

10 August 2023 Thursday



DENR

NEWS ALERTS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



TITLE:

1/3

PAGE

DATE

MANILA BAY RECLAMATIONS SUSPENDED NEWS / A2



CHANGING LANDSCAPE All but one of these 22 reclamation projects altering the face of Manila Bay are under review amid concerns about flooding and environmental damage, according to President Marcos. In this map from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Inquirer marked the location of the US Embassy (red triangle), which last week raised concerns not only about their impact on the ecosystem but also about the involvement of a US-blacklisted Chinese company in one of the developments. The DENR said some of them still lack an environmental clearance.



ALL PROJECTS EXCEPT ONE

MANILA BAY RECLAMATION WORKS SUSPENDED AMID US CONCERN, FLOODS

By **Jerome Aning,**
Jane Bautista
and **Marlon Ramos**
@Team_Inquirer

All Manila Bay reclamation projects, except one, are on hold pending a government review, President Marcos said on Monday in a move hailed by environmentalists and lawmakers as a victory preserving the area from ecological destruction.

"They're all suspended; all reclamation [projects] are under review. Only one proceeded because it has already been reviewed. There are many problems. We saw many [of the projects] which are not being conducted properly," the President told Bulacan officials as they briefed him about flooding in the province and the government response.

"But anyway, that is another big problem that needs to be fixed. Because if they all push through, many rivers will be clogged, including the ones emptying into [Manila Bay]. The water will have nowhere to go. Even on Roxas Boulevard, the sea will disappear," he said.

Mr. Marcos made public his decision days after the United States Embassy expressed concern about a Manila Bay reclamation project being undertaken by a Chinese construction company that was blacklisted by Washington three years ago.

On Aug. 1, US Embassy spokesperson Kanishka Gangopadhyay said the state-owned China Communications Construction Co. (CCCC) "has also been cited by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank for engaging in fraudulent business practices."

Artificial island builder

CCCC was one of 24 Chinese companies blacklisted by the United States since 2020 for having played various roles in the creation of artificial islands that transformed a number of features of the South China Sea into Beijing's military outposts.

The embassy complex on Roxas Boulevard faces the bay and is near some of the reclamation project sites.

It was not clear, however, if CCCC's Manila Bay project was among those halted, as the President did not say on Monday which developer had been allowed to proceed.

The Presidential Communications Office did not immediately reply to media inquiries regarding the matter.

Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga earlier said a team of local and foreign experts was being convened to conduct a "cumulative impact assessment" of the Manila Bay reclamation projects.

A4



FROM A2

She said the agency was looking to assemble the team this month, noting that many of the experts were already involved in evaluating the Manila Bay projects.

Environmental groups on Wednesday hailed Mr. Marcos decision as a victory against destructive reclamation projects around Manila Bay, one of the few scenic spots in the nation's capital famous for its sunset view.

"[It] is the tangible result of years of community action and civil society clamor against the destruction of the Manila Bay ecosystem and the displacement of coastal communities," the Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment said.

But the group called for vigilance against project proponents who may appeal the decision and "find ways to circumvent the moratorium."

Must be in writing

Alyansa Tigil Mina also welcomed the announcement

but wanted it in writing—or in the form of an order from the Office of the President, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA).

International environmental group Oceana challenged the Marcos administration to permanently stop the projects not only in Manila Bay but in other parts of the country.

Citing data from the PRA, Oceana said there were 52 reclamation projects in the country as of the end of February, including a project in Coron that was forfeited last year.

Of that number, 22 reclamation projects are located in Manila Bay with half or 11 already underway, it said.

The activist fisherfolk group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) called on the DENR to comply with the President's declaration suspending the projects by revoking the environment permits issued by the agency.

"For President Marcos' statement to be concrete, the DENR must immediately re-



BUSINESS AS USUAL Reclamation work in Manila Bay goes on unhampered on Wednesday despite President Marcos' statement that 21 of the 22 projects are suspended. —MARIANNE BERMUDEZ

view the 21 environmental compliance certificates of reclamation projects in Manila Bay," Ronnel Arambulo, Pamalakaya vice chair, said in a statement.

Sen. Cynthia Villar, chair of the Senate environment and natural resources committee, said Mr. Marcos' decision was "good news to us who are afraid of the ill effects" of the reclamation projects.

"The reclamation [in Manila Bay] will cause massive flooding in our cities," Villar said.

Sen. JV Ejercito, who earlier called for a moratorium on the

reclamation activities to avert Metro Manila flooding, told reporters: "That is a very welcome development. I support the President's decision 100 percent."

But he said he still saw several dredging machines dumping sand near the shore when he passed by Manila Bay on Wednesday.

Opposition Sen. Risa Hontiveros also praised the President's order but reiterated that the Philippines should not allow Beijing's state-owned companies, such as CCCC, to engage in the reclamation projects.

She said CCCC was the same company that illegally built the Chinese military structures in the West Philippine Sea.

"I welcome the President's suspension, but [the] government should not approve reclamation projects by China state-owned companies anymore. Certainly not now," Hontiveros said, noting China's recent harassment of Philippine ships in Ayungin (Second Thomas) Shoal.

"CCCC, like its home country China, has committed many violations against the Philippines," she said.

Sen. Francis Escudero said necessary charges should be filed against government officials and other individuals behind the reclamation activities that would be found to have violated the existing environmental laws.

But any review of the project contracts should be "evidence-based and not arbitrary," he said.

"[I]f any will be canceled or rectified, appropriate charges [must] be filed against erring officials and individuals in order to exact accountability," Escudero said.

Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda thanked the President for suspending the projects, saying there was "never an ecological option" in land expansion.

"After all, it is part of our intergenerational responsibility to ensure that our decisions are ecologically sound and does not contribute further to the climate crisis or biodiversity loss," she said.

Bulacan airport

On Monday, before he spoke of his decision to halt the projects, Mr. Marcos was informed by Bulacan Rep. Ambrosio Cruz Jr. that his constituents were blaming construction of the New Manila International Airport (NMIA) on the coastal areas of Bulacan town for worsening floods in the area.

"It's being pointed at by the people who say that when the [NMIA] was not yet being constructed there's already flooding, but now that it has started, the flooding worsened," he said.

The NMIA, a project of San Miguel Aerocity Inc., is scheduled to be finished by 2027. INQ



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1900
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



08-10-23

TITLE: _____

1/2

PAGE _____

DATE _____

Marcos suspends Manila Bay reclamation projects

By RAYMUND ANTONIO
and MARIO CASAYURAN

President Marcos has ordered the suspension of all, but one, of the reclamation projects in Manila Bay as they have been placed under review, a move lauded by senators.

He disclosed this during a situation briefing in Malolos City, Bulacan, on Aug. 7, where he lamented how the sea has disappeared from Roxas

Boulevard and took note of several problems in the reclamation projects at the famed Manila Bay.

"Iyong isa lang ang natuloy dahil na-review na. Maraming problema. Marami kaming nakita na hindi masyadong maganda ang patakbo (Only one project pushed through because it has been reviewed. There are many problems. We saw many that are being mismanaged)," Marcos said. He declined to identify the reclamation projects.

The President admitted that the reclamation projects at Manila Bay, famous for its sunset, is another big problem that the government needs to address because it would block rivers.

"Wala na nga yung Roxas Boulevard, mawawala 'yung dagat (Roxas Boulevard is gone and the sea will be gone, too)," he said.

His comments came after Bulacan 5th District Rep. Ambrosio Cruz Jr. said during the situation briefing that "engineering intervention" might be

insufficient as the flooding in Bulacan was caused by the water's inability to flow to the sea.

His proposed measure, House Bill 3148 (An Act Establishing a Manila Bay Integrated Flood Control Coastal Defense and Expressway) aims to address these issues.

"Kasi ang tinitingnan ho namin dun, tumaas nga ho 'yung water level ng ocean. Pangalawa rito, pagbaha naman, nagsasalubong ho iyon (What we are looking

► 5



Marcos suspends Manila Bay reclamation projects 1◀

at here is that the ocean water level rose. Second, floodwater converges with the ocean during floods,” Cruz said. “So, apparently, it would appear na hindi sufficient ‘yung engineering intervention para ma-prevent ang flooding na ito (the engineering intervention is not sufficient to prevent this flooding).”

President Marcos decision was welcomed by some senators.

“I am happy that President Marcos is suspending the reclamation in Manila Bay,” Sen. Cynthia A. Villar said in a statement. “This is good news to us who are afraid of the ill-effects of reclamation which will cause massive flooding in our cities.”

Senator JV Ejercito said the President’s decision is a “very welcome development.” “I support the President’s decision 100 percent.”

In 2022, Sen. Risa Hontiveros filed Senate Resolution No. 300, asking the upper chamber to conduct an inquiry into the reported large-scale land reclamation projects being undertaken on a nationwide scale in the Philippines.

In the resolution, the senator cited scientist Dr. Giovanni Tapang who warned that the reclamation of more than 38,000 hectares—26,232 hectares of which are along the coast of Manila Bay—covered by the National Reclamation Plan will translate to a loss of the same area of seagrass, the spawning ground, and habitat of aquatic life, leading to an annual loss of four to seven billion invertebrates and three to 78 trillion fish.

“Housing and commercial areas in planned reclamation projects will put people in harm’s way. Food security will also be affected, especially since Manila Bay is an important fishing ground. Reclamation will destroy remaining marine habitats, like mangroves, seagrasses, and coral ecosystems,” Hontiveros said.

Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga had earlier said the Department of Environment and Natural Resources was assembling a team of scientists and experts for a cumulative impact assessment of the

Manila Bay reclamation projects.

Earlier, United States Embassy in Manila raised concerns about the ecological impact of the reclamation projects.

The embassy raised concerns over the involvement of a Chinese company in the projects.

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

Hontiveros urged the government to reject all China-funded reclamation projects in the Philippines.

Hontiveros cited reports that two of the six initially approved reclamation projects in Manila Bay are executed by China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd., a subsidiary of the China state-owned CCCC.

“I welcome the President’s suspension, but government should not approve reclamation projects by China state-owned companies anymore. Certainly not now,” she said. “CCCC, like its home country China, has committed many violations against the Philippines. From building artificial islands in the West Philippine Sea to now reclaiming land in Metro Manila. China is destroying Philippine territory left, right, and center. Nabawasan lalo ang respeto ko sa Tsina (I have lost respect for China). Nanghihimasok na nga sa Pilipinas, sinisira pa ang ating likas-yaman (They have not only inured in our territory, they also destroying our natural resources).”

“These China-funded reclamation projects may cause irreversible damage to our cherished natural resources,” Hontiveros stressed.

