

02 June 2023 Friday



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DENR order revises guidelines on mineral exploration reporting

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has revised the guidelines in the classification and reporting standards of exploration results, mineral resources and ore reserves.

DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga recently signed DENR Administrative Order (DAO) No. 2023-05, which allows the local mining industry to adopt with advances and upgrades of internationally accepted standards set out in the Philippine Mineral Reporting Code of 2020.

The new guidelines, in effect, amended DA 2020-09.

In a statement, the DENR chief believes that the compliance of mining contractors, permittees, permit holders and operators, and mining applicants with the new DAO is seen to 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.

Among other changes, DAO 2023-05 updated some terminolo-

gies, 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 pre-

paring 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.

Mineral industry players will be given a transition period of two

years from the approval of DAO 2023-05 to adjust to the revised guidelines.

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.

Jonathan I. Mayuga



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Govt aims to improve food production via geomapping

By SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA [@sam_medenilla](#)

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has ordered the geomapping of agricultural lands in the country to optimize food production.

Marcos said the measure will establish soil maps for specific agricultural products, which will serve as guide for farmers on what to plant in their localities.

While geomapping is already being used by government agencies, such as the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMIRA), and the Department of Agriculture (DA), the president said it is being done on a limited scale.

"We are putting together every-

thing because it is hard to survey everything. So, we will know the areas and it also started with irrigation with the NIA [National Irrigation Administration]," Marcos said.

He also said the geomaps will also be useful in addressing farmland titling issues as the government pushes for consolidation of agricultural lands.

Stakeholder meeting

MARCOS made the decision during his discussion with the members

of the Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders Movement (PRISM) in Malacañang last Wednesday.

During the meeting, PRISM members raised their concerns about the "roadblocks" in the country's rice production, which includes the unavailability and lack of access to real-time data, which will be useful for their operations.

They also complained about the high cost of rice production as well as their limited access to market, capital investment, and extensive irrigation system.

Also discussed were the adverse impact of Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) policies, the threat of El Niño and climate change, slow adoption of vital rice production technology, misaligned programs and activities across agri-related government agencies, inconsistent consultative meetings among the various rice stakeholders, and

rice smuggling.

Interventions

GOVERNMENT officials who were present in the meeting noted that the said concerns are already being addressed by several government programs including the credit and financing by the DA and the Land Bank of the Philippines, as well as the establishment of climate-smart agriculture infrastructure.

They also said farmers can access useful data for food production, such as the Smarter Approaches to Reinvigorate Agriculture as an Industry in the Philippines.

Several government policies, which were flagged by rice stakeholders, are also being reviewed such as importation schedule, review of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) and its implementing rules and regulations (IRR).

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Officials said rice farmers and traders will also benefit from the National Agricultural and Fisheries Modernization and Industrialization Plan and the proposed pre-shipment inspection system by the Department of Finance (DOF).

Additional request

PRISM Founder and Lead Convener Rowena Sadicon said they were pleased with the President's response to their concerns.

"Overall we were very happy that at last the importance of the whole rice value chain has been recognized. It was a success, ev-

eryone in the room including the government officials were very happy with the meeting's outcome," Sadicon told BUSINESS-MIRROR via SMS.

However, Sadicon said they requested another meeting with the president to discuss the RTL and its IRR.

"We knew that time to discuss this will not be enough, that's why we have requested to discuss this in a separate meeting," she said.

The DA said last year that it could come out with the results of the RTL review in the first quarter of 2023.



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Marcos orders

geomapping of agri lands

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered the geomapping of all agricultural lands in the country to boost production.

Geomapping is the process of converting gathered data into a geological map of a particular loca-

tion of utilities.

Marcos issued the directive during a meeting with the Philippine

Rice Industry Stakeholders Movement (Prism) in Malacañang on Wednesday.

Prism raised several concerns to the President including high cost of production, limited market access, limited access to capital investment, adverse Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) policies, lack of extensive irrigation system, the El Niño threat

and slow adoption of vital production technologies.

"We are putting together everything because it is difficult to survey everything. So it is for us to determine the areas and it started with irrigation, with the NIA (National Irrigation Administration)," Marcos said.

Marcos added that the government has already been using geo-

mapping in resolving titling issues to boost agricultural production with the BIR and National Mapping and Resource Information Authority as lead agencies.

"So from that, the titling problem that we are talking about would be easier to resolve. But at least we could define the parcels of land and in that way, we would know. If we are able to

solve the titling problem, everything else will be easier," the President said.

Clustering, low soil fertility, mill modernization and improved milling process were the other issues discussed during the meeting.

Founded in 2019, Prism is composed of multisectoral groups whose mission is to protect the interests of rice industry stakeholders.



