

01 April 2023 Saturday



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NWRB approves increased water allocation to Maynilad, Manila Water

By BELLA CARIASO

The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) is increasing the water allocation to Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water Co. Inc. from 48 cubic meters per second to 50 cumecs for the next 15 days beginning today.

"This will allow the La Mesa Dam and Ipo Dam to recover at a more comfortable level and address some of the water supply issues of Metro Manila," NWRB executive director Seville David Jr. said at a press conference yesterday.

The two water concessionaires had originally requested the NWRB, through the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), to increase their water allocation from Angat Dam to

50 cumecs for two months.

Earlier, Maynilad warned that its west zone service area would experience prolonged water interruptions if the NWRB will not grant the request for an increase in water allocation.

At present, Maynilad customers experience about eight to 14 hours of water cutoff daily.

Since PAGASA sees El Niño taking effect in the last half of this year, the NWRB will have time to make an assessment of the current allocation to the two main water concessionaires for Metro Manila and its surrounding areas. David gave assurance that water supply is enough to last until December.

"With the level of the dam at 202.3 meters at 6 a.m. (on Friday), this level of the

dam is considered as within the normal operating level as we will have sufficient supply particularly in the coming months, summer period," he said.

Still, he appealed to the public to conserve water. "Let's be responsible in our use. As we have said, try to recycle (water) and repair the leaks in the household. Residential areas will also play a big part in the water conservation efforts," he said.

Meanwhile, the MWSS has directed Maynilad to limit supply interruptions to nighttime and immediately roll out measures to augment water supply in its service areas.

MWSS administrator Leonor Cleofas made the call to the water company during a high-level meeting with its officers last Thursday.

- With Danessa Rivera



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Treated Since 1899

The Manila Times

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Concessionaires' appeal for more water junked

THE National Water Resources Board (NWRB) on Friday junked a petition of water concessionaires for an additional two cubic meters per second of water, with the threat of lesser to no rains from El Niño looming.

NWRB chief Dr. Sevillano David Jr. said in a news briefing that the board gave serious considerations to the situation of the public needing water supply and the available

resources as the threat of the dams drying up or going way below their critical level could be expected to happen under El Niño.

At the Laging Handa public briefing, David also said they are implementing a lesser allocation to Maynilad and Manila Water by April 1, when they will reduce the 50 cubic meters per second at present to 48 cubic meters per second.

But because of the appeal and

the threat of the El Niño phenomenon, they had to forgo the reduction, at least until April 15, when they will again review the status of the dams and check how fast the drop occurs there.

David said they understand it is difficult for the public as Maynilad announced possible water interruptions lasting up to 14 hours at most.

"The board will continue its

review of this allocation of course in the light of the threat from El Niño, which Pagasa [expects in] the last half of this year," he added.

David said they will adopt measures to prevent water wastage to include stopping leakages.

Maynilad said the water interruptions will continue, but changes in their duration will be adjusted as well.

FRANCIS EARL CUETO



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BRACE FOR SUPPLY INTERRUPTIONS

NWRB TO AUGMENT METRO MANILA WATER SUPPLY

By Meg J. Adonis
@MegINQ

The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) on Friday said additional water supply will be provided to two of Metro Manila's major sources of water as Filipinos brace themselves for daily service interruptions amid the dry season.

At a press conference, NWRB Executive Director Sevillo David Jr. said the agency's board of directors decided to grant 50 cubic meters per second (CMS) to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) for 15 days to allow the La Mesa and Ipo dams to recover.

"We expect the additional 50 CMS allocation to address the water supply issues in Metro Manila, and we will

continuously review this allocation," David told reporters.

The additional allocation, which will be sourced from Angat Dam, will be granted from April 1 to April 15.

The NWRB decision comes after the MWSS and water concessionaire Maynilad Water Services Inc. sought the agency's approval for additional supply, warning of declining elevation in Ipo and La Mesa dams.

The MWSS sought the 50-CMS allocation for two months, but David explained that the NWRB still needed to review the impact of additional supply.

