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Lake Lanao in peril

Population growth, pollution, invasive alien species, peace and order threaten ancient Philippine lake

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

CAUGHT in the crossfire of the infamous Marawi Siege, Lake Lanao in the province of Lanao del Sur that is now under the newly organized Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) is in peril and may end up as collateral damage.

The traditional home of the Meranaw or Maranao, one of several Muslim ethnolinguistic groups in Mindanao, Lake Lanao, is one of the oldest lakes in the Philippines. Scientists believe it to be more than 2 million years old.

It is the second biggest in land freshwater body that provides a valuable life support system to the communities that depend on the bounty of the Lake Lanao River Basin.

Lake Lanao has an inland water area of 336 hectares. Its surface area is pegged at 36,000 hectares.

Serious threats

THE threats the lake and its surrounding environs is facing are real. Problems besetting Lake Lanao are encompassing food security and safety, population growth, water quality and safety, and pollution.

The lake's biodiversity is also suffering severely. It is believed that 18 native fish species that used to thrive in the lake have gone extinct.

A possible reason: the introduction of 12 different nonnative fish species to enhance the lake's fish production.

Various studies conducted by experts indicate that the lake is facing serious environmental problems.

According to the policy brief Series published by the National Research Council of the Philippines (NRCP) of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Lake Lanao can be classified as an oligotrophic lake which means it has "low primary productivity as a result of low nutrient content."

On a positive note, oligotrophic lakes have low algal production

and often have very clear waters with high drinking water quality.

Saklaw Program

THE six independent NRCP researchers in Lake Lanao under the "Saklaw" or Saklolo sa Lawa Program of the NRCP undertaken between 2015 to 2017 suggest that "the weak lake governance can further deteriorate the condition of the lake which may become detrimental to people's health and wellness." The research was done by experts from the Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology and the Marawi campuses to assess the lake's condition.

Here's why: Households from Marawi City and the 17 municipalities bordering the lake use its resources as disposal sink for both domestic and business wastes.

Human pressure on the lake and its resources is on the rise with the increasing population under a business-as-usual scenario.

The deterioration of the lake's water quality becomes apparent with the water level drastically receding and reduced catch of fishes and shrimps.

Scientists also observed fecal contamination levels from the bank and up to 25 meters lakeward, rendering the water unsafe for drinking.

The lake is also suffering from loss of endemic fishes, indicating possible extinction of native fish to due changes in the lake's natural equilibrium.

Priority Upper River Basin

LAKE Lanao, or the Lake Lanao River Basin, was identified as a priority site for the Integrated Natural Resources and Environmental Management Project (Inrem) along with the Chico Upper River Basin in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), the Wahig-Inabanga River Basin in Central Visayas, and the Bukidnon Upper River Basin in Northern Mindanao.

Inrem is one of the major projects of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Forest Management Bureau (DENR-FMB) to address unsustainable watershed management in the Philippines.

With particular focus on indigenous peoples and resource-poor communities, the project aims to reduce and reverse the degradation of watersheds and associated environmental services caused by forest denudation and unsustainable farming practices.

However, due to peace and order concerns, Lanao Lake was dropped from the program's roster, explained DENR Assistant Secretary for Staff Bureaus Ricardo Calderon.



Lake Lanao in peril

"Lake Lanao is supposed to be part of Inremp project as one of the pilot sites, but because of peace and order situation, the implementation was held in abeyance," Calderon said.

A major factor was the Marawi Siege which saw state forces—both the police and military waging all-out war to flush out suspected Islamic State-inspired terrorists that held the entire Islamic city of Marawi hostage for five months.

Being a watershed reservation, Calderon underscored the need to protect and conserve the entire Lanao Lake River Basin.

Director Nonito Tamayo of the DENR-FMB justified the decision to let go of Lake Lanao from Inremp, citing the peace and order problem at the time.

Nevertheless, he said the rehabilitation of the lake has been integrated in the proposed rehabilitation of Marawi City.

Nevertheless, he is confident that the BARMM, which has jurisdiction over the predominantly Muslim region, will do an equally good job in protecting and conserving the lake.

Rich biodiversity

LAKE Lanao was proclaimed a watershed reserve by virtue of Proclamation 871 on February 26, 1992.

Considered as an important biodiversity site in the Philippines,

it is one of the priority sites for conservation. The lake is home to 18 endemic species of freshwater fish and supports a large number of waterfowls.

In two barangays that were surveyed during the preparation of the Integrated Development Plan of the Watershed alone, a total of 27 species of trees, shrubs and vines were observed. More important, 41 medicinal plant species naturally occur in the forests.

There are six bird species in the watershed. Among them are the white-collared kingfisher, slender bird crow and cattle egret.

Hydropower

LAKE Lanao has five watersheds with rivers and major tributaries, totaling 431 kilometers, according to a biological profile posted on the official web site of Inremp.

The waters from these rivers and tributaries drain into the lake and goes out through the Agus River in Lanao del Norte that flows southwest into Iligan Bay via two channels—the Maria Cristina Falls, the largest waterfall in the country, and Linamon Falls.

Besides being a source of food and water, a hydroelectric plant that feeds from the Lanao Lake and Agus River generates 70 percent of the electricity that energizes Mindanao.

Agus River alone supports seven hydroelectric power plants of the National Power Corp. (NPC) with a combined capacity of 727 megawatts.

Policy recommendations

THE NRCP which funded the six independent studies came up with policy recommendations that are anchored on strengthening the governance of Lake Lanao.

This will require a review of relevant laws affecting the protection and conservation of the lake, and the consequent harmonization of policies or guidelines for better synergy.

It also calls for the creation of a Regional Multi-sectoral Lanao Lake Development Authority and the organization of a community-based "Bantay Ranaw Task Force" for participatory monitoring and protection of the lake.

Another recommendation is the formulation and implementation of a Lake Lanao Sustainable Development Roadmap.

Moreover, the management of Lake Lanao and its resources—through addressing research and development gaps on renewable energy, biodiversity, water safety and sustainability, food safety and security and on culture and heritage—must be done.

It was also emphasized by the proponents of the independent researches that measures toward more responsive and responsible communities for the protection of the health and wellness of the people around the lake is a must.

This will include the review of public toilet facilities in every mosque and public establishments around the lake to prevent seepage of sewage into the lake, a common problem encountered in-land water bodies with increasing human pressures.

Given its importance to the people of Mindanao, particularly the Meranaw or Maranao—whether as a source of food, water, income and, more important, as a way of life—protecting and conserving Lake Lanao cannot be overemphasized.





COMMONSENSE

MARICHU A. VILLANUEVA

Landfills of hope

In July 2018, about 51,000 tons of garbage mis-declared as plastic synthetic flakes arrived at Mindanao International Container Terminal. The shipment originating from South Korea actually contained plastics, used batteries, diapers and dextrose tubes. Quoting records of the Korean Customs, environment activists Greenpeace claimed South Korea has been exporting tons of plastic wastes to the Philippines since 2017.



As investigations unfolded, it turned out 103 containers of garbage and other waste materials from Canada were also found at the Manila International Container Terminal that arrived in batches from 2013 to 2014. Trash from at least 26 containers out of the 103 have already been buried in a Tarlac landfill. In 2016, a Manila court ordered the importers to take back to Canada the remaining garbage-filled containers.

The consignee was accused of violating Republic Act (RA) 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, and the 1995 Basel Convention on the Trans-boundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and Disposal. The international convention, to which both Canada and the Philippines are signatories, provides that "the exporting country must take back the waste materials if the receiving country refuses to accept them."

At least 69 containers of these mixed wastes from Canada were finally shipped last June back to Ottawa. But this was not after President Rodrigo Duterte repeatedly attacked and ridiculed Canadian authorities led by its Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for dilly-dallying on the retrieval of their garbage exports to the Philippines.

Despite these efforts to return them back to senders, garbage "exports" continue to come into the country from Hong Kong and other countries. While these maybe a cause of concern, something else caught my interest about garbage that could turn these waste materials to more productive, if not profitable, venture here in our country.

This we found out in a dinner reception where I met a couple who turned out to be involved in a California-based company aptly called Wasteful Inc. In an executive brief, Wasteful Inc. described their firm as specializing in converting municipal solid waste into "synthetic" fuel, or "syn" crude for short, for use as either aviation fuel or diesel.

