

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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DAY : Sunday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

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DENR urges Filipinos to help save PH eagle

OUTGOING Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Ramon Paje has called on the Filipinos to save and protect the endangered Philippine eagle.

Paje said this type of bird needs to be nurtured as it is the Filipino people's best gift to the global community.

The country started to celebrate the "Philippine Eagle Week" yesterday until June 10, with the DENR renewing its appeal to the public to give more emphasis on the Philippine eagle's protection and concern.

Just recently, a Philippine eagle which was accidentally caught in a trap in Aurora province was formally turned over to the authorities giving conservationists hope for the critically endangered raptor.

"The Philippine eagle is a unique heritage, found only in this part of the world that needs to be nurtured as it is the Filipino people's gift to the global community," Paje stressed.

A weeklong celebration was highlighted by calls to stop the killing and protect the forests.

Paje said the Philippine eagle has continued to brave the challenges to its survival, particularly habitat destruction and hunting.

The wildlife conservation community has been shocked with recent news of Philippine eagles being killed, the latest of which was Pamana, a three-year-old raptor that was found with a bullet hole in the right breast at Mt. Hamiguitan Range Wildlife Sanctuary in Davao Oriental, in August last year.

"There is a need to usher in a renewed commitment to protect the eagle and other wildlife from extinction and allow them to perpetuate for future generations," Paje pointed out.

Joel dela Torre

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High hopes for the tamaraw population

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA [@jonlmayuga](#)

WITH its slightly increasing population—a trend observed in the last five years in Mindoro—environment officials believe there is a bright future for the endangered Philippine tamaraw.

Despite the threats, they believe that conservation effort at the Mounts Iglit-Baco National Park (MIBNP) for the Mindoro's wild beast, also known as the Mindoro dwarf buffalo (*Bubalus mindorensis*), continues to gain ground, hopeful the dream that they will once be seen roaming free in the wild will become a reality.

Endemic to Oriental and Occidental Mindoro, an island in the Mimaropa region in southern Luzon, the tamaraw is among the proposed national symbols. In fact, Presidential Proclamation 273 of 2002 declares October of every year as a special month for the Conservation and Protection of the Tamaraw in Mindoro.

The tamaraw is currently considered a critically endangered species. Only a few hundreds remain of this unique species, which could only be found in the hinterlands of Mindoro Island.

Compared to the stocky or bigger native carabao (*Bubalus bubalis carabanensis*), the tamaraw bears V-shaped horns, has a shorter tail and a straggly coat of chocolate to ebony fur.

It is wild and aggressive, unlike its domesticated cousin, the "beast of burden" and Filipino farmers' best friend and most reliable farming companion.

A fully grown tamaraw stands about 4-feet tall and weighs about 300 kilograms (kg), significantly lighter by 200 kg to 300 kg than the ordinary native carabao.

According to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB), the remaining tamaraw population in Mindoro is concentrated atop grassy slopes and forest patches of Mounts Iglit and Baco, and a few other areas on Mounts Aruyan, Bongabong, Calavite and Halcon.

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Increasing population

THE country's top biodiversity official said the population of the tamaraw continues to increase over the past five years, basing the conclusion on the result of an annual population survey conducted in the MIBNP.

Director Theresa Mundita Lim of the DENR-BMB said that, based on the annual count conducted in April 2011, there are only 274 tamaraws left. This is the highest number since the annual count started in 2000.

It was estimated that 10,000 of this rare animal thrive on the island of Mindoro in the early 1900s. Because of the cattle-killing rinderpest disease, its population was drastically reduced in the 1930s.

Its population continues to shrink owing to logging and hunting until the 1970s, when the population fell below 100, prompting the government to launch the Tamaraw Conservation Program (TCP).

Despite a failed captive-breeding program that started in 1980s, the strong-protection measure that was used in the protected area saw the population of the tamaraw slowly increasing.

In 2012 the number went up to 327; 347 in 2013; 382 in 2014; and 405 in 2015. Rodel Boyles, head of TCP and Protected Area Superintendent (Pasu) of the MIBNP, said a total of 413 tamaraw was recorded this year.

413

The tamaraw population recorded this year

This year the tamaraw count was conducted between April 12 and April 19, with the DENR, through the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB), taking the lead. PAMB acts as the policy-making body in the management of the protected area, which is being enforced by the Office of the Pasu.

Boyles said, the tamaraw count was conducted in partnership with the Far Eastern University (FEU), local government units (LGUs), and DENR partner and volunteer organizations.

A total of 65 volunteers took part in the count from 18 vantage points within the MIBNP, counting herds from a distance of 200 meters to 500 meters from identified tamaraw feeding grounds.

"The trend is increasing in the last five years. As far as counting is concerned, it was increasing. We conducted the count for five days and we spent a day for data analysis," Boyles said.

He said the counting is synchronized in different areas.

"There are many calves, so that means the population is increasing because of breeding. But the size of our study is limited. We have to improve or expand our study areas," he said, partly in Filipino.

Boyles said they intend to improve the system of counting the tamaraw to include other areas where the herds have been sighted.

Other areas, such as in Sablayan, which is already outside the protected area, could be included in the annual count, he said. "We are considering other areas, but we have to validate the potential areas first." So far, Boyles noted that the area being observed as part of the annual tamaraw count is only about 14 percent of the total area of the MIBNP.

"There are other areas where the tamaraw thrives. This means that the population may actually be higher than the number we are recording," he said.

For her part, Lim said that, while the slight increase in this year's annual tamaraw count may not be "impressive," the growth in the population is, nevertheless, a significant development.

"It is safe to say that the population remains healthy and it is actually increasing," she said.

