

10-14-19

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DAY : Monday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



Wildlife species trader nabbed with 11 tarantulas

BY CORY MARTINEZ

THE operatives of the Philippine Operations Group on Ivory and Illegal Wildlife Trade or Task Force POGI under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) have arrested an information technology specialist for illegal possession and sale of live tarantulas and pythons worth at least P106,000 in Marikina City.

Arrested was Rommel dela Cruz, 26, during a raid in his residence in Bgy. Tumana, Marikina City on Oct. 9. His arrest came a month before he was scheduled to leave for Canada.

Task Force POGI is a composite team of wildlife law enforcers from various agencies, including the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) and the National Bureau of Investigation-Environmental Crime Division (NBI-ECD).

Investigations showed that Dela Cruz was arrested after receiving the marked money from NBI-

ECD agents who posed as buyers of a pair of tarantulas he was selling.

After searching the residence, the task force found in Dela Cruz's possession 11 more tarantulas of different breeds—Brazilian Whiteknee (*Acanthoscurria geniculata*), Mexican Golden Redrump (*Brachypelma albiceps*), Mexican Pink (*Brachypelma klaasi*), Mexican Redleg (*Brachypelma emilia*), Chilean Rose (*Grammostola rosea*) and Bolivian Redrump (*Acanthoscurria chacoana*).

According to Rogelio Demellentes Jr., BMB senior ecosystems management specialist, Dela Cruz was already set to leave for Canada to start a job with a monthly salary of P170,000, a far cry from P35,000 he was getting from a local publishing firm.

"He was selling off all the tarantulas at a discounted price of P20,000 so he could buy his plane ticket," Demellentes said, adding that each tarantula

could sell at P1,500 in the black market.

The task force also recovered from Dela Cruz five ball pythons (*Python reguis*), which he was selling at a wholesale price of P86,000.

Ball python, also known as the royal python, is named for its habit of curling itself up into a tight ball. It is listed under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, or simply CITES, in an effort to regulate trade in the species to protect them from becoming threatened or extinct.

NBI-ECD chief Czar Eric Nuqui said Dela Cruz was unable to present any permit or document proving that he was authorized to possess and trade wildlife species.

He said Dela Cruz could be held liable for violating Republic Act 9147 or the Wildlife Conservation and Protection Act, which defines and penalizes illegal possession and trading of wildlife species.

Under the law, violators could face a jail term of up to 12 years and a fine of not more than P1 million.

Meanwhile, NBI-ECD senior agent Abner Tecson revealed that the smuggling of tarantulas happens when

these highly-regulated species are shipped from other countries through courier delivery service as spiderlings, which are then fed "until they are matured enough to be sold in the black market."

Review Antique islands' mining status, DENR asked

Provincial gov't says mineral reserve declaration hampering ecotourism development of Caluya, Sibay

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
@inquirervisayas

ILOILO CITY—The Antique provincial board is seeking a review of the status of two islands in the province which have been declared as mineral reservations.

In a resolution passed by the board on Oct. 10, the board requested the secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to look at Caluya and Sibay islands in Caluya town because the declaration covering these areas had prevented residents from undertaking ecotourism development.

"The mineral reserve status of the islands of Sibay and Caluya hampers the people to plan the utilization of their lots for long-term development because of the threat that [these] will be utilized for mining," according to the resolution authored by Board Member Karmila Rose Dimamay.

The islands' status also discourages their promotion as a tourist destination, according to the resolution.

Potential investments

Dimamay said many potential investors were hesitant because lots could not be titled and might be affected by mining activities.

"We hope that a review can be conducted and the areas covered by the reservation will be



We hope ... the areas covered by the reservation will be reverted so that the people will be able to fully utilize [these] for tourism and livelihood activities

Karmila Rose Dimamay
Antique Board Member

reverted so that the people will be able to fully utilize [these] for tourism and livelihood activities," she told the Inquirer.

Under Proclamation No. 649 issued in 1940 by then President Manuel Quezon, the islands of Mindoro as well as Semirara, Sibay and Caluya in Antique were declared as coal mining reservations.

The proclamation covered about 38,100 hectares in Mindoro and 12,100 ha in Antique.

Under the implementing



CALUYA AND SIBAY ISLANDS, ANTIQUE

SOURCE: Inquirer graphics

INQ GRAPHICS

rules and regulations of the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 (Republic Act No. 7942), the DENR secretary "shall cause the periodic review of existing mineral reservations by detailed geological, mineral and ecological evaluation for the purpose of determining whether or not their continued existence is consistent with the national interest ..."

The secretary can recommend to the President the alteration or modification of boundaries of the reserve or revert the areas to public domain.

Semirara, Caluya and Sibay are among the nine islands comprising the town of Caluya.

The Semirara Mining and Power Corp. (SMPC) has been operating one of the biggest coal mines in Asia in Semirara since 1999 after it took over the then government-owned Semi-

rara Coal Corp. The company employs about 4,000 workers.

At least 96 percent of locally produced coal is supplied by SMPC.

The coal operating contract granted by the government to the mining company was supposed to end in 2012 but in 2008, the Department of Energy extended the contract to 2027 or another 15 years.

The coverage of the contract was also expanded from 5,500 ha on Semirara Island to 12,700 ha, including 3,000 ha on the mainland of Caluya and 4,200 ha on neighboring Sibay Island.

Seaweed farmers in Caluya have earlier raised concerns that the expansion of mining operations to their island could endanger the local seaweed industry, the main source of livelihood of many residents. INQ



MGB wants separate anti-illegal mining bureau

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

🐦 @jonlmayuga

THE Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) is making a pitch for the transformation of its anti-illegal mining task force into a separate bureau, as it bats for more resources, manpower and leverage to fight illegal mining activities.

MGB Director Wilfredo G. Moncano was referring to the National Task Force Mining Challenge (NTFMC), which was established on January 26 last year "to squash illegal mining operators."

The NTFMC had its so-called

baptism of fire when it stopped the illegal mining activities in a Baguio City mine near the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) grounds in February last year, or a month after its creation. Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu led the anti-illegal mining operations.

"Through NTFMC, we aggressively apprehend illegal mining operators, as well as seize, confiscate and dismantle their equipment, including blasting tunnel entrances and portals to the mining sites," Moncano said in a statement.

The NTFMC was later reestablished as the Environmental En-

forcement Task Force, expanding its management of environmental protection laws beyond mining and now including the violation of logging laws, wildlife protection and agricultural policies.

"We are now pushing for the task force to be made into a separate bureau. In this way, it will have more resources, more manpower and more leverage to work with other law enforcement bodies. The environmental laws are there, but we need to be as strict as possible with the enforcement and that means a lot of collaboration from the bottom going up," Moncano pointed out.

The proposal came in the heels of renewed calls for greater responsibility from mining companies nationwide.

In response, Moncano said the agency is fully committed to fighting environmental abuse caused by illegal mining operators in the Philippines. "There is no room for illegal mining in the Philippines."

Moncano said the Duterte administration has been working to enhance environmental protection and rehabilitation in the Philippine mining industry in partnership with local law enforcement agencies. It has also crafted

new policies further enhancing the protection of the environment and local communities.

Currently, the MGB is also seeking to reduce illegal mining operations by allowing small-scale miners to formally register and join cooperatives. The MGB is an attached agency of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

"We are now seeking to formalize the informal. We're pushing for them [small-scale miners] to join the Minahang Bayan," said Engr. Teodorico Sandoval, officer in charge of the MGB Mining Technology Division.

A Minahang Bayan, under the People's Small-Scale Mining Act, is a cooperative of small-scale mines operating as one unit.

In line with this, the government has waived the income and excise tax of gold from small-scale miners as an incentive for them to stay away from the black market and comply with government regulations.

"We tried taxing before," mentioned Moncano, referring to the taxation of the sale of gold to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas in 2011. "But that resulted in a 99-percent drop in domestic gold purchases."



