

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

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DENR

IN THE NEWS



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Environment groups still optimistic about mining

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

A coalition of environmental groups said investors need not worry about the current situation of the local mining industry contrary to what stakeholders claim that the government's strict stance was sending the wrong signals to the global investment community.

The Green Thumb Coalition (GTC), a nationwide network of around 40 non-government organizations and civil society groups, said investors who play by the rules and put the environment alongside business interest, have no reason to worry about investing in the mining industry.

This was in response to the claims of the Philippine Cham-

ber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' recent pronouncements were putting the Philippines in a bad light from an investment standpoint.

Environment Secretary Gina Lopez ordered an intensified audit on all mining firms to determine their compliance with environmental standards. So far, the DENR has suspended 10 firms and another 20 may face suspension.

"If investors make sure that the companies they fund follow the rules, they have nothing to be afraid of. Rather, they should be glad that the playing field is being changed for the

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Environment... From C-1

benefit of better investment prospects which do not sacrifice sustainability and rights for the sake of profit," GTC convener Gerry Arances said.

"A strong and strict execution of prevailing laws will only strike fear among those corporations which aim to cut

costs by disregarding the welfare of affected communities and the country as a whole," he added.

But the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines thinks otherwise.

"If we are to take Secretary Lopez's statement, investors

really have something to worry about. Any investor would be worried because mining is not just a million industry. There is definitely a cause for concern on any investor in the mining industry," COMP legal and policy vice president Ronald Recidoro told The STAR.

"There should be clear sig-

nals from the government and with its policies. The worry here is not the law, the worry here is the implementor (Lopez)," he added.

COMP reported that over \$30 billion is expected to be invested in the local mining industry in the next five to 10 years, majority of which are in Mindanao.

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Geo-hazard assessment required for gov't buildings

IN THE WAKE of two successive typhoons, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) are requiring geo-hazard certifications for the evaluation of repair and construction projects to damaged government facilities.

The DBM and the DPWH released Joint Circular No. 1 on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of damaged government buildings last week, after typhoon Karen left the Philippine Area of Responsibility and was followed immediately by typhoon Lawin.

The joint circular seeks to rationalize the allocation of funds for the rehabilitation, construction and procurement in relation to government facilities.

An additional documentary requirement of a geo-hazard certification from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is needed for the approval of the evaluating bodies in determining whether or not funds would be disbursed for the construction or rehabilitation projects.

The National Economic and Development Authority Board is to evaluate projects that cost more than P1 billion, the Development Budget Coordination Committee of the DBM is to evaluate those costing less than P1 billion but more than P300 million, while the DBM is to evaluate those costing less than P300 million.

Public-private partnerships (PPP) are allowed for construction of new buildings but not for repair, which

would fall under the National Expenditure Program (NEP).

Construction of an office building must cost P30,000 to P35,000 per square meter, or P40,000 to P50,000 if built on a fault area or "soft soil," such as reclaimed areas in Manila Bay.

Proposals should first be submitted to the Office of the Undersecretary for Technical Services of the DPWH, to evaluate if the projects follow to the standards set by the National Building Code of the Philippines and other related rules and standards.

After the approval of the DPWH, the government agency may request its budget from the DBM.

The joint circular is effective immediately. — **Lucia Edna P. de Guzman**



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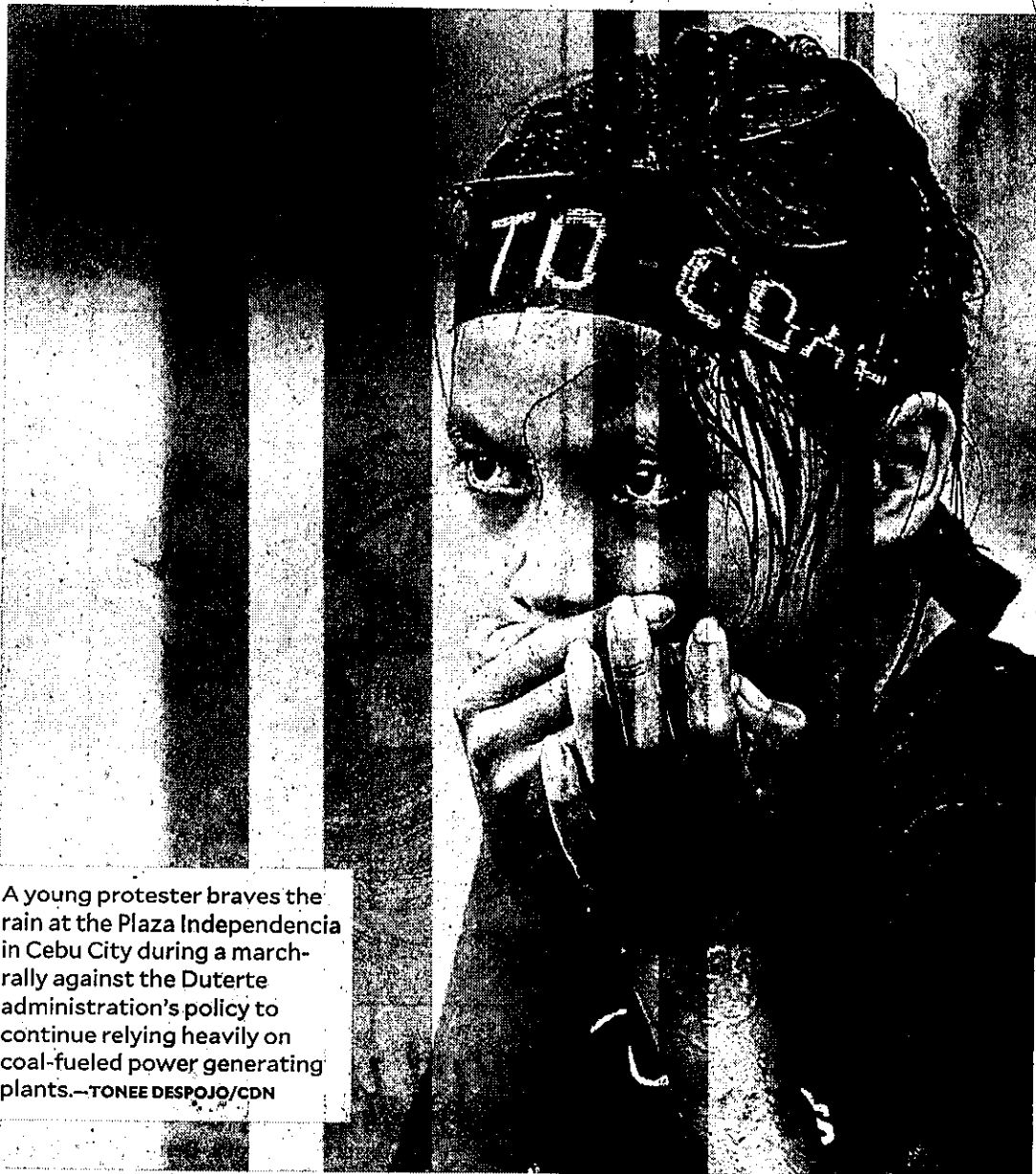
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A young protester braves the rain at the Plaza Independencia in Cebu City during a march-rally against the Duterte administration's policy to continue relying heavily on coal-fueled power generating plants.—TONEE DESPOJO/CDN

