

17 April 2023 Monday

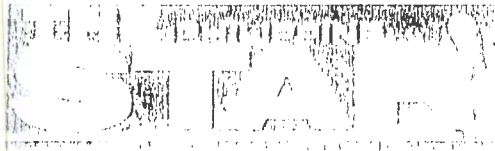


**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



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# DENR gears up for full implementation of EPR law

By **BELLA CARIASO**

At least 50 employees of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources have undergone rigorous training as part of the DENR's preparation for the full implementation of Republic Act (RA) 11898 or the Expanded Producers Responsibility (EPR) Act of 2022.

Environment Assistant Secretary for field operations and Environmental Management Bureau concurrent director Gilbert Gonzales said the training was necessary to equip DENR personnel with the knowledge and skills to communicate a standardized messaging on the EPR law to various stakeholders for its proper implementation.

The three-day training was conducted in partnership with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

The EPR law requires large companies to adopt and implement policies for the proper management of plastic packaging

wastes.

Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga signed the Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA 11898 last January after it lapsed into law on July 23 last year.

Gonzales said those who completed the training would be in the frontline of information on the EPR law across the regions and would serve as resource speakers on upcoming training sessions for stakeholders from the private sector, local government units and waste diversion organizations.

"We are very glad that finally, we are able to start somehow the important activities that we need to undertake under the EPR implementation, one of which is this preparation and training of our future messengers of information related to the EPR," Gonzales said.

The EPR law is seen to significantly aid in the long-standing problem of solid waste management in the country.

The EPR law and circular economy are mainly associated

with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12, which pertains to responsible consumption and production, as it primarily aims to achieve sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources, according to UNDP program analyst Gwyneth Anne Palmos.

"The EPR and circular economy, when implemented in an integrated, holistic and just manner, can help drive the achievement of all SDGs," Palmos said.

As an environmental policy approach and program, the EPR law establishes a mechanism that places upon producers the responsibility for the entire life cycle of plastic waste, especially its post-consumer or end-of-life stage.

The EPR practice focuses on the segregation of waste at source and collection; waste reduction, recovery and recycling; development of environment-friendly products; and application of internationally accepted principles on sustainable consumption and production.





# Bishop: Study mining impact on Homonhon

**Prelate raises concerns over 'escalated' operations of mine firms; Eastern Samar gov pushes for 'responsible' extraction of nickel, chromite in historic island**

TACLOBAN CITY—The bishop of the Diocese of Borongan has raised concerns over “escalated mining operations” on the historic island of Homonhon off the town of Guiuan in Eastern Samar province.

Bishop Crispin Varquez called on government leaders and concerned government agencies to take action on the matter to protect the resources of Homonhon, where the Spanish expedition led by Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan landed on March 16, 1521, which eventually led to the Christianization of the Philippines.

According to Varquez, there are four active mining companies extracting chromite and nickel on the island, whose “immediate and negative effects on the communities and the natural environment are very alarming.”

“We are very much disturbed by the escalated mining operations in our beloved historical island of Homonhon. I am appealing to authorities to carefully study the mining proj-

ects in the island to ensure that these will not have devastating effects on the environment and the local residents,” the prelate said in an April 11 statement.

He added: “We call on our government leaders and concerned agencies to take action on this matter and to consider primarily the preservation, safety, and welfare of the affected areas and its residents.”

## Preserving history

The 20-kilometer long island, which is known for its vast deposits of nickel and chromite, has been grappling with open-pit mining since the 1990s, which continued to this day amid objection from many of the island’s 4,413 population and the diocese.

However, Eastern Samar Gov. Ben Evardone had said that he was not against mining activities on the island. Instead, he would want the miners to be responsible and to ensure that the environment and Homonhon Island’s rich history would not be affected.

“I am not against mining. I am for responsible mining. I don’t want the bad practice of mining to erase the rich history of Homonhon,” he said in a speech he delivered during the commemoration of Magellan’s landing on the island held on March 23.

Evardone has been calling on the national government to grant the local governments hosting the mining operations on Homonhon a share of the excise tax collected from these companies, noting that in 2021 alone, these firms extracted 605,176 metric tons (MT) of nickel ore and 19,105 MT of chromite from the island.

According to Evardone, the four companies currently operating on Homonhon Island are Techiron Resources Inc.; Emir Mineral Resources Corp.; King Resources Mining Corp.; and Global Min-met Resources Inc., all of which started only sometime in early 2015.

