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**DENR**

**IN THE NEWS**

**Strategic Communication and Initiative Service**



# MMPC-DENR to start second phase of plantation convergence project F1



From center left: MMPC president and CEO Mutsuhiro Oshikiri, DENR secretary Roy Cimatu, MMPC senior vice president for corporate division Yasuki Maruyama and other key officers of DENR and MMPC during the MOA Signing at the DENR Central Office.

EDITOR: MANNY N. DE LOS REYES | ARTIST: ELI FERNANDEZ | CONTRIBUTORS: NAP MACEDA AGUILA, ULYSSES ANG, ANGEL RIVERO, JACOU OLIVA

**MITSUBISHI Motors Philippines Corp. (MMPC) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sealed the second phase of its ongoing plantation project as both parties recently signed the memorandum of agreement (MOA) at a simple ceremony held at DENR's central office in Quezon City.**

The second phase covers 30 hectares of forestland in Barangay Kapatalan, Municipality of Siniloan, Laguna. MMPC shall provide P1.3 million to initially cover the implementation of the various activities such as site preparation, seedling production and protection of the established plantations.

It can be recalled that MMPC and DENR signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) on the establishment of a plantation convergence project last 2017 which covers 100 hectares within a span of four to five years in the areas of Region I-IVA as qualified and endorsed by the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PENRO). This paved the way for the first plantation project between both parties in Ilocos Norte last 2018.

Present during signing ceremony were DENR secretary Roy Cimatu, MMPC president and CEO, Mutsuhiro Oshikiri, PENRO-Laguna Ronilo Salac, MMPC senior vice president for corporate division Yasuki Maruyama, and other key officials from DENR and MMPC.

In a statement, MMPC president and CEO Mutsuhiro Oshikiri shared, "I commend DENR for their commitment in ensuring the sustenance of the environment in the different regions of the Philippines. For our part, MMPC is committed to stand with you in your advocacy and rest assured that we, too, will be doing our part for the betterment of the environment."



At the MOA signing ceremony are: MMPC President and CEO Mutsuhiro Oshikiri; DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu; MMPC Senior Vice President for Corporate Division Yasuki Maruyama and other key officers of DENR and MMPC.

## MMPC-DENR Convergence Project firmed up

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*In photo (from center left) are MMPC President and CEO Mutsuhiro Oshikiri; DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu; MMPC Senior Vice-President for Corporate Division Yasuki Maruyama; and other key officers of DENR and MMPC during the MOA signing at the DENR Central Office.*

## MMPC, DENR to start second phase of plantation convergence project

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## DENR calls for private sector participation in greening program

BY JED ALDOUS MACAPAGAL

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has called for more private sector participation in the Enhanced National Greening Program (ENGP), after securing partnerships with two more firms last week.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said the government has made it easier for the private sector to join the ENGP by issuing last year DENR Administrative Order 2019-03, which allows firms to enter into public-private partnerships through the establishment of new plantations, maintenance and protection of existing plantations and protection of existing forests outside ENGP areas.

Last week, the DENR inked partnerships with Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp. (MMPC) and SteelAsia Foundation Inc. (SAFI) to collaborate efforts in planting and nurturing trees.

The partnership with MMPC will involve reforestation activities within a 30-hectare

forestland at Barangay Kapatalan in Siniloan, Laguna, while SAFI will cover 23 hectares of forestland at Barangay Dayawan in Villanueva, Misamis Oriental.

The two companies agreed to allocate funds to cover the five-year implementation of various activities including site preparation, seedling production or procurement and maintenance and protection of the established plantations and their surroundings.

The DENR, for its part, will identify and delineate the forestlands and determine the indigenous tree species to be planted, establish the mode of plantation and protection and maintenance of the areas covered by the agreement.

The agency will also choose jointly with the companies the people's organizations or communities that will plant and nurture the seedlings in the next five years.

Established in 2015, ENGP seeks to cover the remaining 7.1 million hectares of open, degraded and denuded forests in the country from 2016 to 2028.



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### CIMATU NANAWAGAN NG SUPORTA SA PRIVATE SECTOR PARA SA NAT'L GREENING PROGRAM

NANAWAGAN sa mga pribadong sektor si Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy A. Cimatu na makipagtulungan ang mga ito sa pamahalaan sa pagpapatupad ng Enhanced National Greening Program, na isang hakbang ng gobyerno upang madagdagan ang "forest cover" sa bansa.

"We hope to encourage

more private companies to help us in restoring and protecting our forests as we seek to establish new ENGP plantations," ayon kay Cimatu.

Ang Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp. at Steel Asia Foundation Inc. ay kapwa sumang-ayon na makipagtulungan sa DENR sa pagtanim at pag-aalaga ng mga puno para sa national greening efforts.

Sinabi pa ni Cimatu, ginawang mas madali ng gobyerno para sa pribadong sektor na makiusap sa ENGP matapos ilabas noong isang taon ang DENR Administrative Order 2019-03, kung saan nakasaad ang mga hakbang upang mas maging madali ang gagawing partisipasyon ng pribadong sektor sa reforestation program.

Pinapayagan ng DAO ang mga kumpanya na pumasok sa public-private partnership scheme sa pamamagitan ng pagbuo ng bagong ENGP plantations, pagpapanatili at pagbibigay ng proteksiyon sa mga kasalukuyang plantations at ang pangangalaga sa mga kasalukuyang itagubatan sa labas ng ENGP areas.

Sa pamamagitan ng DAO, lumagda ang DENR sa memorandum ng agreement sa MMPC para sa reforestation activities sa 30-hectare forestland sa Barangay Kapatalan, Siniloan, Laguna.

