

**DATE**  
**DAY**

4 JAN 2016

**Monday**

# **DENR**

## **IN THE NEWS**



# BusinessMirror **Green** Monday

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## Bamboo plantations to boost supply for industries—DENR

BAMBOO plantations under a local cooperative's intensive management in Anji, China. WWF/CHINA



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# BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Bamboo Plantation

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

**M**ORE bamboo plantations will be established under the expanded coverage of the National Greening Program (NGP) to boost the supply of the important nontimber forest product to various industries, officials of the Philippines's Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said last week.

Executive Order (EO) 879 promotes the use of bamboo as alternative to wood in the construction of school furniture. It mandates the use of bamboo as planting material with at least 20 percent of reforestation species annually.

While the order has not been strictly implemented because some NGP sites are not suited for

the species, bamboo, along with rattan, is part of the NGP commodity road map 2013-2016, Director Ricardo Calderon of the DENR's Forest Management Bureau said. Bamboo is widely used for construction and processed bamboo is used to make furniture and other handicraft products.

According to the International

Trade of Bamboo and Rattan 2012 report, the Philippines is the fifth most important exporter of bamboo products in the world. The top exporter is China.

The report said the Philippines produces and exports a significant amount of bamboo and rattan products. In 2012, the country's total bamboo and rattan products reached \$36 million, about 2 percent of the world exports.

The same report, however, said the export value of bamboo and rattan products from the Philippines decreased from \$63.8 million in 2007 to \$36.0 million in 2012, with an average annual decline of \$5.6 million.

Under the NGP commodity roadmap, the target is to establish 54,000 hectares of bamboo plantations nationwide.

More areas are to be rehabilitated under the revised forestry master plan released by the DENR, which will require a hefty amount of P123 billion to increase the country's forest cover by 3 million

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Bamboo plantation - - -

hectares in the next 13 years.

Last month President Aquino signed EO 193 expanding the coverage of the NGP to cover the remaining 7.1 million hectares of open, degraded and denuded forest, consistent with the DENR's forestry master plan 2015-2028.

Calderon, also the national coordinator of the NGP, said the implementation of the NGP commodity roadmap identifying the commodities to be planted under the program is on track. He said the agency is now gearing up for the implementation of the expanded NGP.

Meanwhile, the DENR's Ecosystem Research and Development Bureau (ERDB) said it will embark on a research and development project for the mass production of quality planting materials of two commercially viable bamboo species using the tissue-culture technique.

Director Henry Adornado, chief of the DENR-ERDB, said the project aims to boost the supply of planting materials for the

massive reforestation program.

He said the tissue culture experiment for *kawayan tinik* (*Bambusa blumeana*) and giant bamboo (*Dendrocalamus asper*) will allow the agency to produce more quality bamboo planting materials.

The ERDB has recently partnered with the Philippine Army for the establishment of 3,100 hectares of bamboo plantation within Fort Magsaysay. So far, only 400 hectares have been planted, Adornado said.

He noted there is currently a shortage in supply of bamboo planting materials, thereby requiring the use of tissue-culture technique in order to support the demand.

"Other countries are doing this already. If they can do it, why can't we do it?" Adornado said.

The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) has extensive research and development for various uses of bamboo that are ready for technology transfer.

Meanwhile, harvesting of bamboo within forest lands requires special permits, Calderon said.

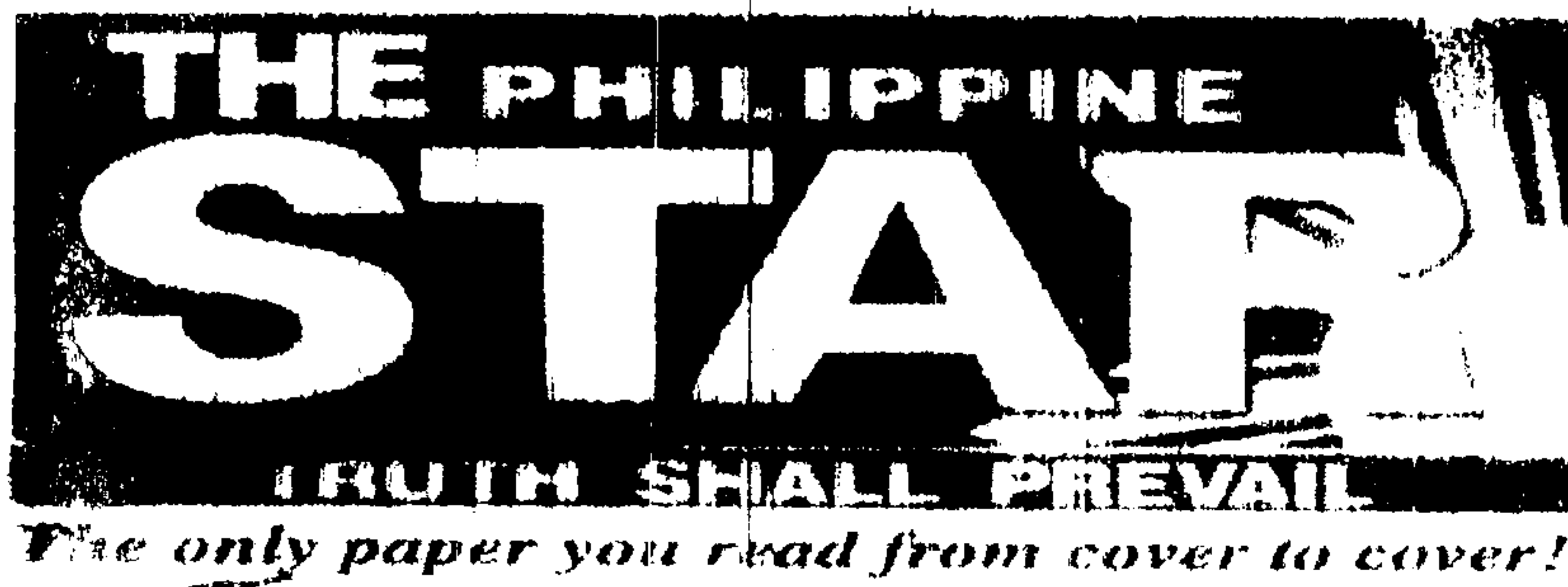
He reminded gatherers of bamboo in forest lands to secure the necessary permits from concerned DENR regional offices before harvest.

Besides cutting permit, gatherers are also required to secure a certificate of non-timber forest products origin (CNFPO) as specified in DENR Administrative Order 59 issued on September 30, 1993.

"Bamboo has two different classifications. If they are planted in private lands, they are considered agricultural products. But if they are planted in forest lands, they are non-timber forest products which require gatherers to secure a permit before harvest," he said.

Securing permit for the collection and harvesting of bamboo in forest lands is specified in the Revised Forestry Administrative Order 11 issued on September 14, 1970. Applications for cutting permit may be filed through the concerned community environment and natural resource office.





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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

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# Gov't agencies now hold 90% of their budgets – DBM

By PRINZ P. MAGTULIS

State agencies are now holding roughly P1.5 trillion of their respective budgets, handed out to them automatically when the 2016 national outlay took effect last Friday.

document, it means that 90 percent of the budget of agencies can immediately be obligated without waiting for the DBM to issue allotments," Budget Secretary Florencio Abad told **The STAR**.

According to data from the Department of Budget and Management, departmental budgets under the General Appropriations Act (GAA)

amounted to P1.66 trillion.

Departmental budgets accounted for 55 percent of the total P3-trillion outlay signed by President Aquino last Dec. 22.

agencies are now free to incur obligations by contracting products and services. Once obligated, agencies would still need to secure notices of cash allocation (NCA) from the DBM.

NCAs, in turn, are given to the Bureau of the Treasury, which issues checks to pay for government services. Once encashed and paid to contractors, the amount is deemed

disbursed.

"The introduction of the GAA-as-release-document ushered in a budget regime in which the GAA is the primary

document, that is, agency budgets are practically released the moment the national budget is enacted," he added.

According to the GAA or RA 10717, the 10 agencies with the largest allocations were the departments of education (P437 billion), public works and highways (P400 billion), national defense (P175 billion), interior and local government

(P154 billion), health (P128 billion), social welfare and development (P111 billion), agriculture (P94 billion), transportation and communications (P109 billion), finance (P33 bil-

lion), and natural resources (P25 billion). ✓

The Aquino administration has been criticized for persistently falling below their spending targets despite double-digit growth in revenues.

As of September last year, expenditures of P1.63 trillion was 14 percent below the P1.9 trillion programmed for the nine-month period, Bureau of

the Treasury data showed.

As far as the 2015 budget is concerned, DBM figures have showed that 96 percent or P2.5 trillion of the P2.6-trillion outlay was already released as of November.

The budget chief had earlier said that historically, no budget is released 100 percent. He said for the Aquino administration,

budgetary releases have averaged 98 percent since 2010.

"No budget is ever released 100 percent. That is like being able to perfectly predict what your total needs are a year before you incur them," he said last week.

The 2016 budget represents a 15 percent increase from the previous year.

# The Manila Times

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### FOR SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT FAILURE

# Local officials face administrative charges

BY JEFFERSON ANTIPORDA  
REPORTER

**C**RIMINAL and administrative charges are being prepared against more than 50 officials from different local government units (LGUs) in the country for failure to implement the 13-year old Republic Act 9003 or Ecological Solid Waste Management (ESWM) Act of 2001, Senator Loren Legarda said on Sunday.

The charges this month will constitute the first batch, with more cases set to be filed in the coming weeks against local officials who have failed to comply with RA9003, she said.

"The Ombudsman was in my office, together with some NGOs (non-governmental organizations), to discuss the strict implementation of environmental laws, including RA9003. More than 50 local government officials were included in the list of those who will be charged," Legarda said, referring to a meeting she had

with the Ombudsman before Congress took a Christmas season recess last month.

The senator did not disclose the names of the local officials who were included in the first batch, except to say that were mostly mayors, vice mayors and councilors.

Section 50 of RA9003 states that "local government officials and officials of government agencies concerned who fail to comply with and enforce rules and regulations promulgated relative to this Act shall be charged administratively in accordance with

R.A. 7160 (Local Government Code of 1991) and other existing laws, rules and regulations."

The country marks January as "Zero Waste Month," according to Presidential Proclamation No. 760.

Legarda said Deputy Ombudsman Gerard Mosquera is in charge of monitoring the LGUs' compliance with the ESWM, particularly on mandatory segregation of wastes, materials recovery facilities, 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.

The monitoring of the LGU compliance started in 2013, or more than 12 years since RA9003 was enacted.

Based on the 2012 statistics from the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) only 414 of the 1,610 LGUs nationwide have complied with the national plan. This translates to only 25.7 percent compliance rate.

In Metro Manila, only nine of

the 17 cities and municipality have submitted a Solid Waste Management Plan.

Under RA9003, passed in 2001, the establishment of open dumps for solid wastes is prohibited and requires all operators to convert such dumpsites into controlled disposal facilities.

