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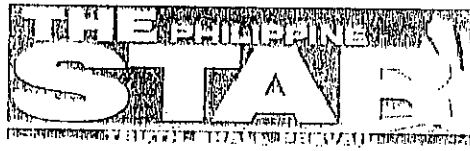
**DENR**

**IN THE NEWS**

**Strategic Communication and Initiative Service**



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# DENR to be more aggressive on implementing environmental laws

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has committed to be more aggressive in the enforcement of environmental laws this year to sustain the momentum after the Boracay Island rehabilitation.

"This year, I hope to send a strong message to environmental offenders and to the public of our seriousness in implementing and enforcing environmental laws, rules and regulations," Environment Secretary Roy

Cimatu said.

The six-month rehabilitation of the famous tourist destination in the country serves as the "center piece of 2018 accomplishments" of DENR and it aims to achieve more this year.

"In Boracay, our mettle was put to test. We not only passed that test, but also carried over the momentum to other prime ecotourism destinations like El Nido and Coron in Palawan, Panglao Island in Bohol, and Puerto Galera in Oriental Mindoro," Cimatu said.

He said that Boracay's success

had spawned demands for replication, prompting the DENR to have the rehabilitation of Manila Bay as its "next big target."

The Manila Bay rehabilitation calls for a change in approach considering that its water quality has not improved despite a Supreme Court mandamus for its cleanup issued a decade ago.

"We are putting up a Manila Bay command center, we will get the local government units more involved, and we will be more aggressive in enforcing environmental laws, particularly against the discharge of

untreated wastewater into the bay," Cimatu said.

Apart from the Boracay rehabilitation, the DENR, through the National Water Resources Board (NWRB), was also successful in enforcing the Clean Water Act in other parts of the country last year.

The NWRB closed 486 commercial establishments illegally operating deep wells, as well as slapping beverage giant Pepsi Cola Products Inc. with an P11.8 million-fine for operating six deep wells in Muntinlupa City without the necessary permits.



## GROUP DISAPPOINTED ON MINING

# DENR in 2018: Exceeding targets, Boracay as biggest accomplishment

STORY BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA [jonlmayuga](mailto:jonlmayuga@denr.gov.ph)

**T**HE year 2018 was marked with hits and misses as far as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is concerned.

Having its hands full following President Duterte's marching order to rehabilitate Boracay Island in Malay, Aklan, the DENR, however, exceeded its year-end targets for environmental programs on solid waste management, clean air and clean water, which are among the top priorities of Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu.

On the other hand, it took the department more than a year to resolve controversial mine closure and suspension orders, during which mining companies accused of failing environmental standards were able to continue their operation.

Cimatu considered the successful rehabilitation of Boracay as the "single biggest accomplishment" of the DENR in 2018 after the agency—along with other government offices—devoted much of its time, effort and resources to carry out the President's directive.

"What we have done in Boracay could well serve as one of the DENR's best legacies. We have done something, but we will not stop there," Cimatu was quoted in a December 27 news release.

Cimatu is hopeful to replicate the success of the Boracay rehabilitation in the heavily polluted Manila Bay.

### Boracay rehabilitation

AS early as March 2018, the DENR has had its hands full preparing for the rehabilitation of Boracay, the country's top tourist destination, which no less than Duterte once tagged as the country's biggest cesspool.

Having been tapped to lead the rehabilitation of the world-renowned tourism site, the department launched a massive crackdown on erring tourism establishments, deploying close to 200 of its officials and personnel—including experts in various fields, from the department's central and regional offices, including those assigned in various

units, bureaus and offices—to work with stakeholders.

The six-month closure, which began from April 26, 2018, until its reopening on October 26, 2018, proved taxing as other issues were momentarily set aside—including the resolution of contested mine closure and suspension orders issued by Cimatu's predecessor, Regina Paz L. Lopez.

Nevertheless, the DENR claimed to have succeeded in removing the cesspool tag on Boracay by instituting corrective measures, including the dismantling of illegal structures in supposedly "no-build" zones along beachfronts; implementing a road-widening program; addressing garbage problems; and, more important, preventing the direct discharge of untreated wastewater from tourism-related establishments near beachfronts.

The site's rehabilitation has set a new benchmark in tourism areas, as the DENR has been ordered to strictly implement various environmental laws in known beach and coastal or marine ecotourism magnets elsewhere in the country, including Palawan, Mindoro in Luzon, Siargao in Mindanao and Panglao in Bohol.

### Exceeding targets

In a report to Cimatu, DENR Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and International Affairs Jonas R. Leones said the agency's program on solid waste management topped the list of the DENR's major accomplishments in 2018.

For one, the DENR was able to exceed its own target in the implementation of rehabilitation and closure plans of open and controlled dumps by 22 percent.

"Through its Environmental Management Bureau (EMB), the DENR was supposed to monitor only 535 closure and rehabilitation plans of local government units [LGUs] this year, but it ended up monitoring 654 as of November," Leones said in his report, covering



TOURISTS frolic on the world-famous Boracay beach in June 2017. ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

the DENR accomplishments from January to November 2018.

As of end November 2018, the EMB also monitored 919 materials-recovery facilities, around 11 percent higher than the original target of 829 MRFs for 2018.

"Both the implementation of closure and rehabilitation plans and the establishment of MRFs by LGUs are mandated under Republic Act 9003 [RA], or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000," Leones added.

Also this year, the National Solid Waste Management Commission was able to approve a record 322 solid-waste management plans (SWMPs) of LGUs, bringing to 806 the total number of approved SWMPs since the enactment of RA 9003.

### Clean air, water programs

LEONES reported that the DENR surpassed its 2018 targets in the implementation of RA 8749, or the Clean Air Act of 1999.

The EMB registered a 102-percent accomplishment in terms of monitoring the compliance of industries to emission standards set by the EMB. A total of 16,117 industries were monitored for their emissions in 2018.

There was also 100-percent accomplishment in the formula-

tion and updating of 22 airshed action plans and maintenance of 98 air quality monitoring stations (AQMS) across the country.

Properly maintained AQMS are crucial to the monitoring of air quality in Metro Manila and other urban centers.

As part of its implementation of RA 9275, or the Clean Water Act of 2004, the DENR was able to monitor the compliance of 8,664 firms or industries, equivalent to 122 percent of the annual target of 7,123.

The DENR had also entered into 92 agreements with LGUs under the Adopt an Estero, or Water Body Program, instead of the original target of 64.

Six new water quality management areas (WQMAs) were also designated this year. These are Upper Amburayan River System; Lower Amburayan River System; Dupong, Matlang and Merida; Malabon-Navotas-Tullahan-Tinajeros River System; Iyam-Dumacaa Rivers; and Las Piñas-Parañaque River System.

WQMA is a significant tool in enforcing the country's clean water law. It aims for the improvement of water quality to meet the guidelines under which water bodies have been classified or to improve their classification and meet their potential use, he added.

As soon as he assumed the DENR post in May 2017, Cimatu vowed to prioritize environmental protection through full implementation of existing laws on clean air, clean water and solid waste management.

### Reforestation, other programs

MEANWHILE, Leones reported that the National Greening Program (NGP) also ended on a high note.

A total of 144,879,921 seedlings have been produced in 2018, exceeding the target by 5 percent.

On the other hand, a total of 125,214 hectares, or 92 percent, of the annual target of 135,859 hectares have been planted with 116,502,217 seedlings of various commodities nationwide.

Further, 1,175 forest-protection officers have been hired, including the total accomplishment of 508 in Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (Pamana).

To date, 108,353 kilometers of forests have been patrolled, 38,879 have been accomplished more than the annual target of 69,474 kilometers.

On lands disposition, a total of 17,044 (81 percent) agricultural and 36,605 (82 percent) residential patents have been issued to untitled public alienable and disposable lands of the public domain out of



the annual targets of 21,163 and 44,740, respectively.

### Disappointed on mining performance

MEANWHILE, the nongovernment group Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM) welcomed the accomplishment report of the DENR for 2018.

"We are glad the DENR has exceeded its performance targets in the fields of solid waste management, air-pollution monitoring and water-quality assessments. We also give credit to the DENR for the rehabilitation of Boracay," Jaybee Garganera, ATM national coordinator, told the BUSINESSMIRROR.

However, Garganera said the alliance "is disappointed with the performance of the department in addressing mining issues, particularly in the performance of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau [MGB]."

"We have yet to see the report of the fact-finding mission in Surigao del Sur after the landslides and floods brought by Typhoon Basyang in January 2018," he said.

