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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



10-15-19

DATE

TITLE:

Fish kill won't affect Manila Bay rehab

By Rio N. Araja

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources on Monday vowed to work to ensure that the recent fishkill in the cities of Las Piñas-Parañaque won't affect the rehabilitation of Manila Bay.

Environment Secretary Roy Cima-tu assured the public that appropriate measures would be undertaken to make sure the recent fish kill in the Las Piñas-Parañaque wetland park would not affect the ongoing rehabilitation efforts in Manila Bay.

The agency is "looking deeply" into the cause of the fish kill in the protected wetland area situated within the Manila Bay region, he said.

"The DENR is now gathering more information on the extent and the cause of the fish kill in LPPWP," the environment chief said.

The Environmental Management Bureau-National Capital Region has already conducted tests in LPPWP for several key water quality indicators, he said.

The results are being fast tracked "to enable us to determine what measures to undertake to mitigate adverse impacts over other marine life in the area," he said.

"We are also doing this because we want to make sure that the fish kill incident will not cause any delay to the ongoing Manila Bay rehabilitation efforts," he said.

According to DENR-NCR regional executive director Jacqueline Caan-can, the water test results will be out "in the next few days."

The results, she said, would complement studies being done by experts from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of the Department of Agriculture, and the city governments of Las Piñas and Parañaque.

"While agriculturists initially assessed that the state of some of the fishes indicate dynamite fishing, our parameter tests on the water quality in the area could pinpoint other factors that may have contributed to the fish kill," Caan-can said.

Last Oct. 9, residents near the LP-PWP saw a portion of the waters surrounding the wetland turning "milky white" in color.

Fish then gradually appeared along the shore, with some displaying an erratic "jumping" behavior.

The large fish kill appeared the next morning, with tons of various marine species crowded along a half-kilometer stretch of LPPWP's Long Island, and about half-ton spread out over Freedom Island.



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Fish kill won't affect Manila Bay rehab

The public is advised against bathing in the affected waters or consuming fish and shellfish

By Maria Romero

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said the ongoing Manila Bay rehabilitation will continue after the reported alleged fish kill in the Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park (LPPWP) late last week.

Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu vowed to implement necessary measures to determine the cause of the fish kill in the protected wetland area situated within the Manila Bay region.

"The DENR is now gathering more information on the extent and the cause of the fish kill in LPPWP," Cimatu said.

He added that the Environmental Management Bureau-National Capital Region (EMB-NCR) had already conducted tests in LPPWP for several key water quality indicators.

The DENR chief said results are being fast-tracked "to enable us to determine what measures to undertake to mitigate adverse impacts over other marine life in the area."

"We are also doing this because we want to make sure that the fish kill incident will not cause any delay to the ongoing Manila Bay rehabilitation efforts."

Meanwhile, DENR-NCR regional executive director Jacqueline Caancan disclosed that the water test results will be out "in the next few days."

The results would complement studies being done by experts from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of the Department of Agriculture (DA-BFAR) and the city governments of Las Piñas and Parañaque.

"While agriculturists initially assessed that the state of some of the fishes indicate dynamite fishing, our parameter tests on the water quality in the area could pinpoint other factors that may have contributed to the fish kill," Caancan said.

The DENR-EMB tested the LPPWP waters for dissolved oxygen, pH level, nitrates, phosphates, fecal coliform and cyanide.

The results could show whether the fish died through toxic means, or through oxygen saturation that is determined by the level of dissolved oxygen in the water, which is essential to sustain aquatic life.

Over the weekend, personnel from the DENR, the local governments of Las Piñas and Parañaque, and the so-called "bakawan warriors" assigned to LPPWP had already cleared the shore of dead fishes, which were causing the heavy stench in the area.

Initial reports showed the local government gathered more than 200 sacks and over 5,000 kilograms of different marine species, such as fish, shrimps and crabs.

"The cleanup was necessary to reduce hazards to both human and environmental health. We must remove the dead fish before the tide brings them back to the sea and further affect the water quality in the area," Caancan said.

Pending the results of the water tests, she advised the public against bathing in the area to avoid ingesting through the skin or by accidental swallowing of chemicals which may be present in the water.



FISH KILL SA LAS PIÑAS INIIMBESTIGAHAN NG DENR

MASUSING iniimbestigahan na ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang naganap na fish kill kamakailan sa bahagi ng Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park (LPPWP).

Ayon kay Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy Cimatu, inaalam na nila ang dahilan ng pagkamatay ng mga naturang isda kasunod ang pagtitiyak na hindi maapektuhan ang kanilang isinasagawang rehabilitasyon sa Manila Bay.

"The DENR is now gathering more information on the extent and the cause of the fish kill in LPPWP, ani Cimatu.

Napag-alamang nagsasagawa ang Environment Management Bureau-National Capital Region (EMB-NCR) ng pagsusuri hinggil sa water quality nito upang matukoy ang pinagmulan ng pagkamatay ng mga isda.

Ani Cimatu, minamadali na rin ang resulta ug pagsusuri upang mabilis na makatugon ang DENR at upang hindi makaapekto sa marine life ng lugar.

We are also doing this because we want to make sure that the fish kill incident will not cause any delay to the ongoing Manila Bay rehabilitation efforts," pahayag pa ni Cimatu.

BENEDICT ABAYGAR JR.



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AFTER FISHKILL, GROUPS SEEK TRANSPARENCY IN MANILA BAY REHAB

A fishermen's group and a scientists' organization have called for transparency in ongoing efforts to rehabilitate Manila Bay, after the reported fishkill in coastal waters off Cavite province and the cities of Las Piñas and Parañaque.

In a joint statement on Monday, the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) and the Advocates of Science and Technology for the People (Agham) said it was not enough for the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to explain the causes of the phenomenon that had affected the fish and mussel catch from the bay.

"What we want to hear from them is who is responsible [for the fishkill], what are the measures and ... concrete actions [that] affected fisherfolk can expect from the government?" they said.

"We demand [that] the Manila Bay Task Force ... report



DEAD HAUL Workers of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources collect the dead fish along the shore of the Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area. The fishkill is being attributed to the degrading ecosystem of Manila Bay. —RICHARD A. REYES

the status and [effectivity of] the clean-up drive [in relation] to the degrading ecosystem of Manila Bay," they added.

Water samples

The task force led by the DENR began rehabilitation of

the polluted bay early this year.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu earlier said the government was aiming to make Manila Bay fit for swimming by the end of the year, by reducing fecal coliform levels from untreated sewage waters pouring

into the historic bay.

The BFAR said water pollution was the cause of the fishkill in the waters off Las Piñas and Parañaque.

Water samples taken by the agency showed poor levels of dissolved oxygen and high levels of ammonia and phosphate, which it said could have come from "excessive wastes" from agricultural, industrial and domestic sources.

"The heavy rainfall in the past few days may have [reduced] the salinity of the water," the BFAR said.

According to the bureau, Manila Bay's salinity ranged from 19 to 25 grams per kilogram of seawater, or lower than the required level of 27 to 35 grams per kilogram of seawater, for marine life survival.

Other factors

Last week, at least two metric tons of dead fish were found in the waters off Las Piñas and Parañaque. Also recovered in the coastal towns of Cavite were dead mussels and oysters.

"In our estimates, for every hectare of mussel farms in Bacoor City, only a fourth—if none at all—could be harvested," said Myrna Candinato, president of Alyansa ng mga Mandaragat sa Bacoor Bay.

The DENR-National Capital Region's Environmental Management Bureau has also collected water samples from the Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park for testing.

"While agriculturists initially assessed that the state of some of the fishes indicate dynamite fishing, our parameter tests on the water quality in the area could pinpoint other factors that may have contributed to the fishkill," DENR-NCR Executive Director Jacqueline Caanacan said in a statement.

During an onsite inspection of the fishkill near the wetland park last week, authorities identified at least 33 species of fish such as tilapia, "talakitok," "sapsap" and "lapu-lapu," as well as crabs and shrimps. —REPORTS FROM JHESSET O. ENANO AND KARL R. OCAMPO INQ



Amid Mla Bay rehab, what's behind fish kill, mussel death?