The conversion process is in preparation for the total closure of the controlled dumps supposedly by the year 2006 as stated in R.A. 9003 and will only allow sanitary landfill facility.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) also bans the use of incinerators in garbage treatment in accordance with Republic Act 8749 or the Clean Air Act.

Legarda, at the same time, dismissed concerns that the filing of charges against local officials might be construed as "politically-motivated," explaining that the cases are a result of years of evaluation.

"There are communications informing them (local officials) of their violations and we have proof enough as basis," she added.



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# The Manila Times

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Solid Waste

## Regions

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■ Environmentalists under the Eco Waste Coalition lament the uncontrolled generation and disposal of garbage in most parts of the country.  
PHOTO BY RUSSELL PALMA



## PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

### #'BasuraSerye' Pilipinas!

WALA na talagang forever ang tambakan ng basura sa Pilipinas! Ang Rizal Park ay hindi nakaalpas sa tambak ng basura nitong nakaraang bisperas at araw mismo ng Pasko. Gayundin nitong nakalipas na pagdiriwang ng Bagong Taon. BasuraSerye talaga!

Hindi lang sa Rizal Park "nagdiriwang" ang tambakan ng basura. Sa Divisoria, Claro M. Recto at iba pa sa Maynila, Commonwealth at Balintawak Markets, mga bangketa ng lalawigan ng Rizal hanggang hangang ilang bayan sa lalawigan ng Laguna na nasaksihan ko mismo sa aking pag-ikot konitong nakaraang Enero 2, 2016.

Lagi namang "nagdiriwang" ang tambakan ng basura sa may Kalayaan Avenue QC kahit hindi Pasko at Bagong Taon. Nasa harapan pa ito ng isang maliit na palengke. Tila hindi na ito pinapansin ng kinauukulan. Malapit lang ang QC City Hall dito. Kailangan nga bang mapuno daw ang mga trak ng basura na nangongolekta bago dalhin at itambak sa Payatas dumpsite?

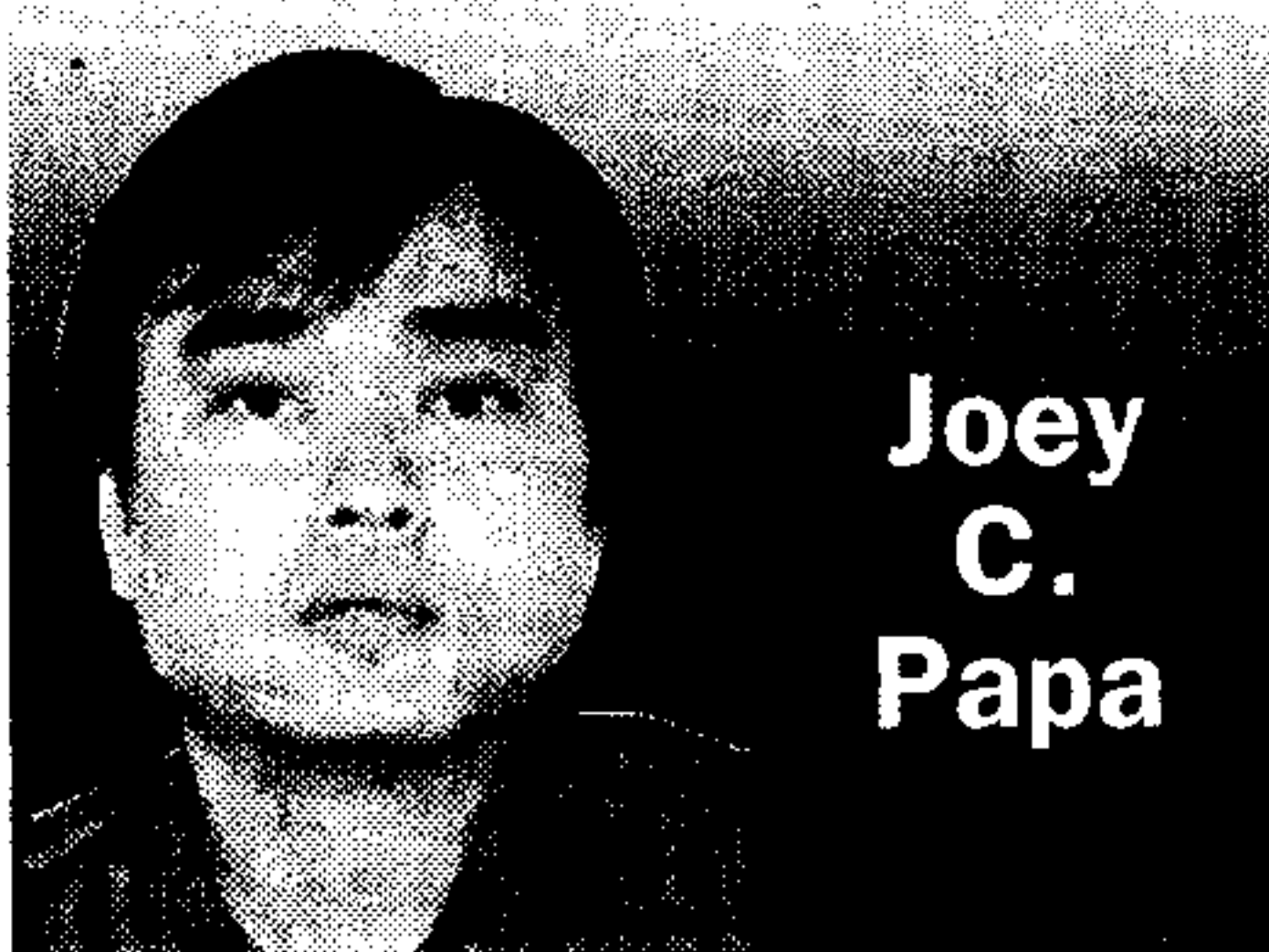
Sa Malolos, Bulacan, palagay ko'y panay ang kamot sa ulo ng inis nang mayor doon dahil sa mga "tambak" ng basura sa mga lansangan nito. Kailangang kumilos ang ama ng maganda at makasaysayang lunsod na ito. Wala na ring forever ang basura sa lunsod na ito at iba pang bayan ng lalawigan ng Bulacan.

Halimbawa'y ang pagtatapon ng maraming trak ng basura sa lunsod ng San Jose Del Monte o SJDM Bulacan sa may barangay San Isidro o tinaguriang 'umanong Wacuman dumpsite..

ang katagayang pang-kalikasan ng kanyang lunsod.

Sabi sa akin kahapon ng dalawang

#### BANGON KALIKASAN



Joey C. Papa

residente sa karatig barangay kung saan nagdaraan ang mga trak ng basura papuntang tinaguriang Wacuman dumpsite sa bgy. San Isidro--,"napakabaho na po ng hangin sa aming kapaligiran! Nasusuka po kami kapag na dumaraan na ang mga trak ng basura!" sabi ng dalawang residente. Humihingi sila ng tulong sa pamamagitan ng kolumn ko kay Department of Environment and Natural Resources o DENR Secretary Ramon Paje at Environmental Management Bureau Assistant Secretary at concurrent Director Juan Miguel Cuna na patigilin na ang pagtatambak ng basura sa kanilang lugar. Halos magmakaawa na sila sa paghingi ng tulong.

Maraming mga residente sa barangay San Isidro, SJDM na ginawang tambakan ng basura ng 'umano'y Wacuman ang ipinagbili na ang kanilang lupa at bahay dahil sa nakasusulasok na amoy ng basura na tila 'umano'y padaskol-daskol na lang na pamamahala ng tambakan simula pa nang buksan ito.

Dapat ding kumilos ang Chairman ng Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) sa pamu-

matign na ang pagtatambak ng basura sa tuwing may okasyon man o wala sa Kamaynilaan. "Tila wala nang ba-

tas sa Pilipinas," sabi ng isang residente ng QC. "Hindi na natigil ang pagpapaputok ng piccolo, nagkalat pa ng sangkatutak na basura sa mga kalye ang mga walang pagmamalasakit na Pilipino sa kanyang bayan."

"May pera ka si sa basura, Intoy", sabi ng kapitbahay nito. Hindi 'yong panghihingi ng mga tira-tirang bagay na nareresiklo "kalakal" ang ibig kong sabihin kundi 'yong mga nagpapatakbo ng tambakan ng basura ang milyong piso ang kinikita sa "tipping fee" ng mga trak ng basura o kaya'y sa mga kontrata ng mga ito sa lokal na pamahalaan ng bansa. May inilalaang budget ang mga LGU taon-taon para sa paghahakot ng basura at bayad sa mga dumpsite at tambakan ng basura! 'Nandyan ang kitang kurakot sa basura pareng Intoy!," dagdag ng residente ng QC.

Sagot ni Intoy, "dapat pala'y gawan nga ng pelikula ang basura sa Pilipinas! Repleksyon lang 'yan ng pagiging salaulang mgaraming Pinoy dito sa bayan ni Juan. Ang kaso'y puro patawa, pananakot at kilig ang ginawang pelikula ngayon. Laging ipinagmamalaki ang pag-unlad 'umano ng Pilipinas."

Laging may-pag-asa. May pag-asa ang bayan natin kung mayroong kahitilan lang na magmamalasakit sa Pilipinas. Laging paalalahanan ang mga pinunong tapat sa kanilang tungkulin at makipagtulungan sa mga residente sa mga lunsod at bayan upang mapamahalaan ng ayon sa kalikasan ang mga tira-tirang bagay na nagiging basura. Hindi kailangang laging umasa sa pamahalaan. Kung kinakapos ang kanilang gawa, punu-

kinabang sa magandang pamamahalan ng ating pagmamalasakit. (bangonkalikasan@yahoo.com)



## PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

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UPANG mapalakas ang pagpapatupad sa Clean Air Act of 1999, isinulong ng isang kongresista na parusahan ang may-ari ng sasakyang nagbubuga ng malitim na usok sa halip na ang mga driver lang.

Ito ang nilalaman ng panukala ni Quezon City Rep. Alfredo D. Vargas III sa inihain niyang House Bill 6298 na amayenda sa Section 46 on Validation of Standards for Motor Vehicles of Republic Act 8749 o mas kilala sa Clean Air Act of 1999.

Binigyang diin ng mambabatas na ang kasalukuyang batas ay nagpaparusa lang sa mga driver at operator ng mga behikulong lumalabag sa emission standards.

Gayung karamihan aniya

### P10K multa sa smoke belchers isinulong

sa mga sasakyang nagbubuga ng malitim na usok ay mga trak at public utility vehicles.

May mga pagkakataon kasi umano na ang mga driver ay hindi naman arto siyang nagmamay-ari ng pampasaherong sasakyan kundi mga empleyado lang at hindi sila ang komo-kontrol sa pagsasaayos ng nabanggit na sasakyan.

Ang mga residente aniya ng Metro Manila ay nanganganib na dahil sa mga sakit sa baga at cardiovascular na dulot ng lumalalang kalidad ng hangin sa rehiyon.