While Angat still enjoyed normal water level, the official said the NWRB wanted to remain cautious given the impending El Niño phenomenon, which is projected to take effect later this year. INQ

Angat Dam - 50 CMS - 15 days - Ipo & La Mesa



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Daily Tribune

WITHOUT FEAR & WITHOUT FAVOR

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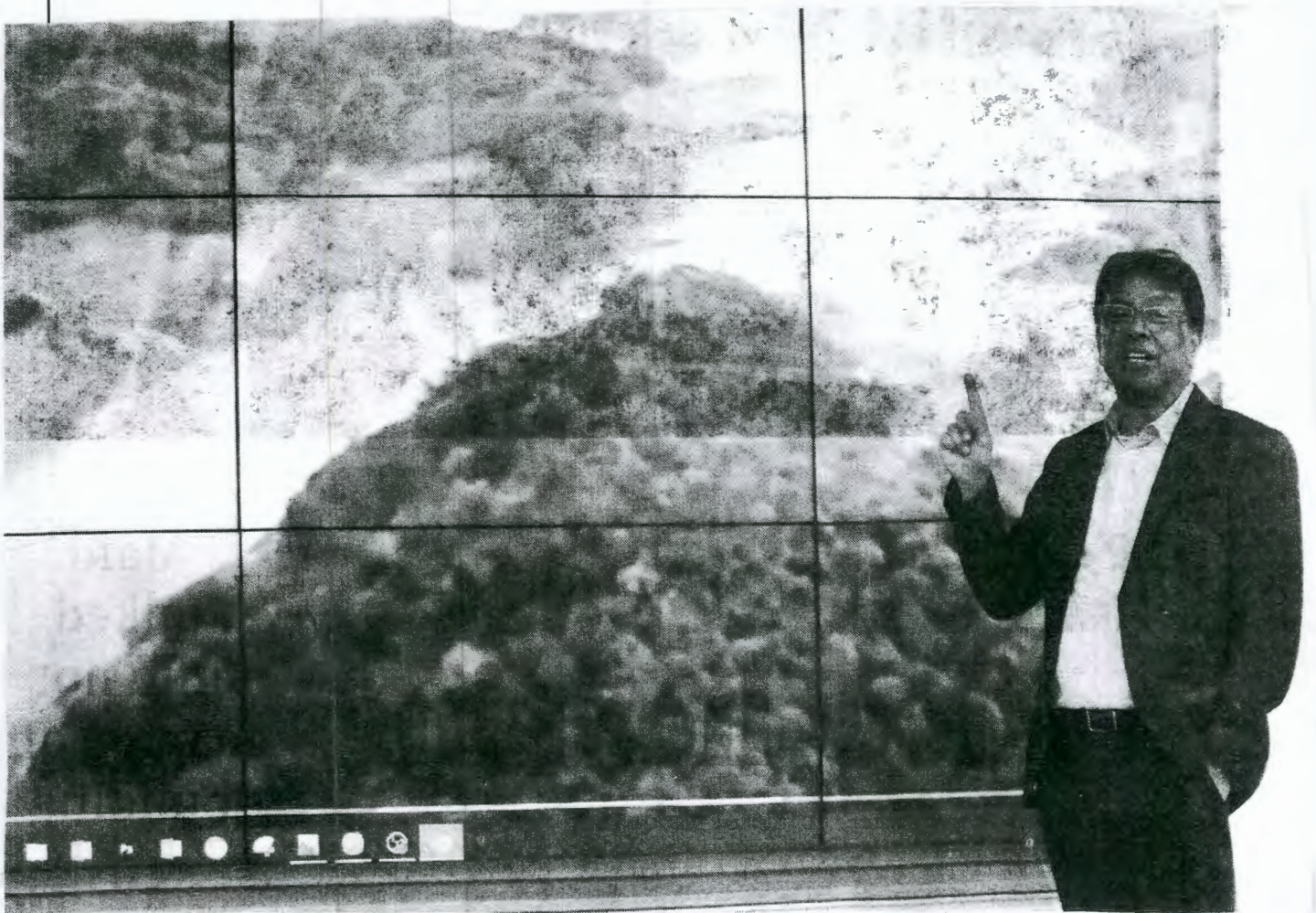
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PHOTOGRAPH BY ANALY LABOR FOR THE DAILY TRIBUNE @tribunephil_ana

Water woes National Water Resources board executive director Servillo David Jr. explains the situation at the country's water reservoirs in a media briefing at his office in Quezon City on Friday, 31 March 2023. David said the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System has been granted 50 cubic meters per second of water release from 1 to 15 April to allow the La Mesa and Ipo dams to recover while supporting the water supply needs of Metro Manila.



TITLE: Oriental Mindoro mulls state of calamity PAGE 015

Oriental Mindoro mulls state of calamity

Water samples collected and analyzed from the affected municipalities from 9 to 12 March showed minimal levels of oil and grease.

The provincial government here on Friday disclosed that it is mulling to have a state of calamity declared in the province due to the oil spill that has taken a toll on the livelihood of residents, mostly fishers.

