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Monday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

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BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

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PMAP holds climate summit

THE People Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP), a member of the Coalition of Clean Air Advocates of the Philippines, is holding on April 12 and 13 the PMAP Summit on Clean Air and Climate Change.

Called "Clean Air: Our Life, Our Future," the summit will be held at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila in Pasay City. A highlight of the summit will be the presentation of the first-ever Punong Bayani ng Kalikasan Award for Leadership and awards for other Bayani ng Kalikasan honorees.

Keynote speaker will be Ramon J.P. Paje, secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural

Resources. Topics to be discussed during the summit include "A Report on the Global Climate Change Situation and the Challenges of the COP21"; "Clean Air and Climate Change Challenges to PMAP Companies and their Responses"; "The Role of Human Resource Managers in Empowering Employees and their Communities in Environmental Management"; "Presentation of Breakthrough Technologies and Innovations, Partnerships and Financing Alternatives for Climate Change Mitigation Projects"; and "A Web of Life: The Interrelatedness of Climate Change Issues and the Urgency of a United Action to Save Our Mother Earth."

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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Mobilize all resources to stop Mt. Apo fire

THE drought brought about by the El Niño phenomenon has not only parched farms in many provinces of the country. It has also dried up wide areas on and around Mounts Apo, Kitanglad, and Kalatungan which are now being destroyed by fire.

The fire on Mt. Apo in Southern Davao has been raging for over two weeks now. Since it started on Holy Saturday last month, it has destroyed over 350 hectares of forests and grassland. It now threatens to spread to the rest of the 7,000-hectare forest.

The Mt. Apo fire is believed to have started in the Kidapawan City trail and may have been caused by campers. Workers of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Department of Interior and Local Government, the Bureau of Fire Protection, and local governments have formed seven composite teams to establish fire lines to keep the fire from spreading, while the Philippine Air Force sent a helicopter to drop buckets of water on the fire. But their combined efforts have so far failed to stop the spread of the fire.

To the north in Bukidnon, fires have also broken out on two other mountains – Mt. Kitanglad and Mt. Kalatungan. Five fires on

Mt. Kitanglad have already destroyed some 850 hectares of forest and grassland. The Mt. Kalatungan fire has damaged 143 hectares.

West of Mt. Apo, Mt. Matutum in South Cotabato has now been closed to mountaineers after two forest fires on its southern slope damaged five hectares of grassland and another fire on the other side of the mountain damaged a hectare of land.

But it is the fire on Mt. Apo which is causing great concern as it has already destroyed a very wide area and now threatens forest habitats of the nearly extinct Philippine Eagle. The Philippine Army's Eastern Mindanao Command has now joined in the operation and two helicopters are bringing in buckets of water to put out the fire.

Mt. Apo, the country's highest peak, is considered by DENR as the center of endemism in Mindanao, with one of the highest land-based biodiversity in the country. It is on the World Heritage list of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The fire has raged for 18 days now and all possible resources must be mobilized to stop it before it destroys all of its rich plant and animal life, not the last of which is our national bird, the Philippine Eagle.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR calls for more planting of mangroves

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB) has called for public participation in the sustainable way of planting mangroves, citing the important

role of mangroves as abundant source of food and fuel, as well as defense from storm surges.

ERDB Director Henry Adornado encouraged companies, people's organizations, non-government organizations, and local government units to partner with the governmental in enhancing the sustainability of mangrove plantations through Integrated

Pest Management (IPM).

"The bureau highlights its efforts of communicating the importance and know-how of practicing IPM to ensure the survival of mangroves planted in the Philippines," Adornado said.

The IPM principle involves the use of science-based techniques that will ensure that all seedlings planted will survive and grow, he added.

The Standard

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RAIN DANCE WON'T PREVENT ANOTHER FIRE

THERE are two Mount Apos—the dormant volcano and the social volcano. One is a towering peak. The other is a pit of despair for those living on its shadows.



PLUMBLINE

PASTOR
APOLLO
QUIBOLOY

There is the Mount Apo on fire, and there's the combustible social situation in the communities ringing it.

There's a common thread piercing the two: El Niño.

The prolonged dry spell has left Mindanao bone dry. Theories abound on who lit the fire that's razing the slopes of our highest peak. Whoever or whatever started the blaze, this can't be disputed: drought has made the country's southern region a tinder box.

Water may be scarce, but what Apo does not lack are lovers. It has a fan base, many of whom rushed to fight the conflagration, with little tools, lugging a full pack of guts and grit.

Many lessons can be learned here. One is that it is time to station a detachment of well-equipped,

regular forest rangers-cum-firefighters not just in Mount Apo but in all major forest parks.

The Apo national park covers almost 55,000 hectares. But if the buffer zone of 9,000 hectares is factored in, the area to be protected expands to 64,000 hectares.

“

**People are the best
barometers of a crisis
like El Niño.**

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Reports have it that there are just 16 guards, mostly temporary hires, patrolling this broad expanse of greenery. Halve this into two shifts, and 8 men, in theory, have their boots on the ground at any given time. And they're guarding the crown jewel of biodiversity, home to airborne wonders like the Philippine eagle and endemic flora under the forest canopy.

The problem is that nationally, there are only one ranger of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for every 3,500 hectares of forestland. There are, however, ways to raise an army of mountain sentinels. One is by recruiting what is called "force-multipliers."

For example, government can enrol upland dwellers under the conditional cash transfer, with an added "condition" that in exchange for cash received, they have to plant trees and protect wildlife from being poached. DENR can also enter into stewardship arrangements with *lumads*, civic groups or cooperatives interested in regreening logged-over areas. There is also the National Regreening Program, a megabuck project of P25 billion to date. Contractors can act as shields against fire and as whistleblowers against poachers.

Climate change has affected even the rain-drenched pinnacle of Apo and our other mountains. The last time Apo burned was probably when it erupted, date unknown.

If you have coffee with Davao old-timers, they will regale you with stories on how showers would pour on downtown Davao like clockwork every late afternoon. This scheduled precipitation is now a thing of the past. So with the belief that the mighty Apo is fire-proof.

The next time a Philippine mountain is ablaze, let's

Page 2 - Rain Dance Won't
Prevent Another fire

have aerial firefighting assets ready to be scrambled, and on the ground, well-equipped firemen. You can't fight fire with a rain dance.

Two years ago, I already warned that one way for the coming El Niño to intensify into the perfect storm is for government to respond with a drought of ideas. I added my voice to those clamoring for an early El Niño mitigation plan because I believe that it would already be late to look for water after the well has dried.

I have lived through two previous nasty El Niños—the one from 1982-83 and the 1997-98 edition. In those two episodes, large swaths of Mindanao turned sepia brown. In 1983, the drought was so bad that Jetmatic water pumps in many parts of Mindanao became useless. Fields were littered with the desiccated remains of corn and rice plants.

I am seeing the same tell-tale signs today. The stream where I often take long morning walks has completely dried up and to think it is near a watershed. Children of farmers have come up to me with mobile phone photos of damaged crops and soil cracked from lack of water. With no money to pay for tuition, the images are equivalent to incinerated dreams.

In 1983, the population of the Philippines was 52 million, a little more than half of what it is now. There are twice more mouths to feed today and yet the size of farm lands has remained the same. I can just imagine how many lives the El Niño of 2016 has disrupted.

Government tallies damages based on hectares destroyed, down to the last centavo of the value of crops lost. Human toll is hardly counted, such as the malnutrition food scarcity inflicts on women and children. We don't measure the severity of drought with humidity, rainfall or moisture. People are the best barometers of a crisis like El Niño.

I believe that farmers who are protesting are driven by the most compelling ideology—that of the empty stomach. And in helping them, we don't census first their political beliefs for compassion is never predicated on these.

We provide comfort and succour to the needy regardless of the political beliefs they subscribe to. In war, captured enemies are even fed. So why can't we do that to our fellowmen?



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Nature helping douse Apo fire

DIGOS CITY—Mother Nature came to the rescue of Mount Apo late Friday by dousing fire-hit areas in the country's highest peak with moderate rainfall, officials said on Saturday.

While the volume of rain needed to fully quell the fire, which started on March 26, was at least 30 millimeters, Jean Galicia, weather forecaster at the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) in Southern Mindanao, said Friday's rainfall, at 8.6 mm, nevertheless helped slow down the combustion.

"This is not a result of cloud-seeding operations. It's natural rain. It also rained in some sections of Kidapawan City, Davao City and Davao del Sur province," she said.

Harry Camoro, spokesperson for the Incident Management Team on the Mt. Apo fire, said the rain had lessened the threat of the spread of the fire, particularly in areas outside the fire lines.

"Even if the fire heads were persisting, the risk is now minimal," Camoro said.

He said the deliberate burning of grasses at the end of fire lines on Friday helped in lessening the risk of the spread of the blaze because there were now fewer dry materials for the fire heads to consume.

Camoro said efforts had been focused on preventing the fire from starting in other areas, especially now that one of the helicopters used in fire-fighting operations had been grounded for maintenance.

Two other choppers continue to douse fire heads and more areas with crushed ice and gelatin, he said.

This year's fire on Mt. Apo was described as among the worst incidents to have hit the mountain in years.

In T'boli town in South Cotabato province, authorities also restricted access to Lake Holon, one of the popular local tourist destinations, after two major forest fires occurred there recently.

The lake became the second destination in South Cotabato to have been shut down to tourism activities, after Mount Matutum, due to grass or forest fires.

T'boli Mayor Dibu Tuan said about 10 hectares of forests near the lake's main outlet were damaged by fire.

The fire broke out last week, barely a month after the 304-ha Lake Holon was reopened to visitors. The closure, from Jan. 11 to March 5, was ordered to allow the lake and its surrounding area to "recuperate" after hosting more than 700 visitors during the Christmas season.

Milagros Lorca, head of the South Cotabato Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office, said the Mt. Matutum fire had been stopped.

"The situation on both sites are now under control, and clearing operations are ongoing to prevent possible break-outs in the coming days," Lorca said.

The first major fire on Matutum broke out on March 23. It was followed by another fire on April 2 that gobbled up 90 ha of grass and forest lands.

At least 5 ha more were damaged in a subsequent fire. *Reports from Orlando Dinoy and Edwin Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao*

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ERDB to public: Plant mangroves properly

IN the wake of Supertyphoon Yolanda that struck the country three years ago, Filipinos learned an important lesson—the need to protect the mangroves.

Filipinos realized the important role that mangroves play in the environment. While mangroves provide an abundant source of food and fuel, it also has a very important role in saving coastal communities against storm and storm surges by acting as a coastal barrier.

Today, more individuals and organizations are engaging on tree planting, specifically on mangrove planting.

However, though the efforts are called for, the research arm of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB), calls for the participation of the public to practice sustainable planting of mangroves.

According to ERDB Director Dr. Henry A. Adornado, the agency is encouraging people's organizations, non-governmental organizations and local government units to partner with the government in enhancing the sustainability of mangrove plantations established through practicing Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

"This year the bureau highlights its efforts of communicating the importance and know-how in practicing IPM to ensure the survival of mangroves planted in the

Philippines," Adornado said. IPM involves the use of science-based techniques and processes that will ensure that all seedlings planted will survive and grow, he added.