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Marcos orders geo-mapping of all agri lands to boost yield

By Vince Lopez

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has directed the geological mapping of all agricultural lands in the country to establish soil maps for specific agricultural products that will help improve farmers' products.

President Marcos said the government is already using geo mapping in

resolving titling issues to boost agricultural production and increase the income of farmers.

"In geo mapping, we're already using maps of BIR (Bureau of Internal Revenue) and NAMRIA (National Mapping and Resource Information Authority). We are putting together everything be

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cause it would be difficult to have a survey on all these lands," Mr. Marcos said in the meeting with the Philippine Rice Industry Stakeholders Movement (PRISM) on Wednesday.

"From that, the issue on titling will be easier. We will be able to define the parcels of land. It will be easier if we will solve the titling problem," he added.

PRISM also raised with the President other concerns such as high cost of rice production and limited market access, limited access to capital investment, adverse BIR policies, lack of extensive irrigation system, climate crisis-El Niño threat, and slow adoption of vital rice production technology.

The Presidential Communications Office said the present government interventions addressing these concerns include the implementation of Farm and Fisheries Consolidation and Clustering program (F2C2), provision of various support services including credit and financing by the Department of Agriculture, and the Land Bank of the Philippines, and establishment of climate-smart agriculture infrastructure.

The Marcos administration is also formulating the National Agricultural and Fisheries Modernization and Industrialization Plan and other plans to guide the de-

velopment of the agriculture and fisheries sectors.

Founded in 2019, PRISM is composed of multisectoral groups involved in the rice industry value chain.

It has the mandate to address the fragmented government approach in addressing issues and help protect the interests of all stakeholders, from the farmers to the consumers.

The geo mapping is in line with the government's goal of 100% rice self-sufficiency in five years following President Marcos's approval of the Masagana Rice Industry Development Program (MRIDP).

The President, who concurrently heads the Department of Agriculture (DA), disclosed the government target during a Rice Industry Convergence Meeting in Quezon City on Wednesday.

"This convergence meeting, I think, has given us a good roadmap to follow, but marami pang mangyayari d'yan between now and our goal of having a 97.5-percent self-sufficiency in rice," Mr. Marcos said.

Mr. Marcos said the government does not have "to be 100%" and that 97.5% is "a good enough number."

The President explained the remaining 2.5% is for the other necessary niche products. He also encouraged all the stakeholders to stick to the roadmap, which he described as a "good plan" that could enable the country's agriculture sector to surmount any roadblocks that lie ahead.



NWRB extends higher Angat water allocations

BY FRANCIS EARL CUETO

THE National Water Resources Board (NWRB) on Thursday announced that it was extending the current allotment of water from Angat Dam to water concessionaires for two weeks.

The agency said it would be retaining the water supply allocation from the Angat-Ipo-La Mesa system at 52 cubic meters per second (cms) for both Manila Water and Maynilad.

NWRB Executive Director Sevillo David Jr. said the reason for extending the allocation was that of preventing water service

interruptions as the concessionaires worked to improve leakage recovery.

The extension will run from June 1 to 15, 2023, after which the allocation will go back to 50 cms to prevent Angat's water level from going down.

As of May 31, Angat's water level decreased to 189.64 meters

(m) from 189.81 m, though this is still above the dam's minimum operating level of 183 m.

During the two-week period, 40 cms will be allocated for irrigation in anticipation of the planting season for farmers.

David said they are preparing for the impact of El Niño to the supply at Angat Dam.

"Yung effect sa water supply natin baka po hindi makarecover ng sapat 'yung Angat Dam, so kailangan din po natin paghandaan (Our water supply might be affected and Angat Dam might not recover sufficiently, so we need to prepare)," he said.

However, the Metropolitan

Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System warned of possible water interruptions after two weeks if the leakages are not resolved.

In a separate briefing, David is counting on the rainy season, especially in July, to increase Angat Dam's water level to prevent any interruption.

Ronaldo Padua, Maynilad supply operations head, said the increased allocation provides relief for their customers.

"The rotational interruption we did in the past is totally gone. Now, we expect the continuity of uninterrupted supply," Padua said.

Manila Water likewise assured uninterrupted water supply.



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Angat can't sustain add'l water allocation

MM water interruptions feared

By **BELLA CARIASO**
and **DANESSA RIVERA**

Angat Dam will not be able to sustain the current allocation of raw water for private concessionaires after June 15, according to the National Water Resources Board (NWRB), raising fears of serious water interruptions in Metro Manila.

The NWRB has approved a lower water allocation from Angat Dam from 52 cubic meters per second from June 1 to 15, to 50 CMS from June 16 to 30.

NWRB executive director Seville David Jr. admitted in a radio interview yesterday that Angat Dam in Bulacan can no longer keep its allocation of 52 CMS for Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water after June 15, amid the threat of El Niño.

