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Sunday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

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The only paper you read from cover to cover!

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR, UP to launch training program on green governance

A training program on environmental governance will be launched by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the University of the Philippines tomorrow.

The UP Program for Environmental Governance or UPPEG is the newest program

being offered by the country's premier university. It aims to harness the multi-disciplinary expertise of the DENR and the UP System in the field of environmental governance.

"The training program is open to all government and private organizations that have a stake in effective environmental

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

governance like the Department of the Interior and Local Government and people's organizations," Environment Secretary Ramon Paje said.

Twenty-two UP professors will be tapped as UPPEG trainers and 30 provincial environment and natural resources

officers will compose the first batch of trainees.

"The trainers will promote the program's objective, which is to strengthen the competence of environmental authorities," Paje said, adding the experts will discuss policy formulation and analysis, transformational

leadership, conflict resolution, effective communications skills, resource mobilization for business development and networking, environmental management planning, and managing environmental risks and resiliency.

The training will start tomorrow until Feb. 20 in UP campus-

es in Diliman in Quezon City, Los Baños in Laguna and in the Visayas; DENR's Environment and Natural Resources Academy in Carranglan, Nueva Ecija, and DENR central office in QC.

Paje and UP president Alfredo Pascual will lead the launch at the UP Diliman's Bahay ng Alumni.

MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICES

Eco governance training program launch set

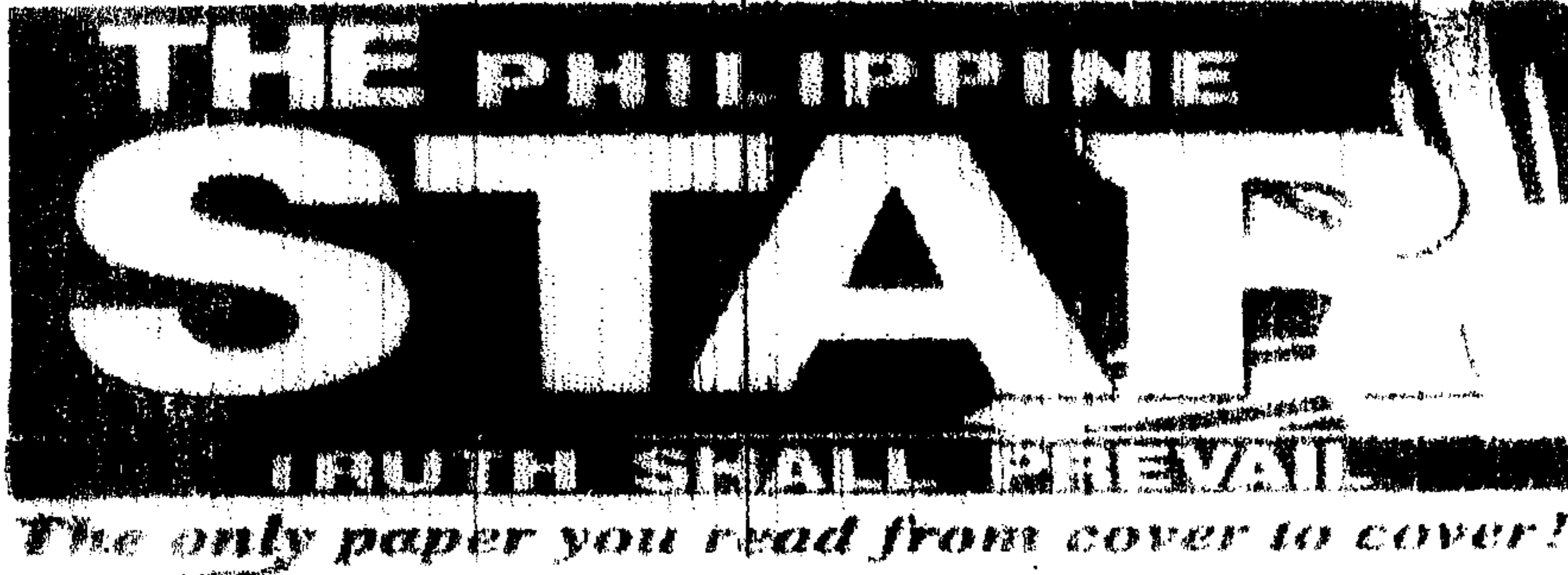
By VANNE ELAINE P. TERRAZOLA

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the University of the Philippines (UP) have forged a partnership and will launch a training program on environmental governance for both private and government organizations.

DENR Secretary Ramon J.P. Paje and UP President Alfredo Pascual will lead the unveiling of the UP Program for Environmental Governance (UPPEG) at the Ang Bahay ng Alumni in UP Diliman tomorrow.

The DENR said the UPPEG, the newest training program by the country's premier university, harnesses the multi-disciplinary expertise of the DENR and the university's Center for Integrative and Development Studies in the field of environmental governance.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Aurora DENR chief, 3 others replaced

BALER, Aurora – The provincial chief of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources here and three other officials have been relieved from their posts as part of the routine reorganization in the DENR.

DENR Region 3 director Francisco Milla Jr. identified the officials as Cyril Coliflores, Aurora provincial environment and natural resources officer-in-charge; Alfredo Collado, Casiguran community environment and natural resources officer; Joselito Blanco, Camiling, Tarlac-CENRO; and Nicanor Claudio, Tarlac division chief.

Coliflores was reassigned to the regional office. Blanco will replace Coliflores while Collado will assume Camiling's post.

Camiling will take over Claudio's post. – Manny Galvez

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

More laws needed to cover protected areas—BMB P.1

THE country's top biodiversity official late last week underscored the need to strengthen the country's protected-area (PA) system through the enactment of more laws that will cover more areas for protection and conservation.

Despite being the key to the strategic conservation of the country's rich biodiversity, the management of the country's PAs receives limited budget for its sustainable development and day-to-day operation.

This is due to the fact that of the 240 PAs, only 13 are backed by legislation, hence by law, protected from destructive activities, including development projects not sanctioned or approved by protected areas management boards (PAMBs), Director Theresa Mundita Lim of the Biodiversity Management Bureau said.

There is no specific budget allocation for development of these PAs, except for the lump-sum appropriation in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources's (DENR) budget for operation divided among the agency's line and staff bureaus and field offices.

BMB is a line agency of the DENR.

Under the 2016 General Appropriations Act, a budget of P1 billion has been earmarked for PA development program out of the DENR's P21.8-billion total budget. Another budget item, for wildlife conservation and protection, has been allocated, P72.2 million.

240 PAs

Only 13 are backed by legislation

The operation of the PAs partly relies on the revenues generated by the PAs that are remitted to the Integrated Protected Areas Fund (Ipaf), a trust fund for PAs; 75 percent of which is now automatically retained by the PAs by virtue of the Ipaf Automatic Retention Law signed by President Aquino in 2014, but will take effect only this year, with its implementing rules having been approved only last year.

On top of these, under the special provisions for the DENR's budget, P30 million has been allocated for the PAs, to be charged against the remaining 25 percent of trust fund for the PAs.

The two budget items comprise the DENR's total budget for the entire PAs and wildlife sector. But these are considered "maintenance budget," as they are earmarked for personnel services and maintenance and other operating ex-

penses of the agency.

PAs get budgetary support from generous local governments that have jurisdiction over the PAs through the designated PA superintendents or managers; or PAMB, the highest policy-making body of a PA.

However, only 177 of the 240 PAs have established PAMBs.

Most of these PAMBs are understaffed, and most of those employed in the DENR regional, city or municipal offices perform multitasking to cover for the PAs operation.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines a PA as "a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystems services and cultural values."