Ang 23 hectares ng forestland naman sa Barangay Dayawan sa Villanueva, Misamis Oriental ang nakapagkasunduan sa nilagdaang MOA ng DENR at ng SAFI para sa reforestation activities.

Nakapaloob sa MOA na ang MMPC at ang SAFI ay pumayag na maglaan ng pondo para sa limang-taong implementasyon ng iba't ibang gawain na kinabibilangan ng paghahanda sa lugar na pagtaniman, seedling production o pagbill at maintenance at protection ng mga gagawing plantations at ang pagligid dito.

Sa bahag naman ng DENR, tutukoyin at ilihawalay nito ang forestlands at aalamir din kung anong indigenous tree species ang itatanim: mode of plantation establishment at ang pagbibigay ng proteksiyon at pangangalaga sa lugar na sakop ng MOA. **JAY REYES at SANTI CELARIO**

## DENR distributes free patent land titles

Your titles secure your ownership over the land you occupy. Take good care of it and use it to improve your social and economic status

BY ELMER RECUERDO

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) distributed 284 agricultural free patents under its Handog Titulo Program to beneficiaries in Villaba, Leyte.

In partnership with the Registry of Deeds (RoD) and the local government unit of Villaba, the DENR invited beneficiaries to receive their much-awaited titles which transformed them from simple farmers to tenured land owners.

Arturo Salazar, DENR assistant regional director for management services, challenged the rest of the beneficiaries to make their land productive and value the titles provided by the government.

"Your titles secure your ownership over the land you occupy. Take good care of it and use it to improve your social and economic status," Salazar said.

Concordia Lamoste Wagas, one of the beneficiaries, expressed joy upon finally assuming full rights and ownership of the land her family has been occupying for years.

"I commit to enrich this land and make it

productive. This is mine and this is the only legacy I have for my family," Wagas said.

Lawyer Emeterio Villanoza, officer-in-charge of the RoD, reminded the recipients to be mindful of their duties as title holders especially in paying their real property tax in order for the government to sustain provision of services for the people.

He also advised the beneficiaries to take extra care in handling their land titles to avoid serious legal problems while reconstituting lost or damaged titles.

Villanoza said the Republic Act 11231, or the Agricultural Free Patent Reform Act, is a recent amendment which makes agricultural land titles immediately bankable and tradable as it removed the prohibition from mortgaging or selling land under free patent within five years from the issuance of the patent.

The issuance of free titles through the Handog Titulo Program is conducted pursuant to Ambisyon Natin 2040 which represents the collective long-term visions and aspirations of Filipinos for themselves and for the country.



BENEFICIARIES of the free patent land shows the titles they received in a ceremony.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ELMER RECUERDO FOR THE DAILY TRIBUNE



## DENR: Law too soft on wildlife criminals

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources is supporting a House bill imposing stiffer penalties on wildlife crime. The bill sets a fine of as much as P2 million and a prison term of up to 20 years for the killing of endangered species. "Hopefully [it] will be a big deterrent because now the penalties are very low," said Assistant Environment Secretary Ricardo Calderon. —STORY BY

JHESSET O. ENANO

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# 12-yr prison term not enough for wildlife traffickers—DENR

By **Jhesset O. Enano**  
@JhessetEnanoINQ

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is backing a House bill imposing stiffer penalties on wildlife crime.

In a position paper submitted to the House committee on natural resources this week and obtained by the Inquirer, the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) said wildlife trafficking had remained unabated and resulted in greater loss of the country's resources—20 years after the enactment in 2001 of Republic Act No. 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act.

It called for stiffer fines and penalties against such illegal acts as killing, trading, hunting or transporting wildlife, as well as the inclusion of specific circumstances that would mean the maximum penalty against offenders.

"Similar to drugs and illegal trafficking of persons, wildlife trafficking is now at the level of transnational crime," Assistant Environment Secretary and BMB chief Ricardo Calderon said in an interview.

"We've seen that wildlife crime is very rampant and moves across boundaries ... Hopefully the increase in pe-

nalty will be a big deterrent, because now the penalties are very low, with some spanning for just six months to a year," Calderon said.

### 12 years not enough

Among the provisions the DENR wants to include in House Bill No. 265, authored by Occidental Mindoro Rep. Josephine Ramirez-Sato, are imprisonment of up to 20 years (reclusion temporal) for offenders who kill or destroy species listed as critically endangered and fines ranging from P200,000 to P2 million.

Under the present law, people committing the same crime face only up to 12 years in jail and fines ranging from P100,000 to P1 million.

Illegal traders of critically endangered animals can be jailed for four years and fined P50,000 to P600,000, under the proposed amendments.

This is in contrast to the current penalties, with jail time of only up to two years and fines ranging from P5,000 to P300,000.

Wildlife laundering—in which traders disguise the origin and ownership of illegally acquired wildlife by making it appear as though they came from legitimate sources—will also be punishable under the amended law.

Despite record seizures of

smuggled wildlife in recent years valued at billions of pesos, prosecuting wildlife criminals remains a huge challenge for the government.

Traders go scot-free with lax penalties, overburdened courts and lack of knowledge among legal professionals, while repeat offenders easily skirt through the system.

### Only 70 cases

An earlier Inquirer report showed that more than 26,700 wildlife were confiscated in at least 123 enforcement operations from 2013 to 2018. But in that period, only 70 cases against wildlife criminals had been filed, with only 18 convictions.

Of the 228 identified offenders, only 30 had been penalized—and not all of them spent time in jail.

"Many continue to take risks because there is a market," Calderon said. "With the value of animals worth millions and with very low penalties, it's really worth risking."

Another reason for the government's shortcomings in dealing with wildlife crime is the notion that these are small-time offenses, said Environment Undersecretary Ernesto Adobo Jr.

