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Monday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

BusinessMirror

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A broader look at today's business

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

Officials report increasing Philippine Eagle population, nests in NorMin

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

AT least nine pairs of the Philippine Eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*) are breeding in Northern Mindanao's vast forest, officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said.

Officials of the DENR told the BUSINESSMIRROR in an interview that latest reports coming from the Philippine Eagle Foundation indicate an increasing population of the rare monkey-eating eagle in Northern Mindanao, which boasts of having a total of 10 protected areas (PAs) covered by the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act.

The Philippine Eagle Foundation is the DENR's conservation partner for the conservation of the rare Philippine Eagle, believed to be the largest bird of prey in the world that can only be found in the Philippines. The Philippine Eagle is considered "critically endangered."

According to Ruth Tawantawan, regional director of the DENR in Region 10, there are nine nesting sites in Northern Mindanao, all within the PAs in the region.

"We are proud because it only means that

our ecology remains healthy and intact. The Philippine Eagle is an ecosystem indicator," Tawantawan said. "If there is a Philippine Eagle in the area, it means there's enough wildlife to support its survival."

Officials of the DENR in Northern Mindanao consider these PAs as the region's "ecological treasure" that needs to be protected by the people.

Tawantawan said the DENR Region 10 Office is embarking on a project to build the region's wildlife database, starting with those in the region's PAs.

She said it is highly possible there are also other Philippine Eagles breeding or nesting outside the PAs in the region.

The PAs in Region 10 include five natural parks and four landscapes and seascapes, and one natural monument.

The natural parks are the Mount Kitanglad Range Natural Park, Mount Malindang Range Natural Park, Mount Balatukan Range Natural Park, Mount Inayawan Range Natural Park and the Mount Kalatungan Range Natural Park.

The landscapes and seascapes are Mimbisan, Bacolod-Kauswagan, Baliangao and the Initao-Libertad protected landscapes

and seascapes.

The Mount Timpoong-Hibok-Hibok Natural Monument is the only protected area in Northern Mindanao under the category of a natural monument.

According to Tawantawan, each of the PAs are protected against destructive human activities, including illegal logging and hunting for trophies or illegal wildlife trade.

"Since 2012 Northern Mindanao has been declared as free of illegal logging activities. We also have strict rules against hunting."

Marilou Clarete, chief conservation and development division of the DENR Region 10 Office, attributed the success of various conservation programs of the DENR in Northern Mindanao to the support and cooperation of various stakeholders led by the local government units (LGUs).

"Over the past several years, the number of nesting sites of the Philippine Eagle has been increasing," Clarete said. "It means that our environment is very healthy and we need to protect them more."

According to her, there are only a

known nests found in the Mount Kitanglad Range Natural Park. "We now have eagle's nest outside protected areas."

Clarete said local officials are very protective of the environment in Northern Mindanao and actively take part in formulating policies that will ensure the sustainable management of the region's natural resources, knowing of the values of biodiversity and the ecosystem services they provide.

"Livelihood projects are very important in conservation," she said, noting that the implementation of the National Greening

Program over the past five years provided livelihood and employment to many upland dwellers through reforestation and forest protection.

"Communities here plant trees and protect the forest because of the program," she said, underscoring the need to continue the massive reforestation program to expand the forest cover in the region.

"It should be continued because it provides job and livelihood to the people and we need to expand our forest ecosystem to conserve our biodiversity," she added.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR extends moratorium on activities on Mts. Banahaw, Cristobal until 2019

By ELLALYN B. DE VERA

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has extended for another three years the moratorium on activities on certain areas of the Mounts Banahaw-San Cristobal Protected Landscape (MBSCPL) in Laguna and Quezon provinces.

DENR-Calabarzon Regional Director Reynulfo Juan, also chairman of the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) of MBSCPL, said majority of the members of the board agreed in passing the resolution on the continued

moratorium on certain areas of the MBSCPL until Feb. 19, 2019.

Juan said some members proposed a shorter period of one year, but agreed as one body that further preparations should be made before lifting the moratorium.

He pointed out that PAMB's decision was based on the members' recommendation that preparedness in "disaster risk reduction and management" of the local government units, should be primarily assured.

Since the municipality of Dolores in Quezon province is the most visited part of Mt. Banahaw, the local government unit should come up with mechanisms

to protect the area.

The Dolores side of the protected area, as well as the Luchan side, also in Quezon, is found to be highly susceptible to landslides, erosion, flash floods, and fire.

Juan said preparation is a must for the concerned LGUs particularly in the strict implementation of the "carrying capacity" or limiting the number of persons at one time within specific a specific site, in "puestos" or pilgrim sites.

He added that a visitor management scheme should be in place.

PAMB also recommended a contin-

ued conduct of biodiversity monitoring and assessment and water quality monitoring.

Gene Beloso of the Quezon Provincial Government Environment and Natural Resources Office said he was for the extension of the moratorium for another year, but the PAMB should prepare for the lifting.

He emphasized the need for thorough assessment of the resultant effects of the closure and if the reasons for closure, since 2004, such as water quality or presence of coliform and other contaminants, and other factors have been resolved.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Court asked to stop cemetery project

CITY OF MALOLOS—The vice mayor of San Ildefonso town and an official of its water district have asked a court to stop the construction of a public cemetery in that town, saying the project has not acquired an environmental clearance.

Vice Mayor Rolando Centeno and Crisanto Mananghaya, a member of the San Ildefonso Water District's board of directors, filed the petition to prevent the construction of the 1-hectare public cemetery in Barangay Makapilapil, which, they said, does not have an environmental compliance certificate (ECC).

Mananghaya, a former councilor, said projects like cemeteries required a clearance from the local water district to ensure these would not affect waterways and pipeline connections.

He said cemeteries also needed to be granted an ECC by the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB).

Mayor Gerald Galvez, who is facilitating the cemetery project, did not issue a statement when sought by the INQUIRER for comment.

In their petition, Centeno and Mananghaya also urged the court to issue a permanent injunction against the project for violating Republic Act No. 9184, or the public bidding law. They claimed the project was not approved by the town council.

The council passed a resolution that granted Galvez the authority to enter into a P150-million loan agreement with the Philippine National Bank (PNB) to finance the project. But the petitioners said it was passed without a majority vote. The council voted 5-3 to approve the resolution.

"Clearly, there was no majority vote on the resolution because the [council] has 10 members ... hence, the required vote to attain majority was six," the petitioners said.

They also said details of the project had not undergone mandatory posting in a newspaper of wide circulation, a requirement for infrastructure projects costing more than P5 million.

The complainants also sued the project contractor, Radthien Builders, and PNB president Reynaldo Maclang.

"[The] plaintiffs, as citizens of San Ildefonso, taxpayers and former officials, will be prejudiced if people's money will be disbursed to fund a patently illegal undertaking. The public interest covering this case mandates that a temporary restraining order/injunction should be issued," Centeno and Mananghaya said. *Carmela Reyes-Estropo, Inquirer Central Luzon*

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CSOs, govt close ranks to protect Tañon Strait

CIVIL-SOCIETY organizations (CSOs) are closing ranks with concerned government agencies to sustainably protect and manage Tañon Strait, the county's largest marine-protected area, between Cebu and Negros, in the Visayas.

The CSOs working in Tañon Strait have committed to provide their respective support to the Tañon Strait Protected Seascape (TSPS) Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) to implement its 10-year general management plan (GMP), in a parallel session during the recent second general assembly of the TSPS-PAMB held in Cebu City. "Our dialogue was a huge first step for CSOs to be united and work together in various areas in the critical phase of the implementation of the General Management Plan to protect Tañon Strait from all forms of threats and make it resilient," said lawyer Gloria Estenzo Ramos, vice president of Oceana.

Oceana is helping the government in the implementation of the Fisheries Code, as amended, to fight illegal, unreported and unregistered fishing in the country. It is looking at collaboration with both public and private sectors in the adoption of measures, such as vessel monitoring for commercial fishing.

The other CSOs included Rare Philippines, Philippine Earth Justice Center (PEJC), Sea Knights, Tambuyog Development Center, Grassroots Travel, University of the Philippines in the Visayas and University of Cebu. Fr. Tito Soquiño, founder of the Knight-Stewards of the Sea (Sea Knights), suggested that the CSOs consider "ecologically evangelizing" the stakeholders, including the clergy, by initially briefing them on the various initiatives to protect the bounty and beauty of Tañon Strait.

Soquiño said this approach would facilitate in spreading the word to their respective dioceses and, finally, to their parishioners in Cebu and Negros, who are directly dependent on Tañon Strait, particularly small fishers and their families, other rural folks and commercial fishers, including barangay and municipal officials.

