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8 JAN 2018

Sunday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Gov't urged to wage all-out war vs *piccolo*

The zero waste and chemical safety watchdog EcoWaste Coalition has urged the government to declare an all-out war against the banned *piccolo* firecracker, the top cause of firecracker-related injuries in the country.

In its yearly "Iwas Paputok" campaign, the group also expressed support for a national ban on all firecrackers to curb the senseless injuries and sufferings inflicted on firecracker igniters as well as spectators.

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

"An all-out war against smugglers, distributors and sellers of *piccolo* will stop this small but terrible monster in further harming more child victims," said Aileen Lucero, EcoWaste Coalition coordinator.

The group had earlier

tagged *piccolo* as "children's enemy number one" during the festive season.

"We urge the government to declare such crackdown now, not wait until December 2016, and assign the Bureau of Customs to accomplish this

task before the next Christmas season," Lucero said.

"As what is at stake is the health and safety of young children, we urge the government to provide for a reward system that will lead to the identification and apprehension of culprits involved in

the illegal trade of *piccolo* and other banned firecrackers," she added.

As of Jan. 1, the Department of Health (DOH) had documented a total of 380 cases of firecracker-related injuries, 219 of whom were *piccolo* victims.

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Government urged to declare war against piccolo dealers, smugglers

By Cory Martinez

ENVIRONMENT advocate Eco-Waste Coalition yesterday called on the government to declare an all-out war against the banned piccolo firecracker to prevent more injuries, particularly to children.

EcoWaste coordinator Aileen Lucero made the call following reports that piccolo is the top cause of firecracker-related injuries in the country.

Lucero said they also support a national ban on all firecrackers to curb senseless injuries and sufferings caused by firecrackers.

"An all-out war against smugglers, distributors and sellers of piccolo will stop this small but terrible monster in further harming more child victims," said Lucero adding that piccolo has been tagged as "children's enemy number one" during the festive season.

"We urge the government to declare such crackdown now, not wait until December 2016, and assign the Bureau of Customs to accomplish this task before the next Christmas season," she emphasized.

Lucero further urged the gov-

ernment to provide a reward system that will lead to the identification and apprehension of culprits involved in the illegal trade of piccolo and other banned firecrackers.

As of Jan. 1, the Department of Health had documented a total of 380 cases of firecracker-related injuries, out of which 219 were piccolo vic-

tims.

Data from the DoH also showed that 32 percent of the 840 firecracker-related injuries in 2014, 36 percent of the 997 firecracker-related injuries in 2013 and 26 percent of the 931 firecracker-related injuries in 2012 were due to piccolo.

To prevent and reduce injuries, as well as the generation of

hazardous fumes and wastes, the group also called for a total ban on firecrackers as expressed by officials of the DoH, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippine National Police and the Bureau of Fire Protection.

"We urge our lawmakers to enact a total ban on firecrackers to stop this out-of-date practice

of ushering in the New Year with bloodied hands, smoggy atmosphere and garbage-strewn surroundings," Lucero added.

"In the name of safer revelry, cleaner air and waste-free environment, we ask our lawmakers to act now and end this mindless violence against humans, animals and Mother Earth," she concluded.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

'New Year's Day air pollution not as bad as past years'

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) yesterday said the air pollution level following the New Year Eve's celebrations was not as bad as previous

years.

The DENR's Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) said the rains contributed to reducing particulate matters

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA
(PM) in the air which is made worse by firecrackers and fireworks during the New Year's Eve revelry.

Teresita Peralta of the EMB

said the presence of particulate matter 10 (PM-10) in Marikina City's air was only 872 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) from midnight of Dec. 31, 2015

up to 1 a.m. of Jan. 1, 2016. It was at 1,988 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ last year.

In Las Piñas City, the PM-10 level was monitored at 540 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ while a year ago it went up

to 2,000 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

"Those that are used to lighting up huge firecrackers could have been discouraged because of the rains," Peralta said.

She said cities in Metro Manila, such as Pasay and Malabon are among those that registered a relatively high PM level since many vehicles pass through these areas and the

population is dense.

Particulate matter, also known as particle pollution, is a complex mixture of extremely small particles and liquid droplets. Particle pollution is made up of a number of components, including acids (such as nitrates and sulfates), organic chemicals, metals and soil or dust particles.

The Manila Times

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

COA: Environment bureau met 2014 air pollution target

THE Environmental Management Bureau-National Capital Region (EMB-NCR) was able to reduce air pollution or the level of total suspended particulates (TSP) by 5 percent in 2014, according to the Commission on Audit (COA).

Based on a 2014 audit report by the commission, the EMB aimed for a 5-percent reduction in the TSP levels for 2014 with 2012 as the base of comparison.

"The targeted 5-percent reduction in the level of total suspended particulate (TSP) was attained by EMB-NCR as of year-end," the commission said.

TSP is one of the indicators in measuring the quality of air.

According to the EMB, TSP refers to "tiny airborne particles or aerosols that are less than 100 micrometers" which constantly enter the atmosphere from natural and human sources.

The natural sources of TSP include soil, bacteria and viruses, fungi, molds and yeast, pollen, and salt particles from evaporating sea water. From human activities, the suspended particulates are produced by the combustion when heating a particular space, as well as through industrial processes, power generation, and motor vehicles.

"The monitoring and sampling are being done by EMB nationwide

to determine the level of pollutants. The results of the sampling and monitoring are reported to the LGUs [local government units], EMB-Central Office, and others concerned," the commission said.

"These reports are important, particularly as guide to LGUs concerning their implementation of programs and projects and their formulations of policies and ordinances especially for the protection of public health from the various impacts of air pollution. The results are also consolidated in the annual National Air Quality Status Report by the EMB-Central Office, which will be used in comprehensive air pollution management and control program," it added.

