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# **DENR**

## **IN THE NEWS**

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# BusinessMirror

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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## DENR chief toughens up on issuance of ECC

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

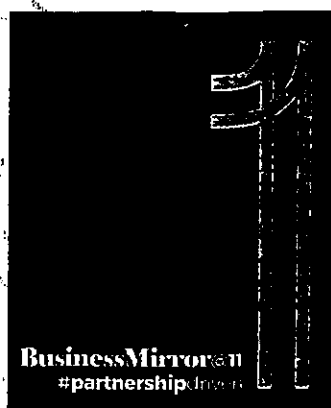
**T**HE government will no longer issue environmental compliance certificates (ECCs) to companies that have yet to fully comply with all the specific measures, conditions and qualifications set by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

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The number of ECCs currently being reviewed by the DENR for possible cancellation

This is the new direction set by Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez, although she assured that the current DENR review on existing ECCs

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# DENR to implement stricter policy for ECC issuance to firms

By **MADELAINE MIRAFLORES**

All companies that need to obtain environmental clearance from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will be slapped with a stricter set of conditions and policies from now on.

A statement on Tuesday showed that the DENR is adopting a stricter policy in the issuance of environmental compliance certificates (ECCs) to ensure that future development projects will not cause significant negative impact on the environment.

Environment Secretary Gina Lopez said that from now on, the DENR will make sure that specific measures and conditions are first met by project proponents before ECCs are issued to them.

This, since it has already been a long-standing practice that the ECCs can already be issued even if certain conditions are yet to be complied with by project proponents.

"If any ECC is cancelled now, it has to be withdrawn in the legal parameters at that time. But for the future, we are saying that if any ECC is given, it should not be given unless all the conditions are first met," Lopez said.

The DENR recently cancelled a total of six ECCs, issued show cause orders against 12 development projects, and denied one ECC application.

According to Lopez, the DENR's decision to cancel, deny or grant an ECC is "based on social justice."

"Social justice, in the context of the DENR, means that the use of the land benefits the greater majority, benefits the common good. But, when the environment is destroyed, it is the poor people around the area who suffer," the DENR chief said.

ECC is a certificate issued by the DENR's Environmental Management Bureau following a positive review of the ECC application.

This certifies that based on the

met by the proponent before and during the operation of the project.

In some cases, conditions are listed to be performed during the project's abandonment phase to lessen identified potential environmental impacts.

One of those cancelled was the ECC issued to Century Communities Corporation for its Novaliches housing project, which is located on the La Mesa Watershed.

The DENR also cancelled the ECCs given to Palawan-based mining firms Ipilan Nickel Corp. and Lebach Mining Corp., as well as Davao-based Core Mining Corp. and Austral-Asia Link Mining Corp., and Donggwang Clark Corporation in Pampanga.

Maria Paz Luna, the designated DENR undersecretary for legal affairs, said that contrary to its claim, Austral-Asia's mining site is only five kilometers away from a habitat of the endangered Philippine eagle.

"This is a signal that the DENR is no longer to keep on waiting for conditions to be fulfilled until we issue adverse findings," Luna said.

Meanwhile, the DENR has directed Benguet Corp. to explain why its ECC should not be cancelled for its Antamok open-pit mine in Itogon, Benguet in its "failure to rehabilitate the open pit site for 25 years" and "negligence leading to a toxic spill to 1.8-km river in Cordillera."

The agency also issued show cause orders to Sinophil Mining and Trading Corp., LaFarge Mindanao (formerly Mindanao Portland Cement Corp.), Philippine Sinter Corp., Century Peak Corp. (on two projects), Filipinas Systems Inc., Ore Asia Mining and Development Corp., Wan Chiong Steel Corp., Wellex Mining Corp., PhiGold Metallic Ore Inc., and Hantex Manufacturing Corp.

At the same time, the DENR denied the ECC application of Egerton Gold Philippines for its project in

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## PAG-IISYU NG ECC HIHIGPITAN NA

LALO pang hihigpitan ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang pagbibigay ng Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) para matiyak na ang mga gagawing proyekto ay hindi makasisira o makaaapekto sa kapaligiran at sa kabuhayan ng mga mamamayan.

Ayon kay DENR Secretary Gina Lopez, simula ngayong taon ay hindi mag-iisyu ng ECC sa mga kompanyang nag-aaplay hanggang hindi naisasagawa ang mga inilatag na kondisyon ng kagawaran.

Sinabi ni Lopez na nadiskubre niya na sa nakalipas na pamunuan

ng DENR ay naibibigay ang ECC sa mga kompanya kahit hindi pa naisasagawa ang mga kondisyon na ibinigay ng Kagawaran.

"If any ECC is cancelled now, it has to be withdrawn in the legal parameters at that time. But for the future, we are saying that if any ECC is given, it should not be given unless all the conditions are first met," wika ni Lopez.

Sa kasalukuyan ay may anim na ECC ang kinansela ng DENR at 12 proyekto ng mga kompanya ang naisyuhang ng 'show cause' order at ang isa naman ay ibinasura ang aplikasyon ng ECC.

Binigyang-diin ni Lopez na ang pagkansela, pagbawi at pagbasura sa mga naisyung ECC ay nakabatay sa social justice.

"Social justice, in the context of the DENR, means that the use of the land benefits the greater majority, benefits the common good. But, when the environment is destroyed, it is the poor people around the area who suffer," paliwanag pa ng kalihim.

Ang ECC ay isang sertipiko na iniisyu ng DENR Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) matapos ang positibong pagrepaso sa aplikasyon ng ECC na hindi makaaapekto sa

kapaligiran, kabuhayan at kaligtasan ng mga nasa paligid ng isasagawang proyekto.

Nauna rito, kinansela ng DENT-EMB ang ECC na naisyu sa Century Communities Corporation para sa kanilang housing project sa loob ng La Mesa Watershed sa Novaliches, Quezon City.

