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DAY

Friday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR to protect river

By ELLALYN B. DE VERA

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has named an important water body in Isabela as the country's 21st water quality management area (WQMA) for protection and improvement of the river system.

Under a department administrative order issued by DENR Secretary Ramon Paje, the Calao-Delinquente-Diadi River System (CDDRS) in Santiago City will be restored to its long-term health and protected from further damage due to development activities.

"The river system will now

be placed under close monitoring by authorities to ensure that its water quality complies with the standards set forth under Republic Act No. 9275 or the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004," Paje said.

CDDRS is the 21st WQMA declared since the enactment of RA 9275 and the 18th under the Aquino administration. Nine of those areas are located in Luzon, five in Visayas, and seven in Mindanao.

The law seeks to provide a decentralized management system for water quality protection and improvement of river systems.

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BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

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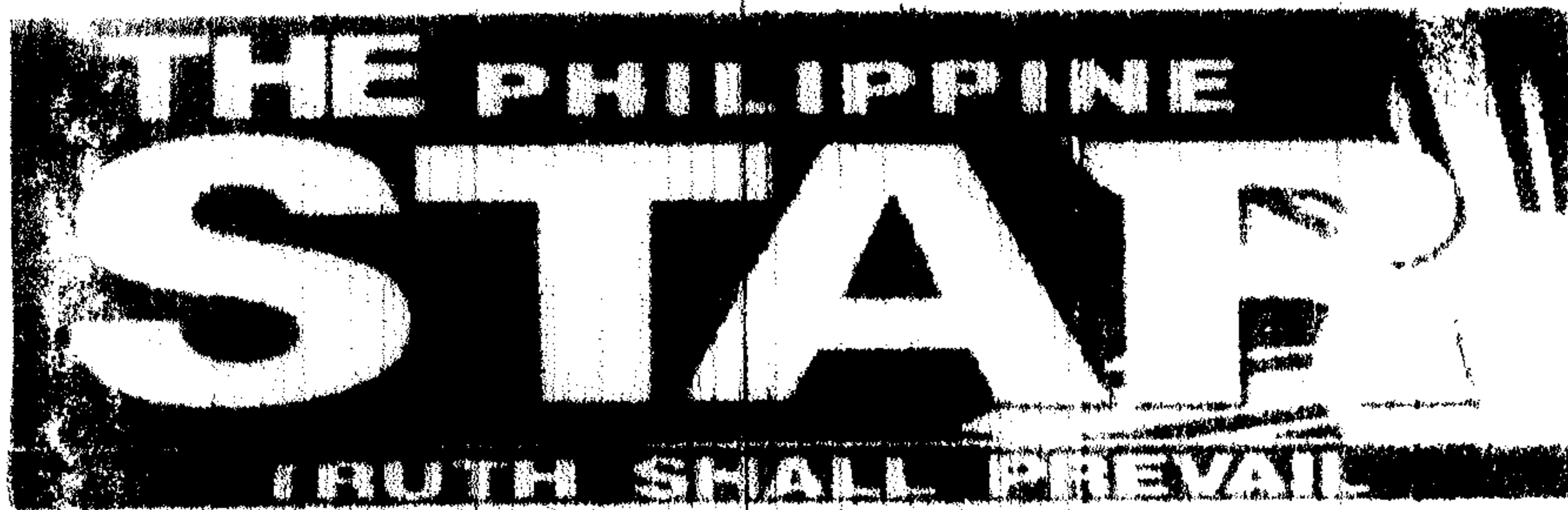
DENR acts to protect Isabela river system

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) announced on Thursday it has designated Calao-Delinquente-Diadi River System (CDDRS) in Santiago City, Isabela as a water quality management area (WQMA).

Designating an area as a WQMA is one of the strategies identified by the government to effectively enforce the Clean Water Act (CWA) of 2004, according to a report by Leza A. Acorda-Cuevas of the DENR-Environmental Management Bureau. By signing an order designating

the CDDRS as a WQMA, Environment Secretary Ramon J.P. Paje has brought to 21 the number of rivers designated as WQMA in the country, a statement issued by the DENR Strategic Communication and Initiatives Service (SCIS) said.

According to the SCIS, the order aims to restore the CDDRS's integrity and protect it from damage caused by development activities. As a WQMA, it will now be placed under close monitoring to ensure that its water quality complies with the standards set under the CWA (Republic Act 9275).