Trevor Nielson, chairman of Wasteful Inc. along with his Filipina wife, Evelyn, flew all the way to the Philippines to personally look and check out garbage sites here that would become their primary source of raw materials for "syn" fuel. In fact, the couple was accompanied by their Wasteful Inc. country manager in the Philippines, Andrew Masigan, in visiting the Rodriguez landfill in Montalban which will be one of their project sites here in Metro Manila.

Nielson, co-founder and chief executive officer of I(x) Investments, disclosed that Wasteful will infuse about \$800 million worth of investments to put up the first-ever "syn" fuel plant in Metro Manila and another in Cebu. An excited Masigan interjected that their project is also seen to generate some 200 jobs for Filipino engineers and chemical scientists who would operate the Wasteful Inc.'s bio-refinery plant.

With existing plants in various stages of development in the United States, Mexico, Columbia, Panama and Brazil, among others, Nielson echoed the confidence of their investment group that the Philippines is a prime destination for this pioneering project of Wasteful Inc. in this part of the world. Nielson disclosed that the Philippines is singled-out by their company for their project due to its seeming not-so-good image abroad because it is an export destination of other country's garbage.

"It's abundance of waste," sadly or rather fortunately, that qualified the Philippines as a highly recommended nation for this kind of investment project.

According to Nielson, Wasteful Inc. intends to build a bio-refinery with the capacity to process 3,500 tons of plastic and other carbon-rich wastes a day that will yield approximately 22.9 million gallons of aviation fuel a year. Initially, he disclosed, their company would sell the aviation fuel to California because of the tax carbon credit given to environment-friendly fuels.

This is because, Nielson explained, Wasteful technology is fully compliant with the Clean Air Act and that its process does not involve incineration or combustion. It uses steam and pressure to convert waste into gaseous form and then using the "Fischer-Tropsch method," it converts the gas to liquid. The outcome is what is called a "syn crude," which is refined into aviation fuel.

Nielson stressed that Wasteful's technology produces aviation fuel from this method with a carbon content that is less than 20% of that made from fossil fuel. "This means that for every minute of commercial flight using fuel made from garbage, we prevent one ton of trash from inundating our landfills and avoid the equivalent of 4 truckloads of CO2 (carbon dioxide) from polluting our air," Nielson pointed out.

Perhaps by stroke of luck, there is a fresh initiative from Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian who is pushing for a law that would encourage both national and local government units (LGUs) to participate in promoting waste management and the development of waste-to-energy (WTE) projects all over the Philippines. In fact, Gatchalian initiated his proposed Waste-to-Energy Act (WTE Act) in filing Senate Bill (SB) No. 363 that seeks to provide a framework for the entire value chain of WTE facilities and ensure the uninterrupted supply of waste as feedstock.

He announced this during the Forum on Renewable Energy and Waste-to-Energy Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) held last Friday. Gatchalian, chairman of the Senate committee on energy disclosed he had done already several consultation meetings with stakeholders and other interested parties. "Hopefully, within a few months we can pass this bill," he cited.

With such technology of turning garbage into synthetic fuel, this could break the "not-in-my-backyard" policy of some LGUs. There is hope, after all, to host landfills. Or accept garbage "exports" again.



"It's abundance of waste," sadly or rather fortunately, that qualified the Philippines as a highly recommended nation for this kind of investment project.



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SUMBONG
kay Editor

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**TAMBAK NA BASURA SA
BAKANTENG LOTE**

IREREKLAMO ko lang 'yung tambak na basura sa bakanteng lote sa Maligaya, Caloocan City. Grabe, sa gabi ay sobrang baho ng lugar na 'yun, ang sama sa pakiramdam kapag nalanghap mo. Hindi ko alam kung sadyang irresponsible talaga ang mga residente kasi ilang araw na 'yung ganu 'n, pero wala pa ring pagbabago. Panawagan sa mga residente at kinaaukulan, pakilinis naman 'yun, maawa naman kayo sa kalikasan at sa kapwa n'yo na napeperhuwisyo! — *Kim*



DENR needs bigger greening budget for next year

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA [@jonlmayuga](#)

THE Duterte administration is asking Congress to approve its proposed budget of P5.152 billion for the implementation of the Expanded-National Greening Program (ENGP) next year.

Of the total amount, around 20 percent or P4 billion is for capital outlay, while the remaining P1.062 billion is for maintenance and other operating expenses.

Some P1.145 billion is allotted for maintenance and protection of 318,871 hectares of NGP/ENGP sites for the next three years.

Under the proposed 2020 National Expenditure Program (NEP), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR) Central Office will get P141 million; Forest Management Bureau (FMB), P146 million; Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau, P67.4 million; and the DENR-National Capital Region, P7.62 million.

Regions will also get greening funds under the NEP. The Cordillera Administrative Region was allocated P249.4 million; Region 1, P363 million; Region 2, P226.8 million; Region 3, P202.95 million; Region 4A, P115 million; Region 4B, P405.8 million; Region 5, P442 million; Region 6, P430.2 million; Region 7, P225 million; Region 8, P386.7 million; Region 9, P373.4 million; Region 10, P280.38 million; Region 11, P212.9 million; Region 12, P343.7 million; and Region 13, P632.68 million.

The proposed budget for the ENGP forms part of the proposed P19.93-billion budget for operations of the DENR under the 2020 NEP submitted by Malacañang.

FMB Director Nonito Tamayo under the proposed budget, the DENR plans to expand the country's forest cover by 150,000 hectares with the establishment of forest plantations, which has a proposed budget of P975 million.

"Hopefully, we can convince Congress to allocate funds to expand our forest cover," said Tamayo.

This year, projects for forest expansion were halted due to the budget constraint. The P2-billion budget cut for 2019 was charged against the ENGP.

Aside from native trees and fruit-bearing trees, the DENR is now eyeing to establish more bamboo plantations, following Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu's recent pronouncement at an international conference hosted by the Philippines wherein he affirmed the country's commitment to promoting regional cooperation for bamboo production.

ERDB Director Sofio B. Quintana believes that the massive cultivation and promotion of bamboo as an alternative to wood and timber can help reduce human pressures on terrestrial environment and eventually save the country's remaining forest.



700,000 Filipinos using GCash Forest to help save watershed

MORE THAN 700,000 GCash users have joined the movement to plant trees through GCash Forest, an important carbon tracking feature of GCash, to help save the watershed that supplies water to Metro Manila. Ney Villaseñor, chief corporate affairs officer at Mynt, which runs the country's leading mobile wallet, said 756,370 people have signed up to collect green energy through GCash Forest as of Aug. 19. GCash Forest is a personal carbon account that tracks how much emission people have avoided by living more consciously. "Green" activities — such as walking, bringing eco-bags and own utensils, among others — earn users energy points. When they have enough points, they get to plant a virtual tree in GCash Forest, which GCash will match with a real, native tree planted at the Ipo watershed.



'Forestry sector holds great promise for PHL economy'

SEVERAL problems, including un-conducive investment environment, continue to hinder the development of the local forestry sector, which could help boost the country's economic growth.

Citing the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda), the Philippine Wood Producers Association (PWPA) said the forestry sector is still grappling with uncondusive policy for forestry investment and the absence of a national policy that addresses permanent forest limit and delineation.

According to the PWPA, figures from the Forest Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources showed that the forestry industry contributed around P2.3 billion to the country's gross domestic product in 2017.

"To help spur growth, the government has identified specific steps to take under the Philippine Development Plan [PDP] 2017-2022 to ensure that the local forestry sector continues to be responsive to current problems," PWPA said in a statement over the weekend.

Among the solutions identified under the PDP 2017-2022 are complete delineation of final forest limits, including protection and production areas through legislation and

the promotion of sustainable forest-based industries. "The former will better equip our country to manage our forests, while the latter will ensure that livelihoods that depend on forests will be protected and made more sustainable," PWPA said.

"Another opportunity to fulfill the great promise of Philippine forestry that the government has identified is the wide-spread adaptation of sustainable forest management," it added.

PWPA Chairman Charlie Liu said the Philippine forestry sector is "filled with promise."

The forestry sector is comprised of 1,700 establishments that employ over 70,000 people, PWPA said.

"Many Filipinos across the country depend on our industry for their livelihoods. That's why we are adamant about campaigning for the wider adaptation of sustainable forest management," Liu said.

"We believe that through it we can empower more Filipinos who rely on the forestry sector," he added.

