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Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

Citizen's group supports Manila Bay rehabilitation

BY CONRAD M. CARIÑO

THE nationwide citizen's movement Maypagasa has thrown its support for the "Battle of Manila Bay" led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Maypagasa is a multi-sectoral group that advocates good governance, clean environment and community development. It cited the recent statement made by Environment Sec. Roy Cimatu that emphasized "the firm resolve to bring Manila Bay back to life."

The DENR is leading the clean up of Manila Bay based on the

Supreme Court's mandamus on Feb. 15, 2011 that mandates the agency and other government entities to rehabilitate the bay to prevent the "continuous cycle of man-made pollution."

"As per media reports, no less than President Rodrigo Duterte earlier this month, approved the Manila Bay rehabilitation

plan proposed by the DENR. The other departments also tasked in the Manila Bay cleanup program include Tourism, Interior and Local Government, Trade and Industry, Defense, and Science and Technology," Maypagasa said in a statement.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government also issued Memorandum Circular 2019-09, dated Jan. 24, 2019 that directs 178 local government units and 5,714 *barangay* (villages) covering the Manila Bay area to hold weekly clean-ups and follow existing environmental laws in their respective areas starting with the Manila Bay Rehabilitation Project's launch date, according to the Philippine

Information Agency.

The high tribunal ordered concerned government agencies to "clean up, rehabilitate and preserve Manila Bay, and restore and maintain its waters to "SB" level to make them fit for swimming, skin diving and other forms of contact recreation."

SB level, according to DENR Administrative Order 34, Series of 1990, refers to Class B water "primarily contact recreation such as bathing, swimming, skin diving, etc."

Maypagasa also supports the Philippine Clean Water Act and other environmental laws, which are among the movement's core values to bring about real transformation for the present and future generations.



EDITORIAL

Reclamation craze

Last month, hundreds of government workers and volunteers trooped bright and early to Roxas Boulevard to kick off a three-year, P42.95-billion program to rehabilitate Manila Bay. The week that followed saw photos of the “newly rehabilitated” bay getting hosannas on social media, followed by hordes of Filipinos trooping to swim in the waters and enjoy the garbage-free shoreline.

Beneath the jubilant pictures, however, there appears to be something more to the Manila Bay rehabilitation program than meets the eye. Just five days after the cleanup launch, Malacañang issued Executive Order No. 74, which transferred the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) to the direct control and supervision of the Office of the President—to “rationalize the approval process for reclamation projects toward an economically and environmentally sustainable resource development,” according to the EO.

The move has raised not a few eyebrows, since one of the reclamation projects already approved by the PRA is the 265-hectare project called Pasay Harbor City, led by known Duterte supporter and campaign donor Dennis Uy. But that’s just one project; some 22 other Manila Bay reclamation ventures are pending before the PRA, revealed Joseph Literal, PRA assistant general manager, at a hearing on Manila Bay’s rehabilitation at the House of Representatives on Monday.

Literal admitted that these reclamation projects would affect what’s left of the Manila Bay ecosystem, but that measures are supposedly being put in place to mitigate the adverse effects.

Former environment secretary and Buhay Rep. Lito Atienza was far less blasé, warning that further large-scale reclamation would be “catastrophic for all of us.” The massive flooding in Navotas, for instance, stemmed from a reclamation project there, he said, adding that “there seems to be a reclamation craze in the Philippines” and that the PRA seems more inclined to approve rather than disapprove projects whose proponents trumpet potential revenues and job generation while failing to disclose the possible environmental impact such projects may cost the cities and communities around the bay.

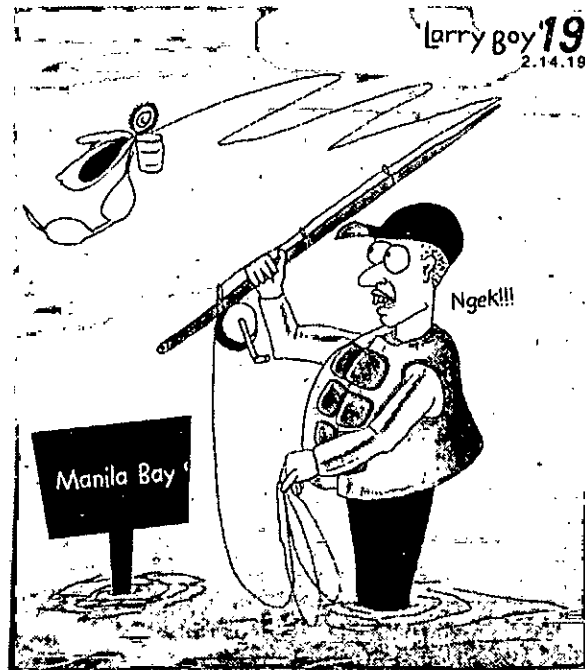
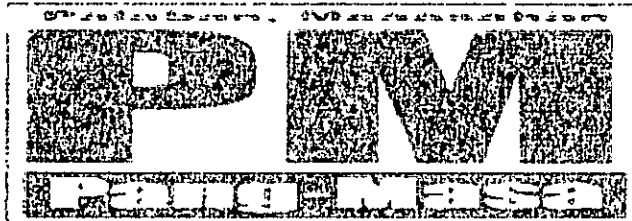
Kelvin S. Rodolfo, professor emeritus of earth and environmental sciences at the University of Illinois, has said in no uncertain terms that massive reclamation projects in Manila Bay—the waters of which reach Cavite, Parañaque, Pasay, Manila, Navotas, Bulacan, Pampanga and Bataan—will put these areas at risk of destructive phenomena such as soil liquefaction, subsidence and storm surges. Rising water levels could see coastal communities displaced by floods or giant waves, while the physical alteration of the bay will destroy its marine ecosystem, which the multibillion-peso cleanup was supposed to protect in the first place.

In his 2014 study, “On the geological hazards that threaten existing and proposed reclamation of Manila Bay,” Rodolfo said “the ongoing rush to execute several of these projects is alarming in how little its proponents seem to understand the littoral environment, and their seeming indifference to the hazards it poses... It seems that science is again being blithely ignored by the financial interests and government authorities promoting the various reclamation projects. Will we never learn?”

That question should be directed at the local governments of Manila and Pasay, who are unabashed supporters of reclamation. In November 2018, Manila Mayor Joseph Estrada and Pasay City Mayor Antonio Calixto signed a memorandum of agreement to exert “utmost effort to cooperate... to reclaim huge swathes of the Manila Bay.” That official endorsement of reclamation, however, came unaccompanied by the necessary environmental and other studies that would assure the people of these cities that the zeal of their City Halls for creating more ersatz real estate out of the bay would not, in fact, redound only to a few while proving detrimental to the larger community.

Forgoing the short-term gains of big-ticket commercial development for a sustainable and viable way of life for the people, and even the businesses, around the bay ought to be the vision of enlightened political leaders. Absent that, the communities themselves must ask for it, for their own sake. As Rodolfo put it: “If the wishes and opposition of enough people prevail so reclamations do not proceed, some of the greatest beneficiaries will be its wealthy proponents, even if they do not realize it now.”

But, as it happens, those 22 or so critical reclamation projects have now become, under EO 74, the sole discretion of the President. What gives?



Dumami pa ang Manila Bay polluters

DATI, limang establimento lang ang tinukoy ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na nagpo-pollute sa Manila Bay pero ngayon, umaabot na sa 17 ang mga establimento. Pinatotohanan naman ito ng Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) na una nang nag-isyu ng cease and desist orders laban sa mga establimento. Ilan sa mga bagong bay polluters ayon sa DENR ay ang Philippine International Covention Center, Harbor View Square, China Oceanis, Philippine Manila Ocean Park, Makchang Korean Restaurant, Networld Hotel, at Legend Seafood Restaurant.

Una nang ipinasara ni DENR Sec. Roy Cimatu ang Philippine Billion Real Estate Development Corp. sa Roxas Blvd., Pasay City; HK Sun Plaza na nasa Roxas

Bld. Pasay City; Tramway Bayview Buffet Restaurant na nasa Roxas Blvd. Pasay City at ang D. Circle Hotel sa M.H. Del Pilar St. Malate, Manila.

