

17 September 2022, Saturday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

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# The Manila Times

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## P4-M narra lumber seized in Nueva Vizcaya

**SANTIAGO CITY:** Regional Executive Director Gwendolyn Bambalan of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Cagayan Valley on Friday vowed to be more vigilant in their anti-illegal logging drive even as environment agents and police seized narra flitches worth P4 million on Wednesday in Calitlitan, Aritao, Nueva Vizcaya.

The seizure came barely two days after authorities seized P900,000 worth of narra lumber from two private vans in Santa Fe, Nueva Vizcaya on September 12.

Bambalan said the DENR-Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office of Nueva Vizcaya through the Cagayan Valley Product Monitoring Station led the operation.

The narra lumber, loaded in a 14-wheeler cargo truck, was intercepted by DENR personnel stationed at the south exit monitoring point in Barangay Calitlitan, Aritao town.

In a verification report, it was found out that the undocumented 281 pieces of lumber with a total volume of 8,155 board feet originated from Barangay Buwaya, Balbalan in Kalinga province.

"However, the region is strengthening the forest protection convergence initiatives with Region 1 (Ilocos Region) and Cordillera Administrative Region for a stringent anti-illegal logging campaign of the Department," she added.

She ordered the regional environment chief to direct all forest protection officers manning

the checkpoints to ensure that no conveyance or forest product without a transport permit shall pass through the checkpoint.

"I would like to appeal to the public to report to the nearest DENR Office any environmental illegal activities for us to

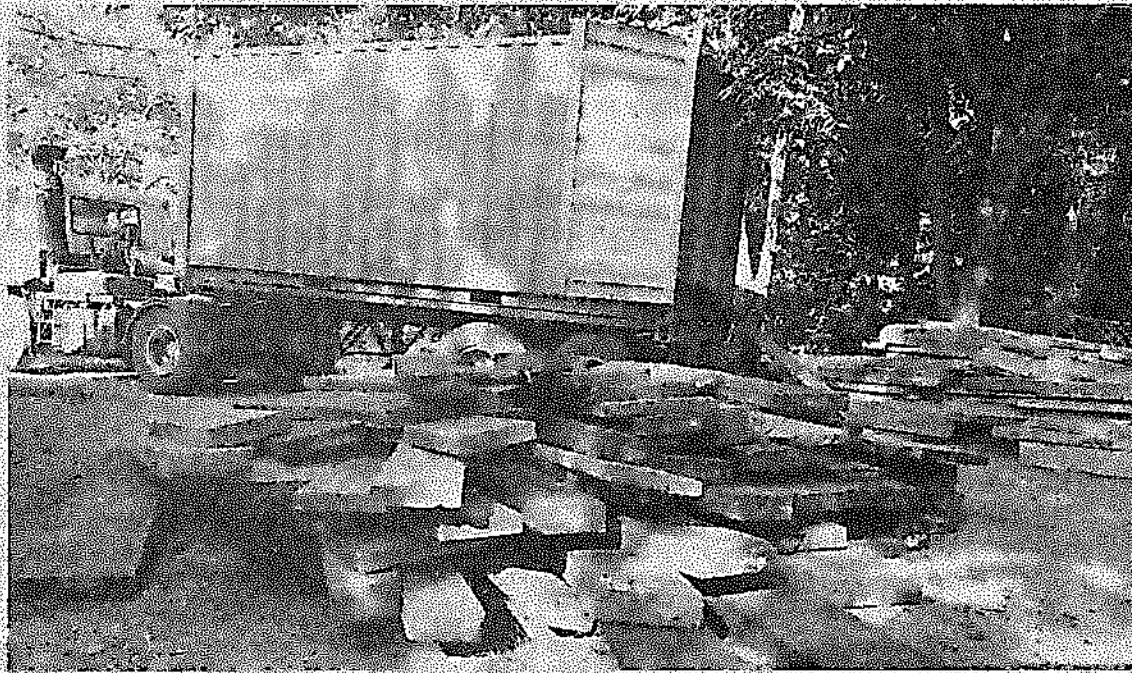
alert our concerned officials and conduct immediate verification," she added.

"I was alarmed by these apprehension incidents. I always order the DENR enforcement group to be proactive in forest protection. I told them that our approach

is preventive rather than confiscation," she said.

