

09 JAN 2017

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DENR

IN THE NEWS

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

09 JAN 2017

DATE

B-10

PAGE

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR orders SMCCPC to stop operations of Bataan plant

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has ordered SMC Consolidated Power Corp. (SMCCPC) to stop any activity inside its coal-fired power plant in Limay, Bataan in the wake of an ash spill that has reportedly caused several residents to fall ill.

Through its Environmental Management Bureau (EMB)-Central Luzon office, the DENR also directed the nearby Petron Bataan Refinery (PBR) to "stop from dumping newly-generated bottom ash" in the area while

the ash spill incident is being investigated.

The two directives, both dated Jan. 6, were issued by regional director Lornelyn Claudio of EMB Region 3, which is based in San Fernando City, Pampanga.

EMB, a line bureau of the DENR, is responsible for the implementation of various environmental laws, rules and regulations, including Presidential Decree (PD) No. 1586 or the law establishing the Environmental Impact Assessment System that requires an environmental compliance certificate

(ECC) to ensure that a development project will not cause adverse environmental impacts.

In a Notice of Alleged Violation issued to SMCCPC, the EMB wanted the power firm to explain why the ECC for its Limay facility should not be revoked or cancelled due to the ash spill.

"Notice is hereby served in connection with the dumping of bottom ash at (SMCCPC's) facility in Limay, Bataan. This allegedly caused unmitigated spread of ash

which affected the health conditions of the residents in the host community," the notice read.

The EMB is giving SMCCPC a period of seven days from receipt of the notice to explain why it should not be penalized under PD 1586, and why its ECC should not be revoked or suspended.

"Similarly, you are hereby ordered to stop from further undertaking any activity while the matters are being investigated," the EMB told SMCCPC.

The bureau also ordered the company to attend the technical conference scheduled on Jan. 9 at the EMB Region 3 office in Pampanga.

"Failure to attend will qualify you to be considered in default and the case shall be resolved based on evidence on record," the EMB warned SMCCPC.

Meanwhile, the EMB said the latest order against PBR was based on the notice of violation it issued against the oil facility last Dec. 28 when the ash spill in Limay was first reported.

The EMB said it was inclined to issue a new order against PBR "considering the most recent reports and information on the alleged skin diseases caused by the dumping of bottom ash at (SMCCPC's) facility."

SMCCPC and Petron Corp. are both subsidiaries of San Miguel Corp., one of the country's most diversified and biggest conglomerates.

Petron Corp. operates the PBR, which is the largest integrated crude oil refinery and petrochemicals complex in the country.

PEOPLES JOURNALS

01-09-2017

DATE

13

PAGE

UPPER HALF

✓
LOWER HALF

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR stops operation of coal power plant in Bataan

THE Environmental Management Bureau Central Luzon regional office (EMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has ordered the San Miguel Corporation Consolidated Power Corp. (SMCCPC) to stop any activity inside its coal-fired power plant in Limay, Bataan pending investigation with the reported ash spill coming from its plant.

EMB Region 3 director Lormelyn Claudio issued the order following reports that the ash spill coming from the plant of SMCCPC has already caused illnesses to several residents in the area.

The EMB also directed the nearby Petron Bataan

Refinery (PBR) to stop from dumping newly-generated bottom ash in the area while the ash spill is still being investigated.

In a Notice of Alleged Violation issued to SMCCPC, the EMB wanted the power firm to explain why the ECC for its Limay facility should not be revoked or cancelled due to the ash spill.

"Notice is hereby served in connection with the dumping of bottom ash at SMCCPC's facility in Limay, Bataan. This allegedly caused unmitigated spread of ash which affected the health conditions of the residents in the host community," the notice read.

The EMB has given the SMCCPC seven days from

receipt of the notice to explain why it should not be penalized under P.D. 1586, and why its ECC should not be revoked or suspended.

The bureau also ordered the company to attend the technical conference scheduled today at the EMB Region 3 office in Pampanga.

"Failure to attend will qualify you to be considered in default and the case shall be resolved based in evidence on record," the EMB warned SMCCPC.

Meanwhile, the EMB said the latest order against PBR was based on the notice of violation it issued against the oil facility last Dec. 28 when the ash spill in Limay was first reported.

Cory Martinez

THE STANDARD

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Q-9-17

DATE

B1

PAGE

✓
UPPER HAL

LOWER HAL

SMC told to shut

coal plant

By Anna Leah E. Gonzales

THE regional office of the Environmental Management Bureau in Central Luzon ordered SMC Consolidated Power Corp., a unit of conglomerate San Miguel Corp., to stop any activity inside its coal-fired power plant in Limay, Bataan.

The agency said it also directed the nearby Petron Bataan Refinery to "stop from dumping newly-generated bottom ash" in the area while the ash spill incident was being investigated.

The two directives, both dated Jan. 6, 2017, were issued by regional director Lormelyn Claudio of EMB Region 3 based in San Fernando City, Pangasinana.

The coal power plant was being blamed by some residents for allegedly causing an ash spill.

"Not true news," San Miguel president Ramon

Ang said Friday, when asked about the Environment Department's plan to shut down the plant.

Petron's 180,000 barrel-per-day refinery is located in Limay, Bataan.

"Our ash pond is located within our facility and near our offices. It has the necessary regional and local permits from the [Environment], is surrounded by dikes and regularly watered to prevent dispersion," Petron said.

