

11 AUGUST 2022, THURSDAY



# NEWS ALERTS

# NEWS CLIPPINGS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE





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## DILG chief welcomes plans to create DWR

THE Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) welcomed the pronouncement of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. to create an agency to solely focus on "water resources management and preservation" as this will make sure that clean and potable drinking water will be made available to all Filipinos even those in faraway barangays.

Abalos said the planned creation of the Department of Water Resources (DWR) "will ensure the availability of reliable and potable water supply, especially in 842 municipalities all over the country that still suffers from intermittent water supply services and lack of proper sanitation."

Abalos said the new department will tackle the interconnected problems of lack of autonomy; lack of technical, financial, and managerial capacities; and zero cost recovery which are mostly seen in poorly managed LGU-run utilities.





# Editorial

## A Department of Water is critical for the nation

**T**HIS week, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) hosted the Asia Water Forum 2022, a three-day virtual event that examined the challenges, prospects and opportunities for water security and development throughout the region. It is thus a good time to revisit one of the most disappointing failures of the previous Congress, the lack of action on the creation of the critically needed Department of Water Resources (DWR).

The failure was not for lack of an enthusiastic start. In 2019, representatives filed 35 separate bills that would create the DWR, resulting in a consolidated bill — House Bill (HB) 4944, authored by Albay Second District Rep. Jose Ma. Clemente "Joey" Salceda — that was approved by the House committees on government reorganization and public works and highways in November 2019. Similar measures were introduced and sent to committees in the Senate as well, but that was as far as the effort went. The 18th Congress ended with no DWR being born, obliging legislators to go back to square one and reintroduce the measures.

Fortunately, several members of both the House and Senate have expressed the intention to do just that, and we hope that their colleagues will treat the matter with the urgency it deserves this time.

Currently, water resources in the Philippines are governed by a scattershot, disorganized framework; there are at least 39 different agencies involved, with much competition for funding and jurisdiction. This stands in stark and uncomplimentary contrast to the examples of just about every other organized country on earth, where water management is accorded ministerial status; either through a stand-alone, dedicated department, or through concentrating regulatory authority within another relevant department, such as the Department of the Interior in the US, or other countries' public works departments.

According to the terms of the aborted HB 4944, the number of agencies dealing with water policy and management would be reduced to just two, the new DWR, and the National Water Resources Board (NWRB), which is primarily responsible for allocation of water resources and would continue in its current form. At least 10 other agencies would either be transferred to the new department, or have their functions absorbed by it, including the River Basin Control Office; the Manila Bay Coordinating Office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR); the flood management planning and sediment functions of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH); the water supply sanitation unit of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG); the water quality management section of the Environmental Management Bureau of the DENR; the Metro Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS); the Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA); the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA); and the National Irrigation Administration (NIA).

There were a couple of things about the proposed DWR under HB 4944 that were appealing. First and most importantly, the new department would greatly streamline management of the critical water sector. Philippine governing style has always favored inefficiency, creating an endless number of separate agencies to handle similar activities, multiplying budgets and creating unnecessary overlapping jobs. Streamlining this — which, significantly, would be clearly within the Marcos administration's "rightsizing" objectives, would reduce costs and improve performance. The proposed DWR could also help to improve regulation of privatized water infrastructure, since resources among different areas of responsibility could be shared and indirect impacts quickly identified.

The recent Asia Water Forum, however, revealed one key consideration that should be made part of any bill reintroducing the DWR. There is a close and inseparable relationship between water, energy and food production, such that any development in one should take into account the impact of the other two. Here in the Philippines, for example, energy and agriculture combined account for just over 91 percent of water demand; conversely, water management accounts for between 2 percent and 3 percent of the country's electricity demand. Thus, one improvement that we would recommend is that the organizational structure of a new proposed DWR should have close cooperation with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Energy built into it, in whatever manner is deemed most practical.





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## EDITORIAL

# Flood uncontrolled

Solving a problem starts with identifying and acknowledging its cause. In the past days, agencies have engaged in finger-pointing and shielding a pet project of the previous administration from criticism over the massive floods that have paralyzed parts of Manila.

While the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority denied that the dolomite beach along Manila's Baywalk area was to blame, the Department of Public Works and Highways admitted that the artificial beach project "partly" caused the flooding that was so deep motorists refused to drive their vehicles through the water, bringing traffic to a standstill.

Last Friday, the western portion of Manila turned into a massive parking lot during the evening rush hour. This was after monsoon-induced continuous rain that began Thursday, but which weather forecasters said was not heavy enough to warrant the issuance of color-coded rainfall and flood alerts. A similar problem, although on a lesser scale, was again experienced earlier this week.

The MMDA is in charge of internal drainage in Metro Manila, but it pointed to three unfinished pumping stations and a pipeline being constructed by the DPWH as the cause of the flooding that took hours to

subside.

The DPWH, for its part, explained that the project is taking longer to finish because the Department of Environment and Natural Resources required the extension of pipes by another 300 meters along with enhanced pumping capacity to ensure that dirty water does not soil the dolomite beach, a project of the DENR.

Completion of the drainage project is targeted in the middle or end of September, according to the DPWH. In the meantime, instead of floodwaters draining directly into Manila Bay, the water is diverted to Pasig River through the Balete pumping station.

Does this mean the public will have to put up for at least another month with torrential flooding each time there is a heavy downpour? The pandemic lockdowns ended last year. Why weren't mitigation measures put in place before the onset of the monsoon and typhoon season? Essential public works projects could be exempted from the election ban.

The MMDA says a mobile pump may be temporarily used to allow floodwaters to discharge directly into Manila Bay without passing through the dolomite beach. So at least there's a glimmer of a solution. The government must get to work on it quickly.





## Gravel and grumbling

ONE of the noteworthy projects — and not in a good way — of the late-stage Duterte administration was the installation, at a cost of well over P150 million and counting, of an artificial beach made of dolomite gravel along a stretch of Manila's Baywalk parallel to Roxas Boulevard. The dolomite beach, which has the appearance and texture of cat litter, was roundly criticized at the time for a number of reasons, some of which were clearly valid. The Duterte administration, for its part, defended the beach as illustrative of its larger Manila Bay rehabilitation efforts, and as being "good for the people's mental health."