The three individuals manning the truck are now under the custody of the Aritao Police Office for investigation.

**VINCE JACOB VISAYA**



**HOT LUMBER** Narra flitches with an estimated value of P4 million were confiscated by environment agents and the police on Wednesday, Sept. 14, 2022, in Calitlitan, Aritao, Nueva Vizcaya. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



## P4M narra nasabat sa Nueva Vizcaya

**ARITAO, Nueva Vizcaya -** Umaabot sa P4 milyong halaga ng narra na lulan sa isang truck ang naharang ng mga kawani ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources at pulisya sa checkpoint sa Calitlitan, Aritao, ng ilawigang ito.

Nakuha mula sa sasakyan na may tractor head (NDC 7499) at trailer number 130110 ang 81 piraso ng narra lumber bar fitches na umaabot sa halagang P4,077,500 na ihahatid sana sa Pasig City.

Naaresto ang driver na

sina Cecilio Macalos, driver ng San Jose del Monte Bulacan at kanyang pahinante na sina Armario Cahayagan, 50, residente ng Brgy. Kurbada Norzagaray, Bulacan at Arcadio Pascual, 50, residente ng Pinokpok, Kalinga.

Ayon kay Forester Jay Marshal Jasmin, team leader ng checkpoint, naitimbre sa kanila ang paparating na sasakyan kaya inabangan nila ito sa checkpoint.

Huminto naman ito at nakumpirmang may kargang mga kahoy na galing sa Kalinga.

Walang maipakitang kau-

kulang papeles ang tatlo para sa kargang kahoy.

Ihaharap ang tatlong suspek sa korte para sa pag-sasampa ng paglabag sa section 77 ng PD 705.

Ayon sa DENR, ibinase nila ang komputasyon sa 500 kada board foot pero posibleng aabot sa 700 o 800 kada board foot ang presyo nito sa Metro Manila.

Ito na ang ikalawang pagkakataon na nakakumpiska ang awtoridad ng milyo-milyong halaga ng iligal na pinutol na kahoy.

**REY VELASCO**



## Air pollution worsen in Metro Manila

THE easing of pandemic restrictions worsened the air pollution in Metro Manila, an official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said on Friday.

The DENR's Environmental Management Bureau Director William Cuñado said that during the implementation of Covid-19 restrictions, all the monitoring stations in the National Capital Region (NCR) registered green which meant good air quality.

Because of the lockdowns, only 10 percent or 35,000 of the 350,000 vehicles in the NCR were allowed to operate.

"During the pandemic, there was a reduction of 90 percent in volume of the vehicles plying within Metro Manila. Because of this, there was a dramatic reduction in air pollutants. There was a good quality of air because of the small volume of vehicles. Almost all the stations have green color, meaning to say that we have good quality of air within Metro Ma-

nila," Cuñado said.

However, as pandemic restrictions eased, a gradual change in the air quality was noticed.

"Now that the vehicles allowed outside are almost the same compared to the volume we had prior to the pandemic, from green, we have monitored yellow or even orange colors," Cuñado said.

Yellow signifies fair air quality while orange means air quality can be unhealthy for sensitive groups such as those with respiratory problems like asthma.

"The air pollution could aggravate their ailments," Cuñado said.

He added that air pollution is high during heavy traffic in a particular area.

"This is the accumulation of gases discharged in a certain area, especially if there is a high concentration of people that are moving and there is heavy traffic. There is an increase in the particulate matter and other substances," the official said.

**BELLA CARIASO**



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# DENR urges tree-planting activities

BY MAR SUPNAD

LIMAY, Bataan — Department of Environment and Natural Resources is calling on the public to initiate tree-planting and tree-growing programs as a way of protecting the environment from future natural disasters.

DENR assistant regional director Laudemir Salac assured that the Provincial and Community DENR offices in Bataan headed by Raul Mamac — together with the local government units — are consistently monitoring and maintaining the growth of

the trees planted.

In a related development, Camille Bartolome of the Philippine Information Agency reported that some 1,000 tree seedlings of narra, baniboo, and cashew were planted in barangays Lamao and Alangan in Limay, Bataan.