Soquiño cofounded the Sea Knights in 2008, initially composed of Catholic priests, whose aim is to help protect the environment. The volunteer group has since then expanded to include professionals, athletes, journalists, policemen and government officials. It conducts regular diving expeditions in Tañon Strait and in other waters in the Visayas.

Rare Philippines, represented by its TSPS Program Manager Rosa Antes, said it will expand its current five project sites in Tañon Strait to 20 sites in the next four years, under its joint project with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, called "Strengthening the Marine-Protected Areas to Conserve Marine Biodiversity Areas."

Antes said Rare will continue to help local government unit partners by supporting the organizational capacity needs of their coastal-resource management (CRM) and fishery units; assist in conducting technical and management effectiveness exercises; develop and support fish-catch monitoring; facilitate coastal-water zoning exercises; develop social-marketing campaigns on sustainable fisheries use and protection; and providing policy support in managing their respective marine-protected areas.

Lawyer Rose-Liza Osorio of PEJC said her group would help the TSPS-PAMB on policy and enforcement, particularly on providing capacity-building training and seminars for paralegals, including

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legal and technical support for policy studies, and legal assistance. It will also help produce a primer to maximize public participation in environmental rule of law.

Tambuyog, Delfa Talaid said, would keep on helping empower fisherfolk organizations by partnering with government agencies, like the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), in implementing livelihood projects. She said Tambuyog is actively partnering with the BFAR in the establishment and operation of fish unloading and trading centers in their group's constituent sites. Boboi Costas of Grassroots Travel said his group will continue to encourage the establishment of sustainable and environment-friendly ecotourism destinations in Cebu, in line with his task as tourism consultant of the Cebu provincial government.

He said they are currently implementing a Cebu midwest community-based ecotourism project involving the five towns of Alegria, Aloguinsan, Balamban, Asturias and Tabuelan. The project is focused on conserving the natural and cultural resources of Tañon Strait and, at the same time, providing supplemental livelihood to fishers and rural folks. In August 2016 the five towns will be launched into one tourism circuit or destination, Costas said.

He added that eco-tourism is one way to deter dynamite fishing, as coastal communities will protect their respective areas and dive sites from destructive fishing methods to maintain the bounty of Tañon Strait, and, thus, attract more tourists. Members of academe—Dr. Joyce Flores of UP Cebu and Edilyn Lopez of University of Cebu—have committed to conduct appropriate researches and surveys to enhance and update current baseline data on marine and socioeconomic parameters of Tañon Strait.

The TSPS-PAMB general assembly business meeting was chaired by Director Isabelo Montejo of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources Region 7 (DENR7). The assembly was attended by about 250 municipal and barangay officials from the Tañon Strait coastal towns and cities in the three provinces of Cebu, Negros Oriental and Negros Occidental.

"We have strong local chief executives and national government agency leaders, who are sincere and dedicated in the performance of their job. The continuing support from us, and with the wealth of commitment, resources and expertise that each of our institution and organization that we represent brings in, inspires these dedicated authorities to do the mandates of their office to the best that they know how, despite the horrible and tremendous pressures that they encounter from some public servants, who still have to understand what sustainable development means," Ramos said.

Besides Montejo, the other government officials who graced the second TSPS-PAMB general assembly were DENR Negros Island Region Director Al Orolfo, Department of the Interior and Local Government Region 7 Director Rene Burdeos, BFAR Region 7 Director Andres Bojos, lawyer Chad Estrella, who represented Cebu Gov. Hilario Davide III, local chief executives from Cebu and Negros provinces and Am Prospero Lendio, TSPS park superintendent.

"Our steadfast collaboration with the dedicated men and women from the public sector and other stakeholders will, sooner than soon, make our dear Tañon Strait, a shining model MPA not just in the Philippines, but in the world," said Ramos, who commended the government officials, led by Montejo, for the successful conduct of the second assembly of TSPS-PAMB.

The Manila Times

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Zambales mining conflict worsens

SANTA CRUZ, Zambales: A top official of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) of the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said two mining firms allowed to resume mining last year in Zambales has been cleared to continue their operations, while two other mining companies will remain suspended.

This, according to Dr. Benito Molino, chairman of the anti-mining group Concerned Citizens of Sta Cruz (CCOS), who said MGB Director Leo Jasareno told

him on Friday that Benguet Nickel Mines, Inc. (BNMI) and Zambales Diversified Metals Corporation (ZDMC) has been cleared by the agency to continue their mining operations in northern Zambales while the suspension on Eramen Minerals Inc. (EMI) and LnL Archipelago Minerals Inc. (LAMI) will remain in force.

Molino added Jasareno is under instruction to forward the report to DENR for consideration.

"The report is with me now, Doc. But I am under instruction to forward to DENR, for consideration.

This report cleared two mines. I am forwarding my options to the DENR Secretary," Jasareno's text message to Molino said.

Molino's group CCOS and other anti-mining advocates earlier asked MGB to heed the call of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan (SP) of Zambales to issue a moratorium on mining operations in the province.

According to Molino, BNMI and ZDMC have committed the biggest environmental destruction yet were the ones whose suspensions were temporarily lifted by the government.

Molino said BNMI and ZDMC

are allowed to extract 3.0 million dry metric tons (DMT) each annually or a total of 6.0 million DMT while EMI is allowed from 0.6 million DMT to 1.5 million DMT and LnL Archipelago Minerals, Inc. (LAMI) 1.0 million DMT or a total of 1.6 to 2.5 DMT.

The date when the order will be enforced is indefinite, said Molino.

"It is very clear that this MGB and this government will never protect our human rights, we have to put our acts together to fight for our rights," Molino said.

PATRICK ROXAS

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Aplikasyon sa land title 40 taong nabinbin

DUMULOG na sa tanggapang ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources ang mga magsasaka sa Brgy. Malibay, San Miguel, Bulacan dahil sa apat na dekadang pagkabibin ng kanilang aplikasyon sa titulo ng lupa.

Sa reklamo ni Dionisio Olimpiada at mga kasamahan nito sa tanggapan ni DENR Sec. Ramon Paje, taong 1979 pa sila nag-apply ng Free Patent sa Community Environmen-

tal Natural Resources Office kaya't nagtaka sila nang sabihin ng CENRO-DENR na naiaward na ito sa isang Guillermo Tolentino sa bisa ng Homestead Application No. 7488.

Nabatid naman sa Land Management Bureau ng Manila na ang naturang Free Patent Title ay nakansela na noon pang Nov. 8, 1963.

Hindi umano maiwasan ng mga magsasaka na magduda na may anomalyang nangyayari sa tanggapan ng CENRO

dahil pinatotohanan ng Treasurer's Office na si Dionisio Olimpiada ang nagbabayad ng buwis at hindi ang isang Guillermo Tolentino.

Ang Land Registration Authority ay naglabas ng patunay na ang lot 2878-AD ay isang public land kung saan maging ang mismong tanggapang ng CENRO ay nakapaglabas din ng sertipikasyon na ang naturang lote ay alienable and disposable.

Nabatid pa na apat na buwan na ang nakalipas nang maglabas ng memo ang DENR Region 3 na tugunan ang reklamo subalit wala pa rin itong aksyon.

The Manila Times

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Any sibling can demand partition of co-owned land

Dear PAO,

My three siblings and I inherited a titled lot from our parents wherein we were all named as the co-owners of the lot in the title of the

land. Our parents built a residential compound within this lot where we have been living for around three decades already. I plan to have this property divided with regard to my share of the land, so I can have my own separate title to the land, but one of my siblings is stopping me. He is claiming that I can never partition our co-owned property since our parents allegedly told us that we are not to divide the property as long as we live there.

Is this legal? Can I be legally restricted from partitioning the property that we co-own together with my siblings? Please advise me about this. Thank you!

Nate

Dear Nate,

According to Article 484 of the Civil Code of the Philippines, there is co-ownership when different persons own an undivided thing. Such is the case in your situation since you and your siblings co-own the land that you inherited from your parents.

Considering this, the law on co-ownership provides for a specific provision with regard to the partition of the co-owned property. According to the law:

"Article 494. No co-owner shall be obliged to remain in the co-ownership. Each co-owner may demand at any time the partition of the thing owned in common, insofar as his share is concerned.

Nevertheless, an agreement to keep the thing undivided for a certain period of time, not exceeding ten years, shall be valid. This term may be extended by a new agreement.

A donor or testator may prohibit



DEAR PAO

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ACOSTA**

partition for a period which shall not exceed twenty years.

Neither shall there be any partition when it is prohibited by law.

