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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

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NEW PLANT SPECIES NAMED AFTER PH WILDLIFE EXPERT

NEWS / AG

RARE BLOOM, RARE HONOR
"Medinilla theresae," named after former environment official Theresa Mundita Lim, is a shrub that grows only on Mt. Redondo and Mt. Hamiguitan, both in Mindanao. A team of renowned taxonomists, professors and researchers from the University of the Philippines has been credited for the discovery of the species. —ASEAN CENTRE FOR BIODIVERSITY/EDWINO FERNANDO

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Rare plant species named in honor of PH wildlife expert

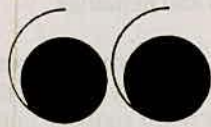
KORONADAL CITY—A new plant species that grows on only two mountains in Mindanao has been named after wildlife advocate Theresa Mundita Lim.

To date, *Medinilla theresae*, which is endemic to areas of a specific soil type, is found only on Mt. Redondo, Dinagat Island, and on Mt. Hamiguitan in Davao Oriental.

The terrestrial, erect and cauliflorous shrub can grow to 1.5 meters high.

A team of renowned taxonomists, professors and researchers from the University of the Philippines were credited for the species' discovery. It includes Edwino Fernando, Perry Ong, Peter Quakenbush and Edgardo Lillo.

"I am truly honored and grateful for this recognition," said Lim, a former director of the Biodiversity Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and



**You cannot
conserve what
you do not know**

Theresa Mundita Lim
Executive Director of the Asean
Centre for Biodiversity



Natural Resources.

Vital step in conservation

She thanked the taxonomists, scientists and researchers for their hard work in discovering new species.

"I believe that taxonomy is a vital step in conservation simply because you cannot conserve what you do not know," she said.

sources of food, medicine and other benefits to humans.

According to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), taxonomists have identified only about 1.78 million species of animals, plants and microorganisms in 250 years of research out of more than 30 million species.

Army of scientists

It is estimated that only 10 percent of vertebrates have been described, but more than 50 percent of terrestrial arthropods (such as insect, spider and crustacean) and up to 95 percent of protozoa (single-celled organisms) have remained undescribed.

The sheer number of species that have yet to be discovered requires an army of scientists, each with his own area of expertise, to identify, name, classify and study the millions of species on earth, the CBD said.

—BONG S. SARMIENTO INQ

Lim, who is now executive director of the Asean Centre for Biodiversity, said the number of species waiting for discovery was far larger than those that had already been studied.

1.7 million named species

She said millions of plant and animal species had yet to be studied and could hold tremendous potential as



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Malaya Business Insight



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Wildfires in PH

THE WEATHERWISER TEAM



IN recent weeks, the state of California in the United States has been in several news reports due to the devastating wildfires that have crippled the state and have left several residents dead or homeless. Millions of dollars in property have been lost, and worse are the adverse effects to the flora and fauna in the affected area. With a single spark, the Californian ecosystem has forever been changed. Instead of a cool and cozy Christmas ahead, some Californians face a dry, burnt-out future ahead.

Historically, little has been known about the frequency of forest fires in the Philippines during the hot, dry months of March through early May of every year. The most common occurrences, however, are "grass" fires, which are usually set off by incredibly warm and dry days, coupled with very dry shrubs around mountain slopes or near fire sources – cigarette butts indiscriminately strewn by bystanders or passing motorists along the highways.

Apo ablaze

The most recent wildfire in the Philippines struck during the hot and humid days of March 2016 in Mt. Apo, the country's tallest peak.

On that day, a campfire set up by local tourists and campers in the area was reported to have gotten out of control and spread rapidly. Burning wood was left unattended, resulting into a spreading blaze that engulfed hard-to-reach areas around Mt. Apo – considered a "hidden gem" and a national park reserve for several endangered species of flora and fauna.

The inferno lasted for weeks well into April, with about 115 hectares of lush forest burning to the ground. The firefighting efforts were massive as authorities, capitalizing on favorable weather conditions later on, created fire lines or firebreaks, effectively preventing the blaze from spreading further.

Eventually, Mother Nature holds the upper hand when it comes to these kinds of situations. It was in early May when the highly precipitable tropical waters east of Mindanao, coupled with shifting winds, eventually let loose rain-bearing clouds up into the mountains around Mt. Apo, relieving the parched burned-out lands there. For months, the mountain was off-limits to trekkers and mountaineers to allow it to naturally regenerate and promote growth after the disastrous inferno that gutted the area.

Aside from carelessness, weather also played a role in fueling the fire. At the time, the country was experiencing one of the most intense El Nino episodes on record, along with other tropical regions in the Northern and Southern Hemisphere. This resulted in a serious drought situation in Mindanao, where below-average rainfall beset the region. This dried up rivers and depleted the usual supply of passing rain-bearing clouds that should have brought ample showers around the area. The supposedly wet months of December through January did not materialize, thus the steady decline of moisture in the region. This eventually brought tinder-dry conditions to the already fire-prone environment in and around Cotabato and Davao Del Sur provinces, where Mt. Apo is located.

After the inferno

We can literally say that fires are an integral part of the forest's natural healthy life cycle, but constant fires that occur year after year might as well damage that natural cycle. In the worst of cases, deliberate fires are set off by "arsonists," or done by the not-so-innocent via "kaingin" to free the land from weeds, or to promote natural growth, or by turning the land into veritable ground for growing high-value crops—these have an ill-effect when they become out of hand, and out of control.