According to the IUCN, PAs are at the core efforts toward nature conservation and services they provide, such as food, clean-water supply, medicines and protection from the impacts of natural disasters.

PAs in the Philippines range from large natural parks to landscapes and seascapes, wildlife and marine life sanctuaries and monuments.

They are governed by PAMBs, headed by the DENR's regional, provincial or city and municipal officers, with governors, city and town local chief executives, other officials or representatives of national government agencies and representatives from non-governmental organizations.

There are many pending bills in the Philippine Senate and the House of Representatives seeking

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More laws needed to cover protected areas — BMB

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to declare or designate certain areas as a PA under the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act.

Lim, in particular, supports the passage of the proposed Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act this year, which will strengthen the protection of 100 PAs.

This way, she said at least 100 PAs will get more protection and, hopefully, given priority when it comes to budget allocation.

The proposed measure filed by Sen. Loren Legarda passed the third and final reading in the Senate, but a counterpart bill in the House of Representatives is taking the back seat, stalled at the committee level by debate over the coverage of five PAs in Palawan in the bill.

Lim said the country's 240 PAs cover around 5 million hectares of forests, which serve as home to thousands of unique, but threatened, wildlife species.

"Once a PA is backed by a legislation, it is expected to receive more protection and budgetary support," Lim said.

"They will also be protected by law against destructive activities or conversion for other land-use policies," she said.

Lim added that the operation of the PAs is important in protecting the country's threatened wildlife species, some of which are considered endangered and critically endangered, or at the brink of extinction.

This requires the hiring of permanent PA personnel and more forest protectors or *bantay gubat* and *bantay dagat*, whose job is primarily to protect the PAs and the wildlife that thrives within the areas.

To encourage community support and prevent destructive activities that threaten the integrity of the forest and marine ecosystems, she said upland and coastal communities should be provided with livelihood support.

"Without sources of income and livelihood, the communities will be forced to cut trees and harvest forest products or wildlife," she said.

Through livelihood programs, she said upland dwellers will not be swayed to engage in destructive activities, such as slash-and-burn farming or *kaingin*, charcoal making, or worse, illegally cutting trees or harvesting forest products.

Among the country's critically endangered species and their habitats that are being monitored by the DENR are the Philippine Eagle, the Philippine tamaraw, Philippine crocodiles, Philippine tarsier, marine turtles, *dugong* and *butanding*.

Some of the country's PAs have gained international recognition, being listed either as a United Nations World Heritage Site, Association of Southeast Asian Nations Heritage Park (AHP), or Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat or Ramsar site, which the Philippine government is committed to conserve and protect.

The Asean Centre for Biodiversity, which acts as secretariat of the AHP Program, has called for an increase in the budget allocation for the country's eight AHPs to boost conservation and protection efforts in these key biodiversity areas. *Jonathan L. Mayuga*

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Saving the endangered 'pawikan'

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

Conclusion

Pawikan conservation program

INSTITUTIONALIZED in 1979 with the signing of Executive Order 54 creating Task Force Pawikan by former President Ferdinand Marcos, conservation efforts in the Philippines have gone a long way. The pawikan conservation program, which used to be a special project, is now part of the wildlife resources-conservation and protection program of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB).

The DENR-BMB's *pawikan* conservation and protection efforts are the country's contribution to the global effort to save the endangered wildlife from extinction.

"Before, under the Task Force Pawikan, conservation efforts is concentrated on the Turtle Islands. Today the program is being implemented nationwide," Lim said.

However, because of limited resources, the program is anchored mostly on information, education and communication campaign. Protection, which basically means enforcement of existing laws, gets the much-needed boost from various DENR-conservation partners.

The DENR continues to "tag" marine turtles for identification as part of the program.

"Every marine turtle that we encounter, with the help of our DENR regional office and partner-LGUs

[local government units] and NGOs [non-governmental organizations], we put tags on marine turtles," Milo Ramoso, the DENR-BMB's point person for *pawikan*, said.

The tags used are small metals with alphanumeric codes indicating the turtle's country of origin such as "PH" for Philippines followed by numbers and letters.

Ramoso said that from 1982, when tagging of marine turtles began up to September 2015, a total of 14,987 marine turtles have been tagged. Other partners such as LGUs, NGOs and people's organizations have tagged a total of 5,000 during the same period. He said that only untagged *pawikan* are tagged by the DENR. The DENR currently has 53 institutional partners protecting and conserving marine turtles in various parts of the country.

Since the creation of Task Force Pawikan, several laws have been passed, both national and local, institutionalizing marine turtle conservation along with other threatened wildlife, Lim said.

The program has inspired some local governments to establish their own *pawikan* sanctuaries or hatcheries to ensure the survival of the species. Republic Act 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act, promotes the conservation and protection of Philippine wildlife against various threats, natural or man-made.

The Philippines is also a signatory to several international treaties that promotes wildlife

conservation, such as Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, or Bonn Convention.

Under the said law and international treaties, the Philippines strictly prohibit hunting *pawikan*, destroying their habitats, including nesting grounds, and harvesting their eggs.

Poor law enforcement, apathy

AA YAPTINCHAY, a veterinarian and marine ecologist, said the Philippines has enough laws to protect its endangered wildlife.

"Our problem is implementation. Enforcement should not just be the problem of the DENR," he said partly in Tagalog.

Yaptinchay, founder and director of Marine Wildlife Watch of the Philippines (MWWP), lamented that Filipinos, in general, seem to have no complete grasp of the situation of the endangered *pawikan*, saying that despite the law, hunting for food, harvesting of eggs and illegal wildlife trade persist.

Partly to be blamed, he said, is the inaction of LGUs.

At the very least, he said LGUs need to strengthen law enforcement for the protection of endangered wildlife within their jurisdiction.

LGUs, he said, can embark on a local program in support of the national government's campaign by establishing units dedicated to rescue and rehabilitation, hatch-

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SAVING ENDANGERED PAWIKAN

eries or sanctuaries to protect and conserve these threatened wildlife and their natural habitats.

"Awareness is a big factor. We need an increased appreciation of environmental laws," he said.

Yaptinchay observed that many wildlife species could have been rescued, saved, rehabilitated and released back into the wild had LGUs only knew how to do it.

"We lack technical know-how to address the many aspects of rescue and rehabilitation [of marine turtles]," he said.

In 2014, the DENR came up with a project to develop a series of manuals to serve as guide in rescuing endangered aquatic wildlife, including *pawikan*. Called Philippine Aquatic Wildlife Rescue and Response Manual Series, a collaborative effort of the DENR-BMB, MWWP and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, the manuals aim to guide stakeholders involved in the rescue and rehabilitation of injured or threatened wildlife.

Threats at bay, threats at sea

ACCORDING to Yaptinchay, many reports his organization receive involve threats to *pawikan*, including in beach resorts.

"We receive reports of violation of conservation laws in beach resorts. Notorious [are those occurring] in Guimaras, Surigao and even Boracay," he said partly in Tagalog.

He said just on January 3 his group received a violation of the law in San Carlos City.

Some resort owners, he said, illegally hold in captivity *pawikan*, which go to beaches to lay eggs.

He said they also receive reports of stranded marine mammals, with some already dead.

"Once a week, we receive incident reports. We report them to the DENR central office. Sometimes, actions were made, but sometimes we do not receive any feedback," he said.

Resort owners, he said, should learn how to best develop their properties, noting that many nesting sites have been sacrificed in the name of development.

Habitat destruction is a major cause of the decline of the population of the marine turtles.

The massive land reclamation in various parts of the country has caused the loss of thousands of *pawikan* nesting grounds over the past several decades.

