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# DENR

## IN THE NEWS

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NEWS

## Mercury pollution: PH hot spots cited

At least five bodies of water in Luzon and Mindanao have been identified as environmental hot spots for having high levels of mercury, according to a study on the prevalence of the toxic metal as a pollutant released by industries. At least 18 sites across the country, including landfills and mining sites, were listed as areas suspected to be contaminated by the chemical locally known as "asoge." —STORY BY JHESSET O. ENANO

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# Mercury level rising in PH waters, mine sites; 18 hot spots tagged

**By Jhesset O. Enano**  
@JhessetEnanoINQ

At least five bodies of water in Luzon and Mindanao have been identified as having high levels of mercury, according to an assessment that studied the prevalence of the chemical and existing policies to curb its use and release to the environment.

The Philippine Minamata Initial Assessment (MIA) report identified at least 18 sites across the country, including landfills and mining sites, as areas suspected to be contaminated by the toxic metal, also known locally as "asoge."

Those identified are mostly located near or at the heart of artisanal and small-scale gold-mining sites that use mercury and other heavy metals.

### Widely used

Mercury, a naturally occurring metal, has been widely used in agriculture, industry and medicine due to its unique properties. It can be found in thermometers, fluorescent lamps, dental fillings and even skin-whitening products.

The World Health Organiza-

tion considers mercury one of top 10 chemicals of major public health concern, citing toxic effects on lungs, kidney, skin and eyes, even in small amounts of exposure.

Man-made sources of mercury include fossil fuels, landfills, waste piles and tailings.

Among the bodies of water suspected to have high concentrations of mercury include Manila Bay in Metro Manila and Meycauayan River in Bulacan province.

Also identified were Mambulao Bay in Camarines Norte province and Lumanggang Creek and Naboc River, both in Davao region.

All three were earlier tagged as potentially polluted by heavy metals, not just mercury, since these are located near mining operations.

Project leader Teddy Monroy said that while these areas were assessed as hot spots for mercury concentration, these could not be officially declared contaminated.

"Right now, we don't have a standard operating procedure on handling mercury, or even a legal definition of contaminated sites," he said at the report's launch in

Quezon City on Wednesday.

In identifying the sites, information was gathered from year-long focus group discussions across the country beginning in 2017. The discussions involved local governments, industries, residents and even the miners themselves, said project technical assistant Ariane Farnazo.

Among the identified hot spots were the abandoned Palawan Quicksilver Mines in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan

province, a past mercury producer; Mabuhay Vinyl Corp. in Iligan City, a chlor-alkali producer; and mining and gold processing sites in Camarines Norte and Masbate provinces.

### Priority areas

Provinces in regions that heavily rely on mining, such as Cordillera Administrative Region and Caraga, were also seen as areas of concern.

"These sites were identified



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to determine which would also be priority areas in policies and efforts in addressing mercury use," Farnazo said.

The site identification and assessment was one of the components of the MIA project, which was spearheaded by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in July 2017.

The project was done to assess the country's readiness as a party to the Minamata Convention on Mercury, an international treaty created to protect human health and the environment from the negative effects of mercury.

It was named after a Japanese city where thousands were adversely affected and hundreds were killed after a nearby bay was contaminated by methylmercury discharged from a chemical factory.

#### Convulsions, death

In October 2013, then Environment Secretary Ramon Paje signed the convention, which came into force in 2017. The country, however, has not yet ratified the convention.

"There is no safe level of mercury in humans," Farnazo said, noting that the chemical

could accumulate in the body. "It is like a ticking time bomb."

In Minimata City, those exposed to the toxic chemical suffered loss of sensation in their hands and feet, difficulties in seeing, hearing and swallowing, and convulsions and death in extreme cases.

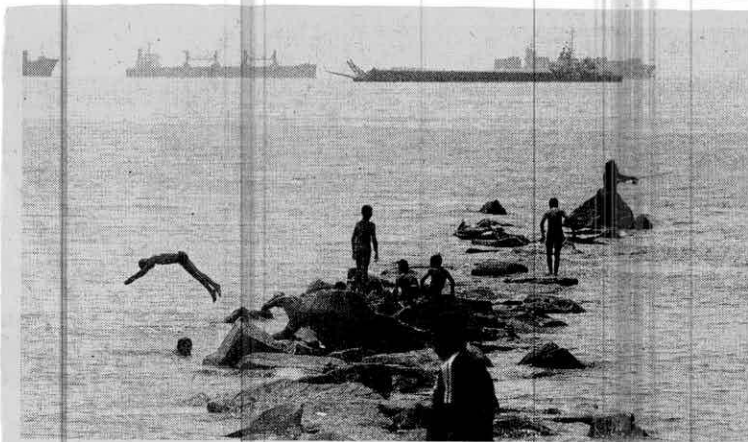
In its inventory done from 2016 to 2017, the report identified primary metal production as the major source of mercury in the country, accounting for over 33,600 kilograms per year.

This was followed by landfills and wastewater treatment and other intentional product or process usage.

In addressing mercury pollution, the report said a comprehensive regulatory framework is needed to address the chemical from its acquisition to its disposal.

At present, the country does not have an established disposal facility for mercury, Farnazo said.

"One of the challenges also is that we do not have a lot of data on this issue," Monroy said, noting also the weak enforcement of existing environmental laws that could help curb mercury use and release. INQ



**TOXIC DIP** A Philippine study on mercury pollution identified Manila Bay, which is currently undergoing a major cleanup, as one of the five bodies of water in Luzon and Mindanao with a high concentration of the toxic metal. —GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE



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# Palace: No slowdown in Manila Bay crackdown

Malacañang will not let up in its crackdown on business establishments in the Manila Bay area that do not comply with environmental laws, presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said yesterday.

*"Hindi naman pupwedeng mag-aantay tayo kung masyadong grabe ang problema ng Manila Bay (It is not for us to wait until the problem of Manila Bay gets worse). After all, if they are non-compliant,*

they are the ones who created the mess themselves," Panelo said.

He was reacting to the call of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) for the government to

observe due process in dealing with business establishments that have not complied with the Building Code, Sanitation Code and related laws.

The PCCI has expressed support for President Duterte's

order to rehabilitate Manila Bay but also asked for more leeway for businesses.

Duterte issued Administrative Order 16 last month, which calls for the rehabilitation and restoration of the

coastal and marine ecosystem of Manila Bay.

The order also created the Manila Bay Task Force to enforce environmental laws and expedite rehabilitation efforts.

— **Christina Mendez**



**PALACE EXPLAINS TO BUSINESSMEN**



**DEFIANT YOUNGSTERS** Boys defy a ban on swimming in Manila Bay, which is being rehabilitated. —GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE

**BAY REHAB CAN'T BE PUT OFF**

**By Julie M. Aurelio**  
@JMAurelioINQ

The rehabilitation of Manila Bay cannot be put off any longer, a Palace official said as a business group called for due process for establishments that fail to comply with environmental laws.

Malacañang instead urged business establishments to follow regulations to avoid closure as the government would continue to implement its seven-year rehabilitation program for Manila Bay.

"We cannot wait any longer if the Manila Bay problem has already worsened," said Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo.

He pointed out that owners of business establishments that were operating in violation of environmental laws had only themselves to blame

if they were ordered closed.

"After all, if they are non-compliant, they are the ones who created the mess themselves," Panelo said.

He made the remarks after the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) appealed to the government to observe due process in dealing with noncompliant companies.

This was after the Department of the Interior and Local Government told local officials of areas within the Manila Bay Watershed Area to revoke the business permits of establishments violating environmental laws.

While it was supportive of the government's rehabilitation plan for Manila Bay, the PCCI said due process should be followed and that businesses should not be arbitrarily closed. INQ



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## REHABILITASYON NG MANILA BAY, SUSUPPORTAHAN NG MALALAKING KOMPANYA

MATAPOS ang mahigit pitong linggo, iniulat ni Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy A. Cimatu na sa pamamagitan ng Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) ay nakapagbigay na ang DENR at LLDA ng 263 Notices of Violations at 119 Cease and Desist Orders sa mga establisimyento sa Metro Manila, Central Luzon at Calabarzon dahil sa mga paglabag sa Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004 at iba pang environmental laws.

Malaki rin ang mai-tutulung sa isinasa-

gawang rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay ang ginawang paglagda ni Ramon Ang ng San Miguel Corp. 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.

Aniya, ilan pang kompanya ang nagpahayag ng kanilang pagsuporta sa rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay at iba pang daluyan ng



## ANG INYONG LINGKOD

DR. HILDA C. ONG

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.

Dagdag pa nito, "My fellow workers in government, Administrative Order No. 16 has

laid down our tasks. We have all been hand-picked to do this job. Let us be brave and courageous enough to accept this colossal challenge of rehabilitating Manila Bay."

Ayon din sa dating military 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," aniya pa.



## Bagong opisina ng LMB, sa QC na

Binuksan na sa publiko ang bagong opisina ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Land Management Bureau (DENR-LMB) sa Quezon City, 10 buwan ang makalipas makaraang matupok ang dating gusali ng ahensiya sa sBinondo, Maynila.

Kinumpirma ni LMB Director Emelyne Talabis na balik-serbisyo na sila at inabisuhan ang publiko na maaari na silang magtungo sa bagong tanggapan ng ahensiya sa Estuar Building, Quezon Avenue.

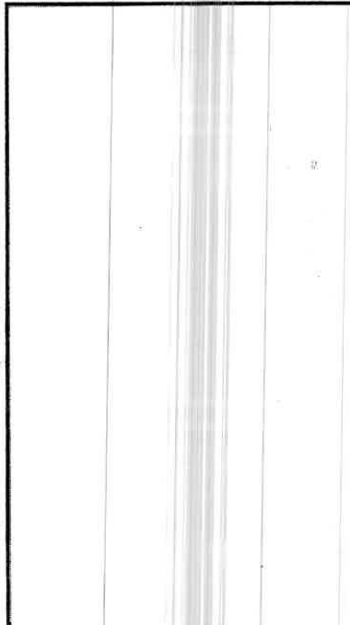
"We are now ready to process land applications, survey and dispose alienable and disposable lands in our new home," sabi ni Talabis.

Mag-oopisina sa bago nilang gusali ang Office of the Director at Assistant Director, lahat ng Bureau Divisions, kabilang na ang Records and Knowledge Management, Geodetic Surveys, Legal, Land Policy and Planning, at Land Management.

