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Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

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44 PAGE LOWER
PAGE 1 STORY
BANNER STORY
EDITORIAL
CARTOON

02 JAN 2017

DATE

Balloon drop: how not to do marketing



IN THE face of overwhelming negative public opinion, a nightclub still decided to proceed with an event that would have contributed to the country's waste problem, only cancelling it after strong urging from the government's environment agency.

Cove Manila announced that it was selling tickets at P2,000 (general admission) and P4,000 (VIP) to a "historic" 130,000-balloon drop set for Dec. 31. A nightclub located at Okada Manila, a casino resort and hotel complex in the Entertainment City gaming strip in Paranaque, Cove Manila said in its publicity material: "Be part of history as Cove Manila attempts to break the Guinness World Record for the biggest balloon drop in the world as we welcome the New Year!"

Thousands of netizens were quick to express their anger at the plan, citing environmental concerns. One of the many commenters on Cove Manila's Facebook page, said, "Looking at your past posts, your original announcement of the event has an Angry:Sad:Like ratio of 15k:2k:944! [Angry 15,000—Sad 2,000—Like 944]. The negative comments abound."

DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu stepped in and asked Cove Manila not to push through with the balloon drop. DENR spokesman Benny Antiporda said the department would not hesitate to arrest the organizers and file charges against them, calling the event a "solid waste disaster waiting to happen."

Cove Manila defended themselves in a Facebook statement posted Dec. 29: "Firstly, the balloons are biodegradable. Secondly, the balloon drop has been planned with solid environmental management protocols in place to minimize, if not eliminate, any possible impact on the environment. And thirdly, we are recycling all the balloons and creatively turning them into something useful." They also said the event will be held indoors.

First, even rubber latex balloons are not 'biodegradable' in the sense that paper is. Latex material takes years to degrade and only in the right temperatures and conditions. Second, what are these "protocols"? If they did not have the balloon drop in the first place, there would be no waste to dispose of! Third, what were they going to recycling the waste into? They did not say at the time. It was all quite vague, and, because of that, questionable.

In addition, the Guinness Book no longer monitors environmentally unsound practices including balloon drops. But Cove Manila used the Guinness name—do the officials of the Guinness Book know about this? If Cove Manila was trying to break the record unofficially, why did they not say so?

Upon receiving a letter from the DENR, Cove Manila canceled the event. However, the balloons have already been inflated. News reports said the club would recycle the waste into ecobricks or school chairs.

Cove Manila's initial insistence on holding their event despite the DENR and the clamor of netizens seemed to be plain stubbornness and the unwillingness to admit a mistake. They have tarnished their brand. It's a public relations disaster.

Peninsula Manila, on the other hand, also set to hold a much smaller NYE balloon drop, canceled it voluntarily after observing all this. In a statement they said, "Oftentimes it's all too easy for the celebrations to come with a big price tag for the planet."

“Doing good is better business.”

“But it is also possible for the New Year's celebrations to be environmentally-friendly as well as enjoyable which is why we will no longer be having our traditional balloon drop as it is not in keeping with our Sustainable Luxury Vision 2020 philosophy.” Now that's a better attitude to take.

When companies behave ethically, the better its reputation among customers and the more business it generates.

In a 2017 study by Cone Communications about corporate social responsibility, 87 percent of consumers said “they would be willing to buy a product or service based on a company's advocacy concerning a social matter”, and 76 percent of those surveyed said “they would decline to do business with a company if it held views and supported issues that conflicted with their beliefs.”

Wayne Elsey, writing for *Forbes* magazine in May 2018, said: “The bottom line for businesses large and small is that you get a competitive advantage in regards to sales and also talent recruitment by not only claiming that you support positive social outcomes but also by walking the walk and demonstrating it.”

Not only does being environmentally-friendly burnish a brand, it also benefits the company. “When we prevent physical waste, increase energy efficiency, or improve resource productivity, we save money, improve profitability and enhance competitiveness,” said Keivan Zokaei, writing for *The Guardian* in 2013.

In short, doing good is not only morally and ethically responsible, it's also better business.

Dr. Ortuoste: Everyone should watch The Lorax movie. FB and Twitter: @DrJennyO



New Year balloon stunt cancelled after criticism

MANILA — A luxury Philippine hotel and casino has called off a world record attempt for releasing tens of thousands of balloons to mark the New Year following complaints from environmental groups and a government warning.