Normally, he said, marine turtles nest on the beach between 10 meters to 30 meters from the sea. These areas can be protected by not putting up structures and, as much as possible, preventing people from going in potential nesting ground.

"The Philippines is very rich in biodiversity. They are all over and many are destroyed," he said.

Besides hunting and harvesting eggs, such as in Tawi-Tawi, by-catching or accidental catching has increasingly become a serious threat to the *pawikan*, he said. Yaptinchay used to work as an employee of the DENR in Tawi-Tawi. Many *pawikan* have ended

up dead after being trapped in fishing nets left by fishermen.

Because *pawikan* are breathing creatures, they need to go to the surface to inhale and exhale from time to time. Once trapped in nets, they are unable to swim to the surface, drowning them in the process. "Fishing methods and gears that causes death to *pawikan* should be banned," he said.

Everybody can help

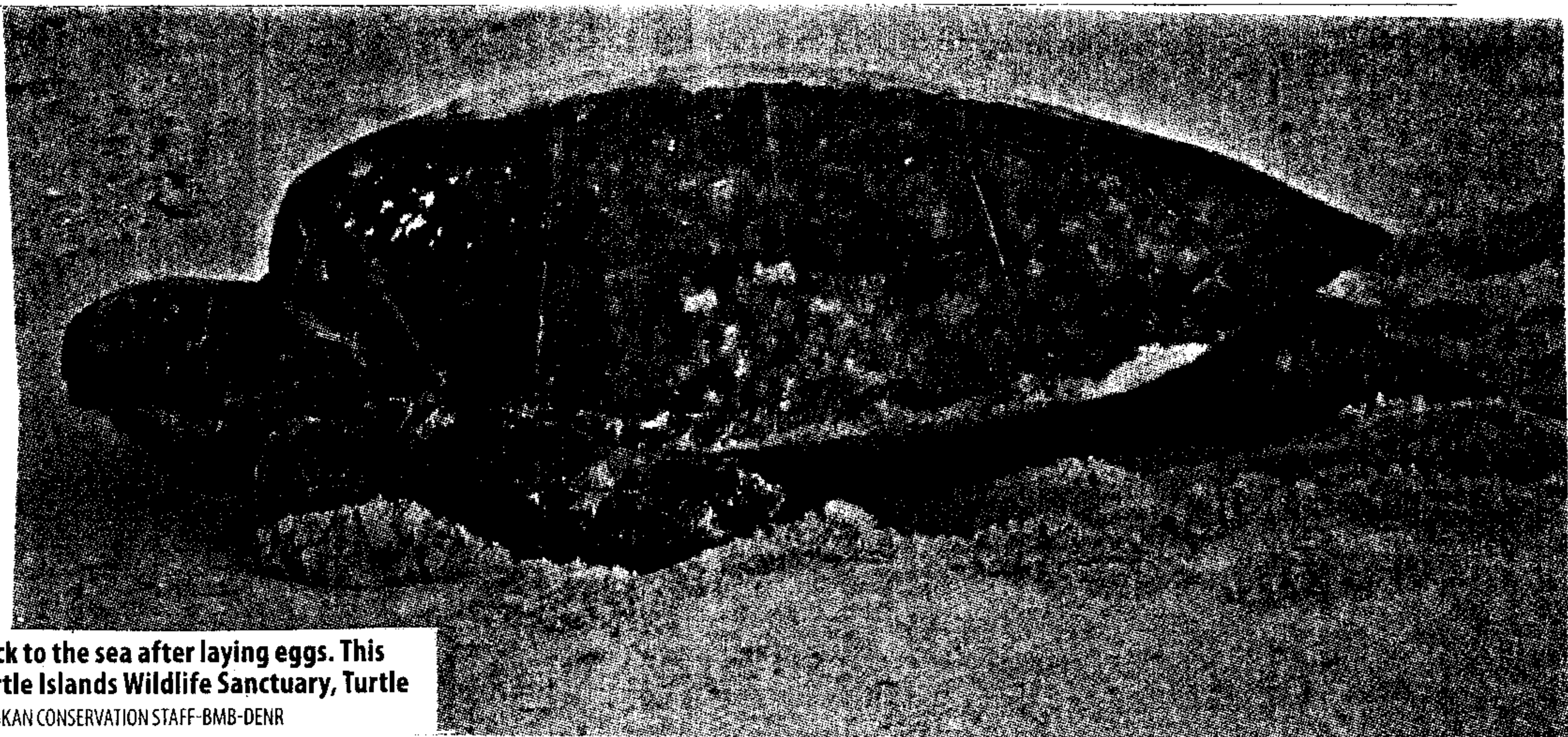
LIM said resort owners have the responsibility to help protect the endangered marine turtles. In the same breath, LGUs should do its part by strengthening law enforcement. Resort owners can help protect nesting grounds of the magnificent wildlife, while LGUs can pass legislation imposing stiffer penalties for violation of environmental laws.

She said while the *pawikan* conservation program had made significant strides, much still need to be done to ensure the survival of the endangered marine turtle species.

"Everybody can help save the endangered *pawikan*, Yaptinchay said.

"All of us can make our share to save the *pawikan*," he said.

He added that reporting cruelty against marine turtle is one way of helping save the species. But more important, he said, people can help save *pawikan* from extinction by not doing things that kill them. By not hunting them, not destroying their habitats, by stopping the harvesting of wildlife, we can help protect and save *pawikan*," he said.



A GREEN turtle goes back to the sea after laying eggs. This photo was taken on Turtle Islands Wildlife Sanctuary, Turtle Islands, Tawi-Tawi. PAWIKAN CONSERVATION STAFF-BMB-DENR

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Imported 'invasive' species threaten Phil fishery industry

By RUDY FERNANDEZ

LOS BAÑOS – Invasive fish species were among 60 species introduced in local inland bodies of fresh water over the past century, a study said.

The exotic fishes from other countries have been in the Philippines since 1905.

However, some were introduced for food production, recreational fishing and ornamental purposes without authorization from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) of the Department of Agriculture.

"Many introduced fishes have become invasive, causing ecological damage, economic loss, and even human injury." Six fish species became invasive

upon escaping "accidentally or intentionally" into open waters from commercial and private keepers, according to aquaculture scientist Rafael Guerrero III of the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST).

In the report titled "Introduced Freshwater Fishes in the Philippines: An Assessment and Recommendations" published by NAST, Guerrero identified some of the invasive fish species and these are the following:

Janitor fish – This fish, particularly the *Pterygoplichthys disjunctivus* species, has reduced the fish catch of fisherfolk using fish corrals and gill nets in Laguna de Bay and Agusan Marsh in Mindanao, resulting in

huge economic losses. The burrowing habit of the other janitor fish, *P. pardalis*, has also eroded the banks of Marikina River, a tributary of Laguna de Bay.

Clown knife fish – Believed to have escaped into Laguna de Bay after a flooding caused by Typhoon Ondoy in 2009, this fish is now wreaking havoc on the milkfish and *tilapia* industries of the lake.

Giant snakehead – This fish is present in the Pantabangan reservoir in Nueva Ecija although its invasiveness is not yet very serious, according to Guerrero.

Black-chin *tilapia* – This was first observed in Laguna de Bay but it eventually spread to the

brackish waters (mixed fresh and salt waters) of Bulacan. Its presence is not yet much of a concern.

Jaguar guapote – This has been preying on and competing with native fishes in Taal Lake in Batangas.

Meanwhile, the red-bellied piranha (*Pygocentrus nattereri*), peacock bass (*Cichia occularis*) and araipama (*Araipama gigas*), which were introduced for ornamental purposes, have been deemed to be potentially invasive and need close watching because of their predatory habits, capability of spawning in tropical waters, and bio-invasive records in other countries, according to Guerrero.

