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DAY Thursday

DENR

IN THE NEWS



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Gina questions motive behind complaint against her

Environment Secretary Gina Lopez has questioned the motive of a group that filed criminal and administrative complaints against her before the Office of the Ombudsman in connection with her alleged inaction over the supposed anomalous purchase of air quality monitoring equipment.

In a statement sent to reporters on Tuesday, Lopez said she suspects a

By ELIZABETH MARCELO

top official of the United Filipino Consumers and Commuters (UFCC) had a hand "in a campaign to find fault" against her and her department.

The UFCC filed the complaint against her and three other officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

"Why these unfounded allegations are

brought to fore when I decide to break relationship with Dr. Mike Aragon because of unkept promises? And if so, what is his real agenda here?" Lopez said.

Aragon is the vice president of UFCC.

"One should question what Dr. Aragon's motives are and who is funding this campaign to find fault where there is none," Lopez said.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR won't allow Nickelodeon theme park

Environment Secretary Gina Lopez yesterday vowed to prevent the American children's television network Nickelodeon from building an underwater resort and theme park in Coron, Palawan.

In a post on its official Twitter

By ELIZABETH MARCELO and MARY GRACE PADIN
ter account, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said: "Lopez says she won't allow the underwater theme park in Palawan."

The DENR issued the state-

ment after Viacom International Media Networks, owner of Nickelodeon, on Tuesday announced its plan to build a 400-hectare underwater resort and theme park in Coron.

"It is known to have some

of the most beautiful beaches in the world today," Viacom executive vice president Ron Johnson - referring to Palawan - was quoted as saying in an email statement to *Agence France Presse*.

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Environment advocates, including Greenpeace, opposed the idea and warned against destruction of marine ecosystems in the area.

Petition

Following Viacom's announcement, environmental group Save Philippines Seas launched an online petition dubbed "No to Nickelodeon's Underwater Theme Park in Palawan."

In less than 24 hours, close to 100,000 netizens have signed the petition against the plan.

Anna Oposa, co-founder of Save Philippine Seas, led the campaign on Bataris.com.

"We call on the local government of Palawan, Nickelodeon or Viacom International Media Networks and Coral World Park Undersea Resorts Inc. to junk their plan to build a 400-hectare underwater theme park in Coron," the petition read.

"Contrary to a press statement that the underwater theme park would advocate ocean protection, it will

- our Last Frontier," the petition said.

"For a television channel that targets children, Nickelodeon is setting a terrible mistake to the younger generation by taking away their right to enjoy our natural resources," it added.

The petition can be accessed through social media sites Facebook and Twitter.

Meanwhile, fishers' group Pamantasan Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) joined the call to stop the proposed Palawan underwater theme park.

"The fisherfolk group vows to oppose and frustrate the project in order to protect the country's marine resources and most of all, the livelihood of the fishers and the Filipino people," Pamalakaya said in a statement.

Pamalakaya chairman Fernando Hicap said that contrary to Nickelodeon's claim that the project will promote environmental protection, the construction of the resort and theme park would destroy Palawan's environment and its marine and aquatic life.

Based on the group's records, Palawan is home to more than 300 coral species or

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Lopez opposes Nickelodeon's underwater resort in Palawan

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez has thumbed down the plan of US children's television network Nickelodeon and Coral World Park Undersea Resorts, Inc. to construct an underwater resort and theme park in Coron, Palawan:

"If it entails destruction of coral right away, I'll say, no way! Fishermen need corals. Corals are home for fish," Ms. Lopez told reporters on Tuesday.

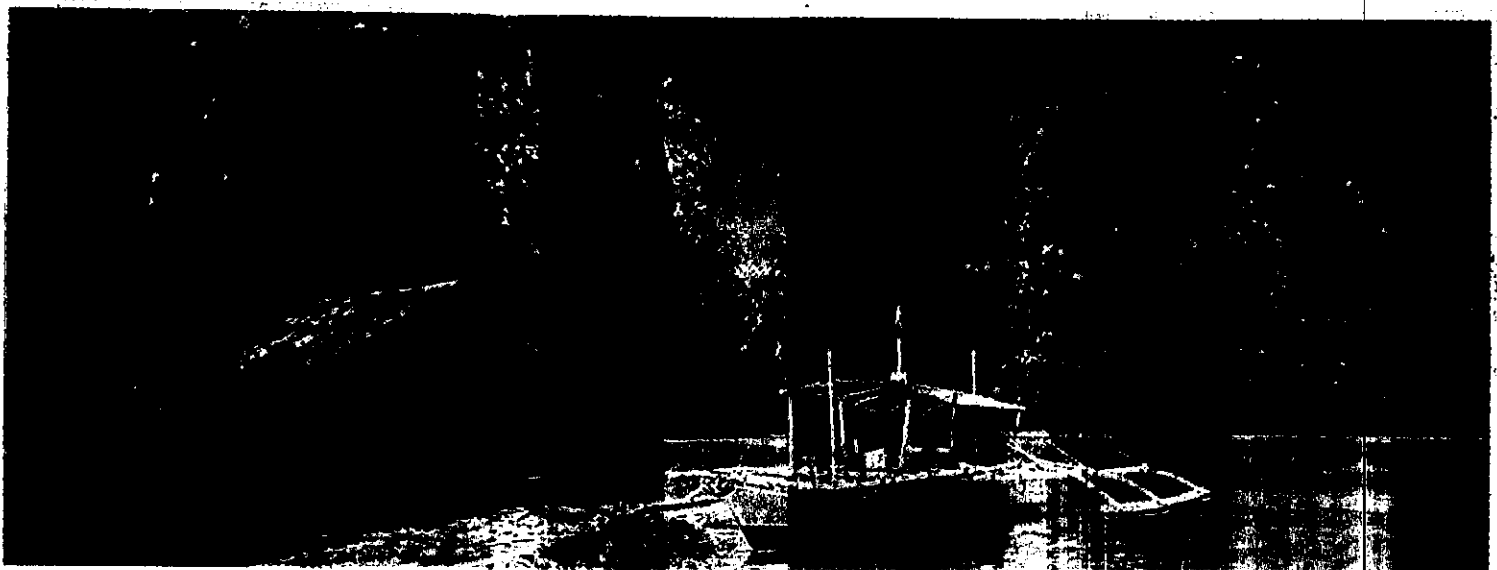
Ms. Lopez was reacting to the announcement of Viacom International Media Networks on Monday that a new Nickelodeon resort and attraction is being