"There is a common notion that these crimes do not have

victims, so they consider it second-class crimes or offenses," Adobo said. "In fact, the victims [in] these crimes are the wild animals themselves."

In its paper, the DENR-BMB sought to include specific circumstances that would mean the maximum penalty against trafficking wildlife.

For instance, the number of specimens involved in violations should be considered since many confiscations involved several numbers of animals of different species and with different conditions during capture.

### Maximum penalty

Under the bill, repeat offenders will be prosecuted with the maximum penalty—the same with those who commit crimes through inducing indigenous peoples.

The Asean Centre for Biodiversity had earlier reported that the Philippines loses P50 billion every year due to the illegal trade. The archipelago serves as a source, transit point and destination for trafficked animals.

Among the most trafficked animals were those seen only in the Philippines, such as the Philippine pangolin and Philippine pond turtle. Both are classified as critically endangered.

INQ





## Protect environment defenders—CHR chief

By Rio N. Araja

THE Commission on Human Rights on Thursday called for the protection of environmental defenders, saying “environmentalists in the Philippines risk their lives every time they go out in the field to do scientific research.”

Jacqueline Ann de Guia, CHR lawyer-spokesperson, echoed the commission’s belief that “one vital way to protect the environment is to safeguard the rights of our environmental defenders.”

As the United Nations commemorate the World Wildlife Day this week, she lamented that despite their genuine

intention to protect the ecosystems and empower communities, environmental defenders still experience “unjust labeling” as dangerous threats to national security and are even subjected to various forms of harassment and attacks.

“This is regardless of peacefully carrying out their profession and responsibly exercising their rights to freedom of speech, association and assembly,” De Guia said in a statement.

In 2010, the country’s top-most botanist Dr. Leonard Co and his two aides were killed by the military when they were mistaken as rebels during a combat operation in Kananga,

Leyte.’

The government downgraded the murder case to homicide only against the accused military men, and the case continued to drag for 10 years.

“The commission continues to monitor the case of Dr. Co since it first launched an investigation in 2010,” De Guia said.

Meanwhile, in another statement, De Guia said CHR “strongly” backs the swift passage of a bill to end child marriage.

“It is high time that we pass a robust legislative framework geared toward protecting children from the harmful practices of child marriage,” it added.



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# REGIONS



HEADS TO SEA One of 22 sea turtles hatched in the village of White Beach in Pagadian City crawls to the sea after being released by residents who protected its nesting site. —LEAH AGONONY

## 22 'PAWIKAN' RELEASED

### IN PAGADIAN CITY, COASTAL VILLAGERS ARE PROTECTORS OF SEA TURTLES

PAGADIAN CITY—Twenty-two "pawikan" (sea turtle) hatchlings were released to the sea in the village of White Beach here, almost two months after a resident saw a marine turtle laying eggs in an isolated patch of this city's shoreline.

Rolando Bongkawil, a member of the village council of White Beach, said he guarded the eggs "day and night" to ensure that the nest would not be disturbed.

"I watched over them like a father," he said. "They were laid

a few meters from my house, and being a barangay official, I made sure that they were secured," he said.

Rodel Arabes, a staff at the City Environment and Natural Resources Office who guided the release, said the hatchlings were Olive Ridley sea turtles, considered critically endangered due to their habitat and nesting site degradation.

#### Fighting poachers

Vicky Toledo, 61, a resident, said she saw a large tur-

tle emerge from the sea while she was on her way home to Purok Tangigue at dusk on Jan. 9. The turtle went to an isolated part of the beach and when she realized it was laying eggs, she went to Bongkawil's house nearby to report her find.

Villagers counted 60 eggs that the pawikan laid that night, of which only 22 survived to be released back to the sea.

Village officials fenced off the spot where the eggs were laid to secure it against poachers. Pawikan eggs are consid-

ered aphrodisiac and pawikan meat, a delicacy in the area.

"There were individuals who get to harvest turtle eggs and cook it like the regular eggs. Some even hunt the pawikan and cook them with the typical meat recipes as they believe it would make them stronger," said village chief Rey Rabanos.

But he said this was already a past practice since residents of Barangay White Beach are now keen in protecting the species. Most villagers lived on fishing and seaweed farming

and they believed that anything that would harm the environment could also harm their livelihood, Rabanos said.

"Abusing the environment and the different species living around would badly affect our harvests," said Toledo, a seaweed farmer and fisher.

It was the second time that a sea turtle had laid eggs in the area.

White Beach residents first monitored a pawikan laying eggs in the village on Dec. 26 last year. Village officials then

stopped boats from docking near the nesting area.

But of the 60 eggs that were laid on the same spot last year, only 20 were hatched. Villagers released the hatchlings on Feb. 19.

"[Villagers] all helped in protecting the eggs," Rabanos said.

After the recent release, village officials said they were planning to declare the area a nesting site for sea turtles. The declaration will ban the construction of any structure in the area or its use for recreational or other activities. —LEAH AGONONY



## Food waste contributes to global warming – CCC

By JANVIC MATEO

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) is pushing for efficient and sustainable practices in food production and consumption to reduce food waste, which contributes significantly to global warming.

Climate Secretary Emmanuel de Guzman stressed the need for efficient and sustainable use of natural resources in food production as 25 to 30 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions are attributable to the food system.

In order to achieve this, the CCC eyes the promotion of less meat-intensive diets and the reduction – if not total elimination – of food waste.

De Guzman said his agency

is committed to assist the food sector in transitioning into a low-carbon and sustainable industry since food security is one of the thematic areas of the country's National Climate Change Action Plan.

"We are pursuing the development of national and local policies that will create an enabling environment for sustainable food value chains," he said at Wednesday's Sustainable Diner Summit 2020 in Quezon City.