"In fact, outside Mounts Iglit-Baco National Park in Mindoro, there are reported sightings of the tamaraw. This means that the population is slightly increasing," Lim told the BUSINESSMIRROR.

She said in the future more areas should be included in the annual count to make a more accurate assessment of the tamaraw population trend.

Key biodiversity area

A PROTECTED area under the National Integrated Protected Areas System (Nipas) Act, MIBNP became a national park by virtue

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of Republic Act (RA) 6149 dated November 9, 1970.

A key biodiversity area, the entire MIBNP is shared by the towns of Gloria, Bansud, Bongabong, Pinamalayan and Mansalay in the province of Oriental Mindoro; and the towns of Sablayan, Calintaan, Rizal and San Jose province in the province of Occidental Mindoro.

While the park is named after two prominent mountains—Mount Iglit (2,364 meters above sea level) and Mount Baco (2,488 meters above sea level)—there are two other mountains within the protected area, namely, Mount Wood (2,024 meters above sea level) and Mount Sinclair (1,842 above sea level).

The park is blessed with abundant water with five major river systems and several minor systems draining from the various peaks.

Grassland is the most predominant land cover of MIBNP, comprising around 72,811 hectares, or 38.25 percent, of the total land area, ideal for feeding ground of tamaraw, and a remaining forest area of about 29.83 percent of the park's total land area.

According to a biological profile of MIBNP, 63 species of plants can be found in the area. The majority of the species are orchids and begonias. Aside from the wild tamaraw, the park is also home to monkeys, wild pigs, palm cat and Malay civet.

Nine species of fruits and insect bats thrive in the park. A total of 104 species of birds also breed in the park, including the Mindoro Imperial Pigeon, Mindoro Bleeding Heart, Mindoro Scops Owl, Mindoro Flowerpecker, Mindoro Hornbill and the Black-hooded coucal. A total of 11 species of

snakes were also recorded; 14 species of lizards and nine species of amphibians.

Hunting practices

TWO known Mangyan tribes—the Buhid and Tau-Buhid, which are claiming vast portions of the park as their ancestral domain—live within the MIBNP, which continues to face various threats, such as logging, illegal-wildlife trade and hunting for food and trophy.

Boyles said hunting in the MIBNP remains a serious threat to the population of the tamaraw in the wild—a reason dispersal in other areas is not happening.

“Hunting is part of the culture of the Mangyans. For them, hunting tamaraw is subsistence; it's food,” he said.

While there are national laws that protect the tamaraw, Boyles said there is also a law, specifically the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (Ipra), that guarantees the protection and of the traditional way of life of the Mangyan.

Laws that protect the tamaraw against hunting include Commonwealth Act 73, RA 1086, RA 7586 or the Nipas Act, which establishes protected areas, and RA 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act.

For Mangyans, Boyles said they have designated certain areas where hunting tamaraw is allowed. While he said there are designated areas for traditional hunting, he also sees the need for management intervention, such as restricting the hunt to fewer and smaller areas.

He said the PAMB is eyeing to tighten the regulation in hunting tamaraw which is exclusive for the Mangyan, it being part

of their tradition and way of life. According to Boyles, the lowlanders' unsustainable hunting methods are influencing the Mangyan. He noted that Mangyan now use guns instead of spears, nylons instead of vines for snare, and bigger traps. “Before, Mangyan use only spears in hunting tamaraws. Now they use guns. For snare, they used to use vines but now they use nylons,” he said.

Using vines for snare, he explained, does not seriously injure a tamaraw, giving them a better chance of survival if they are able to escape. Nylons injure the tamaraw when it struggles to escape.

“If the tamaraw escapes from the snare, the chance of survival is low if it is injured,” he explained.

Being an endangered species, hunting of tamaraw is prohibited under the law but since it is part of the Mangyan tradition and way of life, “we are letting them to hunt but we want to enforce stricter rules,” he said.

Boyles said regulating the use of other animal traps, such as steel cages and pits, is being eyed.

“We want them to make small steel cages and smaller pits,” he said. Bigger cages or pits means catching more than one tamaraw, including juveniles, he said.

Another concern is that the lowlanders hunt in the MIBNP not just for food, but for trophies, and they target not just tamaraws, but other wildlife, too.

Biodiversity conservation

ACCORDING to Boyles, they continue to engage the Mangyans living within and outside the protected area, with the hope of getting their complete support.

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"We continuously hold our information, education and communication campaign. We want to show them that they will be affected if the tamaraw is gone in Mindoro," he said partly in Filipino.

Besides moderating hunting practices, he said they are eyeing to encourage the Mangyans to become forest protectors in order to prevent the lowlanders from encroaching the protected area to cut trees and hunt wildlife.

"Since they said Mounts Iglit-Baco is their ancestral domain, we would like to encourage them to be part in protecting the area against the lowlanders," he said in Filipino.

According to Boyles, the DENR, through the PAMB, is implementing livelihood programs, such as animal dispersal of carabaos and small ruminants.

On the other hand, under the National Greening Program, people in the communities are also provided with jobs as partners of the massive reforestation activities, he added.

From its failed captive-breeding program in the 1900s, the TCP moved forward to strengthening protection and conservation in the wild to boost its population through natural breeding within the 75,445-hectare protected area.

Lim said protecting the entire MIBNP is protecting not only the tamaraw, but other endangered wildlife that takes shelter in the vast forest.

She said the government is not alone in its endeavor for the MIBNP, but to save the tamaraw, the DENR-BMB will need all the help it can get, particularly from the LGUs and the people in the communities.

Lim said the LGUs, which has a seat in PAMB, must integrate development plans and programs in the MIBNP in the development agenda of their respective localities.

