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DENR

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DENR's Yulo-Loyzaga: From the ivory tower to the environmental front lines

By VC Galvez

IT'S been a year since Secretary Toni Yulo-Loyzaga has moved out from the ivory tower, as it were, down to the front lines—to lead the fight to preserve, protect, and bring back to life, what some would say, the remains of the country's natural resources.

In keeping perhaps with her persona, she has quietly adopted innovative ways to enable the DENR bureaucracy to work together in achieving goals she has set during her watch.

Navigating her way through what she has described as the department's silos has been "very challenging."

"We've had to deal with a lot of legacy issues, as you know, and we've had to deal with some cultures and practices that are part of the history of this department," says Yulo-Loyzaga without elaborating in an interview.

Innovations

Yulo-Loyzaga has laid down the infrastructure which will provide her department with the data she needs to make difficult, and maybe even controversial, but science-based decisions in the days ahead.

She has brought in two new undersecretaries—one to oversee organizational transformation and the training of the "next generation leadership" of the department, and another known expert in the field of environmental science to manage a geo-spatial database.

"These two achievements, along with the organization of the Water Resources

Management Office, I hope will characterize our first year as the introduction of evidence-based decision making in this department," says Yulo-Loyzaga.

She explains that the geo-spatial database aims to properly account for, value and manage our country's natural resources, as well as a basis to identify priority areas for forestation, reforestation and afforestation.

It can detect encroachment on public coastal areas, illegal mining activities and industries without necessary permits and pinpoint water systems that can be developed for hydropower and water supply.

Mindoro oil spill

Even as she puts her department in order, Yulo-Loyzaga has had to go out to the field to deal with a different set of challenges.

In February this year, a fuel tanker sank off Naujan, Mindoro Oriental and spewed out about 800,000 liters of oil resulting in damages amounting to over P1 billion.

Yulo-Loyzaga flew out to check on the situation, met with the governor and the coast guard, and deployed a hydrographer ship to locate the sunken vessel.

"We needed to find out where the oil was heading. For that, we turned to the UP Marine Science Institute. We were able to anticipate the flow towards the shore," she says.

Water quality has since improved in most areas affected by the oil spill. She, however, takes pains to point out it is the local government that can best monitor and protect the environment.

"We are not there 24 hours, we are



Environment Secretary Toni Yulo-Loyzaga

undermanned as a department. But the local government is present and they do have environment officers... and we will support them," she says.

Reclamation at Manila Bay

Yulo-Loyzaga has also begun to look into the multi-billion peso (P330.6 billion) reclamation projects in Manila Bay.

"Reclamation, of course, is one way forward in terms of the economic development of the different areas. However, we need a thorough approach that welcomes different perspectives from all groups," she told reporters.

A task force composed of Filipino scientists and foreign experts will be formed this month to conduct an evaluation of the environmental impact of the ongoing reclamation projects.

Full text at www.manilastandard.net



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DENR: Multisectoral partnership will boost climate resilience

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA
@jonlmayuga

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is calling for stronger multi-stakeholder collaboration to implement risk-informed and inclusive actions that will enhance the country's resilience against climate disaster. DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga made the call as she led the launching of the DENR's Project Transform in two areas in Bataan province on July 31.

In a statement, the DENR chief affirmed the DENR's commitment to facilitating investments for climate and disaster resilience through multi-stakeholder partnerships which she believes have a vital role in playing and accelerating an integrated, inclusive, and transformative resilience agenda.

Although the Philippines has made significant progress in disaster risk reduction and climate action, it is still one of the most vulnerable countries to natural and man-made hazards, as well as the impacts of climate change.

"What is happening to our ecosystems, in our communities is now indisputable--referring to the fact that humans have caused these problems--and in

some cases, our ecosystems are at the point of being irreversibly damaged," Loyzaga said in a statement.

The key findings of the Working Group II contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) showed that increases in the frequency and intensity of climate and weather extremes worldwide have had "widespread and pervasive effects on ecosystems, people, settlements, and infrastructure." These climate change impacts have been attributed to human activities.

The IPCC report further stated that with increased global warming, climate change threats to cities, communities, and critical infrastructure will increase significantly in the mid- and long-term, particularly in areas already exposed to high temperatures, near coasts, or with high vulnerabilities.

She cited anew the importance of collaboration with the other members of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council and all other sectors in the transformation towards adaptive and inclusive governance and resilient communities, in view of the linkage between human development, economic development, natural hazards, climate change, biodiver-

sity, water and health.

"Our course of action must be unified and this can only be done by understanding the interdependence between our social, engineered, and natural systems. This interdependence has given rise to multiple and dynamic complexities, and we need to constantly balance our evidence-informed decisions, policies, and our actions," Loyzaga pointed out.

"Leadership and governance are integral parts of resilience in building a system, and a network of decisions that lead to specific outcomes and impacts that we would all like to achieve," she added.

To build disaster resiliency and environmental sustainability through multi-stakeholder partnerships, the DENR recently launched the latest initiatives under Project TRANSFORM or Transdisciplinary Approach for Resilience and Environmental Sustainability through Multi-stakeholder Engagement in the municipality of Abucay and Balanga City in Bataan.

Under Project TRANSFORM, The DENR will implement the Mangrove Adoption and Protection Project in Abucay in partnership with San Miguel Foundation Inc. and Samahan ng Mananahong ng Sitio Bakawan.

