

21 April 2023 Friday



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LWUA seeks water supply inventory

BY ARLIE O. CALALO



ANTICIPATING the impact of a severe El Niño episode this year, the Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) has directed all local water districts (LWDs) for an inventory of the water supply in their areas.

THE MANILA TIMES ROUNDTABLE

LWUA Administrator Vicente Homer Revil told *The Manila Times* Roundtable with *Times* columnist Ben Kritz on Thursday he has started meeting with concerned agencies including the National Irrigation Administration to ensure there "is the right water supply for the people."

Revil said he has met with officials from the Department of the Interior and Local Government and the Department of Public Works and Highways to find

➤ SupplyA2

GETTING READY Local Water Utilities Administration Administrator Vicente Homer Revil is interviewed by *The Manila Times* columnist Ben Kritz at the TMT newsroom in Intramuros, Manila on Thursday, April 20, 2023. PHOTO BY J. GERARD SEGUIA



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■ SUPPLY FROM A1

LWUA

out if small wells could be harnessed as a possible alternative water source.

He said an inventory of water supplies could help LWUA figure out with the concerned agencies how to cushion the effects of a possible water crisis.

"We need to know the water supplies so that if the worst happens, there would be right water rationing for the people, among others," he said.

Revil noted that many island provinces, cities and municipalities are likely to feel the effects of El Niño beginning in the third quarter of the year or as early as July or September as forecast by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

Pagasa said the El Niño could last until 2024. It warned that below-normal rainfall could trigger dry spells and droughts in some areas of the country.

"That's why this early we have already set up contingency plans, we

are looking into helping them with possible technical, financial and institutional support and we are also asking the national disaster management office to provide some necessary support for them," Revil said.

He said LWUA has launched the Save Water Advocacy to highlight the message that water conservation should begin at home.

"Everyone's cooperation is needed here because all of us will be affected, our health, our agriculture, and our economy," Revil said.

The LWUA has also introduced the Patubig sa Buong Bayan at Mamamayan or PBBM as part of the strategy to ensure that the water needs of the public will be addressed, he said.

The program will be implemented until 2028.

Revil said a total of 738 water supply projects worth P20 billion are scheduled for completion and are expected to provide adequate, safe and affordable drinking water to an additional 600,000 households over the next six years.

There are also 43 ongoing sanitation projects worth P4 billion, he said.

On top of this, an estimated 1.8 million more households will benefit from the synchronized efforts of LWDs to expand their services.

"By the end of 2028, the total number of households served will reach 7.929 million, a 45 percent increase from 5,461 million in 2022," the LWUA chief said.

"If we can be able to push through with the PBBM projects, no problem is 'tu-big' (too big)," he said.

Revil said the fate of the proposal to create a Department of Water Resources is all up to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

"He is the one in charge of the executive branch, and I am just here to help and follow orders," he said.

Asked if the proposed department could only duplicate the functions of the National Water Resources Board, which sets and formulates policies on water management and other water issues, Revil said he was confident that economic managers will thoroughly study the matter.



EDITORIAL

Making polluters pay

It's a timely move amid news footage of entire towns gone underwater, thanks to heavy rainfall and rivers that overflow despite this being the height of the country's dry season. The culprit in most urban areas are waterways clogged with solid waste, a big part of which are plastic packaging, including plastic bottles and sachets. This is not really surprising given that a 2015 study has identified the Philippines as the third worst plastic polluter in the world, with 1.88 million tons of plastic wastes produced every year.

Republic Act No. 11898, or the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Act of 2022 aims to remedy that, with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources forming a speakers' bureau to communicate and promote compliance with the law. The agency has started a series of training in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme, "to equip its concerned workers with the proper knowledge and skills to effectively spread information about the EPR law" among stakeholders from the private sector, local government units (LGUs), and waste diversion organizations.

While there are ordinances in several cities in Metro Manila that regulate single-use plastic, including banning plastic bags for dry goods in supermarkets, they often put the burden on consumers. The EPR, on the other hand, places the responsibility solidly on plastic producers and companies that use it as packaging, requiring them to recover a certain percentage of their plastic wastes, or pay a fine of from P5 million to P20 million while risking suspension of their business permit on the third offense.

The law also sets incremental targets that companies must fulfill yearly in exchange for incentives and tax exemptions. For 2023, obliged companies must recover 20 percent of their plastic footprint from the year before. Covered by the EPR law are corporations with total assets of over P100 million, which are expected to allocate resources to support the collection, recovery, transport, processing, recycling, and disposal of plastic packaging wastes in ways that do not harm the environment.

And rightly so.

A September 2017 coastal cleanup of a reclamation area in Manila by the environmental group Greenpeace found that sachets of instant coffee, milk powder, food seasoning, shampoo, and toothpaste comprised 32.82 percent of the plastic wastes collected in the week-long activity. Many of the thin plastic and aluminum-packaged products are manufactured by giant multinationals and global brands.

"It's time these companies stop [their] business-as-usual practices and use their resources to innovate and redesign their packaging and delivery solutions," Greenpeace Philippines campaigner Abigail Aguilar said in a press conference in 2017.

Indeed, these global companies can well afford to invest in proper disposal facilities and fund research to develop alternative packaging, as some have already done with styrofoam made from corn and other organic biodegradable materials. Plastic, some studies have noted, takes up to 450 years to fully decompose. In the meantime, it degrades into small pieces called microplastics that are mistaken for food by fish, shellfish, and other marine organisms, and are ultimately ingested by people. Incineration or burning plastic meanwhile releases toxic gases that contribute to global warming and climate change. Recycling may seem a viable alternative, but a 2020 report by the World Wildlife Fund found that only 9 percent of plastic wastes in the Philippines are recycled, with 35 percent leaked to the environment, and 33 percent collected and disposed of in sanitary landfills.