This is part of the "Buhayin ang Pangangalaga sa Kalikasan" nationwide simultaneous tree planting activity of Department of the Interior and Local Government, DENR and Department of Agriculture in collaboration with other national government agencies and LGUs.



## Fishermen decry San Miguel's reclamation project

BY CHERK BALAGTAS

A fishermen's group yesterday scored San Miguel Corporation for its alleged arbitrary removal of mussel farms and fish pens in Navotas City to pave the way for its reclamation project.

The Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas has requested an immediate onsite investigation by the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources so it can see for itself what SMC reportedly did.

SMC, the group told DENR, was fast-tracking the

dismantling of fishing structures as the private proponent in reclaiming at least 650 hectares.

The removal of the mussel farms and fish pens has deprived about 1,000 fishermen and fish workers of their livelihood, the group said in its electronic letter to the DENR.

The company has been offering affected owners "unreasonable compensation," it added. Aside from the socio-economic effects, the reclamation poses a threat to the "fragile marine ecosystem and biodiversity of Manila Bay," the group said.

Said reclamation project is in

direct conflict with the Manila Bay Rehabilitation Program of the DENR, the group pointed out, noting a 2008 Supreme Court order to clean up Manila Bay and restore its waters to be fit for human recreation and the development of fishery resources.

The letter appealed to the DENR to conduct an investigation to assess the potential effects of the reclamation project on the marine environment, affecting the livelihood of the fishing communities.

A cease and desist order against SMC was requested by the group.



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REGIONS

## Local gov't stops Tampakan mining

The municipal government of Tampakan, South Cotabato, has revoked the business permit of Sagittarius Mines Inc. (SMI), the developer of Southeast Asia's largest untapped copper-gold reserve, due to alleged fraud and misrepresentation. Mayor Leonard Escobillo canceled the permit issued to SMI, which is pursuing the controversial \$5.9-billion Tampakan mining project. —STORY BY BONG

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# South Cotabato town shuts down Tampakan mining

**Closure ordered after the local gov't revoked Sagittarius Mines'**

**business permit over 'false statements' in application**

**By Bong S. Sarmiento**  
**@InqNational**

TAMPAKAN, SOUTH COTABATO—The municipal government of Tampakan in South Cotabato province revoked the business permit of Sagittarius Mines Inc. (SMI), developer of Southeast Asia's largest untapped copper-gold reserve, due to alleged fraud and misrepresentation of its activities.

Mayor Leonard Escobillo canceled SMI's permit to do business in the town based on the Municipal Tax Code of 2012, which allows the local chief executive to revoke or deny business permits if the applicant deliberately makes false statements in its application.

SMI has been pursuing the controversial \$5.9-billion Tampakan mining project, a near-surface minefield that was launched here in January 2003.

The notice of revocation of SMI's mayor's permit was served on Thursday by the municipality to the company's offices here and in the town of Polomolok, also in

South Cotabato, Escobillo said.

The core farm of SMI in Barangay Liberty here was padlocked as a result of the cancellation of the firm's business permit, Escobillo added.

#### 'Nothing personal'

"There's nothing personal in this case. We are just doing our obligation, which is to implement our tax ordinance (to increase local revenues)," Escobillo told reporters in a press conference on Friday.

The revocation came on the heels of a petition filed by SMI against the Tampakan municipal government before a local court asking for a review and issuance of a temporary restraining order against the collection of P397 million in accumulated taxes and surcharges it demanded from the company.

Stressing that the local government was not zeroing in on SMI, Escobillo said all business establishments had been subjected to a tax audit in a bid to improve local revenue generation.

Last month, some business





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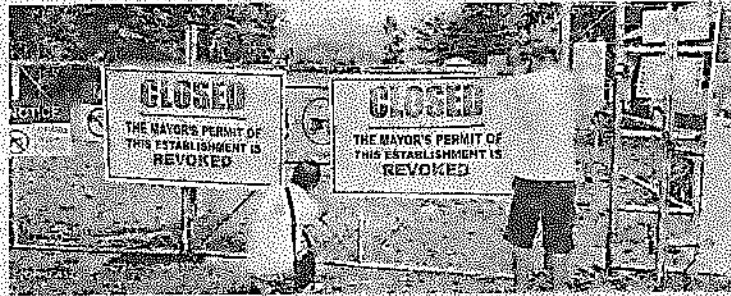
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FILE: South Cotabato town...

