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DENR to develop investment road map for wood industry

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will develop an investment road map for the wood industry to further promote tree farming in the Philippines, the country's top forestry official said.

In an interview, Director Ricardo Calderon of the DENR's Forest Management Bureau (FMB) said the investment road map will give investors an insight on the direction of the wood industry and economic opportunities in tree farming.

"We continue to engage the sector on this," Calderon said.

According to him, Executive Order (EO) 23, which bans harvesting of trees in natural forests, has opened the door for individuals, community-based groups, and businesses, to venture into tree-farming, which supports the wood industry.

The Investment Division, a newly-created unit, is tasked to come up with the investment road map, which will identify the emerging priority investment, aside from supply of lumber and logs, as far as the wood industry is concerned.

"We are departing from the usual investment in the wood industry, which is basically harvesting timber and logs in natural forests. We need to produce the raw materials that we will need for our industry," he said.

Calderon said, as far as forestry products and by-products is concerned, manufactured wood articles is the country's top export performer, making it the top dollar earner.

But, the contribution of forestry to the country's GDP remains very small.

"We can always improve our exports. But we will need the raw materials to support the industry's growth," Calderon said.

Tree farmers, sawmills, wood manufacturers, furniture makers and those into export of furniture and manufactured wood articles stand to benefit from massive tree farming, Calderon said. For export growth to be sustained, he said there is a need to develop a road map, which will both identify the direc-

tion of the wood industry, the emerging regional and global opportunity, step up or accelerate and strengthen the supply systems, he added.

He said tree-farming offers an investment opportunity and alternative way of life that is most beneficial to upland farmers. Even families with small landholdings in upland areas can establish backyard tree plantation, the official said.

Some of the DENR's partners in implementing the National Greening Program, particularly in Mindanao, are into tree farming, which boosts their income as upland farmers and supplier of quality timber products.

In some parts of Mindanao, backyard tree farming is becoming more and more popular, he added.

Tree farming, he said, is not as risky as planting rice, corn and other crops, which could be destroyed by typhoons

and other natural calamities.

While return on investment would in tree farming or forest plantation activities would take time, he said a tree farmer is assured of earnings in 5 to 10 years.

"The needed capital [for tree farming] is also small but the revenue potential is huge," Calderon said.

Citing for instance the prospects in planting falcata, he said the each seedling or planting material costs only P5 to P8. A falcata, he said, now costs P4,500 per cubic meter. "Before, it [falcata] is sold per kilo. But now, it is P4,500 per cubic meter. Falcata is also easy to grow," Calderon said.

Falcata, is the popular choice for tree-farmers in Mindanao, he said.

"Our forest plantations are actually backyard forest plantations. A tree farmer can plant trees and sell them as the trees become ready for harvest in five years," he said. Even farmers with limited land resource can venture in tree farming, Calderon said.

"You can plant three to five trees. If every you need money, all you have to do is cut the trees you planted and bring it to sawmills," he said.

The Philippines is an exporter of falcata, with China as the single major buyer. Falcata is commonly used for furniture and construction, Calderon said.

For Luzon, the popular choice for tree farmers is the Philippine mahogany, commonly used for construction.

Calderon urged businesses to venture into tree farming. "It will earn and at the same time help offset their carbon emissions."

He said the Philippines pledged to reduce its carbon emission by 70 percent between 2020 and 2030. Cutting carbon emission, he said, will affect growth. For growth to be sustained without necessarily increasing carbon emission, the official said private companies can always invest in tree farming.

"To offset carbon, to become carbon neutral, we need to enhance the absorptive capacity of our forests. This means we should continue expanding our forests," he said.

Of the country's approximately 30 million hectares total land area, about 15 hectares are forest land but only around 8.1 million hectares are covered with vegetation.

EO 193 signed on November 12, 2015 by President Aquino expanded the coverage of the National Greening Program, which was supposed to end this year.

To cover the remaining 7.1 million hectares of open, degraded and denuded forests and to accelerate rehabilitation and reforestation, the government will involve private companies to achieve carbon neutrality.

According to Calderon, the plan to develop an investment road map is consistent with the updated 2016-2018 Master Plan for Forestry Development which aims to harmonize all forest development activities that will encourage and enhance development of forest plantations including forest parks, with greater participation from the private sector, local government units and organized upland communities.

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Mindanao mountain fires highlight gaps in disaster relief

By Marifi S. Jara *Mindanao Bureau Chief*

DAVAO CITY — With the grass and forest fire now under control in three Mindanao mountains, government agencies need to sit down and set up institutional reforms to improve the response during similar disaster situations in the future, said the executive director of the Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF).

In an interview with *BusinessWorld* via e-mail, PEF's Dennis I. Salvador said the fires in the last two weeks have highlighted the gaps in the country's disaster risk reduction management (DRRM), particularly for mountain fire incidents.

"The DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) says it doesn't have mandate to fight fire while BFP (Bureau of Fire Protection) claims it is only equipped to fight structural fire. So give [the mandate and equipment] to them," Mr. Salvador said.

Grass fire in Mt. Matutum was first reported on March 23, while the one in Mt. Apo started on March 26, and in Mt. Kitanglad on April 2.

All three mountains, with Mt. Apo as the main area, are considered part of the habitat of the endangered Philippine Eagle, the country's national bird.

Authorities in Mt. Matutum and Mt. Kitanglad announced last week that the fires were already under control, while that in Mt. Apo was only declared yesterday.

Monitoring are continuing in all areas.

Assessing the impact of the fire in Mt. Apo, Mr. Salvador said: "This fire has al-

ready adversely impacted the foraging areas of a Philippine Eagle pair and its young and now threatens its nesting territory. With the loss of its feeding and breeding grounds, the prospects for this family are quite uncertain especially as all other territories in this range are already occupied by six other pairs."

"But beyond this, we are also losing many other endemic and unique organisms which inhabit Mt. Apo. For the Bagobo-Tagabawas, this will also further impoverishment for years to come as they depend on this forest to survive," he added.

For the fire in Mt. Apo, an inter-agency Davao Region Incident Management Team (IMT) was formed immediately after reports of smoke and fire sightings.

Mt. Apo, the country's highest peak and a declared protected area, straddles Davao City and the provinces of Davao del Sur and North Cotabato.

As of yesterday, IMT spokesperson Harry Chester F. Camoro told *BusinessWorld*: "There has been no visible smoke from the burn areas. Responders are currently surveying the areas on foot to validate. They are equipped with knapsack sprayers to put out any fires that would attempt to rekindle."

Mr. Camoro, also the head of the Davao del Sur Provincial DRRM Council, added: "Firelines are being improved as a precautionary measure."



Read the full story by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by typing the link
<<http://goo.gl/ERvnzP>>

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Apo fire under control, but smoke still visible

By Orlando B. Dinoy
Inquirer Mindanao

DIGOS CITY—While authorities have announced that the fire that razed at least 300 hectares of grass and forest land on Mt. Apo is now under control, they could not declare a “fire out” due to smoke that continues to envelope some sections of the mountain.

Harry Camoro, spokesperson for the Davao Region Incident Management Team (DRIMT), said the smoke lingered because of embers in roots of burned trees.

Camoro said the number of volunteers sent to the Century Trail in Sta. Cruz town was down to 27. At least 240 others are staying at the base camp in Sitio Tumpis in Barangay Sibulan, also in Sta. Cruz, awaiting orders to respond to any emergency.

Rains induced by cloud-seeding operations helped quell the fire.

The Department of Agriculture, with the assistance of the

Philippine Air Force's Tactical Operations Group (TOG), dropped 60 sacks of salt during cloud-seeding sorties in Calinan District in Davao City, Kidapawan town in North Cotabato province, and Mati City in Davao Oriental province.

The Air Force has suspended the dropping of sacks of crushed ice on affected areas because of poor weather conditions following the cloud-seeding operations.

Camoro said more volunteers were still needed for tree planting activities to be conducted immediately after the fire is finally put out.

The 2,854-meter Mt. Apo is the country's highest peak and a favorite destination of mountaineers.

Climbers who have reached the peak can attest to its beauty, said Rye Glenn Trinidad, president of the Mindanao Mountaineering Federation. “Reaching the summit is a fulfillment of one's dream,” he said.

Abante

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Sunog sa Mt. Apo kontrolado na

Makalipas ang mahigit 2-linggong puspusang pag-apula, idineklara nang fire control ang forest fire sa Mt. Apo sa Digos City na nagsimula pa noong Sabado de Gloria.