My own impression was that a purely aesthetic upgrade is not necessarily a bad thing, but that the timing of the investment in it was irresponsible; at the time, the administration was already pleading poverty with respect to carrying out pandemic response measures. It also seemed that the government may have underestimated how much the beach would actually cost. A bit of research into beach engineering indicated that creating one is not that difficult, but that keeping it intact and in place requires expensive continuous effort. For all that, however, the beach project seemed largely harmless; a bit dubious, perhaps, but probably not likely to cause any real harm.

Unfortunately, that assessment was apparently wrong. Last Friday evening, the city was subjected to a couple of hours of heavy rain. This caused spot flooding in a number of areas, which is not an unusual occurrence. What was unusual, however, was the heavy flooding in Manila on the major streets running roughly parallel to the dolomite beach — Roxas Boulevard and Taft Avenue — and their cross-streets between Kalaw Avenue and Quirino Avenue. This area is not immune to occasional



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street flooding, but the flooding last Friday was excessive, more typical of a strong tropical storm than just average summer monsoon rains.

Despite the flood and its resulting disruption being a popular topic of conversation in conventional and social media, nobody from the government had anything to say about it until Tuesday, when the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) released a statement blaming the construction of the dolomite beach for the deluge. Or more specifically, the failure of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to complete three pumping stations that would divert all that water to a treatment facility before discharging it into the bay. With those unavailable, the only outlet for the flood water was a pumping station that discharges into the Pasig River, which couldn't handle the volume filling the streets.

That led to a lot of "I told you so's" being expressed on social media; it seemed that most people's worries that the dolomite beach was not just unnecessary but potentially harmful had been confirmed. The MMDA, however, issued a follow-up statement a few hours after the first to partly walk back their earlier statement; the beach had nothing to do with the flooding, the MMDA said, only the missing pumping stations.

Not many people are buying the revised explanation, and they shouldn't. The dolomite beach is the cause of the flooding. The realignment of the stormwater pumping stations, as a component project of the larger Manila Bay rehabilitation, would have

been done at some point, beach or no beach. If the beach were not there, however, those three stations would have been built while the existing drainage system — albeit one in serious need of an upgrade — was still functioning, thus minimizing, if not eliminating, the flooding problem. Installing the beach which has no drainage function, as most of it has a concrete base, anyway — undid the old system, and left no drainage at all in that area until the new system is completed. The DPWH, whose priorities and sense of urgency over the past three years seem to have been limited to "projects that will make (now former) Secretary Mark Villar look good for his Senate campaign," dragged its heels and didn't coordinate with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on the beach project, leading to the current mess.

There should be consequences for this, but, of course, there won't be; overlooking or even rewarding bad faith is the rule rather than the exception in government here.

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The interpersonal drama that has erupted over the leadership of the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) is an embarrassment. It is not a good look for potential or existing investors, and something President Bongbong Marcos Jr. should have intervened — as he has the absolute authority to do — to resolve already.

The squabble is the result of Duterte-era PEZA director Charito Plaza's refusing to abide by the blanket directive — the first executive order issued by the new president, as a matter of fact — for all of the previous administration's appointees to vacate their positions, unless otherwise directed to remain in a holdover capacity, which she was not. Without going into all the mind-numbing legal details, Plaza has argued a different

interpretation of the terms of her employment at PEZA that exempts her from the order to leave, and so has not accepted being temporarily replaced by her former deputy.

Not surprisingly, that has led to the sort of banana-republic shenanigans that often happen when an unwilling official is told to surrender his or her position — people being locked out of offices, carrying out an argument by way of overdramatic statements to the media, and so on.

Although Plaza had a reasonably good record in her tenure at PEZA and has been endorsed for retention by a number of business groups, it inevitably raises suspicions when any official is so aggressive in efforts to remain in office when all circumstances indicate that he or she should not. It does not necessarily mean there is some wrongdoing afoot, but it is an indication that an individual considers himself or herself more important than the system, which is a personality trait that has no place in government at any level.

It is up to President Marcos to decide if Plaza's recalcitrance is enough to disqualify her from being retained in her position, but apart from that, if she can be convinced to dial the ego down a couple of notches, she would not really be a bad choice; particularly given the difficulty the president seems to be having in filling some key jobs. Plaza has done creditable work, has the backing of some business groups, and there is something to be said for continuity, unless a major policy shift is planned. Whatever his decision, President Marcos should make it quickly; the squabble over the PEZA leadership is a problem that the country doesn't need to have, and it simply makes him look like he does not have a firm grip on his own bureaucracy.

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## DENR backs tax on single-use plastics

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Wednesday backed a proposal to tax the consumption of single-use plastics to curb plastic pollution in the country.

"Imposing tax on single-use plastics is a positive development for the environment in several ways. It can promote use of reusable packaging, reduce single-use plastic wastes, and extend the life of sanitary landfills," Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) Director William Cuñado said in reaction to the proposal of Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno.

He said that the DENR pushed for a similar tax measure to combat plastic pollution during the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte.

Cuñado said that the proposal "can potentially replace the 'throw-away culture' and address the long-standing problem of plastic wastes ending up in our oceans and waterways." Single-use plastics are among the primary wastes collected during the DENR's coastal cleanup campaigns.

Cuñado acknowledged that implementing the tax

measure may need careful deliberation with other government agencies, as "imposing an additional expense on stakeholders need to be reasonable and beneficial."

He said that the country should institutionalize a circular economy that aims to reuse, re-manufacture or recycle waste.

Republic Act 11898 or the "Extended Producer Responsibility Act of 2022," which lapsed into law on July 23, 2022, aims to institutionalize the Extended Producer Responsibility or EPR system in RA 9003 or the "Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000."

Under the EPR scheme, manufacturers will be responsible for the treatment, disposal or recycling of their post-consumer products.

"As long as there is an abundant supply of disposable plastics produced, consumers will always use these out of convenience. But, if these will be taxed, it may serve as motivation for the public to opt for reusable or recyclable products, which can result in a waste-free behavior for the betterment of the environment," Cuñado said.

**BELLA CARIASO**





## NEGROS ISLAND

# Conservation of natural resources underscored at Mount Kanlaon Natural Park Festival

By GLAZYL V. MASCULINO

Six local government units (LGUs) on Negros Island urged communities to help protect the environment and conserve natural resources during the opening of the Mount Kanlaon Natural Park (MKNP) Festival on Tuesday, Aug. 9.