Techiron, which extracts chromite in a 1,500-hectare area in Homonhon, was among the mining firms ordered closed in

2017 by then Environment Secretary Gina Lopez but has since resumed operation after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) lifted the suspension of its mineral export permit in April 2020, according to a company profile in the DENR online library.

The other companies also operate with valid mineral ore export permits issued in 2022, based on the online central database of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau.

Residents of the island led by the environmental group “Save Homonhon” have been conducting sporadic protest activities to stop the mining operations in the locality.

The Diocese of Borongan, which has jurisdiction over the island’s Catholic population, has been in the forefront of the campaigns to preserve and protect the island’s biodiversity.

Environmental groups and Catholic priests had earlier appealed to authorities to stop the mining operations on Homonhon but to no avail. —JOEY GABIETA INQ





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**BALD MOUNTAIN** Operators of heavy equipment work at a section of Homonhon Island in Guiuan town, Eastern Samar, where mining operations are being conducted as shown in this April 10 photo. —PHOTO COURTESY OF ESTE NEWS





DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
BUREAU OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT



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## Angat level stable amid higher water allocations

By BELLA CARIASO

National Water Resources Board executive director Sevillo David Jr. gave assurance that the level of Angat Dam will not be threatened despite the decision of the NWRB to grant the 52 cubic meters per second (cms) requested by the Maynilad Water Service Inc. and Manila Water through the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS).

"That's correct (it will not affect the level of Angat Dam). That was considered by the NWRB and we considered in our projection the rains expected by PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration)," David said.

He added that based on the decision of the NWRB, the 52 cms will be effective from April to May 2023.

"We expect that the two cms additional allocation for April and May will not affect our water requirement in the next months and the entire year," David added.

He said the NWRB also tasked the MWSS to submit plans to improve the water supply in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

"The Board approved the additional two cms for April and for May, it was also conditionally approved but the Board asked for the submission of necessary commitments for specific program and timeline," David noted.

According to him, the board considered the daily water interruption being experienced by Maynilad customers on

its decision to increase the allocation to 52 cms from the previous 50 cms.

"During the meeting of the NWRB Board to the MWSS, the latter enumerated efforts to minimize the water interruption, and the NWRB acknowledged the actions of water concessionaires, including efforts to address the leakages," David added.

At the same time, he underscored the need to conserve water to prevent another water crisis that was experienced in 2019.

"We need the cooperation of everybody. The NWRB allows the MWSS to use the standby deep wells. These are operational unlike in 2019 that we don't have these augmentation measures," David said.

MWSS Administrator Leonor Cleofas on Friday said the additional two cms allocation will be given to Maynilad to address the daily water interruption being experienced by its customers.

As of 6 a.m. on Sunday, PAGASA said that the level of Angat Dam was at 197.97 meters compared to its previous day level of 198.19 meters or 0.22 centimeters less.

David has said that the government learned from El Niño where Angat Dam reached its lowest level of 116 meters in June 2019.

He assured the public that aside from NWRB, concerned government agencies including MWSS and NIA regularly hold coordination meetings in preparation for El Niño.

PAGASA has said that the country will experience El Niño starting June or July this year.





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## Hike in MM water allocation gets NWRB nod

By **BELLA CARIASO**

The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) has approved the 52 cubic meters per second (cms) allocation requested by Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System

(MWSS) Administrator Leonor Cleofas announced yesterday.

"Yes, the NWRB has approved the 52 cms," Cleofas told **The STAR**.

She said the additional allocation will be effective until May 2023.

"The additional two cms will go to Maynilad,

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## Hike From Page 1

as Manila Water has no problem in the water supply. It even helped Maynilad as it opened five points of its cross boundaries to assist Maynilad," she said.

According to Cleofas, the two water concessionaires will share the 50 cms allocation earlier granted by the NWRB.

Cleofas said the increase in water allocation will address the daily water interruption being experienced by Maynilad customers. MWSS has appealed the decision of the NWRB after it only granted 50 cms allocation instead of the original request of 52 cms.

The NWRB, led by executive director Seville David Jr., met on Thursday to discuss the request of MWSS.

David said the board needed to assess the situation, including the possibility of an El Niño phenomenon in the middle of the year.

Based on latest monitoring of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), as of 6 a.m. yesterday, the level of Angat

Dam was at 198.39 meters compared to its previous level of 198.52 meters on Thursday, or a reduction of 0.13 centimeters.

Despite the drop in the level of Angat Dam, it is still 9.86 meters above its rule curve elevation of 188.53 meters.

According to David, the water allocation 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.