"We are finding pathways to combine supply-side actions such as efficient production, transport and processing with demand-side interventions such as modification of food choices and reduction of food loss and waste," he added.



# Nestlé, Republic Cement pursue waste plastic collection, co-processing to achieve plastic neutrality

**P**URSUING its goal to achieve plastic neutrality at the earliest possible time, Nestlé Philippines, Inc. recently signed a new agreement with Republic Cement for the collection and co-processing of soft plastic wastes in the latter's cement kilns, significantly expanding an initial agreement in 2019.

Plastic neutrality involves recovering post-consumer plastics equal to the quantity of plastic packaging used for products sold by companies. Therefore, Nestlé Philippines will collect plastic wastes equivalent to the volume it uses in its product packaging to achieve plastic neutrality.

The 2020 agreement, signed by Nestlé Philippines Chairman and CEO Kais Marzouki and Republic Cement Director Nabil Francis, aims to increase the amount of post-consumer plastic wastes to be collected and co-processed during the year.

As part of a long-term, priority program to address soft plastics in the country's waste streams, Nestlé Philippines is engaged in collection and recycling efforts in partnership with other key stakeholders to recover plastics waste in significant amounts.

Under the agreement with Republic Cement, Nestlé seeks to collect post-consumer plastic wastes for cement kiln co-processing, a method of waste material disposal which is internationally accepted and authorized by local environmental laws and regulations.

Republic Cement is licensed by

the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to utilize and dispose of qualified waste streams through cement kiln co-processing, a process used to create cement which entails taking raw materials such as calcium carbonate and silica, and feeding them into a kiln along with fuel. These materials are burned at such a high temperature that any complex materials are broken into simpler compounds. The end result is cement. Any emissions during the process are filtered and monitored by the minute to comply with DENR standards.

Cement kiln co-processing in a country like the Philippines is more advantageous compared to landfilling and physical treatment, since energy and minerals from waste are almost completely used up.

As the world's largest food and beverage company, Nestlé's broader vision is to achieve a waste-free future in which none of its packaging, particularly plastic, ends up in landfills, the oceans, or as litter. In April 2018, Nestlé announced its global commitment to make 100 percent of its packaging recyclable or reusable by 2025.

"We continue to intensify our



THE 2020 agreement between Nestlé Philippines and Republic Cement aims to increase the amount of post-consumer plastic wastes to be collected and co-processed during the year in pursuit of Nestlé's goal of achieving plastic neutrality at the earliest possible time. In photo (left to right) are Nestlé Philippines SVP and Head of Corporate Affairs Atty. Ernesto Mascenon, Chairman and CEO Xais Marzouki, Republic Cement Director Nabil Francis, and Director for Alternative Fuels and Community Relations Atty. Angela Edrallin-Valencia.

efforts to tackle plastic wastes, to expand our reach, and we are thankful to Republic Cement for helping us do just that," said Mr. Marzouki, "Our new agreement is a welcome step in our common journey, and specifically will help us collect considerably more plastics than we did last year."

For his part, Mr. Francis said, "Republic Cement is proud

to be working with Nestlé on their push to becoming plastic neutral. These partnerships challenge us to do more as we continuously advocate for the use of more alternative fuel in order to truly embody sustainability in our operations."

Republic Cement, with five plants and one grinding station in the Philippines backed by

more than 60 years of cement manufacturing experience, has also entered into co-processing partnerships with the following local government units: Manila; Paete and Liliw in Laguna; Norzagaray, San Jose del Monte and Valenzuela in Bulacan, and Teresa in Rizal.

"In accelerating the search for solutions to the plastics problem,

it is necessary, while we look for innovative packaging solutions, to take immediate action to divert waste away from landfills and stop plastic waste from entering waterways and oceans. It is in this spirit that we at Nestlé Philippines are working to achieve plastic neutrality as soon as possible, in close cooperation with our partners," said Mr. Marzouki.

## Alarming Benguet forest fires

THERE have been altogether too many forest



AMBIENT VOICES

MARIA ISABEL ONGPIN

fires in the province of Benguet in the past two weeks. In a matter of days, there were six fires. Tublay, Kabayan, Bokod, Itogon and La Trinidad were the towns affected, including Baguio City with a fire on South Drive trees.

The Kabayan fire lasted more than eight days, damaging 165,620 trees and seedlings with an estimated value of P1.6 million.

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## Alarming Benguet forest fires

Particularly worrisome is that established tree plantations under the Expanded National Greening Program and natural pine forests were victims of the fires.

Mount Pulag Park, already a victim about two years ago of a massive forest fire started when trekkers brought a gas stove that exploded, had to close its access trail in the south to protect itself from another damaging fire threatening nearby.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Bureau of Fire Protection in the Cordillera Autonomous Region reported that the fires were difficult to put out due to acute natural slopes preventing fire trucks or even pedestrian access to bring water to put them out. Meanwhile, the wind conditions at this time (southeasterly) were an aggravating factor in the spread of the fires through forest floors of dry material. The Kabayan fire also spread to an inaccessible mountaintop, leaving firefighters looking on helplessly until a providential shower suppressed it.

While the damage figures in pesos seem less than what they should be, the damage to the ecosystem is

almost unquantifiable. Plants and animals, which are precious environmental assets, are decimated. It also includes the oxygen-creating environments where trees are the engines that clear the air of pollutants, provide shade and cooler temperatures that mitigate summer heat, toxins in the air and other destructive effects of our current environment of climate change, fossil fuel use, unsustainable practices for short term livelihood gains. Certainly, 900 hectares ravaged by forest fire are a costly loss. This is the total area that has been affected by the forest fires.