With the current 52 CMS allocation, Maynilad assured the public there will be no water interruption – at least this month – in the northern part of its service area.

"The 52 CMS allocation will allow us to avoid interruption in the distribution system. When we implemented the 52 CMS in April, we were able to lift water interruption in areas supplied by Angat Dam," Maynilad supply operations head Ronaldo Padua said at a media forum yesterday.

"Because of this new approval by the NWRB for 52 CMS, we expect that the continuity of the water supply will remain to our customers, especially in our area in the north that is supplied by the La Mesa Dam," he said.

Maynilad's northern concession area covers parts of Manila, Quezon City and the Camanava area.

Water interruption is being

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experienced in the southern part of Maynilad's service area.

In a radio interview, David said it was during a meeting on Wednesday that the board decided to cut the water allotment for the two water concessionaires to 50 CMS starting June 16 to maintain water supply from Angat Dam.

"It is better for us to manage and prepare for the next months, particularly on the possible effects of the El Niño. The possible impacts (of the El Niño) include the decline in the amount of rainfall so by (third week of June), we will adjust the allocation from 52 CMS to 50 CMS," David added.

David said a 15-day extension is enough for the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to implement the necessary repair of lines to increase the supply of water allocated to its customers.

The 52 CMS water allocation for Metro Manila and nearby provinces was supposed to end on May 31 but it was extended until June 15.

According to David, the water level at Angat Dam continues to

drop as Typhoon Betty failed to bring enough rain to replenish it.

"The water level of Angat Dam is still dropping as Typhoon Betty did not recharge the dam, especially with the expected onset of the El Niño," David added.

El Niño till Q1 next year

He noted that based on the projection of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration, the impact of the El Niño could be felt in the latter part of the year until the first quarter of 2024.

"We need to conserve the water level of Angat Dam as it is likely that we will be affected by the El Niño. We need to ensure that we still have water supply from Angat Dam to support the needs of the people," he said.

At the same time, David again appealed to the public to conserve water and prevent wastage.

"Our call is for the public to be responsible and conserve water. We need to be prepared for the impact of

the El Niño," he said.

For the second half of the month, the MWSS projects continued water supply in the Maynilad concession area as long as "mitigating measures" are put in place.

"The consumers may experience interruptions during nighttime, but we are implementing mitigating measures. That's why we are targeting to complete the mitigating measures in 15 days," MWSS division manager Patrick Dizon said.

The NWRB is banking on efforts of the MWSS and water concessionaires to complete water recovery programs, like pipe repairs and development of treatment facilities in the first half of the month.

"We are hoping current efforts of MWSS and concessionaires to address water losses in the system. We are hoping they can recover enough water to augment supply so water services will continue even with the 50 CMS allocation starting June 16," NWRB's David said.

Of the mitigating measures, Maynilad's non-revenue water program is seen to provide the biggest boost to water supply.

"We want to recover 100 million liters per day (MLD). That's the commitment of Maynilad to recover by the end of this year. As of May, they were able to recover 74 MLD," Dizon said.

"The NWRB also wants to recalibrate Maynilad's commitment to further increase water recovery targets by end of this year," he said.

Mitigating measures also include reactivating deep wells, improvement of operation in Maynilad's Putatan water treatment plants, and the expected operation of the 50-MLD Poblacion treatment plant. "All of these measures will allow us to secure water requirement," Dizon pointed out.

Help from habagat

The MWSS also expects the southwest monsoon or *habagat* to bring in rains to replenish water in dams before the onset of the El Niño phenomenon.

"We're expecting rains which will help raise elevation in the Ipo dam, which can deliver more supply to the La Mesa Dam. Therefore, this will fill the two CMS reduction in water allocation beginning June 16,"

Dizon said.

"Historically, the elevation of Angat Dam increases by July. We are hopeful that by June or July, the *habagat* will help increase the elevation of dams," he said.

As of 6 a.m. yesterday, water level at Angat Dam was at 189.64 meters, or 0.17 meter lower than the previous 189.81 meters on Wednesday.

The water level at the Angat Dam was still 6.10 meters above the so-called rule curve elevation of 183.54 meters, or just enough for the dam to function.

Angat Dam supplies more than 90 percent of Metro Manila's potable water needs and provides for the irrigation requirements of 25,000 hectares of farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga.

Areas hit most by the eight to 14 hour daily water cutoff before the 52 CMS water allocation took effect on April 15, were Maynilad customers in Manila, Quezon City, Makati, Caloocan, Pasay, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas and Malabon; the cities of Cavite, Bacoor and Imus and the towns of Kawit, Noveleta and Rosario in Cavite.



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SC asked to require Maynilad, Manila Water to refund income tax passed on to consumers 1◀

The ruling that bars consumers from seeking refund is contained in the SC's decision that Maynilad Water and Manila Water are public utilities subject to the 12-percent return on investment and, thus, cannot recover from their consumers the corporate income taxes as operating expenses.

