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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



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New LGU officials asked to prioritize environmental laws

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is calling on newly elected officials of local government units (LGUs) to prioritize the implementation of environmental laws, particularly on solid waste management.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu told city and municipal mayors that they have a duty under the Ecological Solid Waste Management law, which holds the LGUs primarily responsible for waste segregation and disposal.

Cimatu said the DENR is also counting on LGUs on the implementation of the Clean Air and Clean Water laws.

At the same time, he called on the officials within the Manila Bay region to cooperate with the DENR-led inter-agency task force in charge of its rehabilitation.

DENR Undersecretary for solid waste management and LGU concerns Benny Antiporda warned that local officials found violating the provisions of the law could be held administratively and criminally liable.

Antiporda told the newly elected officials to report any violation of the law, particularly the operation of open dumpsites in their localities.

"By doing so, these officials will send the right signal early on in their administration and that is they do not tolerate any wrongdoing," Antiporda said.

He added that failure on the part of the newly elected officials to act or report any irregularities committed by their predecessors would be probed.

"We will go after both newly elected and outgoing local officials who violated environmental laws. Violators could face a jail term of up to three years," he said.

Last week, the DENR issued a cease and desist order against the municipal government of Limay in Bataan for operating an open dumpsite right beside a creek flowing to Mamala River, which drains into Manila Bay.

The DENR ordered Limay officials to stop the operation of the dumpsite and conduct immediate rehabilitation of the area.



DENR chief to elected execs: Implement environment laws

By **CORY
MARTINEZ**

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Roy Cimatu yesterday urged the newly elected city and municipal mayors to prioritize the implementation of environmental laws, particularly Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

Cimatu stressed that under RA 9003, the local officials are mandated to provide a systematic, comprehensive and ecological solid waste management program in their re-

spective jurisdiction.

Under the law, Cimatu explained that LGUs are primarily responsible for waste segregation and disposal.

"We call on newly elected local officials to give priority to full and strict implementation of environmental laws, particularly on solid waste management," Cimatu said.

Aside from RA 9003, Cimatu said the DENR is also counting on LGUs for the full implementation of RA 8749 or the Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999 and RA 9275 or the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004.

He likewise called on local government officials within the Manila Bay region to cooperate with the DENR-led inter-agency task force in charge of the Manila Bay rehabilitation.

"The task force cannot do it alone. We need the full cooperation of LGUs," Cimatu said.

DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and LGU Concerns Benny Antiporda, on the other hand, warned that local officials found violating the provisions of RA 9003 could be held administratively and criminally liable.



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New LGU officials urged to implement environmental laws

By Cory Martinez

ENVIRONMENT and Natural Resources Secretary Roy Cimatu yesterday urged the newly-elected city and municipal mayors to prioritize the implementation of environmental laws, particularly Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

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"The task force cannot do it alone. We need the full cooperation of LGUs," Cimatu said.

DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and LGU Concerns Benny Antiporda, on the other hand, warned local officials found violating the provisions of RA 9003 could be held administratively and criminally liable.

Antiporda encouraged newly-elected local officials to report any violation of RA 9003, particularly open dumpsites in their respective localities.

"By doing so, these officials will send the right signal early on in their administration and that is they do not tolerate any wrongdoing," Antiporda said.

Antiporda added that failure on the part of the local officials to act or report any irregularities committed by their predecessors would be dealt accordingly.

"We will go after both

newly elected and outgoing local officials who violated environmental laws," Antiporda said. "Violators could face a jail term of up to three years."

Last week, the DENR issued a cease and desist order against the municipal government of Limay in Bataan province for operating an open dumpsite beside a creek flowing to Mamala River that drains into Manila Bay.

Establishment and maintenance of an open dumpsite is strictly prohibited under RA 9003.



REVIVAL OF FORESTS KEY TO SURVIVAL OF PHILIPPINE EAGLE

MORE delay in the much-needed rehabilitation of forests paired with the rampant deforestation in many parts of the country may further endanger the population of the Philippine eagle, which is already struggling to keep its numbers alive.

On the average, a Philippine eagle pair needs about 4,000 to 11,000 hectares of forest land to survive in the wild, depending on the number of prey items in the area. But with the rapid loss of Philippine forests, the struggle to survive is harder than ever.

Since the 1900s, more than 70 percent of Philippine forests have been lost to make way for urban and commercial developments.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature lists the Philippine eagle as one of more than 400 plant and animal species that

face the threat of extinction. Today, only 400 pairs of Philippine eagles are left in the wild.

In 2012, it joined the list of 17 critically endangered birds in the Philippines, along with the Philippine cockatoo, rufous-headed hornbill and Sulu bleeding heart.

Haribon Foundation, together with BirdLife International, reported that habitat loss in the form of rapid disappearance of Philippine forests and conversion of wetlands to other uses, is the No. 1 threat to Philippine bird species.

"The problem is twofold. While we are aware of the problem that our national bird is facing the brink of extinction, this stems from the deeper issue that we are losing our forests," Haribon COO Maria Belinda de la Paz said.

According to the Forest Management Bureau of the Department of Environment

and Natural Resources (DENR), almost 47,000 hectares of forest cover are lost every year. This means that only 32.6 percent of the total forest cover remains from the original forest cover, which the country had in the past century.

Some 1.2 million hectares of deforested lands of the country need to be rehabilitated three years from now, according to the DENR.

Hence, it is high time for the government and the private sector to strengthen their mutual thrust in conserving and rehabilitating Philippine forests, which could help save the Philippine eagle.

But the merits of having the apex predator thriving in the country does not end on prestige alone. Considered an "umbrella species" by The Peregrine Fund, "conserving Philippine eagles and their

habitat automatically provides protection for all the other plants and animals that live there, too."

"Saving the Philippine eagle could lead to a chain of events which will ultimately lead to a better environment for the Philippines," de la Paz said.

The loss of forested areas is mainly due to commercial developments and their conversion to major thoroughfares. Road construction close to forests means higher deforestation rates as access opens up avenues for forest resource extraction and land conversion. This poses a serious threat to Philippine birds, especially the globally threatened as they predominantly occupy lowland forests.

Rapid climate change also directly affects the survival rate of the remaining Philippine

eagles. It severely strikes avifaunal diversity in the Philippines, where almost 30 percent of bird species are endemic.

BirdLife International warns that over the next 40 years, the habitats of restricted range birds will continue to be unsuitable due to climate change, attributing this problem to drastic shifts in temperature and rainfall. Many species may not survive under these harsh conditions.

This problem is even more aggravated due to the geography of the Philippines. As an archipelago with over 7,000 islands, the threat of extinction of the many island-endemic, restricted-range fauna is high.

This problem should be faced with proactive resolutions from the government, in partnership with advocacy groups, and private companies. Rehabilitation

of degraded forest lands and a stricter enforcement of illegal logging bans are encouraged to ensure the survival of species such as the Philippine eagle.

"But saving the Philippine eagle does not only mean preserving Philippine biodiversity, this contributes to the global environment as well," de la Paz reminded.

Since 2014, Haribon Foundation has been addressing this problem through The Philippine Eagle Project. This campaign has started from the early days of the Haribon Society, and has now increased knowledge and understanding of the biological and ecological characteristics of *haring ibon* in the Sierra Madre.

With support from international and local sponsors alike, Haribon fights to prevent the extinction of the Philippine national bird.



DENR stops operations of 10 El Nido sites

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA @jonmayuga

AS part of the continuing effort to rehabilitate El Nido, one of Luzon's top tourist attractions, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has issued cease and desist orders (CDOs) against 10 hotels and restaurants for polluting Bacuit Bay in El Nido, Palawan.

The CDOs, issued starting Wednesday, were signed by Atty. Michael Drake Matias, regional director of the Environmental Management Bureau-Mimaropa.

Issued CDOs were El Nido Sea Shell Resorts and Hotel in Barangay Buena Suerte; Doublegem Beach

Resort and Hotel, Buko Beach Resort, Panorama Resort (Mangonana Inc.), Four Seasons Seaview Hotel and Stunning Republic Beach Resort in Barangay Corong-corong; and Sava Beach Bar/Sava Nest Egg Inc., El Nido Beach Hotel, and The Nest El Nido Resorts and Spa Inc. in

Barangay Masagana.

In an interview, DENR-Mimaropa Regional Executive Director Henry A. Adornado said while the CDOs cover only water use and discharge of wastewater, an establishment slapped with such order is, in effect, ordered closed, as the order shuts down their operation.

Erring establishments in El Nido, and two other tourism areas in the Mimaropa region—Coron, Palawan and Puerto Galera in Oriental Mindoro—are facing closure orders as part of the massive rehabilitation of famous tourist areas in the Philippines.

The order says the establishments discharge wastewater continuously without valid permits, a clear violation of Rule 14.12 of the implementing rules and regulations of RA 9275 or the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004.

The law states that: "Disapproved

129

The number of establishments that complied with DENR orders to vacate areas they illegally encroached on in three tourist areas in Mimaropa. The 129 are among those that received 813 individual notices to vacate, but so far they are the only easement violators who complied.

applications or suspended or revoked wastewater discharge permits shall not grant any right or privilege to the applicant or former permit holder to discharge its wastewater into any body[ies] of water and/or land. Any discharge shall be a

ground for the immediate issuance of a cease and desist order."

The CDO further noted that the hotels discharged wastewater that greatly exceed the allowable DENR standards, "without any consideration of its impact and effect [on] the receiving body of water," in this case, Bacuit Bay.

The order said results of the laboratory analysis on the wastewater taken from the erring establishments went beyond the DENR General Effluent Standards for Biochemical Oxygen Demand. BOD is a measure of the quantity of oxygen used by microorganisms when decomposing organic materials present in water. It provides an index on how discharged wastewater affects its receiving environment. A high BOD indicates a high amount of organic matter present in the water sample.