No prescription shall run in favor

of a co-owner or co-heir against his co-owners or co-heirs so long as he expressly or impliedly recognizes the co-ownership. (400a)" (Civil Code of the Philippines) (Emphasis supplied)

As can be gleaned from this provision, any of the co-owners may demand the partition of the co-owned property at any time. The period of prohibition for a partition is limited only to ten (10) years if there is any agreement to such affect and a period of twenty (20) years in case a testator or a donor expressly provided for such a prohibition.

Thus, in your situation, your brother is wrong in claiming that you may never partition the land you inherited together with your siblings. As expressly provided by the aforementioned law, you may legally demand to partition a divisible co-owned property such as the subject land in your case. And even if your parents placed a condition to prohibit a partition, this prohibition is limited only up to twenty (20) years, after which you may rightfully demand the partition of the co-owned property so that you may already have your share in the land titled separately under your name.

Again, we find it necessary to mention that this opinion is solely based on the facts you have narrated and our appreciation of the same. The opinion may vary when the facts are changed or elaborated.

We hope that we were able to enlighten you on the matter.

Editor's note: Dear PAO is a daily column of the Public Attorney's Office. Questions for Chief Acosta may be sent to dearpao@manilatimes.net

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Group airs appeal: Help keep Metro esteros clean

By Maricar B. Brizuela

AFTER the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) collected 288 truckloads of garbage and silt from five esteros in its ongoing cleanup, an environmental watch group has urged people living near these waterways to maintain their cleanliness.

According to the EcoWaste Coalition, households and businesses near rivers, drainage systems, canals and esteros must dispose of their garbage properly to avoid clogging these waterways and prevent flooding during the rainy season.

"We request our city dwellers, especially those with houses by the rivers and canals,

to cooperate with the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority and concerned local government units in protecting our waterways from garbage," EcoWaste Coalition coordinator Aileen Lucero said on Sunday.

Citing Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, Lucero said that throwing garbage into the streets and bodies of water "was unethical and unlawful."

Dumping of waste in public places carries a fine of P300 to P1,000 and/or a 15-day community service, she warned.

"Among other major impacts, indiscriminate trash disposal increases flooding events that can pose [a] serious hazard to life

and property," Lucero said.

"By properly managing our discards, we prevent trash from getting into the drainage systems, blocking the drains and ultimately clogging creeks and rivers, and hampering the free flow of water which can aggravate floods and other water-related disasters," she added.

The group also challenged local and national candidates to include the protection of waterways in their platforms. Lucero said tackling water and sanitation issues and solutions would benefit all residents in Metro Manila.

Last Friday, the MMDA said that it was able to collect 288 truckloads or 2,989 cubic meters of garbage and silt from the

first five esteros it cleaned up through its "Estero Blitz" cleanup drive which started on March 1.

These were the North and South Antipolo Open Canal, Estero de Kabulusan, Estero de Magdalena, Estero de San Miguel and Estero de Quiapo.

The MMDA earlier announced that it would ask the Ombudsman to help it go after barangay officials who neglect the waterways in their area despite repeated clearing operations conducted by the agency.

It warned that should it find the waterways full of trash again, it would file a report in the Ombudsman and ask it to "determine the liability of the negligent barangay officials."



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EcoWaste: Prevent floods, keep waterways trash-free

By CORY MARTINEZ

THE environment-advocate group, EcoWaste Coalition appealed to Metro Manila residents to keep all waterways free of trash to minimize if not to totally prevent floodings in the metropolis.

The group through its coordinator Aileen Lucero made the appeal coinciding with the observance of the World Water Day tomorrow, Tuesday.

Lucero particularly urged households and businesses situated along rivers and drainage or esteros crisscrossing the 17 local government units comprising the National Capital Region (NCR) to practice proper waste management.

The group also called on national and local candidates for the May 9 polls to espouse sustainable solutions that will protect the country's water resources from chemical and waste dumping and other damaging human activities.

"We request our city dwellers, especially those with houses by the rivers and canals, to cooperate with the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and concerned local government units (LGUs) in protecting our waterways from garbage," Lucero said.

"Throwing trash into the streets, storm drains, creeks and rivers is unethical and unlawful," she emphasized.

Republic Act 9003, the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, lists the dumping of waste matters in public places as a prohibited act punishable by a fine of P300 to P1,000, or one to 15-day community service, or both.

In spite of the legal prohibition, illegal waste disposal goes on unabated, Lucero lamented, citing the 288 truckloads of garbage and silt, approximately 2,989 cubic meters, that were removed by the MMDA from five of the 273 esteros and sewers in the metropolis during the agency's "Estero Blitz" program that started on March 1.

"Among other major impacts, indiscriminate trash disposal increases flooding events that can pose serious hazard to life and property" Lucero said.

"By properly managing our discards, we prevent trash from getting into the drainage systems, blocking the drains and ultimately clogging creeks and rivers and hampering the free flow of water, which can aggravate floods and other water-related disasters," she said.

With the general polls fast approaching, the group challenged candidates running for national and local elective positions to make water protection an important aspect of their electoral platforms.

"As it is a crucial component of any program geared at attaining sustainable development, we find it essential for our aspiring political leaders to tackle water and sanitation issues and solutions for the benefit of all," Lucero added.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Earth Hour focused on renewables

By Erika Sauler

THE SWITCH-OFF event for Earth Hour Philippines turned the spotlight on renewable energy as “pedal power” lit up an LED map of the country on Saturday night.

Volunteers took turns riding the 10 bamboo bikes attached to an energy generator during the 60-minute lights off at Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City.

For the 10th edition of the Earth Hour campaign against climate change, landmarks worldwide from Sydney’s Opera House to New York’s Empire State Building and Paris’ Eiffel Tower dimmed their lights for 60 minutes from 8:30 p.m. local time.

The first Earth Hour event was held on March 31, 2007, when the WWF (World Wild Fund for Nature) conservation group inspired people in Sydney to turn out the lights for an hour.

Since then, the WWF-organized event has expanded to thousands of cities and towns around the world and has been held every March.

The Philippine government has “sought to spur investments in renewable energy to lessen dependence on traditional fossil fuels,” President Aquino said in a message read by Earth Hour Philippines director Gia Ibay at Quezon Memorial Circle.

“Now renewable energy makes up 33.9 percent of our country’s energy needs,” the President said.

The Aquino administration, however, has approved 21 new coal-fired power plant projects in the past five years.

Paris agreement

“In light of the agreement reached at COP21 [in Paris], citizens and government should take more positive actions,” the President said. “The Earth Hour 2016 is unique in that it takes place in the aftermath of such an historic event.”

The so-called Paris Agreement sets the goal of limiting global warming to “well below” 2.0 degrees Celsius over preindustrial levels, with a more ambitious target of 1.5 C if possible.

Renewable energy technologies, such as wind, hydro and solar power, were showcased in booths set up at Quezon Memorial Circle.

The Azkals also provided star

power to the event, together with WWF ambassadors Marc Nelson, Rovilson Fernandez and Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski.

Quezon City Mayor Herbert Bautista, National Youth Commissioner Dingdong Dantes and WWF-Philippines CEO Joel Palma led the first batch of bikers that powered the LED map.

“The challenge is to go beyond the hour and make climate change mitigation a way of life,” Dantes said.

The Philippines was declared “Earth Hour Hero Country” from 2009 to 2013 for topping global participation levels. Last year, there were 1,600 switch-off sites in the country out of the world’s 7,000 Earth Hour hubs.

178 countries

Earth Hour’s global executive director Siddarth Das said organizers were excited about how much the movement had grown since it began nine years ago.

“From one city, it has now grown to over 178 countries and territories and over 7,000 cities, so we couldn’t be happier about how millions of people across the world are coming together for climate action,” he said.

Over 150 buildings in Singapore dimmed their lights.

The lights also dimmed across Hong Kong’s usually glittering skyline, though online commentators pointed out that China’s People’s Liberation Army garrison headquarters on the harbor front kept the lights blazing.