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A similar initiative in Balanga City is in partnership with SM Prime Holdings Inc. and Tinig ng Mandaragat. Mangrove forests are natural barriers that reduce the force of incoming waves and storm surges and serve as a breeding ground for fish, crabs, and other marine species.

DENR's Project TRANSFORM engages the whole of society in implementing initiatives to alleviate poverty, improve community resil-

ience, and promote public-private partnerships. Pilot sites of Project TRANSFORM in Visayas are in Ormoc City, Leyte which was launched on January 18, and then in Luzon with the municipalities of Limay, Mariveles, and Orion in Bataan province on May 9; followed by the municipalities Malimono, San Francisco, and Burgos in Surigao del Norte in Mindanao launched on June 23.



Lima Water lab to offer more services—Aboitiz

THE laboratory of Lima Water, Aboitiz InfraCapital's water business unit, has again secured the recognition of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) as an environmental testing laboratory.

This means Lima Water is authorized to conduct testing and analysis of water and wastewater to ensure that the quality adheres to national standards.

The company said it has obtained the DENR's approval to expand its scope of services, which will now include additional recognized effluent parameters such as ammonia, nitrate and color.

"Having received the DENR's recognition and approval to broaden our scope of services, we are now equipped to extend our laboratory services to other companies, assisting them in ensuring that their effluent adheres to government standards and promotes environmental preservation," Lima Water General Manager Hazele Manalo said.

"With our expanded capabilities, we aim to contribute even more significantly to environmental conservation, water resource management, and sustainable practices."

Effluent refers to treated wastewater discharged into a natural body

of water. To protect the environment and public health from the adverse effects of pollution, the government has established effluent standards and regulations to limit the amount of pollutants and contaminants permissible for discharge into the environment.

"With the recent renewal of Lima Water's DENR recognition and the expansion of our laboratory services, we are steadfastly advancing the cause of environmental protection," Aboitiz InfraCapital head of water business Anna Lu said.

"These milestones hold exceptional significance as we serve a diverse range of companies within the Lima Estate. Ensuring that the wastewater effluent quality meets the regulatory standards is an important measure to avert water contamination."

Lima Water is the sole water and wastewater services provider for Lima Estate, an industrial park development in Calabarzon, hosting more than 150 locators with over 65,000 employees. Operating two wastewater treatment facilities with a combined treatment capacity of 26 million liters of wastewater daily, Lima Water was able to treat more than 2 billion liters of wastewater in 2022. *VG Cabuag*



Not down the drain: Wastewater offers a promising climate and nature solution

WASTEWATER is a growing health and environmental threat, accounting for almost as much planet warming emissions as the aviation industry.

Yet with the right policies, wastewater could provide alternative energy to half a billion people, supply over 10 times the water provided by current global desalination capacity and offset over 10 percent of global fertilizer use. These findings appear in an analysis published last week by the UN Environment Program (UNEP) and GRID-Arendal with the Global Wastewater Initiative (GWWI).

The report urges governments and businesses to treat wastewater as a circular economy opportunity, rather than a problem to be disposed of. There are multiple benefits for effectively collecting, treating, and reusing



wastewater—including new jobs and revenue streams. Additional advantages would result from reducing the volume of wastewater produced.

Today, only 11 percent of the world's treated wastewater is reused and around half of the world's untreated wastewater still enters rivers, lakes and seas. To safely fulfill the poten-

tial of wastewater as a valuable resource, the report calls to reduce the volume being produced, prevent and reduce contamination, and manage it to capture the resources that can be safely reused.

"Globally, wastewater is full of potential, yet it is currently allowed instead to contaminate the ecosystems we rely on," said Leticia Carvalho, principal coordinator of the Marine and Freshwater Branch of UNEP. "We must not let the opportunity simply disappear down the drain: it's time to realize the promise of wastewater as an alternative source of clean water, energy, and important nutrients."

The global water crisis is made worse by wastewater, which originates from kitchens, bathrooms and toilets, industrial effluent, agricultural effluent, stormwater and urban

run-off. Chemicals and excessive nutrients in wastewater degrade ecosystems, including soil, freshwater sources and oceans, contributing to food insecurity and other social issues.

Through the release of potent greenhouse gases such as methane and nitrous oxide, wastewater accounts for about 1.57 percent of global emissions, just below the climate harm caused by the global aviation industry.

Yet wastewater can become a climate solution: in generating biogas, heat and electricity, it can produce about five times more energy than is required for its treatment—enough to provide electricity for around half a billion people per year. By reducing water insecurity, good management of wastewater can also support countries' efforts to adapt to climate change. **UNEP News**



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Editorial

Japan must commit to safely disposing of nuclear wastewater

LAST week, the operator of the tsunami-devastated nuclear power plant in Fukushima, Japan, began releasing into the Pacific Ocean water that had been used to cool the facility's reactors.

The discharge of the wastewater was approved by the Tokyo government after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) certified that the procedure passed "relevant international safety standards." Despite the IAEA's stamp of approval, the move has whipped up a storm of protest from Japan's neighbors and environmental watchdogs. Critics insist more studies need to be done. China has been the most strident detractor. "By dumping the water into the ocean, Japan is spreading the risks to the rest of the world and passing an open wound onto the future generations of humanity," its foreign ministry said.

A state-run newspaper in Beijing turned to a popular cinematic monster to dramatize its criticism. "What will be unleashed once the Pandora's box is open?" it said. "The answer to this question may become a landmine threatening the ecological environment of the world and the fears of real-life Godzilla among the public worldwide." To underline its point, China has banned all seafood imports from Japan and is calling on other Pacific countries to follow its lead.