Funding support for the protection of the MIBNP, she said, will boost biodiversity conservation that will help save the tamaraw against hunters.

Lim said the fact that tamaraw continues to thrive within the MIBNP is proof that the ecosystem remains healthy and must be protected against all threats.

A protected area, such as the MIBNP, she said, is hosting a diverse species of flora and fauna, including those classified as threatened and critically endangered like the tamaraw, which LGUs should help sustainably manage together with the national government.

Through the TCP, the DENR hopes to educate the communities, not only to become the protectors of the forest, but champions of the country's rich biodiversity.



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Wildlife smuggling, tigilan na—Legarda

Nanawagan si Sen. Loren Legarda na tigilan na ang "wildlife smuggling" kasabay ng paggunita ng World Environment Day ngayong Linggo.

Ang pahayag ni Legarda ay alinsunod sa panawagan ng United Nations (UN) na labanan ang nasabing ilegal na transaksyon sa bansa lalo dahil banta na rin ito sa ating kalikasan.

Base sa ulat ng Philippine Center for Terrestrial and Aquatic Research (PCTAR), ang Pilipinas ang pangunahing pinagkukunan ng amphibians at reptiles.

"The Philippine forest turtle endemic to Palawan is listed as 'critically endangered' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. In June 2015, at least 3,900 of these freshwater turtles were recovered from a warehouse in Bataraza town in Palawan, the biggest haul of wildlife in recent years," sabi ni Legarda.

Leonel Abasola

Daily Tribune

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UN chief warns against illegal wildlife trade

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon is seeking from the international community more action against continuing illegal wildlife trade.

"There's grave cause for alarm," he said in his message for the 2016 World Environment Day (WED).

He raised urgency for action, noting illicit wildlife trade not only feeds corruption and related criminal activities but is also driving thousands of wild flora and fauna species closer to extinction.

Such natural resource depletion due to unscrupulous parties' greed for short-term gain is jeopardizing biodiversity and ecological equilibrium needed for long-term benefit of communities and habitats, he noted.

"I urge people and governments to overcome indifference, combat greed and act to preserve our natural heritage for the benefit of this and future generations," he said.

Ban lauded 2016 WED global host Angola for deciding to no longer tolerate sale of illegal wildlife products.

Angola is also strengthening legislation and increasing border controls to help restore the elephant population which was

affected by civil war, he noted.

"Such action sends a strong message that wild species of plants and animals are a precious commodity that must be sustainably managed and protected from illegal trade," he said.

In 1972, UN General Assembly designated June 5 as WED.

The annual WED is UN's principal vehicle for encouraging worldwide awareness about and action for the environment.

Anchored on the theme "Go Wild for Life," this year's WED celebration aims helping promote zero tolerance for slaughter and illegal trade of wildlife around the world.

"Elephants are being slaughtered for their ivory, rhinos for their horns and pangolins for their scales," noted Ban.

Environment Secretary Ramon Paje also called for more action against illegal wildlife trade, warning specie extinction is irreversible.

Losses from specie extinction were permanent, he also said.

"Driven by high profits, illegal wildlife trade continues - we must continue, expand and intensify efforts to curb this illicit business including importation of invasive

species to the country," he said earlier this week.

Paje spearheaded in 2013 the environment department's destruction of about five tons of confiscated elephant tusks worth some \$10 million and previously smuggled into the Philippines from Africa.

He described the tusks' destruction - an Asian first - as a "strong statement to the rest of the world that the Philippines is serious about not tolerating illegal trade of ivory."

Similar destructions followed in the US, China, France, Chad, Belgium, Hongkong, Kenya, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Congo, United Arab Emirates and Thailand, noted Department of Environment and Natural Resources which Paje heads.

Ban said the public can help address the problem by not buying products of illegal wildlife trade.

Governments can institute change by fully implementing policies on protecting biodiversity and ecosystems, he continued.

"The campaign asks everyone to pledge ending illegal trade in wildlife," he said.

UN already undertook several measures for helping address such illicit activity, noted Ban. **PNA**

Daily Tribune

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Groups want moratorium on all mining operations in RP

Various environmental groups are seeking from President-elect Rodrigo Duterte green justice for mining operations' violations in various provinces nationwide.

Sanlakas, Concerned Citizens of Sta. Cruz, Zambales (CCOS), Didipio Earth-Savers Multi-purpose Association (DESAMA), Save Manicani Movement (SAMAMO), Environmental Legal Assistance Center (ELAC), ABS-CBN Lingkod Kapamilya Foundation Inc. and Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM) raised such plea as they denounced mining operations in Nueva

Vizcaya, Zambales, Palawan and Eastern Samar provinces for violating environmental laws and human rights in communities concerned.

"The most immediate that we can demand is a moratorium on all mining operations in the country while the Duterte administration reviews and addresses loopholes in the current mining policy," ATM national coordinator Jaybee Garganera said in the groups' 2016 World Environment Day message.

He said the groups also expect review and evaluation of all mining

projects as well as suspension of and sanctions for erring mining firms in the country.

Aside from pushing for repeal of RA 7942 (Mining Act of 1995), ATM highlighted need to enact the Alternative Minerals Management Bill (AMMB).

AMMB presents a "sustainable, rational, needs-based minerals management policy geared towards effective utilization of mineral resources for ecologically-sound national industrialization and modernization of agriculture," noted ATM.

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Stricter ECC application for sand lauded

MANILA -- The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines hailed the issuance of Circular No. 006, Series of 2016 of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, imposing stricter guidelines on the application for the Environment Compliance Certificate.

