

21 JULY 2023 Friday



DENR

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DENR takes serious look at Manila Bay reclamation projects

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has expressed deep concern over the “level of science and level of evaluation” that are currently available concerning reclamation projects in Manila Bay.

According to reports, there are over 20 planned reclamation projects in Manila Bay, about half of it already underway.

What is the overall impact of these reclamation projects? To get a better view of its impact, the DENR is embarking on an in-depth study to determine the potential environmental risks posed by the reclamation projects.

The DENR is tapping experts to study the impact and determine if the agency can “meet up with the challenges on marine biodiversity.”

The United Nations describes marine biodiversity as the variety of life in the ocean and seas that is a critical aspect of all three pillars of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental — supporting the healthy functioning of the planet and providing services that underpin the health, well-being and prosperity of humanity.

That underscores the importance of the ocean and the seas, in this case Manila Bay.

Aside from looking at marine biodiversity, the DENR will also evaluate chemical oceanography — the composition of water in the ocean — and how these reclamation activities affect marine

life.

In fact, in a recent media briefing in Malacañang it was revealed that the DENR has already flagged one party for potential non-compliance with government regulations.

The DENR is now holding discussions with the party over these compliance issues to find out whether it has an explanation on the potential non-compliance observed.

With potential risks, environment groups and other stakeholders have urged President Marcos to unconditionally revoke all Environmental Compliance Certificates (ECCs) issued for Manila Bay reclamation projects.

Following the call, the DENR has been given some latitude to present a cumulative impact assessment—a global practice whenever there are several projects in a single ecosystem—of the different individual projects in Manila Bay. Evaluations have been conducted in the past, but these were done on an individual basis.

We commend the DENR’s determination to assess the overall impact of these reclamation projects. This should serve as a warning to those who disregard the social and environmental issues adversely affected by these projects.

We look forward to the result of this cumulative impact assessment and hope that it will guide the government in coming up with a sustainable development policy that governs Manila Bay projects.



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Roni Santiago
MANILA BULLETIN
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Decentralized—but guided—water governance

A decisive national direction, together with local community empowerment, is required to propel our nation toward a prosperous “bagong lipunan.”

An indication of this direction was seen during the July 19 water summit spearheaded by Dindo Manhit of Stratbase ADR Institute. The new national government-guided direction was given by Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Undersecretary Carlos Primo David.

He explained that the new digital technology, which showed a complete mapping of our country’s rivers, creeks and streams, would guide resource distribution.

The decentralization component was highlighted by DENR Secretary Antonia Yulo-Loyza. She emphatically stated that “water is a shared responsibility of the community,” and therefore, the natural direction must be operationalized and implemented by each local community with its unique needs and solutions.

Decentralization

For agriculture, extension work was transferred under the jurisdiction of local government units, except they were not guided effectively by the national government. Consequently, many of our 17,000 agriculture extension workers did not follow a national direction. With

COMMENTARY

ERNESTO M. ORDOÑEZ

this lack of focused technology transfer, we transformed from a global agriculture leader to an agriculture laggard.

Fortunately, this is now being corrected through the Department of Agriculture (DA)-guided Provincial Agriculture and Fisheries Extension System.

For water, there is a serious lack of local empowerment. It has been shown in many countries that effective water governance is done through local public-private sector River Basin Management Councils (RBMCs). RBMCs coordinate public and private water plans in various areas.

Our 18 strategic RBMCs, however, can’t work effectively with a low annual budget of just P2 million each. An RBMC leader said that with a P10-million budget, necessary coordination can be implemented to harness the billions of pesos in water initiatives.

Prior studies

The water governance studies of the Asian Development Bank in 2013 and in 2016 saw the Philippines rank in the bottom third of 48 countries. To improve the results, a public-private water governance committee was created for 2017 to 2018.

Representing the government were the Office of the President, which served as chair, and members from five departments (DENR, DA, Department of Public Works and Highways or DPWH, Department of Interior and Local Government, and National Economic and Development Authority). From the private sector were the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Agriculture Alliance (AA).

Comprising AA is the Alyansa Agrikultura (representing farmers and fisherfolk), the Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food (agribusiness) and the Coalition for Agriculture Modernization in the Philippines (science and academe).

