

DATE : 09-27-19

DAY : Friday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



MOURNING HOMEGROWN PADDLERS

BORACAY'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE GETS BOOST AFTER BOAT ACCIDENT

ILOILO CITY—Boracay residents and dragon boat paddlers lit candles along the beach on Thursday as they mourned the death of seven paddlers in the worst sea accident on the popular resort island in recent memory.

Other residents changed their Facebook profile photos with a black logo with a small dragon boat symbol. Paddlers from all over the world sent messages of sympathy, prayers and support.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said the island's emergency response programs would be strengthened to avoid a repeat of the accident that killed seven members of Boracay's dragon boat team on Wednesday morning. The team members, who were training for a race set for November in Taiwan, died after their boat capsized when it was hit by a squall while they were transferring from Bulabog beach at the eastern side of the island to the "white beach" at the western side. Fourteen others were rescued by the Philippine Coast Guard.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu on Thursday said that the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) would work with local governments involved to extend assistance to the victims' families and survivors.

"[The BIATF field office] will work on a comprehensive emergency response program ... [This] will consider the provision of necessary protocols, logistics and resources for an effective emergency rescue and

response in the island," Cimatu, chair of the task force formed last year to oversee the rehabilitation of Boracay, said in a statement.

Fund drive

An online fund drive at gofundme.com to support the families of those who died raised \$2,380 (P124,165.28) as of 3:23 p.m. on Thursday, 18 hours after it was initiated.

"The whole community is mourning. We are comforted by the messages we have received from dragon boat teams from across the world, many who have raced with us and others who we have never met but who share the same passion for the sport and understand the family which is built within a dragon boat team," according to a statement of the Boracay Dragon Force team.

Among those who died were couple Johann and Maricel Tan who left behind a son.

"[All of our late colleagues] were kindhearted, generous and compassionate people who were so passionate about the sport," said team member Amanda Virrey.

Boracay Dragon Force is one of nine dragon boat teams on the island and is considered among the strongest and elite groups. It regularly competes in international races.

Elena Brugger, also a paddler, said while they belonged to different teams, they were all close. "We train and compete together and we have built a strong camaraderie," she said.

—REPORTS FROM NESTOR P. BURGOS JR. AND JHESSET O. ENANO INQ



Boracay dragon boat races suspended after mishap

ILOILO CITY – Dragon boat competitions in Boracay were suspended a day after seven team members drowned when their boat capsized on Wednesday.

“Dragon boat races won’t be allowed until teams can present proof that they have the necessary safety equipment and device,” Natividad Bernardino, general manager of the Boracay Interagency Rehabilitation Management Group, said yesterday.

The group is under the Boracay Interagency Task Force (BIATF).

Bernardino said she would convene the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office to review safety protocols.

“More than blaming, the review would find out what

could be done to strengthen our emergency response efforts,” she said.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said emergency response programs in Boracay would be strengthened to prevent a similar tragedy.

“The BIATF is saddened... and sympathizes with the families of the casualties. The task force will work with local government units and other authorities to extend assistance to all those affected by this unfortunate incident,” Cimatu said.

The victims, who were set to compete in Taiwan in November, were training in Bulabog Beach when their boat was hit by strong waves and winds. Fourteen other team members were rescued. – Jennifer Rendon, Evelyn Macairan



Dragonboat tragedy a freak accident

By Jun N. Aguirre

BORACAY ISLAND, Aklan—The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG)-Aklan considers the capsizing of a 21-man dragonboat, which resulted in the death of seven team rowers, a freak accident.

In an interview, PCG-Aklan Lieutenant Commander Marlowe Acevedo said their investigation showed head injuries among the victims of the accident, which happened in the waters off Barangay Manoc-manoc in the island last 25 September.

"Initially, we found hematoma on the head of some of the victims, which indicate that they may have fallen and hit their head on rocks when their boat capsized,"

Acevedo said.

The Boracay Dragon Force Team, an amateur dragon boat team, was training for an international meet when the boat they were riding turned upside down after being filled with water and caught by the strong current.

Upon capsizing, the victims panicked and tried their best to swim 300 meters to the shore. They were also reportedly not wearing life vests.

There was no gale warning, hence, the team pushed through with their training.

The result of the freak accident will be used to formulate new policies to ensure the safety of both the tourists and athletes visiting the island for rest and recreation.



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Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force emergency response palalakasin

INIUTOS ni Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu na higit pang palakasin ang emergency response sa Isla ng Boracay upang hindi na maulit ang nangyaring aksidente na ikinatamatay ng pitong ilang miyembro ng Boracay Dragon Boat Team na nag-eensayo sa karagatan ng isla noong Setyembre 25.

Ang Boracay Inter-agency Task Force ay pinamumunuan ni Cimatu katuwang sina Department of Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año at Department of Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat.

"The program will consider the provision of necessary protocols, logistics, and resources for an effective emergency rescue and response in the island," ani Cimatu.

Agad namang inactivate

ng lokal na pamahalaan ng Malay sa Aklan ang kanilang Incident Command System bilang tugon sa aksidente. Ang Municipal Health Office ang nag-aasikaso sa mga bangkay at ang Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office at Philippine National Red Cross ang nagbigay ng tulong at stress debriefing. Ang Philippine Coast Guard at Philippine National Police-Maritime Group ang namahala sa seguridad.

Pito sa mga paddlers ang idineklarang dead on arrival sa pagamutan kabilang sina Mark Vincent Navarrete, Comar Acob, Maricel Tan, Johann Tan, Richel Montoya, Antonette Supranes and John Vincent Natividad.

Kasalukuyan kinokontak ng MSWDO ng Malay ang pamilya ng isa sa biktima na si Comar Acob na tuborig

Puerto Princesa, Palawan.

Kinilala ang mga nakaligtas sa trahedyang sina Mark Baccay, Jaylord Violanda, Robel Licerio, Mark Sabado, Kathleen Sabado, Kenneth Bandalan, Julia Kurbanizova, Maggie Xie Yhen Aytona, Lani Ordas, Janice Lumbo, Jao Buenaventura, at Edwin Paradas.

Ang team founder na si Von Navarossa ay dinala sa Kalibo Hospital.

Ayon sa report, noong Setyembre 25, ilang linggo nang nag-eensayo ang Boracay Dragon Boat Team sa Bulabog Beach, Barangay Bala-bag bilang paghahanda sa isang international competition. Lumipat sila sa White Beach dahil nagpalit ang ihip ng hangin. Mula southwest monsoon (habagat), ito ay naaging north-east monsoon (amihan) tatlong araw bago ang aksidente.



PDBF NAKIRAMAY SA PAMILYA NG MGA NASAWING MIYEMBRO NG DRAGON BOAT TEAM

NAGPARATING ng taos pusong pakikiramay sa mga kaanak ng mga nasawi ang Philippine Dragon Boat Federation (PDBF), ang national sports organization sa bansa, sa tumaob na dragon boat sa bay-

baying sakop ng Sitio Lingganay, Barangay Manocmanoc sa isla ng Boracay na ikinamatay ng walong miyembro ng Dragon Boat team.

Kasalukuyang nasa funeral homes na ang mga labi ng nasawi habang nananatili pa rin

sa isang pribadong ospital ang 13 na survivors kabilang ang Chinese at Russian nationals.

