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DENR exec appointed to the UN body on biodiversity conservation

By MADAM L. MIRAFLORES

An executive from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has been appointed to be part of the advisory body of the United Nations (UN) Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which could be a sign of global recognition to the country's efforts to conserve and protect its biodiversity.

The CBD, which secretariat is based in Montreal, Canada, recently appointed Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) Director Theresa Mundita Lim to be the next head of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), an intergovernmental body that gives scientific advice to the CBD's Conference of Parties (COP).

The DENR said it has welcomed the appointment, calling it recognition to all the efforts of the DENR to conserve its rich biodiversity.

CBD is an international legally-binding treaty with three main goals: Conservation of biodiversity; sustainable use of biodiversity; fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. Its overall objective is to encourage actions which will lead to a sustainable future.

Lim, who will serve a two-year term starting this year, was appointed during a recent conference dubbed as COP13 held last December in Cancun, Mexico.

One of her main duties is to prepare a set of recommendations for the COP14 to be held in Egypt in 2018.

DENR Secretary Gina Lopez, who had endorsed Lim to the post, said that the appointment of the BMB chief to the CBD would "allow the Philippines to show how its biodiversity programs can benefit humanity."

"Biodiversity is the wealth of the planet. If we keep it alive, our planet will see the light of day. In the Philippines, our aim is to explore biodiversity in a way that benefits the surrounding communities," Lopez said.

She added: "The environment is not only land, air, and water, but also people. If the people do not benefit in a sustainable manner, then our conservation efforts can be considered a failure."

Lopez's statements jive with the objectives of the Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Well-Being, which was

ment and well-being.

Lim, as SBSTTA chair, will also advise or recommend to the COP's other bodies the assessment of the status of biodiversity and other measures taken to successfully implement the convention, if necessary.

The BMB chief is a graduate of veterinary medicine from the University of the Philippines. Her expertise and work experience in championing wildlife protection and biodiversity conservation in the Philippines has made her a very able country representative in various international fora.

The BMB under Lim's watch has improved conservation programs, including management and sustainable financing of protected areas and key biodiversity areas nationwide.

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STRATEGIC CO **BRIEF** AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

EMB denies graft claims

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau denied allegations that there were irregularities in the procurement of 48 units of air quality monitoring stations (AQMS) installed across Metro Manila and other parts of the country.

In-charge of EMB's Office of the Director and its Concurrent Assistant Director Jacqueline Caancan said the purchase of such equipment was aboveboard and free of corruption, noting that the agency followed every step of the procurement and bidding rules.

"The procurement of said equipment went through the standard bidding procedures conducted by our Bids and Awards Committee and acquired through competitive public bidding," Caancan said.

"The procurement is in accordance with Republic Act No. 9184, or the Government Procurement Reform Act," added Caancan.

Caancan was reacting to newspaper reports claiming the procurement of the equipment, supposedly worth P1 billion, was riddled with anomalies and irregularities.

The reports refer to the EMB's purchase of AQMS from 2011 to 2015, composed of both Open Path Differential Optical Absorption Spectroscopy (DOAS), and Particulate Matter Stations (PM 10/PM 2.5). Anna Leah E. Gonzales

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

New lab boosts DENR capacity to assess, control lethal pollutants

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA
@jonlmayuga

WITH a dioxins/furans laboratory in place, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) now boasts of an enhanced capacity to assess and control persistent organic pollutants (POPs).

As a party to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Philippines needs to develop its local capability to assess and control POPs, including polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxin and polychlorinated dibenzofurans or dioxins.

"We now have a dioxins/furans laboratory to do that. We are currently in the process of capacity-building and training our EMB personnel," DENR Undersecretary for Special and Foreign Assistant Projects Jonas Leones said.

The establishment of the dioxins/furans laboratory started in 2015. It has a total estimated cost of P95 million.

A brainchild of Leones during his stint as director of the DENR-EMB, the laboratory is the last of a number of laboratories needed to make the Philippines capable of assessing all POPs and meet its obligation under the Stockholm Convention.

Dioxins are among the most toxic chemicals known to science and are detectable in almost all compartments of the global ecosystem in trace amounts, according to Fatima Molina, supervising science research specialist and chief of the DENR-EMB's Laboratory Services.