At least 5,000 hectares of Manila Bay will be needed for 13 reclamation projects that have been approved by the previous administration.



President on Manila Bay works: All but one reclamation halted

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said all reclamation projects in Manila Bay, except for one, have been suspended.

"All reclamation activities are suspended. These are under review except for one that has already been reviewed. We saw problems in the implementation," the President said during a situation briefing in Bulacan on Monday.

"If these projects push through, a lot of rivers will be affected. The sea in

Roxas Boulevard will be gone," he said.

Mr. Marcos, however, did not identify which project was given the green light to proceed.

Lawmakers have welcomed the President's pronouncement.

"I am happy that Mr. Marcos is suspending the reclamation in Manila Bay. This is good news to us who are afraid of ill effects of reclamation which will cause massive flooding in our cities," said Senator Cynthia Villar, head of the Senate environment and natural resources committee. *Next page*



RECLAMATION CONTINUES. Tons of sand from dredging equipment continues to be dumped on areas of Manila Bay on Wednesday. **Norman Cruz**

President...

From A1

Villar earlier warned that if the reclamation project reaches Las Piñas, it may cause six to eight-meter flooding in her hometown.

Opposition Senator Risa Hontiveros said she supports the suspension order of the President as she reiterated her call to reject all China-funded reclamation projects in the country.

"There are questionable entities involved in those projects, particularly the China state-owned China Communications Construction Co. (CCCC), which has historically destroyed our marine ecosystems in the West Philippine Sea.

We should not be taking risks with companies like CCCC," Hontiveros said in a statement on Wednesday.

"These China-funded reclamation projects may cause irreversible damage to our cherished natural resources," she added.

The fishers' group Pamalakaya earlier called on the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to suspend the reclamation projects in Manila Bay following the recent severe flooding in Bulacan and Pampanga.

Pamalakaya said the DENR must temporarily halt the reclamation projects "until the proponents scientifically prove that their projects have not aggravated the flood hazards in these coastal areas."



Marcos orders intensified dredging in Bulacan

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to assist and intensify dredging operations in Bulacan and Pampanga.

The order came following the massive flooding that hit the Bulacan and Pampanga areas during the onslaught of Typhoons "Egay" and "Falcon" that enhanced the southwest monsoon, or habagat.

The flood left considerable damage to agriculture and infrastructure in the province, which Bulacan Gov. Daniel Fernando reported to the President on Monday, August 7, at the Mariano Ponce Hall, Hiyas ng Bulacan Convention Center in Malolos.

In his report to the President, the

governor said the calamities left a total of P768,671,475 worth of damages to agriculture, fisheries, livestock, poultry and infrastructure.

Fernando, with Vice Gov. Alex Castro and all the mayors in Bulacan, presented to the President the plans to address the flooding problem in the province.

Dredging the rivers and creeks, according to the Bulacan officials, is one of the main actions that they see as needed to lessen the flooding.

Fernando also said the President agreed to construct additional water reservoirs and water impounding areas in Bulacan as a long-term solution to the problem.

The governor, however, said the equipment of the provincial government as well as that of the local cities and municipalities

was not enough for a large-scale project.

The President instructed the DPWH and the DENR to lend dredging and other equipment to Bulacan and Pampanga.

Marcos also said that Fernando's proposed long-term solutions for the province were similar to the plans of the national government.

"This dredging, that is our emergency response, really needs to be done to at least make the river a little deeper. But it is not a permanent solution because siltation will also return. But I think you have identified the better way, the water reservoirs and water impounding areas in the lowlands. That is what we are really planning," the President said.

Fernando also identified the main causes of the widespread flooding in

the province, which include urbanization and the construction of private infrastructure; saturated land caused by heavy rains; a lack of master planning and design in the construction of drainages; and the ongoing construction of the Manila North Rail Transit.

Castro, meanwhile, called the attention of the Philippine National Railways (PNR) regarding the ongoing construction of the north-south commuter railway project in the province which allegedly contributes to flooding in Meycauayan-Marilao, Bocaue-Balagtas-Guiguinto, Malolos and Calumpit.

"The construction is blocking the drainage systems in some parts of the province," Castro said.

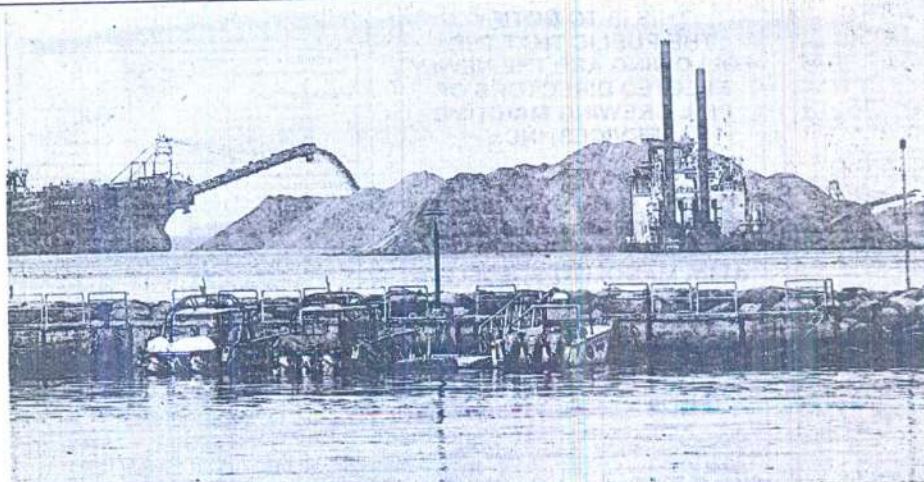
FREDERICK SILVERIO



TITLE

PAGE

DATE



NO STOPPAGE, FOR NOW Work continues at a reclamation site in Manila Bay on Wednesday, Aug. 9, 2023. PHOTO BY MIKE ALQUINTO

Senators hail decision to stop Manila Bay reclamation projects

BY JAVIER JOE ISMAEL AND BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO

SEN. Cynthia Villar on Wednesday welcomed President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s decision to suspend all reclamation activities in Manila Bay.

"I am happy that President Marcos is suspending the reclamation in Manila Bay. This is good news to us who are afraid of the ill-effects of reclamation which will cause massive flooding in our cities," Villar told reporters in a text message.

Marcos suspended all ongoing Manila Bay reclamation activities except for one pending the review of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

"All are suspended, all reclamation projects are under review, except for one, which was allowed to push through as it was reviewed already," the President said during a situation briefing in Malolos City.

The chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change had earlier sought the intervention of the Supreme Court to stop the ongoing Manila Bay reclamation project, noting she would call for a Senate inquiry into the project.

On Dec. 18, 2008, the Supreme Court directed 13 government agencies to clean up, rehabilitate and preserve Manila Bay, and restore and maintain its waters to make them fit for swimming, skin-diving and other forms of contact recreation.

Villar said there were no consultations on the reclamation project, alleging government officials merely "signed and sign" contract papers.

Meanwhile, Sen. Ana Theresia "Risa" Hontiveros urged the government to reject all China-funded reclamation projects in the Philippines.

She cited reports that two of the six initially approved reclamation projects

in Manila Bay are executed by China Harbor Engineering Co. Ltd., a subsidiary of China state-owned Communications Construction Co. (CCCC).

The 24 planned reclamation projects in Manila Bay aim to create new land for commercial and residential development.

The DENR said the projects would occupy 9,000 hectares of the sea, bigger than the combined size of the cities of Manila, Makati, Pasay, San Juan and Pateros.

"I welcome the President's suspension, but government should not approve reclamation projects by China state-owned companies anymore. Certainly not now," Hontiveros said.

The senator said that the CCCC, "like its home country China, has committed many violations against the Philippines."

"From building artificial islands in the West Philippine Sea to now reclaiming land in Metro Manila, China is destroying Philippine territory left, right and center," Hontiveros said.

Senate President Pro Tempore Lorna Regina "Loren" Legarda lauded Marcos' decision on the matter.

"Reclamation was never an ecological option; rather, it is an engineering one, meant to expand land area. It is warranted for when there is precious little land," Legarda said.

"However, if its value is solely for the purpose of making money, we need to be more guarded, making evaluations based on the totality of the circumstances and not just purely from a fiscal perspective," she added.

Sen. Francis Joseph "Chiz" Escu-

dero said the government should file charges against erring public officials or individuals if there are enough evidence linking them to questionable Manila Bay reclamation projects.

Escudero, who earlier cautioned Malacañang against blocking the reclamation projects solely on the basis of the United States government's concern over "long-term environmental impact," clarified he is not opposing a review of the projects "as long as it is evidence-based and not arbitrary."

Legarda earlier filed a bill to amend the Environmental Impact Assessment System, as well as one for Integrated Coastal Management.

"After all, it is part of our intergenerational responsibility to ensure that our decisions are ecologically sound and do not contribute further to the climate crisis or biodiversity loss," she said.

In 2022, Hontiveros filed Proposed Senate Resolution 300, directing the appropriate Senate committee to conduct an inquiry into the reported large-scale land reclamation projects being undertaken on a nationwide scale in the Philippines.

She cited scientist Dr. Giovanni Tapang who said that the reclamation of over 38,000 hectares, 26,232 hectares of which are along the coast of Manila Bay, covered by the National Reclamation Plan "will translate to a loss of the same area of seagrass, the spawning ground, and habitat of aquatic life, leading to an annual loss of 4-7 billion invertebrates and 3-78 trillion fish."

"Housing and commercial areas in planned reclamation projects will put people in harm's way. Food security will also be affected, especially since Manila Bay is an important fishing ground," she said.

Reclamation will "destroy remaining marine habitats, like mangroves, seagrasses, and coral ecosystems," Hontiveros said.



TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

Group urges DENR to suspend all ongoing land reclamation projects in Manila Bay, Metro Cebu

THE Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) on Wednesday urged the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to revoke the environmental compliance certificate (ECC) and other permits for various land-reclamation projects in Manila Bay that were found to be liable for alleged environmental violations.

The call was made after President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. announced on national television that all but one land reclamation project in Manila Bay were suspended due to numerous violations.

It was not clear which project was given the green light to continue with the project while all others will be undergoing a review process.

To concretize President Marcos' pronouncement, the DENR should comply and also review the ECCs of the 21 land reclamation projects in Manila Bay," Ronnel Arambulo, vice chairman of Pamalakaya said in a statement.

According to Arambulo, merely suspending the projects is not enough. He

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

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

It is also imperative, Arambulo said that the mangroves that were destroyed be restored in the coastal areas of Manila Bay.

Pamalakaya said accountability should come in the form of just compensation for fisherfolk who have lost their livelihood and the rehabilitation of marine resources and coastal communities.

