

10 January 2023, Tuesday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**



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## DENR puts to rest 606 land disputes

By Rio N. Araja

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Monday said it has resolved 606 land dispute cases or 43 percent of the 1,419 cases referred to its alternative dispute resolution (ADR) program since 2019.

DENR assistant secretary for legal affairs and ADR committee chair Michelle Angelica Go noted that previous delays in resolving land dispute cases generates “mistrust” in the DENR, but the speedy resolution of land cases through the ADR mechanism raised the agency’s integrity, “a crucial determinant of citizens’ trust in government.”

At least 606 mediated cases over the four-year period “is quite a feat” considering the longer time and costly expenses these cases would have entailed if resolved through court litigation, she said.

The ADR mechanism benefits disputants in terms of time and costs compared to resorting to filing lawsuits where two parties are put through an adversary system and court decisions are based on the merits of the dispute.

The agency’s adoption of ADR mechanism was pursuant to Republic Act 9285 or the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act of 2004 and DENR Administrative Order 2005-18.

Some 412 ADR mediations were conducted in 2022 mostly via online, exceeding by 110 percent last year’s 376 ADR mediations conducted.

Go credited the increase in ADR mediations last year to the full implementation of DAO 2021-01 entitled “Guidelines on the Conduct of Virtual Alternative Dispute Resolution Proceedings in the Resolution of Land Claims and Conflicts and Other Natural Resources Disputes in the Department” issued on Jan. 29, 2021.



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## DENR land dispute resolution at 43%

BY PAULA ANTOLIN  
*@tribunephil\_phau*

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources announced on Monday that it has already resolved at least 43 percent or 606 of the total 1,419 land dispute cases under the agency's Alternative Dispute Resolution since 2019.

DENR Assistant Secretary for Legal Affairs and ADR committee chair Michelle Angelica Go stressed that previous delays in resolving land dispute cases feed "mistrust"

in the DENR speedy resolution of land cases.

She added that the 606 mediated cases over the four-year period is quite a feat, considering the longer time and costly expenses these cases would have entailed if resolved through court litigation.

The ADR mechanism, said Go, benefits disputants in terms of time and costs compared to resorting to filing lawsuits where two parties are put through an adversary system and court decisions are based on the merits of the dispute.



## DENR's alternative dispute resolution resolves 606 land cases in four yrs

**A** TOTAL of 606 land dispute cases have been resolved by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) through its alternative dispute resolution (ADR), sparing the parties of unnecessary costs of going to court.

The number represents 43 percent of the total 1,419 cases referred to the DENR's ADR program since 2019, DENR Assistant Secretary for Legal Affairs and ADR Committee Chair Michelle Angelica Go said.

Go led the ceremonial awarding of Best ADR Officers (ADROs) to highlight the DENR's National ADR Day 2022 celebration held at the DENR Central Office in Quezon City last December 6.

Named as 2022 Top ADROs were Mildred Atienza Pascual (DENR Region 4B), Sebastian Miguel Magat (DENR-Region 2), Alexis Valdez Abrasaldo (DENR-Region 2), Jose Angelo Nermal Fabila (DENR-Region 6) and Orland Julius Moscardon Padios (DENR-Region 6).

The DENR regional offices 1, 2, 4-B, 6 and 10 also received the Top Pool of ADRO Awards in recognition of their support to institutionalize the ADR mechanism within their respective areas of jurisdiction.

The speedy resolution of land cases through the ADR mechanism raises the agency's integrity, which, she said, is "a crucial determinant of citizens' trust in government."

According to Go, the 606 mediated cases over the four-year period "is quite a feat," considering the longer time and costly expenses these cases would have entailed if resolved through court litigation.

Go said the ADR mechanism benefits disputants in terms of time and costs compared to resorting to filing lawsuits where two parties are put through an adversary system and court decisions are based on the merits

of the dispute.

The ADR mechanism was adopted by the DENR pursuant to Republic Act (RA) 9285, or the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act of 2004 and DENR Administrative Order (DAO) 2005-18, which called for the adoption of the ADR principles and procedures in the resolution of conflicts.

Some 412 ADR mediations were conducted in 2022 mostly via online, exceeding by 110 percent last year's 376 ADR mediations conducted.

Go attributed the increase in ADR mediations last year to the full implementation of DAO 2021-01 entitled "Guidelines on the Conduct of Virtual Alternative Dispute Resolution Proceedings in the Resolution of Land Claims and Conflicts and Other Natural Resources Disputes in the Department" issued on January 29, 2021.