Ang mga nabanggit ay lumabag sa batas sa pagtatapon ng kanilang dumi. Wala silang sewage treatment plant na isa sa requirements para masigurong hindi marumi ang iniluluwa sa lawa. Dahil walang STP, lahat ng dumi ay direktang bumabagsak sa isang estero at mula roon, iluluwa naman ito sa Manila Bay. Ayon sa DENR, masyado nang mataas ang fecal coliform sa Manila Bay --- umaabot na sa 330 milyon. Talagang napakarumi ng Manila Bay at hindi na puwedeng pagliguan.

Nang unang inspeksiyunin ni Cimatu ang mga estero na nakasubo sa Manila Bay, nagbabala na agad siya sa mga establimento at kompanya na lumalabag sa Waste Water Act. Una na ngang binantaan ang Manila Zoo at makaraan ang ilang araw, pinasara na niya ito.

Ayon pa kay Cimatu, dapat maitama ng mga nabanggit na establishments ang kanilang violations at saka pa lamang sila makapagpapatuloy sa operasyon. Nararapat ipatupad ang Waste Water Act. Nagiging dekorasyon lamang ang maraming batas sa bansa sapagkat walang political will ang namumuno.

Dapat ipakita ni Cimatu ang kanyang bangis laban sa bay polluters. Dapat may masampolan na sa pagkakataong ito.



PAALAM TANAWIN NG TAKIPSILIM

TOTOO na ang lahat ng bagay ay may katapusan, pati na sa natural na kagandahan ng makulay na paglubog ng araw sa Manila Bay na hinahangaan at kilala sa buong mundo.

Hindi ito maiwasang maganap sa nalalapit na hinaharap matapos linisin ang Manila Bay dahil pumirma na sa memorandum of agreement ang mga lungsod ng Maynila at Pasay para tulungan at suportahan ang iminumungkahing reclamation projects ng tatlong pribadong grupo sa naturang bay. Inaasahang makiknabang ang naturang mga lungsod sa mga proyekto.

Pumirma sina Manila Mayor Joseph Estrada at Pasay City Mayor Antonio Calixto sa MOA, kasama ang mga kinatawan ng tatlong grupo na kinibibilangan ng Manila Gold-coast Development Corporation, SM Prime Holdings Incorporated, at Pasay Harbor City con-

sortium.

Inaasahang itatayo sa lugar ang SM project na 300-hectare at 60-hectare projects ng SM Prime Holdings; ang Pasay Harbor City project na 265-hectare reclamation project ng Pasay Harbor City consortium; at Solar City project ng MGDC, na isang 148-hectare reclamation project na ookupa sa southern parcel ng Manila-Cavite Coastal Road and Reclamation Project-North Sector.

Ayon kay Estrada, sa Solar City pa lang ay inaasahang kikita ang lungsod ng P50 bilyon at makapagbibigay ng 500,000 bagong trabaho sa mga residente ng Maynila.

Ang land reclamation ay ang proseso ng pagbuo ng lupa mula sa tubig tulad ng mga lawa, ilog at bay. Maituturing na-eks-perto ang China sa naturang paksa dahil gumawa sila ng mga isla at instalasyon sa karagatan ng

West Philippine Sea.

Para sa ibang tao, ang terminong reclamation ay hindi nararapat dahil nangangahulugan ito na ibinabalik ang bagay sa tootong may-ari nito. Ang karagatan ng Manila Bay ay hindi pag-aari ninoman, lalo na ng mga negosyanteng dayuhan na sangkot sa proyekto.

Kung halimbawang ilipat ng gobyerno ang may 300,000 informal settlers na naninirahan sa lugar at tutuldukan ang pagtatapon nila ng basura sa tubig, may mga nagtatanong kung wala na bang ibang pagpipilian na hindi wawasak sa natural na kagandahan ng bay maliban sa reclamation.

Para sa ibang mamamayan, ang pagbuo ng lupa sa bay sa pamamagitan ng pagtatambak dito ng mga bato at debris ay lilikha ng grabeng pagbaha sakaling hagupitin ang Metro Manila ng malakas na bagyo.

At ano ang mangyayari sa mga naglalakihang establisimyento na itatayo nila sa Manila Bay, lalo na sa mga tao na mata-trap at 'di makalalabas, sakaling maganap ang pinangangambahang magnitude 7 na lindol?

Hindi pera ang lahat-lahat kung buhay na ang nakataya.



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NI Mhel Jota

CP# 09178239628

LANDFILLS AT REHAB NG MANILA BAY

MAY napupuna tayong isang aspeto na tila na-over-looked o sadyang hindi pinansin ng DENR at ng iba pang stakeholders ng pamosong grand rehab sa Manila Bay.

Ang presensiya ng mga sanitary landfills sa mga siyudad at bayan sa coastal areas ng Manila Bay.

Isa na dito ang landfill sa Obando, Bulacan na may ilang pagkakataon na rin nating pinupuna at tinutuligsa.

Bukod sa Obando, may alam pa tayong landfill sa siyudad na Navotas na napupuna rin nating nakakapagdagdag ng mabahong amoy tuwing tayo ay naglalakbay sa barko papasok ng Maynila.

May landfill din umano sa Las Piñas.

Ang mga landfill na ito ay gumagamit ng mga chemicals na ini-spray sa mga basura para di mangamoy at langawin.

Saan napupunta ang katas ng basura at chemicals na ito?

Sa simpleng sentido-kumon, sasabihin nating inaagos ito sa mga kanal at ilog patungo sa dagat.

Suma-total, mas grabeng polusyon ito kumpara sa dumi at basurang itinatapon ng mga informal settlers na nais walisin ng gobyerno.

Mas grabeng polusyon din ang nagmumula sa mga landfills na ito kumpara sa mga solid at water wastes na itinatapon ng mga pribadong establisimiyento at negosyong ipinasara na?

Bakit wala tayong naririnig na ingay mula sa DENR at sa iba pang sangay ng pamahalaan patungkol sa perwisyo ng mga landfills na ito?

Dahil ba sa may mga ECC na isyu ang DENR sa mga landfills na ito kung kaya't sadyang ayaw maangkat ng mga taga-DENR.

Sabwatan nga ba ito ng mga kontraktor ng basura, opisyal ng mga LGUs at DENR?

May bayad nga ba sa pagkuha ng ECC?

Nagtatanong lamang po Mr. Secretary Roy Cimatu sir?

Paano na pagsapit ng tag-ulan at pagdatal ng mga bagyo at pagbaha.

Baka magimbal na lamang tayo sa senaryong posibleng mang-yari sa Manila Bay.

Baka masayang lamang ang collective efforts ng mga stakeholders sa paglilinis ng Manila Bay.

Ngayon ay nakikita natin ang positibong epekto nito ngunit paano na nga sa pagdating ng tag-ulan at pagbaha dulot ng walang tigil na pagbuhos ng ulan sanhi ng bagyo?

May kasunod...

Abangan!

PARA SA INYONG KOMENTO, REAKSYON AT SUHESTIYON, MAGTEXT O TUMAWAG LAMANG SA CP NO. 0917-823-9628 O MAG-EMAIL LAMANG PO SA mhelbaraquiel1027@gmail.com



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SM-MOA NAGBIGAY-DAAN SA MANILA BAY REHAB

TUMALIMA ang pamunuan ng SM - Supermalls sa hiling ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na huwag nang ituloy ang nakatakda sanang pagdaraos ng taunang Philippine International Pyromusical

Competition (PIPC) sa harap ng lawa sa Mall of Asia (MOA).

Sa halip, inilipat ang tradisyunal na kumpetisyon sa SM City Clark Angeles, Pampanga na gaganapin sa Pebrero 23 hanggang Marso 30 bilang tugon sa kahilingan ng DENR na suportahan ang isinasa-

gawang rehabilitasyon sa Manila Bay.

Ikinatuwa naman ito ni DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda na nagsabing tinupad lamang ni Henry Sy, Jr. ang ipinangako niya kay DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu kamakailan upang maiwasan ang dagdag na polus-

yon sa Manila Bay.