The group also urged the Marcos administration to "certify as urgent" a bill declaring Manila Bay as a reclamation-free zone.

Filed by the Makabayan bloc last year, House Bill 2026 prohibits all forms of reclamation activities in Manila Bay. The bill is pursuant to the 2008 Supreme Court continuing mandamus to rehabilitate, clean

up, and restore Manila Bay for recreational use and fishery resources development.

According to Pamalakaya, reclamation projects with approved ECCs include the 420-hectare reclamation in Bacoor, Cavite; 360-hectare Pasay Reclamation Project; 318-hectare Manila City Waterfront Project; as well as the 419-hectare Horizon Manila Project.

Meanwhile, the People's Network for the Integrity of Coastal Habitats and Ecosystems (People's NICHE) urged DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga to make civil society organizations (CSOs) part of the cumulative impact assessment of land reclamation projects in Manila Bay.

The appeal was made through a letter dated August 8, 2023, urging Yulo-Loyzaga to suspend the land-reclamation activities and hold a dialogue with CSO leaders to discuss the conduct of the cumulative impact assessment.

"We welcome this [cumulative impact assessment], as it is a long-overdue step in the complete appraisal of the impacts of reclamation across the critical bay ecosystem," the group wrote in their letter,

signed by different organizations affiliated with the alliance. "We also hope it serves as a precedent for similar approaches in other parts of the country where reclamation projects are also concentrated, such as in Metro Cebu."

Senator Risa Hontiveros, for her part urged the government to reject all China-funded reclamation projects in the Philippines.

According to reports, two of the six initially approved reclamation projects in Manila Bay are executed by China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd., a subsidiary of China state-owned Communications Construction Co. or CCCC. However, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has since suspended the operations of all but one reclamation project in Manila Bay due to management issues.

"I welcome the President's suspension, but government should not approve reclamation projects by China state-owned companies anymore. Certainly not now. CCCC, like its home country China, has committed many violations against the Philippines. From building artificial islands in the West Philippine Sea to now reclaiming land in Metro Manila, China is destroying Philippine territory left, right, and center. Nabawasan lalo ang respeto ko sa Tsina. Nanghihimasok na nga sa Pilipinas, sinisira pa ang ating likas-yaman," Hontiveros said in a news statement. *Jonathan L. Mayuga*



08-10-23

TITLE:

DATE

FIRST PERSON

ALEX MAGNO

Willfulness

Some of the reasons for the flooding in Bulacan and Pampanga are pretty banal. For instance, one gate at Bustos Dam has been in disrepair for three years now and no one bothered to fix it.



The other reasons require creative engineering solutions. But even the obvious engineering solutions will require the application of political will.

Look at the map. Central Luzon is really a floodplain. It is meant to flood. This is why traditional houses were built on stilts and why dried corn was always stored under the roof. It is the dictate of long memories of great floods.

Somehow, we discarded long memories. People settled in congested towns. Subdivisions were built over catch basins. Streams were stolen. The commons was disrespected.

For over a century, we tried to overpower the floods. Last week, the floods overpowered us.

Short of tearing up the highways and dismantling large settlements to make way for water to flow out, the only thing that could be done is to build infrastructure for impounding the water that comes in great quantity during the wet months. The impounded water could then be used for irrigation during the dry months, shifting demand from the inadequate reservoirs.

Impounding the water makes absolute sense.

When President Marcos met with stakeholders in the flooded areas last week, it became clear why the construction of impounding infra was never done all these years: there will be strong resistance from communities that will be adversely affected by collecting the water.

The Candaba swamp communities are an example of this. One swamp resident, opposing the construction of an impounding facility, said 9,000 farmers will be dislocated. Over generations governed by a weak state, a lot of the swamp was actually titled as agricultural land.

Impounding water in the low-lying swamp is an obvious solution. But it will meet political resistance. If that engineering solution is to be done, President Marcos will have to act with some political will. Land claims will have to be settled and communities to be affected will have to be resettled. No agency beneath the Presidency could get this done. The matter is squarely on the President's lap.

Fortunately, we are seeing some signs of resoluteness in our characteristically conflict-averse leader. A few days ago, he ordered the massive reclamation projects in Manila Bay suspended while the DENR conducts a saner environmental impact assessment.

The DENR, as we know, is currently led by a scientist who is not impressed by power-brokering – the traditional means by which large-scale projects with doubtful environmental credentials get done. If science tells her these projects carry long-term deleterious effects, she will not hesitate recommending they be scrapped.



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

PHILIPPINE DAILY
BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEW
INQUIRER

B1
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

08-10-23

TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

SMC vows more help in flood-control efforts

BIZ BUZZ



After removing over 2 million tons of solid waste and silt from

the Pasig, Tullahan and San Juan rivers, all three waterways are flowing more freely again thanks to the P3-billion cleanup drive of San Miguel Corp (SMC). Now, the country's largest

conglomerate by revenues and assets wants to help solve the perennial flooding issue in Central Luzon, several areas of which were swamped in recent weeks due to incessant rains.

San Miguel president and CEO Ramon Ang made this commitment to Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga in a recent meeting, where he detailed the progress that the firm has made in its river restoration efforts.

San Miguel has offered to

undertake these efforts for free because it has a big stake in the area in general and Bulacan in particular, namely the MRT 7 project, the Bulacan Bulk Water Supply facility

BIZ BUZZ: SMC VOWS MORE HELP IN FLOOD-CONTROL EFFORTS

FROM B1

and the P740-billion New Manila International Airport.

With the conglomerate's technical expertise and financial muscle, hopefully the floods of the last three weeks will be the last the area will experience for a long time.

—DAXIM L. LUCAS

Stamp of approval

When Danny Yu stepped in as PLDT Inc.'s new chief financial officer (CFO) in May, he was served with a (very) tall order: take the lead in settling the multibillion bud-

get overrun that dragged the company's bottom line in the past year.

The former group controller previously outlined measures to prevent the financial fiasco from happening again, including a stricter project management system to monitor capital expenditure outlays.

And his efforts seem to be paying off as PLDT president Al Panlilio commended the brand new CFO.

"Danny has done a good job fixing a lot of depreciation. Our objective is to bring down

loans eventually," Panlilio told reporters during PLDT's recent financial briefing in Makati.

"We can only do that once we fix more things and see if we can push revenues [and] improve Ebitda (earning before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization)," he added.

—TYRONE JASPER C. PIAD INQ



Email us at [BizBuzz@inquirer.com.ph](mailto: BizBuzz@inquirer.com.ph)

Join our Viber community:

[inq_news/inqbusinesscommunity](https://t.me/inq_news/inqbusinesscommunity)



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

SMC says Bulacan floods long-time problem, not caused by airport project

By Darwin G. Amojelar

SAN Miguel Corp. on Wednesday dismissed allegations that its Bulacan Airport Project is the cause of flooding in the province.

SMC president and chief executive officer Ramon S. Ang asserted that flooding in Bulacan had already been a major problem, long before government approved the airport's construction in the province, just north of Metro Manila.

"There are many contributing factors to flooding. Bulacan has many low-lying areas. Another is land subsidence caused by over-extraction and the depletion of ground wa-

ter. In fact, that is one of the reasons why we invested in putting up the Bulacan Bulk Water System Project some years back—to provide potable water to residents without having to resort to unsustainable use of ground water," Ang explained.

"Degradation, siltation, and pollution of our rivers are of course major causes of flooding. Because of these, rivers become shallow and their flood carrying capacity is severely diminished, resulting in river overflow and floods. The proliferation of fish ponds in coastal areas has also contributed to severe flooding in the province," he added.

The SMC has started cleaning up

rivers around the airport project site as part of the overall design and long-term maintenance of the country's largest international gateway.

These flood mitigation efforts are seen to also benefit towns near the airport.

"We are deeply invested in the future as well as the well-being of Bulacan and its residents. We would not pour in billions in resources if we didn't consider all possible risks, including flooding in the province. As with any major undertaking of this magnitude, extensive studies were done even before construction started. And even now, we

continue to work with experts and to consistently ensure we adhere to the highest environmental and social standards and regulations," Ang said.

He also pointed out that heavily-flooded areas during the last typhoon, particularly Calumpit and Hagonoy towns, located far from the airport project, were affected by overflow from the heavily-silted Pampanga River aggravated by the release of water from some dams.

The SMC is already looking to extend its river desilting and cleanup initiative beyond Bulacan's rivers, to other critical tributaries throughout Central Luzon.

"With our experience in clean-



TITLE:

PAGE

Why only now?

IT IS as if our senators and other high government officials never pass Roxas Boulevard.

The GSIS Building where the Senate currently rents its office spaces and session hall is right smack in front of the once beautiful bay.

The senators, I would suppose, go to Sofitel nearby every now and then. And so do their highly paid staff.

But not until the embassy of the mighty US of A complained about the many reclamation projects in the bay did our leaders find their voice, and asked the DENR and other government agencies to look into the environmental impact of such side-by-side projects which haul sand from Cavite, Zambales and elsewhere and dump these into the bay.

An exception is Senator Cynthia Villar, who has been vocal about reclamation projects in her native Las Pinas for years. But till the US Embassy spoke out, it's been a case of "not in my backyard" (NIMBY).

Even the president has rued while in Malolos that "The sea has disappeared from Roxas Boulevard."

Very few except Pamalakaya and environmentalists like Antonio Oposa and scientist Kevin Rodolfo kept criticizing the reclamation that would forever steal the Manila Bay sunset from ordinary folks and likely cause severe floods in the mainland.

Things are not looking good, despite the assurances of our economic managers

In stealth, the Philippine Reclamation Authority rushed the approval of the project proponents which also got the local governments of Manila, Pasay, Paranaque, Navotas and Cavite getting into the new "gold rush."

The Americans squawked only when they found out that one of the projects would be constructed by a Chinese company. If it were an American or Australian company, they would likely have kept quiet.

Which is why Sen. Chiz Escudero called their complaint interventionist, without necessarily supporting the reclamation projects.

One of the projects approved by a previous LGU chief was so hastily passed even if it overlapped with another reclamation project already given by the PRA.

Another overlapped territorial boundaries, between two local governments.

All done in haste, and in the last days of the Duterte administration, the "developers" rushed to pile sand into the bay.



SO
I SEE
LITO
BANAYO

could have grown if government did not earn more revenues to push through with its infrastructure and social projects.

Two weeks ago, Recto warned about the impending rice crisis due to a "quadruple whammy" of the India export ban, Vietnam's export limits, the Russian decision to interdict grain shipments from Ukrainian ports, and the last typhoons, with more forthcoming.

Time and again, this writer has been warning about the mismanagement of our rice inventory. Recto himself warned of the "sound of empty pots clanging."

