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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



BIZ BUZZ



With a capital market-friendly real estate investment trust (REIT) framework finally in place in the Philippines, tax lawyers, investment bankers and stockbrokers now have a new money-making opportunity while retail investors have a new asset class to consider.

And beyond the big names in real estate that have long expressed interest to tap this new mechanism to recycle capital, Finance Secretary **Carlos Dominguez III** wants “even the guys in the middle” to benefit.

“Let’s say a guy in Iloilo has a small mall, maybe worth P500 million. He can create a REIT, bring in investors to buy him out and he will use that capital to buy another mall, and so on and so forth. He will get his money ahead, in exchange for the promise that he will get 90 percent of his earnings in dividends,” Dominguez said in a media roundtable.

“I think it will have a good chance of opening up markets not only for large corporate entities but bring in the capital market to relatively medium-sized companies,” he said.

In Davao, for instance, he noted that an entity like NCCC could now think about using the REIT structure.

Dominguez said he expected the REIT structure to offer an incentive to those “operating in the shadow,” or those who had tax deficiency, to come out clean and raise capital.

It took the Philippines 11 years to come up with an acceptable framework for REIT. In the meantime, Singapore now has 35 REITs with a combined market capitalization of \$75.6 billion while Japan has 64 REITs valued at \$149.2 billion. Closer to home, Thailand, which just started opening up to REITs in 2014, now has 24 REITs with a combined market value of \$9.64 billion.

As REITs feed on assets with recurring revenues, among the government corporate sector and state-owned financial institutions, there is also a rich mine of assets that can be pooled into REITs.

Dawning of REITs

A REIT gives investors the option to invest directly in the finished products that are already earning money—such as residential and office units, hotels or shopping malls or even infrastructure ventures like toll roads, telco towers, hospitals, warehousing/cold storage chains and power plants—and not just the property developer itself. This was meant to attract investors because the Philippine REIT law of 2009 required the distribution of 90 percent of income annually.

On the minimum public float for REITs, the Securities and Exchange Commission had previously set the requirement at 40 percent at year one, which would have further gone up to 67 percent by year three. A lot of potential issuers were not willing to sell down by this magnitude. The government has now agreed to ease the minimum requirement to 33 percent for as long as funds raised using a REIT listing would be reinvested locally—all within a period of one year.

The new framework also upheld the exemption from value-added tax of the transfer of property to a REIT company in exchange for its shares of stocks. The Bureau of Internal Revenue also removed the requirement for a REIT to place in escrow the income tax collectible from the REIT on dividends declared and deducted from its taxable income as well as the 50-percent documentary stamp tax given as incentive on the transfer of real property to the REIT.

Everyone is hoping that the first entity to tap the REIT would be a reputable entity with high-quality assets. Otherwise, it could spoil the party for REITs when it’s just starting. —**DORIS DUMLAO-ABADILLA**

Gender-inclusive

As more companies strive to create work environments that are conducive to all employees regardless of gender, investors increasingly seek guidance on companies that go beyond lip service.

For the first time since its creation in 2016, the Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index (GEI) will have representatives from the Philippines this year. One of these is property developer Robinsons Land Corp. (RLC),

which met the global threshold across five pillars: female leadership and talent pipeline, equal pay and gender pay parity, inclusive culture, antisexual harassment policies and pro-women brand.

RLC, in particular, scored high in equal representation in the workplace. The company’s ratio of men to women in leadership positions is 50:50, while seven in 11 employees are women. The overall GEI average in this category is 48.06 percent.

Bloomberg’s GEI, the world’s only comprehensive investment-quality data source on gender equality, handpicks companies across 42 countries and regions that are leaders in inclusion initiatives.

This year’s list of 323 honorees includes RLC and another publicly listed company that is yet to be announced. This puts RLC in the top 5 percent of the 6,000 shortlisted global companies. In comparison, only 230 businesses made it to the 2019 GEI report.

Across the globe, there are only 17 companies that landed on the 2020 GEI. The financial sector has the most number of eligible firms (117). The other sectors are: communications (25), consumer discretionary (22), consumer staples (19), energy (12), health care (16), industrials (16), materials (20), technology (37) and utilities (24).

This gauge shows that more companies are investing in equal representation and parity. All of the GEI-included companies have shown that they are closing the gap and promoting a culture of inclusivity. —**DORIS DUMLAO-ABADILLA**

“Cleaning up with the Hype Man”

It was a secret no one asked for, and it was a secret he didn’t want to talk about. But still, **Benny Antiporda**, an undersecretary at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), could not help keep it a secret for a long time. Antiporda quietly slipped out of a press briefing on Tuesday about environmental sustainability, only to come back minutes later to make a vague announcement to reporters sipping morning coffee at a popular bakery.

On Wednesday morn-

ing, the DENR will shut down a company in San Juan City which he said has been polluting the river. Antiporda, who is undersecretary for solid waste management and local government unit concerns, did not want to drop any names. Is it a manufacturing company? Is it a big player? Or just a small one? We could only speculate. It was a secret after all. (Antiporda invited the media to be there when the cease and desist order is issued, or otherwise, he said reporters would miss a big scoop.)

“This is our target today, wherein the DENR secretary wanted to send a strong message to the people that we really mean business,” he said. “We don’t care whoever you are, if you are big or small, private or government. As long as you pollute the river, the DENR will shut you down,” he added, echoing the same bravado of **President Duterte**, the man who appointed him back in 2018.

We prompted him for answers, but he refused to talk more about the secret that he himself brought up out of nowhere.

Understandably, he feared the news about the closure might tip the company, as if we forced the answer out of him, as if we asked to be put in this situation where we now had no choice but to ask more questions.

“We cannot give them warnings because in the first place, their water discharge is still ongoing. You can’t say that they should just stop in the meantime. If you stop that, it will stop the entire process,” he said.

“So we cannot do that. What we can do is shut down their operation and let them tell us what their plan is to mitigate the situation, especially in helping the national government in clearing up the river,” he added.

So, dear reader, if you’re reading this story in the morning, chances are you already know who this company is. If so, we hope it was worth the hype.

—**ROY STEPHEN C. CANIVEL** INQ





2,400 tons of SoKor trash shipped back

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

A shipping container with 2,400 metric tons of garbage from South Korea that arrived at the Mindanao International Container Terminal (MICT) in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental in 2018 has been shipped back.

The cargo left the MICT port yesterday morning on board *MV Nordmarsh*, environmental watchdog Eco-Waste Coalition said, quoting the Bureau of Customs (BOC)-Northern Mindanao regional office.

Aileen Lucero, EcoWaste national coordinator, said the remaining 2,700 tons of waste from South Korea are expected to be shipped back on Feb. 9. The shipment was repacked and transferred from a Phividec Industrial Estate facility to the MICT stockyard.

"BOC-Region 10 port collector John Simon reported that South Korea shouldered the

shipping cost amounting to P10 million in keeping with the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal of which both the Philippines and South Korea are parties," Lucero said.

Article 9 of the Basel Convention states that "in case of a transboundary movement of hazardous wastes or other wastes deemed to be illegal traffic as the result of conduct on the part of the exporter or generator, the state of export shall ensure that the wastes in question are taken back by the exporter or the generator or if necessary... into the state of export."

"Kudos to our vigilant Customs, environmental and local government officials in Misamis Oriental and to the Filipino people for remaining steadfast in our... duty to protect the country from the illegal traffic of hazardous wastes and other wastes," Lucero said.

"We hope the next re-exportation schedule for the remaining 2,700 tons of unlawful waste shipment would be the last, and that both South Korea and the Philippines would take bold and resolute steps to prevent the recurrence of illegal and immoral waste trafficking," she added.

EcoWaste participated in various stakeholders' meetings attended by representatives of the South Korean government to resolve the issue.

"We urge the governments of South Korea and the Philippines to strengthen their

commitments as parties to the Basel Convention by ratifying the Basel Ban Amendment," Lucero added.

The treaty, which entered into force last Dec. 5, prohibits member states of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, European Union and Liechtenstein from exporting hazardous wastes to developing countries.

The shipments of assorted plastic waste, which were misdeclared as synthetic plastic flakes, arrived in the Philippines on July 21 and Oct. 20 in 2018.

The BOC said the remaining shipment was supposed to be returned to South Korea last June 30.

At least 1,500 metric tons of garbage, also from South Korea, were shipped back to its point of origin in January last year.



2,400 TONS BASURA NG KOREA Ibiniyahe na pauwi

UMALIS na ka-
hapon ng umaga sa
Mindanao Interna-
tional Container Termi-
nal (MICT) sa Tagoloan,
Misamis Oriental ang
container ship na magba-
balik sa South Korea ng
2,400 metric tons ng mga
basura.

Matapos ang may 19
na buwan na pananatili sa
Verde Soko compound sa
Phividec Industrial Estate
sa bayan ng Tagoloan, ang
illegal waste imports mula
sa South Korea ay inalis na
ng MICT port lulan ng
MV Nordmarsh, na kinum-
pirma rin ng Bureau of
Customs-Region 10 (BOC-

10) sa EcoWaste Coalition.
Ang natitirang 2,700
tonelada ng basura ng
South Korea ay inaasahang
iuuwi rin pabalik sa ka-
nilang bansa sa Pebrero 9
matapos itong i-repack at
mailipat mula sa Phividec
facility tungo sa MICT
stockyard.

Iniulat ni BOC-10 Port
Collector John Simon na
sasagutin ng gobyerno ng
South Korea ang ship-
ping cost na nagkakahalaga
ng P10 milyon alinsod sa
"Basel Convention on the
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kung saan pawang state

parties ang Filipinas at
South Korea.

Nakasaad sa Article 9
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"We are breathing
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Aileen Lucero, National
Coordinator, EcoWaste
Coalition, na lumahok sa
multi-stakeholders' meet-
ings na dinaluhan ng mga
kinatawan ng gobyerno
ng South Korea upang
maresolba ang usapin.

Ang Basel Ban
Amendment, ay nagba-
bawal sa member states ng
Organization for Economic
Cooperation and Develop-
ment (OECD), the Europe-
an Union (EU), at Liech-
tenstein ng page-export ng
mapanganib na basura sa
developing countries.



Basura balik-Korea

NAGLAYAG na kahapon ang barkong may dala ng 2,400 metriko toneladang basura na ibabalik sa South Korea.

Umalis ang MV Nord-marsh sa Mindanao International Container Terminal sa Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental, ayon sa impormasyon na nakuha ng EcoWaste Coalition.

Tumagal nang 19 na buwan ang mga basura sa Verde Soko compound sa Phividec Industrial Estate sa Tagoloan.

Ang nalalabing 2,700 tonelada ng basura ay in-aasahan na aalis ng bansa sa Pebrero 9 at ibabalik din sa South Korea.

