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Friday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

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A broader look at today's business

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR notes drop in number of nesting sea turtles and eggs

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

THE number of nesting marine turtles on Turtle Islands is sharply decreasing over the past three years, officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said on Thursday.

DENR records show that the number of nesting marine turtles has significantly dropped from a record-high 19,550 in 2012. A year later, the number of nesting marine turtles decreased to 17,593. In 2014 the DENR also observed the same trend, with only 14,377 sea turtles (super-family *Chelonioidae*), or *pawikan*, nesting in the beaches of Turtle Islands, the biggest *pawikan* sanctuary in Southeast Asia.

The number of nesting *pawikan* was at its lowest in 2003, when the number of nests went down to just a little over 4,000, DENR records revealed.

As of September last year, only 11,277 marine turtles came to lay their eggs.

With the decrease in the number of turtles laying eggs, so did the decline in the number of eggs recorded.

From the 2 million turtle eggs recorded in 2012, only around 1.6 million eggs were counted in 2013 and 1.3 million in 2014.

As of September last year, the egg count is slightly over 1 million eggs.

Nilo Ramoso Jr., project leader of the Pawikan Conservation Project of the DENR's Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau, noted that 88 percent of the total number of eggs have hatched and were observed to crawl from their nests to shore.

Director Theresa Mundita Lim of the DENR-Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB) said the decline in the number of nesting *pawikan* can be due to a number of factors. Lim, however, expressed fears of the resurgence of illegal-

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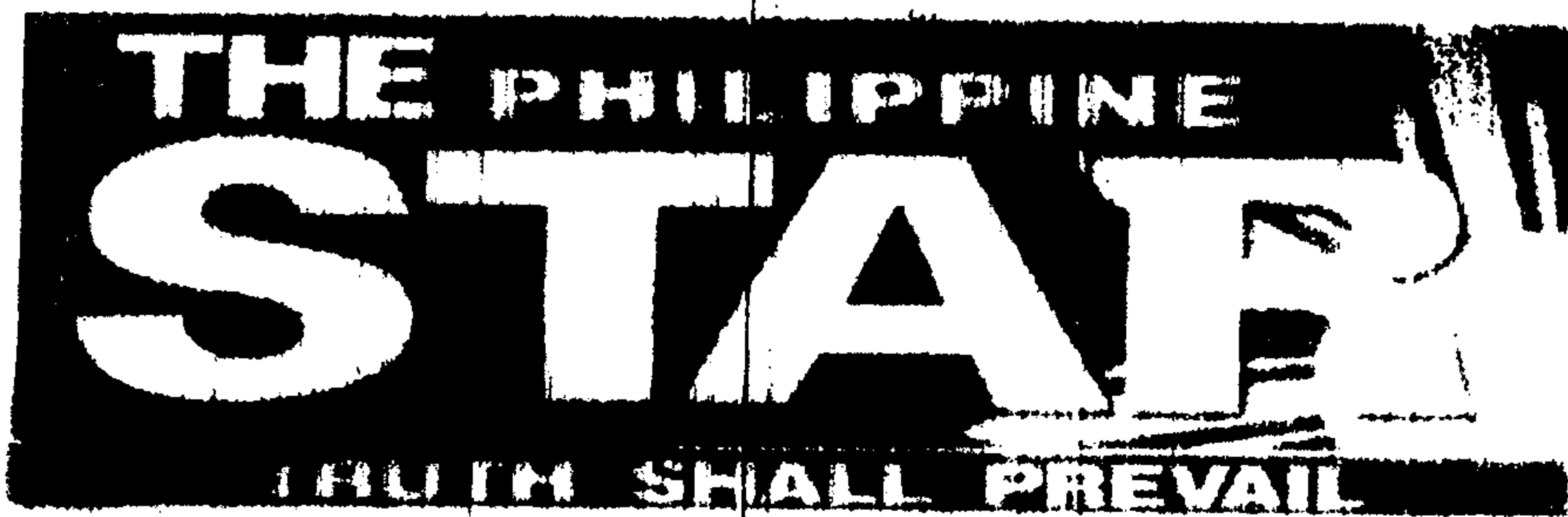
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The only paper you read from cover to cover!

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Noy urged: Take out Canadian trash

As the country observes Zero Waste Month, environmentalists urged outgoing President Aquino to resolve the unfinished business of Canadian garbage languishing at the port of Manila.

"We hope that the illegal garbage shipments would be finally returned to Canada before he steps down and hands over power to his successor. The new president will surely have his or her hands full and this environmental justice issue, we hope, will not add to his or her heavy load," said EcoWaste Coalition vice president Rene Pineda.

