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DENR

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DENR budget, manpower not enough to save environment

By Revin Mikhael D. Ochave
Reporter

THE head of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Thursday said the agency lacks the budget and manpower needed to mitigate the impact of climate change and boost environmental protection efforts across the country.

“Unfortunately, the way we are set up is that the fiscal space is very tight... The DENR is in charge of 15 million hectares of classified forest lands. We are also in charge of so many thousands of hectares of coastal areas,” Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Y. Loyzaga said in a press conference during the Mindanao leg of the DENR’s 2023 multi-stakeholder forum in Cagayan de Oro City.

“We cannot, at the level of budget at this point and the human resources available, do an adequate job of protecting all of our ecosystems,” she said in mixed English and Filipino.

“The reality is that there is inadequate resources to finance

what are the impacts already known to the Philippines in terms of climate change,” she added.

The DENR has a budget of P23.29 billion this year, based on the 2023 General Appropriations Act signed by President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. on Dec. 16. The department’s 2023 budget is lower than the P25.4 billion allocated in 2022.

Nonetheless, Ms. Loyzaga said she is banking on collaboration with the private sector, civic groups, and international partners to address the myriad and persistent issues relating to environmental protection and the climate crisis.

“It is a combination of legislation, some budgeting innovation in terms of the government and bringing in the different stakeholders to do their share in working with us in terms of the preservation, conservation, restoration, and regeneration,” Ms. Loyzaga said.

BALANCE

During the forum, Ateneo de Davao University President Joel E. Tabora underscored the role of the DENR in balancing environ-

mental protection with economic development through resource management.

“The DENR cannot just be a government agency to exploit the natural resources of the Philippines in favor of the economy and of the private interests that drive this. The DENR must be the protector of the environment,” said Mr. Tabora, who lamented the seeming failure of government to listen to the public’s voice.

“They should make sure that society and the planet are not killed by the vicious technocratic paradigm driving the economy. They must be guided by voices of people on the ground, in local government units or in the regions,” he added.

Miguel A. Dominguez, Alsons Aquaculture Corp. director, urged the National Government to boost efforts in promoting food self-sufficiency and to evaluate coastal resources to further develop the local aquaculture industry.

“We must stop relying on imports. There has to be co-management between the local governments and the community themselves. The govern-

ment must get out of their silos and start looking at these resources to encourage more self-sufficiency and food production that would enable the Filipino to have better food security,” Mr. Dominguez said.

Ian Valentin U. Sermonia, Siargao Tourist Operators Association president, pressed the DENR to beef up its waste management awareness campaigns and promote ecotourism for a more sustainable industry.

“Increase in tourism also means an increase in waste,” said Mr. Sermonia.

Ms. Loyzaga said the DENR is bent on adopting a multi-stakeholder approach to the sector’s concerns.

“We at the DENR firmly believe that addressing issues pertaining to the environment and our country’s natural resources needs a comprehensive approach and multi-stakeholder partnerships for evidence-informed, inclusive, and adaptive leadership,” she added.

The Mindanao forum follows similar multi-stakeholder discussions held in Luzon and the Visayas.



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DENR chief highlights partnerships to address environmental concerns

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

[@jonlmayuga](#)

CAGAYANDE ORO CITY—Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga has underscored the need for a comprehensive approach and multi-stakeholder partnerships for evidence-based, inclusive, and adaptive leadership to address the issues confronting the country's environment and natural resources.

Speaking during the opening ceremony of a 2-day forum organized by the DENR at the Luxe Hotel in Cagayan de Oro City on Thursday, Loyzaga said continued dialogues are needed to bolster cooperation and understanding to overcome the challenges of coherence and implementation.

"As you may know, the DENR does these multi-stakeholder consultations because partnerships are key to delivering on our commitments and the work we do at the Department," Loyzaga pointed out.

Around 400 national and local government officials, business leaders, academe and scientific community, members of civil society organizations and community-based groups took part in the two-day Mindanao-wide dialogue.

The official began her welcome remark by borrowing a quote from President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.: "There is no question that the preservation of the environment is the preservation of life. If we cannot mitigate climate change, all our plans for the economy, all our plans for the future will be for naught."

Towards a green and blue economy Loyzaga, President Marcos, alter ego in the DENR, highlighted the present administration's agenda, particularly on the creation of green jobs by pursuing a green and blue economy and establishing liveable and sustainable communities.

She said such an agenda had guided the DENR in achieving better pathways to conserve, protect, manage, restore, and regenerate the country's environment and natural resources; and manage risk and build resilience using the ridge-to-reef approach.

agency mandated to manage the country's natural wealth continues to expand partnerships, they will also strive to deepen engagement with the different stakeholders.

She also underscored the critical role local government units (LGUs) play in building resilient communities and efficient use and conservation of natural resources.

Multiple challenges, opportunities

LOYZAGA said the Mindanao region is faced with many challenges, but nevertheless, said it is rife with opportunities.

"If we work together—the government, the private sector, civil society, academe, development partners, and the media—Mindanao's potential today can be unlocked," she said.

Loyzaga is optimistic that the multi-stakeholder dialogue will provide an opportunity to develop initial strategies, which must be followed through with a very extensive consultation process on how to accelerate development in the region.

Localized, contextualized approach

LOYZAGA said the diversity in the Mindanao region requires a localized and contextualized approach and vowed to hold extensive consultation with local actors across all interventions at all stages.

"The Department stands by the principle of common but differentiated responsibility in terms of degradation and we acknowledge that some bear more responsibility than others in our pursuit of development," she said, expressing hope that close collaboration and partnership can yield the most significant results.

"This synergy will generate new capacity for everyone to protect, restore, and enhance our rich but threatened ecosystems," she said.

In his keynote message, Cagayan de Oro City Second District Rep. Rufus Rodriguez lauded the initiative of the DENR in holding the multi-stakeholder dialogue, saying the discussion in the forum is an essential contribution to the identification of strategies and priority actions of the DENR.



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Loyzaga said the Mindanao Multi-Stakeholder Forum, is an opportunity to gather both evidence and expertise to support the administration's priorities for economic recovery, climate-resilient and inclusive development and a just transition towards the green and blue economy.

'No perfect solution'

"THERE isn't a perfect approach or solution to tackling the environmental challenges we face. However, with everyone's support and collaboration, together we will be able to craft adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable development pathways built on strategic partnerships and sound science," she said.

The DENR chief said while the

He also noted that such widely-participated multi-stakeholder dialogue was a first in Mindanao.

During the plenary, Forester Tommy T. Valdez, former National Council President of the Society of Filipino Foresters Inc., discussed about sustainable forest management, while Dennis Joseph I. Salvador, executive director of the Philippine Eagle Foundation discussed Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation Initiatives and Challenges.

Maria Esterluna Santos Canoy, executive director of the Kitanglad Integrated NGO Inc., talked about the lessons learned on Environmental Natural Resources Management: Indigenous People's Experience.



DENR undersecretary with expertise in

water mgmt likely to lead WRMO

AN undersecretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) with expertise and competence in water resource management will lead the soon-to-be-created Water Resource Management Office (WRMO), Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said.

Asked by reporters during the DENR's Multi-Stakeholders' Dialogue-Mindanao Leg in Cagayan de Oro City on Thursday, Loyzaga said there is no need and there will be no new positions or new undersecretary to be appointed to handle the WRO.

"The executive order is being finalized. There will be no new undersecretary. The mandate will fall under the mandate of one of the

undersecretaries. We're very much aware of the streamlining that is to happen. Rest assured that the one who will be assigned knows what he is doing or she is doing. So that person should be an expert and have a scientific background on water resource management and know climate change," Loyzaga explained.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has approved a proposal seeking to establish a new office under the DENR to ensure a sufficient water supply for the country.

The Philippines has numerous water bodies that overlap functions and mandates.

An attached agency of the DENR, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) is one of the many water

bodies that regulate water resources.

Also under the DENR are the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA), the River Basin Control Office and Manila Bay Coordinating Office.

The DENR also has an oversight function over Marine Protected Areas and terrestrial or inland Protected Areas that wholly or partly covers watersheds, vast lakes and rivers, as well groundwater.

On the other hand, the Department of Agriculture (DA) has the Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM), as well as the National Irrigation Authority (NIA).

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) also regulate water distribution and approve applications for ground-

water extraction.

The Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) is another water regulatory body that regulates water distribution run and managed by local governments and local water utilities or providers.

Marcos vowed to strengthen the mandate of the WRMO to bring together the various water bodies with mandates over water to follow the overall plan, also stressing the importance of a roadmap for all water management agencies.

The various water bodies or agencies, including the new WRMO has to be cohesive in the sense that the recommendation of the management office must be followed, the President said. *Jonathan L. Mayuga*



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REGIONS

Tension in Sibuyan amid mining protest

CITY OF CALAPAN —Residents of Sibuyan Island in Romblon have barricaded the port of a mining company to stop the hauling of nickel ore. Anti-mining groups asked the national government to stop mineral extraction on the island. The police on Wednesday clashed with protesters who tried to block a truck from leaving the port. The company maintained it had secured the proper permits to operate. —STORY BY MADONNA T. VIOLA **AG**

Tension grips Sibuyan amid mining protest

Protesters barricade port to stop ore transport; firm says its operation in Romblon's San Fernando town covered by proper permits, clearances

By **Madonna T. Viola**
@mviolaINQ

CITY OF CALAPAN—Residents of Sibuyan Island in Romblon province continued to barricade the port of a local mining firm on Thursday to stop its trucks from hauling nickel ore as anti-mining groups asked the national government to stop mineral extraction on the island.