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**CLOSED** Workers of the Tampakan local government put a notice of closure on the entry to the core farm of Sagittarius Mines Inc. in Barangay Liberty on Thursday after its business permit was revoked. —CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

establishments with deficiencies already settled their tax obligations, he said.

It was found that SMI had deficiencies for business tax between 2020 and 2022 as well as mayor's permit fees and other regulatory fees from 2013 to 2022.

"This order of mine is not in relation to the cases they have filed," he added.

**'False claim'**

Lawyer Nena Santos, legal counsel of the Tampakan local government, stressed that the

revocation of SMI's mayor's permit "has nothing to do" with the case filed by the firm.

Santos, speaking in the same press conference on Friday, said the closure order was done because of the alleged false statement that SMI made in its application for mayor's permit.

"The company falsely claimed they are already into manufacturing," she said, noting the firm has not yet gone into commercial mining operations.

Santos noted that the gross receipts the company declared

with the local government were based on the sales of unserviceable assets such as tables, computers, vehicles and other equipment, which can be considered as other income but not due to the company's mining operation.

The Inquirer sought comment from SMI but the firm had yet to reply as of press time.

From 2004 to 2011, SMI classified itself as a general engineering contractor but changed its status to a manufacturer in 2012, Santos said.

But according to Escobillo's revocation notice, the assessment of the Municipal Treasurer's Office classified the firm as still a general engineering contractor and not a manufacturer as claimed by the company.

**Mining ban**

The main obstacle to SMI's operation of its mining tenement is South Cotabato's environment code that bans the open-pit method of extracting the minerals.

Jaybee Garganera, coordinator of Alyansa Tigil Mina

(ATM), an antimining advocacy group, lauded the municipal government for "applying the law and holding the mining company accountable for its false statements in its mayor's permit documents."

ATM chair Rene Pamploña called the mayor's action a "welcome development, especially among us, residents of Tampakan, who have been opposing mining in the area."

The Tampakan project has the potential to yield an average of 375,000 tons of copper and 360,000 ounces of gold in concentrate per year over the proposed 17-year life of the mine.

For the first phase or first 10 years of the Tampakan operations, national and local taxes are pegged at P68 billion and P4 billion, respectively.

Royalty for indigenous peoples, on the other hand, is projected to reach P4.8 billion and social development and management program, P2.6 billion.

—WITH A REPORT FROM JORDEENE B. LAGARE INQ



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THE Earth Island Institute Philippines, together with green advocacy groups and volunteers, leads a clean-up drive at the Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area (LPPCHEA), popularly known as the Freedom Island. The group yesterday called on the public anew to stop the use of single-use plastic, which has caused a worldwide environmental catastrophe. (Manny Llanes)



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**Volunteers and members of environmental groups such as the Earth Institute Philippines conduct a clean-up drive at the Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area, more popularly known as the Freedom Islands, yesterday.**

**ERNIE PEÑAREDONDO**





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**ALL THAT TRASH** Army reservists gather trash at the Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area, also known as Freedom Island, to mark the International Coastal Cleanup Day 2022. PHOTO BY RENE H. DILAN



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**DOLOMITE BEACH CLEAN-UP** – Metropolitan Manila Development Authority workers clean up the Manila Bay dolomite beach on Thursday, Sept. 15, 2022. (Manny Llanes)



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# Daily Tribune

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Editor [@tribunephil\\_jhd](#)



PHOTOGRAPH BY AL PADILLA FOR THE DAILY TRIBUNE [@tribunephil\\_al](#)

VOLUNTEERS gather garbage for collection by waiting dump trucks as part of the Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park cleanup drive Friday. The area is being primed as an ecology-tourism area.



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**Kabilang ang mga ginamit na face mask, antigen test kit at plastic bottles sa mga basurang naipon sa isinagawang International Coastal Clean-up Day kahapon sa Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area. (Jonas Sulit)**



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## ECOTOURISM CLEANUP.