From June 2013 to January 2014, a total of 103 shipping containers of mixed garbage from Canada, misdeclared as "plastic scraps" for recycling, entered the country in 10 batches and were subsequently intercepted by customs authorities.

After sitting at the port for months, 26 containers of trash were dumped at the Metro Clark Landfill in Tarlac between June 26 and July 8, 2015, angering local officials and residents.

Tarlac's vociferous objec-

tions triggered preemptive moves by other local government units to bar foreign garbage in local landfills to safeguard public health and the environment.

Aquino kept the illegal garbage importation out of the official agenda for his state visit to Canada in May 2015 and during his bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on the fringe of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit last November.

On Nov. 19, Trudeau announced that a "Canadian solution" is being crafted to plug the loopholes that allowed the export of Canadian trash to the Philippines but was non-committal in taking the garbage back.

Various groups have been asking the Aquino administration to ratify an amendment to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal to prohibit highly industrialized countries from exporting hazardous wastes to developing countries "for final disposal, reuse, recycling and recovery."

— Rhodina Villanueva

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

→ DICAPRIO HAPPY LEADERS TAKING CLIMATE CHANGE MORE SERIOUSLY

NEW YORK—Leonardo DiCaprio feels optimistic that the debate over climate change has begun to wane, and world leaders are finally starting to take it more seriously.

"The scientific community has been screaming out loud. Ninety-nine percent of the scientific community is in agreement that man is contributing to [climate change]," DiCaprio told the Associated Press on the red carpet for his new film, *The Revenant* on Wednesday.

"The argument is over. Anyone that doesn't believe that climate change is happening doesn't believe in science," said DiCaprio, who has remained an active player for the issue.

The actor previously has addressed the United Nations on climate control, donated millions of dollars to environmental causes, and narrated the 2014 short film, *Carbon*, which presents ideas for climate-change solutions. *AP*

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

UP students slam SC on Bt *talong*

By JANVIC MATEO



Agricultural biotechnology students of the University of the Philippines in Los Baños, Laguna (UPLB) joined the science and agricultural communities yesterday in criticizing the recent

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Supreme Court (SC) ruling that banned the field testing of genetically modified (GM) eggplants.

The UP League of Agricultural Biotechnology Students (UP LABS) said the SC ruling did not only ban the field testing of *Bacillus thuringiensis* (bt) talong but also revoked the existing guidelines on the biosafety of GM crops in the country.

In its ruling released last month, the high tribunal stopped the field testing of the eggplant variant developed to resist pests.

It also struck down an administrative order of the Department of Agriculture (DA) that gives additional mandate to the Bureau of Plant Industry to issue permits to promote the safe and responsible use of biotechnology.

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

The group said the nullification of the DA order and halting of the application, commercialization and importation of GM crops could impede agricultural development in the country.

The students said the ruling would also hamper ongoing research on other modern biotechnology projects, such as golden rice, virus-resistant

and delayed ripening papaya and bt cotton.

"This may cause the delay and loss of thesis and research grants for our fellow students, interns, researchers and scientists," said UP LABS.

"With lesser opportunities to hone their expertise in the Philippines, the graduates may seek greener pastures in other countries... The youth might be discouraged to pursue a degree in specialized sciences because of the lack of institutional support, appreciation and incentives," the group added.

Safe for consumption

UP LABS said bt talong is safe for consumption, contrary to those who sought the ban on its testing.

The group said the eggplant variant was also developed in India and Bangladesh. Bangladesh has allowed its consumption since 2014.

"Upon its market release, no incidence of harmful effects to the environment and humans were reported," the group said.

"Now, Bangladeshis benefit from the 70-90 percentage reduction in insecticide use, consequently increasing the net income of their farmers – the true purpose of developing Bt crops," it added.

Daily Tribune

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



PAL adopts RP eaglet

Philippine Airlines (PAL) is adopting a month-old Philippine eaglet to help save the endangered specie.

Known as Chick 26, the eaglet hatched on Dec. 7, 2015 at the Philippine Eagle Center in Davao City.

To celebrate the eaglet's first month, the Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF) is partnering with PAL to be Chick 26's adoptor for the next six years.

PAL is donating one million Mabuhay Miles to support the foundation's mission of spreading awareness to save the Philippine Eagle and protect its forest habitat.

"Philippine Airlines is committed to help promote the Philippine Eagle's survival and to ensure protection of its natural habitat. We thank loyal PAL passengers for their generous support in donating unused flight miles to add to our 'Miles for a Mission' project. Indeed, they have shown the genuine heart of the Filipino," said PAL president and COO Jaime Bautista.

