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**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



## Maynilad steps up work for water recycling facilities for Valenzuela, Muntinlupa, Pasay

# 'EVERY DROP COUNTS'

ANGAT Dam, situated in Barangay San Lorenzo (Hilltop), Norzagaray, Bulacan, is an important water source for Metro Manila. Located within the Angat Watershed Forest Reserve, it supplies potable water to the capital region and generates hydro-electric power. This reservoir meets around 90 percent of Metro Manila's raw water needs, managed by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System. Additionally, it supports irrigation for approximately 28,000 hectares of farmland in Bulacan and Pampanga provinces. [BENJAMIN TOSTA](#)

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

**N**EW Water, Maynilad Water Services Inc.'s recycled water, will soon reach more customers in Parañaque and three other cities within its concession area to reduce customer dependence on the supply coming from the Angat Dam.

Maynilad, the largest private water concessionaire of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) in terms of customer base, disclosed the plan, as the water level in Angat Dam compelled the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) on Sunday, July 8, 2023, to reduce water allocation for Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

Because of the drastic cut in water supply, Maynilad announced that daily water interruption would be implemented, affecting customers in the Camanava area, Manila and Quezon City.

Last week, the newly created Water Resources Management Office (WRMO) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has intensified its drive to conserve water, appealing to government agencies to fix pipe leaks and faulty toilet facilities and extending calls to the public to do the same and even practice rainwater harvesting for non-essential water uses, to reduce dependence on water coming from Angat Dam.

NWRB Executive Director Sevillo David and DENR-WRMO chief Carlos Primo David said Maynilad's New Water or recycled water is one of the strategies to diversify the source of water for Metro Manila.

The new water initiative, the officials told the *BusinessMirror* in separate interviews, is just one of several strategies to augment the supply from Angat Dam, the water level of which has fallen to 178 meters above sea level, which is below the 180 meters above sea level normal operating level.

"Maynilad's New Water is a welcome initiative," the DENR-WRMO chief said, adding it will augment the water supply for Metro Manila other than tapping from the Laguna de Bay. He said the initiative is a short-term solution that will avert another episode of water supply shortage, especially since the New Centennial Water Source—Kaliwa Dam Project, which is a long-term solution to the perennial water supply problem in Metro Manila—is expected to go online or operational in the next

three to five more years.

He said after a meeting with officials of Maynilad that the company is stepping up ongoing works to construct more facilities in other areas.

"Recycling water like Maynilad's New Water is just one of the strategies to augment our water supply. Even Singapore is using used water. They reprocess the used water to make it potable," the DENR-WRMO chief said.

### Angat-dependent population

CURRENTLY, Metro Manila's estimated population of 12 million people, including nearby provinces, still primarily rely on Angat Dam for water supply. With the growing population's increasing demand for water, plus the strain on existing sources due to pollution and climate-change effects, there is a need to consider using previously untapped sources—including treated used water—to augment available supplies for drinking, Jennifer Rufo, corporate communication head of Maynilad, explained to the *BusinessMirror* via email.

"Since Maynilad's sewage treatment plants regularly collect used water from households and subject it to treatment so that it meets the government's effluent standards, it seemed like a waste of resource to just throw that treated used water to nearby creeks and rivers per usual practice. If this treated used water is made to pass through additional treatment processes, it can become potable again," she explained.

According to Maynilad, if the

company is able to implement potable water reuse on a wider scale, it has another alternative supply source—one that is more reliable than traditional sources like the Angat Dam and Laguna Lake, which can be affected by droughts or typhoons that, in turn, affect the availability of water supply.

"Tapping reused water will also reduce reliance on deep wells for alternative supply, which will ultimately help with the replenishment of groundwater systems, thus avoiding land subsidence and salt-water intrusion in underground aquifers," Rufo, said, adding that recycling and reuse are central to a circular economy approach, which involves maximizing resources to address crises on climate, biodiversity and pollution.

### Clean, safe drinking water

MAYNILAD guarantees the safety of New Water, noting that before it commenced with piped-in distribution, New Water was subjected to strict monitoring by all regulating bodies, particularly the Department of Health (DOH).

"This is the country's first-ever foray into potable water reuse, so rigorous monitoring is necessary to ensure that all drinking quality parameters are met and that no contaminants remain in the final product water released by our New Water Treatment Plant," Rufo said.

Per Maynilad's proposed Business Plan for 2023 to 2027, the private water concessionaire of MWSS's West Zone said on top of expanding the capacity of its Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) in Parañaque, the company targets to

operate similar New Water facilities in Valenzuela, Muntinlupa and Pasay City.

"Now in the final stages of construction is the one in Valenzuela, which we hope to start operating within the year, assuming we are able to secure the necessary permits from the DOH," Rufo said.

She said all four New Water Treatment Plants should be "up and running" within the next five years.

"We target to complete and start operating the one in Valenzuela within 2023. Once operational, these four New Water facilities will have a combined capacity of 89 million liters per day (MLD), which is enough to supply some 483,000 customers," she said.

To recall, DOH granted a permanent operational permit to Maynilad's New Water facility in Parañaque last month, which signaled the company's expansion of its New Water project.

"Following the successful pilot implementation of our potable water reuse project in Parañaque, Maynilad plans to eventually expand the production and distribution of New Water supply to more areas within its concession," said Rufo.

However, she said Maynilad could only implement it in areas where the company's sewage treatment plants have a high discharge volume "since it is this discharge that we collect and convert to drinking water."

For its plans in other areas, similar to what it did in the Parañaque New Water Treatment Plant, the firm will only proceed with

piped-in distribution once these additional facilities pass stringent review from all relevant stakeholders, including the local health offices and the DOH, Rufo assured the public.

