

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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Duterte changes mind; DENR will not go to progressive Left

BY LILIAN C. MELLEJOR | *Philippines News Agency*

DAVAO CITY—President-elect Rodrigo R. Duterte is looking for a person who is not from the progressive Left to head the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), as he backtracked from his original plan to hand over the department to the Left, citing serious and sensitive issues on mining operations.

However, Duterte remains committed to give the departments of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to the left.

He said the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) went to Silvestre H. Bello III, who is also the choice of the left.

Duterte said he reconsidered to

give the DENR to the progressive Left after going through all some papers. But Duterte said he has already explained to Fidel V. Agcaoili, the emissary of the Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front (CPP-NDF), why he would not concede the DENR post to them during their meeting on Tuesday night.

Agcaoili met with Duterte on Tuesday night to submit the list of nominees from the progressive Left for government offices reserved for them.

"It is an impressive list...about less than 10," Duterte told reporters. He said he already submitted the list of the nominees, mostly from the University of the Philippines, to the screening committee.

"If you are identified with the Left—that is not an issue with me. Once upon a time I was left of center," Duterte said. He emphasized he only wanted a peaceful country.

"Hopefully, when I step *wala naiyong* [there is no more right...Moro...lumad...Chris want to build a strong nation next generation," he said.

In explaining why he gave the DENR to the left, Duterte said there are serious problems in that department. He needs someone to strongly see the agency. The mayor has been strongly criticizing the mining operations in the country because of abuse of resources.

"*Mainit ako diyang kasitang lupa nila ang ating lupa* [I am really angry with that...they really deplete our soil]," he told reporters in a night conference on Wednesday.

What is unacceptable, Duterte said, they (oligarchs) partner with multinational mining corporations and enriched themselves with nothing for the poor Filipinos. He said they took the spoils of their operation.

MANILA GETS WATER TREATMENT REACTOR

A FIRST-IN-THE-WORLD plant that treats waste water from both 'estero' and wet market and which complies with US Environmental Protection Agency standards was recently turned over to the Manila city government.

A Filipino-developed technology called "sequence bio-reactor" (SBR) employed in the Paco Estero plant was donated as a grant to Manila City Hall by technology provider Eco-System Technology Inc.

The technology may be replicated to treat many polluted river and water systems in the country, the company said in a statement. "It is able to generate an effluent that is of highest quality for non-potable water reuse—10 milligrams per liter or less. It keeps up with the United States effluent standards for water discharged to the environment."

Treating waste water from the Paco estero and public market may seem difficult. It is a combination of household

waste, sewer backflow, Pasig River (and Manila Bay) intrusion from the tidal flows, rain, and flood water.

ESTI's SBR technology is able to comply with and even exceed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' effluent standard in biochemical oxygen demand (BOD5) of 50 mg per liter. BOD is a measure of how much oxygen is needed to allow for waste's decomposition; the lower the better.

SBR has been the preferred sewage treatment technology in the last decade in developed countries as the US, and now also in the Philippines.

Its effluent is ideal for water reuse—for cooling tower, watering plants or irrigation, and toilet flushing.

The SBR plant was bestowed as a grant to the Manila city government by ESTI. It was completed under ESTI's partnership with ABS-CBN Foundation, in coordination with DENR. It collects 220 cubic meters of waste water daily.

Daily Tribune

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Coal-fired power plants threaten lives, environment – Legarda

Sen. Loren Legarda yesterday renewed her call on government to tap cleaner and less wasteful sources of energy, expressing alarm over the adverse environmental impacts of coal-fired power plants in the country.

Legarda, chairman of the Senate committee on climate change, lauded an order to agencies of government to review the country's energy policy, which may see the Philippines moving away from carbon-intensive coal power generation.

"I am in full support of President Aquino's order to government to review the current energy policy and I hope he will seize the opportunity to push for pro-environmental projects to mitigate climate change which our country badly needs. Our goal to reduce carbon emissions will be impossible if we will continue to allow the construction and operation of additional coal-fired power plants, the nation's top source of greenhouse gas emissions and the primary cause of global warming," she said.

The Climate Change Commission (CCC), chaired by President Aquino and led by three Commissioners, recently issued Commission Resolution No. 2016-001, which mandates the agency to lead an "urgent and comprehensive" review of the government's energy policy

within the next six months and conduct "a national policy review and framework development on energy, through a whole-of-nation approach, in accordance with a low carbon development pathway and national goals and targets for climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development."

The Philippines has been taking an active role in addressing climate change as it is among those that acutely feel its effects, which include extreme weather patterns.

Legarda noted that in the past five years, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources granted at least 21 coal-fired power plants an Environmental Compliance Certificates (ECC). "I am optimistic that with the CCC Resolution, stricter standards will be followed in the issuance of ECCs for plants, which should include the measurement of their GHG emissions and impacts on health and the environment," she stressed.

"The Philippines is contradicting itself when it says it wants a strong agreement in climate change yet is allowing the proliferation of new coal power plants. Effectively, by such proliferation we are contributing to our own destruction and we lose the high moral ground as we call on other parties to reduce emissions," Legarda concluded.

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Benham Rise: New ecological frontier

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

✉ @jonlmayuga

Conclusion

Conservation

ACCORDING to Oceana Philippines, the highly prized Pacific bluefin tuna spawns in the western Pacific, including the Benham Rise.

Quoting members of the team that explored the Benham Rise, including Jose Ingles of World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)-Philippines, Oceana Philippines said in a news release there is a huge potential for ecosystems preservation in the Benham Bank to protect commercially valuable fish species. The big-eye tuna is already overfished, Ingles said, and protecting the Benham Bank can be the country's "contribution to the global economy."

Jay Batongbacal, director of UP's Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea who was also among the forum resource persons, was quoted by Oceana as saying that with its wealth of marine resources, there is a need to craft a management framework for the Benham Rise.

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

Coral reef

OCEANA Philippines's Marianne Pan-Saniano, a marine scientist, said the Benham Bank, is blanketed with coral assemblages, sponges and algae. She added in a news release that organisms in what is known as the mesophotic zone, found at depths of up to 150 meters, can tolerate low-light penetration. She said the underwater plateau serves as a refuge and nursery for many economically important fish.

Marine scientists have found more than 50 species of fish and a thick cover of tiered plate corals were also found during the 2014 oceanographic exploration of the Benham Bank, which was funded by the Philippine Council for Agriculture and Natural Resources Research and Development of the Department of Science and Technology. The dive that lasted for 25 minutes was able to film at a depth of 50 meters, Oceana said.

"There is a lot to be discovered when we do extensive research," she said.

Sophisticated gadget

AS scientists explore the Benham Bank anew, Director Theresa Mundita Lim of the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) expects the discovery of more exciting marine species.

"With new and more sophisticated technology, we expect to get a vivid picture of the species of fish and other marine life," Lim said.

Oceana Philippines will provide the baited remote underwater vehicle system (BRUVS) to measure fish population during the exploration. BRUVS is currently one of the most common technologies used worldwide for counting and measuring the length of fish.

With a remotely operated vehicle, and technical diver-videographers in a forthcoming expedition will allow scientists to film the marine resources in the Benham Bank more extensively, Oceana Philippines said.