Binanggit pa ng kongresista

ang ulat ng National Emissions Inventory na nagsasabing 85% ng polusyon sa National Capital Region ay nagmumula sa mga sasakyan.

Bukod sa mga pagsuspinde ng lisensya at registration ng mga sasakyan, isinulong din ni Vargas na dagdagan ang multa mula sa P6,000 hanggang P10,000 at ang may-ari ng sasakyan ay kinakailangang sumailalim sa seminar ukol sa pollution control and management sa ilalim ng pamamahala ng Department of Transportation and Communication.

MELIZA MALUNTAG



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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

**METROBRIEFS**

**QC solon wants clean  
air law amended**

THE OWNER of a car, not its driver, ought to be the one made liable for smoke belching offenses, according to a lawmaker who has filed a bill in the House of Representatives to amend the Clean Air Act. Under House Bill No. 6298, Quezon City Rep. Alfredo Vargas has moved to strengthen the clean air law by transferring the responsibility for smoke belching from the driver to the owner of the vehicle to the owner. In an explanatory note, Vargas said the law held the drivers and operators of motor vehicles liable for violation of the emission standards, especially in the case of trucks and public utility vehicles (PUVs). "With the driver held liable, owners are not compelled to

make the necessary vehicle repairs or part replacements in order to comply with the emission standards. Thus, the problem of smoke belching is not effectively addressed," he added. Vargas noted that residents of Metro Manila were highly vulnerable to ailments resulting from the worsening air quality, citing a partial report of the National Emissions Inventory which showed that 85 percent of air pollution in the area came from vehicles.

*D.I. Yap*



PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

# Mining output drops 20% due to low prices

BY JED MACAPAGAL

PHILIPPINE mining output dropped 20 percent in the first nine months of last year to P85.78 billion compared with P107.24 billion due to lower metal prices in the world market, according to the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB).

Gold prices fell by 8.43 percent from \$1,288.73 per troy oz to \$1,180.13, while silver slipped by 19.64 percent from \$19.95 per troy oz to \$16.03 per troy oz.

Nickel and copper prices also went down by 26.64 percent and 17.89 percent, respectively.

Nickel tumbled from \$7.77 per lb to only \$5.70 per lb, while copper from \$3.13 per lb to \$2.57 per lb.

In terms of contribution to total production value, nickel direct shipping ore and mixed nickel-cobalt sulfide led with 52.43 percent or P44.97 billion, followed by gold with 30.17 percent or P25.88 billion.

Copper had a 16.63 percent share at P14.26 billion, while the remaining 0.77 percent or P0.66 billion came from the aggregate values of silver, chromite and iron ore.

MGB noted the continued decrease in nickel price and demand for nickel ore by China led

most of the country's nickel producers to curtail mine production, resulting to a 38 percent decline in the overall production value from P51.58 billion to P32.13 billion.

Copper also posted a decrease of 6 percent in production volume and 12 percent in production value, moving 248,593 dry metric tons worth P14.26 billion compared with 263,359 dry metric tons worth P16.17 billion.

The agency cited the absence of mining operation at the Lutopan Mining Area of Carmen Copper Corp. in Toledo, Cebu starting March 2015

as the major factor for the weak performance.

Gold and silver, meanwhile, exhibited production growth during the nine-month period. From 12,996 kg, gold increased by 19 percent to 15,485 kg while silver rose by 34 percent to 21,974 kg from 16,433 kg.

MGB identified the Didipio Copper-Gold Project, Masbate Gold Project and Apex Maco Operation as major contributors for the growth, saying the minerals are seen to remain as the preferred investment even in times of economic uncertainty.



# The Manila Times

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Sierra Madre's almaciga trees vanishing - study

**BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya:** The Almaciga (*Agathis philippinensis*) tree, one of the Philippines' endangered forest trees found in the Sierra Madre mountains, is rapidly vanishing, according to the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (Searca).

Searca Director Dr. Gil Saguiguit Jr. said the latest study showed that heartwood rotting as well as destructive and excessive tapping of the resin may eventually lead to the extinction of the almaciga.

"In order to prevent the extinction of the economically significant almaciga tree, there is a need to introduce the indigenous tribesmen of the Sierra Madre Mountains and the forests of Palawan to the correct tapping or extracting of almaciga resin," Saguiguit said.

To help prevent the almaciga from going extinct Searca has trained 144 IPs in Palawan and Sierra Madre to improve their resin harvesting methods.

"It is a welcome development that the government has decreed making it unlawful to cut almaciga trees and that efforts are being undertaken to produce more seedlings to beef up the dwindling stocks in Aurora and



■ A study conducted to prevent the extinction of almaciga trees has helped train 144 indigenous peoples (IPs) in Palawan and Sierra Madre to improve their resin harvesting methods. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Palawan," Saguiguit said

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature Red Data Book Guide in 2008 has defined almaciga, one of the very few conifer timber species endemic to the Philippines, as an endangered tree.

Almaciga also grows in almost all mountainous forests, particularly in Quezon, Zambales, Palawan, Cagayan, Abra, Kalinga, Apayao, Nueva Vizcaya, Samar, Zamboanga, and Davao. It can grow as high as 60 meters with a trunk diameter of 3 meters.

It is highly prized for its

resin, known worldwide as the "Manila copal" which is being used for making varnish, lacquer, soap, paint, printing ink, linoleum, shoe polish, floor wax, plastic, water proofing material, and paper sizing.

Locally, the almaciga sap is used as incense in religious ceremonies and for making torches, caulking boats, mosquito smudge, patent leather and sealing wax.

The Philippines is one of the biggest exporters of Manila copal, and tapping the almaciga tree for resin is a significant

income-generating activity among the forest settlers.

From 2000 to 2009, the Philippines exported the almaciga resin to France, Germany, Japan, Spain, China and Switzerland, earning for the country an average of \$188,900 a year from the sale of 202,400 kilos of the resin, according to Searca.

Training courses for propagating the tree is being conducted at Brooke's Point and Aborlan in Palawan and at Dinapigue, Isabela and San Luis, Aurora in the Sierra Madre.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO



THE EXPONENTIAL GROWTH OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS  
SINCE 1900

# MANILA BULLETIN

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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICES**

## • Youth tapped for Manila Bay rehab

PILAR, Bataan — Raul Mamac, chief of the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO), said over the weekend that the youth plays a major role in maintaining and rehabilitating the Manila Bay area. He said the artistic talent of the youth, through poster-making, can help promote their goal of rehabilitating the western section of the bay. He also lauded the recent conduct of a forum in four towns of the province on the same topic. (Mar T. Supnad)



STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICES

SUMATRA FIRES

## Indonesia to appeal rejection of \$565-M haze lawsuit



**J**AKARTA, Indonesia (AFP) — The Indonesian government will appeal a court's rejection of a \$565-million lawsuit against a pulp and paper company accused of failing to prevent fires that blanketed Southeast Asia in toxic haze, an official said Thursday.

The court on Sumatra island Wednesday dismissed the civil suit brought by authorities against Bumi Mekar Hijau, a supplier to global giant Asia Pulp and Paper, over fires on plantation land in 2014, saying there was insufficient evidence.

The haze-belching fires occur every year as land is cleared using slash-and-burn methods to make way for palm oil and pulp and paper plantations on Sumatra and the Indonesian part of Borneo island.

The damages would have been the biggest ever levied against a firm over such burning activities in Indonesia, and environmentalists said the rejection was a major setback in efforts to take on those behind the annual haze outbreaks.

Environment ministry spokesman Eka Widodo Sugiri said the government would file an appeal against the court's decision within two weeks.

"Our nation's dignity was disturbed, we received complaints from neighboring countries," Sugiri told AFP.

Plantation companies are responsible for ensuring fires do not break out on their land, but blazes still occur frequently.

Major firms have "zero-burn" policies and typically insist fires in-

side their concessions start outside before spreading in, and are started by people not working for them.

Authorities accused Bumi Mekar Hijau of failing to prevent widespread fires in a concession in South Sumatra province last year, according to state-run Antara news agency.

The company is also being investigated over this year's fires, with its operations frozen in December.

The 2015 blazes, which occurred mainly in September and October, were the worst for years, prompting thousands to fall ill, and leading to flight cancellations and school closures across the region.

Bumi Mekar Hijau was one of 20 firms who were punished in an unprecedented move over the blazes.

Activist Riko Kurniawan, from

The Indonesian Forum for the Environment, said the lawsuit rejection set a "bad precedent."

"We really regret the decision of the judges who rejected the lawsuit, it is another failed attempt to seek justice for victims of the haze," he said.

The haze crisis also caused huge damage to the Indonesian economy, with the World Bank estimating the cost at \$16 billion — more than double the sum spent on rebuilding Aceh province after the devastating 2004 tsunami.



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICES

### Peredo's House in Baguio Heritage site

By **ZALDY C. COMANDA**

**BAGUIO CITY** — The National Museum has declared the Peredo's Lodging House in Baguio City a

home's importance as a cultural property and describing it as a century-old treasure.

Located on Claro M. Recto Street in Saint Joseph Village, Baguio City, the "Peredo's" was formally declared as a "Mahalagang Yamang Pangkalinang"

December 28 through Resolution 06-15 of the National Museum.

Since being constructed in 1915, the original structure ► **16**

of Victorian architecture remains preserved to this day.

Now, a marker has been placed on the façade as proof of its having been declared as the Peredo Heritage House in its 100th year in 2015.

It was among the four identified as Important Cultural Property in the city. The other three others are the Dominican and Retreat House or popularly known as Diplomat Hotel; Laperal White Mansion; and the Mirador Jesuit Villa, which were all constructed between 1900 and 1930.

The two-storey house, which has six rooms, was originally owned by spouses Roque and Rita Peredo, which served as their home, where they raised their 11 children.

Roque was a draftsman-engineer and once served as district engineer of public works in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan.

At present, their youngest daughter Aurora "Petite" Peredo-Calaguas, now 80 years old, is the only living owner of the house.

She formed the Peredo Lodging House, Inc., a family corporation with her as chairman with the hope of main-

taining its form the way her parents had it built.

The Peredo Heritage House bears witness to two world wars, American colonial rule, to years of global depression, to natural disasters and to a dictatorship of 14 years. In all of these, the House stood still. It had its story to tell.

In the house story written by Etta Rosales, granddaughter of Roque Peredo and niece of Petite, she said that when World War II broke out, the family abandoned the house and proceeded to Tuguegarao, Cagayan. The house was occupied by the Japanese Imperial Army. It still bears today a shrapnel hole at a corner where the living and dining room light switches are found.

In July 16, 1990, when a 7.8 magnitude killer earthquake hit Luzon and devastated Baguio City, the Peredo House withstood destruction and even became a sanctuary to friends and relatives whose homes were destroyed.

To Petite, the most important happening within the walls of the Peredo Heritage House is the history of love in a family of eleven children under the care of Roque and Rita.



# MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICES



**HERITAGE CITY**  
— Local and foreign tourists continue to flood the streets of Vigan City in



Vigan, which boasts a of well-preserved Spanish heritage, is one of the New Seven Wonder Cities (N7WC) of the world as declared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in December, 2014. (Freddie Lazaro)



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### SC Bt 'talong' decision: criticism baseless

OUR Supreme Court's Bt *talong* (eggplant) decision is being criticized for things it never said.

A Dec. 15 *Inquirer* commentary "Dark day for

scientific pronouncements it had no competence to make and of unduly favoring environmental activists such as Greenpeace and their "shoddy evidence." Curiously, only a Supreme Court Public Information Office (PIO) summary, not the actual decision, was available then.

The disconnect is that the Bt *talong* decision arguably made no scientific pronouncements.

The 104-page decision is difficult reading, with lengthy quotes from scientists. But skipping to page 69, it concludes that there is no scientific consensus on genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

The *INQUIRER* commentary argues this is a scientific pronouncement in itself, and that there is no scientific uncertainty in GMOs' safety. In any case, this was not central to the high court's real point.

The Court's actual ruling was to nullify government GMO guidelines for lack of measures on risk management and transparency for stakeholders required by the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which the Philippines signed.

Justice Marvic Leonen's concurring opinion more clearly illustrates this. An applicant for GMO testing, not the community, chooses community representatives to the relevant biosafety committee. Notices regarding such testing are merely posted in conspicuous places in the area, with no requirement for meaningful meetings with the community or local government concerned. Leonen criticized the regulation as "nonchalant."

The decision clearly did not prohibit GMO testing per se. Its final section would allow GMO testing under new regulations with the required risk management and transparency.

Justice Presbitero Velasco's concurring opinion further argued that the Bt *talong* testing failed to comply with environmental impact assessment requirements under older laws.

After Christmas, Philippine Star and Manila Bulletin commentaries claimed the decision makes ominous, scientifically backward pronouncements such as "humans are not supposed to tamper with

SICYPHUS'

LAMENT

Oscar Franklin Tan



any one element [in the ecosystem]" and "there is a perfect and sound balance of our biodiversity as created or brought about by God."

However, these lines were from the Court of Appeals decision being reviewed by the Supreme Court. These were excerpted in pages 14-15 of the high court's decision under the heading "Factual Background." These were never adopted by the Supreme Court.

In sum, many scientists and pundits have clearly misread—or not read—the Court decision they criticize, particularly those who imply that troglodyte judges have perpetually halted all GMO testing.

We must reiterate insights from past gaffes. First, we sorely need to strengthen legal academia. No impartial referee pointed out that the last two weeks of op-eds criticized what the Supreme Court never said.

Second, the Supreme Court should stop its practice of announcing a decision but releasing its actual text days later. Here, reporters and initial pundits relied on a PIO summary. It was not completely clear from this that the Court was not banning all GMO testing.

Third, Randy David framed that society's various spheres operate by their own codes. Thus, judges must be critiqued primarily under the legal code, or for lack of legal basis. Criticizing them primarily for perceived horrible results is tricky.

Take former president Joseph Estrada. The Supreme Court ruled that the specific wording of his pardon after his plunder conviction allowed him to run for mayor of Manila. However, those who oppose the idea of a convict running for office regardless of the pardon's wording still criticized the Court, not the president who issued the pardon.

The Supreme Court clearly had legal basis here. While a court cannot dictate scientific matters, it properly scrutinizes how we resolve

but may scrutinize an election system, a classic example in judicial philosophy.

Scientists may claim it is in fact certain that GMOs are completely safe, but this is best argued before Congress, not before courts.

On legal critique, I was surprised at how Leonen hinted that our constitutional right to a balanced ecology is treated with "strict scrutiny." Constitutional cases revolve around the level of scrutiny judges impose. The higher the level, the more government must justify itself. Strict scrutiny is the highest level.

Did Leonen take an anti-GMO position overlooked by pundits? Imposing strict scrutiny often predetermines that government loses. It must prove not just that regulation was reasonable, but, in Leonen's phrasing, that it is the "least restrictive" option. Are judges even competent to make scientific pronouncements on which option is least restrictive?

Leonen's side comment seemed off-topic and had no direct supporting legal citation. It will be formally scrutinized in future cases on technology.

More practically, pundits ask if the high court literally prohibits all importation and planting of GMOs, from soybean meal for animal feeds to hybrid corn, until new guidelines for GMOs are enacted. The Court might clarify how the decision temporarily enjoins all "use" and "importation" of GMOs.

Finally, it would have been interesting to hear Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio and Justice Francis Jardeleza, who debated conservative versus liberal interpretation of cultural conservation in the Torre de Manila case. Both inhibited.

It has become normal for public debates on legal matters to revolve around doctrines that clearly do not exist or contradict freshman textbooks. This undermines democracy. Perhaps this column should be renamed to that quote from the sage of Summit Media: "Research pa more, pare ko."

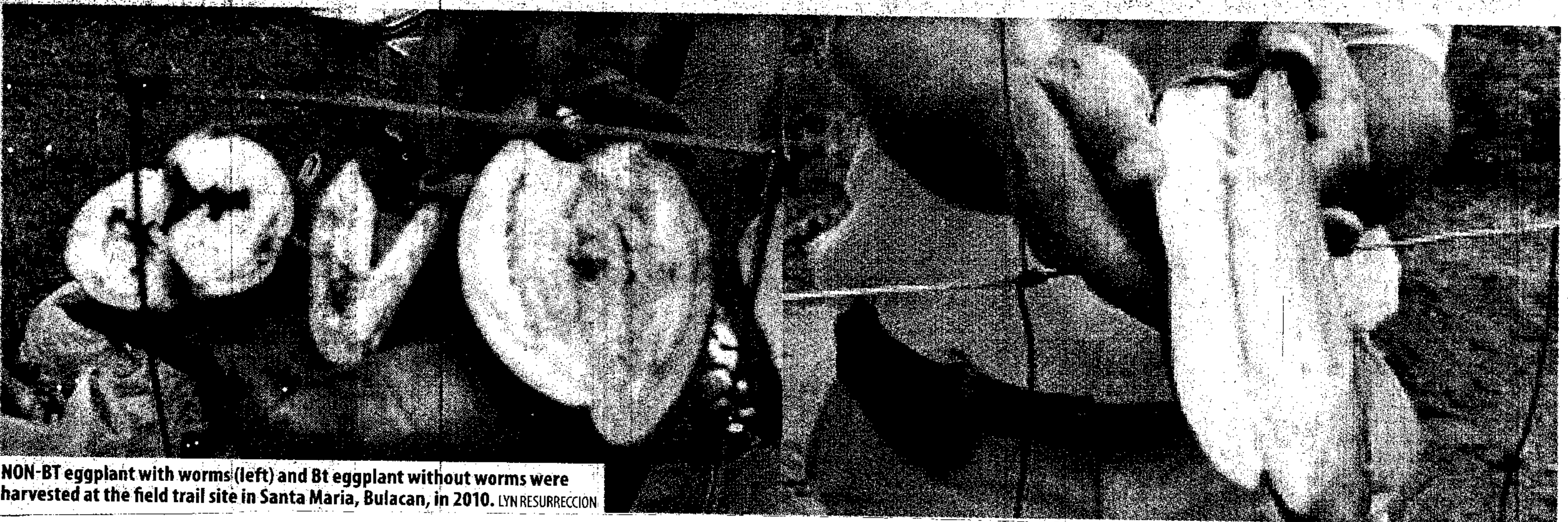
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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

# SC's precautionary principle on GMO is unfounded—group



NON-BT eggplant with worms (left) and Bt eggplant without worms were harvested at the field trial site in Santa Maria, Bulacan, in 2010. LYN RESURRECCION



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**B**IOTECHNOLOGY students from the University of the Philippines (UP) added their voices to the rising dissent to the recent Supreme Court (SC) ruling against *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) eggplant and appealed to the Court to “reconsider” its decision and “reflect on probable overwhelming consequences” of the ruling to the affected sectors.

The UP League of Agricultural Biotechnology Students (UP LABS) said in a statement that it is “deeply saddened” over the recent SC ruling against Bt *talong* (eggplant).

Farmers from the Philippines belonging to the Asian Farmers Network earlier said the SC ruling would cause the collapse of the corn industry in the country, affecting the economy and the lives of millions of farmers dependent on the industry. The Philippine Maize Federation Inc., likewise, said the SC decision to ban the field testing, commercialization and importation of GM crops could hurt the farm sector and the country’s bid for food self-sufficiency.

The UP LABS said the precautionary principle cited by the SC in its ruling was “unfounded” because it was grounded on a misnomer that only naturally produced food are safe, while those manipulated by man “are assumed to be dangerous.”

The precautionary principle was based on a ruling in the 2010 Procedure for Environmental Cases of the Philippine Supreme Court that

including Greenpeace, against Bt eggplant and other GM products.

The principle states that if there is uncertainty in assessing the cause-and-effect relationship between human activities and the environment, actions shall be taken by the court considering the following factors: 1) threats to human life or health; 2) inequity to present or

to the environment without legal consideration of the environmental rights of those affected.

“We believe that invoking the precautionary principle is danger-

ous as basis on the merits of this scientific case. Because on scientific cases, let us always put in mind the reason we conduct research. Risks are the reason there are regulations in the first place, and strict and proper regulations are there so any perceived risk is precluded,” the students’ statement said.

“We are firmly convinced that the precautionary principle isn’t in favor of any scientific advances that are being pushed in our country, since we all know that everything we do involves risks and the only way to know that something is safe is through tests and studies,” they added.

The students promoting biotechnology education in the country expressed its “appeal to the Supreme Court to reconsider their promulgated decision and reflect on probable overwhelming consequences for the affected sectors.”

They said: “We pray to the highly respected justices of our land... that they will understand and appreciate the life works of our scientists on proving the safety of GMOs [genetically modified

We stand firm that our scientists, researchers and regulators are conducting the field trials in good faith. We salute our scientists for investing their time and efforts in advancing Philippine agriculture through modern biotechnology, and we pray that these may not be put to waste.”

At the same time, the biotech

dismayed” on the SC’s nullification of the Department of Agriculture Administrative Order (DA-AO) 08, Series of 2002, or the Biosafety Policy on Genetically



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Modified Crops in the country. "The expanded decision of the SC will bring major setbacks against the stakeholders and industry in the agriculture sector," they said.

DA AO 08-2002 is the policy on the importation and release into

plant products derived from the use of modern biotechnology.

This policy gives additional mandate to the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) on issuing permits to promote the safe and responsible use of biotechnology, and recognizes the policy of the state on acknowledging the potentials of modern biotechnology to improve the quality of life of the Filipino people.

"We believe that the biosafety regulation policy, through DA-AO 08-2002, is a workable yet highly monitored protocol for processing products of modern biotechnology," the group said.

It added that in its 13 years of implementation of approval of the Bt corn in the Philippines, "no reported environmental and health problems were perceived from the consumption and production of Bt corn."

"This was because before approval, strict food and environmental safety tests were conducted. Also, the history of safe use of *Bacillus thuringiensis* can be traced back to the 1920s. This product has also been accepted by organic farmers for over 50 years."