Ayon kay Antiporda, seryoso at puspuhan ang ginagawa ng DENR para tuluyang linisin ang Manila Bay kung kaya anumang establisimiyento na nakaambang magdagdag sa polusyon ng naturang lawa ay kagyat nilang aaksiyunan.

"We can never listen to anything that will add even a small pollution on the bay," saad pa ni Antiporda.

Ang pinakaaabangang 10th pyromusical competition na may temang "A Decade of Lights, Music and Magic" ay inaasahang magiging tagisan

ng mga makukulay na fireworks na pangunahan ng Filipinas.

Kabilang sa inaasahang lalahok ang mga bansang Finland, Portugal, Germany, Poland, United Kingdom, Italy, Belgium, China, France at Canada.

BENEDICT ABAYGAR, JR.



Valentine's wish ni Goitia: "Puso para sa Ilog Pasig!"

NANAWAGAN si Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission Executive Director Jose Antonio "Ka Pepeton" Goitia sa mga mamamayan na pusuan ang Pasig River at Manila Bay ngayong Araw ng mga Puso.

"Puso para sa Ilog Pasig, iyan ang matagal na naming ipinapanawagan sa mga mamamayan mula nang maupo ako sa PRRC," ani Goitia. "Bagamat may banta kami na mananagot ang mga binansagan naming 'esterorista' o ang mga walang habas na nagtatapon ng kanilang basura sa mga estero at iba pang daluyang tubig, nakikiusap kami sa kanila ngayon na pusuan o pagmalasakitan ang kapaligiran, lalo ang Pasig River at Manila Bay."

Ayon kay Goitia, balewala ang pagsisikap ng



Si Goitia kasama si Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio.

mga river warrior ng PRRC sa paglilinis ng mga estero kung hindi makikipagpatulungan ang mamamayan, partikular ang informal settler families (ISFs) na walang habas kung magtapon ng kanilang basura sa mga daluyang tubig.

"Kaya kung mahal natin si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte, dapat na sundin natin ang pakiusap niya na mahalina-

tin ang kapaligiran dahil tayo rin ang makikina-bang kung lilinis ang Pasig River at ang Manila Bay," dagdag ni Goitia. "Kaya nananawagan ako sa mga nakatira sa paligid ng mga daluyang tubig, huwag na po tayong magtapon ng anumang basura hindi lamang ngayong Valentine's Day kung hindi sa habang panahon para sa kinabukasan ng susunod na henerasyon."



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WE are now living in a world where contrast, brightness, opposing directions and harsh highlights dominate the political and social behavior of everyone. It may sound like photography, but it's not. The proliferation of familiar words like upside and downside, pros and cons, positives and negatives, plus and minus, majority and minority, high and low, near and far, above ground and underground, swirls and twirls, real and fake — all dominate subject matter of any kind.

I have chosen to deal with "enablers" and "disablers" as the two very powerful groups in our society as their frequent clashes render periodic immobility in our quest for improvement. A good friend of mine who is now an American citizen was wondering why we are now lagging behind our neighbors. While the claim is true, I retorted with, "because you left us behind and offered your services to another country."

Setting aside my knee-jerk emotional stuff, I had to dig deep to answer the whys objectively without gnashing my teeth painfully in total silence.

President Rodrigo Duterte

A little known feisty hizzoner



MIRRORLESS

ROLLY G. REYES

(who did not have any of those familiar elite surnames) from a southern city gets elected and decided to fulfill his promises to replicate what he has done in his city on a national scale. I never thought of him as a dreamer, but a street-smart realist that would rather be shy and apologetic to those he considers with respect but will waste no time displaying those smirks and hateful eyes to those that he despises.

Always throwing a mouthful of expletives, insults and offending jokes whenever he can, he slowly trekked the perilous journey to combat drug addiction and criminality so he can restore peace and order. A classic example is when he warned terrorists in this manner: "Don't surrender because I'll kill you." The disablers will definitely jump on this to proclaim his instinct as a killer. The tsunami of "I told you so's" will attempt to downgrade the reality that one can now safely walk the streets at unholy hours.

He is known to be most upset

Enablers and disablers

when the environment is degraded and natural resources exploited by greed. His tough stance against open-pit waste disposal and indiscriminate logging and mining is well-known but met with silly resistance by left-leaning groups addicted to revolutionary taxes. Some labor groups have even labeled his policy as anti-poor.

Human rights activists even promote "softness" on drug users as the preferred mode to counter addiction, ignoring the fact that drug lords continue to thrive due to an increasing demand by these users who are more than willing to be mules to satisfy their need for free.

Speaker Gloria Macapagal Arroyo

Here is one much vilified lady who decided to fast-track and approve much needed and timely bills to alleviate poverty and cut corners to jumpstart economic reforms needed to stabilize commerce to insure our chances of a sound fiscal environment.

Yet, her detractors crooned "political ambition" as her veiled motive for her desire to uplift the plight of our less fortunate citizenry.

Distributing promised land titles, reviving Ro-Ro projects all over the country, earmarking ad-

ditional budget for health, expansion of transportation discounts for students and seniors, securing the success of the BOL by embarking on trade missions, focusing on major legislative projects that will further strengthen Visayas and Mindanao while empowering Luzon with a streamlined program of sustainability.

With much frequency, Speaker Arroyo visited various communities to check on their condition amidst heavy workloads to see to it that the budget is not just allocated but correctly spent. And critics dismiss these as purely "political." These are the same people who snoozed for six years to the tune of their "special" lullabies.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque 3rd

Here is one hardworking doctor whose baptism of fire was the killer issue we now call Dengvaxia. He knew he was confronting an "Incredible Hulk" of a problem but remained undaunted against a backdrop of mistrust created by his predecessor. He discovered a department ridden with graft, coerced by the previous hierarchy of looters. Funding for fictitious *barangay* health centers, misspent and juggled budgets, expiring medicines, and

uncooperative LGUs were among the worries he inherited.

As if these were not enough, he is now facing a hailstorm of a well-oiled propaganda machine and surprisingly even coming from a fellow public servant who seem to be fixated in seeking his downfall. A "persistent accost" (Did I give a clue?) to his integrity is well-known and lapped up by the media. "Breakouts" are mislabeled as "epidemics" to further aggravate an already scared public. Being a Surgeon General, these are the headaches that are threatening to be hazardous to his health.



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Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu

This former general knows how to do it and do it well. On top of his plate now is the rehabilitation of a body of water noted for battles and golden sunsets. As a battle-scarred soldier, he is trained to obey orders with accurate execution. He closed Boracay for six months and turned it upside down amidst howling and misinformed critics. Now a renewed prime destination, Boracay gleams like a South Sea pearl from the air. He did not stop. He has trained his sights on the other attractions

like Coron, El Nido, Baguio and Bohol, among others.

Disablers shouted "militarization" and "heartless" approach resulting in unemployment, but this general is not accustomed to blinking. He is now facing the "Battle of Manila Bay," brandishing his sword against all violators. Some wanted him to stop the rehabilitation with some stupid reasons that I cannot recall. He just stood there firmly and invited everyone to complete the job.

Some very creative minds suspected that various reclamation projects are in the pipeline.

He said that the ongoing Manila Bay rehabilitation is not a prelude to any land reclamation initiative. To those suspicious minds, please take a listen. Cimatu is only there to clean up, rehabilitate and preserve Manila Bay. Period.

It is sad that most of us just react instinctively and don't think too much about the total scene. We should look at the structure and not the subject. This sort of surreal detachment is like monochromatic photography. The emotional impact of color is not present, and one feels a bit colder or separated from the scene. An observer rather than a participant.

Good work, good deeds and good faith to all.



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Boracay rehab, closure, pinagtibay

Pinagtibay ng Supreme Court en banc ang presidential proclamation na nag-aatas na isara at isailalim sa rehabilitasyon ang isla ng Boracay.

Sa deliberasyon, 11-2 ang resulta ng botohan, na pabor na isara ang Boracay.

Ayon sa Korte Súprema, sakop ng "police power" ng estado ang Boracay closure and rehabilitation.

Ibig sabihin, constitutional ang naging hakbang ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na pansamantalang ipasara ang isla noong nakaraang taon.