In general, forest fires are caused by natural or human elements. Lightning can ignite forest fires in dry conditions (though as one observer put it, it is not yet the season for thunderstorms). A lighted cigarette thrown carelessly into dry forest conditions can create havoc. *Kaingin*, the slash-and-burn planting technique used by indigenous people, can get out of control and turn into a destructive fire that ravages anything in its path. Aside from *kaingin*, another deliberate fire initiation occurs when cattle need new grass to feed on because after a fire new grass springs up, nature's first answer to keep alive.

While there have been no accusations made as of now regarding these spate of forest fires, their causes are under investigation. They may come up with natural causes i.e. lightning, or man-made causes, i.e., lighted cigarettes thrown carelessly, fires deliberately set for livelihood reasons. Vegetable gardens have been included as suspects, as farmers want more land to till. In these man-made circumstances, the short-term livelihood focus might be at fault.

Another suspicion aired to me by people in the area is that the DENR keeps paying for planting tree seedlings in its National Regreening projects but leaves it at that, failing to include nurturing them for further compensation which opens the seedlings to deliberate fire so as to again replant for a fee. I never thought of this angle until a person from the area that I respect as a decent civic-minded citizen asserted it as fact. Livelihood is a matter of life and death both for human beings and for the environment. The DENR's program should include a plan for nurturing the regreening project with compensation for those who do. In that way, it will give

livelihood to the community and protection for the environment. In truth, this is the tension in all natural environments today; they have to be protected by their communities rather than made short-term livelihood victims, which will in the long run affect everyone near and far negatively.

Furthermore, the environment must be protected by adequate means. Are there enough forest rangers to prevent the causes of fires? Is there enough equipment like fire trucks, water and trained personnel to respond to fire outbreaks successfully? Moreover, is there community support for all of the above?

In many of the fire outbreaks, the community helped in whatever manner they could under the circumstances. That is a comfort. But what is more necessary from the community is fire prevention, being alert as to not instigate fires by accident or otherwise, setting the example to the younger generation to value their natural environment.

Thanks to Rappler, CNN Philippines, *Manila Bulletin*, *Philippine Star* and Frank Cimatu for reporting on these fires. We must respond positively as government and nongovernment entities as well as the general public.



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PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANALY LABOR FOR THE DAILY TRIBUNE @tribunephi\_aria

OLD trees were cut in front of the Palma Hall at the University of the Philippines. New trees, however, will be planted to replace those felled.



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PHOTOGRAPH BY ANALY LABOR FOR THE DAILY TRIBUNE @tribunepht\_ana

No to air pollution Representatives from communities affected by air pollution gather in front of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Quezon City to protest its inaction on a report on unhealthy air quality in the country.





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'DI KUMIKILOS? Kinalampag kahapon ng daan-daang residenteng apektado ng polusyon sa hangin ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) dahil sa kawalan umano nito ng aksyon laban sa maruming hangin sa bansa.

MARK BALMORES



**AIR POLLUTION, MAS MABAGSIK SA COVID-19 SA DAMI NA NG NAMATAY, DENR DEDMA LANG!**

KAPAG kayo ay nasa tuktok ng Antipolo ay halos kitang-kita ang buong Metro Manila at napakaganda nitong pagmasdan lalo na sa gabi dahil punumpuno ito ng iba't ibang klase ng ilaw.

Sa umaga naman ay damang-dama ang lamig na dulot ng napakababang ulap at ganito rin ang tanawin sa buong Kamaynilaan dahil kitang-kita sa ibabaw ng mga gusali ang maitim na ulap na tila humalo na sa mga ito ang napakaruming hangin.

Kakaiba ang nakalutang na tila itim na ulap na indikasyon na talagang napakarumi na ng hanging nilalanghap ng mga tao sa buong Metro Manila.

Sa pag-aaral na isinagawa ng Greenpeace Southeast Asia at ng Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air, ang usok mula sa mga sasakyang gumagamit ng gasolina, diesel at maging ang sinusunog na coal ang dahilan ng kamatayan ng maraming Pinoy.

Base sa unang inilabas na ulat ay umaabot sa 27, 000

katao ang binabawian ng buhay taun-taon dahil sa nakalalasang hangin ayon sa pag-aaral ng mga eksperto at ikatlo ang ating bansa sa buong Asya na marami ang namamatay dahil sa air pollution.

Nakaalarma rin ang ulat na umaabot sa P304 bilyon ang nawawala sa ating ekonomiya dahil lamang sa air pollution at 80 porsiyento ng pinagmumulan nito ay ang mga sasakyang hindi maayos ang maintenance.

Tapos heto at nagpalabas ng ulat ang United Nations (UN) na lahat ng bata sa buong mundo ay bigo umanong bigyan ng proteksiyon laban sa mapanganib na kalusugan dulot ng climate change kabilang na ang air pollution.

Sinasabi ng ulat na ang labis na carbon emissions ay nagbabanta sa kinabukasan ng mga bata at papasanin nila ang karagdagan mga panganib sa kalusugan mula sa nakamamatay na heatwaves hanggang sa pagtaas ng pagkalat ng mga tropikal na sakit.

Ayon sa paliwanag ng Department of Health (DOH), ang hanging tinatamasa natin ngayon sa buong Metro Manila ay nagdulot ng non-communicable diseases kahit marumi ito sa ilong.

Ang mga sakit na nakukuha umano dahil sa maruming hangin ay allergies, acute respiratory infections, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, cancer at cardiovascular diseases.

Natural na ang unang tinatamaan ng mga nabanggit kong sakit ay ang mga taong lantad

sa lansangan tulad ng mga tindero, pasahero, tsuper at kahalintulad nilang madalas sa kalye.