"Tightening the application process for sand and gravel operations, normally issued by the LGU-PMRB (local government unit-provincial mining regulatory board), and industrial sand and gravel permits issued by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau Regional Office is justifiable," said COMP executive vice president Nelia Halcon in a statement.

"The circular will hold the concerned offices accountable and responsible for permits issued to companies even without the proper requirements," he added.

The circular provides that "no new application for an ECC shall be processed and issued in the name of any applicant unless the same applicant shall be the entity or corpo-

ration as reflected in an MPSA (Mineral Production Sharing Agreement) and/or FTAA (Financial or Technical Assistance Agreement)."

Halcon also stressed the Environmental Impact System was enacted "to attain and maintain a rational and orderly balance between socio-economic growth and environmental protection" as stipulated in Presidential Decree No. 1586.

"To say that the EIS system was designed to safeguard natural resources against growing industrialization and urbanization is illogical, unless we come up with a policy of importing the required resources, especially now that the Department of Trade and Industry is promoting its new industrialization program and coming up with regional economic centers; all these will require natural resources," she pointed out.

In 2015, the DENR issued Administrative Order No. 2015-02 to harmonize provisions of PD 1586 and Republic Act No. 7942 or the Philippine Mining Act of 1995.



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WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

ANG World Environment Day (WED) ay itinakda ng United Nations (UN) General Assembly Anoong 1972 sa pagsisimula ng Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. Sa araw din na iyon, pinagtibay ng General Assembly ang isa pang resolusyon para lumikha ng United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) na naging pangunahing pandaigdigang environmental authority na nagtakda ng mga panuntunang pangkalikasan sa mundo.

Iba-ibang lungsod ang nagiging punong abala sa WED bawat taon, at ginugunita ito sa pamamagitan ng isang international exposition sa buong linggo ng Hunyo 5. Ngayong taon, pangangasiwaan ito ng Angola at may temang "Go Wild for Life." Layunin ng tema na maresolba ang mabilis na pagdausdos ng lupa at ang epekto nito sa biodiversity na dulot ng lumalalang ilegal na bentahan ng wildlife products, na tumatangay sa likas na pamana sa planeta, at nagreresulta para maglaho ang ilang species. Hangad din nitong masumpungan ang mga potensiyal at pangmatagalang solusyon sa mga suliraning dulot ng pagpaslang at pagpupuslit ng mga hayop na nakapananamlay sa ekonomiya at ecosystems, nagpapaigting sa organisadong krimen, at nagpapasigla sa kurapsiyon at kawalan ng seguridad sa mundo. Karaniwan nang ipinagdiriwang ang WED sa pamamagitan ng arts at crafts exhibitions, film festivals, competitions, demonstration activities, drama at poetry, flash mobs, online at social media activities, at sports activities.

Nag-aalok ang UNEP at ang mga katuwang nito ng limang mabilisang hakbangan upang gawing matagumpay ang araw na ito: a) bumuo ng grupo sa paghimok sa mga kaanak, kaibigan, katrabaho, kapwa miyembro ng komunidad, mga grupong pangkalikasan, at mga lokal na pamahalaan na mag-organisa ng event katuwang ka at talakayin ninyo ang mga detalye ng okasyon at ang mga paksang sasaklawin nito; b) alamin kung ano pa ang mga idaraos para sa WED sa antas na pandaigdigang, pambansa, pang-rehiyon, at lokal sa paghahanap ng mga website at pakikibahagi sa Twitter sa hashtag na #worldenvironmentday, at pagbabasa ng mga anunsiyo at pahayagan; c) suportahan ang tema sa pagtukoy sa mga nakatutuwang at interesanteng paraan upang iugnay ang inorganisang aktibidad sa opisyal na tema ngayong taon, at lumikha ng malinaw na mensahe na aakit ng atensiyon at magbibigay ng inspirasyon sa iba upang makibahagi; d) bumuo ng plano ng pagkilos na may timetable sa pagkumpleto sa ma ito hanggang sa Hunyo 5; paghahanap ng mga makakatuwan at mga sponsor upang makatulong sa pag-oorganisa at pagkakaloob ng materials; pag-download ng mga logo para sa mga poster o T-shirt mula sa WED website, gayundin ang buong toolkit ng payo sa pagpapalano; at e) makiisa sa pagdiriwang ng mundo sa paglulunsad ng sariling mga aktibidad na makahihikayat sa iba upang makilahok at mahimok silang magrehistro sa website; at hilingin sa mga leader, mga kilalang personalidad, at mga opisyal na magpasimula ng masiglang pagtutok sa mga pagsisikap para maprotektahan ang kalikasan.

Sa ating pagdiriwang ng WED 2016, hinihikayat tayong isaisip ang lahat ng nilalang na nanganganib na maglaho at kumilos upang maprotektahan ang mga ito para sa susunod na henerasyon. Ang mga hakbanging ito ay maaaring tungkol sa mga hayop o mga halaman na delikadong maglaho at nasa paligid lang ng ating komunidad, gayundin sa antas na pambansa o kahit pa pandaigdigang, dahil ang mga paglalahong ito ay may potensiyal na makapagpalala sa pandaigdigang pagkalipol. Nawa'y tayo, mga tagapangalaga ng Mundo, ay magkaisa sa pagbibigay ng proteksiyon sa ating "nag-iisang tahanan".

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1900

MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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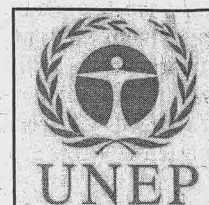
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AWARENESS

World Environment Day



WORLD Environment Day (WED) was established by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1972 to mark the opening of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. On the same day, another resolution was adopted by the General Assembly creating the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) which has become the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda.

