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PH, Southeast Asia need aggressive game plan to check wildlife trade

By **Jhesset O. Enano**
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Southeast Asia needs to ramp up its game plan to tackle its immense wildlife trafficking problem, according to a new report that assessed the illegal trade in the region from the turn of the century.

Published by international wildlife group Traffic, the report highlighted the need for governments to address loopholes in policies and enforcement, especially since inadequate laws, poor conviction rates and poor regulation of markets allow such transboundary crimes to persist in the region.

With 10 countries functioning as source, consumer and transshipment points for wildlife from within the region and the rest of the world, Traffic said Southeast Asia encapsulates the full range of global challenges in biodiversity management and wildlife trade.

The 105-page report, released in full in February, analyzed thousands of successful seizures, revealing stunning numbers related to wildlife trafficking.

Staggering numbers

From 2000 to 2019, for instance, an estimated 895,000 pangolins were trafficked globally, while over 96,000 kilograms of their scales were seized in Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam from 2017 to 2019. This represents 94 percent of the total volume of scales confiscated in the region during this period.

The report also revealed that over 200 tons of African elephant ivory, 100,000 pig-nosed turtles and over 45,000 songbirds were seized in the region in the past 19 years.

Despite the staggering numbers, Traffic said these data only showed a small fraction of the true scale of the wildlife trade, since seizures represent only trafficking incidents that were

successfully intercepted. In addition, complex and ambiguous systems to regulate commercial trade were also riddled with loopholes, the group said.

"Not a day goes by without a wildlife seizure taking place in Southeast Asia," said Kanitha Krishnasamy, Traffic Southeast Asia director, in a statement.

"Seizures are certainly commendable, but what must be eradicated are the many basic enabling factors that drive and fuel illegal trade," she added.

Pervasive corruption

Inadequacies in national legislation, low rates of prosecution and pervasive corruption remain as enabling factors for the trade. Poor regulation of legal wildlife trade also contributed to the problem, while illicit online marketplaces, such as those in social media, likewise mushroomed in the past decade, the report said.

Such realities were reflected in Traffic's assessment of

the Philippines, where there had been several seizures of endangered animals and animal byproducts, among the biggest of which is elephant ivory.

The report also noted frequent entry of Indonesian wildlife for a thriving pet trade, as well as wildlife laundering operations for international trade.

To address the illicit trade in the region, Traffic said Southeast Asian governments and its partners should work together to harmonize national laws, increase penalties and identify and shut down open markets that sell protected wildlife and their products, among others.

For the Philippines, the report recommended the commitment of more resources and efforts into investigating the trade and trafficking, particularly through enhanced vigilance at the entry and exit points in the country. INQ



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ASEAN HERITAGE PARKS

Gene pool of PHIL's rare, endemic species

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

[@jonlmayuga](#)

ONE of the world's megadiverse countries, with a high rate of endemism, the Philippines is also a biological hot spot because of rapid rate of biological loss.



HIBOK-HIBOK crater lake ACB



The enormous threats to the country's environment and natural resources range from natural phenomena, like a volcanic eruption, forest fires and climate change-triggered events, like severe drought, sea-level rise, salt-water intrusion, flooding and landslide.

Among the threats also include destructive human activities, like massive land conversion for real-estate development; commercial logging; mining; quarrying to unsustainable agricultural practices; specifically slash-and-burn farming, charcoal making, timber poaching for construction, and dependence to wood for fuel to hunting for food and trophy, and harvesting of animal and plant wildlife for the highly lucrative illegal wildlife trade.

Efforts to conserve and protect the country's rich biodiversity, nevertheless, have gone a long way, through laws and policies, including international commitments.

Anchored on the strength of its protected area management, the Philippines has more than 240 protected areas covering more than 5 million of the country's 30 million hectares of land area.

Asean Heritage Parks

A MEMBER of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), the Philippines boasts of having one of the most numbers of heritage parks in Southeast Asia.

As of last year, it has a total of nine Asean Heritage Parks (AHPs)—all have unique features and importance, with their protection having more imperative to prevent biodiversity loss, and extinction of its critically endangered and endemic species of plant and animal wildlife.

The AHP is a program being implemented by the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB).

They showcase the best of the best ecotourism sites and represent successful conservation ef-

forts of Asean member-countries.

There are a total of 41 AHPs, five of which were designated as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) World Heritage Sites.

Ongoing program

ENVIRONMENT Assistant Secretary Ricardo L. Calderon, also the concurrent director of Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB), said the designation of AHPs is an ongoing program of the DENR and the ACB.

He said the DENR-BMB is eyeing more sites, including the Pasonanca Natural Park that straddles Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga del Norte, if it passes the criteria of the ACB.

An AHP, he said, is a priority conservation area. "These areas are usually old national parks with high biodiversity, which needs special protection. These are the areas with very high biodiversity value," Calderon said.

"We are also looking for more areas that will involve [the collaboration of] two or three countries, and we are looking at the Turtle Islands Natural Park in Tawi-Tawi as a potential AHP," he added.

Calderon said that once an area is declared an AHP, it will initially get a P4-million budget for the operationalization of the protected area management.

Protected areas in the Philippines undergo a strict management regime with a Protected Area Management Board involving various stakeholders or collaborators as the highest policy-making body.

Gene pools

NINE AHPs in the Philippines are getting their much-needed attention. The country's AHPs are especially important as they help maintain the gene pool of its endemic species. They are:

- Mounts Iglit-Baco Natural



Park is home to the Philippine Tamaraw, or the Mindoro dwarf buffalo, which is endemic only to the island of Mindoro, meaning it could not be found anywhere else in the world.

■ Mount Kitanglad Range Natural Park is where the world's biggest flower species, scientifically known as *Rafflesia schadenbergiana*, would be found, the same with the critically endangered Philippine eagle.

■ Mount Hamiguitan Range Wildlife Sanctuary is the habitat of a pygmy forest, Philippine eagle and a locally endemic pitcher plant, *Nepenthes hamiguitanensis*.

■ Mount Malindang Range Natural Park is home to rare and new records of Philippine mosses, and is a known natural habitat of endemic species of wild plants, such as dwarf bamboo and the Benguet pine, and wild species of birds, long-haired fruit bats, Philippine deer and giant bushy-tailed cloud rats.

■ Mount Makiling Forest Reserve in Laguna is home to large flying foxes *Pteropus* and *Acerodon* species. The endemic Luzon pygmy fruit bat (*Otopteropus cartilagonodus*) may be present at higher elevations of the mountain.

■ Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park, a Unesco World Heritage Site, is home to diverse species of corals and is teeming with marine wildlife.

■ Mounts Timpoong and Hibok-Hibok Natural Monument, an important bird area, is home to two of the restricted-range species of the Mindanao and Eastern Visayas Endemic Bird Area recorded on Camiguin

Island, including species and subspecies of the yellowish bulbul.

■ Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary, home to the 20-foot-long crocodile Lolong, the world's largest saltwater crocodile ever to be caught alive, is also one of the most ecologically important wetlands in the Philippines. Lolong died some time after it was caught.

■ Mount Apo Natural Park is a key biodiversity area and home to over 272 bird species, with around 111 species known to be endemic to the Philippines. The protected area is also home to the critically endangered Philippine eagle.

Coping with the challenge

THE Philippines is coping with the enormous challenge of maintaining its AHPs, including the provision of resources and dedicated staff to ensure that they are effectively managed, ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim said.

"AHPs, as with other protected areas in the Philippines, need resources and dedicated staff," she said.

In the past, Lim, who served as director of the DENR-BMB for 15 years prior to her post at ACB, said limited resources for biodiversity and protected areas has compelled the Philippines to prioritize the areas for government funding and come up with innovative ways for sustainably financing the remaining ones.

"One criteria previously used to prioritize the [protected areas] is 'those considered globally [Unesco heritage parks] and regionally important [AHPs]' so that is more or less how the AHPs are allocated



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resources," she said.