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El Niño preventing cyclone entry to Phl

By HELEN FLORES

No tropical cyclone is expected to enter the country until next month due to El Niño, an official of the state weather bureau said yesterday.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said El Niño, which developed in March last year and has caused drought in many parts of the country, is expected to last until the second quarter of the year.

Anthony Lucero, PAGASA officer-in-charge for climate impact, monitoring and prediction section, said no cyclone entered the country in January and February of 1972, 1982, 1997 and 2009, during which the country was hit by El Niño.

Last year, only 15 cyclones occurred, lower than the annual average of 19 to 20.

Lucero said "below to way below normal" rainfall is expected in most areas from January to April.

About 85 percent or 68 provinces of the country, mostly agricultural areas, are likely to be hit by drought by the end of April.

Only two to six tropical cyclones are seen to enter the Philippine area of responsibility in the first half of the year, Lucero said.

PAGASA deputy administrator Flaviana Hilario said El Niño's impact could possibly be felt up to the second half of the year.

The agency is appealing to the public to save water as the dry spell can bring down the water level in dams.

The country relies on rainfall to fill its dams.

El Niño is expected to bring warmer than normal temperatures during the dry or summer season.

The Manila Times

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

PH mulls higher sugar imports due to El Niño

AFTER six years as a net exporter, Manila is likely to import sugar this year at a higher volume than earlier expected given tight supply caused by the prevailing dry spell, the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said on Thursday.

Ma. Regina Bautista-Martin, SRA administrator, said they are now studying schemes to augment domestic supply as more sugarcane farmers and millers are reporting a drop in their sugar production.

"El Nino has significantly affected our sugarcane production. The lack of rain has diluted the sweetness of the standing crops, resulting in lower volume of the sugar milled," Martin said in a telephone interview.

In the first nine months of 2015, sugarcane production dropped by a hefty 41.8 percent, which was attributed to unfavorable weather conditions that affected major sugarcane plantations, particularly in the Visayas Region.

In Negros Occidental alone, there was a notable decrease in the area harvested for canes intended for centrifugal sugar production because of El Nino. The prolonged drought also caused stunted canes.

In Mindanao, some farmers shifted from sugarcane farming to cultivation of banana and rubber.

The SRA chief said that the additional sugar imports will help maintain a healthy buffer stock as local exporters and traders attempt to fulfill Manila's

commitment to export sugar to Washington under the tariff quota scheme.

The Philippines is one of the select countries given an annual allocation of sugar exports to the US market at a premium.

For this crop year, Manila has a regular US sugar quota of 135,508 metric tons (MT). Washington allowed the Philippines to retain its regular quota despite being able to fill only half or 70,000 MT of the US sugar quota in the previous crop year.

Tariff-rate quotas allow countries to export specified quantities of a product to the United States at a relatively low tariff, but subject all imports of the product above a predetermined threshold to a higher tariff.

For the current crop year that began September 2015 and ends August 2016, the regulator said they expect sugar production to reach 2.25 to 2.35 million MT, while local consumption was

► **Sugar B4**

■ SUGAR FROM B2

PH mulls higher sugar

pegged at 2.2 million MT.

But Martin said supply could be tighter than expected, citing the latest field monitoring in major sugar producing provinces.

"We are expecting a drop from our previous production target. That's why we are now looking at increasing our sugar imports to replace the volume that would be shipped out to the United States, as well as ensure that we have enough supply for our domestic market," she said.

The Philippines has not imported sugar and has remained a net exporter in the past five years.

"However, it is to the national interest that the Philippines export

to the US under its sugar quota allocation while ensuring sufficient supply for the domestic market," Martin said.

At present, traders can import 1.25 MT of sugar for every 1.0 MT exported.

"What we want to do is to adjust the export-import ratio from 1.25 MT to about 1.50 MT to ease pressure on supply," Martin said.

She added that authorized traders will start export of 50,000-60,000 MT of sugar to the United States this week, adding that they expect to fulfill the entire US sugar quota by next month.

JAMES KONSTANTIN GALVEZ

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Isabela City starts water rationing

By A. Perez Rimando

ISABELA CITY, Basilan—The Isabela City Water District started water rationing in this city and in neighboring towns in its service area last week because of the impact of El Niño, management said in a statement.

The district administration said the move seeks to properly distribute available water supply and “to limit extraction from local water sources to cope with the long drought period.”

The rationing, it said, was in response to a recent Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration’s El Niño Ad-

visory No. 10 projecting dry spell up to end of January and drought up to the end of 2016 first quarter in the island province.