Meanwhile, under orders from the Pollution Adjudication Board, the DENR also served a CDO on Cuna Hotel in Barangay Malignaya, which is the subject of an existing complaint of discharging blackish and foul-smelling wastewater. Likewise, the effluent sample taken from the said hotel has greatly exceeded the water-quality standard set by the Department.

To ensure erring establishments refrain from discharging wastewater, a team from DENR-Mimaropa, spearheaded by its regional EMB, implemented the CDOs by sealing all the 10 hotels' water lines and facilities from their kitchens to the comfort rooms (faucets, kitchen sinks, lavatory, sewer lines, outlet pipes, etc); and by posting a notice of their violations to the public.

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"It is a tedious process but that is what the law prescribes," RD Matias remarked. "We make sure all our actions are done in due process," he pointed out.

Others checked, too

MEANWHILE, DENR team is also monitoring the rest of the business structures in El Nido by continuously checking their wastewater discharges.

"We have initial investigations done on other hotels and restaurants and we are just waiting [to see] if results of their effluent samples would merit issuance of a CDO," Adornado said.

"Until these erring establishments have shaped up, we have no other choice but to enforce the law and stop them from polluting El Nido," he said.

The ongoing rehabilitation of El Nido forms part of the strong directive of Environment Secretary Roy Cimatú to protect all bodies of water in the country so that the people

may enjoy their most beneficial use.

"We have long benefited from El Nido. It is about time we all realize that we have a shared responsibility to protect and save it from degradation so that we and the generations to come can still savor the beauty and natural resources that this wonderful island has to offer," he said. Adornado said they continue to issue notices to business establishments for defying the order to vacate the areas they occupy in El Nido and Coron in Palawan Province, and Puerto Galera in Oriental Mindoro, as part of the massive rehabilitation effort of the government in tourism areas.

As of April 5, 2019, the DENR-Mimaropa has listed a total of 1,666 establishments and 1,207 households in the three tourist areas. Of these, 813 individual notices to vacate have been issued to easement violators. So far, only 129 have complied with the order.



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PALAWAN

**DENR shuts
down 10 hotels**

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has ordered the closure of at least 10 hotels found illegally discharging waste into El Nido's Bacuit Bay.

Michael Drake Matias, director of the DENR's Environmental Management Bureau for Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan), said these establishments at Palawan's top tourist destination violated the Clean Water Act of 2004.

Matias said the water being discharged by the 10 hotels at four villages in El Nido exceeded pollutant limits set by the DENR.

The DENR announced on Saturday that a cease-and-desist order (CDO) was issued on Wednesday

against El Nido Sea Shell Resorts and Hotel at Barangay Buena Suerte; Doublegem Beach Resort and Hotel, Buko Beach Resort, Panorama Resort (Mangonana Inc.), Four Seasons Seaview Hotel and Stunning Republic Beach Resort at Barangay Corong-Corong; and Sava Beach Bar/Sava Nest Egg Inc., El Nido Beach Hotel and The Nest El Nido Resorts and Spa Inc. at Barangay Masagana.

A similar action was earlier taken by the Pollution Adjudication Board against Cuna Hotel at Barangay Maligaya after the hotel was found discharging "blackish and foul-smelling" wastewater.

"The result of the laboratory analysis on the wastewater taken from said establishments went beyond the DENR General Effluent Standards for Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD)," Matias said.

"BOD is a measure of the quantity of oxygen used by microorganisms when decomposing organic materials are present in water," he said. —

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10 HOTELS SA EL NIDO IPINASARA

MAY 10 hotels sa El Nido, Palawan ang ipinasara ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) dahil sa paglabag sa Clean Water Act of 2004.

Sinabi ni Michael Drake Matias, director

ng DENR Environmental Management Bureau for Mirnaropa, na ang naturang mga establisimiyento ay nagdadala ng maitim at mabahong tubig sa Bacuit Bay sa El Nido.

Napag-alaman na ang cease-and-desist order ay ipinalabas ng DENR

laban sa El Nido Sea Shell Resorts and Hotel, Doublegem Beach Resort and Hotel, Buko Beach Resort, Panorama Resort (Mangonana Inc.), Four Seasons Seaview Hotel, Stunning Republic Beach Resort, Sava Beach Bar/Sava Nest Egg Inc., El Nido Beach Hotel, at The

Nest El Nido Resorts and Spa Inc.

Ginawaran din ng parehong aksiyon ng Pollution Adjudication Board ang Cuna Hotel sa Barangay Maligaya dahil sa katulad na paglabag.

Ayon kay Matias, sa kanilang laboratory

analysis ay lumitaw na lumagpas sa DENR General Effluent Standards para sa Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) ang wastewater mula sa nabanggit na mga hotel.

Ilang establisimiyento pa ang tinutukan ng DENR dahil sa parehong paglabag.



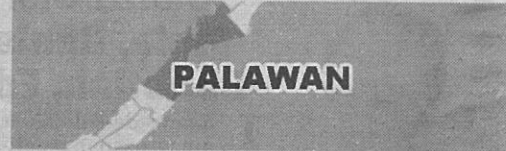
10 hotel sa El Nido pinasara ng DENR

IPINASARA ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang 10 hotel makaraang mapatunayang nagtatapon ng kanilang basura sa Bacuit Bay, El Nido.

Ayon kay Michael Drake Matias, director ng Environmental Management Bureau of Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan)-DENR, ang nasabing mga establishments sa Palawan na top tourist destination ay lumabag sa Clean Water Act of 2004.

Lumagpas umano sa itinakdang limit ng pollutant ang wastewater ng 10 hotel na mula sa apat na villages sa El Nido, ayon kay Matias.

Kasama sa inisyuhan ng cease and desist order (CDO) noong Miyerkoles ng DENR ang El Nido Sea Shell Resorts and Hotel sa Barangay Buena Suerte; Doublegem Beach Resort and Hotel, Buko Beach Resort, Panorama Resort (Mangonana Inc.), Four Seasons Seaview Hotel; Stunning Republic Beach



Resort sa Brgy. Corong-Corong; Sava Beach Bar/Sava Nest Egg Inc.; El Nido Beach Hotel at The Nest El Nido Resorts and Spa Inc. sa Brgy. Masagana.

Pinatawan din ng CDO ng Pollution and Adjudication Board ang Cuna Hotel sa Bgy. Maligaya matapos na mapatunayan na naglalabas ito ng 'blackish and foul-smelling' wastewater.

"The result of the laboratory analysis on the wastewater taken from said establishments went beyond the DENR General Effluent Standards for Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD)," lahad ni Matias. **(Tina Mendoza)**



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PALAWAN'S TOURIST MAGNET, HOME TO ENDANGERED

'PAWIKAN,' MANY MORE SPECIES

Saving El Nido and its rich biodiversity

STORY & PHOTO BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA @jonlmayuga

THERE is more to El Nido in Palawan than its beautiful landscape and seascape.

A first-class municipality known for its crystal-clear waters and breath-taking island scenery, El Nido is home to a diverse species of birds, fish and amazing marine wildlife that adds value to ecotourism.

Also known for its stunning coral reefs and colossal limestone cliffs, El Nido is rich in biodiversity.

Unfortunately, decades of neglect and unsustainable tourism practices are threatening to destroy El Nido, a good reason it is now the subject of massive rehabilitation by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Protected area

COVERED by this captivating town is the El Nido-Taytay Managed Resource Protected Area, which also includes portions of the nearby Taytay town.

Established by virtue of a presidential proclamation signed by then-President Joseph Estrada on October 8, 1998, the El Nido-Taytay protected area is considered one of the largest marine sanctuaries in the Philippines.

It is approximately 90,321 hectares, where 36,018 hectares is terrestrial, while 54,303 hectares comprise the coastal and marine areas. It is shared by 18 barangays from the municipality of El Nido and three from the municipality of Taytay.

The protected area also covers a total of 1,442 hectares of mangrove area, 2,00 hectares of seagrass and 2,000 hectares of coral reef.

The highest peak in the protected area is on Cadlao Island, with an elevation of 640 meters. Spotted with karst limestone formations, the islands and the mainland El Nido is unique in many ways.

Before being declared a protected area, El Nido is previously covered by conservation measures aimed at protecting this beautiful town from destructive development projects and activities.

Administrative Order 518 signed in 1984 established a 360-square-mile maritime area in El Nido as a turtle sanctuary.

El Nido is one of the eight priority areas of the National Integrated Protected Areas Program (Nipap).

Beautiful lagoons

WITHIN the El Nido-Taytay protected area are some of the tourist

attractions being showcased by tourism officials of the municipality of El Nido and the provincial government of Palawan.

These include the Big Lagoon and Small Lagoon, the Secret Lagoon, all in Miniloc Island, and the Cadlao Lagoon in Cadlao Island.

Known as the country's last ecological frontier, Palawan is a major source of wild-caught fish in Luzon.

According to the area's biodiversity profile released by the DENR-Mimaropa region, a total of 197 species of fish species belonging to 28 families have been recorded within the area.

Commonly found species of fish within the area are damselfish, parrotfish, triggerfish, butterflyfish, angelfish, wrasse, grouper, snapper, rabbitfish, goatfish and barracudas. But often, sharks can also be found in its famed Bacuit Bay.



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Marine turtle haven

EVEN before the establishment of the protected area, El Nido's islands and islets are hosts to five of the seven marine turtles—the green sea turtle, hawksbill turtle, olive ridley, leatherback and loggerhead turtle.

El Nido is also frequented by dolphins and whales. Some of them have been recorded by the DENR, such as the bottlenose dolphin, spinner dolphin, bryde's whale and humpback whale.

The rare sea cows, locally called dugongs, are also found in the seagrass areas of Barangay Corong-corong, Manlag and Aberawan.

Birds and fish sanctuaries

EL NIDO is known to host a number of native birds, including those that are identified with Palawan, such as the Palawan blue flycatcher, Palawan flowerpecker, Palawan tit and Palawan hornbill.

Two endemic species can be found in El Nido's Taraw Cliff—the *Amorphophallus natolii*, and *Amorphophallus salmoneus*.

