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Cimatu pushes Puerto Galera rehab

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu has ordered the creation of an office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Puerto Galera to ensure the implementation of a rehabilitation plan for the tourist destination.

Cimatu instructed DENR-Mimaropa executive director Henry Adornado to facilitate the transfer of the regional office from Roxas Boulevard in Manila to Calapan City in Oriental Mindoro.

The DENR chief said he wants to replicate in Puerto Galera what was done in Boracay and Manila Bay.

"It will never be easy. But I can see the strengthened collaboration between the DENR regional task force and the local government in saving Puerto Galera," Cimatu said.

Task Force Puerto Galera

was created in February last year to spearhead the cleanup of the island and ensure strict implementation of environmental laws.

During his recent visit to Oriental Mindoro, Cimatu checked the construction of a P100-million sewerage treatment plant in Barangay Sabang. The STP, which can treat up to 1,750 cubic meters of wastewater per day, is at the commissioning stage.

Cimatu also visited another prospective STP site in Barangay San Isidro.

The quality of water in Sabang Bay was found to have high levels of coliform. It was blamed on the growing number of commercial establishments along the island's easement zone as well as inadequate wastewater treatment facilities.

- Rhodina Villanueva



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Puerto Galera clean-up next after Boracay, Manila Bay

By ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu is hoping to replicate the rehabilitation efforts in Boracay and Manila Bay to promote the protection and preservation of tourist destinations in the country.

Cimatu visited Puerto Galera last week to ensure that the famous tourist destination is being managed properly.

"What we did and are doing in Boracay and Manila Bay, we will replicate in Puerto Galera," he pointed out.

The DENR chief checked on the construction of a P100-million modern sewerage treatment plant (STP) in Barangay Sabang during his visit to Puerto Galera. He also visited Barangay San Isidro as a prospective site of a second STP.

The STP in Barangay Sabang aims to treat 1,750 cubic meters of wastewater per day and is already in commissioning stage. It is expected to be fully operational this month.

Cimatu expressed his gratitude to Puerto Galera Mayor Rocky Ilagan for facilitating the construction of the treatment plant to address the urgent is-

sues of water pollution.

In the past years, water quality in Sabang Bay, has shown high levels of coliform.

The poor water quality was attributed to the growing number of commercial establishments along the island's easement zone that discharges partially treated wastewater into the bay, and the inadequate wastewater treatment facilities in the island.

Cimatu ordered DENR-Mimaropa Regional Executive Director Henry Adornado to establish a DENR local office in Puerto Galera to make the necessary protection and preservation of its beaches.

Cimatu also instructed Adornado to facilitate the transfer of the regional office from Roxas Boulevard in Manila to Calapan City in Oriental Mindoro pursuant to the provisions of Republic Act (RA) 10879 that makes the city the regional center for Mimaropa.

"It will never be easy. But I can already see the strengthened collaboration between the DENR regional task force and the local government unit in saving Puerto Galera," Cimatu said.



DENR tightens watch over Puerto Galera

By **Maria Romero**
@tribunephil_mbr

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is looking at building a satellite office in Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro as part of its efforts to bring back the glamor of one of the country's top tourist destinations in the south.

DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu said this development came after his visit to the island last week as he said he wants the rehabilitation of Puerto Galera to follow the footsteps of Boracay and Manila Bay in a bid to protect and preserve the country's prime tourism destinations.

"What we did and are doing in Boracay and Manila Bay, we will replicate in Puerto Galera," Cimatu said.

He thus ordered DENR-MIMAROPA Regional Executive Director Henry Adornado to put up a DENR office in Puerto Galera to ensure that the famous tourist destination is properly managed.

"It will never be easy. But I can already see the strengthened collaboration between the DENR regional task force and the local government unit in saving Puerto Galera," he added.

Cimatu said DENR officials are allowed to facilitate the transfer of the regional office from Roxas Boulevard in Manila to Calapan City in Oriental Mindoro based on the provisions of the Republic Act 10879 or the law that makes Calapan City the regional center for MIMAROPA.

In 2018, Task Force Puerto Galera was created to spearhead the cleanup of the island and ensure strict implementation of environmental laws such as the Republic

Act 9275 or the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004.

Comprised of personnel from the DENR and the Environmental Management Bureau, the task force was also formed to ensure that the Presidential Decree 705 or the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines is properly implemented.

The task force works closely with the provincial and municipal government, the Department of the Interior and Local Government and the Department of Tourism.

On his visit to the island, Cimatu also checked on the construction of a P100-million modern sewerage treatment plant (STP) in Barangay Sabang. Cimatu also visited Barangay San Isidro as a prospective site of a second STP on the island.

The STP can treat up to 1,750 cubic meters of wastewater per day and is already in the commissioning stage. It is expected to be fully operational this month.

The DENR secretary also lauded the local government of Puerto Galera for actively participating in the island's rehabilitation by facilitating the construction of the treatment plant to address the urgent issues of water pollution.

What we did and are doing in Boracay and Manila Bay, we will replicate in Puerto Galera.

In the past years, water quality in Sabang Bay has shown high levels of coliform.

The DENR said the poor water quality was attributed to the growing number of commercial establishments along the island's easement zone that discharges partially treated wastewater into the bay, and the inadequate wastewater treatment facilities in the island.



Puerto Galera to be preserved — Cimatú

By Rio N. Arāja

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Roy Cimatú wants the rehabilitation of Puerto Galera to follow the footsteps of Antique's Boracay Island and Manila Bay to protect and preserve the country's prime tourist destinations.

He recently visited Oriental Mindoro's Puerto Galera and ordered the Department of Environment and Natural Resources MIMAROPA executive director Henry Adornado to put up a DENR office in the area to ensure that the famous tourist destination is properly managed.

He also instructed Adornado to fa-

cilitate the transfer of the regional office from Roxas Boulevard in Manila to Calapan City in Oriental Mindoro pursuant to the provisions of Republic Act 10879 that makes the city the regional center for Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Palawan and Romblon.

"It will never be easy. But I can al-

ready see the strengthened collaboration between the DENR regional task force and the local government unit in saving Puerto Galera," he said.

"I commend and thank you for your sacrifices but please be reminded that we are protecting Puerto Galera not only for ourselves, but more importantly for the generations to come," he added.

DU30 THREATENS WATER EXECS, ORDERS NEW DEALS

STORY BY JULIE M. AURELIO

The President threatens to sue Maynilad and Manila Water for economic sabotage over 'onerous' provisions in the 1997 concession agreements, like paying the companies for losses should the government reject higher water rates.

FROM A1

By Julie M. Aurelio
@JMAurelioINQ

President Duterte has threatened to jail and file economic sabotage cases against officials of Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water Co. Inc. and others involved in what he called onerous water concession agreements.

The two private firms distribute water in Metro Manila and parts of Cavite and Rizal provinces under agreements signed with the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) in 1997 during the Ramos administration following what was then called "the world's largest water privatization."

The President also ordered Solicitor General Jose Calida and Finance Secretary Carlos

Dominguez III to come up with a new water concession contract that is favorable to the public and the government.

"This is the amended contract, accept it or nothing to it," he said.

Mr. Duterte said he was willing to go down for his decision but would drag with him the "oligarchs" who considered water a commodity and not a natural resource.

"We will expose them. And I will insist that they be tried for economic sabotage. If they do not accept that case, now is the time that we talk seriously, the buying of cases," he said on Tuesday night.

12 'onerous provisions'

He went on: "I will file this. Economic sabotage and I will arrest all of them. I will let [them] taste the life behind bars."

The President even asked why senators had agreed to the

1997 deal, which the Department of Justice (DOJ) said had 12 onerous provisions that were disadvantageous to the government.

At another speech in Malacañang, Mr. Duterte questioned Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon for warning him against unilaterally canceling the contracts with Manila Water and Maynilad following a water crisis in March.

"I distinctly recall that Drilon said something, 'Oh President Duterte, do not tinker with that contract because we will end up paying so many billions of pesos,'" he said.

Mr. Duterte added: "Senator Drilon, are you one of those who profited from that? I'm asking you. I said I am ready to get out. I am not threatening you, but if I go down, I will bring you with me."

Asked for comment, Drilon on Tuesday night said, "I did not in any manner participate in the drafting of the concession

agreement." Drilon became senator in 1995.

The President made the remarks the day after a Cabinet meeting in which the DOJ reported that the 1997 agreements contained 12 provisions disadvantageous to the government and the public.

No gov't interference

Among these provisions were the "prohibition against government interference in rate-setting, and the provision on indemnity for possible losses in the event of such government interference," Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra said on Tuesday.

He pointed out that "due to these twin provisions, the government was ordered by the Singapore arbitration court to pay Maynilad about P3.6 billion and, recently, Manila Water, P7.4 billion as compensation for losses or damages."

"The DOJ also found the ex-

tension of these contracts to 2037 irregular, considering that the extension was granted 12 to 13 years before the original expiration of the 25-year concession agreements in 2022," Guevarra said.

The President was reportedly "upset, if not angered" during the Cabinet meeting on Monday night when the DOJ reported its review of the water concession deals.

Ayalas, Pangilins

He said on Tuesday night that he was not afraid of going down because of his decision, promising to make the lives of the Ayalas and the Pangilins "very, very, very miserable."

The Ayalas own the controlling stake in the publicly listed Manila Water while a company being run by Manuel V. Pangilinan is a shareholder of Maynilad along with the Consunjis.

Mr. Duterte slammed both private water firms of treating water like a commodity and not

as a natural resource.

"The contract is so one-sided, because if they fail to realize the profit during the lifetime of the contract or at any period, we will pay for their losses. You sons of bitches, if that is so," he said.

He said the government was not allowed to raise or lower water rates, and that the private water firms kept on charging the public for waste water treatment facilities that were never built.

Mr. Duterte also criticized the Ayalas for not paying corporate taxes.

