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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



PHL, China to collaborate on engineered bamboo R&D

REPRESENTATIVES of DENR-ERDB, DOST-PCAARRD and DOST- FPRDI during the meeting. ERDB



MORE projects on engineered bamboo will be implemented through the collaboration of the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD) of the Department of Science and Technology; DOST-Forest Products Research and Development Institute (FPRDI); and the Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR-ERDB).

This is made possible through PCAARRD's partnership with China. PCAARRD Executive Director Reynaldo V. Eborá, together with FPRDI Director Romulo T. Aggangan, briefed the new ERDB Director Nonito M. Tamayo about the proposed RP-China Collaboration Project during their meeting at ERDB headquarters, Los Baños, Laguna.

According to Eborá, the proposed collaboration will initially focus on processing of engineered bamboo to be implemented

by DOST-FPRDI.

However, the Chinese counterpart also expressed interest on bamboo germplasm collection which is under the jurisdiction of DENR-ERDB.

Tamayo responded positively in this research collaboration, with concurrence and supervision from the DENR secretary, undersecretary, and other concerned DENR agencies.

Bamboo is one of ERDB's priority commodities under the National Greening Program.

As a result of the meeting, other R&D proposals on germplasm conservation and agar wood will be packaged by ERDB.

The projects will focus on germplasm collection of bamboo and DNA sequencing, environmental requirements, and propagation of agar wood.

A memorandum of agreement will be prepared to further strengthen partnership among the three agencies. Collaborative projects and activities to be done by respective agencies will be highlighted in the MOA.

*Eirene Grace Z. Arcayos/S&T
Media Services*



DENR ALLOWS TREE-CUTTING ALONG BATAAN HIGHWAY

ORION, Bataan: The Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (Cenro) in Dinalupihan City in this province has issued a permit for the cutting of trees along Roman Expressway. The permit, which was approved last January 28 and released three days later, allows the cutting of 487 trees. Cenro, which is under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, issued the permit to Region 3 Department of Public Works and Highway for its road widening project. A long stretch of the expressway from Hermosa to Orani, Samal, Abucay, Balanga City, Pilar, Orion, Limay and Mariveles is set to be widened from four lanes to six lanes. Some 5,000 trees are planted along the highway.

ERNIE B. ESCONDE



Forest fires

EDITORIAL

With the City of Pines stripped of much of its pine trees

to make way for property development, neighboring areas in Benguet province are also losing their trees.

This month, a fire that raged for nine days destroyed an estimated 150 hectares of forested areas in Kabayan, Benguet. Last Thursday afternoon, another fire broke out in Sitio Nalseb in Tublay, Benguet, destroying at least 20 hectares of pines in just a few hours.

While lightning can spark forest fires, a more common cause in this country is *kaingin* or slash-and-burn farming. Another common cause is the indiscriminate use and disposal of lighted items such as cigarettes.

Apart from the threat to life posed by fires, environmental groups have pointed out the difficulty of reviving vegetation in an area that has been destroyed in a conflagration. The country has already lost too much of its forest cover due to illegal logging and indiscriminate development. The government must do more, in coordination with local communities, to protect the remaining forests.

There has been growing aware-

ness at the grassroots of the advantages of sustainable agro-for-

estry. This awareness has reduced cases of slash-and-burn farming and has encouraged community vigilance in protecting fragile forest ecosystems. Ecotourism has also enhanced the appeal of protecting the environment particularly forests.

Still, the country needs to ramp up efforts to protect forests – not only in terms of monitoring, but also in putting out forest fires. In the raging fire in Tublay, Benguet, residents trekked to the slopes, lugging with them containers of water to augment the water from fire trucks.

Even advanced economies find it difficult to put out forest fires, especially when strong winds blow across tinder-dry vegetation. Forests in the tropical Philippines rarely become that dry, making it a bit easier to douse flames. Still, better equipment is needed to battle forest fires. Upgrading firefighting capability must be matched by increased care when visiting forests. One lit cigarette carelessly flicked away can destroy 150 hectares of precious forest and animal habitat and endanger lives.



NWRB assures sufficient water supply in summer

By CHITO CHAVEZ

The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) on Saturday said an increase in water allocation for Metropolitan Waterworks Sewerage System (MWSS) remains unlikely but maintained that no reduction of water supply is in the offing with the approach of the summer months.

