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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Billions of pesos in budgets proposed at Negros Island Region meeting

DUMAGUETE CITY, Negros Oriental (PNA) – Various regional government agencies in the Negros Island Region (NIR) or Region 18 have submitted their respective budgets for 2017 during the 2nd Regional Development Council (RDC) meeting held here over the weekend.

Negros Oriental Gov. Roel Degamo and Negros Occidental Gov. Alfredo Maraño were present in that meeting, attended by the different regional directors or representatives of all the regional government offices in the NIR.

Among the regional offices in the NIR which submitted its proposed budget was the Department of Agriculture (DA) which is asking for a total of ₱1.524 billion.

Specific programs included in the proposed budget for DA-18 is ₱149 million for a rice sufficiency program; ₱69.4 million for corn; ₱46.6 million for high value crops development program; ₱56.66 million for a livestock program;

₱177 million for an organic agriculture program, ₱302 million for farm-to-market roads; ₱470 million for general administration and support services; ₱214.8 million for support operations; and ₱34 million for plant and animal regulations or a total of ₱1.524 million.

The proposed DA-18 budget also provides for ₱478 million for maintenance and other operation expenses and ₱967,300 for capital outlay.

Plans are also afoot for the construction of a regional agriculture center which would include offices and laboratories and a skills development center as well as the establishment of an agricultural training institute in the region.

RDC Chair Maraño and Gov. Roel Degamo of Negros Oriental both agree that agriculture has one of the biggest budgets because the island region has now a bigger and larger area than Western Visayas and Central Visayas.

Meanwhile, the proposed budget for the regional office of the Department of

Environment and Natural Resources (DENR-18) has been made substantial with the end in view of making Negros Island a biodiversity region.

DENR-18 Director Al Orolfo presented an ₱815.4 million proposed budget for the agency. Part of the budget, he said, will be used to establish an office, purchase service vehicles and other equipment.

He said personnel services might be increased due to plans of creating a bigger office. The budget is also bigger because the NIR has bigger forest land areas with two natural parks - Kanlaon Natural Park and Lake Balinsasayao.

Orolfo stressed the need for more investments in terms of environmental and natural management in the island, first, because the NIR, with its total 13,551 square kilometers land area, is bigger than when Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental used to be with Western Visayas (Region 6) and Central Visayas (Region 7).

THE REPORT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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2 Billion 17 years

The full RDC meeting was informed by Orolfo that a detailed proposal of its budget including the proposed plantilla for DENR -NIR, subject to the approval of DBM has the nod of DENR Sec. Ramon Paje.

For the regional office, DENR is proposing 242 plantilla positions and even recommended for the restoration of the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) in Sipalay, Negros Occidental because of the large area of environment that has to be managed properly in the new region.



CREATING A BEACH FOREST - Some 1,000 volunteers from communities in and near Tacloban City plant tree seedlings on the coastline in Brgy. Payapay. The aim is to establish a beach forest serving to shield the barangay and nearby communities from being inundated should a tsunami or storm surge, like what happened when super typhoon Yolanda struck this place in November, 2013. (Restituto A. Cayubit)

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Panay tribal group urges resumption of government's forestry program

By **TARA YAP**

ILOILO CITY — Members of Panay Bukidnon, the indigenous peoples (IPs) in Panay Island, are urging the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Western Visayas (DENR-6) to resume its reforestation program in two towns in CapiZ province.

DENR-6 Regional Director Jim Sampulna disclosed this to Manila Bulletin after members of the Panay Bukidnon and village chieftains went to the DENR-6's regional office in Iloilo City, Iloilo for a dialogue last March 15.

The Panay Bukidnon members said that

government's massive tree planting program, National Greening Program (NGP), actually provides them with livelihood.

Sampulna earlier issued a memorandum dated March 11, 2016 ordering the suspension of the NGP in two CapiZ towns after the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP-6) ruled that some of the areas covered by the NGP are ancestral domains.

In a memorandum, the NCIP-6 asked DENR-6 for the suspension of NGP to avoid conflict between members of the Panay Bukidnon in Jamindan and Tapaz towns.

The NCIP-6 reportedly received

several complaints about the implementation of the reforestation program in ancestral domains belonging to the Panay Bukidnon.

Furthermore, NCIP-6 Director Ana Burgos reminded the DENR-6 that a consent form for the Panay Bukidnon was not complied as stipulated in a revised guideline that was issued in 2012.

According to Sampulna, DENR-6 had no intent to circumvent NCIP's guideline as DENR has been implementing the NGP since 2011.

Tribal chieftain Virgilio Santiago asked the DENR-6 to reconsider its position as members of the Panay Bukidnon can earn at least ₱300 daily for planting seedlings and maintaining the tree seedlings.

Due to the clamor from the Panay Bukidnon, Sampulna said DENR-6 will lobby and ask permission from NCIP-6 to resume the NGP as soon as possible while the Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) forms are being processed.

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Farmers seek help to stop cutting of trees near watershed area

DINGRAS, Ilocos Norte – A farmers' association here has sought the help of the provincial government to intervene and stop the cutting of trees near a watershed area in Francisco village, this town.

Demetrio Tuliao, 59, president of the farmers' group Zanjera in Barangay Francisco, said three century-old trees of acacia and antipolo have been cut down while eight others are due for cutting.

The said trees are located in a private lot and the owners have obtained a cutting permit from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Tuliao said, but these have played a vital role in ensuring a steady source of clean water supply in the village.

In a March 14 petition letter addressed to Governor Imee Marcos, about a hundred members of the Zanjera group

along with other village residents affixed their signature in it as they sought the governor's help regarding this matter.

The group's members said over the past 85 years, they have preserved the watershed where they get their water supply but this is now threatened due to the cutting of trees.

Another village resident, Aniceto Reyes, 69, testified that the lot used to be

a part of the Francisco Elementary School and also a part of the spring development locally known as Pussuak, benefiting more than a hundred households.

"In previous years, we did not have any problem with water supply as we could also plant corn and rice twice a year. But now, we are worried that the lack of water supply may further aggravate with the cutting of more trees in the area," the group said. (PNA)

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Aklan braces for drought in April-May

By JUN AGUIRRE

AKLAN — The Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) expects to see Aklan province experiencing drought caused by the El Niño climate phenomenon in April to May this year.

This was revealed by Engineer

Oscar Tabada, Officer-in-Charge of PAGASA in the Visayas.

"Aklan province has a unique weather pattern compared to other provinces in the country. Other provinces in Luzon and Mindanao have already started to feel the heat of El Niño since January this year," Tabada said.

PAGASA-Visayas has also attributed the delayed effect of El Niño in

the province because of the successful implementation of the National Greening Program (NGP), spearheaded by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to mitigate global warming.

"While we are not yet certain on the effects of the El Niño in Aklan on agriculture, we anticipate that this will have an effect on tourists going to

Boracay Island," Tabada noted, making a reference to the famed resort island in the town of Malay in Aklan which is considered the country's prime holiday destination.

Boracay-bound tourists are advised to drink plenty of water, apply sunscreen and wear protective clothing to shield them from the summer heat and summer sun rays.

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EMB Caraga embraces 'green building concept'

By **MIKE U. CRISMUNDO**

BUTUAN CITY – The threats to the environment resulting from the wasteful use of natural resources and fossil fuels bring out the need to design and manage buildings that are energy efficient.

Green building is the design and construction practice to increase the efficiency of buildings and their use of energy, water, and materials, and to reduce their impact on human health and the environment.

The Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) in the Caraga region is now using plants inside its building to contribute towards achieving the goal of lowering the carbon footprint of the government sector.

Interior plants have a number of roles to play within a building. In this system, the interior climate is regulated with the plants.

“When plants transpire water vapor

from their leaves, they also pull air down to their roots. This supplies their root microbes with oxygen,” EMB 13 Regional Director Wilson L. Trajeco said.

He said the root microbes also convert other substances in the air, such as toxic chemicals, into a source of food and energy.

As a result, these become more effective at converting toxic chemicals into food. Plants also serve as filtering devices to harmful chemicals in the air.

When EMB Caraga region adopted this system, its energy consumption decreased by 12% based on the 2014-2015 electricity consumption. This is also supplemented by the regulated use of air-conditioning systems.

The agency is the first regional office of EMB to be certified for Quality Management System by AJA Registrars, Inc.

BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

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NPC wants to tap P426.71-M fund to manage watersheds

THE National Power Corp. (NPC) wants to tap P426.71 million of the environmental fund from the Universal Charge (UC) to pay for the rehabilitation and management of the nation's watersheds.

The state firm said it is entitled to the Environmental Charge (EC) equivalent to one-fourth of one centavo per kilowatt-hour sales, which forms part of the UC. This environmental fund is intended solely for watershed rehabilitation and management.

Under Executive Order 224, NPC has jurisdiction and control over the following watersheds:

Upper Agno Watershed Reservation, Angat Watershed Reservation, Caliraya-Lumot Watershed Reservation, Makiling-Banahaw Geothermal Reservations, Buhi-Barit Watershed, and Tiwi Geothermal Reservation.

NPC is required to submit to the ERC a petition for availment of the UC-EC in relation to the proposed watershed rehab and management projects on or before March 15 every year.

"In order to attain the objectives, NPC would need to avail and utilize the funds from the UC-EC amounting to a total of P426,710,057.72," the NPC stated

in its 10-page application.

The proposed amount, among others, will be used to plant about 1.3 million trees; protect more than 150,000 hectares of land; reduce soil erosion; increase biodiversity; strengthen the Watershed Task Force that was created to protect and conserve the watersheds; provide income through livelihood projects; and provide employment to more or less 1,000 individuals from the local community.

The NPC said it will conduct consultations with the local government units where the projects will be situated.

The Manila Times

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

The future of coastal cities: post Yolanda and beyond

THE future of the Philippines rests on its shorelines. Cities will be built along the coastlines, where industry trade is accessible, tourism is emerging, and where wind and solar energy is economically viable.

Having the third longest coastline in the world, even much longer than that of the United States and Australia, the opportunity for emerging market and development is insurmountable. We have the opportunity to learn from and even surpass coastal and waterfront cities like Chicago, Brisbane, Venice, Denmark, Paris, and New York.

Confronting climate change and learning from Yolanda

The biggest challenge of coastal cities is the need to confront the worsening impact of climate change. It is no longer a discussion whether it is real or not. It now shifts to how we are going to address it.

One of my recommendations is the implementation of setbacks along waterfront and coastal developments. For the municipality of San Vicente in Palawan, we advised the local government to implement a 50-meter setback from the high tide -- the first 30 meters is a no-build zone and additional 20 meters of non-habitable, non-permanent structures.

