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IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



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House okays bill all graduating students to plant 10 trees each

THE House of Representatives has supported a measure mandating all graduating elementary, high school, and college students to plant at least 10 trees each as a prerequisite for graduation.

House Bill 8728 or the "Graduation Legacy for the Environment Act" is authored by Reps. Gary Alejano and Strike Revilla has been approved on third and final reading at the Lower House, and shall be transmitted to the Senate for action.

In pushing for the measure's enactment, the bill's authors said "it is the policy of the State to pursue programs and projects that promote environmental protection, biodiversity, climate change mitigation, poverty reduction, and food security."

"To this end, the educational system shall be a locus for propagating ethical and sustainable use of natural resources among the young to ensure the cultivation of a socially-responsible and conscious citizenry," the bill said.

The trees planted by the graduating students shall be their living legacy to the environment and future generations of Filipinos.

In its explanatory note of HB 1154, one of the bills consolidated into HB 8728, Alejano said that while the right of the youth to a balanced and healthful ecology must be recognized, there is no reason why the youth cannot be made to contribute.

"With over 12 million students graduating from elementary and nearly five million students graduating from high school and almost 500,000 graduating from college each year, this initiative, if properly implemented, will ensure that at least 175 million new trees would be planted each year. In the course of one generation, no less than 525 billion can be planted under this initiative," Alejano said. **Maricel V. Cruz**



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The Manila Times



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Planning initiatives for Laguna Lake

WHILE the rehabilitation of Manila Bay is well under way, I believe revitalization efforts must encompass other bodies of water, such as Laguna Lake, which are sources of environmental pollution that eventually flows into Manila Bay. Laguna Lake, otherwise known as Laguna de Bay, is the largest inland body of water in the Philippines and the third largest lake in Southeast Asia with a lake surface area of 90,000 hectares and coastline length of 220 kilometers. The area is so vast that Singapore can fit in the lake. The Laguna de Bay region comprises Metro Manila, Laguna, Rizal, Cavite, Batangas and Quezon. According to National Statistics Office data for 2015, Laguna de Bay region's population has already reached 16.2 million — 4.8 million lakeshore residents and 11.4 non-lakeshore residents.

Laguna Lake is abundant with natural resources, and lakeside residents have greatly benefited from its rich biodiversity by skillfully using it as a source of their livelihood. Fishing is the foremost form of livelihood in the lake. According to Laguna Lake Development Authority's (LLDA) 2012 data, fisheries production yielded 150,957 metric tons of fish. Aside from 31 species of fish, other kinds of flora and fauna that are in the lake include crustaceans, mollusks, birds, water hyacinth and water lettuce, among others. Apart from sustaining and enabling communities to earn a living from its natural wealth, the lake also supplies approximately 200 million liters of water to parts of Metro Manila.

With the low water supply in our dams, we are in constant search for alternative sources of potable water. Last March, parts of Metro Manila were unprepared for an unprecedented water supply crisis that cut off the supply of approximately 52,000 households. Since the early 2000s, I have been proposing to utilize the capacity of Laguna Lake to hold 3.2 billion cubic

meters of water. By intensifying efforts to clean and dredge the lake, we can improve its water quality and water-holding capacity. As a result, we can ensure the sustainability of Laguna Lake as a vital resource that will always meet the needs of the Manila Bay Metropolitan Region and Calabarzon. One of the solutions to our water crisis is right in the middle of Metro Manila, and we are missing the chance to utilize it responsibly. Unfortunately, people and industries have aggravated the crisis by treating the lake as a backdoor garbage bin where they casually dump their wastes. Today, Laguna Lake is overwhelmed by domestic, industrial and agricultural pollution, which causes eutrophication, or the presence of excessive waste nutrients, algal bloom and fish diseases. If we do not address the lake's critical condition now, we will be robbing current and future generations of the chance to enjoy its beauty and natural wealth.

If developed appropriately, Laguna Lake can also alleviate traffic congestion, mitigate flood problems, strengthen tourism and expand waterfront development. In the 1970s, the government, through an inter-agency task force, assessed flood mitigation and disaster risk measures. After comprehensive evaluation, they proposed the simultaneous construction of the Manggahan Floodway and the Parañaque Spillway. As of today, only the Manggahan Floodway exists, and the lake's single outlet to Manila Bay is the Napindan Pasig River Channel, which has a capacity of only 600 cu-



FELINO A. PALAFOX, JR.

bic meters/second. During Typhoon Ondoy, approximately 4,000 cubic meters/second flowed into Laguna Lake from the mountains of Antipolo and Rizal. Because the Napindan Pasig River Channel could only drain 15 percent of the torrential downpour to Manila Bay, 80,000 hectares of urban land experienced catastrophic floods. I strongly recommend the construction of the Parañaque Spillway, which will serve as another channel that can flush out accumulating floodwaters in the lake into Manila Bay to prevent flooding in lakeshore towns and nearby areas. Without the Parañaque Spillway, I have always described Laguna Lake as a bathtub without a drain and with 21 faucets running.