Based on the "polluter pays" principle, the EPR obligates companies that manufacture or use plastic packaging to assume full responsibility for the entire life cycle of harmful plastic waste, and pay for the cost of waste prevention, clean up, and recovery measures, a burden that LGUs cannot manage because of their limited resources.

Companies covered by the law can translate their responsibility into green measures that include segregating waste at source and collection and redesigning existing packaging to biodegradable materials. They can also put up collection centers where consumers can redeem deposits on glass and plastic bottles as well as aluminum cans, a practice popular in other countries.

But change is always difficult, and already, there are voices raised to defend the use of plastic as being more convenient for consumers; how switching from plastic to more sustainable materials could prove too expensive for small and micro enterprises, and how single-use sachets have made branded consumer goods more affordable to millions of low-income Filipinos.

It may not be an easy transition, but it is a necessary response to our country's rapidly deteriorating environmental health. It is also a state, corporate, and individual commitment that we must embrace to keep the planet healthy, and to make sure that tomorrow's Earth Day remains truly worth celebrating.



Rep. Duterte, four other solons, press passage of bill on single-use plastic law

BY JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ

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LAWMAKERS are pressing for the passage of a measure that aims to regulate the manufacture, sale, use and importation of single-use plastics products, in line with his advocacy of building a greener and more sustainable economy for the country's future generations.

Davao City Rep. Paolo Duterte, Benguet Rep. Eric Yap, Quezon City Second District Rep. Ralph Tulfo and ACT-CIS Party-list Reps. Edvic Yap and Jocelyn Tulfo reiterated their call as the country marks the Month of Planet Earth this April and Earth Day on Saturday, April 22.

Under House Bill (HB) 507 filed by the five lawmakers, regulating non-compostable single-use plastics also cover the distribution, recovery, collection, recycling and disposal of these products.

"As we mark Earth Day on April 22, I urge my colleagues in Congress to act on this bill and similar other pending measures so that we can finally phase out single-use plastic products, which remain among the most pervasive kind of waste that pollute our land, choke our oceans and bring harm to our precious marine resources," Duterte said.

Duterte pointed out that in Davao City, an ordinance that bans single-use plastics, and regulating their sale and distribution, has been in place since 2021. His congressional district office in Davao City also earlier launched the "Save the Earth-No to Plastics Bags" movement.

While the House of Representatives had already approved on third and final reading a bill that would impose a P100 excise tax on every kilogram of single-use plastic bags,

a measure regulating the eventual phase out of these and other similar products, along with the proper way of recycling and disposal have yet to be enacted, Duterte said.

Duterte said their proposal under HB 507 covers other single-use plastics, such as plastic utensils and tableware, containers, packaging, drinking straws, stirrers, sachets and pouches. Duterte and his fellow authors proposed that single-use plastics may be gradually phased out within a period of 1 to 4 years.

HB 507 "seeks to develop an integrated and comprehensive policy for plastic waste management, particularly the regulation of the production, importation, sale, distribution, provision, use, recovery, collection, recycling, and disposal of single-use plastics," the bill's authors said.

They pointed out the Philippines is one of the world's worst offenders when it comes to marine plastic pollution, with 280,000 to 750,000 tons per year of plastic entering the oceans from the coastal areas of Manila Bay.

"This is equivalent to 60 billion plastic sachets per year, majority of which are single-use plastics such as plastic drinking bottles, bottle caps, food wrappers, plastic grocery bags, plastic lids, straws and stirrers, other types of plastic bags, and foam take-away containers," the bill's authors said.

"As a consequence, economic growth, combined with enhanced production and consumption, is leading to higher waste generation in our country," they added.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), in coordination with the National Solid Waste Management Commission, is tasked as the primary agency responsible for imple-

menting and enforcing HB 507's provisions when it becomes a law.

Under the bill, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), in cooperation with the DENR, Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and in consultation with stakeholders, shall formulate a Consumption, Reduction and Recovery program for single-use plastic products.

"Such measures shall include national consumption reduction, waste recovery targets, and other measures ensuring that reusable and compostable alternatives to single-use plastic products are made available, and that the said products are not free of charge at the point-of-sale to the final consumer," the bill states.

Commercial establishments under the bill are required to promote reusable, recyclable, and retrievable products in their stores; charge P5.00 from customers for every plastic bag or single-use plastic used for take-out food or delivery service, and encourage customer return of used plastic products to the store.

The Department of Finance (DOF), DILG and DTI is tasked under the bill to establish mechanisms that will provide fiscal and non-fiscal rewards and incentives to encourage manufacturers, importers, sellers, and end users to participate in programs geared towards phasing out single-use plastics.

Together with the Departments of Education (DepEd), Interior and Local Government shall also draw up an information campaign to educate the public about the negative impact of single-use plastics on the environment and the best practices to reduce, reuse, recycle, and recover these products.



Make each day Earth Day

Tomorrow, April 22, 2023 is Earth Day. It is dubbed as the "largest environmental movement" which seeks to engage governments, institutions, businesses, and all citizens of the world to do "something" for the planet. This year's theme is "Invest in Our Planet."

According to a statement from the organizer, Earthday.Org, we must come together again for the planet. "Businesses, governments, and civil society are equally responsible for taking action against the climate crisis and lighting the spark to accelerate change toward a green, prosperous, and equitable future. We must join together in our fight for the green revolution, and for the health of future generations. The time is now to 'Invest In Our Planet.'"