Aside from RA 9285, DAO 2021-01 is, likewise, pursuant to RA 11494 or the "Bayanihan to Recover as One Act" which spells out measures for Covid-19 response and recovery interventions and to the Supreme Court's Administrative Circular No. 37-2020 that calls for the pilot testing of hearings through videoconferencing.

The lands sector is the first to be adopted in the DENR's ADR program. In 2018, comprehensive 80-hour accreditation training was conducted for the purpose.

Of the 427 individuals who completed the training program, active ADROs presently stand at 346 following the transfer to other government agencies or retirement of the other 78 ADROs.

According to Go, majority of the DENR-ADROs are non-lawyers, which is an advantage as opposed to lawyer-ADROs.

"As mediation facilitators, ADROs go beyond the legalese. The mindset should not be legalese. You get out of that box and it's better if the ADRO is a non-lawyer," Go pointed out. *Jonathan L. Mayuga*



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## DENR: WATER QUALITY IN MANILA BAY HAS IMPROVED

By Jane Bautista  
@janebautistaINC

The gradual decrease in fecal coliform levels following almost four years of rehabilitation efforts has improved water quality in Manila Bay, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said on Monday.

Data from the Manila Bay Coordinating Office (MBCO) showed that as of October 2022, the fecal coliform level in Manila Bay had gone down to 51,300 most probable number per 100 milliliters (MPN/100mL) from 126,000 MPN/100mL in 2019.

The DENR said the standard coliform level for coastal waters to be safe for swimming and other recreational activities was at only 100 MPN/100mL.

Upon the implementation of the rehabilitation efforts in January 2019, Manila Bay was declared a "no swimming zone." Then Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said bathing in Manila Bay could expose people to high levels of fecal coliform bacteria and increase their chances to develop illnesses.

Back then, the DENR recorded a fecal coliform count of 7.9 million MPN/100mL from the sampling station at the Pa-



**LESS DIRTY** Although not yet fit for swimming, government efforts to rehabilitate Manila Bay appear to be paying off.

—INQUIRER FILE PHOTO

dre Faura drainage outfall.

"The government's ongoing rehabilitation efforts appeared to be paying off as the water quality within the Manila Bay region continued to improve

this year," the DENR said in a statement on Monday.

Two of the seven projects in Manila Baywalk have been completed. These include the solar-powered comfort rooms

on the streets of Padre Faura and Abad, as well as the security, operation and maintenance of the sewage treatment plant (STP).

### Sustainable interventions

The DENR said the remaining five projects were at 83 to 96 percent completion.

"At the Libertad Channel, which is also a hot spot in water pollution, dredging activities were completed while a solar-powered STP with a capacity of 10 million liters per day is already built and only awaiting commissioning," it said.

The government agencies,

which are part of the Manila Bay rehabilitation efforts would adopt sustainable management interventions this year and also initiate community-based strategies in solid waste management.

Jacob Meimban, executive director of MBCO, said the STP projects were expected to significantly reduce pollution in the major waterways.

"At the moment, we are also working on the institutionalization of the MBCO to ensure continuity in the implementation of the projects and activities under the Manila Bay Rehabilitation Program," he said. INQ

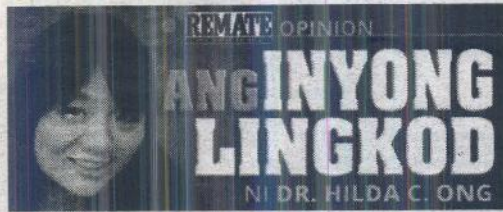


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REMATE OPINION  
**ANG INYONG  
LINGKOD**  
NI DR. HILDA C. ONG

**NAGBUBUNGA** na ang kasalukuyang pagsisikap ng gobyerno na isaayos ang Manila Bay matapos na patuloy na maging maayos ang kalidad ng tubig sa Manila Bay region.

Iniugnay ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang tagumpay na ito sa tuloy-tuloy at maayos na implementasyon ng Operational Plan for the Manila Bay Coastal Strategy (OPMBCS) at ang geo-engineering initiatives

ng inter-agency Manila Bay Task Force (MBTF) na pinamumunuan ng DENR.