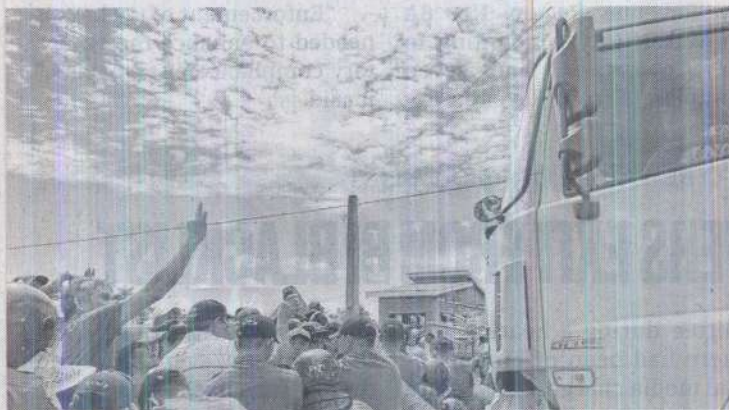
Police securing the area clashed on Wednesday with the protesters who formed a barricade to block a truck from leaving the port of Altai Philippines Mining Corp. (APMC), according to Elizabeth Ibañez, coordinator of environmental group Sibuyanons Against Mining.

In a statement, Ibañez said the company's truck tried to "force [its] way through the barricades" on Wednesday, prompting the protesters to stop it.

She said policemen in full protective gear arrived, resulting in a confrontation with the protesters who were questioning their presence in the area.

In a Viber message, Police Capt. Richard Obsid, information officer of the Romblon police, said policemen were sent to the port to maintain order.

Ibañez described the activities of APMC as "illegal" and must be "immediately investigated" by the municipal and provincial governments and all concerned agencies, alleging the company



NO WAY OUT Policemen and antimining groups clash on Wednesday as protesters form a human barricade to stop a truck hauling ore from leaving the port of a mining company on Sibuyan Island in San Fernando, Romblon. —PHOTO COURTESY OF **ALYANSA TIGIL MINA**

had no permits and documents for its mining activities.

Rodne Galicha, a resident of Sibuyan and executive director of the interfaith movement Living Laudato Si, said the national government "showed disrespect" to the local government and communities by allowing APMC to operate on the island.

"The [Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)] lacks a sense of urgency to protect one of our country's last ecological frontiers," Galicha said in a statement.

According to Ibañez, the protesters were demanding that the mining company show a barangay clearance, a municipal

business permit, a foreshore lease contract from the DENR and a permit from the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) to construct a private port.

Sibuyan is a crescent-shaped island and the second largest in an archipelago that comprises Romblon. The island is divided into three municipalities: Cajidiocan, Magdiwang and San Fernando.

In June last year, the municipal councils of the three Sibuyan towns issued a joint resolution "strongly opposing metallic large-scale mining" on the island.

These towns appealed to President Marcos and the DENR to declare Sibuyan Island free of large-scale metallic mining.

They also called on Environment Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga to immediately "review, halt, revoke and reject all mining agreements, operation and applications within the territorial jurisdiction" of Sibuyan.

Operation legal

But APMC, in a statement sent to the Inquirer on Monday, said its operation was covered by "pertinent permits and clearances" from the DENR, the PPA and the Bureau of Customs.

The company said its compliance with existing mining laws was "affirmed" by the San Fernando municipal government.

"APMC adheres to responsible mining practices that shall ensure environmental preservation and socioeconomic growth of the host community and nearby areas," it said.

In a separate statement on Sunday, the municipal government of San Fernando said Mayor Nanette Tansingco and Vice Mayor Domingo Marin had met with officials of the regional DENR in Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan) and had confirmed that APMC had "complete documents" issued by the national government, including an ore transport permit from the regional Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) and a mineral ore export permit from the MGB's central office. **INQ**



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Sibuyan Island must be protected

Of all the islands in the Philippines I have been to—from Itbayat to Sibutu—Sibuyan Island in Romblon is one of the most memorable, as it is one of the most beautiful.

My first visit to the island—located at the very heart of our archipelago—was in 2008, back when I was a medical student who was obsessed with climbing mountains (I still am), and back when it was the dream of every mountaineer to visit Sibuyan to climb Mount Guiting-Guiting (it still is). Joining a group of mountaineers, I took the 16-hour overnight Ro-Ro from Batangas Pier to Sibuyan via Odiongan. A day after arriving in the town of Magdiwang, we commenced the three-day climb, immersing in a beautiful forest and camping in the shadow of Mayo's Peak before crossing—with much trepidation and excitement—the famed “knife edge” ridge that led to the summit and earned for the mountain the distinction of being one of the most challenging in the country.

On Feb. 3, 2014—exactly nine years ago—I would return to the mountain we fondly call “G2,” this time to do a traverse from San Fernando to Magdiwang. That time around, I did it as a long dayhike, starting at 2 a.m. and finishing just before sundown; a hike made all the more special as I was guided by the late Tatay Remy Robiso—one of the longtime mountain guides in Guiting-Guiting, and a good friend to mountaineers.

Because of these memories, Mount Guiting-Guiting comes to mind when I think of Sibuyan. But there's so much more to the island than being a hiking destination. Owing to its distinctive geological history as an island that has been isolated from the rest of the Philippines since its formation, the island possesses incredible biodiversity despite



SECOND OPINION

GIDEON LASCO

having an area of just 449 square kilometers.

I managed to glimpse some of this diversity during my hikes, from *Nepenthes sibuyanensis*, the pitcher plant that only grows in the mountain (just one of the over 700 vascular plant species in the island), to the Philippine pygmy woodpecker (one of the estimated 140 bird species). In a recent study (Meneses, et al., 2022), scientists were able to identify 47 species of amphibians and reptiles, further cementing its place as the “Galápagos of Asia”—to say nothing of the marine biodiversity in the surrounding Sibuyan Sea.

This island paradise, however, is under grave threat today with the entrance of Altai Philippines Mining Corp., which, as per reports, is commencing mining exploration activities despite the alleged absence of the necessary barangay, municipal, and environmental (i.e., Department of Environment and Natural Resources) permits.

Keenly aware of their island's precariousness, Sibuyanons are vigorously opposed to the mining operations, and have bravely set up a human barricade to block and protest the intrusion of mining trucks.

Alas, despite its apparent anomalousness the mining company seems to have the police on their side. As a barangay official was quoted in an Inquirer report as saying: “The police could not even produce a written order, despite claiming that they were ordered to go to the barricades supposedly to maintain peace and order. But, there is no need for them to come as the residents are protesting peacefully. Besides, why were they in full protective gear? They even brought batons, seemingly wanting to provoke some sort of trouble.”

This is not the first time that Sibuyan has faced such an environmental threat; mining interests have long salivated over the island's rich mineral wealth (despite brave opposition from citizens and local officials)—and logging operations and agricultural croplands alike have long compromised the island's lowland forests. As notorious examples all over the country show—from Southern Palawan to Northeastern Mindanao—mining operations will only exacerbate a looming ecological disaster and cause irreparable environmental, economic, and social harm. The same examples will show that like Tallano gold, promises of wealth from mining are illusory.

Thus, I am echoing the Sibuyanons' call for the immediate suspension of mining exploration activities in their island—and an urgent investigation of how such activities started in the first place, without consent or consultation. Surely, a fair and objective impact assessment—social, environmental, medical—will reach the same conclusion that the locals have reached: Sibuyan must be protected from a mining project that will do nothing but harm the island and its people.

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TAO PO!

Ni BOBOT FRADEJÁS
(Email: bootsfra@yahoo.com)

Minahan ng Sibuyan

HINDI tungkol sa sibuyas ang aking paksa. Tungkol ito sa isla ng Sibuyan kung saan may nangyayaring ilegal na pagmimina ng nikel doon. Noong Linggo (Enero 28), nagbarikada ang mahigit 3,000 mamamayan sa isla ng Sibuyan sa lalawigan ng Romblon. Tutot sila sa ilegal na pagmimina umano ng Altai Phils. Mining Company sa bayan ng San Fernando sa islang ito.

Nababagabag ang mga mamamayan ng Sibuyan dahil binubutas ng isla nagmimina ang bundok at winawasak ang kapaligiran na, sa huli, pati ang pinagmumulan ng kanilang kabuhayan ay nawawasak tulad ng mga ilog at bukid. Bukod diyan, hindi nakakuha ng kaukulang mining permits at dokumento ang Altai Mining.

Ipinaliwanag ni Elizabeth Ibañez, coordinator ng Sibuyanons Against Mining, isang NGO na nagtataguyod sa pangangalaga ng isla, nais ng mga nagprotesta na magpakita ang Altai Mining ng hindi pekeng barangay clearance, municipal business permit, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) shore lease contract, at Philippine Ports Authority permit to construct a private port.