Lessons must be learned from this sad experience. Authorities and the general public should establish safeguards and proper protocols to be observed, while stricter implementation of the laws must be religiously enforced so as not to make a repeat of such disaster. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and local authorities must also step up the protection of the natural state of Mt. Apo and other parts of the country where the threat of neglect and irresponsible behavior could cause a repeat of such environmental tragedy.



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PH ends chairmanship of Coral Triangle Initiative

By ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

The Philippines is ending its two-year chairmanship of the Coral Triangle Initiative, which is led by six nations encompassing the "world's center of marine biodiversity," with a call to scale up efforts to address poverty and food security.

"Moving forward, we must shift our focus on actions that can really deliver a higher level of outcomes, such as poverty reduction and improved food security," Undersecretary Jonas Leones of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said in his opening remarks during the

14th Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF) Senior Officials Meeting in Makati City.

The two-day meeting is one of the culminating activities for the Philippine chairmanship of CTI-CFF, a multilateral partnership of six countries working together to sustain extraordinary marine and coastal resources by addressing crucial issues, such as food security, climate change and marine biodiversity.

The six countries are Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and the Philippines, collectively known as Coral Triangle 6 or CT6.



Turtle rescued in Malaysia slaughtered for meat in Cebu

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

A marine turtle rescued and tagged in Malaysia ended up in the freezer of a restaurant in Cebu.

Dr. Rogelio Demelletes Jr. of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Biodiversity Management Bureau said an identification tag was found on one of the turtles, among the endangered species in the world.

Demelletes said wildlife conservationists had rescued and tagged the *pawikan* that was reportedly caught in Sandakan, Malaysia and later released to the open

sea.

He believed the turtle migrated to Philippine waters and got caught by local fishermen who brought it to Cebu.

The turtle and other *pawikans* were sold to traders in Pasil, which is one of the region's biggest seafood markets.

Demelletes said they had to conduct a "test buy" a month ago before they were able to prove that indeed it was turtle meat being sold in an eatery in Barangay Pasil. The DENR had earlier received reports that turtle meat is being sold in the area.

"However, it was difficult at first

because what they've been serving are cooked meat already. We reasoned out that our friend will cook a special dish that's why we are buying raw meat," he said in an interview.

Demelletes added that sample raw meat can still be subjected to "DNA sequencing" test to check what kind of meat it is. Body parts showed that the meat came from five to six juveniles and an adult green sea turtle, he noted.

He said that after they confirmed it was turtle meat, they formed a team and conducted an operation in the eatery.

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Turtle From Page 2

Last Tuesday, the DENR and agents of the Central Visayas regional office of the National Bureau of Investigation and the Cebu City government confiscated about 60 kilos of *pawikan* meat from an eatery on Rallos Street.

"It was also that time when we were able to check that one of the six turtles they butchered came from Sandakan, Malaysia since it bore a tag. It was rescued and rehabilitated there. This species is migratory so when it came to Cebu, it was captured and killed," Demelletes added.

He noted that Cebu City, particularly Barangay Pasil, had been a known site for illegal trade of wildlife meat.

Five people were arrested during the operation - eatery

cashier Donesa Bustamante, cook Cresley Obatay and helpers Ariesteo Pableo, Julio Abunta and Clifford Obatay.

Charges of multiple counts of possessing, trading and killing endangered species were filed against the suspects.

Under Republic Act No. 9147 (Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act), trading of endangered animals or their byproducts is punishable with imprisonment of at least six months to one year with accessory penalty of P10,000 to P100,000.

For the slaughter of *pawikan*, a violator may be imprisoned for six to 12 years and fined between P100,000 and P1 million. - Mylen Manto, May Miasco/Freeman



REGIONS

Jobless Boracay folk cry for help

ILOILO CITY—Workers displaced by the six-month closure and rehabilitation of Boracay are asking the government for continued assistance, saying livelihood opportunities remain scarce after the resort island reopened to tourists on Oct. 26. With vendors now banned from the 4-kilometer beach, groups concerned about their plight have asked for an alternative site accessible to tourists and customers. —STORY BY NESTOR P. BURGOS JR.

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Residents lament lack of jobs 6 weeks after resort island reopened



REHAB ONGOING Environment and tourism officials say the full rehabilitation of Boracay Island will be finished by the end of 2019. —MARIANNE BERMUDEZ

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
@nestorburgosINQ

ILOILO CITY—Six weeks after Boracay Island reopened in October to tourists, displaced residents and workers are still seeking assistance, especially those who lost their livelihood due to the closure and new policies imposed on the island.

The groups We Are Boracay, Rise Up Aklan and Friends of Boracay have asked Aklan Gov. Florencio Miraflores for help in addressing their concerns.

"Until now, the government has yet to release a comprehensive rehabilitation plan for Boracay and its inhabitants. Moreover, upon the reopening of Boracay, no extensive public consultation was done and a slew of arbitrary rules were issued by the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) that gravely affected us who reside on the island and who depend on its tourism," the groups said in a letter to Miraflores.

Job losses

At least 30,000 workers of establishments and those employed in the informal sector have lost their livelihood and jobs due to the closure of the island from April 26 to Oct. 25.

President Duterte ordered the closure to rehabilitate the island amid continued environmental degradation.

Task force officials later admitted that the rehabilitation had not been completed and would continue until the end of next year at the earliest.

The Department of Tourism has accredited 268 establishments offering accommodations on the island as of Dec. 4. These account for a total 9,637 rooms.

'Arbitrary rules'

Various government agencies have provided socio-economic assistance to residents and workers affected by the closure. But residents said this

was not enough and should be continued despite the reopening of the island.