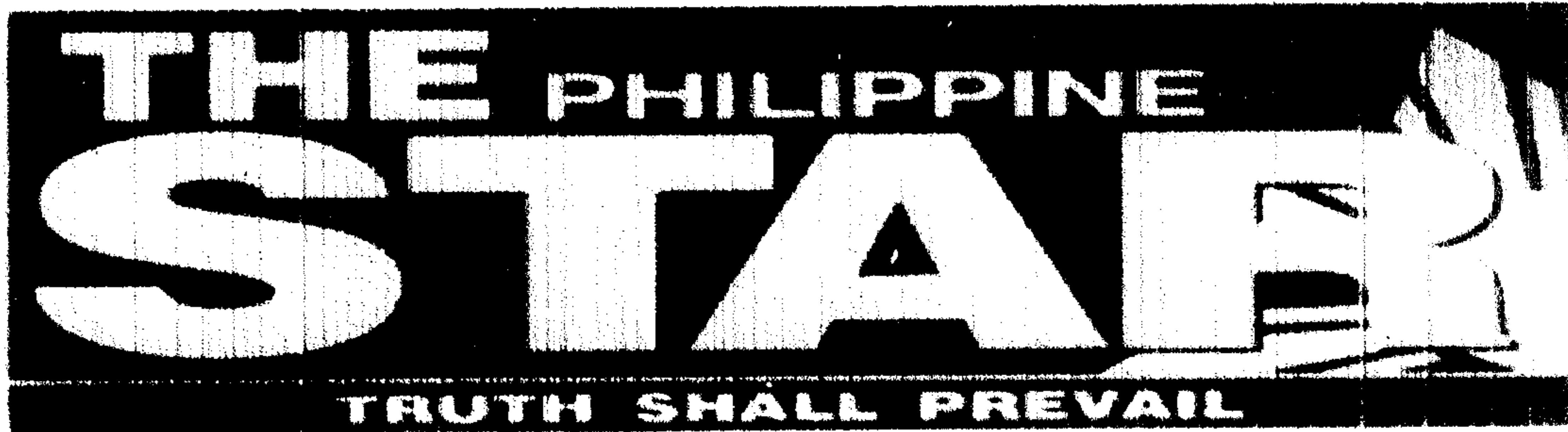
Kinumpirma mismo ni Harry Camoro, public information officer ng Incident Management Team, na kontrolado na nila ang sunog at tiniyak na wala nang anumang pinsala pang maidudulot dito.

“Sa ngayon, hinihintay na lamang

ang report ng Bureau of Fire Protection-11 upang madeklarang fire out na ang sunog sa Mt. Apo,” wika ni Camoro.

Sa record ng management team, aabot sa 267 na mga volunteers na nagmula sa Regions 11 and 12 ang nagtung-tulong upang isalba ang bundok.

Pero sinabi ni Camoro na kahit kontrolado na ang apoy, nilinaw nitong naka-standby pa rin sila at naka-monitor sa sitwasyon. **(Betchai Julian)**



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Alsons Power receives multiple awards from DENR

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) recently gave multiple awards to Alsons Power Group subsidiaries: the Sarangani Energy Corp. in Maasim, Sarangani (SEC), the Southern Philippines Power Corp. (SPPC) in Alabel, Sarangani, and the Western Mindanao Power Corp. (WMPC) in Zamboanga City for company best practices.

SPPC and WMPC both earned recognitions for their cooperation with their respective Multipartite Monitoring Teams (MMT), with the former winning the "Best Management Practice on Reporting" and the latter copping "Best Management Practice on Stakeholders Participation in Region IX."

Each MMT is composed of representatives from various stakeholders including local government units, non-government organizations, women, youth, indigenous communities, the academe, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office, Community Environment and Natural Resources Office and the regional office of Environmental Management Bureau.

SPPC was also recognized for its "Adopt an Estero/Water Body" program which involved reforestation activities as well as the clean up of the Maribulan River.

The DENR-EMB granted SEC the "Best Management Practice on Conflict Management" for its effective management of environment-related issues in Sarangani.

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Our energy mix (up)

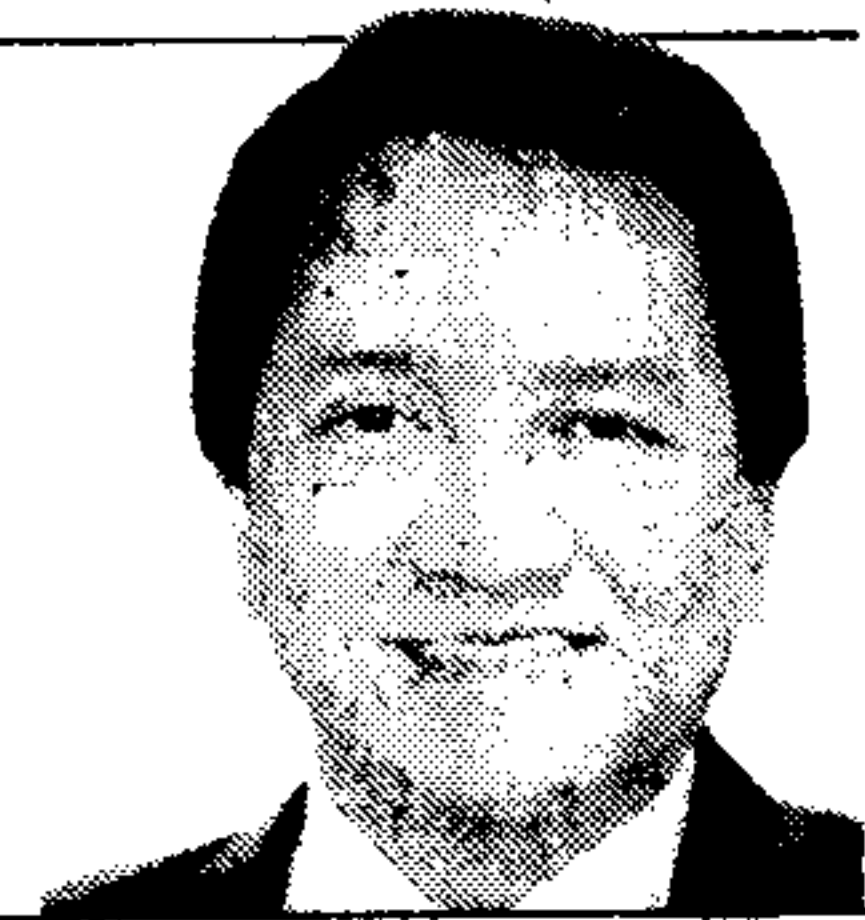
THE PHILIPPINES' energy mix story had never been so much about climate change as about energy security. When we started developing our renewable energy sources decades ago, from hydroelectric to geothermal, it was motivated by the need to reduce our great vulnerability to the volatile price of petroleum, which we almost entirely need to import. We needed sources of power that were both indigenous and inexpensive.

Iceland is a country that exemplifies how indigenous energy resources can be used to great advantage. Its hydroelectric and geothermal resources make up about 98 percent of its energy mix. Power consumers pay about \$0.04 per kilowatt-hour, or less than P2/kWh. It has achieved the three Cs in power generation that all nations aspire for: cheap, consistent, clean. But Iceland is an island-nation about the size of Mindanao, with a much smaller population. It does not have to worry about interisland connectivity. It has melting glaciers that provide more than enough hydroelectric power. But Iceland demonstrates how things can be if a nation need not depend on imported fossil fuels.

The Philippine government has been branded as hypocritical for approving so many coal-fired plants even as it calls for reduced carbon emissions. The Philippines, after all, is blessed with a variety of renewable energy resources that can be developed to fill its power needs. We have traditionally depended on hydroelectric power. We also have ample geothermal resources, and most of our existing renewable energy mix comes from these two sources. The International Renewable Energy Agency cites the Philippines as having "good-to-excellent" wind availability throughout the country, ample solar radiation, and considerable biomass potential from agricultural waste. Wind farms and solar plants are on the rise. Biomass energy has been in use for many years. To climate change advocates, it is inconsistent for us to keep approving coal power projects, knowing how burning more fossil fuels aggravates climate change, to which the

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Philippines is extremely vulnerable. Furthermore, the country had just pledged to the United Nations a rather aggressive target of 70-percent reduction in carbon emissions by 2030.

Hydroelectric power, which dominates the power generation mix of Mindanao, is what has traditionally kept electricity prices low on the island. When the Agus-Pulangi hydroelectric power facilities were exempted from privatization in 2013, the estimated generation cost from these plants was less than P1/kWh, considerably lower than the cheapest available alternatives in the market. With good watershed management, these plants can be a reliable source of cheap power over the long term. But unlike the plants driven by melting glaciers in Iceland, the river-run hydroelectric plants in the Philippines are susceptible to droughts induced by El Niño, which appears to have come at greater frequency and intensity with climate change. Hence, their total dependable capacity drops significantly during dry spells, and the Mindanao power grid needs to turn to other energy sources. It's noteworthy that the P5.90/kWh feed-in-tariff (FIT), or guaranteed price, that the Energy Regulatory Commission has provided for hydropower does not reflect the true (lower) cost of generation from the Agus-Pulangi assets.

We have also begun massive solar and wind developments. But these sources are more expensive, site-specific, and unsuitable for baseload power because of unstable capacity. The FIT rate of the first solar projects was set at P9.68/kWh. Wind at P8.53/kWh and biomass at P6.63/kWh are also well above the current generation rate of

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thermal and natural gas plants, which falls below P5/kWh. Increasing the share of these FIT-covered energy sources will thus bring the electricity cost up. Areas with good wind ideal for power generation are limited. Cloudy days will come when solar plants cannot generate their installed capacity, and using batteries to store solar energy would drive costs even higher. These renewable energy sources may be "clean," but they are not "cheap" and "consistent." They may be good for fulfilling peak load requirements when baseload is not enough, but they cannot always be relied upon.

