

30 MAR 2019

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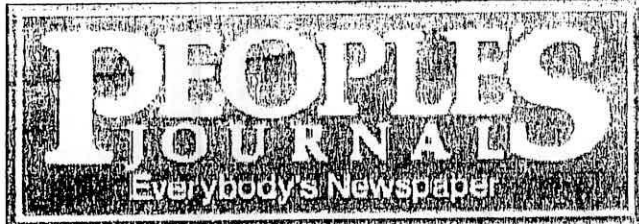
# **DENR**

## **IN THE NEWS**

**Strategic Communication and Initiative Service**



Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE



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## DENR readies gear for 'Battle for the Rivers, Esteros'

By Cory Martinez

**SIMULTANEOUS** cleanup of esteros and rivers which are contributories to the sad state of Manila Bay will soon start to complement the rehabilitation of the bay.

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy Cimatu said after the successful launch of the "Battle for Manila Bay" last January, they will now start the "Battle for the Rivers and Esteros," with the simultaneous cleanup activities tomorrow.

Cimatu explained that the massive cleanup of Manila Bay tributaries aims to involve communities and empower them in protecting their own waterways.

"We at the DENR are doing this to mobilize community participation through their barangay executives in the cleanup, rehabilitation, education and protection activities in the effort to rehabilitate the Manila Bay," Cimatu said.

Cimatu recently led DENR officials in holding a dialogue with leaders of over 200 barangays in Metro Manila in relation to the important role they play in the rehabilitation, dubbed as "Battle for Manila Bay."

The Manila Bay rehabilitation will be done in three phases: cleanup and water quality improvement; relocation and rehabilitation; and education, protection and sustainment.

Cimatu said the first phase involves the cleanup of esteros and waterways, reduction of fecal coliform level and other discharges from establishments, implementation of solid waste management, and planning for the relocation of informal settlers.

"The first activity will involve the regular conduct of cleanup on garbage and debris, removal of silt by dredging, and introduction of bioremediation, infrastructure improvement and other engineering interventions, such as trash traps and silt curtains," Cimatu said.

Bioremediation refers to the use of naturally occurring microorganisms or other forms of life to consume and break down environmental pollutants in order to clean up a polluted site. The microorganisms can also be deliberately introduced in the site.

Cimatu added that there will also be an intensified promotion of the 3Rs of ecological solid waste management, namely: reduce, reuse and recycle; provision of adequate receptacles for waste segregation; and conduct of information, education and communication activities.

Last Jan. 27, the DENR launched the three-phase "Battle for Manila Bay" where over 10,000 people joined a massive cleanup activity on Roxas Boulevard in Manila and other parts of the Manila Bay region.



## Abantemo Coca-Cola, Boracay task force partner sa pag-aalaga sa kalikasan

NAGBIGAY ng top-of-the-line cleaning machinery sa munisipalidad ng Malay, Aklan ang Coca-Cola Philippines na may layuning magbigay ng serbisyo at tulungan ang komunidad sa patuloy na pagpapaganda at pagsasaayos ng mga beach ng Boracay.

Naganap kamakalawa, Marso 28 ang paglagda sa Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) sa pagitan ng Coca-Cola Philippines at

ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Tourism (DOT), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG).

"The collaboration with the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) attests that we are a staunch partner of the government in looking for opportunities to further the country's goals towards environmental preservation," saad ni Gareth McGeown,

CEO & President ng Coca-Cola Beverages Philippines (CCBPI), bottling arm ng Coca-Cola sa Pilipinas.

Isa ring ceremonial turnover ng equipment mula sa CCBPI at Coca-Cola Foundation Philippines ang ginanap para sa Municipal Government of Aklan at sa mga miyembro ng Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) na nirepresenta ni Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año, Environment and

Natural Resources Secretary Roy Cimatu, at Tourism Undersecretary Edwin Enrile.

Layunin ng naturang partnership na mas mapangalagaan nang maayos ang kalikasan sa pamamagitan ng sustainable at holistic plan na nagsimula sa pag-introduce ng surf rake.

Ang surf rake ay isa sa mga pinakakilalang tractor-towed beach-cleaner sa buong mundo. **(Jobelle Macayan)**





## MERCURY-FREE LIFESTYLE PH LABAN SA PAGKASIRA NG KALUSUGAN AT KAPALIGIRAN

MAKAAASA ang mga Pilipino na malaki ang posibilidad na maging mercury-free ang Pilipinas sakaling maratipikahan ang Minamata Convention on Mercury.

Ito ang naging mensahe ni Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy A. Cimatu sa ginanap na Minamata Initial Assessment (MIA) report sa Quezon City noong Miyerkules (Marso 20) na binasa ni Undersecretary Atty. Jonas R. Leones.

Ang naturang report na inihanda ng Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) ng DENR ay nagbabalangkas sa mga pangangaila-

ngan para sa implementasyon ng Minamata Convention.

Umaasa si Cimatu na ang MIA report ang maging susi upang masimulan ng Pilipinas ang pagiging "mercury-free lifestyle" para sa mas ligtas na kapaligiran.

"Once it ratifies the convention, the Philippines will be protected from being a dumping ground for products containing mercury and will help avoid further risk to the country's aquatic life, where mercury levels have been increasing," dagdag ni Cimatu.

Ang Minamata Convention ang kauna-unahang hakbang upang maihinto ang paggamit ng mercury na isang



## ANG INYONG LINGKOD

DR. HILDA C. ONG

nakalalasang kemikal na posibleng maging banta sa pagkasira ng ating kapaligiran at makaapekto sa kalusugan ng mga tao.

