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DENR, Manila Observatory set up climate change information system

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has partnered with the Manila Observatory to establish a climate change information system.

The partnership aims to establish baseline data on the environment and the country's natural resources that will support the DENR's climate

change information management system (CCIMS) and its other information systems, such as the DENR Control Map and the River Basin Information Management System.

The CCIMS will be made available to the public and can be used by local and national government agencies, the pri-

vate sector, academe and civil society organizations.

The database will include interactive and downloadable maps on climate change scenarios for temperature and rainfall; hydrometeorological hazard spatial data and maps; exposure spatial data and maps; associated vulnerability data and maps; climate risk

maps based on the confluence of hazards, exposures and vulnerabilities; and climate change impact information.

The DENR said that this database will help harmonize the different policies and strategies of the DENR in line with the administration's eight-point socioeconomic agenda. —Romina Cabrera



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Tax on single-use plastics tagged as additional cost, review sought

By ANDREA SAN JUAN

OFFICIALS of two business groups are thumbing-down the plan of the Marcos government to impose a tax on single-use plastics.

"I think they should look at the collection system and the reusing [first] rather than forbidding the [use of] plastic itself," Sergio R. Ortiz-Luis Jr., president of the Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc. (Philexport), told reporters in an interview at an expo last week.

Ortiz-Luis said the administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. should focus first on fixing the plastics-collection system that only cultivates people's throw-away habit instead of teaching new ones like recycling.

However, some of his fellow officials at Philexport, the umbrella

organization of exporters in the country, are keen on supporting the proposed imposition of an excise tax on single-use plastics.

Ortiz-Luis said those that share his views believe the government should promote discipline and educate consumers on reusing plastics to carry out its proper collection.

He added that excise tax would only add costs to households that use single-use plastics, like grocery bags, commonly known as "sando" bags.

For example, some housewives now carry a lot of paper when they go shopping, Ortiz-Luis said noting

that some establishments charge P2 for paper bag.

He added that shifting to the use of paper as packaging material can also be a cause for concern as this means cutting more trees.

"At the end of the day, we think we save ecology because of that" because papers come from wood, the Philexport chief added.

Retailers

ORTIZ-Luis's concerns is shared by the head of the Philippine Retailers Association (PRA) as the tax on single-use plastics will be passed on to retailers who will eventually be passed on to consumers.

"We're the ones who will be hardest hit by that tax on single-use plastic because we're the ones selling; we wrap the goods and give them to the customer," PRA President Roberto S. Claudio said.

Claudio said while imposing excise tax on single-use plastic is a "good environmental direction," the concern today lies in the definition of plastic.

He added that government should also clearly define what "single-use" means.

"So, kung 'yung plastic na gamit ko sa palengke, bumili ako ng isda, pagdating ko sa bahay hinugasan ko 'yung plastic, nilinis ko, at ginamit ko ulit. Hindi na single use 'yun. So dapat wala nang tax 'yun," Claudio explained. [So, after putting fish, say, I bought at the market in a plastic bag and wash and clean the plastic bag when I get home; and use it again, that's no longer single use. So there should be no tax on that.]

The PRA official said clarifying the definition of "single-use" plastic is important to avoid confusion in the implementation of the law once it is enacted.

Under the approved version of House Bill (HB) 4102 (the proposed Single-use Plastics Bags Tax Act), an excise tax of P100 will be imposed for every kilogram of SUPs removed from the place of production or released from custody of the Bureau of Customs.

In November last year, the Lower Chamber approved on third reading a bill that seeks to impose excise tax on SUPs. Lawmakers hailed this move as in line with the directive of the President in his State of the Nation Address last July.



Nickel producers urge gov't to shorten permit process for mining projects

By DANESSA RIVERA

The Philippine Nickel Industry Association (PNIA) – the country's largest umbrella group of nickel producers – is urging the government to establish a one-stop shop that will significantly reduce the permitting process for mining projects to attract more investments in the sector.

The PNIA is discussing with government the proposed implementation of a "one-stop shop" program in the mining sector to fast-track the approval of permits, similar to the Energy Virtual One Stop Shop (EVOSS) System, which streamlined the permitting process of energy generation projects in the country.

The one-stop shop should significantly reduce processing time of permits to just six months to one year from the current five to 10 years, PNIA president Dante Bravo said during the Nickel Initiative 2023 conference yesterday.

