

03 APR 2019

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Wednesday

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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



Public participation key to success in Manila Bay rehab – DENR

By **ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ**

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) considers public participation as crucial to the success of the rehabilitation of Manila Bay.

“We have been overwhelmed with the support we received from the public for the cleanup of Manila Bay tributaries. Indeed, nothing is impossible if we all work together,” DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu said.

Based on the initial report of the Manila Bay Rehabilitation Operations Center set up by the DENR, around 16,000 people from 181 barangays in Metro Manila participated in the simultaneous cleanup activities along esteros and rivers that drain into the Manila Bay last Sunday.

The report added that more than 70 tons of solid waste was collected from the waterways and rivers during the cleanup.

“Volunteerism is the most important part of the Battle for Manila Bay,” Cimatu said, noting that the tributaries account for the bulk of pollution load to the bay.

During his visit to the cleanup sites, Cimatu noted that improper disposal of solid waste was the major concern during the cleanup.

Under Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, local government units are primarily responsible for waste segregation and disposal.

Cimatu, however, said the DENR—through its recently created four field offices in the National Capital Region—will

assist Metro Manila localities in implementing RA 9003 to address the problem of solid waste in their waterways.

The cleanup activities were held in 21 impact sites, or those which are heavily polluted, in the river systems of Pasig, Marikina, San Juan, Parañaque, Pateros, Taguig Malabon-Navotas, Tullahan-Tinajeros and Las Piñas- Zapote.



Keep 'esteros' clean, public told

The Maytunas Creek cleanup was among the activities that kicked off the Metro Manila-wide "Battle for Rivers and *Esteros*"

By Elmer N. Manuel

Following the Duterte administration's aggressive bid to clean up Manila Bay and restore its old glory, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) reiterated its call to the public to become environment-conscious by not throwing trash into creeks and rivers to help fast track the cleanup of the bay and its tributaries.

The DENR is one of the government agencies tasked to rehabilitate the historic bay with the world famed sunset and after its recent creek cleanups, the agency once again urged the public to become more responsible in disposing their trash.

The agency had cited the clean-up of the Maytunas Creek in San Juan City's Barangay Addition Hills, saying the San Juan River, a major tributary of the Pasig River, flows into Manila Bay.

Along with the Maytunas Creek, the Ermitaryo, Mariblo, Diliman, Dario and Culiad creeks are among the tributaries of the 10.58 kilometer-long San Juan River, which flows through the cities of Quezon, San Juan, Manila and Mandaluyong.

The Maytunas Creek cleanup was among the activities that kicked off the Metro Manila-wide "Battle for Rivers and *Esteros*" simultaneous cleanup of Manila Bay's tributaries – which also incidentally follows the guidelines of the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDG) of which the *Daily Tribune* is a media partner.

It falls under t Goal 6 of the SDG which aims to

improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.

The rehabilitation of Manila Bay also falls squarely on Goal 14 of the SDG, which also seeks to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution and avoid significant adverse impact, including the strengthening of their resilience, and take action for their restoration to achieve healthy and productive oceans.





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Drive for waterways rehab gets boost

A CAMPAIGN to recover waterways in Metro Manila got a boost on Tuesday after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) signed a memorandum of understanding with the SM Prime Holdings Incorporated for the rehabilitation of the Parañaque River and the Estero de Tripa de Gallina.

The said partnership was made under the DENR's Adopt-A-River Program, where a company takes charge of the cleanliness and maintenance of a certain part of the river. The program was recently considered as a key strategy to fulfill the Supreme Court's continuing mandamus to clean up Manila Bay.

The DENR has also signed partnerships with the city governments of Pasay and Parañaque to fulfill

the rehabilitation of the Parañaque River and the Estero de Tripa de Gallina, both polluted waterways south of Manila.

"With the adoption by SM Prime Holdings Inc. [of the waterways], full coordination and participation will now be put in place so that waters of these adopted waterways will be restored to water quality of Class C level," Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said.