The coordination gave way to seven water summits that churned out a seven-volume report, with each volume signed by a dean of the University of the Philippines Los Baños. This helped increase our water governance rating of “1” in 2013 to a “2” in 2016 and then a “3” in 2020 (out of the highest score of “5”).

Three priorities

Government priorities have already been identified. The first is an apex body that will coordinate 32 water-related government agencies. This was addressed through a legislative priority ironed out during the President’s State of the Nation Address last year and the creation of a National Water Re-

source Management Office under the DENR last April 27.

The second requirement is effective water harvesting. While India collects 60 percent of its water, we collect only 4 percent.

Fortunately, David announced at the forum that a significant part of the P276-billion DPWH budget for flood control would now be “repurposed so [there] will no longer be dikes but water impounding projects, small water hydro dams, and reservoirs for water supply of communities and irrigation.”

The third requirement is local empowerment through the RBMCs. This is the only requirement that has not been addressed. It is hoped that this time, Congress will approve the necessary budget for the 18 critical RBMCs.

Without local empowerment and focused implementation, our water governance will continue to suffer. Climate change is upon us, with the onset of El Niño its most obvious and devastating manifestation. It is about time we have an effective water governance, with guided decentralization as its essential feature. INQ



The author is Agriwatch chair, former secretary of presidential flagship programs and projects, and former undersecretary of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Trade and Industry. Contact is agriwatch_phil@yahoo.



APRI plants more than 3,000 tree seedlings in Albay and Batangas

AP Renewables Inc. (APRI), a wholly-owned subsidiary of AboitizPower, simultaneously planted a total of 3,450 tree seedlings in celebration of Arbor Day last June 24, 2023. This included 1,500 in St. Elena, Sto. Tomas, Batangas, and an additional 1,950 in Naga, Tiwi, Albay.

Aside from carbon sequestration, Arbor Day also aims to preserve the geothermal reservoir in Makiling-Banahaw (MakBan) and Tiwi. Narra, Pili, Amugis, Kama-gong, and Dau tree seedlings were planted during the event as recommended by the local community.

MakBan Watershed Area – National Power Corporation (MB-WAT-NPC) forester Ranil Alvarez emphasized, “Each tree absorbs carbon dioxide. Therefore, they are very important in decreasing air pollutants. Trees also serve as a protection to low-land areas by prohibiting the risks of flooding and landslides.”

Alvarez added that trees help maintain the geothermal energy mechanism beneath the ground.

Mt. Malaraya Environment Protection Council, Inc. (MMEPCI) President Pedro Latore also expressed his gratitude to the volunteers.

“What we do is very important not only for us but for all the communities surrounding this mountain. I am very happy that APRI became a part of this program,” said Latore.

APRI SVP for Operations Ireneo Itoses said, “The AboitizPower’s purpose of ‘Transforming Energy for a Better World’ is a testament to our support to the global Sustainable Development Goal #13, Climate Action. May this activity remind us of our roles as environmental stewards.”

Almost 200 participants

APRI employee Diane Pitallano volunteered during the tree-planting activity in Sta. Elena, Sto. Tomas, Batangas.

from different organizations such as APRI (including scholars), Aboitiz Construction Inc. (ACI), MBWAT-NPC, MMEPCI, Philippine National Police (PNP) – Tiwi, Barangay Naga officials, Tiwi Watershed Area Team of National Power Corporation (TWAT-NPC), and Capalonga Mangrove Development Association Inc. (CAMADA) joined efforts in making the event successful.

Arbor Day is a nationwide celebration institutionalized by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in the observance of planting trees and ornamentals since 2004.



APRI scholars, PNP Tiwi officials, Barangay Naga officials, Tiwi Watershed Area Team of NPC, and CAMADA joined forces in the tree planting activity led by APRI Tiwi Geothermal Power Plant.



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Antoinette Taus, founder and executive director of CORA.

Uniqlo PH, Planet Cora host coastal cleanup

Uniqlo PH, in partnership with CORA (Communities Organized for Resource Allocation), hosted a coastal cleanup event earlier this week at the Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park (LPPWP) along Manila Bay.