In line with PWPA's campaign for sustainable forest management, the organization is holding the Philippine Wood Expo 2019 at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza on October 21 and 22. *Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas*



Tagle: Be more active in caring for nature

By Tina G. Santos
@santostinaINQ

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Manila archbishop, on Sunday appealed to the faithful to be more active in their role as God's stewards in caring for nature as he led

the launching of the celebration of the "Season of Creation."

The monthlong event of the Archdiocese of Manila was marked by a series of activities promoting environmental causes in seminaries, parishes and communities.

"When we were young, the earth was beautiful. We play in fields, bathe in the rivers and were nourished by the seas and the mountains. Now that we are old, so is the earth. It withered, paled and is now dying because of our doing—wrongdoing,"

said Tagle, who concelebrated Mass with Cubao Bishop Honesto Ongtioco and Caloocan Bishop Pablo Virgilio David at the Liwasang Aurora in Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City.

"We have forgotten how to take care of our trees, animals,

waters and land. We have become greedy, and disrespected our common home. And so today we appeal to everyone: 'Let us renew our pledge to respect one another and the web of life,'" he added.

In 2015, Pope Francis de-


clared Sept. 1 as the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation and has urged the dioceses around the world to celebrate the Season of Creation and to collaborate with each other in caring and saving the Earth. INQ



#nationataglance

CORDILLERA ADMINISTRATIVE REGION: BAGUIO CITY
Baguio highlights battle vs urbanization's adverse effects as city celebrates 110th anniversary

THE MOUNTAIN city of Baguio, long tagged as the country's summer capital, has in recent years been plagued by the adverse effects of urbanization such as overpopulation, road congestion, and environmental degradation. As the city celebrated its 110th founding anniversary on Sept. 1, focus was given on balanced growth with the theme Nurturing the Environment for Sustainable Development. "Amidst the grueling challenges that our city continues to confront, we should remain focused on dealing with the serious negative effects of urbanization for us to preserve and protect the state of our environment," Mayor Benjamin B. Magalong said in his Baguio Day message. "This will translate to a better quality of life for our people and the coming generations," said the first-term mayor who has set out a 15-point reform agenda for a "better Baguio." In a press conference last week, he said, "We continue to institute reforms in all areas and aspects for the city of Baguio. It requires both short term and strategic solutions. Just bear with us, please be patient with us. Rest assured that we have all the passion to institute these reforms."



MAYOR @MAGALONGBENJIE FB PAGE

REPRESENTATIVES from various sectors walk up Session Road for the parade in celebration of the 110th Baguio Day on Sept. 1.



INSTEAD OF EXTRACTING SAND, ROCK

**EXPERT: RECYCLING RUBBLE
TO SAVE ENVIRONMENT**

NICOSIA—Recycling rubble, particularly in countries pummeled by war, is one way to limit environmental damage caused by extracting sand and rock, according to Pascal Peduzzi of UN Environment.

"Syria is experiencing a horrible and tragic war—whole cities will have to be razed and rebuilt," the expert told **A14**

Agence France-Presse (AFP).

"Construction materials must be recycled or we will have quarry problems." In neighboring Lebanon, which experienced its own protracted civil war

(1975-1990), a multitude of illegal quarries have already left gaping wounds in the mountainsides.

Environmentalists worry there could be an uptick in extraction to feed an eventual reconstruction of Syria.

But recycling rubble is also an option for countries not devastated by war.

The United Kingdom introduced a tax on landfilling construction materials and "since, builders are recycling (materials) in part to reduce their expenses," Peduzzi said.

"We must also build multi-functional buildings for the long term," like schools that can be transformed into retirement

homes if the population ages, he added.

Extraction of sand and gravel cannot be entirely avoided.

But experts warn that it must be strictly limited on coastlines, where extraction causes erosion that can lead to saltwater contamination of ground water.

If salt water seeps into

rivers, it can destroy entire ecosystems.

Although the environmental impact of quarries is generally less pronounced, experts still advocate strict rules to ensure land is preserved for agriculture and livestock.

"States must levy taxes on extraction so sites can then be

rehabilitated and we avoid companies leaving without returning a site to its original state," Peduzzi said.

When quarrying abides by regulations, it is possible to refill a quarry with inert waste and recover it with topsoil to replant a forest or recreate agricultural land. —AFP



Water crisis continues to subside

Angat power plant to resume operation; farms to get supply for irrigation

By Ronnel W. Domingo
@RonWDomingoINQ

More raw water from Angat Dam has been made available to customers of Maynilad Water Service Inc. and Manila Water Co. Inc. as the stock surpassed the dam's minimum operating level, but Metro Manila and adjacent provinces are not yet out

of the woods.

Even then, the continual rise of the water level at the dam means that farms can now get irrigation from Angat and the power plant there can run again.

Effective Sept. 1, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) raised the allocation to Metropolitan Waterworks and

Sewerage System to 40 cubic meters per second from 36 cu.m.

NWRB last June reduced MWSS allocation to 36 cu.m from the normal allocation of 46 cu.m as the water level fell below the critical mark of 160 meters above sea level (masl).

According to Manila Water, a difference of 4 cu.m in the wa-

ter allocation to MWSS represented 350 million liters a day, equivalent to the daily water consumption of about 700,000 people.

As of 6 a.m. of Aug. 31, water level at the Angat Dam was at 182.61 masl, close to 3 meters above the minimum operating level of 180 masl.

In an interview, NWRB exec-

utive director Seville David said normal allocation to MWSS was still not possible considering that it was more important to allow Angat Dam to accumulate more stock in preparation for next year's summer months.

"We will continue to monitor the dam and make appropriate decisions on allocation as the actual situation would al-

low," David said. "Our hope is to see the water level reach 210 masl or more at the end of this year."

Even then, he said the continued rise of stock in Angat Dam meant not only more supply available for household use, but also for farms and power generation.

"NWRB also decid-

ed to resume allocation for irrigation,"

David said. "That also means that the Angat hydroelectric power plant can run again."

The Angat power plant has been on forced outage for several months now due to the low water level at the dam, contributing to the recent power supply crunch in Luzon

that saw the grid go under red alert more than 10 times.

In a statement, Maynilad said water consumers should continue to cooperate in conserving the still limited supply.

"The water allocation is still below the normal 46 cu.m because NWRB wants Angat Dam to reach a water level of more than 210 meters by yearend to ensure that we have enough

supply in the summer of 2020,"

According to David, it was possible that NWRB would decide this month to again raise the MWSS allocation in October if the water level at Angat reached 190 masl or higher.

"There are many factors that we consider for such a decision, but such an increase [in the water level] would be helpful," David said. INQ



Group sees P16-hike in water rates from SC ruling

WATER rates will likely increase by P12 to P16 per cubic meter as a result of a Supreme Court decision last month that will force water companies to finish their sewerage projects within five years instead of up of 2037, according to consumer advocacy group CitizenWatch Philippines

In a statement at the weekend, the group said the SC's August 2019 decision penalized Manila Water and Sewerage System (MWSS) and its two concessionaires, Maynilad and Manila Water, almost P1 billion each for failing to finish their sewerage projects by May 2009, as required by the Clean Water Act, which took effect in 2004.

The SC ruling was announced only in a press briefing but the fines must be paid within 15 days from its release. Daily fines of P322,102 until full compliance have also been imposed, further pressuring the MWSS and its concessionaires to comply and complete their projects by 2022, CitizenWatch said.

CitizenWatch said the new decision is confusing because in 2011, the Supreme Court gave MWSS and its two concessionaires up to 2037 to comply since 17 government agencies which were tasked to prepare the way for MWSS and the concessionaires have not fully complied until now.

For instance, it said that all the local governments in Metro Manila must provide land and right of way for the sewerage treatment plants, issue permits and identify all households and establishments that are not compliant with the law.

Maynilad has a budget of almost P400 billion and Manila Water almost P200

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Water rates...

CONTINUED FROM A12

billion to finish their sewerage projects up to 2037. Compressing these amounts into five years would result in higher water rates since sewerage and water rates are bunched together, claimed CitizenWatch.

Maynilad's all-in average charge is around P49 per cubic meter now. This in-

cludes all charges like environmental fee and value added tax. For Manila Water, it is P39.

CitizenWatch pointed out, "The problem now is how will they comply when the government agencies who must submit and do preparatory work are still remiss? Where is the land? Where is the overall plan from public works to guide them?" By singling out the concessionaires, the SC is actually penalizing the citizens, it said.