It sounds repetitive but each one of us has a role to protect this planet. No matter how small our contribution may be, it matters, and if it's done on a daily basis, it will have an impact. A simple lifestyle change can restore the health of the planet (and your health, too!) — walking instead of driving a car, taking the stairs instead of the elevator, bringing an eco-bag to the grocery instead of using a single-use plastic bag, etc. They say action speaks louder than words and this is true in the quest for a sustainable lifestyle. Your lips can say "protect the environment" but it's your action that will be the most effective communication tool.

In my interactions with the people behind various eco organizations, the overarching message I got was that of "cooperation" — that no one person can do all the things. Governments all over the world must work together with NGOs; schools have to tie up with businesses; the media has to listen to the citizens, etc. In fact, this is what Earthday.Org has to say about this: "Governments, businesses, and citizens are essential in harnessing the

revolutionary progress needed to save humanity from the climate crisis. Overcoming climate change is within reach if we work together to commit to action and invest in our planet and our collective future."

Our government also has a big role to play. It must "incentivize citizens, businesses, and institutions to create and innovate, advancing the public's interests and creating the framework for an equitable and sustainable global economic system." Is this being done by our government? I am aware of such efforts but these have to be scaled up, boosted to the point that businesses are racing against each other to have the best plans, products, or systems that will benefit the planet.

Simply put, all of us are needed to save this planet. After all, the last time I checked, we only have one home.

In the spirit of Earth Day, allow me to use the words of Antonio Oposa Jr., environmental lawyer and the 2009 Ramon Magsaysay Awardee for his crusading work to protect forests and the Manila Bay. In a book introduction, he wrote: "We need to see our Earth as a spaceship hurtling through space. Water, air, and material must be used and reused ad infinitum because the supply is very limited, especially as it is supporting a population that is growing by orders of magnitude. Filipinos (have to be) reminded that all great changes start with the little ones. Someone once said that humanity does not need to be taught, it only needs to be reminded."

May all of us have a happy Earth Day, not only this year, but also in the years to come!

(Johannes L. Chua is the editor of the Environment & Sustainability Section.)



EDITORS DESK

JOHANNES L. CHUA



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SOCIAL PROTECTION SET FOR EL NIÑO, OTHER RISKS

By SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA [sam_medenilla](#)
& CAI U. ORDINARIO [@caiorinario](#)

THE government is now working to further bring down high inflation and ensure a social protection floor (SPF) framework will be in place to minimize the economic impact of El Niño, which is expected to severely affect the country by the last quarter of the year.

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Social...

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In a press conference in Malacañang on Thursday, NEDA Director General Arsenio M. Balisacan stressed the importance of keeping inflation in check before the arrival of El Niño, which will cut agricultural production, leading to higher prices for basic goods.

"The elevated inflation that we have now, if we are unable to reduce that inflation, and then you get this El Niño phenomenon—that is a dangerous combination and we want to prevent that from happening," Balisacan said.

The country remains exposed to economic and environmental risks, including climate change, supply chain disruptions, and job losses—which could prevent the most vulnerable in society from coping with these challenges. Institutionalizing an SPF would reduce these risks for the most vulnerable, he asserted.

"The intention is to institutionalize the existing programs, especially those that have been proven to work so that we don't have to restart all over again when there is a need to provide support to vulnerable groups," Balisacan explained on Thursday.

Currently, he said the country has already brought inflation to a "downward trajectory."

"We are actively monitoring the situation and implementing the necessary measures to ensure that by the end of the year, we should be on our target of roughly around 4 percent and at 3.5 to 4 percent," Balisacan said.

Headline inflation rate in January was at 8.7 percent before slowing down to 8.6 percent in February and 7.6 percent last March.

Mitigation measures

THE NEDA official said soaring inflation worsened by El Niño will be particularly detrimental for the poor.

The SPF framework endorsed by the Social Development Committee of the Cabinet, he said, will help ensure the marginalized remain protected during El Niño and future crises.

NEDA said the framework will institutionalize the existing programs of the government "that aim to prevent or alleviate poverty vulnerability and social exclusion."

He recalled that they had been pitch-

ing social protection earlier, since 2014, so that "when you have events like that, we prevent people from falling into poverty," because, he noted, "once they fall, it's extremely difficult for them to go up and we don't want that."

He urged concerned government agencies to put in place all measures to mitigate the impact of El Niño this year using their existing resources under the 2023 national budget.

"Of course the next step is to look at the budget and how it [mitigation measures] can, for example, influence the budget allocation for 2024," Balisacan said.

On Monday, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said the country is expected to suffer the worst effects of El Niño during the last quarter of the year or the first quarter of 2024.

4 guarantees

BALISACAN said the SPF consists of four basic guarantees that cover the entire life cycle—health, including maternity care; children; active age; and older persons.

In a phone interview with BusinessMirror, Neda Undersecretary Rosemarie G. Edillon explained that during discussions on the SPF, it was found that existing social protection schemes in the country, though effective, need to be enhanced.

One example: teenage mothers and their children or informal sector workers need social protection as their incomes may not be enough for their families.

There are also Filipinos who do not receive assistance from the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program but remain vulnerable to various risks, she added.

Through the institutionalization of the SPF, these gaps in social protection will be addressed. Efforts to address them will be done in phases, Edillon said, and will be subject to the availability of financing.

Edillon said enhancing programs will also include safeguards such as in the extension of unemployment insurance. Filipinos who lose their jobs will be eligible for assistance if they are actively seeking employment or are enrolled in some form of training, retraining, or upskilling program.

"Today's approval of the government Social Protection Floor is a significant progress in our country's development history. This is a manifestation of the government's commitment to significantly reduce poverty incidence and promote inclusive growth," Balisacan said.



