

01 June 2023 Thursday



DENR

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



DENR to test air quality in Victorias

BY EUGENE Y. ADIONG

BACOLOD CITY: The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will test the air quality in Victorias City, Negros Occidental after a molasses spill incident that occurred in the compound of Victorias Milling Co. (VMC) on May 5.

Residents from nearby villages also complained of a foul odor caused by the spill.

On Tuesday, the City Environment and Natural Resources Office

(Cenro) said in a statement the DENR will "provide a gas tester to monitor the air quality in the city next week."

It also said the VMC, the coun-

try's largest sugar miller, procured a gas tester and borrowed a portable gas tester from the Manapla Distillery Plant to monitor the air quality in its wastewater treatment facility.

"Cenro already requested VMC to provide data on the pH level of all of their operating ponds for better monitoring," it added.

The pH or potential hydrogen level, which measures the acidity or basicity of a solution or substance, "must reach at least 6.5 to reduce the foul odor caused by hydrogen sulfide gas," the Cenro said.

"The higher the pH level, the lower the hydrogen sulfide present

in the water," it added.

The molasses leak caused health and environmental concerns in the city after the spillage led to the contamination of the Malihaw River and the emission of stench from the wastewater treatment pond that has spread to 11 villages.

On Monday, the Sangguniang Panlungsod (city council) approved three resolutions.

The first was for the City Legal Office to explore, study and recommend possible legal actions and remedies related to the molasses spill incident.

In a statement, Councilor Dino

Acuña, chairman of the committee on natural resources, environmental protection and ecology, said the city government was serious in its efforts to protect the environment and the people's health, and that charges should be filed against those responsible for the incident.

In another resolution, the city council called on the executive department, through Mayor Javier Miguel Benitez, to sign a memorandum of agreement with the VMC for the implementation of rehabilitative actions by the latter.

Acuña said this would ensure that the plans would not remain

only as promises but would be fulfilled and implemented soonest. These include mitigating, contingency, long- and short-term plans, environmental cleanup drive, corporate liabilities and social responsibilities.

The third resolution seeks the intervention of the DENR as a third-party agency that will assist the city in addressing the environmental problems caused by the molasses spill and the spread of foul odor.

Molasses is a thick substance made during the process of making sugar. When spoiled, it usually emits a pungent odor.



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DENR revises reporting standards for mineral exploration results

By DANESSA RIVERA

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sees faster development of the country's mineral industry following the new guidelines in the classification and reporting standards of exploration results, mineral resources and ore reserves.

The new guidelines amended Department Administrative Order 2010-09 to allow the local mining industry to adopt with advances and upgrades of internationally accepted standards as set out in the Philippine Mineral Reporting Code of 2020 (PMRC 2020).

According to the DENR, mining contractors, permittees, permit holders and operators, and mining applicants complying with the new DAO could expedite the evaluation and development of mining projects, as a result of the harmonization and streamlining of the entire reporting process related to mineral exploration results.

Prior to PMRC 2020, the industry had been adopting public reporting standards set under PMRC 2007, which was then compatible with the Australasian Joint Ore Reserves Committee (JORC) Code of 2004 and the Committee for Mineral Reserves International Reporting Standards (CRIRSCO) International Reporting Template of 2006.

The CRIRSCO Template and the JORC Code have since been upgraded in 2019 and 2012, respectively, rendering the

PMRC 2007 incompatible with its standards.

The revision of the PMRC to its 2020 edition was undertaken by the PMRC Committee, whose member-organizations include PSEM, GSP, and SMEP along with minerals industry-related organizations and bodies, such as the Philippine Stock Exchange Inc., the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, the Philippine Mining and Exploration Association, the Philippines-Australia Business Council, and the Philippine Chamber of Coal Mines.

The new guidelines also updated some terminologies, such as replacing "competent person" with "accredited competent person" or ACP to refer to an industry professional duly accredited by the Philippine Society of Mining Engineers (PSEM), the Geological Society of the Philippines (GSP), and the Society of the Metallurgical Engineers of the Philippines (SMEP), or other similar professional organizations accredited by the Professional Regulation Commission.

It also replaced the terms "ore reserve" with "mineral reserve," and "potential or target mineral resources" with "exploration targets."

The updated guidelines also entailed consideration of "modifying factors," which are applied to mineral resources to support mine planning and final evaluation of the economic viability of mineral deposits before they are converted to

mineral reserves.

These may include mining, processing, metallurgical, infrastructure, economic, marketing, legal, environmental, social, and governmental factors.

The latest DAO provided an expanded or detailed checklist of assessment or reporting criteria that must be considered by an ACP in preparing a report on exploration results, mineral resources, or mineral reserves. Should any item in the checklist not be discussed, the ACP must explain the reason for such.

