

14 MAR 2016

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DENR

IN THE NEWS

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1900

MANILA BULLETIN

THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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1/3 of DENR employees are women

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said 33 percent, or one-third of the agency's employees, are women.

Secretary Ramon J.P. Paje in a statement said it is fitting to recognize the important role of women in society and nation-building.

Paje said that of the 798 management positions at the DENR, 269 of them are held by women.

This is 251 percent higher from the 107 positions occupied by women recorded in 2008, according to the environment chief.

He also noted that "80 percent of assistant bureau director positions are now occupied by women, and 37 percent of the division chiefs are women." (Vanne Elaine P. Terrazola)



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DENR launches app to monitor conservation areas

By TED TORRES

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is now using a web-based mobile application to monitor protected and conservation areas nationwide.

Called Lawin Forest and Biodiversity Protection System (LFBPS), the mobile app would enable park rangers and planners to access critical information in real time, and share information about what they find in the field.

Wildlife authorities will have speedy access to information on hundreds of protected species and resources which they can use in identifying and prosecuting wildlife crime.

Environment Secretary Ramon J. Paje said technology and its applications, like the LFBPS, would allow the government to cope with the different challenges the environment faces.

"We see it as a way for us to come up with better ways to reverse environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, and at a faster pace," he said.

It would provide accurate information about the status of protected areas covered by RA 7586 or the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act.

The system operates through a web-based, open-source software called "cybertracker" for the data collection interface and the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) for data analysis, mapping and report generation.

Data can be transferred to Google maps and other tools for creation of actionable reports, which facilitate decision-making. Decision-makers at the regional and national level could easily access Lawin patrol reports generated at the field level.

During the pilot testing, the system was found to be effective in spotting the trends and patterns of wildlife species using Geographical Information System or GIS.

The system was also found to be helpful in enabling wildlife patrol rangers, which are mostly community volunteers, to quickly alert wildlife officers to recent clearing of wooded areas, and allows them to upload observations and photos of signs of illegal logging as evidence, and send these photos to concerned law enforcement agencies.

The debut of the mobile app was held at the Fuyot Spring National Park (FSNP) in Ilagan City, Isabela, one of the local government units that overlap in the 360,000-hectare Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park (NSMNP), the largest protected area in the country.

Project Lawin was developed by the DENR and the Biodiversity and Watersheds Improved for Stronger Economy and Ecosystem Resilience (B+WISER) program of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

"It aims to improve the response mechanisms to address observed threats and ensures the sustainability of conservation efforts inside the country's protected areas over the long-term with active support from local communities in the monitoring and enforcement of wildlife laws, especially in areas that are considered hotspots for timber and wildlife poaching," Paje said.

At least 670 wildlife workers, consisting of resource and data managers and community monitors who are mostly indigenous peoples, were trained during the pilot testing.

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MONITORING SA NATIONAL PROTECTED PARKS PINADALI

MAPAPADALI na ang pag-monitor ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sa kondisyon ng mga na-proklamang protected areas (PAs) sa iba't ibang bahagi ng bansa.

Ito ang inihayag ni DENR-Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) Director Mundita Lim makaraang ilunsad ang bagong mobile application na Lawin Forest and Biodiversity Protection System (LFBPS).

Ayon kay Lim, makatatanggap na sila ng tamang impormasyon sa estado ng protected areas, lalo na kung may

umaabuso o sumisira sa mga ito.

Aniya, ang mga natukoy na procted area ay nakapaloob sa Republic Act 7586 o ang National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act.

Paliwanag niya, sa ilalim ng LFBPS, ang mga nakatalagang park ranger at planner ay magkakaroon ng aktuwal na impormasyon kung may paninira at pamumutol ng mga puno na makikitang ginagawa sa mga kagubatan o natural park at ito ay maaaring ibahagi sa mga kinauukulan para mapabilis ang aksiyon at pagtugon

ng BMB.

Positibo si DENR Secretary Ramon J. P. Paje na ang bagong teknolohiya ay makatutulong nang malaki sa kampanya ng pamahalaan na mapangalagaan ang mga kagubatan.

"Technology and its applications, like the LFBPS, will surely allow us to cope with the different challenges the environment faces. We see it as a way for us to come up with better ways to reverse environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, and at a faster pace," ani Paje.

Sinabi ni Lim na unang masusubukan ang

LFBPS sa Fuyot Spring National Park (FSNP) sa Ilagan City, Isabela, na nag-overlap sa may 360,000 ektarya ng Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park (NSMNP), ang pinakamalaking protected area sa bansa.

Ang Project Lawin ay binuo ng DENR at ng Biodiversity and Watersheds Improved for Stronger Economy and Ecosystem Resilience (B+Wiser) Program ng United State Agency for International Development (USAID).

Aabot sa 442, 000 ektarya ang masasakop ng proyekto.

MONCHET LARANO

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

MGB recommends work stoppage in gold tunnel on Mount Diwata

TAGUM CITY—The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) has recommended the suspension of operation of a gold mine tunnel in Monkayo town in Compostela Valley province where 12 miners—six of whom died—were trapped by floodwater on Feb. 27, police said.

The order covering work suspension at Australia Tunnel in Purok 3 in Barangay Mount Diwata came as the Southern Mindanao regional office of the MGB continues its investigation into the accident, said Senior Supt. Albert Ignatius Ferro, Compostela Valley police director.

The management of Australia Tunnel has heeded the MGB recommendation and stopped operations, reports said:

The bodies of Roel Dacaldacal and siblings Bryan and Richard Monson were recovered on Thursday, nearly two weeks after incessant rains inundated the tunnel where they were working.

Supt. Jay Demala, Monkayo police chief, said the cadavers, which were already decomposing, were found underneath debris by rescuers.

The recovery of the bodies of the three miners, who were earlier declared missing, brought to seven the number of people

killed in the accident. Four persons, including a rescuer, were initially killed when rainwater gushed into the mine tunnel as 12 workers were working there.

Rescued were Aljun Dumalaga, Oliver Uganap, Carlito Morado, Albert Agyang, Angelito Tanio and Pepe Mendoza.

Joel Catulong, an MGB engineer, said their investigation showed that the screen gate railings of the shaft's working area were blocked by rocks and other debris, hampering the flow of rainwater to exit points.

Screen gate railings served as partition for many crisscrossing tunnels in Mt. Diwata, also known as Diwalwal.