Currently, the Parañaque New Water Treatment Plant serves around 2,472 service connections in Barangays San Dionisio and San Isidro in Parañaque City. The 2,474 service connections currently being served with New Water supply from its facility in Parañaque is only around 0.16 percent of Maynilad's total customer base.

"If we can fully realize our plans to build additional New Water facilities in the other cities mentioned above, we can expand the New Water beneficiaries to more than 483,000 people over the next five years," she said.

The Metro Manila concessionaires of MWSS are supposed to be getting 46 cubic meters per second (CMS) from Angat Dam. That's around 4,000 MLD. Of this 4,000 MLD, Maynilad's share is 60 percent or 2,400 MLD because it has a bigger customer base than the other concessionaire.

As long as Maynilad receives its rightful share of 2,400 MLD from Angat Dam, it says it can maintain 24/7 water services to its customers. However, the drastic cut in water allocation for Metro Manila has become a perennial problem, especially during El Niño or the long season of drought, as the water level at Angat falls way below the normal operating level.



# Mount Inayawan, in Asean Heritage Park, is Maranao's sacred mountain

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

**M**OUNT Inayawan is at the heart of Mount Inayawan Range Natural Park (MIRNP), the 53rd Asean Heritage Park (AHP) and the country's 11th protected area to have earned such distinction.

Being an AHP, MIRNP is expected to experience a rigid management regime, with its protectors undergoing capacity-building seminars and training that will further boost its protection and conservation.

## 'Last forest bastion'

CONSIDERED as "last forest bastion" and critical watershed area in Lanao del Norte province, MIRNP is the only primary remaining and largest rainforest dominated by dipterocarp species.

It contains a high diversity of flora and fauna in the province, according to the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB).

Home to diverse fauna—including species like Philippine eagle and Philippine deer, and rare species like the Mindanao flying squirrel, scope owl, white collar kingfisher, Rostan hornbill and Mindanao warty pig—MIRNP is one of the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) in the region.

It is also regarded as one of 117 Important Bird Areas in the Philippines.

## Promising ecotourism destination

ACCORDING to ACB, MIRNP is a promising ecotourism destination not just owing to its dense forests but because of its several lakes and waterfalls.

"MIRNP is a primary source of water supply not just for the immediate communities surrounding it but also for irrigation and potable water to Kapatagan Valley, the rice granary of Lanao del Norte," said ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim.

It has lakes and hidden waterfalls surrounded by lush forest vegetation, a perfect setting for camping, nature tripping, bathing and mountain trekking—ideal sites for ecotourism.

## AHP process

IN 2021, ACB, which serves as the Secretariat of the AHP Programme, received the nomination of MIRNP from the DENR Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB).

Following modifications in field evaluation in light of the pandemic and travel restrictions, ACB held the evaluation with two local biodiversity experts from the Philippines. In close coordination with the BMB, field



evaluations were held from December 12 to 15, 2021.

Lim said the MIRNP was declared an AHP on November 1, 2022, during the Seventh AHP Conference hosted by the government of Indonesia. The launching in the Philippines was held only in June owing to pandemic restrictions.

## What is an AHP?

AHPs are "protected areas of high conservation importance, preserving in total complete spectrum of representative ecosystems of the Asean region."

"They are established with the aim of generating greater awareness, pride, appreciation, enjoyment and conservation of Asean's rich natural heritage, through a regional network of representative protected areas, and to foster greater collaboration among AMS [Asean member states] in preserving their shared natural heritage," Lim said.

First conceived in 1978, the AHP Programme was created through the Asean Declaration on Heritage Parks and Reserves on November 29, 1984, with 11 protected areas listed as original AHPs.

Additional AHPs were added in December 2003 and the network has since grown to a total of 55 as of January 2023.

MIRNP became a protected area by virtue of Proclamation 1344, s. 2007, that was signed on July 30, 2007. It became a legislated protected area with the signing of Republic Act 11038, or the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System (E-NIPAS) Act on July 24, 2017. The natural park covers a total of 4,236.19 hectares.

## Rigid management regime

THE management of the AHPs involves various activities from capacity building to promotional activities for enhanced protected area management and strengthened regional network of protected areas, Lim said.

With the declaration of the MIRNP as an AHP, research and development, whether biological, socio-cultural, or ethnological, will be part of the management plan for MIRNP.

The studies will be sources of information that will help in the effective management and conservation of the AHP.

"ACB, as the AHP Secretariat, will provide the necessary support for the park's conservation efforts and in ensuring the effective and efficient management of this new addition to the AHP network," Lim explained.

ACB will likewise promote the environmental and cultural significance of the park in its various communication, education and public awareness activities, she added.

"More importantly, ACB will be strengthening the cooperation of the AHP network to align its goals with the new global biodiversity targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), or the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which will be the roadmap for present and future actions in the AHPs," she pointed out.

## Capacity development

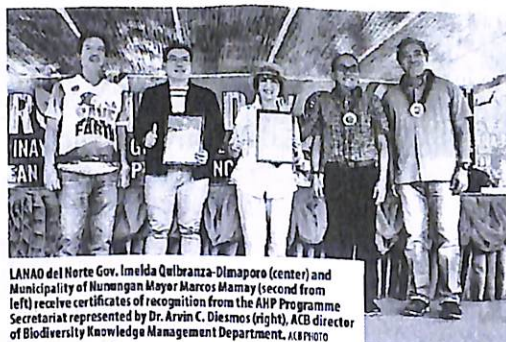
THE ACB, together with its development partners, has been facilitating the conduct of capacity development activities for AHP managers and staff, Lim said.

