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**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**





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# DENR chief to do balancing act on mining, environment

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA  
@jonlmayuga

AS mining takes center stage in the Mindanao leg last week of the multi-stakeholder dialogue by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga vowed to look into the issues and concerns raised by residents of communities affected by mining.

Pressed for comments on the violent dispersal of anti-mining barricades put up by communities in Sibuyan Island, Yulo-Loyzaga initially declined to speak about the issue.

Nonetheless, the DENR chief eventually said that "people need minerals, which requires a balancing act" on the part of the DENR.

The dialogues initiated last year by the DENR in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao aim to gather inputs from various stakeholders on environmental concerns. The inputs will form part of a policy to be developed by the DENR under Loyzaga's watch, a statement from the agency read.

The official said to achieve a balance in terms of the approach, geographically and socially, the DENR needs to listen to all stakeholders and be satisfied after hearing them out—whether they are pro-mining or anti-mining.

"You know, I will not speak spe-

cifically to it, but I'll tell you this, we're here to listen and until we can be satisfied that we have heard all stakeholders, we cannot achieve a balance in terms of our approach geographically and socially," she said. "So, these complexities need to be addressed in whatever approach we will take moving forward."

While minerals are needed, she said there's a need to balance mining impact in terms of economic, social and environmental considerations.

"How we balance that really depends on our understanding of the complexities of the different contexts that we are actually faced with. So we cannot choose just one approach. We need to be sensitive to everything else that is going on. So you've brought up Sibuyan, we'll take a good look at that," she assured.

## Sibuyanons against mining

RESIDENTS of Sibuyan continued to protest the alleged illegal mining operation of Altai Mining in San Fernando town, Romblon province, because of mining's destructive nature.

Romblon has been considered having a fragile ecosystem. The province sits in Sibuyan Islands, known as the Galapagos of Asia because of its rich biological diversity.

The protesters want the mining operations stopped and demanded a thorough investigation as to how

the company was able to operate sans the necessary permits and documents such as barangay clearance, municipal business permit and a DENR foreshore lease contract. The residents said the firm was also able to secure a permit from the Philippine Ports Authority to construct a private port.

## Mitigation hierarchy

LOYZAGA has said that under her watch, the DENR is adopting what she calls a "mitigation hierarchy."

"When you are disrupting an ecosystem, if you can avoid it, you must; if you can reduce it, you must. If you need to rehabilitate, you must and, if you cannot fully rehabilitate, you must be engaged in some form of compensatory action," she said.

Loyzaga, however, admitted that such an approach has not been fully threshed out. She said doing so will entail the consideration of the environmental management program that each company needs to undertake, the progressive rehabilitation program that they will propose and the Social Development and Management Program (SDMP) that they are mandated to put into operation.

During her time as Environment Secretary, the late Gina Lopez has called on large-scale miners to review their SDMPs and adopt a more effective "Sustainable Integrated

Area Development" (SIAD) approach to ensure their operations bring sustained economic and social benefits to their host communities.

SDMPs are provided for in DENR Administrative Order 2010-21, which is the implementing rules and regulations of Republic Act 7942 (Philippine Mining Act of 1995).

## Risk management

LOYZAGA said they are looking at the SDMP to see how it can be part of a general resilience and risk-management objective for the communities and ecosystems that are going to be disrupted.

Pre-condition to starting a mining operation, the SDMP is a 5-year plan carried out during the life of the mine to bring about a sustained improvement in the living standards of the host and neighboring communities.

The environmental protection and enhancement program will also be reviewed, she assured.

"For us at this point, there will be a very careful look at climate-related risks and other multiple hazards that are occurring in the area, but certainly the impacts, socially, economically and in the end, the power of the governance structure at the local level to help us with monitoring, observation and analyzing the environmental impact of these activities," she said.





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NOTICES SERVED

# DENR CITES MINING FIRM FOR VIOLATIONS

By **Madonna T. Virola**  
@mvirolaINQ

CITY OF CALAPAN—A mining firm, whose operations on Sibuyan Island are being protested by residents, has been cited by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for violations, including building a causeway without an environmental clearance and cutting trees without a permit.

In notices served on Saturday by DENR personnel from Romblon province, Altai Philippines Mining Corp. (APMC) was found to be “constructing/operating a causeway project without an approved environmental compliance certificate” and was directed to attend a technical conference at the DENR central office in Manila on Feb. 7.

According to DENR-Mimaropa Regional Director Joe Amil, “failure to attend and submit required position shall be considered as a waiver of right to be heard and present evidence on their behalf.”

The other violation notice signed by Arnoldo Blaza Jr., officer in charge of the Romblon Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office, ordered the firm to explain within 10 days why it should not be fined for violating the Forestry Code for cutting and clearing trees without a permit.

Earlier, a dialogue was held among officials of the DENR, other government agencies, local government and environmental groups protesting the APMC’s allegedly illegal operations on Sibuyan Island. This was after two antimining protesters barricading the port of the mining firm in San Fernando town were hurt in a clash with police on Friday.

The protesters had formed a human barricade to stop three of APMC’s hauling trucks that were carrying nickel ore from leaving the port. However, the trucks forced their way through while about 30 policemen intervened and tried to break up the barricade.

### ‘Small victory’

Elizabeth Ibañez, coordinator of Sibuyanon Against Mining, said “the outcome of the dialogue could be considered a small victory for the protesters who did not waver

in their protest at the barricades and who persisted in demanding that the illegal activities of APMC stop.”

For protest leader Rodne Galicha, “all these victories happened mainly because of the continued protests, barricade, action and expressions of Sibuyanons.”

Rights and environmental groups, however, demanded accountability for the police dispersal and asked the government to respect the stand of residents.

“We demand an immediate investigation of the authorities involved in the violent dispersal. The people of Romblon must be allowed to freely exercise their right to protect the environment and defend their island from destruction,” said Cleng Julve, campaigns officer for scientist group Agham.

### Police chided

Jae Garganera, national coordinator of Alyansa Tigil Mina, said the police should have ensured a “peaceful protest and respected the position of the Sibuyan people against the mining company.”

Karapatan secretary general Cristina Palabay said the Sibuyanons had resisted for decades the entry and operations of mining companies on the island, wary that further mining would destroy their community and undermine their livelihood.

Last year, despite a plea from residents in the towns of San Fernando, Cajidiocan and Magdiwang to declare Sibuyan mining-free, the government issued a mineral ore export permit to APMC in December, allowing the company to bulk test 50,000 metric tons of ore.

“Such brazen disregard for the will of the Sibuyanons comes as no surprise,” Palabay said.

Environmental group Kalikasan PNE also urged the government to “categorically revoke” the mineral production sharing agreement given to the APMC, “in light of its clear human rights violations and the lack of social license.”

“We also call for a moratorium on all mining operations in Sibuyan, and in all other watersheds and key biodiversity areas in the Philippines,” Kalikasan said. —WITH REPORTS

FROM JANE BAUTISTA AND KRIXIA SUBINGSUBING INQ





## Restoring mining sites a must in NEDA plan

By CAI U. ORDINARIO

@caiordinario

**F**UTURE mining projects must consider the restoration of various mining sites, according to the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

Neda Undersecretary Rosemarie G. Edillon underscored that the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) recognizes the importance of responsible mining.

Mining sites, Edillon said in a recent televised interview, should be rehabilitated and restored. This has to be ensured whenever mining projects are undertaken.