With our country's worsening traffic congestion and faulty public transportation, we have to implement alternative forms of transportation. As an architect and urban planner, I highly recommend optimizing Laguna Lake's strategic position and developing an efficient and environment-friendly public transport system that will connect various growth areas around Laguna Lake such as Binangonan, Angono, and Taytay in Rizal and Santa Rosa and San Pedro in Laguna to the rest of Metro Manila. The eastern section of the lake is projected to experience population and economic growth. Therefore, additional stations in Cabuyao, Calamba, Los Baños and Tanay, among others, are necessary to address expected accessibility needs. The proposed station will have linear and perpendicular linkages. Linear connections are ferry routes that will stop at consecutive stations whereas perpendicular connections will cross to other stations while bypassing others. I also recommend integrating the lake's transport system with the current Pasig River

Transportation System and Manila Bay Water Transport System for a wider and more efficient service. Enhancing the water transportation system within the lake must be supported by a circumferential road network and a railway around the lake, which will give Laguna Lake inter-land and inter-water transport linkages. The circumferential road can help establish gateways to other provinces that will form the Laguna Lake Tourism Circuit. The Circuit will feature three tourism zones: 1) the Los Baños-Makiling Zone, 2) the Pagsanjan Zone, and 3) the Angono-Talim Zone. Each zone can boost local tourism by showcasing natural and other tourist attractions that are unique to each area.

Equally important is Laguna Lake's waterfront development. Palafox Associates and Palafox Architecture Group envision the lakefront to have walkable and bikeable linear parks and promenades that can be enjoyed by all, most especially by the lakeshore communities. Developing vibrant public spaces will encourage communities to be better guardians of the lake. I have always believed that the objective of waterfront development is to engender an appreciation of the water that sustains us. Let us work together to restore Laguna Lake's former grandeur, so it can, in turn, save and sustain our communities and future generations.



KUNSABAGAY

NI TONY F. KATIGBAK

Ipagpatuloy ang paglilinis sa Manila Bay

NAGKASUNDO ang city government at DENR na linisin ang Manila Bay, mga ilog at estero sa Metro Manila. Baka raw abutin ng pitong taon bago tuluyang matanggal ang mga dumi at babalik sa dating anyo ang dagat na noo'y dating pasyalan ng mga turista. Kung maibabalik sa dati ang Roxas Boulevard ito ay isang napakagandang tourist attraction lalo nat napapaligiran ng naggagandahang hotel at malls.

Sana kahit magpalit na ng Presidente ay ipagpatuloy lang ang nasimulang paglilinis. Malaking responsibilidad nito ang LGU at mga barangay. Sila ang manghuhuli sa mga walang disiplina nating kababayan na walang ginawa kundi magtapon ng basura kung saan-saan. Nakaka-

awa ang hitsura ng mga tagalinis sa ilog at estero. Nilalangoy nila ang kasula-sulasok na tubig na hindi mo alam kung anong klaseng dumi ang kanilang nakukuha. Pero karamihan diyan ay plastic.

Siguro kung bibilisan ng konti ang paglilinis ay kayang tapusin dahil duda akong ipagpapatuloy 'yan ng susunod na Presidente lalo na't ang mananalo ay hindi kaalyado ni President Digong. Marami namang nagbuboluntaryong namumulot ng basura kaya pasasaan ba at malilinis din 'yan. Ang problema lang ay ang mga nakatira sa paligid ng Manila Bay at ilog. Sinasalo ng tubig ang kanilang mga basura at dumi nila ay direktso rito. Halos silang lahat ay walang kubeta. Ang masama nito dito sila naliligo at nangunguha ng yamang dagat upang ibenta at ulamin.

Sa kasagsagan ng kampanyahan sa nakaraang eleksyon, narinig na naman sa mga kandidato ang pabahay na sa tuwing eleksyon lang nila naaalala. Puro salita kulang naman sa gawa. Kung gusto n'yong bumalik ang dating ganda ng Manila Bay tanggalin lahat ang iskuwater na naninirahan sa tabing dagat.

Mahirap na trabaho pero kung magtutulung-tulong ay kaya natin dahil walang problemang hindi nasosolusyunan.



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TAWILIS HARVEST. A fisherman shows his basket full of tawilis and other fish caught from the waters of Taal Lake after the closed fishing season at the water body was lifted last April 30. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Calabarzon had received complaints of illegal commercial fishers all throughout the closed season that started March 1—the most active spawning period for the tawilis based on studies discussed during the recent Tawilis Summit 2019. As the closed season ended, Lito De Villa, a private citizen residing in the Taal Volcano Protected Landscape, said he is impressed with the increased sizes of the Tawilis.



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A million plant, animal species facing extinction—study

ONE million plant and animal species are facing extinction due to human activities with agriculture as one of the biggest threats to biodiversity and ecosystems, according to the findings of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

About 75 percent of land and 66 percent of oceans have been “significantly altered” by people, driven in large part by the production of food, the report said.

Crop and livestock operations currently co-opt more than 33 percent of the land surface and 75 percent of its freshwater resources, the report said.

Agricultural activities are some of the largest contributors to human emissions of greenhouse gases, it added.

Based on the report, the next biggest

threats to nature are the exploitation of plants and animals through harvesting, logging, hunting and fishing; climate change; pollution and the spread of invasive species.

The average abundance of native plants, animals and insects has fallen in most major ecosystems by at least 20 percent since 1900 because of invasive species.

According to Anne Larigauderie, IPBES executive secretary, biodiversity must at the top of the global agenda, alongside climate change as the two biggest threats to human and species survival.

“Without transformative changes to the world’s economic, social, and political systems to address this crisis, the IPBES panel predicts that major biodiversity losses will continue to 2050 and beyond.

We are eroding the very foundations of

our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide,” said Robert Watson, IPBES chairperson.

Theresa Mundita Lim, a high-ranking official of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Centre for Biodiversity, said “the global assessment provides useful figures and case illustrations that will allow policy makers all over the world, including in the ASEAN member states, to better visualise the state of the world’s and ASEAN’s biodiversity and natural resources, and their impacts to human survival. The report also provides good rationale, as well as suggestions for developing national, regional, and global policies and actions that can address gaps and guide future work that may possibly improve or reverse current situations.”