Members of Earth Island Institute Asia-Pacific held a coastal clean-up at the Las Pinas - Paranaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area (LPPCHEA) also known as Freedom Island in time for the celebration of International Coastal Clean-up Day 2022 held globally every third Saturday of September. **Norman Cruz**







## RAT-TO-CASH AT WASTONG PAGTATAPON NG BASURA



NAGKAROON ng "hanapbuhay" ang mga taga-Marikina City sa inilunsad na kampanya ni Mayor Marcelino Teodoro na rat-to-cash program.

Ito ay kampanya upang masawata ang sakit na leptospirosis, isang bacterial disease mula sa ini ng daga, na laganap o tumaa ang kaso ngayon dahil sa baha na dulot ng sunod-sunod na pag-ulan.

Bawat isang daga na mahuhuli, patay o buhay, babayaran ng Marikina City government ng P200. Walas-tiki!

Kung makahuhuli ang isang indibidwal ng 5 daga, presto... kikitay siya ng 1 bulig.

Kaya nga may isang grupo ng mga tomador sa lungsod na abala sa panghuhuli ng mga daga para magkaroon sila ng "pangtoma" at "pampulutan". Hiki! Hiki! Hiki!

Maganda ang naisip na ito ni Yorme at kahit na papaano, natutulungan niya ang kanyang mga ka-lungsod para kumita ng pera sa "malinis na paraan".

Ngunit hanggang kailan ito gagawin ni Teodoro?

Kung isa lamang ito sa kanyang mga "PR stunt", nag-aaksaya lamang siya ng pera.

E kasi, baka ubos na ang pera para pambayad sa bawat nahuling daga, ang mga daga naman ay tinatawanan lang siya dahil talaga namang mahirap silang maubos at masawata.

Hanggang hindi natututo ang mga tao sa pagiging malinis sa kanilang kapaligiran o hindi marunong sumunod sa wastong pagtatapon ng basura, patuloy lang na magpipista ang mga daga na nagdadala ng iba't ibang uri ng sakit.

Aba'y baka nga kung bibitangin o mababaligtad ang mundo, masasakop na tayo ng mga daga dahil mas marami pa

sila kaysa sa mga tao.

Hindi lang naman ang Marikina ang gumawa ng ganyang "PR stunt", kundi marami nang lugar.

Dahil "PR stunt" o "papogi" lamang sa mata ng madla, hindi rin nagtagumpay. Sanlaksa pa rin sa ating kapaligiran ang mga mapamasteng mga daga.

Dapat siguro, muling higpitan ang batas o mga ordinansa laban sa hindi wastong pagtatapon ng basura.

Paigtingin sana lalo ang mga programa o proyekto sa paglilinis sa mga kanal at estero.

Kung walang basura, walang baha at siyempre, walang daga.

Disiplina ang kailangan, hindi propaganda



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PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF HOTEL 101

HOTEL 101 Group 101 tree planting activity in Iloilo City with Injap Tower Hotel, Hotel 101 Group Sales and Marketing team, and Philippine Coast Guard Marine Environmental Protection Command Western Visayas



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# Nayong Pilipino holds tree planting activity on World Environmental Health Day

Nayong Pilipino Foundation, an attached agency of the Department of Tourism, organized a tree planting activity ahead of the World Environmental Health Day while waiting to get funds to develop its 9.5-hectare property in the Entertainment City, Parañaque on 9 September.

The said park is envisioned to serve as a "heritage space" with pocket gardens, open spaces, a library, and a museum that houses its "rare artifacts" and collections highlighting the country's cultural heritage.

NPF has been severely affected by the pandemic, causing grave effects on its financial status and operations. The P2 billion fund allocated by the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority which was supposed to jumpstart the building of the Nayong Pilipino Cultural and Creative Hub in Parañaque City was put on hold to address the Covid-19 emergency pursuant to Republic Act 11469 or the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act. The said project was supposed to generate income not only for the NPF but for the national government, as well.

