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Solon seeks inquiry into Manila Bay rehab

By **RYAN PONCE PACPACO**

THE chairman of the House committee on natural resources has sought a congressional inquiry into the status of the clean-up drive of the heavily polluted Manila Bay as ordered by President Rodrigo Duterte.

Cavite Rep. Elpidio Barzaga Jr., who chairs the panel and whose district is one of the provinces around Manila Bay, filed House Resolution (HR) No. 247 directing his committee to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the status of Manila Bay rehabilitation and the cleanup of water tributaries leading to it, as ordered by Duterte and by the continuing writ of mandamus of the Supreme Court.

A writ of mandamus is an order from a court to a government agency or agencies to do something, in this case, to clean up Manila Bay.

"The continuous pollution of Manila Bay has im-

pacted the health and livelihood of the coastal communities and produced deleterious effects on the marine life and resources in Manila Bay and contingent waters and tributaries leading to the bay," Barzaga pointed out.

On December 18, 2008 in the case of MMDA vs Concerned Residents of Manila Bay (G.R. Nos. 17147-48), Barzaga said the SC issued a continuing mandamus against different government agencies to clean up, rehabilitate, and preserve Manila Bay, and to restore and maintain its waters to Class B Level that is fit for swimming, skin-diving and other forms of contact recreation.

Barzaga recalled that the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) was ordered by the SC "to direct all LGUs in Metro Manila, Rizal, Laguna, Cavite, Bulacan, Pampanga and Bataan to inspect all factories, commercial establishments and private homes along the banks

of the major river systems in their respective areas of jurisdiction."

He said the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) was directed to maintain water treatment facilities while the Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA), through water districts, was tasked to set up sanitation facilities and ensure the efficient and safe collection, treatment and disposal of sewage in the provinces of Laguna, Cavite, Bulacan, Pampanga and Bataan "at the earliest possible time."

On the other hand, he said the Department of Agriculture (DA), through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) was ordered "to improve and restore marine life of Manila Bay."

Other agencies ordered by the SC to help in the Manila Bay cleanup, according to him, are the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), the Philippine National Police Maritime Group (PNP-MG), the Philippine Ports

Authority (PPA), the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), Department of Education (DepEd) and other agencies.

The Department of Health (DoH) was likewise ordered by the SC, "within one year from finality of the decision," to determine if all licensed septic and sludge companies have the proper facilities for the treatment and disposal of fecal sludge and sewage coming from septic tanks, he said.

Despite the SC decision in 2008 and Resolution in 2011, Barzaga lamented, Manila Bay "continued to be the most polluted in the country, serving as a giant "waste dump" for the metropolis and adjacent cities where domestic sewage toxic industrial effluents from factories leachate from garbage dumps and other substances continue to pollute its waters".



FILE:

HABANG iniimbestigahan ng Senado ang 13 Pampanga ninja cops kaugnay ng drug recycling, noong 2013, lumitaw na lahat ng tatlong sibilyan na nakasaksi sa pangyayari ay patay na lahat.

Ang konklusyon ng Senado, pinatahimik sila lahat ng mga ninja cop.

Ngayon naman, nagpapatuloy ang patayan sa droga.

Ngunit hindi lang mga sibilyang sangkot sa droga ang pinapatay kundi maging ang mga pulis na lumalaban din sa droga.

2 PULIS PATAY

Halos magkasabay na pinatay ang dalawang pulis sa magkahilaw na lugar nitong nagdaang mga araw.

Tinambangan si Police M/Sgt. Emanuel Coronado nitong Biyernes ng mga riding-in-tandem sa Barangay San Isidro, General Santos City.

Kasama ni Coronado ang kanyang tatlong anak at kalalabas lang nila sa kanilang bahay nang maganap ang krimen.

Intelligence officer laban sa droga si Coronado at malamang umanong ito ang dahilan ng pagpatay sa kanya.

Patay naman sa operasyon laban sa droga si Police Cpl. Ronnie Tamaliwan ng Bulacan Provincial Police Office Plaridel, Bulacan.

Ayon kay Police Chief Master Sgt. Merwin Lopez, pumunta sila sa Brgy. Lalangan upang respondehan ang tagawang laban kay Nesty Nacino na isang drug suspect, armado, gumagala at nananakot sa lugar.

Gumamit ng shotgun at granada si Nacino at namatay si Tamaliwan sa bala mula sa shotgun.

Hindi rin nakaligtas si Nacino sa ganting putok ng mga pulis makaraan ang habulan at pagtatago ni Nacino.

KAPITAN VS KAGAWAD VS SK CHAIR

Habang nagaganap ang mga patayan, lumilitaw naman ang pagkakasangkot ng mga opisyal ng barangay sa droga habang lumalaban ang iba.

Saludo tayo kay Brgy. Lalangan Chairman Danilo Tayaw sa tapang nitong lumaban sa droga at krimen.

Si Chairman Tayaw ang nagsumbong sa mga pulis-Bulacan para hulihin sana si Nacino na lumaban kaya napatay.

Sa kabilang banda,



NI BENNY ANTIPORDA

BATTLE FOR MANILA BAY AT PATAYAN SA DROGA

dalawang Sangguniang Kabataan chairman naman ang magkasunod na nahuling tulak ng droga sa Negros.

Unang nahuli nitong buwan ng Agosto si Adonis Cabugnason, SK chairman ng Brgy. Canggohob, Mabinay, Negros Oriental.

Hindi natuto, isa pang SK chairman, si Rey Vicmakente, ng bayan ng Kabankalan, Negros Occidental ang nahuli rin sa pagtutulak ng droga.

MALAKIHAN

Hindi nakapagtata kang marami talaga ang adik dahil sa pagkakasangkot mismo ng mga tagapamahalaan sa salot na droga.

Bukod sa Pampanga ninja cops na pumera sa mahigit P600 milyong halaga ng shabu, nitong huli, may naharang na namang halagang P500 milyong shabu sa Gandara, Samar na sana'y idedeliber sa Cebu City.

Ang nakapaninindig-balahibo rin dito ay galing umano sa Cavite ang kontrabando.

Inisip ng ating Uzi, hindi kaya bahagi ito ng sinasabing itinakbo sa Cavite na P6 bilyong shabu na napalusot ng mga korap sa Bureau of Customs na nakalagay sa magnetic lifters?

Sabi ni Pangulong Digong, hanggang sa matapos ang kanyang termino, mananatiling deklarado ang giyera sa droga alang-alang sa buong bayan at partikular sa kapakanan ng mga kabataan.

Dapat magtulong-tulong tayo lahat sa giyerang ito at hindi tularan ang dumaraming SK chairman na nabubuking na suki ng droga.

BATTLE FOR MANILA BAY TULOY

Tuloy-tuloy ang Battle for Manila Bay.

Kahapon lang, may 747 na sako ng basura, karamihan plastik, ang naihahon mula sa dalampasigan ng Manila Bay ng nagsasama-samang samahan at mga opisyal ng gobyerno sa Brgy. Bagumbayan, Navotas City.

Salamat sa mga nagpasimuno nito, lalo na ang Remate Riders (motorcycle riders) na pinamumunuan ni Diosdado Benitez Jr. na nag-imbiba ng iba pang grupo ng motorcycle riders.

Salamat sa lahat ng motorbike groups na sumali sa clean-up drive gaya ng mga sumusunod: MIO Matic Phil. Elie Group, Manila na pinamumunuan ni Aldrin Coronan; PARDSS Fil National ni Ernesto Asilo; Outside Metro Manila Riders Group ni Ricarte Guillamar, Jr.; Castillon Homeowners Motorcycle Riders Club ni Randy Biolago; Brgy. Ginebra San Miguel Riders Club-Douglas ni McArthur Viado; Bacood Motoclub ni Rommel Dacayanan; Road Trip Riders ni Ernesto Equiza.

Nakita rin ang sipag sa pagmamalasakit sa Manila Bay ni Brgy. Bagumbayan, Navotas City Chairman Marilou Gonzales at kanyang mga kagawad.

Siyempre pa, nakiisa rin ang Pasay City Host Lions Club sa pamumuno ni Lydia Bueno na Editor-in-Chief din ng pahayagang Remate at ang Malate Prime Rotary Club na kinatawan ng past president nito at miyembro rin ng Pasay City Host Lions Club na si Lea Botones.

Salamat at sumali ang nasa 12 tauhan ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources sa pamumuno nina Assec. Jesus Enrico Salazar at Olga Arzadon, deputy chief environment officer ng DENR-NCR.

Mayroon ding mga girl scout at boy scout mula sa eskwelahan ng Navotas City na sumama sa paglilinis.

Maliit lamang ang lugar na nilinis, kulangkulang sa 1,000 metro kwadrado, subalit hindi nakayanang iahon ang lahat ng basura sa lugar dahil napakakapal nito.

Kailangan ang backhoe para mahukay nang husto ang lugar na tambakan ng basura tuwing may habagat.

Para hindi paulit-ulit ang ganitong gawain at makagawa tayo ng iba pang mga programang para sa pagpapahalaga sa kapaligiran at kalikasan, sana matuto na tayong lahat ng magtapon ng basura nang tama.

oOo

Anomang reaksyon o reklamo, maaaring iparating sa 092284-03333 o i-email sa bantiporda@yahoo.com.



SAKO-SAKONG basura ang naipon mula sa dalampasigan ng Navotas matapos magsagawa ng clean-up drive ang miyembro ng Pasay City Host Lions Club PCHLC) sa pangunguna ni President Lydia Bueno (inset) katuwang ang iba't ibang grupo ng motorcycle riders club. Layunin ng mga ito na mabawasan at matanggal ang mga basurang palutang-lutang sa tubig na sumisira at nagpaparumi ng kapaligiran.

