

22 JAN 2010

DATE : _____

DAY : Tuesday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



DENR: All set for Manila Bay rehab

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and other concerned agencies are all set for the Manila Bay rehabilitation, which will start on Sunday, an official said yesterday.

DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu said they would begin with the cleanup of *esteros* and the coastline of Manila Bay.

"While the cleanup is ongoing, we will also be finalizing plans for the relocation of informal settler families in the bay area. We will see who are to be relocated first. We will coordinate with the National Housing Authority on finding decent relocation sites for these informal settlers," he said.

At the same time, the DENR chief pointed out there is a need for continuing education to change the cultural habit of the people living near *esteros* of not properly disposing of their waste.

He said people need to realize that their attitude is contributing greatly to Manila Bay's pollution.

"With education, we can clean up Manila Bay, we can sustain it, and we can preserve the revived Manila Bay," he said.

At the same time, the DENR announced it will also crack down on all establishments discharging untreated wastewater either directly

into the Manila Bay or into *esteros* and rivers leading to the bay.

Establishments found to be ignoring environmental laws could face closure or fine of up to P200,000 a day.

"We will issue notices of violation to non-compliant establishments or we will shut them down," Cimatu warned. "Until they comply, they cannot operate."

Cimatu also underscored the need for these establishments to "consciously practice" the 3Rs – reduce, reuse and recycle – for better solid waste management.

"Segregation at source is a simple practice that, when done habitually, will rid not just Metro Manila but the entire country of solid waste that pollutes land, water and air," he said.

Cimatu said it is important for government offices, particularly those in the Manila Bay area, to make sure they are connected to sewer lines or have their own sewage treatment plants for proper wastewater disposal.

He appealed to local government units to manage their septage by ensuring that all commercial and residential establishments in their areas are treating their wastewater prior to discharging it.

Fecal coliform level in Manila Bay is at 330 million most probable number per 100 milliliters. The acceptable level for Class SB water, which is deemed safe, is 100 MPN/100 ml.

Cimatu added that the DENR's goal is to reduce coliform levels to less than 270 MPN/100 ml by December 2019.

- Rhodina Villanueva



Naic eyed for relocation of Manila Bay squatters

BY EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said Naic town in Cavite could be a potential site for the relocation of informal settler families living near Manila Bay in Parañaque City.

Benny Antiporda, DENR undersecretary for solid waste management and local government units, told *The Manila Times* on Monday that Naic was identified as a relocation site by Mayor Junio Dualan during a meeting on January 15.

Antiporda said Parañaque City Mayor Edwin Olivarez had given his go signal for the relocation of some of his constituents who make up a portion of about 200,000 informal

settlers living near Manila Bay.

The Manila Bay is split between the cities of Manila and Pasay on the north side and Parañaque on the south.

Antiporda said relocating informal settler families would be DENR's long-term solution to restore the polluted Manila Bay.

"They are the mere pollutants," he said.

"First, they don't have CR (comfort rooms) so the human waste

directly go to the water. Second, they don't have proper waste disposal and so the solid wastes are being dragged down to our rivers and seas. So rather than we blame them, we work on helping them be transferred to community relocation areas where there would be market, school and sustainable source of livelihood for them," Antiporda explained.

He said the DENR was closely coordinating with the Department of Trade and Industry, National Housing Authority and the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor to come up with other possible relocation areas.

However, the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) opposed the restoration of Manila Bay and

urged the DENR to instead use its rehabilitation fund "to restore mangroves, sea grasses, and coral reefs that were destroyed by past and present projects for development aggression."

In a statement on Monday, the group claimed that mangrove areas in Manila Bay used to cover 54,000 hectares, but these had significantly shrunk to only less-than-a-500-hectare to give way for commercial and industrial hubs.

Antiporda said planting mangroves has long been part of DENR's programs, but their initial focus was the cleanup of the bay.

He said the DENR allocated P42.95 billion for the bay's rehabilitation, the bulk of which would go to the relocation of informal settlers.



22 JAN 2010

DATE

Manila Bay in critical condition, says Cimatú

By Rio Araja and Maricel Cruz

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Roy Cimatú on Monday urged government offices, including the local governments, around Manila Bay to set a good example to private establishments—residential and commercial ones—on the compliance with the Clean Water Act and Ecological Solid Waste Management Act.

“Manila Bay is in critical condition and proper wastewater discharge and solid waste disposal play a key role to reviving it,” he said.

He told stakeholders that rehabilitation works at the Manila Bay would start on Jan. 27.

Government offices, particularly those in the Manila Bay area, must ensure that they are connected to sewer lines or have their own sewage treatment plants for proper wastewater disposal, he said.

He also reminded them to manage their solid waste to minimize garbage that end up in landfills or oceans.

According to Cimatú, solid waste was still a huge problem due to non-segregation, rampant use of single-use plastic products and improper waste disposal.

He warned establishments that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources would clamp down on all establishments discharging untreated wastewater either directly into the Manila Bay or into esteros and rivers leading to the bay.

“We will issue notices of violation to non-compliant establishments or we will shut them down. Until they comply, they cannot operate,” he said.

“With education, we can clean up Manila Bay, we can sustain it, and we can pre-

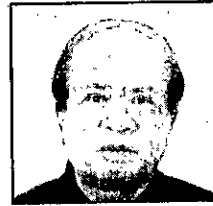
serve the revived Manila Bay,” he added.

But a party-list legislator said the DENR should reveal the details of the multi-billion peso rehabilitation plan.



MERRY-GO-ROUND

Duterte's admin addresses Manila Bay pollution



By **FLORO L. MERCENE**

As early as the '60s, Manila Bay could still be called unspoiled, fit for swimming and other leisurely activities.

Today, it is more appropriate to call it a cesspool, resembling an open septic tank, where all the human, animal, industrial, and commercial refuse are delivered.

But actually, the Bay's pollution is a contribution of many factors, brought about by the growth of our population.

The contribution of Laguna Lake to Manila Bay's pollution cannot be ignored. There are 100 rivers and tributaries that all lead to Laguna Bay. Eventually, the polluted refuse from the Lake empties into Manila Bay through the Pasig River.

Can you imagine how much pollution are contributed by the hundreds of factories, livestock farms, mining, agriculture and other human activities upriver end up on the Lake that finally spill over into the Manila Bay?

Shipping and varied activities at the ports linked to trade and commerce contributes to the Bay's degradation.

An average of 30,000 ships arrive and depart from these ports annually, transporting passengers, manufactured goods and raw materials.

The Bay is home to international ports, fish ports, a container terminal and several major terminals servicing industries in the area.

Mining and lahar quarrying are additional problems coming from provinces of Pampanga and Tarlac, while rock mining occurs in Rizal and Bulacan.

Commercial and business areas abound in the NCR like shopping malls, residential homes and condos.

And finally, the refuse of informal settlers, which trigger a gut reaction and call our attention because it's also good for the TV camera – as they are highly visible.

Many attempts in the past have been attempted to address the Bay's pollution but it is under President Rodrigo Duterte's administration that the Bay's cleanup seems to gather traction, after the Environment and Natural Resources' success in Boracay.

Benny Antiporda, the reporter-turned-DENR undersecretary for solid waste management and local government units said full restoration would take about 7 to 10 years.

His prediction could come true if President Duterte's style is adopted by his successor. What if he is replaced by someone not as dedicated or committed to the environment?



Govt offices along Manila Bay coastline told to comply with environmental laws

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA
@jonlmayuga

GOVERNMENT offices along Manila Bay should set a "good example" by ensuring compliance with various environmental laws, Secretary Roy A. Cimatu of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said on Monday.

Cimatu made the call as the DENR leads 12 other government agencies to embark on an ambitious project to rehabilitate Manila Bay.

In particular, Cimatu wants all government offices along the 194-kilometer coastline fronting Manila Bay to ensure their compliance with the country's laws, particularly Republic Act 9725, or the Clean Water Act, and Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act.

Wise spend

AS this develop, the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) urged the DENR to use the proposed P47-billion rehabilitation fund to restore Manila Bay's degraded coastal and marine ecosystems and restore its water to pristine state.

In a news statement, Pamalakaya National Chairman Fernando Hicap said restoring the mangroves, sea grasses, and coral reefs that were destroyed by past and present projects is a must for Manila Bay's revival.

Part of the DENR's rehabilitation plan is to conduct massive cleanup of Manila Bay, particularly along Roxas Boulevard and esteros, including the relocation of 300,000 squatters, to bring prevent water pollution.

Specifically, the DENR targets to bring down the fecal coliform level which has reached up to 333 million most probable number per 100 milliliters to SB level which is 100 MPN/100 ml, the standard

for bathing and swimming.

Comply with STP requirement

ALL establishments along Manila Bay that are not yet connected to proper sewer lines have been ordered to put up their own sewage treatment plants (STPs) to prevent the direct discharge of untreated wastewater into the environment.

There are several establishments along Manila Bay, which serve as main or central, or satellite offices of various government agencies and government-owned and -controlled corporations.

According to Cimatu, the seven-year, P47-billion Manila Bay rehabilitation will affect or cover establishments in 128 local government units in eight provinces in Regions 3, 4A and the National Capital Region.

Along Roxas Boulevard sits the buildings occupied by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Main Building, Philippine Gaming Corp. Main Corporate Office, Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions of the Department of Trade and Industry, and Securities and Exchange Commission.

Several local government buildings are also situated along the 194 coastlines fronting Manila Bay from Cavite to Bataan.

According to Cimatu, government agencies with buildings along Manila Bay should set a good example for commercial and residential establishments to emulate.

"Manila Bay is in critical condition and proper wastewater discharge and solid waste disposal play a key role to reviving it," Cimatu said in a news statement.

The DENR and other government agencies which will comprise the interagency task force are set to begin rehabilitation works at Manila Bay on January 27.

Cimatu said that it is important for government offices, particularly those in the Manila Bay area,

to make sure they are connected to sewer lines or have their own STPs for proper wastewater disposal.

He also reminded them to manage their solid waste to minimize garbage that ends up in landfills or oceans.

Solid waste management, he said, remains a huge problem in the country owing to non-segregation, rampant use of single-use plastic products and improper waste disposal.

The DENR will clamp down on all establishments discharging untreated wastewater either directly into the Manila Bay or into esteros and rivers leading to the bay starting on January 27.

Establishments found to be ignoring environmental laws could face closure or fine of up to P200,000 a day.

"We will issue notices of violation to noncompliant establishments or we will shut them down," Cimatu warned. "Until they comply, they cannot operate."

Cimatu also underscored the need for these establishments to "consciously practice" the 3Rs—reduce, reuse and recycle—for better solid waste management.

"Segregation at source is a simple practice that, when done habitually, will rid not just Metro Manila but the entire country of solid waste that pollutes land, water and air," he pointed out.

The DENR chief also appealed to local government units to manage their septage by ensuring that all commercial and residential establishments in their areas are treating their wastewater prior to discharge to water bodies.

At the same time, Cimatu said, it is also important to educate the residents on their responsibility to help cleanup Manila Bay.

"With education, we can cleanup Manila Bay, we can sustain it, and we can preserve the revived Manila Bay," he said.

INTROSPECTIVE

TONY F. KATIGBAK

Reviving Manila Bay

I am glad to hear that the government is taking concrete steps to bring Manila Bay back to its former glory – or at the very least, as close to its former glory as possible. We all know Manila Bay has always been a favorite tourist attraction for both Filipinos living in the Philippines as well as tourists visiting from all over the country and around the world who come to enjoy sunsets on the shores.



These days – enjoying time on the banks of Manila Bay is not as it was in the past. Many years ago, lovers and friends could be seen strolling down the boulevard and letting the time pass sitting and enjoying the water and the scenery. This was during the early fifties when the country was still recovering from the ravages of World War II. Manila was devastated by the conflict and was just getting back on its feet at the time, but the simple pleasures of life were slowly coming back after the horrors of war.

I have exceptionally fond memories of Manila Bay and the surrounding areas. My father Paul Katigbak used to take us out every Sunday after work at Reuters (Philippine Bureau) where he was a war correspondent. He would take us to Dewey Boulevard (now Roxas Boulevard) riding the old reliable Manila Motor Coach (Matorco) from Luneta to Baclaran and Parañaque and then back again. My dad and I used to sit on the second deck of the bus and admire the beautiful sunset and clear shores. We'd watch fishermen pull in their catch and see families out in the streets enjoying their time together.

Those were certainly the golden years of Manila, at least in my estimation. It's quite sad to see how things have changed so drastically since then. These days people are more focused on looking down at their screens rather than looking up and admiring nature around them. We no longer live in a world where people actually enjoy the moment since they are too busy capturing it for their social media platforms in an attempt to get the likes and the followers.

It's a pity that the world has changed so much in such a short amount of time and that we've allowed so much that really matters to be lost. The Manila Bay has become so polluted it's hard to remember what it was like years ago. And while people still continue to visit, the once quite popular tourist spot is certainly not like it was during the golden years.