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No room for illegal mining in PH—DENR

By Rio N. Araja

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources on Sunday said that there is no room for illegal mining in the country.

Amid continued calls for greater responsibility from mining companies nationwide, the Mines and Geosciences Bureau assured the public that the agency is fully committed to fighting

environmental abuse caused by illegal mining operators in the Philippines.

"There is no room for illegal mining in the Philippines," MGB director Wilfredo Moncano said.

The long-standing initiative of the MGB is designed to enhance environmental protection and rehabilitation in the mining industry in partnership with local law enforcement agencies, and the creation of new policies further enhanc-

ing the protection of the environment and local communities, he said.

Under the current administration, the MGB launched a new task force called the National Task Force Mining Challenge on Jan. 16, 2018 to squash illegal mining operators, beginning with a Baguio City mine near the Philippine Military Academy grounds which was closed down in February 2018.



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Sulat kay Editor

Polusyon sa Manila Bay

Dear **Abante Tonite**:

Nabasa ko po ang balita sa inyong pahayagan tungkol sa mga isda na naglutangan sa Las Piñas at Parañaque. Nalulungkot ako dahil polusyon daw ang dahilan ng pagkamatay ng mga isda.

Kung kailan pinagsisikapan ng pamahalaan na malinis ang Manila Bay ay nangyari naman ito.

Lumalabas daw kasi sa pagsusuri ng Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources na mababa ang level ng oxygen sa bahaging iyon ng karagatan at mataas naman ang level ng ammonia at phosphate. Lumabas pa sa pagsusuri sa mga nakuhang sample ng ammonia na galing ito sa agricultural, domestic, at industrial waste.

Sa madaling salita ay kontaminado ang dagat. Nalason ang mga isda at nangamatay.

Patunay ito na napakalaking hamon ang paglilinis sa Manila Bay. Hindi sapat na pamahalaan lang ang kumikilos. Kailangan tumulong ang publiko sa pagsusumbong sa mga awtoridad ng mga nagtatapon ng agricultural, domestic, at industrial waste sa dagat.

Hindi sa lahat ng pagkakataon mababantayan ng mga awtoridad ang lahat ng bahagi ng mga karagatan sa ating bansa. Pero ang mga taong naninirahan dito ay siguradong nakikita at alam kung sino ang mga nagtatapon ng mga nakalalasang kemikal sa dagat. Kusang loob sana nilang isumbong ang mga ito para matigil na ang pagkakatay ng polusyon sa karagatan.

Mark ng Las Piñas City



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Personnel of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources collect sacks of trash from Manila Bay yesterday.

EDO GUMBAN



THE PHILIPPINE STAR

metro

EDITOR: DULCE A. SANCHEZ

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Asphyxiated Government personnel scoop up dead fishes that accumulated along the beaches of Las Piras and Parañaque which were killed due to oxygen deprivation.

BOB DUNGO JR



HINAHAKOT ng mga taga-Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sa mga sako ng basura ng patay na isda sa Freedom Island sa Manila Bay sa Parañaque City. Photo courtesy of **DANNY PATA**



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Saku-sako ng basura ang nahakot kahapon ng mga tauhan ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sa Manila Bay Freedom Island sa Las Piñas-Parañaque kung saan kamakailan ay halos higit sa dalawang tonelada ng isda ang mga namatay dahil sa maruming tubig. (Kuha ni Edd Gumban)



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LIBO-LIBONG isda, hipon, alimasag at iba pang yamang dagat sa mga dalampasigan o karagatang sakop ng Parañaque at Las Piñas ang namamatay ngayon.

Namamatayan din ng alaga ang mga magtatahong at tiyak, may mga kabibe at iba pang shellfish ang nadamay.

Napeperwisyo ang hanapbuhay ng napa-karaming mangingisda at magtatahong dahil dito.

Napeperwisyo dahil wala silang mahuling isda o maaning shellfish.

At kung may mahuli o maani man sila, sino ang bibili sa mga ito?

MAY LASON

Sa pag-aaral ng Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, may ilang dahilan ng mga fishkill at shellfish kill.

Madali nating tanggapin na kulang sa alat ang Manila Bay dahil sa nakaraang tag-ulan at ikinamamatay ng mga isdang alat at shellfish ito.

Ang sabi, kulang din sa oxygen ang katubigan at kinukulang ng hanging nalalanghap ang mga isda.

Karaniwang nauubusan ng oxygen ang tubig kung masyadong marami ang mga halaman sa paligid gaya ng lumot at mga water lily.

Pero ang isang dapat nating bigyan din ng pansin ay ang nadiskubrenang maiaking kantidad ng ammonia sa katubigan.

At maaaring may iba pang mga lason na nakasisira talaga sa buhay ng mga yamang dagat.

ANG AMMONIA

Maganda ang ammonia.

Ang kaitawari ng tao ay gumagawa ng ammonia, ayon sa mga siyentista at doctor.

Paliwanag nifa, tagagawa ang ammonia ng tinatawag nilang nitrogen na gumagawa naman ng amino acid na siyang gumagawa ng protina na pundasyon naman ng ating kailawan, ang mga buto at laman.

Binabasag o tinutunaw naman ang protina ng mga bakterya sa ating mga bituka para makagawa ng ammonia na ginagawang urea naman ng ating atay hanggang sa lalabas ito



NI BENNY ANTIPORDA

PARAÑAQUE, LAS PIÑAS FISH KILL PIGILIN

bilang ihi sa pamagitan ng kidney.

Pero kung sumobra o nagkulang ang ammonia natin, anak ng tokwa, diyariyan na tayo magkakasakit sa kidney, atay at colon at maaapektuhan ang suplay ng protina natin.

Ngayon, mga Bro, nakukuha ang ammonia sa hangin, lupa at kapag kinompress o ginawa nating puro, karaniwang makagaya na tayo ng fertilizer.

Ang fertilizer inilalagay natin sa mga pananim na ating kinakain kaya nakakain din tayo ng fertilizer.

'Pag sumobra, riyariyan na tayo malalason.

80-90% SA FERTILIZER ANG AMMONIA

Heto ngayon ang punto kung bakit nagiging lason sa mga isda, shell at iba pa sa katubigan ang ammonia.

Bukod sa paggamit ng fertilizer abono sa mga halaman natin na napa-karami mula sa mga flower garden hanggang sa mga food garden, ginagamit din ang ammonia bilang mga cleanser sa mga kubeta, kusina at iba pa.

Concentrate ng ammonia ang matatagpuan sa mga cleanser na ito at halos gaya rin ng porsiyento nito sa fertilizer.

Eh lahat ng hotel, bahay, restoran at iba pang tirahan ng tao ay gumagamit ng ammonia saka itinatalapon sa mga imburnal, ilog, sapa, kanal hanggang sa umabot ang ammonia sa Manila Bay, sa mga dalampasigan ng Las Piñas at Parañaque.

Sa ating pag-aabon, bumabagsak din sa lupa ang fertilizer/ammonia sa lupa hanggang sa maa-nod ito sa mga kanal o drainage, sapa, ilog patungo sa Manila Bay pa rin.

Hayun, nagkakamatayan na ang mga yamang dagat.

At bawal na bawal ang mag-ulam sa mga patay na isda at shellfish na namatay dahil nga may lasong ammonia at iba pang mga kemikal na nalalaman pa sa mga su-

sunod na pag-aaral ng pamahalaan.

MGA REMEDYO

Kung iisipin, magandang gawin lahat ang mga water lily at iba pang halamang tubig na bag, banig, damit at dekorasyon ng mga bulaklak sa buhay at patay.

Pero problema talaga ang dami ng mga ito at kinakailangan na talagang basta patayin na lang ang mga ito kung barado na ang daanan ng bangka ng mga mangingisda at hindi na makahinga ang mga yamang tubig o dagat dahil sa rami ng mga ito.

May mga gumagamit nga ng herbicide sa mga water lily pero lason naman sa mga yamang tubig.

