

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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DENR seeks recovery of chainsaws

TACLOBAN CITY—Bothered that it may be used for illegal logging activities, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is seeking the immediate recovery of chainsaws distributed by the Philippine Coconut Authority to clear debris after the onslaught of Super Typhoon "Yolanda" in 2013.

DENR Eastern Visayas Regional Executive Director Leonardo Sibbaluca said that since the removal of coconut debris is now done, there's a huge possibility that some people will use these chainsaws to cut trees.

"Are they going to use these chainsaw to pull out weeds? Of course not! This will surely be used for illegal logging," Sibbaluca said.

Sibbaluca said that some foresters have already recovered chainsaws acquired by some individuals for post-"Yolanda" clearing operations.

PCA Regional Manager Joel Pilapil said they are now on the process of recovering chainsaws borrowed by some groups and local government units since late 2013.

"Now that debris clearing is over, most individual operators have already returned the chainsaws. However, most units are still under the possession of local government units," Pilapil said.

PCA records show that

of the 2,625 chainsaws distributed after "Yolanda," 289 units are scheduled for return to the central government within the first half of 2016. Of the number, 151 are in Eastern Samar, 110 in northern Leyte, and 28 units in western Leyte.

The government has embarked on massive chainsaw distribution to remove fallen coconut trees in support to recovery activities for coconut farmers. The 2013 super typhoon has destroyed about 13-million trees in Eastern Visayas region.

Clearing was one of the priorities after the disaster considering that rotten coconut trees serves as breeding ground of rhinoceros beetle that is feed on the palm shoot.

The pest has been present in the region's coconut farms even before "Yolanda" struck, but its population has been manageable, according to PCA.

The beetle's population usually starts to increase six months after a coconut tree is uprooted or sheared. PNA

TVI secures permit for Balabag mining

By Anna Leah E. Gonzales

THE Mines and Geosciences Bureau approved the declaration of mining project feasibility of TVI Resource Development Philippines Inc. for the Balabag gold and silver project in Bayog, Zamboanga del Sur.

"With the approval of the DMPF, the company is now authorized to proceed to the development and operating period of the MPSA, which includes the extraction and commercial disposition of gold, copper and associated minerals within the contract area," MGB said.

TVIRD is the local affiliate of TVI Pacific Inc., a publicly listed

Canadian mining company focused on the exploration, development and production of precious and base metals.

The company already received an environmental compliance certificate from the Environment Department for the Balabag project.

It also received the approval of the social development management program in May 2014.

TVIRD holds 100 percent of the mineral production sharing agreement area covering 4,779 hectares containing the Balabag epithermal gold and silver project.

The project is located 75 kilometers east-northeast of TVIRD's Canatuan mine.

Balabag has an indicated mineral resource of 1.35 million tons with an average annual production rate of 193,000 metric tons of ore per year and with a mine life of seven years.

Exploration and development work were put on hold at the Balabag project in 2014, pending the receipt of all permits from the government.

The Balabag project requires a capital investment of P1.04 billion and is expected to gener-

ate P6.54 billion in revenues, of which the government is projected to benefit P742.70 million.

"Balabag is the fourth mining project to be successfully permitted by TVIRD in the Philippines over the past 11 years and I am confident that TVIRD will secure the necessary funds to move the project forward prior its listing on the PSE later this year," said TVI chairman and chief executive Clifford James.

"At TVI, we are very pleased with this development as a permitted Balabag project will greatly support TVIRD's efforts to list on the PSE and the listing could provide TVI with both a short and long-term source of funding for our resource acquisition and development activities," James said.

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Cacao to be planted in Panay forest

CACAO will be planted in 890 hectare-agro forestry area in Panay, a

partnership among German international cooperation agency Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Cocoa Foundation of the Philippines (Cocoaphil), and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Edward David, Cocoaphil president, said the project will help beef up the country's cocoa production and seize export market. Cocoa global shortage is predicted at one million metric tons (MT) by 2020.