In a motion for partial reconsideration, party-list group Bayan Muna said the SC "erred when it ruled that considering that no action to contest the water rates was brought before the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) within 30 days after the effectivity of such rates, 'the income

taxes passed on to consumers may no longer be recovered as the right to a refund had long prescribed.'"

Bayan Muna, through its counsel Maria Cristina Yambot, asked the SC to direct the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to account for all corporate income taxes of Manila Water and Maynilad it allowed to be included in applicable water rates from 2002 to 2012.

It stressed that the two water utilities should be compelled to refund the "illegally" passed on corporate income taxes to their respective water consumers.

The Dec. 7, 2021 decision, written

by Senior Justice Marvic M.V.F. Leonen, resolved the consolidated petitions in GRNos. 181764, 187380, 07444, 208207, 210147, 213227, 219362, 239938) involving Manila Water and Maynilad.

In GR Nos. 181764 and 187380, the SC denied the petition for review filed by Maynilad Water which claimed that it is not a public utility whose rates may be questioned by the NWRB.

In GR Nos. 207444, 208207, 210147, 213227, and 219362, the SC affirmed the concession agreements entered into by MWSS with Manila Water and Maynilad, including the provision on arbitration clause.

In G.R. No. 239938, the SC granted the petition for review filed by MWSS seeking to set aside the Court of

Appeals' ruling which had affirmed and confirmed the arbitral ruling in favor of Maynilad.

"We are glad that the Supreme Court has now finally resolved the debate that has been going on for decades whether Maynilad and Manila Water are public utilities," former Bayan Muna Representative Carlos Isagani Zarate said.

"We are merely moving for partial reconsideration of the Court's decision prohibiting the consumers from demanding a refund for our payment of their income tax for many years," he said.

Bayan Muna said that since Maynilad and Manila Water are now considered public utilities, which are limited to

12 percent return on investment and cannot impose on their consumers their corporate income taxes, "we hope that the Supreme Court will complete the momentous landmark decision by giving relief to millions of consumers who are suffering from extreme hardships due to inflation, low wages and unemployment."

It lamented that "we were previously forced to pay these corporate income taxes despite our continuing protest, and it is but right that we will be granted a refund because of the people's victory in the Supreme Court."

It pointed out that the refund could amount to tens of billions that could help consumers pay months of water consumption.



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SC asked to order Maynilad, Manila Water to refund their customers

By Rey E. Requejo

PARTY-LIST group Bayan Muna on Thursday asked the Supreme Court to partially reconsider its December 2021 decision which barred water consumers from demanding a refund for the income tax collected from them by Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water Company, Inc.

This was despite an SC ruling that the two water firms are public utilities, and thus cannot recover their corporate income taxes as operating expenses from consumers.

In its partial motion for reconsideration, Bayan Muna, through its counsel Maria Cristina Yambot, also asked the Court to direct the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to account all corporate income taxes of Manila Water and Maynila it allowed to be included in applicable water rates from 2022 to 2012.

The petitioner said the water utilities should be compelled to refund the "illegally" passed on corporate income taxes to their respective water consumers.

While the High Court earlier ruled that water concessionaires Manila Water and Maynilad are public utilities, it denied the plea of Bayan Muna for the release of the refund, noting that the right to refund had already long prescribed due to the failure of any party to contest the water rates before the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) within the prescribed period of 30 days after the effectivity of such rates.



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'Water firms passed on taxes to users'

By JOEL R. SAN JUAN @jrsanjuan1573

PARTYLIST group Bayan Muna yesterday asked the Supreme Court (SC) to partially reconsider its decision that barred water consumers from demanding a refund for the income tax collected from them despite its ruling that private concessionaires are public utilities and, thus, cannot recover their corporate income taxes as operating expenses from consumers.

In its partial motion for reconsideration, Bayan Muna, through its counsel Maria Cristina P. Yambot, also asked the Court to direct the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to account all corporate income taxes of Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water Company Inc. it allowed to be included in applicable water rates from

2022 to 2012.

The petitioner insisted that the water utilities should be compelled to refund the "illegally" passed on corporate income taxes to their respective water consumers.

Bayan Muna's partial MR stemmed from the ruling issued by the Court en banc dated December 7, 2021, but was made public only last

May 5, 2023.

In the said decision, the High Tribunal declared that water concessionaires Manila Water and Maynilad as public utilities, thus, cannot recover their corporate income taxes as operating expenses from consumers.

However, the SC denied the plea of Bayan Muna for refund, noting that the right to refund had already long prescribed due to the failure of any party to contest the water rates before the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) within the prescribed period of 30 days after the effectivity of such rates.