Besides the protected area, there are seven locally managed fish sanctuaries and marine protected areas (MPAs) that give marine ecosystems in El Nido double protection. These are the Mitri Island, Dilumacad Island, in Barangay Buena Suerte; Depelder Reef in Barangay Corong-corong; Masagana MPA in Barangay Masagana; Tres Marias, Guintonggaon/Turtle Island in Barangay

Bebeladan; and Cagbatang MPA in Barangay Pasadena.

An outdoor laboratory

HENRY ADORNADO, regional executive director of Mimaropa, said being rich in biodiversity, El Nido is ideal for the conduct of scientific research.

Adornado, a former director of the Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau, said he had already appealed to the Department of Tourism to fund a study that will determine El Nido's carrying capacity.

Such study will entail a cost of not less than P5 million, which will help policy-makers come up with better rules and regulations without compromising El Nido's ecological integrity.

He said El Nido offers biologists a great learning experience given its unique island ecosystems and the surrounding coastal and marine areas.

"It is rich in terrestrial and marine biodiversity. It has a lot of secrets waiting to be uncovered," he said in Filipino.

Pollution, human encroachment

CAROL ESMENDA, El Nido-Taytay protected area assistant protected area superintendent, said El Nido's water is deteriorating owing to pollution caused by direct discharge of untreated wastewater from the mainland.

Worse, developments, such as the construction of break walls in the beach to protect resorts, is seriously threatening marine turtles, El Nido's flagship species.

Esmenda said in an interview with the BUSINESSMIRROR on May 14 that because some locals are selling their properties to foreign investors, El Nido is experiencing a construction boom, with or without necessary permits, even within the supposedly protected area.

This, she said, is causing a lot of distress to El Nido's already threatened terrestrial and coastal habitats.

"Because of development in the beaches, like human encroachment, marine turtles are unable to find their way back to their nesting grounds. Marine turtles have this unique characteristic that they go back to where they were hatched to lay eggs," she explained in Filipino.

Some locals, she said, are also reportedly consuming turtle eggs, and some egg gatherers are secretly selling them to tourists.

Some locals, she said, are also reportedly consuming turtle eggs, and some egg gatherers are secretly selling them to tourists.

P10-M Ipaf

ESMENDA, however, is confident that stronger protection will soon be put in place for protected areas

with the approval of their work and financial plan that will utilize the P10 million in revenues generated by the park.

The fund is from the automatic Integrated Protected Area Fund (Ipaf) which allows the protected-area management to retain 75 percent of the revenues they generated in the operation of a protected area.

"Last December we came up with the work and financial plan, and [it] was approved, so we are hoping to hire more park rangers to protect the park," she said, confiding that the protected area has only two boats, one of which is already unserviceable.

She said they plan to hire 10 more park rangers and hopefully, acquire even small motorized boats to strictly enforce a policy guided by 2015 carrying capacity study on the maximum number of boats to be allowed operating in El Nido.

"Before, we only ask favors from the Philippine Coast Guard and LGUs [local government units] for us to use their boats because it is also part of their mandate. Hopefully, with our Ipaf, we can have our own boats and more rangers to protect the park," she said.

According to Esmenda, the park rangers will also help create the ecotourism rules and regulation, so as to ensure the protection and conservation of El Nido's threatened wildlife.

Easement rules violation

RECORDS from the DENR-Mimaropa Office revealed a serious violation of the easement rule in El Nido. Of the combined 603 commercial and residential units

“If you are an environment lover, the landscape, El Nido is really beautiful. If we can maintain its beauty, it will be of great benefit to the people in El Nido.”—ADORNADO



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inventoried by the DENR in the area, 285 are commercial establishments, while 318 are households. So far, 496 violators of easement rules have been issued a notice to vacate, representing 82 percent of the total number of inventoried buildings.

According to Adornado, the DENR continues to issue notices to vacate to violators of the easement rules. Of those issued with notices to vacate, 99 owners of these commercial and residential establishments have so far complied with the order.

Adornado said the DENR with the help of experts from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) and the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) are determined to enforce environmental laws, particularly the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004.

He said water samples are being collected from outfalls and those that fall below accepted standard in terms of coliform bacteria depending on the gravity of the violation.

Some establishments, he said, are issued with a notice of violation, while some have already been issued a cease-and-desist order, effectively stopping their operation, pending compliance of corrective measures.

"Some establishments are already putting up their own wastewater-treatment facilities, and some are already connecting to sewer lines," he said.

Saving El Nido

ACCORDING to Adornado, saving El Nido's rich biodiversity by strictly enforcing environmental laws and regulating tourism will ensure sustainable tourism that will benefit communities.

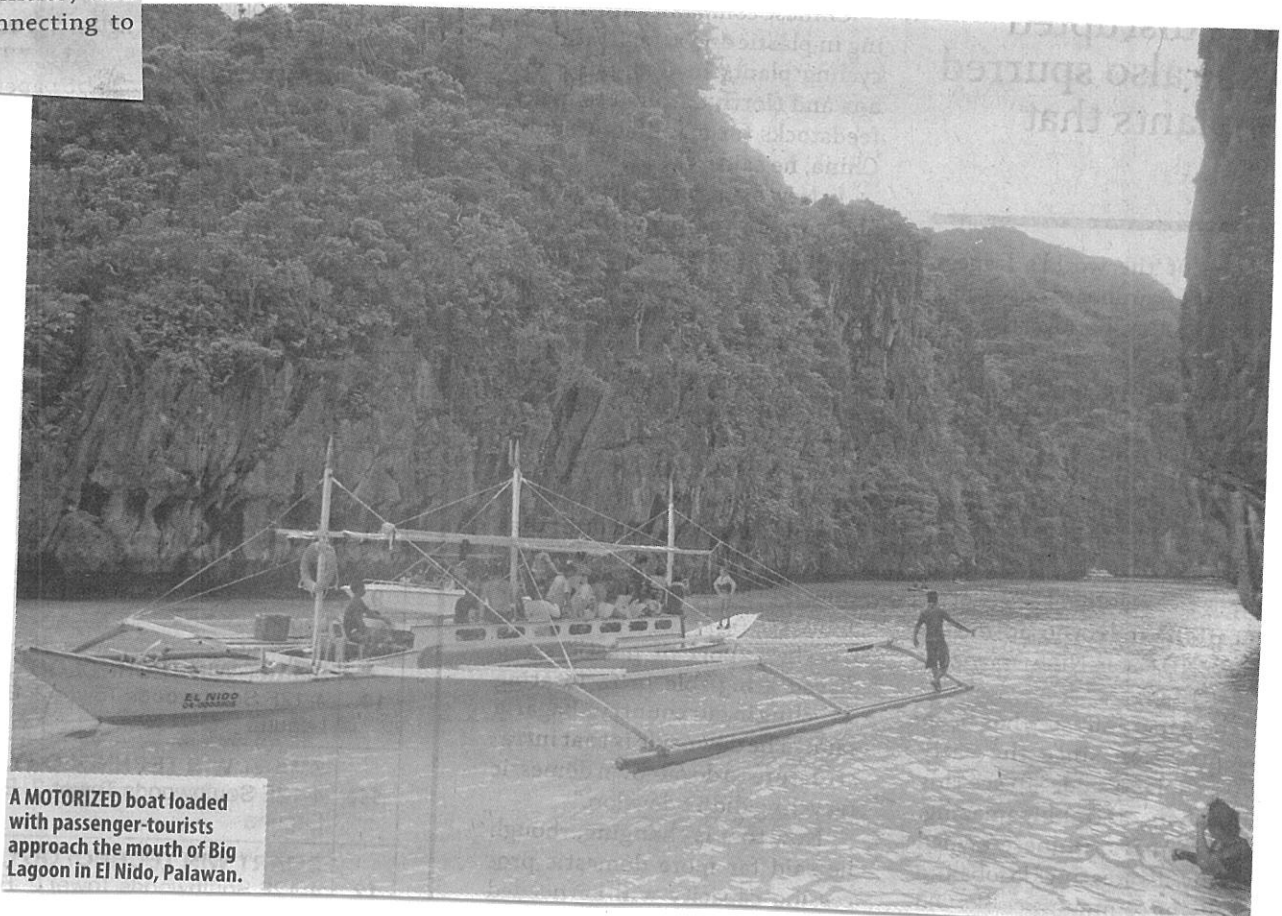
Compared to Boracay, Adornado said the problem besetting El Nido is a lot more manageable with ample budget.

He said enforcing environmental laws entails costs outside the regular budget of the DENR, and sometimes require the expertise of DENR personnel from other units such as the MGB.

He said going island to island, patrolling the vast territory and going resort to resort requires manpower, as well as logistics to mobilize people.

Adornado said El Nido boasts of unmatched natural beauty. Its landscape, the beaches, its pristine waters make it a tourist magnet. Keeping it that way, he said, will be the only way for the communities to continue enjoying nature's bounty.

"If you are an environment lover, the landscape, El Nido is really beautiful. If we can maintain its beauty, it will be of great benefit to the people in El Nido," he said.



A MOTORIZED boat loaded with passenger-tourists approach the mouth of Big Lagoon in El Nido, Palawan.



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REGIONS



SORSOGON PRIDE The town of Donsol in Sorsogon celebrates Butanding Festival to highlight the importance of whale sharks ("butanding") in promoting sustainable tourism and environmental awareness in the province. —MARK ALVIC ESPLANA



Mine waste feared to hurt 'butanding'

But DENR exec in Bicol says tests show water, air pollution levels at safe, standard levels

By Mar S. Arguelles
@msarguellesINQ

DONSOL, SORSOGON—As the annual Butanding Festival here kicked off last week, environmentalists and local officials expressed concern over the operation and exploration plan of two mining firms in nearby Albay province that could threaten the town's tourism and efforts to conserve whale sharks (*Rhincodon typus*).