Noong 2013 ay isa ang Pilipinas sa 128 na bansa na lumagda para sa "convention" na layuning magkaroon ng regulasyon sa paggamit at pag-angat ng mercury.

Kinuha ang pangalang Minamata sa isang lungsod sa Japan kung saan ay libong katao ang naapektuhan dahil sa paggamit ng nakalalasang kemikal noong 1950s.

Ang MIA ay iniatas ng kapulungan upang makabuo ng baseline report na maka-

tutulong sa bansa na tugunan ang paggamit ng mercury kapag ang kasunduan ay naratipikahan na ng Senado at ang mga probisyon dito ay maipatupad.

Base sa MIA report, ang pangunahing pinanggagalingan ng mercury sa bansa ay mula sa mga aktibidad ng mga tao partikular na ang labis na paggamit ng "energy sources" na sinundan ng produksiyon ng mga tinatawag na "virgin metal" kabilang na rito ang pagmimina ng ginto at ang pagkuha ng minerals na nagiging dahilan upang dumumi at masira ang kapaligiran.



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*ISA si Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission Executive Director Jose Antonio "Pepeton" Goitia (ikalima sa kaliwa), sa awardees ngayong taon sa World Water Day Awards. Kasama ni Goitia ang kanyang maybahay na si Catleya, Maynilad Chief Finance Officer Ricardo De Los Reyes (dulong kaliwa), NWRB Executive Director Sevillo David Jr. (ikatlo sa kaliwa), at Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles (ikaapat sa kaliwa).*



Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
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# BULGAR

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## **PRRC at CFHEC, nagtulungan sa pagpapa- ganda ng Pasig River**

HELLO, Bulgarians! Para mas lalong pagtibayin ang adhikain ni Pangulong Rodrigo Roa Duterte at ng Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission sa pagpapaganda at pagsasaayos ng Pasig River ay nagkaroon ng partnership sa pagitan nito at ng China First Highway Engineering Co., Ltd. (CFHEC) sa ilalim ng Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation noong March 22, 2019 sa Novotel Manila, Cubao, Quezon City.

Ito ay inaprubahan at pinirmahan nina PRRC Executive Director Jose Antonio E. Goitia at CFHEC General Manager Hou Jianchao kasama sina PRRC Operations Director Anshari C., Lomodag, Jr. at CFHEC's Business Managers Zhang Hanzhou at Liu Mengchen.

Ang CFHEC ay state-owned corporation mula sa People's Republic of China. Ito ay may kakayahang i-track ang mga record sa engineering at construction requirement sa mga public infrastructure project kasama ang water treatment, road, transportation at commercial development.

Ang rehabilitation ng Pasig River System ay ang treatment ng industrial wastewater at sewerage bago i-drain ang waterways at ang gagawa nito ay ang CFHEC at walang ilalabas na gastos dito ang PRRC.

Sa partnership na ito magsisimula ang muling pagkabuhay at ganda ng Pasig River.

□□□

For event invitations, please, email [bulgarific@gmail.com](mailto:bulgarific@gmail.com) or PM us on our Facebook page.

**Got to go! It's so Bulgarific!**

XOXO





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# PEOPLES JOURNAL Tonight

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## Solid waste import ban pushed

By **MARLON PURIFICACION**

**SENATOR Koko Pimentel has had enough of other countries treating the Philippines as a dumpsite as he filed a bill seeking to ban importation of solid waste.**

According to Pimentel, the Philippines is "well in the path" of being known as a country in the "global waste trade" as evidenced by two incidents of trash dumping in 2017 and 2018.

His Senate Bill No. 2144, otherwise known as An Act Banning the Importation of Solid Waste, proposes to ban the importation of trash even by recyclers of trash located in Special Economic Zones. By banning the importation of

solid waste, the Philippines will stop being a dumping site of more advanced countries.

He said China, formerly the top destination for recyclable trash, has banned the importation of solid wastes, with Thailand and Vietnam following suit.

The China ban of plastic wastes, Pimentel said, has left the US, Britain, Japan and Mexico scrambling to find alternative dumping sites for their wastes.

The Philippines has to set a ban against the importation of solid waste to prevent foreign waste from "arriving in our shores."

Under the bill, any entity or person who imports any solid waste or otherwise use, treat or process the same in violation of the

act, faces imprisonment of 12 years and one day to 20 years depending upon the discretion of the court.

In case the offender is a foreigner, he or she shall be deported and barred from any subsequent entry into the Philippines. In case the offender is a corporation, association or other entities, the penalty shall be imposed upon the managing partner, president or chief executive officer, in addition to the payment of an exemplary damage of at least P500,000.

If it is a foreign entity, the director and all its responsible officers shall be barred from entry to the Philippines, in addition to the cancellation of its license to do business in the Philippines.

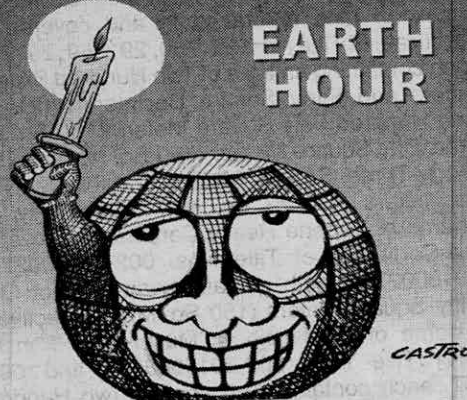
In case the offender is a



**Pimentel** government official or employee, the penalties of automatic dismissal from office and permanent disqualification from holding any elective or appointive position shall be imposed, in addition to the penalties provided in the act.