The 102-page decision was penned by Senior Associate Justice Marvic M.V.F. Leonen, which resolved consolidated petitions (GR 181764, 187380, 07444, 208207, 210147, 213227, 219362, 239938) involving Manila Water and Maynilad.

In GR 181764 and 187380, the SC denied the petition for review filed by Maynilad claiming it is not a public utility whose rates may be questioned by the NWRB.

In GR 207444, 208207, 210147, 213227 and 219362, the SC upheld the respective Concession Agreements entered into by MWSS with Manila Water and Maynilad, in-

cluding the Agreements' arbitration clause.

In GR 239938, the Court granted the petition for review filed by MWSS seeking to set aside the Court of Appeals' ruling which had affirmed and confirmed the arbitral in favor of Maynilad.

"We are glad that the Supreme Court has now finally resolved the debate that has been going on for decades whether Maynilad and Manila Water are public utilities" former Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate said.

"We are merely moving for partial reconsideration of the Court's decision prohibiting the consumers from demanding a refund for our payment of their income tax for many years," Zarate added.

The petitioner said since Maynilad and Manila Water are now considered public utilities, they are limited to a 12-percent limit on its returns of investment and prohibited from imposing on the public their corporate income tax.

"We hope that the Supreme Court will complete the momentous landmark decision by giving relief to millions of consumers who are suffering from extreme hardships due

to inflation, low wages and unemployment. We were previously forced to pay these corporate income taxes despite our continuing protest and it is but right that we will be granted a refund because of the people's victory in the Supreme Court.

The refund could amount to tens of billions that could help pay months of water consumption by consumers," the petitioner added.

Bayan Muna argued that the 30-day period for the filing of protest before the NWRB has yet to prescribe considering that the SC's ruling came out only this month.

"We argue that it is only now that both concessionaires are declared public utilities granting us the clear right to file a protest with the NWRB. Therefore, it is only now that the 30-day rule should be required," he said.

"We are thankful of the Supreme Court for siding with the consumers in the landmark decision. We just hope that it completes the relief asked by consumers and grants us the right to demand a refund and take back the billions we paid for the corporate income tax of the Maynilad and Manila Water arbitrarily imposed on us despite our opposition," Bayan Muna's statement read.



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Sen. Villar vows full support for PH marine areas

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

SEN. Cynthia Villar renewed her commitment to protect oceans and wetlands and preserve their role in nurturing life and supporting livelihoods.

During the On-the-Spot Poster-Making Contest initiated by the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR) at the Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park (LPPWP), Villar underscored the importance of “the conservation, protection, and sustainable management of our country’s coastal and marine resources.”

“It becomes all the more important given that the Philippines is an archipelago endowed with vast coastal and ocean resources, including critical habitats, mangroves, coral reefs, seagrass beds, seascapes, and endangered and vulnerable marine flora and fauna, all of which provide both economic and ecological benefits for the present and future generations,” Villar said.

Villar, chairperson of the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Climate Change, said: “It is a sad reality that our oceans and wetlands are vulnerable. Habitat destruction and climate change have led to a decline in marine bounties and biodiversity. Wetlands, such as the LPPWP, a legislated protected area, are also under threat.”



Oil spill cleanup enters final stage

By Charles Dantes

EFFORTS to clean up the massive oil spill in Mindoro are now on its final phase with the arrival of a special vessel designed to siphon off the remaining industrial fuel from a sunken tanker off Naujan and Pola towns in Oriental Mindoro, the National Task Force on Oil Spill Management said on Thursday.

The task force said the dynamic support vessel "Fire Opal" arrived in Oriental Mindoro from Singapore on May 28.

It said the vessel will be used for oil extraction operations, transferring the remaining fuel to another tanker preparatory to final disposition.

The entire siphoning operations may take 20 to 30 days, the task force said.

A conference to formulate rehabilita-

tion and recovery plans will also be held under the stewardship of the National Economic and Development Authority.

During the meeting presided by Office of Civil Defense administrator Undersecretary Ariel Nepomuceno and attended by representatives of various task force agencies, the Philippine Coast Guard reported that out of the 79.33 kilometers (kms), 83.74 percent of affected coastlines consisting of 66.433 kms. had been declared oil slick-free with only 12.89 kms. remaining for cleanup.

The ongoing cleanup operations have so far collected 44,656.30 liters of oily water mixture, 10,708 sacks, 997 drums, 119 pails, and 648 1-tonner bags of oil contaminated sand/debris and oily waste from Calabarzon, Mimaropa and Region 6.

Oil spill cleanup drive now on its final phase

By AARON RECUENCO

Government operations to clean the oil slick in Oriental Mindoro is now approaching its final phase with the clearing of around 84 percent of the affected coastlines and the start of the siphoning of the remaining industrial oil from the MT Princess Empress that sunk on Feb. 28.