At the core of the debate on the safety of dumping nuclear wastewater into the sea is tritium. The hydrogen isotope is a byproduct of nuclear fission that is used to either kill or heal: it can enhance the destructive power of a nuclear bomb, but it is also a highly effective tool in radiotherapy, acting as a "tracer" to draw a diagnostic map of a particular human organ.

Tritium and other radioactive elements contaminate the water used as a reactor coolant, so a nuclear plant must find a way to safely dispose of its wastewater. One way is to store it in secure above-ground tanks. Or it can be buried in wells or caves deep underground.

The most common method is to treat nuclear wastewater before releasing it into the sea. Nuclear plants around the world, including those in the United States, have been disposing of their tritium-tainted water this way for decades, according to studies.

Thirteen nuclear power plants in China each dumped more tritium into the ocean in 2021 than the amount to be released from the Fukushima plant in one year, according to the Japanese news agency NHK, citing Chinese statistics.

'Science-, fact-based perspective'

Tokyo has guaranteed that the water from the Fukushima plant will go through a state-of-the-art filtering system that removes 62 different radioactive materials, leaving only tritium. The level of the remaining tritium will be "consistent with relevant international safety standards" and "will have a negligible radiological impact on people and the environment," Japanese officials assured.

The first batch of discharged water from the Fukushima plant contained about 190 becquerels of tritium per liter — well below the World Health Organization drinking water limit of 10,000 becquerels per liter, the officials said. Tokyo has been on a PR offensive to defend the discharge of nuclear wastewater into the Pacific. Japan will "continue efforts to gain further understanding from the international community while scientifically refuting politically motivated opinions," its ambassador to Manila, Koshikawa Kazuhiko, said in a statement last week. Japan will continue monitoring the process "in a multi-layered manner with the involvement of the IAEA," Kazuhiko said. "And if some event occurs, such as radioactivity levels exceeding standards, appropriate measures, including not discharging or suspending the discharge, will be taken." The Philippines has been cautious in endorsing the wastewater discharge, saying only that it "recognizes" the IAEA's technical expertise on which Japan based its decision.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said the Philippines "continues to look at the issue from a science- and fact-based perspective and its impact on the waters in the region." We fully agree with the DFA stand. It prevents the country from getting swept deeper into the swirling political undercurrents affecting the region.

Draining the 1 million tons of wastewater from the Fukushima plant will take 30 to 40 years. What we need from Japan is a firm commitment that it will stay the course.



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Fiji commission slams wastewater release

SUVA: The Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission in Fiji has condemned Japan's discharge of nuclear-contaminated wastewater into the ocean, urging the Pacific Island leaders to stand in solidarity to oppose Tokyo's move.

The commission said in a statement that the right to a clean and healthy environment is linked to other fundamental human rights like the right to life, health, food, water, and sanitation among others.

It implored the Fijian government to uphold its constitutional obligations to protect the rights of all persons in the country.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji, every person has the right to a clean and healthy

environment, which includes the right to have the natural world protected for the benefit of present and future generations through legislative and other measures, the statement said.

"The UN General Assembly has already adopted a resolution declaring that the right to a healthy, clean and sustainable environment is a universal human right," the commission noted, "It is the duty of everyone to protect that right."

Struck by a massive earthquake and an ensuing tsunami in March 2011, the Fukushima nuclear power plant suffered core meltdowns. It generated a massive amount of water tainted with radioactive substances from cooling down the nuclear fuel.

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Japan reports wave of Chinese phone harassment after Fukushima discharge

TOKYO, Japan (AFP) – Tokyo has urged Beijing to "ensure the safety of Japanese residents in China" after a wave of telephone harassment targeting businesses in Japan sparked by the controversial discharge of Fukushima wastewater.

While Japan insists the release of the treated water is safe – a view backed by the UN's nuclear watchdog – China has staunchly opposed it and banned all Japanese seafood imports, saying it contaminates the ocean.

The Japanese government on Sunday published new data showing waters off Fukushima continued to post radioactivity levels well within safe limits.

Calls from China began flooding Japanese businesses from Thursday, when operator TEPCO started releasing

water used to cool the stricken nuclear reactors at Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

Japanese businesses and groups, ranging from a concert hall in Tokyo to an aquarium in northern Iwate, reported that they had started receiving so many calls from Chinese speakers that they had difficulty conducting normal operations.

Hiroyuki Namazu, a senior Japanese diplomat in charge of Asian and Oceanian affairs, voiced his regret about the calls and told senior officials at the Chinese embassy in Tokyo to call for calm in China, the Japanese foreign ministry said in a statement late Saturday.

Similar incidents have also occurred in China against Japanese facilities, Namazu told Chinese embassy officials,

according to the statement.

"We strongly urge the Chinese government to take appropriate measures, such as calling on its citizens to act calmly, and to take all possible measures to ensure the safety of Japanese residents in China and Japanese diplomatic missions in China."

Tokyo's embassy in Beijing has separately urged its nationals there to refrain from speaking loudly in Japanese.

A Fukushima businessperson told the Kyodo news agency that his four restaurants and pastry shops received a total of about 1,000 calls on Friday, mostly from China.

His businesses had to unplug their phones, Kyodo said.

Fukushima city mayor Hiroshi Kohata said in a Facebook post Saturday

that the city hall had received around 200 similar calls in two days, while local schools, restaurants and hotels also became targets.

