

03 April 2023 Monday



**DENR**

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# Waterless for

# 19 hours daily

*Maynilad warns shortage to persist as it  
boosts rationing in NCR, Cavite*

By Othel V. Campos

**M**AYNILAD Water Services Inc. over the weekend warned its customers in Metro Manila and Cavite to brace for longer water interruptions that can last from 14 to 19 hours daily.

While it assured its customers that the possibility of 19 hours of dry faucets is a "worst-case scenario," Maynilad said it will step up and boost rationing to some 20,000 connections in its service area as a stopgap measure.

The water shortage will persist unless the National Water Regulatory Board (NWRB) grants Maynilad's petition to increase its water allocation from the dams to 52 cubic meters per second (CMS), the firm's officials said over the weekend.

"We've received information that the NWRB will maintain the current allocation level at 50 CMS, which is not enough to serve the demand of consumers this summer season. These areas are those that are quite far from the source and mostly

located on elevated areas," Engr. Zmel Grabillo, Manila Business Area Head for Maynilad, said Sunday.

"These are hard to reach areas and have been experiencing difficulties even before the water interruption schedule was announced," Grabillo added in a TeleRadyo interview.

Maynilad currently serves over 9 million people in the cities of Caloocan, Las Piñas, Malabon, Muntinlupa, Navotas, Parañaque, Pasay, and Valenzuela, along with most of the City of Manila and portions of Quezon City and Makati west of the Metro Manila Skyway, as well as Cavite.

An ABS-CBN report said about 73

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## Waterless...

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percent of Maynilad customers would be affected by the long water interruptions, but it could not be verified with company officials as of press time.

Last Wednesday, Maynilad said it has begun daily service interruptions to preserve the remaining supply of water in the Angat-Go system, as there will be less rainfall to replenish the dams because of the El Niño dry weather spell.

The firm admitted there is no definite timeline when full or improved water services will be restored in the areas experiencing nearly the whole day without running water.

The prolonged water interruption in selected areas may even persist

through the entire summer since there is a probability that water level from the source, Angat Dam, may further decline owing to lack of rain.

The water firm said it is continuously cooperating with local government units for the water rationing schedule and is keeping tabs of the window when water is flowing to make sure that residents in affected areas are urged to stock up on water.

Among the measures Maynilad is enforcing include the reactivation of deep wells and commissioning of modular treatment plants to produce more water from alternate sources, and the continued repair of pipe leaks and replacement of old pipelines to recover more water for distribution.

The company is also making available around 100 mobile water

tankers for deployment, as needed.

It has installed 83 stationary water tanks (SWT) in strategic locations and is purchasing more SWTs for additional water storage.

Maynilad is also willing to scale up the deployment of more tankers in areas with longer interruptions.

The NWRB has allowed Maynilad access to 30 CMS water until April 15 this year, but what comes next is still uncertain. Whether the agency will continue to supply the same volume or further cut availability of raw water as summer intensifies.

"At 50 CMS, we expect that the volume of raw water flowing to the Navaliches Portal in Quezon City will still be at reduced levels. Given this, the current daily water service interruptions will remain in

place, but the interruption schedule to be implemented starting April 1, 2023, have been adjusted to account for the full suspension of the cross-port sharing arrangement between Maynilad and Manila Water," the company said earlier.

The company is also looking at possible intervention such as electric seeding activities that the Metro-politan Water and Sewerage System (MWSS) may undertake.

Even before the service interruptions, Maynilad has been augmenting supplies through a "cross-ports" arrangement with Manila Water, because less water has been reaching the Navaliches Portal in Quezon City.

However, the declining water elevation at La Mesa Dam has forced Manila Water to gradually suspend the cross-port sharing.

This will mean less supply for Maynilad to distribute, resulting in longer daily service interruption schedules starting April 1.

With a higher raw water allocation, Manila Water would be more comfortable with sustaining the cross-port sharing arrangement with Maynilad.

"It would also increase the volume of raw water that reaches Maynilad's treatment plants, enabling us to suspend the daily service interruptions that are currently in place," the company said.

Maynilad is also taking other measures to help mitigate the supply shortages, including "massive leak repair activities at the conveyance system — from Bigal to La Mesa Dam—to arrest losses in the aqueducts and improve raw water flow to the Navaliches portal."



**BRACE FOR LONGER WATER-LESS HOURS.** File photo shows a group of women lined up for water tank rations along Olivarez Street in Palanan, Makati City last month following a water interruption that affected customers of Maynilad in parts of Manila, Makati, Pasay, and Parañaque. **Danny Pata**





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## THE lack of access to potable water is an age-long problem facing global leaders and climate change is exacerbating the challenge.

In the Philippines, some 11 million families face the dilemma and are forced to rely on "unprotected" deep wells, springs, rivers, lakes and rainwater for their household needs.

Lack of sanitation facilities, according to National Water Resource Board (NWRB) executive director Dr. Sevilla David Jr., has also forced some families to defecate in the open, risking water contamination and diseases.

The water supply lack worsens during the dry season. "We have enough water supply for now. But the PAGASA says El Niño is looming," says David. "We need to prepare for this as it could affect our water supply, particularly in our farms," David said.

The water crisis received centerstage during a three-day United Nations Conference that drew some 10,000 participants in New York.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on March 24 called on the world to safeguard water resources to avert conflict and ensure future global prosperity.

Water, he says, is "the most precious common good" and "needs to be at the center of the global political agenda," he said at the end of three-day UN conference.

"All of humanity's hopes for the future depend, in some way, on charting a new science-based course to bring the water action agenda to life," Guterres said. "Now is the time to act."

The world is not on track to meet its 2030 water goals, including access to safe drinking water and sanitation for all.

Guterres before the meeting described water as humanity's "lifeblood" and said its "vampiric overconsumption" had "broken the water cycle" and led to more natural disasters.

The world is "blindly traveling a dangerous path" as "unsustainable water use, pollution and unchecked global warming

are draining humanity's lifeblood," Guterres said in a foreword to the report, released hours ahead of the first major UN meeting on water resources in nearly half a century.

### Worsening shortages

Between two and three billion people worldwide experience water shortages. These shortages will worsen in the coming decades, especially in cities, if international cooperation in this area is not boosted, warn the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UN-Water in the latest edition of the UN World Water Development Report.

Globally, 2 billion people (26 percent of the population) do not have safe drinking water and 3.6 billion (46 percent) lack access to safely managed sanitation, according to the report.

The global urban population facing water scarcity, says the report, is projected to double from 930 million in 2016 to 1.7-2.4 billion people in 2050. The growing incidence of extreme and prolonged droughts is also stressing ecosystems, with dire consequences for both plant and animal species.

There is an urgent need to establish strong international mechanisms to prevent the global water crisis from spiraling out of control. Water is our common future and it is essential to act together to share it equitably and manage it sustainably, the report said.

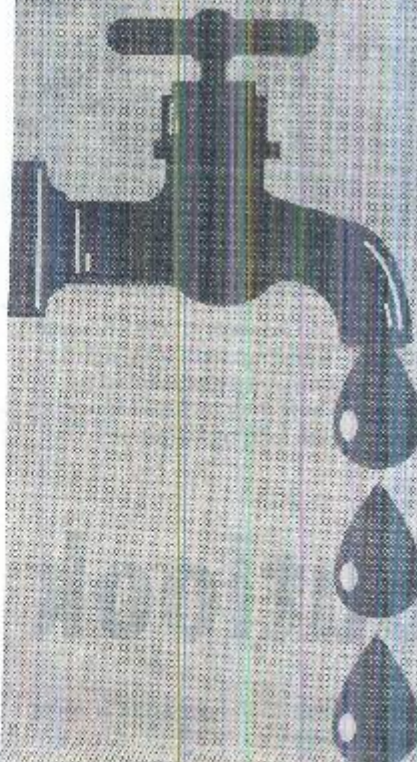
In 2020, two billion people were still without safe drinking water and 3.6 billion lacked access to safely managed sanitation services, including 494 million who had to relieve themselves in the open, according to the latest figures compiled by the UN-Water website.