ACB organizes conferences, holds promotional activities and facilitates coordination among AHP managers to strengthen the parks as a regional network of protected areas.

"The ACB also conducts programmatic training courses for enhancing the management and conservation skills of protected area workers," Lim said.

## Economic opportunities, management plan

THE ACB recognizes the significance of the area as an opportunity to contribute to the economic growth of the



LANAo del Norte Gov. Imelda Quibrana-Dimaporo (center) and Municipality of Nunungan Mayor Marcos Masay (second from left) receive certificates of recognition from the AHP Programme Secretariat represented by Dr. Arvin C. Diesmos (right), ACB director of Biodiversity Knowledge Management Department. KBR PHOTO

municipality of Nunungan and the province of Lanao del Norte.

Given that economic activities need to be anchored on the concept of nature-based solutions, the ecosystem services provided by intact biodiversity and habitats will be sustained by protection and conservation efforts of government authorities and the local people.

Lim said the DENR and the Department of Tourism play significant roles in strengthening the MIRNP management plan by formulating a comprehensive information and education campaign with an ecotourism plan in the park.

"Its management needs to be specific in the direction it is planning to take in terms of the type of tourism development it is going to pursue. This will help ensure proper management and higher quality tourism products and services," she said.

She said there is also a need to reinforce the technical knowledge and information of the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) for better implementation of local policies and regulations.

Also critical is harmonizing local development plans vis-a-vis the objectives of the park management through the help of the PAMB.

## 'Highly promoted'

LIM said some AHPs have been highly promoted in all of the ACB's communication channels and knowledge products.

"The AHPs received technical training, participation in AHP conferences and related meetings, learning visits to other AHPs, even livelihood enhancement programs," Lim said.

She added that there are active partnerships with academic and research institutions for joint research and field visits, revision of their respective management plans facilitated by the AHP Committee and the AHP Secretariat.

"The action plans contain specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time based action plans for more effective implementation of conservation measures in the AHP sites," she said.

The ACB, as the nodal for regional implementation among AMS, ensures that the park management plans are aligned with the new global biodiversity target under the CBD, called the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, for enhanced transboundary conservation management and governance, she pointed out.

## Cultural significance

THE natural park plays an important role in the cultural and historical development of Lanao del Norte, as it displays a strong association among the Islamic Maranao communities, the lake and its surrounding forests, Lim said.

MIRNP Protected Area Superintendent Ismail Ambola said it is more than a natural park for the Maranao people.

"Mount Inayawan is a sacred mountain and the center of belief of the Nunungan Maranao people," told the BUSINESSMIRROR via email on July 12.

Being the symbol of the Nunungan Maranao people, the MIRNP became their life because of its provision. This thinking made the Maranao communities living adjacent to the MIRNP support the protection of the area.

## Utmost protection and conservation

ACCORDING to Ambola, the declaration of the MIRNP as an AHP became the tool to ensure the utmost protection and conservation of the protected area.

"It helps the various stakeholders of MIRNP through a collaboration of other stakeholders, not just from local but also from national and international [agencies]," he said.



TARSIER, one of the unique species found in MIRNP AHP PHOTO

Also, there are programs under AHPs that will elevate the economic conditions of local communities living within and adjacent to the protected area.

"Through these programs, the protected area will not be pressured by humans that depend on it for basic needs," he said.

## National, LGU support

ACCORDING to Ambola, the national government and the concerned local government units are already supportive in terms of sustaining the protection and conservation of the MIRNP.

"We are expecting that this support will continue," he added.

Currently, there are only 15 forest guards, or Bantay Gubat, protecting MIRNP.

Ambola said the number is enough to protect the area against destructive human activities because of the collaboration of the Philippine National Police, Armed Forces of the Philippines and barangay officials in the area.

This, he said, is the reason why hunting and illegal logging are not a problem in the MIRNP.

Currently, MIRNP has an annual budget of P5 million, which needs to increase if the level of protection and conservation are to be enhanced.

He proudly said that unlike other protected areas the MIRNP has no occupants or "household within the legislated protected area."

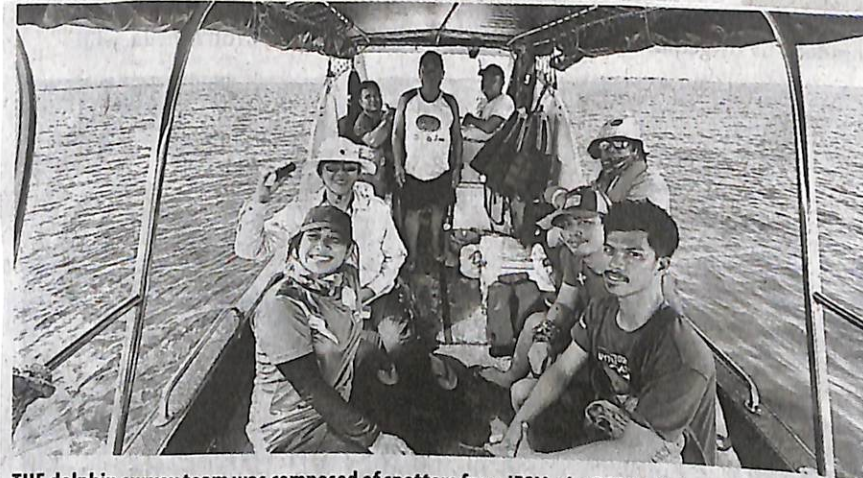
The buffer zones, meanwhile, are occupied by Maranao communities.