Officials from the MGB regional office said these steel gates had become a safety issue following the incident.

Disaster has always struck the gold-rich mountain since gold was found there in the 1980s.

In March last year, at least five houses were destroyed and dozens of families were displaced following a string of landslides in several sections of Mt. Diwata.

In 2014, incessant rains triggered landslides in the mountain, killing six people.

Friston Lim, Inquirer Mindanao

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE Protecting Tawi-Tawi's Bud Bongao



Bud Bongao is Tawi-Tawi's most famous mountain, an important pilgrimage site for both Christians and Muslims. Leading environmental solutions provider World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-Philippines) recently went on a courtesy call to meet members of the Bud Bongao Management Council (BBMC) during its meeting at the Municipal Hall of Bongao in Tawi-Tawi.

Nur-Elnazeem Hadji, WWF-Philippines Site Coordinator for the project, Strengthening the Management of the Bud Bongao Local Conservation Area, presented

the project objectives, plus expected outputs and activities. With a grant from the Philippine Tropical Forest Conservation Foundation (PTFCF), the project aims to enhance the management of the Bud Bongao conservation area through capacity-building assistance for the BBMC.

The BBMC is composed of local government heads, Sangguniang Bayan committee chairs, planning and development units, barangay representatives, accredited civil society organizations and religious leaders. All 29 representatives from eight barangays committed to fully support and participate in the project activities

for the sustainable management of Bud Bongao.

In Bongao, March 1 is considered "Bud Bongao Day" and local community members regularly spearhead activities which highlight the importance of conserving Bud Bongao.

The project provided a platform for members to plan and develop various IEC activities like Alay Lakad or solidarity walks to raise conservation awareness especially amongst the neighboring barangays under the theme Bud Bongao Ayaran, Dekayu Pusaka Min Kamatoohan (Protect Bud Bongao, the legacy of our forefathers).

BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

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Another Philippine Eagle shot, community involvement critical

WITHIN just six months of the death of "Pamana," a Haring Ibon (Philippine Eagle) released in the forests of Mindanao, another was found shot in Barangay Tambobong, Baguio District in Davao.

Unlike Pamana, meaning "inheritance," "Matatag" or "steadfast" was found alive, but wounded, and is now being rehabilitated at the Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF) in Davao.

J. Kahlil Bohol Panopio, a wildlife biologist at the Haribon Foundation, is currently working on field expeditions and community-awareness programs in and around Philippine Eagle habitats on Mount Mingan Important Bird and Biodiversity Area in Central Sierra Madre in Luzon. He observes there is an increased number of reported shootings in Mindanao compared to Luzon, averaging to about one per year since 2013. "In past discussions between Haribon, PEF and other Haring Ibon conservation partners, one of the possible reasons behind the increased reported shootings of Haring Ibon in Mindanao could be due to the increasing encroachment of communities in [the birds'] forest habitats," Panopio said.

Another reason is the fragmented forest habitats of Mindanao. Each pair of Philippine Eagle parents need 7,000 to 13,000 hectares of forest to call their territory. Once their chick grows to an age where it must disperse to search for its own home, it has a lower chance of finding a suitable area and even risks its life as it approaches the forest edge.

"The forest fragmentation, together with communities pushing further into forest areas where the Haring Ibon live, could be contributing to the higher rate of reported shootings of the species in Mindanao." As natural forests, where Philippine Eagles reside, are threatened by encroachment, the importance of community-awareness programs becomes more and more important. After 40 years of zero confirmed sightings in Nueva Ecija, a family of Philippine Eagle have been spotted living on Mount Mingan, thanks to botanists working in the area.

Haribon conducted a field survey to validate and confirm the sightings of the eagle. Currently, Haribon works with the local government units (LGUs), indigenous peoples and community

members surrounding Mount Mingan to ensure the survival of the Philippine Eagle living there. One of them, Gab-e, was named by communities in one of the towns not too far from its habitat in Gabaldon, Nueva Ecija. "It is important to have communities name the Haring Ibon living in their area because it gives them ownership of its conservation," Panopio said. These communities have worked to establish a critical habitat (CH) for the Philippine Eagle, declaring 19,000 hectares of forest habitat to be protected and conserved, with two other towns, San Luis and Dingalan in Aurora province, following the same. With this, Mount Mingan is now on its way to becoming a CH network for the protection of the Philippine Eagle, placing the area ahead of other sites in conserving the bird in the Sierra Madre Mountain Range.

On a national scale, a partnership of several government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academe and private institutions form the Philippine Eagle Technical Working Group. Haribon and PEF are active partners of this group working together, sharing data, information and strategies regarding the protection of the Philippine Eagle. Unfortunately, they, alone, cannot accomplish the grander task of ensuring that the national bird is no longer shot or its forest habitats no longer encroached upon.

In Filipino, *matatag* means steadfast. But it is the steadfast actions of communities living closest to Philippine Eagle that will ensure the survival of the species.

As for those living further away in urban centers, participation in environmental policy-building and forest-restoration efforts is just as critical. The lack of action by all might make everyone just as guilty as the hunters who shoot the bird year after year.

The Philippine Eagle Project on Mount Mingan is made possible with funding and support from Birdlife International, Toyota Foundation, Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered fellowships of the Zoological Society of London, Germany's Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit Protected Area Management Enhancement, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and LGUs of Gabaldon, Dingalan and San Luis.

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BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

