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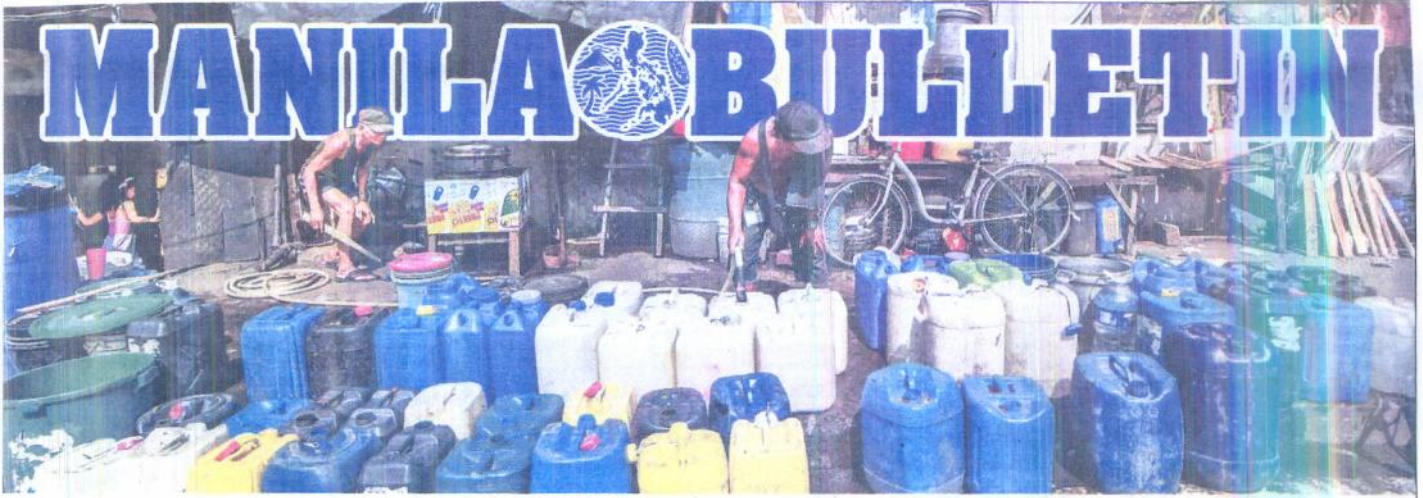
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EACH DROP COUNTS — Local water vendors fill up rows of containers outside their shanty on Mel Lopez Boulevard in Tondo, Manila, on Sunday, July 9, 2023, as residents brace themselves for nine-hour-long water service interruptions starting next week with the water level at Angat Dam dropping to below minimum operating level. (Juan Carlo de Vela)

DENR expands water conservation order

To include residents of NCR, Rizal, Bulacan, Cavite

By JEL SANTOS and HANNAH TORREGOZA

By JEL SANTOS and HANNAH TORREGOZA

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR's) Water Resources Management Office (WRMO) expanded the scope of its water conservation order to include all residents of the National Capital Region (NCR) and nearby provinces of Rizal, Bulacan, and Cavite in its bid to avoid massive water interruptions amid the El Niño phenomenon.

The WRMO directed all barangay officials and condominium and subdivision managers in its Bulletin No. 2 to advise people to save water by reducing activities that require a big amount of water usage, such as watering the yard and car washing.

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DENR expands water conservation order 1◀

"Residents should likewise be encouraged to promote rainwater collection for non-potable use of water, and to reuse laundry and dishwashing wastewater for watering plants," the WRMO said in a statement.

In addition, the WRMO ordered all local government organizations in the NCR to expedite the approval of pipe repairs for water concessionaires Manila Water and Maynilad.

"As we prepare for even drier conditions due to El Niño, it is, more than ever, important to conserve water in order to prevent massive water interruptions later this year," it said.

Spot inspections of office buildings for unwarranted use of water, leaks, and faulty bathroom fixtures will be conducted by WRMO's team, per Bulletin No. 2.

"The team will ensure that WRMO Bulletin Nos. 1 and 2 are posted in offices accordingly," it said.

As such, the WRMO said that together with the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage System (MWSS), it will review the monthly water bills of all government facilities in accordance with MC (Memorandum Circular) 22. Notices on excessive use of water shall be issued, it said.

The public was advised to report leaks along streets to the MWSS (8929-5691, 8922-2969, 0967-3197144, or cch@mwss.gov.ph), or to the water service providers Manila Water (1627) or Maynilad (1626). Leaks within compounds and which may need major repairs may be reported to the DENR-WRMO through wrmo@denr.gov.ph.

WRMO's Bulletin No. 2 was released as the water level in Angat Dam, which supplies potable water to the NCR and nearby provinces, continues to drop.

On July 7, the DENR's WRMO announced that it issued the guidelines for the implementation of water conservation measures by all government offices.

This was in line with Malaca-

ñang's Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 22 signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin last June 7 which ordered all government departments and instrumentalities to strictly implement water conservation measures as part of efforts to prevent a water crisis amid a looming El Niño phenomenon.

In WRMO's Bulletin No. 1, it alerted all government personnel about MC 22 and the water conservation program for public offices and reminded everyone of the "impending El Niño and potential drought conditions this year."

Data showed that, as of July 8, the water level in Angat Dam was at 179.99 meters, which is below the 180-meter minimum operating level.

The DENR noted that when it falls below operating levels, irrigation allocations will be decreased, and supply for the NCR and the provinces of Rizal, Cavite, and Bulacan will be at the bare minimum. As a result, residents may expect decreased water pressures, particularly at night, and probable outages in select MWSS-served locations.

Through MC 22, President Marcos ordered the WRMO to monitor the progress of all agencies towards conserving water through the analysis of their monthly water bills, intending to reduce their consumption by 10 percent.

Resolve water service disruptions

Senator Grace Poe urged state regulator Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to take urgent action on the planned water service interruption of Maynilad Water Services Inc. starting July 12.

Poe, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Public Services, deemed the service disruption, which is bound to affect almost 600,000 customers, as "unacceptable."