Protesters demand pivot away from coal plants

By Izobelle T. Pulgo
@InqNational

CEBU CITY—More than a hundred protesters took to the city streets to press for a shift in the energy policy of the Duterte administration from one that the protesters said is heavily tilted in favor of coal-generated electricity to one that would lean more on renewable sources of power.

The protesters, mostly supporters of the group Philippine Movement for Climate Justice-Cebu (PMCJ), called on President Duterte to drop its policy of continuing to use coal as a main source of fuel to generate power.

Dire effects

Lawyer Aaron Pedrosa Jr., head of the energy working group of PMCJ and secretary general of the militant group Sanlakas, said the use of coal as an energy source must be stopped because of its dire effects on the environment and its effects on people's health.

"We are against using coal as a source to supply our electricity and the building of coal plants not only in Cebu but also in the country," said Pedrosa in Cebuano.

Pedrosa, in a speech during

the protest rally, cited the country's renewable energy sources as a good alternative to coal that could meet rising demand for energy without harming the environment.

Despite the continued construction of coal power plants, he said millions of Filipinos are still without electricity.

Groups in protest

Among the groups that took part in the antioal protest are Sugbuanong Nagpakabana sa Kalikupan (SNK) and Pagtambayayong Foundation Inc.

Residents of several villages—Suba, Pasil, Duljo-Fatima, San Roque, Tinago, Careta and Sambag III—also joined the rally.

On Oct. 11, a protest was also held on Mendiola Bridge in Manila demanding a stop to the construction of more coal plants.

PMCJ, which also led the Mendiola rally, said 26 coal-fired power plants are currently under construction and 19 more had been approved by the government.

"A lot of countries are already phasing out coal. How come coal is now booming here in the Philippines?" said Glenn Ymata, energy campaigner of PMCJ.

Ymata said the rest of the country should follow the example set by the local governments of Ilocos Norte and Batangas provinces, where officials had declared a no-coal policy and support for renewable energy sources like wind, solar, hydro and geothermal.

"There's too much coal already in Batangas," Batangas Gov. Hermilando Mandanas had been quoted as saying in a TV interview.

Alternatives to coal

Batangas has viable alternatives to coal. It has several power plants that run on natural gas, considered as the cleanest form of fossil fuel. These plants have a combined generating capacity of 2,792 megawatts.

The provincial government of Ilocos Norte had also expressed commitment to ban the further use of coal as a power source.

Ilocos Norte is home to some of the country's biggest power plants that rely on renewable sources of energy, like solar and wind.

One of these is a wind power facility, owned by the firm Energy Development Corp., that is capable of producing 150 megawatts of electricity. INQ

Activists hold 'zombie run' vs lead poisoning

BY MICAH YVANA M. VARDELON

THE Eco Waste Coalition on Sunday held a "zombie run" at the Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City as part of the celebration of the International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action.

With only 10 weeks left before the total phase out of lead-containing architectural, decorative and household (ADH) paints takes effect on December 31, the coalition stressed the urgency of meeting the deadline set by the Chemical Control Order (CCO).

Kids who participated the event were dressed in "Walking Dead"-inspired clothing, mimicking the popular American television series about a zombie apocalypse. Before the zombie run, two theatrical performances were presented.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Administrative Order 2013-24 or the CCO prohibits the use of lead in the production of food packaging, paints, toys, and other consumer products because of the harmful effects of lead on people, especially children.

"Our major concern is IQ because lead can be deposited in the brain, resulting in slow performances of the child," said Dr. Visitation Antonio, toxicologist and pediatrician at East Avenue

Medical Center.

Other ill effects of lead include anemia, stomachache, deficiency in hearing, stunted growth, convulsions and worse, death, Antonio said.