Governor Humerlito Dolor, in an interview, said that he has already requested the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office to recommend the declaration for the whole province after grease and oil were found in two more towns — Baco and San Teodoro.

Earlier, several towns of the province were already placed in a state of calamity, namely Naujan, Pinamalayan, Gloria, Bansud, Bongabong, Roxas, Mansalay and Bulalacao.

"The fishing ban also affects even the non-coastal areas of Socorro and Victoria

towns because people are not buying fish," Dolor said.

To recall, the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources recommended a fishing ban in the oil spill-affected towns in Oriental Mindoro, according to its bulletin on Thursday afternoon.

Water samples collected and analyzed from the affected municipalities from 9 to 12 March showed minimal levels of oil and grease, within the standard stated by the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources in Administrative Order 2016-08 for fishing areas (< 3.0 mg/L oil and grease), the bulletin said.

It identified the affected areas as Bansud, Bongabong, Bulalacao, Gloria, Mansalay,

Naujan, Pinamalayan, Pola, Roxas and Calapan City in Oriental Mindoro and Caluya in Antique province.

Meanwhile, the provincial government of Occidental Mindoro, to help its neighboring province has deployed a mobile kitchen serving meals to more than 3,000 residents of two heavily-affected villages in Pola town here by the oil spill.

In other developments, the Philippine Coast Guard in Antique province said that no new oil spills have been sighted off the island municipality of Caluya for the past two weeks.

Lt. Sr. Grade Rey Anacita, PCG Antique Station commander, said in an interview that cleanup operations in Liwagao island and in the other affected barangays of Alegria, Semirara, Sibolo and Tinogboc in Caluya are

ongoing but already focused on mangrove areas since no new oil spills have been reported along the shorelines.

"Mangrove areas are being flushed with water from the water pump," Anacita said.

He added more than 500 oil spill booms from Camp General Leandro Fullon and the University of Antique main campus in Sibalom are on standby while DSWD family food packs are being transported to the affected areas.

Meantime, the BFAR revealed that the country is losing an estimated P5 million daily because of fishing ban due to the oil spill.

The rest of Mindoro island, BFAR added, including dive destination Puerto Galera in the island's north-west, also suffered losses due to implications from the spill. JING VILLAMENTE



TITLE: *The "Mission Impossible"*

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THE 'MISSION IMPOSSIBLE'

Efforts to control industrial fuel leak from the sunken MT Princess Empress face challenges

BY REX ANTHONY NAVAL

WHILE locating the sunken wreck of MT Princess Empress has proven quite easy with the assistance from the Japanese dynamic positioning vessel, Shin Nichi Marui and its remotely-operated vehicle (ROV) Hakuyo, plugging the holes where the oil has been leaking is proving to be quite an herculean task as the ill-fated oil tanker is resting at around 395 meters underwater.

This was revealed by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) on March 22 following the successful survey of ROV Hakuyo that took place earlier.

Shin Nichi Marui had previously arrived in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro on March 20.

The ROV assessment took place 7.7 nautical miles southwest off Balingawan Point, Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, the PCG reported.

"The tanker suffered extensive structural damage after sinking. At this point, no visible consumption fuel leak coming from the damaged vessel. Oil leaks had been observed from all eight compartments (tanks), and some through the ballast tank," the PCG, quoting the findings of the Japanese ROV team, said.

MT Princess Empress sank after encountering major engine or mechanical problems on February 28. It was loaded with an estimated 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil at the time of its sinking.

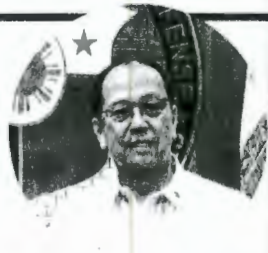
Oil stains were also found on some parts of the vessel.

The PCG also said that oil leaks were also seen coming from the following parts of MT Princess Empress:

- a) ballast tank vents and access hatches;
- b) cargo tank pressure valves (P-Vs);
- c) cargo pipework on deck (including valves).

The PCG said that the ROV survey noted there were no oil leaks from the ship's fuel and service tanks.

It added that the sunken ship's "No. 4 Port Pressure Valve has the highest flow rate."



GALVEZ: "Our response efforts, particularly the actions of the various government agencies, are present and very effective with the collaboration of all stakeholders, not to mention the assistance of our allies and other partner countries."

"Volume of remaining oil inside the compartments cannot be estimated at this point. The oil spillage rate from the source is likewise yet to be determined," the PCG reported.

