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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



D.E.N.R. BATS FOR LAW AUTHORIZING FOREST RANGERS' USE OF FIREARMS

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

✉ @jonlmayuga

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is asking lawmakers to pass a law authorizing forest protection officers, or forest rangers, to bear firearms to protect themselves against "armed and dangerous" environmental criminals.

This, even as the DENR mourns the killing of four DENR forest rangers and informants whom Cimatu said, "bravely put their lives on the line to protect our forests."

He said despite the killings, the DENR remains steadfast in its campaign against illegal logging and other environmental crimes in the forests.

"It is during these times that we want you to join us in our call to protect our hardworking DENR workers. Help us inform every Filipino that the DENR will not be cowed," he said in his message read by DENR Undersecretary Benny D. Antiporda during a year-end performance assessment at the conference hall on Monday.

In Palawan, the DENR in Mimaropa region had completed the necessary training in preparation for the arming of forest protection officers and forest rangers patrolling the region's thick forests.

Arming forest protection officers and forest rangers, hopefully, will deter illegal logging activities

in various parts of the country. Illegal logging syndicates are usually armed with long firearms and would often target forest protection officers, or forest rangers who stand in their way.

According to Cimatu, the DENR will continue to pursue the creation of an enforcement bureau that will protect the DENR's forest protection officers and forest rangers who should be hailed as "environmental heroes" for their sacrifices to protect the environment.

In his year-end assessment of the agency's performance, Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu said the year 2019 was a good year for the DENR as he highlighted the effort to rehabilitate Manila Bay, which started on January 26 this year with the launching of "Battle for Manila Bay."

The historic event, which kicked off with a unity walk in support of the rehabilitation of the historic bay in Manila, triggered the start of a non-stop cleaning effort by the DENR and various government agencies around the Manila Bay Area.

"Our efforts include not only the removal of solid wastes from rivers and esteros through our hardworking volunteers, estero rangers and partner government and private agencies, but also the resettlement of illegal settler families along the rivers and creeks and the closure of erring establishments around the Manila Bay Area," he said.

NATIONAL SCIENTIST SEES OPENING FOR CRONYISM

SCRAPPING WATER DEALS, WAIVING AWARD DANGEROUS, ECONOMIST WARNS

By Doris Dumlao-Abadilla
@Philbizwatcher

The Philippines is sliding into a dark path where it may be unable to attract new investors—except for “cronies”—if the government could easily disregard the sanctity of contracts and get away with it, according to an economist, who is also a national scientist.

Raul Fabella, professor emeritus at the University of the Philippines’ School of Economics, also said the offer of water concessionaires Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water Co. Inc. to waive about P11 billion in combined arbitral awards pertaining to their water tariff dispute with the regulator was “no solution,” even if accepted.

It would, in fact, be a dangerous precedent, he said.

“One cannot blame the concessionaires for trying to buy peace—even if it is really cemetery peace. The problem is that the government reneged on its obligation in the contract (the tax holiday and the arbitral court being integral parts of the contract) and must pay the assessment under the rule of law!” Fabella said.

“If the government gets away with raping a contract now, what’s to prevent a repeat

rape tomorrow?” he said in the research note, which he emailed to the Inquirer on Wednesday.

Fabella said the concessionaires, under tremendous duress, caved in and offered to waive the damages assessed in their favor.

Winning an arm

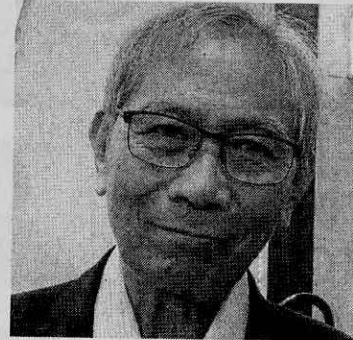
“The government has not tuned down on the fire and brimstone rhetoric. Why should it? It has won a hand; now it wants an arm,” he said.

Irrked by the arbitral award and recent water supply problems, President Duterte has threatened to arrest officials of the concessionaires and charge them with economic sabotage on the grounds that the contracts were onerous and disadvantageous to the public.

He has also threatened to take over the assets of Maynilad and Manila Water.

On orders from the President, the regulator, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), canceled the 15-year extension of the water concessions that was approved during the term of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in 2009.

The 25-year water distribution contracts with Maynilad and Manila Water were set to



Raul Fabella —CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

lapse in 2022.

Among the “onerous” contract provisions cited by the Department of Justice (DOJ) were those that bar the government from interfering in setting water rates and allow the concessionaires to seek compensation in an arbitration court for losses should the government prevent it from raising tariffs.

Mr. Duterte’s rants have caused a massive sell-off of shares of Manila Water, Maynilad’s key investors Metro Pacific Investments Corp. and DMCI Holdings, and Manila Water’s parent company Ayala Corp.

The DOJ and the Department of Finance recently assured the public that they would not revoke the water concession agreements



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but only renegotiate for better terms.

Fabella found it ludicrous that the concession contracts that had served Metro Manila well for the last two decades were now "onerous" and "disadvantageous" to Mr. Duterte.

Sanctity of contract

"The sanctity of the contract is onerous to the government? Onerous to violators, yes, and it better be or there is no contract. That the New Clark City concession contract has no similar onerous provisions is irrelevant: the Metro Manila concession contracts were signed in 1997 not in 2014; the concessionaires made a risky bet in 1997 not in 2014!" Fabella wrote.

"So if there is a renegotiation and revision, the government must pay the concessionaires for their loss and the amount must be negotiated not imposed!"

Fabella said the government had implicitly accepted the legitimacy of the Singapore arbitral court. Had the ruling been favorable, the same government would have hailed it as fair and based on the rule of law, it added.

"Lest we forget, our own Supreme Court decided in 2015 with finality that the Philippine

government pay Piatco (Philippine International Air Terminals Co.) P24 billion [as of March 2016] for unlawful expropriation," the economist said.

He was referring to the high court ruling, which became final and executory in 2016, ordering the government to pay Piatco at least \$531.2 million (P24.5 billion) in just compensation plus interest as of this month for the construction of the controversial Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3.

"Who will invest long-term if the government can expropriate at will? What private banks will make loans? Only the cronies! Marcos cronies, recall, brought the country to its knees. The economic team's first duty on competitiveness is to plug the hole not cosmetize it," Fabella said.

MWSS to blame

On the water crisis in March, he said it was the government itself, through the MWSS, that was to blame.

Fabella believed that even the administration was partly to blame, citing its "waffled" stance on public-private partnerships versus official development assistance, as well as between the Japanese and Chi-

nese, on bulk-water provision.

"The best water distribution network cannot deliver water if the dams are empty and long-planned impoundment projects remain plans," he said.

"It was the intransigence of the water regulator, MWSS, toward the repeated offers by the concessionaires to construct water-security projects (example: delayed Cardona Water treatment and the Tayabasan East Water Source; the aborted Kaliwa Low Intake and Kaliwa Long Term Source projects) because it (MWSS) entertained the idea that it will deliver these projects itself!"

Fabella warned that the country might be heading on the same path as Venezuela, ruled by populist leaders Hugo Chávez (1999-2013) and Nicolás Maduro (2013 to date).

"Autocrats Hugo Chavez and successor Nicolas Maduro made life impossible for the market players and investors who promptly packed their bags for other climes. This emptied the supermarket shelves and brought inflation rate to 53 million percent from 2016! Maduro is waging a war against his own people. No wonder Venezuelans ravaged by hunger started for the border," he said. [INQ](#)

COUNTERING ALLEGATIONS

MANILA WATER: P13B SPENT IN 5 YEARS NOT REIMBURSED BY MWSS

Manila Water Co. Inc. on Wednesday said it had spent P13 billion over the past five years in its concession area in parts of Metro Manila and Rizal province, which the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) had yet to reimburse, countering allegations that the company had been recovering investments for unfinished projects.

"There has not been any five-year period when Manila Water

collected more than it has spent," the Ayala group subsidiary said in a statement. "Manila Water has always spent more than the amount of water rates it has collected from consumers, as determined by the MWSS."

