

DATE : 06 MAY 2019

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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



DENR bans mercury in small-scale mining

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

The Philippines will soon eliminate the use of the highly toxic mercury in artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) in a bid to promote a more sustainable way of extracting minerals.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has embarked on a five-year project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to promote legislation that will legalize and support ASGM while encouraging miners to extract gold using

environment friendly alternatives to mercury.

Environment Undersecretary Analiza Teh said the GEF-Global Opportunities for Long-Term Development project is a way to help small-scale miners who are willing to abide by government policies on responsible mining practices.

"This is expected to help the Philippines contribute to the elimination of mercury in ASGM through a supply chain approach from miners to refiners. We hope that small-scale miners will see mercury-free gold mining as viable," she said.

Aside from the Philippines, the GEF-GOLD project is also being implemented in Peru, Colombia, Guyana, Indonesia, Kenya, Burkina Faso and Mongolia.

In the Philippines, the project sites are the towns of Maco in Compostela Valley, T'boli in South Cotabato and Rosario in Agusan del Sur.

The components of the project include a review of policies and legal frameworks supporting the ASGM sector, introduction of financing schemes allowing miners to invest in sustainable mercury-free tech-

nologies, upscaling of these technologies, dissemination of information to ensure replication, and monitoring and evaluation.

Aside from promoting mercury-free gold mining, the GEF-GOLD project also aims to address issues involving ASGM such as working conditions, child labor and gender gap.

The project is also one of the strategies as the Philippines aims to be mercury-free under the Minamata Convention on Mercury, which is yet to be ratified by the Senate.

Mercury or "quicksilver"

is widely used in ASGM as a "magnet" to extract gold that is mixed with soil and other sediments in ores.

This exposes miners to the metal, which is known for its toxicity that could affect the nervous, immune and digestive systems.

Data from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau showed there are a total of 38 small-scale mining sites in the CARAGA region, while 78 exist in the Cordilleras.

Small-scale mining is protected and regulated under the People's Small-Scale Mining

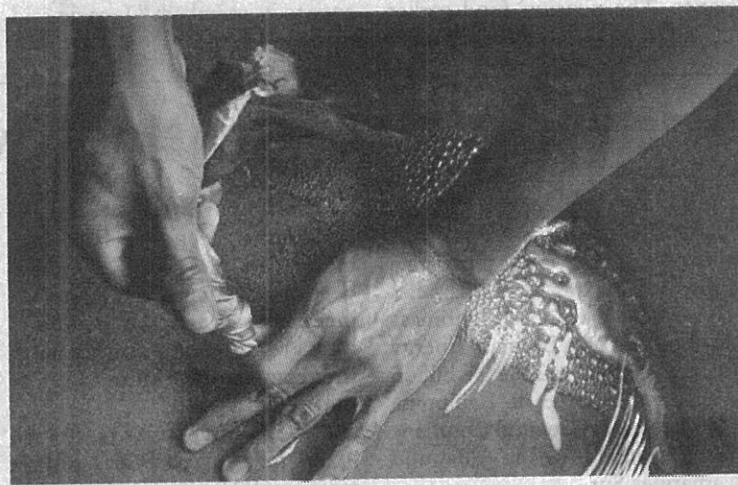
Act as well as Executive Order 79, which provides for the establishment and declaration of Minahang Bayan.

Apart from ASGM, mercury has also been detected in some fuels, recycled metals, and consumer products like whitening cosmetics, batteries and dental fillers.

Earlier this year, an assessment on environmental impacts of mercury identified four sites with confirmed mercury contamination, and 11 others suspected with the presence of the metal, including Manila Bay.



Mercury-free mining extraction pushed



Responsible mining. Artisanal and small-scale gold miners are being encouraged to switch to environment and health-friendly alternatives in extracting gold.

BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is readying the ban of the use of mercury in small-scale mining.

A five-year project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) launched in the Philippines last month would legalize and support artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) where miners will extract gold using environment friendly alternatives to mercury.

The DENR said the project includes a review of policies and legal frameworks supporting the ASGM sector; introduction of financing schemes allowing miners

to invest in sustainable mercury-free technologies; dissemination of information to ensure replication; and monitoring and evaluation.

Analiza Rebuelta Teh, DENR undersecretary, said the GEF-Global Opportunities for Long-Term Development (GEF-GOLD), will help small-scale miners embrace responsible mining practices.

"We hope small-scale miners will see mercury-free gold mining as viable," Teh said.

The DENR said mercury is currently used in the ASGM industry as a magnet to extract gold that is mixed with soil and other sediments

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MERCURY

in ores despite of its toxicity which can affect the nervous, immune and digestive systems of miners.

The GEF-GOLD project is also being implemented in Peru, Colombia, Guyana, Indonesia, Kenya, Burkina Faso and Mongolia.

Project sites where GEF-GOLD is being implemented are the towns of Maco in Compostela Valley, T'boli in South Cotabato and Rosario in Agusan del Sur.

The company filed a case before the Supreme Court to overturn a decision made by the National Telecommunications Commission selection committee.

To date, the government has yet to award the frequency and license to the provisional new major player, Mislattel, a consortium of Udenna Corp. and China Telecom Inc., due to congressional issues on Mislattel's franchise.

Despite failing to get the third telco slot, PT&T is focused on transforming itself into a digital service provider offering a wide

DISQUALIFIED

range of telecommunications and information technology services.

The company said it will foray into cybersecurity, smart cities and Internet of Things in the future, and will be ready when mobile for 5G comes to the country.

Under the MOU, the companies will construct WiFi networks utilizing PT&T's 100 percent fiber necessary for rendering emergency and information services, digital TV and satellite network services, and digital and internet services for smart cities.

PT&T owns and operates a 100

percent fiber internet network in Calabarzon that extends all the way to greater Metropolitan Manila, Batangas and Pampanga. Prior to the government-mandated service area scheme, PT&T operated nationwide for more than 50 years.

The signing of the business agreement was held in Beijing during the recent visit of President Duterte.

CITIC is known in China as a leading system integration and IT services provider. It also develops application software.



DENR defends actions on West Phl Sea protection

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

Following the Supreme Court (SC) decision granting the issuance of the Writ of Kalikasan for the West Philippine Sea, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources maintained that the move may be a mix-up of political and environmental issues on the disputed body of water.

Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said the DENR has been doing its part to protect the marine resources in the highly controversial West Philippine Sea.

"That Writ of Kalikasan may have been a mix-up on the issue of political sovereignty and the issue on the environment, which in fact, we have been doing our part," Antiporda told **The STAR**.

"I don't think that it is fair for them to say that we are not protecting it. They (petitioners) should have done their assignments before coming up with such a case because we are doing our job," he added.

Antiporda said the DENR would finance anew an expedition by marine scientists from the University of the Philippines to further study marine resources in the area.

"We should put it in the right context so as not to confuse the public. The political issue is a DFA (Department of Foreign Affairs) matter and needs a diplomatic approach," he said.

"We have to separate that from the environmental issue and then harmonize all the information that we have," Antiporda said.

He said the DENR has not yet received a copy of the SC decision, but the agency is ready to report what it has been doing for the marine protection of the West Philippine Sea.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu is among the respondents in the case, along with Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources director Eduardo Gongona.

The respondents have been given 10 days to answer.

Piñol and Gongona declined to comment, saying they are just depending on the official statement released by Malacañang.

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo already said the protection of marine life in the

West Philippine Sea is already a "top concern" of the government and that Malacañang has no issue with it.

"In any case, we note that the writ was issued to prevent violations of our environmental laws in our territorial waters and in our exclusive economic zone located in the subject areas," Panelo said.

Meanwhile, international organization Oceana Philippines said the writ is a laudable move to stop the destruction of the coral reefs and other marine resources and the consequent displacement of fisherfolk in portions of the West Philippine Sea.

The SC recently granted a petition of fishermen and a group of lawyers for the issuance of a Writ of Kalikasan directing the government to actively protect the West Philippine Sea and stop the degradation of its marine resources by the Chinese.

The SC said magistrates in special full session issued a Writ of Kalikasan to "protect, preserve, rehabilitate and to restore the marine environment" at the Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal, Ayungin (Second Thomas) Shoal and Panganiban (Mischief) Reef.

In issuing the writ, the SC granted the petition filed by the Integrated Bar of the Philippines and fishermen from Zambales and Palawan last month.

