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COMMONSENSE

MARICHU A. VILLANUEVA

Climate change trips

By God's graces, our country was just grazed by the super typhoon called "Betty" over the weekend. With the international name "Mawar," it could have brought another catastrophic magnitude of damages, especially to a disaster-prone country like the Philippines. We heave a collective sigh of relief that we got spared from major destruction and almost zero loss of lives.



Credit goes to the so-called "whole of government" early preparations and pre-positioning of men, equipment and resources. Even if "Betty" moved far away from our country, it is better to be safe than sorry.

Typhoon "Betty" is just the second tropical cyclone that hit and crossed the Philippines this year. Our country is visited by an average of 20 typhoons each year. In March this year, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) declared that the dry season is expected to last until May.

"Betty" passed us by despite PAGASA predictions of early onset of the El Niño phenomenon. PAGASA projected the long dry spell will develop in our country in the third quarter of 2023 and "may persist until 2024." El Niño increases the likelihood of below-normal rainfall conditions. PAGASA warns this could lead to droughts in some areas of the Philippines even while *habagat* pulls in tropical storms to enter our country.

That's how erratic climate change has drastically altered our normal weather patterns.

Thus, we cannot solely blame PAGASA weather experts for the faulty weather predictions. As the primary weather monitor, climate change is no excuse though for PAGASA to be woefully way off the mark in tracking the erratic movements of super typhoon "Betty."

No less than President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. (PBBM) himself fully understands and proactively addresses the challenges of climate change. PBBM has been espousing the need for climate change adaptation measures in every opportunity to highlight them in his speeches. "We cannot avoid talking about climate change and the effects of climate change and the changes that we have to do or the way we work because we have to adjust to climate change. We have to adapt to the effects of climate change," PBBM pointed out in his recent speech at the inauguration of the ACEN windmills farm in Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte.

But I can't for the life of me understand why Philippine government officials would go abroad on *talk-athon* conferences related to climate change. In a press and photo release last Friday, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) bandied about a Philippine delegation flying to New York for a three-day conference held at the United Nations from May 18-20.

That's how erratic climate change has drastically altered our normal weather patterns.

The same press and photo release claimed it was PBBM who "designated" DENR Secretary Antonia Loyzaga to head the Philippine delegation to the UN High-Level Meeting on the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). From Google, it reported the High-Level Meeting was convened by the President of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) under the theme "Working Together to Reduce Risk for a Resilient Future."

The DENR photo release showed the Philippine delegation Secretary Loyzaga and several other officials from the DENR who included Undersecretary and Chief of Staff Marilou Erni. Several other officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA); the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA); the Department of National Defense-Office of Civil Defense headed by Assistant Secretary Ariel Nepomuceno, and private sector representatives from the ARISE Philippines comprise the rest of the Philippine delegation to New York.

They were joined at this UN-DRR meeting by New York-based Ambassador Leila Lora-Santos and our country's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Antonio Lagdameo.

According to the same DENR press release "the Loyzaga-led delegation" presented the Philippine papers that reaffirmed the government's commitments to building resilience, especially among the most vulnerable sectors in the country. "The delegation stated how the climate crisis and the pandemic amplified pre-existing social vulnerabilities and overshadowed the country's achievements in significantly reducing disaster-related mortalities, the number of affected populations, and direct economic losses to GDP (gross domestic product) prior to 2020. It further pointed out that majority of all loss and damage between 2010 and 2020 were due to tropical cyclones alone, until COVID-19 came and reversed years of social progress and drove more than three million Filipinos back into poverty."

Yes, we get it. Other than the hifalutin words contained in the Philippine statement, we totally understand the message that our government would like to tell the world. From pre-emptive evacuation of people to safer shelters and higher grounds, to the pre-positioning of rescue personnel, equipment and relief goods, these are the "best practices" and the "to do" activities on DRR and climate change adaptation measures.