WED is hosted every year by a different city and commemorated with an international exposition through the week of June 5. This year, it will be hosted by Angola with the theme "Go Wild for Life." The theme seeks to address the fast erosion of the Earth and its invaluable biodiversity resulting from the booming illegal trade in wildlife products, which robs the planet of its natural heritage, and drives species to the brink of extinction. It likewise seeks to find viable and long-term

solutions to the problems caused by the killing and smuggling of wildlife which undermine economies and ecosystems, fuel organized crime, and feed corruption and insecurity around the globe. WED is usually celebrated through arts and crafts exhibitions, film festivals, competitions, demonstration activities, drama and poetry, flash mobs, online and social media activities, and sports activities.

UNEP and its partners offer five quick steps to make the day a success: a) build a team by asking family, friends, colleagues, community, environmental groups, and local government bodies to organize an event with you and brainstorm on what that event might be and what topic it should focus on; b) find out what else is happening for WED at the international, national, regional and local levels by checking out the website and twitter under #worldenvironmentday, and reading notice boards and newspapers; c) support the theme by determining fun and

interesting ways to link your activity or event to this year's official theme, and crafting strong messages that will attract attention and motivate others to get involved; d) draw up a plan of action with a timetable for getting things done in time for June 5; look for partners and sponsors to help organize and provide materials; download logos for posters or T-shirts from the WED website as well as a full toolkit of planning advice; and e) celebrate with the world by making your activities visible and attract others to join you by registering on our website; and engage leaders, celebrities and officials to generate as much enthusiasm and attention for the effort you have made to protect our environment.

As we mark WED 2016, we are encouraged to keep in mind all those threatened species and take action to help safeguard them for future generations. This action can concern animals or plants that are threatened within our local areas as well as at the national or

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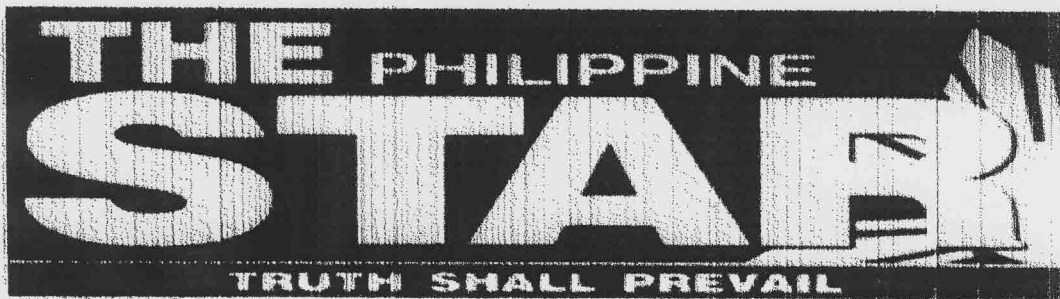
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WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY Isang babaeng nakapuwesto ala-lady justice ang nasa harap ng mga kinatawan ng iba't ibang environmental group na bitbit ang mga dokumento mula sa mga kasong inihain nila laban sa mga kumpanya ng minahan dahil sa paglabag sa batas pangkalikasan at karapatang pantao, bilang paggunita sa World Environment Day kahapon, sa isang restaurant sa Quezon Memorial Circle.

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Ilocos Norte goes into coffee farming

By ARTEMIO DUMLAO

Ilocos Norte, through its Special Projects and Development Office is venturing into coffee farming to boost agricultural development.

SPDO chief Edwin Cariño is urging local farmers to engage in coffee production, which does not require much water supply and other planting costs.

Under the program, SPDO will not only provide seedlings to interested farmers but give technical assistance as well.

Cariño noted that "the market demand for coffee remains high in the national level," citing the agriculture department's data which showed that "an average

Filipino consumes 1.2 kilos of coffee annually."

"Some farmers have already expressed their interest in this endeavor and we are encouraging more Ilocanos to utilize their uncultivated lands for agricultural purposes," Cariño said.

Promoting high value crops in Ilocos Norte is in line with Ilocos Norte's thrust of strengthening sustainable agriculture.

Ilocos Norte Gov. Imee Marcos said 'engaging in the industry will raise economic activity in the long run as it creates alternative source of livelihood for Ilocano farmers.'

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Benham Rise seen as fishing hot spot

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and marine scientists have sailed for the first time this year the 13-million hectare Benham Rise in an effort to protect and increase marine productivity in the country.

BFAR and marine scientists from non-government organization Oceana Phil-

ippines and the University of the Philippines continue to discover the country's newest territory on board a government research vessel.

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).

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

"This could serve as a new alternative fishing grounds for Filipino fishermen, since the area is known as the migration path of fish, including tuna," BFAR-chief scientist Rhoda Bacordo said.

Oceana Philippines is providing remotely operated vehicles and technical diver-videographers for the expedition to get additional

footages and allow researchers to extensively analyze the marine life in the area.

This year's expedition is also making use of the baited remote underwater video system (BRUVS) to measure fish populations which uses footage from two cameras attached to a frame with fish-bait at the center and specially licensed software to estimate fish sizes and analyze the maximum number of fish seen at a given time.

"We are hopeful that whatever new discoveries will be made in this expedition can serve as the basis for crafting a management and conservation plan for this new territory," Oceana Philippines

marine scientist Marianne Saniano said.

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.

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 being 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.

Government initiatives and explorations started in 2013 as the Benham Rise plays a big role in the fisheries sector because the shallowest area has shown primary productivity.