Napag-alaman na ang 21 miyembro ng Dragon Boat team ay nagsasanay para sa isang international dragon boat competition nang maga-

nap ang insidente.

Nauna nang sinabi ng Philippine Coast Guard (PCG)-Aklan, base sa kanilang imbestigasyon na nasa layong halos 300 metro mula sa dalampasigan ang nasabing bangka nang ham-pasin ng malakas na alon

dahilan para tumaob ito.

Napag-alamang ang ilan sa mga sakay ay sinikap na lumangoy papuntang dalampasigan habang ang iba naman ay piniling humawak sa lumubog na bangka.

**BENEDICT
ABAYGAR, JR.**



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CIMATU VISITS PRC: Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu views a poster of the linear park development in Estero de San Miguel in Manila spearheaded by the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission during a recent visit to the office. In his meeting with PRC officials, Cimatu vowed to recover the three-meter easement along the Pasig River and the esteros that connect to it. Cimatu was appointed chairman of the PRC pursuant to Executive Order 90 Issued on Aug. 28.

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town.

Boholanos have been alarmed after a series of suicide cases have been reported in the local media in the past few



Cleanup drive DENR ICC volunteers sort and segregate trash in Baseco, Tondo as part of the 2019 International Cleanup drive where trash is listed in the Ocean Trash Data Form and submitted for validation and analysis. More than 6,000 volunteers took part.



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PATAY NA BABOY PINAANOD SA ILOG

MASUSING sinisiyasat ng provincial agriculture office ang nadiskubreng patay na baboy na hinihi-nalang ipinaanod sa ilog ng Barangay Sto. Rosario West sa bayan ng Aringay, La Union.

Ayon kay Aringay Municipal Agriculturist Benjamin Magno, isang magsasaka ang nagpaabot sa kanilang impormasyon hinggil sa naturang patay na baboy na lumulutang sa nasabing ilog.

Napag-alamang hindi na nila ipinasailalim sa laboratory test ang patay na hayop dahil naaagnas na ito at mas minabuti na lang na ibaon sa lupa.

Ayon kay Magno, aalamin ng kanilang tanggapan kung sino ang nagtapon ng patay na hayop sa ilog.

Kasabay nito, pinawi rin ang pangamba ng mga residente dahil wala pa namang patunay kung ano ang sanhi ng pagkamatay ng baboy sa kabila ng kumakalat na usapin sa African swine fever.

Gayunpaman, nanawagan din si Magno sa mga residente ng lugar na agad ipagbigay alam sa kanilang tanggapan kung may madiskubreng patay na hayop sa ilog upang maimbestigahan.

BENEDICT ABAYGAR



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METROLINE

Groups hold protest vs coal use

Environmental groups are calling for urgent action to stave off climate change amid the continued use of coal in the country.

Members of the Power for People Coalition (P4P) led environmentalists, church groups and residents of coal-affected communities in a rally along Mendiola street in Manila to protest the construction of new coal-fired power plants. They said the construction violates President Duterte's directive to reduce coal reliance and develop renewable energy.

"Based on the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, we have less than 11 years to avert catastrophic climate change. We can do that by eliminating coal as most advanced countries in the world have done," P4P convenor Gerry Arances said.

"We cannot let the current state of affairs continue and expect that we would still have a country to call home in the future. A decisive action now will prevent climate crisis," he added.

- Rhodina Villanueva



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Nationwide protests vs coal isinagawa ng environmentalists

NAKIISA ang Power for People Coalition (P4P), environmentalists, at mga residenteng naninirahan sa 'coal-affected communities', church groups, at iba pang stakeholders sa milyong nagprotesta sa buong mundo upang tutulan ang paggamit ng 'coal' o karbon bilang enerhiya sa bansa.

Ayon kay P4P Convenor Gerry Arances hinihilang nila ang 'moratorium' sa bagong 'coal plants' at sa halip ay iutos ang 'full implementation' ng Renewable Energy (RE) Law.

"We pay for coal with our money, our health, our environment, and our future. In return, we get unreliable energy and fat profits

for owners of power companies. We want things to change, and we want it to change now," ani Arances.

Ang 'massive protest' aysinuportahan ng Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines-National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA), ang National Secretariat for Social Action na mas kilalang Caritas Philippines.

Nagsagawa rin ng sabay-sabay na kilos protesta ang mga apektadong residente at katutubo sa La Union, Quezon, Palawan, Negros Occidental, Davao City, at mga 'coal-affected' at 'coal-threatened communities.

Ito ay upang maringitulan ang "technology neu-

tral stance' ni Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Al Cusi, na payagan ang pagtatayo ng bagong 'coal-fired power plants' na taliwas sa kautusan ng Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na huwag umasa sa karbon at sa halip ay bumuo o idebelop ang renewable energy (RE).

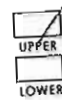
"Based on the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, we have less than 11 years to avert catastrophic climate change. We can do that by eliminating coal and most advanced countries in the world have done so. But the Philippines not just didn't stop using coal, it is increasing its use of coal-fired power plants against all logic," ani Aranes.



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Nationwide protests vs coal, isinagawa ng environmentalist

NAKIISA ang Power for People Coalition (P4P), environmentalists, at mga residenteng naninirahan sa coal-affected communities, Church groups, at iba pang stakeholders sa milyong nagprotesta sa buong mundo upang tutulan ang paggamit ng coal o karbon bilang enerhiya sa bansa.

Ayon kay P4P Convenor Gerry Arances, nanguna sa libo-libong nagsagawa ng kilos protesta sa harap ng Malacañang upang hilingin ang moratorium sa bagong coal plants at sa halip ay iutos ang full implementation ng Renewable Energy (RE) Law.

"We pay for coal with our money, our health, our environment, and our future. In return, we get unreliable energy and fat profits for owners of power companies. We want things to change, and we want it to change now," giit ni Arances.

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affected at coal-threatened communities.

Ito ay upang mariing tutulan ang "technology neutral stance" ni Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Al Cusi, na payagan ang pagtatayo ng bagong coal-fired power plants taliwas sa kautusan ng Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na huwag umasa sa karbon at sa halip ay bumuo o i-develop ang renewable energy (RE).

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Nabatid na milyong katao ang nagsagawa ng mga kilos-protesta sa buong mundo upang tutulan ang paggamit ng coal o karbon bilang enerhiya sa kanilang bansa.

"We are one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change. We cannot let the current state of affairs continue and expect that we would still have a country to call home in the future. Only direct and decisive action today will prevent certain catastrophe tomorrow," dagdag pa ng convenor ng P4P.



Nationwide protests vs coal, isinagawa ng environmentalists

Sabay-sabay na nagkilos protesta sa harap ng Malacañang ang iba't ibang grupo tulad ng Power for People Coalition at mga residenteng naninirahan sa "coal-affected communities" upang tutulan ang paggamit ng "coal" o karbon bilang enerhiya sa bansa.

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Kanilang tinututulan ang "technology neutral stance" ni Energy Secretary Al Cusi, na payagan ang pagtatayo ng bagong "coal-fired power plants" na taliwas sa kautusan ni Pangulong Duterte na huwag umasa sa karbon at sa halip ay bumuo o idebelop ang renewable energy (RE).