Today, she said it is a welcome development that protected areas are getting funds for the implementation of various protection and conservation programs.

"I am pleased to hear that around P500 million [is provided] for the implementation of the Enipas [Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act] and the effective management of the Philippines's protected area system. With this, the AHPs should have their dedicated share from the allocation," she said.

Stakeholder participation

ACCORDING to Lim, one strength in the protected area management in the Philippines is the broad stakeholder participation in developing policies, and hence, decision-making at the site level.

However, she said there is a need for more "buy-in" from the local communities, indigenous peoples, and industries working with and/or around the protected areas.

"So that they, themselves, can initiate the protection measures for the protected areas, not because the laws say so, but because they know that a well-protected natural ecosystem benefits them," she said.

This means that there is a need to come up with ways for stakeholders to actively participate when it comes to implementation so that policies that are developed can be effectively enforced on the ground.

"And not just because there are penalties if they violate the policies, but because they believe that

the policy will benefit them, so advocacy campaigns and capacity development are needed," she added.

Mainstreaming biodiversity

PROTECTED areas are under constant threats, but the more serious threat to managing them, Lim said, is the lack of deeper appreciation for the true value of the biodiversity, which the AHPs are intending to secure and protect through the "whole of government" and the "whole of society" approach.

"It is for this reason that the ACB is pushing for the mainstreaming of biodiversity in the region, in every aspect imaginable," she stressed.

Other serious biodiversity threats, such as natural calamities that require disaster mitigation and risk reduction; disease and pest control, natural pollination and propagation of commercially important or potentially valuable plants and trees, she said, needs integration in policies, plans, and actions of various sectors and institutions.

"Once other sectors, such as business and finance, agriculture, tourism, infrastructure, energy, etc., as well as members of all branches of government, and the private sector recognize the importance and the benefits that can be provided by AHPs, then other threats may consequently be addressed," she said.

Other threats, like overexploitation, indiscriminate land and land-use conversion, and perverse incentives, can, likewise, be addressed once mainstreaming of biodiversity is institutionalized.



Single-use plastic bawal na sa gobyerno

HABANG laganap ang paggamit sa mga kasangkapang plastic na minsanan lang nagagamit, patuloy na nabibingit sa kapahamakan ang ating kapaligiran. Ito'y problema 'di lamang sa Pilipinas kundi sa buong mundo.

Kaya nilagdaan na ni Environment Secretary at National Solid Waste Management Commission chairman Roy Cimatu ang isang resolution na nagbabawal sa paggamit ng "single use plastic" sa lahat ng mga government offices sa buong bansa. Ito ang Resolution 1363 series of 2020.

Kabilang sa ipagbabawal ay mga plastic cups, straws, coffee stirrers, plastic spoons, forks, knives, plastic bags at sando bags. Inaatasan ang lahat ng mga tanggapin ng gob-

yerno na ipatupad ang pagbabawal sa mga plastic utensils. Sa ilang pribadong establishments tulad ng mga fast food restaurant ay ipinatutupad na rin ito, ngunit hindi sa lahat. Depende ito kung may ordinansang nagbabawal sa plastic sa mga lungsod o bayan na kinaroroonan ng restaurant.

Naniniwala ako na dapat na rin ipatupad nang puspusan ang pagbabawal sa mga restaurants, lalo na yurigi mga fast food na karamihan sa mga kagamitan ay gawa sa plastic na pangunahing dahilan ng pagbabara sa mga karagatan at daluyan ng tubig. Ang hirap lang, unti-unti lang ang implementasyon ng kautusan.

Kakailanganin dito ang act of Congress para bubuo ng kaukulang batas laban sa paggamit ng plastic na minsanan lang ginagamit. Diyan marahil kailangan ang political will ng ating Pangulong Duterte na sa maraming pagkakataon ay napatunayan na.

Maging sa mga plastic utensils ay mayroon pa ring hindi maipagbawal dahil walang alternatibong maipapalit sa mga ito. Sa ngayon, wala lamang ang ipinagbawal gamitin at ipinaliwanag ni DENR Usec. Benny Antiporda kung bakit.

Ayon kay Antiporda, isinasaad sa Republic Act 9003 section 29 na ang mga gamit na yari sa plastic na wala pang alternatibong kapalit ay puwede pa ring magamit.



Stricter moves vs illegal waste importation urged

Quezon City-based environmental group EcoWaste Coalition has urged the government to immediately exert greater measures that will ban waste importation in the Philippines.

The group stressed that such moves would "send a clear and unequivocal warning that the Philippines is no longer accepting other countries' trash".

A strong advocate for a zero-waste and toxics-free society, EcoWaste Coalition called on the government to expeditiously ratify the Basel Ban Amendment, an international law banning the export of hazardous wastes from developed to developing countries, and to issue a national waste importation ban.

"While our country has ratified the Basel Convention in 1993, we still have not ratified the Basel Ban Amendment that was adopted in 1995 and entered into legal force in December 2019. By ratifying the said amendment, which is designed to fix the recycling loophole in the treaty, we protect our territory from becoming a dumping ground for hazardous wastes and other wastes camouflaged as 'recyclables' that could no longer enter China and other countries," said Aileen Lucero, National Coordinator, EcoWaste Coalition.

"Our current laws are not strong enough to shield us from waste traders in search for cheap recycling and disposal options in

developing countries like ours. We need a stronger defense against the entry of hazardous wastes and other wastes, including plastic waste, which could be better managed in exporting countries," she added.

Lucero pointed out the string of waste controversies "that rightly angered our people justifies a clear and unequivocal policy warning waste traders and traffickers that it's no longer 'garbage business as usual' in the Philippines.

She recalled the entry of so-called "plastic scraps" from Canada, "plastic synthetic flakes" from South Korea, "assorted electronic accessories" from Hong Kong, and "municipal wastes/processed

engineered fuel (PEF)" from Australia, as clear indicators of the need to overhaul the national policy on the importation of foreign waste.

"Banning waste imports will be for the greater interest of the nation," the EcoWaste Coalition said.

"Beyond banning waste imports, we support stricter monitoring of imports to ensure that no waste is brought in under false declarations," the group added.

The group noted that neighbouring countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam have taken various actions to stop the flow of hazardous wastes and other wastes into their ports.

"To effectively deter illegal waste trade, we urge the ASEAN to initiate a regional response fully banning waste imports in the entire economic bloc," the group suggested. **(Chito Chavez)**



DENR seeks private firms' help in Manila Bay cleanup

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has asked more private firms to include in their corporate social responsibility programs the cleanup of Manila Bay.

Saying the DENR cannot rehabilitate Manila Bay alone, Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu highlighted the importance of public-private partnerships in environmental initiatives.

Last week, the agency launched the P1-billion Tullahan-Tinajeros River dredging project.

The project involves the cleanup of the Tullahan-Tinajeros River from Barangay Catmon in Malabon to Barangay Bagumbayan South in Navotas City.

The DENR partnered with diversified conglomerate San Miguel Corp. (SMC) to make the project possible.

Cimatu said the dredging project is a "perfect example of a collaboration between the government and the private sector."

"The commitment of SMC to help

us in this enormous task magnifies the importance of shared responsibility. As we are all part of the problem, one way or another, we can all be part of the solution," he added.

Cimatu expressed hope that the partnership with SMC would inspire other private firms to help in the cleanup of waterways.

The river system, which starts from La Mesa Dam in Quezon City, passes through the cities of Valenzuela and Malabon and drains into the Manila Bay at the Navotas Centennial Park.

SMC president and chief executive officer Ramon Ang said the company would shoulder the expenses, including manpower, to ensure that the project would be completed on time.

The project formalized SMC's participation in the adopt-a-river program of the DENR as part of the continuing *mandamus* of the Supreme Court to clean up Manila Bay.

- Rhodina Villanueva



Navotas gets high score in MBCRPP

THE City Government of Navotas received a 94.2 percent mark in the 2019 Assessment of Compliance of Local Government Units with Manila Bay Clean up, Rehabilitation and Preservation Program (MBCRPP).

