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**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

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**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**





'CRITICAL PART' OF SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

# DENR WANTS BETTER LIVES FOR SCAVENGERS

**By Jane Bautista**  
@janebautistaINQ

Garbage pickers and scavengers may soon have a steady source of income as entrepreneurs as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) reaffirmed its plan to look into their plight.

"This sector is still locked out of the value chain of solid waste management, but they are in fact, critical and essential as part of the supply chain," Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga said during a recent World Wildlife Fund for Nature-Philippine media event.

The so-called informal waste sector, composed of waste pickers in dumps and trash collection points in communities, is vital in the country's waste management and segregation. However, they are often excluded in policy discussions, and even in the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 (Republic Act No. 9003) whose implementing rules and regulations banned

the "unauthorized removal of recyclable material intended for collection by authorized persons."

In 2010, the National Solid Waste Management Commission adopted a national framework plan to empower trash pickers who are considered "critical actors" in supporting the operation of an environmentally acceptable solid waste management system, including segregation, collection, transfer, treatment and disposal.

With the enactment of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Act of 2022 (Republic Act No. 11898), Loyzaga saw an opportunity to include waste pickers in government programs to ensure that their rights would be protected.

She said this could be done by tapping local governments to conduct financial literacy programs and develop the entrepreneurial skills of waste collectors.

Loyzaga also stressed the need to help local governments in implementing a system of data

recording, tracking and reporting on the informal waste sector.

"By doing so, we can enhance the direction and the strategic impact of social protection programs and direct them specifically to address this sector's needs," she said.

### Partnership

In an earlier roundtable discussion about the EPR law, Loyzaga suggested transforming the collection and sorting facilities into formal activities and establishments, which could be registered and supported by the EPR system.

The EPR Act, which lapsed into law on July 23, 2022, is intended to address the mismanagement of plastic waste and maximize the material value of plastics.

The law requires large enterprises, or businesses with total assets of more than P1 billion, to establish a system to recover, treat and recycle or dispose of their plastic packaging waste after the product is consumed.

Loyzaga stressed the vi-

tal role of the waste collection and management sector, saying that it was the "backbone of the currently limited collection services and partly of recycling" in the country.

The informal sector, she said, could also be integrated as business partners through nongovernmental organizations-supported microenterprises, franchises of waste management companies, operation of local collection centers, and formation of cooperatives.

In a meeting with delegates from the United States-Asean Business Council, Loyzaga expressed hope that the council could help the DENR in improving the lives of garbage pickers and their families.

"The sector is particularly impacted by hazardous environments because of the waste that we generate and their involvement in the solid waste management industry," Loyzaga said. "We hope that we can share that advocacy and we look for ways to actually innovate."

She noted that waste picking, collection and sorting is a phenomenon happening not only in the Philippines but in all Southeast Asian countries.

"And so, we're not the only ones who have that informal sector involved in this whole circular economy. They have been locked out of the value chain but they are part of the supply chain of the circular economy," she said, referring to the system of minimizing waste and promoting a sustainable use of natural resources.

### Quezon City model

In a discussion paper published in 2021, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) pointed out the "prominent role" of the informal economy in the solid waste processing phase as it "bridged the gaps across material collection, segregation and recycling."

"Junk shops served as pseudo [materials recovery facilities] and scavengers and street collectors picked recyclables for their

market value," the analysis read.

It cited the Quezon City government which recognized the big contribution of its 91,983 waste pickers and which ramped up efforts to include the informal sector in its solid waste management system.

"Formalization has to be pursued among the informal workers and settlers whose subsistence depends on local waste management operations... these scavengers and waste pickers could be utilized as partners in segregation and recycling activities," PIDS said.

The paper also cited the rehabilitation process of the 22-hectare Payatas dump and its transition into an engineered sanitary landfill that could serve as a template for other local governments.

Payatas operated from the late 1980s to the 1990s but was shut down in 2000 after the accumulated garbage in the area triggered a landslide and buried at least 300 scavengers and residents living around the dump. INQ





# 1st in PHL: Floating solar energy project in Laguna de Bay gets DENR's chief okay

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA  
@jontmayuga

**T**HE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has put in place "stringent" rules for the issuance of environmental compliance certificates (ECC) under the Philippine Environmental Impact Statement System (PEISS) for floating photovoltaic (FPV) plants in Laguna de Bay.

DENR Undersecretary for Policy, Planning, and International Affairs Jonas R. Leones confirmed that the much-awaited guidelines for floating solar projects in Laguna de Bay were finally signed by DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga.

"We already have guidelines for the floating solar. It is already signed and it is up for publication," Leones said.

Leones, who also acts as spokesman of the DENR chief said, said the guidelines would make sure that the implications of floating solar projects would be thoroughly studied, and was a result of the collaborative effort of the DENR and the Department of Energy (DOE), which approves energy generation projects.

"There must be studies and baseline data," he said.

The department administrative order (DAO) was handed down six months after Yulo-Loyzaga issued an order in January this year halting the acceptance and processing of ECC applications for floating solar and

offshore wind energy projects, and to put in place a robust regulatory framework to address potential social, economic, and environmental impacts of such projects in Laguna de Bay.

A separate DAO putting in place the guideline for offshore wind energy projects is still being reviewed by the Department of Energy (DOE), Leones said.

One of the major considerations in coming up with the guidelines for floating solar projects is to ensure the protection and conservation of the lake's biodiversity, and the lake as an ecosystem, Leones added.

He said the implications of putting solar panels on the surface of the lake for fisheries, navigation, and other uses, including water for irrigation and drinking, would be thoroughly researched.

"The lake has many uses—we have fish pens, and Maynilad and Manila Water also draw water from the lake," Leones noted.

DENR Undersecretary for Finance, Information System and Climate Change Analiza R. Teh, said while the government promotes the shift to renewable energy (RE) harnessing natural resources such as wind, hydro, ocean current, and solar, it is imperative that economic, social, and environmental safety measures are also put in place.

"The guidelines we have developed are very thorough. We have put in place rules, to be followed in developing floating solar projects," she explained.

The guidelines, which are contained in DENR Administrative Order No. 2023-08 signed on July 17 aim to ensure that "FPV development adheres to the highest standards."

The guidelines promote the efficient use of available water resources in Laguna de Bay while maximizing clean energy generation.

With the guidelines in place, the cumulative assessment impact of all development projects within the lake would be assessed.

It also aims to foster collaboration among stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of FPVs and promotes comprehensive water use planning with robust national assessment on the carrying capacity of the lake.

More importantly, the guidelines support continuous research and innovation to improve the environmental performance and resilience of FPV plants in the face of climate change and other challenges.

The order also covers FPV projects with ECCs issued prior to the signing of the guidelines, FPV projects within the initial pre-determined area of not more than 2,000 hectares within Laguna de Bay allocated for Renewable Energy Utilization as indicated in Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) Memorandum Circular No. 2022-02.

All other projects shall be subject to appropriate guidelines to be issued, which shall consider emerging technologies that may evolve and other considerations based on

experience from the implementation of FPVs with ECCs prior to floating solar guidelines and LLDA Memorandum Circular No. 2022-02.