Garganera said his group has not seen any concrete action "in the demands for rehabilitation, repair and compensation to mining-affected communities in Santa Cruz [Zambales], Aroroy [Masbate] and Narra [Palawan]."

"Communities affected by OceanaGold in Didipio, Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya, have submitted a petition for nonrenewal of the Didipio Gold Mining Project, but [they] still have not received any concrete response," he pointed out. "Worse, anti-mining and environmental activists in Didipio have been erroneously and maliciously tagged as communists supporters, which is a baseless accusation."

Garganera said the "most disappointing fact" is that the mine closures and suspension orders issued against 26 mining projects "have not been fully enforced by DENR."

"This, despite the recent review of the MICC [Mining Industry Coordinating Council] and the DENR itself that there are enough legal, technical and social basis to enforce the closures," he added.

"Our deepest disappointment is that 2018 [is over] but President Duterte has not issued his executive order to ban open-pit mining, a promise that he has made repeatedly and publicly in the past," Garganera lamented.



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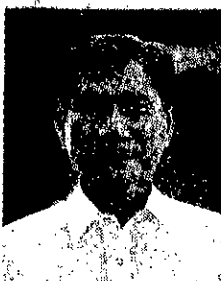
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## MYC backs DENR tack to clean bay

"THE current state of Manila Bay is disgusting and polluted and we would like to revive an asset in our history and culture."

Robert Lim Joseph, the new Commodore of the Manila Yacht Club, said this Sunday as he lauded the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for "using all its resources to clean up the bay once and for all."



Cimatu

"We admire [Environment] Secretary Roy Cimatu for taking the cudgels in prioritizing 'Save Manila Bay' project that has never been done," said Joseph.

"Aside from coordinating with all government agencies to turn this into a success story within one year, Sec. Cimatu is tasking all stakeholders to be part of the solution."



Joseph

The DENR has scheduled a meeting with officials in Metro Manila to map out the plans of the cleanup. Some of these projects are:

Private sector and government agencies should implement the

Sewerage Treatment Plant immediately;

Need a review with Manila Water and Maynilad on the construction of Sewerage Treatment Plants to prevent further pollution of the bay.

A survey will be undertaken on buildings/commercial establishments and factories for the immediate compliance of Sewerage Treatment Plant.

Educational program in collaboration with the private sector, academe, Department of Education to help train barangay chairmen in Metro Manila for waste segregation.

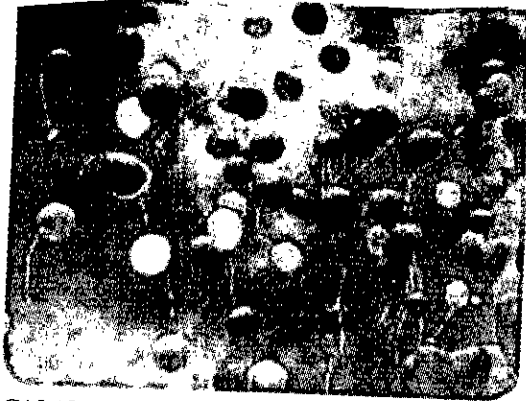


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Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
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# Puwedeng kasuhan ang lalabag DENR SA PUBLIKO: TIGILAN NA ANG PAGPAPALIPAD NG LOBO



**CALAMBA CITY, Laguna** – Umapela ang isang mataas na opisyal ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) 4A (Calabarzon) kamakailan sa local government units (LGUs) at

sa publiko na tigilan na ang pagpapalipad ng lobo sa mga espesyal na okasyon.

“Sa rehiyon ng Calabarzon, nais naming hikayatin ang mga pamahalaang lokal na ituring na littering ang pagpa-

pakawala ng lobo dahil doon, na rin naman ito patutungo,” pahayag ni DENR-4A Executive Director, lawyer Maria Paz G. Luna.

Sinabi rin ni Luna na nag-order sila sa mga funeral home at ibang party o event organizers na tigilan na ang pagpapakawala ng lobo sa ere.

“Maaari po kaming mag-file ng kaso ng paglabag sa RA 9003 o ang Ecological Solid Waste Management Act

of 2000),” babala niya.

Naging praktis na ang pagpapalipad ng lobo sa maraming pamilyang Pinoy lalo na kapag sa funeral rites, sa paniniwalang ito ay may mensahe sa kanilang yumaong mahal sa buhay.

Pero sinabi ni Luna na hindi ito nangangahulugan na ang mga lobo ay nakararating sa langit.

“Hindi kaya’t ang ibig sabihin noon ay sa purgatoryo ninyo ipinadala ang mensahe? Siguraduhin

pong aabot ang mensahe sa mahal sa buhay at hindi sa purgatoryo,” sabi niya.

Naaksiyunan ito matapos na bumagsak ang Cove Manila Balloon sa Okada Hotel Manila, isang okasyon na magpapakawala sila ng 130,000 na lobo sa ere para salubungin ang Bagong Taon, at umani ng pintas mula sa netizens.

Nag-order ang DENR sa Okada na kanselahin ang event.

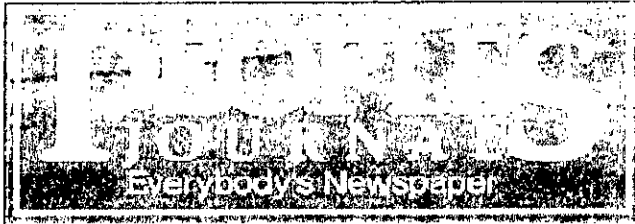
Bilang pag-oobserba

sa National Zero Waste Month ngayong Enero, patuloy ang pagtataguyod ng ahensiya ng environment awareness and action sa publiko at hubugin ang partisipasyon ng mga tao para sa pagpupursigi ng national at local integrated, comprehensive at ecological waste management programs.

Nag-abiso rin si Luna sa publiko na ipadala ang kanilang mga reklamo sa mga nagkakalat – mula sa

pagpapakawala ng lobo hanggang sa illegal garbage disposal – sa DENR-4A sa pamamagitan ng pagte-text sa +639456215007 o sa +639083340224; o mag-email sa denr4a.ord@gmail.com o mag-post ng larawan / mensahe ng anumang paglabag sa <https://www.facebook.com/DENR4AOfficial/> #ZeroWaste o hashtags #DENRCalabarzon at #TayoAngKalikasan.

PNA



## Pagpapalipad ng lobo para kay Lolo

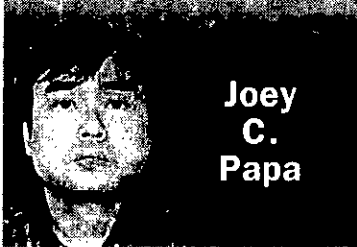
SA isang press release sa pamamagitan ng email, ipinadala ng Public Affairs Office ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources Region 4-A ang pahayag ni Regional Executive Director Atty. Ipat Luna, ang panawagan sa mga lokal na pamahalaan na sakop ng naturang rehiyon ang isyu hinggil sa pagpapalipad ng lobo sa mga libing at iba pang mga event at party.

Kailan lamang ay pinagbawalan ng DENR ang Okada sa binalak na "130,000 balloon dropping" sa kanilang nasasakupang resort. Hindi na itinuloy ng Okada ang gawaing ito dahil sa matinding pagtutol at panawagan ng mga organisasyong pangkalikasan at mamayang Filipino na siyang nagtulak din sa DENR na bigyan ang kumpanya ng cease and desist order.

Hindi na rin itutuloy ang pagpapakawala ng sky lantern sa Sinulog Festival sa Cebu. Magpapatuloy ang okasyon nang walang gagawing pag-sira sa kalikasan. Kinansela nila ang gawaing ito dahil na rin sa pagtutol ng mga netizen.

Sinabi ni Atty. Luna na nakaaugalian na ng mga kababayan natin na ihatid sa huling hanunganan ang mga mahal sa buhay ng may mga kasayahan kung ito man ang habilin ng yumao. May mga libing na masasaya ang tugtog o awitin habang papunta sa sementeryo o nagpapalipad ng

### BANGON KALIKASAN



Joey C. Papa

lobo.

Binanggit pa ni Luna na may isang awitin 'unano na inihingi niya ng paumanhin sa lumikha, ang tungkol sa libing ng isang lolo na nagpalipad ng lobo, pinalipad sa langit ngunit 'di na nakitang muli. 'Yon pala'y naging basura na.

Inaakala aniyang mga naglilibing na kung magpapalipad ng lobo ay makararating ang mensahe ng mga naulila sa langit kasabay ng pagpunta ng yumao dito.