The DENR-EMB recently

are formed as byproducts of numerous industrial activities and all combustion processes, such as exhaust gases, solid and liquid residues and effluents.

Burning of household trash and forest fires can also result in release of dioxins and furans into the environment.

According to experts, dioxins are persistent in the environment. They accumulate in animal fat and can travel long distances.

Member-countries of the Stockholm Convention, such as the Philippines, are giving priority to dioxin/furan management through the conduct of activities that cover national inventories, source reduction and control strategies.

According to Leones, the establishment of a dioxin/furans laboratory also boosts the plan of the DENR to push for waste-to-energy projects in partnership with other countries.

With a dioxin/furans laboratory in place, the DENR-EMB can now generate data to support policy and decisions on the adoption of appropriate approach in the management of POPs from national inventories, source reduction and control strategies, and in order to support the enforcement of the provisions on dioxins in the Clean Air Act, or Republic Act (RA) 8749, and the Solid Waste Management Act or RA 9003.

The Philippines is currently implementing the Integrated Persistent Organic Pollutant (IPOP) project to assist the country in meeting its obligation under the Stockholm Convention.

The project also aims to boost

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Bataan coal-fired power plant's operation stopped amid complaints of

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA
@jonlmayuga

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has ordered SMC Consolidated Power Corp. (SMCCPC) to stop the operation of its coal-fired power plant in Limay, Bataan in the wake of black ashes falling from the skies affecting hundreds of residents living nearby.

The stop order came after Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez ordered an investigation into the reported ash fall that residents blame to the operation of a nearby coal-fired power plant.

This is the not the first time that an "ash fall" incident occurred affecting several communities in Limay, Bataan.

The stop order was handed down by the regional office of the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) in Central Luzon or SMCCPC "to stop any activity beside its coal-fired power plant in Limay, Bataan".

The ash fall reportedly caused several residents to fall ill.

The DENR-EMB Central Luzon office also directed the nearby Petron Bataan Refinery (PBR) to stop from dumping newly generated bottom ash "in the area while ash spill incident is being investigated.

The two directives, both dated January 6, 2017, were issued by Regional Director Lormelyn L. Lirio of EMB Region 3, which is based in San Fernando City, Pampanga.

The EMB, a line bureau of

the DENR, 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 (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 canceled 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 P.D. 1586, and why its ECC should not be revoked or suspended.

"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 December 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 al-

leged 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.

'Not ours'—Petron Corp.

MEANWHILE, Petron Corp. issued a statement claiming it has nothing to do with the incident.

"Our ash pond is located within our facility and near our offices. It has the necessary regional and local permits from the DENR, is surrounded by dikes and regularly watered to prevent dispersion," Petron said in a statement sent out to the media on Monday.

"Ash from the pond, certified by DENR as nonhazardous, will be used as raw material for our cement-manufacturing plant."

According to Petron Corp., reports of ash spill and tons of ash found along the coastline of a distant river, which is almost a kilometer away from our facility, are not true.

Petron Corp. claimed the river near where it operates is clean as the company carries out "adequate measures to contain our bottom ash to avoid dispersion."

The company also welcomes both the government and the media to visit its facility.

"We want to show you a side of this whole story, that we believe, would make it complete and accurate," the statement said.

Nevertheless, it is ensured that it will continue to work with the municipality "to do what is right and necessary."

A cause for alarm

MEANWHILE, environmental group Greenpeace issued an ash fall in Bataan as a cause for alarm, highlighting a campaign against the operation of coal-fired power plants. Reuben Muni, an energy campaigner of the Philippine Greenpeace, said: "This is one with the community in Limay, Bataan, who are affected by the coal ash spill from the coal plant of San Miguel. We join the people in demanding a thorough and transparent investigation into the incident."

According to Muni, residents should not be treated as "victims", given that the government has a very weak regulatory framework when it comes to controlling and preventing pollution. "This is also a reminder to the Duterte administration to pursue a path of industrial development powered by clean energy, especially coal, and not by the oligarchs who will never let the same impacts that are caused by hosting coal plants. The costs to public health and the environment should be a top consideration in planning what kind of development the government should pursue, not only for the benefit of the people, but also for the environment," he said.