## Editorial



### Isang oras para sa kalikasan

Mamayang gabi, mula alas-8:30 hanggang alas-9:30, muling makikiusa ang Pilipinas sa Earth Hour.

Taunan itong ginagawa ng mga nakikilahok na bansa. Isang oras na walang konsumo ng kuryente.

Patay ang mga ilaw at ina-unplug mga de-kuryenteng appliances.

Dati ay sa malalaking lungsod lang — sa Maynila ay sa kahabaan ito ng Baywalk sa Roxas Blvd inoobserbahan na ang sentro ng pagtitipon ay sa harap ng CCP — ngayon ay maraming shopping malls na rin ang lumalahok.

Ano nga ba ang nahihita sa isang oras lang na "total lights out"?

Dahil hindi lang naman ito ginagawa sa Pilipinas kundi sa iba't ibang panig ng mundo, ang sabay-sabay na zero electricity consumption ay isang napakalaking bagay sa nabubutas na ozone ng Mother Earth. Kaya ito tinawag na Earth Hour. Isang oras para sa kalikasan.

Bukod pa rito, lumilikha ng awareness sa tao ang kampanyang conserve energy bilang pinakamalaking saklolo sa pangangalaga sa kalikasan.

Ang mga dating walang pakialam, nabubuksan ang isip. Nagkakaroon ng interes kung bakit ito ginagawa.

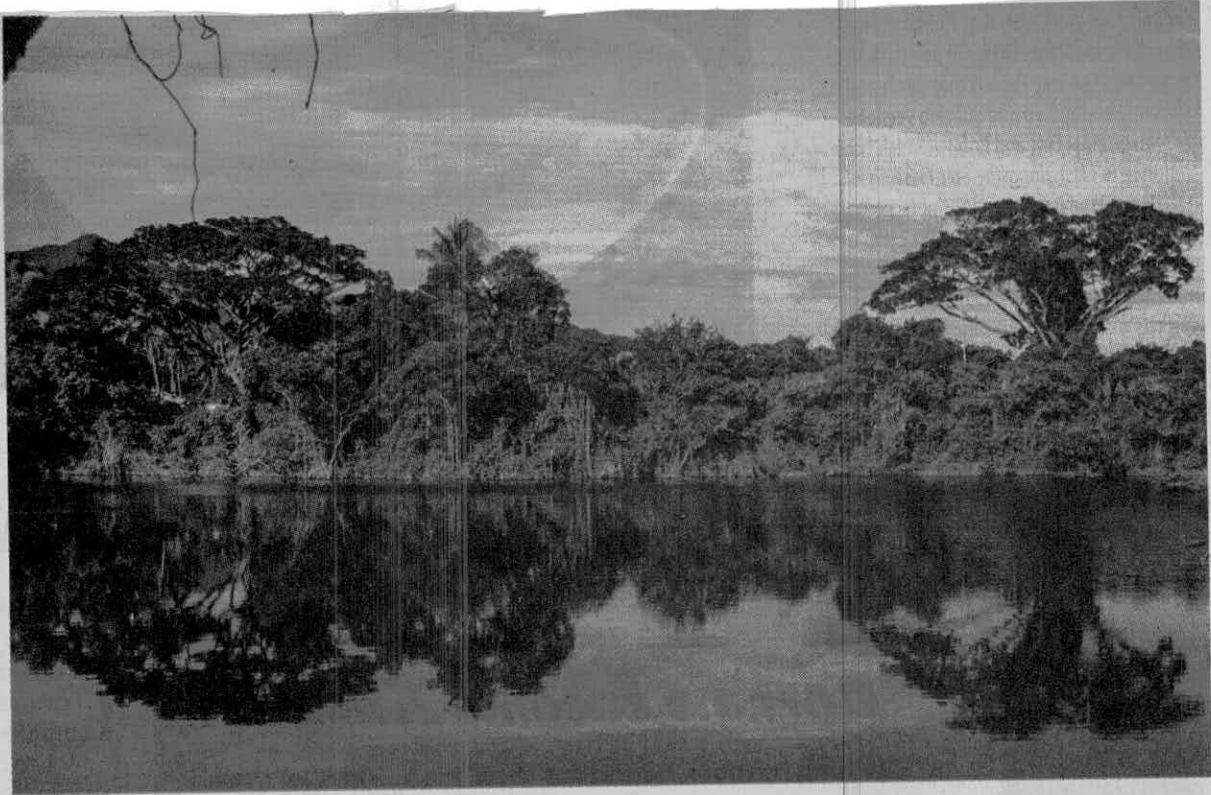
Ang mga tanong na, "Bakit madilim? Bakit patay ang ilaw?" ay magandang simula ng pagpapaalam sa tao tungkol sa nakakaalarmang kalagayan ng mundo sa kabuuan.

Dahil kailangan ng tulong ng lahat, dapat ay maging aware ang lahat at dapat ma-involve ang lahat.

Iyan ang sinisikap na mapagtagumpayan ng Earth Hour at tila hindi naman bigo ang global environmental movement na ito na pinasimulan ng World Wide Fund for nature (WWF) sa isang symbolic event sa Sydney, Australia noong 2007.

Sa ngayon ay umaabot na sa mahigit 7,000 lungsod ng 180 countries ang nakikilahok sa sabayang one-hour lights-out global movement at maipagmamalaking kasama ang Pilipinas dito.