These LGUs are Bago City, San Carlos City, La Carlota City, Murcia, and La Castellana in Negros Occidental and Canlaon City in Negros Oriental.

Bago City Mayor Nicholas Yulo and La Castellana Mayor Rhumyla Nicor-Mangilimutan, along with Denis Pinosa, protected area superintendent of MKNP, led the opening of the three-day festival at the Bantayan Park in Bago City.

The festival, which ends Thursday, Aug. 11, was celebrated annually but due

to the pandemic, it was postponed for two years.

This year, Bago City hosted the celebration dubbed "Ang Pagbangon sang Kumunidad, Nasandig sa Pag-amlig sang Dunang Manggad (The Community's Recovery Lies in the Conservation of Natural Resources)."

According to Pinosa, the celebration commemorates the enactment of Republic Act 9154 (the Mount Kanlaon Law) in 2001.

Pinosa said the law was made to protect, conserve, and develop the remaining natural resources, history, and culture and arts within the MKNP.

The law declared 2,435 hectares on Mount Kanlaon as protected area, according to Pinosa.

"This year, we wanted to enhance the biodiversity values, strengthen life

support system, and improve the quality of life of communities by bringing economic, social, and cultural sustainability," Pinosa said.

Yulo said that it is also best fitting to celebrate this event simultaneously with the first Indigenous People (IP) Assembly in Bago City.

"We need the help of the IPs, they only not represent the katutubos, but their practices are a lesson that we should also keep in mind since they know nature more than we do," Yulo said. "Mount Kanlaon is not only about the mountain and volcano. It's also about taking care of the Earth, of our natural resources, as they play a very crucial role in the balance of nature. We have to make a contribution because we are very much affected by what is happening around us."

Of all creations on Earth, according to Yulo, the most destructive are human beings, but the solution also lies in humans. "If we only break the cycle in this modern world, we could bring back the glory of nature and we will live in harmony with nature."

The festivity is also poised to continue to awaken the consciousness of the com-

munity, especially on the protection and conservation of the environment, including the MKNP, which is considered the last frontier of the Negros forest, according to Mae Ann Furtos, senior tourism officer of Bago City.

Furtos said the local government is giving importance to its environmental advocacy.

The city hosts the Bago Watershed and Bago River that provide livelihood to thousands of farmers in the province by providing them water being irrigated to their farms, she said.

Bago City is also part of the Negros Occidental Wetlands declared as the seventh Ramsar Site in the Philippines and East Asian-Australasian Flyway Site.

Furtos said the southern Negros Occidental locality is also home to the Irrawaddy dolphin, a shy-type dolphin species, which is considered endangered.

"Our local environmental programs and other initiatives really have international impact," she said, assuring that the city government will continue to take necessary measures to protect and conserve the environment while developing its tourism sector.





## Point of view

# Tales of sustainability from a tribal perspective

By DANIEL JASON M. MACHES

I recently volunteered to man the exhibit of Slow Food Philippines during the World Food Expo (WOFEX) held at the SMX Convention Center on Aug. 3-6. It was a thrilling and learning-filled experience, especially for first timers like me.

But beyond the glitter and the shows happening, it was the advocacy that made the event more meaningful and memorable. I especially love the fact that many of those in attendance are social entrepreneurs and small-scale producers who have sustainable goals for both humanity and the planet.

As an indigenous person from the Lias tribe of Mountain Province, I felt like I was in a platform that supported our cause.

The expo is the country's biggest food and trade show and as such, provided a myriad of opportunities for both visitors and exhibitors. Surely, we are grateful to the organizers of the event for providing platforms to sustainable enterprises and organizations, including Slow Food Philippines.

The Slow Food booth featured different products, including fresh produce that are part of the Ark of Taste, a catalogue of heritage foods worldwide.

Among these are traditional souring agents such as *batwan*, *katmon*, *sua*, *tabon-tabon*, *libas* and *tila*, all of which are endemic to the country. Some of these grow abundantly in the rainforests. Other produce on display are pili nuts, *adlai* or Job's tears, *marang* fruit and jam, Cebu cinnamon, *imbuucan* (heirloom rice from Ifugao), *criollo cacao*, *landang* (native tapioca) and coffee green beans from Arabica, Robusta and Liberica. Then there's the *asin tibuok*, also called unbroken salt, which is only made in a few coastal towns of Bohol using artisanal methods.

life-giving water that irrigates our rice terraces. These terraces yield different undocumented heirloom rice varieties that supported our tribe for generations.

My grandma would also say that many species, including heirloom rice that were abundant during their childhood years, went extinct. It's a saddening state that continues up to this day.

So, when I learned that indigenous products such as *imbuukan* are included, I felt I had the obligation to participate.

After all, there's much more to these products than just being native or indigenous.

Heirloom products form the core of indigenous peoples' (IPs) subsistence. For example, native rice is their staple diet, giving them strength for their daily grinds in the field or the forests. Heirloom rice also grows well in the surrounding forests. Thus, it plays an ecological role that benefits not only the local community but beyond.

In the Cordillera region, for example, the traditional farming of heirloom rice fostered the preservation of rainforests. These in turn feed brooks and rivers that provide water for both household and irrigation all the way to the lowland provinces.

Other native species including snails and birds also thrive because of heirloom varieties planted. Further, these have led to the development of indigenous healing methods which are often linked to their spiritual beliefs.

Sadly, commercialization and modernization have led to the endangerment of many heirloom varieties.

Losing these precious species would mean ecological deterioration and cultural disintegration for the IP communities.





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Another interesting display is the *kini-ing*, smoked meat from Benguet that comes from native black pigs. It is similar to the *etag* cured meat of Sagada in Mountain Province but there are variations in the materials and methods used.

The list goes on.

Note that many of these are endangered due to lack of producers, destruction of their natural habitat and the introduction of more commercially-viable varieties.

The disappearance of these heirloom varieties would thus mean the loss of much of the country's rich cultural and ecological heritage, including potential economic opportunities.

That's why, its heartening that Slow Food is championing these unique products and traditions in a world that's rapidly changing and evolving. A local enterprise known as Echo Store is also contributing to this cause by marketing local produce and native species to ensure sustainability.

#### More than a showcase

To man an exhibit for days is no easy task. Aside from the required physical endurance, one also needs to deal with different personalities. That's draining especially for an introvert like me. But what fanned the flame of my endurance was my passion for promoting local and heirloom produce. That comes from my being an indigenious.