The P13 billion is on top of the P7.39 billion that an international arbitral panel awarded to Manila Water because the MWSS did not allow the company to increase rates in the

five-year rate rebasing period that ended in 2018.

Manila Water officials said the company would no longer pursue the compensation. It also agreed not to proceed with the MWSS-approved water rate increases scheduled for Jan. 1.

Before Malacañang threatened to scrap the concession agreement, or its extension from 2022 to 2037, Manila Water said it had lined up invest-

ments totaling P115 billion over the next 18 years for its sewerage program alone.

'Excess investment'

In September, Manila Water chief operating officer Abelardo Basilio said that since 1997 when the company took over the east zone, it had spent P38.5 billion on wastewater programs from collections of only P36.9 billion, or an "excess investment" of P1.6 billion.

To complete its sewerage program until 2037, Maynilad needs to lay about 500 kilometers more of pipes on public and private roads.

"As a contractor of the MWSS under the concession agreement, Manila Water gets from the MWSS a fee consisting primarily of reimbursement for 'operating, capital maintenance and investment expenditures' that the MWSS determined to

have been 'efficiently and prudently incurred,'" the concessionaire said.

"This reimbursement of expenditures is not done on a daily basis [because doing that] would be so difficult, particularly as the MWSS pays Manila Water not with its own funds but with the water rates collected from consumers in the east zone," it added. —RONNEL W. DOMINGO INQ



STOCK MARKET

LISTED FIRMS IN WATER ROW REBOUND

By Doris Dumlao-Abadilla
@Philbizwatcher

Shares of beleaguered Manila Water Co. Inc. (MWC) rebounded for the first time in 12 trading days on Wednesday as the government's rhetoric changed to renegotiation from the previous threat of outright revocation of contract.

Shares of MWC rebounded by 14.17 percent while shares of Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC) and DMCI Holdings, the key shareholders of Maynilad Water Services Inc., also both rose by more than 9 percent.

"There's some relief as the government said the concessionaires won't be replaced," a veteran broker said.

After President Duterte earlier threatened to revoke the water contracts, the departments of

Finance and of Justice are now saying that they would only renegotiate for better terms.

"I think the government realized the damage done to SSS (Social Security System) and GSIS (Government Service Insurance System) due to the decline in price of Ayala Corp., DMCI, MPIC and MWC," the broker said.

It was earlier reported that the state-run pension funds had suffered about P4 billion in reduced market valuation of equity position amid the water row.

At its closing price of P6.85 a share, MWC is now trading above its P6.50 initial public offering price in 2005. However, it is still down by nearly 64 percent from its closing price of P18.98 a share on Dec. 2, or before Mr. Duterte ranted against

the water concessionaires.

Overall, the main-share Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) ended 3.22 points, or 0.04 percent, higher to close at 7,733.67. However, foreigners remained net sellers, resulting in a net outflow of about P1 billion for the day.

"The PSEi is barely staying above the 7,700 support level as foreign investors continue to exit our market. Trading volumes have picked up this week although it may have more to do with the volatility in the companies involved with our water concessionaires rather than investors trying to get in before the holidays. We may see it continue to lower toward the end of the week," said Christopher Mangun, head of research at local stock brokerage AAA Equities. **INQ**



Water level at Angat Dam may not reach year-end target of 212 meters

By ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

Water supply interruptions in Metro Manila are feared to continue until the dry season of 2020 as Angat Dam may no longer reach its end-of-year normal high water level of 212 meters.

The water level of Angat Dam continued to gradually increase due to some rains since the start of December, but its current level remains below the 212-meter target by year-end.

The latest monitoring of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) showed that Angat Dam's water level was slightly up from 197.22 meters last Tuesday to 197.49 meters on Wednesday.

"Based on the projections, (Angat Dam's target level) might not be attained this year. That is the reason of reduced allocation to manage supply in the dam," National Water Resources

Board (NWRB) Executive Director Sevillo David Jr. said on Wednesday.

Reaching the desired level of Angat Dam will ensure the availability of sufficient water for domestic and irrigation uses until the dry season of 2020. Dry season in the Philippines is usually from December to May.

NWRB will likely continue the allocation of 40 cubic meters per second (cms) or 3,450 million liters per day (MLD) of raw water to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) for distribution to water concessionaires Maynilad and Manila Water in January 2020, David said. This will still be lower than the normal allocation for domestic use of 46-48 cms.

"This can change if there will be significant increase in the level of Angat Dam this month," he added.

MWSS has been allocated 40 cms of raw water since September 1, 2019.

Meanwhile, NWRB will increase the water allocation for irrigation of farm-

lands in Bulacan and Pampanga from 5 cms to 10 cms or 864 MLD, beginning January 1, 2020, David said.

"It is possible (that water supply interruptions will continue) considering the allocation (for domestic use) coming from Angat Dam is reduced," he pointed out.

Maynilad and Manila Water currently serve about 16.5 million consumers in Metro Manila and some parts of Rizal, Laguna, Cavite, and Bulacan.

Several areas in Metro Manila and nearby provinces have been experiencing water service disruptions since October 24 owing to Angat Dam's lower-than-usual water level.

David said the NWRB was still managing water releases by not giving the normal allocation.

In case there is a need to augment water source at Angat Dam, David earlier said that NWRB will be "preparing some deepwells within Metro Manila and cloud seeding operations are on standby."



Review of water concessions long overdue – Pernia

By CZERIZA VALENCIA

Investor sentiment is unlikely to be dampened by the revision of contracts of Metro Manila water concessionaires with the government, according to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary and NEDA chief Ernesto Pernia said the contracts of Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water Co. Inc. should have been reviewed a decade ago to suit the improving economic conditions in the country.

"Clear-thinking investors would understand that water concession agreement between the Philippine government with Manila Water and

Maynilad are kind of disadvantageous. In 1997, the government was as the mercy of investors because our economy was considered a high risk economy," he said in a briefing yesterday.

"In 2009 and 2010, the economy was doing better so there was no need to continue with the conditions in the concession agreement. They should have really revisited the concession agreements and the changed the terribly onerous conditions in the contract. I think that would have been more prudent," he added.

The country's two largest water concessionaires recently agreed to drop more than P10 billion in compensation claims from the government as granted by a Singapore

arbitral court in 2017 and deferred the rate increase originally scheduled for next year.

This decision was reached in the wake of accusations by President Duterte that the firms have been benefiting too much from disadvantageous contracts forged with past administrations.

The government, through the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), had also revoked the extension of the contracts of the two concessionaires from 2022 to 2037, a move that the firms said alarmed investors and puts pressure on their financial viability.

Duterte had also threatened the two firms with a military takeover of their operations.

Amid these developments, both sides have expressed willingness to negotiate new concession agreements to remove "onerous provisions in the concession deals."

"I think the most objectionable thing there is the great rush in extending the concession agreement so early, 13 years before the expiry of the end of the contract which is 2022 and extending it by another 15 years to 2037," said Pernia.

"There was no renegotiation or review of the concession agreements before there were extended. So I'm sure the investors will understand that there is something fishy, something wrong with how concession agreements were handled," he added.

Pernia noted that among the most

disadvantageous provisions in the concession agreements were the prohibition on government interference on the setting of water rates, allowing water concessionaires to pass on their corporate income tax to consumers, and the long concession period of 25 years.

"Maybe that should be shorter, maybe 15 years," he said. "Those are the standout items."

Share prices water concessionaires have taken a hit, as the future of their concession agreements continue to hang in the balance.

This weakens the investment position of state-run pension funds Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) and Social Security System (SSS).

"I guess there is a set back on those investments but it will recover. They will recover in time with the adjustments that will be made especially now that the concessionaires are contrite. They have apologized and they will renegotiate for new contracts," said Pernia.

He acknowledged, however, that with the prevailing uncertainties on the future of the water contracts, there will be increased pressure on water security next year as the tail end effects of El Niño will be felt in the summer.