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WORD OF MOUTH

HEMSWORTH, RUFFALO JOIN CALL FOR CLIMATE ACTION

By Linda Bolido
@InqEnt

Donald Trump may think climate change is a hoax perpetrated by China, but Thor, who zips in and out of the stratosphere, has no doubt there is a real environmental crisis that needs to be addressed effectively, forcefully and urgently.

Chris Hemsworth, carrying his daughter, joined one of scores of protest actions held in response to the call of Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, who dared world leaders at the United Nations assembly to act on the global emergency.

The Australian actor, who presumably joined a rally in his home country, captioned his Instagram post, "What do we want? Climate Action!"

Asgard's god of thunder and member of the Avengers said, "The kids have spoken! Well done to all the young climate strikers for taking part in #climatestrike drawing immediate attention to the climate change emergency!!"

He added, "The climate crisis is upon us. Children understand the basic science that if we continue to pollute the planet climate change will worsen and



Mark Ruffalo

they won't have a future. None of us will. The planet will die and, if you do the math pretty, sure that meansum yep we'll also be disposed of unceremoniously too. So yeah definitely immediate, urgent and necessary wouldn't you say..? Get moving 'leaders.'"

Ways to help

Hemsworth mentioned ways people could help slow climate change and global warming: Move away from the burning of fossil fuels, no more new oil, gas, coal projects; move toward 100-percent renewable



Chris Hemsworth

energy generation and exports by 2030; and fund a just transition and job creation for all fossil fuel workers and communities as the transition occurs.

Another "Avenger," the Hulk, aka Mark Ruffalo, also actively campaigned for participation in the Sept. 20 #ClimateStrike.

Ruffalo is a board member of @100isNow, a campaign that aims "to make new clean energy more affordable and accessible for all."

He posted on Instagram:

"As we fight the biggest civil rights issue of our time, we must actively support the front-line youth leaders who are putting their bodies on the line to be heard. Those who continue to tirelessly do the work to ensure the planet they've inherited is clean and livable.

"Make no mistake, this is a climate emergency." INQ



UN calls for 'Global Green New Deal'

GENEVA: The world must dramatically rethink its economic model in order to tackle growing environmental stress, inequality and development challenges, the United Nations (UN) said on Wednesday, calling for a "Global Green New Deal."

In a fresh report, the UN trade, investment and development agency (UNCTAD) called for countries to join forces and enable trillions of dollars in public sector investments to help reboot the global economy and counter climate change.

"Under the current configuration of policies, rules, market dynamics and corporate power, economic gaps are likely to increase and environmental degradation intensify," warned Richard Kozul-Wright, head of UNCTAD's globalization and development strategies division.

What is needed, he told journalists, is to apply the same ambitious model used in the United States to overcome the Great Depression in the 1930s and apply it "at a global scale".

"What we need is a Global Green New Deal," he said, using the terminology proposed by progressive Democrats in the US, who want to shift their country away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy with the aim of rapidly zeroing out greenhouse gas emissions.

If such policies were applied globally, they would help rein in rampant climate change, create millions of jobs and pave the way to meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for eradicating poverty and boosting human well-being by 2030, the report found.

Looming global recession

UNCTAD's flagship Trade and Development Report painted a bleak picture of the global economic outlook, warning that the world risks slumping into recession next year, amid trade tensions, swelling corporate debt and the threat of a no-deal Brexit.

Even ignoring the worst downside risks, the report projected that global growth would fall to 2.3 percent this year from 3.0 percent in 2018, cautioning that global recession in 2020 was now "a clear and present danger."

"The slowdown in growth in all the major developed economies, including the US, confirms that relying on easy monetary policy and asset price rises to stimulate demand produces, at best, ephemeral growth," it said.

It urged a "clean break" from public sector austerity, and slammed the "market-friendly solutions" countries have championed since the 2008 global financial crisis, insisting they had "routinely failed" to boost productive investment.

It urged policymakers to replace their "obsession with stock prices, quarterly earnings and investor confidence" with a focus on jobs, wages and public investment in infrastructure and green energy.

UNCTAD economists acknowledged that "decarbonizing" the global economy would require a significant rise in public investment in things like clean transport, energy and food systems, and especially financial support to help developing countries "leapfrog carbon-intensive development paths."

But they insisted the investments would pay off and in time significantly boost economic growth.

'The resources are there'

If the world increases its total green investments by 2.0 percent of global output, or around \$1.7 trillion per year, it would generate at least 170 million additional jobs, lead to a cleaner industrialization in developing countries and an overall reduction in carbon emissions by 2030, the report said.

While that may sound like a lot of money, UNCTAD pointed out that it represents just a third of what is currently spent by governments on subsidizing fossil fuels.

"The resources are there. What we are missing is the political will," Kozul-Wright said.

The world's top scientists believe long-term temperature rise must be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels to prevent runaway warming.

If the world allows the planet to warm beyond 2 degrees Celsius, it will likely cost "hundreds of trillions" to respond to the effects of climate change, Kozul-Wright said, insisting, "We cannot afford not to do this."



Ozone for sanitizing

FOLLOWING our article on the use of UVC and ozone for sterilizing CPAP system for Sleep Apnea and almost any other items at home, we received queries about the use of ozone cleaner, since UVC lamps come with or without ozone. Natural beneficial germicidal UV-C rays in the stratosphere do not reach us on earth.

What is ozone?

Ozone is activated oxygen (O₂) with an added atom of oxygen (O₃), a super-charged highly reactive gas. The ozone layer in the stratosphere, encircling the earth, protects us from harmful UV rays from the sun. This is ozone from nature, but there is also ozone that is man-made. A tiny machine available today (5x2x2.5 inches, about the size of a can of soft drink) produces ozone emission, which kills bacteria, viruses, fungi, molds, mites, some parasites) and deemed safe and approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for cleaning CPAP machine, masks/nasal pillows, tubing, and accessories.

How is the ozone unit used?

The tubing connected to the machine (heated or not) that is connected to a shorter tube where the mask or nasal pillow is attached to the head gear is connected directly to the ozone-maker gadget. This unit has a one-press button to turn it on and a green light on-indicator. It also has a set timer for 25 minutes sterilization dose and automatic shuts off feature, turning off the green light when sanitation is completed. The ozone (O₃) gives off one atom of oxygen and becomes O₂ (regular oxygen we breathe in) in about 30 minutes. There is a 2-hour airing time to allow ozone to dissipate completely together with the post-thunderstorm (ozone) smell. This "waiting period" must be followed diligently.

How much microbes are in our home?

It is mind-boggling but there are trillions of microorganisms (bacteria, viruses, fungi, molds, algae, protozoa) in every home, no matter how we clean it in the conventional way. Indeed, there



This ozone-producing unit is being used to sanitize in-sink garbage disposer, closets, drawers, kitchen cabinets, bathrooms, crawl spaces...

HEART OF HOPE

PHILIP S. CHUA

are more microbes in one home than the number of humans (7.72 Billion current world population) in the galaxy. While not all of them are pathogens, a significant number of them can cause illnesses of varying degrees, some silent infections, resulting in continuous inflammation in our body system we do not even know or sense. This inflammation increases our risk for the development or aggravation of cardiovascular, pulmonary, metabolic illnesses, Alzheimer's, and even cancer. Any form of inflammation in us is the enemy of our body, negatively impacting our immune system. Besides microbes, stress, tobacco, vaping (e-cigs), alcohol, lack or exercise, loneliness, bitterness, also cause inflammation within us.