The ICWD scheduled water rationing from 8 a.m. to 12 noon to some 20 city villages, including Aguada, Begang, Binuangan, Menzi, Port area, Sta. Cruz, La Piedad, Sunrise,

Sumagdang, City Hall area, Lazaro Drive, Macopa, and Tabiawan.

Water allotment from 12 noon to 4 p.m. was set for other barangays, such as Baluno, Busay, Begang, Lanote. Market site, Calvario, Panunsulan, Dona Ramona, San Rafael, Mango Drive, Mahogany Drive, Tabuk, Timpul, Geras and Kaumpurnah, the district said.

The rationing timetable was slated based “on the status of the current water supply production, ICWD said, adding that “there might be instances when the rationing period may be shortened depending on water supply availability.”

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Nickel Asia ore shipments drop 40%

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

Nickel Asia Corp. recorded an almost 40 percent drop in the value of its nickel ore shipments for 2015 despite a 10 percent increase in volume.

In a report to the local bourse, Nickel Asia said the estimated value of shipments from January to December 2015 reached P14.4 billion, down 39.2 percent from P23.7 billion the previous year.

Nickel Asia's four operating mines sold a total 19.7 million wet metric tons (WMT) of nickel by year-end 2015, higher than the 17.9 million WMT shipped and delivered the previous year.

Direct exports of ore contributed to the increase in the company's shipment volume, rising to 11.88 million WMT from 10.47 million WMT in 2014.

Ore deliveries to the company's ore leaching plants also rose in 2015, particularly the

Taganito plant which completed operations at full capacity. The Taganito mine accounted for 39 percent of total shipments during the period.

Prices of nickel ore exports in 2015 averaged at \$22.66 per WMT, significantly lower than the average \$45.10 per WMT in 2014.

There was a surge in ore prices in 2014 on speculations of supply tightness as the Indonesian ore export ban took effect. The supply tightness, however, did not materialize because of an increase in supply from other sources and weaker global demand.

Low-grade limonite ore shipped to the Coral Bay and Taganito processing plants, which remains linked to prices at the London Metal Exchange, fetched an average price of \$5.36 per pound of

payable nickel in 2015 compared to \$7.69 per pound sold in the prior year.

"The slowdown in China's economic growth coupled with a strong US dollar clobbered metal prices across the board, and in the case of nickel, resulted in a steep reversal of the strong prices we experienced in 2014," Nickel Asia president and chief executive officer Gerard Brimo said.

However, he said Nickel Asia's position as a low-cost producer in mining operations will help the company ride out the challenges in the current down cycle.

Nickel Asia is a global supplier of lateritic nickel ore and exports both saprolite and limonite ore to customers in Japan and China. Its operating mines are Rio Tuba, Taganito, Cagdianao and Taganaan sites, all located in the southern part of the Philippines.

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Nickel Asia nickel-ore exports rose 10% in 2015

MINING company Nickel Asia Corp. (NAC) on Thursday said the total volume of nickel ore it shipped in 2015 rose by 10 percent to 19.7 million wet metric tons (WMT), from the 17.9 million WMT recorded in 2014.

In a disclosure, the firm said the increase in shipments could be attributed to the direct exports of ore during the period. NAC's exports of ore in 2015 grew by 13.46 percent to 11.88 million WMT compared to 10.47 million WMT in 2014.

NAC said the Taganito mine accounted for 39 percent of the total shipment.

"The mine shipped a total of 2.5

million WMT of saprolite ore and 5.24 million WMT of limonite ore, including 4.43 million WMT of limonite to the Taganito plant," NAC said.

This was followed by the company's Rio Tuba mine, which contributed 33 percent of the shipments. The mine shipped 3.18 million WMT of saprolite ore and 3.37 million WMT of limonite ore to the Coral Bay plant.

said the NAC's operations continue to remain profitable.

"Our position as a low-cost producer in our mining operations will help the company ride-out the challenges in the current down cycle," he said.

The mining firm said the estimated realized nickel price on 11.9 million WMT of its direct exports of ore in 2015 averaged \$22.66 per WMT, lower than the average of \$45.10 per WMT realized in 2014.

"It will be recalled that there was a surge in ore prices in 2014, due to

About 2.56 million WMT of limonite ore and 650,000 WMT of saprolite ore was also shipped by the company's Hinatuan mine, while its Cagdiana mine shipped 1.44 million WMT of limonite ore and 729,000 WMT of saprolite ore, NAC said.