"There is a possible water shortage in the summer months especially given that the concessionaires are now set back in their plans," he said.

"Or maybe they will be pushed forward, they will be pressures to deliver better service in 2020.

NEDA Undersecretary Adoracion Navarro said there will be a special meeting between NEDA and the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) tomorrow to discuss the water shortage in Angat Dam.

"We are viewing this as one of the tail end effects of the El Niño phenomenon. We will engage agencies to come up with interventions," she said.

"The things were looking at is possibly curtailing of supply to irrigation activities and also possibly curtailing of supply to household sector. But the first supply priority is potable water supply to households," she added.



NEDA:

Water shortage may hinder growth

BY JORDEENE B. LAGARE

A POSSIBLE water shortage next summer is seen to hinder the growth of the Philippine economy in 2020, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) warned on Wednesday.

In a year-end briefing at his agency's headquarters in Pasig City, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia said such a supply crunch was possible, "especially given that the [water] concessionaires are now...kind of

set back in their plans. Or...maybe they'll be pressured to deliver better [services] in the coming year," referring to Manila Water Co. Inc. and Maynilad Water Services Inc.

His remarks came after the Department of Justice (DoJ) re-

viewed, upon President Rodrigo Duterte's orders, the concession agreements that Manila Water and Maynilad signed with the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) in 1997 and found "disadvantageous" provisions in them.

One such provision is the prohibition against government interference in rate-setting. Another is for indemnity in case of such interference.

But Adoracion Navarro, NEDA undersecretary for the Regional Development Group,

stressed that a supply shortage would have little effect on the economy, since the country was now experiencing the tail end of the El Niño phenomenon.

"It will have minimal impact... unlike during the peak of the El Niño," Navarro said in an interview. "In August, we already declared that the El Niño phenomenon had ended.... Tail-end effects *lang ito* (These are only tail-end effects)."

She also said the possible shortage had nothing to do with the ongoing legal squabble between the

government and the water firms.

"It's because of the Angat Dam's water level. We are not reaching the expected water level by year-end. [It's] not because of the water concessionaires," she added.

The National Water Resources Board has set a 212-meter target by end-2019 to meet the water supply and irrigation requirements of Metro Manila and neighboring provinces until next summer.

Also during the briefing, Pernia said the government's growth target of 6 to 6.5 percent for 2019 was "achievable," as gross domestic

product (GDP) grew to 6.2 percent year-on-year in the third quarter.

He also said October-to-December growth would get a "big boost" from consumer spending, which accounts for two-thirds of GDP, attributing it to holiday bonuses and remittances from overseas Filipino workers.

According to the NEDA chief, besides the possible water shortage, other risks to economic growth are the trade war between the United States and China, natural disasters, volatility in oil prices, and possible delays in infrastructure projects.



WATER LACK, DELAYED INFRA IMPERIL GROWTH

By CAI U. ORDINARIO

[@caiordinario](#)

WATER shortage and delayed infrastructure projects are considered threats to the country's economic performance next year, according to the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

However, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia said growth will remain robust and the controversy created by the review of the concession agreement with two private companies will not dampen the appetite of investors in the country.

"Of course, the trade war between the US and China is still continuing although it has softened a bit and we hope it would soften further. And then of course [there's] our natural disasters which are a common phenomenon in the Philippines [including a] possible water shortage in the summer months," Pernia said.

The Neda chief remains optimistic that the full-year growth target of 6 percent to 6.5 percent can be achieved. GDP growth in the fourth quarter could also average 6.7 percent.

In 2020, Pernia said the GDP growth target of 6.5 to 7.5 percent will also be achievable despite the headwinds he cited.

Neda Undersecretary for Policy

and Planning Rosemarie G. Edillon said private consumption will remain the strength of the Philippine economy.

Edillon said the growth of the domestic economy fueled by consumption will "more than make up" for external headwinds, such as the US-China trade tensions.

"Private consumption will be really robust given the slow inflation, especially food inflation, [and] the government consumption, as we have seen, showed there was really a catchup," Edillon said. "We know that external demand is [quite] slow but domestic demand will more than make up for it."

Neda Undersecretary for Regional Development Adoracion M. Navarro said the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) will meet this week to discuss the water shortage in Angat Dam.

The NWRB is responsible for all water resources in the Philippines. It coordinates and regulates water-related activities in the country that affect the physical environment and economy.

Navarro said the water shortage is part of the tail end effects of the El Niño phenomenon this year. The meeting aims to engage agencies, especially those in charge of food and water security, to create interventions.



Water interruptions sa Metro Manila, magpapatuloy

Ni ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

Pinangangambahang magpapatuloy ang water supply interruptions sa Metro Manila hanggang sa dry season ng 2020 dahil maaaring hindi na maaabot ng Angat Dam ang end-of-year normal high water level nito na 212 meters.

Patuloy na bumababa ang water level sa Angat Dam simula ng pumasok ang Disyembre, ngunit ang kasalukuyang lebel nito ay nananatiling nasa mababa sa 212-meter target sa pagtatapos ng taon.

Batay sa monitoring ng Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), ang water level ng Angat

Dam ay bahagyang tumaas mula 197.22 meters nitong Martes sa 197.49 nitong Miyerkules.

Ang maabot ang desired level ay magtitiyak na mayroong sapat na tubig para magamit ng kabahayan at sa irigasyon hanggang sa dry season ng 2020. Ang dry season sa Pilipinas ay mula Disyembre hanggang Mayo.

"It is possible (that water supply interruptions will continue) considering the allocation (for domestic use) coming from Angat Dam is reduced," sinabi ni National Water Resources Board (NWRB) Executive Director Seville David Jr. nitong Miyerkules.



Waste-to-Energy Act pushed to help solve garbage crisis

By HANNAH L. TORREGOZA

A senator on Wednesday renewed his push for the passage of the measure that would convert waste to energy, believing this would help solve the country's perennial garbage problem.

Senator Sherwin Gatchalian is referring to Senate Bill No. 363 or the Waste-to-Energy Act (WTE Act) which, he said, will encourage the development of new technologies in the treatment and disposal of solid waste.

The measure, he said, also supports the expansion of bioenergy towards a sustainable energy environment.

WTE refers to the energy recovered from waste, usually the conversion of non-recyclable waste materials into usable heat, electricity or fuel through a variety of processes.

"Meeting our growing power demand without sacrificing our environment and draining our natural resources need a delicate balancing act," Gatchalian said.

"With the passage of the WTE bill, the country will be able to maximize the energy we can produce from waste, be it in the form of electricity, fuel, or gas, and in the process address the waste problem," the senator explained.

Gatchalian, who chairs the Senate Committee on Energy, also said

he believes that WTE projects would benefit the country in terms of a more secure energy system while addressing the issue of waste management system.

The senator made the pitch for the proposed Waste-to-Energy Act following Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu's warning that the country, particularly Metro Manila, is now in the middle of a garbage crisis.

Gatchalian said Filipinos should heed the call for proper waste management and disposal, especially during the holidays. Citing Cimatu, Gatchalian said that Filipinos generate more waste during the holidays than any other time of the year.

According to Gatchalian, the

projected waste generation in the country, based on the National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC) data, show that the yearly amount of

waste is expected to increase from 14.66 metric tons in 2014 to 16.63 metric tons in 2020 and up to 20.51 metric tons in 2030.



DILG: Makati is best in managing waste

By Joel E. Zurbano

THE City of Makati was ranked first among compliant local government units in Metro Manila in clearing creeks and waterways, and in managing solid and liquid waste aimed at rehabilitating Manila Bay and its related water systems.

The recognition came from the Department of the Interior and Local Government, which monitors LGUs regarding a Supreme Court ruling.

The ruling mandates them to strictly monitor compliance of their constituents with environmental laws aimed to prevent sewage water and industrial and human wastes from polluting rivers, esteros and other waterways that form part of the tributary systems of the Manila Bay.