Navotas was among the top five LGUs that actively pursued the Supreme Court mandamus which ordered government agencies to "clean up, rehabilitate and preserve Manila Bay" and restore its water quality to make it fit for swimming and other contact recreation.

Mayor Toby Tiangco urged constituents to continue to help maintain cleanliness of water bodies surrounding the city.

"Fishing is our main source of livelihood and as a fishing community, we should place utmost importance to keeping the health and condition of our seas and rivers," he said. "We have policies and programs to keep our seas and rivers



Navotas City Mayor Toby Tiangco poses with representatives of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) upon receiving an award as a top performer in rehabilitating Manila Bay and its tributaries.
—Photo by Edd Reyes

clean and bring back their water quality to swimming level. However, we need everyone's support and participation to make these policies and programs successful," he added.

Navotas implements ordinances on anti-littering, proper sewage and septage requirement for households, institutions and establishments,

among others.

It also actively participates in the Battle for Manila Bay clean-up drive, collecting 2,267,087 kilos of garbage since January to December 2019.

In addition, the city continues its efforts to provide new homes to informal settler families living along coastlines and waterways.

—Edd Reyes



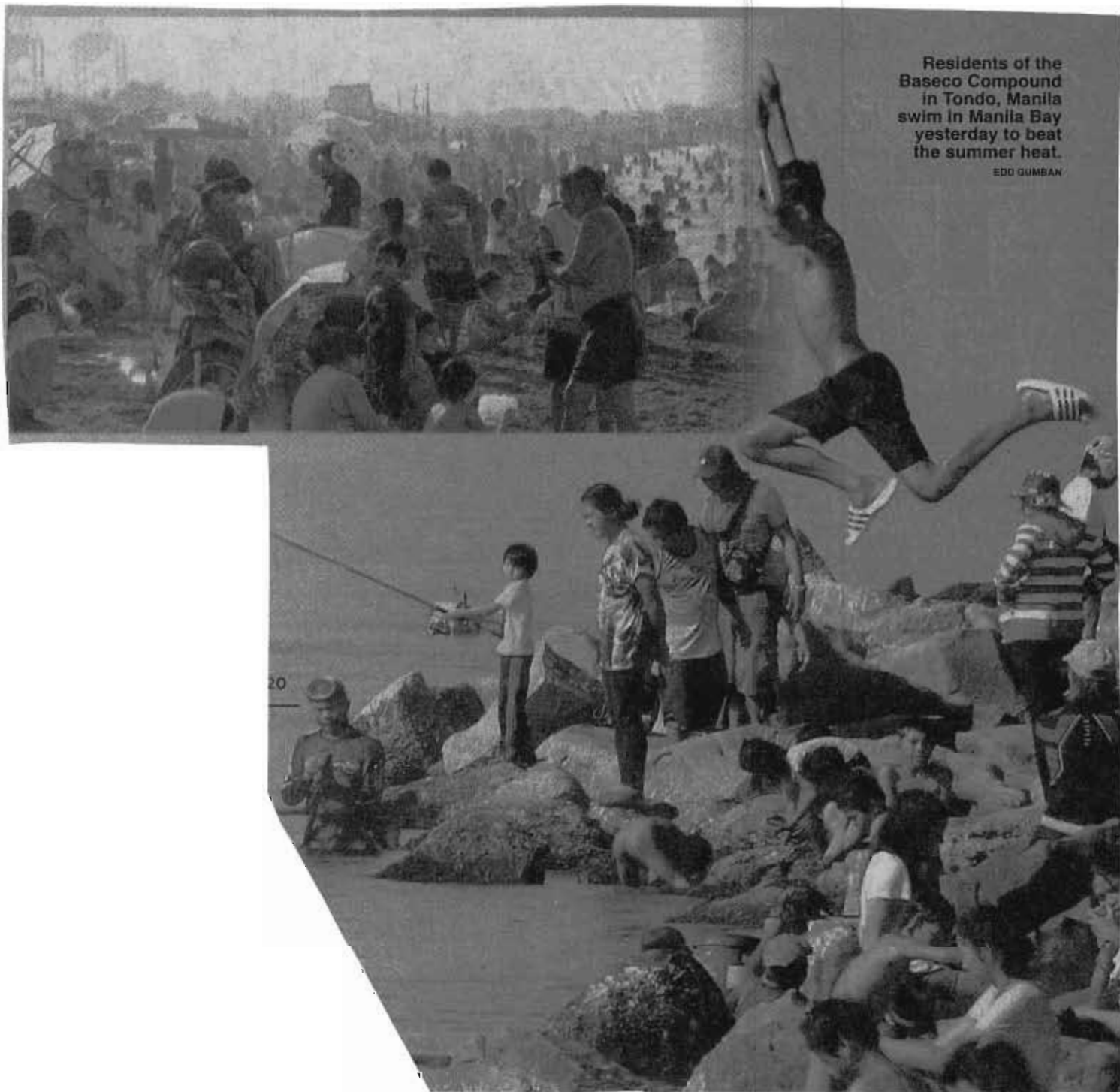
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Residents of the Baseco Compound in Tondo, Manila swim in Manila Bay yesterday to beat the summer heat.

EDO GUMBAN



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Special Print 1995

The Manila Times



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EASY SUNDAY A man on a wheelchair is carried for a refreshing splash in Manila Bay, which teemed with swimmers on Sunday.
PHOTO BY MIKE ALQUINTO



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Dahil sa umiinit sa panahon, nagmistulang piyesta sa Manila Bay nang lumusong at maligo sa tubig ang mga residente ng Baseco Compound sa Tondo, Maynila kahapon. May ongoing clean-up na ginagawa ang pamahalaan upang ma-revive ang Manila Bay subalit hindi pa rin nagpaawat ang publiko sa paglangoy sa polluted na tubig. (Kuha ni Edd Gumban)



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DANGEROUS WATERS. A salbabida vendor peddles his wares along Baseco beach in Tondo, Manila as families take a dip to beat the heat despite prohibition from authorities as the waters are highly contaminated with coliform. **Norman Cruz**



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PHOTOGRAPH BY BOB DUNGO JR. FOR THE DAILY TRIBUNE @tribunephil_bob

Benefit of doubt Hopefully, a dog owner walks his dog for exercise and not to turn the rehabilitated Baseco beach as a huge latrine.



DUMAGSA SA UNANG ARAW NG MARSO. Habang tumataas ang temperatura, ginugol ng mga taong ito ang kanilang oras sa Baseco beach sa Tondo, Manila upang magpalamig.

Kuha ni **NORMAN ARAGA**



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ANG PANGUNAHANG PAMAYGANG TAGALOG SA BANSA

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3,200 hectares in GenSan falsely titled

BY JERRY N. ADLAW

AT LEAST four groups are claiming ownership of a 3,200-hectare pasture area in Barangay Tumbler in General Santos City.

The claimants are the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples Region 12 (NCIP-12), the city government, the six clans of an indigenous tribe, alleged lease holders and the alleged group that bought the land.

NCIP-12 Director Jean Anne Moendig-Zoilo said the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR-12) filed a case

before a regional trial court here to determine the true and real owners of the huge land.

Meanwhile, the six clans have a pending motion filed before the NCIP-12 to declare the pasture area as their ancestral land.

"The NCIP-12 cannot execute the Certificate of Ancestral Land Title in favor of the six clans of

the indigenous tribe in GenSan considering there is a pending case on cancellation and reversion of titles before the regional trial court," Moendig-Zoilo said.

A group of lease holders was accused to have obtained fraudulent titles.

The group is facing a legal conflict with a group of investors who bought almost half of the disputed 3,200 hectares.

Apparently worse was that the investors were able to get titles.

The city government, however, is invoking Republic Act (RA) 9649 or the Charter of the City of

General Santos, as amended by RA 5412, as the basis of its claim.