Rice after all is not just an economic problem; it is a political commodity.

While I agree the NFA should not engage itself in commercial rice trading as the RTL proscribed, government should be allowed to import as exigencies arise.

Leaving the entire market to the private sector now poses food security problems because they will not import when the price is high.

Which is exactly what we are witnessing today.

BPI gave out 1.9 million tons worth of import permits, but many cannot import because the market has constricted.

Speaker Martin Romualdez took it upon himself to engage with his counterparts in Vietnam for assurance of continued supply of the staple.

We hope the assurances given will be able to stem the tide of a looming shortage and price spiral, just as the president must find ways and means to engage Vietnam in a government-to-government transaction.

Lately too, Recto warns about the unsustainability of our huge national debt, its service, and the fiscal deficit.

He has rightly calculated that with an optimistic revenue target of P11.7 trillion, there will be a deficit of P4 trillion in 2024, which must perforce be financed by debt.

We wrote last week the expected national debt by the end of next year will be some P15.7 trillion, which Recto has now calculated at "15.84 trillion after Congress received the national expenditure program.

Unless new taxes are legislated together with a great leap in our GDP, those trillions of pesos in debt will keep growing to nightmarish proportions.

Translating those mind-boggling figures to daily numbers, Recto said the P5.767 trillion means an average daily expenditure of P15.8 billion of which only P11.7 billion can be supported by revenues, leaving a P4 billion hole which represents the daily incremental debt government will incur.



TITLE:

Why only now?

PAGE

2/2

DATE

Now belatedly, the DENR wants to review, after so much work has been done, and hardly any full view of the bay and its fabulous sunset can be seen.

Of course, we have a new DENR leadership, one with a more scientific rather than militaristic mind.

We trust she will do what is right, not only for the present but more so for future generations of our people.

The senators had best go to the Supreme Court to stop the projects via a Writ of Kalikasan.

The tribunal after all issued a writ of mandamus to save the bay more than a decade ago, so the chances of an injunction is quite high.

Still, one wonders, "nakasayad ba sa lupa and paa ng ating mga lider?"

Trust Deputy Speaker and Batangas representative Ralph Recto to point out the major problems of our economy as lucidly as possible.

One should credit Recto and PGMA for straightening out government finances through pushing for the expanded VAT law, even if it was quite unpopular at the time.

It even cost him his re-election to the Senate, yet imagine how our economy

But that is only the fiscal deficit that needs to be financed.

There are also interest and principal payments on present indebtedness that are automatically appropriated in the budget.

These are king-sized headaches the present administration will have to grapple with amidst a global economic slowdown that would limit our export growth while making our imports more expensive.

Things are not looking good, despite the assurances of our economic managers.

We have to thank Ralph Recto for the reality checks, with the hope he and other well-meaning legislators can find solutions, even if Congress itself needs to indulge in self-abnegation.

Legislating new taxes will produce only small increments to the revenue versus expenditure gap, and our inefficient collection machinery will not be up to speed.

Cutting the pork barrel already made part of the President's budget as proposed by DBM, on top of more that our legislators will push for as they deliberate on the GAA all the way to the bicameral conference committee, is the immediate stop-gap measure to bridge that deficit to more manageable proportions.

As a whistleblower in a past Congress clearly exhorted—"moderate the greed."



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

Manila Standard

A3
PAGE

UPPER
LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

DB-10-23

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

DENR eyes multipurpose infra to optimize water usage

By Rio N. Araja

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is eyeing a multipurpose water infrastructure to optimize the utilization of the country's water resources that could enable multitasked usage of the national resource.

Meanwhile, the water level at Angat Dam, Metro Manila's main water source, is "enough" for now although it would need to go up in preparation for the El Niño phenomenon, according to the

Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS).

DENR Secretary Antonia Loyzaga said the agency will refocus government's water security strategy, look to tap other water sources and recycle wastewater as the need for stable and steady water supply increases on the back of growing demand and the threat from the El Niño episode.

The DENR will work closely with other concerned government agencies, such as the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), the

National Economic and Development Authority, the Local Water Utilities Administration, and the MWSS on the possibility of building public water supply facilities for multiple usage, including irrigation, power generation, industrial and commercial and domestic purposes, she said.

"We are looking at our respective budgets and our programs to see how we can design multipurpose infrastructure to actually serve the different needs of agriculture, power, water for domestic use, and for industry," she added.



08-10-23

TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

DENR EYEING MULTIPURPOSE WATER SUPPLY INFRASTRUCTURE

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will work closely with various national government agencies (NGA) to look into the possibility of building public water supply facilities for multiple usage that will include irrigation, power generation, industrial and commercial use as well as domestic consumption, DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said on Wednesday.

The DENR, which is mandated to manage the country's natural wealth, was also tasked to head the Water Resource Management Office (WRMO) created by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. by virtue of Executive Order No. 22.

Aside from the WRMO, other water-related agencies like the National Water Resources Board (NWRB), River Basin Control Office (RCBO) are under the DENR.

"We are looking at our respective budgets and our programs to see how we can design multipurpose infrastructure to actually serve the different needs of agriculture, power, water for domestic use, and for industry," Yulo-Loyzaga said in a news statement.

The plan, according to the country's steward of the environment and natural resources, is part of the move to refocus the government's water security strategy to optimize and maximize utilization of the country's water resources through infrastructure that enables "multi-tasked" usage of the national resource.

This even as the government is also looking to tap water from other sources and to promote wastewater recycling on account of the need for stable and steady water supply increases on the back of growing demand and threats from the El Niño weather condition.

Yulo-Loyzaga said the DENR and DPWH are jointly studying the construction of more water collection and impounding systems as well as flood control structures as mitigation measures in face of climate change and its impacts.

Yulo-Loyzaga added that water conservation and efficiency, along with multipurpose water infrastructure such as dams, reservoirs, sewage treatment plants, associated irrigation canals, and water supply networks may be used for more than one purpose for economic, social and environmental activities will address the different dimensions of water security in the country.

The DENR is also working with the Department of Finance to see how the government can incentivize public-private partnerships for bulk water supply and other projects that can deliver water where it is most needed.

Meanwhile, the World Bank has expressed interest in funding multipurpose infrastructure to address sectors that are critically in danger because of climate change. *Jonathan L. Mayuga*



NWRB to review proposal for add'l water allocation

By **BELLA CARIASO**

Possible water interruptions in parts of Metro Manila and nearby provinces have prompted the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) to review Maynilad's proposal to increase its current water allocation of 48 cubic meters per second.

West zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services Inc. earlier warned that water interruptions may be implemented if the allocation will not be increased despite improvement in Angat Dam's water level, currently at 199.91 meters as of yesterday morning.

The normal operating level of Angat Dam is 180 meters.

"The NWRB will review the situation in Angat Dam brought about by recent rainfalls due to typhoons and southwest monsoon. We have to consider also preparation of the dams with the possible drier conditions by October this year until next year due to El Niño," NWRB executive director Sevilla David Jr. told **The STAR** in a text message.

Meanwhile, Maynilad president Ramoncito Fernandez said they were able to increase water supply by utilizing alternative sources.

"We have two water treatment plants where we are getting water from the Laguna Lake and we are now in the process of finishing our third plant by

the end of the year," he said.

"We will use this as a buffer or reserve so that when there is a need, we can have other sources," he added.

The NWRB also allowed Maynilad to utilize deep wells due to El Niño, according to Fernandez.

"We have a program that was submitted to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS). Our seven-year business plan was already approved. Under the program, the (non-revenue water) will be reduced to 20 percent and will cost us at least P4 billion a year," he said.

'High and enough'

There is no need to increase the water allocation since watershed areas continue to experience some rainfall, according to MWSS division manager Patrick Dizon.

"We're still experiencing some rains in the watersheds so we don't need to request for additional allocation from Angat Dam. If there is a need for higher allocation, we will coordinate with the NWRB," he said.

"Compared with the level last year, Angat's water level is high and enough for now. But our target elevation by yearend is around 210 to 212 meters. We need to prepare for the effects of El Niño, which is expected by fourth quarter until second quarter next year," he added.



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

DENR, DPWH study water impounding system vs floods

By **BELLA CARIASO**

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) are jointly studying the construction of water impound-

ing systems as well as flood control structures as mitigation approaches to climate change and its impacts amid the flooding experienced in many areas in the country following rains brought by Typhoon Egay and the southwest monsoon, Environment Secretary Maria

Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said yesterday. "We are looking at our respective budgets and our programs to see how we can design multipurpose infrastructure to actually serve the different needs of agriculture, power, water for domestic use and for industry," Loyzaga said.

She added that the DENR is refocusing the government's water security strategy to maximize the utilization of the country's water resources.

Multipurpose water infrastructure include dams, reservoirs, sewage

Turn to Page 6

DENR From Page 1

treatment plants, associated irrigation canals and water supply networks which may be used for more than one purpose for economic, social and environmental activities.

Former DPWH secretary Rogelio Singson has proposed the construction of a 200-hectare water impounding area in Pampanga's Candaba swamp to prevent flooding in nearby and low-lying areas.

Loyzaga said that aside from the DPWH, the DENR is working closely with the National Economic and Development Authority, Local Water Utilities Administration and Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System in building public water supply facilities for multiple usage.

The DENR is also coordinating with the Department of Finance to see how the government can incentivize public-private partnerships for bulk water supply and other projects, she added.

Loyzaga also disclosed that the World Bank has expressed interest in funding multipurpose infrastructure to address sectors critically endangered

because of climate change.

Water retention

The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) has expressed support for Malacañang's push to establish a water retention facility in Pampanga as a long-term solution to the worsening flooding problem in Central Luzon.

"There is ground sinking and subsidence that is happening because of the... over-extraction of groundwater that is also happening. It really contributes to longer-term flooding," Science Secretary Renato Solidum said yesterday at the Kapihan sa Manila Bay media forum.

"(The) overall solution should be a combination of many things, especially water retention basins... because if the ground subsides, flooding will become long-term, but the water will come from above," he added.

The DOST could help check out the design of proposed water retention basins for its efficacy to manage heavy rain overflow, according to Solidum.

"Whenever you have a water impounding retention basin, more areas will be saved

than (not having any)," Solidum said.

Water retention infrastructure should also be complemented by another solution, which is to relocate communities in areas with a chronic flooding problem, he added.

The solution being eyed by the Bulacan provincial government, led by Gov. Daniel Fernando, to build a megadike has merit, but the DOST secretary said a dike solution should be thoroughly studied.

Dismay

Senators expressed dismay over the massive flooding in many parts of the country after two consecutive typhoons in the last week despite having about a P3-trillion budget for flood control and management programs.