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA
@jonlmayuga

THE Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) on Monday called on authorities to look into the mystery behind the fish kill in Las Piñas and Parañaque, as well as the one afflicting tons of mussel and oyster in Bacoor, Cavite.

According to Pamalakaya, at least 2 tons of fish—*sapsap*, *salaysay* and *salinyasi*—were recently found floating in Manila Bay in Las Piñas and Parañaque. Aside from fish, shellfish species were also affected by what the group suspects was caused by water pollution.

Ironically, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has been heralding

improved water quality in Manila Bay several months after it launched the Battle for Manila Bay early this year.

The Battle for Manila Bay, an ambitious program with a whopping P4.7-billion budget, aims to make the waters of the historic bay “swimmable.”

Manila Bay’s water has been found to have high level of fecal

coliform worse than Boracay because of the direct discharge of untreated wastewater from millions of households not connected to proper sewer lines.

The Pamalakaya’s municipal chapter in Bacoor, the Alyansa ng mga Magdaragat sa Bacoor Bay, reported that coastal towns in Cavite were severely affected by the water

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pollution, as mussels (*tahong*) and oysters (*talaba*) have been recovered dead from the mussel farms in Bacoor area.

“We estimate that for every hectare of mussel farm, only around a quarter or less may be recovered. The mussel and oyster are falling off from the bamboo poles,” said Myrna Candinato, president of Alyansa ng mga Magdaragat sa Bacoor Bay.

Pamalakaya earlier questioned the effectivity of the government’s ongoing rehabilitation in Manila Bay, citing the ecological disturbances, such as a fish kill.

The group said the Manila Bay Task Force, led by the DENR, was even created to fast-track the rehabilitation and restoration of Manila Bay.

Along with scientist group Agham, Pamalakaya called for transparency in the ongoing reha-

bilitation efforts of the national government in a form of “feedback and report-back mechanisms.”

“It’s not enough that BFAR and DENR would only explain scientifically the causes of the fish kill. We are already aware of that and we believe that this is not a natural phenomenon. What we want to hear from them is who was responsible, what are the measures, and what concrete actions can the affected fisherfolk expect from the government to continue their wheels of production,” a joint statement issued by Agham and Pamalakaya said.

The Manila Bay Task Force should report the status and how effective is the cleanup drive to the degrading ecosystem of Manila Bay, they said, “because it seems that the result of this concerted cleanup effort, with the use of taxpayers’ money, is regressive instead of progressive.”



FISHERMEN on their way home pass the Manila Bay Cavite-Las Piñas area on Monday morning. Vendors said sales of fish slowed after reports of a fish kill. Reports initially said poor levels of dissolved oxygen, and over-the-threshold ammonia and phosphates levels caused the recent fish kills off the coastal areas of Las Piñas and Parañaque cities. NONIE REYES



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NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

Fisherfolk group ties fishkill incidents to Manila Bay rehab

A FISHERFOLK group wants more transparency in the government's Manila Bay rehabilitation program as more incidents of fishkill are recorded in bodies of water connected to the bay. "It's not enough that BFAR (Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources) and DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) would only explain scientifically the causes of the fishkill. We are already aware of that and we believe that this is not a natural phenomenon," Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (PAMALAKAYA) said in a statement on Monday. — **Vincent Mariel P. Galang**
>> See full story on (<https://bit.ly/2VDiIGU>)



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Villar case plugs Manila Bay progress

EXCLUSIVE

Just one legal option was enough to stop all but one reclamation project at the Manila Bay.

This was proved by the list of projects pending before

the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA), which showed that of 19 proposed reclamation projects encompassing the historic water area, only the second phase of the Navotas City Coastal Bay Reclamation Project was given the green light for implementation.

It is the fourth smallest of the proposed projects at 73 hectares,

The other 18 projects, are still either in application or detailed engineering stage, with at least one – the Las Piñas-Paranaque Coastal Bay Project – stalled by a still pending petition before the Supreme Court filed by Sen. Cynthia Villar

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undertaken by the Navotas City local government unit and its partner private firm Argonbay Construction Co., Inc.

The project is part of the 650-hectare Navotas Coastal Bay Reclamation Project (NCBRDP), its first phase consisting of 577-hectare area of water along Manila Bay.

It was approved by the PRA Board under Resolution 4915 on 21 September 2018 as a self-contained mixed-use community with industrial, commercial, institutional and residential areas, an area suitable for port and port-related facilities, marine and tourism-related facilities and other applicable uses.

The other 18 projects, however, are still either in application or detailed engineering stage, with at least one – the Las Piñas-Paranaque Coastal Bay Project – stalled by a still pending petition before the Supreme Court (SC) filed by Sen. Cynthia Villar right after she served as Las Piñas Representative in Congress.

The Las Piñas-Paranaque Project costing P14 billion was earlier part of the Philippine Estates Authority (PEA) and Amari Coastal Bay Development Corp. (Amari) until it was nullified by the SC on 7 May 2003.

It was later intended to be used as a site for a new airport. However, with Villar seeking legal action, its proponent Ramon S. Ang of San Miguel Corp. decided to transfer his massive development project

to Bulakan, Bulacan.

The aborted Paranaque airport was proposed as the present Ninoy Aquino International Airport could no longer handle the massive flow of passengers, as Terminal 1 only has a design capacity for 4.5 million passengers but now handles more than eight million. Terminal 3, meanwhile, handles some 7 million passengers, or more than half its 13 million capacity.

Ang even included in his Bulacan airport project the construction of a new expressway, while a train system is in the pipeline to connect the New Manila International Airport to Metro Manila.

The Las Piñas-Paranaque site is one of the proposed 36 reclamation projects covering 26,234 hectares extending from Metro Manila, Cavite, Bulacan, Pampanga and Bataan.

All the other development projects have also been stalled. This even if the SC has yet to rule with finality on Villar's petition.

The SC had issued a Writ of *Kalikasan* in favor of Villar, but it did not grant her a temporary environmental protection order (TEPO) that would have stopped the reclamation program.

The Court of Appeals (CA) then junked Villar's appeal to stop the Las Piñas-Paranaque project, reiterating expert findings that the reclamation project includes measures to mitigate flood. The project has yet to proceed, however.

Asked why it was stalled, a Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) official said, "Nobody would want

to quarrel with the good Sen. Villar, I suppose."

Raising a Noah's Ark scenario of great flooding in the Las Piñas, Paranaque and Bacoor, Cavite areas – where many of the real estate projects of the Villar family are located – the lawmaker claimed that more than 1.5 million residents of the three neighboring cities would be greatly affected should the bay area be reclaimed.

This will include more than 315,000 Las Piñas residents, whom Villar had represented in Congress.

Primary respondents in Villar's petition before the SC are AllTech Contractors, Inc; PRA; DENR; Environmental Management Bureau; and the City of Las Piñas, the Villar family's turf and was ironically led by the lawmaker's brother, Vergel Aguilar.

With Villar seeking legal action, its proponent Ramon S. Ang of San Miguel Corp. decided to transfer his massive development project to Bulakan, Bulacan.

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

The CA, however, debunked Villar's claim, saying her party lacked credible sources and studies to back its claim.

Also, some experts have shared the view that reclaiming part of the Manila Bay is a solution to the inundation of several parts of Metro Manila and its fringes, including Las Pinas, Paranaque and Bacoor. Flood control is among the features of

the projects.

Ironically, the cities of Paranaque and Bacoor also have pending applications for their own reclamation projects.

The City of Bacoor actually has submitted two.

The first Bacoor reclamation project is to be undertaken by the local government, Frabelle Fishing Corp. and Aboitiz, comprising 944 hectares of submerged land. The second is 1,332 hectares of bay area under the provincial LGU and Century Peak Corp.

Most parts of Bacoor experience flood during the rainy season. Its residents blame the recently completed 120.76-million flood control structure in Las Piñas City, which divert water to its Cavite neighbor instead of allowing its natural flow.

The City reclamation project is only for 300 hectares under SM Prime Holdings Inc., which is also undertaking other reclamation projects in partnership with the Pasay City government.