Cynthia C. Marquez, ERDB's senior science research specialist on forest tree insect pest and diseases, explained the four basic prerequisites for a sustainable mangrove planting. She said the use of IPM should start with the selection of quality planting materials.

Another is studying the area where the mangroves will be planted, ensuring proper transplanting of mangrove propagules, and maintaining and monitoring the planted areas.

ERDB researcher Marcelina V. Pachon said although there are numerous ways to control pest infestation, the importance of preventing them lies in the proper mangrove planting.

"Before undertaking any mangrove planting, it is important to gather baseline information on the area to be planted," she said.

The DENR has already released Department Memorandum Circular 2014-06, which provides information on baselining protocols.

Adornado said for 2016, ERDB is expecting to make the baseline information available and accessible to the public.

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Makiling tree planting can be seen online

PLANT your tree and see it from anywhere in the globe. This is an interesting feature of a unique and lasting experience for the participants of the upcoming Fifth Asean Plus Three Junior Science Odyssey (APTJSO) the Philippines will host in June as they are set to embark on a one-of-a-kind tree planting.

Besides laboratory skills competition, poster presentations and project pitching will test students from the 10-Asean member-states, as well as representatives from China, Sweden, Taiwan and Korea, the participants will be planting and monitoring trees on Mount Makiling through the Individual Tangible Response to Ecosystem Enhancement Program (iTREE).

Organized by the Makiling Center for Mountain Ecosystems' (MCME), iTREE is an offshoot of MCME's Habitat Care Program, a tree-planting and nurturing activity on forest rehabilitation and restoration initiative.

It uses modern technologies, such as geographic information system, the Internet, information and mapping technologies, to allow personal monitoring online of the planted seedlings. "It encourages interested parties to visit the iTREE planting areas and plant trees for the world to see," said Dr. Nathaniel Bantayan, MCME director and an iTREE planter himself.

For the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB)—partners in the hosting of the event—this feature of the Science Odyssey will make the event "more than just a competition" for the participants.

"We've been part of the APTJSO for four years and I can say this activity makes our

hosting modernly unique with this iTREE feature," Science Education Institute Director Dr. Josette Biyo said.

DOST Undersecretary Rowena Cristina Guevara said the activity will make lasting impression of the country's hosting among the international delegates.

"Aside from retaining our championship, we want to make a greater and lasting impact in this hosting," Guevara said. "We want them to see how serious we are in celebrating the role of the rainforest in mitigating climate change and in instilling the value of conservation, preservation and sustainability among the youth, not just in the Philippines, but in the whole of Asean."

The Philippines will host for the first time this year's APTJSO from June 13 to 17 at UPLB and shall banner the theme "Climate Change and the Rainforest."

It will be participated in by around 84 students and 28 teachers. Two campuses from the Philippine Science High School System will represent the national team and try to defend its four-year best finishes in biology, chemistry and physics laboratory skills competitions. The tree planting will cap the weeklong event, along with a community visit by the delegates in various scientific institutions in Los Baños.

"We are confident that the international delegates will get to see the Filipino commitment in fighting climate change throughout this event," Guevara said. Asean includes the 10 countries of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

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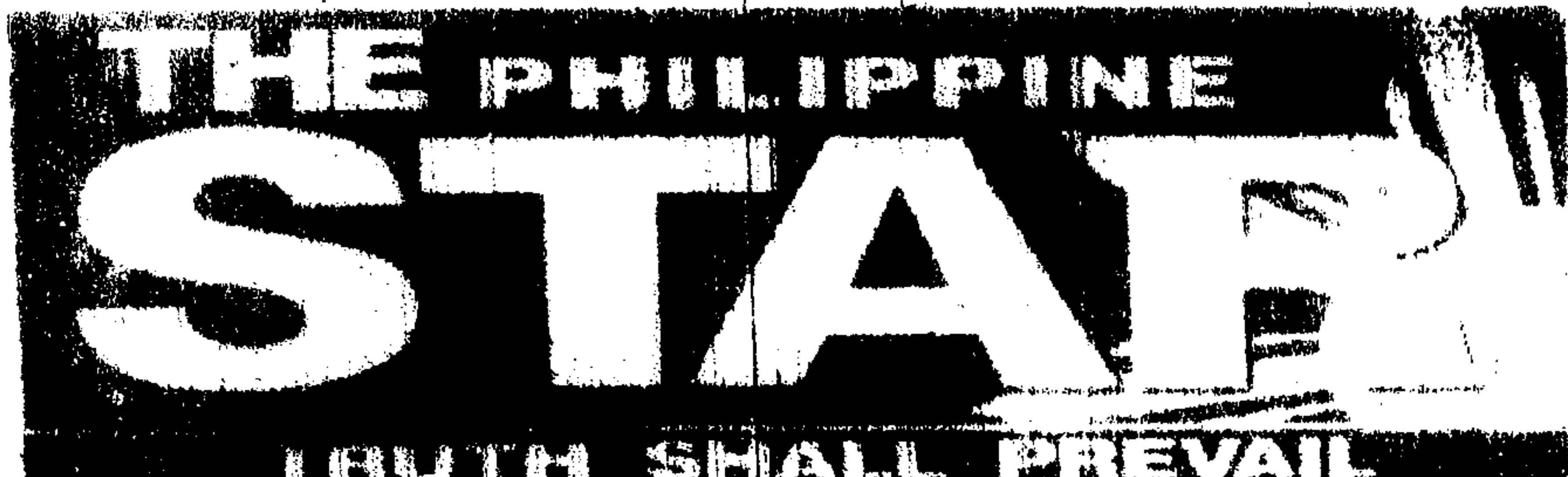
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**FOR THE FILIPINO
FAMILY IN A GREEN
ENVIRONMENT**

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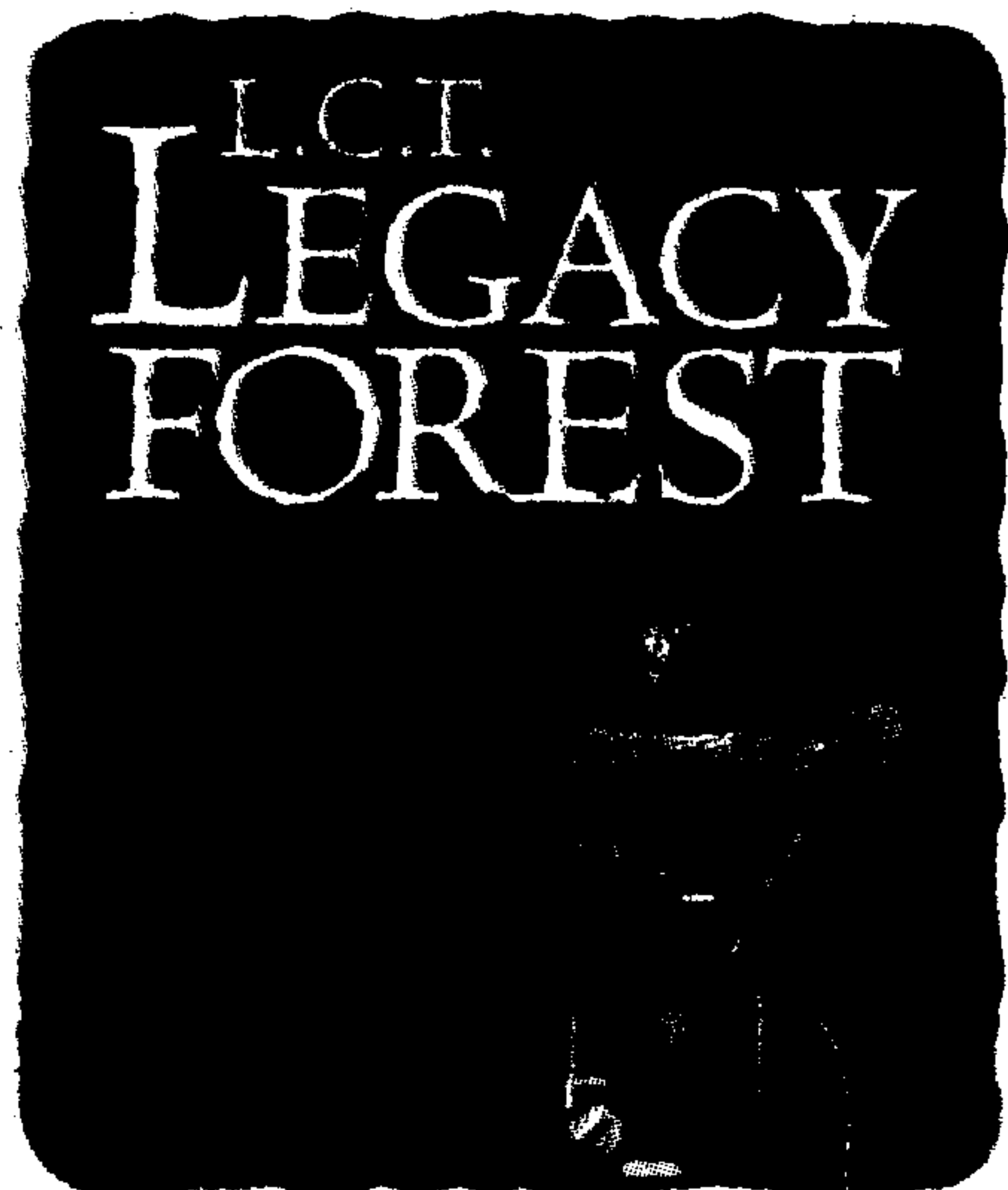
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TAN YAN KEE

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

IN 2014, Tan Yan Kee Foundation, Inc. initiated a three-year plan entitled "Rebuilding the Community and the Environment" which sought to implement strategic and sustainable programs in areas most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The plan includes reforestation activities, housing projects, training and livelihood programs that help encourage Filipino families in the depressed areas to become more productive and enjoy a better quality of life.



During the first year, TYKFI potted over a million seedlings and planted 120,000 seedlings of various species on 240 hectares of land in Quezon and Laguna. In 2015, the Legacy Forest farmers were able to grow and nurture a total of 635,660

seedlings in Sta. Fe, Nueva Vizcaya and Carranglan, Nueva Ecija. During the planting period, the farmers planted 206 hectares of fuelwood and 73 hectares of timber for a total of 279 hectares in Carranglan, Nueva Ecija. Among the wood species planted were ipil-ipil, narra and anchoan dilau. Furthermore, the Foundation also implemented the planting of mangroves in Brgy. Manocmanoc, Boracay Island and Brgy. Las-Ud, Sta. Cruz, Ilocos Sur.

This ambitious goal of reforesting thousands of hectares of denuded land is only made possible by the work being done in the seedling nurseries. The new TYKFI nurseries located in the provinces of Nueva Ecija and Nueva Vizcaya are maintained by local residents, providing income for them and their families. Once planted, these reforested areas need special care and attention, and so provides another opportunity for livelihood generation. Forest caretakers also provide the stewardship and protection of patches of natural forests on a total of 285 hectares of land where wildlife including deer and wild boars still roam and are expected to grow in number with the successful reforestation project.

