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DENR

IN THE NEWS

PEOPLES JOURNALS

Everybody's Newspaper

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No exemption in Laguna Lake clearing operation — DENR

THE clearing operation in Laguna Lake is for real and no one is going to enjoy special treatment or exemption.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) issued the statement after receiving reports that scammers promise fish cage operators with exemption orders in exchange for money.

The DENR last week started clearing Laguna de Bay from fish pens and other illegal structures on orders from President Rodrigo Duterte to allow small fishermen to gain access to traditional fishing ground.

Undersecretary Arturo Valdez, who is also the head of the National Anti-Environmental Crime Task Force in charge of the dismantling operation, said the DENR does not provide any exemption to owners or operators of fish pens and cages in Laguna Lake.

Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) general manager Joey Medina reported that his office has received an information that scammers, who identify themselves as being "well-connected," can provide exemptions from the dismantling operation for a fee.

"No one is untouchables everyone has to go to enable the lake to have breathing spell to rejuvenate," Valdez said.

Valdez urged the public to report to the DENR any extortionists for the agency to respond accordingly.

He said the public may call the following DENR hotlines: #DENR or #3367, 0917-868-DENR, 0917-885-DENR. They may also send an e-mail to aksyonkalikasan@denr.gov.ph and web@denr.gov.ph.

Last Thursday, the DENR, together with the Laguna Lake Development Authority, the National Bureau of Investigation, the Philippine Army and the Philippine Coast Guard, began a massive operation to demolish fish pens, fish cages and other illegal structures in Laguna Lake.

Joel dela Torre

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DENR to keep commercial fishing ban in Tañon Strait protected area

The proposed moratorium on the commercial fishing ban in Tañon Strait Protected Seascape (TSPS), one of the largest marine protected areas in the Philippines, has not yet been finalized but the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is already opposing it strongly.

"We believe that commercial fishing in an unsustainable manner is one of the major threats to our marine environment. Overfishing, as one of the many negative environmental consequences, is a primary cause of species extinction and ecosystem collapse," said DENR-Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) Director Mundita Lim.

Some local government officials in Cebu earlier proposed the imposition of a moratorium that will lift the ban on commercial fishing within Tañon Strait. "As managers of the said seascape, our positions and decisions will

always consider sustainable management of the area, wherein the overall health of the vulnerable marine resources should not be jeopardized and the community benefits will be ensured," Lim added.

The proposal, if approved, will allow commercial fishing within municipal waters of the seascape beginning at 10.1 kilometers away from the coast.

Municipal waters include biologically important near-shore areas where mangroves, seagrass, and coral reefs thrive. Near-shore areas serve as the nesting and breeding ground for fish, and other marine organisms.

Tañon Strait is a critical marine habitat and important migratory path for 14 of the 27 species of whales and dolphins in the Philippines.

It boasts at least 90 species of fish, 20 species of crustaceans, 26 species of mangroves, and 18,830 hectares of coral reef. The rare chambered nautilus, giant diamond-backed squid and

critically endangered dugong can also be found in its waters.

It is also a rich fishing ground for artisanal or municipal fishers who live along the coastal areas within the 42 cities and municipalities in the provinces of Cebu, Negros Oriental, and Negros Occidental.

"Oceana is firm in its stand that commercial fishing activity is prohibited in marine protected areas. It is clearly defined in the National Integrated Protected Area System (NIPAS) Act, in the Amended Fisheries Code, and supported by the Tañon Strait General Management Plan," said Gloria Estenzo Ramos, vice president for Oceana Philippines, for her part.

Ramos said that commercial fishers continue to enter and illegally fish in municipal waters in a lop-sided competition with the municipal fisherfolk for the declining fish stock - marginalizing them further and who are the poorest of the poor in the Philippines.

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Green, safe healthcare facilities (2)

THE Health Care Without Harm and Practice Greenhealth toolkit for the health care sector aims to increase participation in addressing climate change. Opportunities for action are in the following areas:

*** Transportation** Health care facilities rely heavily on transportation to move patients, workers, supplies and waste. Hospitals can reorganize their fleets to include high-fuel efficiency, hybrid, and alternate fuel ambulances, shuttle vans and supply transportation vehicles.