Dahil tag-init na, mabilis namang bumalik ang alat sa tubig mula sa West Philippine Sea na pumapasok sa Manila Bay sa pamagitan ng bukana sa Corregidor at dito muli mabubuhay nang matiwasay ang mga isdang alat na namamatay sa matatag na katubigan.

Pero dito sa ammonia, dapat na magkaroon ng control.

Andiyan ngayon ang panawagan sa mga kaukulang ahensiya ng pamahalaan na magkaroon ng information campaign kung paano gagamit ng ammonia nang hindi nakasisira sa kapaligiran, sa mga yamang dagat at sa mamamayan.

Pagkakataon ng lahat ng lokal na pamahalaan at pambansang pamahalaan na gumawa ng hakbang para sa tamang kontrol sa paggamit at pagbabasura ng mga ammonia sa tamang paraan at para mapigilan na rin ang paglawak ng lason nito sa iba pang mga lugar.

Anomang reaksyon o reklamo, maaaring iparating sa 09228403333 o i-email sa bantiporda@yahoo.com.



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Preservation of Boracay moral values urged

By Jun N. Aguirre

BORACAY ISLAND – The president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry-Boracay (PCCI) called on the different sectors for the preservation of moral values among Filipino children in this resort island after the controversy of a tourist wearing almost nothing went viral on social media recently.

Elena Brugger, PCCI-Boracay President, said that the call developed over the furor caused by a Taiwanese female tourist wearing skimpy strings last week.

She said that while residents respect the cultures of different races coming to enjoy Boracay, foreign tourists should also respect Filipinos and the Filipino culture the

same way.

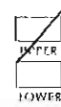
“Filipino kids in Boracay are now influenced by the diversity of culture. The traditional culture of hard work, nature, love, and respect are slowly diminishing in this resort island,” she said.

As exposure to different cultures is inevitable, the traditional and conservative values of the Filipino culture should still be preserved.

“I already saw Filipino children adapting the way of life of many people in Boracay. This resort island is considered a holiday destination and what Filipino children see are the side of a good life, drinking liquor, having an easy-go-lucky attitude. These traits can now be easily seen among the millennials in this resort island,” Brugger admitted.



Preservation Authorities want to preserve inherent moral values among the youth of Boracay.



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Unilever

Consumer goods giant vows to slash use of plastic

THE HAGUE, Netherlands— Consumer products giant Unilever, whose brands include Dove soaps and Lipton teas, said last week that it aims to halve its use of non-recycled plastics by 2025.

CEO Alan Jope said that the plan to slash the use of the so-called virgin plastics will require a “fundamental rethink” in its packaging policies.

The company aims to achieve the goal by reducing its use of all plastics by 100,000 metric tons and using more recycled plastic.

Unilever, previously pledged to make all its plastic packaging reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2025, and to use at least 25 percent recycled plastic in packaging by that year.

The company also said it aims to collect and process more plastic

packaging than it sells by 2025.

“Plastic has its place, but that place is not in the environment,” Jope said. “We can only eliminate plastic waste by acting fast and taking radical action at all points in the plastic cycle.”

He said meeting the new targets will require “new and innovative packaging materials,” and a rapid increase in packaging that can be reused or refilled.

Unilever has already started selling products including toothbrushes made of bamboo, and cardboard deodorant sticks and refillable toothpaste tablets.

Even so, the Anglo-Dutch company says it produces some 700,000 metric tons of plastic packaging annually.

Elvira Jimenez, a plastics campaigner with Greenpeace, welcomed the announcement, “in the sense that they are the first ones that are actually acknowledging that there has to be a reduction.”

However, she said the environmental organization would like to see Unilever shift its focus even further toward packaging and products that can be reused or refilled.

Experts say that some 9 million tons (8 million metric tons) of plastic waste, including plastic bottles, bags, toys and other items, flow annually into the world’s oceans. *AP*



Meralco prohibits single-use plastic in all its premises

MANILA Electric Company said it banned single-use plastic, polystyrene foam and similar products in all its premises, activities and corporate events effective Oct. 1, 2019 to help save the environment.

"The protection of the environment is a collective obligation that we not only owe to the communities we serve, but more importantly, the future generation. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to ensure that we integrate sustainability in all areas of our operations and in our workplace to create a positive impact to the environment," Meralco president and chief executive Ray Espinosa said in a statement.

The ban also applies to the Meralco Industrial Engineering Services Corp. Group, CIS Bayad Center Inc. Group, Meralco Energy Inc., Radius Telecoms Inc., MSpectrum Inc., MRAIL Inc., Meralco Powergen Corp. Group and eSakay Inc. as well as affiliated companies, Comstech Integration Alliance Inc., Clark Electric Distribution Corp. and Shin Clark Power Group effective Nov. 1, 2019.

Meralco's supply chain partners have also been told to ensure full compliance with the ban effective January 1, 2020.

Aside from reducing its contribution of plastic to landfills and marine pollution, Meralco aims to educate employees and business partners on the responsible use of plastic for proper disposal for a sustainable economy and help pave the way for a lifestyle change.

According to a report published by the United Nations Environment Program, the world's ability to cope with plastic waste is already overwhelmed. Only 9 percent of the nine trillion kilos of plastic the world has ever produced has been recycled.

Most end up in landfills, dumps or in the environment. If current consumption patterns and waste management practices continue, then by 2050 there will be around 12 trillion kilos of plastic litter in landfills and the environment.



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Better water supply seen in Bohol with two experts named to water board

By MINERVA DC NEWMAN

TAGBILARAN CITY – Bohol governor Arthur Yap looks forward to a better water supply for the province with the appointment of top water management experts as new board representatives to the Bohol Water Utilities, Inc. (BWUI)

Yap highly endorsed the appointments of Ramon Alikpala, a water specialist, who is the current Chairman and CEO of the Future Water Asia, Philippines, and Dr. Francisco Guiroy Pioquinto, who was Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Isabela City Water District for 22 years (1994 to 2016).

Yap said their appointments to the BWUI board will further strengthen the rehabilitation, maintenance, and operation of water systems in the province and possible reforms as both have already proven their competence in handling various water treatment facilities and systems all over the country.

Alikpala has been involved in various water management jobs as Deputy Administrator on the Financial Regulation Area of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) Regulatory Office from 2002 to 2003.

He was also the Executive Director of the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) for six years while simultaneously serving as chairman

of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Working Group on Water Resources Management and the Philippine Focal Point. He also led the MWSS as chairman of the Board of Trustees for three years starting in 2010.

He also served as consultant to the Water Resources Management Specialist of the Philippine Water and Sanitation Assessment, USAID, Development Alternatives, Inc., Philippines and as an Institutional Development and Regulatory Specialist of the Philippine Water Supply and Sanitation Master Plan (PWSSMP) Philippines.

Dr. Pioquinto is a physician by profession and is currently the Chairman and CEO of Future Water Asia Philippines. He was chairman of the Board of Directors of the Isabela City Water District for 22 years from 1994 to 2016.

Pioquinto's notable accomplishment was the establishment of the first septage water treatment facility not only in the province of Basilan but in all of Mindanao. He became a member of the Board of Governors, Representing Region IX in the Philippine Association of Water Districts from 2013 to 2015.

According to Yap, with the two water experts in the BWUI board, he is looking forward to a better management of the water resources of the province consistent with his administration's programs.



Angat water level still below normal

BY DIVINA NOVA JOY DELA CRUZ

ANGAT Dam's water level remains below normal and continues to drop despite the occasional downpour felt in some areas in Luzon, the weather bureau said.

Water level at the dam, the primary source of water in Metro Manila, was at 188.69 meters on Sunday, 0.29 meter lower than the previous day, according

to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa). Angat's water level reached 190.55 on October 1. It has since

gradually dropped.

Pagasa hydrologist Sonia Serano attributed the decline to a lack of sufficient rainfall over the area of Angat for the past few days. She said a reduced amount of rainfall was expected as the southwest monsoon the weather transitions to the northeast monsoon or *amihan*, which is associated with lighter amount of rainfall.

