

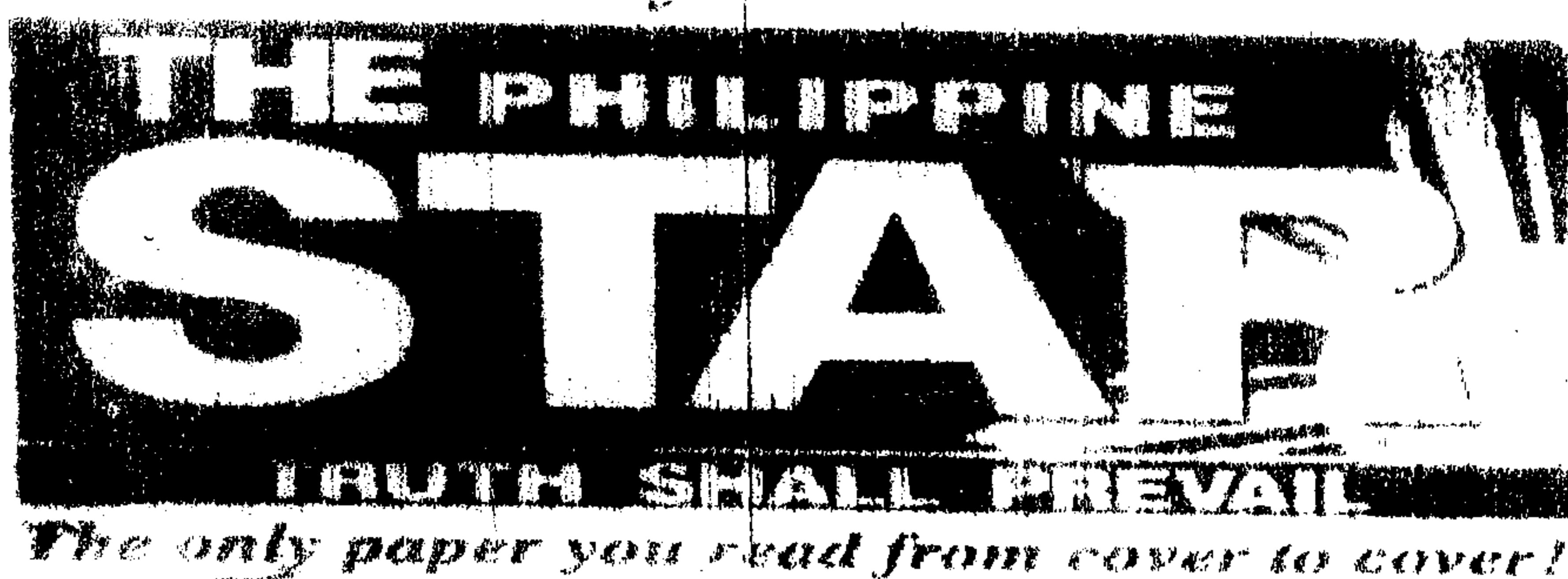
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# **DENR**

## **IN THE NEWS**



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# Knowledge products for climate resilience

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) this week launched several knowledge products to enhance the country's climate change adaptability.

The launch held Tuesday at a Manila hotel was in partnership with the Philippines Climate Change Adaptation Project (PhilCCAP), a foreign-funded program jointly implemented by a consortium of national government agencies, including the environment and agriculture departments and the state weather bureau.

"We expect that the products launch will bring together policymakers, researchers, technical

experts, academicians, advocates, and key officials of the government to discuss and create future actions of scaling the project's gains in a national level," PhilCCAP project manager Wilbur Dee said.

Dee identified the knowledge products as the Community of Practice online knowledge management system; manuals on the retrofitting of irrigation systems and on climate-smart farming; a feasibility study on the weather index-based crop insurance scheme; a climate smart, web-based and SMS advisory system for rice and corn farmers, and a report on climate scenarios and updated management plans for

protected areas.

The Climate Change Commission unveiled the Community of Practice, or CoP, an online knowledge management system intended to become the government's official repository of all climate-related information and practices, from forecasts to general research. It is also expected to facilitate the exchange of climate information.

Two manuals on the redesign and retrofitting of river irrigation systems and on climate-smart farming were also launched during the event. Developed by the National Irrigation Administration, the improved operations manual

was based on lessons learned in the redesigning for retrofitting of two river irrigation systems in Cagayan and Iloilo, which were completed last year. The retrofitting will enable both facilities to improve water distribution and reduce the effects of seasonal climate change on water supply.

The Bureau of Soils and Water Management and the Agricultural Training Institute, on the other hand, showcased an enhanced climate-smart farming manual based on a compilation of lessons derived from practical courses on climate change taught to the project's farmer-beneficiaries.

— Rhodina Villanueva



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICES

## Panay forest protection program continues

By TARA YAP

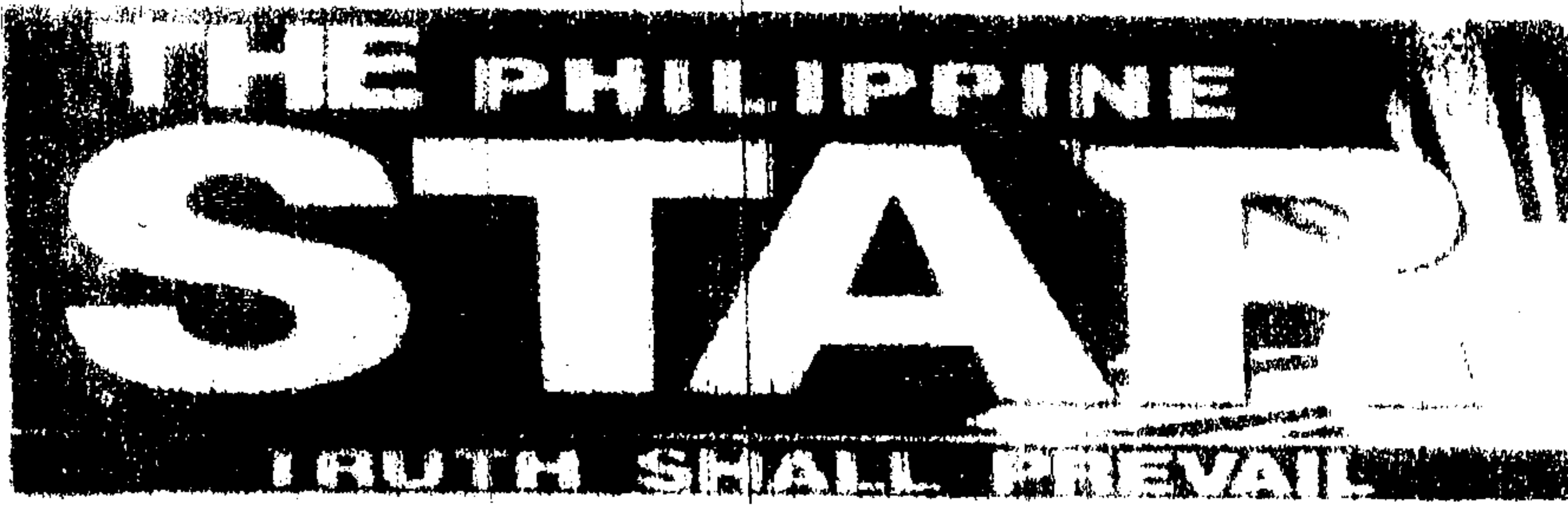
ILOILO CITY – The second phase of the Forest and Climate Protection (ForClim) Project for Panay Island is underway.