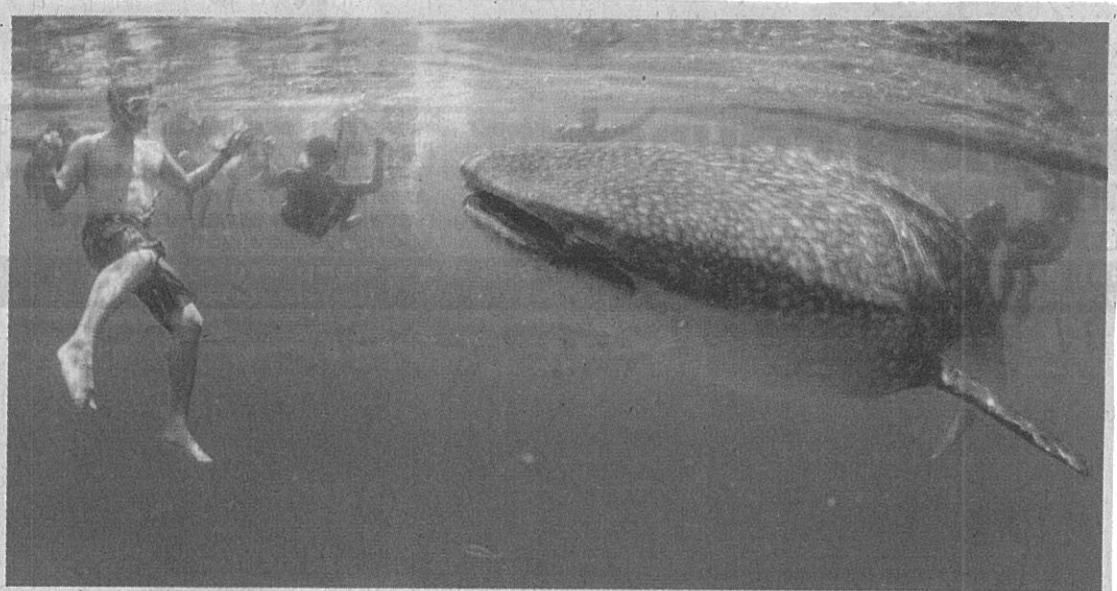
Donsol Mayor Josephine Alcantara-Cruz said the festival had been gaining ground since 2014, bringing in tourists and creating awareness on environment conservation to protect the migratory whale sharks that put this coastal town on the list of the country's must-see destinations.

But Cruz, in a news conference on Friday, said she was concerned over the impact of mining in Albay, noting that mine waste could contaminate river channels linked to Donsol River.

A cement factory in the village of Palanog in Camalig, Albay, has been operating for close to two decades while another mining firm is seeking clearance from the Camalig government and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) to conduct exploration.

Feeding ground

Environmentalists were worried that mining operations, especially during the rainy season, could affect water quality in tributaries in Camalig and Jovellar towns, with dirty water reaching Donsol River, where krill abound.



INTERACTION Whale sharks, which feed in waters around the Philippines, are known to be "gentle giants" of the sea and do not pose danger to humans.—FERDINAND EDRALIN / CEBU DAILY NEWS

Ronnel Dioneda, acting vice president for research development and extension of the Bicol University, in a study in 2016, indicated that krill and planktons, the whale shark's food, grow abundantly in Donsol River that drains into Donsol Bay.

The river, Dioneda said, produces nutrients that sustain krill and planktons, which in turn attract migratory whale sharks to visit Donsol's waters from March to May.

Cruz said she had consulted with the DENR in 2017 and brought to the agency's attention the negative impact of mining operations in Albay on the town's environment and tourism industry.

This prompted the DENR last year to hold a dialogue with local officials and other groups so local governments would be guided in managing their river channels. The dialogue also discussed

the crafting of a comprehensive plan aimed at river conservation and protection measures.

"We are talking here not only of Donsol River but also of other rivers that link to us," Cruz said.

Officials from the towns of Camalig, Daraga, Jovellar and Ligao City in Albay, and the towns of Pilar and Donsol in Sorsogon province attended the meeting.

Quarrying

Cruz said the six local government units should adopt measures to address potential problems on water pollution. "The problem [is] Donsol is just at the receiving end, [but] the towns affected, and we are talking here of five towns, [are] in two different provinces," Cruz said.

But in a telephone interview on Sunday, Guillermo Molina, DENR-EMB regional director in

Bicol, allayed fears that the cement plant's operation in Camalig would lead to water pollution in river channels in Albay and Sorsogon.

He said his agency was regularly monitoring and testing water quality in these rivers, including Donsol River.

"[The cement factory in Camalig] was established in 2000. As to river contamination and air pollution issues, these had been brought out in the past by residents of Camalig and the neighboring towns of Jovellar and other towns in the third district, but EMB records indicated that water and air pollution levels remained at the standard, safe levels," Molina said.

He blamed local quarrying operations, which had been allowed by local governments in Albay and Donsol, for turning rivers murky during rainy days.

Cruz said Donsol had asked



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its partner, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF, formerly World Wildlife Fund), to help initiate a measure that would benefit the six localities while protecting the “butanding” and other marine resources.

Decreasing

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature Red List classifies the whale shark as endangered, based on a global assessment in 2016. It described the whale shark’s population as “decreasing.”

The Donsol field office of WWF Philippines recorded 87 whale sharks in the town’s waters since January.

Joel Palma of WWF Philippines said that his agency had partnered with Donsol to promote environmental stewardship and sustainable tourism, while discouraging harmful fishing practices and the hunting of whale sharks.

“With 21 years of conservation work, the partnership has allowed both the whale shark and the local community to flourish. This renewal also promises to bring progress and prosperity to Donsol for more years to come,” Palma said.

Local government data showed that Donsol’s earnings from its 5-percent share from boat rentals for butanding interaction were P3.36 million in 2017 and P2.05 million in 2018. From January to April this year, the town earned P2.37 million.

Records from the Donsol tourism office showed 13,304 tourists visited the town from January to May this year, more than the 10,562 visitors during the same period last year. —WITH A RE-

PORT FROM REY ANTHONY OSTRIA INQ



Butanding ng Donsol maglalaho sa minahan?

LEGAZPI CITY – Pina-
ngangambahang lokal na
pamahalaan ng bayan ng
Donsol, Sorsogon na maglala-
ho ang whaleshark na mas
kilala bilang butanding sa kara-
gatan ng kanilang lugar dahil
sa nakaambang pagmimina
ng limestone sa bayan ng
Camalig, Albay.

Ito ang inihayag ni Mayor
Josephine Alcantara-Cruz sa
isang pulong balitaan kaugnay
ng grand opening ng Butan-
ding Festival ng Donsol simula
noong Mayo 17 hanggang 24.

Ayon kay Mayor Cruz,
tumawag sa kanya si Mayor
Jorem Arcangel ng bayan ng
Jovellar sa Albay at hiniling na
pagtulungan nilang kontrahin
ang planong pagpapalawak ng
operasyon ng Goodfound Ce-
ment Factory sa Brgy. Palanog
ng Camalig at ang balak na
makapagmina, ang isa pang
panibagong mining company
na nagsumite ng aplikasyon
sa Department of Environ-
ment and Natural Resources

(DENR) -5 para makapagpa-
tayo rin ng panibagong planta
ng semento sa Brgy. Caguiba.

Bukod sa Goodfound Ce-
ment Factory na may kahili-
ngang makapagmina pa ng
limestone sa mga katabing
barangay ng Miti, Bantonan,
Baligang at Calabidongan,
hinihiling din ng isa pang mi-
ning company na makapag-
lagay ng planta ng semento
sa Brgy. Caguiba sa bayan rin
ng Camalig.

Balak umano ng mga kum-
panyang ito na gibain ang mga
bundok ng nasabing limang
barangay para kunin ang mil-
yong tonelada ng limestone
na pangunahing sangkap sa
paggawa ng semento.

Pinangangambahang aa-
gos sa Jovellar River ang mga
bahagi ng gigibaing bundok na
diretso sa Donsol River pala-
bas ng karagatan ng Donsol.

Bukod pa ito sa dumi at
mga kemikal na sangkap sa
paggawa ng semento na pina-
ngangambahang papatay sa



ASEAN IN FOREFRONT OF CONSERVATION

UN report: Save species

from extinction

ONE million plant and animal species are facing extinction due to human activities, with agriculture as one of the biggest threats to Earth's biodiversity and ecosystems.

This summarizes the findings of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

Backed by the UN, IPBES is the intergovernmental body which assesses the state of biodiversity and of the ecosystem services it provides to society, in response to requests from decision makers.

The report, which was released early this month during the IPBES meeting in Paris, is the most comprehensive ever completed, the first intergovernmental report of its kind, and builds on the landmark Millennium Ecosystem Assessment of 2005.

The report said about 75 percent of land and 66 percent of oceans have been "significantly altered" by people, driven in large part by the production of food. Crop and livestock operations currently co-opt more than 33 percent of Earth's land surface and 75 percent of its freshwater resources.

The report identified agricultural activities as some of the largest contributors to human emissions of greenhouse gases. They account for roughly 25 percent of total emissions due to the use of fertilizers and the conversion of areas, such as tropical forests, to grow crops or raise livestock, such as cattle.

Agricultural threats to ecosystems will only increase as the world's population continues to grow, according to the report.

Other notable findings of the report include:

■ Land degradation has reduced the productivity of 23 percent of the global land surface; up to \$577 billion in annual global crops are at risk from pollinator loss; and 100 million to 300 million people are at increased risk of floods and hurricanes because of loss of coastal habitats and protection.

■ In 2015, 33 percent of marine fish stocks were being harvested at unsustainable levels; 60 percent were maximally sustainably fished, with just 7 percent harvested at levels lower than what can be sustainably fished.

■ Plastic pollution has increased tenfold since 1980; 300 million to 400 million tons of heavy metals, solvents, toxic sludge and other wastes from industrial facilities are dumped annually into the world's waters; and fertilizers entering

coastal ecosystems have produced more than 400 ocean "dead zones."

