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DENR

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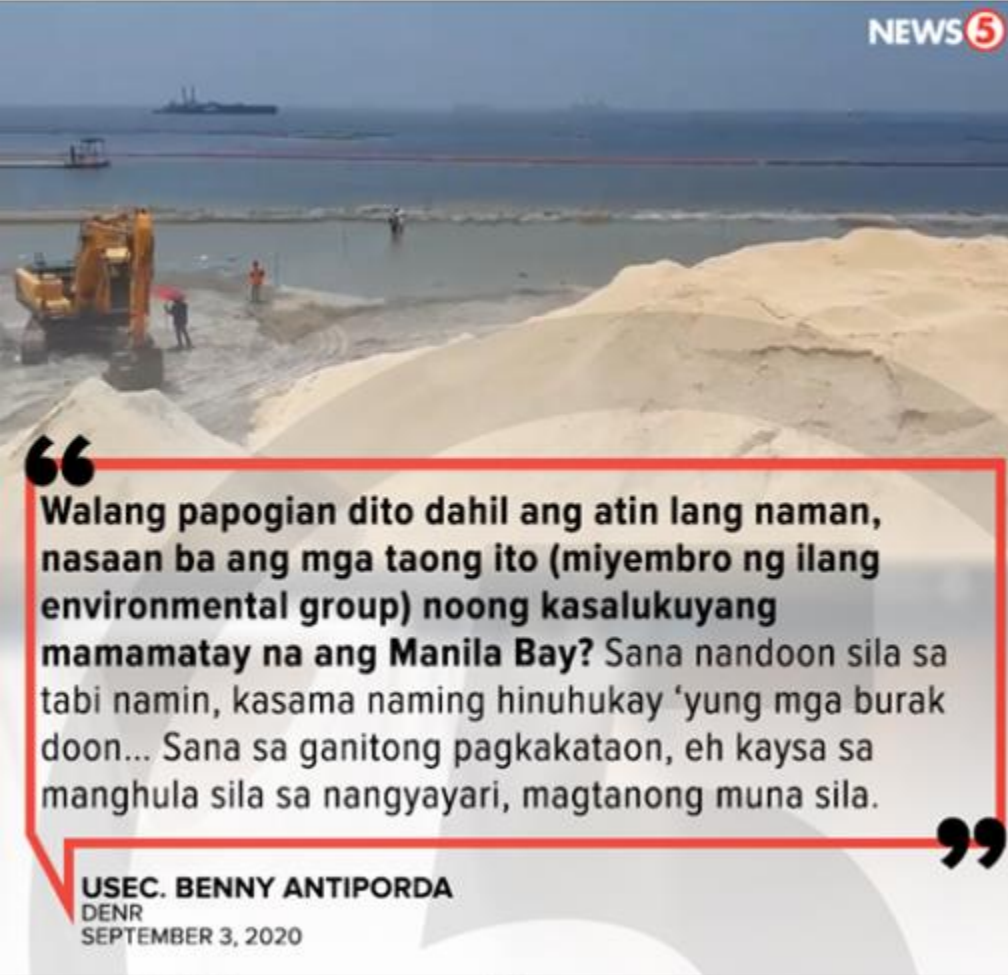
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



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"Walang papogian dito."

Ito ang sagot ni Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda sa kanyang panayam sa #WagPo ng One PH nang tanungin kaugnay sa mga kritisismo sa "white sand" makeover ng Manila Bay. Nautang nilinaw ng ahensya na synthetic sand lang ang gamit nila sa proyekto.



“
Walang papogian dito dahil ang atin lang naman, nasaan ba ang mga taong ito (miyembro ng ilang environmental group) noong kasalukuyang mamamatay na ang Manila Bay? Sana nandoon sila sa tabi namin, kasama naming hinuhukay 'yung mga burak doon... Sana sa ganitong pagkakataon, eh kaysa sa manghula sila sa nangyayari, magtanong muna sila.
”

USEC. BENNY ANTIPORDA
DENR
SEPTEMBER 3, 2020

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Manila Bay's white sand is just like Paris in the summer

Published September 4, 2020, 7:00 AM

by [AA Patawaran](#)

Artificial beaches have a purpose—and here are others from all over the world



BEACH IN THE CITY The baywalk on Manila Bay after its rehabilitation last year. Photo by Lost Juan

Manila Bay beach, why not?

It's not a new idea. In 2002, the French capital introduced the idea of the "Paris Plage," which later became "Paris Plages" or Paris Beaches. Just like here in Manila, just like now, the moment the Parisians, critical by default, caught sight of then Paris Mayor **Bertrand Delanoë** trucking sand, along with palm trees, into the city, they were up in arms, lamenting the frivolity as well as the cost of the project.



PARIS ON THE SAND Paris Plage on a stretch of the Seine riverbank. Photo by Pawel Rivera

But dissent did not stop the project. From *plage* to *plages*, see? In 2002, the fake beach was set up on the right bank of the river Seine. By 2006, there were two beaches, the other set up on the left bank close to the Port de la Gare metro station. By 2014, there were three, the third on a stretch of bank near the artificial lake at La Villette in the northeast of Paris.

But more than beautification, Paris Plages had a practical purpose. August in Paris is, literally, a ghost month. The city of lights, as mercury rises, turns into a ghost town, as everybody flees to the countryside or the coasts. Some businesses would shut down and tourist activities would be slow.



Manila Bay's white sand is just like Paris in the summer

The beaches, sprawling on the riverbanks as if overnight, were an attempt to tide the city over the monthlong slump, as well as to provide recreation for those who might feel trapped in the city.



DESPITE DISSENT Former mayor of Paris, Bertrand Delanoë (2001-2014), pioneered Paris Plage in 2002, bringing the beach to the city in the summer months. It was a major success. Photo by Marie-Lan Nguyen

You can't swim on the Seine, just as you cannot swim on Manila Bay, but Paris Plages has water activities, like a floating swimming pool, mini-pools, and fountains, to get you wet, and "kayaks are available for no charge," according to the Smithsonian. Now, there is even a ferry that traverses the Seine to bring guests from one beach to another. It's fun, a vibrant, sunny scene, replete with parasols, sun lounges and deck chairs, ice cream vendors, and maybe a beach bar, from which to get yourself a *piña colada* and a tall glass of pastis mixed with water, a favorite summer drink in France.

But Paris Plages is only a temporary scheme. The beaches are there for the whole month of August, sometimes starting earlier in July, sometimes extending a few days into September. But it has been a major success. In 2007, summer visitors attributed to these temporary beaches topped four million.



LA PLAGE TEMPORAIRE Floating pools on the banks of the artificial lake at La Villette in the northeast of Paris

In Manila right now, netizens are mad, mad, mad about what the fisherfolk group Pamalakaya called "the artificial rehabilitation focusing on aesthetic appearance rather than addressing the environmental degradation problems." They have a point. The group Pamalakaya suggested that the cost and effort the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) project entails be poured instead into planting mangrove forests and sea grasses to restore and balance Manila Bay's marine ecosystem.



Manila Bay's white sand is just like Paris in the summer



PARTY BEACH The Sunny Beach, constructed on the South Bund of Shanghai, to attract sun worshippers and beach lovers. Photo from Smart Shanghai

But if ever, Manila Bay beach won't be the first of such projects in the world, especially in landlocked cities. There's Paris Plages, for one. There's also Sunny Beach in Shanghai, set up in 2010 as an additional attraction to the South Bund. Now (at least before the pandemic), it's a party destination, with beach bums coming in droves to eat, drink, dance, and dig their toes in the sand. Until 2007, there was a heated, indoor beach in Kyushu, Japan. It was called the Seagaia Ocean Dome that boasted of sand and palm trees, as well as a retractable fake roof in which the sky was permanently blue and a fake volcano spitting fake fire. Even the Maldives, paradise for sun worshippers and beach lovers, has an artificial beach in Male, its capital, which is now a popular venue for parades, live music, sports events, and community parades.



INDOOR BEACH The now defunct 850-acre resort Seagaia Ocean Dome on the southern island of Kyushu in Miyazaki, Japan. Photo from flight965

But let's take a moment and pretend to take a deep breath of fresh air on Manila Bay. Greenpeace weighs in on the DENR project that aims to transplant a beach paradise on a 500-meter-stretch of the baywalk, near the US Embassy. The questions are valid, such as how to contain the sand from just being washed away into the bay, especially by the monsoon rains, the seasonal winds, and the storm surges.



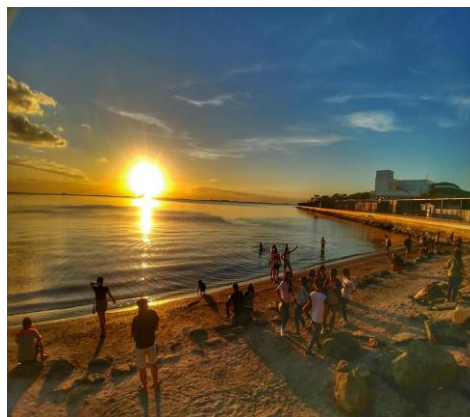
Manila Bay's white sand is just like Paris in the summer



NO BEACH, NO PROBLEM Although it is the capital of a beach paradise, the Maldives, Male has no decent beach of its own, so it built an artificial beach, now a popular venue for parades, live music, sports events, and community parades

Also the sand isn't exactly sand, but crushed dolomite boulders from Cebu, as DENR clarified. We have yet to know if, just like sand, whose mining to create or expand distant beaches is tricky, if not illegal, crushed dolomite is prone to erosion and how it will interact with the eco-system of Manila Bay.

But Paris Plages is only a temporary scheme. The beaches are there for the whole month of August, sometimes starting earlier in July, sometimes extending a few days into September. But it has been a major success, a brilliant scheme in city planning. In 2007, summer visitors attributed to these temporary beaches topped four million.



SUNSET ON MANILA BAY And possibly gleaming on the white sand. Photo from last year by Lost Juan

So we do need to rethink Manila Bay beach. Or maybe DENR and the City of Manila have yet to let us know exactly what the purpose of the beach is, other than to turn what is miserably gray into gleaming white. Is it just beautification like neo-classical lamp posts on a functioning bridge? Is it to attract tourists to the area? Is it to give Manileños respite from the scorching heat? Where's the beach party? And more important, as we know from experience when the baywalk along Roxas Boulevard was a nightspot busy with open-air cafes, live concerts, mimes, and acrobats, where to park?



DENR: Not white sand but crushed 'dolomite boulders' will be used to cover 500-meter Manila baywalk

Published September 3, 2020, 9:42 PM
by [Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz](#)

An official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) clarified that it is not “white sand” that will be used to fill the 500-meter stretch of the baywalk as part of the Manila Bay rehabilitation.



(Screenshot from KHOPARS VLOG's YouTube video / MANILA BULLETIN)

DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns Benny Antiporda said the “sand” that was brought to Manila was crushed “dolomite boulders” from Cebu.

“Kasi bawal iyung sand na ibiyahe na galing sa mga coastal natin. (Because sand is not allowed to be transported from our coastal areas),” he said in a video message sent to reporters.

Fisherfolk group Pamalakaya earlier criticized the plan of the DENR to fill a portion of the Manila Bay baywalk with “white sand.”

The group further described the plan as “artificial rehabilitation focusing on aesthetic appearance rather than addressing the environmental degradation problems” of Manila Bay.

“Filling of white sand would less likely contribute to the rehabilitation and restoration of the degrading Manila Bay,” Pamalakaya national chairperson Fernando Hicap said.

However, Antiporda defended the DENR rehabilitation plan and asked the public to take care of the Manila Bay.

“Kailangan kumilos na tayo at magtulong-tulong na tayo. (We need to act and help each other),” he said.

Antiporda said the DENR is slowly bringing down Manila Bay's coliform level but it is still far from reaching the standard level.

The standard coliform level for coastal waters which is safe for swimming and other similar recreational activities is 100 most probable number per 100 milliliter (mpn/100ml).



DENR: Not white sand but crushed 'dolomite boulders' will be used to cover 500-meter Manila baywalk

When the Manila bay rehabilitation started in 2018, the fecal coliform level in Manila Bay was around 300 million mpn/100ml

The DENR aims to reduce the coliform level in Manila Bay to less than 270 most probable number (MPN) per 100 milliliters (ml) and in all esteros or waterways leading to the bay to 100 mpn/100ml.