But do we need a Philippine delegation just to present and read the country's position paper to that event at the UNGA? Isn't it precisely we have our Permanent Representative to the UNGA who can capably do this simple task? Loyzaga flew there just two weeks after she was also part of PBBM delegation in Washington D.C. She reportedly joined in private and official meetings that - I supposed - required inputs from the DENR Secretary.

To obviously justify this junket, the DENR press release stated in the end: "The New York meeting is seen as a fitting prelude to the Philippine hosting of the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in October 2024."

Loyzaga is reportedly equally if not out-travelled PBBM in foreign trips in one year so far of this administration. It is not unusual if the DFA Secretary, or the Tourism Secretary, or even the Finance Secretary to frequently embark on job-related travels abroad.

But for the DENR Secretary to go on climate change trips abroad, go figure.



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OVP begins school bag distribution, tree planting

By ELIZABETH MARCELO

The Office of the Vice President (OVP) kicked off a nationwide distribution of one million bags containing school supplies and dental kits as well as the planting of one million trees under its "PagbaBAGo: A Million Learners and Trees" program.

Vice President Sara Duterte on Saturday led the launching at the Mandaue City Sports Complex in Cebu.

Tree planting and bag distribution were also simultaneously held in key areas in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

"We hope that in the six years, while we are the Office of the Vice President, the campaign will reach one million children and one million parents," Duterte said in Cebuano.

The OVP, in partnership with the Departments of Education and of the Environment and Natural Resources, said that aside from promoting education, the campaign now includes a dental hygiene kit and environmental care lessons through tree planting.

"It is very important that we take care of our environment now for the benefit of

the next generation," Duterte said.

At least 1,000 Grades 1 and 4 students in Cebu, Isabela, Dagupan and Zamboanga were given the "PagbaBAGo" backpacks. In Bacolod and Surigao, a total of 1,019 and 1,009 learners received their backpacks, respectively.

In Tacloban, 1,015 backpacks were given and another 1,008 were distributed in several areas in Region V. A total of 1,002 learners from Davao and 1,006 learners in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao also received backpacks.



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Sara launches 'Million Learners and Trees' program

VICE President and Education Secretary Sara Duterte has launched the "PagbaBAGo: A Million Learners and Trees" meant to benefit students, the environment and families.

Duterte led the rollout of the project that aims to provide students with 1 million bags containing school supplies and dental kits, planting 1 million trees for environmental sustainability, and promoting family planning among parents, at the Mandaue City Sports Complex in Cebu City last Saturday.

"We hope that in the six years, while we are at the Office of the Vice President, the campaign will reach 1 million children and 1 million parents," she said in the Visayan language.

The campaign is similar to what Duterte started as mayor of Davao City in 2016. The new component of the initiative is the integration of dental hy-

giene and environmental care through tree planting.

"It is very important that we take care of our environment now for the benefit of the next generation," Duterte said.

She partnered with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Education (DepEd) in implementing the campaign.

A total of 1,000 Grade 1 and Grade 4 students in Cebu, Isabela, Dagupan and Zamboanga were the first recipients of Pagbabago backpacks. In Bacolod, 1,019 learners received backpacks, and 1,009 were distributed to students in Surigao.

In Tacloban, the OVP and DepEd distributed 1,015 backpacks to learners and 1,008 in Region 5 (Bicol).

In Davao, 1,002 learners received the backpacks.

KRISTINA MARALIT



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Ship with 1.35M liters of oil raises spill fears

BY DEXTER A. SEE

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan: Gov. Ramon Guico 3rd has asked the Bureau of Customs (BoC) to remove a ship loaded with more than a million liters of oil from Sual Bay, where it has been docked since May 3, 2023.

"The ship should be moved to a safer location to protect the bay area from destruction, in the event the crude oil from the ship leaks into the bay," Guico said this week in an emergency meeting he called at the Urduja House.

Provincial legal officer Baby Ruth Torre said she has written the BoC to formalize the governor's request.

The ship, MV Veronica I, is now under the custody of the BoC office in Sual after the agency seized the ship when it failed to show the necessary documents for its cargo.