It's not surprising though that things change. That's all that's really constant. However, not everything that changes has to remain that way and it's never really too late to try to make things right again. This holds true for all things and most especially for the environment. I'm glad that we have finally really started placing importance on things that truly matter like helping reverse all the environmental damage we have caused throughout the years by finally taking even small steps toward making a difference – looking for ways to utilize sustainable energy, trying to go zero waste and lessen plastic use, and conserving resources just to name a few.

I'm also glad to learn that the government is joining hands in an integrated effort to clean up Manila Bay. Because it has gotten to the point that it is now going to take a lot more than just one person or agency to make a difference. It will require local governments to work together to clean all the *esteros* and rivers that drain into the bay in order to make a real and lasting change.

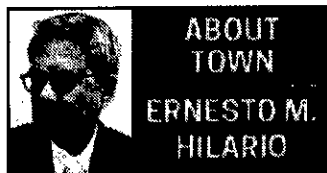
In order to achieve this big goal, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) offices in Metro Manila and the Calabarzon region as well as provincial offices in Pampanga and Bataan will all be involved in the rehabilitation efforts helping not just clean up the Bay itself, but ensuring it stays clean by ensuring all the drain points are clear as well – not bringing in garbage from the different provincial rivers right back.

I fully support this project. And it's something that should not be left to the government alone. We all have our part in ensuring this is successful. Unlike the environmental plan in Boracay that took roughly six months (and ongoing) according to Secretary of Agriculture Emmanuel Piñol it would take far longer than that to address the problems of Manila Bay. He pegged that this would take roughly seven years or more. But then again, in the end, no time is too long to turn this around.

* * *



Can the DENR hack it?



ABOUT TOWN
ERNESTO M. HILARIO

THIS Sunday (Jan. 27) the Department of Environment and Natural Resources begins implementing a 10-year plan costing a whopping P42 billion to revive Manila Bay from decades of pollution and urban blight.

You will recall that serious efforts were made as far back as the early 90s—during the Ramos administration—to clean up the Pasig River, which empties into Manila Bay. Some headway was made in reviving the heavily polluted body of water, with succeeding administrations trying to sustain the effort, including a costly dredging. To date, though, the water remains murky and foul-smelling.

The biggest obstacle to the clean-up of Manila Bay, it looks to me, is not the big hotels, business establishments and condominium clusters along the coast.

The huge problem is removing the informal settlers, or to use what's considered a politically incorrect term—squatters—comprised of an estimated 200,000 to 300,000 families living near the coastal area and along the banks of the many esteros that lead to the Pasig River and ultimately to Manila Bay.

If the average family has no less than four members, that's more than a million informal settlers polluting Manila Bay on a daily basis with their trash and human waste.

And we're not even talking of the business establishments near the esteros and the immediate coastal area that also dispose of both their liquid and solid waste into waterways.

Putting the "Manila Bay Action Plan" to work is therefore going to be a Herculean task. Going by official pronouncements, the plan has three phases: Phase 1 is cleanup and improvement of water quality improvement, Phase 2 is rehabilitation, and Phase 3, protection and sustainment.

Phase 1, starting this month, will include the clean-up of esteros and waterways, reduction of the level of fecal coliform and toxic discharges from establishments, and provision of temporary sanitation facilities for informal settlers

residing along the esteros and the Manila Bay shoreline. Solid waste management and planning for the relocation of the informal settlers will also be done.

Results of the latest water test on Manila Bay showed that its fecal coliform level stood at 330 million most probable number (MPN) for every 100 milliliters, way off the acceptable level of 100 MPN. The acceptable level for Class SB water is 100MPN/100 ml. The DENR's goal is to reduce coliform level to less than 270 MPN/100ml less by December 2019.

No less than President Rodrigo Duterte made the announcement that the government would start cleaning the

"The rehabilitation of Manila Bay is a daunting exercise."

heavily polluted Manila Bay, with Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu and Interior Secretary Eduardo Año instructed to head the operation. At the same time, Duterte warned hotel owners in the area to install water treatment systems for the proper disposal of waste material—or face closure.

To jumpstart the massive cleanup, a DENR—led task force will release an initial list of establishments that will receive "notices of violation" of environmental laws particularly on water and solid waste management.

News reports indicate that the DENR has already taken water samples from or checked the compliance level of close to 300 commercial establishments. The next move is to show them the results and inform them of the requirements, including the establishment of water treatment plants. If they don't meet these, they face closure.

Aside from closure, violators face fines ranging from P20,000 to P200,000 for every day of violation, beginning on the date the water sample was taken.

Recently, the DENR inspected the local government-run Manila Zoo and

found that it had been discharging untreated sewage directly through one of the esteros flowing into the bay. The agency ordered the 59-year-old zoo to immediately construct its own sewage treatment plant, with the city later expressing willingness to build two more of such facilities.

The Department of Tourism has expressed full support for the government plan to rehabilitate Manila Bay, saying that it would be to the "best interest" of the tourism industry and "in line with the thrust of the DOT to create a culture of sustainable tourism."

Having said all this, we see the massive project facing big odds even as government has succeeded in reviving Boracay, considered the crown jewel of Philippine tourism, where the cleanup effort last year required the closure of the famous resort island to tourists for six months.

We're well aware that the DENR has given assurances that they will apply the same "political will" observed in the rehabilitation of Boracay Island, and strictly implement Republic Act 9275 or the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004 which they say is the "key to addressing water quality issues and other environmental problems in the historic bay."

Last week, at the Saturday Forum@ Annabel's which I moderate, DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda pointed out that the cleanup should be a community effort, with various sectors helping out. He's right.

The Manila Bay rehab project is actually long overdue. In 2008, the Supreme Court issued an order for the DENR and 12 other government agencies to clean up Manila Bay and restore its water quality to Class SB level safe for recreational activities such as swimming. It's 2019, more than a decade after that ruling, and the problem seems to have gotten even worse.

The next target is 2029 for the waters of Manila Bay to be as pristine as in the old days—the post-war era, for instance—but we really hope the government succeeds in this noble undertaking. We may have serious reservations at this point as to whether government can relocate all informal settlers that pollute Manila Bay within 10 years, but we'd be glad to be proven wrong.

ernhil@yahoo.com



CIMATU: MAHIGPIT NA IPATUTUPAD ANG CLEAN WATER ACT SA REHABILITASYON NG MANILA BAY

MAHIGPIT na ipatutupad ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang clean water law upang matiyak na maisatuparan ang kanilang pagsisikap na mabuhay muli ang maruming Manila Bay.

Sinabi ni DENR Secretary

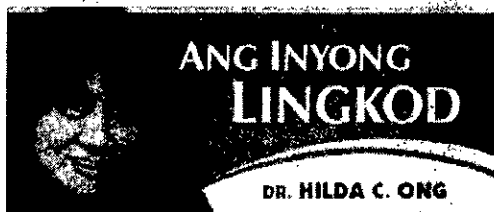
Roy A. Cimatu, mahigpit niyang ipapatupad ang Republic Act 9275 o ang Philippine Clean Water Act ng 2004, "susi sa pagtugon sa mga isyu sa kalidad ng tubig at iba pang mga problema sa kapaligiran sa makasaysayang bay."

"Ang mga establisimiyento ay dapat magtayo o mag-install ng kani-kanilang sariling sewage treatment plants (STPs). Hindi nila pwede ipalabas ang kanilang wastewater sa esteros," sabi ni Cimatu. "Binibigyan namin sila ng tatlong buwan upang maisagawa ang kanilang sariling STP," dagdag niya.

Sinabi ni Cimatu na isasagawa ang rehabilitasyon, sisimulan ng DENR ang paglilinis ng esteros sa pamamagitan ng pagsubaybay sa mga pinagkukunan ng untreated wastewater.

Idinagdag pa ng environment chief na ang plano sa pagrehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay ay magiging strategic na pangasiwaan kung papaano ipatutupad ang three-phase Manila Bay Action Plan.

Ang Phase 1 ay ang paglilinis at pagpapabuti ng water quality improvement; ang Phase 2 ay rehabilitasyon, at



Phase 3, proteksyon at sustainment.

Sinabi ni Cimatu na ang Phase 1 ay nakatakdang mag-simula ngayong taon. Kabilang dito ang paglilinis ng esteros at mga daanan ng tubig, pagbawas ng antas ng fecal coliform at nakalalason na discharges mula sa mga establisimiyento, at pagkaloob ng pansamantalang mga pasilidad ng sanitasyon para sa mga impormal na naninirahan sa esteros at sa baybayin ng Manila Bay. Ang pamamahala ng solid waste at pagpapalano para sa relocation ng mga impormal na settlers ay gagawin din.

Sinuri rin ni Cimatu ang mga ilog ng Parañaque at Don Galo, na parehong patungo sa Manila Bay. Ang dalawang tributaries ay naiulat din na may mataas na fecal coliform levels.

Noong 2008, ang Korte Suprema ay nagbigay ng isang patuloy na mandamus na nag-uutos sa DENR at 12 iba pang ahensya ng gobyerno -- Department of Interior of Local Government, Education, health, Agriculture, Public Works and Highways, Budget and Management, Phi-

lippine Coast Guard, Philippine National Police Maritime Group, Philippine Ports Authority, MMDA, MWSS at Local Water Utilities Administration na linisin ang Manila Bay at ibalik ang kalidad ng tubig nito sa antas ng Class SB na ligtas para maibalik ang dating gawaing panlibang tulad ng swimming.

Ang antas ng fecal coliform sa Manila Bay ay nasa 330 milyong MPN (pinaka-posibleng bilang) sa bawat 100 milliliters. Ang katanggap-tanggap na antas para sa tubig ng Class SB ay 100MPN / 100 ml.

Ang layunin ng DENR ay upang mabawasan ang antas ng coliform, na maging sa mas mababa sa 270 MPN / 100ml sa darating na Disyembre 2019.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

P34-billion pondo sa paglinis sa Manila Bay

TUMATAGINTING na P34 billion taxpayers money ang inilaan ng gobyerno para sa paglilinis ng maburak na Manila bay.

Ang laking salapi nitò. Andaming infrastructure projects, livelihood, social services, pabahay at paaralan ang magagawa nito.

Sobra sobra narin ang halagang ito kung bigyan nalang ng tig-P1 million sa bawat Filipino. Nasa 104 million lang kasi ang bilang natin ngayon.

Sabi ng mga taga-lalawigan, bakit taxpayers money ang gagamitin sa Manila bay rehab eh hindi naman sila nagtatapon ng basura dyan, hindi naman sila umiihi dyan. Oo nga naman!!!

Bakit hindi nalang kunin sa multa ng mga establishment na lumabag ang gamitin sa paglilinis sa Manila Bay? Puede!

Anyway, bantayan nalang natin ang paggamit sa napakalaking pondong ito para sa Manila bay rehab. Wish natin ay maging tama ang paggasta at makita nating ala-Boracay ang linis ng Manila bay soon... Goodluck DENR!



Balita

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DENR sa gov't. agencies: Sumunod sa ecological law

Nanawagan kahapon si Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy Cimatu sa lahat ng ahensiya ng pamahalaan sa palibot ng Manila Bay na sumunod sa environmental law.

Aniya, dapat niaging ehemplo ang mga tanggapan ng pamahalaan sa mga commercial establishment at residential area na nasa paligid ng lawa sa pagsunod sa batas, partikular na ang Clean Water Act of 2004 at ang Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

"Manila Bay is in critical condition and proper wastewater discharge and solid waste disposal play a key role to reviving it," anang kalihim.

Niiniaw ni Cimatu na mahalagang nakakabit sa sewer lines ang mga nakatayong government office sa palibot ng Manila Bay upang masiguro na mayroon silang sariling sewage treatment plant para sa tamang wastewater disposal.

Biralaan din niya ang mga ito na pangasiwaan ang kanilang solid waste upang mabawasan ang mga

basurang naitatapon sa mga landfill at karagatan.

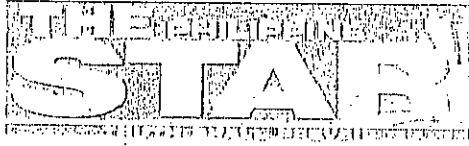
Malaking problema, aniya, sa pamahalaan ang solid waste o iba't ibang basura dahil madali lang naitatapon ang mga ito sa iba't ibang lugar.

Matatandaang nagdesisyon na ang DENR na wakasan na ang pagtatapon ng mga establisimyento ng untreated wastewater sa mga ilog na maiiagos hanggang sa Manila Bay.

Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz



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22 JAN 2010



A flock of migratory birds feed along the coastline of Manila Bay on Roxas Boulevard in Manila yesterday.

EDD GUMBAN



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1900

MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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22 JAN 2010

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MICC to complete second mining review by June

By **CHINO S. LEYCO**

The inter-agency Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) plans to complete its second round of review of mining operations in the country by June this year, the Department of Finance (DOF) said yesterday.