■ Negative trends in nature will continue to 2050 and beyond in all of the policy scenarios explored in the report, except those that include transformative change—due to the projected impacts of increasing land-use change, exploitation of organisms and climate change, although with significant differences between regions.

■ The next biggest threats to nature are the exploitation of plants and animals through harvesting, logging, hunting and fishing; climate change; pollution and the spread of invasive species. The average abundance of native plants, animals and insects has fallen in most major ecosystems by at least 20 percent since 1900 because of invasive species.

■ An estimated 5 percent of all species would be threatened with extinction by 2 degrees Celsius of warming above preindustrial levels—a threshold that the world could breach in the next few decades, unless greenhouse-gas emissions are drastically reduced.

The Earth could lose 16 percent of its species if the average global temperature rise exceeds 4.3°C. Such damage to ecosystems would undermine global efforts to reduce poverty and hunger and promote more-sustainable development.



During a news conference launching the summary of the report, Anne Larigauderie, IPBES executive secretary, said biodiversity should be at the top of the global agenda alongside climate change, as the two are the biggest threats to human and species survival.

Robert Watson, IPBES chairman, said, "Without transformative changes to the world's economic, social and political systems to address this crisis, the IPBES panel predicts that major biodiversity losses will continue to 2050 and beyond. We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide."

In an interview by *Science Magazine* with Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim, executive director of the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), about the impact of the new IPBES report, Lim said, "The global assessment provides useful figures and case illustrations that will allow policymakers all over the world, including in the Asean member-states (AMS),

to better visualize the state of the world's and Asean's biodiversity and natural resources, and their impacts to human survival.

"The report also provides good rationale, as well as suggestions for developing national, regional and global policies and actions that can address gaps and guide future work that may possibly improve or reverse current situations."

As the final version of the report will be released at the end of the year, Lim suggested some areas for improvement.

"Though capacity-building measures and policy support continue to be vital for various national agencies and implementing entities involved in biodiversity conservation, there remains a need to generate and present the science and scientific assessments necessary for policy development and corresponding actions. Lawmakers and leaders will respond to data and information that can directly link biodiversity loss to human well-being and survival," she said.

Lim added that to enable any country to continue to progress, but at the same time protect its rich and unique biological resources, consolidated information serving as sound basis for making decisions on trade-offs, and striking the balance between conservation and development, would be a most useful contribution that a body like IPBES can provide.

"The report needs to be broad enough to encompass various national and regional situations. More details will still have to be generated and provided later on, which should be able to support specific on-the-ground actions. Thus, assessment may have to eventually be scaled down at the regional and at the country level," Lim suggested.

Lim added the report will guide the AMS, supported by the ACB, in

developing recommendations for the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

"The IPBES report is very timely as the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) are currently in the process of developing a global biodiversity framework that will succeed the Aichi Biodiversity Targets after 2020," she explained.

She reported that the AMS have already conducted two consultative sessions, the first in Manila in April, and the second in Lao PDR, this month, where representatives of the AMS called for a more quantified goal on maintaining ecosystem integrity, with a clear set of spatial indicators and a clear agreement on the level of commitment among them.

The report emphasized that the world needs transformative change if life on Earth is to be safeguarded and people are to continue to receive the services and benefits that nature provides.

On this issue, Lim said the Asean consultation participants agreed on: 1) transboundary cooperation which considers internal boundaries, not just regional; 2) linkages among pillars, such that cross-sectors should be part of the action plans with flexible mechanisms to allow different sectors to be engaged in each other's activities; and 3) transformation of mindset, such that Asean may be aware of what it can provide to the region, given its myriad of challenges post-2020.

"The AMS have already identified an overarching vision for biodiversity in the Asean region that we hope to achieve by 2050. Our vision is more descriptive, suggesting that there needs to be quantifiable targets that will preserve and enhance ecosystem integrity in the Asean region.

"We also discussed possible tools and measures which may be used to achieve the vision for 2050. These include: 1) mainstreaming biodiversity; 2) resource mobilization; 3) communication, education and public awareness; and 4) integrating diverse perspectives," Lim reported.

She agreed with the report's recommended actions for sustainability and pathways for achieving them across and between sectors such as agriculture, marine systems and freshwater systems, among many others.

In agriculture, the report emphasized the promotion of good agricultural and agroecological practices; multifunctional landscape planning, which simultaneously provides food security, livelihood opportunities, maintenance of species and ecological functions; and cross-sectoral integrated management.

In marine systems, the report highlighted the ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries management, spatial planning, effective quotas, marine protected areas, protecting and managing key marine biodiversity areas, reducing run-off pollution into oceans, and working closely with producers and consumers.

In freshwater systems, policy options and actions include more inclusive water governance for collaborative water management and greater equity; better integration of water resource management and landscape planning across scales; promoting practices to reduce soil erosion, sedimentation and pollution run-off; increasing water storage; promoting investment in water projects with clear sustainability criteria; as well as addressing the fragmentation of many freshwater policies.

Lim said the AMS are already implementing some of the report's

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recommendations, specifically on protected areas and the campaign against overutilization of resources.

For example, the Asean Heritage Parks Programme manages a regional network of representative protected areas to generate greater collaboration among AMS in preserving their shared natural heritage.

As part of Asean's campaign against overutilization of resources, some AMS, supported by ACB and Germany, are implementing a project promoting biodiversity-based products as an economic source for the improvement of livelihoods and biodiversity protection.

She added that the ACB and the AMS are currently preparing the third edition of the Asean Biodiversity Outlook, which will complement the IPBES report.

It will focus on the status of biodiversity and ecosystems in the Asean region and the conservation achievements, actions and next steps for the AMS in ensuring the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems.

Lim said the report's recommendations will further guide the AMS in enhancing its current conservation programs and crafting new policies and programmes that will further strengthen Asean actions on protected areas, ecosystem services, species conservation, invasive alien species, mainstreaming biodiversity in different sectors, ecosystem restoration, access and benefit sharing, communication and knowledge management for biodiversity conservation.

These and future programs will ensure the conservation of the region's biodiversity and ecosystems, as the Asean region is in the forefront of global conservation and sustainability, serving as home to 20 percent of the world's known plant and animal species. **Rolando A. Inciong/ACB**



PHILIPPINE GOVT NEEDS TO INVEST IN ENVIRONMENTAL R&D

DESPITE being tagged as a biodiversity hot spot, the economic and ecological potential of the country's indigenous plant species remains untapped, as the majority of its flora have yet to be discovered and studied.

There is a huge potential in the Philippines's indigenous plants, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), placing a net presentsustainable bioprospecting value of Philippine forests at approximately \$36 million annually in perpetuity.

However, the sad reality is this—there is a dire need for the government to allocate more budget into environmental research and development (R&D) to buttress its conservation of native trees and their protection from deforestation.

Biodiversity, when managed effectively, entails significant national economic growth, according to the UNDP. More than half of

the country continues to depend on the Philippines's natural resources for livelihood.

Thus, protecting these natural resources in all fronts—including the R&D of native trees for better understanding and appreciation—is highly imperative and is nonnegotiable.

Native trees are species that are naturally found in specific regions. Trees that are native to a country attract more fauna, including birds and insects, since they are already in tune with the environment. A lot of knowledge on native trees come from indigenous communities, who use these plants for various purposes, such as their healing properties.

However, there is a threat to the existence of native trees, as urbanization and rapid deforestation continues despite calls from various environmental groups here and abroad.

A 2011 study by Conservation International placed the Philippines as one of the most

threatened forest hotspots in the world, with only 7 percent remaining of its original habitat. The country has lost more than 90 percent of its original forest habitat, which is home to more than a thousand endemic species.

Data from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) showed that around 99 plant species are critically endangered, 187 are endangered, 176 are vulnerable and 64 are threatened.

"Most of our natural resources, especially native trees, remain untapped. We have a lot of unknown flora that are lost to rapid deforestation and illegal logging," Biodiversity Finance Initiative (Biofin) Philippines Project Manager Anabelle Plantilla said. "These trees can have properties useful for various industries, yet we are not able to study them because by the time research institutions get funding, the species are wiped out."

According to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Philippines is one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, owning two-thirds of the Earth's biodiversity. The country ranks fifth in the world in terms of numbers of plant species, housing 5 percent of the world's flora.

"Additional funding for research focused on native trees is badly needed. We want to put more importance on the need for more funding directed toward the conservation of our local biodiversity," Plantilla said.

With a P27.14-billion budget for the year, the DENR has allotted at least P6 billion for its flagship forest-protection program, the Enhanced National Greening Program (ENGP). Despite this, the Philippines still lags in terms of environmental research in the world.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco)

Institute of Statistics, only 0.1 percent of the country's GDP is dedicated to research and development, and an even smaller amount is allotted to research on the environment.

Unesco recommends for a country to allot at least 1 percent of its GDP toward environmental research and development.

Biodiversity Finance Initiative (Biofin), a project implemented by UNDP in 36 countries that aims to address biodiversity finance gaps, supports this recommendation as investments in R&D could lead to better management of natural resources, including native trees, which are all prone to rapid deforestation.

Restoration is a main action in the forestry sector under the Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (PBSAP), the country's road map for biodiversity conservation.

Based on the costing done by Biofin, the investment need for reforestation in the

Philippines is at P57 billion from 2015 to 2028.

Together with coral-reef restoration, implementation of green sanitation technology, vulnerability assessment, rehabilitating areas with infested with invasive alien species, and mainstreaming of PBSAP into local and national plans, the prospective returns include: carbon sequestration worth P453 billion; food security for at least 1.3 million fishers and their families; and reef fisheries, tourism and willingness to pay for biodiversity associated with coral reefs worth P200 billion/year.

"We should invest in our native trees, in our biodiversity, we have so much yet we take it for granted," Plantilla said. "We're missing a lot by not paying attention to our native species and to our forests. If we continue to damage and exploit our natural resources, there will be grave consequences not only to our environment, but also to our economy."



DENR-4: Turn campaign materials to cash

She added recycling could also help prevent wastes from ending up in the lakes and seas

From trash to cash.