"MWSS should not take this matter sitting down as these recurring

service cuts will affect over half a million consumers," Poe said in a statement.

"Dumadalas, humahaba ang oras at dumadami ang apektado dito sa water interruption. Hindi ito katanggap-tanggap (Water interruptions are becoming more frequent, the time is getting longer and the number of people affected is increasing. This is not acceptable)," the senator added.

Maynilad had earlier warned that its customers may experience up to nine hours of nightly water service interruptions starting July 12 due to the decreasing water level of Angat Dam.

But the MWSS should determine whether water utilities like Maynilad are adhering to their obligations based on their franchise, she said.

Instead of being caught flat-footed, she also said Maynilad should have acted urgently in investing and building its capacities to address the increasing demand for potable water.

"Hindi dapat umasa na lang sa lakas ng buhos ng ulan. Pag may water shortage, Angat Dam lagi ang sinisisi (One should not just rely on the strength of the downpour. When there is a water shortage, Angat Dam is always blamed)," Poe said.

The lawmaker also said both the MWSS and Maynilad should inform the public of its long-term and short-term solutions to the water shortage.

Poe argued the authority granted to water concessionaires carries a serious obligation to deliver efficient water service.

At the same time, the senator renewed her push for Senate Bill No. 102, seeking the establishment of a Department of Water Resources to give focus on water use, management and sources.

Under the bill, the proposed water department would be the "primary policy, planning, coordinating, implementing, monitoring and administrative entity of the executive branch of the government."



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Lead water conservation drive,

b'gay execs told

The Water Resources Management Office (WRMO) yesterday directed all barangay officials to lead the water conservation drive in Metro Manila and nearby provinces as the water level of Angat Dam reached critical level.

In its Bulletin No. 2, the WRMO

said that operators of condominiums and subdivisions should also advise residents to conserve water through reduction of activities that consume large amounts of water, such as watering lawns and washing vehicles.

"As we prepare for even drier con-

ditions due to El Niño, it is, more than ever, important to conserve water in order to prevent massive water interruptions later this year," the WRMO said.

The WRMO added that residents should practice rainwater collection for non-potable use of water, and to reuse

laundry and dishwashing wastewater for watering plants.

At the same time, the WRMO directed all local government units in Metro Manila to hasten pipe repairs of water concessionaires Manila Water

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Lead water From Page 1

and Maynilad.

The WRMO has directed all government agencies to conserve water in their respective offices.

In a related development, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) on Sunday said there was a significant drop in the water level of Angat Dam in the last three days, as the decline averaged to more than 0.40 meters daily as it further fell to 179.56 meters or .56 meters below its normal operating capacity.

In a radio interview, PAGASA hydrologist Rosalie Pagulayan noted that a decrease of more than 1.2 meters was recorded at the Angat Dam from July 7 to July 9.

"This is significant for us as Angat Dam is the source of water in Metro Manila, so any negative drop is an indication of possible water interruption," Pagulayan said.

As of 6 a.m. yesterday, the water level of Angat Dam further dropped by 0.43 meters compared to its previous level of 179.99 meters on Saturday.

"For the past three days, the decrease was almost half a meter, 0.44 meters for July 7; 0.46 meters for July 8; and July 9, 0.43 meters, so more than 1.2 meters for the past three days," Pagulayan added.

Meanwhile, Sen. Grace Poe described as unacceptable the plan of Maynilad to cut water supply starting July 12 for up to nine hours nightly, affecting almost 600,000 customers.

Poe, the chairperson of the Senate committee on public services, implored state regulator Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to take urgent action on the planned water service interruption for Maynilad customers.

"Water interruptions are becoming more frequent; the time is getting longer and the number of people affected is increasing. This is unacceptable," Poe said in Filipino.

Maynilad said its customers may experience up to nine hours of nightly water service interruptions starting July 12 due to the decreasing water level of Angat Dam.

- Bella Cariaso, Cecille Suerte Felipe



water
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LET IT RAIN
Motorists drive through a sudden downpour in Quezon City on Sunday, July 9, 2023. The rain was a welcome spell amid warnings of a looming drought in Metro Manila and other provinces. PHOTO BY ISMAEL DE JUAN

Reduce water use, Metro Manilans told

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL AND KRISTINA MARALIT

METRO Manila residents were advised to reduce their water consumption as the water level at the Angat Dam continues to drop and a prolonged El Niño episode approaches.

"As we prepare for even drier conditions due to El Niño, it is more than ever important to conserve water in order to prevent massive water interruptions later this year," the Water Resources Management Office (WRMO) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said on Sunday.

Angat Dam in Norzagaray, Bulacan, is the main water source for Metro Manila.

The WRMO has issued a bulletin to all barangay officials and condominium and subdivision managers in the National Capital Region (NCR) to advise residents to cut down on activities that consume

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WATER FROM A1

Reduce water use, Metro Manilans told

large amounts of water, such as watering lawns and washing vehicles.

It also encouraged the public to promote rainwater collection for non-potable use and to reuse laundry and dishwashing wastewater for watering plants.

The WRMO will also review the monthly water bills of all government facilities together with the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage System (MWSS).

"Notices on excessive use of water shall be issued," WRMO added.

It said that when the level at Angat dips below operating levels, "the allocation for irrigation will be reduced and supply for NCR and the provinces of Rizal, Cavite and Bulacan will be at the minimum volume."

Residents "could expect lower water pressures mainly during the night and possible interruptions in certain areas serviced by MWSS," it said.

As of July 9, the level in Angat

was 179.56 meters, which is below the 180-meter minimum operating level.

On July 7, DENR-WRMO issued Bulletin No. 1, which laid down water conservation guidelines for compliance by all government offices as part of efforts to head off a water crisis.

Over the weekend, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Undersecretary Rosemarie Edillon said the government was already taking measures to cushion the impact of El Niño, especially on food security and the economy.

Edillon said that while the brunt of the dry spell was still expected by the early part of 2024, mitigating efforts were being laid down as early as now.

One measure is the reduction of allocations for irrigation water in favor of residential use.