In the event of a storm surge brought about by super typhoons, and possible tsunamis, the waves can go as high as eight meters and have a strong current as far as 30 to 50 meters from the shoreline. Implementing a 50-meter setback can instantly



FELINO A.
PALAFOX, JR.

climate change.

save lives, but more importantly it can help conserve the ecology and the environment.

There should also be a coordinated, city-wide disaster plan. More than just evacuation plans, the disaster plan should also consider the local applications of the National Building Code. The geography and context of provinces and islands are unique, and should have contextual considerations. I call this "adaptive architecture."

The local government should do a scientific study on wind intensity, probability of typhoon, flash floods, flood height, strong waves, mid-day heat intensity, and consistent soil tests. For example, areas that are susceptible to constant flooding should adapt a modern version of the bahaykubo's stilt design. Livable quarters of the houses are mandated to be raised to a certain height.

Let us look past temporary housing and dependence on donations. I believe it is time that the government updates and strictly enforces the national and local building codes. On the other hand, while waiting and wishing for this to happen, private businesses can initiate designing their buildings that are able to adapt to the reality of

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The Manila Times

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The future of coastal cities: Post Yolanda and beyond

The heart of cities and the core of business

The heart of the city and the core of business is people. The activity, life, sale, and loyalty revolve on people. If the city is designed horizontally or in an urban sprawl, not only will we be using up too much land, but the activities of people will be also be fragmented. This leads to dependence on vehicles because places to work, live, shop, dine, and worship are much too far from each other to walk or bike. This is what we are already experiencing in the car-centric development of Metropolitan Manila. Ease of doing business is hampered by heavy traffic, flooding, and bureaucratic red tape, among others.

For businesses, there is a strong potential for clean and renewable energy. While a province is developing, there will be higher demand for energy, and many times supply lacks due to limited access to on-grid power. Having a lighted home is a first step of toward a more mature market. This also creates small impacts, such as children not having to study under dim candle-light.

After the Fukushima tragedy in Japan, the government built vertical housing developments. People will be living higher than the potential height of the waves. The size of each dwelling units are maximized, allowing a proper rebuilding of the entire community. It is observed that low level housing is still prominently being built in Samar and Leyte. After Yolanda and observing the wave heights, we should be building back better, safer, and smarter.

I was in the advisory team of then rehabilitation czar Panfilo Lacson, Sr. for his first 30 days in office. Back then, I made the observation that when foreign volunteers/organizations leave before Christmas of 2013, they would leave behind a big vacuum that the government and private sector will have to fill up.

What we needed then was a framework plan with immediate action within 30 days, a short term plan till 2016, a medium term plan till 2021, and a long term plan from 2025 till 2050 and beyond. The international community has been looking at us, not just to provide aid for survivors of climate change, but also to learn from our story of resilience. That crisis created an opportunity to re-plan, remake, and rebuild better, but the opportunity will not always be there. We have the potential to be the world's center for climate change studies and innovations.



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Pinoys urged to join Earth Hour

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

Environment Secretary Ramon Paje appealed to Filipinos to join sustained efforts to fight climate change by participating in the observance of Earth Hour on Saturday night.

"Climate change is our planet's biggest environmental challenge, and to fight it requires mass participation across all continents, even in countries like the Philippines which has a very small carbon footprint," Paje said yesterday.

"Earth Hour is but one response by our country and the rest of humanity," he added, referring to the annual global event where millions of people switch off their lights for one hour to show their concern for the planet.

The country has been participating in Earth Hour since 2009 and Filipinos are among the biggest advocates of the climate movement organized by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

Although it has a smaller carbon footprint compared to industrialized nations, the Philippines is considered an important player in the fight against climate

change, being one of the countries most vulnerable to the global phenomenon.

Since joining the movement in 2009, the country consistently had the biggest Earth Hour participation.

"We have actually been walking the talk beyond merely pledging to limit our carbon emissions," Paje said.

He said the biggest action the government has taken was to implement the National Greening Program (NGP), the Aquino administration's flagship reforestation project that is set to surpass its target of reforesting 1.5 million hectares of denuded lands by June this year.

"Our new forests will greatly increase the capacity of our carbon sink to sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, thereby mitigating climate change," Paje said.

Paje noted that satellite data from 2002 to 2014 showed sea levels near the Philippines rising by more than 14 millimeters per year, or five times more than the global average.

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1-hour 'switch off' sa Earth Hour

Hinikayat ng Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) ang publiko na lumahok ng itinakdang Earth Hour sa darating na Sabado (Marso 19).

Ito'y sa pamamagitan na rin ng voluntaryong pag-switch off o pagpapatay ng ilaw sa loob ng isang oras.

Gagawin ito mula alas-8:30 hanggang alas-9:30 ng gabi bilang pakikiisa na rin sa pandaigdigang pagsisikap upang labanan ang climate change.

Ayon sa DTI, layunin nitong mapakita ng sambayanang Filipino sa buong mundo ang pakikiisa nito sa climate change

mate change gayundin ang pag-promote ng malinis, malusog at kaaya-ayang mundo.

Mula taong 2009 hanggang 2013, nakuha ng Pilipinas ang titulong "Earth Hour Hero Country", bilang bansa na may pinakamaraming lumahok sa aktibidad na nagpatay ng kanilang mga ilaw.

Ang Earth Hour ay isang malawakang pagkilos na pinangunahan ng World Wide Fund (WWF) upang magkaisa ang lahat na gumawa ng hakbang para sa ikakabuti ng planeta. (Eralyn Prado)

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Green Footprints Movement brings green living to consumers



By Marlet D. Salazar

The magnitude of the effect of climate change has shaped the landscape of the private sector's corporate social responsibility strategy. The realization that it would take more than just a tree-planting program hit hard during those months when typhoons destroyed parts of the Philippines and thousands of lives were lost.



Concepcion Industrial Corporation (CIC) Chief Executive Officer Raul Joseph A. Concepcion signs on the Green Footprints movement pledge board to show his commitment to environmental footprint reduction

Concepcion Industrial Corporation (CIC) has embedded into its corporate culture the idea of green advocacy, which goes beyond the products it make and into the consciousness of consumers.

Through its subsidiary Concepcion-Carrier Air Conditioning Company (CCAC), CIC launched "Green Footprints Movement," which aims to educate and empower consumers to start, if not continue, with their own green advocacy efforts.

"It is very easy for companies to be green if they are environmentally conscious," says Raul Joseph

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Concepcion-Carrier Air Conditioning Company (CCAC) Director and Head of Consumer Solutions Group Harold Pernikar, Jr. signs on the Green Footprints Movement pledge wall to show his commitment towards environmental footprint reduction



Concepcion Industrial Corporation (CIC) Executive Vice President for Business Development Rafael C. Hechanova, Jr., declares his commitment to environmental footprint reduction with the signing of the Green Footprints Movement pledge wall



Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) Assistant Director Dr. Eva S. Ocfemia joins the launch of CCAC's Green Footprints Movement advocacy that aims to inspire fellow Filipinos to do their part in reducing their impact on the environment.

Concepcion, CIC chief executive officer.

Concepcion explains that companies are in the position to convert its consumers to become environmental conscious by putting some sense into the products they create. People are aware that they need to be more responsible in taking care of the environment and that is a given. But many of them are either at a loss on what steps to take to be able to contribute to climate change mitigation or they find the green-friendly products to be more expensive than the ordinary appliances.

Concepcion reiterates consumers can do their part and create a larger impact if only they are properly given the right information and are given the right product choices.

"What's going to make it different for us?" asks Harold Pernikar Jr., CCAC director and head of the Consumer Solutions Group. "This is something we want to look at very long term because it's benefitting us as a company, the consumers, and the environment. In that win-win-win situation, there's no chance that you're ever going to look back."

Corporate strategy

"It's part and parcel with the overall corporate strategy that we've had," continues Pernikar. "One of our big values as well is environmental health and safety."

Concepcion says as market leaders in the air conditioning and refrigeration solutions industries, CCIC has the responsibility to instill this advocacy to consumers and the whole of the Filipino people.

Loosely, Concepcion said Filipinos need to walk the talk by not just being part of a global climate change pact but also lead the citizens to put in their contribution.

"Our contribution, as a country, to greenhouse gas may be small," Concepcion explains, "but if those small efforts from citizens are consolidated, we are making a big impact to the world."

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Green
Footprints

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Green footprints

hurdles in adapting a 100-percent green living: recycling.

People can buy green-labeled products and save a significant amount of money from electricity bill. But after the products' life span, around 10 years, how will the consumer be able to dispose of it responsibly?

Maybe 8-10 million refrigerators are out there in the market, according to Concepcion. "What are you going to do about that? A bigger problem for us are the recyclability and disposal that is why companies like us have to take the lead. Nobody's going to take the lead."

"The government has programs of putting up recyclable facilities," Concepcion explains. "We want to be involved in it because that is part of our sustainability strategy."

Unlike other corporate efforts, Concepcion says, having the products alone is already sustainable looking at the corporate and consumer side. The

company is able to bring a green product to a home and the consumer saves energy and money.

Household

During the launch, celebrity and World Wide Fund ambassador Marc Nelson shared his own efforts to living green. He said by using LED lights alone can save him money because they last longer than ordinary light bulbs. He also advised consume to refuse plastic bags if cashiers and baggers ever offer it to them. "Always bring your own bags," he said. He said consumers have no idea how much trash are they eradicating by ditching the use of plastic bags.

CIC has established manufacturing facilities that have the capacity to produce 500,000 units of air conditioning equipment and 300,000 refrigerators located at LISP in Laguna.

Christine Dychiao, mother, lifestyle blogger and green advocate said she has

been practicing waste segregation for a long time now and she could see the different in attitude in their household.

Facilities

CIC has established manufacturing facilities that have the capacity to produce 500,000 units of air conditioning equipment and 300,000 refrigerators located at LISP in Laguna.

CIC's products are available in over 90% of all appliance outlets in the Philippines. Its business is supported by: over 170 accredited installer companies; over 130 accredited service centers; over 2,000 technicians; rapid sales facilitation and service turnaround from over 1,000 merchandisers deployed at the point of sale; and 8 dedicated parts stores. Its logistics network is supported by strategically located regional warehouses supported by over 100 delivery trucks and corresponding delivery personnel.

DEFINING THE NEWS**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

El Niño prompts more calamity declarations

SURALLAH town in South Cotabato has been placed under a state of calamity while Iloilo is under a state of water calamity as the effects of El Niño worsen across the country.