However, the company also said its record volume of ore shipments in 2015 was not sufficient to offset the fall in nickel prices during the year. Due to this, the estimated value of the NAC's shipments decreased to P14.4 billion in 2015 compared to P23.7 billion in 2014.

The year 2015 marked the seventh consecutive year of increasing production and shipment volumes. Unfortunately, the slowdown in China's economic growth coupled with a strong US dollar clobbered metal prices across the board, and in the case of nickel, resulted to a steep reversal of the strong prices we experienced in 2014," NAC President and CEO Gerard H. Brimo said.

Despite the fall in prices, Brimo

the expectation of supply tightness resulting from the effects of the Indonesian export ore ban, which did not occur," NAC said.

With respect to low-grade limonite ores sold to both the Coral Bay and Taganito plants, which continue to be linked to LME prices, NAC realized an average of \$5.36 per pound of payable nickel in 2015, also lower than last year's average of \$7.69 per pound of payable nickel. *Mary Grace Padin*

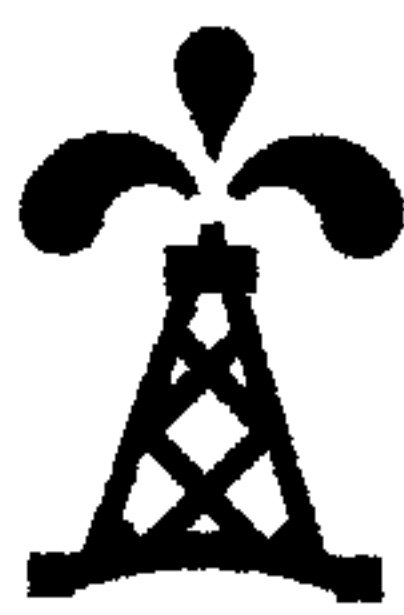
BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

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Asean burns up ranks of global polluters

227%



**Surge in carbon-
dioxide emissions
from fossil in
Southeast Asia
between 1990 and 2010**

AS Southeast Asian economies boomed last decade, so did their pollution.

The region's emissions of carbon dioxide grew more rapidly between 1990 and 2010 than any other part of the world, with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) warning the associated global warming could trigger floods, water shortages and economic losses.

Carbon-dioxide emissions from fossil fuels surged 227 percent in Southeast Asia in the 20-year period, compared with 181 percent in South Asia and 12 percent in North America, the ADB said, citing World Bank data. Southeast Asia's emissions in metric tons per capita increased 157 percent in the period, also the fastest in the world, according to World Bank data compiled by Bloomberg.

"The region has experienced rapid economic growth in recent years, and regional greenhouse gas [GHG] emissions have rapidly increased, at nearly 5 percent per year over the last two decades," the ADB said this week. "In the absence of climate action, the region will be increasingly exposed to hotter temperatures, more destructive storms, greater flooding in some areas, and more droughts in others."

Still, Indonesia was the only Southeast Asian nation ranked among the top 10 greenhouse-gas emitters in the world in 2011. China was the worst, followed by the US and the European Union, according to the ADB report.

World leaders converged on Paris last month and agreed to make an unprecedented push for climate-change action, with 187 nations pledging voluntary commitments to limit pollution from 2020.

The ADB estimated last December that economic losses from climate change in Southeast Asia could reduce the region's GDP by as much as 11 percent by 2100.

The bank's report raised urgency for fast-tracking Southeast Asia's GHG emission reduction, warning limited impacts of climate change arising from these discharges can already reach some 11 percent of the region's GDP by 2100.

The report, titled "Southeast Asia and the Economics of Global Climate Stabilization," highlights need to mitigate GHGs, as it cites the region as among areas most vulnerable to climate change due to geographic, demographic, economic and other conditions prevailing in Asean.

The report also said Southeast Asia registered—at nearly 5 percent annually between 1990 and 2010—the fastest relative growth in emission of carbon dioxide, one of the climate change-driving GHGs.

"It finds that mitigation is in the region's economic interest," ADB Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development Vice President Bambang Susantono said at the report's launch.

He noted adapting energy-efficient (EE) measures and addressing deforestation are among mitigation activities for significantly reducing Southeast Asia's GHG emissions.

"EE is the largest source of potential emission reduction while addressing deforestation is critical to mitigation especially in the medium term," he said. *Bloomberg News*

Business World

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Migration, climate top risks for Davos leaders

LONDON — Humans live in an increasingly dangerous world, with political, economic and environmental threats piling up, according to experts polled by the World Economic Forum.