She said that because the planting season is over, there is no need

for irrigation water.

The frequent rainfall experienced nationwide during the rainy season should be taken advantage of by building small impounding water projects.

"If we are talking about the impact for next year, that really depends on how we're able to prepare this year," Edillon said.

The government sees no significant impact of the El Niño on the economy if appropriate contingency measures are in place, she said.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has organized a "National El Niño Team" to address the impending impact of the dry spell.

NEDA is spearheading the interagency coordination for the development of the national action plan for El Niño, taking into account the climate projections of the state weather bureau in determining interventions for specific regions.



LGUs mobilized to save water

DENR to NCR chiefs, subdivisions: Collect rainwater, reuse wastewater

By Macon Ramos-Araneta and Rio N. Araja

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources has advised village leaders and residents of Metro Manila to reduce activities such as watering lawns and washing cars to avert massive water interruptions in the coming months.

In its Bulletin No. 2, the DENR's Water Resources Management Office (WRMO) told all barangay officials and condominium and subdivision managers to advise residents to conserve water.

The WRMO said residents should also be encouraged to promote rainwater collection for non-potable use of water and to reuse laundry and dishwashing wastewater for watering plants.

The WRMO also directed all local government units in the National Capital Region to speed up the approval of pipe repairs of water concessionaires Manila Water and Maynilad.

"As we prepare for even drier conditions due to El Niño, it is, more than ever, important to conserve water in order to prevent massive water interruptions later this year," the WRMO said.

Earlier, the WRMO issued its first bulletin containing the guidelines for water conservation measures by all government offices, through their building administrators.

In its second bulletin, the WRMO said its team will conduct spot inspections of office buildings for unwarranted use of water, leaks, and faulty bathroom fixtures. The team will ensure that WRMO Bulletin Nos. 1 and 2 are posted in offices accordingly.

The WRMO said that together with

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the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage System (MWSS), it will review the monthly water bills of all government facilities. Notices on excessive use of water will be issued, it added.

The office also advised the public to report leaks along streets to the MWSS (8929-5691, 8922-2969, 0967-3197144, or cch@mwss.gov.ph), or to the water service providers Manila Water (1627) or Maynilad (1626).

WMRO's Bulletin No. 2 was issued as the water level in Angat Dam, which supplies potable water to NCR and nearby provinces, continues to drop amid an impending El Niño dry spell.

As of July 8, 2023, the water level in Angat Dam was at 179.99 meters, which is below the 180-meter minimum operating level.

When below operating levels, the allocation for irrigation will be reduced and supply for NCR and the provinces of Rizal, Cavite, and Bulacan will be at the minimum volume. As such, residents could expect lower water pressures main-

ly during the night, and possible interruptions in certain areas serviced by MWSS.

Under Memorandum Circular 22, President Marcos directed the WRMO to monitor the progress of all agencies towards conserving water through the analysis of their monthly water bills, with the aim of reducing their consumption by 10 percent.

Created last April by virtue of Executive Order No. 22, WRMO is mandated to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water resources in the country.

Senator Grace Poe, meanwhile, said water interruptions which were growing in number and duration were unacceptable.

She said MWSS should take urgent action on the planned water service interruptions affecting almost 600,000 customers of MWSS starting July 12.

"MWSS should not take this matter sitting down as these recurring service cuts will affect over half a million consumers," the chairperson of the Senate committee on public services said.

Maynilad said its customers may experience up to nine hours of nightly water service interruptions starting July 12 due to the decreasing water level of Angat

Dam.

Poe said the MWSS should determine whether water utilities like Maynilad are adhering to their obligations based on their franchise.

"MWSS should be proactive. It can't be just the bearer of bad news to consumers of Maynilad's water cuts," she said.

Poe said Maynilad should have acted urgently in investing and building its supply capacities to avoid being caught flat-footed by increasing demand for potable water.

"They should not be depending only on the strength of rain. If there's a water shortage, Angat Dam has always been blamed," Poe said.

Poe said the MWSS and the water concessionaire must tell the public of its long-term and short-term solutions to the water shortage.

She pointed out that the authority granted to concessionaires to distribute water to consumers carries a serious obligation to deliver efficient service.

She stressed again the need to establish a Department of Water Resources to give focus on water use, management, and sources.

Valenzuela City Rep. Eric Martinez on

Sunday urged the public, relevant authorities, and all stakeholders to take immediate action and prioritize preparedness for the impending water shortage crisis.

He cited the alarmingly low water level in Angat Dam which supplies over 90 percent of Metro Manila's water needs, dipping below the minimum operating level of 180 meters.

This serves as a wake-up call for the urgent need for long-term solutions and comprehensive strategies to mitigate the impact of the El Niño episode and ensure the well-being of our communities, he said.

With no rains in sight and the El Niño scenario in effect, Metro Manila should prepare well, he said, adding that "every drop counts."

"A waterless National Capital Region will hamper economic activity. Our actions should be clear, definitive, and quick," he said.

He cited the necessity for a collective effort to conserve water, implement water-saving practices, and explore alternative sources to ensure sustainability.

"We must face this challenge head-on and strive for long-term solutions that go beyond temporary measures," he said.



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SENATOR TO MWSS: ACT ON WATER SUPPLY CUTS

STORY BY MARLON RAMOS AND JANE BAUTISTA

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System should not just be the 'bearer of bad news,' Sen. Grace Poe said, as she urged the agency to ensure that concessionaires comply with their franchises in providing efficient service.



ALMOST CRITICAL This view of Angat Dam on Sunday shows how low its water level has dropped. On Saturday the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration said water reserve at the dam, which supplies 98 percent of Metro Manila's water, was at 179.99 meters, or some 20 meters above the critical level of 160. —GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

FROM A1

By Marlon Ramos
and Jane Bautista
@Team_Inquirer

Sen. Grace Poe on Sunday called on the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to "be proactive" instead of being the "bearer of bad news for consumers" of Maynilad Water Services Inc. who may face up to nine hours of service interruptions starting this week.

