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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



WASTE-TO-ENERGY FACILITIES

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS THREATEN TO SUE CIMATU

By **Jhesset O. Enano**
@JhessetEnanoINQ

Environment groups have threatened to sue Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu for issuing an administrative order that laid down the guidelines for waste-to-energy (WTE) facilities, which they said violated existing environmental laws.

No Burn Pilipinas and EcoWaste Coalition served a "notice to sue" to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) last week, calling on Cimatu to rescind his order in 30 days, or face legal action.

Aaron Pedrosa, the group's legal counsel, said the DENR Administrative Order No. 2019-21 extended a "blanket clearance" for incinerator projects, which involve the burning of trash supposedly to produce usable energy, such as heat and electricity.

"This clearly violates existing laws, such as the Ecological Waste Management Act and the Clean Air Act," he told a press briefing.

Section 20 of the Clean Air Act clearly bans incineration, which is defined as the "burning of municipal, biomedical and hazardous waste, which process emits poisonous and toxic fumes."

Pedrosa said the issuance of the guidelines was also contradictory to the DENR's own mandate to enforce en-

vironmental laws.

"By promulgating [this order], it overlooks realities in the ground, such as the health hazards linked with incineration," he said.

The operation of WTE projects, the groups said, would produce dioxin and furan, which are hazardous substances from fly ash and bottom ash. These facilities are also expected to heavily emit carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas that worsens global warming, they said.

The guidelines, issued by Cimatu in November last year, were also done without public consultations, they said.

"This is scientifically deficient," Pedrosa said. "[It] ignores best practices on zero waste and existing environmental laws."

Sought for comment, Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda called the groups' action as "very unfair."

Antiporda oversees solid waste management and local government units in the environment agency.

He said that the order would not "tolerate the direct burning per se."

"The minute that these WTE facilities will violate the Clean Air Act, the secretary can immediately make a cease-and-desist order without going through the pollution adjudication board," he told the Inquirer. **INQ**



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REGIONS BRIEFS

DENR welcomes plan to open landfill to other towns

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—As neighboring Tagoloan town tries to send back the last batch of imported garbage from South Korea stored inside the Phividec Industrial Estate area, this city plans to open its sanitary landfill for a fee to accommodate garbage from neighboring towns. Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu welcomed the proposal by city officials here. "I discussed with Mayor Oscar Moreno his plan of letting municipalities use the sanitary landfill for a fee," he told reporters on Thursday. The city government opened its 45-hectare landfill in Pagalungan village even as it developed the former dump into an ecopark. —JIGGER J. JERUSALEM



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PH needs more sanitary landfills, DENR exec says

By Rio N. Araja

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources wants more engineered sanitary landfills before 2022 to address the “growing” garbage woes.

Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns Benny Antiporda said that sanitary landfill is the primary long-term method of solid waste disposal allowed under Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

Under the law, sanitary landfill is required in any LGU as a means of safe disposal of untreated solid waste or resource recovery residuals.

He said the number of sanitary landfills in the country remains small even after 20 years since RA 9003 took effect.

“What we need in this country is about 1,700 sanitary landfills for all the municipalities and cities. But, sad to say, we only have 108 as of the moment and this number could even decrease in the future,” he said.

“Our sanitary landfills are already getting filled. What happens next is some might go back to open dumpsite, which is illegal under RA 9003. We will not allow this to happen,” he said.

He gave the assurance that Secretary Roy Cimatu would do everything to ensure the establishment of more sanitary landfills nationwide before the term of President Rodrigo Duterte ends in 2022.



DENR hangad ang dagdag na sanitary landfills bago mag-2022

UMAASA ang Department of Environment and Natu-

ral Resources na mas maraming engineered sanitary landfill ang maitatayo bago ang taong 2022 upang matugunan ang lumalaking problema ng solid waste management sa bansa.

Ayon kay DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns Benny D. Antiporda, ang sanitary landfill ang pangunahing pangmatagalang paraan ng solid waste disposal na pinapayagan sa ilalim ng Republic Act 9003 o ang Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

Dagdag ni Antiporda, ang sanitary landfill ay ipinag-uutos ng nasabing batas sa mga

local government unit bilang paraan ng safe disposal of untreated solid waste or resource recovery residuals.

Subalit, ayon kay Antiporda, maliit pa rin ang bilang ng sanitary landfill matapos ang 20 taon simula nang ipatupad ang RA 9003.

"What we need in this country is about 1,700 sanitary landfills for all the municipalities and cities. But, sad to say, we only have 108 as of the moment and this number could even decrease in the future," ikinalungkot ni Antiporda.

Siniguro ni Antiporda na ang DENR, sa ilalim ng pamumuno ni Secretary Roy A. Cimatu, ay gagawin ang lahat upang makapagtayo ng mas maraming sanitary landfills sa buong bansa bago matapos ang termino ni President Rodrigo Roa Duterte sa 2022.

Sinabi ito ni Antiporda noong nag-cleanup drive sa Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetlands Park noong Biyernes na nagsilbing culminating activity sa pagdiriwang ng Zero-Waste Month sa buwan ng Enero.