"We were assured that things would be back to normal when Boracay reopened but this did not happen. Many of us were not able to return to our former means of livelihood due to the many arbitrary and capricious rules issued by the [BIATF]," the groups said.

The task force has banned vendors along the 4-kilometer front beach, the main attraction of the island. Massage services have also been prohibited along the beach.

Olive Abañera, We Are Boracay coordinator, said vendors were asking the government for an alternative site accessible to tourists where they could sell their wares.

Relocation site

"Many of our members are vendors, drivers, tour guides, 'commissioners' (those who earn commissions by recommending guests to hotels and resorts and water sport activities), massage therapists, sand castle artists and other workers who have been deprived of the opportunity to earn a living by those unfair rules."

"Moreover, there are many of us who are workers in the formal sector who have not been able to go back to their old jobs until now. Each day that we cannot get back to work spells hardship for our families," the groups said.

They said government agencies should also help workers return to their former jobs or seek new employment.

They called for "immediate and adequate aid" for all affected families as, they said, they continued to suffer from the impact of the closure.

They also called on national government agencies and the local government to provide a relocation site for those who would be removed from forest lands on the island. INQ



Boracay business group may retract opposition to

cruise ship operators

BORACAY Island, Aklan—The Boracay Foundation Inc. (BFI) is reviewing its earlier position on cruise ships making a beeline to this resort island.

BFI President Maylynn A. Graf said the business organization has been opposing the cruise ship industry after authorities cited Boracay's environmental degradation.

Graf noted cruise ships included Boracay as a stop after Aklan Gov. Florencio T. Miraflores signed in 2015 a memorandum of understanding with the Miami, Florida-headquartered Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd.

"Right now, since Boracay is already environmentally safe, we are considering to support the cruise ship tourism. We are, however, still studying if we could officially support it," Graf said.

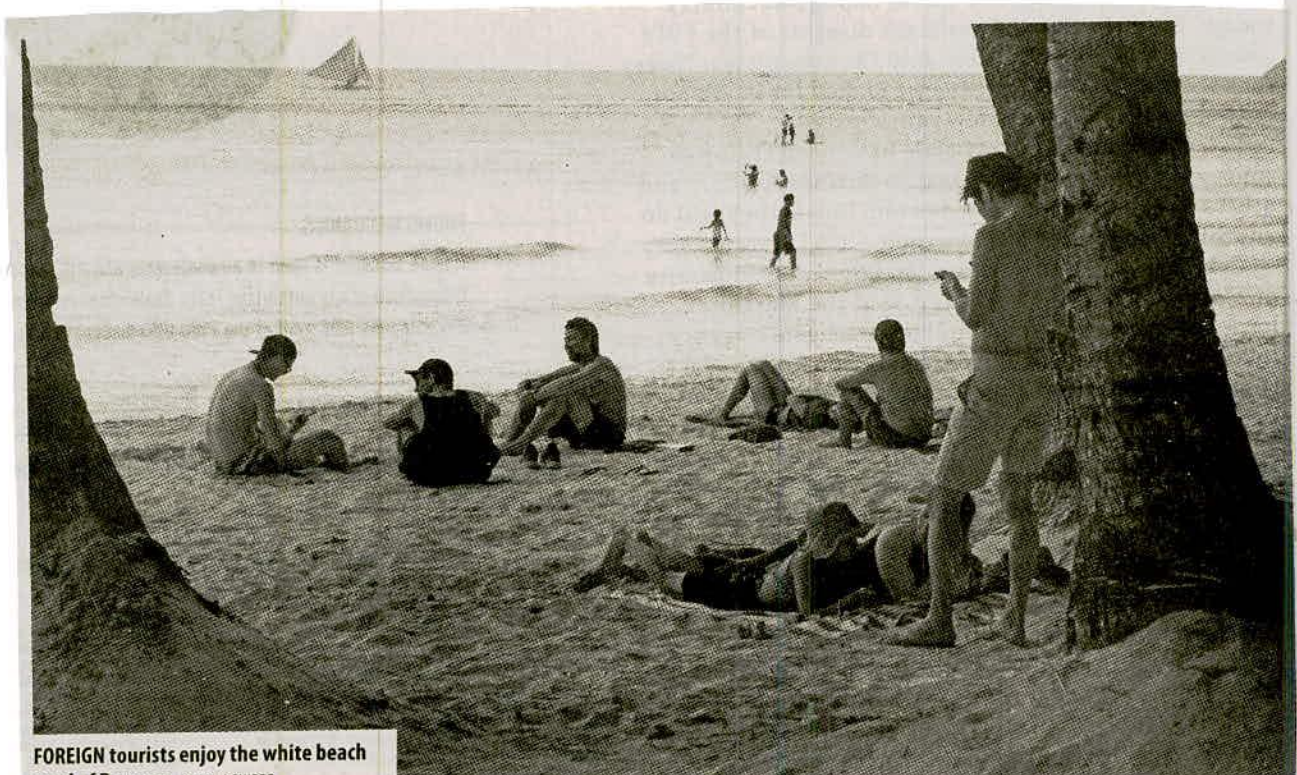
Graf said BFI's review comes after Boracay was reopened to tourists on October 26, six months after it was closed for

rehabilitation. She also noted reports saying a cruise ship will be arriving in Boracay on December

18 bringing some 3,000 tourists.

Earlier, Niven Maquirang, Caticlan and Cagban jetty port admin-

istrator, said they are expecting some 28 cruise ship port calls at Boracay next year. *Jun N. Aguirre*



FOREIGN tourists enjoy the white beach sand of Boracay. JUN N. AGUIRRE

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Boracay workers appeal for gov't help

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They also called on national government agencies and the local government to provide a relocation site for those who would be removed from forest lands on the island.