Next plan of action

WHILE the ill-fated tanker has now been located, the PCG laid down the following plans of action as "priorities for the next operational phase."

This includes the ship's insurance representatives searching for a "service provider that will conduct oil patching, bagging, and removal" and "hot tapping and pumping" from the sunken wreck.

Equipment for these tasks must be designed or able to operate at depths of 395 meters and beyond.

"Coordination has been established for the deployment of a Singapore-based provider. All possibilities are being explored, including the tapping of RP (Philippine)-



(TOP) The Japanese dynamic positioning vessel Shin Nichi Marui and (above) its remotely operated vehicle Hakuyo onboard. OFFICE OF CIVIL DEFENSE & PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD



UNDERWATER photo taken by ROV Hakuyo show the leaking pipes, fittings and valves of the sunken MT Princess Empress around 395 meters below the surface of the sea in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro. PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD

based firms," the PCG added.

Aid from IOPCF in oil spill cleanup

AS this developed, the PCG has sought the assistance of the International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds (IOPCF) to boost the country's efforts in cleaning up the oil spill off Naujan.

In a statement on March 24, the PCG said assistance from the IOPCF would speed up the acquisition of ROVs.

PCG Commandant Artemio Abu said they also sought assistance from P&I London, a group of protection and indemnity insurance companies for mutual maritime insurance representing global ship owners.

Earlier, South Korean Minister Jong Soon Chang and Third Secretary Kim Dosik met with Abu and announced the upcoming arrival of the Korean Coast Guard response team and technical experts on

March 28.

South Korea has also pledged to ship 20 tons of absorbent pads, 2,000 sets of protective equipment, and a 1,000-meter spill boom by the first week of April.



US Coast Guard to help in containing oil spill

AT Camp Aguinaldo, a statement from the Department of National Defense (DND) Officer-in-Charge Senior Undersecretary Carlito Galvez Jr. on March 26 said the United States Coast Guard (USCG) and some of its air assets will arrive in the country to help in the ongoing clean up operations.

Galvez, in his report to President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., said they expect a contingent from the USCG to arrive soon.

"We are looking forward to the arrival of the entire US Coast Guard contingent for the additional technical support in our disaster response operations. Although, one US C-17 with equipment had already arrived this morning (March 26) and is now at Subic Air Base. Another C-5 is expected to arrive," he added.

Galvez, who is also chairman of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), along with the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) Undersecretary Ariel Nepomuceno and Abu and other military and local government officials, conducted an aerial inspection of the affected areas of the oil spill on March 26.

"We will immediately employ these assets and integrate [these]

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in our response operations. In addition, we continue to closely monitor the ROV's operations for significant updates and to further determine the extent of the oil spill," he added,

Galvez also noted that the presence of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has greatly helped in the cleanup operations by providing rapid environmental assessments of the affected areas, identification of priority areas at risk of environmental damage, and assessment of the needs for ecosystem restoration.

"They (NOAA) provide support for scientific modeling to estimate the trajectory of the oil spill and satellite imagery to boost assessment efforts," the DND chief said.

Galvez also noted that the situation in the areas in Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan) and Western Visayas regions affected by the oil spill "is a lot better and very encouraging than I imagined."

"Our response efforts, particularly the actions of the various government agencies, are present and very effective with the collaboration of all stakeholders, not to mention the assistance of our allies and other partner countries," the DND chief noted.

US contracted ship

MEANWHILE, the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) announced that a

US-contracted ship, anchor handling vessel Pacific Valkyrie, had arrived at Subic Bay, Zambales last March 28 and will proceed shortly to Oriental Mindoro to help in the ongoing oil spill management operations.

The *Pacific Valkyrie* is equipped with a submersible ROV that can conduct a video and sonar survey of the sunken MT Princess Empress, it said.

"The ROV can take still photographs, and carry a payload of 150 lb. It has function manipulators capable of work at depth and auxiliary servos for hydraulic tool operations. It also has a salvage basket that can bear 4,000 lb. The wreck survey will provide additional situational data on the shipwreck, which will assist in determining solutions to salvage the vessel and its content," the OCD said.

Galvez thanked the US government for this assistance, which is expected to boost the Philippines's efforts to control and resolve the environmental emergency.

"Once all mandatory checks and preparations are completed, the Pacific Valkyrie, carrying an ROV team from the US, will head to Oriental Mindoro to check the current situation of the shipwreck and its fuel cargo. We will then use data gathered to determine the next appropriate course of action to control the oil leakage coming from its source," he added.