Finance Undersecretary Bayani H. Agabin, who is also one of the lead officials of the interagency body, said that 15 mining sites are up for the MICC review this year, which would run for four months beginning March until June.

"We identified the companies already," Agabin told reporters, but did not identify those companies included in the list. "We are targeting to start by March because it's dry seasons and some of these mines, you cannot visit during the rainy seasons. Hopefully, we are more efficient [this time]."

According to the DOF official, the MICC will continue to use the methodology they have created for the first round of review, but with some "improvements."

"I think with respect to the scope of the study especially on the social and economic aspect," Agabin said when asked about the improvements they intend to introduce.

For the second review, the government has earmarked P25 million, of which P15 million is coming from the DOF, while the remaining P10 million is from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Agabin also said that the MICC will tap again they same audit teams they previously hired to do the first round.

The "objective, science-based, and fact-finding" review would cover the remaining 15 mining companies which were part of the 41 mines initially reviewed by the DERN under former secretary Regina Lopez in 2016.

Last year, the audit team of experts have its outputs on the review of the environmental, economic, social, legal and technical aspects of the first batch of 26 mining companies that Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III described as "highly commendable."

The 33rd meeting of the MICC on December 12 was co-chaired by DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu.

The MICC deferred a recommendation on the lifting of the moratorium on the issuance of new mineral agreements.

Executive Order No. 79 imposed a moratorium on

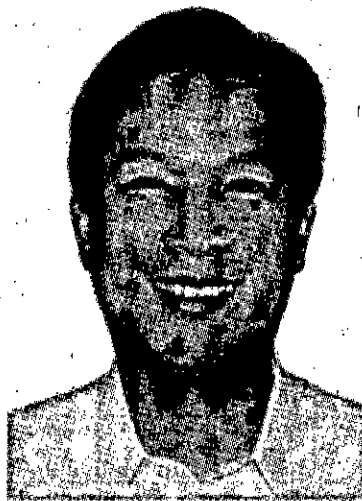
new mineral agreements "until a legislation rationalizing existing revenue sharing schemes and mechanisms shall have taken effect."

The Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion law or Republic Act No. 10963 increased the excise tax on mineral products from 2 percent to 4 percent.

The DENR asked whether the increase would be considered as having satisfied the condition of a legislation rationalizing the existing revenue sharing scheme.

The DOF clarified that the TRAIN law only increased the excise taxes and did not cover the implementation of a new fiscal regime for mining. The new fiscal regime proposed by the DOF covers other taxes and fees, such as royalty, windfall, profit and incentives.

The MICC then resolved to defer a recommendation to lift the moratorium on new mineral agreements, stressing that a new revenue-sharing scheme and mechanisms for mining would be covered under Package 2 plus of the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program.



BAYANI H. AGABIN



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MICC exec: March start set for new mining audits

BY MAYVELIN U. CARABALLO

NEW mining audits will begin in March for another batch of companies as the government seeks to settle challenges against closures and suspensions ordered by the Environment department in 2017, a member of an interagency council said.

"We are targeting to start by March and end it by June because its dry season — the best time to visit these mines," Finance Undersecretary Bayani Agabin told reporters in an interview.

Agabin, who is part of the Mining Industry Coordination Council (MICC), reiterated that the 15

mining firms were part of the 41 that were initially investigated by the Environment department in 2016.

The second audit round will have a budget of P25 million, P15 million of which will be provided by the Finance department and the remainder by the DENR.

2017 after then Environment chief Regina Lopez's closure and suspension orders against 26 mining operations led to an industry outcry.

This led to Congress' deciding not to confirm her appointment and the MICC subsequently created five technical teams to conduct another review.

In November last year, the DENR announced that three mining firms would be definitely be shuttered while another nine were up for suspension.

The three firms to be closed were identified as Surigao del Norte-based Claver Mineral Development Corp., Oriental Synergy Mining Corporation

in the Dinagat Islands and Ore Asia Mining and Development Corp. in Bulacan.

Up for suspension instead of closure, meanwhile, are Dinagat Islands-based AAMPHIL Natural Resources and Development Corp., Krominco, Inc., Libjo Mining Corp. and Wellex Mining Corp.; Carrascal Nickel Corp. in Surigao del Sur; Zambales Diversified

Agabin said the MICC would be commissioning the same team of experts that reviewed a first batch of mining firms.

"We want the same teams. Same scope, same teams, if they still want to," he said.

The methodology for the audit will also essentially be the same but some improvements can be done, Agabin added.

"Now we will be doing it better. We know how to structure it already. Improvements will be observed with respect to the scope of the study especially on the social and economic aspects," he said.

The MICC convened in February

Metals Corp. in Zambales; and Emir Mineral Resources Corp. and Mt. Sinai Exploration and Development Corp. in Samar.

Rounding out the list of nine is Strongbuilt Mining Development Corp. whose suspension was affirmed by the review.



15 mines to undergo audit

BY ANGELA CELIS

THE interagency Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) will conduct in the first half of the year a review of the remaining 15 mines out of the 41 earlier placed under scrutiny by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Bayani Agabin, Department of Finance (DOF) undersecretary, said in an interview yesterday the second batch of companies will be subject to the same parameters used in reviewing the first batch of 26 mining companies. These cover environmental, economic, social, legal and technical aspects of the mines' operations.

The first review resulted to either suspension or closure of the mines by the previous leadership at the DENR.

"Essentially the (methodology will be the) same, but there are some improvements that... can be done... with respect to the scope of the study especially on the social and economic aspect," Agabin said.

"But now we will be doing it better. We know how to structure it already," he added.

Agabin said the MICC targets to finish the review by June.

"We are targeting to start by March, because it's dry season, and some of these mines you cannot visit during the rainy seasons," Agabin said.

"We are doing 15. We identified the companies already, (but

I don't have a list," he added.

Agabin said this review will have a total budget of P25 million.

MICC is eyeing to commission the same team of experts following their outputs on the review.

During the first round, said the review panel was tasked to come up with recommendations on mining-related methodologies and procedures to maximize the benefits of mining and avoid damages; the list of inefficiencies/violations/damages done by mining companies that are difficult to address by the DENR alone; and the appropriate penalties that have to be imposed for such inefficiencies/violations/damages done.



Up next. The first review led to the closure or suspension of some of the 26 mines.



MICC expects to conduct new round of mine audits starting March

By Melissa Luz T. Lopez
Senior Reporter

THE GOVERNMENT is looking to start the audit of a second set of mines in March, an official from the Department of Finance (DoF) said, with the review targeted for faster completion than the last one.

Finance Undersecretary Bayani H. Agabin said that the inter-agency Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) is planning for a fresh round

of mining audits to run from March to June covering 15 mining sites.

"We are targeting to start by March because it's the dry season and some of these mines you cannot visit during the rainy season," Mr. Agabin told reporters on the sidelines of an event in the Philippine International Convention Center yesterday.

This will follow the audit of 27 mining areas which started in March 2018. The second round of reviews will complete the evaluation of all 41 operating mines targeted by the initial review in 2016 of former

Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez.

Mr. Agabin said that the 27 sites were prioritized for the first review as these had adverse findings as per Ms. Lopez's initial assessment.

He said that the method will be "essentially the same," but that improvements will be made to streamline the conduct of the review.

"We want the same teams. Same scope, same teams, if they still want to," Mr. Agabin said.

Five teams composed of 25 industry experts performed the mining

review last year, looking into the social cost-benefit analysis of these sites to surrounding communities.

Covered by the audit are the legal, technical, environmental, social and economic aspects of mining sites, which are then judged through an environmental score card to check whether their performance is acceptable or not.

However, Mr. Agabin mentioned that funding for the fresh round of MICC reviews will be "subject to the budget being approved," referring to the delayed passage of the P3.575-trillion national budget.

Like before, the mining audit is projected to cost about P25 million, which will be split between the DoF (P15 million) and the Environment department (P10 million).

The MICC is a recommendatory body mandated to review the performance of existing mining operations, review mining-related laws and regulations, and facilitate related capacity building programs, among others. They are likewise required to the audits every two years.

Of the mines covered in the first round, the MICC affirmed the

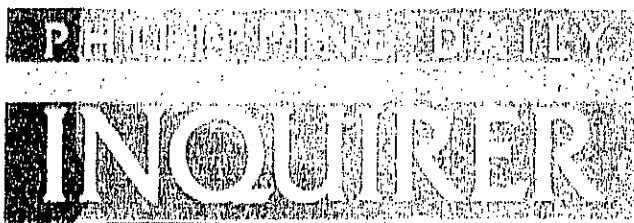
closure of three of the 12 mining operations originally ordered closed. These three operators have also been fined and barred from transporting ore pending full mine rehabilitation.

Meanwhile, nine mining areas were suspended, fined and ordered to do corrective measures.

In December, the DoF said that the government is keeping the moratorium on new mining permits without the passage of a new revenue-sharing scheme for miners, which has been in place since 2012.



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GOV'T SEEN RETAINING TECHNICAL TEAM

NEXT REVIEW OF ACTIVE MINES SET TO START IN MARCH

By Ben O. de Vera
@bendeveraINQ

The plan to audit the remaining 15 to 17 active mining operations in the country will start in March, with the interagency Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) expected to hire the same technical team that

undertook the first review.

Finance Undersecretary Bayani H. Agabin told reporters Monday that the departments of Finance (DOF) and Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), which co-chair the MICC, had allotted P25 million from their respective budgets to fund the next round of review of mining operations.

"We are targeting to start by March because it's dry season and some of these mines you cannot visit during the rainy season," Agabin said.

The DOF official said this second round of audit was expected to be finished by June.

The upcoming round will complete the audit of all active

mining firms as only about 40 remain operating to date, Agabin said.

The MICC last year audited 26 mining companies, which former environment Secretary Regina Paz Lopez had ordered shut down or suspended due to "adverse findings," Agabin noted.

This first round of review

was delayed by over a year due to lack of funding.

Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III had nonetheless said that the technical review team they hired to audit mining operations was "highly commendable."

The MICC, formed through EO No. 79 issued by former President Benigno Aquino III in 2012,

was mandated to conduct a multi-stakeholder review of mining operations every two years, but only now had it been able to do so.

Agabin said the result of the MICC's first review was already submitted to the Office of the President, while the DENR was conducting its own separate audit. INQ

PEOPLE'S MINING ZONE

Second 'Minahang Bayan' opens in Benguet town

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet — A 64-hectare "Minahang Bayan" (people's mine) in the gold-rich town of Itogon in Benguet province was opened for pocket mining after the Provincial Mining and Regulatory Board (PMRB) on Tuesday signed a resolution giving clearance to the area.

The land was mostly owned by Benguet Corp., one of the pioneer mining firms, in Barangay Loacan here.

It was the second Minahang Bayan opened for pocket miners, after a 1-ha area, also in Itogon, was given clearance for mining late last year.

Regulated conditions

Fay Apil, Cordillera director of the Mines and

Geosciences Bureau and PMRB chair, said mining contracts approved by the board give pocket mining groups the right to extract mineral ores for commercial purposes on regulated conditions.

According to Loinino Kaniteng, president of the Benguet Federation of Small-Scale Miners, four groups operate within the Minahang Bayan, aside from Loacan Itogon Pocket Miners Association.

Of the total area, 56.2 ha are patented mining claims of Benguet Corp.

Small-scale mining

Gov. Crescencio Pacalso, who co-chairs the PMRB, directed a technical working group to finalize the guidelines on

processing contract applications.

"Miners are eager to get their livelihood back but we need to follow the legal processes to avoid problems in the future," Pacalso said.

In September last year, Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu banned small-scale mining activities in Cordillera after a massive landslide triggered by Typhoon "Ompong" (international name: "Mangkhut") killed more than 100 people, mostly pocket miners, in Itogon.

Before the ban, pocket mining in Benguet operated illegally but was tolerated for many years by local authorities. — *Inquirer*



Senate OKs ₱3.757-trillion budget for 2019

By **VANNE P. TERRAZOLA**

The Senate on Monday approved on third and final reading the proposed 2019 General Appropriations Bill (GAB) which would provide the government ₱3.757 trillion to fund its programs and operation for this year.

Despite the delay, the Upper Chamber stayed true to its promise to have the GAB approved before the end of January. Fourteen senators voted for the passage of the priority measure.

There were no negative votes or abstention.

The passage of the proposed national budget came two months after its approval in the House of Representatives last November, delayed by the controversy on the alleged insertion of "parked pork barrel" funds into the government's spending program.

The Senate's approval will pave the way for the congressional bicameral conference committee to finalize the provisions of its version **►4**

of the 2019 budget, and its counterpart House Bill 8169.

The Senate contingent in the bicam panel will be led by Senator Loren Legarda, chair of the Senate Finance Committee. Joining her are Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto, Majority Leader Miguel Zubiri, Minority Leader Franklin Drilon, and Senators Cynthia Villar, Panfilo Lacson, Nancy Binay, JV Ejercito, and Bam Aquino as members.