Ookupa rin sa lugar ang Center for Land Administration and Management, gayundin ang Bids and Awards Committee at Administrative Support

Staff ng LMB.

**Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz**







### **Estero de Magdalena muling nilinis ng PRRC**

Muling pinangunahan kahapon ng Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) ang malawakang paglilinis at clearing operations sa Estero de Magdalena, dahil sa walang pakundangang pagtatapon ng basura ng mga residente sa mga barangay na dinadaluyan ng nasabing estero.

Magugunita na kamakailan lang ay nakatuon ang atensiyon ng PRRC sa paglilinis ng Estero de Magdalena gayundin ang relokasyon, clean-up operations at public information campaigns sanhi ng nakaalarmang dami ng basurang bumabara sa estero.

Mula Nobyembre 2015 hanggang Hulyo 3 2018, naihatag ng PRRC sa 1,049 informal settler families (ISFs) mula sa target na 2,015 sa iba't ibang relocation sites sa Bulacan at Cavite upang masimulan na ang konstruksiyon ng P17-milyong Estero de Magdalena linear park development.

Ngunit hindi pa rin ito pinangalagaan ng mga pamilyang nakatira malapit sa estero dahil sa ulat na may nagsipagtuayang kabahayan muli sa Estero de Magdalena kaya nagbabala na si PRRC Executive Director Jose Antonio "Ka Pepeton" E. Goitia sa mga barangay officials at local government units.

Nakipag-ugnayan na rin ang PRRC sa iba't ibang ahensiya upang magsagawa ng joint inter-agency massive clean-up drives para mapaunlad ang kalidad ng ilog habang dumadaan sa rehabilitasyon ang tabing ilog nito.



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

**ESTERO DE MAGDALENA,  
TINUTUKAN NA NAMAN NG PRRC**

MULING pinangunahan ng Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) ang malawakang paglilinis at clearing operations sa Estero de Magdalena sanhi nang walang pakundangang pagtatapon ng basura ng mga residente sa mga barangay na dinadaluyan ng nasabing estero nitong Huwebes.

Kamakailan lamang, nakatuon ang atensiyon ng PRRC sa paglilinis ng Estero de Magdalena gayundin ang reloksyon, clean-up operations at public information campaigns sanhi ng nakaalarmang dami ng basurang bumabara sa estero. Mula Nobyembre 2015 hanggang Hulyo 3 2018, naihatag ng PRRC sa 1,049 informal settler families (ISFs) mula sa target na 2,015 sa iba't ibang relocation sites sa Bulacan at Cavite upang masimulan na ang konstruksiyon ng P17-milyong Estero de Magdalena

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"This morning I ordered all efforts of PRRC to be concentrated again in Estero de Magdalena. Please, kung 'di kaya hayaan na lang kami ang gumawa ng paglilinis at relocation. To all the LGU's responsible we will file all the cases against you. Puro kayo pangako sa conference," sabi ni Goitia.

Nakipag-ugnayan na rin ang PRRC sa iba't ibang ahen-siya upang magsagawa ng joint inter-agency massive clean-up drives para mapaunlad ang kalidad ng ilog ha-

bang dumadaan sa rehabilitasyon ang tabing ilog nito.

Dagdag pa rin ang slope protection sa estero na sinimulan na bilang bahagi ng linear park development.

Gayunman, tumanggap pa rin ang PRRC na patuloy sa pagdami ang basura sa Estero de Magdalena sa harap ng ibayo nilang regular na paglilinis at clean-up operation.

"To our brothers in the MMDA, DENR, DPWH and DILG, we need your support. Let's clean this estero again. Nilinis na natin ito, e. Pinabayaan, e. Mga Chairman, makisama naman kayo at hindi puro sa gobyerno n'yo iaasa katamaman n'yo. Puro kayo ngakngak," galit na sinabi ni Goitia.

Iginiit pa ni Goitia na tungkulin at responsibilidad ng mga barangay official ang tamang solid waste management sa kanilang mga barangay na pinamumunuan.



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Dagdag pa rito ang slope protection sa estero na sinimulan na bilang bahagi ng linear park development.

Gayunman, inamin ng PRRC na patuloy sa pagdami ang basura sa Estero de Magdalena sa harap ng ibayo nilang regular na paglilinis at clean-up operation.

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Para matugunan ang krisis sa tubig

# SUMAG RIVER PROJECT PINATATAPOS

**I**MINUNGKAHI ni House Minority Leader Danilo Suarez na tapusin na ang Sumag River Diversion Project para maibsan ang problema sa krisis sa tubig.

Ang Sumag River Diversion Project ang magsusuplay ng tubig sa Umiray River papuntang Angat reservoir para magtuloy-tuloy ang suplay ng tubig ng Maynilad at Manila Water.

Natigil lamang ang pagtatayo ng proyekto sa Quezon bunsod ng nangyaring aksidente noong 2016 kung saan anim ang nasawi.

Sakaling ituloy ngayon ang konstruksiyon ng diversion tunnel ay inaasahang matatapos ito bago matapos ang 2019.

Ipinaabot na rin ni Suarez kay House Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ang kanyang mungkahing

alisin ang suspensiyon sa pagtatayo sa Sumag River project.

Inirekomenda rin ng kongresista ang Kanan River Bulk Water na isinusulong ng Energy World Corporation para makapagbigay ng long-term solutions sa kakapusan ng suplay sa tubig na mas 'beneficial', aniya, kumpara sa Kaliwa Dam na popondohan mula sa utang sa China.

**CONDE BATAC**



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## editorial

# The plastic pollution problem

**I**T is unfortunate that protecting the environment is clouded with much in the way of political agendas and fear mongering. It is often difficult to separate the hype from the reality of the problems. Further, the attitude of many of the environmental groups is: "We are right, end of discussion".

However, none of us can deny the fact that "plastic pollution" is a growing concern that is going to require that we change our habits and attitudes. Every plastic bag that winds up in the ocean, on our streets, or clogging our waterways ultimately comes down to one person and one plastic bag.

Cities that have banned plastic grocery bags are trying to do their part to change our behavior, and sometimes it is inconvenient to change.

In the United States, it was not until the 1960s that people were brought into the light about road littering. Fines were introduced for throwing waste out of cars and the laws were enforced. Eventually the public's mindset changed, and littering became socially unacceptable. Social guilt about littering became common.

US President Dwight Eisenhower once said that the government could legislate behavior but that it could not legislate attitude. But over time, a different and better attitude eventually kicks in. Right now, our attitude is that pollution is someone else's problem, and that needs to change.

Plastic pollution is a monumental problem not only because of the amount of waste but also the variety of throwaway plastic products many of which we do not even think about. Because it is not a problem that can be solved immediately or totally, we have to break it down into pieces and take one step at a time. When we are told that we need to bag plastic bags, plastic drinking straws, and plastic sachets of products that lower economic classes depend upon, it does not—or maybe is not—look feasible all at once.

Obviously we need to expand on severely limiting the use of plastic grocery bags. These bags are big business and are an integral part of our retail businesses from supermarkets to *sari-sari* stores. There is also some hypocrisy when a supermarket on one side of the street in another city cannot use plastic bags while the one across the street in another city is free to use whatever it wants. There has to be some sort of national coordination of the laws as much as we also disagree often with "imperial Manila."

Further, local and the national government must be proactive in helping businesses cope with changes in the law.

Under Republic Act 9003, or the Solid Waste Management Act, local governments are tasked with solid waste management in their respective areas. That is unrealistic given the huge differences in LGU funding, population, location and the economic status of its citizens.

When an environmental group says that there is the need to pass on the burden to manufacturers, that shows ignorance of how the real world works. Manufacturers provide single-use sachets of coffee, for example, because that is only what many people can afford.

There needs to be a separate national level task force, which would include all stakeholders to formulate a long-term plan. But initially, solving the plastic pollution problems starts with each one of us.



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Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
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## Govt eyes new water agencies to solve crisis

AS a long-term solution to the water crisis that hit the country this month, the government is drafting two bills that will create separate water bodies, a Palace official said on Thursday.

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles, in a statement, said department secretaries, agency heads and representatives drafted

a bill creating a body focused on economic and financial regulation and another responsible for policy formulation and resource regulation.

Nograles added that two draft bills were also endorsed for approval and submission to the Legislative Executive Development Advisory

► **CrisisA2**

Council — bills that would create two separate bodies involving water.

The first bill, he said, would "act as the apex body for the water resources sector."

"This agency will consolidate and reconcile water-related policy, planning and programming mandates of the different agencies involved in water resource management. It will likewise ensure the efficient allocation of water resources across sectors," Nograles added.

On the other hand, the second body will be an independent and quasi-judicial body for water supply and sanitation.

"The office will ensure quality performance of water concessionaires and ensure transparency and predictability in economic regulation of water service providers," Nograles said.

The draft bills came after the government submitted a draft Executive Order reconstituting the National Water Resources Board (NWRB), which will be responsible for policy, direction-setting and integration of all government efforts pertaining to water, under the supervision of the Office of the President.

Nograles said the draft bills were floated during a high-level inter-agency meeting on water security at the Department of National Defense (DND) in Quezon City.

The inter-agency group, headed by the DND, involves at least 30 agencies.

Some of its members are the National Economic and Development Authority, and the departments of Agriculture, Energy, Environment and Natural Resources, Health, Public Works and Highways and Science and Technology, National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, Local Water Utilities Administration, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) and NWRB.

### Water department

The private sector also raised the need for a Department of Water to "harmonize" water management and ensure ample supply.

At the National Water Summit also on Thursday, experts said creating a water department as well as a water regulatory commission would clarify the infrastructure and accountability for water resource management and provide a more efficient and effective governance in the sector.

"The Department of Water aims to serve as the apex body for all water-related functions. It will harmonize and converge relevant policies and even strategies to develop, conserve and use water resources in this country," said Dr. William Dar, former Agriculture secretary.

Former Environment secretary Elisea Gozun said the creation of an apex body for water was proposed in 1997 when the country was hit by a severe El Niño. She noted that the draft bill was prepared for the creation of Water Resources Authority of the Philippines and was filed in 1998. But the measure gathered dust in Congress.

### Waive billing

Meanwhile, the MWSS urged Manila Water Co. Inc. not to charge its customers who were hit by service interruptions.

"If possible, waive or defer the billing to protect customers with consumption of less than 10 cu.m. (cubic meters) since they usually belong to the low-income category," MWSS chief regulator Patrick Lester Ty told reporters also on Thursday.