Beth Camia



1/2

DENR starts environment crackdown at Diwalwal

Gold processing plants given until March 15 to finish production; river cleanup to follow

By Frinston Lim
@flimINQ

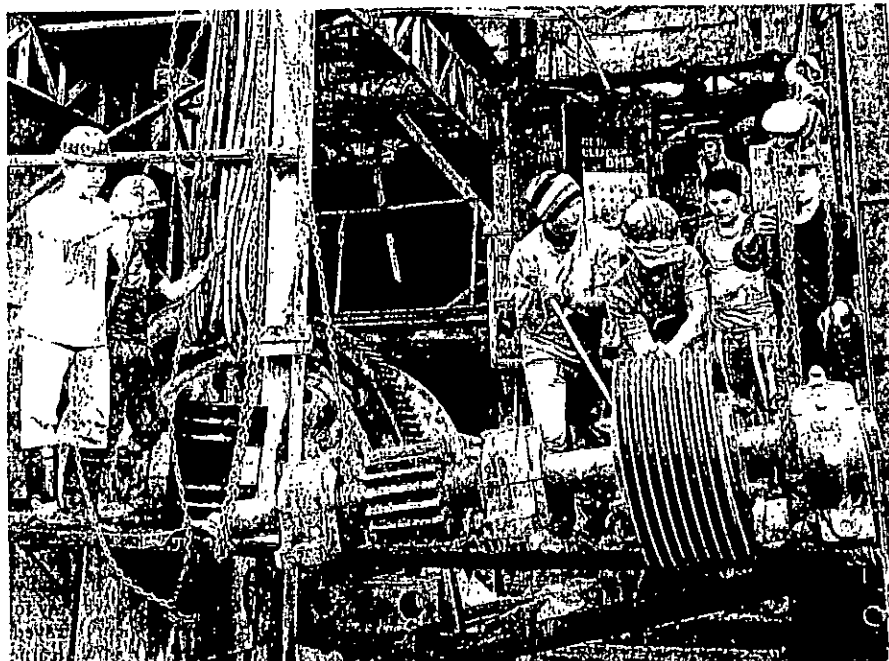
DAVAO CITY—Environment officials started shutting down gold processing plants in a mining village in Monkayo town, Compostela Valley province, on Monday, a move hailed by local officials as a start to a massive cleanup of a major river system contaminated by mine waste.

At least four ball mill processing plants have been closed by their operators at Barangay Mt. Diwalwal to comply with the order of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to relocate all mineral processing activities to a designated area in a nearby village, according to Chamberlain Babiera, DENR provincial director in Compostela Valley.

The cessation of processing activities on Mt. Diwalwal and the plants' transfer to Mabatas at Barangay Upper Ulip has been a longtime plan of the government to pave the way for the rehabilitation of Naboc River, said Evelyn Tolentino, officer in charge of the Monkayo municipal environment and natural resources office.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu created last year a provincial task force that would enforce and oversee the transfer of all ore-crushing plants to a tailings containment facility in Mabatas that the government had built in 2003.

Former President and now Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, through an executive order, created a national task force to oversee the rehabilitation of the 8,000-hectare Mt. Diwalwal Mineral Reservation



SHUTDOWN Miners secure their machines and equipment as the environment department enforces a closure order on gold processing plants blamed for river pollution on Mt. Diwalwal.
—MICHAEL UY/CONTRIBUTOR

Area, which covers Mt. Diwalwal village and mining site.

Cracks

Priority for relocation or closure are facilities located in Purok 15, Purok 16 and Purok 17 due to the presence of tension cracks in these areas which may give way and result in landslides following an assessment by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, Tolentino said.

"They were given an option to either dismantle the process-

ing plants themselves, let the task force do it, or just close their plants and build new ones in Mabatas, particularly those already old and nonoperational," Tolentino told the Inquirer by telephone.

Mabatas is located 5 kilometers down the 769-ha mining village of 18,000.

Babiera said there were at least 50 ball mills and carbon-in-pulp (CIP) plants in the three purok (subvillages). Mt. Diwalwal hosts a total of 22 CIP

plants and 176 ball mills.

He said 46 ore processors in the three purok were given up to March 15 to close their mills so they could finish their current production.

Dirty river

Beyond that date, the task force would implement the cease-and-desist order and fine of each operator up to P200,000 per day of operation beyond the agreed period.

Since the discovery of gold

on Mt. Diwalwal in 1983, pollution and other environment problems have hounded the village and communities below it as mineral waste laced with mercury and cyanide—chemicals used in squeezing gold from the ore—were thrown in creeks and waterways that empty into Naboc River.

Local officials said the relocation of the gold processing facilities was long overdue, noting that the unregulated proliferation of processing plants on Mt. Diwalwal virtually killed Naboc River.

"It has a positive effect on our town, particularly Barangay Naboc, because it means the start of eradicating or minimizing the concentration of mercury and cyanide contaminating the river," Tolentino said.

Tests by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the Department of Health in early 2000s revealed high mercury contamination on Mt. Diwalwal, which reached the river, some 12 km away.

Contaminated rice, fish

The contamination was also found in rice harvested near Naboc River, and fish and mussels caught there, the study said.

Up to 38 percent of Naboc residents were also found to be "mercury intoxicated" after consuming rice and fish contaminated with the heavy metal.

Babiera said mine waste in Mabatas would be contained in a tailings pond and could no longer pollute downstream.

He said the transfer of the rest of the facilities would begin following a final meeting with operators on March 19. INQ



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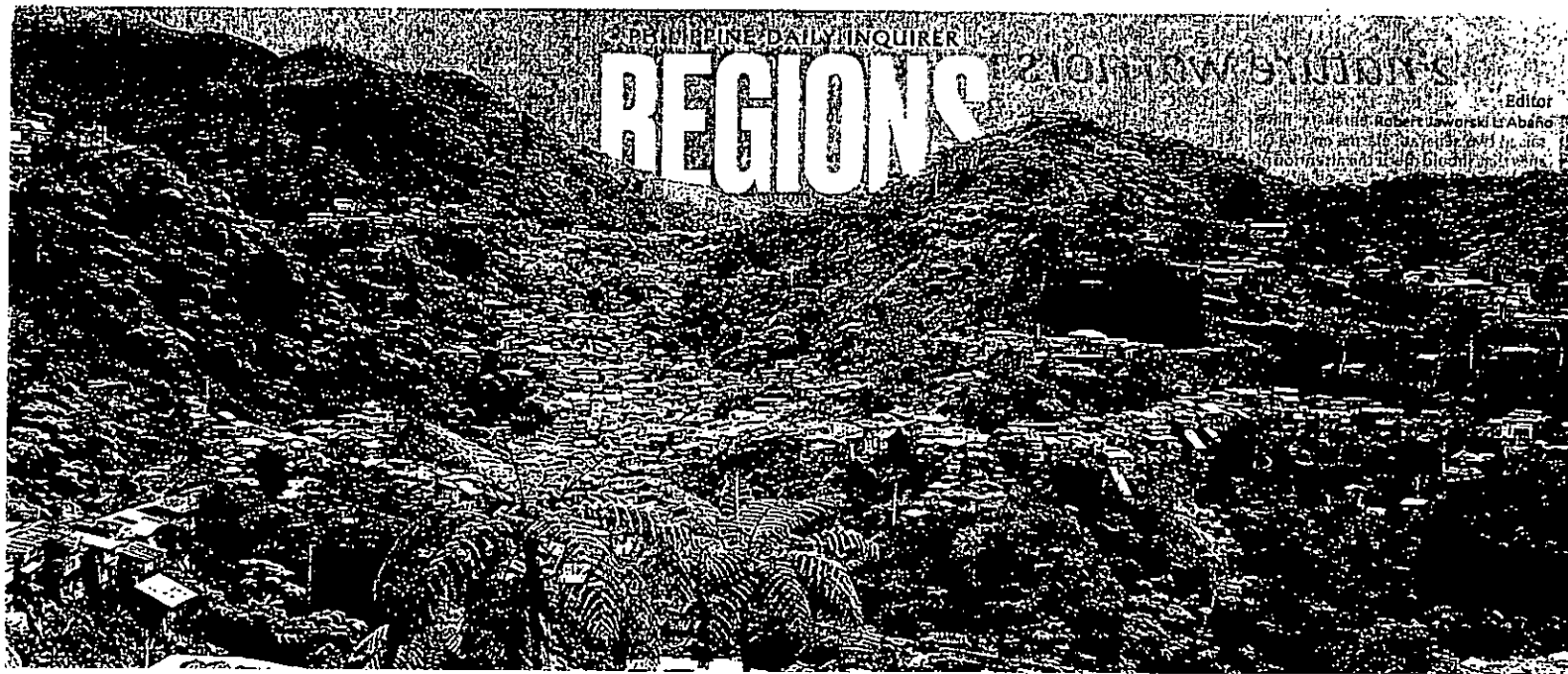
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MOUNTAIN OF GOLD Settlers engaged in small-scale mining have been raising their families in a gold-rich community on Mt. Diwalwal in Monkayo town, Compostela Valley, for decades. —DENNIS JAY SANTOS