Ahead of its annual meeting in Davos next week, the group's 2016 Global Risks report on Thursday ranked the migrant crisis as the biggest single risk in terms of likelihood, while climate change was seen as having the greatest potential impact.

Around 60 million people have been displaced by conflicts from Syria to South Sudan, pushing refugee flows to record levels that are some 50% higher than during World War II.

Coupled with attacks such as those on Paris last year and geopolitical fault lines stretching from the Middle East to the South China Sea, the world is today arguably less politically stable than at any time since the end of the Cold War.

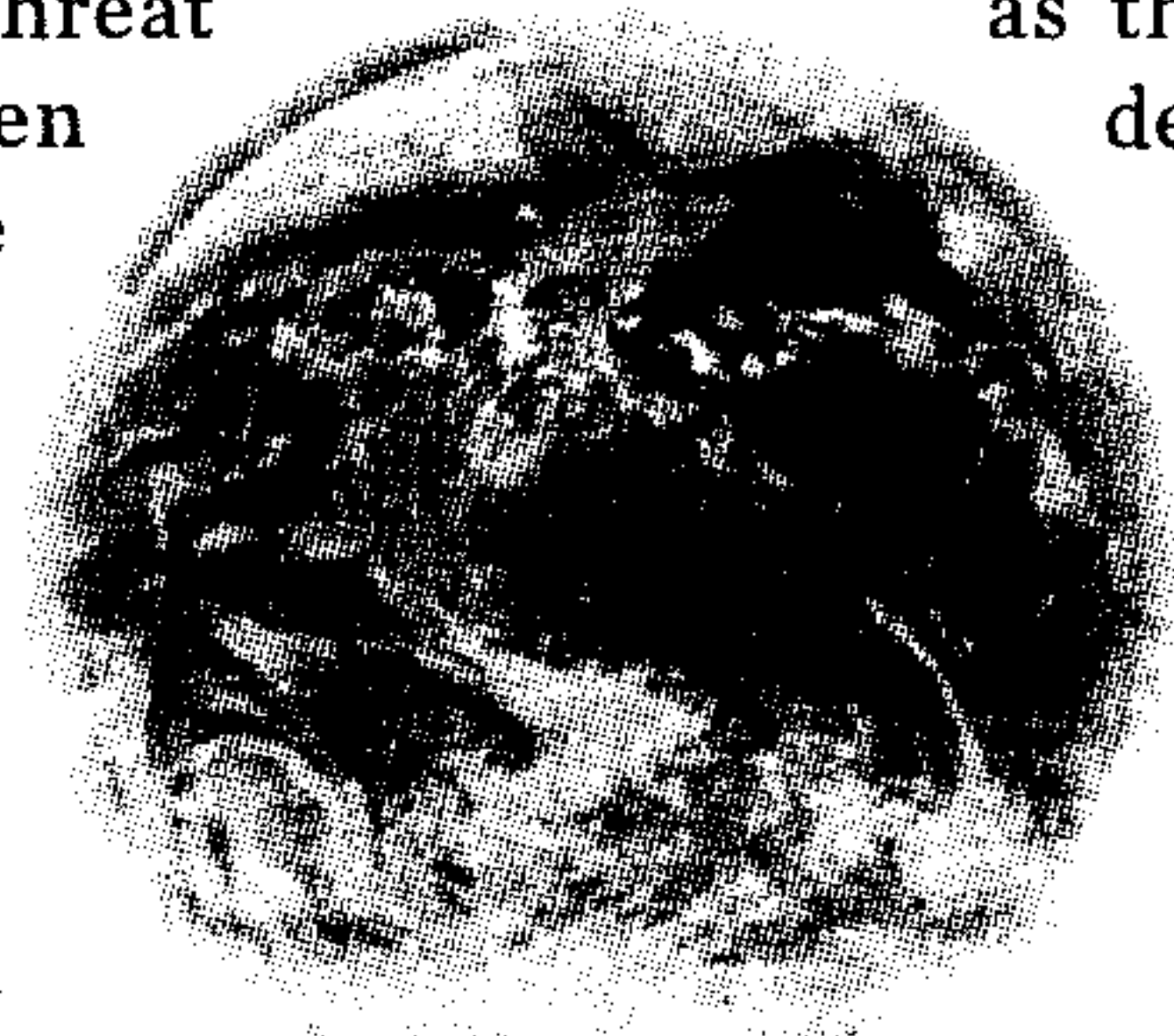
Economic fears, particularly for Chinese growth, and increasingly frequent extreme weather events are further red flags, resulting in a greater breadth of risks than at any time in the survey's 11-year history.