The BFAR did not approve the introduction of piranha and bass, so these species should be on the watch list.

The mudfish (*Channa striata*), Thai catfish (*Clarias batrachus*) and rice paddy eel (*Monopterus albus*) which were introduced for aquaculture have also become invasive.

The mudfish is a pest in freshwater ponds since it preys on cultured species like *tilapia*.

The Thai catfish ecologically displaced the indigenous catfish (*Clarias macrocephalus*) in Laguna de Bay and other water bodies where it was introduced.

The rice paddy eel is reportedly infesting rice paddies in the Cagayan Valley by burrowing

into dikes and causing water losses.

Guerrero underscored the need to strengthen the monitoring, surveillance, and control measures to prevent the spread of invasive ornamental fishes established in some of the country's inland waters and to forestall the escape of the potentially invasive species into open waters.

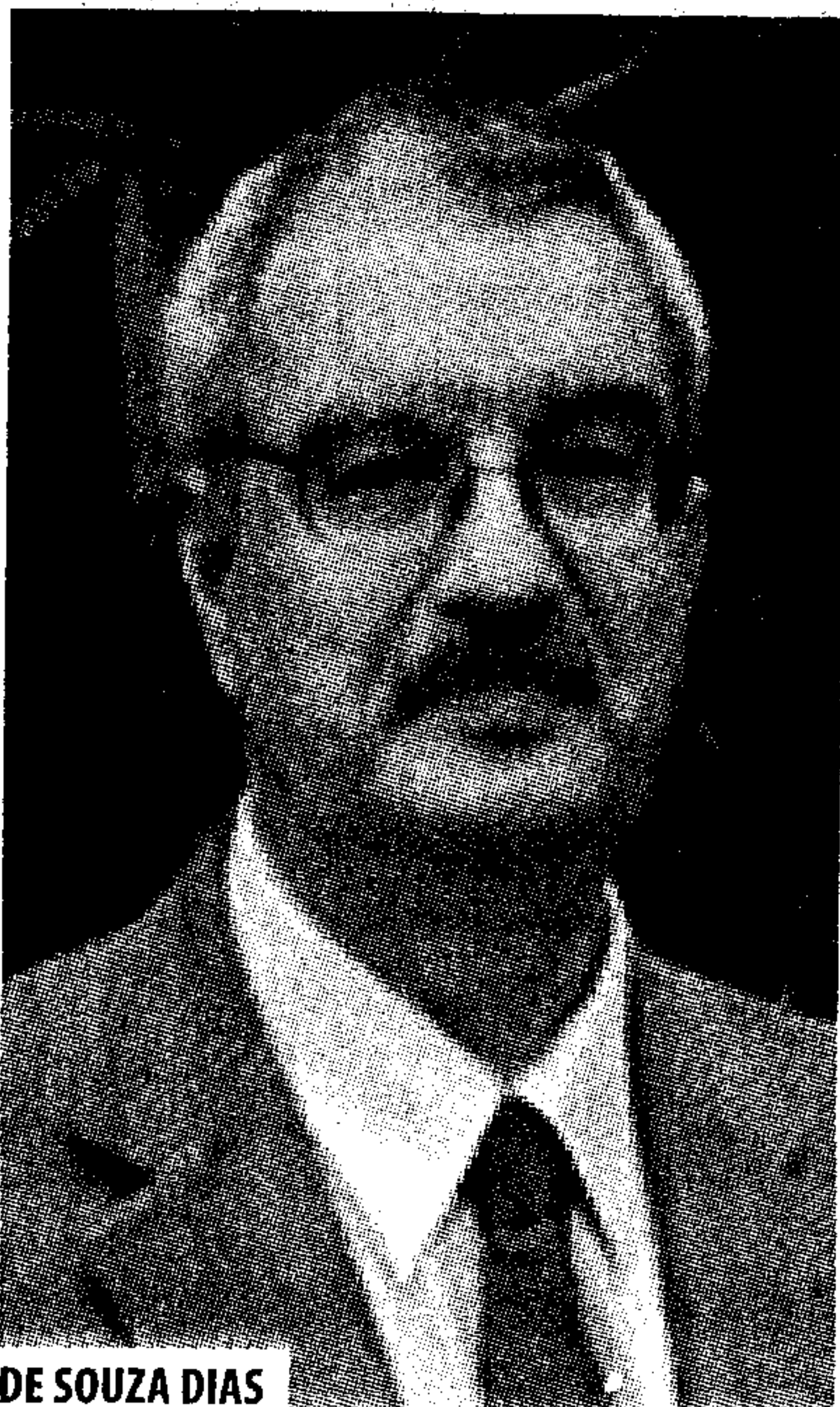
"The regular inspection and possible registration of aquarium pet shops and a massive information, education, and communication campaign to stir up public awareness for responsible aquarium pet care and environmental protection are recommended," he said.

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Asean conference to discuss biodiversity, sustainable devt



DE SOUZA DIAS

THE link between biodiversity and sustainable development will be the key topic at the opening day of the Asean Conference on Biodiversity (ACB2016) from February 15 to 19 in Bangkok, Thailand.

The premier international conference on the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity in Southeast Asia is organized by the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) in cooperation with the Thai government, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand, through the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning.

Dr. Bráulio de Souza Dias, executive secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), will

talk at the opening plenary session on sustainable development and biodiversity targets. The session recognizes that biodiversity and sustainable development are inextricably linked.

Biodiversity and ecosystem services form the foundation of the earth's life support systems, and underpin human lives and well-being. Dias will talk about how biodiversity and ecosystems feature prominently in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He will highlight how the implementation phase of the Sustainable Development Goals will provide a tremendous opportunity to mainstream biodiversity in key national priorities and, at the same time, help

countries achieve the objectives of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

The targets, which were agreed by 192 governments in 2010, were further reaffirmed in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). Meeting the Aichi Biodiversity Targets will contribute significantly to broader national and global priorities addressed through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Prior to his joining the secretariat of the CBD, Dias was the secretary of Biodiversity and Forests at the Brazilian Ministry of the Environment. He has over three decades of experience

in biodiversity science and policy and its implementation at national and international levels.

Invited to serve as panelists in the plenary session on biodiversity and sustainable development are Dr. Asdaporn Krairapanowd, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand; Deputy Secretary-General Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee, Asean Secretariat, Indonesia; Haoliang Xu, United Nations Development Program in Asia and the Pacific, Thailand; and Dr. Chamniern Paul Vorratnchaiphan, International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Thailand.

Some 500 delegates from Asean national governments; private-sector companies; international,

regional and national institutions; non-governmental organizations; academic, science and research community; students; media; and ACB partner countries and organizations have been invited to the conference.

ACB Executive Director Atty. Roberto V. Oliva said the conference will report the progress and gaps of the Asean region in meeting the 2020 global biodiversity targets, known as Aichi Targets; showcase innovative policies, good practices and experiences in meeting such targets in the Asean region; and provide a platform for Asean governments and relevant stakeholders to discuss and recommend ways forward to meet the Aichi Targets.

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INQUIRER

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Same old garbage

HOW HAS it come to this? The containers of trash from Canada are still decaying on our shores after all these years, some dumped in Tarlac and some moved to Subic, and perversely sitting there all of six months after Subic officials demanded that the Bureau of Customs (BOC) remove them. It's unbelievable that this situation has gone on as long as it has.

EDITORIAL

To refresh the collective memory, a total of 103 containers arrived in the Philippines in 10 batches between 2013 and 2014, sent by a company called Chronic Inc. from Ontario, Canada, and identified as "scrap plastic materials for recycling." But when the BOC inspected the containers, it was revealed that they were holding waste, including soiled diapers and household refuse.