The students said the nullification of DA-AO 08 and subsequent halting of the application, commercialization and importation of GM crops until a new AO is promulgated "may decelerate agricultural development in the country."

search, discourage students and slowdown the corn industry in the country. They said, "This will also impede the continuing researches on other modern biotechnology projects [e.g. Golden Rice, virus-resistant and delayed-ripening papaya and Bt cotton], consequently, these may cause the delay and loss of thesis and research grants for our fellow students, interns, researchers and scientists."

With lesser opportunities in the Philippines, "the graduates may seek greener pastures in other countries," and the youth might be discouraged to pursue a degree in specialized sciences because of the

lack of institutional support, appreciation and incentives.

They said more than 415,000 corn farmers, poultry and livestock growers, feed millers, will be greatly affected. "The P90-billion-worth corn industry may suffer major losses on their income. We may no longer be self-sufficient in corn production because of the decision."

UP LABS said three developing countries have started developing the GM crop almost at the same time. India and the Philippines, which were expected to commercialize the product first, have been stopped due to rulings of the Executive and Judiciary branches of their respective governments.

Bangladesh, on the other hand, has already approved and has been consuming Bt eggplant since 2014. "No incidence of harmful effects to the environment and humans were reported" since then, UP LABS said.

"Now, Bangladeshis benefits from the 70-percent to 90-percent reduction in insecticide use, consequently increasing the net income of their farmers—the true purpose of developing Bt crops," the students said.

Respondents to the SC petition by anti-GMO groups are UP Los Baños (UPLB), UPLB Foundation Inc., DA-BPI, DA-Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environment Management Bureau, International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications, among others.

The UP LABS statement also supported by the Biology Majors Alliance of the Philippines, UP College of Agriculture Student Council, UP College of Science Stu-

tics Student Council, Rizal Technological University (RTU) College of Arts and Sciences Student Council, UP Agricultural Society, UPLB Chemical Society, UPLB Genetics Society, UP Pabulum Scientia Sodalitas, UPLB Department of Science and Technology Scholars' Society, UP Beta Kappa Fraternity, UP Molecular Biology and Biotechnology Society, UP Physician-Scientists Association, RTU Organization of Biotechnology Students, Our Lady of Fatima University-Quezon City League of Biology Enthusiasts, and RTU Interactive Psychology Students Association. *Lyn Resurreccion*

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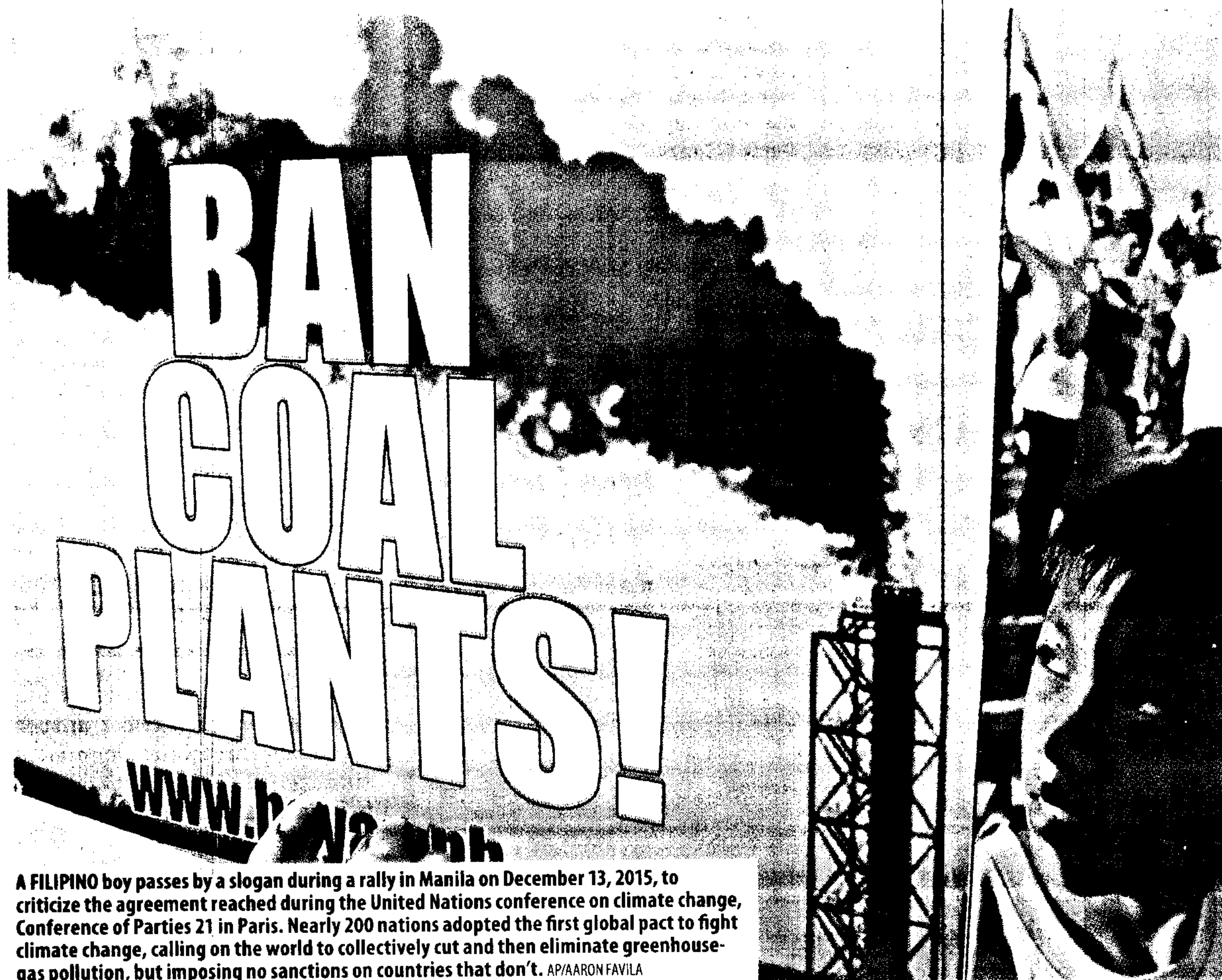
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A FILIPINO boy passes by a slogan during a rally in Manila on December 13, 2015, to criticize the agreement reached during the United Nations conference on climate change, Conference of Parties 21 in Paris. Nearly 200 nations adopted the first global pact to fight climate change, calling on the world to collectively cut and then eliminate greenhouse-gas pollution, but imposing no sanctions on countries that don't. AP/AARON FAVILA



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A broader look at today's business

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### COP21 solved a dilemma which delayed a global pact

**R**OME—One of the most significant aspects of the international conference on climate change, concluded in Paris last December 12, is that food security and ending hunger feature in the global agenda of the climate-change debate.

The text of the final agreement adopted by the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change recognizes "the fundamental priority of safeguarding food security and ending hunger and the special vulnerability of food systems production to the impacts of climate change."

Indeed, of the 186 countries that presented voluntary plans to reduce emissions, around a hundred include measures related to land use and agriculture.

The approved program of measures implemented by 2020, which implies there will be ongoing focus on agricultural issues and not which drew so much of the attention in Paris. In the next years the commitments must be implemented, which will require helping developing countries make necessary adaptations through technology transfer and capacity building.

The Green Climate Fund, mobilizing \$100

billion by 2020 and provided by the industrialized countries, will be a key contributor to this process. Contributions of additional resources to the Fund for the Least Developed Countries and the Adaptation Fund, among others, have also been announced.

The issue of future food production, long saddled with a low profile in the media, is increasingly a major concern and poses a challenge to governments. A recent World Bank report estimated that 100 million people could fall into poverty in the next 15 years due to climate change. Agricultural productivity will suffer, in turn causing higher food prices.

According to Jose Graziano da Silva, director general of the Food and Agriculture Organization, "climate-change affects especially countries that have not contributed to causing the problem" and

and the poorer classes." The facts speak for themselves. The world's 50 poorest countries are responsible for only 1 percent of global greenhouse emissions, yet these nations are the ones most affected by climate change.

Approximately 75 percent of poor people suffering from food insecurity depend on agriculture and natural resources for their livelihoods. Under current projections, it will

be necessary to increase food production by 60 percent to feed the world's population in 2050.

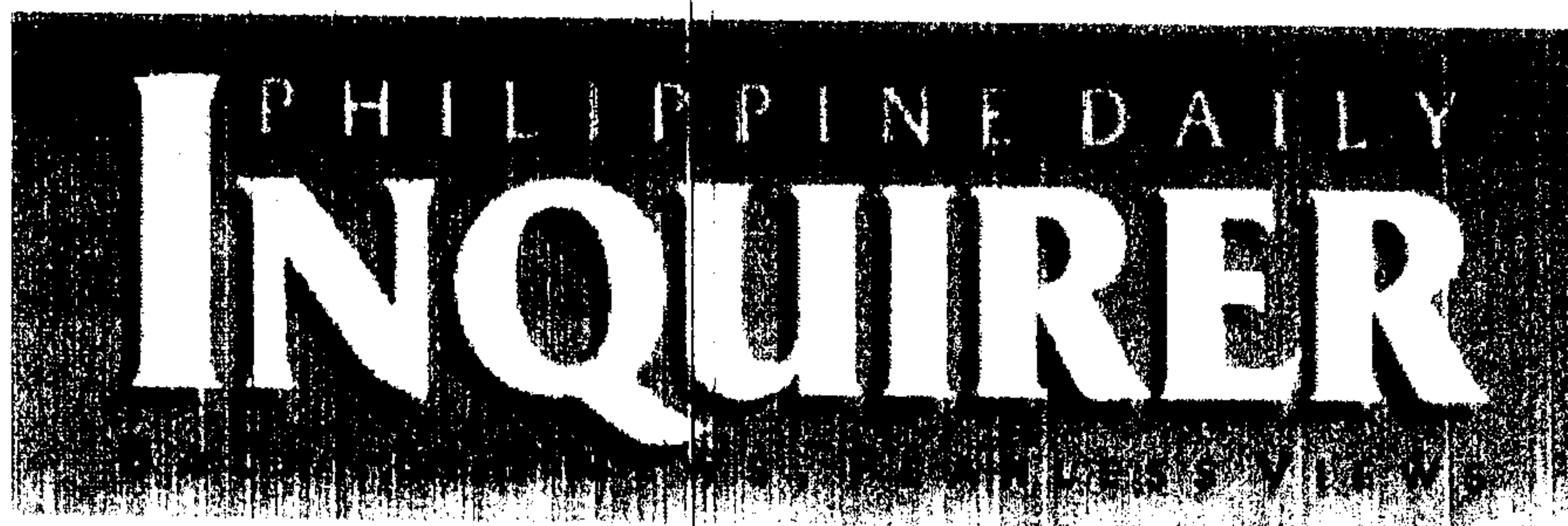
Yet, crop yields will, if current trends continue, fall by 10 percent to 20 percent in the same period, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and higher ocean temperatures will slash fishing yields by 40 percent.