"Almost every risk is now up over the last couple of years, and it paints an overall environment of unrest," said John Drzik, head of global risk at insurance broker Marsh, which helped compile the report.

"Economic risks have come back reasonably strongly, with China, energy prices and asset bubbles all seen as significant problems in many countries."

Last year, the threat of conflict between states topped the list of risks for the first time, after previous editions mostly highlighted economic threats.

British finance minister George Osborne, one of those heading to the Alpine ski resort, set the mood last week, warning that 2016 opened "with a dangerous cocktail of new threats."



The Jan. 20-23 Davos meeting will bring together players from geopolitical hot spots such as the Middle East, Iran and Saudi Arabia, as well as the biggest ever U.S. delegation, including Vice-President Joe Biden.

North Korea's invitation, however, has been revoked after it conducted a nuclear test, defying a United Nations ban.

CYBER RISK A WILD CARD

The immediate problems of the Middle East tensions, China's turbulent markets, and a tumbling oil

price are likely to dominate corridor conversations at Davos.

But, long-term concerns identified in the report center more on physical and societal trends, especially the impact of climate change and the danger of attendant water and food shortages.

While last month's climate deal in Paris may act as a signal to investors to spend trillions of dollars to replace coal-fired power with solar panels and windmills, it is only a first step.

For businesses, the transition from fossil fuels remains uncertain, especially as political instability increases the risk of disrupted and canceled projects.

One wild card is cyberattack, which business leaders in several

developed countries, including the United States, Japan and Germany, rank as a major risk to operations, although it does not make the top threat list overall.

A glimpse in the report at the results of the Forum's Executive Opinion Survey showed that the global risks of highest concern for East Asia and the Pacific were energy price shock and an asset bubble.

Extreme weather events, though, were among the leading concerns for executives in the Philippines and Myanmar.

The report analyzed 29 global risks for both likelihood and impact over a 10-year horizon by surveying nearly 750 experts and decision makers. — **Reuters**

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China blasts Supreme Court ruling on Edca

CANBERRA—The Supreme Court's decision upholding the constitutionality of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (Edca) between the Philippines and the United States has set the stage for the negotiation for expanded US military presence in the Philippines—which is seen as a tough response to China's occupation of disputed territories in the West Philippine Sea.

In a press briefing, the Supreme Court's Public Information Office explained that the Court, ruling 10-4, sees the Edca not as a treaty but as an executive agreement that “merely aims to implement” already existing treaties ratified by the Senate, namely, the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty and the 1999 Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

“As it is, the Edca is not constitutionally infirm,” declared the Court. “As an executive agreement, it remains consistent with existing laws and treaties that it purports to implement.” The constitutionality of Edca, an issue of strategic importance to Philippine-American security, has finally been upheld by the Supreme Court two years after it was signed in 2014. The high court's ruling is seen to have the effect of keeping the defense pact from being politicized in the Senate, which it would have been if it had been submitted to the Senate for ratification.

In effect, the Court said it disagreed with the Senate Resolution of Nov. 10, 2015, which had insisted that the Edca must be submitted to the Senate as a treaty for concurrence of two-thirds of its members. In ruling that the Edca was not a treaty, the Court noted that it was “not the instrument” that allowed US troops or facilities to enter the country; it was the VFA in 1999.

The administration welcomed and capitalized on the Court's ruling, arguing that it would

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila



further “strengthen the strategic partnership” between the two allies. It maintained that the United States would greatly help in the modernization program of the military. President Aquino himself has said the country “definitely needs” the Edca.

Philippine and US officials welcomed the ruling. The Department of Foreign Affairs said that with the ruling, the two governments can now go ahead in “finalizing the arrangements for its full implementation.”

Indeed, within hours of the Court's decision, top diplomats and the defense departments of both countries started talks in Washington, on allowing US troops, warships and planes to use local military camps for mutual security against Beijing's perceived land-grabbing of territories in the West Philippine Sea, territories which are also claimed by Malaysia, Vietnam and Brunei, among other countries.

The talks in Washington drew a warning from China, which said that the Philippine Supreme Court's decision would only escalate tensions in the region over the disputed territories and “could push the situation to the brink of war.”

On the other hand, the official Chinese Xinhua News agency blasted the Supreme Court, calling it a “stupid” move. It warned of “dire consequences that

would only escalate tensions and undermine peace and stability in the region.”