Maaari nga namang mapunta sa langit ang yumao ngunit ang mga lobo ay lilikha naman ng purgatoryo sa lupa dahil sa mga basurang nilikha ng lobo.

Ipinaalala ni Atty. Luna sa mga lokal na pamahalaan ng Region 4-A na ang pagpapalipad ng lobo at pagbagsak nito sa lupa ay maituturing na "littering" o pagkakatat.

Kaya ayon kay Luna ay nagpad-

ala na sila ng babala sa mga punerarya at mga party at event organizers na kapag may nagreklamo sa kanilang tanggapan, tulad ng naging reklamo sa Okada balloon dropping o kaya'y hinggil sa pagpapalipad ng lobo, maaaring ihabla ng kanilang tanggapan ang mga mapapatunayang lumabag sa Ecological Solid Waste Management Act o Republic Act 9003.

Ang isa pang malaking isyu sa mga pagpapalipad at pagpapakawala ng kung-anu-anong bagay na bukod sa may polusyon pa sa hangin nililikha, ang mga basurang ito na babagsak din naman sa lupa ay tiyak na hahakutin papunta sa mga tambakan ng basura o "sanitary" landfill. Ika nga'y kalat-tambak.

Dagdag na namang pasanin ito ng mga nagbabayad ng buwis na ang malaking bahaging nalikom na pera ay gagastusin lamang sa paghahakot at pagmimintina ng mga tambakan ng basura.

At ang milyon-milyong pisong ginagastos sa paghahakot at pagtatabak ng basura ay hindi biro-birong halaga na sana'y mapupunta sa panggastos sa pangangailangan sa edukasyon, kalusugan, at mga serbiyong panlipunan.

Kaya sa palagay ko'y mainam na sundin ang mga babala ni Atty. Luna dahil alam niya ang batas. (bangonkalikasan@yahoo.com)



## 'P100 billion in losses a small price to pay to save Boracay'

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA  
@jonlmayuga

**T**HE economic setback caused by the six-month closure of Boracay Island in Malay, Aklan, is a small price to pay to save the country's top tourist destination, an official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said.

Undersecretary Benny D. Antiporda, deputy spokesman of Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu, said over the weekend that closing Boracay was "inevitable" to fast-track the rehabilitation of the island paradise.

"It is a small price to pay. We returned Boracay around. Not just 180 degrees, but 360 degrees. We returned it back to its pristine state. It is again a paradise," Antiporda, the DENR's undersecretary for solid waste management and local government units, told the BUSINESSMIRROR.

Antiporda was reacting to a report published by the BUSINESSMIRROR indicating that the closure of Boracay has cost the Philippine economy and Filipino workers billions in lost revenue and income between May and October 2018.

According to Antiporda, after Boracay Island's rehabilitation, businesses expect to recover from past losses because of the closure.

The DENR officials said no amount of money can compensate for saving Boracay, which provides employment and livelihood opportunities through ecotourism.

Citing a study by state think tank Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), titled "The Boracay Closure: Socioeconomic Consequences and Resilience Management," PIDS President Celia M. Reyes; Senior Research Fellow Jose Ramon G. Albert; Research Fellow Francis Mark A. Quimba; and research assistants

Ma. Kristina P. Ortiz and Ronina D. Asis estimated that the aggregate economic loss of the Boracay closure was between P20.8 billion and P83.15 billion. In terms of income, the loss in compensation would range from P7 billion to P27.9 billion.

According to the report, the tourism sectors would be affected, as well as agriculture and services, albeit slightly.

"Overall, while the results may not be very significant at the national level, it will still have direct and indirect effects to people living in the island and in the entire municipality of Malay," the authors said in the study.

But Antiporda said the DENR will continue to strictly enforce environmental laws not only in Boracay but in all beach tourism sites in the country from now on as ordered by President Duterte.

"We will keep on doing this until the end of time for as long as we need to do it because that is the President's marching orders. This is a long-term solution to environmental problems we are having," Antiporda said.

According to Antiporda, Cimatu's feat as head of the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force that led the rehabilitation is admired all over the world and the DENR chief continues to receive "a pat on the back" from officials in other countries.

"For businessmen who lost money because of the rehabilitation, they should consider it a six-month promotion where they paid for the advertisement around the world. That is a cheap price to pay for a global advertisement," Antiporda said.

He said there will be no let-up in the government's efforts to clean up in Boracay. Antiporda said the DENR is mobilizing pollution control officers of various companies operating in Boracay to ensure that the gains in cleaning it will be sustained.





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# PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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AFTER CLOSURE

## ASTORIA GETS NOD TO OPEN EXPANDED BORACAY RESORT

By Roy Stephen C. Canivel  
@roycanivel\_INQ

Local hotel chain Astoria Hotels & Resorts (AHR) opened last October its freshly minted P1.5-billion resort on Boracay Island, one of the first resorts allowed to operate after the six-month shutdown of the popular tourist destination.

Called Astoria Current, it is the company's second resort on the island. During Boracay's closure, the company was able to complete its new annex building, bringing the resort's total number of rooms to 205.

The executive fiat on the shutdown called for a moratorium on new projects including expansions.

When asked to clarify, a company representative said the building was already "structurally finished" before the moratorium began.

"Final touches on interior designs were done during the island closure," the representative said.

The company said in a separate statement the additional capacity from the annex building made Astoria Current the hotel in Station 3 of Boracay with the most number of rooms, all with direct access to the famed White Beach.

According to AHR, Astoria Current was one of the first resorts that the Department of Tourism allowed to open after

it complied with all the necessary environment and local ordinances.

"We are one with the government in advocating for and implementing a more environment-friendly stay on the island so that Boracay will continue to be enjoyed by future generations," said company president Jeffrey Ng.

The cleanup of Boracay began in April and ended in October last year.

The Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) estimated the aggregate economic loss could have reached as much as P83.15 billion, while the loss in compensation could have reached up to P27.9 billion.

The PIDS study noted that it aimed to look at the "potential economic effects" of the shutdown. Different government officials have provided different numbers, but the actual losses have yet to be determined.

AHR said the closure posed a "challenge" but claimed its staff hardly felt its negative impact.

The firm said they were re-assigned for retraining and other purposes in other AHR properties, including Astoria Palawan and Astoria Plaza in Ortigas Center.

"This way, not one employee lost his or her job over the six-month rehabilitation period," the company said. INQ



# Pasilip sa bagong BORACAY

**Balita** ... **the Philippines**

NI ELLAINE DOROTHY S. CAL

**KILALA** ang Isla ng Boracay sa Aklan sa pinung-pinong puting buhangin, malinaw na tubig, at night life o party. Ngunit, unti-unting nadungisan ang paraiso sa kawalan ng disiplina ng ilang residente at bumibisita ng turista. Dumating sa punto na tinawag na ito ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na "cesspool" o tapunan ng basura.

Dahil dito, ipinag-utos ni Pangulong Duterte ang pansamantalang pagsasara sa isla. Sa loob ng anim na buwang rehabilitasyon, simula Abril 26 hanggang Oktubre 26, marami na ang nagbago. Ipinatigil ang operasyon ng mga abusadong hotel, ipinagbawal ang ilang aktibidad, gaya ng fire dancing, sand castle, at malalakas na tugtugan o night life.

Kaliwa't kanan na rin ngayon ang mga tapunan ng basura sa isla—di lang basta basurahan, dahil ito ay nahahati sa nabubulok at di nabubulok, kaya walang ligtas ang mga pasaway.

Kapansin-pansin din ang nagkalat na pulis sa paligid ng isla kaya nasisiguro ang mas ligtas na bakasyon. Sa muling pagbubukas ng isla, sabik ang mga turista, karamihan ay dayuhan, na makapasyal at personal na makita ang ganda ng bagong Boracay.

Hindi makukumpleto ang pagbisita sa Boracay kung hindi susubukan ang mga aktibidad, ito man ay air, land o water.

Maraming mapagpipilian, gaya ng snorkeling, parasailing, banana boat, helmet

diving, scuba diving, zipline, volleyball, at iba pa.

Bukod diyan, sa halagang P100-P250, depende sa style, matutuwa ka rin sa hair braiding o pagpapatirintas ng buhok na trade mark ng isla. Astig, di ba?! Nakahilera rin ang masasarap na kainan kung saan matitikman ang mga sariwang isda at iba pang lamang-dagat. Hindi rin mawawala ang mga bilihan ng pasalubong, na pasok na pasok sa budget! Pagkatapos mabaksamga activities at kumain, perfect magpamasaha at magpahilot sa isla. Nag-aalok din sila ng room service, saan ka pa?! Hindi pa man tuluyang natatapos ang rehabilitasyon, bumalik na ang ganda ng paraiso. Pahuhuli ka ba? Tara na sa Boracay!



