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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



Cimatu outraged over DENR worker's death

Counting the number of people killed in the line of duty under my watch as DENR chief is disturbing, if not outright enraging

By Maria Romero
@tribunephil_mbr

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu expressed outrage over the killing of yet another employee of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in the line of duty last Thursday.

Joash Peregrino, a special investigator at the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) in Bislig City, Surigao del Sur, was gunned down in his car parked in front of a store near the DENR office. He and his wife, also a DENR employee, stopped by the store on their way home.

"Counting the number of people killed in the line of duty under my watch as DENR chief is disturbing, if not outright enraging," Cimatu said.

Peregrino is the fourth DENR worker killed

in the line of duty in a span of two months.

According to DENR CARAGA Regional Executive Director Felix Alicer, Peregrino just received his regular appointment as special land investigator and was handling numerous land conflict cases at DENR Bislig, which has been active in the apprehension and retrieval of abandoned and illegally-cut trees inside government timber lands.

"The killing of our colleague may also have something to do with the strengthened efforts of our personnel at the field offices led by our CENR officers on anti-timber poaching and smuggling," Alicer said.

Despite this, Cimatu said there will be no let-up in the DENR's intensified drive against environmental offenders and in fulfilling its mandate to protect and preserve the country's environment and natural resources.

"Though our intensified actions against

violators of environmental laws are taking a toll on our people, we will not relent," Cimatu said.

The DENR secretary also reiterated his appeal for Congress to pass a legislation creating an Enforcement Bureau within the DENR to give it stronger enforcement powers.

Last 4 September, forest ranger Bienvenido Veguilla Jr. was hacked to death when he and his team came across illegal logging activities while patrolling in El Nido, Palawan.

A few days later on 11 September, Gaudencio Arana, a long-time DENR informant at CENRO Munoz in Nueva Ecija was killed by motorcycle-riding men.

Forest Ranger Ronaldo Corpuz, who was also assigned at CENRO Munoz, was shot dead by unidentified gunmen outside his house on 25 October.



Garbage keep coming from South Korea

By BETHEENA KAE WHITE

The Philippines is fast becoming a dumping ground for trash from South Korea.

Last Friday, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) intercepted in Zambales a merchant ship carrying 53,000 metric tons of toxic substance from Gwangyang Port, South Korea.

On Saturday, the Bureau of Customs (BOC) announced that a container filled with assorted electronic waste from South Korea was uncovered at the Manila International Container Port (MICP).

Early this year, several containers of garbage dumped in the Philippines were shipped back to South Korea.

In the Zambales incident, crane operators and several crew were already unloading the toxic substance when a team from the PCG and the NBI arrived

at Cabangan Wharf, Cabangan, Zambales, and stopped the operation.

The inspection revealed that the Liberian-flagged merchant ship was carrying phospho gypsum, which, according to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), is "radioactive" due to the presence of naturally occurring radioactive elements.

It was learned that the cargo was intended to be hauled to San Mateo, Rizal.

In the MICP incident, the BOC found out Thursday that the shipment involving a 40-foot container contained electronic waste, a prohibited importation, instead of used television parts and electric parts as declared.

The BOC said the shipment was consigned to Vision Restore and Equipment Corporation. Records showed that it arrived at the MICP on Nov. 6, 2019 from South Korea.



10 nabbed for unloading toxic waste in Zambales

By ROBERTZON RAMIREZ

Four officers and six crewmembers of a Liberian-registered vessel were held after they allegedly unloaded tons of a toxic substance at the Cabangan Wharf in Zambales on Friday.

Among those arrested were Danny Banes and Clifford Calingacion, sailing master and second officer of *M/V Dayang Century*, respectively; a Chinese sailing master and a chief officer, whose names

were not immediately available, and six crewmembers.

A team composed of personnel of the Philippine Coast Guard and agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) arrested the suspects,

who were reportedly caught unloading phosphogypsum at the wharf, according to PCG spokesman Capt. Armand Balilo.

The suspects were brought to the NBI headquarters in Manila for proper disposition.

Quoting the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the PCG said the substance contained radioactive elements.

According to Wikipedia,

phosphogypsum is a waste by-product from the production of fertilizer from phosphate rock.

The vessel reportedly came from South Korea.

Balilo said they received information about the vessel's activity in the area, prompting them to conduct the search.

The vessel's officers reportedly failed to present a permit to unload shipment.



Ship carrying toxic waste held

By Jonas Reyes

CABANGAN, Zambales – A South Korean merchant ship carrying 53,000 metric tons of toxic substances was seized by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) here on Friday.

According to PCG, the ship came from Gwangyang Port in South Korea and was hauling a toxic substance called phosphogypsum.

The PCG and NBI team intercepted the ship and apprehended the ship crew as it was docked at the Cabangan Wharf. The team chanced upon the group unloading the substance, which stated that it was bound for San Mateo, Rizal.

The team immediately boarded the ship and requested the master to present the cargo permits for such operation, but he failed to do so.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources noted phosphogypsum as 'radioactive' due to the presence of naturally occurring radioactive elements.