Ang iba pang nakanselang ECC ay sa Ipilang Nickel Corporation at Lebach Mining Corp. sa Palawan at Core Mining Corp. at Austral-Asia Mining site na may limang kilometro ang layo sa habitat area ng Philippine Eagle.

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WWW.INQUIRER.NET

## NEWS

# Lopez gives SMC, Petron 24 hours to remove ash

By Allan Macatuno  
and Daxim L. Lucas  
@Team\_Inquirer

LIMAY—Environment Secretary Gina Lopez has given San Miguel Consolidated Power Corp. (SMCPC) a day to clean up ash residue allegedly released from its coal-fired power plant at the Petron Bataan Refinery here.

Lopez's instruction was relayed by Environment Undersecretary Arturo Valdez to SMCPC representatives during a technical conference here on Monday.

Valdez ordered SMCPC to install closed-circuit television cameras to monitor measures that the company would implement to contain the alleged ash spill. SMCPC is a subsidiary of San Miguel Corp. (SMC) that has a controlling stake in Petron Corp.

Petron and SMCPC operate the 150-megawatt (MW) plant near the refinery that was slapped with notices of violation on Dec. 28 and Jan. 6 by the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) for ash that had allegedly polluted a waterway.



Gina Lopez

In an interview, San Miguel Corp. president Ramon S. Ang said the company would "gladly" move the deposits of what he said was lime powder—not ash—to another site within the sprawling refinery complex.

Petron had originally planned to store the lime powder at another site on its property, but was denied a key permit by the local government, forcing the firm to store the byproduct of its oil refining operations at a temporary site.

This company-owned site is closer to a community of informal settlers who are also occupying Petron's property, company officials said.

"It's good if we relocate this," Ang said. "This lime powder is made into gypsum, which

we need for our cement manufacturing plants. We cannot throw tins away because this costs \$100 per ton."

Petron's refinery produces a total of two tons of lime powder per day which are collected into silos, then transferred into truck-mounted cylinders, then transported to the temporary holding facility which the informal settlers are complaining about.

Ang is set to meet with Lopez on Jan. 11 to discuss the issue.

Regarding the informal settlers' earlier complaints about skin rashes allegedly being caused by the lime powder being blown in the direction of their community, Petron officials said they conducted a meeting with the Multipartite Monitoring Team composed of representatives of the company, the local government and residents last Friday and determined that the rashes on some residents were, in fact, scabies (an infectious disease caused by tick bites) and itch caused by exposure to caterpillars.

The company deployed doctors to examine and help residents while the Depart-

ment of Health conducted a health audit in the area.

Following a Jan. 6 meeting with the plant's owners Lormelyn Claudio, EMB Central Luzon director, said SMCPC and Petron "decided to stop dumping bottom ash in any of their ash ponds."

"Petron also committed to extend assistance to the rural health unit to monitor the impact of the ash spill," Claudio said.

Jaime Santos, SMCPC spokesperson, said they would treat the newly generated bottom ash (or residue at the bottom of a furnace) to pass safety standards before this would be taken to an SMC facility in Pangasinan province.

"It will take only a day to take the 20 tons of bottom ash to a qualified facility outside Bataan. A part of it will be taken to cement factories," Santos told the Inquirer.

Bataan Gov. Albert Garcia said the local government is developing a housing project, financed by SMCPC and Petron, for the relocation of communities near the buffer zone of the refinery. INQ

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### EMB denies irregularity in AQMS procurement

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources has denied allegations of irregularities in the procurement of 48 units of air quality monitoring station (AQMS) installed in Metro Manila and other parts of the country.

According to Assistant Director Jacqueline Cañcan, in-charge of the Environment Management Bureau (EMB) of the DENR, the acquisition of such equipment was aboveboard and free of corruption as the agency observed proper procurement and bidding rules.

Cañcan was reacting to newspaper reports claiming that 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).

Cañcan clarified that all these equipment, purchased for EMB Central and Regional Offices, cost only around P290 million.



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# Lopez, 3 other DENR officials face raps

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Secretary Gina Lopez and three other officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) are facing criminal and administrative charges from a consumer group over an allegedly anomalous purchase of air quality monitoring equipment.

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

Javellana added they are also questioning the motive behind the past actions of some EMB officials in deciding to purchase the DOAS despite proof that these were either obsolete or had been phased out years before the DENR purchased them.

"Worst is the fact that we also discovered that most of these expensive air monitors are not properly working and some are not functional anymore," Javellana said. "In Metro Manila, the air quality monitors in question are not even enough to give a very credible and complete picture or results of the real air quality situation in the National Capital Region."

Also named respondent in the charge sheet is Leo Jasareno, former director of the DENR's Mines and Geosciences Bureau and now consultant

ing market research or study. Electrobyte is the exclusive distributor of DOAS in the Philippines.

The complainants claimed the acquisitions had failed to deliver consistent and reliable air quality data.

In 2010, the groups said, four more DOAS were purchased from their "favorite supplier," Electrobyte. Again, this was done without market research, they said.

"These machines would not function, or could not be utilized for the purposes they were acquired, or if these machines do indeed provide us with data, the data would always be inaccurate or cannot be relied upon," the complainants said.

The complaint added: "It is clear that the way the Clean Air Act is being implemented only serves business purposes and not the purposes that will help uplift the health of Filipinos."

The UFCC said the respondents should conduct a review of the implementation of the Procurement Act.

"This is a clear case of graft and corruption," UFCC president Rodolfo Javellana said. "We are questioning a total of roughly a billion pesos worth of purchases of air quality monitoring instruments or equipment by DENR after discovering that these same air monitors were purchased at the gross disadvantage of the

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# DENR's López in trouble over air-quality monitors

By JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ ✉ @joveemarie

**E**NVIRONMENTAL groups on Tuesday filed a complaint before the Ombudsman against Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez and three others in connection with the anomalous purchase of air-quality monitors.

In their complaint, United Filipino Consumers and Commuters President Rodolfo Javellana Jr. and Manuel Galvez of Air Board Co., said Lopez, together with DENR consultants Leo Jasareno and Jean Rosete, and Teresita Peralta of the Environmental Management Bureau should face charges for not investigating the questionable purchase of the air-quality monitors in 2003 and 2010.