Key amendments

Besides the amendments raised during the plenary discussion, Senate President Vicente Sotto III said senators also submitted their proposed revisions to the GAB over the last four days.

Before its approval on final reading, Legarda presented the Senate's amendments to the GAB.

The changes include the restoration of the Department of Health's ₱16.796-billion fund for the Health Facilities Enhancement Program (HFEP), and the provision of an additional ₱4.797 billion of the ₱7-billion requirement for Human Resource for Health Development.

Under the Department of Education's budget, Legarda said the Senate provided ₱800 million for the allowance of teachers, which will be distributed during the World Teachers' Day on October.

Additional allocation for DepEd also includes the increase in its Quick Response Fund (QRF); allocations for School-based Feeding Program, Quality Teacher and Development Program, computerization program, textbooks and other instructional materials, she added.

State universities and colleges (SUCs) would be provided an additional ₱2.973 billion for the implementation of the system of evaluation and

promotion of SUC faculty members, which increase their compensation.

Legarda said the Department of Labor and Employment's (DOLE) proposed outlay for this year was also increased to fund the emergency repatriation of overseas Filipino workers, worker protection and welfare program, employment facilitation program and government internship program.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) was also provided the budget for the construction of building for Emergency 911 Command Center.

Under the DILG budget, the Senate also augmented the Philippine National Police's (PNP's) allocation for its Maintenance or Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) to improve its delivery of services.

"We also allocated an additional amount of ₱59.839 million to provide the per capita cost of additional policemen and ₱1.81 billion for the procurement of a brand new fixed-wing airplane," Legarda said.

The Department of National Defense was also granted an additional amount of ₱48.766 million for its Task Force and Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (ECLIP) for the rebel or insurgent returnees.

Aside from the these agencies, senators also pushed for the increase in the allocations of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Agriculture, Department of Finance, Department of Energy, Department of Justice, Department of Information and Communications Technology, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Tourism, Department of Trade and Industry, as well as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources,

for their respective programs and operations.

Decreases

Unlike other agencies, the other departments saw a decrease in their proposed allocations.

Legarda said the Senate reduced the Department of Public Works and Highways' ₱555-billion budget "due to the cut in the ROW (right-of-way) and various projects which are not part of the DPWH original submission to the DBM (Department of Budget and Management).

It was recalled that senators moved for the realignment of the ₱75-billion DBM "insertion" to the DPWH budget to other key government projects.

Legarda, however, said the budget cut "will be partially offset by the increase in local projects."

Although additional funds were provided to selected airports and seaports, fly fees, purchase of helicopters, lighted ocean buoys, the Department of Transportation budget also suffered a decrease due to cuts imposed on ROW allocation, Legarda said.

The Department of Foreign Affairs' allocation was also reduced due to the transfer of the ₱7.5 billion budget for the country's hosting of the SEA games this year to the Philippine Sports Commission.

New laws

Legarda said the amounts slashed from the agencies in the GAB were realigned for the implementation of new laws, among others, specifically:

-₱10 billion for the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund under the proposed rice tariffication law

-₱10 billion for the Coconut Farmers and Industry Development Fund

-₱18 billion for the initial implementation of the Universal Health Care; and

-₱40 billion for the Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Region in Muslim Mindanao.



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Senate approves 2019 budget

BY RAYMOND AFRICA

THE Senate yesterday approved on third and final reading the P3.757-trillion proposed national budget for 2019.

After the period of amendments, which was followed by the second reading, the 15 senators present during yesterday's session all voted in favor of Senate Bill 8169 or the General Appropriations Act of 2019.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III designated Sen. Loren Legarda, Senate finance committee chair, to head the Senate panel for the bicameral conference committee to iron out disagreeing provisions of the bill with their counterparts in the House of Representatives.

Appointed members of the Senate panel were Senate President protempore Ralph Recto, Majority leader Juan Miguel Zubiri, Senate minority leader Franklin Drilon, and Senators Cynthia Villar, Panfilo Lacson, Juan Edgardo Angara, Nancy Binay, Joseph Victor Ejercito, and Paolo Benigno Aquino IV.

Senators earlier decided to allot portions of the P75-billion

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insertion in the budget of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to agencies needing additional funding, including the Department of Health for its Health Facilities Enhancement Program, and to finance the possible government takeover of Hanjin Shipyard in Subic Bay.

Before the approval, Legarda presented the amendments to the proposed budget, which include the appropriation of P2.973 billion for state universities and colleges; reduction by P2.5 billion of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' National Greening Program; and realignment of P230.8 million to mangrove reforestation.

Legarda said the Senate reduced by P7.5 billion the budget of the

Foreign Affairs Department, and realigned the amount to the Southeast Asian Games.

Some P24.4 billion was restored in the Department of Health's budget, while P59.839 million was added to the Department of the Interior and Local Government's funds for the recruitment of policemen. P1.81 billion was allotted for the purchase of new fixed-wing airplanes.

For the Department of National Defense, the Senate allotted an additional P48.766 million to fight insurgents.

"The reduction in the DPWH budget is due to the cut in the ROW (right of way) and various projects which are not part of the DPWH's original submission to the DBM. However, this will be partially offset by increase in local projects," Legarda said.

Speaker Gloria Macapagal Ar-

royo said she will push for a P20-billion increase in the proposed P123.7-billion budget of the Department of Agriculture (DA) to further lower inflation.

"The House had increased the budget of DA by P20 billion upon my instruction because I noticed that since my administration, the budget for DA had dropped significantly," Arroyo said in a statement.

She said she will instruct the House members of the bicameral committee to make sure that the P20 billion remain in the final budget.

"We have to make sure the increase in the DA budget is retained in the final budget because it will enable the DA to implement measures that will help farmers and increase production needed to control inflation," she said. — *With Wendell Vigilia*



P1.7B water treatment plant starts operation.

WEST zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services Inc. has started operations of its P1.7-billion sewage treatment plant (STP) in San Dionisio, Parañaque City capable of treating up to 76,000 cubic meters of wastewater daily.

Maynilad said the newly-constructed Parañaque Water Reclamation Facility will help ease pollution loading in Manila Bay as it can also serve about 500,000 households in Barangays San Dionisio, Sto. Niño, San Isidro, Moonwalk, San Antonio, Marcelo Green, BF, La Huerta, and Don Bosco in the said city.

This is Maynilad's 22nd wastewater treatment facility in the West Zone and is part of the company's program to expedite the provision of

sewerage and sanitation services in Metro Manila. It was funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency through the Development Bank of the Philippines.

With the completion of the Parañaque facility, Maynilad now operates 19 STPs, two sewage and septage treatment plants and one septage treatment plant with a combined treatment capacity of an estimated 662,000 cubic meters of wastewater per day.

The water concessionaire is also currently constructing additional wastewater treatment facilities in Valenzuela, Cavite City, and Tunasan and Cupang in Muntinlupa which will improve its sewerage coverage to 26 percent once fully constructed next year.



Maynilad starts operating its P1.7-B Parañaque STP

WEST Zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services Inc. (Maynilad) recently began operating its newly constructed P1.7-billion sewage treatment plant (STP) in San Dionisio, Parañaque City.

"Maynilad has always been supportive of government's move to clean up Manila Bay. Building new STPs is in line with this initiative, and the Parañaque Water Reclamation Facility is now our 22nd wastewater-treatment facility in the West Zone. This is part of the P23.3 billion we have already invested since 2007 to improve wastewater infrastructure in our concession area," Maynilad President and CEO Ramoncito S. Fernandez said.

The new Parañaque Water Reclamation Facility can treat up to 76,000 cubic meters of wastewater per day, and will help ease pollution loading in Manila Bay. It can serve about 500,000 households in Barangays San Dionisio, Santo Niño, San Isidro, Moonwalk, San Antonio, Marcelo Green, BF, La Huerta and Don Bosco in Parañaque City.

The facility, which is part of Maynilad's program to expedite the provision of sewerage and sanitation services in Metro Manila, is funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency through the Development Bank of the Philippines.

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The facility, which is part of Maynilad's program to expedite the provision of sewerage and sanitation services in Metro Manila, is funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) through the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP).

With the completion of the STP in Parañaque, Maynilad now operates 19 Sewage Treatment Plants, two Sewage and Septage Treatment Plants, and one Septage Treatment Plant with a combined treatment capacity of an estimated 662,000 cubic meters of

wastewater per day.

Maynilad is the largest private water concessionaire in the Philippines in terms of customer base. It is the concessionaire of the MWSS for the West Zone of the Greater Manila Area, which is composed of the cities of Manila (all but portions of San Andres and Sta. Ana), Quezon City (west of San Juan River, West Avenue, EDSA, Congressional, Mindanao Avenue, the northern part starting from the districts of the Holy Spirit & Batasan Hills), Makati (west of South Super Highway), Caloocan, Pasay, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas and Malabon all in Metro Manila; the cities of Cavite, Bacoor and Imus, and the towns of Kawit, Noveleta and Rosario, all in Cavite.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

MAYNILAD GUMASTOS NG P23.3-B SA WASTEWATER PROJECTS

ANG West Zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services, Inc. (Maynilad) ay gumastos ng P23.3 bilyon para mapaghusay ang wastewater infrastructure at mapalawak ang sewerage coverage sa West Zone mula nang maisapribado ang kompanya noong 2007.

Kabilang sa investment ng Maynilad na punta sa konstruksiyon ng bagong wastewater treatment facilities at rehabilitasyon ng mga kasalukuyang nakatayo na, pagbili ng mga

bagong vacuum trucks ng paglilinis sa septic tank, at pag-iinstala ng bagong sewer lines.

"Increasing sewerage coverage by just one percent requires an average investment of about P1.6 billion, so the level of investment to enhance the wastewater infrastructure is huge. Nevertheless, this is something we have to do to ensure environmental sustainability," pahayag ni Maynilad President and CEO Ramoncito S. Fernandez.

"We have a roadmap

towards the attainment of 100% coverage by the end of the concession period, and we are working with our government partners to facilitate completion of our sewerage projects despite right-of-way conflicts, permit issuance delays, and lot acquisition issues," dagdag nito.

Dahil natapos na ang bagong sewage treatment plants sa Pasay at Parañaque, may 19 Sewage Treatment Plants na ang pinatatabo ng Maynilad kasama ang Sewage at Septage

Treatment Plants, at isang Septage Treatment Plant na kayang luminis sa 662,000 cubic meters ng wastewater sa kada araw.

Kasalukuyang ginagawa ng Maynilad ang dagdag na wastewater treatment facilities sa Valenzuela, Cavite City, at Tunasan at Cupang sa Muntinupa. Kapag nakumpleto na sa 2020, kaya nang madagdagan ng 26% ang sewerage coverage sa West Zone ng 26%.

Ang Maynilad ay pinakamalaking private

water concessionaire sa Filipinas. Ito ang agent at contractor ng Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) sa West Zone sa Greater Manila Area, na kinabibilangan ng Quezon City (certain portions), Makati (west of South Super Highway), Caloocan, Pasay, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas at Malabon lungsod sa Cavite, Bacoor at Imus, at mga bayan ng Kawit, Noveleta at Rosario, sa lalawigan ng Cavite.



THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1900

MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

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#MINDANAO

Our waters are getting more attention

By JOHN TRIA



WHETHER we like it or not, the Boracay rehabilitation has created a greater awareness of pollution in our waters and has forced many to pay more attention to ensuring the health of these vital pillars of our ecosystem and economy.

Recent discussions drew attention to protecting new tourist hubs like El Nido, Samal, and Siargao. We now talk about the health of the Mactan channel and call for the long overdue cleanup of Manila Bay.

Truth be told, Manila Bay rehabilitation proposals have been put forward and money spent on studies since the 1990s, with little effect on improving it.

We still see floating trash from time to time and are still warned against bathing there. Better results have been achieved on the Pasig river, though much still needs to be done.

Guarding our water bodies from harm is not only our civic duty, but a smart move to ensure our economic future. Note how many of our cities and cultures were founded on their being near water bodies. Imagine how much income can be generated from

clean rivers and beaches.

To elaborate, the availability of both fresh water sources like rivers and streams supply the needs for drinking and irrigation water for our crops while living near the seashore allows us access to readily available protein sources like fish.

In recent years, that beautiful interplay of sand and water in our beaches have become engines of growth. We have been clocking almost 7 million foreign tourist arrivals in recent years.

Tourism generated about 19.7% of our almost 3 billion US dollar GDP, and 5.5% of employment in 2016 (World Travel and Tourism Council, March 2017).

Of this income, I estimate about half of this comes from our beaches. While these figures may need further study, it's not a stretch to imagine that our beaches alone have the potential to generate almost 10 billion dollars a year when you include all the costs that go with receiving and hosting tourists, and employing thousands. Boracay itself draws almost 3 million local and foreign tourists a year.

Remember that it is the pristine waters that draw this tourist wealth and generate the employment. Every

other business is leveraged on the beach. Lose the beach to pollution and income is lost.