According to the audit report, bureau was able to reduce the level of TSP from 65 µg/Ncm (micrograms per normal cubic meter) in 2012 to 50 µg/Ncm in 2014 which meant a 23-percent reduction.

It was also able to reduce the level of TSP in the roadside ambient from 126.75 µg/Ncm in 2012 to 114 µg/Ncm in 2014, which meant a 10-percent reduction.

But while the EMB-NCR was able to attain the five-percent reduction in TSP level, the reduction cannot be determined in other regions ac-

cording to COA.

The auditors said that the reduction in TSP level cannot be determined in other regions because of "failure to conduct regular sampling and monitoring, and non-repair of the equipment for air monitoring station by EMB-CAR [Cordillera Administrative Region]... unavailability of service vehicle, equipment breakdown, bad weather condition and power failure in Region 3... malfunctioning of the equipment and inadequate technical personnel to do the monitoring in Region 11," and "inadequacy of pollutants monitored by Region 12."

"Management [EMB] commented that the reduction of TSP has been targeted before because this was the only criteria pollutant being measured by EMB nationwide since 2004. TSP is measured manually every week and this is the basis for assessment of air quality in certain areas especially in the Highly Urbanized Centers (HUC) or Commercial Business District (CBD) per Region. When EMB started measuring PM10 in said areas, some Regions like Regions 11 and 12 shifted to PM10 instead of TSP due to the following reasons," the audit report stated.

According to the EMB's website, PM10 (PM stands for particulate

matter) refers to "suspended particulates less than 10 micrometers in diameter that include both fine and dust particles."

The reasons cited were: "Annual Guideline Value of TSP of 90 ug/Ncu.m. has been attained... PM10, being smaller in diameter, is more harmful to human health... and... To be more cost-effective."

"Likewise, cost of repair for TSP equipment is no longer cost effective because said equipment are already old. TSP equipment will now be used to establish compliance with TS ambient air quality standards by industries especially during complaints and permitting," the audit report further stated.

"EMB-Central Office conducts technical assistance to ROs [regional offices] regarding operation and maintenance of all ambient air monitoring equipment (manual and automatic) and for efficient and effective implementation of the ambient air monitoring network nationwide, the EMB Director has issued EMB Special Order No. 2015-219 designating the focal person and alternate focal person per Region to oversee day-to-day operation of the stations, among other," it added.

REINA TOLENTINO

STRATEG

DENR to push for integration of biodiversity conservation in National Adaptation Plan

IVES SERVICE

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources's Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB) will push for the integration of biodiversity conservation in the National Adaptation Plan (NAP).

The crafting of the NAP is one of the commitments under the historic climate agreement forged in Paris, France, last month during the 21st session of the Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Climate Change Commission, the country's climate-change body, will take the lead in crafting the NAP.

BMB Director Theresa Munda Lim said that this year, the DENR-BMB will align all programs and activities related to biodiversity conservation to the recently forged Paris climate agreement, which primarily aims to reduce global carbon emissions to limit temperature increase below 2°C between 2020 up to 2030.

Lim said the DENR-BMB will participate in the formulation of the NAP to make sure that biodiversity and ecosystem services are integrated in the plan.

"What we are going to do this year is we will link our various programs and activities to the Paris agreement, but focusing more on ecosystem-based adaptation and mitigation," Lim added.

The Philippines vowed to reduce its carbon emission by 70 percent based on a business-as-usual scenario between 2020 and 2030 under its intended nationally determined contribution, but its commitment is largely dependent on the support it will get to finance various climate-change projects.

"We will make sure that part of the National Adaptation Plan is our main asset, biodiversity and ecosystem services," she said.

The role of Protected Areas (PAs) in adaptation and mitigation, as well

as coral recovery and rehabilitation, which was given funding of P500 million for the first time this year, will all be aligned to the Paris agreement, she said.

Lim added that the country's Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, which has been aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) approved during the United Nations General Assembly in September last year, will also be fine-tuned to be consistent with the NAP and the Paris agreement.

The Paris agreement is more on climate, while the SDGs is more encompassing, as it includes various goals to ensure sustainable development, such as poverty, hunger, health and well-being, education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace, justice and strong institutions, and partnerships for goals.

"We will make sure that consciously, all our programs and activities will be integrated to be able to contribute to the Paris agreement," she said.

On coastal rehabilitation, more than providing livelihood support, it should be designed for resiliency to the impacts of climate change, Lim said.

"There are existing studies where we can take off from in implementing coral recovery and rehabilitation. We will coordinate with the academe to take stock of the data that is already available. We will also seek the help of the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority, to map out coral reefs across the country," she said. *Jonathan L. Mayuga*

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



EDITORIAL

Zero Waste Month

You only have to look around on the first day of 2016 to see that the "zero waste" campaign is an uphill struggle. While rains dampened revelry on New Year's Eve in Metro Manila, garbage still littered many neighborhoods, with residents waiting for others to clean up the streets.

In 2014, President Aquino issued a proclamation declaring every January as "Zero Waste Month." The campaign is laudable, but it can only succeed with a combination of improved garbage collection and, more importantly, a change in attitudes toward waste disposal.

"Zero waste" promotes not only proper garbage disposal but also recycling. The campaign has been around for years, achieving limited success in certain neighborhoods. A campaign some years ago to promote waste segregation was initially received with enthusiasm in many gated communities, but faltered after residents considered it too much trouble to constantly decide which types of wastes should go to color-coded plastic bags.

Waste segregation for recycling, however, has slowly gained ground in many public areas. The government, especially local units,

may have to jumpstart the segregation and recycling habit. This can be pushed even in impoverished communities. There's "pera sa basura" or money in garbage; in certain areas, attitude change can be encouraged by incentives such as payment for recyclable waste. Barangay officials can spearhead the recycling effort by setting aside areas for community composting and deploying personnel to regularly collect the organic household waste needed for compost that can then be sold.