Specifically crafted for the Laguna de Bay, the guidelines are the first for RE projects that would harness the power of the sun to generate electricity.

Laguna de Bay, which has a catchment area of 90,000 hectares, presents a unique opportunity for the implementation of FPV due to its geographical location and the increasing demand for power and electricity in the region.

Unlike most solar farms that were built on land, however, FPV plants this time would be constructed atop a vast body of water.

Laguna de Bay, the country's largest freshwater lake, is one of the most economically important and productive lakes in the country. It has multiple uses and ecosystem services.

Aside from being one of the largest aquaculture hubs in the country where bagrus and tilapia are cultured, Laguna de Bay is also a fishing ground for small fisherfolk. It is also used for transportation using motorized bancas and its water is used for irrigation. The private water concessionaires of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS)—Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water Company also extract raw water from the lake to augment the supply coming from Angat Dam for their respective water customers.





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## Calling on DENR, DOLE: The illegal lead smelters are back



**Dr. Jesus Lim Arranza  
MAKE SENSE**

**L**AST April, we went to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) after we got data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showing that a sizeable amount of lead scraps derived from used lead acid batteries (ULABs) that are considered hazardous waste have been exiting the country annually.

It turned out that the DENR Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) was also puzzled by this because the office did not issue any permit to export scrap lead, as this goes against Republic Act 6969 and our commitment to the Basel Convention. We commend the DENR-EMB for being firm in implementing the law on the scrap lead shipment.

Our recent discovery, however, also deserves a firmer and immediate action from the DENR: the unregulated and illegal ULAB recyclers and lead smelters are back and mushrooming in several areas of the country.

Why do I say they are back?

It's because in 2011, the DENR conducted operations against these illegal smelters and some were padlocked, with cases filed against their operators.

We could not be sure if all the illegal smelters then were stopped; maybe some still probably operated clandestinely. Today, however, we can say with certainty that they are operating again.

These are probably the sources of those traders that are illegally shipping scrap lead outside of the country.

Reports we gathered from our field operators showed the presence of illegal lead smelters in Valenzuela, Bulacan, Pampanga, Tarlac, Cavite, Cebu, Bacolod, and Davao. They do not have the necessary permits from concerned agencies like the DENR, and probably even from

the local government units (LGUs).

Photos and videos provided to us were really disturbing. The facilities are really shabby and ill equipped to be able to handle the hazardous materials where they derive their secondary lead. They do not have adequate anti-pollution systems and we don't know how they are disposing the acids and other chemicals.

On the labor aspect—which makes this a Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) concern as well—the workers were not using proper protective gears. There were even those that were working half-naked.

Note that at the end of its life, a used lead-acid battery such as automotive batteries, motorcycle batteries and UPS, may be simply thrown away, or they can also be handed in for recycling.

In the first case, material and energy values will be lost, leading to new demands on environmental resources.

On the other hand, proper recycling avoids disposal in landfills and dumps while promoting the recovery and reuse of non-renewable resources, such as lead and plastics, thereby preventing destruction to the environment.

ULAB recycling rate can go as high as 99 percent for licensed recyclers due to the state-of-the-art recycling technologies they employ.

On the other hand, unregulated/

**We could not be sure if all the illegal smelters then were stopped; maybe some still probably operated clandestinely. Today, however, we can say with certainty that they are operating again.**

unlicensed recyclers can only attain recovery rates of around 40 percent to 45 percent, with much of the recoverable materials being lost in the waste streams and the environment.

A battery that has been improperly disposed of (that is, it has not been properly recycled) also presents serious ecological and health problems due to the toxic and corrosive substances it contains. A junk battery contains lead, which when absorbed by the human body can cause health effects. It also contains battery acid, which, when illegally dumped on the ground or drainage canals can lead to contamination of the groundwater or rivers and creeks.

Unregulated/unlicensed recycling industries and informal methods of recovering lead also pose a great danger to the environment and on humans as these are usually done in homes or backyards.

These unlicensed industries usually are without proper environmental controls such as air emissions management facilities and acid treatment plant, to name a few.

Lack of safety programs, such as the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for workers in these unlicensed industries also place their workers in direct danger.

Institutional sources such as ULAB-generating companies and collectors, and the general population should not patronize these unlicensed recyclers due to the dangers they pose. To ensure that ULAB end up being properly recycled by government licensed recyclers, at a minimum one has to ask for a copy of the recycler's permits listed below:

1. Environmental Compliance

Certificate (BCC) as a lead scrap recycler, issued by the DENR-EMB,

2. TSD Registration Certificate as lead scrap recycler, issued by the DENR-EMB,

3. Permit to Operate Air Pollution Source and Control Installations, issued by the DENR-EMB, and

4. Wastewater Discharge Permit for the Acid Treatment Plant, issued by the DENR-EMB and/or LLDA.

In this regard, Motolite, in partnership with a DENR-EMB licensed lead recycler in Evergreen Environmental Resources Inc. (EERI) has set up the Balik Baterya Program, which is aimed at collecting the junk automotive, motorcycle and UPS batteries in the country while disseminating information about responsible waste management. The Balik Baterya Program utilizes the sales and distribution network of Motolite to retrieve back the used batteries of individual consumers and/or companies. Through the program, partnerships with industries have been established for the proper collection and recycling of their junk batteries. The promotion of the Balik Baterya program have likewise benefited the government in terms of advocacy on proper management of hazardous wastes. Many have been given awareness on the dangers and hazards of hazardous domestic wastes and of the importance of recycling.

The Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI) is a Balik-Baterya partner.

We are calling on concerned agencies like the DENR and DOLE, and even the LGUs, to take immediate action against these illegal ULAB recyclers and lead smelters.

The FPI is ready to coordinate and work with you in putting an end to this.

*Dr. Jesus Lim Arranza is the chairman of the Federation of Philippine Industries and Fight Illicit Trade; a broad-based, multisectoral movement intended to protect consumers, safeguard government revenues and shield legitimate industries from the ill effects of smuggling.*





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# DENR, SM Prime call on cities to innovate and invest in water-saving technologies

**T**HE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and SM Prime Holdings, Inc. (SM Prime), one of the leading real estate developers in Southeast Asia, recently called on local public officials to avoid the extraction of groundwater and, instead, invest in rainwater collection for recycling and impoundment, as well as explore new technologies such as modular desalination and modular sewage treatment plants, to manage the effects of climate change on the country's water resources.

At the multi-stakeholder forum, "Towards a Greener Footprint", in Iloilo City recently, Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga shared solutions-focused guidelines to help the local government reduce carbon footprint, with emphasis on water conservation to address the looming water crisis and increase access to safe water and sanitation.

"We need to invest in the appropriate engineering and infrastructure to deliver water from the source," Lozaga said. "We must avoid, if not reduce drastically, the extraction of groundwater which in low-lying coastal areas causes subsidence and increases flooding."

"Rainwater catchments will not only provide additional supply for household use but will also help ensure the availability of surface water through the maintenance of watershed cover when impounded," Lozaga said.