Historically, Angat recovers and

reaches its normal operating level of 210 meters in December.

Since September, the National Water Resources Board has maintained a water allocation of 40 cubic meters per second (cms) for Metro Manila's domestic supply and 30 cms for irrigation since September. Prior to this, water allocations for Metro Manila was reduced to 36 cms, while irrigation supply was suspended.

Meanwhile, La Mesa Dam and Ipo Dam, other sources of water supply for Metro Manila, maintained their respective normal levels. La Mesa's elevation was recorded at 77.98 meters, a measly 0.02-meter drop from the previous day, while Ipo Dam slightly increased by 0.25 meters to 101.14 meters. La Mesa's normal operating level was set at 78 meters, while Ipo at 101 meters.

Other dams in Luzon have almost reached their respective normal high water levels. On Sunday, Ambuklao Dam's elevation was recorded at 751.95 meters; Binga Dam, 572.28 meters; San Roque Dam, 275 meters; Pantabangan Dam, 208.88 meters; and Magat Dam, 189.03 meters.

Normal high levels were set at 752 meters for Ambuklao Dam; Binga Dam, 575 meters; San Roque Dam, 280 meters; Pantabangan, 216 meters; and Magat, 190 meters.



SENATORS HIT 780% WATER RATE HIKE THREAT

SENATORS are bristling over the "warning" issued by private water concessionaires that complying with a Supreme Court order slapping them with nearly P2 billion in fines for breach of their commitment to set up sewerage systems in timely fashion could force them to pass on the costs to consumers.

"Increasing rates by 780 percent is unconscionable and downright a highway robbery. No business in the world earns 780 percent in profit! Government regulators should never allow this inhumane increase," Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian said in a statement.

"And why should the fine be passed on to consumers. Were they the ones who broke the law? This isn't right and so unfair. It's the people who already suffered from bad service, and yet, they will bear the brunt of the penalties," Gatchalian added, in a mix of English and Filipino.

He noted that "both Manila Water and Mayni-

lad have been given ample time to comply with the Clean Water Act. The government should not let Manila Water threaten to hold the public hostage with exorbitant price increases just so it could blackmail the Supreme Court into reversing its decision."

Sen. Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III joined over the weekend the mounting opposition against the looming imposition of a 780-percent increase in water rates.

The protest was prompted by reports that Manila Water Co. intends to pass on to consumers the heavy penalties imposed by the Supreme Court on the utility firm, jointly with the other private concessionaire, the Maynilad Water Services Inc., and the regulator, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS).

"Passing on to consumers the fines is not only unfair but also utterly baseless. An additional P26.70 per cubic meter in their water bill is a heavy burden on our people. They're burdened enough as it is, why make it harder for them?" Pimentel said in a mix of English and Filipino.

Pimentel protested as the MWSS issued a statement that under Manila Water's concession agreement the utility firm cannot recover said penalties by passing it on to consumers.

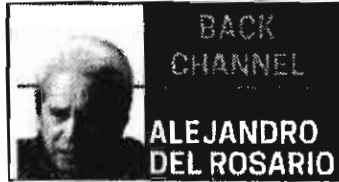
"It cannot be that the public will be made to pay for their environmental violations. It must be noted that consumers already suffered from the monthlong water interruption last June," Pimentel said, adding that the private stock owners of the water concessionaires must bear the cost of their penalties, this being the nature of the business they entered.

"Less or no profit for them this time. Their profits are not guaranteed by their customers. They must run their businesses professionally, ethically, and lawfully," the senator added.

Butch Fernandez



Atienza's war on water firms



LIKE a man consumed by his own mission to wage war against corporate greed, Buhay Party List Rep. Lito Atienza is relentless in his campaign to make the water company concessionaires comply with the Clean Water Act. This, after one major newspaper banner headlined his case against concessionaire Manila Water while the other dailies also ran the story on their front pages.

Atienza is aghast that instead of complying with the Supreme Court order to implement the clean sewage component in their contract as concessionaires, Manila Water is now threatening consumers with higher rates.

"This is the height of arrogance if not downright insensitivity," fumed Atienza, suggesting that the high court cite Manila Water in contempt and double its P1.8-billion fine for attempting to pass on their fine to consumers.

"To increase its rates by 780 percent is corporate greed exemplified," said Atienza. Neglect to separate toxic and chemical waste from water sewage is harming the environment as he pointed out the fishkill in Las Pinas and Paranaque.

Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources officials who inspected the dead fish washed ashore said the cause was not dynamite fishing but plain and pure pollution.

"Manila Bay is now one big cesspool," said Atienza, adding that no amount of cleanup will turn the tide around and restore it to its former pristine condition.

Atienza said Manila Water has the funds to connect pipes to a water treatment facility. It did not do this. And yet the Ayalas who operate Manila Water have the funds for their other business ventures like condominiums and shopping malls. If operating a concessionaire and distributing water to thousands of households is not profitable, then they should get out of it, Atienza

said, urging the government to cancel the water concessionaires' contracts and take over their operation. He said that water a natural resource should never be privatized and given to big business whose sole priority is profit.

The former Environment and Natural Resources Secretary under then President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo vowed to pursue his case against Manila Water when Congress resumes its session in November. He found an ally in Senator Sherwin Gatchalian who is now espousing the cause for a water treatment facility.

“Corporate greed exemplified, he says.”

Atienza also said Manila Water has been collecting money from consumers and business establishments for wastewater treatment for the past 22 years aside from the regular fees for water consumption. Manila Water had enough time to construct a waste water treatment facility as stipulated in its concessionaire contract—but did not. Why?

So, where did that water treatment money go? Probably to other Ayala projects with a faster return on investment. We hope not, because that would be to the detriment of its actual purpose for a wastewater treatment facility, which is for the good of communities nationwide. What is happening now is that both Manila Bay and Laguna de Bay have become big receptacles for toxic waste and other garbage that result in fishkill and other diseases that take their toll on the people. Is it any wonder that polio is back after an absence of three decades, with dengue and the African Swine Fever adding to the people's problems?

Indeed, one business company's neglect is the whole country's misery. Thankfully, we have legislators like Lito Atienza looking after our welfare. May his and Senator Sherwin Gatchalian's tribe increase.



Opinion

Adelle Chua, *Editor*

EDITORIAL

Dead in the water

MANILA Water, one of two private concessionaires serving Metro Manila, this week served up a doomsday scenario of dramatically higher water rates if the Supreme Court insists on imposing a P921 million fine for failing to comply with the Clean Water Act.

The statement, contained in the company's motion for reconsideration, had a ring of blackmail to it—a fact that was not lost on lawmakers who were quick to criticize Manila Water for its insensitivity at best and arrogance at worst.

Faced with scathing criticism, the Ayala-owned company sought to perform some damage control by saying they “never stated that it will be an impending increase” nor that they would pass the costs on to consumers.

“In light of the recent reports on the increase in water rates by 780 percent, we would like to clarify that the 780 percent increase included in the pleading in our motion for reconsideration to the Supreme Court is what it would have cost to build wastewater facilities to comply with the Supreme Court decision...,” it said.

But all this sounded like splitting hairs—and it was clear the company's lawyers had shot themselves in the foot with this passage from

their motion for reconsideration: “On the assumption that costs related to the full implementation of the sewerage network are to be recovered by the concessionaires, including petitioner Manila Water, by the end of the concession agreement, the fees that ought to be collected from the end consumers (on top of their water consumption) would amount to PHP26.70 per cubic meter—or a 780.18-percent increase in water rates.”

How, after all, do the concessionaires expect to recover their costs related to the full implementation of the sewerage network, if not from their customers? The company says so itself in the next sentence, when it says “the fees that ought to be collected from the end consumers (on top of their water consumption) would amount to P26.70 per cubic meter—or a 780.18 percent increase in water rates.”