Local governments can also tap private companies to collect materials for recycling. Several companies pay good money for plastic, paper, cartons, cans, bottles and other materials that can be recycled for industrial use. A zero waste campaign at the grassroots can go hand in hand with a "pera sa basura" program.

Zero waste may seem utopian especially in heavily polluted Metro Manila and other densely populated urban centers, but it is an ideal that is worth pursuing. Getting started is the toughest part. Once people enjoy the pleasure of a clean environment, there is no turning back.



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500 tonelada ng basura, nahakot sa Divisoria

Tatlumpu't tatlong truck o nasa 500 tonelada ng basura mula sa pagdiriwang ng pagsalubong sa Bagong Taon ang nahakot ng pamahalaang lungsod ng Maynila sa Divisoria nitong Biyernes.

Dakong 3:00 ng umaga pa lang nitong Biyernes ay abala na ang Task Force Manila Clean-up sa paghahakot ng santambak ng sari-saring basura sa Divisoria, na pinakamarami ang nakolekta sa Claro M. Recto Avenue.

Ayon sa report ng Task Force Manila

Clean-up, mas marami ang basura na nakolekta sa pagsalubong sa Bagong Taon ngayon kumpara noong nakaraang taon.

Sinabi ni Engr. Che Borromeo, hepe ng Task Force Manila Clean-up, na 33 dump truck ang ginamit nitong Biyernes upang hakutin ang 500 tonelada ng basura, mas mataas na bilang kumpara sa 25 dump truck na naghakot noong nakaraang taon ng nasa 300 tonelada ng basura.

Samantala, sinabi ng EcoWaste Coalition, na ang hindi maayos na pagtatapon ng basura na gaya nito ay

taliwas sa Proclamation No. 760 na nagdedeklara sa Enero bilang Zero Waste Month.

Iginiit ng koalisyon na maraming maaari pang i-recycle ang tuluyan nang naibasura dahil hindi inihiwalay ang mga ito, kaya direktso na sa tambakan ang mga ito.

Dahil dito, plano ngayon ng Task Force Manila Clean-up na turuan ang mga vendor tungkol sa tamang paghihiwa-hiwalay ng basura.

Argyll Cyrus B. Geducos

THE EXPONENTIAL OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS SINCE 1900

MANILA BULLETIN

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Intensified mangrove-planting on Dinagat Is-

By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

BUTUAN CITY - To protect the island from the effects of global warming and climate change, barangay officials and their constituents are now involved in the massive planting of mangrove propagules in the seven towns of Dinagat Islands province.

Supported by the local government units (LGUs), the barangay leaders, who directly supervise the continuous planting of mangrove propagules, also mobilized students during the long Yuletide Season break.

"Our barangay officials and their respective constituents are now very much concerned in planting more mangroves because they know that this is a big help and protection from any typhoons especially tsunamis," stressed Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer

(PENRO) Agapito T. Patubo of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

To date, he said, over 550,000 mangrove propagules have been planted in the island province.

"We (have) the highest survival rate all over in Caraga region in terms of planted mangroves," said Patubo, in an interview with Manila Bulletin, as he also attributed this big accomplishment to the growing concern by the barangay officials and residents for environmental preservation and protection to avert casualty or damage during typhoons.

Along with this all-out drive, Dinagat Islands lone district Rep. Arlene "Kaka" J. Bag-ao, also mobilized her office in extending assistance for the continuity of the program, which is also in line with the agency's National Greening Program (NGP). A total of 940 hect-

ares have already been planted in Dinagat Islands.

Bag-ao is also urging the national government to proclaim the province of Dinagat Islands as a Conservation Area (DICA).

DICA includes watershed areas, forest reserves, bonsai forest, the caves in karst areas (or landscapes formed by the dissolution of rocks such as limestone, dolomite, and gypsum), beaches, coves and the islands and islets which have the potential for ecotourism development. This covers a total area of 114,892.32 hectares of which 19,198.5 hectares are terrestrial and 95,694 hectares are marine areas.

The proposed conservation areas are Panamaon Watershed, Esperanza Watershed, Loreto Watershed, Mt. Cambinliw and Mt. Redondo, Tubajon Watershed, Paragua Forest Reserve, Mt. Palhi, Manoligao Watershed, Cuarenta Watershed and

Western Dinagat Ecotourism Area which can be found in the seven towns of the province.

Rep. Bag-ao has slashed from her funds ₱6.6 million for the DENR-PENRO two-story building including its five-room hostel.

Meanwhile, DENR-13 Regional Executive Director (RED) Nonito M. Tamayo also said yesterday that mangrove planting has also been intensified in the Caraga region, particularly in coastal areas in Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Agusan del Norte and PDI.

About 11,300,000 mangrove propagules were already planted in 4,452 hectares in said provinces in Caraga region in 2015, he said.

About 29,647 hectares of denuded, open and access timber land in Caraga Region are being considered in 2016 for reforestation and development by the DENR-13 under the NGP, he added.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



CRANES in flight. JUSSI MONONEN/WORLDMIGRATORYBIRDDAY.ORG

PHL haven for migratory bird

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

Conclusion

Virus, diseases and other threats

"MIGRATORY birds are natural parts of the interconnectedness of natural systems. Therefore, their natural presence in the order of things should not present some form of negative environmental impact," said Director Theresa Mundita Lim of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB).

Migratory birds, Lim said, could, however, be carrier of pests and diseases. "Disease from domestic birds in farms near migratory-bird sites may find their way to wild birds and then spread to other areas," she said.

Viruses that are maintained in wild birds without lethal effects, such as the West Nile Virus, may be spread by migrating birds, she said.