In the meantime, the foundation is looking to establish a tree-lined park on a portion of the 9.5-hectare land by organizing tree planting activities in partnership with other government agencies, private sectors, and civil society groups. In partnership with the Rotary Club Candubang, some 170 samplings were planted. "Our partnership with the Rotary Club is an example of how collaboration can raise awareness about today's most pressing environmental concerns. Only by working together, we can protect people and provide communities with healthier environments for generations to come," said NPF executive director Gertie Duran-Batocabe.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY  
OF NAYONG PILIPINO FOUNDATION  
NPF is looking to establish a  
tree-lined park by organizing  
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government agencies, private  
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## Manila Zoo to open in December - Mayor Honey

MANILA City Mayor Maria Shiela "Honey" Lacuna-Pangan assured the public that Manila Zoo, now known as the Manila Zoological and Botanical Garden, will be open in December this year.

Mayor Honey said she will announce later the exact date of the opening of one of Manila's favorite attractions but guaranteed that visitors will certainly enjoy the new and improved Manila Zoo on Christmas Day.

The Manila Zoo, considered a top landmark of the City of Manila was first opened to the public on July 25, 1959 but on January 23, 2019, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ordered its indefinite closure after it was identified as one of Manila Bay's major pollutants.

Mayor Lacuna said final touches are still being made to make sure that the public can promenade to one of the best zoos in the country. **Edd Reyes**



# Manila Zoo bubuksan na sa publiko sa Disyembre – Mayor Honey

NI EDD REYES

TINIYAK ni Manila Mayor Maria Sheila "Honey" Lacuna sa publiko na ang bantog na Manila Zoo na ngayon ay may taglay na pangalang "Manila Zoological and Botanical Garden" ay mabubuksan na sa buwan ng Disyembre ngayong taon.

Sinabi na alkalde na kanyang ia-anunsiyo sa mga darating na panahon ang takdang petsa ng pagbubukas ng isa sa pinakapaboritong atraksiyon sa Lungsod ng Maynila at ginarantiyahan niya ang mga nagnanais na magtungo rito na kanilang masisilayan ang bago at pinaganda

pang Manila Zoo sa araw ng Pasko.

Ang Manila Zoo, na itinuturing na mahalagang palatandaan ng Lungsod ng Maynila, ay unang binuksan sa publiko noong Hulyo 25 ng taong 1959 bagama't noong Enero 23, 2019, iniutos ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang pagpapasara nito ng walang katiyakan kung kailan puwedeng mabuksan makaraang matuklasan na isa ito sa mga pangunahing nagtatapon ng maruming tubig sa Manila Bay.

Nang maupo sina dat-

ing Manila Mayor Francisco "Isko Moreno" Domagoso at kanyang bise alkalde noon na si Vice Mayor Honey Lacuna-Pangan matapos ang kanilang "landslide victory" sa 2019 midterm election, naglaan sila ng P1.7 bilyong pisong pondo upang gamitin sa pagpapayos at pagpapaganda ng may 6-ektaryang luwang ng bantog na pasilidad.

Makaraan ang ilang buwan na puspulang pagkukumpuni, muling nabuksan sa publiko ang Manila Zoo noong Disyembre 20, 2021, sa kabila ng banta ng pandemiyang

dulot ng COVID-19.

Gayunman, bago bumaba sa kanyang tanggapan si dating Mayor Isko Moreno, iniutos niya ang pansamantala munang pagsasarang muli ng Manila Zoo simula noong Hunyo 1, 2022 upang makumpleto na ang pagsasaayos at pagpapaganda nito.

Ayon kay Mayor Honey Lacuna, sa kasalukuyan ay todo-todo na ang pagkukumpuni sa iba pang lugar sa loob ng Manila Zoo upang matiyak na masisiyahan ang publiko sa kanilang pamamasyal sa loob ng isa sa pinakamagandang zoo sa bansa.



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## PBBM makikipagpulong sa 6-8 heads of state sa US

**MAYROONG** nakatakdang miting si Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. sa 6 hanggang 8 heads of state sa panahon ng kanyang byahe sa Estados Unidos sa susunod na linggo.

Sinabi ni Philippine Ambassador to the US Jose Manuel Romualdez, nakatakdang lumipad si Pangulong Marcos patungong New York sa darating na Setyembre 18.

Ani Romualdez, sigurado na ang pakikipagpulong ng Pangulo kina Japanese Prime

Minister Fumio Kishida at Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

"Well, we have the Prime Minister of Japan, we've been able to put a fix on that one, and then the Malaysian Prime Minister. It's also the other. And I think the President of the EU is also expected to have a bilateral meeting with President Marcos," ayon kay Romualdez.

