

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

20 APR 2016

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DAY : **Wednesday** \_\_\_\_\_

# **DENR**

## **IN THE NEWS**

# DENR pushes forest certification to boost competitiveness of domestic wood industry

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA @jonlmayuga

**T**HE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), through the Forest Management Bureau (FMB), is pushing for forest certification to boost the country's wood industry, and prepare various stakeholders for a more competitive arena in the global market.

FMB Director Ricardo Calderon, the country's top forestry official, said the country's wood industry needs to catch up with other neighbors in Southeast Asia, especially with the onset of the Asean economic integration, and compete with other countries in the world market.

Calderon said various stakeholders have been consulted in the crafting of a draft executive order (EO) on forest certification. The EO now awaits the final approval of Environment Sec-

retary Ramon J.P. Paje and President Aquino.

In August 2013 the DENR facilitated the formulation of policy guidelines and mechanism on national forest certification. A series of consultations was held to come up with a draft EO on forest certification, including the national standards for forest-management certification.

Calderon said the draft EO was subjected to regional and

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national consultations, with representatives from people's organizations, wood and furniture industries, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Other government agencies also took part in the consultation process.

The EO highlights the procedures, composition, rules and management of establishing a national forest-certification system, or the Philippine Forest Plantation Certification System (PFPCS), and provides for the establishment of a Philippine Forest Plantation Certification Council (PFPC), which shall function as an advisory council to the national governing body (NGB).

The PFPC shall create the NGB, which shall serve as the chief governing body of the PFPCS.

A forest certification is a market-based mechanism that promotes good practices in forest management and forest-product utilization. It is considered a nonregulatory-conservation and -protection

approach, while practicing sustainable utilization of forest resources, according to the FMB.

Forest certification, according to Calderon, supports responsible forest management and utilization through an independent viable compliance. "Other countries already have forest certification. We need to have our own to be more competitive, especially with the Asean [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] economic integration," he said.

Calderon added that forest certification communicates a significant positive image of proper forest management to the public through informed decisions in ethical, low-carbon and sustainable procurement and other business practices.

"With the global effort to fight climate change, many countries want to buy wood and wood products that are certified as legally harvested," Calderon said.

President Aquino signed EOs 23 and 26, which banned the harvesting of timber in natural and residual forests and established the National Greening Program (NGP), respectively.

The NGP aims to plant 1.5 billion trees in 1.5 million hectares of land by 2016. Last year Mr. Aquino, likewise, signed EO 193, expanding the coverage of the NGP to cover the 7.1-million-hectare remaining degraded forest until 2028.

The massive reforestation is being eyed to boost the wood industry, particularly for manufactured wood articles, which is giving hope to the DENR-FMB in increasing forestry's contribution

to the GDP.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the country's forestry sector as a contributor to GDP has declined significantly from 12 percent in 1980 to less than 1 percent in 1994.

Still facing an uphill climb, the country's wood industry expressed support behind the push for forest certification. While the industry, represented by the Philippine Wood Producers' Association (PWPA), is pinning its hope on a more stable policy environment that will revive the "dying industry" that will ensure sustainable forest management, it believes that forest certification will benefit the wood industry, in general.

PWPA is the national association of corporations, partnerships and individuals involved in forest management, logging, forest-plantation development, manufacture of lumber, veneer and plywood, pulp and paper and other wood products, as well as in trading, shipping and sales of these products.

Maila Vasquez, executive director of PWPA, said forest certification will put into a higher level the wood and wood-based products industry.

"This certification will assure that the wood used came from a legal source and a sustainably managed forest," she said.

PWPA sits as a member of the NGB, which crafted the draft EO on forest certification.

"Wood certification has been existing since the 1990s. We follow the market-driven trend. Our neighboring countries have a

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policy that they will not accept wood products if they are not certified," Vasquez added.

While she said some countries are not as strict as others in requiring wood certification, the impact of climate change and the clamor for sustainable forest management could prompt most countries to adopt similar policies.

"The industry is evolving because of climate-change issues. This is one way of contributing to the global effort to mitigate the effects of climate change.

"Wood is the best solution to climate change. Unless it is burned, it will not release carbon into the atmosphere," she said.

Vasquez added that aside from a steady supply of wood, a stable policy environment is needed for the country's wood industry to recover from the decades-old slump as a result of massive deforestation. "What we really need is a stable policy. I am not saying the industry is dying, but we are fighting for survival," Vasquez said.

Vasquez added that the group continues to promote the use of wood being a renewable source of materials for construction and furniture, and as a way of increasing the country's carbon-

absorption capacity.

"If you plant a tree, it absorbs carbon dioxide. The tree releases oxygen, while the carbon is retained in the wood.

"If the tree grows and its marginal utility is reached, the trees are cut, but the carbon remains in the wood. The wood captures carbon and it will stay there, unless it is burned," Vasquez said.

She said the push for the massive reforestation and cultivation of forest plantation will boost the revival of the wood industry, noting the need for sustainable supply for its many uses.

"There are many challenges. But the industry is not dead. Wood remains as the best construction material. We are encouraging members, because there is a future in forestry. The challenge is huge but we need to move forward," she said.

According to Vasquez, there is a need for stability in terms of policy. She said the industry supports the passage of the Sustainable Forest Management Act, which has been pending in Congress for more than two decades. "This could provide a road map and stability to the forestry sector. Every industry needs a road map," she said.

**“Other countries already have forest certification. We need to have our own to be more competitive, especially with the Asean economic integration.”—CALDERON**

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## New forest rangers deployed in Caraga

BUTUAN CITY – Sixty nine new forest rangers were deployed yesterday to help monitor and protect forest, biodiversity at various areas in Caraga region.

These new recruits recently completed an intensive five-day course in forest protection held at the local convention center here on April 11-15.

They were also trained by web-based mobile application called 'Lawin' Forest and Biodiversity Protection System.

'Lawin' is a forest and biodiversity protection system that integrates forest, biodiversity and threats monitoring, implementation of interventions to address threats and monitoring of response of the forest ecosystems. It

uses open-source technology for biodiversity and monitoring of critical situation through a phone application called Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART).

The data and the necessary information that are gathered by a patrolling eco-ranger at the field are encoded in the software for analysis. The output determines the actual state of the forest ecosystem.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR 13) has been selected as pilot testing area for the project. 'Lawin' in Mindanao, is developed by the DENR and the Biodiversity and Watersheds Improved for Stronger Economy and Ecosystem

Resilience (B+WISER) program of the United States Agency for International Development.

Caraga Region has a total forest land area of 1,331,491 hectares. Of this total 331,786 hectares are classified as protection forest and 999,705 hectares are production forest.

About 64,729 hectares are considered as closed forest where the trees are dense. There are 26,731 hectares of mangrove stand most of which are located at the coast of Surigao del Sur and Surigao del Norte. This figure on mangrove and forest in production has changed due to the successful implementation of the National Greening Program. (Mike U. Crismundo)

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## Earth Day is tree-planting day

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FRIDAY is Earth Day, but given how sick our planet is, we should try to make every day Earth Day.

This year's theme, Trees for the Earth, is extremely timely and appropriate. We have been suffering high temperatures caused by El Niño. In Mindanao, the drought led to the violent dispersal of hungry farmers. Mount Apo and one or two other mountains burned because vegetation had dried up.

Experts warn the situation will continue for a few more months.

In urban centers, we cut down trees for the sake of development and replace them with high-rise buildings. We convert

forests into croplands and other agri-forest enterprises.

This year, Earth Day starts the countdown to its 50th anniversary by launching a campaign to plant 7.8 billion trees.

Among other things, trees help combat climate change by absorbing harmful carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. They clean the air we breathe by absorbing odors and pollutant gases and filter particulates by trapping them on their leaves and bark. They provide food, energy and income.

As consumers whose lifestyles have contributed significantly to unsustainable economic growth that increased consumption of fossil fuels and deforestation, we should try to do more aside

### THE CONSUMER

Linda B. Bolido

from planting trees.

We can patronize green products and support green businesses. "A green economy not only protects ourselves and our planet, but can provide millions of jobs as we develop and install new technologies, rebuild and retrofit buildings, and devise new processes and modes of production," the Earth Day website says.

We can also use our daily commute to help Mother Earth. By biking, using public transport and car-sharing, we can help lower emissions that de-

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EARTH DAY TREE PLANTING DAY

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stroy the ozone layer, which protects earth from the sun's harmful rays. Let us demand efficient public transport and biking- and walking-friendly cities.

We can also plant trees and help generate more oxygen for congested cities even if space is limited. Container-planting, vertical gardening and other techniques have been developed for small spaces. Even fruit-bearing trees can now be grown in containers.

### Planting materials

If you want to join the global campaign to re-green our environment, you may want to visit the joint annual show of the Bonsai and Suiseki Alliance of the Philippines, Inc. (BSAPI)

and the Cactus and Succulent Society of the Philippines, Inc. (CSSPI) on April 29-May 9 at the Quezon Memorial Circle's Hardin ng Mga Bulaklak (near the entrance facing East Avenue) in Quezon City.

The show will feature commercial exhibits, where you can buy not just plants but gardening materials and supplies. You can also ask experts about propagation to ensure that the plants you buy will survive and flourish.