Poe, the Senate committee on public services chair, said the MWSS should "not take this matter sitting down as these recurring service cuts [would] affect over half a million consumers."

"The water interruptions have become more frequent, lasting for longer hours and affecting more people. This is unacceptable," she said in a statement.

Last week, MWSS Division Manager Patrick Dizon said that around 600,000 customers of Maynilad—which services the west concession zone in Metro Manila—may end up without water for up to nine hours starting Wednesday, as Angat Dam's water drops below the minimum operating level of 180 meters.

As of Saturday, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said the dam's water level was at 179.99 meters.

Poe said the MWSS should review the compliance of Maynilad and other water concessionaires with their obligation to provide efficient services as stated under their congressional franchises.

According to her, the water utilities should have looked for other ways to ensure a steady supply instead of blaming Angat Dam's dipping water level for the shortage.

"They should not just rely on rainwater," Poe said. "Maynilad should have acted urgently in investing and building its supply capacities to avoid being caught flat-footed by increasing demand for potable water as what is happening now."

Directive to the public

As part of mitigation measures, the DENR's Water Resources Management Office (WRMO) issued on Sunday a conservation directive to residents in Metro Manila and the provinces of Rizal, Cavite and Bulacan who rely on Angat Dam for their water needs.

The advisory is in line with the WRMO's mandate under Executive Order No. 22 which established the agency to "ensure the availability and sustainable management of the country's water resources."

The WRMO directed barangay officials and condominium


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and subdivision managers to advise households to reduce such activities as watering the lawn and washing vehicles.

Residents were also encouraged to collect rainwater and "recycle water from laundry and dishwashing discharge for watering plants [sic]."

"As we prepare for even drier conditions due to El Niño, it is more than ever important to conserve water in order to prevent massive water interruptions later this year," the WRMO advised the public.

Metro Manila local government units, on the other hand, were told to speed up the approval of pipe repairs to be conducted by water concessionaires Manila Water and Maynilad.

Farmers' concerns

The WRMO said it would also conduct spot inspections of office buildings for "unwarranted use of water, leaks and faulty

bathroom fixtures" on top of a monthly review of all government facilities' water bills.

The announcement about Angat Dam's decreasing water levels has coincided with the onset of the El Niño phenomenon which is expected to strengthen by the last quarter of the year.

The double whammy has alarmed farmers who have expressed concern about the effects of the expected water shortage on their crops.

'Concrete plans'

On Sunday, members of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) called on the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) to inform them about its strategy for dealing with the weather phenomenon.

"We want to know NIA's concrete plans on how to help farmers cope with El Niño and how to ensure the availability of rice and food crops despite

extreme weather events," KMP chair Danilo Ramos said.

He said his group has sought a dialogue with the agency to discuss joint measures to help farmers cope with the expected rainfall shortage and its possible effects on their crops.

On Saturday, an official of the National Economic and Development Authority, assured the public that the government was already taking steps to cushion the adverse effects of El Niño.

"We expect the real brunt of El Niño to happen by the beginning of next year, but our preparations for that should already be starting now," NEDA Undersecretary Rosemarie Edillon said in a press forum.

"On the impact for next year, that really depends on how we're able to prepare this year," she added. —WITH REPORTS FROM KRIXIA SUBINGSUBING AND JEROME ANING INQ



Poe wants water interruptions probed

SEN. Mary Grace Poe on Sunday called on the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to take a close look at the water service interruption scheduled by Maynilad Water Services which could affect almost 600,000 of its customers.

The water concessionaire has announced service interruptions starting

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Poe

July 12. Poe said the MWSS, as state regulator, "should not take this matter sitting down as these recurring service cuts will affect over half a million consumers."

The senator said the interruptions were "becoming frequent" and more customers were being affected.

"This is not acceptable," the chairman of the Senate Committee on Public Services said in a statement in Filipino.

Maynilad said its customers could experience up to nine hours of nightly cutoffs due to the dropping water level at Angat Dam.

Poe said the MWSS should find out if water utilities like Maynilad are complying with the obligations stipulated in their franchise.

"MWSS should be proactive. It can't be just the bearer of bad news to consumers of Maynilad's water cuts," she said.

Poe said Maynilad should have acted urgently in investing and building its supply capacities to

avoid being blindsided by the increasing demand for potable water.

She said concerned agencies should not always rely on heavy rains. "The Angat Dam gets the blame whenever there is water shortage."

Poe said the MWSS and the water concessionaire must inform the public of their long-term and short-term solutions to the water shortage.

She said the authority granted to concessionaires "carries a serious obligation to deliver efficient service."

Poe stressed the need to establish a Department of Water Resources (DWR) to focus on water use, management and sources.

She has filed a bill that seeks to give the proposed DWR the task of "primary policy, planning, coordinating, implementing, monitoring and administrative entity of the executive branch of the government."

Poe said the regulatory framework for water in the country has many overlaps, and economic regulations are provided under different setups, "resulting in instability and fragmentation."

BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO



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Govt urges water conservation as El Niño impacts Angat dam

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

[@jonlmayuga](#)

TO avert extreme water supply shortage, the Water Resource Management Office (WRMO), a unit under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), is pushing for a water conservation measure for the whole Metro Manila and for areas adjacent to the National Capital Region (NCR).

WRMO Bulletin 2 has instructed barangay officials and condominium and subdivision managers to advise residents to conserve water through activities that will reduce the consumption of large amounts of water, such as watering lawns and washing vehicles.

The water conservation advisory was handed down as the water level in Angat Dam, which supplies potable water to the NCR and nearby provinces, continues to drop amid an impending El Niño dry spell.

As of July 8, 2023, the water level in Angat Dam was at 179.99 meters, which is below the 180-meter minimum operating level.

When below operating levels, the allocation for irrigation will be reduced and supply for NCR and the provinces of Rizal, Cavite and Bulacan will be at the minimum volume.

As such, residents could expect lower water pressures mainly during the night and possible interruptions in certain areas serviced by MWSS.