During yesterday's public hearing of the Senate committee on public works chaired by Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr., senators lamented the bad effects of the massive flooding in many parts of the country, most of which remain submerged.

Sen. Raffy Tulfo urged government officials to look into alleged corruption in the administration of dams amid

persistent flooding problems in the country.

Sen. Cynthia Villar lamented that the pumping stations in her home city of Las Piñas are causing floods instead of addressing the problem, thus she questioned Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) chairman Romando Artes about the agency's activities.

Artes, however, told senators, "I can say that the pumping stations are working at 100-percent capacity, many have been rehabilitated."

Revilla also asked Public Works Secretary Manuel Bonoan about what had happened to the flood control and management programs, which cost about P726 billion for the agency and P9 billion for the MMDA.

Bonoan explained that many of the projects are still ongoing.

Senate Majority Leader Joel Villanueva earlier blamed the flooding in Bulacan to reclamation projects as well as the DPWH's failure to fully utilize its P182-billion flood-control budget this year. - With Danessa Rivera, Rainier Allan Ronda, Cecille Suerte Felipe, Marc Jayson Cayabyab, Ramon Efren Lazaro



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

Ex-Candaba mayor supports floodwater diversion plan to curb inundation problem

By Maricel V. Cruz

A FORMER three-term mayor of Candaba, Pampanga, on Wednesday expressed support for the administration's plan to divert flood waters from the province and Bulacan to an impounding area in a portion of the town's 2,000-hectare swamp.

Ex-Candaba Mayor Jerry Limjoco Pelayo in a statement said the water impounding area will be a long-term solution to the perennial flooding that besets his town as well as several other localities in Pampanga and neighboring Bulacan province.

"When I was a mayor, I already suggested in a regional development council meeting that a ring dike is needed to collect the rainwater. I'm with the President on this matter. This could also be beneficial for aquaculture, irrigation for farmers, and

tourism as well," he said.

Pelayo, known for his hands-on leadership during his tenure as Candaba mayor, firmly believes that the proposed water impounding project will not only alleviate the perennial flooding issue, but also provide a boost to local industries and tourism.

He expressed disappointment over Pampanga Rep. Ana York Bondoc's reaction to the proposed solution. In a meeting of Pampanga officials with

the President recently, York expressed strong opposition to the construction of the water impounding area, saying that it will result in loss of livelihood for residents who plant cash crops in the swamp, when it dries up during the dry season.

A Cabinet member present at the meeting however said only 200 hectares of the 2,000-hectare swamp will be affected.



Jerry Pelayo



Iloilo City and its Greener Footprint

The Iloilo City Government mounted an inspiring forum last July 14. Titled "Towards a Greener Footprint for Iloilo City," it was a multi-stakeholder forum carrying the slogan of "We Cannot Do Everything, But Everyone Can Do Something." The keynote speech was delivered by Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Maria Antonia "Toni" Yulo-Loyzaga. Other speakers included Engr. Liza Silerio of SM Supermalls, and architects Paulo Alcazaren and Michaela Santos-Tayag - and of course, there was Iloilo Mayor Jerry Treñas, hosting, orchestrating, and making all this happen.

Held at SM City Iloilo, the forum was a lively discussion and exchange of ideas, that showcased how a multi-pronged approach could best serve this shift towards a greener consciousness. Via the multi-stakeholder format, attention was paid to best practices, and how to effectively turn intent into action. Too often, environmental action gets mired in red tape, administrative issues, and/or lack of follow-through. Through this forum, Iloilo - a pioneer smart city, was making its case for how success can be achieved and sustained, and how they were ready to lead the charge and share these learnings.

One invaluable learning is to find strategic partners who will share the load. Following the slogan of "Not trying to do everything," the forum showcased how the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Iloilo is working with SM Supermalls to fast-track particular municipal initiatives such as the city public markets - a win-win situation for both the LGU and the private sector partner.

In her message, DENR Sec. Yulo-Loyzaga acknowledged how "Iloilo is the most modern version



Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas (center) leads the ribbon cutting ceremony during the Iloilo City's Architectural Multistakeholder Forum with the theme, "Towards a Greener Footprint for Iloilo City". With him in the photo are: (from left) broadcast journalist Ces Drilon, United Architects of the Philippines (UAP) Committee on Green Architecture Movement Architect Michaela Rossette Santos-Tayag, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Maria Antonia "Toni" Yulo-Loyzaga, PGAA Creative Design Principal Designer Architect Paulo Alcazaren, SM Supermalls Program Director of Environment and Sustainability Engr. Liza Silerio, and UAP Chapter President Architect Carlo John Puig Debaja.

of the beautiful coastal garden city. The Esplanade and other features that have been invested in overtime are known internationally, and the conservation of her built heritage highlights the elegance of her culture."

The greening of her footprint though, requires accepting that the city is flood-prone, with many low-elevation areas such as the former salt beds. That despite the abundant water sources, the city is short of accessible safe water. Sanitation and solid waste are issues being addressed by the progressive city government but remain formidable issues they have to overcome.

Sec. Yulo-Loyzaga proceeded to spell out a 13-step program that could help disaster resilience. Noteworthy for being specific to the



SM Supermalls Program Director of Environment and Sustainability Engr. Liza Silerio. Photo from DENR.

issues that Iloilo faces, and providing potential solutions to help realize the resilience that Mayor Treñas has made his administration's mission vision. It's founded on coher-

ence, convergence, and synergy across all sectors, with a 'whole-of-society, as well as whole-of-government' approach - ensuring that no ecosystem, no community, and no

one is left behind.

On behalf of SM Supermalls, Engr. Silerio spoke about the company's journey towards sustainability and

resilience, and how they adapt to climate change as a member of the private sector. As an integrated property management company, building shopping malls, residential condominiums, offices, leisure resorts, hotels, and convention centers; it's always about innovation and a sustainable lifestyle - offering convenience and safety to their customers and the general public.

The big idea for Engr. Silerio, their guiding mantra, is "Build It Right, Build It Well". Because that always means a better outcome, and finding practical solutions by designating a significant portion of their Capital Expenditures (CAPEX) to incorporate resilience, sustainability, and green technology in their infrastructure designs.

SM City Marikina, SM City Masinag, and SM Mall of Asia were the three concrete examples of how this strategy finds a footing in reality and becomes part of the value proposition of any SM property and/or development. SM City Marikina, located close to a river with a history of severe flooding, is built on stilts. SM City Masinag has a rain-water catchment facility, with a 17,681 cubic meter water capacity, equivalent to 7 Olympic-size swimming pools. With SM Mall of Asia, a seawall elevated by 4.5 meters protects the mall from storm surges of rising sea levels. There's also a wave return and drainage channel system.

These are just some examples of resilient design and technology, and how it changes based on the property's specific issues. And that's why the ongoing collaboration with Iloilo City, a convergence of private sector know-how with good governance, holds much promise for this vision of a greener Iloilo. It's a game plan for Iloilo's near future, and it's aligned with the vision of Mayor Treñas.



TITLE _____

PAGE _____

08-10-23
DATE

EDITORIAL

Punish violators of plastic waste law

A year after the passage of the landmark Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Act that compelled large corporations to manage their plastic packaging wastes that are choking waterways and filling up landfills, compliance has been disappointingly dismal.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has revealed that as of July, only 16.55 percent or just 662 of around 4,000 enterprises registered with the Department of Trade and Industry had submitted to the National Solid Waste Management Commission their programs for the proper management of their plastic wastes. These include plastic bags, sachets, labels, laminates, and both rigid and flexible plastic used for such products as beverage bottles, cutlery, plates, and straws, and shampoos and instant noodles, respectively.

Given these appalling numbers as of June this year, the DENR launched a timely campaign with the United Nations Development Programme to generate increased awareness of the EPR concept and get the “obliged enterprises”—companies with assets worth at least P100 million—to comply and help the country win the war against plastic.

An amendment to Republic Act No. 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, the EPR Act requires large-scale companies and enterprises to be environmentally responsible throughout the life cycle of their products—from manufacturing, usage, and post-consumer stage—by establishing programs and mechanisms that ensure the effective reduction, recovery, treatment, and recycling and disposal of their wastes, especially plastic packaging.

The performance standards have been set out: By end of this year, the covered companies must demonstrate the recovery or diversion of 20 percent of their 2022 plastic packaging footprint; then up to 40 percent by next year, and by a 10-percent increase every year until it hits 80 percent by 2028.

The urgency of these actions cannot be overstated as the Philippines produces as much as 61,000 metric tons (MT) of solid waste every day, a significant volume of which is plastic packaging. As DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga noted, of the “more than 163 million plastic sachet packets, 48 million shopping bags, and 45 million thin-film bags a day, 33 percent are disposed of in landfills and dumpsites, and around 35 percent are leaked into the open environment and eventually into our oceans and fields.” Indeed, a 2021 Science Advances study pointed out that the Philippines was the single largest contributor to ocean plastic waste at 356,371 MT.

Fortunately, some of the largest multinationals in the country have taken the EPR Act to heart and have invested in the proper management of their production and packaging waste. Some had started even prior to the passage of the law in keeping with their global commitment to minimize their impact on the planet. The Coca-Cola Company, for one, launched in 2018 its “World Without Waste” program by getting back as many of its bottles and cans, that are then recycled into new ones to keep them from becoming wastes. In the Philippines, the company invested in a recycling facility, and supported the set-up of over 800 collection points nationwide for used PET plastic bottles.

Nestlé Philippines, meanwhile, said it has been “plastic neutral” for three years, as it collects the same volume of plastic that it produces. As of July 2023, it has collected 77 million kilograms of post-consumer plastic waste over three years.

Tax incentives given by the EPR Act have given large-scale companies another reason to follow the law. Persuasion, however, can only go so far. With compliance rates at such a low level, it’s time for the Marcos administration to take more drastic measures such as penalizing noncompliant companies. Under the law, companies that do not register their EPR programs that pass DENR standards, or fail to meet their mandated diversion targets, will be fined from P5 million up to P20 million, and their business permits suspended. It is time to crack the whip and impose the penalties on the noncompliant companies, and release this information to the public not merely to shame but to convey the message that the government is serious in implementing the law.

Congress can reinforce such sanctions by passing a law imposing an excise tax on single-use plastics to urge companies to find other environment-friendly alternatives.

Undoubtedly, complying with the law comes at a price, and will impact the operations of covered companies. This is where cooperation from various sectors—from consumers to experts, government, and private firms—can come into play so that best practices can be shared and emulated.

Time, however, is of the essence. As Yulo-Loyzaga said, the Philippines is “losing the war” against plastic, and it is a war that the country cannot afford to lose. Bold action and game-changing financial and operational sacrifices must be made if we are to prevent far greater consequences—such as severe natural disasters—from affecting lives and livelihood in the future.