The MWSS and NWRB have given assurance that Angat Dam will be able to supply the water requirement in Metro Manila and other provinces until December.

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

At present, Maynilad customers in Manila, Quezon City, Makati, Caloocan, Pasay, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas and Malabon; the cities of Cavite, Bacoor and Imus and the towns of Kawit, Noveleta and Rosario in Cavite are experiencing eight to 14 hours of daily water cutoff.





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■ DENR website as it appeared Sunday: Oblivious to the oil spill.

## Do we have a DENR secretary?

HONESTLY, I've become confused as nine



**RIGOBERTO D. TIGLAO**

months into the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. four crucial departments actually do not have secretaries, but mere OICs. ➤ TiglaoA5

Prominent among these is the Defense department which only has an "OIC/senior undersecretary." Quite anomalously, I think, an "OIC/undersecretary" will sign the EDCA documents that puts on the line the lives of 110 million Filipinos — if nuclear war breaks out between the US and China.

The Health department still has no secretary, only another "OIC/undersecretary" Maria Vergeire, even as she performed quite well as Health Secretary Francisco Duque's deputy as well as being the face of the department in the government's victory over the Covid-19 epidemic. Marcos himself of course is also officially the Agriculture secretary.

We do have a secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) who I'd bet very few of my readers can name: Maria Antonio Yulo-Loyzaga (the wife of a son of the basketball legend Carlos); who has however been practically invisible these past nine months.

The biggest environmental threat since the 2006 oil spill off Guimaras Island has emerged with the sinking of the MT Princess Empress off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro on February 28, its cargo of industrial fuel spilling and spreading to reach even the Verde Islands Passage, which has been miracle of marine biodiversity which the oil could damage for decades. It is "threatening the biodiversity of 21 nearby marine protected areas and the livelihoods of Filipinos working in the fishing and tourism sectors," the

Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada warned in a March 22 article.

### Disaster

Three days after the disaster, the DENR posted a three-minute video of Yulo-Loyzaga mouthing generalities over her department's response to it.

After that, nothing more was heard from her. It's as if she's vanished or taken a vacation during a serious environmental threat.

Even the DENR's website isn't alarmed over it, its last update on the disaster posted March 1 — one and a half months ago.

Yulo-Loyzaga should be embarrassed that she wasn't asked to join President Marcos' aerial inspection on a helicopter of the areas affected by the oil spill the other day. Only Mindoro Gov. Humerlito Dolor was with Marcos during the flight although the prime official who should be briefing him on the crisis is the Environment secretary.

Can she not take the hint that she is useless to Marcos? She should spare him the emotional stress of kicking out an old friend from the Cabinet by resigning ASAP. The video of the briefing after Marcos' inspection showed top Cabinet officials: If Yulo-Loyzaga was there, she was in some corner of the table distant from Marcos.

### Helpless

I wrote a column on this topic more than a month ago, entitled "Gov't helpless, leaderless in Min-





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## Do we have a DENR secretary?

doro oil spill." Yulo-Loyzaga obviously ignored that column, and continued to practically pay no attention to the oil spill — which has caused losses to Filipinos livelihood, now amounting to P1 billion, based on the estimates of a unit of the Agriculture department.

What has Yulo-Loyzaga been doing that she is absent in this crisis that she should be on top of? DENR sources allege that her overriding interest is "climate change," that she attends every single convention or mere meeting abroad. Her absence was such that this dubious official in the Defense department a week after the oil spill problem broke out, appointed himself as head of a task force in charge of the crisis and ordered the local government and the DENR to report to him.

A senator who had been close at least for a while to Malacañang said: "She's not just up in the clouds, she's in the moon and the stars," alluding to her interest in astronomy, having been the chairman of the international advisory board of the Manila Observatory. While she's away, DENR sources allege, everything has to be approved by her executive assistant, her son Jose Joaquin Loyzaga.

Yulo-Loyzaga's incompetence — or focus on things other than pressing DENR concerns — was demonstrated last year when a Filipino company asked the department to stop the operations of a Chinese firm it had given its mining rights to, since the latter totally failed to pay the over P1 billion it

should have paid the Filipino firm for the rights. The DENR secretary had not acted on it to the point that one DENR unit, its Regional Office 3, told the Chinese firm to proceed with its operations, with the DENR's Mines and Geosciences Bureau countermanding that order. Because Yulo-Loyzaga was practically an absent secretary, one unit of the DENR was fighting with another unit.

