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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



Saving Manila Bay

Is it possible?

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

✉ @jonlmayuga

A FEW days after the government-led a massive coastal cleanup fronting Bay Walk on Roxas Boulevard in Manila, eager beavers have started to take a plunge at the polluted waters of Manila Bay.

This prompted the Manila Bay Inter-Agency Task Force to put up steel fences and issue a public warning that the water of Manila Bay are not fit for bathing or swimming.

In fact, the level of pollution in Manila Bay's poses serious health risks to those who may ingest water from it, with the fecal coliform level reaching up to as high as 333 million most probable numbers per 100 milliliters in some portions.

A gargantuan task

LED by the Departments of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Interior and Local Government (DILG) and of Tourism (DOT), the government is faced with a far bigger challenge than Boracay in launching what it calls the "Battle for Manila Bay," which primarily aims to save Manila Bay.

Skeptics believe, given the gargantuan task at hand, that rehabilitating Manila Bay is a seemingly impossible mission given the government's limited resources to make things happen.

The Manila Bay area covers eight provinces and 178 local government units in three regions of the country, namely: National Capital Region (NCR), Central Luzon and Calabarzon.

Of the eight provinces, four are coastal (Bataan, Bulacan, Cavite and Pampanga); four are noncoastal (Laguna, Nueva Ecija, Rizal and Tarlac).

Its drainage area covers 1,994 square kilometers, or 199,400 hectares; its coastline measures some 190 km. There are 17 principal river systems draining to Manila Bay.

SC continuing mandamus

THE government, led by the DENR, DILG and DOT, is tasked to implement a 2008 Supreme Court continuing mandamus 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.

DENR Administrative Order 34 of 1990 defines coastal and marines waters under Class SB classification as areas regularly used by the public for bathing, swimming and skin diving; and as spawning areas for *bangus* (milkfish) and similar species.

The DENR is tasked to ensure the implementation of the Operational Plan for the Manila Bay Coastal Strategy pursuant to Executive Order 192, Series of 1987; regularly coordinate with mandamus agencies and other concerned agencies involved in the management of Manila Bay on effective implementation of OPMBCS; pursuant to Section 19 of Republic Act 9275, manage water quality of Manila Bay through standards setting, regular monitoring and determination of Water Quality Management Areas (WQMA).

Relocation of informal settler families

THE Supreme Court, likewise, orders the dismantling and removal of illegal structures along the following waterways: Pasig-Marikina-San Juan Rivers; Parañaque-Zapote, Las Piñas Rivers; Navotas-Malabon-Tullahan-Tinajeros

and connecting waterways and esteros in Metro Manila; rivers in Bulacan, Bataan, Cavite and Laguna de Bay and other rivers connecting waterways and esteros that discharge wastewater into the Manila Bay.

According to the DILG, almost 233,000 informal settler families (ISFs) are residing along the waterways of Manila Bay, directly discharging their wastes into the water.

Interior Secretary Eduardo M. Año said the biggest challenge to the government in rehabilitating the Manila Bay is finding appropriate on-site or in-city relocation for the informal settler families.

Is it possible?

ENVIRONMENTAL groups welcome the launching of Battle for Manila Bay, albeit some are skeptical and highly suspicious of the motive behind the ambitious program, which requires a hefty sum of P47 billion for a period of seven years.

However, DENR officials are confident that rehabilitating Manila Bay is not an impossible mission with the help of various stakeholders.

No less than Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu believes that with the various stakeholders working together, the so-called Battle for Manila Bay will be won.

Sound science

LEON DULCE, national coordinator of Kalikasan-People's Network for the Environment (Kalikasan-PNE), said the rehabilitation of Manila Bay can be done through sound science, democratic consultation and mobilization, and political will against big business interests.



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Saving Manila Bay: Is it possible?

Responding through e-mail to the BUSINESSMIRROR's questions, Dulce said the program should aim to address the long-standing challenges in solid and liquid waste management, ecosystem and natural resources management, disaster risk management and climate adaptation, and urban development regulation.

"A science-based analysis of these issues should be conducted, particularly in disaggregating

the sources of pollution along its pathway, investigating conflicting land and water uses, projecting long-term climate trends, and studying the carrying capacity of the ecosystems integrated to Manila Bay," Dulce explained.

Inclusive program

ACCORDING to Dulce, grassroots communities—such as the fisherfolk and the urban poor—must be seen and engaged as highly motivated partners in rehabilitation, as they are the most affected by the ecological crisis and stand to benefit the most from environmental rehabilitation.

"The biggest stumbling blocks to Manila Bay's rehabilitation are the powerful economic interests—such as reclamation and infrastructure companies—that have weaponized rehabilitation to clear away marginalized and vulnerable communities and pave the way for their business projects," he said.

Dulce noted that project proponents have always failed to put the needs and rights of the poor and vulnerable communities themselves as the core motive of Manila Bay's rehabilitation.

"They must take painstaking effort in encouraging the meaningful participation and genuine consent of the fisherfolk, urban poor and other grassroots sectors in the analysis, planning, management and evaluation of the bay's rehabilitation program. The local government units [LGUs] must also be held responsible to the directives of the Mandamus decision, as some LGUs are proactive proponents of unregulated reclamation projects," he said.

Rehabilitation or reclamation?

AN immediate and obvious policy of the rehabilitation program should be the imposition of a moratorium on reclamation projects to prevent its direct threat of habitat destruction, urban sprawl and consequent pollution, and heightened coastal flood and other disaster risks, Dulce posits.

Rodne Galicha, country director of the Climate Reality Project-Philippines, said the physical rehabilitation of Manila Bay is not possible if political, social and psychological rehabilitation of human beings within and around the area is not done.

"Furthermore, no serious rehabilitation is possible if new reclamation projects are implemented. We need to understand and accept the fact that the primary concern of the Supreme Court mandamus is environmental," Galicha added.

Galicha said given the economic significance of Manila Bay in which a sensitive and strategic environmental intervention is necessary, a law may be needed to strengthen the interagency body and the implementation of its plans with penal provisions.

But first and foremost, Galicha explained, all the LGUs within the Manila Bay area should work for independent Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plans, Local Climate Change Action Plans, Ecological Solid Waste Management Plans, Comprehensive Land Use Plans, all of which should be harmonized toward protecting and conserving Manila Bay.

"This is a huge challenge to harmonize respective plans,"

he said.

"Ultimately, authorities must be asked: rehabilitation or reclamation? Seriously, reclamation is pollution in itself. Manila Bay rehabilitation is idiocy if new reclamation projects are allowed because this is not consistent to the very onus of the Mandamus which is environmental protection," he explained.

Laudable effort

NANCY BERMAS-ATRIGENIO, senior country program manager of Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (Pemsea), said the Duterte administration's move to rehabilitate Manila Bay following the Boracay example is laudable.

She said despite the huge investment in cleaning up Manila Bay, all effort seemed to have failed because of the pollution loading that tends to overcome efforts to clean up and rehabilitate Manila Bay.

"It's like Boracay. After many years, it happened," Bermas-Atrigenio said.

But she said there is hope in rehabilitating Boracay, especially given the Duterte administration's "political will" to fix problems.

A pollution hot spot

PEMSEA'S work on Manila Bay can be traced back to a regional project it implemented way before the SC continuing mandamus was won for a group of environmental law students by environmental lawyer Tony Oposa.

“The biggest stumbling blocks to Manila Bay’s rehabilitation are the powerful economic interests—such as reclamation and infrastructure companies—that have weaponized rehabilitation to clear away marginalized and vulnerable communities and pave the way for their business projects.”

—DULCE



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Saving Manila Bay: Is it possible?

"Manila Bay has many problems. We [Pemsea] started [in Manila Bay] as a regional project. The focus was on pollution-prevention management. Manila Bay was a demonstration site in addition to other sites in Southeast Asia. Obviously, the problem is pollution. Manila Bay is a pollution hot spot," she told the BUSINESSMIRROR in a recent interview.

Risk management

BERMAS-ATRIGENIO said Pemsea then introduced risk assessment as a strategy in identifying the problems and solutions for Manila Bay.

The risk-management framework aims to address the problem

in Manila Bay, she said.

"This is a scientific way of determining the priorities and concerns. There is a risk quotient or point system. If it is more than 1, then there's a problem," Bermas-Atrigenio said.

Long-term strategy

IN coordination with the DENR, various stakeholders made a declaration highlighting the need to implement a long-term strategy for Manila Bay. It gave birth to the Operational Plan for the Manila Bay Coastal Strategy, which translates the shared vision of various stakeholders.

From 2000 to 2007, the first phase of the Manila Bay environmental project, one of the outputs is the operational plan.

"Moving forward...there was now a Supreme Court order in 2008, requiring the 13 agencies to clean and rehabilitate the Manila Bay, citing the operational plan as a basis for the cleanup," she explained.

Scientific studies

BERMAS-ATRIGENIO said Pemsea's role is to conduct scientific studies to aid decision-making.

Last year, Pemsea finished a project with United Nations Environment Program on Nutrient Loading, which confirmed earlier studies that the main source of pollution besetting Manila Bay was domestic waste, with that from industries in a far second.

Citing a 2015 study by the UP Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI), she said the NCR, with its huge population of over 12 million, is the biggest contributor to nutrient or waste loading in Manila Bay.

Hypoxia, eutrophication

BERMAS-ATRIGENIO cited an initial study by Dr. Gil Jacinto on hypoxia, or the oxygen deficiency in the abiotic environment, which identifies domestic waste as the biggest contributor to water pollution in the bay.

"Given the magnitude of the problem and scope of the job needed to be done, it is ambitious. Most likely, experts may say this is where to start. But the fact remains that the major problem is domestic sources of pollution," she said.

This is aggravated by the fact that less than 20 percent of households around Manila Bay are connected to sewage lines.

Based on the UP-MSI study, because of population growth, despite connecting households in Metro Manila to proper sewage for wastewater treatment, it may not suffice to arrest the pollution problem besetting Manila Bay.

The authors of the study, led by Jacinto, are Lara Patricia A. Sotto, Arthur H. W. Beusen, Cesa L. Villanoy and Lex F. Bouwman.

They concluded that the current pollution and eutrophication problem—or excessive richness of nutrients in a lake or other body of water, frequently due to runoff from the land, which causes a dense growth of plant life and death of animal life from lack of oxygen, in Manila Bay—will not decrease with better sewage connection and treatment mainly because of the expected high population growth.

In the end, the study suggested that "there may be a need to distribute the population growth centers. For example, making living in the provinces more attractive in addition to measures that address the poor sewage system in Metro Manila and the surrounding areas of Manila Bay."



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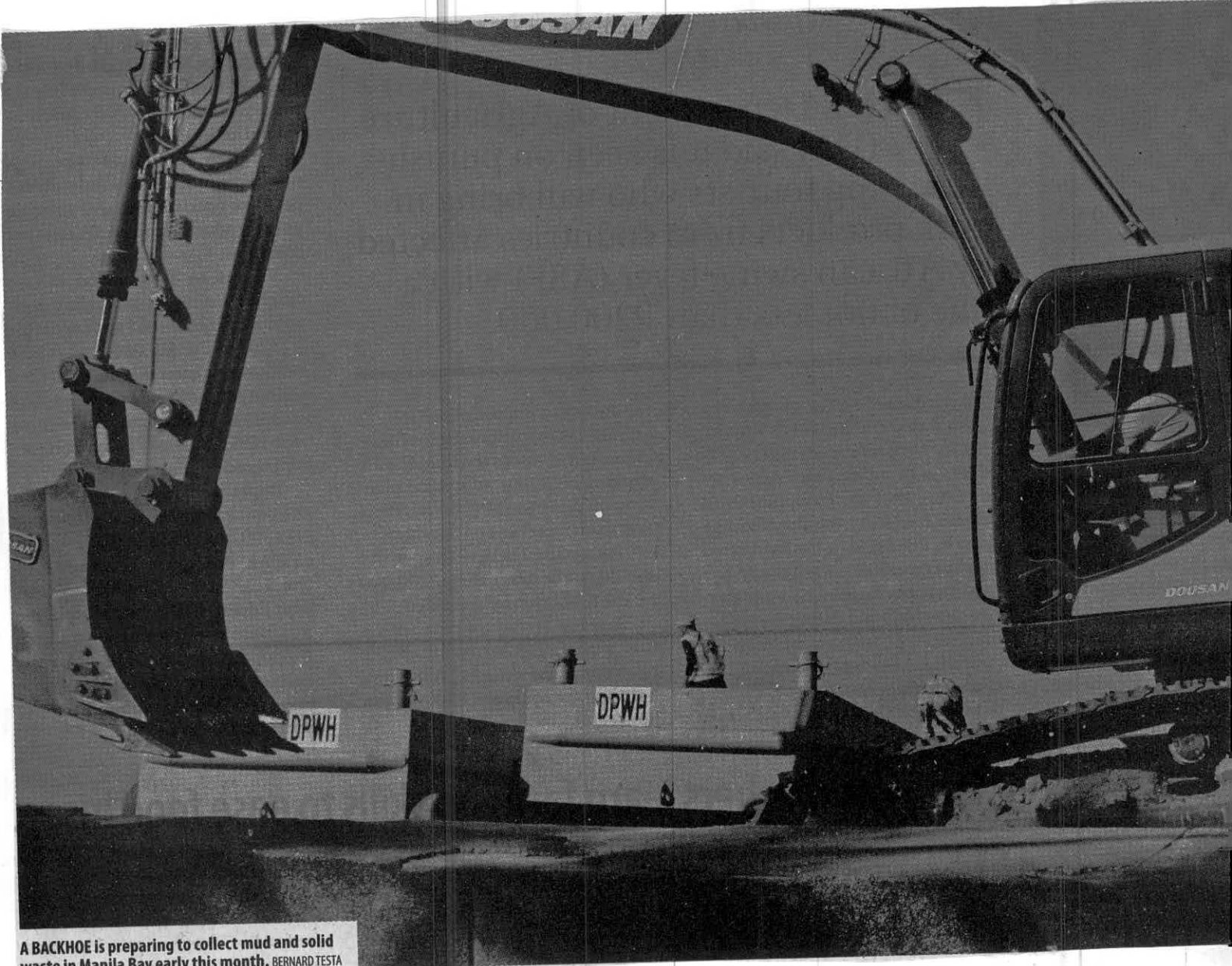
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Saving Manila Bay: Is it possible?



A BACKHOE is preparing to collect mud and solid waste in Manila Bay early this month. BERNARD TESTA



300 barangays in Bay areas tapped to help in rehab plan

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources is seeking the commitment of barangay officials for their cooperation in the rehabilitation of Manila Bay.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said his department will host today a forum for village leaders of over 300 barangays surrounding Manila Bay to ensure their commitment to the ongoing effort to rehabilitate the heavily polluted water body.

The forum aims to remind the barangay executives of their critical role and responsibility in the rehabilitation effort and give them deeper recognition of the advantages their constituents can gain from having clean waterways, especially in terms of health benefits, he said.

"The success of the rehabilitation effort hinges on the support from the local government units, particularly the barangays, which are actually the frontliners in the cleanup, rehabilitation and preservation of the waters of Manila Bay," he added.

The barangay leaders represent areas traversing into three important river systems that empty into Manila Bay, such as the Pasig-Marikina-San Juan Rivers (169 barangays), the Muntinlupa-Paranaque-Las Pinas-Zapote Rivers (40 barangays) and the Malabaon-Tullahan-Tenejeros Rivers (68 barangays).

Also invited are leaders from 42 barangays in Pasay City and 18 from Navotas City.

Cimatu said he would discuss how the barangays can take part in the upcoming simultaneous cleanup of esteros and waterways set on March 31 as part of the extended observance of the World Water Day on March 22.

A dialogue between barangay officials and DENR senior executives will take place. **Rio Araja**



Cimatu cites role of bgys in success of Manila Bay rehab

By CORY MARTINEZ

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Roy Cimatu said the commitment and strong support of local government units, particularly the barangays will greatly contribute to the success of the rehabilitation of the Manila Bay.

Cimatu is set to meet in a forum today leaders of over 300 barangays surrounding Manila Bay to ensure their commitment to the ongoing effort to rehabilitate the heavily polluted water body.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources said the forum aims to remind barangay executives of their critical role and responsibility in the rehabilitation effort and give them deeper recognition of the advantages their constituents can gain from having clean waterways, especially in terms of health benefits.

"The success of the rehabilitation effort

hinges on the support from the local government units (LGUs), particularly the barangays, which are actually the frontliners in the clean-up, rehabilitation and preservation of the waters of Manila Bay," Cimatu said.

The barangay leaders represent areas that traverse into three important river systems that empty into Manila Bay, such as the Pasig-Marikina-San Juan Rivers (169 barangays), the Muntinlupa-Parañaque-Las Piñas-Zapote Rivers (40 barangays), and the Malabon-Tullahan-Tenejeros Rivers (68 barangays).

Also invited are leaders from 42 barangays in Pasay City and 18 from Navotas City.

During the forum, the DENR will also discuss how these barangays can take part in the upcoming simultaneous cleanup of esteros and waterways set for March 31 as part of the extended observance of the "World Water Day" on March 22.

Also part of the fo-

rum is the dialogue between barangay officials and DENR senior executives, who were each assigned by Cimatu to monitor a specific estero and waterway leading to Manila Bay.

The DENR officials were also tasked to recommend further interventions needed to ensure compliance with the continuing mandamus of the Supreme Court to clean up, rehabilitate and preserve Manila Bay.

In the dialogue, the DENR will have an opportunity to hear from concerned barangay

leaders the problems and issues affecting their specific barangays in relation to the overall effectiveness of the government's effort to revive Manila Bay.





Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

BRGY Sa Manila Bay rehab EXECS PINAKILOS

NAKATAKDANG magsagawa ng diyalogo ngayong araw ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), kasama ang Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), sa mga barangay captain sa Metro Manila sa Bayview Park Hotel, Roxas Blvd., Manila. **SUNDAN SA PAHINA 9**



NAGTULONG-TULONG ang mga residente ng Baseco Compound sa Tondo, Manila sa paglilinis sa Baseco beach bilang pagpapatuloy ng rehabilitasyon sa Manila Bay. **Kuha ni NORMAN ARAGA**

ger cars. **ELIJAH FELICE ROSALES**

Sa Manila Bay rehab BRGY EXECS PINAKILOS

Mula sa pahina 16

Pamumunuan ni Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu ang programa, katuwang si Interior Secretary Eduardo Año, para bigyang-diin sa bawat opisyal ng barangay na malapit sa paligid ng Manila Bay ang kanilang responsibilidad na maging bahagi ng rehabilitation project.

"The success of the rehabilitation effort hinges on the support from the local government units (LGUs), particularly the barangays, which are actually the

frontliners in the cleanup, rehabilitation and preservation of the waters of Manila Bay," pahayag ni Cimatu

Ipinatawag ang mga lider ng barangay na kumakatawan malapit sa tatlong mahahalagang ilog na dumadaloy sa Manila Bay - ang Pasig-Marikina-San Juan Rivers na may 169 barangays, Muntinlupa-Parañaque-Las Piñas-Zapote Rivers na may 40 barangays, at ang Malabon-Tullahan-Tenejeros Rivers na may 68 barangays.

Bukod dito, inimitahan din ang nga opisyal ng 42 barangays sa Pasay City at 18 barangays mula sa Navotas City.

