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17 JAN 2017

Tuesday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

More free land titles given to landless

ILOILO CITY—The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Western Visayas aims to distribute 4,478 free land titles to the landless this year.

DENR Regional Director Jim Sampulna said 2,728 residential land titles and 1,750 agricultural land titles will be distributed in Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras, and Iloilo provinces.

"Our goal is to provide the legal and rightful beneficiaries their much-deserved land titles," Sampulna said. "With this, they have the chance to devote their piece of land to some thing that could give them economic gains."

Data from the regional DENR's

Licenses, Patents and Deeds Division (LPDD) showed that 4,042 land titles were distributed last year.

LPDD Chief Hector Garrido said that the distribution of residential and agriculture land titles posted a gain of 103.89 percent and 115.22 percent respectively.

The Duterte administration is pushing for higher target in the issuance of land patents since it is anchored on the Philippine Agenda 21, which is the national agenda for sustainable development.

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Reforestation target surpassed

By **RESTITUTO A. IBIT**

TACLOBAN CITY — The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) regional office in Eastern Visayas exceeded its reforestation target in 2016.

DENR Regional Director Leonardo Sibbaluca told reporters his office targeted 15,687 hectares for reforestation under the National Greening Program, and the actual area planted was 16,816 has., a 107 percent increase.

Eastern Visayas comprises the provinces of Northern Samar, Samar, Eastern Samar, Leyte, Southern Leyte and Biliran.

Sibbaluca said the seedling production also surpassed its target last year. A total of 27,993,186 seedlings were produced, a 116 percent higher than the 24,196,376 seedling target.

He said the reforestation program utilized a budget of P567,744,000 which covered seedling production, protection

and maintenance of established plantation, site preparation and planting activities and monitoring and evaluation.

The reforestation project provided livelihood for the people in the countryside especially those who were victims of Typhoon "Yolanda." "The reforestation and plantation establishments were maintained by various people's organizations and they earned money for their services rendered," Sibbaluca said.

In terms of employment, the DENR regional office also exceeded its target for the year. He said that a total of 137,057 jobs were generated out of the 111,178 target.

Saving the dying Laguna Lake

COMMENTARY

MELITON B. JUANICO

Looking at the shape and location of Laguna Lake on our map, we can say it is the heart of the Filipino nation. If we attach nearby Metro Manila to it, the conjoined regions with their economic clout actually function as the life-maintaining organ of the Philippines. But its physical arteries and valves, so to speak, are so clogged with human detritus that it really has to undergo the equivalent of open-heart surgery. It appears that the only doctors with the will to perform the complex and messy operation and save the dying organ are Environment Secretary Gina Lopez and President Duterte.

The lake is a tangled web of interconnected issues that need decisive solutions, and its carrying capacity as an ecosystem has long been exceeded. It is an area contested by many users, especially between fish pen and fish cage owners (big businessmen, retired generals, politicians) and small fishers, and between users for domestic, industrial and irrigation water, tourism/recreation, and transportation. It is choked with sediment and silt as a result of the unabated forest denudation in the uplands of the 24 sub-watersheds around its basin, as well as the constant deposit of solid wastes by households and factories located in the basin.

The lake has become shallow—an average of only 2.5 meters—and this has resulted in the perennial flooding of the

low-lying areas of the shore. Thus, the more than 450,000 informal settlers in the lake's salvage zone are constantly vulnerable, as was shown, for instance, by the devastating floods wrought by Tropical Storm "Ondoy" in 2009.

It is also dying in the sense that its water quality has deteriorated to Class C, which may still be good for fishery but is no longer fit for bathing. This is the result of unchecked bad practices that make of the lake a convenient waste depository, with the volume of water pollution accounted for by households (69 percent), industries (19 percent), and agriculture (12 percent).