Currently, he said the Protected Area Management Office is conducting profiling and appraisal of eligible people's organization for the development of a Biodiversity-Friendly Enterprise.

"This program will improve the socio-economic condition of the communities through implementing economic activities that are ecologically, socially, and culturally responsible," Ambola said.



## Survey confirms fast-disappearing population of critically-endangered Irrawaddy dolphins in Bicol



THE dolphin survey team was composed of spotters from IESM; the BFAR5-Fisheries Protection and Law Enforcement Group; the BFAR-Fisheries Resources Management Section; and the Ateneo de Naga University Institute for Environmental Conservation and Research. MMRCL PHOTO

**N**O sooner has their existence been confirmed that the rare Irrawaddy dolphins (*Orcaella brevirostris*) of San Miguel Bay in Bicol are already at risk of disappearing from the region, said the University of the Philippines Diliman-College of Science Science Communications (UPD-CS Sci-Comm).

Irrawaddy dolphins are characterized by gray or dark-blue backs and pale bellies, with a high tolerance to various levels of salinity that enables them to live in areas where salty seawater and freshwater meet—such as in the mouths of rivers and bays.

They are among the world's most endangered dolphin species, indicated as critically endangered on the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). They are also considered critically endangered by the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

A mission to find live Irrawaddy dolphins in San Miguel Bay in Bicol led scientists from the UPD-CS Institute of Environmental Science and Meteorology (UPD-CS IESM) to validate the existence in the area of this critically-endangered species during a recent dolphin survey conducted from July 6 to 9, 2023, UPD-CS Sci-Comm said.

### Efforts to locate Irrawaddy dolphins

THE team, led by IESM Prof. Dr. Lemnuel Aragones, who is also the head of Marine Mammal Research and Conservation Laboratory (MMRCL), sighted two Irrawaddy dolphins—one near Apuao Island and another near Canimog Island, both in the waters of Mercedes, Camarines Norte.

"These dolphins prefer brackish waters, making the San Miguel Bay area an ideal place for the Irrawaddy dolphins to thrive,

with its shallow depth, a wide range of salinities, and presence of nearby offshore islands," Aragones explained.

The IESM researchers and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Regional Office 5 (BFAR5) were motivated to organize the

dolphin survey after conducting key informant interviews in October 2022 about a stranded Irrawaddy dolphin reported as a bycatch in August of the same year, UPD-CS Sci-Comm said.

The team covered a total area of about 680 square kilometers. In terms of travel distance, they covered a total of 335 km in 23 hours, spread over four days, with transects traversing the shorelines of towns in Camarines Norte and Camarines Sur.

### Seeking refuge in San Miguel Bay

ACCORDING to Aragones, not only do these rare sightings of Irrawaddy dolphins confirm their existence in San Miguel Bay. They also indicate that only a few of these dolphins are left.

"It is most likely that the Irrawaddy dolphins are using the offshore islands in the San Miguel Bay as a refuge area, and that there is now probably much less food for them there since it is one of the most over-exploited fishing

grounds in the country," Aragones explained. He also urged the creation of an action plan with BFAR5 on the protection and conservation of the critically-endangered dolphins.

"I already talked with BFAR5 Regional Director Ariel Pioquinto about enhancing San Miguel Bay again to ensure the Irrawaddy dolphins' habitat," he said. "We hope to harmonize local ordinances with existing national laws regarding protected species."

The dolphin survey team was composed of spotters from IESM; the BFAR5-Fisheries Protection and Law Enforcement Group; the BFAR-Fisheries Resources Management Section, and the Ateneo de Naga University Institute for Environmental Conservation and Research, UPD-CS SciComm said.

Other populations of Irrawaddy dolphins in the Philippines can be found in Malampaya Sound in Palawan and the Iloilo-Guimaras-Negros Occidental area.



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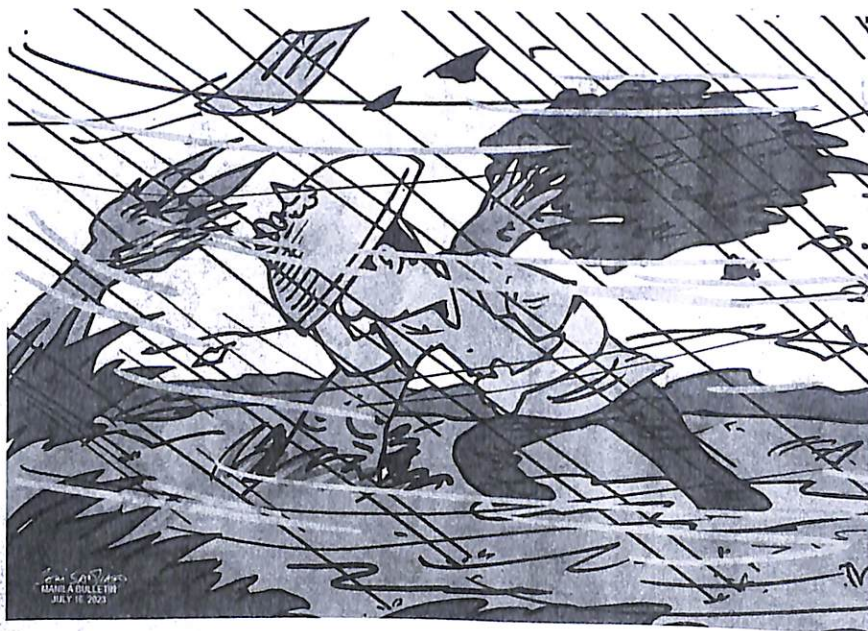
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8 MANILA BULLETIN

Editorial

Sunday, July 16, 2023



## Disaster resilience: How soon we recover from disaster is important

In the past few days, heavy rains caused flooding in many parts of the country due to tropical depression "Dodong." The floods did not only cause heavy traffic that extended a usual short trip to three hours, these also caused damages to crops and property.