During the meeting of top officials of government agencies engaged in the cleanup drive, Office of Civil Defense (OCD) Administrator Ariel Nepomuceno said there are only around 16 percent coastlines that need to be cleaned up while the entire siphoning operations would cover 20 to 30 days.

The siphoning operations following the arrival of the Dynamic Support Vessel (DSV) Fire Opal have already started with the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) saying that there are around 120,000 to 240,000 liters of industrial oil remaining at MT Princess Empress.

Nepomuceno said the meeting of government agencies under the National Task Force on Oil Spill Management on Thursday, June 1, was to facilitate the conduct of a post-disaster needs assessment (PDNA) to determine the

effects and impacts of the oil spill incident on the affected areas, including general long-term impacts on agriculture (fisheries), the marine environment, tourism and livelihood, among others.

"We are undertaking this multi-sector scientific conference so that the pool of expertise on this subject matter can be tapped to ensure that our way forward in rehabilitation and recovery are effective and would be truly helpful to the affected communities in terms of economy, the environment and sustainability," said Nepomuceno.

Civil Defense Deputy Administrator for Operations Assistant Secretary Bernardo Rafaelito Alejandro IV said the conference will jumpstart the conduct of the PDNA and recovery planning by recommending valuation methods of affected environmental assets.

"We are looking forward to the conclusion of the siphoning operations for this will herald the conduct of the scientific conference. The outputs of the conference will serve as the basis for the formulation of a comprehensive rehabilitation and recovery plan for the affected areas," said Alejandro.



ENVIRONMENT MONTH — Migratory birds search for food at the Manila Bay in Bulongan, Parañaque City, littered with trash on Thursday, June 1, 2023. The sorry state of Manila Bay has hardly changed despite President Corazon Aquino's signing of Proclamation No. 237 on April 4, 1988, declaring June as Philippine Environment Month for the protection, enhancement, and development of the environment. (Juan Carlo de Vela)



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Romualdez: House OKs 33 out of 42 priority bills

By JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ

[@joveemarie](#)

THIRTY-THREE out of 42 bills listed as priority measures of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) have already been approved by the House of Representatives.

Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez said the chamber was able to process a total of 9,600 measures consisting of 8,490 House bills, including these LEDAC priorities, 1,109 resolutions and one petition before the first regular session of the 19th Congress went into sine die adjournment last Wednesday.

In his speech, Romualdez thanked the House members whose hard work for the past 10 months helped shape the successes achieved by the legislature in line with the administration's socio-economic development agenda.

"Needless to say, our first regular session has been both eventful and productive," Romualdez said.

The Speaker also reported that the House ratified the bicameral conference committee report relative to establishing specialty centers in hospitals under the direct supervision and control of the Department of Health (DOH).

The Speaker said it is "worthy to note is both Houses have earlier agreed on a version of the Maharlika Fund, the country's first ever sovereign investment fund," which "is designed to promote economic development by making strategic and profitable investments in key sectors, including public road networks."

During the final week of sessions, the House gave final approval of LEDAC measures, House Bill (HB) No. 8203 or the proposed Bureau of Immigration (BI) Modernization Act; and HB No. 8278 or the proposed Philippine Salt Industry Development Act.

Among the measures that have been approved on third and final reading during the past 10 months include the proposed Maharlika Investment Fund, Magna Carta of Seafarers, E-Governance Act / E Government Act, Negros Island Region, Virology Institute of the Philippines, Passive Income and Financial Intermediary Taxation Act, National Disease Prevention Management Authority or Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Medical Reserve Corps, Philippine Passport Act; Internet Transaction Act / E Commerce Law, Waste-to-Energy Bill, Free Legal Assistance for Police and Soldiers, and Apprenticeship Act.

Also passed on third reading were the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) Law, Magna Carta of Barangay Health Workers, Valuation Reform, Eastern Visayas Development Authority, Leyte Ecological Industrial Zone, Government Financial Institutions Unified Initiatives to Distressed Enterprises for Economic Recovery, National Citizens Service Training Program, and National Government Rightsizing.

More importantly, a handful of the Marcos priority bills that hurdled the House are now laws of the land, Romualdez said.

Two of these are Republic Act (RA) No.11934, otherwise known as the "Subscriber Identity Module

(SIM) Registration Act"; and RA No.11939, or an "An Act Further Strengthening Professionalism and Promoting the Continuity of Policies and Modernization initiatives in the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and Amending for this Purpose Republic Act No. 11709".

Unity

ROMUALDEZ also thanked his colleagues for their hard work and for their fidelity to their job, resulting in the record-breaking accomplishments of the House of Representatives during the First Regular Session of the 19th Congress.