Point of view

The scourge of plastic on indigenous people

By MARIAN LEDESMA

Indigenous people may not be your first thought when communities affected by plastic pollution are discussed, but the truth is that they are in the midst of some of the worst impacts of plastic. The fact is that plastic is everywhere – from the highest mountains to the deepest parts of our oceans – and that every stage of plastic's life has harmful effects on people and the natural environment, both resulting in an enormous toll on indigenous people.



The International Day of the World's Indigenous People comes on the heels of Plastic-Free July and there should be more conversation about how the plastic crisis affects indigenous people. Living in close connection with nature and depending on the environment for their livelihoods and cultural practices, indigenous groups are one of the most vulnerable groups to this crisis. From the adverse effects of petrochemical operations to relentless plastic production by corporations polluting traditional lands and waters, there are undeniable atrocities against indigenous people that have persisted for so long, brought about by corporate greed and industrial damages.

In the Philippines, the Badjao have experienced firsthand how plastic can disrupt livelihoods and upend lives. They are seafaring people, with the ocean playing a big part in their daily life, history and culture. Their reliance on marine and coastal ecosystems for their livelihood and food is threatened by plastic pollution's contamination of traditional fishing grounds and degradation of wildlife habitats. Plastic debris obstructs fishing nets and traps, making it hard to catch enough fish for income and even just for subsistence.

The impact on the Badjao's ability to make a living has also become a factor in their migration to highly urbanized cities, where they are discriminated against, experience othering and end up living and working in unjust conditions.

Plastic pollution's transboundary nature makes the issue more complex. Indigenous groups in Pacific Island nations with similar cultural, social and economic connections to the ocean as the Badjao suffer from a range of activities and impacts along plastic's supply chain, such as emissions from plastic production contributing to climate change, waste dumping at sea, persistent organic pollutants, discarded fishing gear and unregulated imports. In the Inuit homelands in the Arctic, plastic pollution from the south as well as local sources has had negative effects on the Inuit's wellbeing.

But these impacts are not just limited to coastal indigenous communities, because the plastic's entire life puts indigenous people at risk. In a statement during the global plastics treaty negotiations in Paris early this year, Frankie

Orona of the Society of Native Nations succinctly describes this injustice: "Indigenous People bear a disproportionate burden of the impacts of plastic pollution, while their rights are undermined

at every stage of the plastic death cycle." He refers to plastic's life cycle as a death cycle because of the grave outcomes plastic has had for their communities.

Really, the negative effects begin at the earliest phases of plastic's life – extraction and production – and from the very start, it is already dire. Indigenous territories are encroached upon by plastic-producing industries, which often operate near or within indigenous lands and waters. The extraction of fossil fuels used to make 99 percent of plastics are frequently in indigenous territories, causing land degradation, water contamination, deforestation and even indigenous lands being stolen.

In Texas, representatives from the Carrizo/Comecrudo tribe have spoken out against the extractive industries responsible for destroying sacred sites and polluting the earth and the waters in their territories. To add to these injustices, there is often a lack of legal protections and widespread support, making them more vulnerable to exploitation while having the least or no contribution to the environmental problem.

If we think about it, we should actually be looking to them for the answers. Indigenous people and traditional communities in places all over the world have historically been plastic-free and, for the most part, have practiced zero waste, a way of life which has long been affected by colonization and the systemic wiping out of indigenous traditions.

The Igorot practice of *ayyew* here in the Philippines, for example, is an indigenous concept of reusing and recycling waste which has inspired waste management initiatives. We can easily see how this concept rooted in reuse can also be applied to upstream solutions like refill and reuse systems. Studies have also highlighted indigenous-led solutions as vital parts to ending plastic pollution.

The fight to end plastic pollution cuts across national borders, genders, socio-economic classes and ethnicity. We need a global plastics treaty that will recognize indigenous rights and knowledge, ensure access and participation of indigenous communities and other vulnerable groups and obligate countries to implement a phase-down of plastic production.

The plastic pollution crisis is a stark reminder that all life on Earth is interdependent. By embracing a Plastics Treaty centering on people's rights and addressing the plastic crisis at its roots of extraction and production, we choose to stand in solidarity with those who have been the guardians of the planet since time immemorial.

Only through collective action and commitment – especially from those with the most power and resources – can we hope to restore the harmony between humankind and nature, and

Justly transition to a sustainable future for all – where no one is left behind.

Marian Ledesma is the Zero Waste Campaigner at Greenpeace Southeast Asia.



TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

Koica, USAID to combat Manila Bay pollution

THE South Korean government, through the Korean International Cooperation Agency (Koica) and the United States government, represented by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), have signed a grant partnership agreement worth P27.7 million (\$ 500,000) to address maritime pollution in Manila Bay.

According to the former's embassy, the grant funding will supplement the existing P426.2 million (\$7.7 million) allocated for the "Enhancement of Marine Litter Management in Manila Bay (EMLM)" project: a five-year initiative led by Koica and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

EMLM aims to strengthen Manila Bay's environmental protection system and promote behavioral changes to combat marine litter. It encompasses the development of a comprehensive "Marine Litter Management Strategy," capacity-building programs, the construction and operation of a clean-up vessel, community-awareness initiatives, and the establishment of pilot communities showcasing effective waste collection and segregation practices.



CONSTANT DIALOGUE: KEY TO GREAT DIPLOMACY In a Senate meeting with the Japan-Philippines Parliamentarians Friendship League led by its president Moriyama Hiroshi, Senate President Juan Miguel F. Zubiri discussed stronger inter-parliamentary cooperation on trade, security and defense, agriculture, infrastructure, tourism as well as people-to-people exchanges. The occasion marked the first time in nine years that the organization had come to the Philippines for an official parliamentary visit. Present in the meeting were (from left) Amb. Kazuhiko Koshikawa, Hon. Aoyama Yamato, Hon. Miyauchi Hideko, Hon. Otsuka Taku, Hon. Okuno Shinsuke, Hon. Moriyama Hiroshi, Zubiri, Sen. Ma. Josefa Imelda "Imee" R. Marcos, Senate Pro Tempore Lorna Regina "Loren" B. Legarda, Sen. Ma. Lourdes "Nancy" S. Binay, Sen. Mary Grace S. Poe-Llamanzares, Sen. Mark A. Villar, Sen. Rafael "Raffy" T. Tulfo, Sen. Joseph Victor "JV" G. Ejercito, Sen. Sherwin T. Gatchalian, and Amb. Mylene Garcia Albano.



TITLE:

PAGE:

ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION RESCUES 17 ENDANGERED NATIVE TREE SPECIES IN ILOCOS NORTE, PALAWAN; RENEWS COMMITMENT TO LAUNCH MORE ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

By Kenneth M. del Rosario

Saving the country's native trees from extinction is a tall order, but one that needs to be taken seriously, with no further delay, and with full commitment, if stakeholders are to succeed.

It becomes an even more urgent situation knowing that about 47 percent of local native tree species are threatened with extinction, mainly due to urbanization, development, and habitat loss due to agriculture.

Energy Development Corporation (EDC) knows this all too well, which is why it wastes no time launching extensive environmental programs that include forest restoration, protection of forests within watersheds, and advocacy and mainstreaming of Philippine native trees. The organization is also involved in biodiversity conservation and provides support to local communities within the company's areas of operation.

One of EDC's most important projects is the Global Tree Assessment (GTA), an initiative with the Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) that aims to research and compile extinction risk information on all tree species worldwide.

BINHI, through the BGCI-fund-

ed GTA, has undertaken assessments for 1,470 Philippine endemic and near endemic tree species; 919 of these has been published in the IUCN Red List Online.

BINHI is EDC's corporate social responsibility (CSR), which has become one of the largest corporate-led greening programs. The project focuses on premium native trees because they are well adapted to the country's forests and have the chance to thrive better. They also won't harm existing plants around them.

Of the first 800 global tree assessments, 49 were added to the BINHI priority species list. There are now a total of 145 priority species, 49 of which are considered critically endangered and island endemic species, limited to areas of Ilocos Norte, Palawan, Samar, and Davao. These are species that are highly susceptible to becoming extinct in the near future.

Rediscovery of species

Committed to conserving and advocating for species, EDC prioritized species rescue, inventory, and documentation for seven target species in Ilocos Norte and 15 species in Palawan in 2022. This underscores EDC's commitment to put forward conservation efforts once data on



EDC's BINHI team led by Ronino Gibe and Jimson Solatre with UP Sierra Madre Land Grant Project Manager, UPLB Professor Pastor Malabrigo, Jr., and forest guards from DENR-CENTRO Bangui, Ilocos Norte were able to locate and account for seven additional species in Kalbaryo-Patapat Natural Park, Adams, Ilocos Norte. These species will be added to the company's 96 flagship BINHI Philippine native species that it will propagate.

assessment has been gathered.

Fortunately, all seven species from Ilocos Norte, as well as 10 out of 15 so far in Palawan, have been accounted for.

Species found in Ilocos Norte include malapimpi, butungou, ginayang, malabayaon, barakitid, Sorsogon Lanutan, and Elmer pasnit. On the other hand, species found in Palawan include the Palawan lanutan, tagobahi, baris, paningit, karakuat, lwahig malaruhat, and Pulgar lamuto.

The organization also collected

seedlings for some species and is now collaborating with regional and local DENR units and other partner organizations (like the Katala Foundation in Palawan) for protection and conservation efforts under its BINHI Adopt A Wildlife Species (AAWS) program.

When it started, one of the first tasks BINHI did was rescue the first 96 most endangered trees in the country, making sure they completed the bank of seeds for the endangered native trees. Because of this crucial mission, they now have the



The Kibatalia Elmeri was one of the Philippine native species that EDC's BINHI team was able to identify and locate in Burgos, Ilocos, Norte.

important opportunity to propagate the samples in nurseries later on.

On June 24, 2022, the EDC renewed its partnership with the DENR for the AAWS program, further highlighting the rediscovery survey of the new 49 priority species. It also signals the start of a collaboration between the two institutions for the adoption of the GTA efforts with BGCI.

Continuing recognitions

EDC recently received accolades for BINHI. At the recently held 2023 Tambuli Asia Pacific Awards, BINHI won the top Gold citation under the Care for the Environment category of the Sustainability & Corporate Purpose division and went on to receive the event's highest commendation possible—the Grand Prix—considered the best among all other Gold winners across the division's

various categories.

Another EDC corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative, the Baslay coffee project in its Southern Negros Geothermal Project, also won a Silver award under the Inclusive Growth category in the same division. The Baslay program has been engaging slash-and-burn or "kaingin" farmers for over three decades and capacitating them with organic coffee farming and retail as an alternative livelihood.

