

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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IN THE NEWS

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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Mining's best practices showcased

By Danilo V. Adorador III

SURIGAO CITY—Faced with possible hostile regulations under the Duterte administration, the mining sector in the Caraga region is embarking on a campaign to highlight the industry's best practices of responsible mining in the country.

Dulmar Raagas, president of Chamber of Mines Caraga Region Inc., said the industry was reeling from negative perceptions brought about partly by images of environmental destruction spreading in social media, such as the heavily silted shorelines of Claver town in Surigao del Norte province.

"It's not the complete picture," Raagas said. "We also have pristine beaches and marine protected areas in places around the region where mining operations exist," he added.

Majority of the region's lateritic nickel mines are found in Claver, a first-class coastal municipality. More than half of 44 large-scale mines operating in the country are in Caraga.

Raagas cited as examples three nickel firms in the region

that had adopted "nature-friendly" operations near coastal areas, which earned praises from regulators and industry leaders. These are Marcventures Mining and Development Corp. in Carrascal town in Surigao del Sur province; Cagdianao Mining Corp. (CMC) in Dinagat; and Hinatuan Mining Corp. (HMC) in Surigao del Norte.

ISO certification

The companies' environmental management systems have been audited and certified to be compliant with the International Standard Organization (ISO) 14001:2004 by TUV Rheinland. The ISO label is for a "systematic approach" for the improvement of performance in environmental protection and safety management.

"You can't see any siltation or discoloration in waters around these mines because they observe high environmental standards in their operations," Raagas said.

"If they can do it, that means it can be done, and it should be done in other mines as well," he said.

The chamber official had voiced support for President Duterte's call on mining companies to adopt Australian standards.

Environment Secretary Regina Lopez, on her first day of office, said she would audit all mining firms for compliance with safety and environmental standards.

According to Daniel Bilderol, chief of the mine management division of the Mines and Geoscience Bureau-Caraga, responsible miners could be distinguished immediately "by just looking at their footprint and practices."

Gaas Bay

"Officials of CMC mine, for instance, were able to preserve the surrounding coastal area

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Continuation

Mining's best practices showcased

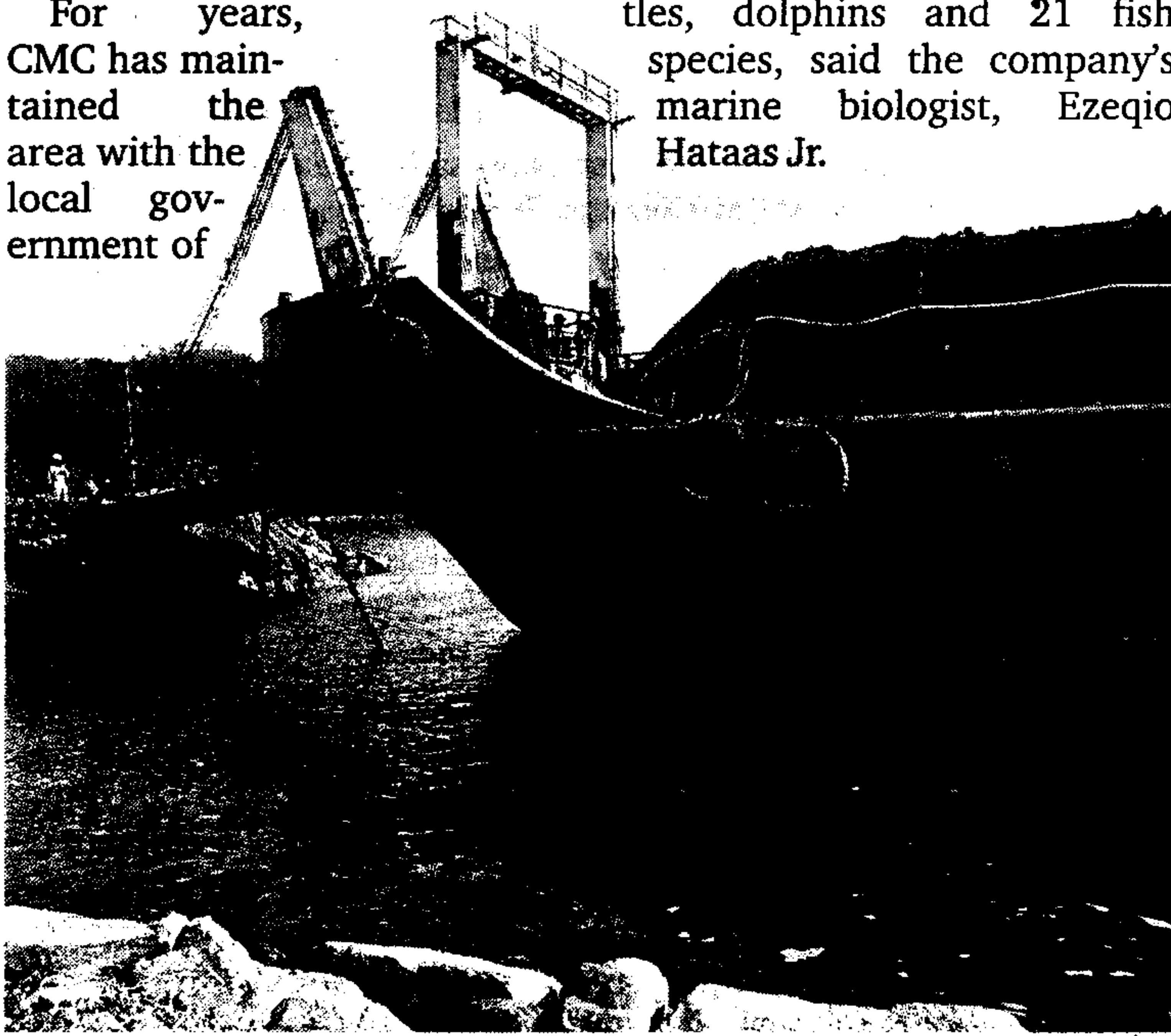
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and they even maintain a marine protected zone," Bilderol said. He was referring to the 80-hectare conservation area in Gaas Bay, which is home to different species of fish, corals, mangroves and other marine life.

For years, CMC has maintained the area with the local government of

Cagdianao, a coastal town in Dinagat province, where the company operates.

The partnership had transformed the bay into a sanctuary teeming with diverse marine life, such as stingrays, baby blacktip sharks, migratory turtles, dolphins and 21 fish species, said the company's marine biologist, Ezeqio Hataas Jr.



WATER in a small port being used by Cagdianao Mining Corp. to load nickel ore is a far cry from turbid coastal waters in other mining areas in the region.

DANILO V. ADORADOR III

Under the deal, the company pays monthly incentives to some 50 "bantay dagat" volunteers who work in shifts to ward off poachers and fishermen using illegal fishing methods.

As a result, compressor fishing, locally known as "boso," had been practically eliminated, as well as other destructive fishing methods, Hataas said.

The municipality conducts coastal clean-up activities regularly and helps raise public awareness on the importance of marine protection and conservation.

'Participatory approach'

In Taganaan town in Surigao del Norte province, HMC implements its own coastal resource management program, in which residents are trained to identify endangered marine species and nesting sites, and improve conservation practices.

Its marine biologist, Phoebe Jean Alac, said the people were also involved in the company's wildlife protection and conservation efforts.

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In Agusan Norte, ISO certification becomes gauge for responsible mining

DAVAO CITY—Agusan del Norte Gov. Angel Amante-Matba expressed support for what she said are mining operations that could serve as examples of responsible mining practices in her province.

The governor, in a statement, cited the case of San Roque Metals Inc. (SRMI), which operates in Tubay, Agusan del Norte as a study in responsible mining.

SRMI, said the governor, holds an International Standards Organization (ISO) 14001 certification which is a badge of honor among mining companies.