Rio N. Araja



RAPID RECOVERY OF UNDERWATER HABITAT

'SUPERCORALS' COULD STILL SAVE WORLD'S DIMINISHING, LONG-SUFFERING REEFS

TOKYO—Hawaiian “supercorals” that have recovered despite living in warm and acidic water offer a glimmer of hope that dying reefs across the world could be saved, a new study says.

The research suggests that the gloomiest climate change picture of a world without the kaleidoscope underwater habitats could still be avoided, according to lead author Christopher Jury.

“It’s unfortunately but inevitably true that things are going to get worse for reefs over the next 20 to 30 years, but that doesn’t mean it’s unstoppable,” said Jury, a postdoctoral researcher at Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology.

“We can still turn this thing around and end up getting back to better than what we have today within a reasonable time-frame,” he told Agence France-Presse.

Coral reefs cover less than one percent of the ocean bed but support around 30 percent of all known marine life.

But they are suffering, with stressors including the warmer and more acidic oceans caused by climate change, as well as other human-made pressures, including pollution and overfishing.

The UN intergovernmental panel on climate change warned last year that just 1.5 degrees Celsius of global warming could see 70 to 90 percent of Earth’s

coral reefs vanish.

But Jury’s research shows that it is possible for coral to survive and even thrive in waters that are warmer and more acidic than where coral usually lives.

Rapid recovery

He studied coral reefs in Hawaii’s Kāne’ohe Bay that were devastated between the 1930s and 1970s by urbanization, dredging, coastal development and the discharge of sewage.

By the early 1970s, shallow coral cover across the bay had decreased by more than 70 percent on average, and by more than 95 percent in the southern bay, nearest the sewage output.

But in the late 1970s, the

sewage was diverted and the coral began to recover rapidly.

That happened despite the fact that Kāne’ohe Bay has warmer and more acidic waters than are typically found in the area.

In fact, the conditions in the bay are what other parts of Hawaii could see in the decades ahead if climate change continues apace. And those conditions are not usually favorable for coral.

But in Kāne’ohe Bay, simply removing the sewage output allowed the coral to recover to between 50 and 90 percent cover, “among the highest reported for any reefs in the Hawaiian Islands,” says the study published on Wednesday in Proceedings

of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences journal.

The key, said Jury, was that the coral populations in Kāne’ohe Bay “naturally harbor a lot of ‘supercorals,’ which can thrive in moderately warmer, more acidic conditions.”

So once the sewage pollution was removed, those “supercorals” swiftly “came in and drove the reefs to a rapid recovery.”

‘Glimpse into the future’

These corals appeared to be naturally able to survive in a climate that is usually hostile.

The recovery was a combination of both growth in remaining coral but also “recruitment,” where larval coral floating along

like seeds in the wind find a suitable environment and “settle.”

Jury said it appeared that the larval coral came from both the bay but also other areas in Hawaii and that so-called “supercorals” likely exist in many other places.

It is too early to say whether these “supercorals” could recolonize devastated reefs elsewhere.

“If we take the necessary steps now, then we will begin to see this reestablishment by corals during our lifetime, and our children and grandchildren will be able to witness the recovery of coral reefs during theirs because we make the decision that reefs are worth saving,” he said. —AFP



Artificial reefs provide marine sanctuary off Tablas

A Buenavista, Marinduque steel fabricator has successfully built cube-shaped artificial reefs designed by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), which have provided sanctuary to marine resources in Tablas Strait off the province.

Josefina Abilay, DOST Region 4-B or Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan) director, said the artificial reefs made from cement and microsilica are more resilient as compared to the usual pyramid-shaped artificial ones made of bamboo that have proven to be vulnerable to strong currents in Tablas Strait or the coastal waters of a marine protected area (MPA) off Buenavista town.

DOST Region 4-B had tapped local steel fabricator SMJ Metal Works to build the artificial reefs

in a project conducted under the department's CEST (Community Empowerment through Science and Technology) program.

The reefs were deployed last November and after four months, a good result was observed as different species of fishes and other marine life started to develop in the MPA.

The CEST program allotted P150,000 for the artificial reefs. The investment is expected to impact the economy of Barangay Yook, especially fisherfolk in the entire municipality.

Abilay noted that former Buenavista town chief executive Russel Madrigal plans to allot funds to build more of the artificial reefs after seeing the potential of the project through its municipal Environmental and Natural Resources office.

- Rainier Allan Ronda



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The Manila Times

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Returning trash shipment to Canada faces delay

RETURNING tons of garbage to Canada would face some delay because the processing of the needed documents would take time, Malacañang said on Wednesday.

President Rodrigo Duterte earlier said Canada had until May 15 to take back the trash shipment.

However, Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo said there would be a slight delay in shipping back the garbage because of documentation.

Panelo said that shipping might start in two or three weeks.

"If the delay is only slight, the President is a reasonable man. What is

important is they will take back their waste," he said.

He added that it was just right for Canada to shoulder all the expenses.

"They should pay for it. All the penalties, it should be thrown to them," he said.

In 2013 and 2014, 103 shipping containers of garbage declared as scrap plastics

were sent to the Philippines from Canada. Twenty-six of the containers were dumped on a private landfill in Tarlac.

Duterte, in a speech last month, said he would declare war against Canada if it would not take back the tons of trash it dumped into the country.

RALPH EDWIN U. VILLANUEVA



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1900

MANILA BULLETIN

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Environment group demands immediate ban on import of hazardous waste to PH

By ELLALYN DE VERA-QUIZ

An environmental justice organization called for the immediate ban on the importation of hazardous waste and other garbage, following the failure of the Canadian government to comply with the May 15 deadline to take ►9

Environment group...

◀1

back tons of trash illegally shipped to the Philippines in 2013.