Mayor Isko backs DENR's Manila Bay beach nourishment project

By Marita Moaje September 4, 2020, 6:17 pm



(Photo courtesy of DENR Dir. Tuchie Gaddi)

MANILA – The city government of Manila expressed its full support to the national government and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in its implementation of the Manila Bay beach nourishment project that includes the overlaying of “white sand” in the area.

Manila Mayor Francisco ‘Isko Moreno’ Domagoso, in a press conference on Friday, said cleaning Manila Bay will entail a lot of costs, which is why the city government appreciates all the efforts of the DENR in cleaning the area.

“*Natutuwa kami dahil* (we are very happy because) they went beyond, to really make more vibrant Manila, we support DENR,” Domagoso said.

Reacting to claims of some groups that the crushed dolomite boulders being overlayed along the Manila Bay beach is dangerous to the environment, Domagoso said that it is not for him to say the same and that he trusts that the DENR knows better on the issue.

“I don’t think a government agency mandated to protect the environment will be the same to destroy it. That is the reason why they are called the Department of Environment and Natural Resources,” he added.

For the meantime, he said that the city of Manila is grateful to the national government for giving attention to the cleanliness of the bay.

He added that the Manila city government is excited as well as to the final outcome of the project.

Domagoso, meanwhile, said the city government will do its share in reviving the beauty of Manila Bay, which is known for its breathtaking sunset view.

“We will continue to clean all those solid waste material in Manila Bay within our territorial jurisdiction. We will try to be more efficient in cleaning up our esteros, tributaries, the creeks, we will continue to clean it up,” he said in a mix of Filipino and English.

Domagoso also called on those who live along the Manila Bay area not to throw their garbage and wastes in the water and for the establishment around the bay to follow the rules and regulations being imposed by the DENR most especially with regard to their wastewater. **(PNA)**



Lacson: Pouring white sand along Manila Bay ‘worthwhile’ endeavor



Senator Panfilo Lacson on Friday said the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' decision to pour white sand along the shores of Manila Bay as part of the rehabilitation plan is "worthwhile," so long as prudent planning was employed.

"On the assumption that proper studies and consultations with experts, especially on its sustainability and effects on the environment, not to mention due diligence on the financial investment were made before its implementation, I would like to think that it is a worthwhile endeavor," Lacson said in a message.

Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda earlier said the [public would refrain from dumping wastes in Manila Bay](#) if they see white sand along its shore.

"If you are going to look at it, 'pag may kulay puti po, ayaw nating marumihan ito," Antiporda said.

The "white sand" placed along Manila Bay were actually crushed dolomite boulders from Cebu province.

Dismissing warnings of some environmentalists that [these substances may destroy the natural ecosystem](#), Antiporda assured that the "white sand" would not harm marine life in the bay.

"They should also have an in-depth study before coming up with opinion[s]. Iyong crushed dolomite boulders po, may calcium carbonate, at ganoon rin po ang content ng sea coral, kaya huwag po sila masyado negatibo," he said.

Further, Antiporda said the water quality in Manila Bay has significantly improved from having 1.3 billion of coliform per 100 milliliter of water to 700 coliform per 100 milliliter of water.

"Ang target po is 200 coliform per 100 milliliter by the end of the year para maging safe po ito sa ating mga kababayan sakali pong lumangoy sila diyan," he added.

For now, Manila Bay remains unsafe for swimming. — **Dona Magsino/RSJ, GMA News**



Isko backs DENR's white sand project at Manila Bay

Published September 4, 2020 5:38pm
By ANNA FELICIA BAJO, GMA News

Mayor Isko Moreno on Friday said the city government of Manila is supporting the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR) plan to cover the Baywalk on Roxas Boulevard with white sand.

At a press conference, Moreno pointed out that there is no proof yet that will show that the agency's plan could be dangerous for the environment, noting that in this situation, the DENR "knows better."

"We support DENR. Now, with regard to the claim na 'yung ilalagay na buhangin ay makakapaminsala sa kapaligiran, it is not up for me to identify scientifically na ito'y nakakasira ng kalikasan. I think DENR on its own knows it better to protect our environment," Moreno said.

"I don't think a person in his right mind, in a particular agency of the government, who's supposed to be taking care of our environment will pollute our environment. 'Yun ang presumption ko. For now, hangga't wala naman sigurong nakapagsasaad o nakapagpapatibay sa claim ng iilan, may presumption of regularity... so if that is the case, we continue to support DENR and the City of Manila is grateful to DENR," he added.

Moreno also said the next step is to "scrutinize" if indeed the plan of DENR could pose risk to the environment. "Kung sakali naman na napatunayan na itong mga inilagay na ito ay makamapaminsala, I think DENR knows it better, kaya nga sila tinatawag na Department of Environment and Natural Resources," he said.

The DENR is planning to fill 500 meters of the Baywalk on Roxas Boulevard with white sand under the Manila Bay Rehabilitation Program.

"Gagawin white sand itong, dito sa may bay walk area para makita ng tao na kapag puti ang kulay ng isang bagay, kailangan pangalagaan mo ito at 'wag mo dumihan," DENR undersecretary Benny Antiporda had said.

This plan was criticized by environmentalists and fisherfolk groups, saying that pouring white sand does not resolve the pollution in the bay. -NB, GMA News



DENR: White sand along Manila Bay will discourage people from throwing trash

Published September 4, 2020 10:02am
By LLANESCA T. PANTI, GMA News

Putting synthetic white sand alongside Manila Bay coastline will discourage people from littering and throwing trash in the water, Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said Friday.

Antiporda made the justification after the effort to bring white sand—made from crushed dolomite boulders shipped from Cebu province—drew flak from the public for being done amid the COVID-19 pandemic when the resources could have been given to sectors badly needing aid.

“If you are going to look at it, pag may kulay puti po, ayaw nating marumihan ito,” Antiporda said in an Unang Balita interview.

“Information campaign rin po ito na kailangan pangalagaan ang Manila Bay, na huwag natin itong dumihan. Tuloy tuloy po ang paglilinis natin, but sad to say, may mga pasaway pa rin po na nagkakalat diyan ng basura, nagtatapon sa dagat,” he added.

As for funding, the DENR official said that such white sand initiative is part of the P389 million Manila Bay beach nourishment project.



No environmental impact study needed on Manila 'beach nourishment' — DENR

[Gaea Katreena Cabico](#) (Philstar.com) - September 4, 2020 - 2:37pm

MANILA, Philippines (**Updated 3:45 p.m.**) — The project to give Manila Bay a makeover by pouring “white sand” on its shoreline does not have to go through the process of preparing an environmental impact study and obtaining a compliance certificate, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources said.

Projects in the country that may affect the environment need to go through the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process and get an environmental compliance certificate (ECC), environmental lawyer Gloria Estenzo-Ramos said as a response to the move of the DENR to fill Manila Bay’s naturally dark shoreline with “white sand” as part of the government’s program to rehabilitate the degraded waterway.

[‘White-sanding’ along Manila Bay will not make it cleaner, DENR reminded](#)

But DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said the “beach nourishment” project is not covered by the country’s EIS system.

“It is a rehabilitation project, not a construction project. It’s only a beach nourishment [project] in which we’re beautifying it,” Antiporda told **Philstar.com** in a phone interview Thursday.

Antiporda, however, said the crushed dolomite boulders will not “disrupt” the coastal ecosystem.

“Kami sa DENR pinag-aralan natin ‘yan. In the first place ‘yung mga ginamit dyan, especially ‘yung sand, ‘yung dolomite boulders na ‘yan it contains calcium carbonate and if you will look sa corals, calcium carbonate din. So it will not disrupt the coastal ecosystem,” Antiporda said.

(We studied it. In the first place what we used, especially the sand, the dolomite boulders it contains calcium carbonate and if you will look at corals, it’s made up of calcium carbonate. So it will not disrupt the coastal ecosystem.)

Certificate of non-coverage

Projects or undertakings which are seen to have significant adverse impact to the quality of the environment are covered by the country’s EIS system, according to Memorandum Circular 2014-005 of the DENR-Environmental Management Bureau. These projects include “proposed major expansion, rehabilitation and/or modification of existing projects as well as resumption of projects that have stopped operations for a prolonged period.”



No environmental impact study needed on Manila 'beach nourishment' — DENR

An environmental impact assessment evaluates the likely impacts of a project on the environment and the surrounding communities and includes mitigation and preventive measures to address the identified consequences of a project.

An ECC, meanwhile, is issued by the EMB to a project's proponent certifying that the proposed undertaking has complied with the requirements of the EIS system and has committed to address environmental impacts.

Antiporda said the project obtained a certificate of non-coverage (CNC), which is issued to projects that are deemed unlikely to cause significant adverse impacts on the environment. This is issued by the EMB to certify that the undertaking is not covered by the EIS system and is not required to secure an ECC.

The environment official earlier said covering a stretch of the bay with "white sand" will serve as an awareness campaign to protect the environment and allow people who have never experienced the popular white sand beaches in Boracay El Nido and Bohol to have one in the capital.

But it was met with criticism from environmental and fisherfolk groups, saying it will not make Manila Bay cleaner and may even affect the natural ecosystem and coastal integrity of the waterway.

Fishers group PAMALAKAYA said a better solution is to grow mangroves and seagrass instead.

"Lahat 'yan ginagawa natin. We're addressing it all at the same time. Pero di mo naman pwedeng ma-comply 'yan at all the same time," Antiporda said, adding the department is planning to spearhead a mangrove planting project on the bay in coordination with the city government of Manila.

(We're doing all of that. We're addressing it all at the same time but you cannot comply everything all the same time.)

Pulverized rocks

The plan is to cover one hectare of the baywalk with "white sand" at 1-meter thick, Antiporda said.

The "white sand" was actually made of crushed dolomite boulders that were transported from Cebu province to Manila. Dolomite is a mineral composed of calcium magnesium carbonate.

When asked where the dolomite was sourced, Antiporda said this was handled by the Department of Public Works and Highways, the implementing arm of the project.

Dolomite is being mined in Brgy. Pugalo in Alcoy town, Cebu.

A notice of award issued by the Department of Public Works and Highways on Dec. 27, 2019 showed that P389.8 million was awarded to MAC Builders/Dragonhart Construction Enterprise Inc for the "beach nourishment, coastal restoration and enhancement of Manila Baywalk Area."

The project to clean up Manila Bay—known for its amazing sunset views and garbage-strewn, murky waters—began in January last year.



“Matagal na po itong project na ito. Last year pa ito. Hindi po ito ngayong pandemic lang. Na-allocate na po yung funds niyan and naumpisahan na po yan last year pa. Yung silt removal nag-umpisa po yan, yung pagtanggap ng burak sa ilalim,” Antiporda told GMA News.

White sand at Manila Bay worth P389M, won't affect ecosystem -DENR

Published September 4, 2020 7:19pm

By TINA PANGANIBAN-PEREZ, GMA News

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources today defended from critics its ongoing project to cover the Manila Bay beachfront with “white sand.”

PAMALAKAYA said the project is “useless” because the sand may just be washed away.

The group called for the rehabilitation instead of Manila Bay, including anti-pollution measures for Pasig River and planting more mangroves.

Greenpeace, meanwhile, called for full transparency for the project.

The project costs P389 million, including the clean-up of Manila Bay.

DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said the funds were already allocated last year, before the pandemic.

“Matagal na po itong project na ito. Last year pa ito. Hindi po ito ngayong pandemic lang. Na-allocate na po yung funds niyan and naumpisahan na po yan last year pa. Yung silt removal nag-umpisa po yan, yung pagtanggap ng burak sa ilalim,” Antiporda told GMA News.

“Sa halip na itim yung ilagay sa ibabaw na sand, yung one meter niya is ang nilagay is white sand. Ayon na rin sa ating Sec Roy Cimatu, para namang makita ng ating mga kababayan yung white sand na inaasam-asam nila na hindi nila marating dahil sa mahal nga naman kung pupunta ka pa sa Boracay o sa Palawan o Bohol,” Antiporda added.

He also clarified that the “white sand” is dolomite, a sedimentary rock which, Antiporda said, will not affect Manila Bay’s ecosystem.