Javellana and Galvez said the purchase was disadvantageous to the government, as "a scientific and educated

check shall certainly bear out reports that this monitor or report it projects cannot be trusted."

"The matter had been addressed to respondent honorable Secretary Lopez, but her action, at commending the very nominal respondents—Rosete and Peralta—speaks of her [Lopez's] already joining the bandwagon of men and women who thrive at the business," the complaint said.

"If we look at the Clean Air Act as business opportunity for suppliers, as well as an opportunity to really

have clean air for the country and the people, it is clear that the way the Clean Air Act is being implemented...what is being served is the business purposes, and not the purposes that will uplift the health of Filipinos, and by the prosperity of the business side is being aided and abetted by the very acts constituting the act/s complained of in this complaint," it added.

The complainants added Lopez and the three respondents shall also be investigated for possible violations of the Government Procurement Reform Act and the Clean Air Act.

The complaint also asked the Ombudsman to file administrative complaint and criminal information against the respondents after the investigation.

"[We also] prayed [for] a review on the implementation of the Procurement Act, how it is being implemented in the procurement of machines and equipment and the implementation of Clean Air Act, by the respondents, be immediately ordered," it said.

"With end view, that the collusion, participated in by the herein respondents Rosete and Peralta, at tailor-fitting the terms of reference and other bidding materials, to suit a favored supplier, the Electrobites, and the cycle of corruption attendant thereto to be immediately checked and stopped," it added.



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Lopez charged over 'faulty' air monitoring system

A COMPLAINT has been filed before the Office of the Ombudsman against Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez for her alleged inaction over the "faulty" air monitoring system in place since 2006.

The nine-page complaint was filed by Rodolfo Javella, Jr., president of United Filipino Consumers and Commuters (UFCC), and Manuel J. Galvez, managing partner of Airboard Company.

Former environment undersecretary Leo L. Jasareno and DENR's Environment Management Bureau (EMB) officers Jean Rosete and Teresita Peralta were also made "nominal parties-respondents."

"The reason they are merely being made nominal parties is because complaint or so had already

been filed against one, two or all of them, but the status of this/these case/s has got to be first determined," the complaint read.

The complainants said they presented a power point presentation to Ms. Lopez in August last year, showing "the evil and the devil" about the air quality monitoring systems that "failed to deliver consistent and reliable air quality data."

According to them, the EMB-Air Quality Monitoring Section (AQMS), headed by Ms. Peralta and Ms. Rosete, procured four Open Path Differential Optical Absorption Spectroscopy (DOAS) from Electrobyte in 2006 "without any market research or study." Another four DOAS were procured in 2010 without any performance report.

"It is clear, during the first two biddings, that all and everything had been tailored-[made] to favor Electrobyte, the favorite supplier. The Terms of Reference or the qualification of bidders had been so phrased and formulated that it always results that as early as during Pre-Qualification, only Electrobyte would qualify," the complaint read.

"In 2013, Electrobyte received full payment for another delivery of 10 more DOAS, and payment was made prior to installation and acceptance," read the complaint.

The complainants also alleged that these machines "would not function, or could not be utilized for the purposes they were acquired of, if these machines do indeed provide us with data, the

data would always be inaccurate or cannot be relied upon."

Although the procedures referred to happened before her appointment, the complainants said Ms. Lopez offered nothing but "mere words and talks" after their presentation. The complainants also claimed "wrongdoing continuously being committed" by the EMB-AQMS staff and officers.

"The baton of respondents Rosete and Peralta had so effectively called the shot for all performers to act in unison, and with no discordant note. And the bandwagon is now joined in by the Honorable Respondent Secretary," read the complaint.

"[I]t is prayed appropriate administrative punishment be meted and imposed." — **Raynan F. Javil**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

## Raps filed at Ombudsman vs DENR sec

A CONSUMER rights group and a businessman yesterday filed criminal and administrative complaints before the Office of the Ombudsman against Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez, DENR consultant Leo Jasareno, and Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) officers Jean Rosete and Teresita Peralta in connection with the alleged acquisition and installation of defective air quality monitoring equipment in Metro Manila.

Complainants United Filipino Consumers and Commuters (UFCC), represented by its president Rodolfo Javellana and Air-Board Company executive Manuel J. Galvez, claimed the respondents failed to act despite being informed that the use of Differential Optical Absorption

Spectroscopy (DOAS) have not delivered "consistent and reliable air quality data."

They claimed that continuing use of data from the DOAS may pose danger to public health because the equipment is defective and unreliable for determining ambient air quality.

However, based on the supporting documents attached to the same complaint, the first four DOAS were purchased in 2006 and another four in 2010. Also being questioned were the acquisition of particulate matter (PM) 10 and PM2.5 analyzers in 2011 and 17 continuous ambient air quality monitoring system (CAMS) in 2013.

Lopez assumed office as DENR secretary in June 2016.

The complainants said they have met with Lopez person-

ally to present their observations but said she has taken no action to correct the problems or to go after responsible agency officials.

They said the EMB-NCR inspected 14 of the CAMS purchased in 2013 and found that they were not calibrated, produced no reliable e-log data, not real time, and are supposedly outdated.

They added that there was no market research or relevant study conducted before the acquisition of air quality equipment from exclusive distributor Electrobytes.

According to the complainants, the same supplier "cornered over 90 percent of the EMB-Air Quality Monitoring Section (EMB-AQMS) projects."

However, neither the supplier nor former DENR and EMB officials were named in the complaint. — **Peter Tabingo**

# The Manila Times

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## Coal plant stops dumping bottom ash

**LIMAY, Bataan:** The coal power plant here has stopped dumping bottom ash in any site outside the oil refinery complex, following orders from the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB), a consultant of Petron and San Miguel Corp. (SMC) said.

SMC and Petron consultant for refinery and plant operations, Jaime Santos, informed the multi-party monitoring team (MMT) of this development at a meeting presided over by EMB Region 3 director Lormelyn Claudio on Monday.

