

10 April 2023 Monday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**



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## Angat Dam's water level down

The water level in Angat Dam has dropped to below 200 meters amid the dry season, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

PAGASA said as of 6 a.m. yesterday, the dam's water level was 199.76 meters from 200.01 meters on Saturday, or lower by .25 meters.

Despite the decline, the water elevation was 10.56 meters above its rule curve elevation of 189.29 meters.

The rule curve elevation enables the dam to fulfill its functions.

The minimum operating level of Angat Dam is 180 meters.

The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) and the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System have assured the public that the current water level in Angat is sufficient for the needs of Metro Manila and nearby provinces until December.

Angat supplies more than 90 percent of Metro Manila's potable water as well as the irrigation needs of the farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga.

As this developed, consumers of Maynilad Water Services Inc. have been experiencing daily water interruption despite the additional daily allocation of 50 cubic meters per second (cms) provided to it and its fellow concessionaire Manila Water.

NWRB Executive Director Seville David Jr. defended the decision of the board to approve the 50 cms additional allocation instead of the 52 cms as requested by Maynilad and Manila Water.

David said the additional allocation would remain in effect until April 15.

Among those affected by daily water cutoffs of eight to 14 hours are some areas in Caloocan, Las Piñas, Malabon, Makati, Manila, Muntinlupa, Navotas, Parañaque, Pasay, Quezon City and Valenzuela as well as Bacoor, Imus, Kawit, Noveleta and Rosario in Cavite.

-Bella Cariaso



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# BusinessMirror

*A broader look at today's business*



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## PBBM trains sights on water crisis



### LITO GAGNI

**F**INALLY, President Marcos has trained his sights on the country's water security, which loomed large with the onset of the summer months. The dry months usually meant rationing of the resource. The fact that he is pushing Congress to craft a law to set up a government agency tasked with addressing what he termed as the "debilitating effect" of a water crisis on the economy is a step in the right direction.

The President's take on addressing this looming water crisis is part of his administration's agenda to concentrate on putting vigor to the economy with the gargantuan debt (P13 trillion) the government is faced with, plus the pandemic's crippling effects on businesses such as restaurants and hotels that have taken big hits. Water, after all, as PBBM emphasized, is an integral part in boosting the economy.

For instance, the Philippine Statistics Authority cited that the semiconductor industry, which accounts for P639 billion out of the P5.8 trillion contribution of the manufacturing sector, requires water security. The semiconductors are very much needed to manufacture various gadgets and technology, such as mobile phones. And here, we host semiconductor needs of

foreign tech firms.

However, semiconductors are also heavily reliant on water. To produce a single mobile phone, 3,000 gallons of ultra-pure water (UPW) is needed. And to have that kind of special water, between 1,400 and 1,600 gallons of tap water is needed to produce 1,000 gallons of UPW. Thus, with the President acknowledging the need for water security, the gnawing fear of water supply challenges that the manufacturing sector is facing will go away.

This also means that the agriculture sector will be able to have the irrigation that farmers require, aside from the potable water that residents in Metro Manila and beyond need. As of now, Angat Dam is already deficient in the water needs of the metropolis plus parts of Rizal, Cavite and Laguna or the Calabarzon area,



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**We understand that the MWSS has already obtained from the elders of the Dumagat-Remontados tribe the free, prior and informed consent that the National Commission on Indigenous People required. Also, the agency has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the tribal leaders in the affected tribes in Rizal and Quezon who will receive P160 million in disturbance fees plus yearly benefits of P46 million for the IPs in General Nakar, Quezon and those in Tanay, Rizal.**

which hosts various semiconductor companies. This is the reason for the rotating water service currently being implemented.

And so with the law that will take care of the water security, the construction of the Kaliwa Dam, which can supply 600 million liters per day plus a 2,400 million liters more via tunnels, will be finished on schedule in 2026. According to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, the dam, which suspended construction for two years due to the pandemic, is now 22 percent complete. And it is a good thing that the MWSS has already inked the thumbs-up from the affected IP communities in the area.