This year's BSAPI theme is "Leveling up with the Black Scissors Society," while CSSPI's theme is "Cactus Craze."

Lecture-demonstrations will cover Basic Care of Cacti and Succulents for Beginners and

Grafting, Advance Bonsai Styling and Penjing, Basic Bonsai, Advance Bonsai, Penjing, Suiseki and Bonsai Accents, Care of Succulents in the Tropics and Hypocotyl Grafting, Suiseki Basics, Stapeliads and Other Succulents, Cactus Uses and Benefits, All about Lithops and Mesems and Growing Cacti from Seeds, The Art of Tray Landscaping of Succulents and Cacti, and Succulents Mutation through Gamma Irradiation.

Send letters to The Consumer, Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 1098 Chino Roces Ave. cor. Mascarido and Yague Sts., 1204 Makati City; fax no. 8974793/94; or e-mail lbolido@inquirer.com.ph.

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The Biggest Music Tribute In Celebration of the International Earthday

## earth day Jam 2016

Performances By

6cyclemind  
Abra  
Absolute Play  
Barbie Almalbis  
Basti Artadi  
Brigada  
Flying Ipis  
Gracenote  
Kitchie Nadal

Kiwan  
Lou Bonnevie  
Mayonnaise  
Nina  
Noel Cabangon  
Philia  
Sitti  
Slapshock  
The Chongkeys  
and many more

Side Activities:

Morning Coastal Clean Up @ SM By The Bay  
Earthday Bike Ride to the "Jam" Open to The Public  
Meet Up @ CCP Grounds Carpark at 4pm with the Firefly Brigade  
Whole Day Booth Exhibits with Electric Vehicles  
@ the Performance Vicinity @ SM By The Bay

**April 23 5 PM**  
**BY THE BAY, MALL OF ASIA**

**FREE ADMISSION.**

Like Earthday Jam Foundation



**First Gen**  
We Care. We Dare.

**HONDA**  
The Power of Dreams



**TBS PHL**



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[www.earthdayjamfoundation.com](http://www.earthdayjamfoundation.com)

# PEOPLES JOURNALS

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### 'Let us all be stewards of the Earth'

#### CONCLUSION

THE main aim of the Paris Agreement is to limit global temperature rise within the century "well below 2 degrees Celsius and to drive efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels."

We rally our fellow vulnerable nations to ensure the early entry into force of the Agreement. But when we commit to this treaty, we must realize that the commitment goes beyond what the government is expected to do. Every citizen has a responsibility to keep our promises and turn them into action.

As individuals, we must concretize our participation in climate action and make it part of our daily living by adopting a low carbon lifestyle.

In a low carbon lifestyle, individuals and communities commit to change their daily routine and practices to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and to create carbon dioxide sinks. The aggregate of these individual and community efforts will considerably mitigate climate change. Learning how to manage our local resources will eventually lead to the sustainability of our country. Ultimately, the objective is to help the world manage its ecological assets more judiciously so that humanity can live within the Earth's limitations.

The effective implementation of the



*Keynote speech of Senator Loren Legarda delivered during the Public Forum Assessing Compliance of LGUs' Implementation of RA 9003 held at Leyte Normal University, Tacloban City on April 18, 2016—ED.*

ESWM Law is part of our climate mitigation efforts as it promotes not only the efficient and eco-friendly management of our solid waste, but also adopting a zero waste lifestyle, which means reusing, recycling, upcycling, avoiding buying unnecessary goods, and patronizing products that produce zero to minimal waste.

As principal author and sponsor of this law, I lament the low compliance rate we have achieved in the 15 years that this measure has been in effect. But I maintain my optimism because today I see the Ombudsman and the DENR, supported by non-government organizations and advocacy groups, at the forefront of this battle to urge

and compel LGUs to implement the ESWM Law and all other environmental laws.

Moreover, in the 2016 national budget, P500 million was allocated under the DENR for capacity building programs for LGUs for the implementation of the ESWM Law. This is our way of giving further support to achieve 100 percent compliance.

In closing, I wish to go back to Pope Francis' encyclical. He said, "The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home."

Let us work together to redefine development—to change our way of thinking and our way of doing.

Let us veer away from the throw-away culture and aim for a zero waste economy.

Let us turn our back on extractive and consumptive practices and adopt the concept of sustainable development and low carbon lifestyle.

Let us give nothing less than our wholehearted commitment to our duty as stewards of the earth so that we, and the generations to come, can live in a safe, clean, healthy and resilient world.

Thank you.

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## SM CELEBRATES EARTH DAY

**P**LANET Earth is about 4.6 billion years old already, according to Smithsonian.com. On April 22 the world will be turning a year older based on the global celebration of Earth Day. Age is not the concern, but rather what the planet has been going through, and will be facing in years to come, as an effect of global warming.

It is for this reason that SM Supermalls, through its corporate social responsibility arm SM Cares, is enjoining the public to join its various activities lined up in celebration of Earth Day. On April 22 all SM malls nationwide will hold a special Trash to Cash Recycling Market from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. The public may bring used plastic and PET bottles, aluminum and tin cans, scrap paper, old wood furniture and kitchen metal items to any SM mall in exchange for cash or useful household items. All the collected items will be turned over to a waste-management facility for recycling. This project is regularly done every first Fridays and Saturdays of every month.

The music scene is also in on the celebration, with SM City Marilao holding a concert, entitled *Green Guitars—A Concert for the Planet*, featuring Spongecola, Ebe Dancel and DJ Arra Pascual. What makes the show unique is the use of renewable energy (RE) to provide

power during the artists' performances.

The audience will be treated to a short audio-visual presentation that will explain RE and how this system works for the concert. Also part of this project is a chance for customers to sign up as a "Partner of the Planet."

In replacement of a concert fee, those interested to watch will instead be required to make a small donation for the benefit of the Jubilee Shelter Program (JSP) of the Diocese of Malolos, Bulacan. The collected fund will be used to provide solar energy system for the JSP's livelihood activities.

On April 30 the SM Mall of Asia (MOA) will be the host venue for the Third Pro-Earth Run.

This is the second straight time that SM MOA has supported the event organized by Earth Day Network Philippines, which is the local counterpart of the global Earth Day Network International and frontrunner of the annual April 22nd Earth Day celebration in the Philippines. Registration for the run is still ongoing through [www.earthdayphilippines.org](http://www.earthdayphilippines.org).

Whichever activity the public chooses in celebration of Earth Day, the one thing that will win is the collaborative attempt to care for a sustainable future. More people can join the cause for as long as public places, like SM malls, are here to provide the opportunity to help.

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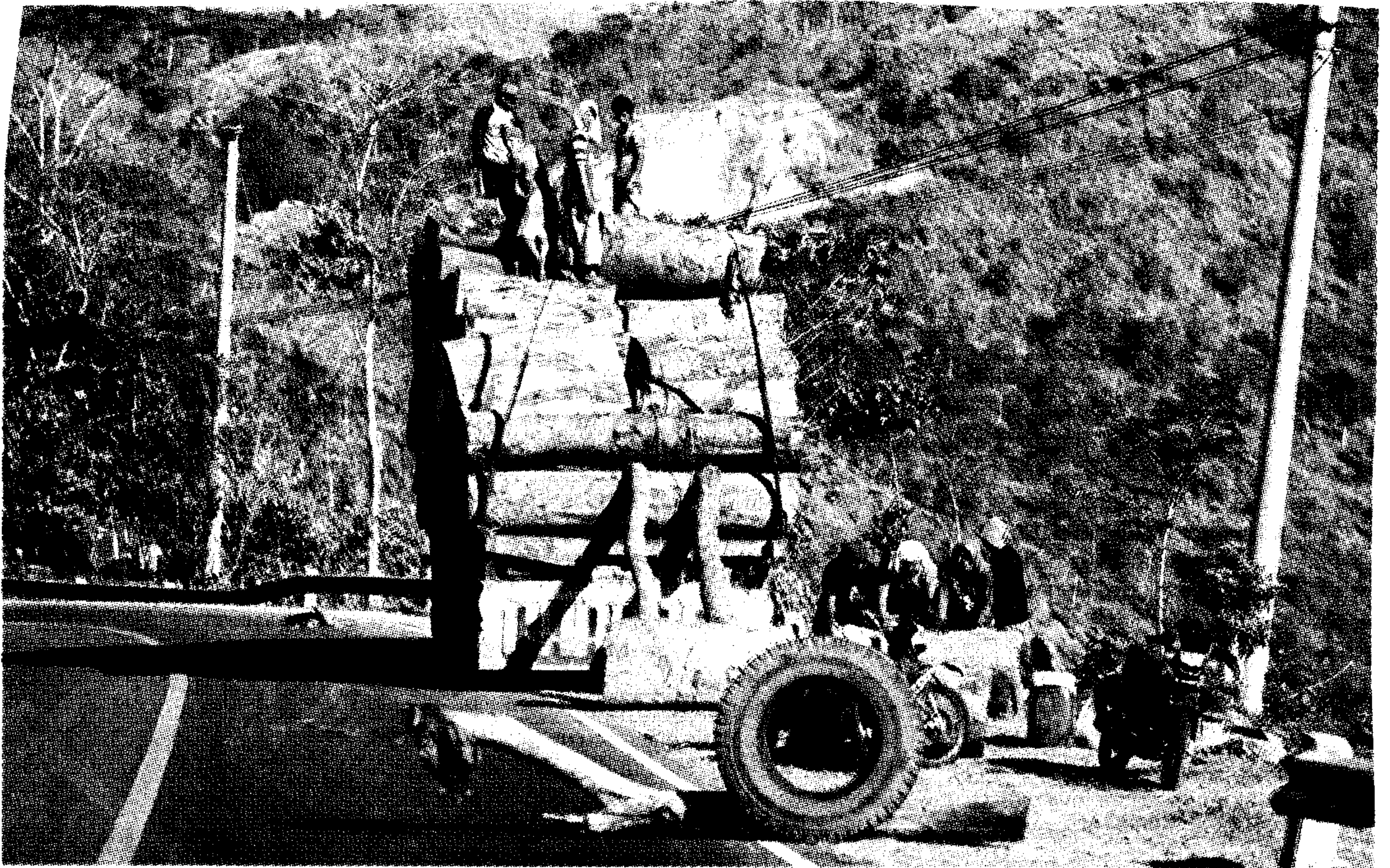
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**COMMERCIAL LOGGING** – Giant Falcata logs are rolled into this waiting hauler truck in Kitaotao, Bukidnon. These trees commercially grown in the area and are used in making plywood, crates, and match sticks. (Keith Bacongco)