developed within Coral World Park, a 400-hectare undersea-themed development being planned in Coron.

Viacom, which owns Nickelodeon, said its first resort in Southeast Asia is expected to open by 2020.

"I will never allow our biodiversity to be killed for money some people want to make. Filipinos are much more important than business," Ms. Lopez said.

Aside from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the project has also earned the ire of envi-



A VIEW of Coron Island in Palawan

[HTTP://WWW.PALAWANISLAND.ORG](http://WWW.PALAWANISLAND.ORG)

Environmentalists and conservation groups who say its impact on Palawan's biodiversity contrary to its advocacy of marine protection.

In its statement, Viacom said Coral World Park will be the largest coral reef conservation program in Asia, with the region's biggest marine sanctuary

been pegged as the country's "last ecological frontier."

Moreover, Palawan is home to several protected areas, including the famous marine

of 1992 for the management, protection, sustainable development, and rehabilitation of protected areas.

The Coral World Park proi-

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR, groups oppose construction of Palawan underwater theme park

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA @jonlmayuga

A PROPOSED underwater theme park in Palawan, considered as the country's last ecological frontier, is facing stiff opposition from ecology groups and possible rejection by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), notwithstanding the proponents' insistence that the project aims to advocate ocean protection and coral-reef conservation.

Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez has taken a hard line stance against "destructive" development projects, particularly in Palawan. As chief steward of the environment, she had previously declared that Palawan is off-limits to destructive development projects, including mining and coal-fired power plants.

While Lopez could not be reached for comment as of this writing, a DENR Twitter account, @DENR_official, tweeted that

environmental compliance certificates (ECCs). An ongoing review of 800 ECCs caused the cancellation of six ECCs for mining projects and a housing project within the La Mesa Watershed.

The DENR also issued show-cause orders to 12 other companies with the threat of revoking their ECCs for failing to comply or meet certain conditions.

Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim of the DENR's Protected Areas

key biodiversity area (KBA) need a long hard look.

"Palawan hosts 70 percent to 80 percent of the Philippines's marine biodiversity, meaning [the] variety of fish and other marine resources can still be found in the sea areas in the country. This needs to be seriously considered in any infrastructure development in the coastal and marine areas in the province," Lim said.

Palawan is home to an assorted

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DENR, groups oppose construction of Palawan underwater theme park

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Scientific Organization (Unesco) World Heritage Sites—the Tubbataha Reefs and the Puerto Princesa Underground River (PPUR).

The project

THE American children's television network Nickelodeon announced it will build an underwater resort and theme park on Palawan island.

News reports quoted Ron Johnson, an executive vice president with Viacom International Media Networks that owns Nickelodeon, said the resort would open in 2020 and would feature

restaurants and lounges 6 meters or 20 feet below sea level.

The firm also said the development would advocate ocean protection and reef conservation.

Viacom's Philippine partner is Coral World Park. Its chairman, Paul Monozca, was quoted as saying they are taking measures to ensure that the biodiversity is kept intact.

Despite assurances from the project proponents, environmental advocates are up in arms and vowed to oppose the project.

Instead of building the money-making facility, the proponents of a proposed underwater theme park should help in real protection and conservation efforts, AA Yaptinchay of the Marine Wildlife Watch said.

'Greenwashing'

YAPTINCHAY said the plan to build a resort was first floated in 2011, but it has yet to secure any permit from the DENR or Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD).

"We believe the project is being supported by [the] local government," he said.

Yaptinchay also branded as mere "greenwashing" the claim of Viacom that the proposed underwater theme park it plans to build in the province would advocate ocean protection and coral-reef conservation.

"The construction of the underwater [theme park] itself would degrade the coastal and marine environment. In constructing the facility, habitats, such as mangrove and beach forests, sea-grass beds and corals, would be destroyed," he added. Marine Wildlife Watch advo-

cates protection and conservation of marine wildlife.

"Nickelodeon and its project partners should spend the money for constructing the theme park to actual or real marine life and habitat-conservation activities, instead of building a facility for profit," Yaptinchay said.

Unsustainable

ACCORDING to the project's proponents, Palawan was chosen for the development, because it "is known to have some of the most beautiful beaches in the world today."

"Why do you need to build a theme park showcasing what is in our backyard all along. All you have to do is swim and enjoy nature," Yaptinchay said.

Oceana Philippines Vice President Gloria Estenzo Ramos also said the proposed plan is unsustainable and will irreparably damage the marine ecosystems and displace artisanal fishermen. Oceana Philippines, a chapter of Oceana, is an international ocean-conservation advocacy group.

"I'm wondering if a thorough environmental and social impact assessment has been done for such as an environmentally critical area. No place seems to be sacred for development projects nowadays," Ramos said.