Okada Manila, a sprawling resort in the country's capital that includes a hotel, casino and restaurants, had planned to ring in 2019 by dropping 130,000 balloons in one of its nightclubs to set a new world record.

But in a statement late Sunday, the Okada Manila resort said it had voluntarily cancelled the stunt as a "sign of respect" to environmentalists' warnings, and "in support of the Government's campaign to protect and save the environment".

The country's Department of Environment and Natural Resources had

joined green groups in criticising the planned balloon drop, saying it would generate huge amounts of waste, but did not have the authority to stop it.

In a statement Monday, DENR Chief Roy Cimatu described Okada Manila's

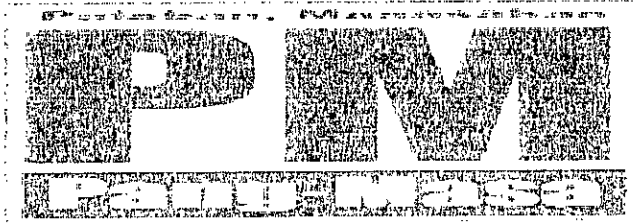
decision as "laudable".

He said other hotels and resorts had also cancelled similar balloon drops for New Year's Eve.

Okada Manila had initially insisted the balloons were biodegradable and would be recycled after the

event.

In recent years, setting Guinness World Records has become a popular activity in the Philippines, with feats achieved including "largest charity walk" and "most hamburgers eaten in one minute".



02 JAN 2010

DATE

Okada Manila, tinuligsa sa tangkang paggamit ng 130K lobo sa pagsalubong sa Bagong Taon

Kinondena ng Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) ang pagkaiignorante ng Okada Manila sa masamang epekto sa kalikasan ng tangkang paggamit ng 130,000 lobo sa pagsalubong sa Bagong Taon sa Cove Manila nito.

"We, in the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission, condemn the utter ignorance of Okada Manila toward the negative environmental impact of using 130,00 balloons in its New Years's eve festivities in Cove Manila," ani PRRC Executive Director Jose Antonio "Pepeton" E. Goitia.

Napilitan ang Okada Manila na ikansela ang paggamit ng 130,000 lobo makaraang tuligsain ng netizens sa social media at pahalalahanan ng Department of the Environment and Natural Resources.

Nauna rito, nanawagan si Goitia sa lahat ng mamamayan na igalang ang kapaligiran sa hindi pagkakatatapan ng basura-lalo sa mga daluyang tubig sa pagsalubong sa Bagong Taon.



Abante

UNA SA BALITA



02 JAN 2013

DATE

Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

DENR natuwa sa pagkansela ng balloon drop

MAGSISILBI nang halimbawa sa mga susunod na event ng iba pang establisimiyento ang pagkansela ng Okada Manila at Manila Peninsula sa kaniyang balloon drop noong selebrasyon ng Bagong Taon.

Ito ang naging pahayag ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) kasabay ng pagsasabing masaya silang nagkusa nang kanselahin ng Okada Manila at Manila Peninsula sa nakatakda sanang balloon drop event matapos ang kaniyang pag-abiso.

Sinabi ni Environment Secretary

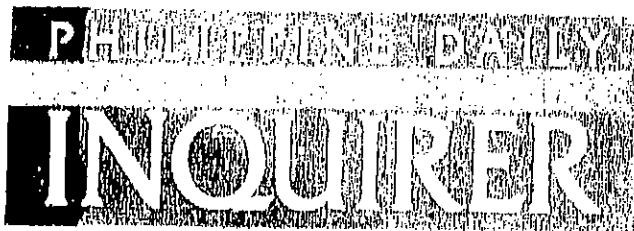
Roy Cimatu na ang ganitong mga pakulo ay tunay na maganda para sa mga parokyano subalit hindi lamang ang kasiyahan ang dapat na isaisip kundi ang magiging resulta nito sa kalikasan.

Bunsod nito, hinimok ni Cimatu ang lahat ng mga business establishment na sa kanilang mga event sa hinaharap ay tiyakin na walang epekto ito sa kalikasan dahil nakabantay umano ang ahen-sya at ipatitigil ito.