Water rate hike

He then accused Manila Water and Maynilad of faking the water shortage last March because "they were waiting for the next round of increase" in water charges.

Such actions, he said, only "screwed us" and were only "contributing to the deterioration of society."



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DU30 THREATENS WATER EXECS

FROM A2

"I said I'm ready to go. But if it's like this, I will not go without a bang. I will expose these rich people who are profiteering from the nation for free. Corruption is really at the top, not at the level of the Customs," he said.

As to the Singapore arbitration tribunal's order for the Philippine government to indemnify Manila Water, Mr. Duterte accused the private companies of being a "member" of a "club" or "brother-

hood" of rich corporations.

"There they are, the rich, interlocking. We lost in the arbitration in Singapore because they are members of that. A club. We lost in the arbitration twice," he said.

The President called the two concessionaires "shameless."

The President ordered the DOJ and the Office of the Solicitor General to review the concession agreements with Manila Water and Maynilad after Metro Manila experienced water shortage in March. —WITH A REPORT FROM INQUIRER RESEARCH INQ



Water level in Angat Dam remains low

MALOLOS – Rains dumped by Typhoon Tisoy in Luzon yesterday barely helped raise the water level in Angat Dam.

Monitoring by the Bulacan provincial disaster risk reduction and management office showed that the water level in the dam was at 189.02 meters as of 2 p.m. yesterday, lower than the 189.05 meters recorded on Monday.

As of 8 a.m. yesterday, the water level even receded to 188.97 meters. It is still 22.98 meters below its ideal

end-of-the-year level of 212 meters.

Sevillo David Jr., executive director of the National Water Resources Board, said water was released from the main turbine of the dam yesterday to generate power because of the red alert situation at the power grid.

The National Power Corp. confirmed the release of water for power generation even as it stressed the need for additional volume to ensure continuous supply for domestic use and irrigation. – **Ramon Efren Lazaro**



Editorial

Manila Water ruling an affront to PH consumers

THE recent ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in Singapore, which ordered the government to reimburse Manila Water Co. Inc. P7.39 billion in supposed losses as a result of lower water rates beginning in 2015, is an insult to every customer of the water concessionaire, and unfortunately, it was completely legal.

This sorry outcome could still have some value, however, if it encourages the government to take steps to ensure it never happens again.

The ruling was the result of an appeal by Manila Water, which in 2012 had sought to raise its basic water rate of P25.07 per cubic meter by P5.83 to P30.90 per cubic meter, with the increase to be spread out over the years 2013 through 2017. Instead of rubber-stamping the rate hike as is usually the practice, regulator Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), in a rare display of consumer advocacy, ordered Manila Water to reduce its rate by P2.77 per cubic meter, or about 11 percent.

After unsuccessfully appealing to MWSS to reverse its decision, in April 2015 Manila Water invoked the dispute resolution mechanism in its concession agreement, and filed a claim for arbitration at The Hague-based PCA's Asia office in Singapore. The arbitral tribunal ruled the government must pay Manila Water for losses it incurred from June 1, 2015 to Nov. 22, 2019, 100 percent of the amount paid by the listed firm to the PCA for court and filing fees, and 85 percent of the Ayala-led company's other claimed costs associated with the rate dispute.

The PCA is one of a handful of international arbitration bodies — another well-known one is the International Court of Arbitration, which is associated with the Paris-based International Chamber of Commerce — that are used as a dispute resolution mechanism in contracts between governments and private enterprises. The arrangement is quite commonly included in public-private partnerships and concession agreements such as the one between MWSS and the two water distributors for the Metro Manila area, Manila Water and Maynilad Water Services Inc.

The rationale behind using an international arbitration body is that it provides a neutral, third-party venue for settling disputes over contracts, instead of subjecting companies — which are often foreign-led — to a country's own court system. In theory, it provides for an objective resolution of disputes. In practice, the system strongly favors the subject business interests over governments, because it was developed by business interests in the first place.

It is, in fact, a perfect scheme from the point of view of business investors: A dispute resolution mechanism, developed by business, heavily biased in favor of business in cases that arise, and included in nearly every type of public-private contract arrangement because "that's how it's done." Because governments badly need private investment in projects and are loath to refuse any investment if there is any possible way to bend to accommodate it, they agree to it. As long as no dispute arises everything is fine; but the definition of what constitutes an actionable dispute is so broad that contract holders can use it to bypass proper regulation, such as what has happened in the Manila Water case.

There is nothing the government can do now except to pay the bill; the outcome, distasteful as it, is a consequence of terms of a valid contract, and these must be honored. The government should, however, look at the cost as 7.39 billion reasons to stop accepting unfair terms in public-private contracts. The party that profits from a contractual arrangement should not be the one to dictate its most important provisions; just because the arbitration mechanism is considered a standard does not mean it is unavoidable.

On a broader scale, this latest development concerning Manila Water, coming as it does after repeated periods of widespread service outages and the adverse final ruling against the company (as well as its counterpart Maynilad) in the 2009 Clean Water Act case should encourage the government to carefully reassess whether the privatization of water distribution is causing more harm than good. Conventional wisdom says that private enterprise always performs better than public agencies. The evidence of our experience with Manila Water, however, is a strong argument to the contrary.



'OPLAN TUBIG PARA SA KINABUKASAN', IKINASA NA!

PAG-AMIN mismo ng National Water Resources Board (NWRB), mukhang imposible na maabot ng Angat Dam ang inaasahang 212 meters elevation nito sa pagtatapos ng taong 2019. Kahapon, nasa 189.07 meters lamang ang taas ng nasabing dam o mababa ng 22.93 meters, ito ay kahit pa pumasok na sa Philippine Area of Responsibility ang Bagyong Tisoy (Typhoon Kammuri) na bagama't may dalang malakas na ulan ayon sa Japan Meteorological Agency ay tutumbukin naman ang Bicol, Samar at Leyte provinces. Pero inaasahan pa rin ang pag-ulan sa Metropolitan Manila.

Kapag mababa ang lebel ng tubig sa Angat Dam, ang kasunod nito ay ang water shortage sa buong Kamaynilaan sa pagsapit ng tag-araw kung saan ay walong pag-ulan. Bilang paghahanda, inilunsad ng Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) sa pangunguna ni Chairman Danilo Lim kasama ang Department of the Interior and Local Go-

vernment (DILG), Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) kasama ang dalawang private concessionaires na Manila Water Company at Maynilad Water Services, at ang NWRB, ang 'OPLAN TUBIG PARA SA KINABUKASAN' na paghahanda at panawagan para sa lahat sa tamang pag-iipon at paggamit ng tubig sa kani-kanilang tahanan at komunidad.

Sabi nga ni MMDA chairman Lim, lubhang napakahalaga ng malinis na tubig sa panahon ng kalamidad upang linisin ang mga masusugatan at hindi magkaroon ng impeksyon. Kung maaalala, base sa pag-aaral ng Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) at MMDA, kung saka-sakaling tatama ang 'The Big One' o ang 7.6 magnitude earthquake at maging sentro ang Metro Manila, aabot sa higit-kumulang 52,000 katao ang direktang mamamatay habang nasa 500,000 ang sugatan.

Bagama't malagim ang pangitain at sana naman ay

huwag mangyari, iba ang alam natin ang posibleng kahantungan ng lahat, kaya nga, ibayong paghahanda ang ginagawa ng pamahalaan partikular ng MMDA na siyang lead agency para sa National Capital Region katuwang ang labingpitong mga chief executive.

May lindol man o wala, sadyang mahirap ang may kakulangan sa tubig. Tayo pa namang mga Pilipino ay mahilig maligo, tatlong beses nga sa isang araw, dala ng mainit na panahon. Mabilis ding makauhaw kapag tag-init dahil tumatagaktak ang pawis natin sa kakapaypay. Natatambakan din tayo ng laba-



DR. HILDA C. ONG

hin at mga gawaing bahay kapag kulang sa tubig, siyempre prioridad natin ang panggamit sa banyo dahil mamamaho naman ang ating mga bahay, problema na naman 'yon.

Malaking perwisyo tala-ga sa lahat kapag may water shortage lalong-lalo na sa ating mga awtoridad na likot sa buong Kamaynilaan para lamang makapagrasyon ng tubig lalong-lalo sa mga mababang lugar na matagal bago datnan ng tubig.

Dagdag pa ni Chairman Danny Lim, sa utos na rin ni Pangulong Digong Duterte ay

kumikilos ang lead agencies para mapaghandaan ang kakulangan sa tubig at hindi na humantong sa malaking suliranin. Nakalatag ang mga plano at hakbangin upang maibsan man lamang ang paparating na krisis.

Kaya sa mga kritiko na nagpapakalat na naman ng fake news tungkol dito, hindi gumagawa ng scenario ang pamahalaan, puwede kayo mismong magtungo sa Angat Dam at tingnan ang sukat nito. Siguro, imbes na puro puna, tumulong kaya kayo sa tamang information dissemination sa ating mga kababayan.





Duterte set to issue land use EO

BY JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ

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PRESIDENT Duterte will soon issue an executive order (EO) that will allow the government to classify lands based on its intended use.

Presidential Spokesman and Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador S. Panelo said Duterte made the announcement after the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) presented the salient provisions of the National Land Use Bill during the 44th Cabinet meeting which was held in Malacañang.

"The President approved the suggestion that the administration first come up with an executive order for the purpose," said Panelo.

He said the EO will serve as a "stopgap measure" until Congress finalizes and approves the National Land Use Bill, which is considered a priority bill by the administration.

Duterte had reiterated in his State of the Nation Address (Sona) last July his appeal to lawmakers to finally pass the proposed National Land Use Act, which he said will attract more investors to the Philippines and will hasten rural development.

The President said he wanted the bill on land use finalized before the end of the year.

Congressional support

CURRENTLY, the Neda said 13 National Land Use Bills are pending at the Committee on Land Use of the House of Representatives.