Marine biologist Euan Harvey said BRUVS uses footage from two cameras attached to a frame with fish-bait at the center, and especially licensed software to analyze the maximum number of fish seen at any one time. BRUVS is useful in studying deeper reefs and doing long-term research for a wide range of fish habitats.

Biodiversity conservation

LIM said the pooling of resources is still ongoing. This includes identification of more sophisticated gadget or equipment, such as underground cameras, to be used during the exploration.

"We expect a report from UP-MSI. We need to get inputs about the condition underneath," she said.

Lim said the exploration in the Benham Rise is not confined to the number or the kind of fish species that can be found there.

"It's not just about the fish. It's also about other living organisms. The corals and other marine species thriving in the Benham Rise will help us come up with an idea of how rich is the marine biodiversity in [the area]," Lim, the country's top biodiversity official, said in an interview on Wednesday.

According to Lim, during exploration, scientists will be able to help the DENR-BMB build a more accurate baseline data in the Benham Rise region.

Protection

"WE need to know the species we need to protect Lim," said. "One of the options being explored is to declare a portion as a protected area. But there is a process in declaring a protected area. We are aware that there are other resources that can be developed in the Benham Rise. We need to balance it to identify or determine the best management option for the Benham Rise," Lim said.

Establishing protected areas needs an extensive resource assessment, including the biodiversity that thrives in the area, she said.

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Benham Rise: New ecological frontier

She said declaring a portion of the Benham Rise a protected area will depend on the exploration report. "If the best use is to protect the marine biodiversity, then the option is to declare it as a protected area. But we would like to listen to other agencies with stake in the Benham Rise, like the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, MGB [Mines and Geosciences Bureau] and the DOE," she said. According to Lim, the plan for another visit to the Benham Rise will be conducted by a composite team, which includes marine geologists, fisheries expert and marine biologists.

"Although we have preliminary information available because of previous explorations, it is best to validate these information toward deciding on what will be the best management option for the Benham Rise," she added.

Excellent cover of coral reefs

AN abstract of a poster prepared by scientists who earlier explored the Benham Rise, entitled "Exploring Mesophotic Depths off Philippine Sea: Coral Reefs on Benham Bank Seamount," revealed that the reefs on the summit 50 meters to 55 meters deep had excellent cover, estimated to be between 75 percent and 100 percent, of mostly *Porites* *rus*, which appeared as tiered, thick, rigid and foliose plates.

These species of coral are heavily collected for the aquarium trade.

Over 60 species of bony and cartilaginous fish were also recorded. Of these, 26 have high commercial value. Also, *Halimeda* spp, a genus of green macroalgae, is dominant. Other classes observed are *epiphytes*, or plant that grows harmlessly upon another plant.

The scientists observed that while the account of benthic biodiversity appears less when compared to shallower fringing reefs of the country's Pacific seaboard, much of the Benham Bank remains to be uncovered.

"It is very important to explore the Benham Rise, because there are other interests in the area. It should be an integrated assessment of the territory so that we will know what we are bound to gain or lose," Lim said.

Once a portion of the Benham Rise was declared a protected area, she said, the territory will undergo a more stringent protection mechanism.

"If it's going to be declared a protected area, it will be an executive decision, hence resources will not rely only upon the BMB. We expect other agencies to help. It means all resources of the national government, including the Department of National Defense, for its protection, will be tapped," she said.



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KAILANGAN NATIN NG COAL PLANTS

MARAHIL ay nagtataka kayo kung bakit sang-ayon ako sa pagdami ng coal plants sa ating bansa. Ang mga grupong makakalikasan ay siguradong nakasimangot sa aking opinyon subali't hayaan ninyo akong ipaliwanag kung bakit kailangan nating magdagdag ng mga coal plant sa ating bansa upang gumanda ang ating ekonomiya.

Sa kasalukuyan, ang ating bansa ay malaki ang kakulangan sa energy reserve o reserbang kuryente kung sakali ang isa sa mga planta ng kuryente ay huminto. Masuwerte tayo at nalagpasan natin ang tag-init na hindi tayo nag-brownout.

Ngunit tayo ba ay kuntento na sa kalagayang isang kahig, isang tuka sa suplay ng kuryente? Ito ay isa sa malaking rason kung bakit mataas ang singil ng kuryente sa ating bansa. Nadidiktahan ng mga power generator ang kanilang presyo dahil iilan lamang sila. Ito ay simpleng paliwanag sa 'Law of Supply and Demand'. Kapag kulang ang suplay, mataas ang pangangailangan, tataas ang presyo sa merkado. Kapag marami ang suplay, bababa ang presyo sa merkado.

Ayon sa National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP), ang suplay ng kuryente sa Visayas ay sakto lamang ngunit kulang kapag nagkaaberya ang isang planta ng kuryente.

Sa Luzon, kung saan napakalaki ng demand ng kuryente, napakaliit ang natitirang reserba at maaaring magkaroon ng brownout kung sakaling isa o dalawa sa mga planta ng kuryente ay huminto.

Sa Mindanao, kung saan manggagaling ang susunod na Pangulo ng ating bansa, sa kasalukuyan ay nagdurusa sa sobrang kakulangan ng suplay ng kuryente. Umabot na sila sa tinatawag na 'rotational brownouts' para mabigyan lamang ng kuryente ang mga tao.

Ayon sa datos ng Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA), may 20% sa ating bansa ang hindi nakatitikim ng kuryente sa kanilang mga tahanan.

Sinabi ng Department of Energy (DOE) na halos 80% ang may kuryente o 17.4 million lamang sa halos 21.8 million tahanan sa buong bansa. Palagay ko ay mas marami pa ito dahil marami ang walang permanenteng tirahan o 'illegal settlers' na malamang ay hindi naisama o nakarehistro sa kanilang datos.

Halos 4.4 million ang walang kuryente sa mga tahanan. Ang Luzon ang may pinakamataas na nabiyayaan ng kuryente na may 89.3 %, at ang Mindanao ang may pinakamababa na may kuryente sa bawat tahanan sa 56.3 %. Ika nga, halos kalahati sa mga tahanan sa Mindanao ay walang kuryente.

Ang mga tumutuligsa sa coal plant ay sinasabing marumi at nakasisira ito sa kalikasan. Aaminin ko, may punto sila rito ngunit kailangan ay timabangin natin ang kabutihan at kamalian sa isyung ito. Nais kong ihambing ito sa mga makabagong teknolohiya tulad sa ating mga sasakyan. Ang mga lumang makina ng sasakayn noong dekada 60 at 70 ay malakas sa konsumo ng gasolina at marumi ang buga ng usok sa tambutso kumpara sa mga makabagong sasakyan ngayon na matipid, mabilis at higit sa lahat, malaki ang kawayasan ng paglabas ng maruming usok sa hangin.

Tulad ng mga makabagong planta na gumagamit ng karbon, pihadong inaral na ito ng mga dalubhasang inhinyero upang mabawasan ang paglabas ng maruming usok na makasisira sa kalikasan. Palagay ko, ang pollution na nalalanghap natin sa araw-araw na trapik sa Kamaynilaan ay mas masahol pa sa inilalabas ng mga makabagong coal plant.