Can this gadget sanitize areas or other items?

This ozone-producing unit is being used to sanitize in-sink garbage disposer, closets, drawers, kitchen cabinets, bathrooms, crawl spaces, etc. using the same procedure as stated above. To sanitize shoes, jewelries, cell phones, charger cables, headsets, earbuds, and other small items, use a large plastic bag (like plastic covers from dry cleaners) tied shut on one end. The gas-blowing-output end of the unit is inserted into the "mouth" of the plastic end, and tied around, to seal the bag. The air-intake end of the gadget allows outside air to get into the unit to produce ozone that is pumped into the bag, like a balloon. Any enclosure, like a shoe box, a large box (make a hole), a plastic grocery bag, a luggage, a purse,

may be used to sanitize objects that fit inside, using a small tube that fits perfectly into the mouth of the gadget, the other end inserted into the hole in the box, to pump in ozone. The house vent could be turned on to get rid of the any ozone leak, or the sanitizing could be done outside the home. Ozone also gets rid of the bad odor or musty smell of shoes, slippers, any clothing items, etc.

Can an entire room be sanitized with ozone?

Theoretically, yes, but for homes, it is cumbersome, inconvenient, and not practical. For sanitizing an entire room, bathroom, family room, office, bedroom, etc, the use of UV-C lamps is more practical and more efficient. One UV-C lamp with 25 watts (less than \$20) could sanitize 400 square foot of space in one hour. For info about the lamp and a small portable collapsible bag sanitizer (for travel) email Shu Wenphone at steriletote@hotmail.com

Is ozone better than chlorine?

Ozone from this machine rapidly oxidizes and destroys other molecules, including bacteria, viruses, fungi and mold, and odors, the reason ozone is used in CPAP cleaner devices. There are several layers of ozone that surround earth, and naturally created by lightning storms and by the sun's ultraviolet rays. It is a bactericidal agent, killing microbes. The smell we sense immediately after a storm or rain is ozone. Ozone as a clean-

ing agent has been found to be more effective than chlorine and bleaches as cleansing/sterilizing agents. After a 30-minute ozone treatment, at least two hours of "airing" is needed to dissipate the residual ozone. After it does its job, it disappears within an hour. When it dissipates, it releases back an atom of oxygen and is transformed back into oxygen. Ozone at its original concentration right after being generated by the machine is irritating to the eyes, nose, throat, skin, and dangerous to inhale. Ozone does not last long, but a little ozone smell may linger a bit. After two hours and beyond, the CPAP, or other items you sanitize with it, are ready to use. This waiting period for ozone dissipation is very important and must be strictly adhered to.

Is ozone safer than chemicals for cleansing?

With discipline, proper attention and care, ozone sanitizers are safer and more effective than chemical cleaning agents for our home. The ozone gas can reach tiny spaces, nooks, and corners, even on the ceiling, where chemicals like chlorine and other bleaches and cleaning agents could not be used as safely. Chemical fumes are also much more harmful to inhale (unintentionally but could not be helped sometimes) than residual ozone smell. Ozone also removes bad odors in our homes. Releasing an extra atom of oxygen into the atmosphere (as O₃ dissipates within an hour, and becomes O₂ again) provides a little more oxygen for our environment, and therefore ecologically better than the chemicals that pollute our respiratory system, our rivers, lakes (our sources of drinking water) and finally the oceans. Although the use of ozone is becoming popular, it is still prudent to do a due diligence before using any method of sanitizing.

Philip S. Chua, MD, FACS, FPCS, a Cardiac Surgeon Emeritus based in Northwest Indiana and Las Vegas, Nevada, is an international medical lecturer/author, and Chairman of the Filipino United Network-USA, a 501(c)3 humanitarian foundation in the United States. Websites: FUN8888.com and philipSchua.com Email: scalpelpen@gmail.com



PALAFIX PUSHES 'GREEN ARCHITECTURE'

ARCHITECT-
Urban Planner
Felino "Jun"
Palafox Jr. has

The Philippine Model Cities and Municipalities

Building Better Landscapes for the Next Generation



pushed for "green architecture" — projects that create buildings that have minimal impact on human health and the environment.

At *The Manila Times'* Philippine Model Cities and Municipalities Business Forum held on Thursday in Manila, Palafox said "green architecture" had started to sprout, citing masterplans in Siargao and Corregidor.

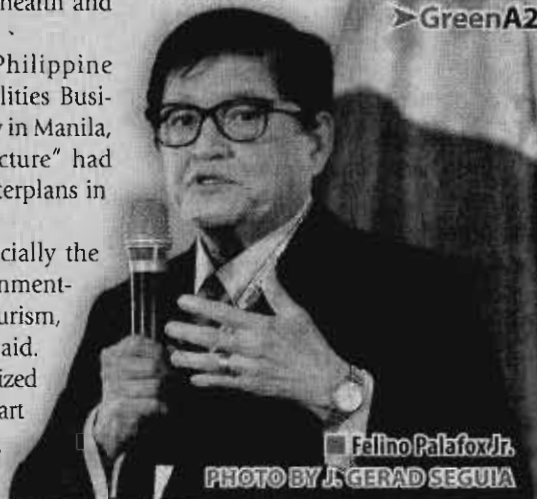
"Many tourists now, especially the younger ones, prefer environment-friendly, green sustainable tourism, buildings and facilities," he said.

The urban planner emphasized that sustainable tourism is part of their advocacy in building structure designs, noting that

architects should go beyond designing structures and should include caring for the environment.

On the use of roads, Palafox said those without wheels should have more space.

➤ GreenA2



Felino Palafox Jr.

PHOTO BY J. GERAD SEGUIA

GREEN FROM A1

Palafox pushes 'green architecture'

"One-third for people, pedestrians and bicycles. One-third for trees and landscaping. And one-third for moving traffic lanes or vehicles. It takes about 10 trees to recover the oxygen out of the carbon monoxide per car," he explained.

He reiterated that pedestrians should be given top priority, followed by bicycles, public transport and private cars.

The architect observed that Metro Manila lacks space and parks because it is fragmented.

He proposed the building of elevated walkways on the central business districts along EDSA to solve traffic congestion.

"EDSA is designed for 60 kilo-

meters per hour. Today, it's only 11 kilometers per hour. We have been promoting elevated walkways, bicycles and different kinds of transportation," he said.

Palafox said he had pushed for the building of bridges and tunnels to interconnect Philippine islands since the 1970s.

"Now, it is starting to be done. From Laoag, Ilocos Norte to Davao in Mindanao. It would take only three hours in a fast train," he said.

Palafox also proposed 10 circumferential roads, bridges and tunnels to connect Bataan, Pampanga, Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Quezon and other areas in Central Luzon.

FRANZ LEWIN EMBUDO



IN BRIEF

Australia PM slams climate critics

UNITED NATIONS—Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison used his UN speech on Wednesday to slam critics of his country's climate record and to suggest Swedish teen Greta Thunberg was being exploited by others for ulterior motives.