Previous episodes of water supply shortage compel the National Water Resources Board (NWRB), an office under the DENR, to reduce water allocation for Metro Manila, resulting in massive water supply interruptions in the entire NCR and nearby provinces affecting a population of approximately 12 million water consumers.

Under MC 22, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. directed the WRMO to monitor the progress of all agencies towards conserving water through the analysis of their monthly water bills, with the aim of reducing their consumption by 10 percent.

Created last April by virtue of Executive Order 22, the WRMO is mandated to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water resources in the country.

WRMO Bulletin 1 was earlier issued pursuant to MC 22 signed by Marcos mandated all government agencies and instrumentalities to strictly implement water conservation measures to prevent a water crisis amid a looming El Niño phenomenon.

In its latest WRMO Bulletin, the water resource body encouraged residents to practice rainwater collection for non-potable use of water and to reuse laundry and dishwashing wastewater for watering plants.

Meanwhile, the WRMO has directed all local government units in the NCR to fast-track the approval of pipe repairs of water concessionaires Manila Water and Maynilad.

"As we prepare for even drier conditions due to El Niño, it is, more than ever, important to conserve water in order to prevent massive water interruptions later this year," the WRMO Bulletin No 2 said.

The water body shall conduct spot inspections of office buildings for "unwarranted use of water," leaks and faulty bathroom fixtures. The team will ensure that WRMO Bulletin 1 and WRMO Bulletin 2 are posted in offices accordingly.

The WRMO said that together with the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage System (MWSS), it will review the monthly water bills of all government facilities in accordance with MC 22. Notices on excessive use of water shall be issued, it added.

The office also advised the public to report leaks along streets to the MWSS or to water service providers. Leaks within compounds and which may need major repairs may be reported to the DENR-WRMO.



Poe calls 'unacceptable' Maynilad water disruptions

SEN. Grace Poe finds "unacceptable" an announced extended waterless supply starting July 12, and has prodded the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to adopt urgent remedial action to mitigate the impact of the service interruption affecting almost 600,000 Maynilad Water Service customers.

"MWSS should not take this matter sitting down as these recurring service cuts will affect over half a million consumers," said Poe, the chairperson of the Senate Committee on Public Services.

She lamented that the Maynilad water service customers have already noticed that the period of water supply shutdowns were "stretching for hours and getting longer," and she complained this is "unacceptable."

For its part, Maynilad said its customers may experience up to 9 hours of nightly water service interruptions starting July 12, blaming it on "the decreasing water level of Angat Dam."

In turn, the senator suggested that the MWSS determine wheth-



POE

er water utilities like Maynilad are "adhering to their obligations based on their franchise."

"MWSS should be proactive," Poe stressed. "It cannot be just the bearer of bad news to consumers of Maynilad's water cuts."

Moreover, the senator said that Maynilad should have acted urgently in investing and building its supply capacities to "avoid being caught flatfooted by increasing demand for potable water as what is happening now."

The utility should not simply rely

"on the volume of rainfall. When there's a water shortage, they always blame Angat Dam," she noted.

Poe also wants MWSS and the water concessionaire to tell the public of the long-term and short-term solutions to the water shortage.

The senator reminded them that the authority granted to concessionaires to distribute water to consumers carries a serious obligation to deliver efficient service.

In addition, she stressed anew the need to establish a Department of Water Resources to give better focus on water use, management and sources.

As author of the enabling bill, she sought to give the new department the task of primary policy, planning, coordinating, implementing, monitoring and administration of water concerns for the executive branch.

Poe noted that the regulatory framework for water in the country has many overlaps, and economic regulations are provided under different setups, resulting in instability and fragmentation. **Butch Fernandez**



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LETTERS

LOVE THE PHILIPPINES, WARTS AND ALL, AND HELP PROTECT ITS PEOPLE,

NATURAL RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT, ETC.

THE recent ad campaign project of the Philippines' Department of Tourism dubbed as "Love the Philippines," worth a staggering P49 million, is but a challenge to the international community to visit the country as tourists and at the same time LOVE the places, people, pilgrimages, cultural visits, and adventures in the midst of abject poverty, widespread corruption, and tyranny.

Love the Philippines and its people by:

1. Enjoying the sea, the cool waters, and rivers while being reminded of the many sacrifices of the people, especially indigenous communities, to protect and defend the land from an exploitative business

agenda disguised as so-called "development projects."

2. Praising and honoring the forests, mountains, and plains and joining the people in caring and ensuring that the next generation will enjoy these gifts of beauty, splendor, and life-sustaining nature, and similarly pass on such bequests to their children's children. Note that the Philippines is one of Asia's most dangerous countries for environmental activists and land defenders.

3. Visiting museums and historical places, and discovering how these connect with you and your country as well as the family and community you represent or to which you belong. Read, ponder upon,

and consider the heroism and courage of our ancestors who resisted colonial plunder, oppression, and exploitation.

4. Talking and dialoguing with the community of farmers, progressive scientists, indigenous peoples, industrial workers, fisherfolks, and women who are engaged in social change. Listen, learn, and love the hope and struggle that they carry on so that we can live with dignity and pride.

"Love the Philippines" goes beyond a tourism agenda. If the global community loves the Philippines, this is the best time to visit the country. Gaze upon its people and places and the natural beauty of physical resources through the lens of environ-

mental defenders and with the ecological perspective of protecting and defending the rights of the people to ensure sovereignty and patrimony. Listen to the stories of farmers, especially the poor ones, and agricultural workers who tend to the fields and till the land, who work hard from dawn to dusk and marvelously contour the lands and fields, yet their lives remain impoverished. Converse with nationalist historians and patriotic youth and learn with them, especially how they tell and retell of the overwhelming LOVE our heroes and martyrs offered to defend the motherland. You have all the rights and access to stay at plush hotels and condomini-

ums, and you are also invited to listen to the stories of the demolitions of the homes of the urban poor to give way to high-rise buildings and towering edifices.