We understand that the MWSS has already obtained from the elders of the Dumagat-Remontados tribe the free, prior and informed consent that the National Commission on Indigenous People required. Also, the

agency has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the tribal leaders in the affected tribes in Rizal and Quezon who will receive P160 million in disturbance fees plus yearly benefits of P46 million for the IPs in General Nakar, Quezon and those in Tanay, Rizal.

Hopefully, the bill mandating the creation of a water agency under the Office of the President will have smooth sailing in Congress. It is what the country needs to address the water crisis now.

And it is essential for the recovery of our economy. We need all hands on deck for boosting the economy, as it is the only way by which the government can create more jobs, reduce the number of poor families and assure water security on top of food security.

As PBBM said, "there are many agencies that are involved in water supply and water management and it has just evolved that way. But what we are going to try to do is to make it a more cohesive policy so that there is planning at the national level and in that way we can maximize the management of what water we have."

"When they say water is life, it's not just a cliché, it's a truism," the President said during a water conference recently held in Pasay City. That water conference discussed other ways of addressing water security that the contemplated law will make rotating water interruption a thing of the past.



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# Co-op makes sure power lines safe for birds

## Insulated cables, where eagles can safely land, set up by Cotabato Electric Cooperative after 2 raptors electrocuted by exposed wires

By **Germelina Lacorte**  
@InqNational

DAVAO CITY—Five years after the second Philippine eagle was reported to have died from having tripped on a live wire, the country's first retrofitted power line system has been installed on Mt. Sinaka in Arakan town of Cotabato province to protect Philippine eagles from similar accidents, an executive of the Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF) said.

Jayson Ibañez, PEF director of research and conservation, said the project undertaken by the Cotabato Electric Cooperative (Cotelco) with funding support from a Japanese company, hopes to popularize the use of insulated wires for power lines installed close or within Philippine eagle habitats nationwide.

Mt. Sinaka, which forms part of the Mt. Apo mountain range that straddles the provinces of Cotabato and Davao del Sur, is considered the smallest Philippine eagle nesting habitat in the world, with only less than 2,000 hectares of forest covered, according to PEF.

Since 1995, PEF has been working with the local government and communities in the area to conserve a pair of Philippine eagles, a species declared "critically endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

"Since our team validated a Philippine eagle family on Mt. Sinaka, we helped surrounding communities become responsible neighbors to the eagle," said Dennis Salvador, PEF executive director.

"We're very proud of these local partnerships. Through the communities' careful watch across the years, at least 11 young eagles were hatched successfully at Mt. Sinaka," he added.



**PROTECTING EAGLES** Linemen of the Cotabato Electric Cooperative install on March 24 the insulated wire at the electric post where an eaglet was electrocuted in 2018. —PHOTO COURTESY OF PHILIPPINE EAGLE FOUNDATION

But in 2018, a tragedy happened. Only 10 days before Christmas Eve, a farmer found the lifeless body of a young Philippine eagle by the roadside. The bird apparently came in contact with two naked electric wires simultaneously, and the full voltage passing through its body caused its death, according to PEF.

### Accidental electrocution

The eaglet was the second eagle death from accidental electrocution after a captive-bred bird named "Kabayan," released on Mt. Apo in 2004, also died of similar accident years after its release.

"The survival of each individual [eagle] to sexual maturity is very critical for an IUCN-declared critically endangered species like the Philippine eagle," said Salvador.

"We hope that through this pioneering project and by way of Cotelco's example, we can

encourage all electric companies operating in Philippine eagle forest habitats across the country to do the same," he added.

According to PEF, highly industrialized countries like Japan, United States and those in Europe that used to have grave issues with large eagles dying of electric shock for decades had developed safe wire insulation methods to avoid its impacts. "With the push for more electrification and urbanization projects close to formerly remote forests and eagle habitats, measures should be carried out to prevent eagle and wildlife deaths from non-insulated power lines," said Ibañez in a statement.

### 'Bird jewel'

In 2021, the Arakan municipal council passed an ordinance declaring the Philippine eagles as the town's flagship species, the "bird jewel" of Ara-

kan town, and imposed penalties for those who will harm the bird.