This is after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the German Society for International Cooperation spearheaded a planning workshop in Iloilo City in February.

DENR-6 Regional Director Jim Sampulna said the ForClim Project-Phase II aims to strengthen forest protection along the Panay Mountain Range. Specifically, this would entail sustainable forest management approaches along the mountain range that straddles the provinces of Aklan, Antique, Capiz, and Iloilo.

The ForClim Project-Phase II for Panay Island has five major goals for this year.

These are preparing the Forest Land Use Plan and Comprehensive Land Use Plan; providing security and land tenure to local government units, people's organizations and individual households; implementing resource management plans; expanding agro-forestry and large-scale forest rehabilitation for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; and utilizing biomass potentials from rice residues or wood as renewable energy source.



*The only paper you read from cover to cover!*

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## **STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

# **The future is in our hands**

Humans, it is said, are the only creatures that kill other species for purposes other than survival. Whether deliberately or inadvertently in the course of human development activities, this has contributed to the extinction of a host of species and endangerment of many others.

Public awareness of the problem has increased in the past decades, allowing conservationists to turn the tide. The task, however, remains daunting, as even efforts to confront climate change, such as biofuel production, have had unintended consequences on the survival of certain species.

Today the country joins the international community in marking World Wildlife Day with at least one piece of good news: efforts to save the Philippine Eagle have been successful enough that the Eagle Center in Davao is reportedly running out of space for the raptors bred in captivity.

In the wild, however, eagles remain favorite targets of hunters for both food and sport. The nation's capability to protect wildlife from traffickers, poachers and hunters also remains inadequate. Even communities that have learned

the economic value of protecting wildlife and their habitats still see these natural attractions facing various threats.

Worldwide, the United Nations has seen intensified efforts to protect wildlife, with UN member states last year adopting the Sustainable Development Goals to end poaching. The UN General Assembly also unanimously approved a resolution limiting wildlife trafficking.

This year, the UN is focusing on community participation to further improve wildlife conservation efforts. The involvement of communities that live in close proximity with wildlife is essential in stopping the slaughter of animals such as elephants for ivory tusks and other parts.

Rhinos, tigers, whales and cheetahs also remain endangered. In the Philippines, poachers and wildlife traffickers continue to collect pangolins, sea turtles and tarsiers.

The collective success of the international community depends on individual actions to protect wildlife. As the UN points out in today's theme, the future of wildlife is in our hands.



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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The future is in our hands



**EDITORIAL**



PHILIPPINE DAILY  
**INQUIRER**

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PILGRIMS and trekkers are allowed only in designated areas at the base of Mt. Banahaw in Quezon and Laguna provinces as the government extends the closure of the mountain until 2019.

DELFIN T. MALLARI

# Still no room at Banahaw for Lent trekkers

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Lucena City

**P**ILGRIMS and mountaineers expecting to spend their Lenten retreat this year in the deep recesses of mystical Mt. Banahaw, which embraces Quezon and Laguna provinces, would be in for a disappointment.

Authorities have again extended the mountain's closure by three more years, or until February 2019, after scheduling its opening last month.

The decision was reached by the Mounts Banahaw-San Cristobal Protected Landscape-Protected Area Management Board (MBSCPL-PAMB) during a meeting held in Dolores town in Quezon on Feb. 19. The multi-sectoral body was created by law to keep watch over the government-declared protected areas.

Salud Pangan, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) park superintendent for Banahaw and adjacent Mt. San Cristobal, said 18 of the 31 board members who attended the meeting support-

ed the proposal to keep people out of the mountain until 2019 while four wanted a shorter ban extension of only a year.

"The rest abstained from voting," Pangan said. "But we all agreed that we have to protect the gains and continue its remarkable rehabilitation."

Representatives from all towns at the foot of Banahaw are members of the board.

The 10,901-hectare Banahaw and San Cristobal straddle the towns of Lucban, Tayabas, Sariaya, Candelaria and Dolores in Quezon province; and parts of the towns of Rizal, Nagcarlan, Liliw and Majayjay, and San Pablo City in Laguna province.

Reynulfo Juan, DENR Calabarzon regional executive di-

rector and chair of the MBSCPL-PAMB, said: "We will advise local governments [around Banahaw] to focus on disaster preparedness and to strictly regulate activities within strict protection zones."

"We don't want to return to the situation during past Lenten seasons that the mountain would turn into a free highway for everyone," said Randy Matibag, municipal environment and natural resources officer of Dolores.

## Reviving the mountain

In 2004, the PAMB installed barbed-wire fences to seal off several trails leading to the bosom of Banahaw to start a program to revive the mountain's natural resources. Environment personnel have attributed the deteriorating conditions of the mountain to years of abuse by trekkers and pilgrims.

After the closure order was extended several times, Congress passed Republic Act No. 9847 in 2009, which designated Mt. Ba-



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Still no room at Banahaw for lent preppers

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protected areas. The law prohibited the entry of visitors until February this year to protect gains in reforestation activities since 2004.

## Return of wildlife

Wildlife species, including the rare *Rafflesia* that is considered the world's biggest flower, began to reappear in the hills and gullies in 2012. "[You can see] lots of rafflesia along the old mountain trails that are now covered with thick vegetation. If we reopen the mountain, all of these rare and exotic flowers will again [disappear]," Pangan said.

Several animal species, such as wild boars, monkeys and wildcats (*musang*), have also returned and have been seen roaming near the mountaintop by environment personnel.

Many people believe that Banahaw is inhabited by spirits, elementals and otherworldly beings. They trek its slopes and offer prayers in the hope of mir-

Since the mountain's closure, the yearly coming of religious pilgrims, mountaineers and nature trippers have been allowed only at selected spots at the base. "We will open more spots at the foot of Banahaw for nature lovers and for the spiritual activities of pilgrims," Pangan said.

## Climbing destination

More than half a million had climbed Banahaw every Holy Week more than a decade ago. Last year, the number was placed at 5,000, up from the 3,000 in 2014, according to tallies of the DENR and the Dolores local government at the guarded entry point leading to Barangay Kinabuhayan.

Matibag said his municipality of Dolores was not yet ready for the reopening of the mountain to the public. It is still reviewing its tourism development plan on Banahaw, he said.

Local officials have wanted to

reopen the system for regulated entry of visitors is in place, he said. This will cover registration, briefing of visitors, employment of trained guides and porters, identification of hazards and safety precautions, and data on the mountain's carrying capacity.

Tanggol Kalikasan, a public interest law office advocating environmental protection, has supported the continued closure of Banahaw "until such time that the protected area has fully recuperated and regenerated."

Its regional area director, Glenn Forbes, urged PAMB to conduct regular and science-based monitoring and assessment to measure changes in forest cover, wildlife as well as reduction of threats in the mountain.

"Finally, the new ... set of local officials must be made aware of these necessities and the need to collaborate in effective law enforcement in the area," Forbes said.