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## Typhoon-battered village plants mangrove cover

By **RESTITUTO A. CAYUBIT**

TACLOBAN CITY, Leyte - The most battered barangay here is planting mangroves to serve as natural barriers against calamities that may strike the village.

Barangay 88 chairperson Emelita Montalban said her village where Tacloban City airport is located was one of the worst hit by super typhoon Yolanda last November 8, 2013 wherein more than 400 people died. At present the population of her village is 10,545.

Montalban said her constituents

have become active in caring for the environment and in participating in climate change mitigation and environmental related activities like tree planting. "The calamity that struck us was an eye opener for the care of the environment and the need for natural barriers, like the mangroves, for our coastal communities," she said.

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Dried up pine trees caused by the extreme drought and extended El Niño are seen along Kennon Road in Benguet province.

# The Manila Times

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Cocoa deal aims to boost Panay farmers' income

THE German government's international development cooperation company, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, through the Forest and Climate Protection in Panay (ForClim II) Project, and The Cocoa Foundation of the Philippines Inc. (CocoaPHIL) will sign an agreement aimed at improving income of cocoa farmers in Panay Island through support for sustainable cacao production, management and marketing.

ForClim II Project principal advisor Dr. Klaus Schmitt and CocoaPHIL President Edward David signed the agreement on Tuesday at CocoaPhil's office in Quezon City.

Funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, the project assists marginal farmers in protecting and rehabilitating degraded forest lands and their buffer zones through enrichment planting, assisted natural regeneration, agroforestry and upland agriculture to increase their income while mitigating climate change and conserving the area's rich biodiversity.

CocoaPHIL is a non-profit organization established in 1993 to revive the flagging Philippine cocoa industry.

It supports Department of Agriculture (DA) Sustainable Cacao Project by addressing shortage of cacao in the Philippines and the world through training, consulting services and provision of planting materials.

Experts predict a one million metric ton (MT) global shortage of cocoa by 2020.

DA aims to raise local production from 10,000 MT to 12,000 MT of dried cocoa beans currently to 100,000 MT by 2020.

Current production is not even enough to satisfy the local demand of 30,000 MT per year.

The partnership will promote sustainable production, management and marketing of cocoa with the goal of contributing to and improving socio-economic conditions of upland farmers.

The German project will ensure coordination of activities with relevant authorities, provide technical and financial assistance to cocoa farmers and participate in monitoring of project success.

CocoaPHIL will provide technical expertise and know-how in cacao planting, management, value adding and processing.

It will provide training, make high-quality planting material available at cost, help link cacao farmers to marketing partners and purchase produced fermented or dried cacao beans that meet quality standards at prevailing market prices.

The CocoaPHIL-proposed cocoa development program will provide the farmers with opportunities to secure a more stable economic status.

On-farm and off-farm employment could be generated also through processing of locally sourced cacao beans by the domestic grinding and chocolate manufacturing sector and additional labor requirements due to production expansion.

Income should be derived also out of added value for organically grown cacao beans or processing cacao nibs made into "tablea" and other delicacies, creating small businesses in rural households.

A mutually beneficial outcome is expected from effective use of land to create economic wealth for the country and people while protecting the environment. **PNA**

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### *Munti zoo? Inmates keeping exotic pets*

By Maricar B. Brizuela

ADD exotic and protected wildlife endemic to Australia and Indonesia to the list of police seizures from the cells of hard-core criminals at the national penitentiary in Muntinlupa City.

Four sugar gliders (*Petaurus breviceps*) inside two cages were among the items recov-

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## Munti zoo? Inmates keeping exotic pets

From page A1

ered on Tuesday at the maximum security compound of the New Bilibid Prison (NBP), where some 3,000 inmates are staying.

It was the first time that gliders—small arboreal and nocturnal marsupials native to Australia and Indonesia and in the family of kangaroos and koala bears—were confiscated during the 29th raid conducted by policemen since November last year under “Oplan Galugad,” the NBP director, Supt. Richard Schwarzkopf told the INQUIRER.

Also found at the compound’s Quadrant 4, Building 5, were improvised firearms, cell phones, air coolers, speakers, weighing scales, knives and Wi-Fi routers.

Schwarzkopf said the prisoners had been taking care of the gliders as pets and as part of their recreation activities.

According to Sugar Gliders Philippines Community, the exotic animals make “wonderful pets” because they relate well to people and form strong bonds with their owners. They are also known to crave attention from humans, it said.

Sugar gliders are sold online from P2,000 to P3,000, the group said.



**FROM GUNS TO EXOTIC PETS** Four sugar gliders (*Petaurus breviceps*) were among the items seized on Tuesday at the maximum security compound of New Bilibid Prison, where some 3,000 inmates are staying.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

As a policy, the NBP does not allow inmates to keep pets and exotic animals, Schwarzkopf said in explaining the police custody of the gliders.

“However, since pets are not considered contrabands, we are actually considering the possi-

bility of allowing dogs or cats inside the NBP to help inmates fight their boredom,” he said.

“It can also be a big part of their reformation,” he added.

The operation, involving at least 120 lawmen, also led to the demolition of the Presidio Headquarters Knights Hospitallers, which, according to NBP officials, served as the “house” of notorious drug dealer Luis Go.

“We are one by one removing these luxurious shelters of inmates because we want everyone treated equally. We have transferred these detainees to their official prison cells after the demolition,” Schwarzkopf said.

He said the NBP would continue Oplan Galugad in the coming weeks and months as part of their security measures.

“We hope to make this a routine to prevent contrabands from entering the prison compound,” the official said.

Schwarzkopf said the items recovered on Tuesday and previous raids might have been smuggled inside the NBP through garbage trucks, ambulances or vehicles of catering services.

Stricter rules have already been imposed on vehicles entering the facility, he said. **With a report from John Cyril Yee, trainee**

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### Exotic pets seized in latest NBP raid

BY ASHZEL HACHERO

FOUR exotic pets and home-made shotguns, along with drug paraphernalia, were seized yesterday by authorities in the latest raid, the 29th, to be conducted at the New Bilibid Prison in Muntinlupa City.

NBP Superintendent Richard Schwarzkopf Jr. identified the exotic pets as sugar gliders, small marsupials belonging to the family of kangaroos and koala bears that have been domestically bred as pets in several countries, including the United States.

They like to eat almost anything that is sweet, including fruits, thus their name, and have a gliding membrane similar to flying squirrel that allows it to glide from tree to tree.

Schwarzkopf said they are investigating who owns the marsupials and how they were brought inside the national penitentiary.

Also recovered were knives, syringes believed being used for illegal drugs, a home theater system and boxes of compact discs.

Schwarzkopf said the home theater and compact discs were recovered in the cell occupied by

members of the Sigue Sigue Sputnik gang at the NBP's maximum security compound.

In the same operation, Bureau of Correction personnel demolished a "kubol" owned by one Luis Go who was reportedly convicted of drug trafficking. Go has been already transferred to the facility housing other high-profile inmates inside the NBP.

Schwarzkopf said strict security measures, including the installation of scanners, metal detectors and X-ray machines are making it difficult for inmates to smuggle more contraband items.

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## More patrol boats deployed in Tañon Strait

By ELLALYN B. DE VERA

Protected area authorities are increasing the presence of sea patrols in Tañon Strait, between the islands of Negros and Cebu, to combat illegal fishing in the critical marine habitat.

Am Prospero Lendio, Protected Area Superintendent for Tañon Strait, said P4 million was allocated for two patrol boats that will be used in apprehending illegal fishers as well as commercial

fishers who violate park rules.

"We are improving our floating assets and other facilities, so we will be more consistent in patrolling Tañon Strait," Lendio said.

Last year, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Protected Area Office, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Philippine National Police together with the local government units in Tañon Strait caught four commercial fishing vessels during a joint seaborne operation in the Tañon Strait Protected Seascape.