Florencio and Marie Corpuz of Carranglan, who have three children aged 10, 9 and 4, are very grateful for the chance given to local residents by TYKFI to work at the nurseries and the forest areas. They wish that the Legacy Project would continue because they know that its aim is to protect the forests and provide livelihood.

Dominador Demorin, a construction worker from the same town, is very happy that his wife's work in the nursery helps augment the family income. His wife, Jocelyn, finished high school but could not find work in the province. As farmers, they can only find a planting job about twice a year during planting seasons at very low wages. Since they had nothing to earn for the rest of the year, they have been very grateful to the Foundation for the livelihood generation of its reforestation project. Asked about the TYKFI's presence in their community, the Demorins said: "Malaki po ang naitutulong ng Foundation sa amin. Nasasapatan po ang pang-araw-araw naming kailangan." (The Foundation is a great help to us in making both ends meet.)

The Carranglan team's plantation establishment activities included baseline establishment, lay-outing, strip brushing, staking and hauling of seedlings before actual planting. After planting the seedlings in designated areas, the LCT Legacy Forest farmers also conduct plantation protection activities through the construction of firebreaks along strategic areas of the plantation and along roads. To prevent forest fires and earn additional income, the farmers also planted crops like cassava and fruit trees like malaruhat, lipote, marang, tigang and malaikmo.

Soon, TYKFI will start construction work on the LCT Legacy Forest Project's first water impounding project in the Carranglan forest that will ensure continued water supply to help nourish the growing seedlings, replace ground water and prevent forest fire. Meanwhile, the farmers closely guard the LCT Legacy Forest 24/7. They are determined to watch over their new trees that will nurture and protect them when the fiercest of climate changes come to threaten their homes and families. They need to care for the source of their livelihood, food and protection of the future generations.

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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

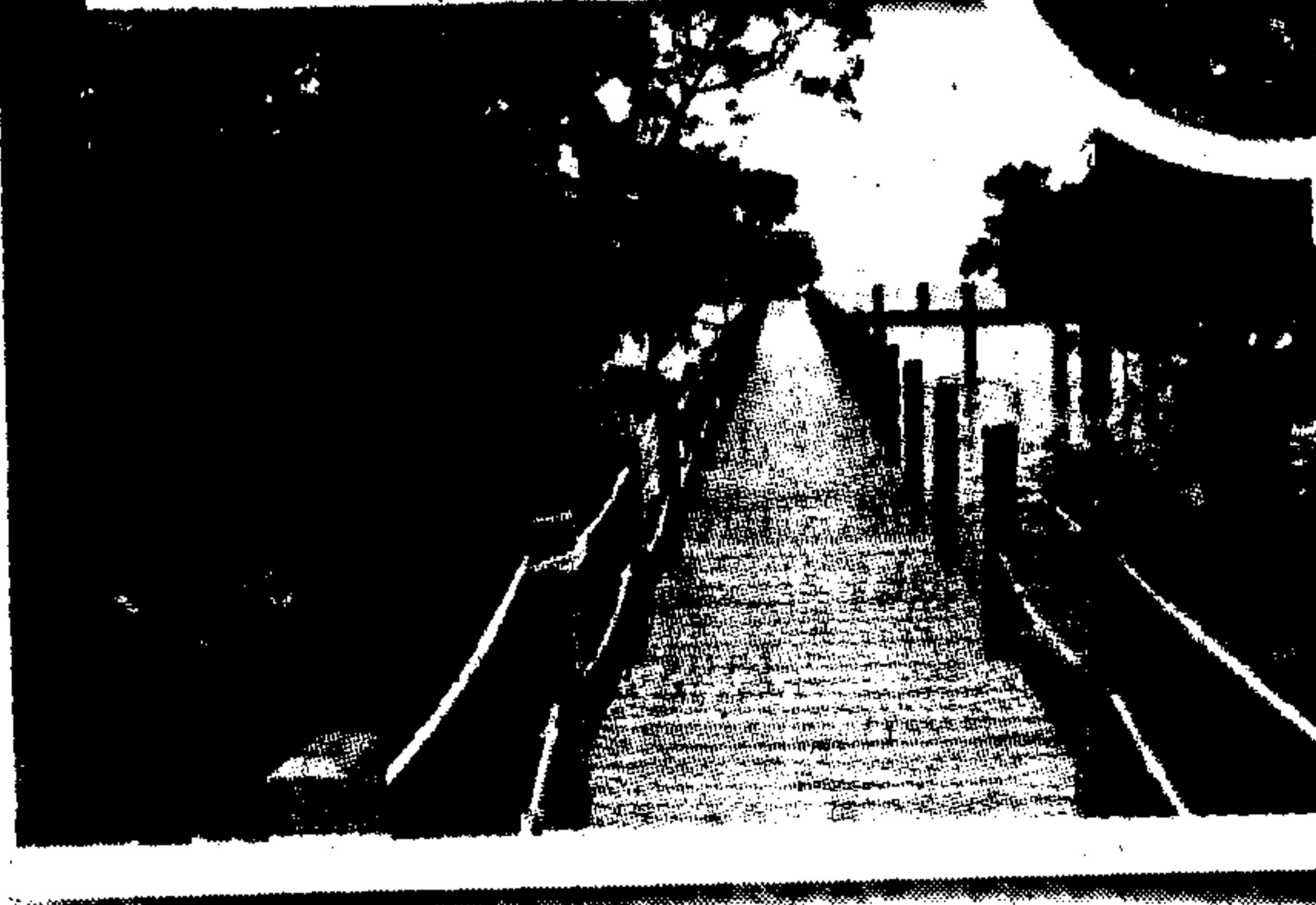
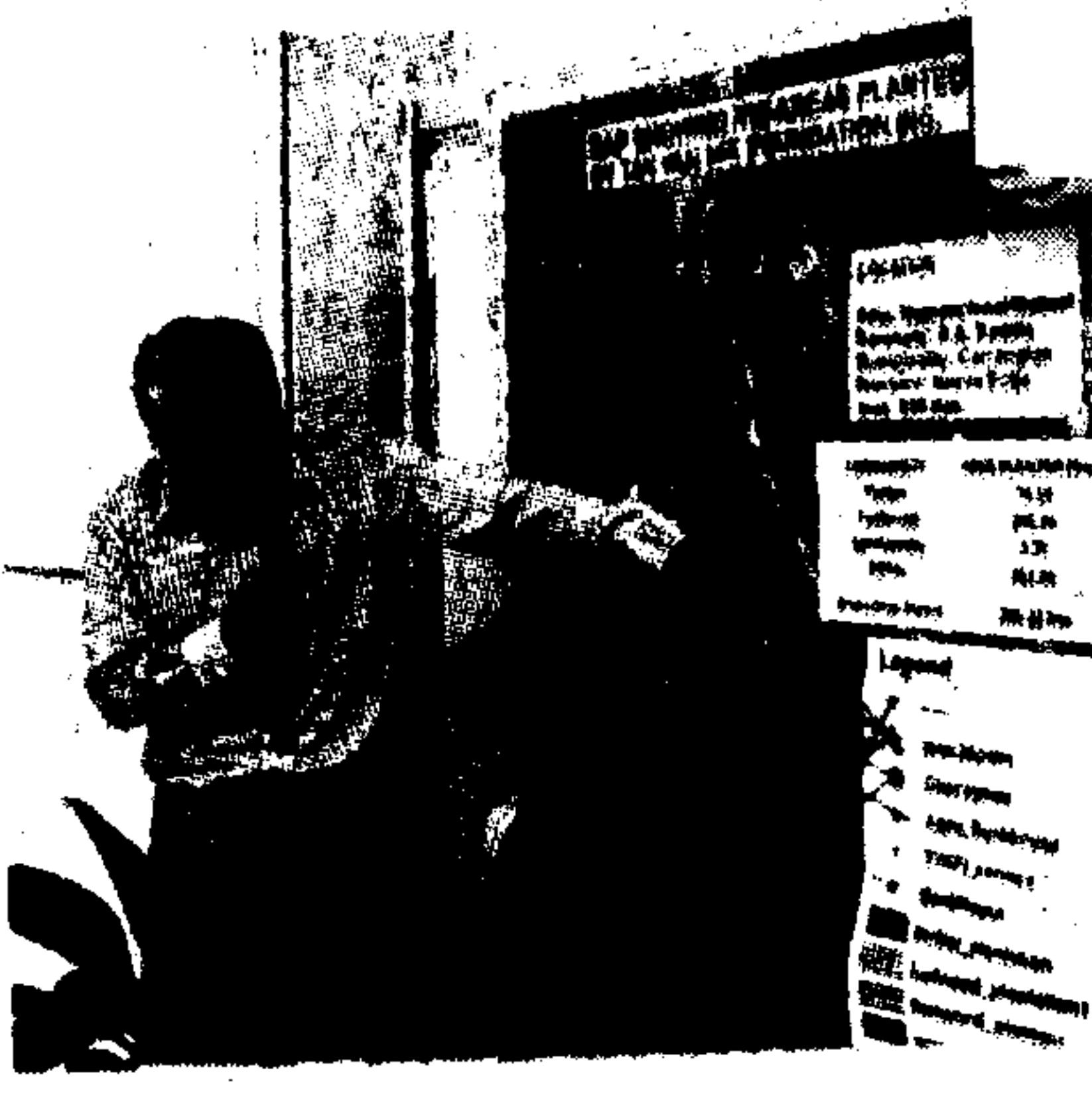
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TAN YAN KEE . . .



3 YEARS



TAN YAN KEE
FOUNDATION, INC.

A Foundation of the Lucio C. Tan Group of Companies



LT GROUP, INC.



Philippine
Airlines



ABSOLUT Distillers, Inc.



FOREMOST FARMS, INCORPORATED

THE EXHIBIT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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Espino claims dev't of eco park, no illegal mining

Pangasinan Governor Amado T. Espino, Jr. assured that no illegal mining activities have been done along the Lingayen Gulf and what was being done in the area was to develop an eco-tourism zone.

With this, the Governor asked the Sandiganbayan 6th Division to dismiss the two counts of graft charged against him over allegations illegally mining black sand in the Lingayen Gulf area in 2011.

In his omnibus motion, his lawyers told the court that it should "dismiss outright the charges against the Accused for lack of probable cause."

"These cases arose from the efforts of the Provincial Government of Pangasinan to develop a portion of the Lingayen Gulf Coast as an eco-tourism zone," the counsels said.

After then President Fidel Ramos declared in 1993 Lingayen Gulf as an environmentally critical area subject to regulations, Espino continued the work started by former Governor Oscar Orbos to develop the area as an eco-tourism zone which was approved by the Lingayen Gulf Coastal Area Management Commission that was set up by the former chief executive.

During the course of a golf course project under Espino, the lawyers said

that soil composition analysis by the Alexandra Mining and Oil Ventures (AMOV) discovered "the presence of metallic and unwanted minerals in the soil within the site of the Golf Course Project."