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# BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS



**BAMBOO CUTTINGS** A lady agro-forester monitors the sprout growth performance of bamboo cuttings propagated at the OceanaGold Sustainable Agro-forestry Inc. nursery in Tucod, Cabarroguis, Quirino. The bamboo is a popular raw material used for making handicraft and huts, and its shoots are also edible. LEONARDO PERANTE II



THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS  
SINCE 1898

# MANILA BULLETIN

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## Army men plant trees

JONES, Isabela - Troops from the Philippine Army's 86th Infantry Battalion joined the drive to help mitigate the impact of climate change in the country when they planted 1,000 forest tree seedlings in Barangay Dalibubon in this municipality. Sgt. Aron Navata of 86th Infantry Battalion, said the tree-planting activity is part of the program of the civil military operations battalion in helping mitigate the impact of climate change. Navata said the soldiers planted 500 narra and 500 anahaw tree seedlings in the said town last week of February. (Liezle Basa Inñigo)



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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**



A man carries a freshly cut log in a forest in A... to last week.

EPA



## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICES

### Duterte: Ban mining firms with records of exploitation

By **BEN R. ROSARIO**

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan – Presidential aspirant Mayor Rodrigo Du-

terte wants the country's mining industry off limits to firms with records of exploitation like the one which had figured prominently as among ►4

### Duterte: Ban mining firms... ◀1

the financial backers of administration standard bearer Mar Roxas.

Interviewed at the sidelines of a huge campaign rally here, Duterte vowed to study carefully calls for the scrapping of the 21-year-old Republic Act 7942 or the Mining Act of 1995 but quickly added that exploitative mining companies should be banned.

He pointed to the SR Metals, Inc. as among the mining firms that should be closely watched, saying the firm's owners have succeeded in ingratiating themselves with powerful government officials and politicians to continue with exploitative practices in the industry.

Duterte had disclosed that SRMI president Eric Gutierrez, and his alleged business partner Caloocan City Rep. Edgar Erice, were providing free air transportation support for the Roxas campaign.

In return, Gutierrez and Erice, currently Liberal Party political affairs chief, have gained special favors from

the Aquino government, including tax perks for SRMI's choppers, he said.

"They have been accused of over-mining. They will have to pay for this crime against the environment," he said.

Duterte said Filipinos should learn about the good and bad effects of mining in order that they can air their stand on issues affecting the industry.

Asked if he will support moves to scrap RA 7942 that liberalized the industry, Duterte said he would spearhead moves to correct excesses committed by mining firms.

#### Green Vote

Earlier, environmentalist organizations launched the "zero vote" campaign against presidential bets found to have "clear track records of promoting, supporting and owning large-scale mining operations in the country.

Roxas and United Nationalist Alli-

ance standard bearer Vice President Jejomar Binay were pinpointed among the presidential candidates who will get no support from groups espousing environmental conservation.

The launch of the Green Vote 2016 coincided with the anniversary of enactment of RA 76942 that was passed in 1995.

In a related development, Bayan Muna partylist Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate dared candidates running in the May elections to air their stand on the proposal to scrap RA 7942, saying that this should be a campaign issue.

"The present liberalized mining regime under the Mining Act of 1995 has only brought strife among our rural peoples, especially indigenous peoples, who are continuously displaced and affected by environmental destruction. The unbridled greed of liberalized mining literally plundered our resources and abused our people. The candidates, particularly those running for the presidency, must address the question of destructive mining," Zarate said.



THE EXHIBIT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS SINCE 1900

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P-2 Posters: Ben Moring

Together with House Senior Minority Leader Neri Colmenares, Zarate authored the People's Mining Bill in 2013 which seeks to re-orient the Philippine mining industry for "national industrialization."

The Mining Act of 1995 open wide the floodgates for greed and plunder of our finite resources. Today, there are at least 999 approved mining applications covering 1 million hectares of our lands. The billions of dollars extracted from our mineral lands are then exported to the USA, Australia, Canada, UK, China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and others. However, mining TNCs are only obligated to pay 2 percent in taxes, as provided in the Mining Act of 1995," said Zarate.

#### Illegal use of gov't vehicles

Meanwhile in Davao City, the Duterte camp has deplored the illegal use of government vehicles in installing the posters of Roxas and vice presidential candidate Leni Robredo.

In a press statement sent to Manila

Bulletin, PDP-Laban spokesperson lawyer Paola Alvarez said the use of red-plated vehicles by supporters of Mar Roxas and Leni Robredo exposes the true nature of the administration and the kind of governance behind the slogan "Daang Matuwid."

"Daang Matuwid is but a platform of deceit that has been conditioning the minds of Filipinos that this administration has been clean and efficient, when in reality it is corrupt and worse than the past administrations it claims to admonish," Alvarez said in reaction to reports that supporters of the administration frontrunners have been using government vehicles in its poster operations.

Last week, a photo circulated in Facebook showed a mini dumptruck loaded with yellow-colored campaign posters in Zamboanga Sibugay. Another photo showed a black Toyota Hilux with red government plates also loaded with a campaign materials of Roxas and the administration slogan "Daang Matuwid." (With a report from Jonathan Santes)



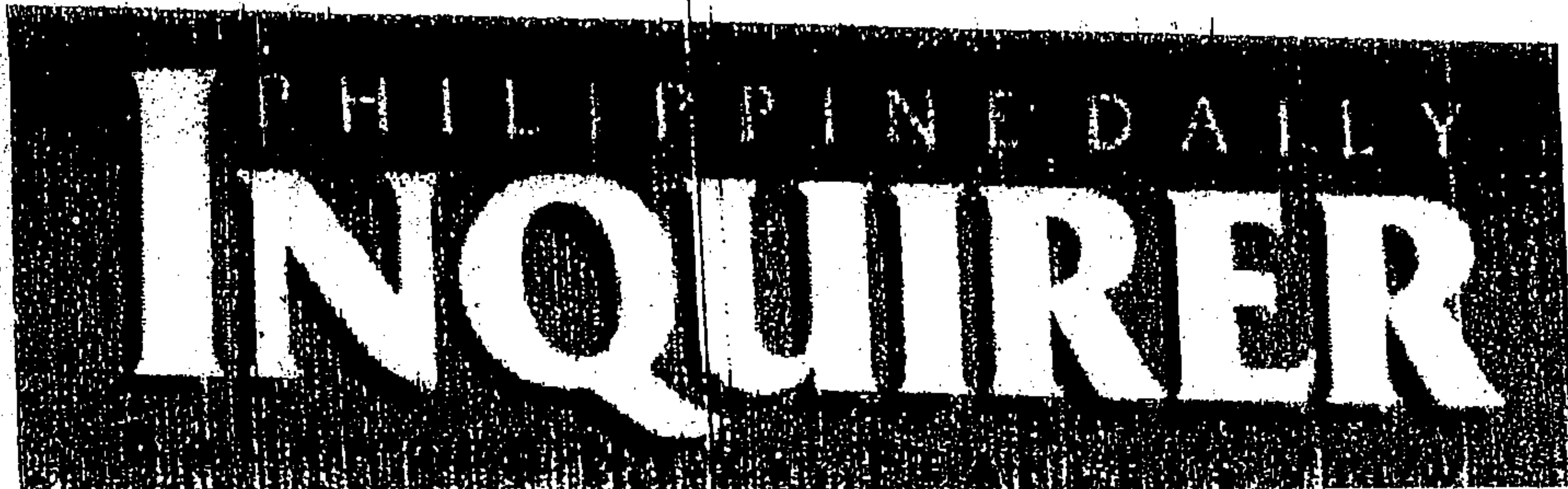
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## El Niño damage rises to P4.77B

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DAMAGE to Philippine farms went up further to P4.77 billion as more food producers reported losses during the past two months when the El Niño was at its peak.