This, as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) 4-A (Calabarzon) encouraged candidates, their supporters, and local communities, to recycle their campaign materials and turn them into cash.

In an interview, DENR 4-A Executive

Director Maria Paz Luna said they fully support the call by various groups for all bets whether they won or lost, to take the lead in the cleanup drive to rid the region of election campaign materials.

Luna said there is an urgency to reduce solid wastes and one of the

best ways to address the problem is through recycling.

She added recycling could also help prevent wastes from ending up in the lakes and seas.

Among the wastes they wanted recycled were campaign posters especially tarpaulins and sample ballots.

Environmentalists said these campaign materials could be converted into chairs, shoe bags, pencil cases and other products.



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NEWS

Siquijor province regulates plastic use

SIQUIJOR, SIQUIJOR—The people of Siquijor are attempting to break free from the bewitching convenience of plastic use. The provincial government approved in October 2018 an island-wide regulation of plastic use that came into effect in February. Officials plan to make Siquijor the first zero-waste province in the country, beginning with plastic bag regulation. —STORY BY JHESSET O. ENANO

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ORDINANCE TO REGULATE PLASTIC USE ON ENTIRE ISLAND

SIQUIJOR AIMS TO BECOME FIRST PROVINCE TO GET RID OF PLASTIC WASTE

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By Jhesset O. Enano
@JhessetEnanoINQ

SIQUIJOR, SIQUIJOR—Long associated with witchcraft, the country's third-smallest province is now trying to break free from another curse: waste and plastic pollution as a result of a growing population and tourism boom.

The people in Siquijor province are attempting to get rid of the bewitching convenience of plastic.

In October 2018, the provincial government approved an ordinance that mandated an island-wide regulation of plastic use.

Zero-waste island

While it has so far changed some mindsets, government officials—in partnership with nongovernment groups—aim to take it one step further: to make Siquijor the first zero-waste island in the Philippines.

But that goal, beginning with the plastic bag regulation, would not come without birth pains.

The ordinance, which came into effect in February, prohibits the use of plastic bags for secondary packaging but allows the sale of plastic bags for primary packaging.

Placing value on these single-use plastics would make the customers think twice before

readily disposing them.

Sundays, however, were designated as "plastic holidays," when the sale and use of plastic bags are banned.

Cle Bern Paglinawan, former provincial board member who authored the ordinance, said the implementation was no walk in the park.

Citation tickets

While most vendors and buyers are already compliant, others, especially small vendors peddling fruits and snacks in tourist areas, still need to follow the ordinance.

Citation tickets are given to violators, who are required to attend orientations on their first offense.

Succeeding violations mean penalties, ranging from P1,000 to P5,000.

In part, it was the closure of Boracay to tourists last year that raised awareness about the growing waste problem, said Enrique Belciña, supervisor of the provincial environment task force, which enforces the ordinance.

Livelihood concern

The impact of Boracay's closure rippled to other tourist destinations, including Siquijor, which saw an influx of tourists.

Siquijor also feared that it



PLASTIC HOLIDAY The provincial government of Siquijor has designated Sundays as "plastic holidays," when the sale and use of plastic bags are banned. —JHESSET O. ENANO

may suffer the fate of the famed island-resort that President Duterte had called a "cesspool" before it was rehabilitated.

"We would tell businesses, if we don't regulate our plastic use, we may end up like Boracay," said Belciña, former deputy director of the provincial police who recently retired.

"We tell them: 'What would happen to your livelihood?' And they would understand why we do this," he said.

Instead of using "sando" plastic bags, vendors would use paper bags or simply hand products to customers, who would be

carrying their own "bayong" or woven bags or cloth bags.

While they understand the merits of the ordinance, some vendors feel the pinch brought by the change.

"These brown paper bags cost much more than the plastic bags," said one vendor. "Our profits are lessened and we are having difficulty with the transition, but we can't do anything about it."

Banana leaves, sachets

A hundred-piece bundle of paper bags, she said, cost around P80, quadruple the price of the same number of plastic bags.



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To reduce expenses, some wrap goods in banana leaves.

The ordinance does not cover sachets and similar single-use packaging.

But government officials recognize that curbing these would be a matter that is out of their hands.

Alternatives

Finding alternative delivery systems for these products—and therefore cutting dependence on sachets—would be the next step, said Froilan Grate, president of Mother Earth Foundation (MEF).

To realize this goal, Grate said alternatives would have to be found, materials recovery facilities established in all five municipalities and at-source segregation in every household encouraged.

“Looking at Siquijor five years ago and now, we can see that the different levels of government are not ready for rapid changes ushered in by its booming tourism sector—from its high demand for food importation [to] waste production,” he said.

Beginning July, the provincial government, in partnership with MEF, would be working for the next three years to make Siquijor the first zero-waste province, similar to the foundation’s successful efforts in the

City of San Fernando in Pangasinana province and certain barangays in Metro Manila.

Under the project, Grate said they hope not only to tackle Siquijor’s waste management, but also address food production as most of the island’s vegetables are imported from far-flung areas like Metro Manila and Baguio.

They also hope to tie their initiatives with the province’s tourism, job production and even social services.

Changing habits

Grate said with the plastic regulation in place, the phased implementation would allow the changing of habits that cannot simply be transformed overnight.

While big cities like those in Metro Manila are seen as major sources of garbage, islands with no waste management systems also contribute to pollution, Grate said.

So it is equally important to empower the local communities in the fight against waste, he said.

“The Philippines is often portrayed as a culprit, a major contributor of plastic pollution,” Grate said. “But it is important to see that this is also where solutions are happening.” INQ



MARIKINA'S 'CULTURE OF CLEANLINESS'

THIS refers to the article "Elections leave mountains of trash" (5/16/19). It said: "Street sweepers, meanwhile, have removed sample ballots, flyers and leaflets that littered the vicinity of public schools, most of which were used as polling precincts on election day."

In Marikina City, a day after the midterm elections, at the behest of reelected Mayor Marcelino Teodoro through city administrator Adrian Salvador, employees of the city

government volunteered to help in taking down campaign materials around the city, making the surroundings impeccably clean as if no elections had been held recently. However, in order to keep government service and offices operating on that day, some employees formed a skeleton force to address the needs of the people.

During the voting period, many netizens took notice that there were no sample ballots, flyers and other election

paraphernalia scattered in front of schools. No election-related trash littered the streets, either.

What's the secret of Marikina City's cleanliness? It's a city where people, from the government down to the residents, have already developed the culture of cleanliness. Being clean has become an integral part of our lives as Marikeños.

REGINALD B. TAMAYO,
Marikina City



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

Malaya Business Insight



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EDITORIAL

A member of the



The National Association of Philippine Newspapers

Canada's trash

THE Philippine government was understandably piqued by Canada's inability to ship back to its territory some 29 40-foot container vans packed with garbage – adult diapers, hospital needles and syringes, various paper products, glass and metals, recyclable parts of electronic devices and gadgets, etc.

From June to August, 2013, a total of 50 container vans arrived in six batches at the Manila International Container Port (MICP). The shipment, declared to contain recyclable plastic scrap materials, was shipped by Chronic Plastics Inc., an export company based in Ontario, Canada with local partners in Valenzuela, Metro Manila.

The Bureau of Customs discovered that the shipments contained garbage, after their consignee Live Green Enterprise failed to claim them. The BOC also classified the waste as hazardous under Republic Act 6969, the

'We will take it from here, as the nation waits who will blink first in this diplomatic brinkmanship.'

Toxic Substances and Hazardous and Nuclear Waste and Control Act.

With the BOC deciding not to open the rest of the containers which most likely also have hazardous waste, representation was made and protest letters sent to the Canadian embassy about the desire of the government to ship back the contraband. In February 2014, the Bureau of Customs filed smuggling complaints and other violations of the Tariff and Customs Code of the Philippines against Adelfa Eduardo, owner of Chronic Plastics in Valenzuela, Metro Manila, and its licensed customs brokers Leonora Flores and Sherjun Saldon.

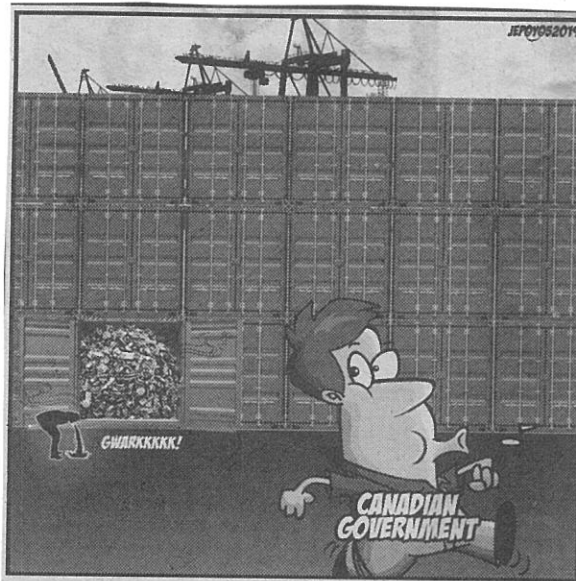
Most telling in this garbage brouhaha is the failure of then President Benigno Aquino III to even discuss the problem with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper during a state visit in May 2015. Instead, his BOC bowed to the Manila City Council's pressure to remove the 50 containers from the MICP, and dump the contents of some 26 containers in a landfill in Aquino's Tarlac province, specifically in Capas, despite protests from environmental groups in Central Luzon.

A visit by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during the APEC Summit in November, 2015 resulted only in a lukewarm, non-committed stance, pointing out that what happened "exposed a problem that needs fixing within our own legislation."

Despite a court order from Manila RTC Judge Tita Alisuag on June 30, 2016 ordering the shipping back of the wastes to Canada at the expense of the importer, nothing concrete happened.

It took a new President -- Rodrigo Roa Duterte -- to press the issue, first by hurling a hyperbole, saying the Philippines with go to war with Canada if it fails to take back the garbage, followed by the setting of the May 15 deadline for such.