The ordinance is a landmark policy that sets the stage for more measures to secure at least two Philippine eagle families found in Arakan town. The measures included piloting a power line retrofitting project to protect the eagles.

A year after Cotelco expressed interest in modifying its power lines on Mt. Sinaka, experts from the Asian Raptor Research and Conservation Network (ARRCN) of Japan came to Mt. Sinaka to provide advice on the power line retrofitting project.

Dr. Toru Yamazaki, ARRCN president, also helped link PEF with the Suntory, a Japanese wine and beverage corporation that managed the Suntory Fund for Bird Conservation. In 2022, Suntory Fund approved the grant for PEF for the purchase and installation of the first 1.5 kilometers of insulated wire at Barangay Tumanding, one of the barangays surrounding Mt. Sinaka.

Cotelco launched the installation work of the first 1.5 km of a 4.5-km retrofitted power line system on March 24 in a simple ceremony at Sitio Bagtok in Barangay Tumanding.

Karol Mei Colambot, head of Cotelco promotions, said installation would be completed before June this year, in time for the town-wide celebration of the Philippine Eagle Day in homage to the Arakan's bird jewel.

This developed as the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources committed to revive its proposal to declare Mt. Sinaka as a national protected area by designating it as a "critical habitat." INQ



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AS PH DEPENDENCE ON SECTOR GROWS

# MINING NEEDS CONSISTENT POLICIES TO PROSPER, SAYS TAMPAKAN OPERATOR

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**  
@jordeenelagare

The Philippines needs “stable” policies to attract more investments in the mining sector even with the constant change in leaderships, according to Sagittarius Mines Inc. (SMI)

SMI legal and compliance manager Stella Joy Segocio said the country’s mining industry was optimistic over the government’s pronouncements on reviving the sector to buoy economic recovery.

“[It’s] very optimistic, especially coming from the past two [administrations] ...” she told reporters, citing the country could take advantage of favorable copper prices.

However, Segocio said the government needed to institutionalize policies that would not be dependent on who was leading the administration.

“If there’s one thing I would ask for, it’s the stability of policies that are not dependent on personalities, meaning it’s institutionalized and

**If there’s one thing I would ask for, it’s the stability of policies that are not dependent on personalities, meaning it’s institutionalized and stable to give security to the investors**

**Stella Joy Segocio**

SMI legal and compliance manager

stable to give security to the investors,” she said.

In the last few years, the sector’s contribution to the country’s economy has not been significant due to regulations that stymied its growth.

### Environmental concerns

To recall, certain regulations were implemented by the Duterte administration to address environmental concerns. President Marcos’ predecessor only lifted the ban

on open-pit mining and new mining projects just before the end of his term.

“We have untapped resources and the government is telling us in so many policy pronouncements that among the industries that could contribute, especially with the devastation of the pandemic, one is [the] mining sector and you will hear that from our economic team, the secretary of finance, secretary of trade and industry,” said SMI president and

CEO Roy Deveraturda.

### ‘Most misunderstood’

The mining sector, despite being the “most misunderstood” sector, is needed since metals are widely used in daily life, according to Deveraturda.

On criticisms that the sector ruins the environment, he cited the need to operate the mining business in a responsible manner while boosting and sustaining economic growth.

“There are scientific ways and methodologies to do it and we can assure you that ... even the government will not allow you to do something [that will] destroy the environment,” he added.

In 2022, the country’s metal production climbed by 31.73 percent to P238.05 billion on higher production alongside the softening of global metal prices, data from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau showed.

Nickel took the lion’s share with P117.58 billion worth of output, equivalent to 49.39 percent of total production value. **INQ**



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## French mission assists Mindoro oil spill response

FRANCE has financed the visit of a French expert to support the Philippines in the ongoing pollution response operations linked to the sinking of the oil tanker MT Princess Empress.

Mikaël Laurent conducted a mission in the Philippines from March 16 to 29 on behalf of Cedre (Center for Documentation, Research and Experimentation on Accidental Water Pollution), based in Brest, France.

