

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DATE : 15 MAY 2016

DAY : Sunday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

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Mining company paves 22-km road network for Didipio mine up north

BY LEONARDO PERANTE II
Correspondent

SANTIAGO CITY—The 22-kilometer service-road network developed by Australian mining firm OceanaGold (Philippines) Inc. to and from its mine site in Didipio, Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya, through Cabarroguis, Quirino, is undergoing pavement construction, with sharp curves and slopes given top priority.

"The upland highway does not only serve as a delivery road for mineral concentrates, but also serves as a farm-to-market road for large-scale agricultural crops and livestock from the mining village and contour farms nearby," Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) Regional Director for Cagayan Valley Mario A. Ancheta said.

He said this first city in Isabela is a business confluence point in Cagayan Valley and is a major beneficiary of the farm products coming from hillside farms at the vicinity of the mining project.

Ancheta said residents from the project area, especially those who live along the service road, can now



A 22-KILOMETER service road that connects the OceanaGold-Didipio mine site in Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya, to the rest of the country undergoes pavement construction. Mines and Geosciences Bureau Cagayan Valley Director Mario A. Ancheta (inset) leads tight monitoring of the large-scale mining project. LEONARDO PERANTE II

reach urban centers, shopping malls, commercial banks, their favorite fast-food chains and university belts quickly via the mining road.

"Farmers in Barangay Didipio find it more convenient to transport their farm products now because of the all-weather road established by the mining firm, which is

gradually being paved. The upland highway was designed according to world-class mine-safety standards, which makes it easier for our MGB team to closely monitor the Didipio mining operation," Ancheta added.

The MGB regional director said that, while the road was opened in

SEE "MINING," A2

Quirino Province, the direct beneficiaries are local residents of Nueva Vizcaya since the gold-copper project is in the mining village of Didipio in Kasibu town.

"The road has transformed what used to be a sleepy village into a progressive commercial district like a tiny upland city. The direct employment of locals in road maintenance is a great advantage for residents who are always given top priority, including women who are assigned to manage road traffic," Ancheta said.

The Didipio Corp. (DiCorp), a locally established company that caters to the daily meals of about

2,000 mining workers also employs a number of local residents in charge of road maintenance.

Many see the ongoing pavement construction of the road a favorable project, not only for laborers, but for everyone who regularly commutes to and from the community center and to the project site, because of the safe and friendly road design.

"The good road does not only give convenient access to the project site in general, but has given the 'go signal' for local residents to purchase their own service vehicles. Besides, in cases of emergency, the firm's emergency response

team can easily transport patients to the nearest hospital downtown," OceanaGold (Philippines) Senior Vice President for Communications and External Affairs Ramoncito Gozar said.

The good roads attract local businessmen from nearby towns to haul their merchandise direct from the farm since the prices of fresh agricultural products are cheaper at farm gate.

"Farmers who do not have the means to transport their harvests could simply call or text their business counterparts from the lowlands to pick up their produce right from the source," Gozar said.

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The Manila Times

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RESCUED PHILIPPINE EAGLE RELEASED

PUDTOL, Apayao: A rescued Philippine Eagle was released into the wild in the province of Apayao after it has totally recuperated. DENR Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer, Dr. Candido Tuscane, said the female bird was rescued by a group of fishermen along Tawit River in Pudtol town on April 21. The Philippine Information Agency in Cordillera said fisherman Richard Tomas and his companions rescued the bird they saw struggling to fly and turned it over to the local government of Pudtol. Pudtol Mayor Batara Lacat named the female eagle "Ingagan", meant for the preservation of the Ingagan clan of the Isnag, including their indigenous culture and belief. The bird weighing 5.5 kilograms, was tagged with a radio and a satellite transmitter to easily monitor its location, and was released into the wilderness on April 24. The province of Apayao was dubbed as New Home of the Philippine Eagle in 2015 following the discovery of their habitat in Calanasan, Apayao.

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Truckloads of poll tarpaulins to be recycled

By RIZAL
S. OBANIL

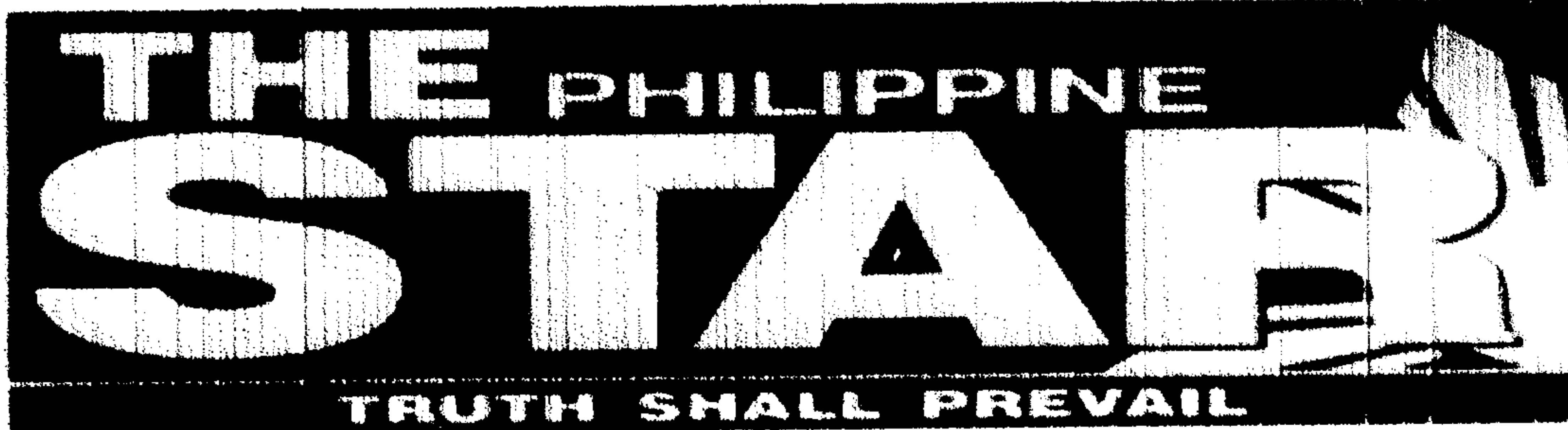
The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) has collected 60 truckloads of campaign materials a day after election day until Friday, Chairman Emerson Carlos bared.