*"Kailangan ay mayroon talagang provision para sa restoration, kasi mag-i-explore sila magbutas dito, butas doon,*

*para lang tingnan kung ano ang talagang nasa ilalim. So dapat may provision para sa mag-rehabilitate, pag-restore niyan [There must really be a provision for restoration, because they will explore and drill holes here and there just to confirm what's underneath. So there must a provision so they will rehabilitate and restore the land],"* Edillon said.

Edillon said a number of examples may be found in countries like Australia and Malaysia where mining sites have been rehabilitated and restored.

Mining companies in the Philippines can emulate these examples when they undertake projects in the country, she added.

Edillon said environmental management is one of the most important aspects of mining in the coun-

try that needs to be considered.

She gave assurances that in the future, efforts at legislation on mining will necessarily come with many consultations.

### Cobalt exports

BASED on the PDP, the international sanctions placed on the export of cobalt from Russia could provide opportunities for the Philippines. Cobalt is a key input in the production of batteries.

The PDP stated the Philippines and Russia have similar amounts of cobalt reserves and are among the six sources of cobalt, after Australia, Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Indonesia.

"Although the Philippines produces nickel-cobalt mixed with sulphide, the

opportunity to add value and produce nickel sulphate (needed by lithium ion battery producers) in the Philippines has yet to be taken. Prolonged sanctions on Russian cobalt will likely increase investors' interest in the Philippines," the PDP stated.

Per the PDP, mineral resources of the country will be used for industrial value-addition. The plan states that mineral ores are preferred to be processed domestically for downstream industries.

It also stated that the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) will also undertake programs to enhance the integration of the iron and steel industry with mining, to include increasing the supply of iron ore and coal.



## NEDA: Fiscal regime key to mining industry revival

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

THE Marcos administration is putting premium on the rehabilitation and strengthening of the mining industry by correcting bad practices in the industry, rationalizing taxes and pushing for projects that would promote and boost mining such as the use of renewable energy.

Rosemarie Edillon, undersecretary of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), in a media forum in Quezon City last Saturday, said the government is determined to revive the mining sector and has identified the mining fiscal regime as a crucial factor in fixing mining governance.

Edillon said the national government needs the support and cooperation of Congress as a law may be needed to address fiscal issues in mining.

She said there seems to be an imbalance in the system as it encourages mined ores to be processed elsewhere.

Edillon said the administration is looking into the practice of some mining companies to leave their sites without rehabilitating them after years of mineral extraction.



EDILLON

She said the government wants to compel mining companies to rehabilitate their depleted mining sites.

Edillon said there are mining firms that practice "responsible mining," but the government wants to set aside funds for rehabilitating the mined-out areas.

She said the government is also pushing for some alternative energy programs that support and complement the mining industry. These programs include the use of electric vehicles as its energy storage system are made of nickel and the country has many supply of nickel.





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# Nature-based solutions in climate response

**T**he country's Philippine Development Plan (PDP) (2023-2028) assessed the progress in environmental and climate action in the last six years as modest. Progress can be seen in the increase in forest cover by 3.03 percent from 2015 to 2020 and the general improvement in the management of protected areas. However, the PDP also cited that these positive gains still fall short of improving the country's overall performance in these sectors.

In the 2022 Environmental Performance Index ranking, the Philippines placed 158th out of 180 countries in environmental sustainability, which covers performance indicators on ecosystem vitality (e.g., biodiversity, water resources), environmental health (e.g., air quality, waste management), and climate change.

In the 2022 World Risk Index, the Philippines ranked first among 193 countries with the highest disaster risks. The PDP noted that between 2011 and 2021, the country incurred P673.30 billion worth of damage and losses due to tropical cyclones alone. These damages and losses from climate change are expected to reach up to 7.6 percent and 13 percent of the country's gross domestic product by 2030 and 2040, respectively, if there is no adequate action to address the impact of climate change. Hence, the PDP strategy framework to Accelerate Climate Action and Strengthen Disaster Resilience will prioritize enhancing adaptation as a priority climate action in the country.

Nature-based solutions (NBS) are key to sustaining the provision of ecosystem goods and services, reducing the intersecting vulnerabilities, and addressing complexities in managing the compounding and cascading risks posed by climate change across forestry, biodiversity, water, and other sectors.

NBS, or actions meant to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, can address climate change in three ways:

1. Avoid or reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to deforestation and land use change and degradation;
2. Capture and store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere;

## COMMENTARY

ANALIZA REBUERTA-TEH

3. Enhance the resilience of ecosystems, and support communities to adapt to climate hazards such as flooding, sea-level rise, and more frequent and intense droughts, floods, heat waves, and wildfires.

The protection and restoration of forests, mangroves, and wetlands, conservation of biodiversity, coastal and marine resources, and creation of urban greenspaces are major adaptation measures the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will relentlessly pursue using integrated and ecosystem-based approaches. These initiatives demonstrate the positive role that nature plays in delivering tangible climate benefits and the potential of NBS for disaster risk reduction.

Integrating nature and climate change as a climate solution provides co-benefits such as job creation, addressing biodiversity loss, and a healthier environment. For instance, the use of a riparian wetland for flood mitigation may also support local fisheries, water quality, recreation, erosion control, biodiversity, and water nutrient management.

As part of the continuing implementation of the risk resiliency program under the Cabinet Cluster on Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation, and Disaster Risk Reduction, resilience road maps with investment portfolio for risk resiliency were recently developed for the provinces in the country that are vulnerable to climate change. These planning documents seek to strengthen province-based planning and budgeting by recommending actions to manage risks and address the provinces' climate and disaster vulnerabilities. The participation of private sector partners is critical in increasing the implementation of these climate- and disaster-related investments, especially in the most vulnerable areas in the country.

The private sector plays an important





*Response*

role in better driving meaningful initiatives for the planet. For example, the Land Bank of the Philippines has been implementing the Gawad Sibol (Adopt-A-Watershed) Program in partnership with the DENR since 2006, which pursues the environmental rehabilitation of open and degraded watershed areas through tree planting.

Just recently, Nestlé, One Tree Planted, and EcoPlanet Bamboo started a major reforestation project in Lanao del Sur to plant 3.5 million bamboo clumps and native trees by 2024. I took part in the tree-growing activity at the La Mesa Watershed and Eco Park that was conducted in support of the project's launch and to demonstrate the spirit of volunteerism among Nestlé PH employees and their partners.

As we traverse the pathway to achieving significant outcomes for sustainable, inclusive, and climate-resilient development in the Philippines, the government, with the other stakeholders, will ensure mainstreaming nature in climate action decisions. Nature is our only opportunity to secure a sustainable future for all.

Through all these, we recognize the importance of working with the private sector in fulfilling our mandate to protect and conserve the country's natural resources. Thus, the DENR will continue fostering meaningful public-private partnerships that can advance our shared environmental goals and help widen the reach and impact of our initiatives.

Analiza Rebueta-Teh is currently the DENR undersecretary for finance, information systems, and climate change. She finished law at the University of the Philippines and became a member of the bar in 1998. She was recognized as one of the UP College of Law Alumni for Public Service.



## BARMM eyes more mining projects

AN official of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) said the regional government is eyeing more mining projects to boost revenues.

In an ambush interview, BARMM Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Energy (Menre) Badr Salendab said that areas rich in minerals can be developed.

"That is actually one of the programs that we are pushing right now, to determine the mineralization of our area, because we believe that there is a big potential. Of course, we have to balance it by protecting our environment, so we will implement a sustainable development approach here," Salendab said.

There are three mining companies operating in the region, one in Sulu and two in Tawi-Tawi.