"Each and every member of this august body truly deserves commendation for a job well done. Congratulations to all of us! When I assumed the post as your Speaker, I invited each one of you to support and join me in fulfilling the aspirations of the Filipino people. For readily heeding this call, I express my sincerest gratitude to everyone," Romualdez said.

The Speaker also called back to his long-running message of unity, which has become the foundation of the Marcos administration.

"The unity that we have shown in the performance of duty, and our relentless action in keeping the legislative mill grinding to full efficiency, are now reaping fruits for our beloved institution. Public opinion on the performance rating of the House of Representatives is fast reaching an all-time high," he said.

Aside from doing its legislative duties, the Speaker said the House also performed its oversight function to find solutions to the country's pressing problems, like the recent unwarranted increase in the price of onions.

He recalled that earlier this year, the House Committee on Agriculture conducted a motu proprio inquiry in aid of legislation to determine the root cause of the surge in the price of onions and other agricultural products and ascertain the appropriate government intervention to keep basic commodities affordable and accessible to everyone.

"We are also equally determined to recommend the prosecution of cartels and their cohorts, including all other profiteers, who continue to manipulate the supply and price of onion in the country," he said.

Romualdez said due to the inquiry and work done by the committee on agriculture, the biggest onion cartel in the country has been dismantled and the price of the commodity has returned to its previous level.

The Speaker also expressed his gratitude to the political parties in the House for their commitment and cooperation in the approval of priority bills of President Marcos and LEDAC.

Just a few days ago, the Romualdez-led Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats (Lakas-CMD) signed alliance agreements with each of seven national, local, and sectoral political groups in the House.

These groups are the Partido Demokratiko Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban), National Unity Party (NUP), Nacionalista Party (NP), Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC), Party-list Coalition Foundation Inc. (PCFI), Partido Navoteño, and Centrist Democratic Party of the Philippines (CDP).



We need a decolonized global plastics treaty

Canberra, Australia—This week, the global plastics treaty negotiations continue in Paris, France. Dubbed as the Second Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee Meeting (INC-2), the series of negotiations leading to the ratification of a plastics treaty in mid-2025 is crucial to curb the plastic pollution crisis.

It can be recalled that the first meeting (INC-1) transpired in Punta del Este, Uruguay in November last year. Environmental groups have noted that the INC-1 negotiations resulted in greater demands for a reduction in plastic production and use, the elimination of toxic substances associated with the plastic life cycle, the protection of human health, and the need for a just transition. The participation of delegates from developing countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, African, and Asia and the Pacific was notable as well since it ensured the representation of strong grassroots voices.

Coming to INC-2, the recent news that the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) Secretariat will give only one to two entry badges for each observer organization severely limits the participation of various sectors hoping to be part of the negotiations. These sectors include business and industry, children and the youth, farmers, indigenous peoples, local authorities, nongovernmental organizations, scientific communities, women, workers and trade unions, and waste pickers.

Another issue that has come out in the lead up to INC-2 is the recently published UNEP report titled “Turning off the Tap: How the world can end plastic pollution and create a circular economy,” which promotes burning plastic waste in cement kilns as a key strategy in the design and implementation of the global plastics treaty. Various civil society organizations, the

academe, and impacted communities have expressed their grave concern on this issue.

According to the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, “the widespread burning of waste in cement kilns would create ... demand for cheap plastic waste for fuel that would defy global efforts toward restricting plastic production.”

In some parts of the world, this is already happening. The investigative report of Reuters found that multiple big consumer brands like Unilever, Coca-Cola, and Nestlé were funding projects to burn their plastic waste in cement kilns, primarily in low-income countries in the Global South which do not have the capacity to monitor and enforce pollution controls. Since 2018, these three corporations have been identified in Break Free From Plastic brand audits as among the top five plastic polluting companies worldwide. This is a clear example of waste colonialism.

In their book, “Discard Studies: Wasting, Systems, and Power,” scholars Max Liboiron and Josh Lepawsky noted that “waste and pollution are part of the domination of one group in their homeland by another group.” Plastic pollution as a form of negative externality is an example of waste colonialism. This can be seen in the issue of Global North countries dumping their wastes on countries in the global South.

Moreover, in its annual Brand Audit report, the Break Free From Plastic movement and its members have also raised the issue of how the plastic pollution crisis emanates from the boardrooms of Global North headquartered corporations that

are using single-use plastics, especially sachets, in the packaging of their products. In fact, former Unilever CEO Paul Polman has admitted in his *Fortune* magazine piece that they made a mistake in introducing sachets in the market. He wrote that, “packaging this small and with such little value has proved impossible to collect at scale, let alone recycle. We need to get rid of harmful sachets for good.”

If UNEP and INC-2 negotiators are serious in coming up with a high ambition treaty, they must not only think about the health and the environmental impacts of plastics. They must also think about how these are gravely affecting low-income communities and people of color. Decisions made in the boardrooms and negotiating tables in Europe and the United States have grave ramifications on the lives, health, and livelihoods of people from developing countries.