Carlos, however, added that since the start of 'Oplan Baklas', which went after campaign posters placed in prohibited areas, over 1,000 truckloads of mostly tarpaulin campaign materials have been collected by the agency.

Carlos stressed that the collected campaign materials will not be burned but will instead be turned over to civic organizations, whose members can recycle the materials and craft bags and mats.

"Di ho namin susunugin at di namin itatapon sa mga sanitary landfill natin kasi binibigay natin yan sa mga humihinging civic organizations (We will not burn them and we will not dispose them in sanitary landfills because we will give them instead to civic organizations), Carlos said.

"Actually dalawang batch na ang naibigay natin sa mga civic organizations. Isa sa EcoWaste Coalition at nirecycle nila para gawing ibang klase ng products and then yung isa naman isang organization na nagcacater sa mga estudyante sa Batanes (We gave away two batches already, one to EcoWaste Coalition which recycled the materials and the other to a group helping school children from Batanes)," Carlos said.



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87 tons of poll trash

By MIKE FRIALDE

gathered in MM

Clearing crews of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) have collected 87 tons – approximately 52 truckloads – since the agency started its “Oplan Baklas” drive on Feb. 9, an official said yesterday.

The agency expects to have hauled at least 100 truckloads of election materials by the time the clearing operation ends on May 30, said Francis Martinez, who heads the MMDA’s Metro Parkway Clearing Group.

The volume of campaign materials removed by the

MMDA for this year’s elections was bigger compared to 2013, when the agency removed 87 tons of campaign materials.

Martinez said Manila and Quezon City had the most number of election materials removed.

The MMDA had deployed around 350 personnel to clear election campaign materials across Metro Manila on a daily basis.

Meanwhile, the MMDA is urging both victors and losers in the recently concluded elections to voluntarily remove their posted campaign materials.

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It will be a La Niña rainy season, PAGASA warns

ON top of our annual weather changes in the Philippines, the worldwide dual phenomena of El Niño and La Niña are now affecting the country, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said Thursday.

El Niño, the heating up of the equatorial Pacific, has been blamed for the drought in many parts of the Philippines for several months now. The drought destroyed rice and other crops in 28 provinces in the country, while 23 other provinces experienced a less severe dry spell.

This month of May, the El Niño has begun to weaken, PAGASA said, with neutral conditions expected by the middle of the year. Then, in the second half of 2016, the sea temperature in equatorial Pacific is expected to drop, and the cooler-than-average air will spawn storms and rains in many areas. From the drought of the past few months, we must now prepare for storms and rains, PAGASA said.

There will be other complications in the weather – inter-tropical convergence zones, low-pressure areas, tropical cyclones, and typhoons. With La Niña, these usual stormy weather con-

ditions will be heightened, the weather bureau warned.

We welcome the afternoon rains that are beginning to fall in various parts of the country this May. But in our relief at the showers of blessing that are heralding the end of the heat and the drought, we must not ignore the implied warning in PAGASA's assessment of the changing weather worldwide.

The La Niña of 2008 caused heavy rains to fall on Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia. The La Niña of 2010-2011 caused floods in Queensland, Australia, blizzards in North America, tornadoes of above-average severity in the US South and Midwest, and seven consecutive days of non-stop rains in California.

The PAGASA warns that it may not be the usual rainy season in the Philippines in the coming months. It will be a La Niña season, for which local governments must now start preparing by checking on their anti-flood programs. For the people, it's not too early to start checking for possible roof repairs, readying emergency kits, and drawing up possible escape routes in case of a sudden flood.

PAGASA has given us due warning. Let us all heed it.

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Weather bureau warns of looming La Niña

By Jason Faustino

With the El Niño phenomenon entering its last phase and is expected to soon fade away, state weather forecasters warned of the possibility of the La Niña, which follows after it during the second half of the year, bringing about strong and heavy rains to the country after the drought.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) warned that the country should start preparing for a very wet season on the onset of the La Niña phenomenon which will bring more and stronger typhoons than the usual to the country.

The La Niña is a climate pattern associated with the abnormal cooling of surface oceans along the tropical west coast of South America and the rise in sea temperature over the tropical

portion of the Pacific Ocean just east of the Philippines.

The pattern is the exact opposite of what happens during El Niño, when the waters surrounding the country are cooler than usual, resulting in fewer rains.

Both phenomena are part of the so-called El Niño Southern Oscillation or ENSO.

The interaction of the easterly winds with the Southwest Monsoon may lead to the formation of typhoons.

Under normal conditions, 19-20 typhoons may enter the Philippine Area of Responsibility (PAR) in a year, but only half may be expected to cross the country.

However, Pagasa already projects seven to 12 typhoons entering the PAR in the period of May to October alone. The La Niña may bring in more in the latter part of the year.

Pagasa likewise expects drought to prevail in some parts of the country until September.

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EDITORIAL

LA NIÑA ANG MARARANASAN SA TAG-ULAN, BABALA NG PAGASA

SA taunang pagpapalit ng panahon sa Pilipinas, nakaaapekto sa ating bansa ngayon ang pandaigdigang kambal na phenomena ng El Niño at La Niña, sinabi ng Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) nitong Huwebes.

Ang El Niño, na nagpapainit sa equatorial Pacific, ang sinisisi sa matinding tagtuyot sa maraming panig ng Pilipinas sa nakalipas na mga buwan. Sinira ng tagtuyot ang mga tanim na palay at iba pang mga pananim sa 28 lalawigan sa bansa, habang 23 iba pang probinsiya ang dumanas ng hindi ganun katinding tagtuyot.