The court said the writ should prompt the government to do more to prevent violations of environmental laws in Philippine waters, specifically within the country's exclusive economic zone.

In filing the petition, the lawyers' group and the fishermen cited the government's inaction on the environmentally destructive activities of Chinese fishermen and forces in the West Philippine Sea.

They said the Chinese activities – including the construction of artificial islands and harvesting of endangered aquatic resources – were clear violations of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna, the Philippine Fisheries Code and Presidential Decree No. 1586, or Establishing the Environmental Impact Statement System in the Philippines.



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Palace to enforce SC's Writ of Kalikasan

By ARGYLL CYRUS B. GEDUCOS

Malacañang will follow the order of the Supreme Court (SC) to actively protect marine life in the West Philippine Sea but protested the contention of government inaction in the disputed waters.

The SC issued a Writ of Kalikasan to protect, preserve, and rehabilitate, as well as to restore the marine environment in the Panatag Shoal, Ayungin Shoal, and Mischief Reef.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said that while they have not yet

received a copy of the order, the Palace is duty-bound to implement all laws.

"The Executive Branch is duty-bound to implement all laws regardless of the existence of orders from a co-equal branch. We find no issue of enforcing our laws as well as performing such enforcement pursuant to our Constitution and principles of international law," he said.

"We note that the writ was issued to prevent violations of our environmental laws in our territorial waters and in our exclusive economic zone located in the subject areas," he added. ▶4

Panelo also said that Malacañang has always respected the orders and decisions of the Judiciary, especially the Supreme Court, "subject to the availment of possible legal remedies." He also said that the protection of the marine ecosystem of the West Philippine Sea is already a top concern and agenda of the government.

However, the Palace official contested accusations that high-ranking government officials neglected their duties under the law to protect the

Panatag Shoal, Ayungin Shoal, and Mischief Reef.

"We take exception, however, to the contention that there has been inaction on the part of the administration with regard to the environmental concerns brought about by Chinese activities in the contested areas," Panelo said.

"Our coast guards as well as other government agencies are performing their task in securing the subject of the writ," he added.

Panelo reiterated that the government is just being careful in dealing with the issues in the contested waters since provocative acts may spark unwanted tension between the two countries.

"There have been concerns made with respect to security of the marine environment with allegations of certain unwanted incursions that have brought damage thereto, but we must remember that they have been made in contested areas," he reminded.

"While we promptly made a series of diplomatic protests using the mechanism of diplomacy to assert our rights, we also undertook protective

measures even as we are consciously cautious not to perform provocative acts that may trigger armed hostilities between the contesting countries which may risk the lives of our countrymen and cost irreparable damage to our land," he added.

In a petition filed last month, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) and fishermen from Palawan and Zambales, both on the coast of the resource-rich sea, cited "massive destruction" in the waters allegedly due to Chinese fishing vessels.

Named respondents in the petition were the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, Department of Justice, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), the Philippine Navy, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), the Philippine National Police (PNP), and Maritime Group.

Panelo said that since government agencies were named in the case, they will just let the Court do its job.

"Given that there are governmental agencies impleaded in this case, coupled with the fact that the action is already being heard by the Judiciary, we will let the Office of the Solicitor General defend and explain the actions of this branch of the government before the High Court," he said.

"Whatever the outcome of the petition, we assure the nation that this Administration is committed to protect the sovereignty of our country and the protection of our marine environment against any and all who will attempt to assault or violate them," he added.

In his visit to Beijing, China last week, President Duterte raised the sea dispute with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Both agreed to pursue bilateral negotiations.

China has ignored the landmark Hague ruling which invalidated China's claim that the disputed waters belong to them based on the Nine-Dash line rule. (Argyll Cyrus B. Geducos)



Palace insists it acted on shoal, reef issues

MALACAÑANG refuted at the weekend allegations that the government is guilty of inaction on environmental concerns brought by Chinese activities in disputed maritime areas.

While the Palace said it respects the Supreme Court order issuing a writ of kalikasan compelling the government to protect, preserve, rehabilitate and restore the marine environment in the Scarborough Shoal (also known as Panatag Shoal), Ayungin Shoal (Second Thomas Shoal) and Panganiban Reef (Mischief Reef), it pointed out that the essence of the writ is already a top agenda of the government.

Although it has yet to receive the copy of the order, the Palace stood firm that the government has since

been doing its part to perform the protection of marine environment.

"In any case, we note that the writ was issued to prevent violations of our environmental laws in our territorial waters and in our exclusive economic zone located in the subject areas. The Executive Branch is duty-bound to implement all laws regardless of the existence of orders from a coequal branch. We find no issue of enforcing our laws as well as performing such enforcement pursuant to our Constitution and principles of international law," said Presidential Spokesman and Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador S. Panelo in a statement late on Saturday.

"We have always respected the orders and decisions of the

Judiciary, especially the Supreme Court, subject to the availment of possible legal remedies."

In Friday's special en banc session, the high court granted the plea of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines and Kalayaan Palawan Farmers and Fisherfolk Association for court protection following the reported Chinese harvesting of giant clams in Scarborough Shoal.

"We take exception, however, to the contention that there has been inaction on the part of the administration with regard to the environmental concerns brought about by Chinese activities in the contested areas. Our coast guards as well as other government agencies are performing their task in securing the subject of the writ," Panelo said.

Malacañang also reassured the public that the government has made a series of diplomatic protests against China to address the security concerns in the contested areas.

"There have been concerns made with respect to security of the marine environment with allegations of certain unwanted incursions that have brought damage thereto, but we must remember that they have been made in contested areas," Panelo said.

"While we promptly made a series of diplomatic protests using the mechanism of diplomacy to assert our rights, we also undertook protective measures even as we are consciously cautious not to perform provocative acts that may trigger armed hostilities between the contesting countries, which may risk the lives of our countrymen and cost irreparable damage to our land."

Since there are several agencies impleaded in the case and the matter is already being heard by the Judiciary, the Palace said it will let the Office of Solicitor General defend and explain the actions taken by the Executive Branch.

Panatag Shoal is located in Masinloc town in Zambales, while Ayungin Shoal and Panganiban Reef are located in the municipality of Kalayaan, province of Palawan.

Bernadette D. Nicolas



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The Manila Times



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Department of Environment and Natural Resources
TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

Protection of ecosystem top govt concern – Palace

THE protection of the marine ecosystem in the disputed West Philippine Sea (South China Sea) is a top concern of the government, Malacañang said on Sunday, days after the Supreme Court issued a writ to protect several areas there.

➤ **Ecosystem A2**

The high court on Friday issued the writ of *kalikasan* to protect, preserve, rehabilitate and restore the marine environment in Scarborough (Panatag) Shoal, Ayungin (Second Thomas) Shoal, and Pangasinan (Mischief) Reef.

The petitioners said the Duterte government's failure to stop Chinese activities in the areas was in violation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna, the Philippine Fisheries Code, and Presidential Decree 1586, establishing the Environmental Impact Statement System in the Philippines.

Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo said the protection of Philippine-claimed areas was already a top agenda of the Duterte administration.

"We note that the writ was issued to prevent violations of our environmental laws in our territorial waters and in our exclusive economic zone located in the subject areas. The Executive Branch is duty-bound to implement all laws regardless of the existence of orders from a co-equal branch," he said.

"We find no issue of enforcing our laws as well as performing such enforcement pursuant to our Constitution and principles of international law," he added.

Panelo, however, denied allegations that the government has not acted on the environmental concerns arising from Chinese activities in the areas.

He said law enforcement agencies had moved to protect the disputed areas. The government has also filed a formal protest with China.

"Our coast guards, as well as other government agencies are performing their task in securing the subject of the writ. There have been concerns made with respect to security of the marine environment with allegations of certain unwanted incursions that have brought damage thereto, but we

must remember that they have been made in contested areas," he said.

"While we promptly made a series of diplomatic protests using the mechanism of diplomacy to assert our rights, we also undertook protective measures even as we are consciously cautious not to perform provocative acts that may trigger armed hostilities between the contesting countries, which may risk the lives of our countrymen and cost irreparable damage to our land," Panelo added.

He said the Office of the Solicitor General would defend the administration in the case.

"Whatever the outcome of the petition, we assure the nation that this administration is committed to protect the sovereignty of our country and the protection of our marine environment against any and all who will attempt to assault or violate them," Panelo said.

The petition, filed in April by the Kalayaan Palawan Farmers and Fisherfolk Association, cited "massive destruction" in the waters allegedly because of Chinese fishing vessels.