One of them is House Bill (HB) 158 or the the Act Instituting A National Land Use and Management Policy, filed by Quezon City Sixth District Representative Jose Christopher Y. Belmonte.

SEE "LAND USE," A2

Land use. . .

CONTINUED FROM A8

In an interview, Belmonte told the BUSINESSMIRROR they expect the swift passage of bill at the lower chamber.

Under HB 158, the National Land Use Policy Council will be created to serve as the highest policy-making body on land use and tasked to resolve land use policy conflict between or among government

government offices.

am more than willing to com-

promise with the version of Malacañang to let it move. I have no problem with that. I am sure this is also the case for the other authors [of the related bill]," said Belmonte.

However, Belmonte said this may not be the case in the Senate, where it could face opposition from some senators.

If the measure faces rough sailing in the Senate, Belmonte said it would be up to lobbyists, as well as the Executive branch to exert "pressure" on the Senate to fast-track the approval of its counterpart version of the bill.



Navotas residents receive land titles

By **EDD REYES**

NAVOTAS City Mayor Toby Tiangco led the distribution of land titles to residents of Bgy. North Bay Boulevard North (NBBN) Monday afternoon.

Some 190 members of Samahan ng Mamaniyang Nagkakaisa ng NBBN Inc. (SAMANA) received land titles from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

"I'm happy that after 23 years, you now hold in

your hands the title to your property. You may now sleep soundly, assured in the knowledge that you have legal ownership of your land," Tiangco said.

"I trust that you will take care of your property and you will be responsible in paying your real property tax," he reminded.

The mayor noted that the processing of the land titles started when he was still vice mayor.

"Back then, this area was classified for industrial use. We had to convert it to residential so the DENR

could proceed with the processing of land titles," he explained.

The revised Navotas Comprehensive Land Use Plan, which contained the reclassification or conversion of land use, was approved in 2018.

Present during the title distribution were DENR-National Capital Region Regional Executive Director Jacqueline Caanacan, NBBN Bgy. Chairperson Melvin Manalo, and officers of SAMANA Inc. headed by their president, Amalia Igot.

FARMERS' EVICTION LOOMS

SETTLE BOUNDARY DISPUTE WITH BENGUET, BAGUIO TOLD

By Vincent Cabreza
@vincentcabrezaINQ

BAGUIO CITY—Farmers with tax declarations issued by Tuba town, Benguet province, on Monday asked the city government to resolve its boundary conflicts after they were told to leave their homes.

Residents of Sitio Bilis, Pula and Sala in Barangay Sto. Tomas in Benguet told the city council that they were issued notices of violation for settling on part of a 138-hectare property owned by Baguio.

"Our lands were declared as part of Tuba by our fathers," said Robinson Sadey, who represented the residents, many of whom are strawberry gardeners.

Sadey said the notices were issued last week, giving the settlers a week to prove they have legitimate rights over their lands.

"After a cadastral survey, it now appears our lands are in Baguio," Sadey said. "We know about the boundary dispute [between Tuba and Baguio] so we urge you to settle this [because it] affects our homes," he said.

The dispute arose from the establishment of Baguio by the Americans in 1909.

The Baguio charter delineated the city's areas that changed its neighbor's boundaries. Tuba's municipal hall, for example, is technically part of Baguio territory.

According to Sadey, their area was considered for Baguio's sanitary landfill in 2008 until it was scrapped in favor of a waste-to-energy project to be installed at the Baguio dairy farm. The proposed energy facility lies across the main access road to Tuba.

Common boundaries

Both Baguio and Tuba have common boundaries at Mt. Sto. Tomas, a massive forest reservation that straddles the two towns.

But the subvillages at Mt. Sto. Tomas that are inhabited by families, who have lived there "since time immemorial," fall inside Baguio, based on the delineation prescribed by the city charter, according to Councilor Isabelo Cosalan Jr.

Cosalan sponsored an ordinance designating the Sto. Tomas property for the city government's multiple land use, following a joint survey undertaking with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, which declared the area vacant. INQ

Blastik Project Eco-rangers go beyond collecting plastic bottles to empowering communities



Judelyn Gantes, a 17-year-old senior student, rides around Barangay Enclaro on a low-carbon e-bike collecting the town's PET bottles as an eco-ranger of the Blastik Project.

Over the summer of 2019, Judelyn Gantes, a 17-year-old senior high school student, spent her vacation in the small farming community of Barangay Enclaro and unlike most of her peers – she became a waste collector. Contrary to the stigma about waste collectors, she proudly took on the role of an eco-ranger for the Blastik Project, a plastic collection and recycling program managed by PeacePond, and supported by the Coca-Cola Foundation Philippines.

Along with her father, she first saw it as a livelihood opportunity, but soon it went beyond from being a job and turned into her personal advocacy. "When I joined the Blastik Project it became clear to me what I had to do. Now, I have more concern for the environment. I know that one single bottle has a tremendous effect on our society, wildlife, our environment and to the people," Judelyn shared.

As part of her responsibilities as an eco-ranger, Judelyn collects bottles with an e-bicycle, segregates the bottles from the caps and the labels, then washes and dries them for recycling. Through the technologies from Alternative Indigenous Development Foundation, Inc. (AIDFI), the plastic packaging is transformed into useful items such as chairs, bowls, pavers, and more.

During the humble beginnings of the Blastik Project, many people did not understand the relevance of segregation, collection, and recycling and the vital role of waste collectors in this system.

"Usually we get comments, like 'That's plastic! Why are you picking up plastics? Why do you collect garbage when you can work in different jobs?' So then, we explain and let them understand the effects instead of controlling

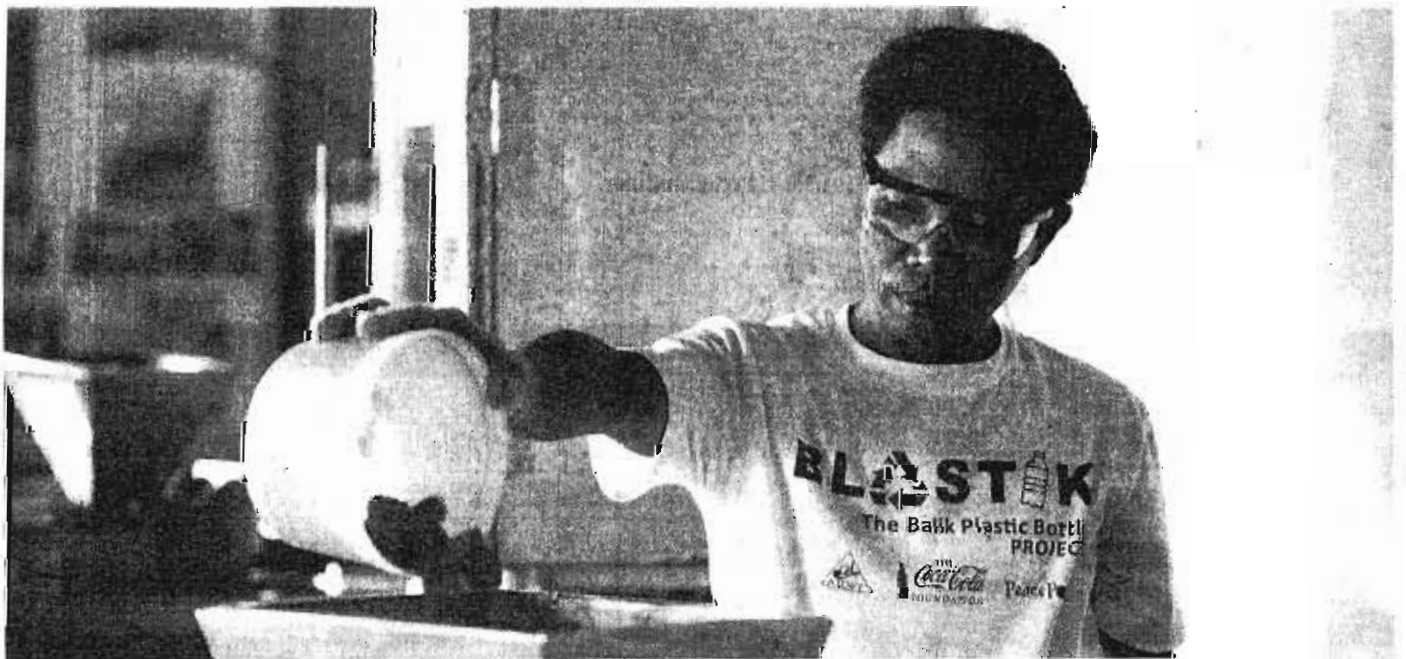
them. We know that we can't please people so the very least that we can do is to be a role model to them. We choose to demonstrate to them the positive outcome of what we are doing," she added.

By example and through educating community members, Judelyn and her fellow eco-rangers were able to inspire their neighbors to become waste warriors as well. The Blastik Project now manages a thriving full-circle, waste management system.

According to Judelyn, the members actively participate in the program, segregating their plastics at home for the eco-rangers to collect, instead of simply discarding them, "Now that I see a lot of people are adapting to Blastik, it feels good that they now have the knowledge about recycling and solid waste management. They have a positive understanding that plastic has value and can be processed into a product that's beneficial to the people."

The Blastik Project is one of the many solid waste management programs supported by Coca-Cola Foundation Philippines all over the country. As part of the Chapter Two program of the Coca-Cola Foundation, the Blastik Project of Peace Pond, a long-time partner of the foundation's water sustainability program, is adding another chapter to the plastic packaging story through the success stories in their communities. Chapter Two program aims to educate, engage, and empower more communities to join the battle against solid waste.

Because of purpose-driven individuals like Judelyn, communities are able to see the value of each and every person taking care of the planet - most especially the waste collectors who work their hardest to create a world without waste.



Blastik Project volunteers are equipped with tools and machines that shreds collected plastic for recycling.