Geothermal can potentially compete with coal as it's less susceptible to the seasons, and a well-managed mature geothermal development should be able to keep its generation price at par with coal and natural gas plants. But operating a geothermal field is more complex than operating a natural gas or coal plant. The cost of geothermal development comes up front. Development risk is greater; the rate of return is slower, and the capital investment higher. With coal as alternative, any power investor would hesitate to develop a geothermal resource, especially since it is not covered by FIT.

Our traditional, fossil-fuel-based power sources are cheaper and consistent and have obvious economic advantages in the short term, but imply future costs that our children and their children will incur. We have some limited natural gas resources, but these will not be able to keep up with our rising power demands. And as the world shifts away from coal toward cleaner natural gas, natural gas import prices will rise. Coal plants are quicker to put up, and the dropping demand for the fuel promises an oversupply and even lower prices in the coming years. For now, then, coal does make great economic sense for baseload plants.

With all these, we will inevitably continue to be mixed up about what our energy mix ought to be. It's a complex and difficult question that has no easy answers.

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Peña sees rival's hand in Makati littering incident

By Maricar B. Brizuela

THREE Makati residents were arrested on Sunday after they were caught scattering garbage in one of the city's busy streets.

The incident, meanwhile, was described by Mayor Romulo "Kid" Peña as an attempt by his political rivals to "clearly sabotage" his name and administration.

"As to the motive of these

people, I do not want to speculate but [all I know is that] my rivals in politics are trying to pin the garbage problem [on] my administration," he said.

A report from the Makati police said that Jason Direro, 23; Emerson Grant, 18; and Romeo Sapurgo, 57; all residents of Barangay Olympia, were arrested around Sunday midnight for deliberately dumping garbage on Kalayaan Avenue corner J.B. Roxas

Street, in the same barangay.

The police said that Sapurgo drove a truck carrying garbage bags filled with trash which Grant and Direro scattered on the road.

Case investigator SPO1 Wilfredo Alvarez said the three men refused to give an explanation for their actions or say who ordered them to do so.

Earlier, Peña's rival for the mayoralty seat, Rep. Abigail Binay, claimed that the garbage

problem in the city had worsened.

Sought for comment, Binay's spokesperson Joey Salgado described Peña's statement as "a heap of garbage."

"There is no need for anyone to portray him as a negligent and weak leader," Salgado said in a text message. "The people of Makati know that he is one and that is why there is a clamor for the Binay kind of service and leadership," he added.

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Environmental clearance revoked for Yolanda housing site

By TARA YAP

ILOILO CITY – The environmental clearance for the P289 million government housing project in Roxas City, Capiz province intended for survivors of super typhoon Yolanda has been revoked.

Atty. Jonathan Bulos, Regional Director of the Environmental Management Bureau under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Western Visayas (EMB-DENR-6) confirmed this development with the Manila Bulletin.

To recall, in a March 22, 2016 decision, EMB-6 cancelled the environmental compliance certificate (ECC) of Goldenville Realty and Development Corp., the private contractor of the Yolanda housing project implemented by the National Housing Authority (NHA).

This is the latest controversy which has hit the housing project intended for Yolanda survivors in Capiz province, Panay Island.

The housing project is located near an existing farm of Cal's Poultry Supply Corp. (Cal's) in Barangay San Jose, Roxas City.

According to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan of the Roxas City government, the some 116,780 square-meter housing site for typhoon survivors sits on classified agricultural land.

Last year, the Roxas City Council approved the reclassification of the land

from agricultural to medium-density residential area. However, the Capiz Provincial Board declared as invalid this ruling of the Roxas City Council.

It was Cal's Poultry Supply Corp. that actually urged EMB-6 to cancel Goldenville's ECC as it claimed its poultry farm was already existing and the area for the housing site is not suitable as residential area given the classification of agri-industrial land.

Bulos reiterated that Goldenville must stop construction of the housing project since the ECC has been cancelled.

However, Manila Bulletin received reports that construction is still ongoing despite the ECC cancellation.

Another complaint was that no survivor of the super typhoon that hit Capiz in November 8, 2013, but rather, victims of a fire incident in Roxas City last March, 2015, currently lives in the housing project.

The Manila Times

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5 Luzon dams' water levels continue to drop

BY IZA IGLESIAS
REPORTER

THE water levels of five dams in Luzon continue to drop because of the El Niño phenomenon.

In a bulletin, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said the water level of Angat dam in Bulacan province was 196.45 meters as of Monday morning.

The dam's normal water level

is 212 meters.

According to hydrologist Gine Nivares, the water level by June will possibly dip to 180 meters.

This drop, Pagasa said, will result in reduced water allocation in Metro Manila and in

irrigation supply beyond the country's premier region.

Angat dam's water level, it added, would not remain normal even if it rained in June.

Heavy rains can be expected only by July, according to Pagasa.

Pagasa cited isolated rain showers for the slight rise.

It said the water level in Ambuklao dam in Benguet province also fell from the normal 752 meters to 747.40 meters.

Water level of Binga dam, also

in Benguet, also plunged from 575 meters to 569.54 meters.

San Roque dam's water level dropped to 253.30 meters from the normal 280 meters and did Pantabangan dam in Nueva Ecija province, to 192.52 meters from the normal 221 meters.

Meanwhile, the water level of Magat dam in Isabela province rose by 0.15 meters also on Monday, bringing the water level to 170.80 meters or more than 10 meters above its normal level of 160 meters.

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Cebu's major firms respond to water crisis

By JUDY ANN DINOPOL, CHRISTOPHER MAHILUM, and REY VINCENT ALISON

CEBU CITY – Major companies and private organizations in Cebu have pledged efforts in alleviating the water crisis currently affecting Cebu.

To recall, Mayor Michael Rama Friday declared Cebu City in a state of emergency as a result of the seriousness of the water crisis.

During a Water Concern Coordination meeting presided by City Legal Office head Jerome Castillo at the Cebu City hall yesterday, 32 stakeholders, both public and private, committed to take action to address the water crisis caused by the dry spell phenomenon referred to as El Niño.

The entities represented at the meeting pledged contributions to help city barangays now experiencing lack of water. Included at the City Hall meeting yesterday were SM, Gaisano Country Mall, Golden Peak Hotel, Crown Port View Hotel, SM, Castle Peak Hotel, and the Bureau of Fire Protection.

Harold Alcontin, who heads the Cebu City Risk Reduction Office, stressed that the city is now in a state of preparedness and the purpose of the meeting was to come up with a plan of action.

Those who were pres-

ent at the meeting made a commitment to provide in the fastest time possible such provisions as water tankers, potable and non-potable water, water pumps, firetrucks among others. A number of establishments also pledged to help facilitate the distribution of contributed equipment.

During the same meeting yesterday, a new water command system aimed at addressing the immediate needs of

the public in relation to the water crisis was launched.

Cebu City Administrator Lucelle Mercado was appointed overall head of the water command system. Appointed under her was City Councilor Philip Zafra as ground command head for drinking water supply while Cebu City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council Head, Harold Alcontin was designated ground commander head

for domestic water supply.

This new system was created to further organize solutions and moves to be taken by the local government to effectively address the water crisis and promote water conservation in the city.

"Hopefully this will run until July when the drought is over but there will be a continuing assessment of the situation" said Castillo.



AVIAN EATING BREAK – Migratory birds take a break in their flight to some destination to look for something to eat such as small snails which are abundant in the river at the South Road Properties in Cebu City. A resolution was passed by the Cebu Provincial Board urging the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Central Visayas to monitor tourist destinations where flora and fauna as well as submarine activities are promoted. One of the bird-watching areas in Cebu is Olango Island in Lapu-Lapu, Mactan Island. (Juan Carlo de Vela)

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EL NIÑO'S WRATH Fishermen in Ilocos Sur have been badly affected by El Niño as their catch has gone down in recent months. The extreme weather event has also damaged billions of pesos worth of crops since it started in February last year. LAILA AUSTRIA

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EDC shares climate change adaptation best practices

THE Energy Development Corp. recently shared its best practices in terms of climate change adaptation and mitigation, in the hope of inspiring different communities to follow suit.

In a recent discussion on actionable solutions to climate resiliency in Southeast Asia, Federico Lopez, Energy Development Corp. (EDC) chairman and chief executive officer, shared EDC's best practices in climate change adaptation and disaster response, borne out of the renewable energy company's first-hand experience in

dealing with the destructive effects of typhoon Haiyan in its geothermal power plant in Leyte.

In partnership with the UP Institute of Biology, EDC started a biodiversity program in all its plants to better understand the ecosystem and how best to protect it. Since 2008, the program has also guided EDC on the proper way to reforest more than 10,000 hectares with roughly 6.5 million trees.