It also invoked the 2016 Hague ruling, which trashed China's nine-dash claim over the disputed waters.

Malacañang invoked The Hague ruling after reports claimed that hundreds of Chinese vessels were seen in Pag-asa (Thitu) Island and Kota (Loaita) Island.

Panelo earlier told the Chinese ships to "go away" because "they do not have any business there."

President Rodrigo Duterte, on the other hand, said China should "lay off" Pag-asa Island.

"I will not plead or beg, but I'm just telling you that layoff the Pag-asa because I have soldiers there," Duterte said in a speech in Palawan on April 4.

"And, if you touch [the island,] that is another story. I will tell my soldiers to 'prepare for suicide missions,'" he added.

RALPH U. VILLANUEVA



Marine upkeep Palace priority

By Kristina Maralit

The Executive does not need to be reminded of its mandate of protecting the marine ecosystem in the West Philippine Sea since it has been a top concern and agenda of the government.

Presidential spokesman

Salvador Panelo pointed this out in response to the Supreme Court's issuance of a *writ of kalikasan* last Friday meant for the protection of a number of areas in the waterway.

While the Palace has yet to receive a copy of the high

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tribunal's order to protect, preserve and rehabilitate, as well as restore the marine environment in the Panatag Shoal, Ayungin Shoal, and Mischief Reef, Panelo asserted that the government is "duty-bound to implement all laws regardless of the existence of orders from a co-equal branch" and that it finds "no issue of enforcing our laws as well as performing such enforcement pursuant to our Constitution and principles of international law."

"We have always respected the orders and decisions of the Judiciary, especially the Supreme Court, subject to the availment of possible legal

remedies," the official said.

Panelo refuted claims of "inaction" on the government's part regarding perceived incursions in the disputed waters.

"In any case, we note that the writ was issued to prevent violations of our environmental laws in our territorial waters and in our exclusive economic zone located in the subject areas," he added.

What inaction?

Panelo, however, refuted claims of "inaction" on the government's part regarding perceived incursions in the disputed waters.

"Our coast guards as well as other government agencies are performing their task in securing the subject of the writ. There have been concerns made with respect to security of the marine environment with allegations of certain unwanted incursions that have brought damage thereto, but we must remember that they have been made in contested areas," stressed Panelo.

The government is duty-bound to implement all laws regardless of the existence of orders from a co-equal branch.

"While we promptly made a series of diplomatic protests using the mechanism of diplomacy to assert our rights, we also undertook protective measures even as we are consciously cautious not to perform provocative acts that may trigger armed hostilities between the contesting countries which may risk the lives of our countrymen and cost irreparable damage to our land," he added.

Solgen's call

Given the fact that many other government agencies are impleaded in the case, Panelo said that Malacañang is leaving it up to the Office of the Solicitor General to "defend and explain the actions of this branch of the government before the High Court."

"Whatever the outcome of the petition, we assure the nation that this administration is committed to protect the sovereignty of our country and the protection of our marine environment against any and all who will attempt to assault or violate them," he added.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

WPS protection top gov't concern

By EFREN MONTANO

MALACAÑANG has stressed that the government has not been lax in protecting the maritime environment in areas being claimed by China.

"We stress that the essence of such writ of kalikasan, which is the protection of the marine ecosystem of the West Philippine Sea is already a top concern and agenda of the government," said Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo.

Panelo's statement came a day after the Supreme Court, in a special en banc session, issued a

writ of kalikasan to prevent violations of the country's environmental laws in its territorial waters and exclusive economic zone.

A writ of kalikasan is a remedy available to persons or groups whose constitutional right to a balanced and healthful ecology is threatened or violated by acts or omissions by public officials or private individuals.

Panelo denied that there's been "inaction" on the part of the government in implementing environmental laws in areas being claimed by China as accused by a group of fishermen from Palawan that filed the petition for the writ of kalikasan with the

high court.

"We take exception to the contention that there has been inaction on the part of the administration with regard to the environmental concerns brought about by Chinese activities in the contested areas," Panelo said.

Panelo added the Philippine Coast Guard and other concerned government agencies "are performing their task in securing the subject of the writ."

The Palace official said the government "undertook protective measures" in the disputed areas "even as we are consciously cautious not to perform provocative acts that may trigger armed hostilities between the con-

testing countries which may risk the lives of our countrymen and cost irreparable damage to our land."

Panelo also reiterated that the Philippines has filed "a series of diplomatic protests" in connection with the alleged Chinese activities in Philippine-claimed territories that caused environmental damage.

In an April 16 petition, the members of the Kalamayan Palawan Farmers and Fisherfolk Association asked the SC to order the Duterte administration to permanently stop from "neglecting" its duty to enforce Philippine environmental laws in the three West Philippine Sea features.

Citing evidence in the



Panelo

Philippines' international arbitration case, the group said Chinese fishermen and vessels have harvested endangered species and used cyanide and dynamite in Scarborough and Ayungin Shoals, violating the Philippine Fisheries Code.

They also assailed Chinese construction activities in Panganiban Reef.



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SC naglabas ng Writ of Amparo, Writ of Kalikasan sa West Phl Sea

Nagpalabas ang Korte Suprema ng Writ of Amparo at Writ of Kalikasan na sumasaklaw sa West Philippine Sea (WPS).

Ayon sa Korte, layunin nitong protektahan, i-preserba, i-rehabilitate at ibalik sa dati ang marine environment sa Panatag Shoal, Ayungin Shoal at Pangani-ban Reef sa nabanggit

na teritoryo.

Anang SC, ang para sa Pilipinas ay dapat lamang na pangalagaan ng pamahalaan ng Pilipinas.

Magugunitang umakyat sa pinaka-mataas na korte ang isang grupo ng mga mangingisda at magsasaka mula sa Palawan dahil sa umano'y pagbabalewala ng gob-

yerno sa obligasyon nitong ipatupad ang mga batas pang-kalikasan sa rehiyon.

Ang Writ of Kalikasan ay isang kautusan na nagbibigay-proteksyon sa karapatan ng mamayan para sa isang malinis, malusog at kapaki-pakinabang na kapaligiran. (Doris Franche)



DILG to probe blocking of beach cleanup drive

By **EMMANUEL TUPAS**

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) will investigate reports that some local officials are blocking efforts of the national govern-

ment to clean up top beach destinations of the country.

Interior Secretary Eduardo Año yesterday gave the order in response to the revelation of Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat that some

officials are exerting efforts to prevent the rehabilitation of their respective beaches.

"Secretary Año has given instructions to our field offices to immediately investigate such reports from

the DOT (Department of Tourism) and the DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources)," DILG spokesman Undersecretary Jonathan Malaya said in a statement.

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The DILG will not hesitate to file cases against officials who are stifling the government's campaign.

"We will not hesitate to exercise

our power of general supervision over LGUs (local government units) should they be found to be blocking or opposing the directives of the President to clean up and rehabilitate our top tourist spots," Malaya said.

The DILG supports Puyat's recommendation to take over tourism sites, similar to what was done in Boracay, that have not complied with environmental and other laws.

Año agreed with the tourism chief's assessment in the case of El Nido in Palawan,

where some beaches and resorts could face closure if they could not comply with government regulations by the end of the six-month deadline on May 30.

"We have given them enough time to comply. We explained to them why and how they can comply with regulations. So far, they have failed to do so. They still have a whole month to shape up, after that they will face closure," he said.

Año lamented that compliance with laws in El Nido has been uneven, with some resorts fully compliant while others are either half-

compliant or have zero compliance.

"The LGU has to impose the regulations and revoke the permits of non-compliant establishments, otherwise the national government will take over," he stressed.

He added that an interagency management team would be created if it would come to a point where the national government has to take over.

"We already have existing protocols and best practices in place. All we need to do is determine if this action needs to be done," Año also said.



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DILG to shut down tourism hubs violating environmental laws

By **CHITO A. CHAVEZ**

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) will shut down by the end of the month tourism hubs in El Nido, Palawan, found to be defying environmental laws.

DILG Secretary Eduardo M. Año said individual beaches or resorts in El Nido, Palawan, that fail to comply with

governmental regulations by the end of the six-month deadline on May 30 will have to be closed.

"We have given them enough time to comply. We explained to them why and how they can comply with regulations. So far, they have failed to do so. They still have a whole month to shape up; after that, they will face closure," he said. **►4**

DILG to shut down...