Maya't maya kasi nilang nalalanghap ang maruming hangin mula sa usok ng mga sasakyan, mga sinusunog na basura, plastic, goma at iba pang harmful wastes na masama sa ating kalusugan.

Kawawa ang mga bata, posibleng magkaroon ng epekto sa kanilang paglaki ang patuloy nilang paglanghap ng maruming hangin na kung hindi man sa kanilang pag-iisip ay malamang sa pisikal nilang pangangatawan.

Hindi naman bago ang pagpuna sa palala nang palalang air pollution ngunit, tila wala namang aksiyong ginagawa ang mga ahensiyang dapat managot sa pagsugpo nito.

Tulad niyan, libu-libo na ang namamatay dahil sa air pollution kaya dapat gumawa ng aksiyon ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) para luminis ang hangin sa Metro Manila.

Sa COVID-19 nga, maya't maya ang paalala ng DOH, gayung wala pang Pinoy na namamatay, pero sa air pollution, libu-libo na pala ang namatay, tapos wala lang kahit paalala.

**Anak ng Teteng!**



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# Bishops, IP hold dialogue

BY ERWIN M. MASCARIÑAS

BUTUAN CITY, Agusan del Norte – Leaders from indigenous peoples (IP) and religious groups took a hard stance against development projects that threaten the environment, calling on government agencies to review policies on the environment during a recently concluded inter-religious dialogue here.

The Bishops-Belayan Dialogue, which was spearheaded by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), became a venue for convergence and deepening a sense of understanding between IP and Christians as well as sharing of opinions on pressing issues affecting their groups.

Redemptorist Brother Carlito Karl Gaspar CSSR, who moderated the dialogue, explained that the activity is an attempt to bridge the gap between the IP communities and their needs as the Church and other religious leaders can help find alternative means to bring these concerns across.

Archbishop Antonio Ledesma of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro cited why the Roman Catholic church is concerned with the call to protect the environment.

"We base our call from the encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* of our Holy Father Pope Francis on care for our common home. All of us, not only those in the church, the priests, but everyone should be concerned for the welfare of our environment. I think it is important that we start also with our church communities, with our IP's whose lives are intertwined with the environment," Ledesma said.

He added that with the Lenten season on hand, he pointed out for everyone to focus on God's gift on creation, respect for the earth.

Several IP leaders from Luzon and Mindanao expressed their concerns on various development projects such as roads, dams and mining operations that threaten rainforests and indigenous areas.

One of the Hingaonon IP leaders described the situation as dire since they cannot openly express their opposition to these projects as they fear for their own lives and safety as those who opposed in the past were "red-tagged."



# Maynilad braces for challenging summer

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

West zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services Inc. is ramping up efforts to mitigate the effects of the reduced raw water allocation from Angat Dam in preparation for the coming summer season.

Maynilad said it would optimize its two water treatment facilities in Muntinlupa which now produce 300 million liters per day of water drawn from the Laguna Lake.

It will also reactivate several deep wells, continued reduction of water losses through sustained pipe replacement and repair activities, cloud-seeding operations, and deployment of modular water treatment plants that will draw

water from small rivers in Cavite.

These measures will enable Maynilad to get additional water supply for distribution, thus easing the current deficit from Angat Dam.

Metro Manila sources 96 percent of its water from the decades-old Angat Dam.

"We expect water consumption to increase this summer, so we have laid out this mitigation plan since last year so we can cushion the impact of the reduced raw water allocation on our customers," Maynilad chief operating officer Randolph Estrellado said.

The National Water Resources Board has opted to maintain reduced raw water

allocation for Metro Manila and nearby provinces in an effort to preserve the remaining supply in Angat Dam.

Current allocation is at 42 cubic meters per second versus the normal 48 CMS.

The reduced allocation started last year and has increased gradually and has yet to return to its normal level.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources said earlier the country was expected to have enough water supply this summer and the rest of the year.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu has assured the President that there will be enough water for the year.

The water shortage experienced in March 2019 prompted the President to scold water officials and to threaten to terminate the concession contracts of the Metro Manila water distributors.

Maynilad is the largest private water concessionaire in the country in terms of customer base. It serves the areas of Caloocan, Pasay, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas, Malabon, and certain portions of Manila, Quezon City, Makati and Cavite.

It is owned and managed by Maynilad Water Holdings Co. Inc. a joint venture among Metro Pacific Investments Corp., DMCI Holdings Inc., and Marubeni Corp.



## Maynilad seeks to mitigate low water allocation

WEST Zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services Inc. on Thursday said it is intensifying efforts to mitigate the effects of the reduced raw water allocation from Angat Dam in preparation for summer 2020.

Among the interventions are the optimization of Maynilad's two water treatment facilities in Muntinlupa City to produce 300 million liters per day of water drawn from Laguna Lake, reactivation of deep wells, continued reduction of water losses through sustained pipe replacement and repair activities, cloud seeding operations and deployment of modular water treatment plants to draw water from small rivers in Cavite.

Such measures would enable the water firm to get more water supply for distribution to ease the poor water supply of Angat Dam.

"We expect water consumption to increase this summer so we have laid out this mitigation plan since last year so we can cushion the impact of the reduced raw water allocation on our customers," chief operating officer Randolph Estrellado said.

The National Water Resources Board had said that it would reduce the water allocation for the National Capitol Region and nearby provinces to help preserve the dwindling supply of Angat Dam.

The current allocation is at 42 cubic meters per second against the normal 48 cubic meters per second. **Rio N. Araja**



## Maynilad moves to ease impact of lower water share

MAYNILAD Water Services, Inc. (Maynilad) is increasing its efforts to lessen the effects of reduced water allocation to its customers in preparation for the summer months.