Antoinette Taus, founder and executive director of CORA – a nonprofit organization committed to fostering sustainable development in the Philippines – participated in picking up trash along with other volunteers. She also shared her organization's goals and inspired everyone to reduce their plastic waste.

Teachers, environment groups, media, and even students joined as well to help clean the beachside area.

Sacks, gloves, and tongs were given to the volunteers to help collect the trash.

The collected trash was separated into six groups: plastic bottles, soft plastics (candy wrappers and plastic bags), styrofoam, straws, rubber (shoes and slippers), and other items (small toys, lighters, cloth, etc.). It was then weighed on a scale to record the data on the collected trash.

After the cleanup, participants shared their experiences from the event. Some shared their personal stories; a participant expressed that it was her first-ever clean-up event and was excited to participate in more such events in the future. (Rodmill Lopez)



Hiking in the rainy season? Here's why it could be a good idea



THE GREEN TEA
BILLIE DUMALIANG

The rainy season is upon us, but should it stop us from going on outdoor adventures? While precautions must always be taken, hiking and enjoying your local tropical rainforest or national park can be a special experience during the wet season. Here's why:

The weather gives rise to an ethereal atmosphere. Deep hues of blue, green, and gray enrich the scenery. Clouds shroud the treetops and rainbows assemble after the rain. There's always something mystical about exploring the jungle during this time – the sound of raindrops, the smell of the grass, and even the taste of the air will calm our minds.

Second, the rainy season gives rise to a new set of species you might spot along the hiking trails. This is not surprising since tropical rainforests are home to almost half of the earth's species, and



Tropical forest over limestone of Masungi Georeserve shrouded in a sea of clouds. (Photo by Kal Joffres)

are the most biodiverse terrestrial ecosystems on the planet.

At the Masungi Georeserve in Rizal Province, the *Armorphophalus* are some of the most interesting plants to spot along the trails once the rainy season starts. With its huge "corpse flower" growing on the forest floor, its striking dark brown-purple features, and the occasional foul smell, this unique species locally called *pungapong* is a sight to behold.

Third, hiking during the rainy season can be much cooler than hiking during the sunny, summer season. This could make your journey much more enjoyable and comfortable. For skincare enthusiasts like me, the overcast skies are an absolute plus.

Overall, hiking in the rainy season is an opportunity for true solace and solitude. With less people on the trails, and nature's bounty at



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full display, exploring the outdoors in this season is an experience you won't soon forget.

Here are some tips when doing so: Wear non-slip shoes (preferably waterproof boots!) and quick-drying clothes, and bring a light rain jacket and a waterproof backpack or sack. Continue to monitor the weather for advisories on hazards, and avoid the lightning storms.

With half of the year in the Philippines described as the rainy season,

the rain shouldn't stop us from exploring the great outdoors. With the right mindset, self-awareness, and preparedness, it can be an enchanting and healing experience for everyone to enjoy.

Last June 22, we celebrated World Rainforest Day to raise awareness for our rainforests. Rainforests are some of humanity's greatest partners in the fight against the climate crisis. They are the under-appreciated treasures of the Philippines which give us water, food, and medicine for our collective survival. I hope Filipinos everywhere will realize that paradise is in our own backyard, waiting to be enjoyed and loved — rain or shine.



Pungapong (*Amorphophallus*) plants thrive during the rainy season at Masungi Georeserve. (Photo by Renz Perez)



Millions suffer from extreme heat in three continents

DEADLY HEAT. A person rests at the First Congregational United Church of Christ shelter in Phoenix, Arizona. The church opened its doors, providing water, food, and refreshments for residents seeking relief from the heat. Temperature forecasts for Europe and the Mediterranean (inset) showed the world is on track for its hottest July since measurements began, the European Union's climate observatory said. **AFP**

MILLIONS suffered through intense heat Wednesday as fires raged, health worries mounted and the world appeared headed for its hottest month of July on record.

As temperature records tumbled on three continents, experts pointed the finger at climate change driven by the burning of fossil fuels, saying global warming had a key role in

destructive weather.

Governments and the World Health Organization issued warnings as vulnerable parts of the population suffered. In Greece, two forest fires, fanned by

strong winds, were raging to the west of Athens, and another on the tourist island of Rhodes where residents had to decide whether to flee.