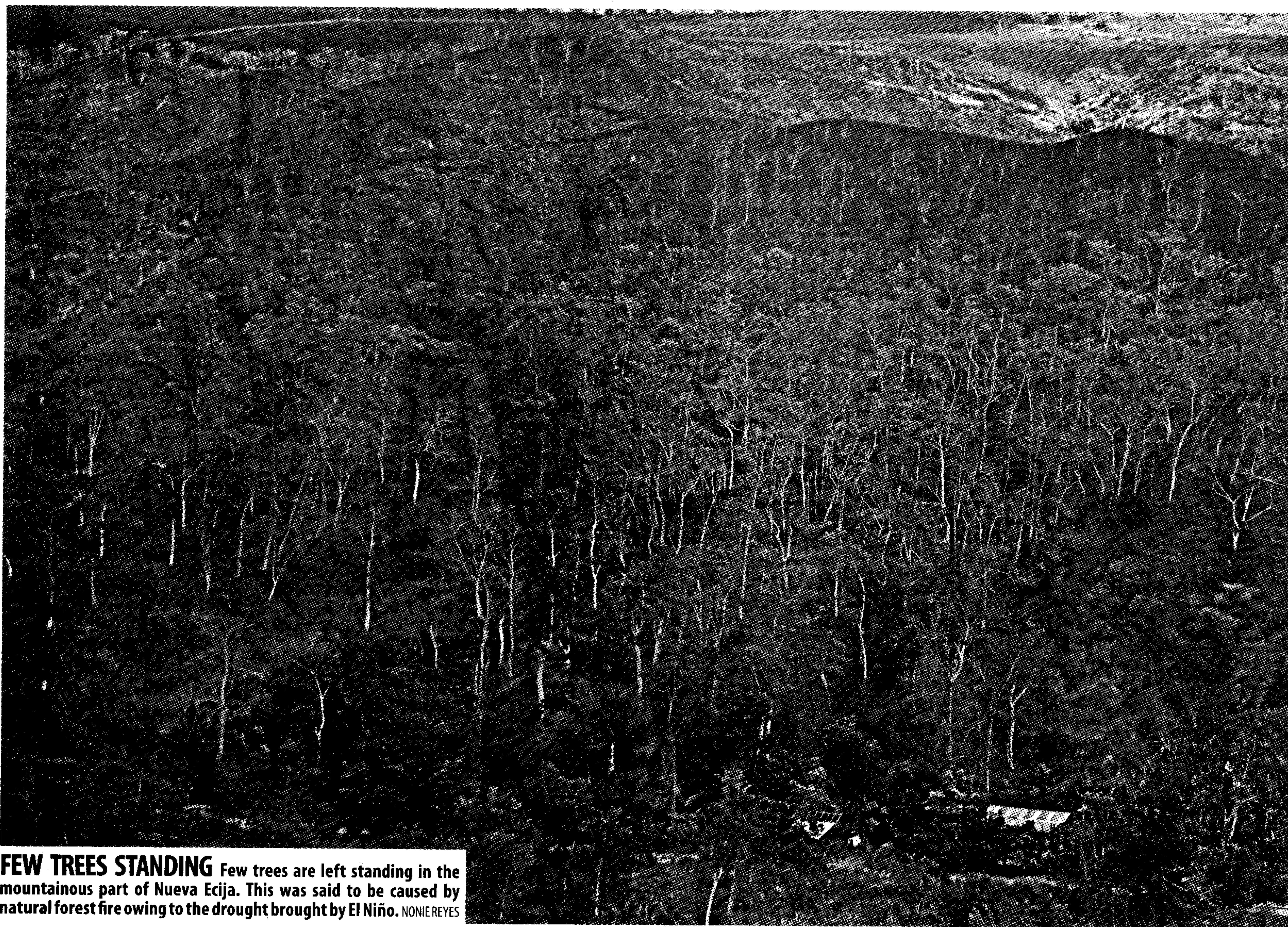
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FEW TREES STANDING Few trees are left standing in the mountainous part of Nueva Ecija. This was said to be caused by natural forest fire owing to the drought brought by El Niño. NONIE REYES

Abante

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Illegal logging balik sa Sierra Madre

Ngayong nalalapit na ang eleksyon, balik na naman ang illegal logging activities sa Sierra Madre Mountain Ranges.

Bukod sa umano'y mga pulitikong lumilikom ng campaign funds ang nasa likod ng paggahasa sa kabundukan, kahirapan pa rin ang isang nakikitang pangunahing factor dito.

Ayon kay Zander Bautista, assistant executive director of Save Sierra Madre Network Alliance (SSMNA), nalulungkot siya dahil maging ang mahihirap na naninirahan

sa kabundukan at ang ilang mga katutubo rito ay napipilitang makisangkot sa mga illegal logging dahil sa kakulangan ng ikabubuhay.

Ayon naman kay Fr. Pete Montallana, SSMNA president, ang paglala at pinakatalamak na illegal logging activities sa Sierra Madre ay paulit-ulit na nangyayari hindi lang sa lalawigan ng northern Quezon kundi maging sa lalawigan ng Isabela at Aurora province tuwing may nalalapit na halalan. (Ronilo Dagos)

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SUPALPAL!



NON ALQUITRAN

Minahan ng ginto sa Paracale, bukas-sara!

FLASH Report: Namamayagpag ang operation ng video karera sa Lucena City at hindi kumikilos itong si Mayor Dindon Alcala at pinsan na si Supt. Joel de Mesa, ang hepe ng pulisya, na masawata ito. Ang pinapaputok sa Lucena, ang may-ari ng mga makina ay itong magkapatid na Richard at Jojo Ceden. Subalit sa kalaunan, lumabas na ang mga vk ay kay alyas Mar Gayeta at mga pulis-intel ng Lucena City. Di ba itong si Gayeta ay isang pulitiko? Hindi kaya sa vk operation kinukuha ni Gayeta ang panggastos n'ya sa pagtakbo sa May election?

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Nagsara pansamantala noong nakaraang Sabado ang ilegal na minahan ng ginto sa Paracale, Camarines Norte bunga sa sobrang init ng operation nila. Subalit matapos mitingnina Sr. Supt. Rodulph Dimas, ang provincial director ng Camarines Norte; Sr. Supt. Portento, ang intelligence chief ng PRO5, at Hector Honasan ang mga financiers ng mga balon, nagbukas na ang ilegal na minahan noong Huwebes. Ang pagbubukas ng small-scale mining sa Bgy. Bulaay, sa Paracale ay matapos ipagyabang ni Honasan na may go signal na sila mula kay PNP chief Dir. Gen. Ricardo Marquez. Ayon kay Honasan, malaking halaga ang ibinigay nilang grease money para kay Gen. Marquez. Ano ba 'yan? Kung sabagay, sinabi ng mga kosa ko na ang payola ng ilegal mining kay Gen. Marquez ay aabot sa P250,000 weekly. Boom Panes! Hehehe! Sino ba ang aayaw sa pitsa? Kaya lang nagbukas itong minahan sa Bgy. Bulaay kasabay halos sa pagkamatay ng tatlong minero sa minahan sa Campostela Valley. Kailangan pa bang may mamatay din na minero sa Bgy. Bulaay bago kumilos ang gobyernong Aquino?