Section 5 of DAO 2023-05 also introduced technical studies, which include scoping, pre-feasibility, and feasibility studies.

Other revisions include the required reporting of metal equivalents, as well as non-technical aspects of reporting of items, notably commodity pricing and marketing, permitting, legal requirements and sustainability considerations.

The latest DAO explicitly requires ACPs to prepare the necessary reports for public disclosure. Specifically, reporting of exploration results and mineral resources shall be disclosed by ACP geologist, while that for mineral reserves shall be disclosed by ACP mining engineer.

Additionally, the ACP metallurgical engineer shall disclose reporting of metallurgical test works that form part of a feasibility study of a mineral project.

The DENR said mineral industry players will have a two-year transition period to adjust to the revised guidelines.



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NWRB prevents rotational water interruption in Metro

The rotational water interruption in Metro Manila and nearby provinces was prevented for now after the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) yesterday decided to retain the 52 cubic meters per second (cms) allocation for the two water concessionaires.

The NWRB granted the request of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to keep the allocation for Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water until June 15 amid the continued drop in the water level of Angat Dam.

In a text message to **The STAR**, MWSS Deputy Administrator Jose Dorado Jr. confirmed the decision of the NWRB led by Executive Director Seville David Jr. to

extend for 15 days the 52 cms water allotment for the two concessionaires.

"The NWRB granted 52 cms from June 1 to 15, and 50 cms from June 16 to 30," Dorado said.

The 52 cms water allocation for Maynilad and Manila Water was supposed to end yesterday.

As of 6 a.m. yesterday, the water level of Angat Dam had dropped further to 189.91 meters from 190.08 meters on Tuesday.

This is still 6.21 meters above its rule curve elevation of 183.60 or the level required for the dam to fulfill its functions.

Angat Dam supplies more than 90 percent of Metro Manila's potable water needs.

— **Bella Cariaso**



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REGIONS

Kennon watershed up for preservation

BAGUIO CITY—This city and its neighboring Benguet towns of Tuba and Itogon are collaborating to save the watershed of Kennon Road's Bued River system, amid the conversion of Cordillera forests into farms. Data on water and soil quality, temperature and land use collected by a team from a local university helped shape the watershed management plan that was endorsed to the local environment offices on Tuesday. —STORY BY VINCENT CABREZA

AB

LAND USE PLAN

BAGUIO, BENGUET TOWNS LINK UP TO PROTECT KENNON WATERSHED

By Vincent Cabreza
@InqNational

BAGUIO CITY—The conversion of Cordillera forests into farms, with an annual rate of 8.64 hectares of lost timberland, will impact 13 major river systems in Luzon, a group of researchers revealed on Tuesday.

This prompted this city and its neighboring Benguet towns of Tuba and Itogon to join hands and preserve the watershed of Kennon Road's Bued River system using new data and a management plan drawn up by Project Danum, a multidisciplinary study group of the University of the Cordilleras that was funded by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST).

The 18,473.81-ha Bued River Basin leads down to the farmlands in the provinces La Union and Pangasinan. The headwaters of Bued and other river systems flowing into Luzon provinces are in the Cordillera, which has been described as Luzon's watershed cradle.

Project Danum (the term is Ilocano for water) tracked the behavior of Bued River, particularly near the settlements along Kennon Road, and has been measuring the water and soil quality, moisture and temperature there, said project leader Nathaniel Vincent Lubrica, an engineer. It has also been calculating the potential impact of increased rainfall along the river system in the future.

The data collected helped shape the Bued watershed management plan that was turned over to the environment offices of Baguio, Tuba and Itogon on Tuesday.

Synchronized use

One of the plan's recommendations was for all three local governments to synchronize and harmonize their respective land use plans.

Taking note of Baguio's industrial and commercial land use priorities and Itogon's dominant mineral extraction zones, Lubrica said most sections of Bued watershed must be reserved for forest use.

Itogon hosts some of the country's oldest mining companies, which continue to operate today.

Tuba's current land use for Bued is predominantly "strict forest protection," followed by agriculture and a push for its own industrialization.

These communities must talk because "some of the proposed land use upstream may affect the land use downstream," Lubrica said.

Project Danum also reviewed the rate of forest losses in the Bued area for the past 20 years, which confirmed that "when the urban area expanded and agricultural activities increased, the Bued forest decreased," he said.

Lubrica heads another DOST-funded study group, Program Boondock, that is conducting several climate-impact research projects throughout the Cordillera.