While there are no recorded lead-caused deaths in the country, yet, Antonio urged parents to be more vigilant because low-dose exposure to lead does not manifest noticeable symptoms and is hard to diagnose.

Antonio also hopes that a policy will be formulated regulating battery-recycling companies through zoning, to prevent lead exposure. She also suggested that students be checked for lead exposure in schools, like the practice in the United States.

Aileen Lucero, Eco Waste national coordinator, said all major paint companies have applied

with the lead-safe paint certification program to assure the public that their paints are lead-free.

But small and medium-sized enterprises have yet to comply with the guidelines, as they would need assistance from the government.

"Around 50 percent of them are still not observing and following the CCO," Lucero said, but added she was optimistic these companies would be spurred to comply because of competition in the market.

She also emphasized the cost-effectiveness of lead-free products. "What would you do with a lead-containing paint used for your house if it will only wear off after two years and will harm your kids?" she asked.

Violators of the CCO will be stripped of their business permits starting next year.

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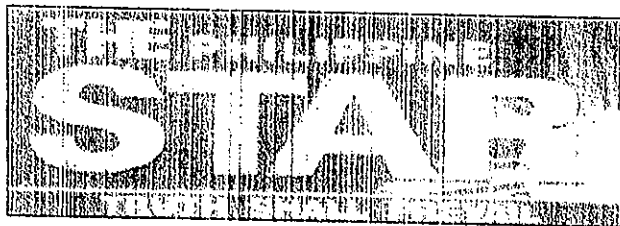
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Activists hold 'zombie run' vs lead poisoning



TOXIC CAMPAIGN

Participants of the Eco Waste Coalition's 'zombie run' channel the undead of the 'The Walking Dead' television series at the Quezon Memorial Circle on Sunday. The coalition is urging companies to meet the December 31 deadline to phase out lead in paints. PHOTO BY RUY L. MARTINEZ



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Climate deal to slow down Phl – Duterte

President Duterte yesterday said he would develop the Philippines according to the needs of Filipinos as he slammed western countries anew for imposing carbon limits on the country to mitigate the impact of climate change.

Addressing residents affected by Typhoon Lawin in Tuguegarao, Duterte said the carbon restrictions set under a climate deal approved by over 150 countries in Paris would slow down industrialization

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of the Philippines.

"They want us to slow down so I have a rift with them," he said, referring to developed countries. "I don't agree with their formula and equation because it's not fair."

"I told them you used carbon for the longest time and now that we want to be like you, you are stopping us? That's stupidity," he added.

Duterte said imposing restrictions on the Philippines' industrialization would stunt its development, which in turn would affect the lives of Filipinos.

"I am one of the presidents who refused to yield. I will develop my country in accordance with the needs of my people. Our number is increasing so we are now using machines. If you stop me from doing that, how can I feed my countrymen?" Duterte said.

"I said I don't like that. Either we all live or we all die," he added.

Climate change, which has been tied to natural disasters including strong typhoons, has been attributed to carbon emissions caused by human activities.

Last April, more than 150 countries inked the historic Paris climate deal that seeks to limit global warming "well below" two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

World leaders have also vowed to work to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

The Philippines, one of the countries prone to disasters, has yet to ratify the agreement.

The Philippines under then president Benigno Aquino III promised to cut carbon emissions by 70 percent by 2030 even if the country is not a major emitter.

Duterte had said he would not honor the Paris agreement, calling it "stupid" and "absurd."

— Alexis Romero

Duterte won't cut carbon emissions, hits rich nations

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has shunned down the reduction of carbon emissions in the country, stressing that it's the high-income countries that should cut back because they have the largest carbon footprint.

Speaking before typhoon victims in Cagayan on Sunday, the President blamed rich and industrialized nations for harmful emissions that have led to climate change and extreme weather disturbances.

He also alluded to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change wherein 175 countries vowed to reduce carbon emissions to stave off global warming. Under the pact, the Philippines committed to reduce its carbon footprint by 70 percent by 2030, with the help of other industrialized nations.

Duterte said rich nations should not force developing countries like the Philippines to cut on their carbon emissions, as doing so would prevent them from enjoying the fruits of industrialization.

"I will develop my country, in accordance with the needs of my

people. We are 104 million people. I will need to use a lot of machines. What do you want us to do? Stick with manual plowing, instead of mechanized farming? If you stop me from doing that, how would I feed my people?" Duterte said.

Duterte said the United States and the European nations, as well as China, should do the cutback as they account for the lion's share of harmful emissions.

"Here in our country, we have a lot of vehicles which they call not fuel-efficient ... looking at our tractors, jeepneys, cars. Well, we don't account for a lot of emissions for that. Besides, you can just count the number of factories here. Compared with other nations, what we have is miniscule," Duterte said.

"The rich nations consumed the bulk of crude oil over the years, and they want to us to scale down on such emissions? I do not agree with that because it is not fair. That's why we are at odds here," Duterte added.

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\$90-T infrastructure investment could combat climate change

UNITED NATIONS—The world will need to more than double its current infrastructure stock over the next 15 years—a massive undertaking that could either contribute to or combat catastrophic climate change—according to a new report.

Two-thirds of the \$90-trillion infrastructure investment needed will be in developing countries, the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate noted in the Sustainable Infrastructure Imperative Report.

"The types of infrastructure we build—coal power plants versus wind farms and solar arrays, for example, or megahighways versus public transit systems—will determine whether we stay on a high-carbon growth path or move toward a climate-smart future," the report said.

Despite the massive price tag, the commission of global experts said much of the money could be easily accessed by ending incentives to build dirty infrastructure, from fossil fuels to urban sprawl.