Matapos mabatikos ay nagdesisyon ang Okada Manila na kanselahin ang event at sinundan na din ito ng Manila Peninsula. **(Tina Mendoza)**



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
REGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE



A4
PAGE

UPPER
LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

02 JAN. 2019

DATE

'CRASS CONSUMERISM' BLAMED; ZERO-WASTE LIVING PUSHED

MESSY MORNING AFTER: METRO MANILA DROWNS IN NEW YEAR TRASH

Residents of Metro Manila again greeted the New Year with revelries and feasts that produced piles of garbage, including plastics, an environmental group said on Tuesday.

To reduce waste, a lawmaker encouraged Filipinos to avoid the use of plastics altogether in 2019.

The EcoWaste Coalition on Tuesday cited the "unsightly and stinking" trash that piled up on the streets, sidewalks, parks and market areas hours after the traditional countdown to 2019 and the "media noche" feasts.

Widespread dumping

"It's really great to see families happily celebrating the New Year. But what makes this beautiful tradition ugly is our penchant to consume and throw a lot of things," Daniel Alejandro, EcoWaste Coalition's Zero Waste campaigner, said in a statement.

EcoWaste monitors found streets surrounding bargain centers and marketplaces to be the filthiest in the metropolis, with garbage strewn across wide areas.

The group saw "widespread" dumping at the Balintawak market in Quezon City, on Recto Avenue and adjacent streets in Divisoria in Manila, at the Bonifacio Monument in Caloocan and around the Marikina public market.

"We found mixed waste dumped in our cities' streets, including food leftovers, product packaging, plastics and hazardous residuals from firecrackers and fireworks," he said.

Segregation

EcoWaste blamed "crass consumerism" and poor waste-segregation practices for the huge amounts of garbage during the holidays.



MESSY START Carriedo Street in Quiapo, Manila, is covered with trash on the first day of the year. —RICHARD REYES

"While we demand that manufacturers embrace clean production and extended producer responsibility, we as consumers need to consume responsibly, choose products in least packaging, and ditch single-use plastics altogether,"

Alejandro said.

Consumers should learn to properly sort disposables to hasten their reuse, recycling or composting, he said.

Zero-waste lifestyle

Sen. Loren Legarda called on

Filipinos to adopt a zero-waste lifestyle as a New Year's resolution.

"Let us welcome the new year with a resolve to be better citizens of the Earth by adopting an eco-friendly, zero-waste lifestyle," the senator said in a statement.

A zero-waste lifestyle, according to Legarda, means using products that can be reused and promoting processes that avoid or eliminate the volume and toxicity of waste.

Reduce, reuse, recycle

Legarda said the shift to a zero-waste lifestyle would not be easy, emphasizing the role of the government in encouraging and assisting citizens toward such a change.

"As we encourage citizens and households to adopt a zero-waste lifestyle, we urge local government units to fully im-

plement the ESWM law, which, together with other environmental laws, will help build clean, healthy, safe and resilient communities," she said.

ESWM refers to the Ecological Solid Waste Management law, which she authored, implementing a system of solid-waste management that includes segregation of garbage at its source, segregated transportation, processing, treatment and proper disposal of solid waste.

Legarda also pushed for the passage of Senate Bill No. 1948, or the proposed Single-Use Plastics Regulation and Management Act of 2018, which would provide a solution to the single-use plastics problem by prohibiting their importation and use in establishments, stores, markets and retailers.

—REPORTS FROM MELVIN GASCON AND DJ YAP INQ



New Year's revelers leave behind piles of garbage

By **CHITO A. CHAVEZ**

Heaps of garbage were left behind all over Metro Manila after New Year's eve revelry.

The environmental group EcoWaste Coalition described the situation as extremely alarming.

The group cited the report of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) that Quezon City was the number one garbage producer in the metropolis, generating 3,610 tons per day, followed by Manila with 1,175 tons and Caloocan City with 913.

Based on MMDA records, the metropolis produces 9,872 tons of garbage every day, close to 25 percent of the national daily waste production of 40,000 tons.

EcoWaste noted the stinking trash was left on the streets, sidewalks, parks, market areas and almost everywhere following the New Year celebration and the traditional media noche feasts.

"It's really great to see families happily celebrating the New Year. But what makes this beautiful tradition ugly is our penchant to consume and throw a lot of things as can be seen from the overflowing bins to the garbage piles

dotting our neighborhoods following the revelry," said Daniel Alejandro, zero-waste campaigner of EcoWaste Coalition.

"Many of our communities, especially in thickly populated areas, are drowning in post-revelry garbage on the first day of January, which, incidentally, is observed as 'Zero Waste Month.' In some places, it may take a few days for haulers to clear streets of mini-dumps," he said.