The company has also deployed well-equipped disaster response professionals in various EDC power plants to train volunteers and teach local government units to become force multipliers and first responders. "Our sites today also stockpile fuel, food, water, and telecommunications equipment like satellite phones which en-



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able our people to function even under extreme emergencies," Lopez added.

During typhoon Haiyan, EDC worked closely with sister company ABS-CBN, to quickly bring relief goods and supplies to disaster victims. The power company leased barges, trucks and private aircrafts to transport generator sets, fuel, relief goods and medical supplies from Manila to the most devastated areas.

"Adaptation to climate change realities is undoubtedly not a one-time event. Hopefully, what EDC learned literally being in the eye of the storm, will spark ideas in others too, and we are more than happy to share those lessons and learn from everyone else's as we build a more resilient Asean together," Lopez said.

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Economic boom seen in CL with Clark Green City

By GENALYN D. KABILING

TARLAC – The country's next modern, green and disaster-resilient metropolis will soon rise in the heart of Central Luzon.

The construction of the ₱607-billion Clark Green City formally kicked off yesterday after President Aquino led the groundbreaking rites of the project that is expected to be bigger than Bonifacio Global City.

The Clark Green City, a project initiated by Bases Conversion and Development Authority, involves the development of a 9,450-hectare proposed business hub located inside the Clark Special Economic Zone. The envisioned green city is expected to boost economic growth and generate jobs in the region.

"Just to give us an idea of the Clark Green City's scale, Bonifacio Global City is roughly about 200 hectares," Aquino said in his remarks.

"By the time of its completion, it is envisioned to be a city in every sense of the word. It will be home to companies, retail outlets, offices, residential parks, accommodating 1.12 million residents and 800,000 workers," Aquino added.

Aquino said Clark Green City also embodies his government's vision for a "more resilient Philippines."

He noted that the number of 800,000 workers is roughly the amount of people that enter the labor force every year. "With just

the Clark Green City, we will have opportunities for the new labor entrance," he added.

Aquino said the Clark Green City would not be prone to floods since its lowest elevation is 56 meters above sea level while its central park will serve as a flood catchment basin. It also enjoys the natural protection from typhoons with the Sierra Madre to the West and Zambales mountain range to the east, he added.

"Truly, as interest in our nation grows — and as markets develop across the country — projects like this are vital. Along with investing in our workforce and spending on critical infrastructure projects, we need to develop viable economic hubs, not just in Metro Manila or Cebu, but in provinces with high growth potential," Aquino said.

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The Philippines at 500 joins the top 20 economies of the world

“Today, 16 March 2021, we celebrate the 500th anniversary since the Western world discovered the Philippines. By addressing corruption, criminality, and climate change, we also lift ourselves from the ills of poverty, pollution, too much politics and the police, transportation and traffic, housing and health, education, environment, infrastructure, and incompetence, among others. It is with great pride that our country now joins the ranks of the top 20 economies of the world. It is indeed quite an amazing national feat, which all started with electing the right leaders just five years ago in 2016.”

That is an introduction I would wish to write in the future, specifically in 2021. I like to believe that the Philippines can make it to the top 20 economies of the world. We still have several weeks before the 2016 elections to seriously think about the future of our country and choose the right leaders.

In my observation of progressive nations, I concluded that their success can be attributed to five factors, namely: visionary leadership, political will, good planning, good design, and good governance. All of these ingredients are needed to create positive change in the next five years and beyond.

In my previous speaking engagements, I shared my development vision for the Philippines, which hopefully could be achieved on its 500th year in 2021. This vision plan is created to in-

spire future leaders and show the people not just fantastic ideas but also doable solutions.

POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE

In our professional practice at Palafox Associates and Palafox Architecture Group, we make sure to go out of our office and observe our immediate community and the larger context of our cities. Our architects, planners, engineers, and designers take pictures of the uglification of our cities and re-imagine them as renewed places for people. We call these “Postcards from the future.”

Some of the key themes arising from this exercise include:

- Creation of growth centers outside of Metropolitan Manila. In 2000, a Harvard study showed that Metro Manila (MM) is one of the fastest growing metropolises in the world at 60 persons per hour, due mainly to in-migration. Delhi, India's largest city and one of the most populated in the world, grows at 47 persons per hour.

In my years as a student in Harvard, I made a study called “Manila Megalopolis” wherein I proposed that growth centers outside the metropolis should be identified and developed as counter magnets to the already congested MM. The Philippine economy focuses heavily in this area with 40% of businesses located in MM. Businesses should be encouraged to move outside of the city, or at least have a satellite office, for the purpose of continuity.

To improve the way our cities and towns are built and continue to grow, each region has to look for an appropriate mix of development options, and apply the best urban design within the context, and scale of both the greater region and the neighborhood.

- Inclusionary Zoning: Mixed-income housing. Cities should also be able to accommodate people of all income levels. Affordable, mixed-income neighborhoods enable the poorest of the poor, the middle class working professionals, and the rich to have equal access to amenities/privileges that the livable city provides. Elsewhere in the world, 80% of developments are for people who “can afford” and 20% are allocated for the urban poor. Many of those who avail low-cost housing within the city are senior citizens who want to be able to live near their grandchildren, while the parents (working professionals) are busy with their jobs. These types of neighborhoods are not just mixed-income, but cross-generational as well.

- Disaster-resilient communities. One of the most important parts of the recommendations that we sent Malacañang in 2010 after the devastation of Ondoy and the earthquake in Haiti was a 10-year program. To be accomplished from 2010 to 2020, the program is an initial plan and tentative scheme toward safer cities, towns, and communities.

The government must promote flood-proof, fire-proof and earthquake-resistant measures by designating open spaces as evacuation places in urban areas, develop and strengthen urban facilities which can be used as comfortable disaster-proof living zones by creating individual citizen awareness for disaster prevention and response.

Among the adaptation and mitigation measures proposed by Palafox Associates is the regular deepening of silted lakes, rivers, creeks, and other waterways, coupled with pollution abatement measures and proper solid waste management. This way, our water bodies can hold more floodwater and reduce flood levels. In line with this, the hills and mountains near the catch basins should be reforested to help absorb more floodwater. But more importantly, however, is the need to update Daniel Burnham's 1905 plan for MM, the 2004 “Metro Manila Earthquake Impact Reduction Study Report”, the 1976-1977 Metroplan, and the 2003 “Manila Megalopolis Concept Plan 2020” I submitted to Harvard to serve as guidelines for the LGUs, national government, and the citizens to follow.

- Humanizing our streets. Among the most crucial things that our cities should immediately address is urban mobility and the efficient but humane development of road networks. The

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The Philippines at 500 joins the top 20 economies of the world

main objectives here are travel time and road density. What the people need is the ability to go to places in the least possible time. As he saves time, he is able to spend it on other things, like leisure and more time for family and friends. So, it is important to strictly layout a mass transport system such as Bus Rapid Transit system, an improved MRT system, and proper loading and unloading zones for jeepneys and tricycles. In this manner, the need for private vehicles does not become a priority.

... Building more skyways is like cheating on your diet by loosening your belt. During rush hour, the average speed in EDSA is three-kilometers-per-hour, while the average walking speed is five-kilometers-per-hour. The key is to allocate more share of the road for walking, biking, and mass transport. In our projects, we always propose the rule of thirds for the design of roads: 1/3 for pedestrians (walkways and bicycle lanes), 1/3 for moving traffic (public and private transport) and 1/3 for trees and landscaping.

Revive the rivers and waterways. In a macro scale, we should rethink how to appreciate our natural catch basins: our rivers and *esteros*. The current practice of treating our waterways as "back of the house", as in the case with most developments along our rivers here in MM, encourages the indiscriminate disposal of untreated industrial and domestic waste into the river. More than trash, development along the water systems has narrowed it and consequently affects its capacity to hold more water. During the downpour of Ondoy, the rivers of Pasig, Marikina, and San Juan were at full capacity. The first persons who were affected by the heavy rains

are those who lived and built their homes along the waterways.

Before any redevelopment could happen in reviving our waterfronts, the government should strictly enforce the existing laws regarding easements, buffer zones and non-buildable areas along the river. Through proper enforcement, various developments can be made possible, such as being able to create pedestrian walkways and recreational parks, and being able to revive our age

M. A. P. INSIGHTS FELINO A. PALAFOX, JR.

The success of progressive nations can be attributed to five factors, namely: visionary leadership, political will, good planning, good design, and good governance.

old river transport system, among others. The biggest impact of the enforcement of easements, however, is putting people out of danger during extreme flooding.

CONCLUSION

The Philippines is so blessed. It should be a great nation. Our country is first in the world in marine biodiversity, sailors, and call centers; second in geothermal energy and BPOs; third longest coastline; fourth in gold reserves and ship building; fifth in all other mineral resources; and 12th in human resources.

For more than 300 years, the Philippines was the Asia Pacific hub of Spanish Europe, 50 years the Americans, four years the Japanese, and two years the Brit-

ish. The Philippines is 400 times the size of Singapore, 350 times of Hong Kong, eight times of Taiwan, and three times of South Korea.