"...all lands of the public domain having been ceded by the national government to the city of General Santos shall exercise the rights and prerogatives over such lands in the concept of a beneficial owner and the disposition of all lands of the public domain within the city shall be in accordance with the provisions of Commonwealth Act Number 141, as amended, and all other pertinent laws, executive issuance, rules and regulations as provided under the said act and

the city government of General Santos shall concur prior to any disposition, administration, and management of such public land", Moendig-Zoilo said, citing the law.

General Santos City Mayor Ronnel Rivera said the city is the rightful owner.

"We, as one of the lease holders who hold land titles, are considered as the priority applicant and claimant. I am not in favor of RA 9649, as amended by RA 5412, because it will create a serious problem involving the various party claimants like the investors, the indigenous tribes and the GenSan LGU (local government

unit)," he added.

"Although I am the current city mayor, I suggest that there must be an *en banc* committee hearing to determine the real owner of the land and to solve the problem once and for all," Rivera said.

Former mayor Darlene Ricasa Antonino-Custodio had filed a case before the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) seeking opinion as to who has the legal rights to the questioned land.

She also sought guidance from the OSG as to allegations that some DENR-12 personnel connived to process the issuance of fraudulent titles.



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ANTICOAL PROTEST Clean energy advocates picket a Meralco office in this January 2020 photo to protest the continued use of coal in its power supply contracts. —NINO JESUS ORBETA

STOP FUNDING COAL PROJECTS, BANKS URGED

By **Carla P. Gomez**
@carlagomezINQ

BACOLOD CITY—A Roman Catholic bishop, who has been at the forefront of the campaign to save the environment, is urging local banks and financial institutions to stop funding the expansion of coal operations in the country and instead support the development of renewable sources of energy.

“As fulfillment of their moral obligation, Philippine banks must have concrete plans to phase out coal finance in the time required by today’s climate crisis,” said Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of the Diocese of San Carlos in Negros Occidental.

Clear policies

“They (banks) must have clear policies restricting their exposure to coal, channeling the funds they divest from it into clean and affordable renewable energy for all Filipinos,” said Alminaza.

Alminaza said he made the call during the 3rd Philippine Environment Summit at the Grand Caprice Convention Center in Cagayan de Oro on Friday, where he represented the With-

draw From Coal Campaign.

Current initiatives contributing to the country’s social and economic development while conserving the environment were tackled at the summit during the two-day summit that ended on Feb. 28.

In his speech, Alminaza praised President Duterte’s directive to “fasttrack” the development of renewable energy resources and reduce dependency on coal during the State of Nation Address in 2019.

But the bishop also pointed out that the continuing dominance of coal in the country’s energy mix called for even more ambitious ways forward from different sectors, including the finance industry.

In fact, he said, the Department of Energy has 29 approved coal plants in the pipeline, one of which is in San Carlos City, the seat of his diocese.

The bishop has been leading a campaign against the planned construction of the 300-megawatt (MW) coal plant by San Miguel Corp. Global Power Holdings Corp.

“Banks financing coal are not only funding the climate crisis, they are also enabling the con-

tinued suffering of coal-affected communities,” he stressed.

In a statement, Withdraw from Coal Campaign said the country had 16 new coal-fired power plants in the last decade.

Still, it added, the Philippines was looking to add a total of 12,014 MW of new coal power, making it the ninth biggest coal expansionist in the world as of 2019.

The statement said 13 local banks had been identified to have loaned or underwritten \$6.303 billion to coal interests from 2017 to the third quarter of 2019.

Most vulnerable

Alminaza said that since the Philippines was one of the most vulnerable nations to climate change, the country must lead in phasing out coal while financial institutions must take their role in it seriously.

Launched in Manila in January and in Visayas in February, “Withdraw from Coal” is a campaign spearheaded by the Church, civil society, and people’s organizations urging Philippine banks to divest from businesses involved in coal power generation and coal extraction. INQ



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Phi environment summit launched

Church leaders have called for an end to coal operations of businesses during the launching of the 3rd Philippine Environment Summit in Cagayan de Oro from Feb. 26 to 28.

The summit was part of the "withdrawal from coal" campaign launched in Manila by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines recently, according to Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of the Diocese of San Carlos, Negros Occidental.

The Catholic Church spearheaded the campaign together with civil society and non-government organizations in a bid to urge companies to divest from businesses involved in coal power generation and coal extraction.

"As part of its moral obligation, the government should phase out coal operations of businesses to avert climate crisis and support the development of renewable energy instead," Alminaza, who has been at the forefront of the campaign to save the environment from pollution, said.

He said the Philippines is one of the most vulnerable nations to climate change.

Bishop Antonio Ledesma of Cagayan de Oro also attended the summit.
- Rhodina Villanueva

PHL govt urged: Take prompt steps to improve air quality

AIR pollution is a silent killer in the Philippines, thus, the government must take urgent steps to address the problem before it gets worse, concerned groups urged.

Environmental, science and health groups last week raised the alarm following recent reports on poor air quality in the country.

A global report launched last week showed that air quality in the Philippines contains PM2.5 pollution levels that significantly exceed the safety limits prescribed by the World Health Organization (WHO).

The groups—Greenpeace Philippines, Clean Air Asia, Center for Energy, Ecology and Development (CEED), Health Care Without Harm, the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice and the World Wide Fund for Nature Philippines—also called on the Philippine government to revamp and improve current air pollution monitoring systems in order to provide more reliable information on whether the air in the communities is still safe.

The 2019 AirVisual report places the Philippines in the 58th spot out of 98 countries with locations from where air-quality data was collected.

The groups emphasized that while available AirVisual data did not place the Philippines as among the countries with the worst air quality, it nevertheless shows that the country still has very polluted air.

Year-on-year data also shows that the country's air quality is getting worse. Average PM2.5 pollution levels in AirVisual sites increased from 14.6 micrograms per cubic meter in 2018 to 17.6 µg/m³ in 2019.

The safety limit set by the WHO is 10 µg/m³.

PM2.5 is the term for fine particulate matter that is less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter. This pollutant can come from various sources, especially combustion of fuels. Because of its small size, it can impair lung function and is known to cause respiratory illnesses, heart disease and premature death.

The groups also noted that the report only looks at PM2.5 pollution, and does not include other pollutants, such as sulfur oxide, nitrous oxide, ozone and other contaminants that carry deleterious health risks.

A report released by Greenpeace Philippines earlier this month showed that these and other toxic emissions can cost Filipinos as much as 1.9-percent GDP loss and 27,000 premature deaths.

The groups are calling for better air pollution standards in the Philippines, including improved monitoring, transparency and analysis.

In the case of the 2019 AirVisual report, the quantity and placement of air monitors from which data were collected provide only a small snapshot of the threat of PM2.5 air pollution.

To be effective, the groups say that the government should monitor places close to main sources of air pollution, such as coal-fired power plants and high traffic areas of motorized vehicles.

Further, the groups have called for the following measures to address the impacts of air pollution:

- President Duterte to declare air pollution as a national issue and to order all line agencies involved in air-quality monitoring and regulation to prioritize this issue;

- Enhance transparency, and expedite the review and update of the air pollution standards under Republic Act 8749, or the Clean Air Act of 1999.

- Issue a moratorium on all Permits to Operate Air Pollutant Installations, especially for proposed coal-fired power plants until the Ambient Air Quality Guideline Values, and Standards and Emission Standards are updated.

- Make air pollution monitoring devices mandatory in all cities, government offices and, particularly, in heavy polluting industries/facilities, such as coal power plants and



HEAVY traffic in Metropolitan Manila. NONOY LACZAR/FILE

in areas with high concentration of motorized vehicles.

- Allocate more funds and manpower to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to increase its capacity in air-quality monitoring, including enabling the department to install its own emissions-monitoring devices in existing coal-fired power plants and, in the meantime, adopt a stringent process for validating self-monitoring reports of emissions rates.

- Fully prepare and implement a National Plan on the Reduction of GHG, as mandated by Section 31 of the Philippine Clean Air Act.