Meanwhile, advocates, led by Anna Oposa, launched an online petition calling on the local government of Palawan and the project's proponents to junk the plan.

The petition, launched 16 hours ago as of this writing, already gathered 99,230 signatures validated by signatories' e-mail addresses.

“Nickelodeon and its project partners should spend the money for constructing the theme

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Lopez opposes Nickelodeon resort

By Anna Leah E. Gonzales

Environment Secretary Regina Lopez said Wednesday she will oppose Nickelodeon's plan to build a 100-hectare underwater theme park in Palawan.

"Lopez says she won't allow the underwater theme park in Palawan," the Environment Department said in a tweet.

Lopez made the statement after Viacom International Media Networks' global kids brand Nickelodeon announced its plan to collaborate with Coral World Park Undersea Resorts Inc. for the development of a Nickel-

odeon resort and attraction in the Philippines.

The company said its first resort in Southeast Asia would cover 70 hectares for the resort's accommodation and 30 hectares for the themed attraction.

Lopez told broadcast network ABS-CBN Corp. which her family controls that she would never allow the corals to be harmed.

"You can't kill the corals for a theme park, no way," she said.

The planned Nickelodeon resort will be a part of Coral World Park, a 400-hectare undersea-themed masterplanned development in Coron, Palawan.

Viacom said in a statement the resort would open in 2020 and feature restaurants and lounges six meters below sea level. The development would "advocate ocean protection," the statement said.

The project will be located amid a cluster of 16 white-sand islands of the CWP. The company said with a distance of 5 to 20 minutes apart by speedboat.

visitors could expect a multi-island experience within CWP that would include island hopping, hidden lagoons, hot springs, an animal reserve and world-class diving amidst shipwrecks.

It said when completed, CWP would be the largest coral reef conservation program in Asia, with Asia's largest marine sanctuary for five key species – dolphins, sea cows, sea horses, turtles and whale sharks.

The Ocean Protection program is jointly funded by Monaco-based Dr. AB Moñozca Foundation and its CWP Trust, and supported by global personalities

change.

CWP will open in phases starting 2018 and is within a three to six hour radius to major cities within Asia.

Environment groups, however, strongly opposed the development of the theme park. Oceana Philippines vice president Gloria Estenzo Ramos said "the proposed plan is unsustainable and will irreparably damage the marine ecosystems and displace our artisanal fisherfolk."

"I'm wondering if a thorough environmental and social impact assessment has been done for

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Underwater resort sa Palawan tinutululan

Inilunsad kahapon ng conservation groups at mga concerned citizens ang kanilang online protest-kaugnay sa planong pagpapatayo ng underwater resort at theme park sa Palawan.

Ito ay pinangunahan ng Save Philippine Seas, na iniendorso ang isang petisyon na pigilin ang Viacom International Media Networks sa kanilang plano.

Inanunsyo ng US children's television network na Nickelodeon ang plano nitong pagtatayo ng isang underwater resort at theme park sa Palawan, na kilala bilang "last ecological frontier" ng Pilipinas.

Ayon sa Nickelodeon, ang parke sa Palawan

ay magiging bahagi ng 400-ektaryang undersea development na magpapakita sa marine life sa nasabing lugar na magbibigay ng pagkakataon sa mga fans na makasalamuha ang kanilang mga paboritong characters.

Kilala ang Nickelodeon sa pagpapalabas ng sikat na SpongeBob Square pants, Dora the Explorer at maraming iba pang animated shows na patok sa mga bata.

"Coron is not Bikini Bottom!" anang Save Philippines Seas kung saan pinasinungalingan nito ang pahayag ng kompanya na ang theme park ay pagsusulong sa pangangalaga ng karagatan.

Ayon sa Viacom na nagmamay-ari sa Nicke-

lodeon, inanunsyo nilang magbubukas ang nasabing resort sa 2020, na magkakaroon pa ng mga restaurants na nakalubog six meters o 20 feet below sea level.

Gayunman, nanindigan ang Greenpeace na sisirain lamang ng nasabing proyekto ang marine ecosystem na kilala sa buong mundo.

Ayon kay Vince Cinches ng Greenpeace Southeast Asia, nakalulungkot at nakababahala ang pagtatayo ng ganito kalaking theme park sa ilalim ng tubig.

Hindi aniya maisusulong ang environmental protection sa pamamagitan ng pagtatayo ng mga ganitong istruktura.
(Betchai Julian)

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR issues OTP to Petron clearing its continued operations

BY LENIE LECTURA @llectura

PETRON Corp. has been cleared by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) of alleged environmental and health violations.

The DENR, Petron President Ramon S. Ang said, "has already issued an Ore Transport Permit [OTP]."

This permit is crucial as it allows the transport of ore from the mines to the market. If such permit is not issued, it effectively stops the company's operations.

"The OTP was issued. *Itinawagna kanina*. The DENR was just misled," said Ang, who is also the president of San Miguel Corp. (SMC). Petron is a subsidiary of SMC.

It was not clear if the permit was already handed to Petron Corp.'s 140

megawatt (MW) cogeneration plant in Limay, Bataan. Ang only said calls were made to issue the permit.

Ang revealed this after his meeting with Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez on Wednesday morning. During the meeting, Ang said he brought all the legal documents to prove not one of the company-owned facilities violated any laws.

The mayor of Limay, Bataan, alleged there were "environmental issues and problems posed by the oil spill at the Bataan Thermal Power Plant [BTPP]/Pan Asia area; oil spill

near the mouth of the Alangan river, and the ash dump near the Petron Limay Terminal [PLT] area."

The company was issued notices of violation on December 28, 2016, and January 6, 2017, by the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) for ash that had allegedly polluted a waterway.