SRMI had renewed the certification this year, according to Amante-Matba.

"They have complied and continue to comply with all government requirements and

standards both for mining processes and environmental management," she said.

Amante-Matba said SRMI is one of only four mining firms that hold an ISO 14001 certification many years before the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) even required the certification.

"It is a fact that SRMI is the

first nickel mine and the third metal mine in the country to have secured ISO 14001 certification," she said.

On top of the ISO certification, SRMI is also recipient of the Platinum Award for Surface Mining Operation given during the 61st Annual National Mine Safety and Environment Conference in 2014.

It is also recipient of the Presidential Mineral Industry Environment Award (PMIEA) for Surface Mining Operation in 2015.

PMIEA is given only to mining firms that meet the award criteria set by a selection committee composed of representatives from the Chamber of Mines, DENR, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of the Interior and

Local Government, Department of Health and the Department of Science and Technology.

The award gives a weight of 50 percent for rehabilitation and environmental protection, 20 percent for safety and health, 20 percent for social and community development and 10 percent for information, education and communication. *Inquirer Mindanao*

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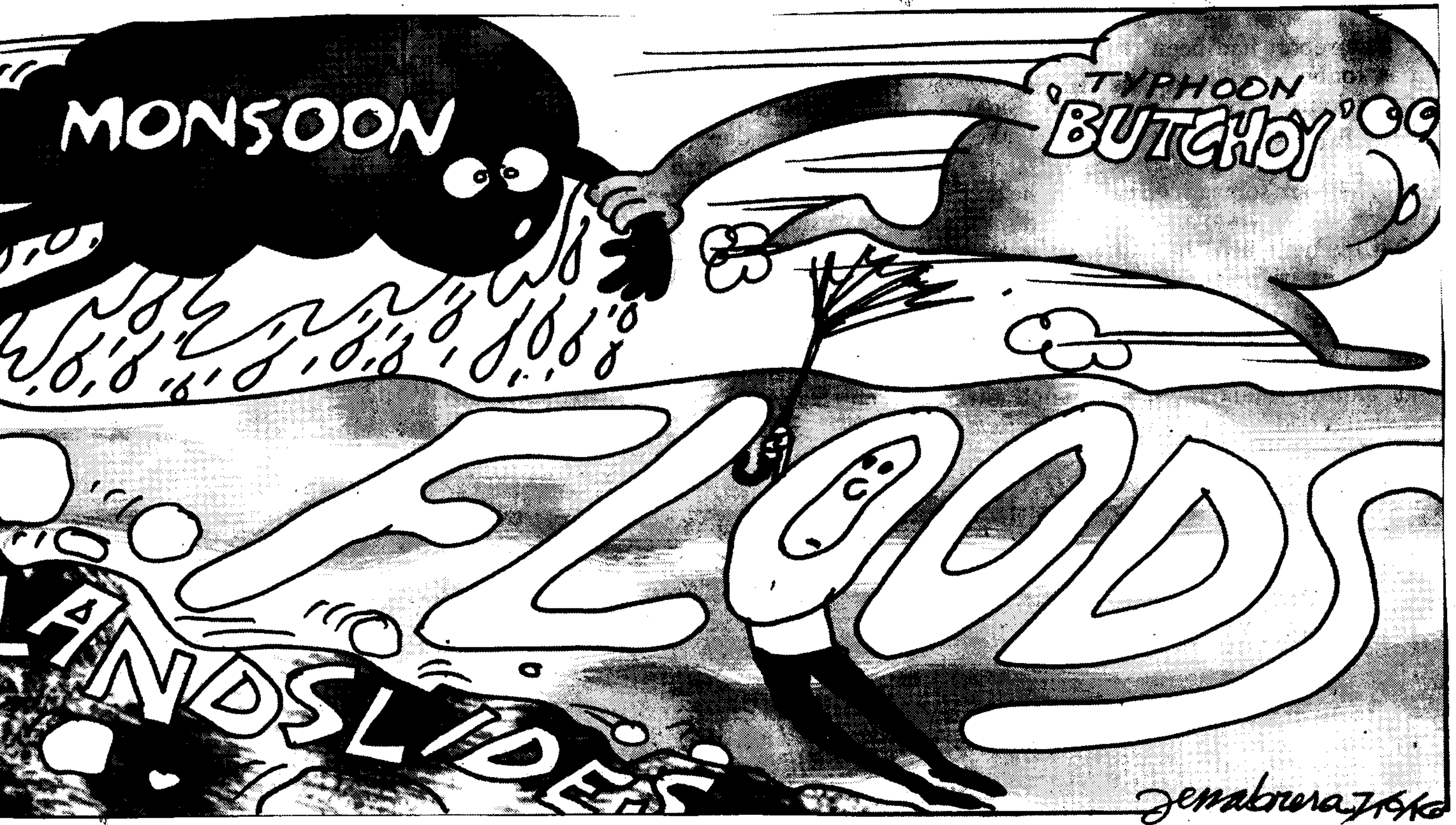
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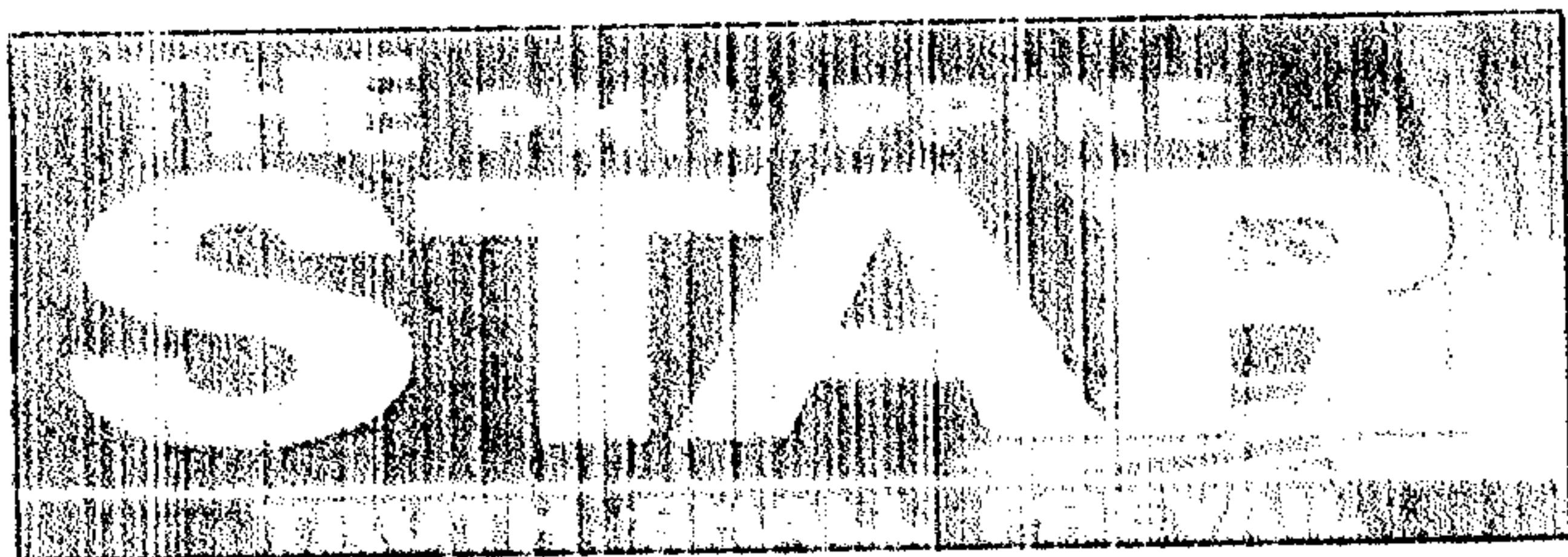
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HIDDEN AGENDA

By MARY ANN LL. REYES

An expensive shift

One of the challenges facing the new administration is crafting a dependable and practical mixed energy use policy, one that would utilize both base load plants (coal and natural gas) along with renewables, as we transition to a low-carbon economy in fulfillment of our international commitments.