The 21st century will be the 'Asian Century.' From the century of nations, the Asian Century will be known as the 'century of cities.' In the old world system, trade and dialogue of cultures used to dominantly converge in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. But today there is a shift. With the booming population and the emergence and rise of new markets and industries in Asia, the Asia Pacific is fast becoming the world's center of trade. If you rotate the map of the world, our country is in the strategic center of Asia Pacific.

Despite all these blessings, our country remains poor and less developed because of corruption, criminality, and climate change not being addressed more effectively. In the coming elections, we have the opportunity to elect leaders who see the great potentials of our country, and have the vision and political will to bring the Philippines well into the 21st century. ■

(The article reflects the personal opinion of the author and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines.)

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Women of Dinagat coastal village take the driver's seat

By Danilo V. Adorador III
Inquirer Mindanao

SURIGAO CITY—In a remote coastal village in Dinagat province, a group of mothers is breaking out of the mold. Determined to improve their lives, the women are taking the driver's seat, literally.

"I never imagined myself driving cars to make a living. Seeing vehicles climbing steep hills and navigating narrow roads alongside deep ravines used to give me goose bumps," says Mylen Centino, a young widow who lost her husband to cancer a year ago.

Centino, 31, is one of 12 women undergoing a six-month driving course at Cagdianao Mining Corp. (CMC) mine site in Barangay Valencia in the nickel-rich town of Cagdianao.

The women come from different backgrounds. Aside from Centino, they also include a former overseas worker, a *labandera* (laundry woman) and young mothers whose husbands do not have stable jobs.

Before they joined the training program, the women were stay-at-home housewives and have

never driven an automobile.

The trainees are taught the skills expected of every good driver, such as how to negotiate the treacherous mine site terrain.

The driving simulations they go through are not easy nor simple. For instance, they have to stop and restart the car engine on a slippery slope, with dozens of giant haulers and heavy equipment coming from

opposite directions during normal mining operations.

But the women are undaunted, especially Centino, who has an 8-year-old child to raise.

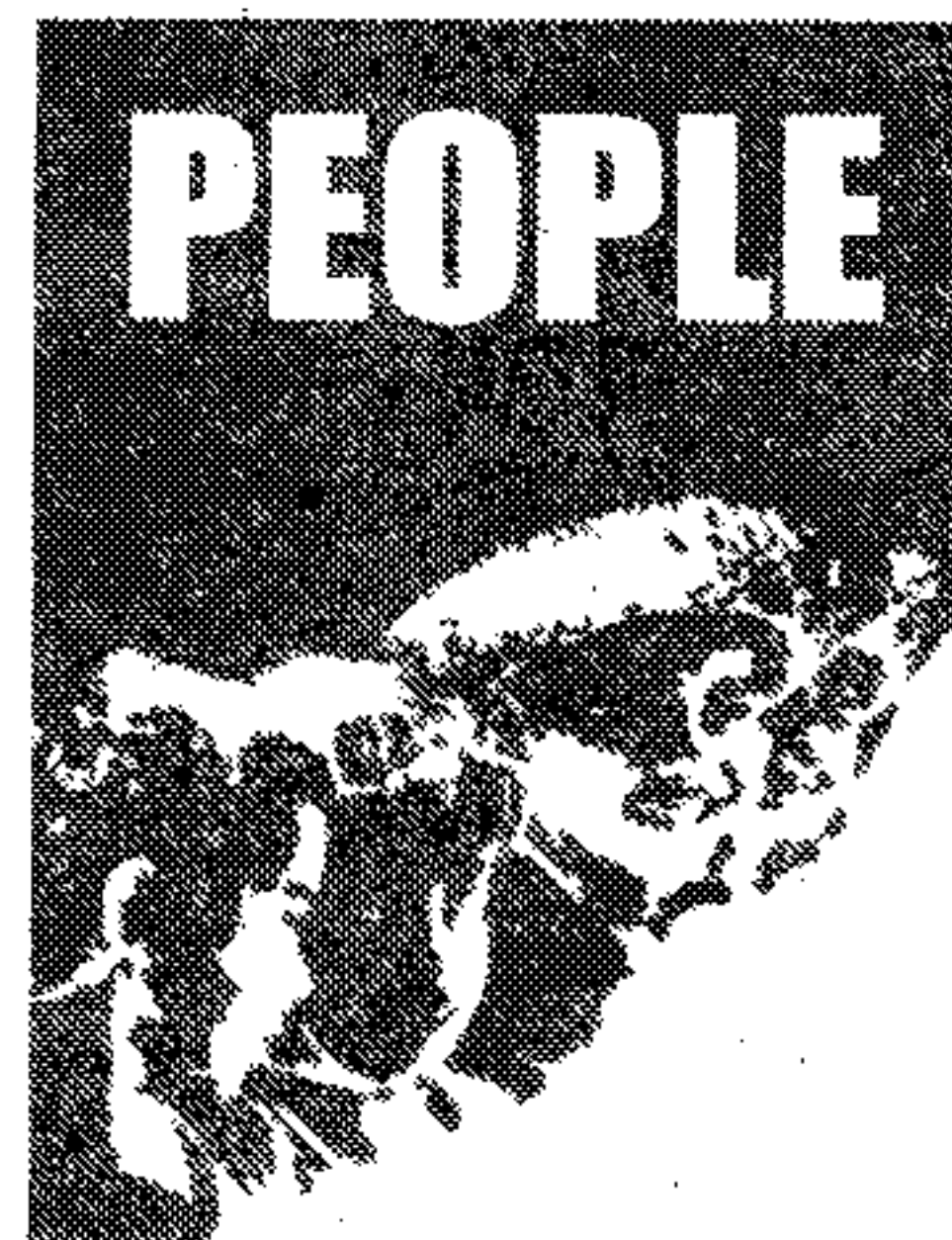
"When my husband was bedridden, I had to think hard about [what was go-

ing to happen to] my child. He was the breadwinner, I was a simple housewife who knew nothing but attend to household chores," Centino recalls, tears welling in her eyes.

Empowering women

Overcoming her fears, Centino joined the driving program. She is now being considered for a driving job at CMC, a subsidiary of Nickel Asia Corp. (NAC), one of the country's biggest mining conglomerates.

Darlito Boraquit, human re-



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DANILO V. ADORADOR/INQUIRER MINDANAO

NOT YOUR AVERAGE MOTHERS The women drivers pose during a training break.

source supervisor at CMC, says NAC wants to expand the role of women in the mining sector by empowering them with new skills.

Under NAC's Women In Mining (WIM) initiative, Boracuit says high school graduates like Centino, who have limited opportunities, are given a new lease on life.

The women trainees consider the driving course a good "fall-back" considering the "unreliable" income of their husbands, who are mainly fishermen.

They point out that their town, which faces the Pacific Ocean, has a short fishing season and is battered by northeast monsoon winds (*amihan*) most of the year.

Margie Bucio, a 33-year-old mother of three, whose husband has no stable job, says the CMC program has given her a new outlook on life.

"I was a labandera, one of the jobs in this village that women can do to earn a living," Bucio says. "I want to change that. I don't want to wash other people's

clothes for the rest of my life."

Jerlyne Gooc, a 35-year-old mother of two and a domestic helper in Kuwait for two years, says she plans to gain as much experience as a driver to seek a different kind of job overseas.

"I won't be cleaning houses when I go back. I will be driving vehicles to earn a much higher salary," she says.

As the women complete the final phase of their training, which they hope will mean stable income, they are aware it will not be easy to go into an occupation dominated by men.

"Driving is a man's job, that's how our society sees it. But we've proven that we can do it," says Florie Ensalada, the oldest in the group at 37.

Ensalada says she and her colleagues initially found the mining terrain difficult and challenging.

"Most of us found it hard at first to climb and drive down hills, as well as negotiate smaller, tighter curves. Add to that slippery roads common in

mineralized soil," she says.

Two of the trainees backed out, though many of the women say this is because of the stereotypes they know they have to face after the program.

Lorina Bactasa, a 35-year-old mother of six, says it took great effort to ignore skeptics who openly doubted their ability to complete the course.

"Some male drivers in the site would tease us that we wouldn't last a week. Even neighbors and some family members expressed doubts that we can do it," Bactasa says.

But the women bonded and swore to look out for each other.

When an engine conks out, the women help their colleague in distress by pushing the vehicle to safe ground.

Easy to train

The women drivers proved to be mentally alert and adept at responding to challenging situations on the road, says instructor Rogelio Aspacio.

"I have taught hundreds of

drivers for years and, based on my experience with the women, their performance is at par with the men's," Aspacio says.

But what sets the women apart, he says, "is that they are easier to train because they have a larger capacity for learning, because they listen and process instructions carefully."

"Men have the tendency to disobey instructions, perhaps out of sheer confidence that they can do it even on the first try," Aspacio says.

He has also observed that the women use fuel more efficiently than men because they "tend to drive calmly, their grip is easy and precise. They don't make rash moves."

Equal footing, respect

It is no surprise, he says, that the trainees not only earned his respect but also the respect of others.