Ngayong Mayo, nagsimula nang manghina ang El Niño, ayon sa PAGASA, at inaasahang magbabalik na sa normal ang panahon sa kalagitnaan ng taon. At, sa ikalawang bahagi ng 2016, inaasahang bubulusok ang temperatura ng dagat sa quatorial Pacific, at ang mas malamig kaysa karaniwang hangin ay magbubunsod ng mga bagyo at malakas na ulan sa maraming lugar. Mula sa tagtuyot sa nakalipas na mga buwan, dapat naman nating paghandaan ang mga bagyo at malakas na ulan, ayon sa PAGASA.

Magkakaroon ng iba pang mga komplikasyon sa klima — mga inter-tropical convergence zone, low-pressure area, tropical cyclone, at bagyo. Dahil sa La Niña, titindi pa ang karaniwan nang panahon ng magkakasunod na bagyo, babala ng kawanihang pamanahon.

Isang malaking ginhawa ang pag-uulan sa hapon na nagsisimula nang maranasan sa iba't ibang panig ng bansa ngayong Mayo. Ngunit sa ating kasiyahan sa pagsalubong sa biyaya ng ulan matapos ang matagal na panahon ng alinsangan at tagtuyot, hindi natin dapat na balewalain ang babala kaugnay ng pag-aaral ng PAGASA tungkol sa nagbabagong panahon sa mundo.

Ang La Niña noong 2008 ay nagdulot ng matitinding pag-ulan sa Malaysia, Pilipinas, at Indonesia. Nagbunsod naman ng mga pagbaha ang La Niña noong 2010-2011 sa Queensland, Australia, biglaang pag-ulan ng yelo sa North America, mapaminsalang buhawi sa US South at Midwest, at pitong magkakasunod na araw na walang tigil na pag-ulan sa California.

Nagbabala ang PAGASA na hindi karaniwang tag-ulan ang mararanasan ng Pilipinas sa mga susunod na buwan. Isa itong panahon ng La Niña, kaya dapat na simulan na ng mga lokal na pamahalaan ang paghahanda sa kani-kanilang programan kontra baha. Para sa mamamayan, dapat nang simulan ngayon ang pagkukumpuni sa mga sira ng bubong, paghahanda ng mga emergency kit, at pagtukoy sa mga posibleng paglikas kung sakaling magkakaroon ng biglaang pagbaha.

Sapat at maagap ang babala ng PAGASA. Mahalagang tumalima tayo.

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Environmental groups push to safeguard Benham Rise

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

Non-government organizations (NGOs) continue to push for the protection of the 13-million hectare Benham Rise particularly the tuna nursery and deep sea corals in the area.

The undersea region east of Luzon is located off the provinces of Aurora and Isabela, and duly recognized by the United Nations in 2012 as the newest Philippine territory in compliance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

"With its wealth of marine resources, there is a need to craft a management framework for Benham Rise," UP Institute for Maritime Affairs

and Law of the Sea director Jay Batongbacal said.

Benham Bank, the shallowest portion of the unexplored seamount, is one of the traditional fishing grounds of coastal dwellers on the north-eastern coast of Luzon.

Based on oceanographic explorations, there are more than 50 species of fish and tiered plate corals in the Benham Bank.

The area is part of the spawning grounds of the highly valuable Pacific bluefin tuna which are known to swim to the US and Mexico, but came back to spawn in the western Pacific including in the Benham Rise.

"There is a huge potential for ecosystems preservation in Benham Bank to protect commercially valuable fish species, noting that bigeye tuna is already overfished. This can be our contribution to the global economy," World Wildlife Fund Philippines fisheries expert Jose Ingles said.

Meanwhile, Oceana Philippines marine scientist Marianne Saniano said the area is blanketed with coral assemblages, sponges and algae and organisms that can tolerate low light penetrations.

"The underwater plateau serves as a refuge and nursery for many economically important fish," she added.

The Biodiversity Management Bureau has also announced plans to organize a workshop on management strategies for the sustainable use of resources in Benham Rise considering the need for complete baseline assessment of the region.

One of the options considered is to declare Benham Rise as a marine managed area, with Benham Bank as the core zone with protected status and the rest as exploration areas.

Furthermore, government initiatives and explorations are ongoing since 2013 as the Benham Rise plays a big role in the fisheries sector because the shallowest area has shown primary productivity.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has also undertaken oceanographic studies in the vicinity of Benham Rise alongside the implementation of fisheries assessment and the National Payao Program in attempts to mark the country's territories.

BFAR director Asis Perez said the bureau has recently monitored the operation of two to three medium-sized

fishing vessels in the area while performing the agency's mandate to explore and identify marine and fisheries resources available in Benham Rise.

Moreover, Perez said conservation of the Benham Rise is as important as the utilization of it, noting that tuna species are highly migratory ones.

"Conserving the area will not assure that the tuna will stay in Benham Rise all the time. A balance has to be made between utilization and conservation. There has to be utilization of the resources in a proper way," he added.



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Breakthrough

By ELFREN S. CRUZ

Scarborough red line



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Will the Scarborough Shoal be the "red line" for the Philippines and the United States against China's intention to create a new artificial island in the West Philippine Sea?

The phrase "to cross the red line" is used worldwide to mean a line in the sand or "a limit which safety can no longer be guaranteed." If the Scarborough Shoal is declared as a "red line" it means that any Chinese incursion into the area will be prevented with force by the Philippine-American alliance.

Although American naval forces have been sailing within the 12-mile limit in other Chinese held artificial islands in the West Philippine Sea, the United States and China have so far avoided direct confrontation. It has also been noticeable that the United States has avoided any explicit statement that it would commit its forces to defend any attack on Filipino maritime vessels and fishing boats that are harassed by Chinese naval vessels. There has been no clear official assurance to the Philippine government by the United States of any US naval or military assistance to prevent any territory from being permanently taken over by China.