Sa naturang forum ay tatalakayin ng DENR at DILG kung paano magiging bahagi ang mga barangay sa nalalapit na sabayang cleanup drive ng mga estero, kanal o mga daluyan ng tubig sa kanilang mga lugar na itinakda sa March 31 bilang bahagi ng pinalawak na paggunita ng "World Water Day" sa March 22.

BENEDICT ABAYGAR, JR.



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Coliform level sa Manila Bay, patuloy sa pagbaba

Tuluy-tuloy pang bumababa ang fecal coliform level sa Manila Bay, kasunod ng rehabilitation efforts ng pamahalaan para maisalba ang dagat.

Sa isang presscon sa Maynila, inanunsyo ni DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu na nakatulong nang malaki ang pagpapasara sa ilang mga pribadong establisyimento malapit sa Manila Bay, gayundin ang pagsasara ng Manila Zoo na nadiskubreng walang sariling sewage treatment plant kaya direktso sa estero ang dumi nito na

tumutuloy naman sa Manila Bay.

Sa monitoring ng DENR hanggang noong isang linggo, malaki na ang naging improvement ng kalidad ng tubig sa dagat dahil sa mas mababang coliform content.

Pero binigyang diin ng kagawaran na hindi pa rin ito pasok sa standard na 100 Most Probable Number (MPN) para sa recreational activities gaya ng swimming at diving.

Sa pinakahuling laboratory analysis, sa area ng Padre Faura, ang dating

54-million MPN fecal coliform level ay bumaba na sa 8.3-million MPN.

Ang dating 1.33-billion Most Probable Number sa area ng Antonio de Abad ay nasa 130-Million MPN na lang.

Sa area ng Remedios, o sa tapat ng Aristocrat, ang dating 160-million MPN ay bumaba na sa 25.5-M MPN.

Kumpiyansa ang DENR na patuloy pang bababa ang coliform level sa Manila Bay sa pagpapatuloy ng rehabilitasyon ng dagat. (*Doris Franche*)



UMAABOT sa mahigit 300 establisimyento na ang natukoy ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na kumpirmadong lumabag sa Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004 at iba pang environmental laws na nakaapekto sa Manila Bay.

Ito ang lumabas sa ulat ni Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu batay sa mahigit anim na linggo mula nang simulan ang paglulunsad ng Manila Bay rehabilitation project ng pamahalaan.

Tinukoy ng DENR sa pamamagitan ng Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) ang mga lumabas kung saan

300+ NEGOSYO SUMALAULA SA MANILA BAY

nakapagbigay na ang DENR at LLDA ng 263 Notices of Violations habang nasa 119 cease and desist orders naman ang naipalabas sa mga establisimyento sa Metro Manila, Central Luzon at Calabarzon dahil sa mga paglabag sa batas pangkalikasan partikular ang Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004.

Sa kabila naman ng mga negosyong naipasara ng kagawaran, pinuri naman ni Cimatu ang ilang negosyante na nagbigay ng suporta sa isinasagawang rehabilitasyon sa Manila Bay.

Aniya, malaki rin ang tulong sa Manila Bay rehabilitation ang ginawang paglagda kamakailan ni San Miguel

Corporation President and COO Ramon Ang sa memorandum of agreement na naglalayong linisin ang Tullahan-Tinajeros River System na isa sa pinakamaruming river system sa Metro Manila.

"Mr. Ang generously pledged P1 billion for this project which will positively impact the rehabilitation of Manila Bay," ani Cimatu.

Nabatid na ilan pang kompanya ang nagpahayag ng kanilang pagsuporta sa rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay at iba pang daluyan ng tubig kabilang na rito ang SM Group para sa Parañaque River at ang Megaworld para naman sa Marikina River.

"Let us put our minds together, roll up

our sleeves, and more importantly, commit ourselves for the rehabilitation of Manila Bay for the present and the future generations," pahayag pa ni Cimatu sa mga pinuno at representante ng iba't ibang ahensiya ng gobyerno na kasama sa rehabilitasyon.

Ayon pa sa DENR chief, ang rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay ay hindi lamang isyu tungkol sa kalikasan bagkus ay tungkol din ito sa social at economic issue.

"As we remove and move people, and weed out industries and structures that violate the law and hinder our work for Manila Bay," dagdag pa ni Cimatu. **BENEDICT ABAYGAR, JR.**



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**BASECO BEACH
CLEAN-UP -**
Volunteers from
a group called
Friends of Duterte
gather muck from
the shoreline
at the Baseco
compound in
Manila Sunday
as part of the
campaign to
clean up Manila
Bay. Baseco's
narrow strip of
beach is referred
to as 'burakay',
a play on burak,
the Pilipino word
for muck, and
Boracay, the
country's prime
resort island. (All
Vicoy)

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People's movement Pursuit of a Manila Bay fit for a swim takes several steps forward as communities cooperate, the same way that the narcotics scourge is expected to be ended soon, with or without the roadblocks thrown by drugs war critics. — BOB DUNGO JR.



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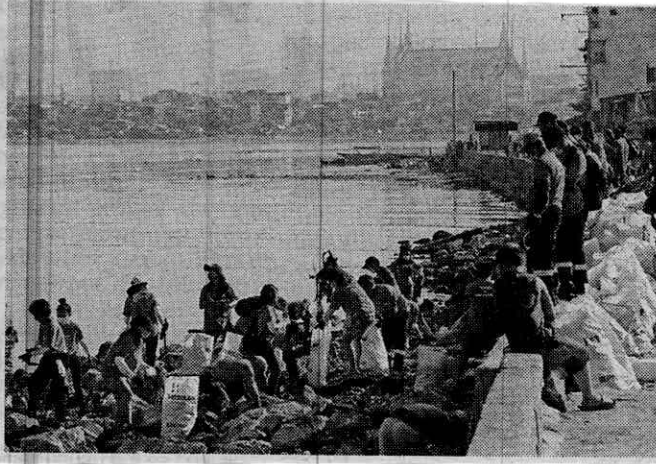
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**Bilang pagtu-
gon sa layunin
ng pamahalaan
na muling mai-
balik ang dating
gayak ng Manila
Bay, nakiba-
hagi ang mga
volunteers ng
"Friends of Rod-
rigo Duterte"
(FORD) sa isi-
nagawang clean
up kahapon sa
isang bahagi ng
look sa Baseco
sa Tondo, May-
nila. (Kuha ni
Edd Gumban)**





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ILANG miyembro ng isang makakalikasang grupo ang tumulong sa paglilinis ng bahagi ng Manila Bay sa Cavite para mabawasan ang mga basurang inaaanod patungo sa Manila Baywalk. (MANNY MARCELO)



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Palace taking over water board

House begins today probe on Metro water shortage

By **GENALYN D. KABILING, HANNAH L. TORREGOZA, and CHARISSA M. LUCI-ATIENZA**

The Office of the President (OP) is poised to take over the supervision of the National Water Resources Board

(NWRB) to craft a master plan on water management in the country, a Palace official said Sunday.

The transfer of the NWRB ► **12**



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Palace taking over...



to the OP from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will be among the proposed provisions of the draft executive order to help address the country's water issues, according to Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles.

The draft EO, covering different components of integrated water resource management (IWRM), will be submitted to the President for his input and approval, he added.

"Given the scope and breadth of water-related concerns, the supervision of OP could help ensure that all 30-plus agencies involved in water resource management are on the same page," said Nograles who led the Cabinet Assistance System (CAS) meeting in Leyte last Friday.

He said the NWRB would be reconstituted into a body responsible for policy, direction-setting, and the integration of all government efforts related to water.

The board would also craft "a national water management master plan that will integrate all relevant and existing plans and roadmaps of the different agencies that play a role in IWRM," he said.

House probe

Top officials of Manila Water, Maynilad, water regulators, and five Metro Manila mayors are expected to attend today's joint House panel probe on the water crisis in Metro Manila and Rizal.

The House Committee on Metro Manila Development, chaired by Quezon City Rep. Winston "Winnie" Castelo and the House Committee on Housing and Urban Development, chaired by Negros Occidental Rep. Albee Benitez are set to jointly conduct the hearing at 7 a.m. today.

"We need to get a clear picture of the situation and how we're going to deal with it because a lot of people are already getting adversely affected by the problem," Castelo said.

"We will need explanations from the concessionaires, regulators, and the experts why we got into this mess and their suggestion on how we can get out of it," he said.

Castelo expressed hope that all the invited resource persons would attend the hearing so that they can "collectively come up with the right approach to overcome the water crisis."

Benitez said, "We have to look into the water shortage with dis-

patch and assure the people that the government is addressing the problem with assurance that it would not happen again."

Pwersa ng Bayaning Atleta (PBA) party-list Rep. Jericho Nograles attributed Metro Manila's water shortage to Manila Water's alleged lack of foresight and mismanagement.

"The water interruptions are localized within the concession areas of Manila Water. This is simply mismanagement. Manila Water should be truthful to the public instead of blaming Mother Nature for their negligence," he said.

Metro Manila mayors who are expected to attend the hearing are Quezon City Mayor Herbert Bautista, Pasig City Mayor Roberto Eusebio, Navotas City Mayor John Reynald Tiangco, Muntinlupa City Mayor Jaime Fresnedi, and Caloocan City Mayor Oscar Malapitan.

Also invited to the joint panel probe are Manila Water Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Ferdinand dela Cruz, Maynilad Water Services President and CEO Ramoncito Fernandez, Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) Administrator Jeci Lopus, LWUA Chairman Rogelio Uy, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) Administrator Reynaldo Velasco, MWSS Regulatory Office Chief Regulator Patrick Ty, National Water Resources Board Executive Director Servillo David, Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAG-ASA) Administrator Vicente Malano, Private Hospitals Association of the Philippines President Rustico Jimenez, Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) Director Leonard Bañago, and Philippine Hospital Association President Huberto Lapuz.

Action plan

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) will soon implement the action plan called for by President Duterte to address the water shortage being experienced by customers of water concessionaire Manila Water Company Inc. (MWCI).

The plan seeks to ease the burden of customers, who have to either scramble or spend hours waiting in line for water.

"We will mobilize fire brigades, mayors, aside from the water concessionaires to end all that queuing," MWSS Administrator Reynaldo

Velasco said.

The MWSS will also be meeting with parties concerned to finalize the matter, Velasco added.

President Duterte had earlier ordered the MWSS to demand from water concessionaires and other concerned offices to release water from Angat Dam good for 150 days to address the water shortage.

Velasco, however, clarified the President's order is not to literally draw that volume of water from Angat but to ensure the people get ample water supply.

"I know what the President means -- he wants the water shortage problem solved so there won't be queuing for water anymore," Velasco said.

He said Angat releases water to MWCI and MWSS' other concessionaire, Maynilad Water Services Inc. (MWSI) at the rate of 4,000 million liters per day (MLD) only.

"We can't increase that anymore," he said, citing the current design limitations and infrastructure of the water distribution system.

Water conservation ordinance

Senator Richard Gordon urged local chief executives in Metro Manila to release an ordinance directing their constituents to observe water conservation practices.

Gordon said that with thousands of families in Metro Manila affected by the water interruption implemented by east zone water concessionaire Manila Water due to shortage in their supply, it is imperative that local LGUs should issue ordinances geared to water conservation to prevent the water crisis from worsening.

Gordon said it is very important that the people be conscious of their water usage and observe water conservation measures.

"We should conserve water. We can take simple actions at home so we don't contribute in worsening the problem," Gordon said in a statement.

"The LGUs should issue ordinances to ensure that all their constituents practice water conservation. We should all do our part," he said adding that the public should use water efficiently but minimally.

Gordon assured that the Philippine Red Cross (PRC) will help provide clean and potable water to the thousands of families affected but hospitals must be prioritized to ensure that healthcare services will not be interrupted and to avoid health complications, such as sepsis, a type of blood infection. (With PNA)



'Water supply 80% restored'

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Palace finalizing water executive order

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

The water shortage situation in Metro Manila is seen to improve in the next weeks as concessionaire Manila Water reported that it has restored supply to about 80 percent of its customers as of Friday.

This improvement came after it started imposing a rotational water supply scheme on Thursday.

"They already have water in their taps. This translates to over one million households.

"challenges in some pocket areas of Quezon City and portions of Mandaluyong."

"But most of those that had no water in the past days in Mandaluyong already have water in their taps," Galang

Congress joint panel starts probe today. Story on Page 12.

This can only get better in the coming weeks, in the coming months as we have observed. We implemented this new scheme beginning Thursday afternoon and we've been seeing marked improvements," said Dittie Galang, Manila Water's communications planning and tactical development manager.

Although the service has been restored in most of Manila Water's area of coverage, she admitted that the firm has

said, although she qualified that the water pressure customers are receiving may not be as strong as in previous months.

On Friday, Manila Water assured customers that its 20-hour water interruptions would not last throughout summer as it cited the initial positive effects of the rotational water supply scheme.

"Levels of various reservoirs have started to increase

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and water supply, though still at low pressure in some areas, is slowly being distributed to severely affected barangays. These operational adjustments are a temporary measure that Manila Water is undertaking to balance the water supply distribution in its concession area... Manila Water continues to make calibrations in these adjustments to ensure that extended service interruptions will not last for the entire summer," the company said in a statement.

The water firm earlier announced it would implement a water interruption scheme with a more definitive schedule as it aims to stabilize the distribution of available supply and help slow down the rapid decline of the water level at La Mesa Dam, which is its reserve resource.

After maximizing its allocation from Angat Dam at 1,600 million liters per day, Manila Water turns to La Mesa Dam for additional supply.

Aside from this, it is also prioritizing the energization of the water treatment plant in Cardona, Rizal, which is part of the Rizal Province Water Supply Improvement Project, as among its immediate solutions to cope with the surging demand.

"The project is now delivering an initial 22 million liters per day and is expected to produce up to 50 million liters per day by mid-April," it said.

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) also said tapping deep wells could be part of the short-term solutions to address the current water crisis.

Meanwhile, the MWSS is calling an inter-agency meeting today to discuss the execution of San Miguel Corp. (SMC)'s offer to help and use its untapped water allocation from Angat Dam.

"To operationalize SMC's offer to help deliver 140 million liters of clean, treated water to areas affected by the shortage, MWSS administrator Reynaldo Velasco is calling for a special meeting among top officials of Manila Water, Maynilad, Bulacan Bulk Water, concerned LGUs, the Bureau of Fire, Association of Volunteer Fire Chiefs and Firefighters of the Philippines on Monday to map out saturation operations over the next two weeks," MWSS said in a statement.

On Friday, SMC announced that, through its Bulacan Bulk Water Treatment Plant, it hopes to be able to deliver 140 million liters of clean, treated water to areas affected by the shortage upon coordination with, and approval by the MWSS.

Velasco lauded SMC for its "willingness to help find a long-term solution to the water problem and contributing to government's efforts to develop new water sources to prevent a similar crisis from happening again."

He added that the agency's "ABC" Projects which aims to



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generate alternative sources of water with a combined capacity to 1,950 MLD is now in the pipeline. These involve the optimization of the untapped 800 MLD from Angat-Norzagaray river, 350 MLD from Bayabas Dam and 800 MLD from the Candaba impounding dam—SMC projects that will secure water security in Metro Manila.

"This situation is unfortunate and dire for many of our countrymen who do not have access to basic water. Many are affected: households, hospitals, schools, businesses. Right now, the best thing we can do is to pull together and help each other," Ang earlier said.

He added that the undertaking, will not be easy since an estimated 14,000 truck trips per day using 10-kiloliter tankers or 7,000 trips per day using 20 kl tankers are needed to deliver clean water.

In January, SMC operationalized Stage 1 of its Bulacan Bulk Water Project, which can supply water to 24 Bulacan water districts. Ang explained that currently, the project has a production capacity of 200 million liters per day. However, as many water districts have yet to upgrade and prepare their facilities to receive water from the BBWSP, only about 60 million liters per day are currently being utilized.

"This leaves an excess capacity of about 140 million liters per day, which is enough to serve the average daily requirements of two million people or about 455,000 households. As a quick response to the situation of customers of Manila Water, we will coordinate with MWSS and local government units to secure permits to place water refilling stations in affected areas," Ang said.

Among the affected areas are: Mandaluyong (all barangays), San Juan (five barangays), Pasig (seven barangays), Angono (three barangays), Antipolo (10 barangays), Taytay (three barangays) and Binangonan (12 barangays).

Integrated water resource management

Officials are finalizing an executive order that seeks to address the water crisis and proposes to turn the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) into a body that will craft policies on water-related issues, Malacañang said yesterday.

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles said the proposed EO, which will cover the components of integrated water resource management, was discussed during a Cabinet Assistance System meeting in Leyte last Friday.

"I believe the different agencies agree on the problems that need to be resolved to prevent the sort of water supply management issues now being experienced in Metro Manila. At this point we have built a consensus on how we can address these issues, but the

recommendations as outlined in the EO will still be subject to the approval of the President," Nograles said in a statement.

The proposed EO aims to reconstitute the NWRB into a body that will craft policies, set directions and integrate all state efforts on water-related concerns. Nograles said the body might be placed under the Office of the President. The NWRB was placed under the supervision of the environment department in 2002 by Executive Order No. 123.

"Given the scope and breadth of water-related concerns, the supervision of OP could help ensure that all 30-plus agencies involved in water resource management are on the same page," Nograles said.

The body would also be tasked to come up with a national water management master plan that would integrate all relevant and existing plans and roadmaps of different agencies involved in water resource management.

Nograles said representatives



Nograles

of the agencies discussing the water issues were "focused on finding solutions to the problem instead of dwelling on its roots."

"They know that to address the problems of our countrymen, it is better to help each other rather than point fingers. I believe that this is the approach to take with any challenge facing our country," he added.

There are at least 32 agencies involved in the water sector. Nograles previously said the Cabinet Assistance System is working on issues like the limited implementation of integrated water resources management in many of the country's river basins and watersheds, which results in wastage and uncoordinated plans and programs, quantifying the extent of water sector issues, and access to safe water supplies.

Earlier, President Duterte ordered the MWSS to demand from water utilities Manila Water and Maynilad and the offices involved in water management to release water from Angat Dam to supply Metro Manila areas that are experiencing water shortage. Agencies were also directed to deliver sufficient water to the affected residents.

- With Alexis Romero



NWRB under OP eyed; water crisis probe slated

BY BERNADETTE D. NICOLAS

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ON the heels of the water crisis affecting some parts of Metro Manila, the government is eyeing to reconstitute the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) and place it under the Office of the President (OP).

This was revealed by Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles on Sunday.

Under the proposed executive order (EO), the proposed reconstituted NWRB will be responsible for policy, direction-setting and the integration of all government efforts pertaining to water.

Nograles said in a statement that "given the scope and breadth of water-related concerns, the su-



"Our country is blessed with an abundance of water, and it is ironic that as we celebrate Philippine Water Week, many Filipinos are being deprived of access to water.

Having unusually heavy rainfall levels—particularly coming from a waterworld to a waterless scourge—seeing the taps run dry is galling."—Binay

pervision of OP could help ensure that all 30-plus agencies involved in water resource management are on the same page." The NWRB is currently under the supervision of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources by virtue of EO 123, Series of 2002.

SEE "NWRB," A5

recommendations as outlined in the EO will still be subject to the approval of the President," he added.

Manila Water on Saturday said it has already restored supply to 80 percent after a week of scheduled water interruptions.

