

19 JULY 2023 WEDNESDAY



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



## Group berates DENR's 'dilly-dallying' in halting land reclamation projects

**T**HE Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakayang Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) on Tuesday slammed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR) supposed "dilly-dallying" in deciding over the issue of land reclamation in Manila Bay.

The DENR is currently holding a Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Reclamation to get inputs from various stakeholders. The latest of such forum was held on Monday with international experts sharing their knowledge and their own country's experiences on land reclamation.

"Manila Bay is dying; the fishing families that rely on it are starving. Why would environment Secretary (Antonia) Yulo-Loyzaga take her sweet time in making a verdict against destructive reclamation projects that are already ravaging marine ecosystems and fishing communities?" Ronnel Arambulo, the group's vice chairperson said in a statement.

Arambulo was reacting to the statement of the DENR that it has tapped marine experts and scientists to determine the potential environmental impacts of reclamation in Manila Bay.

The group has demanded to stop all ongoing reclamation projects in Manila Bay and instead wants the agency mandated to manage the

country's environment and natural resources to reforest Manila Bay's coastal waters with mangroves to boost natural protection against natural calamities like tsunamis, sea level rise and super typhoons.

"It has been long proven by many scientists and experts that reclamation is a disaster to the marine environment and fishing communities. It was no less than the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI) itself that found that the northern and eastern parts of Manila Bay, which includes Cavite, Metro Manila, and Bulacan, are known to have high biomass of fish eggs and larvae. These coastal ecosystems are threatened because of ongoing reclamation and dredging activities," Arambulo said.

Moreover, Arambulo said the scientist group Advocates of Science and Technology for the People (AGHAM) has been expressing interest in working with the DENR for science and evidence-based alternatives to all ongoing reclamation projects.

"These studies and efforts made by the science sector are more than enough basis for the DENR to unequivocally reject reclamation before it's too late," Arambulo said.

*Jonathan L. Mayuga*



# Manila Water NRW remains low

By DANESSA RIVERA

Razon-led Manila Water Company Inc. managed to keep its non-revenue water (NRW) average at 13.35 percent for the first half of the year, allowing it to sustain 24/7 supply to its customers in the east zone.

NRW is defined as water that is not billed and is lost through leaks and illegal connections.

Manila Water said that for every liter of water it produces, only less than 140 ml-or less than half a cup-is lost.

Its first half average NRW is way below the 25 percent standard set by the World Bank and remains one of the lowest in Asia, putting it at par with first-world countries such as Japan, Germany, England and Wales, and Singapore.

Manila Water said keeping the NRW level at this rate along with the various water augmentation projects allows it to provide continuous and uninterrupted water service despite the reduced water allocation from Angat Dam, which is now at 48 cubic meters per second.

"Despite the reduced allocation due to the declining water level in Angat Dam and with the onset of El Niño, our current projections still confirm that our water augmentation projects, coupled with our low NRW can bridge this deficit and help us supply uninterrupted water supply to our customers," Manila Water corporate communications group director Jeric Sevilla said.

Manila Water said it has been maintaining its NRW average below 14 percent by implementing vigorous maintenance checks, replacement, rehabilitation, and repairs in its more than 5,300-kilometer distribution network.

To eliminate or reduce illegal connections that are rampant in informal settlements, Manila Water launched its flagship program, Tubig Para Sa Barangay or Water for the Community program in 1998.

The program has completed almost 900 projects benefitting nearly two million people from urban poor communities.

Aside from keeping the NRW level in check, Manila Water also

has completed extensive projects in augmenting its water supply during El Niño.

Since 2019, the water concessionaire has embarked on the construction and operationalization of auxiliary water sources adding to the Angat Dam allocation.

At present, Manila Water uses the Cardona water treatment plant with 110 million liters per day (MLD), Alat reservoir rain catchers with 10 MLD, backwash recovery from water treatments plants with 30 MLD, and deepwells that can produce up to 118 MLD.

New and additional water supply will come from Wawa-Calawis water supply project phase 1 with 20 MLD (scalable to 80 MLD), Marikina portable treatment plant with 15 MLD and Eastbay water treatment plant phase 1 with 50 MLD.

Even with augmentation measures in place, Manila Water reiterated its call for responsible use of water.

"Water is not an unlimited resource and must be used very wisely and responsibly. The best time to save is now while we still have it. Remember that the most expensive

water is when you have no water at all," Sevilla said.

Meanwhile, Maynilad Water Services Inc. said it is optimistic that it can facilitate the implementation of its capital expenditure (capex) projects that are essential to enhancing service reliability, including those that will help to mitigate the effects of El Niño.

The company vows to deliver its P163 billion water and wastewater capex projects from 2023 to 2027.

Part of this spending is P16.5 billion, which will be allocated to bring down the firm's water losses to 25 percent by 2027 as set by World Bank. The water company ended 2022 with a NRW level of 43 percent from 68 percent in 2006.