American foreign policy has been to declare neutrality on the issue of sovereignty over the Paracel and Spratly islands in the West Philippine Sea. Historically, the US position started in the 1930s when Japan annexed these two island groups. But the Scarborough is a different story. Professor Jay Batongbacal, Filipino maritime law expert, outlines the history of Philippine sovereign claim to the Scarborough Shoal.

The 1900 Treaty of Washington between Spain and the United States stated that all territories administered by Spain as part of the Philippine Islands, even if they were located outside the original 1898 Treaty of Paris, were ceded to the United States. In 1938, the United States Department of State official again officially recognized that the US acquired title to Scarborough Shoal from the basis of the 1900 Treaty.

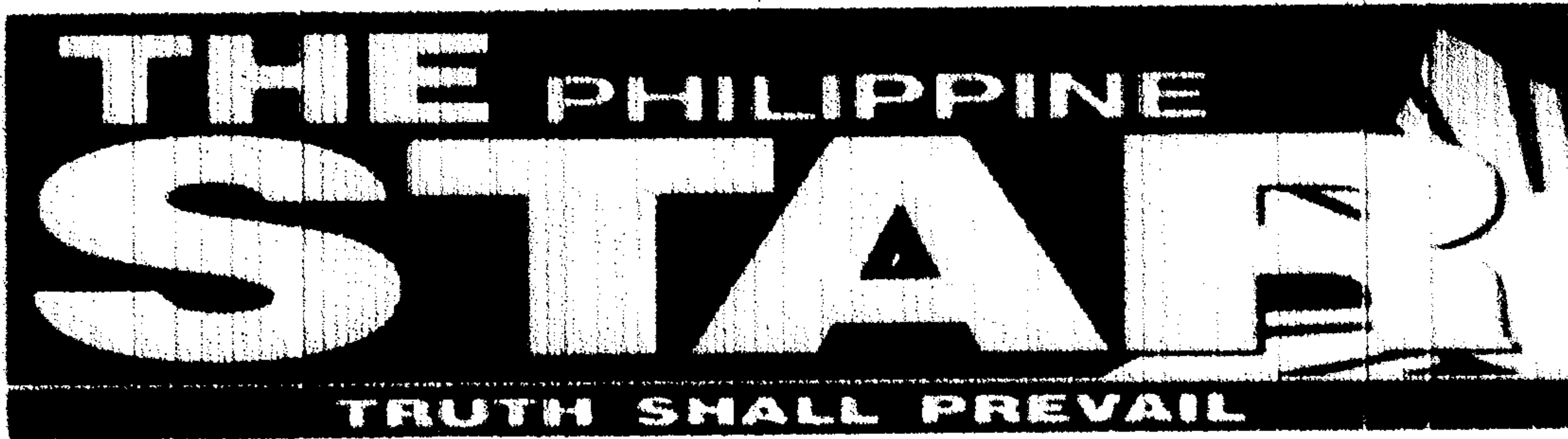
The State Department allowed the Scarborough's transfer to the then Philippine Commonwealth with concurrence of the Secretary of the Navy and Secretary of Commerce. Upon its declaration of independence in 1946, the Philippines took over the administration of Scarborough Shoal. In fact, in 1963 the Philippine Navy destroyed a smugglers' base in the shoal. The Scarborough area was also turned into a gunnery range for the US bases in the Philippines. However, Philippine fishing and survey vessels were allowed to operate in the area.

China did not intrude into the area until after the American bases were closed in 1991. In the early 2000s, China asserted that it had traditional fishing rights in the area. Finally in 2012 China coerced the Philippines into leaving the area and harassed Philippine fishing vessels entering the area.

Political science Professor Richard

Heydarian of De La Salle University, recently wrote a paper entitled "Asia's New Battlefield: The Philippines' South China Sea Moment of Truth." Here are excerpts from his article:

"A spectre is haunting Asia – the spectre of full Chinese domination in the South China Sea. Latest reports suggest that China would soon move ahead with building military facilities in the Scarborough Shoal, a contested land feature it has occupied since 2012.... This is nothing short of a nightmare for the Philippines which is already struggling to protect its supply lines in the Spratly chain of islands due to growing Chinese military assertiveness in contested waters. Unlike most of Chinese occupied features which lie well beyond the immediate shores of other claimant states, the Scarborough Shoal is located just about 120 nautical miles off the coast of the Philippines, well within the country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) – and also its continental shelf. To put things into perspective, the shoal



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Scarborough red line

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lies 900 kilometers away from the closest Chinese coastline. For Manila, the contested land feature is arguably what James Shoal is to Malaysia and Hainan is to Mainland China."

Professor Heydarian concludes his paper stating: "In the Scarborough Shoal, America is expected to come to the Philippines rescue if the Philippine "armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in the Pacific" come under attack by a third party (China) in an event of armed clashes. The United States, along with allies such as Japan and Australia, are also expected to assume the *de facto* role of enforcers once the arbitration is out. Whether it wants it or not, the Philippines is now at the center of Asia's new strategic battlefield.

Will the Philippines be willing to deploy its frigates and coast guard vessels to block any efforts by China to build military facilities on the Scarborough Shoal? This may sound like bravado at this point. But if Vietnam was willing to draw a red line in the Paracel island, then the Philippines could also draw its own red line in the Scarborough shoal.

Role of Japan

Japan will not only play a greater role but will even be the decisive factor in the geopolitical conflicts in East Asia including the disputed territories in the South China Sea. Japan has actually more at stake in ensuring that the South China Sea is not completely dominated by China.

Japan has almost no natural resources. Its resource needs, from Africa and the Middle East, must be transported through the South China Sea. In the past, Japan depended on the United States for military protection. But Japan must now prepare for a future where the United States might not be willing to accept full responsibility to serve as the region's policeman. The third largest economy in the world must now assume the burden of also becoming a military superpower in order to maintain a balance of power in East Asia.