JOJO RABULAN



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BOB DUNGO JR.

MANILA Zoo's lagoon gets a long overdue cleanup.

COUNTDOWN TO UNITED NATIONS S.D.G. # 12

GOVERNMENTS, BUSINESSES, PEOPLE ARE RACING TO CLEAN UP THEIR ACT, WASTE-PROOF THE FUTURE

BY JASPER EMMANUEL
Y. ARCALAS

THE end of 2019 means another decade in the books. And with that, countries around the world are left with just 10 years to fulfill their commitment of providing a better future and life for everyone.

By 2030, at least 17 sustainable development goals (SDG), which are blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all, should be met.

All of these goals are tall order. And one of the gargantuan tasks for countries, especially like the Philippines, is by becoming a nation that is able to do "more and better with less."

The SDG 12, known as Sustainable Consumption and Production, promotes "resource- and energy-efficient, sustainable infrastructure, and providing access to basic services, green and decent jobs and a better quality of life for all."

Among the targets of the goal is "to substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse," by 2030.

And achieving such feat entails the cooperation of every global citizen up to multibillionaire firms.

"Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into

their reporting cycle," SDG 12.6 reads.

In the Philippines, multinational firms have been stepping up their game to contribute to the achievement of this SDG.

The 'single-use' problem

THE Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (Gaia) released a study this year that sought to provide a "snapshot of the plastic pollution problem" in the Philippines, "where a number of cities are trying to implement sustainable Zero Waste strategies."

Gaia is a global network of more than 800 grassroots groups, nongovernment organizations that promotes "zero waste as a holistic solution and an economic shift toward justice and sustainability."

In its study titled "Plastics Exposed How Waste Assessments and Brand Audits are Helping Philippine Cities Fight Plastic Pollution," Gaia pointed to the "lack of extensive data" in the Philippines regarding the "regarding the production, consumption, and disposal of single-use plastics and plastic packaging."

"For example, there is no data on the total sachet production of companies, which make up a significant portion of throwaway plastics in dumps, waterways, and beaches," the group explained in the study released last March.

The research compiled data from 21 waste as-

essments conducted in six cities and seven municipalities across the Philippines, according to Gaia.

In the study, Gaia pointed out that one of the biggest challenge in domestic waste reduction is the "the proliferation of plastic bags, sachets, and other disposable plastic packaging and products."

As Gaia puts it: Single-use disposable plastic is the greatest obstacle to sound waste and resource management.

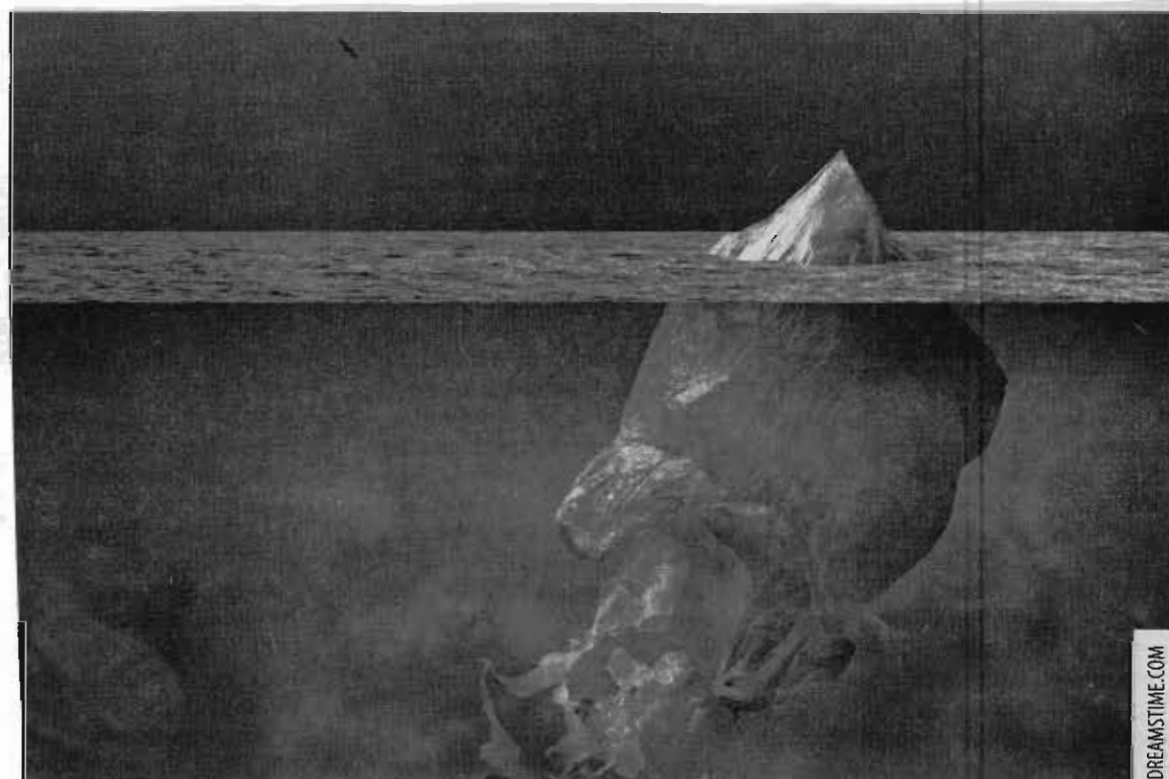
"Inadequate waste management systems and human negligence are often cited as the main contributors to plastic waste leakage into terrestrial and marine environments—but waste and brand audit data in many parts of the world are helping reveal that the unfettered production of disposable plastic is the actual problem," the group said in the report released in March.

"As long as the mass production of throwaway plastics continues unabated, cities and countries will find it harder and harder to cope. Put simply, disposable plastic is a pollution problem, and the only way to prevent it is to stop it at source," it added.

164 million sachets a day

THE Gaia study yielded 48,080 pieces of plastic products from the 21 study sites. Of which are: 25,147

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pieces of sachets, 15,581 pieces of multilayer, multi-material sachets, 11,526 pieces of plastic labo bags, 7,246 pieces of plastic shopping bags and 4,161 other items.

From these the researchers extrapolated data to estimate the plastic residual use per capita per year and for the entire Philippines per day.

Based on the data, Gaia said an average Filipino uses 591 pieces of sachets per year or about 1.64 pieces a day, a "modest figure compared to urban consumption."

"For example in Quezon City, which can reach as many as six pieces per person per day. Included in the sachet count are: shampoo, conditioner, detergent, fabric softener, condiments, coffee and other drinks, processed food, etc," Gaia said.

The Gaia study's findings revealed almost 164 million pieces of sachets are used daily, equivalent to about 59.7 billion pieces of sachets annually.

"These sachets represent billions of pesos in profits for manufacturing companies. However, these companies are not mandated to manage sachet waste once they have sold these to Filipino consumers. All these sachets are unrecyclable and represent waste that has to be managed by cities and municipalities using taxpayers' money," it said.

"All these sachets are unrecyclable and represent waste that has to be managed by cities and municipalities using taxpayers' money," it added.

Furthermore, Gaia findings showed that the Philippines uses 48.125 million pieces of plastic shopping bags and 45.228 million pieces of plastic labo bags daily.

The country also uses a little over 3 million pieces of disposable diapers a day, which is equivalent to 76 pieces of diapers per Filipino per year.

"These figures show that that the sheer volume of residual waste generated daily is beyond the capacity of barangays, cities and municipali-

ties to manage: the problem is the huge amount of single use plastics being produced, not the way the waste is managed," Gaia said.

Additional household income

THE Gaia study also looked at potential income of a household per study site if they would collect and sell recyclables. Based on their data gathering, 11 to 23.87 percent of total household waste in the sample sites are recyclables which could be diverted from landfills by bringing these to junkshops or waste markets.

"The old saying 'one man's trash is another man's treasure' holds true in the amount of recyclables that can be recovered from household waste," the report read.

Based on the extrapolation of data, a Quezon City household could earn P11.68 a week from just selling recyclables to junk shop, according to the study.

"The amount might not be significant to a household of four people, but it could mean additional income for a waste collector assigned to 200 households. The figure could translate to P9,352 (USD178.81) a month for that waste collector," the study said.

On a barangay level, for example, Gaia noted that Brgy. Paraiso, one of the sample sites, which has a population of 3,790 or 816 households, could collectively generate nearly P500,000 annually by selling recyclables.

Stepping up

IN the Philippines, multinationals have been stepping up their game to meet SDG 12 as the goal explicitly pointed out their responsibilities in turning the world to a better and more sustainable habitat.

In June of this year, Nestlé Philippines together with Valenzuela City, the Department of Education (DepEd) and Green Antz Builders Inc., launched a city-wide residual waste-recovery program in Valenzuela City, known as "plastic city" for hosting a number of plastic factories in Metro Manila.

Nestlé Philippines's program called May Balik!

Sa Plastik! promotes proper waste segregation, recycling, and disposal—packaging materials that end up in sanitary engineered landfills or open dumps.

The program targets the recovery of waste laminates such as postconsumer sachets and used beverage cartons, considered residual wastes and comprise the bulk of ocean-plastic pollution. The Philippines is the third-largest source of ocean plastic pollution.

Under the program, using appropriate technologies, these so-called residual wastes may still be used for recycling, upcycling or coprocessing in cement kilns.

