

14 July 2023 Friday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**





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## MWSS: You see, rain dance worked

By BELLA CARIASO

The Dumagat indigenous group's rain dance at the Angat Dam on July 11 seemed to work as rain poured in many areas of the Philippines.

"I'm happy to say that I believe that the ancestors heard our indigenous group after they performed a rain dance on Monday," Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) administrator Leonor Cleofas said yesterday in a radio interview.

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## MWSS From Page 1

The state weather bureau reported a low-pressure area in Infanta, Quezon, where the Angat-Umiray-Ipo watersheds system is located.

As of Thursday morning, Angat Dam's water level dropped to 178.03 meters, from 178.21 meters the day previous.

The normal operating level of Angat Dam is 180 meters.

"Based on our projection and augmentation measures, we have no reason to worry," Cleofas said.

Cleofas apologized to Maynilad Water Services Inc. customers affected by the hours-long daily water service interruption that started on July 12.

Service interruptions had to be set due to the National Water Resources Board's 48 cubic meters per second water allocation, a result of Angat Dam's declining water level.

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

Based on the projection of the Angat technical working group, the lowest water level of the reservoir will be 174 meters, Cleofas said.

"We do not think Angat Dam will drop to 157 meters just like what happened in 2010 as we now have additional augmentation measures," she said.

They are expecting Angat Dam to reach a 210-meter water level by yearend, Cleofas said.

"By August or September, we expect that the water elevation of Angat Dam will improve based on the projection of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA)," she added.

Cleofas said that PAGASA still expects strong typhoons despite the El Niño phenomenon.

## Manila Water plan

Meanwhile, Manila Water Co. Inc. yesterday bared its plans to mitigate the impact of El Niño on water supply outside Metro Manila.

In a statement, Manila Water said its operating subsidiary Manila Water Philippine Ventures has tailored specific mitigation strategies in areas where it operates.

Laguna Water, one of Manila Water's largest business units in the non-east zone, has been working since January to reduce its non-revenue water (NRW) from 30 percent to 20 percent.

The business unit's NRW is at 28 percent as of May.

Boracay Water will install a surface water level indicator at the Nabaoy River, the lone water source of Boracay Island, to regularly monitor the river's condition and water elevation.

Pipe replacement projects in Barangays Yapak and Balabag will also be implemented in the next months to recover 1.8 million liters of NRW per day by November.

Other capital expenditure programs are also being implemented to ensure the operation of standby deep wells,

management of pressure and adjustment of variable frequency drive as needed, regular maintenance works for pumps, tanks and generator sets and operation of line boosters.

Manila Water is preparing for an assumed 10 percent water supply reduction during El Niño, projected to last until early 2024.

"We would like to restate our calls for the responsible use of water, not just in the East Zone of Metro Manila but to all Filipinos in each part of the country," said Manila Water non-east zone chief operating officer Melvin John Tan.

Manila Water has operating units in several cities and provinces – the Metro Ilagan Water, Calasiao Water, North Luzon Water, Clark Water, Bulakan Water, Obando Water, Laguna Water and South Luzon Water in Luzon; Boracay Water, Calbayog Water and Cebu Water in Visayas, and Tagum Water in Mindanao.

For its part, the state-run National Irrigation Administration (NIA) said its field offices nationwide have crafted their respective El Niño Action Plans.

NIA's strategies for El Niño include weekly monitoring of dam hydrological data and dam discharge, adjustment of the planting calendar during the wet season, and educational and communication activities.

The agency also requested water pumps and shallow tube wells to provide for the irrigation needs of El Niño vulnerable areas.

The Department of Agriculture provided P18.925 million worth of agricultural interventions to Irrigators Associations in Batac, Ilocos Norte on June 13 to improve farm production activities in the province.

According to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, up to 46 provinces could be impacted by El Niño while Ilocos Norte, Bataan and Cavite would be greatly affected.





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### Water Resources Dep't

Albay Rep. Joey Salceda reiterated the need to create a Department of Water Resources to solve the country's decades-old water problem.

"Many people don't get it. It's not just another new agency. It's an institutional solution to a decades-old problem of treating water resources as a peripheral and dispersed concern for government," Salceda said yesterday.

"The most economic point-of-view here is simple: we need agriculture to be more efficient with water use. That's the most immediate, effective, and economical demand management solution. So, we need to invest in more precise irrigation, so that we don't waste all that water," he advised.

### Bulacan dams

The rehabilitation of Bustos Dam and Bulo Dam in Bulacan is expected to begin this year and the construction of Bayabas Dam is now up for bidding, according to a text message to The STAR by NIA Region 3 regional manager Josephine Salazar.

Bustos Dam serves the irrigation supply to at least 25,000 hectares in Bulacan and parts of Pampanga. Bulo Dam and Bayabas Dam serve as irrigation and flood

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and flood control to the towns of Doña Remedios Trinidad and San Miguel.

Bulacan Gov. Daniel Fernando had warned Bustos Dam contractors in September last year that they would face civil and criminal cases if they did not repair the dam.