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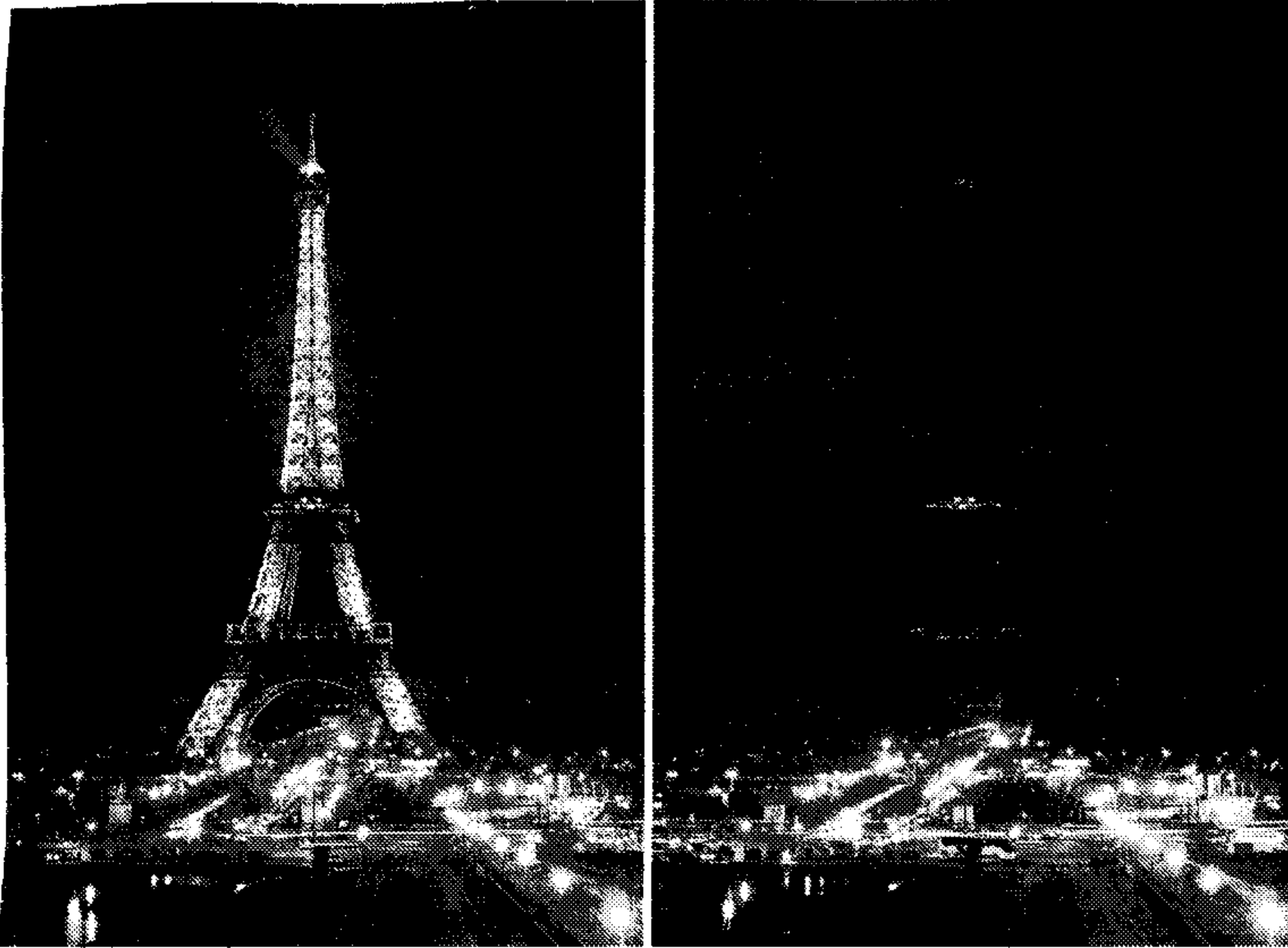
In Seoul, the glass-covered City Hall was among several public buildings where officials switched off the lights inside and out.

Consume less

Lights illuminating landmarks such as the massive COEX shopping mall, the city's main

railway station and several bridges on the Han River were all either turned off or dimmed.

In Beijing, Chinese actress Li



EIFFEL TOWER, TOO Photos show the Eiffel Tower before and after its lights were turned off to mark Earth Hour in Paris. AP

Bingbing showed up at the iconic Temple of Confucius, which was shut dark for an hour while municipal government officials announced that the city's energy conservation slogan would be "Consume less, consume wisely."

The Taipei 101 skyscraper was among the buildings to go dark in Taiwan's capital.

After Asia, Earth Hour shifted to Europe where St. Peter's Basilica, Rome's Trevi Fountain and the Parthenon temple in Athens were among a slew of iconic sites to go off-grid.

In London, the lights were shut off at the Houses of Parlia-

ment, the London Eye, Tower Bridge, St. Paul's Cathedral, Buckingham Palace and Harrods department store.

In Paris, the Eiffel Tower was plunged into darkness, as was the Kremlin in Moscow.

Empire State

When New York's Empire State Building went dark, one New Yorker joked on Twitter "I was wondering why my skyline is black."

In Chile's capital, Santiago, the La Moneda presidential palace cut off its lighting for an hour, while in Mexico, the capital

city's Monument to the Revolution went dark as well.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tweeted a cozy photo of himself and his wife, illuminated only by candlelight, with a fireplace glowing in the background.

"We're all on this planet together. During #EarthHour and every day thereafter," he wrote.

Momentum building

Earth Hour's Das said momentum toward climate action was building in the wake of the global climate talks in Paris last year.

He said people were experiencing the impact of climate change more now than when Earth Hour began, adding that "climate change has now become a more personal topic."

"I feel that there's a renewed vigor among individuals and governments to come together for strong climate action and to fight climate change," he said.

Earth Hour organizers have not collected global statistics on the energy conserved during the 60-minute blackout, and that the event has always had symbolic intent, saying it was more a moment of global solidarity about a global problem, according to Das.

"We are elated at the massive outpouring of support. Government agencies, media allies,

corporations, schools, civil society groups and individuals have all pledged to shine a light on climate action through Earth Hour," Palma said in Quezon City.

"We encourage participants to upload their Earth Hour videos and photos on social media using the hashtag #EarthHourPhilippines. The most meaningful and unique celebrations shall be featured on our social media platforms," Palma said.

Beyond the hour

Ibay said that even more important than observing the switch-off was the commitment to go beyond the hour when the lights were switched back on.

"Earth Hour is symbolic. We're not going to stop climate change just by switching off our lights for 60 minutes. But if we collectively reduce our energy use by shifting to renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies, we will definitely change climate change and secure the low-carbon future we need," Ibay said.

For a low-carbon lifestyle, WWF recommends simple tips such as unplugging appliances when not in use, walking when going to nearby places and reducing meat consumption.

With reports from AFP and AP

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SM Supermalls lead Earth Hour 2016

TAKING the lead in efforts to spark awareness and inspire society to combat the adverse effects of global warming, SM Supermalls and all its 56 malls took part in the celebration of Earth Hour Saturday night (March 19, 2016).

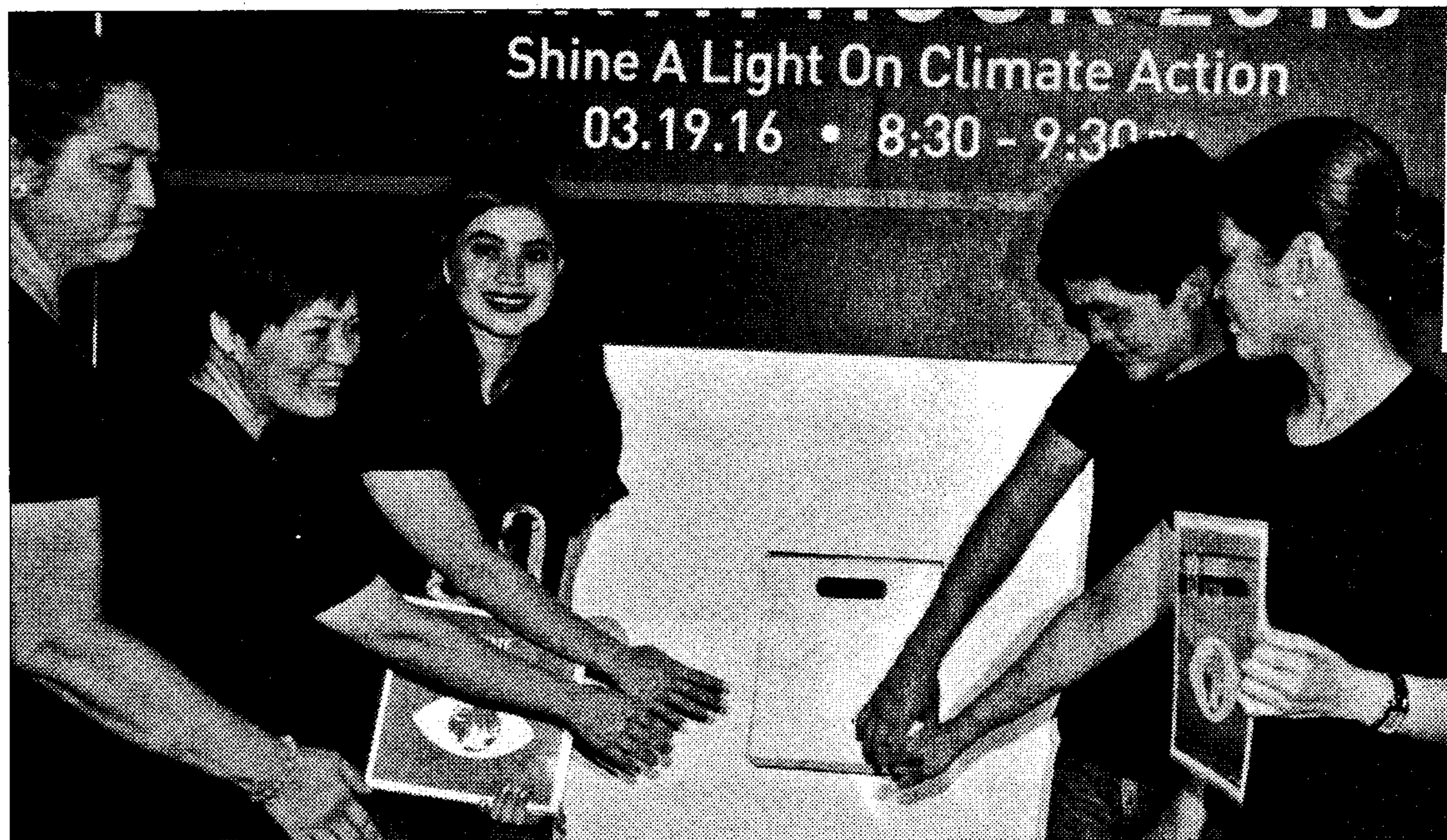
Leading the official switch off at the SM Megamall were World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Charisma Salao, Climate Change Commissioner Frances Veronica, Leonardo Leviste, chief executive officer of Solar Philippines, SM celebrity endorser Anne Curtis and Menchie Abalos, representing Mandaluyong City Mayor Benhur Abalos.