Imagine how much more wealth and livelihood we can generate over time by using these resources responsibly.

These discussions on our waters, and the programs to rehabilitate and protect them, are the first time we have seen political will brought to bear on what were dismissed as hopeless situations.

The good news is that the apparatus to better ensure the health of our waters is in place. The various Water Quality Management Boards that were created as a result of RA 9275 or the Clean Water Act of 2003 have been organized.

These are multisectoral, inter-agency bodies tasked with monitoring the health of specific water bodies and providing programs for continuing protection or rehabilitation as the case may be.

They are convened and guided by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources through its Environmental Management Bureau regularly monitors our rivers and coasts. You can see regular test results on www.emb.gov.ph or visit the various

regional offices for details.

It would be good to know who composes these boards in your areas and what they are doing for your local water bodies. It would be better for you to be involved.

The exhibit of our friend former CNN Beijing Bureau chief Jamie Flor Cruz at the Kaisa Center in Intramuros is one which I regret being unable to visit since I am based in Mindanao.

It must be a fascinating set of memorabilia for those belonging to the Chinese diaspora and students of Chinese history, and 21st century current events. To see all these and reflect upon them as a Filipino seeing them first-hand is such a treat. It runs until February 17. It's worth a visit.

For reactions: [facebook.com/johntriapage](https://www.facebook.com/johntriapage)



Retrieval of Boracay forestlands, wetlands continues – DENR

By **TARA YAP**

ILOILO CITY — The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will continue retrieving this year forestlands and wetlands at world-famous Boracay Island in Aklan province.

"This is the second phase of Boracay's rehabilitation," said Franciso Milla Jr., the newly installed DENR regional director for Western Visayas.

Milla, who succeeded Jim Sampulna who is now DENR assistant secretary for Western Mindanao, emphasized how

Boracay still needs a lot of work despite several accomplishments after the initial six-month closure last year. The resort island re-opened in late October last year.

Milla, who served as DENR's ground commander in Boracay last year, said illegal settlers must first be removed prior to retrieving forestlands and wetlands.

But DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu has not yet ordered the full implementation of removing illegal settlers due to humanitarian reasons. In particular, the affected people have no relocation sites yet.



BORACAY'S White Beach, December 2018

Other tourism destinations learn from Boracay's closure

By The Arts & Leisure Cluster

LAST year, one of the more pressing questions posed to the current Philippine government was, "How do you solve a problem like Boracay?" with President Rodrigo R. Duterte calling the country's top tourist destination — it attracted 2.2 million tourists in 2017 — a "cesspool" in February. The solution? Close down the entire island for six months of rehab.

The shutdown affected businesses, disrupted the lives of the island's inhabitants, and led to a drop in the country's over-all tourist numbers.

Now that the island has been reopened — although rehabilitation is still ongoing as six months was not enough to do all the civil works needed — the question arises: What will happen to the other major tourism areas which are feared to be approaching Boracay-dirty levels, and what can be done to safeguard the up-and-coming areas from similar problems?

WHAT HAPPENED IN BORACAY

After years of nearly unchecked development, the discovery that inadequate sewage systems led to the pollution of the island's waters (the waters, especially in Buabog beach had 47,460 most probable number of coliform or bacteria from feces per 100 ml [mpny/ml] when the standard for water for swimming is 1,000 mpny/100ml), the entire island was closed down on April 26 for six months of rehabilitation. The drastic move led to the displacement of close to 20,000 workers employed in the tourism industry and huge losses for the closed resorts and other tourism-related businesses.

The shut-down of the island also affected tourism numbers considerably, with Department of Tourism (DoT) secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat reporting that the number of international tourist arrivals for 2018 will fall short of the 7.4 million target and she sees only 7.2 million arrivals by year-end — this is despite a 7.43% increase in tourist arrivals from January to October.

"In Boracay's case, the President ordered for its closure based on reports

which revealed a 'failed' water quality in the island. It means that the water of Boracay was no longer fit for recreational purposes such as swimming. President Duterte even called it a 'cesspool,'" said the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR) Jonas Leones, Undersecretary for Policy, Planning, and International Affairs, in an e-mail to *BusinessWorld* in December.

Mr. Leones said there are parameters and the steps taken by the government office before taking such drastic measures as a shut-down. "[The] DENR does not close any tourist spot or any island for no apparent reason," he said.

Parameters include evaluation of the present state of the environment and enforcement of pertinent laws within the area: easement laws as prescribed by the Reformed Forestry Code of the Philippines (PD 705) and the Water Code of the Philippines (PD 1067), and other environmental laws such as proper liquid and solid waste management (RA 9003 or Ecological Solid Waste Management Act), Hazardous Wastes Act (RA 6969), and RA 8749 Clean Air Act (RA 8749).

This is in light of the fact that several island destinations in the Philippines are now under the spotlight, in the fear that these islands, which provide a strong core for the country's tourism business (and by extension, provide a face to the nation), might be in a state similar to that of the island of Boracay.

El Nido town is one such example as the Palawan destination was dubbed by DoT's Ms. Romulo-Puyat as "overcrowded", and steps for rehabilitation have been started, although government officials don't see the need to shut it down like Boracay, and will only shut down establishments found to be violating the rules.

To date, the DENR has closed around 20 establishments in El Nido for violations.

"In my personal opinion, it was long overdue," Erwin Lopez, hotel manager of Discovery Shores Boracay resort, told reporters in December upon the launch of its newest suite of rooms.

Mr. Lopez, who has been working in Boracay for more than a decade, said it

was fortunate that there was someone with "political will" who made changes in the island.

He said this in spite of the huge losses the resort accrued during the closure (the island "soft-opened" on Oct. 26), losses he said might take them a year or more to recover.

"I'm really not seeing a strong comeback, I think it will take about — the quickest — 12 months for us to be able to [recover] because the wholesalers and people who travel from China and Korea, their first quarter is already planned out so it will take a while. Hopefully the local market will take up the slack," he said.

"We can take several lessons from what happened to Boracay," DENR's Mr. Leones said. "We can agree that there was indeed over-development in the island. Admittedly, that was a short-coming on our part which we also share with the LGU; (local government units) of Boracay. We have not prevented these big businesses from coming in and putting up a number of infrastructures leading to the generation of too much waste and the deterioration of water quality among others.

The recreational areas, which include the beach and swimming areas, can only accommodate so many persons on a daily basis," he said.

The lessons of Boracay, according to Benito C. Bengzon, Jr., a tourism department undersecretary, is now "going to be the overarching approach of the Department of Tourism for next year, and the years to come.

"I think what is important here is that with the experience in Boracay, the other destinations are beginning to see the importance of ensuring that we maintain an optimum balance between certain levels of tourism activities, and making sure that we preserve the environment," he said in a press conference last month.

A WAKE-UP CALL FOR OTHER DESTINATIONS

Other tourism destinations in the Philippines are taking notes from Boracay's experience including Bohol, known for its Chocolate Hills and Panglao Island beaches and for welcoming more than

page 1: Other...



a million tourists in 2017, 700,000 of whom were international travellers.

Despite having a less rowdy crowd than that of Boracay, Panglao is already seeing signs of the same sickness: loitering food vendors, and violations in no-build areas of the beach. This prompted former Panglao mayor and Dumaluan Beach Resort owner Doloreich A. Dumaluan to say that the industry should not "kill the hen that lays the golden eggs."

He said, in an e-mail to *BusinessWorld*, that stakeholders should work together to "to determine the extent of which the benefits from tourism can be maintained, while sustaining the quality of the island's social, economic and environmental aspects."

The island's governor Edgar M. Chatto, in an e-mail to *BusinessWorld* in November, said that "more sustainable tourism measures will be in place to regulate tourism development, with the administration's thrust on strong environmental management, tourism players and investors will be on their toes, not violating laws and regulations given the Boracay experience."

"Closing the tourism industry in the province of Bohol, which is our prime economic driver, would greatly affect our economic development, and thus, as the governor of the province, I am in the frontline of closely monitoring the compliance of our environmental laws by our business sector," he said. "We cannot afford and will not allow Bohol to become another Boracay. That is why we are closely coordinating with the relevant national government agencies and our University of the Philippines Advisory Council for their expert opinion on environmental concerns."

Measures include the creation of a legislative oversight body in Panglao, the municipality of Davis, and the City of Tagbilaran, a body that will work on the areas' tourism and culture, environmental protection and conservation, and urban development.

The body has already conducted a "carrying capacity study" in Panglao and has urged water service providers in the area to provide wastewater treatment facilities as required by the Clean Water Act.

The local government also earmarked a one-hectare water treatment facility for the Bohol-Panglao International Airport, which will be able to handle 600 tons of wastewater per day.

While Panglao attracts a huge chunk of Bohol's visitors, Mr. Chatto said that part of the tourism plans of the province include spreading tourism development across Bohol, "with the development of Tourism Clusters bringing tourists out of Panglao offering other tourism attractions all over the province."

The province — and its famed 1,776 Chocolate Hills that change color depending on the weather — is aspiring to be the first geopark in the Philippines as inscribed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

PALAWAN'S ATTRACTIONS

For Palawan, an island cluster which boasts several destinations including El Nido and the up-and-coming San Vicente, environmental protection is paramount, especially in El Nido which is currently undergoing rehabilitation.

In November, the DoT, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and the DENR proposed a six-month rehabilitation effort which began on Nov. 14 in El Nido's urban barangays of Masaganà, Maligaya, Buena Suerte, and Corong-Corong.

In the same month, El Nido municipal administrator RJ de la Calzada told *BusinessWorld* in a phone interview that the authorities closed 22 travel and tour operators alongside resorts and other establishments for various violations.

The introduction of more frequent flights to El Nido, Mr. De la Calzada said, is contributing to the island's challenges — maintenance of solid waste management, sewage management, and carrying capacity pressure.

Tourism data showed that El Nido town had 144,257 overnight guests in 2017, a number expected to increase by 8% in 2018.

Although a test in March from four DENR monitoring stations showed that El Nido's waters passed the department's standard coliform levels, this doesn't mean that the island can rest easy.

"We take note of waste water discharge since it is the contributor of [fecal] coliform [bacteria]," Mr. De la Calzada said.

To ensure water quality, the municipality plans to increase the number of water quality monitoring stations and "have it checked every 15 days," he added.

Mr. De la Calzada also mentioned that they plan to address the island's carrying capacity and spread out the visitors to other areas and introduce more island-hopping tours so tourists are "no longer congested in the Small and Big lagoon," which are the most popular attractions in the area.

"We have a limit of tourists inside the lagoon and [allotted] a particular time so that it's not simultaneous," he said.

For San Vicente, in northwestern Palawan which is known for its 14-kilometer Long Beach (Boracay's famed White Beach is only four kilometers), the focus is to introduce utilities first before the expected influx of tourists starts.

"What we're trying to do right now is getting people to be more aware [of the lessons of Boracay]. It's not an option anymore, it's a necessity," Pocholo Paragas, general manager and CEO of the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Authority (TIEZA), the infrastructure and investment arm of the DoT, told reporters in November when discussing San Vicente.

He explained that their flagship Tourism Enterprise Zone project was built around the concept of sustainability. In fact, the body has six infrastructure projects for the area including a water supply and distribution system which costs P254 million and a sewage treatment plant pegged at P101.2 million.

"Within the next two to four years there should already be a utility concept already emerging to sustain all these things," Mr. Paragas said before pointing out that the late development of utilities contributed to the ills of tourist destinations like Bohol and Boracay and it's something they don't want to happen with San Vicente.

Early planning and strict implementation can keep San Vicente from ever becoming a Paradise Lost.



Baguio's environment situation still manageable – EMB

By ZALDY COMANDA

BAGUIO CITY – Concerned government agencies here can manage the environmental issues and concerns being raised against the local government without the need to close the country's

undisputed summer capital, as was done in Boracay island, because the situation in the two places are different and distinct from each other, said the Environmental Management Bureau-Cordillera (EMB-Cordillera).

EMB-Cordillera Regional Director Reynaldo Digamo said he has already

pointed out to Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu during management conferences that the DENR and its attached bureaus are capable of working together with the local government and other stakeholders to effectively and efficiently address the environmental issues and concerns being raised against the city through the past several years.

"We informed the Secretary we can manage the environmental issues and concerns of the city because we already started closely working with the local government on the implementation of multi-sectoral approaches to address the problems due to rapid urbanization," Digamo said.

The EMB official agreed with the contention of local officials and some sectors that it would be physically impossible to totally close Baguio City like

what was done in Boracay island.

For one, Baguio city has numerous entrance and exit points because of its mountainous terrain while Boracay is just an island which could be reached through a single entry point that made possible its total closure for six months.

According to him, the DENR and its attached agencies have intensified the strict implementation of environmental laws, rules and regulations governing businesses and residences with everyone compelled to adhere to the prescribed environmental standards in the operation of their businesses.