The authorities are set to charge the ship captain and crew of violating Republic Act 6969 or the Toxic Substances and Hazardous and Nuclear Wastes Control Act of 1990.



VOLUNTEERS clear the Canturing River in Maasin, Southern Leyte in an attempt to lower its high coliform levels caused by the indiscriminate throwing of human waste.

E. RECUERDO



E-WASTE SHIPMENT NASABAT SA PORT AREA

MAYNILA – NASA-BAT ng mga tauhan ng Bureau of Customs (BOC) sa Manila International Container Port (MICP), sa tulong ng mga taga-Environmental Protection and Compliance Division (EPCD) ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources Office ang

misdeclared electronic shipment sa piyer.

Damating sa port area noong Nobyembre 6 lulan ng isang 40-footer container van, at naka-consign sa Vision Restore and Equipment Corporation.

Ang shipment na ito ay nagmula pa sa Korea, at idineklara ng may-ari na mga TV parts, ngunit nang

ipadaan sa 100 percents eksaminasyon nadiskubre ng customs examiner na mga electronic waste ang tunay na laman ng container.

Agad naman na inisyuhan ni MICP District Collector Guillermo Pedro A. Francia IV ng alert order na may numerong A/MICP/20191115-0247

kasabay na ipinag-utos nito sa Accounts Management Office (AMO) na ipawalang bisa ang accreditation ng importer at customs broker.

Kasabay rin na ipinag-utos ni Collector Francia sa consignee na ibalik ang nasabing shipment sa port of origin, ito ay batay sa ilalim ng Customs Memorandum

Order No. 38-2019 in relation to the provisions of Section 14 of Republic Act No. 6969 and Article 8 of the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, to which both the Philippines and South Korea are signatories.

FROI MORALLOS



Barkong may toxic substance; naharang

Nasabat ng mga awtoridad ang isang barkong may dala ng 53,000 metriko toneladang toxic substance na nanggaling pa sa South Korea, nang tangkaing ipuslit ito sa Zambales, nitong nakaraang Biyernes.

Ayon sa Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), galing pa ng Gwangyang Port sa South Korea ang nasabing nakalalasang sangkap na tinawag na phospho gypsum.

Sinabi ng PCG, dinidiskarga na ng mga crane operator at tripulante ng barko ang nasabing nakalalasang kemikal nang datnan ng mga tauhan ng PCG at National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) sa Cabangan Wharf, Cabangan, Zambales.

Ipinaliwanag ng PCG, nabigo ang kapitan ng barko na magharap ng cargo permit para sa nasabing

operasyon kaya inaresto ito at mga kasamahang tripulante.

Sa inspeksyon sa nasabing Liberian-flagged merchant ship, natukoy ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na ang naturang kemikal ay nabibilang sa "radioactive".

Natuklasan pa na dadalhin sana ang kargamento sa San Mateo, Rizal nang ito ay masabat.

Ang mga inaresto ay nahaharap sa kasong paglabag sa Republic Act (RA) 6969 o Toxic Substances and Hazardous and Nuclear Wastes Control Act of 1990 at RA 9003 o Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

Pansamantalang nasa kustodiya ng NBI Headquarters sa Maynila ang mga naaresto.

Betheena Kae Unite



Puslit na electronic waste nasabat ng BOC

Nasabat sa operasyon ng Bureau of Customs (BOC)-Manila International Container Port (MICP), at Environmental Protection and Compliance Division (EPCD), ang isang 40-footer container na misdeclared assorted electronic waste.

Ang shipment ay naka-address sa Vision Restore and Equipment Corporation at dumating sa MICP noong Nobyembre 6, 2019 mula South Korea.

Ayon sa report ng BOC idineklara ng consignee na mga gamit ng

TV at mga electric parts ang kargamento subalit nang inspeksiyunin lumilitaw na mga electronic waste ang laman.

Dahil dito agad na naglabas ng alert order No. A/MICP/20191115-0247 si MICP District Collector Guillermo Pedro A. Francia IV sa kargamento at inirekomenda sa Accounts Management Office (AMO) upang bawiin ang accreditation ng importer at ng customs broker.

Mag-iisyu rin ang BOC ng re-exportation order sa consignee upang ibalik sa

South Korea ang kargamento sa ilalim ng Customs Memorandum Order No. 38-2019 in relation to the provisions of Section 14 of Republic Act No. 6969 at Article 8 ng Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, kung saan kapwa signatories ang Pilipinas at South Korea.

Sinabi pa ng BOC na nagsasagawa sila ng imbestigasyon upang matukoy ang mga nasa likod ng shipment at sampahan ng kaukulang kaso. (Doris Franche)



Volunteers clean coliform-infested river

Volunteers waded through the murky water to remove tons of barriers off the upstream villages of Bogo and Nasuag

By Elmer Recuerdo

MAASIN CITY – A river in this city infested with coliform bacteria due to the indiscriminate throwing of human waste finally got the attention it badly needs as volunteers conducted a clean-up drive to rid it of garbage and water lilies choking its passageways.