*** Energy** Health care facilities can make their operations more energy efficient by using LEDs and energy efficient equipment. Hospitals that will be built, refurbished or retrofitted should incorporate green building principles such as day lighting, natural ventilation and green roofs.

*** Waste management** Best practices in waste management include putting up a materials recovery



Keynote Speech of Senator Loren Legarda delivered during the Summit on Green and Safe Healthcare Facilities held in Antipolo, Rizal - Ed.

facility and installation of wastewater treatment systems. Some hospitals are using innovative gas capture technology, which will capture, reclaim and purify gases used in operating rooms and will then be reused by the hospital. The procedure extends gases' lifecycle, thus saving money and reducing GHG emissions.

*** Food service**

It has been estimated that 18% of all GHG emissions are associated with meat consumption, and food that come from distant places utilize more en-

ergy for transportation and preservation, resulting in greater carbon emission. Hospitals can lessen GHG emissions by reducing the amount of meat protein on their menus, buying local, organic and in-season food, composting food waste, and eliminating bottled water.

Whole-of-society approach

Addressing the climate crisis needs a whole-of-society approach. We need the government to lead, but other sectors of society, including the health care sector, must give their wholehearted commitment and take action as well.

In the Senate, we continue to improve legislation and practice our oversight functions to ensure the implementation of our laws. We already have the necessary laws to aid us towards building a healthy, resilient, sustainable and climate-adaptive nation. We have the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Ecological Solid Waste Management Law, Renewable Energy Act, Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Law, Climate Change Act, and People's Survival Fund Law, among many others. But what is more important is to take proactive, urgent and continuous action.

I congratulate the Department of Health for organizing this event and I commend you for releasing a manual on safe hospitals in emergencies and disasters. Thank you.

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MSU, Lanao Sur to jointly protect Lake Lanao

By JOHN UNSON

MARAWI CITY — The largest state university in Mindanao and the provincial government of Lanao del Sur agreed on Monday to jointly protect Lake Lanao and preserve its dwindling endemic fish species.

Lanao del Sur Gov. Bedjoria Soraya Alonto-Adiong and Habib Macaayong, president of the Mindanao State University (MSU), have signed a memorandum of agreement binding their offices to cooperate on the projects.

The deal, forged at the provincial capitol in Marawi City in the presence of local officials, is meant to improve the productivity of local fishing communities while ensuring the abundance of fishes in the lake.

The downstream flow of waters from the lake that drains into the shores of Lanao del Norte propels hydroelectric plants supplying more than half of Mindanao's daily power needs.

The MSU, the largest government university in Southern Philippines, has a fisheries college employing professors with doctorate studies on Asian freshwater fishes and on captive propagation of inland fish species with high market value.

The university, located in Marawi City, will study how the provincial governor's office and local officials in municipalities along Lake Lanao can improve



Habib Macaayong of the Mindanao State University and Lanao del Sur Gov. Bedjoria Soraya Alonto-Adiong signed the Lake Lanao protection cooperation deal in Marawi City on Monday.

the productivity of Maranaws engaged in inland fishing without causing the depletion of fishes in the lake.

Salma Jayne Tamano, Lanao del Sur's provincial information officer, said on Tuesday the agreement crafted by the president of MSU and Alonto-Adiong is in support of the environment-protection thrusts of Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary

Gina Lopez and the executive department of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

The crafting on Monday of the agreement between MSU and the provincial government preceded the activation by the office of Alonto-Adiong in early January of an inter-agency provincial Watershed Management Council to help the national government manage Lake Lanao.

The national government devolved the functions of DENR to ARMM based on its regional charter, the Republic Act 9054, but the protection and management of Lake Lanao and its watersheds remained an exclusive authority of Malacañang.

ARMM Regional Governor Mujiv Hataman suspended all logging operations in forested areas around the lake in 2012.