Aside from its malls throughout the country, its six SM malls in China namely Xiamen, Jinjiang, Chenghua, Wuzhong, Yubei, and Zichuan also participated in the simultaneous hour-long "lights-off" moment between 8:30 to 9:30 PM.

The hour-long program was culminated by a light show wherein performers used LED lights and costumes to the delight of the audience composed of families spending their weekends at the mall.

Leviste, chief executive officer of Solar Philippines, thanked SM Supermalls for their successful partnership in developing the rooftops of SM North EDSA and SM Mall of Asia as the largest solar powered commercial rooftops in Southeast Asia.

Salao, for her part, noted the im-



Taking the lead in efforts to spark awareness and inspire society to combat the adverse effects of global warming, SM Supermalls and all its 56 malls took part in the celebration of Earth Hour. Leading the official switch off at the SM Megamall in Mandaluyong City were (from left to right): Menchie Abalos, representing Mandaluyong City Mayor Benhur Abalos, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Charisma Salao, SM celebrity endorser Anne Curtis, Leonardo Leviste, chief executive officer of Solar Philippines and Climate Change Commissioner Frances Veronica.

PHOTO BY ROLLY SALVADOR

portance of the event saying lowering carbon emissions will spur economic growth and how a shift to renewable energy can lead to a "climate resilient" Philippines that can withstand the challenges of climate change.

Victorio said the Earth Hour is one small step towards achieving resiliency and making the people know about the importance of energy conservation and other envi-

ronment-friendly initiatives. "This small act for the environment no matter how small, multiplied by the millions, would make the difference," she said.

Curtis, on the other hand, performed for the crowd and shared her advocacy of inspiring the youth to make "earth-friendly decision making" in their everyday lives.

Aside from its solar-powered rooftops, SM Supermalls through

SM Cares, its corporate social advocacy arm, have also carried out sustainability programs that include the mall-wide switch to LED lights, the Trash to Cash initiative, and general water recycling and energy conservation efforts implemented in all SM Super Malls—all aimed at making an impact and taking the lead in the efforts towards a more Earth-friendly environment.

The Standard

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Al Gore forum.

Former US Vice President and global climate activist Al Gore (center) poses with Oscar Lopez (right), chairman emeritus of the OML Center for Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management Foundation Inc., and Federico R. Lopez, OML Center chairman, during a dinner held in Manila in honor of Gore. Oscar and son Federico participated in the Climate Reality Leadership Training that Gore's non-profit Climate Reality Project conducted recently in Manila.

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Choice cuts on heckling

NETIZENS waited for almost two hours for the second round of the presidential debates to begin.

The four candidates' attack on each other did not disappoint their thirst for quotes and feisty, witty remarks.

Here are some choice cuts:

Binay to Poe: Paano mo masasabi na tunay kang Pilipino kung sumumpa ka na maging Amerikano?

Poe on Daang Matuwid: Nakakalungkot na hanggang slogan lang. Tsaka napapan-sin ko, pag di kaalyado may kaso. Pag kaalyado ka may proyekto.

Duterte: Climate change doesn't have to be discussed. It is here. El Niño is climate change... Al Gore came here to talk about climate change. Why can't he convince his own country? He should go to the US and China.

Duterte to Mar: Kung takot ka pumatay ng tao at mamatay, you can't be president!
Duterte to Roxas: You are a pretentious leader. You're a fraud. Pati iyong sinabi mo na nag-aral ka sa Wharton di totoo. (Binay's aside: Siguro nag-attend ng seminar)

Poe: I will appoint Col. Ariel Querubin as crime czar.
Poe to Roxas: Maraming pag-

kakataon ang naibigay sa 'yo, ano ba ang mga naiambag mo? Parang kulang pa rin.

Roxas: Itinago po sa akin ang Mamasapano operation.

Poe (If China blasts Philippine ships): Ang una nating dapat gawin, pag presidente, bumangon agad. Siyempre hindi pwedeng sabihin, 'Ay, mamayang alas-singko na lang 'yan.'

Binay on graft charges against his family: Bintang kayo nang bintang, wala namang katotohanan.

Binay's closing statement: Enough of mediocrity in gov-

ernment. Gawa hindi dada... The Filipino people deserve no less for president.

Duterte's closing statement: I will try to suppress crime. I cannot promise you heaven...I can tell you now, I provide leadership, and probably copy their platforms if they're good.

Poe's closing statement: Dadamihan ko ang mga preso, kung saan ilalagay ang mga corrupt, kaibigan man o kaalyado...Hindi ko isasama ang pamilya sa transaction.

Roxas' closing statement: Sa Pilipinas, mahirap maging disente... Ibalik natin ang Pilipinas sa mga disenteng tao.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Clergy to voters: Pick 'green' bets

SAN PEDRO CITY—A Catholic Church leader in Batangas province has urged voters to elect government leaders whose programs include environmental wellness.

Lipa Archbishop Ramon Arguelles said the church was also planning to release a list, similar to the contents of the controversial

**VOTE
PH2016**
THINK. Vote.

"Team Patay, Team Buhay" tarpaulin posters, identifying 2016 candidates with clear environmental programs.

The "Team Patay, Team Buhay" materials were posted by the Diocese of Bacolod in 2013 to identify senatorial candidates who supported or opposed the reproductive health law, a measure that the Catholic Church opposed for its provisions that supposedly were antilife.

"We are not campaigning for any personality, but rather, we are challenging candidates to include environmental issues in their campaigns," Arguelles said in a telephone interview on Sunday.

On March 17, more than 1,000 priests from the provinces of Batangas and Quezon, environmentalists, students and volunteers

joined a "lakadasal" (prayer walk) from the provincial capitol of Batangas to Lyceum of the Philippines University in Batangas City as they launched the Green Thumb Electoral Campaign in the province.

Green Thumb is a national coalition of environmental groups, among them Greenpeace Southeast Asia, Philippine Movement for Climate Justice and ABS-CBN Lingkod Kapamilya Foundation, that challenges presidential candidates to make the environment a priority in their platforms.

"There was not even a mention [of environmental programs] during the first presidential debate," Arguelles said.

Church leaders in Batangas have been at the center of an ongoing campaign against the construction of a 600-megawatt coal-fired power plant in the province.

The launch of Green Thumb happened on the day business groups in Batangas signed a declaration supporting the government's efforts to reduce the country's greenhouse emissions.

Arguelles said they aim to gather 2.5 million signatures in support of the Green Thumb campaign.

"We also campaign against candidates who we think are paid off by interest groups [to allow] mining and coal plants here," he said.

Maricar Cinco, Inquirer Southern Luzon



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'Green vote' about environment, not politics – think tank

The "Green Vote" campaign by non-government organizations (NGOs) should go beyond politics and involve a comprehensive discussion about the environment and economy, private think tank ADRI Institute on Strategic and International Studies (ADRI) said.

ADRI president Dindo Manhit said "green vote" manifests the loud call for the next government to approach the issues of environment and economics as one comprehensive agenda.

Renowned geologist and ADRI trustee Dr. CP David agreed, saying that environmental issues facing the country are complex and will need to be seriously addressed by the candidates.