Petron said ash from the pond, certified by Environment as non-hazardous, "will be used as raw material for our cement manufacturing plant."

EMB, a line bureau of the Environment Department, is responsible for the implementation of various environmental laws, rules and regulations, including Presidential Decree No. 1586 or the law establishing the Environmental Impact Assessment System that requires an environmental compliance certificate to ensure that a development project will not cause adverse environmental impacts.

EMB issued a notice of alleged violation to SMC-CPC and asked the power firm to explain why the ECC for its Limay facility should not be revoked or cancelled due to the ash spill.

THE STANDARD

01-09-17

DATE

B1

PAGE

✓
UPPER HALF

LOWER HALF

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

19.2

EMB gave SMCCPC seven days from receipt of the notice to explain why it should not be penalized under P.D. 1586 and why its ECC should not be revoked or suspended.

EMB also ordered the company to stop further undertaking any activity while the matters were being investigated.

The bureau also ordered the company to attend the technical conference scheduled Monday at the EMB Region 3 office in Pampanga.

"Failure to attend will qualify you to be considered in default and the case shall be resolved based in evidence on record," EMB said.

Meanwhile, EMB said the latest order against Petron Bataan Refiner was based on the notice of violation it issued against the oil facility on Dec. 28 when the ash spill in Limay was first reported.

EMB said it was inclined to issue a new order against PBR considering the most recent reports and information on the alleged skin diseases caused by the dumping of bottom ash at SMCCPC's facility.

SMCCPC and Petron Corp. are both subsidiaries of San Miguel Corp., one of the country's most diversified and biggest conglomerates.

09 JAN 2017

DATE

UPPER H.

PAGE

LOWER H.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR chief misled on Bataan oil spill

By Daxim L. Lucas
@daxINQ

The chief of the country's biggest conglomerate believes Environment Secretary Gina Lopez may have been misinformed about an oil spill adjacent to Petron Corp.'s refinery in Bataan which prompted her to say that she would issue a cease-and-desist order against the petroleum giant.

In an interview with the Inquirer, the president of San Miguel Corp.—the parent firm

of the country's largest oil refiner and distributor—said the presence of Petron personnel at the clean up site of the decommissioned Limay power plant was due only to the company acting as a "good neighbor" wanting to assist in containing the oil spill.

"That old power plant was owned by National Power Corp. and it was foreclosed by the Bataan local government unit for nonpayment of taxes. As they were dismantling it, an oil leak occurred and Petron volun-

teered to help clean it up," SMC president Ramon Ang said.

"We don't own that plant in question. You can check the records of PSALM," he said, referring to the government-run Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. "Why were we at the site? We just wanted to help with the clean up efforts."

Ang said he had already communicated these facts to Environment Secretary Gina Lopez, who has long been vocal about her opposition to coal-

fired power plants and the mining industry, among others.

"Perhaps the information that reached Secretary Lopez was still incomplete," he added.

San Miguel and Limay Mayor Lilvir Roque had been exchanging correspondences about the issue as early as August 2016 soon after the oil spill at the decommissioned Bataan thermal occurred, in July 2016.

"First of all, we

B2-4

would like to point out that the spill incident was caused by a former employee of the contractor engaged by the Department of Public Works and Highways to undertake sewage works in the area," Ang said in his reply. "Nevertheless, Petron has helped and will continue to

help in addressing its effects."

Regarding the ash byproducts that have been the subject of complaints from local informal settlers living on Petron's property, Ang told Roque that no less than the Department of Environment and Natural Resources had certified that the ash was "inert or benign."

"Nevertheless, it was rec-

ommended that Petron construct a retaining wall to ensure that the ash in the Petron Limay terminal area does not reach the Alangan River," he said. "As a preventive measure, we have put up earthen dikes. This measure was done even as we are planning to construct a permanent retaining wall to make the community feel safe." INQ

09 JAN 2017

DATE

UPPER HALF

PAGE 5

LOWER HALF

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Bataan to probe Limay ash spill

By MAR T. SUPNAD

LIMAY, Bataan – The provincial government yesterday vowed to look into the possible link of illnesses that affect some resi-

dents in Limay town and the ash spill which some quarters blame on a coal-fired power plant of Petron Corp.

Bataan information officer Geoff Loyola and Vic Ubaldo, Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer, said that although the provincial government supports the smooth operations of investors operating in the province, Governor Abet Garcia is also bent on protecting the interests and health of the people.

The provincial government's initiative to investigate the matter comes after residents near the Petron refinery in Limay developed skin diseases and experienced difficulty of breathing, among others, which they believe, was triggered by ash from the power facility.

Around 200 families have complained that the ashfall has affected the soil, plants, water



PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

01-09-17

DATE

PAGE

UPPER HALF

LOWER HALF

Hugas-kamay sa Bataan ash fall

LIMAY, Bataan - Nangako ang pamahalaang panglalawigan ng Bulacan na tutukuyin ang pinagmulan ng biglaang pagkalat ng iba't ibang sakit sa mga residente malapit sa isang coal-fired power plant, samantalang itinanggi naman ang Petron Corp. na may kinalaman ito sa ash fall sa Bataan, na higit na ikinagalit ng mga residente.