Ang P10 milyong ahiping cost ay binayaran ng gobyerno ng South Korea bilang pagtalima sa Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.

"We are breathing a sigh of relief now that the first batch of the contaminated plastic waste wrongly declared as 'plastic synthetic flakes' has departed," ani Aileen Lucero, national coordinator ng EcoWaste.

Nanawagan din ang EcoWaste sa gobyerno ng South Korea at Pilipinas na iratipika ang Basel Ban Amendment na nagbabawal sa mga miyembro ng Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, European Union, at Liechtenstein na mag-export ng hazardous wastes sa ibang bansa. — *Leifbilly Begas*



Dagupan City dumpsite closed

DAGUPAN CITY, Pangasinan – A 60-year-old dumpsite in Barangay Bonuan Boquig was closed by the local government unit (LGU) of this city as part of its rehabilitation program under the order of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

According to Mayor Brian Lim, this is to address the garbage crisis of the city, stating that his administration is serious in rehabilitating the dumpsite. In lieu of the dumpsite, the city government needs to sign a contract with a third party service provider for hauling their residual wastes to a sanitary landfill.

The DENR prohibits the operation of open dumpsites. The prohibition is under the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act or Republic Act 9003.

Three years ago, the agency ordered the LGU to stop operating the dumpsite in Barangay Bonuan Boquig. Former city officials refused to follow the order of the agency as they continued to use the dumpsite.

The LGU, under Mayor Lim's term, has complied with the agency's rehabilitation plan. He

said that the city is committed to rehabilitate the open dumpsite that is expected to be completed within six months.

The rehabilitation plan of the open dumpsite includes the removal of makeshift structures inside the area, compaction of critical slopes to prevent the build up of water and the creation of a natural drainage.

The plan will also include the graded site to be covered with soil to stop the entry of water into the waste pile. Canals will be made around the area to prevent run off water from seeping to the waste pile, reducing leaching.

The plan includes the installation of collection pipes in the site to prevent leaching into public waterways, especially beaches. Installation of a perimeter fence is also part of the plan to prevent unauthorized entry of waste pickers, children, illegal settlers and animals.

To offset the closure of the dumpsite, the LGU will operate a materials recovery facility inside the dumpsite for the recycling and composting of waste, including the establishment of a residual containment area.

Jonas Reyes



JAN 22 2020

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PAGE 11

7 of 10 Filipinos want ban on single-use plastics

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

Seven in 10 Filipinos want single-use plastics to be banned at all times, according to a Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey released yesterday.

The survey, commissioned by the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA), showed that 71 percent of the respondents want the use of plastic sando bags regulated.

The SWS said the survey results underscored the Filipinos' call for a national ban on single-use plastics.

Other materials that should be regulated are plastic straws and stirrers (66 percent), plastic labo bags (65 percent), styrofoam or polystyrene food containers (64 percent), sachets (60 percent), tetra pack or doy pack for juices (59 percent), plastic drinking cups (56 percent), cutlery such as plastic spoons and forks (54 percent), plastic bottles for juice (49 percent) and plastic water bottles (41 percent).

Six in 10 Filipinos said they are willing to buy food condiments in recyclable or refillable containers instead of sachet. A majority of them or 73 percent belong to Class E.

Four out of 10 respondents feel that companies should find alternative materials to plastic.

At a press briefing, Beau Bacongus, Break Free From Plastic Asia Pacific co-

ordinator, said, "The message to political leaders and business is clear: Filipinos reject single-use plastics. By supporting a ban on plastics, the Filipino consumer is also sending a message to the plastic industry and manufacturers that pollution and throwaway systems are no longer acceptable."

She said more than 120 countries have instituted regulatory measures such as bans, levies and charges to reduce the production and consumption of single-use plastics.

Among these are Bangladesh, China, Jakarta, Thailand and the Indian state of Kerala.

"Sachets and other plastics are not pro-poor. People buy in sachets because an alternative distribution or packaging systems are not being made available by multinational companies," Froilan Grate, GAIA Philippines executive director, said.

Patricia Nicdao, EcoWaste Coalition Policy and Advocacy officer, said a law needs to be enacted to ban single-use plastics.

Despite the Philippines being hailed as one of the world's most progressive countries on waste management, GAIA said Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2001 has suffered from lack of political will and contradicting policies of government agencies involved in waste and resource management.



7 of 10 Pinoys favor ban on single-use plastics

By JOSEPH ALMER PEDRAJAS

Majority of the Filipinos are in favor of banning single-use plastic bags and containers in the country, a survey con- **►6**

7 of 10 Pinoys favor...

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ducted by the Social Weather Stations (SWS) revealed.

In a press conference Tuesday, SWS Deputy Director Vladimir Licudine said that a nationwide survey showed that seven out of 10 Filipinos "feel that the best thing to do with single-use plastics is to ban their use at all times."

Licudine said the survey was conducted from September 27 to 30, 2019 to 1,800 respondents from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. It was commissioned by GAIA Asia Pacific.

According to the result, 71 percent of the respondents agreed that "sando" bags are the top plastic materials that need to be regulated.

Meanwhile, majority of the respondents specifically indicated the need to control the following plastics: straws and stirrers; "labo" (transparent) bags; styrofoam or polystyrene food containers; sachets; tetra pack; drinking cups; cutlery; juice packaging; and water containers.

The survey also revealed that majority – or 68 percent – of the Filipinos want their food condiments in recyclable or refillable containers, instead of sachets.

This was followed by 42 percent who want their personal care products, like shampoo and conditioners, in recyclable containers; while 29 percent want their household cleaning materials and 27 percent want their powdered drinks in the same type of material.

Meanwhile, only 41 percent, or four out of 10 Filipinos, want companies to find alternative materials for the packaging of their products. Others suggest that companies buy or collect their plastics; ban or stop its production; and reduce its usage.

GAIA Asia Pacific Regional Coordinator Froilan Gate is looking forward to the time Congress will pass a law banning single-use plastic containers and packaging in the country, especially after the President had issued a statement on the matter.



'7 out of 10 Filipinos favor single-use plastics ban'

FILIPINOS favor banning single-use plastics, according to a recent survey commissioned by the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives and conducted by the Social Weather Stations.

GAIA in a statement said this highlighted the Filipino people's strong support for a national ban on single-use plastics (SUPs).

The nationwide survey showed that seven out of 10 Filipinos felt the best thing to do with SUPs was to ban their use at all times.

Topping the list of materials that should be regulated or used less nationally is sando bags (71 percent), followed by plastic straws and stirrers (66 percent), plastic labo bags (65 percent), styrofoam or polystyrene food containers (64 percent), sachets (60 percent), Tetra pack or doy pack for juices (59 percent), plastic drinking cups (56 percent), cutlery such as plastic spoons and forks (54 percent), plastic bottles for juice (49 percent), and plastic bottles for water (41 percent).

In addition, 6 out of 10 said they were willing to buy their food condiments in recyclable or refillable containers instead of sachets while 4 out of 10 feel that companies should find alternative materials to plastic.

"The message to political leaders and business is clear: Filipinos reject single-use plastics. By supporting a ban on SUPs, the Filipino consumer is also sending a message to the plastic industry and manufacturers that plastic pollution and throwaway systems are no longer acceptable," said Beau Baconquis, Break



PLASTICS BAN. Bells ring Tuesday for national single-use plastics ban. A recent SWS survey showed seven out of 10 Filipinos favor a national SUP ban at all times. The call is echoed by the green groups Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives Asia Pacific, Break Free From Plastic and Ecowaste Coalition. **Manny Palmero**

Free From Plastic Asia Pacific coordinator.

More than 120 have instituted regulatory measures such as bans, levies, charges, and others, aimed at reducing the production and consumption of SUPs.

The most recent SUP regulations were by Bangladesh, Thailand, and China, the Indian state of Kerala and the Indonesian City of Jakarta.

Further, according to the same survey, 71 percent of Filipinos want to ban the use of plastic at all times while 10 percent feel there

"The results of the survey puts into question the common excuse from the big companies that sachets are pro-poor," said Froilan Grate, GAIA Philippines executive director. According to the survey, those who are willing to buy their food condiments in recyclables and refillables and those who feel that plastic must be regulated or be used less nationally is highest in Class E at 73 percent. "Sachets and other SUPs are not pro-poor. People buy in sachets because an alternative distribution or packaging systems are not being made available by



Majority of Filipinos favor ban on single-use plastics

By JOSEPH PEDRAJAS

Majority of the Filipinos are in favor of banning single-use plastics in the country, a survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations (SWS) revealed.

In a press conference Tuesday, SWS Deputy Director Vladimir Licudine said that a nationwide survey showed that seven out of 10 Filipinos "feel that the best thing to do with single-use plastics is to ban their use at all times."

Licudine said the survey was conducted from September 27 to 30, 2019 involving 1,800 respondents from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. It was commissioned by GAIA Asia Pacific.

According to the result, 71 percent of the respondents agreed that "sando" bags are the top plastic materials that need to be regulated.

Meanwhile, majority of the respondents specifically indicated the need to control the following plastics: straws and stirrers; 'labo' (transparent) bags; styrofoam or polystyrene food containers; sachets; tetra pack; drinking cups; cutlery; juice packaging; and water containers.

The survey also revealed that majority – or 68 percent – of the Filipinos want their food condiments in recyclable or refillable containers, instead of sachets.

This was followed by 42 percent who want their personal care products, like shampoo and conditioners, in recyclable containers; while 29 percent want their household cleaning materials and 27 percent want their powdered drinks in the same type of material.

Meanwhile, only 41 percent, or four out of 10 Filipinos, want companies to find alternative materials for



A SCAVENGER collects plastics from a pile of garbage in Payatas, Quezon City. A recent Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey showed that seven out of 10 Filipinos want a ban on single-use plastics. (Alvin Kasiban)

the packaging of their products. Others suggest that companies buy or collect their plastics; ban or stop its production; and reduce its usage.

GAIA Asia Pacific Regional Coordinator Froilan Gate is hoping that Congress will pass a law banning

single-use plastic containers and packaging in the country, especially after the President issued a statement on the matter.

GAIA also recommended that the government moves to phase out sachets in favor of re-use and refill systems within three years.



SWS survey shows **71% NG PINOY PAYAG SA BAN VS. SINGLE-USE PLASTICS**

IPINAKITA sa huling Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey na 71% ng mga Filipino ang may gusto na ang single-use plastics ay maiban sa lahat ng oras.

Base sa resulta ng survey na ipinakita ng SWS Deputy Director Vladimir Licudine kamakailan, 71% ng mga tumugon ay gustong maregulate o mabawasan ang paggamit ng plastic sando bags.