"Ang alam namin wala ang mga dokumentong nabanggit sa Altai Mining. Ilegal ang kanilang pagmimina sa isla. Kailangan matigil agad ang kanilang ilegal na aktibidad sa isla. Winawasak ng kanilang pagmimina sa San Fernando ang mismong isla," ani Ibañez.

Nanganamba sila lalo na nang dumating ang mga kapulisan upang "panatilihin ang kaayusan." Anila, hindi sila gagawa ng anumang hakbang na magbibigay ng dahilan sa kapulisan upang sila ay buwagin sa marahas na paraan. Ngunit nakahanda sila na ipaglaban ang kalikasan na matagal nang ginagahasa ng mga ganid sa pera at kapangyarihan para sa mga anak nila.

Pagmamay-ari ng makapangyarihang pamilya ng Gatchalian ang Altai Mining na may operasyon sa pagmimina ng nikel sa mayamang isla. Ayon sa kompanya, pumayag ang DENR na magmimina sila ng nikel at magluwas ng 50,000 tonelada metrika sa ibang bansa. Mataas ngayon ang halaga ng nikel na pandaigdigang pamilihan. Mukhang tataas pa dahil sa mahigpit na pangangailangan ng nikel sa industrialisasyon.

Senador si Sherwin at bagong hirang na kalihim ng DSWD si Rex, dating kongresista ng unang distrito ng Valenzuela City. Kasalukuyang alkalde ng Valenzuela City ang bunsong kapatid na si Wesley. Dating kinatawan si Wesley ng isang party list group sa Camara de Representante bago naging alkalde ngayon.

Lubhang makapangyarihan ang mga magkakapatid na pawang mga anak ng mangangalakal na si William Gatchalian, ang tinaguriang "plastic king" ng Filipinas. Isa sa mga pinakamalaking mangangalakal ng bansa ang ama. Makapangyarihan rin si William sapagkat magaling siyang dumikit sa mga pulitiko na nasa poder.

Pag-aari ng kanilang pamilya ang P35 bilyon na 315 ektarya na Waterfront Reclamation Project sa likod ng Quirino Grandstand sa Manila Bay. Tinawag ito na Horizon Manila at kapag natapos, tatampukan ito ng mga pasilidad sa turismo tulad ng hotel, mall at condo. Maliban sa industriya ng plastic, may interes ang mga Gatchalian sa hotel, turismo at iba pa. Sila ang may-ari ng Waterfront Manila Hotel, isa sa pangunahing hotel ngayon.

Sa Zambales, nagmimina ang isang kumpanyang Chinese na pag-aari umano ng isang Intsik na pugante sa batas dahil sa ilang kaso ng estafa. Pinigil ng Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) noong Disyembre ang Yinglong Steel Corporation na magluwas ng 50 tonelada metrika sa China dahil walang kaukulang permit.

Sa isang tweet, sinabi ng lider aktibista Rodney Galicia na peke umano ang mineral ore export permit na ipinakita ng Altai Mining sa gobyernong lokal ng Romblon. Hindi rin ipinakita ng kompanya ng tama ang halaga ng iluluwas at ibebenta sa Transmine Far East Ltd., ang kompanyang Intsik na nakabase sa Hong Kong.

NAHARANG ng namayapang Gina Lopez ang kontrobersyal na pagmimina sa isla ng Sibuyan at pagwasak sa kapaligiran nito noong siya ang unang kalihim ng DENR ng administrasyong Duterte noong 2016-2017. Binutas ang bundok at nilagyan ng kalsada ang isla kahit hindi kailangan. Naging paksa ng ilang documentary at tanging lathalain ng pambansa-mass media ang pagwasak sa isla.

Dahil mayaman ang isla sa yamang kabuhayan, ginapang ng mga korap na mga lider sa pumalit kay Gina Lopez na muling buksan ang pagmimina sa isla. Itinaon na abala ang mga mamamayan sa halalan ng 2019 nang muling buksan ang pagmimina sa isla.

Pati mga permit ay inilabas noong Kapaskuhan ng 2019. Hanggang natapos ang Pasko ay full blast na ang operasyon kung saan umulan ang kalangitan ng mga dambuhaling truck na panghakot ng miminahan ng kompanya. Nagising din ang mga tao ng isla nang may isang pier na tila kabute na tumubo sa kanilang isla. Garapalang minadali ito para ipamukha sa mga Sibuyanon na walang makakapigil sa operasyon nila.

Isa sa mga requirement ng pagmimina ang pagsang-ayon ng tao. Madali ito sa kanila. Sinamantala nila ang kahirapan at kamangmangan ng mga tao sa isyu. Umikot ang maraming pera sa isla. Hanggang ngayon, walang naririning kahit katiting o gaputok man na salita mula kay Budoy Madrona at Gobernador Otik Riano tungkol sa kontrobersyal na isyu. Nananatili silang bulag at pipi sa isyu. Pakiramdam ng mga Sibuyanon, "palangga ta kamo."

Ang banat ay nakasentro kay Nanette Tansiongco, ang alkalde ng San Fernando na nagkautal-utal sa pagpapaliwanag sa panayam sa kanya ni Kabayan Noli de Castro. Labat ng paliwanag niya ay labas sa ilong maliban sa inamin niya na siya, kasama mismo ang bise alkalde, ang pumunta sa sa Manila upang kumuha ng ore transport permit sa MGB. Nagmukhang abogado siya ng Altai Mining Co. dahil pilit niyang sinasabing legal ang pagmimina ng kompanya.

Matagal na naglalaway sa minahan ng Sibuyan ang grupo ni Budoy, Otik, at Nanette, ngunit hindi ipaprobahan ng nagdaang mga gobernador na totoong tuwid. Ngayon, pinayagan nina Otik Riano. Sa isang banda, naniniwala kami na walang kinalaman si Otik sa dahilang wala naman talaga siyang alam sa pamamahala. Ang masakit, si Budoy ay chairman ng Committee on Environment sa Camara de Representante.

Nakakatakot na kapag nalusutan nila ang Sibuyan, may dahilan upang imina ang isla ng Tablas na kasing yaman ng Sibuyan. Kaya istupido ang mungkahi ng isang nagmamangaling na opisyal na huwag makialam ang mga taong hindi residente ng isla. Marami na nagtangka sa isla ng Tablas pero malakas ang pagtutol ng mga mamamayan ng Odiangan kabilang ang Diocese ng Iglesia Filipina Independiente at mga kapatiran katulad ng OMEGANS. Matindi ang pagtutol nila sa kahit anong klaseng pagmimina sa Tablas kaya hindi sila nagtagumpay. Sa kasalukuyan, ang Odiangan Municipal Council ay nasa proseso ng pagpasa ng ordinansa sa 25 year Mining Moratorium sa pangamba na pasukia sila ng mga ganid na kompanya.

MGA SALITANG DAPAT TANDAAN: "Senility is not a crime. Dementia is a sickness. We understand when [Juan Ponce Enrile] made erratic statements on the Rome Statute or ICC." - Archie Mendoza, netizen

"Kinatawan si Boy Abunda ng nagdaang panahon, hindi ng kasalukuyan. Masakit man aminin, pero ang totoo ay laos na si Boy Abunda. Wala siyang kaugnayan, o relevance, sa ngayon at hinaharap. Iba naman at nandiyan si Christian Esguerra at Roy Mabasa sa mga maaaring pagpilian. Maaaring idagdag si Ogie Diaz kung magkakaroon ng sariling TV talk show." - PL, netizen

"Akala ba namin wala kang pakialam sa ICC o anuman gawin nito? You're obviously scared, Mr. Duterte." - Leila de Lima



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BIYERNES PEBRERO 3, 2023

Pagbarikada vs 'illegal mining' sa Romblon nabalot ng tensyon

NAUWI sa tensyon ang pag-sasagawa ng "human barricade" ng mga residente habang iprino-protesta ang anila'y iligal na aktibidad ng Altai Philippines Mining Company sa kanilang lugar sa Sibuyan Island, Romblon.

Nagkagirian ang mga pulis at environmental defenders, kabilang ang mga residente nang tangkain lumabas sa barikada ang ilang truck na kargado ng nickel ores.

Aminado si Elizabeth Ibañez, coordinator ng Sibuyanons against mining, na ikinagulat nila ang pagtulong ng mga pulis upang makalabas ang truck na magbibiyaha ng mga nickel ore.

Ayon kay Ibañez, walang permit ang Altai upang

makapag-operate ng pagmimina sa Sibuyan.

Enero 28 nang magsimulang magbarikada ang mga resident-eng kontra mining sa tapat ng itinatayong pier ng Altai sa Sitio Bato, Brgy. España, San Fernando, Sibuyan island.

Walang maipakitang barangay clearance, municipal business permit, DENR Foreshore Lease Contract at PPA permit para makapagtayo ng private port ang Altai Mining Philippines na pag-aari ng Gatchalians.