Ayon kina Geoff Loyola, information officer ng Bataan; at Vic Ubaldo, Community Environment and Natural Resources officer, bagamat sumusuporta ang lalawigan para sa maayos na operasyon ng lahat ng kumpanya sa probinsiya, "our governor Abet Garcia is also protecting the interest and health of the people of Bataan."

Ito ay kasunod ng pagrereklamo ng mga residente malapit sa Petron Refinery sa Limay ng iba't ibang karamdaman, gaya ng sakit sa balat, hirap sa paghinga at iba pa dulot ng abo na nagmumula umano sa kumpanya.

Itinanggi naman ng Petron na may kinalaman ito sa pagkalat ng bottom ash, na ginagamit bilang back fill para sa planta.

Kasabay ng pagkakasa ng imbestigasyon, ipinag-utos nitong Biyernes ni Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) Head Lormelyn Claudio sa coal power plant ng Petron sa Limay na itigil ang pagtatambak ng bottom ash hanggang hindi napatutunayang wala itong idinudulot na panganib.

Ayon kay Ubaldo, sa patunang pagsusuri ay natukoy na hindi delikado ang bottom ash. Gayunman, natuklasan

ng Multi Party Tripartite Team na lumagpas ang normal allowable limit nito, gaya naman maituturing na

mapanganib batay sa global imposed limit, ayon pa kay Ubaldo.

Mar T. Supnad

THE STANDARD

09 JAN 2017

DATE

46

PAGE

UPPER HAL

✓
LOWER HAL

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Groups threaten to sue Lopez

By Rio N. Araja

THE United Filipino Consumers and Commuters on Sunday criticized Environment Secretary Gina Lopez for her failure to act on alleged anomalous purchase of air quality monitors.

UFCC president Rodolfo Javellana said his group, along with the Coalition of Clean Air Advocates of the Philippines, have already met with Lopez in August last year to thresh out the details of the questionable purchase, but to no avail.

Javellana appealed to President Rodrigo Duterte to look into the irregular procurement of air quality monitors.

"Consumers, commuters and environmental advocates will file charges against Lopez before the Office of the Ombudsman on Tuesday," the group told **Manila Standard**.

Javellana said since 2003, the Environmental Management Bureau made several purchases of air quality monitors.

He said the purchases were grossly disadvantageous to the government due to the "incompatibility of the monitoring system with the unique needs of the country."

Most of the monitors were not properly working, he added.

THE STANDARD

09 JAN 2017

DATE

B1

PAGE

✓
UPPER HALF

LOWER HALF

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Govt defers new effluent standards

THE Environment Department deferred the implementation of new effluent standards for all industries, including upstream petroleum exploration.

Energy Undersecretary Felix William Fuentebella said the Environment Department acted on the request of the Energy Department to hold in abeyance Department Administrative Order No. 2016-08, or the Water Guidelines and General Effluent Standards.

"The DENR under the previous administration came out with new guidelines that were more stringent than international standards. In response, the DOE wrote to the DENR requesting to hold in abeyance the implementation of the said guidelines and the DENR agreed," Fuentebella said.

He said the department proposed a memorandum of agreement with the Environment Department and the terms of reference that would be used in the sampling of liquids/fluid/water.

"The matter is now with the DENR," he said.

The new standards earlier raised opposition from the oil and gas industry in the absence of technology that would allow them to comply with the requirements. **Alena Mae S. Flores**



01- 09- 17
DATE

1.2
PAGE

UPPER HALF

✓
LOWER HALF

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Loren appeals for 'zero waste' economy

SENATOR Loren Legarda yesterday renewed her call for everyone to strictly observe and implement Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management (ESWM) Law and aim for zero waste economy.

Legarda, principal author of RA 9003, said that ecological solid waste management should be a way of life. She said January is a Zero Waste Month and it's about time for all to observe and implement the ESWM Law.

"We have a very good law but effective implementation rests in the effort of everyone. Local government units, including the barangays, should lead strict implementation by setting up materials recovery facility, implementing no segregation/no collection rule, closure and rehabilitation of open/controlled disposal facility, use of sanitary landfill or alternative technology, and submission of 10-year solid waste management plan," she explained.

Legarda shared how segregation at source can be done.

Bernadette E. Tamayo

PEOPLES JOURNAL

01-09-17

DATE

4

PAGE

✓
UPPER HALF

LOWER HALF

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Malalaking tipak ng bato mula Rizal

ALAM na ng marami ang walang tigil na pagku-quarry sa Rodriguez (dating Montalban), Rizal. Maraming taon na ang nakaraan noon nang kaming magkakasama sa aming pangkalikasang organisasyon ay muntik pa ngang mabagsakan ng gumugulong na malalaking tipak na bato sa lugar malapit sa binabasag na bundok malapit sa Wawa Dam. Quarrying ang tawag sa matagal nang pagbabasag, pagsisira ng bundok ng Inang Kalikasan.

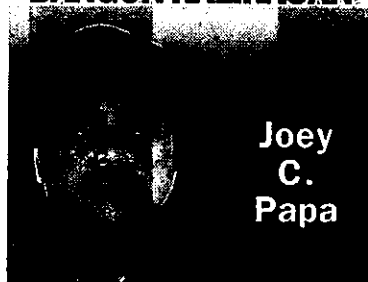
Nang nakaraang taon lang ay naanyayahan akong magsalita sa isang barangay sa may Rodriguez, Rizal, tungkol sa maka-kalikasang pamamahala ng mga tira-tirang bagay na nabubulok at hindi nabubulok, mula sa kabahayan, halamanan at bukirin. Nalungkot ako nang makita ko ang nakahilerang sampung malalaking trak na naghihintay ng mga ikakargang malalaking bato mula sa quarrying sa bayang ito. Sa lugar na ito muntik kaming madaganan ng malaking tipak ng bato noon.