The strategies to address these problems are combinations of conservation, rehabilitation and development for each problem, translated by the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) into programs and projects. What have been proposed are costly big-ticket projects as well as cheaper soft projects that are just as effective. But as with so many projects and plans in the country, the problem lies in the implementation. The LLDA and the local government units in the lake basin lack

the political will to implement not only their rules and regulations but also local ordinances and laws. The sub-watershed management councils tasked with coordinating activities in the lake basin have been operating in a lackluster manner.

For now, a necessary move that will put order in the lake is the strict implementation of the Lake Zoning and Management Plan (or Zomap) that will rationalize and regulate the use of the lake's resources as well as resolve equity problems especially between the rapacious owners of fish pens and fish cages and the powerless small fishers. If the Zomap is fully implemented, it will show a beautiful heart-shaped image of the lake from the air—one that President Duterte would wish to see after nothing with dismay the disarray of structures and the murky waters in the lake. The Zomap depicts an orderly arrangement of fish cages, navigational lanes, fish sanctuary, and shoreline easements rid of informal settlers (check the LLDA website).

The inaction of the LLDA is distressing, and to think that it is under the Office of the President!

Meliton B. Juanico is a retired professor of geography at the University of the Philippines Diliman. He is a licensed environmental planner and is active in consultancy work in urban and regional planning.

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Endangered turtles rescued

By MONOYE LACSON

ZAMBOANGA — Two hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelis Imbricata*), the most endangered sea turtle in the world, were rescued and released recently to the Sulu Sea, their natural habitat and foraging ground.

Dr. Filemon G. Romero, Professor Emeritus of Mindanao State University-Tawi-Tawi said that a local resident of Sitangkai town had kept the turtles in captivity for years and reared them as pets.

Romero and Sitangkai Councilors Hadji Allan Ahaja, Aldimar Awadi, and Hadja Marilyn Joe immediately retrieved the marine turtles at a residence at Barangay Panglima Alari in Sitangkai after they learned of the incident.

The team learned about the hawksbill

turtles after Altan Ishmael, a marine biology graduate and staff of MSU-Tawi-Tawi photographed and posted images of the turtles on his Facebook account.

Romero, the Tawi-Tawi Site Coordinator of the Protect Wildlife Project of Development Alternatives, Inc., (DAI) funded by the USAID, said that hawksbill turtles are critically endangered under the Red List Category of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Dr. Romero reiterated Republic Act 9147 or the Wildlife Resources Conservation Act which states that keeping wildlife species, especially those threatened, vulnerable, and endangered like the hawksbill turtle in captivity is prohibited by law.

Its population is rapidly decreasing due to overexploitation of adult females and gathering of eggs at nesting beaches.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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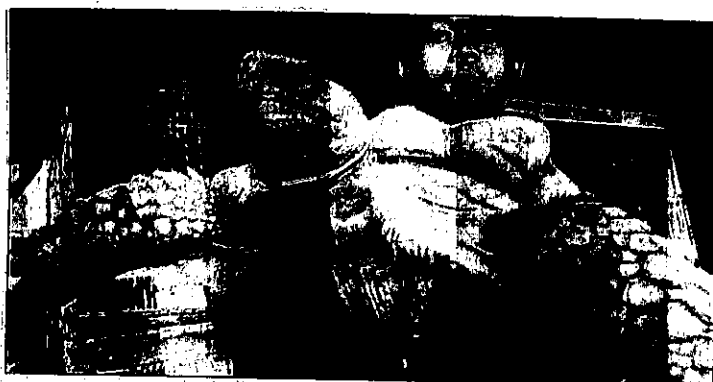


Photo shows a nine-year-old African spurred tortoise, which was sold for P175,000 during the Kuyamis Festival in Cagayan de Oro City yesterday.

GERRY LEE GORIT

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BusinessMirror

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

editorial

Paris Agreement is no panacea

SENATE President Aquilino L. Pimentel III said last week he sees the Senate ratifying the Paris Agreement within six months, to concur with President Duterte's commitment to sign the pact that seeks to limit global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius, mainly by burning less gas, coal and oil.