Claudio issued the order to stop the dumping of coal ash in two areas – Petron Limay Terminal and SMC site – last Friday after residents complained of ashfall which has been bothering them since December 26.

The EMB director said the coal plant can only dispose of its waste in an area approved by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and only after they have mixed it with soil to lessen its corrosive element.

"The bottom ash is now being

brought to Northern Cement factory in Sison, Pangasinan after it has been mixed with soil to lower its ph level," Santos said.

He said that the power plant has stopped dumping bottom ash in the two sites mentioned in compliance with the EMB order.

Santos added that as a long-term solution, they will build an ash pond within the company's 27-hectare property in the town.

Limay Mayor Lilvir Roque said that while the DENR has yet to approve a dump site for the bottom ash, the coal plant will not be permitted to dump any kind of ash waste in the town.

Alvin Pura, one of the affected residents, told The Manila Times they have been voicing their opposition to the coal power plant's operation since 2012. They are thankful that at least their problem with the dumping of bottom ash has finally been given attention.

However, he expressed concern over the absence of a long-term solution.

"What will happen to us? What will it do to the community? It's true that we don't own the lot but we are humans who must be given importance," he said.

Derek Cabe of the Coal-free Bataan Movement said about 500 residents are affected by pollution in the area, with almost half of this number afflicted with frequent fever, colds, headache, skin rashes and hypertension.

Before the MMT special meeting, Cabe and group of anti-coal activists and villagers affected by the ashfall wearing face masks held in a rally in front of Limay municipal hall.

Meanwhile, the provincial health office (PHO) on Tuesday said they are still conducting a study and gathering data to verify if the complained illnesses, such as upper respiratory tract infection, are indeed caused by coal ash.

PHO chief Rosanna Bucchan said the ashfall may be one of the causes but other factors have to be considered why a patient frequently suffers a cold, fever or pneumonia. **ERNIE B. ESCONDE**

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## SMC's coal plant not yet operational

SAN Miguel Corp. on Tuesday questioned the motives of some groups calling for the suspension of the operations of its power plant in Bataan for alleged environmental and health violations when the plant has not started commercial operations yet.

The 600-megawatt power plant that will utilize the state-of-the-art circulating fluidized bed clean coal technology is targeted to start full commercial operations by August 2018. Unit 1 will be commissioned May 2017, Unit 2 by August 2017, Unit 3 by June 2017 and Unit 4 by August 2018.

SMC said these groups must have been misled into making unsupported claims concerning its operations in Bataan, adding that what it currently produces from its co-generation plant—that primarily supplies power and steam to the adjacent Petron Refinery—is predominantly limestone powder.

This has been certified by the Environment Department as non-hazardous and is used as raw material for manufacturing cement, the company said.

The company said reports of "tons of ash" found along the coastline of a river, which is about a kilometer away from Petron's facility, were far from the truth. It said that based on a report from the provincial health office, the reported skin diseases of residents were actually scabies which were in no way connected to exposure to ash.

# The Manila Times

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Editorial

### The murder of environmental protection advocates must outrage us all

**W**E call on the people to join in expressing outrage over the murder of environmental protection advocates by goons of businessmen and their government-official allies.

The success and profitability of some businesses are based on activities that harm the environment. This is why some of them have resorted to murdering the objects of their hatred: pro-nature militants whose aim, ultimately, is to ban occupations and industries that damage the seas, rivers, forests and the environment.

The latest such murder happened in Vigan, the capital of Ilocos Sur.

Mario Contaoi, educator and former environmental protection broadcaster, was shot dead by an unknown assailant last Saturday, January 7. He was traveling along the national highway on his motorcycle when gunned down.

Contaoi was an instructor who taught at the University of Northern Philippines in Vigan and a former commentator at dzNS Radyo Totoo station. He tackled environmental issues and, like most bold commentators, he saw an unhealthy link between the rapists of nature and the military. He spoke against the placement of a heavy military presence – which leftwingers refer to as the militarization of the areas—in the places where environmentally destructive projects are located.

The Kalikasan People's Network rightly and expectedly spoke up, "We condemn the senseless killing of Mario Contaoi, who is the eighth environmental advocate who has been killed under the Duterte administration. There is a clearly persisting impunity facing environmental defenders and other activists. An independent and impartial investigation should immediately be conducted on the murder of Contaoi," said Leon Dulce, campaign coordinator of the Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment (Kalikasan PNE).

According to Sherwin de Vera, coordinator of Kalikasan PNE's regional network named DEFEND Ilocos, "while the assailant's motive(s) remains unclear, the authorities must not discount his previous stint as radio commentator and

There are now at least 105 cases of environment-related killings recorded by Kalikasan PNE since 2001. On average, killings under the previous Arroyo administration reached almost four cases per year, while the Aquino administration averaged almost 10 killings per year. In the first six months of the Duterte administration, there are already seven cases indicating almost triple the rate under Arroyo.

Kalikasan PNE noted that in a dialogue between the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and environmental and indigenous people's leaders last October 2016, Environment Secretary Gina Lopez declared that she would support an investigation of environment-related killings.

Calling on the government to do its job, Fulce said: "We hope Secretary Lopez would help push the Duterte administration to seriously probe the unabated killings of environmental advocates. Ensuring the rights of environmental defenders and grassroots communities should be an integral component of President Rodrigo Duterte's marching orders to stop environmentally destructive projects. Destructive and pollutive companies will be emboldened to be even more aggressive if its opponents continue to be subjected to fascist attacks."

We in *The Times* deeply mourn the murder of the 8 heroes of environmental protectionism who have been killed in just 100-plus days of the DU30 administration.

The President must seriously fulfill his promise to go after the killers.