Do not be discouraged to come here, despite learning that one Larry Gadon who criticized a female journalist with his foul and repugnant words, now sits on the right side of the President as his anti-poverty adviser. It could be a shock to you, as it was to us. His law license was indefinitely suspended last year and now he has been disbarred by the Supreme Court, for his "misogynistic, sexist, abusive and repeated intemperate language" ("Palace keeping Gadon despite SC disbarment," News,

6/29/23). Likewise, you might ask, why still love the Philippines, when the previous administration of Rodrigo Duterte has blood on its hands as thousands were killed in his "war on drugs"? And worse while the current administration has no plans to return to the International Criminal Court that investigates such bloody war on drugs.

Love the Philippines. Stand with its people in pursuing peace, truth, justice, democracy and in protecting the land, seas, rivers, forest, mountains, flora, and fauna.

NORMA P. DOLLAGA,
Kapatirang Simbahan
Para sa Bayan,
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Thousands affected by oil spill file compensation claims—solon

A MEMBER of the House Committee on Ecology said last Sunday that an initial batch of 3,457 victims from the fisheries sector have so far filed a combined P114 million in financial compensation claims for the economic losses they suffered due to the MT Princess Empress oil spill.

Surigao del Sur Rep. Johnny T. Pimentel said through a statement that these estimated figures from the International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds or (IOPC Funds) are "very preliminary."

"Additional claims from the capture fishery alone have probably been submitted by now, but have not been aggregated and reported yet," Pimentel said.

"We understand that the IOPC Funds are now managing the civil liability claims with respect to the oil pollution damage caused by the incident," Pimentel said.

According to Pimentel, the Philippine Coast Guard and other government agencies involved are also expected to file their respective claims for costs incurred in cleanup operations, preventive measures and sea response.

Beach resorts, tour boat operators and other tourism service providers hit by the oil spill are also expected to file claims, added Pimentel.

The 508-ton MT Princess Empress sank on February 28 in the Tablas Strait and discharging up to 5,600 barrels (900,000 liters) of highly toxic industrial fuel oil into the waters of Oriental Mindoro, Batangas, Antique and Palawan.

Fishing and swimming bans were imposed for an extended period in the areas hit hardest by the spill, thus adversely affecting communities dependent on seafood harvesting and tourism activities.

The London-based IOPC Funds pay compensation to those who have suffered pollution damage from spills of persistent oil from tankers in a member state, such as the Philippines.

Claimants may be individuals, partnerships, companies, private organizations, or public bodies, including states or local authorities.

Compensable claims include property damage, costs of cleanup activities at sea and on shore, economic losses by fisherfolk and seafood vendors, or those engaged in mariculture, economic losses in the tourism sector and costs for reinstatement of the environment.

The IOPC Funds work with The Shipowners' Club—a mutual insurance association based in Luxembourg—to settle claims.

Jovee Marie N. Dela Cruz



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P114m in oil spill claims filed

AN INITIAL batch of 3,457 victims from the fisheries sector has so far filed a combined P114 million in financial compensation claims for the economic losses that they suffered due to the MT Princess Empress oil spill, Surigao del Sur Rep. Johnny Pimentel, a member of the House committee on ecology, said on Sunday.

"Those figures from the International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds, or IOPC Funds, are very preliminary. Additional claims from capture fishery alone have probably been submitted by now, but have not been aggregated and reported yet," Pimentel said.

"We understand that the IOPC Funds are now managing the civil liability claims with respect to the oil pollution damaged caused by the incident," the lawmaker added.

Pimentel also said: "The Philippine Coast Guard and other government agencies involved are also ex-

pected to file their respective claims for costs incurred in cleanup operations and preventive measures as well as sea response."

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UBS invests in enhancement of PH Marine Protected Areas

By JAMES A. LOYOLA

UBS Optimus Foundation and Blue finance have forged a new partnership which will see the Foundation make its first marine-focused impact performance loan.

By providing up-front and early-stage blended capital of \$600,000, the Foundation is empowering the Marine Protected Area (MPA) network in the Philippines to implement several blue economy revenue-generating initiatives whilst focusing on protecting and regenerating coral reefs, increasing marine biodiversity, and enhancing livelihoods.

"We are thrilled to partner with Blue finance on our first investment focusing on marine ecosystems. We are strong proponents of their holistic approach, which supports biodiversity and climate mitigation while improving the livelihoods of local communities," UBS Optimus Foundation CEO Maya Ziswiler said.

She added that, "our impact loan to MPA projects in The Philippines showcases the financial viability of what will be a self-sustaining conservation model and highlights the impact potential of Blue finance's approach."

"We believe in nature conservation with sustainable, long-term business models to address the biodiversity crisis in the long term," Blue finance Executive Director and Co-Founder Nicolas Pascal said.

He noted that, "this innovative approach is transformative for MPAs and is setting a precedent for impact investment in marine conservation and economic development globally."

"While more than 60 percent of coral reefs worldwide are under immediate threat, we have shown that MPAs are one of the best tools we have for protecting marine biodiversity. Suc-

cessful MPAs are key contributors to a more climate-change resilient economy," said Pascal.

In 2020, Blue finance created the Blue Alliance NGO with the support of the United Nations, the Global Fund for Coral Reefs (GFCR) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Blue Alliance manages the MPA network and related projects alongside local authorities in North Oriental Mindoro. This island province in the western part of The Philippines encompasses the Verde Island Passage - recognised as a global shore fish biodiversity hotspot, this ocean channel supports more than 2 million people.

The network currently comprises 12 MPAs which together protect some 70km of coastline and 52km² of coastal marine ecosystems, including a UNESCO biosphere reserve. Currently, 30 rangers, community officers and managers are employed to implement core MPA activities.

This funding will allow Blue Alliance to enhance the management and protection of coral reef ecosystems, develop sustainable revenue mechanisms for the MPA network and contribute to the achievement of multiple UNDP Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely 1, 5, 8, 13, 14, and 17.

Blended finance unlocks commercial capital by combining it with philanthropic capital to improve project design and execution, enabling the projects to meet the investor's criteria.

The impact loan will be repaid through tangible revenue streams such as nature-based ecotourism, blue carbon credits from mangrove conservation and small-scale aquaculture projects.