The report's authors, including economist Lord Nicholas Stern, also emphasized that investing in green infrastructure can contribute to economic growth.

"Economic growth and climate action are mutually compatible,"

Stern, who is cochairman of the commission, told journalists. "We emphasized and demonstrated with solid economic evidence that we can do both."

Additionally, the commission found that only a small additional investment is needed to ensure that the over \$90 trillion worth of infrastructure, which needs to be built over the next 15 years, contributes to rather than undermines climate-change efforts.

Developed and developing countries will face different infrastructure challenges over the 21st century. Developed countries will have to replace or repair ageing infrastructure, while the majority of construction of new infrastructure will happen in low and middle-income countries.

"Developing countries, such as those in Asia and Africa, need infrastructure to improve access to basic services, drive development and meet the needs of rapidly urbanizing populations and an expanding middle class," the report said.

"Clearly, developing countries will lead the sustainable infrastructure story of the 21st century," said Naina Lal Kidwai, a member of the commission and former chairman of HSBC India, because of the "sheer quantity" of infrastructure to be built in

developing countries.

Lal Kidwai said the good news is that developing countries can "leap frog" a lot of the problems encountered by developed countries, which built their infrastructure with older technologies and designs.

"A lot of the investment can be designed to be a lot more new age than we have seen in the past," she said.

Developing countries may be able to use climate financing—funds committed by rich countries to help poorer countries fight climate change—to help make their infrastructure investments greener. However, the report's authors noted that this would not be the main source of funding.

"The hundred billion dollars in climate finance is absolutely essential and it is important for catalytic investments to really shift in the right direction," Helen Mountford, program director of the New Climate Economy told Inter Press Service.

"What we're focusing on here, through the report of the global commission, is that question of trillions...all of those investments need to go in a direction which help support growth, which help support, social and development goals and which support climate action." IPS

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Climate change puts agriculture on the hot seat

By JOHNNY F. GOLOYUGO | *Special to the BUSINESSMIRROR*

AGRICULTURE is on the hot seat due to climate change, even as the agricultural development agenda undergo a major shift because of the significant reduction in food production and global food insecurity.

Agricultural scientists, economic experts, academics and civilized societies agree that "a dramatic increase in efforts and investment is required to transition from vulnerable nonsustainable systems to sustainable agriculture." In order to achieve food security, reduce poverty, safeguard and restore ecological systems, the all-embracing concept of climate-smart agriculture (CSA) may yet save the day for the projected 9 billion world population by 2050. By then, according to United Nations (UN) Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates made in 2009, crop yields will need to increase by 70 percent.

UN defines CSA as "agriculture that sustainably increases

70%

The percentage increase needed in crop yields for the projected 9 billion population by 2050

"Based on this definition, the bottom line is how countries look at their national interest and operationalize CSA in their respective countries," said Dr. Leo Sebastian, Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security-Southeast Asia (CCAFS-SEA) regional advisor.

a project of agro-industry that will actually worsen climate change by failing to address such issues as governance, land uses and agricultural research.

Critics also fear that CSA is a "Trojan horse" set to marginalize smallholder farmers, journalist-author Fred Pearce writes in *When the Rivers Run Dry*: "They [critics] believe the arrival of carbon markets, brokers and traders in the fields of Africa can do nothing but harm."

By dictionary definition, carbon market is any market in which carbon-emission allowances trading takes place. For example, companies are given a certain quota or permit to pollute a certain amount of carbon dioxide. These companies can sell their spare permits to other companies who wish to pollute more

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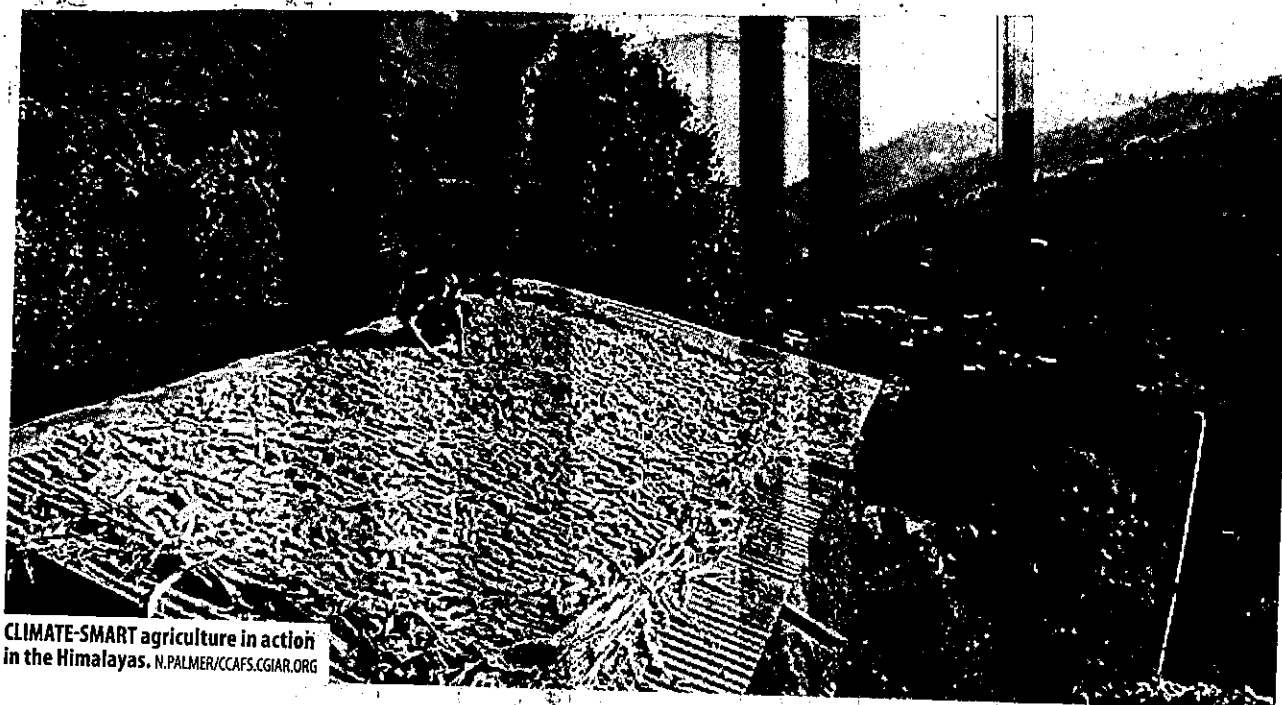
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Climate change puts agriculture on the hot seat