Kailangan ng ating bansa na umusad ang ekonomiya upang maramdaman ng mga ordinaryong mamamayan ang kaginhawaan sa buhay. Kapag sapat na sapat ang suplay ng ating kuryente, tiyak na lalago ang ating ekonomiya. Darami ang oportunidad sa trabaho at bababa ang singil sa kuryente. At higit sa lahat, kapag napailawan mo nang husto ang bawat lansangan sa ating bansa, ito ay makatutulong sa pagsugpo ng krimen na isa sa ikinakampanya ni President-elect Rodrigo Duterte.

Sa susunod na linggo ay tatalakayin ko ang mga kabutihan at kalamangan ng coal plants laban sa renewable energy.

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American helps Pinoys fight Mt. Apo fire

By MARK ANTHONY O. SARINO

The raging flames mercilessly devouring the forest of Mt. Apo was a painful sight even on television to an American who, 18 years ago, had been there with his wife on a honeymoon – climb up the highest peak of the Philippines.

“When I asked my wife and my two sons if I could go and help, they said yes,” Darrell Blatchley, 36, said. ►13

American helps Pinoys... ◀1

That was the start of another volunteer adventure for the 36-year-old American who helped put out the fire on Mount Apo last month.

The fire on Mt. Apo started at about 1 p.m. of March 26, starting at its peak and spreading to the nearby lower areas of Lake Venado going to Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur's boundary.

So Blatchley kissed his wife and two sons goodbye, pulled out his fire-resistant equipment, and headed straight to the scene.

“[Mount Apo] is something close to our hearts and we see it every day,” Blatchley, who embraced the Philippines as his second home, said. He lives with his family in Davao.

Mt. Apo is the Philippines' highest peak, rising up to 9,689 feet. It is located 32 kilometers west of Davao City.

An active volcano, Mt. Apo has a national park that was founded in 1936. The park is covered by a forest consisting of giant, tropical hardwood, and is home to the Philippine eagle, Malasita Falls, among others. According to the Philippine government's tourism web-

site.

Virtual warden

Unmindful of the risks which include losing his own life, Blatchley volunteered as a technical advisor to the group of some 30 Filipino firefighters. For two weeks, starting on April 1, he worked shoulder-to-shoulder with the team and became the virtual “Mt. Apo camp warden.”

“After [seeing] no progress and techniques [which I've] never seen before, such as dropping crushed ice on forest fire, then I went in,” Blatchley said.

“After the first day, I went down and told the Bureau of Fire Protection [to] let us camp up there or all the volunteers would quit. I got what I wanted but if I went down, no campers were allowed to camp,” he said.

After that, he went up back to the camp and did not come down until the job was done.

Blatchley's courage is backed by knowledge of firefight. He said he got his firefighting skills from working for

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American helps Pinoy...

almost five years in the United States as an aviation fuel engineer, whose job was focused on extinguishing forest fires while aboard a helicopter.

Not the first time

Incidentally, this was not the first time for the American to volunteer. He was also part of a church group who went to Tacloban after super-typhoon Yolanda brought much destruction.

"We already had the gear for fire-fighting, as my parents' ministry [in Davao] had purchased it for such events as volunteering for disaster relief," Blatchley said. "So I had the helmet, goggles, boots, gloves and first-aid packs needed for something like this."

He said that he, alongside some of his fellow church ministry followers, took some 60,000 packed meals into typhoon-affected people in Tacloban in November 2013.

Asked what the local government could have done differently to avert unfortunate incidents such as the recent fire on Mt. Apo, Blatchley said that it should have implemented stricter measures in protecting Mount Apo.

"They knew [that] El Niño is cur-

rently hounding the Philippines, so they should have not let climbers to go up," he said. "It was the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and local government unit's decision to allow climbers even though it was recommended to be closed [later on]."

Prioritize forest fire prevention

Asked what the local government could have done to avert unfortunate incidents such as the recent fire on Mt. Apo, Blatchley said that it should have implemented stricter measures in protecting Mount Apo.

"They knew [that] El Niño is currently hounding the Philippines, so they should have not let climbers to go up," he said. "It was the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and local government unit's decision to allow climbers even though it was recommended to be closed [later on]."

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Ramon Paje earlier called on all the protected area management boards (PAMBs) nationwide to prioritize forest fire prevention, ensuring the protection of the country's most

important, and protected areas like the Mt. Apo.

"PAMBs should also come up with their respective forest protection plan and allocate funds for the establishment of fire line and other forest fire prevention activities like training for technical staff and volunteers," Paje said in a statement.

Never again

Blatchley called on the Filipinos to seriously take care of their environment.

"An ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure," he emphasized. "The damage [has been] done, [so] learn from it and don't make the same mistake again."

He could only hope that the probability of the recent Mt. Apo fire happening again would be lessened in the future, Blatchley said that he is closely working with the Bureau of Fire Protection to come up with guidelines on preventing and killing forest fires.

"Yes, I was born an American, but I love the Philippines. My wife is from here, my sons were born here, and it is a shame to not help what you love," he said.

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• Aquino inaugurates solar plant

CABANATUAN CITY – President Aquino inaugurated the First Cabanatuan Renewal Venture Inc. (FCRVI) which can generate 10.2 MW from solar energy, located on a 12-hectare property in Brgy. Lourdes. "This is an ideal location for solar energy generation because this is the hottest city in the country," Aquino said. He also emphasized his vision to make the country's energy sufficient and environment conscious at the same time. FCRVI President and Ecija congresswoman-elect Ria Vergara said the solar power plant is a big contribution to a green environment. "This is only the start. We want to also influence others to venture in solar and other renewable sources of energy," Vergara said. Aquino also spoke of his vision on the development of San Antonio swamp as a catch basin of flood water to control flooding in the province. Also meeting the President at the site was Cabanatuan City Mayor Julius Cesar Vergara. (Sheen Crisologo)

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Bulacan plans save-the-river campaign

By **FREDDIE C. VELEZ**

MALOLOS CITY, Bulacan — "As of now, the construction of 15 kilometer-dike around Marilao-Meycauayan-Obando River System (MMORS) is ongoing, which is part of the Valenzuela-Obando-Meycauayan Flood Control Project that will prevent water from Manila Bay to come in during high tide and heavy rains," Gov. Wilhelmino M. Sy-Alvarado said yesterday.

The mayor called on local government units, civic groups and Bulakenyos to all join hands in reviving the Marilao-Meycauayan-Obando River System (MMORS) which the New York-based Blacksmith International once described as one the "dirtiest rivers" in the world.

Alvarado, who is also the chairman of the Regional Development Council in Central Luzon, said the dredging of the river system and its development as flood control resource and socio-economic productive area will cost P1.9 million.

The project will feature the desilting of the whole river channel, river mouth deepening and its riverbank stabilization, and planting of mangroves. The efforts have been identified as the effective ways to address perennial flooding in the towns of Meycauayan, Marilao and Obando.

It will also include the clearing and relocation of informal settlers along the river system and the regular clean-up activities, urban drainage clogging and dike improvement of about 30 kilometers in length for the flood control.