(Sundan sa page 4)

SUPALPAL... Mula page 3

Kaya naman pala isinusulong nina Dimas at Portento na mapabuksan na muli ang ilegal na minahan sa Paracale ay bunga sa nag-advance na sila ng payola nila sa mga financiers. Hehehe! Siyempre, kasama sa advance si Chief Supt. Augusto Marquez, ang regional director ng PRO5, anang mga kosa ko. Idinagdag pa ng mga kosa ko na ang payola nina Marquez ng PRO5 at Dimas ay P250,000 kada-isa at P200,000 naman ang kay Portento. Ang miniting nina Honasan, Dimas at Portento, ayon sa mga kosa ko, ay itong mga financiers na sina Agil Orqueza, Egay Vardi, Jun Bermundo at Marcos Lustañas. Ang apat ang tinaguriang mga may-ari ng

mga balon sa Bgy. Bulaay na nag-aabono sa gastos sa mga butas, kasama na ang pagkolekta ng tara para pambigay sa mga kapulisan at LGUs sa Camarines Norte. Kapag umalagwa na ang operation ng ilegal na minahan, aba tsaka na lang babawiin ng mga financiers ang ginastos nila. Get's n'yo mga kosa? Kaya sa pagbukas na muli ng ilegal na minahan ng ginto sa Paracale, happy na naman ang mga LGUs at kapulisan natin, di ba Col. Santos Sir? 'Ika nga, buhay na naman ang hasang nila.

Ipinarating din ng mga kosa ko na galit itong si Col. Santos at inaalam kung bakit nakarating sa Supalpal ang pagbukas ng minahan ng gin-

to, kasama na ang mga payola ng PNP at LGU. Kinausap ni Col. Santos ang mga may-ari ng butas para maghatag ng tig-P10,000 para ayusin ang lahat ng gusap sa operation ng small-scale mining, ang dagdag pa ng mga kosa ko. Inaalam pa natin kung bakit nadadawit ang pangalan ni retired Gen. Marcelo Garbo dito sa pagbukas ng ilegal na minahan ng ginto. Sinabi ng mga kosa ko na si Garbo ay tumatanggap ng P350,000 weekly samantalang itong si

Col. Santos ay P150,000 at ang taga-abot ng payola nila ay itong si Lustañas.

Sa pagka-alam ko itong si Gen. Garbo ay nasa kam-po na ni LP standard bearer Mar Roxas. Baka maapektuhan ang tsansa ng kababayan ko na si Roxas sa darating na May election kapag hindi nahinto itong report na sangkot si Gen. Garbo sa operation ng ilegal na minahan sa Paracale. Ano sa tingin n'yo mga kosa?

Abangan!

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Davao City river, beaches found unsafe due to high coliform level

WATER at the Davao River and the peripheral beaches where it flows out into the Davao Gulf have registered very high coliform levels and are not considered safe for bathing, according to the Department of Health (DoH) and the Environment Management Bureau (EMB).

Coliform are bacteria usually associated with human and animal waste.

“The latest study from our testing centers show a high coliform level of 16 million most probable number (MPN) per 100 milliliters (ml),” Conrada C. Vinluan, EMB Davao Region senior environment management specialist, said.

Ms. Vinluan explained that the standard or safe level of fecal coliform is 200 MPN/100 ml and around 1,000 MPN for the total coliform.

Gloria O. Raut, DoH senior health program officer, said the high coliform level in the city’s beaches is due to lack of septage

facilities and the indiscriminate dumping of fecal waste in the Davao River.

A study of the Davao River, released during the Regional Inter-Agency Committee on Environmental Health meeting last week, was conducted in line with the Water Quality Management Area (WQMA) requirement under Republic Act 9275 or the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004.

“The WQMA is a water quality management strategy that requires the designation of an area if there are indications that this area is already degraded based on monitoring,” said Maria Socorro A. Mallare of the EMB’s Environmental Education and Information Section. — **Carmencita A. Carillo**



Read the full story by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by typing the link
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Group seeks ban on OTC sale of mercury

By CORY MARTINEZ

THE environment-advocate group EcoWaste Coalition has urged the government to ban the over-the-counter (OTC) sale of mercury, a highly toxic substance, as its unhampered sales may lead to unauthorized applications of the substance.

The group, through its Project Protect coordinator Thong Dizon, made the call as they discovered that several stores, particularly dental supply stores in Quiapo and Sampaloc in Manila, are selling mercury in liquid form.

During a store-hopping last Saturday, Dizon said four of the 10 stores they visited sell mercury in liquid form that is placed in miniature clear glass bottles.

The liquid mercury is sold for P85-P95 for five grams and P150 for 10 grams of mercury.

Dizon added that the four bottles they bought have no toxic warning or cautionary text on their labels.

"We find this worrisome as unhampered sales may lead to mercury being used for unauthorized applications. If you have the money, you can easily buy as much as you want without any question being asked," Dizon said.

He stressed that despite

global recognition that mercury is hazardous to health and ecosystems with the adoption of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, the liquid chemical is still being sold over-the-counter, particularly in dental supply stores.

"Severely restricting the retail sale of mercury will contribute to the country's ongoing efforts to implement the Minamata Convention," added Dizon, who also noted that governments are currently meeting in Jordan to conduct the final negotiations ahead of the anticipated entry into force of the mercury treaty late this year or in 2017.

The convention, which the Philippines signed in 2013, recognizes mercury "as a substance producing significant adverse neurological and other health effects, with particular concerns expressed about its harmful effects on unborn children and infants."

"Reckless handling may result in accidental spillage that could expose store workers and customers to toxic mercury. Exposure to mercury via ingestion, inhalation or skin absorption even at low levels is detrimental to health," Dizon warned.

In light of the unrestricted sale of mercury in dental supply stores, the group urged the authorities to expedite the issuance of a regulation that will phase

out or phase down the use of mercury in dental care with a short deadline.

"While the regulation is being finalized, we urge the government to immediately stop the over-the-counter sale of mercury in dental supply stores and to impose stringent restrictions to prevent unauthorized uses of mercury such as in artisanal and small-scale gold mining, which is the suspected end point in 'dental mercury' trade," Dizon said.

The use of mercury in mineral processing, particularly in small-scale mining activities, is strictly prohibited by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) pursuant to Executive Order No. 79 issued by President Benigno S. Aquino III in 2012.