The Surallah town council on Monday passed a resolution declaring a state of calamity because the continuing dry spell has continued to affect the produce of thousands of farmers. Municipal administrator Beltran Armada said the resolution had been recommended by the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council.

Mayor Antonio Bendeta approved the resolution Tuesday.

According to Armada, damage to palay crops has risen to P7 million in 400 hectares due to drought; damage to corn has risen

to P108 million in more than 2,000 hectares of dried-up cornfields.

Hardest-hit villages include Moloy, Colongolo, Talahik and Lamian.

Earlier, neighboring T'boli and Koronadal City have also been placed under a state of calamity.

Meanwhile, the Iloilo provincial council made the declaration due to severe water shortages in Lanit, Buntatala, Bitoon and San Isidro in Jaro district and San Juan, Boulevard and Calumpang in Molo district. Barangays Camalig, Cubay and Tabuc Suba in Jaro and Calumpang in Molo also reported

of severe water shortage.

Councilor Julie Grace Baronda, author of the resolution, said the declaration is in consonance with a national law which provides that when two barangays affected with severe water level dropped drastically, the local government unit may declare a state of calamity for the whole area.

The city has an existing calamity fund of more than P100 million including a carried over remaining calamity fund in 2015. An initial P3 million may be used for the water delivery project.

The plan will be implemented for the immediate delivery of water and the setting up of water facilities in the barangays. This may also include the purchase of a water tank with a dual purpose as a fire truck.

In Cebu City, water systems within the Central Cebu Protected Landscape are drying up with the onset of the dry season, according to the provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office.

Only 60 percent of the water supply now flows from rivers and streams in upland areas in Metro Cebu, according to Penro Technical Division Chief Fedencio Carreon.

"There will still be water but it won't be enough," Carreon said. At least 60 percent of the 28,300-hectare watershed area that makes up the CCPL is in Cebu City.

The Cebu City government's pronouncement that it will set up water tanks to mountain villages will be a big help especially for farmers who need to water their farms during the dry spell. **PN**

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Cavite moves to mitigate El Niño effects

By **ANTHONY GIRON**

TRECE MARTIRES CITY, Cavite – Officials in Cavite province are moving to address the anticipated dry spell caused by the El Niño phenomenon this year.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (DOST-PAG-ASA) earlier identified Cavite as one of the 54 provinces that will be affected by the weather pattern which is expected to persist until June this year.

The Office of the Provincial Agriculturist (OPA), Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (DRRMC), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and other concerned offices are one in saying that they have started preparations to mitigate the El Niño effects.

Cavite province — known for its historical sites, industrial zones and real estates — has also vast agricultural lands, especially in the upland districts.

The OPA said the province has 65,603.88 hectares of lands and 39,564 farmers who plant rice, corn, coffee, fruits, vegetables and other crops.

The biggest planting tracts are in the seventh, sixth and fifth districts of the province. Silang in the fifth

district has the biggest agricultural lands. Other towns with large agricultural areas are Alfonso, Indang,

Magallanes and Tagaytay City in seventh district, Amadeo and General Trias in sixth district.

Provincial Agriculturist Lolita Pereña assured said irrigation and other measures are already in place.

As assistance for the water system, the OPA said that the provincial government earlier allocated a P2-million fund for the development of irrigation canals in Tres Cruses, Tanza and Naic municipalities and some other areas in the province.

The OPA personnel said fruit-bearing trees and vegetable seeds are also being distributed for the planting season in the province's seven districts

In capital Imus, City Agriculturist Sixto M. Arandia said his office has been monitoring the agricultural soils and its produce now and then.

"We still have a good climate, it still rains from time to time but just the same we have to be prepared," said Arandia.

Lowland Imus has 1,071.63 hectares of agricultural lands which is one-fifth of the city's total 5,314.60 land area. The city's produce include rice, mangoes and vegetables.

Councilor Raymond Arguelles said that the preparations and measures for the spell are being tackled by the city administration and the Sangguniang Panlungsod (City Council).

"We are discussing preparations and actions with the City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office and other concerned agencies," Arguelles told the *Manila Bulletin*.



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Farmers seek use of P1-B DA emergency funds

SAN FERNANDO,

Pampanga – Citing projections that 85 percent of the country will be affected by the dry spell, farmers have urged Malacañang to provide them immediate support by tapping the quick response fund of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

“Immediate assistance to farmers through production subsidies can be sourced from the quick response fund of the Department of Agriculture and the National Irrigation Administration worth P1 billion,” said Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas secretary-general Antonio Flores.

“Farmers demand strong state intervention to address the effects of El Niño,” Flores

By DING CERVANTES

added, noting that almost 100,000 farmers have been affected by the drought.

DA records show that damage to agriculture due to the dry spell in the past two months reached P5.32 billion and affected 237,000 hectares of agricultural lands. Production loss was estimated at 358,800 metric tons of rice, corn and high value crops.

State of calamity

A state of calamity has been declared in the provinces of Bukidnon, North Cotabato, Davao del Sur, Davao Occidental, Maguindanao and Guimaras as well as the cities of Butuan, Zamboanga, and General Santos.

“Almost the entire Mindanao is affected by drought,” Flores said.

He said the dry spell also continues to worsen in Apayao, Bataan, Benguet, Bulacan, Pampanga, Tarlac, Zambales, Ilocos Norte, Rizal, La Union, Sarangani, Sultan Kudarat and South Cotabato.

“This worsening El Niño ...since last year is devastating the agriculture sector and the livelihood of farmers. The DA should do more than just raffling off farming equipment, facilities and inputs. It should immediately provide production and calamity subsidies to farmers,” Flores said.

Not enough

He said Task Force El Niño

fell short of addressing the effects of the dry spell on farmers.

The government earmarked P19.2 billion to mitigate the effects of drought from the last quarter of 2015 to the first half of this year.

The El Niño mitigation measures are focused on production support and water management to maximize production in non threatened areas and save vulnerable areas through crop shifting.

Flores said the initiatives of the government are not enough.

“The effects of drought continue to reel and wring dry millions of farmers,” he said.

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'People power' sought for leaders' action on climate change

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VICE

By ALEXIS ROMERO

Former US vice president and environment activist Al Gore yesterday urged Filipinos to use "people power" to convince leaders to act on climate change and to counter the influence of industries opposed to the phasing out of coal.

Gore said groups advocating climate action should organize themselves and use technology like social media to spread their message and express their concerns.

"People in social media can serve as counterbalance (to the coal lobbyists). I believe it's a revolution that can dramatically increase people power," he said during the Climate Reality Leadership Corps training in Pasay City.

There have been calls to phase out coal and promote the use of the environment-friendly renewable energy, but these are being opposed by industries.

Coal-fired power plants emit carbon, which has been linked to rising global temperatures, climate change, rising sea levels and extreme weather conditions.

*While the Philippines is considered one of the most vulnerable to disasters, it remains largely dependent on coal for its energy needs.

Coal cornered about 29 percent of the Philippines' energy mix in 2014. Oil accounted for 23 percent while hydroelectric and natural gas constituted 18 percent and 14 percent, respectively. Geothermal cornered 10 percent of the mix while waste heat accounted for four percent. Solar, wind and biomass only comprised two percent.

The Aquino government defended the construction of new coal-fired plants in the country, saying high costs and limited technology impede the harnessing of clean energy.

Gore stressed that people who care about the environment should go beyond posting online comments, and encouraged participants of the training to arm themselves with knowledge about climate.

He said someone with political will "should be in the streets knocking on doors, organizing others to create a powerful political counterweight."

Antonio La Viña, dean of the Ateneo School of Government and a member of the Philippine delegation to the Paris climate talks, agreed that the climate issue is something that should be brought to the streets.

"We cannot underestimate the power of the coal lobby but getting a lot of people to advocate this in the national and local level will make a difference that change will happen," he said.

"It's not a fight that can be won in the inner circles or inner rooms of Malacañang or Congress. It has to be won in the streets. It has to be won in the plant sites and spill over to Congress, the executive branch and even to the judiciary," he added.

ADB to give Climate Change fund

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is ready to provide funds to support the Philippines' efforts to address the impact of climate change as well as its transition towards greater use of renewable energy.

Preety Bhandari, director of ADB's Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department, said the bank can provide not just loans but also grants through financial mechanisms like the Green Climate Fund.

"The ADB and the Philippines can partner on future projects. The Philippines should specifically ask us at ADB for funding for climate investments in order for us to prioritize these," Bhandari said yesterday during a panel discussion at the Climate Reality Leadership Corps training.

The ADB previously announced that it would double its annual climate financing to \$6 billion by 2020 from the current \$3 billion to enable countries to cope with the effects of climate change. — With Rhodina Villanueva

PHL a step closer to fulfilling climate-change commitments

BY LENIE LECTURA

SOLAR Philippines on Wednesday formally switched on its 63.3-megawatt (MW) solar-power facility in Calatagan, Batangas, bringing the Philippines one step closer to meeting its commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and fulfilling the dream of a low-carbon economy.

Developed, financed and constructed by Solar Philippines, the Calatagan solar farm is the largest to be completed in Luzon. It comprises over 200,000 solar panels on a 160-hectare property, and supplies enough power for the entire western Batangas.

Over three decades, it will offset over one million tons of carbon dioxide, equivalent to planting over

80 MW

Solar-power projects which Solar Philippines has completed to date. The firm aims to make the Philippines a global leader in solar power

five million trees. During construction, it employed 2,500 workers, and will continue to employ at least 100 people over 30 years, the company said.

President Aquino, who inaugurated the solar facility, highlighted the global significance of the company's efforts, stating that "through projects like these, we are proving to the world that even developing countries, such as ours, can do their share in combating climate change."

In 2016 the Philippines has become the largest solar market in Southeast Asia and one of the largest among emerging markets worldwide. "Solar has just begun to realize its potential. It will soon not only be cleaner, but cheaper and more reliable than coal, and in a matter of years, supply the majority of our country's energy needs," Mr. Aquino said.

Solar Philippines CEO Leandro Leviste said that the Calatagan solar farm is the first to be developed, financed and constructed entirely by local companies.

The Calatagan solar farm was one of the first among dozens of

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BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

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PHL a step closer to fulfilling
climate-change commitments

solar projects completed this year, and began operations weeks before the Department of Energy's (DOE) March 15 feed-in-tariff deadline.

This program is part of the Renewable Energy law, which, after years of inactivity, was finally implemented under the Aquino administration.