### Most vulnerable

The DENR is actually one of the biggest bureaucracies of government, and one of the most vulnerable to corruption, especially with the proliferation of mining firms secretly owned by unscrupulous Chinese companies which are quick to pay bribes to the department and to local officials so they could mine quickly and move out of the country minerals with a huge global demand. For instance, because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, prices of the minerals, nickel and copper, have risen steeply.

As Marcos nears the completion of his first year in office, he should clean up his Cabinet. He — and we — cannot afford to have the non-performing Cabinet secretaries in this period fraught with risk, both economically and geopolitically.

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## G7 members vow to end plastic pollution by 2040

**SAPPORO, Japan:** G7 environment and climate ministers pledged to end new plastic pollution in their countries by 2040, they said in a statement released Sunday after talks in northern Japan.

"We are committed to end plastic pollution, with the ambition to reduce additional plastic pollution to zero by 2040," it said.

Germany, France, Canada, Britain and the Eu-

ropean Union are already part of a multi-national coalition that made the same pledge last year.

But this is the first time the remaining Group of Seven members — Japan, the United States and Italy — have made the 2040 commitment.

German Environment Minister Steffi Lemke hailed the bloc's new plastic pollution pledge

►PollutionA2

# G7 members vow to end plastic pollution by 2040

as an "ambitious goal" at a press conference following the two-day talks in Sapporo.

The phase-out will be achieved by "promoting sustainable consumption and production of plastics, increasing their circularity in the economy, and environmentally sound management of waste," the statement said.

Plastic waste has doubled globally in 20 years and only 9 percent is successfully recycled, according to the OECD group of developed countries.

The United Nations says the volume of plastic entering the oceans will nearly triple by 2040.

The G7 also pledged to quit fossil fuels faster and urged other countries to follow suit, but failed to agree to any new deadlines on ending polluting power sources like coal.

The language reflects the depth of disagreements among the allies on the balance between climate action and energy security, with host Japan leading a pushback against the most

ambitious proposals discussed.

After two days of talks in the northern city of Sapporo, the bloc's climate and environment ministers vowed to "accelerate the phase-out of unabated fossil fuels so as to achieve net zero in energy systems by 2050 at the latest ... and call on others to join us in taking the same action." But they offered no new deadlines beyond last year's G7 pledge to largely end fossil fuel use in their electricity sectors by 2035.

France's energy transition minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher said the "phase-out" wording was nonetheless a "strong step forward" ahead of the G20 and COP28 summits this year.

"The most important progress we have made is clearly the fact that we agree to move away from non-carbon-offset fossil fuels," she told Agence France Presse.

Britain and France had put forward a new goal of ending "unabated" coal power — which does not take steps to offset emis-

sions — in G7 electricity systems this decade.

But with global energy supplies still squeezed by the war in Ukraine, the target faced pushback from other members, including bloc president Japan and the United States.

"I would obviously have liked to have been able to make a commitment to phase out coal by 2030," Pannier-Runacher said.

But "it is one issue on which we can still make progress in forthcoming discussions, particularly at COP28."

### Call to reduce 'gas demand'

The Group of Seven industrialized nations target net-zero emissions by 2050 or sooner after signing the Paris Agreement to cap warming at well under 2 degrees Celsius, and ideally 1.5 C.

The ministers had been under pressure to announce ambitious steps after a major UN climate report warned last month that

1.5 C increases would be seen in about a decade without "rapid and far-reaching" action.

But campaigners expressed fears ahead of the talks that Japan, supported by Germany and others, could lead backsliding on pledges such as ending new overseas fossil fuel financing.

G7 leaders said last year that the "exceptional circumstances" of Russia's war in Ukraine made gas investments "appropriate as a temporary response."

Sunday's statement contains similar language, but also sets multiple parameters around such investments and highlights the "primary need" for "gas demand reduction."

Still, climate campaigners warned the ambiguity sends the wrong message.

"The science is crystal clear that leaving the door open to investments in new gas or liquefied natural gas leaves the G7 off track for 1.5 C," said Laura van der Berg, public finance campaign co-ordinator at Oil Change

International.

Japan's energy minister Yasutoshi Nishimura nonetheless characterized the communique as "ambitious."

"During this unprecedented energy crisis, it is necessary that we simultaneously make progress on the climate change issue and energy security," he said, praising the G7 for "recognizing diverse paths towards carbon neutrality."

The group, however, stopped short of endorsing Japan's strategy of burning hydrogen and ammonia alongside fossil fuels to reduce carbon emissions — which activists say only serves to extend the lifespan of polluting plants.