Maynilad president and CEO Ramoncito Fernandez said the water sector now has "a valuable ally" in furthering its goal of improving water services through the Water Resource Management Office (WRMO) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Besides promoting synergies among the various government agen-

cies involved in water, Fernandez said the water concessionaires now has the WRMO to help in getting its concerns prioritized.

Fernandez said water concessionaires are often the ones who have to give way to road or rail projects - rather than the other way around - even if doing so will involve the realignment of existing underground infrastructure and disrupt water service for customers.

"We are very happy that we now have an ally in WRMO," he said.

Last April, President Marcos signed Executive Order (EO) 22 creating the WRMO to manage the Philippines' water resources and respond to the current environmental challenges through integrated government efforts.

Under EO 22, all water-related agencies will be attached to the DENR, among which are the National Water Resources Board, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, Local Water Utilities Administration and the network of local water districts, and the Laguna Lake Development Authority.



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## Manila Water: Stable water supply due to NRW drive

**D**ESPITE the cut in water allocation coming from Angat Dam, Manila Water said it is able to sustain a round-the-clock water supply to its 7.6 million customers in the East Zone due to its "successful campaign" to plug pipe leaks and detect illegal water connections over the years.

In a statement, Manila Water said maintaining its non-revenue water (NRW) low is a major factor in sustaining water supply to its customers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The water company has been maintaining its NRW average below 14 percent by implementing vigorous maintenance checks, replacement, rehabilitation, and repairs in its more than 5300-km distribution network.

"Keeping the NRW level at this rate

along with the various water augmentation projects aid Manila Water in securing continuous and uninterrupted water service despite the reduced water allocation from Angat Dam which is now at 48 cubic meters per second," Manila Water said in a statement.

NRW is defined as water that is not billed and is lost through leaks and illegal connections. For every liter of water that Manila Water produces, only less than 140 ml (less than half a cup) is lost, according to the company.

The World Bank standard is set at 25 percent or lower. Manila Water said its less than 14 percent NRW average, which is one of the lowest in Asia, puts them on a par with first-world countries, such as Japan, Germany, England and Wales, and Singapore. *Jonathan L. Mayuga*



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# UNHRC adopts PH climate resolution

BY BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO

**T**HE United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) unanimously adopted a Philippine-led resolution calling for scaled-up action against climate change, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said.

The UNHRC adopted "by consensus" on July 12 the resolution calling for the urgent creation of a new fund to assist developing countries in addressing climate change "loss and damage," the DFA said on Tuesday.

The resolution was in relation to the landmark decision adopted at the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Egypt in November 2022.

DFA Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and International Economic Relations Carlos Sor-

reta introduced the resolution on human rights and climate change tabled by the Philippines, together with Bangladesh and Vietnam, prior to its adoption by the Human Rights Council in its 53rd session, held on July 12 in Geneva, Switzerland.

"The Philippines welcomes the Council's unanimous adoption of this resolution that mandates the UN Secretary-General to conduct a study on the human rights impacts of loss and damage, exploring equity-based approaches to addressing the same," Sorreta said.

"This is the first study on this

important topic within the context of the HRC, and we look forward to its presentation during the fifty-seventh session of the Council next year," he added.

The resolution raised the need for all countries to adopt interventions that benefit the most vulnerable, facilitate safe and voluntary movement, minimize forced movement, and address human rights protection gaps to reduce the risk of trafficking and exploitation of people on the move, especially women and girls, the DFA said.

It also recognizes the role of women and the importance of safe and meaningful civil society participation in policy and decision-making processes on climate change and calls on States and businesses to uphold their corporate responsibility to respect human rights in the context of the environment and

the climate system.

"No other global challenge adversely affects the enjoyment of human rights so profoundly and so disproportionately than climate change," Sorreta said prior to the adoption of the resolution.

"This resolution, since its launch in 2008, has consistently aimed to shed light on the complex nexus between human rights and climate change in order to contribute to global discussions on the development of just, humane, and equitable climate solutions," he said.

The DFA said the resolution called for deep and rapid cuts in greenhouse gas emissions as well as scaled-up adaptation measures to effectively address the adverse impacts of sudden and slow-onset climate events, including on livelihoods, that negatively affect the enjoyment of human rights, especially in developing countries.



## DA exec pushes closer cooperation in management of water resources

**T**HE Department of Agriculture (DA) sought for closer cooperation among Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) member-countries in the implementation of effective measures to improve water resources management.

During the FAO Conference in Rome recently, DA Undersecretary Mercedita Sombilla emphasized the critical importance of implementing water-related measures efficiently and harmoniously at the national level.

She highlighted the significant step taken by the Philippines through the creation of the Water Resources Management Office (WRMO) via Executive Order (EO) 22, signed by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. in April.

The WRMO will act as a regulatory body to protect water resources, ensure their efficient use, and guarantee their availability for all economic sectors.

"This timely move by the government is crucial in securing the country's water resources for future generations," Sombilla said.