The water crisis was blamed on a combination of population growth and the corresponding uptick in the number of water consumers, the unusually huge demand brought about by a "mild" El Niño and limited water allocation for the East Zone, which were serviced by Manila Water. Critics, however, said Manila Water itself was to blame for failing to prepare for the projected increase in customers.

House probe

The House of Representatives called on top officials of Manila Water, Maynilad Water Services Inc., the NWRB and five mayors of Metro Manila to attend the House's investigation

on Monday into the water shortage in parts of Metro Manila and Rizal.

The House Committee on Metro Manila Development chaired by Quezon City Rep. Winston Castelo and the House Committee on Housing and Urban Development chaired by Negros Occidental Rep. Alfredo Benitez want to find out what caused the water shortage and the possible solutions to it.

Meanwhile, Castelo said the Oversight Committee on Public Utilities will file and approve the resolution on Monday allowing the use of deep wells to ease the crisis affecting 1.2 million households in East Zone.

Last Friday, Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo led the opening of the cross-border pipe at the corner of West Avenue corner Bulacan Street, in Quezon City, to enable Maynilad to give water to Manila Water. With the opening, some 10 million liters of water per day will immediately flow to the east zone.

While the provisions of the proposed EO are still being finalized and have yet to be submitted to the President for his input and approval, Nograles said the proposed EO will cover the different components of integrated water resource management (IWRM).

The body will also be responsible for the crafting of a national water-management master plan that will integrate all relevant and existing plans and road maps of the different agencies that play a role in IWRM, he said.

The Palace official said the issuance of the EO was discussed at the last Cabinet Assistance System meeting in Leyte on Friday.

"At this point we have built a consensus on how we can address these issues, but the

Ironic twist

THIS developed as Senator Nancy Binay noted an ironic twist in Metro Manila's water-supply crisis as the country observed "Water Week."

"Our country is blessed with an abundance of water, and it is ironic that as we celebrate Philippine Water Week, many Filipinos are being deprived of access to water," Binay said over the weekend. "Having unusually heavy rainfall levels—particularly coming from a waterworld to

a waterless scourge—seeing the taps run dry is galling," she said in a statement.

"We reiterate our call to have a clear policy on maintaining water security whenever water supply goes bad," she added, suggesting that government regulators concerned "should have a holistic and comprehensive water-resource plan, as well as an effective water allocation and reuse policy."

With a report from Butch Fernandez

Manila Water to be grilled

Senate kicks off shortage probe

Sen. Binay: No explanation can wash the apparent neglect and inefficiency of those who have committed to provide us with clean water

By Mario J. Mallari

The Senate is set to grill officials of concerned government agencies and private companies regarding the ongoing water shortage in Metro Manila and some parts of Rizal province.

The Senate Committee on Public Services will conduct tomorrow the inquiry into the water shortage.

Leading those invited on the side of the government were Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Roy Cimatu, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol and Public Works and Highways Secretary Mark Villar.

Also invited were Metropolitan Waterworks and

Sewerage System (MWSS) Administrator Reynaldo Velasco, Local Water Utilities Administration chief Jeci Lopus, National Water Resources Board Executive Director Sevillo David Jr. and Administrator Vicente Malano of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

For the private sector, expected to appear before the Senate are Geodino Carpio and Nestor Jeric Sevilla Jr., Manila Water chief operating officer and corporate communications head, respectively; and Randy Estrellado, COO of Maynilad Water Services.

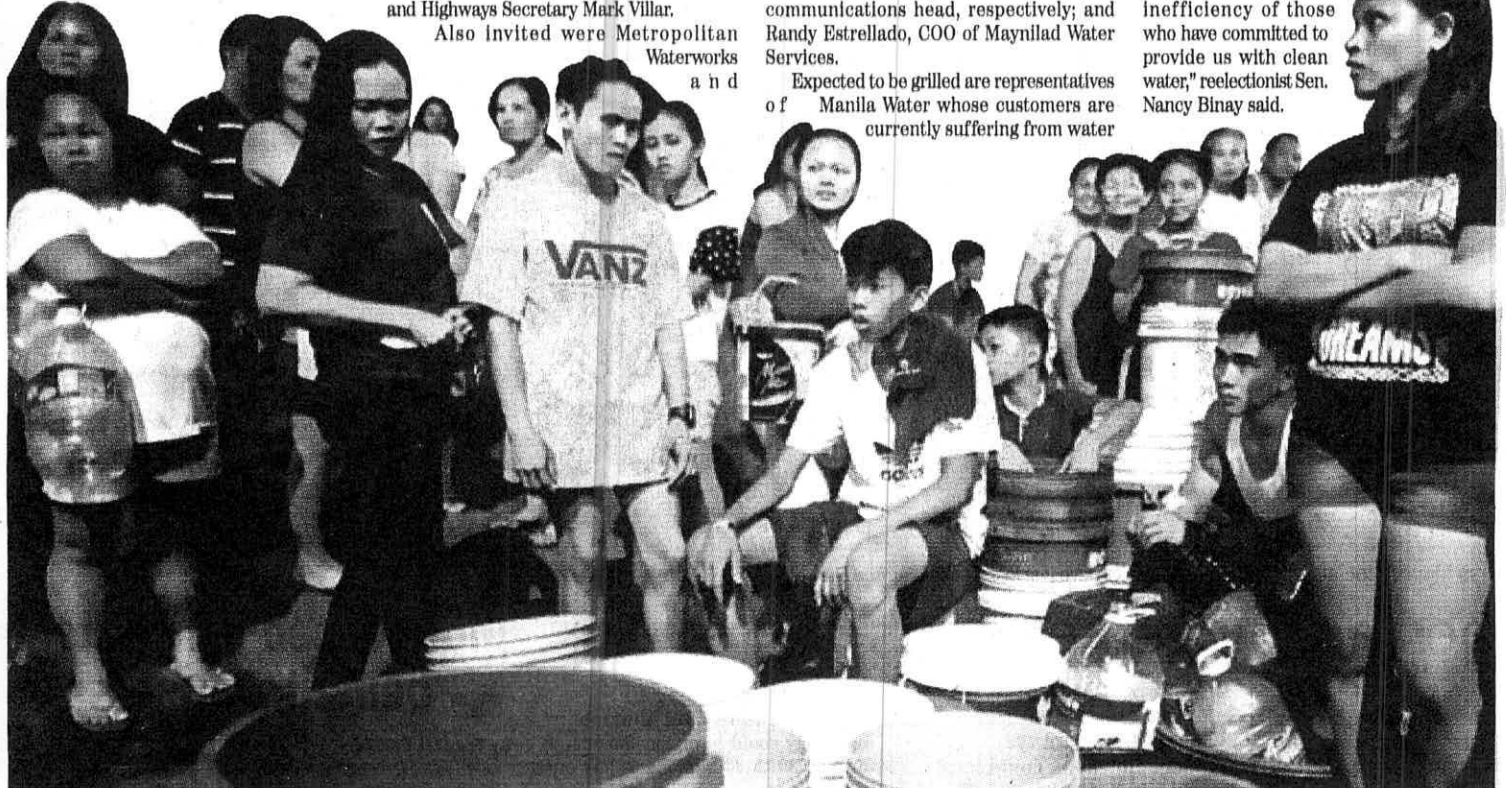
Expected to be grilled are representatives of Manila Water whose customers are currently suffering from water

supply shortage.

Senate President Vicente Sotto III called for the Senate inquiry as Manila Water customers started queueing up to get water from tankers from the Bureau of Fire Protection, Philippine Red Cross and Manila Water.

Sotto's call was supported by his colleagues in the House of Representatives.

"The public is aghast at the response to the current crisis and no explanation can wash the apparent neglect and inefficiency of those who have committed to provide us with clean water," reelectionist Sen. Nancy Binay said.



THE Senate will make a splash bringing together parties to the water woes being experienced in Metro Manila and neighboring provinces.



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House holds hearing on water crisis

BY WENDELL VIGILIA

THE House joint committee on Metro Manila development and on housing and urban development will hold a hearing today to help find ways to address the water crisis in Metro Manila.

Congressmen invited top officials of the Manila Water, Maynilad, water regulators, five Metro Manila mayors and other officials to attend the hearing to help shed light on the ongoing water shortage in parts of Metro Manila and Rizal.

The Senate committee on public services chaired by Sen. Grace Poe will also conduct a hearing on the water crisis tomorrow, Tuesday.

"We have to look into the water shortage with dispatch and assure the people that the government is addressing the problem with assurance that it would not happen again," said Rep. Alfredo Benitez (PDP-Laban, Negros Occidental), chair of the housing panel.

Among the measures calling for the inquiry is House Resolution (HR) No. 2518 filed by Rep. Carloz Zarate (PL, Bayan Muna).

Rep. Winston Castelo (PDP-Laban, Quezon City), chair of the Metro Manila development panel, said Congress needs to get a clear picture of the situation "and how we're going to deal with it because a lot of people are already getting adversely affected by the problem."

"We will need explanations from the concessionaires, regulators, and the experts why we got into this mess and their suggestion on how we can get out of it," he said.

Customers of the Ayala-led Manila Water in Metro Manila and Rizal have been experiencing low water pressure since Thursday last week while some areas have no supply at all. The interruptions were caused by the dwindling water level at the La Mesa Dam.

As of yesterday, there were reports that water has been restored in 80 percent of the affected areas.

Invited as resource persons are Quezon City Mayor Herbert Bautista; Pasig City Mayor Roberto Eusebio; Navotas City Mayor John Reynald Tiangco; Muntinlupa City Mayor Jaime Fresnedi; Caloocan City Mayor Oscar Malapitan; Manila Water chief executive officer (CEO) Ferdinand dela Cruz; Maynilad Water Services president and CEO Ramoncito Fernandez; Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA)



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administrator Jeci Lapus; LWUA chairman Rogelio Uy;

Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) administrator Reynaldo Velasco; MWSS Regulatory Office chief regulator Patrick Ty; National Water Resources Board executive director Servillo David; Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAG-ASA) administrator Vicente Malano; Private Hospitals Association of the Philippines president Rustico Jimenez; Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) chief Leonard Bañago; and Philippine Hospital Association president Huberto Lapuz, among others.

Rep. Jericho Nograles (PL, PBA) said Manila Water cannot blame El Niño for its alleged lack of foresight and mismanagement.

"The water interruptions are localized within the concession areas of Manila Water. This is simply mismanagement. Manila Water should be truthful to the public instead of blaming Mother Nature for their negligence," he said in a statement.

Rep. Luis Raymond Villafuerte (NP, Camarines Sur) said Congress could help address the problem over the long run "by requiring commercial, institutional and residential estate developers to install

rainwater retention facilities in their projects in Metro Manila and other major cities."

Villafuerte said the current water rationing in Metro Manila should prompt Congress to prioritize the passage of bills on water conservation, including his House Bill No. 8088 on the construction of facilities converting harvested rainwater for non-potable uses.

"Rainwater is a free, abundant, and regular natural resource that the Philippines is fortunate to receive year in and out. It is high time that we make use of it for the general advantage of our people," he said in a statement.

Castelo said he aims to establish the need for the development of more water reservoirs since this has been cited by Manila Water as one of the reasons for the shortage.

"I also want to learn from Maynilad how it solved similar problems not too long ago. Maybe they have measures which Manila Water can replicate," he said.

WATER LEVEL DOWN

Water level at La Mesa Dam in Quezon City continued to drop, the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said.

Hydrologist Richard Orendain said the water reserve at La Mesa Dam dropped to 68.69 meters at 6

a.m. yesterday, now the dam's all-time lowest water level. He said water level went down to 0.01 meter from the 68.70 meters on Saturday morning.

Last Thursday, water level at La Mesa dipped to 68.74 meters, breaching the previous record-low of 68.75 meters registered during the 1998 El Niño season.

Orendain said the water level of Angat Dam in Bulacan went down to 198.54 meters yesterday morning from 198.25 meters on Saturday morning. He noted this elevation was still above its critical low level of 180 meters.

SENATE INQUIRY

"We will call for the hearing as part of the committee's oversight functions over the country's utilities. What we are seeing now is not normal and something that our households and farmers do not deserve," Poe said.

Poe said the hearing will gather officials of concerned agencies, heads of water concessionaires, regulators and other concerned stakeholders to discuss the crisis and come up with solutions to ease the impact of the supply shortage.

Poe said it is important for the officials to attend the hearing "so that together, we can come up with immediate short-and long-term solutions to avert the current water crisis."

"We also need to hear the current mitigating measures planned by the agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture, given the importance of our agricultural sector to the economy," Poe added.

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles said government is looking at the reconstitution and transfer of the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) under the Office of the President. He said this one of the measures the Duterte administration is looking at to help address the water problem in the country.

Nograles, in a statement issued Sunday, said the proposed measure is part of the draft executive order that is being finalized for submission to President Duterte for his approval and signing.

"I believe the different agencies agree on the problems that need to be resolved to prevent the sort of water supply management issues now being experienced in Metro Manila. At this point we have built a consensus on how we can address these issues, but the recommendations as outlined in the EO will still be subject to the approval of the President," he said.

The proposed EO was discussed at length during the Cabinet Assistance System (CAS) meeting in Leyte last Friday. — *With Raymond Africa, Angela Lopez de Leon and Jocelyn Montemayor*



Water shortage probe begins

House panels seek ways to end lingering crisis

By Rio N. Araja

A JOINT House panel on Sunday summoned the top officials of the Manila Water Co. Inc., Maynilad Water Services Inc., water regulators and five mayors to today's congressional inquiry into the water shortage in Metro Manila and Rizal.

Quezon City Rep. Winston Castelo, committee on Metro Manila chairman, along with Negros Occidental Rep. Alfredo Abelardo Benitez, committee on housing and urban development chairman, will conduct a congressional hearing.

"We will need explanations from the concessionaires, regulators and the experts why we got into this mess and their suggestion on how we can get out of it," Castelo said.

Customers of Ayala-led Manila Water have suffered service interruptions and low water pressure for the last two weeks, but those in Maynilad's service area have experienced no such problems.

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"We have to look into the water shortage with dispatch and assure the people that the government is addressing the problem with assurances that it would not happen again," Benitez said.

Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Zarate filed House Resolution No. 2518 to investigate the water service interruption.

"Rainwater is a free, abundant, and regular natural resource that the Philippines is fortunate to receive year in and out. It is high time that we make use of it for the general advantage of our people," Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Ray Villafuerte said.

Invited to the joint House panel probe are Mayors Herbert Bautista of Quezon City, Roberto Eusebio of Pasig City, John Reynald Tiangco of Navotas City, Jaime Fresnedi of Muntinlupa City and Oscar Malapitan of Caloocan City; Manila Water chief executive officer Ferdinand dela Cruz; Maynilad Water Services president and CEO Ramoncito Fernandez; Local

Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) administrator Jeci Lapus; LWUA chairman Rogelio Uy; Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) administrator Reynaldo Velasco; MWSS Regulatory Office chief regulator Patrick Ty; National Water Resources Board executive director Servillo David; Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration administrator Vicente Malano; Private Hospitals Association of the Philippines president Rustico Jimenez; Bureau of Fire Protection chief Leonard Bañago; Philippine Hospital Association president Huberto Lapuz, and several others.

Puwera ng Bayaning Atleta Rep. Jericho Nograles said El Niño should not be blamed for Metro Manila's water shortage, saying the culprit is Manila Water's mismanagement and lack of foresight.

"The water interruptions are localized within the concession areas of

Manila Water. This is simply mismanagement. Manila Water should be truthful to the public instead of blaming Mother Nature for their negligence," he said.

On Sunday, Senator Richard J. Gordon said local government units should issue ordinances directing their constituents to observe water conservation.

Gordon also called on the public to do their part in preventing the water crisis from worsening. To do this, he said people should be conscious of their water usage.

"We should conserve water. We can take simple actions at home so we don't contribute in worsening the problem," he said.

The MWSS, meanwhile, lauded San Miguel Corporation (SMC) for its offer to use its untapped water allocation from Angat Dam to provide water to over 6 million people in the east zone of Metro Manila currently experiencing a supply shortage.

Velasco said he is calling for a special meeting among top officials of Manila Water, Maynilad, Bulacan Bulk Water, concerned LGUs, and other agencies to map out saturation operations over the next two weeks. **With Macon Ramos-Araneta**



House panels probe Metro water crisis

Top officials of Manila Water, Maynilad, water regulators, and five Metro Manila mayors are expected to attend today's joint House panel probe on the water crisis in Metro Manila and Rizal.

The House Committee on Metro Manila Development chaired by Quezon City Rep. Winston "Winnie" Castelo and the House Committee on Housing and Urban Development, chaired by Negros Occidental Rep. Albee Benitez, are set to jointly conduct the hearing at 7 a.m.

"We need to get a clear picture of the situation and how we're going to deal with it because a lot of people are already getting adversely affected by the problem," Castelo said.

"We will need explanations from the concessionaires, regulators, and the experts why we got into this mess and their suggestion on how we can get out of it," he said.

Castelo expressed hope that all the invited resource persons would attend the hearing to enable them to "collectively come up with the right approach to overcome the water crisis."

Benitez said: "We have to look into the water shortage with dispatch and assure the people that the government is addressing the problem with assurance that it

would not happen again."

Pwersa ng Bayaning Atleta party-list Rep. Jericho Nograles attributed the Metro Manila's water shortage to Manila Water's alleged lack of foresight and mismanagement.

"The water interruptions are localized within the concession areas of Manila Water. This is simply mismanagement. Manila Water should be truthful to the public instead of blaming Mother Nature for their negligence," he said.

The Metro Manila mayors who are expected to attend the hearing are Quezon City Mayor Herbert Bautista, Pasig City Mayor Roberto Eusebio, Navotas City Mayor John Reynald Tiangco, Muntinlupa City Mayor Jaime Fresnedi, and Caloocan City Mayor Oscar Malapitan.

The Office of the President might soon take supervision over the National Water Resources Board that would be empowered to craft a master plan on water management in the country, a Palace official said yesterday.

The transfer of the NWRB to the OP from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources will be among the proposed provisions of the draft executive order to help address the country's water issues, according to Cabinet

Secretary Karlo Nograles.

The draft EO, covering different components of integrated water resource management, will be submitted to President Duterte for his input and approval, he added.

"Given the scope and breadth of water-related concerns, the supervision of OP could help ensure that all 30-plus agencies involved in water resource management are on the same page," said Nograles who led the Cabinet Assistance System meeting in Leyte last Friday.

He said the NWRB would be reconstituted into a body responsible for policy, direction-setting, and the integration of all government efforts related to water.

The board would also craft "a national water management master plan that will integrate all relevant and existing plans and roadmaps of the different agencies that play a role in IWRM," he said.

Nograles also recognized the need for various government agencies to work together instead of playing the blame game amid the water supply interruptions in Metro Manila.

He noted that the CAS representatives were "focused on finding solutions to the problem instead of dwelling on its roots."
(Charissa L. Atienza and Genalyn Kabiling)



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Water crisis probe, sisimulan ngayon

Inaasahang dadalo ang mga pangunahing opisyal ng Manila Water, Maynilad, water regulators at limang Metro Manila mayors sa joint House panel probe ngayong Lunes hinggil sa kakapusan sa tubig sa Metro Manila at Rizal.

Magsasagawa ng hearing, bandang 7:00 ng umaga ngayong Lunes, ang House Committee on Metro Manila Development, sa pamumuno ni Quezon City Rep. Winston "Winnie" Castelo, at ang House Committee on Housing and Urban Development, sa pamumuno ni Negros Occidental Rep. Albee Benitez, kaugnay ng water shortage sa ilang bahagi ng Metro Manila at Rizal.