Based on the monitoring conducted Tuesday by the group's Basura Patrolers, the garbage is at its worst in the streets surrounding bargain hubs and market places.

"We found mixed wastes dumped in our cities' streets, including food leftovers, product packaging, plastics and hazardous residuals from firecrackers and fireworks," Alejandro said.

The group witnessed widespread dumping at the Balintawak market in Quezon City, along Recto Avenue and adjacent streets in Divisoria, Manila, at Monumento in Caloocan City, and around the Marikina City Public Market.

"While we demand that manufacturers embrace clean production

and extended producer responsibility, we as consumers need to consume responsibly, choose products in least packaging, and ditch single-use plastics altogether. We should also properly sort our discards to facilitate their reuse, recycling or composting," Alejandro said.

With the observance of Zero Waste Month, the EcoWaste Coalition renewed its appeal to all waste generators - from households, institutions to businesses and industries - to commit to proven waste prevention and reduction practices as embodied in Republic Act 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act.

"By actively enforcing the provisions of R.A. 9003, we can dramatically cut the volume of Metro Manila's garbage that is disposed of at landfills located in Navotas City, and in Rodriguez and San Mateo, Rizal, as well as avoid waste materials from spilling into the seas and oceans," Alejandro said.

R.A. 9003 requires "the formulation and adoption of the best environmental practices in ecological waste management excluding incineration," such as waste separation at source, reuse, recycling and composting.



EcoWaste hits heaps of trash left by revelers

By CHITO CHAVEZ

Like in the previous New Year revelry, the environment suffered another pummeling as heaps of unsightly garbage were left behind all over the surroundings particularly in public places where the merrymakings occurred.

The environmental group EcoWaste Coalition described the situation as extremely alarming especially with the effects of climate

change.

What makes the situation more precarious according to EcoWaste Coalition is the report of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) which showed that Quezon City as the number one in garbage production in the metropolis generating 3,610 tons per day, followed by Manila and Caloocan City at 1,175 and 913 tons per day, respectively.

Based on MMDA records, EcoW-

aste Coalition said Metro Manila produces 9,872 tons of garbage every day, constituting close to 25 percent of the national daily waste production at 40,000 tons.

With this continuous abuse of the ecosystem, the Quezon City-based group warned that this will result in more adverse consequences as nature continues to degenerate at a fast pace.

The EcoWaste Coalition noted the unsightly and stinking trash was left on the streets, sidewalks, parks, market areas and almost everywhere following the bright and boisterous countdown to 2019 and the customary media noche feasts.

"It's really great to see families happily celebrating the New Year. But what makes this beautiful tradition ugly is our penchant to consume and throw a lot of things as can be seen from the overflowing bins to the garbage piles dotting our neighborhoods following the revelry," said Daniel Alejandro, zero-waste campaigner, EcoWaste Coalition.

"Many of our communities, especially in thickly populated areas, are drowning in post-revelry garbage on the first day of January, which, incidentally, is observed as 'Zero Waste Month.' In some places, it may take a few days for haulers to clear streets of mini-dumps. We need to stop trashing our communities," he added.



Abante

UNA SA BALITA



PAGE



UPPLR
LOWER



PAGE 1
STORY



BANNER
STORY



EDITORIAL



CARTOON

02 JAN 2013

DATE

Mga LGU kinatok sa implementasyon ng ESWM

KINALAMPAG ni Senadora Loren Legarda ang mga local government unit (LGU) na isakatuparan ang implementasyon ng Ecological Solid Waste Management (ESWM) Law upang mapanatiling malinis, malusog at ligtas ang bawat komunidad sa bansa.

Ang ESWM Law ay iniakda ni Legarda na layong isakatuparan ang sistema ng solid waste management kabilang na ang segregation of garbage, segregated transportation, processing, treatment, at proper disposal ng solid waste.

"We urge local government units (LGUs) to fully implement the ESWM Law, which, together with other environmental laws, will help build clean, healthy, safe and resilient communities," sabi ni Legarda.

Kasabay nito, hinimok din ni Legarda ang mamamayang Pilipino na idagdag sa kani-kanilang New Year's resolution ang pagyakap sa zero-waste lifestyle, partikular na ang pag-iwas sa paggamit ng mga plastik.

"Let us welcome the new year with a resolve to be better citizens of the Earth by adopting an eco-friendly, zero-waste lifestyle," sabi nito.