"We are supporting Department of Agriculture's Sustainable Cacao Project by addressing cacao shortage through training, consulting services and provision of planting materials," said David.

"The natural forest in Panay is the most important carbon sink in the region. Conservation is therefore vitally important. With local people's participation, forest land use plans are developed," according to GIZ.

The FCPP II is a continuation of the first GIZ project of the same name that had mustered support from Panay island's 20 local government units and their communities. Households have established a total of 1,060 hectares of mixed forest and 890 hectares of agroforestry areas.

The memorandum of agreement signed by David for Cocoaphil and by Dr. Klaus Schmitt, FCPP GIZ principal advisor, will sustain protection of the natural resource management areas by planting these with cacao, coffee, abaca and other crops.

Under the cacao program, maximum support to farmers is P10,000 for material subsidy and P4,000 for labor subsidy. The same support is allocated for coffee and abaca, according Bernardo Agaloos Jr., GIZ senior adviser.

"A ready market linking the farmers directly to Cocoaphil, Manila Cordage and Nestle who would purchase all produce that meet quantity and quality at equitable prices beyond the lifetime of the project would be the key factor for success," said Agaloos.

Planting will be in Ibañay and Libacao in Aklan; Pandan, Sebaste, Laua-an, Bugasong, Valderrama, Patnongon, Sibalom and San Remigio in Antique; Tapaz, Capiz; and San Joaquin, Miag-ao, Tubungan, Janiuay and Lambunao in Iloilo. GIZ, however, has yet to indicate target area of

planting for each crop per year.

Cocoaphil will introduce value adding into cacao production processes (processing into chocolates) and also link cacao farmers to markets. It will purchase fermented or dried cacao beans.

The GIZ project will rehabilitate degraded forest lands through natural regeneration and upland farming technologies.

The German government (Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety or BMUB) which funds GIZ has supported Panay forest conservation as Panay is a known habitat for certain endangered species. The endangered Dulungan hornbill and Rafflesia plants are known to be found only in Panay.

"Slash-and-burn (Kaingin) practices, unregulated logging and poaching pose a threat to the entire (Panay) ecosystem," according to GIZ.

Kaingin has contributed to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. But FCPP I is estimated to have contributed to a decrease in GHG (particularly carbon dioxide or CO₂) emission totaling 16,800 MT per year. This is accomplished by arresting deforestation. Reforestation activities are further reducing carbon dioxide emission placed at 11,650 MT per year.

"Deforestation of the mountain range is causing erosion and fluctuating water levels. It also jeopardizes rice irrigation and the drinking water supply in low-lying areas," GIZ noted.

With the proper implementation of a land use plan, FCPP is also able to protect the rights and interests of indigenous groups who are empowered to decide on their recommended uses for the lands. Land rights instruments (land titles and ancestral domain land rights) are respected. At the same time, the land use plan protects critical habitats for endangered species.

The project has also been considering use of biofuel in place of pollutant fossil fuel in operating the project. Agricultural wastes will be harnessed as renewable energy resource.

The project will likewise help DENR meet commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity's Strategic plan 2011-2020. The target involves avoiding extinctions of threatened species and protecting land and seas.

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Public hearing on SM Prime's Pasay reclamation set for June

THE ENVIRONMENTAL Management Bureau will hold a public consultation on the environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the Manila Bay reclamation project.

"The public hearing is being conducted in connection with the review of the EIA report," read the notice of the attached agency of the Environment and Natural Resources Department in reference to a 360-hectare reclamation project, which has the Pasay City Government as its proponent.

Individual or stakeholder groups may participate in the public hearing by registering with the EMB central office either in person or via e-mail

The public hearing is set on June 24 at the Cuneta Astrodome Conference room in Pasay City.

In 2013, Pasay City awarded to SM Prime Holdings, Inc. a contract under the private-public partnership to reclaim and develop around 300 hectares (ha) in parts of Manila Bay within Pasay's jurisdiction for P54.5 billion

The city will contribute to the joint venture its authority, rights and privileges to undertake the reclamation process.