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"I am not leaving. I started building this house when I was 27 years old by myself," said Dimitris Michaelous, a resident in the fire-threatened town of Pournari.

Greece's firefighters said Romania, Slovakia and Poland would send some 230 firefighters to help it tackle the blazes.

Polish fire services said 149 firefighters were on their way to Greece -- 2,000 kilometers (1,250 miles) away -- aboard 49 vehicles.

France recorded temperatures of up to 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in the country's south, including on the Mediterranean holiday island Corsica.

Beijing broke a 23-year-old record with 27 consecutive days of temperatures above 35 degrees Celsius.

'My skin is burning'

"At noon, it feels like the sun is roasting my legs, it feels like my skin is burning," said Qiu Yichong, a 22-year-old student.

Han Weili, a delivery driver, said: "Sometimes when it is very hot, I feel a little confused or dizzy."

The Beijing government urged the elderly to stay indoors and children to shorten outdoor playtime to reduce exposure to the heat and ground-level ozone pollution.

People were cranking up air conditioning, leading to a surge in energy demand.

The World Health Organization said the extreme heat was straining health care systems, hitting older people, infants and children.

The WHO said it was particularly concerned about people with cardiovas-

cular diseases, diabetes and asthma.

In the Canary Islands, some 400 firefighters battled a blaze that has ravaged 3,500 hectares of forest and forced 4,000 residents to evacuate, with authorities warning people to wear face masks outside due to poor air quality.

Temperatures were also ferocious in other parts of Spain, with three regions on red alert.

Coastal waters around Spain have hit a record high temperature for this time of the year, the national weather office said Wednesday.

The Italian islands of Sardinia and Sicily have been forecast to possibly surpass a continent-wide record of 48.8C recorded in Sicily in August 2021.

At Lanusei, near Sardinia's eastern coast, a children's summer camp was restricting beach visits to the early morning and banning sports, teacher Morgana Cucca said.

'Better at the beach'

Many throughout Italy sought escape by the sea, including outside Rome, where the heat hit 40C.

"You can at least get a little wind from the sea," said Virginia Cesario, 30, at the Focene beach near the capital.

"This has become the new normal," said Fabrizio Carozza, a 26-year-old office employee from Belgium.

In North America, meanwhile, tens of millions of people woke up to another scorcher Wednesday, having experienced dangerous heat the previous day.

'Running out of ways'

In the town of San Angelo, Texas, where temperatures were expected to reach 108F (42C), the National Weather Service said it was "running out of ways to say that it's gonna be hot out there today."

"We implore you to continue to practice heat safety," the agency said on Twitter.

And in Arizona, the mercury at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport again reached 110F on Tuesday, breaking the previous record of 18 consecutive days at or above that temperature, set in 1974.

Even Iraq, used to average July temperatures of around 32C, found it hard to cope with the heat surge, prompting the mayor of Basrah in the south to give civil servants a day off Thursday when 50C or more is forecast.

The world is on track for its hottest July since measurements began, the European Union's climate observatory said Wednesday.

"The first 15 days of July have been the warmest 15 days on record," said Carlo Buontempo, director of the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S).

The heat waves across Europe and the globe are "not one single phenomenon but several acting at the same time", said Robert Vautard, director of France's Pierre-Simon Laplace climate institute.

"But they are all strengthened by one factor: climate change."

'Climate-change hot spot'

Struck by near-record temperatures and wildfires during this week's heat-wave, the Mediterranean region is ranked as a climate-change "hot spot" by scientists.

The beaches, seafood and heritage sites in the region spanning parts of southern Europe, northern Africa and western Asia are under threat.

Here are five key threats to the region flagged by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Its reports are the most comprehensive summary of scientific knowledge on global warming. **AFP**



By MITZI
JONELLE TAN

Yolanda, Ondoy, Pepeng, Pablo, Ulysses, Odette, and Paeng.

These are some names that have been ingrained in our collective memory as Filipinos – the names of supertyphoons that devastated our country, uprooted entire communities, and destroyed families. The Philippines is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world, so it's no surprise that a recent study shows Filipino youth are among the most prone to climate anxiety.