The ship carried 1.35 million liters of crude oil worth P54 million. Sual Bay, a cove facing the

Lingayen Gulf, hosts the town's mariculture area where more than 800 bangus (milkfish) cages are located.

Sual and the towns of Bolinao and Anda supply about 80 percent of bangus produced in Pangasinan.

Pablo Costales of the Maritime Industry Authority extension office in Pangasinan said the ship was not issued by his agency a safety certificate and it should not have sailed.

Commander Mark Theodore Valencia, chief of the Philippine Coast Guard station in Pangasinan, recommended that MV Veronica 1 be allowed to temporarily

dock at Sual Fish Port as safety precaution because a typhoon was expected to enter the country on May 26, 2023.

"As recommended by Commander Valencia, let us allow the ship to dock at the pier to prevent the possibility that it will be dragged. But it has to be ensured that the evidence, the contents of the ship, will be guarded," Guico said.

The governor also said the docking at the pier is temporary, adding that the ship should be eventually removed from the bay.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has suggested that spill booms be installed around the ship when it docks at the pier.

The DENR also suggested the installation of additional anchors in the ship to stabilize the vessel.

It said their divers found out that the ship dropped its anchor on a muddy substrate.

Lawyer Catherine Regino, legal officer of Sual, said there is already

"an imminent danger or threat" because of spillage of the oil coming from the ship.

Laboratory analyses of water samples taken by the DENR near the ship, however, indicated that there were no traces of oil spill in the area yet.

"But the danger remains," Guico said.

"Is there a way to legally remove the contents of the ship and then remove the ship from the bay and then account for the contents?" the governor asked.

Lawyer Emmanuel Laforteza of the Provincial Prosecutor's Office said a sample of the oil is only needed as evidence to be presented in court.

"And for the rest of the diesel products, we can remove that and put it in a safer place or a container as long as we can preserve the evidence by taking a sample. And we have to fast-track the hearing of that case so we can dispose of this hazardous element," Laforteza added.



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Belmonte raises world cities' call for plastics treaty

By **ELIZABETH MARCELO**

Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte has voiced out the call of city governments around the world for the passage of an international treaty that would address plastic pollution.

"While we as cities are proud of our respective achievements, we recognize that we cannot address the plastic waste crisis alone. We need a truly ambitious global plastics treaty that unifies our efforts and sets a high bar for all nations to follow," Belmonte said in her speech on Saturday at a global forum to address the plastic waste crisis.

Belmonte has been chosen as the sole representative of local chief executives worldwide at the high level event organized by the French government and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Paris, France.

Belmonte said world mayors specifically want national leaders to consider passing a UN Treaty on Plastic Pollution (Plastic Treaty) that would include provisions on total ban of unnecessary plastics and adoption of reusable items.

Belmonte said other provisions that world mayors want to be included in the treaty are the creation of a financial mechanism to help cities shift harmful consumption patterns into an innovative and sustainable one; and strengthened collaboration with cities in the negotiation process of the treaty to ensure realistic and implementable programs.

Belmonte, meanwhile, urged world city mayors to continue working on their respective programs to address plastic pollution in their localities.

"Let us recognize the power of cities, acknowledge our accomplishments, and empower us with the necessary tools to continue championing the call against plastic pollution. Together, we can forge a future where this is but a distant memory, and our planet thrives in its full glory," Belmonte said.

Belmonte said that like Quezon City, other cities around the world are also

experiencing the adverse impacts of plastic pollution including flooding from clogged sewers, air quality impacts from burning plastics, and the challenge of managing vast amounts of plastic waste.

To address these problems, Belmonte cited some of the measures implemented by the QC government such as prohibiting single-use plastic bags and disposable cutlery, straws and cups in restaurants and fast food chains for dine-in customers and the banning of single-use containers and sachets in hotels.

Belmonte also cited the QC government's "Trash to Cashback" program to recover plastic waste from the waste stream, especially low value plastics.