According to Lim, migratory birds, especially ducks, were also studied to have a role in the dispersal of propagules of exotic plants and planktons where they can be transported elsewhere and become invasive. But she maintained that measures have been

put in place to prevent these undesirable potential threats. She maintained that a ban in trading of wild birds remains in effect. It is one of the measures initiated by the DENR, to prevent the possible spread of the dreaded avian influenza virus.

Until now, the Philippines is bird flu-virus free, she said.

Keeping wildlife safe

HUNTING and loss of habitats are the major threats to migratory birds in the Philippines. These are being addressed primarily through the implementation of two major policies, namely, the Wildlife Protection and Conservation Act and the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act.

These laws prohibit the harvesting of forest products and hunting of wildlife, including migratory birds. "Hunting of wildlife is not allowed. It is enforced through wildlife enforcement networks nationwide. The Wildlife Act also addresses habitat loss by providing for the establishment of "Critical Habitats" for threatened species located outside Protected Areas," Lim said.

Several small wetland areas and important habitats of threatened migratory birds are being managed as "critical habitats," such as the Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism area, the Malasi Tree Park and Wildlife Sanctuary in Isabela, Cabusao, wetlands in Camarines Sur.

Major migratory bird sites in the country are also within protected areas, such as Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary, Naujan Lake, Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary and the Tubbataha Reef Natural Park.

Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation

MOREOVER, Lim said the DENR is also mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in local governance to influence local governments to consider biodiversity in land use-planning process, such as by allocating conservation areas in land use plans. "More local conservation areas managed by LGUs [local government units] that benefit migratory birds are expected to come out from these initiatives, in addition to existing ones, such as the Sasman Wetlands in Pampanga, Balanga City Wetland Park in Bataan and Bangrin Marine Protected Area in Pangasinan," she said.

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BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

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PHL haven for migratory birds

Other important migratory bird sites are being identified for priority protection under different management regimes, either as critical habitats or local conservation areas of LGUs. According to Lim, an important key to biodiversity conservation, such as community education and awareness, is instrumental in transforming positive societal behavior and culture toward migratory birds.

Bird festival

LIM said one of the successful initiatives on this aspect is the annual celebration of the National Bird Festival which is now on its 10th year. The event, coorganized by the Wildlife Bird Club of the Philippines, the Department of Tourism (DOT), DENR and a host LGU, is organized in different places in the country each year.

The festivity is celebrated in December in time with bird migration. Early this month, Balanga City, Bataan, became host to the annual bird festival for the second time.

Lim said the integration of biodiversity conservation as part of educational materials, at least in basic education, is gradually being realized in Balanga City.

This is "something that needs to be pressed further to create a new generation of Filipinos with a worldview that recognizes, the ecological and intrinsic values of nonhuman forms of life," she said.

Bird-watching, educating the people

A GROUP of 240 members, the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines has been promoting bird-watching.

Organized 12 years ago, the group provide guided birdwatching trips and is greatly involved in

the information, education and communication about the importance of birds and the environment in general, said Michael Lu, one of its founding member and current treasurer of the group.

Over the past 12 years, he said, the group's members have also been invited to give talks to different organizations and to conduct bird-watching trips for schools and surveys for different agencies, including power plants and golf courses.

Besides promoting bird watching, the group maintains records for bird sightings, whether resident or migrant species. To date, the group has the most extensive records of birds in the country. The group supplies the DENR-BMB with information about new bird sightings.

Exciting, memorable activity

BIRD-WATCHING in the Philippines, Lu said, is particularly exciting for the group's members "because of the high probability of [their] contributing to records."

"Personally, my most fulfilling moments are introducing bird-watching to the general public—that moment when the nonbirder looks through the binoculars and ooohs and aaahhs when he spots a bird by himself," Lu, a businessman, said. But he says capturing the birds in photo makes bird-watching more memorable.

Lu, who has been into bird-watching for close to 15 years, started taking photos since last year.

"A good photo will always be a prized photo whether the bird is rare," he said.

Gina Mapua, president of the group, said that despite the rapid deterioration of habitats, bird watchers are enthusiastic for new species to find or discover every time they go bird-watching.

She said there is a need to make people know more and appreciate nature, saying that protection and conservation should not be confined in bird-watching alone.

A platform for environmental advocacy

SHE said club members, which include lawyers, doctors, engineers, architects and even youth and students, are all nature lovers and saving the planet in their own little way. "Some of us are members of different clubs and have different focus for the environment, but bird-watching is our common platform for advocating environment [protection]," she said.

"Our advocacy is to raise awareness to [protecting] our environment through bird-watching and through bird festivals, working with government agencies like the DENR to protect birds and habitat, and the DOT to promote bird-watching overseas," Lu said.

Lu added that the government should do its best to protect the ecosystem and conserve the country's precious birds, including the migratory ones, to ensure their survival.

"There are enough laws but the enforcement and implementation is very much lacking," Lu said.

The DENR-BMB maintains that, the government is on its toes in addressing the various threats and challenges in protecting migratory birds, as well as endemic and native birds, along with other species of flora and fauna.

Lim said that despite the concerted efforts, protection and conservation will remain a big challenge but will be the key to maintaining the country's status as haven for migratory birds.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICES



WHY NOT?
DR. EMIL Q.
JAVIER

A misapplication of the Writ of Kalikasan (Part 3)

*There are those who look
at things the way they are,
and ask why...*

*I dream of things that
never were, and ask why
not? ... Robert Kennedy.*

The application of the Writ of Kalikasan on the conduct of field testing of Bt eggplant was unwarranted both on procedural and substantive grounds.

Associate Justice Marvic Leonen himself in his concurring majority opinion pointed out that the petition for the writ as it assails the field testing permits for Bt talong should have dismissed and considered moot and academic. The two-year permits for the Bt talong field tests were about to expire and the field tests themselves have been completed. There was therefore according to Justice Leonen grave abuse of discretion which amounts to excess of jurisdiction on the part of the Court of Appeals.