Morrison, who snubbed a major UN climate summit two days earlier, also said the Great Barrier Reef was "vibrant and resilient," weeks after his own government downgraded the world heritage site's long-term outlook to "very poor" for the first time.

"Australia is doing our bit on climate change, and we reject any suggestion to the contrary," said Morrison, who as his country's treasurer famously brought a lump of coal to Australia's parliament to taunt the opposition over its commitment to renewable energy.

"We are successfully balancing our global responsibilities with sensible and practical policies to secure our environmental and our economic future," he added.

Morrison charged that critics on climate change "willingly overlook or perhaps ignore our achievements as the facts simply don't fit the narrative they wish to project about our contribution."

He noted that Australia is responsible for only 1.3 percent of global emissions, and that he had passed an Aus\$3.5 billion climate solutions plan. AFP

More than 2 million animals die in wildfires

LA PAZ—More than two million wild animals, including jaguars, pumas and llamas, have perished in weeks of wildfires that devastated huge swaths of Bolivian forest and grassland, environmental experts said Wednesday.

The fires devastated the Chiquitania tropical savanna in the east of the country.

"We have consulted the biologists of Chiquitania and we have exceeded the estimate of more than 2.3 million missing animals in many protected areas," Professor Sandra Quiroga of Santa Cruz University told AFP.

Latin American ocelots, and other wild cats like pumas and jaguars, as well as deer, llamas—and smaller forest animals like anteaters, badgers, lizards, tapirs and rodents—were victims of the fires, according to biologists investigating the scale of the damage.

Local media showed images of charred animal carcasses in the smoldering forests and birds fleeing to zones spared by the flames.

The fires, which have devastated more than four million hectares (10 million acres) since August, has completely destroyed the "primary forest" extending over 100 hectares in the Tucavaca reserve in the eastern Santa Cruz department. AFP



SUSTAINABLE BEAUTY, RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

A photo exhibit of the wonders of the Philippines promotes tourism that keeps the environment alive



The campaign slogan #MoreFunInThePhilippines continues to broadcast to the world that our country is a travel destination rich in attractions that promise fun memories and excitement to both foreign and local tourists. Earlier this year, the Department of Tourism (DOT) has announced a revamped campaign centered on sustainability with the catchphrase #MoreFunForever.

These aren't just words to promote tourism in the country. The tagline is also a reminder for everyone to do their part in protecting and preserving the unique charm that our country has, making sure that the fun lasts forever and that our natural attractions will remain beautiful for succeeding generations.

Following the anniversary of the campaign launch, the DOT spearheaded the six-month rehabilitation of the world-famous Boracay Island. While this initially received flak from the public, the rehabilitation brought Boracay back to its pristine condition. It also became instrumental in letting the world know that there's beauty in sustainability.

Soon after the completion of Boracay's rehabilitation, other famous cities and islands in the Philippines such as Baguio, Sagada, El Nido, Siargao, Panglao, and Bohol, have also gone through significant restoration. This also included efforts to teach environmental responsibility to residents and tourists, as well as to businesses that operate in these locations.

Sharing the same vision of eco-tourism, the Manila Bulletin partnered with the DOT to launch this year's

Earth+Lens photo exhibit. This served as a platform to spread awareness on the importance of sustainability, while also magnifying and immortalizing the beauty of the country's natural wonders as seen through the lens of a camera.

DOT Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat, who graced the exhibit opening held at S Maison in Pasay on May, highlighted the importance of responsible tourism.

"Sustainable tourism is not an empty catchphrase but a philosophy and a mode of behavior, a culture so to speak that every man on the street must undergo and live up to," the Secretary said. "What could be more enticing than the picturesque sight of our beaches in countless destinations in this archipelago of 7,641 islands."

Last year, the Earth+Lens photo exhibit featured a closer look at nature through the macro lens of a Huawei P20 Pro. This year, the exhibit, which made use of sustainable materials in line with the event's advocacy in responsible tourism, pays homage to our local beaches — with crystal clear waters and fine sands captured using a Huawei P30 Pro.

Apart from being one of today's leading tech companies, Huawei Philippines has also been a vocal advocate of eco-tourism. For two consecutive years, the company has been part of the Earth+Lens photo exhibit.

After a successful launch, the Earth+Lens 2019 photo exhibit is set to visit select SM Malls in Manila. Catch the exhibit and marvel at the country's marvelous beaches at the Mall Activity Centers of SM City San Lazaro, SM City Sta. Mesa and SM City Manila.



Palawan in world's top 10 list

By **CRISTINA
LEE-PISCO**

THE CNN Travel has named Palawan as one of the 10 world's most beautiful islands, the Department of Tourism (DoT) said yesterday.

Joining Palawan in the CNN list are: Milos, Greece; Bartolomé, Ecuador; Fregate, Seychelles; St. Lucia, Lesser Antilles; Jura, Scotland; Komodo Island, Indonesia; Senja Island, Norway; Mo'orea, French Polynesia; and Kaua'i, United States.

"Our rehabilitation efforts to preserve the beauty of Palawan did not go unnoticed. We are thankful for this CNN citation of our tourist destinations," Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat said.

Described by CNN as "a gorgeous haven of pale sand and clear water", Palawan hosts a multitude of tourist attractions in Puerto Princesa, El Nido, Coron and the emerging San Vicente, an identified tourism enterprise zone.

CNN's Jen Rose Smith noted that Palawan's "most remarkable hiding place might be in Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site where an underground river slips through a maze of limestone caverns."

Puyat applauded the local government's efforts of promoting sustainable tourism and practicing the carrying capacity of the country's longest subterranean river even before it was a norm.

CNN Travel also recommended tourists to "ride a tidal river deep into a limestone cave system, then bask away the afternoon on a postcard-ready beach" at the UNESCO protected biosphere reserve.

Palawan is no stranger to foreign recognition with its latest headline as the 2nd of the World's Best Islands by Trave+Leisure.



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Kalinga town opens cave to tourists

Balbalan town is blessed with several caves which exhibit unique features, with many of the caves familiar to nearby local folk but have never been visited by tourists

The Municipality of Balbalan, Kalinga will open one of its caves to tourists and adventure-seekers soon after ensuring that a Cave Management Plan will be designed for implementation.

Magangab Cave will soon be opened to the public after Balbalan Municipal Mayor Eric Gonayon, Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Cordillera Regional Director Ralph Pablo and Orlando Camma, the land owner where the cave is located, signed a memorandum of agreement at the Davidson's Hotel, Bulanao in the capital of Kalinga, Tabuk City yesterday.

The parties also agreed to fully protect, conserve and manage the Magangab Cave and its resources as source of national wealth as it remains pristine and undisturbed.

Magangab Cave is actually just one of the chambers of the bigger Tawang Cave in Sitio Bagwang and soon, other chambers of the cave will also be opened to the public.

Balbalan town is blessed with several caves which exhibit unique features, with many of the caves familiar to nearby local folk but have never been visited by tourists.

Prior to the signing, DENR-Cordillera initiated a two-day Cave Management Planning and Program Workshop which was participated by the Barangay Officials, Balbalan Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representation and the Municipal Local Government Unit officials as well as other surface landowners of the other chambers of Tawang Caves.