Based on the latest report of the Philippine Statistics Authority, water abstracted for own use increased from 215.2 billion cubic meters (bcm) in 2020 to 217.8 bcm in 2021 countrywide. From 2010 to 2021, the largest amount of self-abstracted water is for the power sector (58.7 percent). This was followed by agriculture



AT the multi-stakeholder forum, "Towards a Greener Footprint", in Iloilo City recently, Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga shared solutions-focused guidelines to help the local government reduce carbon footprint, with emphasis on water conservation to address the looming water crisis and increase access to safe water and sanitation. From left to right are Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Trenas, journalist Ces Drilon, Lozaga, urban planning and landscape architect Paulo Alcazaren, United Architects of the Philippines (UAP) co-chair Michaela Rossette Santo-Tayag and SM Supermalls Vice President for Corporate Compliance Liza Silerio. PHOTO CREDITS TO ARNOLD ALMACEN/ILOILO CITY OFFICE OF THE MAYOR.

(33.5 percent); mining and quarrying, manufacturing, and construction (5.3 percent); and services sector and households (2.6 percent).

Earlier this month, the DENR said the country still has enough water supply, but proper management is needed to prevent a possible water crisis by the end of the year.

The call was met with a resounding response from the private sector, particularly, SM Prime. In the same forum, SM Supermalls Vice President for Corporate Compliance Engr. Liza B. Silerio shared how SM Prime has stepped up the sustainability programs that it has been doing since SM Supermalls started recycling water in the 1990s.

From rainwater catchment to help deter flooding in communities where its malls are located, SM Prime also pioneered the mall-based rainwater filtration system that converts the collected rainwater to

be potable enough for washing, cleaning and even drinking. Launched at SM City Baguio, the facility will supply mall tenants with enough potable water to help reduce sourcing from the communities' water table.

"As an integrated property developer, we have seen the first-hand effects of natural hazards that are caused by the change in weather patterns in the Philippines," Silerio explained. "El Nino and La Nina are two phenomena resulting from climate change. Our country ranks number one in the World Risk Index 2022 report as the most vulnerable among 193 nations."

Faced with this challenge, Silerio shared that SM Prime will continue to find innovative ways to address the climate challenges. "We continue to evolve and adapt technology to improve our resource consumption as part of our climate action," she concluded.





## Gov't focuses on water needs; DA, NWRB bare plans to blunt El Niño

**By Charles Dantes, Vito Barcelo, and Joel E. Zurbano**

THE current water level of Angat Dam, which was filled by recent typhoons "Egay" and "Falcon," is not yet enough to fulfill the water needs of Metro Manila amid the threat of El Niño, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) said Tuesday.

This was as the Department of Agriculture bared its plan to mitigate the

possible impact of the El Niño weather phenomenon on crops.

NWRB Executive Director Sevilla David said he is not yet comfortable nor confident even if Angat Dam's water level is currently way beyond the rule curve of 180 meters.

David said the government needs to prepare for the expected effects of El Niño, as he justified the allocation for Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage

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System (MWSS) and its concessionaires, which was maintained at 48 cubic meters per second for August.

David said the level of Angat Dam should reach 210 to 212 meters by yearend to ensure that water needs for the summer are going to be met.

At a Palace briefing, Agriculture Assistant Secretary for Operation Arnel de Mesa said they were following President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s directive to take a "whole-of-government approach" to lessen the impact of drought on the country.

"The preparations of the DA when it comes to El Niño and, all the necessary interventions are, again, coordinated with our regional field offices to ensure that we are responsive to the possible effects of El Niño," he said.

"We need to coordinate very closely with the National Irrigation Administration for the planting of rice," he added.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said El Niño might last until the first quarter of 2024.

Meanwhile, a total of 108 areas in six regions in Luzon have been placed under a state of calamity due to the combined effects of Typhoon Egay and the southwest monsoon or habagat, according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC).

These cities and municipalities were in the Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, and the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR).

In Pampanga, which declared a state of calamity recently, 3rd District board member Jun Canlas said that almost half a million people, or 100,000 families in 232 barangays were affected by the bad weather.





## Water, life and death

**“W**hat’s the obsession with water?”

That was the question I recently got from one of our readers who emailed me to ask why I have devoted some of our past few columns to expressing our shared concern regarding the current state of our country’s water supply and to air our support for the President’s move to create a Department of Water Resources Management.

My reply was, I cannot help it. “Water” is a subject matter close to my heart. Two reasons: first, I once served as assistant secretary at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The stint, although short, opened my eyes to the sad state of Mother Nature in our country and the urgent need to do something about it.

Second, part of my childhood was spent in a lakeshore town – Binangonan, Rizal.

I have memories of my childhood joining cousins and friends in spontaneous excursions along the shores of Laguna de Bay. On those occasions, I got to appreciate the beauty and the bounty of the waters of this lake – the biggest in the country. I remember seeing fishermen coming off small boats, hauling the catch of the day, often consisting of ayungin, tilapia, and the lake’s famous kanduli. They were the main fare in our picnics, and as I joined our boodle fights, I would occasionally pause and think of how generous this lake is.

When I was elected to various local government positions in the province, I came to realize that food is not the lake’s only gift. It can also be a source of potable water and water for household use. The east zone water distribution concessionaire showcased this gift when it set up a water treatment plant along the shores of the lake in the town of Cardona.

Water drawn from the lake is now distributed to thousands of households, proving that this body of fresh water is, indeed, life-giving.

A few years ago, we also wrote a piece about one more wonder that the waters of the lake bring about. We asked, “What power do the waters of Laguna de Bay possess that the towns along its shore had been the birthplace of some of the greatest Filipinos who ever lived?”

We pointed out that many of our best artistic minds were born and raised in the lakeshore town of Angono: the illustrious Maestro Lucio San Pedro; the muralist national artist Carlos “Botong” Francisco; national artist-nominee and muralist Jose Blanco (who depicted the life-giving nature of Laguna de Bay in his works); painter and sculptor Nemesio Miranda, and many more.

On the other side of the lake, in the province of Laguna, the national hero Dr. Jose Rizal was born, raised and first learned to ponder on the potential for greatness that we possess as a nation.

There was one more thing that captivated us about the lake – the island in the middle of the Laguna de Bay which resembled a sharp dagger. It must have been its shape that led people to call it “Talim.”

Part of Talim Island is under the jurisdiction of the town of Binangonan. The other half is under the jurisdiction of the town of Cardona.

Talim Island is home to folks who live off the bountiful waters of the lake. With the passing of years, many of its residents have become professionals and have landed jobs off the island.

For some reason, they opt to continue living on the island. It must be the island’s mystique or the simplicity of life it affords them that makes them call it home. Perhaps, when one lives in the middle

of a beautiful lake, one enjoys its life-giving powers to the fullest.

The lake has another side to it.

Recently, it dawned on us that its wrath can bring about death. Last week, at the height of strong winds and waves which came with the passing of Typhoon Egay, a boat that was attempting to cross the narrow channel to Talim Island capsized. The tragedy left 27 people dead while 41 survived.

The tragedy has left the province of Rizal in grief. As we mourn, we can only wonder if the tragedy could have been prevented if maritime authorities had done their job well. The word is that the boat was overloaded because maritime authorities had allowed several more people who were not listed in the manifest to board.

The provincial government of Rizal has called for an investigation. National government agencies and the Senate have announced that they will be conducting their own probe. We hope that the results of the investigation would result in stricter implementation of rules by maritime authorities tasked to do just that.