Makati City Mayor Abigail Binay said

she was thankful that all the hard work of the city to clean up its waterways and fulfill its role in the restoration of Manila Bay to its former glory have paid off.

"We have been working hard for over three years now to clean up our waterways and rid them of solid and liquid wastes to make a significant impact on ongoing efforts to restore Manila Bay to its former glory. We are heartened by the remarkable progress we have made," she said.

The city chief executive noted that in 2017, Makati ranked 14th in the said assessment, and then jumped 10 spots to fourth place last year, which merited the 2018 "Most Improved LGU" Award from DILG National Capital Region.

This year, Makati bested 16 other localities in the NCR, garnering a total score of 96.4 percent.

"This kind of validation inspires the city government and personnel to continue working hard and putting our best foot forward to proactively implement environmental laws and policies in our city," Binay said.

Last January, the city government started its compliance with the DILG Memorandum Circular No. 2019-09 which requires the local government to have a weekly waterways cleanup within its jurisdiction.



Makati tops NCR waterways cleanup

Makati City ranks first among local government units (LGU) in Metro Manila in clearing creeks and waterways and in managing solid and liquid waste aimed at rehabilitating Manila Bay and its related water systems, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) said.

The DILG monitors compliance of Metro Manila LGU and surrounding provinces with a Supreme Court ruling which mandates to strictly monitor compliance of establishments and residences with environmental laws aimed to prevent sewage water and industrial and human wastes from polluting rivers, esteros and other waterways that form part of the tributary systems of the Manila Bay.

Makati Mayor Abby Binay said she was thankful that all the hard work to clean up the city's waterways has paid off.

"We have been working hard for over three years now to clean up our waterways and rid them of solid and liquid wastes to make a significant impact on ongoing efforts to restore Manila Bay to its former glory. We are heartened by the remarkable progress we have made," Binay said.

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The Solid Waste Management Division of the Department of Environmental Services, together with the Department of Engineering and Public Works (DEPW) and Barangay Taga-Linis staff and volunteers, has regularly cleaned up creeks, esteros and canals throughout the city. During the first half of the year, some 230,000 kilograms of solid waste were collected by the composite team.

The DEPW has also conducted regular drainage declogging operations, where the group had hauled 54,745 metric tons of solid waste during the same period.



SCRAP FABRIC INTO STUFFED TOYS

Taytay finds way to recycle textile waste

By Neil Alcober

Taytay, Rizal is considering on using the tons of textile waste it generates daily into stuffed toys or stuffing for furniture.

This was revealed by Vic Badaguas, head of Taytay's general services office.

With its many garment factories producing about 10 tons of scrap fabric daily, he said the move could help in reducing the town's solid waste.

"Some of the scrap fabric are recycled into rags, but not all of them. Some of the sewers used to sell their scrap, but there is no longer a demand for it. That's why it is now thrown out as trash," Badaguas said.

"Mayor (Joric Gacula) is looking for ways to have the textile waste recycled into fiber that can be used to fill stuffed toys or in sofas. So, by next year, we will have a new industry. We are now looking for new equipment to handle that," he added.

The Taytay official said they will put a stall at the *tiangge* or bazaar for products that are made from recycled materials like textile waste.

"It's another means of livelihood. We will teach those who used to make rags to make stuffed toys," he explained.

"If you are a TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority) graduate, the mayor can give you assistance in the form of a sewing machine. You will be taught how to make stuffed toys. You will be given a sewing machine that you can pay on installment, so that the money can be used to help others, too," he added.

The town's *tiangge* started in 2008 when a group of 45 dressmakers banded together to sell their products. However, the local garment industry grew fast in the succeeding years.

Taytay has now become the best destination for shoppers who are looking for quality yet affordable clothes.

However, daily traffic to the bazaar, which is located at the Club Manila East compound in Barangay San Juan, is almost always heavy as thousands of shoppers from other places swarms the place.



Massive bamboo plantation eyed in Pangasinan 2020

By EVA VISPERAS

DAGUPAN CITY – The Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) in Pangasinan is eyeing the massive planting of bamboo next year for environmental protection and flood mitigation.

Ernesto Gayo, PENRO head in the province, told **The STAR** recently that there was zero planting this year of seedlings in new sites but in previous areas, the maintenance and protection continue.

“To ensure higher survival, we prepared first high-quality seedlings,” Gayo said, noting the seedlings, like forest trees, were grown in bigger size first made to grow bigger to ensure they can survive.

He said for 2020, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is focusing on the use of bamboo as an alternative form of livelihood.

Bamboo will also address wood demand because of an existing technology that allows its use for houses and furniture.

Gayo said the *kawayan tinik* (*Bambusa blumeana*) variety is endemic to the Philippines. He said a group will invest in a bamboo plantation in central Pangasinan.

There is high demand for *kawayan tinik* in China, where it will be exported for a ready market, he said.

For next year, about 10,000 hectares will be planted to bamboo by an investment group, Gayo said. The National Greening Program will also plant bamboo in about 100 to 200 hectares across Pangasinan, and they are still eyeing suitable areas.

An all-weather plant, bamboo has high absorptive capacity for carbon dioxide and quality air. Within five years, bamboo can be cut for wood.

Bamboo plantations can also address forest fires as investors deploy guards to augment some 60 forest rangers of the DENR in Pangasinan.



GREEN IS IN

■ One bar for one tree

This holiday season, give a gift that makes a lasting impression not only to your loved ones but also to the future generation.

The Saibon shampoo bar is a gift "that plants a tree."

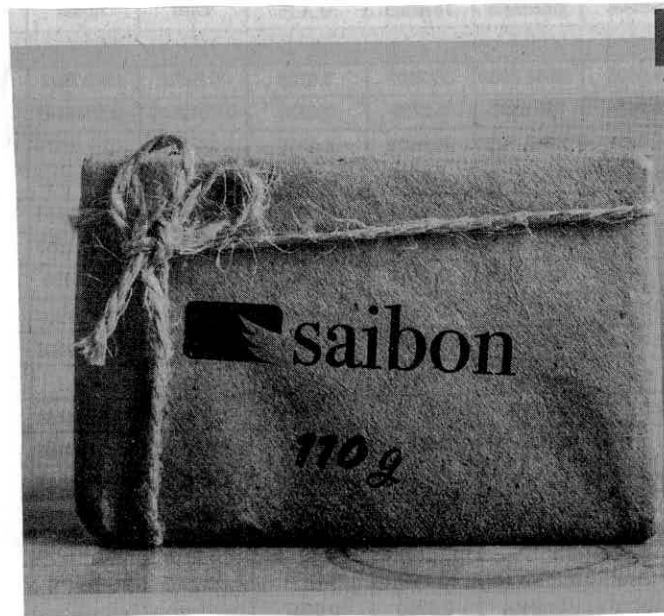
For every shampoo bar you get for a donation of only P380, native tree seedlings such as narra, kamagong, and antipolo will be planted as part of the "Forests for Life" movement, a campaign that aims to bring back life to Philippine forests.

Hand-crafted by organic farmers in Dumingag, Zamboanga del Sur, the Saibon shampoo bar is made with natural ingredients – both good for the user and the environment. It comes in three variants – Calamansi, Cucumber, and Activated Charcoal.

Every seedling donation is maintained by local farmers. This covers seedling preparation, planting, and three years of protection and maintenance by partner communities.

The shampoo bar's biodegradable wrapper also serves as a ticket to one of Haribon's tree-planting activities in 2020.

Each soap bar helps restore Philippine forests, one native tree at a time.





Pangontra sa baha kapag may kalamidad **MILYONG PUNO ITATANIM SA ISABELA**

ILULUNSAD ng pamahalaang Isabela ang "1 million tree in one day project" sa Disyembre 20 makaraang maantala ito dahil sa malawakang pagbaha sa Isabela.

Ang pagtatanim ng milyong puno ay atas ni Isabela Governor Rodolfo Albano III.

Aniya, dapat ay sama-samang magtanim ang mga mamamayan ng nasabing lalawigan upang makamit nito ang target na isang milyong puno sa loob lang ng isang araw.

