

16 August 2023 Wednesday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

OPINION

## COMMONSENSE

MARICHU A. VILLANUEVA

### Agree to disagree-2

Long before President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. (PBBM) ordered the suspension last week of all 22 ongoing reclamation projects, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga previously announced they already started early this year monitoring compliance of reclamation projects around the Manila Bay area.



At a press conference at Malacañang Palace on July 27, Loyzaga first revealed there were ongoing discussions "with at least one party" for possible violations. She did not identify though the party involved, except that the DENR "observed potential non-compliance."

Among the mandates of the DENR is to conduct reviews and issue the environment clearance certificate (ECC) and Area Clearances. At the Aug. 7 dialogue with national and local government officials in Bulacan on the severe flooding in Central Luzon, PBBM mentioned about the suspension of all reclamation projects, except for one that has already undergone review.

Upon clarification with PBBM two days later at Malacañang, the DENR Secretary clarified all 22 reclamation projects were "suspended and under review" by the DENR until further notice. According to Loyzaga, it was the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) and their respective local government units (LGUs) "during the previous administration" that approved all these reclamation projects. The PRA is under the Office of the President. She declined to say if it was PRA during the term of former president Rodrigo Duterte.

In radio interviews one after the other, Atty. Joseph Literal, PRA assistant general manager, confirmed all these reclamation projects were being done under Public-Private Partnership between several LGUs and private contractors. Literal admitted 13 of the 22 reclamation projects are underway within the Manila Bay and the rest extend beyond the confines of the Bay area.

These 13 reclamation projects cover only about 5,000 hectares of the total 200,000 hectares of land around the Manila Bay area, Literal clarified. "It's less than 5 percent. We just want to dispel notions that Manila Bay will be gone," he assuaged the public. No less than PBBM publicly echoed his own observation that "the sea is disappearing" at the famed Manila Bay sunset view.

The PRA executive further explained the other reclamation projects extend to 199,000 hectares from Navotas City to Tanza in Cavite. The rest of the total reclamation projects span across several cities and provinces, including those in Cebu, the PRA executive disclosed. But each and every participating entity, Literal claimed, "scrupulously obtained" their ECC reports, Area Clearances and necessary certifications while adhering to other additional prerequisites.

**Still, all views, whether they agree or disagree, must come to acceptable terms on how to achieve this goal.**

"These rigorous measures have paved the way for official governmental endorsement and the green signal for project commencement," the PRA executive pointed out.

He was obviously trying to parry allegations of corruption that went into the approval of the multibillion-peso contracts for these reclamation projects amid objections by environmental advocate groups and fisherfolk affected in the Manila Bay area. He blamed the cause of the flooding in the areas has been largely due to the existing obstructed drainage systems and sediment-laden Pasig River and connecting waterways.

According to Literal, these ventures required the endorsement and formal authorization from the OP. "President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr. has granted his approval, conditional upon the projects' adherence to government stipulations," Literal cited. "A supplementary set of conditions has been laid out for specific projects - namely those entailing reclamation from the CCP Complex to the United States embassy," Literal added. The CCP Complex refers to the Cultural Center of the Philippines and other buildings situated around the reclamation grounds in Pasay City.

He underscored these mandates apply to contractors involved in reclamation activities along the CCP Complex to the US embassy in Manila. In contrast, he cited, two Pasay rehabilitation projects have secured the green light without additional requisites.

Loyzaga refused to comment on the reclamation project that involved a dredging company of China purportedly "blacklisted" by the US government. The US embassy in Manila raised the red flag on the Chinese dredging company that allegedly built an island in the disputed West Philippine Sea.

"As you know, the proponents of the projects are the LGUs and they do have their own partners, etc. We are not actually able to comment on the choice of contractors or the activities that may have gone on in order for them to engage these contractors. We are here to actually implement environmental laws," Loyzaga pointed out.

But more than the national security risks involved, a little birdie told this corner, the real concern on extending the land reclamation of the Manila Bay area along Roxas Boulevard is far more serious, as this would constrict the evacuation exit plans under the original "The Big One" scenario. "The Big One" refers to the worst-case scenario for Metro Manila should the West Valley Fault move and generate a magnitude 7.2 earthquake.

In the Philippine government evacuation scenario, all civilians, including foreigners, within the surrounding areas will be taken to ships anchored behind the Sofitel Hotel to pick up all evacuees. The evacuation ship is the option on the assumption that all airport facilities have collapsed or were destroyed during "The Big One."

But according to Literal, the reclamation projects were conceived and "designed as distinct islands interlaced with water channels that facilitate the free flow of inland water into Manila Bay." The reclaimed lands, situated 20 to 200 meters from Manila Bay's coastlines, would not infringe upon the mainland, Literal swore.

As envisioned, a strategic metamorphosis of a segment of the Manila Bay will bring about economic prosperity for all.

Still, all views, whether they agree or disagree, must come to acceptable terms on how to achieve this goal.

★



TITLE:

PAGE 14

DATE

## Manila Bay reclamation: Who has the correct facts?

By JEL SANTOS

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Tuesday, Aug. 15, insisted that there are 22 reclamation projects in Manila Bay, not 13 as claimed by the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA). "[There are] 22 [reclamation projects] for

Manila Bay area—that total includes ongoing, those with permits, and those still in the paperwork/permit stage," the DENR said, belying the claim of PRA Assistant General Manager Joseph John M. Literal that there are only 13 reclamation projects in Manila Bay.