Dagdag-presyo sa tubig nakaumang

NAGBABALA ang isang consumer advocacy group sa pagtaas ng presyo ng tubig bunsod ng desisyon ng Supreme Court (SC) na patawan ng tig-P1 bilyong multa ang dalawang pangunahing water concessionaire sa bansa.

Ayon sa CitizenWatch.PH, tiyak na babawiin ng Maynilad at Manila Water sa mga consumer ang multang pinataw sa kanila ng High Court dahil sa paglabag umano sa Clean Water Act.

"The decision will penalize the public without any real gain. The objective of cleaning Manila Bay will not be achieved at all because sewer treatment plants is only a small part of a very complex solution that involves all sectors of society," ayon sa grupo.

Tantiya ng grupo, papalo sa P12 hanggang P16 per cubic meter o 1.6 sentimo kada litro ang itataas ng presyo ng tubig.

Naglaan na ang Maynilad ng P400 bilyon, habang P200 bilyon naman sa Manila Water para tapusin ang sewerage project ng taong 2037, pero dahil sa desisyon ng SC ay kailangan nilang tapusin ito ng limang taon.

"And that means hundreds, if not thousands, of contractors will be needed to dig up the whole Metro Manila. Traffic will be so monstrous that all business activity will be affected. This will be aggravated by even longer timelines because another government agency requires such construction work only from 10pm to 4am. It will be a huge mess," dagdag pa nila.



Kaliwa Dam project will push through – MWSS

THE top official of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) over the weekend assured lawmakers that the Kaliwa Dam project would push through.

Newly appointed MWSS Administrator Emmanuel Salamat said the government had given the Kaliwa Dam project the green light during a briefing on the water situation in Metro Manila.

"We will implement this project as approved by our Board of Trustees. We are currently complying with the requirements for the project. Right now, we're waiting for the ECC (environmental compliance certificate)," Salamat added.

The retired military general told the lawmakers that concerns raised against the project would be properly addressed.

Salamat cited the issue involving the indigenous peoples' community in Infanta, Quezon.

He said public hearings with affected communities are conducted and that their concerns were being looked into.

"We want to make sure there will be sustainable plans for com-

munities to ensure their support," Salamat added.

The Commission on Audit has clarified that the project underwent public bidding — contrary to media reports — and that what they found were only possible irregularities in the compliance with bidding requirements.

Of the P12.2-billion construction cost, 85 percent would be funded from official development assistance from China amounting to P10.2 billion, while 15 percent or P2 billion would be shouldered by the MWSS.

After 34 years, the Kaliwa Dam project is set to fully take off, with the formal signing of the contract between President Rodrigo Duterte and Chinese President Xi Jinping last November.

The project, which aims to supply additional 600 million liters of water per day to Metro Manila, will be undertaken by the MWSS and China Energy Engineering Corp.

The construction of the multibillion-peso water project was first approved by the National Economic and Development Authority in 2014.

FRANCIS EARL A. CUETO



Averting water crisis

WHAT can members of the two-chamber Congress do to avert water shortage in the coming years not only in the heavily-populated Metropolitan Manila (MM) area but elsewhere?

Our lawmakers ought to craft short-term and long-term solutions to the recurring water crisis in the metropolis and other parts of the country which, ironically, is surrounded by water.

That's why we commend the House of Representatives' committee on MM development for working very hard to ensure that alternative water sources will be utilized properly.

The panel, chaired by Manila Rep. Manny Lopez, called on concerned offices to update Congress about various water concerns, including the possible recurrence of water crisis in 2020.

Lopez aired the call during a committee hearing, which was attended by officials of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, Manila Water Company, Inc., Maynilad Water Services, Inc., MWSS Regulatory Office and National Water Resources Board.

"Maghanap tayo ng mga alternatibong pagkukunan ng supply ng tubig at mas paigtinigin natin ang kampanya sa pagtitipid ng tubig at paggamit nito ng wasto," said the Manila solon.

We share the view of Congressman Lopez that the country, which is regularly visited by heavy rains, typhoons and storms, needs proper infrastructure to collect rainwater.

He said harvesting rainwater for irrigation and household purposes is also an effective way to prevent widespread flooding in low-lying communities during the rainy season.

At present, 90 percent of the water supply for Metropolitan Manila is sourced from Angat Dam in nearby Bulacan province.

In the view of many, including the ordinary citizens, Congress should also ensure the construction of more water systems to meet the water needs of the burgeoning population.



Kuwestyon sa Kaliwa dam kailangan linawin'

SUPPORTADO sa Kamara de Representantes ang pagtatayo ng New Centennial Water Source-Kaliwa Dam project pero dapat umanong plant-sahin ng Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System ang mga kuwestyon sa bidding process nito.

Ipinunto ni House committee on Metro Manila Development char at Manila Rep. Manny Lopez ang iregularidad na nakita ng Commission on Audit sa bidding ng Kaliwa dam.

"I support all the initiatives, including this one (Kaliwa Dam project)

to address Metro Manila's water woes," ani Lopez. "However, they should comply with the CoA findings before proceeding with the project."

Ayon sa CoA pina-labas umano ng MWSS na nagkaroon ng competitive bidding subalit dalawa sa tatlong bidder ang hindi umano sumunod sa requirement.

"As a result, only the China Energy Engineering Corporation Limited qualified which is questionable considering that the two bidders were disqualified in the 1st and 2nd stages of the procurement process due to seemingly intentional purpose of the bidders not to comply with the TWG requirements," saad ng CoA.

Posible umano na isinama ang dalawang bidder upang makasunod sa "three bidders requirement" na nakasaad sa Procurement Law. — *Leifbilly Begas*



OCEANAGOLD PHILIPPINES ENSURES WATER MANAGEMENT COMPLIANCE TO ISO 14001



OceanaGold Philippines (OGPI) reports the measures it observes to ensure its water management system complies to ISO certification.

In late 2018, the OGPI Didipio operations undertook recertification in its International Organization for Standardization's Environmental Management System (ISO 14001) and Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSAS 18001). ISO 14001 serves as the guiding framework of UN Sustainable Development Goal for having amply protected; seamlessly integrated; efficiently harnessed; water sources and management systems by 2030.

The Didipio operation uses clean and sophisticated technologies, making its gold processing cyanide and mercury free; its tailings non-toxic and non-hazardous; and ultimately the best in the world in terms of water management.

In the Didipio mine, OGPI recycled an average of 75% of the process plant's water requirements reducing abstraction of water from local catchments and overall operating costs in 2016. As of December 2018, Didipio's continuous efforts to improve the water recycling

rate resulted in an increase to 90% recycled water.

"One of OceanaGold's key environmental goals is to maintain a sustainable, non-polluted water supply across all of our operations and host communities.

We are committed to proactively reducing fresh water use and maximising water recycling in our operations, thereby reducing our need to extract water from local catchments and ensuring our host communities maintain access to healthy water sources.

At Didipio, we are delivering on this to the highest standard," OceanaGold Didipio General Manager, Mr. David Way said.

The construction of a new Water System Project further puts OceanaGold's Didipio operation at the forefront of global long-term environmental planning and management.

The Water System Project is due to be completed later this year and includes water storage, treatment and supply infrastructure that will enable community members to access reliable and safe potable water in each household now and for years to come. The system will have the capacity to provide wa-

ter for up to an estimated 2400 households in the community, roughly triple the estimated count of current households numbered at 900.

OceanaGold has also recently improved its environmental standards and management systems, firmly supporting the United Nations sustainability goal on climate action and affordable, clean energy.

The Didipio operation is now obtaining further certification for its Energy Management System (ISO 50001 2011) - with the aim of more efficiently using available energy sources to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other related environmental impacts and energy cost through the systematic management of energy.

"This continual improvement on our environmental performance is the direct result of the commitment and hard work of our Didipio employees to make their operation world class and aligned to international best practice mining standards.

By doing this they are leaving a lasting, positive legacy not only for Didipio, but for the whole of the Philippine community," Mr. Way said.



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Mining, quarrying output up 15.1%—PSA

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

THE value of the output of Philippine mining firms expanded by an annualized rate of 15.1 percent in 2017, according to the latest data released by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Data from the 2017 Annual Survey of Philippine Business and Industry (ASPBI) for the mining and quarrying sector showed that the industry's output rose to P139.3 billion in 2017 from the 2016 record of P121 billion.

Nonferrous metal ores, except precious metals, accounted for the

lion's share of the total at P86 billion, or 61.7 percent.