Under the program, residents will bring their recyclables and single use plastics to designated areas in exchange for environmental points which they can use to purchase groceries and pay utility bills.

Aside from Belmonte, other speakers in the ongoing event include French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Catherine Colonna, French Minister for Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion Christophe Béchu, UNEP executive director Inger Andersen, Marine Biology professor Richard Thompson of University of Plymouth, Ellen MacArthur Foundation executive for plastics and finance program Rob Opsomer, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) international correspondent Marc Lambertini, and children and youth representative Zuhair Ahmed Kowshik.

Belmonte was accompanied by QC Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Department head Andrea Villaroman.

They have joined delegates from leading cities in the world and international partners including UNEP, International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Ellen McArthur Foundation, WWF, World Economic Forum, United Nations Development Programme and UN-Habitat.

A rational and orderly balance: The economy, environment, and the future



#MINDANAO

JOHN TRIA

In discussions on the issue of amending certain constitutional provisions to allow more foreign ownership in certain economic sectors, it is clear that we need foreign investments to bring capital and technology to develop our resources to meet the needs of present and future generations.

However, some stakeholders have expressed fears that if sectors of the economy will be opened to larger foreign ownership beyond the limits set in the Constitution, then large amounts of foreign capital will cause the "over-exploitation" of natural resources. Along with this will be the feared negative effects on the environment and communities.

In the interest of reasoned debate, it is useful to examine these claims in light of the 1987 Philippine Constitution and other laws that provide safeguards to address these fears.

Firstly, in my reading of the Constitution as a layperson, I do not see any provision preventing the use of our natural resources. What it does say in the national economy and patrimony provisions is that endeavors meant to use such must be controlled by Filipinos. That said, can the claimed "over-exploitation" be done exclusively or mainly by foreign-owned enterprises? No. Anyone given the right to use, even Filipino enterprises can, if unchecked, be guilty of "over-exploiting."

The safeguard against the fears lies in the specific rules imposed on the use of such resources to ensure two outcomes. The first is that the wealth derived from these resources is shared. Second is that the negative environmental impacts are mitigated, and positive social and ecological effects are enhanced.

That said, the constitution itself provides for the fundamental principle that sets the safeguards against this outcome by anyone, whether a foreigner or Filipino. Article 2 Section 16 of our constitution states that "The State shall protect

and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature."

This fundamental principle underpins many environmental laws crafted and passed after 1987, along with rules and procedures such as requiring environmental impact assessments, and public participation requirements for certain proposed projects projected to cause significant environmental impacts. In my view, this is also congruent with the principles of the earlier Presidential Decree 1151 or the Philippine Environmental Policy.

In particular, Section 1 declares it a policy of the State to "(a) to create, develop, maintain and improve conditions under which man and nature can thrive in productive and enjoyable harmony with each other, (b) to fulfill the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations of Filipinos, and, (c) to ensure the attainment of an environmental quality that is conducive to a life of dignity and well-being."

These precepts enshrine balanced ecology as a people's right. People, and the enterprises they organize have a right to use resources and utilize them for their benefit. A rational and orderly balance in the development of the resources in PD 1151 is required to ensure that benefits are optimized and shared, and negative effects are mitigated. This is a strong basis for sustainability.

We cannot thrive in harmony when we have disallowed the use of resources meant for life. Hence, we need investments, technology, new ideas, and capital to build the enterprise and undertake the activities while following proper rules and safeguards. This ensures this balance not only for present stakeholders but future generations. How well we achieve this rational and orderly balance today is an investment in the sustainable future of our children.



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Source: <https://eas.com/160...climate-change-and-agriculture/>

Global temperatures to break records in the next five years

GLOBAL temperatures are likely to surge to record levels in the next five years, fueled by heat-trapping greenhouse gases and a naturally occurring El Niño weather pattern, a new update issued by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said.

There is a 66-percent likelihood that the annual average near-surface global temperature between 2023 and 2027 will be more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels for at least one year.