Led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Canturing River clean-up was conducted by volunteers from the Philippine National Police, the Bureau of Fire Protection, barangay officials and residents who waded through the murky water to remove tons of barriers off the upstream villages of Bogo and Nasuag.

In some choke points, a payloador was used in clearing mounds of sand that were already forming deltas at the middle of the river causing further blockage.

Canturing River is the DENR's provincial office entry to the Rivers For Life contest, a program of DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu ordering all its regional offices to embark on cleanup of all rivers in their respective areas of responsibility.

The contest encourages the concerted actions of different agencies and stakeholders "to protect the country's

rivers from degradation and pollution and assure their suitability, sustainability and further improvement for their designated use or classification."

It also mandates the local offices to "come up with appropriate mitigations and interventions to help address the continued worsening condition of river systems nationwide."

Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer (CENRO) Alejandro Bautista said that the Canturing River's 18 barangays are all already conducting the clean-up in their respective territories every month for about a year now and is already showing considerable improvement in the quality of water especially in the big reduction of coliform levels.

"The first time the river was tested for coliform levels the figure was 500, then it was down to 300 and lately to 200," Bautista said, referring to the volume in parts per million of E. coli bacteria content found.

The goal is to further reduce the coliform presence to 80 to make it fit for swimming, to 50 so it can be a source for drinking water provided it should be boiled first and further down to zero, Bautista explained.



Dagupan City prepares rollout of \$15-M waste-to-energy plant

First of its kind in SE Asia

A groundbreaking \$15-million facility that will convert solid waste into fuel is nearing the final stages of completion in Dagupan, a first-class city in the northern province of Pangasinan.

Waste2Worth Innovations founder and CEO Jill Boughton, whose former employer Procter & Gamble initiated the project, said the zero emissions waste-to-energy plant will convert plastic trash into diesel to power public utility vehicles and fishing boats. Dagupan, known as the Bangus Capital of the Philippines, leans heavily on fishing to drive its economy.

Dagupan emerged as a top choice to pilot a waste-to-worth project based on criteria set out by Procter and Gamble, in partnership with the National Solid Waste Management Commission and the Solid Waste Management Association of the Philippines.

Intended to eliminate waste going to landfill, it involves the establishment of a waste management and processing facility that will convert waste into valuable commodities to stimulate economic development.

Boughton said with the volume of the city's food waste - rotting food at

the dump sends methane gas, 26 times more harmful than carbon dioxide, into the air - the Waste2Worth plant will also convert this waste form into natural gas to fuel motorized tricycles.

Dagupan's City dumpsite is located along the seashore on Barangay Boquig, which is considered an environmentally critical area. It is also within the vicinity of government offices and may affect the air quality of surrounding communities. The sanitary conditions make people living in these areas vulnerable to diseases.

"I knew if we could make our solution economically viable on a small-city scale, it could work anywhere," Boughton said. When completed, the project will make Dagupan the first small city in Southeast Asia to utilize this technology.

Funded by Dow, the world's largest plastic producer, the Waste2Worth facility only needs the signature of Dagupan City Mayor Brian Lim to enable the financial closing with project investors and proceed with the construction, installation and commissioning of one unit by year-end.

The project is targeted to be partly operational by the second quarter next year.

SPRITE® SWITCHES 'ICONIC' GREEN PLASTIC BOTTLE TO CLEAR PACKAGING TO HELP BOOST PACKAGING RECYCLABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

In a bid to help boost recycling of their plastic bottles, Coca-Cola Philippines announced today an industry-first initiative of evolving the iconic green color packaging of their Sprite® recyclable plastic bottles for a clear, new look.

For half a century, people have known Sprite® for its iconic green bottle that is as unique as its crisp, lemon-lime flavor. Now, the brand is switching its trademark design for the plastic bottles, one of its packaging formats, to a clear, new look – aligned with its clear, new mission towards a World Without Waste.

"Sprite®'s status as one of the biggest and most recognized brands in the world can largely be attributed to its crisp lemon-lime taste and its iconic green bottle design. This is why, as part of our journey towards a World Without Waste, we are transitioning our green Sprite® plastic bottles to clear ones as clear plastic is much easier to recycle," said Coca-Cola Philippines Marketing Director Sharon Garcia-Tanganco.

The transformation of Sprite® recyclable plastic bottles from green to transparent bottles is part of the company's World Without Waste goal of collecting and recycling the equivalent of every bottle or

can it sell by 2030. Coloured recyclable plastics are harder to recycle and have much more limited use compared to clear plastics. Because of this, the transition of Sprite® to clear plastic packaging ensures that its bottles are easier recycled and reprocessed.

With its 500ml bottles now made from 100% recycled plastic, Sprite® is also leading the packaging innovation and re-design journey of the broader industry. This packaging milestone makes Sprite® one of the first soft drinks in the Philippines and in Asia to introduce a bottle made from 100% recycled plastic. This innovation is also a move towards one of the cornerstones of the company's global World Without Waste vision - to use at least 50% recycled content in their packaging by 2030. To fully close the loop on their packaging, Coca-Cola Philippines also announced earlier this year that it is investing in what will be the country's largest state-of-the-art bottle-to-bottle recycling facility.