"The righteous anger that Filipinos have expressed over the continued presence of the Canadian trash continues to be frustrated by the long delay in its return to Canada," Ban Toxics executive director Reynaldo San Juan said.

"President Duterte expressed our collective anger, and we need to channel this by taking concrete action and ratify the Basel Ban Amendment immediately," he added.

The Basel Ban Amendment is a revision to the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes, an international treaty designed to reduce and control the movement of hazardous wastes between countries. It specifically prohibits the export of hazardous wastes from rich to poorer countries, such as

the Philippines.

The Philippines ratified the Basel Convention in 1994 and has yet to ratify the Basel Ban Amendment, which is designed to protect developing countries to avoid becoming a dumping ground for unwanted toxic waste and garbage.

The Philippines has been victim to illegal dumping of hazardous wastes and garbage, and the Canadian trash is just one of several incidents.

Early this year, around 1,400 tons of household waste from South Korea arrived in the country. The collective effort of government groups and non-government organizations led to the repatriation of the waste to South Korea, with environmental advocates citing the incident as a huge success in the fight against transboundary movements of hazardous wastes.

Still, the country faces a number

of issues related to hazardous waste shipments.

In 2013, 50 container vans containing household waste were shipped to the Philippines from Canada. The waste has remained in the country over half a decade later, leading President Duterte to issue a deadline for Canada to take back the waste.

Various reports have noted that Canada has agreed to take back the waste, but their actions remain to be seen.

"We appeal to President Duterte, to ratify the Basel Ban Amendment immediately," San Juan said.

"Put the responsibility of policing hazardous waste exporters to the country of export, such as Canada. We need to be smart in addressing the problem, and the Basel Ban Amendment is a valuable tool towards protecting a significant portion of the population who are put at risk by toxic waste dumping," he explained.



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Group calls for ban on waste importation

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

A green group is calling for a total prohibition on the importation of hazardous waste amid Canada's failure to take back its illegal garbage export.

Environmental justice group BAN Toxics issued the call for the immediate ban on importing hazardous waste and other garbage in light of the failure of the Canadian government to take back its garbage shipment by the May 15 deadline.

"We appeal to President Duterte to ratify the Basel Ban Amendment immediately. Put the responsibility of policing hazardous waste exporters to the country of export, such as Canada," BAN Toxics deputy executive director Reynaldo San Juan said.

"We need to be smart in addressing the problem, and the Basel Ban Amendment is a valuable tool toward protecting a significant portion of the population who are put at risk by toxic waste dumping," he added.

In 2013, 50 containers of household waste were shipped to the Philippines from Canada.

The waste has remained in the country over half a decade later, leading President Duterte to issue a deadline for Canada to take it back.

Canada has agreed to take back the waste but their actions seem constrained by red tape.

The Basel Ban is an amendment to the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes, an international treaty designed to reduce and control the movement of hazardous wastes between countries.

BAN Toxics said the Philippines has been victim to illegal dumping of hazardous wastes and garbage and that the Canadian trash is just one of several incidents.

Early this year, around 1,400 metric tons of household waste from South Korea arrived in the country.

Marine plastic pollution up tenfold

Meanwhile, marine plastic pollution has increased tenfold since 1980, affecting at least 267 species, according to a report featuring the work of 400 experts from at least 50 countries.

United Nations biodiversity ex-

perts said the hard-hitting report into the impact of humans on nature shows that nearly one million species risk becoming extinct within decades, while current efforts to conserve the Earth's resources will likely fail without radical action.

Presented recently to more than 130 government delegations for their approval at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) headquarters, the 2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services features the work of experts, coordinated by the Bonn-based Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

The report examined five main drivers of "unprecedented" biodiversity and ecosystem change over the past 50 years, identifying them as changes in land and sea use; direct exploitation of organisms; and climate change, pollution and invasion of alien species.

Although global trends are mixed, the report insists that water and soil pollution have continued to increase in some areas.

"Marine plastic pollution in particular has increased tenfold since 1980, affecting at least 267 species," the report said. That figure includes

86 percent of marine turtles, 44 percent of seabirds and 43 percent of marine mammals.

The 2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services is also the first of its kind to examine and include indigenous and local knowledge, issues and priorities, IPBES said in a statement, noting that its mission is to strengthen policymaking for the sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human wellbeing and sustainable development.

"The loss of species, ecosystems and genetic diversity is already a global and generational threat to human wellbeing," IPBES chairman Sir Robert Watson said.

"Protecting the invaluable contributions of nature to people will be the defining challenge of decades to come. Policies, efforts and actions – at every level – will only succeed, however, when based on the best knowledge and evidence," Watson said.

On at-risk fauna and flora, the study asserted that human activities "threaten more species now than ever before" – a finding based on the fact that around 25 percent of species in plant and animal groups are vulnerable.

– With Pia Lee-Brago



THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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Department of Environment and Natural Resources
TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE



ELECTION CAMPAIGN GARBAGE - Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Task Force Baklas Billboard personnel arrange various kinds of campaign materials used during the recent election campaign at a depot under the EDSA Santolan flyover in Quezon City, yesterday. The MMDA has already collected almost 170 tons of election campaign garbage, among them tarpaulins and cardboard posters. (Mark Balmores)

170 tons of campaign materials collected; now up for recycling

By **JEL SANTOS**

Nearly 170 tons of campaign materials, which are now up for recycling, were collected by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) from

March 1 to May 14.

MMDA's Metro Parkway Clearing Group (MPCG) said they collected 23.42 tons of campaign materials on May 14, while from March 1 to May 12 they got 145 tons.

The 145 tons collected were removed because they were placed outside the designated areas of Commission on Elections (Comelec), the agency said.