With the ongoing climate crisis, how can we not be? This fear of the uncertain future, rooted in trauma caused by these intensifying extreme weather events, is fueled further as world leaders continuously ignore scientists, activists, and the lived experience of those impacted by the climate crisis. These so-called leaders continue to avoid and delay concrete action to rapidly phase out fossil fuels, end fossil fuel finance, and drastically cut down emissions.

The Philippine government says that addressing climate change is its priority, yet it allows the continuous destruction of our environment through reclamation projects, megadams, and large-scale mining. These projects destroy important carbon sinks that could help mitigate the climate crisis, making it more difficult for us to adapt. They say it's all in the name of development, but development for whom? Coastal communities and small fisherfolk, Indigenous Peoples, small farmers, and urban poor communities are

The truth about fighting for climate justice

Climate justice is about fighting for our community; for a chance to build and create that community; to make sure that everyone has access to a community that is safe.

all bearing the brunt of both the impact of these environmentally destructive projects and the impact of the climate crisis. Heatwaves and droughts continue to intensify and threaten our people's health and our nation's food security. Sea level rise is projected to consume large parts of the Philippines well within our lifetimes.

We have been force-fed the narrative that Filipinos are resilient and that we're doing such a great job at surviving these extreme weather events; as if it's our individual responsibility to protect ourselves from this harm. In reality, what we need is to move away from individual blame and resilience and towards infrastructural and systemic resilience.

We cannot keep on being praised for merely surviving. It is time

for us to turn that narrative of individual resilience into collective resistance. Filipinos have always fought back. We have a long history of this by activists, civil society, and environmental defenders – these are our small fisherfolk, small farmers, and Indigenous Peoples.

Bazoo de Jesus, Dexter Capuyan, Mary Joyce Lizada, and Arnulfo Aumentado.

These are some of the names that have been ingrained in the hearts of vulnerable communities but generally forgotten by the rest of us – the names of environmental defenders and Indigenous rights advocates who have recently been abducted and disappeared. We must remember their names and support the call to surface all desaparecidos.

In 2017, during Lakkayan, an annual march by Indigenous Peoples from their ancestral lands to Manila, I took one step into activism, not fully understanding the fears and risks that came along with it. I talked to a Lumad Indigenous leader who told us how they were being harassed, displaced, militarized, and killed, all for protecting the forests and mountains; their ancestral land; our planet. He shrugged, chuckled, and said, "That's why we have no choice but to fight back." It was so simple. He wasn't even trying to convince us – to him it was logical. It simply made sense to be an activist.

It was that moment that set me on a path towards joining a mass organization called Agham Youth (AY), which advocates for making science and technology serve the people. AY later became one of the founding organizations of the Youth Advocates for Climate Action



"I invite everyone to choose love, to choose life, and to fight alongside us for climate justice," says activist Mitzi Jonelle Tan.

Philippines (YACAP) alliance. YACAP now has over thirty member organizations across the Philippines and five chapters for hundreds of young individuals in North-Central Luzon, NCR, South Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

We're not doing this alone and we never have to do this alone. Climate justice is about fighting for our community; for a chance to build and create that community; to make sure that everyone has access to a community that is safe.

Climate justice isn't just about the environment or lowering carbon dioxide emissions or limiting global warming to an average of 1.5 degrees Celsius – the climate crisis is a symptom of the current destructive profit-oriented system that does not respect the physical limits of the planet and completely disregards the well-being of the majority of people who live in it.

Climate justice means recognizing how different socioeconomic problems are exacerbating the climate crisis and are exacerbated by the climate crisis. Climate justice is about fighting for life, in every sense of the word. Life as in living beings, for life as in forever, but also for a chance to live, truly live, with joy, safety, and intention.

Six years later, I still get scared,

because of both climate anxiety and the fear brought by activists being called terrorists. Something within me – something greater than fear – keeps me going. When everything feels hopeless and grim, I remember the strength of the people's movement. I remember how empires, colonizers, and dictators have fallen in the past through young revolutionaries fighting alongside the most marginalized sectors. The future that we are fighting for already exists in small pockets of resistance.