"We need to get a clear picture of the situation and how we're going to deal with it because a lot of people are already getting adversely affected by the problem," ani Castelo.

"We will need explanations from the concessionaires, regulators, and the

experts why we got into this mess and their suggestion on how we can get out of it," dagdag niya.

Umaasa si Castelo na dadalo ang lahat ng inimitahan upang sila ay "collectively come up with the right approach to overcome the water crisis."

Sa kanyang parte, sinabi ni Benitez na, "We have to look into the water shortage with dispatch and assure the people that the government is addressing the problem with assurance that it would not happen again."

Iniuugnay ni Puwersa ng Bayaning Atleta (PBA) party-list Rep. Jericho Nograles ang water shortage sa Metro Manila sa maling pamamahala ng Manila Water.

Inaasahang dadalo sa hearing sina Quezon City Mayor Herbert Bautista, Pasig City Mayor Roberto Eusebio, Navotas City Mayor John Reynald Tiangco, Muntinlupa City Mayor Jaime

Fresnedi, at Caloocan City Mayor Oscar Malapitan.

Dadalo rin daw sina Manila Water CEO Ferdinand dela Cruz, Maynilad Water Services President-CEO Ramoncito Fernandez, Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) Administrator Jeci Lapus, LWUA Chairman Rogelio Uy, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) Administrator Reynaldo Velasco, MWSS Regulatory Office Chief Patrick Ty, at National Water Resources Board Executive Director Servillo David.

Kahapon, nagsimula na rin ang pananalangin ng Simbahang Katoliko ng "oratio imperata" kaugnay ng water shortage.

Ang oratio imperata ay dinasal sa mga misa kahapon, at isinahimpapawid sa PTV-4.

Charissa M. Luciatienza at ng PNA



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

Balita

ANG NANGUNGUNANG PAHAYAGANG TAGALOG SA BANGSA

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Water board, ililipat sa Office of the President

NI GENALYN D. KABILING

Kukunin na ng Office of the President ang supervision sa National Water Resources Board (NWRB) upang palakasin ang pagbalangkas sa master plan ng water management sa bansa, ipinahayag ng Malacañang kahapon.

Ang paglipat ng NWRB sa OP

mula sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ay kabilang sa mga panukalang probisyon ng binalangkas na executive order para makatulong sa pagtugon sa mga problema sa tubig, ayon kay Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles.

"Given the scope and breadth

of water-related concerns, the supervision of OP could help ensure that all 30-plus agencies involved in water resource management are on the same page," ani Nograles na pinangunahan ang Cabinet Assistance System (CAS) meeting nitong Biyernes.



Water crisis bubusisiin sa Kamara

MAGSASAGAWA ng pagdinig ngayong araw ang Kamara de Representantes kaugnay sa kakulangan ng suplay ng tubig sa Metro Manila at karatig lugar.

Pangungunahan ng House committee on Metro Manila Development chairman Quezon City Rep. Winston Castelo at Housing and Urban Development committee chairman at Negros Occidental Rep. Albee Benitez ang imbestigasyon.

"We will need explanations from the concessionaires, regulators, and the experts why we got into this mess and their suggestion on how we can get out of it," ani Castelo. Sinabi ni Benitez na mahalaga na matu-

gunan kaagad ang problema bago pa ito magdulot ng dagdag na suliranin.

"We have to look into the water shortage with dispatch and assure the people that the government is addressing the problem with assurance that it would not happen again," ani Benitez.

Inimbitahan sa pagdinig sina Quezon City Mayor Herbert Bautista, Pasig City Mayor Roberto Eusebio, Navotas City Mayor John Reynald Tiangco, Muntinlupa City Mayor Jaime Fresnedi, Caloocan City Mayor Oscar Malapitan, Manila Water chief executive officer Ferdinand dela Cruz, Maynilad Water Services president

and CEO Ramoncito Fernandez, Local Water Utilities Administration administrator Jeci Lapus, LWUA chairman Rogelio Uy, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System administrator Reynaldo Velasco, MWSS Regulatory Office chief regulator Patrick Ty, National Water Resources Board executive director Servillo David, PAGASA administrator Vicente Malano, Private Hospitals Association of the Philippines president Rustico Jimenez, Bureau of Fire Protection chief Leonard Bañago, Philippine Hospital Association president Huberto Lapuz, at iba pa. —Leifbilly Begas



18 MAR 2019

DATE

Master plan ikakasa ng Palasyo

SUPERBODY VS 'WATER CRISIS'

ni ROSE NOVENARIO

MAGBABALANGKAS ng national water management master plan ang administrasyong Duterte na inaasahang magbibigay lunas sa mga problema sa supply ng tubig sa bansa.

Ayon kay Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles ang master plan ay gagawin ng National Water Resources Board (NWRB) na tatanggalin sa superbisyon ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) at ililipat sa Office of the President.

Sinabi ni Nograles, ang NWRB ay bubuunin ng 30 ahensiya ng pamahalaan na may kinalaman sa supply ng tubig at kikilos batay sa mandatang itatakda ng ilalabas na executive order ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte.

"One of the responsibilities of the body would be the crafting of a national water management master plan that will integrate all relevant and existing plans and roadmaps of the different agencies that play a role in integrated water resource management

(IWRM)," aniya. Matatandaan noong Biyernes ay inatasan ni Pangulong Duterte ang Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) na mag-release ng tubig mula sa Angat Dam na tatagal nang 150 araw na supply.

Nauna rito, naghinala ang Palasyo na artipisyal ang water shortage na naranasan ng mga kliyente ng Manila Water sa ilang bahagi ng Metro Manila, Rizal at Cavite. (ROSE NOVENARIO)

MANILA WATER IPINATAWAG NG KAMARA

IPINATAWAG ng Kamara ang mga opisyal ng Manila Water at iba pang may kinalaman sa pagkawala ng tubig sa ilang parte ng Metro Manila sa isang joint-hearing ng komite ng Metro Manila Development at ng Housing and Urban Development na pinantumunuan ni Negros Occidental Rep. Albee Benitez.

Si Quezon City Rep. Winston "Winnie" Castelo, hepe ng komite ng

Metro Manila Development, ang kasama ni Benitez sa pagdinig.

"We need to get a clear picture of the situation and how we're going to deal with it because a lot of people are already getting adversely affected by the problem," ani Castelo.

"We will need explanations from the concessionaires, regulators, and the experts why we got into this mess and their suggestion on how we can get out of it," pahayag ni Castelo.

Ang mga lugar kung saan nagbibigay ng supply ang Manila Water kasama ang ilang bahagi ng Rizal ay nawalan ng tubig nang ilang araw habang ang Maynilad Water ay hindi.

"We have to look into the water shortage with dispatch and assure the people that the government is addressing the problem with assurance that it would not happen again," ayon kay Benitez.

Kasama sa mga ipinatawag ng Kamara sina Quezon City Mayor Herbert Bautista, Pasig City Mayor Roberto Eusebio, Navotas City Mayor John Reynald Tiangco, Muntinlupa City

Mayor Jaime Fresnedi, Caloocan City Mayor Oscar Malapitan, Manila Water chief executive officer (CEO) Ferdinand dela Cruz, Maynilad Water Services president and CEO Ramoncito Fernandez, Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) administrator Jeci Lapus, LWUA chairman Rogelio Uy,

Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) administrator Reynaldo Velasco, MWSS Regulatory Office chief regulator Patrick Ty, National Water Resources Board executive director Servillo David.

Ayon kay Puwersa ng Bayaning Atleta (PBA) party-list Rep. Jericho Nograles may pagkukulang ang Manila Water kaya nawalan ng tubig ang concession area nito.

Aniya, hindi El Niño ang dahilan ng kakulangan sa tubig.

"The water interruptions are localized within the concession areas of Manila Water. This is simply mismanagement. Manila Water should be truthful to the public instead of blaming Mother Nature for their negligence," ani Nograles. (GERRY BALDO)



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE



18 MAR 2019

DATE

EO NA TUGON SA WATER CRISIS Inihahanda na ng Palasyo

INIHAHANDA na ng Malakanyang ang isang executive order (EO) na tugon sa problema sa suplay ng tubig sa bansa.

Oras na maisapinal ang nasabing EO, agad itong isusumite kay Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte para kanyang mapag-aralan at aprubahan.

Ayon kay Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles,

ang nasabing hakbang ay napag-usapan sa pinakahuling cabinet assistant system meeting na isinagawa sa Leyte kamakailan.

Iba't ibang ahensiya ng pamahalaan ang nakabuo na ng kasunduan para maresolba ang nararansang problema sa suplay ng tubig

sa Metro Manila at maiwasang mangyari pa ito sa iba pang bahagi ng bansa.

Kabilang sa kanilang rekomendasyon ang muling pagtatatag sa National Water Resources Board bilang institusyon na magiging responsable sa pagbuo ng polisiya, direksiyon at mga hak-

bang na may kinalaman sa suplay ng tubig.

Nakapaloob din sa nasabing EO ang pag-sasailalim sa NWRB sa kanyang tanggapan mula sa kasalukuyang pamamahala ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

DWIZ882



TITLE:

AYON sa mga may negosyo sa tubig gaya ng Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, Maynilad at Manila Water, walang krisis sa tubig.

Ito'y dahil sa marami ang tubig sa Angat Dam na pinagkukunan ng 96 porsyento ng tubig para sa mahigit 16 milyong residente ng Metro Manila at mga karatig na pook.

May problema lang umano sa pamamahala ng distribusyon mula Angat patungong Ipo at Lamesa dams at mga teknikal na bagay gaya ng limitasyon sa pag-iimbak, paglalagay ng gamot at pagpapakawala patungo sa mga kostumer.

KASTIGO NI DIGONG

Salungat naman ang sinasabi ng mga mamamayan na talaga namang hindi mapasusbalian.

Sinong may sabi na walang krisis, eh, isang linggo nang walang tubig sa maraming lugar, lalo na sa Mandaluyong area, katwiran ng iba.

Hanggang sa kumalat ang krisis sa suplay ng tubig sa iba pang lugar.

At magkaroon dili ng tulo ng mga gripo sa mga ito.

Dahil sa tindi ng problema sa tubig, hayan na nga at kumilos ang Malakanyang para pwersahin ang MWSS, Maynilad at Manila Water na gawan ng paraan ang suplay ng tubig, maging sa susunod na mga araw o 150 araw.

Kung hindi susunod ang tatlong ito, si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na ang pupunta sa mga ito para lutasin ang malaking problema.

Mismong ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources ay kumilos na rin laban sa krisis sa pagpayag na pupwedeng gumamit ang mga mamamayan ng deepwell.

Ang totoo, ipinagbawal ang deepwell dahil kinakayod nito ang lupa sa ilalim at iniluluwal sa gripo hanggang sa magkaroon ng mga butas at malamang na babagsak ang lupa sa itaas na ikalulubog ng mga katapat na mga komunidad at iba pa.

Pero emergency ang sitwasyon kaya pupwedeng gamitin ang deepwell.

TAE IBINASURA



NI BENNY ANTIPORDA

GRABENG KRISIS SA TUBIG AT KAMAY NG GOBYERNO

Alam ba ninyong biglang naglaho sa maraming lugar ang ipinaglalan nating kalinisan sa hangin, tubig at lupa?

Ano nga ang gagawin ng mga mamamayan sa kanilang dumi kung patong-patong na ito sa kanilang mga kubeta ang dumi dahil sa kawalan ng tubig na pambuhos dito?

Excuse me po, pero iniuulat sa amin na marami ang gumamit ng mga plastic o papel o basahin bilang dumihan o taehan saka ibinabalibag sa mga ilog at kanal.

Ibig sabihin niyan, mga Bro, basurang katakot-takot kahit saan.

Ang masama pa, may palaman tae.

Anak ng pitong putakte talaga.

Ang totoo, sabi ng mga nawalan ng tubig ng kung ilang araw, namaho ang kapaligiran nila.

Basura at polusyon sa tubig, hangin at lupa ang isang ibinunga ng kawalan ng tubig.

Kasama sa polusyon ang pagpanghi ng paligid dahil hindi na nga pupwedeng gamitin ang mga kubeta sa pag-ih.

NAGKASAKIT

Marami ang iba pang epekto ngunit tiniis na lang ng mga mamamayan.

May mga pumigil ng kanilang mga pagtae sa kung ilang araw hanggang sa kabagan ang mga ito at magkasakit sa tiyan.

Ang mga may sakit sa dibdib o puso, nadagdagan ang panikip ng dibdib.

May mga hindi nakainom ng gamot sa tamang oras na pang-maintenance sa kawalan ng panulak na tubig.

At marami ang namaho at lumansa ang katawan.

Ang brownout, ang pagkain at iba pa, medyo matitiis nang mas matagal.

Pero ang kawalan ng tubig?

Giyera ang aabutin mo mula sa mga tao janggang sa Malakanyang at Kongreso.

KONTROL NG GOBYERNO

May nagsasabi na ibalik sa kontrol o kamay ng gobyerno ang usaping tubig at huwag ipahawak sa

mga pribadong negosyante.

Ito'y dahil may kilos ang mga ito na higit na importante ang titig nila sa tubo kaysa pagtingin kung paano sila maglingkod nang tama sa kanilang mga kostumer.

At sa lahat ng pagkatakaton, may krisis o wala, 'yang tubo at hindi serbisyo ang higit na importante sa mga negosyante.

May katwiran ang puntong ito.

At ang palatandaan na hindi dapat na mamamayan ang pagkagahaman ng mga negosyante ay ang pakikialam na mismo nang personal ni Pangulong Digong at paggamit nito ng kanyang kapangyarihan upang utusan ang lahat ng mga namamahala sa tubig na gumawa ng paraan na agad kumilos para magkaroon ng suplay ng sapat at malinis na tubig ang mga mamamayan.

LEKSYON

Para sa atin, tama ang ginawa ng pamahalaang Duterte na makialam kaagad at maglabas ng mga istriktong kautusan sa mga emergency na kalagayan gaya ng krisis sa tubig.

'Yang 150 araw na suplay ng tubig ay dapat na sundin dahil nakabatay ito sa tantiya na magtatagal ang tagtuyot at El Niño sa loob ng limang buwan.

Bukod sa Angat dam, marami ang mapagkukunan ng tubig.

Mula sa Laguna de Bay at kahit pa mula sa mga maaalat ng dagat ay pwedeng pagkunan ng tubig-inumin.

May gagawain na lamang para maging potable o malinis ang mga itobilang inumin, panluto, panlaba at iba pa at alam lahat ito na nabanggit nang mga ahensya at kompanya ng tubig.

oOo

Anomang reaksyon o reklamo ay maaaring iparating sa 0922840-3333 o i-email sa bantiporda@yahoo.com.



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The Manila Times

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CARTOON

18 MAR 2019

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Water service resumes in 3 cities

PRECIOUS water started to flow through the faucets of thousands of households that experienced a week of little to no supply, as the services of Ayala-led utility Manila Water Co. resumed in several areas

in Pasig, Mandaluyong and Quezon City. On its Twitter account, Manila Water said running water was back on Sunday in the villages of Bagong Ilog (Nos. 1 and 19 Lakeview, Felpris Compound and

Kawilihan Village), Kapitolyo and Ugong (Valle Verde 1) in Pasig City and Barangka Itaas in Mandaluyong City.

Major hospitals and health facilities in
➤ServiceA7

■ SERVICE FROM A1

Water

Quezon City also regained water service.

These include the Philippine Blood Center, Lung Center of the Philippines, St. Luke's Medical Center, East Ave Medical Center, Philippine Heart Center, Philippine Children's Hospital, Veterans Memorial Medical Center, Quirino Memorial Medical Center and the National Kidney Transplant Institute.

Manila Water said tankers stood by to supply water if needed.

It clarified that water might take time to reach elevated areas, but assured the public that it was working to restore normal water supply.

In some villages of Quezon City, water services resumed though the water coming out was yellowish and murky, like in Barangka in Mandaluyong.

Water in Mandaluyong, however, later became clear, prompting residents to finally stock up.

In a statement, Manila Water said water discoloration normally happens when pressure and supply adjustments are done.

The water concessionaire advised residents having this problem to allow a few minutes for water to flow until the water becomes clear.

According to Manila Water, its water service interruption affected 250,000 to 260,000 people in Mandaluyong City (all *barangay* or villages), San Juan City (five *barangay*), and Pasig City (seven *barangay*) in Metro Manila, as well as Angono (three *barangay*), Antipolo (10 *barangays*), Taytay (three *barangays*),

and Binangonan (12 *barangays*) in Rizal.

Manila Water was forced to lower water pressure or cut water supply in certain areas to ensure enough water for all its customers.

While Manila Water is still getting its allocation of 1,600 million liters per day (MLD), its requirement is now pegged at 1,750 MLD due to the increase in demand and population growth.

Manila Water services the cities of Mandaluyong, Marikina, Pasig, Pateros, San Juan, Taguig, Makati and parts of Quezon City and Manila. It also serves Antipolo City and the Rizal towns of Angono, Baras, Binangonan, Cainta, Cardona, Jala-Jala, Morong, Pililla, Rodriguez, Tanay, Taytay and San Mateo.

Another utility, Maynilad Water Services Inc., covers the cities of Manila, Pasay, Parañaque, Calocan, Muntinlupa, Las Piñas, Valenzuela and parts of Makati and Quezon City.

Earlier, the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), which regulates Manila Water and Maynilad, asked the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) to increase its water allocation from Angat Dam, Metro Manila's water source.

Palace eyes EO

President Rodrigo Duterte will soon sign an executive order (EO) to address the water crisis, a Palace official said on Sunday.

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles said in a statement that government agencies were finalizing the draft EO to address water issues, following the Cabinet Assistance System (CAS) meeting in Leyte on Friday.

According to Nograles, the draft

EO covers the different components of integrated water resource management (IWRM).

It also asks for the reconstitution of the NWRB which is responsible for allocating water from Angat Dam. It will be responsible for policy, direction-setting, and the integration of all government efforts pertaining to water.

The board, under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, will be placed under the supervision of the Office of the President (OP).

Nograles said supervision of the OP would "help ensure that all 30-plus agencies involved in water resource management are on the same page."

Nograles said that during the meeting, the agencies agreed on the problems that needed to be resolved, so the water supply management issues would not be repeated in the future.

Last week, Nograles said an inter-agency cluster and the Executive branch of the government started to craft the EO to "properly" address the water issues in the country.

Duterte also ordered water companies to release water from Angat Dam.

San Miguel offer

The MWSS will lead an inter-agency meeting to address the water crisis today.

MWSS Administrator Reynaldo Velasco will meet top officials of Manila Water, Maynilad, Bulacan Bulk Water, concerned local government units, the Bureau of Fire Protection, Association of Volunteer Fire Chiefs and Firefighters of the Philippines.

The meeting will also discuss

San Miguel Corp's offer to help to deliver 140 million liters of clean, treated water to areas affected by the supply cut.

The MWSS lauded San Miguel President and Chief Operating Officer Ramon Ang's offer to provide potable water to over six million people in the East Zone of the metropolis from its untapped 140 MLD from Angat Dam.

According to Ang, the undertaking, will not be easy since an estimated 14,000 truck trips per day using 10-kiloliter (kl) tankers, or 7,000 trips per day using 20 kl tankers would be needed to deliver clean water.