Replacement rubber gates for Bustos Dam are undergoing testing in China and could be installed in November this year, Salazar said.

Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr. on Thursday claimed that rainwater harvesting facilities are

long-term solutions to El Niño.

Revilla's proposal last year sought the construction of rainwater catchments in new institutional, commercial, industrial and residential development projects in Metro Manila.

"Rainwater harvesting is an innovative technology proven effective in resolving water problems in other countries such as India," Revilla said.

- With Danessa Rivera, Delon Porcalla, Ramon Efrén Lazaro, Marc Jayson Cayabyab





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ON A WING AND A PRAYER

# WATER MANAGERS HOPE ON RAIN TO BOOST SUPPLY

**By Jerome Aning  
and Abby Boiser**  
@Team\_Inquirer

Water service interruptions in Metro Manila could be shortened if the rainfall forecast for this month materializes, an official of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) said on Thursday.

Speaking at the Laging Handa public briefing, engineer Patrick Dizon, MWSS division manager for the Angat-Ipo operations, said the rainfall expected this month will slow down the water level drop at Angat Dam, which supplies about 90 percent of raw water requirements of Metro Manila.

"As of now, the watershed experienced rainfall overnight so it has slightly slowed down the drop in the water elevation at Angat reservoir," he said, adding that this was related to the slight increase of inflow water at Ipo Dam, which is con-

nected to Angat.

Dizon said the interagency technical working group (TWG) for Angat and the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) are projecting two to four storms this month in the Angat watershed, adding the Angat reservoir is usually replenished by monsoon-induced rainfall occurring around July up to September.

Taking into account the expected rainfall this month, Dizon said "historical data" from the TWG and Pagasa indicate that the lowest elevation at the dam would just be 175 to 176 meters, which is still higher than the 160-meter critical level.

Nevertheless, should the water level drop precariously, the MWSS and other TWG member agencies, such as the National Water Resources Board and National Irrigation Authority already have in place various preparations on water sourcing

and allocation, he added.

He said the agencies are working together to manage rainwater streaming from the watershed to the dams and shorten water service interruptions in the metropolis.

"Our promise is that if we will experience rains in our watershed, we will maximize [the use of water] and we can use this in reducing the number of hours of water service interruptions," Dizon said.

## Practice conservation

The MWSS also continues to monitor the adaptation and mitigating measures undertaken by the two water concessionaires in Metro Manila amid the low supply of and high demand for water.

He said all water consumers would practice water conservation to lessen the overall impact of the El Niño weather phenomenon that is expected to last until the second quarter of next year.

Meanwhile, the low pres-

sure area (LPA) near southern Luzon is expected to develop into a tropical depression by the weekend, the state weather bureau said on Thursday.

Once it becomes a tropical cyclone, it will be named "Dodong."

According to Pagasa, the weather disturbance was last seen 160 kilometers east-northeast of Infanta, Quezon.

The combined effects of the LPA and the southwest monsoon or "habagat" will bring rains over parts of the country until the weekend.

Pagasa said that heavy rains may prevail over Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union and Pangasinan from Friday to Saturday.

Rains are also expected on Friday over Cagayan, Isabela, Quirino, Nueva Vizcaya, Batanes, Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga, Mountain Province, Zambales, Bataan, Occidental Mindoro, Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras, Iloilo, Negros Occidental and Northern Palawan. **INQ**





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## EDITORIAL

# El Niño's threat

**S**HOULD we be afraid of the threat posed by the El Niño weather phenomenon?

Not at all, because the government is already preparing to deal with its adverse impact.

Here's what will happen: El Niño or the unusual warming of the ocean surface in the central and eastern tropical Pacific, could trigger disruptions in local weather patterns.

During El Niño, winds blowing west along the equator slow down, and warm water is pushed east, creating warmer surface ocean temperatures.

The phenomenon occurs on average every two to seven years, and can last nine to 12 months, according to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

Earlier this month, state meteorologists officially declared the onset of El Niño.

This came after the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) observed that in the past three months there has been an ongoing El Niño in the tropical Pacific, and its effects starting to be felt in the country.

It is likely to persist until the first quarter of 2024.

According to the weather agency, El Niño increases the prospect of below-normal rainfall conditions that could bring negative impacts

such as "dry spells" (periods of dry days) or droughts in some parts of the Philippines.

But between now and December, Pagasa expects at least 10 to 14 tropical cyclones to affect the country.

The agency has urged the public to brace primarily for lesser rains during El Niño, which could impact the country's water supply and affect areas that are dependent on hydrological energy.

*“The country faces the risk of reduced agricultural output and hampered business operations from the double whammy of dry conditions and more typhoons from El Niño.”*

Higher temperatures and extreme weather events are also more likely during this period, which could escalate risk of infectious diseases, floods, and droughts.

AdvaBased on five occurrences of "severe" El Niño since the 1990s, rice production in the Philippines was one of the worst-hit in Asia whenever the climate phenomenon hits overdrive.