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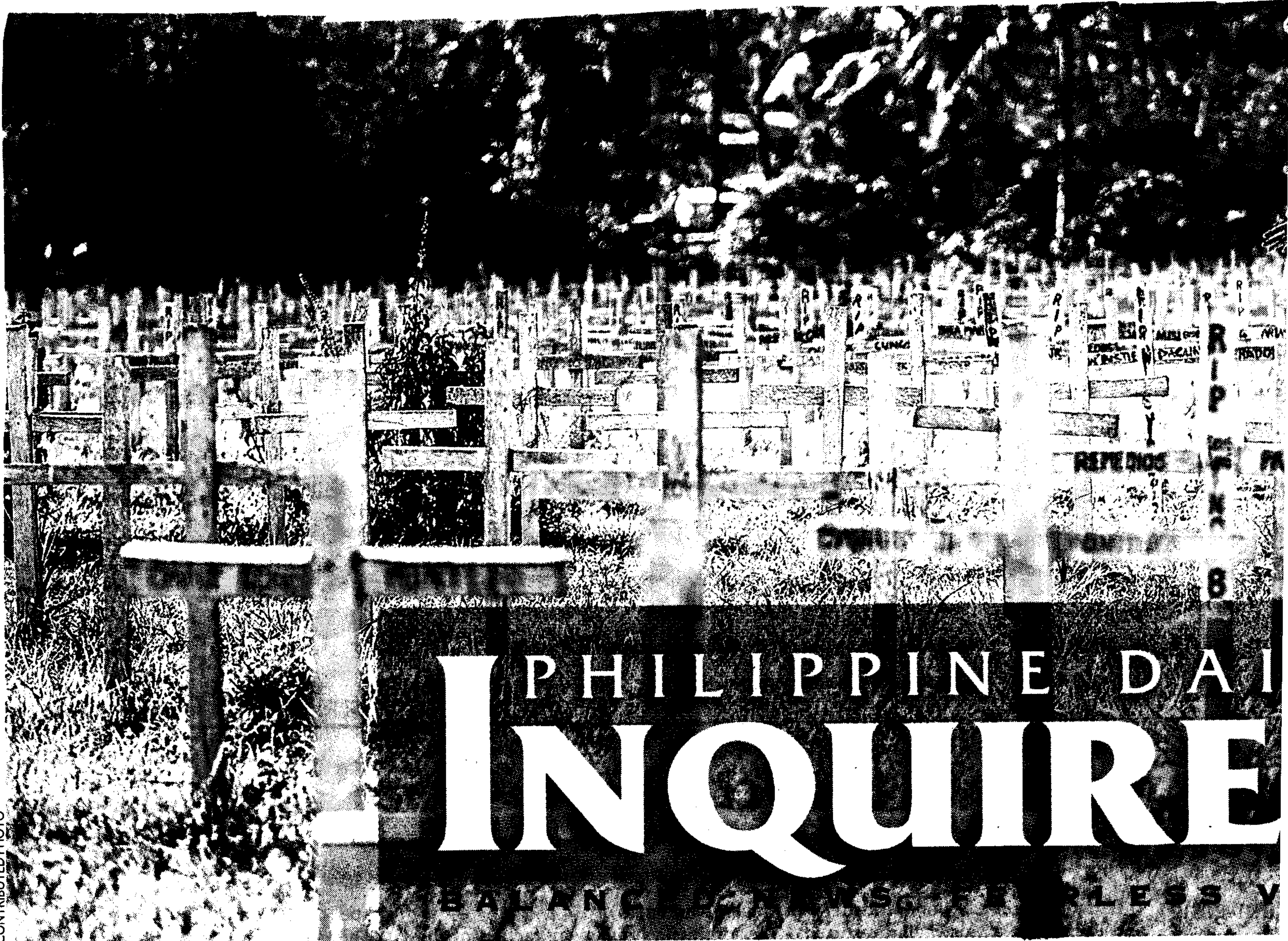
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



PHILIPPINE DAILY
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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

GORE IN TACLOBAN Former US Vice President Al Gore, accompanied by Sen. Loren Legarda and Mayor Alfred Romualdez, ~~will~~ is on Saturday a mass grave i
Gore is in the Philippines for a climate change training workshop starting Monday. He praises the Philippines for having two of the best climate laws in the world—

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Al Gore to train P climate warriors

'It's not smart to build new coal-fired p

By Michael Lim Ubac

AL GORE has no doomsday message for the Philippines as he starts today the training of more than 700 climate warriors from all over Asia who have converged in Manila for the "Climate Reality Leadership Training Corps."

In fact, the former US vice president told the INQUIRER yesterday that because of Super typhoon "Yolanda" (international name: Haiyan) the country had the "moral authority" to take a leadership role in helping the world shift its heavy reliance on coal to renewable energy.

Gore said it was "not smart" to build new coal plants. The Philippines is nevertheless building more coal-fired power plants.

Unbeknownst to Gore, the Aquino administration has ap-

proved 21 new coal-fired power plant projects in the past five years despite its commitment to reduce carbon emissions.

The government's decision to continue constructing coal plants puts into question the country's call for sustainable development and deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions.

The Nobel peace laureate and global climate activist arrived in Manila over the weekend to personally preside over the training of participants to

AL GORE/A18

the climate leadership training, which runs from Monday to Wednesday at the Hotel Sofitel.

"Yes, why not? You have some of the best solar resources in any country of the world because of your latitude. You have fantastic wind resources," Gore told the INQUIRER in an exclusive interview, when asked if the Philippines could become a leader in developing solar and wind power as alternative sources of energy.

"I think the Philippines occupies a special role because of the respect it has in the world community," he said, citing the "economic strength" the country "demonstrated to the world during a period when ... the rest of the world was devastated by the 2008-2009 Great Depression."

The Climate Reality Leadership Training Corps is part of the Climate Reality Project founded and chaired by Gore, a nonprofit organization that aims to solve the climate crisis. Gore will explain to the

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Al Gore to train PH Climate Warriors

soon-to-be climate warriors what climate change is all about and what individuals can do about it.

Over the last 10 years, there are thousands of trained "Climate Reality Leaders" in over 57 countries who are already working at every level of society to solve climate change, according to organizers of the Manila training sessions.

During the three-day training, renowned climate scientists, communicators, storytellers and grassroots organizers will speak about reaching and inspiring people to take climate action.