That's a clear violation of the Basel Convention, an international agreement signed by 180 countries—the Philippines and Canada included—that bans the dumping of hazardous material by wealthy countries on poorer countries, and a violation as well of the Toxic Substances and Hazardous Wastes Control Act of 1990. But the Canadian government refused to take back the containers even when Philippine civil society groups made such a demand, and more than 10,000 Canadians signed a Change.org petition calling on their government to do the right thing.

Some of the containers were transported from the Port of Manila last June and emptied into a private landfill in Capas, Tarlac, an action that moved the Tarlac provincial board to pass two resolutions banning the transport of foreign waste anywhere in the province. Some made up over 700 freight boxes moved to Subic Bay Freeport in the course of unclogging the choked Port of Manila.

In July, Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority Chair Roberto Garcia asked the BOC to remove the 15 containers of trash it had transported there. Half a year later, nothing has budged. "I met [Customs Commissioner Alberto] Lina recently and he told me that his hands were tied. So apparently in that case, nobody wants to take action," Garcia was quoted as saying in a report. "Unfortunately, the trash is still here and it remains our problem. I've been asking the BOC to take it out [of the free port] because I don't want it here."

Not even the new Canadian prime minister, Justin Trudeau, who sparked hope that he would deviate from the ways of his predecessor, is minded to take the garbage back. Trudeau and President Aquino held bilateral talks on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit held late last year in Manila. When asked about the overstaying garbage at a press briefing, Trudeau said his administration was looking at a "Canadian solution"—whatever that was—and into new laws that would prevent such an incident from happening again.

This was what the "Apec hottie" said: "I have obviously been made aware of this situation and told that there is a Canadian solution in the process of being developed. And at the same time, this has exposed a problem that needs fixing within our own legislation. I think going forward, we need to ensure that if a situation like this were to arise once again, the Canadian government will have more power to actually demand action from the companies responsible. If there were loopholes [that were] allowed to be skirted, we have to close [them]."

No promise of immediate action there. And no apology either from a country known to be among the most environment-friendly in the world.

The INQUIRER has harped on this literally festering issue time and again. The EcoWaste Coalition and other civil society groups have bombarded the Philippine government with calls to take a decisive stand on the matter. In a statement, EcoWaste Coalition vice president Rene Pineda said: "With his presidency about to end on June 30, we urge [President] Aquino to put this dumping scandal that has infuriated the Filipino nation to [a just] conclusion."

Meanwhile, as the election season heats up, we're stuck with the same old garbage. If Canada doesn't take back its stinking, leaking trash, who's going to take it off our hands? The ball is literally still in the Philippines' court. The President's people should do something to save his legacy, if he's too busy to save it himself.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

GREEN CONVERGENCE NAMES ALBAY AS FIRST LGU ECO CHAMP

LEGAZPI CITY—Green Convergence Philippines has named Albay as its LGU Eco Champion, the first province to win its newly launched award, for its successful and effective environment policies and ecologically sound tourism program.

Green Convergence is a coalition of networks, organizations and individuals working for a development paradigm that addresses the need for social and economic uplift, while preserving nature's life support system including air, water and land, for generations to come.

GCP president Angelina P. Galang announced Albay's latest award in a recent letter to Albay Gov. Joey Salceda, where she stressed the province's "implementation of and compliance with various Philippine Environmental Laws sum up to good environmental governance and best practices which can be

replicated by other local government units (LGUs)."

Salceda, also known as the Green Economist, is credited for pioneering the Albay Green Economy, anchored on the principles of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, tripled the province's mangrove area from 700 to 2,400 hectares, and expanded forest cover by 88 percent from 26,000 to 44,000 hectares from 2008 to 2014.

Salceda's administration has also been globally hailed for its firm commitment to CCA and climate change mitigation. The governor is set to receive Albay's award during the First Environment Summit scheduled Feb. 9-11, 2016 at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City.

Arnold Embestro, Salceda's executive assistant for environment, who facilitated GCP's strict award validation, said Albay will

have a booth for its credentials as the first Eco Champion at the SMX Complex during the two-day summit. Among Albay's strong points in winning the award was its organization of the Albay Climate Change Academy, the first in Asia and now a popular learning center for LGUs and even government executives from other countries on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, he shared.

GCP has partnered with the Environmental Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in the 2014 launch of the first-ever National Search for LGU Eco Champions. Galang said the purpose of this search is "to determine the local governments' compliance with the various Philippine environmental laws and similar quasi-issuances that are aimed at protecting the environment and human lives."

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Antipolo bags gold for environmental compliance

THE Antipolo City Government won a gold award for being one of the most environmentally-compliant cities in the preservation and rehabilitation of Manila Bay.

The award was given during the Environmental Compliance Audit Conferment Ceremony spearheaded by the Department of Interior and Local Government Region IV-A last December in Tagaytay City.

"I would like to commend the hardwork of the Task Force Manila Bay and CEWMO (City Environment and Waste Management Office) for their dedication in supporting the Manila Bay Clean-Up Drive by living up to the policies and standards set by the DILG and effectively implementing the environmental projects and programs of the city," Antipolo Mayor Jun Ynares said.

DILG recognized the local government units, which adhered to the Climate Change Advocacy Campaign of the Manila Bay Rehabilitation Program entitled "Manila Bay Para sa Kalinisan" through the directives of the Supreme Court in rehabilitating the Manila Bay.

In compliance to the standards of ECA, Antipolo City strictly implemented the proper solid waste management, prepared the 10-Year Solid Waste Management Plan, and continuously conducted clean-up drives and river clean-ups. The city was also strict in the implementation of "no segregation, no collection scheme" and the incessant desludging to all households.

Antipolo received a plaque of recognition and a P60,000 cash prize.

Lee Ann Ducusin

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

New construction technologies address environmental concerns

A local formworks and shoring company, Dimension-ALL, is calling on members of the Philippine construction industry to rally support behind the Paris agreement on climate change that was adopted by almost 200 countries during the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) held during the latter part of December last year.

Consistent with the Philippine position on the climate change agreement, Dimension-ALL has raised the necessity of "commitment on technological support" for efforts directed to mitigate the effects of climate change and resulting disasters brought about by climate change that cause severe loss of lives and properties.

"We believe the Philippine construction industry has the responsibility to help people and communities become resilient against these types of natural disasters resulting to climate change," said Dimension-ALL COO and vice president Steven Phillips.

Dimension-ALL, a local formworks and shoring company is considered an expert in the most advanced formworks technology and in maximizing its own customer

relations program to help clients be resilient against natural disasters such as typhoons, flooding and even earthquake.

Phillips said that technology is an important tool in managing and coping with the number and magnitude of natural disasters that visit the country as a result of continuing changes in climate patterns and behavior.

"Corporate social responsibility, at least for the Philippine construction industry, should mean pushing technology that can address the impact of climate change," he said.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICES

Programs against climate change needed by agri – DOF

By CHINO S. LEYCO

The government should strengthen its climate change initiatives to protect its local agriculture sector against severe affects, the Department of Finance (DOF) said.

In his latest economic bulletin, Finance Undersecretary Gil S. Beltran, said the government should prioritize the agriculture sector in its programs against climate change as the industry employs some 30 percent of the country's workforce.

"The government should intensify its programs to strengthen the resiliency of the country against climate change as this severely affects the agriculture sector," Beltran said.

In particular, Beltran emphasized the need for the continuation of public-private partnerships (PPPs) for the development of infrastructure and roads vital for the growth of agriculture.

PPP is also needed to boost the domestic economy, the finance official and DOF's chief economist said.