"We recognize that packag-



ing waste is an urgent issue – globally and here in the Philippines. As a company, we are determined to be part of the solution and we're working to go further and faster in our actions, such as eliminating hard-to-recycle packaging from our portfolio," Winn Everhart, Coca-Cola Philippines President and General Manager said.

The clear plastic bottle transition of Sprite® in Southeast Asia was announced today at the inaugural "SEA of Solutions Partnership Week for Marine Plastic Pollution Prevention," an initiative of the UN Environment Programme and the Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) in Bangkok today. The Philippines is the largest Sprite® market in ASEAN and the first market in ASEAN to begin the clear plastic bottle transition. The transition will expand to other markets in Southeast Asia through 2020.

To learn more about Sprite® and The Coca-Cola Company's wider goals and actions to address packaging waste, please visit: <https://www.coca-colacompany.com/stories/world-without-waste>.



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Firm up climate tack

Rody: UN should impose sanctions

Efforts to protect the environment should be more resolute, President Rodrigo Duterte said as he called on sanctions from the United Nations (UN) against violators of the international climate treaty

known as the Paris Agreement. Penalties should be imposed against countries that ratified the pact but have failed to live up to their commitments under the framework.

In a speech in an inauguration of two major power projects

in Maasin, Sarangani, the President said the UN "should better understand that it has to have a sanction for violators."

"Without a sanction, I do not think that it will succeed. It will only fail and worsen the situation

for the coming generation," he noted

The UN lately has been organizing conferences for multilateral discussion on climate change, which it promotes, to incentives to those who veer away from the use of fossil fuel through carbon footprint credits.

Mr. Duterte lamented that some industrialized countries that ratified the climate change deal have failed to commit to adopt the agreement.

No more talk

Early this month, the President called on Southeast Asian leaders not to sacrifice the environment in pursuit of progress.

He urged the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) "to ensure environmental sustainability and protect biodiversity in the region's pursuit for development."

"ASEAN should not sacrifice the environment and the region's rich biodiversity, particularly in the maritime domain, in its

Without a sanction, I do not think that it will succeed

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quest for progress," he added.

The President also called on the ASEAN for cooperation to combat marine debris.

His advocacy during the regional meeting won him plaudits as a leading voice in protecting the ecology.

Duterte's call to the UN came as he noticed that there seemed to be little progress in global efforts to mitigate the impact of climate change.

He said it would be a "waste of money" to attend a UN climate change conference because it was just "all talk."

Solidly for environment

"I am for (combatting) climate change. I really do. I can understand. I have a little learning of everything. Not much, but I can understand. Now the problem is the Climate Change Commission is always calling for a meeting," the President said.

"And always, it's always how much carbon footprint you'll leave on planet Earth. And it's all talk, it's all conferences. And I would not really also agree to something of a ratio and proportion vis-à-vis with (the level of) our economy."

The UN climate change forum that is conducted every year and serves as the formal meeting of countries that are mandated to live up to the goals of the Paris climate agreement, a global pact meant to keep temperatures from

rising two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

In March 2017, the Philippines ratified the Paris climate pact.

"But the one thing that is not present and therefore becomes a very inutile commission is it does not have sanctions. You can commit so many things there, excess of carbon monoxide and all, and yet there is no sanction," he said.

"You and I know that if you cannot arrest climate change now, *sigurado* (it's sure), our children will suffer more severe climate changes, typhoons and all," he said.

Multilateral organizations consider the Philippines, as an archipelago, to be among the most vulnerable countries in the world as a result of climate change.

DDR should be formed

Sen. Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go said he will ask the President to certify as urgent the bill creating the Department of Disaster Resiliency Change (DDR) to improve the government's response and preparedness in times of calamities and in addressing the effects of climate change.

"We will not wait for another earthquake to happen. We have to be proactive in dealing with disasters to mitigate (their) effects on lives and properties," Go said. "Since we are through with the first hearing (at the Senate), I will request the President to certify it as urgent so that it could be included in the 2020 budget."

The legislator underscored the



Firm up climate talk

urgency of creating the DOE, saying the country is being battered by various calamities that threaten the lives and limbs of Filipinos.

Go said all line agencies of the government tasked to protect the people from the effects of disasters must be well-equipped and trained to effectively and efficiently handle any disaster response.

"And this could only be done by creating the Department of Disaster Resiliency," he said.

Go was in Davao del Sur to join Gov. Douglas Cagas, Digos Mayor Josef Cagas, Bansalan Mayor Quirina Sarte, Magsaysay Vice Mayor Joy Mejia, and representatives of national government agencies to extend aid to more than 600 displaced earthquake victims.

Go beyond 'Build'

The President also said in the same event in Sarangani that it is not enough to just build infrastructure.