"When you talk of Manila Bay, you refer to a huge area from Region 4-A ▶ 4

(Calabarzon), NCR (National Capital Region) and Region 3 (Central Luzon)," it said in a statement.

The environment department clarified that "the subject of the suspension are the 22 [reclamation projects] in the Manila Bay area, and not in the entire Philippines." Literal had said there are 22 reclamation projects nationwide.

The suspension covers 15 projects in NCR and seven in Calabarzon, it added.

In addition, the DENR noted that not all the 22 Manila Bay reclamation projects have permits, Environmental Compliance Certificates (ECCs), and other regulatory requirements.

The DENR had earlier announced that all the 22 reclamation projects in Manila Bay are suspended pending review after a meeting with President Marcos.

On Aug. 13, fisherfolk group Pam-bansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mammalakyaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakyaya) claimed that dredging activities intended for reclamation continue in Cavite.

### BI inspects dredging vessels

Meanwhile, the Bureau of Immigration (BI) said it has inspected 10 dredging vessels engaged in reclamation activities in Manila Bay to find out if foreign nationals involved in the project are compliant with immigration laws.

"So, far we have already inspected 10 vessels already and some of which are fully manned by Filipinos," BI spokesperson Dana Mengote-Sandoval said on Tuesday.

Sandoval said the BI's Bay Service Section and Intelligence Division started conducting the inspections since Aug. 11, with the assistance of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG).

"Inspections will continue in coordination with PCG for logistics," she said.

BI Commissioner Norman Tansingco had the vessels inspected after Marcos ordered the suspension of reclamation activities in Manila Bay. (With a report from Jeffrey G. Damicog)



08-16-23

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

PAGE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

# ONLY 3 MANILA BAY PROJECTS 'ONGOING' PRIOR TO HALT ORDER-DENR

## FROM A2

The President issued his verbal order days after a United States Embassy official expressed concern about a reclamation project in Manila Bay involving a Chinese construction company blacklisted by Washington three years ago.

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

In an interview with the Inquirer last week, US Ambassador MaryKay Carlson said the embassy had raised concerns because of the reclamation project's environmental impact and the damage it could bring to the cultural and heritage appeal of the historic Roxas Boulevard.

Flooding and other envi-

ronmental problems resulting from the project could lead to "potentially losing whole neighborhoods," Carlson said. "We are in that neighborhood we are concerned about."

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

### Church appeal

Meanwhile, the Catholic Church's social advocacy arm, Caritas Philippines, urged President Marcos to suspend all reclamation projects across the country, saying "these projects are not in the best interests of the Filipino people."

"Reclamation projects displace fisherfolks and coastal

urban communities, destroy coastal ecosystems and contribute to food insecurity," Caritas Philippines president and Kidapawan Bishop Jose Bagaforo said in a statement on Tuesday.

"Reclamation is not the solution to the problems of Metro Manila. We need to invest in sustainable development that will benefit all Filipinos, not just a few wealthy individuals," Bagaforo stressed.

Created in 1966 by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines as the "humanitarian, development and advocacy arm of the Catholic Church," Caritas Philippines is mandated to "accompany the poor and marginalized in the just and legitimate struggle for social justice and transformation."

—WITH A REPORT FROM  
DONA Z. PAZZIBUGAN INQ



08-16-23

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

# DENR disputes PRA on reclamation projects

By ROMINA CABRERA

Fifteen reclamation projects in the National Capital Region (NCR) have been affected by President Marcos' order to suspend reclamation in Manila Bay, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said

yesterday.

This is contrary to the report of the Philippine Reclamation Authority, which said that there are 13 approved reclamation projects.

The DENR said the latest figures came from combined data from both the DENR and PRA, but did not ex-

plain the discrepancy.

The department said that out of the 22 projects that have been suspended, only three reclamation projects are currently being implemented.

Data from the DENR showed that there are 15 projects in NCR and seven projects located in Region 4-A.

President Marcos ordered the suspension of all 22 reclamation projects in Manila Bay pending a review of their compliance with environmental regulations and their impacts.

Marcos noted that the shore along Roxas Boulevard could disappear due

Turn to Page 3

## DENR From Page 1

to the projects that were approved during the Duterte administration.

The DENR said that a scientific team, composed of a physical scientist, oceanographers, geologist, climate scientist and social scientist, would be formed to conduct a community impact assessment.

The US embassy earlier expressed concern that the Manila Bay reclamation projects have ties to the China Communications Construction Co. (CCCC), which was blacklisted by Washington due to its role in helping the Chinese military construct and militarize artificial islands in the South China Sea.

The embassy also said the CCCC was flagged by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank for engaging in "fraudulent" business practices.

## Ban reclamation

President Marcos should not only ban the reclamation projects along Manila Bay, but all similar projects nationwide, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines social arm Caritas Philippines said yesterday.

"The suspension of 22 reclamation projects is a welcome development... We call on President Bongbong Marcos to issue an executive order banning all reclamation projects, not only in Manila Bay but across the country," Caritas Philippines president Jose Colin Bagaforo said in a statement.

"We are deeply concerned about the negative impacts of reclamation projects on the environment, the economy and the people. Reclamation projects displace fisherfolks and coastal urban communities, destroy coastal ecosystems and contribute to food insecurity," Bagaforo stressed.

Meanwhile, Bureau of Immigration (BI) spokesperson Dana Sandoval said that as of Aug. 15, they have inspected 10 dredging vessels in Manila Bay.