Umabot ng tatlong oras ang lecture ko. Pag-uwi ay dumaan muli ako sa may quarrying site. Marami pa ring trak ang nakapila. Nag-aabang ng binasag na mga bato ng bundok.

Naisip kong hindi naman parang halaman na tumutubo muli ang bundok na binabasag. Ngunit kapansin-pansin na halos wala na ang bundok. Pumapatag sa pagdaan ng maraming taon ng quarrying.

Nitong nakaraang linggo lang ay may nakausap akong isang residente ng Binangonan, Rizal at sinabi niyang patuloy ang quarrying sa buong Rizal. Lagi na raw binabaha ang mga bayan

BANGON KALIKASAN



Joey C. Papa

sa lalawigan ng ito. Ayaw niyang ipabanggit ang pangalan niya para sa proteksyon ng kanyang pamilya.

Sabi ko sa kanya ay hindi na bago ang kuwentong ito.

Ilang ulit ko nang sinabi sa mga magsasaka ng Rizal kahit sa Bulacan at alam din naman ng marami sa kanila na ang kabundukan ay nagsisilbing kalasag sa dumadaang malalakas na hampas ng hangin ng bagyo upang ikanlong ang mga tao sa maraming bayan at lalawigan.

Sabi nga noon ni Tata Guying ng Bulacan. Napakagandang aming bukirin ng unit malaking pangambanamin na mangyayari sa amin ang nangyari na sa ilang bayan na pagbaha dahil sa walang habas na quarrying.

Totoong napakagandang bukirin sinasaka ni Ka Guying kahangga o katabi ang ilan pang lupang sakahan sa isang bayan sa Bulacan. Makulimlim ang langit noon, malakas sa ambon ang patak ng ulan at napilitan kaming magpayong habang naglilipat ng mga punla patungo sa taniman. Ang sarap ng pakiramdam ko noon. Sariwang hangin at mabangong

amoy ng bukid na hindi ginamitan ng anumang kemikal. Nagtuturo kami noon ng organikong pagsasaka.

Hindi lang Rizal at Bulacan ang nakararanas ng walang habas na quarrying. Ang lalawigan ng Rizal ay katabi lamang ng kamaynilaan.

Nang nagdelubyo ang bagyong Ondoy ay namatay ang itinuturing namang pangatlong ina (isang tiyahin). Nakita ko sa kalsada ng Cainta, Antipolo, Taytay, Angono at iba pang bayan ang halos mapulang lupa na galing sa bundok. Bundok na kinalbo at binasag ang kabundukan. Sabahay ng aming pangatlong ina, nakakalat ang lupang ito sa kanyang salas, kusina, at kuwarto na lumubog sa baha.

Marami nang delubyo ng sumunod kay Ondoy at ang pinakahuli ay ang bagyong Nina na marami na namang kinitil na buhay at sinirang ari-arian ng mahihirap na Pilipino.

Patuloy ang pag-init ng mundo (global warming) at pabago-bagong klima. Lumalala ang masamang epektong dulot ng pagsira at paglapastagan sa Inang Kalikasan.

Dapat nang ipatigil ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang quarrying lalo na sa lalawigan ng Rizal at Bulacan. Ang alam ko, ayaw ng kasalukuyang DENR acting Secretary na magdusa ang mga tao. O ang madalas niyang gamiting salita ay "suffering." Patuloy pa rin po ang suffering ng mga Pilipino. Baka gusto n'yong kumilos na agad upang matigil na ang pagdurusa ng mahihirap na Pilipino sa mga lugar na ito.

(bangonkalikasan@yahoo.com)

01-9-17

DATE

✓
UPPER HALF

451

PAGE

LOWER HALF

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Swiss gov't forestry grant scheme extended 3 years

THE Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation is extending by three more years its "social forestry" quick response grant fund in the Association of Southeast Asian nations to provide support in resolving issues arising from climate change, hunger, and poverty concerns.

In a statement released over the weekend, the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), the project implementer, said that the program, called the ASEAN-Swiss Partnership on Social Forestry and Climate Change (ASFCC), will be in its third phase after this extension.

Social forestry refers to the promotion of environmental, social, and rural development through effective management and protection of forests and reforestation of barren lands.

The ASFCC aims, among others, to analyze how social forestry can benefit communities through participation in a United Nations program called Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+).

REDD+ is a financial reward scheme for developing countries that reduce carbon dioxide emissions through forest management systems. Projects under this program are initiated in forested areas of Southeast Asia where shifting cultivation, which has been associated with forest losses, is widely practiced.

Around 300 million people has been estimated to be living in rural areas in Southeast Asia. Of this, some 70 million depend on forest for their food and livelihood which have led to massive deforestation through slash and burn agriculture, according to

out of poverty through better forest management systems. That aside from reducing risks for forest people in light of calamities due to climate change.