'Courage, resilience'

Gore acknowledged the particular vulnerability of the Philippines to typhoons. Being in the Pacific typhoon belt, the country "attracts constant attention from the world, which has admired the Philippines' resilience," he said.

Gore referenced Yolanda, the strongest recorded storm to ever hit land that lashed nine



GORE: The Philippines has moral authority to take leadership role in helping world shift to renewable energy.

RAFFY LERMA

regions of the country on Nov. 8, 2013, killing 6,300 people, mostly in Eastern Visayas.

"I think that Haiyan, in particular, underscored not just that single event but brought in to focus the courage and resilience of the [Filipino] people, and the immediate translation

of that in the Warsaw climate conference [in 2013] cannot be overemphasized. It really touched the hearts of the people around the world," Gore said.

He could still vividly recall the "image of the nation standing up courageously" to one of the greatest demonstrations of a climate change impact.

'Hub for geopolitics'

"And as a developing country—some would say—emerging economy, it has a unique position in the community of nation," he said. "Its geographic position gives it a particular relationship to all of East Asia—and of course the historical ties to the US actually make the Philippines a kind of a hub for geopolitics."

Gore noted that the Philippines' enduring ties to America were seen as very significant in the United States.

Impressed

He joked that Daly City or parts of Los Angeles in California could be another province of the Philippines because of

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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Al Gore to train PH climate warriors

the large presence of Filipino-Americans in the area.

Gore praised the country for its advanced climate change laws, ostensibly referring to the Climate Change Act of 2009 and the People's Survival Fund of 2012.

Both laws were authored by Sen. Loren Legarda, the United Nations Global Champion for Resilience.

"She is truly a leader not only in the Philippines but among her counterparts in the international community around the world. Her proposals [for Disaster Risk Reduction and climate change adaptation] are now being looked at as models for the world," Gore said.

He noted that the country was 'learning its lessons from Yolanda.

Quoting the forecast of scientists around the world, including those from the Philippines, he said it was being predicted that these typhoons would "likely to come stronger still with the continued warming of the oceans."

More than 90 percent of the

extra heat trapped by the man-made global warming pollution—which has triggered temperatures to rise since the Industrial Revolution—goes into the oceans.

Oceans warming faster

"The ocean waters around the Philippines are warming faster than anywhere else on the planet," Gore warned.

"If there is another place that is warming faster, I don't know what it is. As a result, sea level is rising faster in the Philippines than anywhere else on Earth mainly because of thermal expansion, and also of course, the melting of ice in Greenland and Antarctica is accelerating sea level rise everywhere in the world," said Gore.

He said that the combination of higher sea levels and more powerful storm surges made island-nations particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change, stressing that "the warming of the seas and rising of the seas are faster here than virtually anywhere on Earth."

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

The greatest fight we will ever win

FILIPINOS DON'T have the luxury of considering climate change a problem for future generations. Climate change is here, and the people of the Philippines see it every day.

The fingerprints of climate change mark the extreme weather that is taking an increasingly disastrous toll throughout Southeast Asia, including the recent decimation in Fiji because of Cyclone "Winston." This extreme weather not only threatens lives and causes untold billions of pesos in economic and infrastructure damage, but it also puts at risk the agricultural industry that is an important part of the Philippine economy. Climate change is not an abstract concept when ocean acidification—which is caused by increased levels of carbon dioxide dissolving into the water—jeopardizes the health of coral reefs and marine ecosystems that produce much of the animal protein that sustains millions of people.

And while many of these climate impacts are also being felt elsewhere in the world, Southeast Asia stands to bear their burden disproportionately: A recent report by the international medical journal, *The Lancet*, indicated that by 2050, half a million people could die from climate change-related impacts to agriculture and the human diet, with the greatest number of deaths in South and East Asia. Similarly, the combined effects of increasing heat and sea level rise might be enough to force a mass migration away from many low-lying island nations, including many parts of the Philippines.

The good news is that the world is finally waking up to the crisis at hand.

Last December, world leaders from around the globe, including those from the Philippines, convened at the United Nations' COP 21 climate conference in Paris to negotiate a historic agreement for all countries to cut their greenhouse gas emissions. The Paris Agreement gave the international community hope—hope that we will solve climate change and in doing so, protect our families and our

COMMENTARY

Ken Berlin

livelihoods from food insecurity, increasing spread of infectious diseases, more extreme weather, and rising sea levels.

But now the hard work begins. The Paris Agreement is a critical and inspiring start—but countries cannot fulfill their commitments without concrete action. As one of the world's most vulnerable nations to the adverse effects of climate change, the Philippines is considered a moral leader on the issue and has been calling for swift, ambitious action at the international level for many years.

Not only has the Philippine government passed key legislation to expand renewable energy use, but it has also started to build the regulatory infrastructure necessary to institutionalize climate resilience and facilitate sustainable development, as exemplified by the Climate Change Act of 2009 and the National Action Plan on Climate Change of 2011. These and other measures will help build up the disaster-risk reduction and management capacity of local government units, as well as incorporate climate resiliency into city and land-use planning. They are also essential in helping the Philippines adapt to climate change.

Furthermore, the Philippines has proven to be fertile ground for pilot programs to increase resiliency to climate change and improve the efficacy of adaptation funding. And with continued and sustained collaboration and communication between development banks, government agencies, local government units, communities and nongovernmental organizations, such programs can be successfully scaled up and implemented, both here and around the world.

While all these measures by the national

government and international organizations are welcome and additive to the efforts the Philippines is making in combating climate change, the real renewable resource fueling these actions comes from the political will of Filipinos themselves.

And it is in service of helping cultivate these individual leaders and community activists who are passionate about making a difference in their communities that former US vice president Al Gore and The Climate Reality Project are in Manila for the 31st Climate Reality Leadership Corps Training.

More than 700 citizens from the region—teachers, business owners, farmers and activists alike—will have the opportunity not only to learn from Gore and global and regional experts about the science of climate change and the cost of its impacts, but also to meet and organize with other Filipino activists committed to taking on the climate crisis and working to solve the greatest challenge of our time.

There remains more to be done, yet the Philippines is uniquely positioned to make a real difference globally in turning this existential threat into an opportunity.

It will take all of us to win this fight, but I am confident that the Philippines can continue to set an example for nations around the world, showing them what it means to be a nation committed to climate resilience, transitioning to a clean energy economy and securing a healthy and prosperous future for our generation and the generations to come.