They found out that not all vessels were manned by foreigners; some reportedly had Filipinos as their crew. But the BI said its data is not yet complete and they are still coordinating with ship agents and getting copies of documents.

Meanwhile, militant fishers' group Pamabansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) has scored the government's allotment of P1.4 billion for the rehabilitation of the Manila Bay.

Pamalakaya chairman Fernando Hicap doubts the DENR, which received the appropriations, can use the funds to rehabilitate Manila Bay effectively and efficiently.

"Over the years, the DENR has been complicit with big corporations involved in reclamation and other forms of conversion in Manila Bay, putting the livelihood and other socio-economic rights of fishers at risk," he said in a statement on Tuesday.

Although the DENR has recently announced the suspension of reclamation projects in Manila Bay, Hicap said they have yet to see it in black and white, adding that they are still witnessing the destructive dredging activities off Cavite for various reclamation projects across the bay. - With Evelyn Macairan, Emmanuel Tupas



# DoLE to assist displaced reclamation workers

BY KRISTINA MARALIT

**T**HE Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE) is ready to assist workers facing displacement with the suspension of reclamation activities in Manila Bay, Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma said Tuesday.

All 22 reclamation projects were suspended following the issuance of a presidential order on August 7.

"I have yet to receive any report that there are affected workers. But in any case, if there are any, we are prepared

to assist them if they are displaced ... in various forms," Laguesma told Malacañang reporters following their sectoral Cabinet meeting.

He added that assistance "could be job facilitation, help them look for jobs in

other companies since we have many contract arrangements with some private organizations."

Workers who would like to directly look for job openings may also visit DoLE's online job portal, philjobnet.gov.ph, to see the list of employment opportunities, the secretary noted.

## 22 suspended projects

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has insisted that the number of suspended reclamation projects in Manila Bay is 22, not 13, as the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) claimed.

A source from the DENR told reporters on Tuesday that the total number of suspended reclamation projects in the Manila Bay area was 22; but not all were in the National Capital Region (Metro Manila, NCR). Some are in Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon).

The Manila Bay area encompasses parts of Region 3 (Central Luzon) and Region 4A (Calabarzon) and is bounded by several provinces, such as Bulacan, Cavite and Bataan, among others.

But PRA Assistant General Manager Joseph Literal said during an interview with CNN Philippines that the 22 reclamation projects the DENR cited were all over the country.

Literal said that there were three projects being implemented now, while 10 were still complying with the documents and other permits from PRA and other government agencies.

He added that the projects were

on the cusp of a transformative redefinition as ambitious reclamation projects emerge as potential catalysts for foreign investments, poised to invigorate economic growth across the Northern and Southern Metro Manila regions.

In the midst of the Philippines' efforts to recover from the disruptive impact of the pandemic, the government is strategically eyeing the conversion of a modest portion of the bay into a powerful driver of recovery aimed at steering clear of an economic downturn, Literal said.

In an interview with radio station DZRH, Literal said that among the ventures, 13 were underway.

Each participating entity has diligently navigated the acquisition of its Environmental Compliance Reports, area clearances and requisite certifications while adhering to additional prerequisites.

The compliance paved the way for official government approval and a resounding green light for initiating the projects.

Literal said that the progression of these endeavors mandates the endorsement and formal authorization of the Office of the President.

He confirmed President Marcos's approval of the projects, subject to their steadfast adherence to the stipulations outlined by the government.

A supplementary set of conditions has been stipulated for specific projects, particularly those encompassing reclamation from the CCP complex to the United States Embassy.

within the NCR, and some areas of Cavite would cover only 5,000 to 6,000 hectares of the bay, which is equivalent to 5 percent of the 199,000-hectare bay area.

"We're saying that we want to dispel notions that Manila Bay will be gone," said Literal.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ordered the suspension of all reclamation activities in the historic water body last week.

But the DENR said the order of the President covers the 22 reclamation projects in Manila Bay located in the NCR and Calabarzon and that it has yet to identify the number of reclamation projects nationwide.

## Economic advancement

Supporters of the reclamation project said that Manila Bay stands

## Blacklisted firms

Addressing concerns surrounding the involvement of "blacklisted" construction companies, Literal said China Communications Construction Co. (CCCC) and its Philippine subsidiaries possess special licenses from the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board.

In response to speculations about potential flooding stemming from reclamation efforts, he categorically dismissed such apprehensions, which were substantiated by comprehensive environmental evaluations.

He clarified that the reclaimed lands, positioned 20 to 200 meters from Manila Bay's coastline, would not threaten the mainland.

**WITH REPORTS FROM  
JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL AND  
FRANCIS EARL CUETO**



08-16-23

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

PAGE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## DOLE ready to assist workers affected by reclamation suspension—Laguesma

**T**HE Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) assured it is ready to provide assistance to workers, who are expected to be affected by the suspension of 22 reclamation projects in Manila Bay.

"As long as there will be workers who will be affected or displaced, we are prepared to help them in various forms," DOLE Secretary Bienvenido E. Laguesma told reporters in an interview with reporters in Malacañang last Tuesday.

He said the aid may include filling up vacancies in DOLE's official job facilitation website, PhilJobnet.

The labor chief said they might also refer the affected workers to their partner firms and business organizations for placement.

As of Tuesday afternoon, Laguesma said they have yet to receive any report of workers, who were displaced amid the suspension the reclamation projects.

Last week, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) announced the suspensions pending the result of their assessment on the soundness of the projects.

It noted that the reclamation activities, which will be found to have violated environmental laws and regulations, might have their respective environmental compliance certificate (ECC) suspended or even canceled.

DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga assured they would give the affected reclamation projects time to implement the necessary corrective measures.

The review of the said projects comes amid concerns these have a negative impact on the environment, which includes worsening flooding in areas near Manila Bay and vulnerability to rising sea water level.

*Samuel P. Medenilla*



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE



NEWS

## Halt order covers 3 'ongoing' projects

The environment department said the President's suspension order covered all 22 reclamation projects in Manila Bay, spanning areas under the jurisdiction of Metro Manila and Cavite province. It said only three of 15 projects in Metro Manila were under an "ongoing work" status prior to the order. The rest were either set for the signing of memorandums of agreement or were still in the application stage. —STORY BY JANE BAUTISTA **A2**

MORE CLARIFICATIONS AFTER MARCOS SUSPENDED RECLAMATIONS

# ONLY 3 MANILA BAY PROJECTS 'ONGOING' PRIOR TO HALT ORDER—DENR

By Jane Bautista  
@janebautistaINQ

President Marcos just last week ordered the suspension of reclamation activities in Manila Bay pending the review of processes that went into the projects' approval and their impact on the environment.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Tuesday said the President's order covered all 22 reclamation projects in Manila Bay—spanning areas under the jurisdiction of Metro Manila and several parts of Cavite province.

The agency also clarified that only three projects in Metro Manila were under an "ongoing work" status, or were being implemented, prior to the suspension order as the rest were either set for the signing

of memorandums of agreement or were still in the application stage. It said not all have environmental permits and other regulatory requirements.

The DENR issued this clarification on Tuesday after Joseph Literal, Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) assistant general manager, said in an interview with CNN Philippines on Monday that the government had approved only 13 reclamation projects in Manila Bay and a total of 22 projects nationwide.

"Not all [the projects] are in the National Capital Region, some are in Region 4-A (Calabarzon or Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon)," the agency said in a Viber message to reporters, adding that only 15 reclamation projects are in Metro Manila while the rest are in Calabarzon.

The DENR did not provide details on the three Metro Manila projects which were being implemented at the time the suspension was announced as the department was still verifying the information with other government agencies.

Data provided by the PRA and published on the government's e-FOI (Electronic Freedom of Information) website in February and May, showed that a total of 52 reclamation projects had been approved around the country, including the 22 projects in the Manila Bay area.

According to the list uploaded in May, two projects have "ongoing reclamation works"—the Pasay Harbor City Project covering 265 hectares and the Pasay 390-Hectare Reclamation Project covering 390 ha.

The proponent of the two projects is the Pasay City govern-

ment while its private partners are Pasay Harbour City Corp. and SM Prime Holdings Inc.

### LGU projects

According to Literal, the PRA has the authority to greenlight the reclamation projects as stated under Executive Order No. 74, signed by former President Rodrigo Duterte.

"We process (and collect) the permits from other government agencies and we evaluate them together with other mandatory requirements [that] we require for the reclamation project," he said, adding that the most important documents are the environmental compliance certificate and the area clearance issued by the DENR.

"The Manila Bay projects are all [public-private partnership] projects of the local government units [LGU] so it's the [concerned]

LGU who [applies] for a reclamation permit for a ... project with the PRA," Literal said.

The project proponents and their private partners are given 24 months to 30 months to comply with all the requirements of PRA, including the conduct of public hearings and of feasibility study for proposed activities.

Records from the PRA showed that the local governments involved in the Manila Bay reclamation projects are the cities of Pasay, Manila, Navotas, Las Piñas and Parañaque in Metro Manila, and the cities of Bacoor and Cavite in Calabarzon.

### Small part

Literal also pointed out that only a small part of the 200-ha Manila Bay area was covered by the approved reclamation projects.

"If you would compare it to the entire size of Manila Bay, which is almost 200,000 hectares ... it's less than 5 percent. We just want to dispel the notion that Manila Bay will disappear," Literal said.

The 22 reclamation projects, including those that are still in the application stage, would cover 6,780 ha of the bay area.

Mr. Marcos had ordered the suspension of these projects, citing problems in implementation and environmental concerns, including severe flooding, raised by different groups.

"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. **A5**





TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

OPINION

## GOTCHA JARIUS BONDOC



### Floods worsen as politicians pocket P836-B budget

Government outlaid P836 billion for flood control, 2017-2023.

Deluges only worsened in those seven years. Filipinos lost lives; jobs, homes, farms, shops, schooling, belongings.

Dishonesty and ineptness taint flood control. In 2019, House Majority Leader Rolando Andaya accused then-budget secretary Ben Diokno of inserting P332 billion for such purpose in three years. Of that, P385 million went to a Bicol town that state engineers said never floods.

The town mayor is stepfather of Diokno's son-in-law. The mayor is a public works contractor; the son-in-law a former stockholder. Diokno denied knowing the mayor.

In 2020, flood controls reached P90 billion; in 2021, P102 billion; in 2022, P129 billion; in 2023, P183 billion.

Flood controls are political dynasts' favorite pork barrel. Lawmakers and local kinsmen divvy up the money via three scams:

- Fake river/lake dredging. Dredgers run only when DPWH officials come to inspect, ex-senator Panfilo Lacson noted.

- Flimsy floodwalls – most overflowed during recent Typhoons Egay and Falcon in Luzon precisely due to no desilting, Public Works Sec. Manuel Bonoan reported.