Sa kuha ng drone na pinost sa Facebook, makikitang malaki na ang nahuhukay ng Altai mining sa gilid ng bundok sa Sitio Bato.

Pinangangambahan na kapag



River worries Las Pinas Village

THE LAST MOHICAN



By MARIO FETALINO JR.

ALTHOUGH summer is first to come this year, a small village in Las Pinas City is very much concerned about the imminent arrival of the rainy season.

The wet periods usually start in the country as early as June but they can be felt at any moment nowadays due to the effects of climate change.

Residents of Woodridge Village in Pulang Lupa Dos are afraid flood could hit their community again once the rains are back.

Waist-deep rainwater flooded the low-lying area of the small subdivision when typhoon Paeng struck Metro Manila late last year, displacing many families.

Flooding in the area occurs when there's too much rainfall as the river beside the village swells. Instead of serving as an outlet, the swollen tributary pumps excess water into the enclave.

The matter was already referred to the local government and the village is awaiting response. There's a lot of hoping that Mayor Imelda Aguilar could give attention to the concern.

Meanwhile, residents in Bulacan are luckier with San Miguel Corporation (SMC) expecting its P2-billion Pasig River cleanup project to cross the one million metric tons threshold in silt and solid wastes removed, by next month.

SMC dredging teams are focusing their efforts on both ends of the river—the Manila Bay and Laguna Lake, where significant water flow restriction is known to occur.

SMC President and CEO Ramon S. Ang reported that with the company's ongoing cleanup, the Pasig River's flood-carrying capacity has significantly improved. From just two to three meters deep at the start of the project, completed sections now have depths of up to five to six meters.

Ang added that the target one million tons by February will be achieved just 20 months after the initiative was launched in July 2021, with the support of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and local government units.

Ang said the pace of its clean-up activities at the Pasig River is considerably

faster compared to its earlier project to clean up the Tullahan River, owing to its deployment of more heavy equipment and personnel.

SMC's Tullahan River cleanup, which removed some 1.12 million metric tons of silt and waste from sections of the river traversing Navotas, Caloocan, Malabon and Valenzuela, took a total of 27 months.

To date, SMC's cleanup teams have extracted a total of 927,198 metric tons of silt and waste from the Pasig River, with monthly targets now at more than 70,000 tons.

Apart from removing wastes and improving the flow and carrying capacity of the river to help mitigate flooding, navigability and safety for ferries and other vessels have also improved.

SMC is happy to note that the easing of restrictions, along with the additional personnel and equipment they were able to put on the ground, are now allowing the company to achieve its cleanup targets much faster.

"Hopefully, by the time the rainy season sets in later this year, our cities will feel the benefits of the Pasig River's larger carrying capacity, along with government's other flood mitigation and control programs," Ang said.

SMC's historic Pasig

River cleanup, said to be the largest such initiative to date by a single private enterprise, caught the attention of Japanese shipping giant NYK Line last year.

The firm, whose seafarers are mostly Filipino, supported the project via a \$1.5 million grant for the purchase of additional equipment. SMC has pegged the cost of its entire Pasig River clean-up at P2 billion, or close to \$ 37 million.

The increase in output from the Pasig River effort is also partly due to the addition of the San Juan River—a major tributary to the Pasig River—to the coverage area.

With a length of around 10 kilometers, the San Juan River emanates from Quezon City and passes through Manila, San Juan, and Mandaluyong, leading to the Pasig River.

Compared to SMC's earlier Tullahan River cleanup, the positive impacts of its Pasig River effort will be felt in even more areas. It will benefit not just people from Metro Manila, but also many who are living in Rizal, all the way to Laguna de Bay.

Apart from increasing the river's capacity to receive floodwaters, the cleanup will also reduce peak water flows that normally go to the Laguna Lake, via the Manggahan Floodway.

See page 10

RIVER

FROM PAGE 4

In many instances, areas near the Laguna Lake experience flooding during heavy rainfall or typhoons, because of heavy siltation, which causes the lake to

overflow.

Siltation of major tributaries, apart from pollution, is among the major challenges that need to be addressed to better manage flooding.

Meanwhile, at the request of the local government

units in Bulacan, San Miguel has also started cleanup efforts at the Meycauayan River, one of the tributaries that make up the Marilao-Meycauayan-Obando-River System (MMORS).

This is also to help address flooding in the prov-

ince. To date, a total of 147,661 metric tons of silt and waste have been removed from this area.

Good job SMC.

For comments, please call or text 09569012811 or email lastmohican2004@yahoo.com



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Editorial

Air at plastic pollution hindi birong problema

MABIGAT ang problema sa air at plastic pollution. Sa air pollution, delikado ang kalusugan ng mamamayan sapagkat lason ang kanilang nalalanghap. Sa plastic pollution, pinarurumi ang karagatan at iba pang pinagkukunan ng tubig at apektado rin ang climate change.

Sa kasagsagan ng pandemya noong 2020 hanggang 2021, bumaba ang lebel ng air pollution sa Metro Manila at iba pang kalapit lungsod. Nabawasan ang air pollution dahil walang yumayaot na mga pampublikong sasakyan — bus, dyipni at taxi. Maraming pabrika rin ang natigil ang operasyon.

Pero ngayong nagbabalik na sa normal ang buhay dahil sa unti-unting pagbaba ng kaso ng COVID-19, nagbabalik na rin sa dati ang malubhang kalagayan ng hangin sa Metro Manila. Lalong lumala ang problema sa air pollution. Sa kasalukuyan, hindi na matanaw ang Sierra Madre dahil sa makapal na usok na nakabalot sa Metro Manila. Ang usok na ito ay may taglay na

Larry Goy '23
2.3.23



nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) at PM_{2.5}. Ang dalawang pollutants na ito ang dahilan ng severe cardiovascular at respiratory health illnesses. Sa pag-aaral, ang exposure sa pollutants na ito ay nagpapahina sa natural na depensa ng katawan laban sa COVID-19.

Sa plastic pollution, ang paghihigpit sa paggamit ng plastic ay nararapat ipatupad. Dati, mayroong kautusan ang bawat lungsod na bawal ang paggamit ng anumang plastic — kutsara, tinidor, tray, sa mga restaurant. Pero ngayon, tila balik na sa dating gawi. Marami nang basurang plastic ang nakokolekta sa mga fastfood chain. Patuloy pa rin ang paggamit sa single-use plastic. Ang mga plastic materials na ito ang humahantong sa mga estero, sapa, ilog at deretso sa dagat. Mapo-pollute ang karagatan. Namamatay ang mga isda. Ang mga whale shark, napagkakamalang pagkain ang mga plastic na kanilang ikinamamatay.

Sinabi ni President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. noong Hulyo 2022 na tututukan ng kanyang administrasyon ang problema sa plastic pollution kung saan pangtatlo ang Pilipinas sa mga bansang nagtatapon ng plastic sa karagatan. Aniya, lilinisin ang mga kalat at soslusyunan ang plastic pollution. Mukhang nalimutan niya ito. Atasan niya ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Sa air pollution, ipatupad na lahat nang mga lumang sasakyan ay bawal nang yumaot sapagkat ang mga ito ang nagbubuga nang nakamamatay na usok. Ituloy ng DENR ang kampanya sa smoke belching. Ipatupad ang Clean Air Act of 1999.



Kidapawan gets Covid waste disposal facility

THE city government of Kidapawan in North Cotabato has received a Covid-19 waste storage and disposal facility from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), an official said on Wednesday.

Mayor Jose Paolo Evangelista said the facility, worth P6.5 million, was turned over on Tuesday afternoon to the local government by DENR Region 12 officials led by Kristeen Kreem Villanueva, DENR-12 chief of the Chemical Hazardous Waste Materials Section-Environmental Management Bureau.

"It is a preliminary disinfection and storage facility for collected Covid-19-related wastes for this city," Evangelista said.

The facility is a 20-footer container van that can haul 4.5 metric tons of Covid-19 waste materials.

It has 63 yellow bins with rollers and 3,150 yellow trash bags mounted on wood platforms and with steel framing for support to seal infectious wastes.

Villanueva said the storage facility is designed to properly handle and control the disposal of infectious wastes and materials that could transmit illnesses.

Evangelista assured to properly utilize the facility to achieve its objective for public safety, including all frontliners from hospitals and medical facilities here.

FRANZ R. SUMANGIL



Salceda says PHL salt industry 'is not dead'

By JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ

[@joveemarie](#)

ALbay Rep. and House Committee on Agriculture and Food Vice Chairman Joey Sarte Salceda on Thursday said that the country's salt industry, which has declined significantly from its peak in the '70s, "is the easiest agricultural industry to revive."

Salceda stressed he believes that the salt industry is not dead.

"But it's a bonsai industry. We try to cut it with so many self-imposed regulations. As an extremely low-margin business, the salt sector has been stunted by regulation," Salceda said.

But the lawmaker said Congress should repeal the requirement that salt makers must iodize their salt.

"We can keep the requirement that food manufacturers have to use iodized salt. We can require iodization in all school canteens. But we should offer people the choice over their nutrition, not require everybody at the expense of our domestic salt sector," Salceda, also chairman of the House ways and means committee, added.