"The lowest was recorded in mining and quarrying, NEC (not elsewhere classified) with less than 1-percent share, or a total value of output of P52 million," the PSA said.

The regions that recorded the

highest mining and quarrying output were Caraga, Western Visayas and the Mimaropa region. These regions accounted for 53.2 percent, or P74.1 billion, of the total.

Among these regions, Caraga had the highest value amounting to P28.4 billion, or 20.4 percent of the total.

This was followed by Western Visayas and Mimaropa with P24.6 billion and P21.1 billion, respectively.

PSA data also showed that the total intermediate expense incurred by the sector reached P54.9 billion in 2017. This was 21.9 percent higher than the P45 billion posted in 2016.

The sector incurred expenses in the production of goods, such as materials and supplies purchased, fuels purchased, electricity and water purchased, and industrial services done by others plus beginning inventory of materials, supplies and fuels.

Among industry groups, firms engaged in the mining of nonferrous metal ores except precious metals spent the most at P37.1 billion. This is about two-thirds, or 87.7 percent, of the total intermediate expense of the sector.

Quarrying of stone, sand and clay recorded the least with P3 billion, or 5.4 percent, of the total intermediate expense.

Across regions, Caraga incurred the highest intermediate expense amounting to P9.9 billion, or 18 percent, followed by Bicol region and Central Visayas.



PHOTO

Intermediate expense in Bicol reached P9.8 billion, while Central Visayas incurred expenses worth P9.5 billion.

"The generated income per peso expense for the sector stood at 1.27 in 2017. This indicates a decrease of 0.8 percent from the income per peso expense ratio of 1.28 a year ago," the PSA said.

PSA data showed that industries that had the highest income-expense ratio were noted in the mining of hard coal, and mining and quarrying NEC, both with income per peso expense of 1.62, surpassing the national level.

Support activities for other mining and quarrying reported the least income-expense

ratio of 0.96.

At the regional level, Mimaropa recorded the highest return of 1.70 followed by Western Visayas at 1.61; Northern Mindanao, 1.41; Cordillera Administrative Region, 1.35; and Bicol region, 1.30.

Data collected from the survey provide information on the levels, structure, performance, and trends of economic activities of the formal sector in the entire country for the year 2017.

The survey was conducted nationwide in 2018 with the year 2017 as the reference period of data, except for employment where the reference period is as of November 15, 2017.



Chocolate Hills, gagawing heritage park

Inaprubahan ng House Committee on Basic Education sa pamumuno ni Rep. Roman Romulo (Lone District, Pasig, City) ang House Bill 2111 na na dedeklara sa Chocolate Hills sa Bohol bilang "national patrimony, natural heritage park and geological monuments."

Ang panukala na inakda ni Bohol

Rep. Rep. Erico Aristotle Aumentado ay pinagtibay ng House Committee on Ecology noong 16th Congress at 17th Congress ngunit hindi naging batas dahil sa kakulangan ng panahong maratipika ng Kamara at Senado.

"Former President Fidel Ramos declared the Chocolate Hills as national geological monuments because of their

exceptional characteristics, scientific importance, uniqueness, relevance to Philippine history and heritage as well as culture and development, their importance in the tourism industry as major tourist attraction in the country, and high scenic value per the National Committee on Geological Sciences, the Department of Environment and

Natural Resources, and the Department of Tourism," sabi nito.

Sa pag-aaral aniya ng isang German scientist, ang Chocolate Hills aniya ay nalikha sa loob ng tatlong milyong taon nang ang Bohol ay nasa ilalim pa ng dagat, bunsod ng "undersea currents and tidal action, which explains the perfect cone of some

of the hills and the haystack formation of other hills."

Ang panukala na Chocolate Hills Protection Act ay nagsasaad na patakaran ng estado na protektahan at panatilihin ang Chocolate Hills na matatagpuan sa 32 barangay sa bayan ng Carmen, Batuan, at Sagbayan.

Bert de Guzman

104 WHALE SHARKS SEEN FOR FIRST TIME IN DONSOLO

By **Rey Anthony Ostria**
and **Jheset O. Enano**
@Team_Inquirer

DONSOL, SORSOGON—Over a hundred new whale sharks were spotted in the waters off this town in Sorsogon province in the first half of 2019, marking the highest number of the endangered species spotted in the area in the past few years, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Philippines.

A total of 104 new individuals were identified in Ticao Pass between January and June, according to a report from the WWF. These new sightings place the total number of whale sharks in Donsol at 676 since the monitoring began in 2007.

WWF said the presence of whale shark juveniles in Ticao Pass suggested that the waters were being used as a “pupping ground.”

“The number of whale sharks spotted in Donsol indicates that its waters are now rich with plankton, which is their primary food. They have even come here with their young,” said Manuel Narvadez Jr., Donsol project manager for WWF Philippines.

Between 2017 and 2018, only 22 new whale sharks had been recorded in Donsol. With the new sightings, those seen in Ticao Pass now account for nearly 40 percent of all 1,724 whale sharks identified in the Philippines.

Endangered

Locally known as “butanding,” the whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) has been listed as an endangered species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. It is the largest living fish species in the world, with an average size of 7 to 8 meters. Despite their colossal size, their diet mainly consists of plankton and small fish, and they generally pose no threat to humans.

To identify and follow population trends, WWF Philippines has been conducting photo identification activities in Donsol beginning over a decade ago. Each whale shark can be identified based on the unique pat-

tern of spots behind its gills. Just like human fingerprints, no two whale sharks have the same spot pattern.

“These whale sharks that pass by Donsol aren’t just important due to their value to local tourism,” Narvadez said. “They play an important, systemic role in providing resilience to the local ecosystem.”

Threats

However, threats to whale sharks persist, including the demand for their meat, fins and oil in the international market. They are also often victims of bycatch or accidental capture, while irresponsible whale shark tourism can also interrupt their feeding patterns.

Dan Faustin Ramirez, WWF Philippines communication and media manager, said that before 1998, when whale sharks were not protected in the area, fisherfolk considered the “gentle giants” as nuisance to their livelihood.

Alan Amanse, 51, who is serving his 16th year as president of the Butanding Interaction Officers Association, said local fishermen used to get annoyed by whale sharks when the sea creatures ruined their nets.

But today, they thank the whale sharks for giving them an alternative livelihood through sustainable tourism.

Amanse said many local fishermen had undergone training to become butanding interaction officers. His group has 40 trained guides who accompany tourists wanting to see and interact with butanding.

Protecting gentle giants

The guides earn P650 for each three-hour trip accompanying tourists. “When there are many tourists, we get three trips a day,” Amanse told the Inquirer.

To protect the whale sharks, only 30 boats at a time are allowed in Donsol’s waters. Each boat carries only six tourists at a time to prevent crowding in the water and to avoid disturbing the whale sharks.

Tourists are also discouraged from touching and feeding the butanding. INQ



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM Fishermen in Donsol have been trained as “butanding interaction officers” to guide tourists who want to see whale sharks up close. Local guides also act as protectors of the sea creatures that have made Donsol a top destination for sustainable tourism. —PHOTO COURTESY OF WWF PHILIPPINES



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WHALE SHARK TAGGING A diver tags a whale shark in Donsol town in Sorsogon province as part of the local population count. From January to June this year, more than 100 new whale sharks, locally known as "butanding," were identified in the area. —PHOTO COURTESY OF JURGEN FREUND/WWF PHILIPPINES



Countries agree to limit sales of elephants to zoos

GENEVA—Countries have agreed to limit the controversial sale of wild elephants caught in Zimbabwe and Botswana, to the delight of conservationists but the dismay of some of the African countries involved.

Wildlife experts say the vote last week at a conference in Geneva on trade in endangered species known as CITES is a "momentous win" for elephants because it restricts their sale to zoos.

The European Union tweaked the language of the resolution to reach a compromise that limits exports of live elephants outside of Africa but allows for some exceptions relevant to Europe.

Conservationists explained, for example, this would allow for an elephant already in France to be shipped to nearby Germany without having to be sent back to Africa first.

But the new resolution means zoos will no longer be able to import wild-caught African elephants to the US; China and many other countries beyond the elephants' natural habitat.

The resolution passed by a vote of 87 in favor, 29 against and 25 abstaining. The US voted against it.

Animal advocates applauded the move, even though some felt it didn't go far enough.