The DA official also highlighted the proactive steps being undertaken by the country to ensure preparedness for the potential worsening impacts of El Niño.

"One of these strategies involves cloud seeding operations to improve water irrigation and other water-impounding facilities, rivers and creeks and groundwater deposits, especially in production areas, critical watersheds and reservoirs," Sombilla added.

"Long-term mitigating measures are also in place to respond to water issues in the country. These solutions involve upgrading

irrigation facilities and dams to optimize water delivery and minimize wastage, constructing flood control and sea wall structures in flood-prone areas, and establishing newly water-impounding facilities in highland areas to capture rainfall," she said.

These measures are decisive responses to the intensifying impact of climate change, Sombilla added.

"The Philippines is also now investing in climate-resilient water infrastructures, such as solar-powered irrigation systems, promoting domestic water and recycling schemes at the household and community level to promote water conservation and advocating nature-based solutions like reforestation and expansion of mangrove areas, use of organic/bio-fertilizer as well as the adoption of water saving and climate resilient agriculture practices and technologies, such as the adjustment of planting calendars, use of alternate wetting and drying, better crop nutrient management," she added.

Furthermore, Sombilla underscored the importance of strengthening the capacity of nations through bilateral cooperation with member countries and tapping the expertise of the private sector to achieve efficient and effective water resource management and infrastructure.

"By working together and supporting each other to achieve the needed integrated management and efficient use of our water resources, under the able guidance and leadership of the Food and Agriculture Organization, is a major step towards our achieving the shared objective of a resilient agrifood system," the DA official said. *Raadee S. Sausa*



## Measures to address the effects of El Niño

ACTING on the directive of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the Water Resources Management Office (WRMO) will issue its recommendations to address the effects of the El Niño phenomenon in the country.

The WRMO, created under EO 22, is under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The President said former Public Works and Highways secretary Rog-

elio Singson will also assist the government in addressing the problem.

According to the President, Singson, a water management expert, will help the government in coming up with a contingency plan for El Niño and in crafting an overall plan for the Philippines.

The country has to convert its water usage from ground water or wells and aquifers to transfer extraction to surface water,

Marcos pointed out.

"Because we have enough surface water. It's just a question of protecting it. We are designing now a system of catchment basins not only for flood control. The original plan was only for flood control. But now, we have said we have to... that flood control always now includes irrigation and sometimes even power, if we can do it," Marcos said.

In terms of water supply for agri-

cultural use, the President said the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) has a design for existing dams to ensure continuous supply.

The President also said the hot and humid weather being felt today is not yet the onset of El Niño.

The President said previously that the government was relying on a newly-created Office of Water Management in addressing the impact of a prolonged dry spell or El Niño.



## Worrisome weather

**T**he past two weeks have been both punishing and confusing for the residents of Metro Manila and its surrounding provinces. The hardship has been caused by the erratic and sudden changes in the weather. The changes are so drastic that we could hardly tell if reports of an extended and cruel El Niño are true or not, and whether or not there really is a shortage in the water supply.

Barely two weeks ago, the Paris-based World Meteorological Organization (WMO) reported that Mother Earth just recorded the hottest week on record. July 3 to be exact was the hottest day in the earth's history, according to the US National Center for environmental prediction, echoing the earlier findings of the WMO. The United Nations likewise made an official declaration to that effect.

We never imagined that such a record would be set during our lifetime.

The scorching heat has been experienced in various parts of Europe, as well as in America which saw wildfires gutting down houses in parts of dry and arid California. Canada has not been spared from these wildfires triggered and stoked by record-breaking temperatures.

When the report of the hottest week on record was announced, the country itself was reeling under extreme heat and humidity. Even prior to the announcement, various parts of Luzon had already been recording their own respective record heat indexes.

During that time, we felt like we were still at the peak of summer in the midst of July.

The advent of the extreme heat indexes was made even more worrisome by an announcement by East Zone water distribution concessionaire Maynilad. Its customers were told that there would be a nightly interruption of the supply of water. According to the firm, the supply of bulk water was insufficient, making it necessary to limit distribution.

This week, we got a reprieve both from the severe heat and the shortage of water supply.

Monsoon rains, triggered in part by the exit of Tropical Storm Dodong, came in torrents, flooding many parts of Metro Manila and Central and Southern Luzon, bringing traffic at the South Luzon Expressway to a standstill, and triggering the flow of lahar along a river in Pampanga. The latter may have inflicted some damage on a bridge along the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEX), causing its closure and adding woes to motorists bound for and coming from the western part of Luzon.

The sudden, dramatic shift in weather conditions has become truly worrisome.

In addition to the destruction of infrastructure and human health that the recent weather developments bring, we continue to worry about the reliability and security of our supply of water.

Due to the recent monsoon rains, Maynilad announced that it is temporarily suspending the nightly interruption in water supply. It appears the rains have improved the inflow of water into several dams in Central Luzon. The firm was, however, quick to emphasize

"temporary," and pointed out that the programmed interruption may resume when the abundant inflow of water into our dams ceases.