I remember that as a kid, my grandmother would share stories of how our ancestors defended our forests and rivers from tribal adversaries. For her, the forests are critical to provide

After all, it there is one sector from whom the world should learn about sustainability, it is the IPs. Even the United Nations say so.

#### Taking action

Despite the modern trends facilitating the loss of heirloom heritage, it is encouraging to see people from different backgrounds coming together. Organizations and institutions have been formed to support this cause.

Slow Food ([www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com)), for example, engages in different programs and projects to help people appreciate the value of heirloom varieties.

The EchoStore ([www.echostore.ph](http://www.echostore.ph)) is likewise developing processed or packaged versions of these heirloom produce to extend the shelf life and reach more consumers. For example, they create and market jams from native fruits or roast coffee from organic farmers.

During the exhibit, I have seen how entrepreneurs, chefs, farmers, academics, government employees, indigenous members and journalists cooperate to raise appreciation and understanding of heirloom varieties. They are all Slow Food volunteers, united in their common goal of promoting good food to protect the planet's biodiversity and contribute to social justice.

I hope there will be more of these meaningful engagements.

Daniel Jason Maches is the founder of Barlig Rainforest Coffee Project which aims to pilot ecological-based farming in his community. Follow his blog: <https://danielsecotravels.com/>





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## ANONG MANGYAYARI KUNG HAHAYAANG MAG-OVERSPILL ANG ISANG DAM?

**MAHIGIT** isang Linggo ng bumubuhos sa Central Luzon, Southern Luzon at Metro Manila ang mahina, katamtaman hanggang sa malalakas na pag-ulan lalo na sa hapon at gabi dulot ng enhanced Habagat o southwest monsoon.

Bilang precautionary measure, nagpakawala ng tubig ang Magat Dam sa Ramon, Isabela at ang Bustos Dam sa Bustos, Bulacan.

Nagresulta ito sa pagbaha sa mga mababang lugar.

Kumusta naman kaya ang Angat Dam na siyang pinagkukunan ng tubig ng Metro Manila?

Base sa dam information ng Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) kahapon (August 10, 2022, 6:00AM). Ang lebel ng tubig sa Angat Dam ay nasa 178.15 mtrs mas mababa ng 31.85 meters kumpara sa 210 NHWL.

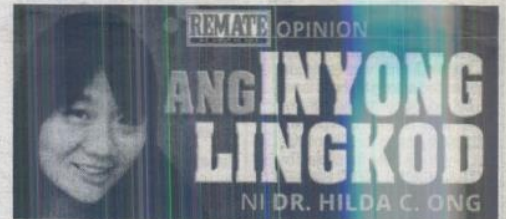
Ipo Dam-100.34 mtrs, malapit-lapit na sa 101 mtrs

(NHWL)

La Mesa – 79.24 mtrs, malapit na rin sa 80.15m (NHWL)

Nakapanayam ng inyong Agarang Serbisyo Lady si DR. SEVILLO D. DAVID, JR., Executive Director ng National Water Resources Board sa programa Health & Travel @ Serbisyo Publiko sa DWBL 1242kHz, AM Band.

Ang unang napag-usapan, kapag nasa panahon ng habagat, ang kinatatakutan ng karamihan ay ang pagbaha at



NI DR. HILDA C. ONG

pagpapakawala ng tubig ng ibang dams sa Luzon. Kung sakali magbibigay ng babala ang mga dam operator sa mga lugar na pupuntahan ng tubig bago sila magpakawala nito?

Hindi ba posible na ibigay sa mga may-ari ng fire trucks at sa pribadong sektor na may malalaking tanke ng tubig, para hindi masayang

ang tubig.

Ano ba ang mangyayari kung hahayaan na lamang mag-overspill ang isang dam?

Kung hayaan mag-overspill, masisira ang dam. Ang tubig ay makakarating sa mga kalawakan at magdudulot ito ng pagbaha pagkatapos nitong maanod ang anumang bagay sa dinadaan nito.

Kung sakali patuloy ang pagbuhos ng malalakas na ulan dulot ng Habagat, maglalabas ng abiso ang Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) kung kailan sila magpalabas ng sobrang tubig, dahil lalagpas na sa kapasidad ang nasabing dam.

Kaya pinayuhan ang mga residente na nasa mga daluyan ng Angat River sa Norzagaray, San Rafael, Bustos, Baiwag, Pulilan, Plaridel at Hagonoy na maging handa sa pagbaha.

Malaki ang maitutulong ng pag-iyon ng mga tubig ulan lalo pa't may kalakasan ang pagbuhos ng ulan tuwing hapon.

Gawing alternatibong paraan sa paglilinis ng bahay, sa pagdidilig ng mga pananim, pangbanlaw ng mga damit na nilabhan, panghugas, pambuhos sa banyo at iba pa.





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## What does a climate emergency declaration

### really mean?

### What does a climate emergency declaration really mean?

First word

WHY am I not surprised



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YEN  
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that Makati Mayor Mar-Len Abigail Binay is so hellbent and obstinate in declaring a state of climate emergency in Makati?

Makati is a place that is fond of securing all kinds of distinctions, like being the richest patch of ground in the archipelago, in being the first to accomplish or acquire this or that, including the inconsequential and the ephemeral.

And now it wants to be the first Philippine city to sport electric vehicles crisscrossing its streets and showing solar panels in its public buildings.

➤ MakabentaA5

### A former Jesuit possession

Historically, Makati is also full of surprises. In an address before the Rotary Club of Makati on Aug. 20, 1968, Fr. Horacio de la Costa, SJ disclosed to his startled audience that Makati originally belonged to the Jesuits. And he even had the text of the deed of donation from Don Pedro de Brito and his wife, Doña Ana de Herrera, to the society.

The Jesuit historian related that "Makati was taken away from the Jesuits by the Spanish crown in 1768, when it was decided that the Spanish empire no longer had need of our services, and when in 1869 the Spanish crown changed its mind, and asked us to return to the Philippines, it was on condition that we would not lay claim to any of our properties."

De la Costa said wryly that the religious order was thankfully spared from a superlative headache not only of managing Makati but other estates in Manila and environs.

In modern times, Makati is a city that has not known a mayor not named Binay for more than three decades running and conjecturally may not know anyone else as its mayor until the climate apocalypse. This is what climate fanatics and fearmongers insist is the future awaiting humanity, if we do not banish or replace fossil fuels from national economies, if we do not bring down to zero carbon emissions, and arrest the warming of the planet.