Digamo called on residents and businesses to learn to love the environment where they co-exist by obeying the stringent rules and regulations imposed by concerned government

agencies and the local government in terms of solid waste disposal, ambient air quality, water quality management, among others.

He added that it was incumbent upon them to value the city where they live, and not for other individuals from other places to come and teach them what to do in preserving and protecting the city's state of environment.

Digamo claimed it is the people of the city who should be actively ensuring compliance with prescribed standards in preserving and protecting the city's environment, and not wait for outsiders to come to the city and correct their malpractices because there will come a time that such situation will happen if there will be rampant violations of environmental laws by the residents and businessmen amidst efforts to correct the same.



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COURT STOPS GOLF PROJECT IN BAGUIO

BAGUIO CITY: A local court here issued a temporary environment protection order (TEPO) against Sta. Lucia Realty and Development Inc. (SLRDI) to cease excavation works in areas covered by its Pinewoods Golf Course and Country Club within the border of this city and Tuba, Benguet.

Judge Maria Ligaya Itliong-Rivera of the Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 5 said the court noted that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) report showed that SLRDI had no permit to cut pine trees in the golf course project site but only a mayor's clearance to cut 35 Benguet pine trees. It said the clearance was not equivalent to a permit.

"It appears from the submissions of the petitioners, heirs of Tunged, that respondents, Sta. Lucia Realty and Development Inc., is in the process of undertaking a project known as pinewoods Golf Course and Country Club. While it was issued an environmental compliance certificate, it allegedly violated some conditions thereof. The project also violated provisions of Presidential Decree 1586 or the "Philippine Environment Impact Assessment" statement and Presidential Decree 705 or the *Forestry Reform Code of the Philippines*," the order stated.

The petitioners, who are heirs of the property owner Tunged (one name only), contended that their ancestor was the owner of a large track of land straddling the border of Baguio City and Tuba, Benguet. He inherited the property originally consisting of 195 hectares from his parents, Yaris and Sabot.

The petitioners claimed that

Tunged's possession of the land was investigated and verified by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) on Aug. 30, 2013 on their petition for the identification, delineation and recognition of their ancestral claim and issuance of certificate of ancestral land title (CALT).

But their right of ownership over the land and all other rights recognized by Republic Act 8371 or the "Indigenous Peoples Rights Act" (IPRA), were violated when SLRDI summarily bulldozed their property causing the destruction of small and fully grown trees and *sayote* (choyote) plantations in about five hectares of the land.

The petitioners sought the assistance of concerned government agencies but their efforts to prevent the golf course project from allegedly intruding into their property were in vain.

On Nov. 27, 2018, the court directed SLRDI to file their comment on the complaint but up until December 21, the court did not receive any formal comment from the company.

The heirs of Tunged also assailed the order of the RTC Branch 5 dated March 2, 2017, which dismissed for lack of jurisdiction the environmental case they filed and a similar order dated April 3, 2017 denying their motion for reconsideration.

Eventually, the Supreme Court *en banc* ruled in favor of the petitioners and remanded the environmental case to the lower court for proper disposition.

The petitioners are recognized indigenous peoples being members of the Ibaloi tribe, who are the original settlers in Baguio City and Benguet.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Sta. Lucia golf project sa Baguio City pinahinto ng korte

Naglabas ng Temporary Environment Protection Order ang korte laban sa Sta. Lucia Realty and Development, Inc. (SLRDI) para sa pagpatigil ng ginagawang paghuhukay sa ari-arian na nasasakupan ng Pinewoods Golf Course and Country club na nasa pagitan ng Baguio City at Tuba, Benguet.

Sa dalawang pahinang kautusan, sinabi ni Judge Maria Ligaya ng Baguio City regional trial court na sa imbestigasyong ginawa ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources, ang SLRDI ay walang permit para pumutol ng pine tree sa golf course project site.

Tanging mayor's clearance lamang ang ibinigay sa kompanya para putulin ang 35 Benguet pine tree ngunit hindi umano ito kapareho ng permit.

Nalabag umano ng kompanya ang probisyon sa Philippine Environment Impact Assessment statement at Forestry Reform Code of the Philippines bukod pa sa paglabag sa Indigenous Peoples Rights Act na hinain ng mga kamag-anak ng orihinal na may-ari ng lupa. (Allan Bergonia)



Can Baguio's urban forests be saved?

Forest bathing originated in Japan in the 1980s and is called *shirin-yoku*.

By Edgar Allan M. Sembrano

Partnering with the Camp John Hay Management, the Department of Tourism-Cordillera (DoT-CAR) is pushing for the protection and preservation of Baguio's urban forests and protected natural parks with last year's launch of its forest bathing project at the former United States Armed Forces rest and recreation facility.

By putting off the gadgets and by being with nature, it will help people to detoxify and relive stress, she said, quipping, "There is no Wi-Fi in the forest, but I promise you will find a better connection."

An urban forest is defined as "a forest or a collection of trees that grow within a city, town or a suburb."

DoT-CAR said this pioneering activity supports responsible and sustainable tourism as well as the preservation of forests in the city that is facing problems such as pollution and overcrowding.

Forest bathing originated in Japan in the 1980s and is called *shirin-yoku*. It is a practice of connecting with forests or nature in general through the senses, improving physiological and psychological health.

In the book *Forest Bathing: How Trees Can Help You Find Health and Happiness*, recently published by the Penguin Publishing Group, author Qing Li explains the practice is a commune with nature and that "by opening our senses, it bridges the gap between us and the natural world."

The activity, which is also in line with the Baguio's distinction as a United Nations Educational, Scientific

and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Creative City, will include creative spaces for artworks on the forest bathing trails to augment visitors' experience.

Meditative exercises such as yoga and traditional healing practices in the form of hilot, herbal medicines and the like will also be eventually part of the project.

In choosing Camp John Hay (CJH) Forest Reservation as its pilot site, DoT-CAR said the camp "is still considered as verdant and teeming with pine trees (*Pinus kesiya*) and is home to a significant amount of bird biodiversity that can be tapped for ecotourism and must be considered in the environmental management of the reservation."

It also said CJH is the most appropriate place in Baguio since it is the only place in the city with the most pine trees.

Meditative exercises such as yoga and traditional healing practices in the form of hilot, herbal medicines and the like will also be eventually part of the project.

"The sprawling camp still has enough forest cover to allow fresh air to circulate, unlike in the heavily polluted city proper," it added.

Former DoT-CAR regional director and now Tourism Promotions Board chief Marie Venus Tan likewise explained the program is geared towards reviving the city into a rest and recreation place with efforts to regreen Baguio, as well as promote its history, culture and traditions.

By putting off the gadgets and by being with nature, it will help people to detoxify and relive stress, she said, quipping, "There is no Wi-Fi in the forest, but I promise you will find a better connection."



Wastewater puts Cebu firm in hot water

By MINERVA BC NEWMAN

CEBU CITY — The Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Central Visayas issued an interim cease-and-desist order (CDO) to GBox Corrugated Packaging for discharging red-colored water directly to the sea in Barangay Dumlog, Talisay City, Cebu, which was caught on video and went viral on social media Thursday.

EMB-7 upon investigation found out that GBox Corrugated Packaging, a company located at Sitio Litmon, Dumlog, Talisay City, manufactures corrugated

pads, wooden pallets, and material handling equipment such as hand pallet truck and rental of electric kettle.

Further investigation revealed that the red-colored wastewater was generated from its inking and labelling area. The company's owner claimed that the wastewater was actually rainwater that accumulated in its premises because the firm does not have a drainage system, EMB-7 said.

Thus, it accordingly had to pump out the water to the sea, EMB-7 investigators said.

The red color indicates that the rainwater was contaminated with water-

based waste ink composed of organic pigments, acrylic resins, alcohol, water, and additives, EMB7 bared.

The waste is considered hazardous waste pursuant to Republic Act 6969, otherwise known as the Toxic Substances and Hazardous and Nuclear Wastes Control Act of 1990, with hazardous waste number F603, EMB7 explained.

The hazardous waste storage area has no containment and proper roofing, thus, during rainfalls it easily wash away. EMB-7 also found out that the plant does not have a wastewater treatment facility and dusts were also observed emitting from the production equipment.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Hospital wastes threaten livelihood of Lapu fishermen

CEBU CITY—Like many coastal villages in the country, residents of Barangay Ibo in Lapu-Lapu City rely on the bounty of the sea for their sustenance.

Fishing and collecting shells are their primary means of livelihood.

But since the discovery of hospital wastes floating on the seas of their barangay, some of the residents have temporarily stopped catching fish and collecting shells.

Eddie Ponce usually spends his free time fishing. He would use his catch as the family's viand and would sell his extra harvest for additional income.

However, Ponce had stopped going to the sea since the day he found a yellow garbage bag con-

taining blood residue and other wastes stuck under his boat.

The 31-year-old Mactan Export Processing Zone (MEPZ) employee has been fishing in the Mactan Channel for 12 years now.

He said before, fishermen from Barangays Opao and Umapad in Mandaue City would come to fish in the seas of Barangay Ibo.

But today, all the fishermen's boats were docked. A lone fisherman was seen collecting seashells.

Ponce's neighbor, Samson Bulante has also stopped fishing and collecting shells and crabs for the first time in more than 40 years.

Being born and raised

in Barangay Ibo, Bulante said this is the first time wastes from hospitals ended up in their shores.

Since January 5, wastes from hospitals based in Mandaue City were found floating on the seas of Barangays Ibo, Poblacion, Pusok and Pajo in Lapu-Lapu City.

And since then, authorities have collected sacks of medical trash some containing tubes with infectious specimen, syringes, medical gloves and blood samples.

The Environmental Management Bureau in Central Visayas (EMB -7) has already recommended fining the service provider tasked to dispose of the trash P250,000 and P110,000 for its hospital client. — CDN



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CA allows Taguig contractor to use Laguna Lake property

The solid waste contractor of the Taguig City government may now continue to use a property beside Laguna de Bay on C-6 Road for its operations.

IPM Construction and Development Corp., the garbage-hauling firm tapped by the local government, has won its case before the Court of Appeals (CA) against the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) involving the 22-hectare property.

In a 19-page decision promulgated on Jan. 15, the CA's former special 13th division granted the petition of IPM and voided the cease and desist order (CDO) issued by LLDA in June last year that indefinitely stopped the operations of the company due to its alleged illegal reclamation and dumping activities in Laguna de Bay.

It made permanent the writ of mandatory and prohibitory injunction issued by the CA to stop the enforcement of the CDO in August last year.

The CA ruled that the LLDA committed grave abuse of discretion in padlocking the IPM facility.

It held that the CDO violated the IPM's right to use the property as it also stopped the other operations of the firm in the facility that were not found to be illegal.

"IPM was not using the entire area for the sole purpose of managing and maintaining a Materials Recovery Facility for the local government of Taguig. The lot also served as an office and a staging and storage area for IPM. If it were true that the CDO is aimed only at putting a stop to the illegal activities therein, it should not have ordered the complete stoppage of IPM's operations and the closure of the entire establishment," read the ruling penned by Associate Justice Priscilla Baltazar-Padilla.

The CA said under LLDA Resolution Number 41, series of 1997, LLDA could resort to closing down the IPM property only for nonpayment of a fine imposed for failure to abate pollution. No such fine was actually imposed in IPM's case.

It also questioned the indefinite period of the CDO's effectivity for being contrary to LLDA Resolution Number 192, which provided for such an order to remain in force only until the company prevented or abated pollution.

Lastly, the CA rejected LLDA's argument that only the Supreme Court can issue an injunction against lawful actions of government agencies that enforce environmental laws.

The CA said the LLDA's actions involved excessive exercise of authority and were not valid administrative acts involving facts or exercise of discretion on technical matters.

Associate Justices Victoria Isabel Paredes and Germano Francisco Legaspi concurred in this ruling.

- Edu Punay



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CA voids LLDA order vs Taguig waste contractor

By Hector Lawas

THE Court of Appeals has voided the suspension order issued by the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) against the solid waste contractor of Taguig City for alleged illegal reclamation and dumping in Laguna de Bay.

The order virtually allows the IPM Construction and Development Corp., the garbage-hauling firm tapped by the government of Taguig, to continue using the lakeside property on C6 Road for its operations.

In a 19-page decision, the CA granted the petition of IPM and voided the order issued by the LLDA in June last year stopping the operations of the company.

The CA ruled that the LLDA committed grave abuse of discretion in closing the IPM facility. It found that the order violated the IPM's right to use the property as it also stopped the other operations of the firm in the facility that have not been found to be illegal.

The CA also ruled that the indefinite effectivity period of the cease and desist order was contrary to the LLDA Resolution Number 192, which provided for such order to remain in force only until the company prevented or abated pollution.

"IPM was not using the entire area for the sole purpose of managing and maintaining a Materials Recovery Facility for the local government of Taguig. The lot also served as an office and a staging and storage area for IPM. If it were true that the CDO is aimed only at putting a stop to the illegal activities therein, it should not have ordered the complete stoppage of IPM's operations and the closure of the entire establishment," read the ruling penned by Associate Justice Priscilla Baltazar-Padilla.