## DOLE nagproseso na ng permit sa mga foreign Boracay worker

NGAYONG bukas na muli sa mga turista ang isla ng Boracay, nag-iisya na uli ang Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) ng mga Alien Employment Permit (AEP) sa mga dayuhang nais na magtrabaho sa sikat na destinasyon.

Sa ilalim ng Labor Advisory No. 01, series of 2019, iniutos ni DOLE Secretary Silvestre Bello III na alisin na

ang suspensyon sa pag-iisya ng mga AEP dahil napaso na ang closure period sa isla na inilabas ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte noong nakalipas na taon sa ilalim ng Proclamation No. 475.

Ang Boracay ay muling binuksan noong Oktubre 26, 2018 matapos ang ilang buwang rehabilitasyon doon.

Ang AEP ay dokumentong inilalabas ng DOLE na nagbibigay

pahintulot sa mga dayuhan na magtrabaho sa Pilipinas.

Dahil sa pag-aalis ng temporary suspension, maari na muling makapagtrabaho ang mga dayuhan sa Boracay.

Iyon namang may mga hawak pa ng valid na AEP ay maari nang makapag-renew ng kanilang mga employment permit. (Maricel Diaz)



# Pimentel urges concrete action on dumping of foreign trash in PH

By **HANNAH L. TORREGOZA**

Senator Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III on Sunday renewed his call on the government to assert its rights against countries that dump their wastes in the Philippines.

"We're not someone else's dumping ground. The Philippines should assert its dignity and co-equal standing as a sovereign state in the community of nations," Pimentel said in a statement.

"We should not be seen as a recipient, officially or unofficially, of waste material coming from other countries," added the senator.

Pimentel issued the statement after the Philippine government said it will return to South Korea some 6,500 tons of waste materials that were dumped in Mindanao and tagged as originating from the East Asian country.

This, after the South Korean government agreed to take back the trash after an agreement was reached at a bilateral meeting between Filipino

and Korean authorities last December 27 and 28, 2018.

According to officials of the Mindanao International Container Port (MICP), the waste materials will commence their return trip to South Korea on January 9.

An initial 5,100 tons of garbage arrived at the Mindanao port in Misamis Oriental province in July last year. More waste in 51 additional containers was shipped in October and transferred to a local consignee's compound in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental.

Subsequent inspection revealed that the shipment contained medical wastes such as used dextrose tubes, soiled diapers, batteries, bulbs, and electronic equipment.

Pimentel noted that the consignee, Verde Soko Industrial Corporation, had falsely reported that the container vans carried soft plastic and not garbage, claiming that the plastics were raw materials meant for furniture reprocessing.

"We are thankful to the South Ko-

rean government for its commitment to resolve this matter and take back the misdeclared shipment," said Pimentel.

"At the same time, it's very urgent that we direct our Bureau of Customs (BOC) and related agencies to file the appropriate charges against those responsible for bringing in foreign trash through an illegal misdeclaration of cargo," he said.

Pimentel said the government should Make sure that this "brazen act is not tolerated and in fact punished to the fullest extent of the law, particularly our Tariff

and Customs Code and possibly the Toxic Substance and Hazardous Wastes and Nuclear Wastes Control Act of 1990."

The senator from Mindanao added that the repeated dumping of foreign trash was an affront to the country's dignity.

"If foreign-based entities and even foreign governments see and treat the Philippines as a final destination for their unwanted waste material, that speaks volumes of the way we are seen abroad. This should not be tolerated," he said.

Following South Korea's commitment, the lawmaker said he will also seek an update on the waste materials that were "dumped" in the country by Canada way back in 2013.

"As far as I'm aware, as of January 2018, the matter has yet to be resolved. The Canadian Prime Minister promised to resolve the matter when he went here for the 31st ASEAN Summit in November 2017," Pimentel said.

"There's been no follow through ever since. We need immediate and concrete action on this," he noted.



## Korean, Filipino waste importer 'not yet off the hook'—DENR exec

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA  
@jonhnayuga

**T**HE people behind the importation of purportedly recyclable plastics from Korea but turned out to be hazardous wastes sent to the country's port are still not yet off the hook.

This, even as the Philippines is scheduled to return to South Korea on January 9 some 6,500 tons of hazardous waste in Mindanao.

Undersecretary Benjamin D. Antiporda of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) warned the importer of the hazardous waste, Verde Soko Philippines Industrial Corp., to do its part by returning the waste already transferred in its compound in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental.

"They should immediately move to return the wastes because these hazardous waste are exposed to the elements and pose risks to the people and the environment," Antiporda, the DENR's undersecretary for solid waste management and local government units (LGUs), said.

About 5,100 tons of garbage arrived at the Mindanao International Container Terminal in Misamis Oriental province in July last year. More waste in 51 containers was shipped in October and were transferred to Verde Soko's com-

pound. However, an inspection later revealed that the shipment contained hazardous materials like used dextrose tubes, soiled diapers, batteries, bulbs, and electronic equipment, in violation of the Basel Convention.

"We will return on [Wednesday about] 51 containers of waste back to South Korea. It will take only one day to do that. What we are worried about are those that are already transferred and are exposed to the elements. If the importer will not act fast, we might file a case against them, including one Korean executive," Antiporda said but declining to name the officials facing charges.

According to port authorities, the first batch of waste has to be carefully repacked before these are shipped back to the Koreans.

"There is proper coordination going on. They will take it [hazardous waste] back on January 9. The next will be the ones that were already opened or transferred. It will take at least a month. But if it will take a long time for them to return it, we will file charges against the importers," Antiporda said.

"We will charge even the Korean executives and we will initiate deportation proceeding by filing a complaint before the Bureau of Immigration for being an undesirable alien," he added.



Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

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## Pimentel wants charges filed vs trash importer

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

SENATOR Aquilino Pimentel III on Sunday urged the Bureau of Customs and other related agencies to file the appropriate charges against those responsible for bringing in foreign trash through illegal misdeclaration of cargo.

"Let's ensure that this brazen act is not tolerated and in fact punished to the fullest extent of the law, particularly our Tariff and Customs Code and possibly the Toxic Substance and Hazardous Wastes and Nuclear Wastes Control Act of 1990," Pimentel said.

The senator said the repeated dumping of foreign trash was an affront to the country's dignity.

"If foreign-based entities and even foreign governments see and treat the Philippines as a final destination for their unwanted waste material, that speaks volumes of the way we are seen abroad. This should not be tolerated," he said.

He said the country should assert its dignity and co-equal standing as a sovereign state in the community of nations.

"We should not be seen as a recipient, officially or unofficially, of waste material coming from other countries," the senator added.

The Philippines is set to return to South Korea some 6,500 tons of waste that were dumped in Mindanao.

The South Korean government has committed to take back the trash after an agreement was reached during a bilateral meeting between Filipino and Korean authorities last month.



## Managing solid waste

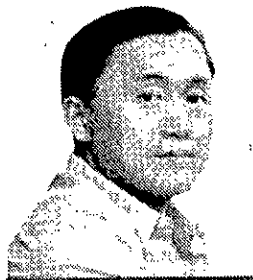
**“We can mobilize our communities to help clean our surroundings from time to time, so that our garbage problem will be manageable and not become out of control.”**

As I went around Metro Manila over the holiday season, I could not help but notice the enormous piles of garbage that littered the streets. In places like Divisoria, Baclaran and Luneta, heaps of trash could be seen everywhere, even as citizens pass by doing their shopping or enjoying the holidays with their friends and loved ones.

But while the local and national governments are both equipped and prepared to clean up the mess left by holiday-goers, it saddens me that we could have prevented all of this garbage from piling up had people been more disciplined in handling their wastes or more responsible in undertaking their activities.

The proper disposal, handling and management of waste is one of the foremost responsibilities not just of the government, but also of the rest of our citizenry. After all, if we do not take care of our trash, it will come back to affect our health and well-being – even our economy.

It is for this reason that the whole month of January is declared as Solid Waste Management Month. Apart from encouraging the proper management of solid wastes, the observance also promotes the designing and managing of products and processes



**GOING FORWARD**  
Christopher Lawrence “Bong” Go

to systematically avoid and eliminate the toxicity of waste and materials, to conserve and recover all resources and not to indiscriminately dispose or burn them.