BFAR continues to undertake oceanographic studies in the vicinity of Benham Rise alongside the implementation of fisheries assessment and the National Payao Program in an attempt to mark the country's territories.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Breakthrough

By **ELFREN S. CRUZ**

Gov't and the Filipino people



AMBISYON NATIN 2040 is a NEDA study that reflects the "collective long term vision and aspirations of Filipinos for themselves and for the country...It describes the kind of life people want to live, as well as how the country will look like in 2040.

The study is the result of public consultations and a national survey with 10,000 respondents. It can be divided into two parts. The first part, which I wrote about in my column last Thursday, focuses on the Filipino vision for self and family. Based on the results of the survey, the NEDA has framed the Vision of the Filipino for self and family as follows:

"...we will enjoy a stable and comfortable lifestyle, secure in the knowledge that we have enough for our daily needs and unexpected expenses, that we can plan and prepare for our own and our children's future. Our family lives together in a place of our own, yet we have the freedom to go where we desire, protected and enabled by a clean, efficient and fair government."

The NEDA has estimated that the Filipino desire for a "simple and comfortable life" is attainable with a family gross monthly income of P120,000 based on current prices and currency value. This will allow the family to own a medium-sized home; at least one car; send their children to college; relax with family and friends; take occasional trips around the country; and have enough money for day-to-day needs and enough savings for unexpected expenses and retirement. It also includes payment of income taxes.

The Filipino and government

The study shows that the Filipino wants a "clean, efficient and fair government..." In terms of this vision, here are the most important aspects of government that he or she wants to be addressed:

- Eradication of corruption;
- Fair enforcement of the law;
- Fast and easy processes;
- Order and safety in the community;
- Fast response towards problems and complaints;
- Enough venues to be able to ask for help.

The Filipino believes that the main economic issues that should be addressed are hunger, local employment and poverty. Here is the ranking of the issues:

- 64 percent say no one is hungry;
- 52 percent say that all Filipinos have a chance for adequate earnings;
- 50 percent say no one is poor;
- 38 percent say everyone can go to college;
- 36 percent say everyone can get treatment when sick;
- 36 percent say all Filipino families have their own homes;
- 17 percent everyone has modern lifestyle;
- 10 percent say the country is a world leader in science.

Based on these survey results, the NEDA has framed the Vision of Filipinos for Country as follows:

"The Philippines shall be a country where all citizens are free from hunger and poverty, have equal opportunities, enabled by a fair and just society, that is



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Gov't and the Filipino people can't

governed with order and unity. A Nation where families live together, thriving in vibrant, culturally diverse and resilient communities."

The Filipino believes that the role of government is to be an enabler for economic growth, investment in people, and protection against instability. It is also the responsibility of government to build strong institutions that will ensure fair and equal application of rules.

Achieving the vision

The NEDA proposes that the Filipino vision can be achieved by a responsive, adaptive, resilient and inclusive economy driven by productivity growth to create more and better quality jobs. There are five areas that can make productivity growth and resilience can happen. Here are the five areas with some details:

Competitive enterprises generating high quality jobs can be achieved through the following:

- Sufficient high quality **infrastructure**, which will make the cost of moving people, goods and services competitive.
- Sound **urban development** that takes advantage of scale and agglomeration economies to make our cities more competitive and livable.
- Adequate and inclusive **financing** for small and medium enterprises.

An agile and high quality workforce can be achieved through the following:

- An **education** system that equips citizens with knowledge necessary to occupy high-productivity employment, while remaining adaptable to changing needs of the economy.

- An economy that is highly capable of generating and using technology and **innovation**.

- A workforce that is **resilient** to income and employment shocks.

A healthy society with social protection can be achieved by the following:

- Healthcare system characterized by clear design, effective regulation and proper delineation of responsibilities between the local governments and national agencies.

- Healthcare system where any person, rich and poor, can walk into a facility and receive attention from high-quality medical services without worrying about money.

- Demand driven public health system where patients are supported by a universal health social health insurance with strong safeguards against corruption.

A citizen-centered, responsive and accountable government can be achieved by the following:

- Efficient public service delivery for citizens and businesses

- Professional bureaucracy
- Streamlined and facilitative rules and regulations

- Major political and electoral reforms to control deepening entrenchment of political dynasties

- A transparent and accountable government that is protected from political capture

- LGUs with strong capacity to deliver public service and promote local development

- Peace ensured with accelerated implementation of long-term development agenda in former conflict areas.

An efficiently managed natural resources and environment can be achieved by the following:

- A competitive, sustainable, low-carbon power mix and transmission system that meets energy needs and security for all.

- Natural resources sustainability and responsibly used for development.
- Resilient communities protected from risks arising from natural hazards and climate change.

The NEDA believes that the Philippines can eradicate poverty by 2040 or sooner and that the nation will be a high income country, with a per capita income of \$11,000 (present value) by 2040. While this is good news, I believe that the national goal should be to attain the Filipino Vision for Self, Family and Country within the next decade and not wait until 2040.

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Senator hits proliferation of coal power plants

The government should tap cleaner and less wasteful sources of energy and stop allowing more coal-fired power plants in the country, Sen. Loren Legarda said Friday.

As chair of the Senate committee on climate change, Legarda lauded the Aquino administration's order for government agencies to review the Philippines' energy policy, which may see the country moving away from generating electricity through coal.

"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.

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 certificate (ECC).

"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," she said.

Legarda cited a resolution by the Climate Change Commission

to lead an "urgent and comprehensive" review of the government's energy policy within the next six months.

She expressed optimism that with the resolution, the government would have stricter standards when issuing ECCs for power plants, which should include measuring greenhouse gas emissions and their impact on health and the environment.

The Philippines is among the countries that have felt the effects of climate change, among them extreme weather patterns.