- Address the root cause of air pollution in the country by implementing a transition plan away from the use of coal energy and fossil fuels in the transport sector.

Khevin Yu, campaigner of Greenpeace Philippines, said: "The Philippine government should see the data as an impetus to overhaul air-quality monitoring systems in the country, as well as to transition away from highly polluting facilities, such as coal plants."

He added that the country's safety standards for air pollution haven't changed since 1999.

"But what's worse is that there are still no efficient air-quality monitoring systems in place. This situation has allowed industries and facilities to pollute the air we breathe with impunity. The good news is that the solutions to air pollution are also solutions to the climate crisis, and addressing air quality now will not just improve the livability of our cities and municipalities, but also move the country away from dependence on fossil fuels,"

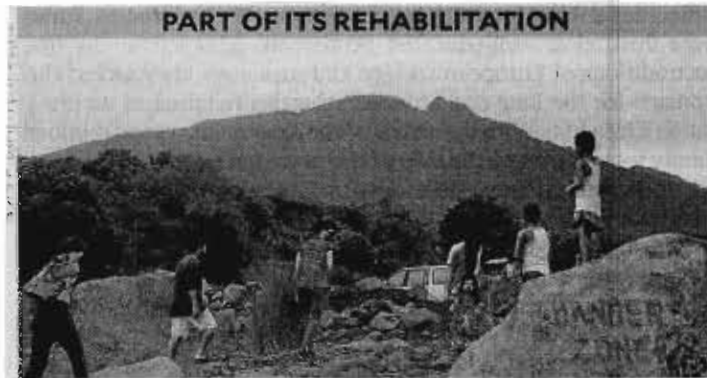
Yu added.

For his part, Bjarne Pedersen, executive director of Clean Air Asia, said online reports of world rankings of cities in terms of air pollution provide with some important insights into the state of air quality in parts of Asia, which, in turn, helps raise awareness on the levels of air pollution.

"Heightened awareness can increase public concern about the impacts of air pollution and build momentum for continued mitigation efforts. However, concrete actions require more than just numbers. We all have a role to play in improving air quality, and collaboration among all stakeholders will be essential to achieve the transition we need. We have the technology, we have the knowledge, and we have the solutions. Clean air for all is achievable. But we must act now," he said.

Gerry Arances, executive director of CEED, said the fact that the Philippines is not listed among countries with most polluted air, and that some of its cities are deemed as having least dirty air among other urban centers in Southeast Asia "are in no way reasons to pat the backs of Philippine authorities, especially the DENR [that is] mandated to ensure clean air for Filipinos."

He explained: "Given that tens of thousands of our people die every year due to polluted air, results of the AirVisual report are instead indicative of the absolute inadequacy of air-quality monitoring in the country, the lax implementation of standards, and the neglect in keeping policies up to date with health, climate and environmental imperatives."



MAJESTIC Mt. Arayat beckons to trekkers. —TONETTE OREJAS

MT. ARAYAT OFF-LIMITS AFTER HOLY WEEK

By **Tonette Orejas**
@ttorejasINQ

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The Mt. Arayat National Park will be off-limits to local and foreign trekkers and bikers starting April 13 to give way to rehabilitation work, an official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said on Sunday.

The area straddling the eighth to 14th station of the cross on the side of Barangay Ayala in Magalang town will be temporarily closed for 30 days, according to Laudemir Salac, DENR officer in Pampanga.

He said the 14th station up to the summit, both accessed via Magalang and Barangay Lacquios in Arayat town, will also be shut down for 45 days.

The DENR, Samahan ng mga Magsasaka sa Mataas na Lupa ng Ayala Inc. (SMAMLI) and volunteers will clean the trail from the jump-off point to the summit, which spans more than 50 kilometers.

Tour guides will be trained and accredited by the Department of Tourism while a live-

lihood center is turned over to SMAMLI, said Salac, who also chairs the Protected Area Management Board in the province.

Single-use plastics

He said charcoal making, slash-and-burn farming and dump-making remain prohibited in the trail under the Expanded National Integrated Protected Area Systems Act of 2018 that strengthens the conservation of 97 ecologically critical areas, including Mt. Arayat.

Single-use plastics are now banned on the 1,026-meter tall inactive volcano.

Salac said that once it's reopened in June, the DENR would require visitors to sign a waiver spelling out their agreement with policies protecting the environs of Mt. Arayat. The DENR's Ecosystem Research and Development Bureau is being asked to determine the carrying capacity of the mountain.

Pampanga Rep. Aurelio Gonzales has a pending bill converting the place into a protected landscape. It became a national park in 1933. INQ



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ROAD-WIDENING PROJECT IN BACOLOR, PAMPANGA

'TRIM THEM, YOU KILL THEM,' TREE SAVERS TELL OFFICIALS

BACOLOR, PAMPANGA—The Save the Trees Coalition has asked local officials to suspend the trimming of trees in a village here otherwise the trees would die and serve the purpose of a planned road-widening project.

"The trimmed trees have been reduced to nothing but their trunks, which will take a longer time to grow back," Dina Zulueta, a member of the coalition, said on Thursday's dialogue with local officials.

The special permit to trim or prune 25 trees was issued to Barangay Calibutbut chair Anna Marie Labung by the Department

of Environment and Natural Resources in Pampanga in January.

Zulueta is the plaintiff in the complaint that obtained a temporary environmental protection order (Tepo) that saved 259 trees along the Friendship Circumferential Road from Barangay Calibutbut in Bacolor town to three villages in Angeles City.

The Tepo, issued by the Angeles City Regional Trial Court Branch 59 on Feb. 7, prohibits the "cutting, harming, injuring, earth-balling, transferring and/or any other action that will result [in] the damage of the subject trees."

Prior to the issuance of the

Tepo, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) stopped the cutting at the request of Angeles City Mayor Carmelo Lazatin Jr.

Shade

The coalition argued company employees at the Angeles Industrial Park benefit from these trees.

"The trees along these roads serve as an important shade to protect [workers] from heat stroke and other heat-related ailments that may plague them, particularly in the summer months. And since the area is

often subject to dust and smoke, these trees also serve as an important filter that protects these workers' lungs," Zulueta said.

The village council said it would issue a certificate of no objection to the road-widening project.

A check by the Inquirer showed that the Tepo covered the Calibutbut trees since these were mentioned in the Nov. 18, 2013, environmental compliance certificate issued by the Environmental Management Bureau to the DPWH and submitted to the court as evidence.

—TONETTE OREJAS INQ



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'Climate crisis' kagagawan ng 'banks financing coal'

BILANG kinatawan ng 'Withdraw From Coal Campaign', umapela ang lider ng Simbahang Katoliko sa Philippine financial institutions na tigilan na ang pagbibig-ay ng pondo para sa pagpapalawak ng 'coal operations' sa bansa at sa halip ay suportahan ang pag-unlad ng 'renewable energy.'

Ayon kay Bishop Gerardo Alminaza, ng Diocese ng San Carlos, Negros Occidental, sa ginanap na 3rd Philippine Environment Summit na isinagawa sa Grand Caprice Convention Centers sa Cagayan de Oro, ang 'banks financing coal' ay hindi lamang ang 'climate crisis' ang pinopondohan, kundi pinahihirapan din nito maging ang mga 'coal-affected communities.'

"As fulfillment of their moral obligation, Philippine banks must have concrete plans to phase out coal finance in the time required by today's climate crisis. They must have clear policies restricting their exposure to coal, channeling the funds they divest from it into clean and affordable renewable energy for all Filipinos,"

Kasabay nito, pinurinaman ng Bishop si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa naging direktiba nito sa nakaraang State of the Nation Address (SONA) nitong 2019, na pagtuunan at mabilis na subaybayan ang pag-unlad ng 'renewable energy resources' at huwag dumepende sa karbon.

Subalit tila binabalewala umano ito ng ibat ibang sektor, kabilang ang finance industry at patuloy na sinusuportahan at pinopondohan ang karbon bilang 'source' ng enerhiya sa bansa, bagamat alam naman nilang ito ay nakalalason di lamang sa kalikasan, kundi maging sa kalusugan ng sambayanan.