Meanwhile, with sadness, we will continue to gaze at the lake with awe, conscious more than ever of its life-giving nature, as well as of the risk to life that its wrath can bring about.

Perhaps, that is where the mystique and beauty of Laguna de Bay springs from. Perhaps, that is a reminder she has given us that she, too, commands respect.

We offer our prayers for the families of the people who perished in the tragedy. We call on our readers to do the same. (*antipolocity-gov@gmail.com*)



### THE VIEW FROM RIZAL

DR. JUN YNARES





STRATEGIC  
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# BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business



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# Manila Bay reclamation, role of Chinese firm, worries US

**T**HE United States Embassy in Manila is worried over the negative environmental impact of a massive reclamation project in Manila Bay and the involvement of a Chinese state-owned construction company.

The US Embassy complex is situated along Roxas Boulevard, fronting the Manila Bay.

"The US Embassy is in regular discussions with the government regarding ongoing reclamation projects in Manila Bay. We have expressed concerns about the potential negative long-term and irreversible impacts to the environment, the resilience to natural hazards of Manila and nearby areas, and to commerce," US

Embassy spokesman Kanishka Gangopadhyay said in a text

message to BUSINESSMIRROR.

Gangopadhyay said the Embassy is also "concerned" that the reclamation project is being financed by China Communications Construction Co.

There are 32 reclamation projects under way in Manila Bay, according to the Philippine Reclamation Authority.

One of the projects was awarded to China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd., a subsidiary of China Communications Co.

The project involves backfilling to form three

artificial islands and foundation treatment.

"We are also concerned that the projects have ties to the China Communications Construction Co., which has been added to the US Department of Commerce's Entity List for its role in helping the Chinese military construct and militarize artificial islands in the South China Sea. The company has also been cited by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank for engaging in fraudulent business practices," the US Embassy spokesman said.

A ranking source from the Department of Foreign Affairs confirmed that this concern was communicated to them. However, the Embassy did not file any demarche or note verbale to this effect.

"We continue to support high-quality, sustainable, and transparent investments to benefit the Filipino people and will continue to engage with the appropriate authorities on this matter," Gangopadhyay said.





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# DOJ: Ancestral titles valid as land documents

**Baguio council cites Remulla legal opinion in move to honor uncontested CALTs, CADTs in property transactions in the city**

By Vincent Cabreza  
@InqNational

BAGUIO CITY—All ancestral land titles in Baguio City that have not been contested by the government are as valid as modern land titles, according to Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla in a 2022 legal opinion that was recently uncovered by the city council.

Because of Remulla's conclusions, the council on Monday passed a resolution directing city government officials to honor certificates of ancestral land title (CALTs) and the communal certificate of ancestral domain title (CADT) inside Camp John Hay in all government transactions, such as building permit applications.

Baguio CALT owners have not been able to secure building permits because the National Building Code (Presidential Decree No. 1098) only recognizes original certificates of title (OCTs) and transfer certificates of title (TCTs) as proof of ownership. As a result, many Ibaloy homes have been constructed on CALT and CADT lands without building permits, said Councilor Michael Lawana, an Ibaloy and president of the Liga ng mga Barangay.

The OCT or TCT is issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and is documented in the local register of deeds.

CALTs are issued by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to recognize individual Ibaloy home lots, where indigenous families have lived "since time immemorial." CADTs refer to communally protected ancestral lands.

Baguio's only CADT is lo-



**CULTURAL DISPLAY** Baguio City should have been the ancestral domain of its original Ibaloy settlers, their descendants shown in this cultural event in 2022, until they were displaced when the American colonial government built the summer capital in the early 1900s. The only Ibaloy domain recognized by the government is at Barangay Happy Hollow inside the Camp John Hay reservation. —NEIL CLARK ONGCHANGCO

cated at Barangay Happy Hollow inside the Camp John Hay forest reserve.

According to Vice Mayor Faustino Olowan, this legal hurdle over CALTs and CADTs shows how indigenous Filipinos still suffer discrimination despite protections guaranteed by the 1987 Constitution and the 1997 Indigenous Peoples Rights Act. By treating CALTs as second-class tenurial instruments, the government continues to deprive Ibaloy of better economic opportunities, Olowan said.

## Legal inquiry

Councilor Maximo Edwin (who also uses the Ibaloy clan surname Bugnay) sponsored the resolution after discovering Remulla's Dec. 15, 2022, opinion on the Department of Justice (DOJ) website.

Remulla addressed a legal inquiry posed last year by Public Works Secretary Manuel Bonoan as to whether CALT and CADT have the same entitlements as regular land titles, at the request of Johnny Degay,

the city's building officer.

Degay, who attended the session, said he needed to find out whether ancestral land titles could substitute for TCTs so he could issue permits covering CALT and CADT properties. He said his office also needed to determine if this action was legal given that it "is in conflict with the National Building Code."

In his opinion, Remulla said the DOJ would normally refrain from rendering opinions on issues it might have to prosecute in court. But he pointed out that Presidential Decree No. 1096 took effect before Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (Ipra) became law, so guided by "the spirit rather than the letter of that law ... CALT and CADT may be submitted with the building official in lieu of an OCT or a TCT for the purpose of procuring a building permit."

The justice secretary said: "Since the CADT and CALT are considered as recognition of ownership, a building permit may be issued on structures built on parcels of land covered by the CADT or CALT that were

not nullified through a judicial proceeding."

He took note of the 2019 Supreme Court ruling that nullified 36 Baguio CALTs issued over a park and lands encroaching on the presidential Mansion. The high court said the CALTs were issued within the Baguio townsite reservation, which is exempt from the NCIP jurisdiction. It also said Congress, not the NCIP, had the sole authority to reclassify townsite properties into ancestral lands.

Councilor Betty Lourdes Tabanda, a lawyer, said the council must study the resolution's impact on "derivative titles," or subdivided CALT lots, which could be sold to outsiders or people who are not members of the IP community. Ipra safeguards ancestral lands for future generations, she said, but easing restrictions over CALT lots "means we may soon have no more Ibaloy lands."

Remulla made the same observation in his opinion, urging the government to take a "judicious approach" to CALT and CADT matters. He cited a 2021 Supreme Court decision that describes CALT and CADT as sui generis (a class by itself), meaning IP lands "cannot be alienated (sold) or encumbered except to the State and in ways that would prevent future generations of the group from using and enjoying it."

NCIP Cordillera legal officer Arthur Herman told the council that Baguio itself should have been the ancestral domain of the original Ibaloy settlers, had they not been displaced when the American colonial government built the summer capital in the early 1900s. **INQ**





## SKETCHES

### ANA MARIE PAMINTUAN

## River revival

**B**efore the pandemic lockdowns, I took the Pasig River ferry with two colleagues, from the "Escolta" station in Manila (it's actually behind the Bureau of Immigration in Intramuros) to Guadalupe in Makati.

We were all pleasantly surprised that the ride was enjoyable.

There was no sewer stink at all, there were no waterlilies to block the way, and the strong breeze made the ride comfortable even without air conditioning. We enjoyed the sight of many aquatic birds, with some flying close to the ferry.