Let's not leave bamboo behind

It's time we put bamboo back on the map.

I sat down with Deogracias Victor "DV" Sevillano; former governor of Ilocos Sur, former deputy speaker of the 18th Congress, and current vice chair of the Philippine Bamboo Industry and Development Council (PBIDC) to discuss the lack of interest in what has the potential to be a booming industry.

Sevillano has been vice chair since 2017, with Rene "Butch" Madarang serving as current executive director. "Bamboo was my advocacy, even when I was governor," Sevillano said, before switching to Taglish. "That was one of [our projects] because it's simple, doable, and has a purpose. Our farmers and fisherfolk need kawayan, so if you go to the provinces... you'll see that every household has bamboo in their backyard. That's where they get... posts for bahay kubo, fisherfolk use them as outriggers [for their boats], and farmers use them for trellises... it has a lot of uses."

He learned about the PBIDC when he was a congressman, and asked then Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary Ramon Lopez if the bamboo industry could

be revived. The vice chair position was created and Sevillano was sworn in. The PBIDC has an automatic board composed of the DTI secretary as chair and members that include the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), some non-government agencies, and so on. There is no budget allocated to the organization. So many, if not all of its projects, have been funded by Sevillano's office since he joined. This led current DTI Secretary Alfredo Pascual to request that he continue in his capacity as vice chair.

Sevillano has big plans for bamboo, should he be given the opportunity to execute them. "I said it would be a waste if we didn't do this because we have a new President who is also a member of the PBIDC as the Secretary of Agriculture. Then for the EO (Executive Order) regarding the use of bamboo materials for



AVANT GARDENER
YVETTE TAN

desks, tables, chairs... there's the vice president. So I think this is the time to take [the bamboo industry] seriously."

He added that The Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Roadmap already exists (interested parties can request a copy through the Freedom of Information Philippines website) and all government agencies and interested parties have to do is follow it if they are truly interested in reviving this industry, while being open to changing according to current circumstances, of course.

When asked about the current state of the Philippine bamboo industry, Sevillano had only two words: "Watak-watak (in shambles)."

"There are government programs," he continued. "The DTI has provided SSF (Shared Service Facilities), the DENR said that 50 percent of its NGP (National Greening Program) will now go to bamboo, and the DA said they declared it as a high value crop. So what's its status? It's really in shambles... no direction. So I said our strategy should be that our next meeting be hosted by the secretary of Agriculture so we can present the bamboo economics for the whole industry."

Bamboo holds huge economic potential. It's an \$80 billion industry in China alone, for example, and according to the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), the Philippines ranks sixth in the world in terms of bamboo exports. "We can increase our production, and at first, we will be addressing so many things: climate change, because it absorbs pollution.

Second, livelihood. Third, soil erosion [prevention] can be a project," Sevillano said, expounding on the third point. "There was a time when the DPWH [had a project] where they planted vetiver grass as a component of their highways. This time, why don't we add bamboo...? It holds the soil in place."

The industry should be holistic. "Not just planting... [there's] processing labong (bamboo shoots), and there's a need for bamboo poles, so they have to be treated. [These things have to be] community-based."

He cited a list of industry concerns: that many interested communities lack access to production materials like seedlings; that the National Greening Program only accounts for tree planting in protected areas, with no follow up plan for their care after; and so on.

Bamboo, he believes, can be both an industry resource and an integral part of public spaces. He cited his own project when he was in office, where his district worked with the Department of Labor and Employment's TUPAD (Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers) program where recipients planted and maintained bamboo parks — public spaces that are now venues for picnics and birthday celebrations.

In the meantime, the PBIDC continues its mission to educate Filipinos on the potential benefits of bamboo, alongside its livelihood and conservation programs. "We inherited bamboo," Sevillano said. "It's there whenever we need it... but [we] have to be educated [about its uses]."



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News

SC stops commercial propagation of genetically modified rice, eggplant

By REY G. PANALIGAN

The Supreme Court (SC) has issued a Writ of Kalikasan that effectively stopped the government temporarily from commercially propagating genetically modified rice and eggplant, known as Golden Rice and BT (Bacillus thuringiensis) eggplant.

The writ was issued last April 18 during the SC's full court session in Baguio City.

The writ directed the secretaries of the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Health (DOH), the director of the Bureau of Plant Industry, the Philippine Rice Research Institute, and the University of the Philippines in Los Baños in Laguna to file a verified return within 10 days from notice.

The SC's public information office (PIO) did not indicate in its press statement when the resolution that contained the writ was issued and received by the parties in the petition. A copy of the resolution was not available as of posting.

The PIO said the SC acted on the petition for a Writ

of Kalikasan filed by several groups led by the Magsasaka at Siyentipiko Para sa Pag-Unlad ng Agrikultura (Masipag).

A Writ of Kalikasan is a legal remedy for the protection of one's right to "a balanced and healthful environment..."

The group asked the SC to issue a temporary environmental protection order (TEPO) against the commercial propagation of Golden Rice and BT eggplant until such time that the proof of safety and compliance with legal requirements is shown.

It also asked the SC to declare null and void all biosafety permits for Golden Rice and BT Eggplant null and void, and to implement liability mechanisms in case of damage, as required by law.

In its petition, the group alleged that both Golden Rice and BT eggplant are genetically modified organisms.