In fact, Associate Justice Leonen chided Greenpeace and the other respondents: "... Environmental advocacy also requires as understanding of science and locating of the proper place of various norms such as the precautionary principle. ... Filing a judicial remedy about two years late and without the required scientific rigor required by the allegations and the arguments misses these standards."

For the Courts to conclude "that the testing and introduction of Bt talong by its nature and interest is a grave and present danger (and an assault on) the Filipinos' right to a balanced ecology because the genetic construction of the Bt talong is meant to eliminate one feeder (the borer) in order to give undue advantage (the humans)" is very naive to say the least.

All of agriculture and medicine are meant to alter/tilt/modify the balance of nature in favour of man's needs and purposes against other living things (the weeds, insects, other pests, parasites, fungi, bacteria and viruses) which attack crops, livestock and man's own person.

By this interpretation of the Writ of Kalikasan the business of agriculture and practice of medicine will have to be forbidden.

This quaint theory of balanced ecology misses the point that the balance in nature is not static but dynamic and constantly changing. Changes in the environment whether natural or man-made alter/modify the natural order of things and the various components of the ecological systems accordingly respond/react to attain a new equilibrium. Species continually evolve and new species come into being as others less environmentally fit become extinct.

Actually the greatest threat to biodiversity is the loss of habitat due to conversion of forestlands, savannas and mangroves into farmlands, for-

est plantations and fishponds. Thus, the best way to conserve biodiversity in addition to seed cold stores and genebanks (*ex situ* conservation) is by way of protected areas (*in situ* conservation), the many NIPAS under the jurisdiction of the Department of Environment and Natural resources (DENR) where all man's interventions are excluded. Corollarily, it is also best to sustainably optimize production from the existing farm lands, forest plantations and fish ponds to obviate demand for further clearing of natural habitats.

Moreover, the biochemistry and mode of action of the specific Cry1A proteins/toxins artificially introduced into Bt talong while toxic to the eggplant fruit and shoot borer (FSB) and other lepidopterans are harmless to humans, mammals and other insect orders.

The Cry1A proteins/toxins are neutralized and digested by the gastric juices in our stomachs into their component amino acids.

The proteins/toxins to be effective must adhere to certain molecular receptors called cadherins which are found in the gut of susceptible insects. The human intestine does not have these specific molecular receptors and hence this class of toxins is innocuous to human beings.

Between Bt talong versus the excessive chemical pesticides used to control the eggplant FSB, the Bt technology ought to be safer for all concerned and more profitable to small farmers.

MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICES

A misapplication of the word of (philosophy)

Broad Scientific Consensus in Safety of GM Crops

Since the Greenpeace petition against Bt talong field trials is in fact moot and academic, the Supreme Court (SC) proceeded on its own and declared the Department of Agriculture Administrative Order (DA-AO) No. 8 series of 2002 as null and void.

This ruling goes much farther than Bt talong since DA-AO No. 8 provided the rules and regulations and the legal basis for the importation and release into the environment of plants and plant products derived from the use of modern biotechnology.

The SC observed that "... There exists a preponderance of evidence that the release of GMOs into the environment threatens to damage our ecosystems, and not just the field trials, and eventually the health of our people. ..."

This is where the SC grievously erred. There is no unanimity but there is broad global scientific consensus on the safety of GMO crops.

The following prestigious international and national scientific bodies have placed on record their endorsement that GMO crops as are safe as their conventionally produced counterparts; See exact quotes in October 11, 2015 issue of Manila Bulletin Why not column.

- World Health Organization
- National Academies of Science (USA)
- The Royal Society (United Kingdom)

- European Food Safety Authority
- American Association of the Advancement of Science
- American Medical Association
- Chinese Academy of Sciences
- Brazilian Academy of Sciences
- Indian National Science Academy
- Mexican Academy of Sciences
- Third World Academy of Sciences

In contrast, as far as the literature shows, NO RESPECTABLE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCE has expressed objection to GMO crops. Unfortunately, the SC gave more credence to the anti-GMO concerned scientists cited by Greenpeace who is a distinct albeit loud, fear-mongering minority.

Even in the European Union, where many countries have imposed a moratorium on the planting of GMO crops (but not importation and consumption) their chief scientific advisor Dr. Anne Glover had these very forceful words to say:

"... There is no substantiated case of any adverse impact on human health, animal health or environmental health, so that's pretty robust evidence, and I would be confident in saying that there is no more risk in eating GMO food than eating conventionally farmed food."

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of AAAS Scientists Say GM Food Safe

The Pew Research Center in collaboration with the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) released in January 2015 the findings of the survey of US adult citizens and US-based members of AAAS. The survey showed that an overwhelming majority (88%) of scientists polled agreed that GM foods are generally safe. This statistic has a margin of error of 1.7%.

In contrast, only 37% of the American public believe GM foods are safe.

The Pew Research Center is part of Pew Charitable Trusts, an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization founded by the heirs of John Pew owner/founder of SUNOCO oil company. It is a conservative organization whose environment portfolio includes saving the natural environment and protecting the rich array of life it supports.

The AAAS, established in the US in 1848, is the world's largest general scientific society and publishes the highly regarded journal "Science." It had 126,995 members in 2008.

The United States is not the universe but if 88% of the scientists surveyed belonging to the AAAS agree that GM crops are safe, that's about as close we can get to a scientific consensus. Incidentally, that's a shade better than the 87% American scientists in the same survey who agree that climate change is occurring because of human activities.