## Rainwater harvesting in Republic Cement Batangas plant

**W**ATER is a precious and limited resource, and needs to be managed well.

With this in mind, the Republic Cement Batangas plant continues to do rainwater harvesting and has it done since 2015—for 100 percent of its domestic and industrial water-consumption requirements—accumulating ~328,150 cubic meters per year. The Batangas Plant has eliminated its groundwater demand

leaving the scarce groundwater resources for our neighboring communities and farmers.

Rainwater harvesting is the collection and storage of rainwater in natural resources or artificially designed resources to prevent runoff and avoid scarcity of water, especially during the dry months.

The Batangas Plant has three major collection ponds that collect rainwater, namely RepubLake, the Pozzolan Pond and the East Shale Pond, which is the largest among the three.

The severe drought due to El Niño in 2014, which almost shut down the cement plant, was the driving force for this initiative while, at the same time, creating cost savings due to reduced water bills from the local water utilities.

Additionally, instead of just being backfilled at the end of quarry life, the reservoirs can now be part of the final mine-rehabilitation plan, and stakeholders may benefit from these new water sources during summer. This is a very good example of how Republic Cement operates to assure its customers of consistent supply and good quality products while taking good care of the environment in the process.

The Mines and Geosciences Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, through its mine rehabilitation and fund committee, and the local government of Taysan have recognized the Batangas Plant's water conservation efforts.



# For our shared futures

BY ALO LANTIN

**I**n the year 2020 our world leaders will be coming together for the United Nations Climate Change Conference.

So what has become of our planet?

Just recently a whale washed up on the shores of Compostela Valley with 40 kilograms of plastic in its stomach. Across the country, crops have failed and farmers have suffered with smaller and smaller yields, and temperatures continue to rise, drying our dams and leaving our taps and water pipes running empty. Elsewhere, the Philippines has faced stronger and stronger storms, cutting their way across the country like never before.

A recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stated that global temperatures were bound to increase by at least 1.5 degrees by the year 2050, with catastrophic implications for the planet. That same report said an increase of 2.0 degrees by 2050 may be seen as well. With it would come ice-free summers in the Arctic and a 170-percent increase in floods. Simultaneous problems of rising sea levels and severe drought will leave as many as 49 million people inundated and 410 million urban dwellers without a stable supply of water. Almost all coral reefs will be gone by the year 2100, with fishery resources expected to disappear as well. With failing crops and flaring temperatures, the IPCC does not predict a good future for the planet—and this is only with a two-degree change in temperature.

With alarm bells ringing on all sides, the threat of our degrading planet seems clear as day. In fact, they have been ringing for years already and, yet, it seems we aren't doing enough.

What can we do in these desperate times?

## A People's movement

ON March 31, 2007, the people of Sydney, Australia, switched off their lights at the same time. A total of over 2.2 million people flipped their switches in a sign of commitment to the conservation of our planet. That same day next year, cities all across the globe decided to join that commitment. Lights went off in the halls of great landmarks and the streets of city centers all over the world as Earth Hour grew into an international phenomenon. From the streets of Sydney that one day, in 2007, it has grown to encompass over 7,000 cities in more than 180 countries across the globe.

As years go by the conversation evolves. Where before Earth Hour was a push against climate change, it has grown into a movement for biodiversity and for species conservation, an avenue to push for the security of our natural resources. In



on the threat of plastic pollution, a major threat to biodiversity and the latest environmental crisis to catch the attention of the public.

"With 8 million tons of plastic entering our oceans every year, it's impossible to ignore the problem. This year we're asking people to recognize and confront the threat of single-use plastics, so we can work toward a future where there are no plastics in nature," WWF Philippines President and Chief Executive Officer Joel Palma said.

A decade of commitments to the planet has turned the Earth Hour into the world's largest grassroots movement for the environment. Conversations grow and evolve in line with the latest, greatest threats to nature, and the movement has remained timely and progressive all throughout.

## Beyond the hour

THE Earth Hour has since grown to become a force far beyond those sixty minutes of darkness every March. In Kazakhstan 17 million trees were planted in honor of the hour; in French Polynesia public protest under the banner of Earth Hour led to 5-million hectares of ocean being classified as a managed marine area; in Peru a No Plastic law was passed in the capital of Quito, in honor of the movement—and so the movement goes on across the planet.

The year 2009 saw men and women take to the streets in a march on COP 15, the first time the public took up the reigns in fighting for the planet. Crowds have gathered since then, lending their voices for the sake of environmental action. What happened a decade ago seems poised to happen again as clamour rises for increased climate action coming out of COP 26.

Early this year an audience of over 30,000

almost twelve years since the first Earth Hour. Xander De Vries, a 20 year-old and a youth himself, took to the stage and spoke. "It's our time to rise up," he said, speaking to the future generation. "We don't have a lot of time left."

## A time to act

THE gravity of today's most pressing environmental concerns weigh down on us heavier than ever before. The signs of dramatic change are all around, and it is tempting to sit in silence and ignore what is happening or, otherwise, to stare at our news screens and despair at what is to come. We could stop and give up—or we could do something about what's happening.

"We only have a little over a decade to keep things from spiraling out of control," reminds WWF Philippines Climate and Energy Head and Earth Hour Pilipinas national director lawyer Gia Ibay, citing the findings of the latest IPCC report on the state of our world's climate. Rather, it appears to be the trajectory of our planet, considering current trends and status quo.