Meanwhile, Mayon Volcano's restiveness remains under Alert Level 3, with very slow effusion of lava flow extending to kilometers, and more than 200 rockfall events recorded by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology.

Because of the country's geography, Filipinos are no strangers to natural disasters. "The majority of the country's total land area and nearly three fourths of the Filipino population are vulnerable to multiple hazards, such as typhoons, earthquakes, floods, storm surges, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, and landslides," according to a World Bank report on the country's risk index.

Thus the need for disaster resilience.

How fast communities can bounce back from the damages caused by a tropical depression's heavy rainfall, Mayon Volcano's present state of restiveness, and other natural disasters, is what disaster resilience is about. Resilience is the ability of a community to cope with, adapt and recover quickly from the impact of a disaster.

National Disaster Resilience Month (NDRM) is observed every July throughout the country since the signing of Executive Order No. 29 in 2017, renaming the National Disaster Consciousness Month and shifting its focus from disaster awareness building to disaster resilience.

One of its objectives is to create awareness through activities related to building of disaster resilience covering the four thematic areas: disaster prevention and mitigation, disaster preparedness, disaster response, and disaster rehabilitation and recovery.

Creating awareness is important because disaster resilience cannot thrive as a reaction to a natural disaster. Acting now to be prepared for disasters builds a community's resilience.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Man-

agement Council (NDRRMC), composed of several government agencies, is the lead agency mandated to develop a National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Framework (NDRRMF) to provide for a comprehensive, all-hazards, multi-sectoral, inter-agency and community-based approach to reducing the risks of disasters.

The NDRRMC is tasked to implement programs for the observance of NDRM. The theme of this year's observance is "BIDAng Pilipino: Building a stronger Filipino well-being towards disaster resilience."

Various activities were held during the launching of this year's NDRM. In Central Visayas, the Philippine Red Cross extended a total of P1 billion worth of humanitarian assistance to families affected by disasters in Cebu. This included the construction and repair of houses and livelihood assistance to empower families to recover from the effects of disasters.

In Western Visayas, a DRRM Expo showcased the disaster response capabilities of local government offices, volunteer groups and private sector organizations.

In the National Capital Region, local government units held activities to create awareness on disaster preparedness, which included plans to open training centers for Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (DRRMO) staff and volunteers.

In the private sector, companies boosted ongoing programs to build disaster resilience. A corporation launched the observance by distributing guidebooks for their employees to create disaster preparedness plans for their families.

"The approved NDRRMF envisions safer, adaptive and disaster-resilient Filipino communities toward sustainable development and conveys a paradigm shift from a reactive to a proactive approach to increase people's resilience and decrease their vulnerabilities," the executive order states.

Start your family's plan to build disaster resilience. Have an emergency go-bag at home and in your vehicle. As the experts tell us: Being prepared builds resilience, or the ability to recover quickly from a natural disaster.



## Making 'disaster resilience and future-proof' real

**W**hen the conversation turns to sustainability and ESG agendas, we'll often hear terms such as disaster-reduction, disaster-resilient, and future-proofing; as all three form part of the framework for how corporations involved with property development in this day and age, should responsibly think, and operate. But the sad truth is that it's easy to play lip service to the concepts, and then discover that a huge gap exists between intent and action.

Bridging this gap is of the utmost importance in a country such as our's. And let's keep in mind that while it's challenging enough to be doing this when speaking of one residential tower or office structure, imagine how thornier and complex the problems and concerns get when one is talking about a community, or a sizable horizontal development.

I mention "of the utmost importance" because the Philippines has long been regarded as a nation that's calamity-prone, and vulnerable to natural disasters. The World Risk Report of 2018 placed us third among highest-risk countries; thanks to the regularity of volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and typhoons leading to floods. Our rainy season officially began about a month ago, and Metro Manila dwell-

ers are only too familiar with how a strong down-pour will clog up our sewers, cause flooding, and stymie traffic.

The unabated movement to urban centers, and to coastal cities and towns, exacerbate the perennial issues of proper garbage collection, efficient sewerage, and danger of flooding. Unless we retrofit cities for resiliency; or from the ground up, create sustainable cities, we'll always be looking at patchwork solutions and stopgap measures.

All developers know this, and it often becomes a question of how strongly will they make sustainability part of their operational DNA. In the case of SM Prime, thanks to the firm belief in a sustainability philosophy among those that lead the conglomerate, disaster risk reduction is one of the core strategies. On a regular basis, a significant 10 percent of capital expenditures is dedicated to incorporating disaster resilient features in all SM infrastructure.



**HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRIPE-VINE: OUR NEW ABNORMAL**  
PHILIP CU UNJIENG

If it's about "walking the walk" as well, it's good to note that Hans T. Sy is an acknowledged leader in the private sector when it comes to disaster resilience initiatives, and was elected twice as a board member of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) ARISE International Board. He's now co-chair for ARISE Philippines network, and concurrently co-chair for the Private Sector of the National Resilience Council. SM Prime is also a main partner of the Women's International Network on Disaster Risk Reduction (WIN DRR), which seeks to empower women to attain leadership status, and enhance their role in decision making in disaster risk reduction in the Asia-Pacific.