— *Inquirer*



55 VOLUNTEER-PARTNER WALANG-SAWANG PAGSUPORTA SA MGA PROYEKTO NG DENR

KINILALA ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang limampung't limang (55) volunteer groups at partners noong ika-5 ng Disyembre dahil sa makabuluhang kontribusyon ng mga ito sa "Philippine environment advocacy" sa pamamagitan ng kanilang walang sawang paglahok sa mahigit 500 DENR organized volunteer projects simula pa noong 2012.

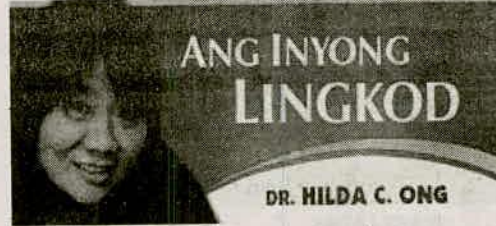
Ang pagkilala ay ginanap sa Seameo Innotech sa Quezon City kasabay ng pagdiriwang ng DENR ng isang buwang selebrasyon ng National Volunteer Month ngayong Disyembre batay na rin sa nakasaad sa Presidential Proclamation No. 55, Series of 1998.

Umabot sa mahigit 500 bisita ang dumalo sa pagdiriwang na nagrepresenta sa kani-kanilang organisasyon kabilang na ang long-time partner groups ng DENR na Earth Day Network Philippines, National Bicycle Organization at The Land Bank of the Philippines.

Kabilang sa dumalo sa pagdiriwang si Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Benny Antiporda na nagsabi pa na ang pagtulog ng taumbayan sa kampanya ng DENR ang isa sa dahilan ng pagiging matagumpay ng mga programa ng nabanggit na ahensiya.

"This is our small way of thanking you for the big contributions you have made to the success of the DENR's programs and activities," ani Antiporda.

Nakasaad sa recognition certificate na ipinagkaloob ang "steadfast commitment to enriching the nation's patrimony as displayed in the 55 organizations invaluable support for DENR's pursuit of sustainable



development".

Ipinaliwanag pa ni Antiporda na ang suporta ng taumbayan sa pamamagitan ng kanilang boluntarismo ay mahalaga para sa misyon ni Secretary Roy A. Cimatu na ipinakikita ang kanyang seryosong pagpapahalaga sa kalkasan.

Aniya, dahil na rin sa kautusan ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na isaayos ang Isla ng Boracay ay hindi nagdalawang-isip si Cimatu na pagandahin muli ang isla at ito ay naging posible dahil na rin sa tulong ng mga residente sa pamamagitan ng kanilang boluntarismo.

"We hope to see the same spirit of support through volunteerism be shown as we carry out the President's directive in other resort-island destinations elsewhere in the country like El Nido in Palawan, Puerto Galera in Mindoro and Panglao Island in Bohol," sabi pa ni Antiporda.

Kabilang sa mga kinilala ang sampung (10) govern-

ment agencies at government-owned and controlled corporation, labing-apat (14) na local government units mula sa National Capital Region (NCR), labing-lima (15) mula sa academic community, pito (7) sa non-government organizations at siyam (9) sa business at industry sectors.

Bukod sa tree at mangrove planting, kabahagi rin ng DENR ang mga pinarangalan sa mga proyekto ng ahensiya, kabilang na rito ang nursery establishment, coastal clean-up at holding of ecological conservation-oriented events.



EcoWaste to Korean Embassy: Get your garbage back

By Joel E. Zurbano

MEMBERS of environmentalist group Ecowaste Coalition again trooped to the Korean Embassy in Taguig City Thursday, this time by holding a Christmas caroling, restating their demand to bring the smuggled tons of garbage now dumped in Mindanao back to South Korea.

Dubbed as the "Keep Your Promise" caroling, the group together with

"running priest" Father Robert Reyes and Buklod Tao, gathered at the embassy gates to restate their demand to get the Korean garbage.

Last month, Ecowaste gathered at the embassy and submitted a letter to Ambassador Han Dong-man urging his government to act decisively to ensure the speedy return of the garbage shipment which are sitting at the Mindanao International Container Terminal in Tagoloan, Misamis Ori-

ental, and at a warehouse in Cagayan de Oro City.

The South Korean government had earlier confirmed through a press release issued on Nov. 21, 2018 by its Embassy "that it would take measures to have the wastes in question be brought back to Korea as soon as possible," stressing that "relevant authorities of Korea will have the wastes repatriated and properly disposed [of] and work to prevent recurrence of the problem."



CHRISTMAS WISH. Filipino carolers wear Santa hats from the environmental health and justice group EcoWaste Coalition as they gather in front of the Korean Embassy in Taguig City on Thursday, calling on the South Korean government to get back their garbage they dumped in Mindanao. **Norman Cruz**



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NAGPROTESTA ang mga Filipino caroler na naka-Santa hat mula sa environmental, health at justice groups sa harap ng Korean Embassy sa Taguig City para ipanawagan ang pagpapabalik sa kanilang mga basura bago mag-Pasko. Kuha ni **NORMAN ARAGA**



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DENR approves Iloilo's waste management plan

By **TARA YAP**

ILOILO CITY—The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has approved the 10-year Solid Waste Management Plan of Iloilo province.

The plan “will serve as the bible for the solid waste management program of the entire province of Iloilo for the next 10 years,” said Mitzi Peñaflorida, senior environmental management specialist of the Iloilo Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office.