The rise of solar power in the Philippines is a touchstone of the government's environmental legacy. At the start of the Aquino administration, the country's installed solar capacity was under 2 MW. This month, it has exceeded the 500-MW target set by the DOE. Talks have begun for an expanded installation target in light of these unprecedented investments in solar power.

Mr. Aquino's last inauguration of a solar project was the 1.5-MW SM North Edsa Solar Carpark in 2014, also developed by Solar Philippines. The company will soon begin construction on its next projects in Mindanao and Luzon, and aims to complete 500 MW by 2017.

Solar Philippines has completed 80 MW of solar-power projects to date. It aims to make the Philippines a global leader in solar power.

The Manila Times

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

#Eleksyon2016: Climate change and *Matuwid na Daan*

EACH candidate for president is talking about development and change. From those big concepts, they will reveal that what they mean by development is infrastructure and investments, toward job creation and poverty alleviation.

None of them, though, are talking about the construction of roads and better public transport as connected to air pollution. None of them are talking about urban development as interwoven with reducing our carbon footprint.

Not even Mar Roxas, who had tried and failed to deal properly and swiftly with the needs of Samar and Leyte post-Haiyan, has spoken of climate change as critical to his presidential platform. All he speaks of as "achievements" are disaster risk reduction and management programs that still depend on the local government units as first line of defense.

That just does not make sense when we all know now, given Haiyan, that in a time of disaster, these LGU officials will most probably be victims themselves. That does not make sense when you consider that a natural disaster is always a national tragedy, one that affects us all, and which the national government should take responsibility for.

Then again, part of *matuwid-na-daan's* skill set is knowing how to evade criticism by pointing a finger at others. Never mind that often it is pointing a finger at precisely those who were victimized by government neglect.

Spinning climate change

Another skill of this government is to spin *kapalakan* and get media and social media on its side. This is actually what happened last year, when we heard government celebrating its involvement in COP21 or the Climate Change Conference in Paris. The Philippines had sub-



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mitted its "Intended Nationally Determined Contributions" with 194 other countries, where each country outlined its program for reducing carbon emissions.

In a National Statement (15 Nov 2015) before going to Paris, the President though spun our participation: "Let me point out, however, that despite our fiscal limitations, and despite the fact that we have one of the smallest carbon footprints in the world, the Philippines continues to pursue vital reforms to address climate change." He then went on to talk about a "massive re-greening program" and the "intensification of the anti-illegal logging campaign" like we don't experience floods and landslides in this country, and took pride in "allotting 5% of the total budget for climate change." The President also took pride in his government's INDC as it commits the country "to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions conditionally by 70 percent by 2030. We are ready to do our part, if other nations demonstrate support in terms of finance, technology development, and capacity building."

The President of course was nag-papabida – another *Matuwid-na-Daan* trait. In fact while he says the Philippines has one of the smallest carbon footprints in the world, he presents an irrelevant fact. According to the Global Footprint Network Report on the Philippines (2012): "The Philippines has been in ecological deficit since the mid-1960s, using more capacity to produce renewable resources and absorb CO2 emissions than is available domestically, and the size of that deficit has

been increasing ever since. By 2008, residents of the Philippines were using more than twice the biological capacity of the country."

So see, the first step in finding a President who cares about the environment and commits to the reduction of climate change? Find a President who will not deny that there is a problem.

Climate change as critical issue

Because already information is skewed in favor of forgetting that we even have a problem at all. When has it happened that climate change and environmental degradation appear as headlines in our papers? When was the last time you watched a real, honest-to-goodness assessment of what we are doing wrong as nation, and how we are making life in this country worse by the day?

In fact, our daily struggles in nation are bound to climate change and our ecological footprint. It is in the celebration of building infrastructure that cuts down mountains instead of working around these. It is the encouragement of investments such as condominiums and malls, which means cutting down trees and cementing over drainage systems, which means disregarding the various crises we face from pollution (noise, air, water) to congestion, from the lack of a waste disposal system to heavy traffic, to the lack of efficient and safe and green public transport.

But media do not want to talk about it, and certainly our politicians would rather not even discuss it. And yet we are on crisis mode when it comes to climate change, and you only need to keep track of the news to find that much of it is about precisely what we would rather not talk about.

The crazy psychotic weather, the threat of floods in the beginning of summer, the emergency situation of drought in provinces, the construc-

tion over every piece of land – all these are proof of climate change. The "legal" logging that "development" means, the violence being wreaked upon the lives of our indigenous peoples for their ancestral lands to be turned into mining and plantation sites, pollution of our waters due to mining and factories – all these make the problem of climate change worse.

COP21 and coal-fired power plants

We have let *Matuwid-na-Daan* go away with murdering precisely what it celebrated as its participation in COP21. After being a part of the smaller group of countries that are considered "most vulnerable," the government confirmed that it has approved 23 coal-fired power plant projects in various provinces, though even as scientists have said that "coal emits more greenhouse gas than any other fossil fuel." (Climate Action website, 23 Dec 2015)

This, while a Southeast Asian country like Vietnam has committed to turning its back on coal plants, and a country like Laos, that is not even part of the most vulnerable countries, does not have a detailed plan to affect fundamental change that would dramatically lessen its carbon footprint.

What does the Philippines have? A *Matuwid-na-Daan* government that makes promises it does not even plan to keep.

It is beyond me why there is a candidate who is shamelessly running on this same platform of government, with the same program, and ultimately, the same kind of ignorance with regards to climate change and the environment.

Thank you to Andrea Teran for pointing this article in the direction of COP21 and the crisis of government commitment to coal-fired power plants. Also still based on stuartstuart.com's environment series.

DEFINING THE NEWS**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

New biotech rules boost agri prospects

FILIPINO farmers can now heave a sigh of relief. Government agencies have finally approved a joint department circular that es-

entially allows the propagation of genetically modified crops in the Philippines in compliance with a Supreme Court decision late last year.

The circular highlights the growing importance of GM crops to overall agricultural production and their impact on the lives of ordinary farmers. The agriculture sector contributes roughly 10 percent to the country's gross domestic product but accounts for roughly 30 percent of the total employed labor force. This means 30 percent of the labor force has to share in only 10 percent of the country's GDP—an indication of low productivity in agriculture.

Low agricultural productivity compounds the poverty problem in the Philippines. An estimated 70 percent of the poor live in rural areas, and about 66 percent are in agriculture. Reducing the poverty incidence in the Philippines, thus, is effective only if farmers' income is increased.

The joint department circular relieves the anxiety of farmers, livestock and the feed milling industries and prevents a food supply crisis. The high court earlier ordered a new set of rules on genetically modified organisms and revoked previous regulations in December 2015.

Government agencies led by the Departments of Science and Technology, Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources, Health, and Interior and Local Government moved swiftly to draw up the new rules. They held five public consultations in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, with all the stakeholders comprised of farmers groups, the scientific community and the environment and civil society groups involved in the discussions.

The new circular enhanced the regulations on risk assessment by involving local governments, on top of a thorough review by concerned government agencies.

The technical working group led by the DoST made sure that the concerns raised by the Supreme Court have been addressed. The new rules tightened environmental scrutiny before biosafety permits are issued, addressing one of the loopholes the Supreme Court cited when it voided the old rules, which were in place since 2002.

The Department of Agriculture, as the lead agency, will also require more documentation from suppliers of GM products.

It is also tasked to form the scientific and technical review panel comprised of a pool of non-DA scientists with expertise in the evaluation of the potential risks of regulated articles to the environment and human health.

RAY S. ENYANNO



The JDC assures the public that biotechnology for agriculture will put to good use. Biotechnology gave hope to the rural areas, especially in strife-torn Mindanao. Former Moro Islamic Liberation Front soldiers gave an account of their life as farmers and the benefits of sowing GM crops.

Life-changing

Maitum S. Salendab, 27, was a former defender of the land in a remote town of Datu Paglas in Maguindanao. He said he was so used to holding a gun and rifle he did not know what else to do. He was unemployed until he tried and discovered to do corn farming at the very land he was assigned to protect.

"*Dati hawak ko lang baril, pero nang matuto ako magtanim ng maun-unti-unti kong natutunan na mas mabuti pala ito,*" Maitum says. He adds with the initial P10,000 he earned farming biotech corn, he was able to finish high school, build a home and run a small sari-sari store for his family. He still wants to continue planting biotech corn.

From South Cotabato, **Mhads Mamantal** said he was able to get back the land he mortgaged with his earnings from planting biotech corn because for the first time he had more than enough, unlike before when he was using the ordinary corn seeds.

Rice farmer **Luisito delos Santos** of Cabioa, Nueva Ecija was inspired by his brother, Florencio, who planted SL-18H in last year's dry season. Florencio harvested 280 cavans over a 1.8-hectare land at 70 kilos per cavan. The farmer effectively yielded 10.89 metric tons per hectare, about three times the country's national average yield of three to four MT per hectare.

They are just some of direct beneficiaries of biotech corn and hybrid rice. Those willing to tap the biotechnology for rice and corn in order to improve their lives were seldom asked how their lives were changed for the better.

The promise of continuing better yields and higher farmer's income is now big for Maitum and other biotech corn farmers with the signing of the JDC.

The Philippines has been a trailblazer in biotechnology and scientific research in Asia since the International Rice Research Institute held its headquarters in the province of Laguna 56 years ago. Along with the scientific community in adjacent University of the Philippines Los Baños, IRRI spearheaded biotech research in Asia involving the development of better crop varieties attuned to the varying needs of each country.

With the approval and implementation of the new biotech regulations, scientists and farmers now look forward to the continuation of their work, including the research on golden rice, delayed ripening papaya and Bt eggplant.

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-Al Gore urges fight vs coal

By Tarra Quismundo

FORMER US Vice President and global climate action advocate Al Gore yesterday urged the public to act as a "counterweight" to governments and big businesses that continue to use coal-fired plants and other polluting sources of energy.

On the third and final day of the Climate Reality Leadership Corps training in Manila, Gore urged some 750 climate warriors from 33 countries to "summon the political will to be in the streets, knock on doors and organize others to build a counterweight to business."

He cited the coal lobby as an example of moneyed industry lobbyists who resist the need for a faster and sustained transition to renewable energy sources.

The Philippines still has 25 coal-fired power plant projects at various levels of construction and operation. Only two percent of the country's energy comes from zero-emission sources such as solar and wind power, and biomass, according to Gore.

"Because of political forces... there must be a counterweight from the people who care," Gore said at a panel discussion with Philippine officials on climate policy reform yesterday morning.