Ang said the oil spill incident at the BTPP occurred in July last year and was caused by a former employee of the contractor by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

"The spill is 5 kilometers away from the Petron facility. The mayor of Limay wrote nine letters blaming us for the spill. Why blame us when the BTPP is owned by the NPC [National Power Corp.] and the pipeline was damaged by the DPWH?" Ang said.

On accusation of ash dump near the mouth of Alangan river, Ang said this incident could not be blamed on Petron because the facility is 2 km away from the river.

"The issue of scattered ash near the river is not true. The bottom ash will be brought to the cement plant as raw mix to clinker so *walang mag-generate na waste*. *Lahat ng plant na CFB* [circulating fluidized bed] *Kahit*

is targeted to start full commercial operations by August 2018.

Unit 1 will be commissioned in May 2017; Unit 2 by August 2017; Unit 3 by June 2017; and Unit 4 by August 2018. "It is not yet running



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR allows SMC unit to move out ash stockpile

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON and DANESSA RIVERA

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has allowed SMC Consolidated Power Corp. (SMC-CPC) to move its stockpile out of its Bataan facilities.

Environment Secretary Gina Lopez said she would immediately approve a transport permit for the stockpiles to be removed out of the area to prevent further damage to the host community in Limay where the Petron Bataan Refinery (PBR) is located.

"The problem is they do not have the permit to move it out and DENR is in a position to give the permit and I will give it so we get the ash out," Lopez said in a briefing yesterday.

"They have to submit a formal request now and we will give it to them as soon as possible," Environment Undersecretary Arturo Valdez said.

Valdez added the company would need to disclose where it plans to put the stockpiles once the permit is granted.

San Miguel Corp. president Ramon S. Ang met with Lopez yesterday to defend the group from allegations of ash spill coming from the facilities of its subsidiaries SMCCPC and Petron Corp.

Ang said the alleged coal ash spill was actually lime powder and never reached the nearby Alangan River.

"What we need is an ore transport

permit from DENR. If we secure that, we don't need an ash pond. (Because) whatever we generate everyday, we haul this to the cement plant, we sell it," Ang said, noting the limestone powder is being used as a raw material in producing cement.

The Environmental Management Bureau of the DENR is responsible for the implementation of various environmental laws, rules and regulations, including Presidential Decree 1586 or the law establishing the Environmental Impact Assessment System that requires an environmental compliance certificate (ECC).

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



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DENR probe vs Bataan coal plant, sinimulan na

Naglunsad na ng imbestigasyon ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) laban sa isang coal plant sa Limay, Bataan kaugnay ng reklamo ng mga residente na nagkakasakit na dahil sa makapal na abong ibinubuga ng planta.

Sinabi ng DENR na nagpadala na ang kagawaran ng mga tauhan sa lugar upang mag-imbestiga bilang tugon na rin sa reklamong inihain ng nasa 19 na residente na kabilang sa mga pamilyang naaapektuhan o

nagkakasakit dahil sa ash fall.

Ayon sa DENR, isasailalim nila sa acidity at fineness tests ang abo mula sa nasabing open ash dump upang matukoy ang tindi ng panganib na naidudulot nito sa mga residente.

Naiulat na aabot sa 55,000 cubic meters ng abo ang natuklasan sa isang mababaw na hukay sa loob ng planta, na ayon sa DENR ay isa lamang sa mga paglabag sa ipinaiiral na basic safety standards ng kagawaran.

Rommel P. Tabbad



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DENR GRANTS PERMIT

PETRON MOVES TO RESOLVE SETTLERS' COMPLAINTS; TO SHIP 'ASH' OUT OF BATAAN PLANT

By Daxim L. Lucas
@daxINQ

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will grant Petron Corporation a permit to transport limestone byproducts of its oil refining activities out of its sprawling production complex in Limay, Bataan to put to rest complaints by nearby illegal settlers about supposed ill effects on their health caused by the powdery substance.

In a press briefing, the president of San Miguel Corp.—the

parent firm of the country's largest petroleum refiner and distributor—said Energy Secretary Gina Lopez gave the order for the transport permit to be issued after she was briefed on the situation on Wednesday morning.

"We will immediately move that limestone ash out of there as soon as we receive the permit," Ramon Ang told reporters in a briefing after his meeting with Lopez. "This is a good solution for us, as we can take this limestone ash straight to our cement plants."

San Miguel also owns a cement production firm which, Ang explained, benefits from the lime ash byproduct since it can be made into gypsum, an additive needed to prevent the cement from hardening too fast.

"I explained to Secretary Lopez that what we have there is not coal ash, but lime," he said, explaining that it was impossible for coal to be the cause of nearby residents' supposed respiratory difficulties because the adjacent San Miguel power plant has pushed back to May 2017 its

schedule to start operating using coal to run its turbines.

"The plants are running on diesel right now. There's no coal," he said. "So what coal ash are they complaining about?"

Unlike other coal-fired power plants, Ang said San Miguel throws away no waste byproducts since everything is used as raw material for cement production. The ash resulting from the burning of coal is "pozzolanic" in nature and, as such, is also used as a cement production additive.

"We throw away nothing here that can pollute the envi-

ronment," he said, adding that the ash was valuable because it was being sold to a sister firm for \$100 per ton.

The San Miguel chief also said the skin rashes that residents have been complaining about were determined by local health officials to be scabies, which is an infectious skin disease caused by tick bites.

This, he said, is caused by being in close contact with dogs and livestock, and has nothing to do with the refinery's powder byproduct.

"Nonetheless, we have health

services for the community in a large, well-equipped clinic that they can avail of for free," he said.