Pasig water quality of course has a long way to go; I may not see fish thriving in the river in my lifetime. But the river was generally free of solid garbage. We didn't spot any floating cadaver, which used to be a regular sight in the river.

The ferry service merits expansion, to augment mass transport in Metro Manila. And it would be great if the Inter-Agency Council for the Pasig River Urban Development created last week would actually attain its goal of reviving the river and transforming the riverfront areas.

Officials in other countries have told me that they managed to clean up and revive what we would describe as dead rivers, and develop riverbank areas into thriving spots for leisure, arts, entertainment and commercial activities. In many countries, real estate properties with views of water and greenery are among the most expensive.

These are mostly advanced economies, however, with not only vast resources for the rehabilitation of rivers and other bodies of water, but also the expertise and governance capacity plus the right ideas for creating livable, sustainable communities.

Even in less affluent countries, however, rivers are used not only for mass transport but also for tourism. Thailand is a prime example. There are over a dozen "floating markets" around the capital Bangkok alone, and all are popular tourist draws. Water in the rivers are mostly a murky, muddy brown. But the water quality is touted by locals as rich in minerals from the muddy riverbed.

Vietnam and Indonesia also have floating markets. With so many rivers all over our archipelago, it's interesting that we don't have a floating market. Maybe because many of our rivers and creeks are clogged with garbage and reek of sewage, becoming breeding grounds for mosquitoes and creepy-crawlies. Also, rivers and other waterways often burst their banks and flood surrounding areas. So riverbank properties are not considered as prime real estate.



The inter-agency council created under Executive Order No. 35 hopes to change this. Specifically, the EO provides that the Pasig riverbank development will entail the relocation of informal settlers, and the enforcement of easement rules.

Good luck doing this.

Anyone familiar with the Pasig riverbanks in the city of Manila alone will see the challenge here. Informal settler communities constitute the voting base of many local politicians. Barangay officials, who serve as grassroots leaders of the politicians, may themselves live in slum communities, or are the biggest landlords in such settlements.

Yes, those shanties are rented out, and you'd be surprised at the high rates. They are prized for their proximity to commercial and industrial areas where there are many jobs available. It's not easy to dismantle such informal settlements.

In some areas, structures built along the riverbanks are properties of the barangay.

Local governments along the Pasig may take tips from the Villars. In their various capacities in government, the family developed riverside roads in their home turf of Las Piñas that have contributed to easing traffic in the city.

Sen. Mark Villar, when he was public works secretary, told us on *One News*' "The Chiefs" that the city government invested in just compensation for properties affected by riverside development, to quickly resolve right-of-way issues.

President Marcos, with his immense popularity, can invest some of that political capital to get things done – if he is genuinely bent on seeing his newly created inter-agency council succeed.

If the government deals decisively with that basic problem, it will be easier to get the private sector to cooperate in stopping river pollution, and even help in the regular cleanup of the river.

Members of my parents' generation remember the days when people could still swim in the Pasig River. Media oldtimers say the late senator Blas Ople, when he was still a journalist, swam across the river following a drinking binge at the National Press Club.

There were no follow-up stories of Ople catching germs and getting sick after his swim, indicating that the river was still relatively clean at the time.

These days, if you fall into the river and accidentally ingest some of the water, you could die either from the toxic industrial sludge, or of cholera from the sewage.

The sewer stink often wafted to the Malacañang complex on both sides of the Pasig, but this was when I was still part of the brat pack covering the presidency.

I don't know if the stink is still there today, with the river now being cleaned up regularly. But Malacañang will be a major point of interest in any Pasig ferry service designed for tourists. Such rides are popular in many countries. For visitors in Metro Manila, a river tour can be more convenient than the hop-on, hop-off tourist bus in the traffic-choked streets.

But first, the riverside areas, particularly those with points of interest, will have to be developed. Public expectations will need management here. Simply clearing the riverbanks to conform with easement regulations will be an uphill battle.





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## Mindoro oil spill: New cases to be filed

The filing of new cases before the Office of the Ombudsman have been recommended in connection with the sinking of the motor tanker *Princess Empress* that caused an oil spill in Oriental Mindoro in February.

The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI)-Environmental Crimes Division

recommended the filing of charges against the owners and crewmembers of *Princess Empress* as well as officials and personnel of the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) and Philippine Coast Guard (PCG).

Based on the NBI's findings, RDC Reield Marine Services, the owner of the tanker, received undue benefits by

registering the vessel despite submitting falsified documents and failing to meet the standard requirements.

Among those named in the complaint are RDC Reield Marine Services president Reymundo Cabial and his children, who serve as co-incorporators of the company.

MARINA regional director Jaime Bea and Region 5 Shipyard Regulation Service head Jose Buban were included in the complaint.

Questions were raised about the certification of the tanker, which was reportedly refurbished in Navotas instead of being newly built in Bataan as declared by both MARINA and RDC Reield Marine Services.

PCG officials and personnel were included in the complaint for allegedly failing to conduct boarding and inspection of the tanker before its departure.

The NBI recommended the filing of cases for grave misconduct and neglect in the performance of duty, under the revised rules on administrative cases in the Civil Service, against the MARINA and PCG officials and personnel.

*Princess Empress*, which was carrying 800,000 liters of fuel oil, sank in the waters off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro on Feb. 28, affecting nearby municipalities and provinces.

- Mark Ernest Villeza





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## PTC partners with One Earth One Ocean

PTC Shipmanagement officially inked a partnership with the environmental organization One Earth-One Ocean e.V. (OEEO) to provide bareboat chartering, time chartering and ship management services to OEEO vessels, including the MB Circular Explorer.

The Circular Explorer is the world's first waste collection vessel of its size to be powered entirely by solar energy and is designed to collect waste along Manila Bay.

The Circular Explorer was developed by One Earth-One Ocean and made possible by Holcim, a global leader in innovative and sustainable building solutions. It can recover up to 4 tons of plastic waste per day to help sustainably preserve vital marine ecosystems. In parallel, OEEO is driving an education program to empower students and local communities as changemakers to take action for people and the planet.

One Earth-One Ocean is a nonprofit organization committed to cleaning up waters worldwide since 2011.

To officially launch the initiative, the Circular Explorer was blessed on July 3 at the CCP Complex in Pasay City. In attendance were Capt. Ronald Enrile, senior vice president for PTC Shipmanagement and head of Talent Acquisition Group; Capt. Florencio Jampil, business development director for Crewing and Shipmanagement; Daniel Scheler, One Earth-One Ocean Philippines

Project Manager; and Christine Bellen, Holcim Philippines ACM and Infrastructure Performance and Business Development manager.

The Circular Explorer uses conveyor belt technology for its waste collection system. Through the deflectors in the bow of the catamaran, the marine litter is directed onto the conveyor belt mounted in the middle of the vessel. The ascending belt continuously delivers materials onto a horizontal sorting mechanism. Everything that does not belong in the sea is sorted out manually by the staff and collected in transport bags.

Harmless organic waste falls back into the water at the end of the conveyor belt through an opening in the deck. This ensures higher efficiency during the sorting process and that organic material and animal bycatch are properly sorted.