Sa pahayag ni Media consultant ng provincial government Romy Santos, itutuloy ang naantulang pagtatanim ng isang milyong puno ay nararapat nang maisakatu-

paran upang masawata ang malawakang pagbaha sa Isabela kapag muling dumalaw ang bagyo gaya ng bagyong Tisoy.

Kabilang sa matinding naapektuhan ng Bagyong Tisoy ang Ilagan City, Isabela at mga karatig na bayan ay binaha.

Ang nasabing proyekto ng provincial government na naantala na hindi natuloy noong Disyembre 6, 2019, ay hindi na idedeklarang special non-working holiday ng butihing punong lalawigan, isasagawa ang nasabing aktibidad sa Northern Sierra Madre, Natural Park, Sitio Lagis, Sindon Bayabo, Ilagan City, Isabela, sa mga Universidad ng Isabela.

Dahil sa naitakda ang buwan ng Disyembre 20, 2019 sa Christmas break ng mga mag-aaral, gayunpaman nagpahayag ang punong lalawigan na magkaisa ang mga mamamayan ng lalawigan ng Isabela sa Disyembre 20, taong kasalukuyan na magtanim ng mga puno upang makamit nito ang target na isang milyong puno na maitanim sa isang araw.

Isinasagawa na ang puspusang paghahanda nang pamunuan ng Environment and Natural Resources Office (ENRO)-Isabela, sa milyong bilang ng mga buto na itatanim para sa nakatakdang aktibidad ng pamahalaang panlalawigan.

IRENE GONZALES



₱86-M agroforestry infra projects ng Japan, inilarga

Ininagurahan ng Japanese government ang ₱86 milyon agroforestry infrastructure projects na naglalayong protektahan at i-serve ang kabuuang 71,300 ektarya ng kagubatan sa ilang watershed areas sa Pilipinas.

Sa isang pahayag, sinabi ng Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) na ang agroforestry infrastructure projects na kinabibilangan ng mga tulay, kalsada, at irrigation facilities na-turnover kamakailan sa local government units sa Nueva Vizcaya at sa Quirino provinces sa Region II at Ifugao sa Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR).

Ang mga proyektong pinondohan ng JICA ay bahagi ng 10-taong Japanese Yen 9.244 bilyon Forestland Management Project (FMP) bilang partnership sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Nilalayan nitong protektahan ang mga kagubatan partikular sa Jalaur Watershed sa Iloilo, Upper Magat at Cagayan River Basins, at Pampanga River Basin, na sumasakop sa mga lalawigan ng Iloilo, Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino, Ifugao, at Nueva Ecija.

Sinabi ni JICA Philippines Senior Representative Yo Ebisawa na ang agroforestry infrastructure ay sinusupportahan ang mga kalsada at tulay para maitaguyod ang livelihood activities ng people's organizations (POs) sa project areas, idinagdag na sa pamamagitan ng ahensiya, patuloy na susupportahan ng Japan ang training ng POs upang mapamahalaan nila ang kanilang "enterprises and keep their organizations viable."

Roy C. Mabasa



The House Committee on Ways and Means has approved the proposed "Single-Use Plastic Bag Tax Act," which will impose a P20 per kilogram tax on single-use plastic shopping bags. The bill is estimated to raise about P4.8 billion annually for the government — money that will finance activities under the Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

The issue, particularly for Environment officials, is that while they support the proposed tax, they have misgivings about imposing the levy by weight, instead of by piece. Mind you, one kilogram of plastic bags is a lot of bags, and the tax on that is only P20. Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda was quoted in a news report as saying that taxing by weight could even worsen rather than reduce plastic pollution.

Plastics manufacturers, to save on tax, might produce thinner bags that are of lower quality, he said. More bags to the weight can help save on tax. But thinner and lighter bags cannot be reused as often, and would be discarded faster than thicker bags. These lighter bags will just end up in landfills, unless segregated and disposed properly. Worst case, they will end up in waterways, he added.

There are at least two concerns with this proposed tax: will it significantly reduce the consumption of single-use plastic bags; and, should the tax be imposed by weight or by piece? Incidentally, the excise taxes on liquids (fuel, beer, liquor, etc.) are specific and imposed by volume (in terms of liters, etc.), while the excise taxes on cigarettes are charged per pack. The excise taxes on vehicles and jewelry are imposed per piece or unit, but based on the value of the item. How then should we do this with single-use plastic bags?

There is no doubt, as with the experience in other countries, a tax on single-use plastic bags can reduce consumption. In Portugal, for example, a plastic bag tax was imposed in 2015. A 2017 article in the journal Waste Management quoted a study by researchers at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa which showed that the tax "reduced the consumption of plastic bags at short and medium term," and that reusable bags given by stores and supermarkets were "critical to reduce consumption."

That study, the article noted, showed that the tax resulted in a "74% reduction [in] plastic bag consumption with a simultaneously 61% increase [in] reusable plastic bags." However, the study also noted that since plastic bags were then reused for shopping instead of being used as garbage bags, "the consumption of garbage bags increased by 12%."



Taxing plastic bags

Similar success was experienced in Ireland, where a plastic bag levy was imposed as early as 2002. In a 2007 article in the journal Environmental and Resource Economics, authors Frank Convery, Simon McDonnell, and Susana Ferreira were quoted as noting that the plastic levy reduced plastic bag use by consumers by 90%, with a corresponding reduction in littering as well.

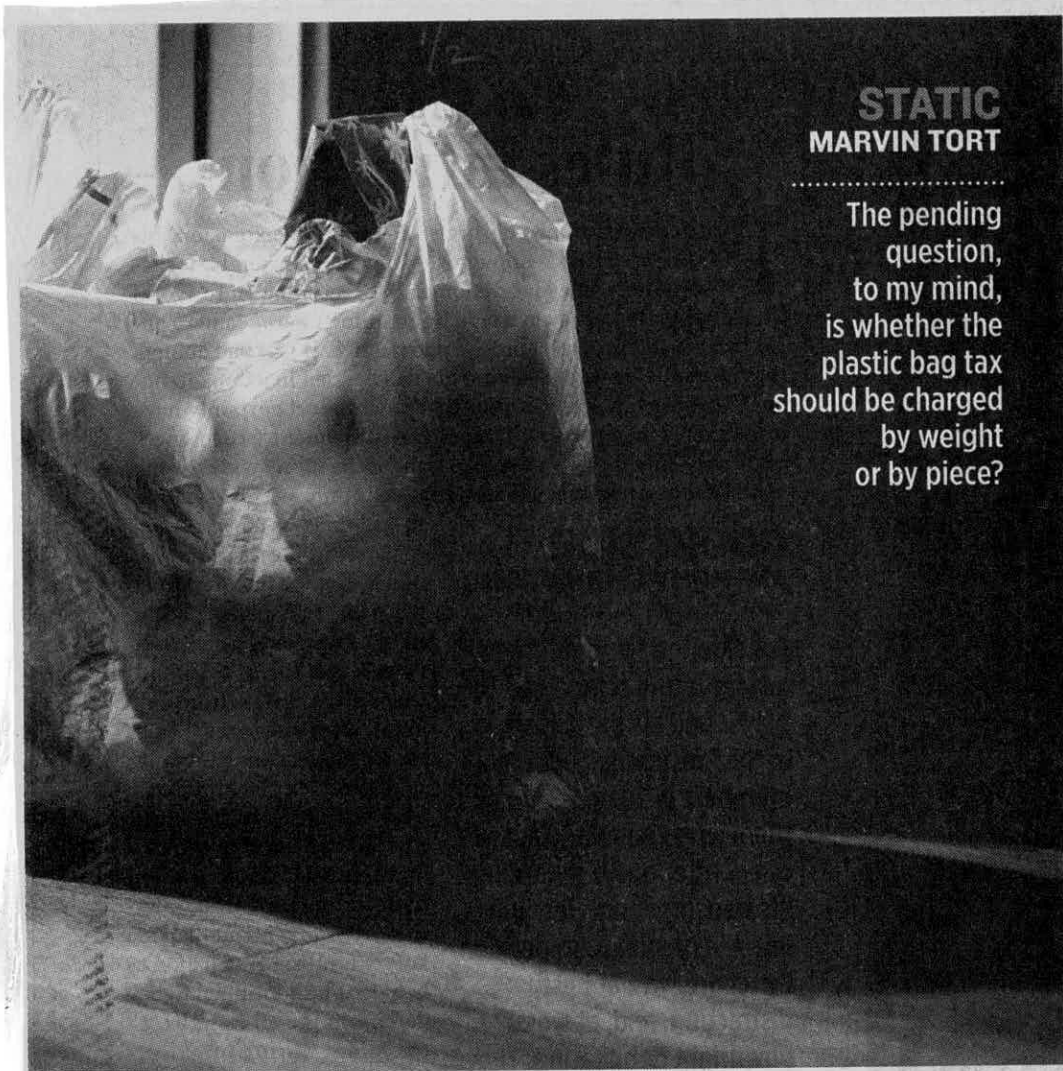
The pending question, to my mind, is whether the plastic bag tax should be charged by weight or by piece? And on this, I support Undersecretary Antiporda's call for a tax per piece. For the simple reason that the tax should be high enough, and somewhat more direct, to create an impact particularly on consumers.