At least two billion people drink water contaminated with feces, and 2.3 billion lack basic sanitation services—conditions conducive to the spread of cholera, dysentery and polio.

While climate change makes droughts more frequent and intense, UN climate experts (IPCC) also estimate that about half of the world's population suffers from "severe" water shortages during at least part of the year.

The World Bank estimates that climate change-exacerbated water shortages could cost some regions up to six percent of GDP by 2050 due to impacts on agriculture, health, income, and potentially forced migration or even conflict. **Ray S. Eñano with AFP**

# Water shortage poses challenge to strategists



'... unsustainable water use, pollution and unchecked global warming are draining humanity's lifeblood'—UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

'The growing incidence of extreme and prolonged droughts is also stressing ecosystems, with dire consequences for both plant and animal species'—UNESCO report

'... water allocation from agriculture to urban centers has become a common strategy to meet freshwater needs'—UN





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## 'Issue El Niño EO to avert water crisis'

By Rio N. Araja

ALBAY Rep. Joey Salceda on Sunday called on President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to issue an executive order directing specific government agencies to initiate measures to mitigate the impact of the El Niño phenomenon, which is expected to persist until 2024 and cause a water crisis.

In a statement, Salceda welcomed President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s creation of the Office of Water Management, which is tasked to manage the country's water resources.

"The first step is to acknowledge

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### 'Issue...

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the problem, which he has by being clear about the existence of a water crisis. Now it is time to issue a related directive to mitigate the impact of El Niño," Salceda said.

The congressman called for the development of small scale irrigation systems that can be set up quickly.

He also urged speeding up the construction of small water impounding projects, and to remind barangays of their obligations to set up rainwater catchment facilities through the Department of Interior and Local Government.

Salceda also called for agricultural measures aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of drought, including increasing cropping intensity, optimizing unit area productivity, decreasing water duty and diversifying the cropping system. Home gardening using pots and recycled containers should be encouraged, he added.

The Department of Trade and Industry, Food and Drug Administration and the Department of Agriculture must monitor prices of basic and prime commodities, agricultural products, food and drugs, he said.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources should look at fuel and fodder, tree plantation, protection of catchments, watershed management, run-off storage and recycling, and rehabilitation of watershed areas.

Congress, he said, is likely to pass the Department of Water Resources Management (DWRM) bill right in time for Marcos's State of the Nation Address by May 8.

AGRI Party-list Rep. Wilbert T. Lee, author of House Bill No. 2880, seeks to create a department that will consolidate all agencies involved in water resources.

The DWRM will:

- Implement necessary policy and resource reforms with respect to the management of all water

- Monitor and evaluate compliance with the national goals relating to water, irrigation, sewage and sanitation;

- Formulate a national updated road map to address the water, sew-

age, and sanitation requirements of the state; and

- Improve conservation of water and increase system efficiency.

This measure is in line with President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr.'s pronouncement on his administration's "overall plan" to improve the country's water resources management.

"There are many agencies that are concerned when it comes to water management. So we have to make it more cohesive. That's why we put up the Office of Water Management, which... will be attached to the Office of the President and with DENR," the President said in a recent interview, pending the passage of a bill creating the DWRM.

Lee emphasized the need for the government to urgently roll out mechanisms and infrastructure to help agricultural workers avoid the looming water crisis.

"Even without El Niño, many of our farmers already suffer from the effects of water shortage. There are farmers who have long been marionettes by the problem of pest infestations. Now that it is the dry season, many of them are seeing a reduction in their production," he said in a writ of Habeas Corpus and Habeas Data.

If passed into law, the measure will set aside P2 billion from any available funds for the organization of the DWRM and its initial operations. Thereafter, funds to carry out the powers and functions of the department will be appropriated in the General Appropriations Act.

On Friday, Sevilla David, National Water Resources Board executive director, said the NWRB is now readying contingency plans to deal with the El Niño.

"We at the NWRB are already prepared with our contingency plan or mitigating measures. One of them is the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System doing its part, such as the preparation for standby deep wells," he said.

"They have these so-called engineering measures, such as the recovery of leaks and treatment," he added.

El Niño, a weather phenomenon characterized by below-normal rainfall that can lead to dry spells and drought, is expected to last until 2024.





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# Solon prods 'Department of Water' creation

BY EDJEN OLIQUINO  
@tribunephil\_eno

A lawmaker is pressing Congress to approve a measure that will establish the Department of Water Resources Management as the country braces for the onset of the *El Niño* phenomenon.

House Bill 2880 will design and carry out the nation's extensive water

usage and conservation policy and consolidate all agencies concerning water resources.

"Even without *El Niño*, many of our farmers already suffer from the effects of water shortage," said Agri Representative Wilbert Lee, the bill's proponent.

"We have farmers who have been suffering for a long time and are having problems with proper

irrigation. This summer, many of the farms are dry, which greatly reduces their production," he added.

State weather bureau PAGASA had earlier warned that Filipinos should brace for warmer weather in the months ahead as *El Niño* is projected to start in the second part of the year and may linger until 2024.

The proposed DWRM mandates include implementing

necessary policy and resource reforms, monitoring and evaluating compliance with the national goals relating to water, irrigation, sewage and sanitation and formulating a national updated road map to address the State's requirement.

It also aims to promote the use of rainwater harvesting facilities around the country to supplement the country's water supply.

The measure's objective — in line with the Marcos government's "overall plan" bolstering the country's water resources management — also intend to improve the conservation of water and increase system efficiencies.

Marcos, in February, had approved the creation of a Water Resource Management Office to manage the country's water

resources and respond to the current environmental challenges.

The Philippines currently has at least 32 different agencies entrusted with managing its water resources, which placed the nation into the bottom third of 48 countries rated by the Asian Development Bank in terms of water administration back in 2018.





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# Water level of 6 Luzon dams continues to drop

By BELLA CARIASO

The water level of Angat Dam and five other dams in the country further dropped amid the dry season being experienced in the country, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

Based on the monitoring of PAGASA Hydro-Meteorology Division, as of 6 a.m. on Sunday, the level of Angat Dam reached 201.60 meters, 31 meters lower than its level on Saturday morning of 201.91 meters.

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

On the other hand, the level of Ipo Dam was at 98.68 meters, 0.05 meters less than its level of 98.73 meters on Saturday; Binga Dam, 570.14 meters, 47 meters less than its previous level of 570.61 meters; San Roque Dam, 241.41 meters, down by .43 meters compared to the Saturday level of 241.84 meters; Pantabangan Dam, 183.20 meters, .31 meters less than its previous level of 183.51 meters; and Caliraya Dam, 286.71 meters, .16 meters lower than its

level of 286.87 meters the day previous.

In a separate radio interview, PAGASA hydrologist Oyi Pagulayan said that water evaporation is high because of high temperature.

"Based on our past records in our dam officers, there is a downward trend in the level of all dams because of high evaporation brought by the high temperature. Climatologically speaking, this is the trend of summer months," Pagulayan said.

Pagulayan added that it is too early to say whether the dams will reach critical level.

"There were fears that the dams reached critical level but hopefully we will not experience this at this time of the year," Pagulayan added.

She called on the public to continue to conserve water amid the threat of the El Niño phenomenon.

"We keep on reminding the public of the consciousness in the use of water. The level of Angat Dam is higher compared to its rule curve, it does not mean we can afford to waste. We still encourage everyone to be careful in the consumption of water," she added.

Pagulayan said that Angat Dam is 11.47 meters away from its rule curve

elevation of 190.13 meters.