It simply notes that "some countries are exploring" the potential of hydrogen fuels, adding that this should be "aligned with a 1.5 C pathway."

Attempts to commit to halving emissions from vehicles in the G7 by 2035 also floundered, but the group did pledge for the first time to end new plastic pollution by 2040.

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## G-7 ministers vow to step up moves to renewable energy, zero carbon

BY ELAINE KURTENBACH  
*AP Business Writer*

**S**APPORO, Japan—Energy and environment ministers of the Group of Seven wealthy nations vowed Sunday to work to hasten the shift toward cleaner, renewable energy, but set no timetable for phasing out coal-fired power plants as they wrapped up two days of talks in the northern Japanese city of Sapporo.

The G-7 officials issued a communiqué laying out their commitments. The 36-page document was prepared in advance of a G-7 summit that will be held in Hiroshima in May.

Japan won endorsements from fellow G-7 countries for its own national strategy emphasizing so-called clean coal, hydrogen and nuclear energy to help ensure its energy security.

"Recognizing the current global energy crisis and economic disruptions, we reaffirm our commitment to accelerating the clean energy transition to net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 at the latest," the communiqué says.

It said the leaders recognized the importance of finding efficient, affordable and diverse energy sources, which "underscore our commitment to implementing immediate, short- and medium-term action in this critical decade."

The call to action comes as China and other developing countries step up demands for more help in phasing out fossil fuels and stabilizing energy prices and supplies amid disruptions from Russia's war on Ukraine.

The issue of setting a timeline for phasing out coal-fired power plants is a longstanding sticking point. Japan relies on coal for nearly one-third of its power generation and is also promoting the use of so-called clean coal, using technology to capture carbon emissions, to produce hydrogen—which produces only water when used as fuel.

The document issued Sunday reiterated the need to urgently reduce carbon emissions and achieve a "predominantly decarbonized power sector" by 2035.

The stipulation that it be "predominantly" clean energy leaves room for continuation of fossil fuel-fired power. But the ministers agreed to prioritize steps toward phasing out "unabated" coal power genera-

tion—plants that do not employ mechanisms to capture emissions and prevent them from escaping into the atmosphere.

"We call on and will work with other countries to end new unabated coal-fired power generation projects globally as soon as possible to accelerate the clean energy transition in a just manner," the document says.

The G-7 nations account for 40% of the world's economic activity and a quarter of global carbon emissions. Their actions are critical, but so is their support for less wealthy nations often suffering the worst effects of climate change while having the fewest resources for mitigating such impacts.

Emissions in advanced economies are falling, though historically they have been higher—the United States alone accounts for about a quarter of historic global carbon emissions—while emerging markets and developing economies now account for more than two-thirds of global carbon emissions.

The president-designate for the next United Nations climate talks, the COP28, who was also attending the talks in Sapporo, issued a statement urging G-7 nations to increase financial support for developing countries' transitions to clean energy.

Sultan Al Jaber urged fellow leaders to help deliver a "new deal" on climate finance to boost efforts to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change and help protect biodiversity, especially in developing nations.

"We must make a fairer deal for the Global South," he said. "Not enough is getting to the people and places that need it most."

He said developed countries must follow through on a \$100 billion pledge they made at the 2009 COP15 meeting. The next talks are to be held in Dubai in late November.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva issued a joint statement saying, "We remain very concerned that funding provided by developed countries continues to fall short of the commitment of \$100 billion per year."

Lula met with Xi in Beijing on Friday.

Economic development is the first defense against climate change, Bhupender Yadav, India's environment minister, said in a tweet.





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## 'Sun's not the enemy; toxic sunscreens are'—group

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

✉ @jonlmayuga

**N**OT only are they hazardous to human health, these products can also damage coral reefs and, hence, consumers are being warned using sunscreen brands sans market authorization.

Better yet, these products should be banned, the Ecological Waste Coalition of the Philippines (EcoWaste Coalition) said.

The group issued such warning after the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued its Advisory 2023-0519 reminding the public of the proper selection and use of sunscreen products.

"To combat the damaging effects of ultraviolet (UV) radiation in the body, safety measures are recommended to be practiced, including wearing sunglasses and protective clothing, and limiting sun expo-

sure," the FDA said.

"Another safety measure is the use of appropriate sunscreen products," the FDA added, stressing "it is highly advised to purchase only products that have been notified with the FDA."

However, according to EcoWaste Coalition, of the 12 brands of sunscreen products their staff purchased for P60 to P250 each from cosmetic retailers in Binondo and Quiapo, six were not authorized by the agency as confirmed through the FDA Verification Portal.