# The Manila Times

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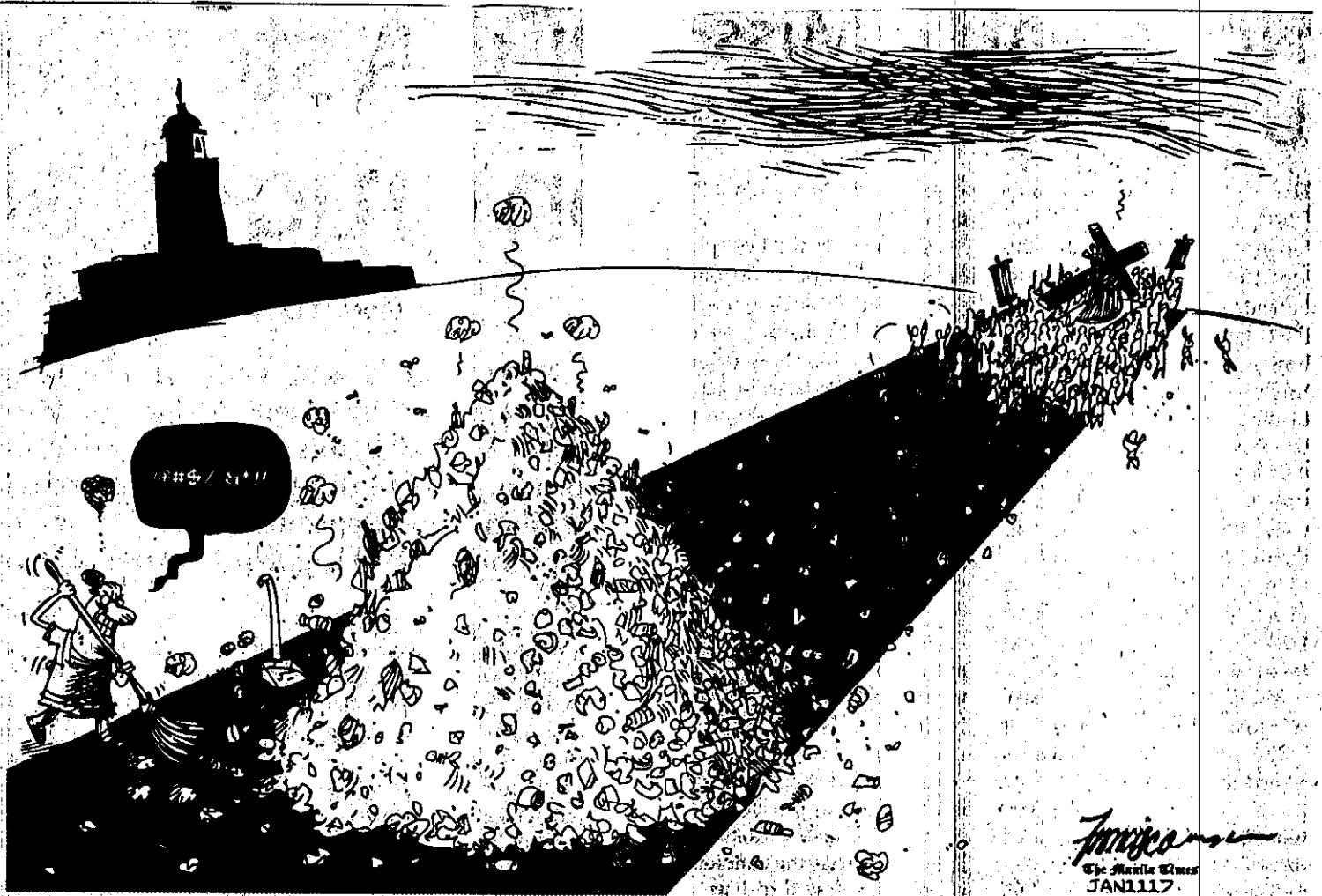
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## Nickelodeon to build Palawan theme park

**A**MERICAN children's television network Nickelodeon has announced it will build an underwater resort and theme park in Palawan province, the Philippines' last ecological frontier, alarming environmentalists.

The firm behind SpongeBob SquarePants and Dora the Explorer said the park on Palawan island would be part of a 400-hectare (1,000-acre) undersea development showcasing the area's marine life that would give fans a chance to "interact with the brand and the iconic characters they love".

Palawan was chosen for the development because it "is known to have some of the most beautiful beaches in the world today," Ron Johnson, an executive vice president

with Viacom International Media Networks, which owns Nickelodeon, said in a statement emailed to AFP on Tuesday.

Viacom's initial statement announcing the project on Monday said the resort would open in 2020 and feature restaurants and lounges six metres (20 feet) below sea level.

The development would "advocate ocean protection," the statement said.

But environmental group Greenpeace said it would destroy the area's world-famous marine ecosystem.

"It's sad and alarming because a theme park that big will not promote environmental protection by building those structures," Vince Cinches of Greenpeace Southeast Asia told AFP.

"Why build a viewing deck when you have the whole paradise to enjoy?"

Conservation groups call Palawan "the last frontier" because of its pristine coastlines and forests, which are among the oldest and most diverse in Southeast Asia.

Palawan is home to two Unesco World

Heritage-listed sites, a subterranean river and the Tubbataha coral reefs.

Palawan-based environmental activist Grizelda Mayo-Anda also expressed concern.

"I am wary because we have had problems already with resorts built in mangrove areas," Mayo-Anda, executive director of the Environmental Legal Assistance Center, told AFP.

"I'm really concerned because sometimes, with all due respect to the local government unit, we get captivated by new projects and we do not judiciously study the impact."

Viacom's Philippine partner, Coral World Park, insisted the resort would not hurt the environment.

"We are taking very, very careful measures to ensure that the biodiversity is kept intact," Coral World Park chairman Paul Monozca told AFP.

The Palawan Council for Sustainable Development, a government body, said the project had yet to be approved.

AFP, Othel V. Campos

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### Nickelodeon to build underwater theme park in Palawan

AMERICAN children's television network Nickelodeon has announced it will build an underwater resort and theme park in the Palawan, considered as the Philippines' last ecological frontier, alarming environmentalists.