"The rule curve elevation is the level of the dam to be able to fulfill its functions," Pagulayan explained.

National Water and Resources Board (NWRB) Executive Director Seville David Jr. has urged the public to conserve water to prevent the country's experience in 2019 where the level of Angat Dam reached as low as 116 meters after the El Niño phenomenon hit the country.

PAGASA warned that El Niño will be experienced starting June or July 2023.

## Increased allocation to curb interruptions

A ranking official of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) on Sunday said that the decision of the NWRB to increase the allocation of Maynilad Water Service Inc. and Manila Water to 50 cubic meters per second from 48 cubic meters per second should shorten if not end the rotational water interruption being experienced in Metro Manila and nearby areas of Cavite and Rizal.

In a radio interview, MWSS Deputy Administrator Jose Dorado Jr. said that while the approved added pro-





## Maynilad's service areas to still experience water interruptions

CUSTOMERS in areas served by Maynilad Water Services, Inc. will continue to experience water service interruptions as supply remains inadequate, a company official said.

"Right now, we're only getting around 2,150 million liters per day (MLD) at the Novaliches portal. We should be getting 2,400 MLD because at that volume, we won't have service interruptions," Jennifer C. Rufo, head of Maynilad's corporate communications, said in a Viber message on Saturday.

Ms. Rufo said the issue right now is not so much the demand but the availability of adequate supply.

She added that the current production of Maynilad's treatment plants in the south is at 230 MLD, or higher than the previous weeks' when raw water at Laguna Lake had higher turbidity levels.

"But it's still lower than the ideal 280-300 MLD because we're still intensifying the cleaning of our facilities' filters following the prolonged high turbidity episode at Laguna Lake," she said, adding that the target is to revert to normal output by mid-April.

On Friday, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) raised the water allocation for the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to 50 cubic meters per second (CMS) from the current 48 CMS from April 1 to 15, 2023.

"NWRB did not grant the request of Maynilad through the MWSS that the allocation be increased to 52 CMS," Maynilad said in a separate statement issued on Friday.

Leonor C. Cleofas, MWSS administrator, told *BusinessWorld* by phone on Sunday that the allocation granted by the NWRB will allow the La Mesa and Ilog dams to recover and support the water supply needs of Metro Manila.

Ms. Cleofas said that MWSS had directed Maynilad to maximize the

production of its Putatan water treatment plants.

"At 50 CMS, we expect that the volume of raw water flowing to the Novaliches portal in Quezon City will still be at reduced levels. Given this, the current daily water service interruptions will remain in place, but the interruption schedules to be implemented starting April 1, 2023 have been adjusted to account for the full suspension of the cross-portal sharing arrangement between Maynilad and Manila Water," Maynilad said.

Ms. Cleofas said that Maynilad had been directed to schedule water service interruptions only at night.

However, Ms. Rufo said that Maynilad cannot limit interruptions to nighttime with its current allocation.

Meanwhile, Ms. Cleofas reiterated that despite the current water service interruptions, water supply remains sufficient.

She added that MWSS and Maynilad are expected to meet on Monday to discuss and monitor the current water supply and demand situation.

Asked whether MWSS will impose fines on Maynilad, Ms. Cleofas said: "It's the regulatory office, they are looking at it."

Maynilad, a concessionaire of the MWSS, serves the cities of Manila, except portions of San Andres and Sta. Ana. It also operates in Quezon City, Makati, Caloocan, Pasay, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas, and Malabon.

It serves the cities of Cavite, Bacoor, and Imus, and the towns of Kawit, Noveleta, and Rosario in Cavite province.

Metro Pacific Investments Corp., which has a majority stake in Maynilad, is one of three Philippine units of Hong Kong-based First Pacific Co. Ltd., the others being Philex Mining Corp. and PLDT Inc. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**





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## Let's not wait until the water runs dry

**Y**ear in, year out, alarm bells over a water crisis are being raised by various sectors of society. Water shortage is experienced in different parts of the country, drying large tracts of land and destroying the agriculture sector, due particularly to the entrance of the dry season, but now exacerbated because of the effects of climate change.

What's different this year is that the government seems to be ready to address this perennial problem, if we are to use as basis the recent pronouncements of the administration and the departments involved in this issue.

For one, when the President was asked by the media what his administration is doing to address the impending water crisis, he was confident to say that the government is ready to — once and for all — not only solve the issue at hand, but to address its root causes.

First, the President acknowledged that this is not a seasonal issue but something that affects all of us on a day-to-day basis. Summer or not, some Filipinos still do not have access to clean, safe drinking water. Various industries also face water shortages even when it is the rainy season.

To address the root causes of the water crisis, the first thing that the administration did was to issue an executive order creating the Water Resource Management Office (WRMO). For the meantime, the WRMO is tasked to consolidate various plans to tackle the water crisis, pending the creation of a full-fledged department that will be known as the Department of Water Resources (DWR).

The President called on Congress to fast-track the passage of a bill to create DWR. "There are many agencies that are concerned when it comes to water management. So, we have to make it more cohesive. That's why we established (the WRMO),

which presently will be attached to the Office of the President and the DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources)," Marcos said. "We are hoping down the road... since there are bills filed in the legislature in both houses, to establish the (DWR)."

The DENR is also proactively addressing the looming water crisis brought about by climate change. This was stated by DENR Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga during the United Nations 2023 Water Conference last March 22 to 24, 2023.

"Today, more than ever, there is a critical need for nexus governance, climate and disaster resilience, one that pursues a strategic balance between supply and consumption of water for health, food, energy, and environmental security," Loyzaga said. She noted that the WRMO, which is a first in history, aims to "achieve water security by integrating the functions of all agencies with water-related mandates."

The creation of the agency, and its eventual transformation to a full department is being prioritized in coordination with the legislative branch. The President is aware that things have to move faster, as water is life, and an efficient water management system means a healthier population and a stronger nation. "We have kept postponing this problem over many years at every level. So, it's time to put in a cohesive (water management) plan that every LGU and government agency can follow."

A looming water crisis can not be tackled with a trickle of solutions; it must be faced with an all-out, hands-on-deck action from the government, solving issues from the ground up, and uprooting years of inefficiencies, bureaucratic entanglements, and roadblocks. Only then we will all feel the flow of relief, knowing that a water crisis is a thing of the past.