Matapos ang halos apat na taong rehabilitasyon, ang tinaguriang "Battle for Manila Bay" ay nagresulta sa mas mabuting water quality sa Manila Bay region na nakita sa unti-unting pagbaba ng fecal coliform level simula noong January 2019.

Sa Region III, bumaba ang coliform level sa 1,243 MPN/100mL mula 5,099 MPN/100mL. Bumaba rin ito sa river mouths o outfalls sa Re-

## KALIDAD NG TUBIG SA MANILA BAY BUMUTI SA 4 TAONG REHABILITASYON

gion IV-A mula 94,000 MPN/100mL patungo sa 47,000 MPN/100mL.

Sa pagsisikap ng Region III, nakapagbigay ng alternative livelihoods sa inilipat na indibidwal sa pagtayo ng floating restaurants at pagkakaroon ng ecotourism area.

Sa ilalim naman ng habitat and resources management, iniulat ng MBCO na may 13,535 mangroves at 24,730 bamboo propagules ang naitanim sa buong bay region noong third quarter ng 2022.

Maliban dito, may 1,694 metric tons ng isda ang nakuha ayon sa Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, habang ang DENR-NCR ay nakapagtala ng

9,248 birds na may 197 iba't ibang species.

Sa kanilang dako, iniulat ng Task Force Water Hyacinth na ang DENR offices sa NCR at Regions III at IV-A. Pasig River Coordinating and Management Office; Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), at iba pang member agencies sa kanilang mga lugar na sinasakupan ay nakakolekta at nakpagtapon ng 22,453.02 cubic meters ng water hyacinths.

Karagdagang clean-up activities ang isinagawa sa river system choke points upang maiwasan ang pagdami ng water hyacinths du- lot ng Habagat season.

Bilang suporta sa Manila Bay Rehabilitation Program, ang MMDA, Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), sa ilalim ng pamamahala ng Mandamus Agencies at MBTF, ay nagsasagawa din ng geo-engineering interventions at infrastruc- ture.

Hanggang noong Octo- ber 2022, dalawa sa pitong proyekto sa Manila Baywalk ang natapos na: ang solar- powered comfort rooms sa Padre Faura at Abad Streets; at ang security, operation at maintenance ng state-of-the- art sewage treatment plant (STP). Ang ibang proyekto ay nasa 83 to 96 percent com- pletion.

Natapos naman ang dred- ging sa Libertad Channel, na tinaguriang 'hotspot in water pollution,' habang ang solar- powered STP na may kapa- sidad na 10 million liters per day ay naitayo na at nag- hihintay na lang ng commis- sioning.

Ayon kay MBCO Execu- tive Director Jacob F. Meim- ban, inaasahan na mapapa- baba pa ng STP interventions ang polusyon sa malalaking daluyan ng tubig.

Ayon dito, ang mga ahen- sya na kabilang sa Manila Bay rehab ay gagamit ng sustainable management in- terventions sa Baywalk area sa darating na taon, mag- sasagawa ng community- based approach sa solid waste management sa pama- gitang ng waste-to-energy at upscaling, at magsusulong

ng nature-based approach sa pagbuo ng mangrove agenda.

"At the moment, we are also working on the institu- tionalization of the MBCO to ensure continuity in the im- plementation of the pro- jects and activities under the Manila Bay Rehabilita- tion Program" saad ni Meim- ban.

Kung nais ninyo malaman ang TAMANG IMPORMASYON, TAMANG SERBISYO ni AGARANG SERBISYO LADY, i-search sa YOUTUBE CHANNEL, "HILDA ONG" at sa Facebook Fanpage "TV RADIO HILDA ONG", Huwag kalimutan i-click ang salitang "SUBSCRIBE", "LIKE" at "SHARE".



## editorial

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# Let's start practicing zero waste at home

**T**HE Philippines was the first country in the world to celebrate January as Zero Waste Month. The idea was hatched in 2012 after Philippine youth leaders issued a Zero Waste Youth Manifesto calling for, among other things, the celebration of a Zero Waste Month.

In 2014, President Benigno Simeon Aquino III issued Presidential Proclamation No. 760 declaring January as "Zero Waste Month". The proclamation promotes designing and managing products and processes to systematically eliminate the volume and toxicity of waste and materials. It also aims to conserve and recover all resources, instead of indiscriminately disposing or burning them.

Proclamation No. 760 declares that zero waste is a goal that is ethical, economical, efficient and visionary to guide people in changing their lifestyles and practices to emulate sustainable natural cycles, where all discarded materials are designed to become resources for others to use.