The Department of Foreign Affairs has recalled the country's ambassador and consuls to the home office, bolstering Duterte's position on the issue. We will take it from here, as the nation waits who will blink first in this diplomatic brinkmanship.



Editoryal

Basura ng Canada nasa Pilipinas pa

HINDI natupad ang taning na bago mag-Mayo 15 ay maibabalik na sa Canada ang basurang dinala sa bansa noong 2013 at 2014. Puro pangako lang ang Canadian leader na sosolusyunan daw ang problema. Walang isang salita si Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Dahil walang nangyayaring pagbabalik ng basura sa Canada, ni-recall na ng Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) ang ambassador ng Pilipinas sa Canada at iba pang diplomat noong Biyernes. Kinabukasan, nasa bansa na ang ambassador bilang pagsunod kay DFA Sec. Teddy Locsin. Darating na rin ang mga consul at pati ang Labor attaché sa Canada ay nire-recall na rin.

Isang araw makaraang makauwi ang ambasadador ng Pilipinas, nagpahayag naman ng pagkadisappoint ang Canada sa mabilis na aksiyon ng Pilipinas. Gumagawa naman daw sila ng paraan upang masolusyunan ang isyu sa lalong madaling panahon. Nakikipag-ugnayan na raw sila sa Philippine authorities ukol dito.

Ganito rin ang sinabi ni Trudeau noong Nobyembre 2017 nang magtungo siya sa bansa para sa APEC summit. Nag-usap sila ni President Duterte at sinabi ng Canadian leader na aaksiyunan na ang problema sa mahigit 100 containers ng basura na binubuo ng mga household at hospital wastes. Subalit walang natupad sa sinabi ni Trudeau.

Sa galit ni Duterte, nasabi niya sa Canada na huwag gawing basurahan ang Pilipinas. Inatasan naman ng Department of Finance ang Customs na ibalik ang mga basura sa Canada bago ang Mayo 15. Walang nangyari sa taning sapagkat hanggang ngayon, nasa bansa pa ang basura.

Tama lamang na pauwiin ang mga diplomat sa Canada para malaman na hindi nagbibiro ang Pilipinas sa isyu ng basura. Maaaring binabalewala ni Trudeau ang bantang giyera ni Duterte at ang pananakot na hahakutin sa Canada at ikakalat sa beaches doon. Ngayong na-recall na ang mga diplomat, siguro naman matatauhan na ang Canada at kukuinin na ang kanilang basura.

Huwag gawing basurahan ng Canada ang Pilipinas. Alam naman ng Canada na mahigpit na ipinagbabawal ang pagdadala na basura sa ibang bansa. Isa sila sa lumagda sa Basel Convention ukol sa batas na ito. Huwag tantanan ang Canada hangga't hindi naibabalik ang kanilang basura.



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TIDAL - TRASH
- A girl collects plastic bottles and other materials she can sell from the flotsam deposited by heavy rains on the shoreline of Pasil in Cebu City. (Juan Carlo de Vela)



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Balita

ANG NANGUNDIRANG PAHAYAGANG TAGALOG SA BANSA

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PERA SA BASURA Halos hindi na makita ang bata sa gitna ng makapal na basurang inanod sa tabing-dagat na dulot ng matinding pag-ulan sa Pasil, Cebu City, kahapon. **JUAN CARLO DE VELA**



Isko vows to preserve Forest Park, Manila Zoo

Newly proclaimed mayor Francisco "Isko Moreno" Domagoso vowed to preserve the Arroceros Forest Park and the Manila Zoo amid alleged threats to sell them.

"We will try to make it na tagalang parang pasyalan ng tao," Domagoso said in a radio interview on Sunday morning.

Domagoso said he has no intention to sell the Arroceros Park dubbed as the last lung of Manila.

He said he wanted to reopen the park to the public and develop it as a place where Manila residents can relax.

It can be recalled that incumbent Mayor Joseph Estrada had earlier announced a plan to turn the park into a gymnasium.

However, during the midterm elections campaign for the mayoralty, Estrada said he would also preserve the park where hanging bridges will be built on the perimeter of the park for passers-by to enjoy the beautiful view from the

top and inhale fresh air.

The present Arroceros Forest Park, situated beside Pasig River in the area of Lawton, is covered with over 1,500 trees and a habitat of 26 resident and migratory bird species.

On the other hand, Domagoso said that Manila Zoo will not be sold, adding he will look into the situation of the animals in the facility.

"We'll look into it. We guarantee you that all animals will be protected," he said.

The Manila Zoo has been ordered closed by Estrada since late January this year to give way for assessment and study after Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu called out its management for being a major pollutant of Manila Bay due to lack of sewerage treatment plant.

In 2018, one of the zoo's lions allegedly experiencing seizures went viral on social media. **(Erma Edera)**



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Looking forward to the new mayor's plans

WHEN Manila mayoralty candidate Francisco "Isko Moreno" Domagoso joined us in Manila Bulletin's "Hot Seat" roundtable discussion before the election, he spoke of many plans he hoped to carry out for Manila if he got elected.

He bewailed that Manila has been left behind other Metro Manila cities on so many fronts, notably business and industry. Where the Escolta used to be the top commercial area in the country, it has long been eclipsed after so many decades by the Makati business district, Ortigas in Pasig, Bonifacio Global City in Taguig, and in the reclaimed area across Roxas Blvd. in Pasay and Parañaque.

If elected, he said, he would focus a great deal of attention on Binondo, a largely neglected area north of the Pasig River; on the Arroceros area whose trees make it Manila's remaining lung; on Roxas Blvd., where he plans an elevated area for pedestrians and bikers with open-air cafés and restaurants; on city vertical housing for informal settlers; and on a much cleaner, garbage-free Manila.

Now that he has won the Manila mayoralty election, we look forward to these changes, the plans for which, he said, will be borrowing heavily from Singapore's development program. There are many other problems he needs to face if only

to catch up with the progress of most of the rest of Metro Manila.

Manila has one great potential the other cities do not have – its history. It was the heart of the Spanish colonial regime for over three centuries. Intramuros has its historic walls. It was where our national hero Jose Rizal spent his last night before walking to his execution in nearby Bagumbayan.

American Admiral George Dewey defeated the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay in 1898, marking the end of Spain as colonial ruler in the Philippines and the start of the United States as a world power. It is this same Manila Bay that is in the news today as possibly the most polluted water body in the Philippines and the new Manila mayor will find this one of his greatest challenges.

Moreno served three terms as councilor for Tondo starting in 1998, followed by two terms as vice mayor starting in 2007. These years have given him an idea of the problems he now faces as mayor.

During his interview at the Manila Bulletin's roundtable discussion, he disclosed that he worked as a garbage collector when he was a high school student, which is why he was concerned over the garbage in the city. So the first thing he will do if he won, he said then, is to "clean up Manila." We look forward to this cleanup and the many programs he has in mind for our city.



EDITORIAL

Looking forward to the new mayor's plans

WHEN Manila mayoralty candidate Francisco "Isko Moreno" Domagoso joined us in Manila Bulletin's "Hot Seat" roundtable discussion before the election, he spoke of many plans he hoped to carry out for Manila if he got elected.

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EDITORIAL

Inaabangan natin ang mga bagong plano ng alkalde

NANG lumahok si Manila mayoralty candidate Francisco "Isko Moreno" Domagoso sa Manila Bulletin "Hot seat" roundtable discussion bago ang halalan, ibinida niya ang maraming plano na balak niyang ipatupad sa Maynila kapag siya ay nahalal.

Sinabi niyang napag-iwanan na ang Maynila ng iba pang mga lungsod sa Metro Manila sa maraming bagay, lalo na sa usapin ng negosyo at industriya. Kung dati'y nangunguna ang Escolta sa mga komersyal na lugar sa bansa, matagal na itong natabunan matapos ang maraming dekada ng Makati business district, Ortigas sa Pasig, Bonifacio Global City sa Taguig, at ang mga tinambakang lugar sa kahabaan ng Roxas Boulevard sa Pasay at Paranaque.

Kung mahahalal, aniya, pagtutuunan niya ng pansin ang Binondo, isang lubusang napabayaang lugar sa hilaga ng Ilog Pasig; ang mapunong bahagi ng Arroceros na sinasabing ang "Manila's remaining lung"; sa Roxas Blvd., kung saan niya balak pataasan ang lugar para sa mga pedestrian at nagbibisikleta katabi ang mga open-air cafes at mga restawran; ang city vertical housing para sa mga informal settlers; at ang mas malinis, at walang basurang Maynila.

Ngayon na siya ang nagwagi bilang Alkalde ng Maynila, inaasahan natin ang mga pagbabagong ito, mga planong, aniya, ay hiram ng malaki sa programang pangkaunlaran ng Singapore. Maraming problema ang kakailanganin niyang harapin upang makahabol sa pag-unlad ng karamihan ng mga lungsod ng Metro Manila.

May malaking potensiyal ang Maynila na wala ang ibang lungsod — ang kasaysayan nito. Ito ang puso ng kolonyal na rehimen ng Espanyol sa loob ng higit tatlong siglo. Nariyan ang makasaysayang pader ng Intramuros. Dito namalagi ang ating pambansang bayaning si Jose Rizal sa kanyang huling gabi bago mabitay sa kalapit lamang na lugar ng Bagumbayan.

Nagapi ni American Admiral George Dewey ang grupo ng mga Espanyol sa digmaan sa Manila Bay noong 1898, na naging hudyat ng pagtatapos ng pananakop ng Espanya sa Pilipinas at ang simula ng Amerika bilang isang 'world power.' Ang Manila bay rin na ito ang nasa mga balita na tinatayang may pinakamalalang polusyon sa tubig sa Pilipinas at ang tiyak na isa ito sa pinakamalaking pagsubok na haharapin ng bagong halal na Mayor.