"We are very excited to be partnering with OEEO and working together to help reduce plastic waste in our oceans and take care of its health for our future generations, advocacies that are also very important to the PTC Group as outlined in our sustainability framework," said Enrile.

He added: "Moreover, we are very proud to have our PTC Global Maritime Professionals man this vessel as we take steps to ensure a just and equitable transition for our Filipino seafarers as the shipping industry moves toward decarbonization."



■ A priest blesses the MB Circular Explorer on July 3, 2023 at the CCP Complex in Pasay City. The Circular Explorer was developed by One Earth-One Ocean (OEEO) and made possible by Holcim to collect waste along Manila Bay. One Earth-One Ocean e.V. has inked a partnership with PTC Shipmanagement for bareboat chartering, time chartering and ship management services to OEEO vessels. PTC Shipmanagement initially partnered with One Earth-One Ocean to help clean up an oil spill that affected the town of Pola in Oriental Mindoro. PTC donated 700 kilos of oil-absorbent wool to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources that was used to clean the oil slick along the shores of the affected barangay whose livelihoods depend on fishing. PHOTO FROM PTC





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## Bamboos, abundant in PH, raise challenges

IF YOU are in the air with your commercial flight descending in three minutes to the waiting tarmac, you can have a good view—without clouds below—of the country's landscape: hectares of green bamboo stands.

On the ground as now, particularly when the monsoon rains have begun to sweep the Philippine archipelago, many farmers from up north in Ilocos Norte and Cagayan down to the hinterlands of Mindanao share a smile.

As abundant as the rains tumble down from June, soon after summer, bamboo shoots start to be plentiful, traditionally used as vegetable food among them and as well in other Southeast Asian countries.

A cultural quipster says that with bamboos in abundance Filipinos can truly celebrate life.

Officials from the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development say the demand at present in the world market for bamboo shoots is "increasing because of their nutritional and health benefits."

The bamboo shoots—"rabong" in the north of the country and "labong" elsewhere and described as the King of Forest Vegetables in Japan—have been a traditional forest vegetable in most parts of this archipelago of 114 million.

In China, the bamboo shoots have been considered a forest vegetable too for the past more than 2,500 years—delicious and rich in nutrients and rank among the five most popular healthcare foods in the world.

*Used as substitute for concrete, bamboos also reduce emissions of greenhouse gases*

Agriculture sources say modern research suggests the bamboo shoots have several medicinal benefits, from cancer prevention and weight loss to improving appetite and digestion.

It is also low in sugar and therefore can be used for treating hypertension, hyperlipemia and hyperglycemia, according to these sources.

### GRINDING GRAINS HONOR B. CABIE

security as food and animal feed. Bamboo is earthquake-proof, has greater tensile strength than steel, and withstands compression better than concrete—which is why it is so valuable in construction.

Used as substitute for concrete, bamboos also reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

Many of the grasses we are most familiar with are annuals, such as rice, corn, wheat and other grains, which flower, go to seed, and die in a single year.

But all varieties of bamboo are perennial, meaning that they live on year after year, more like a tree. Many other ornamental grasses are also perennial, such as fescue and pampas grass.

Experts have identified four bamboo species—*Bambusa blumeana*, *Dendrocalamus asper*, *Dendroclamus strictus*, and *Guadua angustifolia*—are some of the most economically important bamboo species now being cultivated in the Philippines.

Experts say *Bambusa blumeana* or *Kawayang Tinik* is recognized for its structural grade properties when mature and is frequently available within the country.

*Kawayan tinik* is one of the most important bamboo species in the Philippines, where it is well-distributed geographically, according to researchers, who say this is the most desirable bamboo species for construction because the mature culms have high specific gravity and lower shrinkage when dried.

*Kawayan tinik* is an important bamboo resource for the Philippine rural population. Aside from being a premium species for edible shoot production, it also provides materials for construction, furniture, handicraft, and other novelty items.

In the Philippines, bamboos are intertwined with the environment, economy, and culture.

From construction, furniture and handicraft manufacture, food, cooking, etc., bamboos have been popularly used by many communities.

Bamboos also play a protective role in decreasing soil degradation, including the reduction of biodiversity, soil nutrient depletion, and soil erosion.

Researchers, botanists and industry experts say challenges in promoting bamboo cultivation can be multifaceted.





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Japanese scientists recently discovered that bamboo shoots contain anti-cancer agents and making them a regular part of the diet effectively eliminates the free radicals that can produce dangerous carcinogens.

Experts say with the economic development and the improvement of people's living standards, demand for natural foods, especially organic food, has greatly increased.

Official estimates suggest there are a total area of bamboo stands in the Philippines which ranges from 39,000-53,000 ha, mainly naturally growing sporadically or in patches in backyards and riverbanks in forest lands and some private lands and rarely in pure commercial stands.

There are 60 known bamboo species in the Philippines and their number is increasing because of the newly-introduced species by plant collectors and bamboo enthusiasts.

Botanists say the bamboo grass family, Poaceae, includes about 12,000 species, with approximately 1,500 species of bamboo belonging to around 100 different genera.

It belongs to the family of grasses, Gramineae or Poaceae, and is a high-value crop given its many uses involving food and material for buildings, bridges, and furniture.

With its ability to mitigate flood and soil erosion, bamboo has various economic and ecological benefits.

Experts say bamboo has a lower carbon footprint due to its fast growth rate, meaning that it is more sustainable than traditional materials such as wood, plastic, and steel.

Additionally, bamboo is highly versatile and can be used in many different ways both indoors and outdoors.

It also provides food and nutrition

The main challenge, according to them, lies in that bamboo is a long-term investment and requires more care and attention than other crops.

The lack of accurate knowledge about the market potential of bamboo is another obstacle to its proliferation.

Furthermore, governments often lack the capacity or resources to provide farmers with adequate support and technical assistance throughout the entire planting process, from start to finish.

The absence of an organized supply chain for quality raw materials further hampers this process as well.

Finally, farmers require time and capital to properly nurture their plants, making it difficult for them to turn a profit in any reasonable time frame.

With all these challenges in mind, strategies need to be implemented that effectively address each issue in order to drive greater adoption of bamboo as a long-term investment.

The complexity of overcoming these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that focuses on providing farmers with access to accurate market information, technical assistance, and quality raw materials while offering incentives such as subsidies or grants that make it easier for them to turn a profit.

The development of effective policy and regulation, as well as improved infrastructure to support the industry, are also key components in promoting bamboo cultivation, the experts have said.





# 151 areas under state of calamity

## 'Habagat' rains may persist despite Falcon's exit

By MARTIN SADONGDONG  
and ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

**A** total of 151 cities, municipalities, and provinces have declared a state of calamity in their respec-

tive localities due to the devastation left by super typhoon Egay and the enhanced southwest monsoon, or "habagat."

As of 5 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 1, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management **► 5**

## 151 areas under state of calamity ◀

Council (NDRRMC) said the areas that declared a state of calamity were located in Ilocos Region (Region 1), Cagayan Valley (Region 2), Central Luzon (Region 3), Calabrzon (Region 4A), Mimaropa (Region 4B), and Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR).