Aside from the ROV, the US government is also sending 11,000 feet of 26-inch absorbent

harbor boom.

These containment booms will be used to control the spread of oil and allow easy recovery.

Personal protective equipment, other support equipment like vehicles, and vessels, as well as experts from the USCG, NOAA and US Navy will also be deployed to assist the effort.

Help from other allies

EARLIER, Galvez said the government would seek the help of the country's allies and partners to mitigate the adverse effects of the oil spill.

This includes expertise and technical support of other allies and partners, such as France and the United Kingdom, he added.

"The DND, through the NDRRMC (National Disaster Risk and Reduction Management Council), and the local government units (LGUs) in Oriental Mindoro, have stepped up the government's efforts to immediately address the effects of the oil spill from the sunken MT Princess Empress," Galvez said.

He also pointed out that a US humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR) team is now on its way.

"The PCG, on the other hand, specifically requested the US for oil spill booms. Pending the approval of the President to accept the equipment, these booms will help contain the oil spill in order to protect the environment and assist in recovery," Galvez said.



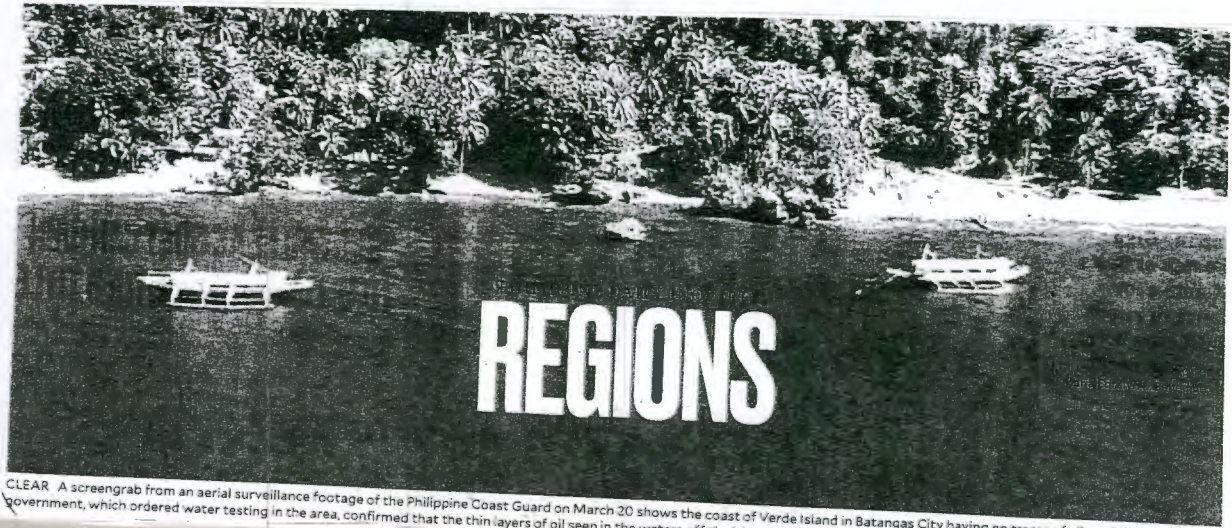
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REGIONS

CLEAR A screengrab from an aerial surveillance footage of the Philippine Coast Guard on March 20 shows the coast of Verde Island in Batangas City having no traces of oil or slick. The local government, which ordered water testing in the area, confirmed that the thin layers of oil seen in the waters off the island earlier were already gone. —SCRENGRAB FROM PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD

WATER TEST CLEARS BATANGAS WATER OF SPILL

OIL SLICK ON VERDE ISLAND CONTAINED

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
@dtmallarijrINQ

A sampling to determine if the waters around Verde Island in Batangas City remained contaminated with industrial fuel oil yielded a negative result, the government of Batangas City said on Friday.

In an advisory, the city's public information office said the waters around the island were already deemed safe from the ill effects of the oil slick that came from the tanker MT Princess Empress that sunk off Oriental Mindoro on Feb. 28.

It said the test, which was made on March 20, also yielded a negative result for oil contamination along the coastline of other areas in Batangas.

The island is a favorite tourist haven for its pristine, clear water and underwater treasures. It is a six-village islet that sits at the heart of the Verde Island Passage (VIP), which is known as the world's center of marine biodiversity.

VIP, a body of water between Batangas and Mindoro Island, is some 100 kilometers from Pola town in Oriental Mindoro province, where the

tanker was last located after it sank on Feb. 28 while carrying 800,000 liters of industrial oil.