Maliban sa sando bags, gusto rin nilang maregulate ang mga sumunod na gamit: plastic

straws and stirrers (66%); plastic 'labo' bags (65%); styrofoam food containers (64%); sachets (60%); tetrapack or doypack for juices (59%); plastic drinking cups (56%); cutlery like plastic spoon and fork (54%); plastic bottles for juice (49%); plastic bottles for water (41%).

Pero, gusto naman ang 10% na rumesponde na mataas ang presyo na ipapataw sa paggamit ng single-use plastics kaysa sa total ban.

Ipinakita rin sa survey results na anim sa 10

mga Filipino ang payag na bumili ng kanilang food condiments sa recyclable at refillable containers kaysa sa sachets. Karamihan sa mga ito, 73% ay nasa Class E.

Dahil dito, nagdududa si Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) Philippines executive director Froilan Grate na ang mga hinala na ang paggamit ng sachet ay pro-poor.

"The results of the survey puts into question the common excuse from the big companies that sachets are pro-poor," pa-

hayag niya.

"Sachets and other single-use plastics are not pro-poor. People buy in sachets because an alternative distribution or packaging systems are not being made available by multinational companies," dagdag niya.

Dagdag dito, apat sa 10 ang pumayag na dapat maghanap ang mga kompanya ng alternatibong materyal kapalit ng plastic.

Sinabi naman ni Patricia Nicdao, EcoWaste Coalition policy and advocacy officer, na kailangang

ng bansa ang batas na nagba-ban sa paggamit ng single-use plastics sa national level.

Noong Disyembre ng nakaraang taon, inaprubahan ng Quezon City government ang ordinaansa na nagbabawal sa paggamit ng itinatapong plato, kutsara, tinidor at baso sa mga hotel at restaurant.

Noong Nobyembre naman ng nagdaang taon din, pinalitaw rin ni President Rodrigo Duterte ang ideya na ayon sa kanya ay mangangailangan ng legislative action.



From preference to practice

THE Social Weather Stations found that seven in 10 Filipinos would prefer a ban on single-use plastics.

Respondents to the survey said sando bags, plastic straws and stirrers, plastic *labo* bags, styrofoam or polystyrene food containers, sachets, tetra packs, plastic drinking cups, cutlery and plastic bottles should be regulated or used less.

Six in 10 said they were willing to buy condiments in recyclable or refillable containers instead of sachets. Four in 10 believe that it is the responsibility of companies to find alter-

native materials to use.

Other countries have already passed legislative measures aimed to curb production and use of single-use plastics, recognizing that these stay in the environment for a very longtime, and form part of the pollution that can be ingested by humans and marine wildlife, affecting their health. Plastics are also known to smother coral reefs.

This knowledge, of course, was never known to many in the past, which is why entire generations of Filipinos grew up consuming products in convenient packaging. The familiar "*tingi*" distribution manner—from instant coffee to detergent soap—is often seen as pro-poor because

many cannot afford to buy supplies in large, bulk quantities.

Unfortunately, the practice is anti-environment, and in the long run threatens not just the well being of the poor but everybody.

The survey results are heartening because it shows that Filipinos are aware of the hazards to the environment, and are willing to make sacrifices even if it means developing new habits to substitute what has been convenient for them for the longest time.

Private companies, for their part, have an opportunity to show they are worthy corporate citizens by making their products available in packaging that at the very least does not worsen the environment's state.



STRATEGIC
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INITIATIVES
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Manila Standard

A4
PAGE

UPPER
LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

JAN 22 2020
DATE

THE:

"From preference to practice"

PAGE 17

2/2





SUSTAINABILITY

MONDELÉZ READY TO GO 100% RECYCLABLE IN 5 YEARS

By Roy Stephen C. Canivel
@roycanivel_INQ

Mondelēz Philippines Inc. is confident it could make its packaging materials entirely recyclable in five years, but its efforts at sustainability could become meaningless without an adequate recycling facility in the country.

The company's manufacturing plant in Parañaque City makes the popular Eden Cheese and Cheez Whiz spread, while it imports the rest of its products from other countries, including Tang powdered drink from Thailand.

"The challenge here [is] some of our products have multilayer plastics. At the moment, we are working very hard with a suitable alternative to that. It will take some time," said country manager Kristoffer Ranada on the sideline of a briefing on Tuesday.

Mondelēz International announced its 2025 commitment in 2018. Here in the Philippines, 98 percent of the packaging waste from the Parañaque plant is either recyclable or recycled. The remaining 2 percent is plastic packaging, Ranada said.

"Having said that, our first priority is the protection and preservation of our products. That is why we are not rushing to finding a solution just now, just to meet a 100-percent," he said.

Moreover, there is also the question of what happens to the packaging waste after it becomes recyclable, a question that the government done little

to answer.

"One of the big problems that we have is that even if all the food manufacturers make their products recyclable, there is no existing recycling facility here in the Philippines that will take in all of that packaging," he said.

Mondelēz is part of a multistakeholder group that wants to address this gap in an otherwise circular economy. Called Parmis, the group stands for Philippine alliance for Recycling and Materials Sustainability (PARMS). Other members include Coca-Cola and Nestlé.

First announced in 2017, Parmis started putting up a P25-million recycling plant in Parañaque. It is currently still in pilot stage, said Ranada, but the facility—wherein Mondelēz invested P2 million—has so far repurposed plastic waste into prototypes of parking bumpers and tiles, which are currently being checked for strength and durability.

The facility could process more than 150 metric tons of plastic waste every year, media reports in 2017 said.

"Our hope is that should it become successful, LGUs (local government units) in the vicinity will take notice and they will take it upon themselves to invest in such facility," he said.

"So you heard about the circular economy. The problem there is even if we do our part, that might stop at some point because the end point which are the recycling facilities are not there yet," he added. INQ



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COMMUNICATION
INITIATIVES
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THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
SINCE 1904
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

7
PAGE

UPPER
LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BAHNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

JAN 22 2020

DATE

III:

PAGE 11



MOUNTAIN OF GARBAGE – A scavenger does his daily grind collecting garbage materials for recycling at the Payatas landfill in Quezon City. A survey of the Social Weather Stations showed that 71 percent of Filipinos support the proposed ban on single-use plastic that form the bulk of Metro Manila's garbage production. (Alvin Kasiban)



**IPAGBAWAL
NA** Naghahakot
ng mga nakalkal
na basura
ang lalaki
sa Payatas,
Quezon City.
Lumutang
sa bagong
Social Weather
Stations (SWS)
survey na
71% ng mga
Pilipino ay nais
na ipagbawal
ang single-use
plastics.
**ALVIN
KASIBAN**



Zero Waste Month strengthened

MALOLOS, Bulacan – The provincial government here, thru Provincial Health Office, has reminded Bulakenyos to keep cleaning their surroundings to prevent the rise of dengue cases in support of the National Zero Waste Month.

Data from Dengue Surveillance update in 2019 shows that 10,307 suspected dengue cases were reported in the province. This is 41 percent higher than 2018 data of 7,312 cases in the same period, in which 25 deaths were recorded last year.

Bulacan Governor Daniel Fernando believes that, healthy people are productive citizen as he said that he has been supporting environmental projects and programs in his constituents.

Hence, his Executive Orders, in accordance with Republic Act (RA) 7160, pertains to the enforcement of pollution control laws vital on protection

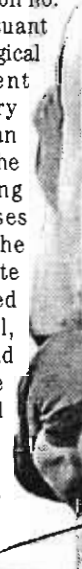


of the environment and natural resources.

Fernando said that Zero Waste Month observation and practices on the first month of 2020, was good strategy to kick off the year, give important reminder to be more aware of waste reduction and to value a clean environment.

Zero Waste Month as mandated by Presidential Proclamation no. 760 dated 5 May 2014 pursuant to the RA 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 put January as Zero Waste Month – an advocacy that promotes the designing and managing of products and processes to avoid and eliminate the volume and toxicity of waste and materials, also defined as a goal that is ethical, economical, efficient and visionary to guide people in having a resourceful lifestyle, in which discarded materials can be re-designed as resources for others to use.

Rex Estuye Espiritu





DENR mobilizes 'Oplan Ligtas Kalikasan' to rescue volcano-threatened animals

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) mobilized field personnel under "Oplan Ligtas Kalikasan" to rescue wildlife species that have come under threat by the eruption on January 12 of Taal Volcano in Batangas province, this, on top of other initiatives of private groups and organizations to rescue horses, pigs, goats, cows, cats, dogs and other domestic animals.

Environment Undersecretary Benny D. Antiporda, deputy spokesman of Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu, said a lot of endangered species, like hornbills, have fled the volcanic island in Taal and may eventually be "captured" as they move to temporary homes outside their habitats. "We are now getting to give refuge to these animals," says Antiporda.

In an interview, Environment Assistant Secretary and concurrent Biodiversity Management Bureau Director Ricardo Calderon said field personnel of the BMB from Manila and Region 4A have been mobilized.

"In fact, our BMB [office] in the region has already rescued a hornbill," he said.

Calderon, a former director of the Forest Management Bureau (FMB), said volcanic eruption has the potential to cause severe damage to surrounding ecosystems. Important ecosystems, like forests, lakes, rivers and caves, can be completely destroyed.

"This results in total displacement. Naturally, we expect some wildlife to perish but it will be the survival of the fittest as always, and we hope

to rescue them when they are able to escape the island," Calderon said. Taal Volcano, the world's smallest volcano, is in the heart of the Taal Volcano Protected Landscape. It is known as home to a diverse range of wild flora and fauna. The lake surrounding the volcanic island where Taal is situated is, itself, a unique ecosystem known for the endangered *tawilis*, the only one-of-its kind freshwater sardines.

According to Calderon, the BMB and DENR Region 4B offices have been doing the rounds to inform residents around Taal Lake not to harm injured wildlife who may eventually seek refuge in nearby communities. "Those rescued will be brought to the DENR's Ninoy Aquino Park and Wildlife Rescue Center in Quezon City because rescue centers in Batangas or Cavite are sure to be affected by the volcanic eruption," he said.

He said the DENR-BMB is now prepared to receive rescued wildlife from areas affected by the eruption of the volcano.

"Fortunately, the Ninoy Aquino Park and Wildlife Rescue Center is ready to accommodate rescued animals," he said.

According to Calderon, the impact of the volcanic eruption will be very devastating, and it will take years for the Taal Volcano Protected Landscape to recover. He cited the case of Mount Pinatubo, which took more than a decade before the forest fully regenerated. That was also the time when wildlife started to come back to the surrounding area. "It will definitely take time. We expect vegetation to go dry, and this can also trigger forest fire which will aggravate the situation," he added.



Experts: Polusyon mula sa 'coal' mas mapanganib sa 'ashfall'

MAS mapanganib at nakamamatay ang polusyon na ibubuga ng 'coal' o karbon kumpara sa 'ashfall' na nagmumula sa mga pumutok na bulkan.