"While it is disappointing

that it is not an outright ban on trade in live elephants, the new language adds vital independent oversight and scrutiny," said Audrey Delsink, wildlife director at Humane Society International.

"The capture of wild African elephants for export to zoos and other captive facilities is incredibly traumatizing for individual elephants, as well as their social groups," she said in a statement.

Dozens of celebrities, including actress Judi Dench and comedian Ricky Gervais, had signed a letter to EU President Jean-Claude Juncker saying it would be "obscene for the EU to endorse snatching wild baby elephants and condemning these



ELEPHANTS roam in the Hwange Game Reserve in Zimbabwe in this August 6, 2015, photo. AP/TSVANGIRAYI MUKWAZHI

beautiful leviathans to a life of captive misery."

Even renowned conservationist Jane Goodall weighed in, saying she was "absolutely shocked" at the idea of separating young elephants from their families and shipping them off to zoos.

Some African officials, however, said the new proposal would deny them some much-needed cash and that they should be free to do what they wished with their elephants.

"The government has been pumping out a lot of money for

conservation with no real return, yet our government has competing social needs," said Tinashe Farawo, spokesman for Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority. "We view our animals as an economic opportunity, so we should sell our elephants."

Farawo said that Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia and other southern African countries would meet for consultations following the CITES meeting.

"We cannot continue to be hamstrung and told what to do with our resources," Farawo said. "We cannot continue to allow powerful countries and NGOs [nongovernment organizations] to set the agenda when the elephants are ours," he said, disputing there was any conservation concern.

"We have too many of them so selling them should not be a problem for anyone. Why should we continue to impoverish our people when we have the resource?" AP

“The capture of wild African elephants for export to zoos and other captive facilities is incredibly traumatizing for individual elephants, as well as their social groups.”—DELSINK



ASEAN JOINS NEGOTIATIONS ON GLOBAL PACT TO SAFEGUARD LIFE ON EARTH

ASEAN member-states (AMS) and the Asean Center for Biodiversity (ACB) joined talks last week on a global agreement to safeguard all forms of life on Earth.

Participated in by 196 countries, it was the first meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework held in Nairobi, Kenya, from August 27 to 30.

Other participants were representatives from state parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), experts, indigenous peoples and communities, and stakeholders from around the world.

State parties to the CBD are expected to adopt the post-2020 global biodiversity framework during their 15th Conference of the Parties (COP 15) in October 2020 in Kunming, China. The new framework represents the world's plan to halt the alarming trends in the state of nature.

According to the Global Assessment on Biodiversity by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, 75 percent of the Earth's land surface has been significantly altered, 66 percent of the ocean area is experiencing increasing cumulative impacts, and over 85 percent of wetland areas have been lost.

Interventions by human activities threaten more species with global extinction now more than ever before. Around 1 million species face extinction unless action to reduce biodiversity loss is taken.

The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on Climate Change and Land shows the adverse effects of climate change, among them, the degradation of the world's key biodiversity areas.

If temperatures rise by 2°C above pre-industrial levels, one-third of these areas will be affected. At 4.5°C, two-thirds of these rich biodiversity areas will experience the impact.

Meanwhile, the 2019 World Economic Forum Global Risks Report noted that environmental issues like extreme weather events, failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation, natural and human-induced disasters, and biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse are among the world's top 10 risks with the greatest likelihood to happen and impact.

The post-2020 global biodiversity framework aims to respond to these ecological concerns.

In this new framework, state parties aim to build on the CBD's current Strategic Plan on Biodiversity (2011-2020), which was adopted in 2010.

The framework is expected to facilitate

transformative change by taking a holistic approach to the multiple crises facing the planet and all its inhabitants, and leveraging opportunities to invest in biodiversity.

Through nature-centered development pathways, the framework will set the course to achieving the CBD's vision of "Living in Harmony with Nature" by 2050.

The Nairobi negotiations are drawing on extensive consultations that have taken place around the globe this year.

In the Asean, the ACB has convened consultations among the AMS and key partners in the region to craft Asean's contribution to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The first meeting was held on April 24 in Manila, and the second was held on May 8 in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

The ACB synthesised all AMS' inputs and submitted these to the CBD.

In their inputs, the AMS identified mainstreaming, resource mobilization, communication and integrating diverse perspectives as four action areas to achieve the vision for 2050.

The AMS also recognized the need for transboundary cooperation among countries to address key biodiversity issues; and strengthening linkages among Asean pillars, such that cross-sectors should be part of action plans, allowing different sectors to be engaged in one another's activities.

It also saw the need for transformation of mindset to see the AMS as one community working together to increase investment in biodiversity protection, conservation and wise use.

The ACB is an intergovernmental organization that facilitates cooperation and coordination among the 10 AMS and with regional and international organizations on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of such natural treasures.

"As we work toward living in harmony with nature in 2050, mainstreaming of biodiversity is essential," ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said. "Biodiversity is where we get our food, ingredients for medicine, materials for our clothing and shelter, and raw materials for businesses and industries. Biodiversity is interconnected with all development sectors."

The ACB is working to mainstream biodiversity in the key development sectors of agriculture, fisheries, health, tourism, manufacturing and processing, education and climate change.



Protection of sharks and rays OK'd

GENEVA—Countries have agreed to protect more than a dozen shark species at risk of extinction, in a move aimed at conserving some of the ocean's most awe-inspiring creatures who have themselves become prey to commercial fishing and the Chinese appetite for shark fin soup.

Three proposals covering the international trade of 18 types of mako sharks, wedgefishes and guitarfishes each passed with a needed two-thirds majority in a committee of the World Wildlife Conference known as CITES on Sunday.

"Today we are one step closer to protecting the fastest shark in the ocean, as well as the most threatened," said Jen Sawada, who directs The Pew Charitable Trusts' shark conservation work. The measures don't ban fishing these sharks and rays, but any trade must be sustainable.

The move isn't final but is a key sign before an official decision at its plenary this coming week.

Conservationists applauded and exchanged hugs after the tallies. Opponents variously included China, Iceland, Japan, Malaysia and New Zealand. The US voted against the mako shark measure, but supported the other two.

Critics variously argued that the measures distanced CITES from its initial mandate to protect endangered land animals and plants, not marine life, and insisted the science didn't back up the call to increase protections.

They also noted that that millions of Mako sharks exist and even the CITES secretariat advised against the protections.

But proponents countered that stocks of sharks are in a deep dive, with tens of millions killed each year, and that measures need to be taken now—with what they call some of the most significant rules ever adopted for trade in shark parts.

Rima Jabado, a shark expert and lead scientist of the Gulf Elasmobranch project, said many of the species included in the CITES proposals are classified as "critically endangered."

Jabado said there has been an 80-percent decline in the number of wedgefishes, based on available data. Like giant guitarfishes, the enigmatic wedgefish has an elongated triangle-shaped head and can be found in oceans in Southeast Asia, the Arabian Sea and East Africa.

Makos are the world's fastest sharks, reaching speeds of up to 80 mph (nearly 130 kph). But they often get caught up in the nets of fishing trawlers hunting for tuna.

Several countries with large fishing fleets, including Japan, opposed the measure to protect

mako sharks.

"Japan has been highly dependent on [live] marine resources from the ancient times," said Hideki Moronuki, director of fisheries negotiations at the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

"It's very, very important for us in Japan to sustainably use all those marine riches," he said. He was among those who noted that even the CITES secretariat had recommended rejecting the mako shark proposal.

CITES concluded that "with the possible but uncertain exception of the Mediterranean, the population of [mako sharks] does not seem to have declined below the 30 percent threshold in different ocean regions" and that "it is currently not projected that declines would continue."

Still, Jabado said some species of sharks and rays are becoming so difficult to find in the wild that scientists only often see them when they are on sale at local fish markets.

"How are we ever going to save these species if we only see them when fishermen bring them in?" she said, adding that even if actions are taken now, it will be decades before shark populations start to recover.

Losing more sharks and rays could also have other unintended consequences since they are top ocean predators and help to balance the ecosystems, Jabado said.

Scientists warn that although warming oceans and climate change are also hurting sharks, it is the demand for shark fin soup that is threatening to drive some species to extinction. The Pew Trust estimates that between 63 million and 273 million sharks are killed every year, mostly to feed the shark fin trade centered in Hong Kong.