When President Rodrigo Roa Duterte was mayor of Davao City, he directed the purchase of sturdy garbage bins that segregate solid wastes – black for non-biodegradable wastes and green for biodegradable wastes – because he saw that as

the city grew, so did the garbage accumulate in the streets and the need to segregate wastes. With the help of our able and hard-working garbage collectors and street sweepers, we were able to maintain the cleanliness of Davao City.

But apart from the able response of the city government and city hall employees, we owe a lot of our success to our responsible and disciplined city residents. Sure, there will be impudent and lazy citizens throwing their trash anywhere every once in a while, but they are few and far between. I am proud to say that the vast majority of Davaoeños are responsible and conscientious citizens when it comes to disposing their garbage.

And whenever solid wastes in an area become

overwhelming, clean-up drives are undertaken by private groups and the city to help a community solve its garbage problems in true *bayanihan* fashion. This synergy and cooperation between the citizenry and their government is what enabled Davao City, despite being the largest metropolis in the country, to effectively manage its garbage issues.

**“If we do not take care of our trash, it will come back to affect our health and well-being – even our economy.”**

I believe that the same strategy can be applied in solving the garbage problems in Metro Manila and other parts of the country. We can put several large and visible garbage bins in strategic areas in our communities. We can educate our citizens, starting from the young, how to segregate and become more responsible in disposing their trash. We can also impose penalties on those who would violate laws, so we can use the funds to buy more trash bins, hire more garbage collectors and street sweepers or educate the public.

And lastly, we can mobilize our communities to help clean our surroundings from time to time, so that our garbage problem will be manageable and not become out of control. Truly, if we come together and cooperate, there is no problem that we cannot solve. But, most importantly, if we do not

only think about ourselves and our convenience, but also become disciplined and responsible citizens who care about their community, our dream of a clean and green Metro Manila and Philippines can become a reality.



**Blast from the past:** On 7 January 1901, Gen. Arthur MacArthur Jr., military governor of the Philippines, exiled several prominent politicians and leaders of the Philippine Revolution to the island of Guam.

Among those deported were Apolinario Mabini, who was considered the “Brains of the Revolution” and served as the chief adviser of President Emilio Aguinaldo; and Generals Artemio Ricarte, Pio del Pilar, Mariano Llanera and Maximino Hizon, as well as Pablo de Leon Ocampo, a lawyer and member of Malolos Congress.

After two years, many of those who were deported were allowed to return to the Philippines on the condition that they take an Oath of Allegiance to the United States. Weakened, stricken by disease and dying, Apolinario Mabini agreed while those like Artemio Ricarte refused. Ricarte was freed, but was not allowed to set foot in the Philippines. There are also other exiles who remained in Guam and became part of the local Filipino community.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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### PH 'wag hayaang gawing basurahan

Hinikayat ng isang miyembro ng Senado ang gobyerno na patunayan sa ibang bansa na hindi tapunan ng basura ang Pilipinas.

Iginiit ng senador na dapat igiit ng bansa ang ating dignidad at co-equal standing bilang sovereign state at hindi tagatanggap ng basura ng ibang bansa.

Ginawa ni Sen. Koko Pimentel ang pahayag matapos tiyakin ng gobyerno na ibabalik sa South Korea ang 6,500 na toneladang basura na itinapon sa Mindanao.

"We are thankful to the South Korean government for its commitment to resolve this matter and take back the misdeclared shipment. At the same time, it's very urgent that we direct our Bureau of Customs and related agencies to file

the appropriate charges against those responsible for bringing in foreign trash through an illegal mis declaration of cargo," anang senador.

Iginiit ng senador na hindi dapat kinukunsinti ang mga ganitong aksiyon at dapat itong patawan ng parusa.

Nais din ng mambabatas na magkaroon ng update sa mga basurang itinapon naman ng Canada noong 2013.

"As far as I'm aware, as of January 2018, the matter has yet to be resolved. The Canadian Prime Minister promised to resolve the matter when he went here for the 31st ASEAN Summit in November 2017. There's been no follow through ever since. We need immediate and concrete action on this," dagdag nito. **(Dang Samson-Garcia)**





## Globe's myBusiness leads campaign on marine biodiversity in Siargao

**F**OLLOWING its participation in the recent rehabilitation efforts on Boracay Island, Globe Telecom led an awareness campaign on Marine Biodiversity Conservation on Siargao Island, Surigao del Norte, which is dubbed as the surfing mecca of the Philippines.

This was done through Globe myBusiness, which caters to the business needs of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), in partnership with Save Philippine Seas (SPS), an independent nongovernment, nonprofit organization that aims to protect the country's rich marine resources.

Stakeholders—including 30 business owners and a representative from the Department of Environment and Natural

Resources (DENR)—attended the one-and-a-half day marine biodiversity workshop to discuss best practices on sustainability and biodiversity.

"This program of Globe about Marine Biodiversity and Sustainable Business Practices is a big help to the municipality of General Luna. The program serves as a tool to give proper education and awareness to every household and every barangay in order to solve our solid waste management problem," said Jose Wilbert L. Gorgonio, Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Officer, General Luna.

"I would like to appeal to the local community and all business establishments here in General Luna that we help each other and work together for the success of

our environment-conservation efforts for the prosperity and progress of our own municipality," Gorgonio added.

While the island is very progressive and has become a booming tourist destination, Siargao is not yet too commercialized, thus, an early intervention is ideal to avoid the pitfalls that Boracay had encountered.

Several establishments in Siargao's capital of General Luna are working together to create a better sustainable development, making it one of the best places to start the awareness campaign.

Harana Surf Resort, for instance, gave a commitment through its general manager, Veda Alcos, that, while the establishment is not yet fully plastic-free, "we are aiming to be one very soon."



The Philippines is considered as one of the 25 biodiversity hot spots in the world but it is also the third-largest polluter of plastic into the ocean, according to Earth Day Network, prompting Globe myBusiness to help address the situation.

"We want to help combat this growing concern on marine litter. Through the workshop, we were able to inform and influence business stakeholders that this advocacy on marine conservation and the problem on plastic litter is everyone's responsibility. They have a big role in this endeavor and that, together, they can create huge positive social impact," said Derrick Heng, senior adviser for Globe myBusiness.

During the workshop, Globe myBusiness and SPS shared tips

on how to integrate sustainable best practices into day-to-day operations of businesses. These include the use of eco bags, reusable eating utensils, refillable containers and the reuse of printed tarps and signage.

The business owners were also requested not to use sand, seashells, corals and sea stars as decorations, as well as avoid balloons and lantern releases.

At the same time, Globe myBusiness, being a trusted business partner of MSMEs, gave participants a sneak peek into its Lakbay session by providing them with useful information on how they can use technology to run their businesses more efficiently in order to provide the best experience to their customers.

"We have prepared a portfolio of business solutions to give them the competitive advantage to improve efficiency and productivity, reduce cost and further grow their business so that they can focus on what matters most—the customers," said Mitch Peralta, head for Marketing for Tourism of Globe myBusiness.

Among the solutions being offered by Globe myBusiness are Wi-Fi connectivity, digital advertising, web site creation, auto SMS blast, digitized forms and a personalized loyalty program.

Globe Telecom has committed to contribute to UN Sustainable Development Goals, which include Sustainable Cities and Communities, Responsible Production and Consumption and Life Below Water.



# Deforestation, dying rivers leading to wars

By MICHAEL A. HENGWAYAN  
Special to the BUSINESSMIRROR

**B**ONTOC, Mountain Province—An eerie calm exists over the villages of Fedelisán, Sagada and Dalican in Bontoc in Mountain Province in northern Philippines. It is because there is no telling how many killings will again turn the pristine waters red. Not too long ago, 10 people died and scores injured in prolonged tribal war over water.

Water has become a major bone of contention not only in villages but also nationwide. Water-related conflicts have been increasing lately.

The Philippine National Police (PNP), in four regions covering 56 provinces, identified 34 areas last year where shooting and killing erupted due to conflicts on water rights, boundaries, use and sharing.

In urban areas, it may not be long before the problem of diminishing water resource goes uncontrolled toward social unrest. Per capita demands are increasing and per capita water availability is declining due to population growth and trends in economic development.

The country's capital, Manila, is the most vulnerable to water scarcity, so are the major cities of Baguio, Cebu, Bacolod, Iloilo, Olongapo, Angeles, Cagayan de Oro, Pagadian and Davao, the Philippine Center for Water and Sanitation (PCWS) said. These cities are currently experiencing severe water shortages.