"It will need more than modern technology to clean and biologically revive the dead MMORS. Its dredging and improvement are part of our long term solution to address flooding during rainy season and to erase the bad image of the river," the governor said.

The governor explained that while the dredging and the dike improvement of the polluted river will soon to materialize, authorities will still need the cooperation of the community to save the river system.

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Freediving means promoting conservation of marine life

STORY & PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE TUMAMPOS & ALMOND CARLO GAMIL
Special to the BUSINESSMIRROR

FREEDIVING is a growing leisure sport for many people around the world. In the Philippines it is common for fishermen and sea gypsies to go freediving for food. It naturally runs in the blood as, geographically, the Philippines is just surrounded by waters, and is the center of the coral triangle. Due to its popularity, more people are now getting the interest of holding their breath diving under the open water.

Although it does not let you stay for more than half an hour as what scuba diving offers, the challenge of freediving with the use of only a mask, snorkel and fins to enjoy the world down under is a relaxing and liberating experience.

For recreational freediving, a diver is limited to only 40 meters underwater yet, more than just attaining depths, the Philippine waters offer the freedivers a feast for the eyes. Sites—particularly Moalboal in Cebu, Balicasag in Bohol, Anilao in Batangas and many more—are a haven for diving. Shallow corals and other marine biodiversity species are sites to behold.

More than just the site seeing, freedivers not just appreciate but, by taking and sharing their photos, also promote marine conservation. Being in the center of the coral triangle, the Philip-

pinas takes pride in having the most diverse marine life in the planet. The presence of healthy corals indicates that there is also a healthy marine biodiversity.

According to the web site of the Large Marine Vertebrates Research Institute Philippines, a nonstock, nonprofit company registered in the country which aims to conserve marine biodiversity in the Philippines, of the almost 3,000 species of fish that were recorded, 26 species of cetaceans, including whales, *dugong*, whale sharks, mantas and even five out of seven sea turtles known to exist, are in the Philippine waters.

Turtles are important in the marine cycle. "They are keystone species," said Kristina Pahang, a Filipina marine biologist based in Australia and finishing her postgraduate degree. She has focused her research projects in the Bohol Sea. In an online interview with the BUSINESSMIRROR, she explained: "Keystone species are species that, if removed in the ecosystem, would be imbalanced."

The hawksbill turtle is an endangered sea turtle species. It feeds on sponges. "They [sea turtles] keep in check sponge growth in the reef," Pahang said. She highlighted the consequences of having too many sponges. "Or else, they [sponges] will overgrow the corals and, eventually, the corals will die."

Under the Philippine law, Republic Act 9147, or the Wildlife Act, Philippine wildlife, such as the sea turtles, are protected. However, although there is such a law, it is not fully enforced.

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Freediving means promoting^{P-2} conservation of marine life

Pahang encouraged the enforcement of the law.

"We have regulations, but there are still cases of noncompliance," Pahang said. She emphasized, though, that human dimensions must also be understood on the issue of sea-turtle conservation. "It is also very important to understand why people know these regulations, but still cannot comply."

The sea-turtle research in the Philippines still needs more extensive investigation. "If you ask where to start sea-turtle research, it becomes overwhelming, because I don't think we [the Philippines] have a good baseline data on sea turtles," Pahang said. "We need in-water research of sea turtles," she added.

According to Pahang, there is a 2-meter no-interaction zone for sea turtles. It is also not advised to provoke or hold them. If one comes to encounter sea turtles, Pahang encourages everyone to just take pictures and maintain a distance. It is also encouraged to take photos of the left side of the turtle as shown in this photo for possible photo identification. The

photo identification is for hard-shelled sea turtles, not the leatherback turtles. "There is a unique pattern of the sea turtle's facial scales or scutes at the side of the head," Pahang emphasized. "Photo identification has just started in the Philippines and, hopefully, these steps will move us forward to sea-turtle conservation."

The Philippines is a treasure and for freedivers in the country, it is not just about reaching attainable depths, but also caring for the sea that has given the world food, security from natural disasters, and even provide balanced nature. Taking photos is more than just photos for freedivers, it is a way of showing to the public that the underwater world can provide as much beauty, sense and mystery as on land. That the sea world provides the balance the planet needs.

Why stay on land when the world is 75 percent water?

The Manila Times

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// **SMALL-SCALE AGUSAN MINING FACILITIES CLOSED**

BUTUAN CITY: At least six small-scale mining facilities in Agusan del Norte were padlocked for operating without permits and environmental clearance certificates (ECCs) by a multi-agency team headed by the Regional Office of the Mines and Geosciences Board (MGB). The mining facilities, located in Barangay Comagascas in Cabadbaran City, are owned and operated by Alfredo Roa, Nenita Ito, Jose Silao, Alfredo Labarete Jr., Lito Catarig and Jehu Cagaanan. Ador Patiño, MGO regional office engineer and head of the joint team, said the closure of the mining facilities was temporary, pending the application for a Minahan ng Bayan permit.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

'Use imagination in disaster risk mgmt'

By DJ Yap

TOKYO—Experience from disasters in both Japan and the Philippines in 2011 and 2013, respectively, has shown the importance of using one's imagination in crafting a disaster management plan, according to the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica).

In vulnerable coastal communities under threat from tsunamis or storm surges, disaster managers need to do simulations or "scenario building," distribute hazard maps, prepare an evacuation plan, conduct emergency drills, build bridges or dikes and, most of all, share their experiences with others.

These were some of the lessons Jica learned from its reconstruction work in the Philippines in the aftermath of Super-typhoon "Yolanda" in the eastern

Visayas in 2013, as well as the earthquake and tsunami disaster in northeastern Japan in March 2011.

In an interview, Jin Wakabayashi, director of Jica's Southeast Asia and Pacific department, spoke of the need and urgency of formulating a disaster risk management plan for communities facing threats.

One of the key measures, he said, is to distribute hazard maps to local government units and to formulate an evacuation plan based on these.

Continuous revision

"During the course of our assistance, we supported introducing or upgrading hazard maps in LGUs but we foresee there needs to be continuous revision... for such kind of hazard maps to be utilized effectively," Wakabayashi said.

Hazard maps should have detailed information on the geographic features of the land or other "various anticipated effects" depending on the level or magnitude of an approaching disaster, he said.

"On a side note: I live in a suburb of Tokyo. My city distributes hazard maps, very detailed ones, to each household, so that's an image we have," Wakabayashi said.

Another lesson is the importance of conducting simulation drills even before a huge disaster strikes, he added.

Wakabayashi said simulations or scenario-building in the form of emergency drills in the barangays or communities would be helpful in identifying disaster risks.

"We also learned the importance of balancing out the quality and consistency of such manage-

ment plans in LGUs," he said, noting the disparity in capacity of each municipality.

Reflecting on the Philippine government's efforts in Yolanda-affected areas, Wakabayashi said Jica found the response to be generally "quick and effective."

"We observed that not only as an initiative of the central government, but also with the participation of LGUs and private citizens, all these stakeholders have worked hard on recovery and reconstruction efforts," he said.

Wakabayashi also cited the importance of structural measures, such as building dikes and bridges.

Jica is involved in the 27.3-kilometer and four-meter tide embankment project along the coastline of Leyte from Palo to Tanauan. Jica helped conceptualize the government-led project.