"Right now, three mining companies operate, but the two are already in the winding up stage. The one in Lugus (Sulu) is still in full blast operation. The permits of the two were issued way back, before the advent of BARMM; the third, it started operation during the BARMM," Salendab said.

He said that some investors have manifested their interest in investing in mining.

"Of course, they will undergo the right process. It is a big help to the economy if mining is done right, as it provides jobs, it provides employment, it has domino industries downstream. Of course, we have to consider its effects on the environment," the official said.

Salendab said that BARMM supports the move of the national government to revive the mining industry.

"It is understandable; we are feeling the economic devastation of Covid, so I think that is one of the actions being done by the national government to address that," he said.

"We at Menre, we are the protector of the environment. That's our foremost consideration, so we really have to strike the fine balance between encouraging investment, providing for possible employment and of course, conserving and protecting our environment. We assure our people in the Bangsamoro that we are here to guard the environment," he said.

BELLA CARIASO





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# Atlai maintains Sibuyan mining ops legal

BY TIZIANA CELINE PIATOS  
@tribunephil\_tiz

Atlai Philippines Mining Corp. over the weekend “categorically denied” all allegations questioning the legality of its Sibuyan operations.

In an advisory obtained by *Daily Tribune*, the mining company emphasized it has secured all permits and licenses to lawfully and peacefully conduct its business in the area.

“Accordingly, our operations in Sibuyan began many years before we even set up camp on-site: Undertaking comprehensive environmental and socio-economic studies and outcome analyses, consulting with official regulators and agencies, and engaging the surrounding communities to

ensure that our operations will be safe, legitimate, and with minimal environmental effects,” APMC said.

It added: “In the meantime, we remain committed to ensuring that our mining operations involve and respect all stakeholders, minimize environmental impact, and prioritize a fair division of socio-economic benefits.”

Meanwhile, Atlai said it was “deeply saddened” by the recent hostilities near its mining exploration operations on Sibuyan Island.

The company has received information that Atlai employees, law enforcement personnel, and protesters were hurt as a result of the tensions.

APMC said it has exhausted all means to help those who were hurt in the incidents and

do whatever it can to de-escalate the situation.

“We are particularly distressed by the fact that the ideology of these protesters may not be as different from our company’s core values,” the mining firm said.

“While the full and outright refusal of all mining operations is simply not realistic (nor economically sustainable), Altai Philippines Mining Corp. is equally opposed to all forms of illegal, reckless and irresponsible mining,” it added.

APMC added that the company’s right to operate “is as inviolable” as the right to peaceful protest and assembly.

The mining firm said it “repeatedly reached out” to the protesters to establish dialogue and hopefully find common ground.





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# 3 villages in Cebu City declared danger zones

Local gov't issues declaration after land fissures discovered in upland barangays

CEBU CITY—At least three upland villages here have been declared as “danger zones” by the city government’s Task Force Likay sa Landslide (Task Force to Prevent Landslide) because of the presence of soil fissures that might put residents at risk.

The villages of Bonbon, Babag and Sirao were declared danger zones at about the same time that the Cebu City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (CCDRRMO) had requested the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) to inspect the presence of these cracks to avert untoward incidents from happening, said lawyer Jerone Castillo, the task force head.

Mayor Michael Rama will act based on the recommendations of the MGB, said Castillo in an interview on Wednesday.

The village chiefs of these barangays were encouraged to

be part of the process to ensure the safety of their constituents, according to Castillo.

Harold Alcontin, chief of the CCDRRMO, said in a separate interview on Feb. 1 that they started looking into the situation in upland villages since last year.

“In August [2022], we conducted a series of assessments in the areas which have been prone to landslides. So we requested the MGB to release advisories [according to what we observed],” he said.

## Worsened

The CCDRRMO conducted another investigation in November and December 2022 due to the incessant rains and found that the landslides and cracks in the three villages have worsened, especially in Sirao.

This prompted Rama to issue an executive order in December creating the Task Force

Likay sa Landslide.

“Actually, we were closely monitoring 14 barangays but the situation in Babag, Bonbon and Sirao were bad,” Alcontin said.

Alcontin did not, however, say how large the cracks were or if they were found in populated areas.

But former Councilor Dave Tumalak said there were a number of fissures in these upland villages and their sizes vary. Some measure 33 meters long and five inches wide while the others are 11.3 m long. One crack has a depth of about 1.40 m, he added.

Tumalak, then chief of the city’s disaster risk reduction and management council, has visited these areas and had seen these cracks since 2017.

The three villages are sparsely populated and thrive on vegetable and flower farming. Based on the 2020 census, Babag has a

population of 5,945; Bonbon has 6,108; and Sirao, famous for its flower farms that have become a tourist attraction in the city, has a population of 3,647.

Other hilly villages in the city have also suffered from massive soil erosion during heavy rains, such as what happened on Oct. 29 last year, when a landslide in Sitio Garaje in Barangay Busay damaged several houses and left more than 30 individuals homeless. No one was hurt in the incident.

Alcontin said they were waiting for the MGB to release an advisory based on their investigation so proper actions could be taken by the city government.

“We can recommend for a no build zone or danger zone in areas that were prone to too much landslides,” if that would be the recommendation of the MGB, Alcontin said. —NESTLE SEMILLA INQ





## PBBM bubuhayin mga minahan

Isasailalim sa rehabilitasyon ng gobyerno ang mga inabandonang minahan sa bansa kasabay ng pagbuhay sa industriyang ito, ayon kay National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Undersecretary Rosemarie Edillon.

Kabilang aniya ang pagbuhay sa mining industry sa mga prayoridad na proyekto ng administrasyon ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. sa ilalim ng inaprubahang Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028. "Kasi gusto nga nating mai-revive iyong mining sector, also to do with the, parang support din sa ating renewable energy," ani Edillon.

"Yung mga electric vehicles natin na gusto nating magkaroon ng battery energy storage system na ang malaki pa ang component at nickel, eh marami tayong nickel. So ito iyong nakalagay po ito sa PDP" sabi ng kalihim.

Ayon kay Edillon, aayusin ng administrasyon ang

pagpapatupad ng buwis sa mga minahan kung saan nahihirapan ang gobyerno sa pangkalahatan.

Nais din aniya itama ng administrasyon ang mga maling gawain ng mga minahan sa bansa kung saan inabandona na lamang ang kanilang mga mining site makalipas ang ilang taon na paghuhukay sa mga ito na wala man lang isinagawang rehabilitasyon.

Maaari umanong kailanganin ng bagong batas para maisakatuparan ito.

"Gusto natin magset-aside ng ponco para sa pag-rehabilitate naman, kapag halimbawa mined-out na iyong area. So there has to be those provisions. So, like I said, nasa PDP po 'yun," ayon kay Edillon.

"Mayroon na rin po naman tayong mga mining firms na responsible mining naman iyong mga practices, so okay din po iyon. Pero ang gusto natin is, you know sa pangkalahatan ayusin natin iyong fiscal regime," dagdag pa ng opisyal. **(Prince Golez)**





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## NANGANGANIB NA ISLA

HALOS dalawang linggo nang nakabarikada ang mga residente ng Sibuyan Island sa Romblon. Pinipigilan nilang makapag-loading at makapaglabas ng mahigit na 6,000 tonelada ng nickel ore ang ALTAI Philippines Mining Company (APMC).<sup>1</sup>

Anang mga residente, iligal umano ang pagmimina dahil kulang sa permit ang kumpanya. At nitong Biyernes, nagkaroon ng giran sa barikada nang pwersahang iginilid ng mga pulis ang mga nakaharang na mga tao para makapasok ang tatlong truck ng mga minero.