"At the ASEAN organization itself, the inclusion of wood-based products among the 12 priority integration sector and the special focus on food, agriculture and forestry as a sector indicate appreciation for forestry and agriculture as essential components in the process of economic integration," SEARCA said in a statement, quoting the 2015 report funded by the Swiss government, "Impact of ASEAN AEC on Social Forestry and Forest Products Trade."

The budget limit for the ASFCC is \$15,000 for single-country projects and \$30,000 for multi-country projects. Each project should be completed in six months. The grant facility also offers scholarship training up to \$2,000.

Beneficiary states are the Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.

In the same statement, SEARCA Director Gil C. Saguiguit Jr. said a streamlined process will be implemented to fast-track the release of grant assistance to beneficiaries.

Eligible project proposals include studies to aid decision-making, exploratory reviews of emerging problems, analytical studies, dialogues and roundtable discussions, and study tours, among others.

Mr. Saguiguit added that a trust fund is being conceptualized by SEARCA as a long-term program that will continue even after the grant program ends.

"This can become the precur-

The case of 2.4 million hectares of missing farmlands

In 2015, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) released the highlights of the much-awaited 2012 Census of Agriculture. The last census before that was made in 2002. The statistics are of importance to policy makers and investors.

Sadly, not too many people in government are appreciative of accurate and timely statistics and the analytics for decision-

making. In the process, many pronouncements by heads of the executive and legislative branches are also inaccurate.

For example, some politicians claim that the Philippines is the world's top coconut producer. We lost that rank more than 20 years ago to Indonesia. Another example is that the country exported \$440 million worth of bananas in 2015. In re-



MAPPING

THE FUTURE

ROLANDO T. DY



Not too many people in government are appreciative of accurate statistics

ality, it exported more than twice that amount based on imports of buyer countries.

My thesis is that the Philippines is under-investing in statistics collection, in people and resources.

Table 1. Census 2012 and 2002 Differences

| Region | 2002 Census | | 2012 Census | | Difference 2012/2002 | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| | No. of Farms '000 | Area of Farms '000 ha | No. of Farms '000 | Area of Farms '000 ha | Area (ha) '000 | % Change |
| NCR | 77.3 | 0.82 | 38.6 | 20.9 | +19.5 | 2,500 |
| CAR | 120.5 | 175.0 | 167.5 | 137.6 | -37.4 | (21) |
| Ilocos | 279.2 | 274.1 | 313.4 | 213.6 | -55.5 | (20) |
| Cagayan Valley | 325.0 | 545.9 | 443.2 | 478.7 | -67.2 | (12) |
| Central | 357.0 | 565.6 | 361.3 | 440.9 | -124.7 | (22) |
| Calabarzon | 285.8 | 588.6 | 341.8 | 497.5 | -91.1 | (15) |
| Mimaropa | 221.5 | 545.2 | 277.7 | 445.6 | -99.6 | (18) |
| Bicol | 388.6 | 898.2 | 486.2 | 765.3 | -132.4 | (15) |
| Western Visayas | 429.4 | 661.9 | 517.7 | 460.5 | -205.4 | (31) |
| Central Visayas | 428.8 | 518.3 | 427.5 | 292.6 | -225.7 | (44) |
| Eastern Visayas | 332.7 | 724.9 | 412.8 | 453.6 | -271.2 | (37) |
| Western Mindanao | 253.4 | 670.5 | 212.7 | 448.2 | -222.3 | (33) |
| Northern Mindanao | 321.6 | 740.6 | 371.9 | 532.9 | -207.7 | (23) |
| Davao | 301.7 | 744.4 | 338.3 | 571.2 | -173.2 | (23) |
| Soccsargen | 335.9 | 773.8 | 385.6 | 618.1 | -155.7 | (20) |
| Caraga | 211.7 | 522.4 | 183.5 | 461.4 | -61.0 | (12) |
| ARMM | 248.3 | 532.4 | 282.7 | 345.5 | -185.9 | (35) |
| Philippines | 4,896 | 9,560 | 5,563 | 7,190 | -2,370 | (25) |

Source: PSA

INQUIRER

09 JAN 2017

DATE

UPPER H.

33-2

PAGE

LOWER H.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

P-2

The case of 2.4 million hectares of missing farmland

Now the census. In 2012, it was determined that there were 7.2 million hectares (ha) of farmlands in the country. Ten years earlier, there were 9.6 million ha, and in 1991, there were almost 10 million ha.

Where did the 2.4 million ha go? Definitely it was not land conversion. Since 1986, there were about 220,000 ha of farmlands converted. At the same time, the DENR has classified 14.2 million ha as certified alienable and disposable lands, almost twice the size of the latest agriculture census.

The overall area decline of farmland between 2002 and 2012 was 25 percent. The huge discrepancies are carried across the regions: the lowest in Cagayan Valley and Caraga at -12 percent each, and the highest in Central Visayas -44 percent, Eastern Visayas -37 percent, ARMM -35 percent, Western Mindanao -33 percent, and Western Visayas -31 percent. Regions such as Central Luzon and Calabarzon, which are likely to post potential large declines due to land conversion, slid by -22 percent and -15 percent, respectively, below the national average. NCR areas grew dramatically!