Aiza Mindavia, a 27-year-old mother of two, says the growing respect she gets both at home and the workplace has boosted her self-esteem. "I no longer get judgmental looks from some of the male drivers who used to look down on us," she proudly says.

"Even my husband now calls me 'ma'am' at home," she adds, eliciting laughter from her colleagues.

Disa Dilinggan, 33, agrees. She says her new skill has put her on equal footing with her husband, who is a dump truck driver.

"I think it's not about wanting to be equal to our husbands, or other men. I believe that the most important thing we gained from this training is respect—respect for ourselves and respect from others," says Dilinggan, a mother of three.

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Group seeks Writ of Kalikasan from SC to stop Sasa Port project

By ALEXANDER D. LOPEZ

DAVAO CITY – The business sector, together with consumer and professional groups and progressive organizations, has asked the Supreme Court (SC) for the issuance of a Temporary Environmental Protection Order against the Aquino administration from proceeding with the implementation of the Sasa Port Modernization Project under the Public Private Partnership Program (PPP).

Lawyer Harry Roque, counsel to the opposition group, told reporters during the regular Kapehan sa Dabaw at SM City on Monday that they have already filed a petition with the SC asking for a Writ of Kalikasan, "questioning the negative environmental impact and the lack of consultation, mandated under the environmental laws of the country," in connection with the modernization of Sasa Port here.

According to Roque, the high court is expected to hear their petition today when SC justices resume session in Baguio City after the Holy Week break.

Roque said the writ is a new remedy under the special rules adopted by the SC intended to protect the environment and issued when there is an existing environmental law that is being violated.

He said that the project will increase the threat to the environment, and under the environmental code, it is required that the local government unit must first approve the project.

"Under the environmental code, anything that has the tendency to damage the environment must first seek an environmental impact assessment and acquire environmental compliance certificate or ECC."

The project, Roque emphasized, has no ECC from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Roque added that the project was also graft-laden, saying that the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) only



'NO TO SASA PORT MODERNIZATION' – Lawyer Harry Roque (second from right) speaks for a group of oppositors to the P18-billion Sasa Port Modernization Project in Davao City that will be implemented through a Public-Private Partnership Project. With Roque during the SM Kapehan sa Dabaw at SM City Davao Monday were (from left) former Davao City Councillor Pilar Braga, Councillor Diosdado Mahipus, and Davao City Chamber of Commerce President Bonifacio Tan. (Alexander D. Lopez)

recommended the port's modernization with a budget of ₱4 billion, but this was subsequently increased to ₱18 billion.

"It is being rammed by the administration for the election season. This administration is willing to damage the environment for as long as they are able to raise funds from this P18-billion project," Roque said.

The opposition group to the Sasa Port Modernization project is repre-

sented by Councilor Diosdado Mahipus of the city council of Davao; Bonifacio Tan, president of the Davao City Chamber of Commerce; Pilar Braga of the Consumer Movement of Davao, Samal island Resort Owners Association President Patro Lozada Jr., Benjie Badal of the Kadamay Urban Poor Network, and Peter Tiu Laviña, spokesperson of the Duterte presidential campaign.

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The 'best women'

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David



"MAY THE best woman win" was certainly the clincher in the closing remarks of the only woman vice-presidential candidate, Rep. Leni Robredo, at the close of Sunday's vice-presidential debate.

May I just say that I find the debate—sponsored by CNN Philippines and the Commission on Elections—the most organized and lucid of the series of candidates' debates in this year's campaign. Despite the candidates occasionally talking over each other, even if moderators Pinky Webb and Pia Hontiveros repeatedly admonished them to observe the rules, the public still managed to get a lucid and even entertaining view of where each of the six candidates stood on a welter of issues.

For a while there, it seemed as if the debate would get stuck on the issue of corruption, dynastic politics and hidden wealth, with Sen. Bongbong Marcos turning out to be the focus of much of the brickbats and name-calling. But soon the session "moved on" and managed to cover a wide range of issues, from the peace process to Internet coverage, from criminality to China, from transportation to connectivity.

But to return to Robredo's closing statement. While she couldn't match Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano's relentless pursuit and dogged questioning style, Sen. Chiz Escudero's "balagtas" posing or even Marcos' smooth dodging of accusations, Leni did women proud. She was rational, reasonable, calm and collected, and while lacking in the zing that people had come to expect of women pols like Miriam Defensor Santiago, she managed to score key points.

She may be the "best woman" running for vice president, but Robredo is not the only woman running in this year's elections. She leads a lineup of women endorsed or supported by the majority of members of the TOWNS Foundation, composed of past awardees of the national biannual search for the country's "outstanding women." The congresswoman from Camarines Sur leads a multipartisan lineup of four senatorial candidates, all of them women, endorsed by TOWNS. They are: former congresswoman Risa Hontiveros, Lorna Kapunan (who is a TOWNS awardee in the field of law), former justice secretary Leila de Lima, and OFW advocate Toots Ople.

It is a roster I am very comfortable with, and I would urge readers to look into the qualifications and records of Robredo and the other women when drawing up their own lists of candidates for Election Day.

TOWNS has likewise come out with a set of policy recommendations drawn up by "clusters" of members, divided into key issues, that the women are disseminating to the various candidates' camps in hopes that some (if not all) of them will be adopted by the eventual winners (or even by "losers" who will continue with their public service careers). Excerpts from the document follow.

In the field of business and entrepreneurship, TOWNS recommends concrete measures to increase "ease of doing business" by small entrepreneurs, especially in accessing licenses and following procedures, and simplifying the tax code to make it more user-friendly, with rates comparable to our neighbors.

The transportation cluster echoed the calls of many sectors for improved infrastructure, the elimination of "colorum" vehicles, and synchronized interconnection of the many forms of urban public transports. As for Internet traffic, the women called for greater transparency in the operations of telcos, including properly matching the capabilities of the providers with the number of subscribers and removing the expiration feature of prepaid cards. It also recommended the creation of a Department of Information and Communications Technology.

IN THE field of science and technology, the

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TOWNS document calls for a drastic increase in the budget to 1 percent of GDP as recommended by Unesco and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development for developing countries.

Strengthening the local government units is also needed, the document says, focusing on these as the primary responders in case of natural disasters and with responsibility for creating land use policies.

The document also strongly pushes for the development of tourism infrastructure and facilities, while protecting heritage structures and institutions. It also said that arts and culture should not only be promoted and promoted, but also recognized as a "commercially viable" resource.

Among the recommendations for health, the TOWNS document bats for the "full implementation" of the Reproductive Health Law, the passage of pending legislation on mental health, and further studies on the health impacts of climate change and the emergence of new viral diseases linked to changing weather patterns.

AGRICULTURAL sustainability was a particular concern of the TOWNS women, who called for more measured responses to climate change by increasing productivity and improving yield stability. They also called for the separation of the functions of research and regulation among government agencies related to agriculture, natural resource management and environmental protection.

The TOWNS women also call for the creation of a separate Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources which can provide better strategic directions and overall care for this sector. Those in the agricultural and fisheries cluster also called for shifting focus from "just" rice production to the propagation of higher value crops like fruits and flowers and vegetables.

It is indeed a daunting list of recommendations, but at least the men and women who will be taking office in May can no longer complain about lack of direction or guidance on what they are to do with the mandate given them.

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Heat stroke: Hottest summer alert

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CONSUMERLINE



By **CHING M.
ALANO**

You know it's summer when suddenly, the temperature shoots up to 39°C (as hot as when you're shivering with fever) and it is not uncommon for people's tempers to flare up, too.

It's sizzling hot you could probably fry an egg on the pavement. It is oh-so-hot you sweat as soon as you get out of the shower.

In the US, death from heat stroke has been reported among children (and pets, too) forgotten in vehicles by caregivers. Heat stroke (or sun stroke) is tagged as the "deadliest weather-related event." It kills hundreds of people in the US every year.

With the alert up on heat stroke, we asked two doctors from Healthway, the largest chain of mall-based clinics in the country, to answer some of our concerns on this really hot topic. Here are excerpts from **The Philippine STAR** Q&A with Dr. Maria Alexandra C. Villapol, internal medicine, Healthway Manila and Dr. Jennifer Ann Luna Cantre, cardiologist, Healthway, SM The Block.