"The system can be made to work if and only if the people in this room decide to make a difference, find ways to connect with one another and use strength in numbers," he said.

Gore, chair of the Climate Reality Project which trains advocates around the world to spread the moral imperative of action to mitigate climate change, also cited the power of social media and diligent leg work to spur response to the climate crisis.

Gore and his organization provided climate warriors data, including graphs, photos and other materials, which they could use in giving presentations on the present climate reality—thawing glaciers, warming seas, extreme summers, shorter and warmer winters—to encourage a wider response.

Gore cited the example of his home country, the United States, where community organizations were able to muster mass action against the politically influential coal lobby. "Today, coal is dead in the United States as an energy resource, as solar and wind power have taken over each accounting for a third of the energy supply," he said.

Gore cited the Philippines as a nation that could do more to clear hindrances to effective mitigation efforts, again noting the country's heavy reliance on



GORE: "There must be a counterweight from people who care."

coal-fed power plants.

Tony La Viña, dean of the Ateneo School of Government who was the country's lead negotiator in previous climate change negotiations, called on government to impose a ceiling on the country's coal reliance, citing the dominance of coal-fired power plants as one such roadblock.

"For me, the first clear policy that government needs to resolve is a cap on coal," said La Viña, receiving cheers from the audience.

"There should be a new energy mix. We should use a wider

range of renewable energy sources," he said.

Climate Change Commissioner Emmanuel de Guzman said the government is aware, and has taken steps toward reform.

"We are looking at options for addressing these plants, because they're dirty and they're the traditional fuel-based power," De Guzman said.

His commission is conducting a review of laws related to the country's energy use, with the goal of proposing by June a new legislative reform initiative or an executive order.

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Shift to renewable energy: Gore

CLIMATE change activist and former U.S. Vice President Al Gore has urged the Philippines government to end its dependence to polluting coal-fired power stations, particularly given the rapidly dropping prices of renewable energy.

Gore, founder of the non-profit Climate Reality Project, said in a speech to more than 700 climate action leaders being trained in Manila that while the Philippines is making significant efforts to deal with climate impacts it also needs to build a new energy infrastructure.

"We have the solutions at hand to address climate change. Shift to renewable energy," Gore urged Monday. "The age of renewable energy is beginning."

While many countries are adopting more clean energy, the Philippines government last year approved the construction of 25 new coal-fired power plants, said Philippines Senator Loren Legarda.

"While more and more countries are shifting to renewable energy, we are still moving towards the use of coal," she said.

Gore said that the costs of producing energy from wind, solar power and geothermal energy are all coming down, and that in a growing number of rural communities around the world renewable energy is as widely used as traditional power sources.

Changing energy systems is crucial because climate impacts are putting lives in danger as a result of fiercer typhoons, longer droughts, more flooding and rising seas, he said.

The former vice president, after arriving in the Philippines, visited Tacloban City, one of the areas worst hit by Typhoon Haiyan, and talked to survivors. More than 6,000 people died in the 2013 typhoon, and more than 4 million were left homeless.

"Climate change is causing massive disruption, conflict, hunger, infrastructure destruction and is affecting the global economy. It is also threatening political stability in many regions. That's why we need to act and find solutions that work," Gore said.

He said moving away from the use of coal would improve the energy security of the Philippines in the future.

According to Legarda, the Philippines needs another 13,000 megawatts of power generating capacity by 2030, with

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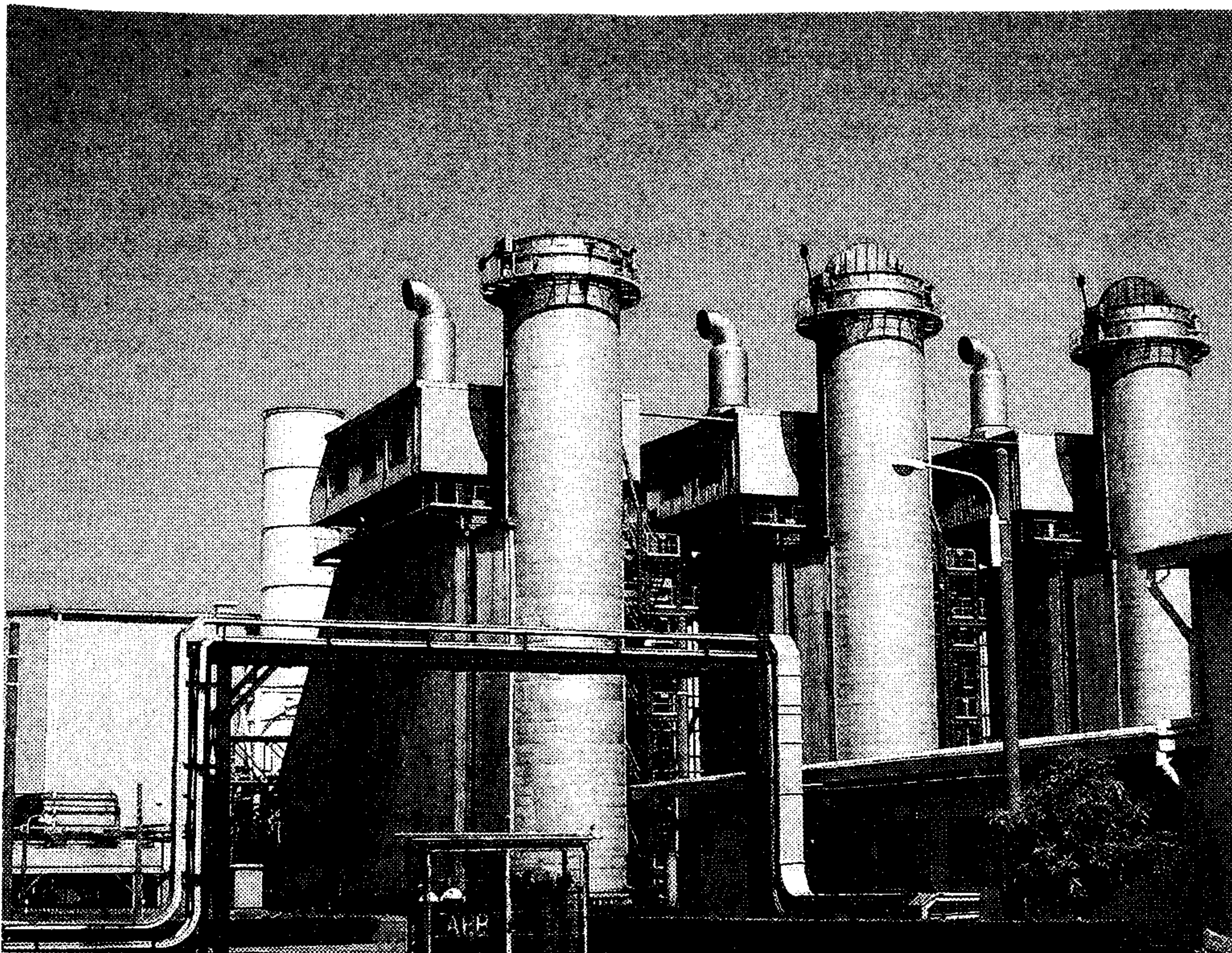
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Shift to renewable energy: Gore



Consumption of coal by the Philippines rose 27 percent between 2012 and 2014. The country needs another 13,000 megawatts of power generating capacity by 2030, with about 8,500 of those expected to come from coal.

about 8,500 of those expected to come from coal.

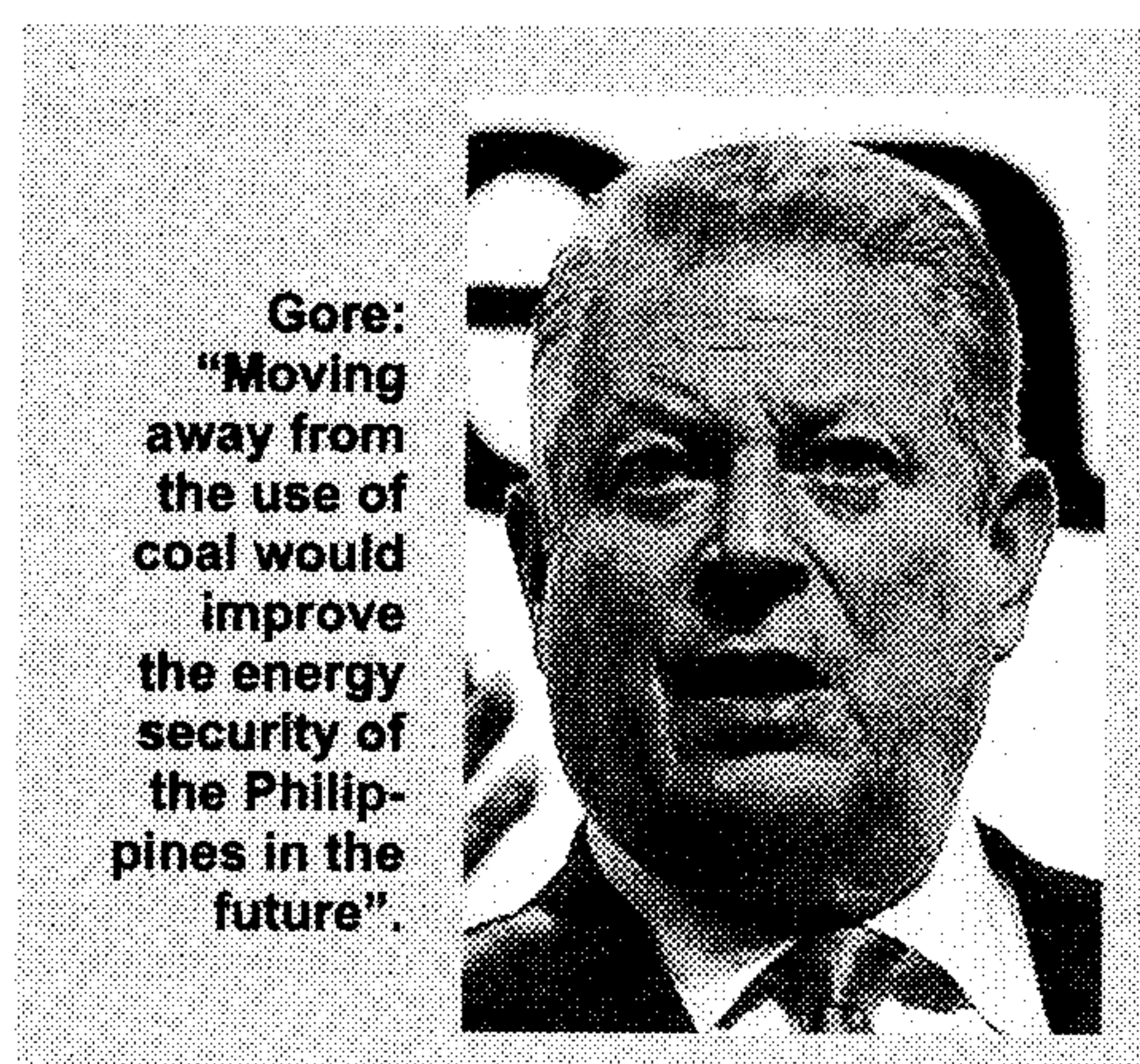
Consumption of coal by the Philippines rose 27 percent between 2012 and 2014, she said.