"A zero-waste lifestyle means using products that can be reused and promoting processes that avoid or eliminate the volume and toxicity of waste. It means creating little to no waste. It is veering away from the throwaway culture by reusing, reducing and recycling," paliwanag ni Legarda. **(Anne Lorraine Gamo)**



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

Manila Standard

Page
LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

02 JAN 2010

DATE

Zambales community models international reforestation tack

By Romeo Dizon

SAN FERNANDO, Pampanga—A registered upland community farmer organization based in Zambales has now become a model for implementing a new international reforestation program promoted by member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The Malatapi Community Livelihood Center Inc., based in Candelaria, Zambales, has so far reforested 60 out of the 1,400 hectares assigned to them to improve the ecosystem of the province.

The community-based farmer organization registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission since 1997 is the partner of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources under its Community-Based Forest Management Program in the region.

The program, which is promoted by the Asean-Republic of Korea Forest Organization, aims to fast-track the reforestation of degraded forest lands and watersheds

with less cost to the government.

Paquito Moreno Jr., executive director of the DENR in Central Luzon, said the organization used a new method called Assisted Natural Regeneration program.

Under the ANR, Moreno said about 35 upland farmers will find surviving trees species and seedlings, including wildlings. Once located, they uproot grass around the trees combined with grass pressing by foot to clean the surrounding of the trees of weeds.

According to the regional executive director, the farmers also protect tree species from grass fire by establishing fire-lines or fire breaks to ensure their survival.

Another protective measures being implemented by the farmers is the construction of the lookout tower for regular monitoring against any form of forest disturbance.

"We find this method very effective as we have already reforested a wide area under the CBFMP," Moreno said.



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

Air pollution levels at an all-time low

By ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

Air pollution levels in Metro Manila during New Year's eve was at an all-time low, but it lingered longer, based on the monitoring of the Environmental Pollution Studies Laboratory (EPSL) of the University of the Philippines (UP).

The airtoday.ph, a project of the EPSL in partnership with the Rotary Club of Makati and Lung Center of the Philippines (LCP), monitored air quality on Ayala Ave. in Makati City and LCP in Quezon City, both adjacent to designated community fireworks display sites.

UP Institute of Environmental Science and Meteorology head Dr. Mylene Cayetano said they measured both particulate matter (PM) 2.5, or particles less than 2.5 micrometers in

diameter, and PM 10, particles less than 10 micrometers in diameter.

Air particulates can be inhaled or respired, depending on the size of the pollutant.

Both stations recorded "very poor" air quality. The Ayala Avenue station recorded the highest PM concentration at around 1 a.m. Tuesday - 114 micrograms per cubic meter of air (ug/m3) for PM10 and 113 ug/m3 for PM2.5.

These are "significantly lower" (about 24 percent and 14 percent) compared to last year's

readings of 149 ug/m3 for PM10 and 131 ug/m3 for PM2.5 for the same station.

The Ayala Ave. station also "poor" air quality from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. on December 31, and 11 p.m. and then again from 4 a.m. to 6 a.m. January 1.

Air quality was "very poor" from 12 a.m. to 3 a.m. January 1.

The LCP station recorded a PM concentration of 99 ug/m3 for PM10 and 98 ug/m3 for PM2.5.

The LCP station recorded "poor" air quality 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. on December 31, and 2 a.m. to 3 a.m. on January 1.

"Very poor" air quality was recorded 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. December 31, and 12 a.m. to 1 a.m. January 1.

PM concentrations at both stations dropped significantly at around 4 a.m. January 1, while the Makati Station still maintaining a "poor" readings that is the same as January, 2018.

Cayetano said that Tropical Depression "Usman" washed away the particles emitted by fireworks and firecrackers.



Senate panel backs bill requiring harmonized LGU business fees

THE Senate committee on local government is recommending passage of a bill requiring the national government to provide clear guidelines for local government units (LGU) seeking to impose fees and charges on businesses.

Senate Bill No. 2123, under Committee Report No. 533, seeks to amend some provisions in Republic Act No. 7160 or the Local Government Code Act of 1990 covering municipal fees and charges, fishery licenses and rental charges, barangay charges, clearance and other fees, as well as common revenue-raising measures such as other LGU fees and charges, public utility charges, and toll charges.