"There was no other way to grow grass on the golf course and hence, to build the golf course itself, without removing the unwanted minerals from the soil," said the lawyers who pointed out that soil remediation had to be undertaken to remove the unwanted minerals.

"In order to undertake the recommended soil remediation, AMOV itself applied for a Small Scale Mining Permit (SSMP) with the Provincial Government," they added.

The lawyers assured that "while both soil composition analysis and soil remediation necessitate extraction of minerals from the soil, such processes do not involve 'mining activities' as defined under Republic Act No. 7076 - the Small Scale Mining Act, and/or Republic Act No. 7942 - the Philippine Mining Act of 1995."

The counsels said that Espino issued the SSMP "in the honest belief that the extraction of the minerals, as a mere preparatory phase in the development of the area into a golf course, was akin to small-scale mining, even as such activity was purely incidental to the real purpose of the development."

However, the Department of En-

vironment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) stopped the activities of AMOV and advised the provincial government to issue instead Government Gratuitous Permit since the activity only "involves extraction and scraping off loose minerals in the soil."

In 2011, the provincial government entered into a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with Xypher Builders Inc. to assist in the preparatory works of the

golf course project but "none of which includes the conduct of any mining-related activities."

"Xypher was not granted authority by the Provincial Government to undertake small-scale mining, mineral processing, or mineral exploration," stressed the lawyers.

Acting on the recommendations of the EMB, the Provincial Mining Regulatory Board (PMRB) endorsed Xypher in securing the gratuitous permit from the provincial government which also issued a Mineral Ore Export Permit (MOEP) "for the purpose of properly disposing the unwanted magnetite sand, consistent with Xypher obligations under the MOA."

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WALA akong paki kung sinoman ang bumubuo ng bagong tatag na iBBM o Ibalik ang Bilyones ng Mamamayan. Sabi ng kanilang spokwa na si Rafaela David, kailangan daw ibalik lahat ni vice presidential candidate Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos (BBM) ang mga nakuha niya kay pork barrel queen Janet Lim Napoles?

Wala rin tayong paki kung manalo man o matalo si BBM sa pagkabise-Presidente. Ang isyu na isinama ng kampo ni Rafaela David, iBBM, ay kakenkoyan sa totoong postura. Teka, rehistradong organisasyon ba kayo?

Papalampak sana tayo o baka sumama pa sa iBBM kung LAHAT as in LAHAT ng tumanggap ng payola kay Janet Napoles ay sasampahan ng kaso. Bakit si Bongbong Marcos lang, mga tuta ni Benigno Aquino III? Garapal, eh.

Ang mga kalaban ng rehimeng



I-BBM? HU YU?

Aquino ay sa milyon-milyon nasa-sangkot at puro kinasuhan, may naipakulong pa. Pero bakit kayo sa rehimen na puro bilyon-bilyon ang kinasasangkutan ay hindi man lang nakakasuhan?

Tanong ko sa inyo, Rafaela at iBBM, sino ba talaga kayo sa lipunang Filipino?

Ang Department of Agriculture batay sa Commission on Audit ay may nawawalang P4.2 bilyon. Ang DILG sa kamay ni Mar Roxas ay hindi maipaliwanag ang pagkawala ng mahigt P7B. Humigit-kumulang

din sa P4B ang tinatanong kung saan dinala ng DENR.

Pinakamalala ang DOTC sa kamay nina Mar Roxas at Jun Abaya na hindi na kayang sumahin ng pinakamalaking calculator ang nilaspag nila pero wala pa rin tino ang MRT3, LRT at mismo ang NAIA! At 'yung presidential fund/pork barrel na halos P1 trilyon sa kamay ng inyong dilawang lider, kasama ang Malampaya Fund, may aksyon ba kayo?

i-BBM? PUNYETA!

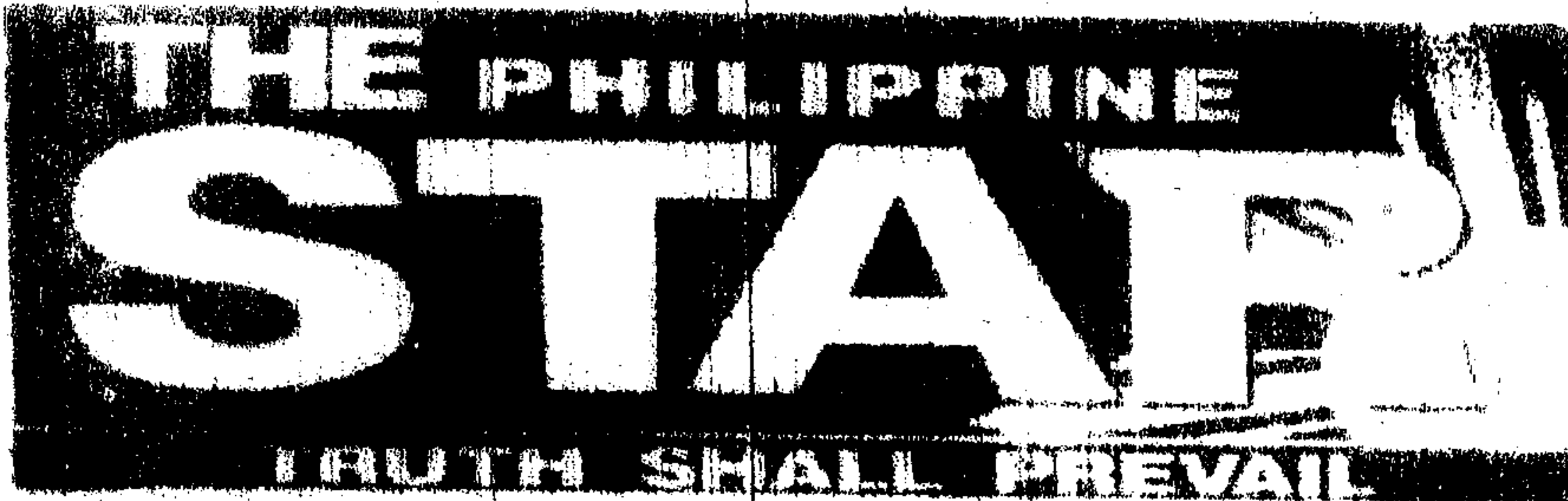
Masyado kayong nagpapaka-

tuta sa inyong mga amo, eh. Aminin man ninyo o hindi, kargado kayo ng pondo para wasakin si Senador Bongbong Marcos. Eh, mismong ang inyong lider ay nagwawala sa pangangampanya na binubuhay pilit ang isyu ng MARTIAL LAW. Ano ang takot ng inyong amo kay BBM?

Kung gusto ninyong linisin ang bansa sa korapsyon, unahin ninyo ang mga nakaupo sa pangunguna ni G. Benigno Da Terd! Hindi lang niya kinunsinti ang pinakamalalang korapsiyon sa kasaysayan ng Pilipinas kundi winawasak niya ang bansa natin.

Isama sa unahan ng kaso ang 188 kongresista na doble-kita para sa impeachment ni SCCJ Renato Corona. Ang opisyal ng DND na bumili ng 21 basura na helicopters. Ang mga opisyal ng SSS, Philhealth at mga kauring GOCCs na nagregalo ng multi-milyon bonus para sa sarili nila! I-BBM, HU YU?

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Bets urged to discuss environmental issues in last debate

By RHODINA VILLANUEA

A coalition with more than 40 environmental organizations is urging the Commission on Elections to ensure that environmental issues are discussed in the third presidential debate since it is important to know the candidates' plans to address climate change.

Green Thumb Coalition aims to get the commitment of candidates to include a

green agenda and to hold the newly elected public officials accountable for their commitments to the environment.

"For a nation frequently hit by natural disasters, it is ironic that environmental issues have been neglected in the current electoral discourse," said Norie Garcia, advocacy and partnerships director of ABS-CBN Lingkod Kapamilya

Foundation Inc.

"Our country is one of the most vulnerable in the continued degradation and rape of our environment. Let us not forget the thousands of deaths brought about by the increase in intensity of typhoons hitting the country due to the rising temperature of the seas and other disasters caused by the continuous

destruction of our natural resources," she added.

SANLAKAS secretary-general Aaron Pedrosa said the first PiliPinas presidential debate held in Cagayan de Oro City failed to discuss key global environmental issues, and this has to change.

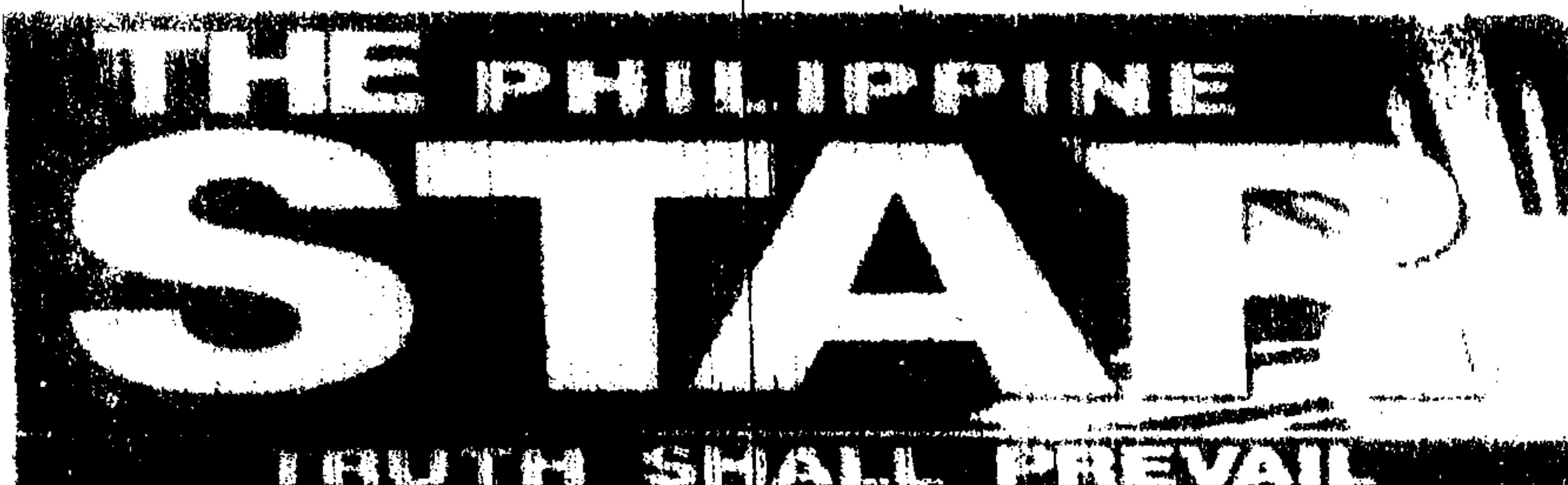
Citing glaring inconsistencies between promises and

deeds, the Green Thumb Coalition noted that the government boasted of their commitments to reduce emissions after the climate change talks in Paris hosted by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. However, it inaugurated a 300-megawatt coal power plant in Davao just a month later.

Launched last February,

Green Thumb also raises environmental awareness by holding rallies in key cities and provinces all over the Philippines where they challenge candidates and incumbent officials to help save and protect the environment.