At least 174,553 people live near or along the Bued River system and its watershed, according to Project Danum's demographic profile of the area. They belong to 41 villages in Tuba, Itogon and Baguio. At least 70 percent of these Bued settlements are in the summer capital, he said.

Prone to landslides

Citing a 2021 socioeconomic study of Bued River that was conducted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Project Danum said most of the dwellers were government or office workers, entrepreneurs and seasonal construction workers, with only 2 percent engaged in agriculture and 1 percent occasionally taking part in food production.

The Bued terrain is prone to landslides, which is a typical problem for the 34-kilometer Kennon Road, the shortest route to Baguio City from Pangasinan and La Union.

Lubrica said sections of its watershed have "inadequate vegetative cover" and "impermeable subsoil," which may account for its "high drainage density." This means runoff rainwater is not absorbed immediately by the ground, so it joins the Bued River channel and occasionally increases its water elevation as it flows to low-lying communities.

"We still have time to do something," Lubrica said after water quality standards described the Bued River as being in a "good condition." INQ



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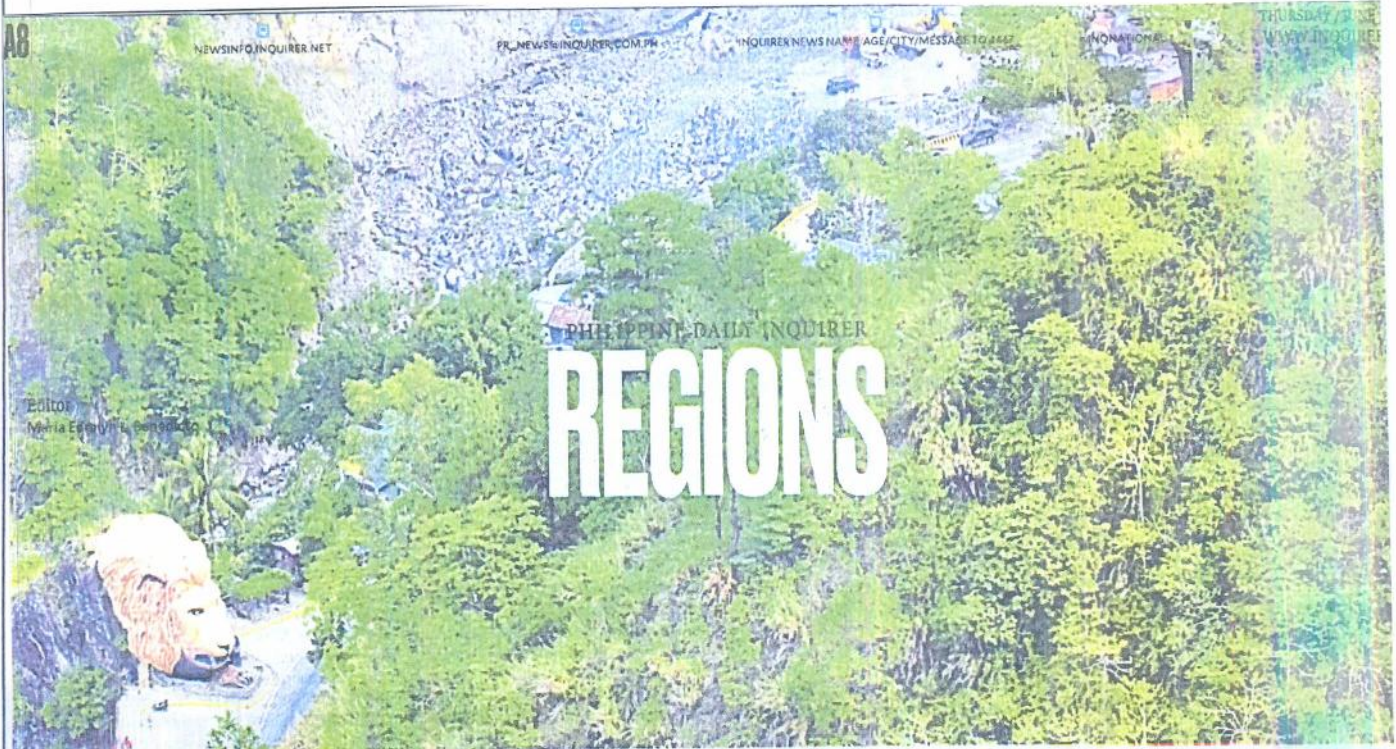
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SCENIC ZIGZAG Kennon Road, the popular "zigzag road" to Baguio City, is within the Bued River basin that flows from its headwaters in the Cordillera and cascades down to farmlands in Pangasinan and La Union provinces. Baguio and its neighboring towns of Tuba and Itogon in Benguet are joining hands to preserve the river system and its watershed. —NEIL CLARK ONGCHAI



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'Phl must prepare for worsening effects of climate change'

By **ROMINA CABRERA**

The Philippines must prepare for the worsening effects of climate change, such as sea level rise and hotter weather already affecting the country, according to Secretary Renato Solidum Jr. of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST).