"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," Paranaque city administrator Ding Soriano said.

The Baseco, Smart Harbor, City of Pearl, Harbour Center, Horizon Manila, Manila-Cavite Toll Expressway, Manila Waterfront City, Manila Solar City, Philippine Navy and Sangle Point International Airport also have pending papers with the PRA.

ADC with Alvin Murcia



Soon in Boracay: Ban on nudity, skimpy wear

Aklan execs discuss measure after Taiwanese fined for wearing 'microkini'

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
@inquirervisayas

ILOILO CITY—Nudity and wearing “extremely skimpy” swimsuits in public areas may soon be prohibited on Boracay Island.

The municipal council of Malay in Aklan province, where the world famous Boracay beaches are located, is mulling over an amendment to municipal ordinances to include a ban on public nudity.

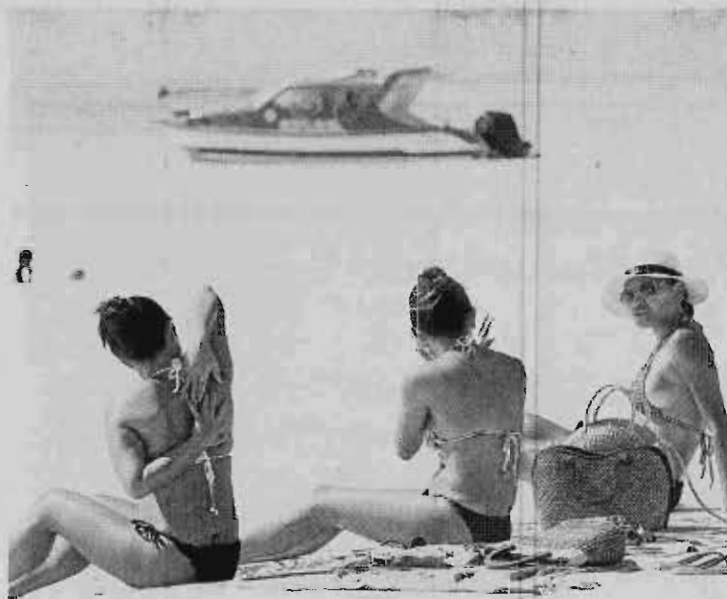
“We will be discussing possible measures but among those is to amend existing ordinances or pass a new one,” Councilor Maylyn Aguirre-Graf told the Inquirer on Monday.

The planned measure was prompted by the controversial wearing of an extremely skimpy swimsuit by a Taiwanese tourist on Boracay beach last week.

The tourist wore a “microkini,” which barely covered her private parts. She drew various reactions when her photographs went viral on social media.

The tourist, who was with her boyfriend, was asked to report to the Boracay police on Thursday. They left the island on Friday after she paid a P2,500 fine.

But the imposition of the fine also raised questions as there was no existing ordinance prohibiting nudity or the wearing of skimpy attire on the beach or other public



BEACH GETAWAY Local and foreign tourists enjoy the clear waters and powdery white sand of Boracay Island, one of the top beach getaways in the Philippines. —**MARIANNE BERMUDEZ**

areas on the 1,032-hectare island.

Instead, the police issued a citation ticket against the Taiwanese woman for violating a provision of a 2013 ordinance that prohibits photographers from “taking lewd and/or excessively erotic pictures.”

According to some residents, the ordinance covers only photographers, and not tourists.

In the case of the Taiwanese tourist, she could have been fined for alarm and scandal under the Revised Penal Code.

Tolerated

Topless bathing mostly by foreign tourists was tolerated in Boracay until the early 1990s when there were still few tourists and residents on the island.

But the surge in visitor arrivals and population growth on the island also meant less secluded and private areas.

About a decade ago, local officials also proposed an ordinance prohibiting sex in public areas after tourists were filmed making love on the beach. But the proposed measure was not approved.

*According to Natividad Bernardino, general manager of the Boracay Interagency Rehabilitation Management Group, which supervises the rehabilitation of the island, they support the passing of an ordinance on nudity and extremely skimpy attire.

“We want Boracay to be a family-oriented tourist destination. This is also why we stopped beach parties,” she said.

‘Ridiculous’

But an expatriate, who has been living on the island for decades, said passing such ordinance was “ridiculous,” adding that the town council should focus on many other “outdated ordinances on urgent concerns.”

“This was an isolated incident. They want to be holier than the Pope. It’s best we declare Boracay a monastery so they can ban tight shorts and skimpy bikinis,” said the expatriate, who asked not to be identified to avoid antagonizing local officials. **INQ**



Gov't eyes separate bureau to stamp out illegal mining

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

The government is pushing for a separate agency that will fight environmental abuse caused by illegal mining operations in the country.

The move is aimed at creating a better and responsible extractive industry.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources and its attached agency Mines and Geosciences Bureau want the current Environmental Enforcement Task Force to become a separate bureau to handle illegal mining operations.

"We are now pushing for the conversion of the task force into a separate bureau. In this way, it will have more resources, more manpower, and more leverage to work with other law enforcement bodies," MGB director Wilfredo Moncano said.

"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," he said.

Last year, the MGB launched the National Task Force Mining Challenge (NTFMC) to squash illegal mining operators, beginning with a Baguio City mine near the Philippine Military Academy grounds which was closed down in February 2018.

The NTFMC was later re-established as the Environmental Enforcement Task Force, expanding its management of environmental protection laws beyond mining to include the violation of logging laws, wildlife protection and agricultural policies.

"Through NTFMC, we aggressively apprehend illegal mining operators, as well as seize, confiscate, and disman-

tle their equipment, including blasting tunnel entrances or portals to the mining sites," Moncano said.

He said the MGB has a long-standing initiative to enhance environmental protection and rehabilitation in the local mining industry in partnership with local law enforcement agencies, and the creation of new policies aimed at further enhancing the protection of the environment and local communities.

The MGB is seeking to reduce illegal mining operations by allowing small-scale miners to formally register and join cooperatives.

"We are now seeking to formalize the informal. We are pushing for them to join the Minahang Bayan," MGB mining technology division officer-in-charge Teodorico Sandoval said.

A Minahang Bayan, under

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

"The process is also faster for them. This is to make sure that this is the best opportunity for them to become legitimate," Sandoval said.

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

"We tried taxing before. But that resulted in a 99 percent drop in domestic gold purchases. We really must be more collaborative. We can't just tax and punish, we have to reward also, in order to strengthen our environmental protection and management of the mining industry," Moncano said.



Water as a public trust



THE Supreme Court could not be as clear in *Maynilad vs. DENR*, decided in August this year and which I summarized last Saturday: "Water is not a mere commodity for sale and consumption but a natural asset to be protected and conserved. Sanitation is its corollary constant [...]" "We have a collective responsibility to preserve water resources and improve sanitation facilities for future generations."

This is a monumental decision, as the Court phrases it especially in the realm of environmental policy, public health, utilities regulation, concessionaire agreements, and privatization. Indeed, as I wrote in my previous column, this is probably the best environmental decision the Philippine Supreme Court has ever issued. It should affirm it in toto and not give the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System and the two private water utilities Maynila Water Services and Manila Water any leeway or pathway to escape liability. It should also not allow the companies to pass on the costs of the fines to consumers.

Maynilad was a unanimous Supreme Court decision, with 12 of the 14 Justices then serving on the bench signing on to the brilliant and magnificent decision written by novice Associate Justice Ramon Paul L. Hernandez. Assistant Court Administrator and SC Spokesperson Atty. Brian Hosaka said that Justice Diosdado M. Peralta and Justice Andres B. Reyes, Jr. did not take part in the case. Peralta's wife, CA Justice Fernanda Lampas-Peralta, concurred in one of the cases that were subject of the petitions consolidated before the Supreme Court. Reyes was also a member of the division which ruled in one

of the cases when he was still with the Court of Appeals.