"I will report this to the Japanese government and demand action," he wrote in his post.

Chinese social media users shared videos of themselves making calls to Japanese numbers, including restaurants in Fukushima.

The Japanese environment ministry said Sunday that a fresh test of Fukushima coastal water showed no elevated levels of tritium.

The ministry added that the water samples did not show signs of gamma radiation that can come from other radioactive materials such as caesium.



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Fukushima residents are cautious after the wrecked nuclear plant began releasing treated wastewater

BY MARI YAMAGUCHI | *The Associated Press*

IWAKI, Japan—Fish auction prices at a port south of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant were mixed amid uncertainty over how seafood consumers will respond to the release of treated and diluted radioactive wastewater into the ocean.

The plant, which was damaged in the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, began sending the treated water into the Pacific on Thursday despite protests at home and in nearby countries that are adding political and diplomatic pressures to the economic worries.

Hideaki Igari, a middleman at the Numanouchi fishing port, said the price of larger flounder, Fukushima's signature fish known as Joban-mono, was more than 10 percent lower at the Friday morning auction, the first since the water release began. Prices of some average-size flounder rose, but presumably due to a limited catch, says Igari. Others fell.

It was a relatively calm market reaction to the water release. But, Igari said, "we still have to see how it goes next week."

The decades long release has been strongly opposed by fishing groups and criticized by neighboring countries. China immediately banned imports of seafood from Japan in response, adding to worries in the fisheries community and related businesses.

In Seoul on Saturday, thousands of South Koreans took to the streets to condemn the release of wastewater and to criticize the South Korean government for endorsing the plan. The protesters called on Japan to store radioactive water in tanks instead of releasing it into the Pacific Ocean.

A citizens' radiation testing center in Japan said it's getting inquiries and expects more people might bring in food, water and other samples as radiation data is now a key barometer for what to eat.

Japanese fishing groups fear the release will do more harm to the reputation of seafood from the Fukushima area. They are still striving to repair the damage to their businesses from the meltdown at the power plant after the earthquake

and tsunami.

"We now have this water after all these years of struggle when the fish market price is finally becoming stable," Igari said after Friday's auction. "Fisheries people fear that prices of the fish they catch for their living may crash again, and worry about their future living."

The Japanese government and the plant's operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, say the water must be released to make way for the facility's decommissioning and to prevent accidental leaks of insufficiently treated water. Much of tank-held water still contains radioactive materials exceeding releasable levels.

Some wastewater at the plant is recycled as coolant after treatment, and the rest is stored in around 1,000 tanks, which are filled to 98 percent of their 1.37 million-ton capacity. The tanks cover much of the complex and must be cleared out to make room for new facilities needed for the decommissioning process, officials say.

Authorities say the wastewater after treatment and dilution is safer than international standards require, and that its environmental impact will be negligible. On Friday, the first seawater samples collected after the release were significantly below the legally releasable levels, the power company said.

But, having suffered a series of accidental and intended releases of contaminated water from the plant early in the disaster, hard feelings and distrust of the government and TEPCO run deep in Fukushima—especially in the fishing community.

TEPCO says the release will take 30 years, or until the end of the plant decommissioning. People fear that could mean a tough future for youths in the fishing town, where many businesses are family-run.

Fukushima's current catch already is only about one-fifth its pre-disaster level due to a decline in the number of fishers and decreased catch sizes.

The government has allocated 80 billion yen (\$550 million) to support fisheries and seafood processing, and to combat potential reputation damage by sponsoring campaigns to promote Fukushima's Joban-mono and processed seafood. TEPCO has promised to deal with reputational damage claims, and those hurt by China's export ban.

Tetsu Nozaki, head of the Fukushima prefectural fisheries cooperatives, said in a statement that worries of the fishing community will continue for as long as the water is released.

"Our only wish is to continue fishing for generations in our home town, like we used to before the accident," Nozaki said.

Fish prices largely depend on the sentiment of wholesalers and consumers in the Tokyo region, where large portions of the Fukushima catch goes.

At the Friday auction at the Numanouchi port, the price for flounder was down from its usual level of about 3,500 yen (\$24) per kilogram (2.2 pounds) to around 3,000 yen (\$20), said Igari, the middleman.

"I suspect the result is because of the start of the treated water release from the Fukushima Daiichi and fear about its impact," he said.

Igari said the discharge is discouraging but hopes careful testing can prove the safety of their fish. "From the consumers' point of view about food safety at home, I think the best barometer is data," he said.

At Mother's Radiation Lab Fukushima in Iwaki, a citizens' testing center known as Tarachine, tests were being conducted on water samples, including on tritium levels for seawater that the lab collected from just off the Fukushima Daiichi plant before the release.

Lab director Ai Kimura said anyone can bring in food, water or even soil, though the lab has big backlogs because testing takes time.

She joined the lab after regretting

she might not have fully protected her daughters because of the lack of information and knowledge earlier in the disaster. She says having independent test results is important not because of distrust of government data, but because "we learned over the past 12 years the importance of testing in order to get data" on what mothers want to know for serving safe and healthy food to their children and families. Kimura said people have different views about safety—some are fine with government standards, others want them to be as close to zero as possible.

"It's very difficult to make everyone feelsafe.... That's why we conduct testing so we can visualize data on food from different places and help people have more options to make a decision," she said.

Kimura said the lab's testing has shown Fukushima fish to be safe over the past few years, and she happily eats local fish. "It's totally fine to eat fish that does not contain radiation," she said. But now the treated wastewater release will bring new questions, she said.