On January 22, 2015, the first Philippine Zero Waste Fair was held at the Quezon Memorial Circle. Organized by EcoWaste Coalition, Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, Mother Earth Foundation, and Health Care Without Harm, the fair served as an excellent opportunity for people to learn more about zero waste initiatives, and to partner with local government units and organizations supporting the zero waste advocacy.

The term zero waste was first used in the 1970s by Paul Palmer, a chemist whose company, Zero Waste Systems, was established to reduce the amount of chemical waste in laboratories across the United States. This means his interest in zero waste was scientific and monetary rather than ecological.

Bea Johnson, a French-American woman living in California, is widely credited with beginning the zero-waste lifestyle movement, starting small with her family of four and sharing the journey on her blog Zero Waste Home. Johnson brought the 5 Rs (refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle and rot) of the zero waste movement to prominence. This template of zero waste living gave potential zero wasters around the world an easy to understand and implement rulebook.

Today, with the help of social media, people around the world are embracing a zero waste lifestyle. Zero waste is no longer a theory and is being put into action by people in cities all over the world.

The Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) Asia Pacific is using the strength of the movement to celebrate International Zero Waste Month this January. The alliance was founded in 2000 when it brought together 83 participants from 23 countries to establish GAIA. The movement has grown into an organization that unites hundreds of members in 90 different countries. The alliance has played a leadership role in influencing climate policy, building a world free from plastic, and supporting cities in their transition to zero waste.

It would do well for all of us to take part in the yearly celebration of Zero Waste Month this January. We can start small by following some steps that can help in reducing our solid waste problems. For example, we can make it a habit to follow the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle); we can start segregating our household waste, and avoiding the use of plastic straws and cutleries when eating outside.

Ultimately, our goal is to follow a cleaner, greener alternative to the way we manage our waste. It is not too late for us to make a difference. If we can make this a habit, we can create a zero waste society and help make landfills a thing of the past.



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REMATE OPINION  
**PINDOT AT  
SUNDOT**  
NJR REYES

## PARAÑAQUE, TADTAD NG REKLAMO SA BASURA

SA kabila ng napakaraming mga deboto ng Poong Itim na Nazareno na lumahok sa "Walk of Faith" mula Quirino Grandstand sa Luneta hanggang sa simbahan ng Quia-po nitong Linggo ng mada-ling araw, hindi naging problema ng pamahalaang lungsod ng Maynila ang mga basura sa lansangan.

Marahil, natuto na rin ang mga deboto sa walang tigil na panawagan ng lokal na pamahalaan at ng mga grupong tulad ng Ecowaste Coalition kaugnay sa pananatili ng kalinisan at wastong pagtatapon ng kanilang mga

basura lalo't hindi biro ang 88,000 kataong lumahok sa mahigit isang oras na paglalakad at mag-iwan ng mga basura sa lansangang kanilang dinaanan.

Hindi naman kasi lingid sa kaalaman ng marami, ang mga pangunahing lansangan sa Maynila ay may nakatalagang street sweeper bukod pa sa regular ang koleksiyon ng basura saan mang gawi sa lungsod.

Kung mahigit isang milyon man isang araw ang ginastos ng pamahalaang lokal sa kompanyang nangangasiwa sa paghahakot ng

basura, sulit naman dahil sa dami ng mga residenteng naninirahan sa Maynila, tiyak na magiging ga-bundok ang mga basura sa lansangan kapag pumalya ng kahit isang araw lang ang koleksiyon ng basura.

Batid 'yan ng mga Manilenyo dahil minsan na nilang naranasan ang ganitong sitwasyon sa mga nakaraan pang administrasyon matapos pumalya ang kontratisang humahakot ng basura bunga nang 'di pagkakau-nawaan.

Taliwas ang nangyayari ngayon sa kaharian ni Parañaque City Mayor Eric Olivarez na tinadtad ng reklamo ng mga residente dahil sa hindi nakokolektang basura mula pa noong nagdaang Pasko.

Halos lahat ng 16 na barangay sa lungsod ay namamaha na sa dami ng tambak na basurang hindi nakokolekta kaya todo ang hingi ng paumanhin ng alkalde sa mga residente nang bumisi-

ta siya at kanyang may-bahay na si Aileen Claire sa Material Recovery Facility sa C5 Road Ext. sa Brgy. La Huerta.