- Paltry sewers – politicians allow subdivision and irrigation paving without drainage. Ripe palay rot in inundated fields, Bonoan said. Dynasts extract 42-percent kickback, Baguio City Mayor Benjie Magalong bared. They also act as constructors/suppliers, for 15-percent markup.

They defy the 1989 Rainwater Collector and Springs Development Act. The 34-year-old law requires impounding of rainwater in all barangays' lowest portions for use during dry spells. Flood controls are only for re-election showcase. Unmaintained, water pumps conk out when most needed.

In one island town, the mayor abets destructive mining of nickel, chromite, cobalt and iron. Her husband constructed the mining firm's causeway to the port. Mining execs lodge, wine and dine at the mayor's seaside hotel.

In Cavite, another mayor let a food factory fence off a creek. Motorists blame storm floods on the South Luzon Expressway, not the real wrongdoers.

In Bulacan, for three months officials chided dam managers for insufficient farmland water. The other week they attributed floods to dam releases. They also blamed "reclamation" of the New Manila International Airport.

Wrong. NMA is an island separated from Bulacan mainland by five rivers: Maycapiz, Babangad, Bamban Creek, Malad, Meycauayan. San Miguel Corp. isn't reclaiming but restoring foreshores submerged by subsidence and rising Manila Bay levels. River unclogging by Royal Boskalis Westminster NV, the Netherlands' largest dredger, benefits Bulacan's flood-prone basins.

Officials aggravated Bulacan floods. They opposed 17 years ago the basins' drain out to Manila Bay under a Japanese masterplan. Then, they permitted

fishpens that choked waterways.

In Pampanga, North Luzon Expressway traffic snarled for hours due to a mere 12-meter narrow flood stream in San Simon. Officials squabbled over a proposed 200-hectare damming of Candaba swamp. Some also blamed NMIA even if the Lower Pampanga River empties 22 kilometers farther north.

Helicoptering over the swamp, SMC chairman Ramon Ang sighted the culprit. Garbage had stuck up beneath San Simon's Tulaoc Bridge half a kilometer downstream. A DPWH contractor had left undemolished a cement dredger platform. Ang offered to remove the obstruction himself.

Speaking of which, SMC voluntarily cleaned Metro Manila's Tullahan, San Juan and Pasig Rivers. Removed were millions of tons of silt, sludge and solid waste. Cost: P1 billion a year for three years now. Eleven cities benefited: Quezon City, Caloocan, Valenzuela, Malabon, Navotas, San Juan, Mandaluyong, Pasig, Pateros, Taguig, Manila.

Of government flood controls in 253 congressional districts, 82 provinces and 149 cities, only few work. One is Marikina City's, where the river was deepened and widened, and tributaries unclogged. Not thin floodwalls but levees were constructed along the banks. Debris were compacted, reinforced with steel, then concreted into a promenade.

Superstorm Ondoy in 2009 and Typhoon Ulysses in 2020 submerged Provident Village rooftops. Dozens perished. But recent heavy rains and two typhoons passed unnoticed, congratulations to Mayor Marcy Teodoro and Reps. Marjorie Teodoro and Stella Quimbo.

But peril remains. Rizal provincial/municipal officials abet encroachers at mountaintop Marikina Watershed. A dozen picnic resorts divert brooks into swimming pools. Charcoal makers fell trees. A Malacañang-tagged "police narco-general" keeps a mansion-fortress.

Goons maul and drive away Masungi Georeserve park rangers who reforest the slopes against floods. Environment officials forsake Masungi Foundation which predecessors assigned as wildlife protector. Nearby, 15 quarriers led by an ex-DENR chief crush hillsides for gravel.

Pleas of leaders below fall on deaf ears. Cascades threaten Marikina, Rodriguez, San Mateo, Antipolo, Cainta, Pasig, San Juan, Quezon City.

Malacañang budgets P216-billion flood control for 2024. That'll bring the total to P1.052 trillion in eight years.

Congress will grab the pork. In return, like in 2023, it'll grant the President P4.56-billion no-audit confidential/intelligence fund. Plus P50-million CIF to the Dept. of Agriculture.

The VP will again get P500-million CIF. Plus P150 million to the Dept. of Education. Even the environment secretary has CIF: P14 million.

Follow me on Facebook: <https://tinyurl.com/jarius-Bondoc>



STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE

Printed On Demand

# The Manila Times

A11  
PAGE

UPPER  
LOWER

PAGE 1  
STORY

BANNER  
STORY

EDITORIAL

L  
CA.

08-16-23

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

## The wicked problem of flooding in Pampanga and Bulacan

"WE can't keep doing the same things we did before. It doesn't work anymore. We have to think of new things to do. We need to be more attuned to understand the problem of climate change."



URBANISTA  
**DAPHNE  
OSEÑA PAEZ**

a strong and clear message: "The weather is changing. We are not going back to the way it was before. This is climate change. I'm sorry this is bad news." In the Philippines, we have a front row seat to climate change.

This is what President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said in Filipino at the August 7 situation briefing on typhoon-affected areas in Pampanga. We witnessed on live television how the President was adamant about creating long-term and lasting solutions to our constant battle with flooding, erosion, and the impacts of severe storms and prolonged rains. He said seasonal dredging was "temporary and exceedingly expensive."