Legarda said she would push for a ban on the construction of new coal-fired power plants in the country and introduce an energy-efficiency bill as part of efforts to reduce climate-changing emissions in the Philippines.

In 2014, about 74 percent of the Philippines' electricity came from fossil fuels, said Kenneth Berlin, president of the Climate Reality Project, which aims to spur action on climate change.

That year, geothermal and hydropower accounted for about 13 percent and 12 percent of electrical production, respectively, with solar, wind and biomass providing only one percent.

Berlin said some of the barriers to expanding use of renewable energy in the Philippines include lengthy and complicated regulatory, permitting, and construction procedures; complex and uncertain project financing conditions



such as limits to foreign investment and ownership; and infrastructure and grid constraints.

"We have to bear in mind that increasingly renewable energy is cheaper, cleaner, and more reliable than fossil fuels. Transition to a clean energy economy will benefit the country and create jobs. We must remove barriers to the deployment of renewable energy," Berlin said. -Reuters

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

From The Stands

By DOMINI M. TORREVILLAS

**Saving the Earth,
stopping use of coal**



The Climate Reality Leadership Corps training led by former US Vice President Al Gore in Manila, drew hundreds of climate change activists. The event hoped to inform community leaders on limiting the earth's warming and allowing communities to adapt to climatic changes that are already taking place.

At the three-day forum's opening, Sen. Loren Legarda, UNISDR (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction) Global Champion for Resilience spoke, about the road to the "decarbonization" of the Philippines.

"We are in the face of a climate crisis," she said. "The Philippines' geographical location makes it prone to natural hazards, and climate change is making it worse."

There is injustice, she said in that the Philippines is a minor emitter of greenhouse gases (GHG) with only 0.3 percent of global emissions, but it is among the most vulnerable to climate change impacts. Ketsana or Ondoy in 2009, Haiyan or Yolanda in 2013 are just a few examples.

In last year's climate change negotiations in Paris, the Philippines, as chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, led the call to limit warming to 1.5°C to be able to survive.

The senator said governments conveyed the message that they are determined to act to achieve the goal of limiting the world's rise in average temperature to "well below 2 degrees Celsius above

pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius."

While the 2015 Paris Agreement is a landmark agreement in this history of humankind, its aspirations will not happen on its own, she said.

Below are the senator's thoughts:

Bending the global warming curve to 1.5°C is a moral imperative, because it means saving the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people; it means upholding the human rights of the poor and vulnerable; it means ensuring the integrity of our ecosystems.

Global warming has already breached the 1°C level with unprecedented warming in the past months. We have already borne countless tragedies and losses from recurring impacts of extreme weather events under a 1°C global warming. How much more with higher temperatures?

In fact, the 2°C warming above pre-industrial levels is no longer a prognosis but a reality, she said. Early this month, unofficial data show that average temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere likely exceeded 2°C above normal even only for a few hours.

In taking action, however, we face daunting challenges that confront us.

The sustainable development-energy nexus requires an urgent examination of how we can tap on the power of innovation and new technologies to provide for the energy we need in a sustainable and inclusive manner.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

*Saving the Earth,
stopping use of local*

Energy production accounts for two-thirds of the world's GHG emissions. The ADB projects that even by the year 2035, the majority of the region's primary energy demand will still come from fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas.

Senator Legarda then pointed to the use of coal as a great contributor to the pollution of the earth's atmosphere. The World Energy Outlook Special Report 2015 cited that over the past two-and-a-half decades, global carbon dioxide emissions increased by more than 50 percent. Since 2000, the share of coal has increased from 38 percent to 44 percent of energy-related carbon dioxide emissions. She said:

The annual carbon dioxide emissions of the power generation sector increased by an average of 1.2 percent in the last decade of the 20th century. It has turned for the worst between 2000 and 2014, when the average annual rate of increase accelerated to 2.3 percent.

As so-called development loomed – with massive volumes of steel and cement being produced to build cities and industries – so did carbon dioxide emissions double from 1990 to today.

Clearly, the development we saw these past decades did not deliver us from the great economic divide that separates us from the more affluent countries. It has only drawn us closer to the menacing uncertainties of climate change.

By the year 2030, the Philippines would need an additional 13,167 megawatts of power capacity, more than half of which is expected to be generated from coal-fired power plants. In fact, 25 coal-fired power plants that have been granted Environmental Compliance Certificates are now either operational or under construction.

Philippine consumption of coal has been on the upswing, which increased by 27 percent between 2012 and 2014.

If global projections point to a decline in the share of coal in power generation, why is the Philippines taking the opposite track?

The explanation given is anchored on simplistic assumptions – coal-fired power plants are the country's dominant power technology because economically, they are widely available and easy to build.

But, easy and affordable defy durable solutions.

"On the surface, one might be tempted to accept that this country's continued struggle to provide electricity to four million households eclipses the seemingly mundane discussions of climate change. This may be so until one experiences its catastrophic impacts, with villages being washed away and thousands of young lives cut short by tsunamis."

What the "easy and affordable" explanation fails to consider is the fact that there are external costs to coal, which, if considered, would render coal-fired power plants as one of the most expensive forms of power generation. Coal-fired power plants' impacts on health, air quality, and climate, and life – above anything else – are more vital considerations.

There is a dearth of studies on the health impacts of pollution from coal-fired power plants in the Philippines, but the cases studied point to the unequivocal truth – coal-fired power plants have generated health concerns in host communities.

Before coal can be used in power plants, they must first be mined, washed, and transported. This process alone, without a single watt of electricity generated yet, already produces pollution.

Coal is burned to generate electricity and its by-product, in the form of ash, is either recycled into cement or construction products, stored, or disposed in

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**Earth Hour 2016 sinuportahan
ni Councilor Lazatin**

ANGELES CITY, Pampanga – Hinikayat ni Angeles City Councilor Carmelo "Pogi" Lazatin Jr. ang mga residente na makilahok sa Earth Hour 2016 sa Sabado, Marso 19 ng gabi.

"Inaanyayahan ko po kayo na sama-sama po tayong makiisa sa Earth Hour sa pamamagitan ng pagpatay ng ating mga ilaw sa loob ng isang oras, mula alas-8:30 hanggang alas-9:30 ng gabi," pahayag ni Councilor Lazatin.

Taun-taong idinaraos ang Earth Hour sa buong mundo na inorganisa ng World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) kung saan hinihikayat ang mga tao na nasa mga bahay at establisamento na magpatay ng kanilang ilaw sa loob ng isang oras para maka-save ng enerhiya. "There is a common misconception that the Earth Hour is merely a 'lights off' project and does not really impact the environment, the event will advocate for greater collective consciousness to start taking care of the environment," paliwanag ni Lazatin.

"Ang Earth Hour ang nagpapakita na kahit ang maliliit na efforts ay nagkakaroon ng malaking epekto kung maraming tao ang makikiisa rito. Napakalaking enerhiya na po ang matitipid natin dito laho na kung ang mga komunidad sa buong mundo ay makikiisa para i-observe ang Earth Hour," dagdag pa ni Lazatin.

Si Lazatin na kumakandidato sa pangalawang termino ay nagsulong ng Ordinance 364 (Plastic Bag and Styrofoam Ordinance of Angeles City) para protektahan ang mga karapatan ng tao sa kanilang kalusugan sa plastic waste. **Gary Bernardo**



Hinihikayat nina Angeles City Councilor Carmelo "Pogi" Lazatin, Councilor aspirants Tintin Dungca, Carlo Maniago, at Rudy Simeon ang mga tindera sa San Nicolas Public Market na makiisa sa Earth Hour 2016 sa Sabado ng gabi (Marso 19). **Gary Bernardo**

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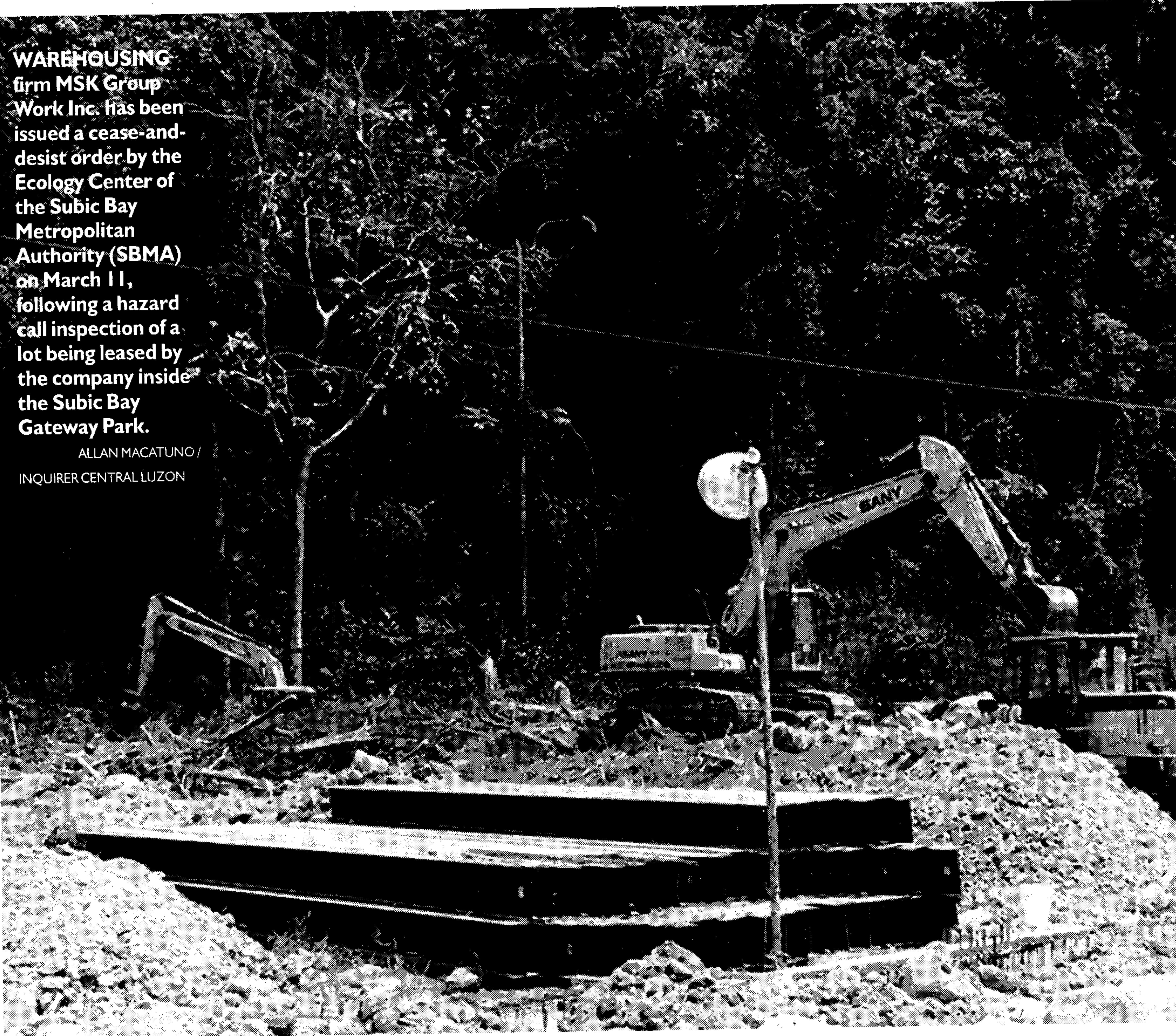
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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WAREHOUSING
firm MSK Group
Work Inc. has been
issued a cease-and-
desist order by the
Ecology Center of
the Subic Bay
Metropolitan
Authority (SBMA)
on March 11,
following a hazard
call inspection of a
lot being leased by
the company inside
the Subic Bay
Gateway Park.