Mayor Binay, who issued the declaration at a webinar on August 5, says low-lying and coastal areas in Makati and other areas are bearing the brunt of strong typhoons and rising sea levels.

Oddly, Makati has no sea bounding it and no coastal areas to worry about.

"We heard the data. We understood the science. We are feeling its impact. Now is a crucial time to act, and we need to act fast," Binay said in recorded remarks at the close of the webinar organized by the city's disaster risk reduction and management office (CDRRMO).

"With this realization, Makati City has found enough reason to declare a climate emergency in the

city, and we are well aware that much still needs to be done to achieve our climate goals," she said.

It is emblematic of modern Makati to extend its sights from monetary and developmental concerns to the planetary, which is the chief excuse for all the hullabaloo about climate change today.

So, it is in character that Mayor Binay has ventured to declare a climate emergency in Makati.

### Not the first

To set the record straight, Makati is not the first Philippine city to declare a state of climate emergency. That distinction belongs elsewhere.

In a front page story on July 20, 2019, the *Sunstar Bacolod* newspaper reported that Bacolod City became the first city in the Philippines to declare a climate emergency by virtue of a resolution authored by councilor Carl Lopez, chairman of the committee on environment and ecology which endorsed such declaration and which was unanimously approved by the city council during its regular session on July 17, 2019.

Mayor Binay did not issue a signed declaration or resolution by the Makati government. She did it verbally at the close of the webinar.

Declaring a state of climate emergency in Makati is not as consequential or epochal as the mayor fancies it to be.

Makati is just a local jurisdiction in the Republic of the Philippines; it is just one among many in the country. It is not even the first Philippine locality to declare a climate emergency; that distinction belongs to Bacolod, the capital of Negros Occidental province.

To place this initiative in perspective, Mayor Binay's declaration is about as meaningful as Pope Francis' earlier declaration of a climate emergency in Vatican City or the Holy See. Few remember now the pope's declaration.

Significantly, Makati is as small an area as the Vatican. It is absurd to imagine that the two jurisdictions can reshape the global climate through their climate action.

Mayor Binay appears to be pro-





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moting the idea of the Philippines as one of the most vulnerable countries to climate hazards as claimed by a so-called Global Peace Index, which is concerned with peacefulness, not climate vulnerability.

The Global Peace Index is a report produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) which measures the relative position of nations' and regions' peacefulness. The GPI ranks 163 independent states and territories (collectively accounting for 99.7 percent of the world's population) according to their levels of peacefulness.

The index measures or rates the relative peacefulness of countries, and makes a big show of announcing which countries are the most troubled.

Strangely, it is nowhere claimed that the index measures or rates countries according to their susceptibility to climate hazards.

Mayor Binay bought into the purported claim that the index found that 47 percent of the Philippine population are in areas highly exposed to climate hazards such as earthquakes, tsunami, floods, tropical cyclones and drought.

Forgetting that Makati has no sea or coast at its boundaries, she waxed sentimental and alarmed about rising sea levels in the country because of climate change.

Also, earthquakes are not part of the climate. No climatologist will say that.

She turned a reported increase in rainfall experienced by Makati over the years during storms into an ever-present calamity. She bewailed extreme weather events that disrupt public services and displace families.

"We need to plan and create strategies to make our city more climate-resilient. We need to educate and engage our citizens in this important effort, and we need to lead by example by ensuring that our actions align with our goal of achieving a more sustainable future," she said.

For this reason, the Makati government said it is amping up its efforts to bring down its greenhouse gas emissions.

Among them are plans to use electric vehicles for the city government and solar panels for public

schools and government offices.

## No climate emergency

Not everyone is as jumpy or naive as Mayor Binay in beholding the challenge of a climate emergency.

In the United Kingdom, British peer and ex-cabinet minister Lord Frost told Mail Online that there is no "climate emergency" and urged the next prime minister to move away from "medieval technology" such as wind power.

The Conservative peer, who was Boris Johnson's Brexit negotiator, has hit out at the "totally unrealistic approach to climate and energy policy" in the UK over the past two decades.

He demanded that Britain change tack from "managing demand" for energy and instead put greater emphasis on fracking and nuclear power, as well as carbon capture and storage (CCS).

He called for a "pragmatic" response to climate change which he said was just one of the many problems facing the UK.

In an essay for the Policy Exchange think-tank, Lord Frost outlined how a new prime minister could alter the government's approach to climate and energy policy.

"The current evidence does not support the assertion that we are in a climate 'emergency,'" the Tory peer wrote.

"Rather, the effects of climate change are a problem, one of the many we face, and should be tackled in that pragmatic way rather than by asking us to up-end the whole way our societies work.

"Western society, and indeed world civilization, depends on copious supplies of energy.

"Yet the prevailing mood is one in which individuals are asked to restrict their use of energy and in which unsatisfactory renewables technology is touted as the best solution to our problems.

"Instead of focusing on technological solutions that enable us to master our environment and get more energy in a more carbon-efficient way — nuclear, CCS, fracking, one day fusion — we have focused on managing demand so we can use medieval technology like wind power."

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## 'A hungry man is an angry man'

**L**AST week, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres strongly criticized the "grotesque greed" of oil and gas companies for making record profits from the energy crisis on the back of the world's poorest people. The UN chief called their record profits from oil and gas amid global crisis "immoral."

"The combined profits of the largest energy companies in the first quarter of this year are close to \$100 billion. I urge governments to tax these excessive profits, and use the funds to support the most vulnerable people through these difficult times," Guterres said.

The UN chief said there is increasing fear that the rising costs of energy may price out many developing countries, especially the most vulnerable communities, from energy markets. These countries are already bearing the brunt of the cost-of-living crisis, having experienced major setbacks on access to energy and progress on sustainable development since the Covid-19 pandemic.

More worryingly, there could be a potential "scramble for fuel" whereby only countries paying the highest prices can access energy, he warned, adding that governments need the fiscal space to support their most vulnerable populations to avoid worsening levels of energy poverty or losing energy access altogether. At the same time, without policies that balance the need for urgency and sustainability, there is a risk of short-term energy policies that might set developing countries on a course for a high-emission and expensive energy future. "As the world charts its way forward, its plans must safeguard its commitments to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Developing countries don't lack reasons to invest in renewables. Many of them are living with the severe impacts of the climate crisis including storms, wildfires, floods and droughts. What they lack are concrete, workable options," Guterres added.