Gayunman, naging malupit ang mga residente dahil sa halip na umawain ang paghingi ng paumanhin ng kanilang alkalde ay ipinost pa ang mga larawan ng tambak na basura sa opisyal na Facebook page ng kanilang Public Information Office.

Sa isang komento nakasaad ang katagang "Di naman dapat tumigil ang service kung anomang transition yang nangyayari. This is just plain MISMANAGEMENT! Anong tulong ang nagawa n'yang personal visit na yan ng mayor? Photo op??"

Ang isa pang maanghang na komento ay ang post ng isang netizen ng ganito: "Ang pangit ng pamalakad ngaun, laging walong tubig, magdamag pising para makaipon ng tubig,

nagkakasakit na kapupuyat, tapos ung basura wala na rin napasok ang mahal na ng bayad sa mga nagtatapon... Grabe naman maawa namn kau sa mga nasasakupan nyo, gawan nyo namn po sana ng action yung mga problemang kina-kananap ng mga nasasakupan nyo."

Sabi pa ng isang nagingtingit na residente sa kanyang post- "Hina ng mayor na 'to malapit ng mabulok ang Paranaque. Grabe naman pahirap nyo."

Marami pang negatibong komento ang mga residente na kung babasahin, hindi lang masakit sa tenga kundi tagos talaga sa damdamin. Siguro, kailangan ng umakasyon ni Parañaque Rep. Edwin Olivarez para mabigyan ng sapat na kaalaman sa wastong pamumuno ang nakabatang kapatid dahil sampal sa kanilang pamilya ang hindi magagandang komento sa alkalde ng kanilang mga kababayan.





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## Tambak na basura bumulaga sa P'que

UMANI ng batikos mula sa mga residente at netizens ang kakulangan ng konkretong aksyon ng Parañaque City Mayor Eric Olivarez kaugnay sa hindi pa umanong nakokolektang basura sa lungsod mula pa noong nagdaang Kapaskuhan.

Humingi naman ng paumanhin ang alkalde nang bumisita siya, kasama ang asawang si Aileen Claire at hepe ng City Environmental and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) na si Mark Allen Besa nitong araw ng Linggo sa Material Recovery Facility sa C5 Road Ext. sa Barangay La Huerta upang alamin ang sitwasyon sa problema sa basura.

Isinapubliko pa ni Mayor Olivarez sa pamamagi-

tan ng opisyal na Facebook page ng Public Information Office (PIO) ng Parañaque ang pagbisita nila ng kanyang maybahay sa pasilidad upang ipakita sa mamamayan ng lungsod ang kanyang pagtugon sa sitwasyon at paghingi ng paumanhin.

Gayunman, sa halip na maging daan ito upang kumalma sa kanilang galit ang mga residente, lalo pang, umano nagngitngit pati mga netizens, kasabay ng pagbibigay nila ng negatibong komento sa pagsusumikap ng alkalde ng maisaayos ang sitwasyon.

Sa halip na unawa at kooperasyon na ipinapakiusap ng alkalde, sinuklian ng mga netizens ng hindi magagandang komento at

masasakit na pahayag para lamang maibulalalas ang kanilang sentimyento.

Bukod kasi sa nararanasang pagdami ng ramamahong basura sa may 16 na barangay ng lungsod, nakadagdag pa ng perwisyo sa mamamayan ang kakulangan ng supply ng tubig bunga ng raga inilabas na pagpapayo ng Maynilad Water kaugnay sa patuloy na water interruption.

Napag-alaman na rula ng magpalit ng kontratista na maghahakot ng basura ang kasalukuyang parruan, hindi na nahahakot ang basura sa mga secondary at tertiary roads ng buong lungsod at sa halip ay sa mga malalaking lansangan lamang dumadaan ang trak ng basura. **Edd Reyes**



STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS  
SINCE 1900  
**MANILA BULLETIN**  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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# Republic Cement sweeps mineral industry environmental awards

By BERNIE CAHILES-MAGKILAT

Republic Cement took home a total of seven awards at the prestigious 68th Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Awards (PMIEA).

Hosted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Mines and Geosciences Bureau (DENR - MGB), the awards ceremony recognizes companies that performed admirably in terms of environmental preservation and safety excellence. This year's theme was "Resilience, Reset, Recovery", highlighting the important role that the mining industry plays in economic development and safeguarding the environment through responsible mining.