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Heeding the call of the sea

To promote the protection of our seas, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) joined Human Nature's (S.O.S.) Save Our Seas Coastival, held last April 29 in La Union.

The daylong event highlighted the need to be mindful of the products we buy, the advocacies we champion, plus the lessons we teach our children. WWF's Environment

Education unit taught kids about conserving dolphins, whale sharks and turtles, while reminding them of the need to rid our seas of trash.

"One of the joys of teaching is when kids realize that protecting the environment can be enjoyable. We hope their love for nature will translate to protecting our oceans, coasts

and beaches," said WWF Philippines Environmental Education officer Maye Padilla.

WWF also helped renowned artist and WWF Hero of the Environment AG Saño in etching a 180-meter long sand sculpture featuring a *pawikan* and the letters S.O.S., signifying a call for help and a pledge to save our oceans by leaving no trace when at sea.

"We encourage everyone to spend more time with nature, but to throw no trash and minimize their impacts at sea," added Padilla.

Human Nature president Anna Meloto-Wilk reminded people that the smallest actions can make the biggest difference: "It's as simple as choosing products which do no harm to the environment."

"The sea is alive. It's a source of life. We're here to witness people coexisting with nature. We want to invite everyone to conserve nature by sharing solutions to Save Our Seas on social media," added La Union Soul Movement's Tina Antonio.

WWF works with many allies to protect the world's oceans.



Human Nature, WWF, Save Philippine Seas and the La Union Soul Movement led the first S.O.S. Coastival last April 29 in San Juan, La Union. Shown are Maye Padilla of WWF, Tina Antonio of La Union Soul Movement, Anna Meloto-Wilk of Human Nature, plus Anna Oposa of Save Philippine Seas.

PHOTO BY GERLENE REYES/WWF



WWF Philippines environmental educator Maye Padilla teaches kids about endangered marine species.

PHOTO BY GERLENE REYES/WWF

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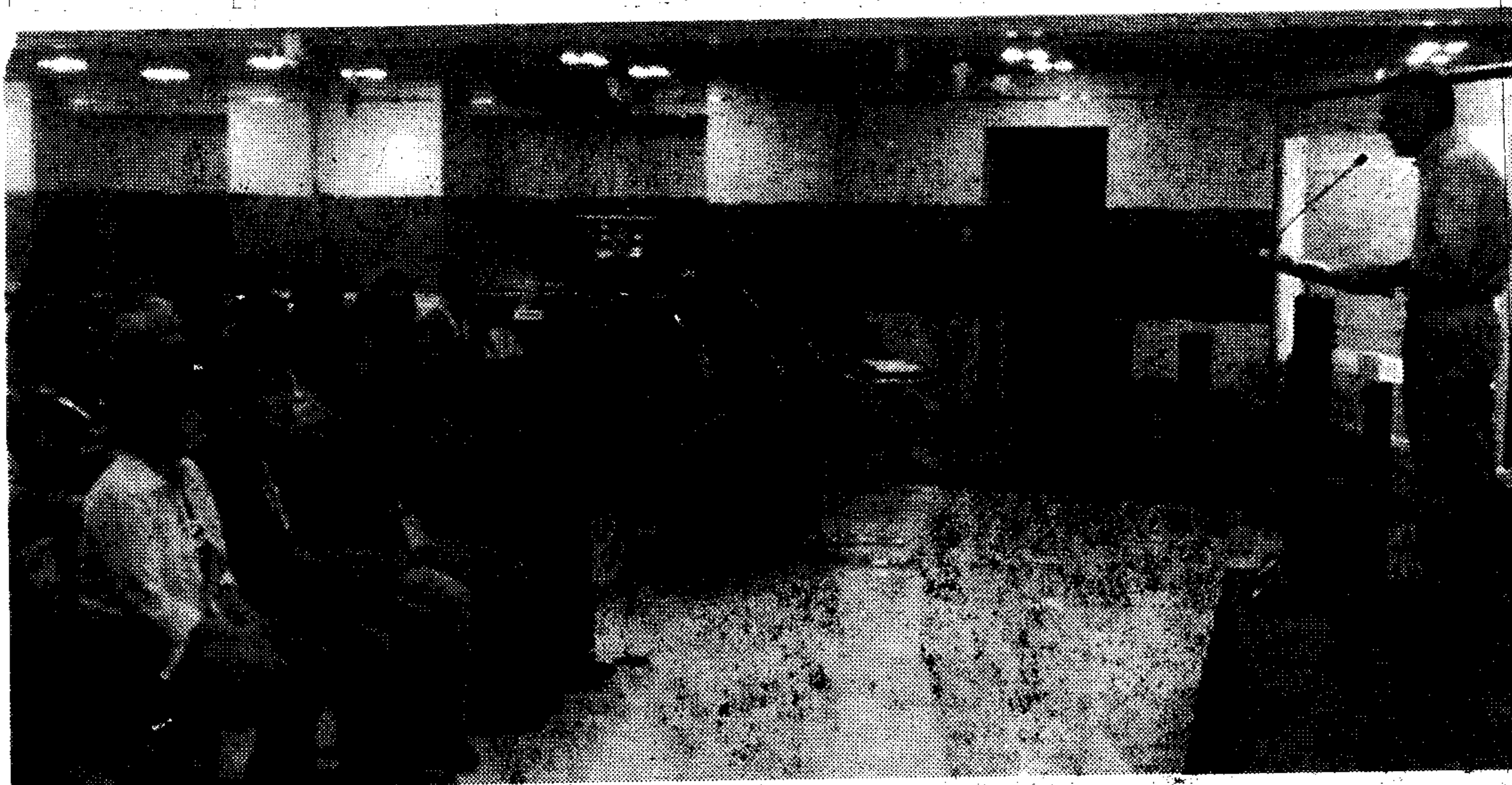
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Leveraging technology to save and protect fisheries and marine resources



US Ambassador to the Philippines Philip Goldberg addresses the participants to Fishackathon 2016 Manila

Over 10 percent of the world's population depends on fisheries and agriculture for their livelihood and for many people, fish is a major source of protein in their diet. Yet, these vital resources are continuously threatened by overfishing, illegal fishing, climate change, water pollution, and other dangers to marine life.