The DILG chief said that compliance with laws in El Nido is uneven with some resorts fully compliant, others half-compliant, while others are zero-compliant.

"The Local Government Unit (LGU) has to impose the regulations and revoke the permits of non-compliant establishments, otherwise, the national government will take over," he added.

In case the national government comes in, an inter-agency management team will be created similar to what was done in Boracay.

"We already have existing protocols and best practices in place. All we need to do is determine if this action needs to be done," Año said.

The DILG will also investigate

reports that some local government officials are blocking efforts of the Duterte administration to clean up the top beach destinations of the country.

DILG Undersecretary and spokesman Jonathan Malaya said that "Secretary Año has given instructions to our field offices to immediately investigate such reports from the Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)."

"The DILG will commence appropriate legal action based on the results of the investigation. We will not hesitate to exercise our power of general supervision over LGUs should they be found to be blocking or opposing the directives of the President to clean-up

and rehabilitate our top tourist spots," Malaya said.

Malaya urged all LGUs to be proactive and take the lead in cleaning up their respective jurisdictions without prodding from the DILG since it is their responsibility under the law in the first place.

The DILG said this supports the stand of DOT Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat to take over tourism sites across the country that have not complied with environmental and other laws similar to what was done in Boracay.

"We support the proposal of DOT. The campaign to restore, rehabilitate, and preserve our natural wonders as well as the effort to ensure compliance with existing laws is always a team-effort by all government agencies particularly the DOT, DENR, and the DILG," Año said.



DILG, DENR and Coca-Cola lead Earth Day run for Manila Bay

THE DEPARTMENT of Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and Coca-Cola Philippines have partnered for a 3-kilometer run that aims to raise awareness on the government's efforts to protect the environment. The April 28 fun run, dubbed "Takbo para sa Kalikasan in Support of the Battle for Manila Bay toward a World Without Waste" took an estimated 5,000 runners from government agencies and partners, along the stretch of Roxas Boulevard fronting the famed Manila Bay. Government and the private sector unite to pledged their commitment in creating a World Without Waste. In photo (L-R) are Coca-Cola Philippines President and General Manager Winn Everhart, Department of Tourism (DOT) ASec. Leila Magda Rivera, Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) USec. Epimaco Densing, Philippine National Police (PNP) Brigadier General Rhodel Sermonia, DILG ASec. Marjorie Jalosjos, Coca-Cola Philippines Public Affairs and Communications Director Jonah de Lumen-Pernia, Commissioner Sandy Sanchez-Montano of the Philippine Commission on Women, PNP Deputy Regional Director for Operations Police Brigadier General Crizaldo Nieves, The Manila Hotel Resident Manager Chris Orta, and Holcim Philippines Vice President of Communications Ann Claire Ramirez.



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Secretary Cimatu should ban garbage importation

PRESIDENT Duterte will "declare war" on Canada if it will not retrieve their garbage dumped in our country. It was a threat by an exasperated leader who was supposed to inspect rescue operations for the victims of a strong earthquake that occurred last April.

But what if Canada ignores President Duterte's threat? Will our country go to war with Canada?

Or will the president say, "it was only a joke!"

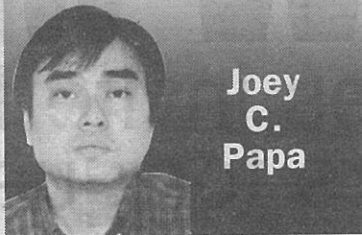
Nonetheless, Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu should take the cue from the president and immediately issue a department order banning the importation of all kinds of garbage to put an end to the disrespect of the Philippines by other countries.

The Philippines is not a garbage dumping site!

Of course there are many garbage dumping sites in the Philippines but that doesn't mean that foreign garbage is welcome in our country.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) should ban all kinds of garbage importation and close all kinds of garbage dumpsites in the Philippines and implement household- and barangay-based ecological solid waste manage-

BANGON KALIKASAN



Joey
C.
Papa

ment in line with Republic Act 9003.

A report, as told to me, stated that several containers filled with Canadian garbage were transported to the Capas, Tarlac "sanitary" landfill, again! Is this true?

Some five or six years ago, several containers carrying the then newly arrived Canadian garbage were brought to that same garbage dumping site from the Bureau of Customs.

A so-called "sanitary" landfill should not accept foreign garbage!

Natuwa marahil noon ang Canada dahil may tumanggap na lalawigan sa kanilang basura.

Nangyari ang pagtatambak ng basura sa Tarlac habang tinutulan pa ito ng maraming organisasyon mag-

ing 'yaong mula sa lalawigan ng Tarlac at nagkaroon pa nga ng hearing sa kapitolyo ng lalawigan.

Dahil may tumanggap ng basura ng Canada, inisip marahil ng bansang ito na tapos na ang isyu sa kabastusang ginawa nila.

May nagbulong yata kay PDuterte sa isyu ng basura ng Canada, kaya daw pagdating sa Porac, Pampanga para tingnan ang resulta ng lindol doon, hindi na siya nagdalawang - isip na banggitin at bantaan ng digmaan ang Canada kung hindi nito kukunin ang basura nila sa ating bansa.

Matapang ang ipinakita niyang asta. Kung wala raw mangyayari sa banta niya, maaari raw siyang tawaging Boy Banta.

Ngunit may utos na si Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin, Jr. na ibalik ang basura ng Canada sa Mayo 15.

Tingnan natin ang mangyayari sa mga banta at utos ng mga pinuno ng Pilipinas.

The Canadian government should now heed the call of Filipinos for them to take their garbage back or the Philippine government should declare Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his officials persona non-grata.

(bangonkalikasan@yahoo.com)



WWD PHILIPPINES 2019 NAGDULOT NG KASIYAHAN SA BASECO

SUMALI ang National Water Resources Board (NWRB), kasama ang iba pang ahensya at pribadong sektor sa aktibidad ng World Water Day (WWD) 2019 KICKOFF na pinamagatang "WORLD WATER DAY 2019 WATER FAIR" na ginanap noong ika-15 ng Marso 2019 sa Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) Livelihood and Mangrove Center, sa loob ng Baseco Compound, Maynila.

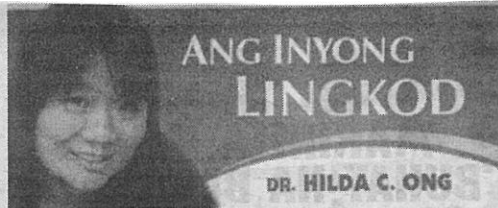
Ang tema para sa taong 2019, "Leaving no one behind (#hawak-kamay, tubig-kaagapay, sa tubig walang iwanan)", ay nakakuha ng 165 kalahok mula sa komunidad upang maabot ang mga taong nabubuhay pa nang walang ligtas na tubig.

Mga kinakatawan mula sa WWD partner-agency ay namahagi ng kani-kanilang saalamanan at kadalubhasaan

sa mga paksa na may kaugnayan sa tubig. Sa umaga, ginanap ang mga pagtatanghal at lektur tungkol sa "Awareness on Environmental Laws and Initiatives, Water and Wastewater, Waste to Livelihood, Solid Waste Management, Environmental Health and Social Welfare".

Mayroon din eksibit para sa livelihood ang nakasama sa "World Water Day 2019 Water Fair", na inihanda ng Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) at Villar Sipag's Foundation, at isang appreciation ceremony para sa Baseco Community.

Isa sa masayang pangyayari na hindi malilimutan ng mga sumaling kalahok mula sa iba't ibang ahensya ay ang taunang sungka tournament na inisponsor ng Maynilad. Ang



DR. HILDA C. ONG

nanalo sa Sungka Champion sa taong ito ay si G. Valen V. Juan mula sa National Water Resources Board (NWRB), siya ang nangunguna sa 32 iba pang mga manlalaro mula sa iba't ibang ahensya ng gobyerno.

Ang taunang event na ito ay inorganisa at pinangangasiwaan ng River Basin Control Office (RBCO), Manila Water Company Incorporated (MWC), Maynilad Water Services, Inc. (MWSI), Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) at Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC).

-ooOoo-
**MAGTIPID NG TUBIG
NGAYONG BUWAN
NG MAYO**

PAULIT-ULIT ang pana-

wagan ng Executive Director ng National Water Resources Board (NWRB) na si Dr. Sevil-lo D. David Jr. sa publiko na umpisahan na ang pagtitipid sa paggamit ng tubig.