No reasons were cited for the area decline in the 2012 census. INQ

Table 2. Changes in physical areas: Selected Crops: 2002 and 2012

| (hectares) | 2002 | 2012 | Change | % Change |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Physical Area | | | | |
| Coconut | 3,181,670 | 3,574,614 | 392,944 | 12.2 |
| Irrigation service area - mainly rice | 1,387,000 | 1,570,900 | 183,900 | 13.3 |
| Abaca | 121,941 | 138,523 | 16,582 | 13.1 |
| Coffee | 132,408 | 120,000 | -12,408 | (9.1) |
| Oil Palm | 19,987 | 53,015 | 33,028 | 165 |
| Rubber | 81,312 | 176,244 | 94,932 | 117 |
| Sugarcane | 359,866 | 433,303 | 73,437 | 20.3 |
| Tobacco | 40,659 | 34,025 | -6,634 | (16.3) |
| Bananas | 398,005 | 454,262 | 56,257 | 14.1 |
| Mango | 150,505 | 188,718 | 38,213 | 26 |
| Pineapple | 44,961 | 58,450 | 13,489 | 29.9 |
| Cassava | 207,619 | 217,259 | 9,640 | 4.3 |
| Total/Above | 6,125,933 | 7,019,313 | 893,380 | 14.6 |
| Harvested Areas | | | | |
| Irrigated Palay | 2,706,298 | 3,163,185 | 456,887 | 16.9 |
| Rainfed Palay | 1,340,020 | 1,526,876 | 186,856 | 14 |
| Total Palay | 4,046,318 | 4,690,061 | 643,743 | 15.9 |
| White Corn | 1,503,118 | 1,311,619 | -191,499 | (12.7) |
| Yellow Corn | 892,338 | 1,282,304 | 389,766 | 43.7 |
| Total Corn | 2,395,456 | 2,593,924 | 198,468 | 8.3 |
| Coconut | 3,181,670 | 3,574,614 | 392,944 | 12.2 |
| Abaca | 121,941 | 138,523 | 16,582 | 13.1 |
| Coffee | 132,408 | 120,000 | -12,408 | (9.1) |
| Oil Palm | 19,987 | 53,015 | 33,028 | 165 |
| Rubber | 81,312 | 176,244 | 94,932 | 117 |
| Sugarcane | 359,866 | 433,303 | 73,437 | 20.3 |
| Tobacco | 40,659 | 34,025 | -6,634 | (16.3) |
| Banana Cavendish | 44,051 | 82,414 | 38,363 | 87.1 |
| Banana Lakatan | 50,439 | 58,071 | 7,632 | 15.1 |
| Banana Saba | 173,906 | 187,428 | 13,522 | 7.8 |
| All Bananas | 398,005 | 454,262 | 56,257 | 14.1 |
| Mango | 150,505 | 188,718 | 38,213 | 26 |
| Pineapple | 44,961 | 58,450 | 13,489 | 29.9 |
| Cassava | 207,619 | 217,259 | 9,640 | 4.3 |
| Total/Above | 11,180,707 | 12,732,398 | 1,551,691 | 13.9 |

Source: PSA



06 JAN 2017

DATE

UPPER HALF

3

PAGE

LOWER HALF

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

World's coral reefs dying of bleaching

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

Nearly all of the world's coral reefs, including those in the Philippines, risk dying of annual severe bleaching (ASB) due to climate change if the world fails to reduce pollution, a United Nations-supported study has revealed.

The finding about severe bleaching, the gravest threat to one of the Earth's most important ecosystems, is part of a study funded by the UN Environment Program (UNEP) and partners, which reviewed new climate change projections to predict which corals will be affected first and at what rate. The report is published in the journal *Nature Scientific Reports*.

Calling the predictions "a treasure trove" for environmentalists, the head of the UN agency, Erik Solheim, said the projects allow conservationists and governments to prioritize reef protection.

"The projections show us where we still have time to act before it's too late," Solheim said.

Researchers found that the reefs in Taiwan and the Turks and Caicos archipelago would be among the first to experience annual bleaching, followed by reefs off the coast of Bahrain, in Chile and in French Polynesia.

"A similar gradient (noted in Papua

New Guinea) is seen in the Philippines with eastern sides of the eastern islands projected to experience ASB more than 20 years earlier than central islands," the study uncovered. "The Philippines and eastern PNG results are likely explained by the eastern sides of these areas having greater exposure to the western Pacific warm pool, which has higher warming rates than SE Asia."

On average, the reefs started annual bleaching in 2014, according to the study.

The coral reefs need at least five years to recover, but without this, the study noted, annual occurrences of bleaching would have

a deadly effect on the corals and disrupt the ecosystems that these corals support.

"However, if governments act on emission reduction pledges made in the Paris Agreement, which calls on countries to combat climate change and limit global temperature rise to below two degrees Celsius, the corals would have another 11 years to adapt to the warming seas," the UN News Center reported.

Between 2014 and 2016, the world witnessed the longest global bleaching event recorded, the report said. Among the casualties was the Great Barrier Reef, with 90 percent of it bleached and 20 percent of the reef's coral killed.

THE STANDARD

09 JAN 2017

DATE

UPPER HALF

PAGE

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

SBMA in coral reef protection pact

By Butch Gunio

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—The Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority will work hand in hand with agency leaders, investor-locators, and non-government organizations to ensure the growth and propagation of coral reefs that are already degenerating all over the country.

SBMA Chairman Martin B. Diño signed a partnership agreement with the Philippine Council for Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Brighterday Subic LTD Inc., the locator-investor of the All Hands Beach Resort inside the Freeport, and Sangkalikasan Producer Cooperative, a non-government organization engaged in reef restoration and monitoring activities based in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija.