In an exchange with Pampanga Fourth District Rep. Anna York Bondoc, who opposed former public works secretary Rogelio Singson's proposal of constructing a 200-hectare water impounding area in the Candaba Swamp, the President laid down

In the global environmental discussion, there are many measures that countries may take to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. With the Paris Agreement, 196 countries agreed to limit the temperature increase to an ambitious 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by lowering greenhouse gas emissions. The Philippines has been moving toward a sustainable energy mix. We now allow 100 percent foreign ownership in the renewable energy sector. And in February 2023, President Marcos launched the "Green Lanes for Strategic Investments," which will expedite, streamline,

► PaezA12



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

## ■ PAEZ FROM A11

### Flooding

and automate government approval and registration processes for priority investments, including renewable energy projects.

In communications, it isn't always easy to sell the idea that renewable energy may save the world from "global boiling." Farmers who have lost their harvest in floods and citizens who constantly deal with displacement during the rainy season worry about their livelihood and safety. Renewable energy sources, though a very important move, are not the first thing that comes to mind for Filipinos battling climate change. On a local and national governance level, we need flood control programs, engineering solutions, and a shift in the way we do things like what the President keeps saying. **There are** certainly many things we can do in business and at the household level. Solid waste management is one. Planting trees is another.

I've just finished one semester of studying Strategies of Environmental Management at the University of Toronto. Everything that the President expressed at that tension-filled briefing was very much in keeping with the **global conversation on** climate change. The President knows that the flooding in Central Luzon is a wicked problem — there is no clear solution; each problem is a symptom of another; it is unique; there is no one-shot solution; the situation keeps changing. On short-term, immediate, emergency action, he agreed to continued dredging. But he drove home the need for long-term solutions. Any flood control program may displace farmers and families. We've seen this in some of the greater infrastructure solutions in the West. The Hoover Dam and Glen Canyon Dam in the US have



08-16-23

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

OPINION

**CTALK**  
CITO BELTRAN

**A 'thank you'  
would be nice**



After the high impact attack of president Rodrigo Duterte on the chaos on Boracay Island, it would be safe to say that it has all turned out to be *ningas cogon* or a flash in the pan in terms of fixing the problems of the island.

Figuratively speaking, the main beach has become a real tourist trap in many ways, most especially after the Duterte forces demolished so many structures but did not do a good job of clearing the debris. Time and again you will see tourists tripping over leftover steel bars, hollow block chips and PVC pipes. For all the money the island generates you would think that a wheelchair-, PWD-friendly path could be constructed. But there's none.

Of course, my pet peeve remains to be the Third World quality of internet and mobile connectivity on the island! Forget a scam- and spam-free Philippines since the SIM card registration law has apparently failed to stop criminals, but can the DICT and the DOT at least make sure that tourist destinations such as Boracay etc., has world class LTE-5G signals and internet so we can at least access online reservations!

\* \* \*

E-mail: [utalk2ctalk@gmail.com](mailto:utalk2ctalk@gmail.com)



STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE

Founded Since 1978

# The Manila Times

PAGE

UPPER  
LOWER

PAGE 1  
STORY

BANNER  
STORY

EDITORIAL

L  
CA.

08\*16-23

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

## Arbitration made us vulnerable in Ayungin

WHILE Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo



RIGOBERTO D. TIGLAO

calls the arbitration suit that the Benigno Aquino 3rd administration brought against China in 2001 "a beacon of light," it will mostly like be the graveyard candle for our Ayungin Shoal, which we consider to be within our exclusive economic zone but which China claims to be part of its sovereign territory.

Including the Ayungin issue in the arbitration suit — that China illegally prevented Philippine vessels from delivering supplies to the Marine detachment at the BRP Sierra Madre grounded there — was a big blunder

► TiglaoA11

■ TIGLAO FROM A1

## Arbitration made us vulnerable in Ayungin

It wasn't among the complaints that the Aquino regime listed in the suit when it was filed in January 2013; it was included only after the 2014 incident when Chinese ships drove away the supply vessels to Ayungin carrying construction materials.

Yes, the tribunal agreed that Ayungin was within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone (EEZ) as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos). However, it was totally silent on China's claim of sovereignty over it, that it is part of what the Chinese call their "Nansha" archipelago, with Spratlys being its international appellation and Kalayaan Island Group to us.

What it did rule was that the so-called nine-dash line had no basis under Unclos. But nowhere in China's laws and declarations defining its sovereign territory does it claim that the line is its basis for claiming sovereignty over the Spratlys. The arbitral panel was quite emphatic that its award in no way decided on issues of sovereignty, which are beyond its authority and that of Unclos.

### Delimitation

Unclos is a treaty among 157 nations that took effect in 1994 which defines countries' EEZs and territorial seas (and guidelines for their delimitation for those that overlap). It does not have the authority — no body has — to rule on the validity of a country's claims of sovereignty over a particular area.

How can the US or its allies assist the Philippines in maintaining its presence in Ayungin when an international tribunal, which the Americans even likely influenced, has ruled that the shoal is the subject of a legitimate territorial dispute?

Ironically, it was one of the late Aquino 3rd's American lawyers in the arbitration suit, Philippe Sands, who first conceded — another stupid blunder — during a hearing in November 2015 that the Philippines had already lost the shoal:

"China took de facto control of that feature in May 2013. Chinese marine surveillance vessels, navy warships and fishing administration vessels have surrounded the shoal. They have blocked Philippine vessels, including civilian vessels, from approaching Second Thomas Shoal." (Transcript of hearing, Day 2, page 158).

The tribunal quoted that statement by Aquino 3rd's lawyers in its award but threw out their arguments to rule that China was in violation of the Unclos on two grounds.