The Pasay City government will not incur any expenses on the reclamation and development of the land but will be given 51% of the area to be reclaimed.

The reclamation project is part of a bigger reclamation deal which also involves 300 hectares in Manila Bay awarded by the Parañaque City government. —
Janina C. Lim



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Bulacan governor warns piggeries not to dump waste into rivers

MALOLOS CITY, Bulacan—In a bid to further boost the image of Bulacan as an environment-friendly growth center, Gov. Wilhelmino M. Sy-Alvarado warned factories, piggery and poultry farms not to discharge their waste water to creeks and rivers and comply with existing environment laws or face revocation of their business permits.

Alvarado also ordered the Bulacan Environment and Natural Resources Office, headed by Elizabeth M. Apresto, to inspect factories, big piggery and poultry farms if they are complying on the provision of

the provincial environment code.

He told Apresto to revoke the permits and the Environment Compliance Certificate (ECC) of those who will be found discharging waste waters to creeks and rivers and other violations of the law. Alvarado said discharging toxic waste to creeks and river does not only pollute but is also hazardous to human health.

Most of the factories are in this city, Guiguinto, Marilao and Meycauayan City, while big piggery and poultry farms are in Santa Maria, Pulilan, Pandi, Norzagaray, San Ildefonso and San Rafael. **PNA**



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AKSIYON NAMANI Puno na ng basura ang ilog na ito sa C. M. Recto Street malapit sa Divisoria sa Maynila at mistulang bulag ang mga opisyal ng barangay dito sa pagtatapon ng mga residente na hindi inisip na magdudulot ito ng pagbaha lalo na ngayong magtatag-ulan na. Kuha ni **RUDY ESPERAS**

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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Environment friendly technology unveiled

Mapecon Green Charcoal Philippines Inc. (MGCPI) will pursue a program it believes can draw public interest to help communicate to the public the value of managed environment through a thematic program which is designed to address the problems of pests, wastes and other environment problems.

This was aired by noted inventor Gozalo Catan Jr., MGCPI executive vice president who also said the program was arrived at following results of research on the massive population of water lilies and mud in Laguna Lake and Pasig River.

Waterlilies, the research showed, can be converted into alternative fuel while mud can be made into vermicast (organic fertilizer) through the company's patented Green Charcoal technology.

The program, dubbed "Modern Indigenous Proven

Solutions" is embodied in a position paper presented to the DENR.

It involves recycling of water lilies from Laguna Lake and mud and Pasig River which may serve as a model in revitalizing and cleaning the lakes through an organic vermicomposting using the Green Charcoal technology in consonance with Article I, Section 2C of Republic Act 9003, the Solid Waste Management Law.

Green Charcoal technology, Catan said, converts biowaste into green charcoal in the form of pellets, firelog and briquette and it is environment friendly.

It is an activated carbon produced from coconut shell, coal and other forest wastes using a Toyota Hi-Ace 4-K engine that runs on 100 percent green charcoal hydrogen fuel - the cleanest fuel there is in lieu of petroleum fuel which is harmful to the environment.

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Funds ready for gold project in Batangas

By Ronnel W. Domingo

A JOINT venture for the prospective Lobo gold project in Batangas has become operational, revving up activities to bring the planned mine nearer to production stage.

Red Mountain Mining Ltd. said its partner Bluebird Merchant Ventures Ltd. has completed payments to form the \$6.8-million (about P317 million) joint venture (JV), following the latter's recent listing at the London Stock Exchange.

"Now that the Batangas JV is operational and funded, we can bring together all the work over the past 12 to 18 months to fast track completion of the development studies and permitting," Red Mountain managing director Jon Dugdale said in a statement. "This JV brings together two highly experienced board and executive teams, with the mining and development experience to develop this exciting gold project."

The joint venture intends to complete a pre-feasibility study of the prospect in Lobo town and secure a permit for a drilling program and test key resource or reserve targets at Lobo.