At this year's awards, Republic Cement dominated the Quarry Operations (Non-Metallic) Category, winning the Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Awards for its Batangas, Iligan, and Teresa Plants. The Platinum Achievement Award for the same category was also awarded to Republic Cement Bulacan Plant.

Further to these achievements, the proudly local cement manufacturer's Batangas Plant was recognized for having the Safest Mine (Non-Metallic). For Best Mining Forest (Non-metallic), Republic's Bulacan Plant won the top prize with its Iligan Plant winning second runner-up for the same category.



The Republic Cement Team stands proudly at the recently held 2022 Annual National Mine Safety and Environment Conference. The team shows off its 7 awards, including the Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Awards (PMIEA) for Quarry Operations for its Batangas, Teresa, and Iligan Plants, the highest honor for excellence in responsible mining conferred by the Department of Environmental & Natural Resources (DENR).

"The awards we have received this evening serve not only as recognition for our practices and commitments towards our communities and sustainable development, but also as a challenge to do even more in promoting the responsible management of environmental and natural resources," Republic Cement & Building Materials President Lloyd Vicente shared in his acceptance speech.

Founded in 1955, Republic Cement celebrates 67 years of being a partner for Philippine transformation as a building materials company and key

contributor to nation building. Republic Cement proudly supplies quality cement manufactured at seven strategically located sites across the Philippines.

"Throughout our 67 years of service towards building the nation, Republic Cement has always been deeply and wholly committed to responsible mining," said Republic Cement CEO Roman Menz. "It is through responsible mining and our daily commitment to safety and sustainability that we are able to support robust communities and a thriving environment, towards a greener and Stronger Republic."



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**MANILA BULLETIN**  
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## Eramen Minerals cited for 'Best Mining Forest'

Eramen Minerals, Inc. recently bagged the prestigious Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Award (PMIEA) in the Surface Mining Category and 1st runner-up in the Best Mining Forest in the Metallic Category at the 68th Annual National Mine Safety and Environment Conference, held at the CAP John Hay Trade and Cultural Center in Baguio City, last November 18, 2022.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) recognized Eramen for its exceptional commitment, initiative, and innovation in environmental protection, safety and health management, and social development. In 2021, Eramen launched the Mine Environment Modernization (MEMO) Program to enhance its

environmental protection and natural resource management. One of the projects under the MEMO program was the development of a new 1-hectare forest nursery with a capacity to grow 500,000 seedlings.

The new nursery is also the location of Eramen's Forestry Research Laboratory, aimed to boost the cultivation of high-quality seedlings, particularly the Mindoro Pines, using in vitro germination. The program also included silvicultural training and a waste-to-nutrient project that captures biological macro-elements, such as nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus, and beneficial micro-elements to produce cytokinin enhancers for seedlings. Eramen has planted over 510,000 trees covering more than 657 hectares, including mined-out sites,

buffer zones, NGP, and DENR-Eramen bamboo plantation program areas.

In addition to the forest nursery, Eramen also developed an organic agro-forestry farm to grow a variety of fruits, vegetables, and other crops not only to augment food sources and sustainability of the mine but also to aid in reducing the impact of climate change. Eramen maintains a program to manage air quality through road watering activities by installing Road water sprinklers spanning 9 Kilometers. It addresses siltation issues through a combination of mega silt ponds and a company-developed filtration module in all discharge points to filter sediment and fine silts. Eramen has invested nearly ₱50 million in its mine environmental management for the fiscal year 2021-2022 alone.



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## Eramen wins environmental awards

Eramen Minerals, Inc. was honored this year after getting the prestigious Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Award (PMIEA) in the Surface Mining Category and as 1st runner-up in the Best Mining Forest in the Metallic Category at the 68th Annual National Mine Safety and Environment Conference, held at the CAP John Hay Trade and Cultural Center in Baguio City, last Nov. 18, 2022.

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## FIRST PERSON

ALEX MAGNO

### Thorough

The investigation into the possible cause for the system-wide failure of our air traffic management system is still ongoing. Nothing is taken for granted, whether this be human error or the possibility of a cyber attack.



Transport Secretary Jaime Bautista expects the investigation to be as thorough as possible. He has built a reputation as an extremely competent manager in his long career in the private sector. He understands how complex organizations work and how human failure can upset the most sophisticated technological systems.