“Hindi naman po yan white sand talaga na galing sa coastal sand. Ito po ay dolomite boulders na crinush at ginagamit din naman po ng mga resorts and beaches. Hindi rin yan makaka-disrupt sa ating ecosystem dahil in the first place, ang content po niyan is calcium carbonate. And yung sea corral natin is calcium carbonate din,” Antiporda explained.



White sand at Manila Bay worth P389M, won't affect ecosystem -DENR

The DENR is scheduled to inspect the project on September 19, in time for International Coastal Clean Up Day.

After the inspection, the public may already visit the area.

Antiporda, however, cautioned the public against swimming in Manila Bay because the water's coliform level is still high.

Coliform is present in human and animal waste. -NB, GMA News



'Manila Bay makeover part of rehabilitation'

[Christina Mendez](#) (The Philippine Star) - September 5, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — Malacañang defended yesterday the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)'s makeover of Manila Bay's shoreline.

"On the issue of the Manila Bay rehabilitation, per the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the report that 'white sand' is being used to fill the stretch of the Baywalk is erroneous," presidential spokesman Harry Roque said.

He said the project has been in the pipeline even before the onset of the pandemic.

"This forms part of the cleaning up of the Manila Bay rehabilitation program with an allocated budget," the Palace official said.

The P384-million "beach nourishment" project for Manila Bay received flak for the use of the crushed dolomite boulders transported from Cebu to Manila.

In an interview with "The Chiefs" on OneNews/TV5 on Thursday night, DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said they decided to come up with the project so Metro Manila's residents would enjoy "Boracay feels."

He said the target is to fill in 500 meters of the Baywalk area with the crushed dolomite after the silt was removed.

DENR data show that fecal coliform levels "drastically decreased" in January, a year after the Manila Bay rehabilitation kicked off.

The coliform count at the Padre Faura outfall is down to 920,000 most probable number per 100 milliliter from 7.21 million mpn/100 ml in January 2019.

From 35 million mpn/100 ml at the Raja Soliman/Remedios drainage outfall, the coliform count dropped to 11 million mpn/100 ml.

The coliform count at the Manila Yacht Club outfall is now 54 million mpn/100 ml from a high of 110 million mpn/100 ml.

Manila Bay's waters would be safe for swimming at 100 mpn/100 ml.

Department of Public Works and Highways Undersecretary for regional operations in Metro Manila, the Visayas and Region 4-B, Roberto Bernardo said yesterday the newly rehabilitated stretch of Manila Bay is tentatively set to open for recreation, including swimming, by Sept. 19.

"We are eyeing Manila Bay as another Boracay within the country's capital. Right now, we are already on the finishing touches," he said.

The DENR classified the bay as "Class SB" meant for the commercial propagation of shellfish, a spawning area for milkfish, ecotourism and contact recreational activities such as bathing, swimming and skin diving. – **Rhodina Villanueva, Jose Rodel Clapano, Elizabeth Marcelo, Rey Galupo**



DENR ‘white sand’ haul alarms Cebu officials

By: [Dale G. Israel](#), [Nestle Semilla](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)
[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:00 AM September 05, 2020

CEBU CITY — Officials of Cebu province are looking into the reported extraction of dolomite rocks that were pulverized into “white sand” to cover and beautify a small part of the Manila Bay shoreline under a much-criticized P349-million rehabilitation project of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

“We were caught by surprise. This is alarming,” Provincial Board Member John Ismael Borgonia told reporters on Friday, a day after Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda disclosed, without providing further details, that the sand being used for the “beach nourishment” of Manila Bay was actually crushed rocks sourced from Cebu.

Borgonia, who chairs the provincial board’s committee on environment conservation and natural resources, said that “even if the project was undertaken by the national government, the local government of Cebu should have been informed. They [national government] should have asked for the necessary permit and consent.”

“It’s like Cebu was robbed,” he added. “We didn’t even have an idea about it.”

He said he had requested the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office to investigate where exactly in Cebu the dolomite rocks were extracted.

“This is a classic example of getting something from our resources but the province did not have anything in return,” Borgonia said.

DPWH matter

Earth movers and other heavy equipment started covering a 500-meter stretch of Manila Bay with the sand on Thursday.

News of the operation, as announced by the DENR, immediately set off a firestorm of criticism from netizens and environmentalists who questioned the costing and sustainability of the project, as well as its timing in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Critics also dismissed the so-called whitewashing of the Manila Bay coastline near Manila’s Baywalk strip along Roxas Boulevard as a mere cosmetic job following a major cleanup that removed tons of trash from the shores last year.

Antiporda earlier said the sourcing of the dolomite rocks from Cebu was a matter handled by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

Defending the project in an ANC interview on Friday, the DENR official said engineering interventions like geotubes had been installed to protect the new layer of sand from being washed away during storm surges or high tide.



DENR ‘white sand’ haul alarms Cebu officials

He said the new layer of sand would be a meter thick and cover a total area of “1 hectare.”

No permit

Edgar Tabacon, director of the DPWH-Central Visayas (Region 7) office, did not respond to phone calls on Friday when the Inquirer sought his comment.

Another official from Tabacon’s office, who declined to be named for lack of clearance to speak to the media, said they could not give any statement since the project was undertaken by the DPWH central office.

Joel Garganera, a councilor of Cebu City, which is administratively independent from the provincial government, said he had sought clarification from DENR-7 Director Paquito Melicor Jr., who told him that no permit had been issued in the province to extract and transport dolomite for the Manila Bay project.

“DENR-7 wants to know where the information [came from] that the dolomite [was] from Cebu. They are actually conducting an investigation if indeed these dolomites were taken from Cebu,” said Garganera, who heads the council’s environment committee.



NEW LAYER Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda says geotubes have been installed in the Manila Bay area being covered with white sand to protect it from being washed away during storm surges or high tide. —RICHARD A. REYES

‘Waste of money’

Also on Friday, maritime experts weighing in on the Manila Bay project warned about its risks.

In an interview with the Inquirer, Jay Batongbacal, director of the Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea of the University of the Philippines, said the new layer of sand would require structures to protect it from erosion.

The dumping of foreign material, he added, would create turbidity or affect the relative clarity of the waters on Manila Bay, which in turn would have a short-term effect on its sensitive marine life.

He likened the project to “painting a dirty wall with a water soluble paint—superficial and a waste of money.”



DENR ‘white sand’ haul alarms Cebu officials

It also remains to be seen how the dolomite would interact with other wastes and metals that had contaminated the waters, he noted.

Marine biologist Benjamin Vallejo said sand sourced from quarrying would likely have an effect “especially [on] the substantial mollusk biodiversity” found on the bay’s sand flats.

‘Washed out’

“Cleaning up the bay involves a holistic approach which includes reducing sewage outfalls by sewage treatment, restoring habitats like mangroves and putting a hold on reclamation projects,” said Vallejo, who has been studying the Manila Bay ecosystem for years.

Disaster scientist Mahar Lagmay pointed out that sand deposited on beaches always shifts and is eventually transported elsewhere.

“If you put white sand there, chances are during storms and high tide when the waves are high because of strong winds, all this sand will be washed out and transported,” he said on ANC. “It’s really going to be expensive if you want to continuously replenish the white sand because it is foreign material and the beach should really be gray just like that kind of sand that is common in that area.”

In many countries, Lagmay said, beach nourishment is an expensive effort aimed at protecting high-end properties near coastlines.

This is not the case with regard to Manila Bay, he said, citing Antiporda’s explanation that the project was carried out for beautification.

Isko: ‘We are happy’

In an online press briefing late Friday afternoon, Manila Mayor Francisco “Isko Moreno” Domagoso expressed appreciation for the project, saying “we are happy that the DENR went beyond [its call] to make the city a more vibrant Manila. We agree [with] it. We support DENR.”

“DENR, on its own, knows it better to protect our environment. I don’t think a person in his right mind—in particular, an agency [tasked] to protect the environment—will pollute the environment. This is my presumption,” the mayor said. — *(with reports from Nikka G. Valenzuela, Julie M. Aurelio and Jodee A. Agoncillo)*



Cebu officials probe dolomite mining for Manila Bay rehab



[ARVIE N. VELOSO](#)

September 5, 2020

THE Cebu Provincial Government has launched a probe into a Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) pronouncement that crushed dolomite boulders from Cebu were being used to fill up Manila Bay's 500-meter baywalk as part of the national agency's bay re-habilitation program.

Provincial Board Member John Ismael Boragonia (Cebu, 3rd District), who chairs the committee on environment and natural resources, said re-ports that minerals from Cebu were being used to develop Manila Bay "caught him by surprise."

He said they will verify which part of the province pro-vided the dolomite rocks for the DENR project.

"We are tracing, in particular, what beach and what they used (to extract). This is alarm-ing. Suddenly, we hear that sand is taken from us for Manila Bay," Boragonia told reporters on Friday, Sept. 4, 2020.

DENR Undersecretary for Solid Waste Management and Local Government Units Concerns Benny Antiporda had told reporters the "sand" that was brought to Manila was crushed "dolomite boulders" from Cebu.

Environmental issues

Malacañang has faced a wave of criticism over the Manila Bay rehabilitation project done at a time of the coronavirus crisis.

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque explained that funds for the project were al-ready allocated even before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Environmentalists and fisherfolk also described the Manila Bay makeover, which cost government around P349 million, as destructive on the area in Cebu where the "sand" was sourced, while it hardly addressed the bay's environmental degradation problems.



Cebu officials probe dolomite mining for Manila Bay rehab

But past these issues on the project's timeliness and relevance, Cebu officials want to know why no undertaking was made with them that would allow dolomite from the Province to be mined and then turned into white sand for Manila Bay.

"As far as I know, they can-not just right away quarry minerals from Cebu even if it's a National Government undertaking because local governments have autonomy," Borgonia said in Cebuano. Borgonia said securing a permit to mine or quarry minerals from Cebu is a tedious process.

"They have to ask the necessary permit from Cebu Province and the consent of the particular local government unit where they plan to extract. They can not do it without our consent," Borgonia added.

Permits

The Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (Penro) also wants to know if the mining operator responsible for the dolomite extraction was engaged in small-scale or large-scale mining.

Penro Chief Rodel Bontuyan said the Province has jurisdiction only over small-scale mining operations or those operating within a five-hectare area.

Only the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) has total jurisdiction over large-scale mining operations, Bontuyan explained.

Based on Penro's records, only the town of Alcoy in southern Cebu has a mining industry that is totally dependent on dolomite.

For its part, the DENR Central Visayas said it will verify if the material used to fill up the stretch of Manila Bay's shore-line really came from Cebu.

DENR 7 Communications Development Officer Maricita Cabasa said the regional DENR office is coordinating with the MGB 7 to trace extraction permits that may have been issued.

Cabasa said a permit to transfer would be needed to transport the minerals from Cebu to Manila. The DENR's rehabilitation of Manila Bay is being undertaken by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

"From our end, we are trying to trace where the DPWH sourced the material and who they contracted for it," Cabasa said.



Immediately after winning the 2019 elections, Cebu Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia issued orders to stop the issuance of quarry permits across the province due to numerous violations incurred by quarry operators.

Garcia also increased the number of requirements needed before quarry operators are again issued permits.

“It’s a classic example that there is still quarrying going on even if this has already been suspended in Cebu Province. We will ask Penro to investigate where this is going on and if those undertaking this have the necessary permit,” Borgonia said. / **JJL**



'No 'white sand beach' project in Manila Bay, says Roque, as senators express mixed views on DENR project

Published September 4, 2020, 2:38 PM
by [Genalyn Kabiling & Vanne Elaine P. Terrazola](#)

Malacañang has rejected “erroneous” reports that white sand has been used to fill the stretch of Manila Bay as part of its rehabilitation.

Citing information from the Department of Environment of Natural Resources (DENR), Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said crushed “dolomite boulders” are actually being used in the rehabilitation project.



Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque
(JOEY DALUMPINES/PRESIDENTIAL PHOTO / MANILA BULLETIN FILE PHOTO)

“Per the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the report that ‘white sand’ is being used to fill the stretch of the baywalk is erroneous,” Roque.

“DENR added ‘crushed dolomite boulders’ would be utilized for the aforesaid project. This forms part of the cleaning up of the Manila Bay Rehabilitation Program with an allocated budget, which began even before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic,” he said.