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collecting plastic bottles to empowering
communities.



The Blastik Project by PeacePond spearheads the collection, segregation, and recycling of PET bottles of the small farming town in southern Negros Occidental, creating their own closed-loop community.



Innovative and collaborative action on plastic waste

We all live in a world that generally seems to be on the cusp of the next big thing. From bigger screens to smaller cameras, faster ways of transportation and communication, innovation has truly shaped our society, behavior and interactions.

On a certain level, even the environmental problems that we are facing now — animals going extinct, extreme degradation of natural resources, plastic waste pollution, and the climate crisis, among others — are externalities of these innovations or arguably, a lack thereof.

Fortunately, consumers, companies, and governments have embraced the way of sustainability not just in terms of social responsibility or a separate component of development plans, but refashioning and integrating our way of life with smarter and sustainable alternatives. International and multilevel frameworks such as the Paris Agreement and sustainable development goals bring premium to a balance of environmental, social, and economic considerations for both

THINKING BEYOND POLITICS VANESSA PEPINO

land and ocean ecosystems. These have guided policies and standards implemented on national and local levels.

The heightened awareness about plastic waste pollution in the Philippines, for one, tells us an important story about the importance of sustainable production, proper waste management systems and efficient recycling processes. This discussion opens doors to different points of view, policy options, and technological advancement that can offer viable solutions to reducing plastic waste and reviving our ocean economy.

One that has been gaining ground lately is the complete banning of plastics. Numerous legislation on plastic use bans and tax measures on plastic production have been filed. There are news reports that say President Rodrigo Duterte is in sup-

port of this and might certify this bill as urgent.

While I understand that the motivation is to clean up our act, quite literally, I think the discourse has been simplified to become “since plastic is so bad, we use something else.”

A 2018 report of the American Chemistry Council and accounting firm Trucost says that the shift to alternative packaging will increase environmental costs five times higher than plastic packaging. These abrupt changes may translate into increases in production costs that may be passed on to consumers. This is a significant policy question as cost impacts are more likely to burden households at lower income levels.

Don't get me wrong. It is encouraging to see efforts to revive indigenous packaging such as banana leaves, abaca, and twigs. Though this is challenging enough to replicate, this sheds light to possibilities of innovative packaging that industries and governments can explore.

Scientists in other countries argue that instead of banning



plastics altogether, it would be more sensible to make plastics better or smarter. Plastic packaging replaced paper, glass, tin, and aluminum as it was cheaper, safer, more durable, and lightweight. It was even considered better for the environment at that time since it took less energy to produce plastic and transport goods in plastic packaging. Plastic materials also enabled the increase in the shelf life of food and the decrease of food waste which is recognized as having a big carbon footprint.

Whether our policymakers have taken these into consideration is something we need to confront.

Coca-Cola has recently invested in a state-of-the-art recycling and reprocessing facility in the Philippines that will collect, sort, clean, and wash post-consumer PET plastic bottles and turn them into new bottles using advanced technology. The company also developed and has even opened up its patent rights to the so-called PlantBottle technology which produces 100% recyclable packaging —

and the technology has helped reduce the company's emissions.

Big companies, such as Unilever and Nestle, that have been widely called out for their lack of accountability for the volume of plastic waste that comes from their products, have similarly committed to adhering to a closed loop system of waste management, using recyclable, reusable, or industrially compostable packaging and less virgin plastic, and helping in environmental education.

Instead of banning plastic use, government needs to support large-scale and comprehensive solutions. Government needs to incentivize innovative solutions to curb plastic waste pollution that can be widely implemented and replicated. It needs to hold accountable households, LGUs, and companies and implement existing environmental policies. We need to strengthen current systems of waste management and recycling processes to prepare for newer technologies such as biodegradable plastics and alternative packaging.

The challenge of cleaning up and rehabilitating Manila Bay is a wake-up call, and along with the tons of plastic waste are the social, economic, and financial implications that are beginning to surface.

Without implementing and strengthening regulatory mechanisms to penalize waste mismanagement behavior among consumers, establishments and LGUs, our bodies of water will still end up being polluted and our ecosystem adversely affected whatever alternative material we use. Ultimately, it all depends on policies and actions crafted with innovation and collaboration.

The sustainability trend is unlikely to disappear soon — hopefully never. We may not be ahead of the curve, but there is still a narrow window open to adopt comprehensive, innovative, more sensible approaches to plastic waste pollution and other environmental challenges. ■

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VANESSA PEPINO is a Non-Resident Fellow of the Stratbase ADR Institute.



editorial

Taxing single-use plastic bags needs careful study

IMAGES of dead marine creatures that have ingested plastic materials and of living tortoises caught in nets have prompted many to call for a ban on plastics. Experts even warned that humans are now also consuming the plastic debris they throw in seas and oceans. The plastic debris enter the food chain via the fish that ingest microplastics, which the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration defined as any type of plastic fragment that is less than 5 millimeters.

The horror of discovering that plastic debris has now found its way into the food we eat has resulted in knee-jerk reactions, such as the call for a total ban on the use of plastic (*See, "Duterte backs legislation to ban plastic use," in the BUSINESSMIRROR, November 8, 2019*). The President even signaled his preference for legislation to authorize the ban. In place of plastic, advocates of the ban want a shift to more environment-friendly packaging materials made of biodegradable matter, such as paper, which comes from trees.

Following the President's pronouncement, lawmakers at the House of Representatives have started deliberating a bill that seeks to impose excise tax on single-use plastic bags. House Committee on Ways and Means Vice Chairman Estrellita B. Suansing of Nueva Ecija said her proposal targets supermarkets, malls, shops, stores and similar establishments. However, House Minority Leader Bienvenido Abante Jr. wants a total ban on single-use plastic and to hike the excise tax on reusable plastic.

The protection of the environment was cited by advocates as the single biggest reason for their push to ban plastics and to slap an excise tax on single-use plastics. Unfortunately, imposing taxes will not discourage single use and will only penalize the poor who have grown dependent on plastic. For the poor, plastic bags have become the most convenient means of carrying their groceries and food items that they consume in construction sites or even in their air-conditioned offices.

The tax will only be passed on to consumers and raise the price of goods and it is likely that businessmen will not absorb the cost. This has always been the case whenever government decides to tax certain items. The dependency of Pinoy consumers on plastic containers and packaging materials has given rise to an industry that may be forced to lay off workers if the government will insist on a total ban on plastics.

The shift to the paper-based packaging materials will also be stressful to the environment as more trees will have to be cut down to meet the spike in demand for paper. This could result in the further denudation of the country's forests, which had to give way to more houses as the country's population expands. The consequent increase in demand will make paper more expensive and raise the production cost of industries that depend on it.

Instead of an outright ban on plastics or imposing taxes, Congress could consider giving out incentives to consumers and industries that will use biodegradable packaging materials. To protect the remaining forest cover of the country, the government must now encourage the cultivation of bamboo, a sturdy material that can also be used to construct houses. Tax perks must be given to companies that will find a way to add value to locally grown bamboo.

The government can do a lot to ensure that the transition to reducing the use of plastics will be less painful. Measures to encourage people to use alternatives, however, will require political will to implement. Information and education campaign will help, but the government must not stop there.



ILOILO LGUs IPINAKITA ANG PRODUKTONG GAWA SA RECYCLABLE MATERIALS



RECYCLED PRODUCTS. *Ipinapakita ng mga opisyal ng barangay sa bayan ng Badiangan, Iloilo kung paano pakinabangan ang itinapong basura at gawing pagkakakitaan. 12 bayan sa Iloilo ang nag-display ng kanilang recycled products nitong Disyembre 2, 2019 sa Iloilo provincial Capitol lobby bilang simula ng Solid Waste Awareness week ng probinsiya*
PNA Photo by **GAIL MOMBLAN**

PARA ipaalam ang kanilang suporta sa solid waste management program ng probinsiya, 12 Iloilo governments units (LGUs) ang nagpakita kamakailan ng produkto at kanilang likha mula sa recyclable materials.

Nag-exhibit ang isang dosenang LGUs ng kanilang recycled products at ipinakita ang kanilang magandang gawain tungkol sa mga basura sa Iloilo provincial Capitol bilang simula ng Solid Waste Management Awareness week sa probinsiya ayon kay Mitzi Peñaflores, senior environment management specialist of Iloilo Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office, sa isang panayam.

"They have shown here the products that were made from the recyclable materials that are readily available in their respective

communities. This is one of our efforts to show the province that the trash can still be made useful and even saleable," sabi ni Peñaflores.

Ilan sa mga item na display ay bags, slippers, decorative pots, pillows, stuffed toys, at silya na gawa sa plastic at ibang residual wastes.

Kasama sa exhibit ay decorated bottles, paper flower vases, key chains, at manika na dinamitan ng left-over fabrics.

"These products are eco-friendly choices of the Ilonggos who wish to give their relatives and friends something special this holiday season," sabi niya.

Dahil ang ibang items ay pang-benta, linitingnan ng PENRO-Iloilo na kunin ang Local Economic Development and Investment Promotion (LEDIP)

Center para maglagay ng label, magpakete sa mga produkto at ihanda para sa merkado.

"We will help them in packaging the products. We will tap the LEDIP to help especially on the costing to put value in the effort and materials used by our participants" sabi niya.

Sumali na rin ang mga bayan ng Miag-ao, Batad, Ajuy, San Dionisio, New Lucena, Santa Barbara, Dumangas, Tigbauan, Leon, Badiangan, Cabatuan, at siyudad ng Passi sa product display.