## Enough water but unavailable for all

It may be unthinkable because according to Dr. Peter H. Gleick of the Pacific Institute for Environment, the country happens to have 323 km<sup>3</sup> per year of total renewable fresh water supply, third-most bountiful in Southeast Asia after Indonesia and Malaysia. But think again.

Of that amount, the country can only withdraw a total of 29.5 percent yearly of water.

Gleick reported in the 2012 edition of the World Water that the Philippines will need some 393 percent of total withdrawal until the next 10 years.

Of the total withdrawable amount, 18 percent is consumed for domestic use, 21 percent for industrial purposes and 61 percent for agricultural irrigation.

Luzon itself is a paradoxical case. Even with the Gran Cordillera, Caraballo and Sierra Madre ranges, which cradle three giant river basins—Agno, Angat and Cagayan—water scarcity is not only become a problem in the country's biggest island. It is also

causing sanitation constraints and increasing incidences of water-related diseases. The amount of land irrigated is falling as competition for agricultural water is being strained to the limit.

**Deforestation and water mismanagement are culprits**  
NOT surprisingly, massive deforestation is behind the problem.

Deforestation is rampant nationwide. If the country's deforestation rate pegged at 1,500 hectares a day as of 1995 by the World Resources Institute is not scary enough, deforestation rates in several provinces are more alarming with many provinces falling below the ideal 60:40 forest-settlement ratio to maintain ecological balance.

The Cordillera Ecological Center (CEC), an environmental non-government organization, said at least six provinces in the Cordillera region have only between 20 percent and 30 percent forest cover, based from Landsat satellites estimates, with the province of Benguet having the least forest cover.

The Philippines itself has only a little more than 4 million hectares of forests left, 700,000 hectares of which are virgin forests as bared by former Senate Committee on Environment head, Sen. Loren B. Legarda.

But it may not be long before these are wiped out, what with the deforestation rate far outstripping reforestation efforts.

According to former director of PCWS, Rory Villaluna, deforestation is not the only cause for worsening water inadequacy. Rather, water resources—like river basins, rivers, creeks, brooks and underground water—are inadequately protected, conserved and rehabilitated.

She said water levels have not only gone down. These are being polluted at an alarming rate such that it is not fit for domestic or agricultural use.

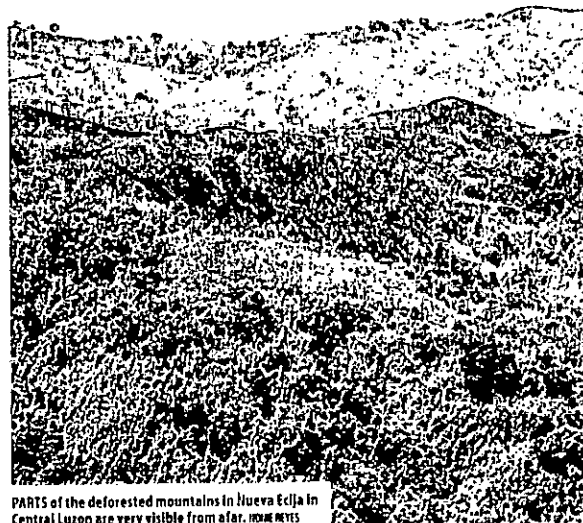
Such statements only prove Legarda's lamentable revelation that only one forester guards and protects every 3,000 hectares of forests in the country.

"We often equate water with forests, but actually ill water management and use has only aggravated the sad state of our watersheds—our main sources of water. Much water, if not polluted and poisoned, can be used back for the burgeoning population," Villaluna said.

"We ask what forests can give us, but we don't do enough to give back to conserve our forests and water," she added.

## Dying rivers

THE Agno River of the Philippines is a very good example. While it feeds three dams—San



PARTS of the deforested mountains in Nueva Ecija in Central Luzon are very visible from afar. ROMAN REYES

Roque, Ambuklao and Binga which generate 1,200 megawatts of electricity—it is dying.

From its headwaters in Mount Data and Loo, Buguias in Benguet, now the country's center of highland vegetable production, toxic pesticides find their way to the river.

Along its stretch, vegetable gardens using dangerous broad spectrum pesticides exist. The deadly chemicals eventually find their way to the river through soil and water surface, as well as underground run-off.

As the river reaches Itogon municipality, cyanide and mercury from the various mines and hundreds of pocket miners seep to the river. A Japan International Cooperation Agency study in 1990 showed that at Lingayen Gulf, Pangasinan, the delta of Agno, shellfishes have trace deposits of cyanide and mercury.

Mercurial and cyanide poisoning cause weakening of the human body, and these are characterized by symptoms coughing, vomiting, reddening of eyes, nausea and difficulty of breathing, said the Dr. Charles Cheng, a noted medical researcher and director of the Baguio-based Chinese-Filipino General Hospital.

Because both have cumulative effects, they may not kill instantly in small deposits in the human body. But when accumulation defeats the tolerable level of the human body, instant death oc-

curs, said Cheng, who has recently passed away.

Besides the two deadly chemicals, an independent assessment team commissioned by the Friends of the Earth and the International Rivers Network found several more harmful chemicals in Agno's river. Dr. Sergio Feld of the team identified these as lead, selenium, molybdenum, iron, manganese, zinc, arsenic, copper, nickel and even radioactive compounds like uranium.

The Manila-based Upland NGO Committee (Unac) said 27 rivers which used to provide household water, irrigation, fishing haven, and washing and swimming grounds are "crying in silence" as they go to die in dams or either run dry.

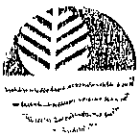
Unac member and secretary-general of the NGO Bantay Mina, Nestor Caoli, said six of the 27 rivers—Balili, Agno, Baroro, Balincaquin, Bued and Dagupan—are biologically dead due to mining.

Six more rivers are heavily polluted and silted by mining activities. These are Naguillan, Upper Magat, Caraballo, Santa Fe, Amurayan and Pasil.

Expanding agricultural operations are pouring pesticide elements into the river, Caoli said. The dead and dying rivers are adversely affecting economic and social activities of people living within and along the rivers' headwaters and tributaries, Unac added.

CEC added that one river that

**“We ask what forests can give us, but we don't do enough to give back to conserve our forests and water.”—VILLALUNA**



## Deforestation...

feeds the country's vegetable bowl, Balili River, is being killed mainly by solid-waste pollution, including human excrement from Baguio City, a known highland tourism city. An estimated 3,000 tons monthly of human excreta is treated by the Baguio Sewage Plant but still find their way to Balili river.

The Cordillera, it appears, is fast turning out to be the region of not only the "dammed damned, but also of dying rivers," CEC said.

The government's Environmental Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources came out with a different view but still complements the findings of the NGOs. It said Amburayan and Baroro rivers in La Union are dead, so are Agno and Dagupan of Pangasinan.

Even the rivers in the provinces of Bulacan and Batangas are dying; Balagtas, Bocaue, Guiguinto, Marilao and Meycauayan in Bulacan, and Dumaca-a in Batangas.

In Luzon's heart, Metro Manila, nine river sub-basins may soon have only poisoned water. These are Obando-Malabon-Navotas estuary in Balut and Malabon; Tullahan in Valenzuela; and the three Taguig-Napindan river basins in Taguig and Taguig-Napindan in Fort Bonifacio.

These are in the most critical situations among the country's 18 river basins whose areas total to more than 110,000 square kilometers.

### No water means death of communities

THE dead and silent rivers are now the subject of fierce rhetoric from environmentalists hell-bent on protecting what is left of the country's water sources. NGOs in Luzon look squarely at logging companies, mines, dams and insensitive farmers as culprits.

Forester George Facsoy of the CEC, for instance, sees the death of rivers as the decapitation of communities from the ecosystem that once supported them.

In the Cordillera, "water is looked upon as life itself," as the Igorot hero Maci-ing Dulag once said.

Death of a river means people will suffer deep economic recession. There will be no farms and fishing areas, and people will be marginalized, making them dependent on outside culture difficult for them to adapt to, he said.

The precious water from rivers replenishes the paddies and deposits fertile silt onto thousands of hectares of farms which foster populations along rivers. If and when the rivers run dry, the imprint of many centuries of human civilizations' cumulative toiling, ethnic culture and identity will be forever lost, he said.

### Groundwater will be affected

THE extinction of rivers will directly affect underground water resources, the National Water Resources Center warned. Of all the nation's provinces, only 12 have groundwater resources that are expected to provide water in the near future. Not one of these has a groundwater area of more than 30,000 hectares—meaning—population density will definitely bear hard on water that these sources can provide.