The worry over water is not exclusive to our country. It is a global concern. The WMO director for climate services himself said that the world "is an uncharted territory.. "We expect more records to fall as El Niño develops further and these impacts will extend into 2024," he pointed out.

What worries the international community most is the impact of worrisome weather conditions on our ecosystems and on our farms. Despite the advent of modern agriculture technologies, fresh water remains the single most important farm input. Without it, we cannot produce food to feed our ballooning population.

For countries like ours, the situation becomes even more worrisome since water is a resource shared by many sectors: residences, industries, farms, and the power generation sector. When the water supply is tight, government agencies are forced to reallocate the supply of water to the sector that needs it most, sacrificing the needs of other sectors in the process.

*The scorching heat has been experienced in various parts of Europe, as well as in America which saw wildfires gutting down houses in parts of dry and arid California.*

We are encouraged by the fact that the President publicly acknowledged the water crisis in March of this year when he said some 11 million Filipino families lack access to clean water, particularly during the dry season.

We have faith that the President would consider the growing clamor for the creation of a Department of Water which will harmonize the programs and policies of the national government and hasten the completion of projects designed to bring in new sources of clean water. We laud the President for taking the initial step in this direction when he created the Water Resources Management Office under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

However, the creation of an independent department exclusively focused on worrying about and working on the sufficiency and sustainability of our water supply will be the better piece of news.

Meanwhile, we ask our readers not to be lulled into complacency by the spate of monsoon rains. This may be a temporary relief. The worry over water is not over. (antipulocitygov@gmail.com.)



### THE VIEW FROM RIZAL

DR. JUN YNARES





# Kerry: Climate change a threat to humanity

**B**EIJING: Global warming poses a threat to all humankind and requires a new kind of cooperation between China and the United States, Washington's climate envoy John Kerry told Chinese officials on Tuesday.

Kerry has called for "urgent action" by China and the US to tackle the threat of climate change as the world's two largest polluters revive stalled diplomacy on reducing planet-warming emissions.

Speaking at Beijing's Great Hall of the People with Chinese foreign policy chief Wang Yi, Kerry underlined the need for "global leadership" on the issue.

His visit to China came as the Northern Hemisphere endured record-setting summer heat waves, which scientists have said are being exacerbated by climate change.

"Climate, as you know, is a global issue, not a bilateral issue. It's a threat to all of humankind," Kerry told Wang.

"This is a matter of global leadership," he said, adding that the world "really hopes for that and needs it."

"Our hope is now that this can be the beginning of a new definition of cooperation and of capacity to resolve the differences between us," he added, noting that "we both know there are real differences."

"But we also know from experience that if we work at it, we can find the path ahead and ways that resolve these challenges,"



**CONFRONTING CLIMATE** United States climate envoy John Kerry (left) and China's foreign policy chief Wang Yi shake hands before their meeting at the Great Hall of the People in the capital Beijing on Tuesday, July 18, 2023. AFP PHOTO

Kerry said.

In response, Wang underlined the need "for a healthy, stable and sustainable Sino-US relationship."

"Cooperation on climate change is advancing under the overall climate of China and the United States, so we need the joint support of the people of China and the United States," Wang told Kerry, who he described as an "old friend."

Climate talks between the two biggest greenhouse-gas emitters came to a halt last year after Nancy Pelosi, then speaker of the US House of Representatives, enraged Beijing by visiting self-ruling Taiwan, which China considers to be part of its territory.

Kerry, a former secretary of state, has enjoyed comparatively cordial and consistent relations with China despite Washington and Beijing locking horns over Taiwan and other issues.

Kerry on Tuesday also met with Chinese Premier Li Qiang, who told the US envoy climate change posed a "daunting challenge."

"It is incumbent on China, the United States and indeed all countries in the world to strengthen coordination, build consensus and speed up actions," Li said.

Kerry met his Chinese counterpart Xie Zhenhua in Beijing on Monday, with the two men speaking for around four hours, state broadcaster China Central Television said.

Both countries "must take urgent action on a number of fronts, especially the challenges of coal and methane pollution," Kerry wrote in a tweet after the talks.

Beijing said after the talks that "climate change is a common challenge faced by all mankind."

Kerry's trip follows two other high-profile visits by US officials —

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen — that were aimed at stabilizing US-China ties.

China on Monday said temperatures hit 52.2 degrees Celsius (126 degrees Fahrenheit) in its northwest over the weekend, setting a record for mid-July.

Xin Xin, an analyst working for the China Meteorological Administration, said in a post on his verified Weibo account that 52.2 C was the "highest measured temperature at a regional station in our country that I have ever seen."

The US has said Kerry, during his trip, would press Beijing not to slow-roll efforts to cut emissions.

"Every country, including China, has a responsibility to reduce emissions," US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan told CNN on Sunday.



URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

# KERRY SAYS CLIMATE CHANGE NEEDS 'NEW KIND' OF SINO-US COOPERATION

BEIJING—Global warming poses a threat to all humankind and requires a new kind of cooperation between China and the United States, US climate envoy John Kerry told Chinese officials on Tuesday.

Kerry has called for "urgent action" by Beijing and Washington to tackle the threat of climate change as the world's two largest polluters revive stalled diplomacy on reducing planet-warming emissions.

Speaking at Beijing's Great Hall of the People with China's top diplomat Wang Yi on Tuesday, Kerry underlined the need for "global leadership" on the issue.

His visit to China came as the Northern Hemisphere endured record-setting summer heat waves, which scientists have said are being exacerbated by climate change.

### Global issue

"Climate, as you know, is a global issue, not a bilateral issue. It's a threat to all of humankind," Kerry told Wang.

"This is a matter of global leadership," he stressed, adding that the world "really hopes for that and needs it."

"Our hope is now that this can be the beginning of a new definition of cooperation and of capacity to resolve the differences between us," he added, noting that "we both know there are real differences."

"But we also know from experience that if we work at it, we can find the path ahead and ways that resolve these challenges."

Wang, in response, underlined the need "for a healthy, stable and sustainable Sino-US relationship."

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### Pelosi enrages Beijing

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Both countries "must take urgent action on a number of fronts, especially the challenges of coal and methane pollution," Kerry wrote in a tweet after the talks. —AFP



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## Kerry: Climate change threat to humankind



US climate envoy John Kerry greets China's Premier Li Qiang in Beijing yesterday.

BEIJING (AFP) – US climate envoy John Kerry said yesterday that global warming represented a “threat to all of humankind” and required “global leadership” as he met Chinese officials in Beijing.

“Climate, as you know, is a global issue, not a bilateral issue. It’s a threat to all of humankind,” Kerry told China’s

top diplomat Wang Yi, stressing it was “a matter of global leadership.”

“We’re very hopeful that this can be the beginning not just of a conversation between you and me and us on the climate track, but that we can begin to change the broader relationship, the world really hopes for that and needs it,” he added.



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# New lava flow cascades down Mayon; quakes spike

By CET DEMATERA and ROMINA CABRERA

New lava flow from Mayon Volcano that cascaded 600 kilometers from the crater has been monitored.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said lava flows along the Mi-isi gully in Daraga and Bonga in Legazpi City, on the other hand, reached 2,800 and 2,400 meters, respectively, yesterday.

Paul Alanis, Phivolcs resident volcanologist at the Lignon Hill Observatory in Legazpi, said the longer and new lava flows occurred during three days of zero visual observation of the volcano due to thick clouds.

"We failed to have a visual observation of Mayon in the past three days... When we measured the lava flows when the volcano became visible yesterday, we collected these new data," he said.

Phivolcs said the number of volcanic earth-

quakes increased again yesterday afternoon, totaling 573.

The volcanic quakes have increased from nine on Sunday to 184 on Monday and 267 early yesterday.

Sulfur dioxide emissions were also high at 2,212 tons compared to 1,689 tons on Monday.

At least 150 rockfall events and three dome collapse generated pyroclastic density currents were also recorded.

Alanis said the abnormal parameters indicate that Mayon's unrest continued to escalate.

He said state seismologists continue to analyze these parameters to determine if there are abrupt changes that may lead to a strong explosion.

Phivolcs reiterated its warning that since Mayon is under Alert Level 3, hazardous eruption is possible within weeks or days.

## Evacuees' mental health

Meanwhile, apart from attending to those

diagnosed with respiratory infections, the Department of Health (DOH) said it would check on the mental health of Mayon evacuees.

"We are set to monitor the mental health of those in evacuation camps since we have not received any report on that yet. There could be cases. But for now, we can't tell how serious are these," DOH Undersecretary Eric Tayag said.

He said prolonged stay in evacuation centers can affect a person's mental health.

"No one will be comfortable being in evacuation centers since this is not their familiar environment, especially those who want to immediately go back to their normal routine," Tayag said.

He encouraged evacuees, especially pregnant women, to seek help when they experience mental health problems.

Latest data showed that 5,392 families or 18,826 people remain in 27 evacuation centers across Albay.

- With Rhodina Villanueva



## SKETCHES

ANA MARIE PAMINTUAN

### Water security

Thanks to heavy rainfall in the past days, water supply rotation in wide areas of Metro Manila has been lifted, and water for irrigation need not be curtailed.

Heavier rains ahead are likely due to the start of El Niño, which tends to trigger extremes of whatever is the prevailing weather condition. This means no more water rotation during the rainy season, but it could resume during the dry season when drought is possible.



One measure of the level of development in a country is the safety of tap water. In advanced economies, you can drink water directly from the tap. If you ask for bottled water, you will be given something fancy like Perrier.

Until my college years, people could still drink water directly from the taps of what we now know as Metro Manila. Even in Parañaque, where water during those days had a distinct taste because it came from deep wells, I never got sick from drinking water directly from my relatives' home taps.