"For as long as the SBMA, the community leaders, and the business owners around the

Zone are responsive and responsible enough in preserving our coral reef beds, the condition and future of our ecosystem is sustainable" Diño said, following the signing of the agreement held at the All Hands Beach Resort on Dec. 23, 2016.

Dr. Melvin Carlos, Technology Transfer Division Director of PCAARRD, said the degeneration rate of coral reefs across the country has already reached 80 percent.

"This means that it has breached its ecological condition that is dangerous to plants, animals, and other organisms living in our waters," Carlos said.

The agreement aims to enjoin the partner organizations to transplant some 5,000 coral fragments to restore damaged reef areas and set-up and deploy about 10 coral nursery units.

It also tasks the partner organizations to identify, document, and establish a stream of dive sites, develop a pool of human resource for coral restoration

and promote science based coral reef management.

The partnership agreement was forged to strengthen current coral reef restoration efforts by the BLSI and Sangkalikasan at the All Hands Beach Resort.

Each to its own commitment, the DENR serves as the lead implementing agency that will provide the necessary technical assistance in monitoring and evaluating the project activities.

Sangkalikasan serves as the project implementer in delivering project outputs, results reviews, information dissemination, and technology transfer.

SBMA and PCAARRD are supporting bodies in monitoring, maintaining, and protecting the identified and established sites, also in baseline assessment and monitoring of coral transplants.

BLSI is the adaptor in maintaining and protecting the identified and established sites, for the growth and propagation of the coral transplants.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Climate focus shifts as Trump moves in

LONDON. — With the world facing the hottest global temperatures since the advent of record-keeping, 2016 was a year of accelerating international action to address climate change - though one ultimately capped by the US election of Donald Trump, who has called climate change "a hoax".

What's ahead on the climate change rollercoaster in 2017? The Thomson Reuters Foundation asked a range of experts to share what they're watching - and what they think will make the headlines this year. Here are their top predictions:

TRUMP, CHINA AND CHANGING CLIMATE LEADERSHIP

The US Republican president-elect, who takes office on Jan. 20, has indicated he plans to fill his cabinet with a hefty dose of friends of the country's oil, gas and coal industries.

They include the outgoing head of ExxonMobil as head of the State Department, a former Texas governor and climate skeptic as head of energy, and a new environment protection chief who doubts climate change is human-caused and who has battled President Barack Obama's effort to curb coal power plant emissions.

A growing number of US cities and companies say they plan to push ahead with ambitious plans to address global warming regardless of what happens in Washington.

And most countries that brought the global Paris Agreement to tackle climate change into force three years early in November similarly say they're committed to pushing ahead.

But if the US government exits the global climate action stage under President Trump, that may open the way for new leadership - including by China, which has partnered with the United States in recent years to push international action on climate change.

"2017 could be the defining year when the United States cedes global leadership on tackling climate change to China, and more broadly the developed world cedes leadership to the developing world," predicted Saleemul Huq, director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) in Bangladesh.

China is already the world leader in producing renewable energy, and China's Xi Jinping has said he'll attend the World Economic Forum in Davos for the first time in 2017, and has raised climate change as an important issue in a meeting with new U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

"China's prominence on the global stage is likely to raise interest in many capitals and the potential for shifts in the balance of power," noted Liz Gallagher, a senior associate and director of the Climate Briefing Service at E3G, which focuses on climate diplomacy and energy policy.

Could Europe also step into a climate leadership vacuum? With Brexit beginning to take shape, French elections looming and Germany's Angela Merkel also standing in federal elections, it remains unclear - though with the region hosting both the G7 summit and the G20, the

potential is there, experts say.

MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT

Boatloads of migrants, particularly from conflict-torn nations, continued to hit the shores of southern Europe in 2016, driving disagreements and political realignments in the region over how much of a welcome they should receive.

But potentially dwarfing those numbers in years to come could be migrants fleeing rising temperatures, more extreme weather and creeping sea level rise, warned Harjeet Singh, the global lead on climate change for charity ActionAid.

At the moment, those fleeing climate change pressures have no right to seek asylum as refugees, a reality that is unlikely to change, experts say.

But a new task force on displacement, being set up under the U.N. climate talks, is expected to begin its work this year looking at ways to "avert, minimize and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change".

One of those may be finding better ways to predict and avoid climate disasters before they occur.

Humanitarian organizations from the World Food Program to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are experimenting with getting money, food and other resources to areas where dangerous floods, for example, are forecast, giving people at risk the resources to prepare before disaster strikes.

THE RISE OF GEO-ENGINEERING

Scientists around the world start work this year on a special report, due out in 2018, on potential ways to hold average global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, an ambitious goal of the Paris Agreement to address climate change.

With that threshold likely to be passed in less than a decade, scientists say, there is growing talk of "geo-engineering" the planet to hold down temperatures.

That could involve blasting sulfur particles into the atmosphere to reflect sunshine, seeding oceans with iron to make them absorb more carbon, or turning more land to growing plants for fuel, then burning them and pumping the emissions into underground storage.

Such actions may be "almost unavoidable if we want to stay below 1.5 degrees" but could also have unexpected and potentially huge side effects, such as shifting crucial monsoon rains that billions rely on for food, said Maarten van Aalst, director of the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre.