Severe El Niños were recorded in 1991 to 1992, 2002 to 2003, 2003 to 2004, 2009 to 2010 and 2015 to 2016.

The most recent severe El Niño was considered as one of the worst in recorded history and, during that time, rice production in the Philippines was 10 percent below the average annual output.

The Water Resources Management Office will soon issue its recommendations to address the effects of the El Niño phenomenon in the country.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources is also preparing a plan to make public what needs to be done, according to President Marcos Jr.

Other agencies involved in the mitigation of the expected effects of El Niño are the Public Works and Agriculture departments.

The country faces the risk of reduced agricultural output and hampered business operations from the double whammy of dry conditions and more typhoons from El Niño.

But economists believe the Philippines can still maintain their growth forecast of 6.2 percent in 2023 and 6.5 percent in 2024.

If the numbers are unchanged from the forecast made last April, then we can very well overcome the weather phenomenon's ill-effects.





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# THE MARVELS OF BAGANGA; DENR BESPEAKS ACTIONS

**D**avao Region's natural resources and places of interest are legion and mostly, if not all, are sought-after. From Davao City, an estimated 3-4-hour drive north-bound will take you to the wondrous and unblemished attractions of the coastal Municipality of Baganga in Davao Oriental.

The seemingly relaxing and placid place will stun you with its spots that howls both serenity and adventure. There's loose and powdery white-sand beaches, hot springs, mesmerizing falls and then there's lush mangrove forests with an entire coastline stretch that is in tip-top shape.

Factors that precisely made the Municipality of Baganga as two (2) of the region's Protected Areas (PA). One is the Baganga Protected Landscape formerly named as Baganga Watershed Reservation, which was declared as PA pursuant to RA 7586 (NIPAS Act of 1992). The other is the Baganga Mangrove Swamp Forest Reserve which was proclaimed under the Presidential Proclamation No. 2152 dated December 29, 1981.

The said PAs has a total area of 14, 013 hectares that covers eleven (11) coastal barangays of the said Municipality namely- Baculin, Bobonao, Salingcomot, Lucod, Central, Saoquigue, Lambajon, Dapnan, San Victor, Kinablangan and Ban-ao.

From being two (2) separate PAs, the Protected Area



Management Board or PAMB, the highest policy-making body for these critical and highly-significant biodiversity area, is making steps to merge it as one legislated PA under E-NIPAS Act. Through a PAMB resolution, it is proposed to be named as Baganga Bay Protected Landscape and Seascape.

The said move visualizes a more effective and efficient environmental approaches in the management of these PAs that ranges from its highlands to oceans including other vital habitats such as Coastal Areas, Seagrass Meadows, Coral Reefs and the entire Municipal Sea waters of Baganga.

Several areas in the PAs have been identified as regular nesting sites of our sea turtles including the critically endangered Hawksbill Turtle. Further, there has been routinary sightings of dugongs and dolphins gliding particularly on its clean and captivating island.

The conservation and protection efforts for the natural resources of the Municipality of Baganga remains enforced through the DENR Davao's PENRO Davao Oriental and its CENRO Baganga.

Simply put, and as the PENR Officer Pablito Ofrecia emphasizes, "If you still want to see this richness in the future, if you want to enjoy the benefits of an abundant environment, you [and we] have to conserve and protect them now." (DENR-XI)





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IRRAWADDY SIGHTINGS BOTH EXCITE, ALARM SCIENTISTS

FOR RARE DOLPHINS' SAKE, GIVE THIS BICOL BAY A BREAK

By Krixia Subingsubing @krixiasINQ

Recent sightings of the rare Irrawaddy dolphins in one of the most overfished bays in the Philippines confirmed their existence in the Bicol region—but also indicated risks that can lead to their disappearance from its waters.

This was according to a team of scientists from the University of the Philippines' Institute of Environmental Science and Meteorology (UP IESM) and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), who went on a four-day survey mission from July 6 to July 9 to verify the presence of one of the world's most critically endangered species in San Miguel Bay.

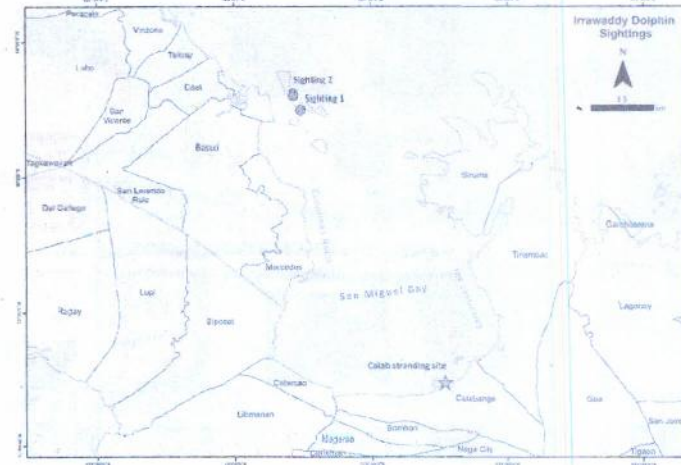
Led by UP IESM professor and Marine Mammal Research and Conservation Laboratory chief Lemnuel Aragonés, the team sighted two of these grey dolphins that are noted for their blunt, rounded heads—one near Apuao Island and another near Canimog Island in Mercedes, Camarines Norte.