Ken Berlin is president and CEO of The Climate Reality Project.

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros is on medical leave.—Ed.



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Commonsense

By MARICHU A. VILLANUEVA

Hello, summer

As far as the state weather bureau is concerned, it's not yet officially summer season in our country. But the average temperature has steadily been rising the past weeks. There were even reports of heat stroke-related incidents that caused one death a few days ago.

Thus, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) and the Department of Health (DOH) issued advisories one after the other against falling victim to heat stroke. Weather experts tell us the actual temperature being felt by us would be hotter than the air temperature as the humidity is factored in.

PAGASA's acting administrator Vicente Malano alerted the public to expect warmer days ahead as the start of the dry season is imminent. For now, the northeast monsoon winds, or *hanging amihan* as we call it, help bring down the temperature with the colder winds coming in from northernmost parts of our country.

However, state weather forecasters already observed a shift in wind direction to easterly that brings in the hotter air from the Pacific Ocean. So far, the hottest temperature recorded by PAGASA this year was 38.6 degrees Celsius felt last March 1 in General Santos City.

The rising temperature is actually part and parcel of El Niño phenomenon, or the long dry spell that we are currently having in our country. Anthony Joseph Lucero from the PAGASA climate impact monitoring and prediction section assuaged the public last week that El Niño is expected to gradually weaken in the next months.

The country's rainy season usually starts June until September. But now, we experience typhoons at any time of the year. La Niña phenomenon (opposite of El Niño) has also brought in super typhoons like Yolanda that struck us in November 2013.



Incidentally, former Vice President Al Gore arrived in Manila over the weekend to attend the 31st Climate Reality Leadership Corps Training to be held here starting today in Sofitel Philippine Plaza in Roxas Boulevard. Gore, one of the global leaders among climate change advocates, is founder and chairman of the Climate Reality Project. He will be joined by Ken Berlin, president and chief executive officer of the Climate Change Reality Project, and by Sen. Loren Legarda as Global Champion for Resilience of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR).

Gore will talk about "The Climate Crisis and Its Solutions" this afternoon. Organizers of the three-day training project said they will seek to focus "not on the destructive impacts of climate change but rather why Vice President Gore is optimistic about humanity's efforts to combat it."

Legarda will deliver the keynote address on "Road to Decarbonization," in reference to the use of coal – the fossil fuel for most of the electric power generation – as one of the leading causes of global warming. Legarda, who chairs the Senate committee on climate change, helped in crafting the Manila Call to Action for Climate Change that was signed by President Benigno "Noy" Aquino III and President Francois Hollande during the latter's state visit here last year.

Speaking of President Aquino, it shocked me to hear him admit in public he was not aware that Sen. Grace Poe was still an American citizen when he first appointed her as chairperson of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) in 2010. Before declaring her bid for the presidency last year, Poe again even met with the President several times to discuss the possibility of her joining the administration as either its standard bearer, or as running mate of ex-Interior Secretary Manuel "Mar" Roxas II.

P-Noy confessed he is still in a quandary when he first heard that Poe went to a US consulate in 2011 to officially renounce her US citizenship. "Ni walang nagkuwento sa akin, walang nagbalita, walang formal report. At palagay ko naitanong ko na rin bakit kailangan pang gawin dahil ang assumption ko nga ay matagal-tagal nang nare-acquire supposed to be iyong citizenship," Mr. Aquino said.

As the great Greek philosopher Aristotle said, one swallow does not make a summer. Hello, summer.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Commentary By *Marichu A. Villanueva*

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Has anyone in Mr. Aquino's Office of the President heard about complete staff work? What other presidential appointments in the past five years of the Aquino administration did not get thorough vetting process like Poe's?

Also on the same subject, P-Noy staunchly defended last week his appointment of his Ateneo classmate Cabinet Secretary Rene Almendras as ad interim secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). Almendras took over from Albert del Rosario who opted to retire last week due to failing health.

While praising his retired DFA secretary, the President, however, ignored his wise counsel for him to appoint his recommended successor, DFA Undersecretary Laura del Rosario. Among other major accomplishments in the long years of her career service, Del Rosario headed the national organizing council of last year's successful staging of the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' summit in Manila.

Del Rosario supervised the Philippine chairing for the entire year of the various 2015 APEC ministers meetings ending with the summit last November. One of the most senior career officials in the diplomatic service, Del Rosario (not related to the ex-secretary) was thus twice ignored by P-Noy.

Almendras was P-Noy's former energy secretary at the start of his administration. P-Noy subsequently transferred Almendras to the Office of the President. Having the President's trust and confidence, Almendras was lauded for addressing the port congestion and traffic problem in Metro Manila.

The Chief Executive also cited the track record of Almendras as a "trouble-shooter." He credited him for helping resolve Philippine government disagreement with Hong Kong after the bungled Luneta bus hostage rescue in August 2010. He noted the "instrumental part" of Almendras to iron out differences with Taiwan on the Philippine Coast Guard shooting of Taiwanese fishermen in Balintang Channel.

The unexpected appointment of Almendras to a very sensitive Cabinet post at this time of the country's souring relations with Beijing to qualify him as DFA secretary was notably all China related. Just saying.

As the great Greek philosopher Aristotle said, one swallow does not make a summer. Hello, summer.

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Pagasa: Drought not as widespread

THE DROUGHT in the Philippines caused by one of the strongest El Niño episodes ever was not as widespread as feared, the weather bureau said yesterday.

This month, 19 provinces mostly in Mindanao will continue to suffer drought, while 13 other provinces will continue to suffer a dry spell due to months of severely reduced rainfall, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa).

Pagasa last year forecast that around this time, 34 of the country's 81 provinces would intensely feel El Niño's impact.

"We expected many months ago that [the drought] would be very widespread. In actuality, it is better, there are only some provinces under drought," said Anthony Lucero, Pagasa climate monitoring and prediction chief. "So it is not as widespread as forecast," he added.

He said the outlook was better than the original forecast that up to 85 percent of the country, or 70

provinces, would experience drought at the height of the dry season in April.

Pagasa's latest forecast indicated drought in 30 provinces by April. The number of affected provinces will go down to 23 by

May. By June, three provinces are seen to remain under drought conditions.