Newly installed Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi has said that he will strive for a reliable, steady and affordable power supply as well as greater energy self-sufficiency, in line with the government's agenda for sustained economic growth and social progress over the next six years.

To achieve this, the Duterte administration is likely to retain coal as an integral part of the country's electricity generation mix while striving to expand the use of renewable energy sources.

Cusi, in a press briefing, emphasized that coal is the more dependable and is the more reliable source for base load, and that as a developing country, we cannot afford not to have coal.

He said there is a need to find a happy balance, since our country cannot afford to rely solely on renewables.

Under the Aquino administration, the Department of Energy had pursued a 30-30-30 energy mix, composed of coal, natural gas and renewable energy, with the remaining 10 percent for other technologies. But the Climate Change Commission (CCC) wants a virtual crackdown on coal power generation in line with the country's commitment under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 70 percent by the year 2030.

But this is easier said than done, especially with the country's power demand expected to double to 20,000 to 24,000 megawatts in the next 15 years in case the economy continues to expand by at least six percent per year.

This means we cannot just abandon our coal-fired power plants unless we are prepared to deal with a crippling energy shortage.

Aside from coal power being readily available and affordable, this energy source now uses clean technologies already popular in "green" economies like Finland and Germany that guarantee ultra-low emissions.

Germany and Spain had first established their economies and industries before shifting from traditional to RE power. In Germany, coal is still being used in major cities to fuel the growth of industrial zones.

While renewable energy sources may be desirable, the sad reality is that they are still expensive to produce. In fact, the feed-in-tariff (FIT) rate for coal is at P4.2079 per kilowatt hour, compared to wind power which is P7.40 per kwh and solar at P8.69 per kwh.

Another argument going against renewable energy sources, like wind, is reliability. Only baseload plants like those powered by coal that are available on demand could provide industries with a reliable, continuous supply of power.



Even President Duterte has noted that developing countries like the Philippines are being compelled to curb their carbon emissions and limit their productivity, while industrialized ones, which were able to build their economies using coal and other traditional sources of energy, cannot even do more to help ease the effects of climate change.

These are important matters that the new Environment and Natural Resources Secretary, Gina Lopez, should consider before she comes out with a policy for or against coal energy.

We don't know if Lopez, who has joined in the past several protest actions against the use of coal energy and to stop the construction of coal-fired power plant projects, will have a change of heart.

There are a number of coal projects, including the 600-MW coal-fired power plant that the Gokongwei-led JG Summit Holdings Inc. plans to build in Barangay Pinamucan Ibaba in Batangas City, that are awaiting government approval.

The new administration should speak with one voice. We cannot have the President and his energy secretary supporting a mixed energy policy that includes coal while the environment secretary is derailing the issuance of environment compliance certificates (ECCs) for new coal power plants because of her personal advocacy.

The environment chief should also be careful lest she be accused of protecting her family's business interests in the renewable energy sector as some of her bashers are saying.

Who knows, there might come a time when renewable energy sources will be cheap enough to dislodge traditional energy sources.

But now is too early. Unless consumers are willing to pay the cost in terms of higher power rates and the consequent increase in the price of basic goods and services.

According to industry sources, the current demand for 12,000 MW could increase to as much as 20,000 to 24,000 MW in the next 15 years. This means an additional capacity of 10,000 MW, from the current installed capacity of 16,000 MW, is needed to meet growing demand.

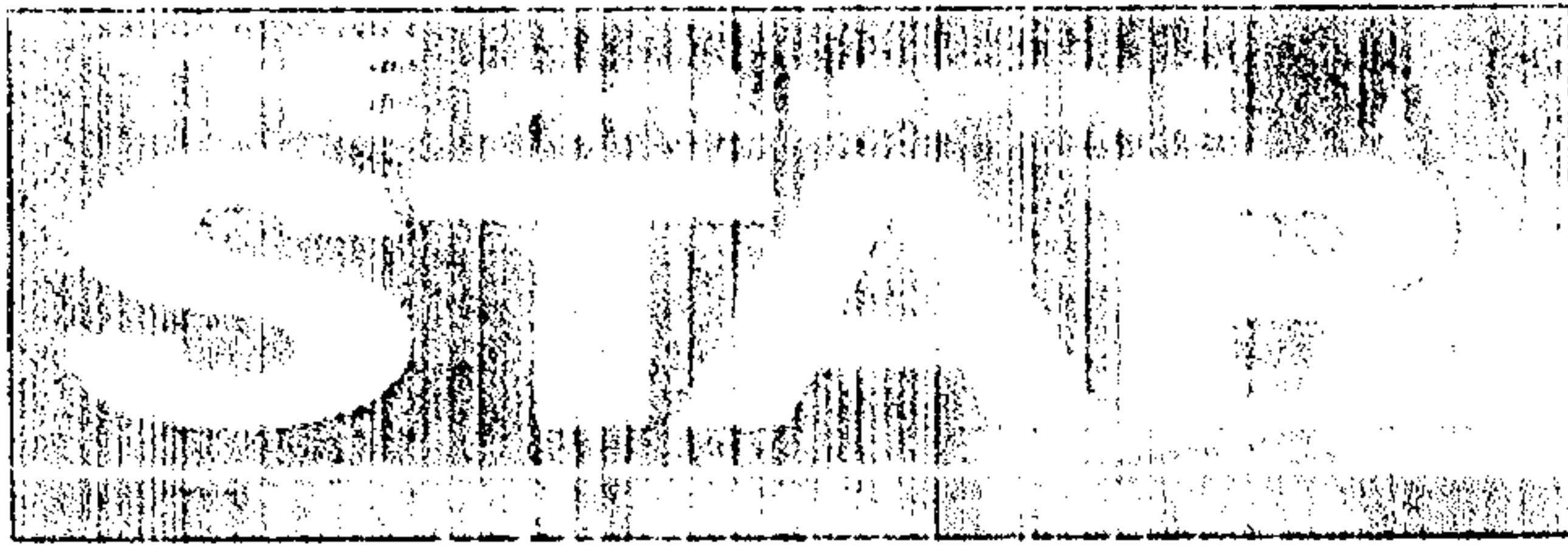
It would seem that the 16,000 MW of installed capacity is enough to meet the current demand of 12,000 MW. But we also have to consider the fact that there are maintenance shutdowns or unscheduled outages that would put our installed capacity in danger.

"Yellow alerts," are now becoming more frequent because of our thinning reserves. Power transmission firms place certain areas on "yellow alert" when the actual produced power is much lower than the power plants' nameplate capacity, especially when some of them are on maintenance shutdown or on an unscheduled outage.

Our country needs investments and industries if it wants to create more jobs especially in the rural areas. Even the new trade and industry secretary Ramon Lopez is eyeing a drastic increase in foreign direct investments. But how can this happen if we do not have a reliable and affordable power supply that we can promise investors?

Even the so-called first world countries cannot abandon their traditional energy sources because they know that business needs them. Why should we be forced to comply with these climate change treaties ahead of the more industrialized countries whose carbon footprints are definitely much bigger? We need coal to grow as an economy. That is the reality these so-called environmentalists have to accept. And instead of condemning coal outright, maybe the DENR should just be vigilant enough to make sure that these coal-fired power plants are using clean coal and putting in the necessary equipment to make sure that their emissions are up to par if not better than standards.

For comments, e-mail at philstarhiddenagenda@yahoo.com



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THE FUTURE IS GREEN

Quezon province eyed as Phl herbal capital

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By CHIT TRIBIANA

In July 2014, Typhoon Glenda hit the country causing billions of pesos in damages. The Quezon province suffered the biggest blow with some P2 billion worth of agricultural crops and facilities destroyed.