The ban is still on and regional officials have not ceased in preventing poaching of timbers in rainforests in protected hinterlands surrounding Lake Lanao.

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BMReports

Extra

Investing in rivers can help PHL bag 'First World' status

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA @jonlmayuga

Conclusion

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources-River Basin Control Office (DENR-RBCO) is currently developing an integrated master plan for 17 of the 18 major river basins and three principal river basins to rationalize and integrate all its plans, programs and projects.

The master plan aims to address various concerns related to watershed conservation, river-basin rehabilitation, and flood control and mitigation. Other concerns included water security for domestic, irrigation and industrial use, livelihood and economic opportunities within the river basin.

Started in 2012, the development of the master plans as so far been completed for the following: Abra River, Cordillera Autonomous Region; Apayao-Abulug, Cagayan; Iraya-Malungon, Sarangani; Ilog-Hilabangan, Negros Occidental; Jalaur, Panay; and Ranao-Agus, Lanao.

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MOTORIZED banca ferries tourists in a floating restaurant along Loboc River in Bohol. TRAVNIKOVSUDIO/DREAMSTIME.COM



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Investing in rivers can help PHL bag 'First World' status

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A master plan has also been completed for the Tagoloan River, Misamis Oriental, the 13th-largest river system in the Philippines in terms of watershed size, as classified by the National Water Resources Board. Other rivers with completed master plans include the Tagum-Libuganon, Davao del Norte; Iloilo-Batiano, Iloilo; and the Marikina River.

According to DENR-Rbco Deputy Executive Director Donna M. Gordove, the government is hoping to complete the master plan for the Agno River, Pampanga River and the Agusan River. While apathy of stakeholders led to the current "sorry state" of many rivers, poor enforcement of environmental laws both by the national and local governments aggravated the situation.

The National Solid Waste Management Commission estimates that more than 20 percent of Metro Manila's 9,000 tons of waste, or around 1,800 tons find their way in creeks, canals, esteros and rivers passing through the National Capital Region.

"In some areas, like in Metro Cebu and Metro Davao, uncollected waste that goes into the river is

more severe," said Ely Ildelfonso, executive director of the NSWMC Secretariat.

Protecting sources

ON January 18 Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez made a policy pronouncement vowing to intensify the campaign against the indiscriminate dumping of garbage and operation of open dumps, and even sanitary landfills, to water bodies.

Lopez had ordered Quezon City Mayor Herbert Bautista and Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña to shut down their respective city's sanitary landfills.

The Payatas Sanitary Landfill is near the La Mesa Watershed, where water from Angat and Ipo dams are processed before distribution.

The Inayawan Sanitary Landfill in Cebu City, meanwhile, is on a reclamation area.

Underscoring the importance of protecting the country's watersheds, Lopez said she will sign an order to close not only open dumps, but sanitary landfills situated near water bodies.

Environment Undersecretary Arturo Valdez said a lot of open dumps and sanitary landfills are near river banks, threatening to

contaminate the country's fresh-water supply.

Destructive human activities, Lopez said, compromise water sources, which she vowed "will not happen under my watch". She also vowed to ban all development projects near watersheds that she said are "destructive".

The DENR said there are ongoing programs that aim to rehabilitate the country's open, degraded and denuded forests, including critical watersheds. These programs include the National Greening Program (NGP) of 2010 to 2016 and the Expanded-NGP 2017-2028.

The DENR-Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) implements public-private partnership projects in its effort to rehabilitate and protect the country's rivers through the Adopt-an-Estero Program.

So far, the DENR-EMB has listed a total of 480 esteros adopted, and had signed a total of 640 memorandum of agreements with its private-sector partners.

The DENR-EMB also monitors water quality and puts under strict management regimes specific water bodies declared as water quality management areas (WQMAs).

Republic Act 9275, or the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004,

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mandates the DENR to designate certain areas as WQMA using appropriate physiographic units, such as watershed, river basins or water resources regions, to effectively enforce its provisions and improve the water quality of water bodies.