The case of *Maynilad* is about the violation of the water concessionaires, Manila Water and Maynilad, of the Clean Water Act of 2004 (CWA), through its "blatant apathy" in complying with their obligations. They have failed to "provide, install, operate, and maintain adequate Wastewater Treatment Facilities (WWT-Fs) for sewerage system[s] resulting in the degraded quality and beneficial use of the receiving bodies of water leading to Manila Bay, and [for] which [they have] directly forestalled the DENR's mandate to implement the operational plan for the rehabilitation and restoration of Manila Bay and

“The Supreme Court used the more established Regalian and *parens patriae* doctrines.”

its river tributaries.” Such violation was in clear contravention of the five-year period mandated in the CWA's Section 8. The allegations made were based from the findings stemming from the "test results of water samples taken from Manila Bay which showed that the quality of water near the area has worsened without improvement in all parameters."

To decide *Maynilad vs. DENR*, the Supreme Court connected the more established Regalian and *parens patriae* doctrines to the concept of public trust, using the latter to develop a more systematic and

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Water...

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integrated framework of utilizing natural resources, one which is more consistent with sustainable development and environmental protection. To quote the Court:

"The Regalian doctrine is an exercise of the State's sovereign power as owner of lands of the public domain and of the patrimony of the nation. Sources of water form part of this patrimony.

The vastness of this patrimony precludes the State from managing the same entirely by itself. In the interest of quality and efficiency, it thus out-sources assistance from private entities, but this must be delimited and controlled for the protection of the general welfare.

Hand-in-hand with police power in the promotion of general welfare is the doctrine of *parens patriae*. It focuses on the role of the state as a 'sovereign' and expresses the inherent power and authority of the state to provide protection of the person and property of a person *non sui juris*. Under the doctrine, the state has the sovereign power of guardianship over persons of disability, and in the execution of the doctrine the legislature is possessed of inherent power to provide protection to persons *non sui juris* and to make and enforce rules and regulations as it deems proper for the management of their property. *Parens patriae* means 'father of his country,' and refers to the State as a last-ditch provider of protection to those unable to care and fend for themselves. It can be said that Filipino consumers have become such persons of disability deserving protection by the State, as their welfare are being increasingly downplayed, endangered, and overwhelmed by business pursuits.

While the Regalian doctrine is state ownership over natural resources, police power is state regulation through

legislation, and *parens patriae* is the default state responsibility to look after the defenseless, there remains a limbo on a flexible state policy bringing these doctrines into a cohesive whole, enshrining the objects of public interest, and backing the security of the people, rights, and resources from general neglect, private greed, and even from the own excesses of the State. We fill this void through the Public Trust Doctrine."

Maynilad laid down the basic tenets of the "Public Trust Doctrine" as applied in our jurisdiction. The doctrine "speaks of an imposed duty upon the State and its representative of continuing supervision over the taking and use of appropriated water." "Thus, '[p]arties who acquired rights in trust property [only hold] these rights subject to the trust and, therefore, could assert no vested right to use those rights in a manner harmful to the trust.'" As cited by the Court, "[i]n *National Audubon Society v. Superior Court of Alpine County*, a California Supreme Court decision, it worded the doctrine as that which—[the state had the power to reconsider] past allocation decisions even though an agency had made those decisions after due consideration of their effect on the public trust. This conclusion reflected the view that water users could not acquire a vested property right in the water itself; they merely obtained a usufructuary right to the water]."

Further elaborated in academic literature, and as cited by the Court, "that '[p]art of this consciousness involves restoring the view of public and state ownership of certain natural resources that benefit all. [...]" Public trust holds "that certain natural resources belong to all and cannot be privately owned or controlled because of their inherent importance to each individual and society as a whole. A clear declaration of public ownership,

the doctrine reaffirms the superiority of public rights over private rights for critical resources. It impresses upon states the affirmative duties of a trustee to manage these natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations and embodies key principles of environmental protection: stewardship, communal responsibility, and sustainability."

According to the Court:

"The Public Trust Doctrine, while derived from English common law and American jurisprudence, has firm Constitutional and statutory moorings in our jurisdiction. The doctrine speaks of an imposed duty upon the State and its representative of continuing supervision over the taking and use of appropriated water. Thus, "[p]arties who acquired rights in trust property [only hold] these rights subject to the trust and, therefore, could assert no vested right to use those rights in a manner harmful to the trust.

The public is regarded as the beneficial owner of trust resources, and courts can enforce the public trust doctrine even against the government itself.

It is in this same manner that the right to distribute water was granted by the State via utility franchises to Maynilad and Manila Water, under express statutory regulation through its delegated representative, the MWSS. The State conferred the franchise to these concessionaires, working under the firm belief that they shall serve as protectors of the public interest and the citizenry. In this regard, water rights must be secured to achieve optimal use of water resources, its conservation, and its preservation for allocative efficiency."

I will discuss the implications of these statements in the next installment of this series.

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BUMABA MULI ANG ANTAS NG TUBIG SA ANGAT DAM

AYON kay Dr. Seville David, Jr. Executive Director ng National Water Resources Board (NWRB), mananatili ang alokasyon sa 40CMS para sa Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) at sa mga konsesyunaryo nito, Manila Water at Maynilad. Para sa Irlgasyon mananatili pa rin sa 30cms metro kubiko bawat segundo alokasyon ang ipatutupad ngayon buwan ng Oktubre.

Base sa ulat, ang antas ng tubig sa Angat Dam ay nasa 189.73 metro noong ika-8 ng Oktubre 2019, (8:00am), pagkalipas ng tatlong araw, bumaba na muli ang lebel ng tubig sa Angat.

Base sa NATIONAL DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT COUNCIL (NDRRMC), noong ika-11 ng Oktubre, bandang alas-8 ng umaga, ang antas ng tubig sa Angat Dam ay nasa 189.21 metro, imbes na inaasahang pagtaas dahil sa panahon ng tag-ulan, bahagyang bumaba

mul.

Ayon kay Executive Director David, kailangan pa rin ang pagtitipid sa paggamit ng tubig hanggang sa tumaas ang lebel ng tubig sa Angat Dam hanggang sa umabot sa end of the year target na 212 meters.

Ang panawagan ng NWRB sa lahat, makiisa sa pagtitipid ng limitadong supply ng tubig para may magamit sa taong 2020. (Photo credit to Manila Bulletin)

SSS PENSIONERS MAAARI NANG MANGUTANG HANGGANG P200K SA PENSION LOAN PROGRAM

Nagpalabas ng pahayag ang state-run Social Security System (SSS) nitong nakaraang Biyernes, base sa talaan hanggang Agosto 2019 ng retiree-pensioners, maaari na ngayong mangutang hanggang sa P200,000 sa ilalim ng pinahusay na Pension Loan Program (PLP) ang mahigit sa 1.5 milyong mga reti-



ANG INYONG LINGKOD

DR. HILDA C. ONG

SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM

SSS Pensioners may now loan up to 200K under PLP

rado na pensyonado.

Sinabi ng pangulo at Punong Ehekutibo ng SSS na si Aurora C. Ignacio, mas pinahusay ng ahensya ang mga alituntunin sa PLP na alinsunod sa Social Security Commission (SSC) Resolution No. 429-s.2019 naglalayong magbigay ng sapat na tulong-pinansyal sa mga kwalipikadong retirado na pensyonado.

"As we celebrate the Elderly Filipino Week, we would like to inform our pensioners the good news about PLP. They can now borrow up to 12 times their basic monthly pension plus the additional P1,000 benefit. SSS branches are now accepting PLP applications from qualified retiree-pensioners," sabi ni Ignacio.

"We want our pensioners to know that we value them as one of our key stakeholders in recognition of their support to SSS during their prime, wherein their monthly contributions were the lifeline of the pension fund then," dagdag pa ni Ignacio.

Sa ilalim ng SSS Office

Order 2019-004-b, mas mataas na halaga ng pantang (loanable amount) o hanggang sa 12 beses buwanang pensyon o basic monthly pension kasama ang P1,000 karagdagang benepisyo ng isang retirado na pensyonado, mas matagal na mga term sa pagbabayad at mas malawak na saklaw para sa kwalipikasyon ng edad ang pwedeng ibigay ngayon sa ilalim ng PLP.