Nauna nang ipinagutos ni Secretary Cimatu kay Antiporda, na siya ring chair ng NSWMC, ang pag "review and revise" ng DENR Administrative Order 2001-34 o ang Implementing Rules and Regulations ng RA 9003 at gawing mas madali at abot-kaya ang pagtatayo at pagpapagana ng sanitary landfill.

Sinabi ng DENR chief na maraming LGU ang nahihirapan na sumunod sa batas dahil ang pagtayo at pagpapantili ng sanitary landfill ay nangangailangan ng malaking halaga at komplikado.

Ang sanitary landfill ay isang solid waste management facility na gumagamit ng engineered method ng waste disposal, pangunahin ang municipal solid waste. Sa "engineered" method ng landfilling, ang basura ay dinadala sa disposal facility na "designed, constructed and operated in a manner protective of public health and the environment."

SANTI CELARIO



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DENR: More landfills to end PH waste woes

By **CORY MARTINEZ**

MORE engineered sanitary landfills must be built to address the growing problem of solid waste management in the country.

According to Benny Antiporda, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns, the DENR hopes to build more of these landfills before 2022.

Antiporda explained that sanitary landfill is the primary long-term method of solid waste disposal allowed under Republic Act 3 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

He said that under the law, sanitary landfill is required in any LGU as a means of safe disposal of untreated solid waste or resource recovery residuals.

However, Antiporda said the number of sanitary landfills in the country remains small even after 20 years since RA 9003 took effect.

"What we need in this country is about 1,700 san-



Antiporda

itary landfills for all the municipalities and cities. But, sad to say, we only have 108 as of the moment and this number could even decrease in the future," Antiporda lamented.

"Napupuno po ang ating mga sanitary landfill and what happens next is some might go back to open dumpsite, which is illegal under RA 9003. We will not allow this to happen," he added.

Antiporda assured that the DENR under the leadership of Secretary Roy A. Cimatu will do everything to ensure the establishment of more sanitary landfills nationwide before the term of President Rodrigo Duterte ends in 2022.

"Dalawang taon na lang po pero mayroon pa po kaming pwedeng magawa," he stressed. "Sa pamunuan naman po ng aming Kalihim Roy Cimatu, isa lang po ang maipagmamalaki namin: we mean business."

Cimatu had earlier ordered Antiporda, who also chairs the NSWMC, to "review and revise" DENR Administrative Order 2001-34 or the Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA 9003 to make the establishment and operation of a sanitary landfill easier and less expensive.

The DENR chief noted that a lot of LGUs find it difficult to comply with the law as building and maintaining a sanitary landfill can be costly and somewhat complicated.

A sanitary landfill is a solid waste management facility that utilizes an engineered method of waste disposal, primarily for municipal solid waste. An "engineered" method of landfilling means that garbage is handled at a disposal facility that is designed, constructed and operated in a manner protective of public health and the environment.



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DENR magtatayo ng dagdag na sanitary landfill

Upang matugunan ang lumalaking problema ng solid waste management sa bansa umaasa ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na mas maraming engineered sanitary landfill ang maitatayo bago ang taong 2022 sa bansa.

Ayon kay DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns Benny D. Antiporda, ang sanitary landfill ang pangunahing pangmatagalang paraan ng solid waste disposal na pinapayagan sa ilalim ng Republic Act 9003 o ang Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

Dagdag ni Antiporda, ang sanitary landfill ay ipinag-uutos ng nasabing batas sa mga local government unit (LGU) bilang paraan ng safe disposal of untreated solid waste or resource recovery residuals.

Subali't, maliit pa din umano ang bilang ng sanitary landfill matapos ang 20 taon simula nang ipatupad ang RA 9003.

"What we need in this country is about 1,700 sanitary landfills for all the municipalities and cities. But, sad to say, we only have 108 as of the moment and this number could even decrease in the future," ikinalungkot ni Antiporda. **(Riz Dominguez)**



Rescue centers for Taal wildlife

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is looking at the possible establishment of wildlife rescue centers at its satellite offices in Batangas and nearby provinces to facilitate the rescue and rehabilitation of wildlife species that have fled after the Taal Volcano's eruption.

"We want to bring these centers closer to people who have saved or will rescue wild animals that migrated to communities to escape Taal Volcano's wrath, so

they no longer have to travel to Manila to turnover the species," DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said during the turnover of a rescued baby Luzon scops owl or *Otus longicornis* at the DENR's Wildlife Rescue Center in Quezon City last Thursday.

He pointed out that nestlings and other young wildlife species are the most at risk during volcanic eruption since they are unable to fly and travel long distances.

By setting up rescue centers near areas affected by the Taal

Volcano eruption, Antiporda said the DENR could immediately respond to citizens in custody of rescued wildlife.

He also assured that the DENR is available 24/7 to respond to animal rescue situations through its hotlines and social media accounts.

"The public can reach us through our Facebook and Twitter accounts. They can also call us and we will go to them. The DENR is ready 24/7," Antiporda said. **(Ellalyn Ruiz)**



Angara pushes for assessment of damage caused by Taal eruption

By HANNAH L. TORREGOZA
and ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

Now that the alert level on Taal Volcano has been lowered from Level 4 to 3, Senator Juan Edgardo Angara urged on Sunday all local government units (LGUs) and other agencies to immediately conduct an assessment of the damage wrought by the eruption so that Congress can help expedite the recovery and rehabilitation efforts of the affected communities.