Environment dept. allots P10 million for local biodiversity-friendly enterprises

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is allocating P10 million to finance biodiversity-friendly social enterprises for coastal communities within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).
Director Crisanta Marlene Ro-

driguez of the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau said the funding can be accessed by community-based organizations, nongovernment organizations, people's organizations or cooperatives that are willing to partner with the DENR-BMB in promoting

biodiversity-friendly programs and projects that will help conserve and protect the country's rich biodiversity.
"For this year, we have allocated only P10 million but the focus is on MPAs because it is under the flagship CMEMP program," Rodriguez told the

BUSINESSMIRROR, referring to the Coastal and Marine Ecosystem Management Program.

For 2019, she added, the DENR-BMB had informed DENR regional offices aware of the program and funding availability.

These regional offices, she added, will receive and process applications from interested parties, who may wish to avail themselves of funding support.

The DENR regional offices, Rodriguez said, also conducts the assessment and issues recommendations as to the

amount of financial support a development partner can avail itself of.

The CMEMP was established by virtue of DENR Administrative Order (DAO) 2016-26, to promote Biodiversity-Friendly Social Enterprise Development. *Jonathan L. Mayuga*



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THE EXHIBENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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MWSS chief: Manila Bay rehab needs masterplan

By **MADELAINE B. MIRAFLOR**

Metropolitan Water Works and Sewerage System (MWSS) stressed the need for collaborative effort and a well-crafted masterplan in order to pull off the massive Manila Bay rehabilitation.

MWSS Administrator Reynaldo V. Velasco said that while he supports the

ongoing rehabilitation at Manila Bay, which is being led by Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, there is still a need for a masterplan to address the wastewater problems in Metro Manila.

"I strongly recommend that a masterplan, which should have been done long time ago, is needed right now to properly address the sewerage and waste prob-

lems in Mega Manila," Velasco said.

As part of the rehabilitation, Velasco said he already tasked its two concessionaires, Manila Water Company, Inc. and Maynilad Water Services, Inc., to reengineer and fast-track their roadmap to provide wastewater treatment facilities to help arrest the deterioration of Manila Bay waters.



EMB-3 rallies LGUs to protect environment

MEYCAUAYAN CITY – The Environmental Management Bureau (EMB)-Region 3 is reiterating its call to local government units, particularly those with jurisdiction over the Marilao-Meycauayan-Obando River System (MMORS) on LGUs to perform their role in environment protection in line with the massive Manila Bay rehabilitation effort.

The MMORS flows toward Manila Bay and has been identified by international pollution watchdog Blacksmith Institute as comprising three of the 31 dirtiest river systems in the world.

EMB Central Luzon director Lormelyn Claudio has reminded concerned LGUs of their shared responsibility in protecting the environment and recommended actions that would help in the cleanup and protection of rivers and waterways.

Claudio wants concerned LGUs to hold the approval of mayor's/business permit and/or sanitation permit applications of industries which have no proof that their septage had been siphoned, hauled and treated.

She also recommends the passage and implementation of an ordinance regarding septage management.

Claudio explained that siphoning of septage was required to compel industries to comply with the Clean Water Act and the Supreme Court's continuing mandamus to rehabilitate Manila Bay.

Around 70 to 75 percent of the biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) loading of the MMORS come from domestic sources including septage generated by establishments.

Three septage treatment

facilities are located in the city of Meycauayan and the towns of Baliwag and Norzagaray.

She said continuous inspection and monitoring for environmental protection are conducted in the towns Marilao, Obando and Sta. Maria as well Meycauayan City for the Manila Bay cleanup and rehabilitation.

Claudio said these include the inspection of illegal structures built on easements; checking of the compliance of households and individuals with local ordinances such as anti-littering; serving of notices of violation and orders to violators, and the simultaneous clean up of waterways per city/municipality and monitoring/inspection of compliance to Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

– Ramon Efren Lazaro



Panawagan para sa malawakang pagbabawas ng basura

HINIKAYAT ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)-Environment Management Bureau (EMB) ang buong Calabarzon para sa malawakang pagbabawas ng mga dumi o basura sa mga bahay at establisyemento sa rehiyon, dulot ng limitadong mga landfills at dumpsites.

Sa pagbabahagi ni DENR Calabarzon Regional Executive Director Maria Paz Luna, sinabi niya na kinakailangang palawakin ng mga local government units (LGUs) ang kanilang solusyon para sa maaaring pakinabang ng mga basura sa ekonomiya.

"Many LGUs now can derive economic value from their wastes, we only need to increase demand," aniya.

Bukod sa mga economic-driven solution, nagbigay din ng suhestiyon ang DENR sa pagsubok ng posibilidad ng paglalagay ng mga disposal facility sa bawat probinsiya sa pakikipagtulungan sa Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

Iginiit din niya ang pangangailangan ng lahat ng mga pampublikong instruktura, na ikonsidera na subukan ang paggamit ng mga ladrilyo na nag-aalis ng mga dumi sa mga 'waste stream'.

"Landfills are no less public works than roads and bridges. Pag umapaw na po ang palanggana, hahagilapin ba muna ang mop o papatayin muna ang tubig? Wala na pong pagpagaan ng mop, ibang paraan na ang dapat hanapin pag 60 percent na ang problema," paliwanag ni Luna.

Iniulat na tanging 38 porsiyento ng pangunahing mga dumi o basura ng rehiyon na binubuo ng Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal at Quezon ay maaaring tanggapin ng 35 sanitary landfills na nasa iba't ibang lokalidad na may permisong magsagawa ng operasyon, lalo't bawat landfill ay may kapasidad lamang na umaabot sa 2,193 tonelada ng dumi kada araw.

Sa datos na isinumite ng LGUs sa EMB, naglalabas ang Calabarzon Region ng 5,695 tonelada ng basura kada araw na may per capita waste generation na umaabot sa 190 gramo hanggang 390 gramo bawat tao.

Cavite at Laguna ang nangunguna sa per capita, habang ang Quezon ang may pinakamababa tala na mas mababa pa sa basura na nalilikha ng mga metropolitan areas at sikat na lugar katulad Boracay.

Sa pulong kamakailan kasama ang mga opisyal ng DENR, umapela ang mga LGU na hindi kayang makamit ng rehiyon ang 100% efficiency sa pagkolekta ng mga basura at hindi ito maaabot dahil sa limitadong bilang ng mga dump trucks at tauhan.

Tinalakay din sa pagpupulong ang serbisyo ng pangongolekta ng basura na kalimitang nakasentro sa mga poblacion o town proper.

Samantala, hinikayat din ng ahensiya sa mga LGU na paigtingin ang kanilang koordinasyon sa mga pribadong sektor bilang isang holistikong paraan upang mabawasan ang mga basura ng rehiyon lalo na sa bawat tahanan.



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Manobo tribe shows why forests should be valued

WHY are forests important? It provides us with shelter, the materials used for buildings and the paper we use to write in school. It also holds water and cleans the air we breathe. These are typical answers one might hear from a student, an urban dweller, or from a top search over the internet.

But for the Manobo indigenous group of Surigao, the forest means so much more. Not only do forests provide them with their daily needs, they also hold and represent their culture and identity. "*Ang kalasangan mao ang atong kinabuhi* (The forest is our life)," said Datu Pedrito Agustin of the Manobo tribe during a consultation meeting held at Tandag City.