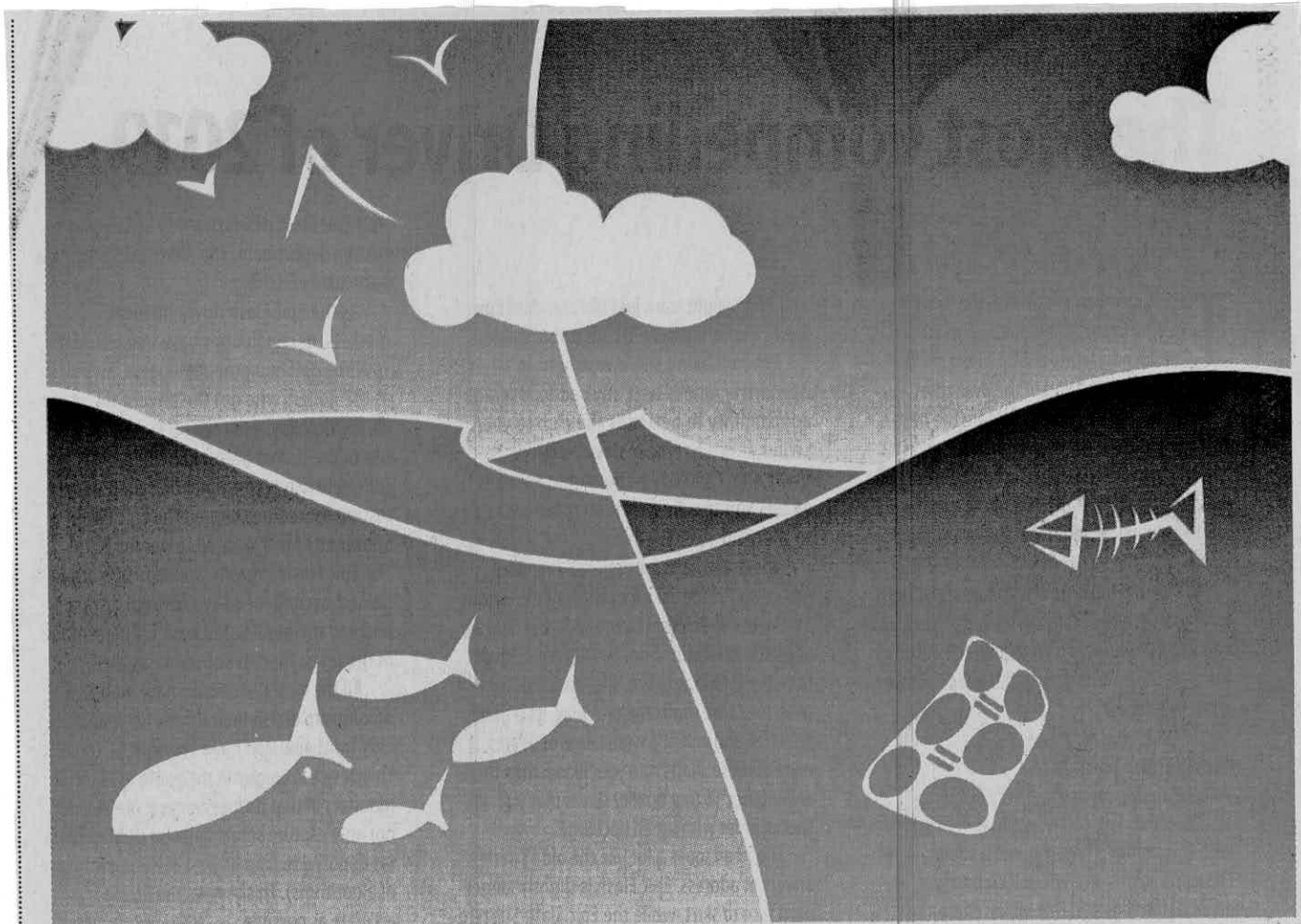
Despite the bad news that continues to pour in, people across the world continue to come together for the sake of planet earth. Campaigns continue to push for green and transformative policies while projects and individual actions continue to protect our damaged and critical natural resources. Our impact on the planet remains clear, but people remain optimistic.

With world leaders set to meet and with public pressure stronger than ever, we have found ourselves in a critical time in the protection of our planet.

The Earth Hour might just be that little push we need to bring the whole world together for



# PROMOTING PLASTIC-FREE PHILIPPINES



issue while the Earth Hour has transformed into the world's largest grassroots movement for the environment.

Every year new countries and territories around the world take part in WWF's Earth Hour. Even the International Space Station rallied behind this movement to show the impact of climate change on our planet.

In 2013 citizens of Uganda united to create the world's first Earth Hour forest. This is a significant

move, especially considering how deforestation has become one of the biggest environmental problems in the country.

One year later the Unesco World Heritage site of the Galapagos Islands became the first province in Ecuador to ban plastic bags and other disposable packages.

### How we can turn things around?

WHILE WWF Philippines campaigns

for a plastic-free living for this year's Earth Hour, it's also the perfect time for Filipinos to step up and commit to this change. It's true that shifting to an environmentally friendly lifestyle is tough at this age, but one step toward a plastic-free nation will make a huge difference.

As said by Alo Lantin, WWF Philippines communications officer, we could stop and give up—or we could do something about what's happening.





## PRRC AT CHINA FIRST HIGHWAY ENGINEERING, NAGKASUNDO PARA SA PASIG RIVER

**BILANG** pagtugon sa mga atas ni Pangulong Rodrigo Roa Duterte at sa mandato ng Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) na makontrol ang polusyon sa Pasig River system, nagkasundo ang PRRC at China First Highway Engineering Co., Ltd. (CFHEC) sa isang Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation nitong Marso 22, 2019 sa Novotel Manila, Cubao, Quezon City.