Beyond that, the joint venture wants to move forward to a definitive feasibility study (DFS) and finalize other permits like the Environmental Impact Statement, which is a requirement for the Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC).

The project also needs to secure endorsements needed to allow the Declaration of Mining Project Feasibility (DMF) to be elevated to the Mines and Geosciences Bureau for final technical assessment and recommendation for approval.

Last November, Red Mountain said samples from the so-called South West Breccia (SWB) Main Lode showed as much as 29.3 grams of gold per ton of material from just a meter under the surface.

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DPWH to revive crucial Laguna dike PPP

By Miguel R. Camus

THE DEPARTMENT of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) is seeking new consultants to restructure the failed Laguna Expressway Dike public private partnership project (PPP) and ensure that a crucial flood control dike gets built.

Ariel Angeles, DPWH head of PPP service, said in an interview the agency was seeking the help of the Asian Development Bank in procuring a new transaction adviser.

The original Laguna Expressway Dike PPP, valued at P123 billion, failed after bidders snubbed the project last March, citing a slew of reasons from the project's complexity to legal and political uncertainties.

Angeles said the agency planned to break up the project, which involved a flood control component, overhead tollroad and a massive and likely lucrative land reclamation project on Laguna Lake.

For the flood control dike, Angeles said the government was eyeing unbundling

this from the PPP project and building it by itself. He said the DPWH may tap official development assistance loans overseas to help finance the project.

"We hope the next administration would prioritize this," Angeles said.

The flood control dike was deemed crucial since it would protect about 800,000 people in Laguna and parts of Metro Manila from rising waters. The DPWH estimated the government would also save an average of P8.1 billion in flood-related damage every year.

Angeles said the DPWH still planned to bid out the tollroad, which would be a 47-kilometer expressway linking Taguig in Metro Manila to Los Baños in Laguna.

More uncertain, he said, was the fate of the reclamation of 700 hectares of land on Laguna Lake. The land reclamation aspect was the original PPP project's main sweetener, since traffic estimates for tollroad were considered "low" and the flood control dike would not make any money.

The final structure would depend on the

results of a new feasibility study. Angeles said the project was returning to the drawing board, and any bidding would occur in 2017 at the earliest.

The original Laguna Lakeshore Expressway Dike PPP was among the Aquino administration's more ambitious projects. It also lured a healthy amount of interest from the private sector, before feasibility issues ultimately prompted bidders to back out.

The three groups that qualified and collectively did not submit bid offers were Team Trident, comprised of Ayala Land Inc., SM Prime Holdings Inc., Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc. and Megaworld Corp; San Miguel Corp.; and Alloy Pavi Hanshi LLEDP Consortium, comprised of Malaysia's MTD Group, South Korea's Hanjin and the family of former Sen. Manuel Villar Jr.

The Aquino administration, which ended in June 2016, had successfully auctioned off 12 PPP deals valued at over P200 billion.



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DA needs 'real action' on climate change

BY JOHNNY F. GOLOYUGO
Correspondent

REAL action is needed in addressing climate change in agriculture, because "the Department of Agriculture's [DA] response has been mostly on paper," a consultant of the System's Wide Climate Change Office (SW-CCO) said on Friday.

SW-CCO consultant Dr. Eliseo Ponce, former director of the Bureau of Agricultural Research (BAR), said the institutionalization of the office is needed "to provide continuous focus and attention to climate change in agriculture and fisheries development."

Ponce also said the key provision of the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act of 1997, or AFMA (Republic Act 8435) "to plan agricultural development by landscapes, rather than by commodity, to better address climate change and sustainable development issues has to be implemented, not later than 2017, to achieve better resilience in agriculture livelihoods and communities in the years to come."

Former President Fidel V. Ramos signed AFMA into law in December 1997, specifically to address poverty alleviation and social equity, food security, rational use of resources, global competitiveness, sustainable

development, people empowerment and income profitability, especially for farmers and fisher folks.