The firm behind SpongeBob SquarePants and Dora the Explorer said the park on Palawan island would be part of a 400-hectare (1,000-acre) undersea development showcasing the area's marine life that would give fans a chance to "interact with the brand and the iconic characters they love."

Palawan was chosen for the development because it "is known to have some of the most beautiful beaches in the world today," Ron Johnson, an executive vice president with Viacom International Media Networks, which owns Nickelodeon, said in a statement emailed to AFP on Tuesday.

Viacom's initial statement announcing the project on Monday said the resort would open in 2020 and feature restaurants and lounges six meters (20 feet) below sea level.

The development would "advocate ocean protection," the statement said.

But environmental group Greenpeace said it would destroy the area's world-famous marine ecosystem.

"It's sad and alarming because a theme park that big will not promote environmental protection by

building those structures," Vince Cinches of Greenpeace Southeast Asia told AFP.

"Why build a viewing deck when you have the whole paradise to enjoy?"

Conservation groups call Palawan "the last frontier" because of its pristine coastlines and forests, which are among the oldest and most diverse in Southeast Asia.

Palawan is home to two UNESCO World Heritage-listed sites, a subterranean river and the Tubbataha coral reefs.

Palawan-based environmental activist Grizelda Mayo-Anda also expressed concern.

"I am wary because we have had problems already with resorts built in mangrove areas," Mayo-Anda, executive director of the Environmental Legal Assistance Center, told AFP.

"I'm really concerned because sometimes, with all due respect to the local government unit, we get captivated by new projects and we do not judiciously study the impact."

Viacom's Philippine partner, Coral World Park, insisted the resort would not hurt the environment.

"We are taking very, very careful measures to ensure that the biodiversity is kept intact," Coral World Park chairman Paul Monozca told AFP.

The Palawan Council for Sustainable Development, a government body, said the project had yet to be approved. AFP



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## THE BIGGER PICTURE

# Duterte and the New Year (Part I)

By RICHARD JAVAD HEYDARIAN

**"A**S the water shapes itself to the vessel that contains it, so a wise man adapts himself to circumstances," Confucius, the legendary Chinese sage, once said. As we enter a new year, it is incumbent upon us, including our political leaders, to reflect on 2016 and draw necessary lessons for years to come.

Six months into office, President Rodrigo Duterte remains a highly popular and trusted leader. Latest surveys suggest that as many as 8 out of 10 Filipinos have "much trust" in the President. A similar number, 77% of adult Filipinos are satisfied with his performance, so far.

Public mood is generally buoyant, with 95 percent of adult Filipinos expressing hope for better conditions in the New Year. Similar levels of optimism were recorded back in 2003 (after the EDSA II revolt) and 2012 (as the Aquino administration moved ahead with "good governance" reforms). In short, the Duterte administration enters the New Year with some confidence in terms of public support and satisfaction.

Without a question, the first six months of the Rodrigo Duterte administration have been among the most testosterone-filled and suspense-laden moments in our political history.

Running on a campaign promise of restoring law and order, swiftly mopping out crime and corruption, and restoring our national dignity,

the Duterte administration adopted a "shock and awe" strategy in dealing with both domestic and foreign policy challenges.

True to his campaign promise, the President adopted extraordinary measures to mop out the proliferation of illegal drugs in the country. Despite international and local outcry over human rights concerns, surveys suggest more than 8 out of 10 Filipinos support the President's war on drugs.

As many as 1 million suspected drugs users and pushers have surrendered, according to the government. A massive Drug Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation Center has been built in Fort Magsaysay, Nueva Ecija. Bureaucratic reforms have also kicked in, with 1,419 cities and municipalities around the country (87% of total) streamlining licensing system and processing of business permits. A one-stop service center for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) has been established, while, in order to ease commuting concerns, around 21 premium Mercedes Benz buses have been brought on stream to handle passengers from Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) to Roxas Boulevard and Makati City.

Under the leadership of Gina Lopez, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has also implemented more stringent monitoring to ensure compliance among mining companies operating in the country. Up to 30 metallic mines companies were or faced suspensions.



Peace talks with the Communist rebels have never looked better, while preceding negotiations with Islamist rebels, particularly the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), have been expanded to include other major forces such as the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

In terms of foreign policy, the Duterte administration seems to have secured a modus vivendi with China in the West Philippine Sea, particularly in the Scarborough Shoal. This has contributed to easing of tensions in the high seas, raising hopes for a peaceful dialogue-based resolution of territorial spats. Or at least their effective management by rival claimant states.

Obviously, six months is never enough to institute structural reforms and overcoming endemic maladies in our society. There have been misses in both domestic and foreign policy fronts. Fundamental problems such as poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity abound. Domestic and international security concerns are bound to intensify, not subside anytime soon.

And international pressure vis-à-vis Duterte's war on drugs won't fizzle out anytime soon, especially under the leadership of António Guterres, the articulate and indefatigable new secretary general of the United Nations, who, as a prime minister, implemented a radically different approach to the drug problem back in Portugal. This year will bring new and unique challenges for the Duterte administration.

# PEOPLES Tonight

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## PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS



Diver applies Pioneer Epoxy Clay Aqua to attach coral fragment.

### Our Earth, Our Responsibility drive goes to Hundred Islands

THE Pioneer Adhesives Foundation, Inc. (PAFI/The Pioneer Foundation) partnered with the City Government of Alaminos to bring its environmental campaign Our Earth, Our Responsibility to The Hundred Islands. This collaboration was in partnership with the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development (DOST-PCAARRD) and Pangasinan State University (PSU). The event took place from December 12 to 14, and involved underwater coral transplantation and mangrove planting activities.

The campaign began with PAFI's project entitled Reef Fix, which is their Coral Restoration Program under their environmental campaign. Reef Fix aims to support and strengthen local reef rehabilitation efforts through coral transplantation with the use of the product Pioneer Epoxy Clay Aqua.