When bottled water was introduced in Metro Manila, many people asked, who would pay for drinking water?

And yet as water pipes deteriorated and the capital region's population surged, with no corresponding expansion in potable water capacity, the safety of tap water became compromised, and bottled water enterprises boomed.

The piped water network of what was called the NAWASA - the National Waterworks and Sewerage System Authority - also did not reach many areas of the capital.

In the property development "projects" south of Manila, people relied mainly on ground water extracted through industrial-grade pumps provided by the subdivision developer, or on household pumps connected to storage tanks.

My house still has water pumps and a massive tank that can store up to three days' worth of the household's regular water needs. This was because we used to get only a few hours of water supply, sometimes only every other day.

The service under NAWASA's successor the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System was so awful that privatization was gladly welcomed by people desperate for improvement. A study conducted by the Asian Development Bank showed that the heavily indebted MWSS serviced only 60 percent of its coverage area, with less than half having 24-hour water service.

After the privatization deal was finalized in what at the time was touted as the deal of the century, I got to tour the water treatment facilities outside Paris of the French partners of Benpres Holdings Corp., Suez Environment and Lyonnaise Asia Water Pte Ltd. Benpres' Maynilad had won the concession for the west service sector.

I was told that the Suez group handled water distribution at the time in Paris, where water from the tap is safe to drink anywhere. Seeing how wastewater was transformed into sparkling potable water in that French treatment plant, I happily anticipated an end to Manila's water woes.

Disappointingly, it took forever for the west zone concessionaire to reach my neck of the woods. Apart from corporate issues, the west sector reportedly needed more extensive work to install new pipes, which required right-of-way agreements plus talks with local water service providers and homeowners' associations.

The Benpres group eventually threw in the towel and Maynilad was taken over by the partnership of DM Consunji Holdings Inc. and Metro Pacific Investments Corp. I don't know what miracle happened, but in no time, the pipes were laid in our village and for the first time since leaving the city of Manila, I could again enjoy piped water around the clock at home.

Even Maynilad and east zone concessionaire Manila Water, however, have their requirements for providing optimum service. Under the privatization deal, the government was supposed to be in charge of providing the water sources - including developing new ones - for distribution by the concessionaires.

I don't remember any significant new water source coming onstream since then. Kaliwa Dam is bogged down in all sorts of controversies that no administration can seem to resolve with a win-win outcome, to borrow a favorite Chinese phrase.

The Chinese come to mind because the world knows how they deal with opposition to the construction of dams and other critical public infrastructure projects - which is to proceed as if the opposition is non-existent, and woe to anyone who believes otherwise.

This, of course, is not possible in our exuberant democracy. But such decisive moves by the state are part of the appeal of China (and Vietnam) for investors. Money doesn't like uncertainty and indecision. Even in our country, I know a number of titans in business and industry who believe we could use a firmer hand and a bit less democracy.

We can't even stop the unending reclamation activities and construction of fishpens owned mostly by political families in Laguna de Bay, which have caused heavy siltation and massive flooding in what was originally a floodplain around the lake.

The siltation and use of the lake for aquaculture have limited the possibilities of tapping Laguna de Bay as a freshwater source for Metro Manila and neighboring areas. Manila Water taps the lake for augmentation.

Some experts have said our archipelago is blessed with abundant sources of fresh water. What's lacking, they say, is efficient water management.

Those who see Kaliwa Dam and other new water sources as a lost cause are looking instead at industrial-scale or community-level rainwater harvesting and wastewater recycling as options.

"Graywater" for recycling is not supposed to include wastewater from toilets and kitchens. I don't know how these can be segregated from wastewater from the laundry and garden; I thought everything ended up in the same septic tank.

Also, wastewater recycling is of course more expensive, and could require treatment agents whose effects on drinking water and human health need deeper study.

But with water sources unable to keep pace with population growth, we have to be open to other options.

As for harvesting rainwater, this was popular in the country before the arrival of piped water networks. There are still old houses with concrete cisterns where water for doing laundry, gardening and cleaning driveways was stored. The water just needs proper containment to prevent it from turning into a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

I wonder if we will ever be water secure in my lifetime. And if I will ever again enjoy drinking water direct from the tap in Metro Manila without worrying about developing gastroenteritis, amoebiasis or, worse, cholera.



## Editorial

### QC a climate leader among world cities

**Q**UEZON City was recently recognized for its leadership in climate action, being just one of six cities worldwide to receive a \$60,000 (P3.3 million) grant from the C40 Cities Inclusive Climate Action Cities Fund (ICA Fund) to support local-level climate initiatives. While the amount of the grant might seem rather modest given the enormous scale of the need for climate action, the recognition should inspire other local governments here in the Philippines to ramp up their own efforts toward climate adaptation and mitigation.