Isabelo Montejo, DENR Regional

Director for Central Visayas, said collaboration between government agencies and civil society was critical in the protection of Tañon Strait.

"The patrol work of our courageous personnel and partners led to a significant decline in the number of commercial fishers within the national park," Montejo said.

Tañon Strait covers 42 towns and cities in the provinces of Cebu, Negros Oriental, and Negros Occidental. It is a critical marine habitat for 14 species of dolphins and whales, and harbors extensive mangroves and coral reefs.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Boracay's coral preservation featured in Hollywood documentary

By JUN AQUIRRE

BORACAY ISLAND, Aklan — An upcoming documentary film produced by a key Hollywood producer and director will feature the environmental efforts in preserving coral reefs in world-famous Boracay in the town of Malay, this province.

Benjie Tayag, an environmentalist with Sangkalikasan Producers Cooperative (SPC), said the award-winning Hollywood movie producer and director Will Harper has filmed underwater scenes for the documentary film off the coast of the global holiday island destination.

"It is more than just an ordinary film documentary on the environment. It will focus on cause-and-effect, on how destruction of coral reefs off Boracay impacts on the less privileged members of society. Its objective is to raise awareness on a worldwide scale and serves as a call for immediate action," Tayag said.

It is not much known but Tayag and an Austrian geoscientist have invented the reef bud technology used by the SPC

to rehabilitate Boracay's coral reefs, which have been in decay due to the impacts of a growing tourism industry.

"During filming, I was asked what motivates us to do this. My answer was simple: 'We do or we die'," Tayag said.

The coral recovery project of SPC in Boracay was also supported by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and other private organizations.

Aside from Boracay, the documentary film with a working title Earth: Code Blue has also featured other tourism locations in Southeast Asia including the ones in Indonesia and Singapore.

Harper has directed and produced Hollywood stars including Clint East-

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS  
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# MANILA BULLETIN

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# Deadly gas kills 5 in Masbate mining pits

By NIÑO N. LUCES

**L**EGAZPI CITY, Albay – At least five gold miners were killed after reportedly inhaling deadly gas while conducting small-scale mining operations in Aroroy town, Masbate province since last weekend, police said Tuesday.

Senior Inspector Malu Calubaquib, Police Regional Office (PRO-5) spokesperson said that on Monday, two miners were found dead inside the mining tunnel of Lucky Land Small Scale Miners Association, Inc. which is reportedly owned by a certain Robert J. Chan located in Brgy. Jaboyan, Aroroy town, Masbate.

The victims were identified as

Cornelio C. Credo Jr. 42, a resident of Brgy. Tinago, Aroroy, Masbate and a certain Angelo, 17, a resident of Brgy. Lagta, Baleno town, Masbate.

Calubaquib said that another miner – Cristito D. Balicolon, 53, a resident of Brgy. Tinago, Aroroy, this province, managed to get out of the tunnel when he started feeling dizzy. He was immediately brought to the nearest clinic for treatment.

Calubaquib added that on Friday, three miners were reported to have died after they were trapped inside the mining sinkhole located at Sitio Boston, Brgy. Capsay, Aroroy, Masbate.

The victims were identified as Wilson F. Petiros, 40, and Jorly Cedillo,

28, both residents of Brgy. Panique, this town. The two victims went to the mining sinkhole early morning of Friday to dig ore-bearing soil but were later found dead by authorities.

Calubaquib said, another incident was reported on the same date where a certain Francisco Bangalisan, 23, a resident of Panique, Aroroy, Masbate was declared dead, after he and several others were trapped inside the sinkhole of a small scale-mining company which is being owned by a certain Rosebelle E. Rabosa.

Calubaquib said investigation is ongoing but initial findings point to suffocation due to inhalation of harmful gas inside the mining pit as the cause of death of the victims.

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Lepanto set to mine copper anew

By Bernadette Nicolas

LEPANTO Consolidated Mining Co. is set to resume its copper operations by the middle of this year as the price of the red metal has gone up above \$2 a pound.

Bryan Yap, Lepanto president and chief operating officer, said 13 rigs were being used in an extensive underground drilling program to define the remaining resources of the copper mine. Lepanto expects results of the drilling to be ready by the end of July.

Yap added that a few potential buyers have shown interest in buying Lepanto's arsenic- and gold-bearing copper concentrates.

"We are looking at restarting the copper [operations] because we will be using the same resources we have in mining and, at the same time, we know what we have because these areas we have mined before," Yap told

the INQUIRER. "We are just re-mining the ones that we have mined before."

Lepanto is spending P500 million mainly to restart its copper operations.

The company hopes to return to profitability this year as gold prices have also risen more than 16 percent and remained above \$1200 an ounce since the start of the year. The price of the precious metal is forecast to increase gradually this year. Lepanto suffered a net loss of \$185 million in the first quarter of 2016. It produced 5,821 ounces of gold and 9,520 ounces of silver during the period.

The company's main focus will still be the Victoria gold operation where it hopes to develop other prospects to raise production to a level that will result in a neutral cashflow in 2016. Lepanto shut down its copper operations in 1997 and focused on gold production.



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**S**UMMER na naman! Inaasahan ng lahat ang mainit na klima – ngunit hindi sing-init ng nararamdaman natin ngayon. Sa sobrang init, lumolobo na ang bilang ng mga namamatay sa heat stroke, kasama na ang ilang kilalang personalidad sa radio, TV, print media at pelikula.

Nagpaalala rin ang Department of Health (DOH) tungkol dito. Ang heat stroke ay isang malubhang karamdaman kung saan lubhang tumataas ang temperatura ng katawan na hindi napapawi ng pagpapawis dahil sa dehydration. Mataas ang insidente ng heat stroke kapag mainit at maalinsangan ang panahon, lalo na kung ang trabaho ninyo ay nagiging sanhi upang pagpawisan kayo nang todo. Madaling malaman kung umaatake ang heat stroke dahil makadarama kayo ng matinding pagkauhaw, panghihina, pagkahilo at pagkawala ng malay, pagkabalisa, at pananakit ng ulo. Kung hindi maaagapan ay puwede itong ikamatay.

Ngunit hindi lamang ito ang pinoproblema ng Pilipinas at iba pang bansa. Sa Japan at Indonesia, kung inyong natatandaan, sunod-sunod ang pananalasa ng tsunami (tidal wave) na ikinamatay ng libo-libong tao. At huwag na tayong lumayo. Sa Pilipinas, matapos magbigay ng hindi inaasahang baha ang bagyong Ondoy noong 2008, nanalasa naman ang tikatik na ulan kahit walang bagyo noong 2012 sa panahon ng hanging Habagat na kumitil din ng katakot-takot na tao. Inamin na ni Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Sec. Ramon Paje na hindi na maiiwasan ang mga ganitong kalamidad dahil sa pagbabago ng panahon o climate change.

Asahan na, aniya, ito taon-taon sa panahon ng tag-ulan. Kaya noong 2014, mahigit 10,000 buhay naman ang tinangay ng super bagyong Yolanda sa Kabisayaan, hindi pa kasama ang mga nasawing hayop na pinagkakakitaan. Naitala tayo sa kasaysayan ng mundo sa pagkakaroon ng pinakamalaking trahedyang ikinasawi ng napakaraming tao at ikinasira ng komunidad na hanggang ngayon ay hindi pa naisasaayos. Ang lahat ng ito ay epekto umano ng climate change.

### ANO NGA BA ANG CLIMATE CHANGE AT ANO ANG EPEKTO NITO SA MUNDO?

Sabi ng DENR, ito ang hindi inaasahang pagbabago ng panahon na nakaaapekto sa buhay ng tao. Bumabagyo kung tag-araw, umiinit kung tag-ulan. Nagkakaroon ng El Nino o tagtuyot, na susundan naman ng La Nina o walang tigil na pag-ulan. Lumalakas din ang bagyo – sa katunayan ay mayroon na ngayong signal number 4 na dati-rati ay wala. Turnatagal ang tagtuyot kaya nagkakamatay ang mga tao at hayop. Maihahalintulad ito sa Great Depression ng Amerika noong 1930s o sa Horn of Africa noong 1980s.

### PAAO MAKAAAGAPY SA PAGBABAGO NG KLIMA?

Maraming komunidad sa bansa ang hindi ligtas sa epekto ng climate change kaya dapat maunawaang hindi na maiiwasan ang pagbabago. Kung may kakayahan ang bansa, dapat ay magbigay sila ng mga 'community-based adaptation to climate change program' upang mabigyang-lakas ang mga komunidad na prone sa mga disaster na magkaroon ng kaalaman at desisyon upang magsagawa ng aksiyon sakaling dumating ang mga hindi inaasahang pangyayari.

Maraming institusyon ang pamahalaan na makatutulong dito. Siyempre, nangunguna rito ang DENR. Dapat ding tumulong ang Department of Agriculture (DA) – huwag 'yung bigay lamang sila nang bigay ng fertilizer na pang pinagkakakitaan na yata ng ilang opisyal ng ahensya. Isa rin sa makatutulong ang Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) at kung hindi kalabisan, hingin na rin sana ang tulong ng Philippine Red Cross kahit man lamang sa pagbibigay ng kaalaman sa first aid.