"I told them that I do not need that 'Build, Build, Build,'" Duterte told his audience.

"I want 'Build-Use, Build-Use, Build-Use,'" he added.

Duterte has directed all concerned state



agencies to speed up the completion of infrastructure projects, Go said on Monday.

The President's order came after several government offices, including the Department of Transportation, earned criticisms for their supposed failure to spend their 2019 budget for their major projects.

It will only fail and worsen the situation for the coming generation.

Go said the President wanted not only "Build, Build, Build," but also "Use, Use, Use" of the infrastructure projects being pushed under his watch.

Earlier, Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon claimed the current administration's infrastructure program was a "dismal" failure because only nine out of the initial 75 priority projects was started in Duterte's three years in office.

The President, however, disputed Drilon's claim, saying the senator is "out of tune."

It's always how much carbon footprint you'll leave on planet Earth. And it's all talk, it's all conferences.

The number of key infrastructure projects under the "Build, Build, Build" program went up to 100 from the original 75, after Duterte earlier ordered his economic team to revisit the roster of proposed big infrastructure.



PRRD wants sanction against climate change deal 'violators'

By **RUTH ABBEY
GITA-CARLOS**

MANILA — President Rodrigo R. Duterte on Friday urged the United Nations (UN) to impose sanctions against countries that ratified the climate change pact but have failed to live up to their commitments under the framework

"UN should understand that it has to have a sanction for violators," Duterte told his audience in Maasim, Sarangani province where he led the inauguration and launch of two major power projects. "Without a sanction, I do not think that it will suc-

ceed. It will only fail and worsen the situation for the coming generation."

The UN has been organizing an annual conference for multilateral discussion on climate change.

Duterte's call to the UN came as he noticed that there seemed to be little progress in global efforts to mitigate the impact of climate change.

He said it would be a "waste of money" to attend a UN climate change conference because it was just "all talk."

"I am for (combatting) climate change. I really do. I can understand. I have a little learning of everything. Not much but I can understand. Now the problem is the Climate Change Com-

mission is always calling for a meeting," the President said. "And always, it's how much carbon footprints you'll leave on planet Earth. And it's all talk, it's all conferences so that this time, I said it would be a waste of money. And I would not really agree to something of a ratio and proportion vis-à-vis with your economy."

The UN climate change forum that is conducted every year serves as the formal meeting of countries that are mandated to live up to the goals of the Paris climate agreement, a global pact meant to keep temperatures from rising two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

In March 2017, the Philippines ratified the Paris climate pact.

However, Duterte lamented that some industrialized countries that also ratified the climate change deal have failed to commit to adopt the agreement.

"But the one thing that is not present and therefore becomes a very inutile commission is it does not have sanctions. You can commit so many things there, excess of carbon monoxide and all, and yet there is no sanction," he said. "You and I know that if you cannot arrest climate change now, sigurado 'yan: Our children will suffer more severe climate changes, typhoons and all." PNA



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MGA BANSANG NAGRATIPIKA SA CLIMATE CHANGE AGREEMENT DAPAT PARUSAHAN-DUTERTE

HINIMOK ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang United Nations (UN) na patawan ng parusa ang mga bansang kabilang sa nag-ratipika sa kasunduan hinggil sa climate change pero bigong tuparin ito.

Sa kanyang naging talumpati sa dinaluhang event sa Sarangani, iginilit ng Pangulong Duterte na hindi magtatagumpay ang climate change deal kung walang kaakibat na parusa.

Aniya, mabibigo lamang ito at mas lalo pang magpapalala sa sitwasyon ng mundo para sa mga susunod na henerasyon.

Dagdag ni Pangulong Duterte, aksaya lamang sa pondo ang pagdalo sa taunang cli-

mate change conference ng U.N gayung wala naman aniya siyang nakikitang pag-usad para mapigilan ang paglala ng epekto ng climate change.

"I would not really also agree to something of a ratio and proportion with your economy and a hugeness of your... kaya pwede 'yang ganu'n eh. That you limit me to this because I would need more of mine. Kung ganun ang attitude ng Amerika has separated, medyo mahirap yan. Ako, I'm for climate change but the one thing that is not present, and therefore are very (...) it does not have sanctions," ani Pangulong Duterte.

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Agricultural biodiversity going mainstream

The Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) have agreed to continue cooperating on programs that will mainstream biodiversity in agriculture.

In a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed on Nov. 4, the two international organizations agreed to pursue their common objective of building capacities of the ASEAN member states in biodiversity conservation as it relates to agriculture

and food.

Signatories to the MOU were SEARCA director Glenn Gregorio and ACB executive director Theresa Mundita Lim.

SEARCA and ACB will jointly undertake projects and activities covering thematic areas on agriculture and biodiversity, along with capacity enhancement activities and information exchange and awareness campaigns.

The collaboration includes capacity building activities, information exchange and

awareness campaigns, and project development and implementation on sustainable agriculture and biodiversity.