Bautista had to give up about a dozen board directorships to accept his current government post. That translates into a major income loss. This case is illustrative of the difficulty of recruiting talent from the private sector. Accepting a government appointment often requires giving up so much to serve the nation.

Fixing our problematic transport sector is a big challenge by itself. Cleaning up governance of our transport sector inflates the challenge all the more. Introducing the needed reforms will meet resistance from embedded interests who profit from the inefficiencies and incompetence that burden the many agencies under the DOT's wing.

Twice Bautista stood his ground and opposed political appointees in key agencies under his supervision. It is no secret that several groups with vested interests are keen on getting rid of Bautista.

The on-going investigation into the shutdown of our airspace on the first day of this year appears to focus on human failure. The failure may be due to the actions or omissions of other parts of government. For instance, Congress had disapproved allocations for equipment upgrade for our air traffic control system.

Both houses of Congress are set to begin public hearings on the air traffic fiasco. Our legislators should consider their own roles in causing equipment failure in a vital agency.

The pay scales of some of the most technical jobs in our air traffic control system needs some looking into. The entry salary of a CAAP technician is just P14,000 a month, lower than most other skills-intensive government jobs. At that salary grade, the technician is expected to look after billions of pesos worth of sophisticated equipment.

A seasoned control tower specialist is paid all of P44,000 a month. While Filipinos pay the highest prices in the world for onions and sugar, we pay our air traffic specialists the least.

Because of the low pay we give, other countries freely poach from our pool of technical talent. Over the past years, the CAAP has been frantically training new recruits to replenish those choosing to work abroad where they are better compensated for their talents. This, on its own, presents risks for the reliability of our critical infrastructure.

In a word, many factors contributed to the failure that led to that air traffic control shutdown. If our legislators want to be really thorough in their investigation of what happened, they should broaden the inquiry to include those other contributory factors.

### Counter-trade

In the last session of Pandesal Forum, panelists discussed the future of Phl-China relations in the wake of President Ferdinand Marcos' successful state visit.

I asked the panel how we should deal with the paradox of our bilateral relations: the more we grow trade between our two economies, the more lopsided our balance of trade becomes. The only solution to this paradox is, of course, to grow our exports to China. But that brings up the effectiveness of our economic governance. We need clear-sighted economic leadership to build up our capacity to export, especially to the world's largest consumer economy.

The low-hanging fruit in growing our export capacity is to boost our mineral exports, especially nickel, which is in great demand in China. This path has been blocked the past few years by legal issues as well as the many vulnerabilities of our agencies that regulate this sector. Among those vulnerabilities, needless to say, is corruption.

For instance, a graft complaint has been recently filed before the Office of the Ombudsman by a potential investor against the very head of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB). Eugene Co, president of Yinglong Steel Corporation based in Sta. Cruz, Zambales claims that in October 2021 he and his company's general manager went to the office of MGB director Wilfredo Moncano.

Co claims that the official demanded P10 million to facilitate and release the pending permits. Thinking the amount was an official fee for the release of the needed permits, Co negotiated for a staggered release of the amount. His general manager immediately issued a pay-to-cash check for P3 million.

To their surprise, the check was encashed by Moncano himself on Oct. 9, 2021 at the East-West Bank Davao branch. The MGB official affixed his signature on the check and wrote in his address and phone number. He likewise submitted a copy of his driver's license for verification.

Needless to say, the paperwork on Yinglong's permit applications have not moved to this day. It is now clear to Eugene Co that the amount demanded from his company was not official procedure. It is a bribe demanded with his paperwork held hostage.

It is not easy for a foreign investor to file a complaint against a sitting public official. The investor risks vengeance and, probably, the future of his business. But Co went to the ombudsman, nevertheless, armed with the evidence described above.

Incidents such as this one erode investor confidence in our economic governance, explaining why investors tend to avoid the Philippines.





DANGER TO MARINE SANCTUARY

# FLOATING WHARF ON APO ISLAND WORRIES ENVIRONMENTALISTS

By Irma Faith Pal  
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DUMAGUETE CITY—Local officials of Dauin in Negros Oriental want to put up a floating wharf on the 74-hectare diving haven Apo Island, much to the chagrin of environmentalists.

Scientists from the Coastal Conservation and Education Foundation Inc. and the Silliman University Institute of Environmental and Marine Sciences appealed to the Apo Island's Protected Areas Management Board (PAMB) to carefully deliberate on the disadvantages of the proposal, and consider the science behind it.