The Philippines's ratification of the Paris Agreement would bind the country into cutting its greenhouse-gas emissions by 70 percent by 2030.

Duterte initially had second thoughts about signing the Paris Agreement, arguing that big polluters, like the United States, China and other European Union countries, should be the first to cut their carbon emissions. But we welcome the President's change of heart and the Senate's expression of support for the climate pact. The Philippines, after all, is a leader of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), an international partnership of highly vulnerable nations. Countries composing the CVF, including some of our Southeast Asian neighbors, are among the first to be affected by climate change and the last to recover from disasters caused by extreme weather events.

Ondoy, Pepeng, Yolanda, Pablo and Sendong—these are just some of the deadliest tropical storms that hit the Philippines in recent years, causing thousands of deaths and billions in damage. We need no further proof, obviously, being a perennial climate-change victim ourselves, that reducing carbon emissions is necessary. And signing on to the Paris Agreement can only strengthen our leadership in voicing the concerns of vulnerable nations on the impact of climate change.

But while the Paris Agreement can lay the groundwork for meaningful, collective action, make no mistake, it is no panacea. Avoiding the most catastrophic effects of climate change will require more than the actions of countries and their governments. It will also require the concrete actions of individuals, their communities, workplaces and various organizations.

Long before the Paris Agreement became a byword, we already had citizens trying to cut carbon pollution on their own, taking responsibility through lifestyle changes, whether by ditching their cars in favor of bicycles, installing solar rooftops, switching to LED bulbs, planting trees, recycling water and waste, or some other simple steps that matter.

A few local governments have made similar commendable commitments.

The Provincial Board of Ilocos Norte last year passed a resolution seeking to make the province the first to phase out coal use and become a total renewable-energy consumer. Since 2010, local government initiatives have paved the way for Ilocos Norte to have a 264-megawatt installed wind-energy capacity, hosting the wind farms of the Energy Development Corp. (EDC) in Burgos, Northern Luzon; UPC Asia Corp. in Caparispisan; and Northwind Power and Development Corp. in Bangui. With other solar and hydropower projects under way, the province is seen generating 50 percent of its power requirement from clean energy in the near future.

Negros Occidental hosts six solar-power facilities, with a total generation capacity of 341.5 MW, according to the Negros Occidental Investment Promotions Center-Public Information Section. The province also has six major river systems—Himogaan, Sicaba, Malugo, Bago, Binalbagan and Ilog-Hilabangan—which can be tapped for run-of-the-river hydroelectricity with an estimated capacity of 200 MW.

Cities, communities and schools have joined hands with the private sector to launch their own initiatives in climate-change mitigation.

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Since June last year, the 658-hectare campus of Central Luzon State University, the oldest and largest state university in Region 3, has been getting all its electricity from an EDC geothermal-power station in Bicol.

Bike-friendly infrastructure have been built in various parts of Metro Manila to promote bicycle riding as an alternative means of transport. There are also bike-sharing or rental projects, like the ones in the tourist districts of Malate and Intramuros, in Bonifacio Global City (BGC) and on the Diliman campus of the University of Philippines. Sure, our cities are not as bike-friendly as Amsterdam or Copenhagen but the efforts are still encouraging.

The use of electric vehicles is growing in Philippine cities. We can now see electric jeepneys and tricycles plying our streets. They are being used as shuttles in Philippine tourist destinations, like Boracay, Davao and Surigao, and in central business districts, particularly in BGC and in Legaspi and Salcedo villages in Makati. A number of universities and private companies, like the Manila Electric Co., Filinvest, the Ateneo de Manila University and De La Salle University, have fleets of e-jeepneys going around their compounds and campuses.

All these individual actions matter as much as the nation's commitment to the Paris Agreement. And they only show that Filipinos on their own can do a lot and have done a lot of things to cut their own carbon footprints and create a greener, healthier place to live. What more if we do it together.

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PROTECTING THE FORESTS

RANGERS GO HIGH-TECH AMID RISKS OF JOB

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Patrolling dense jungles on foot used to be the only means for 215 rangers in Central Luzon to keep track of what is happening inside 589,489 hectares of forests in the region.