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CLIMATE-SMART agriculture in action in the Himalayas. N.PALMER/CCAFS.CGIAR.ORG

sparked a rally in European Union against carbon permits.

On the other hand, other critics fear that the high cost of employing consultants to monitor carbon uptake of farm soils will make it impossible for small farmers to earn income from the sale of the carbon absorbed by their soils. Only large landowners are able to reduce carbon market-transaction costs resulting in a new phase of land-grabbing called "soil grabbing."

Gina Castillo, agriculture program manager at Oxfam America and a steering committee member of the African CSA Alliance, fears that farmers may be left out of any climate-adaptation efforts. Thus, former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan warns: "These efforts must have at their heart smallholder farmers. Without their participation we will fail."

Concerns were, likewise, aired about CSA prioritizing mitigation and carbon sequestration in soils over food security and adaptation

and biodiversity-based food systems in Africa, Asia and Latin America, called CSA a "meaningless label...meant to conceal the social, political and environmental implications of the different technology choices."

"I do not want to be refuting other people's analysis, opinions, perspectives, prejudices or biases on CSA. I think that's for them to explain their position. For me, what matters most is what is really happening on the ground. What people are doing, not what they are arguing about," Sebastian said.

"Climate change will impact on all of us. As such, inclusive and concerted efforts will be needed whether you are a big corporate entity or a small-holder farm. The big challenge is how we can bring everybody to start working and addressing the challenge.

"We cannot afford to make the issue of climate change an ideological debate. The sooner we can work together and start assuming

director of the Philippine Rice Research Institute, pointed out: "In the case of the Philippines, are we going to focus on addressing the interest of our smallholder farmers or the big corporate farms? For countries, where CCAFS has been working, like in Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR, the focus is very clear—CSA is for smallholder farmers, how we can improve their resilience to climate change, sustainably increase their productivity and contribute to green agriculture."

Over at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Los Baños, Laguna, scientists point out that "environmental stresses constrain rice production, affecting about 30 percent of the 700 million poor in Asia alone who live in rain-fed rice-growing areas. These stresses can be caused by extreme climatic changes, like drought, flooding or rising sea levels, while some can be inherent, like high-iron toxicity in the soil. Our

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Climate change

to the rice varieties developed that better tolerate drought, salinity, heat and flooding, and the tools that enable farmers to save water, reduce carbon emissions and plant on less-favorable soils."

Surprisingly, funding for rice research comes mostly from western countries. As climate change threatens resource security and availability, IRRI scientists say, investment into research and development cannot be ignored.

IRRI Director General Matthew Morell revealed that over 95 percent of funding for rice research from 2010 to 2015 came from the West. Governments of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations "should seize the opportunity to drive the next Green Revolution and secure its own future food needs by increasing funding support for agriculture R&D [research and development]," Morell said.

On the whole, scientists from six research institutions—Wa-

geningen University, Research University of California Davis, French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development, UNFAO, CGIAR CCAFS and Council for Scientific and Industrial Research—said "CSA is a way to achieve short- and long-term agricultural development priorities in the face of climate change and serve as an integrator to other development priorities."

CSA needs support from countries in "securing the necessary policy, technical and financial conditions to enable them to sustainably increase agricultural productivity and incomes, build resilience and the capacity of agricultural and food systems to adapt to climate change and seek opportunities to reduce and remove greenhouse gases while meeting their national food security."

At the same time, more knowledge is needed about CSA, while continuous interaction between science, policy-makers and farmers essential not only to align research and decision-makers, but also to improve the efficiency of investments to successfully confront climate change.

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ALEXANDRA COUSTEAU

PHL 'museums' of biodiversity, rich marine life must-see for luxury travelers

ALEXANDRA COUSTEAU, filmmaker and environmental advocate for the oceans, represents a new wave of luxury traveler heading for El Nido Resorts in Palawan, these days. Together with her husband and two children, the granddaughter of legendary explorer Jacques-Yves Cousteau was a recent visitor to three of the four resorts named after the islands that host them: Miniloc, Lagen and Pangulasian.

According to Joey Bernardino, marketing director of El Nido Resorts, which also includes Apulit Island resort: "Cousteau is the epitome of the responsible traveler, one who favors destinations that support economic, social and environmental sustainability. And we expect that her visit will attract many other guests who share her passion for the environment."

Cousteau was in the Philippines recently to muster support for the campaigns of Oceana, the largest international environmental organization concerned primarily with oceans conservation. She capped her stay in the country with a visit to El Nido Resorts that

included two days of diving with husband Fritz Neumeyer, a green architect based in Berlin, and to bring her 5-year-old daughter, Clementine, snorkeling for the first time.