Fishing allowed

According to the Batangas city government, residents could continue fishing and do leisure activities, such as swimming, in the coastal areas.

It was also on March 20, when oil sheen and thin patches of segmented oil reached the Verde Island's villages of San Agapito, San Agustin-Kanluran, Liponpon and San Andres.

At that time, the city government assured the residents

in these coastal communities that the oil slick had a "minimal impact."

Batangas City Mayor Beverly Dimacuha also immediately directed concerned local government offices to monitor the oil spill, ordering water testing in the seas off Verde Island.

The local government said the "prompt response" and the eventual cleanup operations of the Philippine Coast Guard, various local government agencies and other volunteers helped contain the spread of oily mixtures along the shorelines of the four villages. INQ



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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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MANILA BAY TOUR —
United Kingdom (UK)
Minister of State for
Indo-Pacific Anne-
Marie Trevelyan,
MP; UK Ambassador
to the Philippines
Laure Beaufils, and
Philippine Coast
Guard Commander
Admiral Artemio
Abu tour Manila
Bay on Friday,
March 31, 2023,
aboard a PCG rubber
boat. Trevelyan is
in the country to
discuss enhanced
UK-Philippines
cooperation on
maritime security
and marine
conservation as
well as talk on
trade concerns and
climate links. (Juan
Carlo de Vela)



Manila Bay tour with UK officials



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The silencing of PD 705 in Masungi

THERE is a need to revisit the legal



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complexities surrounding the Masungi Georeserve. At the outset, it is not my intention to favor one stakeholder over another. As a scholar of environmental policy, and whose academic training includes the analysis of legal texts and discourses, I am committed to render an objective inquiry into the complex ecology of relevant laws and policies. ➤ **ContrerasA5**

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The silencing of PD 705 in Masungi

I do this in order to shed light on the current conflict between the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Masungi Georeserve Foundation Inc. (MGFI). The two are parties to a 2017 memorandum of agreement (MoA) that ironically while signed in good faith and with the presumption of regularity, is now assailed by the DENR as legally and constitutionally infirm. This is done with the hope that a middle ground can be found to get out of the predicament that would serve the best interest of all stakeholders, and ultimately the environment.

An objective analysis of the situation reveals an environmental conflict that stems from the political pressures that emanate from private interests colliding with the now-defined and settled policy regime that locates the entire Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape in the ambit of environmental protection, by virtue of Republic Act (RA) 7586, or the "National Integrated Protected Areas (Nipas) Law," as amended by RA 11038, otherwise known as the "E-Nipas Law."

The problem with our protected areas discourse is that while there is an overarching state policy on environmental protection, space is allowed for private rights to be recognized, particularly in situations where lands within protected areas have already been titled to private persons, or when those lands are part of the ancestral domains of Indigenous peoples. Thus, while prohibited acts are enumerated in Section 18 of RA 11038, which amends Section 20 of RA 7586, there is an overarching exception when, in the words of the law, the said activity "may be allowed by the nature of their categories and pursuant to rules and regulations governing the same."

The validity of MGFI's actions pursuant to the terms of the 2017 MoA, where it was given blanket

authority to conduct environmental protection activities, is now being assailed by the DENR as contrary to public interest. The reason given is that they did not comply with the regulations of the E-Nipas Law, which is a strange argument since the 2017 MoA was preceded by one-year RA 11038, which became law only in 2018. Granting that the MoA was inconsistent with the law, then adequate measures should have been taken to harmonize the contract, and renegotiate its terms. After all, aside from the prohibition against an ex-post facto application of laws, there is also the principle of operative fact that theoretically protects the legality of actions even if an associated instrument or law would be declared as inconsistent with the Constitution or any law. If this is true even for laws already in existence when the MoA was signed, the more that it should be considered in the case of a law that only took effect a year after.

The assault on the 2017 MoA develops in the face of competing private claims on the land emanating from resort owners, and others. This is where the legal landscape becomes odd, and deserves closer scrutiny. Private claimants build their case on the basis of Presidential Decree (PD) 324 issued by President Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr. in 1973 which excluded 1,729 hectares from the Marikina Watershed Reservation, and classified it as alienable and disposable (A and D), and therefore could be subjected to exploitation and use under the provisions of the Public Land Act. They offer this argument that a later presidential action, Proclamation 1636, issued by Marcos in 1977, which reverts the land back to its original classification does not have standing since it is a mere proclamation, and not a decree, a claim that is rather dubious and would require judicial vetting in order to be valid!