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CA voids cease order vs Taguig waste firm

By HECTOR
LAWAS

THE Court of Appeals has voided the cease and desist order (CDO) issued by the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) against the solid waste contractor of Taguig City whose operation was suspended due to its alleged illegal reclamation and dumping activities in Laguna de Bay.

This means the IPM Construction and Development Corp., the garbage-

hauling firm tapped by the government of Taguig, may now continue to use the lakeside property along C6 Road for its operations.

In a 19-page decision, the CA granted the petition of IPM and voided the CDO issued by LLDA in June last year that indefinitely stopped the operations of the company.

The CA ruled that the LLDA committed grave abuse of discretion in closing the IPM facility.

It held that the CDO violated the IPM's right to

use the property as it also stopped the other operations of the firm in the facility that have not been found to be illegal.

"The use of the property is not limited to the operation of a transfer station. IPM was not using the entire area for the sole purpose of managing and maintaining a Materials Recovery Facility for the local government of Taguig. The lot also served as an office and a staging and storage area for IPM. If it were true that the CDO is aimed only at

putting a stop to the illegal activities therein, it should not have ordered the complete stoppage of IPM's operations and the closure of the entire establishment," read the ruling penned by Associate Justice Priscilla Baltazar-Padilla.

The CA noted that under LLDA Resolution Number 41, series of 1997, LLDA could resort to closing down the IPM property only for non-payment of a fine imposed for failure to abate pollution. No such fine was actually imposed

in IPM's case.

It also questioned the indefinite period of the CDO's effectivity for being contrary to LLDA Resolution Number 192, which provided for such order to remain in force only until the company prevented or abated pollution.

"It made a short-cut by immediately ordering the stoppage of all its operations in the premises.

Worse, it padlocked the establishment and seized control of the entire property," the CA stressed.

"Evidently, LLDA exceeded its authority when it took control of the premises leaving IPM practically dispossessed of its property without due process," it pointed out.

FOR THE RECORD



TWITTER: @lacorte_jen

Nagkalat ngayon sa social media ang mga isyung may kaugnayan sa mga politiko.

May ibang halata namang paninira lamang pero mas marami ang naghuhumindig sa katotohanan.

Katulad na lamang ng isang Instagram post kamakailan lamang ng

award winning actress na si Sylvia Sanchez.

Nag-shooting ang aktres sa Lungsod ng Malabon para sa pelikula nitong 'Jesusa' at katulad ng nakikita nating nakabalandra sa social media personal niyang nasaksihan ang nakarimarim na kalagayan sa Malabon.

Hindi makapaniwala at laking dismaya ng aktres sa nabungarang dagat ng basura sa Malabon City na patunay umano ng kawalan ng disiplina at malasakit ng tao sa kapaligiran.

Sa kanyang instagram account, makikita ang larawan ng aktres habang nakasakay sa gawang-kahoy na bangka na hinihila sa lubid para

makatawid sa kabilang bahagi ng ilog.

Ayon sa aktres, nakakalungkot dahil hindi tubig-dagat kundi mga itinapong basura ang nakalutang sa ilog na bukod sa sumisira at pumapatay sa kapaligiran ay nag-aamba pa ng panganib sa kalusugan ng mga tao.

Nakita ng aktres ang nakalulungkot umanong kalagayan ng ilog sa Malabon sa ikalawang araw ng kanyang shooting.

Matatagpuan ang maruming ilog sa pagitan ng mga barangay ng Catmon at Tonsuya na kabilang sa mga may pinakamalaking populasyon sa siyudad.

Naka-hashtag din

ang isinusulong niyang adbokasiya sa ban sa paggamit ng plastic na pangunahing dahilan ng polusyon sa paligid.

Kahit na ang aktres na si Angelika Dela Cruz na barangay captain sa Barangay Longos sa Malabon City ay nagkomento ng kanyang pagkadismaya sa ipinost ng aktres na mga larawan ng ilog.

"Nakakalungkot naman yan. Walang disiplina ang tao," ani Dela Cruz.

Sa kalagayang ito sa Malabon, alam kong may malaking pananagutan dito ang mga residente na walang patumangga sa pagtatapon ng basura.

Pero hindi ba't may-

roon naman silang gobyerno na dapat na magpatupad ng istrik-tong mga programa para hindi mamayagpag ang mga dugyot na residente.

Kumbaga nasa pamumuno rin ang ikatitino ng isang komunidad.

Ano nga ba ang ginagawa ni Mayor Lenlen Oreta sa lungsod?

Anong pagpapatuloy ng adbokasiya ang gagawin niya katulad ng ipinangangalandakan nitong slogan na 'Kinaya natin, ituloy natin' kung ganito kabaho ang Malabon?

Mukhang nagkamali ng napiling slogan si Mayor Oreta dahil tayong nakikitang pagbabago sa lungsod, 'yun lang!

Dagat ng basura ang Malabon



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Tulong-tulong sa paglilinis sa baybayin ng Aurora

HINDI bababa sa 500 katao ang boluntaryong nakilahok nitong Sabado sa province-wide cleanup activity, para linisin ang mga baybayin na karaniwang dinadayo ng mga turista sa Baler, Aurora.

Pinangunahan ng Aurora Police Provincial Office (APPO) ang kampanya na may temang "Best Practice of the PNP's Environmental Care and Drive Against Lawbreakers (PEDAL)" para sa isang ligtas at makakalikasang tourist destination.

"We are doing this in order to attract more tourists and raise public awareness on environmental care and protection and to forge strong partnership between PNP and the community as a whole," paliwanag ni Senior Supt. Cosme A. Abrenica, APPO director.

"Local and foreign tourists continue to visit this province and that's the reason why local officials and the people of Aurora should take care of our coastal beaches since this province is known for surfing and nature's gateway in Central Luzon," dagdag pa ni Abrenica.

Nanawagan naman ang opisyal sa mga mamamayan ng Aurora upang muling mangako ng kanilang suporta sa pangangalaga sa karagatan ng Baler sa Aurora, na kilala bilang "surf haven" at nakaharap sa Dagat Pasipiko.

Pagbabahagi ni Abrenica, lubos ang kasiyahan ng pulisya sa malaking bilang ng mga nakilahok sa kampanya.

Nagtulong-tulong sa pagpupulot ng mga basura at iba pang mga kalat sa mahabang baybayin ng Sabang beach, pinakakilalang surfing spot sa lugar, ang mga kalahok na kinabibilangan ng mga lokal na opisyal at empleyado ng pamahalaang panglalawigan ng Aurora, mga sundalo mula sa 91st Infantry Battalion; mga miyembro ng Kabalikat Civicom; mga kasapi ng Tricycle Operators and Drivers Association; Aurora Ready Reserve Command ng militar; Aurora Philippine National Police (PNP) Press Corps; Noble Blue Falcons Environmentalists; Bureau of Fire Protection; pamahalaang bayan ng Baler; Philippine Guardians Brotherhood Inc. (PGBI); at Aurora Surf Riders Association Inc. (ASRAI).

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77 INREMP livelihood projects set for implementation in Kalinga

AT least 77 livelihood enhancement support (LES) projects proposed under the Integrated Natural Resources and Environment Management Program (INREMP) are ready for implementation.

Noel Barrientos,

OIC provincial environment and natural resources officer, said all the proposals were endorsed to the Watershed Management Council at DENR central office. LES is an intervention to make members of people's organizations

(POs) productive while waiting for the harvest period from their plantations under INREMP.

"We make sure our partner POs will not stay idle while they wait to harvest products they raise on their plantations," Barrientos said.



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NAGSAGAWA ng picket rally ang mga environmental group sa harapan ng DENR sa Quezon City para manawagan kay Secretary Roy Cimatu na respetuhin ang batas na nagbabawal sa paggamit ng waste incinerator sa pagtugon sa problema sa basura na lubhang nakasisira sa kalikasan. *(Art Son)*





House OKs Road Board abolition

By JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ [@joveemarie](#)

THE House of Representatives on Monday endorsed for Senate approval a measure abolishing the Road Board.

Voting 180 affirmative and zero negative, lawmakers passed the House Bill 7436 on third and final reading.

The bill will be transmitted to the Senate immediately for its own deliberations.

Under the bill, the motor vehicle user's charge (MVUC) will go directly to the General Fund.

The projects that will be funded by the MVUC will be itemized in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

Earlier, the both Houses of Congress agreed to abolish the Road Board and its funds shall be transferred to the General Fund under the GAA.

Before approving the bill, Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr. said the House has already withdrawn its earlier bill which is similar to the Senate version.

Upon consultation with the Members of Congress, Andaya said they discovered there was an erroneous referral of the particular bill. It was passed by the House Committee on Government Reorganization.

But in reality, Andaya said

the bill was a tax measure and the creation of the Road Board was merely incidental to the establishment of the MVUC being collected by the Land Transportation Office.

Just like any other tax measure, Andaya said that under the Constitution, the House will have the first crack and the Senate will wait for the House version.

Andaya said they will hold the bicameral meeting immediately as requested by the Senate and make sure that the bill is specific to what President Duterte has instructed.



House okays abolition of Road Board

BY WENDELL VIGILIA

THE House yesterday approved on third and final reading the measure which seeks to abolish the graft-ridden Road Board.

Congressmen voted 180-0 with no abstention in favor of House Bill No. 7436.

Last week, they withdrew the passage of the former version of the bill which seeks to merely transfer the powers of the Road Board to three cabinet secretaries.

The House and Senate have reached a consensus to abolish the Road Board and allow lawmakers to scrutinize the motor vehicles user's charge (MVUC), or road users' tax, stripping it of its status as a hidden off-budget item and making it part of the annual general funds.

Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno have accused congressmen of wanting to control the road user's tax after he was accused of orchestrating the alleged flood-control scam by inserting P75 billion in the proposed public works budget for 2019.

The Senate has rescinded its adoption of the version authored by ousted speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, which the new House leadership under Speaker Gloria Arroyo has been opposing.

Under the new version of

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the measure, the MVUC will be stripped of its status as a special account used for the maintenance of roads and will be made part of the general fund under the an-

nual national budget that Congress scrutinizes.

The President has said the fund can be used to help calamity-ravaged areas and in the government's efforts to rehabilitate the heavily polluted Manila Bay.

The Road Board, created in 2000, was tasked to manage MVUC funds which are collected yearly and intended for the maintenance and improvement of roads, drainage, and road safety devices.



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Gloria, Andaya luhaan: Road Board nilibing ng 180 congressman

Inaprubahan na sa ikatlo at huling pagbasa ng Kamara ang panukalang batas na bubuwag sa Road Board.

Umabot sa 180 kongresista ang bomoto pabor sa panukala, walang komontra at wala ring abstention.

Nakapaloob sa inaprubahang panukala ang pag-amyenda sa orihinal na Road Board Abolition Bill o House Bill No. 7436.

Batay pa sa panukala, huhu-
baran na ng kapangyarihan ang

tinaguriang 'Road Board Kings' na binubuo ng mga kalihim ng Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Transportation (DOTr) at Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) para manduhan ang malilikom na pondo mula sa road user's tax.

Napabilis ang pagpapatibay ng panukala matapos makialam si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte bunga ng ginawang pagharang ni House Speaker Gloria Maca-

pagal-Arroyo at ng political lieutenant niyang si Camarines Sur Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr.

Maaari nang isagawa ang bicameral conference committee upang ayusin ang magkaibang bersyon ng Kamara at Senado bago ito maratipikahan at pirmahan ni Pangulong Duterte upang maging ganap na batas.

Ipinabuwag ng Pangulo ang Road Board dahil sa nagiging source umano ito ng korapsyon. **(Aries Cano)**



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SENADO TIWALANG WALANG MABABAGO SA KASUNDUAN SA PAGBUWAG SA ROAD BOARD

TIWALA si Senate President Vicente Tito Sotto III na kahit palitan si House Majority Leader Rolando Andaya, hindi maapektuhan ang napagkasunduan sa pagitan nila ni Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri ukol sa pagbuwag ng road board.

Ito ang naging reaksiyon ni Sotto sa pangamba ng ilan matapos na magbitiw si Andaya bilang House Majority Leader.

Ayon kay Sotto, sa naganap na pagpupulong si Zubiri ang kinatawan ng Senado at si Andaya naman sa Kamara na kung saan napagkasunduan na kilalanin ang paninindigan na ina-dot na ng Senate ang House

bill version ukol sa pagbuwag sa road board at may ilang amendments din na napagkasunduan gaya ng makokolekta sa road users tax ay ipapasok sa National Treasury o sa General Appropriations Act at dapat ilista kung saan gagamitin ang pondo.

Nilinaw pa ni Sotto sa naturang pagpupulong na si Zubiri ang boses ng Senado at si Andaya naman ang tumayong boses ng Kamara.