A first-class city, Valenzuela City is determined to challenge the perception that plastic is bad. Properly managed, plastic or even its so-called residual waste, have its positive impact to livelihood, and environment, Mayor Rexlon Gatchalian said during the launch at the city's Amphitheater.

Speaking mostly in Filipino, Gatchalian said through the program, they hope to encourage proper use and disposal of plastics as it also has positive effect to the environment and through the program, to help improve the living condition in Valenzuela City by converting these residual wastes into cash.

Valenzuela City is among the very few cities in the National Capital Region (NCR) without an ordinance that bans the use of single-use plastic or Styrofoam.

"Tackling the problem of plastic waste in the environment and arriving at sustainable solutions are of paramount importance to Nestlé," the company's Chairman and CEO Kais Mazouki said.

Marzouki recalled that in April 2018, Nestlé announced a global commitment that 100 percent of its packaging will be designed for recycling or reusable by 2025 as it envisions that none of its waste would end up in landfill or as litter.

He said this can be achieved through three focus areas, namely, developing packaging of the future; helping shape a waste-free future through collection and recycling and addressing consumer beliefs and behaviors.



"At Nestle Philippines, we are accelerating our efforts to find solutions to the plastic problem," he said. He added that while the company looks for innovative packaging solutions, it is also imperative to take immediate action to stop leakage into waterways and oceans, and find ways to recycle its packaging.

Under the program and in partnership with Green Antz Builders Inc., the proponents of the program will encourage school children to turn over their sachets and used beverage cartons in designated outlets.

Green Antz Builders Inc., an innovative social enterprise which manufactures alternative construction materials, will use these residual waste as raw materials for eco-bricks.

The company will collect the plastic waste from the schools and barangays. The bulk of the collection will go to Republic Cement for co-processing in its cement kilns.

Billion-peso facility

ALMOST the same time as Nestle's May Balik sa Plastic program, Coca-Cola Beverages Philippines, Inc. (CCBPI), the bottling arm of Coca-Cola in the country, unveiled its P1-billion investment in a pioneering food-grade facility to help boost recycling in the country.

This was Coca-Cola's first major investment in a recycling facility in South East Asia and is part of the its commitment to a World Without Waste.

CCBPI said it has engaged with potential partners to "ensure that the positive impact of the facility will be total and far-reaching."

These partners include: a reputable local company, as well as an internationally-recognized green technology partner in recycling.

CCBPI explained that facility will collect, sort, clean and wash post-consumer PET (polyethylene terephthalate) plastic bottles and turn them into new bottles using advanced technology.

"Coca-Cola has called the Philippines its home

for 107 years and counting, and we want to do our part in ensuring sustainability within its shores," said Gareth McGeown, President and CEO of Coca-Cola Beverages Philippines, Inc.

"Our Coca-Cola bottles and cans are 100-percent recyclable and have value as a recycled material. Our aspiration with this facility is to close the loop on our packaging by helping turn old bottles into new ones. This facility is testament to our resolve in making our World Without Waste vision a reality across the country, with real positive impact not just across our value chain, but also in the communities where we belong," McGeown added.

Once established, the facility is expected to help improve PET collection and recycling rates in the Philippines—and, with this, the generation of more Filipino jobs, according to the multinational.

"The project will also help uplift the livelihood of workers across the waste materials value chain, including that of waste-pickers and waste-collectors. Through job creation and the institutionalization of environmentally conscious practices, this recycling facility will help build stronger communities," CCBPI said.

The project is an integral part of "World Without Waste" — Coca-Cola's global commitment to collect and recycle the equivalent of every bottle and can that it sells by 2030, it said.

"The company also intends to use an average of 50-percent recycled content in its packaging including its PET bottles," CCBPI said.

"World Without Waste is one of Coca-Cola's most ambitious sustainability goals to date. Over the years, the company has made strong progress in the Philippines by integrating sustainability across the business and the value chain—from water resources (the company has already achieved over 100% water replenishment through an array of community water projects); to energy (50 percent of Coca-Cola's operational energy requirements in

the country utilize renewable energy); to sustainable packaging (50 percent of volume in returnable glass bottles)," it added.

Much work, little time

THE Philippines, the recognized center of world marine biodiversity, stressed at the high-level 4th UN Environment Assembly in March that countries must double time to achieve environmental-related SDGs including SDG 12.

The UN Environment Assembly is the multilateral's highest-decision making body on environmental issues.

The Philippines challenged fellow UN member-states to detail what they have achieved after decades of negotiations toward a better and sustainable global environment.

The country's statement during the four-day high-level March meeting in Nairobi, Kenya was delivered by Philippine Ambassador to Kenya Francis Maynard Maleon.

"After decades of negotiations resulting in multilateral environmental agreements of every kind, we should have at least made a dent in the gargantuan task of cleaning up the environment, halting and reversing biodiversity loss and drastically reducing our emissions. But, are we succeeding?" Maleon said.

"Now, more than ever is the best time to seriously take stock of what we have accomplished, thus far, and, building on these efforts, to unequivocally, ambitiously, and innovatively move forward, and not backwards, with concrete actions towards building sustainable and resilient societies," Maleon added.

Maleon said countries as "as one global community" must "strive for sustainable consumption and production patterns, using a complete full-life cycle approach, across our global economy, with the people and planet at the forefront, as spelled out in our SDGs."

"For our part, as a mega-diverse country, the Philippines is ready to do its share - even as on a per capita, our consumption rate is lower than the global



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coverage - as we seriously pursue the formulation and eventual implementation of our Sustainable Consumption and Production Plan," Maleon said.

The Filipino diplomat said this plan is in line with President Duterte's directive to make environmental protection and ensuring sustainable development for all

a top priority of the current administration.

Leading in this effort is our Department of Environment and Natural Resources which has vowed

to be more aggressive in enforcing environmental laws and regulations this year to sustain the momentum created by the six-month rehabilitation of



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Boracay, the agency's centerpiece accomplishment, in 2018, and Manila Bay this year," he said.

Maleon said the "Philippines remains committed to its roadmap and action plans for biodiversity conservation, climate change, food security, renewable and clean energy and the attainment of the SDGs."

He continued: "Excellencies, we are running out of time. As we speak, the cost of our procrastination in addressing our abuses against our global commons and natural capital is already haunting us.

"Our unsustainable human consumption patterns must be curbed, so we can still leave behind a world where future generations can still pursue their own sustainable development aspirations, and not stolen from them."

What lies ahead?

AS the world chases its goal of meeting a sustainable future for all, one cannot help but ask: Are plastics naturally good or bad?

Former United Nations Environment Programme (Unep) Head Erik Solheim makes a good case about this in his foreword to the program's study titled "Single-use Plastics: A Roadmap for Sustainability."

At the get-go, Solheim pointed out that there is no doubt that plastic is a "miracle material," that saved "countless lives," facilitated growth of energy sector, and "revolutionized" food storage.

But the characteristics of this "miracle material" such as convenience and affordability, made it one of the planet's "greatest environmental challenges," Solheim wrote.

"Our oceans have been used as a dumping ground, choking marine life and transforming some marine areas into a plastic soup," he said.

"In cities around the world, plastic waste clogs drains, causing floods and breeding disease. Consumed by livestock, it also finds its way into the food chain," he added.

And if that's the case, is there a way to solve this "one of the greatest environmental challenges" known to man? Solheim believes so.

"The good news," Solheim pointed out, is that a growing number of governments are "taking actions and demonstrating that all nations, whether rich or poor, can become global environmental leaders."

Solheim cited the case of Rwanda, which he said "is now one of the cleanest nations on earth" since it became a pioneer in banning single-use plastic bags.

Kenya has followed the footsteps of its fellow African country to "help clear its iconic national parks and save its cows from an unhealthy diet," Solheim said.

"Plastic isn't the problem. It's what we do with it. And that means the onus is on us to be far smarter in how we use this miracle material," Solheim said in ending his foreword.

There is hope

DURING the 4th high-level UNEP in Manila, world leaders from more than 170 UN member states issued a declaration saying the "world needed to speed up moves towards a new model of development in order to respect the vision laid out in the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030."

The declaration is grounded on the countries' grave concern by the mounting evidence that the planet is "increasingly polluted, rapidly warming and dangerously depleted."

The ministers "pledged to address environmental challenges through advancing innovative solutions and adopting sustainable consumption and production patterns," according to Unep.

"We reaffirm that poverty eradication, changing unsustainable—and promoting sustainable—patterns of consumption and production, and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are the overarching objectives of, and essential requirements for, sustainable development," the ministers said in a final declaration.

"We will improve national resource management strategies with integrated full lifecycle approaches and analysis to achieve resource efficient and low-carbon economies," they said.

The world leaders also pledged to "significantly reduce single-use plastic products," according to the declaration.

"We will address the damage to our ecosystems caused by the unsustainable use and disposal of plastic products, including by significantly reducing single-use plastic products by 2030, and we will work with the private sector to find affordable and environmentally friendly products," they said.



THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTIC

By LEONY GARCIA

PLASTIC per se is not the problem. Mismanagement or improper disposal of plastic is the culprit of the world's plastic waste problem.

Plastic is a unique material with many benefits: it's cheap, versatile, lightweight, and resistant. This makes it a valuable material for many functions. It can also provide environmental benefits through certain supply chains as it plays a critical role in maintaining food quality, safety and preventing waste.

The trade-offs between plastics and substitutes (or complete bans) are therefore complex and could create negative knock-on environmental impacts.

That's why members of the Philippine Chamber of Food Manufacturers, Inc. (PCFMI) were one in saying no to the total ban of plastics including the one-time-use materials.