Ang mga kwalipikado sa ilalim ng mga bagong alituntunin ay ang mga retiree pensioner na hindi hihigit sa edad na 85 taon bago magtapos ang termino ng pagbabayad ng utang at kung wala silang outstanding loan balance, or benefit overpayment payable sa SSS mula sa kanyang buwanang pensyon. Hindi rin siya dapat magkaroon ng paunang pension sa ilalim ng package ng kalamidad ng SSS at dapat na tumatanggap ng kanyang regular na buwanang pension nang hindi bababa sa isang buwan at may "aktibong" pension status.



Plastic recycling helps transform lives



The Body Shop's bestselling Ginger Shampoo is made of 100-percent recycled plastic.

Our planet is drowning in plastic. The devastating effect of plastic waste on our oceans is well known. However, there is a human element to the plastic crisis, which is rarely discussed. Over three billion people live without formal waste management—that's almost half the planet's population. This has given rise to an informal waste picking economy.

Some of the world's most marginalized people pick untreated waste to try to make a living. These waste pickers, many of whom are women, often live below the poverty line, working in appalling conditions. Yet they form a critical line of defence in stopping plastic from entering our rivers and oceans.

That's why The Body Shop recently launched its first Community Trade recycled plastic, in partnership with Plastics for Change. The Body Shop wants to use plastic recycling to help transform lives.

The Body Shop launched its first Community Trade recycled plastic on World Fair Trade Day in Bengaluru, India. The Body Shop and Plastics for Change will work alongside with India's local organizations such as Hasiru Dala and Hasiru Dala Innovations who are dedicated in fighting for the rights and creating employment opportunities for the waste pickers, who will receive a fair price for their work, a predictable income and access to better working conditions.

They will also get help in accessing services such as education, financial loans and healthcare services, and the respect and recognition they deserve.

"As a company, we've always had the conviction to stand up for our principles when it comes to helping empower people, especially women, while protecting our planet," says Lee Mann, global community trade manager for The Body Shop. "Our new Community Trade partnership will not only help support waste pickers but also champion plastic as a valuable, renewable resource when used responsibly. We want to use plastic recycling to help transform lives."

The Body Shop has started using Community Trade recycled plastic in some of its 250ml haircare bottles. Over time, it aims to increase the usage of recycled plastic including its bestselling Ginger Shampoo with one bottle sold every four seconds.

The launch of Community Trade recycled plastic initiative is just one of the many advocacies of The Body Shop to protect the planet and the people.



Andrew Almack, CEO of Plastics for Change, believes that the partnership with The Body Shop will help the waste pickers get the financial and social benefits they deserve.



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PLASTICS FOR CHANGE

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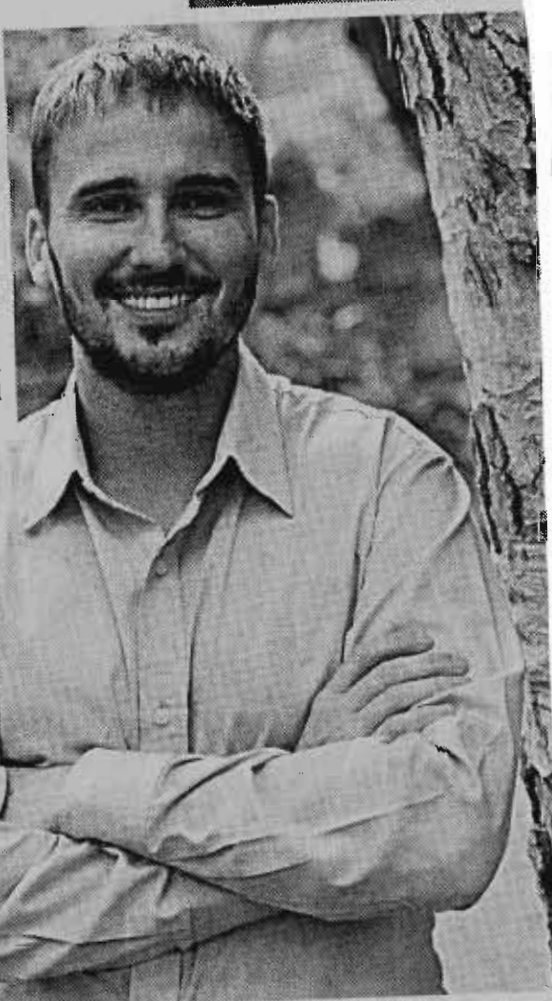
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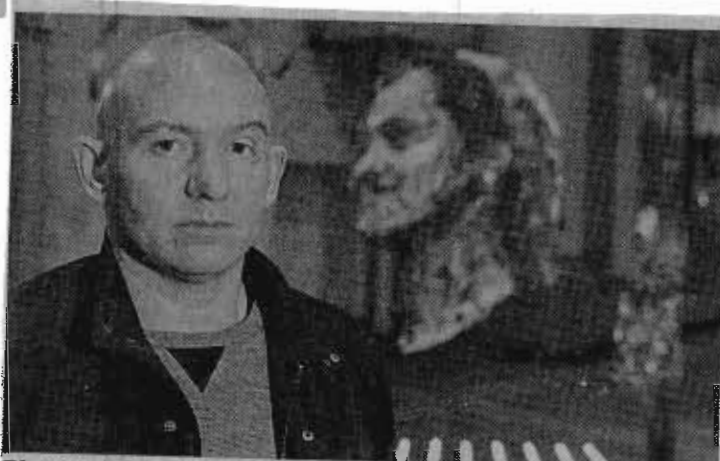
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TITLE: PLASTICS FOR CHANGE

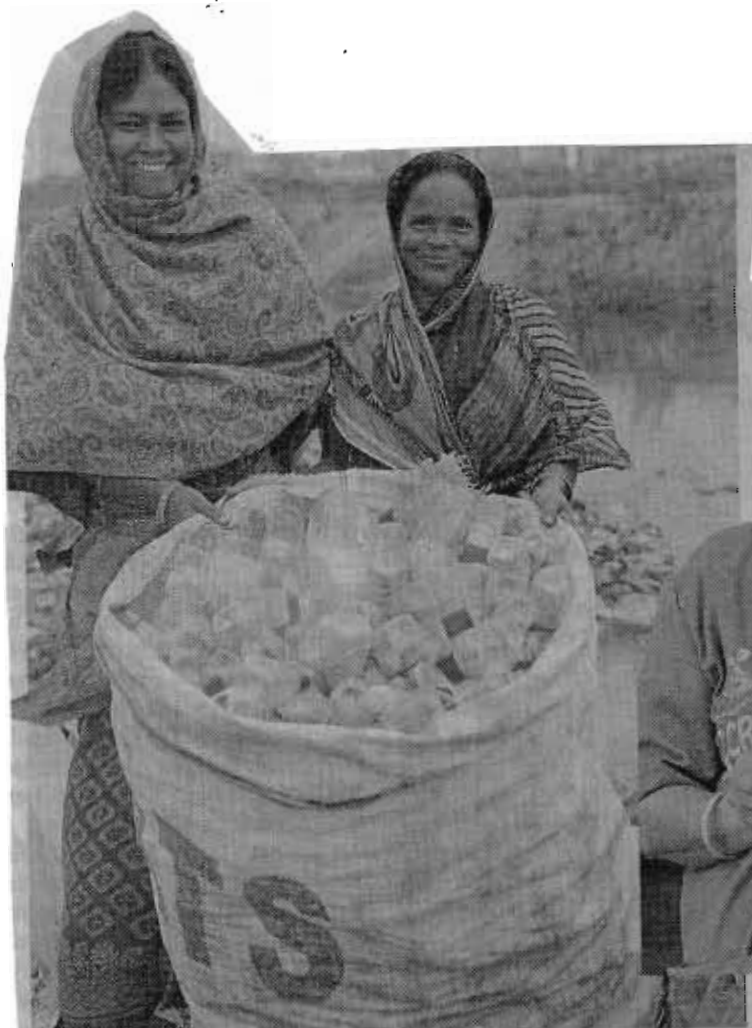
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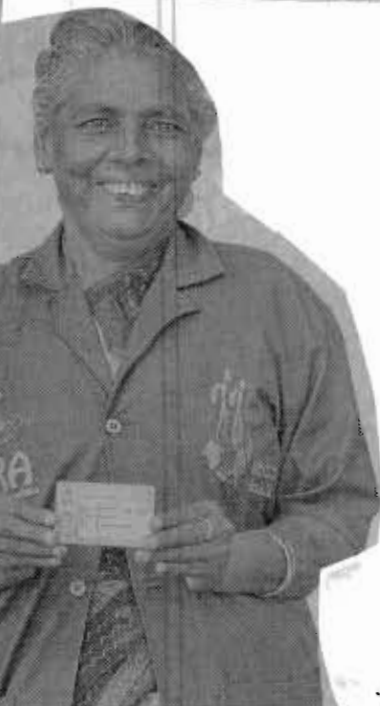
THE bestselling Ginger Shampoo made of 100 percent recycled plastic.