# PEOPLES JOURNALS

Everybody's Newspaper

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## PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

### ***EMISSION TEST ANOMALY SCORED***

Punish LTO personnel behind 'non-appearance' scam – Escudero

SENATOR Francis Escudero has warned "corrupt" officials and employees at the Land Transportation Office that they will be held accountable and punished for allowing the practice of "non-appearance" in vehicle emission tests.

Escudero, who is running for vice president under the Partido Galing at Puso, blamed the corrupt practice for the worsening state of air pollution in the country.

He said instead of phasing out old jeepneys, the

government must address the racket in LTO which defeats the purpose of emission testing.

"That is a form of corruption. The vehicle owners who give bribes and the officials and employees who accept bribes are both guilty of corruption," said the chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources.

"These people must be taught a lesson. They must be made to pay for their crimes," added Escudero.

The senator said allowing non-appearance or no-

show in emission testing is a violation of the Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999.

Through the racket, vehicles that would otherwise fail emission testing, including so-called smoke-belching vehicles, are given clearance for registration.

"Bribery is always two-fold. Corruption is never one way," said the independent vice presidential candidate.

"People who have benefited from this corrupt practice should realize that they also suffer from air pollution caused by

their vehicles," Escudero added.

Escudero made the promise to run after the people behind the racket after he was endorsed by the Coalition of Clean Air Advocates Philippines on April 16.

The group has hailed Escudero as a "Clean Air Champion" for his track record of fighting for environmental protection.

"A Clean Air Champion represents the hope and struggle of our countrymen for a much better quality of life, through

enforcement of good governance that will eliminate the dreaded societal corruption that aggravates the clear and present danger of air pollution and environmental degradation of this great nation," the group said in its citation to honor the veteran legislator.

Escudero said the lack of enforcement of the law, particularly the provision on emission testing of vehicles, has contributed to poor air quality since 80 percent of air pollution comes from motor vehicle emissions.

# HATAW!

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**NAGDEKLARA** ng giyera sina 'Captain America,' 'Iron Man,' ang grupong SANLAKAS at environmental advocates laban sa coal plants na makasasama sa kalusugan at kapaligiran. Hinamon nila ang presidentiables na pagtuunan ng pansin ang nasabing problema. (ALEX MENDOZA)

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS  
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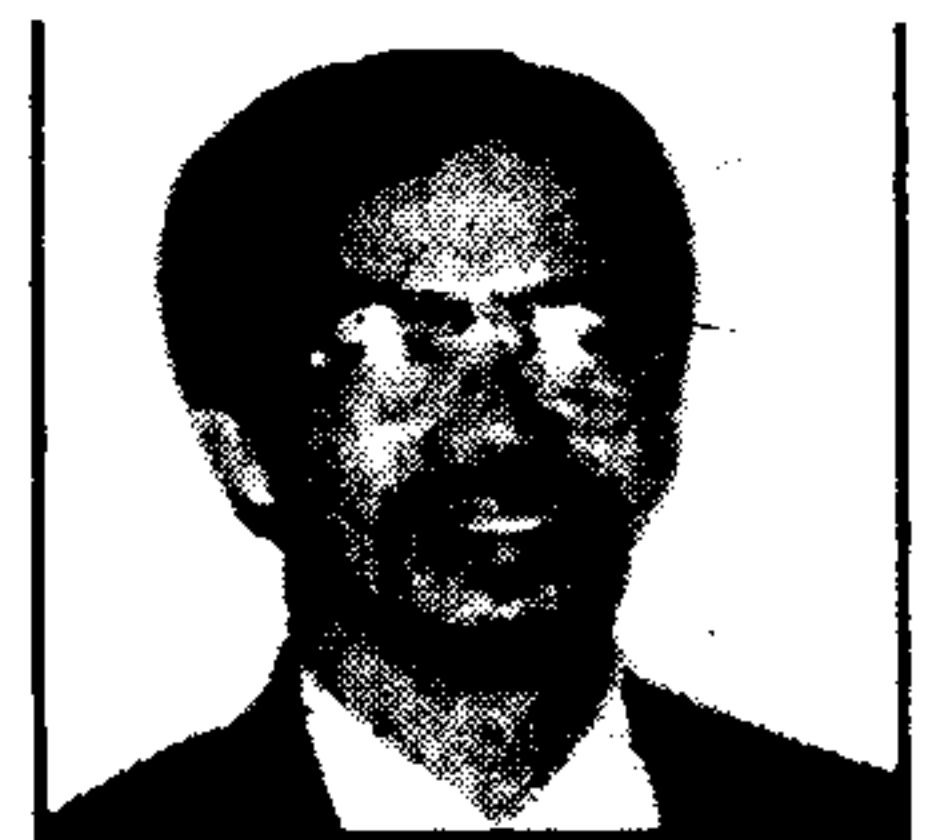
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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### PUNCHLINE

# Earthquakes and climate change; political jolts and bickering



**D**ESTRUCTIVE earthquakes hit Japan and then Ecuador, destroying buildings and killing many people.

Here comes a season of earthquakes scaring us all. And telling us to be safety-conscious and to prepare for the worst.

\*\*\*

Locally, an Intensity-6 earthquake that shook Zamboanga City Thursday last week prompts authorities to order an inspection of all buildings and structures to ensure that they are safe for use or occupancy.

Let's better be safe than sorry — by complying with both building construction and inspection requirements in the entire country.

\*\*\*

Earthquake forecasting blog Solar Watcher released a video on YouTube last April 5, informing the public of possible powerful earthquakes that may hit the continents between April 14 and April 22.

It predicts that two heliocentric planetary alignments (Venus-Sun-Jupiter and Mercury-Venus-Neptune) culminating into one geocentric alignment (Venus-Uranus Conjunction) with Mars moving direct, may foreshadow multiple magnitude-7 earthquakes during the eight-day period.

\*\*\*

"April 21-22 does feature significant celestial connectivity and important planetary geometry suggesting a strong seismic adjustment here on Earth. The simultaneous clustering

of two planetary alignments pose a significant threat for shallow and damaging earthquakes as the Earth is involved in a two-way magnetic portal connection 'tug of war' of the planets," warns Solar Watch, mentioning some "possible locations that may receive significant shaking."

To be warned is to be forewarned, as the old saying goes.

\*\*\*

Meanwhile, some 130 nations, including the Philippines, will sign the agreement on climate change (reached at the 2015 United Nations (UN) Climate Change Conference in Paris last December) at the UN headquarters in New York City on Friday, April 22.

Here comes a breakthrough agreement, limiting global warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels.

\*\*\*

A total of 146 nations had earlier presented their proposed national climate change contributions, including the world's top two emitters of greenhouse gases, the United States and China.

United we stand, divided we burn.

\*\*\*

The Philippines, which is among the nation's most vulnerable to violent storms and other extreme weather because of climate change and its location right in the path of Pacific typhoons, has vowed to contribute its share to the reduction of worldwide greenhouse emissions.

Development of more renewable energy for our factories and residences, such as wind, solar, and biomass to get

priority.

\*\*\*

On the political front, the camp of leading presidential candidate Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte opts to issue an apology over his "joke" about an Australian rape-slay victim in his city in 1989.

Critics say rape is no joking matter.

\*\*\*

Former presidential assistant for Mindanao Jesus Dureza, one of the key campaigners of Duterte, says the "apology" will even be posted on his official Facebook account, "Rody Duterte."

It could read "We apologize, in the name of Jesus. Signed: Jesus D."

\*\*\*

Malacañang, says through Presidential Communications Operations Sec. Herminio Coloma Jr. that Duterte's joke shows disrespect for women and lack of maturity as Duterte described the Australian rape victim as beautiful and added that he the mayor should have been the first to commit such offense on the lady.

"It speaks volumes," Coloma claims. 'Twas just a manly "cliche," says Digong.

\*\*\*

Liberal Party (LP) presidential candidate Mar Roxas hits Duterte for making the joke, saying "rape is a serious problem. Anyone who laughs at the ultimate assault on the dignity of women should not be allowed to wield power."

As politics heat up, expect a continuation of the "Bakla ka!" vs "Ampaw ka!" verbal exchanges between them.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Even crocodiles feel El Niño's heat

NORTH COTABATO – Rising temperatures and continued lowering of water levels have caused large crocodiles at the Liguasan Delta to swim to swampy areas, endangering the lives of reptiles

By JOHN UNSON  
and residents nearby.

Veterinarian Cayetano Pomares said he and veterinary medicine professors at the University of Southern Mindanao (USM) are

convinced that the continuing reduction in water levels at the Liguasan Delta due to the dry spell since November caused the crocodiles to swim downstream

Turn to Page 16

### Even From Page 1

to swampy areas in Barangay Kuyapon.

"Rising temperatures in waters upstream must have also been causing so much discomfort to these creatures," he explained.

Last Wednesday, Mamangkas Mamatong found a crocodile eight feet (2.4 meters) long in a marsh in Kabacan, North Cotabato. He was harvesting tilapia, but his fishing net caught the huge crocodile

instead.

"I was to harvest tilapias in my small fish pen and was stunned to see a big crocodile inside. I was so scared and ran away shouting for help. I almost lost consciousness," he said in Filipino.