But every cloud, as the saying goes, has a silver lining.

The Quezon provincial government soon launched a rehabilitation caravan to help survivors by distributing relief packs to thousands of families in badly devastated areas.

During this campaign, the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist (OPA) introduced its herbal program as a possible livelihood alternative to residents.

Many local government officials responded positively to the concept, having been oriented on the increasing global demand for medicinal plants as an alternative way to health and wellness.

Herbal farming sounded like an economically viable proposition. Based on a study published in the *World Journal of Pharmaceutical Research* in 2015, the global market for herbal medicines currently stands at over \$60 billion annually. The sale of herbal medicines is expected to get higher at an average annual growth rate of 6.4 percent.

The global market for all herbal supplements and remedies could reach US\$115 billion by 2020, with Europe and the Asia-Pacific as the largest and the fastest-growing markets. In another article published in the *International Journal of Academic Research in Accounting, Finance and Management Sciences* in 2013, the herbal industry is expected to grow

to \$5 trillion by 2050.

Herbal medicines have been widely used in the Philippines long before modern Western medications were introduced. In many rural areas in the Philippines in the past and up until now, the *albularyo* is a prominent and sought-after person for his ability to cure common diseases.

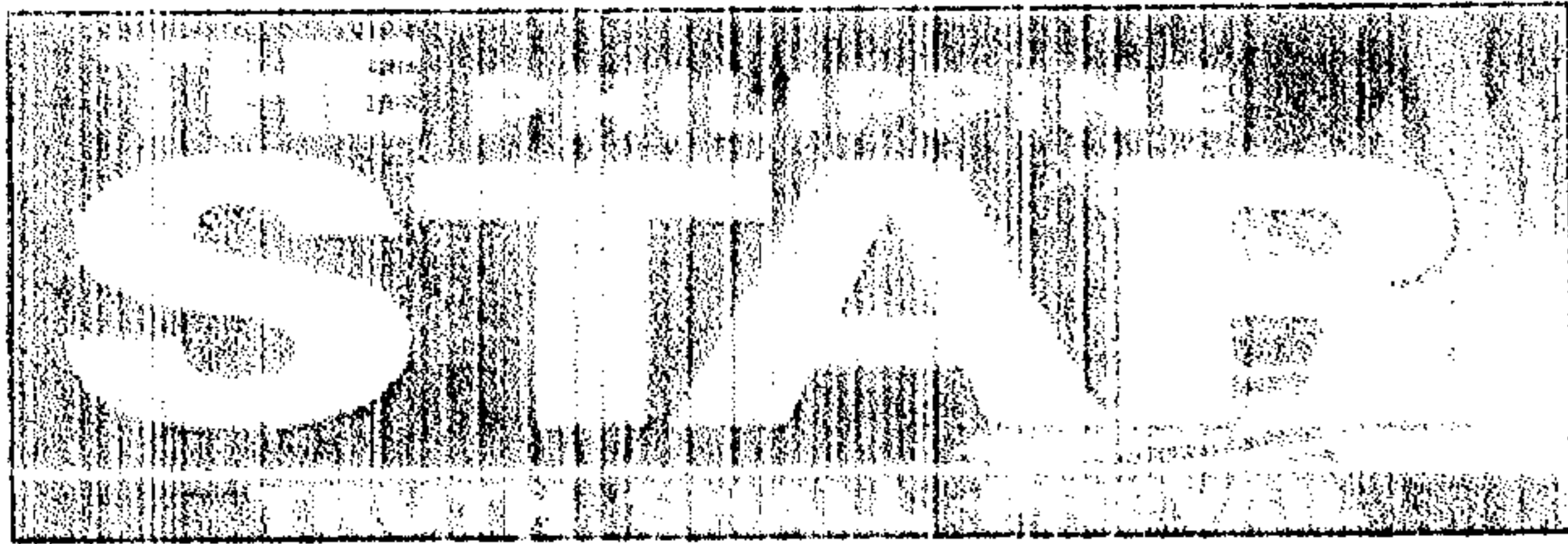
There is an astounding variety of medicinal plants in the Philippines. Health advocacy group Alay Kapwa Kilusang Pangkalusugan (AKAP) has been able to list 1,297 plants in the Philippines that are known to have folk medicinal uses.

There are reportedly 9,000 different plant species, 60 percent of which are believed to be endemic to the Philippines. So far, fewer than 500 of those species have been identified to have medicinal uses.

In 1992, then Health Secretary Juan Flavio Velasco parlayed his decades of experience as a barrio doctor into championing the use of herbal drugs.

During his term as Health Secretary, the DOH endorsed 10 Philippine plants clinically tested to have medicinal value. He also co-authored the Traditional and Alternative Medicine Act that gave legal recognition to natural healing side by side with pharmaceutical drugs. It was signed into law (RA 8423) by then President Fidel Ramos in 1997.

The law also created the Phil-



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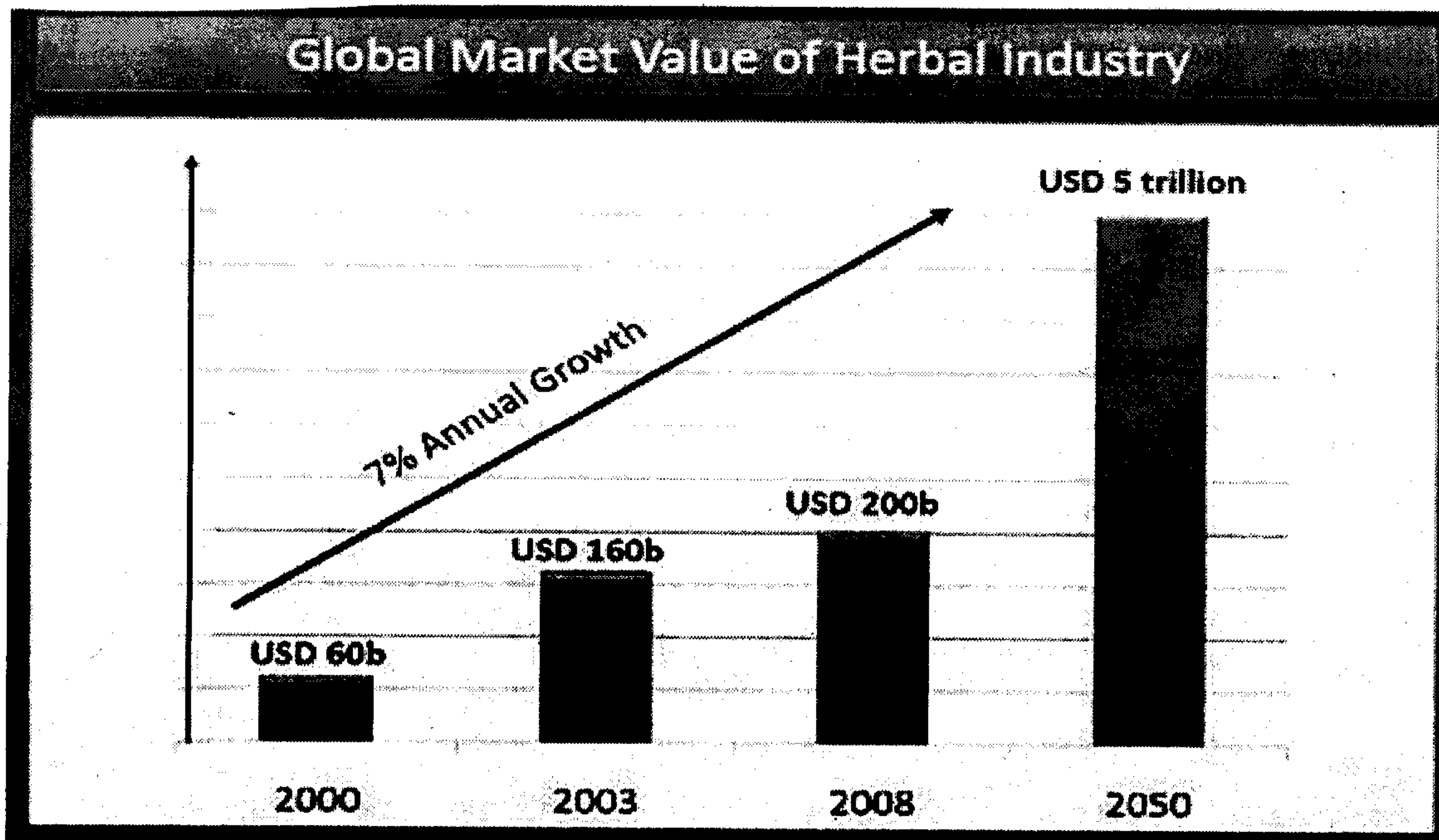
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Source: World Bank Report

ippine Institute of Traditional and Alternative Health Care, a state-owned corporation supervised by the DOH designed to promote scientific research on medicinal herbs and plants.