The company may quibble about the word “impending” but the intent seems apparent.

Buhay party-list Rep. Lito Atienza, who used to be Environment secretary, neither quibbled or minced words, calling Manila Water's statement “the height of arrogance.”

“Instead of complying with the Supreme Court order, they are now threatening consumers with an oppressive hike in water rates unless the high tribunal reverses its ruling. This is tantamount to blackmail,” Atienza said.

“For the past 22 years, they have been charging consumers a so-called environmental fee purportedly to put up sewer lines connecting all households to the waste-water treatment facilities. Instead of flowing directly into water bodies such as the Laguna de Bay and Manila Bay, water from households and commercial establishments should be directed to these treatment facilities, converting it to a level that can even be of drinking quality. But until now they have not rendered this service as stipulated in their concession agreement with the government,” Atienza said.

Meanwhile, the utility's regulator, the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System made it clear that the concessionaires may not pass on these costs to consumers.

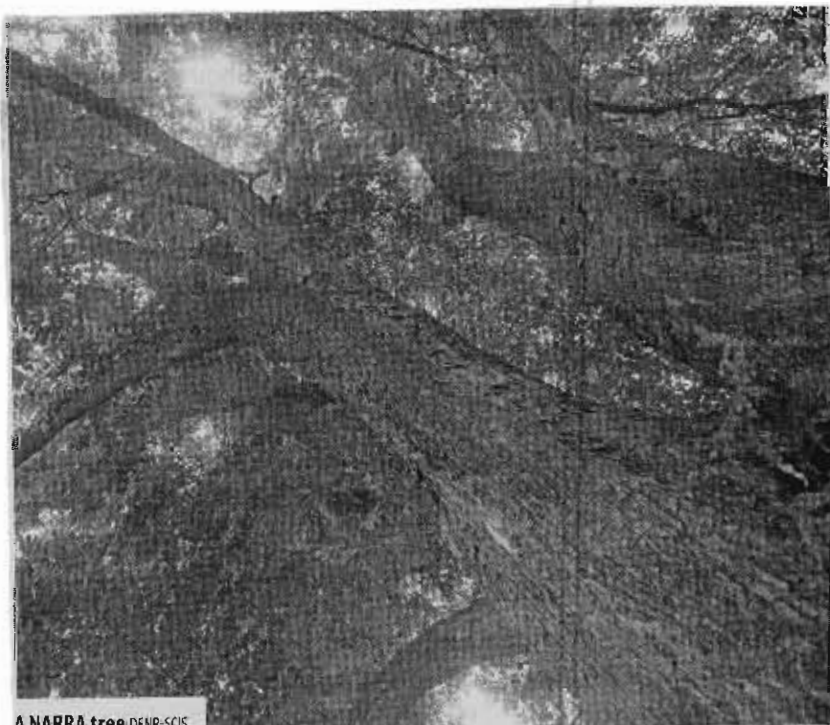
Manila Water's threat, intended or not, just doesn't hold water.



Planning to cut down a tree? Think again

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

CUTTING down trees in urban areas is often driven by the need for space, fuel or construction material and, in some cases, to prevent it from causing an accident when it shows signs of falling down.



A NARRA tree DENR-SCIS



III. Planning to cut down a tree? Think again

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Even in public places, road-widening projects often result in cutting down trees. In school premises, trees are cut down to build extra schoolrooms or provide more space for children's activities.

However, there are good reasons for not cutting down trees.

It takes years to grow a tree. Sometimes, one will not even survive its first year.

Trees are needed for the oxygen they produce. They also provide shades—natural protection against sunlight and rain—plus the beauty they provide to the natural environment.

Fruit-bearing trees provide food and serve as home to wildlife—birds, bees, all sorts of insects, fruit bats—which help in maintaining ecological balance in both rural and urban settings.

Law against killing trees

THE law against cutting down trees, or killing trees, Presidential Decree (PD) 705, or Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines that was signed on May 19, 1975, regulates the act in both public and private lands.

It calls for the prior approval or permission from the government, specifically the Bureau of Forest Development whose mandate now rests on the Forest Management Bureau (FMB), one of the four bureaus of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Section 68 of PD 705 states that "any person who shall cut, gather, collect, or remove timber or other forest products from any forest land, or timber from alienable and disposable public lands, or from private lands, without any authority under a license agreement, lease, license or permit, shall be guilty of qualified theft as defined and punished under Articles 309 and 310 of the Revised Penal Code."

Moreover, the same section states that in the case of partnership, association or corporation, the officers who ordered the cutting, gathering or collecting shall be liable, and if such officers are aliens, shall, in addition to the penalty, be deported without further proceedings.

Under the 1930 Revised Penal Code of the Philippines, the penalty for qualified theft depends on the value of the property stolen. Essentially, however, since a tree is valued at least P50,000 nowadays, a tree-cutting violation may land the culprit up to a maximum jail term of 25 years.

Chainsaw Act

CUTTING of trees, even with a permit from the DENR, is also tricky because there's a law regulating the use of a chainsaw, which can also put one in trouble if it is used without license or permit from the DENR.

The Chainsaw Act, or Republic Act 9175, signed on November 7, 2002, regulates the ownership, possession, sale, importation, and use of chainsaws and penalizes violators.

Regulating chainsaws is not without a good reason. A chainsaw can cut a fully grown tree in minutes, and it takes only a few hours to cut 100 trees using this equipment.

Hence, the law's Section 7, which provides for the penal provision, states that actual unlawful use of chain saw may land one in jail from six years and one day to eight years or a fine of not less than P30,000 but not more than P50,000.

Exception to the rule

HOWEVER, the cutting of trees and the use of chainsaw are not strictly prohibited. All one has to do is apply for a permit with the DENR or with the concerned Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office, or with the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office, and cite the reasons, officials of the DENR said.

In fact, the DENR is lenient in implementing the law in urban areas where trees are fast becoming extinct.

"Cutting of trees, even in private land for a registered tree plantation, needs a permit. That is why we are trying to liberalize tree cutting," said Environment Assistant Secretary Ricardo Calderon, also the concurrent director of DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB).

He explained that liberalizing means that if one "has a registered tree plantation, then you will no longer need to apply for a tree-cutting permit."

A draft policy for registered plantations in private land, Calderon said, is in the works.

"Why will you invest in tree plantations when the law makes it hard for you to cut them later on?" he asked in Filipino.

In the case of cutting of trees in private lands that are not covered by a registered tree plantation, he said the DENR encourages the landowner to still apply for a tree-cutting permit whenever possible.

"That is what the law says. In some cases, we let the local government units help monitor these activities," he said.

Obsolete law

ACCORDING to Calderon, the Revised Forestry Code is already obsolete and needs revisiting.

"That has been the consensus and the clamor of [those] in the wood industry," he said, adding that the 1975 Revised Forestry Code was meant to regulate logging at a time when the country's economy is largely dependent on logging.

FMB Director Nonito Tamayo agrees. He said cutting of trees needs to be liberalized to promote investment in forest or tree plantations that will support the country's wood industry requirement.

The current annual wood requirement of the Philippines is 6 million cubic meters.

However, the country can only produce 1 million cubic meters. This means it is importing around 5 million cubic meters of wood every year, according to the latest DENR-FMB estimates.

In private lands, Tamayo said, cutting of trees for non-commercial purposes requires no special permit.

"If they intend to sell, that is the time they really need to apply for a permit. But if it is to cut the tree that is endangering people, it is okay," he said.

However, he encourages the public not to cut down trees without a valid reason.



TITLE ~~Working~~ Planning to cut down a tree? Think again

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Trees and urban biodiversity

EVEN in an urban setting, trees are very important to keep the biodiversity alive and well, said Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim.

Mainstreaming biodiversity in urban and infrastructure development is one of the programs of ACB.

In the Philippines, although the concept is new in the country, some cities are starting to adopt green infrastructure and to promote green spaces and green buildings, she said.