Mamatong, a resident of Barangay Kuyapon in Kabacan,

sought the assistance of his friends to capture the reptile.

They brought the crocodile to Mamatong's home. For two days, the creature drew spectators from around Kabacan, a booming agricultural town home to Muslims and Christians.

Mamatong decided to turn

over the crocodile last Thursday to the officials of USM.

"I learned it was illegal to keep this kind of reptile without permission from the government so I turned it over to authorities," he explained.

The crocodile was later brought to the North Cotabato provincial capitol in Kidapawan

City, more than 20 kilometers north of Kabacan.

Veterinarians will return the crocodile to the Liguasan Delta.

Pomares said the reptile would be released after its full recovery from injuries caused by the crude harnesses that residents used to capture the creature.

THE NATIONAL NEWSPAPER

# Malaya

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS



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# BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business

## PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

### Church official, group slam govt for delay in release of El Niño funds

**A** CHURCH official and a non-governmental organization on Tuesday criticized the government for the delayed release of El Niño funds to farmers in drought-stricken areas.

Fr. Edwin Gariguez, National Secretariat for Social Action (Nassa)/Caritas Philippines executive secretary, has expressed alarm over reports of the delayed release of government funds that would have eased the burden of farmers affected by the drought.

Nassa/Caritas is the social action arm of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP).

According to Gariguez, the available funds from the national government, such as the Quick Response Funds (QRF), were not yet fully disbursed despite requests by local government units (LGUs) of areas hit by El Niño.

"What is taking them long from releasing these available funds? We have already seen enough bloodshed in Kidapawan, which rooted from the government's inaction to this national concern," Gariguez said in a statement.

The priest said a ranking official of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) confirmed that their "letter request for funding has not been acted upon despite follow-ups."

"Time is of the essence here. The government needs to act now and disburse the funds intended for the farmers, who have suffered enough. Loss of livelihood means hunger for our people who are already living in poverty to start with," he said.

Gariguez said the Department of Social Welfare and Development earlier claimed the availability of

P1.32-billion QRF for 2016, and another P6.7 billion for the implementation of cash-for-work and livelihood assistance for families affected by El Niño.

"But these funds were not yet fully downloaded to the affected LGUs," he said.

#### 'Excuse'

MEANWHILE, multisectoral alliance Bantay Bigas (Rice Monitor) has recently expressed concern over the possibility of using El Niño as an "excuse for rampant, arbitrary and unplanned rice importation."

In a separate statement, Cathy Estavillo, spokesman of Bantay Bigas, said the effects of El Niño to the country's agriculture and food security cannot be discounted.

"We were definitely not prepared for this calamity.

However, the government must not use it as a justification for rampant importation of rice," Estavillo said.

Citing data from the Department of Agriculture, Estavillo said the drought that has been devastating the country since last year has resulted in the loss of 383,743 metric tons of crops valued at P5.53 billion.

From February to March this year, she said some 252,176 hectares of agricultural land have been affected by El Niño.

Data from the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council showed that a total of six provinces, 12 cities, 17 municipalities and two barangays have been declared under a state of calamity since 2015, according to Estavillo.

"As early as last year, the threat of this dry spell has been clear, but the government just shrugged it off. The effects are now blowing up in our faces," she added. *TNS*

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**EDITORIAL**

## ALERTO SA LINDOL MATAPOS YANIGIN ANG JAPAN, ECUADOR

**N**IYANIG ng 6.5-magnitude na lindol ang timog-kanlurang isla ng Kyushu sa Japan nitong Huwebes ng gabi, Abril 14. Nitong Sabado, isang mas malakas na lindol na naitala sa magnitude 7.3 ang naramdaman sa kaparehong rehiyon. Nasa 41 katao ang nasawi sa magkasunod na trahedya, at maraming iba pa ang pinaniniwalaang nakalibing sa ilalim ng gumuhong mga bahay at gusali.

At nitong Linggo, Abril 17, naminsala ang pinakamalakas na lindol sa nakalipas na mga taon, may lakas na magnitude 7.8, at winasak ang Ecuador sa Pacific Ocean. Ang sentro ng pagyanig ay malapit sa may kakaunting populasyon na lugar ng mga pangisdaan at pantalan, ngunit maraming gusali ang gumuho sa bayan ng Pedernales at sa mga siyudad ng Manta, Poroviejo, at Guayaquil. Makalipas ang dalawang araw, umabot na sa 413 ang bilang ng nasawi.

Hanggang ngayon, kakaunti lang ang alam natin tungkol sa lindol at pagsabog ng bulkan, maliban na lang sa may kaugnayan ang mga ito sa paggalaw ng continental plates sa ilalim ng lupa. Nagkakaroon ng tensiyon sa pagkikiskisan ng plates, hanggang sa mailabas ito sa paraan ng biglaang lindol.

Marami sa mga nagkikiskisang plates na ito ay matatagpuan sa Pacific Ocean, mula sa Australia at Indonesia sa timog, nasa hilaga ang Pilipinas at Japan, sa hilaga-silangan ang Kuriles hanggang Alaska, at sa timog, sa bahagi ng kanlurang North America, Mexico, Central America, at South America. Ito ang tinatawag na "Ring of Fire" sa paligid ng Pasipiko, at saklaw nito ang Japan at Ecuador.

Mayroon na ngayong pag-aaral na nag-uugnay sa paggalaw ng mga planeta sa pagyanig sa mundo. Ayon sa nasabing teorya, ang paghilera ng mga planeta ay lumilikha ng puwersa na nakaaapekto sa Earth. Sa unang bahagi ng buwang ito, isang video ng Solar Watcher sa YouTube ang nagbabala sa posibleng mga pagyanig dahil sa paghilera ng Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, at Neptune at ito ang ikinokonsiderang paliwanag sa inaasahang magnitude-7 na mga lindol sa loob ng siyam na araw, Abril 14-22.

Nilindol ang Japan noong Abril 14 at 16, habang Abril 17 naman niyanig ang Ecuador. Ngayon, ang mga nakasubaybay sa pag-aaral ng Solar Watcher at sa babala nito tungkol sa mapanganib na panahon ng Abril 17-22, ay nakaantabay sa posibilidad ng malalakas na lindol sa ilang "possible locations", kabilang ang Sea of Okhotsk sa kanlurang Pasipiko, Argentina, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, at Tajikistan.

At dahil ang Pilipinas ay nasa "Ring of Fire", isang karaniwang lokasyon ng lindol at pagsabog ng mga bulkan, mahalagang maging alerto tayo. Nagsagawa tayo ng earthquake drill sa Metro Manila noong Hulyo 2015, sa layuning maihanda ang mamamayan sa lindol at maiwasan ang pagkataranta sakaling yumanig ang hanggang magnitude 7.2—ang "Big One"—sa rehiyon at sa mga karatig lalawigan. Dapat nating tandaan ang mga natutuhan sa nasabing drill at isaisip ang aral nito partikular na sa mga susunod na araw.



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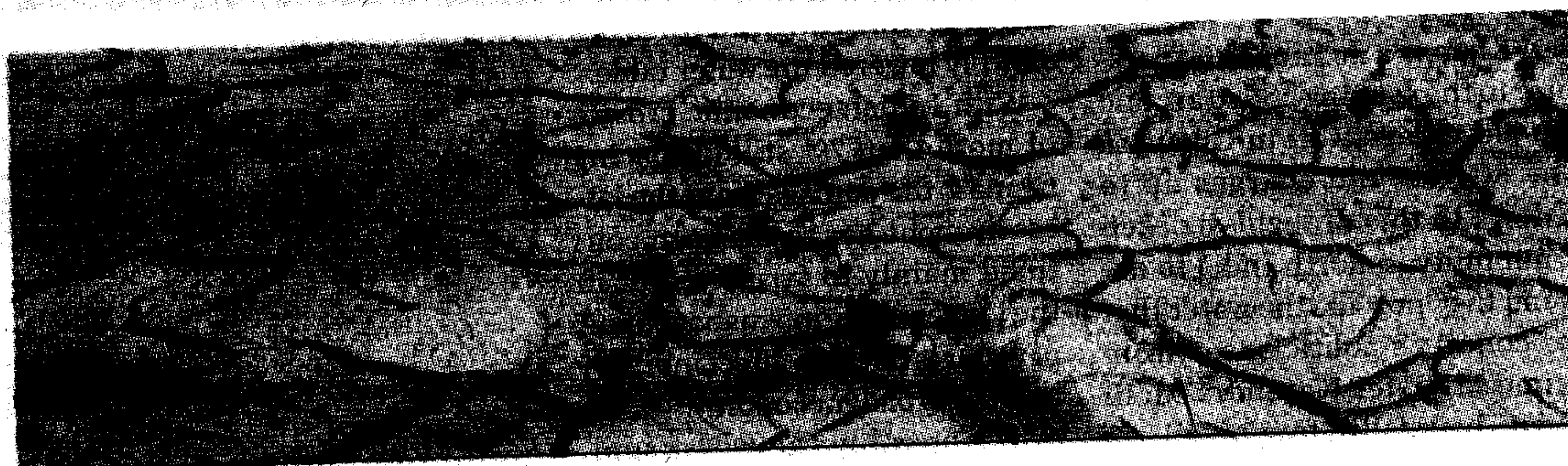
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Feeling the heat



**By Leslie Hook**

John Veron stands on a mud-flat littered with dead coral and gazes mournfully at a nearby reef, which has been bleached a ghostly white by Australia's hottest summer in history.