But last week, they began to go high-tech by using satellite-aided laptops to generate images of logging, timber poaching, landslides and unauthorized settlements.

"It's like they have an eye on the forest," said Francisco Milla Jr., Central Luzon director of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Information that the rangers gather, said Milla, would be relayed in real time to allow DENR agents, soldiers and policemen to quickly enforce environmental laws.

Milla said 13 laptops were provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through its Biodiversity and Watersheds Improved for Stronger Economy and Ecosystem Resilience (B+WISER) program in support of DENR's Lawin Forest and Biodiversity Protection System.

The Lawin system was initially focused on wildlife and was expanded this year to include forests.

Trial run

The second phase of the system is undergoing a trial run that would last for about a year in Central Luzon and Cagayan de Oro, Milla said.

The new technology was designed to reduce risks taken by rangers, some of whom have been shot or killed while pa-

trolling or inspecting forests.

An ambush in June 2015 left a ranger dead in Nueva Ecija province.

"We've been aiming for zero hotspot," Milla said, referring to the campaign to protect rangers.

He said the rangers have not been armed by the DENR because many of them believed that carrying guns endangered their safety.

Forests in Central Luzon span 942,387 ha but only 589,489 ha or 62 percent have forest cover, DENR records showed.

The mountain ranges of Sierra Madre, Zambales and Bataan are home to the flower *Rafflesia consueloae*, Tapulao mice, the world's largest flying fox, the giant cloud rat and Philippine eagles. —TONETTE

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SOCCSKSARGEN: COTABATO

Fish farming in the time of climate change

A woman fisher stands by a lake in Sitio Bulogo, Barangay Matilac in Pigkawayan town, carrying a gill net she received from a program by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, funded by a \$3-million grant from the New Zealand government. The program supports the resumption of agricultural livelihoods affected by natural disasters and armed conflict.

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PAFI STATEMENT

On the Philippines chairing ASEAN in 2017

THE Philippine Ambassadors Foundation Inc (PAFI) urges the Philippines to seize the opportunity presented by its chairing of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 2017, when ASEAN celebrates the 50th anniversary of its founding, to assert and project a leadership role in the construction of regional ocean governance and maritime security as a Philippine contribution to the ASEAN Community Vision 2025. Ocean governance and

maritime security are of vital and critical importance to the Philippines and the ASEAN and should be accorded greater and more particular attention in Philippine foreign policy and in the work and aspirations of ASEAN.

The leadership role of the Philippines proceeds from its primal characteristic as an archipelagic state that is highly vulnerable to all maritime issues and concerns, traditional and non-traditional. Geograph-

ical circumstances have in fact made the country the strategic epicenter of all aspects of ocean governance and maritime security. It is in the thick of a maritime disputes situation that can drag down regional integration and consolidation.

The archipelagic waters of the Philippines are interconnected with those of the other countries in ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific. The ASEAN seas and central Indo-Pacific maritime region are flanked on their east-

ern longitudes in a north-south alignment by the three largest archipelagic states, namely the Philippines, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea. Carrying more than half of the world's maritime trade, the seas of ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific are collectively a regional common heritage that must be nurtured and managed comprehensively and seamlessly through joint cooperation among the states concerned as well as extra-

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On the Philippines chairing ASEAN in 2017

regional interested states.

The incorporation of the archipelagic doctrine in the UN Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS) was a hard-won success for the Philippines. UNCLOS consequently is the linchpin and underpinning of the archipelagic state. But UNCLOS leaves to its state parties a lot of work, including the legal regime implementing its provisions. The ASEAN for instance can collectively work on and arrive at a common definition of what constitutes freedom

of navigation in archipelagic waters otherwise known as the right of archipelagic sealanes passage.