"Singapore and Thailand are leading this concept in the Asean, but there is also an emerging interest in some of the cities in the Philippines," she said.

According to Lim, a former director of DENR-BMB: "If nature or biodiversity is taken into account in cities' development, where a large part of the land is already privately owned or managed, then logically, even trees in private land or small patches of trees in the urban setting must have some kind of protection, especially if they are indigenous trees and vegetation."

Communication is key

ACCORDING to Lim, there's really a need to communicate the importance of trees in urban areas where the competition for space is very stiff.

"There is a need to advocate the protection of trees in urban areas, as well as allocating spaces for tree planting and revegetation. There are studies that show that more trees in urban areas can reduce respiratory problems, and trees and greens around hospitals and health-care centers can hasten the healing and reduce stress-related illnesses," she said.

According to Lim, if a tree poses danger, they may be cut, but she added that weak trees that might collapse could be prevented from cutting.

"Remember some trees that were planted in cities years ago might not be the appropriate species, and were not managed to grow well in urban settings with their roots growing and expanding to destroy concrete roads and sidewalks. Cutting the roots and branches improperly or nailing signages onto trees would make trees vulnerable to rotting and diseases," she said.

Cutting trees just because the landowner wants these for timber or to make more space for infrastructure, must be looked into more carefully by concerned government agencies, in this case, the DENR and local government units (LGUs), she said.

"The species of trees must be taken into account, and there is a need for green spaces and corridors. Also, it should not just be the DENR's responsibility, but the LGUs, as well, in making sure that they set aside the proper proportion of green areas when they prepare their land use and development plans," she said.

Beneficial to homes

ENVIRONMENTAL group Kalikasan-People's Network for the Environment (Kalikasan-PNE) added that trees in urban and suburban lots are actually beneficial to the overall wellbeing of residents.

"Trees sequester air and noise pollution, provide shelter from the rain, stormy winds and extreme temperature shifts," Kalikasan-PNE National Coordinator Leon Dulce said.

According to Dulce, all tree-cutting activities require a permit from the DENR. But because household construction is seen as a small-scale activity that would have a smaller impact on the urban forest cover, regulating them would be seen as too much of an effort to cover all 24.2 million household units across the country.

"Practically speaking, ensuring a green architectural intervention in this situation would also be expensive," Dulce said.

What the government can do, he added, "is to ensure that we have clear environmental architecture guidelines, and that we have in-house green architects and engineers across all cities and towns that will be available to guide the integration of trees in the construction instead of building over trees."

That said, before we have to think again before we decide to cut down a tree.



Help Mother Earth, plant more trees

I'm often asked by readers what my suggestions are on what individuals can do to help fight climate change whenever I write about environmental issues. My straightforward answer is to plant trees and to campaign for others to do the same.

One of the little-known secrets that should never stay a secret is that the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) gives away fruit tree seedlings for free if these are requested by barangays. I have seen for myself the excellent varieties of fruit trees that are also sold by BPI to individual buyers at very affordable prices. We should prompt our barangay captains to make the necessary request for free seedlings from BPI, to establish barangay tree nurseries, and to make the seedlings available for free to all barangay residents.

If one wants to plant forest trees like narra, there's the Forest Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, which has native tree varieties. But there are also social media groups where one can buy native tree seedlings such as molave, kamagong, almaciga, apitong, lauan and yaka. One such Facebook group I joined is the Philippine Native Tree Enthusiasts, which encourages its members to share "relevant information on the seed sources, germination and propagation, cultural care, and problems of native trees."

One learns very interesting information shared on social media. For instance, trees widely assumed as native to the Philippines are, in fact, alien (exotic) trees, such as acacia, mango, duhat and many others. There are generous souls among social media groups who



FLEA MARKET OF IDEAS

JOEL RUIZ BUTUYAN

give native seeds for free. I myself have received free seeds of the now critically endangered *tindalo* tree and the beautiful rainbow eucalyptus tree, locally known as *bagras*.

Apart from these seedling sources, all households have the potential to become cradles of tree seedlings if we make an effort to plant the seeds of the fruits we eat like mango, *mabolo* and *atis*; and if we plant the seeds of trees that are naturally growing in our lots or nearby roadsides, like narra, *talisay* and *bana-ba*. We should take on the habit of planting seeds in plastic and glass container discards, and make the seedlings available in our front yards with signs like "free seedlings, pick one."

There have been repeated efforts by the Philippine government to exhort citizens to get into the habit of planting trees, but all the lofty declarations usually end up as empty slogans because no sincere and sustained programs are implemented.

As early as 1947, President Manuel Roxas

issued Proclamation No. 30 declaring "the second Saturday of September of each year as Arbor Day, to be observed in schools and elsewhere by the planting of trees and plants." In 1977, President Ferdinand Marcos issued Presidential Decree No. 1153 directing that "every citizen of the Philippines at least ten (10) years of age... shall plant one tree every month for five (5) consecutive years." In 2003, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo issued Proclamation No. 396 declaring June 25 as Philippine Arbor Day, "to be observed throughout the nation by planting trees and ornamental plants."

More recently, Congress passed the Arbor Day Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10176), which decrees that "(a)ll able-bodied citizens of the Philippines, who are at least twelve (12) years of age, shall be required to plant one (1) tree every year." It has been seven years since the law was passed, but we don't see or hear its exalted aspirations being followed. Even its requirement that all local government units (LGUs) must pass an ordinance designating a tree-planting day each year for all their constituents has been snubbed. If Congress is serious, it should pass a law withholding each LGU's entitlement to its internal revenue allotment if it fails to comply yearly with the Arbor Day Act.

The wellbeing of our planet is all too important to be left in the thoughtless care of our government leaders. Planting trees will help Mother Earth ensure our survival in the only home we have.

Comments to fleamarketofideas@gmail.com



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
INITIATIVES
SERVICE



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UPPER
LOWER



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BANNER
STORY



EDITORIAL



CARTOON

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•Agarwood smuggling

TACLOBAN CITY - Two Indian nationals and two Filipinos were nabbed for possessing ₱1 million worth of Agarwood wedges, locally known as "Lapnisan," in a checkpoint at San Juanico Bridge recently. Reports reaching the Police Regional Office 8 Headquarters revealed that personnel of the 805th Reg'l Mobile Force Battalion intercepted a white van travelling towards Tacloban City from Samar province. The driver, identified as Lucio Abordo, together with Decina Noel Dela Fuente and 2 Indian nationals identified as Mohammed Sharikul Hoque and Mohammad Khaliqur Rohman were carrying 2.5 kg. of Agarwood chips without the necessary permits from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Agarwood, also known as Oud Oil, is one of the most precious, rare and expensive essential oils. It is also sometimes called as Aloeswood, a fragrant dark resinous wood used in incense, perfume, and small carvings. (Marie Tonette Marticio)



Villar writ curbed airport

Villar's allegations, the court said, have been disproved by the parties concerned

A toothless Writ of *Kalikasan* against a reclamation program issued by the Supreme Court (SC) in 2012 that favored former Las Piñas Rep. and now Sen. Cynthia Villar had caused the transfer of a big-ticket airport project from the City of Paranaque to the province of Bulacan.

Sensing delay caused by Villar's SC plea, San Miguel Corp. (SMC) president Ramon S. Ang moved what he envisioned as a \$10 billion airport for the government

along the Cyberbay reclamation area in Paranaque to Bulacan, Bulacan, upping the ante with expressways and a proposed train system that would link what would be known as the New Manila International Airport to Metro Manila for faster travel time and easier accessibility.

Ang's Cyberbay reclamation project,

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With plenty of cash to fuel growth, Ang then relocated his Cyberbay project to Bulacan, Bulacan

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however, has now sat untouched for years since Villar was able to get the SC to issue a Writ of *Kalikasan*, which not a few viewed as a powerless summons in the absence of a temporary environmental protection order (TEPO).

A TEPO should have stopped the respondents in Villar's case filed 20 March 2012, which sought to stop the reclamation project at the Las Piñas and Paranaque seaside locations.