Balbalan Tourism Officer Regine Mundacruz said that it was a dream to have the Tawang Caves to finally be opened after seeing the success of the tourism-famous Manacota Cave and Underground River of Apayao.

Tawang Cave is classified as a Class 2 cave, which means that this cave has areas or portions that have hazardous conditions and contain sensitive geological, biological, archeological, cultural, historical and biological values or a high-quality ecosystem.

It is a three-hour drive from Tabuk City to Tawang, and an hour trek to the site. If properly managed, Tawang Cave may be open to experienced cavers or guided educational tours and visits. **Aldwin Quitasol**



Untouched Inside the Mangangao cave of Balbalan, Kalinga



Is Metro Manila better prepared for another 'Ondoy'?

By Krixia Subingsubing
@krixiasINQ

(Second of three parts)

On Sept. 26, 2009, large parts of the sprawling urban jungle of Metro Manila were underwater.

In just six hours, Tropical Storm "Ondoy" (international name: Ketsana) poured a month's worth of rain onto the metropolis, killing over 700 and causing billions of pesos in damage.

So many things went wrong on that day, says engineer Geramie Quitain of the Department of Public Works and Highways-National Capital Region (DPWH-NCR) flood control office. Manila, already disadvantaged by its topography at zero meters above sea level, was built atop a flood control system of waterways and drains built for a 25-year flood projection.

But Ondoy was a monstrous phenomenon that, experts say, happens only once every 100 years.

In submerging the metropolis, Ondoy exposed its raw vulnerabilities during natural disasters: the absence of a clear road map for disaster risk management, weak infrastructure and lack of preparedness, says engineer Baltazar Melgar of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) flood control division.

It's why the NCR's flood control managers have drastically changed the way they view disaster risk mitigation. Ten years after Ondoy, both the DPWH and the MMDA have significantly firmed up the metro's flooding infrastructure in accordance with the \$350-billion Metro Manila Flood Management Master Plan (MMFMMP) laid out by the National Economic and Development Authority and the World Bank.

But the pace of development is still staggeringly slow even as climate change amplifies the risk of disasters. Both departments concede that if another Ondoy were to pummel the nation again soon, there might be less deaths—but "Manila would still definitely sink," Melgar says.

"The infrastructure we have in place is really not enough," Quitain says. "For now, our lack in structural interventions would have to be augmented by nonstructural measures," such as constant relocation of informal-settler families from waterways, constant dredging and solid waste management, and disaster risk preparedness and response.

For disaster scientist Mahar Lagmay, executive director of Project Noah (Nationwide Operational Assessment of Hazards) now housed in the University of the Philippines Resilience Institute, the problem also lies in the dearth of science-based anticipatory planning needed in disaster mitigation.

"The failure to anticipate is the problem of resilience," he says. "We are still falling short of what we need to understand disasters."

Aggravating circumstances

The Philippines, a tropical archipelago with long, meandering coastlines, consistently ranks high among the countries most vulnerable to natural hazards, says Jerry Fano, a project impact evaluator at the DPWH-NCR flood control office. At least

60 percent of its cities and municipalities, including Manila, are coastal and low-lying, making it naturally flood-prone.

Lagmay makes a distinction between nuisance floods brought on by heavy rainfall that may still cripple the day's economy and "killer" floods like those triggered by Ondoy. Thus, he says, solving the flooding problem first means "knowing exactly what it is we're trying to solve."

There were records of floods in Manila as early as the 19th century, according to Fano. Back then, urbanization and gentrification had yet to eat up much of the 273 waterways, creeks and estuaries crisscrossing Manila, all linked to the hydraulically complex Pasig-Marikina River system feeding into Manila Bay.

Even now, the MMDA still doesn't know how many of these have been buried under construction projects.

Open waterways are crucial to flood control, Melgar points out. When it rains, floodwaters flowing into the roads' drainage inlets feed into these waterways and are then forcibly pumped into the bay by the 64 pumping stations scattered across the metro.

Informal-settler dwellings now cover these natural waterways, Melgar says. Worse, all sorts of garbage get into the drainage systems and on to the decades-old pumping stations, most of which are now less than 100-percent efficient. "Sometimes," Melgar says, "we even get mattresses, sofas and pieces of metal from our pumping stations. And once trash coils itself around the pumps, it makes discharging floodwater more difficult."

This, coupled with the fact that the drainage systems in the metro have only a two-year return period, is also why nuisance floods still hound the capital 10 years after Ondoy.



Is Metro Manila better prepared for another "Ondoy" ^{P-2}

According to an MMDA study conducted in 2018, over 50 out of 60 national roads in the metro will be inundated by 10-centimeter to 20-cm floods with 40-millimeter to 49-mm rainfall. With 80 mm of rain, all of these would be submerged under 30-cm to 114-cm floods.

For now, the MMDA is re-signed to making flood recession faster—between 10 and 20 minutes—as it looks to the DPWH to follow through with the World Bank-funded flood master plan.

Structural interventions

There has been no shortage of flood control master plans for Manila—the earliest recorded was in 1942—but it was only after Ondoy that “the country was able to have a new set of standards,” Quitain says.

In 2012, the government approved the MMFMMP, which consists of structural and non-structural flood mitigation measures to be implemented between 2018 and 2035, Fano says.

Of the 11 structural projects shortlisted, the highest priority is the Pasig-Marikina River Channel Improvement Project split into five phases of dredging and construction of floodgates and embankments.

Phases 3 to 5 are in various stages of completion, per DPWH records. But the first two phases—the construction of a high dam (P12.9 billion) and a retarding basin (P23 billion) in the Up-

per Marikina River catchment area—are expected to quadruple the metro’s flood capacity from 25 to 100 years.

During extreme rainfall, the dam and the basin will serve as the first line of defense against floodwaters coming from the Sierra Madre. The basin will hold the waters from flowing into Marikina River, and allow the river to carry the waters conveyed by its creeks, estuaries and tributaries.

Sierra Madre was one of the reasons Marikina went under during Ondoy, Quitain says. The waters rushing from the Cordillera range was too much for the low-lying river, which rose to as high as a three-story building.

Other projects in the

MMFMMP include the improvement of drainage projects in the metro; the construction of pumping stations in flood-prone areas (Valenzuela, Manila and Makati); the improvement of Manggahan Floodway; and the construction of a spillway along the Parañaque rivers to reduce flooding in Laguna de Bay.

Without these, the World Bank projects will be inundated by a 100-year flood, affecting 2.3 million people and causing P151 billion in damage.

But the entire master plan will be implemented within 23 years, during which climate change is expected to aggravate the effects of extreme weather and slow-onset disasters.

But Lagmay worries that the

master plan is still not enough.

Science-based solutions

For one, he says, the plan is hinged on the flood projection models of Pasig, Marikina and San Juan rivers, and does not take into consideration the hundreds of waterways that feed into these rivers.

If there is one lesson to be learned from Ondoy, he says, it’s that even these waterways will also wreak destructive flooding once these three rivers swell. It’s why even areas beyond these rivers still bore the brunt of Ondoy, he says.

In 2015, Lagmay recalls, Project Noah generated flood hazard maps using probabilistic multi-scenario models gleaned at the

municipal level. These showed that, compared to DPWH projections, larger swaths of the metro would be flooded.