For the group of local food manufacturers which uses plastic packages on their products, plastic per se is not the problem. The mismanagement/improper disposal of plastic is the culprit of the world's plastic waste problem according to them as validated by the studies presented during the group's annual membership meeting in September this year.

But being an urgent environmental issue, PCFMI Chairman and President Elizabeth M. De Leon-Lim, called for collaborative actions toward the complex and urgent issue of plastic wastes.

"We believe that collaborative and collective actions toward the complex and urgent issue of plastic wastes are necessary, requiring the involvement of all stakeholders in the public and the private sectors," she said.

Although the Philippines is ranked third highest source of ocean plastic pollution, next to China and Indonesia, the country has one of the best ordinances when it comes to abating plastic waste. Republic Act (RA) 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 was crafted in response to the looming garbage problems in the country. It was passed by the Philippine Congress on December 20, 2000, and was subsequently approved by the Office of the President on January 26, 2001.

RA 9003 declares the policy of the state in adopting

a systematic, comprehensive and ecological solid waste management program that ensures the protection of public health and the environment and the proper segregation, collection, transport, storage, treatment and disposal of solid waste through the formulation and adoption of best environmental practices. Moreover, it illustrates the potentials and benefits of recycling not only in addressing waste management problems but also in alleviating poverty.

In relation to ocean clean up drives and rehabilitation, the country also holds several successful projects including the Boracay Island rehab and the Manila Bay cleanup program. Private groups and individuals, together with government agencies tasked for these programs, mainly, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the local government units (LGUs) regularly conduct coastal cleanups.

One of the favorite venues for coastal cleanup is the Las Piñas-Paranaque Critical Habitat & Eco-Tourism Area (LPPCHEA). The Wetland Park is a 175-hectares mangrove forest and marine habitat that serves as a sanctuary for 84 bird species, including migratory birds from as far as Siberia. It is the breeding site of the vulnerable Philippine Duck and supports at least 1,000 of the remaining 100,000 remaining Black-Winged Stilts in the world.

Established in 2007,

LPPCHEA is a nature reserve of mangroves, ponds, lagoons, mudflats, salt marshes, and mixed beach forest which has been the site of many cleanup activities of various individuals and groups.

According to Joey Petras who works as farmworker for LPPCHEA under DENR-Paranaque, hundreds of sack of rubbish are collected almost every week by volunteers. He said the garbage in the area used to be taller than his 5-feet-8-inch frame when he started as a farmworker in 2010. Today, the DENR has five farm workers and 17 bakawan warriors for the upkeep of the area.

A recent cleanup activity at LPPCHEA by key officers and employees of AllHome Corporation, numbering 150, in September this year, gathered a total of 155 sacks of rubbish which is equivalent to 1,421.7 kilos of trash composed mainly of plastic, rubber, styrofoam, glass and assorted items. The DENR Team headed the weighing of the rubbish which was turned over to Paranaque office. Recyclable items would be turned over to individuals and groups who are into producing new items from the waste products according to DENR.

Global efforts towards plastic pollution

In September 2018, a group of the world's most influential business leaders, policymakers,

CONTINUED ON F7



The truth about plastic

CONTINUED FROM F2

environmental experts and civil society advocates came together at the World Economic Forum's 2018 Sustainable Development Impact summit for a frank discussion on plastic waste and pollution which had become a global crisis.

Accordingly, everyone in the forum recognized it was time to turn promises and platitudes into concrete and swift action – and to create a unified platform to drive and amplify this action at an unprecedented level. Thus, the Global Plastic Action Partnership (GPAP) was born forging powerful alliances.

Plastic production sky-rocketed in the early 2000s—including single-use plastic packaging—resulting in mismanaged plastic waste. The world currently generates 300 million tons of plastic waste each year, without the capacity, infrastructure and collective willpower needed to sustainably manage it. That's why 8 million tons of plastic waste flow into the ocean annually, while mismanaged waste remaining on land can trigger public health crises among vulnerable communities.

Recognizing the extent to which their products have contributed to the ballooning plastic pollution crisis, many of the world's leading companies are pledging to do better. Four of GPAP's founding partners – Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Dow, and Nestlé – are pivoting towards more sustainable ways of doing business. Coca-Cola has pledged to adopt 100 percent recyclable packaging by 2025, for instance, while Dow is financing waste management initiatives aiming to reduce total global plastic leakage by 45 percent.

Likewise, Marriott International, the world's largest hotel chain, recently announced it would stop supplying plastic toiletries to guests by 2020. While Amazon committed to eliminating single-use plastic packaging across its operations in India.

In March this year, GPAP met a major milestone: Indonesia became the first country to officially sign on as a national partner. The world's second-largest contributor to plastic pollution in oceans, the government of Indonesia committed to several ambitious

targets including reducing 70 percent of its marine debris by 2025.

This October, GPAP will formally launch its first engagement in Africa: a partnership with the government of Ghana. The country's dizzying economic growth has come at the expense of unsustainable plastic pollution and mismanaged waste, but it has also shown exceptional leadership and resolve to catalyze a new era of plastic management across West Africa.

And in November 2019, GPAP will launch its third national partnership with the government of Viet Nam, which will assume chairmanship of ASEAN next year, through supporting its efforts to spark plastic action nationally and across the broader region.

Despite the ongoing global activities, GPAP provided a harrowing statistic: "that by 2050, there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish." But the group also promised on one thing: "We're close to completing a blueprint to effectively tackle the plastic pollution crisis in our ocean and communities – and we're piloting the approach in a few locations to test it and learn from it."



Take it from the expert



Atty. Jose Ferdinand M. Rojas II

RISING SUN

Conclusion

The responsibility of businesses

I AM continuing the topic I started writing about last week: Sustainability in business, communities, fashion and tourism. The insights come after the Sustainability Summit Manila that was held on October 5 at Colegio de San Juan de Letran in Intramuros. Sonia Mendoza, the chairman and founder of Mother Earth Foundation, was there to talk about the waste management efforts of her organization.

One of the powerful things that she shared on that day had to do with the waste and brand audit that Mother Earth conducted with GAIA (Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives) from 2017 to 2018. GAIA and Mother Earth are part of the worldwide movement #breakfreefromplastic which calls on corporations to reduce their

production of single-use plastic packaging. The study, conducted in five cities nationwide, revealed that multinational brands are the top plastic polluters. Their trash comprise almost 75 percent of all collected nonrecyclable and noncompostable waste.

Aside from choking our seas and killing marine life, plastic

ends up in our bodies after we eat seafood that ingested plastic particles. Although coastal cleanups are a great display of cooperation and concern for the environment, Mendoza believes that it does not address the root cause of the problem. Millions of people buy and use single-use plastic every day and it will never stop as long as there are huge corporations producing them. This is the plastic packaging for our noodles, coffee, shampoo, ready-to-drink juice, and other similar products.

Businesses need to shift to new and environment-friendly ways to distribute their goods. Additionally, there needs to be a policy change implemented by the government as mandatory regulation for corporations. National plastic bans and plastic packaging reduction policies will help in the implementation of Republic Act 9003, or the Philippines's Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

The government, for its part, should also promote zero-waste programs because this has been proven to address the problem. Mendoza

shared that Mother Earth's model communities all over the Philippines have shown that zero-waste programs result in significant reduction of waste management costs, improved livelihood for waste workers, and of course, cleaner and greener environment.

After the brand audit, Mother Earth and GAIA wrote to the concerned businesses to encourage them to implement new solutions. However, the response they received was less than satisfactory.

As ordinary citizens, we can petition for the creation of environmental policies like the EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility). According to Mendoza, this is a strategy wherein manufacturers become responsible for the packaging of their products up to the end of its life cycle. It will encourage them to look for alternative delivery systems for their products. In other countries with EPR regulations, there have been significant reduction in the consumption of single-use plastic packaging. Advocates believe that if we have that here, too, it will positively affect us and our environment in general.



PDA PRESIDENT'S FEATS IN 1ST 100 DAYS CITED

The first 100 days of the Presidency of Dr. Stephen B. Almonte of the Philippine Dental Association (PDA) were packed with challenges and trials which he addressed with dispatch and efficiency.

In a report submitted by Dr. Christine T. Valerio, PDA PRO and Information Committee Chairman, it disclosed that Dr. Almonte attended the inductions of the different chapters and affiliates throughout the country in June and August, encouraging organizers to be austere and minimize bureaucracy by doing away with leis, garlands, buttoners and presidential table, tokens or plaque of appreciation.

In PDA's oral awareness campaign, "Sugar away, walang tooth decay," Dr. Almonte rallied all chapters for no sugar sweetened beverage served during all inductions and other chapter activities. He also called for Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Rethink.

As part of collaboration, the main thrust of this year's theme, Dr. Almonte held sit-down meetings with local government leaders to discuss concerns of government dentists on salary grade increase, the need for a dentist in every health center, and the accreditation of the PDA local chapters as Civil Society Organization.

As early as June, the President in his "Go Beyond the Smiles" advocacy, challenged all the chapters to focus on sustainable projects -- programs that will make a great impact on overall health and living conditions like education on proper diet to have better oral health, adoption or ownership of health centers and toothbrushing and hand wash facilities.

President Almonte attended Public Consultation on the Universal Health Care Implementing Rules and Regulation formation. PDA also participated in the Professional Regulation Commission Social Responsibility Program, Caliraya Lake Tree Planting Activity, "Sibol Para sa Kalikasan", Exploratory meeting on Dental Tourism and



ALMONTE

meeting with PDA legal adviser for plans on public health issues.