Ponce noted the current DA rationalization plans "falls short of the principles enunciated by the Economic Policy Research and Advocacy [EPRA] presented in 2006 during the administration of former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and rationalization plan proposed by then Agriculture Secretary Domingo F. Panganiban."

"Conflict of interest still persists in the current system, and there is no function specialization to achieve effectiveness and efficiency," he said.

Dr. Ponce also noted the serious weakening of the DA regional field offices in terms of technical expertise that will enable them to provide robust and reliable technical support services to local government units.

He suggested the passage of a "DA Bureaucracy Restructuring Bill," along the principles advanced by the EPRA, headed by former National Economic and Development Authority Director General Cielito F. Habito.

The EPRA principles called for, among others, a simplified national agriculture bureaucracy, specialization to achieve efficiency and avoid conflict of interest,

provide appropriate staff balance to ensure systems efficiency and client responsiveness, decentralize the provision of national public goods by assigning administrative responsibilities to the lowest level of governance capable of carrying out responsibilities competently and improve the quality of governance.

"It should be a priority bill. The organizational structure will continue to negatively affect to a high degree the DA's effectiveness in providing national leadership in agriculture development if not passed soon," he stressed.

Ponce also cautioned against hurriedly conceived programs for political purposes.

"Limit pronouncements to key principles that will define the government's programs in the pursuit of inclusive agriculture development to achieve presumptive President Rodrigo R. Duterte's vision of the country."

"Get to know the bureaucracy and its existing programs. Know its strengths and limitations by talking to different stakeholders and experts who have studied the DA over the years. In that way, programs are well thought of and highly consistent to the principles of inclusive development, which Mr. Duterte has publicly announced," Ponce added.



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As El Niño exits, La Niña looms and promises her style of mayhem

THINK of it as Mother Nature's roller-coaster ride: the shift between the weather patterns, known as El Niño and La Niña, that, at their worst, can cause havoc worldwide.



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As El Niño exist, La Niña
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El Niño—spurred on by a warming of the equatorial Pacific—has dried up rice crops across Southeast Asia, cocoa fields in Ghana, coffee in Indonesia and sugarcane in Thailand since last year. It contributed to the Western Hemisphere's strongest hurricane on record and the planet's warmest year since at least the 1880s.

Now the ocean's surface is starting to cool, which may signal the start of a La Niña. Scientists say this pattern typically contributes to more hurricanes in the Atlantic, drought in Brazil and heavy rain in Indonesia and India. While it might give a boost to US natural gas, it could hurt Australian coal operations and palm-oil output in Malaysia. For some areas, it may be worse than a typical El Niño.

"El Niño extremes are greater, while La Niña lasts longer," said Kevin Trenberth, distinguished senior scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado.

The cycles occur every two or three years on average and help regulate the temperature of the Earth, as the equatorial Pacific absorbs the heat of the sun during the El Niño and then releases it into the atmosphere. That can create a La Niña: a "recharge state," when "the whole Earth is cooler than it was before this started," Trenberth said.

Forecasters on two continents have issued La Niña watches for this year. Australia's Bureau of Meteorology says the odds are about 50 percent. The US Climate Prediction Center's bet is 75 percent by December, but it says formation also could come earlier: some time from July to September.

Peruvian fisherman centuries ago were first to notice the ocean would often warm late in the year. They called the phenomenon El Niño, after the Christ child. Modern researchers came to realize its importance to global weather in the 1960s, when they recognized the link between warm surface water and corresponding atmospheric changes. They tweaked the name to El Niño or Southern Oscillation. La Niña was named about two decades later.

The patterns aren't simply opposite sides of the same coin. "La Niña is more like a strong case of

'normal,'" Trenberth said. If a region is typically dry, it could become arid in a La Niña. If it's usually wet, there may be floods.