"Keeping our river basins clean is important," DENR-EMB Acting Director Jacqueline Caancan said. "That is why the DENR has adopted the ridge-to-reef approach in protecting our rivers."

The declaration of water bodies as WQMA puts identified water body under strict management regime and under the control of a governing board to better protect them against pollution and other threats.

"Under the WQMA system, the water body is placed under the control of a governing board that involves various stakeholders, including LGUs," Caancan said.

The governing board serves as a planning, monitoring and coordinating body. It also reviews the WQMA action plan prepared by the EMB. So far, the DENR had declared a total of 31 water bodies as WQMA.

Problem of consciousness

LOPEZ said the problem besetting the country's rivers is a problem

of consciousness, which directly translates into structural defects.

"Rivers are not seen as a conduit of life—to be revered and protected. In Manila, for example, structurally, sewerage is dumped into our esteros and the Pasig River," she said. "It's a structural problem that emanates from a consciousness problem."

"According to Lopez, rivers have the potential to bring life, to be functional means of transportation, 'to bring joy and beauty and economic well-being to forge unity and harmony in our societies'."

"It is much harder to fix a problem once there are structures that strengthen this consciousness malaise," Lopez said. "What results is disease, and the blocking of the economic potential of the city."

According to Lopez, the solution to this problem is political will and people working together.

"There must be a shift in consciousness, and this can happen if the leaders make this happen," she said. A mix of the leaders making decisions and getting citizens of the place to partake will heighten consciousness about the importance of rivers. "But, definitely, money has to be spent and rules and regulations imposed strictly to enforce the right

consciousness. Structural defects have to be fixed, because they aggravate the problem," she said.

Stakeholders' roles

THE DENR, which is implementing the Expanded-NGP, is eyeing to enhance partnership with communities to promote agro-forestry and ecotourism in NGP areas.

Lopez wants NGP partners to benefit from activities that are "environmentally sound," such as rehabilitating open, degraded and denuded forests, including watersheds riverbanks and turn NGP areas into income-generating ecotourism area, similar to the La Mesa Ecopark. The park, Lopez claims, is now earning P30 million a year from ecotourism.

According to her, for the Philippines to achieve the status of a first-world economy, everybody has to play a role.

"LGUs have to be superstrict with rules. Businesses should not be allowed to pollute waterways," she said. "The private sector should not pollute the ways, and the communities need to inculcate discipline in not polluting the waterways."

In the end, she said, reverence for the country's rivers will help jack up the economy.

BusinessMirror

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SBMA plans extending Subic Freeport to contiguous towns

BY HENRY EMPENO | Correspondent

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—Top officials of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) said they are working with neighboring local government units to expand the boundaries of the Subic Bay Freeport and special economic zone in order to accommodate more investments and hasten development in nearby communities.

In a meeting with members of the Subic Bay Freeport Chamber of Commerce (SBFCC) on January 25, SBMA Administrator Wilma Eisma said the fenced areas of the Subic Freeport "should be extended" in keeping with the spirit of Republic Act (RA) 7227, the law that created the Subic Bay Freeport Zone.

"That's the dream," Eisma said, referring to the bid to expand the secured area of the free port, which has been defined under RA 7227 and set for implementation under Executive Order (EO) 97-A, as amended by EO 675.

"Fencing outside the existing fenced areas is difficult, but I think it can be done, and it should be done," Eisma said.

The administrator said expanding the secured area of the Subic Bay Freeport will work to benefit investors and business locators in the zone, as the tax-exempt provision and other privileges enjoyed by businesses in the zone are applicable only inside the secured area.

SBMA Chairman Martin B. Diño, who was also present in the meeting with the SBFCC, also sounded the call to expand the Subic Freeport's metes and bounds upon his assumption to office late last year.

He said the SBMA, under his administration, "will seek to maximize the use of the Subic port and develop more business districts for investors".

"We should find ways to accommodate more investments, because the available area for further development in [the Subic Freeport] is now very much limited," Diño said in a previous statement.

He said his office will initiate multilateral dialogues with the city of Olongapo, the municipalities of Morong and Hermosa in Bataan, and the town of San Antonio in Zambales to identify areas for possible development.