"We are concerned with the over-the-counter sale of unauthorized sunscreen products, which may not protect users from the damaging effects of UV radiation to human health," the EcoWaste Coalition told the FDA through a letter submitted last April 11.

As mentioned in the said FDA Advisory, overexposure to the sun

may bring risks to health such as "premature skin aging, wrinkling and sagging, a compromised immune system, and skin cancer."

The EcoWaste Coalition also expressed its concern over the presence of reef-damaging substances in 10 samples of a dozen samples. One sample even lacks a list of ingredients, and the other one has information written in Chinese characters, the group said.

"Knowing the need to protect and nurture our coral reefs, which have been 'in constant and rapid decline,' the Philippines should consider adopting an all-encompassing 'Sunscreen Regulations,' which, along with other conservation measures, can help in restoring the integrity and health of our marine ecosystems," the organization pointed out.

### Palau, Hawaii

ECOWASTE Coalition is referring

to the unprecedented "Sunscreen Regulations" adopted by the government of Palau. An archipelagic state, Palau has banned sunscreen ingredients that are harmful to coral reefs, according to the EcoWaste Coalition.

Among these reef-toxic sunscreen ingredients are: oxybenzone (benzophenone-3); octinoxate (octyl methoxycinnamate); ethylhexyl methoxycinnamate; octocrylene; 4-methyl-benzylidene camphor; and, avobenzone (butyl methoxydibenzoylmethane). These chemicals are on the list of ingredients contained in the sunscreen samples purchased by EcoWaste Coalition members.

The ban, which took effect in January 2020, aims "to protect Palau's pristine marine environment from the harmful effects of reef-toxic sunscreen." It prohibits the entry, manufacture, importation and sale of reef-toxic sunscreens.





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# Public warned on use of unauthorized, reef-toxic sunscreens

By JEL SANTOS

As people start to flock to beaches this summer season, toxics watchdog group EcoWaste Coalition has warned the public against using unauthorized sunscreen products supplied locally which can damage reefs.

In a statement, EcoWaste said it conducted a market monitoring in Manila following the recent issuance by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of Advisory No. 2023-0519 reminding the public of the proper selection and use of sunscreen products.

It found out that six of the 12 sunscreen brands purchased by the group for ₱60 to ₱250 per piece from cosmetic merchants in Binondo and Quiapo have not been notified with the FDA, according to

the FDA Verification Portal.

"We are concerned with the over-the-counter sale of unauthorized sunscreen products, which may not protect users from the damaging effects of UV radiation to human health," the EcoWaste Coalition told the FDA through a letter submitted last April 11.

Citing the FDA Advisory, the toxics watchdog said overexposure to the sun may bring risks to health such as "premature skin aging, wrinkling and sagging, a compromised immune system, and skin cancer."

The EcoWaste raised grave concern over the inclusion of reef-damaging compounds in 10 of 12 samples (one sample lacks an ingredient list, and the other has information written in Chinese characters).

"Knowing the need to protect and nurture our coral reefs, which

have been 'in constant and rapid decline,' the Philippines should consider adopting an all-encompassing 'Sunscreen Regulations,' which, along with other conservation measures, can help in restoring the integrity and health of our marine ecosystems," the group said.

The watchdog is pertaining to the unprecedented "Sunscreen Regulations" adopted by the government of Palau, which like the Philippines is an archipelagic state, banning sunscreen ingredients that are harmful to coral reefs.

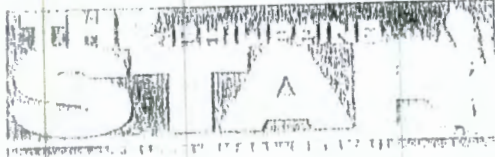
"Among these reef-toxic sunscreen ingredients are oxybenzone (benzophenone-3), octinoxate (octyl methoxycinnamate, ethylhexyl methoxycinnamate), octocrylene, 4-methyl-benzylidene camphor, and avobenzone (butyl methoxydibenzoylmethane) which are on the ingredients' list of the sunscreen samples purchased by the EcoWaste Coalition."

EcoWaste said the ban, which took effect in January 2020, seeks "to protect Palau's pristine marine environment from the harmful effects of reef-toxic sunscreen." It prohibits the entry, manufacture, importation, and sale of reef-toxic sunscreens.





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# BBM: No deadline for controlling oil spill

By ALEXIS ROMERO

There is no deadline for the cleanup of the oil spill caused by the sinking of a fuel tanker in Oriental Mindoro, President Marcos said, weeks after expressing hope that the efforts to contain the oil slick will not last up to four months.