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DENR, Petron tangle on Bataan coal ash spill

By MADELAINA MIRAFLORES
and MYRNA VELASCO

The tension between Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and multi-energy firm Petron Corporation arose as they disagree on the true cause of the ash spill incident last week that allegedly came from the latter's coal plant in Limay, Bataan.

The regional office of the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) in Central Luzon has ordered Petron Corp. 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 last week.

It 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.

But Petron immediately lashed back at the DENR as it claimed that it was wrongly faulted for the incident.

"Reports of ash spill and tons of ash found along the coastline of a distant river, which is almost a kilometer away from our facility,

is far from the truth," the company noted. "Our ash pond is located within our facility and near our offices. It has the necessary regional and local permits from the DENR. (Our facility) is surrounded by dikes, and regularly watered to prevent dispersion".

Petron added that the ash, accruing at the pond, had been certified non-hazardous by the DENR itself.

On purpose, the ash is being "used as raw material for our cement manufacturing plant," it added.

Petron just recently took full ownership of the 140-megawatt coal plant that had been primarily serving the electricity requirements of its Limay refining facility in Bataan.

EMB, a line bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, is responsible for 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 (ECC) to ensure that a development project will not cause adverse environmental impacts.

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'Why is coal-fired plant still running?'

LIMAY, Bataan—The Coal-Free Bataan Movement on Monday lamented the continued operation of ashfall-causing coal-fired power plants in this town.

"We have read in the news that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau in Region 3 already ordered the shutdown of the SMC Global Power plant and told the Petron Corp. RMP 2 coal plant to 'stop dumping newly generated bottom ash,'" said Derek Cabe, coordinator of the Coal-Free Bataan Movement.

"We checked this morning and found out the Limay coal plants are still in operation."

Asked to react to the DENR-EMB's reported plan to shut down the plant, San Miguel Corp. president Ramon Ang on Friday said it was "not true news" without elaborating.

In a statement, Petron said its ash pond "is located within our facility and near our offices. It has the necessary regional and local permits, is surrounded by dikes and regularly watered to prevent dispersion."

Ash from the pond, certified by the DENR as non-hazardous, "will be used as raw material for our cement manufacturing plant," added Petron, which also has its 180,000 barrel-per-day refinery in Limay.

Butch Gunio

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EMB stops dumping of corrosive wastes

LIMAY, Bataan – The Environmental Management Bureau has ordered a coal power plant operator here to stop dumping of bottom ash unless neutralized of its alleged hazardous properties and to be disposed only in an area approved by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

EMB Region 3 director Lormelyn Claudio made the announcement during a dialogue Friday night with villagers at the PEX site in Barangay Lamao, this town after meeting with Limay Mayor Lilvir Roque.

"We issued an order stopping the dumping of bottom ash in any disposal sites," she said.

The EMB director said that before the bottom ash would be disposed of, it should be neutralized with soil to lessen its corrosivity and no longer hazardous.

Disposal will only be permitted in an area approved by DENR, she said.

Bottom ash is two of the by-products of coal in power plants. The other is fly ash used in the production of

ENVIRO WATCH

cement.

Claudio emphasized, however, that the operation of the coal plant will not be stopped.

"Only stoppage of dumping of bottom ash," she said.

The order involves the 140 or 150 megawatt plant operational reportedly for already three years.

Claudio said that she had ordered management of the coal plant to undertake sprinkling of water for ash not to affect the community and the setting up of buffer zone by planting trees between the plant and the community.

The director also told residents that the company has committed to undertake medical missions.

Affected residents, however, seemed not to be convinced.

"Today, stoppage of dumping but what about in the long run?" Alvin Pura asked the director.

The affected residents demanded lasting solutions and sanctions on al-

leged company violations.

Claudio said EMB would install CCTV cameras to monitor the activities of the plant.

"In case, I am no longer around or be placed elsewhere, there are chiefs of the different departments in the EMB," she said in reference to reports that DENR Secretary Gina Lopez would see to it that heads would roll.

"I hope the media will report that I am making an action. Like, today, I am here the whole day until evening," the EMB director said.

With her were chemists, monitoring team and other officials and personnel of EMB in Region 3 and main office in Manila.