Aside from private sector participation, Beltran also highlighted the need for more government programs aimed at enticing foreign and domestic investors to invest in the country.

"With the continued slump on global economy and decline in the export industry, the government should continue encouraging foreign and local investors to set-up businesses in the country," Beltran said.

"Promoting innovation among local manufacturers may also improve the production of goods," he added.

Meanwhile, Beltran urged local manufacturing companies to increase their production amid cheaper oil prices.

"The continued decline in oil prices allows local firms to produce more goods at lower cost of production. This will compensate for losses in export sector," Beltran said.

He also pointed that the manufacturing sector, particularly food processors, may not need to wait for the agricultural sector to provide the needed inputs,

adding the government may assist in providing alternative sources.

"The Department of Trade and Industry may need to assist the sector to look for alternative sources of inputs to reduce factory downtime and avoid food price increases," Betran said.

In November last year, the Volume of

Production Index (VoPI) of the manufacturing sector posted a positive growth of 7.5 percent, significantly higher than 1.7 percent in the previous month but lower than 9.1 percent in the previous year.

Seven major sectors which contributed to the growth were tobacco products (52.7 percent), machinery except

electrical (29.6 percent), basic metals (25.1 percent), and leather products (23.7 percent).

Likewise, electrical machinery (20.1 percent), petroleum products (12.5 percent) and footwear and wearing apparel (12 percent) contributed to the hefty growth.

Daily Tribune

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOR

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Central, southern RP face 'very dry' in Q1

The prevailing strong El Niño phenomenon will further affect Philippine rainfall patterns, likely causing in 2016's first quarter "very dry" conditions mostly across the Visayas and Mindanao,

State-run Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) gave such warning as this agency forecast for the January-March 2016 period below-normal to way below-normal rainfall in the country due to El Niño.

"By the end of March, about 40 percent of the country or 32 provinces will likely experience meteorological drought conditions," Pagasa said this week in its latest seasonal climate outlook.

Pagasa defines drought as three consecutive months of way below-normal rainfall condition.

Such condition is characterized by more than 60 percent reduction in rainfall from average levels, noted Pagasa.

Data Pagasa presented at this month's El Niño forum showed at risk for drought by March 2016's end are the central Philippine provinces of Palawan, Albay, Camarines Sur and Catanduanes all in Luzon as well as Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras, Iloilo, Negros Occidental, Cebu, Negros Oriental, Siquijor, Biliran, Eastern Samar, Northern Samar and Samar all in the Visayas.

Pagasa also forecast drought by then in Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay, Bukidnon, Lanao del Norte, Misamis Occidental, Davao del Sur, Davao Oriental, South Cotabato, North Cotabato, Sarangani, Sultan Kudarat,

Basilan, Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi provinces all in southern Philippines' Mindanao,

The data also showed the country can expect between 16 to 31 dry days during 2016's first quarter

Between 26 to 31 dry days are likely in March alone across 16 of 18 regions nationwide, the data further showed.

January to March is the northeast monsoon's peak period but tropical cyclone (TC) activity that can bring rain to the country is at its minimum then, noted Pagasa.

For such three-month period, Pagasa forecast one to two TCs in the Philippine Area of Responsibility.

According to Pagasa, strong El Niño continues prevailing as data showed sea surface temperature anomaly (SSTA) in the Pacific exceeding 1.5°C.

Pagasa Climate Monitoring and Prediction Section OIC Anthony Lucero earlier said the Philippines is already experiencing El Niño's effects.

"Drought, dry spell, delayed onset of last year's rainy season, lesser-than-average number of TCs and higher temperatures are El Niño manifestations in the country," he noted.

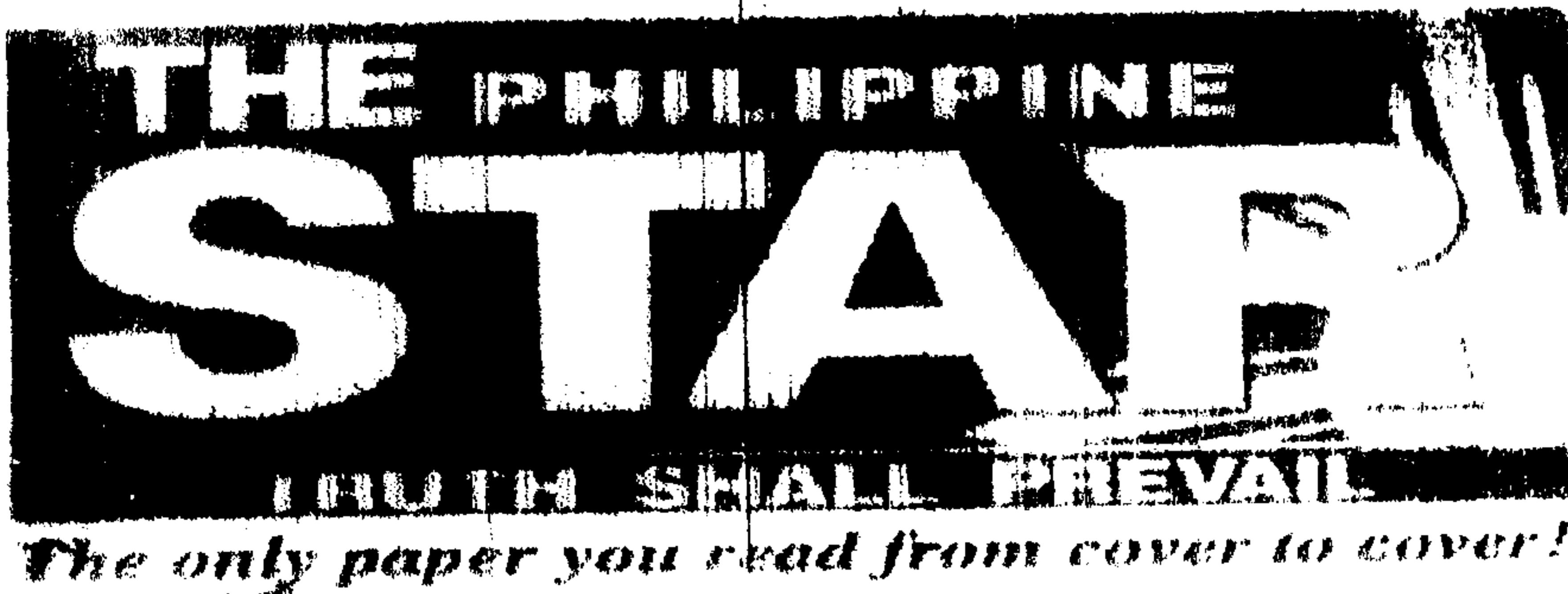
Citing latest available model outputs, he said El Niño may last until mid-2016.

He noted the models also indicate possible decreasing SSTA as 2016 progresses, however.

"We expect neutral conditions to return by July's end," he added, citing possible normalization of rainfall in the country by then.

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Farmers dare bets: Present land reform agenda

Poll candidates, particularly those seeking national positions, are being challenged to present their agenda on land reform and rural development.

Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) chairman Rafael Mariano said they are looking for candidates who could promote domestic agriculture and food security.

"No one among the candidates in the national elections has so far supported our demand for a genuine land reform as well as free land distribution that would jumpstart significant rural development," Mariano said.

A survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations and commissioned by Greenpeace Philippines contained issues on agriculture that the government should focus on.

Among them were the provisions of support for farmers who are vulnerable

to calamities such as services and fertilizers, establishment of farmers' markets, land distribution, and consumer education on ecological agriculture and organic farming.

"Issues that will make one vote for a specific candidate and reflect the plight of the farmers. In general, farmers want a candidate to respond to their needs and demands and that of the domestic agriculture," Mariano said.