Speaking to reporters in Pola, Oriental Mindoro last Saturday, Marcos said the timeline for the cleanup operations may be altered if there are changes in the wind conditions.

"There's no deadline for the cleanup. I cannot make a deadline for the cleanup. If the wind changes, the timing would again be changed. So, it's useless for anybody to say the deadline is this, this day or that day... There's really not much more that we can do in terms of controlling the oil spill," the President said.

"We are at the mercy of the weather," he added.

In March, Marcos said the cleanup of the oil spill, which was caused by the sinking of fuel tanker *MT Princess Empress* in the waters off Naujan town last Feb. 28, may be completed in less than four

months.

According to him, the oil slick in Oriental Mindoro is less than a previous one that affected Guimaras, whose cleanup took four months.

Marcos said the government is now most concerned with the cleanup in terms of the actual beaches and the actual oil that reached the shoreline.

The government has launched a cash-for-work program wherein individuals affected by the oil spill are given cash if they join the cleanup activities.

Marcos noted that less oil is coming out of the ship and that it is necessary to plug the leaks of the vessel to complete the operations.

"What is critical now is people have no livelihood. That is what we are prioritizing, that they should have a livelihood," the Chief Executive said.

"It had an impact and there are many affected barangays. And that's what we are trying to do. We are trying to find alternative livelihood for them until they can go back to their old fishing grounds," he added.

The sunken *MT Princess Empress* was carrying 800,000

liters of industrial oil.

The amount of damage to the fishery industry and income loss from the incident is now close to P1 billion, according to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

Losses in terms of inputs and produce, fishing gear and paraphernalia, facilities and equipment, have amounted to P445 million, while income losses suffered by affected fisherfolk have risen to P441 million.

Some 26,000 fisherfolk were directly affected by the oil spill, which has also reached the provinces of Antique, Palawan and Batangas.

Marcos has instructed the interior and local government department to meet with local chief executives so that the affected fishermen could fish in alternative fishing sites.

The four alternative fishing sites in Calabarzon and Mimaropa regions are Mindoro Strait in Mindoro Oriental; Cuyo Pass in Batangas; Tablas Strait in Romblon, and Tayabas Bay in Quezon.

The social welfare department has distributed over 140,000 family food packs to oil spill-hit communities.





# PBBM vows long-term rehab of Oriental Mindoro

By ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS

**P**resident Marcos has assured the people of Oriental Mindoro that his administration was looking into the long-term rehabilitation of the province for them to have new sources of income and livelihood.

Marcos gave the assurance amid the government's ongoing response to the oil spill that has affected Oriental Mindoro and nearby areas since late February.

In a speech in Pola town, the President said the government is making this move as he admitted that the oil spill recovery might still take a long time.

"Kaya't ang aming ginagawa ay sabi natin ay kailangan may hanap-buhay ang tao (That's why what we're doing is -- we said people need to have livelihoods)," he said.

"Kaya't nagpaplano kami, yung mga livelihood na pwedeng dalhin at pwedeng buhayin (That's why we're planning to bring livelihood here that are sustainable)," he added.

Marcos said the livelihood program should run even after the oil spill recovery is complete to give the people options or other opportunities to add to their earnings.

The departments of Trade and Industry (DTI) and Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) are leading the agencies that are providing aid, livelihood assistance, and even seed money and training for small business owners.

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), through the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), said it "has many plans" for the province under its recovery initiatives.

Marcos has also ordered Interior

Secretary Benhur Abalos to talk to local chief executives of alternative fishing grounds to allow displaced fisherfolk in Mindoro Oriental to fish in their waters.

The Chief Executive led the distribution of various government assistance to the people of Pola, Mindoro Oriental, on Saturday, April 15.

He also conducted an aerial inspection of the areas affected by the oil spill.

## Action on water, power crisis

Marcos said his administration will give priority to the problems that cropped up during the oil spill crisis in Oriental Mindoro, such as the source of potable water for local communities and people's livelihood.

The President said that his administration would seize the opportunity to develop the province's infrastructures, businesses, and industries,

particularly as the aid comes in.

"Asahan po ninyo na ang national government, nandito po kaming lahat upang alalayan ang sitwasyon ninyo dito (Rest assured that the national government is here to assist you in your situation here)," he said.

"Asahan ninyo na hindi titigil 'yan hanggang kayo'y nakabangon na (You can expect that this will not stop until you've completely recovered)," he added.