Aragones said the dolphins traveled 335 kilometers across San Miguel Bay, covering almost 680 square kilometers of waters off Camarines Norte and Camarines Sur.

Subpopulations

Before this sighting, he said, there were three confirmed subpopulations of the Irrawaddy species in the Philippines, mainly at Malampaya Sound in Palawan province and in the Iloilo-Guilmaras-Negros Occidental area.

"These three distinct populations do not interact at all and they are not related to each other," he said in an Inquirer interview. "This discovery is



SURVEY MISSION A team from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and the Institute of Environmental Science and Meteorology of the University of the Philippines went on a four-day survey mission last week in San Miguel Bay and made two sightings of the rare Irrawaddy dolphins. The mission was prompted by an earlier discovery in August last year of one of the marine mammals off Camarines Sur, where it was caught in a fisherman's net and eventually died (right upper photo). —MARINE MAMMAL RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION LABORATORY AND UP IESM PHOTOS

a validation of the existence of these rare animals outside those areas."

The Irrawaddy—named after Myanmar's largest river where they were first documented—often prefer shallow, brackish waters, making the San Miguel Bay an ideal place for them to thrive, Aragonés said.

However, the fact that they only saw two dolphins in San Miguel Bay could be taken as a sign of their dwindling population in the area, he said.

For one, it was hard to miss the marine mammals in the bay's crystal-clear waters since "they would eventually have to

break the surface to breathe," Aragonés said.

2022 sighting

He said last week's four-day mission was prompted by an August 2022 sighting of an Irrawaddy dolphin in Camarines Sur.

The dolphin spotted at the time, which they named Calab, was accidentally entangled in a fisherman's net in San Miguel Bay off Calabanga and eventually drowned.

It was the first confirmed sighting in Bicol of such a dolphin, which has been declared "critically endangered" both by the Department of Environ-

ment and Natural Resources and the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

In October last year, both the UP IESM and the BFAR's Region 5 office interviewed local residents to confirm whether these species have always been there.

Apart from having melon-shaped heads, Irrawaddy dolphins are relatively small compared to the other species (between 2 meters to 2.5 meters long) and are gray-skinned except on their bellies. They also don't have a rostrum, or a "beak," but they have a small rounded dorsal fin.

"In one interview, we talked to an old fisherman who said they always saw those dolphins there," Aragonés said. "Back then, the dolphins would sometimes be seen in groups of 20 and were commonly seen close to the shorelines."

'Sense of urgency'

Compare this to 2022, where residents said they spotted just one Irrawaddy dolphin.

That they were spotted in one of the most heavily fished areas in the country raises the risk of their eventual disappearance, Aragonés warned.

For decades, local fishermen

have competed with commercial trawlers that sweep the bottom of the bay for a big catch, leading to overfishing and abuse of the underwater environment.

"So there is a sense of urgency here; we cannot wait for another 10 years to act," he said.

Aragones said he had appealed to the regional BFAR office to impose a moratorium on commercial fishing in San Miguel.

"We need to let the bay take a break," he said. "The fact that there are now only a handful of these animals (here) and their habitats are very much disturbed means they would soon be in more serious peril." 182





# PH needs comprehensive shark legislation

**T**oday is Shark Awareness Day, and we urgently call on the Marcos administration to pass a shark conservation legislation—or the future of Philippine conservation will come back to bite us.

Over 200 kinds of sharks live in Philippine waters, making them an important aquatic resource. However, there are several challenges to these species, such as unrestricted tourism, marine wildlife destruction, and rampant fishing for their meat, oil, skin, and fins.

The Philippine government has made great progress in shark conservation and management after realizing the critical role that sharks play in the country's environment and economy. To protect the future of sharks in our waters and safeguard Philippine culture as well as present and future generations, it is critical that we act fast by building on this accomplishment and enacting comprehensive legislation.

The Philippines is a signatory to important international environmental treaties like the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. These international agreements impose binding legal requirements on member nations, laying the groundwork for effective conservation initiatives. We can work together to conserve sharks and their habitats by upholding our commitment and playing an active role in international negotiations.

The engagement of civil society organizations (CSOs) has strengthened the administration's initiatives. A collaboration of committed institutions and organizations called Save Sharks Network Philippines (SSNP) has been instrumental in promoting shark conservation. SSNP has advanced the conservation movement through multistakeholder participation and skill- and knowledge-sharing activities. As we move forward, it is essential that we continue the collective action with CSOs, advocates, and experts while also harnessing our best practices and lessons learned.