"We now import 93 percent of our salt. That is in a country with one of the longest coastlines in the world. Shameful is one way to describe it. Stupid is another way," he said.

According to Salceda, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources should simply create a list of areas where salt making could be viable without any significant environmental restrictions.

"Salt making is one of the less environmentally destructive sectors. We can also do a negative list of areas that are not suitable for salt making due to environmental risks. If you don't fall into either list, that's the only time you need to apply for an environmental clearance," he said.

"That list of suitable locations, mind you, is required of the DENR under the ASIN law, or RA 8172," Salceda added.

Salceda also wants salt for export to be free from the iodization requirement under Republic Act No. 8172.

"We have artisanal salts. Tibuokin Bohol is one of the best in the world. And yet, they cannot even sell domestically—because they can't iodize. Even when imported Himalayan salts freely get sold in the market. This is frankly ridiculous," he said.

Salceda said he would be pushing for amendments to Republic Act No. 8172.

"The problem right now is that RA 8172 amendments are referred to the committee on health, which means the industry considerations and food security concerns are secondary to the health discussions. But I will try to convince Chairman [Ciriaco] Gato [Jr.] and my colleagues that imported salt is far more difficult to regulate for health reasons. We don't know how they make it."

"RA 8172 I think exceeded its bounds in that it presumed the State should have the ultimate say about a person's health choices," Salceda appointed out. "We have stunted a once-thriving industry as a result of such a presumption."



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SMC todo-kayod sa Pasig River cleanup

Aabot na sa isang milyong tonelada ngayong Pebrero ang mga basurang nahalukay mula sa Pasig River kaugnay ng isinasagawang cleanup project ng San Miguel Corporation (SMC).

Ayon kay SMC president at chief executive officer Ramon S. Ang, dahil sa kanilang cleanup driver ay bumuti ang kondisyon ng Pasig River matapos makalkal ang kalaliman nito mula sa mga burak at basurang naipon ng matalagal na panahon.

Makakamit aniya ng

SMC ang target na isang milyong tonelada ngayong Pebrero makalipas ang 20 buwan lamang na paglilinis sa Pasig River na sinimulan noong Hulyo 2021, sa suporta ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources at ng mga lokal na pamahalaan.

"Hopefully, by the time the rainy season sets in later this year, our cities will feel the benefits of the Pasig River's larger carrying capacity, along with government's other flood mitigation and control programs," wika ni Ang.



Sen. Villar moves to label Mulanay watershed as PA

By BUTCH FERNANDEZ [@butchBM](#)

SEN. Cynthia Villar, asserting the urgent need to save the endangered Mulanay Watershed Forest Reserve in Quezon Province, asked Congress to urgently pass a law declaring it as a protected area (PA).

Recognizing the richness of its biological resources—both flora and fauna—that are native and distinct to the Mulanay Watershed Forest Reserve (MWFR), as well as their aesthetic and ecological importance, Villar promptly filed Senate Bill 1691 to declare the watershed as a PA to be known as the San Francisco Protected Landscape (SFPL).

The senator asserted that the Mulanay Reserve should remain as a PA given its "rich and lush forest vegetation that serves as habitat of various wildlife, including threatened flora and fauna species."

With its total area of 29.6 hectares, she cited its rich biodiversity of flora and fauna include those in the updated national lists of threatened Philippine plants and animals and their respective categories.

Moreover, the senator acknowledged a Biodiversity Monitoring System Report had identified 83 floral species and 59 faunal species in the area, three flora and two fauna species of which were classified as endangered.



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Protect Quezon watershed – Villar

BY JAVIER JOE ISMAEL

IN recognition of the richness of its biological resources — both flora and fauna — that are native and distinct to the Mulanay Watershed Forest Reserve (MWFR) as well as their aesthetic and ecological importance, Sen. Cynthia Villar wants to declare it a "protected area."

In filing Senate Bill 1691, Villar, chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment

and Natural Resources, recommended that MWFR should be known as San Francisco Protect-

ed Landscape.

She said MWFR should be a protected area because of its rich and lush forest vegetation that serves as habitat of various wildlife, including threatened flora and fauna species.

The MWFR has a total area of 29.6 hectares.

Its flora and fauna include those on updated national lists of threatened Philippine plants and animals and their respective categories.

The Biodiversity Monitoring

System Report identified 83 floral species and 59 fauna species in the area, three flora and two fauna species of which were classified as endangered.

The senator noted that the MWFR also provides a clean source of water for the people that can be used domestically and agriculturally.

In 2021, MWFR was subjected by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to the Protected Area Suitability Assessment (PASA) to determine

its suitability to be legislated as a protected area under the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act.

Through the PASA, it was determined that the MWFR is suitable to be declared a protected area under the category of protected landscape.

It was then renamed as "San Francisco Protected Landscape" through legislation.

"As such, the State shall ensure the conservation, protection, management and re-

habilitation of the area. It is likewise recognized that effective administration of this area is possible only through cooperation among the national government, LGUs (local government units), concerned NGOs (nongovernment organizations), private entities and local communities," Villar said.

"The use and enjoyment of this area must be consistent with the principles of biological diversity and sustainable development," she added.



House panel OKs bill protecting waters off Kalayaan islands

The natural resources committee of the House of Representatives has approved a measure that aims to protect and preserve the country's waters off the Kalayaan Group of Islands in the West Philippine Sea.

The panel headed by Rep. Elpidio Barzaga Jr. of Cavite's fourth district approved House Bill 6373, authored by Palawan Rep. Edward Hagedorn for the "environmental protection" of Kalayaan Island Group and Scarborough Shoal (KIGSS) in the disputed seas.

HB 6373 is officially more known as the KIGSS - Marine Protected Area Bill. It will "prohibit and penalize" certain acts and activities within the waters of the three-nautical mile area to guarantee protection of marine habitat.

However, traditional fishing will still be allowed as it is considered generally harmless to the marine ecosystem.

With this latest development, the Barzaga committee will now be preparing its report before transmitting such proposed measure to the House plenary for deliberation and debate.

The measure aims to declare all low-tide elevations and high-tide features, and an area of three nautical miles around the Kalayaan Island Group and Scarborough Shoal as a "Marine Protected Area."

"It is my sincerest belief that pushing for environmental protection for the KIG and Scarborough Shoal is a common ground that every Filipino could rally behind," the Palawan congressman, who also once served as mayor of its capital Puerto Princesa, said.

"We do hope that this environmental lens would be likewise used by other coastal states surrounding the West Philippine Sea and the South China Sea to promote cooperation and environmental protection for greater peace, stability and prosperity for the entire region," he said.

Rep. Eduardo Villanueva of party-list Citizens Battle Against Corruption, who sponsored the bill and pre-

sented it in Hagedorn's behalf, said it is "focused on the protection of the marine environment" of the KIGSS, and not "disputes" in the WPS.

"We cannot afford not to act because the habitat of marine life in our waters, which benefits not only the Philippines but also adjacent countries like China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei, is being destroyed," he said.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines also expressed its full support for HB 6373.

Hagedorn was grateful for the "strong support" given by Speaker Martin Romualdez, Barzaga for "ably leading the hearing and pushing for its approval" as well as fellow Palawan Rep. Jose Alvarez of the second district who "also showed his support."

"But a most special thanks should be given to CIBAC Representative (Brother Eddie) Villanueva who, in my absence during the hearing, stood in my behalf as the sponsor of the bill. He brilliantly presented and explained to the body the very essence of the bill," Hagedorn said.

"His (Villanueva's) inclusion of biblical passages highlighted the overarching and transcendental importance of protecting our natural resources in the KIG and Scarborough Shoal," Hagedorn added.

Villanueva cited a study by the UP-Marine Science Institute in 2019 which found out that coral reefs in Kalayaan Islands - particularly in the Pag-asa Island, Panata Island and Sabina Shoal - were damaged by alleged illegal activities such as blast fishing.

The bill is an operationalization of proposals from local and international marine experts to declare the surrounding waters of the KIG and Scarborough Shoal as protected areas.

A 2014 study by the Asian Development Bank showed that the Kalayaan Islands comprise 30 percent of the country's total coral reefs and serve as breeding ground of fishes and marine species in the country. - Delon Porcalla



Regional Updates

Soccsksargen inks deals vs wildlife sales

THE DEPARTMENT of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Soccsksargen regional office has signed agreements with air and sea port authorities to beef up border checks against wildlife trafficking.

The Mindanao State University (MSU), meanwhile, has launched its Center for Biodiversity Studies in General Santos City, which will do research on the region's three protected areas.

Soccsksargen in southern Philippines covers the provinces of South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani, and General Santos City. Its protected areas are Mt. Matutum, Allah Valley Watershed Forest Reserve and Sarangani Bay.

Under the DENR partnership with the Philippine Ports Authority and Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines, wildlife traffic monitoring units will be stationed at ports to enforce the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act of 2002.

Reactivating these monitoring units particularly in General Santos City's sea and air ports is expected to boost wildlife protection, South Cotabato Provincial Environment Officer Radzak B. Sinarimbo said.

Under the law, only legally acquired and documented wild animals can enter and leave the country.