The plan, submitted to the National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC) and signed by DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda, outlines the

waste analysis and characterization study in the province's 42 towns and component city of Passi.

Iloilo Gov. Arthur Defensor Sr. considers the approval of the plan as a step forward in implementing Section 10 of the Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

NSWMC also approved the 10-year plan for the towns of Bingawan, Dumanas, Leganes, and Oton. This means that 28 out of 43 local government units (LGUs) in the province have their plans approved.

Meanwhile, the final version of the plan will be submitted to NSWMC along with a resolution from the Iloilo provincial board.



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• CWL: No to plastics

Concerned with the garbage problem in the country, the Catholic Womens League (CWL), the largest Catholic women's organization in the country, is saying No to Plastics. CWL National President Rita Mariano said since last year they have been encouraging their 250,000 members nationwide to always bring their own utensils to events and gatherings. "We are advocating for them to bring fork and spoon or chopsticks and put in inside their bags," she said. "In this little way, at least we could minimize the use of plastic that are thrown away," added Mariano. She said their members are also encouraged to bring their own water bottles for the same reason. "These items you can re-use. It really starts with us," said Mariano. This, she said is also in line with Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si (Praise Be To You) which promotes care for the environment. CWL also supported the planting and upkeep of 100 wildling seedlings in the Marikina Watershed as part of their outreach services. (Leslie Ann G. Aquino)

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MANDAUE CITY BRINGS RIVER BACK TO LIFE

By **Jessa Mae O. Sotto**
@inquirervisayas

MANDAUE CITY—When he was 7 years old, Solomon Cuizon and his friends would swim in the clean waters of the Butuanon River and play on its banks.

They did the laundry and took a bath in a reservoir nearby.

Now 40, Cuizon said he felt bad that the younger generations of Mandauehanons might no longer experience what they had before.

The Butuanon River has deteriorated badly over time due to pollution. In one instance, it was declared biologically dead.

City government officials have been struggling to revive it.

Casualty of urbanization

The 23-kilometer river has become a casualty of growing urbanization, particularly in Mandaue, whose rapid growth exacted its toll on the waterway.

According to Araceli Barlam, acting chief of the Mandaue City Environment and Natural Resources Office, 62 factories and business establishments discharge effluents into the river, which winds through to 11 barangays in the city from the upland villages of Cebu City before reaching the Mactan Channel.

While discharging is not a problem, Barlam said many companies have violated regulations set by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), including the failure to secure environ-



RIVER VIEW The Mandaue City government built a viewing deck as part of rehabilitation of the Butuanon River and cleanup of its banks. —**TONEE DESPOJO/CEBU DAILY NEWS**

mental compliance certificates from the DENR's Environmental Management Board (EMB).

"The wastewater should not smell and people should not find it dirty," she said.

Mayor Gabriel Luis Quisumbing said the city had already met with the violators and had been working with the DENR to make sure that their waste management, especially their sewage and septage systems, "are up to standards."

Household wastes

Households, particularly in riverside communities, were also major contributors to the water pollution, Vice Mayor Carlo Pontico Fortuna said.

"As it turns out, less than 50 percent [of the dirty water] comes from the industrial establishments ... The large part of it comes from the households," Fortuna said.

Any household activity, such as doing laundry, washing dishes and even taking a bath could bring wastewater to

the river, he pointed out.

Mandaue's drainage system is connected to the river all the way down to the sea.

Fertilizers coming from upland farms could be another pollution factor, said Jose Eugenio Singson Jr., member of the Central Cebu River Basins Management Council.

"Right now, we are really experiencing bad quality of water levels," Singson said.

In 1995, the city council passed a resolution penalizing those caught dumping toxic wastes directly into the Butuanon. Back then, the river was already described as "highly polluted by industrial and domestic waste."

Revival efforts

An interagency committee was formed to oversee the Butuanon River Watershed Management Project, but nothing came out of it.

Quisumbing, who was elected mayor in 2016, revitalized efforts to save the river.

The city government has

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Mandaue City brings River back to life



DEAD WATERWAY Mandaue officials say Butuanon River, which has been declared "biologically dead," is a casualty of rapid urbanization. —TONEE DESPOJO/CEBU DAILY NEWS

focused the rehabilitation on a 1.06-km stretch along Barangays Ibabao-Estancia, Alang-alang and Paknaan, during the first phase of the project.

It spent P104 million for the river drainage master plan, at least P70 million in infrastructure projects and another P5 million for a bamboo walk.

Barlam introduced "bioremediation," which utilizes natural methods to decontaminate the water by planting about 6,000 "umbrella" plants (*Cyperus alternifolius*) on the riverbanks.

Umbrella plants can absorb heavy metals and help decontaminate toxic chemicals that are discharged into the river, a study conducted by chemistry students of Uni-

versity of San Carlos, a project partner, showed.

3-meter easement zone

A team from the city's Housing and Development Office also demolished illegal structures that encroached on the 3-meter easement zone from the river.

The Department of Public Works and Highways built a slope protection barrier to prevent soil along the waterway from eroding and check overflows from the creek.

The city's Department of General Services led the beautification of the riverbank and the construction of pathways.

Barlam said the residents from nearby villages were asked to get involved in the rehabilitation. "Cleanliness should be ev-

erybody's concern," he said.

"We are willing to put a significant amount of our resources ... [W]e will be able to get support from other agencies," Quisumbing said.

On Nov. 16, a P1.5-million viewing deck in Barangay Ibabao-Estancia was inaugurated. Its construction was funded by private entities.