Agriculture Undersecretary Emerson U. Palad, chief of the DA's field operations services, said in a briefing that the phenomenon's toll on the sector in January and February alone was P1.34 billion.

"This involves a total of 54,619 farmers working on 76,593 hectares of farms and lost 125,133 tons of produce," Palad said.

Of the total area affected so far this year, crops in 31,349 hectares were considered having a chance of recovery.

Palad added that close to two-thirds of total damage value incurred in the past two months—which represented the planting period for this year's dry season crop—were P864.37 million worth of palay.

Also, insufficient rainfall claimed P477.48 million of corn and P2.1 million worth of high-value crops, including various vegetables.

Sustaining the biggest amounts of damage were Northern Mindanao where 12,350 farmers lost P358.4 million worth of crops and Western Visayas with P356.6 million.

In terms of population, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao reported the most number of affected farmers at 16,347 incurring losses of P214.6 million.

Even with the past two months accounting for 28 percent of total farm damage from the ongoing El Niño, Palad reiterated the DA's pronouncement that damage was "minimal."



## PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

# El Niño damaged P1.34B of crops in Jan-Feb

By MARY GRACE PADIN

**E**L NIÑO has damaged 119,339 metric tons (MT) of crops valued at P1.34 billion in the first two months of 2016, according to figures from the Department of Agriculture (DA).

P979.9 million from its 2016 budget to roll out the interventions and programs under its El Niño Action Plan.

The government said it will provide production support to local farmers, conduct cloud-seeding operations, and repair or rehabilitate small water-impounding projects and diversion dams to help them cope with El Niño.

However, the DA said it has yet to receive the P2.11 billion in additional budget for El Niño mitigation it has requested from the Department of Budget and Management.

Meanwhile, Agriculture Undersecretary for Field Operations Emerson Palad said in a news briefing that El Niño will not have an adverse impact on the country's vegetable production.

Danilo Daguio, DA Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) assistant director for operations, said the prices of vegetables from Benguet and the Mountain Province have gone down, as farmers are currently harvesting their crops.

Daguio assured that there will be no "significant" increases in prices despite the onslaught of El Niño in vegetable-producing areas in the country.

Based on its monitoring, he said the agency has yet to receive reports about supply problems in Benguet and the Mountain Province. CAR supplies around 80 percent of the country's highland vegetable requirement.

Meanwhile, the high temperature associated with El Niño has affected several seedlings in cacao

nurseries and newly planted trees in Davao City.

This was revealed by Val Turtur, executive director of Cacao Industry Development Association in Mindanao Inc., who said that they need to water the plants twice or thrice daily.

He noted a 50-percent drop in their production compared to the same period last year.

"That is why our original target of 19,000 MT annual yield for 2016 was reduced to 16,000 MT," he said.

Worst, he said, farmers are entailing additional cost because their only source of water is the Davao City Water District, except in areas where nursery is situated near creeks or river where they could access water for free. *With PNA*



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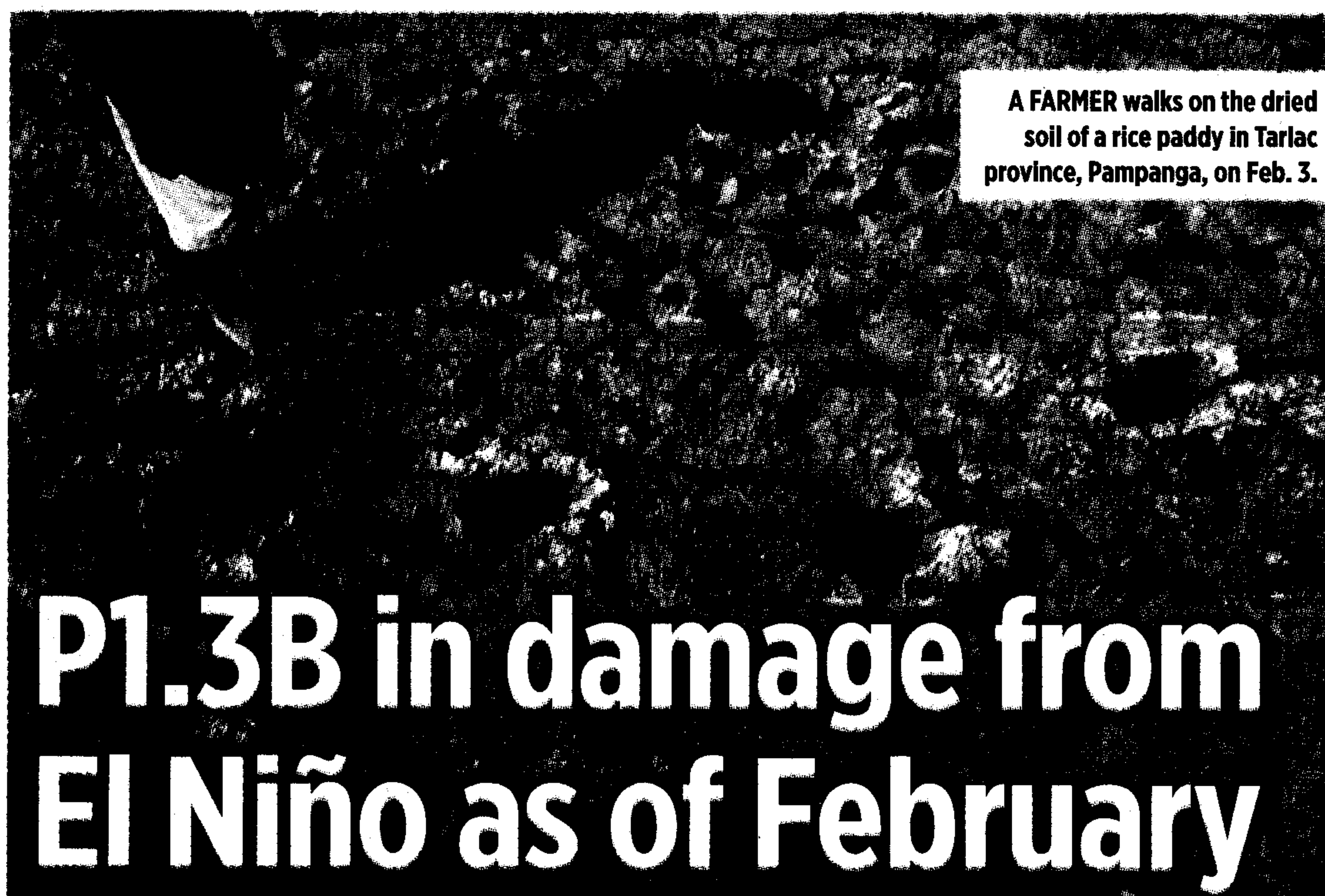
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PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS



A FARMER walks on the dried soil of a rice paddy in Tarlac province, Pampanga, on Feb. 3.

## P1.3B in damage from El Niño as of February

CROP DAMAGE from El Niño amounted to P1.34 billion for the year so far, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

According to a DA report released yesterday, a total of 119,340 metric tons (MT) of crops have been affected as of Feb. 26 by El Niño, a phenomenon triggered by the unusual warming of the Pacific Ocean.