Derek Cabe of the Coal-Free Bataan Movement said they have written many complaints to EMB but the agency acted only recently.

"We are thankful with Secretary Lopez and we will wait for her actions," Cabe, who is a ranking member of the Kilusang Pambansang Demokratiko, said.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

W. Visayas surpasses reforestation target

By **TARAYAP**

ILOILO CITY — The Department of Environment and Natural Resources – Western Visayas (DENR-6) exceeded its reforestation target in the region.

DENR-6 Regional Director Jim Sampulna said a total of 9,114.42 hectares were reforested in Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras, and Iloilo provinces last year under the National Greening Program (NGP).

In a report recently released, Sampulna disclosed that DENR-6's reforestation target for 2016 was only 8,977 hectares.

A total of 15,225,032 seedlings of indigenous forest trees and fruit trees were planted.

Aside from planting in degraded and unproductive areas, Sampulna reiterated that the NGP is also a socio-economic booster.

DENR-6 has tapped people's organizations, former communist rebels and indigenous peoples (IPs) in Panay Island.

"They earn by planting and as forest protectors. They can also earn from the harvest," Sampulna noted.

Meanwhile, DENR-6 is gearing for the expansion of the NGP for the next 12 years.

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House bill calls for reverting unused fishponds to forestlands

By JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ
@joveemarie

THE House Committee on Natural Resources has endorsed for plenary approval a measure allowing the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to revert to forestlands fishponds that have been unutilized or abandoned for three years.

Party-list Rep. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate of Bayan Muna, chairman of the panel, said House Bill (HB) 854,

authored by Rep. Linabelle Ruth R. Villarica of Bulacan, seeks to amend Section 43 of Presidential Decree (PD) 705, titled Swamplands and Mangrove Forests.

"Mangrove and other swamps released to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources [BFAR] for fishpond purposes which are not utilized or which have been abandoned for three years from the date of such release shall revert to the category of forest land," the bill read.

"The Department of Agriculture

[DA] and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources shall determine in a set of joint guidelines, abandoned, undeveloped or underutilized fishponds covered by Fishpond Lease Agreements (FLAs)," it added.

For her part, Villarica, chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, said environmental laws must be attuned to the demands of climate change, as well as the socioeconomic needs of the increasing number of people living in communities.

Villarica, however, said PD 705, or "The Revised Forestry Reform Code of the Philippines" requires that for the DENR to revert fishponds with FLAs to forestlands, the fishponds must have been unutilized and abandoned for five years from the time these were released for such purposes.

"The five-year period is deemed too long for such fishponds to be utilized for purposes other than what they were intended for, such as for mangrove propagation, to address

the devastating effects brought about by climate change or for promoting eco-tourism activities," Villarica said.

To effectively implement the provision on the reversion of fishponds, as well as the FLAs issued by the BFAR covering fishponds, Villarica said the DA should prepare with the DENR joint guidelines in determining abandoned, undeveloped or underutilized fishponds.

The bill was filed during the 16th Congress, but was not taken up due to time constraint.

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PCCI vows to help govt rehabilitate Laguna Lake

BY RAADEE S. SAUSA

THE Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) is committed to help the government in its initiative to rehabilitate and restore Laguna Lake to its "original and pristine condition" by reducing the number of fish pens in the lake and reducing its pollutants.

Felipe Gozon, director for Environment and Climate Change of PCCI, said on Monday his group welcomes the decision of the government to suspend the issuance of fishing permits for Laguna Lake.

This move will help the government properly re-allocate the use

of the lake according to its carrying capacity and help the government get rid of illegal fish pens, he said.

Gozon cited a recent report published by the Laguna Lake Development Authority titled Pilot Ecosystem Account for Laguna de Bay Basin which indicates that

the major contributor of pollution remains to be domestic wastes.

The lake's aggregate surface area is about 900 square kilometers or 90,000 hectares. Of this, 10 percent or 9,000 hectares may be allocated for aquaculture, but in 2016, there were about 12,000 hectares of fish pens in the lake.

According to the report, 81 percent of the biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) load comes from domestic wastes, while the rest of the load comes from industry (9 percent), agriculture (5 percent), and solid wastes (3 percent).