"This is nothing like what it was," says Mr. Veron, who has studied the Great Barrier Reef off Queensland since 1972. "Back then you could swim along this area here and go diving in among quite luxuriant coral. I'm afraid now it's a mixture of gravel and sand."

Mr. Veron, a scientist who has named about a fifth of the world's coral species, is visiting Orpheus Island to study the worst bleaching event in the history of the reef. Up to 95% of coral reefs in the northern portion of the 2,300-kilometer-long Great Barrier Reef are suffering severe bleaching as a re-

sult of rising sea temperatures, with scientists reporting that half of that coral is already dead.

"It is the El Niño years that are worst because that's when you get slightly higher sea temperatures," says Mr. Veron, referring to the warming of parts of the Pacific Ocean which occurs every three to seven years, leading to shifts in global weather patterns.

Named the Christ Child by the Peruvian fishermen who noticed it in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, El Niño has occurred for thousands of years. But recent research — disputed by some scientists — suggests global warming will make El Niño events, and its reverse phenomenon, La Niña, more severe.

The current El Niño, which began in early 2015 and should peter out in the next few months, is one of the most intense in history. Its effect is stretching around the globe.

"The impact of a strong El Niño is massive, global in reach and likely to occur more frequently into a warmer future," says Agus Santoso, a senior research associate at the Climate Change Research Centre at University of New South Wales. "It affects marine environments, agricultural crop yields, society and perhaps even politics."

El Niño helped to make 2015 the hottest year on record, according to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

The US space agency said it marked the first time global average temperatures were 1C or more above the 1880-99 average, the point when modern record-keeping began. Even as the weather pattern weakens, its effect will continue to hit communities and prices for commodities from palm oil to natural gas.

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Feeling the Heat

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

The United Nations warns that up to 60 million people in developing countries are at risk from the effects of drought, fire and flooding linked to El Niño, which is also likely to lead to food insecurity and outbreaks of disease. It is urging governments and donors to act to strengthen health systems, adaptation measures and responsiveness to severe weather events.

Assessing the economic impact of El Niño is difficult. An International Monetary Fund report in 2015 showed that Australia, Chile, India, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand and South Africa all experience a short-lived dip in growth because of severe weather events. In Europe and the United States,

meanwhile, output improves because warmer and wetter weather encourages crop growth.

Munich Re says losses from natural catastrophes last year fell to \$100 billion, their lowest level since 2009, mainly due to fewer hurricanes affecting North America. This glosses over the impact in poorer regions, which face the most severe events during El Niño.

"El Niño, on average and also visible in the 2015 pattern, hits the poorer areas of the world hardest while richer regions are relatively unscathed," says

Peter Hoeppe, head of geo risks research at the reinsurer.

Companies are moving to insulate themselves from the risks. GrainCorp, an Australian agribusiness, is investing A\$30 million to expand in Canada — in part to escape the threat posed by drought in eastern Australia. Fragile ecological environments like the Great Barrier Reef are, however, unlikely to adapt to increasingly severe weather events.

Many scientists believe the deal reached at the Paris climate conference in December, which aims to keep global temperature rises this century well below 2 degrees Centigrade, is inadequate. NASA data released last week shows that January, February and March each recorded their highest ever temperatures.

A change in Australian policy seems unlikely. Last month it approved one of the world's biggest coal mines even as scientists warned that bleaching linked to climate events threatened to destroy the Great Barrier Reef.

"The Paris plans to curb CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are not remotely adequate to stem catastrophic climate change," says Mr. Veron. "It's like Russian roulette. There is nothing at all to stop one El Niño wiping out the Great Barrier Reef in a few months."

### \$1-billion bill

Rotting carcasses of cattle lie strewn across parched, cracked soil. Fields are littered with stunted, worthless maize plants. Dams that provide resources for hydroelectricity, irrigation and drinking water sit at their lowest levels for years.

Such scenes have been playing out across southern Africa as the El Niño weather cycle buffeted fragile economies and heaped pain on a region of nearly 300 million people. In South Africa, the regional power, five out of nine provinces were declared drought disaster areas last year, while the government estimates that the economic cost on agriculture has already hit \$1 billion.

A key bread-basket for less developed neighbors — providing about 70% of their maize imports, the main ingredient for staple foods — the effects are being felt across South Africa's borders. Last year, its maize crop was down by a third to 9.9 million tons. In 2016 it is expected to fall to 7.2 million tons. Annual domestic consumption stands at 10.5 million tons.

Just as South Africa's commercial farmers are being battered, so too are thousands of small-scale producers across the region. The UN's World Food Program (WFP) estimates that 31.6 million people in southern Africa face food shortages. It warned last month that acute malnutrition is increasing in Zimbabwe, southern Madagascar, Malawi and Mozambique as

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Heat,

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the region has endured its lowest rainfall in years coupled with its hottest temperatures in a decade.

"Southern Africa's unprecedented El Niño-related and weather-related stress has triggered a second year of food insecurity for the vulnerable with serious consequences that will persist until at least the next harvest in March 2017," the WFP said.

There has been some rain in recent weeks but much will depend on conditions in the last three months of the year when farmers sow a new crop. After two poor harvests maize producers are struggling.

"Farmers have lost money from the 2015 crop and also coming into this year, so generally many of them are in hard financial conditions," says Wandile Sihlobo, an economist at Grain SA, a farmers' association. "Even if South Africa gets good rainfall around October, when we have to plant the next crop, what is going to be important is whether the farmers will have the resources to actually plant because most of them are in debt."

In Zambia, there is an additional effect. The copper producer

relies on hydroelectricity for 95% of its electricity but with dam levels dropping it is rationing power to eight to 12 hours a day. The fall in metal prices is also exacerbating the situation for exporters such as South Africa and Zambia.

### Damage to peatlands

Every year toxic smog gathers over Southeast Asia during the dry spell around July as forest fires — started by Indonesian smallholders using slash-and-burn techniques to clear land — take hold. The annual blight has been aggravated by what locals call a "Godzilla" El Niño that delayed monsoon rains across the archipelago.

Officials estimate 2.6 million hectares of land was charred last year, about four and a half times the area of Bali.

Some 500,000 people suffered respiratory problems, 2.4 million students were affected as schools were temporarily closed and relations with Singapore grew tense as the pollution drifted across borders.

The World Resources Institute (WRI) estimates that the fires emitted more than 1.62 billion

metric tons of carbon dioxide by the end of October, exceeding total emissions from the entire US economy on 26 days in a 44-day period analyzed by the WRI. The Asian Development Bank and World Bank estimate that the fires cost Indonesia more than \$16 billion.

"The triggers on the ground are human-made," says Andika Putraditama, an outreach officer at the WRI. "If we don't change the way we manage our land use, extreme El Niño events like we saw last year are going to be a lot more damaging for Indonesia."

The fires have turned into an environmental disaster in recent decades after powerful palm oil and paper businesses began to drain carbon-rich peatland, which left it dry and highly flammable. Some say the extreme El Niño weather pattern has actually been a blessing in disguise, spurring the government to act. Amid heightened international pressure, President Joko Widodo has issued a moratorium on cultivating peatland. He has ordered a review of licenses to drain peat and followed up with calls to re-wet vast swaths of land.

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### STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Heat

"We don't want to just say who is at fault, we want to solve the problem," says Raffles Panjaitan, director of forest fire prevention at the environment and forestry ministry.

With a decentralized government spread over 17,000 islands, enforcement is a major hurdle and Jakarta's actions are being called into question as a second dry spell begins. Another 1,432 hot spots have been detected since the beginning of the year.

The weakness of Jakarta's response is captured in the newly created Peatland Restoration Agency. Nazir Foead, head of the organization, plans to restore some 830,000 hectares this year but told reporters last month that bureaucratic delays mean his team has yet to receive any state funding.

#### Heavy rains bring relief

California is one of the few places that derives some benefit from El Niño.

This winter the extra rain it has delivered has helped alleviate a four-year drought in the US state.

Precipitation levels stood at 109% of the average between

October and March, helping to refill reservoirs that had become depleted during the drought. For farmers — whose fields have been parched — it means that more water will be released from state reservoirs for irrigation than in 2015, a boost for the state's \$50 billion agriculture industry.

The effect helps explain why the US economy overall may benefit from El Niño: a study last year by the International Monetary Fund found that the US economy might grow by 0.55% following an El Niño shock. Wetter weather for the west coast and a milder winter in the northeast both contribute.

At times the El Niño effect has been too much. In January, northern California reported huge sea swells and floods from a storm which was especially strong because of El Niño. Throughout winter, seafront communities have also suffered from flooding because of unusually high "king tides", which were strengthened by El Niño.

In the coastal city of Pacifica — usually popular for its surfing — residents piled up sandbags and moved cars as waves

crashed across driveways. In the Sierras, meanwhile, extra snow has helped the skiing industry and built up the snowpack, the source for roughly a third of California's water.

Despite all this, the drought that began in California in 2011 is still not officially over, and many reservoirs remain at below-average levels.