TO mark the launch of the Community Trade recycled plastic initiative, an artwork of a female Indian waste picker by perceptual artist Michael Murphy was showcased in London's Borough Market.



WOMEN waste pickers from Bengaluru, India.



LAKSHAMMA, a waste picker, was given a formal identity to have a fair place in society.



JOE'S TAKE

Ni Joe Zaldivar

ERUSALEM, Israel – Noong nakaraang linggo ay isinulat ko ang tungkol sa panahon ng pagbabago sa industriya ng koryente sa Egypt at ito ay inihambing ko sa kasalukuyang pagbabago rin sa ating industriya rito sa Filipinas. Ngayon, habang isinusulat ko ito dito sa Israel, nais ko ring ihambing ang ilang mga inisyatibong isinusulong dito na kahawig ng mga naranasan ko sa ating bansa. Napakarami kong natutunan sa aking bakasyon. Isang napakagandang karanasan ang malaman kung paanong nagsisikap ang ibang bansa upang mas paunlarin ang kanilang ekonomiya, kung paano rin nila pangalagaan ang kanilang kapaligiran, at kung paano nila labanan ang polusyon sa kanilang bansa.

Isang magandang halimbawa ay ang mga lungsod dito sa Israel na Herzliya at Eilat na naghahanda na upang harapin at talakayin ang isyu ukol sa mga produktong plastik. Bunsod ng determinadong aksiyon na bawasan ang polusyon sa kanilang lugar, ipinagbawal ng

dalawang lungsod na ito ang paggamit ng mga single-use plastic (SUP). Sa katunayan, nabanggit sa ilang mga balita rito na ang tingin ng mga residente sa lungsod na ito sa mga SUP gaya ng mga plato, kutsara't tinidor, at iba pa ay simbolo ng pagkasira ng kapaligiran at paglala ng polusyon. Maaaring kapaki-pakinabang ang nasabing mga produkto sa ating lipunan ngunit kung makikita lamang ninyo kung gaano katindi ang problema ng Israel ukol sa mga SUP, nanaisin ninyong huwag tayong matulad sa bansang ito.

Patuloy ang pagtaas ng paggamit ng mga SUP ng bansang Israel. Tinatayang umaabot sa milyong tonelada ng basurang plastic ang nagagawa nila taon-taon. Kinilala rin ang Mediterranean na baybayin ng Israel bilang pinakamarami sa rehiyon. Napakalaki ng pinsala nito sa kapaligiran at kalikasan: ang mga butil ng plastik na lumulutang rito ay maaaring makalason sa mga isda at iba pang hayop na naninirahan sa dagat. Ang hindi maayos na pagtatapon ng basura ay nagreresulta rin sa pagkainang lugar, ipinagbawal ng

PAGBIBIGAY SOLUSYON

basura gaya ng mga landfill na maaari ring magresulta sa pagkasira ng ecosystem sa bansa. Sa pagsubaybay ko sa Israel habang ako'y nandito, nakakita na rin ako ng kaunting pagbabago. Ngunit hindi pa rin maitatangi na napakalaki pa ng kailangang kaka-harapang problema ukol dito.

Ngunit kung talagang gusto ay may paraan, 'ika nga ng kasabihan. Dalawang progresibong lungsod na sa bansang ito ang nagdesisyong lumaban sa problema ng polusyon sa plastic sa kanilang mga karagatan at ito ay mahigpit nilang ipinatutupad. Ang lungsod ng Herzliya ay itinuturing bilang isa sa mga pangunahing destinasyon na madalas pinupuntahan ng mga turista kaya isang mahalagang bagay para sa lungsod ang solusyonang problema nito sa plastik. Ang Herzliya ay kilala bilang lugar ng magagandang mga dalampasigan kaya tiyak na makasasama sa turismo ng lungsod at sa kapaligiran. Itatuboy nito ang mga turista kapag umabot na sa puntong hindi na kanais-nais ang sitwasyon ng lungsod.

Sa kabilang banda, ang lungsod naman ng Eilat ay kilala sa yamang dagat nito: iba't ibang hayop na naninirahan sa karagatan nito, magagandang mga koral. Kilala rin ang lungsod sa mga turistang

maninisd. Para sa lungsod na ito, ang isang bagay na kritikal at dapat isaalang-alang ay ang buhay pandagat. Sisirain ng mga basurang plastic ang mga magagandang koral at kinalaunan ay nagreresulta rin sa pagkalamon ng mga isda at iba pang hayop dito. Isang matinding problema ang kanilang tiyak na haharapin kung hindi pa sila magiging maagap. Hindi lamang ang kapaligiran ang maaapektuhan at masisira kundi pati na rin ang turismo sa lungsod. Tama lamang ang ginawa ng Herzliya at Eilat na ipagbawal ang paggamit ng SUP dahil kailangan nilang protektahan ang bagay na nagpapaunlad sa ekonomiya ng kanilang lungsod. Kailangang pangalagaan ng Israel ang kapaligiran nito dahil marami ang umaasa at nakasalalay rito.

Ngayong mayroon na akong malawak na perspektibo ukol sa isyu ng SUP, napapaisip ako kung paano tayo bilang mga mamamayan ay maaaring makatulong sa ating sariling paraan. Ang maliit na pagbabago sa ating mga gawain sa araw-araw, kung pagsasama-samahin, ay magdudulot ng malawakan at positibong epekto sa ating kapaligiran. Minsan ay kailangan lang natin mag-simula sa mga simpleng bagay gaya ng pag-aayos ng ating nakagawian hanggang sa

SA PROBLEMA SA PLASTI

ito'y maging isang kultura na maaaring maipasa sa mga kapamilya, kaibigan, at kahit sa ating katrabaho. Ito ang isang bagay na hinahangaan ko sa aking ikalawang tahanan, ang Meralco, na nagkakaisa sa pangangalaga sa kapaligiran sa pamamagitan ng paghinto sa paggamit ng mga SUP.

Gaya ng Israel, ang Meralco ay nanindigan at determinadong haharap sa problema ng polusyong likha ng mga SUP. Ito ay isang laban na hindi madaling makamit ngunit gayunpaman, magpupursige ang Meralco hanggang sa maitulak nito ang pagbabago na nais nitong isulong. Matatagulan pa bago natin tuluyang masolusyunan ang problema ng bansa ukol sa mga produktong plastic ngunit kung gagawin nating lahat ang ating mga responsibilidad bilang mamamayan ng ating bayan, unti-unti rin nating makamamit ang ating layunin na magkaroon ng sustainable, malinis, at mas maayos na kapaligiran.

Kagaya ng dalawang lungsod na aking tinalakay, inanunsiyo rin ng Meralco ang pagbabawal sa paggamit ng SUP, mga produktong yari sa polystyrene foam, at iba pang kahalintulad na produktong ito sa anumang okasyon simula Oktubre 1, 2019.

Ipinahayag ni Meralco

President and Chief Executive Officer Atty. Ray C. Espinosa na, "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."