Under Dr. Almonte's 1st 100 days watch, the public health program "Tahanang Sentrong Pangkalusugan" to align with the Universal Health Care Law was launched in July, the first PDA -- Bayanihan ni Juan Summit Capacity building seminar was held last July 29-30 through a partnership with Dok Juan toothpaste, a call for mass enrollment, enlistment of active PDA members to HMI health card, for further membership benefit was approved in the second board meeting and Testimonial Luncheon for the Top 10 Dentists was held at the PDA St. Apolonia Hall and the campaign against illegal dentists was intensified with the entrapment operations from July to September.

In August, the President finished the last leg of the inductions during which he exercised shared leadership or empowerment wherein he delegates and trusts the different committee chairmen to perform what is needed for the members. Furthermore, he macro-manages the preparatives for the different incoming activities such as DENR PCO trainings in PDA, partnership with NBI for the patient record keeping, NDHM activities, the launch of the first PDA Webinar, Area and Regional Conferences and made sure that all checks for the Life membership awardees and chapter rebates have been prepared and signed for distribution.



High level of lead found on playground equipment

Environmental group EcoWaste Coalition prodded concerned government authorities to clamp down on firms manufacturing and selling hazardous playground equipment to ensure public safety.

The call was made after the Quezon City based group reported that high levels of lead, a potent neurotoxin, has been discovered on public playground equipment in several cities across the country.

EcoWaste Coalition Chemical Safety campaigner Thony Dizon noted the painted play equipment containing dangerous amounts of lead pose a serious lead poisoning risk for young children and adults alike.

He insisted there should be an effective enforcement of the ban on lead in all paints, especially for applications that can expose children to lead contamination.

The EcoWaste Coalition sounded the alarm over lead painted play equipment as the UN-backed International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action is observed from October 20-26.

Dizon said the celebration focuses on eliminating lead paint.

To mark the occasion, the group assembled Sunday at the Caloocan City People's Park to press for a lead-safe play environment for all Filipino children.

According to the report "Lead in Playground Equipment in the Philippines," 50 out of 55 play equipment analyzed by the group had total lead concentrations above 90 parts per million (ppm).

In addition, 42 of such lead-coated playground equipment have dangerously high lead levels above 10,000 ppm. **(Chito Chavez)**



Play equipment sa mga park mataas ang lead content

Ibinulgar kahapon ng EcoWaste Coalition (EWC) na nagtataglây ng mataas na level ng lead ang mga outdoor play equipment na inilalagay sa mga playground at iba pang lugar.

Ayon sa EWC, kinakitaan ng mataas na level ng lead ang mga play equipment na inilalagay sa mga playground sa bansa na mapanganib umano sa mga bata.

Kasabay nito,

nanawagan ang EWC sa lahat ng mga environmental health advocate na ipa-ban ang lead sa mga pintura partikular na sa mga bagay na mai-expose ang mga bata.

Ayon sa ulat ng United Nations, 50 sa may 55 playground equipment sa Pilipinas ang may lead concentration na mas mataas sa 90 parts per million (ppm), ang limitadong lead content na itinakda ng DENR A.O.

2013-24 at inulit pa sa inilabas na EMB M.C. 2016-010.

Sa isinagawang pagsusuri ng EWC sa may 42 lead-coated playground equipment, aabot sa mas mataas 10,000 ppm ang nadiskubrenang lead level.

Ang multi-layered lead painted na nasuri ay ang pinakamapaniganib kung saan umaabot sa 662,863 ppm.

Gumamit umano ang EWC sa pang-

detect ng lead level sa mga playground equipment ng handheld X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) chemicals analyzer sa 12 public playgrounds na nasa Luzon (Baguio City), Visayas (Cebu, Lapu-Lapu and Mandaue Cities, and Consolacion, Cebu), Mindanao (Davao City) at sa National Capital Region (Caloocan, Malabon, Manila, Navotas at Quezon City).

"The high levels of lead detected on the paint of outdoor playground equipment are very worrisome and unacceptable. The paint will deteriorate with repeated use and exposure to sun and rain. This will cause the paint to peel and get into the dust and soil, which can be ingested by children through common hand-to-mouth behavior," ayon kay Thony Dizon, Chemical Safety Campaigner ng EWC. **(Juliet de Loza-Cudia)**



ILOCOS NORTE VILLAGERS HELP CONSERVE MARINE TURTLES

LAOAG CITY, Ilocos Norte—Some villagers in Barangay Naglicuan, Pasuquin, are taking turns in monitoring and guarding the stretch of the shoreline which is becoming a favorite nesting place of sea turtles.

Naglicuan village chief Oliver Baclagan Valite confirmed this on Wednesday as a huge *pawikan*, or marine sea turtle, was found laying eggs, prompting villagers to report it to village officials.

In fact, a video and photo of the marine turtle covering her eggs with sand was posted on Facebook when this was spotted by a grade-schooler Emerson Menor of the same barangay.

When reached for comment, Arthur Valente, Provincial Fishery Regulatory officer of Ilocos Norte, said they are thankful that villagers, particularly those living in coastal areas, are now doing their share in conserving and protecting endangered species such as marine turtles.

In previous years, Valente said there had been reports from concerned citizens that some locals are gathering sea turtle eggs despite the presence of a national law and the local

government units' efforts to conserve and protect this endangered species.

With this, a massive information and education drive was launched in the province through social media and in various media outlets, discouraging residents to stop selling and consuming marine turtle eggs.

Anyone found possessing and consuming sea turtles and their eggs shall be fined P600 or imprisonment of not more than six months, or both, under MNR Administrative Order 12, Series of 1979.

"Marine sea turtles often lay their eggs from dusk till dawn and the peak season is from November to March. There had been reports from the ground that egg sales and consumption still continue and this must be stopped immediately," Valente said as he enjoined all concerned authorities to help in the strict implementation of the law.

In Ilocos Norte, Valente reported there are at least three types of sea turtles often spotted in the Ilocos shoreline. These are the olive ridley, hawksbill and green sea turtles.

Leilanie Adriano/PNA



ASEAN ENVIRONMENT CHIEF CALLS FOR COOPERATION FOR BIODIVERSITY

SIEM REAP, Cambodia—A leader of Cambodia urged environment heads of Asean to intensify regional cooperation in preventing and responding to environmental challenges in the now disaster-prone Asean.

"Climate change and environment-related issues are not a responsibility of a single country. It is our problem. Our responsibility," said Deputy Prime Minister Aun Pornmoniroth in his speech at 15th Asean Ministerial Meeting on the Environment (15th AMME) early this month in this Cambodia capital.

The meeting discussed the most pressing environmental issues in the region, including the alarming rate of biodiversity loss due to climate change, plastic pollution and transboundary haze.

The meeting kicked off with a tree-planting ceremony in front of the world-renowned Angkor Wat. It marked the soft launch of the Asean Green Initiative, a testament to the group's commitment to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, and to ensure that its regional policies and strategies are supported by a broad base of stakeholders, including the youth, and traditional and local communities.

One Asean for biodiversity

THE ministers recognized the efforts of the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) in facilitating regional coordination among the Asean member-states (AMS), dialogue and development partners, and other relevant international organizations, for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the region.

The meeting also discussed the Third Asean Conference on Biodiversity (ACB2020) which will be held in Putrajaya, Malaysia, on March 16 to 19, 2020, to prepare for the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) in China.

The ACB2020 will be organized by the ACB in cooperation with the government of Malaysia.

Malaysia lauded the efforts of the ACB

in supporting the Asean Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity, and encouraged all AMS to actively participate in the ACB2020 to consolidate Asean's efforts in biodiversity conservation and to enhance its presence as a strong regional strong bloc in the upcoming COP15.

Declaration of new Asean Heritage Parks

ONE of the highlights of the 15th AMME was the declaration of five protected areas from Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam as new Asean Heritage Parks (AHPs).

They were: Hat Chao Mai National Park and Mu Ko Libong Non-hunting Area and Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park, both in Thailand; Lo Go-Xa Mat National Park and Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve in Vietnam; and Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary in Myanmar.

Asean Secretary-General Dato Lim Jock Hoi said Asean has listed 44 protected areas as AHPs through the ACB, the secretariat of the AHP Programme. Thus, the network has 49 declared AHPs to date.

"The AHP Programme is a flagship program of the Asean that was established to recognize national parks and nature reserves with outstanding wilderness and biodiversity values. It offers opportunities to strengthen regional connectivity and cooperation, as ecosystems and their services transcend national borders," said Dr. Theresa Mundita Lim, executive director of the ACB.

The five new AHPs will be part of the Sixth AHP Conference which be held in Pakse, Lao PDR, on October 21 to 24. This is also a celebration of the 35th year of the AHP Programme.

Three related meetings were held back-to-back with the 15th AMME. These included: the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Asean Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution; the 16th Asean+3 (China, Japan and South Korea) Environment Ministers Meeting; and the Asean-Japan Ministerial Dialogue on the Environmental Cooperation.



Biodiversity helps address food security challenge

THE Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) reiterated its call to mainstream biodiversity into the food production systems, underscoring the benefits of biodiversity-rich approaches to the food security agenda.

"It's high time to rethink and innovate the way we produce our food. Diverse food production systems can better nourish and improve the health of both rural and urban population, not to mention biodiversity's role in building resilience to climate change," said ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim on the occasion of the World Food Day.

World Food Day is celebrated on October 16 every year to honor the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. It is a day of action dedicated to tackling global hunger.

Lim said this year's theme, "Our Actions are our Future," highlights the need to transform food systems by mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into agriculture and fisheries.

Food security remains a challenge across the world as over 820 million people—or 1 in every 9 people globally—are suffering from hunger according to the latest United Nations report.