The Palace apparently found nothing wrong with the use of these materials for the Manila Bay makeover. The environment department earlier clarified that the dolomite boulders from Cebu were transported to Manila to fill the portion of the baywalk.

Some groups however criticized the government’s plan to use alleged white sand for to boost the aesthetic look of Manila Bay instead of addressing actual environmental concerns.

Meanwhile, senators expressed divergent views on the DENR’s project.

Senator Joel Villanueva said Friday that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) could have spent its funds for projects that would actually protect the country’s natural resources or were attuned to the current COVID-19 pandemic than investing on its “white sand” beach project along the Manila Bay.



'No 'white sand beach' project in Manila Bay, says Roque, as senators express mixed views on DENR project

Villanueva echoed public criticism on the DENR's plan to fill a 500-meter stretch of the baywalk with white sand.

Senator Panfilo Lacson, meanwhile, said he hopes that the DENR did its homework in terms of relevant research and consultation in pushing for the program.

"On the assumption that proper studies and consultations with experts, especially on its sustainability and effects on the environment, not to mention due diligence on the financial investment were made before its implementation, I would like to think that it is a worthwhile endeavor," Lacson opined

"Environmental protection cannot be achieved by mere aesthetics alone, and certainly not at the cost of sacrificing one area to preserve or make the other more pleasing. This will lead to further environmental degradation, if not fool-hardly and waste of resources in a time of great hunger and economic hardship," Villanueva said in a message to reporters when asked about the DENR project.

"Funds for this project could have been better spent in buying the needs of our students, or providing more assistance to displaced workers and OFWs," said the senator, who chairs the Senate committees on labor and higher education.

Groups had criticized the DENR's "beach nourishment" plan, which it said was part of the government's Manila Bay Rehabilitation Program. The program reportedly cost around P349 million.

Fisherfolk group Pamalakaya described the plan as "artificial rehabilitation focusing on aesthetic appearance rather than addressing the environmental degradation problems" of Manila Bay.

DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said that the project would serve as a campaign to tell the public that "it's about time for us na pangalagaan ang ating kapaligiran at panatilihin nating malinis (to take care of our environment and keep it clean)."

The "white sand", he said, is made from crushed boulders of dolomite and shipped from Cebu, "will signify cleanliness". He added that the DENR also prepared "engineering interventions" to preserve and prevent its erosion.

Antiporda also related this to the COVID-19 pandemic and said that DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu believes that this pandemic is connected to the people's "carelessness" about the environment.



Palace: Not ‘white sand,’ but ‘crushed dolomite boulders’ used in Manila Bay

By: [Krissy Aguilar](#) - Reporter / [@KAguilarINQ](#)
[INQUIRER.net](#) / 03:25 PM September 04, 2020

MANILA, Philippines — It is “erroneous” to say that white sand was used to cover Manila Bay’s shore, Malacañang said Friday, pointing out that “crushed dolomite boulders” were utilized in the makeover.

“On the issue of the Manila Bay rehabilitation, per the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the report that ‘white sand’ is being used to fill the stretch of the baywalk is erroneous,” presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said in a statement.

“DENR added ‘crushed dolomite boulders’ would be utilized for the aforesaid project,” he added.

Roque said funds for Manila Bay’s rehabilitation project were already allocated even before the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic broke out.

Environmentalists and fisherfolk groups [questioned](#) DENR’s project, calling it “artificial rehabilitation” that focused on appearance.

But DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda came to the project’s defense, saying it would [discourage](#) littering in Manila Bay. [ac]

Read more: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1331253/fwd-palace-not-white-sand-but-crushed-dolomite-boulders-used-in-manila-bay#ixzz6X6sQrT3e>

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MALA-BORACAY PROJECT IN MANILA BAY PART OF ITS P389M PROGRAM



September 5, 2020 @ 12:28 AM 6 hours ago

THE white sand being applied alongside Manila Bay coastline was part of the national government's P389M Manila Bay beach nourishment project that started two years ago and the best way to discourage people from littering and throwing trash in the water.

Environment and Natural Resources Undersecretary Benny Antiporda also said there's an engineering intervention in place so the white sand can withstand strong current and strong waves coming from the sea.

He made the justification after it drew flak from the public for being done amid the COVID-19 pandemic when the resources could have been given to sectors badly needing aid.

"Information campaign rin po ito na kailangan pangalagaan ang Manila Bay, na huwag natin itong dumihan. Tuloy-tuloy po ang paglilinis natin, but sad to say, may mga pasaway pa rin po na nagkakalat diyan ng basura, nagtatapon sa dagat," Usec. Benny said during a television interview.

Navotas' seminar for small businesses

Navotas Mayor Toby Tiangco said the local government continues to conduct seminar to interested residents who wish to put up small business in the city.

Launched more than a month ago, the 'NegoSeminar' is aimed at teaching interested residents affected by COVID-19 pandemic on how to set up their own small business but don't have enough savings to fund it.

It's held every Wednesday between 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the City Hall and those who want to avail the "Tulong Puhunan" can proceed to the Navotas Hanapbuhay Center for their next schedule.

He keeps on reminding his constituents about the importance of cooperation of everyone in order to keep up the continued slowing of the rate of virus infection.



MALA-BORACAY PROJECT IN MANILA BAY PART OF ITS P389M PROGRAM

Lone LGU in MM

While entire local government units in Metro Manila have adjusted their curfew hours under the relaxed general community quarantine, Navotas was left with 8pm-5am period with Mayor Tiangco saying “it’s better safe than sorry.”

He said the city would stick to its 8pm-5am curfew hours saying they had an ordinance that said it would be observed and followed in the city while a community quarantine is in place.

Mayor Toby believed that if the curfew hour was extended, it would only encourage people to stay out longer instead of going home earlier.

“We want Navoteños to stay home as much as possible. Anyway, APORs (authorized persons outside residences) are exempted from curfew.”

Parents will be penalized for allowing their children to go out

Careless and negligent parents in Navotas who allow their children to play with others outside their houses must pay a fine of P1,000 for failing to shield their loved ones from danger posed by COVID-19.

The visibly-incensed mayor issued the stern warning after seeing pictures of children posted on social media while playing on the streets without fear of being infected by the dreaded disease.

He’s dismayed by the parents’ attitude for being complacent amid the active threat of Covid-19.

“Sa mga magulang, obligasyon po ninyong disiplinahin at alagaan ang inyong mga anak. Kayo po ang unang magtuturo sa kanila kung ano ang mabuti at hindi. ‘Wag po silang hayaan na gumala dahil pag-uwi po nila, malaki ang tsansang may virus silang dala.”

The mayor said that he even is against imposing fine to reckless parents due to hardship that everybody is facing amid the pandemic but as a public servant, he is duty-bound to implement the laws especially in these trying times.



Villanueva warns vs white sand dumping on Manila Bay

[Friday, September 4, 2020](#) [Marlon Purificacion](#)¹³

SENATOR Joel Villanueva warned that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR) project of dumping white sand at the Manila Bay may lead to further environmental degradation.

Villanueva said environmental protection cannot be achieved by mere aesthetics alone, and certainly not at the cost of sacrificing one area to preserve or make the other more pleasing.

“This will lead to further environmental degradation, if not fool-hardly and waste of resources in a time of great hunger and economic hardship,” he said.

The senator further said the funds for the project could have been better spent in buying the needs of our students, or providing more assistance to displaced workers and OFWs.

On the other hand, Senator Panfilo Lacson thinks that the project is worthwhile endeavor on the condition that it was properly studied.

“On the assumption that proper studies and consultations with experts, especially on its sustainability and effects on the environment, not to mention due diligence on the financial investment were made before its implementation, I would like to think that it is a worthwhile endeavor,” he said.



Funds for Manila Bay’s white sand project could have aided COVID-hit sectors – Villanueva

SENATOR DISMISSES THE PLAN AS 'MERE AESTHETICS'

By: [Christia Marie Ramos](#) - Reporter / [@CMRamosINQ](#)
[INQUIRER.net](#) / 04:56 PM September 04, 2020

MANILA, Philippines — The millions of funds used for the “white sand” makeover in Manila Bay’s coastline could have been “better spent” to aid pandemic-hit sectors, Senator Joel Villanueva said Friday.

“Environmental protection cannot be achieved by mere aesthetics alone, and certainly not at the cost of sacrificing one area to preserve or make the other more pleasing,” Villanueva said in a message to reporters.

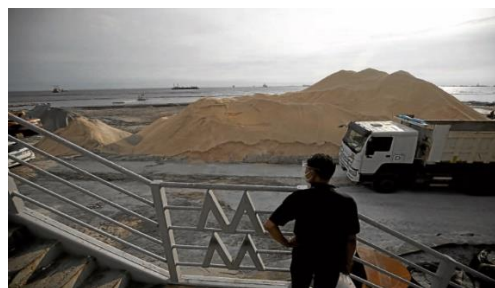
“This will lead to further environmental degradation, if not fool-hardly and waste of resources in a time of great hunger and economic hardship,” he added.

The project is part of the Manila Bay Rehabilitation Program launched by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) early last year in compliance with a 10-year-old Supreme Court order for the government to clean up coastal areas in Metro Manila.

DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said the project cost around P349 million.

Environmentalists and fisherfolk groups, however, questioned DENR’s project, calling it “artificial rehabilitation” that focused on appearance.

But Antiporda defended the project, saying that the “white sand,” which is made of crushed dolomite transported from Cebu to Manila, will [discourage](#) people from throwing garbage in the area.



TO SAVE THE BAY A 500-meter stretch of the 190-kilometer coastline of Manila Bay will be covered with sand derived from crushed dolomite in a bid by the government to beautify the scenery and encourage the public to protect it. Environmental activists are not exactly pleased. —RICHARD A. REYES

“Funds for this project could have been better spent in buying the needs of our students, or providing more assistance to displaced workers and [overseas Filipino workers],” Villanueva, chair of the Senate labor committee, went on.



Funds for Manila Bay’s white sand project could have aided COVID-hit sectors – Villanueva

SENATOR DISMISSES THE PLAN AS 'MERE AESTHETICS'

Meanwhile, Senator Panfilo Lacson said he would think that the project is a “worthwhile endeavor” if “proper studies and consultations with experts, especially on its sustainability and effects on the environment, [as well as] due diligence on the financial investment were made before its implementation.” [ac]

Read more: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1331297/fwd-mere-aesthetics-senator-says-funds-for-white-sand-project-in-manila-bay-could-have-aided-pandemic-hit-sectors#ixzz6X7TgNTAi>

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Cebu local officials demand probe on dolomite extraction for Manila Bay

By [Danielle Nakpil, CNN Philippines](#)

Published Sep 4, 2020 3:44:37 PM



Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, September 4) — Cebu provincial board members are demanding for an investigation on the extraction of dolomite brought to Manila Bay.

The local officials said that they are “alarmed” after revealing that the extraction of the rocks for the cleanup was done without any permit from the local government.

Provincial board member John Ismael Borgonia said that they want to know where the dolomite rocks have been extracted, and have asked the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) to investigate.

“We want to know if the one who supplied the dolomite has the necessary permit and where they secured it. Why they were able to ship the dolomite without us in the province or any LGU knowing it,” Borgonia said.

The overlaying of white sand made of refined dolomite rocks on the shore of Manila Bay in Roxas Boulevard has [drawn flak](#) from different environment groups, saying that it is entirely for “aesthetic” purposes.

However, Department of Environment and Natural Resources Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said that the project has been studied thoroughly.

“*May pag-aaral po ‘yan. Hindi naman basta-basta gagawin ‘yan to just please the eyes of the people. May mga engineering intervention na ginawa diyan,*” he said in a CNN Philippines interview on Friday.

[Translation: There have been studies conducted. It was not just made to please the eyes of people. There were engineering interventions that were made there.]

According to Antiporda, the rehabilitation project has a ₱389-million funding, and clarified that it was not spent solely on the dolomite rocks.

Dale Israel, CNN Philippines correspondent in Cebu, contributed to this story.