"The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) reported that the world has until 2030 to reduce coal use by 78% from 2010 levels to avoid even more disastrous climate impacts. As stewards of

Creation, we must unite with our scientists on this and seek to veer away from a fuel that causes the suffering of our people and destruction of our Common Home," giit ni Alminaza.

Kasabay nito gumawa ng 'petition letter' sa Bank of the Philippine Islands, ang bangko kung saan karamihan ng church organizations ay may 'financial relations,' na nilagdaan ng daan-daang dumalo sa nasabing summit, kabilang si Bishop Antonio Ledesma ng Cagayan De Oro.

"We appeal to all to join the calls as written in our letter as expression of our care for our common home and our future generations. For as one saying goes, 'we do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors - we borrow it from our children.' We must act swiftly for time is running out," dagdag pa ng Obispo.



'Climate crisis' kagagawan ng 'banks financing coal'

BILANG kinatawan ng 'Withdraw From Coal Campaign', umapela ang lider ng Simbahang Katoliko sa Philippine financial institutions na tigilan na ang pagbibigay ng pondo para sa pagpapalawak ng 'coal operations' sa bansa at sa halip ay suportahan ang pag-unlad ng 'renewable energy.'

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Financier ng coal project kinatok sa krisis sa klima

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LOW LA MESA DAM WATER LEVEL

MANILA WATER 2019 PROFIT DOWN BY 16%

By Ronnel W. Domingo
@RonWDomingoINQ

The water supply crisis felt last year in the national capital, which sent Manila Water group through a cataclysm, did not dislodge the Ayala-led business as it posted a profit of P5.5 billion in 2019, only 16 percent less than the 2018 level, thanks to mitigating contributions by its operations elsewhere in the country.

Manila Water Co. Inc. said in a statement the drop in consolidated net income "has been anticipated" considering the operational problems they

faced resulting from the water level at the La Mesa Dam in Quezon City dropping below critical level.

This, in turn, resulted in franchise-wide, hourslong service interruptions and—for the worst affected—no water for at least seven days in March 2019.

In the second quarter last year, Manila Water implemented a voluntary bill waiver program, which was a self-imposed penalty that was followed by fines imposed by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS).

The bill waver implement-

ed last April slashed revenue by P353 million while the MWSS-imposed penalty rang up at P534 million.

The company said that even as it paid the MWSS penalty, it maintained that it "has no liability on the penalty's basis as it was not the root cause of the water supply shortage."

Manila Water added that as part of efforts to address the problem, it reconfigured its distribution network operations to maintain service availability, with at least seven pounds per square inch of pressure—enough to reach the ground floor

level of a customer's premises.

"We are thankful for the untiring efforts of our employees and continued support of our stakeholders throughout the challenges last year," said company president and chief executive Rene Almendras.

"Their trust and dedication are solid proof that foremost of our commitment is providing service to our customers even in the face of overwhelming obstacles beyond our control," Almendras said.

The Manila concession-based business alone chalked up a P5.1-billion net income, a de-

crease of 22 percent.

Subsidiaries that operate elsewhere in the country helped shore up company, such as Manila Water Philippine Ventures, which posted a 131-percent surge in net income to reach P450 million.

This was mainly due to a strong performance among Estate Water that cater to real estate developments as well as Laguna Water and Boracay Water.

More recently, amid the continuing verbal attacks of President Duterte against the Ayala family, Manila Water announced the sale for P10.7

billion of a 25-percent stake in the company to Razon group's Trident Water.

Manila Water assigned to Trident proxy rights, such that the Razon group would have a 51-percent interest in the MWSS concessionaire. The Razon group has announced a tender offer to buy shares from other shareholders at P13 a share.

The deal with Trident would take effect after the company's annual stockholders meeting scheduled this April 17, and "after regulatory approvals." INQ



ELEVATION DROP The weather bureau expects the water elevation of Angat Dam, which supplies consumers in Metro Manila, to drop near or below the reservoir's minimum operating level of 180 meters above sea level by the end of April due to the summer heat. —INQUIRER FILE PHOTO

Angat water level still below normal

CITY OF MALOLOS—The stock in Angat Dam continues to drop because of lack of rain, threatening the water supply in Metro Manila and surrounding provinces.

As of 6 a.m. on Sunday, the water level at Angat was 202.20 meters above sea level (masl), lower by 0.09 m from the previous day. The stock's normal elevation is 212 masl.

The water in the dam has gone down by as much as .79 m since Feb. 11, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa).

Summer heat

Pagasa has projected the dam's stock to dip near or be-

low the reservoir's minimum operating level of 180 masl by the end of April due to the summer heat.

The situation has prompted the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) to keep the water allocation for Metro Manila at 42 cubic meters per second (cms), which is below the normal allocation of 46 cms.

Sevillo David, NWRB executive director, said the allotment for irrigation in Bulacan and Pampanga provinces through the National Irrigation Authority (NIA) remained at 20 cms.

The NWRB approved the allocation last month, but the Bulacan Federation of Irrigators' Associations said this was not enough to irrigate the

farms in the province.

There are 25,000 hectares of rice farms in 17 towns in Bulacan and four towns in Pampanga. Most of these farms get irrigation water from Angat Dam through Bustos Dam, also in Bulacan.

According to Felix Robles, head of the water control and coordinating unit of the NIA-operated Bustos Dam, the 20-cms allocation covers more than 16,000 hectares in the two provinces.

Farmers need more water

But Idefonso Canquin, a farmer from Bulacan town, said the farmers had been lobbying for 30 cms so they could irrigate more land and increase their production.

—CARMELA REYES-ESTROPE INQ



Sufficient data, budget to help improve irrigation systems—study

By CAI U. ORDINARIO [@caiordinario](#)

ADEQUATE data and the provision of “realistic” resources would help improve irrigation systems, according to a study released by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies.

The study, titled “Assessing the Resurgent Irrigation Development Program of the Philippines-National Irrigation Systems [NIS] Component,” said data on potential irrigable areas have been inadequate, particularly on field-based information on soil texture and land suitability.

Resources have also been lacking particularly for the operation and maintenance (O&M) of irrigation systems, as well as the completion of irrigation projects.

“NIA [National Irrigation Administration] should allocate realistic resources for O&M, and formulate effective policies and incentive systems, so as not to defer O&M until the problem becomes a major rehabilitation project. The target is to establish the system condition near its design condition,” the study read.

The study indicated that adequate resources are needed to address water losses, especially in Earth or unlined canals.

Resources are also needed to adopt Integrated Watershed Management (IWM) to control runoffs and degradation; protect and conserve watersheds; enhance the water resource originating from the watershed; control soil erosion and reduce sedimentation; and increase the infiltration of rainwater.

The study stated that the lack of budget was due to the focus of the NIS on new irrigation projects and less on completing existing projects.