Globally, the Philippines has consistent-

## COMMENTARY

ANNA OPOSA



**OVER 200 KINDS  
OF SHARKS LIVE IN  
PHILIPPINE WATERS,  
MAKING THEM  
AN IMPORTANT  
AQUATIC RESOURCE**

ly shown dedication to shark conservation, distinguishing itself in Southeast Asia. The country has demonstrated its commitment by supporting CITES listing requests for several shark species in recent years, consequently ensuring international protection for these animals. While these international agreements offer a solid policy basis, enacting thorough national legislation is an essential next step.

Significant advancements in shark conservation were made at the onset of the administration in June 2022, with the introduction of the shark conservation bill in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Once passed, these bills could be used as a basis for amending other species-specific regulations and as a supplement to current laws like the Philippine Fisheries Code and the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act.

There is another legislative path available. A fisheries administrative order (FAO) can speed up the process by including clauses that are similar to those in the proposed

bill because they only need the approval of the Department of Agriculture and its secretary. Though an FAO can efficiently mobilize resources within the mandate of the national government agency, a national law makes it easier to distribute resources and mobilize manpower, which increases the likelihood that it will be implemented successfully.

Additionally, the drafting of the national framework for shark conservation and fisheries management in March 2023 means moving forward in the right direction. It is crucial to follow it with the enactment of a comprehensive and stringent shark conservation law. Such legislation will handle important issues that previous regulations have not fully addressed, such as confinement, interactions with tourists, and bycatch. A national legal framework will strengthen our conservation efforts and inspire the long-term viability of sharks in our waters by dedicating resources for enforcement and implementation.

The year 2023 offers a unique potential for the Philippine government to establish itself as a leader in shark conservation on a worldwide scale. The adoption of a national law will formalize efforts and create a strong anchor for ongoing conservation projects. We must capitalize on this momentum and give shark conservation, management, and sustainable use a top priority. By doing this, we can conserve our marine habitats, the tourism sector, and the future of these species in the years to come.

The time to act is now. We must keep working to save sharks and push forward its sustainable use in alignment with biodiversity preservation. We can reinforce our international obligations and strengthen the participation of civil society, advocates, and experts as we ensure a future in which sharks coexist well with our ecosystems by enacting comprehensive national legislation.

Anna Oposa is executive director of Save Philippine Seas and the co-convener of Save Sharks Network Philippines.





# SC denies Benguet IPs' land claims

BY THOM F. PICANA

**T**HE Supreme Court has affirmed a 10-year-old decision of the Court of Appeals (CA) that denied a petition of several individuals belonging to the Ibaloi and Kankana-ey tribes of Benguet to reverse a ruling of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) that upheld its issuance of certificates of ancestral land title in 2007.

In a 24-page decision dated Jan. 16, 2023 released only last week and penned by Senior Associate Justice Marvic Leonen, the Supreme Court denied the petition for review on certiorari involving the certificates of ancestral land title covering almost 77,585 square meters of land located in Pinsao, Baguio City issued by the NCIP to Maximo Bugnay Sr., who has been elected as the Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative of Baguio City this year.

The petition was filed by Gabriel Diclas, Antonia Dianson, Carlos Ansis, Joseph Soypan, Corazon Soypan, Rita Biador, Merto Saldet, Imelda Ingosan, Myrna Basanes, Grace Solano, Marcelo Catanes, Valentino Sec-open, Dixon Anches, Carlos Anches Jr. and Francis Que, Jr. after the CA affirmed on April and October 2013 the rulings of the NCIP denying their petition to cancel the ancestral land titles issued to Bugnay.

The petitioners claimed to be

the owners and long-time possessors of the ancestral land covered by certificates of ancestral land title issued in favor of Bugnay.

Some of them alleged they are the descendants of a certain Bilag, one of the pioneer Ibaloi families and was a claimant of ancestral lands in Baguio City. They also claimed that the matriarch of the Bilag clan inherited portions of the disputed parcels of land from Bilag, who they said has occupied these parcels of land since time immemorial.

In their petitions before the NCIP and the CA, Diclas and co-petitioners said Bugnay committed fraud in securing his certificate of ancestral land titles through conflicting representations in his application.

They also said the CA erred in ruling that they, the petitioners, failed to establish that they have acquired a vested right over the subject parcels of land. that

Bugnay did not comply with the requirement of publication when he applied for recognition of his ancestral land claim at the NCIP and that Bugnay failed to comply with the mandatory requirements of delineation and recognition of ancestral lands, resulting in a violation of the petitioners' right to due process.

In denying the petition, the Supreme Court relied on the findings of the Court of Appeals, which upon review affirmed the decision of NCIP in its ruling on April 2013 and in its denial of the petitioners' motion for reconsideration in October 2013.

The CA ruled that Diclas et al. failed to prove their vested rights over the parcels of land as demonstrated by their failure to comply with the requirements for a town-site sales application.