Given the increasing awareness of the health benefits of herbal medicines and the growing demand for plant-based products globally, the Herbal Program envisioned by the provincial government of Quezon, was immediately set to motion.

In 2014, Quezon Gov. David Suarez issued an EO that created the QHIP committee composed of different government agencies, academic institutions and representatives from the private sector.

The QHIP committee drafted the Herbal Industry Development Program, which focuses on five major areas: research

and development, enhancement of herbal production, information and education, promotion and marketing, and agro-enterprise development.

Before the year was over, the provincial government led by Gov. Suarez conducted its first-ever Quezon Herbal Conference with the theme, "The Prospects of Herbal Plants in Quezon Province" in Tayabas City. The conference brought together municipal mayors, municipal agriculturists, municipal health officers, department heads of the provincial government of Quezon, non-government organizations, academic institutions and herbal health advocates.

Participants were briefed on the significance of the Traditional and Alternative Medicine Act, the herbal plants found in Quezon province,

the global market positioning of the Philippines, processing and manufacturing herbal plants as medicines, and business opportunities in essential oils, among others.

The provincial government identified co-operators (individuals, groups, cooperatives) to participate in the production and processing of selected medicinal plants that have huge market demand. Six towns were initially chosen as pilot areas for the program and were given planting materials.

Various forms of assistance were provided to the chosen co-operators, including needs assessment, training in production and product development, provision of equipment and tools, and financial management.

On May 26, 2015, Gov. Suarez led the signing of a memo-

randum of agreement between Quezon, the local government of Atimonan, and Department of Environment and Natural Resources Region IV-A for the beautification of the Quezon Protected Landscape (formerly Quezon National Park) and developing it as another tourist destination in the province.

It also marked the groundbreaking ceremony for the Quezon Protected Landscape (QPL) Herbal Pavilion along the iconic zigzag road known as Bitukang Manok in Atimonan.

Along with recreational facilities for visitors, the QPL Herbal Pavilion will have a display center for products made by different organizations, cooperatives and individuals involved in the Herbal Program. It will be a sanctuary for different types of medicinal plants and other species endemic to Quezon province, making it an ideal destination for those who want to enjoy nature and feel its healing power.

Gov. Suarez is unequivocal about his vision when he said "I want Quezon province to be the center of herbal medicine in our country, where all kinds of herbal plants and requirements can be acquired."

He also sees this initiative as a way of promoting environmental protection and rehabilitation by providing alternative jobs for those who still resort to cutting trees and slash-and-burn activities in the area.

With the targeted opening of the QPL Herbal Pavilion this year, Quezon province is well on its way to becoming the "Herbal Capital of the Philippines."

THE REPORT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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Mines that fail environmental checks will be shuttered – DENR

By **CECILIA YAP**
and **MARTIN RITCHIE**
(Bloomberg)

Miners in the Philippines will be shuttered this year if they fail environmental checks, according to the country's environment secretary who's spearheading tougher regulation of the resources sector.

Gina Lopez, hired by new President Rodrigo Duterte to clean up mining, announced the probe last week on assuming the post. The audit will be completed in three to four weeks and may result in mines being closed in the next six months, Lopez said in a Bloomberg interview.

"If they are killing our rivers, how can their business interest be more important than the lives of our people? I will not allow suffering," said Lopez, who has previously disclosed that she doesn't like mining. "The main thing is that whatever we do, the welfare of the people must be paramount."

The Philippines is the world's biggest source of mined nickel, and supplies almost all of the nickel ore imported by China and used to make stainless steel. Nickel surged about 8 percent in two days after Lopez announced the probe amid concerns that closures would cut supply and deepen an emerging global shortage. Nickel Asia Corp. and Global Ferronickel

Holdings, Inc., the nation's top two producers, say they operate according to the standards demanded by their new regulator.

Open-pit ban

The environment chief said Thursday she will oppose the Tampakan copper and gold mine project on Mindanao island in the south of the Philippines, which has been on hold because of a local government ban on open-pit mining.

"Open-pit mining? It's horrible," Lopez said. "Tampakan is on top of hundreds of hectares of agricultural land, the food basket of Mindanao, and you want to put a 700-hectare open-pit mine? I don't care how much money they give us. It's not worth it. Who is making the money here and who is taking the risk?"

Mining has been halted in other areas too. Operations in Zambales province, in the north of the Philippines, have been suspended by the local government because of "complaints on environmental degradation," according to Mines & Geosciences Bureau Director Leo Jasareno. The Supreme Court separately issued a stop order against mining companies in the province in June.

Fiery campaign

Duterte was sworn in last month after a fiery campaign including pledges to crush crime, fight corruption,

and halt environmental abuses. The country also has significant resources of gold, copper and other minerals.

The worst hit by the measures will be nickel miners because "increased costs from compliance to environmental regulation will be exacerbated by the current low nickel prices and the probable re-entry of Indonesian nickel ore into the global market," analysts from BMI Research said in a note Thursday. Indonesia banned exports of raw materials from the start of 2014, handing the Philippines a bigger role in supply of the material.

Chinese imports of nickel ore from the Philippines were already set to drop this year before the crackdown, according to Ding Zhiqiang, an analyst at Baosteel Resources Ltd., a unit of Shanghai Baosteel Group. Cost issues and loading disruptions because of the weather mean shipments could drop more than 20 percent from 2015, Ding said at a conference in Shanghai on Friday.

On Friday DENR Secretary Regina Lopez ordered all large scale mining companies in Zambales to stop their operations.

Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), a bureau under the DENR, has suspended the operations of two more mining companies in Zambales on the basis of environmental degradation.

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Forest officers train on biodiversity protection

By ELLALYN B. DE VERA

To enhance the effectiveness of forest and biodiversity officers, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) trained some 200 forest officers from Region 4A (Calabarzon) under the Lawin Forest and Biodiversity Protection System.

DENR's Forest Management Bureau (FMB) led the training with the support of USAID. The organizations recognize deforestation and forest degradation as posing major threats to endangered wildlife and fragile forest habitats in the country.

With its Biodiversity and Watersheds Improved for Stronger Economy and Ecosystem Resilience (B+WISER) Program, the DENR and USAID worked with the local government units and the local community to establish an improved forest and biodiversity protection system.

The Lawin System training is the sixth of the series being conducted by the DENR-

FMB and USAID-B+WISER Program since January. It aims to train a total of 2,014 forest officers.

The system is a scientific approach to identify conservation areas. It uses information on indicator species, forest cover change, and threats for the design of participatory management plans for the Calabarzon region's conservation areas. It applies open-source software including CyberTracker for the data collection interface and the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool for data analysis, mapping and report generation.

Data can be transferred to Google maps and other tools for creation of actionable reports, which facilitate decision-making.