Ang pointed out that the residents—many of whom are informal settlers who encroached on Petron-owned land—have so far refused offers to be relocated to a nearby property.

He added the number of informal settlers swelled in recent years when Petron was conducting a \$2-billion upgrade for its "RMP 2" refinery because of the large volume of scrap metal generated by the project. INQ

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Swiss aid agency puts up 'social forestry' fund for 8 ASEAN states

A "social forestry" quick response grant fund was put up by a Swiss agency for eight Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries to help in the immediate needs arising from climate change, hunger, and poverty concerns.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is extending in the next three years the grant through the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) as project implementor.

The program is the third phase of the ASEAN-Swiss Partnership on Social

Forestry and Climate Change (ASFCC), which will benefit the Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

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

SEARCA Director Gil Saguiguit Jr. said a streamlined process will be implemented to speed up release of grant assistance to beneficiaries.

Eligible types of project proposals include quick turnaround studies to aid decision-making, exploratory review of emerging problems, analytical studies,

dialogues and roundtable discussions, and study tours.

Saguiguit said a trust fund is being conceptualized by SEARCA as a long term program after this grant program is piloted under the ASEAN Social Forestry Network Strategic Response Fund (ASRF).

"This can become the precursor or test bed for the creation of an ASRF Trust Fund," Saguiguit said.

"ASRF will also support ASEAN regional initiatives in support of the ASEAN Multi-sectoral Framework on Climate Change: Agriculture and Forestry towards Food Security and the ASEAN Vision for Food, Agriculture and Forestry," he added.



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Chinese traders urged to stop selling candles with lead

CHINESE candle retailers in Chinatown, Manila, were urged to refrain from selling candles with leaded wicks which are harmful to the health especially of children.

The EcoWaste Coalition went to 11 stores in Chinatown to ask retailers to stop the importation, distribution and sale of candles with leaded wicks.

The Food and Drug Administration earlier issued an advisory against the use of candles with leaded wicks. "As a lead-cored wick candle burns, some of the lead may vaporize and be released into the air. This airborne lead may be inhaled and may deposit onto floors, furniture and other surfaces in the room where children may be exposed to it," the FDA warned.

The FDA said that exposure to lead emissions can result in increased blood lead levels in unborn babies, babies and young children adding that other toxic effects include neurological damage, delayed mental and physical development, and attention and learning deficiencies.

The EcoWaste Coalition in 2014 bought imported candles with lead-cored wicks from Wonderful Trading, a shop selling Chinese prayer articles, and then sent them to a private laboratory for lead content analysis. As per the laboratory test report, the wicks of approximately 20 candles were found to contain 20.735 percent lead, which is way above the 0.06 percent limit imposed in Australia.

Countries like Australia, Finland, Denmark and USA had banned the sale of candles with lead-cored wicks. Australia in 2002 imposed a permanent ban on candles with wicks that contain 0.06 percent lead.

"Fortunately, most locally-made candles are non-cored wicks made of braided or twisted cotton and present no risk of lead pollution," Thony Dizon, Coordinator, EcoWaste Coalition's Project Protect said.

"As a precaution against lead exposure, we advise consumers to patronize locally made candles with non-cored wicks and avoid those with cored wicks as the metal inside may be lead-based," he added.

"While the advisory did not ban the sale of lead-cored wick candles as we have sought, it clearly warned that the purchase and use of such candles pose an 'imminent hazard to the public health,' providing a cue that such products must not be produced and sold at all. There is no known level of lead exposure that is considered safe," Dizon said.

Lead, as a cumulative toxicant, can build up in the

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Vice governors push for solar lighting

The country's most far-flung areas would soon get night light as the League of Vice Governors of the Philippines (LVGP) recently forged a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with My Shelter Foundation's Liter of Light program for the provision of affordable, sustainable solar light to people with limited or no access to electricity.

Under the MOA, which was facilitated by and LVGP official Jo Kristine Revil (Masbate), the provinces through the Vice Governors, Sangguniang Panlalawigan, private sector and civil society groups will endeavor to provide inexpensive lighting to remote barangays across the archipelago.

Founded by Filipino social entrepreneur Illac Diaz, the project has installed more than 350,000 bottle lights in more than 15 countries and taught green skills to empower grass-roots groups.

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Concrete action vs air pollution needed

A lady business executive has urged a more concrete action against climate change and bewailed the lack of enforcement of environmental laws.

"We are aware of the grave threat posed by the phenomenon but it seems we tolerate it," Ruth Marie Atienza, operations manager of Mapecon Philippines Inc., said.

Atienza noted that at this stage there are many vehicles roaming the roads belching carbon monoxide and factory buildings emitting black smoke. Carbon dioxide is the main culprit in air pollution.

Atienza's stance echoed that of World Bank president Jim Yong Kim who said pollution is not being taken seriously and time is running out to avoid

consequences like flooded cities and dried out farmlands.

He also said, "We are quickly coming to a point where we are not going to be able to keep global warming below two degrees Celsius."

The World Health Organization in a report in the International New York Times said air pollution is the biggest single environmental risk.

Figures released by WHO stated that from the tails of vehicle pipes to dung-fired stoves from India claimed seven million lives around the globe in 2012. WHO also said one third of deaths occurred in the fast-developing Asian countries where rate of cardiovascular and pulmonary diseases have been on the rise.

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SUSTAINING MARINE BIODIVERSITY

A representative from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) of the Department of Agriculture outlines his agency's support for management of the Marine Protected Areas in Lanuza Bay, Surigao del Sur to a gathering of local stakeholders. HARIBON FOUNDATION PHOTO

Haribon promotes marine management

CONSERVATION group Haribon Foundation has been working with communities around Lanuza Bay, Surigao del Sur to sustain marine management after development programs end, the group reported this week.