Angara noted that in the past two weeks, agencies on the ground have found it difficult to come up with an accurate assessment of the damages because of the lockdown imposed on the affected areas due to the strong possibility of another eruption.

But since the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) has scaled down the alert level and authorities have allowed most of the residents of Cavite and Batangas to return to their homes, the senator said LGUs and agencies on the ground should move quickly to report Congress on the current situation.

"Now that the alert level on Taal has been scaled down by the Phivolcs, the agencies on the ground,

together with the LGUs, should act swiftly to assess the situation and report back to Congress so that we can already get the ball rolling on the recovery of the affected communities," said Angara, who chairs the Senate finance committee.

"May available na pondo at dapat as soon ma-verify na nila yung pangangailangan ng mga komunidad, dapat ibigay nila agad 'yan. 'Yun ang dinadaing ng ating mga kababayan, dahil hindi nila agad nararamdaman yung ayuda (There are funds available and as soon as they are able to verify the needs of the community, those should be disbursed immediately. That is what our countrymen are complaining about, because they do not feel they are immediately getting assistance from the government)," Angara pointed out.

Angara said there is a ₱16-billion appropriation, a significant amount of funding, under the ₱4.1-trillion General Appropriations Act (GAA) for 2020 that is available for the use of different government agencies for the repair and rehabilitation of the affected areas in Cavite, Batangas, and Laguna under the National Disaster and Risk Reduction Management Fund (NDRRMF), or the so-called calamity fund.

On top of this, Angara said there is also ₱6.8 billion in quick response funds (QRF) lodged in the budgets of the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of National Defense-Office of Civil Defense (DND-OCD), and the National Electrification Administration (NEA).

Meanwhile, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is looking at the possible establishment of wildlife rescue centers at its satellite offices in Batangas and nearby provinces to facilitate the rescue and rehabilitation of wildlife species that have fled after the Taal Volcano's eruption.

"We want to bring these centers closer to people who have saved or will rescue wild animals that migrated to communities to escape Taal Volcano's wrath, so they no longer have to travel to Manila to turnover the species," DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said during the turnover of a rescued baby Luzon scops owl or *Otus longicornis* at the DENR's Wildlife Rescue Center in Quezon City last Thursday.



Manila cleanest district gets P1M

In an effort to rally his constituents to participate in the campaign for tidy surroundings, Manila Mayor Francisco "Isko Moreno" Domagoso is offering a P1 million cash prize to the cleanest district in the city.

The mayor made the announcement as part of the directive of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) for local governments to clear public roads of all sorts of obstructions.

The contest is seen to entice barangay officials to maintain cleanliness among Manila's six districts.

The criteria for the P1 million cash prize are 30 percent, segregation of

garbage, 20 percent, the presence of a material recovery facility, 20 percent, the implementation of a greening program, and 15 percent, a barangay clean-up system.

Representatives of the Departments of Environment and Natural Resources, DILG and Science and Technology and Metropolitan Manila Development Authority will validate the shortlist before it will be given to Moreno.

It was learned that the reward will be given to the district's barangay chairmen for the implementation of their projects on solid waste management.

Pat C. Santos



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Cleanest, greenest Manila bggy to receive P1M - Isko

By **ITCHIE G.
CABAYAN**

MAYOR Isko Moreno announced over the weekend that a prize of P1 million awaits the winning barangay which will also be commended by the city via a plaque of recognition.

Moreno has been issuing appeals and directives and implementing measures all aimed at promoting basic cleanliness inside and outside homes.

In launching the search, Moreno said it is hoped that the habit of cleanliness will infect the grassroots level with the involvement of the barangays in all of the city's six districts and numbering 896 in all.

The criteria for judging will be as follows: segregation at source and segregated collection, 30 points; material recovery facility/system, 20 points; greening program, 20 points; barangay solid waste management committee for ecological solid wastemanagement (ESWM), 15 points and barangay weekly clean-up, 15 points, for a total of 100 points.

The panel of judges will be composed of representatives from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and Department of Science and Technology (DOST).

The DILG has allowed a



Mayor Moreno announces search for cleanest barangay in Manila.

Photo by Jerry S. Tan

cap of P1 million for the prize and such amount must only be used for the purpose of establishing clean and green projects

and for the improvement of solid waste management facility.

The winner will be announced on June 24.



P1M awaits cleanest barangay in Manila

By Jerry S. Tan and Cory Martinez

MANILA Mayor Isko Moreno announced that the search for the cleanest and greenest barangay in Manila starts today, with the winning barangay getting a P1-million prize and a plaque of recognition.

Moreno said he hoped that the campaign for cleanliness which he launched from the first day he assumed office will be sustained with the participation of the 896 barangays from the city's six districts.

The 100 points is divided into these criteria for judging: 30 points for segregation at source and segregated collection; 20 points for material recovery facility/system; 20 points for greening program; 15 points for baran-

gay solid waste management committee for Ecological Solid Waste Management (ESWM), and 15 points for barangay weekly clean-up. The winner will be known on June 24.

The judges will be composed of representatives from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and Department of Science and Technology (DoST).

Moreno said the amount is based on the DILG directive which set it as the maximum amount that can be used for establishing clean and green projects and for the improvement of solid waste management facility.