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Global shipping firms tasked to curb air and water pollution

A NEW strategy will set global shipping on an ambitious path towards phasing out greenhouse gas emissions, top UN officials said at the opening of the latest session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) in London last week.



Source: news.un.org

committee tackles concerns such as the control and prevention of ship-source pollution covered by the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), including oil, chemicals carried in bulk, sewage, garbage and such emissions from ships as air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions.

The committee last week adopted a greenhouse gas emissions strategy in response to climate change and threats to biodiversity, following meetings with IMO.

"This is a historic moment in which all of you have a role to play," IMO Secretary-General Kitack Lim said, encouraging states to help roll out the new strategy by forging ambitious targets that will put shipping on a "clear trajectory" to phase out greenhouse gas emissions.

"The 2023 strategy will be your legacy, for which your children and grandchildren will be grateful," he said. "The time for IMO to demonstrate its global leadership is now."

The revised strategy is expected to set out the way forward for possible technical and economic measures to be further developed by IMO.

Underlining the importance of concrete legal measures to protect biodiversity, he recalled that nearly two decades of discussion had led to the landmark Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), adopted at the UN headquarters on June 19, 2023.

Together, with the Kunming-Montreal Global Framework for Biodiversity, adopted last December and ongoing negotiations for a new legally binding instrument to tackle plastic pollution, he said "there is no doubt that your Committee's efforts to ensure a greener, more equitable and more sustainable maritime future is of greater importance than ever before." **UN News**

"Humanity is in dangerous waters on climate," UN Secretary-General António Guterres said in a video message at the start of MEPC's latest session.

"Science tells us it is still possible to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 °C, but it requires an immense and immediate global effort, and shipping, which accounts for almost three per cent

of global emissions, will be vital."

The decisions "you take over the coming days could help us chart a safer course," he said, urging committee members to agree on a strategy forward.

Tasked with addressing environmental issues under the scope of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the



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'NEGLECTIBLE IMPACT' ON MARINE ENVIRONMENT

SCIENTIST: FUKUSHIMA WASTEWATER DISPOSAL WON'T AFFECT PH WATERS

By Jane Bautista
@janebautistaINQ

Japan's plan to dump treated wastewater from its Fukushima nuclear plant into the Pacific Ocean will have a negligible effect on Philippine waters, an environmental science professor has assured the public, especially fisherfolk alarmed by its potential impact on fish and other marine life.

Hernando Bacosa, a professor at the Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology, said any discharged wastewater would have little to no direct impact on the Philippines, since it no longer contained high-risk radionuclides.

"Considering the highly dynamic nature of the sea with continuous dilution, this has likely negligible impact on the marine environment of the

Philippines," the scientist told the Inquirer on Sunday.

Bacosa served as a research scientist at Tohoku University in Japan when the Fukushima nuclear disaster happened following the earthquake and tsunami of 2011, and was involved in research about the consequences of the accident.

He emphasized, however, that Tokyo Electric Power Co. (Tepco), which ran the destroyed Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, should keep monitoring the level of radioactive contents of fish, seafood and water, as the planned disposal would take three to four decades to complete.

In March 2011, a devastating magnitude 9.1 earthquake hit the northeast coast of Japan, damaging the Fukushima nuclear power plant's supply and cooling system.



RADIOACTIVE CONTENT This 2021 photograph shows the storage tanks for treated water at the tsunami-crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. —KYODO VIA REUTERS

To cool the reactors, Tepco has been pumping water into the plant, resulting in the accumulation of an estimated 1.33 million cubic meters of water on the site, which now needs to be disposed.

Tepco, according to Bacosa, has been removing high-risk radioactive materials like cesium and strontium from the contaminated water through an Advanced Liquid Processing System.



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"During the wastewater treatment, these were removed and what was left are Carbon 14 and tritium, the radioactive form of hydrogen. [These two] are very less reactive," he said.

Gradual discharge

Tritium's impact on the marine environment depends on its concentration and the exposure of organisms to it, he noted.

If Tepco would dump 1.33 million cubic tons right away, that would pose an alarming risk to marine organisms like fish or shellfish, Bacosa said.

But with a gradual discharge, he said, the worst-case scenario is that marine organisms and seafood could be exposed to tritium, though still at a "safe level."

Fisherfolk groups, however, have expressed strong opposition to the wastewater disposal, citing potential adverse impact

on their livelihood.

"We demand the Japanese government to stop the plan to dump Fukushima nuclear wastewaters into the Pacific Ocean to save the fishermen's livelihood, to ensure the safety of foods for the public and to uphold sustainability of the Pacific Ocean for the whole world," Bryan Valenzuela of Nagsama-Lamon Bay Fisherfolk Federation said in a recent Pandal forum in Quezon City.

Edlyn Rosales, chair of Pangisda Bataan, pointed out that the Pacific was already facing different types of pollution like plastics or microplastics and nuclear weapon testing.

"This untenable situation will only be worsened by the plan to dispose of the Fukushima radioactive wastewater into the ocean," she said.

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During an online forum organized by Earth Island Institute Philippines, Derek Cabe of the Nuclear Free Bataan Movement cited concerns raised by

scientists regarding issues on the planned disposal, such as "deficiencies in ecosystem impact analysis" and "lack of adequate and accurate scientific data on the safety of the release."

On July 7, the proposed plan

to release the Fukushima water cleared its last regulatory hurdle in Japan as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) concluded the safety review of Japan's plan.

"The IAEA notes the controlled, gradual discharges of

the treated water to the sea, as currently planned and assessed by Tepco, would have a negligible radiological impact on people and the environment," IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said.

The report comes after al-

most two years of comprehensive assessment of the IAEA task force composed of top specialists from the agency, who were advised by internationally recognized nuclear safety experts from 11 countries.

While it recognized that the discharge had raised societal, political and environmental concerns, IAEA said its assessment concluded that Japan's approach was "consistent with relevant international safety standards." INQ



Dumping of Japan nuke plant waste protested

MULTISECTORAL groups protested the plan of the Japanese government to dump nuclear wastewater from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant into the Pacific Ocean.