**RALPH U. VILLANUEVA,  
EIRENE JAIREE GOMEZ  
AND JORDEENE B. LAGARE**



## Palace seeks 2 water agencies

By Vito Barcelo, Maricel V. Cruz, Macon Ramos-Araneta and Rio N. Araja

THE Duterte administration has proposed the creation of two separate water agencies to solve water crisis in Metro Manila and nearby provinces: one will focus on economic and financial aspects and the other for policy formulation and resource regulation.

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles said two draft bills had been endorsed for approval and submission to the Legislative Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC), bills that would create two separate bodies involving water.

"One of the proposed agencies that will be formed will act as the apex body for the water resources sector. This agency will consolidate and reconcile water-related policy, planning, and

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## Palace...

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programming mandates of the different agencies involved in water resource management. It will likewise ensure the efficient allocation of water resources across sectors," Nograles said.

"The second body will be an independent and quasi-judicial body for water supply and sanitation. The office will ensure quality performance of water concessionaires and ensure transparency and predictability in economic regulation of water service providers," he said.

He said that there are currently 30 or so agencies involved in water resources management but the water problem could not be resolved.

"For example, there are four agencies involved in resource assessment, four involved in policy, seven in water supply, four in sanitation, five in water quality management, and six in watershed management," the Palace official said.

"And yet, there is no single repository of water data, and no regularly updated water availability data. This is an untenable situation," he said.

Nograles also cited short-term measures that would be undertaken to address the water supply problems in Metro Manila by the standby deep wells designated for use during natural disasters.

"There are a total of 109 of these wells in NCR, and the National Water Resources Board will work with the MWSS to identify which wells can be tapped, and to ensure that water quality in these wells is evaluated and constantly monitored," Nograles said.

"There is a need for a government-led policy for the sustainable optimization of water resources. For instance, the water run-off used by hydro power plants to move their turbines," he said.

"What's absurd is that the households near and along those rivers, they don't have water for domestic use. Aside from households, we should find a way to make use of run-off water from hydro power plants to water farms and industries," he added.

In related developments:

\* House Minority Bloc Leader and Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez has offered several water sources in his province to help ease the shortage in Metro Manila.

At a congressional hearing, the construction of at least one was reported to have been started but work was suspended due to an accident the resulted in the death of six workers.

Suarez said the Sumag River Diversion Project shall supplement the water from Umiray River going to the Angat Reservoir, which shall increase the supply to the Maynilad Water Services and the Manila Water Co.



## Executive branch eyes creation of 2 water agencies

By BERNADETTE D. NICOLAS  
@BNicolasBM

**T**HE Executive branch is targeting to set up two separate agencies that will regulate the Philippine water sector following the supply crisis that hounded

residents and business establishments in Metro Manila and nearby areas in recent days.

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles said on Thursday that several departments have already agreed to endorse for approval and submission to the Legislative-Executive

Development Advisory Council of two draft bills, which will create an agency focused on economic and financial regulation, and another which would be responsible for policy formulation and resource regulation.

"One of the proposed agencies that

will be formed will act as the apex body for the water-resources sector. This agency will consolidate and reconcile water-related policy, planning and programming mandates of the different agencies involved in water-resource management. It will likewise ensure the efficient allocation of water resources across sectors," Nograles said in a statement.

He added the second body will be an independent and quasi-judicial body for water supply and sanitation. The office will ensure quality performance of water concessionaires and ensure transparency and predictability in economic regulation of water-service providers.

Moreover, agencies have also agreed during the high-level inter-agency meeting last Wednesday that the national government should spearhead efforts to optimize water resources, which are expected to become more limited with the onset of El Niño.

"There is a need for a government-led policy for the sustainable optimization of water resources. For instance, the water run-off used by hydropower plants to move their turbines, we are just throwing it to the river," he said.

"What's absurd is that the households near and along those rivers, they have no water for domestic use. Aside from households, we should find a way to make use of run-off water from hydro power plants to water farms and industries," Nograles added.

As for the short-term measures, Nograles assured the public that the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) will be activating standby wells designated for use during natural disasters.

"There are a total of 109 of these wells in National Capital Region, and the NWRB will work with the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System [MWSS] to identify which wells can be tapped, and to ensure that water quality in these wells is evaluated and constantly monitored," he said.

He also said a draft executive order (EO) strengthening the NWRB and addressing the fragmented water sector is now being crafted.

The Cabinet official earlier noted that one of the provisions of the proposed EO will include the reconstitution of the NWRB under the Office of the President to 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.

"Currently there are 30 or so agencies involved in water resources management. There are four agencies involved in resource assessment, four involved in policy, seven in water supply, four in sanitation, five in water quality management, and six in watershed

management," he said.

"There is no single repository of water data, and no regularly updated water availability data. This is an untenable situation," Nograles said.

On Tuesday night, President Duterte threatened to fire officials of MWSS and terminate the government's contracts with private water concessionaires Maynilad and Manila Water over the water crisis.

The President has also ordered officials to submit a report on the water shortage before April 7, after which the President will decide "whether heads will roll" or "whether the contracts will be terminated."





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## WATER SUMMIT.

Photo shows (from left) Elisea Gozon former Department of Environment and Natural Resources secretary; Ramon Alikpala Cluster B Expert; Roderick M. Planta, assistant secretary for Infrastructure staff, Dr. Sevillo D. David Jr., executive director of NWRB who attended a press conference for the National Water Summit held at NOVOTEL in Araneta Center in Cubao, Quezon City.  
**Manny Palmero**



  
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# FOI invoked on Kaliwa Dam deal

By CECILLE SUERTE FELIPE

Several groups are pressing the government to make public the contract it has entered into with China on the Kaliwa Dam project.

Human rights lawyer and opposition senatorial candidate Chel Diokno yesterday said groups opposing the Kaliwa Dam project have sent the government several letters requesting access to official documents related to the project, invoking the Freedom of Information (FOI) law.

Diokno, who serves as lead counsel of the groups, warned that the government faces legal action if it fails to comply.

He said they sent the FOI letters of request to Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea and Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Diokno said they are specifically asking the two officials to produce the documents: Preferential Buyer's Credit Loan Agreement on the New Centennial Water Source-Kaliwa Dam Project between the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System and the Export-Import Bank of China, and the Commercial Contract of the New Centennial Water Source-Kaliwa Dam

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Project between the MWSS and China Energy Engineering Corporation.

Diokno stressed the agreement surrounding the Kaliwa Dam is a matter of public concern, emphasizing that Filipinos have a constitutional right to know the terms of the deal.

"We are also concerned that these contracts may contain onerous provisions that are against the interest of Filipinos," Diokno added. "We will not know unless the deal is made public and the documents are shown."

Diokno also reiterated questions regarding the government's preference for a Chinese partner for the project, given that a proposal made by a Japanese firm has been shown to have more favorable terms.

He explained the access to documents regarding the deal with China should help the public evaluate other proposals.

The FOI letter to Medialdea and Locsin was signed by Apolinar Derilo of Task Force Sierra Madre for Balance Ecology; Fr. Peter Montalliana of the Save Sierra Madre Network Alliance; Conrado Vargas of Prelature of Infanta-Community Organization of the Philippines; Marcelino Tena of Samahan ng mga Katutubong Agta/Dumagat-Remontado na Binabaka at Ipinagtatanggal ang Lupang Ninuno; Bishop Bernardino Cortez of the Prelature of Infanta; Oscar Catilo of the PAMB-Presidential Proclamation 1636 and Sandiwaan Laban sa Kaliwa Dam Coordinating Group, and Demosthenes Raynera of the Tribal Center for Development.

## The project

Malacañang is leaving it to Medialdea to respond to the request of Diokno and other critics of the project. "They should formally request for that... I will leave it to the Executive Secretary since the letter is addressed to him. I will not preempt his response," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said.

The proposal to build the Kaliwa Dam in Infanta, Quezon as another source of water was raised during the previous administrations.

Under the deal, the dam will be funded through official development assistance from China and will be built by China Energy Engineering Corp.

But environment groups and local officials are opposed to the construction of the dam, saying it would cause floods, displace residents and destroy Sierra Madre's biodiversity.

Panelo earlier said the administration could stop the Kaliwa Dam project if it is fraught with anomalies.

"It will push through until perhaps anomalies are discovered," he said.

"Of course, the President can stop anything, unless there is a contract already. There might be impairment of obligations in the contract. But it can be (stopped) if there was fraud in entering it," he added.

Panelo, also presidential chief legal counsel, said the

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project would be implemented "unless it's stopped by the President." He said it would be up to Duterte to decide whether to reevaluate the deal with China.

"We will leave it to his judgment call. But if you ask me personally, if the advantage is so clear, if it is true that the Chinese proposal is onerous, I think we should look into it," Panelo added.

Panelo said he would ask the National Economic and Development Authority why it preferred the Chinese deal over the proposal by Japanese firm Global Utility Development Corp. The Japanese expressed readiness to build the Kaliwa Dam under a 25-year build-operate-transfer scheme. Its proposal costs about \$410 million.

"We are entitled to know," Diokno said.

"We believe that is a matter of public interest, we should know its terms and conditions so we can also compare with the other proposals, and ensure that damage to the environment is avoided or minimized to the greatest extent, as well as that there are no onerous provisions contained in the agreements," he said.

Diokno said by operation of law, Medialdea and Locsin have 15 days to comply with the request, otherwise, "we will take the necessary legal action, court action, to compel them to do so."

### Water agency

The Kaliwa Dam project came to light following the water crisis affecting Metro Manila and Rizal that Malacañang had blamed on mismanagement.

President Duterte has threatened to terminate the concession agreements of Manila Water and Maynilad for failure to provide sufficient water supply to millions of Metro Manila residents.

Duterte ordered the top officials of the two concessionaires and water regulators, including the MWSS, to come up with solutions to prevent another water shortage.

The water officials mentioned facilities such as Kaliwa Dam as additional water sources.

Currently, the main source of Metro Manila's potable water is Angat Dam in Bulacan.

Malacañang is also proposing to consolidate the operations of at least 30 government agencies involved in water-related services all over the country in a bid to prevent the recurrence of a water crisis in the future.

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles said concerned agencies have agreed to submit to the President a draft executive order strengthening the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) and addressing the fragmentation of the water sector.

"Currently there are 30 or so agencies involved in water resources management. The agencies present at the meeting recognize that this institutional setup is problematic," he said.