"Discussions earlier with (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) Secretary (Maria Antonia) Yulo-Loyza is that we have to involve all agencies, at least identifying this as a priority project. The usual process that has been done for decades will have to be thoroughly reviewed, redesigned to become more efficient and really conducive to foreign investments, quality investments," he said.

Doing so will support government's efforts to grow the mining industry and level up to value-added processing.

"If we can sort of streamline all these processes and avoid duplication and identify that this is really a priority program... It's a lot easier to convince investors, that you can put in a billion-dollar investment here..., you can be assured that over the next 12 to 24 months, your

plan can be finished and start operating," Bravo said.

Ease of doing business was one of the concerns raised during the Nickel Initiative stakeholder roundtable sessions and business conference that the industry group has been organizing since March.

"Mining is capital intensive in every stage of the operation's life cycle from exploration to extraction, to value added processing. While there is a lot of interest in the Philippines as a mining investment destination, we need to convince investors that the business environment is ready and conducive for their entry to the Philippines," Bravo said.

Bravo explained that while the government is focused on attracting investors in value-added processing, industry development efforts should include mining exploration and extraction because a nickel processing plant requires more than 100 million tons of raw nickel ore for at least 20 years to be considered viable.

"We can't push for value added processing without mitigating uncertainties in minerals exploration and extraction because all of these are integral parts of the minerals development value chain. To produce the minimum raw ore input requirement of one processing plant, mining permits need to be approved efficiently and awarded contracts should be allowed to operate with minimal disruption under a predictable, rules-based regulatory regime," Bravo said.

Bravo said other areas for reform that were flagged in the Nickel Initiative consultations include streamlining of fiscal regime, harmonization of national and local mining regulations, and monitoring and evaluation of environmental protection laws.



Nickel industry proposes faster mining approval

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**
@jordeenelagare

The Philippine Nickel Industry Association (PNIA) has proposed the creation of a one-stop shop to fast-track government approval of mining permits to just six months to a maximum of one year from the current processing period of as long as 10 years.

The PNIA also expects the industry to supply at least 40 million wet metric tons (WMT) to as much as 51.65 million WMT of nickel ore to the global market this year, driven by increased demand for this metal, a component for the production of electric vehicle batteries.

The higher end of the forecast suggests a return to the re-

cord-high export level of 51.65 million WMT last seen in 2014.

Last year, the country exported 45.22 million WMT of nickel ore.

PNIA president Dante Bravo said the PNIA, which represents more than 70 percent of the nickel sector, was discussing with the government an initiative similar to the Energy Virtual One-Stop Shop, a platform that streamlines the permitting process for the energy sector.

"The usual process that has been done for decades will have to be thoroughly reviewed, redesigned to become more efficient and really conducive to foreign investments, quality investments," Bravo said in a press conference during the

Nickel Initiative 2023 Business Conference.

He described the current system as "tedious" as the permitting process takes at least five years to as long as 10 years.

Bravo, president of Global Ferronickel Holdings Inc., said, "Mining is capital-intensive in every stage of the operation's life cycle from exploration to extraction, to value added processing. While there is a lot of interest in the Philippines as a mining investment destination, we need to convince investors that the business environment is ready and conducive for their entry to the Philippines."

A nickel processing plant needs to produce more than 100 million MT of raw nickel

ore for at least 20 years to be considered viable, according to the PNIA.

The country only has two operating nickel processing plants and 34 nickel mines.

"We can't push for value-added processing without mitigating uncertainties in minerals exploration and extraction because all of these are integral parts of the minerals development value chain. To produce the minimum raw ore input requirement of one processing plant, mining permits need to be approved efficiently and awarded contracts should be allowed to operate with minimal disruption under a predictable, rules-based regulatory regime," he added. **INQ**



One-stop shop for nickel projects pushed

By BERNIE CAHILES-MAGKILAT

The Philippine Nickel Industry Association (PNIA), the largest grouping of nickel industry players in the country, has called for the establishment of a one-stop-shop program to fast track the approval of permits amid strong investor interest.

PNIA President Atty. Dante R. Bravo has proposed the one-stop-shop program based on the feedback from the Nickel Initiative roundtable sessions and business conference where stakeholders raised predictability in regulations and ease of doing business are critical paths in attracting investments and accelerating the growth of the mining industry.