One of the least-mentioned problems associated with climate change are the effects of droughts and floods, which have become a near constant reality. On top of the destruction of resources and huge losses brought by these phenomena, they also cause increases in food prices which, in turn, affects mainly the poor and most vulnerable.

Rising food prices have a direct relation to "climate migrants," as the drop in production and income is one of the factors that triggers

as from the poorest countries to those where there are potentially more opportunities to work and have a dignified life. For example, migration in Syria and Somalia are not driven by political conflicts or security issues alone, but also by drought and the consequent food shortages. This is why the Food and Agriculture Organization argues that we must simultaneously solve climate change and the great challenges of development and hunger.





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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

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## Feeding a flawed society

STANFORD/BERKELEY—Virtually everyone in the scientific community agrees that ensuring sufficient food supplies for a surging human population, which is set to grow by 2.4 billion by mid-century, will require serious work. Indeed, we have not even succeeded at providing enough food for today's population of 7.3 billion: Nearly 800 million people currently are starving or hungry, and another couple billion do not get enough micronutrients. But there is no such consensus about how to address the food-security problem.

The scientific community is split between two main approaches: "tinker with agricultural details" (TAD) and "mend societal fundamentals" (MSF). While the former approach has support from a clear majority, the latter is more convincing.

To be sure, the TAD camp has identified many important problems with current food production and distribution systems, and addressing them could indeed improve food security. Yields could be increased by developing better crop varieties. Water, fertilizer and pesticides should be used more efficiently. Maintaining tropical forests and other relatively natural ecosystems would preserve critical ecosystem services, especially soil fertility, pollination, pest control and climate amelioration. The trend toward rising meat consumption should be reversed. Stricter regulation of fisheries and ocean pollution would maintain the supply of marine protein essential to many people. Waste in food production and distribution should be reduced. And people should be educated to choose more sustainable and nutritious foods.

Achieving these goals, TAD supporters recognize, would require policymakers to give food security high political and fiscal priority, in order to support the needed research and action. Responsibility for launching programs to distribute food more equitably would also fall to governments.

But the TAD approach is incomplete. Not only would its short-term goals be extremely difficult to achieve without more fundamental societal changes; even if they were attained, they would probably prove inadequate in the medium term, and certainly in the long term.

### WORLD VIEW

*Paul R. Ehrlich and John Harte*

To see why, let us suppose that, in 2050, the TAD goals have all been reached. More food is available, thanks to higher agricultural yields and waste-reducing improvements in storage and distribution. Improved environmental policies mean that most of today's forests are still standing and no-fishing zones are widely established and enforced. Ecosystems are becoming stronger, with many corals and plankton evolving to survive in warmer, more acidic water. Add an uptick in vegetarianism, and it appears that the global temperature rise could be limited to 3 degrees celsius.

As a result, the world could avoid famines by mid-century. But, in a human population of 9.7 billion, hunger and malnutrition would be proportionately the same as they are in today's population of 7.3 billion. In other words, even with such an extraordinary and unlikely combination of accomplishments and good luck, our food-security predicament would still be with us.

The reason is simple: Our societies and economies are based on the flawed assumption that perpetual growth is possible on a finite planet. To ensure global food security -- not to mention other fundamental human rights -- for all, we need to recognize our limitations, in terms of both social and biophysical factors, and do whatever it takes to ensure that we do not exceed them.

Based on this conviction, the MSF approach demands that governments take steps to empower women in all areas of society, and ensure that all sexually active people have access to modern birth control, with women free to have an abortion, if they so choose. At the same time, governments must address inequality of wealth, and thus of food, not least by curbing corporate dominance.

Short of bringing the global population down to sustainable levels, MSF reforms are the world's only hope. But, as it stands, implementing them seems unlikely. The United States, the country that consumes the most, is moving in the opposite direction: Women are struggling to hold onto their reproductive rights, wealth distribution is becoming increasingly skewed, and corporations are becoming even more powerful.

If this trend continues, in 2050, governance systems will be even more poorly equipped to deal with the fundamental problems of perpetual population and consumption growth or wealth inequality. As environments deteriorate from climate change, toxification, and loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services, people will have less time and energy for governance reform aimed at reducing inequality or preserving the environment. As a result, those in power will feel less pressure to arrange systems to provide food to those who need it most.

The social-biophysical system is replete with chicken-and-egg subsystems. Given that there is no obvious single vulnerable point in the system to initiate change, governments must address a range of issues simultaneously. Key starting points include purging politics of "big money"; introducing a more progressive tax system that effectively caps the income of the extremely wealthy; ensuring that policymakers have a basic level of scientific understanding; and strengthening women's rights, including access to free contraception.

Just as social and environmental problems can be mutually reinforcing, so can actions aimed at strengthening our social and environmental fundamentals. Only by focusing on these fundamentals, rather than merely tinkering with the details of food production, can intrinsic systemic linkages work to the advantage of future generations.

*Project Syndicate*

*Paul R. Ehrlich is professor of population studies in Stanford University. John Harte holds a joint professorship in the Energy and Resources Group and the Ecosystem Sciences Division of the College of Natural Resources at the University of California, Berkeley.*



# THE PHILIPPINE STAR

TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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## **STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

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### **EDITORIAL**

## **104 million and growing**

The Supreme Court has given the go-signal for the implementation of Republic Act 10354, or the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012. It will take years, however, before the full impact of the RH law becomes evident.

Meanwhile, the nation must meet the demands of an ever-growing population. The past year ended with the Commission on Population reporting that the number of Filipinos would hit 104 million in 2016, up from the current 102.4 million. PopCom officials say the projection could be lower if the increasing trend in contraceptive use is sustained during the year.

The national fertility rate is slowing down, according to PopCom. Still, it is clear that the country cannot keep up with the demands of the booming population. Official statistics show that the poverty rate has changed little over the past six years. The classroom backlog is being addressed and the textbook shortage is over, according to education officials,

but public education resources remain inadequate. Public health facilities are overwhelmed. At government hospitals, new mothers share not just rooms but also beds.

The lack of meaningful jobs is reflected in the continuing exodus of Filipinos for employment overseas. The lack of decent sources of livelihood especially in the countryside is also a key reason for urban migration, which has turned Metro Manila into one of the world's most congested megacities.

Other urban centers such as Baguio are rapidly becoming overcrowded. As in Metro Manila, urban blight is the result. Too many people compete for limited resources. Vehicles compete for road space with no room for expansion. All basic services are inadequate, from shelter to garbage collection and maintenance of peace and order. With the RH law in place, the greater challenge is to improve governance and delivery of services. This cannot wait for population growth to taper off.



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### YEARENDER

# Int'l disaster deals signed amid high number of Pinoy casualties

By ALEXIS ROMERO

The year 2015 proved to be a historic one for countries prone to natural disasters like the Philippines.

Three international agreements related to disasters were crafted this year, a development that Philippine officials believe reflected the growing awareness about the need for more resilient communities and economies.

The Sendai Framework, which recognizes the role of the state and other stakeholders in reducing disaster risk, was adopted last March. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Disaster Risk Reduction Framework, meanwhile, was approved in Iloilo City in September.

A long-awaited climate agreement was also adopted in Paris in December, but not without protests by some groups who believe that poor countries were shortchanged during the negotiations.

"The year 2015 was a year of both challenges and opportunities," National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) executive director Alexander Pama told **The STAR** in an

It was a year of challenges as we strong typhoons... It was also a year of opportunity because respected groups like the UNISDR (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction) and other counties said we are doing what is right," he added.

Pama claimed that the Philippines, a country visited by about 20 typhoons every year, played a key role in the adoption of all three agreements.

With regard to the Sendai Framework, a 15-year non-binding agreement that aims to substantially reduce disaster-related deaths and losses, Pama said the Philippines pushed for gender sensitivity and the participation of migrant workers.

He said the country also lobbied for the inclusion of pre-disaster risk assessment, a concept now embodied in paragraph 23 of the agreement.

"We contributed important aspects to the Sendai Framework, particularly in pre-disaster risk assessment and understanding disasters," Pama said.

"It was a very significant milestone in terms of disaster risk reduction and we played a very significant role in the passage of that framework," he said.

The framework has seven global targets: to substantially reduce global disaster mortality, reduce the number of affected people globally, reduce direct disaster economic loss, substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support, substantially increase the availability of and access to early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments all by 2030, and substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020.

To achieve these goals, countries need to undertake four priorities of action,

strengthen disaster risk governance,

enhance disaster preparedness for effective response and rehabilitation.

### **Non-binding**

The APEC Disaster Risk Reduction Framework, meanwhile, was described by Pama as a document "practically authored by the Philippines."

"For the first time in the history of APEC, it now has disaster risk reduction framework," Pama said.

The document, however, is also non-binding and there have been doubts as to whether it could really promote international cooperation on disaster response. Pama, however, believes that the adoption of the framework is in itself an important development.



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

*Year Endor : Int'l disaster...*

"It may not be binding but we now have a basis and framework for the conduct of activities related to emergency preparedness," he said.

Pama stressed that the "new normal" – a term used to describe unpredictable and increasing frequency and magnitude of disasters – requires stronger cooperation among APEC member-economies.

The framework, the first document on disaster preparedness adopted by APEC since the economic bloc was formed in 1989, emphasizes the importance of prevention and mitigation, preparedness and response, recovery and rehabilitation.

It also acknowledges the role of the private sector in promoting disaster resilience and sustainable development. APEC member-economies have also agreed to craft an action plan to implement, monitor and evaluate activities related to the framework.

### Controversial climate deal

The 21st Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) drew

mixed reviews. While delegates were able to prove wrong the doomsayers who predicted that nothing significant would come out of the event, some

critics are not satisfied with the outcome, which has been criticized as vague on key issues including climate finance.