"I think there are two others that are awaiting confirmation so he'll probably have at least six to eight

meetings with heads of state," dagdag na pahayag nito.

Sinabi pa ni Romualdez na mayroong "requests" para sa miting sa mga heads of state mula Latin America at Africa.

"We're still waiting for a word on that one," ayon kay Romualdez sabay sabing "Like I said, there are a lot of moving parts in these meetings."

At nang tanungin naman kung posibleng makipagpulong si Pangulong Marcos kay US President Joe Biden, si-

nabi ni Romualdez na "it is still uncertain."

"As I told you, schedules for these bilateral meetings, this is really something that cannot be confirmed but it will only start as we get closer.

We all know the sad news about Queen Elizabeth's passing and so President Biden has already said that he'll be going to London so that kind changed a lot of schedules," ayon kay Romualdez.

Gayunman, sinabi ni Romualdez na si Biden ang

magho-host ng reception para sa lahat ng heads of state na dadao sa United Nations General Assembly.

"One thing for sure is that President Biden is hosting all the heads of state in New York for a reception, so definitely they will be meeting there. But of course we are looking at an opportunity for them to sit down and have a longer discussion on our relationship," arito.

"I think it's been moved from the 20th to the 21st but

again that's being confirmed by the White House. This reception is something that's traditional... the President of the United States usually gives a reception for all the heads of state that are attending the United Nations," dagdag na pahayag ni Romualdez.

Inaasahan naman na magpaparticipa si Pangulong Marcos sa 77th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) at handang magtalumpati sa economic briefing sa panahon ng kanyang

pananatili sa Estados Unidos.

Tatalakayin naman ni Pangulong Marcos ang food security, climate change at rule of law sa kanyang inihandang talumpati sa UN.

Sinabi ni Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary Kira Christianne Danganan-Azucena, inahayag ni Pangulong Marcos ang kanyang Philippine national statement "at the high level general debate of the opening."

**KRIS JOSE**



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HOPE TO REPLICATE SUCCESSFUL CLEANUP DRIVES

# CIMATU BEGINS NEW ROLE AS ANTIFLOOD TASK FORCE CHIEF IN CEBU CITY

**By Dale Israel  
and Nestle Semilla**  
@inquirervisayas

CEBU CITY—Former Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu has come out of retirement to lead a special task force to clear and clean up all the seven major rivers here.

Cimatu, named an adopted son of Cebu at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic for assisting the city in curbing the surge of the disease, hoped to rehabilitate and replicate what he did in Boracay, Manila Bay, and the rivers of Marikina and Cagayan in northern Luzon.

He, however, admitted there was so much work to be

done in Cebu City, which has a bigger area than his previous cleanup assignments.

"It will be very difficult," the retired Army general said.

### Clogged waterways

Cimatu said he was already in his home province Ilocos Norte planting papaya when Mayor Michael Rama called him up and asked for his help. He immediately agreed.

He said the job in Cebu City could not be completed in just a few years, but he hoped to jumpstart the process of doing the right things for the generations to come.

"It is a challenge, really, but with your cooperation, maybe we can do it now for the next

generation, for a better and new Cebu City," Cimatu said.

Cebu City has experienced severe flooding during heavy rains in the past weeks. The problem was blamed by local government officials on clogged rivers and waterways.

The local government has announced it would clean up and dredge the seven rivers in the city starting on Sept. 17, alongside the launching of the Task Force Gubat sa Baha (War on Flood) headed by Cimatu.

Cimatu said the rivers would also be cleared of illegal structures, including commercial establishments and dwellings of informal settlers.

The city government re-

cently advised affected entities to voluntarily demolish their homes or structures so they could save their belongings.

### The petition

Informal settlers would be transferred to medium-rise condo buildings donated by a private firm at the South Road Properties and would receive P35,000 each from the Department of Public Works and Highways.

"If there are illegal structures there, then they are violating the law. I know they know there is a (3-meter) easement rule. I suggest they self-demolish already," Cimatu added.