Dr. Emil Q. Javier is a Member of the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) and also Chair of the Coalition for Agriculture Modernization in the Philippines (CAMP). For any feedback, email ecjavier@yahoo.com

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

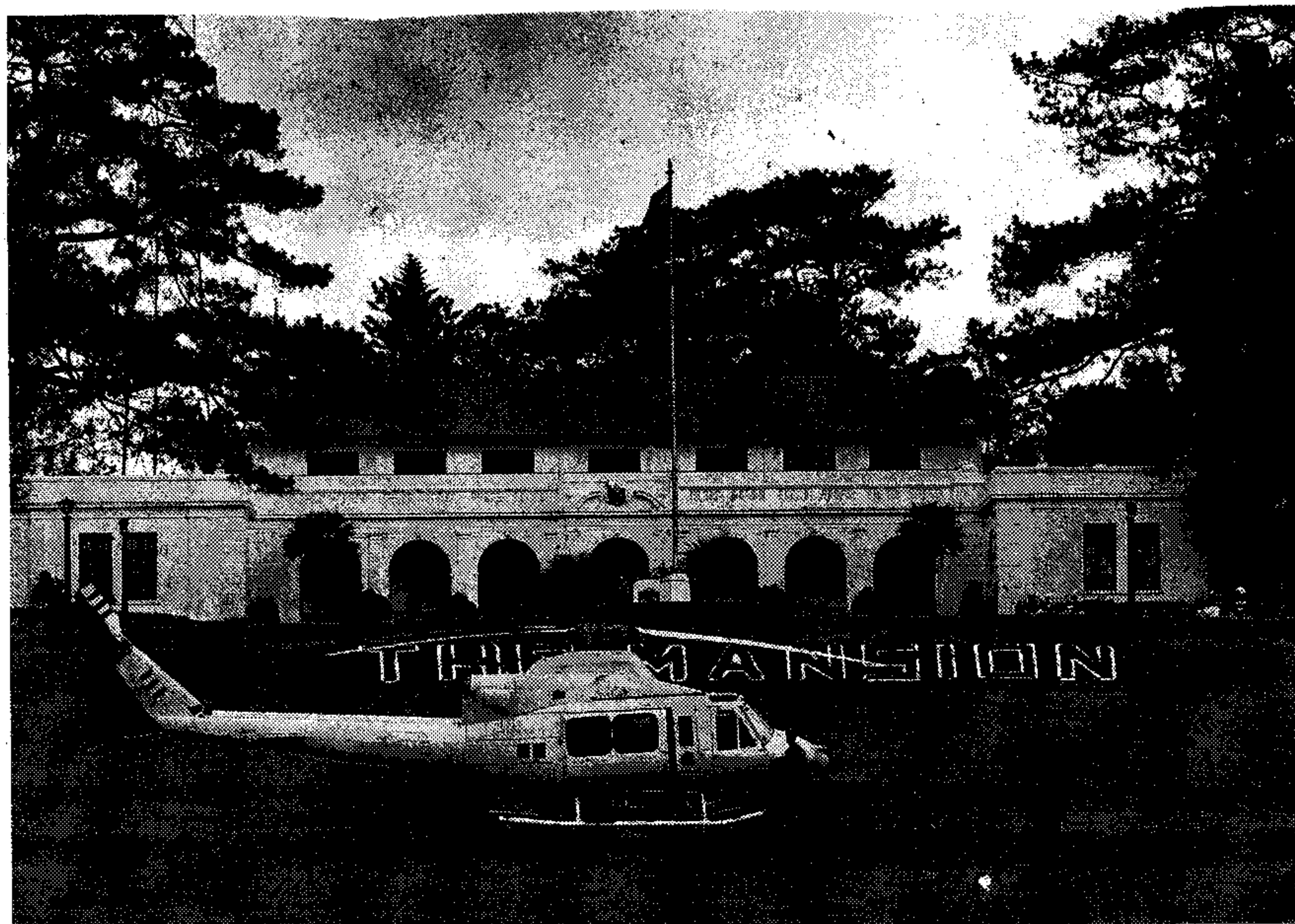
Baguio case highlights row on ancestral land claims

BAGUIO CITY—A court here has dismissed a case filed by a businesswoman who wants to develop a newly purchased lot that the government insists is inside the reservation of the presidential Mansion.

Imelda Tan Lao had asked for a mandamus (a judicial remedy) to compel the Baguio City government to release zoning and building permits for a piece of titled ancestral land that she said was bought “in good faith” from an Ibaloi family.

The Lao family had gone to court to acquire locational clearance, certificate of zoning compliance and building permit for a proposed single-story structure which the city’s various agencies refused to process.

But in a Dec. 10 decision, Baguio Regional Trial Court Judge Emmanuel Rasing ruled that the city government had legitimate reasons to deny Lao’s family these permits because of legal questions over the sale of the Mansion lot.



THE CENTURY-OLD Mansion House in Baguio City has been the summer home for many presidents. But a section of its reservation was recently titled to an Ibaloi family by a government agency, portions of which were sold to Baguio families who are now unable to develop the disputed lots.

EVESPIRITU/INQUIRER
NORTHERN LUZON

The Abanag family acquired Certificates of Ancestral Land Title (CALTs) in 2010 over lands, some of which are inside the Mansion reservation.

The Abanag CALTs were counted among the titled ancestral lands which a National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) en banc resolu-

tion described as fraught with “procedural and substantive defects, [which] constitute fraud that warrants [their] cancellation.”

Unclear legal right

The Aug. 24 resolution, signed by NCIP Chair Leonor Oralde-Quintayo and Commissioners Zenaida Brigida Pawid,

Bayani Sumaoang, Cosme Lambayon and Dionesia Bangua, was included in the city government’s response to Lao’s petition, said Baguio legal officer Melchor Rabanes.

“Before mandamus is issued, it is essential that the petitioner (Lao) should have a clear legal right to the thing demanded... This is where the

petitioner fails,” Rasing said in his four-page decision.

The decision said offices at City Hall followed Administrative Order No. 52, series of 2014, which imposed guidelines governing the issuance of permits over areas covered by CALTs.