Groundwater, often looked upon as an unreliable resource, is possible of being lost. It is very vulnerable and with the water and sanitation sectors' poor management of it, like surface water, it may soon be lost to oblivion.

If so, biodiversity will be lost too, and economic and social activities will altogether be disrupted, especially in the lower regions.

### Water wars in this millennium

THE specter of water crisis will cause communities to fight tooth and nail for its possession and use.

The politics of water is as difficult as preventing a war. It makes rivers no longer "deep and wide" as the song goes, but the rift between communities.

Sandra Postel of the influential Worldwatch Institute said: "In efforts to seek and prevent water as flashpoints of conflict, there is a must for mediators to allocate strategies where communities or nations can agree to equal sharing."

Easier said than done, especially so when no law exists where pressure is put on lower communities to either pay for the water that flows or die without. Moreso, putting water scarcity to the already crowded policy agenda of the government has not yet been done with genuine interest by Philippine lawmakers, even though the challenge to recognize water scarcity as an increasingly powerful cause of political and social instability is so great.

In fact, politicians have yet to pass a Code of Conduct for the water and sanitation sector.

"Communities and even counties will go to war," warned Facsoy, "and the government may find it too late to act."

The villages in Mountain Province are not the only volatile places. This year's drought, the impending long, hot summer and El Niño next year, need not spell these out.

*Bangwayan has a Master's Degree and PhD in Development Studies and Environmental Resource Management from University College Dublin, Ireland, as a European Union fellow. He is currently a fellow of Echoing Green Foundation in New York.*



## Lower House prompts senators

## on bill seeking sale of govt land

**T**HE House of Representatives has urged the Senate to act on the proposal addressing the country's problem on housing backlogs through disposition of idle government-owned lands.

The lower chamber already passed on third reading House Bill (HB) 8553, or the "Idle Government-Owned Lands Disposition," which seeks to prescribe the mechanisms to facilitate the disposition of unused properties that are owned by the government for socialized housing.

The bill mandates the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) through the National Housing Authority (NHA), in coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), to prepare the inventory of all lands owned by the national government that have not been used for the purpose for which they have been reserved for the past 10 years.

Meanwhile, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), through local government units (LGUs), shall be in charge of preparing the inventory of all idle local government-owned properties within their respective areas.

The NHA, in coordination with the Land Management Bureau (LMB), shall use these inventories as references to identify the lands owned by the national government that are suitable for socialized housing.

Likewise, the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board shall provide aid to the LGUs in identifying the local government-owned properties that can also be used for socialized housing purposes.

The NHA and the concerned LGUs shall be authorized to enter into a joint venture agreement with private developers, as well as nongovern-

ment organizations that are engaged in housing production to help implement the provisions of the bill.

To promote their participation in these projects, the private sector and the NGOs shall be given incentives pursuant to Section 20 of Republic Act 7279, or the "Urban Development and Housing Act of 1992" on incentives for private sectors participating in socialized housing.

The bill further stipulates that if these properties owned by the LGUs and the national government will not be used for socialized housing, they shall be sold, transferred, or encumbered for the purpose of developing them into industrial, commercial or other similar estates.

Otherwise, at least 10 percent

of their proceeds shall be set aside for the development of socialized housing projects within, adjacent, or near the affected areas in the city or municipality.

The measure further provides that segregated lands or funds from the properties owned by the national government shall be utilized by the NHA as means for expanding socialized housing projects. In addition, the LGUs shall retain the lands they own and use them exclusively for socialized housing.

The HUDCC and the DENR shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations, including the mechanisms and procedures to make the inventory, as well as identify the lands suitable for socialized housing.

Earlier, House Committee on Housing and Urban Development Chairman Alfredo B. Benitez of Negros Occidental said 2,185 hectares public land is idle and ready for housing programs.

According to Benitez, the housing needs of Filipinos could balloon to 6.8 million before President Duterte's term ends in 2022.

Citing the HUDCC, the lawmaker said 2 million of the housing backlog were recorded in 2016.

He said there will be an estimated 774,441 housing needs in 2018; 788,773 in 2019; 803,405 in 2020; 818,363 in 2021 and 833,619 in 2022.

Benitez, meanwhile, said at least 1 million units should be constructed every year to address the country's housing backlog. *Jovee Marie N. Dela Cruz*



## Idle gov't properties for more housing projects

**UNUSED government-owned properties shall soon be utilized for more socialized housing projects as the House of Representatives passed on third and final reading the proposed "Idle Government-Owned Lands Disposition Act."**

House Bill (HB) No. 8553, which received 202 affirmative and five negative votes, without abstention, seeks to prescribe the mechanisms to facilitate the disposition of these idle government lands for socialized housing purposes.

The bill, principally authored by Ilocos Sur Rep.

Eric Singson, declares that the State shall ensure the availability of sufficient lands for socialized housing and improve the capability of local government units (LGUs) in implementing various programs on housing and urban development.

To this end, the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUD-CC), through the National Housing Authority (NHA), and in coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), shall be mandated to prepare the inventory of all lands owned by the national government that

have not been used for the purpose for which they have been acquired for the past 10 years.

Meanwhile, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), through the LGUs, shall be in-charge of preparing the inventory of all idle local government-owned properties within their respective areas.

The NHA, in coordination with the Land Management Bureau (LMB), shall use these inventories as references to identify the lands owned by the national government that are suitable for socialized housing.

**Ryan Ponce Pacpaco**



## Wawasakin ni Erap ang karagatan ng Maynila

**KAILANGAN** kumilos ang taong-bayan sa binabalak ni Manila Mayor Joseph 'Erap' Estrada sa kanyang isasagawang proyekto na tiyak na magdudulot ng kapahamakan hindi lamang sa kalikasan kundi maging sa mga Manileño na umaasa ng kanilang kabuhayan sa paligid ng Manila Bay.

Nakasisindak ang planong reclamatain project ni Erap sa Manila Bay dahil aabot sa daan-daang ektaryang karagatan ang plano niyang tambakan ng lupa at patagin, at gawing commercial area na tiyak na pagkakakitaan lamang ng mga negosyanteng sakim sa pera.

At sa kasunduang pinasok ng Manila City government sa pamumuno ni Erap, bilyon-bilyong piso rin ang nakalaan dito para sa katuparan ng nasabing mga reclamation projects sa Manila Bay. Wala kayang SOP si Erap dito?

Ayon sa Pamalakaya o Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Pamalakaya, umaabot sa 100 reclamation projects ang nakabinbin sa buong karagatan ng Filipinas at 70 porsiyento rito ay nasa Manila Bay.

Ilan sa mga reclamation projects na pinasok ni Erap ay New Manila Bay International Community na gagawin ng UAA Kinming Group Development Corp; ang P7.4-billion expansion ng Manila Harbour Center sa Tondo na gagawin naman ng construction firm na R-II Builders, Inc.

Kasama rin ang multi-bilyong piso na reclamation project sa Manila Bay na tatawaging "Solar City" urban center na isa raw na state-of-the-art na pang-turismo, commercial at



Mat Vicencio

residential district na magbibigay tahanan sa mga commercial projects, tourism facilities na kinabibilangan ng international cruise ship terminal; at ang multibilyong-piso na commercial at tourism hub sa Roxas Boulevard na tatawagin namang Manila Waterfront City.

Nitong nakaraang Nobyembre, sa pamumuno ni Erap at Pasay City Mayor Antonio Calixto, isang MOA ang nilagdaan kabilang ang mga kinatawan ng Manila Gold Coast Development Corporation, SM Prime Holdings Inc., at Pasay Harbor City consortium para sa nasabing reclamation projects.

Kaya nga dahil sa mga proyektong ito ni Erap, nananawagan ang Pamalakaya kay Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu na huwag bigyan ng environmental compliance certificate ang mga reclamation projects sa karagatan ng Maynila.

Kung tutuusin, ang mga mandurukot, holdaper, adik, prostitusyon at nagkalat na basura sa Maynila ang dapat na pinagkakabalahan ni Erap, pero bakit ba pilit niyang pinupuntirya ang mapaminsalang reclamation projects sa Manila Bay. 'Meron' nga ba, ha?

Kahirapan ang kailangang bigyang solusyon ni Erap at hindi 'yung tambakan ng lupa at patagin ang karagatan ng Maynila. Sawang-sawa na ang mga Manileño sa mga pangako ni Erap, at kailangan nila ng tunay na solusyon sa kanilang mga problema.

Sabagay malapit nang husgahan si Erap, kung hindi siya mapipigil sa kanyang mapamuksang reclamation projects, tiyak sa basurahan din siya pupulutin sa darating na May 13 elections.