On Dec. 13, 2016, 30 certified scuba divers descended into the water off of Mayor's Island in the Hundred Islands National Park (HINP) to begin coral transplantation. The scuba divers applied Pioneer Epoxy Clay Aqua to the base of each fragment to secure it to the hard substrate. Proper execution of each step by the divers was essential to the survival of the transplanted corals, and through great underwater efficiency, the teams were able to transplant approximately 2,500 coral fragments to the reef with an average dive time of over one hour.

PAFI will be returning to Alaminos this month to fulfill its commitment of 5,000 coral transplants. During this visit, The Pioneer Foundation will also be donating two buoys with solar-powered lights to help mark the coral transplantation site and the nearby coral nursery. The deployment of these buoys will also help to prevent the destruction of the reef caused by anchors dropping into the water and crashing into corals.

# INQUIRER

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## GOV SEEKS PROBE OF 'LUMAD' LEADER'S MURDER AMID PEACE TALKS

MATI CITY—Davao Oriental Gov. Nelson Dayanghirang has called on the government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) panels to investigate the killing of a "lumad" leader in Caraga town on Dec. 30.

The New People's Army (NPA), in a statement, said it was planning to disarm Mandaya tribal chieftain Datu Copertino Banugan and his men but the rebels were forced to kill him, his brother Ramon and a relative, Benny Banugan, because they fought back.

But Dayanghirang said no such NPA operation should have been conducted because of the ongoing ceasefire and peace talks.

The peace panels are scheduled to hold the third round of the talks in Rome later this month. A ceasefire, unilaterally declared by the NDFFP and the government, has been holding for more than two months now.

"Why do it when there is a ceasefire? Why do it in the middle of the peace talks?" Dayanghirang said in an interview with the Inquirer on Friday.

Col. Michelle Anayron, chief of the Army's 67th Infantry Battalion, said the NPA's claim that it killed Banugan as an act of self-defense was "nothing but a lame excuse."

"How can they call it self-defense? They tried to disarm him, it was only natural that

[Banugan] would resist," Anayron told the Inquirer.

Anayron said electricity supply in Banugan's house was cut off before the attack. Authorities, he said, recovered three gallons of gasoline and unexploded Molotov bombs from the crime site.

Anayron also said the military could not launch pursuit operations against the rebels because of the ongoing ceasefire.

"Such violence was unwarranted. This is contrary to what they (rebels) want. They say they want peace talks and yet they perpetrate violent acts," Lt. Col. Ramon Zagala, chief of the Army's 28th Infantry Battalion, said.

Dayanghirang said Banugan's death is a "huge loss to the peace-loving Mandaya people of Davao Oriental."

Banugan was a leader of a Mandaya community in upland village of Pichon in Caraga town. Last year, the Inquirer visited Pichon's subvillage of Sangab during its Kalidugan Festival. Sangab is one of 13 Pichon subvillages comprising CADT (Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title)-01.

Awarded to the tribe in 1997 and covering about 14,000 hectares, CADT-01 is the first such title given to indigenous communities in Southern Mindanao. Residents have opposed the entry of NPA rebels in their land. —NICO ALCONABA INQ

**Malaya**

# Business Insight

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## Water crisis in Ph: Scarcity amid abundance

BY PAUL ICAMINA

SIXTEEN million Filipinos don't have access to safe drinking water and Filipino slum dwellers are paying more for their water than what Londoners pay for theirs.

According to Agnes Rola, a professor at the Institute for Governance and Rural Development, University of the Philippines Los Banos (UPLB), only a small portion of the renewable water supply is tapped: just 12 percent or 400 cubic meters per person out of 3,360 cubic meters renewable water resources.

Rola said statistics tend to suggest that water scarcity – and the need for conservation – is not a pressing issue but noted that “several facts quickly dispel this notion.”

First, per capita water availability has been declining in recent years caused

by increased water demand due to economic and population growth. On the other hand, the degradation of forest watersheds means less water.

“The data on aggregate availability are illusory in that they indicate the average supply per capita per year without regard to the distribution of available supply,” Rola said. “True availability is contingent on time, place, quality and cost. The Philippines, like all other Asian developing countries, has regions and times of year in which water for specific uses is scarce.”

In fact, water deficits are reported in the Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Southern Luzon and Central Visayas.

“Water is a basic human right,” Rola said in a policy paper for the National Academy of Science and Technology. “Yet many,

especially the poor, have limited access to it, even if annual available resources far exceed total withdrawals.”

In rural Philippines, water is almost free such that water is not properly used by farmers who are not charged the full cost of irrigation systems.

Rola said a higher irrigation price may induce farmers to demand less water and leave the land fallow.

“Despite the relative abundance of water in the Philippines, 16 million Filipinos in 432 municipalities do not have access to safe drinking water,” Rola said, citing a United Nations Development Program report. The price of water in urban areas seems prohibitively high, she said, noting this is especially true among slum dwellers.

# THE STANDARD

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## Cagayan climate change meet set

TUGUEGARAO, Cagayan—  
The provincial government here  
will conduct a two-day Agriculture  
and Climate Change Summit  
at the Events Place in Carmelita  
Hotel here on Jan. 26 to 27.

Gov. Manuel Mamba said  
the summit will address the  
lessons learned during the  
onslaught of Super Typhoon  
“Lawin” and to plan for a more  
disaster-resilient province.

“There is more to be learned  
and there is a need for a more  
encompassing plan on disaster  
management,” Mamba stressed.

Cagayanos once again  
showed to the country their  
resiliency and prepared-  
ness when it comes to disaster,  
as seen in the low number of  
casualties from the typhoon,  
the governor said.

Mamba said that among those  
affected, the agriculture sector’s  
concerns were immediately re-  
sponded to and restored through  
the assistance of the Department  
of Agriculture and civil society  
organizations that have reached  
out to farmers.

He said the Department of  
Science and Technology, De-  
partment of Public Works and  
Highways, Department of  
Environment and Natural Re-  
sources and other stakehold-  
ers are helping Cagayan carry  
out the summit.

Mamba assured that financial  
support donated by different  
groups and personalities to Ca-  
gayanos will be spent judicious-  
ly, as this manifests their trust in  
the provincial government.