Daily Tribune

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOR

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'Don't burn trash, don't use lead paints'

A waste and pollution watch group urged participants of this year's Brigada Eskwela on May 30 to June 4 to clean and beautify the country's public schools in a way that will not put human health and the environment at risk.

As schools gear up for the annual sprucing up, the EcoWaste Coalition reminded participants to ensure that wastes collected from the week-long clean-up drive are not burned and that lead-free paints are solely used for school renovations.

"Burnish trash and using leaded paint must be avoided all the time as these practices can contaminate the school environment with health-damaging substances," said Thony Dizon, coordinator of the EcoWaste Coalition's Project Protect.

The group reminded school principals, teachers and the general public that open burning is prohibited under the Republic Act 9003, the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act and that the use of lead-free paints is prescribed under the Department of Education Memorandum No. 85, Series of 2016.

Unknown to many, the burning of discards discharges microscopic toxins that can trigger headaches, cause eye, throat and skin irritation, weaken respiratory functions, cause asthma and heart attacks, bring about reproductive disorders, and even result in cancers, the group pointed out.

On the other hand, coating school walls, doors, windows, chairs, tables and other fixtures with leaded paints creates a lead poisoning hazard as the painted surfaces will chip and deteriorate over time, dispersing lead-containing paint flake and dust that can enter the human body via ingestion or inhalation, the group added.

According to health experts, the brain damage caused by chronic and low-level exposure to lead, a potent neurotoxin, is irreversible and

untreatable.

Disturbing lead painted surfaces through dry sanding or dry scraping will create enormous amounts of lead dust and should also be avoided, the EcoWaste Coalition likewise said.

Instead of simply mixing or setting them on fire, the group urged Brigada Eskwela partakers to recycle or reuse the non-biodegradable discards and to compost the biodegradable discards.

As for the paints, the group advised Brigada Eskwela volunteers to use water-based paints whenever possible and, if oil-based paints are required, to choose lead-free brands.

The group offered the following tips towards a waste-free and toxic-free Brigada Eskwela:

1. Opt for reusable or recyclable containers for volunteers' drinks and foods to reduce trash.

2. Separate discards at source to keep the volume of residual trash to the minimum.

3. Reuse, recycle and compost discards instead of burning them.

4. Do not dispose of busted mercury-containing fluorescent lamps in ordinary trash.

5. Use safer cleaning agents and avoid hazardous ones such as muriatic acid, oxalic acid and dichlorobenzene.

6. Apply lead-free paints for school interiors, exteriors, furniture and fixtures.

7. Avoid dry sanding or dry scraping painted surfaces that might contain lead so as not to disperse lead dust into the surroundings.

8. Keep children and pregnant women out of the work area (lead is very hazardous to unborn children).

9. Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water before meals and after the work is done.

10. After a repainting job, change clothes before going home, set aside in a sealed reusable bag and wash separately.

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Nature's answer to climate risk

LONDON—Nearly half the world's population—some 3.5 billion people—live near coasts. As climate change exacerbates the effects of storms, flooding, and erosion, the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of millions of those people will be at risk. In fact, the latest edition of the World Economic Forum's World Risk Assessment Report names failure to adapt to the effects of climate change as the single greatest risk, in terms of impact, to societies and economies worldwide.

Beyond endangering lives, more frequent and stronger storms could cost many billions of dollars, owing to infrastructure damage and lost revenues from farming, fisheries, and tourism. And, as the Harvard Business Review recently noted, the projected cost rises with each new study. Yet the international community currently spends on risk mitigation less than one-fifth of what it spends on natural-disaster response.

When it comes to climate risk, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. As Rebecca Scheurer, director of the Red Cross Global Disaster Preparedness Center, put it, "We spend millions of dollars on the response side, and were we to invest more of those resources on the front end we'd save more people. It's as simple as that."

With the human and the financial costs of climate change attracting more attention than ever, now is the time to shift resources toward risk reduction. Doing so will require national governments, industry, aid organizations, and other NGOs to make the most of their investments. And some of the most effective and cost-effective solutions are already available in nature.

Coastal and marine ecosystems have considerable potential to mitigate the effects of storms and other risks, especially when combined with traditional built infrastructure. A 100-meter belt of mangroves, for example, can reduce wave height by up to 66 percent and lower peak water levels during floods. A healthy coral reef can reduce wave force by 97 percent, lessening the impact of storms and preventing erosion. These and other coastal ecosystems are the first line of defense for many cities worldwide, from Miami to Manila.

WORLD VIEW

Maria Damanaki



Until recently, such nature-based solutions were often overlooked. But leaders increasingly recognize their importance, and are beginning to take action, including on the international level. The Paris climate agreement, reached last December and signed last month, not only established a consensus on the importance of addressing climate change, but also explicitly affirmed that ecosystems play a role in capturing greenhouse gases and helping communities adapt to the effects of climate change.

At the national level, some of the most at-risk island countries are taking important steps. For example, last year the Seychelles announced a first-of-its-kind "debt for nature" swap with its Paris Club creditors and The Nature Conservancy. The swap will allow the country to redirect \$21.6 million of its debt toward investment in a comprehensive approach to ocean conservation that will bolster its resilience to climate change.

Private-sector leaders, too, are starting to look toward natural tools. Engineering firms like CH2M are working with coastal communities in the Gulf of Mexico and beyond to find hybrid solutions that combine traditional and nature-based approaches.

Even the insurance industry—comprising what may be the most risk-averse companies in the world—sees the potential in natural solutions. Over the last decade, insurers have paid out some \$300 billion for climate-related damage, often to rebuild the same vulnerable structures. It is not surprising, then, that the reinsurer Swiss Re has conducted studies on mitigating the costly risks of hurricanes to coastal communities.

According to one Swiss Re study, Barbados loses the equivalent of 4 percent of its GDP every year to

hurricane-related costs. But every dollar spent to protect mangroves and coral reefs saved \$20 in future hurricane losses. Given such findings, it is no longer inconceivable that insurance companies might one day write coverage for wetlands and other natural infrastructure that offers protection for coastal communities and economies.

Nature can also help to protect livelihoods. A Red Cross-led mangrove restoration project in Vietnam not only reduced damage to dikes and other built infrastructure, but also resulted in higher aquaculture yields and thus more income for the local communities. A mangrove and coral restoration project in Grenada—a joint effort of the Red Cross, the Nature Conservancy, and the fishers of Grenada's Grenville community—has also shown great potential to increase resilience. Just 30 meters of reef and coral have been shown to increase substantially the population of lobster, conch, octopus and urchins.

Climate and disaster resilience is a challenge that spans sectors. So, too, must our solutions. Such collaborative efforts are vital to the development and implementation of more effective preventive strategies. The World Bank, the Nature Conservancy, and partner researchers (including ecologists, economists, and engineers) have recently published a report offering guidelines for such cooperation. Specifically, the report recommends calculating the value of coastal ecosystems in terms of protected capital and infrastructure, based on approaches commonly used by the insurance and engineering industries.