Pahayag ni Peñaflores na bawat isa sa 43 na local government units sa probinsiya ay may kanilang recyclable products na napipisil para punuin ang anim na palapag ng provincial Capitol sa Solid Waste Management Week celebration sa susunod na taon.
PNA



Kahit ang OCA, 'nganga' at 'abusadong opisyal' ng Maynila

THE SOUTHERN WATCH Paul's Alarm



By Paul Gutierrez

BAGO ang lahat, sinserong pakikiramay ang ating ipinahahatid kay 'Boss' George Reyes, dating editor sa Manila Standard, 'page administrator' ng 'Bifan Today' sa 'Facebook' at isa sa mga "haligi" ng 'Press Freedom Party' ng National Press Club (NPC) sa hanay ng mga 'lifetime members' nito.

Marami kaming "masasayang" araw—at gabi—ni Boss George sa 'restobar' ng NPC at marami rin naman akong "natutunan" sa kanya, tama ba, 'Boss' Jimmy Montejo?

Oh well, "mag-enjoy" ka sa patutunguhan mo, Boss George! Natitiyak kong "masaya" kang "sasalubungin" ng mga "katropa" mo sa NPC—Butch del Castillo, Cip Roxas, Willie Baun, 'Mommy Tiger' Andolong, at marami pang iba. Mabuhay ka, Boss George!

At nasimulan na rin lang sa "pakikiramay," 'sincere condolence' din kay kasamang Benjie Caballero ng 'Radyo ni Juan' station sa Sultan Kudarat/Tacurong City na inambus kamakailan at binawian ng buhay noong nakaraang Linggo, Disyembre 1.

Samantala, harinawa rin na 'maka-recover' sa matinding 'heart attack' si kasamang Saul Pa-a ng Phil. News Agency (PNA) Calabarzon. Isa rin si Saul

sa mga tagasuporta ng NPC sa Calabarzon.

Habang "binabayo" ang bansa ni Bagyong Tisoy, patuloy namang "inuulan" ng papuri at paghanga ang nangyaring opening ceremony noong Sabado ng ating 'hosting' ng '30th Southeast Asian Games' (SEA Games).

Aber, kung "nganga" at "natameme" ang mga Dilawan dahil sa ganda ng okasyon kaya nabalewala ang kanilang mga batikos at "paninirang-puri," ibang klaseng "nganga" naman—dahil sa sobrang paghanga—ang nasambit ni Olympic Council for Asia (OCA) vice president, Wei Jishong.

Dahil 'impressed to the bones,' wika nga, hinimok ni Wei ang 'Pinas na 'mag-bid' bilang 'host country' ng Asian Olympics sa 2030 edition nito!

Sa totoo lang, kung mangyari ito, dear readers, malaking karangalan ito sa ating lahat dahil para na rin tayong 'nag-host' ng 'Olympiad' dahil sa matinding preparasyon na kailangang gawin, hindi ba?

Bago ito, "humanga" rin si Wei sa ipinakitang 'humility' ni PDU30 at Speaker Alan Cayetano, sa kanilang "paghingi" ng "dispensa" sa mga naunang 'glitches' bago ang porma na pagbubukas ng SEA Games.

Dangan kasi, sa panahon ngayon, sadyang "bi-

hira" na tayong makakita ng mga lider na handang "magpakumbaba" sa harap ng ating mga 'foreign visitors' at mga kababayan.

Dagdag pa nga ni Wei, talagang "hindi maiiwasan" ang pagkakaroon ng aberya sa mga malalaking torneo at kahit sa Asian Games ay "sumusulpot" ang ganitong problema.

Mabuti pa itong si Wei, "marunong" kumilala at "pumuri" sa pagpupunyagi ng ating bansa para maiddos nang mahusay ang 30th SEA Games. Hindi "katulad" ng ilan d'yan, hehe!

Harinawang "matauhan" na ang mga tao at grupo na walang inaatupag hanggang ngayon kundi ang magbafó ng mga puna at batikos? Harinawang makita na nila ang katotohanan na hindi kayang igupo ng mga negatibong usapin ang dangal, tatag at dignidad ng atletang Pinoy.

Bakit ba kasi hindi na lang tayo magkaisa sa pagpalakpak at pag-suporta sa lahat ng mga manlalarong lumalahok sa SEA Games?

Hindi yung tayo pa ang bumibira sa sarili nating bayan. Di pa ba kayo natutuwa niyan, sa ikalawang araw pa lang ng torneo, higit 30 medalyang ginto na ang nakuha ng 'Pinas at hindi malayong muli tayong tanghalin bilang "da best" in Southeast Asia bilang overall champion?

Marami sa ating mga miron sa Maynila ang nagtatanong kung hanggang saan ang "pagtitimpi" ni Mayor Isko 'Kois' Moreno, dito sa isang dating kose-

hal at ngayon ay opisyal ng kanyang administrasyon?

Una nang "kumalat" sa City Hall ang "balita" na "siya at ang kanyang anak na lalaki ay "pinosasan" ng NBI noong Oktubre dahil "nangingikil" umano sa ilang establisyamento d'yan sa Malate area.

"Depensa" naman ng isa nating kaibigan sa City Hall, "hindi" ito totoo at "yung anak lang daw nitong si 'Mr. City Hall Official' ang "sumabit." Ganun ba? Eh, 'di...wow, hehehe!

Inireklamo na rin pala ng ilang 'netizen' itong nasabing opisyal dahil "naplakakan" at lumabas sa social media na ginagamit ang sasakyan ng city hall para sa kanyang 'bar/restaurant' d'yan din sa Malate area—kahit alam niyang labag ito sa regulasyon at sa gustong mangyari ni Mayor Kois na "tapat" at "malinis" na serbisyo publiko.

Ang siste pa, "nakumirma" natin na ginagamit nitong opisyal na ito ang kanyang makapangyarihang posisyon sa city hall para "perwisyuhin" ang mga kalaban niyang 'restobar' hindi lang sa Malate, bagkus, sa buong Maynila, talaga rin naman, tsk,tsk,tsk!

At any rate, "nakamasid" ang ating mga miron sa ginagawa nitong mamang ito na sinasabing "malaking pagkakamali" kung bakit "pinagtiwalaan" ni Mayor Kois.

Oops! Bago ko pala makalimutan, DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu. May "ibubungang maganda" ang "pagtama" ng Bagyong Tisoy sa Maynila da-

Turn to Page 5

Kahit...

Mula sa pahina 4

hil napipiho natin na "sasalya" sa 'breakwater' ng Manila Bay ang mga basura kaya hindi na mahirapang "hakutin" ang

mga ito hindi ba?

Puwedeng sabihin na 'blessing in disguise' ito sa nagpapatuloy na 'Save Manila Bay campaign' ng pamahalaan.

At "pakisilip" mo na rin ang isang restobar d'yan sa "gilid" ng Manila Bay, malapit sa 'Ocean Park.'

Aho pa ba kasi ang "ginagawa" nang restobar na 'yan sa nasabing lugar samantalang "nakatirik" sa gilid mismo ng Manila Bay?

Saan kaya, Sec. Roy, napupunta ang mga "basura" at 'untreated wastewater' n'yan? Hindi na sig-

uro dapat pag-isipan yan, hehe!

Dahil ba mga opisyal din ng city hall ang sinasabing 'behind' (nasa likod) nitong restobar na ito kaya kinukunsinti, ehek, hindi na lang pinapansin?

Nagtatanong lang naman. Abangan!



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
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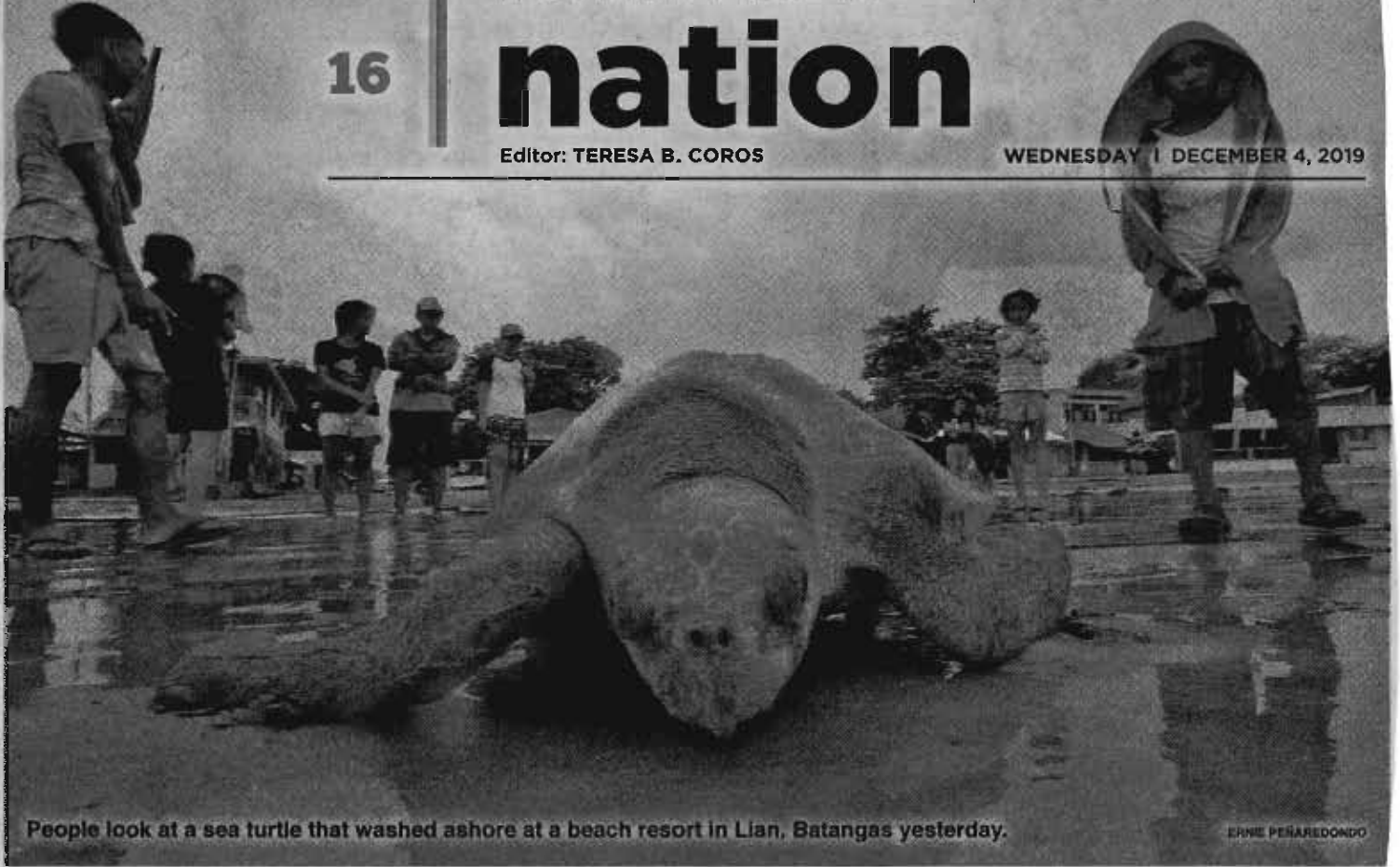
THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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nation

Editor: TERESA B. COROS

WEDNESDAY | DECEMBER 4, 2019



People look at a sea turtle that washed ashore at a beach resort in Lian, Batangas yesterday.