Moreno has been relentlessly appealing to residents for cleanliness in the city.

More sanitary landfill pushed

Meanwhile, more engineered sanitary landfills must be built to address the growing problem of solid waste management.

According to Benny Antiporda, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns, the DENR hopes to build more of these landfills before 2022.

He said the sanitary landfill is the primary long-term method of solid waste disposal allowed under Republic Act 3 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

Under the law, sanitary landfill is required in any LGU as a means of safe disposal of untreated solid waste or resource recovery residuals.

Antiporda said the

number of sanitary landfills in the country remains small for the past 20 years since RA 9003 took effect.

"What we need in this country is about 1,700 sanitary landfills for all the municipalities and cities. But, sad to say, we only have 108 as of the moment and this number could even decrease in the future," Antiporda lamented.

"Napupuno po ang ating mga sanitary landfill and what happens next is some might go back to open dumpsite, which is illegal under RA 9003. We will not allow this to happen," he added.

Antiporda assured that the DENR under the leadership of Secretary Roy A. Cimatu will do everything to ensure the establishment of more sanitary landfills nationwide before the term of President Rodrigo Duterte ends in 2022.

Cimatu had earlier ordered Antiporda, who

also chairs the NSWMC, to "review and revise" DENR Administrative Order 2001-34 or the Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA 9003 to make the establishment and operation of a sanitary landfill easier and less expensive.

The DENR chief noted that a lot of LGUs find it difficult to comply with the law as building and maintaining a sanitary landfill can be costly and somewhat complicated.

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handled at a disposal facility that is designed, constructed and operat-

ed in a manner protective of public health and the environment.



Mayor Isko



P1m sa 'Cleanest Barangay' sa 6 districts ng Maynila - Mayor Isko

TUMATAGINTING na P1 milyon ang ipagkakaloob ni Mayor Isko Moreno sa mapipili bilang pinakamalinis na barangay sa 6 na distrito ng Maynila.

Ang mga criteria o pamantayan sa timpalak ay: 30% sa segregation ng mga basura, 20% kailangan may material recovery facility, 20% mayroon greening program, 15% may isinagawang barangay consultation at 15% barangay clean-up.

Ang mga kinatawan ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) at Department of Science and Technology (DOST) ang magba-validate ng shortlist bago ibibigay kay Moreno.

Ang cash prize ay gagamitin ng mga chairman sa pagsasaayos at improvement ng kanilang Barangay Solid Waste Management.

Gayundin sa mga clean and green project na irekomenda ng DILG.

Layunin ng timpalak na mahikayat ang mga opisyal ng barangay at mamamayan na mapanatili ang kalinisan ng Lungsod ng Maynila. (Andi Garcia)



SI Manila Mayor Isko Moreno habang ina-announce ang search para sa cleanest barangay sa Manila. (Jerry S. Tan)



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WASTEWATER FACILITY BUKAS NA

WASTEWATER FACILITY BUKAS NA

PARA sa isinasagawang "complete rehabilitation, restoration at conservation" ng Manila Bay, binuksan na ang pinakamalaking wastewater facility sa bansa, ang Ilugin Sewage Treatment Plant na matatagpuan sa Brgy. Pinagbuhatan, Pasig City.

Alinsunod ito sa ipinalabas na Administrative Order No. 16 ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na layong bumuo ng isang

task force para sa agarang rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay na layong manumbalik ang kalidad ng tubig nito, mabawasan ang coliform level nilo sa lahat ng major river system at tributaries na nasa Manila Bay Region.

Ang nasabing treatment plant ng Manila Water ay may treatment capacity na 100-million-liters-per-day (MLD) na kaya pang paabutin ng hanggang 165 MLD at uma-

abot sa 658,392 mga kabahayan sa paligid ng Pasig River ang makikinabang.

Bukod pa sa bagong bukas na wastewater facility, mayroon na ring gumaganang 39 at isang rehabilitated wastewater treatment plants ang itinayo para sa paglilinis ng Manila Bay.

Matatagpuan ang mga nasabing planta sa Quezon City na nasa Road 5, East Avenue, Kalayaan, Sikatuna, Heroes Hill, Philam, Belarmino, A. Luna, Palosapis, Pagasa, Fisheries at UP Diliman.

Sa Makati City naman ay

nasa Makati South, Guadalupe, Makati Pabahay at Poblacion. Ang sa Taguig City ay nasa Taguig North, Pinagsama, FTI, Centennial, Diego Silang, Lakeview, Maharlika, Fortville at Bagong Lipunan.

Gayundin, sa Pasig City na nasa Valle Verde, Capitolyo (Pineda), at Karangalan 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. Sa Cainta, Rizal naman ay nasa Karangalan 1, 2, 3; Sa Marikina City ay nasa Marikina North at Olandes at mayroon din sa San Mateo North at Mandaluyong MRH.

Ayon sa Manila Water, ang

kanilang capital investment ay umaabot sa P38.5 bilyon samantalang ang collections nila ay nasa P36.9 bilyon.

Gayunpaman, siniguro ng nasabing water concessionaire na makakamit nito ang 100 percent na sewer coverage sa East zone na kung saan ay karagdagang 10 sewerage treatment plants pa ang itatalayo na may kapasidad na 847 milyon MLD.