Under the bill, such fees imposed by LGUs will be subject to the guidelines to be provided by the Department of Finance's (DoF) Bureau of Local Government Finance (BLGF) in consultation with LGU associations.

Guidelines to be formulated in setting the local charges will also take into consideration the recovery of capital, maintenance, and other service delivery costs.

In the case of fishery license fees and rental charges, the bill allows municipalities to levy rents for erecting fish corrals, operating beds for shellfish like oysters, mussels or other species and to levy fees in issuing licenses to operate fishing vessels.

The fishery rental charges will be subject to the guidelines of BLGF, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and the Department of Agriculture's (DA) Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resource (BFAR), in consultation with the league of municipalities. Agencies will take into consideration the costs for environmental maintenance and sustainability of the municipal waters covered.

The authority of the barangay to collect charges for the use of barangay-owned properties or

service facilities, to impose fees for barangay clearance or a license for any business activity will be subject to the guidelines of the DoF, in consultation with the Liga ng mga Barangay.

The DoF will have to consult with the league of municipalities on fees and charges for services rendered or conveniences provided to businesses and professions.

The bill also provides a new definition to the "charge" imposed by LGUs as the "liability for services rendered or conveniences provided by the local government unit, the amount of which should be commensurate to such services and capital recovery which ensures continued delivery."

"Fee" is also redefined as the "liability imposed for the regulation or inspection of a business or activity, the amount of which should be commensurate to the administrative cost of regulation and surveillance."

Senator Juan Edgardo M. Angara, who chairs the committee on local government, said in the bill's explanatory note that many LGUs lack guidance "on how to fairly and efficiently determine" what fee or charge should be imposed to business activities within their jurisdiction.

He noted that while the Local Government Code gives LGUs greater means to create their revenue sources, many businesses have raised concerns that the imposition of LGU fees has increased their cost of doing businesses.

"With this in mind, this bill mandates several national agencies... to outline clear guidelines in the setting of local fees and charges, which LGUs should then incorporate in their impositions. Such reform will raise LGU competitiveness and strike a healthy balance between revenue generation and private business promotion," Mr. Angara said. — **Camille A. Aguinardo**



Multi-agency team to address foreign workers

A TECHNICAL working group (TWG) composed of representatives from the Department of Justice (DoJ), Bureau of Immigration (BI), and Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE) will be formed to address the influx of foreign workers in the country.

DoJ Undersecretary and spokesperson Markk L. Perete said Labor Secretary Silvestre H. Bello III requested the creation of a TWG.

"Officers from DoLE, DoJ, and BI will form the TWG and are set to meet this January," Mr. Perete told the *Business World* in a text message last Dec. 29.

"As to the meeting, there is no specific date yet. But once the three offices are able to confirm who to designate as their representatives to the TWG, the TWG itself will be able to schedule and call meetings," he added.

Mr. Bello made an earlier pronouncement that the DoLE is considering revoking the authority of the BI, an agency under the DoJ, to issue working permits to foreign nationals.

Mr. Perete also said that the internal TWG will study the joint guidelines and submit its recommendations to the inter-agency task force initiated by the DoLE last Nov. 15.

The task force, which "will conduct inspection and come up with joint guidelines in regulating the employment of foreign nationals in the country," includes members from the DoJ, BI, DoLE, Department of Foreign Affairs, Professional Regulation Commission, and Department of Environment and Natural Resources, among others.

Justice Secretary Menardo I. Guevarra, for his part, said while he has not yet discussed the matter directly with Mr. Bello, the DoJ intends to "work very closely" with DoLE to address the issue.

He also said that there are other options that may be considered other than taking away the authority of the BI to issue working permits.

"(T)here are other options... such as tightening the rules on issuance of SWPs, BI personnel movements, and improved intelligence/technology to closely monitor aliens working in our country," Mr. Guevarra said in a text message.

The DoLE, in 2005, authorized the BI to issue special working permits (SWP) to foreigners covering a six-month period. The DoLE issues an alien employment permit (AEP) to foreigners staying beyond six months.

An AEP is issued only if there are no Filipinos competent or able to do the job being sought by a foreigner.

During a Senate committee inquiry last Nov. 26, DoLE said the BI issued SWPs to 119,840 foreigners from 2015 to 2017, mostly Chinese who work for Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators.

DoLE, meanwhile, issued 115,652 AEPs from 2015 to 2017, of which 51,980 were given to Chinese nationals. — **Vann Marlo M. Villegas**