Gregorio said a healthy natural resource base as a prerequisite for sustainable agricultural and rural development is emphasized under SEARCA's new five-year strategic plan.

"Mainstreaming is important because of the inextricable connection between agriculture and biodiversity. Together, our organizations can work to strike the balance between the two," Lim said.

This was affirmed by Gregorio as he sees the "urban sprawl creeping fast into the countryside, diminishing fertile agricultural lands and consequently affecting food and nutrition security and biodiversity in the region."

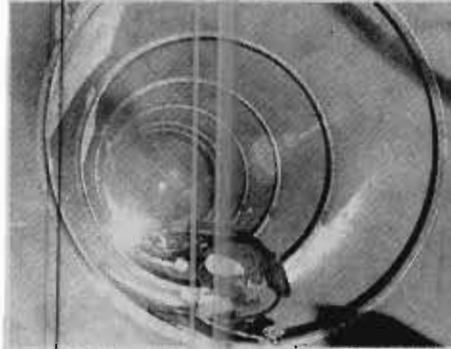
"Our hope is that these common interests will evolve into concrete plans for joint research and development undertakings, and scientific fora and conferences on emerging development issues in the region we both serve and call home," Gregorio said.



Natural gas offering false hopes?

PARIS (AFP) — Natural gas is cleaner and produces fewer global warming emissions than other fossil fuels, making it key to our transition to a low-carbon future, but it comes with its own serious drawbacks.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) said recently that natural gas is



A WORKER welds the inner part of a tank for natural gas, a fuel that is cleaner than both coal and oil.

AFP

crucial to its sustainable development model which requires oil and coal use to fall sharply if we are to get anywhere near the Paris agreement climate change targets.

Natural gas is relatively cheap, abundant and produces 50 percent less CO2 than coal, used widely, especially in Asia to generate electricity for fast growing economies.

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In its latest annual report, the IEA predicted a 10 percent increase in natural gas use through to the end of the 2020s while oil use would have to return to levels last seen in the 1990s.

Some NGO, however, attack the IEA — set up after the first great oil shock in 1973-74 to advise countries how to manage their energy needs — for being overly beholden to nae-say governments such as the United States, and the huge fossil fuel companies.

Rather than recommending an increase in the use of natural gas, the IEA should be calling for a reduction, they say.

Murray Worthy at Global Witness said “governments should not be misled... and should rather work on closing down existing oil and gas fields, and halting exploration for new reserves.”

Significantly, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the lending arm of the European Union, recently announced that it would halt funding new fossil energy projects, including natural gas, from 2022.

Good and bad?

For some, natural gas is the ideal transition fuel, with major companies such as Total and Shell producing increasing amounts and launching new projects which stretch for decades into the future.

“When it burns, natural gas releases less CO2, nitrous oxide and sulphur than coal or oil,” said Nicholas Browne of energy consultants Wood Mackenzie.

“Replacing coal with gas, for example, has had a huge impact on air quality in northern China, with immense benefits in terms of public health,” Browne said.

The question however is “if gas and LNG (Liquified Natural Gas) are better, are they good enough?” he added.

Extracting and transporting natural gas notably results in significant emissions of methane, a greenhouse gas 30 times more potent than CO2.

“Methane emissions linked to... natural gas are largely under-estimated,” said Cecile Marchand of Friends of the Earth.

Taken together, it is not necessarily the case that natural gas is so much better than other fossil fuels, Marchand said, and on that basis, it may “not allow us to face up to the climate change challenge.”

The gas industry is trying to meet these criticism, committing to reducing methane emissions and developing CO2 capture systems in the hope of keeping global warming at manageable levels.



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DTI eyes P125 M funding for startups

By LOUELLA DESIDERIO

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), through its investment arm National Development Co. (NDC), plans to establish a venture fund with an initial capital of P125 million to be able to invest in startups and help them go commercial.

This venture fund will be on top of the P3 billion the government intends to spend to help develop 1,000 startups by 2022.

During the signing of the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) for Republic Act (RA) 11337 or the Innovative Startup Act Friday, Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez said discussions have started to set up a venture fund to be used to help deserving startups go to the next level.

"The discussion has started with how NDC can help with the fund and basically to also eventually co-invest in the winning startup ventures," he said.

To bring 50 startups into commercialization, the government estimates P250 million would be needed to extend P5 million for every startup.

Lopez said the DTI is looking at an initial P125 million for the venture fund to support 50 deserving startups in the first year of implementation, while the rest of the P250 million would come from the private sector.

He said the DTI would come up with guidelines on how to select startups that would be covered by the venture fund.

Also part of the guidelines is up to how much NDC could invest in the startups.

Apart from supporting startups ready to move to commercialization, the government is also looking to

assist startups in the early stages of development.

In particular, Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Secretary Fortunato dela Peña said the government would need P3 billion to support 1,000 startups by 2022.

Signed into law last April 26, the Innovative Startup Act aims to implement a Philippine Startup Development Program which includes providing benefits and incentives for startups or any person or registered entity in the Philippines seeking to develop an innovative product, process or business model.