In over 25 SM Malls, and in their office buildings and SMDC Residences, you'll find rainwater

catchment basins; as they champion disaster resilience via flood prevention. SM malls have been recycling used water for decades, and the treated water is utilized in watering landscapes, water closet flushing, and A/C operations. In SM Baguio, the element of circularity was further enhanced, as SM City Baguio became the prototype for rainwater treatment - turning collected rainwater into potable water for cooking and cleaning.

This innovation becomes impactful as one recognizes how this stored rainwater can help supply the mall with its operational requirements for potable water. As the rainwater treating facilities are introduced to other SM Malls, it's impact of helping conserve the municipal water supply for the citizenry, becomes part of just how responsibly SM views it's role in the community, and how it finds ways to give back.



**BAGUIO MAYOR BENJAMIN MAGALONG** with SM representatives drinking the water from the SM Baguio rainwater catchment basin, now treated and made potable.

In line with realizing the sustainability dream, the SM Smart City projects are raising the bar for sustainable development, leading the way for the aforementioned scenario of "creating sustainable cities from the ground up." It's where people and nature can thrive together - connected habitats linked by travel modes that highlight public and active transport. It's about naturally ventilated buildings, water sourced locally, and intelligent energy systems that are renewable and secure. And it's about minimizing waste, and strengthening a local circular economy.

It's a dream that needs to be realized now, and it's us recognizing who are the best qualified and equipped, to make that dream happen.



**AERIAL VIEW OF Mall of Asia: Developing a sustainable community.**



## Shell Lubricants take on responsible waste management

TO reduce plastic waste and promote circular solutions, Shell Lubricants launched Shell Lube Recycle, a collaborative sustainability project that enables customers and partners to participate in responsible plastic waste management and recycling.

The project will initially roll out with Green Antz as one of the many partners in the pipeline and will be piloted in Mega Manila.

Customers are encouraged to drop off their used lubricant bottles and pails, as well as other plastics, into designated bins located in strategic collection sites with partner auto workshops and car dealers such as Autocasa and Car Doctor in Quezon City; Foton Motor Philippines Inc. in Pampanga (Clark), Valenzuela City, Laguna (Sta. Rosa), Pasig City, and Cavite (Bacoor); and Chery Auto Philippines in Pasig City and Cavite (Bacoor).

The plastic waste collected will be recycled into other useful materials, such as eco-bricks, which are sturdy and durable bricks made from compressed plastic waste. These can be used for both residential and commercial construction, like the commercial building of the Shell Mobility station in Plaridel, Bulacan launched in 2021.



**Jackie Famorca, vice president of Shell Lubricants Philippines**  
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

During the MOA signing ceremony in Taguig City, Jackie Famorca, vice president of Shell Lubricants Philippines, highlighted the initiative's alignment with Shell's commitment to promoting waste management.

"We recognize the need for a fundamental shift in our approach to waste production and management, which inspired our Shell Lube Recycle program that we are launching with Green Antz as the first of the many partnerships in store for this initiative. Let's create a more sustainable future for the next generations to come by converting plastic waste into something useful," said Famorca.

Moreover, this initiative is in support of government policies that promote the increase of recycling rates, including the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Law.



# Water supply cuts on hold; MWSS cites 'rain dance'

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**  
@jordeenelagare

The deities of the Dumagat-Remontado ethnic community must be smiling on Maynilad Water Services Inc. as the company will suspend until today, July 16, the planned supply interruptions in its concession area that are supposed to last as long as 11 hours and affect over half a million customers.

"The rains over Ipo Dam watershed brought by Tropical Depression 'Dodong' have been mitigating the effect of low-

er releases from Angat Dam," Maynilad said in an advisory on Saturday, a relief for consumers, particularly in parts of Calocan, Malabon, Manila, Valenzuela, Navotas and Quezon City.

On July 12, Maynilad started cutting supply due to the decreasing water level at Angat Dam in Norzagaray, Bulacan, amid the dry spell attributed to the El Niño weather phenomenon.

About 591,000 customers have been affected by the service interruptions.

Maynilad's announcement suspending the supply cuts

came after the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) said the "rain dance" performed by some 16 members of the Dumagat-Remontado community in the Angat area appeared to have worked.

## Call to 'ancestors'

"I'm happy to say that I believe that the ancestors heard our indigenous group after they performed a rain dance on Monday," MWSS administrator Leonor Cleofas said in a radio interview on Thursday.

In a social media post, the MWSS said a group of Dumagat-Remontado villagers performed a rain dance near Angat Dam last week for the replenishment of its reservoir, which supplies about 95 percent of Metro Manila's potable water.

"This ritual holds deep spiritual significance for the indigenous community, marked by prayers to natural spirits and to their supreme deity, Makadapat, forming the core of the ceremony," the MWSS added.

This was not the first time that the Dumagat-Remontado

had been asked to perform a rain dance, along with other rituals, to induce rain for Angat. Such rites were also done last year.

## Reduced allocation

With El Niño's return this year, the National Water Resources Board recently reduced its raw water allocation to the MWSS to 48 cubic meters per second from 52 CMS. This was after the water mark at Angat Dam dropped below the minimum operating level of 180 meters.

Water from Angat is split between Maynilad and Manila

Water Co. Inc., with Maynilad getting a bigger share owing to its bigger customer base and proximity to the dam. So far, Manila Water continues to deliver normal supply.

But with or without factoring in the rain dance, some parts of Luzon experienced heavy rains late last week due to a low pressure area and Tropical Storm "Dodong."

The downpour slightly improved Angat's water level to 178.48 m on Saturday from 178.02 m on Friday, according to the state weather bureau Pagasa. INQ





## Bamboo bill's passage in Senate gains support

THE Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Council (PBIDC) has sent a letter to Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri, asking that more stakeholders be allowed to physically attend hearings on the "Bamboo Bill" as a means of rallying support for its approval.