Take the case of grocery shoppers. Assuming a P20 tax is charged per kilogram of plastic bags. One kilogram will probably account for about 100 bags, for a measly 20-centavo tax per bag. A pass-on tax of 20 centavos per bag is practically negligible to a shopper with thou-

sands worth of groceries. But, assuming, for the sake of argument, a tax of P10 per bag, then the consumer will probably think twice about asking for a bag, right? Incidentally, in Denmark, where a plastic bag tax was first imposed way back in the 1990s, I believe a plastic grocery bag cost roughly about P25, including taxes.

But, it is also worthwhile to look into the experience of other countries that taxed plastic bags specifically based on weight. We need to make public studies and research papers and technical assessments that can help boost the argument in favor of either taxing by weight, or taxing per piece. We need legitimate scientific research and data to help craft this tax legislation.

In the case of Denmark, a tax on plastic bags beginning 1994 was imposed at the importation or manufacturing level, based on weight. Retailers pay the tax when they buy the bags, and they in turn can pass on the tax to consumers by charging them for the bags. Plastic bag use went down 66% in the first year.



STATIC MARVIN TORT

The pending question, to my mind, is whether the plastic bag tax should be charged by weight or by piece?

Ireland, in 2002, decided on a direct tax to consumers, charging them the tax per piece at point of sale. Plastic bag use went down 90% in the first year of the tax. The tax was raised to 22 euro cents in 2007, from 15 euro cents previously, as plastic bag use went up again. But, comparing the two countries, per-piece tax seems to work better in terms of reducing use.

In England, users were required by law to pay a five-pence fee per bag, which reportedly resulted in an 85% reduction in use within six months of legislating the fee. Again, the charge was per piece, and not by weight. Using a similar fee, Wales reportedly saw a 96% reduction in use within a year. These experiences by other territories should be taken into consideration by our legislators.

Ultimately, I prefer a more integrated approach to dealing with plastic bags, which involves manufacturing itself, then to distribution, and tax on sale, plus segregation and

recycling. In particular, I point to also encouraging the use of waste for energy production, or as construction and building materials, or their reuse or repurposing for new productive uses. However, in the immediate, I also think that a tax per piece will have its advantages.

However, the plastic bag tax should be seen for what it really is, a tax. It is, mainly, another source of revenue for the government, just like taxes on cigarettes, vaping, beer, liquor, fuel, jewelry, and motor vehicles, among others. They are meant primarily to raise money for the government. The taxes' impact on consumption, and on related negative externalities, are secondary. We need more creative and ingenious ways to deal with plastic pollution. ■

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RSA first Filipino in elite Bloomberg 50 global icons, innovators

Ramon S. Ang, president and chief operating officer of conglomerate San Miguel Corporation (SMC), has made it into the Bloomberg 50, an elite annual list of top global innovators, entrepreneurs, and leaders who have changed the global business landscape, as compiled by Bloomberg Businessweek. He is the first Filipino to make it to the list.

An unranked list, the Bloomberg 50 represents the most influential thought-leaders in business, entertainment, politics, finance, fashion, and science and technology, whose accomplishments were particularly noteworthy and defined 2019.

"It's a great honor, and I'm grateful to Bloomberg for taking note of our work and the developments here in the Philippines," Ang said. "I hope this helps to showcase the many great and positive things happening in our country."

Ang is joined in the list by Warner Media News and Sports Chairman and CNN President Jeff Zucker, TV host Jon Stewart, pop star Rihanna, Shopify CEO Tobias Lutke, GlaxoSmithKline CEO Emma Walmsley, Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige, American gymnast Simone Biles, Walmart CEO Doug McMillon, Disney International Chairman Kevin Mayer, celebrity and Kylie Cosmetics CEO Kylie Jenner, and climate activist Greta Thunberg, among others.

In the last decade, Ang engineered the massive diversification and transformation of the over 100-year-old San Miguel from a beer, food, spirits and packaging company with market leading positions, to a diversified conglomerate with interests in industries crucial to Philippine economic growth: Food and Beverage, Oil and Fuels, Power, Infrastructure, Banking.

SMC is one of the Philippines' largest companies by revenues and profits. In 2018, its revenues breached ₱1 trillion, equivalent to about 5.9% of the Philippines' Gross Domestic Product.

Much of San Miguel's earnings are ploughed back and reinvested in the Philippines in the form of growth-generating manufacturing facilities and infrastructure projects aimed at improving people's lives, decongesting cities, and sustaining economic growth.

Currently, SMC's Food and Beverage business is in the midst of the largest capacity expansion program in its 129-year history. It is building additional breweries, new feed mills, flour mills, food processing plants, poultry facilities, and a ready-to-eat plant, in various locations nationwide.

These new facilities bring direct and indirect jobs, livelihood opportunities, and boost local economies.

SMC, under Ang, is also managing, operating, and constructing some of the country's biggest infrastructure projects.

Its operating expressways include the South Luzon Expressway (SLEX), Skyway 1 and 2, Southern Tagalog Arterial Road (STAR), the NAIAX Expressway (NAIAX), and the Tarlac-Pangasinan-La Union Expressway (TPLEX).

It is building Skyway Stage 3, which will connect SLEX and Skyway 1 and 2 to the Northern Luzon Expressway from Buendia, Makati; Skyway Stage 4, from Skyway FTI, Parañaque City to the Batasan Complex in Quezon City and to San Jose del Monte, Bulacan, and the



RAMON S. ANG

Skyway Extension from Alabang to SLEX Susana Heights.

SMC is also set to build the SLEX TR4 project, which will extend SLEX from Sto. Tomas, Batangas to Lucena City in Quezon province.

San Miguel is also building the MRT-7 project, which will stretch from North EDSA through Quezon City, to San Jose del Monte, Bulacan. The project includes an intermodal transport terminal and a road component that will connect to the North Luzon Expressway.

Most ambitious project

SMC's biggest and most ambitious upcoming project to date is the new Manila International Airport project in Bulacan province, just north of Metro Manila, and accessible via an expansive infrastructure network.

At US\$15 billion, it is the company's single largest investment to date, and the largest in the country. The new airport will be the Philippines' largest and most modern.

To be built on a 2,500-hectare facility, it will have four runways, upgradable to six, and world-class facilities seen to boost the country's competitiveness as an investment and tourism destination.

Philanthropy, sustainability

Ang is also a known philanthropist. Through the San Miguel Foundation, he has channeled billions of pesos towards building housing communities for thousands of families affected by natural calamities and armed conflict.