The Philippines ranks third in the world for marine biodiversity, Haribon said. With more than a hundred marine key biodiversity areas, the country's waters host globally significant species threatened with extinction.

As a response, site scale conservation of marine protected areas has been inaugurated in the past years through funded projects. Despite this, assisted communities are commonly faced with the dilemma of finding ways to sustain momentum whenever a project closes — a typical scenario in development work.

What will happen to the marine protected areas and its management bodies when a project ends? How will they continue to sustain programs in biodiversity conservation and income generation? This concern unsettled Pepe Montañez of the Adlay Fisherfolk Multi-Purpose Cooperation (AFMPC) of the municipality of Carrascal in Surigao del Sur. He, along with members of other organizations and local government units, have been clamoring for sustainable solutions plaguing the marine protected areas (MPAs) and marine protected area networks (MPAN) in the last twenty years.

According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a marine protected area or MPA is a "clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed... to achieve long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values."

A multifaceted approach for sustainability

Through a multifaceted perspective, the Strengthening the Marine Protected Areas to Protect the Marine Key Biodiversity Areas in the Philippines (SMARTSeas) Project in

ment Bureau, Haribon and its local partner, the Lanuza Bay Development Alliance, will assist the local government units and the management bodies to strengthen MPA and MPA network in Lanuza Bay for five years.

There are more than 16 MPAs in Lanuza Bay. It is home to one of the first MPAs established in the Caraga region in 1996 — the Tigao Fish Sanctuary in Barangay Tigao in the municipality of Cortes. This was two years before the enactment of the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998, otherwise known as Republic Act 8550.

Each of the 16 MPAs has a management body mainly composed of fishers and other sectors, with the support of the barangay and municipal/city government.

Through SMARTSeas, these 16 MPAs have upgraded their strategic management plans. To sustain current initiatives, they have identified funded and unfunded activities and created a business plan that were presented to the Caraga regional offices of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Tourism (DOT), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and the local governments of Lanuza Bay.

This new direction ensures that in the next three years, activities that gain no support from the local government still push through.

In 2016, national government offices signified support for the all of 2017, ranging from provision of marker buoys to mark MPA boundaries, training on tourism management planning, bird watching and food services for MPAs with tourism potential, and training on coral reef monitoring.

The DOT suggested an integrated tourism plan that will link each municipality in Lanuza Bay to different tourism opportunities, and prevent competition and overlapping of products and services (e.g. snorkeling and diving, river cruising, bird watching).

Manong Pepe, the MPA management bodies and local governments continue to



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Pangasinan finds ylang-ylang gold

By EVA VISPERAS

MANGATAREM – Pangasinenses have found a gold mine in the fragrant ylang-ylang as about 200,000 seedlings of the *Cananga odorata* – ilang-ilang in Filipino – have been transplanted and more are being propagated in a nursery in barangay Bueno.

Since the start of propagation of ylang-ylang last July, 120 hectares of public land in Barangay Hacienda, Bugallon town; more than 100 hectares in sitio Mapita, Barangay Laoag, Aguilar town, and another 80 hectares in Barangay Banto-

caling, Mangatarem have been planted to this tree by members of people's organizations assisted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources through its National Greening Program.

Second District Rep. Leopoldo Bataoil set up the ylang-ylang propagation project for his constituents with the help of his high school classmate and businessman Fred Reyes, one of the country's top perfume distributors. The seeds are abundantly available in Anao, Tarlac, Bataoil said.

Reyes co-owns Philippines-based Chemworld Fragrance Factory that will buy the ylang-ylang oil products of Pangasinan for local use and export.

Reyes told Bataoil there is a big demand for ylang-ylang oil both here and abroad.

It takes five years before the plants can produce flowers with bloom cycles lasting 25 years, Bataoil said.

"It's a sure livelihood for our people," Bataoil said.

Bataoil said the growing of ylang-ylang would not be limited to the three towns as other towns may also plant it provided they can conform with specifications and their products would be sold to the company.

He said they would con-





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Pangasinan finds ylang-ylang gold

The essential oil derived from the flowers is used in aromatherapy.

Mangatarem municipal councilor Ricardo Pastor Jr., caretaker of the ylang-ylang nursery here, said about 60,720 seedlings have been planted in Bugallon, another 22,240 seedlings in Bantocaling, Mangatarem and 70,000 in Aguilar town for the first batch of transplanting.

Another 200,000 seedlings are being grown and expected for distribution in June for the second batch.

This month, about 15 kilos of ylang-ylang seeds that can produce 150,000 seedlings are expected to arrive, Pastor said.

Pastor said they have 75 percent survival rate.

"Yes, we found a gold mine in ylang-ylang," he said.

Pastor said each ylang-ylang tree that flowers year-round can produce three kilos of flowers per week.

The flowers are harvested early morning or late afternoon when there is no sunlight.

Chemworld is set to put up a mobile facility to extract the oil and store it for pick-up.

The nursery here employs 12 workers, some of them out-of-school youths.

Pastor and his group also go school hopping, campaigning about ylang-ylang planting and distributing seedlings.

He said last Dec. 31, he talked to indigenous people about ylang-ylang and they

manifested interest to plant in about 200 hectares of public land in Labrador town.

Bataoil said Reyes would buy the ylang-ylang oil produce.

He quoted Reyes as saying that "in this kind of industry, market is not a problem."

Reyes will put up an extraction facility and buying station in Bataoil's district to assure planters of a ready market.