In January this year, San Miguel operationalized Stage 1 of its Bulacan Bulk Water Project.

The facility's Phase 1 has a production capacity of 200 MLD. However, as many water districts have yet to upgrade and prepare their facilities to receive water from the BBWSP, the project uses only about 60 MLD.

Poe sets probe

Sen. Grace Poe, who is running for reelection, on Sunday urged the MWSS and Manila Water to stop finger-pointing and instead offer solutions on the water crisis.

The senator, chairman of the Senate Committee on Public Services, is scheduled to conduct an inquiry on the water shortage on Tuesday, March 19.

Asked if she would recommend the removal of concerned officials who will be proven to be remiss of their duties, Poe said, "We need to find out who neglected their duties."

FRANCIS EARL CUETO WITH RALPH EDWIN U. VILLANUEVA, JORDEENE B. LAGARE AND BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO



Kaliwa Dam won't solve current water supply crisis—economist

BY BERNADETTE D. NICOLAS
@BNicolasBM

THE construction of China-funded Kaliwa Dam project, which is seen as a medium-term solution to the water crisis in Metro Manila, is also expected to be delayed because of the standoff in the passage of the proposed 2019 budget, a local economist said.

The budget bill has yet to be transmitted to the Palace as there is an ongoing debate on the last-minute changes done on the budget bill after the version approved by the bicameral conference committee was ratified by both chambers on February 8.

Foundation for Economic Freedom President and local economist Calixto V. Chikiamco also tagged as a mistake the Duterte administration's shift in emphasis on the mode of financing the project from a public-private partnership (PPP) to official development assistance (ODA), which entailed getting a loan from a foreign country.

Debt servicing is annually appropriated in the country's budget bill.

Despite the opposition of environmentalists and some critics to the construction of Kaliwa Dam, Chikiamco, meanwhile, also stood firm that this is the right step forward.

"Firstly, the Duterte government made a mistake of canceling the PPP for Kaliwa [Dam] in favor of Chinese ODA, delaying the project," Chikiamco said in a text message to the BUSINESSMIRROR. "Secondly, Kaliwa can only be up in three to four years. Won't solve current shortage."

Nonetheless, he said he still favors the construction of Kaliwa Dam together with other dams as a good medium-term solution.

Chikiamco pinned the blame on the water crisis to the failure of Manila Water Co. Inc., one of the private concessionaires, to anticipate higher demand versus its water supply.

"For medium term, Laiban, Kaliwa and Kanan dams should be tapped as alternative to Angat. Combined the dams are capable of 8,000 million liters per day, double [that of] Angat's capacity," he said.

Manila Water on Saturday said it has already restored supply to 80 percent after a week of scheduled water interruptions.

No overnight solution—AER

NONETHELESS, Action for Economic Reforms Coordinator Filomeno Sta. Ana III said there is no overnight solution to increase sustainable supply but the government should no longer be complacent about this.

"Building new dams must proceed but the government must be credible in undertaking these projects by being transparent and by convincing people that environmental, engineering and safety standards are met, that financing is sound and fair,

that affected people are justly compensated," Sta. Ana said in a text message to the BUSINESSMIRROR.

In the short run, he also urged the government to take the lead in facilitating the coordination between water concessionaires Maynilad and Manila Water in water sharing.

The government must also lead efforts in undertaking water conservation, he said.

High prices for summer

MOREOVER, Chikiamco recommended that the government set higher prices for water above a certain level during summer to encourage water conservation.

He also urged the government to immediately pass a law reforming the water industry similar to the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (Epira) and to set rights and rules for private investment in water production and distribution.

Population factor

MEANWHILE, lawyer Michael Ll. Yusingco, nonresident research fellow at the Ateneo School of Government, said the government should not lose sight of the underlying cause of the problem, which is the growing population in National Capital Region.

"Ultimately, what this crisis is showing us is that the supply will soon be overwhelmed by the demand. And this is the problem we must all face now," Yusingco said.

He also said the best way to move forward from this crisis is for President Duterte to call for a Water Resource Management Summit to look for viable long-term solutions to preserve the country's water resources, including revamping the current water resource management regime.

Stakeholders can be gathered to produce a comprehensive and coherent water resource management plan for the country, he said.

"One such solution which can be properly discussed is to de-populate Metro Manila. While obviously controversial, I believe this proposal is very much in line with the President's federalism agenda. In any case, this is an idea people in Metro Manila must seriously consider if we want to prevent an even harsher water crisis," he said in an e-mail sent to the BUSINESSMIRROR.

"Doing this is utterly paramount considering that by next year our population will be 110 million. With more than half of Filipinos less than 35 years old."

Aside from this, he said the government should also consider stabilizing water from typhoons into a sustainable and vast supply for cities.

"This will certainly relieve some pressure on our natural reservoirs. Pursuing this makes sense considering the number of typhoons that come our way every year," he said.



Japanese firm revives dam bid

OSAKA-BASED Global Utility Development Corp. Ltd. (GUDC) is reviving a 10-year old unsolicited proposal to build the Kaliwa Intake Weir project under a 25-year build-operate-transfer (BOT) scheme that would address Metro Manila's looming potable water supply problem

Toshikazu Nomura, GUDC chief executive officer, in a statement yesterday, said the project is a feasible and cost-efficient alternative to the Kaliwa Dam project being opposed by the indigenous peoples in the area.

GUDC said the project would be at no cost to the government nor will it require sovereign guarantees.

"We propose to build a water source that not only meets the capacities needed by MWSS (Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System), but also utilizes a long-term, sustainable approach in consideration of communities and livelihoods in the area," Nomura said.

Nomura said if the project starts by June, the project can be completed within the Duterte administration.

The proposed Kaliwa Intake Weir will have a capacity of 550



New twist. The China-funded Kaliwa Dam project is being opposed by the Dumagat tribe and residents.

million liters per day.

It will have a 7-meter-high weir with a 16-kilometer-long tunnel that has a diameter of 3.3 meters.

The proposal includes the con-

struction of a water treatment plant within the vicinity.

It will have a construction period of 36 months.

Nomura said the proposal addresses the issue of the imminent

inundation of Daraitan Village.

"The design of the weir and associated facilities takes a highly sustainable approach. We are

See JAPANESE > Page A4

conscious of lessening the impact on the surrounding communities, particularly Daraitan Village. This makes it a win-win for all stakeholders, especially the affected LGUs," Nomura said.

A weir, or low head dam, is a barrier across the horizontal width of a river that alters the flow characteristics of water and results in a change in the height of the river level.

According to Nomura, this is a viable

alternative to building a dam and will sufficiently deliver the capacity required by MWSS.

The project was first presented to MWSS in 2009 and a memorandum of understanding was signed by both parties in the same year.

But the government did not pursue the project until San Miguel Corp. proposed its own, this time for Kaliwa Dam, in October 2015.

Under the Duterte administration, the Kaliwa Dam project shifted from a public-private partnership to official development assistance, tapping Chinese loans.

Nomura said he hopes MWSS would finally honor the memorandum of understanding it signed with GUDC in 2009.

"We are ready and we are committed to delivering this project within the soonest

possible time should it be reconsidered," said Nomura.

GUDC has been doing construction and engineering projects in the Philippines over the past decade.

It is currently building the 300-megawatt Calaca-2 coal-fired power plant in Batangas, and the National Network of 500-KV transmission line from Naga to Lucena-Kalayaan-San Jose. (I. Isip)



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Gordon urges LGUs to issue ordinances on water conservation

By **HANNAH L. TORREGOZA**

Senator Richard Gordon on Sunday urged local chief executives in Metro Manila to release their respective ordinances, directing their constituents to observe water conservation practices.

Gordon said that with thousands of families in Metro Manila affected by the water interruption implemented by east zone water concessionaire Manila Water due to shortage in their supply, it is imperative that local government units (LGUs) should issue ordinances geared at water conservation to prevent the water crisis from worsening.

Gordon said it was very important that the people be conscious of their water usage and

observe water conservation measures.

"We should conserve water. We can take simple actions at home so we don't contribute in worsening the problem," Gordon said in a statement.



IP WARNING

CHICO RIVER PROJECT SEEN AGGRAVATING LACK OF WATER

BAGUIO CITY—An alliance of indigenous people's (IP) groups in the Cordillera has assailed the Chico River Pump Irrigation Project (CRPIP) that they believed would worsen water shortage in Kalinga and nearby provinces.

Windel Bolinget, chair of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance, said the China-funded CRPIP is not feasible and sustainable under the overall development plan in the Chico River.

The Chico River is the most extensive river in the Cordillera region, which traverses the provinces of Mountain Province, Kalinga and Cagayan.

Many communities along the Chico River banks depend on the water in the river for irrigation of farmlands and for domestic use.

The river's potential for generating electric power has made it a target of numerous hydropower projects, including the World Bank-funded Chico Dam Project in the 1970s-1980s.

3-year project

The P4.3-billion CRPIP, which will be completed in three years, included six electric pumps at Barangay Katabogon that can draw 3,800 liters per second.

This was expected to irrigate 7,150 hectares in Tuao town and 380 ha in Piat town, both in Cagayan, and 1,170 ha in Pinukpuk, Kalinga.

But Bolinget said the CRPIP would fail in irrigating two barangays in Kalinga and 19 barangays in Cagayan province because of the presence of 10 hydropower projects along the Chico River.

"These dam projects will disturb the natural flow of the Chico River and during the dry season, most of the water will be stored in the dam reservoirs, which in turn will worsen the scarcity of water supply in the downstream area including where the CRPIP will operate," Bolinget said in a recent statement.

Bolinget said Kalinga farmers were currently suffering from agricultural damages due to lack of irrigation water since the volume of water in the Chico River has declined because of drought.

CRPIP is the first flagship infrastructure project to be financed by China under President Duterte's ambitious Build, Build, Build program. —KIMBERLIE QUITASOL INQ



Rainwater catchment bill pushed in Congress

By **CHARISSA M. LUCI-ATIENZA**

In the wake of the water shortage affecting Manila Water consumers, Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Raymund Villafuerte has urged Congress to prioritize the passage of a bill mandating commercial, institutional and residential estate developers to install rainwater retention facilities in their projects in Metro Manila and other major cities.

"Rainwater is a free, abundant, and regular natural resource that the Philippines is fortunate to receive year in and out. It is high time that we make use of it for the general advantage of our people," Villafuerte said.

He pushed for the construction of small water-impounding facilities and pumps to help communities retain rainwater for their water needs. In Camarines Sur, Villafuerte said public schools have started putting up facilities to retain rainwater.

House Bill (HB) 8088 seeks the construction of facilities converting harvested rainwater for non-potable uses.

The proposed rainwater retention facilities are expected to capture the rainwater, purify it, and store it for non-potable uses, "thereby effectively reducing the amount of rainwater that submerges Metro Manila roads during the rainy season, as well as feed the demand for water in the cities."

Villafuerte said his proposal seeks to reduce flooding.

"While Metro Manila is annually drenched with some 20,000 millimeters rainwater, many parts of the metropolis and other major cities are unable to absorb the rainwater they receive," he said.

He cited that Cebu, Baguio, and Nueva Ecija already started utilizing rainwater for non-potable uses.

HB 8088 also provides that no project design or building permit for a new real

estate project in Metro Manila and other major cities shall be approved by the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board (HLURB) and local government units (LGUs) unless it includes a rainwater retention facility.

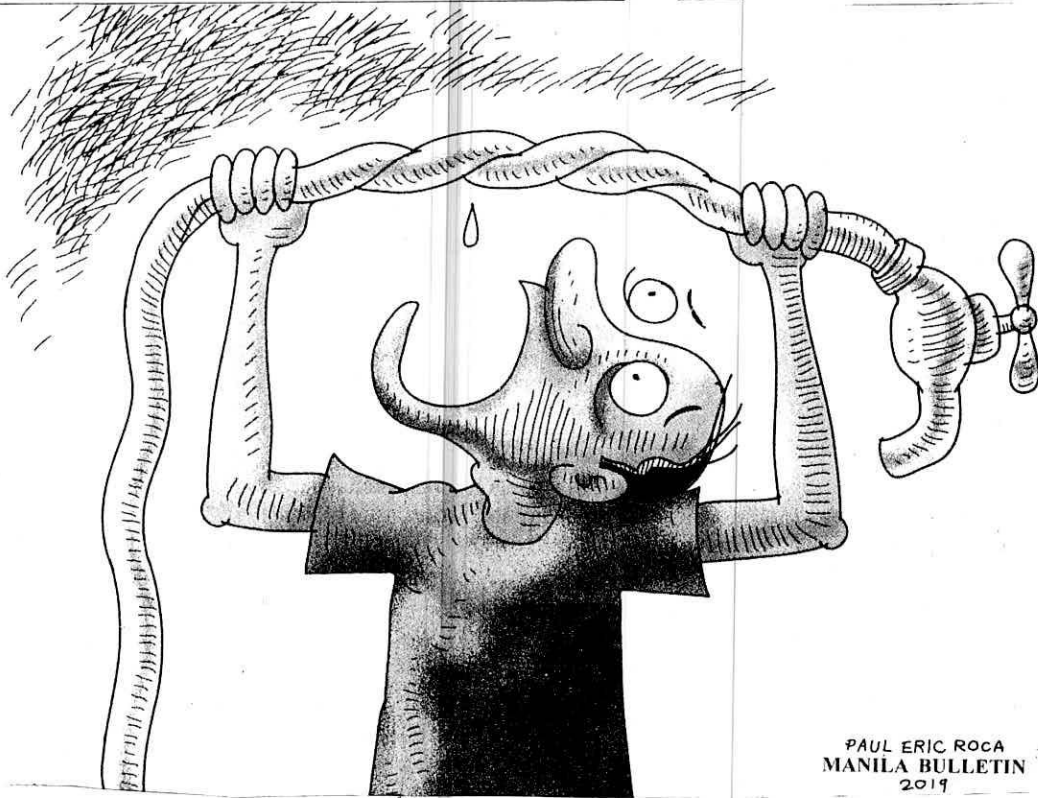
The bill requires an owner or developer of a new commercial, institutional and residential development project in Metro Manila and other major cities with an area of at least 1,500 square meters to develop, and maintain at least three percent of the total area, exclusive of roads, service streets and alleys, as a rainwater harvesting facility.

Under HB 8088, the owner or developer of an ongoing commercial, institutional, and residential development project in Metro Manila and other major cities that has no existing provision for a rainwater facility is mandated to build the facility within three years from the effectivity of the proposed law.



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PAUL ERIC ROCA
MANILA BULLETIN
2019

Include water infrastructures in 'Build, Build, Build'

PRESIDENT Duterte ordered the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to demand the release of water from Angat Dam by noon last Saturday, water good for 150 days, in the wake of a water shortage that has hit Metro Manila, presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said.

If the water shortage was just due to some official making a wrong decision to start rationing water in line with established rules governing the water supply, this swift presidential order should end the problem.

But it seems the situation is not that simple. On the same day the President issued his order for the MWSS to demand the delivery of more water act from Angat Dam in Bulacan, an MWSS official said it may be difficult to carry out the order with the present infrastructure.

Angat Dam in Bulacan province now delivers 1,600 million liters of water a day to Manila Water for the Metro Manila East Zone and 2,400 million liters to Maynilad for the West Zone – a total of 4,000 million liters. From Angat, the water passes through various tunnels into three catchment basins, then through six aqueducts, two canals, and a conduit, to treatment plants of the two distribution concessioners. And all that infrastructure can handle only 4,000 million liters a day.

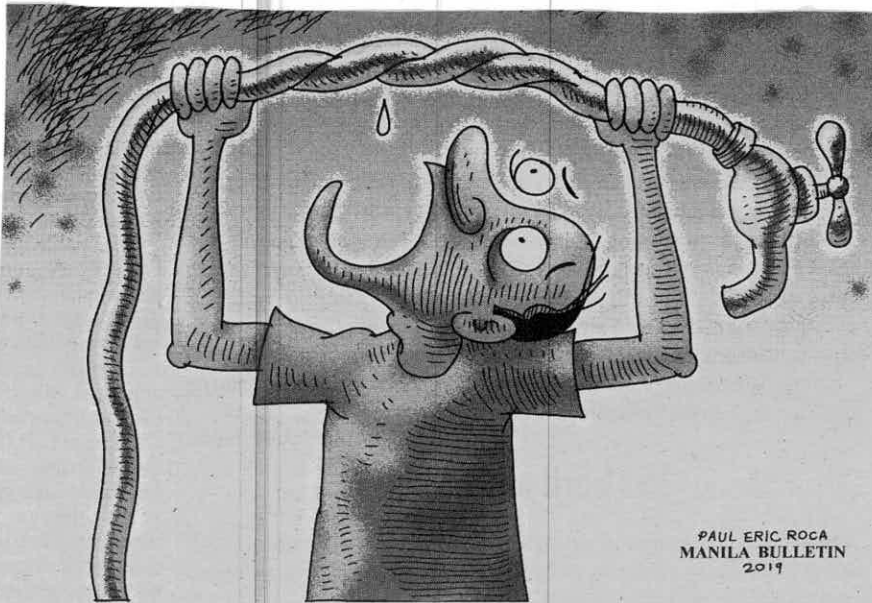
The problem of water shortage has been cropping up for some years at about this time of the year, when the demand rises along with the summer

temperature. The population of Metro Manila has also been growing tremendously. This year, there is the additional phenomenon of El Niño – heat developing over the Pacific Ocean then spreading out in all directions.

Among the many proposed solutions for the ever-rising demand for water is the drawing of water from Laguna de Bay and from old wells and the setting up of additional treatment plants. There are proposals for additional dams in other provinces. There is a House bill requiring developers to include catchment basins in their projects to save rainwater. There are proposals for desalination plants to process seawater, as some nations in the Middle East have already begun to do.

All these many proposals have landed on desks in various existing government agencies. It may be time, as some have proposed, that a separate government department be set up to look at the entire problem of water – its availability, infrastructure for gathering, storing, and delivering it, how the total supply is to be apportioned among various users, notably agriculture, manufacturing, and households.

The current water supply problem now holding Metro Manila in its grip will take more than an order for immediate action from the bureaucracy. The solution calls for much greater study and planning and considerably more infrastructures. These could now be included in the overall "Build, Build, Build" program that is now moving forward at an increasing pace.



PAUL ERIC ROCA
MANILA BULLETIN
2019

EDITORIAL

Isama ang mga water infrastructure sa 'Build, Build, Build'

IPINAG-UTOS ni Pangulong Duterte sa Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) na hingin ang pagpapakawala ng tubig sa Angat Dam nitong tanghali ng nagdaang Sabado, tubig na sasapat sa 150 araw, sa gitna ng kakulangan sa tubig na sumapol sa Metro Manila, sinabi ni presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo.

Kung ang kakulangan sa tubig ay dahil lamang sa maling desisyon ng ilang opisyal, sa pagsisimula ng pagrarasyon ng tubig bilang bahagi ng ipinatutupad na panuntunan sa suplay nito, ang mabilis na kautusan ng pangulo ay dapat na magbigay sa wakas sa suliranin.

Ngunit 'tila lumalabas na hindi ganito kasimple ang problema. Sa kaparehong araw nagpalabas ang Pangulo ng kautusan na nag-uutos sa MWSS na humingi ng paglabas ng mas maraming tubig mula sa Angat Dam sa Bulacan, habang isang opisyal ng MWSS ang nagsabi na mahihirapang ipatupad ang kautusan sa kasalukuyang lagay ng mga imprastraktura.