Guterres urged people everywhere to send a message to the fossil fuel industry and their financiers that "this grotesque greed is punishing the poorest and most vulnerable people, while destroying our only common home, the planet."

From the Associated Press: "The head of the UN body promoting development is warning that the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change and the war in Ukraine have led to "an unprecedented reversal" of decades of progress in combatting global poverty and hunger and ensuring quality education for children everywhere."

"Collen Kelapile, who is president of the Economic and Social Council known as ECOSOC, said there is growing concern that funding for critical UN development goals including ending extreme poverty and hunger by 2030 might be neglected by Western donor nations supporting Ukraine militarily and financially in its war against Russia."

"Please, let's not forget other pre-existing challenges. We need to finance development. We need to finance climate. We need to finance many other conflicts around the world," Kelapile said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Making a mistake and sidelining these issues, Kelapile warned, could lead to higher costs in the future if they escalate "because there is no longer attention to them." There is a saying that "a hungry man is an angry man," he said, citing people recently venting their anger of the lack of food and gasoline, including in Sri Lanka.

The UN announcement that the world is currently seeing an unprecedented reversal of decades of progress in combatting global poverty should serve as a reminder for governments to focus on their anti-poverty programs.

It would do well for the Marcos administration to confront poverty head-on. Filipinos who suffer poverty's effects are not the only victims. Poverty affects us all. Studies show that poverty is the root cause of many crimes in the world such as theft, murder, and the selling of drugs and contraband items. A US study noted that a one percent rise in poverty would amount to a 2.16 percent rise in crime and a 2.57 percent rise in violent crime.

Poverty is an issue that undermines our security as a nation. We all pay a heavy price for allowing poverty to walk in our midst. As the regime of high inflation affects most Filipinos, it's not far-fetched that households that have recently escaped poverty could be pushed back into it by skyrocketing prices.

Government alone won't succeed in its poverty reduction efforts without the support of big business. Shared prosperity also means moderating corporate greed for profit by increasing wages. As a wise man once said, lifting someone out of poverty is the most effective antidepressant in the world.





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# BATINGAW

DANTE ZAMORA

## Ingatan ang kalikasan

ISANG relihiyosong bansa ang Pilipinas ngunit tila maraming pagsubok ang hinaharap mula sa mga gawa ng tao hanggang sa hagupit ng kalikasan, o tunay na magkakawing ang dalawa. Hindi kanais-nais ang mga inaabot na mga indulto sa lahat ng bagay na lubhang nagpapahirap sa buhay at kabuhayan ng Pilipino. Sadya bang kailangan dumaan at lagpasan ang mga pagsubok upang maging matatag sa pagharap sa mga kaganapan na pangkaraniwang dumadalaw sa mga tahanan. Sadya bang kailangan habaan ang pisi o pasensya upang sa pagharap sa kahirapa'y mairaos ang araw-araw na pasanin dulot ng kawalan. O sadyang hindi pumapasok sa kokote ng bawat Pilipino na kailangang mag-isip na sa bawat pagpapasyang may kalakip na pasanin 'di lang sa sarili kundi sa bayan.

Sa bawat pagharap sa hamon ng panahon at kalikasan ang pagtatangi'y nararapat dahil matindi ang bawat bawi na mangyayari kung ito'y naduhagi. Sa bawat sulok ng bansa, kita ang labis na idinudulot na pagkasira dulot ng galit na kalikasan. Karaniwan na ang malalakas na ulan ngunit dahil sa kapabayaang o sa pag-unlad na walang awa kung gibain ang kapaligiran nariyan na nararanasan ang malupit na hagupit nito sa sangkatauhan.

Sa pagtotoon ng kalagayan ng kapaligiran, tila mas maraming yaman ng bansa ang ginugugol sa pagsagip sa buhay at kabuhayan ng mamamayan. Ang dumaang lindol at baha ay patunay na hindi handa ang bayan sa mga sakuna kahit ilang dekada na ang nagdaan upang ihanda si Mang Juan. Nariyan na lito ang bawat grupo, maging ang gobyerno kung paano maipapaabot ang tulong na nasa tamang oras. Hindi pa usapin ang kaayusan ng mga pasilidad upang mapabilis ang pagbalik ng balana sa kanilang mga tirahan. At sa pagbalik, muling dadaan ito sa pagsubok dahil sa kawalan ng kabuhayan o maging ng nasirang kabahayan. Nariyan pa ang sakit na dulot ng panahon na lalong nagpapalala sa nadaramang kawalan ng mga biktima ng kalamidad.

Sa totoo lang, nasa kamay natin ang kaligtasan, ang pagmamahal sa bayan lalo sa kapaligiran ang unahin ng ito ang maging sandalan natin sa kinabukasan. Ang mga dumadaan na hamon ng kalikasan ay isang karaniwan lamang. Subalit o dahil sa pagiging sakim ng iilan, marami ang nagdudusa na naghahatid ng kabiguan at maging ng kamatayan. Tila hindi natuto sa mga nakaraan na ang bawi ng kalikasan walang nakakapigil ano man ang katayuan sa buhay. Ang lumalapastangan sa pag-aari ng sanlumikha'y hindi simple ang balik bagkus ito'y may kalupitan. Habang sa isang banda, marunong magbigay ng gantimpala ang sanlumikha, pagtatamasa sa bunga ng bawat likha nito 'di mapuputol kung ito'y pagyayamanin. Nariyan na malalanghap ang malinis na sariwang hangin, ulan na magtatampisawan, bungang kahoy na makakain, halamang palamuti sa mga kabahayan at maraming pang-iba.

Sa pagdalaw ng maraming sakuna at maging ng mga sakit sa bansa, inaasahan na ang pamilya ni Mang Jua'y magbabalik tanaw sa dating kaugalian na mapagmahal sa kapaligiran. Ang

pag-ulayaw nito sa kalikasan ang simpleng ambag upang hindi masira ang kapaligiran. Ang pagpapahalaga sa kaayusan nito'y ang sinusunod at walang galaw na sisirain ito dahil sa pangangalangin. Ang karanasan ang panuntunan at ang gagawing batayan sa pangangalaga ng kapaligiran. Walang hindi gagawin kundi ang mapanatili na maging malalambing sa kalikasan ng sa gayon ang pagbawi nito'y sa kapakinabangan.