Countries and people that might be hardest hit by geo-engineering impacts have so far had little say in decisions about their use, he said.

But a meeting this year on climate risk management, as part of the special report, should begin looking at the complex issue of who would need to be consulted if planet-wide geo-engineering is eventually deployed, van Aalst said. — Reuters

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

'Auring' makes landfall in Siargao

P-1

By the Inquirer Staff
@Team_Inquirer

The country's first cyclone this year smacked Siargao island in Surigao del Norte province shortly before 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, sending thousands of people fleeing to higher ground amid warnings of flash floods and landslides.

Tropical Depression "Auring" was forecast by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) to cross the Caraga and Northern Mindanao regions, Leyte Island and the Central Visayas region on Monday.

Auring may reach Palawan on Tuesday and continue westward to the West Philippine Sea where it is expected to exit from the country around Thursday.

At the time of its landfall, Auring packed maximum sustained winds of 55 kilometers per hour and gusts up to 70 kph while moving northwestwards at 9 kph.

Heavy rain

Pagasa expects Auring to remain a tropical depression over land and intensify to a tropical storm once it exits the Mindanao landmass into the Moro

While the wind is not destructive, what we have to watch out is the rain

Vicente Malano
Pagasa Administrator

Gulf on its way to Palawan.

"While the wind is not destructive, what we have to watch out is the rain," said Pagasa Administrator Vicente Malano.

Pagasa said that Eastern and Central Visayas and most of Mindanao were already experiencing heavy rains.

Malano said Auring could cause flash floods along the Agusan, Davao, Tagum-Libuganon and Mindanao river basins.

Alert for landslides

"There are areas in the Visayas and Mindanao that are prone to landslides, especially in Caraga, due to mining. According to the MGB (Mines and Geosciences Bureau), landslides occur there even if it's not rain-

ing because of mining operations. The rains may trigger landslides due to the many excavations," he said.

Storm Signal No. 1

By the time of landfall, 16 areas had been placed under Storm Signal No. 1, including Agusan del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Dinagat, Misamis Oriental, Camiguin, Bohol, Siquijor, Negros Provinces, Southern Leyte, Cebu, Guimaras, the southern part of Iloilo and the southern part of Antique; and Guyo island.

Forecaster Christopher Perez said Metro Manila would not be directly affected by the cyclone but may expect passing light rains on Monday due to the prevailing northeast monsoon.

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09 JAN 2017

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A-3

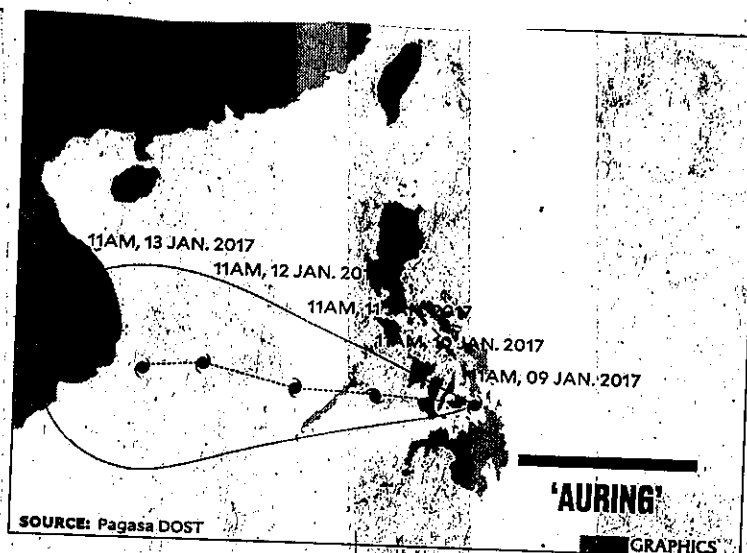
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LOWER H

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

P-3

Auring makes landfall in Siargao



The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) operation center at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City went on blue alert on Sunday.

1,000 families evacuated
NDRRMC spokesperson Romina Marasigan said over 1,000 families were evacuated in the Caraga provinces with Auring's approach.

She said local government units had been ordered to implement their "Operation Liso," or disaster-preparedness protocol, while the local social

welfare and health offices had been asked to preposition relief goods and medical supplies.

In Davao del Norte province, Gov. Anthony del Rosario ordered a 24-hour monitoring and response efforts.

Flooded communities
Moderate to heavy rain flooded several communities in Compostela Valley, forcing authorities there to declare a suspension of classes in at least nine towns, said Raul Villocino, provincial disaster action officer.

At least 773 passengers were

stranded at Lipata Port in Surigao City, Mindanao's main gateway to the Visayas. Cargo trucks and buses bound for Luzon were held up there, said Surigao City information officer Annette Villages.

At smaller ports in the city, hundreds more were barred from leaving to other island routes such as Siargao and the Dinagat province. The Philippine Coast Guard has also advised fishermen and small boats not to venture out.

Minor landslide

Torrential rains have caused flooding and a minor landslide in Surigao City. Monday's classes have been suspended in all levels there.

In Agusan del Sur province, some areas have already been flooded due to continuous rains since last week.

Village councilman Jonie Asoy of Nueva Era village in Bunawan town said the floodwaters had already reached their homes since Friday, but only three families sought temporary shelter in the designated evacuation center.

—WITH REPORTS FROM
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