She observed that there are places in the Philippines and in El Nido that don't exist anywhere else in the world. They are like "museums of what [ocean life] was like hundreds of years ago."

The National Geographic emerging explorer wanted her preschooler to experience them and "to see the extraordinary wonders the ocean has to offer."

Among the diving spots that amazed Cousteau and her group was South Miniloc, a dive site that was brought to the attention of millions of viewers by her grandfather Jacques when he visited Palawan on the boat *Calypso* in 1991.

El Nido Environmental Officer Elaine Tagudando, who was with Cousteau's group, recalled: "Visibility was good and we got to see iconic yellow snappers and cabbage corals of the area. It was breathtaking to see

different schools of fish—soldier, snapper and barracuda—and a trumpet fish couple. None of us wanted to surface even if our dive master was banging the tank and calling for a safety stop."

Distinct sites teeming with marine life and other natural attractions remain the primary reason responsible travelers favor a destination, Bernardino said.

"But it works for us to adopt sustainable practices that help us maintain our natural attractions. We've realized that the key to our longevity as a resort is conservation of the attractions around us."

Javi Hernandez, chief operating officer, observes that upscale travelers from the West eager to discover rare marine life, endangered species and undeveloped natural territories have become a niche market for El Nido Resorts.

The Philippines is part of the Coral Triangle, the global center of marine biodiversity. The Solomon Islands, Palau and Indonesia are also part of the Triangle. But in many of these places that boast a staggering number of species, it takes hours to move from one marine habitat to the next.

El Nido Resorts, on the other hand, offers guests the advantage of over 800 marine species, 400 kinds of corals and 500 marine vertebrae within an area of 200 kilometers.

Cousteau articulated the advantage offered by the Philippines and Northern Palawan: "It's the center of the center of marine biodiversity in the world."

Knowing only too well the difficulties and challenges of conserving natural heritage sites, responsible travelers "want to know that we sort and recycle our waste so that only 5 percent ends up in the dumpsite, that we offer a green menu and serve only seafood that remains bountiful, and that 95 percent of our employees are locals," Bernardino said. "All these ensure they will have a 'museum' of underwater life to come back to and to show off to their children."

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More wildlife recovered in Eastern Visayas

PALO, Leyte: The number of recovered wildlife increased significantly upon the opening earlier this year of a rescue center in Cadahug village in this town, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has reported.

From only five rescued animals in the previous years, the number has risen to 40 this year.

The rescue center, which opened on March 3, is intended to house wildlife species.

The facility is also open to educational tours and family trips.

Carlito Tuballa, DENR assistant regional director, said more wildlife in search of food or after the destruction of their natural habitats have been found in communities here.

"After rescue, our personnel check the health condition of these animals before releasing them back to the wild," Tuballa told the Philippines News Agency.

DENR development management officer Winston Solite said the increase in the number of animals turned over to the department indicates heightened public awareness of the value of preserving wildlife.

Pythons are among the most rescued species.

Recently, 15 pythons were confiscated from the house of alleged top drug lord Kerwin Espinosa in Albura, Leyte.

"The number of animals being surrendered here is increasing. Most of them are pythons, I don't know why, but maybe because of the rainy season," Solite said.

The rescue center provides quarantine and care to the animals, depending on their health condition.

A veterinarian, the center's caretaker, monitors the condition of each animal daily.

Animals with stable health conditions are then released back to their natural habitat, preferably in protected areas of the region.

A seagull and three pythons were released in Mahagnao Natural Park in Burauen, Leyte; two pythons in Lake Danao, Ormoc City; two owls in Babatngon, Leyte; and two pythons in Barugo, Leyte.

On Friday, the DENR released five pythons, two lizards and six parrots within the Samar Island Natural Park in Hinabangan town. **PNA**

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Rescued wildlife species increase

PALO, Leyte—The number of recovered wildlife has increased significantly this year following the opening of a rescue center here, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources said.

From only five rescued animals in the previous years, the number rose to 40 this year.

The rescue center, which opened on March 3, is intended to house wildlife species.

The facility, located in Cadahug village, is also open to educational tours and family trips.

"After rescue, our personnel check the health condition of these animals before releasing them back to the wild," DENR assistant regional director Carlito Tuballa said.

DENR development management officer Winston Solite said the increase in number of turned over animals also indicates heightened public awareness on the value of preserving wildlife.

"The number of animals being surrendered here is increasing. Most of them are pythons, I don't know why, but maybe because of the rainy season," Solite said.

Animals with stable health conditions are then released back to their natural habitat, preferably in protected areas of the region. PNA

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Uplanders to act vs. loggers, 'kaingeros'

By Ferdie G. Domingo

CABANATUAN CITY – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has mobilized some 300 upland dwellers and farmers in Central Luzon to guard the region's forests from illegal loggers and *kaingeros* (slash-and-burn farmers).

Francisco Milla Jr., DENR regional director for Central Luzon said the uplanders belong to the Palauig Green Planters Association Incorporated in Palauig, Zambales and the Digmala Tree Planters' Association Incorporated in Cabaldon, Nueva Ecija.

Milla said they will guard 357 hectares of forestlands in the two provinces—251 hectares in Nueva Ecija and

106 hectares in Zambales not only from illegal logging and *kaingin* but also from forest and grass fires and other forms of environmental destruction.

He said these functions are stipulated in a 25-year community based forest management agreement the two people's organizations were awarded with.