Dried shark fin can draw up to \$1,000 per kilogram. The fins are often turned into shark fin soup, a Chinese delicacy that symbolizes good fortune, in which the gelatinous fin is served in a broth whose recipe dates back to the 10th-century Song Dynasty. Fishermen often slice off a shark's fin while the animal is still alive before tossing the writhing carcass back into the ocean.

While Chinese celebrities like retired basketball star Yao Ming are trying to persuade diners to abandon the soup, many aren't convinced.

"Shark fin soup is a Chinese tradition so why should I stop eating it?" Wilson Kwan said outside a seafood restaurant in London's Chinatown. "I know some people say it's cruel to sharks, but sharks are killers too." **AP**



Collective approach urged for species, ecological management

THE goal of maintaining the health of our fragile ecosystem depends on our pragmatic approach to conservation," said Rainier Manalo, president of the Biodiversity Conservation Society of the Philippines (BCSP).

Manalo made the statement during the 28th annual Philippine Biodiversity Symposium attended by hundreds of conservationists, scientists, independent researchers, government representatives and students at the Visayas State University, Baybay, Leyte, last month.

With the theme, "Conservation Without Borders," this year's symposium sought to highlight the interconnection among various conservation efforts, such as species protection, the ridge-to-reef approach and biodiversity management.

Manalo emphasized the importance of ensuring the sustainability of all conservation actions and the vital role of all stakeholders, including the public and business sectors, in upholding environmental and sociocultural development.

During the four-day event, high-school and undergraduate research reports, scientific paper presentations, and simultaneous talks and workshops were held.

The symposium encompassed various biodiversity conservation topics, including taxonomy, flora and fauna (plant and animal life), threats and issues, and conservation management.

Anson Tagtag, chief of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources Biodiversity Management Bureau, Wildlife Management Section, and Juan Carlos Gonzales, zoology professor and director of the University of the Philippines Los Baños Muse-



HARIBON researcher J Kahlil Panopio (center) in front of his poster during the 28th annual Philippine Biodiversity Symposium.

um of Natural History, presented the updated Philippine Red List for terrestrial fauna, or the list of threatened land-based wildlife species in the country.

During the plenary talk, Tagtag and Gonzales also explained the criteria used for the categories assigned, the basis of the threats, and challenges and issues arising from its implementation across archipelagic Philippines.

Local conservation group Haribon Foundation also gathered conservation experts in a workshop that aims to assess current and identify new priority areas for conservation in the country, also known as key biodiversity areas (KBAs), using the updated global guidelines by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Unlike the previous versions, the new IUCN criteria for KBA includes the identification of threatened ecosystems, preservation of ecological integrity and preservation of biological processes.

Besides the overall KBAs, the

workshop also aimed to identify sites under the Alliance for Zero Extinctions (AZE) framework, which are said to be the most important site among all KBAs.

According to Haribon, AZE sites are critical to the sustenance of global biodiversity as they provide homes to threatened wildlife that are found nowhere else in the planet.

Participants also joined an exposure trip to the Leyte Sab-a Peatland, one of the two major peatland sites in the country. It covers four barangays of the municipality of Santa Fe and Alangalang, Leyte, and considered important in climate regulation and wildlife conservation.

Symposium activities included exhibits of groups involved in biodiversity research and conservation, including the Asian Species Action Partnership; Buhay-ilang Research, Education and Conservation Inc.; Center for Conservation Innovations Philippines Inc.; Center for Centered Conservation;

Crocodylus Porosus Philippines Inc.; Energy Development Corp.; Forest Foundation Philippines; GIZ Ecosystem-based Adaption in River Basins Project; Haribon Foundation for the Conservation of Natural Resources Inc.; International Institute of Rural Reconstruction; Isla Biodiversity Conservation; Katala Foundation; Mindoro Biodiversity Conservation Foundation Inc.; Talarak Foundation; TeaM Energy Foundation Inc.; Traffic Southeast Asia; United State Agency for International Development Protect Wildlife Project; UP Diliman Institute of Biology Biodiversity Research Laboratory; UPLB Museum of Natural History; Wetlands International; Wild Bird Club of the Philippines; and Zoological Society of London.

The event was organized by the BCSP, a professional organization of wildlife researchers, scientists and conservationists, in partnership with the Leyte Sab-a Peatland Forest Restoration Initiative, and Visayas State University.



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COA junks deal between PRA, Amari-CBRDC

By Rio n. Araja

THE Commission on Audit has struck down the Oct. 14, 2016 compromise deal between the Philippine Reclamation Authority and the Central Bay Reclamation and Development Corp. transferring 102,703.15 square meters of reclaimed land to the latter's assignee as reimbursement for P1.0127 billion.

In a nine-page decision, the COA Commission Proper said the agreement was unlawful since the PRA did not have the authority to compromise since under the Administrative Code of 1987, citing it was only Congress had the power to enter into such deals where the claims involved exceed P100,000.

It also rejected Central Bay's claim for reimbursement of expenses of P11.538 billion against the PRA pertaining to the cost of development on the three-island reclamation project along the Manila-Cavite Coastal Road, saying the claimant firm was only entitled to P714.938 million.

The ruling was penned by COA chairperson Michael Aguinaldo and Commissioners Jose Fabia and Roland Pondoc.

It said that the Supreme Court had ruled with finality that Amari Coastal Bay Reclamation and Development Corp., the forerunner of Central Bay, was blocked by the Constitution from acquiring any alienable land of the public domain.



Direktiba na paunlarin renewable energy kinontra

MISTULANG kinontra umano ng pamunuan ng Department of Energy (DOE) ang direktiba ng Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa State of the Nation Address (SONA) nito na paunlarin ang Renewable Energy (RE) at bawasan ang paggamit ng uling o carbon.

Ito ang reaksiyon ng Murang Kuryentesanaging pahayag ni DOE Secretary Al Cusi sa harap ng mga mambabatas, ang 'moratorium' sa anumang teknolohiya dahil ito aniya ay nakakapinsala sa bansa.

"If you have technology that is more reliable, more affordable, and more sustainable in producing energy, you go for it and

abandon old technology, especially if it's destructive," paliwanag ni Murang Kuryente spokesperson Gerry Arances,

Ayon kay Arances, ang mga konsyumer ay nagbabayad ng napakataas na halaga para sa nakakapolusyon na enerhiya.

"Coal makes consumer pay more in their electric bills, makes them sick, and destroys the environment. Renewable energy should not even be an alternative, but rather the first choice in our energy policy," giit pa nito.

Binigyang diin ni Arances, na ang 'coal power plants' sa bansa ang dapat sisihin sa lumalalang krisis sa ener-

hiya sa bansa na naranasan na nitong 2019 midterm elections.

Aniya, ang Pilipinas ay isa sa ilan lamang na mga bansa sa buong mundo ang naggigiit o nagnanais sa konstruksiyon ng bagong 'coal-fired power plants' sa kabila ng 'global trend' na naghihikayat na iwasan ang paggamit ng carbon.

"Coal makes consumer pay more in their electric bills, makes them sick, and destroys the environment. Renewable energy should not even be an alternative, but rather the first choice in our energy policy," dagdag pa ng tagapagsalita ng Murang Kuryente.



LOCAL GOV'T UNITS URGED TO USE RENEWABLE ENERGY

By Ronnel W. Domingo
@RonWDomingoINQ

Town and provinces in the Philippines should consider pursuing or promoting renewable energy projects that would address their own supply needs, particularly systems that combine solar photovoltaic, battery storage and water storage, according to an expert at the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Manuel Omedas Aldanondo, ADB senior technical expert in water and renewable energy, said in a forum recently held in Makati City such a technology was very appropriate in the Philippines, which benefited greatly from sunshine and where there was at the same time ample rainfall.

"Preliminary studies show how solar energy plus water storage is technically and economically feasible," Aldanondo said. "It is also a good project for sustainability and modernity for economic development."

The Spaniard noted that the Philippines was among the countries in the world that had the highest amount of irradiation from the sun such that solar energy could be very competitive due to its modularity, simplicity, production and price.

"The Philippines also has enormous hydroelectric potential as it is one of the rainiest countries in the (Asia-Pacific) region," he said. "Therefore, the water-energy (combination) is a great potential to develop."

Aldanondo said the Philippines could learn much from the experience of El Hierro, which was part of the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean. El Hierro, an autonomous part of Spain, is like Camiguin Island in terms of land area and Marinduque in terms of electricity demand.

He said lessons from the El Hierro model suggested a 20-megawatt solar power component

combined with a 20-MW pump storage hydropower component.