Bukod sa pagbabawas ng kompanya sa kontribusyon nito ng plastik sa mga landfill at polusyong pandagat, nilalayon din ng Meralco na maturuan ang mga empleyado nito at mga kasama sa negosyo ukol sa responsableng paggamit ng mga produktong plastik at sa maayos na pagtatapon ng mga ito para sa sustainable na ekonomiya, at makatulong sa pagbibigay-daan sa pagbabago ng paraan ng pamumuhay ng mga ito.

Napakalinaw ng datos ukol sa isyung ito. Ayon sa balita na inilathala ng United Nations Environment Program, naabot na at nalampasan ng mundo ang kapasidad nitong kayanin ang dami ng mga basurang plastik. Nasa siyam na porsiyento lamang ng humigit kumulang siyam na trilyong kilo ng plastik ang nai-recycle sa mundo. Karamihan dito ay naiiwanag

nakatambak sa mga landfill at ang iba naman ay nakakalat sa dagat at sa kapaligiran. Kung ang kasalukuyang paggamit at paraan ng pagtatapon ng plastik ay mananatili, pagsapit ng 2050, aabot sa 12 trilyong kilo ng plastik ang maaaring matagpuan sa mga landfill at sa kapaligiran.

Ang Meralco ay nagsisimula pa lamang. Bilang umpisa sa mga inisyatibong nito sa pagkakaroon ng sustainable na kapaligiran, ipinagbawal ng kompanya ang paggamit ng mga SUP gaya ng mga kutsara't tinidor na yari sa plastik, mga inumin na nakalagay sa plastik na bote, at iba pang kagamitan na matuturing na SUP. Ito ay sinimulang ipatutupad noong Oktubre 1, 2019.

Mismong ang mga matataas na opisyal ng kompanya ang nangunguna sa inisyatibong ito. "Everyone in Meralco is committed to do their part in ensuring that we embrace sustainability as a way of life by greatly reducing our contribution to the million tons of plastic wastes that are used and dumped in our water ways, rivers, and oceans every day," sabi ni Espinosa.

Ako ay nasasabik nang umiwi at lumahok sa inisyatibong ito ng aking kompanya. Nawa'y kayo ring aking rina mambabasa ay mahikayat na lumahok sa inisyatibong ito na isinusulong ng Meralco.



SHOOTING STRAIGHT

BOBIT S. AVILA

Sea turtles and eagles in Davao City? Wow!

I was invited to Davao City with my friends in the Cebu media, notably, *Freeman* Business columnist Fidel O. Abalos, Jhunnex Napallacan, manager of DYLA, Divine Ngujo of Chatterbox and Atty. Elias Espinoza of *SunStar Daily* led by Aboitiz Power's Victor Anthony Silva and Maleen Camo. All these were arranged by my good friend, Willy Rodolfo who was once with Cebu media, but has now been with Aboitiz Power for sometime now.



Arriving in Davao we were given the most unexpected tour of our lives, when Willy Rodolfo sent the group to the Davao's Eagle Center and Sanctuary and saw "Pagasa" and around 40 different Eagles including "Pangarap" who was sponsored by Aboitiz Equity Ventures (AEV). It was truly the first time for me to visit this part of Davao City and it was also the first time I realized that there are so many corporations and people who sponsor these eagles. Notably, St. Theresa's College (STC) in Cebu City and Uy Masuy Wine also in Cebu City, Marco Polo Plaza Hotel in Cebu and Cebu Pacific Airlines.

There is no doubt that this facility is a tourist destination simply because eagles should never be housed, but kept wild and free. Unfortunately, there are still people who shoot those beautiful birds. It was then that we learned that Pag-asa is already 27 years old. I just hope that people would keep sponsoring those eagles. Then after lunch, we visited another place where wild sea turtles hatch their young eggs on the Davao Coast.

This was once an island that became part of Davao Port, which is owned by the Aboitiz Equity Ventures and is now called Cleanergy Park in Sitio Dimalag in Barangay Matina Aplaya just very near SM in downtown Davao City. Yes, this is where giant sea turtles come to hatch their eggs 25 years after being hatched in this place. What a great way to see Davao City where we did not expect to see sea turtles.

Thanks to Willy Rodolfo of Aboitiz Power, he brought along Sheryin Puno to explain to us the process how sea turtles drop their eggs into a hole on the white sand beach. With her was Papa Pawikan Pap Rotchi who takes care of the sea turtles as many of them come to this park to hatch their eggs. In fact that very next day we were told that some eggs which we saw the previous day had hatched, but we didn't have time to return there. They also had sea turtles that were rescued because many of them eat plastic wrappers and many often die when they eat them. It was indeed a great day for us, seeing eagles in their sanctuaries and sea turtles that use the Cleanergy Park as a place to hatch their eggs.

The next day, we dropped by a Bone Museum, something that I did not even expect Davao City to have. It is owned by a foreigner and he has three stories of animal bones to fill up his building. These were indeed things that I did not expect to see in Davao City. Yes, we also tried passing by the house of Pres. Rodrigo Duterte, but I think he was in Davao when we were there so we were not allowed by the police to pass his home.

We then dropped by the Tudaya Plant 2 Hydro Electric Plant of Hedcor in Davao del Sur. This was the newer plant that I previously saw when we rode our big bikes with the late Roberto "Bobby" Aboitiz years ago. This was the Sibulan Hydro Electric plant, which took water from the river source and dropped it to a hydro power plant and the excess water is stored in a pool and that water is once more sent down to the next hydro electric plant. So in a way, the new Hedcor hydro plant in Tudaya 2 is a continuing cycle of river water being used to help Davao's power consumption.

Finally we visited the 300-megawatt coal-fired power plant of Therma South Inc. in Barangay Binugao, Toril District. Therma South is the largest baseload coal-fed power plant in Mindanao. It uses the latest circulating fluidized bed (CFB) combustion technology that minimizes emissions to ensure that it meets Philippine Clean Air Act standards. It also features a fully covered coal dome, the first of its kind in the Philippines, which is why this is a very clean coal power plant. This was thoroughly explained to the group by Jean Karl Y. Huyatid, corporate communications specialist of Aboitiz Power.

I have visited this plant when it was 95 percent finished. Now that it is operational, it is one of the main reasons why last summer, Davao City no longer had power outages. I can only give credit to the Aboitiz Power Corp. (APC) for all the things they have done in Mindanao and recently APC was hailed as the most outstanding energy firm in the Philippines by *Asiamoney*. What we saw in Davao City was not only the plants of APC, but also their environmental support for sea turtles and eagles, something you won't see anywhere in the Philippines.

* * *
Email: vsbobita@mozcom.com or vsbobita@gmail.com



Lifeless forests?

Until I interacted with some biodiversity experts in a workshop meeting last weekend, I didn't know that we have largely been doing reforestation wrong in this country. We've had a long history of efforts to rehabilitate and reforest denuded forest lands, after having wantonly decimated much of it over the past century.

In 1900, the Philippines had 21 million hectares of lush old-growth forests, covering more than two-thirds of the country's total land area. By the 1960s, they covered only about half. Deforestation rates reached up to 300,000 hectares a year in the Marcos era, and we lost 7 million hectares of forest in the period 1965-1986, leaving less than a quarter (23 percent) of our total land area covered with forests. It took only 20 years then to lose what took seven decades to use up before that. Now, forest cover stands at about 7 million hectares, after vast areas had been logged over by large concessionaires, or cleared and tilled by farmers pushed to seek their fortunes in the uplands. At one point, we denuded forests five times faster than we regenerated them.

Government embarked on small-scale rehabilitation efforts during the American colonial period, starting with the establishment in 1910 of our first forestry school in Los Baños, Laguna (now the University of the Philippines Los Baños College of Forestry and Natural Resources). After the war, modest reforestation efforts were pursued, and became more multisectoral. Foreign funding flowed in by the 1970s, at which time government had established the forerunners of what is now the Forest Management Bureau in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).



NO FREE LUNCH

CIELITO F. HABITO

The 1990s saw the adoption of community-based forest management as our main forest management strategy, which finally helped arrest the slide in forest cover, and we actually saw it increase by the early 2000s. The latest in the series of reforestation efforts has been the National Greening Program (NGP), which sought to plant 1.5 billion trees in 1.5 million hectares in six years (from 2011 to 2016).