ALLAN MACATUNO /
INQUIRER CENTRAL LUZON



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

SBMA stops tree-cutting by Taiwan firm in free port

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By Allan Macatuno
Inquirer Central Luzon

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—The Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) has stopped a Taiwanese company operating inside this free port from cutting trees for failing to secure an environmental clearance.

Warehousing firm MSK Group Work Inc. was issued a cease-and-desist order (CDO) by SBMA's Ecology Center on March 11, following a hazard call inspection on a lot being leased by the company inside

the Subic Bay Gateway Park.

Lawyer Ruel John Kabigting, Ecology Center officer in charge, has notified officials of the Taiwanese firm about its violations, which included cutting 50 trees and proceeding with construction without obtaining environmental permits.

Addressed to Kelly Uy, MSK general manager, the cease order also required the firm to replace the fallen trees with 1,752 saplings "due to the gravity of the violation."

Kabigting has also called for a technical compliance confer-

ence to discuss the company's violations.

"The [conference] will allow [MSK] to explain the circumstances of the violation and [to] present a proposal to remedy the deficiency and assure future compliance," Kabigting told Uy in the letter.

Kabigting also warned the firm that SBMA would suspend or cancel the company's permit to operate if it does not comply with conditions set by the agency.

SBMA Chair Roberto Garcia said MSK has been clearing its

leased area to build a warehouse but has failed to obtain necessary permits from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

"The CDO will remain effective until the company complies with all the requirements set in the order and pays all penalties or fines associated with the violations," Garcia said.

The replanting program, he said, is part of the sanctions that the DENR imposes on firms responsible for the illegal cutting of trees.

Garcia also said that MSK

would be liable for possible landslides due to a weakened slope in the area that had been attributed to the firm's construction work.

"The company should also have slope protection project in that area," he said.

He said MSK officials have already apologized about the company's violations.

"I've met with some of the company's officials and they told me that they were sorry about what they did. But I told them that they should cease operation for now," he said.

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Malaya

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

Cap on coal use proposed

BY PAUL ICAMINA

THE Philippines should put a cap on using coal to produce electricity, one of the country's prominent clean air advocates said yesterday.

The country cannot afford to put more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere before 2030 when it is committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 70 percent, said Antonio La Viña, Dean of the Ateneo School of Government.

The pledge was made by the Philippines during the Paris climate change conference last December. One way to prevent global warming is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, of which coal is a major contributor.

The roadblocks to policy changes "are real," La Viña told a conference organized by the Climate Reality Project, a global clean energy initiative founded and chaired by Nobel Laureate Al Gore. The first policy change "is to put a cap on coal," said La Viña.

"We cannot underestimate the power of the coal lobby," said La Viña. "This is not a fight in the inner circles of Malacanang or Congress, it has to be won on the streets, in coal plant sites", he said. Gore acknowledged the analysis made by a study led by La Viña that recommends the country should veer away from an energy mix that is top heavy on coal.

The reason: the Philippines would already exceed the baseload energy requirement for 2030.

The paper recommended a transition of energy policy away from what it called "technology neutrality" and an "unrestrained free market" approach. Instead, it advocated for a more strategic approach where the Philippines is clear about its priorities as a growing economy.

The Department of Energy estimates about 13,167 Megawatts of additional power capacity will be needed by 2030, of which 8,548 MW are to be generated from baseload power plants.

The study observed that coal-fired power plants are seemingly poised to secure and exceed the country's baseload energy requirements.

The committed and indicative coal-fired power plants between 2012 and 2030 have the potential to deliver rated capacity of 11,992 MW, assuming that all are completed and built. This is more than enough to supply the whole country's additional energy needs of 13,167 MW, of which 11,400 MW is open for private investments, the study observed.

It will exceed baseload capacity needs of 8,400 MW as indicated in the 2012-2030 Philippine Energy Plan targets, the study concluded.

Without factoring in the environmental and other consequences of using coal, it still remains the cheapest technology from a purely economic perspective.

"Coal as a source of energy is perceived to have more mature and well-entrenched institutional arrangements to suit its needs," the Ateneo study said. "A strong lobby for coal is likewise said to further support its continued existence."

THE DISCOVERY OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Solar plant seen to save 13,000MT of carbon emissions

MARIVELES, Bataan – The newly inaugurated Citicore Solar power plant in Barangay Alas Asin will save the country 13,000 metric tons in carbon emissions per year.

This was revealed to Bataan Governor Abet S. Garcia by Manolo T. Candelaria, executive vice president of Citicore, during the official inauguration of the solar power plant here that can produce 18 megawatts.

"The facility is made up of over 68,500 photovoltaic modules. It is expected to power 22,000 homes connected to the Luzon grid. Construction was started in October 2015 by Megawide Construction Corporation.

"The plant is expected to help avoid 13,000 metric tons of carbon emissions per year, equivalent to planting 600,000 trees over the life of the facility. Project funding was secured through Land Bank of the Philippines with Primeiro Partners as financial consultants," said Candelaria in his speech.

"The almost simultaneous completion of these two power plants shows that Citicore Power is aggressive and serious in completing its renewable energy portfolio. We are committed to providing energy to the Filipino people with little or no impact to the environment," he added. (Mar T. Supnad)

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P-Noy inaugurates Batangas solar farm

By Riza T. Olchondra
and Nikko Dizon

PRESIDENT Aquino yesterday inaugurated the 63.3-megawatt Calatagan Solar Farm, the biggest solar farm in Luzon that has claims to be able to power the noontime energy needs of western Batangas.

Solar Philippines CEO Leandro Leviste said the Calatagan Solar Farm is one of the first of dozens of solar projects completed this year. It began operations just weeks before the Department of Energy's (DOE) March 15, 2016 deadline for projects seeking eligibility for feed-in-tariff (FIT) incentives.

The FIT system is a scheme to allow accelerated development of renewable energy by offering incentives to renewable energy producers such as long-term contracts and higher prices for renewable electricity they supply to the grid.

The DOE has started checking on solar power projects and reviewing applications of companies that have applied for FIT. Companies wishing to qualify for FIT should have projects that are completed, switched on, and exporting power to the Luzon and Visayas grids on or before March 15, said DOE assistant secretary Mario Marasigan.

Right on time

The President inaugurated the project a day after visiting former US Vice President Al Gore called on the Philippines to end its dependence on coal. Gore warned that if such actions are not taken, rising sea levels caused by climate change may threaten 13.6 million Filipinos living in coastal areas.

Experts have said that the Philippines, because of its abundant sunlight, can become one of the world's first 100 percent renewable energy-powered economies.

At yesterday's inauguration, Mr. Aquino highlighted the global significance of projects such as the Calatagan Solar Farm. "Through projects like these, we are proving to the world that even developing countries such as ours can do their share in combating climate change," he said.

Leviste said the solar farm is among the largest to be completed in Luzon. It comprises over 200,000 panels on a 160-hectare property, and supplies enough power for the entire western Batangas. Over three decades, it will offset over 1 million tons of carbon dioxide, equivalent to planting over 5 million trees. During construction, it employed 2,500 workers, and will continue to employ at least 100 people over 30 years.

He said this is the first solar farm developed, financed, and constructed entirely by local companies. The project is being financed by Philippine Business Bank, Banco de Oro, Chinabank and Bank of Commerce, he said.

The company will soon begin construction on its next projects in Mindanao and Luzon, and aims to complete 500 megawatts by 2017, he said.

Promoting solar energy

Solar Philippines under Leviste, the 2-year-old son of Sen. Loren Legarda, also built the largest solar roof top at SM North Edsa which President Aquino also launched in November 2014.

Leviste was very lavish in his praise of the President at the event. He credited Mr. Aquino's renewable energy policies for leading the country to promote and utilize solar energy.

"Because of President Aquino's visionary leadership, we have crossed the point of no return in our country's shift away from fossil fuel. For many years, the conventional wisdom was that solar was only a marginal share of the energy mix," Leviste said in his speech.

In 2016, the Philippines has become the largest solar market in Southeast Asia and one of the largest among emerging markets worldwide, he said.

"Solar has just begun to realize its potential. It will soon not only be cleaner, but cheaper and more reliable than coal, and in a matter of years, supply the majority of our country's energy needs," he said.

Only a few days ago, Legarda had criticized the Aquino administration for allowing the construction of 25 coal-fired power plants in the country in the next decade.

The Manila Times

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

12.6M die each year due to unhealthy environments

UNITED NATIONS: An estimated 12.6 million people died as a result of living or working in an unhealthy environment in 2012, nearly one in four of total global deaths, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters here Tuesday.