Nilagdaan nina PRRC Executive Director Jose Antonio "Ka Pepeton" E. Goitia at CFHEC General Manager Philippines Branch Hou Jianchao ang nasabing MOU kasama sina PRRC Operations Director Anshari C., Lomodag, Jr. at CFHEC Philippines Branch Business Manager Deng Xuping at Branch Manager Liu Mengchen.

"We can rightfully claim that the President is ever supportive to the PRRC as manifested by his issuance of Administrative Order No. 16 last February 19, 2019 – giving particular roles for this Commission (PRRC) to perform in expediting the rehabilitation and restoration of the coastal and marine ecosystem of the Manila Bay," sabi ni Goitia.

May kakayahan ang CFHEC, na state-owned corporation mula People's Republic of China, at track record upang maipatupad ang engineering at con-

struction requirements ng mga public infrastructure projects, gayundin ang water treatment, kalsada, transportasyon at commercial development.

Sa naturang partnership, aayuda ang PRRC sa CFHEC sa pagsasagawa ng feasibility study at maghatag ng mga kinakailangang impormasyon. Gagamitin ang feasibility study para sa ganap na rehabilitasyon ng Pasig River System, kasama na rin ang requirements para sa treatment ng industrial waste water at sewerage bago itapon sa mga waterway.

"I am honored to work and live in the new era of President Duterte's 'Build, Build, Build' Project, with this at hand, my company and myself will try our best to contribute to the infrastructure development of the Philippines. With the assistance of PRRC, we will together complete the Pasig River Regulation Program as soon as possible, and follow-up work will be carried out to conduct a detailed survey of the Pasig River and give the Filipino people and concerned government agencies a satisfactory plan as soon as possible," pahayag ni Hou Jianchao.

Alinsunod sa Republic Act No. 6957 at inaymendahan ng R.A. No. 7728, dadaan ang proposal ng CFHEC sa tamang proseso at pagrerebisa ng pamahalaan.

Mababayaran naman

ang pamumuhunang ito sa sistemang aaprubahan ng pamahalaan sa sandaling natapos na ang Pasig River project ng CFHEC.

"We love the Pasig River. In Chinese, we consider it our 'Mother River,' who nurtured her people but aged and languished herself. We are looking forward to returning her favor and restoring her beauty in the near future. We do hope that the restored Pasig River will bring sweet memories to the riverside children. This is also one of the reasons we feel truly honored to be part of this project," dagdag pa ni Hou Jianchao.

"Today marks another momentous event in the history of the PRRC and CFHEC, as both signify to participate in joint undertaking for the cause of attaining the requirements of the Pasig River Integrated and Strategic Master plan (PRISM)," paliwanag naman ni Goitia.

Ang PRISM ay ang realisasyon ng pagsasamasama ng PRRC at ng mga stakeholders nito sa nasyonal at mga local government, private sector at non-government organizations na naglalayong mapaganda ang Pasig River sa isang world-class river system na sumusunod sa kalikasan, nakasasabay sa mga pagbabago ng klima, socio-economically fit at kayang ipagpatuloy hanggang sa susunod na 15 taon.



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# Gov't reactivates El Niño Task Force

**By Ronnel W. Domingo**  
@RonWDomingoINQ

The government is reactivating the El Niño Task Force (ENTF) in anticipation of the climatic phenomenon's continuous effects in the next few months, Economic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia said on Friday.

The task force was first engaged in 2015 when the Philippines was reeling from one of the strongest El Niño occurrences on record.

Back then, the agriculture sector alone lost P15.2 billion worth of crops and livestock.

## 'Weak' this year

This year's El Niño is classified as "weak," although it is expected to cause reduced rainfall, dry spells and droughts, which are already being felt in some parts of the

country.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council has approved the ENTF's reactivation as early as August 2018 but is still awaiting a memorandum order from the Office of the President.

"Neda (National Economic and Development Authority) is ready to take a leading role in mitigating the effects of El Niño," Pernia said in a press briefing.

"We will also review and improve the 'RAIN' approach to better suit the country's current conditions," he added.

He was referring to the task force's Roadmap for Addressing the Impacts of El Niño, which guided key interventions on critical areas.

During the previous El Niño, the ENTF's areas of concern were food security, energy se-

curity, health and safety.

"(W)e cannot stop El Niño from happening," Pernia said. "But as we take a long-term view and look at the lessons from our experiences, we are on a stronger footing to weather it."

## Water security

This time, Neda is adding a fifth area of concern, which is water security.

Pernia said this should be the priority after food security and before energy security.

"As we all know, it is easier to endure lack of electricity than lack of water," he said.

According to Neda Undersecretary Adoracion Navarro, key actions lined up to ensure water security include close monitoring of major dams, supply allocation and water pressure management. INQ



# Can trees stop global warming?

**T**he short answer is yes and no. Trees can help slow down climate change, but they can never solve planetary warming on their own.

The most important greenhouse gas in terms of total effect on atmospheric warming is carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). This gas is a by-product mainly of the use of fossil fuels, and is responsible for more than half of the planet's warming to date. Part of the problem is that CO<sub>2</sub> molecules persist in the atmosphere for decades, even centuries. So far, no one has invented a cost-effective way to remove these gas molecules from the air.

The good news is that there is a natural way to siphon off carbon from the atmosphere. Trees and forests absorb CO<sub>2</sub> in order to produce their "food." We call this process photosynthesis, where plants convert water and CO<sub>2</sub> to produce carbohydrates and oxygen with the aid of sunlight. In trees, part of the carbon absorbed eventually becomes "sequestered" (stored) in its woody biomass.