“In NIS, the trend of focusing on new projects instead of finishing up old/incomplete projects seems to demonstrate the lack of commitment to comply with

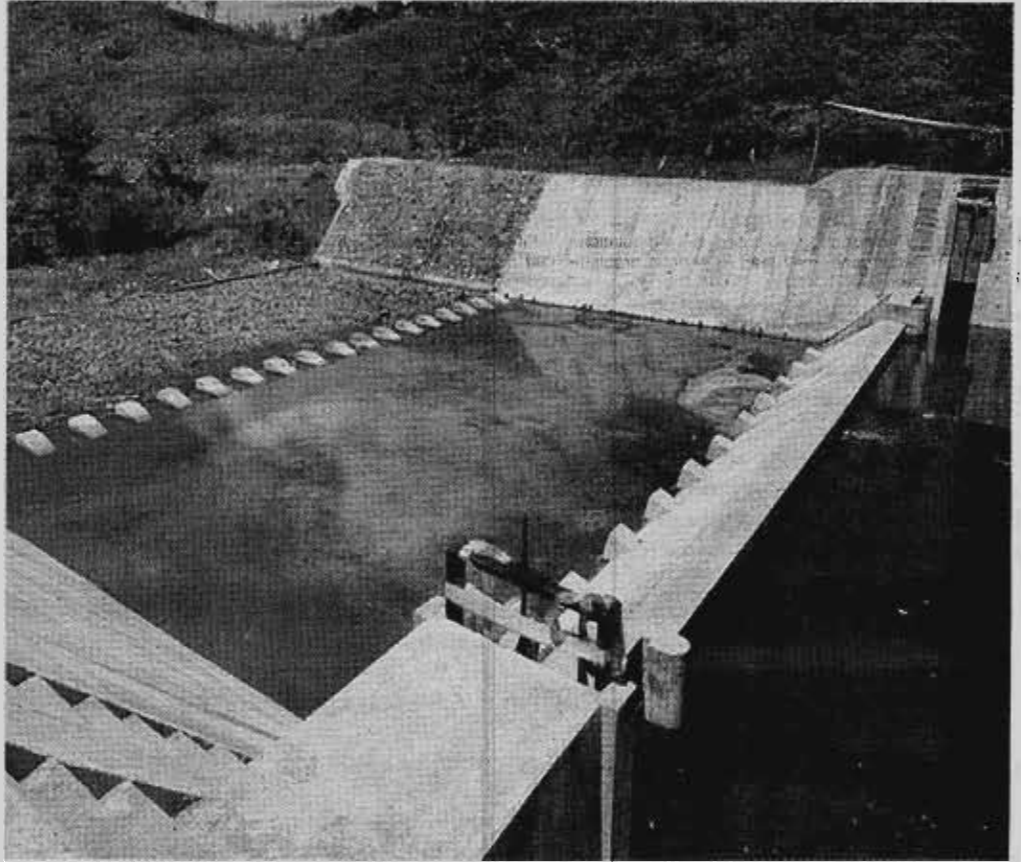


PHOTO shows the General Aguinaldo Communal Irrigation Project in Dinagat Islands, which was inaugurated by the National Irrigation Administration in 2016. NIA PHOTO

old project deliverables. But the contract should have been followed until completion,” the study read.

“This may be in part due to lack of budget to finish up the incomplete projects or it could be that the feasibility of opening new projects with new budget seem more promising,” it added.

The National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) said the availment backlog for overseas development assistance was at \$1.42 billion in 2018.

The top 5 agencies that did not meet

their scheduled availment as of 2018 for their project loans were: the Departments of Transportation (DOTr), of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and the NIA.

Neda said these agencies accounted for 91 percent of the total availment backlog. Data showed the DOTr accounted for an availment backlog of \$724.34 million; DPWH, \$406.9 million; NIA, \$58.22 million; DENR, \$52.34 million; and DSWD, \$48.8 million.

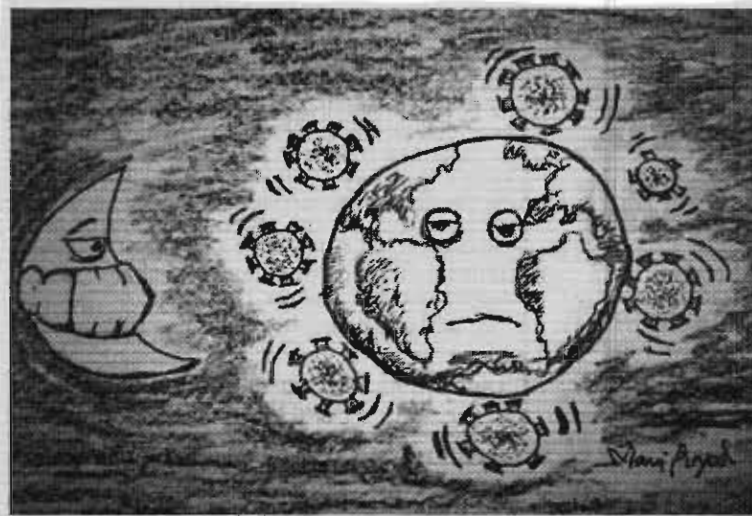


Nationinbriefs

NEGROS TOWN DECODGING, DESILTATION PROJECT SET

BACOLOD CITY: It's all systems go for a decodging and desiltation project in the Imbang, Madalaga and Malogo Rivers of EB Magalona, Negros Occidental, Mayor Marvin Malacon said after a recent public hearing on the project conducted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and attended by Barangay Latasan, Madalag, Batea and Pasil officials, as well as sectoral representatives from the town. Awaiting for the release of the environment compliance certificate from the DENR, Malacon said the project timeline will depend on the ship's capacity where the materials from the dredging area will be transferred and shipped to reclamation projects, and on weather conditions that may stall the operations especially during the rainy season. When asked about his assessment of the hearing, the mayor said "the people were satisfied with the presentation of the contractor of the project." Malacon added that the project is "the answer to the flooding problem of my town." From the income of the contractor, a portion will be returned to the local government unit of which 40 percent will go to the provincial government, 30 percent to the municipal government and 30 percent to affected *barangay* (villages), he said. They want the share of the villages to be put in a common fund managed by the municipal government "to ensure that its utilization is regulated and the people will benefit from it," Malacon pointed out. He called environment groups opposing the project as "ignorant of the project" for asking what he described as the same irrelevant and nonsensical questions. The dredging ship manned by about 30 Chinese is already on its way to the Philippines after undergoing quarantine in Singapore, Malacon said. Eric Tagle, president and Chief Operating Officer of First Terradev Corporation, said their firm has been ready for the project since August 2019, and will comply with government laws and regulations imposed on their EB Magalona project.

EUGENE Y. ADIONG



EDITORIAL

Averting water shortage

BEWARE the Ides of March!

A scorching summer is apparently on the horizon, and everyone must brace for the temperature to rise as we are at the tail-end of the cold season that started quite late into the holidays.

And so here we go again. And the question that must be asked is:

Is the government better prepared to address the looming water crisis this year?

Sen. Joel Villanueva has sought an inquiry into the preparation of different government agencies and stakeholders to avert the negative effects of the anticipated water shortage in the summer months.

"The water shortage in 2019 caught most of our people by surprise. It's almost a year since the shortage happened so we're expecting that the MWSS and its two concessionaires are better prepared this time," Villanueva correctly noted.

His resolution cited problems experienced by different establishments last year such as hospitals, especially those in severely affected areas that reportedly "turn[ed] away patients with less urgent cases." He also mentioned drastic water conservation efforts of businesses whose facilities resorted to streamlining toilet operations, among other incidents.

"Our experience last year shows that Metro Manila has inadequate water supply. Our regulator and concessionaires should be able to respond to this upcoming problem," he lawmaker said.

Proposed Senate Resolution 29 pointed out: "there is a need to closely monitor the national water programs, activities, and projects being implemented and undertaken by the government to demand not only its prioritization, but also its timeliness and effectiveness in recognition of the people's Constitutional right to health and to a balanced and healthful ecology."

"This is especially more so considering that Angat Dam has not reached its ideal level of 212 meters," Villanueva explained.

As of 6 a.m. of February 25, the dam's water level is at 202.23 meters, according to the monitoring of the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

The resolution, which the senator filed on February 18, also sought updates on the accomplished, ongoing, and pipelined projects of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, including the Bulacan Bulk Water Supply Project, the Kaliwa Dam, and the Ipo Dam 3 Project, among other issues.



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TAG-INIT o summer na. Marami na ang naliligo kung saan-saan para maibsan ang pag-iinit ng katawan.

Ang sunog naman ay madalas na maganap sa ganitong panahon.

Matitindi ang mga pinsalang dulot ng tag-init o summer.

Kamatayan at kapinsalaan sa ari-arian.

Kaya naman, dapat na mag-ingat ang lahat.

Pero hindi lang mag-ingat kundi magbantay na rin laban sa pangang-nib ng tag-init.