They are also urging the voters to support pro-environment and pro-people candidates.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Bohol declares state of calamity due to El Niño

TAGBILARAN CITY, Bohol — Drought-triggered damage in Bohol has already reached around P313 million, prompting the Sangguniang Panlalawigan to pass a resolution declaring the province under state of calamity.

This came in response to the resolution of the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRRMC) recommending to the SP to declare the province under a state of calamity due to the dry spell experienced all throughout the province brought about by El Niño phenomenon.

In the resolution, the PDRRMC also calls for an immediate response to the growing needs and concerns of the agriculture sector.

PDRRMC passed the resolution during an emergency meeting on April 7 convened by Gov. Edgar Chatto, the chairman.

Chatto learned of the worsening state of the farms when he attended the Kaabag Congress on April 6.

The PDRRMC cited the report of the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist stating that the total estimated cost of damage for all commodities is around P312.962 million.

The dry spell already spanned for over two months with severe heat posing health concerns aside from drying up the farmlands, and rainfall has been below the average level.

Moreover, the National Irrigation Administration-Region 7 based in Tagbilaran City reported that the four major dams in the province "are nearing its water critical level while

most crops are not yet harvested."

At least 27 towns had also submitted reports to the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist that most of the farmers in their areas hardly carried on up to the terminal stage of the cropping cycle or the stage when they supposedly harvest their crops, because the dry spell damaged their crops.

Larry Pamugas, OIC at the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist and chair of Task Force El Niño, said some farmers were able to harvest a portion of their crops before the dry spell totally affected their entire farmlands.

With this, the PDRRMC finds it pressing to come up with "appropriate mitigation interventions to address and respond to the effects of the dry spell and El Niño phenomenon on the agriculture sector and to the Boholano community in general.

Pamugas said there had been rounds of cloud seeding conducted by the Bureau of Soil and Water Management (BSWM), but recently they have been trying to spot cumulu-nimbus clouds to be able to proceed to more rounds.

The PDRRMC action immediately followed a day after 470 members of Ka-ABAG came in consensus, through the Bohol Provincial Ka-ABAG Federation, to pass a resolution requesting the governor to declare the province in state of calamity due to El Niño phenomenon that caused extreme damage to different crops, farmlands, and small impounding fish ponds of Bohol farmers. **PNA**

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S1 Drought-hit farmers buy food instead of seeds

By Julie Alipala
Inquirer Mindanao

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Vegetable farmer Annaliza Pabayos, 41, had to dip into her savings for the purchase of seeds and farm inputs for the next cropping season in order to buy food.

Pabayos, a resident of Barangay San Roque here, said she had no choice if she did not want her family to starve.

They also had to buy water, which had become expensive because of the long drought that dried up many water sources.

Pabayos said there was nothing to harvest from her vegetable farm, as the crops died last month. "The vegetables did not survive the extreme heat," she said.

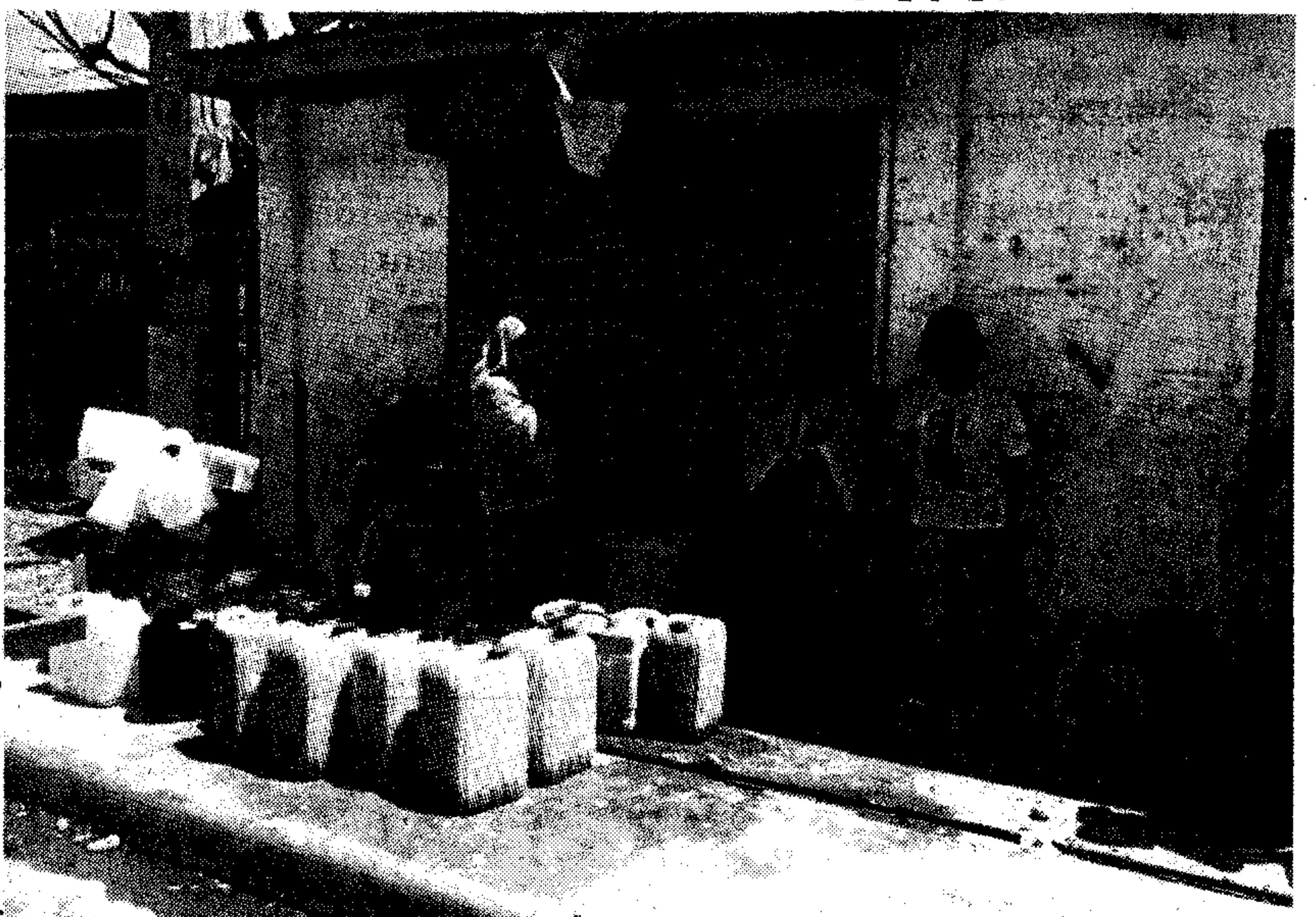
Now, the farm is overgrown with weeds.

To meet the family's daily needs, Pabayos tends a small *sari-sari* store in the village.

In Aurora town in Zamboanga del Sur province, the situation is not much better for Mateo Anlap, a 63-year-old rice farmer.

His rice field is now a wasteland, Anlap said. "I can't even collect leaves to feed the pig."

Anlap sold all of his 200 ducks and some farm animals so the family would have some money to spend and to throw a thanksgiving party for his graduating son.



JULIE S. ALIPALA/INQUIRER MINDANAO

RESIDENTS of Barangay Rio Hondo in Zamboanga City await their rationed supply of water as the intense heat dries up water sources in the city.

Browned grass

Though he still has a few farm animals left, Anlap said he was not sure they would survive if the drought continued. "Even grasses had turned brown and gray," he said.

Pabayos and Anlap are among almost 10,000 farmers in Western Mindanao who bear the brunt of the protracted drought. The number is still growing, Ray Anthony Credo, El Niño focal person of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in the region, told the INQUIRER.

Western Mindanao consists of the provinces of Zamboanga Sibugay, Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga del Norte, and the cities of Pagadian and Zamboanga.

As of April 5, the long dry spell attributed to the weather phenomenon known as El Niño had already damaged 12,881.80 hectares of farms planted to rice, corn and other high-value crops in the region. Income lost so far had been placed at P466.334 million.

Hardest hit was Zamboanga del Sur with P182 million in crop losses, followed by Zamboanga Sibugay with P177.4 million. Zamboanga del Norte lost P83 million and this city suffered P24 million in damage.

But Credo said starvation did not seem to be a problem as yet. "We haven't received reports of farmers going hungry or demanding rice like what happened in Kidapawan City," he said, referring to the five-day protest in North Cotabato that resulted in the death of three people.

If farmers in Western Mindanao got hungry, Credo said, the National Food Authority in the region could immediately provide assistance. "The National Food Authority is mandated to set aside a certain number of bags [to help farmers]," he said.

Rice is available if farmers ask for it, Credo said, adding that his agency had instituted mitigating measures to prevent incidents like what happened in Kidapawan.

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In Zamboanga City, officials said they would not wait for farmers to demand rice subsidy. The City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, chaired by Mayor Maria Isabelle Salazar, has approved a resolution for the distribution of rice to affected communities, according to city agriculturist Diosdado Palacat.

Each farming household affected by the drought has been allocated 25 kilograms of rice.

The city social welfare office, Palacat said, would also provide cash-for-work opportunities.

Credo acknowledged that assistance to farmers in the region, particularly for planting and irrigation for the next cropping season, was delayed.

"Much as we want to give aid, the funds are still stalled at the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). Without these funds, we cannot immediately help our farmers if they start planting or if the rains come," he said.

Waiting for funds

The DA regional office plans to acquire more than 16,000 bags of certified rice seeds and an equal number of bags of corn seeds for distribution, as well as to distribute materials for construction of shallow tube wells, Credo said.

Money for these programs has not yet been released. Credo said the agency was hoping that the DBM would release the El Niño mitigating funds before May.

"We need this before May. May is usually the start of the rainy season and seeds have to be distributed," Credo said.

THE REPORT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Reveal stand on environmental issues, presidential bets urged

By ELLALYN B. DE VERA

A coalition of environmentalists Saturday called on the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to ensure that environmental issues are tackled comprehensively in the poll body-organized PiliPinas presidential debates series stressing the importance for the candidates to spell out their plans to address climate change and its impacts.

Stressing how important it was for the candidates to detail out how they intend to address climate change and the latter's impact on the environment, Norie Garcia, Advocacy and Partnerships Director of ABS-CBN's Lingkod Kapamilya Foundation, Inc. said, "For a nation frequently hit by natural disasters, it is ironic that environmental issues have been neglected in the current

electoral discourse. Our country is one of the most vulnerable to the continued degradation and rape of our environment. Let us not forget the thousands of deaths brought about by the increase in intensity of typhoons hitting the country due to the rising temperature of the seas and other disasters caused by the continuous destruction of our natural resources."

The Foundation is one of the members comprising the Green Thumb Coalition which is made up of 40 national and local environmental organizations.

The coalition was formed to get the commitment of national and local candidates to include a green agenda, and to hold newly-elected public officials accountable for their positions on, and commitments to, their environmental mandates.

Sanlakas Secretary-General lawyer Aaron Pedrosa said the first and second PiliPinas presidential debate, held in Cagayan de Oro and Cebu respectively, failed to discuss key global environmental issues. "This indifference has to change," Pedrosa stressed.