- With Christina Mendez, Alexis Romero, Delon Porcalla, Ghio Ong



# Palace mum on request for Kaliwa Dam documents

Despite its earlier pronouncement that it is promoting transparency in government, Malacañang has avoided a categorical response to the request of some groups for documents on the China-funded Kaliwa Dam project.

Presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo on Thursday declined to say if the government would grant the freedom of information request made by groups opposed to the dam's construction in Quezon province using loans from China.

"I will leave it to the executive secretary [Salvador Medialdea] since the [groups'] letter is addressed to him. I will not preempt his response," Panelo said at a press briefing.

Earlier this week, Malacañang said it was open to disclosing infrastructure deals with Chinese companies to promote transparency in the bureaucracy.

"Well, why not? That's pursuant to transparency," Panelo said in a previous press briefing about the recent trip of Philippine officials to Beijing to discuss further infrastructure cooperation with China.

Senatorial candidate Chel Diokno, lead counsel of groups opposed to the dam's construction, said the request for access to official documents related to the project was meant to check if there were "onerous provisions" in the agreement with China. —JULIEM. AURELIO INQ



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**CHINESE-FUNDED IRRIGATION PROJECT**

# CORDILLERA WANTS BIGGER WATER SHARE FROM CHICO RIVER DEAL

**By Vincent Cabreza**  
@vincentcabrezaINQ

**BAGUIO CITY**—Saying they were left out of the deal, Cordillera executives this week formed a team to study the Chinese-funded Chico River pump irrigation project and to determine if upland communities can get a bigger share of farm water.

Under the project, rice farms spanning 7,500 hectares in 18 villages in Tuo town and one village in Piat town, both in Cagayan province, will be served by Chico water, according to a project profile for the P4.37-billion irrigation system.

Dubbed the first of government's flagship projects to be financed by China under the "Build, Build, Build" infrastructure program, the Chico pump project will also serve 1,170 ha of farms at Pinukpuk town in Kalinga province.

### Consultation

"Irrigating Cagayan rice fields is very important and we are not objecting to that, but the project appeared to benefit that side of Luzon more than upland communities traversed by Chico River," said Baguio Mayor Mauricio Domogan, chair of the Cordillera Regional Development Council.

The headwaters of the 175-kilometer Chico River come from Mountain Province and empty into the Cagayan Valley.

"We resolved to form the fact-finding team so we can get to the bottom of complaints that host communities were not properly consulted [about the irrigation program]," Domogan told the council meeting on Tuesday in Bontoc, the Mountain Province capital.

He said the council would want to examine the project's environmental compliance certificate, which would have required the contractor, China

CAMC Engineering Co., to secure the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of indigenous peoples (IP) who live near the river.

The FPIC certification is mandated when development projects are undertaken in the IP's ancestral domain.

### IP rights

Chico River was a key element in the crusade for IP rights during martial law. Families from Kalinga and Mountain Province blockaded areas pinpointed as sites for four hydroelectric dams, leading to confrontations with soldiers securing the areas from 1977 to 1979.

Activists opposed to the Marcos dictatorship and Cordillera clans also rallied against the Chico Dam projects.

The Chico irrigation project, however, does not require a dam. Proponents will install six pump units, with a capacity to draw river water at the rate of 3,000 liters per second.

These pumps will transmit water through 43 km of diversion tunnels and about 100 km of lateral canals to be built by the Chinese contractor.

A \$62-billion soft loan secured from China Exim Bank for the project had been criticized by oppositors for its high interest rates, compared to loan packages offered by other countries.

The government insisted that the deal was properly vetted.

When completed in 2023, the project would make available farm water for 4,350 families that would generate 87,000 metric tons of crops and "incremental crop income" of P93,026 per hectare a year.

"If Cagayan would indeed reap more benefits from the project, then provisions must be set in place so communities where the water comes from would be compensated," Domogan said. INQ



# Cebu firm offers water-purification technology to help address Metro Manila water-supply woes

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

[@jonlmayuga](#)

**A** CEBU-BASED firm is pushing for the application of desalination and reversed osmosis to help address the perennial water-supply shortage besetting Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

Mactan Rock Industries Inc., a manufacturer of water-treatment chemicals and equipment, is offering its water-treatment technology to industrial and commercial establishments, to extract and purify raw water from the heavily polluted Manila Bay, or rivers like Pasig River and Marikina River.

The company was among the exhibitors that showcased their products and technologies during the Water Philippines 2019 Exhibition happening from March 20 to 22 at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City.

Antonio Tompar, CEO of Mactan Rock, told the BUSINESSMIRROR that desalination or reversed osmosis, basically a process to make saline or brackish water fresh and drinkable, is a viable solution to Metro Manila's perennial water-supply problem.

The desalination technology, particularly reversed osmosis

which the company specializes in, is already "ripe" especially for a commercial and industrial area like Manila Bay.

He said availing the technology, because of the need to install desalination equipment and use of chemicals, would entail some costs. However, compared to decades ago when the technology providers and equipment are limited, desalination is much cheaper and affordable today.

"It's like the calculator. When I was in college, it costs P1,500. Now, it is cheaper," he said.

"We already have reversed osmosis in the Philippines. We already have 36 desalination plants all over the country. We have in Davao, Aparri, but mostly in Mactan, Cebu. We also have three in Metro Manila," he said.

"In the Manila Bay area, like in Mall of Asia, all those big hotels, we can supply them directly," he said.

Tompar said going for desalinated water is relatively cheaper than the cost of freshwater coming from Angat Dam because the water companies charge consumers for the cost of water treatment and distribution.

"We charge only less than P80 per cubic meter [cu m]. The usual is

more than a P100 per cu m," he said, adding desalinated or purified water from the river is much cheaper. Water extracted from rivers, he said, can supply villages near the river.

About 96 percent of raw water supply for Metro Manila and nearby provinces like Bulacan, Cavite and Rizal come from Angat dam. Because of the increased population and expansion of service areas, the demand for water over the years had outgrown the current maximum water allocation of 4,000 million liters per day (MLD).

The water demand for the East Zone of Metro Manila, which has 6.8 million water consumers and customers serviced by Manila Water Co. Inc. spiked to as many as 1,740 MLD in February this year, exceeding the 40-percent share or 1,600 MLD it gets from the total water allocation from Angat, resulting in severe water-service interruption that affected about 1.2 million customers.

Manila Water started operating its water-treatment plant in Cardona, Rizal, on March 14, extracting raw water from Laguna de Bay. The company uses reversed osmosis to purify the water it now distributes to its customers to augment the water allocation it receives from Angat dam.



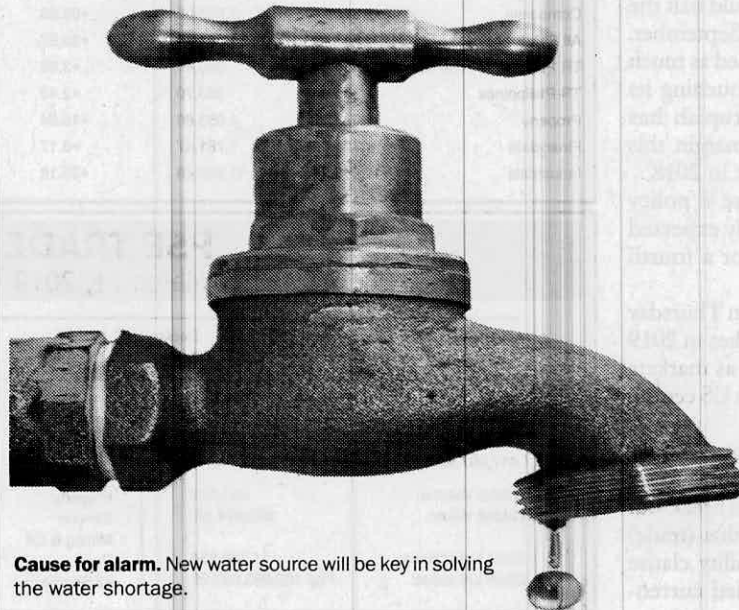
# PCCI says water crisis to hurt competitiveness

THE Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) called for the development of new sources of water as a long-term solution to the shortage saying stop-gap measures would not be sufficient.

The group has expressed concern over the water shortage experienced in Metro Manila which is "not only hurting consumers but could also affect the country's competitiveness standing, particularly investors' interest because water is an important input to industry."

"The shortage we are experiencing now is obviously a cause for alarm," said Alegria Sibal Limjoco, president of PCCI

"We are already seeing that the demand for clean water has



**Cause for alarm.** New water source will be key in solving the water shortage.

exceeded the rate of replenishment from existing sources. And unless we develop other sources while slowing down our demand for water, we are faced with dire consequences that could have negative impact on our goals to achieve industrialization and economic transformation," Limjoco said.

PCCI said stop-gap initiatives should be complemented by long-term measures that will effectively and efficiently manage and utilize the country's water resources.

"If no measures are taken to address the current supply shortage, the water crisis experienced now could become a normal occurrence in the future," Limjoco added.



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## Dept. vs water crisis, kailangan – Tolentino

Binigyang-diin ni Atty. Francis Tolentino na kailangan nang magkaroon ng isang kawanihan na mangangasiwa sa tubig, bilang pangmatagalang solusyon sa krisis na nararanasan ngayon ng bansa.

"Pangmatagalang solusyon po ang pagkakaroon ng Department

of Water Resources Management na kinakailangang maisabatas sa lalong madaling panahon," ani Tolentino.

"Ang isyu ng climate change na siyang ugat ng El Niño at ng iba pang matitinding kalamidad ay hindi na ma-re-reverse, subalit maaaring mabawasan ang epekto

nito lalong-lalo na sa kalusugan at kabuhayan ng mga tao. Dapat lang na maging mabilis ang aksyon ng pamahalaan sa mga pagkakatong ito."

Iminungkahi rin ni Tolentino ang cloud seeding upang makatulong sa pagpapadami ng tubig sa mga dam.



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# RICH PAY LESS, POOR PAY MORE FOR SAME WATER QUALITY—UN

By **Ronnel W. Domingo**  
@RonWDomingoINQ

Billions of people worldwide still lack access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation facilities, a basic human right, no thanks to social exclusion and inequality, according to the United Nations.

In the World Water Development Report 2019 released prior to Friday's observance of World Water Day, the UN said that if exclusion and inequality were not dealt with, efforts to provide water and sanitation would fail to reach those most in need.

It said people were being left behind for reasons related to issues like gender, ethnicity, culture and socioeconomic status.