Bravo said that predictability in government rules and ease of doing business are two common sentiments by industry players. PNIA has been organizing the Nickel Initiative since March this year in support of government's efforts to grow the mining industry and level up to value-added processing.

"Mining is capital intensive in every stage of the operation's life cycle from exploration to extraction, to value added processing. While there is a lot of interest in the Philippines as a mining investment destination, we need to convince investors that the business environment is ready and conducive for their entry to the Philippines," said Bravo.

Bravo said other areas for reform that were flagged in the Nickel Initiative consultations include streamlining of fiscal

regime, harmonization of national and local mining regulations, and monitoring and evaluation of environmental protection laws.

To fast track the approval of mining permits, PNIA is discussing with government if a "one-stop shop" program, similar to what was provided to support growth sectors such as energy, can be implemented in the mining sector.

Bravo explained that while the government is focused on attracting investors in value-added processing, industry development efforts should include mining exploration and extraction because a nickel processing plant requires more than 100 million tons of raw nickel ore for at least 20 years to be considered viable.

"We can't push for value added processing without mitigating uncertainties in minerals exploration and extraction because all of these are integral parts of the minerals development value chain. To produce the minimum raw ore input requirement of one processing plant, mining permits need to be approved efficiently and awarded contracts should be allowed to operate with minimal disruption under a predictable, rules-based regulatory regime," said Bravo.

Apart from discussions on fiscal and regulatory regime, the Nickel Initiative stakeholder roundtable and business conference also looked into enhancing the development impact of the mining sector's environment and social development programs.

Bravo said that it expressed to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau its readiness to support its on-going review of Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programs (EPEP) as well as their Social Development and Management Programs (SDMP).

"Any industry development effort should translate to sustainable economic development particularly to impact communities. PNIA members have consistently demonstrated how we deliver beyond compliance to uphold the welfare of our host communities and to progressively rehabilitate the environment," said Bravo.

In addition, the PNIA has revived its offer to help draft an industry blueprint in collaboration with government to make the country's nickel sector globally competitive and attractive to investors.

PNIA Chairman Antonio L. Co explained that the offer drafts the nickel industry blueprint is part of

PNIA's comprehensive partnership proposal to government that includes the institutionalize private-public dialogue mechanisms, conduct scientific studies on the Philippines' nickel reserves and applications, and explore research and development on viable alternatives in nickel processing technologies.

The need for a nickel industry blueprint regained traction during PNIA's Nickel Initiative Stakeholder Roundtable discussions held in March 2023 where participants, which includes experts and foreign business chambers, drew attention to the Philippines' low standing in the Fraser Institute's 2021 Survey of Mining Companies that measured Policy Perception Index (PPI) or the overall policy attractiveness of 84 jurisdictions covered by the survey.

The Philippines ranked 2nd in Frasers' tally of 10 least attractive jurisdictions based on its 13-point PPI that includes factors such as uncertainty concerning the administration of current regulations,

regulatory duplication, political stability, legal system and taxation regime, uncertainty concerning protected areas and disputed land claims, and quality of geological database among others.

The Philippines is among the top nickel producers in world. In 2022, PNIA nickel mining companies produced over 11 million dry metric tons of nickel. Based on latest MGB data, 33 out of 56 operating metallic mines in the country are nickel mines.

"There's so much interest right now to invest in Philippine mining but investors are also calculating risks because of the huge investment and effort required in mining," he said noting that a value-added processing plant requires at least more than \$1.5 billion investment to guarantee access to more than 100 million tons of raw nickel ore, apart from other requisites such as importation of technology, stable and cost-effective electricity, highly technical skills, and efficient logistics.



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'One-stop-shop' mining permit facility to boost nickel industry growth pushed

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA
@jonlmayuga

THE Philippine Nickel Industry Association (PNIA) is urging the government to fast track the processing of mining permits through a "one-stop-shop" program similar to what was provided to support growth sectors, such as the energy sector.

PNIA President Dante R. Bravo said the common sentiment of members of the PNIA, the largest grouping of nickel industry players in the Philippines, is that the ease of doing business and regulatory pre-

dictability is a "must-have" to attract investments in mining and value-added processing.

At a news conference during the Nickel Initiative held in Makati City on Tuesday, Bravo said they are hopeful of dra-

stically cutting down the gestation period for mining investments by streamlining the mining permit process.