Bataoil spoke in a forum with the Management Association of the Philippines last month on his ylang-ylang initiative.

He said the project addresses the need for livelihood of his constituents especially the marginalized sectors. One tree yields a harvest of three kilos of flowers per week or about P180 worth, he said.

It also works alongside climate change concerns with the National Greening Program as a major responder, he said.

The congressman also hopes to bring back the glory days of ylang-ylang production in the Philippines and to make the second district of Pangasinan the country's major producer.

Environment Secretary Gina Lopez came to the ylang-ylang nursery here when she visited the Mangatarem hot spring last month.

"She got excited. She was so happy to learn about this," Bataoil said.

Olivier de Bontin, writing about about ylang-ylang oil

production in Madagascar and the Comoros, said, "It is generally thought that ylang-ylang originated from either the Molucca islands or the Philippines. Its name arises from the Filipino word *Alang-ilang*, which expresses the lightness and mobility of the flower to the least breath of wind."

The study said that the first cultivation of ylang-ylang for commercial distillation occurred in the 19th century in the north of Manila.

"Until the beginning of the 20th century, ylang-ylang Manila was almost the only source of the oil and it was regarded as the best and finest for a long time afterwards," the study said.

Proper care

Every ylang-ylang given to an interested planter is accompanied by a small piece of paper containing pointers on its proper care.

The note says, "Please plant this ylang-ylang seedling in your backyard or in an open field. In five years, it will bear flowers all year round. About three kilos of flowers per tree per week can be harvested, if properly grown and well maintained. Currently, the cost per kilo is P60. Therefore, expected income is P180/tree/week."

Care instructions were also indicated: distance between trees must be six meters; use organic fertilizer only and prune regularly so the tree will not exceed six feet.

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The Manila Times

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERV

RESEARCH STUDY FINDS: Cities can be a safe haven for endangered species

ENDANGERED animals can sometimes flourish in urban areas, researchers from Hong Kong and Australia found in a recent study published in *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*.

The researchers explained that the persistent trafficking of wild species is helping some of them survive in relative safety.

"Across the planet, poachers have reached into the last remote habitats to harvest wildlife populations used for clothing, eaten, or kept as pets in faraway cities," said Dr. Luke Gibson from the School of Biological Sciences of the University of Hong Kong, who led the study.

"In some cases, the traded organisms have escaped and are now thriving in their introduced habitats," he added.

In their study, the authors identified 49 globally threatened species—those listed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered—which have established introduced populations outside their native areas. These include amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and birds, as well as insects and plants, with introduced populations found on all continents except Antarctica.

One example is the yellow-crested cockatoo, critically endangered due



UNEXPECTED REFUGE Some endangered species, such as this yellow-crested cockatoo, are thriving in urban areas as a result of the illicit wildlife trade, researchers in Hong Kong and Australia found in a recent study. PHOTO BY PHYS.ORG

to capture for the pet trade. Ironically, many of these pet birds were accidentally or deliberately released in their new environments. The study said that currently, about 200 yellow-crested cockatoos—an estimated ten percent of the bird's global population—are found on Hong Kong Island, mostly between Pokfulam and Happy Valley.

"This is a key example of how Hong Kong—a heavily urbanized city-state—can play a role in the conservation of globally threatened species," said co-author Yong Ding

Li, a PhD student at the Australian National University.

Reintroduction of this species to its native range in Indonesia and East Timor could help to buffer populations there, which are rapidly declining due to poaching, Li explained. As an option, collecting the introduced cockatoos in Hong Kong to trade as pets could offset demand from the bird's native range.

Both approaches could also eliminate threats the introduced population might pose to native species in

the new environment, such as monopolizing nesting sites and triggering population declines of local birds.

Combined, augmenting declining populations in their native ranges and eliminating the threats to native ecosystems could "save two birds with one stone," Gibson said.

"This creative tactic could be essential to save species imperiled by wildlife trade as well as eliminate threats the same species pose in their adopted territories," he added.

BEN KRITZ

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Hedcor moves to protect Talomo River in Davao



HEDCOR VP for Mindanao Operations Rolando G. Pacquiao (left) signs the memorandum of agreement with Region 11 Regional Director Metodio U. Turbella (right) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR) Environment Management Bureau and Mintal, Davao City Barangay Captain Ramon B. Bargamento II for the adoption and protection of the 3.55-kilometer stretch of Talomo River in support of DENR's Adopt-a-River Program.

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Hedcor moves to protect Talomo River in Davao

DAVAO CITY—Four kilometers (km) of the Talomo River will now be under the protection of run-of-river hydropower company Hedcor Inc., in partnership with the local government unit (LGU) of Barangay Mintal, Davao City.

The move is Hedcor's way of reinforcing its support of the Adopt-a-River Program of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Talomo River is the source of water for Hedcor's longest-running Talomo Hydropower facilities in Davao, with a combined installed capacity of 4.47 megawatts (MW). Hedcor vowed to work with the local government of Barangay Mintal for the conservation and development of the river to improve its water quality.

To fulfill its commitment, Hedcor will continue its regular cleanup activities and its Information Education Campaign on the importance of riverbank stabilization and river protection. Also, Hedcor will participate in community-mobilization activities of the DENR and the LGU to solicit community participation and support for the program and ultimately provide a healthy, clean and safe environment.

"Aside from tree planting, they also do river cleanup drives and other environmental activities. Because of this, I am more than thankful to Hedcor. Davao City is truly blessed to have this company. They do more of what is required; they are more than

compliant, unlike other companies," DENR's Environment Management Bureau Region 11 Regional Director Metodjo U. Turbella said.