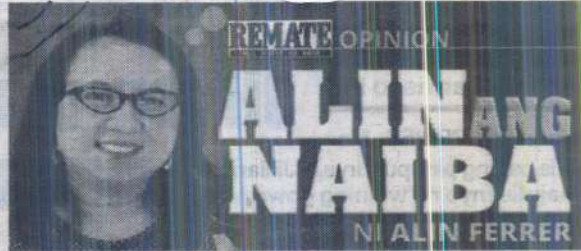
Paliwanag ng mayor ng bayan ng San Fernando, wala raw s'yang magagawa dahil pinayagan ng national government ang minahan na mag-operate. Meron na raw kasing pirmedong mining contract at meron ding mga permit

na magbiyahe ng mga bato o nickel ores at i-export ang mga ito.

Giit naman ng mga local na makakalikasang grupo, walang business permit o mayor's permit ang minahan, walang barangay clearance at wala ring permit ang pantalan (port) na s'yang nagiging loading area para ilabas ang mga bato.

Bakit nga ba emosyonal na tumututol ang mga Sibuyanong sa pagmimina? Sa research ko, nalaman ko na para naman talagang paraiso ang Sibuyan Island sa ganda at linis ng mga likas-yaman nito.

Malaking bahagi ng isla ay deklaradong protektado dahil sa Mt. Guiting-Guiting Protected Landscape. Ito daw ang pinaka-mahirap akyat na bundok dito sa Pilipinas, at dito nagte-training ang Pinoy mountaineers na sumasabak sa Mt. Everest. Ang malaking ba-



REMATE OPINION

## ALINANG NAIBA

NI ALIN FERRER

hagi ng kabundukan ay primary rainforest.

Nasa loob din ng Sibuyan ang tinaguriang 'cleanest inland freshwater' o mga pinaka-malinis na batis at mga ilog. Sa sobrang yaman ng samu't -saring buhay sa Sibuyan, nabansagan itong "Galapagos of Asia".

Isang malaking hamon ngayon sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources at kay Sec. Yulo-Loyzaga kung paano mareresolba ang krisis sa Sibuyan Island.

Papayagan ba ng kagawaran na magpatuloy ang minahan at ma-

sakripisyo ang likas na yaman sa isla? O papanang ang gobyerno sa mga tao na naninidigan laban sa mapanirang pagmimina?

Inialay ni dating Municipal Councilor Armin Marin, isang environmentalist, ang buhay n'ya sa pagtatanggol sa Sibuyan at labanan ang mga minero.

Pinaslang si Marin noong Oktubre 3, 2007 matapos makipagpalitan ng salita sa isang empleyado ng mining company. Hindi raw ito makakalimuan ng mga Sibuyanong, kaya hindi nila papayagan ang pagmimina.





### **Alagang hayop at bahay nadamay. Ginang nilamon ng 8-metrong sinkho**

Nilamon ng sinkhole ang isang 46-anyos na ginang kasama ang kanyang alagang hayop at maging ang kanilang bahay ay nadamay matapos lamunin ng malaking sinkhole kasunod ng pag-uga ng lupa sa Danao City, Cebu noong Biyernes ng hapon.

Patay na nang marekober ang katawan ng biktima na kinilalang si Mejame Papaya, may-asawa, factory worker ng Minebea Mitsumi Cebu at residente ng Brgy. Sabang, Danao City.

Ayon sa report ng City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Of-

fice (CDRRMO), dakong alas-4:45 ng hapon nang mahulog sa sinkhole si Papaya na nabuo malapit sa kanilang tahanan.

Agad na nagresponde ang search and rescue team na kinabibilangan ng mga pulis, bumbero at maging ng mga tauhan ng CDRRMO at bandang alas-9:50 na ng gabi nang kanilang marekober ang bangkay ng ginang sa sinkhole matapos gamitan pa ito ng backhoe.

Sa imbestigasyon, sinabi ni Staff Sergeant Allan Vertucio ng Danao City Police Station na si Papaya at kaniyang mister

ay nagpapakain ng baboy ng kapwa nila maramdaman ang biglang malakas na pag-uga ng lupa.

Agad tumakbo ang mag-asawa pero nabiyak ang lupa at nilamon ang biktima kasama ang alaga nitong baboy at kanilang bahay.

Nagawa namang makaligtas ng mister nito nang mabilis na nakatakbo palayo sa lugar.

Nabatid na ang kulong o sinkhole ay sumukat ng 8 metrong lalim at lapad na 200 square meters. Ang naturang lugar ay isa umanong quarry site. (Joy Cantos, Doris Franche-Borja)

Ust. Chito Bue





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## COMMONSENSE

MARICHU A. VILLANUEVA

### Solving water resource issues

As Malacañang first announced it last week, President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. (PBBM) is set to issue an Executive Order (EO) that will create a Water Resources Management Office (WRMO). According to the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) announcement, the new office will be created under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). The PCO quickly clarified the new office will only serve as a transitory body pending passage into law of the bill seeking to create a Department of Water Resources (DWR).



The proposed establishment of DWR is one of the 19 priority administration bills that PBBM identified during his maiden state of the nation address at the joint opening of both chambers of the 19th Congress in July last year. Several administrations made similar attempts to create a full-pledged Water Department but it never got out of the legislative mills in the Congresses past.

To ensure sufficient water supply for the country, the incumbent Chief Executive approved the proposed establishment of a new water body during a multi-sectoral meeting at Malacañang last Wednesday. While the EO is still being crafted, the President instructed the DENR to coordinate with all existing water-related agencies to work together on the collaborative mechanisms on carrying out the creation of the WRMO.

"We have to bring them (various water agencies) together so that they are all following the overall plan," PBBM cited.

Initially, PBBM identified the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS); the Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA); and, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB). "So that whatever the relationship we come to with MWSS, the LWUA, and the Water Board, DENR and this new Water Management Office, it has to be cohesive in the sense that the recommendation of the management office must be followed," the President pointed out.

Very clearly, the WRMO will be on top of the NWRB which is the foremost government agency that handles the Philippines water sectors' policies, regulations, and quasi-judicial functions.

Obviously, there is disconnect among the government agencies managing our country's resources for potable drinking water. As soon as the WRMO is set up, the President spelled out the priority actions of this new office: To find ways of reducing the country's reliance on groundwater and deep wells as well as managing surface water supply.

Recurring droughts and water shortage due to climate change and environmental destruction are very real concerns. But lack of coordination by various agencies managing our water resources often lead to conflicting priorities and lack of a cohesive plan.

"That's as far as I could tell. We have sufficient... there's enough water in the Philippines, we don't just use (water), we also waste it," PBBM speaking partly in Filipino to express extreme dismay.

The President's main goal is to formulate an Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP) that will integrate various plans of different agencies. It would also set policies and implement structural reforms on water management to address issues including the critical supply of fresh water.

The importance of WRMO – precursor of the planned Water Resources Department – cannot be overemphasized. In recent published reports, the MWSS said a water crisis looms in parts of Metro Manila if the proposed Kaliwa dam is not finished by 2027. In fact, Southern Metro Manila has long been suffering from poor water supply. It's now a common sight again to see tankers delivering water to different subdivisions.