ERNE PEÑAREDONDO



HE PROTECTED CROWD BY COVERING GRENADE WITH HIS BODY

COP WHO SAVED VILLAGERS FROM BLAST HAILED AS HERO

By Richel Umel
@inqnational

INITAO, MISAMIS ORIENTAL—Still reeling from the grenade explosion that killed two people and wounded 16 others last week, this sleepy town in Misamis Oriental province remembers the policeman who saved people from the blast that could have killed or injured them.

An English graduate who served the police force in the last nine years, Master Sergeant Jason Magno, 46, had trained in basic explosive ordnance disposal, which could have prompted him to cover the grenade with his body in the last moments of his life, according to Brig. Gen. Rolando Anduyan, the Northern Mindanao police chief.

Anduyan said Magno's body posture while trying to wrest the grenade from one of those killed showed the instinct he developed for years as bomb expert.

He said Magno was trying to protect the people around him by shielding the grenade with his body as he tried to wrest the

explosive from the man.

"He was attempting to render the explosive safe. His moves [showed that he] was trying to twist the head of the grenade, where the blasting cap was situated, so that it would not explode," he said.

Anduyan said he learned from people in Initao town, where Magno grew up and lived, that they used to seek the policeman's help whenever there was trouble.

Third time

Magno's wife, Vivian, said the incident in Initao was the third time that he had put his life at stake to fulfill his duty as a policeman.

She could no longer remember the year when Magno tried to pacify a retired Scout Ranger involved in a shooting incident at Initao public market.

When protesters staged a blockade in Lugait town, also in Misamis Oriental, Magno was hurt after he was hit by a stone thrown by the mob. Yet he was able to pacify the protesters.

"That was okay because that was part of his work and he

came home alive," Vivian said.

But Magno did not survive the incident at Initao College on Thursday when an angry Ibrahim Bashir, 65, brought a grenade at the town's city environment and natural resources office (Cenro), where his seized Isuzu forward truck had been kept since March after it was used by its driver to transport lauan logs without permit.

Bashir had removed the grenade pin, prompting the Cenro staff to run to a nearby covered court located within the unfenced Initao College.

A video that circulated after the event showed Magno trying to wrest from Bashir the grenade which eventually exploded.

Selfless act

Anduyan said he would recommend to President Duterte the awarding of the Medal of Valor to the slain policeman.

"It would be good for his family because it carries with it corresponding benefits, including scholarships for his children," Anduyan said, adding that it was "not every

day that a police officer would do a selfless act like what Magno did."

Bashir's family appealed to the public not to judge Ibrahim unfairly because he was not in his right mind (he was undergoing dialysis), and that he had been going back and forth to the Cenro office for months asking for the release of his truck.

Humble and kind

Magno's mother, Princesita, 73, a retired teacher, described her son as "humble, generous and kind." "He's very generous. When someone asked for his help, he was always ready to help," she said, adding that he had always cared for her.

Magno entered the police force in 2000, on the encouragement of his uncle, also a policeman. He used to serve the Police Regional Mobile Group in Lanao del Norte province when the fighting between government troops and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front there was at its height. —WITH REPORTS FROM GERMELINA LACORTE AND DIVINA SUSON INQ



CTPCMC'S AWARDS. C.T.P. Construction and Mining Corp. receives two platinum achievement awards from the Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Award Selection Committee for their surface mining operations in Carrascal, Surigao del Sur. Attending the awarding ceremony during the 66th Annual National Mine Safety and Environmental Conference in Baguio City are (from left) Mines and Geosciences Bureau director Wilfredo Moncano, CTPCMC engineer Charlo Basadre, CTPCMC president and chief executive Clarence Pimentel Jr., environmental protection and enhancement officer Yones Lumba, engineer Henry Naputlag and Philippine Mining & Exploration Association president Joey Ayson.



Casting away coal addiction for survival

BY HEHERSON T. ALVAREZ

Conclusion

2. Upscale low-carbon farming methods in irrigation systems nationwide, such as organic farming, which eliminates the use of fossil fuel-based agrochemical and the system of rice intensification (SRI), which reduces agricultural methane by minimizing rice field flooding. These systems also improve farmers' income and health.

3. Mandate segregation and recycling projects in municipalities and cities to control pollution and greenhouse-gas emissions from solid and liquid wastes, while turning them into sources of local jobs and income.

4. Manage the ongoing energy transition from fossil fuels to new renewables to reduce carbon emissions and, at the same time, maximize flexibility, preserve potentially game-changing options, enhance job creation and minimize the cost of electricity to consumers. Pilot proven energy efficiency and renewable technologies in government buildings and other structures, to set the example for the rest of the country. Solarizing the Malacañang building would be a model of inspiring government offices to follow the lead of the Palace.

5. Acquire electric vehicles for some government offices, to initiate the necessary infrastructure of charging stations that can spur other early adopters to shift to EVs.

6. Provide a comprehensive cultural, science-based communications and effective education with inclusive, transformative lifelong learning involving all disciplines of the arts and forms of media through a focused program with the support of an inter-agency cluster of tourism, social welfare and NEDA, including the rehabilitation of climate refugees.

7. Direct DOST, Department of Information and Communications Technology, Climate Change Commission and the Civil Service Commission to conduct a joint study to adopt Internet protocol that will permit at least 35 percent of public and private employees to work at home, three days a week. This will help reduce transport traffic, cut pollution and improve efficiency.

8. Tax appropriately and fairly COAL to excise its hidden and overt subsidy to level the playing field as one of the incentives for the entry of renewable energy.

B. Adaptation Initiatives:

Preparing ourselves to cope with the risks of climate change.

1. Direct all cities in NCR to propose 20 initiatives to protect and strengthen their cities, including three key actions: managing the risk of flooding, increasing areas for parks and vegetation, and improving water and energy efficiency. Proposals must be based on identified hazards and assessed risk of climate-change impacts on the most vulnerable areas and infrastructure within their territories.

2. Implement job-creating agro-forestry programs for enhancing the resilience of farms to climate impacts, reducing land degradation, and improving soil quality and productivity to ensure diversified and secure food production in various

parts of the country.

3. Provide special funding to highly vulnerable LGUs, like Cagayan de Oro and Ilagan, and local universities, Pagasa and NRRDC for the development and implementation of adaptation plans based on multi-hazard scenario-based assessment of risks and vulnerabilities.

4. For food security, direct the Department of Agriculture to include more resilient crops than rice and corn in its programs, and enhance the adaptive capacity of small-scale agriculture, especially in the Cordillera region, the Cagayan Valley and parts of Mindanao.

5. Direct the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to promote and provide support for the cultivation of mangrove forests by coastal communities for their protection from storm surges, and opportunities for food, income and recreation.

6. Allocate appropriate fund and direct the Commission on Higher Education, the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to implement nationwide rollout, information dissemination, and training of teachers and students in integrating climate change and disaster risk issues in the K to 12 and other curricula. This can spark a nationwide trend for innovation and promotion of science-based solutions in communities and LGUs.

7. Require and assist DepEd and DOH to provide schools and clinics in distant barangays with supplementary power from local renewable energy sources. Incentives for installing and operating backup RE power sources by government agencies and units, medical facilities and schools should also be provided.

8. Declare the 175-hectare Las Piñas-Paranaque Critical Habitat and

Ecotourism Area of NCR, and similar critical areas, as Climate Change Adaptation Projects and commit Pagcor funding for their planning, beautification and cleanup.

9. Support the call of LGUs for the reform of the People's Survival Fund. The PSF was created in 2012, but remains generally dormant due to weak organizational mechanisms.

President Duterte supported the recent global strike on Climate Justice, Peace and Clean up kicked off in the Philippines by the Earthsavers Unesco Dream Center, Climate Institute and its partners that created the unique Gallery of the Sea that was applauded by him in his message:

"This administration recognizes that armed conflict and climate change are among the greatest challenges our society faces today. I thus commend your organization for being our reliable partner in upholding our peace-building efforts and environmental conservation programs. I also hope that you will encourage others to take concrete steps in preserving our natural resources and leading a more sustainable and responsible lifestyle."

The President, therefore, is in a unique position to initiate a cultural revolution to bring about a regime of plenty by protecting the nation from the ravages of inevitable, intensified extreme weather occurrence that will submerge our coastal towns, threatening the survival of our nation.

Heherston T. Alvarez is former senator and Isabela representative who served as Environment secretary, as well as Climate Change secretary. He is the founder of Earthsavers, honored as a Unesco Dream Center and is currently chairman of the advisory board of Climate Institute, among the oldest international NGO based in Washington, D.C., Tel. 0917-8711161 or 0815-8983947.