A total area of 76,593 hectares tilled by some 54,629 farmers have been hurt by the dry spell.

Rice crop areas were hit the hardest, with total production loss valued at P864.37 million. Damage to corn and high-value crops was valued at P477.48 million and P2.07 million, respectively.

The Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) has warned that the current El Niño can last longer than the one in 1997-1998.

The officer-in-charge of PAGASA's Climate and Monitoring Section told *BusinessWorld* in a phone interview that the El Niño will stretch until July this year, extending the earlier forecast of the country's weather tracker, which had warned of the dry spell lasting till May.

Earlier, DA Secretary Proceso J. Alcala said that the agency aims for rice production to reach at least 18 million MT this year.

In an earlier forecast by the Philippine Statistics Authority "based on standing crops," rice

production in the first quarter could decline by 4.98% to 4.15 million MT, from the 4.37-million-MT output in the same period of 2015.

To address the impacts of El Niño, the government has budgeted P979.90 million through the General Appropriations Act of 2016, though the DA is seeking an additional P2.11 billion.

As part of its interventions, the government has provided hybrid seed varieties, which can boost average yields by 20%-35%, and conducted cloud seeding operations to hard-hit areas.

From Jan. 12 to Feb. 25, the DA has conducted 122 cloud seeding sorties, with a 72% success rate in prompting light to intense rainfall. — **Janina C. Lim**



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# PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Scientists broke biosafety law in releasing Bt 'talong'

SOME SCIENTISTS insist that Bt *talong* (eggplant) is "safe" and brand the Supreme Court—which banned the further release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) into the Philippine environment in a recent ruling—as "antiscience." But the scientists who proposed to release the genetically modified vegetable into the environment broke the law that ensures the safety of such releases, the National Biosafety Framework (NBF).

Despite claims by scientists that Bt eggplant is completely safe, its proponents as well as regulatory agencies failed to conduct independent risk assessments as required by the NBF. Under the framework, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is required to conduct assessments on the impacts identified in biosafety decisions. The Supreme Court ruling quoted Carmelo Segui of the DENR's Environmental Management Bureau, who admitted that the agency lacked funds and the competence to conduct these assessments.

Although not stated in the high court's ruling, the NBF also requires other agencies to play a role in determining the impact of biosafety decisions on health and the socioeconomic situation, among others. For instance, the Department of Health is required to formulate guidelines in assessing the health impacts posed by modern biotechnology and its applications, and to require, review and evaluate results of relevant environmental health impact assessments. It is also required to take the lead in evaluating and monitoring processed food derived from or containing GMOs.

The NBF also mandates the Department of Trade and Industry to study the impact of GMOs and biosafety decisions on trade, intellectual property rights, investments and consumer welfare and protection. Also playing a role are the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples and the Department of the Interior and Local Government, which are mandat-

#### COMMENTARY

*Joy Angelica Santos Doctor*

ed to study such impacts on, respectively, indigenous peoples and communities, and the autonomy of local government units.

Before releasing GMOs into the environment, the NBF additionally requires that the public be informed and be allowed to decide if they want bacteria-infested foods into their digestive systems and their surroundings.

To comply with the legal requirement for public participation, Bt *talong* proponents simply posted a document the size of bond paper in barangay announcement boards. Then they asked the barangay captain and the municipal mayor to sign a certificate that public participation had taken place.

Yet the NBF specifies that all stakeholders "shall have appropriate access to information and the opportunity to participate responsibly and in an accountable manner in biosafety decision-making processes." It requires all concerned government departments and agencies to exert all efforts to find consensus among all stakeholders, including farmers, women and indigenous peoples, using well-accepted methods such as negotiation, mediation and other appropriate dispute resolution processes. The consensus, to be achieved in a transparent and participatory manner, shall be based on the best available science and knowledge, and shall not compromise public safety and welfare.

The NBF lists the following minimum requirements of public participation: 1) notice to all concerned stakeholders, in a language understood by them and through the media to which they have access; 2) adequate and rea-

sonable time frames; 3) public consultations, as a way to secure wide input into the decisions to be made; 4) mechanisms that allow public participation in writing or through public hearings, as appropriate, and that allow the submission of any positions, comments, information, analyses or opinions; and, most importantly, 5) consideration of public concerns in the decision-making phase following consultation and submission of written comments.

In addition, the NBF requires that the public be informed of the final decision promptly have access to the decision, and be provided with the reasons and considerations resulting in the decision, upon request.

The Supreme Court assessed scientific evidence and concluded that there is "uncertainty of the possibility of irreversible harm and the possibility of serious harm" in releasing Bt *talong* into the environment.

Consequently, it upheld the constitution right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology and said: Eggplant, a staple vegetable in the country, is grown by small-scale farmers, the majority of whom are poor and marginalized. While the goal of increasing crop yields raise farm incomes is laudable, independent scientific studies revealed uncertainties due to unfulfilled economic benefits from Bt crops and plants, adverse effects on the environment associated with use of GM technology in agriculture, and serious health hazards from consumption of GM foods. For a biodiversity-rich country like the Philippines, the natural and unforeseen consequences of contamination and genetic pollution would be disastrous and irreversible.

*Joy Angelica Santos Doctor is a lawyer previously involved in biosafety campaigns and human rights, and a former correspondent of INQUIRER Northern Luzon covering Benguet. She is now a municipal judge in Bohol.*



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# PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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## Mindanao drought brings cobras to villages, kills plants

COBRAS slithering into villages in Kidapawan City. Egg-plants turning from purple, foot-long vegetables to burnt

brown, 2-inch inedible clumps.

The effects of the dry spell brought by the El Niño phenomenon are wide ranging in

Mindanao provinces, towns and villages where the absence of rain is changing the landscape and the way of life of hundreds of communities.

But while the face of El Niño's devastation may be different from place to place, it is painting just one scenario—devastation.

In Kidapawan, a 62-year-old man was just resting in his shanty when he was bitten by a king cobra in the village of Sumbac, a rubber plantation community.

According to Psalmer Bernalte, head of the Kidapawan Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, the man, Bonifacio Digao, was bitten by an 2.44-meter long cobra, locally known as "banakon."

Digao is now comatose in an undisclosed hospital.

The snake was killed by Digao's neighbors, but city officials said residents of the village should be watchful for more snakes being driven out of their habitats by extreme heat associated with El Niño.

The snakes, said Mayor Joseph Evangelista, are in search of cooler places and the "temperature is always colder in rubber plantation areas."

In the town of Tagaloan, Misamis Oriental province, the effects of drought that are staring farmer Rolly Tacud in the face may not be as scary as a cobra's fangs but are as deadly.

Tacud, 50, could only stare in disbelief at his half-hectare vegetable plot, which has become his source of income for the last two years after giving up a job as a motorcycle salesman.

Just last year, Tacud had high hopes that vegetable farming was a worthy income alternative to selling motorcycles after he earned thousands of pesos selling his produce.

When rain was abundant last year, Tacud said, he earned an average of P3,000 a day on egg-plants alone.

But when the rains stopped coming in late December, Tacud's fate became as clear as the cloudless sky above his farm—uncertain.

He could now barely repay debts that he incurred to buy seeds and fertilizers.