In the face of rising climate and disaster risk, investments in nature-based solutions can protect lives and safeguard prosperity in a cost-effective manner—all while preserving imperiled natural ecosystems worldwide. It is time for governments, business, and NGOs alike to recognize that when it comes to fighting the effects of climate change and protecting coastal communities, preserving and restoring nature may be the smartest investment we can make.

Project Syndicate

Maria Damanaki is global managing director for oceans at the Nature Conservancy.

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• Brace for La Niña, farmers warned

TACLOBAN CITY, Leyte (PNA) – The Department of Agriculture regional office in Eastern Visayas (DA-8) is asking rice farmers to brace for intense rains as La Niña sets in during the second half of the year. DA-8 Regional Director Leo Cañeda said the agency has already advised farmers to plant early and utilize climate smart rice variety that can withstand stress due to flooding. "At its worst, La Niña will adversely affect about 155,000 hectares of rice farms in the region. In two cropping seasons, those areas normally produce 200 metric tons of rice," he said. "Should there be losses during La Niña, the region's rice self-sufficiency will suffer the most." The region experienced a three percent shortfall in rice production last year compared to the previous year as the region only just recovered from the devastations caused by natural calamities. Rice self-sufficiency is presently posted at 88 percent. Leyte's plains in the second district, which is the rice granary of the region, is being braced to face the La Niña occurrence. La Niña occurs when easterly trade winds strengthen, cooling water across the central and eastern Pacific Ocean, which in turn can up-end weather around the world. The severity of the phenomenon is measured by ocean temperatures and changes in wind patterns. It also increases the likelihood of tropical cyclones in the Pacific.

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Cotabato City SP eyes stiffer traffic rules, Eco Park

By **ALI G. MACABALANG**

COTABATO CITY — The Sangguniang Panlungsod (SP) here is mulling the adoption of ordinances imposing stiffer penalties on traffic law violations and the opening of a city Eco Park that will be equipped with a comprehensive waste disposal management system.

Presiding SP officer Vice Mayor-elect Frances Cynthia Guiani-Sayadi said the Cotabato City SP has already prepared the enabling measures for the more stringent enforcement of traffic laws, as well the creation of the Eco Park.

These will be included in the legislative agenda that will be launched

on June 30.

Rapid economic growth has been identified as the main reason why traffic has become worse in the city, and Sayadi noted that “this should be handled and contained at a manageable level with the amendment of obsolete local ordinances on traffic.”

“We heard the clamor of the people for (the city government) to implement solutions to the traffic problem in our city and this is what I want to act upon immediately when I assume office,” she said.

Sayadi, who is a former city administrator, won the three-cornered vice mayoral contest in tandem with her elder brother City Mayor Japal Guiani Jr. who was given a third mandate.

In conjunction with the upgrading of local road traffic rules, Sayadi said, the SP will also adopt an ordinance, transforming a strategic area in this city to an Eco Park.

Seen as an effective solution for proper garbage disposal in the city, the Eco Park will be comprised of a dumpsite, a composting facility, a material recovery facility, and at the same time a venue for educational tours on how to reduce, re-use, and recycle garbage, she said.

The proposed park will boost the city government campaign on proper solid waste management, and instill in the minds of residents a higher sense of garbage segregation in households and immediate surroundings, she said.

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Lack of water ironic in town hosting a dam

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

PANTABANGAN, Nueva Ecija—The signs of a problem that should not exist linger in this mountain town.

Every household has water drums in their backyards. "Indiana Jones," the name of a water distribution truck, is parked to refill the next customer's containers, its task never ending because every home needs domestic water 24 hours a day.

This water shortage is unusual for a town that hosts Asia's second biggest dam that provides hydroelectric power to Luzon.

Mayor-elect Roberto Agdipa himself ordered six 1-gallon containers of water for a beeline of guests. A gallon costs P5 while a drum full of water is worth P60.

"The 'balong' (water tributary) has been dry for months," said Agdipa, referring to the entry of water from Pantabangan Dam in Sitio Aya in East Poblacion.

This crude water system is run by the local government, which also operates the Pantabangan Municipal Electric System

(Pames) for the town's 30,000 residents.

Government agencies turned over these utilities to the local government after seven of 14 villages of the town were submerged by the Pantabangan Dam in 1974.

"The [water distribution] lines are as old as me. These are made of asbestos. The water system here needs to be totally rehabilitated and installed with a treatment plant," Agdipa said.

The depletion of the water supply had taken place 20 years after the original location of the town was inundated.

In 2006, a team from the University of the Philippines Los Baños, in a report based on simulations of the likely effects of climate change on the Pantabangan-Caranglan watershed, said chances of rain would decline by up to 80 percent and average temperature would rise by as much as 8.4 percent at the end of the century.

Agdipa, a former nurse, said the water problem should be solved to prevent diseases.

He said officials also need to address Pames' debts and recover taxes from hydropower firms. "But water first," he said.

WATER level at Pantabangan Dam declines among the dry season, too low to feed a tributary that brings water to households in Pantabangan town.

TONETTE OREJAS/INQUIRER CENTRAL LUZON

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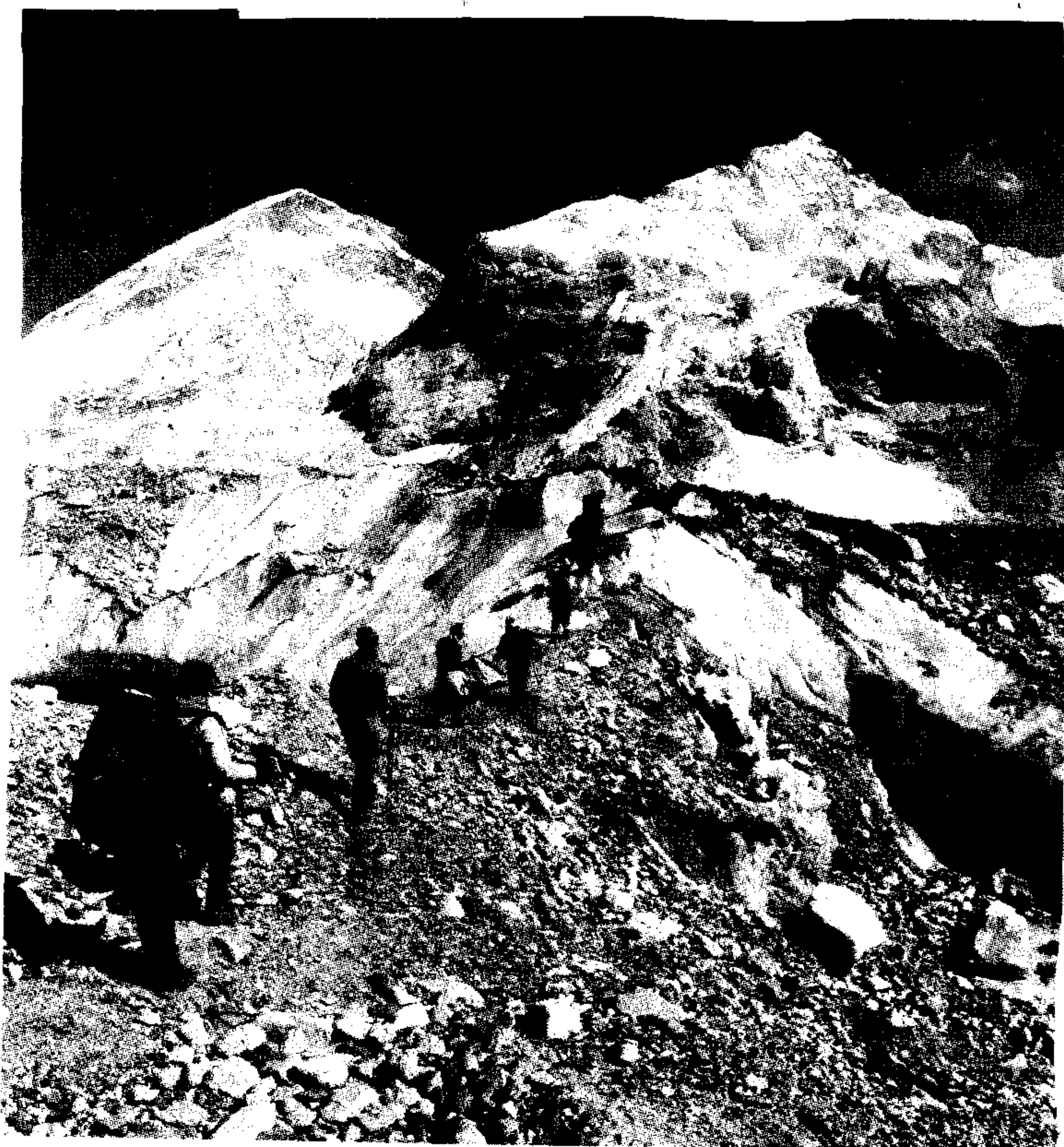
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DEADLY PEAKS - In this Feb. 22, 2016 file photo, international trekkers pass through a glacier at the Mount Everest base camp, Nepal. Nearly 300 people have died on Mt. Everest in the century or so since climbers have been trying to reach its summit. At least 100 of them are still on the mountain, perhaps, 200. (AP)