"We've been humbled by the response of both the private and public sectors," Quisumbing said. "Hopefully, the spirit of volunteerism is sustained until we are able to fully rehabilitate Butuanon River."

"There is no stronger legacy we can leave to the future generations of Mandauehanons and Cebuanos than a healthy, vibrant Butuanon River," the mayor said. INQ



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Close watch on Panglao waters ordered

By **MINERVA BC NEWMAN**

TAGBILARAN CITY – Bohol Governor Edgar Chatto demanded a weekly sampling and analysis of the waters of Panglao island after one sampling station noted an increase in coliform contamination.

Chatto was unhappy to learn that the sampling station in Barangay Tawala along the Alona beach area registered as high as 16,000 probable number per 100 milliliters (MPN/100 mL) coliform reading, since the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) of the Department of Environment and

Natural Resources (DENR) in Central Visayas had declared Panglao's coastal waters as "very safe for swimming."

On December 4 to 6, EMB tested the quality of water samples from 10 sampling stations.

EMB said the samples passed laboratory analysis, with all the fecal coliform levels falling below the standard of 100mpn (most probable number) per 100ml (milliliters).

EMB added the result was not conclusive since no uptrend was established based on previous months' results.

According to a media release from the Bohol Provincial Information Office, there are three sampling stations

in Barangay Tawala registered 33 only in November, dropping further to 23 in the first week of December.

Here are the latest water quality test results: Doljo Station 1, 7.8mpn/100ml; Doljo 2, 1.8mpn; Danao 1, less than 1.8mpn; Danao 2, 23mpn; Danao 3, 49mpn; Tawala 1; Tawala 2, 23mpn; Tawala 3, 79mpn; Bolod 1, 23mpn; and Bolod 2, 13mpn.

The latest status report was signed by William Cuñado, EMB regional head.

EMB said majority of the fecal coliform levels of the stations in Tawala and Danao had been considered safe for the last seven months.

But based on the results of the sampling done in October, high coliform levels could be observed, even reaching 16,000 mpn/100ml for Tawala Station 1. Establishments such as the Hennan Resort, Genesis Dive Shop, and Alona Tropical are nearest to the station, EMB noted in its report.

The bureau attributed the increase to a number of "possible factors," including the presence of over a hundred tourist boats with no septic receptacles that moor nearby.

Because there are no onshore waste receptacles, and it was possible that the boat operators empty their waste into the water, the report said.



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UN CHIEF: NO ROOM FOR FAILURE IN STOPPING CLIMATE CATASTROPHE

By **Jhesset O. Enano**
@JhessetEnanoINQ

KATOWICE, POLAND—United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Wednesday told climate negotiators from 200 countries that there was no leeway for failure as they hammered out implementation guidelines for the Paris Agreement that would limit temperature rises to prevent catastrophic global warming.

Guterres returned to this southern Polish city two days before the scheduled wrap-up of the 24th Conference of the Parties (COP24) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

His return came amid anxiety among participants—country representatives and civil society organizations—that consensus would not be reached for the rule book of the landmark climate deal adopted in Paris in 2015.

'Disastrous message'

Addressing the plenary during the resumption of the high-level meeting, Guterres said failing in Katowice would send a "disastrous message" to countries that were willing to shift to greener economies.

"I understand that none of this is easy. I understand some of you will need to make some tough political decisions," Guterres said.

"To waste this opportunity would compromise our last best chance to stop runaway climate change. It would not only be immoral. It would [also] be suicidal," he said.

The main aim of the conference is to produce a rule book that would measure the world's progress in climate ambition and action and lay down clear mechanisms for finance and transparency, among other things.

But over the past few days, political tension and division clearly showed between rich and emerging economies, particularly on contentious issues such as providing assistance to developing nations by countries

seen as historically responsible for global warming.

Domestic political shifts, such as the lack of climate leadership from the United States, previously regarded as a key force in the climate talks, also marred the negotiations, often done in closed meetings and huddles between groups.

Differences

The differences were brought into focus at the end of the first week of this year's talks, after four major oil-producing countries—the United States, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait—refused to welcome the crucial report of the United Nations science panel on global warming,

the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), preferring to just "note" the study.

Trump administration officials were also heckled earlier this week for promoting fossil fuels at an official side event of the climate talks.

In his remarks, Guterres said the plenary could not afford to ignore the findings of the report, which was initiated through the request of the nations in COP21 in Paris.

Former Vice President Al Gore of the United States also stressed the urgency of this year's talks in an hourlong presentation to the delegates, where he showed the adverse impact of climate change on

people across the globe.

"We do not have time for despair ... Too much is at stake," he said. "This is the single most important moral choice that humanity has ever faced."

He added: "If anyone doubts that we as human beings can make the right choice, please remember that political will in itself is a renewable resource."

Gore did not try to hide his disdain for US President Donald Trump, a known climate change denier.

He said some people only looked at the planet and saw profit, referring to the United States and Saudi Arabia. "Some are not bothered by the choices they made," he said. INQ



Failure to agree on climate deal rules would be suicidal: UN chief

KATOWICE, Poland. - Failure by countries to agree on rules on implementing the 2015 Paris climate agreement aimed at curbing global warming would be suicidal, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Wednesday.

Guterres told delegates from over 130 countries meeting in the Polish city of Katowice that they had less than three days to find the political will to reach difficult compromises, sacrifices and common ground needed for a deal.

"Failing here in Katowice would send a disastrous message to those who stand ready to shift to a green economy," he said. "To waste this opportunity would compromise our last best chance to stop runaway climate change. It would not only be immoral, it would be suicidal."