## Bid to use road tax fund for floods backed

**T**HE leadership of the House of Representatives on Sunday backed President Duterte's pronouncement to use over P40 billion in collections from the controversial Road User's Tax to end the problem of flooding.

Majority Leader Rolando G. Andaya Jr., in a statement, said the lower chamber will designate its contingents to the bicameral

conference committee reviewing the bill abolishing the Road Board on January 14.

The bicameral committee will reconvene to work on the "genuine" abolition of the Road Board.

"This makes the proposed bicameral conference committee on the bill more urgent and indispensable. In concurrence with the President's wishes, the House will

designate the members of our contingent to the bicameral conference committee on our first session day next year, on January 14," he said.

"In the bicam, we have to ensure that all proceeds from the MVUC [Motor Vehicle User's Charge] form part of the General Fund. We want to strip MVUC collections of its status as a hidden off-budget

SEE "ROAD TAX FUND," A2

## Road tax fund. . . CONTINUED FROM A1

item that will be spent by one person in an untransparent way," Andaya added.

According to Andaya, the President has made clear how he wants the Road Board abolition done.

During his visit to calamity areas in Bicol recently, the President spelled out the need to use proceeds of the road user's tax or the motor vehicle user's charge (MVUC) in helping calamity victims.

"With the President's latest instructions, the bill being pushed by the Senate and the previous House leadership on Road Board abolition is dead in the water. He wants total Road Board abolition, not fake abolition. The utilization of MVUC in the bill is the complete opposite of what the President

wants," Andaya said.

But he said, as he explained earlier, that the present House leadership advocates the 100-percent dismantling of the Road Board.

"We do not want its powers to be merely transferred to three secretaries who will in effect be Three Road Kings who can spend the MVUC at will," he said.

"The proceeds need to be included as a line-item fund in the annual budget of the DPWH in the General Appropriations Act. This way, the real and full funding level of the DPWH is reflected clearly, unlike today when MVUC spending is segregated and treated as a non-national budget expenditure," Andaya added.

*Jovee Marie N. Dela Cruz*



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## LAYUNIN NG CHINA MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES SA PAGBISITA SA PILIPINAS

BUMISITA sa Pilipinas ang mga opisyal ng China Ministry of Water Resources (MWR) na may layunin na magsagawa ng policy dialogue sa bansa na may kaugnayan sa palakaran sa water policy at reporma sa tubig na may pinagsamang pamamahala ng mga mapagkukunan ng tubig, pagtitipid, pag-iingat at proteksyon ng tubig, pag-iwas sa kalamidad at mitigation, at iba pa.

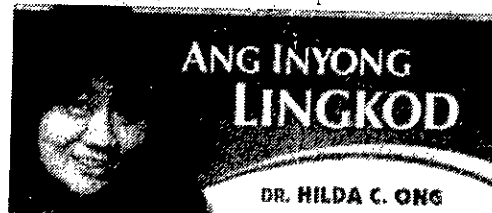
Noong ika-4 ng Enero, nabanggit ng inyong lingkod na ang National Water Resources Board (NWRB), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Bureau of Soil and Water Management (BSWM) at National Irrigation Administration (NIA) ay nagbigay ng maikling pagtatanghal na may kaugnayan sa tubig upang maipakita sa mga opisyal ng China MWR ang kani-kanilang maikling presentasyon na nagpapakita ng mga mandato ng bawat ahensiya, mga programa at proyekto at posibleng lugar para sa pakikipagtulungan.

Ipinakita ng Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) kung papaano nila ginagawa ang pagkontrol ng baha at mga programang imprastruktura ng tubig ng ahensiya. Gayundin, isang pag-aaral sa flood risk assessment ukol sa 120 priority principal (drainage area na > 40 sq.km) na mga river basin at i-prayoridad ang 56 river basins kung saan inaasahang makukumpleto ang mga proyekto sa loob ng 2011 hanggang 2034.

Ipinakita rin ng Office of Civil Defense (OCD) ang

tungkulin ng ahensiya ay alinsunod sa Seksiyon 9 ng Batas ng Republika 10121. Ang Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 or Republic Act 10121 ay pinagtibay upang maiwasan ang mga sakuna sa bansa. Ang RA10121 ay nagtatatag ng "DRRM Network", o ang replication ng NDRRMC mula sa national hanggang sa antas ng mga rehiyon, probinsiya, lungsod, munisipyo at barangay. Ipinakita rin nila ang mga function ng OCD sa mga tuntunin ng tubig.

Ipinaliwanag ng Climate Change Commission (CCC) ang National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) na bumabalangkas sa agenda ng bansa para sa adaptation at mitigation mula sa taong 2011 hanggang 2028, alinsunod sa mga layunin na nakasaad sa National Framework Strategy on Climate Change (NFSCC). Kabilang sa thematic clusters ang: seguridad sa pagkain, sapat na tubig, ekosistem at katatagan sa kalikasan, seguridad ng tao, climate smart industries at services, sustain-



able energy, at cross-cutting knowledge at capacity development cluster.

Nakatuon ang National Power Corporation (NPC) sa pamamahala ng Dam. Ang NPC Dams Management Department ay responsable sa pagkakaroon ng epektibong pamamahala ng mga istruktura ng dam, reservoir at iba pang mga istruktura na kinakailangan ligtas at maaasahang hydropower plant operation. Gayundin, ang Flood Forecasting & Warning System for Dam Operation (FF-WSDO), ang nagbibigay ng kinakailangang impormasyon ukol sa ligtas at cost-effective operasyon ng mga dam, pag-aralan ang dami ng mga pag-ayos tuwing may mga bagyo upang matukoy ang tamang oras at dami ng reservoir at pre-emptive water releases, at nagpapatupad ng mga hakbang patungo sa pagtatag ng isang epektibong pagbantay sa pagbaha at mga warning systems.

At ang panghuli, ipinakita ng Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Administration (PAGASA) ang tungkol sa legal na mandato at mga pangunahing tungkulin ng ahensiya. Ang mga posibleng lugar sa pakikipagtulungan ng mga tuntunin ng technical thru data integration and flood modelling at capability-building sa pamamagitan ng scholarships/graduate study programs on water resources, hydrology, disaster risk reduction and management at sa iba pa.

Matapos ang mga presentasyon, pinakita rin ng delegasyon ng Tsina ang Water Resources nito, na kinabibilangan ng: a) sitwasyon ng tubig sa Tsina; b) mga hamon sa seguridad ng tubig; c) tagumpay sa sektor ng tubig; d) diskarte sa tubig sa hinaharap; at e) internasyonal na pakikipagtulungan.





# TOURISTS HELP REGREEN CATANDUANES

**V**ISITORS to the island province of Catanduanes can enjoy its natural allure and, at the same time, make a meaningful share in nurturing Mother Earth.

This, after the provincial government adopted a unique program that provides tourists the opportunity to plant trees during their stay in the province.

Provincial Tourism Head Carmel Bonifacio-Garcia said the undertaking, called "One Tourist, One Tree," encourages foreign and domestic tourists to plant a tree in areas identified by the provincial government.

She said the program was inceptioned in 2015 to help promote responsible and sustainable tourism in Catanduanes by incorporating the tree-planting activity into the itinerary of the guests, as well as sporting events.

She added that the undertaking also intends to support the programs of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) aimed at reforesting the

archipelago to mitigate the impact of climate change. The province is listed by the DENR as among the country's most important biodiversity areas.

In the past four years, some 1,280 trees have been planted at Mount Cagmasoso in San Andres, Pag-Asa Radar Station in Bato, Puraran Beach, and in Balacay Point in Baras, Carangyan Beach in Pandan, Simamla Breeding Station, a government facility in the capital town of Virac.

In addition to tree planting, the province is also undertaking environmental measures to ensure the carrying capacity and sustainability of the tourist spots.

Catanduanes takes pride in its 60,000 hectares of forests considered as the largest green patch in the Bicol region, which includes the Watershed Forest Reserve, the 1,500 hectares of old- and second-growth forests, and vast abaca plantations, which are home to various wildlife species.



**TOURISTS** participate in the "One tourist, One tree" tree planting in Catanduanes.

It is the Philippines's top producer of the abaca fiber, which is celebrated in the annual Abaca Festival every summer.

In the east of the Bicol peninsula, Catanduanes is a booming destination for

its powdery beaches, unspoiled islands, enchanting waterfalls, panoramic viewpoints, marine sanctuaries and surfing areas, topped by the iconic Puraran "majestic" spot in Baras, which hosts international tournaments.