"All in all, we have collected so far 168.84 tons of campaign trash this midterm elections," Francis Martinez, MPCG head, said on Wednesday.

The cities of Manila, Quezon, Parañaque and Makati produced the most number of campaign materials, he added.

He said that environmental groups that want to recycle the collected campaign materials may coordinate with them.

According to Martinez, the materials were stored at the flyovers in Santolan and Nagtahan for sorting and recycling.

"Various groups in need of candidates' tarpaulins to recycle them into bags, place mats, school supplies and other useful items can coordinate with us," the MPCG chief said.

This mid-term poll's collected campaign material, he said, is lower than of 2016 national elections that had 206 tons.

The collected campaign materials were tarpaulins, buntings, posters, wirings, leaflets, sample ballots, and flyers.

Danilo Lim, MMDA chairman, said they are targeting to rid major thoroughfares of campaign materials and spruce up public schools until this week so the public can prepare for the opening of classes next month.



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GARBAGE TALK

ELECTIONS LEAVE MOUNTAINS OF TRASH

By **Jhesset O. Enano**
and **Tina G. Santos**
@Team_Inquirer

Trash talk continues after the elections.

The volume of campaign materials to be collected from this year's midterm polls is expected to surpass that from the 2016 national elections, according to the Metropolitan Manila Development **A4**

Authority (MMDA).

Despite the huge volume, the MMDA has expressed hope that the bulk will not end up in dumps and landfills, as it seeks partners to help it recycle tarpaulins, streamers and other election paraphernalia.

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) on Wednesday reminded national and local candidates to take down their campaign materials if they don't want to be charged with an election offense.

On Tuesday, environment and health watchdog EcoWaste Coalition showcased upcycled products made from campaign materials.

In its post-cleanup report on Tuesday, MMDA's Metro Parkway Clearing Group said that just a day after the elections it collected 23.42 tons of campaign materials, filling up seven dump trucks.

Francis Martinez, the group's chief, said it had seized at least 21,700 pieces of election-related paraphernalia from major thoroughfares, as well as those hanging on electrical posts, wires and trees in Metro Manila.

Street sweepers, meanwhile,

have removed sample ballots, flyers and leaflets that littered the vicinity of public schools, most of which were used as polling precincts on election day.

Since "Oplan Baklas" started on March 1, the MMDA has collected a total of 168.84 tons of campaign materials, including those that were placed outside designated areas by the Comelec.

Most of the trash were collected from Manila, Quezon City and Parañaque City.

In 2016, the MMDA collected 206.61 tons of campaign-related materials for the entire election season.

MMDA Assistant Secretary

Celine Pialago said the agency was expecting the volume of this year's collection to go up, given the increased number of party list groups and aggressive advertising by political candidates and parties.

Election offense

Comelec Commissioner Rowena Guanzon said that under election rules, candidates should take down their campaign posters and other election paraphernalia immediately after the elections, warning that failing to do so could lead to the disqualification of a winning candidate.

"That is already an election

offense if after three days they still failed to remove their posters. If he is convicted then he is up for a disqualification case," she said.

Guanzon said the candidates could recycle the tarpaulins, or donate them to the homeless or to the fire victims. "It's bad manners to just leave behind those garbage on the streets."

Shopping bags, phone cases

EcoWaste showed that tarpaulins bearing faces and names of candidates could be turned into shopping bags, mobile phone cases and shoe bags.

Paper-based paraphernalia

were reused as folders, envelopes and even teaching aids for the coming school year.

"Unfortunately, those who won would not think of these campaign materials anymore," said Thony Dizon, EcoWaste's chemical safety campaigner. "And those who lost would rather not think about it."

Dizon said these sample products could be made into livelihood projects for communities.

These efforts, however, are only temporary solutions to the bigger problem on waste production during election seasons, said Aileen Lucero, the group's national coordinator. **INQ**



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THE PHILIPPINE STAR
metro

EDITOR: DULCE A. SANCHEZ

THURSDAY | MAY 16, 2019

Workers of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority sort out poll trash under the EDSA Santolan flyover in Quezon City yesterday.

MICHAEL VARCAS

Poll cleanup: 7 truckloads of trash hauled

The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) has collected at least seven truckloads of discarded campaign materials in the metropolis.

Francis Martinez, chief of the MMDA Parkway Clearing Group, said a total of 23.42 tons

of garbage were hauled a day after the midterm elections.

He said MMDA workers used scrapers in removing campaign materials posted on concrete walls.

Martinez said they took down 21,700 tarpaulins and posters hung on electric posts.

On March 1, the MMDA launched "Oplan Baklas" and removed 134,700 illegal campaign posters in the metropolis.

"We have collected 168.84 tons of campaign materials this midterm elections," Martinez said.

This is lower compared to the 2016 elections where the MMDA hauled 206 tons of garbage.

Manila, Parañaque and Quezon City registered the most number of election trash, according to Martinez.

- Robertzon Ramirez



POST-ELECTION EYESORE. Torn down election materials form an ugly heap at the MMDA compound under the flyover at the EDSA in Quezon City after the agency removed all such materials in the National Capital Region following the election on Monday. **Manny Palmero**

Candidates told: Recycle or clean up tons of trash

By Joel E. Zurbano

POLICE and volunteers have started removing campaign posters all over Metro Manila, even though it is the candidates who should be cleaning up their mess.

“Whether or not the candidates won the Monday’s elections, they should all serve as role models in cleaning up the campaign materials which came from them in the first place,” said Metro Manila police

chief Guillermo Eleazar.

A spokesperson for the Ecowaste Coalition agreed, and urged candidates to sort the materials and upcycle them when possible.