With the IRR signed by Lopez, Fortunato and Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) Secretary Gregorio Honasan, the three agencies would form a steering committee to implement the law and develop the overall program for the development of startups in the country.

Lopez said startup ecozones would also be put up to spur the growth and development of startups and startup enablers.

"Further, we will work with the Board of Investments on a Startup Investment Development Plan. This plan will develop short, medium, and long-term strategies to spur investment in, and promote the growth and development of startups and startup enablers in the country," Lopez said.

Earlier this year, RA 11293 or the Philippine Innovation Act which seeks to set up an innovation fund for enterprises developing innovative solutions to benefit the poor, was also signed into law.

Under the Philippine Innovation Act, an initial P1 billion revolving fund would be set aside for the initial year of implementation of the law to be administered by the National Innovation Council composed of the President, as

well as the heads of the National Economic and Development Authority, DTI, DOST, DICT, Department of Agriculture, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Health, Department of Transportation, Department of Energy, Department of National Defense, Commission on Higher Education, Department of Budget and Management, Department of Education, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Labor and Employment and Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines.



El Nido posts progress in sustainable tourism initiatives

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

El Nido, Palawan is making progress with its rehabilitation efforts as it continues to implement more sustainable tourism practices, the chief of the Department of Tourism (DOT) said.

"The tourism industry of El Nido has been thriving for so long, so I'm happy to see this progress in the sewage and solid waste management facilities. We want our tourists to feel clean and safe when they visit our country," Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat said in a statement.

Puyat recently inspected the rehabilitation efforts being implemented in El Nido after the launch of the DOT's "Save Our Spots" (SOS) movement held at the Lio Estate Resorts.

The rehabilitation of El Nido was initiated last year due to unsustainable tourism practices and ecological degradation.

During her recent inspection of the town, Puyat observed that the municipal and provincial governments are progressively building a sewage and solid waste treatment plant, and that owners of structures violating the proper easement zones along the shorelines are self-demolishing.

Puyat added that the rehabilitation of tourism sites is being simultaneously implemented by the task force of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the DOT in various destinations.

Last month, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) announced that it is extending financing solutions for the development of sustainable tourism in El Nido and Coron in Palawan province that will equip these two

fast-growing tourism destinations with sustainable urban facilities and means of protecting marine life.

Moreover, the DOT said several initiatives are now in place to instill sustainable development in Boracay Island, Cebu, Coron Island, Davao City, Panglao Island in Bohol, Samal Island, Siargao, and Siquijor.

The DOT continues its push for sustainable tourism as it recently launched its SOS movement, which aims to instill a culture of responsible tourism and to involve more people to act for the welfare of our domestic tourism industry.

"This movement calls for each individual to do their part in act-

ing as a responsible tourist and encouraging the same behavior among their peers," Puyat said.

"Sustainable tourism as a whole may seem like an ambitious venture but every small contribution will go a long way to collectively benefit the country's tourism status, precious destinations and valued lives," she added.

SOS is part of the DOT's overarching campaign for sustainability, called "More Fun Forever," which aims to inspire tourists, businesses and local communities to have a long-term view on tourism by protecting destinations and natural resources.

The campaign seeks to impart

sustainable tourism concepts by providing a more holistic view of the tourism industry to all stakeholders.

It emphasizes the importance of tourism as a source of livelihood for many Filipinos and providing business opportunities that help uplift the quality of their lives.

"A lot of travelers are now looking at the Philippines because of the thrust for sustainable tourism. Our tourists now are more mindful – they choose to go to a place where they know that environmental laws are in place, and that we take care of the environment to make tourist spots very clean and safe," Puyat said.



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HOW A FATEFUL HIKE SPAWNED A TAMARAW DOCUFILM

STORY & PHOTOS BY CELINE MURILLO

TO be given access to the magnificent Mounts. Iglit-Baco Natural Park is an opportunity one doesn't simply pass on.

With a sweeping terrain of rolling hills and undulating peaks, this place seemed like it belonged to another time, like the present did not deserve such beauty. As if to prove this point, most of the creatures that call this place home could not be found anywhere else. It was an entire world of its own.

A creature known as the tamaraw lives here. With only about 480 individuals left in the wild, it is one of the most critically endangered animals in the world, on the brink of disappearing forever. It resides exclusively in the island of Mindoro, and Iglit-Baco is where most of them are.

I couldn't miss the chance to see them in their natural habitat.

I'd been sure I was going to be happy—it was the mountains after all. I'd expected to be in awe, for here dwelt the tamaraws. But I hadn't anticipated my life to be changed so fiercely by this experience.

That night in October, we were at a place they called Station 3. It lay on the foot of Mount Magawang—one of the peaks that dot the landscape of Iglit-Baco. We were in a bunkhouse, on the terrace where some of us sat on wooden benches while others were on the floor. Our faces awash in harsh white LED light.