It is time the issues and concerns of ocean governance and maritime security in ASEAN take off from the talk-shop level and are translated into concrete and specific undertakings and projects. In this regard, PAFI proposes that the Philippines pursue as a flagship project Integrated Coastal Zone Management to benefit the coastal areas of maritime Asia particu-

larly in the revival of the coasts and coastal waters as sources of food and livelihood and in the mitigation of the effects of natural disasters.

PAFI hopes that ASEAN will step up maritime cooperation in its Dialogue Partner arrangements and its relationships with the United Nations system and other international organizations. The Philippines should reiterate its 1996 invitation to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to establish a Regional Office with head-

quarters in the Philippines.

The spirit of "open regionalism" trending in regional organizations may already be discerned in ASEAN Dialogue Partner arrangements. PAFI supports ASEAN approving in this spirit the applications for membership of Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea, and Sri Lanka, countries potentially making an important contribution to regional oceans governance and maritime security.

In approaching issues of regional oceans governance and maritime security, particu-

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obtaining in the Spratlys archipelago, PAFI supports the revival of the sociocultural norms originating from the ancient Majapahit and Sri-Vijayan culture of "musyawarah" (consultations) and "mufakat" (consensus). These are values articulated in the Bandung Declaration of 1955 and given a modern manifestation in the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. Their practice is in keeping with the ASEAN vision of "a community that is aware and proud of its identity, culture and heritage with the strengthened ability to innovate and proactively contribute to

The Philippine Ambassadors Foundation Inc. intends to be proactive in conveying inputs to the Philippine Government to help frame national interests for projection in the Philippines' hosting of ASEAN in 2017. It plans to produce a series of articles on various aspects of ASEAN and relevant core national interests in line with the Philippines' pursuit of an independent foreign policy that is ASEAN-centered and oriented to the wider Indo-Pacific region.

AMBASSADOR LAURO L. BAJAJ JR.
PAFI Chairman
16 January 2017

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SE

Editorial

ASEAN summit 2017: The glory and the challenge

THE honor and privilege of hosting the annual summit of leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a great one. It rotates by design among the 10 members of the regional association every year.

The fact that the honor falls this year on the Philippines is most significant for our country and our people. The fact that this year also marks the 50th anniversary of ASEAN makes this responsibility and honor all the more significant and ennobling.

All of Southeast Asia should aspire to make this a red-letter year for our association and our region.

In the course of this golden anniversary year, the region and our people of over 600 million will have the satisfaction and pride of knowing that their regional association has truly become one of its greatest achievements.

Today, ASEAN has the distinction of being one of the most

long-lasting and perhaps most cohesive regional association in the world. When ASEAN was born, several parts of Southeast Asia were in the throes of a devastating war, as a result of the Cold War. Today, the region can look back with pride at a history of overcoming one of the most bloody, costly, and harrowing conflicts in history. The region can take solace in an epic process of rebuilding societies that were shattered and decimated for a time by conflict.

Today, we in ASEAN can look to a future of being lifted together by the signs of economic development, the evidence of one of the highest economic growth rate, and by the happy fruits of regional community.

“ This anniversary year we should strive to address our longstanding lament that too often, the consensus-driven approach of ASEAN to decision-making is too slow for decision-making, and sometimes

We should also have the wit to see that this anniversary year we should strive to address our long-standing lament that too often, the consensus-driven approach of ASEAN to decision-making is too slow for decision making, and sometimes is an excuse for doing nothing.

Being a country that has lately undergone pervasive change, it is to be expected that with President Rodrigo Duterte in the lead, we as host should sound the hope of partnership for change and engaging the world.

ASEAN can say to the world that our entire region and all our peoples have experienced first-hand the blessings of peace, the hopeful and liberating signs of economic development, and the practical advantages of being a regional bloc.

But we are also witness to the growing rivalries between the powers in our part of the world, and to misunderstandings between ourselves and our neighbors. Diplomatic maturity means that such rivalries and misunderstandings should be actively transcended.

An anniversary is fittingly a time for remembrance and rejoicing. It is also a time for vigilance and reflection on lessons learned.