"Aside from mining, politicians vying for national positions should debate on marine protection, forestry, solid waste management and, of course climate change in relation to disaster risk management," he said.

Environment advocacy group Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship (PBEST) also said the "green vote" for the upcoming 2016 elections should be about policy reform and not politics.

"The 'green vote' can be the vehicle to force solutions

to the environment issues into the election debate and adopted in their platforms," said PBEST secretary general Ysan Castillo.

More than discrediting candidates because of their associations with mining, the "green vote" should distinguish between the legitimate and highly regulated mining operations and illegal mining.

"Mining by itself is not bad, but illegal practices and poor regulation resulting in damage to the environment gives a negative image to the industry that has the potential to be an economic game changer not just on a national but on far flung local areas with rich mineral deposits," Castillo said.

PBEST cited three of the country's biggest mines that voluntarily submitted their operations to third-party scrutiny last year to assess compliance with relevant environmental regulations.

The Padcal mine of Phillex in Benguet; the mine of Taganito Mining Corp., a Nickel Asia Corp. subsidiary in Surigao del Norte; and the mine of Carmen Copper Corp., subsidiary of Atlas Consolidated Mining and Development Corp. in Cebu all scored top marks in the PBEST Environmental Per-

formance Tracking Program (EPTP).

"The environment had never figured prominently in any administration's agenda," Manhit said.

"So, the real task for the next president is determining how to strike a balance between environmental stewardship and development," he said.



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ISANG ORAS NG PANDAIGDIGANG PAGKAKAISA PARA SA NAG-IISA NATING PLANETA VS CLIMATE CHANGE

NAGKAKAISA ang mga lungsod sa mundo sa pagpapatay ng ilaw nitong Sabado ng gabi para sa ikasampung taunang Earth Hour, isang pandaigdigang kampanya na layuning protektahan ang planeta at bigyang-diin ang epekto ng climate change.

Habang lumalalim ang gabi, nagdilim ang mga siyudad mula sa South Korea hanggang sa United States sa inilarawan ng World Wildlife Fund bilang isang oras ng pagkakaisa ng mundo laban sa climate change. Pinangunahan ng grupo ang event at inihayag na 178 bansa at teritoryo – kabilang ang Pilipinas – ang nakibahagi sa Earth Hour.

Nangamatay ang ilaw para sa isang-oras na event – mula 8:30 ng gabi hanggang 9:30 ng gabi, local time – sa Beijing, Moscow, Beirut, Cairo, Athens, Rome, at Paris. Nagdilim maging ang mga ilaw sa tuktok ng Empire State Building sa New York, gayundin ang maraming billboard sa Times Square.

Sa Seoul, kabilang ang napalilibutan ng salamin na City Hall sa ilang pampublikong gusali na pinatayan ng ilaw, sa loob at labas. Pinatay din maging ang mga ilaw na nagpapaliwanag sa mga pangunahing landmark gaya ng dambuhalang COEX shopping mall, ang pinakamalaking railway station, at ang ilang tulay sa ibabaw ng Han River.

Sa Beijing, dumalo pa ang aktres na Chinese na si Li Bingbing sa switch-off sa iconic na Temple of Confucius, na isang oras na pinagdilim, habang inihayag naman ng mga opisyal ng gobyerno na ang slogan ng siyudad para sa pagtitipid ng kuryente ay "Consume less, consume wisely".

Isa ang Taipei 101 skyscraper sa mga gusaling nagdilim sa kabisera ng Taiwan.

Pinangunahan naman ng mga opisyal sa Maynila ang daan-daang environmental activist, estudyante, at celebrities sa pelikula at telebisyon, sa pagpapatay ng mga ilaw sa Quezon Memorial Circle sa Quezon city. Sa gitna ng kadiliman, ilang partisipante ang nagpedal ng mga bisikletang gawa sa kawayan at nakakabitan ng maliliit na energy generator upang masindiha ang LED lights at mabigyang liwanag ang higitang mapa ng Pilipinas. Simbolo ito ng pagpupursige ng bansa na ganap nang gumamit ng renewable energy sources, ayon sa mga organizer.

Ang unang Earth Hour ay idinaos noong Marso 31, 2007, nang bigyang inspirasyon ng WWF ang mamamayan ng Sydney upang magpatay ng ilaw sa loob ng isang oras. Simula noon, isinagawa na ang taunang event na ito ng WWF sa libu-libong siyudad at bayan sa iba't ibang dako ng mundo tuwing Marso.

Associated Press

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Online registry opened to Makiling hikers

SAN PEDRO CITY—Wanting to speed up the queues of hikers spending the Lenten break on Mt. Makiling, the Makiling Center for Mountain Ecosystems (MCME) has launched an online registration to prebook thousands of visitors expected this week.

The online registration is the newest feature of Make it Makiling (MIM), the visitor management program of the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), to encourage responsible hiking and, at the same time, promote forest conservation. Launched in 2002, MIM is activated during Lent, when large groups of trekkers visit Makiling.

"We've noticed in the past years that there had always been a bottleneck at the entrance," Leo Baruga, MIM overall coordinator, said in a telephone interview last week.

He said to ease the filling out of forms and attending the required briefing, "which usually takes 10-15 minutes [per group]," visitors may now do these online through MIM's website (<http://mim.mountmakiling.org/>).

Baruga said visitors reach an average of 10,000, with numbers peaking on Good

Friday, each year.

Last year, only about 3,600 hikers were accommodated after the town government of Los Baños issued an advisory for an incoming typhoon, prompting forest managers to close the trail midweek.

MCME, through the MIM website, offers maps of the two hiking trails—the Mariang Makiling trail starting from the UPLB campus in Laguna province and the West Mariang Makiling trail from the Sto. Tomas Eco-park in nearby Batangas province.

It also shows a slide presentation of "Leave No Trace," a popular hiking guideline on outdoor ethics.

Aside from the online registration, visitors may take an online quiz, too, and skip the actual briefing on site, Baruga said.

Mt. Makiling is the 33rd Asean Heritage Park, a recognition by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations for its exceptional biodiversity. The forest reserve is also host to 2,038 species of flowering plants, most of them endemic to the Philippines.

Maricar Cinco. Inquirer Southern Luzon

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GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY OF A PROCESSING PLANT FOR A SMALL-SCALE MINING OPERATION

Toxic-free gold, copper processing

BY MANUEL T. CAYON | *Mindanao Bureau Chief*

NABUNTURAN, Compostela Valley—A mercury- and cyanide-free processing of gold ores was introduced recently for the fund-strapped, small-scale miners, with the new processing technology that could include extracting copper, offering new avenue for additional income source.

The fourth University of the Philippines (UP)-designed processing plant for small-scale mining operation had a groundbreaking with the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) on Tuesday in interior Barangay Katipunan in this town. Five of the town's sitios have been subjected to gold prospecting in the last decade, and many tunnels have been abandoned owing to meager gold output per several sacks of ore.

Dr. Rowena Cristina L. Guevarra, DOST undersecretary for science and technology services, said all four processing plants—with the three others in Benguet, Albay and Caraga—were still prototypes to be tested before they would be finally used for full operation. The DOST spent P120 million for the four plants, which would use organic liquid solutions under a generally categorized group of substances called separators and floaters.

Dr. Herman D. Mendoza of the UP College of Mining, Metallurgical and Materials Engineering who designed and tested the technology from 2004 to 2012, described it as alternative and innovative, "because it would discard the use of mercury and cyanide in extracting gold from the ore that is a common practice among small-scale mines across the country."

"We are using old and existing technology for use of the small-scale miners to help them save on cost and time, and allowing them to double their recovery of gold from the ores than what their mercury and cyanide use could derive," he said.

Gravity, flotation

THE technology would still need infrastructure, like buildings and processing tanks, Mendoza said, but unlike the carbon-in-pulp tanks that use cyanide, "we would use organic solutions that coat the extracted gold from the water and float it."

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A broader look at today's business

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Toxic-free gold, copper processing

"The main medium is still water, and the solutions would separate and float the gold, this time without mercury and cyanide," he said.

Unlike cyanide that is used

₱120M

DOST spent for four prototypes of small-scale mining processing plants

by the sacks per processing, the solutions are used by the small bottles only, he said. "It's one use only and would be discarded after processing," he said.

There would still be a tailings pond for extra safety precaution, like they do to the ores after they were treated with either mercury or cyanide. "But the solutions are actually organic and degrades easily. The tailings ponds would find its significance more in the ores for the remaining unextracted gold or copper, and we can subject them for another round of processing."

Field test

GUEVARRA said she was excited with what she has monitored through the years that Mendoza and his team was designing and testing the technology in the laboratory.