Marcos arrived in Pola on Saturday morning to inspect the oil spill's damage and ensure that the government rehabilitation efforts are continuing and benefiting the local population.

After more than a month of containment and rehabilitation efforts, the President said the government had strengthened its response to the oil spill with the help of its foreign partners from Japan, the United States, and South Korea, as well as international

disaster agencies and organizations.

## Power crisis

Marcos told reporters that the government is looking into constructing renewable energy sources in Mindoro Oriental to address the frequent power outages.

"Yung solar kahit saan naman sa Pilipinas pwede nating gamitin. Yung wind power pinag-aaralan nila (Solar energy can be used anywhere in the Philippines. They're studying wind power, too)," he said.

"Baka pwede din dito para hindi na umaasa ang Mindoro sa ibang lugar para sa kanilang kuryente (Perhaps that would work here so Mindoro won't have to rely on other areas for their power needs)," he added.

According to the President, the government is also eyeing submarine cables to ensure a stable power supply in the province.





09

## EVERYMAN

# Manila Water supports Million Trees Foundation

**By Melandrew T. Velasco**

ON MARCH 16, 2023, Manila Water Company and Manila Water Foundation renewed their commitment to the environment and sustainability through a donation of one million pesos to the Million Trees Foundation, Inc. during its second anniversary celebration as an organization.

The P1 million donation was for MTFI to help develop its onsite office and enhance the Million Trees Nursery and Eco Learning Center at the 5-hectare property at the La Mesa Watershed.

At the anniversary event, the donation hand-over ceremony was held after the partnership message of MWF President and MWC President and CEO Jocot de Dios who was joined by MWF Executive Director Reginald Andal, MWC Enterprise Regulatory and Stakeholder Engagement Group Head Atty. Kaye Revil in turning over the institutional support to former MWSS Chairman/Administrator and now MTFI Chairman Emeritus Gen. Reynaldo Velasco (Ret.), and us as MTFI President and Executive Director.

As an institutional donor, MTFI recognizes the invaluable contribution of MWC and MWF as stakeholder partners in protecting the environment through its water access, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and environmental programs that are social investments to communities and future generations.

In his speech, MWC and MWF President Jocot de Dios said MWF is one with MTFI in projects that sustain environmental efforts to mitigate the ill effects of climate change such as carbon credit recovery by planting a million trees and rehabilitating critical watersheds namely Ipo, La Mesa, Angat, Umiray, Laguna Lake, and Manila Bay.

"It's an honor to collaborate with MTFI in creating holistic efforts to save and preserve our environment from deterioration. We're proud that we are part of their action, as we also have the same goal through our LIKAS program house as part of our environmental initiatives in MWF," MWF Executive Director Andal said.

Just recently, Manila Water Foundation (MWF) celebrated its 18th founding anniversary with activities marked by collaboration.

The social development arm of the Manila Water Enterprise, Manila Water Foundation, collaborates with different agencies and organizations to help realize the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Established in 2005, MWF has adopted the theme Celebrating Synergies, Expanding Reach for this year's anniversary celebration. Included in the series of activities was the Partners Event where 18

partners of MWF in its WASH program were given recognition as it invites 18 more organizations to synergize with and support its programs.

Among the program partners lauded by MWF was the Million Trees Foundation, Inc. (MTFI).

MTFI is an institutional partner of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) in the latter's Annual Million Trees Challenge (AMTC) that aims to rehabilitate critical watersheds essential to water supply in the Metro Manila and neighboring provinces.

*“ Health in Our Hands educate communities on the importance of proper hygiene practices as key for healthy living ”*

Established only two years ago, MTFI's contribution to environment protection has earned for it plaudits including that from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-NCR last month and in the recent World Water Day Awards on March 22, 2023 at the SMX Convention Center.

The commendation from MWF is another feat for the young organization whose advocacy is aligned with MWF's WASH programs.

The WASH— Water Access, Sanitation, and Hygiene—program of MWF is an integrated program that aims to improve the lives of marginalized communities.

The WASH program highlights the importance of water, which is at the core of MTFI's advocacy.

It was in 2010 when water and sanitation were explicitly recognized by the United Nations General Assembly as human rights that are “essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights.”

Moreover, adequate water, sanitation and hygiene are necessary in the provision of basic health services.

Data from the UNICEF website reveal that 2.2 billion people still lack access to safe drinking water worldwide.

More than half of the global population does not have access to safe sanitation; three billion people do not have access to hand-washing facilities with soap; and 673 million people practice open defecation.