COMELEC was asked by the coalition to use the forthcoming third and last Presidential Debates to be held in Pangasinan later this month as a platform to raise the discussion on issues such as climate change, mining, land use, and renewable energy transition, among others.

Citing glaring inconsistencies between promises and actual deeds, Green Thumb explained how the Philippine government boasted of their commitments on reducing emissions after the 21st Conference of Parties hosted by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, but then allowed the inauguration of a 300-megaWatt coal power plant in Davao just a month later.

"Not only has our government shown its false commitment to the global environmental goals but it has also revealed its insincerity to lead genuine progress for sustainability and environmental security," said Gerry Arances, convenor for the Center for Energy, Ecology and Development. "The price we have to pay for our neglect of the environment may be too much for us in the future."

Launched last February, Green Thumb aims to raise environmental awareness by holding rallies in key cities and provinces all over the Philippines. In these events, they intend to challenge electoral candidates and incumbent officials to pledge commitment in saving and protecting the environment through genuine reforms, ensuring comprehensive development.

The coalition is also asking the electorate to support pro-environment and pro-people candidates.

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Environmentalists seek options to Davao waste-to-energy facility

By Maya M. Padillo *Correspondent*

DAVAO CITY — Environmental group Interface Development Interventions (IDIS) has called on the city government to look at other options before deciding to give the go signal to a proposed Japanese waste-to-energy (WTE) facility.

IDIS Executive Director Mary Ann V. Fuertes said in an interview that many factors must be considered before resorting to WTE.

"I don't think it's a good choice for Davao City having at least 60% to 70% of its wastes are compostable and recyclable and one should consider the suitability of wastes, its volume and composition," Ms. Fuertes said.

"Our waste composition is very different from Japan. It is best also to listen from experts who are saying differently from the proponent of the project," she added.

Ms. Fuertes also said WTE is a form of incineration and it is forbidden under the Clean Air Act.

She recommended consulting with experts such as Dr. Jorge Emmanuel of Health Care Without Harm, which promotes non-burn waste management systems, and local government units that have successful programs such as Nueva Vizcaya province and San Mateo town in Isabela.

"We should try to learn from them first," she said.

Nippon Steel & Sumikin Engineering Technology presented the WTE to the Davao City government following a feasibility study supported by the Japan International Coop-

SHIN MOJI PLANT —
Nippon Steel & Sumikin
Engineering's largest
gasification plant



eration Agency (JICA) under its Collaboration Program with the Private Sector for Disseminating Japanese Technology.

Members of the study team from Nippon Steel & Sumikin cited an analysis conducted by the University of Mindanao, which indicates that the city's waste materials for electricity have a calorific value of 1372 kilocalories or heat unit.

The technology is used in Japan's Kitakyushu City.

JICA representatives have also met with Mayor Rodrigo R. Duterte on the project, but the mayor said the plan will have to be decided upon by the next local administration.

Councilor Marissa S. Abella, chair of the committee on agriculture and food, has expressed support for the Japanese technology as an alternative to developing new landfills.

"We've been throwing our garbage in the landfill and we know it costs us. Supposedly the landfill should be used for a longer time but as of today the landfill is good until five years only. There is a need to build a new facility to reduce waste through the waste-to-energy technology," Ms. Abella said in an interview.

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

extrastory2000@gmail.com

Clark's 'Green City' breaks ground today

By Othel V. Campos

PRESIDENT Benigno Aquino III is leading the groundbreaking rites for Clark Green City today, heralding the start of the development of the country's first smart, green and disaster-resilient metropolis in Tarlac province.

The president will lay the time capsule of what will become the country's most modern and global metropolis.

He will be accompanied by Cabinet members including Public Works Secretary Rogelio Singson and Economic Planning Secretary

Emmanuel Esguerra.

"It's all system go for the Clark Green City," Bases Conversion and Development Authority president and chief executive Arnel Paciano Casanova said.

The development of the 9,450-hectare Clark Green City will be in several phases. The first phase covering 288 hectares will be developed by BCDA and joint-venture partner Filinvest Land Inc.

The Filinvest parcel will have two distinct components—an industrial zone and a mixed-used development with residential, office, commercial and institutional elements.

Casanova said Clark Green City was perfectly suited to become a back-up government center, as it was designed to have a disaster-resilient facility, with measures to combat the ill effects of climate change and other natural disasters.

Clark Green City's favorable geological con-

ditions also make it less vulnerable to earthquakes. The absence of a fault line in the vicinity makes the site ideal for long-term development.

The city will also be spared from the damaging effects of super typhoons, with the Zambales Mountain Range and the Sierra Madre Mountain Range serving as natural barriers. Flooding will also be remote due to its high elevation.

Casanova said Clark Green City would showcase the country's capability to build a sustainable and modern city.

"The city will adopt smart and green features like compact walkable communities with generous open spaces, bike lanes, mass transportation, smart utilities, high-bandwidth connectivity, protected biodiversity, energy efficiency and urban farming, among others, making it one of the country's most livable cities of the future," he said.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Gov't not keen on declaring state of calamity over El Niño

By GENALYN D. KABILING

The government is not yet keen on placing the country under a state of calamity despite the adverse

impact of El Niño dry weather on the agriculture sector.

For now, Presidential Communications Operations Secretary Herminio Coloma Jr. said concerned authorities have taken steps to mitigate the blow of El Niño particularly in ensuring stable food supply and prices.

"Batay sa ulat ng El Niño Task Force sa pagdinig ng Senate Committee on Finance noong nakaraang Biyernes, Abril 8, naibsan sa pamamagitan ng iba't ibang programang ipinatupad ng pamahalaan ang epekto ng tagtuyot sa aspeto ng pagiging sapat ang suplay ng pagkain at sa pagpapanatiling stable ang presyo ng mga pangunahing bilihin (Based on the report of El Niño Task Force in the Senate Committee on Finance last Friday April 8, the government has eased the impact of the drought on the supply of food and keeping prices stable through various programs)," Coloma said over government radio.

Coloma said the task force has crafted the Roadmap to Address the Impact of El Niño (RAIN) on food security, energy security, health and safety amid the El Niño weather phenomenon.

Under this action plan, Coloma said the government provides production support for farmers such as irrigation and distortion of seeds in non-vulnerable and mildly affected provinces.

It also includes the timely

importation of rice by the National Food Authority to augment buffer stocks, Coloma said. A price freeze will likewise be implemented in case some areas that declared state of calamity.

Senator Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III earlier urged the government to consider a nationwide state of calamity to help provinces cope with the El Niño dry weather. Such declaration would also allow the release of calamity funds worth ₱45 billion.

Pimentel said the recent farmers' rally in Kidapawan, Cotabao highlighted the worsening food production and widespread hunger in areas affected by El Niño.

Last March 30, thousands of farmers made a barricade along Cotabato-Davao highway to seek government assistance to deal with the drought affecting their livelihood. The protest rally however, turned bloody when policemen fired at the protesters during the April 1 dispersal operation.

National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) chief Emmanuel Esguerra earlier said rice and other food prices have been "low and stable" in recent months.

"In fact for March 2016, despite the El Niño phenomenon, rice prices remained lower than in the previous year (-1.7% in March from -2.0% in February) and have been declining consistently since October 2015," Esguerra said.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS **Commonsense**

By **MARICHU A. VILLANUEVA**

Still underspending up to now

The more sober legislative inquiry into the violence-marred dispersal last April 1 of protesting farmers and fisher folks at Kidapawan was conducted last Friday at the Senate discovered another case of underspending by government. It turned out so much budget provided by the government to mitigate the effects of El Niño phenomenon had not been disbursed as programmed.



Senator Loren Legarda called for this separate Senate inquiry in Manila in her capacity as chairperson of both the Senate committees on finance and climate change. Legarda looked into the Kidapawan protest staged by El Niño-affected farmers and fisher folks that was reportedly infiltrated by left-leaning militants who instigated trouble. Reports reaching Manila have it that farmers and fisher folks were promised sacks of rice for their starving families following the long drought that damaged their rice and corn crops.

It took place a day after the Senate committee on justice and human rights conducted in Davao City their inquiry into alleged excessive use of force by policemen to remove the three-day old roadblock put up by protesters at the highway linking Kidapawan to Davao. The dispersal resulted in the reported death of three farmers and injury to scores of protesters and policemen. The focus of that Senate inquiry was more of a police probe.

Initiating her own inquiry in aid of legislation, Legarda explained her focus was on reported failure and shortcoming by concerned government agencies to deliver intervention measures to prepare for the projected El Niño, or the long dry spell in the country, especially the areas that would be hardest hit.

National government agencies invited to the Senate hearing included officials and representatives from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM); National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA); Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD); Department of Agriculture (DA); Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR); Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG); Climate Change Commission (CCC); National Food Authority (NFA); and, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC).

But it was only NEDA director general Emmanuel Esguerra, head of the inter-agency committee on El Niño, who appeared at the Senate hearing. The other Cabinet secretaries did not attend but sent their respective undersecretaries.

The NEDA chief assuaged Legarda there was no food shortage but more than enough supply of rice. He

conceded, however, the government's assistance may not have indeed reached intended beneficiaries on time.

A very dismayed Legarda could not contain her irritation after she found out the Congress-approved budget to cover for El Niño mitigating measures were not spent as much as they should have been.

Among other regular budget items, Legarda pointed out the 2016 General Appropriations Act (GAA) is filled with general and special provisions for funds that can be utilized for climate change adaptation and mitigation. This is aside from "special funds" in the GAA like the annual P1 billion People's Survival Fund as additional source for disaster risk reduction and rehabilitation purposes.

From the Senate computation, Legarda estimated as much as P52.81 billion of quick respond funds (QRF) for El Niño phenomenon and other emergencies are available. However, due to slow action of national and local government agencies in affected areas, the much-needed assistance was not reaching intended beneficiaries.

At the Senate hearing, the DA reported to Legarda their agency still has P11.9 million balance of their QRF for 2015 and P496.6 million for 2016. From the DSWD, they reported a balance of P703.6 million in their 2015 QRF and another P1.6 billion for 2016. Meanwhile, NDRRMC executive director retired Gen. Alexander Pama disclosed there is still P5 billion left over from 2015 and P43 billion for 2016 at their disposal.

These QRF are public funds precisely allocated to address the impact of El Niño and its opposite extreme weather condition of much rain called La Niña phenomenon, and other natural and man-made calamities.

While these allocations are for the entire year, the senator noted with concern, huge amounts remained underspent until the first quarter of this year.

"It's really clear that the government has the funds. The national government has the funds in your respective agencies. It's very clear that there is a seeming disconnect between the funds available and the utilization of funds," Legarda fumed.

This obviously aggravated the sentiments of Kidapawan farmers and fisher folks who are suffering from such government neglect on their plight.

These laments were aired at the first Senate hearing in Davao into the Kidapawan incident. But Senate majority leader Alan Peter Cayetano, and Senators Teofisto "TG" Guingona III, and Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III had other concerns they looked into.