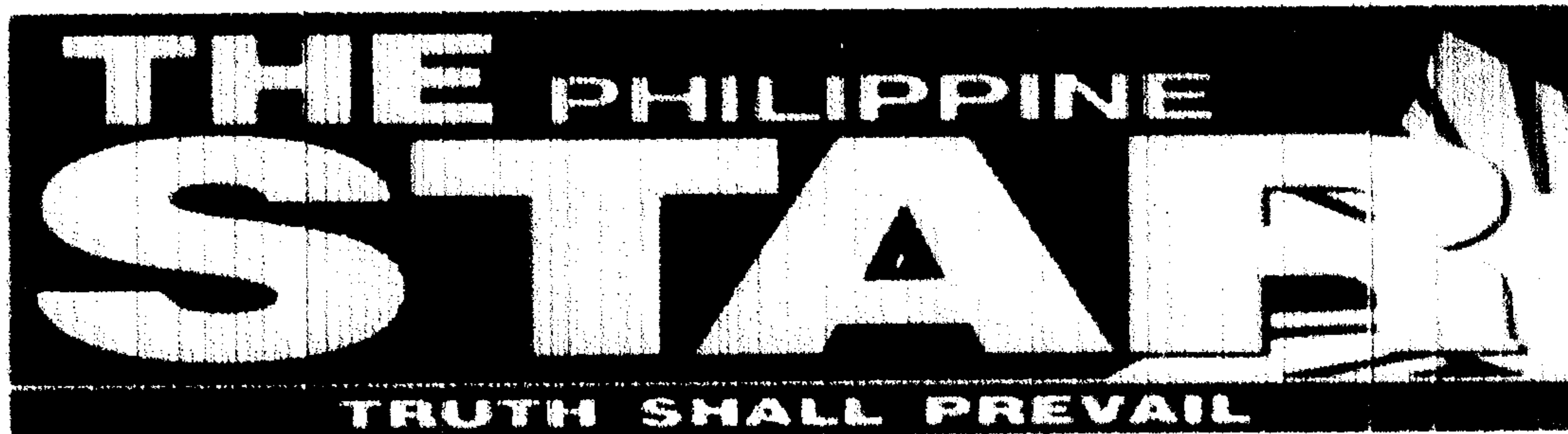
PHILIPPINE STAR: What are the symptoms of a heat stroke? How do I know I'm about to have one? What are the warning signs?

It's not true that when we take a shower, we should avoid wetting our head first lest we get an aneurysm.

DR. MARIA ALEXANDRA VILLAPOL: Symptoms of a heat stroke include flushed skin, a high temperature of 40°C or higher, moist skin but some may have hot and dry skin, and a throbbing headache. As the heat stroke worsens, the heart rate increases (normal is 60-100 beats per minute), because the body starts to compensate for the changes brought about by the extreme heat. The breathing becomes rapid and shallow. The person may also experience nausea or vomiting. What may start as confusion and irritability may progress to a more

altered mental state, and the person may have slurred speech, delirium, seizures, and coma.

DR. JENNIFER ANN LUNA CANTRE: Symptoms include weakness, dizziness, disorientation. When these symptoms are experienced while being exposed to hot temperatures, then it is possible that you are having a heat stroke.



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Is it anything like a stroke?

DR. VILLAPOL: No, it is different from a stroke. A heat stroke is a result of prolonged exposure to high temperatures, especially if accompanied by physical exertion, such as running on a really hot day.

A stroke, or medically called Cerebrovascular Accident (CVA), is due to an accumulation of blood in the brain (hemorrhage) or a sudden interruption of blood supply to an area of the brain (ischemia). Both types of stroke are most commonly caused by very high blood pressure.

DR. CANTRE: Although some symptoms of heat stroke are similar to strokes of cerebrovascular origin, these are two different things. The management for the two conditions also differs.

What should I do so I don't get a heat stroke?

DR. VILLAPOL: To avoid a heat stroke, you should wear loose and lightweight clothing especially in summer. Apply sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 if you are going to be exposed to the sun, or wear a hat and sunglasses. Keep yourself hydrated by drinking eight to 10 glasses of water per day. If you are to join a sports activity, make sure that you are hydrated prior to the activity, periodically check your hydration status during and after the activity, and increase your fluid intake as needed. If you are taking any medications,

consult your doctor to make sure that these are adjusted accordingly. And, if possible, avoid exposing yourself during the hottest time of the day. If you want to do outdoor exercises, schedule it in the early morning or evening.

If I see someone suffering from a heat stroke, how can I help with first aid?

DR. VILLAPOL: The primary goal in the treatment of a heat stroke is to cool the overheated person. You can help with first aid by bringing the person under the shade or indoors, removing excess clothing, applying ice packs or wet towels over the head, neck, armpits, and groin, and, if available, use fans or air conditioning.

DR. CANTRE: For lay people, the best thing to do if you see someone who is possibly suffering from a heat stroke is to remove the person from the area and put him/her in a well-ventilated/cool place and to make sure he/she is seen by a doctor immediately.

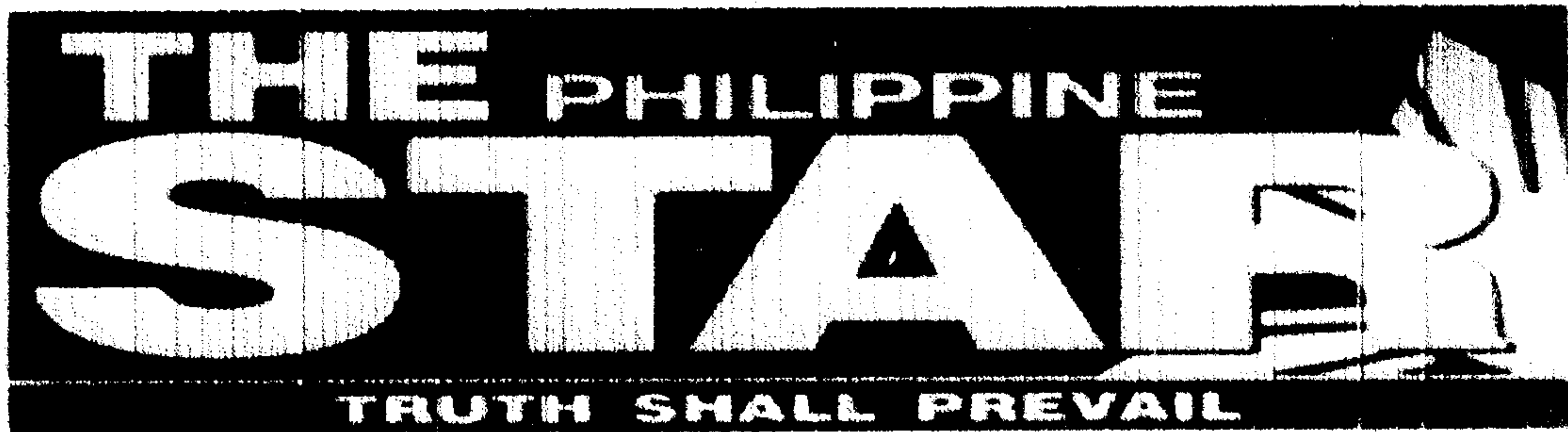
Who are at risk of a heat stroke?

DR. VILLAPOL: Anyone can develop heat stroke. However, the following are at increased risk: adults over 65 years old, those in military training or sports done in hot weather, those suddenly exposed to hot weather they are not used to, those taking maintenance medications that limit fluids such as vasoconstrictors, beta-blockers, diuretics, antidepressants or antipsychotics, and those with certain health conditions such as lung disease.

What's the worst thing that can happen when you get a heat stroke? Can you die?

DR. VILLAPOL: The worst thing that can happen is damage to the vital organs (such as the heart, brain, lungs, kidneys) and death, especially if the heat stroke is severe and there is a delay in the treatment.

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DR. CANTRE: Yes, the worst case scenario for patients who develop heat stroke can lead to death because the increase in temperature results in cellular injury to various bodily systems which may result in multi-organ failure not compatible with life.

Is it true that with the summer heat, when we take a shower, we should avoid wetting our head first lest we get an aneurysm?

DR. VILLAPOL: No, this is not true. An aneurysm is a bulge in the wall of an artery that is filled with blood, and is caused by weakness in the arterial muscle. It is due to hardening of the arteries, aging, genetics, and uncontrolled high blood pressure. It can occur anywhere in the body. Common locations are the brain, heart, and abdominal arteries.

DR. CANTRE: Aneurysms are abnormalities in blood vessels caused by either elevated blood pressure or anatomic deformities. These are not caused by showers.

What clothes should we wear in the heat of summer?

DR. VILLAPOL: In summer, we should wear loose and lightweight clothing. If we are active in sports, we should take note and follow the proper attire for these sports.

DR. CANTRE: It is best to wear clothes that can promote air circulation like cotton, linen, etc. Best not to wear thick clothes or two many layers.

Is there an anti-heat stroke diet? What foods should we eat to cool off this summer?

DR. VILLAPOL: Currently, there is no study-based, proven anti-heat stroke diet. But there are home remedies that are thought to help with or prevent heat stroke. These include the following: watermelon, onions, fruit juices, coriander, buttermilk, coconut water, and plums. However, to be sure, consult your doctor and nutritionist first.

DR. CANTRE: No specific diet for heat stroke. Just make sure you are always well-hydrated. Make sure to drink plenty of water and eat fruits with high water content like watermelon.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

China's struggle for recognition

WHAT WOULD you do if you were the richest person in your community and you have issues with your neighbors on property rights?

If you are emotionally stable or do not have a chip on your shoulder, you will reach out to them to come up with a win-win solution to your conflict.

If you are emotionally challenged or harbor feelings of insecurity, you will perform acts that show your superiority or your neighbors' weakness in relation to your strength. Like a bully, you may even use force or intimidation to "persuade" them to give in to your demands in deference to your high standing in the community.