Ang Angat Dam sa Bulacan ang nagdadala ngayon ng nasa 1,600 milyong litro ng tubig kada araw sa Manila Water para sa Metro Manila East Zone at 2,400 milyon litro sa Maynilad para sa West Zone — nasa kabuuang 4,000 milyon litro. Mula sa Angat, dumadaan ang tubig sa iba't ibang tunnel sa tatlong catchment basins, patungo sa anim na aqueducts, dalawang kanal, at isang conduit, papunta sa mga treatment plants ng dalawang concessioners. At lahat ng mga imprastrakturang ito ay kaya lamang humawak ng nasa 4,000 milyong litro kada araw.

Ilan taon nang nararanasan ang problema sa kakulangan ng tubig sa ganitong bahagi ng taon, kapag tumataas ang demand kasabay ng pagtaas ng temperatura. Patuloy rin ang mabilis na paglago ng populasyon sa Metro Manila. At ngayong taon, nararanasan pa ang dagdag na epekto ng El Nino — ang init na namumuo sa bahagi ng Karagatang Pasipiko na kumakalat sa iba't ibang direksiyon.

Kabilang sa mga ininumungkahing solusyon para sa patuloy na tumataas na demand sa tubig ang pagkuha ng tubig sa Laguna de Bay at sa mga lumang balon gayundin ang pagtatayo ng dagdag na mga treatment plant. May mga mungkahi rin ng pagdaragdag ng mga dam sa ibang mga probinsiya. Mayroon din panukalang batas na nag-uutos sa mga developer na magtayo ng mga catchment basin sa kanilang mga proyekto upang maimbak ang tubig-ulan. At ang ilang mungkahi para sa desalination plants upang iproseso ang mga tubig-dagat, tulad ng ginagawa na sa ilang bansa sa Gitnang Silangan.

Lahat ng mga mungkahing ito ay naiparating na sa ilang ahensiya ng pamahalaan. Panahon na siguro, tulad ng mungkahi ng ilan, na isang hiwalay na departamento ng pamahalaan ang itayo na tututok sa buong problema sa tubig — ang kasapatan nito, mga imprastraktura para sa pangangalap, pag-iimbak, at pagdadala, kung paano hahatiin ang kabuuang suplay sa lahat ng gumagamit, lalo na sa agrikultura, pagmamanupaktura, at sa mga kabahayan.

Ang kasalukuyang problema sa suplay ng tubig na gumigipit sa Metro Manila ay mangangailangan ng higit sa isang kautusan para sa agarang aksiyon mula sa pamahalaan. Nananawagan ang solusyon ng higit na pag-aaral at pagpapalano at mas maraming imprastraktura. Maaari itong maisama sa pangkalahatang programa ng "Build, Build, Build" na ngayon ay naisasakatuparan na sa mabilis na hakbang.



AS A MATTER OF FACT

SARA SOLIVEN DE GUZMAN

No water?

In an archipelago surrounded by water, how can Filipinos suffer from a "water crisis"? Is this an act of God or an act of incompetent government officials? We surely know what the sad reality is.

My friend Rick Ramos gave me a ray of hope by saying, "Our country is blessed with rivers and watersheds that Metro Manila and environs should never have a water shortage. We have more than enough water for the next 30 years (2050) for the metropolis and contiguous provinces of Rizal, Cavite and Bulacan supplying a population of 30 million people."

He added, "We can develop more than 3,000 MLD (Million Liters/Day) from Laiban Dam (2,000 MLD), Kaliwa Dam (600 MLD), Wawa Dam (550 MLD) and Sumag River in Quezon (190 MLD). Then there is still Laguna de Bay that can easily bring at least an additional 200 MLD. All told, 3,500 MLD! The problem is that MWSS is hardheaded. It wants to keep its role in raw water supply production that is better or best left to the private sector."

The Water Crisis Act of 1995 places MWSS as a regulator. MWSS should allow its concessionaires such as Maynilad and Manila Water to handle the supply of raw water. So, why doesn't the MWSS follow the Act? This needs to be investigated. Clearly, there are twin issues of corruption and incompetence at the MWSS to reckon with.

Alan Ortiz, a public utilities expert, points out that we are throwing all 8 billion liters of water per day from the Sierra Madre mountains to the Pacific Ocean. He said, "This is a criminal sin of omission by government in failing to harness these water sources not just for the Metropolis, but also for the surrounding Calabarzon provinces as well. Only the smallest of these water sources is scheduled for Build Build Build - Kaliwa at 550 million liters per day."

He added, "New sources are key to long term sustainability of the concessionaires and water security of the metro, coupled with other demand-side interventions, such as mandating use of more efficient water appliances and possibly seasonal pricing to reflect scarcity value during drier days which I hope is being studied by the National Water Resources Board."

Rick Ramos, an industrial engineer analyzed the problem by saying, "The central issue is the incompetence of the National Government. MWSS concessionaires Maynilad Water and Manila Water have been asking the government for new sources of water since 2007. That was 10 years after they won the concessions in 1997 and two years after the Water Crisis Act of 1995 passed by Congress and signed by President FVR into law. The 13 km Angat-Umiray River Transbasin Tunnel, which added 25% more water to the supply for Metro Manila, was completed almost 20 years ago in the late 1990s."



He further said, "MWSS Chief Regulator Patrick Ty has publicly admitted that it is the fault of government not having added new sources of water for the NCR and environs. He recalled that both concessionaires talked to him about it two years in 2017 when he assumed office. The Sumag River Diversion Project should have been finished by now. It was 67.79% complete when Rodrigo R. Duterte became President in July 2016. So what happened? Work has stopped at the Sumag project. This is only a 600-meter tunnel that will be linked to the 13 km Angat-Umiray Transbasin Tunnel."

The Umiray Project added 25% to the water supply of Metro Manila. Water from Umiray River in Quezon province flowing to the Pacific Ocean was diverted to Angat Dam through a tunnel under the Sierra Madre mountain ranges to Bulacan. However, the tunnel was damaged in 2004 when a super typhoon hit northern Quezon Province and the illegally cut logs went inside the tunnel and damaged it. I haven't heard anything on its rehabilitation.

In August last year, Manila Water warned of a possible supply shortage in its concession area by 2021 unless MWSS gives the green light to the East Zone concessionaire's P13-billion Laguna Lake Water Supply System Project or "East Bay." But MWSS administrator Rey Velasco allegedly wasn't keen on approving the plan. Why? Well, there are allegations that he gave preference to the government-led Kaliwa Dam project in Quezon, which will not be completed until 2023.

The Kaliwa Dam was supposed to be constructed via PPP mode four years ago in 2015 under PNoy with SMC but this did not push through. Now Duterte is pushing to continue the project to be funded by the Chinese. He changed the PPP to ODA loan to give it to China. If you study the interest rate of the ODA loan from China and the one offered by South Korea, you will freak out.

The Office of the President should have asked earlier MWSS administrator Velasco to explain the water shortage situation. Velasco could have told PRRD the problem is in the supply of raw water that MWSS is supposed to provide and failed to do. And that nothing happened with Sumag Diversion, Wawa rehabilitation, Kaliwa Dam and dam between Angat and Ipo.

Instead of understanding the problem that besets the crisis, the President and his jester in Malacañang ordered the release of water supply from Angat Dam and demanded the concessionaires do it or else they will get a personal scolding. *Sanamagan!* First of all, the release of water is under the jurisdiction of the government (MWSS) and not the concessionaires; second, haven't they been properly briefed on where the problem lies? Such a pathetic state of affairs!

And now, after 20 years of banning deep wells, the NWRB has approved the request to reactivate them as one of the short-term solutions to the water problem. I hope that the approval was not done in haste and with due consideration for the reasons why it was banned.

The water crisis we are facing today should serve as an eye-opener. It's high-time the President gets real professionals on board MWSS and other government entities to get this country going!





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Life

Several water-less days last week had caused Metro Manila to tumble. Several more days without water would have caused a revolution, one repartee went but not without a tinge of truth or possibility.

Those were days that harken back to the 1970s when marching activists would inject their patriotic calls with *sigaw ng bayan, tubiiiiig!* (people cry for water) if only to make light of their *walang goli* (no bath) days.

While it was unthinkable for the Philippines – an archipelagic nation with an abundance of water – to go water-less, we should listen to some environmental activists' prognosis if we are to prepare for the future.

It is not just the Philippines, but 1.8 billion people will be living in countries or regions with absolute water scarcity by 2025. Count six years from now.

That is about two-thirds of the world's population. And Filipinos should be prepared to living under water-stressed conditions.

That is if we are not to act now.

Clean water is needed in improving sustainable food production in order to reduce poverty and hunger. So it's not just clean drinking water which we are about to lose, but also our food sources, including farms which we are losing now quite quickly. No thanks to so-called development of lands into mid-class and high-end villages and areas of commerce.

Each of us contributes to the death of our clean water sources. More than 80 percent of sewage in developing countries, including the Philippines, are discharged untreated, polluting rivers, lakes and coastal areas.

Want proof? Think Pasig River, Boracay and Manila Bay.

This rubbernecker will no longer talk about the business side of the water problem. He is in agreement with those who think water is among the people's needs that should not have been privatized.

Even presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo had aired concern that Metro Manila's water problem may have been artificial. Well it looked it.

The push for the development of the Kaliwa Dam in Quezon Province was floated as a solution to the dwindling supply from the Angat and La Mesa dams. But is it?

There had been other suggestions, many of them legitimate. The Philippines could not be without solutions to a water crisis. Will they not cost much to the end user, which is the public? Will they be viable?

The Taal Lake had been offered in the past. The Laguna de Bay could have been a source, too.

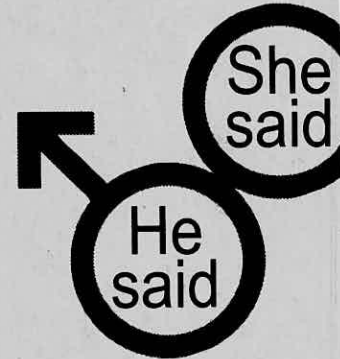
Senate President Tito Sotto said desalinating our sea waters could provide the people with potable water.

But these would be costly. Just like now when a liter of drinking water in convenience stores cost as much as a liter of diesel of gasoline, we would be finally seeing water's true worth to our lives and pockets.

While the Kaliwa Dam would still take time and opposition



Aldrin Cardona



before it gets completed, we are also being reminded that the last time the country had built a major dam was in 1998, a little more than three decades when the San Roque Dam was inaugurated in Pangasinan.

The San Roque Dam is now the country's largest dam and yet we still could not provide enough.

The other "newest" of the major dams was completed in 1975. It's the Magat Dam in Ifugao and Isabela.

Others have been built before our time, like the Wawa in 1909, the La Mesa in 1929, the Ambuklao in 1948 and the Angat in 1967.

Government leaders have been consistently saying that we are decades behind in infrastructure. This includes our water sources.

Also several years ago, Rogelio Singson who served as secretary of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to former President Benigno Simeon Aquino III proposed the utilization of flood water for recycling into potable drinking water.

But his idea was quickly shot down. His proposal was to collect flood water in underground silos and utilize them for clean water supply of Metro Manila residents. Talk about priorities!

As an example, he cited the España, Manila area where the University of Santo Tomas is situated and which remains flood-prone despite numerous efforts by various agencies to solve its constant flooding problem.

The priests, he said, may have been fed with wrong information they did not agree with his suggestion to put a water reservoir underneath the area for future public consumption.

And so, we are here today when we face the specter of drought, climate change and the still present threat of a dwindling water supply and we have not moved an inch towards a solution.

Even the top countries with a vast sources of freshwater, including Brazil, the United States, Russia, China, Canada and Indonesia, are facing the same problems of under-utilization of their freshwater sources.

They are also facing the same threats like we do. But they can survive for years because these countries can well manage their infrastructure, distribution, generation and renewal of their water sources.

This, while we wait for a drop, rain or a miracle to fill our antiquated reservoirs. Then we take them for granted again when they come.

**“
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just the
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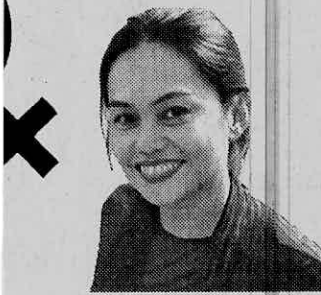
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Too big



Dinah S. Ventura

Memes and jokes flooded social media anew following the water shortage that hit parts of Metro Manila last week.

Among my favorites is this parody from a friend's Facebook wall: "Manila water crisis instructions to the twins before leaving for the pub: Soon as you hear the taps running again, start filling the buckets and then fill the drums. Fill every bucket afterwards. I'm just going out to look for supplies and salvage anything I can. If one of them starts showing symptoms of being bit, make sure to put a bullet through the head."

If you're a fan of the zombie series *The Walking Dead*, this will resound in your lower frontal lobes and make you laugh away the inconvenience of waterless days, at least for a while.

For as many Metro Manila residents found out, having no water can cost you your sleep, energy and those extra coins from your pocket. Some even said having limited water is like going back to the primitive times.

Not only were around 52,000 households badly affected, with laundry probably piling up and dishes still a little oily from lack of water to wash them, but also businesses and hospitals.

Soon enough it became clear: Manila Water officials "clarified the dry season or El Niño is not solely to blame for the water shortage," as one report goes.

They said it was more of "a high demand and low supply" problem.

Bravely the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) Chief Regulator Patrick Ty admitted last Thursday (might as well have been

Thursday) that the shortage was due to the "government's shortcomings." He said "project delays are the ultimate cause of the supply issues of Manila Water."

So here we are with another issue that, like the rice shortage last year, became too big (*tubig?*) before we knew it. In other words, the problem is not insufficiency of water, but insufficiency of planning.

Sourcing water is the government's job. The earth is made up of 70 percent water. Government must be made up of 30 percent thinkers only.

This crisis has fortunately led some officials to propose solutions. The President is looking at crafting an Executive Order (EO). Congress will discuss the issue this week and hopefully come up with its own solutions, short term and long term hopefully. Others propose a "more defined water sector management" as the current system is like water itself – hard to contain.

"In other words, the problem is not insufficiency of water, but insufficiency of planning."

Right now a number of agencies can be deemed responsible for this crisis, with no hope of real accountability. An EO should help give direction as what the key agencies should manage the water sector.

People, for their part, should learn to conserve the resource. Officials have already made it clear that the "Angat Dam, which supplies some 96 percent of Metro Manila's water demand, is no longer sufficient and more water sources are needed." More mindfulness in our daily consumption will go a long way for sure.

Water from La Mesa Dam is a reserve, but it is now also fast being used up. Because of this, government is currently pushing for the implementation of the Kaliwa Dam, proposed decades ago to provide additional water, but it will be funded by China.

The water problem is proving to be more complex than we thought. And even if it is not all about the El Niño, right now all we can do it seems is wait for the rains to come.



World Water Day



Atty. Jose Ferdinand M. Rojas II
RISING SUN

IT is just so fitting that the world is celebrating World Water Day on Friday, March 22, as we Metro Manila dwellers currently experience a water shortage. And it is probably just as fitting to widen our perspective a bit, in the midst of our personal water-related struggles, and look at the global picture.

According to data from the United Nations, there are about 844 million people in the world who lack access to clean water. India faces its worst-ever water crisis affecting about 600 million people. Cape Town, Michigan, Asia's megacities, Brazil's Sao Paulo, Barcelona, California and the rural sub-Saharan Africa have faced, or are still facing, severe water crisis.

These are just some of the places on the long list of cities affected by water shortage.

Metro Manila residents can relate. We know how hard it is to have water rationed, to carry water from the source to our homes, to scrimp on water for washing and cooking, and to suffer all this in the middle of a scorching summer. We can't

downplay the national and global impact of this problem. Access to clean water is crucial to development: there is better hygiene and sanitation, people are healthier, children are more likely to go to school, certain types of illness are avoided, people can grow their crops and nurture their livestock, there is more food for everyone, and communities become more progressive.

Water management professor Arjen Hoekstra says that water scarcity is mainly brought on by quick growth (high demand) and insufficient preparation. Further, climate-change effects like drought will definitely make matters worse. In the global setting, agriculture represents 80-90 percent of the world's total water consumption. This is followed by energy production and industry. Home use is only at 3 percent.

Back home, there are various reasons being presented to the people. Some say it is because of El Niño and

increased demand for more water, others say it's a political maneuver related to the construction of Kaliwa Dam. More recently, there are those who claim it's because MWSS had the bypass valve closed. (The bypass valve splits water from reservoirs between the two concessionaires Maynilad and Manila Water.)

Aside from conserving water in our homes, which everyone must do regardless of whether they are being serviced by Maynilad or Manila Water, it is also important for the city to establish more stringent regulations related to industrial processes. Aside from the residential homes, the city's industries must also put water conservation measures in place and implement these strictly. Furthermore, it would help if we could all support and fund clean water initiatives, usually promoted by nongovernment organizations, international agencies and other active players in the advocacy.



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DISPLACED SECTOR

DESPITE BORACAY REOPENING, MANY WORKERS HAVE NOT RETURNED

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
@nestorburgosINQ

ILOILO CITY—More than four months after Boracay Island reopened to tourists, many workers displaced by the closure have not been able to return to work.

Most of those who left the island to seek work elsewhere have not returned even if many hotels and resorts have already reopened.

The Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) reported that 320 accommodation establishments with a total of 11,662 rooms had been accredited and allowed to operate as of Feb. 27.

Tourists were barred from the resort island for six months from April 26 to Oct. 25, 2018, while it was undergoing rehabilitation from environmental problems.

During the closure, almost all businesses stopped operating, forcing most of their employees to leave the island.

Those employed in the informal sector also lost their income.

"We try to survive, but our income is really down," said Maureen Tapican, who sold seafood before the closure but now sells directly to the market and resorts as vending is not

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MANY BORACAY WORKERS HAVE NOT RETURNED

FROM A1

allowed along the beach.

Only a few vendors have been given a temporary area to sell their goods, she said.

Food, service workers

An estimated 30,000 workers were affected by the closure, which also severely hit Aklan province and neighboring areas that supply food and services to the island's tourism industry.

Tapican said the assistance given by government agencies was not enough.

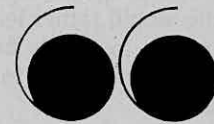
"The government should continue to help us because we are the worst affected, not the business owners," she told the Inquirer.

The Department of Labor and Employment in Western Visayas said in a statement that its assistance to workers affected by the closure had reached P507 million as of Jan. 31. The amount included cash-for-work and livelihood programs.

About 5,005 beneficiaries of the Tulong Panghanapbuhay Para sa Ating Displaced/Disadvantaged Workers (Tupad) program received a total of almost P51 million.

Each beneficiary received the regional minimum wage of P323.50 per day for 30 days or P9,705 in six months.

Displaced, suspended and retained regular workers also received financial assistance



The government should continue to help us because we are the worst affected, not the business owners

Maureen Tapican
Seafood Vendor

equivalent to 50 percent of the prevailing minimum wage in Western Visayas, or P4,205.50 per month.

Regional labor director Cyril Ticao reported that as of Jan. 31, his office had received 28,304 applications for the Boracay Emergency Employment Program.

A total of 19,279 applicants were paid, he said.