I am grounded and rooted in this reality and in my love for life, the people, and the planet. We must be bound in this fight by that love that is stronger than fear – a fear that, at its core, is also rooted in our love: the fear of losing what we love. It is through this relentless love that hard decisions are made. It is through love that we stick to these difficult tasks. It is through love that revolutions are won.

Each of us has a role and a place in the movement, and I invite everyone to choose love, to choose life, and to fight alongside us for climate justice.

Mitzi Jonelle Tan is a full-time climate justice activist based in the Philippines and the international spokesperson of Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines.



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LPA to intensify in 2 days, affect Luzon

The low-pressure area (LPA) which may develop into a tropical depression within the next 24 to 48 hours may affect some areas of Luzon in the coming days, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said on Thursday, July 20.

The LPA was last seen 720 kilometers east of Borongan, Eastern Samar at 3 p.m. on Thursday.

"Hindi pa rin inaalís ang posibilidad na maging bagyo ang LPA within the next 24 to 48 hours

(The possibility of the LPA becoming a tropical depression within the next 24 to 48 hours is still not being ruled out)," PAGASA weather specialist Rhea Torres said in its live weather report.

Torres urged the public to continue monitoring PAGASA's updates on this weather disturbance, as it may affect parts of Luzon in the coming days.

PAGASA weather specialist Patrick del Mundo on Thursday morning said that the LPA's track remains "highly uncertain."

However, based on historical cyclone tracks, he explained that

tropical cyclones that enter or form within the country's area of responsibility in July typically make landfall in Northern or Central Luzon, while others "recurve" toward Japan, avoiding landfall in the Philippines.

The most recent cyclone to hit the country was tropical storm "Dodong" (international name "Talin"), which made landfall in Isabela on July 14.

PAGASA said the LPA may begin to bring scattered rain showers and thunderstorms to Eastern Visayas, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Albay, Sorsogon, and Masbate over the next 24 hours. (Ellalyn V. Ruiz)



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LPA approaches Phl, may become Egay

By **ROMINA CABRERA**

The low-pressure area (LPA) off the coast of Eastern Samar has been forecast to develop into a tropical cyclone last night or today as it brings rains over parts of the country.

Once it develops into a tropical depression, the LPA will be given the name Egay and becomes the fifth cyclone to enter the country this year.

As of 3 p.m. yesterday, the weather disturbance was spotted 720 kilometers east of Borongan, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

PAGASA said the vortices of the LPA have yet to consolidate in the past few

days, that would have signaled its development into a tropical cyclone.

The LPA has been bringing rains over many parts of Southern Luzon and the Visayas.

It will bring scattered rainshowers over Albay, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Eastern Visayas, Masbate and Sorsogon.

Meanwhile, Metro Manila and the rest of the country will have isolated rainshowers due to the trough of the LPA and localized thunderstorms.

PAGASA warned the public to be wary of possible flash floods or landslides during moderate to at times heavy rains.



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Pagasa predicts wet weekend

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) on Thursday predicted a wet weekend in the Bicol and Eastern Visayas regions due to a low pressure area (LPA) east of Eastern Samar. The LPA was last spotted 720 kilometers east of Borongan, Eastern Samar, and may intensify into a storm in the next 48 hours, the weather bureau said in its 4 p.m. report. If it does develop into a tropical cyclone it will be given the name Egay, said Pagasa weather specialist Rhea Torres. As for the rest of the country, it will continue to experience the usual weather at this time of year, with generally fair and humid mornings, but with possible rain showers and thunderstorms in the afternoon or evening.

—CHARLIE ABARCA



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Rain dance for rain, to cast out evil

After Maynilad Water Services Inc., the water and wastewater services provider for 17 cities and municipalities in Metro Manila, announced last week that there will be everyday water interruptions for an indeterminate period because of the impending El Niño dry spell, there was a mad scramble for pails, tubs, tanks, and other water containers. It was going to be “*pila-balde*” (banish the erotic undertone) season for many, especially for those in depressed areas. All except for the privileged government officials—local and national—who have yet to install water entrapment and collection systems in this often water-logged archipelago. The irony of it all.

Desalinization, no longer a new technology, is centuries away for this nation whose leaders would rather see reclamation of land from the sea but not water minus the salt. That we are also running short of salt is another tragic-comedic story.