Building on these recognitions, EDC will be holding an in-situ restoration or actual conservation efforts that will be launched to improve the habitat of species found, specifically those found in Ilocos Norte. After which, the continuation of the species survey for areas of Samar and Davao will ensue.

In-Situ Conservation involves partnering with local government units to improve local environmental policies, raise awareness among communities about tree species of interest, and build the capacity of stakeholders to implement appropriate local conservation actions.

All of this underscores the fact that there's still a long way to go before native tree species are fully protected. But with the efforts of EDC and partner organizations, the next generation may wake up to a much greener, more sustainable planet.



Climate change impact hikes reinsurance cost

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON

The Philippines is seeing a 50 percent surge in the cost of reinsurance amid increased risk to natural calamities as climate change worsens, making non-life insurance products more expensive.

In a briefing yesterday, officials of Malayan Insurance Co. Inc. said premiums for non-life insurance products have been rising largely due to hardening reinsurance rate and poor risk rating of the Philippines.

It should be noted that reinsurance coverage keeps companies solvent and operational despite paying for large losses. It is the largest component in every insurance product.

Malayan senior vice president and chief underwriting officer Eden Tesoro said the cost of reinsurance has gone up by 50 percent this year, especially for catastrophe-exposed countries like the Philippines. Also factored in are the impacts of the pandemic and global tensions that drove prices up.

"Reinsurers have done mainly two things: withdraw from the market or continue to give support but at a limited amount," Tesoro said.

"Now, they have priced it much more than what it was before. And when you have a key ingredient that increases its cost, that also increases the price of non-life products," she said.

For instance, an individual that has a house insured is now paying a premium of P3,798.63, up from P2,532.42 previously.

Tesoro explained that over the past three decades, the industry can get away with a limited increase, sometimes even zero, but this has now jumped significantly.

This, as reinsurers globally tend to recover not only from a certain region, but across all areas of operations.

The Philippines topping the World Risk Index 2022 in terms of risk from natural

calamities and conflict also has a negative impact on how global reinsurers price Philippine risks.

Tesoro emphasized that such an increase would likely stay the same for another year as reinsurers do not just look at past instances, but are pricing for exposure and potential hit.

"These things do not change overnight and would likely stick for a while," Tesoro said.

As such, the non-life insurance sector are losing clients given more expensive premiums, with the retail segment the first to be eroded, such as household and personal insurance being the most price sensitive.

Tesoro said adding to the challenge is the burden of coping with various national and local government taxes and fees, such as value-added tax, documentary stamp tax, and other service taxes, among others.

The Insurance Commission and the private sector are now reviewing the insurance tax system to make it more reasonable.

"We are not saying that we should not be taxed. But to review where we are if we compare ourselves to our Southeast Asian peers," Tesoro said.

The insurance sector is currently slapped with about 24 to 25 percent in combined taxes as compared to the seven to 12 percent in neighboring economies.

Further, Tesoro is looking at a further decline in the share of the sector to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) as products become more expensive.

Currently, insurance penetration of the sector is at 1.75 percent of GDP. Of that, less than 0.5 percent is accounted for in the non-life segment.

A member of the Yuchengco Group of Companies, Malayan is authorized to underwrite the following: aviation, engineering, fire, property, marine, miscellaneous casualty, motorcar, personal accident, travel insurance, and surety bonds.



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

Deep-sea mining talks run aground

IN what may be a hopeful sign, negotiations to craft an agreement that would permit large-scale deep-sea mining fell apart last week after it became clear that a growing number of governments, major corporations, and perhaps most importantly, the banking sector, actually do not want their brands and businesses associated with wholesale destruction of the ocean environment. The collapse of the talks is a reprieve rather than a victory for anti-mining forces, as the debate will resume again when the International Seabed Authority (ISA) reconvenes next year, but it at least buys time for building a stronger environmental and economic case against the utterly harebrained, greed-driven idea.

The ISA is a UN-backed body tasked with regulating the exploration and exploitation of deep-sea minerals in the 70 percent or so of the world's seas that do not fall under any national jurisdiction as territorial waters or exclusive economic zones.



ROUGH TRADE

BEN KRITZ

The amount of minerals such as manganese, cobalt and nickel that are believed to lie at the bottom of the sea is astounding. The world's richest patch, the Clipperton-Clarion Fracture Zone, an area in the Pacific between Hawaii and Mexico that is about the size of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh combined, is thought to hold between \$8 trillion and \$16 trillion in minerals. The ISA has issued 19 licenses for mineral exploration in the zone, but the issuance of any licenses for actual extraction is on hold for now.

The main push to complete an agreement that would allow the issuance of those licenses came from the Chinese government, in keeping with its policy of striving to be the world's cancer, several large mining conglomerates, and the Pacific Island nation of Nauru. The latter might come as a surprise to

some, as the small Pacific countries are more at risk than anyone else from the rest of the world's wanton environmental destruction, but on the other hand, their economies do not have much else going for them, and the possibility of vast riches from undersea minerals is just too tantalizing to ignore.

Since the usual "because it's there" argument for mineral exploitation is no longer fashionable, the rationale for opening up large-scale undersea mining was that "the resources are necessary for the energy transition." The rapid expansion of manufacturing of batteries and components for renewable energy systems has caused a great deal of concern as to whether known reserves on land will be sufficient. To aggravate that situation, some of the minerals critical to production, such as cobalt, are concentrated in politically inconvenient places.

On the other side of the debate over undersea mining are grave concerns about the potential environmental damage of strip-

mining the seafloor. Very little is known about the ecology of the deep ocean floor, but enough is known that the potential harm from the destruction of seafloor habitats and the release of vast volumes of sediment containing toxic metals can be reasonably described. However, scientists do admit that most of what happens in the world's oceans is a mystery — we know more about deep space than we do about the deep oceans, simply because it is so challenging to study the depths. And that is the real problem: Until the potential environmental damage can be explained with reliable accuracy and corresponding mitigation measures are developed, many are not willing to take a chance on doing irreparable harm.

Who are the "many"? So far, 21 countries have declared their opposition to undersea mining, or at least undersea mining right now, calling for either an outright ban on it, a moratorium, or a "precau-

>KritzA12



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

Trusted Since 1908

The Manila Times



TITLE:

PAGE

08-10-23

DATE

■ KRITZ FROM A11

Deep-sea mining talks run aground

tionary pause" until more research can be completed to better inform the development of a treaty. The latest countries to join the call for a moratorium were mining powerhouses Canada and Brazil, which issued their declarations while the ISA talks were underway last month. Several high-profile corporations have also declared they would not use ocean-sourced minerals in their supply chains due to environmental concerns; the most notable of these are Samsung, BMW, Volvo and Google's parent company Alphabet.

In the end, however, the same thing driving the would-be underwater gold rush — money — appears to be the thing that might kill it. The preemptive declaration by some of the world's biggest industries that there would not be a market for ocean-sourced minerals seems to have given some potential investors reasons to be skeptical, at least according to global-ratings giant Fitch. In a statement earlier this week, Fitch said that activities seen as destructive to biodiversity, such as riverine tailings disposal and mountaintop removal mining, are already commonly targeted for portfolio exclusions, and that seabed extraction is likely to be regarded in the same context.

"This could negatively affect future deep-sea mining development through reduced access to capital, particularly if deep-sea mining is subject to negative screening by environmental, social and governance (ESG)-conscious investors," said Fitch.

As though to underscore Fitch's point, 37 financial institutions and investment groups submitted a joint statement to the ISA during the talks "urging governments to protect the ocean and not proceed with deep seabed mining until the environmental, social and economic risks are comprehensively understood, and alternatives to deep-sea minerals have been fully explored." Many of the signatories are already specialists in sustainable investment, but a few noteworthy ones are not, including French insurance giant Allianz and public bank La Banque Postale group; major Dutch insurance group ASR Nederland; and the CZ Group, which is the money behind the Czech firearms industry, including the American firearms giant Colt, which it now owns.



Editorial

Are we properly managing our natural capital?

A COMMENTARY earlier this week by Lei Lei Song, the director of the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) economic analysis and operational support division, made a strong case for economic policymakers to do something that is not common practice now: integrate the country's natural capital into economic planning. Reflecting on Dr. Song's analysis reveals that, encouragingly, the Philippines, at least under the present Marcos Jr. administration, could be fairly described as being ahead of the game with respect to considering the role and value of the country's "natural capital." But it could also be just as fairly said that much more should be **done to maximize natural capital's value while preserving it for future generations.**

That may all sound a bit esoteric, so let's take a step back and clarify the subject. "Natural capital" is defined as a country's renewable and non-renewable resources, including minerals, soil, air, water and all living things; in short, all the components of the environment not built or created by people. Some natural assets are easy to understand, such as clean water for drinking and irrigation, mineral resources, and natural fish populations in our seas that are harvested for food. Others are less tangible but no less important, as they provide advantages such as nutrient cycling, pollination, protection from natural hazards, and climate regulation, as well as cultural and "quality of life" benefits. A mangrove forest, for example, protects against flooding from storm surges, serves as a carbon sink, and provides a habitat for a vast variety of wildlife.

No one with any sense of decency would argue that the mangrove forest is not important and should not be protected, and as we noted above, the current government has raised environmental conservation in its list of priorities as well as taking other initiatives to reduce human impact. Measures such as the policy of prioritizing renewable energy development, or the recently implemented Extended Producers' Responsibility Act aimed at reducing plastic pollution have the effect of slowing the rate at which our natural capital is spent.

And so far, it seems to be working. A few days ago, on August 4 to be exact, the world marked what is known as "Overshoot Day," the date each year that the world uses more resources than the environment can replace in the same year. The date has been a few days earlier each year, but it differs from country to country, with some, particularly the resource-poor desert countries of the Middle East, reaching their "overshoot day" as early as February. The Philippines, however, is among the relatively few countries in the world that does not have its own "overshoot day." So far, we have managed to avoid living beyond our natural means, and it is heartening that government policy for the most part supports keeping it that way.

The problem, as Song asserts, is that even good environmental and resource management policies are treated as something apart from economic policy; if they are connected at all, it is usually only when they act as a constraint or modifier, such as when an environmental impact assessment must be made to determine the scope of a permit for a new mining project or some bit of infrastructure. Natural capital, Song argues, is still capital, and it ought to be accounted for in economic planning.

Just exactly how policymakers should go about doing that is a bit vague. The ADB expert recommends developing better systematic approaches to assigning a value to natural capital, adjusting pricing and risk approaches, more carefully assessing supply and demand, and — the mantra-like refrain of all multilateral development banks and other development finance institutions these days — mobilizing more international and domestic capital to manage natural assets.