Following its successful partnership with PAL, PEF executive director Dennis Salvador hopes that other organizations and individuals would continue to support PEF's programs to spread public awareness and understanding on the importance of conservation work.

"We thank Philippine Airlines for lending a hand in this noble cause. Having the nation's flag carrier on our side helps advance our mission to save our national bird. May others do the same," he added.

As adoptor of Chick 26, PAL was given the naming rights for the month-old eaglet. The flag carrier will launch an internal name search, gather suggestions from PAL employees, and choose the best name for the young bird.

PEF curator Anna Mae Sumaya said Chick 26 is in good health, is eagerly feeding and always wants more of its ration.

"We only give food quantities appropriate for the chick's age to ensure a normal diet. The eaglet is given 80 grams of ground quail meat, liver and bones per feeding thrice a day," she said.

Chick 26 is currently tended in an air-conditioned room which simulates conditions in the wild. Its handlers say this is important especially since the chick's down feathers are starting to thicken and develop.

The eaglet will soon be transferred to an isolated area for 'mentoring'. While there, it can observe the activities of an adult eagle so it can properly imbibe the characteristics of its species.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Massive infrastructure work seen solution to C. Luzon floods

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Former Sen. Richard Gordon has urged the government to implement massive infrastructure work in Central Luzon to stop floods and address what he called the “cycle of disaster and poverty” in the region.

Gordon, in a statement, said every time heavy rain occurs in the Sierra Madre mountain ranges, floods due to denuded forests in Aurora and Nueva Ecija provinces trigger soil erosion and fill up shallow and silted rivers. Floodwater, he said, then destroys earth dikes, submerging farmlands in Central

Luzon, the rice granary of the country.

“[Floods] always have a delayed impact on low-lying Bulacan, Pampanga and Tarlac [riverside] and coastal communities, which linger for weeks [and disrupt] livelihood activities,” said Gordon, chair of the Philippine Red Cross and a former mayor of Olongapo City.

He asked the government to reforest the Sierra Madre, do continuous desilting of rivers draining to Manila Bay, build interceptor canals and mini-dams to collect water for irrigation, and strengthen dikes along rivers.

Public Works Secretary Rogelio Singson agreed with Gordon's recommendation. “That is what the Pampanga River Basin Flood Control Master Plan is all about,” Singson told the INQUIRER.

The master plan seeks to develop two retarding basins in San Antonio town in Nueva Ecija and Candaba town in Pampanga. It includes the dredging of river channels from the mouth of Manila Bay in Bulacan, he said.

The Regional Development Council (RDC) in Central Luzon

approved in December a P2.11-billion infrastructure rehabilitation program for areas damaged by Typhoon “Lando” (international name: Koppu) in October.

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), National Irrigation Administration (NIA), and NIA-Upper Pampanga River Integrated Irrigation System (UPRIIS) are implementing the program.

“The strategy is to rehabilitate affected irrigation systems

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and transportation and communication linkages using upgraded climate and disaster standards and specifications,” said Severino Santos, vice chair of RDC and regional director of the National Economic and Development Authority.

The program requires the DPWH to repair 95.1 kilometers of national roads, rebuild 3.5 km of flood control dikes, and restore or build schools, town halls and multipurpose buildings. These cost P1.8 billion.

NIA was tasked to improve 62 km of main canals and other structures worth P158 million.

UPRIIS will rehabilitate main canals, line canals and gravel roads in Nueva Ecija and Tarlac at a cost of P250 million.

The RDC also approved P1.57 billion for social services rehabilitation plan and P643 million for livelihood and business projects.

The Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said Lando left 24 people dead and displaced 1.4 million people in 1,184 villages in Central Luzon. The region lost P6.79 billion in crops, fishery and livestock. **Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon**

Daily Tribune

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PCCI calls on SMEs to conserve water

Philippine businesses, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs), are encouraged to undertake water conservation initiatives amid climate change.

Jesus Reyes, vice chairman of Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industries (PCCI), said the earth is warming about one degree celsius in the past 150 years, and is projected to warm two to six degree celsius in the next hundred years.

Reyes said the 10 warmest years on record happened in the last decade.

"What happens when you reach 2 degrees celsius? There is more risk of coastal flooding, more risk of hunger because of the decrease in food, risk of malaria and risk of water shortage," he said in a recent Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc. (PhilExport) position paper sent to some entities, including The Daily Tribune.

Reyes said the 2015 Paris Climate Change Conference underscored the need for countries around the world to create their own plans called Intended National Determined Contributions (INDC) identifying how they intend to cut greenhouse gas emissions caused by climate change.