"We helped persuade the DOST secretary [Mario Montejó] to help pursue the technology, because we told him this is for the small-scale miners and their families," she said. It is estimated that there are 300,000 small miners across the country. But the actual number of individuals who will benefit from possible increase in income would reach 2.3 million Filipinos, "because we would be counting also their family members."

"That possibly persuaded the secretary. And to put the fourth plant here for field test also persuaded [him] when he was told the

economic windfall would help the province recover from the devastating Typhoon Pablo in 2012," Guevarra said.

The UP and the DOST said laboratory tests for high recovery of gold from the ores was 90 percent, compared to 40 percent derived with the use of mercury, and 60 percent with cyanide. Guevarra



UNIVERSITY of the Philippines (UP) Engineering professor Dr. Herman D. Mendoza bares his designed gold-and-copper processing plant that discards mercury and cyanide commonly used by small-scale miners. The UP and Department of Science and Technology held a groundbreaking for the fourth processing plant in remote Barangay Katipunan in gold-rich Compostela Valley province. MANUEL T. CAYON

said three processing plants were earlier put up in Benguet, where the partner miners' federation would start processing their ores by the end of March, while in Caraga, the partner local government is expected to finish the plant by the end of the year. "It would take three months, starting with the first processing, to end the field test and to start the commercial operation of this plant," Mendoza said.

Cost-effective

MENDOZA said the cost for processing would be less than what the small miners would spend to process their ores from the carbon-in-pulp (CIP) plants using cyanide. Menrado Matanhay, 54, of Barangay Katipunan, said miners had to group themselves to reach the average minimum requirement of 20 tons for a single processing in the

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Toxic-free gold

CIP. "We would chip in and spend P60,000 per processing."

"The cost per processing is lower than that because of the small solutions needed," he said. Also, the waiting time is only one day, compared to the CIP processing of 72 hours. Matanhay said the CIP processing involved the use of limestone, then cyanide and then carbon. "Maybe it would take longer, especially if the tank operator would see that these materials have not been used up."

"It's a huge income if we happen to hit a high-grade vein, such as one time in 2003, when I have 150 bags of ore and they produced 600 grams of gold. That was a jackpot when the buying price of gold was then P500 per gram," he said.

In many instances, the yield per sack would be dismal "that in the end I stopped and closed my tunnels." Matanhay said he has three tunnels in the barangay, one in Purok 6 and two in Purok 5. Angelo Quintila, 23, also of Barangay Katipunan, had the same experience. But he did not try his luck in the tunnels in his village. He and his relatives went to dig in the recently discovered mining area in Pamintaran, in another Compostela Valley town of Maragusan in 2010.

"We tunneled for only three years, until the cooperative decided to stop all operations in the area because of lack of timber," he said. "But, actually, the mining activities were stopped, because there were no more adequate deposits there."

Quintila returned to farming, planting his 1-hectare farm with 500 trees of cacao, which are now one year old. Cacao begins to yield fruit in 18 months. Quintila said he was excited with the promise of a ready market because of the still inadequate supply of this raw material for chocolates. Matanhay also returned to tilling his farm with lemons, which he said are selling well since February at P600 per 50-kilogram sack. At that price, "I am very happy," he said.

Environment-friendly

THE sheer number of small-scale gold miners is probably explained by the rich gold and other mineral deposits in the country, Mindanao having the richest and largest deposits. The country's small-scale mining account for 80 percent of the Philippines's \$32.97-billion gold production and contribution to the GNP, a 2014 Mines and Geosciences Bureau statistics said.

The environmentally destructive processing in small-scale mines caused a national uproar following reports of severe mercury contamination of rivers and gulf, especially in the Davao Gulf, which is the final draining basin for two of the largest small gold-mining areas of Diwalwal in Monkayo, and Boringot in Pantukan, all in Compostela Valley.

Government studies ascribed this also to the poverty impulse for driving the poor to the risky operations in the poorly built tunnels merely for daily sustenance. Dr. Anthony Sales, regional DOST director, said the new processing technology would satisfy the agency's thrust for economic benefit for the ordinary Filipino, a social benefit for the community and the environmental sustainability of the projects.

"Our projects are all about seeking the economic well-being of people. It's not about testing only the technology," he said.

Guevarra said the original plan was to put up 10 plants, but the budget allocation hindered its distribution. "Maybe we can finally have 10 in commercial operation," she added. "But what we hope is that other groups would find the technology worth emulating that they would put up their own, and ultimately we would have a clean environment," she said. "And probably, that would put substance to what we always hear as responsible mining," Guevarra said.

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s Pagasa to tell how hot it really is

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

IS THE weather becoming too hot to handle?

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) will answer this in a weekly heat index on its website, www.pagasa.gov.ph.

Pagasa declared the official onset of the dry season on Friday.

The weather bureau will forecast the maximum heat index in and around 13 major cities around the country to alert the public on days when scorching temperatures will reach dangerous levels.

Pagasa has warned the country may again experience record-high temperatures of over 30 degrees Celsius since the brunt of the strong El Niño will be felt this dry season.

The heat index, also called the human discomfort index, is measured not only based on air temperature but also on humidity in order to give the actual temperature felt by the body.

High air temperature and high relative humidity will give a high heat index.

Pagasa considers it the "danger level" when the heat index breaches 41 degrees Celsius, warning that continued activity under the sun

would likely lead to heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

The "extreme danger level" is reached when the heat index reaches 54 degrees Celsius.

According to Pagasa's five-day forecast from March 18 to 22, Zamboanga will experience the highest heat index with a maximum of 37.6 degrees Celsius on March 21, while Tuguegarao City in Cagayan will have a maximum heat index of 37.3 degrees on March 22.

Metro Davao experienced a heat index of 37.5 degrees Celsius on March 18, while Metro Manila's highest maximum heat index during the forecast period will reach 36 degrees on March 22.

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3 BUWANG TAGTUYOT, GOBYERNO WALANG TULONG

SINABI ng Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration na magtagal hanggang Hunyo ang tagtuyot dahil sa pagpatong ng El Niño sa tag-init.

Karaniwang hanggang ikalawang linggo lang ng Mayo ang tag-init ngunit lalawig ito sa katapusan ng Hunyo dahil sa El Niño.

Gaya ng iniulat mismo ng pamahalaan ukol sa mga buhay-magsasaka, naghahayupan at mangingisda, grabe na at lumalawak pa ang epektong kasiraang dulot ng tagtuyot.

Libo-libong ektarya na ng mga palayan at maisan, at mga gulayan na rin, ang natutuyuan at nagkakabitak-bitak na nagbubunga ng mga sirang pananim.

Natutuyuan na rin ang maraming ilog at sapa na nakasasama hindi lang sa mga taniman kundi sa mga palaisdaan at tanging ang mga palaisdaan sa mga tabing-dagat ang nagkakaroon ng sapat na suplay ng tubig.

Nangangayayat na rin ang mga alagang hayop gaya ng mga baka, kalabaw at kambing dahil sa kawalan ng sapat na pagkain sa pagkamatay ng mga pananim at damo sa paligid na pawang mga natutuyuan.

Pinakamasaklap ang kalagayan ng mga magsasaka, mangingisda at naghahayupan na nawawalan ng pagkakitaan at maging ng panibagong puhunan sa pagkasira ng kanilang mga pananim at alagang hayop at isda.

Higit na masaklap, sinasabi ng gobyerno Aquino na wala na itong pondong maibibigay na ayuda sa mga biktima at tanging ang calamity fund at pondong nasa Department of Agriculture ang maaasahan ng mga ito.

Nakapagtataakang nagbubuhos na ng bilyon-bilyong piso ang pamahalaan para sa pamumulitika ngunit tahasang nagsasabi itong wala nang pondo bilang pang-ayuda sa milyon-milyong biktima ng tagtuyot.

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El Niño damage to Western Visayas' agri sector pegged at ₱1.27 billion

By TARA YAP

ILOILO CITY - The El Niño dry climate phenomenon has, so far, caused some ₱1.27 billion in damages to Western Visayas' agriculture sector.

Office of Civil Defense (OCD-6) Regional Director Rosario Cabrera revealed this during a recent meeting of the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council in Western Visayas (RDRRMC-6) in Iloilo City.

Based on data presented by the Department of Agriculture in Western Visayas (DA-6), the onset of El Niño from the latter part of 2015 up to February 2016 damaged rice production by ₱1.22 billion in the region.

Such damage covers rice in 54,210 hectares in Antique, Capiz, Guimaras, and Iloilo provinces. The DA-6 data does not include rice damage in Aklan province.

For corn production, El Niño destroyed ₱56.25 million in two provinces of Western Visayas.