This situation prompted the United States government to come out with Fishackathon in 2014 to tap the expertise of tech-savvy individuals through a two-day coding marathon aimed at developing apps that could benefit sustainable fisheries and the communities that they support.

From just a handful of US cities during its first year, Fishackathon 2016 has expanded to 42 cities in six continents which included Manila given that the issue is very relevant to an island nation like the Philippines.

"The fish that the people rely on for food, the coastal areas which are so vulnerable to typhoons and water surges, eco-tourism, climate change, effects of pollution to coral reefs – these are extremely important to the Philippines and that's why we want to use your talent to help address these concerns. We know firsthand the efficiency and innovation that the tech sector can bring to the table in approaching one of the world's biggest problems," US ambassador to the Philippines Philip Goldberg told the participants during his opening remarks at Fishackathon Manila hosted by Globe Telecom recently.

On the other hand, Glenn Estrella, Globe vice president for Digital Ventures, rallied everyone to make a difference both for the Philippines and the world even as he noted that Globe strongly supports the use of technology in saving and preserving the environment.

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Leveraging technology to save and protect fisheries and marine resources

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"Like any innovation, technology and marine protection are two different ideas that come together. Greater ideas are born from the joining of the minds. I witnessed how the telecommunications industry evolve and it is very exciting to see what we can do to improve everyone's lives. This hackathon is not about popularity or how many people will use the app but it is about solving a problem," said Estrella. "We would like to see more partnerships and events on other grassroots topics. We need more activities that touch more people."

Globe is currently very active in its sustainability campaign to create a *#WonderfulPH* through positive societal impact with the use of

modern technology. It has ongoing eco-tourism partnerships with PUSOD on protection and enhancement of Taal Lake in Batangas ecosystem; Save Philippine Seas on protection of thresher sharks through engagement and education of community stakeholders in Malapascua, Cebu; Sangkalikasan Producers Cooperative on the establishment of an environment hotline center in Boracay, Malay, Aklan; and Casa San Miguel on livelihood opportunities for those living along the coastal barangays of San Antonio, Zambales.

Fishackathon 2016 Manila was a joint effort by the US Embassy Manila, US Agency for International Development, mobile content marketing firm Tone and Globe Telecom.

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'No to coal power plants'

Batangueños and pro - environment groups who staged a protest action against the expansion of Calaca coal-fired power plant in Batangas over the weekend challenged the incoming administration to declare moratorium on new coal power plants. "Batangueños have long suffered from the adverse impacts of Calaca power plant's three decades of operation. It will be more perilous for our health and livelihood if the plant continues to expand and emit more toxic and hazardous pollution," Petti Enriquez, spokesperson of Bukluran para sa Inang Kalikasan-Batangas said. "Five Presidents have passed, but all are deaf and blind to the suffering of Calaca residents caused by the dirty coal plant. Incoming administration should immediately order the stoppage of its expansion and compensate damages caused in the communities," Enriquez added. (Ellalyn B. De Vera)

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China developing, arming manmade isles—US report

WASHINGTON—China has reclaimed more than 1,295 hectares of land in the southeastern South China Sea. But the country's focus has shifted to developing and arming those manmade islands to give it greater control over the maritime region without having to resort to armed conflict, according to a new Pentagon report.

In its most detailed assessment to date of China's island-building program, the Department of Defense said three of the land features on the Spratly islands now had nearly 10,000-foot runways and large ports in various stages of construction.

And China has excavated deep channels, created and dredged harbors, and constructed communications, logistics and intelligence-gathering facilities.

The report argued that the accelerated building effort did not give China any new territorial rights. But it said that the airfields, ship facilities, and surveillance and weapons equipment would allow China to significantly enhance its long-term presence in the South China Sea.

"This would improve China's ability to detect and challenge activities by rival claimants or third parties, widen the range of capabilities available to it, and reduce the time required to deploy them," the report released on Friday said.

Chinese officials have defended the land reclamation by saying they are Beijing's territory, adding that the buildings and infrastructure were for public service use and to support fishermen. It accused the Philippines, Vietnam and other countries of carrying out their own building work on other islands.

"China is using coercive tactics short of armed conflict, such as the use of law enforcement vessels to enforce maritime claims, to advance their interests in ways that calculated to fall below the threshold of provoking conflict," the report said.

The 1,295 ha only represents China's reclamation in the Spratlys and does not include its building in the Paracels, further northwest, including the contested Woody Island, in its estimates. China has deployed anti-aircraft missiles to Woody Island, which is also claimed by Vietnam and Taiwan.

The Pentagon declined to release details on the amount of increased reclamation in the Paracels or to provide a more concrete estimate of the increase in building in the Spratly islands, to some of which the Philippines has claims.

The report also noted that China had continued to assert sovereignty over the East China Sea, including the Senkaku Islands, which are administered by Japan.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

China developingarmingmanmade isles - US Report

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Vietnam, China and Taiwan all claim the Paracels, and the three along with the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei claim all or parts of the Spratlys. The United States said it takes no sides in the territorial disputes, but supports freedom of passage through the region, which is one of the world's busiest and richest sea lanes.

China's island building, the report concluded, is designed to walk right up to—but not cross—"the threshold of provoking the United States, its allies and partners, or others in the Asia Pacific region into open conflict."

More broadly, the report said that China was steadily increasing its role and power around the world, while continuing to modernize and build up its military and inventory of ships, mis-

siles and aircraft.

Specifically, it noted China's plans to build its first overseas military facility in Djibouti to support its naval operations in the region.

The report also repeats assertions made by Defense Secretary Ash Carter that continued provocation by China may only improve US relations in the Asia Pacific.