The foundation has also built community hospitals, schools, and libraries, among others. It's thrust today is to address hunger and education. It recently completed its first learning and feeding center and food bank in the poorest district of Tondo, Manila, where Ang grew up.

Under Ang, SMC has also pushed for greater sustainability, initiating a landmark water sustainability project which calls for an ambitious 50% reduction in the utility and domestic use of water across all its businesses by year 2025.

In 2017, as part of efforts to reduce the company's solid waste footprint, he announced the discontinuation of San Miguel's plastic bottled water business.

In 2019, he announced several major sustainability initiatives: A ₱1-billion donation to clean up the Tullahan River; building the country's first recycled plastics road, and adopting the Philippines' first fully-certified biodegradable plastics for various packaging requirements.

From an early age, Ang has had an entrepreneurial spirit. He started in business importing and reconditioning heavy equipment for the local construction industry. He is a mechanical engineering graduate and an avid car aficionado and collector.

The Bloomberg 50 2019 list is published in a special issue of Bloomberg Businessweek released December 6.



Fighting climate change and protecting nature go hand in hand

The preservation of Earth's pristine wildernesses and oceans, long treated as a separate issue to curbing climate change, is taking on more importance as scientists say they really need to go hand in hand.

The year 2020 will be crucial as countries submit their commitments to the fight to curb global warming ahead of the COP26 conference in Glasgow, Scotland.

At the same time, they will also be drawing up their plans for protecting biodiversity over the next decade in preparation for the COP15 summit in China.

While the focus at COP25 in Madrid these past weeks has been on climate change and the growing urgency to cut greenhouse gas emissions, organizers have made

an effort to put the natural environment into the mix.

COP25 chair Chile, for example, has put the stress on protecting our oceans, under threat on all fronts – pollution, acidification, coral loss, over-fishing, to name a few.

"We cannot approach global problems in separate compartments, we must look for synergies," said Andres Landerreche, coordinator for the Chilean conference presidency.

"It is the first time (at a COP summit) that there are so many official events linked to biodiversity," said Alexandra Deprez of the Institute for Durable Development and International Relations (IDDRI).

Climate change, nature linked
The link between global warm-

'The link between global warming and biodiversity is and should be self-evident—climate change spells changing habitats and upheaval in the animal world, just as it will mean for mankind.'

ing and biodiversity is and should be self-evident – climate change spells changing habitats and upheaval in the animal world, just as it will mean for mankind.

"The effects of climate change stoke the biodiversity crisis," said Grethel Aguilar, acting head of the International Union for Conservation (IUCN) whose Red List estimates 30 percent of all animals and plants to be at risk.

Yet, it is nature which may offer solutions to help tackle climate change, Aguilar added.

One of the best known examples is planting trees to help absorb some of the billions of tons of CO2 being pumped out, but it should not be seen as an easy pass on the pressing need to reduce our emissions outright.

Similarly, alternative fuels, such as those based on plants like maize can help – but they have a price in diverting food crops into energy.

Lola Vallejo, who runs IDDRI's climate program, said the issue of biodiversity was on the agenda and had attracted support from key countries such as France, China, Costa Rica, and New Zealand.

At Madrid, there has been some meeting of minds on the idea of enlisting nature to combat climate change, which may prove better than some of the technological or engineering solutions suggested up to now.

"It is also important not to think that such solutions absolve us of our responsibility on commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," said Karin Zaunberger of the European Commission. "We have to be ambitious, unconventional, and work together." (AFP)



Demonstrators hold a banner reading 'Climate Justice' during a climate march to demand urgent action on the climate crisis from world leaders attending the COP25 summit in Madrid recently. (AFP)



PH urges developed countries to fulfill commitments to Paris Agreement

Deputy Speaker and Lone District of Antique Representative Loren Legarda delivered the Philippine statement at the High Level Segment of the 25th Session of the Conference of Parties (COP25) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Madrid, Spain, recently where she served as head of the Philippine delegation.

Legarda urged developed countries to fulfill their commitments to the Paris Agreement by leading deep and drastic cuts in carbon emissions and providing finance and investments for innovative adaptation solutions in local communities.

"The latest science tells us that our options to survive and thrive are swiftly diminishing. So in this COP, let us finish the work at hand, 'the Paris rulebook.' The urgency of action, unequivocally, is most pronounced today

than ever. United climate actions must now happen in an ambitious scale, scope, and speed," Legarda said.

"The committed climate finance of at least 100 billion dollars by 2020 and every year thereafter for the adaptation and mitigation needs of developing countries must now materialize, beginning with the immediate replenishment of the Green Climate Fund," she added.

Legarda said that the Philippines has exhibited climate leadership and commitment to act on the climate emergency.

She cited landmark climate legislation, such as the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, Renewable Energy Act, Climate Change Act, People's Survival Fund Act, National Protected Areas Act, Green Jobs Act, and the recent Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act, as well as the



Rep. Legarda, as head of the Philippine delegation, read the Philippine statement at the High Level Segment of the 25th Session of COP25

'The Philippines, constrained as we are in means and capacities, has been doing all it can to make a difference in responding to the global climate emergency. It is in this context that we urge the developed country parties to uphold climate justice.'

country's increase of excise tax on coal importation.

"The Philippines, constrained as we are in means and capacities, has been doing all it can to make a difference in responding to the global climate emergency. It is in this context that we urge the developed country parties to rise to the 1.5 climate challenge and uphold climate justice," Legarda said.

"The time for action has long passed. Now is the time to catch up. Now is the time to translate words into actions. As we end the year to welcome a new one — the year Paris Agreement will be fully enforced — let the era of procrastination, inaction, and apathy end as well. Let this end present a new beginning for humanity — a new chance to rise to the climate challenge, this time with a renewed commitment and a stronger resolve," she concluded.



Coal demand seen to remain stable amid climate concerns

PARIS – The demand for coal will remain steady over the next four years due to demand from Asia, which comes despite fears of the climate crisis, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said Tuesday.

Coal remains a major source of power across Southeast Asia, where breakneck economic development has spurred soaring energy demands – but at a cost to the environment.

Coastal areas across Southeast Asia have already seen major floods and seawater incursion linked to climate change.

“Global coal demand has rebounded since 2017,” the IEA said in a report.

“Although it will probably decline in 2019, we expect it to remain broadly steady thereafter through 2024,” the Paris-based agency said.

Coal is the primary source of energy used to generate electricity and accounts for more than

40 percent of energy-related CO2 emissions. It is also widely used to produce steel and cement.

Europe and the United States are becoming less reliant on coal, but its use is increasing in Asia – especially in India and China which are the world’s largest coal producers and users.

“Coal-fired power plants in Asia are young – 12 years old on average. So they could still run for decades,” said IEA executive director Fatih Birol.

He said it will be necessary to

have access to technologies such as carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) projects – a costly technology which captures and stores CO2 to prevent it from being released into the atmosphere.

For the moment, there are few CCUS projects in operation.

“The adoption of CCUS in many of Asia’s young power plants would be necessary to bring the world into line with a pathway for achieving international goals on climate, air quality and energy access,” Birol said.

– AFP



Down with Grinch

To say that traffic worsens during the Christmas season is putting it mildly.

Traffic woes escalate to hellish levels just when we are raring to spread good cheer.

**“
Christmas season or not, the demand for more transport modes has been recognized by government which, through several departments, is working hard to address the need.**

Vehicle-packed highways, disgruntled motorists and long-suffering commuters are the gifts of the Grinch, and how we wish some kind of Santa would make it all go away for good!

The common sight of commuters filling up road space, craning their necks for a ride to somewhere, or the carmageddon that used to be so rare but no longer, makes us think the traffic problem is on the road to nowhere.

Even some perceived solutions had revealed themselves to be problematic. Recently, a senator demanded that ride-sharing app Grab explain what he said was a sudden surge in its fares.

In a press statement, Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian said, “The high fare is killing the festive mood of many Filipino commuters.

We don’t want to let Grab play the Grinch who stole Christmas from Juan de la Cruz because of high fare.”