— Jose Rodel Clapano

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WIND POWER FIRM REFORESTS PAGUDPUD



ABOUT 293 hectares within the 625-hectare site of Ayala's wind farm in Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte, will once more grow into lush protected land. This is expected as AC Energy Holdings' wind unit, North Luzon Renewables, enters the third year of its reforestation program in Barangay Caparispisan this year.

"Maintaining and protecting the lush flora of Pagudpud is highly important to us," said AC Energy president and chief executive John Eric Francia.

"Pagudpud is one of the most vis-

ited seaside towns in the country, because of its natural beauty, so we are well aware of our responsibility to nourish and protect its forests, sustain its water resources, and protect its ecosystems. In the process,

we are also collaborating with local communities to generate more green jobs," Francia said.

In partnership with the Ilocos Norte provincial government, the wind farm began producing and planting various seedlings in 2014. The first major goal of the effort is to produce 350,000 seedlings and plant 205,000 within three years.

The remaining seedlings will then be distributed to other local governments and nearby communities to support similar tree-planting efforts and the government's National Greening Program. Since the pre-construction, the wind farm has generated 1,900 employ-

ment opportunities for many locals who now work as plant nursery staff, forest guards, maintenance and stockyard workers and civil works personnel.

AC Energy has committed to grow its renewable and conventional energy portfolio and over the past three years it has committed over \$700 million to meet baseload demand as well as develop alternative clean power.

Together with North Luzon Renewables' 81 MW wind farm in Pagudpud, AC Energy has expanded its wind farm in Bangui, Ilocos Norte, under Northwind Power Development Corp., to generate a total of 52 MW, bringing AC Energy's total wind energy capacity to 133 MW, the second-largest in the country today.

In the Visayas, AC Energy is likewise expanding its renewable portfolio. In September 2015, it entered into a partnership agreement with Bronzeoak Clean Energy Inc. for the development, construction and operation of a P1.3-billion solar power farm in Bais City, Negros Oriental. Completed in February 2016, the solar power farm has a capacity of 18 MW in the first phase. The second phase will involve the expansion of the solar power farm to a targeted total of 50 MW.

Aside from its reforestation program in Pagudpud, the company is implementing numerous corporate social responsibility projects in Ilocos Norte also in collaboration with the provincial government. These include programs in educa-

tion, health and sanitation and infrastructure. Notably, North Luzon Renewables has established a Manpower Response program in Barangay Caparispisan.

This taps the local knowledge and strength of town residents, who now provide immediate support to households who may be affected by the operation of the wind farm. In 2016, the company will also establish a community-based disaster risk reduction management program to address community needs arising from typhoons and other natural disasters.

"The generation of clean energy, such as our wind farm investment in Pagudpud and our solar power farm in Negros, naturally encourages the growth of other complementary green programs, whether they are in forest protection, farming, and other forms of livelihood associated with environmental protection," said Francia.

"We hope to continue, where possible, to build on our existing renewable energy platforms in the future," he said.

AC Energy currently has a total attributable capacity of 650 MW in conventional and renewable projects. The company expects this capacity to reach over 1,000 MW by 2016.

AC Energy Holdings Inc. is the development arm of the Ayala group in the energy sector. The company is building a portfolio of power generation assets using renewable and conventional technologies.



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Solomon Islands taps 3 Pinoys for special economic zones

S SERVICE

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

Three Filipino experts have been tapped by the government of the Solomon Islands to set up special economic zones in that country.

The experts were hired by the Democratic Coalition for Change Government to help finalize a bill on special economic zones in preparation for its discussion in the next Parliament in July.

The Solomon Islands prime minister's secretariat office said Josefina Ela Bueno, Antonio Rex Chan and Jesus Vicente Magsaysay have signed a 10-week contract of employment with officials George Kosui, secretary for the ministry of commerce, industries, labor and immigration, and Henry Kuma, secretary for finance and treasury.

The ceremony was presided over by John Muria of the attorney general's chamber and attended by Martin Husanau of the national consultant on commerce and tourism.

Kosui said their government's task force on special economic zones welcomes the Filipino experts and is looking forward to their role in the passage of a significant legislation.

Kosui, chair of the government task force, said the establishment of the eco-zones is a flagship policy of the Democratic Coalition for Change Government.

Chan said the team would

bring with them their vast experience in special economic zones legislation.

Chan, operator of one of the largest freeport special economic zones in the Philippines, said he understands the needs of foreign investors and knows how to structure investment requirements in special economic zone legislation to entice them.

Special economic zones in the Philippines are considered economic drivers that are significant in generating jobs.

Special economic zones include the establishment of heavy and light industries and outsourcing of services for exports, tourism and business process outsourcing.

The Solomon Islands offers a different kind of product for its eco-zone program. It lacks skilled laborers due to its small population, but is abundant in land that can be consolidated and developed into a large-scale agriculture, expansive sea territory, forest products and minerals.

The Filipino experts are likely to help forge a strong synergy that can be developed by both countries.

The Philippines can benefit from the arrangement, being a major consumer of agricultural products as well as in creating overseas employment and business opportunities for Filipinos based in the island state.

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Outgoing solgen tackles maritime row with successor

By JANVIC MATEO

DAVAO CITY – Outgoing Solicitor General Florin Hilbay has met with his successor Jose Calida and incoming foreign affairs chief Perfecto Yasay Jr. to discuss the maritime dispute with China.

In an interview yesterday, Calida said they had a meeting with Hilbay as part of transition talks between the outgoing and incoming administrations.

"We only discussed the West Philippine Sea dispute with China. There will be other issues that will be discussed (in the future)," he said.

Calida expressed hope that the Philippines would win in the arbitration case filed before

the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague.