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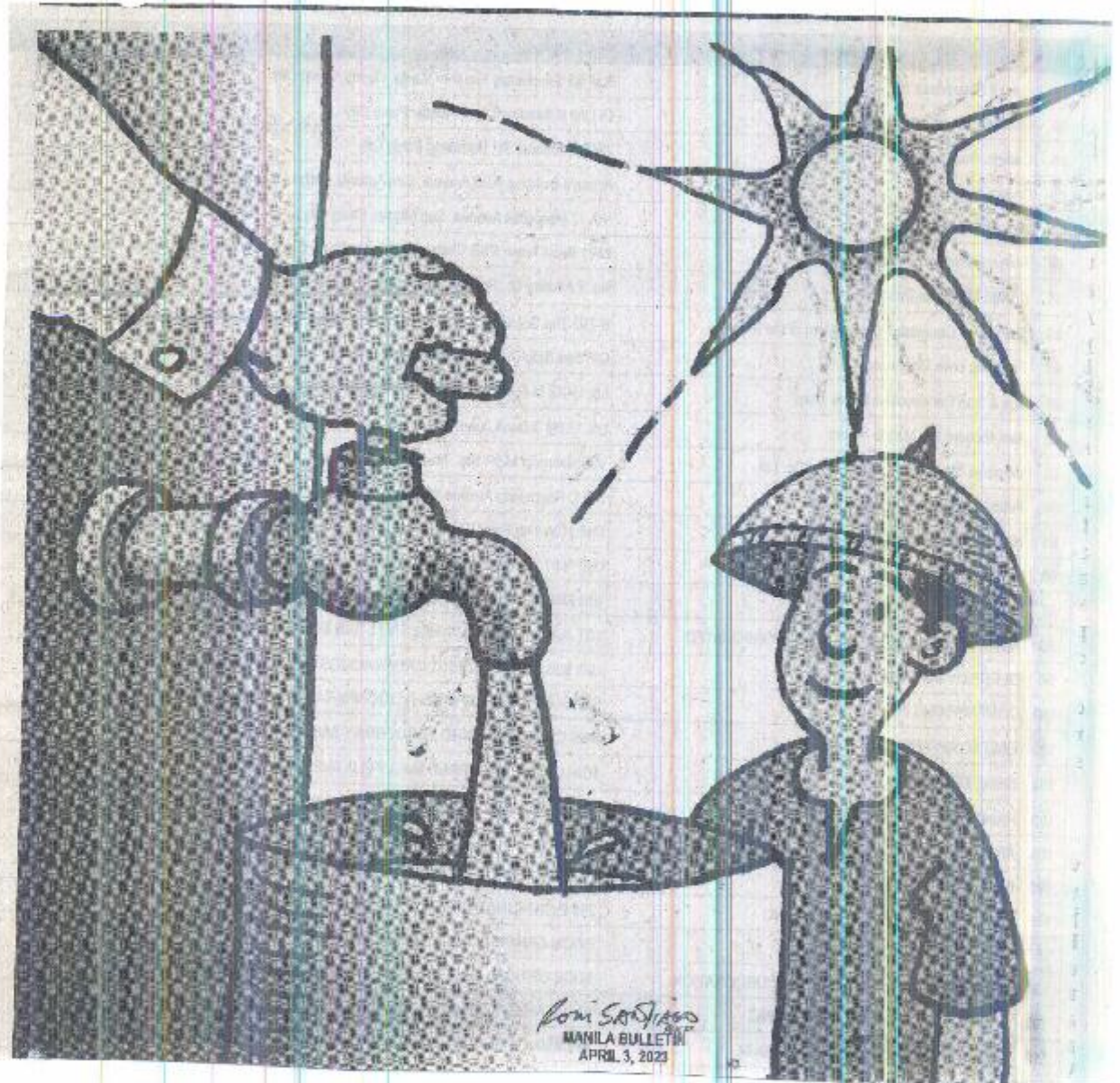
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## Water to irrigate our farms year-round

**W**ith the oncoming El Niño season, which is expected to adversely affect water supply both for drinking and irrigation, President Bongbong Marcos' recent announcement could not have come at a better time.

PBBM approved the creation of a Water Resource Management Office which will be tasked to manage the country's precious water resources. The WRMO will be established under the DENR and serve as a temporary body while the Water Resources Department is being created.

"The WRMO's main functions include formulating and ensuring the implementation of the Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP), which will integrate various plans of different agencies," according to the Presidential Communication Office.

Commenting on the current water supply management, PBBM lamented: "We have sufficient... there's enough water in the Philippines... hindi lang natin ginagamit, tinatapon natin."

With this latest development, perhaps it is opportune for Water Resource Expert Oscar I. Violago (OIV) to follow up his proposal which was submitted to PBBM in a letter dated Feb. 20, 2023.

Violago was the prime mover behind the \$670-million Casecan hydroelectric and irrigation project under a build-operate-transfer agreement with the government. The Casecan multipurpose project collects water from the Casecan and Taan Rivers. The water is then transported through a



### SPEAKING OUT

GNACIO R. BUNYE

16-mile tunnel towards the Pantabangan reservoir. It provides about 150 megawatts of electricity and irrigates 350,000 hectares of farmland.

More recently, Violago's joint venture company with business tycoon Enrique Razon inaugurated the Tayabasan weir, the first phase of Wawa bulk water supply project. Initially, the Tayabasan weir will deliver 80 MLD of raw water supply. Once the high dam is completed, another 500MLD to 750MLD will be delivered to Metro Manila consumers.

What is OIV proposing this time? In a nutshell, the proposal calls for a nationwide installation of solar powered irrigation systems. The objective: "to make water available to our farmers throughout the year. Without water during the dry season, our farmers will remain hopeless and helpless. We will forever be importing rice, subsidizing foreign farmers in the process."

Quoting Director Gina P. Nilo of the Bureau of Soils and Water Management, Violago says there are around 3.5 million hectares of shallow wells in the Philippines. As a starter, Violago proposes to irrigate one million hectares.

Who can execute the project? Foreign governments like The Netherlands, Japan, Singapore,

South Korea, the USA and Israel all have the necessary expertise to do it. "Israel has offered the Philippines to build solar irrigation with shallow wells, payable within years on a government-to-government basis at the present cost of P150,000 per hectare. For one million hectares, this translates to a yearly average amortization of P12 billion for 12 years."

"The cost is nothing compared to our rice importation per year," Violago asserts. "Last year alone, it was P80 billion."

"At 1 million hectares, we will already be food self-sufficient and the farmers will become rich. This will create a multiplier effect in our economy because they will buy more food, clothing, shelter, better education for their children, making us a wealthy nation. At two million hectares and bigger, we will become exporters of rice, corn, vegetables, making us even richer. Our animal industry will be fed by our corn production, allowing us to have lower prices for our meat, cattle, chicken and eggs. So, instead of becoming an importer, we will become a big exporter."

Good luck, OIV, on your proposal. May the force be with you!





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vision of NWRB was lower than the requested 52 cubic meters per second, it will contribute to lessen the number of hours of water interruption being experienced by Maynilad customers.

"The 50 cubic meters per second approved by NWRB will be managed to increase the elevation in Ipo Dam and La Mesa Dam and improve the operation of Maynilad," Dorado said.

On Friday, NWRB's David announced that the NWRB board approved the request of Maynilad and Manila Water to increase their water allocation to 50 cubic meters per second from 48 cubic meters effective April 1 to 15, 2023.

"We requested 52 cubic meters per second but according to Executive Director David, the board needs to first analyze the water level these coming days to determine the behavior of the dams amid the high temperature," Dorado said.

Dorado added that aside from the increased water allocation granted by NWRB, Manila Water also committed to assist Maynilad.

"We have what we call a cross border. This is treated water already. It will not come from the Novaliches portal or La Mesa portal. As you can

observe these past few days, the water supply of Manila Water to their customers is stable. This will allow them to assist Maynilad," he said.

Dorado also blamed leaks and illegal connections for the dwindling allocation of Maynilad.

"The water supply is affected by the leaks and illegal connection and then there are also losses going to the treatment plants. The biggest problem of Maynilad is its distribution system," Dorado noted.

He reiterated that water supply from Angat Dam will last until December 2023.

"The level of Angat Dam is normal and it will be enough to supply the water requirement until the end of the year," he said.

He added that the use of deep wells as an alternative source of water will be the last option as the NWRB can authorize the two water concessionaires to tap their standby sources from the ground.

"We keep on reminding our customers to be patient as we are trying to fix the system to minimize the water interruption. We also urge the public to use water properly, conserve water to maximize the water allocation for Metro-Manila," he added.





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## The depth of our water problems



Atty. Jose Ferdinand M. Rojas II

### RISING SUN

**L**AST week, Maynilad announced that starting this April, there will be longer daily service interruptions to save water in the Angat-Ipo system. It's summer and they say El Niño is to blame. Everyone else is wondering why, when summer and even El Niño should be expected annually, the water service company is not able to prepare adequately for the inevitable. Aside from that, even during rainy days, there have been daily service interruptions in many of the areas they serve. It would be best to find a longer-term solution to this problem.