"China's increasingly assertive efforts to advance its national sovereignty and territorial claims, its forceful rhetoric, and lack of transparency about its growing military capabilities and strategic decision-making continue to raise tensions and have caused countries in the region to enhance their ties with the United States," the report said.

US officials have been increasingly

concerned China's activities could be a prelude to enforcing a possible air defense identification zone over the South China Sea, similar to one it declared over disputed Japanese-held islands in the East China Sea in 2013.

As noted in previous year's reports, China continues to target US government and defense department computer systems through cyber intrusions. The report said that in 2015, China used its cyber capabilities to spy on the United States and steal information from computer networks.

"The information targeted could potentially be used to benefit China's defense industry, high technology industries, and provide the CCP insights into US leadership perspectives on key China issues," the report said. **AP**

The Manila Times

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■ TACTICS FROM A1

China using coercive

that Chinese coast guard and fishing vessels sometimes act in an "unprofessional" manner.

They do so "in the vicinity of the military forces or fishing vessels of other countries in a way that's designed to attempt to establish a degree of control around disputed features," Denmark told reporters.

"These activities are designed to stay below the threshold of conflict, but gradually demonstrate and assert claims that other countries dispute," he added.

China claims nearly all of the strategically vital South China Sea, even waters close to Southeast Asian neighbors including Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei, which have competing claims.

3,200 acres of new land

Central to China's claims are its land-reclamation efforts that have seen tiny islets, reefs and other maritime features built into military facilities.

The Pentagon report included dramatic photos of these contentious islands, including the Fiery Cross Reef Outpost, located between the Philippines and Vietnam.

Since 2014, China has turned a sandy blip in the ocean into an island stretching more than three kilometers complete with a lengthy runway.

China's land reclamation efforts in the Spratly Islands have added 3,200 acres of land to the seven features it occupies, the report said.

Beijing last year paused land-

reclamation efforts and began focusing on "infrastructure development" of the islets.

The United States insists China's claims have no basis under international law, and the US military has conducted several "freedom of navigation" operations, where ships and planes pass close to the sites claimed by China.

Such missions have drawn howls of anger from Beijing, which accuses the US of provocation and of increasing the risk of a military mishap.

The US Navy maintains a strong presence in the South China Sea, and Defense Secretary Ashton Carter has twice in recent months pointedly visited US aircraft carriers deployed in the waterway.

"Recent land reclamation activity has little legal effect, but will support China's ability to sustain longer patrols in the South China Sea," the report noted.

China has the second-largest military budget after the United States, and over the past two decades has increased spending annually.

In 2015, its official military budget was \$144 billion, though the true number is thought to be even higher. The Pentagon's 2016 budget is about \$585 billion.

Much of China's military money is going towards the development of its conventionally armed missile capability, "as well as ground- and air-launched land-attack cruise missiles, special operations forces, and cyber warfare capabilities to hold targets at risk throughout the region," the report said. **AFP**

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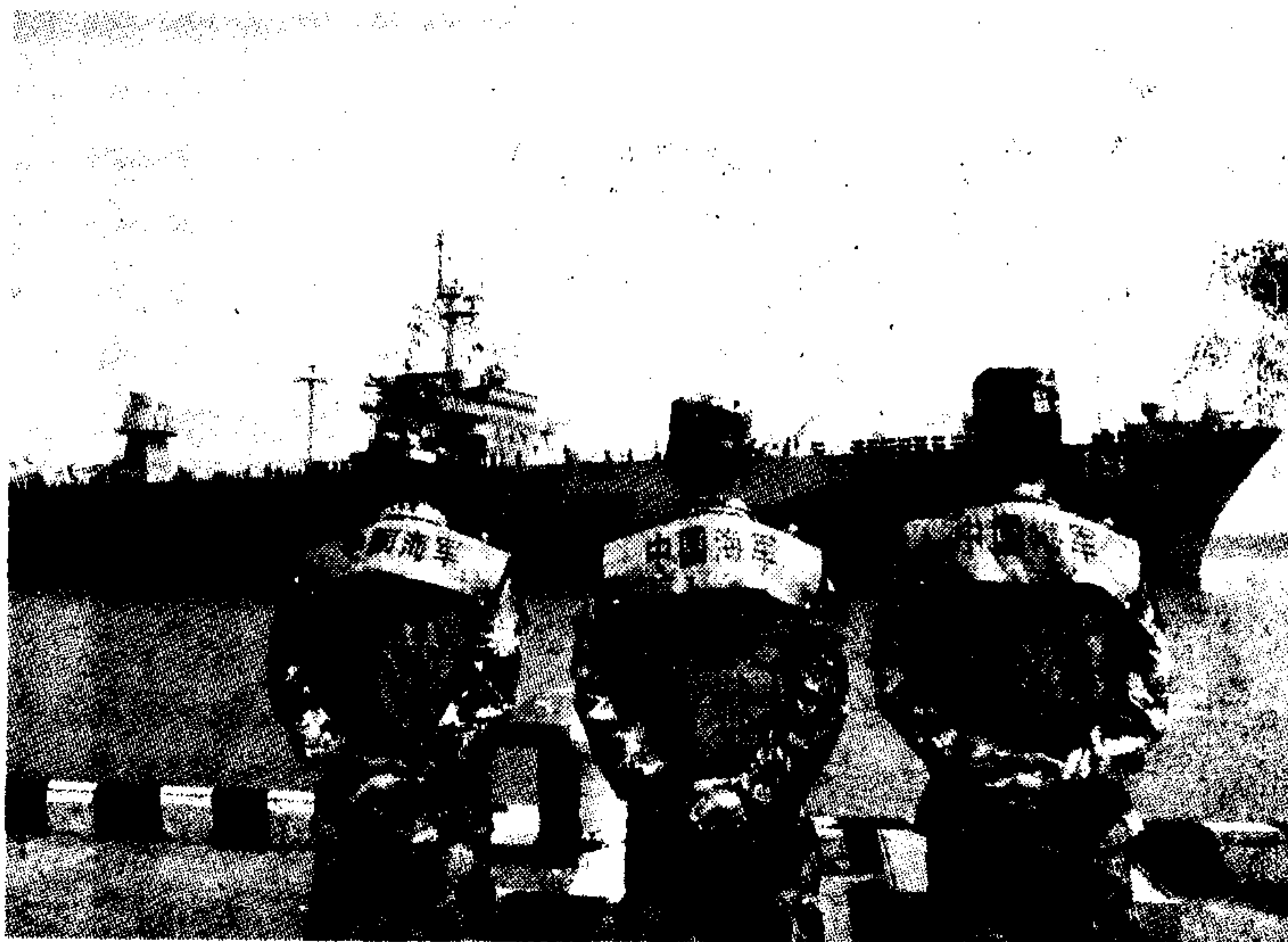
BusinessMirror