"We are looking at a period of 6 months to 1 year," he said, adding that at present, it takes about 15 to 20 years for a prospective mining project to start producing minerals or commercial production because of the numerous regulatory requirements and processes.

"You see, from the time of application for mineral exploration, it takes 15 to 17 years," he pointed out.

Bravo said policy pronouncements by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. bring renewed hope for a vibrant mining industry.

Marcos earlier made it clear that the country needs the mining industry to achieve its growth target. In his official foreign visits, the President is encouraging busi-

nessmen to invest in the country, assuring of a business-friendly policy environment.

According to Bravo, mining is capital-intensive in every stage of the operation's life cycle from exploration to extraction, to value-added processing.

"While there is a lot of interest in the Philippines as a mining investment destination, we need to convince investors that the business environment is ready and conducive for their entry to the Philippines," said Bravo.

Bravo explained that while the government is focused on attracting investors in value-added processing, industry development efforts should include mining exploration and extraction because a nickel processing plant requires more than 100 million tons of raw nickel ore for at least 20 years to be considered viable.

"We can't push for value-added

processing without mitigating uncertainties in minerals exploration and extraction because all of these are integral parts of the minerals development value chain. To produce the minimum raw ore input requirement of one processing plant, mining permits need to be approved efficiently, and awarded contracts should be allowed to operate with minimal disruption under a predictable, rules-based regulatory regime," said Bravo.

Bravo said other areas for reform that were flagged in the Nickel Initiative consultations include streamlining of fiscal regime, harmonizing national and local mining regulations, and monitoring and evaluating of environmental protection laws.

Meanwhile, apart from discussions on fiscal and regulatory regimes, the Nickel Initiative stakeholder roundtable and

business conference also looked into enhancing the development impact of the mining sector's environment and social development programs.

Bravo said that the group expressed to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau its readiness to support its ongoing review of Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programs (EPEP) as well as their Social Development and Management Programs (SDMP).

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Manila Bay land reclamation projects

Today's topic conveniently belongs to the subject of "stressful economic issues and challenges."

Manila Bay reclamation projects. The recent week included the recent action of the President Marcos to suspend all, but one of the current land reclamation projects that are intended to expand the foreshore land of Manila Bay.

The reason for this action is to examine the environmental impact of the projects. In explaining his action, the President expressed his concern about the potential that the reclamations would cause the narrowing the exit of water

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GERARDO P. SICAT

into the bay during periods of heavy flooding. Public fear has been expressed that the projects could worsen the problem of flooding in the city.

Hopefully, in undertaking this action, the engineering problems of improving water flow in and out of the bay would be solved. The solution can be integrated into the physical planning. In the case of a crowded metropolis such as Manila, that would be an added benefit to the urban transformation.

When ongoing projects are stopped by regulatory orders in midstream of implementation, they could lead to project derailment. If the project gets completely stopped, the invested capital of the project owners goes to waste.

The risk to those who invest in such projects are high. To start, mobilization costs for undertaking such projects involve large commitments of capital. Temporary stoppages can involve big losses in terms of resources used. Prolonged stoppages lead to cost escalations. Inefficient outcomes result as the projects get completed.

This is reminiscent of projects that have cost the nation greatly in terms of lost time in economic development. It can, of course, be said that such projects are only held up until the government finds the proper time and reason to continue them. Disruption in an undertaking creates its own costs and uncertainties. They have an impact on the nation's speed of accomplishments in economic matters.

In fact, the reasons for undertaking actions to stop the project might be justified. Environmental concerns appear to be the main issues that led to the suspension of the ongoing Manila Bay reclamation projects. Such issues should have been fully properly evaluated during the project screening and approval stage.

Projects approved by a different government administration are likely to be more vulnerable to political criticisms, especially if laxity of treatment by previous project evaluators is suspect.

The current Manila Bay land reclamation projects have added new land to the foreshore of Metro Manila. The reclamation projects have been proceeding at a reasonably fast pace since they started during the Duterte administration. In the scheme of things, the development projects would normally suffer no implementation hindrance under a Marcos administration since the two principals are in friendly political alliance.

In fact, it would seem inconceivable that such projects would suffer suspension had they been initiated by the current administration. So, there must be other large reasons for the action of suspension of the land reclamations.