In Claveria, another Misamis Oriental town, farmer Numeriana Nacario, 74, is preparing to accept the inevitable: heavy losses in her and her husband's 2-ha farm planted to corn, bananas and root crops.

Nacario said she had expected to harvest corn this month, "but the young cobs have already withered and died."

Tacud's and Nacario's farms are both dependent on the rain and are not covered by irrigation systems.

Tacud said that while he had a well, it had become too expensive for him to use his pump to draw water from it. "I could no longer afford to pay for the electric bills for my pump," said Tacud.

Tacud and Nacario are just some of the small-scale farmers who are getting hurt by El Niño. Both said they had yet to get financial or material aid from their local governments.

Concepcion Salcedo, Misamis Oriental agriculturist, said the provincial government had



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# PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Mindanao drought P-2



**CONTAINERS**  
are waiting  
to be filled  
with water  
in a village  
faucet in  
Zamboanga  
City, which  
is suffering  
from drought  
as a result of  
the El Niño  
phenomenon.

JULIE ALIPALA/  
INQUIRER MINDANAO

allotted P11 million this year to help farmers cope with El Niño.

She said hundreds of bags of heat-resistant, open-pollinated variety (OPV) rice and white corn seedlings were now ready for distribution and more were to be purchased from suppliers in Valencia City and Kabacan, North Cotabato province.

The provincial agriculture office is also preparing vegetable seeds for distribution.

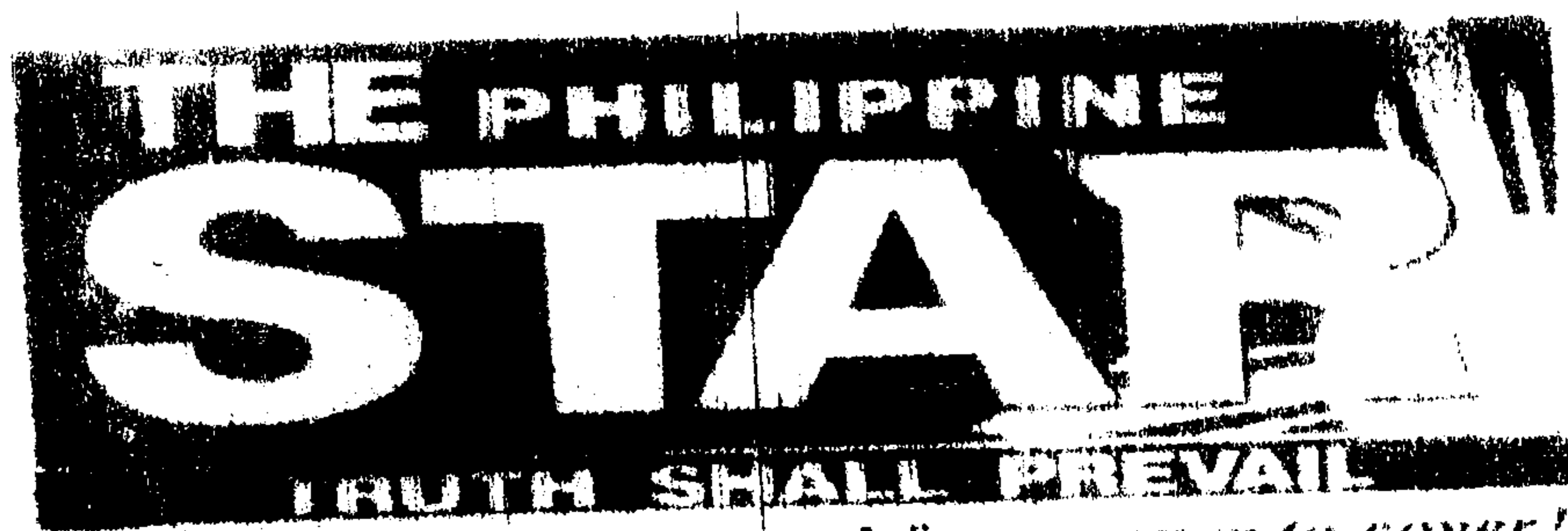
Salcedo said her office is closely watching the towns of Laguindingan, Alubijid, Opol, Initao, Gitagum, parts of Claveria and Tagoloan and El Salvador City, which could be areas worst hit by the drought.

She said the province had received P9.7 million worth of irrigation pumps to be used to ease the effects of the dry spell.

According to the Department of Agriculture (DA) in Northern Mindanao, the total loss in agricultural production in the region has already reached P792 million. At least 11,709 farmers are suffering from income loss as of Feb. 17.

Bukidnon province, according to the DA, is the worst hit province in the region. *Williamor Magbanua, with a report from Jigger Jerusalem, Inquirer Mindanao*





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# Climate info may be key in fight vs Zika

BARCELONA – In the Caribbean island state of Barbados, rainwater collection has been promoted as a way to boost scarce supplies of fresh water.

But there's a catch: environmental health officers then reported an increase in mosquitoes breeding in household water storage tanks.

In a country battling a high rate of dengue fever and some recently detected cases of Zika, controlling the population of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito – which transmits both viruses to humans – is a high priority.

Diarmid Campbell-Lendrum, team leader for climate change and health with the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva, says there is a cheap and easy answer: covering rainwater tanks with mosquito nets.

But first the connection between climate and health issues must be made – and that doesn't always happen.

In Barbados, it did. The country was one of seven to take part in the first global project on adapting public health systems to climate change, launched by the WHO and the UN Development Program in 2010.

Key aims of the work in Barbados were to improve water storage facilities to eliminate mosquitoes, give technical advice on building and maintaining water tanks, and raise public awareness about safe ways to harvest rainwater.

"It is about healthy urban planning – whereby your urban design, and your water and sanitation services all take into account the health risks and opportunities that arise," said Campbell-Lendrum.

Pressure to analyze the health impacts of climate change and extreme weather – and to explore how efforts to deal with climate stresses could themselves shape health risks – is increasing as Zika gathers pace.

WHO figures show that active Zika outbreaks have been reported in around 40 countries or territories since the start of 2015, with three quarters of them in the Americas. In that region, the *Aedes* mosquito is found in all countries except

Canada and continental Chile, according to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

The Zika infection itself produces none or only mild symptoms in many cases, but scientists are trying to establish whether it causes microcephaly in babies, a condition in which infants are born with unusually small heads and can suffer developmental problems.

Zika also has been associated with Guillain-Barre syndrome, a rare disorder in which the body's immune system attacks part of the nervous system.

There is no treatment or vaccine for Zika infection, and the WHO has said it will take at least 18 months to start large-scale clinical trials of preventative shots.