He added that this—done through public-private part-

nership or PPP—would guarantee water quality and quantity as well as sustainable electricity supply 24 hours daily, 365 days a year.

"The Philippines can be a

leader on the energy transformation [referring to the shift to renewable energy] by involving the entire society with self-consumption PPP and energy storage PPP," he said. INQ



BOI denies Chinese firm's steel project application

By **BERNIE CAHILES-MAGKILAT**

The Board of Investments (BOI) has denied the application of Chinese firm Sanjia-Steel Corporation to invest ₱800 million for the production of reinforcing steel bars (rebars) using coreless electric furnace smelting technology because it will employ obsolete and pollution-causing technologies.

In its July 18, 2019 meeting, the BOI Board "resolved to deny Philippine Sanjia-Steel Corporation's application, taking into consideration the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR) policy against induction furnaces with defective or substandard air pollution control technology."

BOI grants tax and fiscal incentives to projects, mostly catering to the domestic market. These incentives include a maximum of 8 years in income tax holiday, duty-free importation of capital equipment, tax deduction on expenses for training, among others.

The BOI already informed the Philippine Iron and Steel Institute (PISI) on August 20, 2019 of its decision to deny the project, which proposed to locate inside the Phividec Industrial Authority in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental.

In its letter to PISI President Roberto M. Cola, the BOI said they considered the points raised by PISI during the project application's deliberation.

These concerns centered on the development in the local steel industry where obsolete induction furnace facilities are being moved from China to the Philippines after the Chinese government banned in January 2017 such facilities from producing construction grade steel.

Induction furnace facilities produce sub-standard steel and are one of the main sources of pollution in their host communities. Harmful elements of phosphorus and sulfur from liquid steel are present in varying amounts in the scrap iron and steel raw material, which poses

a danger to the environment due to the "hit or miss" operation of every heat or batch of steel produced.

As a result, the ASEAN Iron and Steel Council had issued a statement of concern warning governments over the moving of obsolete induction furnace facilities from China to ASEAN.

Meantime, documents also showed that the Phividec Industrial Authority (PIA) already approved on October 9, 2018 the Chinese firm's ₱800-million project to locate in this government-run industrial estate. Both parties also signed a memorandum of understanding the following month, November 2018.

Sanjia would have wanted a total of 47 hectares for the ₱800-million manufacturing facility, but Phividec said it has only 22.8 hectares left.

The steel plant would also require 120 megawatts to produce 3,200 cubic meters of steel a month. The project was expected to employ 150 people initially and 300 three years after its operation, which is estimated to commence after a 4-year construction period.

Phividec is expected to earn ₱6.8 million in annual lease of the property over a 25-year lease contract renewable for another 25 years.



DAPAT na talagang ilagay sa dapat kalagyan ang mga gumagawa ng heinous crimes.

Ito'y makaraang magkaroon ng kontrobersya sa pagpapalaya sa nasa 1,914 na convict sa karumal-dumal na krimen sa bisa ng batas ni Noynoy noong 2013, ang Republic Act No. 10592.

Sa batas na ito, binibigyan ang lahat ng bilanggo ng pabor sa anyo ng malalaking kalitas ng panahon ng kanilang pagkakakulong kapalit ng pagpapakita ng mga ito ng magandang-asal.

Good conduct time allowance ang tawag diyen.

Kung inabuso o mali ang pagkakaintindi ng mga opisyal ng Bureau of Corrections at Department of Justice dito ay ibang usapan na.

Ibang usapan din kung may mali mismo sa batas at sa implementing rules and regulations nito.

NAGULANTANG

Noong una, tahimik lang ang pagpapalaya sa halos 2,000 napatunayang nakagawa ng heinous crimes simula nang maging epektibo ang RA10592.

Pero nagulantang ang lahat nang maibali ang umano'y napipintong pagpapalaya rin kay ex-Calauan, Laguna Mayor Antonio Sanchez na napatunayang nagkasala ng pitong beses na pang-gagahasa at pagpatay kay Eileen Sarmienta at pagpatay na rin sa boy-pren nitong si Allan Gomez noong 1993.

Dahil dito, nagka-ungkatan na rin kung sino-sino na ang mga lumaya na at may mga kasama palang mga druglord at mga katulad ni Sanchez.

Katulad ng kaso ni Sanchez ang pag-rape at pagpatay sa magkapatid na sina Marijoy at Jacqueline Chiong sa Cebu noong 1997.

Kasama umano sa mga napalaya na ang mga convict sa kaso nina Chiong.

Ang may mga druglord nang nakalaya na rin bagama't sinasabing Bureau of Immigration na ang apat sa mga ito ay nasa BI detention cell para itapon ang mga ito sa mga bansang pinanggalingan nila.

ILAGAY SA DAPAT KALAGYAN



BITAYIN NA ANG MGA MAY HEINOUS CRIME

Ngayon ay may iba't ibang pananaw ang lumilitaw ukol sa problema.

Maaaring may nakatugon na talaga sa parusang iginawad sa kanila kaya sila pinalaya.

Halimbawa ang mga nakaabot na ng 40 taon sa kulungan.

Pero ang problema ay ang mga hindi nakaabot sa 40 taong pagkakulong na maximum na pagkakabilanggo ng isang kriminal sa heinous crime.

Dito nagkaroon ng problema.

Dahil sa good conduct time allowance, may pinalayang dapat na magdusa ng 40 taon nang walang tawad.

Ang posisyon ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte, lahat nang lumaya nang hindi pa nakatatapos ng 40 taong pagkabilanggo ay dapat na hanapin lahat at ibalik sa kulungan at ito ang dapat nilang kalagyan.

Aniya, hindi pupwedeng pairalin ang GCTA sa mga nagkasala ng heinous crime, paulit-ulit sa paggawa ng krimen at pagtakas.

Pero sa nangyari nga na pagpapalaya sa halos 2,000 convict sa heinous crime, hindi sila sangayon dito.

Katwiran nila, naging malabo ang batas, lato na ang implementing rules and regulations na kanilang sinunod sa pagpapalaya.

Yung bang === hindi umano naging malinaw kung kasali o hindi ang mga convict sa heinous crime, paulit-ulit sa paggawa ng krimen at pagtakas.

TOTOONG KALAGYAN

Habang lumilyab ang usapan sa problema, mga Bro, lumitaw ang isang uri ng dapat talagang kalagyan ng mga sangkot sa mga karumal-dumal na krimen.

Walang iba kundi ang parusang bitay.

Sabi ng ating Uzi, kung pinaairal sana ang parusang bitay, wala sanang problema gaya ng pinagkakaguluhang kaso nina Sanchez, Chiong sisters, ng mga druglord,

mandarambong, kidnappers for ransom na may may pagpatay, terorismo at iba pa.

Malaki rin sana ang natitipid ng pamahalaan sa gastos sa mga bitangguan.

Nagtatagal ang karamihan sa mga kaso ng 10 taong paglilitis at pagkakulong ng mga convict at nagiging tuloy-tuloy ito hanggang ika-40 taon.

Gaano kalaki ang gastos ng gobyerno o buwis ng taumbayan para mamantine na buhay at malusog ang mga halang ang kaluluwang ito?

Pagkatapos, habang nakakulong, nagpapatuloy pa ang mga ito sa paggawa ng krimen gaya ng ginagawa ng mga druglord at ni Sanchez na nahulihan ng shabu sa kanyang Mama Mary.

BITAY SUPORTAHAN

Lumitaw ang maraming may gusto ng bitay bilang parusa sa mga gumagawa ng mga karumal-dumal na krimen.

At sa totoo lang, ang pananahimik nila sa pagkakapatay ng mga rapist at kidnapper for ransom at mga tulak at druglord ay pagsangayon din sa bitay.

Hindi pinakikinggan ng mga ito ang mga panawagan ng mga pari, madre at taga-human rights.

Alalahanin na kabilang din ang mga kontra-bitay ng mga ayaw sa bitay nina Sanchez at gustong mabulok sa kulungan ang mga ito.

Nangangahulugang pabor din sila sa kamatayan bagama't sa ibang paraan at 'yan ang pagkabulok sa kulungan.

O i-firing squad, turukan ng laon o bigtihin na ang mga mapatutunayang magkasala ng heinous crimes.

Anomang reaksyon o reklamo, maaaring iparating sa 091 2840-3333 o i-email sa bantiporda@yahoo.com.