Ikinumpara ng mga

environmentalist ang ashfall sa Taal ay may sangkap lamang na PM 10 at sulfur dioxide, habang ang mga coal plants ay may PM 2.5, na may maliit na butil na mas mapanganib at nakamamatay dahil may iba pang nakalalasang sangkap na carcinogenic, mercury at arsenic.

"For communities living near the 29 coal-fired power plants currently operating in the Philippines, particulate matter, toxic gas, and pollutants float in the air on a daily basis and these already claimed lives among many of the Filipino people," paliwanag ni Ian Rivera, national coordinator of the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ).

Kasabay nito ay binitikos ng environmental think-tank ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) dahil sa tila kawalan nito ng ambisyon at paninindigan na proteksiyunan ang kalikasan sa bansa, dahil sa patuloy na pagkiling nito sa pagtatayo ng mga 'coal power plants' sa bansa.

Ayon kay Gerry Arances, executive director ng Center for Energy, Ecology, and Development (CEED), hindi umano tinutupad ni DENR Chief Roy Cimatu ang kaniyang ipinahayag na sa 2020, kaniyang patutunayan sa Filipino na pangangalagaan ng departamento ang kalikasan at likas na yaman ng bansa.

"DENR seems to think that they have proven themselves triumphant in performing their mandate, but there is an elephant in the room which the department can't expect Filipinos not to point out -- the role they played in the proliferation of dirty industries, especially coal facilities, that pollute the environment and threaten the health of the Filipino public," giit ni Arances.

Ang mga komento ay dahil na rin sa nasaksihang tensiyon at pagpapanic ng mga residente hindi lamang sa Batangas, kundi sa mga karatig na mga lalawigan, kabilang ang Metro Manila nang magsaboy ng ash-

fall ang pumutok na Taal Volcano.

"With residents in Batangas, surrounding provinces, and Metro Manila hoarding as many face masks as they could find in the face of dangerous pollution brought by a natural disaster, Taal Volcano's eruption and the public health panic that accompanied it should serve as a nudge to DENR not to place itself on too high a pedestal," giit pa ni Arances.

Ganito rin ang sinabi ni Veronica Cabe of the Coal-Free Bataan Movement nang masaksihan din nitong mga nakaraang linggo, ang pagkabalisa ng mga residente dahil sa mapanganib na polusyon nang magbuga ng ashfall ang bulkan Taal. "The ashfall experienced by CALABARZON, Metro Manila, and surrounding provinces is a constant reality for coal-affected residents across the country, such as in the communities of Limay and Mariveles in Bataan, who breathe contaminated air as if a volcano was erupting in their backyard daily," aniya.



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PAGE 1/ _____

Polusyon mula sa 'coal' mas mapanganib sa 'ashfall'

Mas mapanganib at nakamamatay ang polusyon na ibubuga ng 'coal' o karbon kumpara sa 'ashfall' na nagmumula sa mga pumuputok na bulkan.

Paliwanag ng environmentalist na Philippine Movement for Climate Justice, ang ashfall sa Taal ay may sangkap lamang na PM 10 at sulfur dioxide habang ang mga coal plants ay may PM 2.5, na may malilit na butil na mas mapanganib at nakamamatay dahil may iba pang nakalalasong sangkap na carcinogenic, mercury at arsenic.

Sinabi pa ni PMCJ National Convenor Ian Rivera na, para sa mga nakatira sa mga lugar sa bansa na may nakatayong 29 coal-fired power plants, araw-araw na lumulutang sa hangin ang mga particulate matter, toxic gas, at marami nang buhay ang nalagas umano dito.

Kasabay nito, binatikos ng environmental think-tank ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) dahil sa tila kawalan nito ng ambisyon at paninindigan na proteksiyunan ang kalikasan sa bansa, dahil sa patuloy na pagkiling nito sa pagtatayo ng mga 'coal power plants' sa bansa.

Ayon kay Gerry Arrances, Executive Director Center for Energy, Ecology, and Development,

hindi umano tinutupad ni DENR Chief Roy Cimatu ang kaniyang ipinahayag na sa 2020, kaniyang patutunayan sa Filipino na pangangalagaan ng departamento ang kalikasan at likas na yaman ng bansa.



Ineffective implementation of environment laws denounced

ENVIRONMENT advocate groups denounced the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for its "lack of ambition" in upholding environmental protection.

The Center for Energy, Ecology, and Development (CEED) called on the DENR "not to haughtily pat themselves on the back" for their accomplishments in 2019, citing the

department's statement that this year it is "confident we will again prove to the Filipino people that indeed there is a Department that takes care of their environment and natural resources."

CEED's comment came following recent panic caused by the Taal Volcano eruption.

"Taal Volcano's eruption and the public health panic that accompanied

it should serve as a nudge to the DENR not to place itself on too high a pedestal," said CEED executive director Gerry Arances.

Arances noted that residents in Batangas, surrounding provinces and Metro Manila are hoarding as many face masks as they could find due to the dangerous pollution brought by the natural disaster.

"DENR seems to think that they have proven themselves triumphant in performing their mandate, but there is an elephant in the room which the Department can't expect Filipinos not to point out - the role they played in the proliferation of dirty industries, especially coal facilities, that pollute the environment and threaten the health of the Filipino public," he said.



DENR kinalampag sa polusyon ng mga coal plant

Matapos na masaksihan ang matinding takot, tensiyon at pangamba ng publiko nang magsaboy ng ashfall ang pumutok na Bulkang Taal na uma-bot hanggang Metro Manila, iginiiit ng environmentalist na mas mapanganib at nakamamatay ang polusyon na ibubuga ng coal o karbon mula sa mga itatayong planta nito.

Ayon kay Ian Rivera, national coordinator ng Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ), ang ashfall na ibinuga ng Bulkang Taal ay may sangkap lamang na PM 10 at sulfur dioxide, habang ang mga coal plant ay may PM 2.5 na may maliliit na butil na mas mapanganib at nakamamatay dahil may iba pang nakalalasang sangkap na carcinogenic, mercury at arsenic.

"Many studies stressing that the proliferation of coal plants in the country is a public health concern have cast doubts on DENR's claim that it did its best the past year to ensure that the people breathe clean air," dagdag ni Rivera.

Kasabay nito ay binatikos ng environmental think-tank ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources dahil sa tila kawalan nito ng ambisyon at paninindigan na proteksiyunan ang kalikasan sa bansa, dahil sa patuloy na pagkiling nito sa pagtatayo ng mga coal power plant sa bansa.



Polusyon mula sa "coal" mas mapanganib kaysa ashfall

MAS mapanganib at nakamamatay ang polusyon na ibubuga ng "coal" o karbon kompara sa "ashfall" na nagmumula sa mga pumuputok na bulkan.

Ikinompara ng mga environmentalist ang ashfall sa Taal ay may sangkap na PM 10 at sulfur dioxide, habang ang mga coal plants ay may PM 2.5, na may mas maliit na butil na mas mapanganib at nakamamatay dahil may iba pang nakalalasang sangkap na carcinogenic, mercury, at arsenic.

"For communities living near the twenty-nine coal-fired power plants currently operating in the Philippines, particulate matter, toxic gas, and pollutants float in the air on a daily basis and these already claimed lives among many of the Filipino people," paliwanag ni Ian Rivera, National Coordinator of the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ).

Kasabay nito, binatikos ng environmental think-tank ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) dahil sa tila kawalan ng ambisyon at paninindigan na proteksiyonan ang kalikasan sa bansa, dahil sa patuloy na pagkiling sa pagtatayo ng "coal power plants" sa bansa.

Ayon kay Gerry Arrances, Executive Director Center for Energy, Ecology, and Development (CEED), hindi tinutupad ni DENR chief Roy Cimatu ang kaniyang ipinahayag na sa 2020, kaniyang patutunayan sa Filipino na pangangalagaan ng departamento ang kalikasan at likas na yaman ng bansa.

"DENR seems to think that they have proven themselves triumphant in performing their mandate, but there is an elephant in the room which the Department can't expect Filipinos not to point out — the role they played in the proliferation of dirty industries, especially coal facilities, that pollute the environment and threaten the health of the Filipino public," giit ni Arances.

Ang mga komento ay dahil sa nasaksihang tensiyon at panic ng mga residente hindi lamang sa Batangas, kundi sa mga karatig lalawigan, kabilang ang Metro Manila nang magsaboy ng titis at abo ang pumutok na bulkang Taal.

"With residents in Batangas, surrounding provinces, and Metro Manila hoarding as many face masks as they could find in the face of dangerous pollution brought by a natural disaster, Taal volcano's eruption and the public health panic that accompanied it should serve as a nudge to DENR not to place itself on too high a pedestal," giit ni Arances.

Ganito rin ang sinabi ni Veronica Cabe ng Coal-Free Bataan Movement (CFBM), nang masaksihan nitong mga nakaraang linggo, ang pagkabalisa ng mga residente dahil sa mapanganib na polusyon nang magbuga ng abo ang bulkang Taal.

"The ashfall experienced by CALABARZON, Metro Manila, and surrounding provinces is a constant reality for coal-affected residents across the country, such as in the communities

of Limay and Mariveles in Bataan, who regularly breathe contaminated air as if a volcano was erupting in their backyard every single day," dagdag ni Arances.



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PAGE 1/

Coal mas mapanganib sa ashfall

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Ikinumpara ng mga environmentalist ang ashfall sa Taal na may sangkap lamang na PM 10 at sulfur dioxide, habang ang mga coal plant ay may PM 2.5 na may maliliit na butil na mas mapanganib at nakamamatay dahil may iba pang nakalalasong sangkap na carcinogenic, mercury at arsenic.

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Ayon kay Gerry Arrances, executive director ng Center for Energy, Ecology, and Development, hindi umano tinutupad ni DENR chief Roy Cimatu ang kanyang ipinahayag na sa 2020, kanyang patutunayan sa mga Pilipino na pangangalagaan ng departamento ang kalikasan at likas na yaman ng bansa.

"DENR seems to think that they have proven themselves triumphant in performing their mandate, but there is an elephant in the room which the Department can't expect Filipinos not to point out - the role they played in the proliferation of dirty industries, especially coal facilities, that pollute the environment and threaten the health of the Filipino public," giit rin Arrances.

Ang mga komento ay dahil na rin sa nasaksihang tensyon at pagpa-panic ng mga residente hindi lamang sa Batangas kundi sa mga karatig lalawigan.

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NANGANGAILANGAN talaga ang mahal kong Pinas ng pagkakaisa, pagtutulungan, kapatiran at iba pa upang maalpasan natin ang mga dumarating na problema.

Tingnan natin.

Naglalaro sa 220,000 katao ang nabilang na talagang biktima ng sumabog na Bulkang Taal.