"While petitioners assert a better right than the respondent (Bugnay), they submitted no

evidence before this court to prove their claim of long-time occupation and possession. The supporting documents they allegedly submitted before the NCIP to prove their claim were not attached to the petition for review. Additionally, while they represent to be Bilag's descendants, no proof confirming this allegation was present," the Supreme Court also ruled.

As to alleged non-compliance of Bugnay with procedural requirements, the Supreme Court also relied on the findings of the Court of Appeals that Bugnay had substantially complied with the requirements for the issuance of his certificates of ancestral land title: he submitted the correct application form, it was accompanied by supporting documents and inspections were conducted before his application was submitted to the NCIP director for evaluation. The Supreme Court also ruled

that the petitioners failed to present evidence supporting their claim that the requirements for publication in a newspaper of general publication and posting of the ancestral land claim of Bugnay were not complied with.

"Petitioners again failed to submit before this court evidence to support their contentions. They attached no evidence, documentary or otherwise, to prove respondent's non-compliance and non-submission. Such being the case, this court has no means to ascertain the truthfulness of their claims," Leonen wrote in the decision.

The Supreme Court said: "We are constrained to rely on the factual findings of the Court of Appeals that respondent (Bugnay) had substantially complied with the requirements of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act, negating any violation of petitioners' (Diclas et al.) right to due process."





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Trusted Since 1898

The Manila Times



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# Tribal group protests construction of new trash facility

**GENERAL SANTOS CITY:** Indigenous peoples (IPs) from the B'laan tribe have opposed the construction of a solid-waste facility at a 63.3-hectare sanitary landfill in Barangay Sinawal in General Santos City after the city government allegedly failed to give a P7-million payment for their 2 percent income share

from the landfill.

Clan leader Leonardo Taluna Fuentes told reporters here about their demand, but he said the local government unit (LGU) has not delivered on it.

Fuentes cited a memorandum of agreement entered into by the LGU and the tribe allowing the city government to construct a

similar facility at the landfill in 2006 during the administration of then-mayor Pedro Acharon.

The agreement, he said, states that the 2 percent share will be given to the B'laan IPs once the facility begins to generate income.

"But since the construction of the old facility in 2006 and gen-

eration of income from it, the city government did not give a single centavo to the IPs," Fuentes said.

"Even until the succession of the two mayors Darlene Magnolia Antonino-Custodio and Ronnel Riviera, the city failed to give our demand payment," he added.

The 63.3-hectare sanitary landfill in Barangay Sinawal sits on an

ancestral property of the IPs that receives the 110 tons of garbage collected daily from the 26 covered barangay (villages) of General Santos.

The city government intends to construct the new solid-waste facility within the landfill because the old facility is already fully capacitated. **JERRY ADLAW**



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# Editorial

## Protecting the Pacific Ocean from nuclear contamination

ON March 11, 2011, a magnitude-9 earthquake off the eastern coast of Japan generated a tsunami that devastated everything in its path.

Almost 20,000 people were killed in one of Japan's worst disasters. Close to half a million more were forced to leave their homes, many never to return.

The 2011 quake and tsunami also touched off an environmental tragedy that continues to play out 12 years on.

Fifty-foot waves flooded the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, knocking out the emergency generators that were pumping water to prevent the reactor's core from overheating.

The cores in three reactors of the plant eventually did overheat, culminating in a nuclear meltdown that leaked tons of radioactive material into the atmosphere and the Pacific Ocean.

It was the world's second biggest nuclear disaster, after Chernobyl in 1986.

In the years that followed, Japanese officials wrangled with how to safely dispose of the more than 1 million tons of radioactive water temporarily stored in tanks at the site.

In 2021, the Tokyo government asked the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to approve its plan to dump the wastewater from the Fukushima plant into the Pacific Ocean.

The plan calls for building a tunnel from the plant site through which the treated water will be gradually released into the ocean over the next 30 years.

Last week, the IAEA announced that the plan complied with "relevant international safety standards."

IAEA Director-General Rafael Mariano Grossi said the "controlled, gradual discharges" of treated water from the nuclear plant "would have a negligible radiological impact on people and the environment."

Nuclear plants around the world have been "routinely" discharging their waste materials into the sea, the agency noted.

The IAEA announcement touched off a tsunami of protest. Angry demonstrators confronted Grossi as he arrived in Seoul on a mission precisely to placate the critics of the wastewater dumping plan. One protester considered the plan "an international crime."

### Irreversible damage

Environmental advocates have long warned about the irreversible damage of nuclear waste contamination to the seas. The concern is, not surprisingly, most vocal among the countries that dot the Pacific Ocean.

The anxiety has driven the Pacific Islands Forum to commission five experts to review Japan's nuclear wastewater scheme.

One expert, Robert Richmond, a marine biologist at the University of Hawaii, concluded "there are insufficient data to be able to demonstrate the feeling that this [nuclear wastewater dumping] is going to be safe."

Richmond challenged the IAEA's finding that the effect of dumping nuclear wastewater into the ocean is negligible.

He said harmful elements like radionuclides could bind to the ocean sediment and marine life, potentially altering their DNA and causing mutations.