The uplanders are the latest beneficiaries of the CBFMA 12 years after a moratorium on its issuance was implemented.

The CBFMA, Milla said, will help reduce poverty in rural areas and promote social justice and equitable access to forest resources.

Milla explained that the DENR is not giving land titles in forestlands, only alienable and disposable lands (A and D) such as agricultural land and residential areas. "However, tenurial instrument in the form of agreement is being awarded to upland farmers as proof of their legitimate occupancy over the forestland," he said, adding the agreements covers 25 years renewable for another 25 year.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Forest destruction to remove barrier vs storms, says group

LUCENA CITY—The role of Sierra Madre as a protective barrier against typhoons is now being threatened by illegal logging and destructive farming practices in sections of the mountain ranges that stretches from Quezon to Cagayan provinces, environmentalists warned.

Fr. Pete Montallana, president of Save Sierra Madre Network Alliance (SSMNA), said all storms that entered the country and passed through the Sierra Madre had weakened and spared population centers from widespread destruction.

"Sierra Madre is now losing her capacity to absorb a storm's

fury because of rampant illegal logging and other destructive activities," Montallana said on Friday.

Both Supertyphoon "Lawin" (international name: Haima) and Typhoon "Karen" (international name: Sarika) weakened when these hit the mountains and crossed the Sierra Madre, considerably reducing the damage that the storms brought.

Juliet Borlon-Aparicio, area director of Tanggol Kalikasan Southern Luzon, shared Montallana's observation, saying Sierra Madre's forest cover has sharply decreased.

Aparicio said without Sierra

Madre as a natural barrier, highly populated communities would be very vulnerable.

The Sierra Madre has the largest remaining tract of old-growth tropical rainforest in the Philippines. It spans Luzon's northeastern coast from Cagayan province in the north to Quezon province in the south.

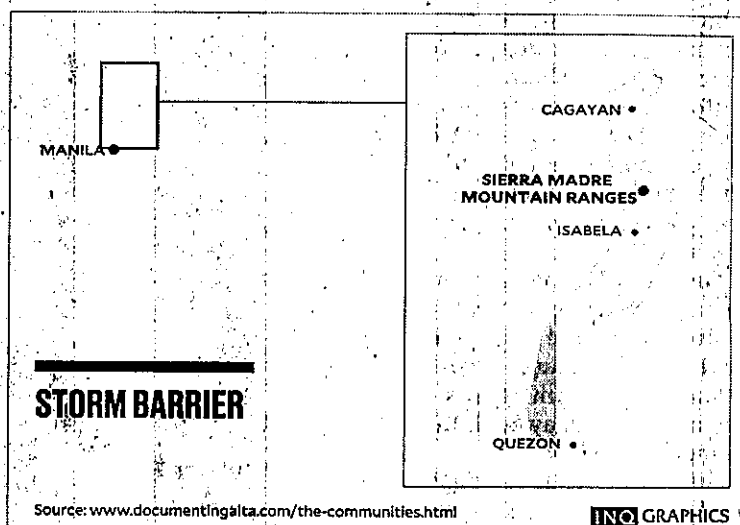
The longest mountain range in the country, also known as the "backbone" of Luzon, Sierra Madre has 1.4 million hectares of forests, representing 40 percent of the Philippines' forest cover.

Early this month, government forest rangers recovered more than 3,000 illegally cut

logs abandoned in General Nakar town in northern Quezon. This area in the Sierra Madre considered to be a hot spot for illegal logging operations.

Former President Aquino through Proclamation No. 23 signed on Aug. 10, 2011, declare Sept. 26 as "Save Sierra Madre Day" in a bid to step up rehabilitation and conservation of the mountain ranges.

That day coincided with the second anniversary of Tropical Storm "Ondoy," which dumped record amounts of rain that triggered widespread flooding. It killed 464 people. —DELFIN MALLARI JR. INQ



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



**NORTHERN MINDANAO:
CAGAYAN-DE ORO CITY**

**3rd International River Summit
to focus on Cagayan river basin**

THE 3rd International River Summit, scheduled on Nov. 24-25, will be held in this city where 1,292 people died when the Cagayan River overflowed in December 2011 following heavy rains from typhoon Sendong (international name: Washi). The forum, organized by the International River Foundation, was first held in Iloilo City and the second in Marikina. Department of Environment and Natural Resources Region 10 Director Ruth M. Tawantawan said this year's discussions will focus on the Cagayan river basin, a major inland body of water in Mindanao. She said: "We will build consensus that will address gaps in policy and programs implementation of the river basin management and expand avenues for greater cooperation in finding sustainable solutions for development and environmental stewardship."

— Mark D. Francisco

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Bulusan ashfall threatens crops, residents' health

Volcano erupts a 3rd time, sending small volcanic debris falling on villages



blots out the sun in the village of Inlagadian in Casiguran town, Sorsogon province, following ashfall from Mt. Bulusan on Oct. 21. —MARC ALVIGESPI

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

By Mar S. Arguelles,
Michael B. Jaucian
and Rey Anthony O.
@Team_Inquirer

BULUSAN, SORSOGON—Thrice during the past week, Mount Bulusan in Sorsogon belched out gray ash plumes in a series of minor phreatic (steam-driven) eruptions that sent ash raining over villages in the towns of Bulusan, Casiguran and Irosin, threatening crops and endangering the health of some residents.

Antonio Banares, 64, a resident of Barangay Central in Bulusan town near the slope of the volcano said he thought the ash falling from the sky last week was just drizzle.