# THE PHILIPPINE STAR

## TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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## *PEZA drums up investor interest ahead of Duterte's Middle East visit*

By RICHMOND MERCURIO

The Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) is leading a delegation that will warm up investors in the Middle East ahead of President Duterte's planned state visit there late next month.

"It was PEZA which initially conducted talks with some sheikhs and businessmen in these countries so the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) is asking us to be in the frontline in formalizing the possible investments to the Philippines prior to the state visit of President Duterte," PEZA director general Charito Plaza said.

Duterte is tentatively scheduled to visit several Middle East destinations from Feb. 26 to March 3. Among those in the pipeline are Riyadh, Dubai, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and Kuwait.

The PEZA chief said her agency

will be accompanied by officials from the DFA, Department of Trade and Industry, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and other government and private sector executives during the investment roadshow.

"Owners of some identified economic zones will also come. Some are governors, mayors, private land owners, they will join us. We are actually inviting participants, maybe from the Department of Agriculture and Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Some local executives like the mayor of Palawan, mayor of Hermosa, Bataan, and several mayors in Mindanao will be going with us so they can already find a partner or an investor of their economic zones," Plaza said.

Investment seminars are scheduled on Feb. 11 and 12 in Riyadh,

Feb. 13 and 14 in Dubai, and Feb. 15 and 16 in Qatar.

"PEZA will be doing the investment seminars for investors in these countries and then hopefully we can already find a match to our local investors, specifically the new economic zones created in the provinces and cities of Mindanao because Mindanao is where the majority of our Muslim Filipinos are staying," she said.

Plaza said the investment roadshow is necessary so that during Duterte's visit, agreements and investments can already be signed and finalized.

She said businessmen from the Middle East are interested in investing in tourism and agriculture, as well as putting up halal hubs in the country based on her initial meetings with them last year.

# Finnish firm mulls P10B rubber manufacturing

BY JED MACAPAGAL

INVESTORS from Finland are keen on investing \$200 million for a 50-hectare (ha) rubber manufacturing plant for tires with an annual capacity four million, the Philippine Rubber Research Institute (PRRI) said.

Rudy Galang, PRRI interim executive director, told reporters that officials of Black Donuts Engineering Inc. are set to go to Cotabato and Davao today to scout for possible location of the manufacturing plant.

"(Black Donuts has) set a timetable that within two years, (it) will put up a manufacturing plant for tires of regular cars, pick-up trucks and other small trucks," Galang said.

PRRI said the investors picked Davao and Cotabato because of their good logistics facilities like roads and ports.

Galang said on average, the manufactur-

ing plant would consume 16,000 tons of rubber annually to produce four million tires.

"We are producing enough yearly requirement, we are producing around 110,000 metric tons (MT) a year but our consumption according to our data of around 30,000 MT is for domestic and the remaining 80,000 MT is being exported as processed rubber or in raw form," he said.

The Philippines exports rubber to Malaysia, China, South Korea and Japan.

PRRI said as of last year, the total land area planted with rubber trees stood at 220,000 ha but majority are young trees which are not yet productive. There are 25 processing/manufacturing plants using rubber, most of them for tires.

Galang also said that the local rubber industry is valued at around P11.6 billion at current prices of \$2.11 per kilograms of rubber.



Some 220,000 hectares of land in the country are planted to rubber.

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## SWS: Satisfaction with gov't dipped

Net satisfaction with the general performance of the Duterte administration declined in the fourth quarter of 2016, dropping across areas and economic classes.

This was revealed in the latest Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey, which also showed that the administration posted lower net satisfaction ratings on its human rights and anticriminality platforms amid widespread criticism of its all-out war against illegal drugs.

Nationwide, SWS found that 73 percent of 1,500 adult respondents were satisfied with the Duterte administration, while 12 percent were dissatisfied and 15 percent undecided.

The latest figures yielded a "very good" net satisfaction rating (satisfied minus dissatisfied) of +61, or 5 points lower from +66 (75-percent satisfied minus 8-percent dissatisfied, correctly rounded) score in September which SWS also rated as "very good."

Conducted on Dec. 3-6, the Fourth Quarter Social Weather Survey had a margin of error of

plus-or-minus 3 percentage points.

Results of the same survey released last month showed that 81 percent had "much trust" in President Duterte, 9 percent had "little trust" and 10 percent were undecided. It yielded an "excellent" net trust score of +72, 4 points down from +76 (83-percent much trust minus 8-percent little trust) he obtained in September.

By area, net satisfaction scores of the administration dipped 13 points in Metro Manila (+53 from +66), 4 points in the rest of Luzon (+56 from +60) and Visayas (+58 from +62) and barely unchanged in Mindanao (+78 from +81).

By class, it remained unchanged among Class E (+62) and barely unchanged among ABC (+55 from +58) but declined 7 points among D (+61 from +68).

In addressing national issues, the Duterte administration posted lower net satisfaction ratings on fighting crimes (+50 from +58) and promoting human rights (+56 from +63), including fighting terrorism (+41 from +55), eradicating

graft and corruption (+45 from +57), reconciling with Muslim rebels (+33 from +42), reconciling with communist rebels (+30 from +39), fighting inflation (+25 from +33) and ensuring that no family will ever be hungry (+34 from +37).

It improved in addressing national issues on ensuring an efficient transport system (+48 from +39), foreign relations (+46 from +39), providing jobs (+51 from +46), helping the poor (+66 from +63), defending territorial rights (+54 from +53) and developing science and technology (+50 from +49).

SWS included for the first time the national issues on solving extrajudicial killings and recovering the ill-gotten wealth of Marcos family, which had 40-percent and 24-percent satisfaction scores, respectively.

SWS considers a rating of +70 and above excellent; +50 to +69, very good; +30 to +49, good; +10 to +29, moderate; +9 to -9, neutral; -10 to -29, poor; -30 to -49, bad; -50 to -69, very bad; and -70 and below, execrable. —RAFAEL L. ANTONIO, INQUIRER RESEARCH INQ