Members of the United Filipino Consumers and Commuters (UFCC), Makabansa, Water for All Refund Movement (Warm Pilipinas), and youth activists also called on the Philippine government to object to the dumping of treated nuclear wastewater used to cool damaged reactors at Fukushima.

On July 5, the alliance also protested in front of the headquarters of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to express its disappointment over the government's silence on the issue and the possible negative environmental impact that action will cause.

Although Japan claims that the wastewater to be dumped is safe, Nolan Tionco of the UFCC and a spokesman for the protesters said experts have already declared that the move poses an environmental threat that will last generations and could affect ecosystems.

"Anything released into the ocean — in this instance, nuclear wastewater — is not going to stay in one place," said Tionco.

"The nuclear discharges may threaten the largest continuous

body of water on the planet, containing the greatest biomass of organisms, including 70 percent of the world's fisheries. And since the Philippines is one of the countries that is closest to Japan, we may be the ones who will feel the impact," he added.

Tionco cited studies showing that nuclear wastewater and debris released during the initial Fukushima accident were quickly detected nearly 5,500 miles away.

He said radioactive elements in the planned wastewater discharges may once again spread across the ocean since they could be carried by ocean currents.

Tionco noted a lack of adequate and accurate scientific data supporting Japan's assertion of safety.

The three reactors of the Fukushima plant melted down following a 9.1-magnitude quake off the east coast of Japan's main island on March 11, 2011.

More than 12 years later, the cooling process produces more than 130 tons of contaminated water daily.

"The problem is that [Japan is] already moving with a plan that has not yet shown that it will work," said Tionco. "The worst part is, the Philippine government has not taken any stand on the issue that could spell disaster in the future."

FRANCO JOSE C. BAROÑA



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No signs of slowing down for Mayon

By ELLALYN V. RUIZ

Mayon Volcano's ongoing activity still shows no signs of slowing down after a month of increased unrest.

From 5 a.m. on Saturday to 5 a.m. yesterday, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) recorded three lava dome collapse-triggered pyroclastic density currents (PDC) lasting 1.5 to two minutes, one lava front collapse-triggered PDC producing a 500-meter-high light brown plume, 303 rockfall occurrences, and 26 volcanic quakes.

Mayon Volcano's lava flows and collapse debris have been continuing slowly down the Mi-isi and Bonga gullies on the southern and south-eastern flanks, respectively.

Rockfall and PDC occurrences were also observed in these gullies, as well as in Basud gully on the eastern flank of the volcano.

Phivolcs said lava flows have progressed by about 2.8 kilometers and 1.3 kms, respectively, along the Mi-isi and Bonga gullies, while collapsed debris has advanced by four kms on the Basud gully.

It also pointed out that the Mayon Volcano continues to emit

a "moderate" amount of sulfur dioxide, producing a one-km high steam-laden plume that drifted southwest and west-southwest.

Phivolcs has upgraded Mayon Volcano's status twice in the past month, first to Level 2 on June 5 and then to Level 3 on June 8 due to "intensified magmatic unrest."

Mayon Volcano is still in a relatively high level of unrest as of yesterday and that a potentially hazardous eruption within weeks or even days is still possible.

Phivolcs advised communities near the restive volcano to maintain increased vigilance against PDCs, lahars, and sediment-laden stream flows on channels draining the volcano edifice, as heavy rainfall could cause channel-confined lahars and sediment-laden stream flows.

It has strongly advised that entry into the six-kilometer Permanent Danger Zone be strictly prohibited.

Pilots were asked to avoid flying close to the volcano because ash from a sudden eruption may pose hazards to aircraft.

Phivolcs said communities on the southern side of Mayon Volcano may most likely experience ash fall events based on the current wind pattern.



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TO ESTABLISH COMMUNITY FARMS

COTABATO TOWN PREPARES FOR EL NIÑO BY PLANTING DROUGHT-TOLERANT CROPS

KIDAPAWAN CITY—The municipal government of Antipas in Cotabato province has started getting ready to mitigate the El Niño weather phenomenon by planting drought-resistant crops and identifying prime water sources that could be tapped in their areas during a prolonged dry spell.

Antipas Mayor Cristobal Cadungon said the town's 29 villages had submitted their contingency plans to cushion the effect of El Niño, following the state weather bureau's warning that the phenomenon

marked by the abnormal warming in the Pacific Ocean would officially develop in July and would probably persist until the first quarter of 2024.

The mayor said town officials were particularly concerned about where to source the staple food and water in their areas in case the long dry spell would affect harvest and result in shortage of food supply.

He said village officials immediately heeded the local government's proposal to establish a common area in their respective villages to plant crops that

are resilient to drought and intense temperature.

So far, the municipal agriculture office has been distributing camote (sweet potato) and cassava ("kamoteng kahoy") seedlings to be planted in the common area of the barangays to ensure that when other crops fail, people will still have food to eat.

Share water, or else...

He also urged people to make use of all the vacant lots they had to plant resilient crops to ensure there would be

enough food on the table.

The mayor also ordered all barangay chairs to identify water sources, including those owned by private individuals, in their area to ensure that sufficient supply of potable drinking water would still be available if the projected dry spell would lengthen.

"We have plenty of springs in our villages. We will protect it to cushion the effect of the dry spell, especially as water would be very vital during these times," Cadungon said.

He said the local govern-

ment would conduct a dialogue with individuals or entities with privately owned water sources in the community and formally come up with a memorandum of agreement that would allow the local government to tap into their water sources when existing water supply would be exhausted.

Cadungon also warned of possible sanctions against those reluctant to share their privately owned water sources.

"Even if [these wells or springs are] private, the government has the right to use these

when it concerns the welfare of the community," Cadungon said.

He said that far-flung villages usually depend on spring water for drinking while those in the upland villages depend on submersible water pumps to draw water.

Cadungon, however, assured residents there would be enough water for all, adding the municipality had allocated P2 million for the purchase of a water tanker for water rationing in upland villages.

—WILLIAMOR MAGBANUA INQ