Aileen Lucero, a spokesperson, said upcycling, or the creative reuse of discards, is a practical way of saving resources from being burned or sent to the dumps and landfills for disposal.

So far, police and volunteers have re-

moved 654,859 posters that were outside the common poster areas.

“Let us do away with the bad practice in the past of just leaving behind the campaign materials,” Eleazar said.

He ordered his men to coordinate with the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority to conduct one final “Baklas” operation to rid the metropolis of posters and other campaign materials.

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Candidates...

From A1

The MMDA on Wednesday said Manila, Paranaque and Quezon City produced the greatest volume of campaign materials.

Most of the 23.42 tons of campaign posters and other election-related materials it removed and collected after the May 13 midterm elections came from various areas of the three cities.

MMDA chairman Danilo Lim said the cleanup in major roads would take a week. Public schools, which were used as election precincts, would also be spruced up for school opening early next month.

Francis Martinez, head of the MMDA Metro Parkway Clearing Group, said they collected a total of 168.84 tons of election-related trash since the campaign began.

Tarpaulins would be recycled into bags, place mats and other useful items, he said.

Martinez said this year’s collections were lower than the 206 tons of garbage collected in 2016.



NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION **169 tons of campaign trash collected; MMDA offers materials for repurposing**

A TOTAL of 168.84 tons of campaign trash was collected by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) following the just-concluded midterm elections, including those placed outside designated areas during the campaign period and those taken down after Monday's vote. MMDA, in a statement on Wednesday, said it aims to complete the post-election clean-up operations this week. "We target to rid the major roads in the metro of campaign materials and spruce up public schools until this week so the public can prepare for the opening of classes next month early," said MMDA Chairman Danilo D. Lim. The cities of Manila, Quezon, Parañaque and Makati produced the most number of campaign materials. The collected materials, currently stored under the flyovers in Santolan and Nagtahan, are on offer to recycling groups. "Various groups in need of candidates' tarpaulins to recycle them into bags, place mats, school supplies and other useful items can coordinate with us," said Francisco B. Martínez, head of MMDA's Metro Parkway Clearing Group.



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Recyclers of campaign tarps wanted

The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) asked those who want to recycle campaign materials into bags, placemats and other useful items to call the agency.

The MMDA revealed that so far it has collected 21,700 pieces of election-related materials made of recyclable tarpaulins following the 13 May elections.

The materials weigh 23.42 tons and had filled up seven dump trucks, said

the Metro Parkway Clearing Group (MPCG) in its post cleanup report to MMDA.

With the use of scrapers and sprayers, clearing operation teams also scratched election materials off concrete walls and fences in major thoroughfares.

Using man lifters, workers also took down tarpaulins, buntings and posters on electrical posts, wirings and trees while street sweepers removed leaflets,

sample ballots and flyers in the vicinity of public schools.

Tons collected before and after elections.

"We target to rid the major roads in the metro of campaign materials and spruce up public schools until this week, so the public can prepare for the opening of classes early next month," said MMDA

chairman Danilo Lim.

Meanwhile, Francis Martinez, MPCG chief, said they confiscated 134,700 pieces, equivalent to 145 tons, of election-related materials in various areas in Metro Manila under the "Oplan Baklas" operation before the elections.

Alvin Murcia





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Clean up after yourself

With the Commission on Elections unable to enforce the rules, candidates brazenly violated the guidelines set on the display of campaign materials. Incumbent officials displayed their campaign posters even in government buildings and compounds, in violation of Comelec regulations.

Candidates of all political colors ignored even appeals by environmental groups to spare trees from their posters and to refrain from stringing their streamers on electrical and telecommunications wires.

It remains to be seen whether the Comelec will go after even a single violator of the rules on common poster areas. In the meantime, candidates should make up for their violation of the rules by cleaning up their own materials. They should send a clear message to all their supporters that with the elections over, it's time to take down all campaign materials and to dispose of the trash properly. Walls and

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lampposts must be cleaned and rid of any political and *epal* messages.

In the National Capital Region, seven truckloads of campaign trash have been collected so far by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority. Candidates must help the MMDA in this effort.

The Comelec must also clamp down on candidates littering the landscape with post-election garbage, this time thanking the voters for the poll results. There are posters of incumbent local officials that have been on display since Christmas. Private individuals must pay for advertising space in public places, and only in designated areas. Government officials do not own public spaces. Why should they have the privilege of putting their faces and messages wherever they please?

Winners and losers alike violated the rules on the display of campaign materials. They should not leave their garbage for others to clean up.



FARM SUPPLY

IRRIGATION WATER CUT AS ANGAT RESERVOIR DIPS

CITY OF MALOLOS—Water elevation at the Angat Dam reservoir was recorded at 174.10 meters above sea level on Wednesday, low enough to show sections of the dam's surrounding wall of rock and earth.

But the water volume was still sufficient to meet Metro Manila's daily potable water supply, according to the Bulacan provincial disaster risk reduction management office. The dam supplies 97 percent of Metro Manila's drinking water needs.

The dam's lowest level was recorded at 157.57 masl on July 13, 2010.

On Wednesday, the allocation of irrigation water was completely cut to more than 25,000 hectares of rice farms in 17 towns in Bulacan province and four towns in Pampanga province.

Rice crops in most farms in these areas were due for harvesting or had already been harvested by this time.

Harvest

More than 200,000 farmers rely on irrigation water from the dam.

Ildefonso Canquin, president of the Provincial Agriculture and Fishery Council, said the National Irrigation Administration had yet to inspect the farm areas that might still need water for irrigation.

The reservoir level plummets during the dry months, or from March to July, and rises in August and September when replenished by rain. The dam level is at its peak in December.