Kung titingnan natin ang ulat ng Hydrological Information ng Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRRMC) inilabas noong Abril 30 ng umaga (6:00AM), bumaba na sa 178.90 meters ang level ng tubig sa Angat Dam. Nasa kritikal lebel ang tubig dahil ang Minimum Operating Water Level (MOWL) ng Angat dam ay nasa 180 meters.

Malinis na tubig ang kailangan pagtuunan ng pansin ng lahat sa pamamagitan ng matiyagang pamamahala sa pinagkukunang tubig. ang sapat at malinis na tubig para sa lahat sa mga dumarating pang taon.

Dagdag ni Executive Director David, "Kapag hindi tayo marunong magtipid, ang kasalukuyang 178.90 lebel ng tubig sa Angat dam ay patuloy na bababa, pati na rin sa Bustos Dam at Ipo Dam dahil nasa panahon ng tag-init."

Ipagpatuloy natin ang pagtitipid sa tubig ngayong panahon ng tag-init, upang masiguro natin ang sapat at patuloy na suplay ng tubig para sa pangangailangan ng bawat tahanan.



MAYNILAD INAUGURATES SECOND WATER TREATMENT PLANT IN MUNTINLUPA



West Zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services, Inc. (Maynilad) recently inaugurated its second water treatment plant in Barangay Putatan, Muntinlupa City. The Putatan Water Treatment Plant 2 (PWTP 2), which sources raw water from Laguna Lake, is part of Maynilad's water security program that aims to minimize dependence on the Angat Dam.

Maynilad Chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan said the PWTP 2 is proof of Maynilad's commitment to

continue meeting its service obligations as specified in the concession agreement. Besides the PWTP 1 and 2, Pangilinan said that Maynilad plans to build more facilities in the area to tap raw water from Laguna Lake.

Joining Pangilinan (fifth from left) during the PWTP 2 inauguration were (from left) Laguna Lake Development Authority assistant general manager Generoso Dungo, Rep. Winston Castelo of Quezon City, Rep. Rufino Biazon of Muntinlupa, MM-DA Deputy Chief of Staff

Michael Salalima, Maynilad President and CEO Ramoncito S. Fernandez, MWSS administrator Reynaldo Velasco, MPIC President and Maynilad board director Jose Ma. K. Lim, DENR Undersecretary Jonas Leones (partly hidden), Spanish Ambassador to the Philippines Jorge Moragas Sánchez, National Security Council Deputy Director General Vicente M. Agdamag, Muntinlupa Mayor Jaime Fresnedi, and Rep. Bayani Fernando of Marikina City.

The photo on the right

shows MWSS administrator Velasco and Representatives Biazon, Castelo and Fernando touring the new facility, which is one of the largest membrane-based water treatment facilities in the Philippines. It uses a multi-stage process of Dissolved Air Flotation, Biological Aerated Filter, ultrafiltration, reverse osmosis, and chlorination to treat the lake water and convert it to a product that complies with the Philippine National Standards for Drinking Water (PNSDW) of the Department of Health.



Boracay to remain open during 'habagat'

By MA. STELLA F. ARNALDO @akosistellaBM
Special to the BUSINESSMIRROR

BORACAY Island will remain open even during the monsoon season.

This was the clarification made by Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat in reaction to published reports that the island, famous the world over for its creamy white-sand beach, will be closed for routine maintenance in June. "No not at all," she told the BUSINESSMIRROR. "It was discussed before that we might close for *habagat* [monsoon season], but it was never brought up again. Plus the waters are all below 100 [most probable number per 1,000 milliliter], so there's no need to close it," she asserted.

The clarification was prompted by exchanges in the Boracay Beach Community group page on Facebook, in which would-be tourists have been asking if it was true the island would be closed in June.

The talk was prompted by a published report quoting environment officials that the island would be cleaned up in June, but that there was a pending decision on whether to close the entire island, or just certain areas. "We can also divide it by section and close each section for a week," said Environment Undersecretary for Attached Agencies Sherwin Rigor was quoted during a media briefing. He added, the cleanup "is our evidence that we continue cleaning Boracay."

A few tour operators also confirmed receiving inquiries from their clients if they could still visit Boracay in June, as there was talk about the island's closure by then.

According to an initial study by the National Economic and Development

Authority obtained by this paper, the medium- to long-term vision for Boracay Island is for it to be "a secure and globally competitive world-class tourism destination with a vibrant, productive, and climate-resilient economy that is geared toward inclusive growth and anchored on the sustainable development of its innate natural resources."

The resort island was closed for six months in 2018 to give way to government's rehabilitation efforts, primarily to control environmental pollution, implementing a 30-meter easement on the main white beach, reclaiming wetlands, and constructing vital infrastructure.

As per the Neda study, the total public investment needed to rehabilitate and maintain Boracay Island is about P7 billion from 2018 to 2022. Of this amount, P635.5 million will go to the enforcement of laws and regulations; some P535 million will be for pollution control and prevention; P72.5 million for the rehabilitation and recovery of ecosystems; about P4.7 billion to put in place reliable infrastructure



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BORACAY

P7B

The total public investment needed to rehabilitate and maintain Boracay Island from 2018 to 2022, according to a Neda study

facilities; P879.4 million for responsible social services in health, education, and housing; and P138.6 million for sustainable economic activities including tourism and livelihood.

Since it reopened last October 26, Boracay has been held up as a model for sustainable tourism by the Philippine government. It is the second-most popular tourist destination in the country after Cebu, and reached a historic-high number of 2 million tourists in 2017, with visitor receipts reaching P56 billion.

The DOT sees tourism as a way out of poverty for many Filipinos,

and targets to improve the lives of 541,000 poor beneficiaries by 2022.

ADB's view

THE view was shared by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), underscoring how tourism has significant potential to contribute to the Asia-Pacific region's long-term growth prospects through infrastructure development and job creation. Governments, however, should work to ensure the industry grows in a socially and environmentally sustainable way, according to participants at a high-level bank seminar.

The Governors' Seminar, titled "The Role of Tourism for Sustainable Development," at the 52nd Annual Meeting of ADB's Board of Governors in Nadi, Fiji on Saturday, featured as panelists Japan Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Taro Aso; Indonesia Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati; Fiji Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service, and Communications Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum; Italy's Director-General for International

Financial Relations, Ministry of Economy and Finance Gelsomina Vigliotti; and ADB President Takehiko Nakao.

According to a news statement from the ADB, international visitors to Asia have risen by 65 percent between 2010 and 2018 with key Asian destinations being China, Thailand, Japan, Hong Kong, and Malaysia. Asian tourists are also an increasing driver of global tourism with higher incomes and a rapidly growing middle class seeking experiences abroad. Globally, international tourist arrivals are projected to reach 2.44 billion by 2030, a 75-percent increase from 2018, with Asia and the Pacific projected to account for a third of this number.

Tourism plays a large role in the Asian economy. Spending on hotels and airline tickets was \$92 billion in 2018 with an estimated 78 million new jobs created. The indirect impact such as through tourism-related investment on new hotels or airplane purchases was larger at \$2.94 trillion, creating an estimated 180 million jobs.



OPINION

Paradise reborn



BW FILE PHOTO

BORACAY — One year since its forced shutdown and six months after reopening, this island paradise is back in business.

Illegal beachfront structures are gone, along with faulty sewage systems that discharged waste directly to the sea, resulting in the proliferation of coliform bacteria way beyond safe swimming levels.



J. ALBERT GAMBOA is CFO of the Asian Center for Legal Excellence and Chairman of the FINEX Golden Jubilee Book Project.

Wild parties and loud concerts are no longer allowed along the three-kilometer stretch of Boracay's world-famous White Beach, where tens of thousands used to congregate every night on Labor Day weekend.

The so-called "LaBoracay" event, which peaked in 2017 when more than two million people visited the island, got canceled in 2018 due to the island's shutdown. This year it was replaced by #LoveBoracay, a more sober commemoration of the closure's first anniversary.

MARKET MONITOR J. ALBERT GAMBOA

It seems the massive, 180-day rehabilitation of Boracay has done wonders for the island's ecosystem. Lots of wildlife have returned — eagles are coming back, whale sharks from Cebu are visiting, and for the first time in a decade, turtles are hatching on the beach.

New rules include the ban on casinos throughout the island; regulation of sandcastle building; and prohibition of beachfront smoking, drinking, dining, and fire dancing with kerosene lamps.