Several SBMA administrations in the past have voiced out the need to expand the free port in view of limited land area for development into industrial estates and commercial centers.

The metes and bounds of the Subic Special Eco-



DIÑO

nomie and Freeport Zone, as defined under Proclamation 532, consisted of a total land and water area of 67,452 hectares, with only about 14,000 hectares forming the fenced area, where much development has taken place.

SBMA officials, however, said out of the total fenced area, only about 2,800 hectares, or 20 percent, is developable, while the remaining 11,200 hectares, or 80 percent, of the total land and water area, consisted of either high slopes, forests, or protected areas.

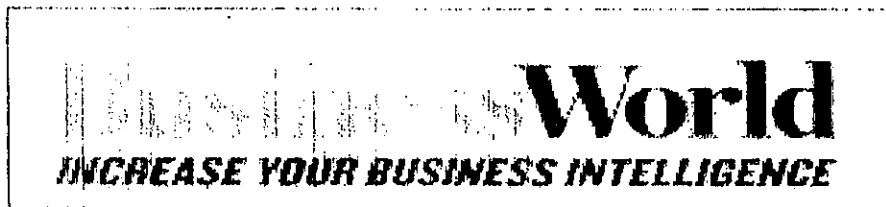
Under Section 12 of RA 7227, the Subic Special Economic and Freeport Zone consists of the city of Olongapo and the municipality of Subic in Zambales, the lands occupied by the former US Naval Base and its contiguous extensions within the territorial jurisdiction of the municipalities of Morong and Hermosa in Bataan.

In view of this limitation, then-President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo issued EO 675 in November 2007, thus authorizing the SBMA to declare areas outside the former US Naval Base as "additional secured areas" that may be operated as special economic and freeport zone under its supervision.

In Wednesday's meeting, Eisma assured the business community in the Subic Freeport the agency is now working on the expansion plan in tandem with neighboring local government units, and encouraged business locators and investors to share inputs with the contiguous communities.

"At the end of the day, based on the provisions of the law, [the contiguous areas] or parts of those areas are actually part of the free port," Eisma said. "It is very important to work with the local government units within the contiguous zone. So, we are now working on that."

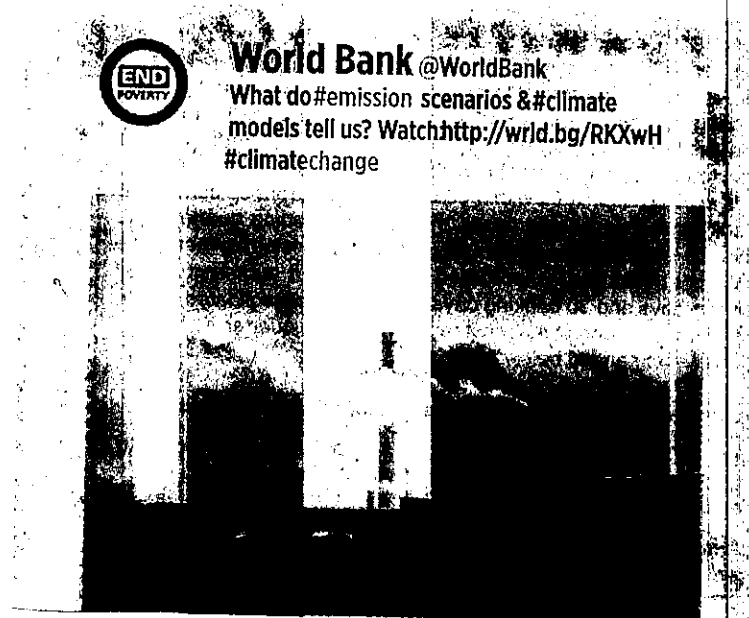
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G **GreenpeacePH** @gpph
Palawan's local govt needs to say NO to @
NickelodeonTV's theme park. Keep the pressure on!
>><http://bit.ly/notonick> #CoronNotBikiniBottom