"The full support and assistance received by DENR from the city governments of Pasay and Parañaque will strengthen enforcement of environmental laws and regulations in their respective areas of jurisdictions," he added.

The new partnership aims to lower down the coliform level of the two bodies of water up to 200 mpn (Class C level),

so that it can be used to propagate fish and aquatic resources.

In February, the DENR has also sealed a partnership with the food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp. for the adoption of Tullahan River, one of Manila Bay's major tributaries.

"I must emphasize that we need to clean and rehabilitate Manila bay; but admittedly, the DENR cannot do it alone. Cleaning all the 9 rivers and almost 50 esteros in Metro Manila that drain to Manila Bay is not an easy job," Cimatu said.

The MoU signing was attended by SMPH President Jeffrey Lim, Henry Sy, Jr., Pasay City Mayor Antonio Calixto and Parañaque City Mayor Edwin Olivarez represented by Parañaque City Administrator Gernando Soriano.

EIRENE JAIREE GOMEZ



DENR, SM Prime team up in cleaning Parañaque River

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA @jonlmayuga

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Roy A. Cimatu on Tuesday vowed to make one of the most polluted rivers in Metro Manila healthy once more. He wants its water not just to be swimmable but also clean and green as to allow native fish to thrive for present and future generations.

Briefing reporters on the signing of a memorandum of agreement between the DENR, the local government units (LGUs) of Pasay and Parañaque and SM Prime Holdings, Inc., Cimatu said while Parañaque River is "relatively clean," along with Estero Tripa de Gallina, it remains among the "millionaire rivers" as far as coliform bacteria count is concerned. This, he added, makes it imperative for the government to rehabilitate it to succeed in saving Manila Bay.

At Tripa de Gallina, particularly at the Tramo Bridge in Pasay City in October last year, the coliform level is about 92 million most probable number (MPN) per 100 milliliters.

As of January, it is now down to just 11 MPN per 100 milliliters.

Even the most sturdy fish may not survive in this condition, or if they do, consuming them may be hazardous to humans.

Last month, the DENR signed a MOA with San Miguel Corporation, which is "adopting" the Tullahan River, another dirty river that drains out to Manila Bay.

Signing the MOA for SM Prime Holding was its president, Jeffrey Lim; Mayor Antonino Calixto of Pasay City; and Parañaque City Administrator Fernando C. Soriano, representing Mayor Edwin L. Olivarez. The event was also graced by SM Prime Holdings Chairman Henry Sy Jr.

Speaking mostly in Filipino, Cimatu sounded confident of reviving the Parañaque River and Estero Tripa de Gallina with the help of SM Prime Holdings Inc. and the political will of the Pasay and Parañaque LGUs.

Ultimate goal: Save Manila Bay

THE rehabilitation of the Parañaque River, also known as Las Piñas-Parañaque River System, and the Estero Tripa de Gallina, along with other river and esteros that lead out to Manila, is a key strategy in rehabilitating Manila Bay.

"We will dredge and take out the garbage embedded under the Parañaque River and the Estero de Tripa de Gallina so the fish can thrive there once more," Cimatu said.

Lim said SM Prime Holdings will help DENR in its effort to clean water bodies as its commitment to promoting a clean environment for all generations.

"I would like to thank the DENR for this momentous event. In 2012, SM Prime entered into a five-year collaborative undertaking between DENR, LGU San Juan and the Environmental Management Bureau [EMB]. With the hard work that has been done and the support of the LGU, we can all say that the program has resulted in improved quality of the San Juan River. Today, SM Prime is here again for the Manila Bay under the adopt-a-river program," Lim said.

Several SM establishments along Manila Bay were earlier tagged among violators of environmental laws by the DENR and the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA), particularly the Clean Water Act of 2004 when it launched the P4.7-billion, seven-year "Battle for Manila Bay" program on January 27.

Calixto and Soriano both vowed to help the DENR and other agencies in its effort to clean up the Parañaque River and the

SEE "DENR," A2

Estero Tripa de Gallina, starting with the relocation of 160 informal settler families to a soon-to-be-built relocation site in Naic, Cavite.