Metro Manila's west zone water provider will optimize its two water treatment facilities located at Barangay Putatan in Muntinlupa. The two water facilities produce 300 million liters of water per day coming from Laguna Lake.

In a statement, Maynilad Chief Operating Officer Randolph T. Estrellado said that higher water consumption is to be expected this summer.

"We have laid out this mitigation plan since last year so we can cushion the impact of the reduced raw water allocation on our customers," he added.

Moreover, the water concessionaire will reactivate its deep wells, conduct cloud-seeding operations, and deploy modular water treatment plants in Cavite.

In a phone interview, Maynilad Water Supply Operations Head Ronald C. Padua said that cloud-seeding operations could tentatively start by March 9 depending on the weather report from the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) on whether there are seedable clouds near the dam.

The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) maintained its current water allocation for Metro Manila at 42 cubic meters per second (CMS), lower than the normal allocation of 48 cms.

Mr. Padua confirmed that the current water allocation from the NWRB is seen to remain amid the lowering water levels of Angat Dam.

"So far, the NWRB will maintain the 42 cms it allocates to our company," he said.

According to the latest data from PAGASA, the level of Angat Dam is at 201.72 meters (m) as of Thursday morning, lower by 0.15 m than Wednesday's level of 201.87 m.

Mr. Padua urged the public to only use the water they need and exert additional effort to save water.

He also assured that the water distributor is doing everything it can to minimize the adverse effects of reduced water allocation to its customers.

"We appeal to the public to practice responsible use of water and limit their usage only to what they need," Mr. Padua added.

He said current water interruptions experienced by Maynilad customers would remain as is.

Metro Pacific Investments Corp., which has majority stake in Maynilad, is one of three Philippine units of Hong Kong-based First Pacific Co. Ltd., the others being Philex Mining Corp. and PLDT Inc. Hastings Holdings, Inc., a unit of PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund subsidiary MediaQuest Holdings, Inc., has interest in *BusinessWorld* through the Philippine Star Group, which it controls. —

**Revin Mikhael Ochave**

## DOT convenes council as virus threats arise

DEPARTMENT of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat today assured the country of the tourism industry's fortitude and resiliency through the global health crisis brought by the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in 60 countries, including the Philippines.

Sec. Puyat said boosting domestic tourism may yet turn the adverse effects of the coronavirus into an opportunity to showcase the country as a safe and fun destination.



ROMULO-PUYAT

"This is temporary.

We will bounce back and recover," said Sec. Puyat as she rallied members of the Tourism Coordinating Council (TCC) during a special meeting she called this morning at the Makati Diamond Residences in Makati City.

The TCC is a 25-agency body created under RA 9593 or the Tourism Act of 2009 with the DOT Chief as chairperson, to serve as the coordinating body for national tourism development efforts.

She convened the council to tackle measures to mitigate the effects of the global pandemic threat on the country's tourism industry.

Joining Sec. Puyat at the TCC meeting were Sec. Roy Cimatu of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Sec. Silvestre Bello, of the Department of Labor (DOLE). Also present were representatives of other TCC member agencies, private sector and the non-government organizations (NGOs).

In a media briefing that followed, the DOT Chief outlined the DOT programs aimed to cushion the blow on the tourism sector which employs 5.3 million Filipinos, and sustain it until the health scare subsides.

In view of the economic losses incurred by the tourism industry from the massive outbreak of COVID-19 in other countries, including country's top visitor markets Korea and China, Sec. Puyat said the adverse effects may be mitigated by boosting domestic tourism.

"We will showcase the Philippines as a safe destination, which in fact it is, and we will have no less than PRRD to promote our local destinations starting with Boracay where he will visit the rehabilitated areas."

She lauded the private sector for the "all-out support," citing that had various airlines started rolling out discounted airfares for domestic flights until the promos culminated Tuesday night where all three companies gave their biggest sale in recent history.

Sec. Puyat also commended DOT-accredited hotels and resorts that committed to lowering their rates from 30-70 percent off of published and online rates in order to be competitive with neighboring Southeast Asian countries. Tour packages are also in season with many accredited tour operators giving up to 70 percent discounts.

"To strengthen this private-public partnership initiative, the DOT will be allocating approximately PHP 6 billion pesos that will span international and domestic promotions, infrastructure, and regional tourism development," Sec. Puyat added.

The DOT Chief stressed that there is no cause for panic, even as the Department of Health (DOH) has performed a commendable job containing the possible coronavirus spread since the death of one of three confirmed cases of COVID-19, all Chinese nationals who came from Wuhan in January.

"It is important to note that the Department of Health's current data would show that travelling around the country remains safe, highlighted by the fact that we don't have any local transmissions," said Sec. Puyat.

She noted that even before the temporary ban was enforced, the DOT had already cascaded the proper guidelines for accommodation establishments on how to deal with guests in light of the COVID-19.

These protocols include the use of infrared thermometers to check one's temperature, screening guidelines and provision for more available hand sanitizer in the premises.

Sec. Puyat also disclosed that PHP 85 million will be allocated for training on COVID-19 orientation, preparedness, response and protocols for industry stakeholders. The DOT's manpower development office will tweak its Filipino Brand of Service module to include points on how to handle guests for COVID-19 and response. This will include integration of DOH guidelines in all training.

During the TCC meeting, Sec. Cimatu agreed with Sec. Puyat to turn the world health crisis into an opportunity to step up efforts to rehabilitate and upgrade the country's tourist destinations.

Sec. Cimatu disclosed that Puerto Galera will soon start constructing its sewage treatment plant on a one-hectare property donated by a private individual.

Labor Sec. Bello meanwhile assured assistance to those workers who may be affected by the crisis and skills training will be available at TESDA.

On the other hand, Tourism Congress of the Philippines (TCP) president Jose Clemente III urged the DOT and the DOH to come up with standard regular updates on the COVID-19 situation.