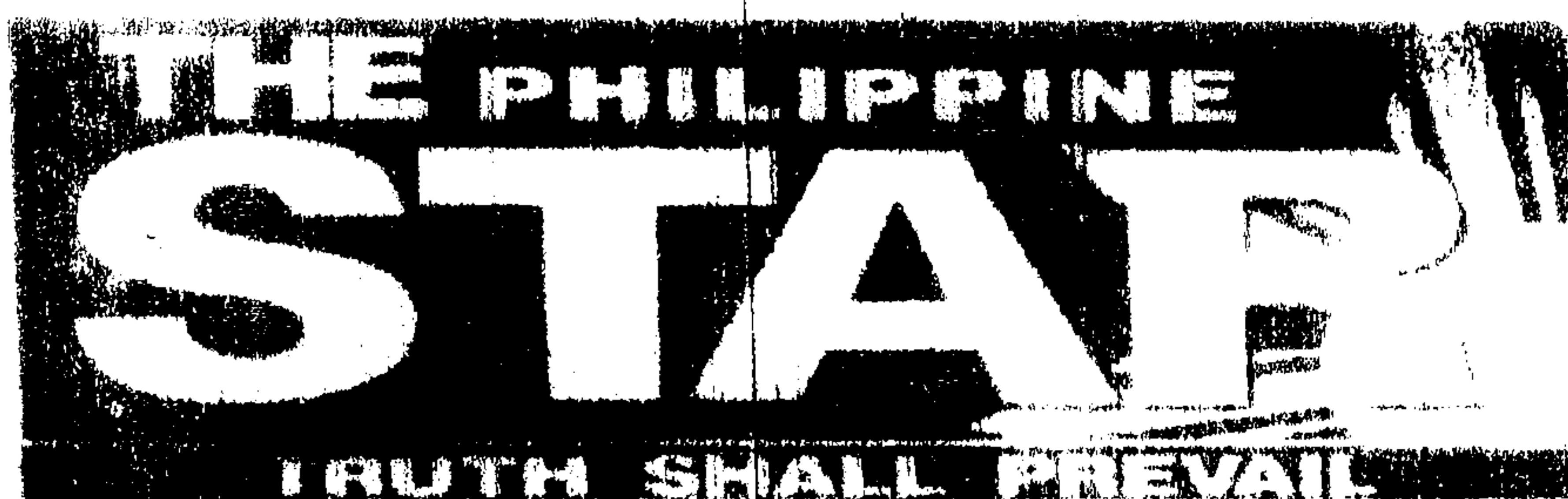
That means the focus for now is on understanding where and how the virus is likely to spread, eliminating mosquito breeding sites – from water tanks to flower pots, gutters and used tyres – and taking precautions against mosquito bites.

## El Niño influence?

Climate scientists have a role to play in the fight against Zika because mosquito-borne infections are strongly affected by weather and climate conditions, Campbell-Lendrum said.

It remains unclear if and how climate change and the powerful El Niño weather phenomenon that has brought drought and floods to different parts of the world in recent months may have influenced the spread of Zika, he added.





*The only paper you read from cover to cover!*

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

"But it is certainly highly plausible that these unusual weather conditions have made it easier to transmit the virus," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Meteorologists have warned that El Niño, a warming of Pacific Ocean surface waters, could be succeeded later in the year by its opposite - La Niña - which also causes extreme weather around the globe.

That is something scientists will need to monitor closely in the coming months, matching projections of climatic conditions that favor breeding of Aedes mosquitoes with information on where people from places with the infection are travelling.

Erin Coughlan de Perez of the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Center

said that as knowledge grows about the links between climate factors and Zika, it could be used to target public health measures in at-risk areas, to head off outbreaks.

### Improving response

In a January report on the health impacts of El Niño, the WHO warned that above-average rainfall was expected in parts of South America until May - particularly Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil and Argentina.

That could cause floods and increases in vector-borne diseases such as malaria, dengue, chikungunya and Zika, said the report - the first of its kind.

"We are paying much more attention to the links between climate and

weather and health, and trying to use this information and this understanding to improve the response," the WHO's Campbell-Lendrum said.

Madeleine Thomson, a senior scientist with the International Research Institute for Climate and Society, said it is now increasingly accepted that climate factors need to be a core consideration for the health sector, but the resources to put that into practice have yet to follow.

The fact that global warming will make populations in some parts of the world more vulnerable to mosquito-borne diseases like dengue and Zika "is not rocket science," she said.

"The key thing is how do we use that knowledge to better control Zika and other emerging infectious diseases

that will come down the pipeline?"

Thomson will attend a meeting called by PAHO in Washington this week to define the public health research agenda for Zika, which is expected to include weather and climate influences.

The researcher noted that scientists will have to draw on what they already know about dengue, given that Zika is likely transmitted by the same mosquito species.

### Urban slums

Dengue - which causes flu-like symptoms and can develop into the deadly dengue haemorrhagic fever - is the world's fastest-spreading tropical disease, with the annual number of cases increasing 30-fold in the last 50 years, according to the WHO.

The failure to control dengue is rooted partly in the fact that the mosquitoes thrive in small amounts of stagnant water in urban areas, and their eggs can survive dry seasons.

Unplanned urbanization favors the transmission of dengue and Zika, experts say. That's a problem at a time when the world's cities are mushrooming, particularly in poorer countries with slums that lack a reliable water supply and decent housing.

"It's really a recipe for disaster, for increasing disaster risk - and it reinforces the need for us to get out ahead of this with effective planning," said Robert Glasser, head of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR).

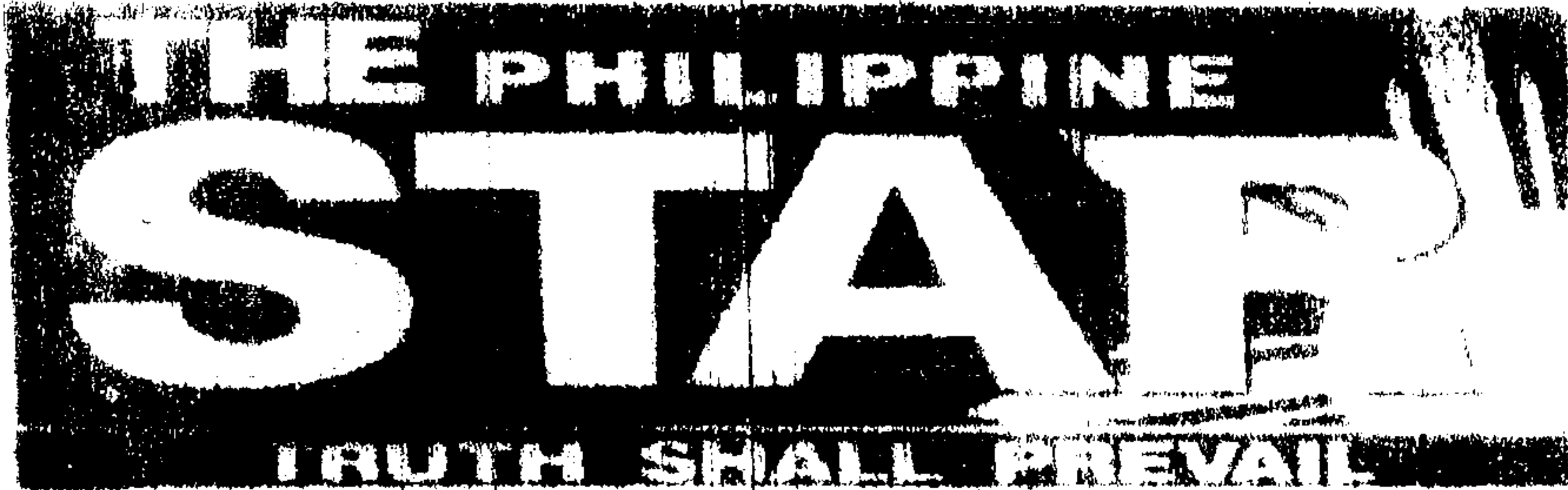
The spread of Zika has shown that the emergence of a virus or disease can affect all countries, including rich ones, making international cooperation, early detection and rapid response systems essential, he added.