The Environment department also said the MSU would identify and protect critically endangered plant and animal species and conserve terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

The center will also look into issues affecting Soccsksargen's indigenous flora and fauna, especially those in protected areas. — MSJ



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REMATE OPINION

ANG INYONG LINGKOD

NI DR. HILDA C. ONG

AYON sa Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), magiging mas mainit ang darating na summer season sa bansa at sa buong mundo ngayong taong 2023 dahil epekto na ang El Niño phenomenon.

Panay na ang pagpapaalala ng pamunuan ng National Water Resources Board (NWRB) sa pangunguna ni executive director Dr. Sevilla David, Jr. sa mga nasa National Capital Region at Greater Manila Area para sa

tama at responsableng paggamit ng tubig.

Sa panahong ng tag-init, mas mataas ang pangangailangan sa malinis na tubig kung saan nasa dalawang concessionaires sa NCR at GMA ang namamahala – ang Manila Water Company at ang Maynilad Water Services.

Sa pinakahuling pagsilip natin sa antas ng tubig sa Angat dam, nasa 213.47 meters, nalagpasan pa rin ang normal operation level nito na 212 meters.

Pero sa tantiya naman ng

MAGHINAY-HINAY SA PAGGAMIT NG TUBIG, PANAWAGAN NG NWRB

NWRB, sasapat ang tubig sa Angat dam sa kabuuan ng summer season sa bansa.

May El Niño man o wala dapat pa rin naman tayong responsable sa paggamit ng malinis na tubig. Ika nga ni Ed David, bahagi dapat ito ng ating mga moral value, ang pagmamalasakit sa kalikasan at kapaligiran.

Sinasabayan naman ng pagseseguro ng Manila Water at Maynilad Water na malaki na ang nababawas sa nasasayang na tubig. Tayo rin kasing mga kostumer ang siyang nagbabayad ng water losses ng dalawang water concessionaires na ito kaya dapat kapag may nakita tayong tagas ng tubig sa mga kalsada ipagbigay-alam kaagad ito sa Barangay para

maitawag sa nabanggit kong water companies.

Dapat din talaga tayong maghinay-hinay sa paggamit ng tubig dahil pinayagan ng Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) ang pagtataas sa singil matapos ang isinagawang periodic assessment kada limang taon alinsunod sa kasunduan.

Nasa P13.00 hanggang P14.00 per cubic meter ang pagtataas ng Maynilad Water na hahati-hatiin sa loob ng limang taon o mula taong 2023 hanggang 2027. Ngayong taon ay karagdagang P3.29, magiging P6.26 sa taong 2024, P2.12 sa 2025, .84 centavos sa 2026 at .80 centavos sa 2027.

Habang ang Manila Water naman nasa P20.00 na hahatiin sa P8.04 ngayong 2023, P5 (2024), P3.25

(2025), P1.91 (2026), at P1.05 (2027).

Kapwa ilalaan ng dalawang water concessionaires ang karagdagang singil sa capital investment.

Magpapatuloy naman ang NWRB at mga kasama sa technical working committee na magbantay sa magiging takbo ng panahon at klima sa bansa ngayong taon.



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Kaliwa Dam project done by 2026, MWSS says

By JOE PRIELA

The ₱12.2-billion New Centennial Water Source Kaliwa Dam Project will be completed by mid-2026, and will be able to supply water to Metro Manila households and nearby areas by early 2027, the Metropolitan Water Sewerage System (MWSS) said.

In a forum on Wednesday, Feb. 1, MWSS Administrator Leonor Cleofas said China Energy Engineering Corporation (CEEC), which is undertaking the project, has reported the overall project accomplishment at 21 percent.

"There are two major components of the project, which are the tunneling and the construction of the dam. It has started with tunneling and it will be complete by the middle of 2026. At the same time, if the validation of the settlement of 46 families is accomplished, the dam will also begin and MWSS is endeavoring to complete the dam by 2026," Cleofas said.

The Kaliwa Dam project is a

63-meter-high reservoir that will hold an initial discharge capacity of 600 million liters per day, intended to supply Metro Manila, as well as nearby areas that only depend on two dams in Bulacan.

A Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) is being used for the 28-kilometer-long conveyance tunnel that will stretch from Teresa Rizal to General Nakar, Quezon Province. It will pass through Barangay Magsaysay in Infanta, Quezon as well as several barangays in Baras, Morong, Tanay, and Teresa towns in Rizal. At its deepest, the TBM will be 500 meters below the Sierra Madre Mountains.

The excavation at the tunnel outlet in Teresa started on Dec. 7 last year.

MWSS said the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) already issued a Certification Pre-condition.

In September last year, MWSS got the approval of the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources-Protected Area Management Board

(DENR-PAMB) for clearances as prerequisite for a Special-Use Agreement on Protected Areas.

The construction of the dam was put on hold last year due to the protest of the indigenous peoples (IPs) in the area, particularly the Dumagat-Remontado communities in Rizal and Quezon provinces, who asserted that the dam will be encroaching on their ancestral land.

The project will also be passing through three watershed areas.

MWSS said that it has forged mutually beneficial agreements with IPs, local government units, and the DENR to meet all explicit conditions under the environmental compliance certificate, laying a groundwork for enduring relationships with the communities.

A comprehensive and inclusive socio-economic development plan was developed to ensure that those who are going to be affected by the project can participate and contribute to the development of their communities.



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COMMONSENSE

MARICHU A. VILLANUEVA

Whole of government must fight smuggling

Government authorities credit much the military's succeeding to reduce the communist ranks in the countryside to the "whole of government" approach. If this is the solution that can be done, will somebody issue the same call to action to put a lid — once and for all — to the unabated smuggling activities in our country?



We finally got to hear this from Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) general manager Jay Daniel Santiago who issued this call to action against smuggling during our *Kapihan sa Manila Bay* news forum last Wednesday. A lawyer by profession, the PPA chief is among the heads of the various government agencies enforcing border control measures in all the entry and exit points in our entire country.

This is not to mention law enforcement arms of the government that also run after smugglers from the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Philippine Coast Guard, among them.

The PPA, along with the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina), including the supervision of all airports all around the country are all border control agencies under the Department of Transportation (DOTr). Santiago clarified though it is not the mandate of the PPA to go after smuggling. However, he urged, guarding against such kind of illegal entry and exit of goods and people must be "a whole of government" work on daily basis.

As of last count, there are 130 seaport terminals all around the Philippines.

According to Santiago, the PPA supervises all of these seaport terminals from the tip of the country in Basco, Batanes up north all the way down to the southern borders of the Philippine sea in Sulu and Tawi-tawi. Likewise, Santiago cited, the PPA keeps in check all entries and exit of goods and people from the smallest one in Basco seaport to the biggest ones like the Manila International Container Terminal (MICT) in the South Harbor and in North Harbor; the Batangas Port Terminal; the Port of Matnog in Sorsogon; Tagbilaran seaport in Bohol; Cebu seaports for the Visayas; Cagayan de Oro City and Davao as major seaports in Mindanao.

For enforcement functions, the PPA chief cited, the agency has police powers. The PPA employs 140 or so uniformed port policemen, each carrying body camera and beefed up by private security guards as the "force multipliers" to secure both passengers and cargoes going in and out in all seaport terminals.

"Because the anti-smuggling campaign is not just the monopoly by the Bureau of Customs but they need the help of the entire government," Santiago pointed out.

As of last count, there are 130 seaport terminals all around the Philippines.

Aside from the Customs Bureau, Santiago pointed to other "frontline" government agencies that are supposed to be watchdogs against smuggling activities. These include the Department of Agriculture (DA), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Incidentally, these are the same government agencies comprising the nine PPA Board members which also include the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA); and a private sector representative.

Santiago averred the PPA has been doing its share in "whole-of-government" approach to combat smuggling, especially of agricultural products. Through the aid of modern technology, the PPA chief explained, the agency has been steeped into digitalization programs to improve efficiency of government services and remove areas of corruption. One such PPA program is the now the controversial Trusted Operator Program-Container Registry and Monitoring System (TOP-CRMS).

The program though is "not designed as anti-smuggling," Santiago admitted. However, he believes this program has the capability to generate information that could help go after and deter smuggling activities.

Approved in June, 2021 by the PPA Board under Administrative Order 04, the TOP-CRMS program got underway. In competitive public bidding, a local entity Shiptech Solutions Corp. won and was awarded in March last year the P900 million technology supply contract to implement the TOP-CRMS. Subsequently, the nine-man PPA Board — chaired then by DOTr Secretary Arturo Tugade and co-chaired by the PPA chief — gave the go-signal for the drafting of the operational guidelines to implement the TOP-CRMS program at no cash outlay from the government.

As designed, Santiago explained, the TOP-CRMS will install and use a digital tracking system to exactly locate the whereabouts of the container cargoes in real time. Through this digital technology tracking system, cargo diversion to another warehouse, one of the notorious schemes of smugglers, will be quickly and easily detected.

Hence, this will enable government authorities to identify and prosecute suspected smugglers. Furthermore, Santiago added, this will prevent the incidence of losses and eliminate the existing container security deposit, a cost imposed to importers and shippers ranging from amounts of P10,000 up to P30,000 per container.