Only 19,000 tourists can be in Boracay at any given moment, with a maximum of 6,405 allowed to enter the island per day. Visitors are required to show proof of confirmed reservations with hotels accredited by the Department of Tourism prior to entry.

If the thrust on sustainable tourism continues, Boracay could well be on its way to regaining its distinction as the best island in the world.



Govt to limit tourist numbers to carrying capacity of sites

By CAI U. ORDINARIO [@caiordinario](#)

NADI, Fiji—The President wants to limit the number of tourists visiting the country's major destinations to ensure that environmental and local laws are followed, according to the Department of Tourism (DOT).

In a briefing on the sidelines of the 52nd Asian Development Bank (ADB) Annual Meeting here, Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat said the government is now in talks with the ADB and World Bank to conduct a study on the carrying capacity

of major tourist destinations nationwide.

Romulo Puyat said that while the intent is to preserve the environment, this would not necessarily be bad for the economy. She said imposing a limit on the number of tourists per destina-



"Researchers from UPLB stayed in Boracay for.... two to three months to study the carrying capacity.... The President is really serious about the carrying capacity—that each tourist destination must have a carrying capacity."—Romulo Puyat

tion will be good for lesser-known tourist spots in the country.

"We're already talking to, actually ADB and also World Bank approached us, to help [with] the tourist destinations with plans, because we need a plan. Sometimes what happens is that if destination is a good one, businesses will just

sprout [without any regard for regulations]. So we aim to have local tourism plans [where] everything is inclusive, including the infrastructure, [and it's] green, sustainable, [and the] carrying capacity [is known], etc.," Romulo Puyat said.

Romulo Puyat said the government would like to begin the studies on carrying capacity, particularly for Panglao in Bohol, El Nido and Coron in Palawan, and Siargao in Surigao del Norte within the year.

However, for other tourism destinations, the effort will have to wait. Romulo Puyat said there is a possibility that the government will be the one to finance these studies through the national budget next year.

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A broader look at today's business

Gort to limit...

Tourist. . . CONTINUED FROM A12

"Like in Boracay, the researchers from the University of the Philippines Los Baños stayed there in Boracay for two months, two to three months to study the carrying capacity," Romulo Puyat said. "The President is really serious about the carrying capacity—that each tourist destination must have a carrying capacity."

Warnings in El Nido

APART from limitations on the total number of tourists, the DOT will also close Boracay to cruise ships on certain dates. The DOT said the island will be closed to cruise ships between October 26 and November 8 for All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day; as well as November 23 and January 5, 2020, for the Southeast Asian Games, Christmas and New Year.

Meanwhile, Romulo Puyat said establishments in public beaches in El Nido are in danger of being closed down due to noncompliance of environmental laws and local ordinances by the end of the month.

She said after resorts in Panglao, Bohol, and El Nido in Palawan were given six months to address violations, only Panglao resorts seem to have gotten the message that the Duterte administration is serious about compliance.

Romulo Puyat said that while reports revealed that Panglao-based resorts were already "self-demolishing"

establishments to comply with laws and ordinances, those in El Nido are not yet complying. This, she said, was mainly due to the failure of local government units (LGUs) to implement national and local laws.

"El Nido is still a challenge. It's a challenge when you have to work with the local government. You are lucky if the local government understands why you have to do these things, why you have to follow environmental laws. It becomes a challenge if local governments are bull-headed," Romulo Puyat said.

Romulo Puyat said in her last visit to El Nido, she already told El Nido Mayor Nieves Rosento that apart from the easement, many public beaches are not complying with local ordinances which prohibit acts such as grilling on boats and penalizing the use of single-use plastics.

She lamented that on paper, the local ordinances were impressive and could be deemed as a "model" in sustainable tourism. However, in terms of implementation, much needs to be done.

"My suggestion is to do it [closure of public beaches] per beach," Romulo Puyat said. "If you go to El Nido resorts, [they even impose a] 40-meter easement so it would be unfair to close a whole island when there are resorts that are compliant and [some of them even go] over 20 meters, [around] 40 meters. And [El Nido has] coves, so [the closure] could be a particular beach," Romulo Puyat said.



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ZOO SUCCESSFULLY BREEDS RARE HORNBILL

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HELLO, FEATHERED FAMILY Walden's hornbill chick Valentin (left), here preening with parents Ligaya and Kalantiaw, has been celebrated by zoo keepers at the Negros Forest Park in Bacolod City since emerging from a hole in a tree trunk with his mother on April 19.

—DINO GUTIERREZ/CONTRIBUTOR



NEGROS ZOO SUCCEEDS IN BREEDING

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CRITICALLY ENDANGERED HORNBILL

9-YEAR EFFORT

By Carla P. Gomez
@carlagomezINQ

BACOLOD CITY—For 105 days, Jimmy Benzuela didn't take a day off as head keeper of Negros Forest Park here.

He wanted to make sure the mother Walden's hornbill named Ligaya and her chick were taken care of while holed up inside a tree trunk in this conservation center located along Capitol Road.

"Being one of the zoo keepers, I have much joy and pride, that for the first time I was able to successfully hatch a rufous-headed hornbill," he said.

When both mother and chick finally emerged on April 19 after 105 days, everyone in the center was overjoyed.

First in nine years

"It took us nine years to have our first ever successful breeding. They take so long to mature, and bonded pairs are hard to form in captivity. Pairs have to be totally compatible to breed successfully," said Fernando Gutierrez, president of Talarak Foundation Inc. (TFI).

TFI manages Negros Forest Park, formerly known as Negros Forest and Ecological Foundation Inc. Biodiversity Conservation Center.

The Walden's hornbill (*Rhodotorrhinus waldeni*), locally known as "talarak," has been de-

clared critically endangered. It is also known as Visayan wrinkled hornbill, rufous-headed hornbill and writhed-billed hornbill.

The bird used to be seen in the forests of Negros and Panay islands.

"They are functionally extinct in Negros, and there have only been a few sightings and calls heard, but no photographic proof, so far," Gutierrez said.

Valentin

The chick was named Valentin because it was first

heard making a sound from inside the tree where it was holed up with its mother on Valentine's Day.

Valentin's parents, Ligaya and Kalantiaw, were born in the wild, said Paul Lizares, vice president of TFI.

When the female Walden's hornbill lays her eggs, she is put in a hole inside the trunk of a tree for about 105 days to incubate the eggs and later take off the chicks. She can leave only when her chicks are ready to fledge.

In the meantime, she relies on the male Walden's hornbill to bring her food every day. If the male is captured or killed, the female and her chicks die.

In the case of Ligaya, she sealed herself in on Jan. 4, and after a week, she laid her first egg.

She laid three eggs in all, but only one was hatched, Lizares said.

To make sure nothing would go wrong, Benzuela tirelessly watched over the new family for 105 days, ensuring that their health and nutrition

was everyone's top priority.

"Every breeding season I really give them extra time and effort just so they can breed, and for the longest time waiting, I was actually able to get them to breed successfully. My joy is full," Benzuela said.

Gender wait

The gender of the chick gets known only after a month or two.

The chick is female if it starts molting in a month or two.

It is male if it doesn't and maintains the same color.

The last successful captive breeding of a Walden's hornbill was in 2010, at Mari-it Conservation Center in Iloilo's Lambunao town. Since then, captive numbers have plateaued at 32, with one female having a congenital defect.

Only Mari-it and Negros Forest Park have these birds in captivity, and are working hard to keep the species alive.

Hunting for sport, poaching for the illegal wildlife trade, and the lack of mature nesting trees in Philippine forests are key factors to the species' rapid decline in numbers.

"Being big birds, with poaching and hunting still an issue in our remaining forests, the future looks very bleak if there are any wild birds remaining. It is of great importance to properly secure our remaining forest cover," Gutierrez said. INQ



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NEW ZOO RESIDENT Visitors of Negros Forest Park in Bacolod City will find a new resident—a Walden's hornbill called Valentin. —DINO GUTIERREZ/CONTRIBUTOR



Davao marine park yields 238 new hatchlings

By MANUEL T. CAYON | *Mindanao Bureau Chief*
& JONATHAN L. MAYUGA | *@jonlmayuga*

DAVAO CITY—A coastal marine park here maintained by the Aboitiz group continued to be a productive nestling site of sea turtles, with caretakers finding 238 *pawikan* hatchlings this year and released in April.