At a meeting of the BIATF, Assistant Social Welfare Secretary Rhea Peñaflor reported that the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) had provided individual livelihood assistance to 10,956 families last year.

This year, the DSWD has allotted P9 million in assistance to associations that will implement sustainable livelihood programs, according to Peñaflor. INQ



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Closure of Boracay Island pushes demand for DMCI Power supply

OFF-GRID electricity supplier DMCI Power Corp. said it had the highest sales volume last year, growing 25 percent to 308 gigawatt hours from 247 GWh in the previous year, as the closure of Boracay Island pushed tourists to other destinations.

It also said stronger power demand across its key operating areas coupled with improved distribution and transmission-line systems accounted for the double-digit growth.

"The six-month closure of Boracay positively affected Palawan and Oriental Mindoro, which are known secondary tourism spots in the Philippines. Higher tourist arrivals generated more economic activi-

ties in these areas," DMCI Power President Nestor D. Dadivas said.

Palawan sales showed the strongest growth at nearly 34 percent from 98 GWh to 131 GWh, while Masbate energy sales reached 111 GWh, a 12-percent increase from 99 GWh in 2017.

Registering the second-highest percentage growth in 2018 was Oriental Mindoro with 66 GWh in sales, a 32-percent jump from 50 GWh the year before.

In Sultan Kudarat, where DMCI Power operates as a back-up or reserve power provider, sales volume was flat at 170 megawatts per hour from 140 MWh in 2017.

On a standalone basis, DMCI Power's net income surged 30 percent year-on-

year from P359 million to P465 million.

"Our business has long-term contracts, so it rides on the long-term economic growth of the island. That alone is a good basis to say if we will have a better year or not," Dadivas said.

"Let's say in Mimaropa [the provinces of Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan], we discovered the economies of Palawan and Mindoro, grew at 6 percent and 9 percent, respectively. Then Masbate grew 5 percent, and there's a direct correlation between demand of power and economic growth. We experience the same in any part of the country. So, more or less that's the outlook for the year," he said. **VG Cabuag**



Mining policy stalemate costly—think tank

By Rio Araja

THE Philippines is losing billions of dollars in potential mining investments because of the policy stalemate plaguing the industry, according to an independent think tank.

Dindo Manhit, Stratbase ADR Institute president, said that while countries, such as Australia and Indonesia, have managed to develop their mineral endowments as a strategic pillar of their economies, the Philippine mining industry has become stagnant, following the issuance of Executive Order No. 79 and DENR Administrative Order No. 2017-10 on April 27, 2017 effectively banning open pit mining.

“Our ability to efficiently and sustainably harvest the country’s mineral wealth potential, estimated to be worth more than a trillion dollars, just sitting underground and basically untapped, has been mired in prolonged legal and regulatory challenges,” he said.

Manhit spoke during the Stratbase ADR Institute’s roundtable discussion on open pit mining ban organized in partnership with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship.

“To put in perspective just how much opportunity we are losing, a 2016 list of just 11 pending projects was estimated to total over US\$23 billion in capital investments. Compare this to the official figures of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas on our total foreign direct investment from January to November last year which totaled only US\$9.06 billion,” Manhit said.

“Passing a new mining revenue law now pending in the Senate will resolve the impasse caused by EO 79 and will result in substantial revenue gains needed for President Rodrigo Duterte’s vision for economic and infrastructure development,” he added.

Carmelo Bayarcal, PBEST convenor, backed Manhit, saying “aligning policies to responsibly develop the country’s resource potential while strictly enforcing existing environmental regulations to harness our mineral resources should be a priority of the government.”

According to Manhit, DENR under the leadership of Secretary Roy Cimatu is on the right track for initiating continuous consultations with industry experts to understand the complex technical, social and environmental issues affecting all stakeholders that would “hopefully” result in a more enlightened, pragmatic and stable policy environment.

Gerard Brimo, Chamber of Mines of the Philippines chairman, said EO 79 imposing a ban on new mining applications and DAO 2017-10 made mining in the Philippines unattractive to investors.

Brimo identified three open pit projects—Tampakan copper project, King-king copper gold project, and Silangan copper and gold project—in Mindanao that are now on hold as a result of the ban.



Gold processing plants shut down

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) started Saturday the implementation of a closure order against 1,797 gold processing plants in Barangay Mt. Diwata (also known as Diwalwal) in Monkayo, Compostela Valley.

DENR-11 Regional Executive Director Ruth Tawantawan gold processing plants in Diwalwal, many of which were allowed to operate for 33

years without paying tax, should close shop and transfer instead to the Mine Processing Zone in Mabatas, Monkayo.

Tawantawan said the government needs to rehabilitate the Naboc River from toxic contamination.

Studies conducted by the Environmental Management Board, the Mines and Geoscience Bureau as well as various foreign and local organizations showed

the Naboc River has high concentration of mercury, in addition to incidents of soil erosion and siltation.

She noted that despite intervention by the DENR, the National Task Force Diwalwal and the local government units, the river remains grossly contaminated with mercury and cyanide used in gold mining operations. **CRP**



Mercury, cyanide processing of Diwalwal gold relocated

BY MANUEL T. CAYON [@awimailbox](#)
Mindanao Bureau Chief

DIWALWAL, Monkayo, Compostela Valley—Hordes of green-uniformed national and local mining officers, backed by soldiers, finally enforced a long-ignored government regulation to transfer mercury and cyanide-laden processing of gold away from active mining sites and underneath residential houses to the lone government-designated processing area here.

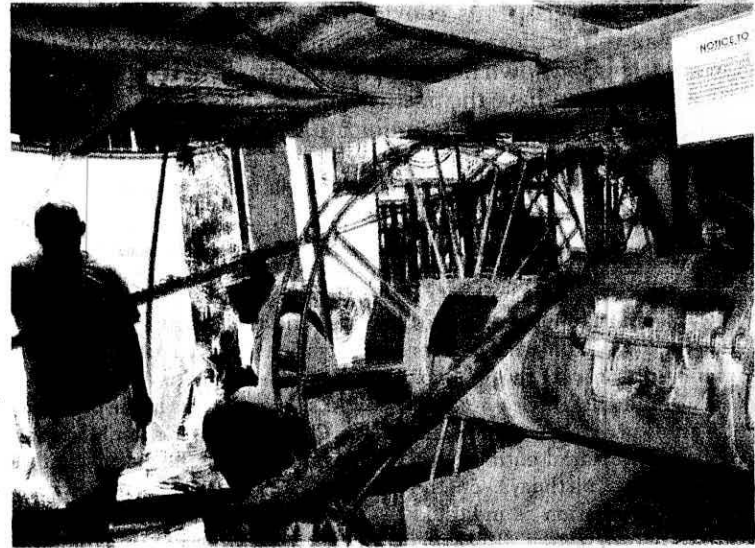
In Purok Nang here, they knocked on stores and houses to serve the cease-and-desist order and showed reporters the ball mills and the carbon-in-pulp (CIP) processing machines underneath these establishments and simple residential house structures.

They explained to gold-ore processors that enforcement of the order, and the relocation of their operations to Purok Mabatas in Barangay Ulip, some 5 kilometers down the slope, were to begin on that day, March 15, and onward until Sunday.

729

The hectare of the Diwalwal mine site that the government started to overhaul since 2002

“By then, we would slap a fine of P200,000 for every day that they defy this order,” said Environment Assistant Secretary Ruth M.



PROCESSING equipment mothballed by the interagency government task force that swooped down on Diwalwal before the weekend is seen with the closure notice tacked on by authorities, declaring the ban on mercury- and cyanide-laden processing of gold in the residential areas. MANUEL T. CAYON

Tawantawan, the designated field operations chief for Eastern Mindanao.

The relocation of the processing plant was the prelude to a massive cleanup of the mercury contamination of the Diwal-

wal’s Naboc River and its surrounding rice fields, and would be Mindanao’s equivalent to the cleanup of Boracay in the Visayas, and the Manila Bay in the National Capital Region.

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Mercury, cyanide processing of Diwalwal gold relocated

Diwalwal...

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The Department of Environment and Natural Resources said the dredging and cleanup of the Naboc River was crucial as it drains into the Agusan River, the country's third largest river basin, which drains into an estimated 12,000 square kilometer area, including the Agusan Marsh, a wildlife sanctuary.

Less grumbling

EDGARDO BAYAWA, one of those served with the cease-and-desist order, pleaded with serving officers from the local Mines and GeoSciences Bureau and the Environmental Management Bureau, to allow him 10 more days at most to haul the unprocessed gold lying idle at the small tailings pond and to process the rocks that must be crushed and refined at the ball mills.

"It would take one day to crush and pulverize one sack of these rocks," he said.

The serving officers were divided though, with one assuring him that he could negotiate it with the higher officials.

One other small processor would rather stop his processing activities. "It is difficult to get gold from the ores. These few years, a gram of gold could be extracted from three to four sacks of rock ores. That's how it is getting to be scarce."

A company sized unit of Army soldiers was tapped to secure the residential and mining site, and to provide security to the enforcement teams headed by 11 community environment and natural resources officers (Cenros) and five Penros.

They would serve the order on the more than 300 operators of 1,797 ball mills and 31 CIPs.

As of the first day of the serving of the cease-and-desist order, the only grumbling heard was the further pleading from operators to give them a little more time to prepare and haul the remaining sacked ores and gold dusts.

"The mining operators have no other recourse but to comply," Barangay Captain Pedro Samillano said.

Today, he added, "the miners called me up or sent text messages telling me that the DENR has arrived in the area. They asked me what to do."

"Of course, I told them to comply," he said.

Since 2002

RELOCATING the processing activities to Mabatas began a few years immediately after the government took over the small scale mining operation of the 729-hectare Diwalwal mines site in 2002. The National Task Force Diwalwal soon subdivided the scattered and violence-wracked control of the tunnels into cooperatives. Malacañang also established offices here of its corporate arm on mining, the Philippine Mining Development Corp. and

the DENR's corporate arm, Natural Resources Development Corp.

A relocation was identified at an area covering 60 hectares in Mabatas, intended to remove the families from shanties perched atop the slopes with tension cracks developing underneath, but mainly to bring the processing mills away from the rivulets and streams that feed into the Naboc River, a tributary of the Agusan River.

The mercury contamination in the 1990s of the Naboc River, which eventually found significant traces into the Davao Gulf, forced the government to clamp down on the wanton use of mercury and cyanide but to no avail, as suspicion of payoffs to high-ranking government, police and Army officials hounded the enforcement.

Miners and barangay officials also argued that the government has not constructed the necessary structure of a tailings dam, and basic infrastructure for civilian occupancy was not seen. Last year, lawyer Alberto Sipaco, former regional director of the Commission on Human Rights and currently designated president of the PMDC, announced government's warning to miners to transfer them with finality to Mabatas.

Tawantawan said the miners were given the final grace period since October 2019 till March. She said in the previous meetings leading to the enforcement over the weekend, "we made it clear that we now have to enforce it."



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Marine biologist Darrell Blatchley shows some of the 40 kilos of plastic ingested by a beached juvenile curvier beaked whale that was stranded on the shores of Mabini town in Compostela Valley last Friday. Photo courtesy of Blatchley. Story on Page 2.



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40 kilos of plastic found in beached whale

By EDITH REGALADO

DAVAO CITY – Forty kilos of plastic equals one dead whale.

This was the grim equation made by marine biologist Darrell Blatchley who said 40 kilos of plastic waste were found inside the belly of a juvenile

male curvier beaked whale that got stranded on the shores of Mabini town in Compostela Valley last March 15.

“I couldn’t believe it. I’ve never seen anything like this before. It was the first time that I saw at least 16 empty rice sacks and assorted plastics were just among the 40 kilos of trash found inside

the body of the beached whale,” said Blatchley, president of D’ Bone Collector Museum Inc.

“This whale had the most plastic we have ever seen in a whale. It’s disgusting,” he said.

The beached whale estimated 4.6 meters long and 2.1 meters wide was found stranded along the coastline of Barangay Cadunan in Mabini town.

Blatchley said the rice sacks and other plastic waste found inside the whale’s belly were one-tenth of its total weight of 500 kilos.

“The final cause of death is in for the juvenile male curvier beaked whale we recovered March 16, 2019. (Forty) kilos of plastic bags. Including 16 rice sacks. Four banana plantation style bags and multiple shopping bags,” Blatchley posted on his Facebook page.

Blatchley added he will post later a full list of plastic items retrieved from the whale.

He noted the 500-kilo beaked whale was actually a lot smaller than the sperm whale found in the waters off Barangay Libudan of Samal Island, Davao del Norte in December 2016.

“The sperm whale that was found in Samal Island was so huge and many times bigger than this beaked whale but the one in Samal Island yielded only 10 kilos of plastic,” he said.

According to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, the local fishing community attempted to release the stranded whale in deeper water for three times when it was found in Mabini last March 15.

The whale would reportedly return to shallow water where it was later found lifeless on shore.

Reports said that upon initial observation, the whale had a prominent backbone and peanut-shaped head.



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PHIL island women lead in peatland restoration

A LANGALANG, Leyte—Eluminada Roca has lived all her life next to the Leyte Sab-a Basin peatlands in this municipality. The grandmother from San Isidro village in this Leyte Island grew up looking at the green hills that feed water to the peatland, she harvested *tikog*—a peatland grass to weave mats—and ate the delicious fish that was once abundant in the waters.

But today, the land is losing its water, the grass is disappearing and the fish stock has drastically decreased.

The community is mainly subsistence food growers and dependent on the catching and selling of fish both for consumption and sale.

So, at the age of 70, Roca has joined hands with women of her village to restore the peatland to its previous health.

In the 1970s, the Philippine government encouraged its people to clear the peatland forests and start farming.

In Leyte Sab-a Basin, it resulted in destroying some hills to build roads and canals. However after decades, the canals are draining the peatland water, making them go dry. Fortunately, there is now a new effort to undo the damage.

In a hot, March afternoon, Roca sits with the members of San Isidro Village Women's Association, discussing why they must restore the peatland.

"We need to make the peatland whole again, so we can resume our life as it used to be," Roca is heard saying.

Everyone nods in agreement, including Janeline Garcia who, at 32, is the youngest woman in the group.

Peatland: Crucial to combat climate change

PEATLANDS are wetland ecosystems where the soil is composed of 65 percent or more organic matter derived from dead and decaying plant materials submerged under high water saturation.

They preserve global biodiversity, provide safe drinking water, minimize flood risk and help address climate change.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), peatlands store as much as 30 percent of the global carbon.

But, damaged peatlands are also a major source of greenhouse-gas emissions. When drained and damaged, they worsen climate change, emitting 2 gigatons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) every year, which accounts for almost 6 percent of all global greenhouse-gas emissions.

Peatland restoration can, therefore, bring significant emissions reductions. Countries have been urged to include peatland restoration in their commitments to global international agreements, including the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Peatland in the Philippines

ACCORDING to the data published by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the total area of identified peatlands in the Philippines is 20,000 hectares, including Leyte Sab-a Basin peatland. Spread over four villages, including San Isidro, this is one of the two major peatlands in the country.

In 2013, when Philippines was hit by the devastating Super typhoon Yolanda (international code



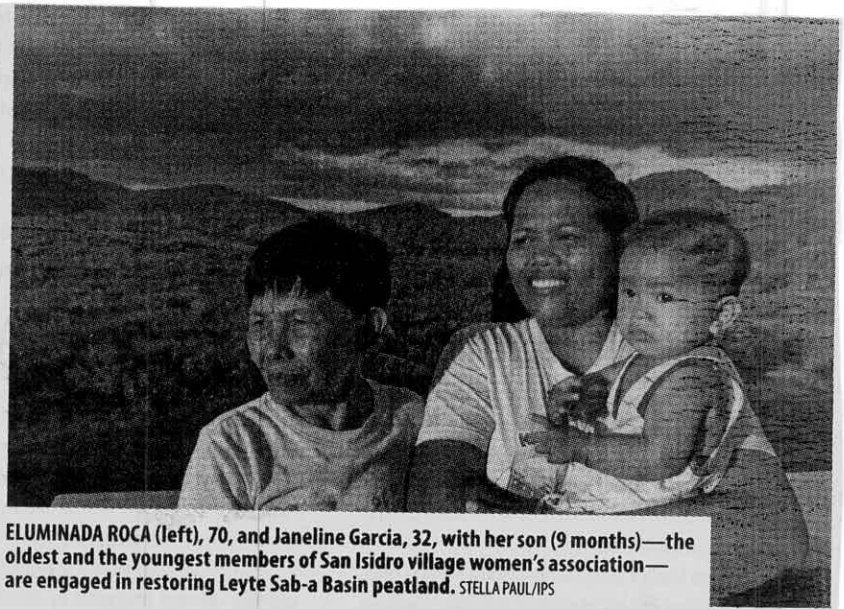
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PHL Island women
lead in peatland
restoration



ELUMINADA ROCA (left), 70, and Janeline Garcia, 32, with her son (9 months)—the oldest and the youngest members of San Isidro village women's association—are engaged in restoring Leyte Sab-a Basin peatland. STELLA PAUL/IPS

name Haiyan), everything in Leyte and its capital city Tacloban was razed to the ground.

According to an Oxfam report, the natural disaster had "brought out the greater vulnerabilities of women, children, persons with disabilities, elderly people and the LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] individuals in already poor communities."

As they struggled to get their lives back in track, the locals who live near the peatland areas began to notice the changes around them.

They started identifying them one by one. The trees, including *lanipao* (*Terminalia copelandii*) and syzygium flowering plants, were destroyed; and the bats, birds and tarsiers that inhabited the peatlands were almost gone.

The loss of the wildlife concerned the local communities, with many feeling that the peatland was becoming uninhabitable.

In 2017, Weaver—a women's-led nongovernment organization in Tacloban—started a project to restore 1,180 hectares of Leyte Sab-a Basin peatland by roping in local women with support from the local government, the Visayas State University and International Institute for Rural Reconstruction, an international NGO:

"It is a project where the local women will be the main actors. The different partners will con-

tribute by doing research on what alternative crops the locals can grow, what alternative livelihood they can have because they cannot just be taken out of the place. We will help them organize, give them training and help them have an income through peatland restoration," Paulina Lawsin Nayra, founder of Weaver, tells Inter Press Service (IPS).

According to Nayra, training of the women will begin after April. It will include deepening their knowledge of peatland, its link to climate change, its vulnerability to fire and the various ways to restore it.

The training will include collecting seeds and planting the trees that only grow on peatland, vigilance against fire and keeping nurseries.

While they are yet to be trained in the restoration work, the women of San Isidro already are looking at the future.

"If we plant enough trees, birds will be back and we can start a bird sanctuary, which can be a tourist attraction," Maria Cabella, 52, who heads the village women's group, tells IPS.

"We can also start a ropeway cable car for the tourists to enjoy the view of the peatland below," Estilita Cabella, 42, tells IPS. "We can restart making *tikog* mats," reminds Roca.

But for Janeline Garcia, a young mother, the future health of the peatlands is related closely to the future of 9-month-old son.

"Once we restore the peatland, my husband can catch enough fish to support our child," she tells IPS with a smile. *Stella Paul/IPS*

“We need to make the peatland whole again, so we can resume our life as it used to be.”—ROCA



Asean discuss conservation of key biodiversity areas

WHILE there is much to celebrate about Asean's rich biodiversity, it is important to recognize that the region's natural resources are fast depleting and face a wide range of threats leading to biodiversity loss," said Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim, executive director of the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB).