The Xinhua editorial said that the Philippines appears to be now turning to Uncle Sam to b its ambition to counter China. Media reports s that the high court's ruling declaring the E constitutional bolsters US efforts to reassert presence in Asia and dovetails with the Phi pines' desire for American help in countering C na's maritime claims in the West Philippine Se

It appears that Chinese concerns have b fueled by the prospects of an enhanced Phi pine military capacity to resist Chinese territ al encroachments in disputed islets in the W Philippine Sea. The Chinese seem to dread prospects of a stronger Philippine-US secu partnership as a far more serious obstacle their expansionist ambitions in disputed terr ries more than the Philippines' diplomatic ini tives seeking UN arbitral interventions resolve the disputes.

What's on the cards in the Washington t that have aroused China's furious blast? Acco ing to Philippine military sources, Manila offered eight bases where US forces may build cilities to store equipment and supplies under Edca. Five military airfields, two naval bases a a training camp were reportedly offered to United States.

An American submarine arrived at Subic last week, hours before the Supreme Court ing. This port visit was clearly a show of force, naling that the United States is serious in prov ing its allies in the Asia-Pacific with military m cle to stand up to Chinese maritime penetratio and to prevent the West Philippine Sea from coming a Chinese lake, by default.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Realpolitik

THE SUPREME COURT decision upholding the constitutionality of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement was in essence a realistic recognition of the executive's prerogative to enter into international agreements. That the Edca would allow more American troops to be stationed temporarily in more military bases in the Philippines as a counterweight to Chinese expansionism in the West Philippine Sea was only a secondary consideration. The realpolitik behind the Edca, however, exactly has it the other way. The Aquino administration entered into the executive agreement precisely because, in its calculus, the country needed greater American military presence.

EDITORIAL "No court can tell the President to desist from choosing an executive agreement over a treaty to embody an international agreement, unless the case falls squarely within Article 18 Section 25," the Supreme Court ruled, referring to the exception provided in the Constitution regarding "foreign military bases, troops, or facilities."

"In the field of external affairs, the President must be given a larger measure of authority and wider discretion, subject only to the least amount of checks and restrictions under the Constitution."

That seems to be the right reading, in light of both history and jurisprudence. In foreign policy, the executive has always enjoyed a "larger measure of authority" and "wider discretion"—in contrast with domestic policy, for instance, the use of budgetary allocations such as congressional pork barrel, which the executive used to employ, until it was struck down by the Supreme Court.

And yet we cannot help but think that the Supreme Court failed to consider the case in all its dimensions. The real purpose of enhanced cooperation with the United States is to help the Philippines project a stronger, more credible military position in the West Philippine Sea. This is not in itself an unconstitutional initiative or even a necessarily controversial policy.

As we have written in this space more than once, the Aquino administration has the public's support for its multilevel approach to the Chinese government's expansion into the West Philippine Sea. But the same public is aware that there are real risks to confronting China whether in the international courts or in increasing fraught encounters at sea. Or, indeed, in enhanced military cooperation with the United States.

Given the risks, and the stakes, it would have been better for the Senate to have gotten involved, precisely as a means for the public to make itself heard. In fact, the Senate passed Resolution 105, affirming that the Edca was a treaty and that, therefore, and as the Constitution provides, at least two-thirds of the Senate must approve it before it can take effect.

We had hoped that the Court would see it the Senate's way. Such a decision would not have been a repudiation of the policy itself, but rather a remedy that would have allowed the Senate to take its mandated part. It would have been a political question, at least as pre-1986 jurisprudence understood that term, because the Constitution allows the Court to intervene even in political questions on the grounds of abuse of discretion.

Instead of supporting the Aquino administration's discretion in "choosing an executive agreement over a treaty to embody an international agreement," the Supreme Court should have forced the issue and obliged the executive to court the support of the Senate. The risks and stakes of enhanced military cooperation with the United States demanded it. And the executive's calculated refusal to do so, given precisely the risks of increased confrontation with China and with the future of Philippine maritime claims at stake, should have been judged an abuse of discretion.

But, with its 10-4 decision, the Court has enabled a process that will dramatically increase the presence of American military personnel and hardware in the Philippines—against the intent of the Constitution and the guardian of—without a single debate in the Senate. Realpolitik.