Tinatayang katlo o kapat dito ang kinakanlong ng mga kamag-anak sa labas ng lugar na tinamaan ng bulkan.

Lahat ay nagsisimula nang nahihirapan.

Ngayon naman, tila narito na sa atin ang kinatatakutang corona virus sa China.

May isang bata na galing sa Wuhan, China na pinagmulan ng sakit ang pinigil sa Cebu at kinunan na ng sampol para pag-aralan ng Regional Institute for Tropical Medicine at ng laboratoryo sa Australia.

May corona virus na sa Thailand, South Korea at Japan at hindi imposibleng makarating nga sa Pinas ang sakit.

P30-50 BILYON

Hiniling ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa Kamara na maglaan ang pamahalaan ng halagang P30 bilyon na supplemental budget para sa pagbangon o rehabilitasyon ng mga biktima ng Taal.

Agad namang tumugon ang mga kongresman sa pagsasabing kahit aabot pa sa P50 bilyon ang halaga ay kanilang gagawin.

Paliwanag ng mga kongresman, Idamay na rin ang mga biktima ng lindol sa Mindanao at ng Marawi siege.

Sa katunayan, ang rehabilitasyon ng mga nalindol at nagiyera sa Mindanao ay napaglaanan para sa taong ito.

At ang mga pagputok ng bulkan ay sumunod na lang na nangyari.

Masasabi nating tama lang ang aksyon ni Pang. Digong at ang aksyon din ng Kamara na isama na ang mga nalindol at nagiyera.

PANDARAMBONG WAG IHALO

Magandang pakingsangan na mabilis na tumugon ang mga mambabatas sa panawagan ni Pang. Duterte para ayudahan ang mga nakakalamidad.

At napakaganda talagang pakingsangan na kahit malaking halaga ang magagastos, basta para sa kapakanan ng mga mamamayan, handa silang tumugon.



Ni BENNY ANTIPORDA

MAY BULKAN NA, MAY CORONA VIRUS PA

Pero alalahanin nating ang P30-P50 bilyon ay napakalaking halaga.

At kahit sinasabing bagong pulitika na ang pinaiiral ngayon, nariryan pa rin ang paglalaway ng ilang mambabatas sa mga malalaking proyekto ng pamahalaan.

Nariryan, halimbawa, ang katotohanang may bulong ang mga korap na kongresman sa mga pinanggagalingan at nagpapalabas ng pondo, may may-ari ng mga construction company, may may-ari ng mga lupa para sa relokasyon, may kontak sa mga suplay ng materyales na semento at bakal, quarry ng semento, bato at buhangin.

Lahat ng ito ay pinagkakakitaan ng malalaking ilang kongresman.

At ang mga pinakamadadali gaya ng pamorsyento sa pondo, subcontracting at iba pa.

Sana nga, buo na magagastos ang P30-P40 bilyong pondo para sa mga proyektong nakalaan sa mga biktima ng kalamidad at hindi totokhangin ang mga pinakamalaking halaga rito ng mga korap.

TOTAL LOCKDOWN

MULA sa araw na ito, ipatutupad na ang total lockdown sa loob ng 14 kilometrong paligid ng Bulkang Taal.

Sinabi ni Brig. General Vicente Danao, pinuno ng CALABARZON police, pupwersahin na ang lahat ng nakatira sa loob ng 14 kilometro danger zone na lumabas at walang matitira sa loob ng lugar na ito, kahit pa ang mga pulis at militar.

Babalawalain na umano ang mga lockdown para sa 5-10 kilometro na pinaiiral at matapos na mailabas ang lahat ng tao, pipigilan na rin silang pumasok.

Ang patakaran ang napagkasunduan umano ng lahat ng ahensya ng pamahalaan makaraang tiyakin ng Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology na delikado pa ang lagay ng bulkan at hindi dapat na malagay sa atanganin ang buhay ng mga mamamayan.

BATA POSITIBO SA CORONA VIRUS

Nagpositibo sa coro-

na virus ang isang bata na Tsino na galing sa Wuhan, China.

Ang corona virus ay mabilis na pumapatay sa China ng mga kinakapitan nito.

Makaraan ang 10 araw na pagkapit ng sakit sa tao at pag-aaral kung corona virus nga ang kumapit sa iyo, maghihintay ka naman ng tawag ni San Pedro o mabubuhay ka.

Apat nang Tsino ang tinanggap ni San Pedro habang ang iba sa mahigit nang 200 nagkakasakit ng corona virus ay pumapalag.

Ang karamihan naman sa mga ginagamot sa ospital ay gumagaling habang ang iba ay kritikal.

'Yun bang — nasa bingit ng kamatayan.

KAYA NG PINOY

Ayon sa ating mga awtoridad, kayang kontrolin ng gobyerno ang pagpasok at paglaganap ng corona virus.

Kumpleto umano sa gamit ang mga quarantine area natin at may magaganda tayong kagamitan upang malaman na agad natin kung may problema sa kalusugan ang dumarating na pasahero.

May mga kagamitan din ang mga medical professional natin sa mga quarantine area upang hindi sila madaaling mahawa ng sakit.

Pero ipagpalagay na lang nating may makalusot.

Dito na dapat pumapei ang mga mamamayan. Dapat mag-report agad ang sinoman na may suspetsang ang kanilang kabahay o kapitbahay ay posibleng may corona virus. Lalo na ang mga nangagaling sa Tsina at Hong Kong na kanilang mga kamag-anak.

Ang totoo, nakikipagugnayan na ang ating pamahalaan sa Tsina at maging sa World Health Organization para magtulongan ang lahat laban sa sakit.

Anomang reaksiyon o reklamo, maaaring iparingat sa 0922840-3333 o i-email sa bantiporda@yahoo.com.



Editorial

Solusyunan, problema sa air pollution

NOONG nakaraang linggo sinabi ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na bumubuti na ang kalidad ng hangin sa Metro Manila dahil sa pagputok ng Taal Volcano. Ang abo na binuga ng bulkan ay umabot hanggang Metro Manila at iba pang probinsiya. Nadagdagan ang dati nang maruming hangin sa Metro at kung hindi kikilos ang DENR para masolusyunan ang problema, lalo pang lulubha ang sitwasyon. Maaaring naka-face masks na ang mga tao sa Metro Manila para hindi makalanghap ng maruming hangin.

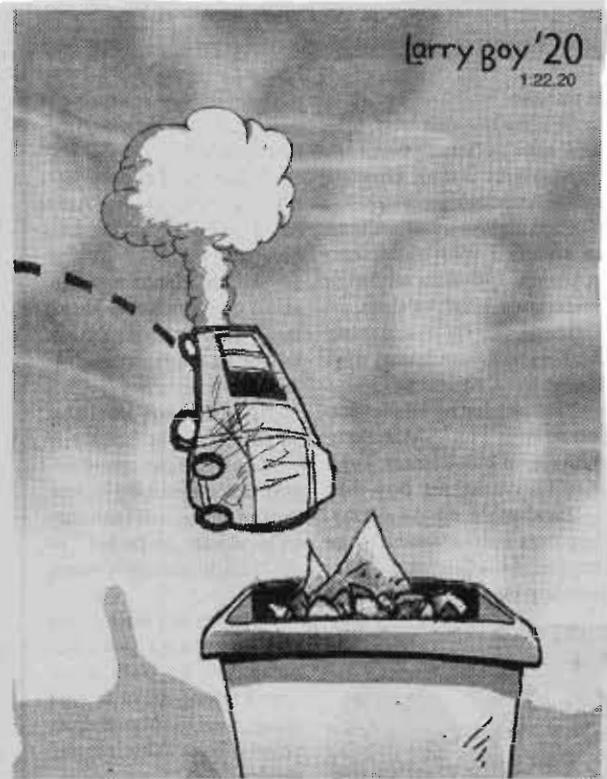
Ayon sa report, 120,000 Pilipino bawat taon ang namamatay dahil sa pagkalanghap ng hangin na may lason. Ang Pilipinas ay pangatlo sa mga bansa sa Asia na marami ang namamatay sa air pollution. Nangunguna ang China at ikalawa ang Mongolia.

Karaniwang pinagmumulan ng hangin na may lason ang usok ng mga sasakyan partikular na ang mga jeepney na yumayaot sa Metro Manila. Walumpong porsiyento na pinagmumulan ng air pollution ay mula sa mga lumang sasakyan.

Ayon sa Department of Health (DOH), ang maruming hangin ay nagdudulot ng noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) gaya ng allergies, acute respiratory infections, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, cancer at cardiovascular diseases. Unang tinatamaan ng sakit ang mga pasahero at pedestrians dahil sila ang nakalantad sa maruming hangin. Bukod sa usok ng mga sasakyan, nalalanghap din ang mga sinunog na basura, goma, plastic at iba pang harmful wastes.

Noong nakaraang taon, sinabi ng DENR-Environmental Management Bureau na ang air pollutant concentrations sa Metro Manila ay umabot na sa 130 micrograms per normal cubic meter (NCM). Ang maximum safe level ng air pollutant concentration ay 90 micrograms per NCM. Ngayong 2020, tiyak mas mataas ang level ng air pollutant.

Namo-monitor ng DENR ang level ng maruming hangin sa Metro Manila kaya sila rin ang dapat kumilos para ito masolusyunan. Tungkulin nila na mapangalagaan at mapadalisay ang hangin. Katuwangin nila ang local government units (LGUs) para masawata ang mga nagpaparumi sa hangin sa Metro Manila. Hulihin ang smoke belchers na sasakyan gaya ng jeepney na nagdudulot ng air pollution. Isalba ang Metro Manila sa pagkamatay dahil sa hangin na may lason.





In-city relocation for 420-hectare Bacoor reclamation project pushed

The city government of Bacoor said an in-city relocation will be an important component in the proposed 420-hectare reclamation project along the city's coast for directly-impacted stakeholders.

Bacoor City Mayor Lani M. Revilla in a statement said the in-city relocation component of the project has helped secure support for the planned development from Bacoor residents.

Revilla claimed the proposed reclamation project had clinched the overwhelming support of the city's residents during the recent public hearing held by the Environmental Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

On January 5, 2020, the Liga ng mga Barangay (LnB) of Bacoor passed resolution No. 01-series of 2020, expressing support for the proposed reclamation project in the city.

The resolution, signed by LnB President Reynaldo Palabrica, cited among others that the proj-

ect "has a concrete plan for all informal settler families that may be affected, like decent housing as relocation site within the city and being priority for employment in all job opportunities which will be created by the project."

The Sangguniang Kabataan Federation of the city earlier signified their full support for the project through a letter, dated November 11, 2019, signed by SK Federation President Mac Raven Espiritu, and addressed to DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu.