It was thus imperative to invest in such technologies and to tap local scientists to better understand the risks, Lagmay says.

“There is a pattern that emerges whenever disaster strikes. People always say they were all surprised ... We never anticipate disasters [worse] than what came before. Instead of looking at historical records, we need to go beyond the community experience. Science will be able to address that anticipation.

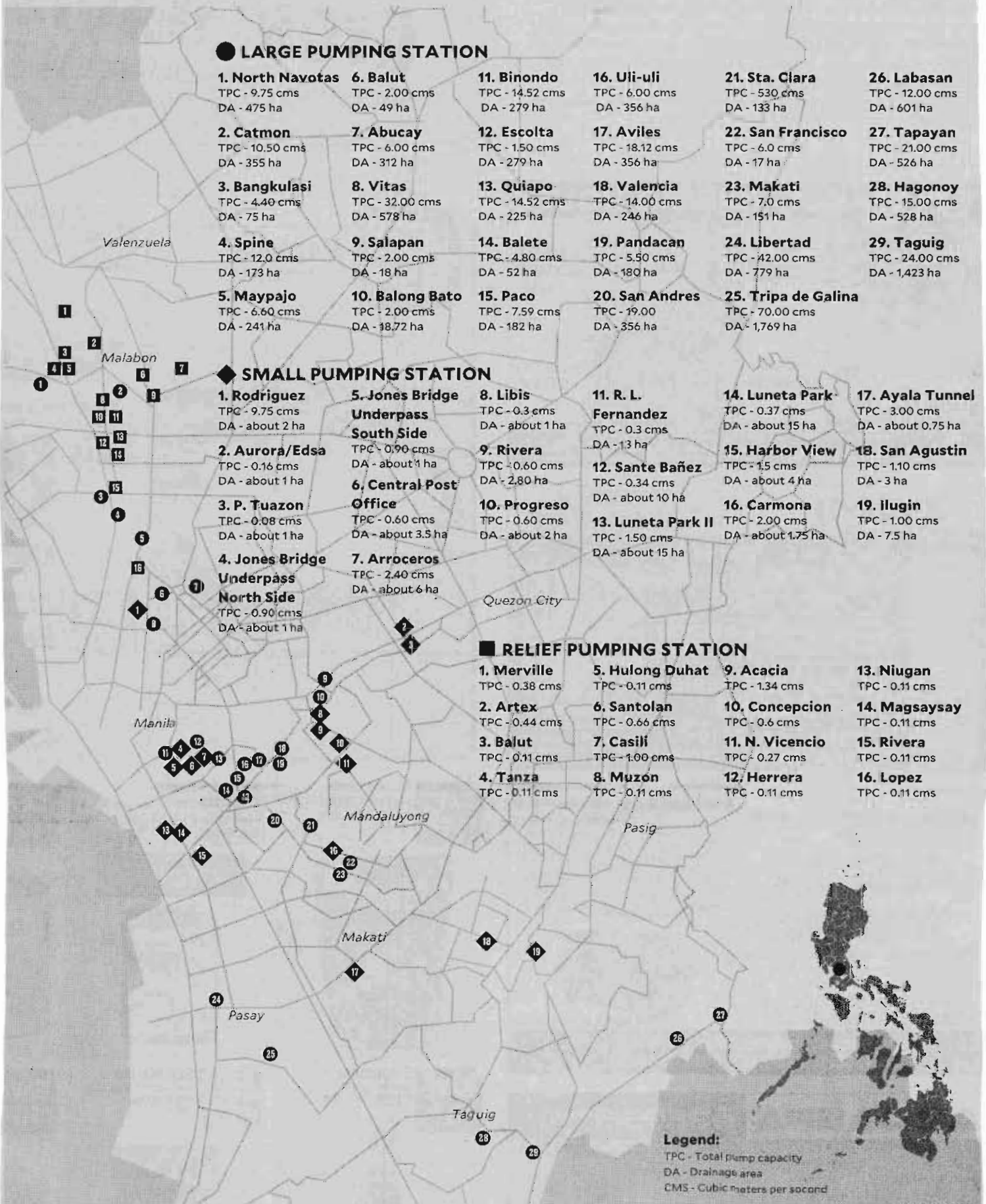
“If we do that, we stand a better chance to survive.”

(To be concluded)

Is Metro Manila better prepared for another "Ondoy"?

LOCATION MAP OF PUMPING STATIONS IN NCR

When "Ondoy" struck 10 years ago, there were only about 30 pumping stations discharging floodwater into Manila Bay and Laguna de Bay to keep the National Capital Region (NCR) from going completely underwater. Today, the DPWH and the MMDA are maintaining and operating 64 pumping stations to improve flood control measures across the metro. These stations are classified into three types depending on the size of the drainage area (DA) for which they serve as catchbasins, and their total pumping capacity (TPC) or the volume of water they can pump out from the creeks into Manila Bay and Laguna de Bay. The large stations are mostly located near Pasig and Marikina rivers, while the small stations and relief stations (for smaller but flood-prone areas) are near estuaries and tributaries.





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ITONG mga kritiko at oposisyong pulitikal, hindi mo mawari kung saan sila upo bilang mga mamamayang Pilipino.

Basta ang tingin nila sa kanilang mga sarili, eh, sila lang ang tama at dapat lahat ng iba na may sariling mga pananaw ay mali.

At sila dapat ang masunod at hindi kailanman ang iba.

Nakita ito sa nakaraang mga araw at linggo gaya ng anibersaryo ng Martial Law nitong Setyembre 21, iskandalo sa Good Conduct Time Allowance, babala ng maaaring kamatayan ng mga hindi susuko na may heinous crime ngunit pinalaya nang may iskam sa GCTA at pagbubuking ng maraming pulis na sangkot sa droga.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Sa usaping human rights lamang kaugnay ng giyera sa droga, gusto nila ang mga dayuhan na siyang maghari sa mahal kong Pinas.

Una, gusto nilang ipalitis si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte at mga nagpapatupad ng mabagsik na giyera sa droga sa International Criminal Court bilang human rights violators.

Ikalawa, gusto nilang papasukin ang United Nations Human Rights Council bilang tagapangasiwa ng imbestigasyon sa kalagayang pangkarapatang-pantao sa mahal kong Pinas.

Ikatlo, siyang mga lokal at dayuhang kritiko ay pinag-iinitan ang maliit na bansang tulad natin sa problema sa human rights ngunit bulag, pipi at pilay naman sa malalaking bansa na maaaring may tunay na problema sa human rights.

SA UNHRC MISMO

Kung titingnan ang human rights records mismo ng 47 na bansang bumubuo ng UNHRC, lahat pala ay may mga paglabag sa karapatang-pantao.

Pati ang Iceland na nagsulong na dapat maimbestigahan ang gobyernong Pilipinas sa paglabag umano sa human rights.

Batay sa Cato Institute of Human Freedom's Index, na nagsagawa ng sarbey sa 159 bansa noong 2017, lahat ng 47 bansang ka-



KRIKONG LOKAL, DAYUHAN DAPAT MAG-ISIP-ISIP

sapi ng UNHRC ay "human rights violator."