He said farmers need genuine land reform and distribution as he challenged all candidates to face them and respond to their demands.

"Farmers and the rural poor comprise a majority of the electorate. We will continue to push the Peasant Agenda before the start of campaign period for the national election on Feb. 9," he said.

— Rhodina Villanueva

INQUIRER

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Drought dries up Zamboanga veggie farmers' income

Julie S. Alipala, Zamboanga City

CIRILO Noynay's 61-centimeter-long (2-foot-long) string beans variety could hardly grow to its length.

I have water dedicated for growing beans because this gives me a better income," Noynay said. He tries to salvage some vegetables from poles that were once covered with healthy vines.

But Noynay was able to harvest only four bundles worth P40 from his garden.

"That's how it is—P40 weekly compared to last year when I could get as much as 100 bundles every other day," he said.

Annaliza Pabayos, a 41-year-old vegetable grower, said her vegetables "are too stressed out that my eggplant can only grow 5 cm (2 inches), and my peppers' skin is getting old quickly."

Pabayos said she could hardly harvest 10 kilograms of vegetables from her farm.

"Last year, I got more than 100 kg, which was worth P1,000," she said.

Pabayos complained that she had to spend P200 to fuel her water pump "to suck up water from the river to her vegetable farm."

"Even grasses that give morning moisture are gone," she said.

Diosdado Palacat, the city agriculturist, said the dry spell had been sucking up all the "little water, moisture and nutrients," affecting the growth and fruiting of the vegetables and crops.

"The root systems of cereals and vegetables are very shallow—around 5 to 7 inches (13-18 cm). Grasses have also dried up, depriving food for the livestock," Palacat said.

"It is so hot that every living thing within the agro-ecosystem is affected. The temperature is very hot that water disappears immediately," Palacat said.

The City Agriculture Office reported that as of Jan. 8, crops on 372 hectares have been damaged, affecting 233 farmers who lost 1,674 metric tons of rice worth P7.4 million.

"Farmers planted rice last December when water was still flowing. In one month, the water was gone," Palacat said.

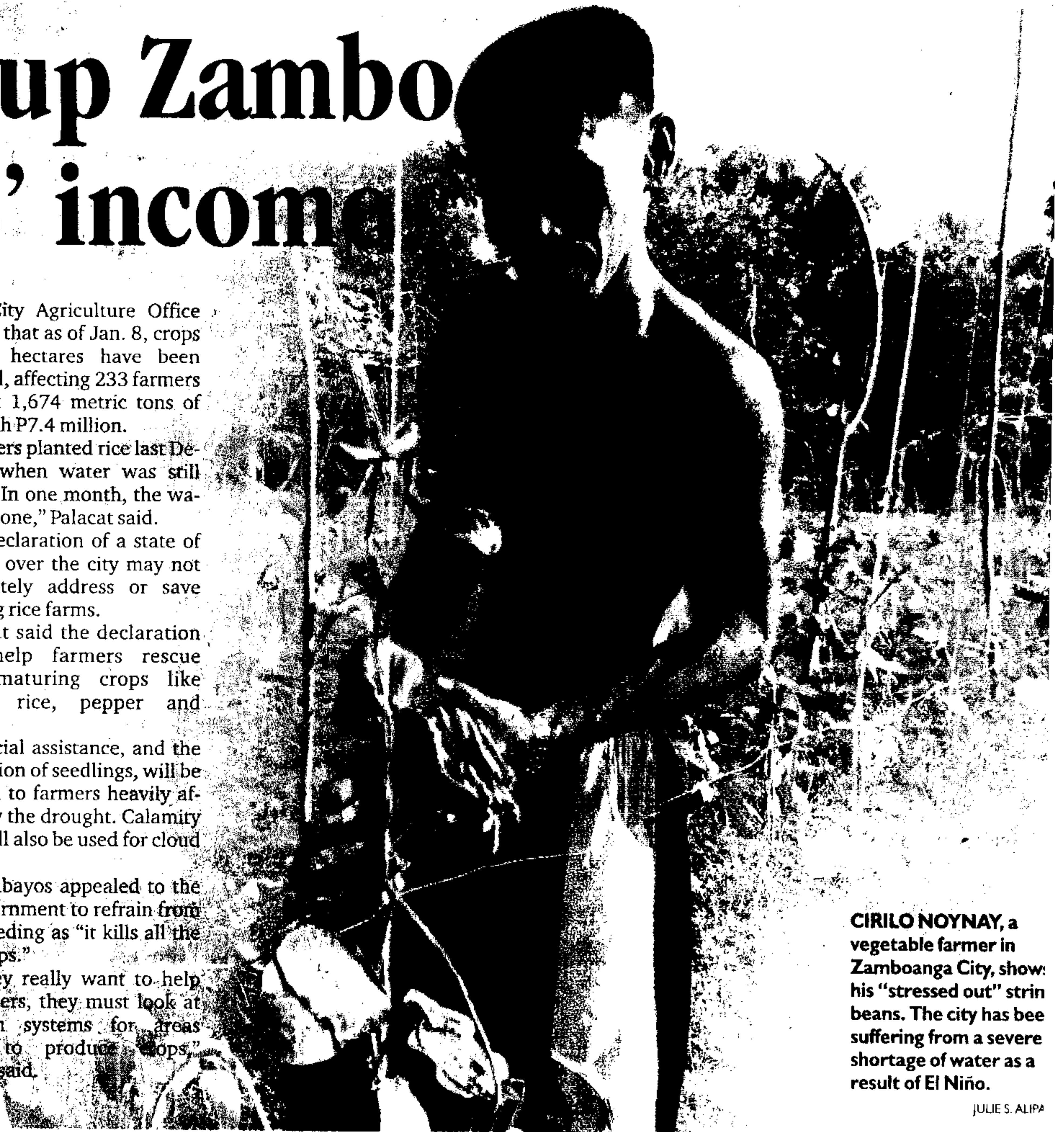
The declaration of a state of calamity over the city may not immediately address or save the dying rice farms.

Palacat said the declaration could help farmers rescue "early maturing crops like tomato, rice, pepper and okra."

Financial assistance, and the distribution of seedlings, will be provided to farmers heavily affected by the drought. Calamity funds will also be used for cloud seeding.

But Pabayos appealed to the city government to refrain from cloud seeding as "it kills all the leafy crops."

"If they really want to help the farmers, they must look at irrigation systems for areas known to produce crops," Pabayos said.



CIRILO NOYNAY, a vegetable farmer in Zamboanga City, shows his "stressed out" string beans. The city has been suffering from a severe shortage of water as a result of El Niño.

JULIE S. ALIPALA

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

***218,639 bakanteng posisyon
sa gobyerno, punan na - Recto***

Iginiit kahapon ni Senatē President Pro-Tempore Ralph Recto na dapat nang punan ang nasa 218,639 na bakanteng puwesto sa national government offices upang mabawasan ang mga walang trabaho sa bansa.

Ayon kay Recto, isa sa bawat tatlong kabataan sa ngayon ay walang trabaho.

Naniniwala si Recto na maaaring kunin ng gobyerno ang malaking bilang ng mga walang trabaho kung saan 536,072 ang mga tapos pa ng kolehiyo.

Nauna ng isiniwalat ni Recto na sa kabuuang 1,513,695 permanenteng posisyon sa national government, nasa 1,295,056 lamang ang maoo-

kupa ngayong taon kung saan 218,639 ang bakante.

"There's almost a quarter of a million unfilled positions in the national government plantilla," ani Recto.

Hindi pa umano kasama sa nasabing bilang ang mga local governments at government corporations.