Aeon, a major supermarket chain that has been testing cesium and iodine levels in fish, announced plans to also test for tritium, a radionuclide inseparable from water.

Katsumasa Okawa, a fish store and restaurant operator who was at one of his four shops Thursday, said customers were sparse after the plant started its final steps of the treated water release at 1 p.m. and media reports covered the development.

But on Friday, he said, his Yamako seafood restaurant next to Iwaki's main train station seemed to be doing business as usual, with customers coming in and out during lunchtime.

Okawa said he's been looking forward to the wastewater draining as a big step toward decommissioning the nuclear plant. "I feel more at ease thinking those tanks will finally go away."

Okawa, who said he did voluntary testing of his products for a number of years after the disaster, is worried about returning to the days of radiation testing and data as a benchmark of what to eat.



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NO SCIENTIFIC BASIS

RECLAMATION AGENCY JUSTIFIES BAY PROJECTS

By Marlon Ramos
@MRamosINQ

The reclamation projects in Manila Bay were actually designed to shield the communities along its coast from tsunamis and storm surges, an official of the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) claimed on Sunday.

"The reason why these reclamation projects were on a higher elevation is that these also serve as coastal protection," PRA Assistant General Manager Joseph Literal said in a statement.

Contrary to the fears of some senators, Literal said the reclamation activities would not worsen the flooding in the metropolis since they were designed with "climate change projections" in mind.

The expansion of the coastal areas used the sprawling SM Mall of Asia complex in Pasay City as its baseline, according to the PRA official.

Literal also clarified that of the 22 reclamation projects that the Department of Envi-

ronment and Natural Resources suspended, only 13 were in Manila Bay.

"These projects are handled by various local governments, such as Navotas, Manila, Pasay, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Bacoor and the province of Cavite," he said.

Two weeks ago, President Marcos said only one of the ongoing reclamation activities was allowed to continue pending the review being conducted by the government.

As to concerns that the construction of the man-made coastal lands would block the picturesque sunset in Manila Bay, the PRA official said the public would actually have "a bigger viewing deck" once the reclaimed areas are completed.

Said Literal: "The people in Metro Manila will have opportunities to view the sunset from different vantage points."

"There will be no obstruction," he stressed, "since they will be at the front of Manila Bay." INQ



NEWS

PRA exec defends reclamation projects

Assistant General Manager Joseph Literal of the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) on Sunday said reclamation projects in Manila Bay are designed to shield coastal communities from tsunamis and storm surges. Since these projects are "on a higher elevation," they would "serve as coastal protection," he said, adding that reclamation activities would not worsen flooding as these comply with "climate change projections." —STORY BY MARLON RAMOS

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Reclamation protection vs tsunamis – PRA exec

LAND reclamations in coastal areas can act as protection against storm surges and tsunamis and will likely prevent flooding, a Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) official said.

PRA Assistant General Manager Joseph Literal on Sunday allayed fears over reclamations in Manila Bay after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) issued suspension orders against 22 projects pending the result of its cumulative impact assessment.

The issuance of the suspension order was on the order of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

Literal said the purpose of building up the land in a reclamation project to a higher level is to make it serve as coastal protection.

In the Manila Bay reclamation projects, they are elevated to survive

storm surges and tsunamis, in compliance with climate change projections.

Likewise, the PRA official disputed claims of flooding in Metro Manila, saying that the Pasay Coastal Development Project is an island reclamation with the Mall of Asia as its baseline.

Literal gave assurances to the public that they can still enjoy the Manila Bay sunset upon the completion of the reclamation projects, as a bigger viewing deck in different locations will be provided to admire the scenery.

"People in Metro Manila have longer and more opportunities to view the sunset from a different vantage point. There is no obstruction because they are right there in front of Manila Bay," the PRA official pointed out.

He clarified that only 13 of the

22 reclamation projects suspended by the DENR are in Manila Bay.

These projects are handled by various local government units, such as the cities of Navotas, Manila, Pasay, Parañaque, Las Piñas and Bacoor, and the province of Cavite.

The PRA was created to serve primarily as the clearinghouse for all reclamation projects in the country. It was designated as the agency primarily responsible for integrating, coordinating, and directing all reclamation projects on behalf of the national government.

Revocation, not suspension

For the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya), mere suspension of reclamation proj-

ects is not enough, citing the environmental impact the dredging activities are causing.

The group urged the DENR to revoke the environmental compliance certificate and other permits for various land reclamation projects in Manila Bay that were found to be liable for alleged environmental violations.

Pamalakaya said those found violating environmental laws should be held accountable for the destruction of Manila Bay, an important fishing ground in Luzon, and the displacement of communities.

For instance, the group cited the need to restore the more than 300 fishing families who were forcibly evacuated from Bacoor, Cavite, due to land reclamation.

FRANCO JOSE C. BAROÑA



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Proposal to ban use of plastic in election campaign backed

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

[@jonlmayuga](#)

A LOCAL waste and pollution watchdog expressed support behind a proposed measure that will ban the use of plastic in election campaigns.

The EcoWaste Coalition issued last Sunday a statement of support behind Senate Bill 1762 filed by Senator Raffy T. Tulfo. SB 1762 seeks to amend Republic Act 9006 or the "Fair Election Act" as candidates for the upcoming Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections (BSKE) prepare to file their Certificates of Candidacy starting August 28.