The TOP-CRMS will charge a much lesser amount and standard fee of P980 for container monitoring. As such, Santiago calculated, importers would spend just P1.08 billion, or 95 percent less, for the container deposit of 1.1 million containers per year that go through the PPA.

However, when the TOP-CRMS suddenly become too controversial, the PPA Board decided in their monthly meeting held last Jan. 25 to defer action on it. Five of the PPA Board, or majority members voted to defer it pending "thorough study" purportedly upon instructions from Malacanang. This came after big business groups have joined forces together in publishing an "open letter" asking President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. to suspend the implementation and look into the questioned TOP-CRMS program.

Though communists and left-leaning groups strongly resist it, the National Task Force to End Local Armed Conflict continues with success in its "whole of government" approach against insurgency-infested areas. But those a — holes in government apparently in cahoots, or in bed with smugglers are giving the same "hard push back" on this PPA program.

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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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National scientist, former DENR secretary Angel Alcalá, 94

DUMAGUETE CITY (PNA) – National Scientist Dr. Angel C. Alcalá passed away on Wednesday afternoon, Feb. 1, in a hospital here, at the age of 94.

Alcalá, considered the “father” of marine protected areas (MPAs), was the vice chairperson of the Silliman University Board of Trustees at the time of his death.

He was appointed as the ninth president of Silliman University in 1991 but served only for two years after he became the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary during the administration of then President Fidel Ramos.

Former President Benigno S. Aquino III,

in 2014, conferred on Alcalá the Order of National Scientist of the Philippines award in the field of Biological Sciences for his research work on amphibians and reptiles, marine biodiversity, and marine protected areas.

Alcalá also served as the Commission on Higher Education chairperson until 1999.

He established the Silliman University Marine Laboratory in 1974, which is now known as the Institute of Environmental and Marine Sciences.

The national scientist founded the Angelo King Center for Research and Environmental Management at Silliman

University.

In 1992, he was a recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award for “pioneering scientific leadership in restoring and protecting coral reefs” in the Philippines.

He pioneered the establishment of no-take marine sanctuaries and community-based coastal resources management, especially in the world-renowned dive destination, Apo Island in Dauin town, Negros Oriental province.

Alcalá is survived by his wife of 70 years, Naomi Lusoc Alcalá, and the families of their children, Angelo, Estrilda, Moses, Emily, Grace, and Ely.



National scientist Angel Alcalá, 93

National Scientist Angel Alcalá, a pioneer of marine biodiversity and marine conservation in the Philippines, died at the Silliman University (SU) Medical Center in Dumaguete City at past noon on Wednesday. He was 93.

"SU mourns the loss of a scientist, administrator, trustee, professor, morally upright family man and public servant," the university said in a statement.

An acclaimed biologist and conservationist, Alcalá was known for his pioneering work in establishing marine protected areas in the Philippines focusing on ecosystems and promoting sustainable fishing.

He introduced the concept of community-based coastal resource management in the promotion of marine biodiversity as well as the use of artificial reefs as models for fisheries development. He also did extensive research on Philippine amphibians and reptiles since the mid-50s, according to the SU obit post.

Masungi Georeserve paid tribute to Alcalá as its "first defender," having banned applications for quarrying within the then-proposed



Alcalá

nature reserve and wildlife sanctuary when he was environment secretary in 1993.

Alcalá was named National Scientist in 2014. He was conferred the Ramon Magsaysay Award for public service in 1992 and named ASEAN Biodiversity Hero in 2017. He was one of 11 alumni inducted to the Fulbright Philippines Hall of Fame.

He was secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources from 1992 to 1995 and Commission on Higher Education chairman from 1995 to 1999.

Alcalá's wake will be at the SU church in Dumaguete. Interment is at the Dumaguete National Park on Feb. 10. — **Juaniyo Arcellana, Janvic Mateo**



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Insurance for CARP farmers pressed

By Jester Manalastas

IN a bid to help farmers after the onslaught of natural calamities, a measure that mandates full insurance coverage to farmer-beneficiaries of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) was given utmost priority.

Approved on third and final reading is House Bill 6680 which aims to provide aid and relief in times of natural calamities, pest infestations or even death.

"This measure, if enacted into law, is envisioned to help farmers recover from the adverse effects of circumstances that are beyond their control, such as natural calamities, the infestation of plant diseases and pests, or even death and injury of the beneficiary," House Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez said.

"This is part of our legislative commitment to ensure food security by helping the hands that feed the nation — our farmers — and make sure they bounce back from

any event that may affect their ability to produce the food we have on our tables," he added.

HB 6680 amends Republic Act No. 6657, as Amended by Republic Act No. 9700, otherwise known as the "Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988."

The objectives of the measure are to provide immediate financial assistance to Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries (ARBs) in the event of natural calamities to make their losses more bearable and to mitigate the effects of these occurrences by providing full insurance coverage to these farmers.

Under the approved bill, full insurance coverage is granted to all qualified agrarian reform beneficiaries who are actually tilling the land for compensable losses that are also defined under the measure.

HB 6680 also defined who the qualified agrarian reform beneficiaries are, and they are those mentioned in Section 3(b) of Republic Act No. 10000, otherwise known as the "Agri-Agra Reform Credit Act of 2009."



EDITORIAL

Early retirement

THE whole idea of retirement is the full enjoyment of a worker's twilight years after a productive lifetime.

For most folks, it is the period of reaping the benefits of employment or work.

But given the fact that the retirement age is generally pegged at 60 to 65, most retirees are no longer in the best of health to engage in leisurely pursuits with their loved ones.

Most of them are already physically weak or are weighed down by diseases associated with ageing.

This makes retiring at such an advance age would no longer be as meaningful and enjoyable for most people.

Quite fortunately, more than one million workers in the bureaucracy would soon be given a choice to retire early with the passage of a bill lowering the optional retirement age for government employees from 60 to 56 on final reading, Speaker Martin Romualdez said.

Romualdez said many employees would benefit from this proposed law, noting that retiring early would enhance their well-being.

"They can opt to quit working, receive their benefits, do other activities and enjoy life in retirement with their loved ones even before they become senior citizens," he said. "It's surely more fun to live life without work-related stress."

During Tuesday's plenary session, the House of Representatives approved on final reading House Bill 206 with 268 affirmative votes, one negative vote and one abstention.

The bill seeks to amend Section 13-A of Republic Act 8291, otherwise known as the "Government Service Insurance Act of 1997".

It states that a government worker-GSIS member would be entitled to retirement benefits if he is at least 56 years of age at the time of retirement, has rendered service for at least 15 years and he is not receiving a monthly pension for permanent total disability.

Retirement is compulsory at 65 years.

The proposed law would put the rest of government workers at par with members of the military and the police, whose mandatory retirement age is 56.

ACT Teachers Party-list Rep. France Castro, principal author of the bill, said rigorous work and the physical and psychological burdens it causes applies to all those working in government, particularly public school teachers.

Castro said earlier retirement is one of the demands voiced during consultations with public school teachers, noting that retiring at a late stage would not allow them to fully enjoy their retirement years with the hazards and level of stress accompanying their duties.

"Teachers usually leave the profession not with satisfied smiles but assaulted by various illnesses; whatever retirement benefits they receive will be spent not for their rest or their own businesses but solely for medical bills," she said.



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REGIONAL UPDATES

Davao de Oro suspends classes, gov't work after quake

THE DAVAO de Oro provincial government suspended classes at all levels and work at nonessential local offices on Thursday to give way to building inspections after a magnitude 6 earthquake shook the province on Wednesday night.

Other national agencies in the province could heed the suspension to ensure the safety of their workers, Governor Dorothy Montejo-Gonzaga said in a memo dated Feb. 1. They may also do structural integrity checks in coordination with local government units.

No major damage was reported as of Thursday morning. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said in a bulletin damage and aftershocks were expected.

Phivolcs said the epicenter of the quake that occurred at 6:44 p.m. on Feb. 1 was in the town of Compostela. Intensity 5 was reported in surrounding provinces, including Bukidnon, South Cotabato, Surigao del Sur and Samal Island.

Ms. Gonzaga, who heads the provincial disaster management council, ordered the evacuation of all patients at the Davao de Oro Provincial Hospital to the Montevista Sports Complex.

Phivolcs has recorded at least 30 aftershocks, with magnitudes ranging from 1.8 to 3.6. — **Mariff S. Jara**

Cebu City beer sales up fivefold

PHILIPPINE startup Packworks on Thursday said beer sales in Cebu City rose fivefold amid a liquor ban during the Sinulog Festival.

In a statement, the firm said the increase was determined using data from its Sari IQ market intelligence platform. About two million people attended the festival.

"The total gross merchandise value of beer products from *sari-sari* stores within the Sinulog Festival vicinity was recorded on Jan. 15, the day of the main festivity, which outperformed brandy and gin compared with the previous day," Packworks said.

It attributed higher beer sales during the period to stricter enforcement of the liquor ban at larger retail establishments that caused people to buy from mom-and-pop stores, which are more lenient.