"Environmental risk factors, such as air, water and soil pollution, chemical exposures, climate change, and ultraviolet radiation, contribute to more than 100 diseases and injuries," Dujarric said at a daily news briefing here, citing a new report from the World Health Organization (WHO).

"The report emphasizes cost-effective measures that countries can take to reverse the upward trend of environment-related disease and deaths. It is available online," he said.

The WHO report, entitled "Preventing disease through healthy environments: a global assessment of the burden of disease from environmental risk," revealed that since it was first published a decade ago, deaths due to noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), mostly attributable to air pollution, including exposure to second-hand tobacco

smoke, amount to as much as 8.2 million of these deaths.

"A healthy environment underpins a healthy population," said WHO's Director-General Margaret Chan in a press release. "If countries do not take actions to make environments where people live and work healthy, millions will continue to become ill and die too young."

At the same time, deaths from infectious diseases, such as diarrhea and malaria, often related to poor water, sanitation and waste management, have declined.

Increases in access to safe water and sanitation have been key contributors to this trend, alongside better access to immunization, insecticide-treated mosquito nets and essential medicines.

The report emphasizes cost-effective measures that countries can take to reverse the upward trend of environment-related disease and deaths. These include reducing the use of solid fuels for cooking and increasing access to low-carbon energy technologies.

PNA/XINHUA

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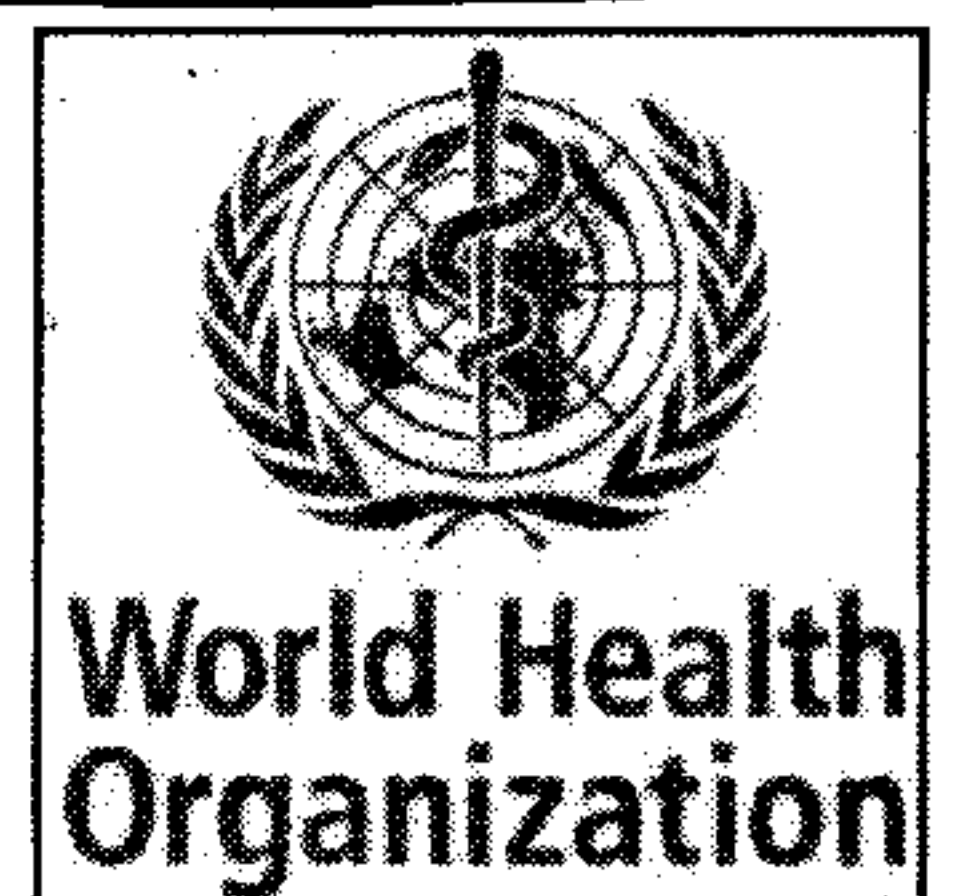
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

STUDY

Environment behind nearly quarter of global deaths — WHO



GENEVA, Switzerland (AFP) — One in four deaths worldwide are due to environmental factors like air, water, and soil pollution, as well as unsafe roads and workplace stress, the World Health Organization (WHO) said Tuesday.

An estimated 12.6 million people died in 2012 as a result of living and working in unhealthy environments, 23 percent of all deaths reported globally, according to the new study.

"If countries do not take actions to

make environments where people live and work healthy, millions will continue to become ill and die too young," warned WHO chief Margaret Chan in a statement.

The report defines environmental causes broadly, drawing links between a long line of environmental risk factors like pollution, chemical exposure, climate change and ultraviolet radiation, as well as access to firearms and more than 100 diseases and injuries.

As many as 8.2 million of the deaths

could be blamed on air pollution, including exposure to second-hand smoke, which is responsible for heart disease, cancers, and chronic respiratory disease, the report said.

Among the deaths attributed to environmental factors were 1.7 million caused by "unintentional injuries", including road accidents.

The report also counted 846,000 diarrheal disease deaths among environmental mortalities, adding that many were linked to pollution and unsafe

drinking water.

The WHO reported 246,000 deaths due to intentional injuries, including suicides, which it linked to the unsafe storage and access to firearms, as well as to pesticides — used in a full third of the world's suicides — among other factors.

The report found that most environmentally-linked deaths happened in Southeast Asia, which accounted for 3.8 million such deaths in 2012, followed by the Western Pacific region with 3.5 million.

The least affected region was the Americas, with 847,000 deaths blamed on environmental conditions.

Europe had 1.4 million environmentally-linked deaths while Africa reported 2.2 million.

The WHO said that better environmental management could prevent the deaths of 1.7 million children under five, who are especially prone to serious illnesses arising from respiratory infections and diarrhea.

"There's an urgent need for investment in strategies to reduce environmental risks in our cities, homes and workplaces," said Maria Neira, WHO's public health chief.

"Such investments can significantly reduce the rising worldwide burden of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, injuries and cancers, and lead to immediate savings in healthcare costs," she said.

The report is the second of its kind and follows an initial WHO study a decade ago.



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ACROSS THE COUNTRY

WWF to protect Tawi-Tawi mountain

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has launched a project that aims to protect Bud Bongao, Tawi-Tawi's most famous mountain.

Nur-Elnazeem Hadji, WWF-Philippines site coordinator, presented the objectives and expected output of the un-

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100K trees planted for Bhutanese prince

GAUHATI, India—Citizens in Bhutan are anxious to ensure the survival of groves of trees that have been planted across the Himalayan nation to honor the beloved king and queen's new baby boy. Many people in the Buddhist country stop during daily walks or drives to water some of the 108,000 saplings placed on hillsides and in valleys. In Buddhism, trees are considered divine for their role in providing and nourishing all life forms. "We are now nurturing the plants as if we are nurturing the little prince," said Dasho Karma Raydi, who is among those helping to care for the new trees.

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Farmers in Bali insure rice fields in defense against dry spell from El Niño

NUSA DUA, INDONESIA — Tourist taxi driver Nur-ul Aslam watches in hopeful silence as drops of rain begin to cloud his windscreen.

Last year at this time, he was farming rice on his two-hectare (ha) farm 40 kilometers north-east of Bali's airport. But, a long spell of dry weather, which has lasted since last July, dried up irrigation channels in his village of Tegal Mengkeb.

To survive, the 33-year-old walked away from his farm last December and began driving a taxi in Nusa Dua, a tourist hub with dozens of luxury resorts. He dreams of returning home.

"We need regular good showers, but there is mostly drizzle. Unless the *subaks* (water channels) are full again, I can't plant any crop," he said.

Mr. Aslam may have found a way to stay on the farm next year, however. He recently signed up for new government-backed crop insurance, one of 100 farmers to do so in Bali, where rice is grown on about 80,000 ha of land.

The Bali insurance program, launched last October, promises to pay farmers up to 6 million rupiah (\$480) for a crop failure caused by disasters such as drought, flooding, or pest attacks.

The premium is 180,000 rupiah (\$13) per hectare, but the state has agreed to pay 80% of the cost. That means a farmer like Mr. Aslam only has to come up with 36,000 rupiah, or about \$2/ha.

The program is part of a larger Indonesian crop insurance scheme introduced in 2012-2013 with financial support from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

In the first season of the program, 470 hectares of rice fields were insured in East Java and Sumatra. This year, the government has moved to include Bali and a few other provinces, though delays in the expansion have limited the number of farmers signed up.

"Our previous target this year was 11,000 ha of rice fields (insured), but only 4,000 ha can be insured due to limited time," said Ida Bagus Wisnuardhana, head of the Bali provincial Agriculture and Foodstuffs Affairs office.

Currently, the scheme targets only small-scale farmers growing rice, but the federal government hopes to bring in all 27 million farmers in Indonesia's 33 provinces by 2019, according to a paper published by Japan's Ministry of the Environment.

EL NIÑO AND DROUGHT

In Indonesia, the dry season runs from May to August. But Badan Meteorologi, Klimatologi dan Geofisika (BKMKG) — the local official weather mapping organization — says the island of Bali has seen "extreme" weather since the end of August.

The agency attributes the unusually hot weather to the El Niño phenomenon.

In November, the temperature in the area around Denpasar, Bali's

provincial capital, rose as high as 37 degrees Celsius above the average daily temperature of 31.4°C, said Nyoman Gede Wiryajaya of BKMKG.

Bali's provincial agricultural department says nearly 1,000 ha of farmland are suffering some degree of drought, which threatens the coming harvest. With crops drying, local media have already reported food shortages in several villages.

Buleleng, a north Bali district which has recorded crop failure on 160 ha, has been declared under "severe drought".

With no rice available, "we have been living off dried cassava for several weeks," said Palembang Kaka, a small-scale farmer from Buleleng who now works as a porter in Pasar Badung, Denpasar's largest community market.

Although globally, El Niño is expected to start weakening soon, meteorological service officials in Bali are advising farmers to brace for more dry weather.

Sutopo Purwo Nugroho of the National Disaster Management Agency predicted that "rainfall will be extremely low until the end of this year".

For Mr. Aslam, the prediction could mean another missed crop and another season at the wheel — unless his new insurance policy works.

"We will see how the insurance [money] is paid. I hope it is enough to recover my losses," he said. — **Reuters**