Cabrera, who also chairs RDRRMC-6, disclosed that two local government units (LGUs) in the region declared a state of calamity due to El Niño. These are the island province of Guimaras which reported heavy damage to its agriculture sector and the Iloilo City government which says it badly needs funds because of a lack of water.

Cabrera cautioned local governments in the region not to hurriedly declare a state of calamity.

Meanwhile, DA-6 is still validating data from the five provincial governments.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Thousands of public schools lack clean water, toilets, DepEd reveals

By Kristine Felisse Mangunay

MORE than 3,000 public schools—both elementary and secondary—have no regular source of safe and clean water.

This according to Education Secretary Armin Luistro who addressed the 2016 Rotary International Presidential Conference on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools (WASH) which opened at the Marriott Hotel in Pasay City on Friday.

The two-day conference was organized by the international civic organization to “spread awareness of the water crisis, share each other’s knowledge in finding solutions, and ultimately gain the commitment to implement these solutions, whether individually or collectively.”

According to Luistro’s Power-Point presentation, the 3,628 elementary and secondary schools that have no regular source of safe and clean water represent

7.76 percent of the 46,739 public schools in the country—38,657 of them elementary schools, and 8,082 secondary schools.

“We have identified different sources—deep wells, rain catchments, water districts and nearby streams and rivers as sources of water. It is critical that the school managements recognize the advantages and disadvantages of such and monitor how these are used,” Luistro said.

As for the number that had

sanitation facilities, Luistro’s presentation showed 91.8 percent of the overall number of public schools in the country had toilets.

Louise Maule, sanitation and hygiene expert at the United Nations Children’s Fund, however, said that while the Philippines had a “relatively good” national toilet-to-pupil ratio—one toilet is to 39 pupils—“some areas are being missed.”

She cited as an example the Autonomous Region in Muslim

Mindanao, which she said had a ratio of one toilet to more than 100 people.

“Hygiene promotion coupled with basic washing sanitation... not only improves children’s health but increases their performance in schools... but half of schools in lower and developing countries have no amenities,” Maule said.

She said that apart from the lack of amenities, globally there was also “still some way to go”

before the facilities that do exist were something “we would like.”

According to Luistro’s presentation, there were at least 3,620 public schools that had “substandard” toilets. The DepEd also needs to check whether or not the toilets listed were actually functional.

“We want all schools to end up being three-star schools (including their toilets). We recognize getting there is a process,” Maule said.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Responsibility still mine in last 100 days—Aquino

By Nikko Dizon

THE COUNTDOWN to the last 100 days of the Aquino administration begins today.

In a press conference yester-

day, President Aquino said he would still be “responsible for everything” until the last minute of his term, even as he instructed his Cabinet to prepare their respective “transition plans” to pave the way for the new administration.

“I wish I had the luxury to be able to say that ‘this is the only thing I’d do’ or ‘majority of the time we will spend here.’ But the job of the President is to be responsible for everything all the time—before it happens, while it’s happening, and after it happened,” said the President, who will pass on the office to the winner of the May 9 elections.

Answering a question on whether defense and security issues would be on his priority list in his last three months in office, Mr. Aquino said such issues “will be a concern” as much as the rebuilding in the aftermath of Super-typhoon Yolanda that government vowed to complete before his term ends, the effects of the ongoing El Niño weather phenomenon, and even the spread of the Zika virus.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Air pollution not just bad for your lungs

Exposure to air pollution for just a month or two may still be enough to increase the risk of developing diabetes, especially for obese people, a recent US study suggests.

Researchers studied more than 1,000 Mexican-Americans living in southern California and found short-term exposure to contaminated air was linked to an increased risk of high cholesterol and impaired processing of blood sugar – risk factors for diabetes.

Scientists aren't exactly sure how air pollution might lead to diabetes.

It's possible that air pollution causes inflammation in the body, which triggers a chain reaction that makes it harder for people to process blood sugar, said senior study author Dr. Frank Gilliland, director of the Southern California Environmental Health Sciences Center and researcher at the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

Some previous research has linked air pollution from traffic and other sources to an increased risk of type 2, or adult-onset, diabetes, which happens when the body can't properly use or make enough of the hormone insulin to

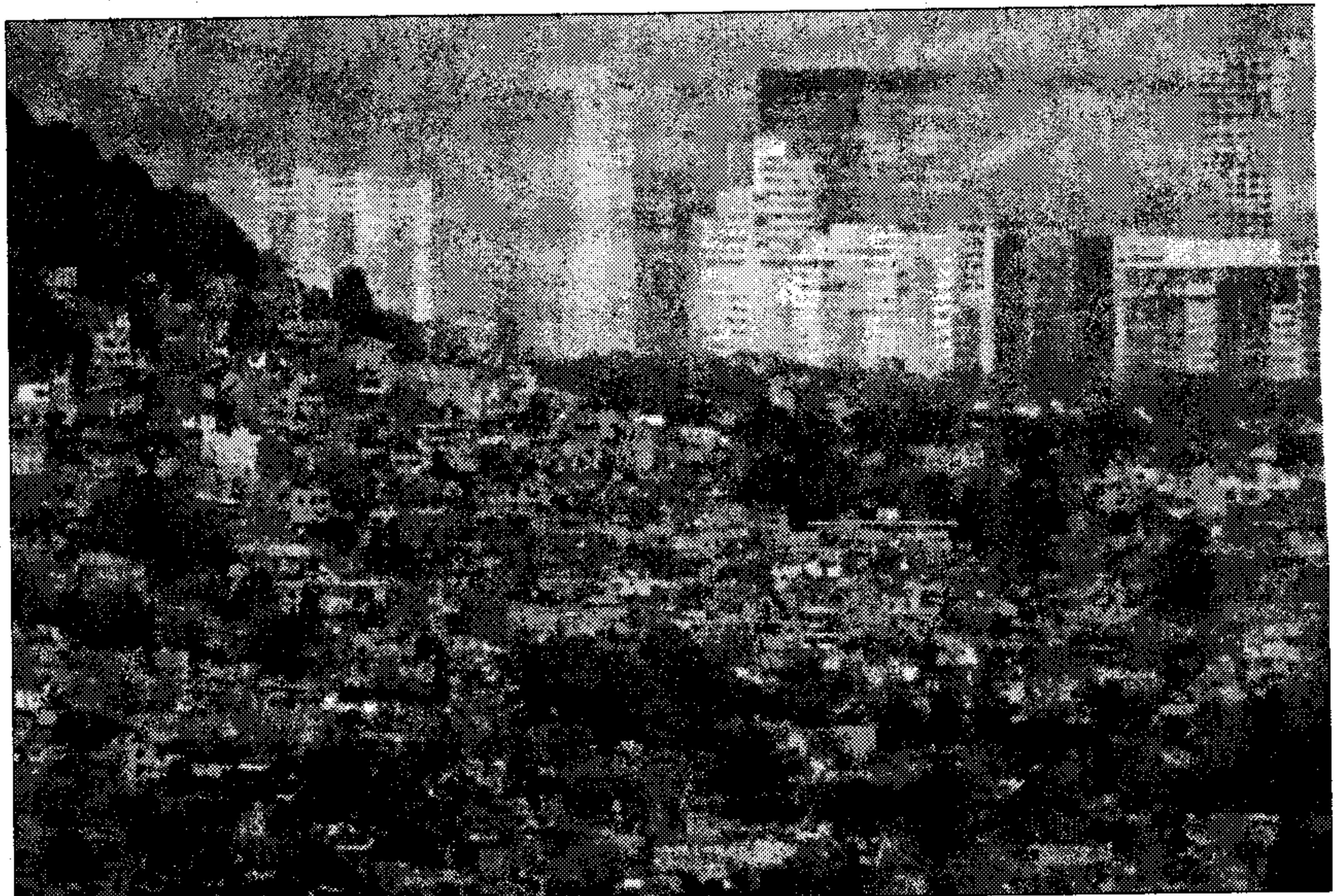


Photo taken last March 16 shows buildings and houses stand shrouded in smog in Mexico City.

convert blood sugar into energy. But few tests have been done in humans, the researchers note in the journal *Diabetes Care*.

For the current study, Gilliland and colleagues examined concentrations of ozone, an unstable form of oxygen produced when various types of traffic and industrial pollution react with sunlight; nitrogen dioxide, a byproduct of fossil fuel combustion that can contribute to smog; and so-called PM 2.5, a mixture of solid particles and liquid droplets smaller than

2.5 micrometers in diameter that can include dust, dirt, soot and smoke.

All of these pollutants have been found to damage lungs and some PM 2.5 particles are small enough to enter the bloodstream, where they have been linked to increased risk of heart disease and stroke.

All of the participants in the current study completed questionnaires on their dietary and exercise habits, and they also had lab tests to measure levels of cholesterol and sugars in their blood. — Reuters