Filipinos tend to defy liquor bans during festivals since drinking is linked with socializing, as



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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
NATIONAL WATER RESOURCES BOARD
8th Floor NIA Bldg., EDSA, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines 1100

AMAIA LAND CORPORATION,
Applicant

Case No. 23-3533

NOTICE OF HEARING

This is an application for Certificate of Public Convenience to operate and maintain a waterworks system within Amaia Steps Bicutan Condominium, Barangay Sun Valley, Parañaque City, Metro Manila, with the following proposed rates:

PROPOSED TARIFF

Residential and Commercial

Pipe Size	0-5 m3 (mm)	6-10 m3	11-20 m3	21-30 m3	31-40 m3	Over 40 m3
1/2"	₱ 427.00	100.70	128.10	149.40	170.80	256.20
1"	₱ 1,368.00	341.50	409.90	478.20	546.50	819.70

This application will be initially heard by the Board on **13 March 2023**. The hearing will start at **9:00 o' clock in the morning** at the NWRB-WUD Conference Room, 8th Floor, NIA Building, EDSA, Quezon City, at which time applicant shall present its evidence.

At least fifteen (15) days prior to the scheduled hearing, applicant shall publish this notice once in a newspaper of general circulation in **Metro Manila** and serve by personal delivery or registered mail a copy of the (i) application and its attachments, and (ii) this notice, to all affected parties appearing on page 2 hereof.

Parties opposed to the granting of the application must file their written opposition supported by documentary evidence on or before the above scheduled date of hearing, furnishing a copy of the same to the applicant.

Failure on the part of any person affected to file its opposition on time and to appear at the hearing will be construed as a waiver of their right to be heard. The Board will proceed to hear and decide the application based on the evidence submitted.

Likewise, failure by the applicant to appear at the hearing shall amount to lack of interest on its part and the instant application shall be dismissed accordingly.

Witness the Honorable Executive Director of the National Water Resources Board this 24th day of January 2023.

By Authority of the Board:

(Sgd.) **Dr. SEVILLO D. DAVID, Jr., CESO III**
Executive Director

Affected Parties:

The Secretary
Sangguniang Panlungsod
Parañaque City, Metro Manila

The Barangay Chairman
Barangay Sun Valley
Parañaque City, Metro Manila

The Homeowners Assn. President
Amaia Steps Bicutan Condominium
Barangay Sun Valley
Parañaque City, Metro Manila

The Administrator
Metropolitan Waterworks & Sewerage System
MWSS Compound, Kalipunan Road
Balara, Quezon City

(POI- Feb. 3, 2023)



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
NATIONAL WATER RESOURCES BOARD
8th Floor NIA Bldg., EDSA, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines 1100

AMAIA LAND CORPORATION,
Applicant

Case No. 23-3532

NOTICE OF HEARING

This is an application for Certificate of Public Convenience to operate and maintain a waterworks system within Amaia Series Novaliches, Condominium, Barangay San Agustin, Quezon City, Metro Manila, with the following proposed rates:

PROPOSED TARIFF

Residential and Institutional

Pipe Size	0-5 m3 (mm)	6-10 m3	11-20 m3	21-30 m3	31-40 m3	Over 40 m3
1/2"	₱ 389.00	97.30	116.80	136.20	155.70	233.50

This application will be initially heard by the Board on **13 March 2023**. The hearing will start at **9:00 o' clock in the morning** at the NWRB-WUD Conference Room, 8th Floor, NIA Building, EDSA, Quezon City, at which time applicant shall present its evidence.

At least fifteen (15) days prior to the scheduled hearing, applicant shall publish this notice once in a newspaper of general circulation in **Metro Manila** and serve by personal delivery or registered mail a copy of the (i) application and its attachments, and (ii) this notice, to all affected parties appearing on page 2 hereof.

Parties opposed to the granting of the application must file their written opposition supported by documentary evidence on or before the above scheduled date of hearing, furnishing a copy of the same to the applicant.

Failure on the part of any person affected to file its opposition on time and to appear at the hearing will be construed as a waiver of their right to be heard. The Board will proceed to hear and decide the application based on the evidence submitted.

Likewise, failure by the applicant to appear at the hearing shall amount to lack of interest on its part and the instant application shall be dismissed accordingly.

Witness the Honorable Executive Director of the National Water Resources Board this 24th day of January 2023.

By Authority of the Board:

(Sgd.) **Dr. SEVILLO D. DAVID, Jr., CESO III**
Executive Director

Affected Parties:

The Secretary
Sangguniang Panlungsod
Quezon City, Metro Manila

The Barangay Chairman
Barangay San Agustin
Quezon City, Metro Manila

The Homeowners Assn. President
Amaia Series Novaliches Condominium
Barangay Socorro, Quezon City
Metro Manila

The Administrator
Metropolitan Waterworks & Sewerage System
MWSS Compound, Kalipunan Road
Balara, Quezon City

(POI- Feb. 3, 2023)



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
NATIONAL WATER RESOURCES BOARD
8th Floor NIA Bldg., EDSA, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines 1100

AMAIA LAND CORPORATION,
Applicant

Case No. 22-3500

NOTICE OF HEARING

This is an application for Certificate of Public Convenience to operate and maintain a waterworks system within Amaia Steps Sual Condominium, Barangay San Antonio, Parañaque City, Metro Manila, with the following proposed rates:

PROPOSED TARIFF

Residential and Commercial

Pipe Size	0-5 m3 (mm)	6-10 m3	11-20 m3	21-30 m3	31-40 m3	Over 40 m3
1/2"	₱ 241.00	60.30	72.30	84.40	96.40	144.70
1"	₱ 296.00	96.50	115.80	135.10	154.70	231.50

This application will be initially heard by the Board on **6 March 2023**. The hearing will start at **9:00 o' clock in the morning** at the NWRB-WUD Conference Room, 8th Floor, NIA Building, EDSA, Quezon City, at which time applicant shall present its evidence.

At least fifteen (15) days prior to the scheduled hearing, applicant shall publish this notice once in a daily newspaper of general circulation in **Metro Manila** and serve by personal delivery or registered mail a copy of the (i) application and its attachments, and (ii) this notice, to all affected parties appearing on page 2 hereof.

Parties opposed to the granting of the application must file their written opposition supported by documentary evidence on or before the above scheduled date of hearing, furnishing a copy of the same to the applicant.

Failure on the part of any person affected to file its opposition on time and to appear at the hearing will be construed as a waiver of their right to be heard. The Board will proceed to hear and decide the application based on the evidence submitted.

Likewise, failure by the applicant to appear at the hearing shall amount to lack of interest on its part and the instant application shall be dismissed accordingly.

Witness the Honorable Executive Director of the National Water Resources Board this 1st day of December 2022.

By Authority of the Board:

(Sgd.) **Dr. SEVILLO D. DAVID, Jr., CESO III**
Executive Director

Affected Parties:

The Secretary
Sangguniang Panlungsod
Parañaque City, Metro Manila

The Barangay Chairman
Barangay San Antonio
Parañaque City, Metro Manila

The Homeowners Assn. President
Amaia Steps Sual Condominium
Barangay San Antonio
Parañaque City, Metro Manila

The Administrator
Metropolitan Waterworks & Sewerage System
MWSS Compound, Kalipunan Road
Balara, Quezon City

(POI- Feb. 3, 2023)



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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
MIMAROPA Region


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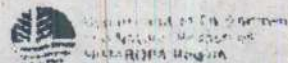
LEASE OF PUBLIC LAND

NOTICE is hereby given the DENR-CENRO at Brooke's Point will accept oral or written bids not later than 02 MAR 2023 on 10:00 A.M. for the lease of the tract of foreshore land herein below described:

- Location** : Barangay Maasin, Brooke's Point, Palawan
- Description** : Miscellaneous Lease Application No. 045301-13 Adjacent to Lot No. 1166; Pls. 96 identical to Lot No. 5701, Cad 796-D Survey Plan Mlc No. 045306-13-D
- Boundaries** : Foreshore land is bounded on the Northwest by Lot No. 1166, Pls 96; in the East by Sulu Sea; in the South by Sulu Sea and in the West by Sulu Sea,
- Area** : 118,580 sq.m.
- Appraised Value of the Land** : 7,470,540.00
- Appraised Value of Improvements** : 1,825,684.14
- Annual Rental** : 9,296,224.14
- Applied By** : Ipilan Nickel Corporation
Rep. by Carlo Matilac

The right to lease the land will be awarded to the person offering the highest annual rental, which shall not be less than three per centum (3%) of the value of the land plus one per centum (1%) of the value of the proposed and/or existing improvements. In order that a person may be entitled to participate in the bidding, he must be a qualified public land applicant. Before the commencement of the same, he must make a deposit equivalent to at least three (3) months rental. Only deposits in cash, money order, treasury warrant, certified check, or manager's check can be accepted. A person bidding in the representation of another may do so under a duly executed power of attorney. During the bidding, the bidder has to make an additional deposit every time his bid is raised to complete the three (3) months' rental, otherwise, such bid as raised shall not be accepted. The right is reserved to reject any or all bids.


LORMELYN E. CLAUDIO, CESO IV
Regional Executive Director



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