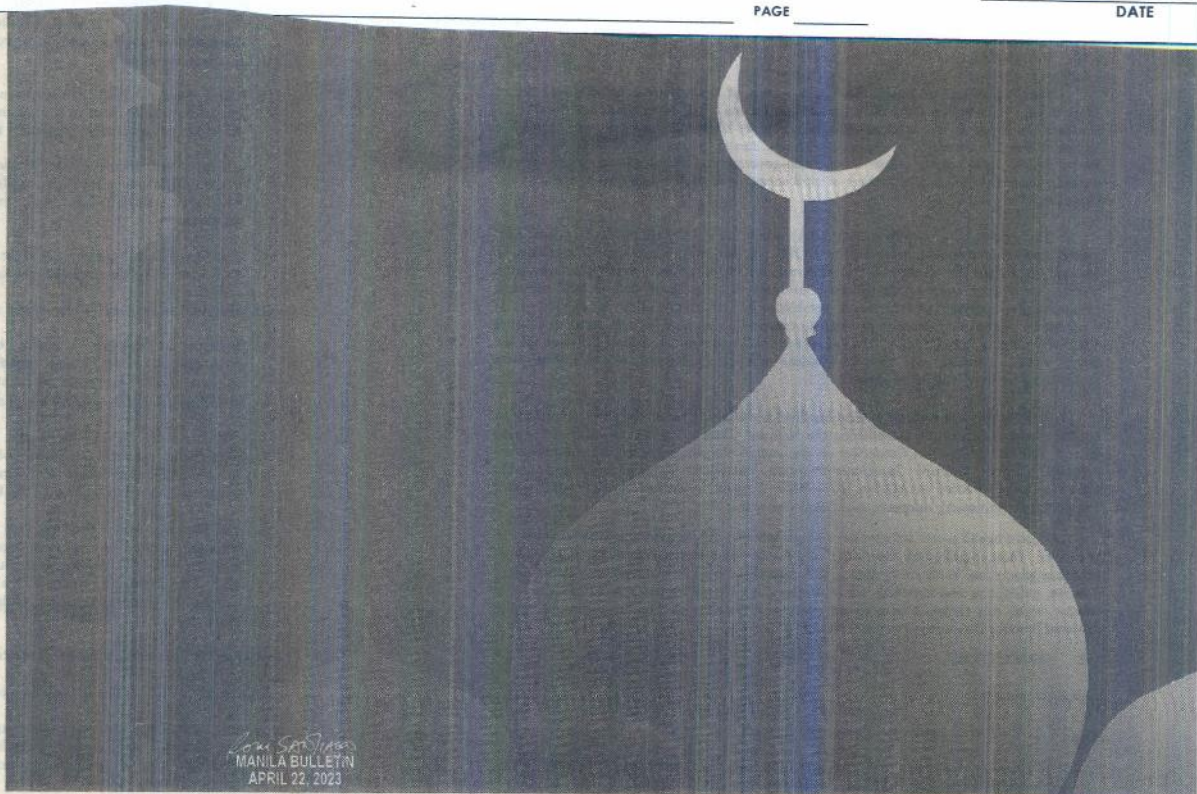
It claimed that Golden Rice, which is patented to Syngenta, a transnational agrochemical corporation, is a rice that has been modified by inserting a gene from maize and a gene from bacteria found in soil which allows the plant to biosynthesize beta-carotene in the edible parts of rice.



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MANILA BULLETIN
APRIL 22, 2023

Reflections on Eid al-Fitr: Fusion of faith with caring for environment

Today, April 21, has been declared a special non-working public holiday to commemorate the end of Ramadan, a month-long period of fasting observed by Muslims throughout the world. It is known as *Eid al-Fitr*, or the Festival of Breaking the Fast, that typically lasts for three days, or one less than what is observed in *Eid al-Adha*, the end of the pilgrimage season later in the year.

The observance of *Eid al-Fitr* begins with special morning prayers, at which greetings of "*Eid Mubarak*" which means "Have a blessed *Eid*" are exchanged. Gatherings of family and friends are held in which special meals are served, including savory delights such as the Turkish *baklava*, date-filled pastries and cookies in Saudi Arabia and Iraq, and honey cake in Yemen.

Another significant feature of the observance is the ritual of giving to those in need. Donations to charity are given, as well as special attention to less fortunate families. Finally, "Muslims are encouraged to give and seek forgiveness during *Eid al-Fitr*, and look forward to the opportunity to fast again during Ramadan the following year."

According to scholars on Islam, the deepening of individual consciousness of the Creator "implies that one should develop an appreciation, love and authentic form of care for what has been created by God." Hence, this year's observance is marked by heightened consciousness on the importance of saving planet earth from the ravages of climate change and environmental degradation. Mongabay, a conservation news web portal that reports on environmental science, energy, and green design

points out: "The act of glorification and worship which is shared by all communities of beings on the Earth is a sacred bond which must be carefully tended to. The connection of the inner state of the heart with the outer state of physical action is the very point of intersection at which Ramadan and the (United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change or) IPCC report meet. As Muslims focus on their worship as well as acts of service to humanity, it is imperative that they make a very conscious commitment to connect their acts of worship toward the wellbeing of the earth this Ramadan."

Mongabay calls attention to the need to ensure the conservation of Mt. Busa in Sarangani province, home to one of the last verdant primary forests in Mindanao: "Despite its ecological importance, the mountain has enjoyed little protection, with only the topmost slopes falling under a local conservation zone." Designated as a key biodiversity area in 2001, environmentalists and local officials are now pushing to legalize and strengthen the mountain's protection by including it in the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas Systems (E-NIPAS).

Lastly, a clean and green Ramadan – in which plastics would be absent from the meals of many Muslims breaking their fast – is a popular theme of this year's observance. It is reported that many mosques are progressively discontinuing single use-products, such as plastic knives, forks and water bottles.