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'Emergency awareness year' sa kalamidad pinadedeklara

Inihain kamakailan ni Albay Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda sa Kamara ang kanyang House Resolution 535 na humihiling na ideklara ang 2020 bilang Disaster and Climate Emergency Awareness Year.

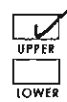
Ang panawagan ay ginawa upang lalong paigtingin ang pagpukaw sa kamalayan ng bansa sa banta ng lalong lumalakas na mga bagyong dulot ng climate change.

Ang HR 535 ay bilang tugon sa panawagan ng Philippine Councilor's League (PCL) na dumalaw sa Kamara ang mga lider matapos ang First PCL Conference on Climate-Disaster Resilience and Federalism Governance sa Quezon City.

Pinangunahan ni Albay Board Member Jesciel Richard Salceda, hiniling nila sa mga mambabatas, kasama si House Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano, na ikonsidera ang working output ng kanilang PCL climate change conference – na madeklara ang 2020 bilang Disaster and Climate Change Awareness Year.

Kamakailan ay inaprubahan ng United Nations (UN) Green Climate Fund (GCF) ang \$10 milyong ayuda sa Pilipinas para sa multi-hazard impact-based forecasting and early warning system (MH-IBF-EWS) ng bansa.

"Sadyang kailangan ng mga kalamidad na ito ang wastong tugon ng pamahalaan – pambansa at lokal – at pati ang paggasta ng bansa at dapat ding nakakatugon sa mga ito," sabi ni Salceda.



Boracay posts P49.861 billion in tourism revenue in 10 months

MALAY, Aklan—Boracay's tourism industry has generated a total of P49.861 billion in revenue as visitor arrivals aggregated to 1,742,459 in the first 10 months of 2019, or 151.76 percent higher than the recorded number of 692,124 travelers during the same period last year, according to the latest data from the Department of Tourism (DOT)-Region 6.

Based on a report furnished by DOT-Boracay Senior Tourism Operations Officer (TOO) Marc Judicpa to the *BUSINESSMIRROR*, foreign tourists who came to the world-renown island reached 891,298 from January to October of this year.

China was Boracay's top market, registering 389,885 visit count; followed by Korea, 334,201; Taiwan, 28,455; the United States, 20,100; the United Kingdom, 10,539; Australia, 9,988; Saudi Arabia, 9,639; Japan, 9,506; Russia, 9,310; and Germany, 5,908.

Local tourists and overseas Filipino workers who went there also increased during the period as they accounted for 796,908 and 54,253, respectively, of the total tourist arrival. He said that the tourism volume hike is indicative of the recovery of the island of Boracay since its reopening last October 25, 2018, after a six-month closure order from President Duterte due to environmental degradation issue.

Another factor that showed the famed destination is getting back on its feet is the rise in tourism establishments, or entities now operating in Boracay.

As of December 1, a total of 388 accommodation facilities has been accredited by the DOT to cater to visitors. These include 80 resorts, 26 hotels, 276 "Mabuhay" accommodation and six apartment hotels. Inventory-wise, they house a total of 14,169 rooms.

Other primary tourism establishments currently available are: travel agencies and tour operators at 65; tour guides (Aklan-based), 56; and tourist water transport operators, four. Secondary entities are composed of restaurants at 82; spas, nine; tourism recreation facilities, 19; and specialty and souvenir shops, 30.

"If we will base the number of accommodation and tourism establishments approved by the DOT, we can roughly say that recovery level is at 85 percent compared to Boracay's pre-closure," Judicpa told reporters on Monday during a media briefing organized by Citic Hotel as part of the press tour of the soon to be fully

operational hospitality player at Station 1.

He was referring to the upturn of businesses in terms of compliance to the tourism agency's requirements.

Boracay's carrying capacity on a daily basis has, likewise, improved between 12,000 to 13,000. The DOT previously said the island can accommodate only 6,405 tourists everyday.

But with a study conducted by University of the Philippines-Los Baños (UPLB), which multiplied the latter figure to the average traveler's three-day stay, the capacity is now pegged at 19,215 daily visitors.

"So we are still not crossing beyond that," the senior TOO of DOT-Boracay said of the crowd situation there that remains manageable.

Need for decongestion even if Boracay is not "over-capacitated" yet, a top ranking official of the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines suggested the need for its decongestion early on.

"That's why we're looking for several destinations nearby Boracay, wherein there could be an activity for our tourists," said Alberto Gadia Jr., market specialist III for sales division at TPB.

With the help of the DOT-Region 6, he cited that they are now promoting some alternative sites, such as Motag Living Museum in Malay, Aklan; the Bugang River in Antique, which has been declared by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources as the cleanest in the country; and the sustainable communities in Kalibo, also of Aklan.

"The idea is that we have to distribute the economy to everyone. We are 7,600 islands. So that's what we want and, at the same time, this will be a great help for the local government units," he said.

For Gadia, he sees that driving the tourists to go to other "must-visit" sites would not be detrimental to Boracay, that is currently recuperating from its two-year rehabilitation. Based on the technical study of UPLB, the 19,215 carrying capacity need not have to be maximized, according to him. He said: "As a rule, 50 percent of the total carrying capacity would be enough technically, especially if it's a prime destination."

Given that half of that of Boracay would be close to 10,000 daily tourist arrivals, so the 12,000 to 13,000 average is just enough reason for decongestion, Gadia stressed. *Roderick L. Abad*



THE CORNER ORACLE

ANDREW J. MASIGAN

Why sustainable tourism makes sense

Many struggle to understand why Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat chose to make sustainable tourism the centerpiece agenda of the Department of Tourism (DOT). They argue that our visitor count is still too low to worry about sustainability. Our 8.2 million visitors is but half of Indonesia's and a fifth of Thailand's. Certainly, before we talk about sustainability, we ought to build our numbers first.



Last week, the Joint Foreign Chambers of Commerce hosted an event that put the spotlight on Tourism. Usec. Benito Bengzon spoke on behalf of the DOT and put perspective on its sustainability program.

First of all, we should understand that as a tourism product, the Philippines is unique. Although our intake of foreign visitors may be less than some of our neighbors, the revenues derived from them are substantial due to high per capita spending. Records show that the average tourist spends \$1,184 in the Philippines. This indicates that tourists stay longer here than in most parts of ASEAN and spend more on food, lodging and entertainment. We get more leisure visitors than we do the budget backpackers. Last year, tourism receipts amounted to \$7.6 billion while tourism related businesses, taken collectively, amounted to some \$45 billion. One in every eight jobs in the Philippines is tourism related.

For decades, we've milked our cultural sites and tourist spots for every penny they were worth. We over-built, over-stressed and over-run them without regard for their maintenance or longevity. Our view of tourism has been shortsighted.

The tipping point came when President Duterte declared Boracay a cesspool (which it was beginning to become, if not addressed). He made us realize that we could lose the jewel in our crown if we left things as they were. We all knew he was right. The President's decision to close the island for rehabilitation was a painful but necessary pill we had to swallow.

While the stakeholders in Boracay took a financial hit with its closure, the exercise taught us important lessons. It made us realize how overcrowding without infrastructure can backfire; It taught us that we can continue to derive economic benefits from our tourism sites if only we take care of them; It made us realize that invisible infrastructure (power and wastewater treatment plants) must precede visible infrastructure (roads, hotels and ports). Finally, it showed us that if left alone, nature heals itself.

The environmental degradation that happened in Boracay is now happening in Palawan, Bohol, Surigao and Cebu at an accelerated rate. A study by the Partnership in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) reported that the country's ocean health index ranked an alarming 165th among 221 countries. This is due to an ever growing population, unregulated development and desludging of septic tanks – all on the back of tourists influx.

Exacerbating matters is the fact that only nine out of the country's 17 regions have solid and wastewater management plans in place.

With this as context, Secretary Romulo-Puyat's decision to focus on sustainability makes sense.

The good news is that the thrust toward sustainability has not come at the expense of growth. From January to September this year, foreign arrivals grew three times faster than the global average, clocking-in a growth rate of 14.37 percent. We are well on our way toward attaining the 2019 target and surpassing 12.5 million visitors by 2022.

The move to preserve our ecosystem goes beyond national interest – it is our duty as responsible global citizen. Unknown to many, the Philippines is one of the most biologically diverse countries both on land and sea. A large percentage of the world's animal species, specifically, 59% of mammals, 45% of birds, 77% of reptiles and 81% of amphibians call the Philippines their home. Our marine ecosystem is so rich that it was declared the world's center for marine biodiversity. In terms of flora, 60% of the world's plant life are endemic to the Philippines.

We have everything to gain by protecting our ecosystem and everything to lose if we allow it to deteriorate for short term gain.

At the heart of environmental stress is overcrowding. Having more tourists than the true carrying capacity of a site leads to waste disposal problems, air and water pollution and imbalances in the food chain.

Despite the DOT's strong drive toward sustainability, it has yet to ascertain the true carrying capacities of most of our tourism sites. From the looks of it, Panglao, Oslob and Puerto Galera are already over-run. Establishing the true carrying capacity should be the priority of the DOT at this juncture.

With carrying capacities established, the DOT and LGUs can control the influx of tourists by limiting the permits for new lodging facilities. Carrying capacities can be adjusted upward as invisible infrastructure are put in place.

There are enough laws to enable the DOT to enforce sustainable tourism practices across the land. Among them are the Tourism Act of 2009, which requires LGUs to develop their respective tourism plans according to sustainable principles; the National Ecotourism Strategy, which requires LGUs to formulate programs to protect natural habitats of flora and fauna in their respective localities; and the Farm Tourism Development Act, which calls on LGUs to create programs for environmentally friendly farm tourism practices.

The LGUs hold the key to sustainability. They can either go the way of the Boracay officials (pre-rehab) who ignored zoning laws and "sold" business permits like they were bananaque, or go the way of Palawan's local government who will soon allow only carbon-neutral resorts in the island.