According to a 2017 report of the World Health Organization, United Nations Children's Fund and the World Bank Group, a

quarter of the children under five are stunted and 8.4 percent of them are wasting, or having low height for weight. Both conditions are associated with food insecurity.

"We are facing an ever-increasing demand for food, on one hand, and dwindling natural resources, on the other. The challenges of food security are even compounded by biodiversity loss caused by rapid urbanization and climate change," Lim said.

Agrobiodiversity, a variety and variability of animals, plants, and microorganisms that are used directly or indirectly for food and agriculture, has been high on the global food security agenda with relentless efforts of countries and organizations to achieve a synergy between agriculture and biodiversity.

Past declarations under the Convention on Biological Diversity demonstrate the global commitment to undertake specific actions on the conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity.

"Agriculture and biodiversity have always been inseparable. Through the biodiversity of plants, animals, and microorganisms, and the services that



ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim says some of the effective agrobiodiversity practices being done in Asean member-states are worthy of replication. *ACS*

ecosystems provide, humans' daily sustenance becomes possible," Lim said.

The ACS head, likewise, noted that some of the effective agrobiodiversity practices being done in Asean member-states are worthy of replication.

Citing the 2019 paper of Dr. Percy Sajise published by the ACB and the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca), intercropping and multi-species farming, and aquaculture are among the effective biodiversity-friendly approaches in agriculture.

For example, corn-peanut intercropping effectively reduces corn borer infestation, as peanut is a good habitat for spiders, which are predators of the corn borer.

Urban farms, she added, are also becoming popular for their role in greening spaces and augmenting the cities' and even national food supply. An example is the Urban

Farm Urban Barn project in Thailand's central Bangkok, which transformed a former textile factory and abandoned farmland into agricultural production and outlet.

In recognition of the crucial importance of biodiversity in the region's goal of sustainable economic development, the Asean Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry adopted the Asean Guidelines for Agroforestry Development in Hanoi, Vietnam, on October 11, 2018.

Meanwhile, the ACB and Searca under a memorandum of understanding signed on July 1, 2016, has been enhancing capacities of the AMS in biodiversity conservation in relation to agriculture and food through a series of regional workshops.

"These are important steps toward a strengthened Asean multi-sectoral cooperation in line with our food security and biodiversity conservation goals," Lim said.

US agencies host 1st Environmental Law Enforcement Summit in Palawan

THE Calamianes Resilience Network, with the support from the US Agency for International Development (USAid) and the Calamianes Marine Protected Area Network, hosted the first environmental law enforcement summit in Coron, Palawan from October 10 to 11.

The summit drew more than 100 representatives from the national and local governments, civil society organizations and local communities who gathered to find solutions to improving local government authorities, enforcement agencies, and communities' cooperation to address illegal fishing, mining, quarrying, logging, and wildlife trafficking.

Among the key outcomes of the summit was a declaration of commitment by the participants — led by Department of Agriculture's Undersecretary for Fisheries and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Director Eduardo Gongona and US Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission John Law — through which governments and communities cemented their commitment to work together for more sustainable management of natural resources.

"The United States government is honored to work alongside you in



■ US Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission John Law (sixth from right), Philippine Department of Agriculture Undersecretary for Fisheries Eduardo Gongona (fourth from left), and USAid Acting Mission Director Patrick Wesner (fifth from right) together with local government partners.

advancing sustainable fisheries that provide food, livelihoods, and coastal protection for all Filipinos," Law said.

"We are partners in building toward a productive blue economy that will lead to a more prosperous Philippines," he added.

Annually, the Philippines loses about P68.5 billion from illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. Through USAid's P1.3 billion Fish Right program, the US government improves the sustainable use of critical coastal and marine

resources, enhances the resilience of these resources, and strengthens the capacities of key actors on an ecosystem approach to fisheries management. US assistance is expected to benefit close to a million people in coastal communities in the Calamianes.

During his first visit to Coron, Palawan, Law also participated in a dialogue on illegal fishing with local government and municipal fisherfolk. He also met with community leaders managing the Siete

Pecados marine park and the Tagbanua leaders in Kayangan Lake.

In 2015, the local government of Coron and USAid signed an MOU to implement a comprehensive master plan to protect the marine biodiversity in Siete Pecados. Since then, the island has become a model for sustainable tourism for other local governments, earning an annual revenue of up to P2 million pesos from tourism user fees, funding regular patrol and monitoring operations.



MGB names 18 areas susceptible to landslide after Mindanao quake

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA
@jonlmayuga

GOVERNMENT'S Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) has alerted local government units (LGUs) against the possibility of landslide and other geological hazards following the 6.3-magnitude earthquake that hit Mindanao last Wednesday.

The MGB, a unit under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), identified 18 areas that are highly susceptible to landslide. Aside from communities in Mindanao hit by the recent earth-

quake, the MGB said these areas are: Benguet; Mountain Province; Abra; Nueva Vizcaya; Davao Oriental; Ifugao; Aurora; Apayao; Quirino; Kalinga; Camiguin; Southern Leyte; Sarangani; Siquijor; Quezon; Bukidnon; Romblon; and Negros Oriental.

Many of these provinces are part of the Cordillera Administrative Region, which hosts six of the 18 provinces tagged by the MGB.

"Earthquakes can loosen the top layer of soil, causing landslides," DENR's Mines and Geosciences Bureau Director Wilfredo G. Moncano said in a statement.

"It is more dangerous in high-

slope areas, but can still be caused by earthquakes, depending on the intensity," Moncano said.

The list of areas that are highly susceptible to landslide was released by the DENR-MGB based on an assessment of a number of factors, including altitude and capacity for debris to flow, according to Moncano, who is also a lawyer.

The most recent quake in Mindanao caused at least six deaths—including three people killed in landslides—and injuries to at least 93 people.

The MGB also aired the warning following the devastating effects of

Typhoon Hagibis in Japan.

"The risks of any natural disaster are reduced by preparation and proper dissemination of information," he emphasized.

"If Japan, a developed country that is already highly prepared in times of natural disasters, still suffered severely in the wake of Hagibis, then we must really double our efforts to prepare in case of a similar typhoon," he added.

Moncano said the MGB is ready to assist local government units in assessing their communities and preparing for geohazards, such as landslides and mudslides.



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
INITIATIVES
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Mines bureau urges caution in landslide-prone areas

By Rio N. Araja

THE Mines and Geosciences Bureau on Sunday urged local government officials and the public to exercise caution in landslide-prone areas following the magnitude 6.3 tremor that hit Mindanao last week.

"Earthquakes can loosen the top layer of soil, causing landslides," MGB director Wilfredo Moncano said.

"It is more dangerous in high-slope areas, but can still be caused by earthquakes, depending on the intensity," he added.

Apart from the communities in Mindanao which experienced the recent strong quake and its aftershocks, the MGB also

tagged 18 areas that have high susceptibility for landslides all over the Philippines, namely Benguet, Mountain Province, Abra, Nueva Vizcaya, Davao Oriental, Ifugao, Aurora, Apayao, Quirino, Kalinga, Camiguin, Southern Leyte, Sarangani, Siquijor, Quezon, Bukidnon, Romblon and Negros Oriental.

Many of these provinces are part of the Cordillera Administrative Region, which hosts six of the 18 tagged areas.

"This is based on an assessment of a number of factors including altitude and capacity for debris to flow," Moncano said.

He also issued a warning following the devastating effects of Typhoon

"Hagibis" in Japan that took the lives of at least 78 people and left thousands homeless due to flooding and landslides.

"The risks of any natural disaster are reduced by preparation and proper dissemination of information," he said.

"If Japan, a developed country that is already highly-prepared in times of natural disasters, still suffered severely in the wake of Hagibis, then we must really double our efforts to prepare in case of a similar typhoon," he added.

Moncano said the MGB is ready to assist local government units in assessing their communities and preparing for geohazards, such as landslides and mudslides.



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Ibinabala ng DENR matapos ang lindol **PAGGUHO NG LUPA SA MINDANAO**

NANAWAGAN ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sa mga lokal na pamahalaan at kanilang mga residente na mag-iingat, lalo na sa landslide-prone areas, matapos ang magnitude 6.3 na lindol na tumama sa Mindanao noong Miyerkoles.

"Earthquakes can loosen the top layer of soil, causing landslides," sabi ni DENR's Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) Director Atty. Wilfredo G. Moncano. "It is more dangerous in high-slope areas, but can still be caused by earthquakes, depending on the intensity."

Bukod sa mga komunidad sa Mindanao na nasalanta ng lindol at ng mga aftershock, tinukoy rin ng MGB ang 18 lugar

sa Filipinas na may mataas na panganib ng landslide na kinabibilangan ng Benguet, Mountain Province, Abra, Nueva Vizcaya, Davao Oriental, Ifugao, Aurora, Apayao, Quirino, Kalinga, Camiguin, Southern Leyte, Sarangani, Siquijor, Quezon, Bukidnon, Romblon, at Negros Oriental.

Karamihan sa mga lugar na ito ay nasa kabundukan.

"This is based on an assessment of a number of factors including altitude and capacity for debris to flow," paglilinaw ni Moncano.

Anim na katao na ang napaulat na namatay dulot ng lindol sa Mindanao habang 93 naman ang sugatan.

Nagbabala rin ang MGB makaraan ang

pananalasa ng bagyong Hagibis sa Japan kung saan 78 na ang nasawi at libo-libo ang nawalan ng tirahan dahil sa baha at pagguho ng lupa.

"The risks of any natural disaster are reduced by preparation and proper dissemination of information," aniya.