The C40 Cities organization, according to a press statement about the grant awards, "is a network of nearly 100 mayors of the world's leading cities working to deliver the urgent action needed right now to confront the climate crisis and create a future where everyone, everywhere can thrive. Mayors of C40 cities are committed to using a science-based and people-focused approach to help the world limit global heating to 1.5 degrees Celsius and build healthy, equitable and resilient communities." The major funding for the organization comes from Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) and Realdania, and the group is led by London Mayor Sadiq Khan and former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg.

The other cities awarded grants along with Quezon City include Bogotá, Colombia; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Los Angeles, California; Vancouver, Canada; and Warsaw, Poland.

With the grant funding, Quezon City intends to produce interactive informational materials about the city's climate change actions, primarily aimed at children with disabilities and other youth. In a statement, Quezon City Mayor Ma. Josefina "Joy" Belmonte said, "I am proud to join other leading mayors in the world in advancing inclusive and equitable climate action with the support of C40's new Inclusive Climate Action Fund. In Quezon City, we recognize the need for inclusive and accessible information dissemination that caters to all residents, of all backgrounds, educational attainment and age groups, to better engage them in our climate action initiatives. This project will help address this priority, putting the needs of the youth and children with disabilities at the forefront of its design and delivery."

There are several important takeaways from all of this. First, Quezon City's strategy of targeting youth is an effective way to gain public acceptance of changes in behavior necessary to help larger climate change actions. Young people do not have as many bad habits to unlearn as older generations, so good practices such as proper recycling and waste disposal and conservation are not sacrifices or inconveniences for them. And as anyone with children knows, a youngster can be a powerful influence on the entire household.

Second, the recognition of Quezon City's efforts on a global level reflects well not only on the city administration but on the country as a whole. It is important for the Philippines and other climate-vulnerable countries to have a voice in global efforts to combat climate change, and recognition such as that recently conferred on Quezon City only boosts our credibility.

Finally, the grant award should encourage other local government units to find ways to take advantage of the substantial support that is available for their own climate and sustainability initiatives. C40 Cities is far from being the only or largest organization making climate funding available to cities and local communities. The overwhelming majority of them offer support in the form of grants and even offer technical assistance to local government units in designing effective proposals. Initiatives that local governments might want to pursue but are hesitant to do so because of the uncertainty of whether budget resources will be available need not necessarily be set aside because outside support is very likely available.

As we said at the outset, even though the particular grant awarded to Quezon City may be small in scale, its significance is quite large. We congratulate the city government and Mayor Belmonte for their work and the recognition it has received, and we sincerely hope it challenges other cities, municipalities and provinces to make their own mark in a similar fashion.



## GREEN LIGHT

JHON CARLO  
C. SERAPIO

WITH all these things said, the Philippines has the potential to be a global leader when it comes to tourism and hospitality. But it will require continuous improvement and commitment to standards. Are we really serious about maintaining it? As we say, "quality has a cost." How far can we go to maintain our desire to protect the integrity of excellence? Allow me to share what I refer to as the Three R's for the continuous progress of our tourism industry.

### Real investments and partnerships

We must invest in tourism drivers that can greatly advance the delivery of our services, such as accessibility, amenities, attraction, activities, and accommodation. Palawan is positioning itself as the primary cruise destination in the Philippines; to realize this vision, it invested in ports that can accommodate various types of cruise ships.

They are ready to welcome small and big cruise ships to their islands. Also, it is time to witness real partnership and collaboration among the government, private sector, and local communities to ensure sustainable and world-class Philippine Tourism. We need to develop more community-based sustainable tourism projects to provide opportunities for locals without inflicting the environment.

### Reputation Building

How do foreign tourists perceive us as a country? What image do we portray in the international community that can boost their interest and desire to visit the Philippines? Safety and security is an utmost concern for any tourist. It is important to establish a solid brand that will not only promote the Philippines as a fun destination, as we say in our tourism slogan, "It's more fun in the Philippines," but a well-defined message that will assure tourists of their safety and security.

Despite the many attractive attractions we can offer as a destination, tourism products are highly substitutable. Any negative reviews not adequately addressed can result in tourists seeking alternative options. We certainly do not want another kidnapping and terrorism story in the Philippines that spread globally and almost crippled our tourism industry.

### Rejuvenation

While preservation is a priority for natural attractions, it is important to note that too much familiarity with the destination, without any substantial improvements over time, can lead to boredom. Eventually, this can result in a decrease in tourist visits. For instance, in the case of Palawan, a tour guide informed me about the ongoing development of new attractions, both natural and events, in the southern part of the province. This aims to spread the potential tourism opportunities across the entire island.

The rejuvenation process does not disrupt the natural form of our country's flora and fauna, which is the differential advantage of our country. However, introducing additional "attractions" that can ignite their curiosity can generate interest among tourists to visit and explore the destination.