As Tulfo's proposed measure has not yet been enacted into law, the group is appealing to all BSKE candidates to voluntarily moderate their use of tarpaulins to woo voters, noting that most tarpaulins are made of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic. The latter, according to the group, is produced using carcinogenic substances like vinyl chloride and cadmium.

The group further requested the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to use its powers to monitor, control and prevent the excessive and inappropriately-placed tarpaulins, including candidates' promotional back-to-school, fiesta and related "greetings," before, during and even after the official campaign period.

In recommending a prohibition on plastic posters, Tulfo noted the excessive use of tarpaulins during the campaign

season, which "mostly end up in landfills and sometimes in bodies of water, causing pollution and flood," adding "they do not degrade quickly and may take 1,000 years to decompose."

The senator, likewise, cited the results of the laboratory tests commissioned by the EcoWaste Coalition that detected cadmium, a carcinogen and renal toxin, on the campaign tarpaulins of some presidential aspirants in the elections held in 2022.

Laboratory tests commissioned by the group found 607 to 775 parts per million (ppm) of cadmium on the multicolored coatings and 384 to 546 ppm on the white sheet of six presidential campaign tarpaulins that were analyzed. Under the European Union's "Cadmium Directive," the total amount of cadmium on plastic, paint and polymer stabilizers should not exceed 100 ppm whatever their use or intended final purpose.

Aside from cadmium, PVC plastic may contain lead pigment, stabilizer and phthalates to make such plastic soft and flexible. These additives can migrate from PVC products to consumers and may also be released to the environment when such products are dumped or burned, the group said.

The EcoWaste Coalition also pointed out that incinerating chlorinated plastics like PVC generates highly toxic by-product dioxins and furans, known as persistent organic pollutants targeted for continuing minimization and, where feasible, ultimate elimination under the "Stockholm Convention."



Cost of plastic waste cleanup to hit \$297M

By CAI U. ORDINARIO
@cauordinario

THE total clean-up of plastic pollution in seven major rivers across Southeast Asia will cost \$297 million, according to environment experts.

This is according to an Asian Development Blog penned by National University of Singapore Centre for Nature-based Climate Solutions and Tropical Marine Science Institute's Audrey Tan and Asian Development Bank's Francesco Ricciardi.

Tan and Ricciardi said plastic pollution is costing Southeast Asian countries \$23,100 to \$270,000 per square kilometer of coral reef.

"As government coffers are limited, the private sector has to be brought into the discussions. That requires a pipeline of projects that not only meet environmental targets but are also profit-making. Such projects, however, are few and far between," the experts said.

Citing a 2021 ADB report, Tan and Ricciardi said there is an annual funding gap of \$459

billion that needs to be filled before countries can fully access opportunities in sustainable coastal infrastructure, wastewater treatment, sustainable tourism and food production.

One recommendation to plug this gap is through blended finance—the combination of public and private capital. But other innovative financial tools could also help, the authors said.

These innovative financial tools include the rise of carbon markets which could inject new funds for ocean conservation through the sale of carbon credits from the

protection of coastal or marine habitats like mangroves.

The list includes blue bonds and insurance schemes that are also being developed to improve the resilience of coastal habitats.

"Parametric insurance schemes that pay out for reef restoration after a hurricane have been rolled out to protect the Mesoamerican reef, and similar schemes are being developed for Asia and the Pacific," the experts said.

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Cost of plastic waste cleanup to hit \$297M

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Tan and Ricciardi said addressing plastic pollution is important in climate change adaptation and mitigation. This is not only because of the costs but also the fact that over 70 percent of the earth is covered by water.

They said the sustainable use of ocean resources for development, improved livelihoods, and job creation are critical in the region and the world's climate change efforts.

These efforts will go a long way, especially now that ocean temperatures are expected to hit their highest level in history.

The experts said this month, it is estimated that the global average daily sea surface temperatures will reach 20.96 degrees Celsius, breaking the 2016 record of 20.95 degrees Celsius, according to the Copernicus climate modelling service.

"The world's oceans play a critical role in regulating the climate. They put the

brakes on how fast the world is warming by absorbing vast amounts of heat and planet-warming carbon dioxide, and also make the higher latitudes more liveable by transferring heat from the tropics to the poles," Tan and Ricciardi said.

They also noted that oceans present a wealth of untapped resources for cutting emissions, dealing with climate impacts and delivering co-benefits to communities and biodiversity.

The deep sea keeps carbon out of the atmosphere, mangroves protect communities from coastal disasters, and marine genetic resources pave the way for medical innovations—like fluorescent proteins in jellyfish that can help detect cancer.

"There is still much of the blue realm that humanity has yet to discover, but current knowledge of oceanic ecosystems already indicates they have immense value to societies," Tan and Ricciardi said.



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DENR: PRODUCTS LIKELY FAKE

GREEN GROUP SEEKS PROBE OF SALE OF 'AMULETS,' ITEMS FROM MT. BANAHAW

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
@dtmallarijrnq

LUCENA CITY—An officer of environmental law group “Tanggol Kalikasan” (TK) urged the authorities to investigate the unabated selling of charms, amulets, sacred objects, plants and flowers taken from the mystical Mt. Banahaw.

Jay Lim, project officer of TK, noted the widespread sale, both online and in physical stores, of flora, fauna (including wood and plant species native to the mountain) and other exotic items that were advertised as originating from Banahaw and its adjacent mountain, San Cristobal.

“This should be investigated by the appropriate authorities because they (sellers) claim that the materials were sourced from Mt. Banahaw,” Lim said in

an interview on Saturday.