But lack of clean, potable water is not only a problem in Metro Manila. It is replicated in many areas around the country, requiring large water projects including bulk water supply. In fact, several local government units (LGUs) enter into bulk supply deals to extract more water from underground sources. Such is unsustainable but even LGUs are now fighting over ownership of water resources. In Bohol, the towns of Sevilla and Balilihan are locked in a bitter dispute over the right to extract water from a fresh water spring.

Based on published reports, Sevilla Mayor Juliet Dano complained to the DENR that its neighboring town's waterworks project intruded into her municipality. Dano reported to DENR Secretary Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga that while Balilihan's permit from the NWRB allows it to install a water system in its own territory, it installed its pipes and is extracting water beyond its boundary from Bugwak Spring in Barangay Magsaysay, Sevilla, Bohol. The Mayor claimed her neighbor's project doesn't have a barangay clearance and lacks a building permit from the town of Sevilla – all basic requirements for such an undertaking.

During an ocular inspection last year, NWRB field inspectors confirmed that Bugwak spring and the facilities constructed to extract water from it are in Sevilla and outside Balilihan's jurisdiction. This prompted the agency to revoke the latter's permit. The case is now on appeal.

While issues like these are usually decided by a panel of NWRB field inspectors, lawyers and water experts, the case has been elevated to the NWRB's top governing body composed of the Secretaries of the DENR; Department of Justice; National Economic and Development Authority; Department of Science and Technology; and, a representative of the University of the Philippines-National Hydraulic Research Center.

Why should an inter-barangay dispute reached the agency's highest echelons of the NWRB and DENR? What's truly at stake in this bitter water dispute? Whoever or whatever is the motivation of NWRB in this case? It behooves upon its responsible officials to strictly apply the law and observe due process. The people of Sevilla town deserve nothing less. They might wake up one day to find their spring water all dried up already.

Sadly, our bureaucratic set up has been so fragmented in tapping the full potentials of our natural wealth like water resources that our country enjoys.







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## Water Expo at SMX

The Philippine Water Works Association of the Philippines (PWWA) will host the 6th Edition of Water Philippines Conference and Exposition from March 22 to 24, at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City, Metro Manila.

PWWA president Vicente Joyas said that President Marcos has been invited as the keynote speaker during the program and will participate in the ribbon cutting to officially open the exhibits. Other prominent guest speakers that have been invited are DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga; and Sen. Grace Poe.

Invited plenary speakers are Health Asst. Sec. Dr. Beverly Ho; Rep. Arnolfo Teves, Jr.; Jose Victor Emmanuel de Dios, president of Manila Water Company Inc.; Ramoncito Fernandez, president and CEO,

Maynilad; Dr. Mohmad Asari Daud, president, Malaysian Water Association; Chay Lo, president, Cambodia Water Association; Rogelio Quevedo, government corporate counsel, Office of the Corporate Counsel; Eileen dela Vega, OIC, Local Water Utilities Administration; Patrick Lester Ty, chief regulator, Metropolitan Waterworks & Sewerage System; and Agnes VST Devanadera, president and CEO, Clark Water Development Officer.

Technical sessions will follow to be participated in by local and international key players in the water industry to discuss global challenges and emerging issues in water and wastewater.

According to PWWA executive director Neneth Javier, the Water Expo was organized

in partnership with Informa Markets. She said that interested participants may contact PWWA at [pwwa@gmail.com](mailto:pwwa@gmail.com). Javier added, the culminating activity is a gala dinner and fellowship night for all participating government regulatory officers, practitioners and other industry experts to promote better ties and collaboration between the Philippines and the global water community.





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# NIA to build P2.45 B water impounding project

By DANESSA RIVERA

The National Irrigation Administration (NIA) is proposing to build a P2.45-billion Bayabas water impounding project in Bulacan to boost irrigation for arable lands and help mitigate flooding in nearby areas.

The NIA-Region 3 has proposed the Bayabas Small Reservoir Irrigation Project (SRIP) in Barangay Bayabas, Doña Remedios Trinidad, Bulacan as a long-term solution for irrigation and flood control in the province, based on its Environment Impact Statement submitted to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB).

The project will have a storage capacity of 53.137 million cubic meters (MCM) to be sourced from

Bayabas River, one of Angat River's tributaries.

The NIA said this would augment the water supply to the 26,981 hectares in Angat Maasim River Irrigation System (AMRIS) through the existing Bustos Dam.

The Bayabas reservoir dam was recommended since the Bayabas River's catchment area may not be able to irrigate at least 50 percent of the AMRIS service area.

"Without the project, the estimated annual volume of rice production in AMRIS service area will only be 188,331 tons. This amount may also reduce in the future due to prioritization of domestic water supply in the utilization of Angat River water resources," the state-run agency said.

The Bayabas SRIP will also irrigate 150 hectares of arable lands and aug-

ment water supply to existing pump irrigation systems in the municipality of Doña Remedios Trinidad.

Bulacan is predominantly an agricultural province despite of massive land conversions, with palay, corn, coconut, mango and banana as the region's top five agricultural crops.

Moreover, the project will serve as a flood control structure since water will be released in a controlled basis since the flood water during heavy rains will be secured in the catchment basin, it said.

The NIA has conducted a feasibility study on the project from October 2014 to August 2017, while detailed design and engineering was done from September 2017 to December 2021.

The project is envisioned to be fully operational by 2025.

Estimates showed that the project

will cost P2.45 billion, broken down into direct cost of P1.88 billion and indirect cost of P222.655 million.

In 1994, the Bayabas Project Study was conducted as part of the Water Resources Development Project and was identified as one of the potential sources of additional water supply to the AMRIS.

Angat Dam, located in Norzagaray, Bulacan is operated and managed by the National Power Corp. (Nepocor) and supplies water to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage Systems (MWSS) to serve Metro Manila's needs and to NIA for irrigation requirements of farmers within the province.

The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) has intervened in the water demand conflict by setting compromise water allocation during critical levels of the Angat Reservoir.

Because of this, the NIA faced reduction of allocation, which adversely affects the extent of actual irrigated area in the AMRIS, particularly during the dry season.

"Considering the ever-increasing demand for domestic water supply in Metro Manila, and given that domestic water supply is afforded as higher priority, the search and development of additional water sources for AMRIS needs to be resolved. NIA, being the proponent of the project, viewed a long-term possible solution by impounding to harness the water from Bayabas River for irrigation," it said.

The state-run firm expects the project to generate revenues where a portion can be allocated for reforestation, erosion control, and watershed protection.





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# LWUA to complete big ticket irrigation projects

By DANESSA RIVERA

State-run Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) has set its focus on completing big-ticket water supply systems by 2025, as well as speed up the development of treatment plants, to meet the growing potable water and sanitation needs of residents outside Metro Manila.

The agency is now getting back on track with the rehabilitation and construction efforts on water supply systems in the regions in line with the loan contract signed with the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The agency has faced setbacks due to the pandemic and the lack of an administrator, LWUA officer-in-charge Eileen dela Vega said in an interview.

"We don't have a full-fledged administration, so we face disruptions in terms of fund releases," she said.

In 2016, the multilateral

lender extended a \$60-million loan to LWUA to put up treatment plants in at least 12 provinces nationwide, and the agency is mandated to finish all of the projects by 2022 as required under the agreement.

But out of the 12 projects, Dela Vega said only two have been completed – one in Polomolok, South Cotabato and the other in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon.

Because of this, the LWUA has extended the project implementation of the ADB-funded projects.

"They are in various stages... but we're looking to complete all the projects in 2025," Dela Vega said.

Apart from water supply systems, LWUA is also developing septage treatment plants and sewerage systems.