The 51-year-old Angat Dam can take in as much as 210 to 214 masl during the rainy months. It has been retrofitted and strengthened to withstand the impact of a 7.2-magnitude earthquake.

Critical level

It hits the low level when its reservoir elevation is measured at 180 masl, and the low critical level when it reaches 160 masl.

In 2016, the dam recorded its lowest level at 184.93 masl. In 2017, it was 185.71 masl, and last year, 187.91 masl.

Faustino Reyes, forest guard at the Angat Dam watershed, said he saw portions of the reservoir bed when the water level dropped to 170 masl in 2014.

Angat Dam lies atop the mountains overlooking the towns of Doña Remedios Trinidad and Norzagaray in the Sierra Madre mountains. It helps control floods and generates electricity for Angat Hydro Co., which is owned by beverage giant San Miguel Corp. and Korean Water Co. Inc. —CAR-

MELA REYES-ESTROPE INQ



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UN suggests 4 shifts to advance climate action

The United Nations has called on governments to make four shifts, including tax pollution to advance climate action.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said emphasis should be placed on taxes on carbon emissions, known as carbon pricing, instead of on salaries.

He called for a stop to subsidizing fossil fuels and stressed that taxpayer money should not be used to increase the frequency of hurricanes, spread of drought and heatwaves, the melting of glaciers and bleaching of corals.

The UN also called for a stop to the building of new coal plants by 2020.

Coal-based power is key, according to UN-environment's 2018 Emissions Gap Report: all plants currently in operation are committing the world to around 190 giga tons of CO₂, and if all coal power plants currently under construction go into operation and run until the end of their technical lifetime, emissions will increase by another 150 giga tons, jeopardizing the ability to limit global warming by 2°C as agreed upon in the 2015 Paris Agreement.

The UN chief encouraged governments to focus on a green economy not a grey economy.

"It is very important that around the world young people, civil society and those that in the business community have understood that the green economy is the economy of the future and the grey economy has no future," Guterres said. "It's very important that you convince governments that they must act because there's still a lot of resistance."

He said governments are still afraid to move forward as he deplored explaining that "they feel the costs of climate action, forgetting that the costs of inaction are much bigger than any costs of climate action."

"Nature does not negotiate," he added. "It's very good to see youth in the frontline."

On Sept. 23, the UN chief is convening a Climate Change Summit to galvanize increased ambition for decisive climate action.

The common central objective is not to have more than 1.5 degrees of increasing temperature at the end of the century.

The international community, as well as the scientific community, has been very clear that there should be carbon neutrality by 2050 to reach this goal.

- Pia Lee-Brago



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



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We're losing battle vs climate change

THE United Nations is embarking this week on a new stepped-up effort to keep climate change in check, with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres traveling to New Zealand and several south Pacific islands.

It has been three years since the Paris agreement went into force, with the various nations presenting their planned programs of activities to help reduce the worldwide emission of carbon dioxide and other industrial emissions which have been identified as the main cause of rising world temperatures.

"We are still losing the battle," Guterres said last week. "Climate change is still running faster than we are, and if we don't reverse this trend, it will be a tragedy for the whole world." On this trip to the Pacific, the UN chief will be going to Fiji, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu, which have recently been hit by cyclones and floods.

Pacific island countries, are said to be the most vulnerable to climate change, because of the expected rise in sea levels as the world temperature rises and the polar glaciers melt. Typhoons starting from the Pacific have also become more powerful, causing more deaths and greater destruction in the island nations.

At the center of this increasingly dangerous area in the Pacific is the Philippines. From the hot central Pacific, typhoons rise and gather strength, then sweep westward toward the Asian mainland. The Philippines is right in the middle of the paths of most of these typhoons.

The new UN effort to mobilize greater efforts to moderate climate change is in preparation for the next climate action summit at the United Nations this September. This could be the world's last chance to prevent irreversible climate change, Secretary General Guterres said.

The overall world temperature has continued to rise despite the UN Convention on Climate Change in Paris in 2016. The United States led by President Donald Trump rejects the very idea of climate change and remains the No. 1 producer of industrial emissions. China is the world's next biggest polluter, but it has promised to take steps to reduce its industrial emissions.

At the Paris conference, the Philippines presented a program of increased development of renewable energy and less dependence on highly polluting plants like coal-fueled electric power producers. We are now producing more power from wind farms and solar farms, but we continue to depend heavily on coal plants to produce the power we need.

This also seems to be the general situation in many other countries today, so that UN Secretary General Guterres is moving to win greater support from the Pacific island nations for the coming UN summit in September.

Our hopes go with the UN secretary general as he carries on his mission in the South Pacific this week. As a nation that is among the most vulnerable to climate change in the world today, we should extend all possible support to this UN effort that will culminate with the summit in September.



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Dehado tayo vs climate change

TATAHAKIN ngayong linggo ng United Nations ang panibagong pagsisikap upang labanan ang climate change, sa pagtungo ni UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres sa New Zealand at iba pang isla sa katimugang Pasipiko.

Tatlong taon na ang nakalilipas nang buhin ang Paris agreement, na ang iba't ibang bansa ay naglatag ng kani-kanilang planong aktibidad upang mabawasan ang paglalabas ng carbon dioxide at iba pang industrial emissions na tinukoy na pangunahing sanhi ng pagtaas ng temperatura.

"We are still losing the battle," ani Guterres nitong nakaraang linggo. "Climate change is still running faster than we are, and if we don't reverse this trend, it will be a tragedy for the whole world." Sa paglalakbay na ito sa Pasipiko, magtungo ang UN chief sa Fiji, Tuvalu, at Vanuatu, na tinamaan kamakailan ng bagyo at baha.