### THE AREAS UNDER A STATE OF CALAMITY ARE:

- Region 1 – 25 areas (Ilocos Norte with 23 and La Union with two)
- Region 2 – 29 areas all in Cagayan
- Region 3 – 36 areas (Pampanga with 21, Bataan with 12, Bulacan with two, and Tarlac with one)
- Region 4A – 23 areas all in Cavite
- Region 4B – Sablayan in Occidental Mindoro
- CAR – 37 areas (Abra with 27 and Mountain Province with 10).

The number is expected to further increase as the NDRRMC said it was waiting for a copy of the resolution declaring a state of calamity from the local "sanggunian" in one more area in Bataan.

The areas placed under state of calamity may utilize their quick response fund (QRF) for relief and recovery programs.

Officials said the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund may be released to augment local funds in areas that will still need additional money for relief and rehabilitation efforts.

The regions where areas were placed under state of calamity are among the hardest-hit by Egay and habagat.

The combined effects of Egay and habagat have affected 2.4 million individuals, 50,000 of them still in evacuation centers.

### ₱1.94 B damage to agri

The Department of Agriculture (DA) said Egay wiped out almost ₱2 billion worth of agricultural goods.

Assistant Secretary for Operations Arnel de Mesa gave this latest assessment of the DA on the damage caused by the typhoon to the Philippine agriculture sector.

The losses and damage due to Egay climbed from the ₱1.54 billion reported by the Agriculture department on July 30.

"To date, the estimated damage





is already at ₱1.94 billion," he told reporters during a media briefing held in Malacañang.

The official said the affected commodities include rice at ₱950 million and ₱713 million for corn.

Analysts had earlier warned the losses in high-value crops and other agriculture goods are likely to drive inflation up as the fishery sector was likewise affected by the typhoon.

#### Falcon exits; rains may persist

Meanwhile, typhoon Falcon (international name: Khanun) left the Philippine area of responsibility (PAR) at 3:30 p.m., Tuesday, Aug. 1, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said.

PAGASA last located Falcon 835 kilometers northeast of extreme northern Luzon as of 4 p.m.

It was moving west-northwestward at 15 kilometers per hour (kph), while packing maximum sustained winds of 175 kph near the center and gusts of up to 215 kph.

However, PAGASA said the habagat, being enhanced by Falcon, may continue to bring occasional rains to western Luzon.

In the next 24 hours, scattered to widespread heavy rains may persist in Zambales and Bataan, while occasional moderate to heavy rains may prevail over Metro Manila, Pangasinan, Pampanga, Bulacan, and Occidental Mindoro.

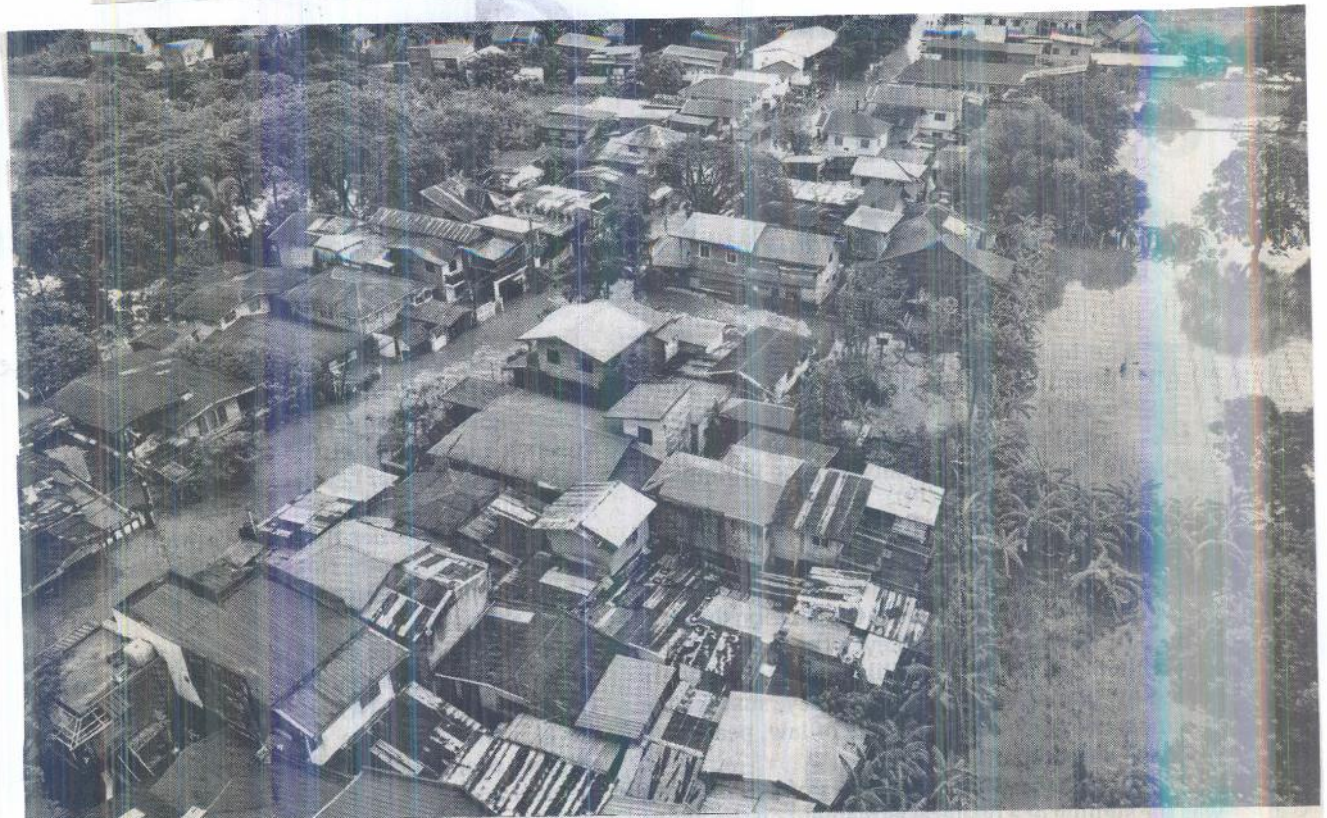
Meanwhile, scattered light to heavy monsoon rains may continue in Ilocos Region, Cordillera Administrative Region, Cagayan Valley, Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon), Nueva Ecija, Aurora, Tarlac, Oriental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan.

#### Gusty conditions

PAGASA may no longer raise tropical cyclone wind warnings over the extreme Northern Luzon due to Falcon, but warned that the enhanced southwest monsoon may bring gusty conditions over several parts of Luzon.

On Wednesday, Aug. 2, gusty conditions caused by the habagat may continue to affect Batanes, Babuyan Islands, Ilocos Region, Nueva Vizcaya, Aurora, Zambales, Bataan, Bulacan, Pampanga, Metro Manila, Southern Luzon, Bicol Region, Western Visayas, the western portion of Northern Samar, and most of the Cordillera Administrative Region.