Land reclamation projects are relatively simple engineering undertakings, but in reality, they are prone to major political controversies in the Philippine experience. As such, the prime examples of the Manila Bay and Cebu foreshore land reclamations have suffered from long delays and colorful changes in project proponents. Today, they may appear to be successful reclamation of lands for commercial purposes. But in fact, they represent prominent examples of long delays in completion.

They may appear to be successful examples. When these are stopped by regulatory orders after undertaking a fair amount of work, much capital and resources have been spent on the projects. If prolonged unreasonable stoppage could mean economic disaster for the project owners. In fact, many initiators of the early reclamation projects in the past have failed to finish their projects due to developments they could not foresee.

When large amounts of capital get tied up in forced work stoppages, the project owners are likely to lose their investments. Actively employed capital is productively used capital, but once it is frozen into inactivity, it becomes sunk capital and is laid to waste.

Our experience with land reclamation projects so far. The current commercial and property developments in the area of the Mall of Asia had their origins in the land reclamation projects that trace their origins to the 1960s. The site for the Cultural Center Complex, which includes a big luxury hotel in the late 1960s were land reclamations from the waterfronts of Manila Bay of that early period. Further reclamation efforts expanded toward the Parañaque area until the late 1970s when further reclamations stopped.

The story of the Cebu land reclamation project, which today is also a burgeoning commercial development, has a familiar similarity to the Manila reclamation project. In both areas, politics (both at the national and at the local levels) made it impossible to speed up the early completion of the projects.

(I am less familiar with the experience of land reclamations that expanded the foreshore area of the city of Manila during the American colonial period. What seems to have been accomplished during that period was the expansion of land for parks (the enlarged Luneta park), for public facilities and private buildings, and for roads along the bay area. At that time, the reclamation of land also incorporated waterways and flood control issues). Today, after decades of delayed developments, these new areas of regional growth are contributing to the economic coffers of the local governments concerned and to the growth of the national economy. In addition, the reclaimed lands provide an opportunity to undertake urban renewal projects that could enhance the physical plans of the larger community that forms the city.

It is a fact, however, that in our country, land reclamation projects undertaken during our post-independence period have been economically messy projects. They have experienced delays, stoppages, and long, political recriminations.

Such a result need not have been the case. In our experience, the grand play of political forces have forced long delays in realizing the benefits from the reclamation projects, hampering also our economic development.

For archives of previous Crossroads essays, go to: <https://www.philstar.com/authors/1336383/gerardo-p-sicat>. Visit this site for more information, feedback and commentary: <http://econ.upd.edu.ph/gpsicat/>



SUNKEN VESSEL'S DIESEL CARGO DISSIPATES FASTER IF SPILLED

PCG DISPELS FEAR OF OIL SPILL OFF BATANGAS

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
@dtmallarijrINQ

LUCENA CITY—A Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) official on Tuesday dismissed the concerns raised by environmental groups about an oil spill along the fragile Verde Island Passage (VIP) after a fishing vessel carrying 70,000 liters of diesel oil sank off the coast of Calatagan town in Batangas province, on Sunday.

The fishing vessel, Anita DJ II, was carrying marine diesel oil when it partly sank after encountering strong rains while traveling from Navotas City in Metro Manila to Palawan province. By Tuesday, however, the vessel has completely sank in sea located some 7 nautical miles (around 13 kilometers) from the shoreline of Cape Santiago in Calatagan's Barangay Bagong Silang.

However, Commodore Geronimo Tuvilla, the PCG-Southern Tagalog commander, assured the coastal communities near the half-sunken sea vessel that there was no cause for alarm over the incident.

"The viscosity of marine diesel oil is thinner and dissi-

pates more easily. When stirred by waves and sunlight, it can easily dissipate in the sea," Tuvilla said in a radio interview.

He further explained that marine diesel oil is different from the industrial oil that was carried by MT Princess Empress when it sank in Oriental Mindoro last February and spilled 800,000 liters of its oil cargo in the waters off the province.

The incident involving the Princess Empress, considered the first marine environmental crisis under the Marcos administration, caused a massive oil spill that affected coastal areas in Oriental Mindoro and Batangas, both of which are within the marine corridor of the VIP, as well as those in Antique and Palawan provinces.