"You have phytoplankton at the bottom of the food web, microscopic algae that photosynthesize. They pick up a number of the radionuclides, notably tritium and carbon-14. And so these can be taken up, and then they can be passed through the food web to other organisms, and a number of radionuclides can be bioaccumulated. And this is a pathway for which it can get into people through seafood," Richmond said.

On the other side of the spectrum are groups that insist that nuclear waste repositories are not a health threat. "The quantity of materials which would be found in the environment in the event of a leak would be very small," said the World Nuclear Association, an organization that promotes nuclear energy.

"Radiation is an unavoidable part of life on our planet, and life evolved and is thriving in this radioactive environment, and the doses from a nuclear waste repository would be almost 50 times smaller than the average background radiation," the group said.

The Philippines cannot but be swept into the row over nuclear waste dumping, now that the release of water from the Fukushima reactor has escalated into a transboundary issue. We are part of the Pacific Ocean, and, like it or not, we will be impacted by the actions of other Pacific nations.

The dangers in converting the Pacific Ocean into a repository of radioactive waste far outweigh the benefits it will bring to just one country. That is unacceptable.





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## Oceans changing color, climate change eyed

**PARIS:** Over the past 20 years huge swathes of the world's oceans have changed color, displaying a subtle greening towards the tropics that researchers say points to the effect of climate change on life in the world's seas.

In the new research published on Wednesday (Thursday in Manila), scientists said they had detected shifts in colors across more than half of the world's oceans — an expanse bigger than Earth's total land

area. Authors of the study in Nature think that is down to changes in ecosystems, and particularly in tiny plankton, which are the centerpiece of the marine food web and

**ClimateA2**

### CLIMATE FROM A1

## Oceans

play a crucial part in stabilizing our atmosphere.

"The reason we care about the color changes is because the color reflects the state of the ecosystem, so color changes mean ecosystem changes," lead author B.B. Cael, of Britain's National Oceanography Centre, told Agence France-Presse.

The color of the seas when seen from space can paint a picture of what is going on in the upper layers of the water.

A deep blue would tell you that there is not much life, while if the water is greener it is likely to have more activity, specifically from the photosynthesizing phytoplankton, which like plants contain the green pigment chlorophyll. These produce a significant amount of the oxygen we breathe, are a crucial part of the global carbon cycle and are a foundational part of the ocean food web.

Researchers are keen to develop ways of monitoring changes in ecosystems in order to track climate changes and enshrine protected areas. But previous studies have suggested you would need three decades of ocean chlorophyll monitoring to detect a trend, because of annual variations. In the latest study, researchers broadened the color spectrum, looking at seven hues of ocean color monitored by the MODIS-Aqua satellite from 2002 to 2022.

**AFP**





## Aid for Mayon evacuees reaches P160 M

The government has spent more than P160 million to provide for the basic needs of families affected by Mayon Volcano's unrest, according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council.

The NDRRMC said 3,474 people in various evacuation centers in Bicol have also received medical assistance.

The agency said the Department of Health conducted 4,431 consultations for common ailments from June 12 to July 12.

The NDRRMC said 9,867 families or 38,376 people have

been affected by Mayon's increased seismic activity.

At least 5,393 families or 18,828 people remain in 27 evacuation centers.

Families in permanent relocation sites across Albay are also being provided relief assistance, Albay Public Safety and Emergency Management Office chief Cedric Daep said.

"Technically, they should no longer be considered as evacuees because the government has provided them permanent houses in relocation sites away from the threat of Mayon's eruption. But because their

sources of livelihood are within the six-kilometer permanent danger zone, they are still proceeding to evacuation centers for food assistance when entry into the permanent danger zone is prohibited due to the eruption," Daep said.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said very slow effusion of lava from the summit crater of Mayon continued to feed lava flows that stretched up to 2,800 meters and 1,400 meters in the Mi-isi (south) and Bonga (southeastern) gullies, respectively, in the past 24 hours.

Collapsed debris rolled down to 4,000 meters away from the crater.

Phivolcs said 10 pyroclastic density currents, 286 rockfall events, three volcanic earthquakes, plumes that rose 500 meters and sulfur dioxide emission of 1,582 tons were monitored.

Mayon has been under Alert Level 3 or relatively high level of unrest since June 7.

Phivolcs said this means hazardous eruption within weeks or days is still possible.

- Michael Punongbayan, Cet Dematera





## Mayon lava flow remains 'very slow'

By ELLALYN RUIZ

Lava flow from Mayon Volcano's crater is still occurring at a "very slow" rate, Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) monitoring from Wednesday, July 12, to Thursday, July 13, said.

Phivolcs said that the "very slow effusion of lava" causes the collapse of the lava front and dome, increasing the amount of pyroclastic density currents that travel down the slopes of Mayon.

From eight dome and lava front collapse-triggered PDCs on Wednesday, Mayon Volcano logged 10 PDCs on Thursday. Mayon also had 286 rockfall occurrences and three volcanic earthquakes in the past 24 hours.