However, there is one law that surprisingly does not appear not just in the manifestation of the claimants, but even in the official legal briefs tendered by the DENR. In 1975, Marcos issued PD 705, or the Forestry Reform Code. Section 15 of the law clearly states that:

"Lands eighteen percent (18 percent) in slope or over which have already been declared as alienable and disposable shall be reverted to the classification of forest lands by the department head, to form part of the forest reserves, unless they are already covered by existing titles or approved public land application, or actually occupied openly, continuously, adversely and publicly for a period of not less than thirty (30) years as of the effectivity of this Code, where the occupant is qualified for a free patent under the Public Land Act: Provided, That said lands, which are not yet part of well-established communities, shall be kept in a vegetative condition sufficient to prevent erosion and adverse effects on the lowlands and streams: Provided, further, That when public interest so requires, steps shall be taken to expropriate, cancel defective titles, reject public land application, or eject occupants thereof."



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This provision is still effective today, considering that it was not included in the amendments enumerated in PD 1559 issued in 1978.

Therefore, even granting that PD 1636 is assailable, PD 705 clearly directs the reversal of lands with slope above 18 percent that are declared as A and D. It is the burden of those who claim exemption, which could include the private claimants in Masungi, to show that as of 1975, they already had acquired valid titles, or that they held approved public land applications, or that they had already continuously occupied the area for a period of 30 years in 1975, or since 1945. And even if they have valid claims, the state still has the power to expropriate, cancel defective titles or reject public land applications if they run counter to public interest. Certainly, the E-Nipas Law has clearly laid out that such interest lies best in keeping Masungi a protected area.



TITLE:

Manila Times - Property sector
scored for lack of climate plans

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Editorial

Property sector scored for lack of climate plans

IN a study released earlier this week, the world's major real estate developers have come under fire for being "alarmingly slow" to develop climate action plans. Given the outsized impact of the industry on the climate and the significant impact the industry has on the Philippine economy, this is indeed an alarming revelation, and a problem the country should take immediate steps to address.

The study in question was carried out by the World Benchmarking Alliance and CDP, a carbon measurement non-profit, and assessed 50 of the world's largest property development, construction and building management companies. The study found that more than half of these companies do not have a climate transition plan, and that nearly half of them do not have a target in place to cut their emissions. Only six firms out of the 50 had what is deemed to be an adequate climate action strategy that includes a sustainability target and time-bound plan to reach it.

The top firms in the study were property managers Jones Lang LaSalle and Gecina, based in the United Kingdom and France, respectively, while at the bottom were Qatar's state-owned developer Qatari Diar and China's RiseSun Real Estate Development. In fact, seven of the bottom 10 firms in the ranking are located in China. Ayala Corp., the only Philippine firm of sufficient size to be included in the study, was ranked a modest 17th out of 50, although it was singled out as being one of the few firms that does have a net-zero emissions target that includes in-use buildings, i.e., buildings that it has already built.

The reason for the focus on property developers and managers is that at least 37 percent of man-made greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are attributable to built environments, which includes buildings as well as infrastructure such as roads and airports, excluding the GHG contributions of the vehicles. The GHG emissions from built environments are a combination of the emissions from the structures themselves, construction activities and the production of building materials.

It may come as an unwelcome surprise to property marketers here who have successfully touted newer buildings' certifications as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) buildings, but the study points out that this coveted designation, which is given by the US Green Building Council, does not take into consideration construction and supply chains. Thus, many "green" buildings here and elsewhere still contribute heavily to GHG emissions.

The property and construction sector here in the Philippines is one of our economic bright spots, an important driver of growth, source of employment and catalyst for secondary business and value chain expansion. It should continue to be encouraged and supported, but its growth and positive contributions to the country cannot be enforced at the cost of environmental sustainability. Nor does it necessarily have to; with proper coordination among government agencies and regulators, and between government and the private sector, the industry could easily "step up" to the level of places like Singapore, whose property firms were excluded from the study due to consistently having near-perfect scores in the four previous years the study was conducted.

Strictly enforce regulations

A good place to start would be to strictly enforce already existing regulations and guidelines for environmental impact assessments. These have been increasingly shortcut in recent years in the name of infrastructure development and economic recovery, including in some high-profile development proposals such as San Miguel Corp.'s Pasig River Expressway. This should be an easy step, as it simply requires the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and other responsible agencies to do their jobs according to established specifications.