Lower threat level

The Princess Empress oil spill in the VIP—a 1.14-million-hectare marine ecosystem located off the coastlines of Batangas, Romblon, Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro and Oriental Mindoro provinces—has disrupted the livelihoods and well-being of thousands of residents, caused billion of

pesos in damage, and harmed the world's most biodiverse marine habitat, according to environment protection advocate Protect VIP.

In the interview, Tuvilla emphasized that the "threat level of marine diesel oil is lower" compared to the thicker industrial fuel oil.

"It will be easy to combat them (marine diesel oil)," he said.

Tuvilla said the PCG had deployed a ship using water cannons to help dissipate the oil sheen on the water in the vicinity of the sunken fishing vessel.

Anita DJ II had 13 crew members on board when it stalled and started to sink, all of whom had been rescued.

Tuvilla reminded mariners to evade passing near the sunken Anita DJ II as the fishing vessel was carrying fish nets and there was still floating debris that could endanger passing sea vessels.

The PCG is still conducting an investigation and has invited the fishing boat owner to shed more light on the cargo of the sunken vessel. INQ



Oil sheen spotted from sunken vessel

By EVELYN MACAIRAN

Authorities are preparing for a possible oil spill in Batangas after an oil sheen was seen coming from a fishing boat that capsized in the waters off Calatagan over the weekend.

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) yesterday said the *F/B Anita DJ II* was loaded with 70,000 liters of marine diesel oil when it sank near Cape Santiago in Barangay Bagong Silang on Sunday.

No one was reported injured in the incident.

All 13 crewmembers of the *Anita DJ II* were rescued by a PCG multipurpose vessel and another fishing boat that happened to be nearby when the incident occurred.

Commodore Geronimo Tuvilla, chief of the PCG-Southern Tagalóg District gave assur-

ance that the incident would not cause massive damage similar to the devastation brought by the sinking of motor tanker *Princess Empress* in Oriental Mindoro.

The *Empress* was carrying 900,000 liters of industrial fuel when it sank in the waters off Naujan town in February.

The incident caused a massive oil spill that affected not only Oriental Mindoro, but also Antique, Batangas and Palawan.

The incident resulted in the filing of charges against several officials and owners of the *Empress* as well as of the Maritime Industry Authority or MARINA.

"We have monitored the oil sheen coming out of the *FB Anita DJ II*. It is easier to combat the oil sheen as marine diesel oil easily dissipates in the waves or when exposed to sunlight... It has low viscosity," Tuvilla said.

"We have deployed a ship and we use water cannons to disperse the marine diesel oil," he said.

Tuvilla said the oil sheen was confined in the middle of the sea and would not reach the shore.

The PCG has alerted local government units, nearby communities and resort owners about the situation.

An incident management team was deployed in the area to assess and better monitor the situation as well as immediately respond if any problem arises.

The owner of the fishing boat, IRMA Fishing, was told to furnish the PCG useful information that could shed light on the incident.

"We have alerted other vessels that a fishing boat had sank so they could avoid passing through the area," Tuvilla said.

The *Anita DJ II* was headed to Palawan from the Navotas port when it figured in the accident.



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Goring exits; Hanna enters Phl today

By ROMINA CABRERA

Typhoon Goring is on its way out, but strong winds and heavy rains continue in some parts of Luzon as Tropical Storm Hanna is forecast to enter the Philippine area of responsibility (PAR).

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) reported that Goring may exit the PAR on Wednesday evening or Thursday morning.

Goring may make landfall in the vicin-

ity of southeastern China on Sunday.

As for Hanna (international name Hai-kui), it is scheduled to enter the PAR on Wednesday morning and could intensify into a typhoon in the next few days.

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Students wade through the flooded Hagonoy West Central School in Hagonoy, Bulacan during the school opening yesterday.

ERNE PEÑAREDONDO

Goring From Page 1

Hanna was monitored 1,669 kilometers east of extreme Northern Luzon, moving northwestward, and will remain far from the Philippine landmass.

Still, it may intensify into typhoon category within the PAR and may enhance the southwest monsoon starting today or tomorrow. The southwest monsoon will bring occasional rains over the western portions of Central Luzon, Southern Luzon and the Visayas in the next few days.

Evacuations

A total of 19,370 families or 63,565 individuals in seven regions across the country have been affected by the southwest monsoon enhanced by Goring.