We believe that it may not need to be that complicated, at least to start integrating natural capital into economic planning. All that really needs to be done is to add another dimension to planning and determine the long-term cost or gain in natural assets from carrying out any sort of development. Many values of things — such as the value of the mangrove forest in terms of the likely monetary cost a flood would cause if it were not there — are already known, thus it is just a matter of expanding the accounting.



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

Trusted Since 1898

The Manila Times



PAGE



UPPER
LOWER



PAGE 1
STORY



BANNER
STORY



EDITORIAL



CARTOON

08-10-23

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

El Niño could imperil Australia's Great Barrier Reef

SYDNEY, Australia: Australia's Great Barrier Reef could deteriorate if warming ocean temperatures spark another mass coral bleaching event later this year, the country's top marine science body said on Wednesday.

Sections of the reef had been showing promising signs of recovery until a bleaching event in 2022 turned swathes of the vibrant coral a sickly, pale white.

The Australian Institute of Marine Science said that, although the reef's condition had stabilized during this year's "relatively mild" summer, it remained in a precarious position.

David Wachenfeld, the institute's research director, said the reef was at "increased risk with climate change driving more frequent and severe bleaching events."

Australia's weather bureau has said it is "likely" an El Niño weather pattern will develop over the country in the coming weeks,

bringing warmer ocean temperatures to the Pacific — and renewing the risk of coral bleaching.

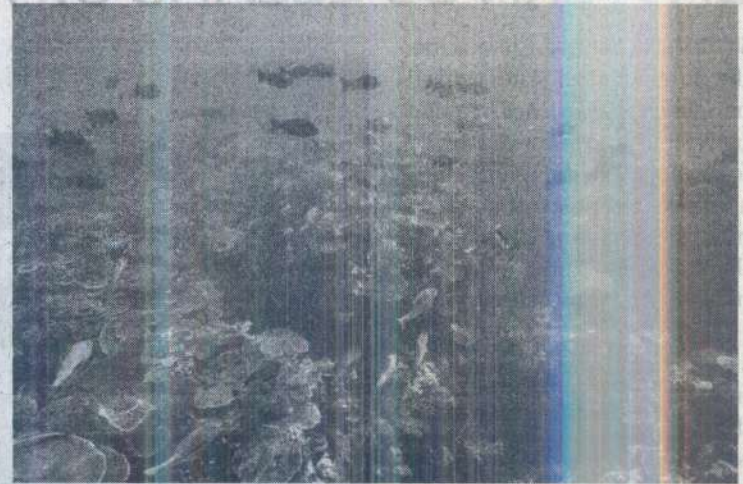
Globally, the average ocean temperature has been topping seasonal heat records regularly since April.

Wachenfeld said the reef was "only one large-scale disturbance away from a rapid reversal of recent recovery."

Australia was given a brief reprieve earlier this year when a team of United Nations experts left the fading wonder off a list of heritage sites considered "in danger."

The reef is one of Australia's premier tourist attractions, and putting it on the in-danger list could substantially tarnish its allure for international visitors.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) considered listing the reef after a damning report in 2021 but held off following intense lobbying from Australia's previous conservative government.



REEF AT RISK A school of fish swim above corals on Moore Reef in Gungahjin Sea Country, off the coast of Queensland state in eastern Australia on Nov. 13, 2022. AP FILE PHOTO

Instead, the agency has set up a monitoring mission within Australia to assess the impact of pollution, fishing, climate change and coral bleaching.

It first raised the alarm about the reef's deterioration in 2010.

Marine heat waves have caused mass coral bleaching on the Great

Barrier Reef in 2016, 2017, 2020 and 2022.

Researcher Mike Emslie said even the most minor bleaching event was enough to "put the brakes" on the reef's recovery.

"This means the reef is still at risk of decline from more frequent disturbances," he added.

AFP



TITLE:

Scientists look for other 'heat' factors

SCIENTISTS are wondering if global warming and El Niño have an accomplice in fueling this summer's record-shattering heat.

The European climate agency Copernicus reported that July was one-third of a degree Celsius (six-tenths of a degree Fahrenheit) hotter than the old record. That's a bump in heat that is so recent and so big, especially in the oceans and even more so in the North Atlantic, that scientists are split on whether something else could be at work.

Scientists agree that by far the biggest cause of the recent extreme warming is climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas that has triggered a long upward trend in temperatures. A natural El Niño, a temporary warming of parts of the Pacific that changes weather worldwide, adds a smaller boost. But some researchers say another factor must be present.

"What we are seeing is more than just El Niño on top of climate change," Copernicus Director Carlo Buontempo said.

One surprising source of added warmth could be cleaner air resulting from new shipping rules. Another possible cause is 165 million tons (150 million metric tons) of water spewed into the atmosphere by a volcano. Both ideas are under investigation.

The cleaner air possibility

Florida State University climate scientist Michael Diamond says shipping is "probably the prime suspect." Maritime shipping has for decades used dirty fuel that gives off particles that reflect sunlight in a process that actually cools the climate and masks some of global warming.

In 2020, international shipping rules took effect that cut as much 80% of those cooling particles, which was a "kind of shock to the system," said atmospheric scientist Tianle Yuan of NASA and the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

Hunga Ha'apai undersea volcano in the South Pacific blew, sending more than 165 million tons of water, which is a heat-trapping greenhouse gas as vapor, according to University of Colorado climate researcher Margot Clyne, who coordinates international computer simulations for climate impacts of the eruption.

The volcano also blasted 550,000 tons (500,000 metric tons) of sulfur dioxide into the upper atmosphere.

The amount of water "is so absolutely crazy, absolutely ginormous," said Holger Vömel, a stratospheric water vapor scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research who published a study on the potential climate effects of the eruption.

Vömel said the water vapor went too high in the atmosphere to have a noticeable effect yet, but that effects could emerge later.

A couple of studies use computer models to show a warming effect from all that water vapor. One study, which has not yet undergone the scientific gold standard of peer review, reported this week that the warming could range from as much as 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) of added warming in some places to 1 degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) of cooling elsewhere.

But NASA atmospheric scientist Paul Newman and former NASA atmospheric scientist Mark Schoeberl said those climate models are missing a key ingredient: the cooling effect of the sulfur.

Normally huge volcanic eruptions, like 1991's Mount Pinatubo, can cool Earth temporarily with sulfur and other particles reflecting sunlight. However, Hunga Tonga spouted an unusually high amount of water and low amount of cooling sulfur.

The studies that showed warming from Hunga Tonga didn't incorporate sulfur cooling, which is hard to do, Schoeberl and Newman said. Schoeberl, now chief scientist at Science and Technology Corp. of Maryland, published a study that calculated a slight overall cooling — 0.04 degrees Celsius (0.07 degrees Fahrenheit).

The sulfur pollution used to interact with low clouds, making them brighter and more reflective, but that's not happening as much now, Yuan said. He tracked changes in clouds that were associated with shipping routes in the North Atlantic and North Pacific, both hot spots this summer.

In those spots, and to a lesser extent globally, Yuan's studies show a possible warming from the loss of sulfur pollution. And the trend is in places where it really can't be explained as easily by El Niño, he said.

"There was a cooling effect that was persistent year after year, and suddenly you remove that," Yuan said.

Diamond calculates a warming of about 0.1 degrees Celsius (0.18 degrees Fahrenheit) by midcentury from shipping regulations. The level of warming could be five to 10 times stronger in high shipping areas such as the North Atlantic.

A separate analysis by climate scientists Zeke Hausfather of Berkeley Earth and Piers Forster of the University of Leeds projected half of Diamond's estimate.

Did the volcano do it?

In January 2022, the Hunga Tonga-

Just because different computer simulations conflict with each other "that doesn't mean science is wrong," University of Colorado's Clyne said. "It just means that we haven't reached a consensus yet. We're still just figuring it out."

Lesser suspects

Lesser suspects in the search include a dearth of African dust, which cools like sulfur pollution, as well as changes in the jet stream and a slowdown in ocean currents.

Some nonscientists have looked at recent solar storms and increased sunspot activity in the sun's 11-year cycle and speculated that Earth's nearest star may be a culprit. For decades, scientists have tracked sunspots and solar storms, and they don't match warming temperatures, Berkeley Earth chief scientist Robert Rohde said.

Solar storms were stronger 20 and 30 years ago, but there is more warming now," he said.

AFP



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

PHILIPPINE DAILY
BALANCED NEWS • FEARLESS VIEW
INQUIRER

B1
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

08-10-23

TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

SMC vows more help in flood-control efforts

BIZ BUZZ



After removing over 2 million tons of solid waste and silt from

the Pasig, Tullahan and San Juan rivers, all three waterways are flowing more freely again thanks to the P3-billion cleanup drive of San Miguel Corp (SMC). Now, the country's largest

conglomerate by revenues and assets wants to help solve the perennial flooding issue in Central Luzon, several areas of which were swamped in recent weeks due to incessant rains.

San Miguel president and CEO Ramon Ang made this commitment to Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga in a recent meeting, where he detailed the progress that the firm has made in its river restoration efforts.

San Miguel has offered to

undertake these efforts for free because it has a big stake in the area in general and Bulacan in particular, namely the MRT 7 project, the Bulacan Bulk Water Supply facility

BIZ BUZZ: SMC VOWS MORE HELP IN FLOOD-CONTROL EFFORTS

FROM B1

and the P740-billion New Manila International Airport.

With the conglomerate's technical expertise and financial muscle, hopefully the floods of the last three weeks will be the last the area will experience for a long time.

—DAXIM L. LUCAS

Stamp of approval

When Danny Yu stepped in as PLDT Inc.'s new chief financial officer (CFO) in May, he was served with a (very) tall order: take the lead in settling the multibillion bud-

get overrun that dragged the company's bottom line in the past year.

The former group controller previously outlined measures to prevent the financial fiasco from happening again, including a stricter project management system to monitor capital expenditure outlays.

And his efforts seem to be paying off as PLDT president Al Panlilio commended the brand new CFO.

"Danny has done a good job fixing a lot of depreciation. Our objective is to bring down

loans eventually," Panlilio told reporters during PLDT's recent financial briefing in Makati.

"We can only do that once we fix more things and see if we can push revenues [and] improve Ebitda (earning before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization)," he added.

—TYRONE JASPER C. PIAD INQ



Email us at [BizBuzz@inquirer.com.ph](mailto: BizBuzz@inquirer.com.ph)

Join our Viber community:

[inq_news/inqbusinesscommunity](https://t.me/inq_news/inqbusinesscommunity)