Cayetano and Guingona, both candidates in the coming May 9 elections, set aside their respective campaign sorties to conduct this public hearing into this highly emotional and controversial case. Cayetano is the vice presidential runningmate of Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte. Guingona is up for re-election under the 12-man senatorial ticket of the administration-backed Liberal Party.

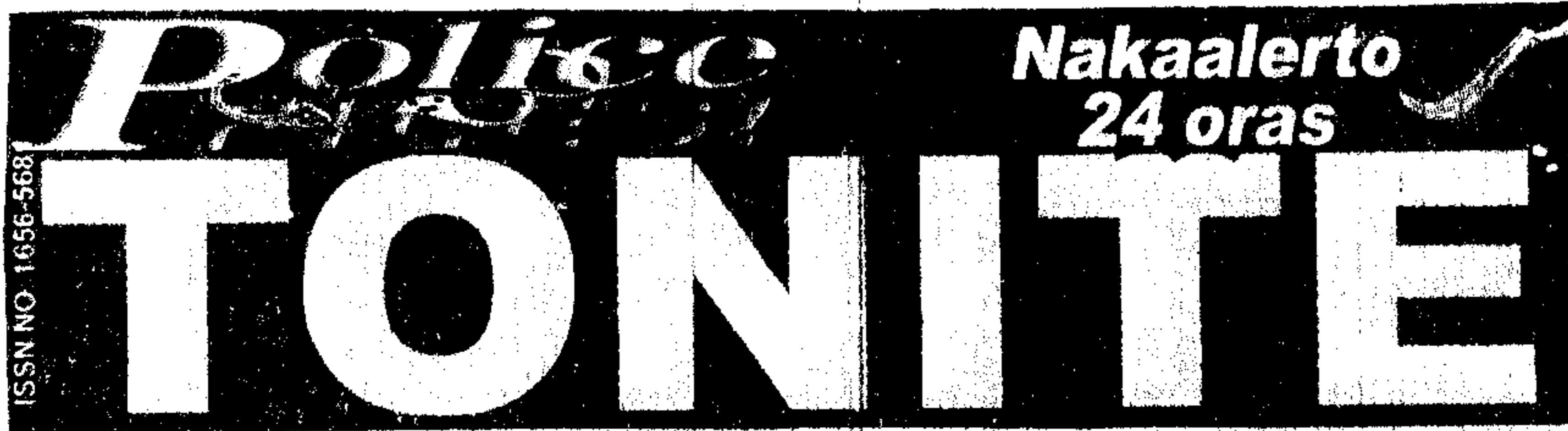
Although he is not a candidate, Pimentel is the party chieftain of the PDP-Laban carrying Duterte as their presidential standard-bearer. At least, we know where the three senators are coming from in tackling the Kidapawan incident.

Legarda is now on her last term at the Senate ending in June, 2019. She waged her campaign for environment and climate change when she ran but lost for the vice presidential race, first in 2004 and then in 2010. Incidentally, the Comelec-sponsored debate for the six vice presidential candidates running this May 9 elections took place yesterday.

In the case of Legarda, politics is her least priority in the appreciation of the Kidapawan incident. Legarda's inquiry clearly showed the government is still underspending even as the Aquino administration winds down its last 80 days in office. For whatever reason, we could only speculate.

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El Niño ang sanhi ng massacre sa Kidapawan City

Tama yong nabasa ko sa isang editorial na ang puno't dulo nitong kaganapan sa Kidapawan Massacre ay ang hindi agarang nabigyan ng pansin ang El Niño effect. Kung ginawa nga naman ang mandato ng National Irrigation Administration na gumawa ng maraming mini-dams at irrigation canals para matubigan ang mga palayan at iba pang mga farm lands desin sana walang Kidapawan Massacre. Hindi nagprotesta ang ating mga magbubukid. Ito ay nasa North Cotabato pa lamang paano na ang ibang rehiyon na apektado rin ng El Niño effect? Dapat kumilos na ang lahat ng ahensiya bago mahuli na naman ang lahat. May budget naman pala rito bakit hindi agad i-release nang sa ganun ay maiwasan ang anumang trahedya.

Napuna ko rin na ang ating mga kapulisan sa North Cotabato ay kulang na kulang sa numero kumpara sa mga nagwelga. Anim na libong nagprotesta laban sa 150 pulis. Sana humingi ng tulong ang ating mga kapulisan sa ating mga kasundaluhan nang sa ganoon maiwasan ang sino mang nais magpasimuno sa kaguluhan. Antimano alam na ng mga kinauukulan na may kasamang NPA ang mga nagwelga at marami sila, bakit hindi sila nakipag-ugnayan sa militar? Asahan na natin kapag malaking crowd tiyak yan may magpapasimuno ng kaguluhan. Lalo na kapag kumilos na ang maka-kaliwang grupo. Planado at plantsado ang lahat sa paghasik ng karahasan. Yan ang sinasabi ko na natutulog sa pansitan ang ating mga awtoridad. Alalahanin natin na ang maka-kaliwang grupo ay nag-aantay lamang ng tamang tiempo upang masakyan ang lahat ng isyu. - ELLY A. SABIO, SSS Village II, Marikina City



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STATE OF CALAMITY SA EL NIÑO TABLADO SA PALASYO

MALAMIG ang Malacañang sa panukalang mag-deklara ng state of calamity bunsod ng malawak na epekto ng tagtuyot sanhi ng El Niño sa sektor ng agrikultura.

Ayon kay Presidential Communications Secretary Sonny Coloma, nag-ulat ang El Niño Task Force sa Senate Committee on Finance at nagsabing naibsan ang epek-

to ng tagtuyot dahil sa mga programang ipinatupad ng pamahalaan.

Sapat aniya ang supply ng pagkain at napanatili ng gobyerno ang matatag na presyo ng mga pangunahing bilihan sa pamilihan.

Nangako aniya ang El Niño Task Force na lalo pang paiigtingin at palalawakin ang ipinatutupad na

mga hakbang sa pamamagitan ng pagpapahusay ng distribution system sa mga lalawigan at kanayunan upang masiguro ang maayos at epektibong pamamahaging supply at support programs ng mga lokal na pamahalaan.

(Aileen Tuliping)

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US defense chief opens Asia trip to talk defense

WASHINGTON—US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter headed Saturday to India and the Philippines for talks on increasing regional defense cooperation, after calling off a planned trip to China amid tensions over Beijing's expansionist ambitions in the South China Sea.

Carter will fly out of Washington and travel to India and then the Philippines, where he is scheduled to meet with President Aquino and Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin.

China lays claim to almost all of the South China Sea, which is important to international shipping and is believed to

hold valuable mineral and energy deposits.

Neighboring countries and Washington fear China could impose military controls over the entire South China Sea, and Beijing has in recent months built massive structures, including radar systems and an airstrip over reefs and outcrops.

The Philippines is among several regional countries that have claims to the strategic zone.

"Almost all the nations there are asking us to do more with them... bilaterally and multilaterally," Carter told the Council on Foreign Relations think tank in New York on Friday.

"Many of those countries are reaching out anew to the United States to uphold the rules and principles that have allowed the region to thrive."

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In India, where Carter will stay through Wednesday, he will discuss new partnerships and modernizing old alliances, according to the Pentagon.

"We are now doing things that could not have been imagined 10 years ago," a senior US defense official said.

In the Philippines, Carter will visit the Antonio Bautista Air Base on the island of Palawan, which faces the South China Sea and the islands claimed by Beijing.

The Philippine base is part of five that the US military can use temporarily to rotate soldiers, following a military cooperation agreement that came into effect in January.

No China stop

Access to the five bases will "enhance our ability to operate within the Philippines... and in the South China Sea—and of course, reinforce our deterrent message," a senior US defense official said.

The agreement marks a return of the US military to the Philippines, which was a US colony from 1898 to 1946. Until 1992 the Philippines was also home to Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Base, two of the largest US military bases abroad.

Carter, however, chose to not stop in China during his Asian tour, even though he had earlier accepted an invitation to visit.

The decision to skip China was made just a few weeks ago, highlighting tensions between Beijing and Washington over the South China Sea.

Carter "did officially accept an invitation to travel to China in the spring," said Pentagon spokesperson Bill Urban. However, "scheduling problems" prevented that visit from happening.

"We are actively looking" for another date to visit "this year," Urban said. **AFP**

Record drought to stay in California—experts

LOS ANGELES—Last winter, El Niño-driven storms dumped much-needed snow and rain over California, boosting reservoir levels and fueling hopes the parched state's four-year drought might end.

But despite the brief respite, experts say the record drought is here to stay.

The El Niño weather phenomenon—caused when a rise in the Pacific Ocean's temperature triggers intense precipitation—has provided only “a band-aid on a gaping wound,” says Julien Emile-Geay, a paleoclimatologist at the University of Southern California.

In fact, restoring the state's water supplies to their pre-drought levels would require several years of intense rain and snowfall.

The water level barely equaled the average in the state's north this winter. In the south, levels failed to rise enough to fill dried-out rivers and aquifers.

The drought crisis—which has

caused wildfires, decimated forests, threatened animal species and deprived thousands of homes of access to clean water—is far from over, and the authorities of this vast West Coast state say its 39 million residents had better get used to the new reality of climate change.

A quarter of the Sierra Nevada Mountains' snow cover—essential for feeding rivers and maintaining groundwater levels—will disappear by 2050, California's Department of Water Resources (DWR) predicts on its website. Half will vanish by the turn of the century.

That prospect is especially worrying because rising temperatures are also increasing soil evaporation in America's most populous state.

Californians aren't ready for

“an increasingly dry climate with a population that is continuing to grow without a long-term strategy to address the imbalance,” Emile-Geay says.

Others agree.

Heather Cooley of the Pacific Institute praises California for “tremendous progress” by decreasing water use to less than its level 30 years ago.

But she says the wealthy state has yet to turn the page on its culture of abundance.

Governor Jerry Brown's mandatory 25 percent water savings enacted a year ago signaled the end of an era and earned widespread praise.

But the state still sees a huge amount of water waste.

In the middle of the Californian desert, golf courses in the opulent resort city of Palm Springs abundantly water their greens during the heat of midday while drainage pipes pour rivers of water down the

middle of streets.

The authorities must employ financial incentives to encourage adoption of more efficient toilets and appliances—otherwise drastically increase the price of water used after a certain limit is reached, experts say.

In a region where most urban consumption comes from watering gardens, maintaining green lawns could become an unaffordable luxury.

Among other failures, Californians do nothing to collect their rainwater.

Worse still, “everything has been designed to drain water as quickly as possible to avoid flooding,” Emile-Geay says. “The water doesn't have time even to wet the soil before it flows into the ocean.”

California must accelerate recycling, desalination, and generally “reflect” about its system of water rights, which he criticizes as inequitable, archaic and encouraging of “more use than needed.” **AFP**

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A broader look at today's business

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El Niño, warming blamed for 'gruesome' coral death

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THE coral on the sea floor around the Pacific island of Kiritimati looked like a boneyard last November—stark, white and lifeless. But there was still some hope.