Sure, there have been regular news reports about the decreasing water level at the Angat Dam, the main source of Maynilad water. But despite the start of the rainy season having been officially announced by the government weather bureau, still a water crisis is to be expected, we are warned. A couple of tropical depressions have already entered the Philippine Area of Responsibility and dumped rains, so what’s with Angat Dam and the water reservoirs it supplies?

Manila Water Co. Inc., also a concessionaire for other parts of the metro, did not make similar warnings.

Girding for the worst, Maynilad customers got a taste of the unwelcome daily nighttime water interruption but—alleluia!—for one night only. Tropical Storm “Dodong” unleashed heavy rains that flooded Metro Ma-



HUMAN FACE

MA. CERES P. DOYO

nila streets and left towns and villages in Bulacan and Pampanga north of Manila still in knee-deep waters as of this writing and long after Dodong has departed.

But oh, perhaps, because of Maynilad’s ominous announcement last week, the Dumagat-Remontado indigenous community that inhabits parts of the Sierra Madre mountain range staged a rain dance to call on the heavens to water the fields and valleys and replenish the water of Angat Dam that supplies 95 percent of the metro’s water. And so the heavens opened and poured down rain accompanied by rolling thunder and blasts of lightning (“Water supply cuts on hold; MWSS cites ‘rain dance,’” News, 7/16/23).

Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System administrator Leonor Cleofas chirped: “I’m happy to say that I believe that the ancestors heard our indigenous group after they performed a rain dance [last] Monday.” Note that members of this indigenous peoples (IP) community marched from Quezon province to Metro Manila and across several provinces for more than a week early this year to protest the impending construction of the Kaliwa Dam on

their ancestral domain. The dam is supposed to boost Metro Manila’s water supply.

I have written many articles on our IPs, but I am not familiar with their rain dances that their Native American counterparts are known for. The latter are known to perform the rain dance, not only to summon rains from the sky, but to also cleanse the land of evil spirits. It is a prayer of supplication. It echoes in a saying attributed to author Paulo Coelho: “And, when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you achieve it.” And from Ralph Waldo Emerson: “Once you make a decision, the universe conspires to make it happen.”

I hope our IPs’ sacred ritual does not get defiled by mindless cultural iconoclasts who might turn it into some kind of hip-hop number or by attention-seekers who cannot tell the difference between the profound and the profane. Do not cross the line. (Examples: the clueless beauty contestant who dressed like the Santo Niño; the cross-dressers who sang and choreographed the “Our Father” like an entertain number.)

As to the rain dance’s cleansing power against evil—why not? There is much in this country that needs to be cleaned out, to be exorcised. IPs have a keen sense of what is not right, of the evil that roams the land and defiles the waters and the woodlands. They see the beautiful in its purest splendor.

Something we might not easily perceive in a sacred rain dance—the universe’s interconnectedness at work or perhaps quantum physics and the spiritual energy that it unleashes. It is a field for mystics and quantum physicists, and for those who can hear the laughter of the trees when rain gently falls.

Send feedback to cerespd@gmail.com



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
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Mayon spews more ash; sulfur dioxide emission up

More ashing events have been recorded in Mayon Volcano as it continues to be restive.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said three ashing events and three pyroclastic density currents were monitored in the past 24 hours.

Phivolcs said ashfall may occur on the

southern part of the volcano.

Ninety low-frequency volcanic earthquakes and 169 rockfall events were also monitored.

Phivolcs said sulfur dioxide emission remained high at 2,622 tons on Wednesday.

Slow effusion of lava had bulked up along

the Mi-isi (south), Bonga (southeastern) and Basud (eastern) gullies.

Lava flows reached 600 meters to 2.8 kilometers while rockfall and PDCs were deposited around four kilometers from the crater.

Phivolcs warned the public of channel-confined lahar and sediment-laden streamflows during heavy rain.

Paul Alanis, Phivolcs resident volcanologist at the Lignon Hill Observatory in Legazpi City, said deflation of the eastern lower flanks and inflation of the northwest middle flanks of Mayon were monitored, an indication that magma is continuously ascending to the surface.