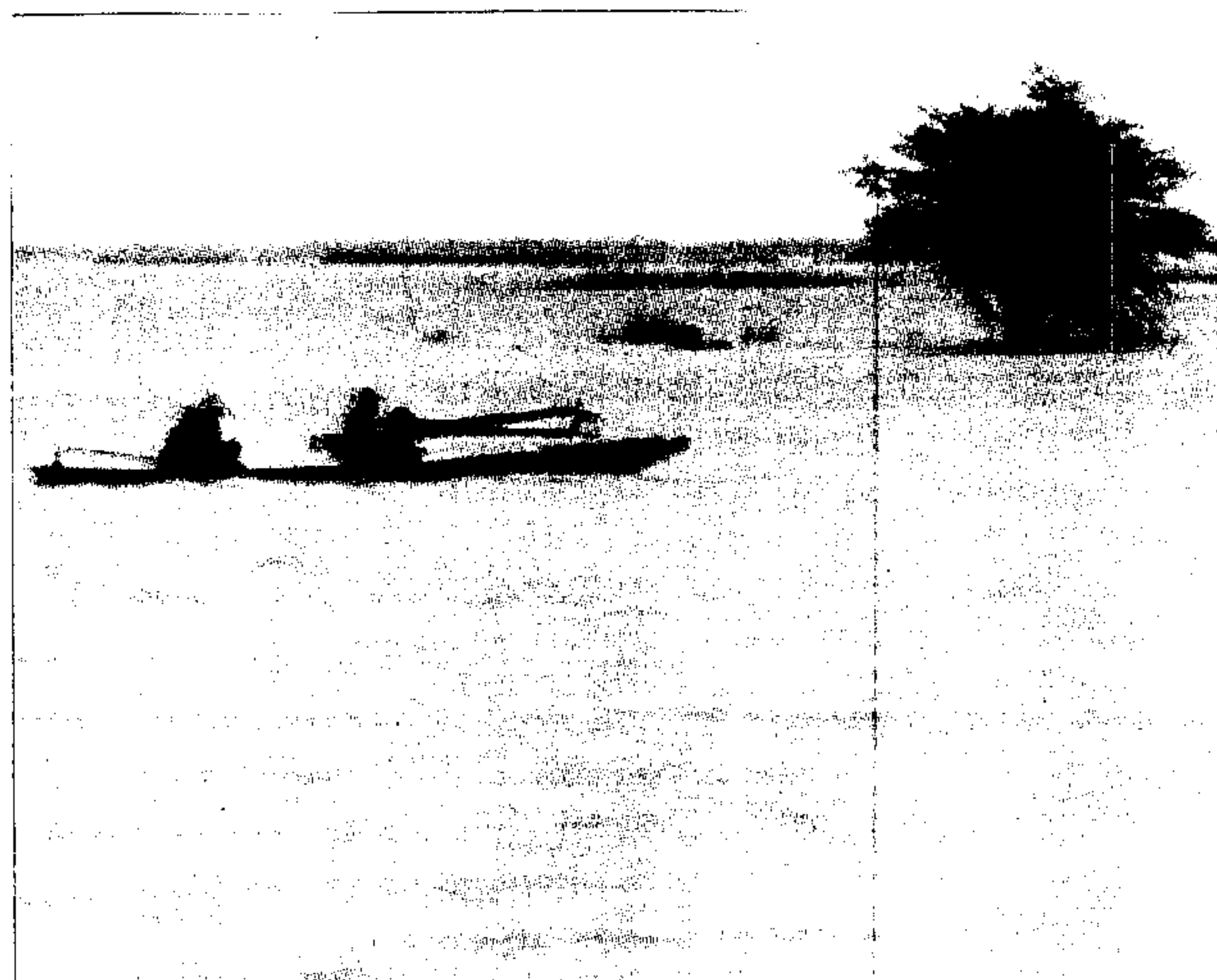
Under the agreement, countries will work to hold global warming "well below" two degrees Celsius and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to

1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

The Philippines and other vulner-

able countries pushed for the lowering of the UNFCCC's temperature goal to 1.5 degrees Celsius from two degrees, saying this would ensure their survival.

Parties will also stop the increase in greenhouse gas emissions, which has been linked to global warming. The agreement, however, is silent on countries that failed to meet their emission reduction goals.



A rice field in San Agustin, Candaba, Pampanga is flooded following the onslaught of Typhoon Lando in October. MICHAEL VARGAS

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Some groups also claimed that the agreement did not have enough provisions on climate financing for countries vulnerable to climate change.

Rodne Galicha, Philippine manager of The Climate Reality Project, said while the agreement may become "a spark of hope to save the planet," it did not have much to say about loss and damage mechanisms.

"Ambitious it may seem, there is still a great imbalance – no clear finance mechanism for loss and damage. This agreement is useless if countries are unable to ratify and implement – the challenge lies on governments and their people," Galicha said in a recent statement.

"Historical responsibility, liability and compensation are not addressed, hence, most vulnerable countries which experienced massive losses and damage may be at the crossroads," he added.

International humanitarian group Oxfam, meanwhile, said the deal is "a landmark step" but "has not done enough to ensure that a three degrees Celsius world will be avoided or secure sufficient climate funding for vulnerable communities."





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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Year End: Int'l disaster.

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"The Paris climate deal has brought the world's powers together but has short-changed the poorest and most vulnerable people as they struggle with the burgeoning reality of rising sea-levels, floods and drought Oxfam warned today," Oxfam said in a statement.

The group said the ambitious speeches from world leaders opening the summit were not sustained until the end of the talks.

"This deal offers a frayed lifeline to the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. Only the vague promise of a new future climate funding target has been made, while the deal does not force countries to cut emissions fast enough to forestall a climate change catastrophe. This will only ramp up adaptation costs further in the future," Oxfam executive director Helen Szoke said.

"Governments across the world have now come together in the global fight against climate change but must play catch up. We will be holding them to account with the millions of people who marched in cities all around the world so that dangerous warming is averted and the world's poorest and most vulnerable communities get the support that they need," she added.

Oxfam said there is nothing in the agreement that guarantees that current commitments of countries will improve before they come into force, making it hard to reach the two degrees Celsius goal and almost impossible to avoid warming of more than 1.5 degrees Celsius that developing countries, including the Philippines, believe is necessary for their survival.

Pama, however, believes that all the climate concerns cannot be resolved by a single agreement.

"We cannot expect to come up with a perfect document in a span of two weeks. The fact that there is already a document, that there is an agreement in principle in most of the areas, that is already a major movement," Pama said.

"It is understandable that some countries will push for their respective interests. Some will say it's for the survival of some countries, others will say hey, if you ban the use of oil, it will also affect our survival," he added.

"I won't complain about the agreement but it could have been better."

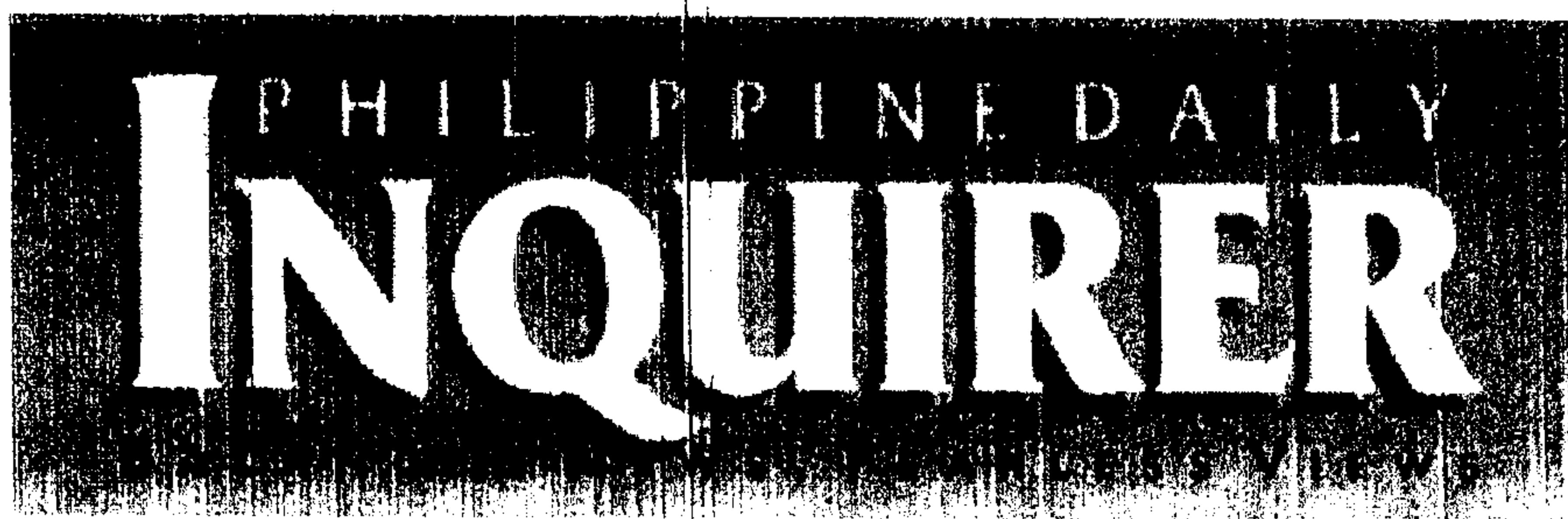
### Impact of typhoons

While the government claimed to have several achievements in disaster management, the number of casualties and amount of damage caused by typhoons that hit the country this year remained high.

A total of 116 people died while 35 others went missing in 13 typhoons that visited the country this year. The typhoons also left 133 persons injured, data from the NDRRMC showed.

The typhoons also affected 4.2 million persons or more than 976,000 families and damaged P18.24 billion worth of properties.





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## Economic growth up to us

**T**HOSE EXPECTING the government to provide the impetus for the Philippines' economic growth in 2016 are bound to be disappointed, just as they have been over the past five years.

Yes, there will be an increased pace of government spending this year as the Aquino administration tries to ensure the victory of its standard-bearer at the polls

### EDITORIAL

through a late surge in infrastructure spending. This will happen mostly at the local level involving roads, bridges and waiting sheds, instead of the big-ticket items that this country sorely needs.

But this fiscal stimulus is bound to be held back by the same wait-and-see hesitation that has hounded this administration for the past five years.

Thanks to the example provided by the current dispen-

aware of how their lives can be made miserable by fault-finding agents of the next president set to assume power six short months from now. So, like in previous years, the bureaucrats will take their time in affixing their signatures on project-approval documents, lest they be haled to court on graft charges by the next administration, whether real or imagined.

Yes, government spending will help move economic growth along, but not by much and, by any measure, nowhere near its potential to-do so.

For 2016, we must temper expectations of a last-minute surge in project approvals under President Aquino's economic flagship, the public-private partnership program. Expect would-be megaprojects—which otherwise would have had the capability of generating thousands of new jobs, directly and indirectly, and of marshaling billions of pesos in investments for productive economic use—to meet lackluster fates. Any deal that miraculously makes it through the bidding process over the next six months is certain to break ground only by the time a new president is sitting in Malacañang, too late to have an impact on this year's economy.

So just like in the past, in the absence of decisive government action, the responsibility for ensuring the growth of the Philippine economy lies once more with the private sector, from big conglomerates all the way down to entrepreneurs running small and medium enterprises, and further down to the individual consumer.

And what faces the private sector on the business and economic front this year?

Apart from potential changes in government policy once the new president is sworn into office, the Philippines and the rest of the world will have to wrestle with rising interest rates, thanks to the decision of the US central bank to raise lending costs for the first time in nearly a decade. For the average Filipino, that will mean more expensive home mortgages, car loans, credit card debts potentially trickling all the way down to your neighborhood "five-six" loan shark.

On the upside, fuel prices will likely remain low this year, meaning the increase on the prices of basic goods will be tempered, aided by the cheaper imports from our neighbors, thanks to the advent of the Asean Economic Community which came into force on Jan. 1, 2016 (but it will mean more competition for local entrepreneurs).

In other words, whatever happens this year, and whoever wins the presidency come May, the environment will not be as easy as the last five years. It will be nothing short of "challenging" (to use the euphemism so loved by businessmen and analysts).

Ultimately, the economic fate of this country in this challenging year is in your hands. Yes, you, the individual consumer.