When faith translates into behavior that is socially beneficial, then it becomes truly providential.



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BEFORE I get to today's topic, my condolences to the family of Secretary Albert del Rosario. I never dealt with him as a government official but had extensive dealings with him in his private work. If I had to limit myself to one word to describe him, it would be gracious. Beyond that, he was very even-tempered, wise and mature. A person who got results due to his judgment and calm demeanor. I can say as adviser to the seller when he was part of the buy side that one important deal might not have happened if not for his counsel, and influence to his side at more than one critical moment when the deal could have collapsed. While I did not always agree with his views, I cannot think of a more agreeable person to deal with. Add dignity to his graciousness and I am certain that is how many remember him.

I was first introduced to the theory of Thomas Malthus in my university economics and like with most academic discourse prevailing then, Malthus' views were dismissed, doubly so as I was at Ateneo, a Catholic university. I suppose even then I was of an inquisitive and skeptical nature, I did not agree with its dismissal by my professor and the text (Samuelson) and saw inherent logic in it. In his anonymous essay published in 1798 and in later works where he did write in his name, Malthus argued that population growth will outpace the growth in supply of food.

Overpopulation threat

As provided in Britannica.com, "In Malthus' view, a human society free of coercive restraints is an impossible ideal, because the threat of population growth will always be present. Increases in population, if unchecked, will take place in a geometric progression, while the means of subsistence will increase in only an arithmetic progression. A society's population, therefore, will always expand to the



THE EMPIRICIST

STEPHEN CUUNJIENG

limit of subsistence...According to Malthus, societies that ignored the imperative for moral restraint — delayed marriage and celibacy for adults until they were economically able to support their children — would suffer the deplorable "positive checks" of war, famine, and epidemic, the avoidance of which should be every society's goal. From this humane concern about the sufferings from positive checks arose Malthus' admonition that poor laws (i.e., legal measures that provided relief to the poor) and charity must not cause their beneficiaries to relax their moral restraint or increase their fertility, lest such humanitarian gestures become perversely counterproductive."

By the way on their website, you can read Thomas Malthus' 1824 article "Population" which he wrote for the fourth edition of Encyclopedia Britannica. He seemed to be somewhat of a moralist as well. I suppose given methods of contraception were not yet in place then and his concern on population growth, I can see the reason for his moralistic tone and his view on abstention as the solution, impractical as that has turned out to be. As advanced societies have subsequently shown, this is now unnecessary given today's multiple methods of contraception and population restraint.

In the time since the 1970s, it seems the recently departed Gordon Moore's law on semiconductors has also applied in a more restrained level to food production as well. But Malthus' warning, though deferred, in my view did come to pass. Coupled with successful population moderation in population growth in many countries like those in the West, China,

That Malthusian moment



and Japan, the continued increase in food production and productivity has postponed the end scenario where the increase in food production falls behind what is needed given population growth. But alas, all this has probably come to an end or close to it, especially for the world leader in population growth since World War 2, the Philippines.

Beyond sustainability

Over two centuries after Malthus' warning, have we finally reached our Malthusian moment? Has what we take from the planet to support our ravenous population reached the point where we are not just using the earth's resources but are now depleting and degrading it? I agree with the overwhelming work on this subject that shows we are living beyond the point of sustainability.

Many articles and journals have written about what a sustainable global population is, and while many have shied away from stating what that level is given all the assumptions and speculations needed. Especially having to make predictions on and factor the rate of technological progress and productivity to make what can be considered a sustainable population at best rough estimates. Yet, except for religious and biased right-wing sites, most believe we are beyond that point. There are

calculations per country of how much is being depleted versus sustained. Some sites that are strongly on the side of controlling population have argued the global sustainable population is about 1.5 to 2 billion (overpopulation-project.com) or what it was 100 years ago. We are at 8 billion now and peak population estimates range from somewhere above 9 to 11 billion. When Apollo 11 landed on the moon in 1971 there were 3.9 billion people and I don't think we were sparsely populated then. Thanks to high population growth in out-of-control places like the Philippines, a little over 50 years later we have more than doubled globally to over 8 billion (during that period, the Philippine population grew from over 36 million (source: Population Pyramid) to over 113 million today for an over 300 percent increase.)

What are the Malthusian effects of this gross overpopulation? An article "Understanding Population Growth" from Understanding Global Change of the University of California Berkeley lists many. Here is an extract:

– Increasing the extraction of resources from the environment. These resources include fossil fuels (oil, gas, and coal), minerals, trees, water, and wildlife, especially in the oceans. The process of removing resources, in turn, often releases pollutants and



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waste that reduce air and water quality, and harm the health of humans and other species.

- Increasing the burning of fossil fuels for energy to generate electricity, and to power transportation (for example, cars and planes) and industrial processes.

- Increase in freshwater use for drinking, agriculture, recreation, and industrial processes. Freshwater is extracted from lakes, rivers, the ground, and man-made reservoirs.

- Increasing ecological impacts on environments. Forests and other habitats are disturbed or destroyed to construct urban areas, including the construction of homes, businesses, and roads to accommodate growing populations.

Additionally, as populations increase, more land is used for agricultural activities to grow crops and support livestock. This, in turn, can decrease species populations, geographic ranges, biodiversity, and alter interactions among organisms.

- Increasing fishing and hunting, which reduces species populations of the exploited species. Fishing and hunting can also indirectly increase numbers of species that are not fished or hunted if more resources become available for the species that remain in the ecosystem.

- Increasing the transport of invasive species, either intentionally or by accident, as people travel and import and export supplies. Urbanization also creates disturbed environments where invasive species often thrive and out-compete native species. For example, many invasive plant species thrive along strips of land next to roads and highways.