Theoretically, the more trees are planted, the greater the amount of carbon removed from the atmosphere. However, just like any natural systems, there are limits to how much trees can absorb carbon. There is also a finite land area, so we cannot plant trees ad infinitum. But even if we manage to cover the entire planet with trees, that will not be enough to absorb all the carbon we are emitting.

## COMMENTARY

RODEL D. LASCO

When we destroy trees and forests, the flip side happens—carbon is released to the atmosphere. Indeed, one of the major sources of greenhouse emissions in the planet today is deforestation, especially in the tropics.

As a practical implication, one effective way to fight global warming is to conserve our existing forests and the vast carbon that have accumulated in their biomass. This is easily said than done, given the myriad of often competing uses of our forest lands. Not to mention that trees themselves are at risk by the very same climatic changes taking place. Around 1.8 million hectares of Philippine forests, for instance, are likely already experiencing the adverse effects of strong winds and tropical cyclones.

Planting and growing trees are another way by which each of us can contribute to mitigating climate change. The country has embarked on a massive tree establishment campaign through the National Greening Program. To supplement this, we can all plant and protect trees in our local communities.

Perhaps more than their role in mitigating climate change, trees and forests are vital

to our people because they promote the resilience of natural and human systems. For instance, trees provide income and livelihoods to smallholder farmers. Forests also help regulate waterflows in our river basins. With the new climate normal, ecosystems-based adaptation (e.g., mangrove conservation and restoration to reduce coastal flooding or to minimize the impacts of storm surge) is increasingly being seen as an effective way to promote local climate action.

Mitigating climate change and building resilience are but a few of the many values that trees and forests offer to mankind. It is home to many other living forms, a source of remedies and medicinal cures, and a place of meaning, identity and culture. If only because they give off oxygen, trees are the reason we, carbon-based humans, exist in the world.

More than a hundred years ago, the poet Joyce Kilmer expressed it best: "I think that I shall never see, a poem lovely as a tree." In the age of global warning, nothing is more apropos.

Dr. Rodel D. Lasco is an author of several Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports including the forthcoming sixth assessment report. He is the executive director of The OML Center, a foundation devoted to discovering climate change adaptation solutions (<http://www.omlopezcenter.org/>).





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## Lights out for 12th Earth Hour tonight

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

Conservation group World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is urging Filipinos to participate in the observance of the annual Earth Hour tonight and at the same time take a stand against plastic pollution to help save the environment.

Now on its 12th year, Earth Hour is the world's largest grassroots movement for the environment, WWF said.

It said what started out as a campaign to engage people and create significant environmental action against climate change has evolved into a platform that aims to raise awareness on the importance of biodiversity as a viable resource link that families, communities, nations and future generations all depend on.

"The last decade of Earth Hour has contributed so much to the global climate agenda and has paved the way for many conservation wins. Now that we are ushering in the second year of the movement's new decade, our efforts will still be centered on raising awareness and inspiring action on conserving

nature and biodiversity to counter the worsening impacts of climate change," lawyer Gia Ibay, WWF-Philippines head of climate and energy program and Earth Hour Pilipinas national director, said.

The main switch-off event of Earth Hour 2019 is slated tonight at the Globe Circuit Event Grounds in Makati City at 8:30 p.m.

At least 3,000 scouts will be deployed to the public event that will feature booths, activities and performances that will honor the planet.

Ibay called on everyone in the Philippines to switch off non-essential lights from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. in solidarity with millions around the world who will do the same.

The group recalled that when #Connect2Earth was launched last year as theme of Earth Hour, more than 17,900 landmarks and monuments in over 180 countries and territories switched off their lights to show their commitment to and support for raising awareness and inspiring action on conserving nature and biodiversity.



## MOA hosts Nat Geo Earth Day Run 2019

By Paul David L. Gelario

NAT GEO's commemorative 10th year anniversary Nat Geo Earth Day Run 2019, which will be held in Mall of Asia on April 14, has accumulated the most registrations according to SVP, General Manager - Philippines at Fox Networks Group Jude Turcuato.

"I've just checked the number of registration so far this year. Actually it's the most that we've ever had up until this time," said Turcuato said during the launch at Waterside, Solaire Resort & Casino, in Pasay last March 28.

The race will have five categories: 21km, 10km, 5km, 3km, and the new 500m Doggie Run.

Interested runners may register online by visiting Nat Geo Run 2019's website. Onsite registration is available at four selected SM branches: SM North Edsa, SM Aura, SM Mall of Asia, and SM Southmall.

Registered participants will receive the Nat Geo race kit containing a race bib, a race singlet, a hydration bottle, a belt bag, and a drawstring bag.

The Doggie Run is limited to 300 participants and available for onsite registration only. The dog race kit includes a vest, a race bib and a leash.

Finishers of the 21k will receive a finisher shirt and a medal, while the 10k will only receive a medal.

This year's beneficiary of the run is CORA (Communities Organized for Resource Allocation) Foundation, an organization that organizes feeding programs and spreads environmental awareness.

"The goal for National Geographic and CORA together are three important things. To educate, to inspire action, to empower people and the youth," said CORA Founder Antoinette Taus.

A total of 15,000 participants are expected.

The 21k run starts at 3:00 a.m., 10k at 4:30 a.m., 5k at 5:30 a.m., 3k at 6 a.m., and 500m Doggie Run at 7:00 a.m.