### Tribunal

First, the award declared: "The tribunal has reviewed the record identified by the Philippines and is not able to identify a single documented instance in which Chinese government vessels acted to prevent Filipino fishermen from fishing at either Second Thomas Shoal or Mischief Reef. The tribunal considers that the Philippines has not established that China has prevented Filipino



■ Our 'sentinel' at Ayungin Shoal, as described in an October 2013 New York Times article 'A Game of Shark and Winnow.' IMAGE CAPTURE FROM NYT.COM

fishermen from fishing at Mischief Reef or Second Thomas Shoal and that, in this respect, the provisions of the convention concerning fisheries are not implicated." (Award, paragraphs 714 and 715)

Second, and more importantly, the tribunal ruled that Chinese vessels' actions to prevent Philippine government vessels from resupplying the BRP Sierra Madre in May 2014 were "a quintessentially military situation, involving the military forces of one side and a combination of military and paramilitary forces on the other, arrayed in opposition to one another..." (Award, paragraph 1160). It ruled that such military situations in a dispute over territory were beyond its jurisdiction as well as that of the Unclos.

This means we cannot invoke Unclos or the arbitral ruling if the Chinese again undertake similar actions, such as using water cannons and their vessels' maneuvers to drive away our vessels. These actions will certainly be undertaken when China decides to impose a blockade around the BRP Sierra Madre to prevent the delivery of food and water supplies to it, so that our Marines will have no choice but to abandon the decrepit ship.

Sadly, even if the arbitration panel described the Chinese actions as a "quintessentially military situation," we cannot invoke our 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty with the US. It is categorical in declaring that it will come to our aid only if another country undertakes an "armed attack on our territories or vessels." Water cannoning and a vessel's maneuvers to shoo away another are not considered an "armed attack."

### Tomorrow

Since 1999, our foreign affairs officials have just been telling Chinese officials that its grounding was an accident and that it will be towed away "tomorrow."

Even Aquino's foreign affairs secretary Albert del Rosario at the 2013 Asean ministerial meeting in Brunei rather stupidly told his counterpart, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi, that his government just "did not have the money" yet to remove the BRP Sierra Madre, in effect admitting that the Philippines did promise to remove it. The Chinese official told del Rosario that the People's Liberation Army Navy could do it for the Philippines. Del Rosario was dumbstruck and said nothing.

While that "offer" seemed preposterous at the time, that is not such a remote possibility

after President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr.'s statement the other day: "I am not aware of such an agreement [to remove the BRP Sierra Madre]. But if there were, I hereby rescind it as of this moment."

While that may seem like a bold statement, Marcos in effect said goodbye to the BRP Sierra Madre in Ayungin.

China had allowed the Philippines to resupply the eight Marines there since 1999, or for 22 years, on the justification that President Estrada and his successors promised to remove it. But with the current president himself saying he is rescinding that commitment, the dovish faction of the Chinese leadership no longer has an argument for their conciliatory stance toward the Philippines. The hawks will take action to get its Navy to remove the BRP Sierra Madre from Ayungin Shoal, such as imposing a blockade on our supply vessels in order to starve out our eight Marines stationed and get them to abandon the vessel.

Will the US assist us in such a situation? The Chinese have water-cannoned our vessels that they suspected to be carrying construction and repair materials, and their vessels have maneuvered to shoo away our vessels — and my count is that they have done this six times. Did the US assist us? It is sheer delusion to believe the Americans will escort our vessels to supply the BRP Sierra Madre.

### Jingoists

Our conduct of foreign policy is a mess, even disastrous. Jingoists like Jinggoy Estrada, National Security Council official Jonathan Malaya and Coast Guard officer Jay Trariela keep playing to the gallery, the latter even accusing those who do not support his anti-China frenzy as "traitors."

Why, even Senate President Miguel Zubiri is calling for a boycott of Chinese products, ignorant of the fact that the province that will be hit first will be his Bukidnon home province, a main producer of bananas and pineapples, which China has been the biggest importer of.

Don't these guys understand that the Chinese will be reading about all this hate, and their government may just decide to ban travel to the Philippines on the grounds that Filipinos are in mass hysteria against China?

When the Chinese blockade the BRP Sierra Madre, will Marcos tell the Marines there, "Do

not give up an inch!"

But a joke among the Marines in Sierra Madre, reported in the 2013 New York Times article, is that they will likely be "visiting China without a passport." The article also quoted one of the Marines as joking: "They could come take this at any time, and everybody knows it." What would these guys do if that happened? He raised both hands, smiled and said, "Surrender."

### Two jokers

These two jokers who wouldn't be in the Senate if not for their father's popularity claim to refute my column reporting that their father — or their father's administration — did promise to remove the Sierra Madre from Ayungin Shoal.

In fact, the commitment was made to remove two vessels; the other one was the BRP Benguet, which was also deliberately grounded near Scarborough Shoal as a pathetic marker of our sovereignty. BRP Benguet was removed in April 1999.

Yet Jinggoy Estrada said of my report, "I don't know where he got his information." I don't think Jinggoy even read my article (or any newspaper, for that matter). I presented official documents from then-foreign affairs secretary Albert del Rosario and other DFA officials referring to such promises.

In these memos, they did not claim that the Chinese were lying or that there were no such promises. If there were no such promises, they would have screamed so.

### Senile

It is sad that the jingoist Jinggoy has practically described his father as senile, since he claimed Erap "will not remember." I have more faith in his father's mental condition than his son. Let our father speak about it.