The report also indicates that treating household discharges holds much potential for improving the water quality of the

Laguna de Bay.

Restoring the pristine condition of the water quality of the lake will also help the local community increase their livelihood.

Gozon recalls that in the past, there abounded in the lake freshwater snails (suso) that were used as feeds for the ducks that were raised in the backyards of the houses adjacent to the river and that tasty freshwater catfish (kanduli) were numerous in the lake and the Pasig River.

Gozon added that business, being one of the stakeholders of the lake, behooves the PCCI to want to be part of the process of developing a master plan for Laguna Lake.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SEI

'Don't restore Laguna lake mega dike project'

THE militant fisherfolk group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) on Monday asked the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) not to revive a mega dike project in Laguna de Bay known as the Laguna Lakeshore Expressway Dike Project (LLEDP).

Fisherfolk, residents, environmentalists and other concerned sectors oppose the project, saying this will pose a grave threat to the already fragile marine environment and species in the 90-thousand hectare lake.

Moreover, they added that around 4.9 million fisherfolk and urban poor families will be deprived of their livelihood if the project is revived.

The LLEDP, which would cost P122.8 billion, was one of the biggest projects of then-President Benigno Aquino 3rd under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP).

It has proposed two component projects: a 47-kilometer expressway dike from the cities of Muntinlupa and Taguig (both in Metro Manila) to Los Banos, Laguna; and the 700-hectare reclamation area intended for commercial, residential and mixed use.

But the project was terminated early last year because of failed bidding and strong resistance from the Laguna

lake fishers, settlers and other sectors concerned with the brackish lake.

The DPWH, one of the LLEDP's implementing agencies, earlier said it would still push through with the construction of the mega dike, which is crucial to the transformation of the Laguna de Bay into an eco-tourism zone.

"The DENR's initiative to rehabilitate Laguna de Bay through a moratorium on fishpens will become futile unless this mega dike [project] that is a total menace to the lake would be suspended permanently. We hope that fishpen dismantling is not a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the total conversion of the productive fishing water of Laguna de Bay into a money-making eco-tourism hub for business tycoons and the rich," Fernando Hicap, Pamalakaya chairman, said in a statement.

The fisherfolk group said they are ready to mobilize the Laguna lake chapters to stop the allegedly destructive project from being peddled to private developers and investors.

"We have frustrated this project before, we will again do so in the name of protecting one of the country's abundant fishing grounds and upholding the economic and political rights of the fisherfolk," Hicap said.

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SBMA at PCAARD magkatuwang sa coral reefs

Nagkasundo ang pamunuan ng Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) at Philippine Council for Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARD) para mapanatiling buhay ang coral reefs na umuusbong sa bansa.

Nagkaisang nilagdaan ang partnership agreement sa pagitan ni SBMA Chairman Martin Diño at lahat ng agency leaders, investors-locators at non-government organizations para i-

monitor ang kalagayan ng corals na nakabase sa 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 eco-system is sustainable" pahayag ni Diño.

Ayon naman kay Dr. Melvin Carlos, director ng Technology Transfer Division ng PCAARD,

umaabot na sa 80 porsiyento ng coral reefs ang umuusbong sa buong kapuluan.

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

Dahil sa kasunduan ng mga partner organization ay ililipat ang may 5,000 coral fragments para ayusin ang nasirang reef areas at ilatag ang pag-deploy sa 10 coral nursery unit. (Alex Galang)



Kinamayan ni SBMA Chairman Martin Diño si Mark Dayrit, chairman ng Brighterday Subic Limited Inc. matapos lagdaan ang partnership agreement para sa coral reef restoration project sa Subic Bay Freeport. Kasama din sa okasyon sina Community Environment Officer Marife Castillo at Zambales Provincial Environment Officer Laudemir Salac. (Alex Galang)

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PAHINA SIYETE

Clemen Bautista

ISA sa nagpapatingkad sa Antipolo ay ang Hinulugang Taktak. Bukod pa ang Katedral ng Antipolo na dambana ng Mahal na Birhen ng Kapayapaan at Mabuting Paglalakbay. Dinarayo ng ating mga kababayan at ng mga turista, lalo na tuwing Mayo. Minamasdan ang malinaw na tubig na bumabagsak mula sa talon at umaagos sa batis. Sa pagmamasid, naririnig din ang lagaslas ng tubig. Ang Hinulugang Taktak mula nang matapos ang magkatuwang na rehabilitasyon ng pamahalaang