The Manobo of Barangay Pakwan, Lanuza, Surigao del Sur reside within the forests of Mount Hilong-Hilong. According to Haribon Foundation, Mount Hilong-Hilong is the highest mountain in North Eastern Mindanao and the home to a vast range of wildlife. The ancestral domain of the Manobo can also be found within the areas.

For the Manobo group, the forest is both the treasure and the life of the tribe. Prior to its declaration as Barangay Pakwan in 1981, the Manobo have already been inhabiting the area. Reports accounted that they have lived a simple life, practicing harmony with the forests through their culture and traditions. They farmed crops, hunted wild animals and carried out rituals and tribal celebrations for the *Magbabaya* (the Creator).

Facing destruction from deforestation

When logging companies opened in the 1970s, the Manobo have struggled with rampant displacements and discrimination brought about by the arrival of migrants and lowlanders. Lifestyle changes were made necessary in order to survive.

Lasting for more than four decades, the tribe was a witness to the damage caused by the massive deforestation at that time including the decline of

wildlife such as the *usa* (deer), *amo* (monkey), *ayaw* (hornbill), *milo* (wild cats), or the complete loss of species in the area such as the *Banug* (Philippine eagle), which can no longer be spotted today. The Manobo have also reported lower water levels, lower fish catch, and warmer climate throughout the years.

The passing of the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) Rights Act and the creation of the National Commission of Indigenous People in 1997 paved the way for the Manobo tribe members to organize their own association, which enabled them to protect the forest, their ancestral domain and rights, and to preserve their cultural way of life.

When the large-scale logging ceased in 2010, the Manobo begun collaborating with various government agencies and non-government organizations. They were provided with different types of training that they have also passed on to their children.

"*Ang edukasyon ang naghatag kanamo ug dalan para maila kami ug adonay balaud na mapapasa alang sa among mga IP* (Education paved the way for us to be recognized and for laws to be passed for the IPs)," said Datu Romel Dawog, the Municipal Indigenous Peoples mandatory representative of Manobo during the Participatory Situational Analysis activity conducted by Haribon.

He added that through building capacities, the next generation would not have to experience what the older generation had struggled with before. The Manobo believe that aside from planting trees and implementing forest-related policies, empowering their members through capacity-building is one of the best ways to strengthen forest protection by the community.

The Manobo tribe is part of the Forest Governance Project with Haribon Foundation that aims to strengthen community voice and action in forest governance. It is a five-year program funded by the European Union in partnership with BirdLife International.

KATHLEEN D. ZAMBAS



Volunteers from the Manobo tribe of Barangay Pakwan, Lanuza, Surigao del Sur, show their support for the Forest Governance Project with Haribon Foundation. HARIBON PHOTO



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Students join Cagayan town wetlands conservation

IN an effort to conserve and protect the wetlands in Buguey, Cagayan province, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) collaborated with the younger generation as their partners during the recently held Buguey Wetlands Summit 2019.

Composed of coastal lagoons, freshwater marshes, mangrove swamps, mudflats, with some fish, crab and shrimp ponds, and large rice paddies, the Buguey Wetlands covers about 500 hectares or about 80 percent of the total land area of Buguey municipality.

The DENR Cagayan Valley (Region 2) office said the young partners were the elementary and high school students who resided near the Buguey Wetlands who participated the Buguey Wetlands Summit on February 2. The summit with the theme "Wetlands and Climate Change" highlighted the celebration of the World Wetlands Day (WWD).

To raise public awareness about the importance and value of wetlands, WWD is celebrated every February 2.

During the summit, the students learned the importance and benefits of wetlands through different interactive lectures and activities. They toured in some areas within the wetlands where



■ Students from different schools participated in the recently held Buguey Wetlands Summit 2019 in Buguey town in Cagayan Province, where they learned the importance and benefits of the wetlands through different interactive lectures and activities. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

they experienced bird watching and asked to identify the migratory birds visiting the area.

The students were introduced to five species in the wetlands including Black-winged Stilt, Intermediate Egret, Great Egret, Grey Heron and Purple Heron, and learned to identify common species of mangroves and its parts and functions, which included the seven species of *bakawan lalaki*, *bakawan babae*, *pagatpat*, *pototan*, *saging-saging*, *nipa* and *bungalon* or *api-api*.

Participating schools were Minanga Elementary School, Mala

Weste Elementary School, Leron Elementary School, Centro West Elementary School, Buguey Central Elementary School, San Isidro Elementary School, Santa Maria Primary, and Licerio Antiporda Senior National High School.

During the summit, Adolfo Miranda Jr., Buguey municipal council member, delivered a message appealing for active participation in conserving the Buguey Wetlands.

"The survival of the migratory birds and the source of income of the locals depend on the conservation and protection of our very own

Buguey Wetlands," Miranda said.

The summit was part of the Buguey Wetlands Awareness Campaign (BWAn) project that aims to provide supplemental activities for the conservation and development of the environment. It was funded by Ramsar Regional Center-East Asia.

"Through the summit, we encourage the students to share and impart what they have learned to build a bigger and stronger network in wetlands protection and preservation," said Emerlynn Daliong, BWAn project lead.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO



Wastewater treatment technology reaches Siargao

A wastewater treatment technology developed through funding by the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) has helped a beach resort in surfers' mecca Siargao island to become an eco-friendly tourist destination.

The successful full installation of the Eco-Friendly Septic (Eco-Sep) system features the use of Vigormin Organo Mineral developed by Adamson University professor Merlinda Palencia at the Travellers Pension House & Beach Resort in General Luna, Siargao. It made the destination

confident of undergoing environmental inspection.

The Eco-Sep's Vigormin Organo Mineral (ViOM) is an odorless, white powder composed of various organo-minerals with the capability to neutralize the pungent odor and murky color of wastewater. Its application significantly improves water quality based on the effluents standard set by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Editha Gonzales, former general manager of the establishment, said that with the highly effective treat-

ment of the resort's wastewater, plants around the resort now benefit from "recycled" water.

"The treated wastewater is clear and does not have any odor. Thanks to the DOST for making us a recipient of the Eco-Sep (technology)," Gonzales said.

Aside from the Travellers Pension House, the DOST-Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and Emerging Technology (PCIEERD) had provided Eco-Sep to the General Luna public market and the high school through a pilot-test run on effectiveness of the

technology as a wastewater treatment in 2017.

However, it was only Travellers Pension House that fully installed and adopted the technology.

"The previous septic tanks of the resort have a bottomless design, so the wastewater drains straight into the sea. The contamination of the water is one of the biggest problems of resorts in the island," Gonzales said.

Gonzales also thanked the PCIEERD for providing a year's supply of Vigormin and that after full implementation of the improved sew-

erage system, the resort has met the effluent standards set by the DENR.

Travellers Pension House's success with Eco-Sep has led to serious interest among other hotels and beach resorts in Siargao, as Sugba Lagoon in Del Carmen town has installed such system on Feb. 10.

The Eco-Sep is a self-sustaining, portable and movable wastewater treatment system that uses an innovative combination of bio-stimulation and filtration enhanced with organo-minerals.

- Rainier Allan Ronda



Photo shows a section of a water treatment facility that was recently inaugurated in Cortes town, Bohol.

Water treatment facility to benefit thousands of Boholanos

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

CORTES – Thousands of households in Bohol province are set to benefit from a state-of-the-art water treatment facility that was inaugurated in Barangay Patrocinio, Cortes town recently.

The P1.5-billion water treatment project of Richli Corp. aims to address the province's lack of clean, safe and stable supply of water since Boholanos have long been dependent on deep wells for their water needs.

The water problems being faced by the residents prompted Richli Corp., a private company owned by Bohol native Richard Lim, to make this water project a reality.

"As Boholanos, we've seen firsthand the many problems our region is facing. And we want to give the people of Bohol their much-needed supply of clean and safe potable water," Lim said.

As cholera, gastrointestinal problems and kidney stones are mostly due to the ingestion of unsafe water, the lack of water has also hampered development of Panglao Island, one of Bohol's tourist sites.