Nagsilbing konsehal ng Tondo si Moreno sa loob ng tatlong termino mula noong 1998, na sinundan pa ng dalawang termino bilang vice mayor mula noong 2007. Ang mga taong ito ng kanyang paglilingkod ang nagbibigay sa kanya ng ideya sa problemang kinakaharap niya ngayon bilang mayor.

Sa panayam sa kanya sa Manila Bulletin's roundtable discussion, inamin niyang dati siyang nagtrabahong tagakolekta ng basura noong siya ay nasa high school pa, dahilan upang ikabahala niya ang mga basura sa lungsod. Kaya naman ito ang una niyang gagawin kapag nanalo siya, ito ang "clean up Manila." Aabangan natin ang cleanup, at ang maraming programang kanyang naisip para sa lungsod.



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Rehab programs increase mining costs

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

The compliance of mining companies to the government's progressive rehabilitation program for mine sites is generating higher operating costs, a mining executive said.

Global Ferronickel Holdings Inc. (FNI) president Dante Bravo said that about eight to 10 percent of the company's operating costs is accounted by environmental costs such as that incurred by the progressive rehabilitation program for mines.

"It will impact the bottom-line," Bravo said.

Last August the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is-

sued an administrative order on progressive rehabilitation, in a bid to minimize the disturbed area of a mining project at any given time.

Under the DAO, if a miner is producing one million metric tons or less, it can only extract within 50 hectares of its mine sites, while those producing around one million to three million MT are only allowed to operate within 60 hectares of their tenements.

In contrast, those producing three million to five million MT can only excavate within 70 hectares of their contract areas, while those with annual production of seven million MT but less than nine million can only extract within 90

hectares of their mine sites. "It's really burdensome. You really have to comply otherwise you will just get an NOV (Notice of Violation)," Bravo said.

FNI through its subsidiary Platinum Group Metals Corporation (PGMC) expects nickel ore output at its site in the Municipality of Cagdianao in Claver, Surigao del Sur to go up to 5.5 million wet metric tons (WMT) this year from 5.1 million last year.

In December, FNI reported that the proven and probable ore reserves at the Cagdianao mine went up by 21 percent to 43.8 million WMT from the 36.3 million WMT recorded in June.

Apart from the progressive

rehabilitation program, Bravo said that another initiative of the government to push for sustainability is the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)'s requirement to all listed companies, including mining companies, to submit sustainability reports.

"So that's another regulatory requirement," he added. "We are really being regulated and we are compliant."

On Friday, PGMC turned over a production facility building for chips and woodcraft and a school bus to Barangay Cagdianao. The distribution of the school bus was done under PGMC's Social Development and Management Program (SDMP).



Institutional issues plague mining law implementation—PIDS study

By CAI U. ORDINARIO

[@caiordinario](#)

INSSTITUTIONAL issues continued to plague the country's implementation of mining laws, preventing the Philippines from maximizing the benefits of these policies, according to a Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) consultant.

In a PIDS Policy Note, titled "Challenges in the Philippine mining industry," Eligia D. Clemente said these issues include inconsistencies in local and national policies as well as the lack of qualified personnel in the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP).

Clemente said that despite safeguards put in place in the laws, audits conducted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in 2016 found that several mining sites lacked environmental plans and suffered from denuded forests and silted rivers.

"The partner-agencies of the DENR in the implementation of PMA [Philippine Mining Act], such as the NCIP, are also reported to be suffering from institutional issues that affect the performance of their role in the mining sector," she said.

Clemente, coordinator of the University of the Philippines-Diliman Mining Engineering program, said institutional issues such as overlapping functions when it comes to issuing permits leads to the circumvention of permits through illegal means and the destruction of the environment.

She explained that while some companies claim that the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) permit to operate is enough legal cover to cut trees in a mining area, the DENR insists that tree-cutting permits need to be secured.

In order to continue the mining operations and meet the requirements of the DENR, a company left

some of the trees standing in the mining site.

However, because of the stress, the trees died and, in order to remove the dead tree, the company secured a permit to cut it down. This permit was easier to secure than the permit to cut down healthy trees.

"This type of practice admittedly is more destructive since the cut tree is no longer listed as part of the number of trees to be replaced," Clemente said.

In terms of protecting ancestral domain and giving the IPs their fair share of the profits of the mining operation, Clemente said the NCIP needs to assign certificates of ancestral domain titles (CADT).

The process starts from the verification of claim, survey and delineation of areas, and inventory of IPs. This involves qualified geodetic engineers to do surveys and lawyers to address arbitration cases.

However, Clemente said the NCIP doesn't have enough employees to perform these functions. In fact, she said, only one region nationwide had a plantilla position for a licensed geodetic engineer, and nonlawyers are tasked to take on arbitration cases.

"These personnel issues need to be resolved immediately to efficiently deliver needed services, which comprise the first stage of the permitting process," Clemente said. "At this point, no further progress on the permitting can be expected until such time that the land ownership issues are resolved."

The NCIP's personnel issues spill over to providing assistance to IPs, particularly in planning for the proper use of funds received from mining companies. However, NCIP does not have enough qualified personnel to do this.

Due to this challenge, Clemente lamented that while there are many mining operations near or within ancestral domains of IPs, many of them have remained poor.



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No restrictions on conveyance of land covered by free patents

Dear PAO,

My father was granted a free patent covering an agricultural land three years ago. I just want to know if we could sell or transfer this property now to another person.

Senyor

Dear Senyor,

Please be informed of the limitations provided under Section 118 of Commonwealth Act (CA) 141, otherwise known as the "Public Land Act," which reads:

"Section 111. Except in favor

of the Government or any of its branches, units, or institutions, lands acquired under free patent or homestead provisions shall not be subject to encumbrance or alienation from the date of the approval of the application and for a term of five years from and after the date of issuance of the patent or grant, nor shall they become liable to the satisfaction of any debt contracted prior to the expiration of said period, but the improvements or crops on the land may be mortgaged or pledged to quali-



DEAR PAO

PERSIDA ACOSTA

fied persons, associations or corporations.

"No alienation, transfer, or conveyance of any homestead after five years and before twenty-five (25) years after issuance of title shall be valid without the approval of the Secretary of Ag-

riculture and Commerce, which approval shall not be denied except on constitutional and legal grounds."

The abovementioned restrictions, however, have already been removed by Republic Act 11231 or the "Agricultural Free Patent Reform Act." Under Section 3 of the said law, "[a]gricultural public lands alienated or disposed in favor of qualified public land applicants under Section 44 of Commonwealth Act 141, as amended, shall not be subject to restrictions imposed under Sec-

tions 118, 119 and 121 thereof regarding acquisitions, encumbrances, conveyances, transfers or dispositions. Agricultural free patent shall now be considered as title in fee simple and shall not be subject to any restriction on encumbrance or alienation."

Clearly, the restrictions on the alienation and conveyance of agricultural lands covered by free patents have been removed by the Agricultural Free Patent Reform Act and are, likewise, now considered as title in fee simple. In your situation, your father may

sell his property today as the five-year limitation under Section 118 of CA 141 has been removed.

We hope that we were able to answer your queries. This advice is based solely on the facts you have narrated and our appreciation of the same. Our opinion may vary when other facts are changed or elaborated.

Editor's note: Dear PAO is a daily column of the Public Attorney's Office. Questions for Chief Acosta may be sent to dearpao@manila-times.net



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BARANGAY CAPT MAY PANANAGUTAN SA POLUSYON

MATAPOS tukuyin ng Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) na ilang local opisyal na kina-bibilangan ng alkalde at punong barangay ang dapat managot at pagkalooban ng show cause orders kaugnay umano ng polusyon sa Manila Bay dahil sa kapabayaang mga ito.

Partikular rin na tutukan ng DILG ang mga lugar na mataas ang bilang ng mga informal settlers na karaniwang nagtatayo ng bahay sa mga estero na siyang dahilan ng pagbaha sa ilang mga lugar.

Isang halimbawa

umano na dapat tutukan ang Victory Street corner Kaliraya St. Brgy. Tatalon, Quezon City dahil umano sa pagsulputan ng mga informal settler sa lugar na may mga insidente na muntik nang masagasaan ng ilang motorista ang ilang mga bata na naninirahan sa nasabing lugar.

Bagama't may city ordinance sa Quezon City para sa pagsusulong para sa pagpapatayo ng mga housing project ng mga informal settler, hindi pa rin ito natutugunan dahil na rin sa pagsulputan ng mga informal settler.

PMRT



Illegal logger, timbog

PANTABANGAN, Nueva Ecija – Makalipas ang limang taong pagtugis, tuluyan nang naaresto ang isang lalaking illegal logger sa Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija, kamakailan.

Pinangunahan ni Capt. Victory De Leon, ng Pantabangan Police Station, ang operasyon sa Barangay Marikit na ikinaaresto ni Jun Sta. Maria, 36, ng nabanggit na lugar.

Si Sta. Maria ay nahaharap sa kasong paglabag sa Presidential Decree 705 (illegal logging).

Isinagawa ang pagdakip sa bisa ng arrest warrant na ipinalabas ni Judge Joselito Cruz Villarosa, ng Regional Trial Court Branch 39.

Light A. Nolasco



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Mag-ina na empleyado ng DENR tinambangan

KIDAPAWAN CITY - Pinaniniwalaang may kinalaman sa trabaho ang tangkang pagpaslang sa mag-inang kawani ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources o DENR-12 matapos na tambangan at pagbabarilin ng riding in tandem habang sakay ang mga ito ng tricycle sa Brgy. Zone IV sa Koronadal City, South Cotabato, kamakalawa ng gabi. Kinilala ng Koronadal City PNP na pinamumunuan ni Police Lt. Col Rey Egos ang mga biktima na sina Hazna Potri Sabdulla at Bai Mariam Sabdullah, kapwa ng DENR-12 regional office at nakatira sa Purok Clemente, Barangay Zone 4, Koronadal City. Ang mga biktima ay binaril ng dalawang suspek na nakasakay sa Honda XRM motorcycle na walang license plate. (Rhoderick Beñez)