## ROSES & THORNS

PIA ROCES MORATO



### Women's Month 2020

**E**very March we commemorate the impact of women throughout the world in a celebration we know as Women's Month.

The Philippine Commission on Women celebrates this month annually with activities aimed to further inspire and empower women of all ages to achieve gender equality. The theme "We make change work for women" has been the annual theme for a few years since 2017.

It is exciting to note that the Philippines ranked first in Asia and 8th in the world in terms of gender equal opportunities, according to a report by the World Economic Forum which, however slipped for the first time in 2019 in the global gender index.

Nevertheless, however, the Philippines remains to be the most gender equal country in Asia.

Under our current theme, government agencies such as the DENR, DILG and DepEd highlight the empowerment of women as "active contributors to and claimholders of development" which is also rooted on the commitment of 'Mala-sakit at Pagbabago.'

The Philippine Army on the other hand is celebrating Women's Month with activities that promote and advocate

advocacy Juana, social media exhibit of army women stories and a Juana Leadership Conference wherein the inspiring Philippine Army Women for 2020 will be awarded.

All in all, putting both the past and present together, Women's Month commemorates the vital role of women in the world. Being a single mother such as myself in this highly competitive world is very challenging, yet many developments throughout the years have also proven to be also empowering.

The celebration of Women's Month has proven that women have very valuable roles to play in nation building. In spite of the challenges many women still face today, opportunities for growth in our sector has enabled us to become more confident, empowered and successful.

To all the women out there, be they the homemakers, our beloved elders, business women, women in media, women in public service, women in the areas of health and social welfare and women in law enforcement and national defense, March is always a steady reminder for us to continue to rise and become the pillars which society can steadfastly build on for strength, and for progress. Happy Women's Month!







**MAGKAPE  
MUNA  
TAYO ULIT**  
ni Jera Sison

**PARA sa mga bumabatikos at sa mga taong sarado ang paniniwala na ang Meralco ay walang ibang inisip kung hindi umasa lamang sa coal plants para sa suplay ng koryente, makinig kayo.**

Kamakailan ay pinayagan ng Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) ang Meralco na maari na silang kumuha ng source ng koryente mula sa Solar Philippines Tanauan Corp. (SPTC). Malinaw na isa sa pagkukunan nila ng karagdagang suplay ng koryente ay mula sa renewable energy (RE) at ito ay mula sa init ng araw o solar energy. Ang SPTC ay pag-aari ng Leandro Leviste na anak ni dating Senador Loren Legarda na kilalang environmentalist.

Ayon sa ibinabang desisyon ng ERC, inaprubahan nila ang kasunduan sa pagitan ng Meralco at SPTC ng 20-year power supply agreement (PSA) na magbibigay ng 50 megawatts sa halagang P5.39 kada kilowatt-hour. Ayon sa ERC, maaring bumaba pa ang singil ng koryente sa ilalim ng power generation charge ng 1.18 centavos kada kilowatt-hour.

Sa pahayag naman ng Meralco, ito ay patunay sa kanilang suporta sa renewable energy. Lumalabas kasi na mas mababa pa ang nakuha nilang presyo mula sa SPTC sa regular na presyo ng koryente kapag ito ay nasa ilalim ng feed-in-tariff (FIT) rates. Matatandaan na ang FIT ay isang programa ng ating gobyerno upang mahikayat ang mga ibang kompanya na pumasok sa negosyong RE sa pamamagitan ng bahaging subsidiya mula sa atin sa pamamagitan ng dagdag bayad tuwing

tayo ay sinisingil sa ating konsumo ng koryente kada buwan.

Sa totoo lang, medyo kuwestiyonable ang nasabing FIT program. Biruin ninyo nagbabayad tayo ng subsidiya sa mga nais magtayo ng RE plants nguni't kinalaunan, kapag nakapagtayo na sila ng kanilang planta ng koryente ay sisingilin ulit tayo rito. Parang talo yata tayo rito ha?

Subali't pagdating ng panahon, nakikita ko na sa RE talaga tayo pupunta. Ang coal ay mula sa tinatawag nating fossil fuel. May hangganan din ito. Mauubos din ito. Subali't ang solar energy ay nandyan hanggang magunaw ang mundo. Kaya naman patuloy ang pag-aaral

**MERALCO AT SOLAR ENERGY**

at pagsasaliksik upang makaimbento ng mga bagong teknolohiya kung papaano magamit ang init at sikat ng araw bilang koryente na mas mura at abot kaya ng lahat ng tao.

Mahal pa kasi ang magpatayo ng isang solar energy plant. Maliban dito, ang kanyang tinatawag na 'base load capacity' ay hindi kasing laki ng makukuha mula sa isang coal plant. Kaya naman kung mapapan-sin ninyo, ang maaring mabigay na suplay ng SPTC sa Meralco ay 50 megawatts lamang. Nangangailangan ang Meralco mula sa Septyembre 2024 ng mahigit na 1,200 megawatts sa loob ng 20 years. Siguradong hindi kaya mapunuan ito

ng mga RE. Coal plants lamang ang may kapasidad na makapag-suplay ng ganitong kalaking bulto ng koryente sa mas murang halaga.

Sa ngayon, kahit na batikusin pa ng mga militanteng grupo at mga environmental group ang coal plant, ito pa rin ang kailangan ng ating bansa upang makatulong sa pag-unlad ng ating ekonomiya.

Nguni't ang kasunduan ng Meralco at SPTC ay patunay na bukas ang Meralco sa paggamit ng RE sa hinaharap na panahon na maaring bilang pangunahing source ng suplay ng ating koryente at hindi lamang nakatuon sa coal plant.