"I became aware that it was ash and that the volcano had a (minor phreatic) eruption. I saw the ash thicken and I thought, this is bad, especially for my heart condition," he said.

Banares and other residents in 11 barangays in Bulusan had been suffering from the effects of phreatic eruptions on Oct. 17, 19 and 21.

The Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (MDRRMC) of Bulusan said the villages of Dancalan, Madlawon, Pootol, Sapngan, Dapdap, Looban, Central, Sabang, Mabuhay, San Rafael and San Bernardo bore the brunt of the ashfall which dumped up to half a millimeter thick of ash.

Fumes coming from the volcano drifted to the villages of San Jose and San Francisco.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) also found small traces of ashfall in the area and

barangays of San Rafael and Sabang in Irosin town during the Oct. 19 eruption.

In Casiguran town, Luisito Mendoza, the town's MDRRMC officer, said at least 350 houses were covered by ash in Barangay Inlagadian from the Oct. 21 eruption.

At least 10 residents were treated for vomiting and stomach ache, said Mendoza. Masks were also distributed to residents.

He said "if the situation gets worse," officials would order preemptive evacuation.

Nerma Ricero, principal of Inlagadian Elementary School, canceled classes Friday after 310 students reported difficulty in concentrating on their lessons. Bulusan Mayor Mike Guysayko also ordered classes suspended in eight elementary and secondary schools.

Farmer Salvador Hajas, 33, said the continued eruption of Bulusan volcano is destroying crops. "Our produce are affected. They get rotten due to ash," he said.

Renard Fullon Garados, MDRRMC officer in Bulusan town, said officials are conducting an inventory of households that need to be moved to safer grounds.

Garados said residents and local government officials see no cause for panic yet since the ashfall has not been catastrophic.

Ed Laguerta, Phivolcs resident volcanologist based in Legazpi City, said in a previous interview that the steam-driven eruptions are "normal oc-

currences" in Bulusan. Phivolcs has recorded at least 20 eruptions since May last year.

"What we are closely checking is the presence of fresh magma expelled by the volcano, indicating that magma is developing beneath the vent," he said.

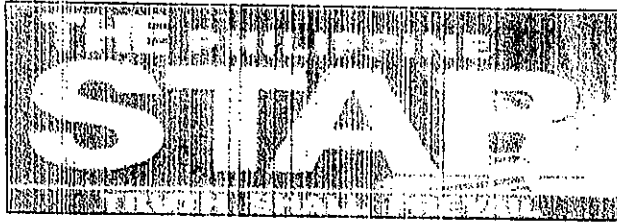
Government volcanologists gather ash samples from every eruption to determine traces of fresh magma, Laguerta said.

Garados, however, said volcanic ash is harmful to people with weak lungs and who are

suffering from asthma.

He said the Bulusan MDRRMC had already supplied barangays with medicines for residents who need these.

Phivolcs extended the radius of the permanent danger zone around Mount Bulusan from 4 km to 6 km. The extension was ordered by Phivolcs on Oct. 18 after the Oct. 17 phreatic eruption but it became effective Oct. 19 after the second eruption. Alert level one remains in effect over Bulusan volcano. INQ



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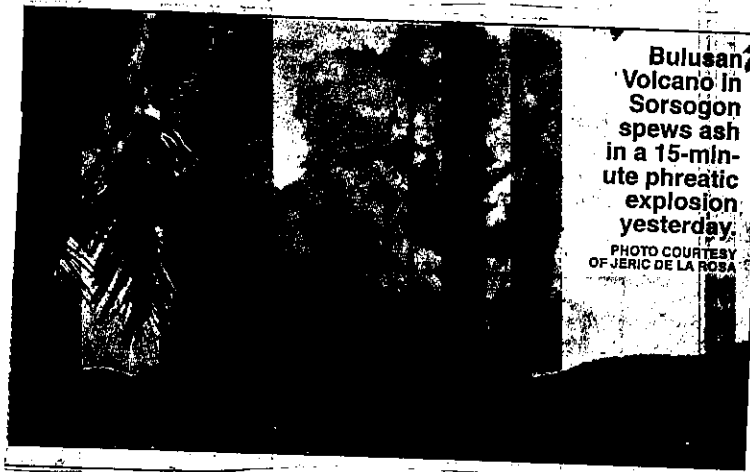
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Bulusan's newest eruption lasts 15 minutes



**Bulusan
Volcano in
Sorsogon
spews ash
in a 15-min-
ute phreatic
explosion
yesterday.**

**PHOTO COURTESY
OF JERIC DE LA ROSA**

Bulusan Volcano in Sorsogon generated another phreatic eruption yesterday that lasted for 15 minutes, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said.

Yesterday's explosion – the fourth recorded in a week – produced a dirty white to grayish ash column that reached 2.5 kilometers high and drifted west-southwest.

The agency, however, did not mention in its report

whether there were communities affected by the explosion.

Phivolcs said the eruption originated from the summit crater, while a smaller eruption also transpired at the south vent.

Phivolcs recorded a total of 24 volcanic earthquakes at Bulusan during the past 24 hours.

Bulusan remains at Alert Level 1, which means that the volcano is still in an "abnormal" state. Phivolcs noted that "hydrothermal processes are

underway beneath the volcano that may lead to steam-driven or phreatic eruptions."

The agency continued to warn the public against entering the four-kilometer radius permanent danger zone around the volcano.

Three phreatic eruptions were recorded at Bulusan last Oct. 17, 19 and 21, which brought minimal ash fall in some villages in the towns of Bulusan, Irosin and Casiguran.

– Helen Flores