## Ocean heat hits record high – UN

GENEVA (AFP) – Ocean heat hit a record high in 2018, the United Nations said Thursday, raising urgent new concerns about the threat global warming is posing to marine life.

In its latest State of the Climate overview, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) reaffirmed that the last four years had been the hottest on record – figures previously an-

## Ocean heat hits...



nounced in provisional drafts of the flagship report.

But the final version of the report highlighted worrying developments in other climate indicators beyond surface temperature.

"2018 saw new records for ocean heat content in the upper 700 meters," a WMO statement said.

The agency said the UN had data for heat content in the upper 700 meters (2,290 feet) of the ocean dating back to 1955.

Last year also saw new heat records for the ocean's upper 2,000 meters, but data for that range only goes back to 2005.

The previous records for both ranges were set in 2017.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres described the latest findings as "another strong wake-up call" for governments, cities and businesses to take action.

"It proves what we have been saying that climate change is moving faster than our efforts to address it," he said at UN headquarters in New York.

The United Nations is hosting a major summit on September 23 that is billed as a last-chance opportunity for leaders to tackle climate change, which Guterres has described as the defining issue of our time.

The UN chief has urged world leaders to come to the summit with concrete plans, instead of speeches, to reduce

greenhouse gas emissions by 45 percent over the next decade and to net zero by 2050.

### Warming oceans

About 93 percent of excess heat – trapped around the Earth by greenhouse gases that come from the burning of fossil fuels – accumulates in the world's oceans.

Research published earlier this year in the US journal Science showed that warming in the oceans is on pace with measurements of rising air temperature.

Some models predict the temperature of the top 2,000 meters of the world's oceans will rise nearly 0.8 degrees Celsius by the end of the century if nothing is done to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, according to Science.

Oceans are also not warming evenly across the planet.

The WMO report said the highest rates of ocean warming are occurring in the southern ocean, where warming has also reached the deepest layers.

This could result in sea levels being substantially different in different places, experts have previously said.

The thermal expansion – water swelling as it warms – is expected to raise sea levels 12 inches (30 centimeters), above any sea level rise from melting glaciers and ice sheets, according to the research published in Science.





# EARTH

# HOUR 2019

BY TRISHA JEAN V. DE LEON

**E**ARLIER this month, news about a Cuvier's beaked whale that spewed blood before it eventually died circulated worldwide.

This sad story is close to home, especially since this marine mammal was recovered from the east of Davao City.

But that isn't the only thing that shocked the world. It was later discovered that this gentle giant had ingested almost 88 pounds of plastic waste.

With the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Philippines's #AyokoNgPlastik movement, Filipinos are encouraged to ditch their old habit of patronizing single-use plastics and switch to eco-friendlier alternatives. This campaign was also launched just right on time for the 12th Earth Hour today, March 30.

WWF Philippines President and Chief Executive Officer Joel Palma reiterated the significance of collaborative effort to achieve a long-term solution to this environmental problem.

"The Philippines is the third major polluter of oceans in the world, and we Filipinos must unite and create concrete steps to stop this worsening situation," Palma said.

## The heart of the Earth Hour 2019

AS a mega diverse country, Philippines is home to 52,177 described species, of which more than half is found nowhere else in the world. The sad truth, however, is we do so little to protect our environment from man-driven activities, which threaten the whole ecosystem.

For instance, overexploitation and deforestation remain unsolved, despite the laws and ordinances that are supposed to address these issues. These man-driven activities have caused the pool of flora and fauna to dwindle.

According to the Biodiversity Management Bureau, 42 terrestrial mammals, 29 reptiles and 14 amphibians are endangered. In 2017 984 species of wild flora were considered threatened species.

Following last year's theme #Connect2Earth, the Earth Hour 2019 calls for the urgent need to care for our planet's biological diversity, viable resource link that we can all rely on today and in the future.

"The last decade of [the] Earth Hour has contributed so much to the global climate agenda and has paved the way for many conservation wins", said Attorney Gia Ibay, WWF Philippines head of climate and energy program and Earth Hour Pilipinas national director.

Walking down memory lane, #Connect2Earth was first launched in 2019, wherein 17,900 landmarks and monuments in over 180 countries and territories switched off their lights to show support to this good cause. Both #EarthHour and #Connect2Earth also trended in 33 countries and received over 3.5 billion impressions worldwide.

During the kickoff event of Earth Hour 2019, the Boy Scout of the Philippines inked a memorandum of agreement with WWF Philippines to further strengthen their commitment to the cause. National Ambassadors Rovilson Fernandez and Iza Calzado, as well as National Youth Ambassador Janine Gutierrez, also renewed their contract to promote conservation of natural assets.

## Main switch-off event

JOIN WWF Philippines at the Globe Circuit Event Grounds in Makati City today from 5 pm to 10 p.m. for the Earth Hour 2019 event. The actual switch-off, however, will start from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Everyone from all over the Philippines is encouraged to turn off nonessential lights in solidarity, with millions around the world who will do the same.

To harness the power of social media, use the hashtags #Connect2Earth, #EarthHourPH2019, and #AyokoNgPlastik when posting your stories and photos. These hashtags are meant to promote sustainable living actions and plastic-free lifestyle. You may also visit [www.earthhour.org](http://www.earthhour.org) to stay updated and join [facebook.com/groups/ayokongplastik](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ayokongplastik) to engage in conversations about plastic.

## Earth Hour through the years

IN the past climate conversations had been confined to policymakers and science experts. When the Earth Hour movement first emerged in Sydney, Australia's busiest city, approximately 2.2 million individuals, businesses and organizations showed their support. From then on, climate change has become a mainstream