Another avenue would be to tighten up requirements for disclosures of sustainability plans for SEC-registered and listed companies. The Philippine Stock Exchange is implementing some directives along these lines, but these should be expanded. Likewise, the banking sector can help to encourage better climate action strategies by including sustainability in credit assessments for property development and construction loans. Getting the banks to do this will likely require directions from the Bangko Sentral, the conservative nature of Philippine banks being what it is, but if just one would do so, the rest would follow.



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'No need for big power plants'

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Friday said that the Philippines no longer needs large-scale energy projects such as the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant as his administration eyes the creation of more power storage facilities to address the problems of energy supply in the country.

Marcos made the statement as he promised to improve the policy and regulatory framework for the renewable energy industry, especially for the Energy Storage System (ESS) technology, to encourage further development of the industry.

In his speech during the inauguration of Global Power's Battery Energy Storage System facilities of the San Miguel Corp. in Bataan on Friday, the President said since a nuclear power plant cannot really be turned off and on very easily, "we have to find a way to store the energy."

"Unfortunately, the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant was never in operation, but you can see the advancements that we have now.

That was a very — shall we say involved kind of energy storage system because it was at a very large scale," Marcos said.

"However, that now we no longer need to construct all of those facilities, we no longer need to put in that kind of infrastructure. All we need now are these battery farms that we are seeing today," he added

Marcos said that the government "highly encourages and approves" projects like the BESS, especially amid the problems of energy supply in the country.

He said that "this is now the solution to the problem" as it applies to all kinds of power that we are able to use.

"As I said, the BESS or the Battery Energy Storage System, certainly will form a very important part of that formula that will solve these problems that I had just gone through," Marcos said.

"Because it is novel, it is innovative, it is full of promise, this Battery Energy Storage System. This technology is carving a distinct path towards a more energy-secure and sustainable future for the country. It is clean, it is zero-emission, zero-water extraction, no noise pollution," he added.

With this technology in place, the President said that "storage of power is made possible."

"Power could be stored when not needed or in times of over-supply and released whenever required when there is undersupply," Marcos said.

"And that is why it is extremely encouraging for those of us who are always trying to find ways to one, increase the supply of power; secondly, decrease the cost of power; and thirdly, improve the mix of traditional sources of power and renewable sources of people," Marcos said.

Marcos labeled the battery system as the "wave of the future" that is already existing.

He said it holds many of the keys to survival and self-sufficiency in the country.

"Given the increasing generation of renewable energy, it is vital that we advance and incorporate energy storage systems in our overall energy infrastructure. Indeed, it promises great rewards for our country. Not only will we be able to generate sufficient, reliable and clean energy, leading to more affordability of energy and generate jobs for our people, green jobs in the process," he said.

"In my SONA, I stressed the importance of increasing the use of renewable energy. It is why I am glad that we are making strides in this area. But as much as we desire to rely on renewable energy, we know that electricity generated from sources such as solar, wind, water are sometimes considered intermittent. They cannot function continuously and perfectly because of inherent factors and other circumstances beyond our control such as the wind blowing

or the sun shining," he said.

"Let us consider ourselves fortunate that we are here at the birth of this project at this late stage, as it goes online in the Grid and begins to serve the Filipino people," he added.

"We will improve the policy and regulatory framework for the renewable energy industry, especially for the ESS technology, to encourage the further development of our fledgling renewables industry," he said.

"The Department of Energy is currently working on an improved and expanded version of our ESS policy," the President added.

Marcos said his administration is also aiming to increase the share of renewables in our total generation mix, and encourage those investments that will add to the renewable supply in our country.

"With this mutually beneficial working relationship in the field of energy, we all function effectively towards attainment of our ambition of strongly rooted, comfortable, and secure lives for our citizenry, as well as a healthy and vibrant business continuity

for both the government and the private sector," Marcos said.

"So together, we will spur further advancements and reforms in our country. Soon, not only will the Philippines have attained energy security, but it will also gain the recognition and the respect of the world as an advocate of clean energy and other green and resource-efficient practices," he added.

Meanwhile, Marcos lauded the San Miguel Corp. for the innovation and pledged support in undertaking projects that would benefit the country and its people.

"San Miguel Corporation, at 130 years old, certainly shows no sign of aging or of laying low. Quite the contrary, they are as ever leaders in the various industries, the various sectors in which they are involved... And I think your San Miguel CEO Ramon Ang deserves a round of applause for all of these innovations that he has introduced in the country," Marcos said.

"So we will continue to be a partner with you, — the Government and the Filipino people. As the immortal line goes: *Iba na 'yung may pinagsamahan,*" he added.