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CHINA HAS RECLAIMED 3,200 ACRES IN SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTED AREA



SOLDIERS from the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy watch as the USS *Blue Ridge* arrives at a port in Shanghai on May 6. Seeking to calm escalating tensions in the South China Sea, top generals from China and the US spoke by phone on Thursday, and said they were ready to work out an effective mechanism to prevent confrontation and maintain stability in the region. AP

WASHINGTON—China has reclaimed more than 3,200 acres of land in the southeastern South China Sea. But the country's focus has shifted to developing and weaponizing those man-made islands so it will have greater control over the maritime region without resorting to armed conflict, according to a new Pentagon report.

In its most detailed assessment to date of China's island-building program, the defense department said three of the land features on the Spratly Islands now have nearly 10,000-foot runways and large ports in various stages of construction.

And it has excavated deep channels; created and dredged harbors; and constructed communications, logistics and intelligence-gathering facilities.

The report argues that the accelerated building effort doesn't give China any new territorial rights. But it says the airfields, ship facilities, surveillance and weapons equipment will allow China to significantly enhance its long-term presence in the South China Sea.

"This would improve China's ability to detect and challenge activities by rival claimants or third parties, widen the range of capabilities available to China and reduce the time required to deploy them," according to the report released on Friday.

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China has reclaimed 3,200 acres in south
China sea disputed area

"China is using coercive tactics short of armed conflict, such as the use of law-enforcement vessels to enforce maritime claims, to advance their interests in ways that are calculated to fall below the threshold of provoking conflict," the report adds.

The 3,200 acres only represents China's reclamation in the Spratleys and doesn't include its building in the Paracels, further northwest, including the contested Woody Island, in its estimates. China has deployed anti-aircraft missiles to Woody Island.

The Pentagon declined to release details on the amount of increased reclamation in the Paracels

or to provide a more concrete estimate of the increase in building in the Spratly Islands.

Chinese officials have defended the land reclamation by saying it is Beijing's territory, adding that the buildings and infrastructure are for public service use and to support fishermen. It accuses the Philippines, Vietnam and others of carrying out their own building work on other islands.

The report also notes that China has continued to assert sovereignty over the East China Sea, including the Senkaku Islands, which are administered by Japan.

Vietnam, China and Taiwan all claim the Paracels, and the three, along with the Philippines, Malay-

sia and Brunei Darussalam, claim all or parts of the Spratlys. The US says it takes no side in the territorial disputes, but supports freedom of passage through the area, which is one of the world's busiest sea lanes.

China's island-building, the report concludes, is designed to walk right up to—but not cross—"the threshold of provoking the United States, its allies and partners, or others in the Asia-Pacific region into open conflict."

More broadly, the report says that China is steadily increasing its role and power around the world, while continuing to modernize and build up its military and inventory of ships, missiles and aircraft. AP

PARIS AGREEMENT FLESHED OUT

FRONTLINE climate diplomats will seek to translate good intentions into concrete action in Bonn Monday when they gather for the first time since hammering through a historic deal in December.

"Our challenge is now to operationalize the Paris Agreement," France and Morocco -- currently co-chairs of the negotiating process -- said in a briefing note.

After two decades of intense wrangling, the 195-nation Paris accord set ambitious targets to cap global warming and help poor countries cope with its impacts, present and future.

Ratification could happen early next year or sooner, a speed record for an international treaty.

But the landmark deal left a large number of crucial issues unresolved, experts and negotiators say.

"The cooperation shown in Paris will mean nothing if we descend into petty squabbles," Mohamed Adow, a climate expert with Christian Aid, said in a commen-

tary on the Climate Home website.

The most urgent question is how to ramp up national plans for slashing greenhouse gas emissions.

As they stand, these voluntary pledges -- which go into effect in 2020 -- would see Earth's surface heat up by at least three degrees Celsius (5.4 degrees Fahrenheit) compared to the pre-Industrial Era benchmark.

But a climate-fuelled crescendo of superstorms, droughts and rising seas convinced the world's nations to lower the bar to "well below" 2 C, and 1.5 C if possible.

2015 was by far the hottest year on record, and nearly every month in 2016 has also exceeded previous highs.

"History will judge the Paris Agreement... by whether govern-

ments, corporations and other actors rapidly increase ambition," the WWF said ahead of the Bonn meeting.

The next "political moment" when countries could deepen their commitments to curb carbon pollution is a so-called "stocktaking" in 2018, a focal point at the talks next week.

Negotiators also have a lot of blanks to fill in when it comes to aid for developing nations which, historically, have contributed least to climate change but are most exposed to its ravages.

"There is pent-up demand for implementation of financial assistance," noted Alden Meyer, a climate analyst at the Washington-based Union of Concerned Scientists who has been tracking the negotiations for 25 years.

"A lot of parties came out of Paris feeling there was more progress on mitigation and decarbonisation" -- measures, in other words, to curb greenhouse gases -- "and less on adaptation". **AFP**