Lastly, a global decolonized plastics treaty must ensure support in achieving its objectives for countries of the Global South and those economies in transition, including a dedicated financial mechanism, technical support, and technology transfer similar to the Paris climate agreement. It must ensure that voices of historically marginalized groups are represented. This is reparation for the waste colonialism that they continue to impose on us.

Jed Alegado is doctoral researcher at Crawford School of Public Policy at The Australian National University in Canberra, Australia. He has worked with non-profit organizations and environmental movements in the Asia Pacific region in the areas of advocacy, campaigns, and communications for more than a decade. He is also a part-time lecturer at Ateneo de Manila University.

COMMENTARY

JED ALEGADO



EARTH IS REALLY SICK, IN DANGER ZONE – STUDY

EARTH has pushed past seven out of eight scientifically established safety limits and into "the danger zone," not just for an overheating planet that's losing its natural areas, but for the well-being of people living on it, a new study said.

The study looks not just at guardrails for the planetary ecosystem but for the first time it includes measures of "justice," which is

mostly about preventing harm for countries, ethnicities and genders.

The study by the international scientist group Earth Commission published in Wednesday's journal Nature looks at climate, air pollution, phosphorus and nitrogen contamination of water from fertilizer overuse, groundwater supplies, fresh surface water, the

►DangerA8

■ DANGER FROM A1

EARTH IS REALLY SICK, IN DANGER

unbuilt natural environment and the overall natural and human-built environment. Only air pollution wasn't quite at the danger point globally.

Air pollution is dangerous at local and regional levels, while climate was beyond the harmful levels for humans in groups but not quite past the safety guideline for the planet as a system, the study from the Swedish group said.

The study found "hotspots" of problem areas throughout Eastern Europe, South Asia, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, parts of Africa and much of Brazil, Mexico, China and some of the US West — much of it from climate change. About two-thirds of Earth don't meet the criteria for freshwater safety, scientists said as an example.

"We are in a danger zone for most of the Earth system boundaries," said study co-author Kristie Ebi, a professor of climate and public health at the University of Washington.

If planet Earth just got an annual checkup, similar to a person's physical, "our doctor would say that the Earth is really quite sick right now and it is sick in terms of many different areas or systems and this sickness

is also affecting the people living on Earth," Earth Commission co-chairman Joyeeta Gupta, a professor of environment at the University of Amsterdam, said at a press conference.

It's not a terminal diagnosis. The planet can recover if it changes, including its use of coal, oil and natural gas and the way it treats the land and water, the scientists said.

But "we are moving in the wrong direction on basically all of these," said study lead author Johan Rockstrom, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany.

"This is a compelling and provocative paper — scientifically sound in methodology and important for identifying the dimensions in which the planet is nearing the edge of boundaries that would launch us into irreversible states," Indy Burke, dean of the Yale School of the Environment said in an email. She wasn't part of the study.

The team of about 40 scientists created quantifiable boundaries for each environmental category, both for what's safe for the planet and for the point at which it becomes harmful for groups of people, which the research-

ers termed a justice issue.

Rockstrom said he thinks of those points as setting up "a safety fence" outside of which the risks become higher, but not necessarily fatal.

Rockstrom and other scientists have attempted in the past this type of holistic measuring of Earth's various interlocking ecosystems. The big difference in this attempt is that scientists also looked at local and regional levels and they added the element of justice.

The justice part includes fairness between young and old generations, different nations and even different species. Frequently, it applies to conditions that harm people more than the planet.

An example of that is climate change.

The report uses the same boundary of 1.5 degree Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming since pre-industrial times that international leaders agreed upon in the 2015 Paris climate agreement. The world has so far warmed about 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit), so it hasn't crossed that safety fence, Rockstrom and Gupta said, but that doesn't mean people aren't being hurt. AP



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Betty exits PAR; monsoon to bring rains

The southwest monsoon will be the dominant weather system that will bring rains over parts of the country as severe tropical storm Betty exited the Philippine area of responsibility yesterday afternoon.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said heavy rain would be experienced in Occidental Mindoro, Antique and northern portions of mainland Palawan, including Cuyo and Calamian islands.

Cloudy skies are forecast over Metro Manila, Ilocos, Cordillera Administrative

Region, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Bicol, Batanes and the rest of Mimaropa and the Visayas.

Isolated rains will be experienced in Mindanao and the rest of Cagayan Valley due to the southwest monsoon and Betty's trough.

PAGASA warned the public of flash floods or landslides during moderate to heavy rain.

The enhanced southwest monsoon will also bring occasional to frequent wind gusts over northern Cagayan and other parts of the country.

— Romina Cabrera