MANILA'S BORACAY BEACH | Concerned groups question safety and impact of artificial white sand for Manila Bay

September 4, 2020 , 03:53 PM

(September 04, 2020) – The government’s plan to turn Manila Bay’s murky bayside into a world-class beach resort similar to the world famous Boracay was questioned by some sectors, including an infrastructure-oriented think tank.

Infrawatch PH has questioned the viability and health risk of using dolomite, or calcium magnesium carbonate, to cover the half-kilometer beach front, a popular hang-out area in the nation’s capital.

“No amount of motherhood statements will save the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) from direct responsibility for this monumental blunder,” Terry Ridon, Infrawatch PH convenor and former urban poor chief for the Duterte administration said in a statement.

“There is nothing to be proud about using dolomite sand as topfill. DENR will be causing another round of public health emergencies if they insist on this material for the project. The safety of the material was your holdout.”

Critics questioned the timing, sustainability, and environmental impact of the project, which aims to cover a 500 square meter stretch of the Manila Bay in front of the US embassy with artificial white sand.

DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said they wanted to bring the “white sand look”, famously known in tourist beaches such as Boracay and El Nido, to the capital region. However, transporting sand from coastal areas is prohibited.

“These are not sand, these are boulders–dolomite–na kinrush and turned into sand na dinala from Cebu,” Antiporda told Cignal TV’s One News’ talk show *The Chiefs* and OnePH’s “Wag Po” on Thursday.

But Ridon pointed out that the primary applications of dolomite are for glassmaking, the construction of iron and steel, as fertilizer, and as soil conditioner.

This was stated by the [JFE Mineral Company](#), a Japanese mining company which subsidizes the Philippine Mining Service Corporation (PMSC). The company is responsible for mining and processing dolomite at the Alcoy mine in Cebu.

Ridon also brought up [health safety reports](#), which said dolomite granules are “essentially non-toxic” but prolonged exposure and inhalation could cause respiratory disorders.

American building material supplier [LeHigh Hanson](#) said dolomite “may cause damage to organs (lung) through prolonged or repeated exposure.”

A study of construction workers, [published in the US National Institutes of Health](#), said there was evidence that “that exposure to high atmospheric concentrations of [dolomite] is likely to be associated with respiratory symptoms.”

MANILA'S BORACAY BEACH | Concerned groups question safety and impact of artificial white sand for Manila Bay

Ridon, who was fired by the president for traveling on multiple junkets, also questioned the cost of the project pegged at 795,000 pesos per meter.

“The unit cost of dolomite sand should be no more than 600 pesos per metric ton which is the highest retail price recorded by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau in 2017,” he said.

“The current market price of dolomite sand is 469.50 pesos per metric ton. Anything more will lead the public to believe that the project is not only a health hazard, but also overpriced,” he said in a statement.

Environmental group Greenpeace also called on the DENR to release the environmental impact assessment (EIA) report for the project.

“Hindi pa natin alam ang status ng Manila Bay before,” Greenpeace campaigner Sonny Batongbacal told *The Chiefs*.

“The EIA has yet to be seen. Normally may third party na sisilipin ang EIA. DENR states they issued an EIA but no one has seen it.”

But the DENR defended the project, spearheaded by Secretary Roy Cimatu, saying it underwent due process.

“Ginawan ng study yan. Ano ba maganda itambak dyan? Basura ba o sand?” Antiporda told *The Chiefs*, “Sand naman talaga nakalagay dyan noon pa.”

The department made previous efforts to clean up parts of the Manila Bay which had been a tributary for garbage from various cities.

“If you can still remember, punong-puno ng basura yang lugar na yan. Meron nang trash boom to control, tinatangal ang basura everyday kaya ‘di na ho aabot sa Roxas Boulevard. Nagkaroon ng pagasa ang Manila Bay na matagal nang sinukuan.”

Antiporda also appealed for the public to appreciate their efforts.

“Talaga namang sand ang nakalagay dyan. Sand po talaga noon ‘yan. Let’s try to be positive on this matter rather than come up with a negative notion on what we’re doing because it really hurts us,” he said.

(Katrina Elaine Alba/MM)

EDITORIAL

500 tons of waste and stupidity



By [The Manila Times](#)
September 5, 2020

THAT howling noise you might have noticed on Thursday and Friday this week was the nation's collective expression of derision directed at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for its almost inconceivably stupid and wasteful idea to dress up the shore of Manila Bay with more than 500 tons of "white sand," a move that is certain to go down in history as one of the more embarrassing follies of government planning.

Undersecretary Benny Antiporda, who may now be ruing being assigned the duty of serving as the agency's point man on the project, tried to clarify the DENR's thinking in a media statement on Thursday. The "white sand" is actually crushed dolomite flown to Manila from Cebu, Antiporda explained, and "was overlaid in the beach area for the people to see that the white sand will signify cleanliness."

As for the obvious problem that sand simply dumped on the Manila Bay shore would soon wash away, Antiporda assured the public: "We have engineering interventions that will be done to make sure the bay will be preserved and to sustain the beauty of Manila Bay."

A number of environmental groups issued angry statements protesting the DENR move, pointing out that the mere cosmetics of an artificial and highly likely short-lived beach are no substitute for a comprehensive rehabilitation plan for the bay. That point of view is correct; other than step-by-step actions to "clean up" the bay and its shoreline, particularly on the important stretch along Roxas Boulevard, the government has not presented a detailed, long-term plan for environmental management of the bay and the watersheds that feed into it. It should be noted that the somewhat ad hoc, clean-up efforts carried out by the DENR and other participating agencies have had some remarkable results, but whatever goodwill the government has earned through that work will be quickly undone if it is not extended and sustained. The shore of Manila Bay, after all, is the edge of one of the densest and most populated urban areas on the planet; keeping the water and coastal fringe clean will require constant effort.

What is more concerning is the great cost of creating a beach in an area where a natural beach has never existed before; at a time when government expenditures are constrained by the coronavirus pandemic response and its impact on the economy. Most people would agree that making cosmetic improvements to the Manila Bay shoreline at a time when the number of visitors who can actually appreciate it is severely limited should not be a priority. Transporting hundreds of tons of sand by air from another part of the country cannot have been an inexpensive undertaking, and we question, as nearly everyone who is aware of the project has, whether the money could have been employed with better value elsewhere.



500 tons of waste and stupidity

And contrary to Antiporda's assertion that "engineering interventions" will keep the new artificial beach in place, numerous studies done around the world on "beach nourishment" — the addition of sand to existing beaches in order to maintain them — conclude that it is an inevitable failure.

In a 2018 study of several beaches in California, for example, researchers from the University of California at San Diego found that in every case, the added sand quickly moved from where it was placed. One beach was entirely eroded in a single winter storm while the sand from another migrated over several months to choke off a nearby river estuary. The study concluded that only beaches that have at least some source of natural sand as well as sufficient width to migrate landward as sea levels rise could be sustained by "beach nourishment," and only then if the effort was more or less continuous with new sand being added constantly. Neither of those natural conditions apply to the area of Manila Bay where the DENR has created a "beach," thus the almost certain result of the project will be temporary.

What's done is done; it would be foolish to apply the work and cost to try to remove the sand that has already been placed. But the DENR would be well-advised to stop wasting its effort and our tax money on this ridiculous project.



Dolomite sand project in Manila's baywalk criticized

Published September 4, 2020, 8:26 PM

by [Ben Rosario](#)

An infrastructure-oriented think tank on Friday urged the government to reject the 500-meter Manila Bay white sand project with a P795,000 per meter tag price.



Former representative Terry Ridon

Former representative Terry Ridon, Infrawatch PH convenor, said the P397.897 million budget for the project should be better spent for anti-COVID-19 pandemic measures.

“The last time white sand was on the news, a former President was convicted of plunder. DENR’s white sand project is worse than plunder, because the project’s use of dolomite sand as beach top fill causes cancer, lung failure and other serious illnesses,” he noted.

Ridon, who used to head the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor, said the pricey project aimed at rehabilitating the Manila Baywalk is better spent for other more important activities.

“For comparison, the average cost of a two-lane road is around P25 million to P30 million per kilometer. The same amount can also fund a month’s social amelioration program for almost 80,000 vulnerable families,” the former lawmaker said.

He also warned that the dolomite sand that will be used to top fill the beach area is also dangerous to public health because exposure leads to cancer and lung failure.

Ridon warned that the country’s major dolomite sand supplier makes no mention that dolomite can be used as top fill for beaches.

“Dolomite sand has typically been used for as: auxiliary materials for iron and steel, plate glass for construction materials, automotive glass, fertilizer, soil conditioner. Nothing in this list mentions dolomite as viable for use as artificial sand for beaches,” Ridon added.

According to him, several medical studies have “consistently” disclosed that dolomite exposure is hazardous to human health.

Aside from causing irritation of cornea and redness to the eye, prolonged exposure to the material “may dry out the skin and cause irritation of the lungs.”

“Overexposure may cause silicosis, cancer, bronchitis, or emphysema,” he said.



Dolomite sand project in Manila's baywalk criticized

Ridon dared proponents of the project to fully disclose the procurement cost for dolomite sand as he hinted overpricing.

“The unit cost of dolomite sand should be no more than PHP 600 per metric ton (or no more than the total amount of PHP 56.977-million for 62,100 cu. meters) which is the highest retail price recorded by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau in 2017,” said Ridon.

He added: “The current market price of dolomite sand is PHP469.50 per metric ton. Anything more will lead the public to believe that the project is not only a health hazard, but also overpriced.”

DENR gustong may permanenteng bureau na magpairal ng environmental laws



September 4, 2020 @ 7:24 PM 11 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Sa halip na bumuo ng task force na isang temporary lamang ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ay mas epektibo sa pagprotekta sa kalikasan sa sarili nitong permanenteng bureau na nakatuon sa pagpapatupad sa environmental laws and regulations.

Ito ang nais ipunto ni Nilo Tamera, executive director ng DENR's Environmental Protection and Enforcement Task Force (EPETF) na habang isinasagawa ang inter-agency consultation webinar sa proposed bill na magbubuo ng Environmental Protection and Enforcement Bureau (EPEB) na isinagawa nitong nakalipas na Agosto 28, 2020.

Nilinaw ni Tamera na ang bagong task force na binuo ng mga nakalipas na bawat isang administrasyon ay paulit ulit lamang sa negatibong epekto para ipagpatuloy ang isang pagpapanatili at pagsisikap ng DENR's law enforcement.

“Yun na nga ‘yung nakitang karanasan ng DENR, walang sustainability at malakas na enforcement mandate and yet ang dami nitong ipinatutupad na mga batas,” ayon kay Tamera sa katatapos na webinar na inorganisa EPETF at ng United States Agency for International Development, through its Protect Wildlife Project.

Kaugnay nito nitong nakalipas na Nobyembre ng nakalipas na taon si DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu ay bumuo ng technical working group para pag-aralan at gumawa ng plano para sa proposal na bubuo ng enforcement bureau sa DENR.

Sinabi ni Cimatu na sa pamamagitan ng permanenteng enforcement bureau ang DENR ay mas lalong magiging epektibo para mapatigil ang environmental crimes gaya ng illegal logging at smuggling sa mga wildlife species.

Samantala kaugnay nito nitong nakalipas na Hunyo 15, si House Deputy Speaker Loren Legarda ang nag-files ng House Bill 6973 para magbuo ng ng EPEB sa ilalim ng DENR. Ang panukalang measure ay tinukoy sa Committees on Government Reorganization and on Natural Resources. *Santi Celario*

DENR-CENRO, 91IB ink pact for environmental protection in Aurora

By Jason De Asis September 4, 2020, 7:00 pm



PARTNERSHIP. Lt. Col. Reandrew Rubio, commanding officer of the Army's 91st Infantry (Sinagtala) Battalion; and DENR-CENRO Officer for Dingalan, Marivic E. Santos; sign a memorandum of agreement on Thursday (Sept. 3, 2020) to collectively implement laws on the protection, conservation and development of the environment and natural resources. Rubio said the battalion will designate one unit specially assigned to assist the DENR in its forest protection and law enforcement campaign in Aurora province. *(Photo by Jason de Asis)*

BALER, Aurora – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources- Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (DENR-CENRO) in Dingalan town and the Army's 91st Infantry (Sinagtala) Battalion (91IB) have partnered to collectively implement laws on the protection, conservation, and development of the environment and natural resources in the province.