Sinabi pa nito, mahigit P110 bilyon pa ang gugugulin para makumpleto ang sewerage program ng bansa hanggang 2037.

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DOOR-TO-DOOR GARBAGE SEGREGATION PROGRAM

MALABON'S 'WASTE WARRIORS' HELP SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT ONE HOUSEHOLD AT A TIME

By Meg Adonis
@MegINQ

She may be 65 years old but Ester Mendoza, a widow and mother to six children who is also one of around 30 "waste warriors" in Malabon City, shows no signs of slowing down.

For many years, she provided for her family by taking on odd jobs. During the day, she was a laundry woman and part-time house helper.

At night, instead of resting, Mendoza would scour the streets of Caloocan City, looking for recyclables to sell to junk shops.

This hand-to-mouth existence continued until she and her family decided to move to Malabon City, where her late husband used to live.

When officials of Barangay Potrero launched a door-to-door garbage collection drive in 2015 with the help of nongovernment organization Mother Earth Foundation (MEF), Mendoza signed up for the program.

"I can only invest on my remaining strength because I did not finish schooling. So as long as I can work and earn money, I will not waste time," she told the Inquirer in a recent interview.

The program has allowed



GREEN THUMBS The biodegradable waste collected from households is turned into compost and used to fertilize the garden in the barangay's materials recovery facility.

the Malabon local government not only to minimize plastic waste and encourage trash segregation, but also to provide jobs to low-income families, said Barangay Councilor Khate Nolasco. She manages and spearheads the campaign.

Although there is no formal recruitment for the program, Mariedel Barbin, head of the waste warriors, said that they targeted longtime scavengers in the area.

"Before they were recruited, you would see them sifting through trash then simply

throwing on the streets the garbage that they could not sell. Through this campaign, we are giving them an incentive and an additional source of income," Barbin explained.

Extra income

The waste warriors, mostly women in their 60s, receive a P3,000 monthly salary. They are also allowed to keep the recyclable materials they collect six days a week from the dozens of households to which they are assigned. Mendoza, for example, earns an additional

P1,400 a week from selling recyclables.

According to Barbin, the volunteers are accompanied by a monitor who checks whether the garbage has been segregated. If not, it will be returned to the household concerned.

"Sometimes the owners would argue with me and even get angry if I don't collect their garbage. But I'm only doing my job, so I explain to them that their trash should not be my problem," said 39-year-old Maricel Zamora, one of the collectors.

TITLE: Malabon's waste warriors' help save the PAGE 1/ 2/2
environment one household at a time



AGE JUST A NUMBER Ester Mendoza (left), with fellow "waste warriors" (from right) Pinky de Galicia, Alminda Barbin, Marcel Mendoza and Emil Ramos, intends to keep on working and making money for her six children while she is still able. —PHOTOS BY JOAN BONDOC

To deal effectively with noncompliant residents, they were required to undergo seminars with MEF that included talks on how to properly explain the importance of waste segregation, Barbin said.

Program requirement

"It was one of the incentives we offered them when we pulled them out of the streets: We need them to attend a one-day seminar for them to be qualified, earn extra income and help save the environment," she explained.

Biodegradable waste, such as food, is transferred to the barangay's second materials recovery facility, which opened last October. It is then turned into compost for the fruits and vegetables being grown inside the facility.

Nolasco said there were three designated areas in Barangay Potrero where garbage trucks still collect the remaining trash, as well as subdivisions that they had been unable to gain access to due to strict security measures being imposed by homeowners' associations. **INO**



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Noble program

Students participating in a project to monitor their parents' compliance at home with the garbage disposal, segregation and reduction program of the city through the Bantay-Magulang Waste Management Project pose for a souvenir shot following the completion of the program.





DA probing how ASF reached

Davao Occidental

DAVAO CITY – The Department of Agriculture (DA) and local officials of the provincial government of Davao Occidental are conducting a probe aimed at tracking how African swine fever (ASF) reached the area.

The ASF case in Davao Occiden-

tal is the first ever outside Luzon that resulted in the killing of at least 1,000 pigs, leading officials to try and contain the virus and stop it from spreading.

ASF is a severe viral disease affect- ing domestic and wild pigs, which

has been responsible for serious production and economic losses in the pork industry.

Agriculture Secretary William Dar ordered the investigation, particularly in areas which the town of Don Marcelino actively trades

with, such as Malita, Santa Maria and Jose Abad Santos towns, all in Davao Occidental and Sulop, in Davao del Sur.

The local government in Davao Occidental has also implemented

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DA From Page 1

a strict lockdown on the movement of pigs for slaughter in Malita and Don Marcelino.

Dar commended Davao Occidental Gov. Claude Bautista, and respective mayors of the two towns for enforcing a complete, but

temporary, lockdown, and in establishing quarantine checkpoints round-the-clock, secured by barangay *tanods* and uniformed Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Philippine National Police (PNP) personnel.

Dar also met with repre-

sentatives yesterday from the the Davao Occidental provincial veterinarian, municipal agriculture officers of Don Marcelino and Malita, and officers of the PNP, AFP, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources office, Municipal Environment and Natural Resources office, Provincial Health Office, as well as the DA-Bureau of Animal Indus-

try (BAI) veterinary quarantine service.