This month, color returned with fuzzy reds and browns, but that's not good news. Algae has overtaken the lifeless coral on what had been some of the most pristine coral reefs on the planet, University of Victoria coral reef scientist Julia Baum said after dozens of dives in the past week. Maybe 5 percent will survive, she estimated.

"What it really looks like is a ghost town," Baum said. "It's as if the buildings are standing but no one's home." Kiritimati is where El Niño, along with global warming, has done the most damage to corals in the past two years, experts said. While dramatic images of unprecedented total bleaching on Australia's Great Barrier Reef are stunning the world, thousands of miles to the east conditions are somehow even worse. "This El Niño has its most powerful grip right at this

spot," Georgia Tech climate scientist Kim Cobb said in a telephone interview from the island 2,000 miles south of Hawaii.

About 36 percent of the world's coral reefs—72 percent of the US reefs—are in such warm water they are under official death watch, and that could rise to up to 60 percent of the world's coral by July, said Mark Eakin, the coral reef watch coordinator for the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Eakin said Kiritimati was the worst he's seen, with America Samoa a close second.

"It is unprecedented," Baum said. "This is absolutely the most intense response, the most dramatic death of a coral reef from an El Niño event."

The island has been on the highest level of alert for coral stress since June 2015. NOAA's Eakin wasn't part of the Baum-Cobb team, but when he saw their photos, he e-mailed Baum: "I was simply aghast at the pictures."

I expected the worst, but still wasn't prepared for those."

He called it "gruesome." It's

the heat that's killing the coral.

Last December temperatures at Kiritimati peaked at 31.4 degrees Celsius and have been about 5° to 7° warmer than normal.

That's the kind of temperature spike that can be the difference

between life and death for coral, Eakin said. Water temperatures around the island are nearly a degree Fahrenheit warmer than the last big El Niño, in 1997-1998, and the damage is far worse, likely an assist from man-made

warming on top of the natural-transitory warming from El Niño, Cobb said.

Coral reefs are important for fishing; nearly half a billion people rely on coral reef marine life for food, Eakin said. "Coral reefs cover

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A broader look at today's business

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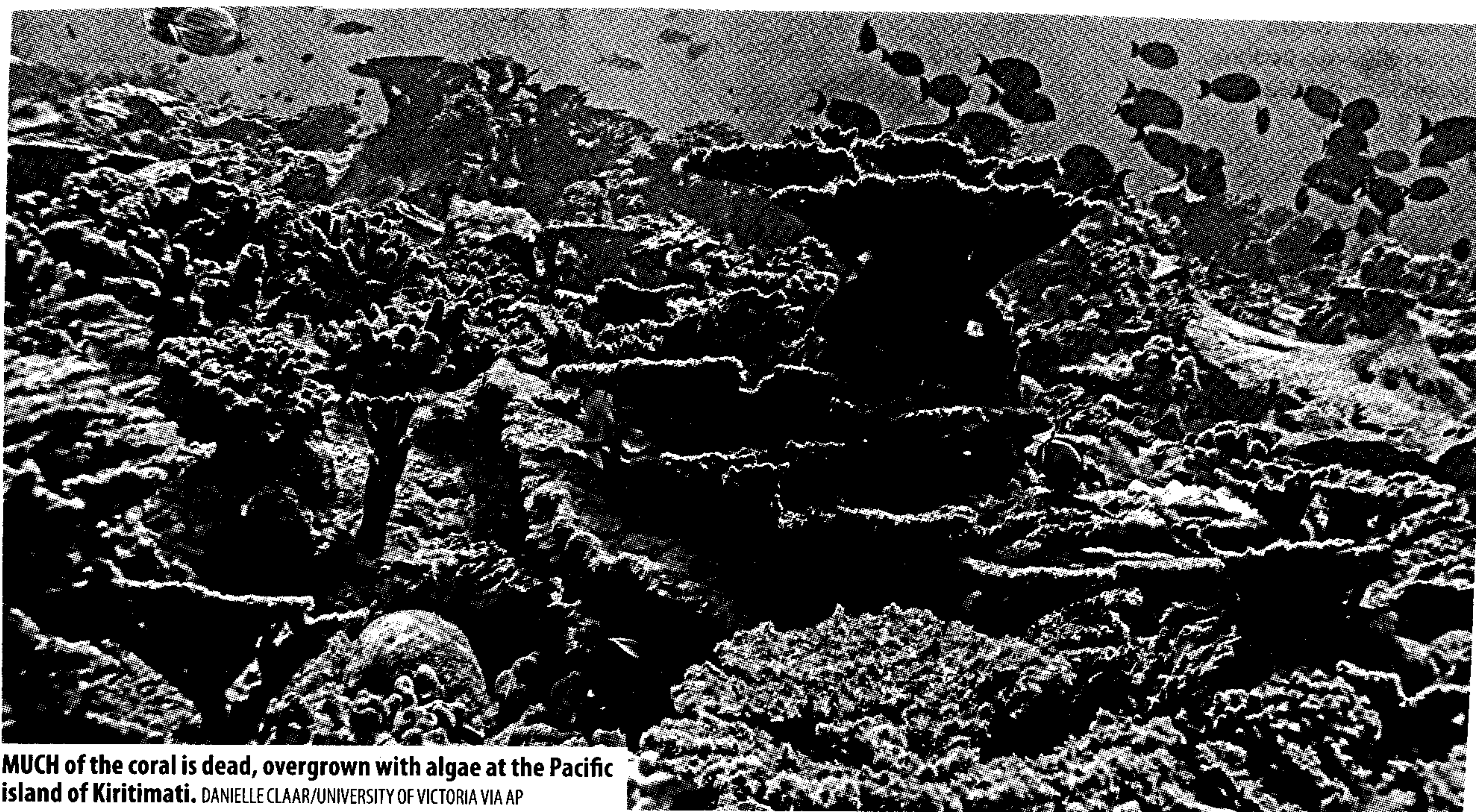
El Niño warming -

only one-tenth of 1 percent of the sea floor but are home to 25 percent of all marine species," Eakin added in an interview.

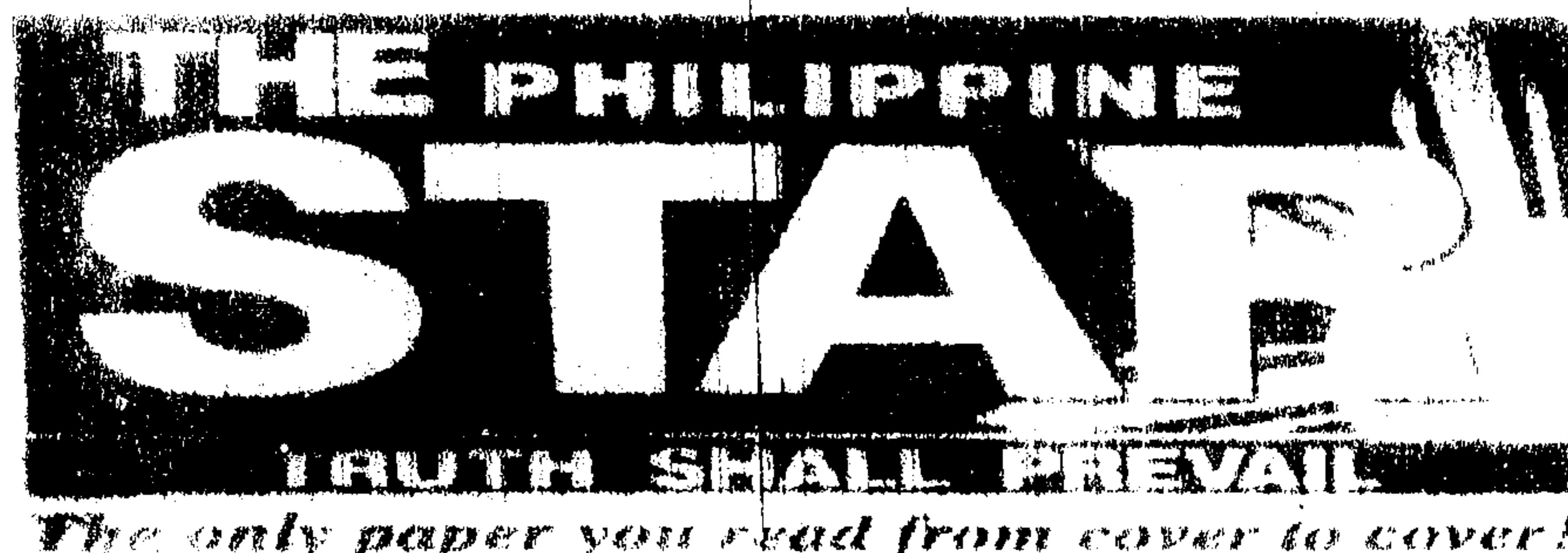
Baum has hope that something can survive because of what she calls "little miracle corals," the small amount of one particular species that seems to be surviving so far. Perhaps over a couple decades, it can repopulate this once bright reef, she said.

In Australia, where "100 percent of the corals are snow white on some reefs," it is hard to imagine that Kiritimati is worse, said Terry Hughes, an Australian professor who heads the country's National Coral Bleaching Task Force. One area to the north "is absolutely blitzed," he said.

In the past, El Niño warming of the Pacific didn't cause such mass-bleaching events in Australia. But the effects of recent, major El Niños have coincided with water that's already warmer because of man-made climate change, Hughes said. "The link between bleaching and global warming is incontrovertible," Hughes added. **AP**



MUCH of the coral is dead, overgrown with algae at the Pacific island of Kiritimati. DANIELLE CLAAR/UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA VIA AP



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Earth could become hotter than thought, study warns

WASHINGTON – Global warming could make the planet far hotter than currently projected because today's scientific models do not correctly account for the influence of clouds, researchers said this week.

The study in the journal *Science* was led by researchers at Yale University and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

When climate scientists look ahead to how much the planet's surface temperature may warm up in response to a doubling of carbon dioxide – a byproduct of fossil fuel burning – they typically predict a rise of between 2.1 and 4.7 degrees Celsius (3.75 to 8.5 degrees Fahrenheit).

But these models overestimate the ability of clouds to reflect back sunlight, and counteract warming in Earth's atmosphere, researchers said.

"We found that the climate sensitivity increased from four degrees Celsius in the default model to 5 to 5.3 degrees Celsius in versions that were modified to bring liquid and ice amounts into closer agreement with observations," said lead author Ivy Tan, a researcher at Yale University.

The problem is most models assume there is more ice in clouds than there actually is.

Icier clouds would gain more liquid in a warming environment, and more liquid in clouds would mean less global warming.

"Most climate models are a little too eager to glaciate below freezing, so they are likely exaggerating the increase in cloud reflectivity as the atmosphere warms," said co-author Mark Zelinka.

"This means they may be systematically underestimating how much warming will occur in response to carbon dioxide."

Researchers said their findings add to previous studies that have suggested clouds may make warming worse, rather than lessen it.

"The evidence is piling up against an overall stabilizing cloud feedback," said Zelinka.

"Clouds do not seem to want to do us any favors when it comes to limiting global warming."

The study was funded by NASA and the Department of Energy's Office of Science.

– AFP