Lim made the statement as she discussed about the series of orientation workshops on key biodiversity areas conservation reporting held in Bangkok, Thailand, from March 11 to 15, in partnership with the Key Biodiversity Areas Community and NatureServe.

To combat biodiversity loss, Asean Member States signed the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Citing the importance of implementing activities to comply with commitments to these agreements, Lim said such action will help governments increase the number of protected areas, improve management effectiveness of such areas, and monitor progress on their conservation activities.

To support the efforts, Lim said the workshops will help the participants identify sites critical to the global persistence of biodiversity, and develop visualization tools to aid reporting processes to multilateral environmental agreements. The workshops presented tools to promote the conservation

of sites critical to the global persistence of biodiversity in the Asean region; demonstrate how these tools can guide the strategic expansion of protected area networks; inform environmental safeguards and report progress in the achievement of CBD targets and the SDGs.

"The workshops also introduced the Biodiversity Indicators Dashboard, an interactive, customizable, online platform for visualizing trends and geographic variation in biodiversity indicators; provided an overview of trends in biodiversity and conservation actions through the BID; and identified gaps to tailor-fit the BID, and tools to identify areas critical to the persistence of biodiversity to the requirements of the Asean Member States," said Dr. Sheila Vergara, director of the ACB Biodiversity Information Management Unit.

The ACB-European Union project called, Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in Asean, discussed alternative conservation measures, such as Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas, Community Managed Areas, and other effective area-based conservation measures.

Participants at the workshops included managers of protected areas and Asean Heritage Parks, officers handling collection and analysis of biodiversity data, and conservation staff involved in the preparation of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and reports to multilateral environmental agreements.



Run for the planet

Earth Day Run 2019 is coming to the Philippines this April as National Geographic continues its campaign to reduce the usage of single-use plastics

National Geographic will push forward its commitment to the environment by celebrating Earth Day with its yearly Earth Day Run this April. This year's run will be in the theme of "Planet or Plastic?", a multiyear initiative aimed at raising awareness of plastic pollution and reducing the amount of single-use plastic that enters in the world's oceans.

Everyone in the Philippines can get involved in National Geographic's Earth Day run by visiting www.natgeoearthdayrun.com for more information and to sign up. The run will take place on 14 April at The Mall of Asia Open Grounds.

Co-presented by Immunomax, this year marks the 10th year of Earth Day Run in the Philippines and is expected to attract 15,000 running enthusiasts with the following race categories: 3K, 5K, 10K and 21K.

"We are proud of how Earth Day Run has played a vital role in bringing awareness to environmental issues in the country. Now on our 10th year, we are excited to once again share everyone's passion in caring for one's self and the environment as we run together for the planet. With this year's theme 'Planet or Plastic,' we aim to raise awareness on the effects of single-use plastic and how important it is to take action today. It is our goal to make Earth Day Run a change driver with how people live their lives. By being more conscious of our actions and the footprint we leave behind, we re-commit and strengthen our promise to help and protect our planet," said Charo Espedido, director and head of Marketing of Fox Networks Group Philippines.

We are proud of how Earth Day Run has played a vital role in bringing awareness to environmental issues in the country.

National Geographic's Earth Day Run 2019 will be a powerful platform to share the "Planet or Plastic?" campaign with even more people. Runners and event-goers at this year's Earth Day activities in the Philippines will be encouraged to take the official "Planet or Plastic?" pledge to reduce their use of single-use plastic. No single-use plastics will be allowed at the event, as all runners are encouraged to use the reusable water bottles that will come with every race kit.

Each year nine million tons of plastic waste end up in the ocean, and Asia is responsible for more plastic waste leakage than the rest of the world combined. Some estimates suggest this plastic could remain in marine environments for 450 years or longer and the problem is only getting worse. Addressing a challenge of this magnitude requires an unprecedented approach – leading National Geographic to launch its "Planet or Plastic?" global commitment to tackle this pressing problem.

The ultimate goal of the campaign is to prevent one billion plastic items from reaching the ocean. Doing so will not only benefit the thousands to potentially millions of marine animals that become entangled in, suffocated by or ingest plastic each year, but will also contribute to the overall health of the planet's marine ecosystems and all who rely upon them.

Jude Turcuato, SVP and general manager of Fox Networks Group in the Philippines said, "In support of "Planet or Plastic?" and in celebration of Earth Day, we're asking runners in Asia to choose the planet. As a global movement dedicated to raising awareness of pollution, Earth Day is the perfect moment to bring environmental issues around climate change, plastic pollution and the health of marine life into the spotlight. Raising awareness of these critical issues through events such as the National Geographic Earth Day Run is key to kick-starting lasting change across the region."

People in the Philippines can get involved by joining the Earth Day Run in April and taking the "Planet or Plastic?" pledge, a commitment to reduce your use of single-use plastic. By taking the pledge, individuals will become part of a global community working together to stem the tide of single-use plastic polluting the ocean and will continue to receive information and tips to help them in their efforts. The pledge is particularly important in Asia, where just five countries are the source of 55 to 60 percent of the plastic that ends up in the world's oceans, according to Ocean Conservancy.

Apart from the Earth Day Run and the pledge, the "Planet or Plastic?" campaign comprises a number of actions leveraging the power of National Geographic's media portfolio and expansive network. The organization-wide effort – being executed across multiple platforms in the months and years to come – will include major research and scientific initiatives; consumer education and engagement; updated internal corporate sustainability commitments; and innovative partnerships with like-minded corporations and non-governmental organizations from all over the world.

To get involved with Earth Day Run 2019, visit www.natgeoearthdayrun.com. You can also head to natgeo.com/plasticpledge to learn more about the "Planet or Plastic?" campaign and take your pledge to choose the planet.





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NO PLASTIC IN EARTH DAY RUN

National Geographic continues its commitment to the environment with the staging of the annual Earth Day Run on April 14 at Mall of Asia grounds in Pasay City.

This year's "Planet or Plastic?" theme is aimed at raising awareness on the effects of plastic pollution and helping educate the public in reducing the amount of single-use plastic that litter the world's oceans.

The 10th EDR this year expects some 15,000 running enthusiasts to join the 3K, 5K, 10K and 21K.

"We are proud of how the Earth Day Run has played a vital role in bringing awareness to environmental issues in the country," said Charo Espedido, director and marketing head of Fox Networks Group Philippines.

No single-use plastic will be

allowed in the event as all runners are encouraged to use the reusable water bottles that will come with every race kit.

Each year, nine million tons of plastic waste end up in the ocean, with Asia responsible for more plastic waste leakage than the rest of the world combined. Studies suggest those plastics could remain in the marine environment for 450 years or longer.



EcoWaste sounds alarm on toxic beauty products

By **CHITO A. CHAVEZ**

Aecological watchdog asked concerned government authorities to “put an end” to the rampant sale of make-ups and cosmetic products with hazardous chemicals.

Quezon City-based EcoWaste Coalition raised the alarm after discovering in its routine “test buys” that four of five “made in Pakistan” skin-whitening cosmetics banned by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for containing dangerous levels of mercury are being sold over the counter at shopping malls in Pasay City.

The group noted the illegal trade after purchasing the banned Pakistani mercury-laden facial creams from cosmetic retailers at the Baclaran Terminal Plaza Mall and Baclaran Bagong Milenyo Plaza. The illegal products are being sold for ₱225 to ₱300 each.

“We are dismayed by the nonstop and remorseless trade of unregistered skin-lightening products from Pakistan containing extremely high levels of mercury way above the permissible limit of 1 part per million (ppm),” said Thony Dizon, chemical safety campaigner of EcoWaste Coalition.

“Mercury, a highly toxic substance, is not permitted for use as an ingredient in cosmetic products such as skin whitening creams, lotions and soaps as per the ASEAN Cosmetic Directive. To protect human health and the environment, governments through the Minamata Convention on Mercury have targeted a global phase-out of skin-whitening cosmetics with mercury above 1 ppm by 2020,” he said.

Among the items the group screened for mercury were Parley Herbal Whitening Cream with 32,200 parts per million (ppm) of mercury; Goree Beauty Cream (21,700 ppm); Goree Day & Night Whitening Cream (17,800 ppm), and Golden Pearl Beauty Cream (10,000 ppm).

The FDA issued an advisory last March 5, 2019 banning two variants of Parley for containing mercury beyond the 1 ppm limit.

Similar advisories were also issued against two types of Goree on October 30, 2017.

Golden Pearl was among the mercury-tainted products banned by the FDA through an advisory released on September 8, 2014.

It is latest advisory the FDA noted that “Adverse health effects brought about by highly toxic mercury in cosmetic products include kidney damage, skin rashes, skin discoloration and scarring. Chronic use reduces the skin’s normal resistance to against bacterial and fungal infections. Other effects include anxiety, depression or psychosis and peripheral neuropathy.”

“The transfer of mercury to fetuses of pregnant women may manifest as neurodevelopment deficits later in life,” FDA warned.

To put a stop to the illicit trade of mercury-contaminated skin-lightening products from Pakistan and elsewhere, the EcoWaste Coalition called on the FDA to conduct sustained law enforcement efforts, including on-the-spot confiscation of banned products and preventive closure of erring business establishments.



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Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

La vie en plastique

THERE has been much fuss lately about cleaning up beaches and rivers. And yes, removing the tons of trash—mostly plastic—that litter the shores and pollute coastal communities and rivers is a wonderful thing. While stopping the pollution first before cleaning up would make more sense, not doing anything would be worse. Every piece of trash picked up from a beach or riverbed is one piece less that could end up inside a whale or an albatross.

The sheer volume of garbage littering our world is breathtaking, in a choking kind of way. We like to marvel over the achievements of man, but this is one achievement in which we can take no pride. The garbage mountain is made up of thousands of tiny pieces—plastic bottles, lids, candy wrappers, shampoo and coffee sachets, plastic bags, junk food packaging—in fact, a lot of packaging of fast-moving consumer goods such as beverages, food and toiletries with a short shelf life. How ironic that while the life span of the consumer good may be only a month—from production to consumption—its packaging will stick around for maybe a hundred years. Burning it is a tempting solution especially for those who make a living out of manufacturing single-use plastic but unfortunately, it would release into the air the toxic compounds that went into making the plastic



RESURGENCE

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in the first place.

Turning the tide is not easy and requires more than clean-up drives and slogans. Even the most well-meaning of us might lack awareness on how everything is connected—for instance, organizers of a river clean-up conducted in connection with the visit of Greenpeace International's campaign ship Rainbow Warrior to Cebu reportedly used single-use plastic cups when they served *lugaw* to about 2,000 volunteers who joined the clean-up activity.

This happens because many still see the garbage problem as a disposal problem and an ocean plastic crisis, with the environment in general, and the oceans in particular, as innocent victims of improper disposal of trash.

Unfortunately, the ocean plastic crisis, while indeed a serious crisis in itself, is also a symptom of the larger problem: our way of life. Our economy is running on a produce-consume-dispose formula. We can blame profit-seeking corporations but jobs and government revenues depend on it too. The trash soup polluting the oceans is—pardon the comparison—like the vomit

after a night of excessive eating and drinking, only that we can't flush it away. Obviously, we can't go on living this way.

Rainbow Warrior is in the Philippines to raise awareness on the need to break free from plastic and that 'business-as-usual' is unsustainable. While plastic obviously has its good uses, too much of it is killing us, literally. To reduce the volume of plastic garbage that ends up in the environment, we must reduce the volume of plastic being produced—and one way to reduce production is to reduce demand, especially for single-use plastics. Greenpeace and its partner organizations convinced Cebu's local governments to sign a declaration for a Cebu Free of Single-Use Plastic, committing to create and implement measures to reduce and eventually ban single-use plastics, undertake information and education campaigns on the hazards of plastics, promote zero-waste practices, and support efforts towards replacing single-use with better delivery methods such as reuse and refill systems for business (Greenpeace, March 13, 2019).

The Philippines has the dubious distinction of being the world's third largest polluter of oceans, after China and Indonesia. Our contribution comes in the form of sachets because Filipinos are fond of buying everything, from 3-in-1 coffee to shampoo and nuts in tiny sachets. Greenpeace calls this hachet

economy and blames the fast-moving consumer goods manufacturers for exploiting the propensity of cash-strapped Filipinos to buy everything in small quantities.

In 2017, Greenpeace conducted a brand audit of the garbage it found on Freedom Island in Manila Bay. Products made by Nestlé, Procter & Gamble and Unilever were among the most popular, shown by the numbers of empty packaging (Greenpeace, Sept. 22, 2017). The international environmental organization is challenging these companies and other consumer goods manufacturers to use their resources to innovate and redesign packaging and delivery solutions. If we have water refilling stations, why not shampoo refilling stations? In the Philippine setting, even sari-sari stores could be part of such solutions.

As we find ourselves in the middle of a water supply crisis, letting go of single-use plastic and other disposable items may not seem practical at the moment as scarce water is reserved for personal hygiene rather than dishwashing. However, what both the water shortage and the garbage crisis tell us is that human activity is putting a tremendous strain on the environment and this is boomeranging on us. Each one of us is part of the problem. We must become part of the solution.



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DAVAO: DAVAO CITY

Learning center to built with ecobrick in Marilog

THE JUNIOR Chamber International (JCI)-Duwaling is setting up a learning center in the upland area of Marilog in Davao City using ecobricks, a plastic bottle filled with other plastic materials and used as a building block. "We intend to collect some 81,000 ecobricks at the end of the campaign on March 30 so we encourage everyone to join and contribute," JCI-Duwaling Vice-President for Business Hannah Chloe Cano said at the launch of the Eco-Brick Project Campaign. Ms. Cano said the learning center will serve as a daycare center and reading nook, especially for children in the indigenous people communities in the area. The project also aims to teach people the importance of reducing single-use plastics and recycling. JCI also conducts ecobrick workshops every Saturday to encourage others to collect plastics and help build the learning center. — **Carmencita A. Carillo**



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WE NEED DISASTER DEP'T -- SOLONS

By Ryan
Ponce
Pacpaco

AMID the onslaught of El Niño, Tingog Sinirangan party-list first nominee Yedda Marie Kittilstvedt-Romualdez yesterday renewed her appeal for the Senate to pass the proposed Department of Disaster Resilience (DDR) when session resumes on May 20 after the midterm poll.

Romualdez, congresswoman of the First District of Leyte and chairperson of the House Committee on Accounts, underscored the need to approve the measure before closing the 17th Congress this June.

"I believe we still have time to work on the approval of the proposed Department of Disaster Resilience. I am appealing again to our good senators to consider fast tracking the passage of the DDR bill as this would help drastically reduce, if not totally eliminate, the bureaucratic red tape that has caused many delays in the delivery of immediate assistance needed by disaster and calamity victims," said Romualdez, one of the principal sponsors of the DDR measure that the House of Representatives approved on third and final reading last year.

Joining Romualdez, 1-PACMAN party-list Rep. Mikee appealed to President Rodrigo "Rody" Duterte to certify as urgent the passage of the DDR measure.

"To complement Malacañang's efforts, we in Congress already have several bills, including House Bill (HB) No. 8165 creating the Department of Disaster Resilience. I hope HB No. 8165 can be certified as urgent so the new Department of Disaster Resilience can take the lead in addressing the water crisis aggravated by the ongoing El Niño drought," said Romero.

Camarines Sur Rep. LRay Villafuerte, another principal author of the DDR bill, also joined Romualdez in making an appeal for "the Senate to act with a similar sense of urgency in approving its version that will better equip government to deal with year-round natural calamities made worse by climate change."

"The government can better achieve its zero-

casualty goals as the would-be department could go full-blast on preemptive evacuation, especially of people in coastal and mountainous villages," said Villafuerte.

The DDR guarantees a unity of command, science-based approach, and full-time focus on natural hazards and disasters.

The DDR shall also provide leadership in the continuous development of strategic and systematic approaches to disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery, and rehabilitation, and anticipatory adaptation strategies, measures, techniques and options.

It shall also augment the capacity of local government units (LGUs) in collaboration with relevant national agencies and other stakeholders to implement disaster risk reduction and management and climate change action plans, programs, projects and activities.

Earlier, Romualdez underscored the need to study the possibility of extending loans to the troubled farmers as an act of "malasakit" (compassion) for their plight.

She also underscored the need to look into possible energy shortage, especially if there will be a significant drop in the water supply in major dams in Luzon, including Angat Dam in Norzagaray, Bulacan.

At the same time, Romualdez urged the concerned officials to determine if there is a need for possible cloud seeding operations in places affected by the El Niño phenomenon.

The Leyte congresswoman said the national and local governments should work double time and united to mitigate the impact of El Niño and damages to the agriculture sector.

Romualdez is the wife of former House Independent Bloc Leader and ex-Leyte Rep. Martin Romualdez, president of both the Philippine Constitution Association (Philconsa) and Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats (CMD), who is running for Leyte congressman.



Agri Free Patent Reform Act to boost inclusive growth

THE new "Agricultural Free Patent Act" (RA 11231 signed recently by President Duterte, is seen to "deliver a huge and immediate impact on the economy, on investments in the countryside and on inclusive growth" from the agriculture sector.

RA 11231 lifts restrictions on owners of agricultural free patents and lands from mortgaging or selling them within five years from date of possession, which have made agricultural lands and patents unbankable assets since banks are not inclined to hold a property for five years before its disposition.

Albay Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda, principal author of the measure in the Lower House, said the new law makes agricultural land titles immediately available for trade to help spur development in the agricultural sector, easing up prohibitions in granting public farmlands and qualified beneficiaries access to capital. It likewise empowers qualified farmland beneficiaries to legally manage and improve their lands as viable livelihood sources.

"For a country that has its roots in agriculture it is sad to note that agri-

culture only contributed 8.5% to the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2017, but with the new law, there will be a radical change because farmers are empowered and given the option on what to do with the land," said Salceda.

RA 11231 removes the restrictions on agricultural free patents imposed under the Commonwealth Public Land Act No. 141 which prohibits land owners to sell and mortgage the land within the first five years of the patent grant. It also gives original owner the option to buy back the property within five years from the date of sale.

Salceda, a noted economist, said these restrictions have given poor farmers limited options to obtain funds to modernize and hike farm productivity and invest in their improvement. These were further aggravated by the government's failure to help maximize farm production through modernization and inadequate use of inputs to hike productivity and make farming more viable and source of economic growth for farmers, the community and the country as a whole.

"Obtaining funds for capitalization by farmers to become farmer-entrepreneurs is very difficult, and access to credit has always been problematic for the poor. With RA 11231, Filipino farmers can have easy access to fresh funds, break away from stagnancy and move fast across the other side of the poverty line," he stressed.

Banks and financial institutions require loan borrowers to present collaterals but farmers almost always have no assets to use as collateral other than the lands they till. This situation, Salceda noted, is reflected in the poor compliance by banks with the Agri-Agra Reform Credit Act of 2009, with banks only allocating 1.05% of their loan portfolio for agrarian reform credit vs. the 10% required compliance and 12.83% allocation for agricultural credit.

The 1936 Public Land Act adversely affected about 2.5-3 million agricultural patents covered by this restriction, or nearly 25% of the 12 million registered patents, that cannot be mortgaged or sold, except in the informal markets where their value remains depressed.



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World War 2 soldiers are reincarnated through trees in Capas, Tarlac through an ingenious reforestation effort.

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THIS fire tree turns into an instant attraction as it blooms beside the road in the town of Mlang, Cotabato. INQUIRER