Temporarily seeking shelter are 4,049 families or 14,856 individuals around 154 evacuation centers.

The National Disaster Risk Re-

duction Management Council said affected areas include the Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Western Visayas and the Cordillera Administrative Region.

No deaths or injuries have been reported.

Estimated infrastructure damage stands at P41.175 million, mostly in Cagayan Valley, Mimaropa and the Cordillera.

The government has provided close to P1 million worth of assistance to affected families, including food packs, hygiene kits, ready-to-eat meals, financial assistance and other necessities.

As of noon yesterday, nine national road sections are impassable in Regions 1, 2 and 6, as well as the Cordillera Administrative Region due to Goring, according to the Department of Public Works and Highways. — With Rudy Santos, Evelyn Macairan, Ed Amoroso, Michael Punongbayan, Jose Rodel Clapano



'WISFUL THINKING'

LAWMAKERS: HOUSING PROGRAM TOO COSTLY FOR GOV'T, POOR

By Julie M. Aurelio
@JMAurelioINQ

The government's socialized housing program is both out of reach for poor Filipinos living on minimum wage and too costly for the government to subsidize.

This came to light during the House appropriations panel's hearing on Tuesday on the proposed funding for the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD).

The DHSUD is seeking P5.404 billion for its 2024 budget, of which P1.5 billion will go to interest payments for socialized housing units under the Pambansang Pabahay Para sa Pilipino (4PH) program.

Launched in September 2022, the 4PH program targets at least six million families as beneficiaries in building one million housing units every year nationwide, with lease rights extending up to 100 years.

'Far-fetched'

But House Deputy Minority Leader Rep. France Castro said the P1.5 billion meant to subsidize interest payments for 50,000 housing units was too small.

She said that if the P1.5 billion were to cover one million housing units, it would mean a subsidy of P1,500 per unit.

"I think the target of one million houses a year is wishful thinking," Castro said, adding that with each housing unit costing around P1.2 million to



SHELTER PROJECT President Marcos and other government officials inspect a scale model for a government housing project in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga, on July 3. —PNA PHOTO

P1.4 million, this would be too expensive for Filipino workers earning minimum wage.

Housing Secretary Jose Rizalino Acuzar said a beneficiary's monthly amortization for 30 years would range from P3,500 to P4,500. But with the interest subsidized by the government, this may go down to P2,000 a month, he said.

The 4PH program proposes an interest rate of 6 percent for amortization, with 5 percent to be shouldered by the government and 1 percent by the beneficiary.

But Castro maintained that "it's a far-fetched dream for the poor to afford P3,500 monthly payments if they are making only P610 a day or the minimum wage. The poor cannot afford your proposal." **A5**

FROM A2

She also expressed doubt that the DHSUD could meet its target of one million housing units a year to address the country's housing backlog.

'Hefty' subsidy

Marikina City Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo, House appropriations panel vice chair, said the P1.5-billion subsidy for interest would end up too expensive for the government to shoulder.

"That P1.5 billion is hefty, it's for 50,000 houses. And if you add 50,000 houses every year, you keep on adding to interest subsidies," she said.

According to Housing Undersecretary Roberto Juanchito Dispo, the estimated interest subsidy for one million housing units is P36 billion a year.

"We are having a hard time with that computation of P36 billion, then after another year P36 billion, then if we reach three million housing units, that's P100 billion in subsidies. So we will study our options on that," Acuzar said.

Dispo said the agency was studying how long the government could sustain its subsidies for the interest payments. —WITH A REPORT

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Goring exits; Hanna enters Phl today

By ROMINA CABRERA

Typhoon Goring is on its way out, but strong winds and heavy rains continue in some parts of Luzon as Tropical Storm Hanna is forecast to enter the Philippine area of responsibility (PAR).

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) reported that Goring may exit the PAR on Wednesday evening or Thursday morning.

Goring may make landfall in the vicin-

ity of southeastern China on Sunday.

As for Hanna (international name Hai-kui), it is scheduled to enter the PAR on Wednesday morning and could intensify into a typhoon in the next few days.

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Students wade through the flooded Hagonoy West Central School in Hagonoy, Bulacan during the school opening yesterday.

ERNIE PEÑAREDONDO

Goring From Page 1

Hanna was monitored 1,669 kilometers east of extreme Northern Luzon, moving northwestward, and will remain far from the Philippine landmass.