"It had been so dry in the past four years, [that] this was certainly a turnaround," says Dan Cayan, research meteorologist at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

He says, however, that it would have been "almost impossible" to end the drought, even after so much rain, because of the deficit from previous years.

One major disappointment has been that southern California has remained dry this winter, defying expectations. Dry conditions could be exacerbated with a La Niña — which in the past has brought floods to SouthEast Asia and Australia and droughts to the US midwest — later this year. Even after an El Niño winter, California is still hoping for more rain.

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Britain: China must heed UN ruling on sea dispute

WASHINGTON—Britain said on Monday a ruling expected in the next few months in an international arbitration case the Philippines had brought against China's South China Sea claims must be binding.

Hugo Swire, British minister

of state responsible for East Asia, also said Britain saw the ruling from the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague as an opportunity for China and the Philippines to renew dialogue over their territo-

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### Britain: China must heed UN ruling on sea dispute

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rial disputes.

China claims virtually all of the South China Sea and rejects the court's authority in the case, which is widely expected to go in favor of the Philippines, significantly raising tensions in the strategic waterway.

The court is expected to rule in late May or early June.

Swire said that although Britain's relations with China had warmed and it was keen to attract Chinese investment, this did not mean "we suspend our critical faculties" over Beijing's human rights abuses or its assertive pursuit of territory in the South China Sea.

#### Int'l rules-based system

"We make it clear to the Chinese that we can only do these kinds of deals in an open and transparent way under an

international rules-based system," he told Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank.

"Under the international rules-based system on which the world depends, we would expect the ruling from The Hague to be adhered to by all parties concerned, whichever way it goes and we would stand by others, including the United States, whichever way that ruling goes," he added.

#### Respect Hague ruling

In February, the United States and the European Union, of which Britain is a part, warned China it should respect the ruling from The Hague.

The court has no powers of enforcement and its rulings have been ignored before.

Washington has expressed concerns that China may use a negative ruling as a pretext to declare an air defense identification zone (Adiz) in the South

China Sea, which would require notification when passing through the airspace of one of the world's busiest trade routes.

#### 'Absolutely nonnegotiable'

Swire said Britain considered freedom of navigation and overflight "absolutely nonnegotiable."

Britain has prioritized developing economic ties with China and welcomed Chinese President Xi Jinping on a state visit in October last year, leading critics to accuse London of placing short-term financial gain above human rights and security interests.

Britain also upset the United States when the former became the first non-Asian country and the first member of the Group of Seven advanced economies to join a China-backed development bank for Asia seen by Washington as an unwelcome rival to Western-led institutions, such as the World Bank. *Reuters*

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## Context of tension

**A**S A symbol of military force projection, nothing comes close to the aircraft carrier—especially the top-of-the-line American variety. When US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter landed aboard the USS John C. Stennis on Friday as it was conducting military exercises in the South China Sea, it was not simply to give his Philippine counterpart, Defense Secretary Voltaire

### EDITORIAL

Gazmin, a ringside seat at the war games. The unusual and high-profile visit, Carter's second to a US Navy aircraft carrier in the same waters in less than six months, was also to telegraph to his counterparts in the Chinese security establishment the American game plan.

In pursuit of its stated goal of ensuring freedom of navigation in the South China Sea—parts of which Vietnam calls its East Sea, other parts of which the Philippines has renamed the West Philippine Sea—the American government signaled that it was ready to put military muscle behind its diplomatic position.

Greater US military engagement in the region was prompted by Beijing's much more aggressive approach to the maritime disputes in the South China Sea in recent months, Carter said. "That's a question of Chinese behavior."

He added: "What's new is not an American carrier in this region. What's new is the context of tension exists, which we want to reduce." This is rather like putting a gun on the table as people around that table raise their voices in argument. It could work and prevent the intense argument from spiraling out of control—or it could fail and raise both the stakes and the risks.

The two-hour visit to the carrier, which allowed Carter and Gazmin to watch F/A 18 Hornets take off from the flight deck and execute maneuvers, came on the heels of the announcement made Thursday that the United States and the Philippines would conduct more frequent joint patrols in the South China Sea.

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That announcement naturally ruffled Beijing's feathers. "The joint patrols between the United States and the Philippines in the South China Sea are militarizing the region and are nonbeneficial to regional peace and stability," read an official statement issued immediately on a military website. "The Chinese military will pay close attention to the situation, and resolutely defend China's territorial sovereignty and maritime interests."

Carter's visit to the Stennis, with as his special guests the defense secretary and the armed services chief of the Philippines, the one country that has challenged China at an arbitral tribunal, has only added to the "context of tension."

From the point of view of both the Philippine and the American governments, the carrier visit and the joint patrols are only the necessary next steps in the carefully calibrated response to China's increasingly aggressive conduct. After all, how should Washington and Manila (and other capitals in the region) protest Beijing's deceptive reclamation work in the disputed area? China has created artificial islands with lighthouses and facilities that can be readily reengineered for military use. A display of resolve in the face of such a provocation is necessary.

And yet, whether it is the Americans saying so (the commander in chief of the US Pacific Command telling the US Senate last February: "In my opinion China is clearly militarizing the South China Sea. You'd have to believe in a flat earth to believe otherwise") or the Chinese doing it (a senior foreign ministry official saying last year: "This has gone beyond the scope of freedom of navigation. It is a political provocation"), the result is the same: The United States and China are increasingly committed to a militarization track.

It's well past time for the key players in the region to help create the conditions that will allow the Chinese to save face on the South China Sea issue; American power projection only stokes the fire of nationalism that is forging the new future of the Chinese Communist Party. At the same time, the United States must find another way to reassure its allies in the region of its support, without highlighting its military capability. Only then can the context of tension find an easing.

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

### Breaking free from fossil fuels

BERN—There has never been a better time to break free from fossil fuels. Record-breaking global temperatures, plummeting fossil-fuel prices, historic investments in renewable energy, and global pressure to honor climate pledges are all coming together to create the ideal setting for this world-changing shift.

The shift could not be more urgent. The UN climate agreement forged in Paris last December reconfirmed the level of 2 degrees Centigrade above preindustrial levels as a hard upper limit for global warming, beyond which the consequences for the planet become catastrophic. But it also included commitments to “pursue efforts” to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Judging by the latest data published by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, achieving that lower limit should be viewed as an imperative.

The new data confirm that 2015 was the hottest year on record, and show that the global run of record-breaking temperatures continued through the first two months of this year. According to Nasa, global temperatures in February were 1.35 degrees Celsius above average, based on a 1951-1980 baseline.

Fortunately, the privileged position of fossil fuels already seems to be weakening. In fact, according to the International Energy Agency, global greenhouse-gas emissions and economic growth have already decoupled, with global-energy-related carbon dioxide (the largest source of human greenhouse-gas emissions) having remained at the same level for the second year in a row. This means that fossil fuels are no longer the lifeblood of our economy.

It seems that the precipitous decline in oil prices—by two-thirds over the last 18 months

#### WORLD VIEW

*Payal Parekh*



—has not, as many feared, encouraged increased consumption. What it has done is deal a major blow to the profits of fossil-fuel giants like Shell, BP and Statoil.

Coal is not faring any better. Following China’s announced moratorium on new coal-fired power plants at the end of last year, Peabody, the world’s largest coal company, recently filed for bankruptcy protection in the United States, after it could no longer make its debt payments, partly because of waning demand for coal.

Meanwhile, renewable energy sources are receiving record amounts of investment—some \$329.3 billion last year, according to research from Bloomberg New Energy Finance. As a result, a cleaner, fairer and more sustainable future, powered entirely by renewables, is starting to become a real option.

Yet there is still a long way to go. Most governments are still clinging, in varying degrees, to destructive fossil fuels, with their volatile prices and devastating environmental impact, even as this dependence destabilizes their economies.

Those committed to addressing climate change—from international organizations to local communities to individual citizens—must urgently build on the momentum acquired over the

last year, by maintaining strong pressure on governments and companies to pursue the policies and investments needed to complete the break from fossil fuels. Just as a warming planet puts all at risk, scaling up action early benefits everyone. And it is up to everyone to hold leaders accountable to their promises, and to science.

Global movements such as Break Free have been exemplary in this regard. By backing campaigns and mass actions aimed at stopping the world’s most dangerous fossil-fuel projects—from coal plants in Turkey and the Philippines, mines in Germany and Australia, to fracking in Brazil, and oil wells in Nigeria—Break Free hopes to eliminate the power and pollution of the fossil fuel industry, and propel the world toward a sustainable future.

Recognizing the scale and urgency of the challenge ahead, Break Free is prepared to intensify its peaceful resistance against new and existing fossil-fuel projects. The key will be the strength and bravery of communities demanding that we keep fossil fuels in the ground and instead build a healthier and more just world, in which everyone has access to sustainable energy.

The world is closing in on a historic shift in our energy system. To accelerate progress, we must confront those who are profiting from climate change and defend the interests of ordinary people. Next month’s mobilizations against fossil-fuel projects are an important step in the right direction. The struggle to finally break free from fossil fuels is a global one. Nobody can afford to ignore it. *Project Syndicate*

*Payal Parekh is program director at 350.org, which supports the Break Free movement.*