Lt. Col. Reandrew Rubio, commanding officer of 91IB, said that a memorandum of agreement (MOA) was signed by him and DENR-CENRO Officer Marivic E. Santos on Thursday at the Battalion Headquarters in Barangay Calabuanan here.

On the basis of mutual cooperation, he said the 91IB will provide manpower, security assistance, equipment and technical assistance in the enforcement of environmental laws rules and regulations under their respective area of responsibilities (AOR) in the municipalities of Dingalan, San Luis, Baler, and Maria Aurora.

It is also indicated in the MOA that the 91st IB will incorporate in its regular aerial reconnaissance survey, foot patrol, and ground surveillance operations the concern on environmental destruction and activities and will provide training on proper gun handling, basic self-defense and jungle survival.

"We will also designate one unit specially assigned to assist the DENR in its forest protection and law enforcement campaign," Rubio said.

"It is the commitment of both agencies to work hand-in-hand against anti-illegal logging and protecting the forest and its preservation," he added. *(PNA)*



Water is life: The case for massive reforestation

September 4, 2020

IN the national papers lately was the news that President Rodrigo Duterte has signed an administrative order that will expedite the review and approval of infrastructure flagship projects on water security in the country. It directed all agencies to prioritize and complete review and approval of infrastructure flagship projects on water security.

Over the decades we have all been witnesses to the worsening water shortages every now and then – for drinking water of households, commercial and industrial use, and irrigation of agricultural lands. At the present trajectory, it will gradually and continually get worse.

Is there an end in sight to this dire prognosis? Is this what we want to leave behind to the next generations after us?

Broadly, water supply can have two components: (1) the water supply source, and (2) the infrastructure to deliver the water where they are needed

The President's AO addresses the second component. But the bigger problem is component (1): is there enough water supply? Sadly, the answer is no, for the most part. Building huge dams and other water infra will be for naught if there is not enough water supply to feed into those.

Decades of scientific research have undoubtedly proven that trees are the biggest contributors to the water supply ecosystem. However, notwithstanding those studies, our forest covers nationwide have continuously dwindled over the centuries due to massive logging operations, both legal and illegal.

The state of Philippine forests

In 1900, the country's forests cover about 21 million hectares or 70% of the total land area of 30 million hectares

- By 2003, it is down to 7.2 million hectares
- By 2010, it is further down to 6.8 million hectares
- Currently, the Philippines is losing its forest cover at a rate of 40,000-120,000 hectares per year (different studies available online show different results)
- Unless the government acts decisively, at the rate we are losing our forests, we will practically wipe out our remaining forests in a few decades. And with it goes our only dependable water supply source.

Facts about water

- 71% of the earth's surface is water
- Less than 3% of the earth's water is freshwater



Water is life: The case for massive reforestation

- Over 68% of the freshwater on earth is found in ice caps and glaciers and just over 30% is groundwater.
- Only about 0.3% of fresh water is found in the surface water of lakes, rivers, and swamps.
- More than 99% of the earth's waters are not consumable by man and other living things.
- With this realization, we need to utilize this resource very wisely.

The significance of trees and forests in water supply

Among all factors contributing to water supply usable to man, trees are arguably the most important.

- Trees extract water from the soil (groundwater), store it in their barks, branches, and leaves, and then gradually release it back into the atmosphere in a process called Transpiration. When large areas of forests are cut down, this eliminates the water released back into the atmosphere, thus resulting in reduced cloud formation, consequently resulting in reduced rainfall.
- Further, with fewer trees, whatever reduced rain that falls is largely wasted because of faster surface runoff due to lack of vegetation. Such runoff goes fast to the rivers and then off to the sea—wasted freshwater.
- **Trees** improve **water** quality by slowing the velocity of falling rain and helping more water to soak into the soil into the underground reservoir.
- Roots of trees help break up compacted soil and open up space so that **water** can be absorbed even deeper into the soil (groundwater storage) and in bigger quantities.
- The groundwater becomes available for pumping to the surface and/or slowly flow to the rivers via sub-surface flow; thus maintaining higher levels of dependable surface water supply, especially during the dry season.

Conclusions

- If the forests continue to diminish at the present rate, our water supply for domestic, commercial, and industrial use, irrigation and power will continually get worse.
- Given that WATER IS LIFE, the government should wake up to the undesirable realities described above and use its vaunted political will to do a massive reforestation program nationwide, with priority in the watersheds of the dams made for water supply, irrigation and
- Widespread reforestation could be undertaken with the participation of all government personnel, military personnel, policemen, high school and university students, and all other volunteers.



Water is life: The case for massive reforestation

- Planting is just the start of a massive reforestation program. It's the easy part. What is more important and the bigger job is nurturing those trees until they can grow on their own. This is where we need the participation of the LGUs, mainly the barangay people. People in the barangays will need to be hired as maintenance personnel and the national government must be willing to pour in national funds for this endeavor.
- Widespread nationwide hiring of barangay people to do maintenance work has multi-pronged benefits: (a) it ensures the success of the reforestation program, (b) the salaries paid to tens or hundreds of thousands of people contribute to rural development that results in the uplifting of the lives of the rural people; in other words, poverty alleviation, (c) and with better economic conditions in the countryside, the rebellion will surely reduce.

Let me close this via a modified version of a saying by North American natives:

"When the last tree is cut, and the lakes and rivers have dried up, you will finally realize that you cannot drink money"

The time to act was YESTERDAY. But you can't bring that time. Let's act NOW!!!

(Comments may be sent to idthabije@gmail.com)



House OKs tree-planting tasks for graduating studes

[Friday, September 4, 2020](#) [Ryan Ponce Pacpaco](#)¹⁵

THE House of Representatives has approved on third and final reading a bill requiring graduating senior high school and college students to plant two trees each.

House Bill (HB) 6931 authored by Representatives Rufus Rodriguez of Cagayan de Oro City has been consolidated with five other measures authored by Reps. Manuel Cabochan III of Magdalo, Joel Mayo Almario of Davao Oriental, Tyrone Agabas of Pangasinan, Mark Go of Baguio City, and Bro. Eddie Villanueva and Domingo Rivera of CIBAC.

Rodriguez said graduating high school and college students would be required to plant trees “as a civic duty for environment protection and preservation.”

He said the country is fast losing its forest cover and habitat of flora and fauna due to agricultural practices, illegal logging, large-scale mining, population growth, and conversion of land into residential, commercial or industrial development.

“We are among the world’s mega diverse countries but we are also among the biodiversity hotspots,” he said.

Rodriguez added that the consolidated bill “seeks to address the problem of biodiversity loss.”

Under the measure, planting trees would be a pre-requisite for graduation for high school and college students.

The Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) would enforce the tree planting requirement in coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Science and Technology (DoST), and National Commission on Indigenous People.

The DENR and local government units would identify the planting areas. The DENR and the DA would establish and maintain seedling banks that would supply the needed seedlings.

The DepEd and CHED, in coordination with the DENR and DILG, would issue implementing rules and regulations.

Funding would be included in the annual budgets of the agencies tasked to implement the proposed tree planting law.



Dolphins, 'dugong', whales being monitored in Sarangani Bay

Published September 4, 2020, 5:37 PM
by [Joseph Jubelag](#)

ALABEL, SARANGANI– The provincial government has launched a monthly monitoring of marine species inhabiting Sarangani Bay after several dolphin species were sighted flocking in its waters.



The provincial government has launched a monthly monitoring of marine species inhabiting Sarangani Bay after several dolphin species were sighted flocking in its waters. (Photo via Joseph Jubelag / MANILA BULLETIN)

Gary John Cabinta, ecosystems management specialist of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), said the monitoring was aimed to determine the frequency of the species of marine mammals, their usual sighting and location, estimate their population and density, and observe their behavior and activities within the bay.

He said the provincial government of Sarangani funded the monitoring activity on the 16,000-hectare protected seascape of Sarangani Bay, covering the shoreline of Sarangani province and General Santos City purposely for the protection and conservation and eco-tourism development of the bay.

Dr. Roy Mejorada, the provincial program manager of the Environmental Conservation and Protection Center (ECPC), said the monitoring team from DENR and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) sighted three marine mammal species, which included spinner dolphins, Risso's dolphins, and a "dugong" or sea cow.

He stressed that Spinner dolphins were small dolphins known for their acrobatic spins when they leap or jump out of the water, and were frequently sighted in the waters off Glan, Malapatan, Alabel towns and General Santos City during the monitoring activity last month.

He said Risso's dolphins were medium-sized, grey-colored dolphins that could grow to lengths of four meters with big dorsal fins and linear scars which are frequently sighted near the coasts of Malapatan and Glan towns.

He added that sea cow dolphins or "dugong" were spotted in barangay Cablalan in Glan which offers a wide expanse of seagrass as their food.

Dolphins, 'dugong', whales being monitored in Sarangani Bay

Mejorada explained that baby dolphins and whales were also sighted in Sarangani Bay which could indicate these sea animals now regard the area as safe haven to nurture and feed their offspring.

He said Sarangani Gov. Steve Solon launched the provincial government's "Sulong Kalikasan" flagship program to protect and conserve the marine resources of Sarangani Bay.

He said the marine mammal monitoring was being conducted quarterly, but Solon provided additional funds to make the monitoring on a monthly basis to enable the monitoring team from DENR and BFAR gather more detailed and comprehensive data.

<https://mb.com.ph/2020/09/04/dolphins-dugong-whales-being-monitored-in-sarangani-bay/>



Metro Manila water allocation cut after decline in Angat Dam levels

September 4, 2020 | 7:07 pm



THE WATER allocation for Metro Manila has been reduced to 46 cubic meters per second (cms) from 48 cms to address the declining water levels in Angat Dam, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) said.

In a mobile phone message, NWRB Executive Director Sevilla D. David Jr. said Angat Dam experienced low rainfall at its watershed during July and August.

"We reverted to the regular location of 46 cms considering the current level of Angat Dam," Mr. David said.

On Friday morning, water levels at Angat Dam fell 16 centimeters to 179.53 meters, below the dam's minimum operating level of 180 meters and far from its normal elevation of 212 meters, according to the government weather service, known as PAGASA.

However, Mr. David said the agency is looking forward to the rainfall projected by PAGASA.

"We are guided by the near-normal to above-normal rainfall projections of PAGASA for the rest of the year and probable occurrence of a La Niña episode by the last quarter of the year," Mr. David said.

Mr. David said the National Power Corp. (NPC), the National Irrigation Authority (NIA), and PAGASA are monitoring the situation and the possible impact on irrigation and the water supply of Metro Manila, which depends largely on Angat.

"Considering that we are at the middle part of the wet cropping season in Bulacan and Pampanga, coupled with the need for steady supply of water for Metro Manila as a preventive measure against the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), water allocation for September is currently maintained at 46 cms," Mr. David said.

Mr. David said the NWRB is looking for other sources of water that may assist in meeting the water requirements of Metro Manila such as Laguna de Bay and deep wells.

"We are also expecting some local inflows to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) reservoir during this rainy season to complement raw water releases from Angat Dam," Mr. David said.

Mr. David appealed to the public to use water responsibly while Angat levels deteriorate. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

The end game

[Antonio M. Claparols](#) (The Philippine Star) - September 5, 2020 - 12:00am

Many islands and forests have been destroyed by loggers, miners and lack of awareness. An overwhelming number of tourists have caused devastating damage in different places all over the world — which started from leaving garbage behind.

The Philippines — known as the Pearl of the Orient Seas — is an archipelago composed of 7,641 islands. Once upon a time, our country had over 22 million hectares of rich biodiversity. Today, we only have less than two million hectares, mostly secondary forests.

Our seas were considered one of the richest in the world. It used to be at the center of the coral triangle with colonies housing the most marine species ever recorded by science. Our marine biodiversity was abundant and endless.

The tarsiers of Bohol and the wild tamaraw of Mindoro are almost gone. Our famed monkey-eating eagles are now difficult to locate and almost extinct. Our turtles, nautili and golden cowries have significantly depleted. Our butanding or whale sharks in Donsol are treated like circus animals.

Balicasag and Pamilacan — two islands rich in marine species — have also suffered from the effects of over-tourism.