Phivolcs continues to detect lava flows, collapse debris, rockfall, and PDCs on the Mi-isi and Bonga gullies on Mayon Volcano's southern and southeastern flanks, respectively, as well as the Basud gully on the volcano's eastern flank.

The approximate lengths of lava flow stayed at 2.8 kilometers (kms) and 1.4 kms, respectively, on the Mi-isi and Bonga

gullies, while collapsed debris was still deposited four kms on the Basud gully.

The Mayon Volcano also continued to emit "moderate" amounts of sulfur dioxide, producing a 500-meter-high steam plume that drifted west and east-southeast.

As of Thursday, Mayon Volcano is still in a relatively high level of unrest and that a potentially hazardous eruption within weeks or even days is still possible.

Phivolcs said Mayon Volcano remains under Alert Level 3.

Communities near the restive volcano were advised to maintain increased vigilance against lahars and sediment-laden stream flows on channels draining the volcano edifice, as heavy rainfall could cause channel-confined lahars and sediment-laden stream flows.

Meanwhile, Phivolcs said yesterday that it is considering raising the Taal Volcano alert level from one to two if the restive volcano's activity worsens.

Phivolcs made the announcement after detecting a series of shallow tremors and an increase in sulfur dioxide emissions in recent weeks.





## Brace for heavy rains till Saturday; LPA may develop into tropical depression

By ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

The low-pressure area (LPA) near Southern Luzon may develop into a tropical depression within 48 hours, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said on Thursday, July 13.

PAGASA's next tropical cyclone name will be "Dodong."

As of 3 p.m. Thursday, PAGASA said the LPA was spotted 90 kilometers northeast ▶4

## Brace for heavy rains till Saturday; LPA may develop into tropical depression ◀1

of Infanta, Quezon or 85 km southeast of Baler, Aurora.

It warned that the combined effects of the LPA and the enhanced southwest monsoon, or "habagat," may bring "significant" rains over the next three days.

The following areas may experience heavy rains until July 15.

● July 13, Thursday — Metro Manila, Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon, Aurora, Isabela, Cagayan

● July 14, Friday — Cagayan, Isabela, Quirino, Nueva Vizcaya, Batanes, Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga, Mountain Province, Zambales, Bataan, Occidental Mindoro, Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras, Iloilo, Negros

Occidental, northern Palawan

● July 15, Saturday — Zambales, Bataan, Occidental Mindoro, Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras, Iloilo, Negros Occidental, Palawan

Meanwhile, PAGASA said intense rains may affect Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, and Pangasinan from Friday to Saturday.

"Under these conditions, flooding and rain-induced landslides are possible, especially in areas that are highly or very highly susceptible to these hazards as identified in hazard maps and in localities that have received considerable amounts of rainfall over the past several days," it said.





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Republic of the Philippines  
Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
**ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT BUREAU  
REGION 02**

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**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**

On the ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE REPORT AND MANAGEMENT PLAN (EPRMP) of the CAGAYAN NORTH SOLAR POWER PROJECT of NATURES RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVT. (NAREDCO) CORPORATION located in BARANGAY MAGAPIT AND STA. MARIA, LAL-LO, CAGAYAN.

Notice is hereby given to all parties who wish to give their opinion regarding the implementation of the proposed CAGAYAN NORTH SOLAR POWER PROJECT to attend the Public Hearing scheduled on:

Date/Time	Venue	Details
21 July 2023 (Friday); 9:00 AM (Registration starts at 8:00 AM)	Barangay Gymnasium, Barangay Magapit, Lal-lo, Cagayan	Face-to-Face

The Public Hearing is being conducted in connection with the review of the EPRMP of the aforementioned project by the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The following is the project information:

<b>Project Name</b>	Proposed Cagayan North Solar Power Project
<b>Project Location</b>	Barangay Magapit and Sta. Maria, Lal-lo, Cagayan
<b>Project Type</b>	Renewable Energy Project
<b>Proponent</b>	Natures Renewable Energy Devt. (NAREDCO) Corporation

All interested parties who wish to attend or participate in this Public Hearing should preferably confirm their attendance/participation and may give their opinion(s) in a concise position paper to the CLEARANCE AND PERMITTING DIVISION (CPD) of this Office through e-mail at [recordsr2@emb.gov.ph](mailto:recordsr2@emb.gov.ph), three (3) days before the Public Hearing schedule. Those who will not be able to register or submit written positions may be given the opportunity to share their issues on the day of the hearing itself.

The project's EPRMP and Executive Summary for the Public are downloadable on our website: (kindly access the Notice of Public Hearing/Consultation link found in our website) while copies will be available in our Office.

**EMB Regional Office No. 02  
Carig Sur, Tuguegarao City, Cagayan**

For more details, please contact the Clearance Permitting Division at this Office at telephone number (078) 396-0724 and look for the Chief, Environmental Impact Assessment Section, For. Patrocinia P. Dalluag.

(PDI – July 7 & 14, 2023)