He added: “It seems that some form of gathering might be happening within the protected area without the knowledge of government authorities.”

The 11,133-hectare Banahaw and San Cristobal mountain ranges straddle the towns of Lucban, Tayabas, Sariaya, Candelaria and Dolores in Quezon, and parts of the towns of Rizal, Nagcarlan, Liliw and Majayjay and San Pablo City in Laguna province.

‘Fake items’

In 2004, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sealed off the bosom of Banahaw to rehabilitate the mountain after years of abuse by pilgrims and trekkers. It declared the mountains’ peaks off-limits to the public.

On Dec. 11, 2009, then Pres-

ident Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo declared the two mountains as protected areas under Republic Act No. 9847.

Magtanggol Barrion, DENR forest ranger assigned in Banahaw and San Cristobal, brushed aside the selling of products and religious items supposedly from Banahaw.

“In my opinion, they might be using the name of Mt. Banahaw to deceive customers. Those materials didn’t come from Banahaw,” Barrion said in an online interview on Saturday.

Lim said that some sellers were probably scammers offering “fake items” from Banahaw.

These items supposedly sourced from Banahaw are coveted by buyers, as possessors believed these would protect them against diseases and danger or would bring them good luck

But Lim said the DENR could not just dismiss the claim.

“What if some of them are genuine and truly sourced from Banahaw? It only meant that an illegal activity had been committed and thus should be investigated,” Lim, who is also a mountaineer, emphasized.

Barrion stressed the rules on the mountain closures remained enforced except for areas kept open for research purposes. But researchers should first obtain a permit from the local Protected Area Management Office as part of the requirement to enter Mounts Banahaw and San Cristobal, he added.

Scientific study

Manny Calayag, a member of the local Protected Area Management Board (PAMB), said they will discuss the is-

sue in their next meeting. The PAMB is a multisectoral body tasked by the government to monitor protected areas.

Calayag also opined that the claims of the sellers were not credible, as everything within the two mountains were not allowed to be taken out, “except with a permit.”

“However, the permit given is only for scientific study, and it identifies what is being collected and how much is being taken. It’s not allowed to be sold or turned into a business,” he explained.

Despite the prohibition, some individuals still managed to sneak into Banahaw via new trails established by unscrupulous villagers, mountaineers and explorers of mystic items that they would sell, the Inquirer learned.

The items for sale included



CHARMS These amulets and charms, supposedly made from mystical wood sourced from Mt. Banahaw, are openly sold in Dolores town in Quezon province during Holy Week in 2017. —DELFIN T. MALLARI JR.

amulets, charms and religious icons supposedly made from indigenous hardwood called “dignum,” which turns black as it ages, and which folklore claimed to be the same wood species used to make the cross where Jesus Christ was nailed to. INQ



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DLSU UNIVERSITY FELLOW, PARTNERS PUSH FOR MARINE 'HOPE SPOT'

In July, international marine conservation nonprofit Mission Blue named the Verde Island Passage (VIP) in Southern Luzon a "Hope Spot."

The new status paves the way for additional protection for the area, a critical step in preserving the region's rich marine biodiversity, which is under attack from industrial activities.

DLSU University Fellow and Br. Alfred Shields FSC Ocean Research Center (SHORE) Director Dr. Wilfredo Licuanan and Senior Curator of Invertebrate Zoology at California Academy of Sciences Dr. Terrence Gosliner were named Hope Spot Champions for their efforts to push for the expansion of the VIP Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network, which covers 1.14 million hectares of coral reef and has been described as one of the most biodiverse places on earth.

Gosliner and Licuanan, with their partner institutions, have been conducting primary research on advancing coral rearing and spawning techniques. They are developing these to be deployed for restoration



Verde Island Passage between Southern Luzon and Northern Mindoro Island, extending from Lubang Island (west) and Tablas Island (east).

work in areas that lack natural resilience.

Part of their work is to identify particularly resilient coral species and reefs and establish national standardization across reef monitoring techniques. For this they have partnered with ABS-CBN Foundation to train community volunteers on

citizen science tasks such as monitoring reefs and collecting data.

Gosliner and Licuanan are also seeking the inclusion of the VIP as a National Integrated Protected Area System of the Philippines and to have it declared as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area by the International Maritime Organization (IMO).



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FAO: Efforts to safeguard biodiversity receive welcome boost

THE Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) said the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund has been launched during the Seventh Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Assembly in Vancouver, Canada.

The newly established fund will facilitate financing for developing countries—which are often the most biodiverse—to enhance their ability to protect, restore and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources, as established through The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted by 196 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at COP15 in December 2022.

“The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework places agrifood systems at the forefront of an enormous challenge that will require important financial resources,

coordination, and commitment to implement win-win solutions for people and the planet. The new Fund is also an essential part of climate action, and a critical step towards making these solutions a reality,” FAO Deputy Director-General Maria Helena Semedo said in a statement.

The fund, uniquely dedicated to supporting the Framework and its action towards halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030 and putting nature on a recovery path by 2050, provides an opportunity to receive funding from all sources. Two countries have announced initial contributions to start its capitalization: Canada pledged 200 million Canadian dollars and the United Kingdom 10 million pounds.

FAO said biodiversity is the variety of life at genetic, species and ecosystem levels. It is essential for food and agriculture and

indispensable to food security and sustainable development. It includes the domesticated plants and animals that are part of crop, livestock, forest or aquaculture systems, harvested forest and aquatic species, the wild relatives of domesticated species, and other wild species harvested for food and other products.