Three years to the day after the Paris climate accord was adopted by over 190 countries, delegates in the Polish coal-mining city are still grappling with how the accord will be implemented.

This slow progress after more than a week of negotiations prompted Michal Kurtyka, the Polish president of the talks, to tell delegates time was precious and they needed to find wordings which were acceptable to all.

Environmental activists and some developing countries have also raised concern that the rule book could fall short of pushing countries towards curbing their emissions to meet the Paris targets.

"The clock is ticking. While we spend time debating texts and demanding their implementation, the planet outside is deteriorating. Species are becoming extinct. Habitats disappearing. Emissions piling up," Brazilian Environment Minister Edson Duarte said. Guterres said a recent report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change acknowledged what global warming beyond 1.5 degrees will mean for billions of people, especially those who live in small island states.

The report outlined a catastrophic future if no action was taken by countries immediately, he said, adding that the window of opportunity was closing.

The Paris Agreement aims to restrict warming to "well below" two degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial times.

"This may sound like a dramatic appeal, but it is exactly this: a dramatic appeal," Guterres said. - *Reuters*



We are out of time: Rapid progress needed at UN climate talks

By Imelda V. Abano

EVERYMAN

KATOWICE, POLAND—The world's nations have a lot to figure out to make swift progress in taking forward climate action. Several scientific reports provided snapshots of the likely future impact of increasingly severe climate change, as well as the world's progress toward avoiding them.

Since last week, governments from more than 195 countries have been meeting in Katowice, which lies at the heart of Poland's coal-mining region of Silesia, for the 24th Conference of Parties under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The UNFCCC aims to finalize the "rulebook"—rules and processes for turning the ambition into action—to implement the 2015 Paris Agreement.

But actions needed to be significantly toughened at the two-week COP 24. Nations of the world have a narrow path to preventing global temperatures from overshooting. This was particularly the stark warning of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change special report: Countries need to take "rapid and far-reaching" transition in energy, industry and transportation to keep temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Already, climate change is significantly increasing the likelihood of extreme weather, severe, widespread and irreversible impact on billions of people and the environment.

"Challenges brought about by the impacts of climate change, both rapid and slow onset, are getting worse every day we spend doing nothing. Inaction has its price. Countries should embrace the massive co-benefits of ambitious climate action," said Secretary Emmanuel de Guzman, Climate Change Commission vice chairman and the head of the Philippine delegation to COP 24.

As chairman of the Climate Vulnerable Forum in 2015, the Philippines, on behalf of 48 developing countries, led the advocacy for the ambitious global warming threshold of 1.5C, now enshrined in the Paris Agreement as its long-term temperature goal (stated as: "limiting global average temperature to well

below 2 °C and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C").

De Guzman said the Philippine advocacy for a highly ambitious climate goal has upheld the fundamental principles of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, as well as historical responsibilities, and climate justice.

"Here in Katowice climate talks, the Philippines will be constant and persistent in our call for the provision of scaled-up, continuous, predictable, and adequate financial support of developed countries to developing countries. We continue to enjoin developed countries to improve their mitigation targets, mobilize climate finance, and accelerate its flow as well as the development and transfer of technology," De Guzman said.

Climate justice

During the crucial second week of the climate conference, dozens of people protested and disrupted a side event inside the COP24 venue hosted by the Trump administration promoting innovation in coal and natural gas chanting "keep it on the ground" and unfurling a banner. During the weekend, hundreds of climate activists and environmentalists marched throughout Katowice, demanding that governments take tougher action to curb global warming.

Yet, here at COP 24 in Katowice, some countries refused to "welcome" the IPCC report on 1.5C that a huge majority of countries wanted to put at the heart of the climate talks.

Rodne Galicha, country manager of Climate Reality Philippines, said that climate justice, just and fair transition need to be highlighted in the climate talks.

"Climate debt must be settled once and for all. It is our moral obligation to lead the country to a more sustainable path and achieve below 1.5C. To welcome and take action on the 1.5C in the climate negotiations process are both moral and inter-generational responsibility. If we allow US, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Kuwait to control climate action, this is a failed process," Galicha said.

Galicha lamented that five years after Haiyan hit the Philippines, its impact continues to echo from within the communities of eastern Visayas to the halls of climate negotiations. Its survivors continue to struggle with recovering from loss and damage, he added, saying that the thousands of lives lost serve as a reminder of the consequences of allowing fossil fuels to continue dominating the energy sector globally.

"Everyone has a role to play in stopping further global warming within their respective capacities. Divestment is but one of the many feasible ways to contribute to solving the climate crisis, a personal investment with far-reaching benefits for current and future generations," Galicha said.

Gerry Arances, Executive Director of the Center for Energy, Ecology, and Development expressed his disappointment over the lack of significant policy support from the part of the government to shift from carbon-intensive coal energy to more renewable energy sources such as wind and solar.

"While there has been a global shift towards renewables this year, the Philippines and other ASEAN countries do not seem to be onboard, considering their energy policies and projections," Arances said. "If we are to abide by the targets of the Paris Climate Agreement, global emissions must reach their highest peak in 2020, but the recent UN special report on 1.5C indicates that this may not be possible by 2030," he noted.

Arances cited the International Energy Agency report that in 2017, 70 percent of global energy demand was met by oil and gas which corresponds to the 1.2 percent increase in emissions in the same year.

"It is alarming that two years after the Paris Accord is when we reached a record high in global emissions. This means that developing countries like the Philippines and the rest of Southeast Asia can no longer use development to opt out of doing their fair share in cutting emissions," he said.