Youth leaders declared that the project would not only boost the city's economy without compromising the environment but also "provide our fellow Bacooreños who have been legally or illegally settling at the 20 meters easement from the shores of the Manila Bay, within the jurisdiction of the City a better living situation through its relocation program."

The City Government of Bacoor is the proponent of the reclamation projects, namely Bacoor Reclamation and Development

Project, consisting of a total of 320-hectare islands, and the Diamond Reclamation and Development Project consisting of one 100-hectare island via Public-Private Partnership under the PPP Code of Bacoor.

A government center with social services will also be established within the site. Among the target beneficiaries for Ciudad Kaunlaran are ISFs from ten barangays of Bacoor who would be impacted by the project.

Likewise, she said properties in Barangay Alima would be developed into a Fisherman's Village for the resettlement of fishermen living along the coastlines of Bacoor Bay, allowing the fishermen to continue plying their trade. A wharf with berthing facility will also be constructed for their use.

Directly-impacted stakeholders would participate in the planning of the resettlement package under the Community-based Initiative Approach of the National Housing Authority, according to Revilla. (Bernie Cahiles-Magkilat)



'FLAGSHIPS WILL REQUIRE MINIMAL RECLAIMED LAND'

THE National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) said most of the big-ticket infrastructure projects of the Duterte administration will require minimal reclamation work.

In a television interview last week, President Duterte had expressed his reservations to allowing additional reclamation projects in Manila Bay.

"He [the President] has expressed that a number of times, not just once. As you know, Neda is not directly involved anymore in the approval of reclamation projects. And so we'll see how it's going to impact those who are planning or have already approved reclamation projects," Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto M. Pernia said.

The Neda noted that out of the 100 flagship projects, only the Bata-

an-Cavite interlink bridge, which is being designed with Asian Development Bank (ADB) assistance, will require reclamation.

The P187-billion Bataan-Cavite Interlink Bridge involves the construction of two long-span bridges with a total length of 31 kilometers and connecting Mariveles, Bataan, to Corregidor to Naic, Cavite.

The feasibility study of the project is being funded under ADB's \$200-million Infrastructure Preparation and Innovation Facility (IPIF).

Neda Officer in Charge Undersecretary Jonathan L. Uy said the reclamation for the project is now being undertaken by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

"[In the case of] most reclamation projects, if they are found to be not environmentally sustainable, there

are mitigation measures which may entail changing the nature of the input, therefore reclamation may not be the only solution," said Uy.

"So as far as planning these projects are concerned, we adhere to the requirements that these be environmentally sustainable and socially acceptable," he added.

The Neda is currently crafting the Manila Bay master plan to provide a comprehensive framework for the sustainable development and management of the entire Manila Bay area.

It is envisioned to guide future decisions on programs and projects within the Bay area. The project is being funded together with the Dutch government and focused on ensuring environmental sustainability in Manila Bay.

Uy said the Neda has finalized the

master plan which will also be used as a model to plan for other coastal cities, such as Davao and Cebu, as well as others across the country.

"The output is now being used by the Manila Bay Task Force of DENR [Department of Environment and Natural Resources] with regard to proposed interventions particularly [the] regulatory aspects [of the Manila bay]," Uy said.

Manila Bay is the catchment basin of major rivers in the National Capital Region, Bulacan, Bataan, Laguna and Cavite.

In 2014, the Department of Tourism pushed for the crafting of a "tourism master plan" for the Manila Bay Region, while the private sector wanted a comprehensive master plan to spur economic development in the area. *Cai U. Ordinario*



Surplusage or effective governance?



LITO
BANAYO

PARDON me for writing this piece on the plans of Congress to rush three "landmark" laws creating three departments. I know the intentions are noble. But they may be more reactive than absolutely necessary considering the many problems and crises that we have been experiencing on these three fronts of late. The devil will always be on the details.

Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano and Majority Leader Martin Romualdez have stated that they would prioritize the passage of laws creating a Department of Disaster Resiliency, a Department for Overseas Filipinos, and a Department for Water Resource Management.

I have written in the past about the need for consolidating all the agencies that have to do with water rights, water distribution management, and other ancillary services such as sewage and water pollution concerns. As it is, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has to grapple with myriad concerns, let alone conflicting mandates.

Why should an agency that is supposed to protect the environment also be in charge of giving licenses and development rights to private companies that would exploit our natural resources? Ideally, environmental protection, especially in this era of worsening climate change conditions, should be under an Environmental Protection Agency, preferably under the Office of the President.

In crafting a law that would be in charge of managing our precious water resources, we submit that Congress should also address the bigger picture of natural resource management vis-à-vis the need to

protect the environment.

True, we are prone to many natural disasters, as if the man-made disasters we appoint to the bureaucracy do not do enough damage because of corruption and inefficiency.

Twenty typhoons visit us each year, some of such intense ferocity that kill and destroy much too often. We are along the Pacific Ring of Fire, which means earthquakes occur quite frequently, and

"We might just be bloating the bureaucracy."

we have so many active volcanoes which could erupt with little warning.

There is nothing wrong with creating a Department of Disaster Resiliency, but we hope the details are such that functions do not overlap insofar as other agencies are concerned, and the law would provide smooth coordination among other existing departments such as the DND, DILG, and DOST. More important is that in the implementing rules and regulations, and in the staffing of positions in the new department, meritocracy and the rights of those working under other agencies that will be subsumed are duly respected.

The way patronage politics through several administrations has debased the talent pool in many critical agencies is not only demoralizing to rank and file. Worse, the resulting ineffectiveness and inefficiency negatively affect the fulfillment of their mandates.

I know that creating a Department for Overseas Filipinos has been announced by the President in his last SONA. The many abuses suffered by our OFWs in for-

eign countries and the rackets in recruitment may have prompted the administration to propose this reorganization of the DOLE and its attached agencies.

But I know, based on experience, that we have so many dedicated people working in the DOLE-attached agencies, such as the OWWA, that hopefully will not be sidelined or replaced when the law is finally implemented. Again the prospect of patronage politics spoiling the career service system must not be allowed by Malacañang.

In retrospect, it may have been better if Malacañang, at the very start, created a task force of management experts to study and propose a general re-organization and retooling of government. That way, Congress would have been properly guided in these often reactive creation of new departments and agencies to address specific problems that could otherwise have been solved by the right appointments and proper implementation of existing policies.

It might be a case of bloating the bureaucracy, creating surplusage instead of delivering services effectively and efficiently.

I condole with the family of Hotdog band's Dennis Garcia, particularly my dear friend Greg, his brother. Less than two years back, they also lost Rene, another legend of original Filipino music. Together they pioneered the so-called Manila Sound of the 70s, the music of our generation.

In the last 20 years, Dennis and Greg have been reliable, in fact, extremely important cooperators in many political marketing efforts.

We will miss Dennis, not only for the music he has wrought, so magnificently revived in the successful opening of the SEA Games in the Philippines last, but likewise for the innovativeness and creativity of his mind.



Editorial

Congress must stop delaying passage of land use bills

ON Monday, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) disclosed that it had drafted an executive order (EO) addressing the regulation of land use, which President Rodrigo Duterte may decide to issue after a Cabinet meeting being held today. The EO was not, surprisingly, requested by the President, but rather by other Cabinet members who have grown frustrated with the chronic failure of Congress to take land use legislation seriously.

There have been several land use bills filed over the past several sessions of Congress, but none has ever made it beyond committee debate. Two versions of another proposed National Land Use Act (NaLUA) are currently stuck at a similar point in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, despite the President's clear position that it should be a priority issue.

As NEDA explained, the EO is intended not as a substitute for the legislation, but rather as a formal expression of the President's views on what the NaLUA should contain, in the hope that it would encourage the legislature to move more quickly to create and pass a final version of the bill.

NEDA had to take this approach because it, too, has been frustrated by Congress. As NEDA Undersecretary Adoracion Navarro explained, the agency is aware that there were some objections and concerns about the NaLUA among members of the Senate, but the Senate is yet to invite NEDA to discuss these. As a result, "we are left guessing what the contentious issues are," Navarro said.

The rest of us are left guessing, as well. Some have suggested that the large number of legislators in both Houses that have property-related business interests has made them unwilling to pass the NaLUA if it might in any way constrain their future investment prospects. That may be an unfair accusation, but if it is, Congress only has itself to blame for the impression its avoidance of the NaLUA makes.

Land is the most fundamental national resource, and it is absolutely finite. From the limited amount of land the nation has, several competing but all equally important objectives must be met: adequate housing, transportation infrastructure; sufficient land for agriculture; space for critical sectors such as mining, power generation, manufacturing, retail businesses, and offices; watersheds; and ecological preservation. Minute by minute, the amount of land available for each Filipino shrinks as the population grows. The amount of space available to meet all these needs is therefore constantly shrinking as well, while the needs themselves are growing.

Managing that effectively and sustainably would be an incredibly complex challenge even with a robust and properly enforced land use program. Unfortunately for the Philippines, land management has been so weak for decades that it is practically non-existent.

Land resources are overused and misused as a matter of habit, because human nature is allowed to run amuck: No one, whether a real estate developer, miner, factory owner, farmer, or informal settler, considers the diverse needs of others or the impact his use of the land may have on them, because it is natural for people to look out for their own interests before, and if necessary to the exclusion of, everyone else's. The law is supposed to impose rational limitations for the benefit of everyone, but in this country's case, there is virtually no law to do that. Determining what that law should be is an authority reserved for Congress, as the representatives of the people. By not exercising that authority, Congress is failing to carry out its duty.

If Congress cannot be encouraged or provoked into passing a sound, sustainable and enforceable NaLUA before the current legislative session ends, President Duterte might consider exploring whether he can turn the EO being presented to him this week into something a little more forceful than an expression of the administration's policy position on land use. Using an EO as a substitute for law that should be provided by legislation is not an ideal solution, and is something that should be done only when there is a critical need for it. We think the steady degradation of the country's land resources because of congressional inaction may very well be an appropriate critical need.



Builders aim for UNTV semis berth

NATIONAL Housing Authority tries to secure the third semis berth when it battles Philippine International Trading Corporation in the quarterfinal round of the 8th UNTV Cup today at the Paco Arena in Manila.

Game is set at 4:30 p.m. with both teams out to sustain their winning starts in the Round of 8 of the tournament offering P4 million to the chosen charity of the champion team.

The Builders of coach Benneth Palad hiked their record to 7-3 following their 67-59 win over the Judiciary Magis while the PITC Global Traders improved to 6-4 with a 74-61 win over the Department of Agriculture Food Masters.

The Food Masters and the Magis clash at 3 p.m. with both squads needing a win to stay in semis hunt of the annual tournament organized by UNTV President and CEO Dr. Daniel Razon for public servants.