Grab’s defense was that it was “working on a very limited number of drivers to serve an exponentially high demand.”

Christmas season or not, the demand for more transport modes has been recognized by government which, through several departments, is working hard to address the need.

Among the solutions rolled out by the Department of Transportation are additional infrastructure, all ongoing at a fierce pace.

The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) also relaunched the rehabilitated Pasig River ferry service, increasing its fleet to serve more commuters wanting to escape the road traffic in the metro.

The Pasig ferry service covers Manila to Pasig, which means the cooperation of both cities now headed by young visionaries Mayors Francisco “Isko Moreno” Domagoso and Vico Sotto of Manila and Pasig, respectively.

Currently, the ferry offers free rides to entice commuters to try the service instead of public utility in congested Metro Manila roads.

Information reveals that the ferry transport system, launched in 2014, has “11 stations spanning the 25-kilometer Pasig River: Escolta, Lawton, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Sta.

Ana and Lambingan stations in Manila; Pinagbuhatan, San Joaquin and Maybunga stations in Pasig; Valenzuela and Guadalupe stations in Makati and Hulo station in Mandaluyong.”

It can reportedly accommodate up to 14,000 passengers, significant in helping decongest traffic along EDSA and other major thoroughfares.

Of course, the river itself has to be rehabilitated, which is among the current goals of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) under Secretary Roy Cimatu.

If all goes according to plan, commuters can take this alternative mode of transport with ease and comfort in a short time without taking a bus, jeep or the Light Rail Transit.

Issues notwithstanding, bringing Pasig River to life is part and parcel of the dream to

revitalize our waterways for additional transport systems.

To consolidate efforts, the Palace abolished the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission, whereby under Executive Order 93, the former commission’s functions, including “all necessary and incidental powers,” were transferred to the Manila Bay Task Force, DENR, MMDA, Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development and the Department of Public Works and Highways.

Within the next two years, Santa may just have kicked the traffic Grinch for good.

**“
Issues notwithstanding, bringing Pasig River to life is part and parcel of the dream to revitalize our waterways for additional transport systems.**



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
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SERVICE

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Down with Grinch

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SUNOD-SUNOD ang malalagim na disgrasya ngayon.

Marami ang namamatay sa iisang insidente.

Magkakaiba ang mga dahilan mula sa kawalan ng preno hanggang sa human error, overloading, overspeeding, kawalan ng mga warning sign, lasing na tsuper at iba pa.

Dapat tayong humugot dito ng mga leksyon para sa ligtas nating paglalakbay.

NAKAINOM LANG HINDI LASHING

Nang damputin ng mga pulis ang mga tsuper ng Mistubishi Montero at pick-up na nasangkot sa disgrasyang nakamatay ng 6 katao at nakasugat ng ___ iba pa sa Tacurong City nitong nakaraang Biyernes, tila nakatungga ang mga ito ng alak.

At ito ang isa sa mga pinaniniwalaang dahilan kung bakit nawala sa wisyo ang mga tsuper sa pagmamaneho.

Ang tsuper ng Montero ay nakabangga ng isang traysikel na puno ng pasahero at isang motorsiklo habang bumangga naman sa puno ang pick-up upang makaiwas sa disgrasya.

Tila mabilis din umano ang Montero at pick-up at maaaring nagkakararahan ang mga ito na maaaring isa ring dahilan ng disgrasya.

Namatay rito sina Najmia Kusain; Juhailer Mamusaka, 12; Juhaina Mamusaka, 9; Aipa Mamusaka, 2; Juhairi Mamusaka, 1; at alias Atong Ontong habang 14 naman ang nasugatan.

WALANG PRENO

Nawalan naman umano ng preno ang isang dump truck bumulusok ito mula sa pababang diversion road sa Cardona, Rizal hanggang sa mabangga nito ang jeepney na kasalubong.

Namatay ang tsuper ng dumptruck nang mahulog ito sa bangin habang karamihan sa mga namatay ay pasahero ng jeepney.

May isa pang truck na nadamay rin subalit lumalabas na walang nadamay na sakay nito sa insidente.

Karamihan sa mga namatay rito ang obrero at estudyante at nadamay rin ang mga nagdya-jogging at naglalakad lang sa lugar.



ULTIMATUM

ni BENNY ANTIPORDA

HUMANGO NG MGA ARAL SA MALALAGIM NA DISGRASYA

NANGAIN NG IBANG RUTA

Nabangga naman ng isang bus ang kasalubong nitong ___ sa ___ nang kainin nito ang linya ng nakabanggaan nito.

Dahil sa tindi ng salpukan, lima ang namatay habang ___ ang sugatan.

Hindi pa malinaw kung paano kumain ng ibang linya ang bus subalit malimit umanong nagaganap ito kung mabilis ang takbo ng sasakyan sa pakurbadang daan.

MAMANG TSUPER NAKATULOG, NAKABANGGA

Makaraang mabangga ng isang dump truck ang ilang traysikel at motorsiklo sa Gapan, Nueva Ecija na ikinamtay ng tatlong tao at ikinasugat ng ilan, inamin ng tsuper na nakatulog siya habang nagmamaneho.

Sa Bocaue, Bulacan naman, apat ang namatay makaraang gustong takasan ng isang tsuper ng pick-up truck ang nabangga nitong isang motorsiklo hanggang sa mabangga o masagi ang dalawang traysikel, tatlong iba pang motorsiklo, isang SUV at isang L-300 van.

Sinasabing namatay rin ang anak mismo ng tsuper ng pick-up truck dahil sa insidente.

KARGA MABIGAT

Nang mawalan naman ng preno ang isang malaking truck na puno ng buhangin sa Mendez, Cavite, inararo nito ang isang jeepney at iba pang naadaan nitong traysikel, motorsiklo at iba pa.

Namatay rito ang dalawang tao habang 16 ang nasugatan.

Sinubukan ng tsuper na pahintuin ang sasakyan at umiwas na makadisgrasya ngunit nabigo ito kaya ibinangga na lang umano nito ang kanyang sasakyan sa puno.

Mabagal naman umano ang kanyang takbo ngunit nang pabulusok na ito mula sa itaas, hindi na niya nakontrol ito lalo't nawalan itong preno.

SINO ANG SUSUNOD?

Kapaskuhan na kaya napakarami ang lumala-

bas gamit ang kani-kanilang mga sasakyan.

Dahil Kapaskuhan, marami ang bumibiyahe nang malayuan at malapitan din. Panahon din ng delivery ng mga paninda na pam-Pasko

Siyempre pa, lahat ay inaasahang inihahanda ang kani-kanilang mga sasakyan para maging "road worthy" o nakakondisyon para makaiwas sa disgrasya.

Pero tiyak na may susunod pang mga biktima ng aksidente sa lansangan.

Sino nga ba ang susunod na mamatay at maospital?

Dapat itanim ang tanong na ito sa utak ng mga biyahero, lalo na ang mga tsuper, upang makaiwas sa disgrasya dahil magiging mas maingat sila sa paglalakbay.

MAG-ARAL, MAGSALITA, INSPEKSYON

Magandang gawin ang pag-aralan ang mga sanhi ng disgrasya.

Lahat ng mga tsuper, konduktor at taga-pamahalaan ay dapat na malalim at matandain sa mga sanhi ng sakuna.

Ag mga tsuper at konduktor o helper ay dapat laging nakakondisyon ang katawan at mapagbantay sa depekto ng kanilang mga sasakyan.

Ang mga nasa pamahalaan na nagpapatupad ng mga batas para sa ligtas na paglalakbay ay dapat na gawin ang nararapat gaya ng ta-mang inspeksyon sa mga sasakyan, tamang pamimigay ng lisensya sa mga karapat-dapat, paglalagay ng sapat na road signs sa kalsada at iba pa.

Ang mga pasahero ay may karapatang magsalita, magbabala at pumigil sa mga tsuper kung wala na ang mga ito sa tama at ligtas na pagmamaneho.

O mga Bro, happy biyahe tayong lahat.

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