Death on Everest leads to risky effort to recover bodies

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — The mountain is speckled with corpses.

Nearly 300 people have died on Mount Everest in the century or so since climbers have been trying to reach its summit. At least 100 of them are still on the mountain, perhaps 200. Most of the bodies are hidden in deep crevasses or covered by snow and ice, but some are visible to every climber who passes by, landmarks in heavy plastic climbing boots and colorful parkas that fade a little more every year. The most famous corpses get nicknames - "Green Boots," "Sleeping Beauty," "The German" - becoming warnings of what can go wrong on the 8,850-meter (29,035-foot) peak, even as they become part of the mountain's gallows humor.

No mountaineer wants to end up a nicknamed body. No grieving family wants their loved one to become a punchline. But in one of the most unforgiving places on Earth, where low oxygen, frigid temperatures and strong winds mean any effort can seem impossible, taking down the dead is no simple thing.

So when four people died on the upper reaches of Everest in recent days, and with a fifth missing and presumed dead, climbing teams and climbers' families scattered around the world had to face

Coster said that Strydom's body was just off a main climbing route, in an area where it was easily visible, and that her family wanted it brought down.

But he said he discussed the situation first with a Sherpa team, evaluating the potential dangers involved, before deciding they could safely get down the mountain with the corpse.

Coster described Strydom as a strong climber who had weakened as she neared the summit. She turned back but later collapsed and died. After being carried down the mountain, her body was flown to Kathmandu on Friday.

A recovery like that does not come cheap.

Dan Richards of Global Rescue, a Boston-based agency, said retrieving a body from Everest is a massive logistical operation that can cost from \$10,000 to \$40,000, depending on the difficulty and helicopter flights.

"However, we do not take the risk for mortal remains unless it is in a safe location," he said.

Jiban Ghimire of Shangri-la Nepal Trek, a prominent expedition outfitter agency based in Kathmandu, said recovery operations are generally covered by insurance companies or paid for by the families of the dead climbers. Strydom's family and friends are trying to raise at least \$30,000 to

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Death on Everest leads to risk effort to
recover bodies

the question of whether the bodies would be brought down.

"For the loved ones back home and family members of those fallen and died on Mount Everest, it is worth it," said Ben Jones, a guide from Jackson, Wyoming, who made his third successful Everest ascent this year.

But the equation isn't simple.

"It's extremely difficult and extremely dangerous," said Arnold Coster, expedition leader for Seven Summit Treks, which lost two climbers this year on Everest and spent days getting them off the mountain. "The terrain is steep and the weather is bad. It's been snowing, and been very windy the past couple days," he said Thursday, as a team of Sherpas struggled to get the body of one climber, Maria Strydom, low enough to be picked up by helicopter.

It can take 10 Sherpas more than three days to move a body from Everest's South Col, at 8,000 meters or 26,300 feet, to Camp 2, a rocky expanse at 21,000 feet where helicopters can take over. It's a painful, exhausting process, with the bodies, which are normally carried in sleeping bags or wrapped in tents, often much heavier because they are covered in ice.

Given the risks involved in spending so much time at high altitudes, many climbing teams decide not to bring down their dead, sometimes lowering them into crevasses or covering them with rocks so they are not gawked at.

cover what it cost to get her body down from Everest and to Kathmandu, according to Australian press reports.

The climbers who died on Everest this year included Strydom, a Dutch man and two Indian men. Another Indian man is missing, with almost no chance he remains alive.

But across the years, it is Sherpas who die most often on the mountain. In just the past two years, at least 28 of the dead were from the ethnic group that has lived for centuries around Everest, and who have become an integral part of the Himalayan mountaineering world.

The pay on the mountain, in a nation with an average per capita income of just \$730, has long made the risks worthwhile.

Sherpa climbing guides can earn up to \$7,000, plus bonuses and tips, in the three-month climbing season. Cooks and other support personnel earn about half as much.

When a Sherpa dies on Everest, relatives also working there will normally rush to recover the body.

But sometimes, they are never found.

Chhedar Sherpa, a guide who has scaled Everest seven times, lost his brother and nephew when an Everest avalanche killed 16 Sherpas in 2014. His brother's body was recovered, but his nephew has never been found.

The Standard

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SCHOOL CLEANUP CAUTION URGED

A WASTE and pollution watch group urged participants of this year's Brigada Eskwela on May 30 to June 4 to clean and beautify the country's public schools in a way that will not put human health and the environment at risk.

As schools gear up for the annual sprucing up, the EcoWaste Coalition reminded participants to ensure that wastes collected from the week-long cleanup drive are not burned and that lead-free paints are solely used for school renovations.

"Burnish trash and using leaded paint must be avoided all the time as these practices can contaminate the school environment with health-damaging substances," said Thony Dizon, coordinator of the EcoWaste coalition's Project Protect.

The group reminded school principals, teachers and the general public that open burning is prohibited under the Republic Act 9003, the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act and that the use of lead-free paints is prescribed under the Department of Education Memorandum No. 85, Series of 2016.

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Contaminated water

Hundreds hospitalized in Zambo City, Sulu kills 45 people province in gastro outbreak

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Contaminated water in this city and the province of Sulu has already killed 45 people, according to authorities.