The Philippines was once blessed with rich biodiversity. Our country used to be the envy of the world. Scientists would come to research on our ecosystems and natural resources to study our animal and plant species.

When I first came to Zamboanga in 1973, we would eat bayawak, an endemic lizard. They have ceased to exist today. When we started diving in the 1970s, our seas and coral reefs were breathtakingly beautiful and overwhelmingly abundant. Now, many of our species are painfully framed in museums.

The Pearl of the Orient no longer exists. Our seas are gone and many of our resources are destroyed. It is an environmental catastrophe.

A country's rich biodiversity is dying, but it's also a problem all over the world. There are only a few beautiful places left untouched, thanks to sustainability- and environment-first policies. One example is Amanpulo, with its wildlife roaming free. People use electric carts to roam around the 89-hectare island since there are no cemented roads. Once you enter this tourist spot, you hear the chirping voice of birds and the sound of waves. However, plastic still finds its way into this sanctuary as it gets washed ashore.

The oceans are in peril. If we don't get our act together, it's only a matter of time before the damage gets worse.

Sadly, our leaders have failed us and we have failed Mother Earth. We need to change our ways as soon as possible. If not, our civilization will cease to exist. We are living in the endgame.

Science diplomacy vis-à-vis biodiversity loss, climate crisis, pandemics



By [Amado S. Tolentino, JR.](#)

September 5, 2020

SCIENCE as a tool for diplomacy has been in use for many decades and by many countries around the world. Science diplomacy is the use of scientific collaboration among nations to address common problems and to build constructive international partnership. Its objective is to facilitate international scientific cooperation through actions primarily designed to meet global needs and challenges as well as cross border interests. Science diplomacy focuses on resources and tools towards the further development of scientific solutions to the world's challenges such as biodiversity loss, climate change and public health issues and concerns.

As late as December 2018, a group of international experts on science diplomacy met and adopted in Spain the “Madrid Declaration on Science Diplomacy.” Apart from defining several principles and highlighting the benefits of science diplomacy, the Declaration emphasizes the benefits science diplomacy can bring in tackling the global challenges faced by humanity. In fact, scientific cooperation works well now on problems across borders made possible by the use of understanding international languages vis-à-vis methodology of science in examining evidence that even allows scientists to go beyond ideologies and form relationships that allow diplomats to defuse politically explosive situations.

International treaties

Science cooperation as a useful part of science diplomacy is best exemplified in the area of multilateral environmental agreements or international environmental treaties. For one, the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has a Scientific Council that advises the Conference of the Parties (or the countries which are signatories to CBD) and the Secretariat on scientific matters and priorities for research and conservation. It also maintains a Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, which uses an ad hoc group of experts to provide guidance on more technical issues. It strives to give recommendations based upon scientific consensus, allowing for different views to be presented to the decision-making body. In connection therewith, the World Economic Forum through the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services recently revealed acceleration of species extinction to the point of endangering economies, livelihoods, food security and the quality of life of people.

A joint review by the Convention on Biological Diversity and the World Health Organization (WHO) titled “Connecting Global Priorities: Biodiversity and Human Health,” on the other hand, emphasized how biodiversity loss can destabilize ecosystems, promote outbreaks of infectious diseases and undermine security and protection from natural disasters. These are brought about by overpopulation, trade systems, consumption patterns and urbanization. Cited as an example is



Science diplomacy vis-à-vis biodiversity loss, climate crisis, pandemics

the destruction of wildlife habitats which have pushed wildlife species closer to humans making way for the likelihood of more potential pandemics. It has been estimated that 1.7 million viruses known to infect humans are estimated to exist in mammals and waterbirds and any one of these may be more disruptive and lethal than Covid-19.

To bring the subject home, take the case of pangolins (scaly anteaters) which thrive in Palawan about which trafficking to China has become a keen issue with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. The WHO said bats are likely the main source of the virus, but it might have jumped to another species before being transmitted to humans. Pangolins are under scrutiny as a possible intermediate host of a new coronavirus picking up the pathogen from other animals in the wild.

The 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is another international environmental treaty which relies on science for its effective implementation. For this purpose, there is an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a scientific body established by the UN and the World Meteorological Organization. Its role is to examine and assess the latest data and information as a baseline on the state of knowledge on climate change in making science-based decisions.

In addition, its Subsidiary Body for Science and Technical Advice plays an important role as the link between the scientific information provided by expert sources such as the IPCC and the policy-oriented needs of countries which are signatories to the UNFCCC. It cooperates with other relevant organizations on scientific, technological and methodological questions.

PH vulnerability

While the Philippines is yet on the way to recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, it remains number one among countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in terms of vulnerability to extreme weather events brought about by global warming. In the course of time, its response has progressed from climate change mitigation to adaptation to resilience. What hampers efforts are the difficulties brought about by the economic impacts of the planetary health emergency.

Despite imperfections, the institutional arrangement in place in the Philippines to counter the impacts of climate change known as the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council, or NDRRMC, has made progress in providing the needed leadership to revise strategies by aligning the same with an integrated and efficient approach in close coordination with local government units (LGUs), health agencies and nongovernmental stakeholders. In particular, it involved improvements in disaster preparedness and response, e.g., risk communication, simulation exercises and mass evacuation. Noteworthy as an example is the early harvest of rice and corn produce before the arrival of typhoon Ambo during the second quarter of 2020 which reduced the typhoon's potential impact on food availability.



Science diplomacy vis-à-vis biodiversity loss, climate crisis, pandemics

The safety of frontliners, from medical personnel to volunteer relief providers, has so far been secured also through the efforts of LGUs to meet the impact of disasters and the health crisis.

Stimulus packages put in place range from the provision of livelihood financial assistance to community-level mapping to prevent not only the spread of Covid-19 but also the impacts from other natural disasters as well. Preparation of temporary evacuation facilities and emergency supplies, enhancing early warning systems and strengthening the response capability of local health and emergency systems were looked into to ensure safety of the population from both threats. In this regard, health and economic authorities are encouraged to work together to help preserve both lives and livelihoods.

In that connection, a recent development in the field of international law is the emergence of global health law. Defined as a collection of rules, norms and processes that shape the health of the world's population, global health law incorporates laws and policies related to the environment, trade, labor conditions and much more.

Of late, global health was reenergized by growing concern about the effects of globalization on health. This was brought about by the surge of infectious diseases — severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), avian flu, SARS coronavirus 2 (which causes Covid-19), to mention a few.

The clearest example of global health law is the 2005 World Health Regulations (IHR), a legal instrument under the auspices of the WHO and revised following the SARS epidemic, which provides an international regime for the control of transmissible diseases. The IHR set out a decision instrument for determining when national disease outbreaks are reportable to the WHO on the basis that they are a “public health emergency of international concern.” They also require countries to identify a national focal point for communications with WHO.

Thus, human health, like environmental ecosystems, is essential to humanity's survival. It must be the focus of a forward-looking operational mobilization involving science and data, enabling governments to anticipate the issues at stake and provide an appropriate early response beyond the strict curative measurers. This must be done in a collective and coordinated manner, from the national, regional and global levels, guided by implementable and enforceable health legislation. According to the WHO, 23 percent of global deaths are linked to the damage and destruction of our natural environment while millions of people suffer from illnesses related to unhealthy and unnatural environments. In support thereof, research and anecdotal evidence from the field reveal the interconnectedness of what we do with our natural ecosystems and the rise of pandemics. The trend is attributed to the “complex connections between virology, biodiversity, climate change, poverty, food safety and population growth.” Indeed, many of the environmental challenges today lay at the intersection of science and international relations.

Promoting connections with nature through science diplomacy should be a key part of any post-pandemic recovery strategy.

“Science is more eternal, more human, more universal...When humanity is enlightened and redeemed...when peoples are free...when justice prevails, and man is simply a citizen of the world...only science will be left.” (Jose Rizal, *El Filibusterismo*, 1891)



Philippines reports 3,714 new COVID-19 cases, total now at 232,072

Published September 4, 2020 4:05pm
Updated September 4, 2020 5:11pm
By JOAHNA LEI CASILAO, GMA News

The number of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases in the country rose to 232,072 on Friday after the Department of Health (DOH) announced 3,714 new infections.

Most of the new cases reported came from the National Capital Region with 1,797. This was followed by Negros Occidental with 390, Batangas with 248, Laguna with 247, and Cavite with 150.

Eighty-eight percent of the newest cases acquired the virus in the past 14 days. A total of 45 duplicate cases were also removed from the total case count.

The DOH also announced that 1,088 more patients have recovered from the illness, bringing the total to 160,549, while 49 new fatalities brought the nation's death toll to 3,737.

Among the new deaths, five occurred in September, 35 in August, four in July, three in June, and two in May.

Meanwhile, there are 67,786 active cases undergoing treatment or quarantine. Of this, 90.7 percent are mild, 6.9 percent are asymptomatic, 0.9 percent are severe, and 1.4 percent are in critical condition.

At present, the Philippines has 87 certified polymerase chain reaction facilities and 28 GeneXpert laboratories that have tested a total of 2,564,662 individuals.

Forty-nine percent of the country's intensive care unit beds for COVID-19 patients are occupied while 28 percent of mechanical ventilators are being used.

Experts from the University of the Philippines have said the country's cases is on a [downward trend](#) and approaching a flattened curve towards September. However, they warned against complacency.

On Thursday, the Philippines reported 1,987 new infections, the [lowest](#) since July 29.

Meanwhile, Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said the DOH is still [observing](#) the decrease in the number of cases, adding that a reliable analysis would only be possible if the trend goes on for a week.—LDF, GMA News

PH COVID-19 case total breaches 232,000 with 3,714 new infections

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published Sep 4, 2020 4:24:56 PM



The country's COVID-19 case tally exceeded 232,000 on Friday with 3,714 new infections recorded, the Department of Health announced. (FILE PHOTO)

Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, September 4) — The country's COVID-19 case tally exceeded 232,000 on Friday with 3,714 new infections recorded, the Department of Health announced.

The department said the nationwide case total hit 232,072 with 67,786 active or currently ill patients. Metro Manila had the highest number of newly infected residents with 1,797, followed by Negros Occidental with 390, Batangas with 248, Laguna with 247 and Cavite with 150 new cases. The DOH said 3,259 or 88 percent of the new cases were detected in the last 14 days.

From the active cases, some 90.7 percent have mild symptoms, 6.9 percent have no symptoms, 1.4 percent are in critical condition while 0.9 percent are severe cases, the agency's case bulletin stated.

DOH also reported 1,088 new recoveries, bringing the total number of patients who got better to 160,549. This is the highest number of new recoveries reported in a day since August 26 that were not included in the department's "Oplan Recovery." The program logs thousands of new survivors — even reaching over 20,000 — every Sunday.

Meanwhile, 49 others succumbed to the disease, pulling the death toll to 3,737, the agency said.

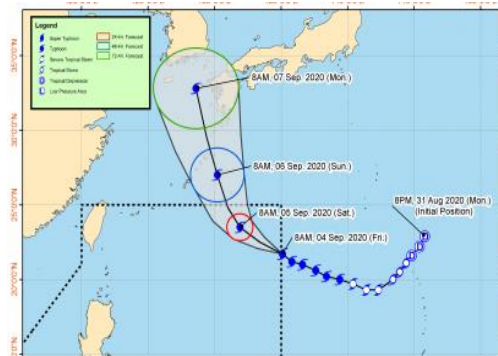
Of the newly listed fatalities, two died in May, three in June, four in July, 35 in August and five in September, the case record showed. The department also said 40 duplicates were removed from the total count including 12 recoveries. Five cases were also deducted after validation, of which two were mistakenly reported as survivors, the department said.

The DOH said the new cases came from reports of 93 out of 113 COVID-19 laboratories in the country.

The Department of Foreign Affairs also announced 18 new COVID-19 cases among Filipinos abroad. This brings the total infected to 10,113 with 6,275 recoveries and 757 deaths in 74 countries. Of the total count, 1,992 cases were verified by the DOH, the DFA said.

Typhoon enters PAR; unlikely to affect PH

By Ma. Cristina Arayata September 4, 2020, 2:42 pm



(Image grabbed from PAGASA's website)

MANILA – Typhoon Haishen has entered the Philippine area of responsibility (PAR) and was given the local name, "Kristine", the weather bureau said Friday.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said "Kristine" is unlikely to have a direct effect on the country's weather condition and will remain far from landmass.