"Exclusion, discrimination, entrenched power asymmetries, poverty and material inequalities are among the main obstacles to fulfilling the human rights to water and sanitation and achieving the water-related goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development."

"While the wealthy generally receive high levels of service at low prices, the poor often pay a much higher price for services of similar, or lesser quality," said Stefan Uhlenbrook, coordinator of the World Water Assessment Program which prepared the report.

## Slum dwellers

"It is insane that often in slum areas, people have to pay

more for a volume of water than people living in better-off neighborhoods," Uhlenbrook said in a statement.

He said slum dwellers were paying as much as 20 percent more for not having piped-in access to water and sanitation and instead depend on water vendors, kiosks and similar alternative sources.

It makes good economic sense to invest in water supply and sanitation in general, and for the vulnerable and disadvantaged in particular, the report said.

"Evidence suggests that the return on investment in water supply and sanitation services can be considerably high, especially when broader macroeconomic benefits are taken into account," it said. "Although the support of the international donor community will remain critical in the developing world, it will remain incumbent upon national governments to dramatically increase investments."

## PH goal: Water for all

In the Philippines, the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) said the country would need investments of about P1 trillion over the next 12 years, to be able to meet the goal of water for all by 2030.

Assistant Neda Secretary Roderick Peralta said the bulk of the package, at P734 billion, would have to be invested over the next four years.

Programs tailored to specific

target groups help ensure that affordable water supply and sanitation services are available to all, the UN said.

"While larger centralized water and sanitation systems provide opportunities for resource-sharing and economies of scale in high-density urban communities, less costly decentralized systems have been shown to be successful in smaller urban settlements," the UN said.

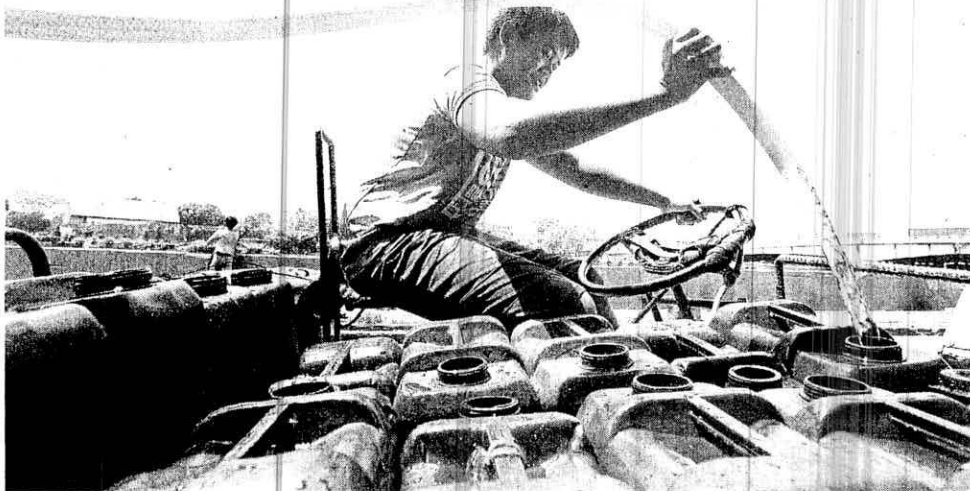
It noted that one of the factors behind the problem was rapid urbanization.

## Sanitation problems

The report also showed that while the Philippines was among the majority of countries worldwide where at least 90 percent of the population enjoyed "basic drinking water services," it was also among the worst-situated minority where less than half of the population have access to "basic sanitation services."

The Philippine situation in terms of water supply and sanitation worsens when natural calamities hit, throwing down more people below the poverty threshold and further limiting their access to water and sanitation services.

An example cited was the aftermath of Super typhoon "Yolanda" (international name: Haiyan) in 2013 when 23.6 percent of the "near poor"—or those living on between \$1.90 and \$3.10 per day—fell into poverty. INQ



**UNEVEN FLOW** Having a steady supply of drinking water remains a luxury in urban poor communities, like the slums of Tondo, Manila. A UN report is calling for bigger investments in water services for consumers who need them most. —**MARIANNE BERMUDEZ**



# World Water Day 2019

## WATER FOR ALL

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UN World Water Development Report:  
Poor pay more for water; good governance  
key to making water more accessible.

By **JUDITH S. JUNTILLA**

**A**midst the ongoing chaos in water delivery services (or lack thereof) in the Philippine capital, the United Nations has released a report assessing the state of water and sanitation around the world. To residents who have been affected by the weeks-long shortage in Metro Manila, the report is an opportunity to give Filipinos the bigger picture: That there are billions of people around the world still living without safe water, and that the situation is far worse for already-marginalized groups like poor women, children, refugees, indigenous peoples and the disabled, who are overlooked and discriminated against, and have no access to clean, safe water.

According to the United Nations World Water Development Report 2019, which was released March 19, days ahead of today's observance of World Water Day, the poor and disadvantaged are often on the losing end of water services. They end up paying more for water, and suffer even more because of the poor quality of service. The report was prepared by the UNESCO for United Nations Water (UN Water), a body which coordinates the efforts of UN entities and international organizations working on water and sanitation issues.

UN Water reports that water use has been increasing worldwide by about 1% per year since the 1980s. The primary drivers have been identified as a combination of population growth, socio-economic development, and changing consumption patterns. The demand is expected to rise as the need for water continues to grow and the effects of climate change intensify.

Things taken for granted by those who have always had access to clean, safe water—better health, savings in time and money, dignity, improved access to food and energy, and greater opportunities in terms of education, employment and livelihood—are an aspiration for most people around the world, majority of whom stand to benefit most from improved access to water and sanitation.

“The vulnerable and disadvantaged, who are typically not connected to piped systems, suffer disproportionately from inadequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation services and often pay more for their water supply services than their connected counterparts,” the report said. Experts estimate that slum dwellers often depend on water vendors or other sources for water, and pay up to 10 to 20 percent more for not having piped-in access to water.

This is even worse when it comes to sanitation because the poor often live in areas where they are not part of any formal system, whether because their housing arrangements are part of the informal economy, have no physical address, or are not even part of the taxation system. Traditional arrangements in the provision of sanitation services in urban areas tend to favor large-scale, centralized systems that allow for economies of scale. Water, coupled with sanitation and hygiene, are key public health issues in sustainable development.

The report also stressed the role of good governance in ensuring the availability for water for all, especially the marginalized.

“Government alone cannot always take on the full responsibility for ‘providing’ water supply and sanitation

services to all citizens, especially in low-income settings,” the report said. “When governments’ role is geared towards policy setting and regulation, the actual provision of services is carried out by non-state actors or independent departments.” Accountability will go a long way, it further said, toward making sure the involved institutions are able to fulfill their mandates.

Furthermore, it stressed that good governance involves measures and mechanisms that promote effective policy implementation along with sanctions against poor performance, illegal acts and abuses of power. “Holding decision-makers accountable requires ability, willingness and preparedness among rights-holders to scrutinize actions and non-actions. This in turn builds on transparency, integrity and access to information,” the report said.

It observes that expenditure on providing drinking water and sanitation typically includes large capital investments, on top of recurring expenses on operation and maintenance. In order to increase affordability, it recommends lowering the cost of service through technological innovation and dissemination, the enhancement of management through good governance, and increased transparency, and the implementation of cost-effective interventions.

In the case of agriculture, the report observed that water infrastructure remains sparse in rural areas, where more than 80% of all farms in the world are smaller than two hectares. Yet these small farms constitute the backbone of national food supplies and contribute more than half of the agricultural production in many countries. Equal access to water for agricultural production, it concluded, can spell the



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difference between farmers merely surviving or being able to make a living from agriculture.

The report also tackled the issue of refugees, who are often faced with barriers to access to basic water supply and sanitation services. The mass displacement of people puts a strain on water resources—including sanitation and hygiene—at transition and destination points, affecting the policies of host governments who may be forced to refuse to accept refugees should the situation become protracted.

Clean water and sanitation is number 6 among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, alongside eliminating poverty and

hunger, providing good health, quality education and gender equality, among other goals.

The United Nations World Water Development Report 2019 is coordinated by the World Water Assessment Programme, and is a joint effort of the UN agencies and entities which make up UN Water, working in partnership with governments, international organizations, NGOs, and other stakeholders.

World Water Day is an international event observed by the UN. It has been celebrated globally every year following the UN General Assembly's designation of March 22 as 'World Water Day' in 1993. In 2019, World Water Day has adopted the theme, "Leaving No One Behind".



# Water For All: Leaving no one behind this WWD 2019

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By Peter Paul Duran

**E**VERY March 22nd, the world focuses its attention on the importance of water.

For this year's World Water Day celebrations, the theme, much like the ones that have gone before, delves on the important matters such as the pressing issues on water security and availability.

"Leaving no one behind," says United Nations Water, which coordinates the efforts of UN entities and international organizations working on water and sanitation issues, adapts the central promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that "as sustainable development progresses, everyone must benefit."

Focusing on Sustainable Development Goal 6 which aims to provide water for all by 2030, WWD 2019 certainly taps its overall goal by leaving no one behind this year and a decade to come leading up to their projected goal.

But today, billions of people are still living without safe water, and according to UN Water, households, schools, workplaces, farms and factories still struggle to survive and thrive.

According to the international organization, marginalized groups – women, children, refugees, indigenous peoples, disabled people and many others – are often overlooked, and sometimes face discrimination, as they try to access and manage the safe water they need.

Other factors, such as environmental degradation, climate change, population growth, conflict, forced displacement and migration flows can also disproportionately affect marginalized groups through impacts on water.

This year's activities is about tackling the water crisis by addressing the



World Water Day poster [worldwaterday.org](http://worldwaterday.org)

reasons why so many people are being left behind and what can be done to reach them.

It is our basic human right to water and entitles everyone, without discrimination. It is also everyone's right to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic use; which includes water for drinking, personal sanitation, washing of clothes, food preparation, and personal and household hygiene, according to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Whoever and wherever you may be water is our human right, this underpins public health and, therefore, "critical to sustainable development and a stable and prosperous world."

UN-Water adds that we cannot move forward as a global society while so many people are living without safe water.

So for this year, and the years ahead, let's band together to bring this valuable resource to all individuals regardless of any condition.



STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE

# Manila Standard



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**WWD PHILIPPINES 2019 STAKEHOLDERS' MEETING.** LWUA Administrator Jeci Lapus with proponents from the different public and private entities spearheading the WWD PH 2019 activities during their stakeholder's meeting at the employee's lounge of the LWUA compound in Katipunan, Quezon City, February 28, 2019. **Peter Paul Duran**



# Having heart in service key to Pasig rehab

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By Alyssa Chrizelle Ng Miclat and Peter Paul Duran

**I**N 1999, the Philippine Government, under the administration of President Joseph Ejercito Estrada, created the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission or PRRC Executive Order (EO) No. 54, as amended by EO No. 65.

The PRRC, a convergence of various national agencies, local government units and non-government organizations, aims to rehabilitate the Pasig River into a condition that is able to support and sustain aquatic life and resources as well as conducive for transport, recreation and tourism. Its river rehabilitation and management model includes housing and resettlement, riverbank, transportation and tourism development, flood control, environmental management, and public information and advocacy programs.

From 1999 to 2018, PRRC saved almost 20,000 informal settler families of ISFs (out of the 30,050 target) living along the banks of the river and its tributaries. Many of which were even residing over the estuaries and creeks, and tons of garbage that [had] piled underneath their makeshift houses. Beyond the assistance and new houses, which they can finally own and call home, said families were given new lives consistent with the philosophy of human dignity.

PRRC's river patrol group heads the recovery of easements, which are transformed into environmental preservation areas (EPAs) in the form of linear parks, greenbelts, and walkways that now serve as alternative access roads and avenues for recreation and ecotourism.

To date, the PRRC has established almost 39,000 linear meters of EPAs along the main Pasig River.

Moreover, through the mandate lodged with MMDA, at least 57 pumping stations are being operated in flood-prone areas to minimize solid wastes in waterways, to improve drainage systems, and to improve the discharge of drainage water from tributaries surrounded by

populated areas into the Pasig River.

Other than serving as role models in their communities, PRRC's river warriors conduct daily cleanups in flood-prone areas not yet reached by pumping stations. From 2012 to 2018 alone, PRRC diverted more than 27 million kilograms of solid wastes from the Pasig River and its tributaries after a series of cleanup activities and clearing and resettlement operations.

Given its limited budget and legal mandate, PRRC says it has been doing its best to introduce research-based water quality improvement technologies to bring us closer to the water quality much



desired for the river- Class C level.

Together with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Laguna Lake Development Authority, the PRRC initiated the Pasig River Unified Monitoring System Project to standardize the water quality monitoring and data in different stations along the Pasig River.



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As a continuing advocacy, environmental awareness is imparted to communities through their multimedia information, education, and communication campaigns to encourage the people to be environmentally-responsible and law-abiding citizens. PRRC spearheaded the Pusong Para sa Ilog Pasig (Love for the Pasig River) and Kontra-Esterorismo (a play of word for countering terrorism in the estuaries) campaigns.

### Not in Vain

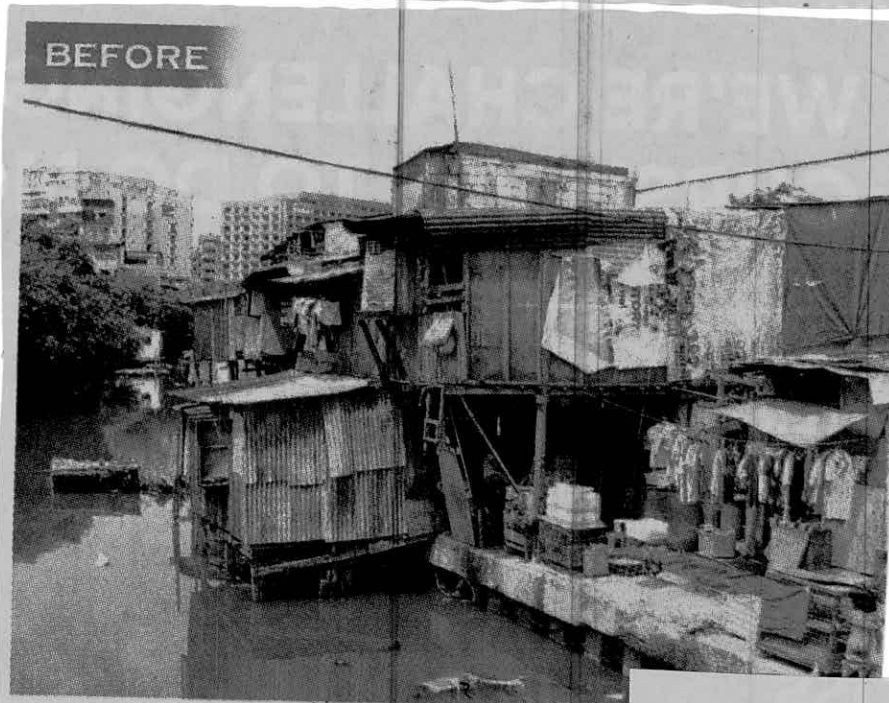
The Pasig River and its 47 tributaries is, indeed, a tedious process, if not an "impossible feat." The recovery, however, of each estuary and creek, coupled with the active participation of the community, will ensure the progressive rehabilitation of the Pasig River system, the agency said, adding that the years of hard work and cooperation among government agencies together with the help from private sectors and households for the past 20 years were not in vain.

In a nutshell, more than a hundred species of fish, birds, trees, and aquatic plants are now seen in the river. People now fish, travel and do exercise along the Pasig River and its tributaries. Last October 16, 2018, the Pasig River, through the leadership of Executive Director Jose Antonio E. Goitia, won the Inaugural Asia River Prize given by the International River Foundation (IRF) followed by China's Yangtze River as the runner-up.

During the announcement, the IRF said the judges were really impressed with the scale of the problem the Pasig River faced and the scale of the response initiated by the PRRC.

Through the 2032 Pasig River Integrated System Master Plan in effect, and with the public's continued support, Executive Director Goitia is confident that we can sustain and improve our rehabilitation efforts so that the Pasig River can outlive us all for the sake of the next generations to come.

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BEFORE

Estero dela Reina, Manila



AFTER



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# Manila Standard



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Photo: COMSEVENTHFLT

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eci Lapus with Manila Standard tackling the issue on groundwater. Peter Paul Duran

By Angelica Mirano

**U**NDER the skyscrapers of Metro Manila is a ground that is slowly and gradually subsiding through the years, this is because of the uncontrollable climate, but most especially, the man-made repercussions brought by the over pumping of groundwater.





This is the phenomenon in which land sinks primarily because water that occupies the ground below is extracted by humans, faster than it is replenished by nature. This is one of the issues that seeks immediate attention in our country, our land subsidence. The ground that we are standing on is now continuously and rapidly sinking.

People might quickly blame global warming and climate change for this. Although true, this is not the only reason to blame. Flooding has many more causes, including those trash or human waste that blocks the floodway, and narrower waterways and the excessive digging for groundwater.

Professor of Earth and Environment Sciences at the University of Illinois in Chicago, Kevin Rodolfo states that global warming and climate change truly causes the sea level to rise but only about 3 millimeter per year. But he also states that one of the major causes for the subsidence of land is the fact that groundwater is overutilized.

This has led to subsidence since the lack of support below ground were decreasing due to excessive extraction of groundwater, which eventually results to flooding in most parts of Metro Manila. Groundwater is used for drinking by about 50 percent of the people in the country.

He pointed out that the big cause of worsening flooding is land subsidence due of so much withdrawal of groundwater. This causes sinking by as much as six inches every year.

Metro Manila was devastated almost ten years back by a rainstorm, dropping more than 40 centimeters of rain over a span of 12 hours, Tropical Storm "Ondoy" has shown how our metro city has sunk over the years, but nature is not the only baddie in this sad story, the rapid and poorly planned urbanization adds up to the problem.

Increasing population in metro cities is likewise suspect as humans slowly altered the city's landscape. Either poor planning or poor implementation of regulations promoted development in flood plains, with many residences, along with their garbage, obstructing key waterways. Many of our canals are still blocked with trash and the floodways are still constricted by structures.

Data from the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority or NAMRIA shows that areas in Metro Manila has sunk anywhere from 27 inches to 53 inches or almost four and a half feet in the span of 30 years, from 1979 to 2009. And is still continuously sinking.

Signs of lands subsiding are also seen in parts of Bulacan, Pampanga, San Pedro and Biñan in Laguna, and in Rosario in Cavite. And in Nueva Vizcaya, 15 municipalities faced severe drought in as short as five years from now because of dwindling groundwater.

In East Asia, the same situation has been observed in Tokyo and Osaka, Shanghai, Hanoi, and Bangkok – also due to the excessive extraction of ground water.

Based on studies, Jakarta is sinking at a rate of 10 inches every year – and that about 40 percent of the metropolis now lies beneath sea level. scientists estimate that almost all of North Jakarta will be below sea level in a few decades.

Addressing the issue, the National Water Resources Board or NWRB strongly recommends that we look for alternative sources of water such as those from rivers and lakes. experts have been pointing loud

and clear that we need to find an alternative source to groundwater

The former Agriculture secretary and now president of Inang Lupa Movement, Mr. William Dar, stated that groundwater availability is now on a low level with severe drought intensity based on a research on a Water Summit in Nueva Vizcaya.

Meanwhile, Administrator of Local Water Utilities Administration, Jeci Lapus, during a talk with **Manila Standard** recently, suggested that an in-depth study should be done for the groundwater to be recharged.

This might be done through developing of water impounding stations purposively for the replenishment of aquifers.

Huge investments is needed for optimum result and a long-term solution plan is likewise required regarding the problem.

Preparations for World Water Day 2019, with the theme "No One Left Behind," gathered more than 30 agencies involving water in a stakeholder's meeting recently.