Flooding as reason

With plenty of cash to fuel growth, Ang then relocated his Cyberbay project to Bulacan, Bulacan where his P736.6 billion aerotropolis will rise.

Construction of the new airport started last September following President Rodrigo Duterte's green light in April last year.

On 26 April 2013, however, the Court of Appeals (CA) junked Villar's contention that the reclamation project near Manila Bay would cause flooding to the Las Piñas-Paranaque-Bacoor corridor, where most of her family's properties and big real estate projects are located.

Ang's Cyberbay reclamation project, however, has now sat untouched for years since Villar was able to get the SC to issue a Writ of *Kalikasan*.

Primary respondents in Villar's petition before the SC are AllTech Contractors, Inc; the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA); Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR); Environmental Management Bureau (EMB); and the City of Las Piñas, the Villar family's turf and was ironically led by the lawmaker's brother,



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Villar writ curbed airport

Vergel Aguilar.

Aguilar's wife, Imelda, now sits as Las Piñas City mayor.

SC petition

After her petition was junked by the CA, Villar on 10 October 2013 then brought her legal battle to the SC anew, demanding that the P14 billion reclamation project, to be undertaken by AllTech, be stopped.

The project, however, has an Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) from the DENR. With an ECC and with the CA fully apprised of the legitimacy of the project, the appellate court also found "no credible, competent and reliable evidence presented (by the Villar camp) to support allegations that the proposed coastal bay project would cause environmental damage of such magnitude to prejudice the lives, health or properties of the residents of Paranaque and Las Piñas."

Villar's allegations, the court said, have been disproved by the parties concerned.

With Villar's petition at the SC still pending, the city government of Las Piñas said: "We will wait for the SC decision with regard to the petition of Sen. Villar against the proposed reclamation project."

Reclamation backed

The City of Paranaque, however, is supportive of reclamation programs.

"Paranaque is now booming. It has become an investment destination which spurs economic growth," said Ding Soriano, the city administrator.

Construction of the new airport started last September following President Rodrigo Duterte's green light in April last year.

"Our reclamation in the area of Manila Bay and within the jurisdiction of the city is primarily the catalyst that motivated our investors to locate their businesses to our city," he added.

"The projects are conformably with our existing laws and policies on reclamation and consistent with the interest of the city and our people," Soriano further said. "Reclamation is part of its economic agenda for future growth."

Paranaque has a coastal bay reclamation project for its

203.43-hectare property. It is side by side Las Piñas' 431.71-hectare coastal development project. Both the Las Piñas and Paranaque projects are handled by AllTech.

Trend in cities

Pasay also has a 360-hectare reclamation project not far from the Las Piñas and Paranaque development programs. It is handled by the local government unit along with SM Prime Holdings Corp.

There are also two Manila-Cavite Coastal Road reclamation projects (north and south). The South sector is a consortium made up of the City of Manila and the Manila Goldcoast Development Corp., while the North sector is a project by the Asian Seas Resources and Realty Corp.

Navotas also has two, with separate projects for 577 hectares and 73 hectares, both handled by Argonbay Construction Company Inc.

There are also almost two dozen applications to reclaim more land along the Manila Bay coastline filed before the PRA, six of which have already secured approval and one being implemented.

With Alvin Murcia



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Indigenous Peoples hit BTA rule on ancestral domain

DAVAO CITY, Davao del Sur, - The indigenous peoples in Maguindanao reacted to a recent Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) resolution asking the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to keep its hands off from the processing and granting of certificates of ancestral domain titles (CADTs) in Maguindanao.

Timuay Santos Unsad, representative of the Timuay Justice and Governance of the Teduray and Lambangian tribe of Maguindanao, said the resolution asking the NCIP to cease and desist from delineating lands and from the processing of CADT in Maguindanao would further delay the granting of the title to their ancestral domain claim — which covers 208,258 hectares in eight towns of Maguindanao and six villages of Lebak, Sultan Kudarat and some 14,000 hectares of water.

Unsad said that the Teduray and Lambangian people, who started processing their claim in 2014, had already completed all the required documents in August this year and were already waiting to be granted their CADT by NCIP.

He said the Teduray and Lambangian communities had already sent their letters both to the NCIP and to the Chief Minister of the

Bangsamoro to protest the BTA resolution.

If it pushes through, the resolution will be a continuation of the historical injustice committed against us since hundreds of years ago," Unsad said. "The former oppressed now turning against us."

The BTA approved on Sept. 25 a resolution protesting the land delineation conducted by the NCIP in Maguindanao and urging the NCIP to "cease and desist" from it and from issuing certificates of ancestral domain titles in the province which falls under the jurisdiction of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

The resolution also calls for the setting up of the Ministry on Indigenous Peoples in the BARMM to take over what used to be NCIP's task of delineating lands, conducting cadastral surveys and processing CADT to indigenous peoples in the autonomous region.

Unsad said, however, that the process would still take a long time because BTA still would have to come up with a law that would adopt the IPRA in the Bangsamoro.

"Although we already have a draft [of the Bangsamoro IP Law], the process will take so long that it will further delay the granting of our CADT," he said. — *Inquirer*



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Singapore offers Indonesia help to combat 'scourge' of haze

SINGAPORE has reached out to Indonesian authorities to offer assistance and urge action in combating the "perennial scourge" of haze on the region, with no response from Indonesia thus far, the Ministry for the Environment and Water Resources (MEWR) said in written responses to Parliament queries last week.

Here are more comments from the ministry regarding the haze issue:

■ Fires in Indonesia have released 360 million tons of carbon dioxide since August, equivalent to more than Spain's emissions for the whole of 2018; the two-month haze episode of 2015 cost Singapore S\$1.83 billion (\$1.33 billion) in health costs, lost productivity, and diminished tourism and business.

■ "Singapore is supportive of the Indonesian government's continuing efforts to suppress the forest and land fires. We recognise President Joko Widodo's personal attention and efforts in tackling this problem. The key is to prevent the fires from starting in the first place."

■ Singapore has contributed S\$5 million to the Asean Specialised Meteorological Centre for a regional capability building program to monitor haze, including hot spot activities, and build

predictability around weather and climate.

■ "We will not tolerate the irresponsible actions of errant companies, whether Singapore-based or otherwise, that harm our environment," and the National Environment Agency still has cases open with four companies that were issued legal notices in 2015 to take immediate measures to stop fires that caused haze affecting Singapore.

Noting that consumer choices and demand can help shape forestry and palm oil industries' actions, MEWR says, "as more consumers opt for sustainable products, this will incentivize companies to adopt more sustainable practices which, in turn, contributes to reducing haze."

The government maintains a 28-agency Haze Task Force, in place since 1994, that has been focused since mid-September on protecting especially vulnerable groups, such as elderly, pregnant women, children and people with chronic diseases.

All primary and secondary school classrooms have been equipped with air purifiers, and the Haze Task Force is ensuring that sufficient stocks of masks are in warehouse and available to be pushed to retail stores.

Bloomberg News



World leaders pledge 'decade of action'

NEW YORK: Four years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and with efforts off track for meeting its objectives, world leaders called for a decade of ambitious action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and announced actions they are taking to advance the agenda.

In the political declaration, "Gearing up for a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development," unanimously adopted at the opening of the UN Summit on the Sustainable Development Goals, UN Member States pledged to mobilize financing, enhance national implementation and strengthen institutions to achieve the sustainable development objectives by the target date and leave no one behind.

"The 2030 Agenda was a feat of multilateralism, and multilateralism is the only way for us to address complex global challenges faced by present and future generations," said the President of the UN General Assembly, Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, who convened the summit.

"A decade of action and delivery is our opportunity to fulfill the historic promise of the 2030 Agenda and ensure collective, global action and shared responsibility. We must take action — striving together, delivering for all," he continued.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres, in his remarks, urged Member States to live up to their commitments and called on all sectors of society to mobilize for the 2030 Agenda.