Greater intensity

So far, the United States hasn't tried to predict how strong a La Niña might be. For both parts of the cycle, greater intensity means greater impact. The ebbing El Niño was one of the three strongest on record, spurring the growth of Hurricane Patricia last year, which clocked winds exceeding 200 miles (322 kilometers) per hour before going ashore in Mexico.

La Niñas typically produce more hurricanes, but that may not mean more losses: What matters most is where the storms hit, according to Peter Hoeppe, head of Munich Re's Geo Risks Research/Corporate Climate Center in Germany. And La Niñas actually have lowered the Atlantic hurricane count in some years by bringing more African sand storms—which reduce the moisture hurricanes need—and cooler water into the tropics, he said.

Commercial and academic fore-

casters have said La Niña probably will cause a slightly above-average year for tropical storms and hurricanes. The 30-year normal for the June 1-to-November 30 season is 12. Last year, 11 storms rose out of the Atlantic. The year before, when the El Niño was trying to get started, only eight were named. One storm, Alex, already formed this past January.

United States

WHILE El Niño can produce a milder winter across the northern US, La Niña often brings chills to the Pacific Northwest, northern Great Plains and parts of the Midwest. For places like Iowa, a major source of corn and soybeans, timing is key, said Harry Hillaker, the state's climatologist. If a La Niña occurs early in summer, there's a chance for hot and dry weather, which can hurt the plants as they are pollinating.

Natural-gas producers in the US "would really like La Niña," said Teri Viswanath, managing director for the commodity at PIRA Energy Group in New York. They hope it will produce warmer temperatures in summer and the possibility for

cooler temperatures in winter. "A cool winter, wow, that would be really helpful."

United Kingdom and Europe

FOR Europe, the energy prospects are more muddled. From November to December, the phenomenon could mean colder temperatures and thus higher fuel demand.

"It's also the case that we get the unfortunate relationship of lower wind speeds during that period, so that could mean we get lower wind power," said Hazel Thornton,



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75%

As El Niño exists, La Niña looms
and promises her style of
mayhem

The likelihood of a La Niña formation happening as early as July, according to the US Climate Prediction Center

manager of the UK Met Office's climate-change adaptation team. After the New Year, the pattern in Europe would typically flip, with temperatures becoming milder and wind increasing.

Brazil

FOR Brazil, La Niña is more dangerous than El Niño because it hits crop production "hard," said Eduardo Assad, a climate researcher at Brazil's state-run agricultural research company, Embrapa. That's because it can bring drier conditions, which also could damage the water supply,

worsening São Paulo's water crisis, he said.

Brazil tops the world for soybeans and oranges, and São Paulo is one of the cities hosting football matches for this year's Olympic Games.

India

FOR India, La Niña "means good rains," said Atul Chaturvedi, CEO of Adani Wilmar Ltd., a refiner and retailer of cooking oils. "India has been reeling with poor rains for almost two years now, so La Niña for all practical purposes should be a boon."

It might come too late to enhance this year's monsoon, however, said Dave Streit, COO for the Commodity Weather Group LLC in Bethesda, Maryland.

Malaysia

IT also may come too late to help this year's palm-oil crop in Malaysia, with futures there rising in February to the highest in eight years.

"There is no way the emergence of La Niña, or just normal weather, will undo the damage done by El Niño," said Ling Ah Hong, director of Malaysian plantation consultant Ganling Sdn in Kuala Lumpur. "This is something a lot of people misunderstand."

An extreme La Niña could cause yields to fall. Flooding hurts the ability to harvest and reduces the quality of fruit, said Roy Lim, group plantations director at Kuala Lumpur Kepong Bhd., Malaysia's third-largest producer.

Australia

FOR Australia, the "main negative impact" from La Niña is heavy rainfall and "a disproportionate number

of major flood events," said Blair Trewin, a climatologist with the national Bureau of Meteorology.

In 2010-2011, the pattern triggered so much rain that 85 percent of the continent's coal production was hit by flooding. Spot prices of metallurgical coal jumped to \$383 by the start of 2011 from \$212 per metric ton in the third quarter of 2010, Mark Levin of BB&T Capital Markets said in a May 10 note to clients.