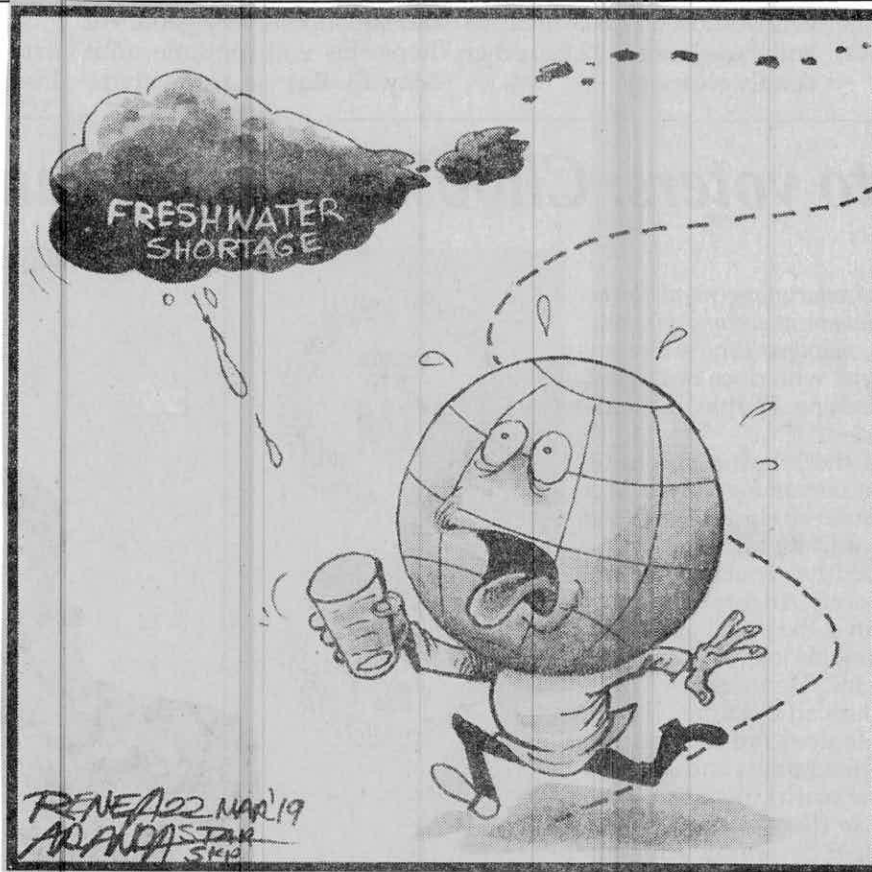
Lapus says they are trying to extend to the farthest household in every water district, stating that everyone deserves to have access to clean water. Through this, the digging for the groundwater will be reduced once clean water from the surface will be available to all, and

the as the administrator points out, this can be done only if there is a single conductor of all water agencies- the reason why the former Tarlac representative has pushed for the creation of the Department of Water.

"It is now up to us to follow suit -- better late than never. That's why I'm using this opportunity to appeal to everyone to seriously consider and take steps toward this direction. Let's not wait for ground subsidence to slowly and steadily creep throughout the country. Let's innovate and embrace a more sustainable source of water for millions of Filipinos now and for generations to come," said Jeci Lapus during his speech at the 40th PAWD National Convention at the SMX Convention Center last February 12.

*The ground that we are standing on is now continuously and rapidly sinking.*

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## 'Leaving no one behind'

The country joins the international community in observing World Water Day today as the east sector of Metro Manila is just emerging from an unprecedented weeklong water shortage.

While the government is blaming the shortage on mismanagement rather than an actual lack of water in the reservoirs used by Metro Manila, the metropolis and the rest of the country are bracing for a longer dry season this year and a mild El Niño. Drought arrived early in certain areas, where farms have dried out from lack of irrigation even before the official start of summer.

Access to safe and clean drinking water has been recognized by the United Nations as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights. The UN stresses that the right to water must be enjoyed by all, without discrimination, but this is not the case. The UN reports that billions of people around

### EDITORIAL

the world still live without safe water in their households,

schools, workplaces, farms and factories. Marginalized groups, including refugees, indigenous peoples, women, children and the differently abled are among those deprived of this right.

For this year's World Water Day, the UN is focusing on the theme of "Leaving no one behind." The theme adapts the core objective of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is to have everyone benefit from the UN development goals, among them the availability and sustainable management of water for all by 2030.

Attaining this goal becomes more challenging because of global warming.

As the recent water crisis in Metro Manila has shown, the Philippines has much work ahead in providing safe water. The crisis is not yet over, and it gives urgency to the need for measures to improve water security for all.



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Manila Standard DIGITAL

WORLD WATER DAY  
2019 Leaving no one behind

# WORLD WATER DAY 2019

## Key Facts

- #1**  
**2.1**  
BILLION  
people living without safe water at home
- #2**  
**1 in 4**  
primary schools have no drinking water service
- #3**  
**700+**  
CHILDREN UNDER 5 die every day from diarrhoea linked to unsafe water
- 80%**  
of the world's population who live in rural areas have to use unsafe and unprotected water
- 8/10**  
women and girls are responsible for water collection in eight out of ten households
- 68.5**  
million people forced to flee their home which face the problem of accessing safe water services

# 159

million people

collect their drinking water from surface water, such as ponds and streams

# 4

million people

experience severe water scarcity during at least one month of the year

# 700

million people

worldwide could be displaced by intense water scarcity by 2030



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UN WATER  
22 MARCH  
WORLD  
WATER DAY

Children enjoy the cool waters of the Daraitan River in Tanay, Rizal yesterday ahead of today's celebration of World Water Day. Residents have expressed concern that Barangay Daraitan in Tanay could be submerged if the Kaliwa Dam is constructed because its elevation is lower than the dam's. MICHAEL VARCAS





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PHILIPPINE DAILY  
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**UNTIL SUPPLY LASTS** A boy frolics in the spray from a fountain at San Lorenzo Ruiz Plaza in Binondo, Manila, on the eve of World Water Day, which advocates sustainable use of freshwater resources.

—EDWIN BACASMAS



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# The Manila Times



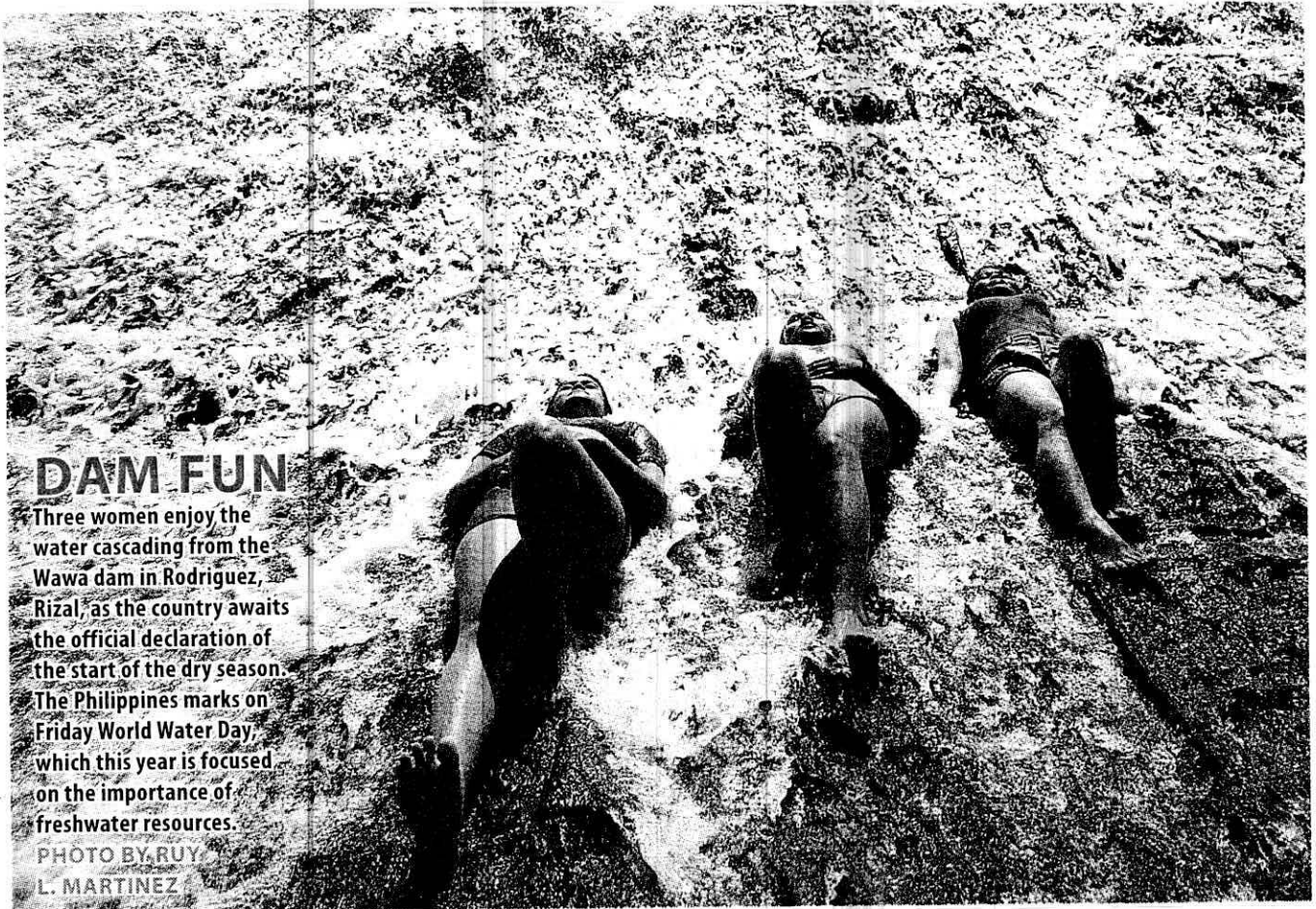
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## DAM FUN

Three women enjoy the water cascading from the Wawa dam in Rodriguez, Rizal, as the country awaits the official declaration of the start of the dry season. The Philippines marks on Friday World Water Day, which this year is focused on the importance of freshwater resources.

PHOTO BY RUY  
L. MARTINEZ





Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

# Balita

ANG NANGUNGUNANG PAMAYAGANG TAGALOG SA BANGSA



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**PARA-PARAAN PARA MAPRESKUHAN** Enjoy sa paliligo si Mark Joemuel Naquita, taga-UP Arboretum sa Quezon City, gamit ang malamig na tubig mula sa tinaguriang "Balon ni Adan", dahil hindi pa rin naibabalik sa normal ang supply ng tubig sa kanilang lugar. Ipinagdiriwang ngayong Biyernes ang World Water Day.  
**KEVIN TRISTAN ESPIRITU**



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# DMCI Mining braces for tough 2019

By IRIS GONZALES

DMCI Mining Corp., the mining arm of Consunji-owned conglomerate DMCI Holdings Inc., is bracing for a tough 2019 with one of its nickel assets still suspended by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

DMCI Mining president Cesar Simbulan Jr. said the company's inventory is nearly depleted.

"We will be shipping mostly lower grade nickel which fetches a lower price in the market. Our inventory is also nearly depleted," he said.