MGA ITATAYONG PASILIDAD SA HINULUGANG TAKTAK

panlalawigan at ng pamahalaang lungsod, sa pangunguna nina Rizal Gov. Nini Ynares at Antipolo Mayor Jun Ynares at suporta at tulong ng mga taga-Rizal, ay muling binuksan sa publiko ang Bagong Hinulugang Taktak noong Pebrero 13, 2015.

Sa bahagi ng mensahe ni Rizal Gov. Nini Ynares, sinabi niya na ang rehabilitasyon ay simula pa lamang at nais niyang matupad ang laynin na maging tourist destination ang Rizal. Kung lalakas ang turismo, magkakaroon ng hanap-buhay ang mamamayan. Kasunod ng rehabilitasyon ang pagtatayo ng waste water treatment upang maging

malinis ang tubig ng Hinulugang Taktak. Ayon naman kay Antipolo Mayor Jun Ynares, maaaring matagal pa ang katuparan na maibalik sa dati ang Hinulugang Taktak, ngunit natupad ang pagmumulat sa ating mga kababayan ang kahalagahan nito.

Ang Hinulugang Taktak, sa pamamagitan ng Proclamation No. 42, ay ipinahayag na nasa kategorya na ng Protected Landscape upang matiyak ang proteksiyon, patuloy na pagpapaunlad at rehabilitasyon nito. Malaking tulong sa Hinulugang Taktak ang inilunsad na Ynares-Eco System (YES) To Green Program

ng pamahalaang panlalawigan na may kaugnayan sa pangangalaga sa kapaligiran at kalikasan. Kasama rito ang Hinulugang Taktak na itinuturing na natural at cultural heritage ng Antipolo.

Sa pagpapatuloy ng rehabilitasyon, ang isa sa karagdagang gawain ay ang pag-aayos ng mga dokumento ng Pamahalaang Lungsod ng Antipolo para sa itatayong mga bagong pasilidad sa Hinulugang Taktak. Kabilang dito ang hanging bridge, palaruan, mga konkretong upuan, karagdagang picnic hut o mga kubo at ang elevator.

Sundan sa pahina 11

Mga itatayong...

Mula sa pahina 7

Ayon kay Antipolo Mayor Jun Ynares, mahalagang mapanatili ang mga likas na yaman at tanawin tulad ng Hinulugang Taktak Protected Landscape. Naniniwala siya na ang malinis at magandang kapaligiran ay simbolo ng isang maunlad na komunidad o pamayanan. Hindi na kailangang gumastos pa ang mga Antipolenyo sa pamamasyal sapagkat libre at bukas sa publiko ang Hinulugang Taktak.

Sa muling pagbubukas ng Hinulugang Taktak noong Pebrero 2015, patuloy ang pagtaas ng bilang ng bisita na umaabot na sa mahigit 500,000 turista.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Benguet-Goldrich Antamok waste disposal project on

By Dexter A. See

BAGUIO CITY—Benguet Corp. and its development partner, Goldrich Natural Resources Exploration and Development Inc., has signed separate agreements with the City Government of Baguio and the Municipal Government of Itogon for the conversion of its Antamok properties into an engineered sanitary landfill.

The landfill would have a waste-to-energy compost plant geared toward sustainable environmental preservation and protection in the concerned localities, the mining firm said.

The Antamok project is in the mine rehabilitation plan to be implemented in the affected areas under the final mine rehabilitation and decommissioning plan approved by the MGB, Benguet Corp. added.

Once implemented, the Antamok project will effectively address the solid waste management of the Baguio-La Trinidad-Itogon-Sablan-Tuba-Tublay or BLISTT area, following the provisions of the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, and that the project is imbued with public interest, the firm said.

The proposed facilities for

the project will cover a portion of BC's 60-hectare property to be used for the proposed engineered sanitary landfill and waste-to-energy plants.