And there is a 98-percent likelihood that at least one of the next five years, and the five-year period, will be the warmest on record.

"A warming El Niño is expected to develop in the coming months and this will combine with human-induced climate change to push global temperatures into uncharted territory," said

WMO secretary-general Jukka Petteri Taalas.

"This will have far-reaching repercussions for health, food security, water management and the environment. We need to be prepared," he said.

El Niño typically increases global temperatures in the year after it develops, in this case, in 2024.

There is a 98-percent chance of at least one in the next five years beating the temperature record set in 2016, when there was an exceptionally strong El Niño.

Arctic warming is disproportionately

high, the report said. Compared to the 1991-2020 average, the temperature anomaly is predicted to be more than three times as large as the global expected anomaly when considering the next five northern hemisphere extended winters.

Predicted rain patterns for the May to September 2023-2027 average, compared to the 1991-2020 average, suggest increased rainfall in the Sahel, northern Europe, Alaska and northern Siberia, and reduced rainfall for this season over the Amazon and parts of Australia, the report said.

Water is becoming increasingly scarce in arid and semi-arid parts of Sudan.

In addition to increasing global temperatures, human-induced greenhouse gases are leading to more ocean heating and acidification, sea ice and glacier melt, sea level rise and more extreme weather.

The Paris Agreement sets long-term

goals to guide all nations to substantially reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to limit the global temperature increase in this century to 2°C while pursuing efforts to limit the increase even further to 1.5°C, to avoid or reduce adverse impacts and related losses and damages.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says climate-related risks for global warming are higher than 1.5°C but lower than 2°C.

The new report was released ahead of the World Meteorological Congress on May 22 to June 2, which will discuss how to strengthen weather and climate services to support climate change adaptation.

Priorities for discussion at Congress include the UN's Early Warnings for All initiative to protect people from increasingly extreme weather and a new Greenhouse Gas Monitoring Infrastructure to inform climate mitigation. UN News



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Betty slows down, but will enhance monsoon

By BELLA CARIASO

Typhoon Betty has weakened, but more than 200 millimeters of rain are expected in Northern Luzon and western section of Southern Luzon and Visayas as the former super typhoon enhances the *habagat* or southwest monsoon, affecting many areas in the country including Mindanao, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

At a press conference, PAGASA weather senior specialist Chris Perez said that while tropical cyclone wind signal No. 1 was hoisted in many areas, the weather bureau does not discount the possibility of raising the wind signal to No. 3.

"Many may ask, signal number one was raised in their areas, but there are no rains. We would like to remind the public that the effect of strong winds will be experienced starting tonight (Sunday) or tomorrow morning (Monday morning). We are not ruling out the possibility of signal number two as it is slowly

moving southwest. The worst-case scenario is we will have wind signal three," Perez said.

He added that Northern Luzon will be directly affected by Typhoon Betty (international name Mawar), while enhanced *habagat* will affect Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

"Northern Luzon will experience more than 200 millimeters of rain in the next two to five days starting tomorrow (Monday) until Friday. On the other hand, in terms of *habagat*, the western section of Southern Luzon and Visayas will also experience the same amount of rain," Perez warned.

He said that the combined strength of Betty and enhanced *habagat* will result in flooding and landslides, particularly in low-lying areas.

"The continuous rains will bring flooding in certain portion of Northern Luzon, Central and Southern Luzon and Visayas because of the combined effects of Typhoon Betty and enhanced *habagat*," Perez said.

He said the state weather bureau does not see the typhoon making

landfall, but it will affect the entire country because of its radius.

"Based on our satellite imagery, it is far from the land mass, but many areas will be covered by heavy clouds, bringing rains and strong winds," Perez explained.