Sa ibang salita, mga Bro, saktong-sakto ang sinasabi ni Kristo ukol sa kinaladkad sa kanyang harapan na babaeng pinarantangan na makasalanan.

Sabi ni Kristo, sinoman ang walang kasalanan, siya ang magpupukol ng bato sa babae.

Walang nambato sa babae.

Pero ang mga kritiko ni Pangulong Digong at gobyerno nito, anak ng pitong putakte, ang kakapal ng mukha ng mga ito na pumulot ng mga bato at pinagpupukol ang Pangulo at administrasyon nito.

Isipin pa, gustong ipilit ng 18 lamang na bansa ang gusto nilang pag-iimbestiga laban sa 14 na bumoto laban sa kanila at ang 15 iba pa na nangdedma sa resolusyon ng Iceland.

MAMAMAYAN VS MGA KRITIKO

Wala talagang kadaldala ang mga kritikong lokal at mga kasapakat nilang mga dayuhan sa nagaganap sa Pilipinas sa usapin ng human rights.

Matagal nang kinokondena o hindi naniniwala ang mga mamamayan sa mga kritiko batay sa mga lumalabas na sarbey ukol sa giyera sa droga at human rights.

Noong kasisimula ng Oplan Tokhang at Double Barrel na programang laban sa droga, 86 milyong sa 100 milyong Pinoy ang pumabor.

Nagkaroon naman ng kaunting pagbaba ng mga pabor sa giyerang ito nang magkaroon ng pagkaka-mali ang ilang pulis na dinurog ng mga kritiko sa nasa 77-78M.

Pero nitong huling sarbey, sumipa muli pataas ang pagtitiwala ng mga mamamayan sa giyera sa droga.

Naging 82M Pinoy ang sumuporta.

KNOCKOUT

Noong huling halalan, ginawang sentro ng paninira sa administrasyong Duterte at mga kandidato nito sa pagkasenador at kongresman ang pagla-

bag umano ng Pangulo at kanyang administrasyon sa karapatang-pantao.

Umasa ang mga kritiko na susuportahan sila ng nasa 60 milyong botante.

Kabaligtaran ang nagaganap.

Na-knockout ang Otso Diretso na kanilang kandidato at wala ni sinoman sa mga ito ang nanalo.

Iilan din ang nanalong kandidato nila sa pagka-kongresman sa bilang na wala pang 20 kumpara sa 297 na kabuuang bilang ng mga mambabatas na ito.

MAG-ISIP-ISIP

Kung totoong hawak-hawak ng mga kritiko ang interes ng higit na nakararami, dapat nilang pag-isipan ang resulta ng mga sarbey at halalang nagdaan.

Ang dapat nilang isipin, eh, bakit kabaligtaran ang gusto ng higit na nakararami sa kanilang mga ipinaglalaman?

Ang mahalagang isipin, hindi bobo ang 82-86 milyong mamamayan na pabor kay Mayor Digong na Pangulo ng bansa at sa ginagawa ng kanyang administrasyon.

Kung nag-isip at gumagawa ng kabutihan para sa bayan ang mga kritiko, hindi kaya higit na nag-isip at gumagawa ng kabutihan para sa bayan ang mga pro-Digong at kanyang administrasyon?

Ibig sabihin nito, mga Bro, dapat na diskubrehin ng mga kritiko ang mga magagandang bagay na nagagawa ng kasalukuyang liderato at pamahalaan.

At pwede silang makipagtuiungan sa mga magagandang bagay kaysa magpatali sa walang katapusang pagsilip ng mga mali at ngawa nang ngawa.

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



EDITORIAL

Grim reemergence

And now, a polio outbreak. Health Secretary Francisco Duque III declared the outbreak Thursday last week after confirming a second case of polio in a 5-year-old boy from Laguna, following that of a 3-year-old girl from Lanao del Sur province.

The polio virus has also been detected in samples taken from sewage in Tondo, Manila, and the waterways in Davao during a regular environmental surveillance. Duque explained that "a single confirmed polio case of vaccine-derived poliovirus (VDPV) Type 2 or two positive environmental samples that are genetically linked isolated in two different locations is considered an epidemic in a polio-free country."

That's right—the Philippines had successfully eradicated polio in 2000, with the last case recorded in 1993. Its grim reemergence this year is thus significant and worrying. Low vaccination coverage, substandard sanitation practices and poor early surveillance of polio symptoms have contributed to its reappearance, the Department of Health (DOH) said.

Polio, or poliomyelitis is a highly contagious disease caused by the polio virus invading the nervous system. It is transmitted mainly through the oral-fecal route. Polio's symptoms include fever, fatigue, headache, vomiting, stiff neck and the sudden onset of floppy arms or legs. The illness spreads rapidly and can cause paralysis and even death. Children under 5 years are the most vulnerable to this infectious disease, which has no cure and can only be prevented with multiple doses of polio vaccines given at proper intervals.

At least 95 percent of children under 5 need to be vaccinated to stop the spread of polio in the Philippines, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef). Duque said the average national polio vaccination stands at about 66 to 68 percent.

DOH data also showed that in 2018, 12 out of the 17 regions in the country were identified as high-risk areas for polio reemergence, and that the number of cities and provinces at high risk of polio grew to 99 this year from just 52 last year.

As part of its rapid response to the polio outbreak, the DOH said it is rolling out a series of synchronized oral polio vaccinations for children under 5 in areas at risk starting October 2019. Aside from door-to-door initiatives, the DOH said it would deploy resources in health centers nationwide, and will strengthen its environmental surveillance throughout the country to detect the virus. The vaccination schedule involves 3 doses of oral polio vaccines (OPV) and one dose of inactivated polio vaccine.

Because poor sanitation helps spread the disease, it is critical for health workers not just to administer the polio vaccine, but also to emphasize to parents and caregivers why exercising proper hygiene—such as thoroughly washing their hands after toilet use, or using a proper toilet instead of open defecation—can help stop the virus from spreading. Parents and caregivers, too, must adhere to the proper vaccine schedules. It's been reported that the polio-infected boy was given OPV on a delayed schedule, allowing the polio virus in the vaccine to mutate.

On Friday, Duque signed an agreement with 10 Rotary clubs that have pledged to raise funds, mount various advocacy campaigns as well as commit volunteers to ensure that the country would reach the ideal 95-percent vaccination coverage. The DOH chief said a total of P1.1 billion has been set aside for the supplemental OPV drive.

Although limited, with lawmakers having slashed the DOH's budget by some P10 billion despite the multiple public health crises the agency has to deal with, the DOH's budget must also be used to plug the gaps that have hobbled the government's vaccination program in remote areas, including manpower and logistical issues. A lack of health workers plagues the program at ground level, the DOH's Disease Prevention and Control Bureau officer in charge Anthony Calibo said in a Senate hearing on Tuesday. Calibo also mentioned the need to revisit the monitoring system for the cold chain, the process that ensures that vaccines are delivered at the needed temperatures to maintain quality, especially in areas where electricity remains a luxury.

The WHO and Unicef, meanwhile, are reminding families to exercise basic sanitation: to wash their hands regularly with soap and water, use a toilet, consume food that is fully cooked, and drink safe water. If in doubt, boil the water, the two agencies said. When it comes to preventing polio, nothing is too costly, bothersome or simple to try out.