"We also have internally funded projects to develop water supply systems. We are also focusing on septage treat-

ment plants to comply with the Clean Water Act," Dela Vega said.

For the sewerage systems, she said areas outside Metro Manila are just starting the development of these structures.

"We are just starting our sewerage systems. We have one in Baliwag, Bulacan, and this is hosting other districts for water treatment. But there are a lot being constructed in Baliwag. We also have one in San Jose, Bulacan and in Bataan," the LWUA official said.

The implementation of ADB-funded projects is in line with LWUA's long-term goal of providing universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water, and universal access to

adequate and equitable sanitation by 2030, as set under the Philippine Development Plan (PDP).

With the continued population growth and the impact of climate change, there is a need to find and develop new water sources, Dela Vega said.

"Water districts, nonetheless, are also doing their part in finding new water sources," she said.

The LWUA is also urging water districts to focus on reducing non-revenue water.

"We are also teaching them to prioritize addressing non-revenue water, the leaks... because that is important for them to prioritize in their program to prepare in case of drought," Dela Vega said.





EDITORIAL

## Securing future water supply

In the summer of 2019, Metro Manila residents experienced critically low supplies of potable water, and daily interruptions became the norm. Affected residents had to queue and wait for the arrival of fire trucks to have their daily supply. Besides the dwindling water level at the decades-old Angat Dam and Ipo Dam, as well as the dangerously low reserve held by La Mesa Dam, the crisis was blamed on the delay in water infrastructure projects, particularly the Kaliwa Dam in Tanay, Rizal.

Last week, the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) announced that the P12.2-billion, Chinese-funded Kaliwa Dam can now be completed by 2026 and start operation the following year, adding the controversial project will “no longer be derailed” after spending eight years just to secure permits for its construction. The MWSS and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) said they had obtained the free, prior, and informed consent of the 46 tribal communities to be affected by the project.

The project, however, is a little late in coming. Last month, the MWSS already warned of a possible supply shortage by 2024 due to population growth, while new water sources will not be readily available by then, highlighting not the lack of planning, but the sense of urgency in seeing the projects push through. The so-called New Centennial Water Source Project, an integrated system involving the construction of the Laiban Dam at the Kaliwa River in Rizal province, and the smaller Kaliwa Dam in Quezon province, is an example of the sad state of the process involved in vital infrastructure undertakings. Conceived as early as the Marcos era in the 1970s, a detailed study and preliminary work on Laiban were conducted until President Corazon Aquino deferred the project in 1989 due to ballooning costs. Studies continued through the Ramos and Estrada regimes, and the succeeding Arroyo administration identified Laiban as an infrastructure project to be funded by a loan from China—a proposal that fell through after Chinese state loans were put on hold in the wake of the ZTE-National Broadband Network scandal in 2007.

In 2009, San Miguel Corp. submitted an unsolicited proposal to the government to construct the P52-billion Laiban Dam, but the project drew flak from various groups, prompting the MWSS to terminate it in March 2010. The project was revived in 2017 as one of the Duterte administration's flagship water security projects, but only the Kaliwa Dam project was approved by the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda). In December 2021, the MWSS reported that the Kaliwa Dam project will push through after it signed a memorandum of agreement with the indigenous people of Rizal and Quezon. However, opposing groups alleged that the MWSS and the NCIP railroad negotiations with communities whose land would be affected by the project delaying the project anew. Even the MWSS announcement last week does not mean that opposition to the dam has completely gone away.

The MWSS still has to secure other permits needed for the project, including clearance from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources as parts of the dam project would pass through protected areas in the Sierra Madre.

This raises the question of why it takes too long for critical projects such as the Kaliwa Dam to get off the ground running, given the crucial need to secure water supply in Metro Manila and nearby provinces. The project is expected to provide 600 million liters a day to some 17 million residents in the metropolis and nearby provinces once completed. But just because Metro Manila is in dire need of water does not justify bringing irreversible damage to our remaining protected areas.

The lack of transparency has often been cited as a major factor for these tedious delays, causing many projects to attract opposition from stakeholders who feel the government was keeping them in the dark. This was obvious in the refusal of the Duterte administration to disclose the terms of the funding for the dam project, including the reported use of patrimonial assets as collateral for the Chinese loan.

The decades-long delay in implementation simply puts to the fore the need for the government to improve its procedures in obtaining permits for crucial projects, identify and eliminate redundancies, and address valid concerns if it is to fast-track their implementation. Greater transparency must be a key component of the entire process.

For the Kaliwa Dam, it is also imperative for the government to ensure that it fulfills its promises to the indigenous residents who will be adversely affected by the project. These include proper relocation, the payment of a P160-million one-time indemnity fee to communities in Rizal and Quezon provinces, and that they continue to receive their annual share from the first 25 years of the dam's operations. Then perhaps trust in the government's processes will improve and help speed up projects in the future.





# 'Salt makers should not be required to iodize product'

All the government needs to do is repeal the law that requires salt makers to iodize their product, and the Philippines can redeem its once glorious days in the 1970s when importing salt was not necessary, a key House member hinted yesterday.

As far as Albay Rep. Joey Salceda is concerned, the problem with the salt industry is too much regulation as specified in the Salt Iodization Law (Republic Act 8172), which is why he said he would push for

amendments to it.

"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," he pointed out.

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

Salceda said.

Nonetheless, the chairman of the House of Representatives' ways and means committee is optimistic this industry "which has declined significantly from its peak in the 1970s, is the easiest agricultural industry to revive."

"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 observed.

The House leader said government can still do away with its 93 percent import of salt if the Marcos administration can "repeal the requirement that salt makers have to 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," he suggested.

He said it was ironic that the Philippines is a country with one of the longest coastlines in the world, estimated to be 36,000 kilometers across the archipelago, from Luzon, Visayas to Mindanao, and yet the government needs to import salt.

"Shameful is one way to describe it. Stupid is another way," Salceda remarked.

He also proposed that the Department of Environment

and Natural Resources "simply create a list of areas for salt-making without significant environmental restrictions. Salt-making is one of the less environmentally destructive sectors."

"We have artisanal salts. *Tibuok* in 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. — **Delon Porcalla**





## EDITORIAL

### Ban plastic tarpaulins

A PROPOSED legislation is now pending consideration in the 24-member Senate seeks to prohibit the use of plastic tarpaulins during the election campaign period.

In impoverished Philippines, a Southeast Asian nation of election-crazy people, national and local polls are held every three years as mandated by the Constitution.

This is in addition to the non-partisan Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan (BSK) election, which is supposed to be held next October after several postponements.

Thus, Senator Raffy Tulfo's filing of Senate Bill (SB) No. 1762 is a welcome development in the national government's uphill battle against plastic pollution.

Tulfo, a former newspaperman, said the proposed legislation actually seeks to amend Republic Act (RA) No. 9006, otherwise known as the "Fair Election Act."

During the 2022 presidential elections, records show that collected plastic campaign materials, including tarpaulins and posters, weighed a total of 254 tons.

A well-meaning environmental group - the Eco-Waste Coalition (EWC) - said heavy-duty tarpaulins may take a thousand years for them to decompose.

And like other plastic garbage, poll campaign tarpaulins and posters end up in landfills and bodies of water across the country, causing pollution and catastrophic flooding.

Not only that. Plastic poll campaign tarpaulins and posters contain cadmium.

According to World Health Organization experts, cadmium exerts toxic effects on the renal, skeletal and respiratory systems and classified as a human carcinogen.

Banning the use of plastic tarpaulins and posters as poll campaign materials is certainly long overdue.