This despite the lifting of

the suspension order on the company's other nickel asset, Berong Nickel Corp. in November last year.

In an order dated Nov. 15, 2018, DENR partially granted Zambales Diversified Metals Corp.'s (ZDMC) motion for reconsideration by modifying its earlier closure order to an order suspending the operations, production and shipment of the company.

In 2018, DMCI Mining shipped 643,000 wet metric tons (WMT) of nickel ore, a 22 percent improvement from 525,000 WMT the prior year.

Average nickel grade of the shipments stood at 1.7 percent,

up 13 percent year-on-year.

This year, the company expects to ship nickel ore with an average grade of 1.57 percent.

DMCI Mining is still working on the reopening of ZDMC.

The DENR earlier said ZDMC could be permitted to operate again once it meets certain conditions, which include continued rehabilitation and reforestation of the mine site as well as management of environmental structures in the area.

ZDMC has since submitted its action plan to address those conditions.

On a standalone basis, DMCI Mining recorded a 93 percent surge in net income to



DMCI MINING  
CORPORATION

P190 million last year.

DMCI Holdings, meanwhile, posted a net income of P14.5 billion last year, two percent lower than the previous year.

Excluding non-recurring income of P38 million in 2018 and one-time loss of P281

million in 2017, core net income of DMCI Holdings actually declined four percent year-on-year to P14.5 billion.

The P38 million non-recurring income is attributable to a P715 million gain on sale of land by DMCI Homes and

P679 million share in accelerated depreciation of Sem-Calaca Power Corp.

In the fourth quarter alone, DMCI Holdings recorded a P3 billion net income, slightly lower the P3.1 billion posted a year ago.





## DMCI Mining expects weaker 2019

DMCI Mining Corporation expects 2019 to be a tough year even after the lifting of the suspension of shipments by subsidiary Berong Nickel Corporation (BNC) in November 2018.

"We will be shipping mostly lower grade nickel which fetches a lower price in the market. Our inventory is also nearly depleted," explained DMCI Mining President Cesar F. Simbulan Jr.

In 2018, DMCI Mining shipped 643 thousand wet metric tons (WMT) of nickel ore, a 22 percent improvement from 525 thousand WMT the prior year.

Average nickel grade of the shipments stood at 1.70 percent, up 13 percent year-on-year from 1.51 percent. This year, the company expects to ship nickel ore with an average grade of 1.57 percent.

DMCI Mining is still working on the reopening of its other nickel asset, Zambales Diversified Metals Corporation (ZDMC).

In an Order dated November 15, 2018, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) partially granted ZDMC's Motion for Reconsideration by modifying its earlier Closure Order to an Order suspending the operations, production and shipment of the company.

The DENR also declared that ZDMC may be permitted to operate again once it meets certain conditions, which include continued rehabilitation and reforestation of the mine site as well as management of environmental structures in the area. (JAL)



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# The Manila Times

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## DMCI Mining aims to ship more nickel ore

DMCI Mining Corp. aims to ship a 24-percent higher volume of nickel ore in 2019, despite expecting the year to be tough.

In a regulatory filing on Thursday, the Consunji-led mining firm said it shipped 643,000 wet metric tons of nickel ore last year, a 22-percent increase from 525,000 WMT in 2017.

DMCI Mining President Cesar Simbulan had told reporters his company targeted to ship 800,000 WMT of nickel ore, while bracing for a more challenging year in light of its diminishing inventory.

"We will be shipping mostly lower grade nickel, which fetches a lower price in the market," Simbulan said in the filing.

Average nickel grade of the shipments stood at 1.70 percent, up 13 percent year-on-year from 1.51 percent.

Meanwhile, the company expects

to ship nickel ore with an average grade of 1.57 percent.

Simbulan said all new shipments would come from its Berong mine in Palawan province, now fully operational, as operations of subsidiary Zambales Diversified Metals Corp. (ZDMC) remained suspended after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources ordered the move in 2016.

Last November, the department partially granted ZDMC's motion for reconsideration by modifying its earlier closure order to suspension.

It also declared that ZDMC might operate again once it met certain conditions. These include the continued rehabilitation and reforestation of the mine site, as well as the management of environmental structures in the area.

Last year, DMCI Mining's net income surged by 93 percent to P190 million from P99 million in 2017.

**ANGELICA BALLESTEROS**



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# DMCI mining unit sees tough year ahead

By VG CABUAG [@villygc](#)

**D**MCI Mining Corp., a unit of publicly listed DMCI Holdings Inc., on Thursday said it sees a tough year ahead even with the lifting of the suspension of one of its nickel assets, Berong Nickel Corp., last November.

"We will be shipping mostly lower-grade nickel, which fetches a lower price in the market. Our

inventory is also nearly depleted," DMCI Mining President Cesar F. Simbulan Jr. said.

Last year, DMCI Mining shipped 643,000 wet metric tons of nickel ore, a 22-percent improvement from the 525,000 WMT it shipped the previous year. Average nickel grade of the shipments stood at 1.7 percent, up 13 percent year-on-year from 1.51 percent. This year, the company expects to ship nickel ore with an average grade of 1.57 percent. DMCI Mining said it is still working on the reopening of its other nickel asset, Zambales Diversified Metals Corp. (ZDMC).

In an order dated November 15, 2018, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) partially granted ZDMC's motion for reconsideration by modifying its earlier closure order to just a suspension order on its operations, production and shipment.

The DENR declared ZDMC may be permitted to operate again once it meets certain conditions, which include continued rehabilitation and reforestation of the mine site, as well as management of environmental structures in the area. DMCI said its unit has since submitted its action plan to address those conditions.

On a stand-alone basis, DMCI Mining recorded a 93-percent surge in net income to P190 million last year from P99 million in 2017.



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## DMCI Mining sees higher nickel exports

DMCI Mining Corp. it looks at shipping about 800,000 wet metric tons (WMT) of nickel ore this year as its Palawan operation gets going.

Cesar Simbulan, DMCI Mining president, said this will "mostly lower grade nickel which fetches a lower price in the market."

"Our inventory is also nearly depleted," said Simbulan, of DMCI Mining's prospects.

In 2018, DMCI Mining shipped 643,000 WMT of nickel ore, up 22 percent from 525,000 the prior year. Average nickel grade of the shipments stood at 1.70 percent, up 13 percent year-on-year from 1.51 percent.

"This year, the company expects to ship nickel ore with an average grade of 1.57 percent," said Simbulan.

DMCI Mining is still working

on the reopening of its other nickel asset, Zambales Diversified Metals Corp. (ZDMC).

In an order dated Nov. 15, 2018, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) partially granted ZDMC's motion for reconsideration by modifying its earlier closure order to an order suspending the operations, production and shipment of the company.

The DENR also declared that ZDMC may be permitted to operate again once it meets certain conditions, which include continued rehabilitation and reforestation of the mine site as well as management of environmental structures in the area. ZDMC has since submitted its action plan to address those conditions.

DMCI Mining closed 2018 with a profit of P190 million, up 93 percent from P99 million in 2017.

PUNCHLINE

# DU30 abolishes Road Board; environmental violators charged



By **FRED M. LOBO**

**P**RESIDENT Duterte has abolished the corruption-tainted Road Board.

No more milking cow for corrupt officials, he said.

\*\*\*

The President finally signed into law Republic Act No. 11239 transferring the rights, assets, and liabilities of the abolished Road Board to the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

Henceforth, motor vehicle user's charge (MVUC) collection will be remitted to the National Treasury.

\*\*\*

Duterte said the abolition of the Road Board was meant to stop corruption in the agency and to streamline government services.

No more Road Board to implement MVUC and questionably manage funds collected from motor vehicle owners, he added.

\*\*\*

Under RA 11239, the DPWH will absorb the employees of the abolished Road Board without diminution of their salaries and other benefits

Employees separated from the service as a result of the abolition will receive separation benefits, Duterte assured.

\*\*\*

"The DPWH shall, by virtue of this act, be subrogated to all the rights

and assume all the obligations and liabilities of the Road Board," the law further provided.

"All records, property, assets, equipment, and funds of the Road Board, including unexpended appropriations or allocations, shall be transferred to the DPWH," it added.

\*\*\*

All funds shall now be remitted to the National Treasury under a special account in the General Fund.

MVUC funds will be earmarked solely for the construction, upgrading, repair and rehabilitation of roads, bridges, and road drainage included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

\*\*\*

The secretaries of the Department of Budget and Management, the DPWH, and the Department of Transportation have been directed to promulgate the implementing rules and regulations of the new law.

Time for wise and efficient use of the MVUC special fund. Same with other government funds.

\*\*\*

The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) ordered 178 local government units (LGU) covered by the Manila Bay Watershed area to revoke the business permits of companies found violating environmental laws.

No more bay polluters, DILG said.

\*\*\*

DILG Secretary Eduardo Año said in a memorandum that all mayors of local government units (LGUs) in the National Capital Region (NCR), Central Luzon, and Calabarzon must ensure that all establishments in their areas are compliant with pertinent provisions of the National Building Code, the Fire Code, the Code on Sanitation, and other related laws and regulations.

Comply or perish, he said.

\*\*\*

DILG Undersecretary Jonathan Malaya said the massive abuse committed on Manila Bay requires the full cooperation of concerned government agencies, LGUs, and the public to fully rehabilitate Manila Bay.

Manila Bay rehab is a tough job to do, he admitted.

\*\*\*

Malaya said that with the Año directive, all LGUs should act with dispatch on the enforcement orders from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA), and other government agencies.

"All LGUs should revoke or cancel permits of establishments found to have committed violations and/or are non-compliant with environmental and other applicable laws," he said.

\*\*\*

"The DENR and LLDA have started the inspection of commercial establishments last January 27,

2019, to ensure their compliance with environmental laws. They have issued Cease and Desist Orders and Notices of Violations to various establishments," Malaya said.

"All concerned LGUs should immediately act on the findings of the DENR and LLDA and revoke or suspend the business permits they have issued, as may be applicable," Malaya stressed.

\*\*\*

"The Supreme Court has ruled that a business permit is subject to the regula-

tion of the state and may therefore be revoked or withdrawn if there is cause to do so," he added.

Translation: A business or mayor's permit is not a right, just a privilege.

\*\*\*

Año instructed the DILG regional directors of NCR, Central Luzon, and Calabarzon to report to him LGUs and local chief executives (LCEs) who fail to abide by his directive, plus barangays that do not conduct weekly clean-up drives in their localities.