MGA SUNOG

Kung saan-saan nagaganap ang sunog ngayon.

At walang oras at araw na itinatakda nito kung kailan umatake.

Pero karaniwang nagaganap ang sunog sa mga sentrong lugar gaya ng Kamaynilaan.

Meron ding mga sunog na nagaganap sa mga kabundukan gaya ng sa Benguet na sinasabing nakontrol na ng mga awtoridad.

MGA SUNOG SA LALAWIGAN

Pansinin natin ang mga sunog na ito.

Noong Enero 4, nasunog ang dalawang bahay sa Disud, Sindangan, Zamboanga del Norte nang iwanan ng isang matanda ang kanyang kusina habang nagluluto siya.

Kinahapunan, nasunog naman ang isang car repair shop sa Sudlon, Molave, Zamboanga del Sur mula sa umapoy na kawad ng kuryente ng electric cooperative.

Nasunog naman ang nasa 60 bahay sa Brgy. Luz, Cebu City Enero 13, 2020 nang sunugin umano ng isang adik ang sarili niyang bahay sa lugar.

Nasa 60 bahay rin ang nasunog sa Rayco, Purok 2, Bankerohan Riverside, Brgy. 5-A, Davao City noong Enero 15 dahil sa nag-iinit at nagliyab na electric fan sa isang bahay.

Pebrero 3 naman nang masunog sa hindi matukoy na dahilan ang 13 bahay sa Kilometer 8.5 Santa Cruz, Brgy. Matina Pangi, Davao City.

Nagkaroon din nitong Pebrero 23 ng kambal na sunog sa Purok 44, Mangahan, Ulas Brgy. Talomo at Tavera St., Davao City sa 'di agad nalamang mga dahilan at maraming bahay ang natupok at commercial establishment.

Isang two-story restaurant naman sa Brgy. Lualhati, Baguio City nitong Pebrero 26.



MAGBANTAY LAHAT SA LUNOD AT SUNOG

Nagkaroon na rin ng mga grass fire at 26 na sunog mula Enero.

SUNOG SA METRO MANILA

Enero 1 nang mag-simulang magkasunog sa iba't ibang lugar sa Metro Manila.

Kabilang sa mga ito ang naganap sa Pasig Line, Sta. Ana, Manila na tumupok sa tahanan ng mahigit 640 pamilya.

Sumunod ang sunog sa Gen. Araneta Street, Brgy. San Antonio, Pasig City na ikinamaty ng isang tao.

Nagkasunog naman sa Brgy. Sto. Domingo, Quezon City nitong Enero 19 at namatay rito ang isang senior citizen, si Angelita Unite, habang mahigit 180 pamilya ang nawalan ng tahanan.

Pinakamalaking sunog ang pagkatupok ng isang warehouse ng plastik sa Pandacan, Manila na ikinadamay ng ilang ka-bahayan.

Naging dahilan ito ng pagguho ng ilang parte ng Skyway sa lugar.

MGA DAHILAN

Lahat ng mga dahilan ng sunog ay dapat alamin at dapat na totoo at huwag haluan ng kasinungalingan.

Ito'y para makagawa ang lahat ng mga hakbang na narapat upang sa susunod na mga araw ay maiwasan ang mga sunog.

Kabilang sa mga nag-ing klarong dahilan ang depektibong electrical wire o labis na paggamit ng kuryente o depektibong gamit-pangkuryente.

Meron ding mukhang arson gaya ng gawa ng isang adik.

Meron ding napabayaan kusina.

Ang P1 bilyong pinsala naman sa Skyway at San Miguel warehouse naman ay nagmula sa mga nagbabagang metal mula sa grinder at apoy ng welding na tumama sa mga karton na nagpaliyab sa mga ito.

Lumalabas na walang mahirap na lugar at mayamang lugar sa sunog at kombinasyon ng mga pagkakamali o kapabayaang ng tao at depektibong mga gamit ang mga dahilan ng sunog.

Pero isang malaking bagay ang lumilitaw rito: sa kabila ng maraming

sunog na nagaganap, maraming Pinoy ang walang kaalam-alam o kakakayahan para lumaban sa sunog at dapat na pagtuunan ito ng pansin ng mga kinauukulan.

MAGBANTAY SA PAGKALUNOD

Nakagigimbal ang pagkalunod ng limang high school student na pawang kababaihan kamakalawa ng hapon.

Nagpaalam na magkakaroon ng praktis para sa isang aktibidad ng kanilang eskwelang Bukig National Agricultural and Technical School ang mga dalagita nang malunod sila sa malalim na parte ng Cagayan River sa Brgy. San Joaquin, Camalaniugan, Cagayan.

Naganap ang pangyayari sa silangan ng isla na tinatawag nilang Pugo sa nasabing ilog at nakaharap sa Brgy. Catotoran Norte dakong 1:00 ng hapon at natapos ang pag-rescue dakong alas-4:00 ng hapon. Ayon kina Brgy. Joaquin dela Cruz Chairman Adoracion Ortiz at Brgy. Kagawad Roderick Torio, nalaman nila mula sa isang bangkero o namamasada ng bangka patawid sa ilog ang pangyayari.

Naunang nagsagawa ng sariling rescue ang bangkero ngunit hindi nito nakayanang ligtas ang mga bata at dito na siya humingin ng tulong kina kapitan.

Mabilis namang tumawag ng rescue sina kapitan kay Tristan Aquino na agad na nagpadala ng search and rescue team ngunit natagpuan na lang nilang bangkay sina Loribeth Ruatos, 14; Jenny Dela Cruz, 14; Aileen Tubol, 16; Mae Tubol, 13; at Bernadeth Paet, 14.

Nakaligtas sa trahedya ang kaklase nilang sina Christine Mae Aquino, Christine Joy Urbi at Lorels Rieto.

O mga magulang at teacher, pakibantayan nang husto ang ating mga anak sa kanilang paglililiwaliw.

Anomang reaksyon o reklamo, maaaring iparating sa 0922840-3333 o e-mail sa bantiporda@yahoo.com.



Baguio bans harmful wet wipes

By ZALDY COMANDA

BAGUIO CITY – The city government has called on all business establishments to ban the sale of wet wipes and other similar products with harmful ingredients in line with an ordinance signed by Mayor Benjamin Magalong.

Vice Mayor Faustino Olowan said the ordinance cites the environmental group's warning on the presence of harmful chemical compounds in wet wipes which may trigger skin allergies and contact dermatitis.

According to the coalition, the six products that contain harmful chemical compounds

such as methylchloroisothiazolinone, methylisothiazolinone (MCI/MIT) and iodopropynyl butylcarbamate (IPBC) are Dong Bang, Dong Bang Yao Baby Tender, Family Treasure Baby Tender, Sky Fire Baby Tender, Giggley Baby Wipes, and Super Soft Skin Care Wet Towel.

Under the ordinance, the said wet wipes brands and other similar products found to contain harmful ingredients are now prohibited in the city. Individuals or business establishments that would surrender banned products will not be penalized.

"Some of these baby wipes/products were found to be sold

at the city's grocery stores, black market, supermarkets, and convenience stores; and the continued sale of these products supposedly for hygiene is disturbing," the ordinance reads.

Pursuant to the ordinance, the City Health Services Office (CHSO) – in coordination with the Public Order and Safety Division (POSD) and the barangay officials – is authorized to conduct inspection in establishments and confiscate the prohibited products. It will be followed by an inventory on the confiscated items, identification of the names of the establishment, their locations, the type and number of

the confiscated items, and the mode of disposal conducted.

The CHSO is also enjoined to coordinate with the FDA and the City Environment and Parks Management Office (CEPMO) to identify environmental-friendly modes of disposal of confiscated products.

Erring individuals and establishments will be fined with ₱1,000 for the first offense (immediate closure of business for those without business permits); ₱3,000.00 for the second offense (closure of business for those without business permits until compliance); and ₱5,000.00 and non-renewal of business permit for the third offense.