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## Davao City LGU inks agreement with PRA for reclamation project

By MANUEL T. CAYON

[@awimailbox](#)

Mindanao Bureau Chief

**D**AVAO CITY—The city government has applied with the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) to reclaim the areas enclosed by the 18-kilometer coastal road project.

Mayor Sebastian Z. Duterte and Acting City Administrator Francis Mark H. Layog signed last January 25 a Memorandum of Understanding with PRA General Manager and Chief Executive Officer Janilo E. Rubiato and PRA Board Members Dioscorro E. Esteban Jr. and Nolasco K. Bathan.

The city government application contained in the MOU covers an area of 57 hectares of reclaimable areas.

City Planning and Development Coordinator Ivan C. Cortez said the application “stems from the strategy of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) in avoiding structures along the Davao City Coastal Road.”

“The city government deemed it necessary to secure the spaces between the coastline and the coastal road with the Philippine Reclamation Authority as one of the first steps in ensuring we can develop the space properly as warranted by socioeconomic and environmental demands of the city,” Cortez said.

The City Mayor’s Office has earlier officially sent a letter of intent to the

PRA on March 18, 2018, Cortez said. From then on, he added, the city worked with various offices concerned and processed the documentary requirements, including the financial requirements.

### Open space

AMONG the requirement was a resolution and ordinance from the Sangguniang Panlungsod authorizing the City Mayor to enter and sign on behalf of the City of Davao the MOU between the city and PRA “relative to the application for reclamation along Davao City Coastal Road Project.”

Duterte said the initial plan was for the reclaimed areas “to become an open space for people to enjoy leisure activities.”

Rubiato said his office “has determined that the city is pre-qualified for the reclamation.” He said the MOU “basically outlines the requirements and the deadlines for submission.”

“Without proper engineering, the structural integrity of the reclaimed land won’t be sustained and the environment would not be protected. With our guidance, we will make sure that the city, the plans of the city and the methodology will be okay so that the structural filling up of the submerged area will be to the standard. Importantly, the environment will be protected if there will be effects at least we can institute mitigating measures,” he said.





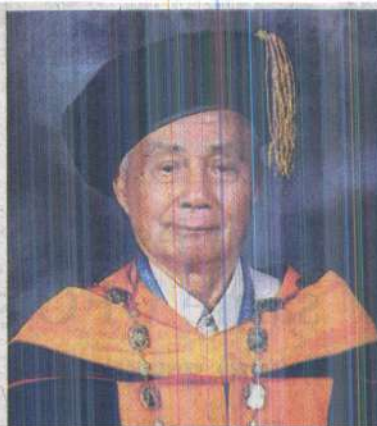
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## DOST recognizes scientific contributions of National Scientist Angel Alcalá

By ANALOU DE VERA



The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) recognized National Scientist Dr. Angel C. Alcalá's contributions and research works on marine biodiversity and marine conservation.

Alcalá, who died last Feb. 1 at the age of 93, was a marine biologist, herpetologist, research advocate, civil servant, and an acclaimed scientist, the DOST said.

"As a well renowned scientist, he was recognized for his outstanding scientific contributions to the systematics, ecology, and diversity of amphibians and reptiles and marine biodiversity, reef fishes, and conservation of marine protected areas," the DOST said in a statement. ▶ 7

## DOST recognizes scientific contributions of National Scientist Angel Alcalá ◀

"His research and advocacy for marine no-take zones led to a national policy and program that established no-take marine protected areas all over the country and became a model of coastal resource management and conservation that many countries have adopted," it added.

Alcalá graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Biology degree from Silliman University in 1951. He completed his Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy in Biological Sciences at Stanford University in California in 1960 and 1966, respectively, the DOST said.

The national scientist also received honorary doctorates from Xavier University and the University of South-eastern Philippines, the DOST said.

Alcalá was also an instructor in Biology at Silliman University and handled various high-ranking positions, including dean of the College

of Arts and Sciences, director of the Marine Laboratory, and eventually president of the University from 1991 to 1992, the DOST said.

"He founded the Silliman Marine Laboratory, which has been active in research on marine protected areas, fisheries and marine biodiversity, mariculture, and conservation of Philippine plant and animal species," the DOST said.

"His marine science publications consist of about 80 papers on coral reef fish, marine reserves, and the long-term effects of protection on marine diversities such as corals and top predatory fish. Most of these papers have been published in refereed, international journals and books," it added.

He also served as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) secretary from 1992 to 1995. Alcalá was also designated as chairman

of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) from 1995 to 1999.

It was in 2014 that former President Benigno Aquino III conferred Alcalá the Order of National Scientist. The title is the "highest recognition given to a Filipino man or woman of science in the Philippines who has made outstanding contributions in one of the different fields of science and technology," the DOST said.

Alcalá also received various awards such the Ilawng Karunungan Award for Biological Sciences by the Philippine Fulbrighters' Association in 1983, Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service in 1992, Outstanding Men and Women of Science by the Department of Science and Technology in 2009, and Gregorio M. Zara medal for Basic Science by the Philippine Association for the Advancement of Science, Inc. (PhilaAS) in 2011, among others, the DOST said.





## Protecting 30% of oceans a huge challenge for the planet

**M**ONTREAL, Canada (AFP) – How do we go from protecting eight percent of marine areas to 30 percent in less than 10 years? This question is at the heart of a global forum in Canada this weekend aiming to save marine ecosystems under threat from overfishing, pollution and climate change.

On the heels of the historic biodiversity agreement signed at COP15 in Montreal late last year, about 3,000 officials, scientists, NGOs and Indigenous groups are meeting in Vancouver for the fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5), which opened Friday and runs until Feb. 9.

Scientists have said the meeting is crucial for setting up a framework to reach the agreed target at COP15 of protecting 30 percent of the planet's lands and oceans by 2030.

It's an immense step for ocean conservation, which will see a tripling of areas made off-limits to most human activities, with an aim to preserve sensitive ecosystems and species at risk.

The summit, usually held every four years, is taking place two years late due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We must re-think our policies, economies, priorities, and processes in ways that reflect the important role nature plays in our own health, equity, well-being and economic sustainability," said host Canada, which has some of the world's longest coastlines.

Covering almost three-quarters of

the earth's surface, oceans are home to a quarter of known species and absorb 30 percent of CO2 emissions from human activities.

"COP15 marked a historic inflection point in conservation efforts for nature... but the pressure is on now not just to reach the numerical target, but to make sure that we do it right, that our marine protected areas are in the right places (and) that they're managed well," Pepe Clarke of the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) told AFP.

Some experts fear the "politics of figures."

### Resistance to climate change

Biodiversity hotspots or particularly vulnerable areas that deserve urgent conservation measures have been identified, scientists have said.

Now it is essential to have discussions to "establish a global network, ecologically representative and which adequately protects the whole range of ecosystem types," according to Clarke.

Especially since protecting and managing our oceans more sustainably will make them more resistant to climate change.

But even if the world achieves "the ambitious target of protecting 30 percent of the oceans by 2030 within high-quality (marine protected areas), the goals of the framework cannot be fully met without appropriate management of the other 70 percent of the oceans," said the Pew Charitable Trusts, a non-profit.





### Editorial

## Isaayos muna ang sistema ng retirement

**I**NAPRUBAHAN na ng House of Representatives sa ikatlo at huling pagbasa ang panukalang batas na nagbababa sa retirement age ng mga nagtatrabaho sa pamahalaan. Mula sa dating 60-anyos, gagawin itong 56-anyos. Nakasaad sa House Bill No. 206 na ang mga manggagawa sa gobyerno at kuwalipikadong miyembro ng GSIS na may edad 56 at nakapagsilbi ng 15 taon ay makakatanggap ng benepisyo.