"As DENR's forest officers, you are a person of authority, you should recognize that," said FMB Director Ricardo Calderon.

While Calderon emphasized the weight of their role as forest officers, he also pointed out the importance of their being knowledgeable on environmental laws and regulations.

DENR-Region 4A Director Reynulfo Juan expressed appreciation for the FMB and the USAID B+WISER's conduct of the training.

He said the training of the 222 forest officers included foresters, forest rangers, forest technicians, protected area superintendents, park management foremen, biologists and environmental management specialists.

"The Lawin system training is very important for us in the field as it is a new, improved system of monitoring and protecting the environment," he said.

DENR Calabarzon Assistant Regional Director for Management Services Arturo Fadriquela said that after the training, he expects the region's forest officers to have skills on planning and designing conservation areas; designing patrol sectors, routes and schedules; conduct actual patrol; record data on forest condition, threats and wildlife; identify indicator species; and appreciation of synching of patrol data through remote transfer; and appreciate environmental law enforcement mechanisms.

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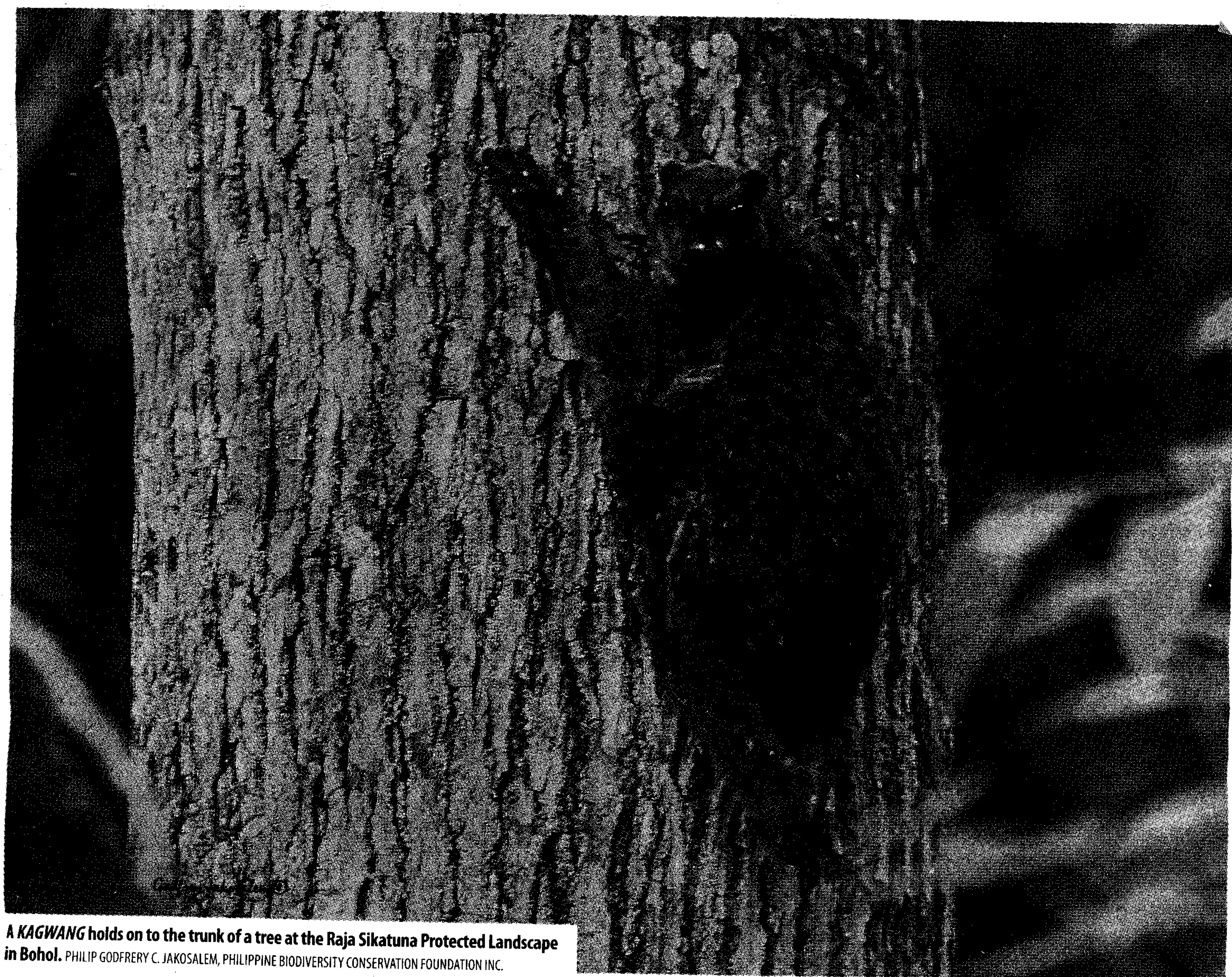
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PHILIPPINE FLYING LEMUR:

Demystifying the 'kagwang'

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



A KAGWANG holds on to the trunk of a tree at the Raja Sikatuna Protected Landscape in Bohol. PHILIP GODFREY C. JAKOALEM, PHILIPPINE BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION FOUNDATION INC.

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A RECENT social-media post that went viral showed a frightened Philippine flying lemur being restrained by its captors.

Mistaken for *aswang*, a mythical evil creature, it is being blamed for the mysterious death of livestock.

While it is commonly called as *kagwang*, the Philippine flying lemur is not your *aswang* that feeds on human or animal flesh and internal organs, as the local folklore says. It neither sucks blood, nor destroys crops.

The flying lemur is also not, as many believed it to be, a bad omen or one that brings bad luck.

In fact, the Philippine flying lemur is considered a blessing to the forest, being part of the food chain and the diet of other wildlife on top of the food chain.

Glider, not flyer

HERE is more. The Philippine flying lemur is not a flyer and is also not a lemur.

The country's biodiversity office said it is a glider, which has the habit of jumping and gliding from one tree to another. Lemur is a primate endemic to Madagascar, which the Philippine flying lemur is not.

The Philippine flying lemur is a mammal that belongs to the order Dermoptera, said Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim of the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

More accurately, the Philippine flying lemur it is the Philippine colugo (*Cynocephalus volans*).

"The lemurs found in Madagascar and the Philippine colugo are not related," Lim told the BUSINESSMIRROR.

The Philippine flying lemur is one of two species of flying lemurs, the only two living species in the order Dermoptera. It is the only member of the genus *Cynocephalus*. The other flying lemur is the Sunda flying lemur (*Galeopterus variegatus*) found elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

Endemic species

THE *kagwang* is endemic to southern Philippines. While its population in the wild remains unknown, it is considered as threatened by the DENR because of the massive destruction of the forest and rampant hunting for food and trophy.

In 1996 the *kagwang* was included in the Red List of Threatened Species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as vulnerable.

In 2008, because it proved to be resilient despite the massive destruction of habitats brought about by the increasing rate of deforestation in the last several decades, it was eventually listed under the "Least Concern" status by the IUCN.

This unique species used to thrive in Mindanao regions and Bohol, but because of its strange appearance and behavior, it is often hunted and killed on site.

Lim said the Philippine flying lemur is being hunted down being mistaken as *aswang* and a bad omen or harbinger of bad luck.

Some hunters, however, hunt it for food, sometimes ending up as *pulutan* or finger food.

According to the DENR-BMB, flying lemurs have been recorded on the islands of Biliran, Bohol and Leyte in the Visayas; and Maripi, Dinagat, Siargao, Tongquil and Basilan in Mindanao; and in the provinces of Agusan del Norte, Bukidnon, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Misamis Occidental, Misamis Oriental, South Cotabato, Surigao del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, and Zamboanga del Sur provinces and Samar.