Nagtalaga ang Kongreso ng P16.9 bilyon sa 2016 national budget upang punduhan ang ilan sa mga tinatawag na "unfilled items", samantalang P7.7 bilyon ang ilalaan sa mga bagong posisyon.

Kabilang sa mga departmentong magre-recruit ng malaking bilang ng mga personnel ngayong taon

ay ang Health at Education departments.

Ang DoH ay nakatakdang kumuha ng nasa 21,118, kabilang na ang 946 doctors, 15,727 nurses, 3,100 midwives, 308 medical technologists, 324 dentists kung saan ang kabuuang suweldo ay aabot sa P7 bilyon.

Ang DepED, naman ay kukuha ng nasa 62,320 bagong guro.

Ang ibang departamento na mangangailangan ng karagdagang personnel ay ang DPWH; DSWD; Department of Agriculture; Commission on Audit; Bureau of Fire Protection; Coast Guard; Judiciary; at maging ang DENR. (Malou Escudero)

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

More runways on reefs

China building more facilities deeper into PH side of disputed sea

By Nikko Dizon

CHINA has nearly completed construction of a runway and other facilities on Panganiban Reef, on the Philippine side of the Spratly archipelago in the heavily disputed South China Sea, a US-based think tank reported yesterday.

Also known as Mischief Reef, Panganiban Reef is 216 kilometers west of Palawan, well within the Philippines' 370-km exclusive economic zone recognized under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

China is also rapidly completing construction of a runway and other facilities on Zamora Reef (Subi Reef), also part of Philippine territory in the Spratlys.

Zamora Reef is 23.4 km away from Pag-asa Island (Thitu Island), a small municipality of Palawan province that is home to a small civilian population.

The Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (Amti) released its latest report on the developments in the Spratlys on Friday, complete with satellite images that show in detail China's swift construction undertaken in less than six months.

"Mischief Reef sits just [37.8 km] from the BRP Sierra Madre, which was deliberately grounded by the Philippines at Second Thomas Shoal (Ayun-

gin Shoal) in 1999 and is home to a contingent of Philippine Marines," the Amti report said.

"China has maintained a constant coast guard presence around Second Thomas since 2013 and attempted to prevent resupply of the Sierra Madre in March 2014. Mischief is also about [108 km] from Reed Bank (Recto Bank), where the Philippines hopes to drill for natural gas deposits over China's objections," it added.

Strategic location

"This strategic location combined with its size (China has reclaimed twice as much land at Mischief Reef as it did at Fiery Cross [Kagitingan Reef] and about 50 percent more than at Subi) makes developments at Mischief of particular concern for the Philippines," Amti said.

Security expert Chester Cabalza of the National Defense College of the Philippines (NDCP)

described the progress of China's work on Panganiban and Zamora reefs as "alarming."

"China has become [daring]. They have completed their construction, so what's next?" Cabalza told the INQUIRER by phone.

Cabalza said China was actually "challenging the international community" with its expansive construction activities on the disputed areas in the Spratlys.

"China wants to let the international community know that 'This is ours,'" he said.

Cabalza said China had been able to follow the timeline it set for staking claim to nearly 90 percent of the South China Sea, through which \$5 trillion in global trade passes every year.

"The next step is to totally claim what they say is theirs. They know how the international community, especially the US, Japan and India, would react," Cabalza said.

Private investment

On Friday, China announced that it would invite private investment to build infrastructure on the artificial islands it had built in the South China Sea and that it would launch flights to one of them this year, moves likely to anger the Philippines and the other claimants to territory in the strategic waterway.

Besides the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia and Taiwan also has claims in the South China Sea.

The Philippines controlled Panganiban Reef until 1999 when China seized it and put structures on stilts there, supposedly to provide shelter for fishermen. It has controlled the reef since then.

The Philippines responded by grounding the BRP Sierra Madre, a rusting naval hospital ship, on Ayungin Shoal in 1999.

Amti's latest satellite images that showed progress on Panganiban and Zamora reefs were dated Jan. 8, the same day Manila filed a diplomatic protest over China's test flight to Kagitingan Reef.

China rejected the Philippine protest, saying it had "undisputed sovereignty" over South China Sea, where islands, reefs and atolls are believed to be sitting on vast energy reserves.

On Jan. 6, China landed two test flights on the 3,125-meter-long runway on Kagitingan Reef, a follow-up to a Jan. 1 landing that drew a protest from Vietnam, which also claims the reef, and drawing sharp criticism from the United States.

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MORE RUNWAYS ON REEFS

Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario said China's activities in the Spratly should be challenged, as it might next impose an air defense identification zone above the contested region similar to the exclusion zone it had declared in the East China Sea, where it is locked in dispute with Japan over ownership of five uninhabited islands.

The United States urged China to stop land reclamation and militarization in the Spratly

and Britain declared that freedom of navigation and overflight in the area were nonnegotiable.

Faster progress

Amti said only four months after it released images of China's completed construction of its first Spratly airstrip on Kagitingan Reef, "China has not only landed three civilian test flights on Fiery Cross, but is progressing even faster than expected with its work at Subi and especially Mischief."

The think tank observed that if construction of the Kagitingan airstrip took "at least seven months from the start of grading," China's work at Zamora is taking at least six months.

On Panganiban Reef, grading began in September or October, and Amti said that "construction is already approaching completion just three to four months later ... considerably faster than (its work) on Fiery Cross or Subi."

"A fully formed and compacted sand runway could be seen by Oct. 19, and by Dec. 5 the runway and apron had been covered with gravel and about [150 meters] of concrete. As of Jan. 8, concrete covered most of the runway, which appears to be nearing completion," Amti said, describing the work on Panganiban Reef.

Satellite images show that as of Jan. 8, the northwest side of Panganiban Reef already has a 570-m-long seawall, housing

facilities, artificial turf parade grounds, cement plants and dockings.

China has also constructed a seawall and completed a dock on the artificial island it has built on the southern end of Panganiban Reef.

'Tower' on Zamora

Zamora Reef, which can be seen from Pagasa Island, now has an "octagonal tower with a conical feature at its top" measuring 27 to 30 m high and 12 m on each side, Amti said.

Construction of the tower, located on the northeast side of Zamora Reef, was almost complete as of Jan. 8.

"A seawall and docks have been constructed, and work continues on a number of hardened buildings," Amti said.

As of Jan. 8, too, the "southern end of the runway" on Zamora Reef "had been paved with concrete as had most of the runway and apron at the northern end, while the gravel base had been completed and concrete strips were visible in the central portion," Amti said.

Edca

Cabalza said the Philippines "reacted with grace" when it pursued the legal and diplomatic track in responding to China's expansionism in the South China Sea.

But the Aquino administration is also pushing for joint patrols with the United States in the South China Sea through

the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (Edca), which the Supreme Court declared constitutional last week.

The Edca is seen as a deterrent to China's aggression as the Philippine and US militaries could conduct joint patrols in the South China Sea, although Manila and Washington stress that the agreement will greatly contribute to faster humanitarian assistance and disaster response.

In a speech at the East-West Center Association International Conference held at Manila Hotel on Friday, President Aquino said the "basic logic behind" the Edca was "interoperability" between the Philippines and the US militaries.

"Anybody who is reasonable will see that this agreement is an enhancement of both our countries' abilities, rather than a threat to anyone else," the President said.

"To my mind, the Edca has a very practical purpose for developing our own armed forces: All the modern hardware carries a significant price tag; yet with the Edca, we have a chance to try the cutting-edge equipment and see just how suitable they are to our needs, without having to buy them first ... On the reverse side, the US gets to learn how to make do with fewer resources, which in a conflict situation is always a high probability if not an intense possibility," the President said. **With a report from Reuters**