On the global front, the first UN Water Conference after 46 years took place in New York on March 22 to 24. Titled the "The United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action 'Water for Sustainable Development' (2018-2028)," the conference aimed to raise awareness about the global water crisis. The goal

was for the participants to be able to decide on ways to achieve the internationally agreed objectives and come up with solutions for the crises of "too much water," such as storms and floods; "too little water," such as droughts and water scarcity; and "too dirty water," such as polluted water.

Our global water system is in crisis. Billions of people lack access to safe and clean water; we know that

**Our global water system is in crisis. Billions of people lack access to safe and clean water; we know that so well even here in the Philippines. Since the first UN Water Conference in 1977, the world population has doubled. Demand for water rose alongside the increase in population. According to the UN, the UN 2023 Water Conference is "the most important water event" in a generation.**

so well even here in the Philippines. Since the first UN Water Conference in 1977, the world population has doubled. Demand for water rose alongside the increase in population. According to the UN, the UN 2023 Water Conference is "the most important water event" in a generation.

More than 10,000 people took part virtually or in person. There were 713 voluntary commitments filed by non-government organizations, governments, businesses, universities, and organizations like

Unicef. These were collected into what is now being called the Water Action Agenda. There were many small pledges and few huge plans. Some of the themes that came up were the push for "nature-based solutions," the need for inclusive management, and finance or how to fund the cause. The latter is linked to good governance and the effective use of funding.

Realistically, the world's problems related to water will take much more than three days of speeches and presentations to solve. Everybody knows that, and so the conference participants left the meeting with hope and enthusiasm. They voted to create the position of UN Special Envoy for Water, to facilitate the conversation within the UN system, and to call regular high-level meetings to talk about water.

How might we translate the learnings from this conference to fuel our own local water projects? How can we emphasize the sense of urgency and inspire everyone—from the public to private sector, communities down to individuals—to take steps now, before it's too late?





## Maynilad recognizes 21 water, environment champions in World Water Day Philippines Awards 2023



WEST ZONE concessionaire Maynilad Water Services, Inc. (Maynilad)—in partnership with the National Water Resources Board and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)—honored 21 water and environment champions at the World Water Day Philippines Awards 2023 (WWD.PH Awards) held last March 22 in Pasay City.

Recipients of Maynilad's "Water Warrior Award for Advocacy Leadership" were Caloocan City Vice Mayor Karina Teh, ABS-CBN journalist Alvir Elchico, the Guezon City Climate Change Education Department, and the Million Trees Foundation, for actively raising awareness on water sustainability and environmental responsibility in their respective professions and initiatives.

NWRB's "Water Wise Award" went to the Cebu Technology University, Holcim Philippines Inc., and West Cebu Industrial Park Developers, Inc. for their exemplary water management practices consistent with the agency's regulatory mandate and advocacy.

The "Huwaring Lingkod Tubig Award" recipients of Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) were Baguio Water District in Luzon, Silay Water District in the Visayas, and General Santos City Water District in Mindanao, for being model water districts in water conservation and environmental initiatives.

Meanwhile, the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) named as "Most Outstanding Irrigators' Associations" the Makabilog Maynabo Tambo Irrigators Association, San Agustin San Luis Irrigators Association, Inc., and Bayawan United Farmers Irrigators Association.

Efforts in Laguna de Bay rehabilitation were also recognized through the "Kampeon ng Lawa Awards" of the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA). These were given to the Local Government of Treseña, Rizal; the University of the Philippines Training Center for Applied Geodesy and Photogrammetry; and the Department of Science and Technology-Advanced Science and Technology Institute.

The DENR-Environmental Management Bureau's "Water Leadership Award" went to Adem Novelas of Project Blue PH for his initiative to design innovative boats made entirely out of recycled and sustainable materials.

Completing the roster of honorees were Metro Pacific Water's "Kampeon ng Kalikasan" awardee Cagayan de Oro City Water District, Aboltiz InfraCapital's "Agos ng Kinabukasan" awardee San Pablo City Water District, and the PWWA "Lingkod Tubig at Kalikasan" awardees Go Share and Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Council.

In his message during the event, Maynilad President and CEO Ramonito S. Fernandez underscored the need to work together for the

environment, in keeping with this year's World Water Day theme, "Accelerating change through partnerships and cooperation." He thanked the WWD award recipients and acknowledged their role in promoting environmental causes.

The WWD.PH Awards serves as the culminating event of the country's week-long celebration of World Water Day.

Since 2015, the WWD.PH Awards has recognized a total of 114 individuals, institutions, and programs that have contributed to accelerating water and water-environment sustainability in the country. Each WWD.PH participating government agency and private company submits their nominees, which are then screened and vetted by a multi-organization committee before being included in the list of awardees.

Among this year's partners are Metro Pacific Water, Aboltiz InfraCapital, LLDA, NIA, LWUA, and Philippine Water Works Association.

Photo shows the awardees along with officials of the various water agencies that granted the awards headed by DENR Undersecretary for Field Operations - Luzon, Visayas and Environment Juan Miguel Cuna (1st row, 7th from left), Maynilad President and CEO Ramonito S. Fernandez and NWRB Chief for Policy and Program Division Enay Susan Abaño (1st row, 9th and 10th from left, respectively).





ALSO HELPING OUT: US, UK, KOREA, FRANCE

# PCG, JAPANESE SHIP BEGIN SEALING OF LEAKS FROM SUNKEN TANKER

By Frances Mangosing  
@FMangosingINQ

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the crew of the Shin Niichi Maru, a Japanese dynamic positioning vessel, have begun "bagging" operations to seal off leaks from tanker MT Princess Empress, more than a month after it sank off Oriental Mindoro.

The bagging technique is the part of the next phase of the PCG's oil spill management operations, the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) said in a statement on Saturday.

The specialized bags were provided by the government of the United Kingdom to support the operations.

The MT Princess Empress was carrying 900,000 liters of industrial-grade oil when it sank on Feb. 28.

The US Navy is set to deploy its remotely operated vehicle starting Monday to provide additional situational data on the shipwreck.

### 'International assistance'

The BRP Corregidor and BRP Habagat were also deployed to provide assistance, while a special response unit of the Korea Coast Guard gave technical advice while on board.

France also sent a technical expert who joined reconnaissance operations and other

ground work to provide expertise in pollution response operations, according to the French Embassy.

### Other personnel

"We are grateful for all the support from the other countries in addressing this emergency," OCD administrator Undersecretary Ariel Nepomuceno said.

He added: "We hope that along with these international assistance, the integrated response between government agencies and the local government units (LGUs) will enable us to accelerate the effort to contain the leakage and mitigate the impacts of the oil spill."

As of Saturday, 47 PCG personnel were deployed to conduct shoreline assessment cleanup, while seven were working on offshore response operations.

Some 16 Coast Guard Marine Science technicians, 20 personnel from LGUs, 58 personnel from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and three volunteers from the Department of Health were deployed to support the shoreline response operations.

Another 167 hired workers and 12 representatives from Harbor Star Shipping Services Inc. as well as 220 volunteers also joined the response activities, the OCD said. *ina*



SUNKEN VESSEL The MT Princess Empress as spotted in the waters of Pola, Oriental Mindoro, on March 21. —PHOTO FROM FUKADA SALVAGE AND MARINE WORKS CO.





STRATEGIC  
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**MANILA BULLETIN**  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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## Bagging operation begins to seal sunken tanker

By MARTIN SADONGDONG

Authorities have finally started the bagging operation to seal off the leaks from motor tanker (MT) Princess Empress which sank in the vicinity waters off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro on Feb. 28, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said.