Ang pagpapasya'y itutuon sa kagalingan ng nakararami at hindi ng iilan. Sana'y maging malinaw sa lahat na ang aksyon ay may kalakip na kontra aksyon, positibo o negatibo man ito. Ang mabilis na pagkatuto sa mga kamalian sa nakaraan at ang pagtutuwid ang magdadala sa kinabukasan ng bansa. At ang tao ang makikinabang sa pag-unlad, pag-unlad na para sa lahat.

Sa kasalukuyan na hinihingi sa bawat Pilipino na pag-ingatan ang kalikasan dahil ito ang magdadala sa matiwasay at ligtas na bukas. Hindi tutulutan ang gawaing makasarili na maglalagay sa bansa sa mas malalim na panganib. Iingatan ang kalikasan ng bansa dahil sa minsang pagkakamali, na masdan na kung paano inaani ang bayan ng maraming sakuna at kabiguan. Kabiguan na dala ng kalikasan dahil sa kawalan ng malasakit ng iilan. Ang mabuting pag-aalaga sa sarili ng bawat anak ni Mang Juan ang magdudulot sa pamilya nito ng kabuhayan na hayahay sa kinabukasan.

Huwag hayaan ang sarili na manatiling maging palaasa sa lider na ito ang nais. Dahil tunay na gagawa ito ng sala para mapanatili ang sarili sa pedestal na alay ng bayan. Samantala, ang mabuting mamamaya'y nagpapa-abot ng mga mungkahi na makabubuti sa hanay. Hindi aasa sa programang panandalian ngunit may kapahamakan sa kapaligiran. Handang magpaabot ng mga kagustuhan para sa kapakinabangan ng bayan. At ito ang senyales ng kumpiyansa at respeto sa sarili. Ang hangad na kagalingan pambansa ang isusulong, masakit man ito sa mata at pandama ng lider ng bansa. Ang kagalingan ng lahat ang dapat na gawing programa lalo sa pag-aalaga ng kalikasan na siyang yaman ng bansa. Walang hindi proprotektahan para sa pakinabang ng sambayanan. Minsan na itong tinayuan at asahan na muli itong titindigan para sa salinlahi ng bayan.

Sa totoo pa rin, mabuting tangapin na ang kapasyahan ng bayan at magtulong tulong sa pag-aalaga ng kalikasan. Huwag ipagwalang bahala ang likas na kaganapan dahil tila marami pa ang darating na pagsubok sa hinaharap. Pag-ingatan at patuloy na pag-iingat sa kaganapan ang sandata para sa ligtas na kinabukasan. Panatilihin ang likas yaman ng bayan dahil karga ng bawat Pilipino ang sakit na naka ambang panganib. Silipin at ipaabot ang tamang hakbang sa pagpapanatili ng ligtas na kapaligiran sa lider ng bansa. Huwag umasa na sila ang solusyon sa suliranin o usaping bayan. Ang pagpapaabot sa nais ang gawin nang madama ng bayan na nasa kanya ang tunay na lakas ng bayan at kaligtasan ng nakararami lalo ng kapaligiran. Mang Juan ikaw ang gumising sa taong bayan na lumimot ngunit nagdusa sa lupit ng kalikasan.

Gawing halimbawa ang karanasan na ang nangangalaga sa kalikasan ang nagtatamasa sa anumang bunga nito. Ang lider na inupo sa Balite ng Malacanan ay simbolo lamang at nasa Pinoy ang tunay na kapangyarihan. Huwag kalimutan ang lakas ng mayroon Mang Juan, tamang pagpapasya sa kinabukasan ang magdadala ng pag-unlad sa kinabukasan. At huwag kalimutan na patuloy na ingatan ang kalikasan.

Maraming Salamat po!!!



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# Exciting development in Laguna Lake

These efforts to upgrade the transport systems in Laguna Lake will result in more business and employment opportunities in Talim Island and nearby towns

Although they are working quietly, the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina), specifically its Franchising Services headed by Director Atty. Maria Rowena B. Hubilla, deserves a commendation.



BEYOND THE HORIZON  
CAPT. JESS MORALES

On Director Hubilla's initiative, Marina has conducted a series of meetings, sans publicity, with other government agencies involved in the implementation of priority Program 3 of the 10-Year Maritime Industry Development Plan (MIDP) – the Development of Coastal and Inland Waterways Transport System (CIWTS).

Program 3 is probably the fastest moving among MIDP's 10 priority programs as indicated by recent developments, particularly in the Laguna Lake area and its surrounding towns in the provinces of Rizal and Laguna.

In the last meeting, where yours truly was invited to represent the Philippine Association of Coastal and Inland Waterways Ferries Inc. (PACIWFI), as well as Metro Ferry of Cebu, it is evident among agencies present that they appreciate the need and urgency of developing a modern transport system in the country's largest lake.

Present in the meeting were Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA), the local government of Binangonan, Rizal; the Department of Transportation (DoTr); National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) and other ferry operators, aside from PACIWFI and Metro Ferry.

P50 million for the construction of a Roll-on/Roll-off (RORO) ramp starting next year.

This is definitely a laudable project, which will be built at a site accessible to proposed major road projects around Laguna Lake.

This welcome development will pave the way for the use of customized mini RORO passenger ships (ropax) that can accommodate one or two rolling cargoes, such as trucks and cars, and about 60 to 80 passengers.

Another project is the LLDA-proposed ferry system connecting Laguna towns to Guadalupe in Makati via the Pasig River. This longer project, however, needs to be thoroughly studied. Should it turn out to be highly viable, the project has tremendous potential in decongesting the heavy volume of traffic from Laguna towns to Metro Manila, if it pushes through. It could be an efficient alternate route to the South Luzon Expressway (SLEX).

**More importantly, wooden bancas can no longer support the increasing trade and economic activities in Talim Island that need vessels for transporting heavier cargo.**

One thing is certain, though. These efforts to upgrade the transport systems in Laguna Lake will result in more business and employment opportunities in Talim Island and nearby towns.

One encouraging development is the proposal to modernize the transport system in Talim Island in Laguna Lake, which is still being served by wooden-hulled bancas. The island, which has 24 barangays, is divided between the municipalities of Binangonan and Cardona, Rizal.