This is exactly how China, the richest economy in the region (and the second largest in the world), has been acting in recent years in relation to some of its neighbors.

Invoking historical rights, China has claimed ownership over practically the entire South China Sea, including a number of shoals, reefs and islands, to the exclusion of other countries that, under the rules of international law, are entitled to certain economic rights over them.

After seizing some shoals and islands that lie within the exclusive economic zone or territory of the Philippines and Vietnam, respectively, China recently encroached into Indonesian and Malaysian waters. It justified the intrusion of its fishermen with the claim that those areas have been their "traditional fishing grounds."

Although a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos), China refuses to abide with its provisions on the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes among its signatories.

China wants direct negotiations on those issues with the other countries that have territorial claims in the South China Sea; it does not want those countries to seek relief from Unclos or any other international institution.

COMMENTARY

Raul J. Palabrica

The subliminal message of China's demand is, as the "overlord" in this part of the world, it has the right to decide on the manner by which conflicts in the area should be resolved.

If a third party—especially a body organized under the auspices of the United Nations or the Western powers—steps into the picture, China is aware that it would be unable to influence the proceedings or decision and possibly lose. That would be bad for its image and prestige.

China's recent announcement that it would create a maritime court to hear and decide on maritime disputes in the region lends credence to its feeling of insecurity.

The humiliation of seeing parts of its territory under foreign control in the past is still imbedded in China's consciousness, and it is apprehensive (or paranoid) about the "foreign devils" (as it describes its former colonizers) conspiring to prevent or contain it from becoming a superpower.

It also appears disconcerted by the fact that, in spite of its economic and military might, many of its neighbors continue to hold the United States or Japan in high esteem, sometimes at its expense.

American influence in social and political activities remains strong in Asia despite reduced US presence and China's emergence as an economic power. China's erstwhile war enemy, Japan, whose geographical size and economy are comparably smaller, continues to be looked up to by many Asian countries as a model for inclusive economic growth.

With the United States and Japan still looming large in Asia, the most populous, richest and militarily-strongest nation in the region has been reduced to "pygmy status" in terms of political and social leadership in its own neighborhood.

To date, only three countries in Southeast Asia—Laos, Cambodia and Burma (Myanmar)—defer to and treat China as "Big Brother" on significant economic and military matters. This behavior does not come as a surprise because China has given (and continues to give) them massive financial assistance to help develop their economy and military. The additional payback for the dole is their willingness to act as China's surrogates or defenders, in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations when its interests are threatened.

For economic reasons, Indonesia and Malaysia have adopted a neutral attitude vis-à-vis China in connection with territorial disputes in the South China Sea. And why not? They are profiting immensely from their trade with China and its assistance to their infrastructure projects.

Unless China learns to respect Indonesia's and Malaysia's maritime rights, it may find itself with the same strained relations that presently characterize its ties with the Philippines and Vietnam.

If China thinks gunboat diplomacy, the strategy of subjugation used by its former colonizers, will serve its interests, it is totally wrong. The world has turned around many times since and replicating that approach today can lead to disastrous results.

There is still a long way to go before China can accomplish its dream to be recognized and treated as a superpower, at least in this part of the world.

Raul J. Palabrica (rpalabrica@inquirer.com.ph) writes a weekly column in the Business section of the INQUIRER.



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G7 foreign ministers oppose sea row provocation

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HIROSHIMA – Foreign ministers from the Group of Seven (G7) advanced economies said they strongly oppose provocation in the East and South China Seas, where China is locked in territorial disputes with nations including the Philippines, Vietnam and Japan.

"We express our strong opposition to any intimidating coercive or provocative unilateral actions that could alter the status quo and increase tensions," the foreign ministers said in a statement yesterday following a meeting in this Japanese city.

In an apparent reference to China's territorial spat with the Philippines, the group also called on countries to observe international maritime laws and implement any binding

judgments delivered by courts and tribunals.

Manila has asked the International Court of Arbitration in The Hague to decide on its dispute with Beijing. A ruling is expected by June.

China is building islands on reefs in the South China Sea to bolster its claims. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam also have claims on the waters that are believed to have huge deposits of oil and gas and through which about \$5 trillion in trade is shipped every year.

The United States has said it is keen to raise the issue of China's territorial ambitions in the South China Sea at a G-7 foreign ministers' meeting in Hiroshima, a move that would likely draw an angry response from Beijing.

State Department spokesman Mark Toner told reporters in Washington last Friday the US should discuss security issues any time it meets with key partners in Asia. "What we want to see happen in the South China Sea is important. It's important to the region, it's important to the stability of the region, so I would suggest that those topics should be on the table."

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi last Saturday said the G-7 meeting that began yesterday should not "hype" the South China Sea issue. He made the comments at a meeting with British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond in Beijing, according to a statement on the ministry's website last Saturday.

While host nation Japan



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decides on the agenda for the two-day meeting, it is likely to agree to any request from the US to discuss the South China Sea, as it has in recent months stepped up its criticism of China's activities in the water – a key maritime artery for trade and energy shipments.

While none of the six states that have overlapping claims in the resource-rich sea is present in Hiroshima, any implied criticism would be seen in Beijing as a political move to put pressure on China.

Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and US Secretary of State John Kerry are scheduled to speak after the meeting closes this afternoon.

China has shown increasing assertiveness in its claims, constructing artificial islands and placing military facilities on

them. The US has challenged its "excessive" claims, conducting freedom of navigation operations close to these islands.

Kerry, who arrived in Hiroshima yesterday morning, became the first US Secretary of State to visit the atomic-bombed city. His landmark trip is seen as possibly paving the way for President Barack Obama to become the first serving US president to visit the city next month, when he comes to Japan for the G-7 summit, which will take place in another part of Japan.

The Hiroshima meeting, part of the run-up to the summit, also includes top diplomats from nuclear-armed Britain and France, and Canada, Germany, Italy, host Japan and the European Union. The ministers discussed issues

including the Middle East, the refugee crisis, the conflict in Ukraine and global terrorism.

Ministers have so far said little about the content of the meetings, though Kerry tweeted that they had a "big foreign policy agenda to cover" – mentioning topics such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria militant group as well as "Asia regional issues and global threats."

But it is the location of the talks – one of two cities where the US dropped an atomic bomb in 1945, ending World War II – that has captured the imagination of the Japanese public. Many hope it will promote greater understanding of Japan's staunch anti-nuclear stance as the only country to suffer an atomic attack.

– Reuters, AFP

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Green city to rise in Clark

By GENALYN D. KABILING

TARLAC – The country's next modern, green, and disaster-resilient metropolis will soon rise in the heart of Central Luzon.

The construction of the ₱607-billion Clark Green City formally kicked off yesterday after President Aquino led the groundbreaking rites of the project that is expected to be bigger than the Bonifacio Global City.

The Clark Green City, a project initiated by the Bases Conversion and Development Authority, involves the development of a 9,450-hectare proposed business hub located inside the Clark Special Economic Zone.

The envisioned green city is

expected to boost economic growth and generate jobs in the region.

"Just to give us an idea of the Clark Green City's scale, Bonifacio Global City is roughly about 200 hectares," Aquino said in his remarks.

"By the time of its completion, it is envisioned to be a city in every sense of the word. It will be home to companies, retail outlets, offices, residential parks, accommodating 1.12 million residents and 800,000 workers," Aquino added.

Aquino said Clark Green City also embodies his government's vision for a "more resilient Philippines."

He noted that the number of 800,000 workers is roughly the amount of people that enter the

labor force every year. "With just the Clark Green City, we will have opportunities for the new labor entrance," he added.

Aquino said the Clark Green City would not be prone to floods since its lowest elevation is 56 meters above sea level while its central park will serve as a flood catchment basin.

It also enjoys the natural protection from typhoons with the Sierra Madre to the West and Zambales mountain range to the east, he added.

"Truly, as interest in our nation grows – and as markets develop across the country – projects like this are vital. Along with investing in our workforce and spending on critical infrastructure projects, we

need to develop viable economic hubs, not just in Metro Manila or Cebu, but in provinces with high growth potential," Aquino said.

"And I am particularly glad that, when I step down in office and have more quiet time to spend in Tarlac, I can watch over the development of this city and hopefully with a mayor who is smiling at the successes," he added.

Aquino also thanked the government's partners in the private sector, including Filinvest and Japan Overseas Infrastructure Investment Corp. for Transport and Urban Development, for their active participation "to make this dream a reality."

With the ground breaking ceremony led by the President, BCDA President Arnel Casanova said it's now all systems go for the Clark Green City.

Casanova said the first phase of

the Clark Green City development will involve the construction of an industrial zone and a mixed-use development covering 288 hectares. The project will be made in partnership with Filinvest Land Inc.

Apart from its favorable geographical conditions making it less vulnerable to floods and quakes, the envisioned Clark Green City will be a sustainable and modern metropolis, according to the BCDA head.

"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 diversity, energy efficiency and urban farming, among others, making it one of the country's most lovable cities of the future," Casanova said.