Lim explained that Richli will source water from the Malingin River and distribute in bulk to the capital Tagbilaran, as well as to Panglao and Dauis towns.

The project will cover an initial output of 10,000 cubic meters of water per day, and a peak target of 25,000 cubic meters per day – good enough to supply potable water up to 20,000 households.

Jeoffrey Hapitan, chairman and CEO of JE Hydro and Bio-Energy Corp., said this facility is the first of its kind in the province. JE Hydro is a project partner.

"The Richli Water Treatment plant employs the proven process of treating surface water. We are using environment-friendly chemicals for the coagulation process to remove the dirt and other impurities from the river water then we further purify the treated water using our filter, and finally, the treated water will undergo the process of disinfection by using chlorine to clean all the microbes," Hapitan explained during the inauguration late last month.

Strict quality control entailed having online analyzer for continuous monitoring, a laboratory and a licensed chemist who double checks the analysis of the water.

Richli Corp. also guaranteed the supply of potable water even during blackouts since the facility is generated by an emergency power supply system.

"Panglao Island and the city of Tagbilaran can now enjoy a steady supply of safe drinking water at a very affordable cost, and they need not buy water from the refilling station anymore," Hapitan said.

Rei Bernardo, project manager, said they have accepted more than 400 applications, mostly from households in Tagbilaran, Baclayon, Dauis and Panglao, to avail themselves of the the water treatment plant service.

He noted that the approved rate from the National Water Resources Board concerning the project's operation is P391 as minimum charge for the first 10 cubic meters.



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Let our love for water continue to flow



ALL ABOUT
CHOICES

LUDWIG O.
FEDERIGAN

(Second of two parts)

THE United Nations has declared 2018 to 2028 as the International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development in order to accelerate international efforts towards meeting water-related challenges, including limited access to safe water and sanitation, increasing pressure on water resources and ecosystems, and an exacerbated risk of droughts and floods.

Why the discussion on water so important?

Water is the only consistent and absolute requirement for life on Earth. We all drink water, bathe in water, cook with water, and are made of water. Water is a solvent, a solute, a reactant, and a catalyst. The water molecule is the second most common molecule in the universe after hydrogen. There are 100 times as many water molecules in our bodies than the sum of all the other molecules put together. Humans can't live for more than a few days without water.

In the keynote address delivered by the Philippines' Climate Change Commission (CCC) Sec. Emmanuel de Guzman, during the last National Conference on Water Security, acknowledged that: "Water scarcity is now a growing concern for the Philippines." He enumerated the most striking data:

The 2017 Philippine National Demographic and Health Survey by the Philippine Statistics Authority stated that only 49 percent of

Filipinos use non-piped improved water sources, while there is still a proportion of 5 percent of Filipinos using unimproved drinking water services.

In 2018, the National Economic and Development Authority presented that out of the 22.7 million families, 12.32 percent still have no access to safe water supply. Likewise, alarming is that 2.04 percent of the country's population have cases of unimproved sanitation and 4.23 percent have occurrences of open defecation.

In the latest count of the Department of the Interior and Local Government, under the "Sagana at Ligtas na Tubig para sa Lahat" (Salintubig) program, there are still 173 waterless barangays across 15 regions that need urgent interventions for water supply and access.

Philippines has lost 1.09 million hectares of tree cover from 2001 to 2017, which is equivalent to a 5.9-percent decrease since year 2000, which is a contributory factor to massive flooding in the lowlands and urban communities, according to a report by Global Forest Watch.

Philippines is 54th among all countries that were determined by the World Resources Institute as highly water-stressed in sectors including agricultural, domestic and industrial, while Asian Development Bank ranks us 37th out of 48 countries on the national water security index — both clear indicators that with climate change, our rank can still reach a higher notch in terms of water stress and water insecurity.

The Philippines, being a country surrounded by water, is projected to experience a "high" degree of water shortage in 2040, according to a report published by the World Resources Institute.

The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) said during Roundtable Discussions on Water Security that hydropower takes up most of the allocated water for non-consumptive use at 57.09 percent, while for consumptive use, irrigation takes the lead at 73.05 percent.

Nine cities in the country were identified as water-stressed in the late 1990s, and other cities are still adding up to the list.

Student Leadership Conference on Development

On February 18 to 19, the Student Leadership Conference on Development at the United Nations has dedicated this year's theme on "Ensuring Safe, Sufficient and Accessible Water and Sanitation for All." The annual conference to be hosted by the University of Makati will have three major sub-themes, namely: water and sanitation resource management and innovation; water sanitation and infrastructure; and water pollution.

Now running on its 10th year, the conference, conceptualized in 2010 by Green Education Motivators headed by Wayne Jacoby, aims to bring students together from around the world to tackle real and pressing development issues facing our society today. I Am SAM.



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let our law

Foundation Inc., the Philippine Convener and cofounded by Rayla Melchor Santos, has been the local host for the past six years.

As one of the partner organizations representing the Young Environmental Forum, I will deliver a message of inspiration to mobilize our young people to act on water-related challenges that will contribute to the achievement of the sustainable development goal.

Youth's response to the water problem

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2019: "Water crisis as a societal strain is a leading global risk both in terms of likelihood and impact."

Fifty young leaders representing different schools and universities from north to south of the country have been selected to represent the Young Environmental Forum for the conference. Let me share with you what they have to say when asked with the question: "What can I do to address the water problem?"

Ronaldo Magsakay, 20, BA Journalism, Bulacan State University said: "Water crisis is a serious problem that we must face. As a youth and as a writer, it is a calling for us to use any platform that we have to

further influence more people to conserve water. Change is something that will not magically come. It will start from me, it will start from us."

Raymark Paul Rigor, 21, MS Conservation and Restoration Ecology, University of the Philippines-Baguio: "Water crisis is so evident worldwide, and it prevails due to climate change. Potable water is now scarce in various regions that citizens are turning to whatever water resources they can adhere to. I believe that human action towards progress must always be observed that it does not compromise the environment, for this will cause further damage in land, water and other resources. As a researcher, I am fully aware of the potentials on how we can make new technology and enhance the existing ones to give people ways on how to have clean, potable water, like the straw that filters muddy water for instant drinkable water."

Aldwin Silfavan, 19, AB Political Science, West Visayas State University: "First, I can devote my personal time and space by simply sharing and proliferating awareness and learnings, news, articles, reliable blogs about water crisis through social media platforms. Second, I can participate in community activities like coastal clean-up in riverine and coastal *barangay* (villages) because it's not just clean water, we should make sure it is also safe that can sustain life of the organisms living in there by maintaining a good pH level suitable for fish species and other organisms. Third, we can expound our knowledge about water

crisis by joining initiatives of Young Environmental Forum, which will improve our understanding and be innovative of our ways."

Klel-Sien Cordova, 20, BS Environmental Engineering, University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines: "I have experienced living in an area where the residents need to store water for their daily consumption because there is no water supply ranging from three to more than six hours daily. As an environmental engineering student, I can use water wisely. I will ensure that I will not take it for granted because we will never know the worth of water until water become scarce. I will participate in tree planting activities especially in areas near the watersheds and practice CLAYGO (Clean As You Go) wherever I go."

Jonalyn Dilangalen, 21, BS Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering, University of Southern Mindanao: "In our generation, our water sources maybe the most critical element in our society if we do not do our part to make it more safe and clean. As a student leader, I will address the water crisis with the people who are irresponsible to their environment. Throwing garbage anywhere, especially to the canal, rivers and lakes is very disappointing. We must think of our generation and the generations to come. The betterness of our world begins with us, so let us conserve water and save humanity."

Love is like water. We can't live without it. Happy Valentine's Day, everyone!



DOST, Isabela State work to conserve Cagayan River

By RAINIER ALLAN RONDA

The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Region 2 and Isabela State University (ISU) are spearheading an effort to conserve the Cagayan River basin.

Engineer Sancho Mabborang, DOST 2 regional director, said the effort seeks to draw up an integrated water resource management program for the Cagayan River basin system, which is vital for the Cagayan Valley region as well as Region 1 and the Cordillera Administrative Region, being a source of food, water for irrigation and renewable energy.