La Niña returned in 2011-2012, helping to boost wheat production to a record 29.9 million metric tons. It also caused vegetation to flourish in the usually arid interior—which fueled widespread grass fires when the rains stopped.

While the world waits to see if a La Niña will develop, there's always a chance it could fizzle. Forecasters were certain an El Niño would form in 2014, only to see it fall apart. The prediction models are better around June and July than they are now, according to Michelle L'Heureux, a forecaster for the Climate Prediction Center.

So stay tuned. **Bloomberg News**

The Manila Times

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»globalwarning

Protect Mother Trees

BY LAARNI JOCSON
HARIBON FOUNDATION

DID you know that there is a term for a mature, superior quality tree? In the forest, one calls it a mother tree. We'd like to highlight its constant plight and celebrate its fundamental unique qualities that greatly contribute to the forest ecosystem and human survival.

What is a Mother Tree?

Any tree can be a mother tree. It should be mature enough and have reached optimal growth level. Due to its robust growth and development, a mother tree is highly resilient to weather disturbances, unsuceptible to pathogens and gives steady supply of high quality seedlings for natural propagation in the forest and future tree planting activities. Mother trees are essential in supplying good quality seeds and wildings for rainforestation (or forest restoration using native trees) programs.

Haribon, along with other organizations under the network Rain Forest Restoration Initiative (RFRI), promotes protection of mother trees, especially premium *dipterocarp* (short-term for *Dipterocarpaceae*) species. *Dipterocarp* means two-winged, which makes these tree's seeds very easy for wind to carry in long distances. The seeds of these species have the potential to be widely dispersed which results to further diversification of the area and discourage monoculture. Through this process, it naturally provides an extensive range for wildlife's source of habitat and food. In fact, our country's prime raptor, Haring Ibon or the Philippine eagle typically resides and favors this type of trees.

According to Professor Suzanne Simard, forest ecologist at the University of British Columbia, all trees in a forest ecosystem are interconnected, with the largest, oldest, "mother trees" serving as hubs. The underground exchange of nutrients increases the survival of younger trees linked into the network of old trees. Mother Trees are connected to all the other trees in the forest by this network of fungal threads and may manage the resources of the whole plant community. Simard's latest research reveals that when a Mother Tree is cut down, the survival rate of the younger members of the forest is substantially diminished. (Jane Engelsiepen, 2012)

Unfortunately, there is no formal study and recognized database available mapping out the presence of mother trees in the Philippine's remaining 24 percent forests. Most of the information at hand is based on informal listing or observed accounts of experts on the field—foresters, Bantay Gubat or forest guards, People Organization (PO), farmers, advocates and groups and individuals who engage in forest restoration and protection.

Ongoing predicament

In "The seedling nursery survey on Leyte Island, The Philippines" by Nestor Gregorio, et. al, the general scarcity of information of superior mother trees that produce high quality native tree seedlings along with the lack of knowledge among seedling producers and seed collectors about its characteristics mean that they are getting or collecting poor quality seeds instead of propagating premium native trees.

It is disturbing to note that although there are laws that should protect mother trees from cutting or harvesting, it is widely disregarded by many illegal loggers and timber harvesters due to mother trees' inherently premium quality that sell for a high price in world trade.

Save Mother Trees for our future

There should be firm implementation of the law to protect our country's premium native tree species to prevent them from vanishing altogether. If fully implemented, there will be no shortage of healthy native tree seedlings. The need to import invasive exotic tree species for tree planting activities will be lessened which will make our forests and landscapes flourish with biodiversity. Ultimately, survival of all living species that depend on forest's ecological services will be secured, including us humans. It's because of the generosity and resilience of our mother trees.

REFERENCES

"Trees Communicate," Jane Engelsiepen, 2012
"Inventory and Assessment of Mother," Nestor Gregorio, et al., 2010



■ Indigenous timber species found on Leyte Island and southern Mindanao