A new global agreement to prevent disasters, adopted in Sendai, Japan, last March, included the need to address biological hazards such as pandemics - largely in response to the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa.

But efforts to join up ministries and agencies working separately on health and disasters are still at an early stage, with a conference due to bring them together in Bangkok next month.

- Reuters





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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

## Best actor DiCaprio lauded for acceptance speech

Climate justice advocates in the Philippines lauded American actor Leonardo DiCaprio for raising the issue of climate change in his acceptance speech after winning best actor at this year's Academy Awards.

"DiCaprio hit the nail on the head when he stressed that the issue of climate change is an issue of vulnerable peoples, indigenous communities, marginalized sectors and the future generation," said Aaron Pedrosa of

Sanlakas on Tuesday.

"His speech is a motivation for advocates working for more ambitious and transformative measures addressing climate change," he added.

DiCaprio won the coveted award for his performance in the film "The Revenant."

"Climate change is real. It is happening right now. It's the most urgent threat facing our entire species

By JANVIC MATEO

and we need to work collectively together and stop procrastinating," the actor said in his acceptance speech.

"We need to support leaders around the world who do not speak for the big polluters, but who speak for all of humanity, for the indigenous people of the world, for the billions and billions of underprivileged people out there who would be most affected by this," DiCaprio said.

Gerry Arances – convenor for the Center of Energy, Ecology and Development – noted the role of the government in addressing the threat of climate change.

"Like DiCaprio said, the politics of greed has caused those most impacted by climate and ecological disasters to be silenced, with global and local leaders being in the pocket of corporations and companies who profit from destroying the environment," he said.



## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICES

# Earth Hour 2016: Lights off to change climate change

A global blackout will take place on the third week of this month to shed light on climate change.

Earth Hour, spearheaded by environmental solutions-provider World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), is an annual global celebration where people switch off their lights for one hour to show their commitment to the future of the planet and stand in solidarity with climate action.

This year's celebrations will be on Saturday, March 19, 2016 between 8:30 and 9:30 p.m. in local time zone across the world.

It is the world's largest grassroots movement for the planet with a record-breaking 172 countries and territories taking part in Earth Hour 2015, and about 10,400 participating landmarks.

More than just an impactful visual call-out, the lights-off campaign also incited on-the-ground projects for the planet.

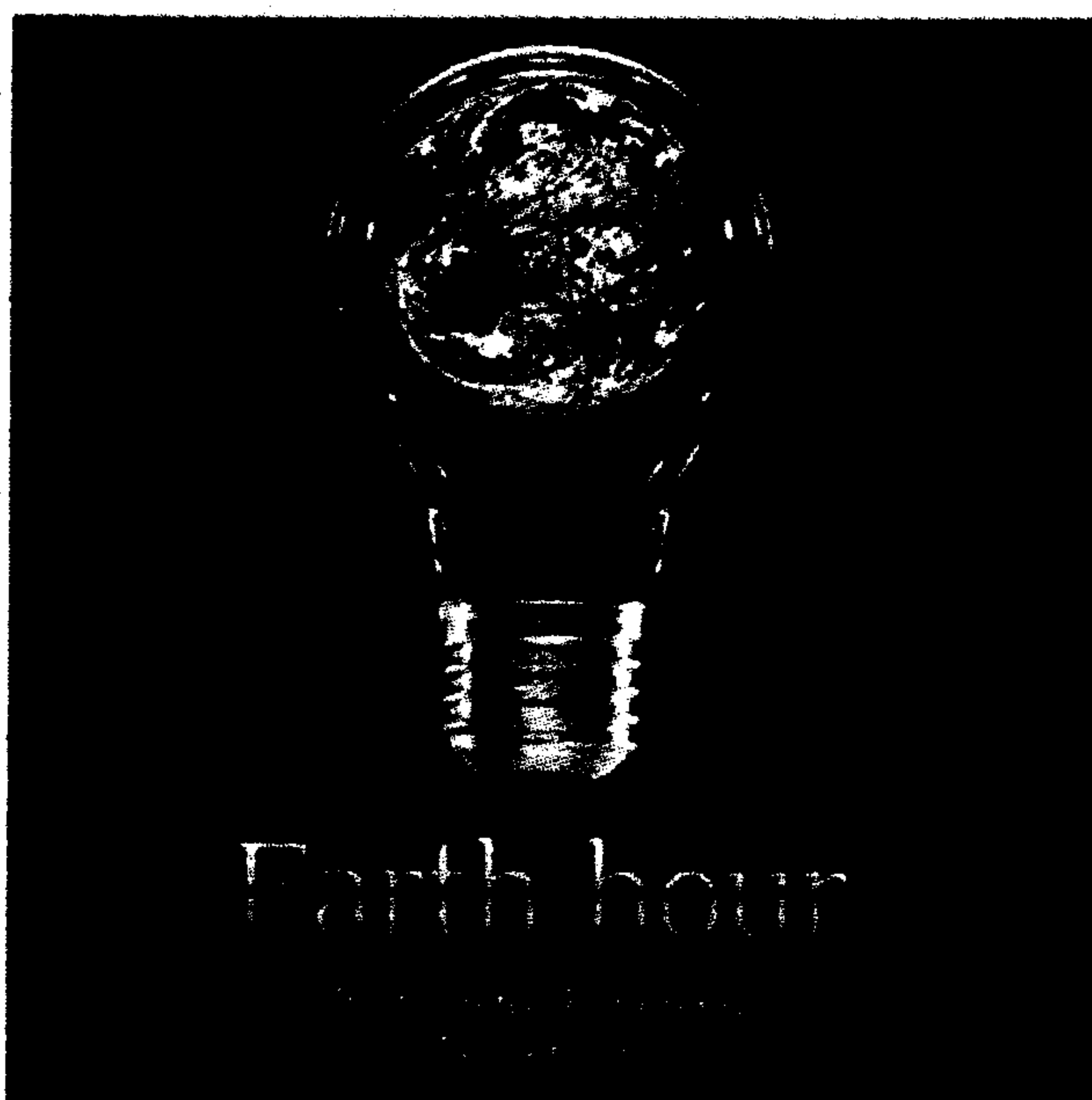
WWF Uganda started the world's first Earth Hour Forest.

Solar-powered lights were installed in three villages without electricity in India.

In Paraguay, WWF used the Earth Hour platform to build public support to gain an extension of the logging moratorium, helping to reduce deforestation.

Hundreds of thousands of LED lights were installed by girl scouts in the United States.

People-powered legislative changes arose in Russia and Argentina. More



Courtesy of timetable.com

than 250,000 Russians voiced support for better protection of their country's seas and forests.

Meanwhile, Argentina used its 2013 Earth Hour campaign to help pass a Senate bill for a 3.4-million hectare Marine Protected Area in the country.

In 2016, Earth Hour will continue to strengthen grassroots efforts to change climate change, including driving a petition for 100 percent renewable energy in Spain, protecting forests and biodiversity in Africa and helping devise a comprehensive solution to Southeast Asia's persistent haze crisis by working with governments, businesses, and civil society simultaneously on peat land protection and sustainable palm oil.

This year marks Earth Hour's 10th spectacular lights out event.

Switching off the lights in a span of an hour seems a simple deed, yet the overall effect can be massive with a powerful statement to change climate change. (PNA)