He said the Philippines aims to reduce its

carbon emissions by 70 percent by 2030 from 2000 levels.

Reduction will come from energy, transport, waste and industry sectors.

Reyes, also the vice president for corporate affairs of Nestle Philippines, Inc, further said the industry sector supports the government's action to reduce the country's greenhouse carbon footprint.

The official's warning about climate change is similar to the warning of former United States vice president Albert Gore.

According to the former VP, the hole in the ozone layer was already as big as the state of Texas in 2002.

Texas' land area is more than 400,000 square kilometers or one and one-fourth of the Philippines.

Gore said the hole was caused by factories' and vehicles' too much use of fossil fuels.

He fully narrated his findings about climate change in his documentary "An Inconvenient Truth," which won as best documentary at the 2003 Oscars.

Ed Velasco

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Investment pledges OKd up to P662B in '15

By Amy R. Remo

THE VALUE OF investment pledges approved by the Board of Investments and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority rose by 4.3 percent to P661.8 billion in 2015, reflecting the continued strong investor interest in the country.

In a briefing yesterday, Peza Director General Lilia G. de Lima said Peza alone approved a total of 598 projects, which could generate P295.085 billion in investments. This reflected a 5.58 percent increase from the P279.5 billion worth of projects it approved in 2014.

"Our figures showed that for (the approved) investments, we had an increase of 5.58 percent; for employment 7.73 percent, and exports, slightly down at 0.55 percent. But the figures for employment and exports covered only up to October as we are still collating the reports for the last two months. If it were not for the impact of the port congestion

issue and concerns on the importation of chemicals, we should have had better figures," De Lima said.

"Very conservatively, we are targeting this year a growth of 5-5-5 (5 percent growth in the value of investments, employment and exports). Please note that the base (figures) have been increasing," the Peza chief added.

Trade Secretary Adrian S. Cristobal Jr. said the BOI approved last year a total of 358 projects, worth about P366.74 billion, up 3 percent from the P354.76 billion approved in 2014. These investments are also expected to generate 58,252 new jobs once the projects become fully operational.

Cristobal said the BOI was targeting a 5-percent growth in the value of investments this year, stressing that the agency's new thrust was to focus on the number and the quality of jobs to be generated by registered projects/

Data provided by the BOI showed

that the increase in investments was attributed mainly to the approval of big power projects including Olympia Violago Water and Power Ltd. Co. (P69.13 billion); San Buenaventura Power Ltd. Co. (P49.45 billion), and Semirara Mining and Power Corp. (P29.5 billion).

According to the BOI, the 55 energy-related projects, which will cumulatively have a capacity of 2,095 megawatts, are seen to generate P246.42 billion in investments. The investments were higher compared to the previous year's record of P174.69 billion from the 37 power-related projects, which have a total capacity of 1,542.404 MW.

"The increase in power investment projects augurs well for the country's goal to ensure energy security and independence. These investments support the Philippine Energy Plan (PEP) 2010-2030 to search for, discover, and further develop energy sources," BOI managing

head Ceferino S. Rodolfo said.

Approved investments in the manufacturing sector reached P27.01 billion last year, from the P24.47 billion recorded the previous year.

"The continued growth of the manufacturing industry is a clear indication of the efforts to boost the growth and further development of the sector through the Manufacturing Resurgence Program (MRP)," Rodolfo said.

Other sectors that contributed to the increase included agriculture, forestry and fishing (P6.19 billion), and information and communication (P4.68 billion).

Investment commitments from domestic sources, meanwhile, reached P307.24 billion, accounting for about 84 percent of the total investment approvals from January to December last year, while the remaining 16 percent or P59.51 billion were generated from foreign sources.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

IN THE COUNTRY

The troopers of the 20th Infantry Battalion were tracking down two unidentified men.

The explosion was followed by a firefight that lasted a few minutes, Viernes said.

Cpl. Donnie Aton and Pfc. Bingbong Crisologo were rushed by their colleagues to the Northern Samar Provincial Hospital for treatment.

Meanwhile, in Samar, residents from 15 villages in Calbiga town left their homes for fear of being caught in the crossfire in the anticipated military offensives against the rebels.

The villagers are staying with their relatives in the town proper.

One evacuee who requested anonymity said the military asked them to evacuate, as they would launch the offensives in the boundaries of Calbiga, Basey and Eastern Samar.

The military denied the allegations, saying there would be no military operation in the areas.

— Ricky Bautista



Villagers hold a 13-foot python caught by watchmen in Barangay Bagna, Malolos City yesterday morning before turning it over to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. RAMON EFREN LAZARO