NWRB Executive Director Sevilla David Jr. said the NWRB aims to at

least maintain the 42 cubic meters per second (cms) allocation in the coming months to lessen the impact of the dry spell to the public and ensure a sufficient water supply during summer.

With this declaration, David reiterated that raw water from Angat Dam for domestic use in Metro Manila, Cavite and Rizal is expected to be maintained at a sub-normal level of 42 cms for the third consecutive month this March. ▶15

NWRB assures sufficient... ◀1

Maintaining a 42 cms water allocation, David explained will avoid a reduction in supply until things go back to normal levels.

Normally, the MWSS gets 46 cms from Angat but in 2019 it only received a low of 36 cms when water level at the Angat Dam fell below the critical level of 160 meters above sea level.

Less in April

David also said water supply for irrigation will likewise be maintained at 20 cms or 50 percent of the normal supply for farms. This should be maintained in March since this is the time when crops are at their vegetative stage adding that water allocation may be lessened in April when the crops are almost ready for harvest.

As of yesterday morning water level at Angat Dam was at 202.48

meters above sea level (masl).

The NWRB earlier warned the public to brace for lower water allocation in Metro Manila as the measure is necessary to avoid a repeat of last summer's water shortage where millions of households were severely affected.

"Authorities cannot increase the water allocation for houses to the normal 46 cubic meters per second from the current 40 m³/s because Angat Dam, Metro Manila's main water source, was still below its normal operating level," the NWRB explained.

David asked for public understanding citing the move will avoid another water crisis where howls of protests were hurled against the government.

He noted the water shortage last summer affected some 1.2 million households in the east zone of

Metro Manila, serviced by Ayala-led Manila Water.

Manila Water traced last summer's water shortage woes to the increased demand, lack of rains, delays in infrastructure projects supposed to boost supply and the declining level of the La Mesa Dam.

Meanwhile, senators are pushing for the construction of a potable water supply system for municipalities and villages in the country that still have no access to drinking water.

Relly Leysa, project manager of the Department of Interior and Local Government's Salintubig Program said there are only 60 towns in the Philippines that are still waterless.

Sen. Imee Marcos has proposed an increase in the budget of the Salintubig Program, which she said has "stagnated" for three years at ₱1.5 billion.

Leysa said through the Salintubig Program, the government aims to give all municipalities access to safe water by 2030. (With a report from Vanne Elaine P. Terrazola)



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QC postpones plastic ban

BY FRANZ LEWIN EMBUDO

MAYOR Josefina Belmonte has postponed the implementation of the ordinance banning the use of single-use plastics in Quezon City from February 15 to July 1 due to "needed logistical adjustments" on the part of stakeholders.

"We understand the situation and concerns of the establishments; so, we will give them ample time to comply," Belmonte said.

She said restaurants and hotels have been given until July 1 to fully comply with the ordinance.

"After that, it will be all systems go for the implementation of the ordinance," she added.

The postponement was recommended by the Environmental Protection and Waste Management Department (EPWMD) after a series of dialogues with stakeholders, including restaurants, fastfood chains and hotels.

Ordinance 2876 prohibits the distribution and use of single-use plastics and other disposable materials, including cutlery for

dine-in purposes, in all hotels and restaurants in Quezon City.

The ban covers the use of throwaway plates, spoons, forks, cups, and other plastic and paper disposables

Meanwhile, the stakeholders raised several concerns in terms of food safety and hygiene, logistical concerns and requirements and other issues regarding hotel and restaurant operations.

The deferment of the ordi-

nance's implementation would provide stakeholders time to come up with a transition plan.

EPWMD head Andrea Villaroman said the plan, to be submitted within 30 days from February 15, would include the introduction of recovery and recycling mechanisms for single-use plastics and other disposable materials.

The EPWMD will coordinate with the Philippine Alliance for Recycling and Materials Sustain-

ability to develop the recovery and recycling mechanisms for residual plastics and disposable materials.

Villaroman, meanwhile, said the implementation of the Plastic Bag Ban Ordinance, which started on January 1, was being followed by most of the relevant retailers.

"Personnel of the Climate Change team of this department will be deputized for them to issue notices of violation or environmental violation tickets," she added.