On Thursday, Aug. 3, gusty conditions may persist in Batanes, Babuyan Islands, Ilocos Region, Cordillera Administrative Region, Nueva Vizcaya, Aurora, Zambales, Bataan, Bulacan, Pampanga, Metro Manila, Southern Luzon, Bicol Region, Northern Samar, and Western Visayas. (With a report from Raymond Antonio)



'HABAGAT' AFTERMATH — An aerial shot of Barangay Frances in Calumpit, Bulacan, on Tuesday, Aug. 1, 2023, shows the extent of the flooding in the community where residents have resorted to wading through waist-deep waters or negotiating the streets with the use of bancas. (Mark Balmores)





# Bulacan, Pampanga placed under state of calamity

By RAMON EFREN LAZARO

The provinces of Bulacan and Pampanga have been placed under a state of calamity due to massive flooding and damage caused by the southwest monsoon enhanced by Typhoons Egay and Falcon.

The Bulacan Pro-

vincial Council passed Panlalawigang Kapasiyahan Blg. 579-T'2023 on Monday.

The Provincial Public Affairs Office said the calamity caused by Typhoon Egay enhanced by the

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## Bulacan From Page 1

southwest monsoon affected some 228,648 families from 171 barangays.

The Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office noted that floodwaters affected 21,367 people or 5,631 families who were evacuated to different centers in Bulacan.

Gov. Daniel Fernando called on members of the House of Representatives to prioritize the urgent and comprehensive solution to the decade-old problem of flooding in the province.

As of yesterday morning, 172 barangays in 16 towns and three cities in Bulacan are still affected by floods ranging from six inches to seven feet, according to the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office.

Villages affected by floods include those Calumpit (28 barangays), Hagonoy (23), Bulacan (13), Balagtas (8), Guiguinto (8), Paombong (8), Angat (1), Pandi (2), Bocaue (10), Plaridel (1), Bustos (2), Obando (4), Marilao (4), San Rafael (5), San Ildefonso (5) and San Miguel (6). Also affected by floods are 25 barangays in Malolos City, 13 in Meycauayan and five in Baliwag.

In Pampanga, the Sangguniang Panlalawigan unanimously approved last Monday Resolution No.8058, following the recommendation from the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRRMC).

Based on the reports submitted by the PDRRMC to the Provincial Board, a total of 232 villages in 15 local government units have been greatly affected by flooding due to continuous downpour.

It also stated that about 144,340 families or 512,722 individuals were affected, with 6,057 individuals temporarily housed in 112 evacuation facilities.

The flooding also rendered many roads and bridges in different municipalities impassable to light vehicles.

With the declaration of a state of calamity, the provincial government can now use its Quick Response Fund to augment the relief efforts of affected towns and cities.

In Benguet, members of the PDRRMC are asking the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Benguet to place the province under a state of calamity due to heavy damages and losses left by Egay.

PDRRMC Officer Abner Lawangen made the recommendation during a meeting attended by Gov. Melchor Diclas and Vice Gov. Ericson Felipe.

According to data from the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), some 113 cities and/or municipalities have been placed under state of calamity in at least six regions.

The death toll remains at 25 with at least 52 reported injuries, while the number of persons reported missing went down from 20 to 13.

In Zambales, at least 598 families were evacuated to various centers due to torrential rains brought about by Typhoon Falcon.

Gov. Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. said a portion of dikes has been destroyed and triggered landslides, damaging more than P18.5 million in rice and other agricultural products.

Ebdane urged residents to be extraordinarily alert as Falcon, which was expected to further intensify, would enhance the southwest monsoon and further spawn heavy rainfall of from 100 to 200 millimeters.

- With Artemio Dumlao, Danessa Rivera, Jose Rodel Clapano, Michael Punongbayan, Mayen Jaymalin, Neil Jayson Servallos, Mark Ernest Villeza, Pia Lee-Brago, Romina Cabrera, Janvic Mateo, Ric Sapnu





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# Falcon rains raise Angat Dam water level

By RAMON EFREN LAZARO

**MALOLOS** – Rains brought by Typhoon Falcon and enhanced by the southwest monsoon raised the water level in Angat Dam by almost a meter yesterday.

Records from the Bulacan Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office showed that Angat Dam's water elevation was at 195.88 meters compared to the previous day's 195.05 meters.

The water level was 15.88 meters above its minimum operating level, but still 16.12 meters short of its normal high water level of 212 meters.

Authorities said the dam needs to reach its normal high water level before the end of the year to provide adequate potable water supply

to Metro Manila residents.

Angat Dam provides more than 90 percent of the potable water needs of Metro Manila.

It also provides irrigation to around 25,000 hectares of rice fields in Bulacan and parts of Pampanga.

Meanwhile, Josephine Salazar, National Irrigation Administration regional director for Central Luzon, told **The STAR** that Ipo and Bustos Dams were still discharging water as of 8 a.m. yesterday.

Ipo Dam was releasing a total of 34.70 cubic meter per second of water while Bustos Dam was discharging 80 cms from its Sluice Gates 1, 2 and 3 that were raised at one meter each, Salazar said.

In a radio interview, Bulacan Gov. Daniel Fernando blamed the release of water from Bustos Dam for massive flooding in several areas in

Bulacan.

He made the statement despite claims by some local officials that the release of water from dams is not to blame for flooding in their areas.

Fernando had pointed to the big volume of water from the San Jose del Monte river system as the culprit for the overflowing of the Bocaue River, which inundated five barangays in Bocaue.

Low-lying areas were inundated with up to seven feet of floodwater following the release of water from Ipo and Bustos Dams.

Up to 172 barangays in 16 towns and three cities in Bulacan remained flooded as of yesterday morning.

A state of calamity was declared in the province under a resolution passed by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan during a special session on Monday.





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Residents cross a flooded street in Barangay Talibaew in Calasiao, Pangasinan yesterday. Days of heavy rainfall have swollen the Marusay River, which caused flooding in 10 towns in the province.

CESAR RAMIREZ

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**8** | **na**  
EDITOR: TERESA B. COROS





## Faster lava flow, ashfalls monitored in Mayon

LEGAZPI CITY – Mayon Volcano's abnormal parameters increased anew as faster lava effusion and intermittent ash ejections have been monitored.

Paul Alanis, Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) resident volcanologist at the Lignon Hill Observatory in this city, said low-frequency volcanic earthquakes and sulfur dioxide emissions were also monitored until yesterday afternoon.

Alanis said fresh lava had started flowing rapidly from the crater and rolled down to established lava flows along the Bonga Gully in Legazpi City, Mi-isi Gully in Daraga and Basud Gully in Sto. Domingo.

The lava flows reached 600 meters up to 3.4 kilometers from the crater.

"We recorded increases in the values of major parameters as compared to the previous days. This means that Mayon's abnormal condition remains high but is still within the Level 3 overall status," Alanis told **The STAR**.

Mayon has entered its eighth week of lava effusion.

In the past 24 hours, Phivolcs recorded 258 volcanic earthquakes, including a tremor event that lasted for a minute and 30 seconds, 57 ashing events, 100 rockfall events and 2,325 tons of sulfur dioxide emissions.

Alanis said Phivolcs can now monitor the pyroclastic density currents and rockfalls from the volcano after the solar-powered monitoring station within the six-kilometer permanent danger zone began functioning again.

Phivolcs said Mayon remains under Alert Level 3, which means that hazardous eruption within weeks or even days is still possible.

– Cet Dematera, Romina Cabrera