In an interview with "The Chiefs" aired on Cignal TV's *One News* last Tuesday night, Solidum stressed that global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius has dire effects on one of the most at-risk countries from the climate crisis.

"Here in the Philippines, climate change is something that we need to prepare for. Roads and bridges below one meter and other airports should be planned out to be inland. There are

communities that might be flooded. That level of temperature has a significant effect on our sea level and, of course, the hot weather, which is really hot," he said in mixed Filipino and English.

The DOST chief noted that there is a looming El Niño phenomenon, characterized by below-average rainfall that may last for months and could spell trouble for agriculture, drinking water and hydroelectric power plants that generate electricity for parts of the country.

"During El Niño, when there is not much water, our agri crops could be affected, the water supply could diminish and the reservoirs are not filled. And energy, hydropower will be affected," he said.

Solidum urged the public to conserve water even before the onset of El Niño to be prepared for its adverse effects.

"Overall, there will be decrease in rainfall in various parts of the Philippines. We should conserve water, hopefully, conserve electricity because scarcity in water affects our beverage and power," he added.

Solidum said that before El Niño arrives, the country may still expect stronger rains on its western side due to the southwest monsoon.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) earlier noted that stronger monsoon rains and tropical cyclones tend to develop before an El Niño episode.



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Betty to further weaken as it exits PAR

Tropical cyclone Betty was forecast to weaken into a severe tropical storm between last night and this morning as it leaves the Philippine area of responsibility (PAR).

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said Betty was monitored 410 kilometers east-northeast of Itbayat, Batanes as of 4 p.m. yesterday.

The tropical cyclone was carrying maximum sustained winds of 120 kms per hour near the center and gustiness of up to 150 kph.

It was forecast to exit PAR this afternoon or tonight and pass near or make landfall on Ryukyu islands in Japan tonight.

Tropical cyclone wind signal No. 1 was still hoisted over Batanes and the eastern portion of Babuyan islands as of 5 p.m. yesterday.

Betty may still bring heavy rain in parts of La Union, Benguet, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur and Abra.

Meanwhile, the southwest monsoon will bring rains over Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Romblon, Antique and northern Palawan, including Cuyo, Calamian and Kalayaan Islands.

The southwest monsoon and Betty will bring scattered rains over Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon and the Visayas.

Mindanao may experience isolated rains due to the southwest monsoon or *habagat*.

PAGASA said faster weakening of Betty is not ruled out due to the extent of the effect of dry air intrusion as well as cooler ocean waters and the increasing vertical wind shear.

The typhoon may further weaken into a tropical storm by Friday night or Saturday morning.

14,908 affected in N. Luzon

Despite minimal damage to property, Betty has affected 14,908 people in Northern Luzon, according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council.

The NDRRMC said 216 of 3,821 affected families remained in 31 evacuation centers yesterday.

Records show that 1,815 families or 5,981 people were preemptively evacuated.

Provinces in Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Mimaropa, Western Visayas and the Cordillera Administrative Region were affected by the typhoon.

The NDRRMC said damage to infrastructure in the Cordilleras was estimated at only P68,695.

Assistance provided to families severely affected by the typhoon has reached more than P1.9 million.

— Romina Cabrera, Michael Punongbayan



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Magnitude 4.9 quake jolts Quezon, felt in MM

A magnitude 4.9 earthquake hit off the coast of Quezon province on Tuesday night, with tremors felt in Metro Manila and neighboring areas.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said the epicenter of the quake, which struck at around 11:22 p.m., was monitored 18 kilometers east of Infanta.

Phivolcs said there was no expected damage from the quake, but aftershocks may follow.

The quake was felt at Intensity 4, which is classified as moderately strong, in Mauban, Quezon and Intensity 3 in Sta. Cruz and Sta. Rosa in Laguna.

Phivolcs said the quake was felt at Intensity 2 in Manila, Makati, San Juan, Marikina and Quezon City.

Instrumental Intensity 5 was recorded in Polillo in Quezon and Instrumental Intensity 4 in Infanta, Quezon.

Instrumental Intensity 2 was recorded in Gabaldon in Nueva Ecija, Dingalan in Aurora, Carmona and Tagaytay City in Cavite, Tanay in Rizal and Mayban and Dolores in Quezon. — Romina Cabrera