With two years left in this administration, it will do well for the DOT to invest on an information drive to give the LGUs a better appreciation of sustainable principles. They need to be trained on best practices and benchmarks of success. More importantly, the DOT must establish strict controls against over-crowding, which is the real enemy.

The Philippines may not have as much tourists as Indonesia and Thailand today. But what the DOT is doing ensures us that our tourist sites will remain viable for decades to come. By 2050, when Bali is overrun and Koh Samui is over polluted, El Nido, Boracay and the rest of our islands will remain the bright and pristine jewels they were meant to be.



SAY MO ATTORNEY?



**By ATTY. PERSIDA
RUEDA-ACOSTA**

KGG. na Chief Acosta,
WALONG buwan na ang nakalipas matapos na ipagutos ng Professional Regulatory Board of Environmental Planning ang revocation ng aking certificate of registration. Kailan kaya maaaring maipareissue ang aking certificate of registration?

Lubos na gumagalang,
Quan

Dear Quan,
Para sa inyong kaalaman, ang batas na sumasaklaw sa sitwasyon na inyong inilahad ay ang Sec-

Quan, ang iyong kaso ay saklaw ng 'Environmental Planning Act of 2013'

tion 23 ng Republic Act No. 10587 na mas kilala bilang "Environmental Planning Act of 2013", na kung saan nakasaad ang sumusunod:

"Section 23. Reissuance of Revoked Certificate of Registration, Replacement of Lost or Damaged Certificate of Registration, Professional Identification Card or Temporary/Special Permit. - The Board may, upon petition, reinstate or reissue a revoked Certificate of Registration after two (2) years from the effectivity of the revocation, which is the date of surrender of the said certificate and/or the Professional Identification Card to the Board and/or the Commission. The Board may not require the holder thereof to take another licensure examination. The petitioner shall prove to the Board that he/she has valid reasons to resume the practice of his/her profession. For the grant of his/her petition, the Board shall issue a Board Resolution subject to approval by the Commission." xxx (Bini-

gyang-diin)

Ibig sabihin, matapos ang dalawang taon magmula nang revocation ng inyong certificate of registration, na itinuturing na nagmumula sa petsa ng pag-sauli ng nasabing sertipikasyon o/at professional identification card sa Professional Regulatory Board of Environmental Planning o/at sa Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), ay maaari na kayong magsumite ng petisyon upang maipareinstate ang inyong sertipikasyon. Kaugnay nito, maaaring magdesisyon ang Professional Regulatory Board of Environmental Planning na hindi na kayo pakuhanin ng panibagong licensure examination. Nararapat din kayong magpatunay na mayroon kayong mga sapat na dahilan upang magtrabahong muli bilang environmental planner. Kung sakaling mapagbigyan ang petisyon, maglalabas ng board res-

olution ang Professional Regulatory Board of Environmental Planning, na maaaring sang-ayunan ng PRC. Dangan nga lamang sa inyong sitwasyon, hindi pa kayo maaaring maghain ng petisyon upang ma-reinstate ang inyong certificate of registration, dahil hindi pa natatapos ang dalawang taon magmula nang revocation nito.

Nawa ay nasagot namin ang inyong mga katanungan. Nais naming ipaalala sa inyo na ang opinyong ito ay nakabase sa inyong mga salaysay sa inyong liham at sa pagkaintindi namin dito. Maaaring maiba ang opinyon kung mayroong karagdagang impormasyon na ibibigay. Mas mainam kung personal kayong sasangguni sa isang abogado.

Ang inyong Lingkod Bayan,
**DR. PERSIDA V. RUE-
DA-ACOSTA, DSD**
Punong Manananggol
Pambayan



TITLE:

LUMALABAS na hindi tumatalab ang taktika o programang "Hugs not Bullets" laban sa ilegal na droga sa Mexico.

Sa loob ng isang taon, may halos 29,000 nang kasong murder ang iniuugnay sa malalang problema sa droga sa nasabing bansa.

Bago ito, sa 12 taon, kulang-kulang sa 200,000 ang namatay sa giyera sa droga nang gamitin ng pamahalaang Mexico ang militar upang sugpuin ang salot.

Kabaligtaran sa todo-giyera sa droga ang pinaliral ni bagong Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.

Si Pang. Felipe Calderon ang nagpasimula ng giyera sa droga noong 2008 gamit ang militar at ipinagpatuloy ito ni Pang. Enrique Peña Nieto.

MGA MASAKER

Sunod-sunod ang mga masaker na isinasagawa ng mga cartel ng droga kahit sa pariahon ni Obrador.

Kabilang sa mga pinakamadugo ang pagmasaker sa tatlong ina at anim na bata na miyembro ng Mormons.

Naipit umano ang mga ito sa agawan ng teritoryo o kapangyarihan sa pagkontrol sa droga sa pagitan ng Sinaloa at Juarez cartel.

Nitong huli, 25 na sasakyan na puno ng mga armadong sangkot sa droga, apat dito ang may machine gun, ang lumusob sa Coahuila state.

Nagkaroon ng labanan sa pagitan ng drug cartel at mga pulis at militar at nagbunga itong 22 patay.

Dalawa sa patay ang kidnap victims ng drug cartel na Northeast Cartel, 4 na pulis at 16 sa mga nasa droga.

Ayon sa mga nahulirita, gusto nilang ipakita na kaya nilang hawakan sa ilalim ang lahat ng opisyal sa Coahuila state.

Dahil sa pangyayari, gusto ng ayon ni American President Donald Trump na ideklarang terorista ang mga cartel sa Mexico ngunit kinontra ito ni Obrador.

Pakikialam umano ng ibang bansa ang aksyon ni Trump, sabay sabing dapat ihinto na ng mga Kano ang pagbebenta ng armas at pagbili ng droga sa mga cartel.

KULUNGAN NILUSOB; DRUGLORD LUMAYA

Nagkaroon din ng pag-aresto sa isang anak ni Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman na si Ovidio Guzman.



'HUGS NOT BULLETS' SA MEXICO AT GIYERA VS TISOY

Pero sinalakay ang munisipyo at kulungan na pinagkulungan sa kanya para palayain siya.

Ang tagumpay ng cartel ang nagbigay-mensahhe sa ibang mga cartel na kayang-kaya nilang igupo ang anomang sangay ng pamahalaan na lumalaban sa kanila.

Minalilit lang ni Obrador ang mga ganitong kaso pero marami ang nagtataas ng kilay.

MALAKI ANG TIWALA

Kahit may libo-libo nang namatay sa kamay ng pamahalaan at mga cartel sa nakaraang isang taon lamang, umaasa pa rin ang maraming Mehikano na mareresolba ni Obrador ang problema sa droga sa Hugs not Bullets na istayl.

Subalit dumarami naman ang nagdududa kung may epekto ito dahil, gusto man o hindi ni Obrador, walang puso at halang ang kaluluwa ang mga drug cartel.

Hindi kailanman sasailalim ang mga ito sa pagbabago, iwan ang droga at mabuhay nang mapayapa at matiwasay.

Dito parang nakarelate ang ating Uzi ukol sa gustong mangyari ni Vice President Leni Robredo.

Ayaw ni Robredo na may mamamatay at gustong ituring na sakil lang ang pagdodroga, maging ang paggawa, pagbenta, pagpalaganap at pag-importo export ng droga.

Duda ang marami kung may magandang epekto dahil hindi papayag ang mga sangkot sa droga na magnegosyo ng ligal bilang kapaalit ng negosyo nilang nakamatay, nakasisira ng ulo at kalusugan at nakasisira rin sa inismong pamahalaan.

GIYERA VS TISOY

Naging matagumpay kahit papalano ang giyera laban kay Tisoy dahil tila kakaunti ang madedeklarang casualty o namatay gaya ng dalawa sa Oriental Mindoro.

Nagsama-sama ang mga pambansa at lokal na pamahalaan, hanggang mga barangay, ang sapilitang pagpapalimas sa mga nasa delikadong lugar.

Kasama sa mga delikadong lugar ang mala-

lapit sa dalampasigan, nasa river banks at nasa kabundukan.

Storm surge o tsunami ang kinatakutan sa mga dalampasigan, baha sa mga mababa at nasa gilid ng ilog at landslide naman sa mga kabundukan.

Ang Catanduanes na binugbog ng malalakas na hangin at ulan ay sinasabing casualty free o walang nasawi.

NA-TRAUMA

Itong tinatawag na trauma ang nagpalikas sa mga tao nang boluntaryo.

Alam ng mga mamamayan kung nasaan ang mga delikadong lugar at ayaw nilang mamatay gaya ng sa mga nau-nang katulad na kalagayan.

Pero ang mga nagmatigas na ayaw magpabakwit, sinundo sila ng pulis at pwersahan silang pinalikas.

Maganda riga namang isipin na buhay ng tao ang una sa lahat.

Ang mga gamit, tahanan at iba pa ay pupwede muling ipundar pero ang mga kinuha ni Lord, hindi na mapupundar muli.

GUTOM BAWAS

Habang naririto pa si Tisoy, tuloy ang giyera laban sa baha, landslide at storm surge o tsunami at isang epektibong paniabanan dito ang pagbabakwit.

Pero alam ba ninyo, mga Ibro, na humihigpit ang pagitiwala ng mga tao sa sistemang bakwit?

Nawala kasi umano ang korapsyon sa mga relief goods, gamot, salapi ang ibang mga tulong.

Dati-rati palaging kapos dahil ibinubulsa at iniuwi ng mga korap sa kanilang mga bahay ang mga ayuda.

Ngayon, kung sumobra ang suplay sa isang lugar, ipinamamahati pa rin sa mga residente.

Ang gutom, lalo na sa mga evacuation center, ay hindi na malala at hindi tulad noong unang mga administrasyon.

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