Among us were men we've come to know as the tamaraw rangers, the guardians of the elusive beasts. They have sworn to protect these creatures, making sure they don't go extinct. On that cold night, we listened to their harrowing stories: the lack of gear, the measly—and often delayed—salary, the dangerous encounters with poachers, the loneliness from being far from their family for 22 days, the complicated relationship with the indigenous Mangyan and many, many more.

Their words left a mark on my being—one that I'm sure would no longer heal. I've always known the world was full of injustices, but to come face-to-face with the reality of it blew me away. It was immediate, the effect of this conversation. I dealt with it the only way I know how: through creating. As soon as I got back, I wrote stories—several of them—about the plight of the tamaraws and its guardians. Yet somehow, I felt like I could do so much more.

I didn't have money to donate. I found the thought of organizing a charity drive impractical. I didn't have much to give, but I had words and a penchant for storytelling. And so *Suwag o Suko* was birthed.

It was originally conceived as a proposal for a National Geographic grant. But it was declined. I was heartbroken, because I knew what a project like this could mean for the Tamaraw Conservation Program (TCP).

For a while, I kept this project on the shelves, thinking I'd get back to it in the future—perhaps when I've money to spare and a less weary soul. But then Biofin came along, bearing gifts of funding. I got Ace the director and the production team, on board. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Suwag o Suko was an attempt at telling the story of the tamaraw through a lens



KALI is the only product of the unsuccessful breeding program in the 70s to 90s



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How a fateful hike spawned a tamaraw documentary

other than science—not that we don't need scientific perspectives (we do, badly), it's just that they are oftentimes hard to relate to. And for an issue as pressing as that of the tamaraw, we needed as many people as possible to care. The best way to do that was to "humanize" the story. When logic and reasoning prove insufficient, I say: appeal to the heart.

We protect what we love. And how can we love something we know nothing about?

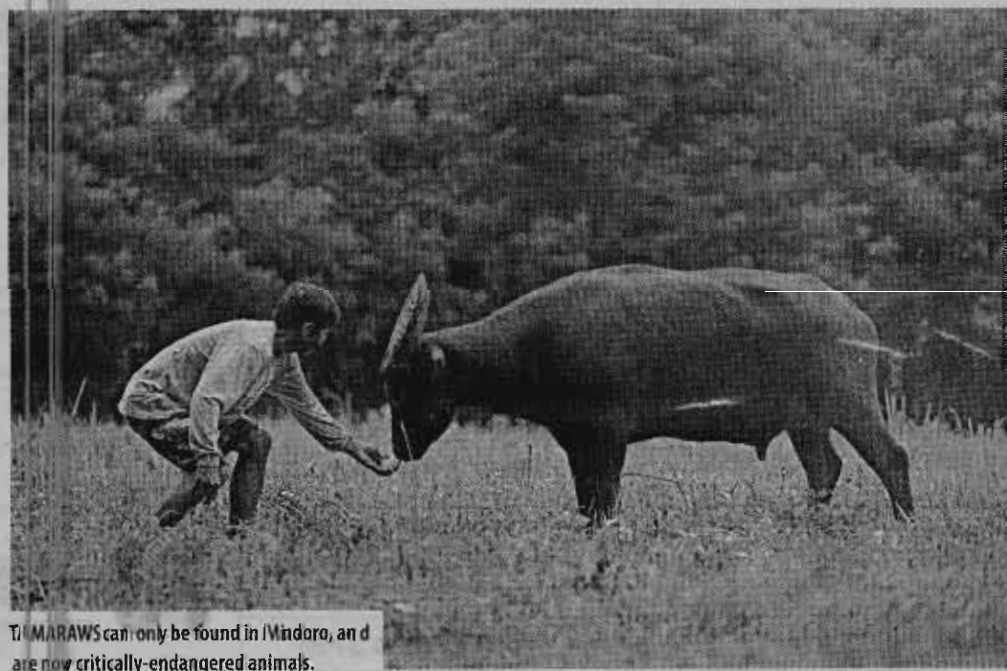
Suwag o Suko was made because protecting the country's natural heritage is every Filipino's business. And speaking from experience, awareness often leads to involvement. The story of the tamaraw and the rangers inspired me into action. I'm hoping this film will propel more people to do the same.

And if you'll allow me a moment of immodesty, I'd like to have it on record that we didn't make anything from this movie. We did it pro bono. All its proceeds will go to the TCP to strengthen the conservation efforts and provide better working conditions for our rangers. It was a labor of love. And I'm happy that the film is looking like it's going to do what it's meant to do.

This whole experience made me realize how stories are vital. And that travel has another dimension to it. Of course, most of the time, a place is just a place, and we experience it in ways we only know how. But sometimes, a place is not just a place; it is a catalyst, and its people an inspiration. And my wish is that when a story behind a place plants a seed in your heart; nourish it and let it bloom. For no matter how grueling and traumatizing the process may be, telling a story is a wonderful thing. Stories can save the world, and in the words of Martha Postlewaite, "this world is so worthy of rescue."



NATURE campers share a snapshot with tamaraw rangers.



TAMARAWS can only be found in Mindoro, and are now critically-endangered animals.