He was supported in his mission by Emeric Faure, Maritime Security Advisor working for the Philippine Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) since November 2022, on behalf of the French government.

Laurent participated in planning meetings with the Philippine Coast Guard, the Department of Environment, local authorities, as well as private operators (including the French company Le Floch Depollution).

He participated in reconnaissance operations and observed coastal clean-up worksites, polluted sites, with a view to identifying clean-up techniques adapted to the different substrates, and anticipating the parameters for the closure of worksites.

He provided advice on selective collection to limit the quantity of waste generated during clean-up operations. Laurent from Cedre was involved as an observer and technical advisor during response operations at sea, particularly during the deployment of oil containment booms and the recovery of pollutants.

In particular, this cooperation enabled a significant improvement in the speed of pumping pollutants onboard the tug Titan 1, accompanied by the tug Ladagat.

This field cooperation was also followed by exchanges at institutional level, in particular with the Marine Environment Protection Training Institute of the Philippine Coast Guard.

This mission is part of France's long-term support for the protection of the environment and biodiversity in the Philippines, particularly in the maritime field. It was made possible thanks to funding from the French Development Agency and Expertise France, in the framework of technical cooperation on disaster risk management.



■ Cedre's Mikaël Laurent (left) leads the mission in Mindoro. PHOTO FROM THE FRENCH EMBASSY



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## KOREA SENDS AID TO ADDRESS MINDORO OIL SPILL

A Korean ship reached Port Area in Manila on April 5. Unloaded were 20 tons of sorbent pads and snares, 1,000 meters of solid flotation curtain boom, and 2,000 sets of personal protective equipment as part of the Korean government's assistance to address the oil spill in Mindoro. The Philippine Coast Guard welcomed the aide supplies, describing every item "much needed." The supplies will be sent to the affected region promptly. PHOTO FROM THE KOREAN EMBASSY





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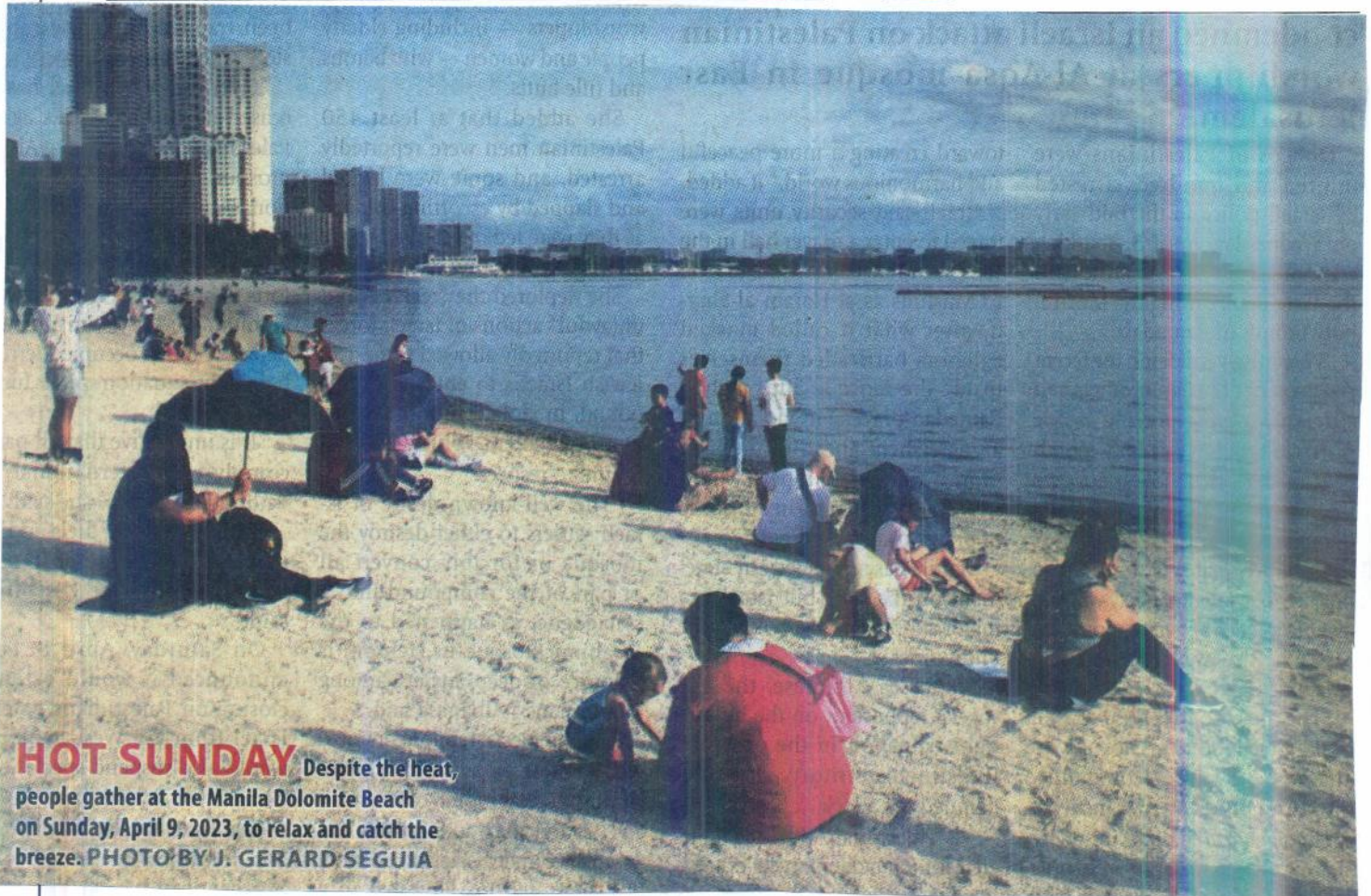
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**HOT SUNDAY** Despite the heat, people gather at the Manila Dolomite Beach on Sunday, April 9, 2023, to relax and catch the breeze. PHOTO BY J. GERARD SEGUIA