DA-BAI national director Ronnie Domingo instructed the Davao regional veterinary quarantine officers (VQOs) to extend full assistance in restricting animal movement, following the 1-7-10 protocol in affected barangays.

Domingo also advised other regional VQOs in Mindanao

to strictly enforce quarantine procedures and monitor animal movement.

Dar called for strong cooperation among hog raisers and traders to stop the transport and sale of live hogs and pork products from suspected areas.

The DA-Regional Field Office 11 quick response team, together with the Davao

Occidental provincial veterinary office and municipal agriculture office of Don Marcelino, conducted an investigation on Jan. 29 in the town's eight affected barangays of Linadasan, North Lamidian, South Lamidian, Calian, Mabuhay, Lawa, Nueva Villa and Baluntaya.
– Edith Regalado, Louise Maureen Simeon



UNIQUE WILDLIFE, UNIQUE VIRUS

'You never know what you're gonna get'

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA
@jonlmayuga

AS China struggles to contain an epidemic caused by a new deadly strain of coronavirus, Philippine authorities are on heightened alert.

The virus, designated by the World Health Organization (WHO) as 2019-nCoV, also called the Wuhan coronavirus, named after the place where it was traced, is believed to have been passed on from exotic animals—possibly bats or snakes—that are legally and openly sold in a wildlife and seafood market in Wuhan in the Hubei Province of China.

The Department of Health (DOH) announced on Thursday that it had the first confirmed case of someone infected with the deadly and, so far incurable respiratory disease, a Chinese woman who arrived in the Philippines from Wuhan via Hong Kong on January 21.

The DOH said a total of 29 people are tagged "persons under investigation" (PUI) on suspicion of having been infected by the virus.

Deadly disease

IN 2003, the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome or SARS prompted the WHO to reveal the cause of SARS to be a novel coronavirus identified by several laboratories in the United States. The virus hence named SARS-CoV infected 8,000 people and killed 10 percent, or 800 of the confirmed cases.

The 2019-nCoV is as deadly and highly contagious. Like SARS-CoV, it is believed to have been transferred to humans from wild animals in Wuhan.

Wildlife experts say the threat of a deadly disease causing a pandemic is real as deadly viruses are passed on from animals to animals, animals to humans, and eventually, humans to humans.

Worse, from exotic animals could come an equally exotic virus so unique that you'll never know what you are going to get.

Potential ground zero

THE Philippines, like any other country, is a potential ground zero of a global pandemic. Here's why. One of the mega-diverse countries in the world, the Philippines is besieged by animal poaching, targeted both for human consumption, sports trophy, and illegal-wildlife trade.

Being both a source and consumer of illegally traded wildlife products and by-products, it struggles to prevent the hunting or harvesting of threatened animals from the wild.

Despite the concerted efforts of various law enforcement agencies, hunting for food prevails, because of hunger and poverty, in rural areas, and in coastal and upland communities.

The Philippines is also besieged by the illicit pet trade, wherein targeted species end up in steel cages or glass aquariums.

Aided by the Internet, advanced communication technology and gadgetry, the proliferation of social-media platforms and unique, user-friendly applications, even teenagers can now be both a buyer and a seller of wild-caught animals.

On the other hand, big-time criminal syndicates are becoming clever and are always a step

ahead of law-enforcement agencies when it comes to trading wild-caught animals.

Distinct taste, apathy

FILIPINOS have a distinct taste for exotic food. While eating wild-caught animals to some means staving off hunger, to others eating exotic animals means satisfying a craving for exotic food.

Aside from wild boar and deer, exotic animals like sharks, stingray, marine turtle, birds, bats, snakes, monitor lizards are becoming food staple in coastal communities and upland areas where they are abundantly found.

To liquor and beer drinkers, they are a favorite bar chow while to some, for reasons of health and wellness, they are like a magic cure, an aphrodisiac even, a source of imagined strength and vitality.

In catching threatened wildlife, poachers risk infection by a deadly virus from their animal-victims.

Even with an increased level of awareness and consciousness, wildlife conservation experts believe sheer apathy is also behind the seeming uncontrollable addiction of some for wild-caught meat or food.



What is a virus?

Among the most abundant organisms on the planet, yet we know less about them than any other living forms

Viruses are tiny and simple

Much smaller than bacteria

Some are little more than nucleic proteins arranged in a line



In recent years larger viruses discovered, known as mamavirus and megavirus

They have no colour

Virus images are artificially coloured



In reality they are too small to reflect visible light

Scientists can't agree if they are living or not

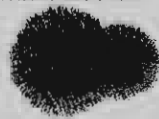
YES: Contain nucleic acids -- DNA and RNA -- and can reproduce

NO: Cannot reproduce independently of a host

Some scientists call them "biochemical mechanisms"

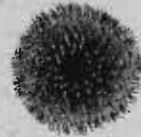
Some die within seconds outside a host

Others can last for years



Viruses last longer in the cold
Heating is one way to kill them

Ultimate parasites



Enter hosts in various ways

Including via:

- Airways
- Digestive system
- Wounds
- Insects



Viruses can parasite all life forms such as animal, plant, fungus and bacteria

Specific viruses depend on specific hosts

They hijack cells to use the host's cellular machinery for reproduction

They are everywhere

One study assessed that the total virus population of Earth is more than a million times the estimated number of stars in the universe



Another study estimated that each day some 800 million viruses attached to dust particles fall onto every square metre of the Earth's surface

There is so much more to learn



In the past five years the number of species identified has increased by 20 times

Beyond good and evil?
Viruses are responsible for some of the most devastating diseases in history

Including

- Influenza
- Ebola
- Smallpox
- Polio
- Rabies
- HIV

At the same time they appear to play a vital role in evolution and the origins of life

Their ability to enter cells has made them useful in gene therapy

They offer a potential key to overcoming drug-resistant superbugs

Strict screening slows China ODA

BY ANGELA CELIS

THE strict process involved in scrutinizing loans from China for the Philippines' infrastructure projects has led to a "rather slow" flow of official development assistance (ODA) from that country, the National Economic and Development Authority's top official said.

Thus, Ernesto Pernia, socio-economic planning secretary, said there is no way the Philippines will be "overshooting" its debt level.

"Actually, the ODA coming from China has been rather slow. We have been very cautious and strict in scrutinizing... we have this screening process at the China level and also on the Philippines' side. They have to submit to us three names of companies that are reputable, no record of monkey-business before, and really credible. They submit three names and on our side we have to screen in terms of selecting the best of the three, so it has been rather slow," Pernia said at the Nordcham Economic

Briefing in Makati held last Friday.

"(Someone mentioned) we're in danger of overshooting our debt level beyond 100 percent? No way! It's unlikely that we would be hitting even 50 percent debt-to-GDP (gross domestic product) ratio," he added.

The Bureau of the Treasury previously said the debt-to-GDP ratio went down to 41.5 percent in 2019 from 41.9 percent a year ago, beating the program of 41.7 percent for the year. Of the total debt stock, 33.7 percent are ex-

ternal debt while 66.3 percent are domestic debt.

"The only China-project actually going on is the Chico River (Pump) Irrigation Project. There is another one, that's Kaliwa Dam but that has barely started so that goes to show that, compared with Japan, Japan International Cooperation Agency ODA has been much faster. There are so many projects now being funded that are ongoing, being funded by Japan. So that is the story," Pernia said.

He also said the economic slow-

down in China plus the Wuhan coronavirus that may affect China's economy may possibly affect projects for approval.

"Maybe... except for those which they have already signed," Pernia said.

According to the Department of Finance (DOF), since the start of the Duterte presidency in 2016, the Philippines and China have so far signed three loan agreements amounting to \$493.08 million. The



PERNIA

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Philippines has also secured a total of \$430.82 million-worth of grants from China since 2016.

Pernia previously said a screening system was put in place on the Philippines' and China's side to make sure that companies interested to participate in infrastructure projects in the Philippines are not questionable or do not have a bad record. They

should not be blacklisted, for example, with the World Bank, Asian Development Bank or the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Last December, the DOF said newly appointed Chinese ambassador to Manila Huang Xilian has committed to institutionalize the conduct of regular meetings between the Philippines and China to thresh out issues involving the administra-

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tion's big-ticket infrastructure and development projects that are being implemented with funding support from China.

The DOF said Huang made this commitment in response to the proposal of Carlos Dominguez, DOF secretary, to hold regular dialogues between high-level officials of the Philippines and China to address such concerns.

"It would be very helpful

if we have regular meetings regarding these projects. Our suggestion has always been to meet once every three or four months," Dominguez said.

According to the DOF, Huang agreed with the finance secretary and said he would "work very hard" to ensure that projects under the "Build, Build, Build" infrastructure modernization program that are being implemented in co-

operation with China would be launched "as soon as possible."

"We will try to make this (regular meetings) happen as soon as possible. My suggestion is we need to institutionalize that kind of mechanism. Every three months to take place, every quarter," Huang said.

In 2018, Dominguez said the Philippines will not fall into a "debt trap" by tapping funds from Japan and China, as the

loans from these countries were extended with the lowest interest rates and the lowest term arrangements possible.

Dominguez then said by the end of the administration's term, the country's project debt to China would constitute around 4.5 percent of the total debt, while the project debt to Japan will be around twice as large or 9.5 percent of total debt.



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Unlawful

ACCORDING to the director of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB), consumers of wild-caught meat or food or by-products, such as meat and eggs don't just face health risks.

Assistant Secretary Ricardo Calderon, the concurrent BMB director, they also risk arrest and jail terms for violating several environmental laws, notably Republic Act 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act, National Integrated Protected Areas System Act and its amendatory version, Expanded Nipas.

Just a myth

CALDERON said beliefs that eating exotic animals have health benefits or magical cures for illnesses are just a myth.

"More often than not, claims of health benefits in eating these animals including alleged [aphrodisiac] effect are just myth and not proven by medical science," he said.

He warned the public that eating wild-caught animals are, in fact, unsafe as they may be infected with a deadly virus that could be passed on to humans.

Without a vaccine or cure for such new and emerging diseases like the Wuhan coronavirus, acquiring such a deadly disease means certain death.