Bagging is a technique where the vessel is covered by specialized bags which catch the leaking industrial fuel oil from the cargoes onboard the MT Princess Empress. It is part of the next operational phase of the Philippine Coast Guard's (PCG) oil spill management operations. **>15**

## Bagging operation begins to seal sunken tanker **1<**

The NDRRMC said that Oriental Mindoro Gov. Humerlito Dolor confirmed the arrival of the specialized bags from the United Kingdom and that the bagging operation started on Saturday, April 1.

Accordingly, the specialized bags were loaded onboard the Japanese dynamic positioning vessel (DPV) Shin Nichi Maru to have it tested through the help of PCG personnel.

A remotely operated vehicle (ROV) or underwater robot was used to cover the MT Princess Empress with the specialized bags. At least 16 more customized bags will arrive in Oriental Mindoro today, April 3, from

a plantation in Cavite to sustain the operations.

"We are grateful for all the support from the other countries in addressing this emergency. We hope that along with these international assistance, the integrated response between government agencies and the local government units will enable us to accelerate the effort to contain the leakage and mitigate the impacts of the oil spill," NDRRMC Executive Director Undersecretary Ariel Nepomuceno said.

### 14,083 liters of oily water

The ongoing clean-up operations in the oil spill-affected areas have

resulted in the collection of 14,083 liters of oily water mixture and 155 sacks of oil-contaminated materials during the offshore response operations.

For shoreline response, the PCG collected 4,150.5 sacks and 22 drums of waste from the 13 affected barangays in Naujan, Bulalacao, and Pola towns in Oriental Mindoro from March 1 to 31.

A total of 36,658 families or 173,468 individuals have also been affected in 163 barangays in Oriental Mindoro, Palawan, Antique, and Batangas as of Sunday, April 2.

Moreover, the livelihood of 16,930 farmers and fisherfolk were also affected as the estimated cost of damage to agriculture reached P263,556,100.





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## Regional Updates

### Puerto Galera excluded from state of calamity declaration due to oil spill

THE OIL spill from sunken fuel tanker *MT Princess Progress* has yet to reach the tourist town of Puerto Galera, according to local authorities.

This was confirmed by Oriental Mindoro Vice Governor Ejay L. Falcon after the provincial council passed a resolution on Friday night placing all coastal villages in the province under a state of calamity except those in Puerto Galera.

In a letter to the Sangguniang Pambalawigan before the Friday session, Puerto Galera Mayor Rocky D. Ilogan said "there is no basis" to include the town in the declaration since it remains oil spill-free.

Mr. Ilogan said that based on water samples collected by authorities from Puerto Galera's Varadero Bay, Escarceo Point and Palangan Bay last month, oil and grease presence in the three sampling points remained below one.

It added that the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources had released a bulletin

that after its evaluation of contamination levels in water and fishery resources, "the same showed minimal oil and grease, which are within the standard stated by DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) for fishing areas."

Mr. Ilogan said the local environment and natural resources office "also conducts almost daily monitoring of our municipal waters and there are no indications that the oil spill has migrated to the municipal waters of Puerto Galera or that our resources are in any way contaminated by the oil spill."

The Oriental Mindoro resolution came after the provincial government had confirmed the presence of grease and oil in Baco and San Teodoro, Puerto Galera's neighboring towns.

The Puerto Galera local government has boosted its efforts to attract local and international tourists this summer season.

On Saturday, local authorities held a so-called "I Change to Pledge" activity to inform the public that the town remains oil spill-free.

The local government has called out alleged false information on social media indicating that the oil spill had reached the town. Last month, Mr. Ilogan admonished the University of the Philippines-Marine Science Institute, which has been closely monitoring the incident, for issuing a warning that the oil spill might reach Puerto Galera.

The tanker was carrying 800,000 liters of industrial oil when it sank off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro on Feb. 28.

The Philippine Coast Guard and other emergency responders, with help from international experts, are still carrying out clean-up operations and preparations are underway to plug the oil spill source. — **Wido Aristophere T. Atienza**





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## Efforts to contain oil spill ramped up

BY VICTOR REYES

RAMPING up efforts to contain the oil leaking from the sunken MT Princess Empress off Oriental Mindoro, authorities have started a "bagging" operation to "seal off" the leaks.

In a statement last Saturday night, the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) said the operation is being done by personnel of the Philippine Coast Guard and Japanese dynamic positioning vessel Shin Nichi Maru using the remotely operated vessel (ROV) aboard the Japanese vessel.

"Specialized bags to be used in the bagging technique to stop the oil leakage were sent to the country by the government of the United Kingdom to support the operations," the OCD said.

"The bagging technique is part of the next operational phase of PCG's oil spill management operations," added the OCD, the implementing arm of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council.

After bagging, the next phase of the operation will be to patch the leaks, hot tapping and siphoning of the oil remaining inside the vessel.

Citing information from Oriental Mindoro Gov. Humerlito Dolor, the OCD said more "customized bags" from a plant in Cavite are due to arrive in the province to support the operation.

OCD administrator and concurrent NDRRMC executive director Ariel Nepomuceno

See EFFORTS > Page B3

### EFFORTS

expressed gratitude to countries that are providing assistance in the oil response operations.

"We are grateful for all the support from the other countries in addressing this emergency," said Nepomuceno.

"We hope that along with this international assistance, the integrated response between government agencies and the local government units will enable us to accelerate the effort to contain the leakage and mitigate the impacts of the oil spill," he added.

The United States, among the countries that have extended assis-

tance, has sent an anchor handling vessel, the Pacific Valkyrie with an ROV, that arrived in Subic, Zambales last Tuesday. The vessel will proceed to Oriental Mindoro "once all mandatory checks and preparations are completed."

Last Friday, Korean Coast Guard representatives went to the provincial capitol in Calapan City to discuss with PCG officials "approaches to improve the response operations being implemented," the OCD said.

The MT Princess Empress was traveling to Iloilo from Bataan when it sank off Naujan in Oriental Mindoro last February 28.

Last March 1, the PCG said oil

was spilling from the tanker in the waters of Naujan. The oil spill drifted to Caluya in Antique last March 3 while oil sheens and thick patches were seen along Verde Island on March 20, Tingloy on March 21 and the shoreline of Batangas City on March 25.

### MILLIONS IN AID

More than P78.86 million worth of food and non-food relief items have been provided to families affected by the oil spill in parts of Calabarzon, Mimaropa and Western Visayas regions, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) said

yesterday.

Data from the DSWD's Disaster Response Operations Monitoring and Information Center (DROMIC) showed that available relief resources on standby are now down to P1.39 billion composed of P119.081 million fund and P1.275 billion worth of stockpiles.

The number of affected barangays has risen to 187, up from 163 last week, made up of 30 in Batangas, 145 in Oriental Mindoro, 8 in Palawan and 4 in Antique.

A total of 37,871 families have been affected, composed of 178,306 persons. — *With Jocelyn Montemayor*



# UNDP, DoH tackle healthcare waste management

**O**VER 200 hospital workers in Metro Manila completed training courses on responsible and sustainable healthcare waste management, and two medical autoclave units were handed over to partner hospitals as part of the DoH-UNDP-GDF Covid-19 Healthcare Waste Management Response Project.

In the project's culmination activity in Caloocan City, graduates of the healthcare waste training program received their course completion certificates presented by Department of Health (DoH) Assistant Secretary Dr. Gloria Balboa, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Philippines Resident Representative Dr. Selva Ramachandran, and Chinese Embassy in the Philippines Minister Councilor Yang Guoliang.

Following the handover ceremony last December 2022, medical autoclaves have been successfully set up and tested in Dr. Jose Rodriguez Memorial Hospital

and Sanitarium (DJNRMHS) and the Pasig City General Hospital (PCGH). Hospital personnel finished their week-long practical training in preparation for the full operation of the donated medical waste management equipment and underwent comprehensive learning sessions conducted by UNDP and the DoH-Metro Manila Center for Health Development (MMCHD) Office on a new and improved waste management system that will be implemented in the two health facilities in the coming months.