Plant, not flesh eater

THE Philippine flying lemur lives in heavily forested areas and is not carnivorous or predator of smaller animals. These gentle creatures are folivore or herbivores, which eat young leaves and, occasionally, soft fruits, flowers and plant shoots.

As it has lived almost all its life up tall trees and glides from one tree to the next to feed, it moves awkward when on the ground.

This species is hunted by the Mindanao's ultimate predator—the Philippine eagle.

Ecosystem indicator

ACCORDING to Lim, the flying lemur is an ecosystem indicator, too. She said with its presence alone, one can say that the forest where it thrives is healthy and in excellent condition.

"It lives on trees in the forest. It glides from one tree to the other and would not touch the ground," she said, underscoring the need to maintain a densely covered forest where the *kagwang* can glide in search for food.

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Demystifying the *kagwang* STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

"If we lose our tall trees in the forest, the flying lemur also loses its habitats. It will not be able to forage for food," she said.

Various studies indicate that because of habitat destruction, these flying lemurs are often forced to relocate and invade agricultural plantations, particularly coconut, which further exposes them to greater risk of being killed by coconut farmers.

Cruelty to animals

THE animal-welfare group People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta-Asia) expressed alarm over people's cruelty to animals like *kagwang*.

Jana Sevilla, campaigner for Peta-Asia, bluntly puts it as "ignorance" but seriously doubts that those who hunt them are simply mistaken about their true "identity."

"People should know that flying lemur is not an *aswang* because they live in the area," she said partly in Filipino.

Sevilla said it is also unlikely that the people also believed in stories that the flying lemur is behind the death of animal livestock.

"It is just being used as an excuse to justify cruelty to animals," she said.

She said the ill-fated *kagwang* could be likened to the story of Lolong, the world's largest saltwater crocodile that was hunted and captured by the people because of the report of the mysterious death of a young girl in Agusan del Sur.

"The same thing happened to

Lolong. Because it was reported that it killed a young girl, the people decided to hunt it down. They know Lolong is a large crocodile and capturing it will break the world record. True enough, it did. It was sad that Lolong died because it was taken away from its natural habitat," Sevilla said.

"The people should learn to respect animal wildlife like the *kagwang* and stop destroying their habitats," she added.

Poor law enforcement, information campaign

HUNTING animals, whether for food or trophy, is unacceptable, Sevilla said. She blamed the failure of concerned government agencies like the DENR to educate the people about the Wildlife Act, which prohibits hunting of animals in the wild.

"This is a responsibility of the DENR. It should intensify its information campaign and call on authorities to enforce the law against hunting wildlife," she said.

She said the DENR field offices should coordinate with people in upland areas and rally the people to help protect all wildlife against destructive human activities and cruelty to animals, whether pets or those in the wild.

Kikko Kalabud of the Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF) said flying lemurs are the Philippine eagle's "favorite" food and maintaining their population in the wild is crucial to ensuring the survival of the National Bird.

He said, like the Philippine Eagle, hunting flying lemurs is against the law and should be stopped.

The PEF is the DENR's partner in the conservation of the Philippine Eagle, which, like the flying lemur, is listed as threatened.

Strange appearance

NO bigger than the average household cat, the flying lemur is a highly distinctive animal, with unusually soft brown, gray or brown dorsal fur. When it glides, it is sometimes mistaken for a bat. Bats, incidentally, hangs on the branch of trees like the *kagwang*.

The male *kagwang* are darker than females. Its ventral fur is paler, thin and very soft.

Because it is a nocturnal mammal, it often glides at night, which explains why it is often mistaken for the dreaded *aswang*.

Kagwang has a gliding membrane that extends between its hind legs (enclosing the tail entirely), between the forelimbs and hind limbs, and between the toes of the forelimbs.

Its six lower incisors are comb-shaped, and it has a broad gap with no teeth between the outer upper incisors which are small and pressed against the canines.

It is also mistaken for Mindanao flying squirrels (*Petinomys crinitus*) because it is of the same size.

According to Lim, some of the country's protected areas are known to host flying lemurs, such as the Raja Sikatuna Protected Landscape in Bohol, underscoring the need to strengthen the protection of the key biodiversity areas and wildlife refuge.

Lim said, like most animal wildlife, *kagwang* poses no threat or danger to humans or their livelihood.

"It is better off left alone in the forest because that is its natural habitat. People should stop hunting it and they should also stop worrying about *kagwang* as a sign of bad luck or bad omen, as it is not.

"It is not *aswang*, which we should not be afraid of, and it should not be eaten," Lim said.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Calabarzon forest officers undergo biodiversity-conservation training

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

✉ @jonlmayuga

FOREST officers of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Region 4A, or Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon), recently completed a four-day training on forest and biodiversity-protection system to make biodiversity conservation a breeze using high-tech gadgets.

A total of 222 forest officers took part in the training, dubbed Lawin Forest and Biodiversity Protection System, held from July 5 to 8 at El Cielito Hotel in Santa Rosa, Laguna.

Organized by the Forest Management Bureau (FMB), with

January, which aimed at capacitating a total of 2,014 forest officers.

FMB Director Ricardo L. Calderon, during the training, emphasized the weight of the role of forest officers, as well as the importance of their being knowledgeable of environmental laws and regulations.

DENR Calabarzon Director Reynulfo Juan, for his part, said: "The capacitation training is not just a need, but a must. The Lawin System training is very important for us in the field as it is a new, improved system of monitoring and protecting the environment."

The participants include foresters, forest rangers, forest technicians, protected area superintendents, park management foremen,

support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the training aims to increase the effectiveness and performance of forest officers for them to better respond to various forest threats.

The DENR and the USAID with its Biodiversity and Watersheds Improved for Stronger Economy and Ecosystem Resilience (B+WISER) Program worked together with the local government units and the local community to establish an improved forest and biodiversity-protection system in the region.

The Lawin System training is sixth of a nationwide regional series being conducted by the FMB and USAID's B+WISER Program since

biologists and environmental management specialists. Most of the participants are new hires or are just recently promoted.

The Lawin System is a scientific approach to identify conservation areas. It uses information on indicator species, forest cover change, and threats for the design of participatory management plans for the Calabarzon region's conservation areas.

It applies open-source software, including CyberTracker for the data-collection interface and the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool for data analysis, mapping and report generation, and makes use of hi-tech gadgets, such as tablets, or even smartphones.



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Large scale mining sa Zambales, ipinatigil

Sinuspinde ang lahat ng large scale mining sa Zambales mahigit isang linggo matapos maupo si Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) secretary Gina Lopez, na kilalang tagakampanya laban pagmimina, sa ahensiya na namamahala sa kontrobersiyal na sektor.

Sinuspinde ng Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), isang kagawaran sa ilalim ng DENR, ang mga operasyon ng dalawa pang kumpanya ng pagmimina sa Zambales sa batayan ng environmental degradation.

Ang mga sinuspindeng kumpanya bunga ng magkakahiwalay na writs of Kalikasan na inilabas ng Supreme Court ay ang Benguet Corp Nickel Mines Inc. at Zambales Diversified Metals Corp., kasama ang iba pang large scale mining firms sa Zambales gaya ng LNL Archipelago Minerals Inc. at Eramen Minerals Inc. na hindi pinahihintulatang mag-operate hanggang ngayon.

"It was in view of the Writ of Kalikasan issued by the Supreme Court and the newly signed Executive Order by the local government unit of Zambales, suspending all mining operations in the province," pahayag ni MGB Director Leo Jasareno.

Sinabi ng DENR na ipinatupad ang joint suspension order "in order to ensure that the environment, particularly the communities, farmlands, and water bodies are not in any way compromised".

Madelaine B. Miraflor

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1-buwang moratorium sa mining

Magpapatupad ng 1-buwang moratorium ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sa mga bagong mining exploration.