Recently, the DOT launched its new tourism slogan, "Love the Philippines." According to Secretary Frasco, the enhanced slogan goes to the very heart of every single Filipino with the distinct grace and hospitality with which we welcome every guest that comes to our shore, our communities, and our homes. She added that "Love the Philippines" recognizes our natural assets, our long and storied history, and our rich culture and diversity. The future of Philippine tourism does not solely depend on the key individuals directly responsible for its delivery. We are

the heart of Philippine tourism. Filipinos themselves are the genuine gem of the Tourism Industry.

I started and will end this article with a question: Are we ready to become the face of excellence in hospitality and tourism in Asia? Think about it.

*The author is a Doctor of Business Administration student at the Ramon V. del Rosario College of Business, De La Salle University. He can be reached at jhon\_@dlsu.edu.ph.*

*The views expressed above are the author's and do not necessarily reflect the official position of DLSU, its faculty, and its administrators.*



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## NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

On the **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS)** of the proposed **GUTALAC NICKEL PROJECT** of the **FLORJENMAR MINING AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (FMDC)** to be located in **BARANGAYS BACONG AND BAYANIHAN, GUTALAC, ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE**.

Notice is hereby given to all parties who wish to give their opinion regarding the implementation of the proposed **GUTALAC NICKEL PROJECT** to attend the Public Hearing on:

Date	Time	Venue
26 July 2023 (Wednesday)	9:00 AM <i>Registration starts at 8:30a.m.</i>	Covered Court, Brgy. Bacong, Gutalac, Zamboanga del Norte

The Public Hearing is being conducted in connection with the review of the EIS of the aforementioned project by the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The following is the project information:

<b>Project Name</b>	Gutalac Nickel Project	
<b>Project Location</b>	Barangays Bacong & Bayanihan, Gutalac, Zamboanga del Norte	
<b>Project Type</b>	Extraction of metallic minerals	
<b>Project Area</b>	114.50 hectares	
<b>Project Capacity</b>	500,000 MTPY	
<b>Project Rationale</b>	The mining industry in the Philippines is an engine for growth in the local and regional economy providing critical employment, infrastructure development, industrialization, and rural development that transform and create self-sustain communities. Thus, the mining operation of FMDC is expected to generate the same benefits in both local and national economies. It aims that over the life of the mine not only of Parcel 2 but of the whole tenement areas assigned to FMDC that the communities will benefit from the mining-related programs and activities.	
<b>Project Components</b>	<b>Components</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>
	Mining Area	81
	Stockpiles at Mining Area ( <i>High-grade, Marginal-grade, Low-grade, Topsoil</i> )	10
	Waste Dumps	4
	Mining Contractor's Equipment/Motorpool	0.5
	Camp Site/Mine Office ( <i>Offices, Warehouse, Core House, Fuel Depot, Nursery, Assay Laboratory, Staff &amp; Guesthouses, Recreational Area</i> )	2.62
	Pier/Causeway	0.01
	Pier Facilities ( <i>Stockyard, Multipurpose shed, Fuel Depot, Security House</i> )	0.24
	Stockyards & Drying Areas at the Port ( <i>Solar/Wind Drying Pad, Ore Stockyard, Dry Ore Stockpile Area, Equipment Service Area</i> )	12
	Road Networks ( <i>Haul roads from mining area to port, Brgy. Road from mining area to Brgy. Bacong, Access Roads, Campsite to mining area</i> )	10
	Source of power – 2 units of generator sets with 200 kVA capacity and 3 units of generator sets with 15 kVA capacity for pumps and lighting	
	Source of water – nearby springs; approximately 80,000 liters per day	
	Pollution Control Facilities – siltation ponds, waste dumps, topsoil stockpile, oil-water separators, materials recovery facility, hazardous waste storage facility, septic tanks	
<b>Proponent</b>	Florjenmar Mining and Development Corporation	

All interested parties who wish to attend or participate in these Public Hearings should preferably confirm their attendance/participation and may give their opinion(s) in a concise position paper to the **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT DIVISION (EIAMD)** of this Office through mail or email at [eia@emb.gov.ph](mailto:eia@emb.gov.ph), at least three (3) days before the Public Hearing schedule. Those who will not be able to register or submit written positions may be given the opportunity to share their issues on the day of the hearing itself.

The project's EIS and Executive Summary for the Public are downloadable at our website: [www.eia.emb.gov.ph](http://www.eia.emb.gov.ph) (*kindly access the Notice of Public Hearing/ Consultation link found on our website*) while copies will be available in the following offices:

- EMB Region IX**  
Purok Tugas, Balangasan District, Pagadian City Tel. No. (082) 945 3228
- Gutalac Municipal Hall**  
Municipality of Gutalac, Province of Zamboanga del Norte
- Bacong Barangay Hall**  
Brgy. Bacong, Gutalac, Zamboanga del Norte
- Bayanihan Barangay Hall**  
Brgy. Bayanihan, Gutalac, Zamboanga del Norte

For more details, please contact the EIAMD Division at this Office at telephone number (02) 8539-4378 loc. 116 through the project case handler Ms. Leonil Marie Garger and Engr. Joel Polintan.

MT - July 12 & 19, 2023

*mygd*