3 disputed CALTs

The order said permits may be given if the CALT “does not include or overlap forest reservations, watershed reservations or other government reservations” or is not part of “any pending case before the court or any tribunals.”

Since 2010, various government agencies have challenged three sets of Baguio CALTs in the courts because these encroached on the Mansion lot; the Wright Park, where houses have sprouted; the Baguio Dairy Farm, half of which had been settled and illegally excavated; and the site of Casa Vallejo hotel, which was almost claimed by a Baguio Ibaloi family. **Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon**

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DA reaffirms commitment to mangrove project

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is strengthening its aquasilviculture program, a multi-purpose production system that allows production of fish in a mangrove reforestation project.

Aquasilviculture which involves the growing of fish and other aquatic organisms within a mangrove area without cutting down a single tree is seen as an environment-friendly approach to enhance fisheries production in the wild, while at the same re-

habilitate the mangrove habitat which currently represents less than a quarter of what used to be a 550,000-hectare mangrove cover in the 1950s.

Agriculture Secretary Proceso Alcala said the Philippine National Aquasilviculture Program (PNAP) had already planted 73,847,231 mangrove propagules or 73.85 percent of the total target as of the end of September last year.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

also procured several equipment including 27 units of 40-footer monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) vessels, 70 units of 30-footer multi-mission vessels, and two 50-meter vessels equipped with necessary special operations tools.

Other devices such as service fire arms, global positioning system (GPS), night vision goggles, scuba gears, and rigid-hulled inflatable rubber boats have also

been procured.

The PNAP is a program implemented by the BFAR, which aims to develop self-sufficient fisherfolk families who are advocates of fisheries resource protection through mangrove habitat rehabilitation, promotion of aquasilviculture and establishment of community-based multi-species hatcheries.

Based on government data, there are already 1,632,332 registered municipal fisherfolks and 118, 222 registered municipal

boats.

According to the DA, the fisheries subsector grew 1.8 percent in the third quarter of 2015 on the back of increased tuna production.

Skipjack (gulyasan) production went up 15.88 percent during the period, the highest growth rate among tuna species.

Eastern little tuna (Bonito) registered a 1.88 percent growth while yellowfin tuna (*tambakol*) increased by 6.67 percent.

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Sure na mas matipid at 'di na dadaing sa oil price hike...

NI: CEDIE R.

KAHOY, GINAGAMIT NA ALTERNATIBONG FUEL SA MGA SASAKYAN

SA taas ng mga biling ngayon, marami sa atin ang walang magawa kundi mamalimos na lang sa lansangan o kaya hahawak na lang sa patalim para may maipangkain sa pamilya. Kapag may oil price hike naman pati mga pamasahang ating mga iskolar at mga senior citizen, panay ang taas din. Marami ang na-apektuhan. Marami ang nagdurusa. Hindi lang 'yan nangyayari sa 'Pinas kundi pati na sa buong mundo.

Sa Ukraine, sa sobrang mahal at taas ng presyo ng krudo, gumagawa sila ng alternatibong enerhiya sa kanilang mga sasakyan. Gamit ang mga kahoy, ito ang kanilang ikino-convert bilang kanilang panggatong sa sasakyan sa tulong ng wood-burning stove at metal canister sa likod ng kanilang mga sasakyan na nakakonekta sa makina nito. Maraming dekada na ang lumipas mula pa noong World War I nang naging sikat na gamitin ito ng mga motorista.

Binuhay na lang ito ulit ni Eugene Chernigov, 36-anyos na isang propesor sa

physics at mathematics sa kanilang siyudad. Dalawang buwan ang iginugol ng propesor para basahin ang mga artikulo tungkol sa kahoy na ginagawang pang-gas sa sasakyan mula pa



noong 1939. Layunin niya kasing magkaroon ng mas matipid na alternatibong fuel system hindi lang para sa sariling kapakanan kundi para sa lahat ng kanyang kababayan.

Natutunan niyang mula sa wood combustion, sinusunog ang 40 pounds ng kahoy at ang gas na makalap nito ay napupunta sa metal canister. Dito kasi naipalalamig, naipi-filter ang

gas na direktso sa makina ng sasakyan. Mula sa rami ng ganitong kahoy, maaari niyang mapaandar at maipatakbo ng 100 kilometro ang lumang Opel, isang sikat na brand ng sasakyan sa Europa. Nagagastos niya lang dito ay 20 hryvnia o katumbas ng P20.00 sa atin. Kumpara naman kapag gas ang ginamit, nagkakahalaga ito sa kanila ng 115 hryvnia. Malayo ang pagkakaiba, 'di ba? Sa sobrang kamahalan nito, marami na talaga sa kanila na ikino-convert na nila sa wood-fueled ang kanilang mga sasakyan.

Sa kanyang karagdagang impormasyon, maaari rin daw maging fuel ang plastic na bote pero walang batbat daw ito sa mga kahoy.

Ang magandang epekto pa nito, imbes usok na nakapollute sa hangin, tanging water vapor at carbon dioxide lang ang inilalabas ng mga sasakyang ginagamitan ng kahoy.

Sa ngayon, marami na sa Ukraine ang sumunod sa yapak nina Chernigov at Sergey Lagoon na unang nagdisenyo ng unang wood-burning car. Hindi lang ito para makatipid kundi para maging eco-friendly pa sa paligid. Ang mga nagko-convert ng kahoy bilang gas ng mga sasakyan ay maaari nang nasa likod o nasa loob ng compartment ng sasakyan.

Ano pa ang hinihintay mo, baka ikaw na ang kauna-unahang Pilipino na makagawa rin ng wood-burning car sa 'Pinas? Try mo lang! Nakatulong ka na sa kalikasan, nakatipid ka pa!