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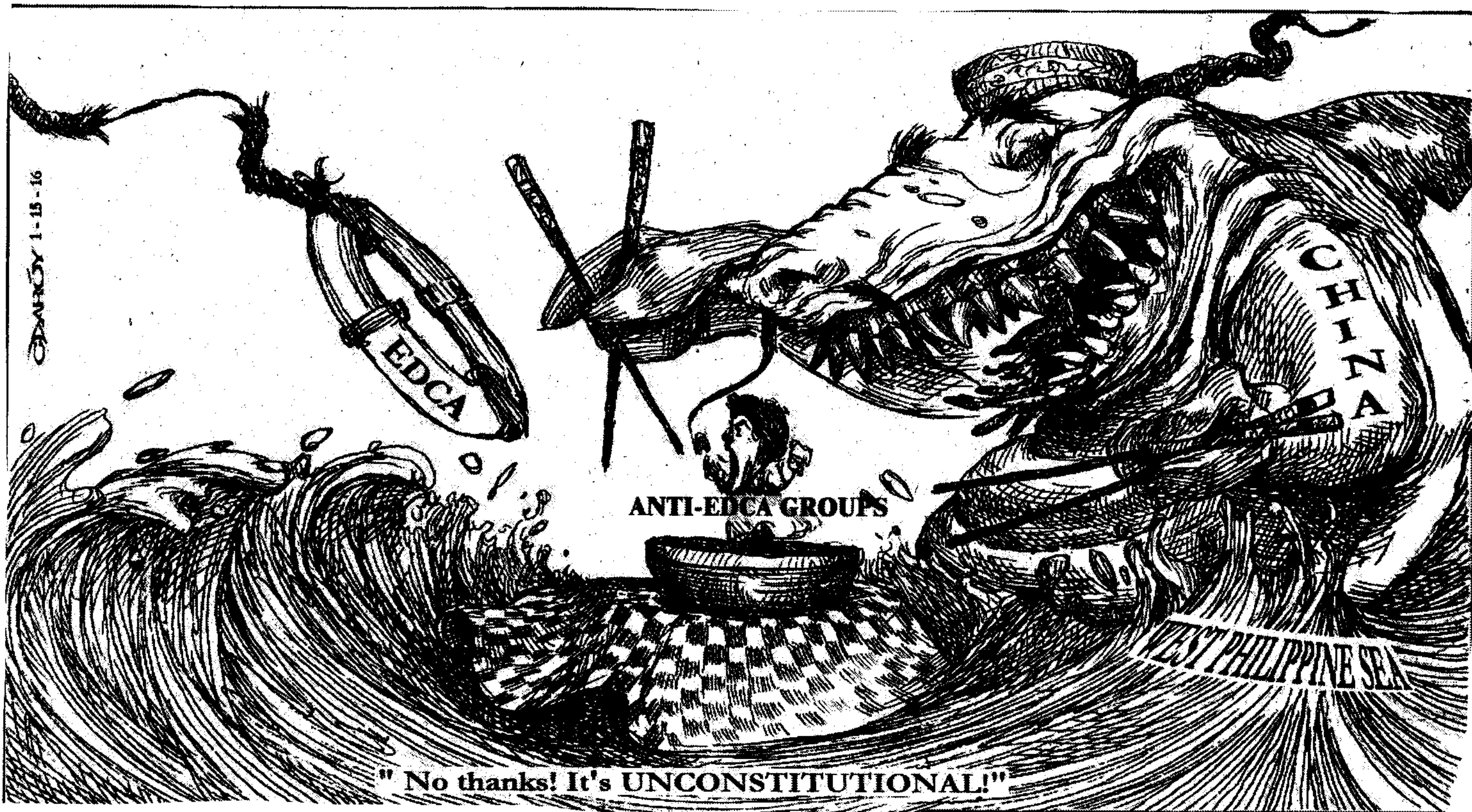
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Baseco cleanup drive held

Around 300 environmentalists led by Sen. Cynthia Villar participated in the clean-up activity at Gasangan, Barangay 649, Baseco Compound in Manila in celebration of January as Zero Waste Month.

The cleanup with the theme "Barangay and School Accountable for a Sustainable and Exceedingly Clean and Orderly Environment" was also attended by Department of Education (DepEd)

Sec. Armin Luistro and students and teachers from Pres. Corazon C. Aquino High School, Herminigildo J. Atienza Elementary School, and Sen. Benigno S. Aquino Elementary School.

"I will never get tired of organizing and participating in tree-planting and coastal clean-ups as long as there are volunteers like our participants here today who stay committed to the cause of environment protection," Villar said.