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IT'S IN THE FOOD AND AIR

# ART SHOW HIGHLIGHTS PLASTIC WASTE 'EVERYWHERE'

By Jane Bautista  
@janebautistaINQ

Plastic wastes are usually regarded as eyesores, but not in an ongoing art exhibit intended to raise awareness of the worsening state of plastic pollution.

The "Life in Plastic" art show is currently on a campus tour after its debut last month at the Talyer 15 studio in Pasay City.

Organized by Greenpeace Philippines, the mobile and immersive art exhibit was last featured at Miriam College in March. It is due to be presented next in a series of weekly schedules at the University of Santo Tomas, University of the Philippines (UP) in Manila, UP Diliman, Ateneo de Manila University, and at De La Salle University in Dasmariñas, Cavite.

"The exhibit will continue for the remainder of the year, with schools and organizations nationwide, like Baguio, Bulacan and Bohol, expressing their interest in hosting the exhibit,"

said Eunille Santos, Greenpeace digital campaigner.

Visitors in each show are greeted with art pieces made of plastic waste from past brand audits, or plastics collected from waste streams and audited according to their brand and plastic type.

The artworks were designed by student artists from Ateneo and UP Diliman.

One of the interactive displays titled "Bangong Naka-kagigil" had a prompt which urged visitors to sniff at two containers having the citrus-like scent of the sea breeze.

On the other side of the display are another two containers with the strong, repellent smell of burned plastic.

### 'Invisible effects'

Marian Ledesma, senior campaigner of Greenpeace Philippines, said, "Plastic has become so ubiquitous that the majority of its impacts escape the naked eye. Microplastics

are in the food that we eat, the clothes that we wear, even in the air that we breathe. It's everywhere."

Coleen Salamat, plastic solutions campaigner of EcoWaste Coalition, said "plastic has also been found in the bottom part of the lungs, and even in our blood. Plastic does not only affect our oceans and food chain, but is also very alarming to our health."