In 2013 Hedcor adopted a 31-km stretch of Sibulan River in Davao del Sur.

Hedcor is a wholly owned subsidiary of Aboitiz Power. It specializes in generating renewable energy from run-of-river hydropower systems. Today, Hedcor manages and operates 22 hydropower plants and supplies the country with 185 MW of clean and renewable energy. With more than 30 years of experience, Hedcor is the leading run-of-river developer in the Philippines.

Aboitiz Power is the holding company for the Aboitiz Group's investments in power generation, distribution and retail electricity services.

The company is one of the largest power producers in the Philippines with a balanced-mix portfolio of assets located across the country. It is a major producer of Cleanergy, its brand for clean and renewable energy, with several hydroelectric and geothermal power-generation facilities. It also has various fossil-fired power plants in its generation portfolio to support the baseload and peak-energy demands of the country.

The company also owns distribution utilities that operate in high-growth areas in Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao, including the second- and third-largest private utilities in the country.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Lawmaker renews call for solid waste management observance

By FREDDIE Q. LAYO

SAN FERNANDO CITY, La Union – A lawmaker has renewed her call for everyone's contribution to strictly observe and implement Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management (ESWM) Law to further attain a zero waste economy.

Senator Loren Legarda, principal author of R.A. 9003, said ecological solid waste management should be a way of life to attain a zero waste economy.

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

The senator added that the whole community should be involved and every household should implement segregation at source and practice

the 3Rs — reduce, reuse, recycle.

"To our local leaders from the provincial, city and municipal levels down to the barangay, greater action is expected as they are tasked to implement the law. It is the barangay that must collect all segregated waste, which should go to the barangay MRF for proper waste management," Legarda explained.

Biodegradable waste goes to composting, animal feeds or biogas; while recyclables go to the junk shops. Only residual waste should be collected by the city or municipal truck.

Meanwhile, special or hazardous waste will go to the city/municipal MRF for proper treatment or disposal in coordination with the Environmental Management Bureau.

"A zero waste lifestyle may seem difficult at first especially since many are not yet used to it, but let us take it as a simple sacrifice that would make our surroundings cleaner, safer and healthier," Legarda added.

For his part, Forester Eduardo T. Malasig, the chief of the solid waste management section of the EMB Region 1, reported that a region-wide cleanup drive is set on January 20, 2017.



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YEARENDER

Phl wins arbitration case vs China, but...

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The year 2016 saw the Philippines scoring an international legal victory against China in the West Philippine Sea dispute, but straining ties with the United States, the European Union and the United Nations because of the bloody war on drugs of the new administration.

Since 2012, China has been aggressively claiming islands and shoals in the South China Sea, even those within Philippine territory. Beijing's basis for its expansive and excessive claims is its historic rights to a nine-dash line in the disputed sea.

But in a landmark ruling on July 12, 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague found no legal basis for China's nine-dash line. The PCA ruled that China had breached the sovereign rights of the Philippines.

The PCA also ruled that many purported islands controlled by China are not in islands but reefs or rocks, which do not generate territorial rights.

China has refused to honor the ruling. Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhermin even accused the judges of taking bribes from the Philippines in exchange for a favorable ruling.

It was the previous Aquino administration that filed a case against China's excessive claims in the South China Sea.

The PCA released its ruling during the Duterte administration, which put the landmark ruling on the back burner to improve Philippines-China relations.

Former foreign affairs secretary Albert del Rosario, the top diplomat of the



File photo shows anti-China groups releasing balloons after a UN-backed arbitral tribunal released its ruling favoring the Philippines in a rally in Manila.

MIGUEL DE GUZMAN

declaring that it would set aside the PCA ruling and for not protesting China's deployment of missile systems in the South China Sea.

Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop also questioned why the Duterte administration is not enforcing the PCA ruling. She said she was surprised by Duterte's decision not to allow the Philippines to join the joint patrols in the South China Sea and not to traverse the territory the PCA found within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Perfecto Yasay Jr. said the Philippines would not stop China from building military structures on disputed islands in the South China Sea because countries can separately deal with China regarding the presence of military weapons on the structures they built in the South China Sea.

Beijing expressed willing-

Strained ties with US, EU, UN

As the Philippines' relations with China improved, ties with its long-time ally the US, as well as the EU and UN, were strained.

The fallout started after Duterte threw insults at the US, EU and UN for criticizing his bloody war on drugs, which has been marked by summary killings and human rights violations.

The US and EU urged the Duterte government to put an end to the current wave of extrajudicial killings, launch an immediate investigation into them and adopt specific, comprehensive policies and programs in full compliance with national and international obligations and respect for human rights.

Duterte even threatened to leave the UN as he lambasted the statements of UN special rapporteurs who urged his administration to stop summary

pointment and frustration of the Duterte administration with international human rights experts who urged the Philippines to stop drug-related killings.

Addressing the United Nations General Assembly in September, Yasay told the UN that the world should not interfere in the Philippine government's action against illegal drugs, saying it has been widely misunderstood.

'Independent foreign policy'

In September, Duterte announced that he would chart an independent foreign policy and "open alliances" with China and Russia.

He said the Philippines would pass a "point of no return" in its relations with the US, in a bid to strengthen ties with others.

During his visit to Manila in October, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Russel said Washington does not want the Philippines to choose between the US and China and they do not object to improved relations.

He said it is a mistake to think that improved relations between Manila and Beijing somehow come at the expense of the US:

"That's not how we think." "This should be addition and not subtraction," Russel told reporters after meeting with Yasay. "We don't want countries to have to choose between US and China but we do want countries to be able to choose, to have choices, to have autonomy,