- The transmission of diseases. Humans living in densely populated areas can rapidly spread diseases within and among populations. Additionally, because transportation has become easier and more frequent, diseases can

spread quickly to new regions.

Demographic dividend

I don't expect the religious or closed-minded to agree with me. I try to go where facts and logic take me, not dogma or ideology. I think there is greater hope for my children and their generation as at least for the highly educated ones, many are planning not to have several children, but just one and two at most. Why have they voluntarily chosen to implement what China used to dictate? They tell me it is needed for the environment and sustainability, and they want to ensure the highest quality of life and opportunities they can give to their children. They are also people who have access to contraception. I wish I could live like them.

I am not going to discuss the nonsense of the demographic dividend in detail, having previously done so. It may work for rich countries with full employment that are not straining their resources like in Scandinavia. None of the reasons apply to the overpopulated, overdense, resource-challenged Philippines whose only solution for our world-beating population growth but underperforming economic growth (while this wonderful demographic dividend has been in place) is to force their citizens to leave to find employment and live apart from their families to keep their families and them from starving. We would collapse without exporting our tens of millions of Filipinos to far from ideal jobs and hoping demand for them overseas continues to increase. Watch the chaos if the diaspora has to return. You will have EDSA 3 and possibly worse in short order would be my prediction. That would be the test and show whether we are living a demographic disaster versus the inapplicable and fancied demographic dividend.



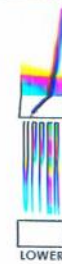
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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
NATIONAL WATER RESOURCES BOARD
8th Floor NIA Bldg., EDSA, Quezon City, Philippines 1109

PRIMEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE CORP.
Applicant.

Case No. 23-3591

NOTICE OF HEARING

This is an application for Certificate of Public Convenience to operate and maintain a waterworks system within Camella Venezia Subdivision, Barangay Pulang Lupa I, Las Piñas City, Metro Manila, with the following proposed rates:

PROPOSED TARIFF

Residential and Institutional

Pipe Size	0-5 m3 (min)	6-10 m3	11-20 m3	21-30 m3	31-40 m3	Over 40 m3
½"	P 389.00	79.20	81.80	84.00	86.40	88.80
¾"	P 622.00	126.70	130.50	134.50	138.30	142.00
1"	P 1,244.50	253.40	261.00	268.90	276.80	284.10

Residential and Commercial

Pipe Size	0-5 m3 (min)	6-10 m3	11-20 m3	21-30 m3	31-40 m3	Over 40m3
½"	P 389.00	79.20	81.80	84.00	86.40	88.80
¾"	P 622.00	126.70	130.50	134.50	138.30	142.00
1"	P 1,244.50	253.40	261.00	268.90	276.80	284.10

Commercial and Industrial

Pipe Size	0-15 m3 (min.)	16-30 m3	31-500 m3	501-1000 m3	Over 1000 m3
½"	P 2,385.00	188.30	177.50	192.40	192.40
¾"	P 3,816.00	286.10	284.00	307.90	307.90
1"	P 7,633.50	532.30	568.10	615.80	615.80

This application will be initially heard by the Board on **8 May 2023**. The hearing will start at **9:00 o'clock in the morning** at the NWRB-WUD Conference Room, 8th Floor, NIA Building, EDSA, Quezon City, at which time applicant shall present its evidence.

At least fifteen (15) days prior to the scheduled hearing, applicant shall publish this notice once in a daily newspaper of general circulation in Metro Manila and serve by personal delivery or registered mail a copy of the (i) application and its attachments, and (ii) this notice, to all affected parties appearing on page 2 hereof.


Parties opposed to the granting of the application must file their written opposition supported by documentary evidence on or before the above scheduled date of hearing, furnishing a copy of the same to the applicant.

Failure on the part of any person affected to file its opposition on time and to appear at the hearing will be construed as a waiver of their right to be heard. The Board will proceed to hear and decide the application based on the evidence submitted.

Likewise, failure by the applicant to appear at the hearing shall amount to lack of interest on its part and the instant application shall be dismissed accordingly.

Witness the Honorable Executive Director of the National Water Resources Board this 29th day of March 2023.

By Authority of the Board:


Dr. SEVILLO D. DAVID, Jr., CESO III
Executive Director

Affected Parties:

The Secretary
Sangguniang Panlungsod
Las Piñas City, Metro Manila

The Barangay Chairman
Barangay Pulang Lupa I
Las Piñas City, Metro Manila

The Homeowners Assn. President
Camella Venezia Subdivision
Barangay Pulang Lupa I
Las Piñas City, Metro Manila

The Administrator
Metropolitan Waterworks & Sewerage System
MWSS Compound, Katipunan Road
Balara, Quezon City

MT - Apr. 21, 2023



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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
NATIONAL WATER RESOURCES BOARD
88 Floor NIA Bldg., EDSA, Alabang, Muntinlupa City, Philippines 1150

PRIMEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE CORP.,
Applicant. Case No. 23-3587

NOTICE OF HEARING

This is an application for Certificate of Public Convenience to operate and maintain a waterworks system within Brescia Subdivision, Barangay Greater Fairview, Quezon City, Metro Manila, with the following proposed rates:

PROPOSED TARIFF

Residential and Institutional

Pipe Size	0-5 m3 (min)	6-10 m3	11-20 m3	21-30 m3	31-40 m3	Over 40 m3
1/2"	P 358.50	82.20	83.20	84.20	85.20	86.20
3/4"	P 574.00	131.60	133.10	134.60	136.10	137.60
1"	P 1,147.50	263.10	266.20	269.30	272.40	275.50