The DoH recognized the significance and timeliness of the proj-

ect. "The importance of healthcare waste management in these unprecedented times was underlined with the help of our partners. We were able to effectively implement this project and replicate the best practices in waste management. It is essential that effective healthcare waste management is a crucial public health service. Only an enabling environment will ensure that this is carried out continuously and successfully," said Assistant Secretary Balboa.

Dr. Ramachandran looks forward to even better and greater partnerships between UNDP, the government, and development partners. "This culmination, rather than an end, is a celebration of new beginnings: the beginning of better health care waste management for our partner-beneficiaries, the beginning of new and more efficient waste management processes that can be scaled-up to other hospitals—both public and private—or even expanded to reinforce other sectors and initiatives

such as Circular Economy, among others," he said in his message.

Minister Councilor Guoliang expressed appreciation to the partners for their efforts and dedication in delivering the project. He also warmly congratulated the health workers who have finished the training courses. "You will play significant roles in improving the health waste management capability of the Philippines," he stated.

With technical support from Healthcare Without Harm, health workers from DJNRMHS and PCGH learned waste audit, characterization, and the fundamentals of the waste management process. They were also provided with tablet devices to familiarize themselves with digital waste registry and taught how to use digital tools for faster and more efficient waste management record keeping.

"This project has been such a real blessing to us at the time it was really needed, which was during the pandemic. This would



UNDP, DoH tackle

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Minister Councilor Yang Guoliang of Chinese Embassy, DoH Assistant Secretary Gloria Balboa, and UNDP Philippines Resident Representative Dr. Selva Ramachandran present the certificate of completion to health workers from DJRNMHS and PCGH.

also entail that focusing on the leveling up of our hospital's waste management system would also mean upgrading the standard quality of service we provide to our patients," shared Nocielta Garcia-Castillo, DJRNMHS Designated Planning Officer.

Apart from DoH, UNDP has also sought the support of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on ways the project can drastically reduce the volume of infectious medical waste produced in the partner hospitals.

The project comes to a close as the Philippines eases into the new normal, coming from a global health crisis. With the technical support and equipment provided, the project aims to bring the coun-

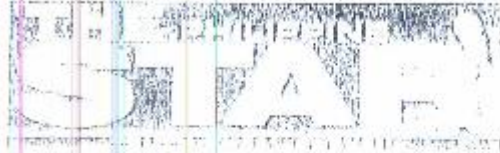
try closer to achieving a sustainable waste management system to help protect the health of the exposed population and prevent environmental pollution. It also seeks to share the best practices with other institutions in Metro Manila and eventually nationwide. The partners committed to build on the momentum of the project to continue supporting the health sector, with plans to generate a new expanded package of support.

The DoH-UNDP-GDF Covid-19 Healthcare Waste Management Response Project was made possible through the support of China's Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund (GDF) operated by the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA).





DEPARTMENT OF  
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Department of Public Works and Highways officials turn over four backhoes to the city governments of Las Piñas and Muntinlupa for the Manila Bay rehabilitation project, led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. In a ceremony on Saturday, Sen. Cynthia Villar, who graced the event, sponsored the DENR budget, a portion of which was given to the DPWH for the procurement of equipment that will be used to dredge rivers and creeks connected to the bay. GERMEN PINTOLO





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# Nickel Asia expects mining to thrive this year

By DANESSA RIVERA

The Philippine mining industry is seen to thrive more this year given the perceived strong support of government, as well as the growing global demand for nickel, according to a top official of Nickel Asia Corp.

"The mining industry in the Philippines is positive as the government is taking on a more supportive stance for our industry," NAC president and CEO Martin Antonio Zamora said.

"I think overall we're quite positive versus last year for the industry," he said.

The Marcos administration sees high growth potential in the mining sector that will help the economy recover amid the pandemic.

The mining sector has only been contributing less than one percent to gross domestic product (GDP).

As the Philippines' largest producer of lateritic nickel ore and one of the largest in the world, NAC also sees positive drivers for nickel this year.

Zamora pointed to China's economic recovery and the global push to roll out electric vehicles (EVs). China is a heavy user of nickel to produce lithium-ion batteries.

"The nickel industry specifically is highly dependent on China, on the recovery story. So, if China's recovery pans out as expected, then we believe that there will be support for demand for nickel, specifically for the steel industry," he said.

"The EV sector continues to be a major source of demand and we do not expect any slowdown in the take up of EVs at least in the medium term," Zamora said.

Last Dec. 9, China shifted from a COVID Zero policy to a full-on economic reopening.

China's reopening, coupled with

the nickel demand for EVs, could bump up prices this year.

"There are factors such as the reopening in China and its positive impact to the economic recovery there, which would accelerate towards the second half of 2023, which may provide a relief for class 2 nickel prices," NAC vice president for treasury, investor relations and sales Andre Dy said.

"Recovery may offset slowing growth in the US, Europe, coupled with continuous demand for EVs. We think this is positive for nickel prices in the long term," he said.

Data from the Mines and Geosci-

ences Bureau (MGB) showed metal production increased by 31.73 percent to 238.05 billion last year from P180.71 billion in 2021.

The nickel group took the lion's share of the total production value with P117.58 billion or 49.39 percent.

Production volume of nickel direct shipping ore slipped 11 percent to 29.27 million dry metric tons (dmt) from 32.93 million dmt due to the production shortfall incurred by most nickel projects.

The decline in output was offset by the high nickel prices, which rose to \$11.86 per pound from \$8.35 per pound.





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## Mining prospects rosy

BY JED MACAPAGAL

MINING is expected to further improve this year but the nickel sector's recovery will depend on China's economy, according to Nickel Asia Corp. (NAC).

"(For) the mining industry in the Philippines, the outlook is positive as the government is taking on a more supportive stance for our industry. The nickel industry is highly dependent on China, on the recovery story. If China's recovery pans out as expected, then we believe there will be support for demand for nickel," said Martin Antonio Zamora, NAC president and chief executive officer at the company's earnings call last week.

Zamora said the electric vehicle (EV) industry continues to drive the demand for nickel and they do not expect any slowdown in the takeup of EVs in the coming years.

"At least in the medium term, we do not expect any slowdown in the take up. Overall, we're quite positive versus last year for

the industry," Zamora said.

Last year, the country's metallic mineral production value rose by 31.73 percent to P238.05 billion from P180.71 billion in 2021. The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) said nickel ore together with its nickel by-products, mixed nickel-cobalt sulfide and scandium oxalate continued to have the largest share at P117.58 billion or 49.39 percent.

However, in terms of production, direct shipping ore nickel was the only component whose production fell, down by 11 percent to 29.27 million dry metric tons (dmt) from 32.93 million dmt.

MGB earlier indicated the Philippines will be able to produce and export more minerals this year, given the likely improved level of metal demand most especially from China.

The agency said under the latest list of priority projects spanning three phases, 33 are expected to commence within the next six months, 14 of which are for metallic minerals.





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# 'Mabilo mine permits only for

**M**T. Labo Exploration and Development Corp. (MLEDC) said it is the sole permittee of the Mabilo Gold Project in Camarines Norte Province.

The company said that based on Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Mines and Geosciences Bureau (DENR-MGB) records, Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) MLC MRD-V-459, which refers to the Mabilo Gold Project, only pertains to the company.

The Mabilo Gold Project is one of the major traditional gold mining centers in the Philippines. The area is easily accessed from the nearby town of Labo, using a 15-kilometer all-weather road.

MLEDC said the DENR further certified that the MPSA was "issued by the DENR solely under the name of Mt. Labo Exploration and Development Corporation."

The company issued the statement in light of recent news announcing Galeo Equipment Corp. as a "co-permittee" of the Mabilo Gold Project.