The goal of the exhibit, Ledesma said, is to spread the realization that plastic waste was more than the usual eyesores and included as well their "invisible effects" on the people and the environment.

"We'd like to see the biggest corporations, who also happen to be the biggest plastic producers, experience how the packaging they produce disrupts lives and health. All the trash we see in this exhibit comes from them, and this is just a tiny fraction of the entire waste they produce annually," she said. INQ



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## EcoWaste Coalition bewails endless littering

THE waste and pollution watchdog EcoWaste Coalition has bewailed the littering at pilgrimage sites during Holy Week.

The group said some pilgrims ignored the reminder not to leave any garbage behind after visiting the sites.

On the eve of Palm Sunday, the EcoWaste Coalition appealed to the Catholic faithful to avoid indiscriminate use and disposal of single-use plastics (SUPs) at pilgrimage sites.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, through its president, Caloocan Bishop Pablo Virgilio David, supported the group's call for a litter-free pilgrimage.

Antipolo City Mayor Casimiro Ynares 3rd also invited pilgrims to help keep the penitential Alay-Lakad "free from all forms of garbage."

"While some opted to bring their discards home or dispose of them in available bins, many visitors, without remorse, threw or abandoned their trash along the streets and in pilgrimage sites, which are places for prayer and reflection, for cleaners or sweepers to pick up," observed the EcoWaste Coalition.

"Littering, which has become a tradition in itself, is truly appalling and unacceptable," it said.

At the Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto in San Jose del Monte City, bins were overflowing with mostly plastic garbage such as plastic bags and bottles, and food waste.

Some visitors recklessly tossed

their discards on the ground, creating minidumps on the hilly terrain featuring the 14 Stations of the Cross.

At the International Shrine of the Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage in Antipolo City, some visitors who spent the night outside the cathedral after a grueling walk did not bother to tidy up the area, leaving improvised sleeping materials, plastic bottles and other litter behind, despite the gentle "clean as you go" reminder announced again and again over a megaphone.

While the Stations of the Cross at the National Shrine of the Divine Mercy in Marilao, Bulacan were almost litter-free, some visitors left their trash at the site.

Also, the Plaza Miranda in front of the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo, Manila, was found relatively clean, but not the adjacent Carriedo Street and the side of the church facing Quezon Boulevard.

SUPs are among the most littered items monitored by the group in pilgrimage sites, indicating the need for regulations that will control, if not ban and replace, disposables.

"It's high time to move away from disposable culture. Ecological conversion and solidarity is urgently needed amid the triple planetary emergencies involving climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss, which threaten human health and livelihoods and the ecosystems upon which we depend on," the group said.



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## RTC dismisses waste dumping raps vs. CEO

By Butch Gunio

A REGIONAL trial court junked the case against the chief executive of a sanitary landfill operator in Bataan for alleged dumping of hazardous and liquid wastes under Section 13 of RA 6969 or "An Act to Control to Control Toxic Substances and Hazardous and Nuclear Wastes"

The case was filed by the local government unit of Hermosa, Bataan, represented by its newly appointed municipal and environmental and natural resources officer.

In granting the Demurrer to Evidence filed by the camp of the Atty. Beulah Coeli Fiel, president and CEO of Econest Waste Management Corp, Judge Amelita Cruz Corpuz of the Regional Trial Court Branch 96 Dinalupihan, Bataan dismissed the case due to insufficiency of evidence.

The court said, "There was no testimo-

nial or documentary evidence presented that will prove beyond reasonable doubt that herein accused committed the act complained of," and "that the evidence of the prosecution is insufficient, hence, dismissal of this case is proper under the premises."

Prosecution witness Ronel Pagcaliwangan, COO of Udenna Environmental Services, while admitting that they did business with Econest, nonetheless denied disposing of any untreated hazardous wastes at the Hermosa landfill.

Court order also noted Pagcaliwangan's letter dated February 26, 2020, wherein he wrote, "There was no instance where we disposed of any liquid chemical wastes in your sanitary landfill, as these were either treated via our Physico-Chemical Treatment Facility in Taguig or Thermal Oxidation in our Bataan Plant".