That was all well-meaning, aiming to reforest thousands of hectares of our denuded forests—except that the NGP ended up planting the wrong trees, and in the view of many, could have done more harm than good. The reason: mahogany—more particularly, Bolivian mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*). For some reason, the DENR used this alien species for massive planting, perhaps thinking it was the same as, or could be an improvement over, "Philippine mahogany." The term had been used to refer to various dipterocarps including, *lauan* and *apitong*, which are native species.

But the bulk of trees planted were of the alien kind, which grew and spread rather rapidly, while suppressing much of other vegetation and animal life around due to its peculiar physical and chemical properties. It is an example of what are known as alien invasive species, which put in great peril the existing biodiversity of native species. In the foothills of Mount Makiling in Laguna, these trees have slowly taken over the native forest after their introduction years ago. In Bohol, tarsiers have disappeared in new mahogany forests, where they used to thrive in friendlier vegetation.

Those alien mahogany areas are now described as "green deserts," as hardly any other forms of life may be found coexisting with them: no birds on their branches, no insects on their leaves, no bacteria in the ground, and no other vegetation around. They have thus upset the ecological balance where they have thrived, and while seen as a good source of timber, they have run counter to one of the professed goals of the NGP, which is to preserve the nation's biodiversity, and hence the ability to sustain life far into the future.

The goal, biodiversity experts tell us, should not simply be to rehabilitate a denuded forest with whatever trees grow fast or provide economic value, but to restore the forest to as close to its original native vegetation as possible. And that means we need to be reforesting with native species like narra, *apitong*, *lauan* and the like. Otherwise, we could end up with forests that, except for the trees themselves, are virtually lifeless.

cielito.habito@gmail.com



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TREE-PLANTING ACTIVITY. Bataan governor now a lieutenant Colonel and newly-designated commander of the 305th Army's Reserve Command, Albert Garcia (center), together with Colonel Leomar Jose Doctolero INF (GSC) PA, group commander, and reservists of the 305th (BAT) Ready Reserve Infantry Battalion Headquarters, leads over the weekend a tree-planting activity for a clean and healthy environment. *Photo by Christian Supnad*



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Text BRIGADE

Mga reporter ng bayan

I-text sa 09293852536

Maging reporter ng inyong lugar. I-text lang ang inyong mga nakikitang iligal, katiwalian at krimen para makarating sa mga awtoridad. Ang inyong cellphone number at seguridad ay aming pangangalagaan.

- Editor

Grabeng baho ng dumi ng manok sa Tala farm, HDA Dela Pena, Murcia

Gud day po. Report ko lang ang Tala farm sa HDA DELA PENA sa Murcia, hindi gid maagwanta ang baho sang ite sang mga manok. Gamasakit ang mga tao dito. - Concerned citizen



TITLE:

MAY mambabatas na nagsasabing ang iskandalo sa Philippine National Police ukol sa ninja cops ang patunay na hindi nararapat na ibalik ang nasabing parusa.

Ang sabi ng mambabatas, lalong magaganap ang abusadong gawain ng mga awtoridad laban sa mga mamamayan gaya ng extortion, pagtatanim ng ebidensya at pananakot sa kanilang hinuhuthutan.

May katwiran naman ang mambabatas, lalo na kung isipin na talagang nagaganap ang pang-aabuso sa tungkulin ng mga awtoridad at dehado ang maliit at walang kalaban-laban na mamamayan.

MAS MALINAW NA DAHILAN

Sa kabilang banda, ang mga nabanggit na krimen ang higit na malinaw na dahilan upang ibalik ang bitay.

Dapat alalahanin na seryoso ang pamahalaan sa paggiyera sa droga at walang sinisino ito, sibilyan man o awtoridad.

Higit pa, dapat alalahanin na mas mabigat ang parusa sa mga awtoridad na may pang-aabuso sa kanilang tungkulin kaysa sa mga mamamayan kaya nga higit na swak ang una sa parusa kaysa sa huli.

Kung maging batas ang parusang bitay, naririyang naman ang mga hukuman na inaasahan nating magiging patas at makatarungan ang mga desisyon.

Basta magtiwala lang tayo sa pamahalaan at sa hukuman na ilalapat nila ang mga karampatang parusa sa mga nagaganap na krimen.

HINDI LANG DROGA

Kung titingnan ang mga krimen na panukalang sakop ng bitay, hindi lang droga.

Sakop din nito ang plunder o pandarambong na pagnanakaw at pandaraya sa taumbayan ng P50 milyon pataas.

Maging ang rape na kinakikitaan ang kademonyohan ngayon dahil pati ang mga paslit mula beybi hanggang sa mga nasa day-care, kinder-



ULTIMATUM

Ni BENNY ANTIPORDA

PANAHOON NANG IBALIK ANG PARUSANG BITAY

garten at elementarya ay pinapatay pa.

Sa loob din mismo ng New Bilbid Prison at ibang mga sakop ng Bureau of Corrections at Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, naririyang ang paglala ng krimen ng mga detenido at convict mula sa murder patungo sa droga o kabaligtaran nito o pagpatay patungo sa upahang pagpatay sa loob at labas ng kulungan, human trafficking at prostitusyon ng mga bata at marami pang iba.

AYAW NA AYAW

Para sa mga mambabatas, sa totoo lang, marami sa mga ito ang ayaw sa parusang bitay dahil sakop sila batay sa takaw nila sa mga pork barrel na laging lagpas sa P50 milyong nakawan.

Ayaw rin ng iba pang awtoridad dahil pa rin sa plunder.

Sampol na lang ang pambababoy nila sa housing project para sa mga biktima ng Yolanda.

Ayon sa Presidential Anti-Corruption Commission, sasampahan nila ng kaukulang kaso ang mga nagbigay at nabigyang mga kontraktor ng housing project na nagkakahalaga ng P741 milyon.

May kaso dahil sa halip na magtayo ang mga ito ng 2,600 bahay, nasa 36 unit lang ang nagawa sa loob ng dalawang taon at tila nawala na ang halagang nabanggit.

Kakaunti na nga lang ang nagawa, anak ng toka, panay mga standard pa at malinaw na binaboy nila ang pondo para sa mga namatay at naghirap sa kalamidad.

Sakaling pandarambong ang kaso ng mga ito at maproklamang nagkasala ng hukuman, makukulang sila ng 20 taon at 1 araw hanggang 40 taon.

Ngayon, hindi ba mas maganda kung mabitay na lang ang mga ito?

PABORABLENG KONDISYON

Ang magandang na-

gaganap ngayon, bukas na bukas ang komunikasyon ng mga mamamayan sa Malakanyang at hindi katulad noon na wala nito.

Bunga ito ng pag-sasabi nang seryoso mismo ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na dapat magsalita, magsumbong ang taumbayan sa mga awtoridad.

Kung ayaw makinig ang mga nasa ibaba sa mga sumbong, pwede silang dumiretso sa Malakanyang sa pamamagitan ng tawag, text, sulat at personal na paglapit sa Pangulo.

Sa paraang ito, mga Bro, makararating at makararating ang sumbong mismo sa Pangulo kahit pa harangin ng kung sinong Pilato ito.

Magtiwala lang tayo sa pamahalaan.

BENTAHE

Ang bentahe ng parusang bitay, karampatang parusa ito sa mga kriminal na halang ang kaluluwa.

Matitigil at matitigil ang paggawa nila ng krimen at hindi na natin magiging problema pa ang pag-ubos ng salaping bayan para sa kanila na mabuhay nang matagal at sa huli gagawa pa rin sila ng krimen kahit na sila'y nakapiit, gaya ng lang ng mga narco-politician, ninja cop at druglord at makapangyarihan o maimpluwensyang politiko o sibilyan.

Isa pa, daraan naman sila sa napakasusi at patas na paglilitis na sa maraming pagkaka-taon ay mabibigyan sila ng karapatang ipagtanggol ang sarili.

Dito rin huhupa ang mga bintang na may mga extra-judicial killings dahil may tamang proseso o daan sa pagkamit ng katarungan.

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