Signing the agreement on behalf of Benguet Corp. was Executive Director Isidro C. Alcantara Jr., while Goldrich was represented by its president, Atty. Jaime A. Paredes Jr.

Baguio was represented by Mayor Mauricio G. Domogan while Itogon Mayor Victorio Palangdan also signed the pact.

Under the agreement, BC will turn over its Antamok properties in favor of Goldrich that

are needed for the landfill and waste-to-energy project, as well as give Goldrich access to the properties through Benguet Corp.'s surrounding properties for the entire economic life of the project.

BC shall retain ownership of Antamok and can access it any time for operations and repair-and-maintenance activities of its underground facilities and other mine structures in the area.

At the end of the agreement, which lasts 25 years and renewable for another 25, the possession of the patented lands shall revert to Benguet Corp.

The mining firm will also secure the approval from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau as part of the mine rehabilitation program of Antamok.

Meanwhile, Itogon will deliver and dispose exclusively at Antamok all the town's solid waste generated and collected by its communities once the engineered sanitary landfill is ready for operation. The town will only do so upon receiving written notice from Goldrich and issue the endorsement necessary for the implementation, operation and maintenance of the Antamok project.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

**SMC addresses
Issues raised by
DENR on coal plant**

The energy arm of San Miguel Corporation (SMC) is in close coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in addressing concerns raised relative to the alleged ash spill proximate to its coal-fired power facility in Umay, Bataan. In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE), SMC Corporate Information Officer Ferdinand K. Constantino has noted that "the views expressed by members of the MMT (multi-partite monitoring team) are considered in coming up with measures to address such issues." The MMT comprises of the DENR, Municipality of Umay, local communities, non-government organizations as well as representatives of Petron Corporation and SMC Consolidated Power Corporation. Constantino added that a technical conference was scheduled on Monday (January 9), and such provided the venue for both Petron and SMC Consolidated to "present and explain their respective positions to respond to the points raised by DENR-EMB (Environmental Management Bureau)." (MMV)

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NO TO COAL Protesting members of the Philippine Movement for Climate Change, the largest climate justice group in the country, lie on the road in front of San Miguel Power Corp. along EDSA in Mandaluyong City (Metro Manila) calling for the immediate stop to operation and construction of coal-fired power plant in Limay, Bataan. Residents in a community called PEX site in Barangay Lamao, Limay have complained of health hazards brought by dusts from the bottom ash dumped by the coal plant. PHOTO BY MIKE DE JUAN



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Phl to ratify Paris climate pact in July

By PAOLO ROMERO

The Philippines has committed to ratify the Paris Agreement on climate change in July and seek Senate concurrence before the end of the year.

This was disclosed yesterday by senators and their visiting French counterparts after meeting with Foreign Affairs Secretary Perfecto Yasay Jr. in the course of their four-day visit starting Jan. 6.

"We met this morning with the Secretary of Foreign Affairs who very much assured us of the willingness of the Philippine government to ratify the agreement by July," French senator Gerard Miquel told a joint press conference after a closed-door meeting with Senate President Aquilino

Pimentel III at the Sofitel hotel in Pasay City.

Pimentel was joined by Sens. Franklin Drilon, Joseph Victor Ejercito, Loren Legarda, Cynthia Villar and Juan Miguel Zubiri.

With Miquel, president of the France-Southeast Asia Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Group, were Senators Bernard Saugey, Jean-Claude Lenoir and Simon Sutour.

The visit was part of the activities commemorating the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and France.

The French senators also went to Cebu and met with Gov. Hilarion Davide III and Cebu City

Mayor Tomas Osmeña.

Miquel was part of the delegation of French President Francois Hollande, who visited Yolanda-hit areas in February 2015 with actress Marion Cotillard.

He described the Paris Agreement as a "success that we've been working on for a long time... and is going to allow us as a nation to face important challenges in climate change and the protection of the environment."

The agreement, signed by some 175 countries and entered into force last Nov. 4, aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions worldwide by 2030. The Philippines has yet to

ratify the pact.

Legarda said Duterte has always been for climate justice despite reports that he was lukewarm to the agreement.

"I've been for climate justice because the Philippines is a non-emitter (of greenhouse gases) in the world. It doesn't mean that if you are for climate justice that you are against an agreement," Legarda said.