Residential and Commercial

Pipe Size	0-5 m3 (min)	6-10 m3	11-20 m3	21-30 m3	31-40 m3	Over 40m3
1/2"	P 358.50	82.20	83.20	84.20	85.20	86.20
3/4"	P 574.00	131.60	133.10	134.60	136.10	137.60
1"	P 1,147.50	263.10	266.20	269.30	272.40	275.50

Commercial and Industrial

Pipe Size	0-15 m3 (min.)	16-30 m3	31-500 m3	501-1000 m3	Over 1000 m3
1/2"	P 2,371.50	167.70	172.40	181.90	181.90
3/4"	P 3,793.50	268.40	275.90	291.00	291.00
1"	P 7,587.00	536.80	551.70	582.00	582.00

Others

Pipe Size	Per cu.m.
1/2"	P 229.50

This application will be initially heard by the Board on **8 May 2023**. The hearing will start at **9:00 o'clock in the morning** at the NWRB-WUD Conference Room, 8th Floor, NIA Building, EDSA, Quezon City, at which time applicant shall present its evidence.


At least **fifteen (15) days** prior to the scheduled hearing, applicant shall publish this notice once in a daily newspaper of general circulation in **Metro Manila** and serve by personal delivery or registered mail a copy of the (i) application and its attachments, and (ii) this notice, to all affected parties appearing on page 2 hereof.

Parties opposed to the granting of the application must file their written opposition supported by documentary evidence on or before the above scheduled date of hearing, furnishing a copy of the same to the applicant.

Failure on the part of any person affected to file its opposition on time and to appear at the hearing will be construed as a waiver of their right to be heard. The Board will proceed to hear and decide the application based on the evidence submitted.

Likewise, failure by the applicant to appear at the hearing shall amount to lack of interest on its part and the instant application shall be dismissed accordingly.

Witness the Honorable Executive Director of the National Water Resources Board this 29th day of March 2023.

By Authority of the Board:

Dr. SEVILLO D. DAVID, Jr., CESO III
Executive Director

Affected Parties:

The Secretary
Sangguniang Panlungsod
Quezon City, Metro Manila

The Barangay Chairman
Barangay Greater Fairview
Quezon City, Metro Manila

The Homeowners Assn. President
Brescia Subdivision
Barangay Greater Fairview
Quezon City, Metro Manila

The Administrator
Metropolitan Waterworks & Sewerage System
MWSS Compound, Katipunan Road
Balara, Quezon City

MT - Apr. 21, 2023



PRIMEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE CORP.,
Applicant.

Case No. 23-3592

NOTICE OF HEARING

This is an application for Certificate of Public Convenience to operate and maintain a waterworks system within Camella Porac Subdivision, Barangay Sta. Cruz, Municipality of Porac, province of Pampanga, with the following proposed rates:

PROPOSED TARIFF

Residential and Institutional

Pipe Size	0-5 m ³ (min)	6-10 m ³	11-20 m ³	21-30 m ³	31-40 m ³	Over 40 m ³
½"	P 361.00	73.60	75.60	79.20	82.80	86.40
¾"	P 577.50	117.70	121.00	126.70	132.50	138.30
1"	P 1,155.00	235.40	242.00	253.40	264.90	276.60

Residential and Commercial

Pipe Size	0-5 m ³ (min)	6-10 m ³	11-20 m ³	21-30 m ³	31-40 m ³	Over 40m ³
½"	P 361.00	73.60	75.60	79.20	82.80	86.40
¾"	P 577.50	117.70	121.00	126.70	132.50	138.30
1"	P 1,155.00	235.40	242.00	253.40	264.90	276.60

Commercial and Industrial

Pipe Size	0-15 m ³ (min.)	16-30 m ³	31-500 m ³	501-1000 m ³	Over 1000 m ³
½"	P 2,214.00	156.00	172.80	193.80	193.80
¾"	P 3,543.00	249.60	276.50	310.10	310.10
1"	P 7,084.50	499.30	552.90	620.30	620.30

This application will be initially heard by the Board on **8 May 2023**. The hearing will start at **9:00 o' clock in the morning** at the NWRB-WUD Conference Room, 8th Floor, NIA Building, EDSA, Quezon City, at which time applicant shall present its evidence.

At least fifteen (15) days prior to the scheduled hearing, applicant shall publish this notice once in a daily newspaper of general circulation in the province of Pampanga and serve by personal delivery or registered mail a copy of the (i) application and its attachments, and (ii) this notice, to all affected parties appearing on page 2 hereof.

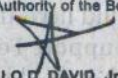
Parties opposed to the granting of the application must file their written opposition supported by documentary evidence on or before the above scheduled date of hearing, furnishing a copy of the same to the applicant.

Failure on the part of any person affected to file its opposition on time and to appear at the hearing will be construed as a waiver of their right to be heard. The Board will proceed to hear and decide the application based on the evidence submitted.

Likewise, failure by the applicant to appear at the hearing shall amount to lack of interest on its part and the instant application shall be dismissed accordingly.

Witness the Honorable Executive Director of the National Water Resources Board this 29th day of March 2023.

By Authority of the Board:


Dr. SEVILLO D. DAVID, Jr., CESO III
Executive Director

Affected Parties:

The Secretary
Sangguniang Bayan
Porac, Pampanga

The Barangay Chairman
Barangay Sta. Cruz
Porac, Pampanga

The Homeowners Assn. President
Camella Porac Subdivision
Barangay Sta. Cruz
Porac, Pampanga

The General Manager
Porac Water District
Cangatba, Porac, Pampanga 2008