In an interview on Saturday, PBIDC Executive Director Rene Madarang said stakeholders want to show support for the immediate passage of Senate Bill (SB) 605 or an "Act Institutionalizing the Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Program."

The House of Representatives recently passed its version of the proposed law, which promises various fiscal incentives to investors engaged in the cultivation and processing of bamboo into high-value finished products.

Mararang said SB 605 will also serve to fortify the PBIDC's policymaking role in creating community-based enterprises that will have sufficient supply of quality materials and produce new products from research and development-inspired technologies.

If passed, furniture manufacturers will be mandated to use bamboo on at least 25 percent of their raw materials inputs as part of an aggressive campaign to promote bamboo as an alternative to hardwood.

Additionally, bamboo plantations will be accepted as loan collateral in government-owned and -controlled financial institutions, while plantation developers and bamboo processors will have priority access to credit and guarantee.

Bamboo plantations will be exempted from security cutting, harvesting and transporting permits, he added.

"Developing the bamboo industry will not only help investors, but it promises steady economic benefits to planters as well," he said.

He cited as an example the two bamboo nurseries in the municipality of Rodriguez (formerly Montalban), Rizal province, which are already providing income to members of the Dumagat tribe, thanks to a partnership between the PBIDC and the Rotary Club.

The Dumagats are paid regular wages for growing the bamboo propagules in the nursery, and eventually transplanting them to denuded areas within the Marikina Watershed, as part of reforestation efforts to support the watershed's continued viability, said Madarang.

Zubiri, who authored SB 605, said that the Bamboo law enactment "will create among the biggest agriculture industries in the country."

The bill is touted as being aligned with the Marcos administration's aim to "speed up economic development, create livelihood and cushion vulnerable poor populations from climate disasters."

Six other bamboo development-related bills will be deliberated upon in the Senate next week, all of which will help strengthen the PBIDC's mandate, and allocate more resources to this Department of Trade and Industry-attached agency.

"There is a lot of potential in the local bamboo industry. Currently, we are the fifth-largest bamboo exporter in the world. With smart planning and malasakit (concern), especially to our bamboo planters, the Philippine bamboo industry could be a behemoth a few years down the road," Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez said in a statement after the approval of House Bill 7941 in May.

Under the measure, the PBIDC shall be tasked to create the Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Program, to include plans of actions and projects for the scientific propagation, development and management, processing, utilization, business development, and commercialization of Philippine bamboo and bamboo products.

Former House deputy speaker Deogracias Victor Savellano, vice chairman of the PBIDC, said he hopes SB 605 will be ratified within the year.

"It is imperative that the industry that is so natural to us Filipinos can be developed sooner. It has been waiting for a long time now to help our poorest population," he said in a previous statement.

PNA



## Editorial

### Looming water crisis needs audacious plan

**H**OPEFULLY, the recent rainfall mitigates the water shortage that Filipinos were warned to brace for later this year because of the El Niño weather phenomenon. But even with the best possible outcome, bolder moves are needed to break the cycle of seasonal water shortages and avert a future catastrophe.

The government has a good grasp of the problem and has taken many initiatives to address it. Earlier, for instance, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. himself acknowledged there was already a water crisis as he announced the creation of the Water Resources Management Office. It will coordinate the water policies and programs of various government departments.

Mr. Marcos is also looking to implement old laws meant to ensure the security of the water supply. In a recent video message, he said the authorities were looking to capture and store rainwater in "large impounding facilities."

Those should have been built under Republic Act 6716, which was enacted in 1989. That law mandates the Department of Public Works and Highways to build rainwater collectors and water wells and rehabilitate similar facilities in every barangay (village) across the country. At least now, the Marcos administration is looking to implement that law.

The government is also continuing projects started by the Duterte administration, particularly the controversial Kaliwa Dam project in Rizal province. Once completed in 2026, the dam is expected to supply 600 million liters of potable water to Metro Manila residents.

For now, the aging Angat Dam supplies the bulk of Metro Manila's drinking water supply, along with groundwater in the metropolis. But with the water level in Angat running low, the authorities will be reducing supplies to utility firms servicing households and to farmers who also rely on that dam for irrigation. As President Marcos pointed out, Filipinos rely too much on aquifers, and more needs to be done to protect and maximize surface water resources.

The awareness of the problem and initiatives taken by the authorities are all welcome. But given the gravity of the situation, President Marcos should do something audacious to mobilize the country into action.

### Laguna Lake

The government should look more closely at Laguna de Bay. Plans to ensure adequate drinking water supply, at least for Metro Manila and adjacent provinces, should include rehabilitating that lake.

As many people know, Laguna de Bay is one of the largest freshwater lakes in Asia. It can hold around 3.2 billion cubic meters of water. The lake has a total area of 352 square kilometers and an average depth of about 2.8 meters. As those characteristics suggest, Laguna de Bay is a humongous and naturally-made water impounding resource.

Manila Water Co. already taps the lake to supply households in its concession area. But Laguna de Bay might be better appreciated if the water was not so murky because of soil erosion and pollution. Worse, the lake area may be shrinking if reports of unauthorized reclamation are true.

Rehabilitating Laguna de Bay should not only be a national priority but also a matter of self-preservation for those in Metro Manila and surrounding areas. Of course, the Philippines has many lakes, but none as vital to the seat of government.

The Marcos administration should take a page, so to speak, from Rodrigo Duterte. The former president closed Boracay Island for six months in 2018 for a massive cleanup effort.