Games Today

(Paco Arena)

3 p.m. - Agriculture vs Judiciary

4:30 p.m. - NHA vs PITC

The top two placers after the round will join defending champion and No. 1 seed Armed Forces of the Philippines and newcomer Department of Environment and Natural Resources in the semis which is a best-of-three affair.

Out to lead NHA's cause are Antonio Lustica and Alvin Vitug—the same players who sparked the team's decisive breakaway in the playoff period where they combined for 20 points.

The Global Traders, on the other hand, will be led by Ryan Regalado and Miguel Lopez.



Alvin Vitug hopes to lead the NHA Builders to the semis when they face the PITC Global Traders today.



BUILDERS EYE SEMIS

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INITIATIVES
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13
PAGE

UPPER
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PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
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EDITORIAL

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PAGE 1/

NHA seeks third UNTV semis vs PITC

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4/2

Pass Disaster Resiliency bill now!

Phivolcs not an NDRRMC member

IF there's any big lesson from the Taal Volcano eruption, and the continuing threat of a bigger one, it is this: Congress must pass ASAP the Disaster Resiliency bill that President Duterte endorsed in his State of the Nation Address (SONA) last July. Duterte's words in that SONA seem a bit prescient now:



**RIGOBERTO
D. TIGLAO**

► TiglaoA5

■ TIGLAO FROM A1

Pass Disaster Resiliency bill now!

"I am calling on Congress to expeditiously craft a law establishing a new authority or department that is responsive to the prevailing 21st-century conditions and empowered to best deliver an enhanced disaster resiliency and quick disaster response."

The utter failure of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) to issue an emergency alarm in the early hours of January 12, which I wrote about last Monday, is just one symptom that this entity is so unwieldy and has little authority to confront what has been our country's geological bad luck.

We are in the so-called "Ring of Fire (its scientific term, the Circum-Pacific Belt), a major area in the bottom of the Pacific Ocean characterized by active volcanoes and frequent earthquakes. The majority of the earth's volcanoes and earthquakes take place along the Ring of Fire. We are also smack in the path of typhoons generated in the Pacific Ocean, that a 2006 United States government study concluded that our country is the worst hit by this terrifying natural phenomenon, in terms of both frequency of occurrence and extent of destruction.

With natural disasters so obviously the biggest, really inescapable, threat to our people, guess what has been the state agency assigned to tackle this?

Committee

A committee, glorified as a "council," or the NDRRMC, consisting supposedly of 40 heads of government *institutions* that includes nearly all departments and even the "president of the Liga ng mga Barangay." And as happens in such committees, the heads of the institutions attend its first inaugural

meeting. Later, the ranks of those attending become lower and lower, that the council is unable to make any major decision.

Quite strangely and a huge oversight of the 2010 law creating the NDRRMC, the two agencies that could tell it that a natural disaster is looming in the horizon and it should prepare for it — the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) and the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) — are not members of the council. While 15 department secretaries are in the NDRRMC, the Science and Technology department secretary who supervises these two forecasting agencies is not a member of the NDRRMC.

I suspect this could be the reason why the NDRRMC didn't issue an alarm on January 12 that Taal was on the way to a major eruption.

Guess who *officially* chairs the NDRRMC? It is the Defense secretary who is one of the busiest department officials, what with a communist insurgency still alive, a huge modernization challenge prone to corruption, and the enforcement of our rights in our exclusive economic zones demanding his constant attention. I may be wrong, but I haven't seen in TV news the face of this guy in charge of disaster management since the volcano erupted last January 12.

Civil defense

Guess who runs the NDRRMC on a daily basis? The Defense undersecretary in charge of the Department of National Defense's Office of Civil Defense, a small agency that had actually been intended as the link between our military and the civilian population in all things

involving our soldiers' interaction with civilians, which in the past decades involved training and supervision of paramilitary units in conflict areas.

The current NDRRMC executive director is Ricardo Jalad, who I'm sure has been working his butt off to run this really weak institution. But when he retired, Jalad's Army rank was that of a brigadier general, the lowest general rank. Jalad's Army experience has been in anti-insurgency operations, leading battalions fighting communists and Islamic insurgents. He may be a man of integrity, but he just doesn't have the stature nor experience in running a body tasked with such a huge, complex task as disaster management.

A proponent of the bill, Sen. Panfilo Lacson, has pointed out: "Five years after Republic Act 10121, known as the 'Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010,' was enacted, a special report prepared by the Commission on Audit in 2015 tells us that: 'The government's response and recovery efforts in Yolanda-ravaged areas already showed that the implementation of RA 10121 still leaves a lot to be desired,'" he said.

"The recorded below par performance was primarily attributed to the multi-sectoral, multi-organizational structure of the NDRRMC," he explained.

"Experience tells us that creating a task force or an ad hoc body every time a disaster strikes is deemed ineffective and inefficient, especially now that scientists postulate that we are entering a time of climatic uncertainty, also tagged as the 'new normal,'" he added.

Resilience

The House of Representatives had

passed the Disaster Resiliency bill last November, but the Senate has dilly-dallied on it.

Under the bill passed by the House, the entity in charge of confronting disasters will have the status and funding of a department, will also be headed by a secretary supported by undersecretaries, assistant secretaries and directors. Albay Second District Rep. José María Clemente "Joey" Salceda, one of the main proponents of the bill, said that the new department would need an initial budget of P10 billion from the national budget.

The new bill also adopted a "joint operational supervision" provision over four agencies vital to a Department of Disaster Resilience — which are Pagasa, Phivolcs, the Geo-Hazard Assessment and Engineering Geology Section of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau and the Bureau of Fire Protection — instead of making them attached agencies of the department.

Such an approach would be similar to that of another disaster-prone country, Japan, which has a minister for disaster management who runs the Disaster Management Bureau. The bureau acts as secretariat of the Disaster Management Council, which formulates and undertakes long-term plans to prepare for and confront disasters.

Countries classified as high-risk in disasters, such as Pakistan and India, have created strong institutions for disaster management. Why can't we?

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Thunberg slams climate change inaction as Davos awaits Trump

DAVOS (AFP) — Swedish teen activist Greta Thunberg yesterday slammed global inaction on climate change in front of the world's top business leaders, as the annual Davos forum faced up to the perils of global warming while bracing for an address from US President Donald Trump.

The 50th meeting of the World Economic Forum in the Swiss Alps resort got under way seeking to meet head-on the dangers to both the environment and economy from the heating of the planet.

Trump, who has repeatedly expressed scepticism about climate change, is set to give the first keynote address of Davos 2020 today, on the same day as his impeachment trial opens at the Senate in Washington.

But before his appearance, Thunberg underlined the message that has inspired millions around the world — that governments are failing to wake up to the reality of climate change.

"We are all fighting for the environment and climate. If you see it from a bigger perspective, basically nothing has been done. It will require much more than this. This is just the very beginning," she said.

Speaking calmly and with a wry smile, Thunberg acknowledged that her campaign which began with school strikes had attracted huge attention without yet achieving change.

"There is a difference between being heard to actually leading to something,"

she said.

"I am not the person who should complain about not being heard," she said to appreciative laughter.

"I am being heard all the time. But the science and the voice of the young people are not at the center of the conversation," she added.

The forum's own Global Risks report published last week warned that "climate change is striking harder and more rapidly than many expected" with global temperatures on track to increase by at least three degrees Celsius (5.4 degrees Fahrenheit) towards the end of the century.

There are no expectations that Trump and Thunberg, who have exchanged barbs through Twitter, will actually meet, but the crowded venue and intense schedule mean a chance encounter cannot be ruled out.

When Trump and his entourage walked through UN headquarters last year at the annual General Assembly, a photo of the teenager staring in apparent fury at the president from the sidelines went viral.

Tweeting as he headed to Davos, Trump appeared in bullish mood, writing he would "bring Good Policy and additional Hundreds of Billions of Dollars back to the United States of America!"

"We are now NUMBER ONE in the Universe, by FAR!!" he added.

Sustainability is the buzzword at the forum, which began in 1971, with heel crampons handed out to participants to

encourage them to walk on the icy streets rather than use cars, and the signage paint made out of seaweed.

Trump's opposition to renewable energy, his withdrawal from the Paris climate accord negotiated under his predecessor Barack Obama, and the free hand extended to the fossil fuel industry puts him at odds with the entire thrust of the event.



Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg takes her seat prior to the opening session of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland yesterday. AP

Davos 'astig'

Every year for almost 50 years now, a World Economic Forum (WEF) is held in Davos, Switzerland, bringing in billionaires and heads of state from all over the world.

The first WEF was in 1971 with 450 participants. The forum caught the attention of more people from the private sector as well as government. Last year's WEF had 2,500 participants.

The world tunes in on this world forum, noting the agenda, participants and resource persons. This year, the world's youngest prime minister, 34-year-old Sanna Marin from Finland, will be there. So, too, will Ren Zhengfei, the CEO of China's Huawei, who makes Trump and others lose sleep with their breakneck speed of innovations.

Last year, the Forum invited young environmental activist Greta Thunberg, who told the WEF participants that "our house is on fire" and that she would hold the delegates accountable for not doing more to handle climate change.

Thunberg's been invited again for 2020 to be part of a climate apocalypse panel, which is sandwiched between a keynote address by US President Donald Trump and a special address by China's Vice Premier Han Zheng.

Thunberg's appearance in Davos comes only a few months after the feisty 17-year-old addressed (actually, hectored) the United Nations in New York.

Meanwhile, the business media outfit Bloomberg reports that about a hundred of the world's billionaires will be flying in, many in personal planes with—and I wasn't sure if Bloomberg was being tongue-in-cheek—"fuel designed to lower carbon emissions."

There's something "*astig*" about Davos, *astig* being a Filipino slang word for impressive, with a punch. The term is "*tigas*" (hard) spelled backwards.

The first day's panels give us an idea of the *astig* agenda of WEF. *Astig* panels, too, but I find irony in the slated speakers. Besides the climate apocalypse panel, there will be one on green growth (panelists from the Bank of England and the oil company Aramco) and another on stakeholder capitalism (panelists from the Bank of America, IBM and Siemens).

High up on the agenda of this year's WEF will be burnout and depression, which have become serious issues worldwide, exemplified by Japan's "*karoshi*," literally death from overwork.



PINOY KASI
MICHAEL L. TAN

There lies another irony about WEF. Davos used to have a tuberculosis sanitarium, a sanitarium being a hospital for long-term care of patients with infectious diseases. That was in the pre-antibiotics era. The TB sanitarium are long gone, but Davos and Switzerland are now known for their retreats for the rich, powerful, famous and sometimes notorious, offering promises not just of relief from overwork but also spa packages promising beauty and long life.

I couldn't help but think of figures on the number of work hours from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The top five are not the richest: Mexico, Costa Rica, South Korea, Greece and Russia. Certainly, within countries, the most overworked are the poor; throw in added hours wasted on the road getting to and from work.