Ang mga bansa sa isla Pasipiko ang sinasabing pinakaapektado ng climate change dahil sa inaasahang pagtaas ng tubig sa dagat sa pagtindi ng temperatura sa mundo at pagkatunaw ng polar glaciers. Mas tumindi rin ang mga bagyo mula sa Pasipiko, na nagiging sanhi ng mga pagkasawi at pagkasira ng mga isla.

Ang sentro ng tumitinding panganib sa lugar sa Pasipiko ay ang Pilipinas. Mula sa mainit na sentro Pasipiko, pag-iipon ng lakas ng bagyo, at pipihit patungo sa pangunahing lupain sa Asya. Nasa gitna ang Pilipinas ng daraanan ng mga bagyo.

Ang panibagong pagsisikap ng UN upang maibsan ang climate change ay paghahanda sa susunod na climate action summit sa United Nations sa Setyembre. Maaaring ito na ang huling pagkakataon ng mundo upang maiwasan ang climate change, ayon kay Secretary General Guterres.

Patuloy ang pagtaas ng temperatura sa mundo sa kabila ng UN Convention on Climate Change in Paris noong 2016. Inayawan ng United States, sa pamumuno ni President Donald Trump, ang ideya ng climate change at nananatiling No.1 producer ng industrial emissions. Ang China ang pinakamatinding polluter sa mundo, ngunit nangakong kikilos upang mabawasan ang industrial emission nito.

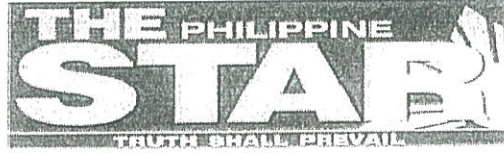
Sa Paris conference, ipinakita ng Pilipinas ang isang programa ng mas pinaunlad na programa ng renewable energy at hindi gaanong pagdepende sa highly polluting plants gaya ng coal-fueled electric power producers. Nagpo-produce tayo ng kuryente mula sa wind farms at solar farms, ngunit patuloy tayong dumedepende sa coal plants upang makapag-produce ng kuryente na ating kailangan.

Ito rin ang kasalukuyang kalagayan ng iba pang mga bansa, kaya si UN Secretary General Guterres ay kumikilos upang makakuha ng suporta mula sa bansa sa Pasipiko para sa darating na UN summit sa Setyembre.

Umaasa tayo sa UN secretary general sa kanyang misyon patungo sa South Pacific ngayong linggo. Bilang isang bansa na kabilang sa pinakaapektado ng climate change, kailangan nating ipaabot ang ating suporta sa pagsisikap ng UN na aabot sa summit sa Setyembre.



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Nature's endgame

By NEY VILLASEÑOR

It's a hard pill to swallow. It's tough to know we destroyed our planet, but it's knowledge that demands to be known. Now, more than ever.

It gets worse when you realize that the significantly unusual weather patterns, lack of water supply, and murky taps in the metro, along with the floods and landslides in the regions are signs that even with this inconvenient truth, nothing is getting better.

The Philippines prides itself with its natural resources, forests and oceans that are under threat every single day – many flora and fauna that are endemic are considered endangered, some even on the brink of extinction. According to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the country is one of the richest in biodiversity in the world, owning two-thirds of the planet's biodiversity.

Our greatest asset is our resources. In 2013, the forestry sector contributed 0.12 percent, or around P5.26 billion to the gross domestic product. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) places "the net present sustainable bioprospecting value of Philippine forests at approximately \$36 million annually in perpetuity."

Forests in the Philippines used to amount to more than 50 percent of the country's land area, but this percentage gradually declined. From 17.8 million hectares in 1934, the country's remaining forest cover is now only at 7.168 million hectares, or 24 percent of the total land area. This is the result of relentless illegal logging and deforestation.

Still, the problem remains. How little the government understands that our life revolves around forests is baffling. The growing need for a comprehensive policy agenda for our forests is imminent. With its thrust to Build, Build, Build toward infrastructure, our officials should always remember to take into account how development affects the environment.

Even with projects such as the National Greening Program, we see a greater need for the government to understand the adverse effects of continuous environmental ignorance. The need for well researched and adequately funded reforestation projects backed by the government continues to grow. Tree planting is more than just planting easy to sell lumber, we have to take into account the sustainability of our actions.

Non-government organizations have long recognized this need, and have consistently lobbied, fought for, and championed initiatives and policies for environmental protection and rehabilitation.

Organizations such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Philippines support government projects such as the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage Systems' Annual Million Tree Challenge last year.

The five-year project aims to plant, maintain and nurture a million trees for the benefit of watersheds, which are the main sources of water in Metro Manila. The project is one step toward water security, as more trees in watersheds result in clean and potable water.

In 2005, Haribon started the Forests for Life Movement, a project to restore Philippine rainforests using indigenous tree species. Native trees, according to Haribon Foundation, are more adaptive to the forest in reforestation, and they have a greater chance of reviving the life system within the forest, ensuring that native plants and animals also thrive.

At this point, we see how individuals and nongovernment organizations are doing their best to spur information campaigns that will support and educate the public sector. It's more than just planting trees, it's the growing call for public officials to step up and protect what's ours. Push the government to implement the laws they've passed. There's a dire need for the public to understand how important our forests are.

One of the ways to push for awareness is through education and events. The government should allot funding for research and development to support projects like Haribon's Forests for Life Movement.

Are we going to stay still? We're in the endgame now. What's the use of being on earth when we won't avenge it?

We should fight for our forests. Walk the wire for nature. Continue to grow with it as time passes.

Ney Villaseñor is a corporate communications and public affairs professional who currently leads the corporate communications group of a Tech Fin company.