"Kristine" was last tracked 1,340 km. east of extreme Northern Luzon, moving northwestward at 15 kph while inside PAR and packing maximum sustained winds of 185 kph near the center and gustiness of up to 230 kph.

The typhoon is expected to exit PAR between Saturday and Sunday and is forecast to head towards Japan and the Korean Peninsula.

"This typhoon is undergoing rapid intensification at the moment. It is forecast to reach (a) peak intensity of around 205 (kph) to 215 kph on Sunday," PAGASA said in its 11 a.m. bulletin.

Meanwhile, PAGASA said "Kristine" may bring rough to very rough seas over the northern and eastern seaboard of Northern Luzon beginning Friday night or Saturday.

Sea travel is risky under such sea conditions, it said. (**PNA**)



MGA KRITIKO, DAPAT TUMULONG SA GIYERA VS KORAP AT MANDARAMBONG



September 4, 2020 @ 12:49 PM 18 hours ago

“Ang dami ng korap ngayon kumpara sa nakaraang mga administrasyon.”

Ito ang binabanggit ng mga kritiko ng administrasyong Duterte sabay palabas na noong sila ang nakaupo, kakaunti lang ito.

Talaga?

WALANG MASUSUMBUNGAN SA DROGA

Isang tanong: Alam ba ninyong noong panahon ng mga nakaraang administrasyon, lalo na ang huli, walang mapagsusumbungan ang mga tao?

‘Yun bang === kung magsumbong ka, mauuna pang darating sa iyo ang death threat kaysa maimbestigahan ang isinumbong mong korap.

Sampol na lang sa droga.

Ang tindi ng korapsyon noon dito.

Kinokorap o pinepera ang halos lahat ng pang-aaresto sa mga sangkot sa droga at kahit suspek pero inosente at pananamsam ng mga droga.

‘Yun pala === mula sa ordinaryong pulis hanggang sa mga heneral, kone-konektado pala ang mga ito bilang ninja cops, druglord mismo o protektor ng mga druglord at mga tulak at user at narco-politician.

At dahil mamamatay ka kung magsumbong ka sa mga awtoridad, mananahimik ka na lang.

Ngayon naman, binuksan mismo ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang komunikasyon para magsumbong ang mga mamamayan nang direkta sa kanya o sa mga naatasang gumigiyera sa mga korap sa droga, natural na nagsisilabasan ang mga kasong korapsyon sa droga.

At nasosolusyunan ang mga ito. Peksman!



MGA KRITIKO, DAPAT TUMULONG SA GIYERA VS KORAP AT MANDARAMBONG

WALANG MAPAGSUSUMBUNGAN SA PULITIKA

Kung ano ang nagaganap noon sa droga, gayundin sa pulitika noon.

Ang mga nasisibak noon ay mga hindi kaalyado ng mga nakaupo noon kahit hindi mga korap.

Sampol ng korapsyon noon ang paggawang ligal sa PDAF o Priority Development Assistance Fund at natigil lang ito nang pagkaisahang ideklara ito ng mga hukom sa Supreme Court na labag sa batas at Konstitusyon.

Ang tagal nang panahon na umaabot sa halos P300 bilyon taon-taon ang halaga ng PDAF na pinagkakakitaan ng mga korap na kongresman, senador at miyembro ng gabinete.

Ito namang disbursement acceleration program noon na pinagkunan pa ng P3.5 bilyong ipinambili ng Dengvaxia ay nagkahalaga ng mahigit P134 bilyon at hinawakan ito ng mga tao sa Malakanyang noong 2010-2012.

Maging ang kontrobersya sa pagkanakaw at pagkawaldas ng nasa P147 bilyong PhilHealth fund, pagkabaon ng National Food Authority sa utang na P177 bilyon at ₱36.2 bilyong Malampaya fund ay nauugnay rin sa nakaraang administrasyon.

At sino ang maniniwalang ang napakalalaking kontrata sa MRT-3 maintenance, mga LRT extension at Skyways at superhighways na mabilis na inaprubahan ng nakaraang administrasyon bago sila lumayas sa Malakanyang ay walang korapsyon?

Hindi nga lang korapsyon kundi pandarambong ang isyu sa lahat ng ito.

Pero walang mapagsusumbungan noon at kahit lumitaw sila noon, walang nangyari gaya ng nagaganap ngayon na marami ang nadedemanda, nasisibak sa pwesto at nakukulong.

MGA OFW 'DI RIN MAKAPAGSUMBONG

Ang milyon-milyong overseas Filipino worker noon ay hindi rin gaanong pinapansin ang mga kalagayan mula sa illegal recruitment hanggang sa kanilang paghihirap o kamatayan kaya sa iba't ibang kadahilanan.

Punom-puno ang sumbong noon na hindi pinadadalo o hinaharang sa mga pagtitipon ng mga bumibisitang matataas na opisyal ang mga may problemang OFW.

Kahit pa sa kanilang pag-uwi na merong sex for flight, pagkanakaw ng mga kargada at overcharging ng mga airport taxi at laglag-bala.

Ngayon, nakapagsusumbong na sila at sila'y pinakikinggan at inaaksyunan sa kanilang malungkot at hindi magandang kalagayan.

UUBUSIN ANG DALAWANG TAON

Ngayon ay pinaninindigan mismo ni Pang. Digong na uubusin niya ang nalalabing dalawang taon ng kanyang panunungkulan sa pag-ubos sa mga korap at mandarambong.

MGA KRITIKO, DAPAT TUMULONG SA GIYERA VS KORAP AT MANDARAMBONG

Narapat lang lalo't nagsisilitawan ang mga sumbong at imbestigasyon sa iba't ibang larangan dahil sa kumpiyansa ng mga mamamayan sa pamahalaan.

Maging sa problema sa kuryente, tubig at telekomunikasyon nama'y halo ring mga korapsyon at pandarambong.

Dahil malaya ang mga sangay ng pamahalaan na mag-imbestiga ngayon at hindi sila sinisiperan sa bibig at kinakadenahan sa pagkilos, ito na rin ang dahilan kung bakit nadidiskubreng punom-puno ang salop ng korapsyon at pandarambong na dapat nang pagkakalusin.

Kaya naman, para sa ating Uzi, mga Bro, dapat tayong magpasalamat kaysa madismaya sa paglitaw ng katakot-takot na korapsyon at pandarambong mula sa mga lokal na opisyal hanggang sa mga panrehiyon at nasyunal na opisyal.

Kasama na rito ang mga ahensya o departamento ng pamahalaan na ginagawang lungga ng mga korap at mandarambong.

Sana nga, magtagumpay ang ating pamahalaan sa pagtiktik-kalawang at pagwawalis ng bakuran nito.

At kabilang sa mga susi rito ang mga mamamayan na hindi natatakot na magsumbong laban sa sinoman sa pamahalaan.

At para sa mga kritiko, ano ang maitutulong ninyo laban sa mga bulok at pahirap sa bayan na korap at mandarambong?



PH famous dive spots featured in Lonely Planet

Published September 4, 2020, 2:30 PM

by [Hanah Tabios](#)

Lonely Planet, the largest travel guide book publisher, has cited two of the country's famous dive spots as among the six national parks around the world with offer a "surprisingly spectacular diving" experience.



Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park (Ron Van Oers / UNESCO)

In her article, Lonely Planet writer Angela Ballard described the Philippines as a site where thousands of dives sites are scattered throughout the country, with more than 1,200 macro and open sea or pelagic enchanting species that live in the Philippine waters.

Ballard specifically noted the rich biodiversity of Tubbataha Reefs National Park in Palawan which has earned the UNESCO World Heritage status.

"Board a liveaboard in Puerto Princesa City, then sail to dive sites like Amos Rock, Washing Machine and Black Rock to experience 600 species of fish, 360 species of coral, 11 species of sharks and 13 species of dolphins and whales, along with manta rays, barracuda, nudibranchs, pipefish and seahorses," she said.

Aside from the underwater heritage site in Palawan, Ballard also mentioned the country's top diving spot, the municipality of Moalboal in the island province of Cebu, where she recommended travelers to sail on a traditional double outrigger canoe, locally known as "bangka".

"Moalboal is world-renowned for its sardine run, an enormous bait ball of approximately seven million small fish that attract larger marine life in search of food. While you can dive in the warm Philippine waters year round, you'll witness the most wildlife and avoid monsoons if you visit between March and June," she said.

The Department of Tourism (DOT) celebrates this recognition, coming as it does amid a pandemic that has inflicted massive losses on the tourism industry.

"This citation from the largest travel guide book publisher, Lonely Planet, is positive news, something to be proud of especially for the tourism stakeholders of Tubbataha, Palawan, and Cebu," Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat said in a statement.



PH famous dive spots featured in Lonely Planet

Puyat added that this also fortified the country's status as one of the premier diving sites in the world. She said that the article is timely in view of the scheduled staging of the second edition of the Philippine Dive Expo (PHIDEX) 2020 this year.

Palawan and Cebu were among the earliest major tourism sites to allow their local residents for leisure travel as community quarantine measures have already been eased by the national government.



Oil industry placing risky bet on plastics



Published 16 hours ago
On September 4, 2020 02:24 PM
By [Agence France-Presse](#)



Big oil producers are pinning their future growth on the world's insatiable appetite for plastic, researchers said Friday, in a "bet" on society's failure to tackle disposable consumption that risks stranding billions of dollars in petrochemical investments.

The industry has faced increasingly urgent questions in recent months about whether "peak" oil demand has been reached, with the coronavirus pandemic leading to a dramatic drop in transport fuel consumption, while cleaner energy makes ever greater headway.

But oil producers now see plastics as the biggest driver of future demand, according to a new report by financial think tank Carbon Tracker and sustainability and development group Systemiq.

Plastic production has increased around four percent every year since 2000, the report said, adding that most firms in the industry appear to expect that rate of growth to continue, driven mainly by emerging economies.

Plastics currently make up less than nine percent of oil demand, but the report said they are the largest component of oil demand growth.

It said the industry now plans to invest at least \$400 billion (337.8 billion euros) in the next five years to expand supply for so-called virgin plastics by a quarter, but warned that this risked huge losses for investors.

"The plastics industry, in its assumption of a doubling of demand for plastics in the next 10, 20 years or so, is making a bet that society will fail to find any solutions to reduce, substitute or recycle plastic," said report author Kingsmill Bond, energy strategist at Carbon Tracker.

He told AFP that it was an "unreasonable assumption to imagine that you could carry on doing for the next 50 years what you've done for the last 70 years, which is polluted with impunity".

Oil industry placing risky bet on plastics

Some 350 million tonnes of plastic are produced annually — about half in Asia, 19 percent in North America, and 16 percent in Europe.

The International Energy Agency forecast in 2018 that the growth in demand for petrochemical products — including plastics, fertilizers, detergents, and other items — would see them account for over a third of the predicted increase in oil demand to 2030, and nearly half to 2050.

But surging plastic use has caused a pollution crisis, with least 8 million tonnes thought to end up in oceans every year.

This has spurred governments to mandate greater recycling, impose tighter restrictions on waste disposal, and in some cases introduce bans on single-use items.

Pollution fears

The Carbon Tracker report forecast that mounting pressure to cut plastic use could slash growth in demand for virgin plastic from four percent a year to below one percent, with demand peaking in 2027.

It also found that the plastic value chain — from extraction of the oil, to when it is burned, buried or recycled — releases roughly twice as much carbon dioxide as producing a tonne of oil.

“These guys think that they are going to be completely unaffected by the world’s attempt to cut down carbon usage,” said Bond.

Overall, the report said that plastics impose “a massive untaxed externality upon society” of at least \$1,000 per tonne — or \$350bn a year — from carbon dioxide, health costs, collection costs, and ocean pollution.

The European Union in July proposed a tax on non-recycled plastics of 800 euros per tonne.

But recycling has also come under the spotlight in recent years after China restricted imports of plastic in 2018, sending a surge of discarded waste — mainly from richer nations — towards countries in South and Southeast Asia.

In a report last week, Interpol warned that criminal networks are profiting from this “overwhelming” level of plastic waste by burning and dumping rubbish that was supposed to be recycled.