"It's really a complicated issue, but according to the solicitor general now, around 70 to 80 percent, we will win this case," he said.

Asked what will be the move of the Philippines should it win the case, the incoming solicitor general said, "We will cross the bridge when we get there."

"We will make our moves after we get the decision," Calida said.

President-elect Rodrigo Duterte earlier said he is open to engaging in multilateral talks with parties involved in the dispute in the West Philippine Sea and South China Sea.

The map was made by Jesuit priest Fr. Pedro Murillo and shows that Panatag Shoal, also known as Bajo de Masinloc, is Philippine territory.

Nolcom is a key military unit directly securing and protecting country's maritime domain in the northern frontier, including Panatag Shoal, over which China has established de facto control.

Velarde will hand over the map to Nolcom commander Lt. Gen. Romeo Tanalgo in a turnover rites to be held at the Nolcom headquarters in Tarlac on Monday morning.

Key Nolcom officials will be around to witness the historic turnover of the valuable map,

In a recent interview, he stressed that he would not surrender the country's territory to China, particularly Panatag Shoal.

Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jianhua has said he believes the relationship between the two countries will improve under the administration of Duterte. "We are looking forward to work with the incoming president and his team to explore the possibility of returning to bilateral talks over the disputes we have," Zhao said.

1734 Murillo Map

Meanwhile, the Armed Forces of the Philippines—which would further bolster Nolcom's resolve of not giving up Panatag Shoal to other claimant countries.

The Velarde map is among the evidence that the Philippines has submitted to The Hague-based International Court of Arbitration where the Philippines has filed a case against China in order to legally and peacefully settle the current maritime row in the South China Sea and the West Philippine sea.

The international court, despite China's non-participation and argument that the court has no jurisdiction over the maritime case, is expected to release its verdict very soon.

– With Jaime Laude

Northern Luzon Command (AFP-Nolcom) will have in its possession on Monday the 1734 Murillo Map showing Panatag or Scarborough Shoal off Zambales as an integral part of the country's maritime domain.

The owner of the centuries-old document, businessman Mel Velarde, has decided that the 300-year-old map which he acquired for P12 million in an auction in London in 2014 be donated to Nolcom.

"The document will be handed over to Nolcom as its caretaker by its owner Mr. Velarde," Nolcom spokesman Maj. Gina Daet said.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Swimmers race to save richest place under the sea

By Maricar Cinco
Inquirer Southern Luzon

NASUGBU, Batangas—To drum up awareness of the need to protect “the world’s center of the center of marine shorefish biodiversity,” six Filipino athletes braved strong current and intense heat on May 29 to complete a cove-to-cove swim along the Verde Island Passage between Batangas and Mindoro provinces.

SWIMMERS/A15

Swimmers race to save richest place under the sea

From page A1

With only seconds to stop and hydrate, the open-water long-distance swimmers took to the sea during “Reef Strokes,” an event organized in time for the commemoration of World Environment Day today, World Oceans’ Day on June 8 and Coral Triangle Day on June 9.

The World Wide Fund for Nature-Philippines (WWF) mounted the event in cooperation with the SEA VIP Institute and with the support of Hamilo Coast Pico de Loro Beach and Country Club, and Cebu Pacific Air.

The Verde Island Passage, impressive for its wall-to-wall coral reef, is home to 74 genera of hard corals and 319 of the world’s marine species, according to Conservation International.

“This is the richest place on earth. We are where the action is,” said biodiversity scientist Dr. Wilfredo Licuanan. But he warned that due to climate change and other factors, “we can lose our corals in a matter of weeks, not years.”

As open-water swimmers, “we are natural stewards and ambassadors of marine protection,” Betsy Medalla said.

It took her and the other athletes

about four hours to complete the “dry land to dry land” marathon that started 7 a.m. at the Dorado Cove and ended at the Pico beach.

Four of them hit the 10-kilometer mark: Medalla (10.65 km in 3 hours 12 minutes), Julian Valencia (10.6 km in 3 hours 13 minutes), Moi Tamoyam (10.2 km in 4 hours 51 minutes), and Frank Lacson (10.5 km in 4 hours 15 minutes). Miguel Villanueva completed 9 km (4 hours 53 minutes).

Ingemar Macarine, 39, also known as the “Pinoy Aquaman” and still recovering from an asthma attack, swam 7.1 km in 3 hours 31 minutes.

At one point, the swimmers were “practically not moving” due to strong waves, Valencia said. “Mentally, you want to give up (but you) also want to see it through.”

“We were supposed to enter 14 coves, but the route had to be shortened because of the strong current,” Macarine said.

The records from the Verde Island swim will be submitted to the California-based World Open Water Swimming Association, where, according to Macarine, so far only six Filipinos, including himself and Lacson, had records for completing at least 10 km of marathon swim.

What should have been a breathtakingly beautiful sight underwater was marred by trash. The swimmers reported seeing plastic bags and even a pair of shoes.

“It was really disheartening to see plastic floating around you,” said Macarine, adding that it was among the dirtiest waters he had swam in.

“Coral reefs give millions of people food and livelihood,” said Joel Palma, WWF-Philippines president. “However, they are threatened by plastic waste, which smothers corals. Climate change effects, such as global warming, also lead to coral bleaching, turning once productive reefs into graveyards coated by algae.”

Palma said the Philippines used to be among the top producers of marine products, but its resources are threatened by pollution and unsustainable coastal tourism and industries. These affect about 1.2 million Filipinos who directly depend on fishing for their livelihood.

Climate change contributes to the rapid degradation of coral reefs, which actually take thousands of years to grow just a few meters back, Licuanan said.