Still, it may intensify into typhoon category within the PAR and may enhance the southwest monsoon starting today or tomorrow. The southwest monsoon will bring occasional rains over the western portions of Central Luzon, Southern Luzon and the Visayas in the next few days.

Evacuations

A total of 19,370 families or 63,565 individuals in seven regions across the country have been affected by the southwest monsoon enhanced by Goring.

Temporarily seeking shelter are 4,049 families or 14,856 individuals around 154 evacuation centers.

The National Disaster Risk Re-

duction Management Council said affected areas include the Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Western Visayas and the Cordillera Administrative Region.

No deaths or injuries have been reported.

Estimated infrastructure damage stands at P41.175 million, mostly in Cagayan Valley, Mimaropa and the Cordillera.

The government has provided close to P1 million worth of assistance to affected families, including food packs, hygiene kits, ready-to-eat meals, financial assistance and other necessities.

As of noon yesterday, nine national road sections are impassable in Regions 1, 2 and 6, as well as the Cordillera Administrative Region due to Goring, according to the Department of Public Works and Highways. — With Rudy Santos, Evelyn Macairan, Ed Amoroso, Michael Punongbayan, Jose Rodel Clapano



Typhoon Goring slightly intensifies; signal No. 4 up

By ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) raised Tropical Cyclone Wind Signal No. 4 over the northeastern portion of the Babuyan Islands, as typhoon Goring (international name: Saola) intensi-

fied slightly on Tuesday afternoon, Aug. 29.

Signal No. 3 was also hoisted over the southern portion of Batanes and the rest of Babuyan Islands.

The northeastern portion of mainland Cagayan, the rest of Batanes, and the northern portions of Ilocos Norte and Apayao were ► **5**

Typhoon Goring slightly intensifies; signal No. 4 up ◀

placed under Signal No. 2, while the northern and eastern portion of Isabela, the rest of Ilocos Norte, the rest of Cagayan, the rest of Apayao, and the northern portions of Abra and Kalinga were under Signal No. 1.

In its 5 p.m. bulletin, PAGASA said Goring has maximum sustained winds of 165 kilometers per hour (kph) near the center and gusts of up to 205 kph.

It is currently moving west-northwestward at 10 kph, and was last spotted 165 kilometers east of Calayan, Cagayan.

Landfall, signal No. 5 possible

PAGASA said Goring will cross the Luzon Strait as it moves northwestward or west-northwestward from Tuesday until it leaves the Philippine area of responsibility (PAR) on Wednesday evening or Thursday morning, Aug. 30 or 31.

The typhoon may pass very close or make landfall in the vicinity of Babuyan Islands between Tuesday evening and early Wednesday morning, Aug. 30, it pointed out.

However, a slight northward shift in the track forecast may bring the eye and eyewall region of Goring to the southern portion of Batanes, it added.

The highest possible warning that may be hoisted by PAGASA over extreme Northern Luzon is Signal No. 5.

Heavy rains to persist

Until Wednesday afternoon, Goring may continue to bring intense rains (100-200 millimeters) to the Babuyan Islands, while heavy rains (50-100 millimeters) may prevail over Batanes, Ilocos Norte, the northern portions of Abra and Apayao, and the northern and eastern portions of mainland Cagayan.

From Wednesday afternoon to Thursday afternoon, Aug. 31, Batanes and Babuyan Islands may experience torrential rains (more than 200 millimeters), while the northern portion of Ilocos Norte and the northwestern portion of Cagayan may receive intense rains.

Heavy rains may also affect Apayao, Abra, the northern portion of Ilocos Sur, northeastern portion of mainland Cagayan, and the rest of Ilocos Norte.

The southwest monsoon, or "habagat" enhanced by Goring may also bring heavy rains to Occidental Mindoro, Zambales, Bataan, Cavite, Batangas, the northern portion of Palawan, including Calamian and Cuyo Islands, Antique, the southwestern portion of Iloilo, and the northwestern portion of Aklan on Tuesday.

By Wednesday, heavy monsoon rains may prevail over Occidental Mindoro, Zambales, Bataan, and northern portion of Palawan, including Calamian and Cuyo Islands

By Thursday, heavy rains may affect Zambales, Bataan, Occidental Mindoro, Metro Manila, Rizal, Bulacan, Cavite, Batangas, and Pangasinan.