The Aboitiz group said the year 2019 “has got off to a good start as Davao Light and Power Co. Inc. welcomed a total of 238 *pawikan* hatchlings at the Cleanergy Park in Sitio Punta Dumalag, Matina Aplaya.”

On April 3, caretakers released 92 hatchlings of *pawikan*, as marine turtles are called in Filipino, out into the sea and, on the next day, 10 more were released after being found trapped in the nest.

“These hatchlings came from *pawikan* nest No. 1, which was found laid at the Cleanergy Park on February 3,” the Aboitiz-owned Davao Light said.

On April 18, another set of *pawikan* eggs were hatched from nest No. 2, whose eggs were earlier discovered at the park on February 19.

In that nest, a total of 94 hatchlings were found and released on the same day. The following day, 42 additional hatchlings were released. These were also found trapped inside the nest, the Davao Light added.

“We must double our conservation efforts in preventing trash from reaching the ocean, especially because sea turtles and other marine creatures mistake plastics and other garbage as food. In this way, we are not just helping save the *pawikan* but we are also helping sustain the environment. Thus, advancing business and communities,” said Rodger S. Velasco, Davao Light director, president and COO.

He said the April 18 release of *pawikan* hatchlings were witnessed by 200 visitors, including children.

More *pawikan* visits are expected in the remaining months of the year, the Davao Light said.

Cleanergy Park is a project of Davao Light and Power Co., an AboitizPower subsidiary, in partnership with the Aboitiz Foundation. The Davao Light said the area “is a biodiversity park that is aimed to help preserve the *pawikan* nesting grounds, be a home of many thriving bird species and help maintain ecological balance for other sea and land creatures.”

Meanwhile, a previously undiscovered nest inside a coal-fired power plant in Davao City has yielded a total of 115 marine turtle hatchlings that made their way to the sea on March 29.

The marine turtle hatchlings that were released on March 29, an army of olive ridley turtles, emerged from what is now considered the third protected marine turtle nests along the shore of the coal-fired power plant of AboitizPower’s wholly owned subsidiary, Therma South Inc. TSI is the owner and operator of the 300-megawatt Davao Baseload Power Plant in Binugao, Toril, Davao City.

Incidentally, TSI named this batch of sea turtle hatchlings “Team Stingray” after Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio’s son,



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DAVAO MAMUW PSMK...



ONE of the 115 olive ridley turtle hatchlings as it makes its way back into the sea. FRANZ JONATHAN G. DE LA FUENTE/ABOITIZ EQUITY VENTURES INC.

whose birthday happens to be on the same day.

Marine turtles are a globally threatened species. The olive ridley turtle is one of the seven marine turtle species.

The global population of the marine turtles is on the decline because of the unabated poaching for their meat, shell and eggs, while their reproduction is mired by habitat destruction, accidental bycatch, ocean plastic pollution

and climate change.

Five of the seven known marine turtle species can be found in the Philippines. The country hosts one of the most important nesting sites of the green turtles—the Turtle Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Tawi-Tawi province—in Southeast Asia.

The Philippines is a party to the Bonn Convention, or the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.

Marine turtles are protected in

the country under various environmental laws—such as Republic Act 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act, and Republic Act 7586, or the National Integrated Protected Areas System (Nipas) Act as amended by Republic Act 11038, or the Expanded Nipas Act, which provides protection to protected areas and the wildlife found within these areas set aside for conservation.

The Philippines, through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), has an ongoing program to protect and conserve *pawikan*—the Pawikan Conservation Project—which is supported by various local governments and private-sector conservation partners.

Since December last year, three marine sea turtle nests were discovered within the vicinity of TSI's power plant.

The first nest was found on December 14, 2018, and the second was found on February 23.

Since the discovery of the nests, TSI has worked with various groups, including the team from the group's *pawikan* conservatory

“We must double our conservation efforts in preventing trash from reaching the ocean, especially because sea turtles and other marine creatures mistake plastics and other garbage as food. In this way, we are not just helping save the *pawikan* but we are also helping sustain the environment. Thus, advancing business and communities”

—VELASCO



DAVAO MAMING GANU

in Aboitiz Cleanergy Park in Punta Dumalag, to ensure that the nests inside TSI are well-protected and well-cared for.

"This occurrence reinforces the diversity of marine ecosystem in the city. Having a coal-fired power plant playing host to these hatchlings makes this event even more interesting," Duterte-Carpio was quoted as saying in a statement released by AboitizPower. Duterte-Carpio was supposed to lead the releasing of the marine turtle hatchlings but failed to, owing to prior engagements.

DENR-Davao Region Assistant Secretary Ruth Tawantawan extended her congratulations to TSI and its efforts in protecting the nests and the marine ecosystem.

"The hatching of the *pawikan* has been an eye-opening experience. It is a small indicator that our environmental stewardship efforts are bearing fruit. The presence of these endangered creatures inside the plant is proof of sustainable environmental conditions resulting from the steps we have taken to operate our power plants responsibly," said Danel Aboitiz, president and COO of AboitizPower-Coal Business Unit.

Since sea turtles come back to the place where they hatch through their magnetic imprinting, it is thought that there might be other nests in the area.

When the released hatchlings grow up, they may come back to the area to lay new nests and repeat the cycle.

Because of this, TSI plans to engage the community and experts to ensure that the shorelines remain pristine and conducive for *pawikan* nesting in the years to come.

TSI is certified with three ISO standards, namely Quality Management (ISO 9001:2015), Environmental Management (ISO 14001:2015), and Occupational Health and Safety Management (18001:2007).

Together with Therma Luzon Inc. and Therma Visayas Inc., the three primarily comprise the Coal Business Unit of AboitizPower.



DISCOVERY OF NEW SPECIES PROVES PHL IS HAVEN FOR BIODIVERSITY

THE Asean Center for Biodiversity (ACB) lauded the team of local and international researchers who recently discovered three new species in Mindanao. Discovered were the bark cricket (*Endodrelanva siargaoensis*), sword-tailed cricket (*Trigonidium solis*) and a very unique cricket which produces no sound unlike other typical crickets, known as "mute" cricket (*Paranisitra flavofacia*).

Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim, executive director of ACB and a staunch advocate of species and wildlife conservation, said the discovery of the three species of crickets further proves that there are still thousands of species in the Philippines that remain to be discovered and identified.

"It also demonstrates that the Philippines is a critically important haven for biodiversity," she added.

The discovery team was led by researchers Sheryl Yap and Jessica Barbecho from University of the Philippines-Los Baños, along with researchers from the Russian Academy of Sciences, the National University of Singapore and the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in France. The team discovered the crickets during biodiversity surveys conducted in the town of Del Carmen on Siargao Island last year.

In 2011, the Philippine Biodiversity Expedition discovered some 300 new species. The expedition was led by scientists from the California Academy of Sciences, joined by two dozen colleagues from the Philippines. The discoveries included deep-sea armored corals, ornate sea pens, new sea urchins and sea stars, a shrimp-eating swell shark, over 50 colorful new sea slugs, and insects and spiders.

Dr. Terrence Gosliner, dean of Science and Research Collections at the California Academy of Sciences and leader of the 2011 Philippine Biodiversity Expedition, said, "Biodiversity in the Philippines is still relatively unknown, and

we found new species during nearly every dive and hike as we surveyed the country's reefs, rainforests, and the ocean floor. The species lists and distribution maps that we created during this expedition will help to inform future conservation decisions and ensure that this remarkable biodiversity is afforded the best possible chance of survival."

In light of the new species discoveries, Lim urged the youth to take up courses in biology or taxonomy.

According to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the diminishing number of taxonomists is a major hindrance to biodiversity conservation. Scientists estimate that more than 90 percent of the world's species have yet to be discovered.

Lim, emphasizing the need for more taxonomists, said, "Many of our species may be disappearing before we even know they exist. We need taxonomists to identify them. We can't conserve what we don't know. Knowing our species will enable conservation policy- and decision-makers to make smart and appropriate decisions and strategies on how to conserve what is left of our biodiversity."

How valuable are crickets to our environment? Crickets play an important role in maintaining the balance of the ecosystem. They renew soil minerals and decompose plant materials, contributing to soil richness, which, in turn, ensures good habitats for plants and trees.

Field crickets consume the seeds of weed species that may be invasive in garden ecosystems.

Crickets are food for other animals, and even humans. In a 2013 report, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization said current farming and food-production practices are unsustainable—but edible insects, such as crickets, are a viable, untapped resource that could help meet the food demands of the world's expanding population.