"If Japan, a developed country that is already highly-prepared in times of natural disasters, still suffered severely in the wake of Hagibis, then we must really double our efforts to prepare in case of a similar typhoon," aniya.

Idinagdag pa niya na nakahandang tumulong ang MGB sa local government units (LGUs) pagdating sa paghahanda para sa mga geohazard tulad ng landslides at mudslides.



SOVEREIGN FUND

DOMINGUEZ OPEN TO PROPOSAL TO SLAP A WEALTH TAX ON MINING REVENUES

By Ben O. de Vera
@bendeveraINQ

The head of the Duterte administration's economic team is open to Albay Rep. Joey Salceda's proposal to slap a sovereign wealth tax on mining revenues.

"The idea of a sovereign fund is actually a good idea...Funding something like this from taxes on irreplaceable resources, I think it's a good idea," Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III told reporters recently.

While the Department of Finance (DOF) has yet to see the details of Salceda's proposal on paper, Dominguez said the DOF would support it.

Salceda, who chairs the committee of ways and means of the lower House, told reporters last month that he would propose

new and higher taxes on mining operations, the proceeds of which would be placed in a sovereign wealth fund that the current administration couldn't touch nor spend.

Among the features of Salceda's proposal is jacking up min-

ing excise taxes to 5 percent from 4 percent.

Another key feature of the mining fiscal regime that Salceda envisioned is the establishment of a sovereign wealth fund, which he said would have to be accumulated during a six-year period and

parked with the Bureau of the Treasury as trust fund. The fund will come from a new 2-percent sovereign wealth tax, Salceda said.

Salceda said a sovereign wealth tax was ideal for nonrenewable resources like minerals and oil. INQ



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Sovereign tax on mining excites Dominguez

By CHINO S. LEYCO

Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III is amenable to the proposal seeking to introduce a new tax on mining to generate funds for future generations calling it a "good idea."

President Duterte's chief eco-

nomie manager cited the plan of Albay Second District Rep. Clemente Joey S. Salceda, chair of the House ways and means committee, to impose a two percent sovereign wealth fund tax on gross revenues generated by mining companies.

"First of all, the idea of a sovereign fund is actually a good idea," Dominguez told reporters, noting

such proposal will be similar to the "coco levy fund," though controversial but had generated up to P150 billion in assets.

Dominguez added that a sovereign wealth tax on mining is an acceptable proposal as the country's minerals are irreplaceable.

"The idea is what they call intergenerational equity. You get the

gold now and sell it, your grandchild cannot do it anymore, so if you take part of that and invest it, in such a way he benefits, that's a good idea," the finance chief explained.

But Dominguez added that Albay Second District Rep. Clemente Joey S. Salceda has yet to discuss with the DOF his planned sovereign wealth tax. **►B-4**

"I haven't seen the details, but I think it's a good idea. It answers a question that you are using a non-renewable resource and passing on the benefits to the future generation," he said.

In September, Salceda said that he will propose a two percent sovereign tax on miners' gross revenues as well as increase the industry's current four percent excise tax rate to five percent.

Salceda also wants to auction off the mining tenements in the country to raise additional funds, instead of the existing first-come, first-served policy being implemented by the government.

Currently, miners pay the government the 12 percent value-added tax (VAT) that they can recover once the minerals were exported. Also, there is the 30 percent corporate income tax, as well as four percent excise tax and windfall taxes that include royalties.

But the existing taxes and fees were not enough for the House ways and means chairman, thus he is now proposing for the establishment of a trust fund under the Bureau of the Treasury from the sovereign wealth fund tax.

Salceda proposed "all collections [from the sovereign wealth fund tax] by one administration can't be used by them. It can only be used by

the next administration. At least there's a six-year accumulation."

"A trust fund is way of perpetuating the land... it's a self-limiting incentive system," Salceda said, noting Norway also imposes a sovereign wealth fund tax on their oil reserve.

"They're not repeating resources because you have to wait two million years for a new induction to produce the next ounce of gold. There should be an intertemporal benefit across generations," the lawmaker pointed out.

But Salceda admitted that he has yet to discuss his mining tax proposal with Dominguez, saying "It was never discussed, they were like 'it's up to you'."

Aside from the DOF, Salceda also plans to consult the mining stakeholders to determine the costs and potential revenues once his proposed measure was passed into law.

The DOF earlier supported a measure aiming to introduce amendments to the existing fiscal regime covering all mining operations in the country.

The department also wanted to impose a uniform royalty rate of five percent for all mining operations, whether located inside or outside a mineral reservation.



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New mining tax regime not happening this year

By MADELAINE B. MIRAFLOR

The government's desire to get higher share from mining operations will not yet happen within this year, but House of Representatives is already planning to resume next month the discussion regarding the passage of a new mining tax.

Finance Assistant **►B-4**

Secretary Maria Teresa S. Habitan said the Department of Finance (DOF), the government agency that has been pushing for a new fiscal regime on mining, has remained hopeful that a new mining tax will soon be passed, but doesn't necessarily see it happening within the year.

With less than three months left for this year and "given the tightness of the schedule in the Senate," Habitan said this is something that may actually be discussed next year.

For his part, Albay Representative Joey Salceda said in a text message that there will be a congressional hearing on the recently filed House Bill (HB) 5022, or an act establishing a new fiscal regime for the mining industry, during the first week of November.

Authored by Salceda, chair of the House ways and means committee, HB 5022 proposes the imposition of royalty on mining operations within and outside mineral reservation areas.

For large-scale metallic mining operations outside mineral reservations, companies should pay the government a margin-based royalty of up to 5 percent, while those within mineral reservation areas should pay 3 percent royalty tax.

Small-scale mining operations shall be exempt from the payment of royalty.

Habitan said the DOF is now studying HB 5022 and is closely monitoring when it will be taken up in Congress.

"[HB 5022] is a mixture of DOF-industry proposal with a Salceda twist," Habitan said. "But the royalty provisions are similar to the industry's proposal."

Though Habitan didn't say that DOF opposes HB 5022, she said that what the DOF would have wanted is a mining tax regime "that is simple to administer."

"So, we really have to look at it," she further said.

Like what Habitan said, HB 5022 is quite similar to the amended HB 8400, which the House of Representatives already passed on third and final reading in November last year.

HB 8400, which also proposed a margin-based royalty on miners operating outside mineral reservation areas, is a "happy compromise" to the mining industry, according to Chamber of Mines of the Philippines

(COMP) Executive Director Ronald Recidoro said.

The original HB 8400, which adopted the proposal of the DOF, imposes a 5 percent royalty on all mining companies. It doesn't matter whether they are in and out of mineral reservations areas.

Unfortunately, in the Senate, no corresponding bill was adopted before the end of the 17th Congress.

"There simply was not enough time. We are now into the 18th Congress and we must face this all over again," COMP Chairman Gerard Brimo said a few weeks ago.

In January, the Senate Committee on Ways and Means conducted a hearing on the proposed legislative measures on Fiscal Regime and Revenue Sharing Arrangement for the Mining Industry.

Among those deliberated in the said hearing were HB 8400 and Senate Bill (SB) 225, 927, and 1979.

SB 225 and 927 both propose a fiscal regime and revenue sharing arrangement between the government and the mining companies wherein the latter's share shall be 10 percent of the operation's gross revenue or 55 percent of the Adjusted Net Mining Revenue (ANMR), whichever is higher.

Habitan said the DOF hasn't got a word from the senate yet when they will tackle the corresponding bill on a new mining tax.

Rocky Dimaculangan, vice president for corporate communications at COMP, said the mining industry is also monitoring the new tax proposals but "there has not been any action so far."

COMP, an organization of some of the country's largest mining operations, is also studying the bill filed by Salceda.

"We need to have the moratorium on new mining projects and the ban on open pit mining lifted ASAP [as soon as possible]," Dimaculangan said.

To recall, a new fiscal regime is needed before the government can lift the ban on new mining projects, which was put in place during the Aquino administration.

Under Executive Order 79, no new mineral agreements should be approved "until a legislation rationalizing existing revenue sharing schemes and mechanisms shall have taken effect."



DOF welcomes new mining tax proposal

The Department of Finance (DOF) has welcomed the proposal of Albay Rep. and House ways and means committee chairman Joey Salceda to impose a new tax scheme for the mining sector, which would be used to create a sovereign wealth fund for the benefit of future generations.

In an interview, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez said he supports the proposed creation of the National Resource Trust Fund, a sovereign wealth fund which would be used for development projects in communities affected by mining activities.

"First of all, the idea of a sov-

ereign fund is actually a good idea. In fact, we already have a sovereign fund, but it's called a coco levy fund. It's similar to a sovereign fund. Now, funding something like this from taxes on irreplaceable resources, I think it's a good idea," Dominguez told reporters.

According to Dominguez, the sovereign wealth fund is an inter-generational fund which would benefit future generations.

The finance chief, however, said Salceda has not discussed his proposal with the DOF yet.

Earlier, Salceda filed House Bill 5022, which seeks to introduce a new

tax regime for the mining industry.

The proposal provides a three-percent royalty tax on large-scale mining operations within a mineral reservation.

It also seeks to impose a margin-based royalty tax on large-scale mining operations outside mining reservation areas, ranging from one percent to five percent.

Salceda is also proposing for the imposition of an additional two-percent tax on the gross revenues of mining companies, which would be used to create the National Resource Trust Fund.

- Mary Grace Padin



Sovereign wealth tax on mining pushed

THE proposed creation of a sovereign wealth fund for the country by imposing additional taxes on the mining industry has gained the support of the Department of Finance (DoF).