"The Cagayan River provides us so much, being a source of food from fisheries, irrigation, and even electricity which is from the Magat Dam, the Magat river being a tributary of the vast Cagayan River system," Mabborang told The STAR.

"So it's important for us to conserve it," he said.

The DOST Region 2 and ISU recently organized the three-day International Training-Workshop on Integrated Water Resource Management in River Basins for Sustainable Development in Cauayan, Isabela, which drew participants from the Asian Development Bank, Japan Water Agency, Japan's Public Works Research Institute and the International River Foundation, among others.

Mabborang said they seek to get various government agencies including the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture and their line agencies, the DOST's various institutes and councils, and even state universities and colleges (SUCs) in Region 2 to join in drawing up a comprehensive IWRM plan and implementing it.

Science Secretary Fortunato dela Peña, keynote speaker in the opening ceremonies of the three-day conference, said DOST was ready to support water resource management and conservation initiatives not only in Region 2 and the Cagayan River basins, but in all of the country's 18 major river basins.

He pointed out that seven out of the 17 UN sustainable development goals are dependent on water security.

Insects headed for mass extinction, study warns

Nearly half of all insect species worldwide are in rapid decline and a third could disappear altogether, according to a study warning of dire consequences for crop pollination and natural food chains.

"Unless we change our way of producing food, insects as a whole will go down the path of extinction in a few decades," concluded the peer-reviewed study, which is set for publication in April.

The recent decline in bugs that fly, crawl, burrow and skitter across still water is part of a gathering "mass extinction," only the sixth in the last half-billion years.

"We are witnessing the largest extinction event on Earth since the late Permian and Cretaceous periods," the authors noted.

The Permian end-game 252 million years ago snuffed out more than 90 percent of the planet's life forms, while the abrupt finale of the Cretaceous 66 million years ago saw the demise of land dino-

saur.

"We estimate the current proportion of insect species in decline – 41 percent – to be twice as high as that of vertebrates," or animals with a backbone, Francisco Sanchez-Bayo of the University of Sydney and Kris Wyckhuys of the University of Queensland in Australia reported.

"At present, a third of all insect species are threatened with extinction."

An additional one percent join their ranks every year, they estimated. Insect biomass – sheer collective weight – is declining annually by about 2.5 percent worldwide.

"Only decisive action can avert a catastrophic collapse of nature's

ecosystems," the authors cautioned.

Restoring wilderness areas and a drastic reduction in the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizer are likely the best way to slow the insect loss, they said.

'Hardly any insects left'

The study, to be published in the journal *Biological Conservation*, pulled together data from more than 70 datasets from across the globe, some dating back more than a century.

By a large margin, habitat change – deforestation, urbanization, conversion to farmland – emerged as the biggest cause of insect decline and extinction threat.

Next was pollution and the widespread use of pesticides in commercial agriculture.

The recent collapse, for example, of many bird species in France

was traced to the use insecticides on industrial crops such as wheat, barley, corn and wine grapes.

"There are hardly any insects left – that's the number one problem," said Vincent Bretagnolle, an ecologist at Centre for Biological Studies.

Experts estimate that flying insects across Europe have declined 80 percent on average, causing bird populations to drop by more than 400 million in three decades.

Only a few species of insects – mainly in the tropics – are thought to have suffered due to climate change, while some in northern climes have expanded their range as temperatures warm.

In the long run, however, scientists fear that global warming could become another major driver of insect demise.

Up to now, rising concern about biodiversity loss has mostly focused on big mammals, birds and amphibians.

– AFP



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

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Samar fisher's net snags dead whale shark

TACLOBAN CITY – A young female whale shark was killed after getting entangled in a gill net in Marabut town, Samar, recently.

Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Regional Director Juan Albaladejo said the 17.4-foot juvenile shark was trapped in a fisherman driftnet last Monday.

The fisherman, identified as Rodolfo Flores, said he was fishing in the waters between Marabut and Lawaan town in Eastern Samar, locally known as Capinis Point, when he noticed that he had difficulty lifting his net.

At first he thought the net had stuck on some rocks underneath, but when he

hauled it up, he found the dead animal tangled in it.

Albaladejo said Flores cannot be faulted because he was unaware of the entanglement.

"The usual practice is to set the net in early evening and left overnight. This juvenile female whale shark might have separated from the pod chasing krill or "alamang" and went to the shallow waters of the gulf and got entangled," he explained.

The necropsy report revealed superficial skin abrasions on the animal's mouth, which is believed to be inflicted while it was trying to get free. (Marie Tonette Marticio)



2 nature warriors raise alarms

Two veteran environmentalists have raised two separate alarms on two issues that should merit the attention of the government and citizens.

Jose Ma. Lorenzo Tan, a member of the national advisory council of World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and Brain Trust Inc. (a sustainable development consultancy), and Antonio Oposa Jr., an environmental lawyer and activist, are speaking out individually to call attention to environmental issues. These two men are also authors of books on the environment. Oposa was a 2007 Ramon Magsaysay Foundation awardee. Tan headed WWF-Philippines for many years.

Tan's alarm has to do with Taal Lake/Volcano and its environs, among them, the heritage town of Taal in Batangas. A circumferential highway along the east side of the lake is to be built. The problem is that Mount Maculot, "a mountaineer's first love," is in the area, and Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology studies show it to be landslide-prone. Also, the road being planned is on the "littoral zone," that is, the highest zone of biodiversity in the entire protected area.

Tan points out that the east side section of the Taal Lake caldera is the last forest and wildlife area, and covered by the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System rules. The highway project should be put in the freezer, Tan says, because a writ of kalikasan has been filed for Taal Lake, and the Court of Appeals is still monitoring the so-called consent decree.

And yet, Tan says, "the contractor has cleared forests, slopes, slides and coastal areas without approval. The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) created a budget for a 20-meter circumferential road, but not for the purchase of



HUMAN FACE

MA. CERES P. DOYO

right of way. They may have expected the local government units to provide the land for the road... (but) it seems like no LGU is giving land, hence the proposal is to cover the shoreline of the entire lake with a road, assuming it is all easement and therefore public land. In some barangays, the highway project has removed natural water sources. This will destroy the lake."

So it is not only the lake's famous "tawilis" fish that are endangered (there is now a ban on catching them), the lake itself and its surroundings are endangered.

Tan, now a resident of Batangas, also points out that the historical, cultural and religious sites of Pinagkurusan, Dingin and Lumang Simbahan in Alitagtag and Sta. Teresita towns will be affected. Already, the clearing operation is nearing Dingin.

Is the project supposed to be a circumferential tourism highway? What is the basis for a project in a hazard, unstable area? And why has the DPWH delayed the much-needed widening of the Cuenca-Alitagtag road which could be safer?

On another front, the quixotic Oposa,

who, along with his law students, brought the case of the polluted Manila Bay to the Supreme Court 20 years ago (and won), is still fighting windmills. While the bay is now undergoing massive cleanup and rehab two decades too late, and the world-class sunset bay continues to inspire romantics, something worrisome is looming in the horizon: reclamation in Manila Bay.

"Reclaim?" Oposa asks. Why, who owned it previously? Someone, he says, fills up the sea with rocks and soil then claims the land as his own and sells it as real estate. In Filipino, "tinambakan at inangkin." He makes a computation on how developers could make a fast buck or "tubong lugaw."

The lawyer cites a 2003 Supreme Court decision that declared that submerged areas are public domain and outside the commerce of man. He dares President Duterte (whom he calls Bossing Bisaya) not to heed reclamation offers.

He brings up the negative impacts the Philippine Reclamation Authority should be aware of: bribery of officials in order to scrape off entire mountains to fill the sea; rising water levels ("See you underwater, Camanava!"); the negative effect, on marine life; solid and liquid waste disposal; land liquefaction, to name a few.

Oposa waxes sentimental when he pictures Manila Bay wearing a sheen of gold at day's end: "Reflecting on the evening sky, at twilight time when we ask ourselves why. 'It is not the things we do, but the things that we leave undone, that leave a bit of heartache at the setting of the sun.'"

Countless Valentine couples will be out there to woo when the sun romances the sea and day turns to dusk.

Send feedback to cerespd@gmail.com.