"All these fluctuations, with high values in abnormal parameters mean that the overall condition of Mayon is escalating, though still within the Level 3 status," Alanis said.

Phivolcs reiterated that entry into the permanent danger zone should be prohibited as Mayon's prevailing condition could lead to a hazardous eruption within weeks or even days. — **Romina Cabrera, Cet Dematera**



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Mayon logs low-frequency quakes

By ELLALYN RUIZ

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said on Thursday, July 20, that low-frequency volcanic earthquakes (LFVQs) associated with the discrete and rapid releases of volcanic gas dominated Mayon Volcano's eruptive activity in the past 24 hours.

A total of 90 LFVQs were recorded by the Mayon Volcano Network between 5 a.m., Wednesday, July 19, and 5 a.m., Thursday.

"Some of these degassing events were accompanied by entrained ash at the crater to produce 'ashing' that drifted southwest," Phivolcs said.

Three ashing events were recorded between 10:52 p.m. on July 19 and 12:33 a.m. on July 20 where each event lasted 10 to 25 seconds and ejected a plume that reached a height of 100 meters.

Phivolcs noted that the slow lava effusion continued to feed and bulk up lava flows on Mi-isi, Bonga, and Basud gullies on Mayon Volcano's southern, southeastern, and eastern flanks.

"These lava flows have maintained distal lengths of approximately 2.8 kilometers, 2.4 kilometers, and 600 meters from the crater, respectively," it said.



BSP gaslights

THE latest press release from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) about approaching academe and other laboratories and research facilities to find a technology to recycle the polymer currency they are foisting on us is revealing. It admits that despite telling the Senate committee on banking at a hearing on why they went from abaca paper currency to polymer, that they had the technology to recycle the plastic and unsustainable polymer into plastic furniture (showing unconvincing photos of particularly unattractive plastic furniture), they do not have any technology to recycle the polymer currency at all. Calling the attention of Senators Pimentel and Cayetano.

Moreover, on the switch to polymer, the BSP said it was conducting a survey on its acceptability to the public, intimating that this was not a permanent, but an experimental change for which public opinion was solicited. Now it says that it is a done



AMBIENT VOICES

MA. ISABEL ONGPIN

deal, they will switch to polymer.

Need we say that the world does not need anymore unsustainable material like polymer? Do we need to point out how environmentally burdensome and detrimental it is? Apparently, the BSP has made the decision and we are on the road to polymer perdition.

It is the copycat behavior of the BSP that is also appalling. Without any thought of consequences, without any patriotic sense of the value of abaca to this country and the world, they discard our premier fiber used in our banknotes in exchange for polymer, saying they have the technology to recycle when they do not. Worse, they remove authentic heroes and put a bird in their place in the new banknote. History, legacy, tradition be damned.

Moreover, one of their claims is that polymer is cheaper. That is impossible, they have to pay for the technology they need to recycle and that comes at a price. It is not cheaper, but comes with expenses down the road.

Obviously, the BSP put the cart before the horse when it leaped into polymer because other countries did (usually fully developed countries) without providing for the recycling of this unsustainable material. Worse, they gaslighted the Senate that they have the technology when they do not. And now they make it plain that they have decided to go the polymer way without assessing public opinion. Incidentally, most people I know return the polymer currency they get from the ATMs to the bank to change to the traditional abaca paper currency. It is not fully acceptable to the public.

Methinks the BSP has so much money to burn that it prefers to import polymer currency, spend for the still unknown technology

to recycle it, and make obsolete its security printing press which produces the abaca-paper banknotes.

Furthermore, the BSP was the first to change a fully acceptable logo to a new one that cost more than the P3 million that people are criticizing another government agency for spending on a new logo. No use asking them how much that logo cost, they are not into truth-telling, but it is rumored to be about multiple times P3 million. Believe me, the next project will be to buy a state-of-the-art polymer printing press. We know what those government purchases entail on the matter of negotiated benefits for the negotiators. Sorry, the BSP has proved to be untrustworthy regarding its move to polymer. We have every right to be suspicious.

There is a new BSP governor. We hope he can take a look at what is going on in whatever committee, group, or kingdom of darkness that is responsible for the switch to polymer while gaslighting the public.