In a recent interview, Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez 3rd said House Bill (HB) 5022 filed by Albay Rep. Joey Salceda is "a good idea."

A sovereign wealth fund is defined as a state-owned investment fund or entity that comprises of pools of money derived from a country's reserves. Reserves are funds set aside for investment to benefit the country's economy and its citizens.

"Funding something like this from taxes on irreplaceable resources. I think it's a good idea," Dominguez said.

Under the bill, reserves for the sovereign wealth fund will be raised from the annual payment of mining contractors to the Bureau of Internal Revenue for the additional amount of 2 percent based on gross output for large-scale metallic mining, which shall be remitted to the Bureau of Treasury within the first quarter of the succeeding income year.

The Finance chief explained the proposal is like the controversial coco levy fund that is an intergenerational equity.

"You get the gold now and sell it. Your grandchild cannot do it anymore, so if you take part of that and invest it in such a way he benefits, that's a good idea," Dominguez said.

Earlier, Salceda said all the collections from the sovereign wealth tax will be accumulated for six years, which will be automatically appropriated upon notice by the next administration.

"Under a sovereign wealth fund, all collections by one administration cannot be used by them. It can only be used by the next administration," he noted.

"A trust fund is a way of perpetuating the life.

The mining industry is extracting non-repeating resources. It belongs to the Philippines and the next Filipinos because you have to wait 2 million years to at least produce the next ounce of gold, for example. So there's at least should be intertemporal benefits across generations," the congressman said.

The sovereign wealth tax is just one of the features of HB 5022 as Salceda also proposed for a 3-percent royalty tax to be imposed on large-scale mining operations within a mineral reservation.

The bill also seeks a margin-based royalty tax to be imposed on large-scale mining operations, outside mining reservation areas, ranging from 1 percent to 5 percent.

But it said small-scale mining operations shall be exempted from the payment of royalty.

At present, mining operations are taxed 4 percent from 2 percent under the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion Act.

A recent study made by the National Tax Research Center revealed the mining industry is a significant driver of an economy, but its progress is proceeding at an extremely slow pace.

The think tank said the industry contributed only an average 0.7 percent to the country's gross domestic product from 2008 to 2017.

MAYVELIN U. CARABALLO



'Ensure Boracay carrying capacity compliance'

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

WITH the expected influx of tourists in Boracay in the coming months, Senator Nancy Binay called on the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force to ensure strict monitoring and compliance of the carrying capacity of the island.

"The BIATF could perhaps give us an update about the status of the framework set in the monitoring of tourists and their evaluation and recommendations especially as we're anticipating an influx of tourists in the coming months," she said.

When Boracay was reopened in October last year, the government imposed a limit of 6,405 tourist entries a day.

"We should learn from our mistakes—in the non-implementation of laws, in ignoring the laws and in allowing unli-tourists," said Binay.

Only 19,000 tourists will be allowed in Boracay at any given day and workers in the island must not exceed 15,000 per day to be able to maintain the 55,000 carrying capacity of the island.

Aside from strictly enforcing the daily limit on tourist arrivals, Binay also urged the inter-agency council to remain vigilant and ensure establishments in Boracay comply with environmental laws.

"*Sana hindi ito ningas-cogon lamang.* It would be a shame if we are not able to continue the reforms that were put in place," she added.

One major component in the Boracay rehabilitation is the implementation of the "25+5-meter" easement along the beach. This means no structures are allowed to be put up within the 30-m area.

Structures that encroached on the easement along the white beach at the western side of the island have also been removed by the owners or demolished by the task force.

Boracay Island, which was previously described as 'a virtual cesspool,' was closed to tourists for six months from April 26 to Oct. 25 last year to undergo rehabilitation.



First Gen holds tree planting in Masungi Georeserve area

EMployees of Lopez-led First Gen Corp. recently conducted a tree planting at the Masungi Georeserve in Baras, Rizal, as part of efforts to rehabilitate the reservation area.

Over 50 employees from First Gen's head office in Pasig City and from the site of the company's natural gas-fired power plants in Batangas City joined a 2-kilometer (km) trek from the base to the summit of the Masungi Georeserve. They planted over 300 narra, *bignay* and *banaba* saplings.

In the past, the Masungi area suffered not only from the ravages of illegal logging and quarrying but also from an invading horde of illegal treasure hunters, lured by stories of buried World War II booties.

However, efforts are now

underway to reforest and turn the area into an ecotourism destination.

Masungi is part of the Sierra Madre, the country's longest mountain range that stretches for almost 700 km from Quezon province in the south to Cagayan province in the north.

First Gen is the country's leading clean and renewable-energy company with total installed capacity of 3,492 megawatts.

Its portfolio of power plants runs on geothermal, hydro, wind, solar and natural gas, considered the cleanest form of fossil fuel.

First Gen is also undertaking Binhi, a forest restoration and biodiversity preservation program that aims to save endangered premium Philippine timber trees.



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COMMONSENSE

MARICHU A. VILLANUEVA

'Sustainable' thinkers

FLORENCE – Of all applications of sustainable development policy, the heirs of world-renowned Italian shoemaker walk the talk, so to speak. The famous “Salvatore Ferragamo” chain of stores demonstrated it through their models who take the ramps wearing the popular but quite expensive brand name of shoes to bags and belt to stylish dresses for men and women.



No, we did not watch a fashion show of Ferragamo while here at Firenze but we did the walking tour of their company’s “Sustainable Thinking” museum.

Located at the heart of Florence, the walking tour of “Sustainable Thinking” museum, of course, ends up in Ferragamo’s shopping galore. Luckily for me, I don’t have the euros enough to buy even a signature women’s belt.

And before anyone goes around for a tour of this part of the building here, people must first read the glass-encased declaration what is “Sustainability Thinking” fashion-turned-museum is all about: “Sustainability” defines the human capacity to meet “the needs of the present time without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs.”

It was an eye-opening discovery for me to learn many new things from Ferragamo’s “Sustainable Thinking” museum which opened in April this year. Coming from one of the world’s most influential style masters is an admission that “the global fashion industry is one of the most polluting industries.”

According to the studies undertaken by this project, 98 million tons of oil were used to produce synthetic fibers in 2015. Around 8,000 synthetic chemicals are utilized to turn raw materials into textiles and these chemicals are released into freshwater sources.

As far as this famous Italian fashion institution is concerned, sustainability “is a global challenge that is not limited to production methods but also implies a greater focus on the environment overall from energy conservation to the volume of waste, from the choice of raw materials to the workers’ health and safety.”

The tour of “Sustainable Thinking” museum capped our attendance to the three-day “Green Energy” and Expo 2019 Conference held in Rome last week. During the conference, we listened to various scientists and experts who shared the latest technologies to bring about further reduction in global warming as a take-off point from the United Nations Climate Change call to action for sustained cutting down of carbon emissions from coal power plants and other fossil fuels.

In yet another reiteration of his administration’s policy, President Rodrigo Duterte impressed upon captains of Philippine industries that the country’s environment “is a priority” of the government while on his watch. President Duterte renewed this policy commitment after he reportedly figured in a motorcycle “spill” on a ride around the Malacañang Golf grounds Thursday night.

No, we did not watch a fashion show of Ferragamo while here at Firenze but we did the walking tour of his “Sustainable Thinking” museum.

Speaking before the 45th Philippine Business Conference and Expo at the Manila Hotel Fiesta Pavilion last week, President Duterte issued this call: “Business should not only comply with environmental rules and regulations but shall also take part of taking care of the environment. This is your duty as citizens of the country.”

With substantial reforms carried out by the administration in the past three years, President Duterte called upon private businesses to do their share by pursuing more effective and efficient business strategies that commit to protecting the environment and ensuring the welfare of host communities.

The President much earlier directed concerned government agencies, in particular, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Energy (DOE) to remain vigilant in monitoring the strict compliance by power generation companies to existing environmental laws and regulations in our country. The Chief Executive made the gentle reminder during the ceremonial switch-on of the 500-megawatt coal-fired power plant in Mauban, Quezon Province last Oct. 15.

In rites held at the Bonifacio Global City, President Duterte reassured Filipinos that his administration remains committed to the use of clean energy to drive the country’s economic growth even while the government still allows new coal technologies to run power plants without losing sight of the future of power generation in the Philippines.

“And always keep in mind that beyond profits, your primary objective is to provide reliable and affordable electricity to our people,” the President urged.

In the Philippines, another power generation company has fully embraced the sustainable way of doing their business. The Lopez-owned conglomerate First Gen Corp. is one of the few companies that use clean and renewable energy (RE) such as natural gas, geothermal, hydro and wind to run its power plants. Like the other global brands seeking to lower carbon emissions that threaten our planet earth, First Gen continues to find new and innovative ways in veering away from archaic and polluting methods such as coal and other so-called fossil fuels.

Of the total 3,482 megawatts (MW) installed capacity of 30 power plants run by First Gen, 2,017 MW is produced from natural gas. The other bulk comes from its other RE power plants, namely: 1,179 MW is generated by its geothermal power plants; wind (150 MW); hydro (134 MW); and, solar (12 MW).

Aside from power generation, the “Green Energy” Conference experts pointed to transport and mobility utilities as the future direction on the potentials of RE. One of the most wonderful discovery here also is a young Filipina transport engineer working on “sustainable” train system in Italy. Requesting not to be identified, she told us her work entails analysis of project initiatives for the development of railway networks, upgrade of operational processes, and innovative projects on sustainability.

It is indeed quite reassuring to see young Filipinos like her among the global “sustainable” thinkers who come up with ways to keep the present environment livable for the sake of future generations.