We all know that wooden bancas had already been phased out to give way to safer and more efficient steel-hulled vessels or boats made of fiber-reinforced plastic (FRP) or fiberglass, and to save on our trees.

More importantly, wooden bancas can no longer support the increasing trade and economic activities in Talim Island that need vessels for transporting heavier cargo, such as cement, hollow blocks and other hardware items. Using bancas in transporting these goods to the island has doubled their costs, a heavy burden to people of the island.

Responding to the problem, the local government of Binangonan has allocated

As an experienced seafarer, however, we are looking forward to hear some discussions in future meetings on related activities necessary to ensure safe, uninterrupted passage of vessels in the lake.

One of them is the lack of charts to guide the vessels that would operate in Laguna Lake; it remains uncharted. Closely related to this, the lake is known to have been suffering from siltation for many years.

Thus, a study is needed to chart the various depths of the lake in order to identify the exact navigable waters or sea lanes for the passage of vessels. These should be marked with lighted buoys also to avoid fish pens that are scattered in the lake.

Notwithstanding these issues, we are very excited over these developments of upgrading the coastal and inland waterways transport system in the country.





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## RAINWATER UNSAFE TO DRINK DUE TO

### CHEMICALS – STUDY

**STOCKHOLM:** Rainwater everywhere on the planet is unsafe to drink due to levels of toxic chemicals known as PFAS that exceed the latest guidelines, a new study by Stockholm University scientists said.

Commonly known as "forever chemicals" because they disintegrate extremely slowly, PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) were initially found in packaging, shampoo or makeup but have spread to the entire environment, including water and air.

"There is nowhere on Earth where

the rain would be safe to drink, according to the measurements that we have taken," Ian Cousins, a professor at the university and the lead author of the study published in *Environmental Science and Technology*, said.

A compilation of the data since 2010 that his team studied showed that "even in Antarctica or the Tibetan plateau, the levels in the rainwater are above the drinking water guidelines that the US EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) proposed," he said.

Normally considered pristine, the two regions still have PFAS levels "14 times higher" than the US drinking water guidelines.

The EPA recently lowered its PFAS guidelines significantly after discovering that the chemicals may affect the immune response in children to vaccines, Cousins noted.

Once ingested, PFAS accumulates in the body.

According to some studies, exposure can also lead to problems with fertility, developmental delays in children, increased risks of obesity

or certain cancers (prostate, kidney and testicular), and an increase in cholesterol levels.

#### Planet 'irreversibly contaminated'

Cousins said PFAS were now "so persistent" and ubiquitous that they will never disappear from the planet.

"We have made the planet inhospitable to human life by irreversibly contaminating it now so that nothing is clean anymore.

And to the point that it's not clean enough to be safe," he said.

"We have crossed a planetary boundary," he said, referring to a central paradigm for evaluating Earth's capacity to absorb the impact of human activity.

However, Cousins noted that PFAS levels in people have actually dropped "quite significantly in the last 20 years" and "ambient levels (of PFAS in the environment) have been the same for the past 20 years."

"What's changed is the guidelines.

They've gone down millions of times since the early 2000s, because we've learned more about the toxicity of these substances," Cousins said we have to learn to live with it.

"I'm not super concerned about the everyday exposure in mountain or stream water or in the food. We can't escape it... we're just going to have to live with it. ... But it's not a great situation to be in, where we've contaminated the environment to the point where background exposure is not really safe." AFP





## Hybrid is the way to go: DOE

BY RAYMOND AFRICA

ENERGY Secretary Raphael Lotilla yesterday said it is time to shift to hybrid sources of energy to end the country's overdependence on petroleum-based fuels.

Lotilla made the remark during the Senate committee on energy organizational meeting to find solutions to the recurring power shortage and high electricity rates in several areas of the country.

He said going hybrid is the long-term solution to the country's energy woes.

"We must end this overdependence on petroleum and petroleum-based fuels because otherwise we will experience the volatilities in prices and therefore, it means we would have to invest in solar, in wind and as you mentioned, even newer technologies," Lotilla said.

He said hybrid sources of energy such as the ocean, thermal, hydrogen and offshore wind can be considered – an initiative that could be started right now as it is not to happen in an instant.

"So time is not on our side but to be able to do this, we need certain reforms," he added.

He said he will discuss the reforms in the energy sector with Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno and Budget Secretary Amenah Pangan-daman who are both board members of the National Power Corp. and the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp.

Lotilla added the government is also looking at reviewing the Electric Power Industry Reform Act to reform the electric cooperatives system, strengthening the processes in the Energy Regulatory Commission and promoting competition in the energy sector.

Sen. Raffy Tulfo, committee on energy chairman, said the country should find ways to lessen the price of electricity "by finding solutions equitable to both the consumer and producer."

He noted the need to ease the investment into the energy industry amid the depletion of the country's current largest natural gas source.

"We must see to it that our gov-

ernment regulatory framework is streamlined and responsive to the needs of the people and put an end to abusive and self-centered practices," Tulfo added.

Tulfo said he is looking forward to working with the members of the Senate energy committee to address the pressing issues hounding the energy sector.

He earlier filed Senate Resolution No. 107 which seeks an inquiry on the persistent and recurring power outages in the different parts of the country and address the rising cost of electricity amid the shortage in supply.

He intends to set at least two more meetings to further discuss issues in the energy sector.

Meanwhile, Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian pointed out that the country had around 22 red alerts and 154 yellow alerts in the past six years and asked the Department of Energy's outlook for the next six to 12 months.

Lotilla said at present, the country has enough reserves as long as there will be no major breakdowns of power plants.

"But for the summer months, I have

to tell you that I'm beginning to have concerns about that and we will do our best precisely to address stranded power out there," Lotilla said.

Sen. Ronald dela Rosa, for his part, urged Lotilla to look into the energy problems in Mindanao in the wake of several complaints from consumers.

"I hope you can help our town-mates in Mindanao who lost their power because they could not meet the high cost of energy. Perhaps you can restore their electricity and bring down the cost," dela Rosa said.

Lotilla said the agency will do everything it can to help ease the energy problems in Mindanao and the rest of the country.

Sen. Risa Hontiveros also recommended to the committee to summon independent power producers and government agencies to look into the power shortage in Oriental Mindoro.

Oriental Mindoro Electric Cooperative serves the franchise area of the province which has been the subject of complaints as consumers often experience power outage.