Over half of the targets of the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework are directly related to agrifood sectors, and FAO is the custodian of four of the Framework’s headline indicators: ecosystem restoration, fish stocks, areas under productive and sustainable agriculture, and sustainable forest management.

“The transformation of agrifood systems to make them more sustainable can unlock solutions that generate multiple benefits, including safeguarding biodiversity which

can help address the challenges posed by diverse and changing environmental conditions and socioeconomic circumstances.”

Actions such as diversifying production systems, for example by using multiple species, breeds or varieties, integrating the use of crop, livestock, forest and aquatic biodiversity, or promoting habitat diversity in the local landscape or seascape, increase resilience, tackle the climate crisis, improve livelihoods and support food security and nutrition.

FAO is a member of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert group on Global Biodiversity Framework Indicators and is also co-leading, with the UN Environment Program, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration which actively contributes to the monitoring and reporting of Target 2 of the Kunming-Montreal GBF related to restoring degraded areas.



LWUA target: Water for 7.2M households by 2028

THE Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) aims to provide potable water to about 7.2 million families, or around 29 million individuals, before the end of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s term in 2028, the agency's top official said.

Speaking at SMNI's "Business and Politics" program hosted by *The Manila Times* Chairman and CEO Dante "Klink" Ang 2nd, LWUA Administrator Vicente Homer Revil said the agency is heeding the President's call to ensure the country's water security.

LWUA, a government-owned and -controlled corporation, provides clean water to around 5.4 million households, or about 22.3 million people, and operates with 532 water districts outside

Metro Manila.

Revil affirmed that the goal is "achievable," as LWUA pushes for the "Patubig sa Buong Bayan at Mamamayan" legacy projects — including over 700 water supply and 40 sanitation projects.

"We just have to put our act together. We have to align our different agencies to ensure that these legacy projects will come into fruition during this term," Revil said.

According to the National Water Resources Board, about 11 million households lack access to clean water, and they draw water from "unsafe" sources.

In his second State of the Nation Address, Marcos said the government will give "special focus" on water security and

► **WaterA2**

■ WATER FROM A1

LWUA target: Water for 7.2M households by 2028

that efforts should be "cohesive, centralized, and systematic" and not "scattershot."

"I would like to say that this is the only administration who really focus[es] on water... because he (President Marcos) wants to say that, indeed, water is life, and it is for every Filipino," Revil said.

He also said the agency will ask lawmakers to allocate a P5-billion budget for Level 3 distribution directly serving households through pipelines and faucets.

"So, in the next five years before 2028, we'll be able to increase by 30 percent our household connections throughout the country. That is our answer to the call of our President," Revil said.

The bulk of the agency's budget is earmarked for Level 1 and 2 water services, he noted. In Level 1, people get their water directly from the source, like wells. In Level 2, there is only communal water

for a specific area.

Revil said that Level 3 is the "ideal service of water" because it is a safe, affordable and sustainable way of delivering water to households.

The Philippine Statistics Authority said that at least 14 Filipinos died every day between 2010 and 2019 due to waterborne diseases such as bloody diarrhea, cholera, viral hepatitis, typhoid and paratyphoid fever, and leptospirosis.

LWUA envisions that water in the country that comes from the source is treated, transmitted through pipelines and directly served to households, Revil said.

"Together with [the] Local Water Utilities Administration [and] the water districts, under the leadership of this administration, we are here to ensure that there is enough water for every Filipino," he said.

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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
PROVINCIAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES
Brgy. Lanot, Roxas City, Province of Capiz
Tel/Fax No. (036) 621-60-69; 621-52-40; 621-00-13
Email Add: penrocont@gmail.com

July 19, 2023


LEASE OF PUBLIC LAND

Notice is hereby given that DENR-PENRO Capiz at Brgy. Lanot, Roxas City, Capiz will accept oral or written bids not later than ten (10) o'clock A.M. on September 19, 2023 for the lease of the tract of land herein below described:

Location	: Brgy. Culasi, Roxas City, Capiz
Description	: A parcel of public land (foreshore area) adjoining Visayan Sea, under plan FlO-061914-000130
Boundaries	: North : Visayan Sea East : Visayan Sea South : Visayan Sea West : Visayan Sea
Area	: 86,458 square meters, more or less
Appraised Value of Land	: P1p 255,051,100.00
Value of Improvements	: P1p 9,800,000.00
Applicant	: PETRON CORPORATION - ROXAS DEPOT REP. BY RAMON S. ANG AND EMMANUEL E. ERANA

The right to lease the land will be awarded to the person offering the highest annual rental, which shall not be less than three per centum (3%) of the value of the land plus one per centum (1%) of the value of the proposed and/or existing improvement. In order that a person may be entitled to participate in the bidding, he must be a qualified public land applicant and must, before the commencement of the same, make a deposit equivalent to at least (3) months rental. Only deposit in cash, money order, treasury warrant, certified checks, cashier's check or manager's check can be accepted. A person bidding in representation of another may do so under a duly executed power of attorney. During the bidding, the bidder has to make an additional deposit every time his bid is raised, to complete the three (3) months rental, otherwise, such bid as raised shall not be accepted. The right is reserved to reject any or all bids.

Brgy. Lanot, Roxas City, Capiz, Philippines, July 19, 2023.

Very truly yours,

VICENTINA SARDINA
PENRO Officer

MT - July 24 & 31, Aug. 7, 14, 21 & 28, 2023