Health officials said the fatalities had been suffering from an epidemic of acute gastroenteritis that started in March.

Dr. Joshua Brillantes, chief of the local health support division of the Department of Health in Western Mindanao, blamed contaminated water for the prevalence of gastroenteritis here and in Sulu province

and the deaths that came with it.

"Water is the main culprit of this," he said.

Brillantes said the surge in the number of gastroenteritis cases has been observed during the months associated with the El Niño phenomenon, starting in March.

"The El Niño phenomenon

meant scarcity of water, which resulted in rationing," he said.

Brillantes said although the number of cases declined recently, gastroenteritis continues to spread in other areas like Zamboanga del Sur.

Dr. Fahra Tan Omar, director of the Integrated Provincial Hospital in Sulu, said health workers had attended to a total of 1,706 gastroenteritis patients since March. Of this number, 1,272 were children while 434 were adults.

"It has been noted that there

has been an upsurge in diarrhea cases admitted at the Sulu provincial hospital," Omar said.

Omar said tests showed that the drinking water supplied by the Jolo Water District is among the causes of the surge in gastroenteritis cases in Sulu.

"We got samples from the water district, we had it tested and it tested positive for fecal coliform," she said.

She added that health officials had written the manager of the water district about the

contamination and the clean water that the district supplies to households.

She said the district was also asked to check for pipe leaks.

Dr. Vikki de los Reyes, field epidemiology training program officer at the Zamboanga City health office, said that in this city, 22 gastroenteritis patients had died since April 4.

She said the dead were among 2,936 patients hospitalized here since the outbreak of gastroenteritis in April.

Brillantes said tests conduct-

ed here showed that even water coming from refilling stations had been contaminated by the coliform bacteria.

"It showed that poor handling (of water) is among the reasons (for the epidemic)," he said.

Joselito Sarmiento, of Zamboanga City Water District, said the company had increased the amount of chlorine being mixed into the city's drinking water after several taps had been contaminated, too. **Ju Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao**

The Manila Times

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US 2016 ELECTIONS



UN TO TRUMP: CLIMATE DEAL IS CRITICAL TO SAVING PLANET

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations on Friday hit back at Donald Trump after he vowed to scrap the Paris climate deal if elected US president, saying the agreement was critical to saving the planet. "The Paris agreement is one of the key achievements that world leaders have made in the critical fight that is designed to make sure that this planet is habitable for all of us, for generations to come," UN spokesman Farhan Haq said. Trump had in the past said he was "not a big fan" of the Paris deal and that he would seek to renegotiate it, but on Thursday he declared that he would simply scrap it altogether. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon considers the Paris deal as his proudest accomplishment during his 10-year tenure. However, Ban has no plans to reach out to Trump to try to educate him on the benefits of the Paris deal, according to his spokesman.

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Alam n'yo ba??

Nasa PH ang pinakamalaking solar farm sa SE Asia

Ni Lhean Angeles

Pinakamalaki sa Southeast Asia at pang-7 sa buong mundo. Iyan ang Solar Farm sa Cadiz City na matatagpuan sa Negros Occidental. Ang kanyang sukat: 35-ektaryang lupain.

Nagkakahalaga ng P10 bilyon, ang naturang Solar Farm na matatagpuan sa Hacienda Paz, Bgy. Tinampaa, Cadiz City ay mayroong production capacity na 280 megawatts at inaasahang makakapag-akyat ng P45 milyong dagdag na taunang kita sa lokal na pamahalaan.

Ang solar farm ay nagkakarga ng enerhiya mula sa araw na siyang isinu-supply sa mga kabahayan, negosyo at infrastructure. Ang tinatawag na Photovoltaic cells sa solar panels ang tumatanggap ng sinag ng araw at naiko-convert ito bilang kuryente.

Pang-10 solar farm sa PH

Mula sa dating sugarcane plantation, ang Hacienda Paz ay isa na ngayong solar farm na nagsu-supply ng kuryente sa buong lalawigan ng Negros.

Sa pamamagitan ng partnership ng Gregorio Araneta Incorporated (GAI) at Soleq Holdings Incorporated ay matagumpay na natapos ang Solar Farm.

Ito ang ika-10 sa kabuuang bilang ng fully functional power plants sa Pilipinas.

Masayang ibinalita ni Governor Alfredo Marañon Jr. na ang kaniyang lalawigan ay mayroon nang kakayahan ngayon na mag-produce ng 280MW (megawatts) na pinaniniwalaang makakaakit sa mga investors para magnegosyo sa kaniyang lalawigan. Bukod pa dito, nakatulong din ito sa power shortage problem sa Negros Occidental.

Ikinatuwa din ni Cadiz City Mayor Patrick Escalante ang pagkakaroon ng solar project sa kanilang bayan dahil ang inisyal na P45 milyong annual revenues ng pamahalaang lokal, inaasahang aabot pa umano sa P100 milyon.

Sinimulan ang Solar Farm at naikonekta sa National Grid Corporation nito lamang Pebrero 13 taglay ang initial supply na 30MW.

Sa ngayon, ang Negros Island ay kinikilala na at tinawag na "solar power capital of the Philippines" at maging sa Southeast Asia.

2.9 trabaho

Tinatayang mahigit sa 2.9 milyong trabaho, na karamihan ay construction at engineering services, ang palikha ng solar, wind, geothermal, hydro at biomass power projects sa naturang lalawigan.

Dahil sa Solar Farm sa Cadiz, direktang nagkaroon ng hanapbuhay ang may 2,500 na mga manggagawa sa kanilang bayan bukod pa sa 200 na naging regular employee upang mangalaga sa Solar Farm.

Ang Solar power ay itinuturing na pinakamura at epektibong teknolohiya ngayon.

Sabi ni Gregorio Araneta III, chairman of Helios at owner ng GAI, "Ideally-located P200-million solar farm in Cadiz is one of our renewable energy projects in the country. Yung iba ay nasa Leyte at Ilocos."

"This project also demonstrates our country's ability to develop world-class renewable energy projects and establishes the Philippines' foothold as frontrunner in renewable energy. It's more comparative with fuel sources. The cost of manufacturing has gone down, and the quality of the panels has become greater so the efficiency is greater. So it's cheaper to do and when you include the feed-in tariff, that makes it far more viable," dagdag pa ni Araneta.

Push pa more!

Sa ngayon balak na din magtayo ng solar panel sa mga lugar ng Bacolod City, La Carlota City, at sa mga munisipalidad ng Murcia at Manapla sa Negros Occidental at Mabinay sa Negros Oriental.

Mas mabilis ang pagtatayo ng solar farm na binubuo lamang ng solar panels, kumpara sa ibang conventional energy sources na mayroon pang boilers, conveyors belts at cooling systems.

Sa maintenance naman, kailangan lamang umano ay palagiang linisin ang mga panels at i-trim ang mga damo sa paligid na kinalalagyan ng mga solar panels. Ito ay papalitan tuwing ika-10 taon.

"The FIT, through fixed price rates for the generated electricity, guarantees revenue for the solar farm for a period of 20 years. For solar power, the FIT rate is P9.68 per kilowatt/hour (KPH)" sabi naman ni Mayor Escalante.

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