The country may consider itself fortunate the raging El Niño, which started last year, wasn't as bad although it was billed as one of the

strongest on record, causing record-high warming over the equatorial Pacific Ocean.

Pagasa said the El Niño was starting to weaken and was expected to end by May.

"But even in its dying stage, it will

enhance the dry season," Lucero said.

Without typhoons expected in the next few months, drought-

affected provinces cannot expect relief from reduced rainfall from March to May.

Dona Z. Pazzibugan

The Manila Times

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

AL GORE VISITS TACLOBAN

TACLOBAN: Climate change activist and former US vice president Al Gore made a surprise visit to this city ravaged by one of the strongest storms on record.

The Nobel Peace Prize winner lit candles at a mass grave in Tacloban for thousands killed by Super Typhoon Yolanda (international codename Haiyan) in 2013, a picture tweeted by Climate Reality showed.

The US non-governmental organization is holding a seminar on adapting to climate change in Manila next week, where Gore is scheduled to speak.

"We hope his visit reminds the world of what happened after Yolanda," 51-year-old typhoon survivor Demetria Raya said.

The mother of three said she met Gore Saturday in a seaside village near Tacloban airport where her home once stood, before it was wiped out by the storm.

"He asked if I want to rebuild my house here. I said no. This

place reminds me of my ordeal, how the waves washed away everything," said Raya, who now lives in a temporary shelter several kilometers away.

More than two years after the typhoon, Tacloban and surrounding areas have yet to recover, with many living in shanty towns without running water and electricity. Survivors often still bear emotional scars.

Yolanda swept through central islands of the Philippines in November 2013, with giant waves wiping out entire communities and leaving 7,500 people dead or missing.

Since the disaster, high-profile personalities including the Pope and French President Francois Hollande have visited Tacloban to call attention to the effects of climate change.

Experts are studying the link between climate change and the increasing strength of storms battering the nation.

AFP

AS PART OF BROAD CLIMATE-CHANGE AGREEMENT

US and Canada pledge to cut methane emissions

PRESIDENT Barack Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Thursday announced a wide range of environmental initiatives to combat climate change, expand renewable energy and protect a fragile and remote region important to both nations—the Arctic.

The most notable commitment, outlined in a joint statement by the leaders, is a plan to reduce potent methane emissions from the oil and gas industry by 40 percent to 45 percent below 2012 levels by 2025.

Yet, their announcement also served as a broader reaffirmation of the cooperative spirit long shared between the countries—strained in recent years—that has moved forward significantly since Trudeau's election last October.

"The United States and Canada must and will play a leadership role internationally in the low-carbon global economy over the coming decades," the two leaders said in a joint statement.

Under Trudeau's predecessor, Steven Harper, a conservative who took office in 2006, tension grew between the nations over the fate of the proposed Key-

stone XL pipeline, which would have transported crude oil from the tar sands of Alberta into the US. Harper was often critical of the Obama administration for not acting quickly to approve the project.

Trudeau, the moderate son of former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, made environmental issues a key part of his 2015 campaign and said that, although he supported Keystone XL, he would not allow the debate over it to taint relations between the two countries.

In early November, less than three weeks after Trudeau won office, Obama announced that he was rejecting the pipeline. Soon after that, Trudeau traveled to the Paris climate talks to under-

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A broader look at today's business

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

US and Canada
pledge to cut
methane emissions

score Canada's commitment to addressing climate change.

The announcement on Thursday was among the strongest evidence of that commitment. Canada and the US said they "will work together to implement the historic Paris agreement, and commit to join and sign the agreement as soon as feasible."

They agreed to a broad set of plans, including working together to expand emission limits on vehicles, looking for ways to reduce airplane emissions and exploring putting a price on industrial carbon emissions.

The plan to reduce methane drew by far the most praise and criticism. Though carbon dioxide poses greater climate risks over the long term, methane is far more potent in the short term, accounting for as much as 25 percent of the planet's current warming.

The oil and gas industry is, by far, the largest emitter of methane, much of it through leaks in drilling and delivery systems.

The US Environmental Protection Agency is already preparing to implement a rule that would reduce emissions on new and modified oil and gas wells. The proposed new policy would apply to existing facilities.

"This, ultimately, is such a common sense thing to focus on," Mark Brownstein, vice president for climate and energy at the Environmental Defense Fund, said in an interview on Thursday. "So much of what needs to be done here is better operation and maintenance. This is not expensive to achieve."



PRESIDENT Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama welcome Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his wife Sophie Gregoire Trudeau to the White House for an official visit on March 10 in Washington, D.C. OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS/TNS

But the plan was criticized by the industry, which said it was already taking steps to reduce methane emissions. "Additional regulations on methane by the administration could discourage the shale-energy revolution that has helped America lead the world in reducing emissions while significantly lowering the costs of energy to consumers," Kyle Isakower, the vice president of regulatory and economic policy for the American Petroleum Institute, said in a written statement. "The administration is catering to environmental extremists at the expense of American consumers."

Some environmental groups said a better solution would be to reduce fossil fuels and hydraulic fracturing, a drilling method linked to methane leaks.

"In order to avert health and climate catastrophe, we must keep fossil fuels in the ground and begin investing immediately in a 100-percent clean, renewable energy future," said Wenonah Hauter, executive director of Food & Water Watch.

In the Arctic, where sea ice has been at record lows, and the region faces increasing pressure from oil development and fishing, Obama and Trudeau announced plans to create "low-impact shipping corridors," prevent overfishing and expand on existing goals to protect "at

least 17 percent of land areas and 10 percent of marine areas by 2020."

"If oil and gas development and exploration proceeds, activities must align with science-based standards between the two nations that ensure appropriate preparation for operating in Arctic conditions, including robust and effective well-control and emergency-response measures," the policy statement said.

Carter Roberts, the president and chief executive of the World Wildlife Fund, said in a written statement that the "agreement unites the US and Canada behind a shared vision to balance smart economic development with protection of the Arctic's unique and important ecosystems."

At a news conference in the White House Rose Garden on Thursday, Obama referred to his trip to Alaska in August and to meetings about the Arctic to be held in Washington this fall.

"As the first US president to visit the Arctic," I saw how both of our nations are threatened by rising seas, melting permafrost, disappearing glaciers and sea ice, and so we are focusing on making sure the Paris agreement is fully implemented and we're working to double our investments in clean-energy research and development," he said. *Los Angeles Times/TNS*