"We must step up our efforts. Now is the time for bold leadership, both individual and collective," he emphasized, calling

for ambitious action by Member States, local authorities, and the private sector, and asking the media, academia and young people to mobilize partnerships and hold leaders to account. "We need to move together, leaving no one behind," Guterres said.

Leaders from government, business, and civil society are gathering at UN Headquarters for a week of summits and high-level meetings focused on accelerating action on the Sustainable Development Goals. On September 23, leaders announced potentially far-reaching steps to confront climate change, including initiatives to finance and build a new generation of sustainable cities, increase energy efficiency and support sustainable climate-friendly cooling, conserve and restore marine and terrestrial ecosystems, promote regenerative agriculture and the greening of supply chains, help people secure employment, improve health, and promote gender equality.

Actions announced specifically in support of today's SDG Summit include, among others, Brazil committing to reduce premature mortality caused by non-communicable diseases by one-third by 2030; Finland pledging to achieve carbon neutrality by 2035; the Maldives partnering with Parley for the Oceans, American Express, ABInBev and Adidas to create a nationwide framework to deliver on many of the Goals; Mexico pledging to provide access to the internet for everyone including vulnerable communities; Greece committing to green growth through circular economy; the Netherlands doubling the

target number of people who gain access to justice through Dutch support in parts of Africa and the Middle East; companies from 25 countries committing to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 as part of the UN Global Compact's 'Business Ambition for 1.5 °C: Our Only Future' initiative; and Project Everyone's 'World's Largest Lesson' engaging more than 500,000 students in Nigeria in learning about the Sustainable Development Goals. The full list of more than 100 acceleration actions is available at sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgactions.

Countries in 2015 unanimously adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — the most ambitious undertaking to transform our world to boost prosperity and ensure well-being for all while protecting the environment.

The Secretary-General's annual progress report as well as the Global Sustainable Development Report by a group of independent scientists issued in advance of the Summit found that progress made so far is in danger of being reversed through worsening social inequalities and potentially irreversible impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss.

With hunger on the rise, greenhouse gas emissions rising, and the world's most vulnerable bearing the brunt of conflict and inequalities, the two-day SDG Summit is bringing together leaders from governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations to help generate the ambition and impetus needed to put the world on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.



ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS DECLARE NEW ASEAN HERITAGE PARKS

FIVE protected areas from Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam have joined the network of Asean Heritage Parks (AHPs), which are areas of high conservation value that best represent the region's rich natural resources and cultural identity.

Environment ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations declared Hat Chao Mai National Park, and Mu Ko Libong Non Hunting Area and Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park in Thailand; Lo Go-Xa Mat National Park and Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve in Vietnam; and Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary in Myanmar as new AHPs during the 15th Asean Ministerial Meeting on the Environment (Amme) and related meetings early this month in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

"We are happy to announce that we now have 49 Asean Heritage Parks. These are models of effective protected area management," said Dr. Theresa Mundita Lim, executive director of the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB).

The ACB serves as the secretariat of the AHP Programme, a flagship initiative of Asean that recognizes national parks and nature reserves with outstanding wilderness and biodiversity values.

"These additions to our growing list of protected areas in the region demonstrate Asean's intensified and unified efforts to conserve a wider area and cover all types of ecosystems," Lim said noting that of the 49 AHPs, 12 are marine and coastal parks.

The AHP Programme encourages the sustainable and equitable management of protected areas to contribute to the progress of achieving Aichi Target 11 under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Target 11 calls for the conservation of at least 17 percent of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10 percent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, by 2020.

"The AHPs represent the rich and diverse species and ecosystem of the Asean region. We hope to cover more areas in line with our main goal of reducing the rate of biodiversity loss in the region," Lim said.

For a protected area to be an AHP, it must meet several criteria, including ecological completeness, representativeness, naturalness, high conservation importance, legally gazetted conservation areas, approved management plan, transboundary, uniqueness, high ethno-biological significance, and importance for endangered biodiversity.

The Amme is held every two years to discuss a wide range of environmental issues. The 15th Amme tackled biodiversity conservation, climate change, environmentally sustainable city, coastal and marine environment, environmental education, chemical and hazardous waste management, transboundary haze pollution control, and eco-schools.

The Asean environment ministers also attended related meetings, including the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Asean Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, the 16th Asean plus 3 (China, Japan, and South Korea) Environment Ministers Meeting, and the Asean-Japan Ministerial Dialogue on the Environmental Cooperation.

Heritage park conference

THE new AHPs and other conservation topics are expected to take the spotlight at the Sixth Asean Heritage Park Conference (AHP6) on October 21 to 24 in Pakse, Lao PDR.

With theme "Sustainability and Innovation for Parks and People—Celebrating 35 years of Asean Heritage Parks," the AHP6 will gather protected area managers, representatives from international environmental organisations, businesses, academe, traditional and local communities, and youth to discuss knowledge and best practices in managing protected areas.

It is organized by the ACB and the Department of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Laos, with support from the European Union, the German Development Cooperation through the KfW, German development agency GIZ, SwedBio, Convention on Biological Diversity and Japan

Biodiversity Fund.

The conference aims to improve the AHP network and strengthen camaraderie among AHP stakeholders and other development partners.

Hat Chao Mai National Park and Mu Ko Libong Non Hunting Area

HAT CHAO MAI NATIONAL PARK and Mu Ko Libong Non Hunting Area are protected areas beside each other in Trang Province in Southern Thailand, towards the Andaman Sea.

Declared as Ramsar wetlands of international importance in 2002, the two sites possess high ecosystem diversity—including evergreen, karst, and beach forests, limestone cave ecosystems, mangroves, seagrass meadows and coral reefs.

The areas are known as home to dugong, a marine mammal listed as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

They also host other threatened flora and fauna, including 265 identified floral species and 50 faunal species, which have been listed as critically endangered, endangered, vulnerable species and nearly threatened.

Unique rock formations, such as caves, limestone formations, cliffs and sinkholes can also be found in the sites.

Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park

THE Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park is a protected area in Surat Thani Province in Thailand.

With an area of 102 square kilometers, it is an archipelago and a protected area composed of diverse ecosystems, such as coral reefs, seagrass, mangroves, and karst ecosystems.

It is a popular tourist destination featuring panoramic views, geological formations and sandy beaches.

The area is also known to offer numerous ecosystem services, especially on the life cycle of mackerels, which is a very important commercial fish in Thailand.

It is home to endangered and threatened species. Among others, the orchid Ang Thong Lady Slipper is endemic to this area.

The area was recognized as a Ramsar site in 2002. It was also awarded a five-star beach rating by the Pollution Control Department of Thailand for the sound environmental management of the area.

Lo Go-Xa Mat National Park

LOCATED in Tay Ninh Province of Vietnam, Lo Go-Xa Mat National Park covers a total area of 191.50 square kilometres of core zone and 186 square kilometres of buffer zones.

It plays an important role in the conservation and development of biodiversity values, border protection and natural landscapes, especially the forest and wetlands habitats of the transitional region between the Central Highlands, Southern Lowlands and Mekong Delta ecoregions of Vietnam.

The park was established to conserve threatened plant and animal species. It serves as a location for scientific research, environmental education and ecotourism development.

The site is also important for transboundary conservation between Vietnam and Cambodia.

Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve

NGOC LINH is the second-highest mountain range in Vietnam, following the Hoang Lien Mountain, the highest in South Vietnam and Indochina.

The Ngoc Linh mountain has a strongly fragmented terrain and is a transitional area between the Northern Annamite Range and the Southern Annamite Range, between the coastal plain and the Central Highlands.

With these characteristics, Ngoc Linh has a unique location that creates high and unique values of biodiversity.

Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary

IT is also a haven for other animal and plant species, including: 16 orchids, 38 mammals, 266 birds, 77 reptiles and amphibians, and more than 100 butterflies. This 215,072-hectare sanctuary can be found in Sagaing Region in Northern Myanmar.