Last Tuesday, city hall announced it would petition the

Supreme Court to issue a writ of kalikasan in a bid to clear the riverbanks from informal settlers and commercial establishments that encroached on the 3-meter easement zone. A writ of kalikasan would also compel national agencies to act and free the rivers of obstructions.

According to the Environmental Management Bureau, all seven major rivers in Cebu City—Guadalupe, Kinalumsan, Mahiga, Lahug, Estero de Parian, Bulacao and Butuanon—were already "dead" since they have ceased to perform their ecological functions, including sustaining any form of life such as fish and aquatic plants.

About 14,000 to 18,000 structures that encroached all



**VOLUNTEER COPS** Central Visayas police officers and personnel conduct a cleanup drive in one of the rivers of Cebu City on Sept. 15. —NESTLE SEMILLA

seven rivers in Cebu City need to be demolished. So far, the city has given notices of eviction to at least 2,000 households and establishments. INQ



## Sugar and salt in food security

**O**ur top concern in food security today does not focus on a staple crop like rice or corn, but on two essential additives – sugar and salt.

The latest brouhaha over sugar importation had brought into light critical issues facing the industry – tight supply and declining production which had doubled the price of white sugar from ₱50 a year ago to ₱95 a kilo.

This prompted President Marcos, Jr., concurrently agriculture secretary and Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) chair to issue Sugar Order 1 which orders all sugar output for domestic use. The planned importation program would be a “stop gap measure.”

Thus, we must allow manufacturers to import part of their sugar requirements, according to Dr. Jesus Lim Arranza who notes that we merely had a total production of 1.7 million metric tons instead of the projected target of 2.1 million MT due to extreme

weather conditions that damaged crops and sugar refineries, and high fertilizer costs.

The history of the sugar industry in the country pre-dates pre-Spanish colonization when Arab traders brought from the Celebes cuttings of sugar cane. Sugar cane became our most important agricultural export between the late 18th century and the mid-70's because it was the basis of wealth accumulation of some Filipino elite. As of 2005, the country was the ninth largest sugar producer in the world, second, among ASEAN countries.

For three centuries, sugar was the most important of the overseas commodities. Sugar or “white gold” was the engine of the slave trade that brought millions of Africans to the Americas in the 16th century.



**PAGBABAGO**

FLORANGEL ROSARIO BRAID

Analysts note that although the salt industry may not be dying, it will need help from government and the private sector to make it sustainable.

While the presence of sugar was first acknowledged in England in the 12th century where it was regarded as a spice and medicine, salt was mentioned in the Bible in this passage: “When God rained sulphur and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt.” This pillar was 700 feet high.

Pangasinan, its name, derived from the phrase. “pinagasinan (where salt is made) is among the country's top producers. It is my hometown where as a child, I would watch salt farmers raking their salt beds. The other provinces are Mindoro, Bulacan, the Ilocos region, Zambales, Bataan, Marinduque, Antique and Palawan.

Yolanda Sotelo (Inquirer, Sept. 11, 2022) noted challenges facing the salt industry, citing findings by Pangasinan State University's vice-president for research, Dr. Paulo Cenas who attributed the decline in yield and the massive importation of salt to the labor-intensive nature of the industry. He notes that because it does not pay well, the younger ones have turned away from salt farming.

The passage of the Salt Iodization law or Asin

Law that required stringent standards crippled local salt manufacturers. The aim was to eliminate micronutrient malnutrition. But instead of meeting this challenge, the manufacturers deferred the process.

Besides the Asin law, the decline was also due to the massive conversion of salt farms into housing and industrial areas, a fate experienced by other agricultural farms. This had caused the displacement of salt makers who were only leasing the farms from the government. Their facilities were gradually depreciated and they did not have enough capital to invest.

Environmental factors – climate change or “La Niña,” with more rains than usual, limited the salt makers capacity to operate their saltbeds.

With our membership in the World Trade Organization in 1994, our salt farmers saw thousands of tons of salt entering the local market. But we had no laws to protect the industry. Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources' (BFAR) Nestor Domenden notes that while salt is an important mineral in agriculture and industry, it is an “orphan” with no agency tasked to oversee it. Today, the country imports 93 percent of its salt requirements. This is deemed ironic since we have 36,000 kilometers of coastline.

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