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Meycauayan, Marilao in world's 'Dirty 30' -- report

By Nonoy Espina
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MANILA, Philippines -- The city of Meycauayan and the town of Marilao in Bulacan province share a slot in the list of the world's 30 most polluted places in the developing world drawn up by a private New York-based institute.

In its report, "The World's Worst Polluted Places" for 2007, the **Blacksmith Institute** said: "Industrial waste is haphazardly dumped into the Marilao, Meycauayan, and Obando River system, a source of drinking and agricultural water supplies for the 250,000 people living in and around" the Meycauayan-Marilao area.

"The river system is extremely polluted due to wastes received from tanneries, gold and precious metals refineries, the largest lead smelter in the Philippines, and numerous municipal dumpsites," it said.

"Substantial contamination also results from small-scale lead recycling facilities along the river and from the many tanneries that dump untreated hexavalent chromium-laced wastewater into the river," it added.

Hexavalent chromium is recognized as a carcinogen and is also linked to other adverse conditions.

It said this dumping of waste "has had a severe effect on the health of the local population with complaints of nausea, eye irritation, and various respiratory ailments" and that these effluents in the river system that feeds directly into Manila Bay "contaminate local fishing areas, further endangering health."

At the same time, the institute acknowledged the "considerable local effort to deal with the main sources of pollution, resulting in the creation of a coordinating body to encourage and guide clean up of this river."

"This stakeholder group, which has been instigated and supported by Blacksmith, includes senior representatives of the...government, the local municipality, industries from the area and community groups," the report said, without giving other details on members of the group.

It also recognized the "strong support from [the] political leadership in the Philippines," which it credited for "generating momentum for the clean-up process."

"A process has been started to collaboratively implement private and public remediation efforts over the next several years and efforts are ongoing to obtain national and international financial assistance," the report said.

The Blacksmith Institute, founded in 1999, says it helps "develop and implement solutions for pollution-related problems in the developing world" by working "cooperatively with partnerships of donors, governments, NGO's and others, and provide strategic, technical, and financial support to local champions as they strive to solve specific, pollution-related problems in their communities."

It launched its first assessment of the extent of toxic pollution in the developing world -- "The World's Worst Polluted Places: The Top Ten" -- last year, listing "sites where human health is severely affected."

The institute's list of the 30 worst polluted places in the world follows:

Africa
Kabwe, Zambia
Dandora Dumpsite, Kenya

China
Wanshan, China
Tianying, China
Huaxi, China
Lanzhou, China

Linfen, China
Urumqi, China

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Chita, Russia
Norilsk, Russia
Rudnaya
Pristan/Dalneg'sk, Russia
Bratsk, Russia
Chernobyl, Ukraine
Mailuu-Suu, Kyrgyzstan
Dzerzhinsk, Russia
Sumgayit, Azerbaijan
Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kazakhstan
Magnitogorsk, Russia

Latin America and the Caribbean

Huancav'lca Peru
La Oroya, Peru
Haina, Dominican Republic
Oriente, Ecuador
Mexico City, Mexico
Matanza-Riachuelo, River Basin, Argentina

South Asia

Sukinda, India
Hazarib'g, Bangladesh
Ranipet, India
Mahad Industrial Estate, India
Vapi, Gujarat, India

Southeast Asia

Meycauayan City and Marilao, Philippines

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