Why would Erap make that promise to remove the vessel, other than to temporarily stop the Chinese from protesting wildly? Several Cabinet members told Erap that without that promise, and the actual removal of the BRP Benguet from Scarborough Shoal, Premier Zhu Rongji would likely cancel his official trip to Manila, where he was scheduled November 1999 to address an unprecedented meeting of Asean heads of state and their dialogue partners — China, Japan and Korea.

Other sources in the Erap Cabinet claimed that he and his foreign secretary, Domingo Siazon, had wanted the latter to be appointed UN Secretary General when the incumbent Kofi Annan ended his term in 2001. Any of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council can veto the appointment of the Security General — and making China a friend was therefore a crucial step toward that goal (Annan was given a second term).

Facebook: Rigoberto Tiglao  
X: @bobitiglao  
Archives: www.rigobertotiglao.com  
Book orders: www.rigobertotiglao.com/shop



STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE

Printed Since 1978

# The Manila Times

A10  
PAGE

UPPER  
LOWER

PAGE 1  
STORY

BANNER  
STORY

EDITORIAL

L  
CA.

08-16-23

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

## Editorial

### Take heat warnings seriously

**B**OTH the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) and the Climate Change Commission (CCC) issued warnings to the public this week over the likelihood that many parts of the country will experience increasing heat waves in the coming months as a consequence of the El Niño climate phenomenon. Although recent bouts of rain that have even caused flooding in some areas may make the forecast of higher temperatures and drought seem far-fetched, the warning should be taken seriously.

According to meteorologists, the month of July was the hottest ever recorded on planet Earth, a consequence of climate change and the periodic El Niño, which is characterized by an increase in sea temperatures in the eastern Pacific Ocean. An estimated 4 out of 5 people worldwide have been affected by hotter temperatures this year, and that includes people in much of the Philippines. Again, though the recent wet and thankfully somewhat cooler weather might give a different impression, we have already experienced dangerous heat conditions in some parts of the country this summer. These spells have been mercifully brief, but they may last longer and be more widespread as the El Niño intensifies over the next few months.

In other countries where heat waves have already lasted an extended period of time, there have been thousands of deaths. Some estimates run as high as 20,000, but the exact number is difficult to determine since many deaths are recorded as being from cardiac arrest or organ failure instead of heat stress, which often does not leave any other tell-tale evidence in the body. Anyone at any age is susceptible to heat exhaustion or heat stroke; ironically, many victims are younger and healthier people, since they are the least likely to recognize when they are being overcome by heat.

Even if heat exposure does not lead to immediate death, an advisory from the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) warned that experiencing a core body temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) can lead to organ damage, particularly the kidneys.

A recent study in the US found that agricultural workers are most at risk and are about 35 times more likely to die from heat than other workers; construction workers are about 14 times more likely to suffer heat deaths. The study did emphasize, however, that anyone who is exposed to high outdoor temperatures for an extended period of time is potentially putting themselves in danger.

### How to protect oneself

The cautions provided by Pagasa and the CCC this week are not the first time that government agencies have issued public service advisories about the risks of high temperatures, and we have previously highlighted the issue here as well. The risk of death or serious injury from heat is so serious, however, that the warnings and advice on how to protect oneself ought to be repeated and shared as widely as possible before dangerous temperatures are experienced. One of the lethal characteristics of heat stroke and heat exhaustion is that the early warning signs are often difficult to recognize; often, by the time the victim or those around him realize something is wrong, only swift medical intervention can save his life.

There are a number of simple ways one can avoid becoming a victim, however. In general, limiting one's exposure to high temperatures — a heat index, or "feels like" temperature of 40 C or higher — is the best choice. If staying indoors is not an option, such as for people who must work outdoors, following the "shade-rest-water" rule at least once per hour is vital: Get out of the direct sun, rest from strenuous activity for a short period of time, perhaps 10 to 15 minutes, and drink plenty of water.

Finally, if you begin to feel discomfort such as fatigue or fever-like symptoms, immediately notify someone, go indoors or to a cooler location, and take steps to cool down, such as taking a cool bath or shower or applying wet cloths to the head and neck, as one would do to relieve a fever. Drink plenty of fluids as well; water or sports drinks that are room temperature (not very cold) are recommended, while sugary drinks or soda should be avoided.



STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE

Founded 1898

The Manila Times

A3  
PAGE

UPPER  
LOWER

PAGE 1  
STORY

BANNER  
STORY

EDITORIAL

CA.

08-16-23

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

# PUBLIC WARNED VS 'DANGEROUS' HEAT

THE country will see hotter days ahead, the weather bureau warned as it urged the public to take precautions against the "dangerous" heat.

Dr. Marcelino Villafuerte 2nd, chief of the Climate Impact Assessment and Application, Climatology and Agrometeorology Division

of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), said areas in Luzon, including Metro Manila, will have hotter temperatures.

"In fact, it already started last week, wherein 40 to 43 degrees

Celsius were recorded specifically in various areas in Metro Manila," Villafuerte said.

He said that this falls under the "danger level.

"As much as possible, limit outdoor activities. But if it is really necessary, make sure to cover your

body against the sun and keep hydrated by drinking plenty of water to avoid heat cramps, heat exhaustion and even heat stroke," Villafuerte said.

The Pagasa official said the present condition can be linked to the effect of the El Niño phe-

nomenon, although its strong impact will be felt in the last months of the year and up to the first quarter of 2024.

He said if the heat index hits the 33 to 41 C range, it could lead to heat cramps and heat exhaustion.

**ARLIE O. CALALO**