Dahil nitong nakaraang linggo pa napagkasunduan ang nasabing panukala, kaya kung sakaling palitan man si Andaya ay hindi na maapektuhan ang naturang kasunduan.

Kahapon ay inap-

rubahan na sa ikatlo at huling pagbasa ang panukala para sa tulu-yang pagbuwag sa Road Board.

Sa ilalim ng panukala, pinabubuaw ang ahen-siya at ang naunang panukalang inihain para palitan ang orihinal na pitong members ng Road Board ng 3 Powerful Road Board Kings na pamumunuan ng mga kalihim ng DPWH, DOTR at DENR.

Iilagay naman sa General Fund ang nakolektang P45 billion mula sa Motor Vehicles Users Charge (MVUC) o road users tax na nakapaloob sa 2019 budget.

Gagamitin ang halagang ito para sa repair, rehabilitation at reconstruction ng mga kalsada,

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Hazard maps

EVERY year, natural disasters claim the lives of many people in various parts of the Philippines, which is one of the world's favorite "sparring partners" of destructive typhoons, storms and floods.

That's why there's a need for local government units (LGUs) to maximize the use of "geohazard maps," which identify landslide and flood-prone areas in the country, to lessen the impact of disasters.

No less than Sen. Grace Poe, who is seeking reelection in this year's polls, said the "hazard maps will be one of our guides to make our communities safe from possible effects of landslides and flooding."

Everybody agrees that knowledge of said hazard maps enables LGUs and other concerned government offices and agencies to deal with the kind of environment in a certain barangay or municipality.

The articulate lady lawmaker, a known environmentalist, called on local government officials to train on how to use the geohazard maps and cascade the knowledge to their constituents.

"Kailangan talaga ay sanayin ang ating mga official ma-identify yong (danger zones), lalo na yong mga katabi ng matarik na bundok na pwedeng mag-landslide o kaya tabi ng ilog," she said.

Poe is right. State authorities, notably those mandated to ensure the health and safety of the people during natural calamities, ought to be familiar with the government-prepared maps.

With the worsening of climate change due to man's continued use of fossil fuel, the Filipino people, particularly local government authorities, are fortunate to have these hazard maps.

Of course, land developers have no choice but to avoid setting up housing subdivisions in areas identified as danger zones.

And what's important is for the government to act now -- and fast -- to relocate people living in flood and landslide-prone communities not only in the metropolis but throughout the country.



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Department of Environment and Natural Resources
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Global warming forever?



WASHINGTON
POST WRITERS
GROUP

**ROBERT J.
SAMUELSON**

WASHINGTON, D.C.: On global climate change, I've changed my mind — just slightly.

I've written about this issue for more than two decades, and my theme has been monotonously consistent. As a starting point, I've accepted the prevailing scientific view that man-made greenhouse gases contribute to global warming.

But I've been routinely pessimistic and skeptical that we can do much about it. That is, we can't easily control the forces that worsen global warming.

We have yet to discover or create some low-cost fuel that would replace fossil fuels (oil, natural gas and coal), which provide roughly 80 percent of the world's energy. Most nations aren't willing to scrap the energy status quo — the very basis of modern civilization — before having a practical substitute.

Thus, despite the enthusiasm for non-fossil fuels (wind, solar, hydro, nuclear), global greenhouse-gas emissions are higher today than, say, in 1990.

This raises the atmospheric concentration levels of those gases, which in turn trap heat above the Earth's surface. From 1990 to 2018, the concentration level of carbon dioxide rose from 354 parts per million to 409 parts per million.

The emissions continue. Poorer countries (China, India, Indonesia and the like), where most

energy growth now occurs, won't condemn their populations to perpetual poverty to satisfy hard-to-attain environmental goals. Many governments — rich and poor — resist inflicting pain on today's voters, in the form of higher energy prices or more regulations, for imprecise future gains. Politics is present-oriented.

Implicitly, I've been critical of much media coverage, which has portrayed the climate-change story as a struggle between good guys and bad — climate-change believers versus deniers. The real story is our relative helplessness.

Still, we should do something. We need to learn how much, if at all, we can influence emissions.

Last week, a large group of economists, including 27 Nobel Prize winners, 15 former chairs of the White House Council of Economic Advisers and two former Treasury secretaries — Democrats and Republicans — issued a manifesto endorsing what's been called a "carbon dividends" plan. This would be a good start.

Here's how it would work. The government would tax CO2 emissions. The idea is to prompt Americans to use less fossil fuels

and to prod businesses to focus on renewables and energy efficiency. That's a standard carbon tax. What defines the "carbon dividend" plan is that all the money collected would be rebated to households.

Under one proposal, the government would slap a \$43 tax on each ton of CO2. That would equal about 38 cents on a gallon of gasoline, says economist Marc Hafstead of Resources for the Future, who studied the plan. It would raise about \$180 billion in the tax's first year, he says. If the "dividend" — the tax rebate — were distributed evenly, that would be about \$1,400 per household.

Meanwhile, if the tax were increased 3 percent annually, there would be (according to the estimates) a dramatic reduction in US fossil fuel use and greenhouse gases. Without the tax, projected CO2 emissions would be 5.4 billion metric tons in 2035. With the tax, the total would be 3.6 billion metric tons, a 33 percent decline. Still, this would hardly eliminate greenhouse gas emissions.

Assuming the tax works this way, the lesson would be that we can, up to some point, curb emissions without hugely disrupting the economy. As Hafstead notes, the initial increase in gasoline prices of 38 cents a gallon is within normal market fluctuations. The rebate would sweeten the tax. Consumers who cut fossil fuel use would come out ahead.

The tax has another advan-

tage. It decentralizes decision-making to individual companies and people. The alternative of regulations would centralize more power in Washington. This would be complicated, costly and potentially corrupting.

Given President Trump's hostility toward anything "climate change," it's unlikely that major legislation will pass this Congress. We will have to wait until at least 2021.

None of this has changed my longstanding skepticism that, without some major technological breakthrough (safer nuclear power?), it will be exceedingly hard to halt the increase in atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases. The required changes in lifestyles and economic activity are simply too great.

But something less grandiose than "solving" the problem is plausible. It may be possible to slow the increase in greenhouse gases.

We need firsthand experience with these problems rather than repeating an increasingly futile and familiar debate. (For the record: I have long favored a carbon tax without a dividend. Revenues would go to cut budget deficits. But I recognize the dividends' political appeal.)

All in all, my thinking on global warming has shifted slightly, as I said. I haven't gotten more optimistic. But I am less pessimistic. **(C) 2019, THE WASHINGTON POST WRITERS GROUP**



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Hong Kong failing to tackle wildlife smuggling epidemic: study

HONG KONG (AFP) -- Hong Kong must do more to crack down on illegal wildlife smuggling by ending legal loopholes and lenient sentences, conservation groups said Monday, as they detailed the city's role in the lucrative trade.

Despite its comparatively small size, the bustling southern Chinese transport hub plays a "disproportionate" role in wildlife crime, researchers said, accounting for around a fifth of all global ivory seizures and nearly half of all pangolins seized in the last decade.

Yet authorities do not list wildlife trafficking offences under the city's organised crime legislation targeting drug traffickers and triad gangs — and the few who are caught rarely face stiff penalties, the report's authors warn.

"Wildlife crime in



File picture taken on September 5, 2018 shows seized endangered species products, including elephant ivory tusks, pangolin scales and shark fins, during a press conference at the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound in Hong Kong. Hong Kong must do more to crack down on illegal wildlife smuggling by ending legal gaps and lenient sentences, conservation groups said yesterday as they detailed the city's growing role in the lucrative trade. / AFP / Isaac LAWRENCE

Hong Kong remains under-policed and under-investigated," said Amanda Witfort, a professor at Hong Kong University's Faculty of Law and one of the report's authors.

"Wildlife smuggling is not regarded as organised and serious crime under Hong Kong law," she added.

The study by Hong Kong Wildlife Trade Working Group (HK-WTWG), a coalition of local groups, offers one of the most detailed analyses yet on smuggling rackets in the city.

Researchers compiled and analysed 379 seizures from government departments, court cases, media reports and NGOs from January 2013 to December 2017 to assess the extent of the trade.

Researchers said the amount of parts seized in the city for three major trafficked species since 2013 could equate to the deaths of "3,000 elephants, 65,000 pangolins, and 51 rhinoceros".

But they warned the actual volume being trafficked through Hong Kong could be 5-10 times the size of seizures.

Over the last decade Hong Kong estimates the value of smuggling has grown by some 1,600 percent while the diversity of endangered species has increased 57 percent.

Hong Kong has long served as a key gateway to China's mainland where there is huge demand for illegal and endangered wildlife parts.

The report detailed many of the ways crime gangs have snuck their quarry into the city, from so-called "ant smugglers" who arrive by commercial airplane with as much as 30 kilos of ivory sewn into their clothing, to loot hidden inside cargo ships heading to the world's fifth busiest port.

An analysis of convictions in the last five years showed sentences ranged from community service to eight months jail and fines of HK\$1,500

to HK\$180,000 (\$191 to \$22,900), far below maximum penalties. Criminals who were prosecuted tended to be low-level carriers, leaving the kingpins untouched.

"It is evident that there are numerous operations relying on Hong Kong, at the very least as a transit port, and in the worst case as a base of operations and/or money laundering," the authors wrote.

China finally banned the ivory trade a year ago while Hong Kong began phasing it out a few months later. The southern Chinese city has also recently increased the maximum penalties on smuggling to 10 years in jail and a HK\$10million fine.

Sophie Le Clue, one of the report authors, said increasing the penalties available to prosecutors was a step in the right direction.

"But there's no point having a penalty raise if all you're going to do is take the mules," she told



editorial

Carbon cleaning

BUILDING a power supply that is as clean and reasonably priced as possible should not just be the government's goal but also the private sector's.

We should continue showing the way toward developing clean energy sources, considering our vulnerabilities to climate risk and the vast availability of wind, solar, geothermal, hydro and other nonconventional and sustainable power sources in our country.

The development of renewable-energy resources and the implementation of new clean technologies offer the opportunity to diminish our dependence on fossil fuels and reduce our carbon-dioxide emissions, thereby helping mitigate climate change.

Many local companies are showing they are up to the task. First Gen and Energy Development Corp. were recently included in the Carbon Clean 200, a list compiled by As You Sow, a nonprofit organization in the US, and market research group Corporate Knights of Canada.

The rankings recognize the greenest companies in the world based on the size of their revenues from clean energy sources. To qualify, a company must have over \$1 billion in market capitalization and generate more than 10 percent of its total revenues from clean energy sources.

First Gen and EDC were the only Philippine companies to make it to the list. It was the first time for First Gen, which ranked 113rd with estimated clean energy revenues of \$632 million in 2017, coming from 3,490 megawatts of installed capacity; and the third time for EDC, ranked 139th with \$494.72 million in revenues from an installed capacity of 1,471.8 MW.

In 2016, Lopez-owned First Philippine Holdings, the parent firm of First Gen and EDC, vowed it would not invest, build, or develop any coal-fired power plants, totally committing to greening its footprint and supply chains.

While other power producers have not totally abandoned ownership of coal-fired energy assets, they have started long-term investments in RE technologies.

Aboitiz Power Corp. has investments in various thermal and renewable power generating facilities with a total net sellable capacity of 3,350 MW (together with its partners), and it is further expanding its Cleanergy portfolio by landbanking on solar developments.

Together with its partners, AboitizPower has 1,294 MW of Cleanergy, which come from 32 out of 50 power plants with a portfolio of hydro, geothermal and solar facilities, and other RE projects in the pipeline.

The power unit of conglomerate San Miguel Corp. also vowed to invest in the RE sector (up to 10,000 MW, according to Ramon Ang), in a bid to further expand its presence in the energy industry.

Manila Electric Co. executives had previously announced that the company is eyeing to build a portfolio of at least 500 MW of RE in the next four years, looking at all RE technologies, whether it's solar, wind or hydro.

Solar Philippines has taken full advantage of our tropical climate, producing energy through its solar farms and making its own solar panels for local use and export. It has eight solar projects with a total value of P85.96 billion.

We have a unique opportunity to break away from our fossil fueled past and head toward a greener future.

These companies as well as others are taking advantage of new technologies and new sustainable ways to power the country. The Philippines could, indeed, be the most aggressive Asean member when it comes to renewable-energy development.

The National Grid Corp. of the Philippines should be ready to connect RE projects to the power grid. RE developers might be much faster than they are ready to accommodate new projects.

The Philippines's National Renewable Energy Program, under the RE Law of 2008, targets to install 15,304 MW of installed renewable capacity by 2030.

All these RE power plants would help mitigate climate change. They would displace hundreds of thousands of tons of carbon emissions in the country, even as they generate a significant number of jobs and boost economic activity in the host provinces where they operate.

They would prove, as some companies are already proving, that with cheaper, cleaner, greener power comes more environmental as well as economic benefits.



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