As of 11 a.m. on Sunday, tropical cyclone wind signal one was hoisted in Batanes, Cagayan including Babuyan Islands, Isabela, Apayao, Ilocos Norte, northern and central portions of Abra (Tineg, Lacub, Lagayan, San Juan, Lagangilang, Licuan-Baay, Malibcong, Danglas, La Paz, Dolores, Tayum, Bucay, Sallapadan, Daguioman, Bucloc, Boliney), Kalinga, eastern and central portions of Mountain Province (Sadanga, Barlig, Natonin, Paracelis, Bontoc), eastern and central portions of Ifugao (Mayoyao, Aguineldo, Alfonso Lista, Banaue, Hingyon, Lagawe, Lamut, Kiangan, Asipulo), northern and central portions of Aurora (Dilasag, Casiguran, Dinalungan, Dipaculao), Quirino and the northeastern portion of Nueva Vizcaya (Kasibu, Quezon, Solano, Bagabag, Diadi, Villaverde, Bayombong, Ambaguio).

According to the weather bureau, the center of the eye of Typhoon Betty was located at 715 kms. east of Tuguegarao City, Cagayan. It has maximum sustained winds of 175 kilometers per hour near the center and gustiness of up to 215 km/h, as it is moving westward at 15 km/h.

The state bureau said that more than 200 millimeters of rain are expected in Batanes, Ilocos Sur, northern portion of La Union and northern portion Benguet, Babuyan Islands, Ilocos Norte and Abra from Wednesday morning to Thursday morning.

PAGASA said that monsoon rains are expected over the western portions of Mimaropa, Calabarzon and Central and Southern Luzon.

At the same time, PAGASA said a gale warning remains in effect over the northern and eastern seaboard of Northern Luzon, eastern seaboard of Central and Southern Luzon, and the eastern seaboard of Visayas and Mindanao.

"Typhoon Betty will move west northwestward or northwestward until tomorrow (Monday) while

gradually decelerating. The typhoon will likely become slow-moving to almost stationary by Tuesday while over the waters east of Batanes. It will then move northward or north northeastward by mid Wednesday or Thursday towards the sea east of Taiwan," the weather bureau added in its latest bulletin.

According to PAGASA, Typhoon Betty is expected to gradually weaken until Tuesday.

"Afterwards, increasingly unfavorable environment while moving northward or north northeastward on Wednesday or Thursday will result in a faster weakening rate. Typhoon Betty may be downgraded to severe tropical storm category on late Thursday or early Friday," it added.

Under PAGASA's tropical cyclone wind signal system, a super typhoon is declared if it has sustained winds of 185 km/h; typhoon, 118 to 184 km/h; severe tropical storm, 89 to 117 km/h; tropical storm, 62 to 88 km/h, and tropical depression at less than 61 km/h.

- With Ramon Efren Lazaro, Evelyn Macairan, Ralph Edwin Villanueva, Rainier Allan Ronda



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Sorsogon town sizzles with 50°C heat index

Amid the threat of Typhoon Betty, the heat index in the town of Juban in Sorsogon hit 50 degrees Celsius on Saturday, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

PAGASA said the highest heat index in Juban was felt at 3 p.m.

Six other areas experienced "danger" heat index including Borongan in Eastern Samar with 43 degrees Celsius; Dagupan in Pangasinan and Iba in Zambales with 43 degrees, and Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) in

Pasay City, Legazpi City in Albay and Sinait in Ilocos Sur with 42 degrees Celsius.

The state weather agency said that from March 1 to May 27, the highest heat index was recorded in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro on May 24 with 52 degrees Celsius followed by Juban and Legazpi City with 50 degrees, and Virac in Catanduanes and Aparri in Cagayan with 49 degrees Celsius.

"Danger" heat index ranges from 42 to 51 degrees Celsius and may cause heat cramps, exhaustion and heat stroke with contin-

ued exposure.

Heat index ranging from 52 degrees Celsius and above is considered "extreme danger."

PAGASA is expected to declare the onset of the rainy season within the next few days.

As this developed, the water level in Angat Dam dropped to 190.54 meters yesterday morning from 190.81 meters the other day.

Angat supplies more than 90 percent of Metro Manila's potable water needs and irrigates 25,000 hectares of farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga. —Bella Cariaso