Imelda Abano is the president of the Philippine Network of Environmental Journalists.



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DOST 'high-tech' map key in disaster fight

BAGUIO CITY—Charting Cordillera terrain using a modern imaging and data gathering tool to generate precise hazard maps and models could be the key to preventing massive landslides like what happened this year in Natonin town, Mountain Province, and Itogon town, Benguet province.

Mountain communities that have been prone to landslides could tap Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) for more accurate data on potential ground movements, according to Nancy Bantog, director of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) in Cordillera.

LiDAR uses crisscrossing light beams projected from an aircraft to provide more information that could not be acquired from conventional satellite or aerial imagery.

Flood-prone sites

The disaster and exposure assessment for mitigation program, led by the DOST in collaboration with a team from the University of the Philippines Diliman, has covered more than 60 percent of the country's 298,170-square-kilometer land area using LiDAR to map flood-prone areas, said



MOUNTAIN SLIDE In this 2009 photo, rescuers use shovels and pickaxes to remove soil, rocks and other debris as they race against time to search for victims of a landslide in La Trinidad town, Benguet province. —EV ESPIRITU

program head, Enrico Paringit of the UP department of geodetic engineering.

At present, only portions of Baguio have been mapped at the request of John Hay Manage-

ment Corp. to locate and count pine trees within Camp John Hay, he said.

Paringit introduced LiDAR technology to local disaster management officials here,

hoping to get local governments to use it.

Slide simulation

He said LiDAR-collected data could be used to simulate landslides and their trajectory, and pinpoint areas vulnerable to a disaster. The same data would speed up search and rescue operations.

Paringit said these data, had the technology come earlier, could have prevented 97 people from being killed in the Itogon landslides on Sept. 15 and 30 people from being buried by the Natonin erosion.

Database

"It has a high probability of pinpointing where the houses may have been buried, which can help hasten recovery where time matters," he said.

Once Cordillera is mapped out, a landslide database can be put up to help communities in the region understand how and where they could live safely.

Cebu was the first province in the country to request for LiDAR to map its area. The data would not only be used for disaster mitigation but also for land-use planning and inventory, Paringit said. —KARLSTON LAPNITEN INQ



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This is On Me

Floro Mercene

Marine cone snails, a biomedical resource

MARINE cone snails valued by shell collectors for beautiful patterns on the shells manufacture powerful venom to immobilize their prey of fish, worms and other mollusks. Only a few species of cone snails are highly dangerous to man. The most dangerous species are those that feed on fish. It releases a venomous cocktail into the water in order to stun its prey, then, like the other cone snails, it fires a harpoon-like, venom-tipped modified tooth into its prey.

The geography cone is the deadliest among 500 known cone snail species, and powerful enough to kill people. Among the compounds found in cone snail venom are proteins which, when isolated, have great potential as pain-killing drugs. Research shows that certain component proteins of the venom target specific human pain receptors and can be up to 10,000 times more potent than morphine without its addictive properties and side-effects.

Recent research has revealed that geography cone snail uses a form of insulin as a means of stunning its prey. Once this venom passes through a fish's gills, the fish experience hypoglycemic shock, essentially stunning it and allowing for ingestion by the snail. The snail insulin could prove to be a useful tool for probing systems that the human body uses to control blood sugar and energy metabolism, the researchers said.

Across the world, however, tropical marine habitats are being lost due to coastal development, pollution, destructive fishing and climate change, resulting in rapid species loss. International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List by the researchers found that some species are at imminent risk of extinction. These snails need swift action to protect their habitats, otherwise, their loss could rob future generations of an undiscovered reservoir of pharmaceuticals.



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Manila Standard

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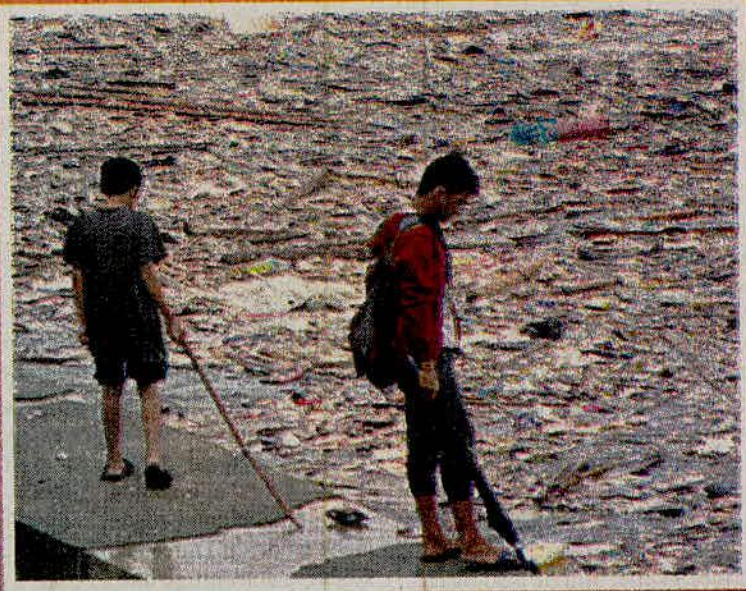
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STRONG-WILLED WARNING. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has warned of the potential closure of establishments along the shores of Manila Bay—where the setting sun for years has been a perfect postcard frame—that do not comply with environmental regulations. Members of the Department of Public Service-Manila City Hall (inset) gather to the shoreline the garbage dumped by heavy rains in recent weeks. Authorities want the extent of Manila Bay pollution—115 million most probable number fecal coliform bacteria in 2016—reduced in 2019. **Norman Cruz**