Mabilis na naaprubahan ang panukalang batas at isa lamang ang kumontra sa 268 na mambabatas. Isa ang nag-abstain. Ang pagbaba ng retirement age ng mga nagtatrabaho sa gobyerno ay naging parehas na rin sa mga sundalo at pulis na ang mandatory retirement age ay 56. Nagpahiwatig naman ang GSIS na nahaharap sila sa malaking problema sa pagpapababa ng retirement age. Hindi naman ito gaanong niliwanag ng GSIS.

Nasisiyahan namang sinabi ni House Speaker Martin Romualdez na sa pagpapababa ng retirement age, maari nang mag-enjoy ang government workers habang kasama ang kanilang pamilya at mga kaibigan. Mae-enjoy na umano ng retirado ang benepisyo bago pa sila sumapit sa senior years.

Marami naman ang nagsabi na hindi maganda ang pagpapababa ng retirement age sapagkat masyadong bata pa para magretiro ang 56-anyos. Marami rin sa mga may edad na ganito ang may sinusupportahan pang kaanak. Mayroon pang pinag-aaral. Karamihan ay mga apo ang pinakakain. Karamihan ay walang ipon dahil sapat lang sa pangangailangan ang suweldo. Kung makukuha na ang benepisyo sa edad 56, madali lang itong mauubos dahil wala nang ibang pagkakakitaan. Baka maging pasanin pa ang mga ito sa dakong huli.

Mas maganda sanang ginawa ay isaayos ang retirement system. Bago ginawa ang pagpapababa sa retirement age, tinaasan sana ang benepisyo. Saan hahantong ang kapinggot na pension mula sa GSIS at maski sa SSS.

Hindi sana minadali ang HB 206 at dumaan muna sa mga konsultasyon kasama ang mga magreretiro.





## RETIREMENT AGE SA 'PINAS, GAWING 56 NA LANG



ISA sa pinakamalapit na sektor sa akin bilang mambabatas ay ang hanay ng mga manggagawa at senior citizen, kaya napakarami ko nang isinulong na batas para sa kanilang kapakanan.

Sa ating lipunan, napakarami pa rin nating kababayan na hanggang ngayon ay naghahanapbuhay, bagama't hindi naman masama kung kaya at malakas pa ang pangangatawan, ngunit paano ang mga kababayan nating sa murang edad ay hirap na sa kanilang kalusugan?

Kaya bilang Chairperson ng Senate Committee on Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation, nais kong bigyang-pansin ang kapakanan ng ating mga kababayang masigasig na nagtatrabaho sa ating pamahalaan.

Napakarami ng masisipag na nagtatrabaho sa ating gobyerno, ngunit marami sa kanila ang pinipilit na lamang ang kanilang katawan dahil nanghihinayang sila sa ilalagi pa nila sa kanilang pinapasukan dahil hindi pa sapat ang kanilang edad para magretiro.

Wala naman akong ibang motibo, maliban sa nakikiisa ako sa milyun-milyon nating kababayan na kawani ng gobyerno na ang tanging hangad lamang ay masuklian ang kanilang sipag at pagtutuyaga sa paninilbihan sa taumbayan.

Kaya lahat ng panukala na naglalayong bigyan ng mas maraming proteksyon at benepisyo ang mga empleyado ng gobyerno ay buong-buo ang aking suporta, hindi lang para sa ikabubuti ng mga manggagawa kundi ng buong bansa.

Ang pagkakapasa sa pinal na pagbasa ng House Bill No. 206 na naglalayong ibaba ang edad sa optional retirement ng mga kawani ng gobyerno mula 60-anyos patungong 56-anyos ay isang welcome development.

Nagsumite rin ako ng kahalintulad na panukala sa Senado noong nakaraang Pebrero 2, 2023 matapos ang masusing pag-aaral tungkol sa magiging epekto at benepisyo sa oras na maging isa na itong ganap na batas.

Ang totoo niyan, isinusulong ko ang panukalang ito, hindi lang sa mga panahong ito dahil noon pang 18th Congress ay pinupursige ko na ito dahil nais ko talagang gumaan-gaan naman ang sitwasyon ng nakatatanda nating kababayan.

Nakakalungkot isipin na ang mabagal na turn-over sa mga tanggapan ng pamahalaan ay nagmumula sa katotohanang kaunti ang nakikinabang dahil hindi pa kinuwali-pikado sa edad ng optional retirement.

Sa pamamagitan ng naturang panukala, hindi lang basta makakapagretiro nang maaga ang mga itawani ng gobyerno kundi mapapakinabangan pa nila nang husto ang bunga ng kanilang pinaghirapan dahil hindi pa sila uugod-uгод.

Higit sa lahat, bibilis ang turn-over at magkakaroon ng pagkakataon ang mga mas murang edad, lalo na 'yung mga bagong graduate na makalahok at maturo sa pamahalaan sa pagbibigay ng serbisyo sa taumbayan.

Tumatakbo ang panahon at kahit ano'ng gawin natin ay hindi na natin ito mapipigilan pa at ang pagkakataong makapagretiro nang maaga ng isang kawani ng pamahalaan ay kayamanang pamana para sa kanilang pamilya at iba pang mahal sa buhay.

Kaya kasangga ako ng mga kababayan nating isinusulong ang panukalang-batas na ito na naglalayong suklian ang dekada nilang serbisyo, hindi lang sa pa mahalaan kundi sa buong bayan.

Kung inyong matatandaan, isinulong ko rin ang Senate Bill No. 1573 na naglalayong amyendahan ang Republic Act No. 7432 na nagsasaad na ang senior citizen na naninirahan sa kahit saang bahagi ng bansa ay dapat na 60-anyos.

Sakaling maisabatas ang aking panukala, lahat ng residenteng Pinoy na 56-anyos ay ikukonsiderang senior citizen at maaari nang makinabang sa umiiral na benepisyo na tinatamasa ngayon ng mga senior citizen.

Nararapat lamang na gawing 56-anyos ang edad para maging senior citizen ang ating mga nakatatandang kababayan dahil madami na ang hindi pinapalad na umabot sa naturang edad at hindi na nila gaanong natatamasa ang benepisyo ng isang senior citizen.

Aanhin pa natin ang damo kung wala na ang kabayo? Tandaan natin na ang mga kamay nila ang humubog kung anuman ang magandang tinatamasa natin ngayon at kung tutuusin ay kulang na kulang pa ang benepisyong ibibigay natin kumpara sa kanilang mga ginawa.

Hindi lang 'yan dahil malapit sa atin ang sektor ng mga nakatatanda, nagsumite rin tayo ng Senate Bill No. 1558 na naglalayong obligahin ang mga establisimiyento na magtalaga ng upuan para sa mga senior citizen.

Nakapaloob din sa naturang panukala na bukod sa establisimiyento ay kabilang din ang mga restaurants, libraries, recreational centers, at venue halls na dapat ay may nakahandang upuan at lamesa sa mga senior citizen.

Isipin n'yo na lang, ang mga kasalukuyang senior citizen ay pinabibigyan na natin ng upuan para maibsan ang pagod sa paglalakad, tapos marami pa sa mga kawani natin sa pamahalaan ang 60-anyos na ay saka pa lamang makakapagretiro.

**Anak Ng Teteng!**