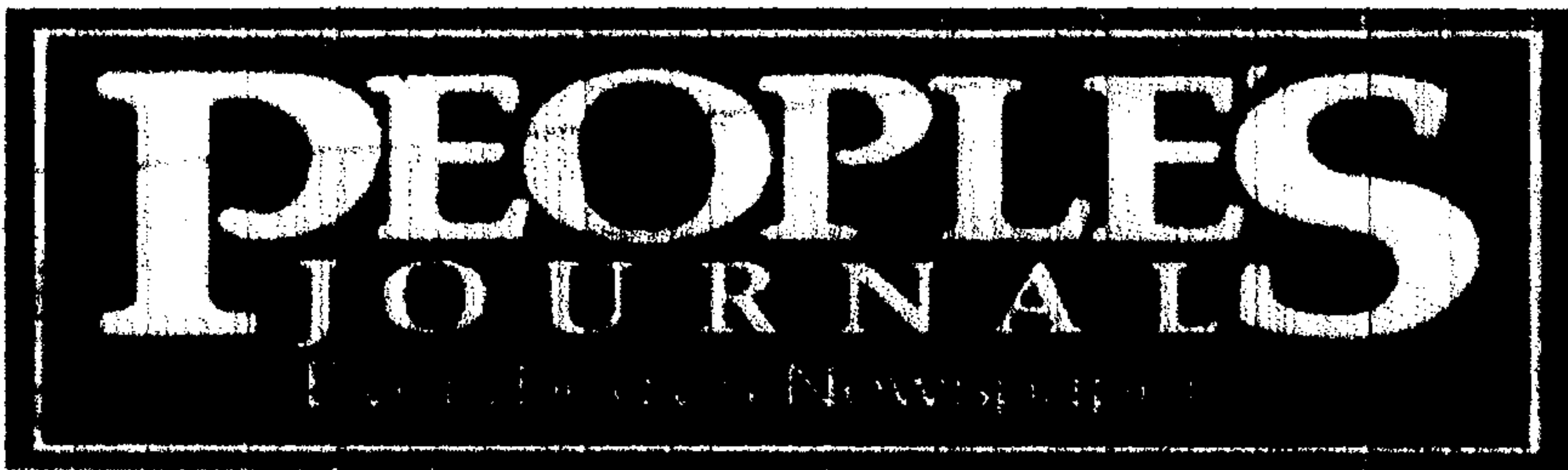
Ayon kay DENR Sec. Gina Lopez, tatapusin muna nila ang pagrerepaso sa lahat ng tumatakbong minahan sa bansa bago tumanggap ng bago.

Matatandaan na bagama't itinigil ng pamahalaan ang pag-iisyu ng permit para sa minahan noong 2012, hanggang

ngayon ay pinapayagan naman ang exploration.

Samantala, dalawang nickel ore mines ang unang nasampolan sa pag-upo ni Lopez bilang DENR Secretary.

Sinuspende ang nickel mines ng Benguet Corp. Nickel Mines Inc. at Zambales Diversified Metals Corpo sa Zambales dahil sa maraming reklamo ng paglabag sa panuntunan lalo na sa pag-aalaga ng kapaligiran. (Lhean Angeles)



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

SSS covers PAGASA, Phivolcs and EMB job order workers

THE Social Security System has signed agreements for the coverage of 310 workers hired as job order (JO) or contractual workers of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs), and the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB).

SSS Professionals Sector department manager Noel L. Coyupan said the signed SSS agreements formalize the inclusion of the JO and contractual workers under the KaltaSSS-Collect Program, which ensures their active SSS membership and eligibility for SSS benefits and loan privileges.

JO and contractual workers are not covered by the social protection program for public sector employees.

"Workers hired on a job order or contractual basis are more vulnerable in the face of financial contingencies, as they are often excluded from benefit packages and other privileges that regular employees receive. With these agreements, they can now rely on SSS for financial assistance," Coyupan said.

The covered JO and contractual workers occupy a wide range of positions such as electronics and communications equipment technicians, science and engineering aides, science research specialists and assistants, computer programmers and drivers from PAGASA, and emergency employees, science research specialists, project and research assistants, and information officers from Phivolcs.

Meanwhile, the covered JO and contractual workers from EMB in-

clude utility workers, encoders, bookkeepers, records aides, administrative officers, drivers, engineers, computer operators, mechanics, technical staff and laboratory aides, as well as security guards who are not under a service provider.

The KaltaSSS-Collect Program, which was formerly known as the e-AlkanSSSy Program, offers an automated salary deduction scheme from the monthly contribution and loan payments of the covered JO and contractual workers, who are covered as self-employed members.

"Under the agreements, these agencies assume the responsibility of making sure the workers are duly registered with the SSS, and that their payments are collected and remitted to SSS every month," Coyupan said.

Jun I. Legaspi



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

A bad habit so badly in need of change

RUMI, a 13th-century poet and mystic, said: "Yesterday I was clever, I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, I'm changing myself." And now in the 21st century, it was President Rody Duterte in his inaugural address who reminded Filipinos that change "must start with us and in us."

From the insights of Rumi and Duterte, one may deduce that cleverness and wisdom are needed to achieve genuine change, particularly the kind of change that is to be "permanent and significant" as aspired by many of us. But aside from wisdom, there must be inner resolve, just as Duterte explained when he paraphrased national artist F. Sionil Jose and said: "We have become our own worst enemies. And we must have the courage and the will to change ourselves."

For many of us, the need to change ourselves and correct a very bad habit has become apparent every time heavy rains come. And the monsoon rains or habagat enhanced by Typhoon Butch-oy was no exception.

The rains that paralyzed Metro Manila last Friday again exposed the dirty habit of many Filipinos—the indiscriminate throwing of plastic trash that strain drainage systems and pollute marine environment. The filth and floating debris has been seen again at Manila Bay.

Such perennial dilemma is indicative of an aberration in our society: an undisciplined lot whose apathy is the primary cause of flooding due to clogged waterways and, on the other

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Angelo Tugado



hand, negligent authorities whose apparent indifference allows the crisis to worsen.

Improper garbage disposal has become a bad habit so difficult to break for many people, despite common knowledge that littering and careless dumping of all sorts of trash—particularly plastics, styrofoam, and other non-biodegradable materials—end up clogging drainage systems, canals, and rivers, and with plastic debris finding its way into the open sea.

The reckless disposal of plastic waste is common not only in Metro Manila but also in other densely-populated areas that our country has been ranked third, next to China and Indonesia, among the top 20 countries with the highest amounts of mismanaged plastic waste in 2010.

An extensive study made by a group of environmental scientists, oceanographers, and researchers whose work was published last year in *Science*, the leading journal of original scientific research, revealed that the Philippines' mismanaged plastic waste reached 1.88 million metric tons

(MMT) a year, which is estimated to be 5.9 percent of the world's total.

The study which calculated the amount of plastic waste for populations within 50 kilometers of the coast in 192 countries disclosed that of the Philippines' 1.88 MMT/year of mismanaged plastic waste, 0.28-0.75 MMT/year are believed to have flowed and found its way into the ocean. In 2010, an estimated 4.8 to 12.7 MMT of plastic trash from coastal countries ended up in the world's oceans, the study findings showed.

The plastic trash, which endangers marine life that ingests them, can be found not only in waters near coastlines but also "in Arctic sea ice, at the sea surface, and on the sea floor." With the extreme difficulty of retrieving plastic debris from ocean environments, the groundbreaking study shows it is now imperative that "most effective mitigation strategies must reduce inputs" to the ocean.

Discipline is imperative. Even the simple gesture of refraining from throwing on the street a candy wrapper or cigarette butt can make a difference. We must heed Pope Francis' encyclical to stop environmental degradation: "Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start."

POST-SCRIPT: Happy birthday to siblings Renato and Sonny Rosario! May you both continue to be blessed with love, friendship and good health! E-mail: angelotugado@yahoo.com