It sounds counterintuitive, but the amount of investments that will be poured into the economy and the number of jobs that will consequently be created this year will depend on mainly you. It will depend on how many kilos of meat and vegetables you buy at the wet market, how much canned

credit you load onto your mobile phone and how many fried chicken lunches you buy. And lest anyone forget, it will also depend on how well you balance all this consumption with savings in case unexpected challenges come around.

This year, the Philippine economy will rise or fall thanks to the actions of the individual consumer. Just like in previous years, but more so this year, you alone will be responsible for this country's progress.

Over the next six months, don't let vote-hungry politicians tell you otherwise.



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# PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# China landing on PH reef hit

## Manila to join Hanoi in protest

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE PHILIPPINES will protest China's landing a plane on an airstrip it has built on an artificial island in the hotly contested Spratly archipelago in the South China Sea, Malacañang and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said yesterday.

The Chinese foreign ministry released a statement late Saturday saying Beijing had completed construction of an airfield on Philippine-claimed Kagitingan (Fiery Cross) Reef, and recently used a civilian plane to conduct

a flight testing whether the facilities were up to civil-aviation standards.

The statement immediately drew protest from Vietnam, which also claims Kagitingan, calling the reef Da Chu Thap.

Le Hai Binh, spokesperson for the Vietnamese foreign ministry, said the airstrip had been "built illegally" on the reef in territory in the Spratlys that was "part of Vietnam."

Binh said the Chinese test flight violated Vietnam's sovereignty, breached mutual understanding and hurt bilateral relations.

"Vietnam resolutely protests Chinese above-said action and demand that China immediately stop, not repeat similar actions," Binh said in a statement.

In Manila yesterday, Presidential Communications Secretary Herminio Coloma Jr. said in a text message that the DFA would

CHINA/A19



**DISPUTED REEF** Photos provided by the Center for Strategic and International Studies show

Kagitingan (Fiery Cross) Reef (above) with a 3,125-meter-long airstrip built by China and reclamation work (right) going on on the reef in the Spratly archipelago also claimed by the Philippines and Vietnam.

REUTERS/CSIS/AFP/PAO



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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### China landing on PH reef bit

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also protest the Chinese action.

In a separate text message, Charles Jose, spokesperson for the DFA, said the department would "also be lodging a protest" with China over the test flight to Kagitingan.

Jose said Kagitingan was part of the Kalayaan Island Group that belonged to the Philippines.

China, which claims almost the entire 3.5-million-square-kilometer South China Sea, rejected Vietnam's protest.

In a response Saturday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said the test

Chinese carrier *Liaoning* island, was a matter "completely within China's sovereignty."

"The Chinese side will not accept the unfounded accusations from the Vietnamese side," Hua said in a statement.

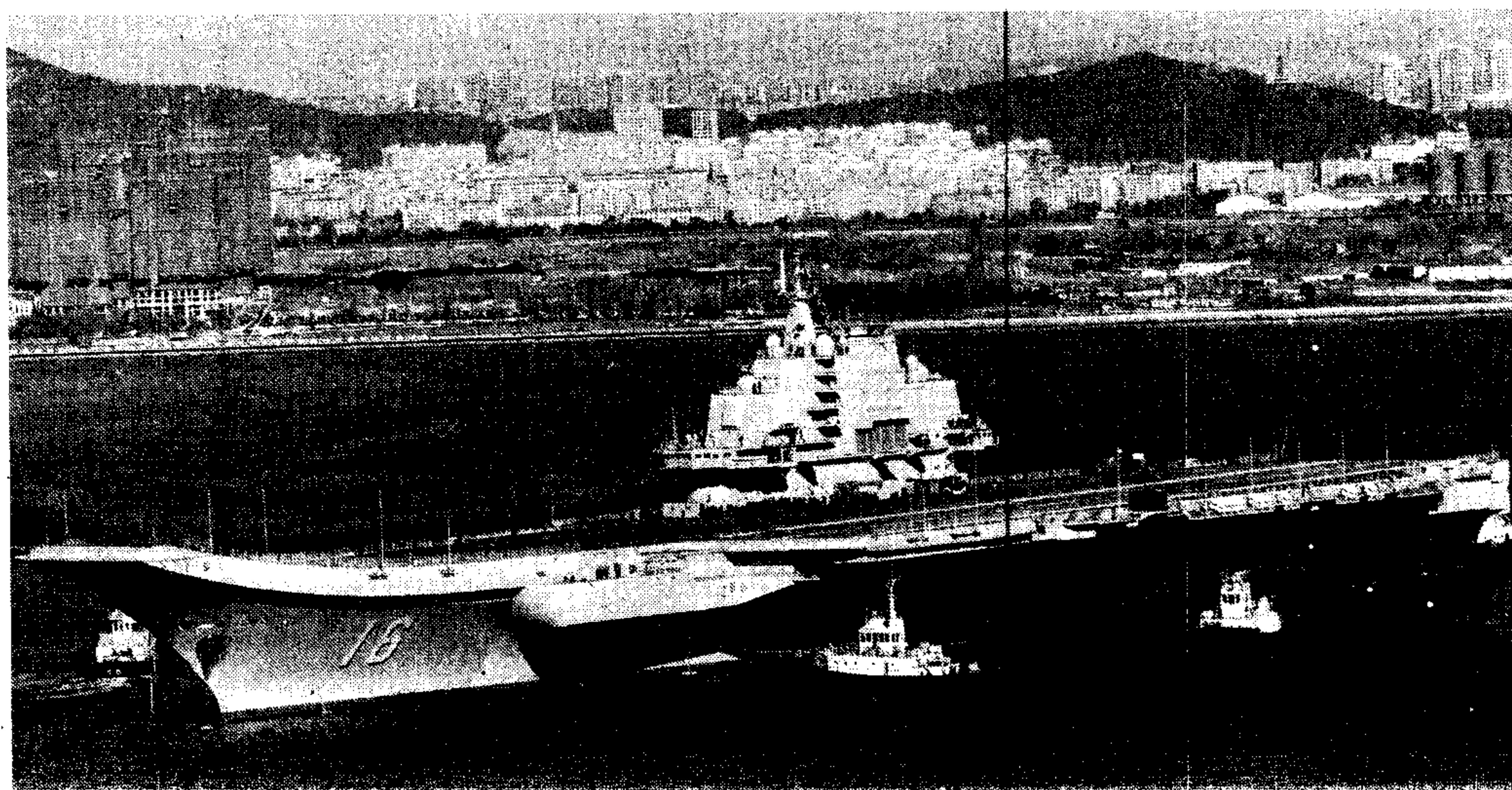
She added that China hoped Vietnam could work to achieve "sustainable, healthy and stable" development of bilateral ties.

#### Artificial islands

China has become more assertive in pressing its claims to the South China Sea, building artificial islands on reefs in the Spratlys, an archipelago rich in natural resources that is the focal point of rival claims by neighboring countries.

Besides the Philippines and Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia and Taiwan also claim parts or all of the South China Sea, which is crisscrossed by sea-lanes through which \$5 trillion in global trade passes every year and where islets, reefs and atolls are believed to be sitting atop vast energy reserves.

China has piled sand atop seven reefs in the Spratlys, on at least two of which it has built airstrips, radar installations and docking facilities.



**NAVAL POWER** China's first aircraft carrier, the *Liaoning*, returns to port in Dalian after its sea trial in October. With the *Liaoning*, China aims to project its growing military power in the Asia-Pacific region. AP

Besides Kagitingan, China has built artificial islands on Calderon (Cuarteron), Burgos (Gaven), Mabini (Johnson South), Panganiban (Mischief), Zamora (Subi) and McKennan (Hughes) reefs, all claimed by the Philippines and within the country's 370-kilometer exclusive economic zone recognized under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

#### Opaque policy

As with most of its policy in the South China Sea, Beijing has remained opaque about its plans for the airstrips.

China insists its island-building works are justified and do not constitute a threat to stability and freedom of navigation. But the United

States and its regional allies have expressed concern that China's robust assertion of its claims has aggravated tensions.

Although the Philippines and Vietnam already have airstrips in the Spratlys, they are just long enough to accommodate slow-moving cargo and surveillance planes.

China's airfield on Kagitingan has a 3,125-meter-long runway, long enough to receive bombers capable of launching cruise missiles.

#### Regional tensions

The United States said it was concerned that the test flight had exacerbated tensions in the region.

Washington has criticized China's construction of artificial islands in the South China Sea and worries that Beijing plans to use them for military purposes, even though China

says it has no hostile intent.

Pooja Jhunjhunwala, a spokesperson for the US state department, said there was "a pressing need for claimants to publicly commit to a reciprocal halt to further land reclamation, construction of new facilities and militarization of disputed features."

"We encourage all claimants to actively reduce tensions by refraining from unilateral actions that undermine regional stability, and taking steps to create space for meaningful diplomatic solutions to emerge," she said.

Although not taking sides in the territorial disputes, the United States has challenged China's claim of sovereignty over nearly the whole South China.

In October, the United States sent a guided missile destroyer sailing near one of the artificial islands built by China in the Spratlys. In De-



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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

China landing - - -

cember, it has also sent two B-52 strategic bombers flying near the artificial islands.

US ally Australia also sent a surveillance plane flying near the artificial islands in early December, showing it did not recognize China's expansive claim in the South China Sea.

**PH arbitration case**

Without military muscle to defend its claims in the South China Sea, the Philippines has taken its territorial dispute with China to the United Nations Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague for resolution.

China has ignored the proceedings, saying it will not accept any decision by the tribunal.

The court, however, has proceeded to hear the case, and is expected to hand down a decision by June. *With reports from AP and Reuters*

**IN THE KNOW: Kagitingan Reef**

KAGITINGAN Reef, internationally known as Fiery Cross Reef, is part of the disputed Kalayaan Island Group on the Philippine side of the Spratly archipelago in the South China Sea.

Besides the Philippines, China and Vietnam also claim Kagitingan Reef.

In 2014, China began to reclaim land on disputed reefs in the Spratlys and build airstrips that could be used for landing military aircraft.

In October 2014, Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario said the Philippines submitted a note verbale to China, "protesting the

activity" in the West Philippine Sea, waters in the South China Sea within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

In November 2014, a London-based security group, IHS Jane's, disclosed in a report the details of the land reclamation project China was undertaking on Kagitingan Reef.

According to the report, the artificial island is 3,000 meters long and 200-300 m wide, one of several reclamation projects being pursued by China in the region but apparently the first that could accommodate an airstrip. A harbor has been dug out on the east side of the reef that appears

large enough for tankers and naval warships, it said.

It also said the artificial island had a Chinese garrison and had a pier, air defense guns, antiriot defenses, communications equipment and a greenhouse.

As of September 2015, the runway built atop Kagitingan Reef was 3,125 m long. The airstrip is long enough to accommodate bombers like the H-6K, whose air-launched cruise missiles increase its destructive power.

**Inquirer Research**

Source: *Inquirer Archives, IHS Jane's Website*