The Manila Times

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

FREAKY WEATHER SYSTEMS USHER IN 2016

LONDON: With temperatures above freezing at the North Pole, deadly tornadoes in Texas, extreme heat in Australia and floods in Britain and Missouri, the world is beset by extreme weather events as it welcomes 2016.

A powerful and destructive low-pressure system in the North Atlantic has pushed the mercury up to two degrees Celsius (35.6 Fahrenheit) at the pole, 20 degrees above the

seasonal norm.

The Arctic has borne the brunt of global warming, with temperatures three degrees higher than the pre-industrial era.

But linking the current mild conditions to climate change is premature, warned Natalie Hasell, meteorologist at the Canadian Department of the Environment, saying that scientists do not base their conclusions

"on one anomaly."

The North Atlantic depression also brought eastern Canada an unusually warm holiday period, with temperatures hitting 15.9 degrees Celsius in Montreal on Christmas Eve, around 20 degrees above the seasonal average.

This was followed by heavy snowfall that covered the country's eastern half.

In the United States, tornadoes and floods left at least 49 dead.

The waters of the mighty Mississippi River have already exceeded overflow levels by four meters in some areas, claiming 13 lives.

In the south, spectacular tornadoes devastated parts of Texas.

The common cause of the unusual events is a particularly strong El Niño system, amplified by global warming, according to scientists.

El Niños, which emerge every four to seven years on average and run from October through January, are triggered by a shift in trade winds across the Pacific around the Equator.

However, the 2015 episode is "probably the strongest in the last 100 years," said Jerome Lecou, forecaster at Meteo-France.

"There is no simple answer" to explain the exceptional conditions, he added.

Strawberries at Christmas

Although centered on the Pacific Ocean, El Niño "has an impact on a global scale," Jean Jouzel, former vice president of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), said.

"Generally, El Niño years are warmer than average," he said.

In Australia, scorching heat has led to large forest fires and temperatures are forecast to soon hit 38 degrees Celsius in the south.

In France, the unseasonably warm weather has baffled Mother Nature with Périgord strawberries, Alsatian asparagus and mimosas all flourishing on the French Riviera.

In Spain, higher temperatures and low rainfall have led to an unusual outbreak of wildfires in the north.

Several Italian cities have introduced traffic restrictions to combat fine-particle pollution, which has been worsened by the dry and calm conditions.

Record rainfall has brought unprecedented flooding to the north of England, leaving the historic city of York under feet of water and thousands evacuated over December.

Stormy weather buffeting the North Sea has brought havoc to oilfields on New Year's Eve, with one man reported

killed by a giant wave hitting a rig, and hundreds of workers evacuated after a huge barge broke its moorings and began drifting.

"There is no doubt in my mind that climate change is partly responsible for the flooding across the north of England," said Piers Forster, professor of climate science at Leeds University.

Britain's mean December temperature was a record-breaking eight degrees Celsius, smashing the previous high of 6.9 degrees set in 1934, according to the Met Office.

It was also the wettest December on record for Scotland and Wales and one of the top 10 wettest in Britain as a whole.

Worldwide, temperatures between January and November have already broken records, suggesting that 2015 will be the hottest in modern history, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"On a global level, we really are in an exceptional year as it is just over a tenth of a degree warmer than 2014, which itself was a record year," said Jean Jouzel.

"This is a real leap, one tenth of a degree from one year to another," he added.

With El Niño showing little sign of running out of steam, he predicted that 2016 could be warmer still, but that following years may be less extreme.

AFP

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Colorado scientists develop fully recyclable, biodegradable plastic

BY MARVYN N. BENANING
Correspondent

SCIENTISTS at the Colorado State University (CSU) have beaten other researchers in the race to develop a fully recyclable and biodegradable plastic, rendering petroleum-based polluting plastics obsolete.

The researchers also undercut the work of US biotechnologists who have been coaxing fungi to produce plastic sheets in a process called biomimesis.

This product could potentially reduce global pollution by preventing the dumping of nonbiodegradable plastics in sanitary landfills and the dumping grounds of computers and other gadgets in China, US, the Philippines and other countries.

In 2013 the European Union (EU) estimated that hard plastic formed a significant volume of the electronic waste (e-waste) that comprised 25 percent of the waste exported to Africa and Asia for recycling.

"The global volume of electronic waste is expected to grow by 33 percent in the next four years, when it will weigh the equivalent of eight of the great Egyptian pyramids, according to the UN's Step initiative, which was set up to tackle the world's growing e-waste crisis.

"Last year nearly 50 million metric tons of e-waste was generated worldwide—or about 7 kilograms for every person on the planet. These are electronic goods made up of hundreds of different materials and containing toxic substances, such as lead, mercury, cadmium, arsenic and flame retardants," the Guardian of

the United Kingdom reported on December 14, 2013.

Recycling plastics and other metals in Guiya, Guangdong, the biggest landfill for e-waste, has led to many cancer cases among the workers sifting through the materials in search of copper, gold, zinc, beryllium, tantalum and rare earths.

"Once in landfill, these toxic materials seep out into the environment, contaminating land, water and the air. In addition, devices are often dismantled in primitive conditions. Those who work at these sites suffer frequent bouts of illness," Greenpeace said.

Moreover, with the use of recyclable and biodegradable polymers developed by Prof. Eugene Chen and post-doctoral fellow Miao Hong at CSU, the huge pile of e-waste could be reduced substantially, with the plastics being used again and the metals in computers, cellular telephones and tablets retrieved with less waste.

For his work on the completely recyclable and biodegradable plastic, Chen was recently bestowed the Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge award.

In their report to the November 23, 2015, issue of Nature Chemistry, Chen and Miao described the characteristics of the polyester that when simply reheated for an hour converts back to its original molecular building blocks and is, thus, ready for reuse.

Biodegradable plastics have been around for some time, Chen noted, and most of them are made from the biomaterial polylactic acid but they are not fully recyclable.