Provincial officials of Camarines Norte had hailed the decision of the DENR and MGB Region 5 granting co-permittee status to the Mabilo Project joint venture (JV) partners.

The Provincial Board of Camarines Norte recently passed a resolution "expressing thanks and appreciation" to the DENR, particularly the MGB Panel of Arbitrators (POA), after resolving to declare Galeo Equipment Corp. as co-permittee and co-contractor to MLEDC under MPSA No. MLC-MRD-459.

The decision recognized and gave importance to Provincial Ordinance No. 52-2017 enacted by the Provincial Board which states that in case there are JV partners in the mining projects within the province of Ca-

marines Norte, the said JV partners should be deemed as co-permittees to ensure accountability in the implementation of mining laws and ensure responsible mining within the province. However, MLEDC maintained its position as the sole permittee on the basis of an August 2020 arbitration ruling of the Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC).

SIAC ruled against Galeo and rejected its position to be recognized as a co-permittee in the project.

Galeo elevated the SIAC decision before the Singapore Commercial Court (SCC), but its appeal was denied.

MLEDC then filed for a Petition for Recognition of the SIAC ruling before the Regional Trial Court in Makati City.

According to MLEDC, the basis of the proclamation that Galeo is a "co-permittee" in the Mabilo Gold Project is "unfounded" and "outright

## MLEDC'

runs contrary to the aforementioned SIAC legal proceedings and certification of the DENR." *Jonathan L. Mayuga*





STRATEGIC  
CULTURAL POLICY  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICES

THE EXHIBITION OF THE PHILIPPINE PROGRESS SINCE 1900  
**MANILA BULLETIN**  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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# Let's talk about the climate emergency

## MCAD on the greatest test of our time

**"Adaptation: A Reconnected Earth,"** the first on-site exhibition for 2023 of the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD) Manila of De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde, has opened, proposing an approach of determining the present within the realities of a changed climate, a despairing planet, and a recently renewed humanity.

Climate agencies have warned that the global temperature rise this century should be kept well below two degrees Celsius to save the planet. The exhibition features artists who speak on the realities of the disrupted climate and the

daily lives amid the anxious shift between the allure of capitalism and responsible conservation.

"We must approach re-entering the planet, of peopling the world, through the modality of care and

"This proposal of having a thoughtful, kind, and considerate outlook is the consciousness we should strive for in order to survive the present and future of our own making."

kinship," notes MCAD director and curator Yeyey Cruz. "This proposal of having a thoughtful, kind, and considerate outlook is the conscious-

ness we should strive for in order to survive the present and future of our own making."

"Adaptation: A Reconnected Earth" features a diverse collection of artworks, from C-prints and papier-mâché works to video installations. They come from artists Patty Chang, Deniz Tortum and Kathryn Hamilton, Josh Kline, Agnes Denes, Lui Medina, Bartolina Xixa, Issay Rodriguez, and Derek Tumala.

The exhibition is free and open to the public until July 23. Booking in advance is required via its website.

MCAD is located at De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde Design + Arts Campus, Dominga Street, Malate, Manila. [www.mcadmanila.org.ph](http://www.mcadmanila.org.ph)



Josh Kline





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LET'S TALK

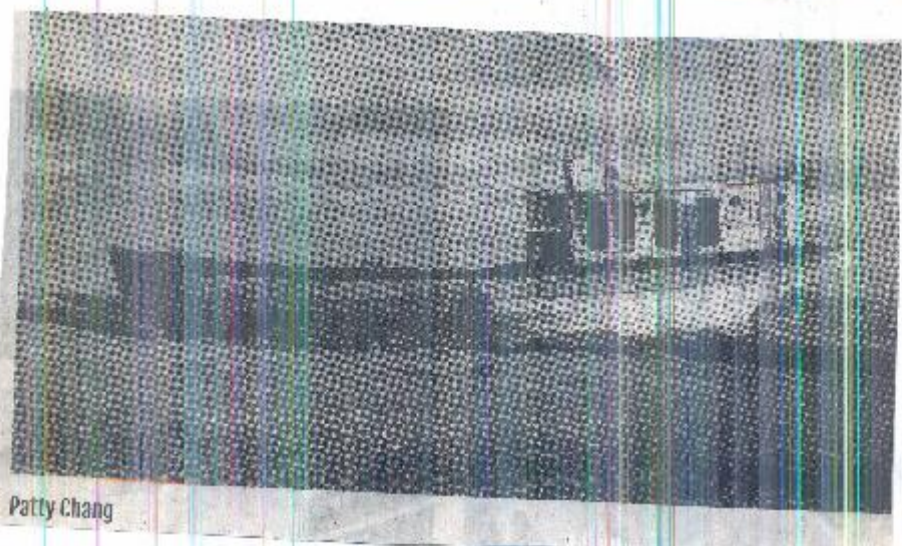
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Bartolina Xixa

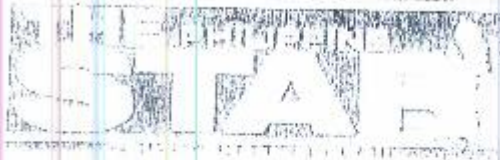


Patty Chang



Deniz Tortum and Kathryn Hamilton





## Northern Samar town sizzles at 46°Celsius heat index

The town of Catarman in Northern Samar logged a heat index of 46 degrees Celsius on Saturday, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

PAGASA said the temperature in Catarman reached 31.2 degrees Celsius at 1 p.m. of the same day as relative humidity was recorded at 90 percent.

Data from the state weather agency showed the highest heat index recorded from March 1 to April 1 was in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro at 47 degrees Celsius on March 25.

Other areas that logged a high heat index were Butuan in Agusan del Norte with 47 degrees Celsius on March 24 followed by Roxas City in Capiz with 43 degrees Celsius on March 30 and Maasin in Southern Leyte with 43 degrees Celsius on March 25.

PAGASA said aside from Catarman, other areas with high heat index on Saturday were Dagupan, Pangasinan; Legazpi, Albay, and Malaybalay, Bukidnon, which all logged 41 degrees Celsius, and Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Pasay with 40 degrees Celsius.

PAGASA has warned that the heat index this month could reach over 50 degrees Celsius.

Weather forecasters define heat index as the level of heat or discomfort that a person experiences due to the combined effects of temperature and humidity.

The public has been advised to limit outdoor exposure, drink plenty of water, and avoid tea, coffee, soda and liquor.

- Bella Cariaso





## El Niño a hotbed for epidemics - lawmaker

By DELON PORCALLA

A key member of the House of Representatives has warned that the ongoing threat of extended drought could be a "hotbed for epidemics," for which reason the Department of Health (DOH) must prepare for a worst-case scenario.

"Tropical diseases can be particularly problematic. Global studies indicate a spike of between 2.5 percent to 28 percent in cases during El Niño activities," Albay 2nd District Rep. Joey Salceda, who chairs the House ways and means committee, said.

"El Niño is a hotbed for epidemics - climate is warmer than usual, and people have less water available. So, we should be working on adaptations such as mandating LGUs (local government units) to clean up, hospitals to probabilistically allocate resources among probably tropical diseases and the DOH to do the coordination work and provide close guidance," Salceda added, urging the DOH to beef up its contingencies to respond to diseases typically

accompanying a hot season, such as cholera, Chikungunya and Zika virus.

The Bicolano lawmaker explained that what will happen can be anticipated, more or less, "because the models teach us when, how long and how bad it can be."

He emphasized that the presence of a full-time, dedicated staff for disease control and prevention would help ensure that the matter does not get buried in bureaucratic gobbledygook.

"El Niño and La Niña can make extreme weather events more likely in certain areas of the country. It could intensify droughts, floods and storms. So, apart from usual damage due to natural disasters, let us also expect diseases related to these hazards," he said.