Mangrove rehabilitation provides livelihood to Masbate fisherfolk

Some fisherfolk in Aroroy, Masbate, through the assistance of the Masbate Gold Project, have been planting mangroves in the coastal areas of the municipality as part of MGP's environmental programs. This partnership has led to the planting almost a million (over 950,000) mangroves, providing livelihood opportunities to over 400 fisherfolk.

"We have been planting up to 30,000 propagules a year since 2014," said Elmer Alvarez, president of Paraugma kag Parapangisda Para sa Pakauswagan Inc. The Association has 95 members, almost all from San Agustin. "We are

being paid every quarter to grow the mangroves; we do replanting," he said.

Since 2014, Alvarez's group has been tasked by MGP to plant mangrove species like miapi and baras-baras in San Agustin.

The mangrove rehabilitation of Aroroy, particularly the eight impact barangays, has been part of the MGP's Environmental Protection and Enhancement Program (EPEP). This is to ensure environmental protection, community awareness and social responsibility within these areas.

The EPEP is a provision in the Mining Act of 1995,

which requires operating mining companies to establish and implement an environmental management program that will take care of and even en-

hance the environment in its operating area from the start to the end of mine life.

Baseline environmental studies conducted within Port

Barrera showed that the area has one-eighth of its original living coral cover. In the surrounding areas of Masbate, dynamite fishing, cyanide fishing, and overfishing using unsustainable methods are rampant and continue unabated.

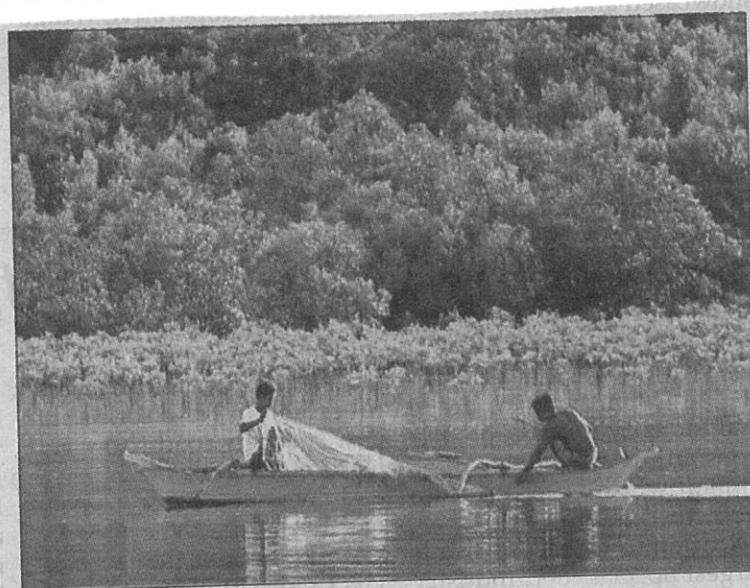
These have a significant effect on the coral reef environment by destroying habitat and decimating fish stocks. The damage from these methods can take generations to naturally repair and, in many cases, are irreparable.

Coral reef and mangrove ecosystems function in a symbiotic relationship, which thus enhance tropical and subtropical coastal environments. The health and extent of coral reefs are largely dependent on coastal mangrove forests, which stabilize shorelines, remove pollutants, improve water quality, and provide nursery habitat that maintains

fisheries. If fisheries are degraded due to the destruction or loss of mangrove habitat, the coral reefs will be adversely affected.

Through MGP's EPEP, the mangrove forests of Port Baris and Port Barrera have grown exponentially since 2014. Puro Barangay was able to replant 145,000 propagules in 32.61 hectares. Balawing was able to replant 150,000 propagules over 33.73 hectares. Almost 27.78 hectares in Panique were planted 123,500 propagules and San Isidro was able to replant 90,000 propagules in 20.24 hectares.

Although they are outside the eight impact barangays, three other barangays were included in the mangrove reforestation project. Matalangtalang has replanted 90,000 propagules in 20.24 hectares, while Don Pablo has regrown 115,000 propagules also in 25.87 hectares.



Young mangroves line the coastal areas of several barangays of Aroroy. The MGP has partnered with the local fisherfolks association to ensure that mangroves are planted and cared for.



Candidates told to push for environment agenda

By **MADELAINE B. MIRAFLOR**

Following the strong earthquake jolted some parts of Luzon, advocacy group Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship (PBEST) urged political candidates in the upcoming election to push for balanced policies to manage the country's natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

The group particularly challenged the candidates to disclose their agenda on environmental sustainability as the country prepares for the national and local elections on May 13, 2019.

"For the longest time, environmental concerns have only been cursory and novelty platforms for political candidates, and existing regulations are softly enforced. But the issue of environmental protection has now become an urgent discussion worldwide that we cannot afford to be left out," said PBEST Convenor Carmelo Bayarcal. Bayarcal said balanced policies mean that the steward-

ship of the environment and economic development should not be in conflict.

"The repercussions are real, and we are starting to feel them. The sooner we and the candidates realize that the environment agenda is fundamentally linked to other 'conventional' election issues such as power, water, food security, and even job creation, the sooner we can make development sustainable," he said.

The group said recent disruptions such as erratic water supply, food inflation due to precarious supply, intermittent power interruptions and natural disaster are all linked to the environment, because they resulted from people's wanton disregard for the protection and care of nature and its inhabitants.

Hours before the earthquake, Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu urged Filipinos to pause and reflect on the most pressing ecological problems facing the world today and think of what they can do to save the planet.



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TURNING THE TIDE AT SM'S GREEN FILM FESTIVAL: High school and college students took part in the annual Green Film Festival at the SM Mall of Asia, held recently in celebration of Earth Day 2019. The Green Film Festival, a corporate social responsibility initiative of SM Cares, in partnership with the US embassy and SM Cinema, reached out to young learners about environmental issues through a free film screening of the critically acclaimed documentary, 'A Plastic Ocean'. The film highlighted alarming truths and negative impacts of plastic pollution in our oceans. The event also had a post-screening discussion of learning between the students and subject experts.



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Climate change expert urges LGUs to toughen up on building approvals

By **RAINIER ALLAN RONDA**

A climate change scientist has urged local government units (LGUs) to take the lead in ensuring that high-rise structures are safe and will pose no threat to the community especially during times of natural calamities like super typhoons and strong earthquakes.

Glenn Banaguas, executive director of De La Salle Araneta University's Environmental and Climate Change Research Institute (ECCRI), said the implementation of climate change and disaster resilient plans and designs in building high-rise structures was crucial in attaining low or zero casualty goals during times of natural calamities.

Banaguas successfully spearheaded the two-day Climate Smart and Disaster Resilient ASEAN International Conference held last month at the Bay Leaf Hotel in Intramuros, Manila.

Amid threats of natural disasters, Banaguas appealed to LGUs to be more strict in approving the construction of high-rise structures in their respective cities or municipalities.

He said cities and municipalities have the power to approve or reject the construction of a high-rise structure in their respective jurisdiction if it doesn't adhere to the safety provisions specifically prescribed by law.

"There is now a need to incorporate the Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Reduction and Management (CCA-DRRM) strategies on the planning and decision-making in the infrastructure buildup," Banaguas said.

"Aside from identifying the most vulnerable areas and most at risk, it is also significant to check the quality of our buildings. Based on the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) priority area, our infrastructure should be climate proof and climate change-adaptive housing and land use development should also be implemented," he added.

Banaguas said to avoid a repeat of the damage wrought by Super Typhoon Yolanda in 2013, high-rise structures nowadays should withstand more than 300 kilometer per hour super typhoons.

To do this, LGUs should be

more strict in granting building permits. They should also be more cautious that only standard materials be used in the construction of high-rise structures.

Banaguas said reports of prevalence of substandard steel in the market is a major concern. "Generally, if there are some concerns on the methodology or process, it will be better to conduct more scientific tests and analyze," Banaguas said.

"If we want to prove the accuracy of the outputs, there is a need to validate them. For example, we can modify the methodology or we can introduce different parameters in the process. There is also a possibility to introduce new approach or innovative idea. Then we always look at the impact of the project. No matter how technical and innovative our research projects are, we want to make sure that these projects will create positive changes to the lives of the people," he added.

Banaguas said there should always be testing on reinforced bars (re-bars) to ensure the resilience of existing quench tempered steel in the market.