Apo Island, the country's premiere model of community-based coastal resources management off the coast of Dauin, about 16 kilometers south of Dumaguete City, will get a P207-million face-lift aimed at providing "ease and convenience in travel, transport of goods, and delivery of medical services" to the island, said Apo's village chief, Mario Pascobello.

"This (floating wharf) will provide safety and comfort



PLAYTIME A diver swims with a green sea turtle, one of the main attractions on Apo Island, in this undated photo. —DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM-CENTRAL VISAYAS PHOTO

not only to the people of Apo but also to tourists, especially the aged and the handicapped," Pascobello said.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Apo Island Protected Landscape and Seascape-PAMB gave the municipality of Dauin a clearance in November 2022 to apply for an Environmental Compliance Certificate to build a jetty port on the island.

Income from tourism alone at Apo Island during the

prepandemic period was highest at P14 million, coming only from entrance fees, snorkeling and scuba diving fees.

Prepandemic records at the PAMB showed that about 20 to 40 boats docked on Apo Island each day, bringing in more than 200 tourists on the average.

Income from boat rentals, souvenirs and eating places were earned by the residents themselves. Income from green turtle-related activities, on the other hand, went to the Apo Island Snorkeling Equipment Rental and Guiding Association.

### Movable port

Pascobello said the proposed movable port would be stationed at Cogon Point from July to September during *habagat* (southeast monsoon), and towed to the Baybay area by October during *amihan* (northwest monsoon).

Baybay is near the Chapel Point coral reef, the habitat of green turtles where snorkeling is popular. Cogon Point is about a kilometer from the Apo Island Marine Sanctuary in Purok Ubos where scuba diving is regulated. INQ



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## 60 illegal loggers naaresto sa Cordillera

**CAMP DANGWA,** Benguet - Umabot sa 60 illegal loggers ang naaresto habang higit sa P5.7 milyong halaga ng iligal na pinutol na kahoy ang nakumpiska sa pinaigting na anti-illegal logging operations ng Police Regional Office-Cordillera noong 2022.

Batay sa talaan ng Regional Operations Division (ROD), sa loob ng 167 anti-illegal logging operations ng Cordillera PNP, nahuli nila ang 60 indibidwal na sangkot sa illegal logging activities.

Nakumpiska sa mga ito ang 62,197.05 board feet ng mga kahoy na iligal na pinutol na nagkakahalaga ng P5,738,719.54.

Ayon kay Brig. General Mafelino Bazar, director ng Cordillera Police Regional Office, ang Benguet Police Provincial Office ay nakapagtala ng pinakamataas na bilang ng mga naaresto, 17; simundang ng Baguio City Police, 13; Apayao PPO, 10; Mountain Province Police, 8; Ifugao Police, 6; Abra at Kalinga PPO, tig-3.

Aniya, ang mga pulis ng PROCOR ay nanatiling aktibo sa kanilang pagsisikap sa pangangalaga sa kapaligiran sa pamamagitan ng pagsasagawa ng iba't ibang aktibidad sa pagtanim ng puno, paglilinis, at pagpapatrolya sa kagubatan.



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## 7 magnitude quake hits Vanuatu

A 7.0 magnitude earthquake has struck the South Pacific Ocean nation Vanuatu, the United States Geological Survey has said, triggering a tsunami warning for the region that was withdrawn hours later.

The quake hit around 11:30pm local time (12:30 GMT) on Sunday. It was centred 23km (14 miles) from Port Olry and hit at a depth of 27km (17 miles), the agency said.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said that a tsunami threat it had issued for nearby Vanuatu coasts has passed. Some Vanuatu residents fled to higher ground after the warning was first issued.

Kayson Pore, a 22-year-old student from the village of Hog Harbour in Espiritu Santo, said he felt a "very huge" shaking of the earth.

"We were right on the sea, we were looking for crab on the coast," he said. "We ran for our lives and then we ran to our homes."

At his home in the village of about 1,000 people, the quake had knocked objects to the ground, breaking cups in the kitchen, Pore said.

"People were moving to higher ground," he added, for fear of a tsunami tidal wave. But Pore said he had seen no structural damage to homes in his village.

There have been no reports of damage or casualties so far. Vanuatu has a population of 280,000 people and consists of several dozen islands. It sits on the Pacific Ring of Fire, where tectonic plates collide, and it experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity.

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