She said the Duterte administration is for the agreement, with 32 of the 33 agencies having already submitted their certificates of concurrence to Malacañang.

"I am certain we will be able to shepherd the concerns and ratification within the year," Legarda said.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**FIRECRACKER BAN
MUST START THIS EARLY**

We welcome the lower number of firecracker-related injuries at 630 as reported by the Department of Health, and we laud the agencies and groups behind the steadfast "Iwas Paputok" campaign for this "good" news. But while 32 percent lower than last year's figures, 630 firecracker-related injuries are incontestably still too many and deeply tragic as most of those wounded, burned or maimed are young children.

The significant number of young children injured and the high levels of health-damaging particulate matter 2.5 and toxic trash generated from the firecracker explosions should drive government into fast-tracking the issuance of a regulation banning firecrackers. Taking action now will allow our people to breathe clean air, a basic human right, and to welcome the next new year in a healthier and saner way sans gory stories of body parts being amputated, eyes blinded and skin burned.

As the pending bills on firecrackers in both houses of Congress may not be enacted fast enough, we request President Duterte to support the DOH-drafted executive order that seeks to prohibit firecrackers for personal or household use. The immediate promulgation of the order will give the country, particularly the firecracker industry, more time to perform the necessary adjustment and transition.

Upon promulgation, we find it essential for a government-led stakeholders' committee to be convened as soon as possible to discuss the order's full and systematic enforcement, including the conduct of a vigorous public information and education drive all year round, as well as stern action to stop the entry of firecrackers manufactured abroad.

Concerned national and local government institutions need to come up with a detailed plan on how to assist the affected sectors and families in their switch to a safer and sustainable livelihood. The authorities should seriously reach out to the so-called backyard industry to ensure workers are duly assisted in finding alternative employment.

The ban will surely not please everyone, but greater public interest dictates that a tougher policy be adopted to put an end to the preventable cycle of injuries, deaths, fires and toxic pollution that may be caused by firecrackers.

As government is duty-bound to protect the health and safety of its citizens, especially the children who are most vulnerable to injury and toxic pollution, we urge the authorities to hasten the ban on firecrackers.

AILEEN LUCERO,
national coordinator,
EcoWaste Coalition,
Unit 329, Eagle Court,
26 Matalino St., Quezon City

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

'Welcome to the club, Petron'

BIZ BUZZ

BY THE STAFF

One cannot help but feel a little sorry for large corporations that, every now and then, fall prey to enterprising individuals who lodge complaints with authorities alleging some environmental or health law violation and leveraging off populist sentiment.

Mining firms and industrial/agricultural companies know this phenomenon well and have become adept at responding to agitated local communities or local government officials.

The latest to join the club is Petron Corp.

The country's biggest petroleum runner and distributor has recently become the subject of news reports and complaints from local government officials and a number of Limay residents linking its Bataan refinery to everything from an oil leak, to rashes on residents' skin and a slew of other would-be environmental or health issues.

And in the midst of all this, Biz Buzz learned that a representative of Limay Mayor Liliw Roque actually called on Ramon Ang, who heads Petron's parent firm San Miguel Corp., a day before the complaints against the company hit mainstream media.

In any case, on the day the news broke (sending Petron's share price plummeting), company officials met with their counterparts in Limay (in a so-called Multipartite Monitoring Team) to review the complaints being lodged by local residents, some of whom were complaining that the ash

lowing SMS message: "PG-En-ro" (meaning the "Provincial Government Environment and Natural Resources official) confirmed that the complainants who were interviewed on TV were the informal settlers who were NOT residents of Lamao or Alangan. The reported skin rashes were verified to be scabies and 'higad' bites.

Of course, scabies is an infectious skin disease caused by the bite of a particular mite (*Sarcoptes scabiei*, if you must know). "Higad," meanwhile, refers to a rash and itch-inducing caterpillar. These had nothing to do with Petron's ash byproducts, which happened to be deposited on the same company property that, by the way, some of the informal settlers were occupying.

Even law-abiding firms are no match for LGU officials and their constituents sometimes. Said one exasperated mining industry official: "Welcome to the club, Petron."

—DAXIM L. LUCAS