Regional cooperation

WHILE it has no specific campaign against the consumption of exotic foods, the Asean Centre for Biodiversity strongly supports the Asean campaign for curbing illegal-wildlife trade, including the implementation of the Chiang Mai Statement on Illegal-Wildlife Trade, according to ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim. The Chiang

Mai Statement affirms the commitment of Asean member-states in fighting the illegal-wildlife trade, considered a major driver of biodiversity loss.

The statement calls for stronger cooperation among Asean member-states in the fight against illegal-wildlife trade.

The Philippines is a signatory to various international treaties that promise regional cooperation in fighting illegal wildlife trade and conserving important ecosystems, such as the Con-

vention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Bonn Convention and Ramsar Convention.

Contagious

A LICENSED veterinarian and a former DENR-BMB Director, Lim said certain zoonotic diseases can be transmitted from animals to humans.

Wild animals can carry organisms that could be pathogenic to humans, yet the animals can still appear healthy, especially if they are the natural hosts, she explained.

She said, however, the risks are not limited to those who eat the wild meat, but also to those who get into contact with the animals when they catch them, slaughter and/or process them.

"Also, wild animal if under stress, like in captive, crowded conditions, tend to shed more of the virus or pathogen, so the more they can transmit the infection to people," she said.

"Otherwise, if they are left alone in their natural habitat, with less contact with people, of course, there will be fewer chances for transmission," she added.

Potentially potent virus

ACCORDING to Lim, cooking does not guarantee safety in consuming meat infected with viruses or microbes.

"Some viruses or microbes may be destroyed by heat when cooked, but some are resistant to heat, so even if you cook the meat, they remain potent and still cause diseases. If the meat is improperly cooked, the higher the risk of infection that may result from ingestion," she said.

Lim said humans contracting a deadly disease may pass it on to others, potentially causing an epidemic if the disease is uncontrolled.

"If the zoonotic disease from wild animals starts jumping from human to human, or from domestic animals to humans, then that's when an epidemic is likely to occur," she warned.

Not pet or food

LIM said because of the sheer uncertainty of food safety, wild animals should be left alone in the wild as they are neither meant to be pets or food to be eaten, unlike animal livestock which undergo strict inspection to ensure the safety of the consuming public.

The National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS), for instance, checks meats in animal farms and slaughterhouses to ensure that they are healthy, and hence, safe to eat.

Unfortunately, the NMIS covers only domestic or farmed animals, not those that are wild-caught, she said.

"And even if they start inspecting wild-caught meat, certain wild animals, even if infected, may show atypical signs of known diseases or may not manifest signs at all," she said.

"Specific laboratory examinations will have to be conducted," added Lim.

Deadly, but ecologically important

HENCE, Lim said eating bats, a practice in some areas in the Philippines, is very risky as bats have been known to be reservoirs for viruses that cause zoonotic diseases.

However, it does not mean that the bats should be exterminated, as their role in ensuring a balanced ecology outweighs the risk of transferring a deadly virus to humans, she hastened to add.

Glenn Maguad, OIC of the National Wildlife Research and Rescue Center (NWRRC) at the Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Center (NAPWC) in Quezon City agrees.

He said there is also no way of knowing whether animals are in fact carriers of a deadly virus.

"Data deficient"

AVETERINARIAN, Maguad said a major challenge for authorities in preventing the spread of a deadly virus is its lack of capacity, starting with being "data deficient" when it comes to viruses potentially emanating from animal wildlife.

According to Maguad, there's no extensive study when it comes to health risks associated with eating exotic animals like bats, he said.

When it comes to a deadly virus, research and development are always reactive rather than proactive, Maguad said.

He explained that limited resources or funding is just one factor.



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Like hitting a lotto jackpot

THERE'S a logical explanation to the limited research on the deadly virus from wild animal: governments doubt the wisdom of spending so much money to experiment on, say a couple of bats, not knowing what really to look for, in the first place.

Governments, Maguad said, would rather spend limited resources on studying food safety on livestock because of the economic impact of the import or export ban, like in the case of chicken for bird flu, cattle for mad cow disease, or swine for, most recently, African swine fever virus.

Speaking mostly in Filipino, Maguad said there's a very slim chance of discovering a potentially potent virus that can be passed on from animals to animals, animals to humans, and eventually, humans to humans, before a disease causes a mysterious death.

"It's really like hitting jackpot," he said.

According to Maguad, prevention is always better than cure when it comes to deadly diseases triggered by previously unknown virus which unique wildlife are known for.

Unique wildlife, unique virus

MAGUAD said the more exotic the animal, the more exotic the virus can be.

"As the saying goes, unique wildlife, unique virus," he said.

Often, he said governments start investing in scientific research on animal wildlife after a mysterious or unexplained death that is threatening to cause a pandemic, such as what is now happening in the case of the Wuhan coronavirus.

"You wouldn't know what to look for in conducting scientific research when it comes to the virus. Not until you've been hit already," said Maguad, citing the case of the dengue virus, which took several years for scientists to finally discover after many have perished.

"Being proactive in identifying the threats of a potentially deadly virus that can cause an epidemic is impossible. What we can do is to put up measures to reduce the risk of disaster, contain and prevent the spread of the virus, or better yet, avoid contact with wildlife. Better yet, avoid eating wild animals as they are not meant to be eaten," he said.