Stakeholder capitalism pretty much captures what's been going on in Davos. Economic inequality, wars (foremost this year, the US-China trade war), crises always come with wistful predictions from Left groups that capitalism is about to collapse. Davos epitomizes the way contemporary capitalism handles the challenges, often by co-opting the radicals and the naysayers by allowing them to speak.

A more charitable view is to think that the world's rich and powerful will actually listen to and learn from the radicals. I do wish our economic and political leaders in the Philippines would adopt more of that spirit of WEF and "stakeholder capitalism" with its philosophy that we're in this together, so let's all see what we can do (even if the capitalists do end up giving too little).

We have local versions of the WEF like the Makati Business Club, which used to be quite outspoken and critical about authoritarianism, knowing as many WEF billionaires do that dictators are not healthy for the economy. There's also the Management Association of the Philippines, which is even more docile and ends up missing out on important social developments that will shape our future.

If 2020 is used as a metaphor for the need for clear vision, we should think of Davos *astig* in terms of a liability—that of astigmatism, a condition where vision is blurred because the eye can't focus and objects are not put in the proper light. That could happen, too, in Davos, and in our many 6-star hotel meetings and conferences about economic, political and environmental woes.

mtan@inquirer.com.ph



Climate change pushes investors to take portfolio's temperature

LONDON- Move over revenue growth and dividend payouts: it's time to take your portfolio's temperature.

Policymakers are pushing investors to do more to ensure their portfolio choices help to meet the 2015 Paris Agreement to combat climate change by limiting planetary warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, and preferably to 1.5C.

A vanguard of insurers and pension funds, many of whom will be in Davos this week for the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum, say part of the answer is a new "temperature score" that gives a snapshot of how their investments are contributing to climate change.

A single score, they say, can help them navigate the reallocation of capital from heavily polluting sectors of the global economy likely to take a financial hit to greener companies poised to profit.

So far, the temperature metric has been adopted by only a handful of the thousands of financial institutions worldwide but the buzz it has generated shows how investors' concerns about climate risk are finally moving into the mainstream.

"There's still a massive amount of work to be done on this but it's very encouraging that we as an industry are being forced to answer this temperature score question,"

said Mark Lewis, head of sustainability research at BNP Paribas Asset Management.

"If you thought you could ignore climate change before, you just can't anymore."

France is leading the way with 18 firms, including insurer AXA and reinsurer Scor, disclosing the temperature score of all or part of their portfolios in 2018.

British regulators have flagged that they could require some banks and insurers to report temperature scores from 2021 in annual portfolio stress tests.

Asset manager Standard Life Aberdeen, German reinsurer Munich Re, Swiss rival Swiss Re and Zurich Insurance all told Reuters they were considering assigning temperature scores to their portfolios.

Temperature scores are one of several investor-led initiatives to spring up in the last few years as policymakers crank up the pressure on the financial industry to accelerate change.

The Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change, a European body of mainly pension funds and asset managers with 30 trillion euros (\$33 trillion) of combined assets under management, launched an initiative in May to work out how members can use their financial clout to back the Paris goals.

That was followed by the launch

The challenge becomes harder when investors look beyond stocks and corporate bonds to real estate and infrastructure, where there is less transparency over emissions, or to sovereign debt, where investors have less scope to engage with borrowers.

of the "Net-Zero Asset Owner Alliance" at a UN climate summit in September. The group, which has so far signed up 16 insurers and pension funds with combined assets of almost \$4 trillion, has pledged to align investments with the most ambitious Paris temperature targets.

The world's biggest asset manager, BlackRock, last week announced an overhaul of the way it approaches climate risk. Chief Executive Larry Fink told the thousands of companies it holds stakes in that sustainable investing was the "strongest foundation" for client portfolios.

Generation Investment Management, a fund co-founded by former US Vice President Al Gore with \$25 billion of assets invested according to environmental and sustainability criteria, says temperature scores are an important

development.

"This is an incremental indicator to help the stakeholder community engage in the urgency of the transition," David Blood, co-founder and senior partner, told Reuters.

Despite the growing enthusiasm for temperature scores, a dearth of standardized data, methodologies and disclosure makes it extremely hard to calculate a single meaningful number.

Andrew Howard, head of sustainable research at British asset manager Schroders, said his company was actively looking at adopting temperature scores but warned any approach must be "robust and logical".

"There are a bunch of challenges here that you've got to work," he said.

Investors have already been struggling with a comparatively

simpler metric: the amount of greenhouse gases a company produces. Increasingly firms are estimating their "carbon intensity" based on the ratio of emissions to revenue.

A portfolio temperature score, though, requires more complex calculations, including how companies contribute to global emissions and their planned reductions over time.

Those numbers are then crunched with assumptions about the relationship between emissions and temperatures. The calculation gets even more complicated when factoring in uncertainty about how the world might conceivably achieve net zero emissions by 2050 - the target scientists say is needed to cap global temperature rises at 1.5C.

"The biggest question mark is what exactly that pathway is going to look like," said Mara Childress at the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), a global initiative launched by Bank of England Governor Mark Carney.

The TCFD said it was considering its position on the possible utility of temperature scores.

The challenge becomes harder when investors look beyond stocks and corporate bonds to real estate and infrastructure, where there is less transparency over emissions,

or to sovereign debt, where investors have less scope to engage with borrowers.

Nevertheless, advisory firms say that as data improves, the differences between companies poised to benefit from the transition to a low carbon world, and those that will suffer, will become clearer.

"A warming potential metric really helps you to understand which constituents of a portfolio ... are really the climate culprits," said David Lunsford, co-founder of Carbon Delta, part of data analytics and index company MSCI.

"You could be exposed to a lot of risk if you pick companies that are not aligned with a sustainable future."

Scientists have been sounding the alarm over global warming for decades but investors have only begun to pay real attention in the last few years.

The TCFD, which is backed by the G20, is encouraging companies and banks to reveal more about the climate risks they face, as a precursor to making disclosures mandatory.

Regulators are issuing increasingly strident warnings over the dangers extreme weather poses to economies and the risk that oil and gas infrastructure could be left stranded by a rapid transition to clean energy. - Reuters



THE CORNER ORACLE

ANDREW J. MASIGAN

Another crisis looms

Just as the residents of Metro Manila and the Southern Tagalog regions cope with the impending eruption of Taal Volcano, another crisis is looming in the air. This time, it is water crisis. With water volume at the Angat Dam below minimum manageable levels, acute water disruption is imminent for the entire NCR region, Rizal, Laguna, Cavite and Bulacan.



The disruption of water service has nothing to do with the ongoing negotiation of contract terms between government and the two water concessionaires, Maynilad and Manila Water Co. (MWC). Rather, it has everything to do with government's failure to build an alternative water source that meets the needs of the Greater Capital Region and its 16.5 million inhabitants. The 60-year-old Angat dam is the lone water source of the region and its maximum supply capacity of 4,000 million liters per day is no longer sufficient.

Contrary to the common notion that the water concessionaires control the amount of water supply, it is in fact the National Water Resource Board (NWRB) who determines how much water is released from Angat and channeled to the Metro Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS). The MWSS, in turn, appropriates the water to both Maynilad and the MWC, who distribute it to consumers.

Last Jan. 8, the MWSS admitted that Angat's maximum capacity can no longer meet the needs of the Greater Capital Region. In fact, we already felt the shortage in May and October last year when water rationing was imposed in some districts.

Despite two typhoons last December, Angat's water level peaked at only 201.71 meters, far below the ideal yearend level of 212 meters. Due to this lower-than-expected water volume, the NWRB is hard-pressed to choke water release from Angat.

This month, the NWRB released a mere 40 cubic meters per second (cms) or 3,450 million liters per day of raw water from Angat, 20 percent below the ideal allocation of 48 cms. The shortfall of supply is seen to become more acute during the summer months.

The specter of water shortage will persist until 2025 or until the Kaliwa Dam comes online. Meantime, life for all those who live in the Greater Capital Region will become increasingly difficult, much like it was in the early 90's.

How did we get here?

Truth is, past administrations knew very well that a water crisis was imminent given Metro Manila's ever-growing population.

Plans to build the New Centennial Water Source project, which involves the construction of the Kaliwa Dam in Quezon and the Laiban Dam in Rizal, existed since the Marcos era. However, no administration, until the current one, had the political will to press forward with the project. For decades, the construction of the Kaliwa Dam faced fierce opposition from indigenous folk, informal settlers, the church, leftist groups and opportunistic politicians who consigned the project to limbo by filing one temporary restraining order (TRO) after another. Neither President dared to face-off with them.

It was only President Duterte who did. In a statement last Dec. 30, the President "warned" the courts to be "sparing" in the issuances of TROs on the Kaliwa Dam project. He reminded the courts that by virtue of Republic Act 8975, only the Supreme Court has the power to grant TROs for infrastructure projects.

As a compromise, government decided that only the Kaliwa Dam will be built (without the Laiban Dam). This will make the social and environmental impacts of the project minimal. In addition, consultations with the indigenous peoples and cultural communities reached a positive outcome last month and a resolution of consent for the project has been reached. This satisfies the "Free Prior and Informed Consent," the most contentious requirement of the project.

With this, the construction of the P12.2 billion Kaliwa Dam was given a notice to proceed. It is being built by China Energy Engineering Co. Ltd under an official development assistance loan. Preparatory work for construction is already in full swing. When completed in 2025, the Kaliwa Dam will ensure Metro Manila with ample supply of water, even with low levels of rainfall, for decades to come.

So what can we do between now and 2025 to minimize the impact of the water shortage?

For one, conserve water usage. Two, government will have no choice but to limit the amount of water appropriated for agricultural irrigation (which will result to higher prices of fruits and vegetables – but that's another story).

Third, the water concessionaires must eke out extra supply of water wherever they can.

As for Maynilad, they completed the upgrades of Putatan 1 & 2 Water Treatment Plants and activated various deep wells. These initiatives will add 154 million liters of water per day for the Western sector of Manila. This February, its leakage reduction program will be completed and this will add another 94 million liters of water per day.

In total, Maynilad's leakage reduction program has managed to recover 979 million liters of water per day, enough to supply potable water to 1.7-M households. Mind you, this refers to leaked water which Maynilad cannot derive revenues from.

On the part of MWC, they invested P1.35 billion to retrofit their Balara Treatment Plants 1 and 2. This will result in the recovery of 20 million liters per day of water loss. At the Balara Pump Station, new variable frequency drives are being installed to ensure stable water pressure.

The mitigation efforts of the two concessionaires will minimize the water deficit but not eliminate water shortage and rationing.

So all these spells good and bad news for the residents of the Greater Capital Region. The good news is – our second water source, the Kaliwa Dam, is finally under construction and this should solve our water woes by 2025. The bad news is – water rationing will persist for five more years.