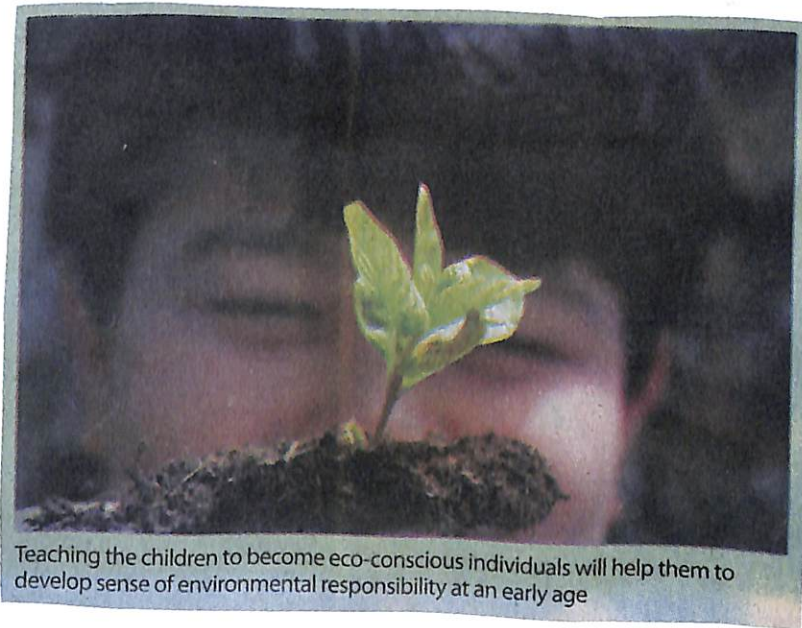
Admittedly, cleaning up Laguna de Bay will be more challenging because of its size, and the coordination needed to address the complex issues will be difficult. For instance, past attempts to stop illegal reclamation were stymied in court. Also, major investments are needed to build more sewerage treatment plants to handle the effluent from residential areas, informal settlers, and industries located around the lake's 220-kilometer shoreline.

Moreover, the authorities need to improve the holding capacity of the lake. They should revisit the need to dredge the lake to improve its average depth. The Arroyo government tried that. But its successor canceled the project and did not introduce an alternative.

Rehabilitating Laguna de Bay will require massive resources and, more importantly, political resolve. Hopefully, President Marcos will take up this challenge.



## EQUIPPING YOUNG ONES TO BECOME ENVIRONMENT CHAMPIONS



Teaching the children to become eco-conscious individuals will help them to develop sense of environmental responsibility at an early age

IN today's rapidly changing world, it is important to instill a sense of environmental responsibility in the younger generation. Being conscious of the environment plays a pivotal role in shaping a sustainable future for the planet.

By nurturing these values in children at an early age, they can be an inspired generation of eco-conscious individuals who will make a positive impact on the world around them.

But how exactly can children be taught to care for the environment? Here are some ways to help in this endeavor:

### Lead by example

Parents should showcase environmentally responsible actions in their own lives, becoming role models for their children. By practicing recycling, conserving energy, and reducing waste, they instill eco-consciousness in their kids.

### Connect with nature

Encourage children to spend time outdoors and explore nature's wonders. By fostering awe and appreciation, kids develop a deep-rooted connection and are motivated to protect the environment.

### Educate through storytelling

Utilize storytelling to impart knowledge and inspire environmental consciousness. Engage children with books, movies, and interactive experiences that highlight caring for the environment and the impact of human actions.

### Emphasize interconnectedness

Teach children that every action has a ripple effect on the environment and living beings. By explaining ecosystems' delicate balance and the significance of biodiversity preservation, children appreciate all life forms' vital role in a healthy environment.

### Collaborate with schools and communities

Engage with schools and community organizations promoting environmental education. Encourage participation in workshops, environmental clubs, and initiatives raising awareness and encouraging sustainability. Empower children as change-makers and environmental stewards.

Philusa Corporation, a homegrown brand, advocates sustainability and greener alternatives for its iconic brands like Babyflo. They prioritize biodegradable, recyclable, and sustainable options, urging effective environmental actions.

With the launch of its eco-friendly cotton buds, Babyflo reaffirms its commitment to providing excellent daily hygiene while caring for the environment.



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COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
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**Senate awaits Palace push on water dep't**

Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri on Saturday said the Senate was not keen on working on the passage of law creating the Department of Water without a push from Malacañang to make it one of the priority measures of the administration. Zubiri said Congress has to get the assurance that its efforts will not be in vain with a possible presidential veto as the executive department has already shown reluctance over the creation of more agencies and fatten the burgeoning bureaucracy. "With the concern of the [Department of Budget and Management (DBM)] about rightsizing the bureaucracy, and since we all know that if it's the DBM and the Department of Finance that makes a position, the chances of creating the DWM becomes bleak, and it will just be a waste of our work in Congress if the President just vetoes it," he said. "If we have an assurance from the President that it will be supported then definitely we have to approve it 100 percent," Zubiri added.

—MELVIN GASCON



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**PCCI CLEANUP DRIVE:** The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry CSR Committee, led by its chairman Nora Lacuna, held a cleanup drive at the Dolomite Baywalk Beach along Roxas Boulevard last July 1. Photo shows Lacuna (6th from left) with over 25 volunteers from the PCCI Secretariat who joined the cleanup project, which yielded more than 50 bags of water lilies and waste. The program was aimed to reduce the coliform level to a standard level and make it safe for swimming as well as raise awareness of the growing garbage problem affecting the beaches around Manila Bay and encourage all businesses and the public to be responsible for garbage disposals.