According to Cimatu, the LGUs of Parañaque and Pasay committed to help the DENR enforce the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 and the Clean Water Act of 2004.

The DENR and LLDA, he said, will continue to identify business establishments that fail to comply with the order to put up a sewage treatment plant (STP). The LGUs vowed to review their contracts

with garbage collectors, which, Cimatu noted, seem to leave out garbage collection in squatter areas or areas occupied by informal settlers.

9 rivers, 50 esteros

ACCORDING to Cimatu, cleaning all nine rivers and almost 50 esteros that drain to Manila Bay is not an easy job.

On Sunday, around 16,000 individuals joined the DENR-led simultaneous river and estero cleanups in various parts of Metro Manila

DENR Undersecretary Benny D. Antiporda said the participants came from 181 barangay. The day-long cleanup operations netted 4,950 sacks of garbage weighing 70,889.98 kgs.



SWIMMABLE, BOUNTIFUL

Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu (center), continuing his crusade to save Manila Bay, has turned his sights on cleaning up the Parañaque River, one of those that drain out to the bay. He vowed to make it healthy once more, with help from local authorities and private business. Joining him at the signing of an agreement between the DENR, the local government units of Pasay and Parañaque and SM Prime Holdings Inc. are Jeffrey C. Lim, SM Prime president, and Pasay City Mayor Antonio G. Calixto. *Story on page A12. NONOY LACZA*





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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE



BILANG bahagi ng kampanyang "Battle for the Rivers and Esteros" para sa puspasang paglilinis ng Manila Bay, nagsagawa ng MOA signing sa pangunguna ni DENR Sec. Roy Cimatu; alkalde ng Pasay at Parañaque at negosyanteng si Henry Sy, Jr. sa DENR Office sa Quezon City. D QUERUBIN



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MUSSELS are harvested by this man along the shallow parts of the Manila Bay which had recently been placed on rehabilitation by government.

ROMAN PROSPERO



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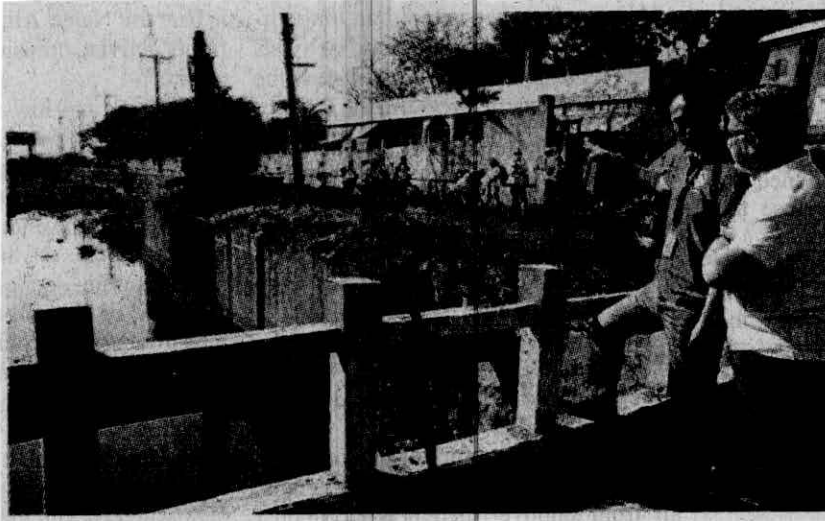
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CREEK CLEANUP.

Manila Water Company Inc. president and chief executive officer Ferdinand M. dela Cruz (in blue shirt) and Dante M. Abando, president and CEO of Makati Development Corp., lead the cleanup activity at Hagonoy Creek in Taguig City as they join the Department of Environment and Natural Resources event 'Battle of the Rivers and Esteros Launch,' part of Manila Water's 'Toka Toka' program to support the DENR's efforts to keep Manila Bay from further degradation.

Manny Palmero



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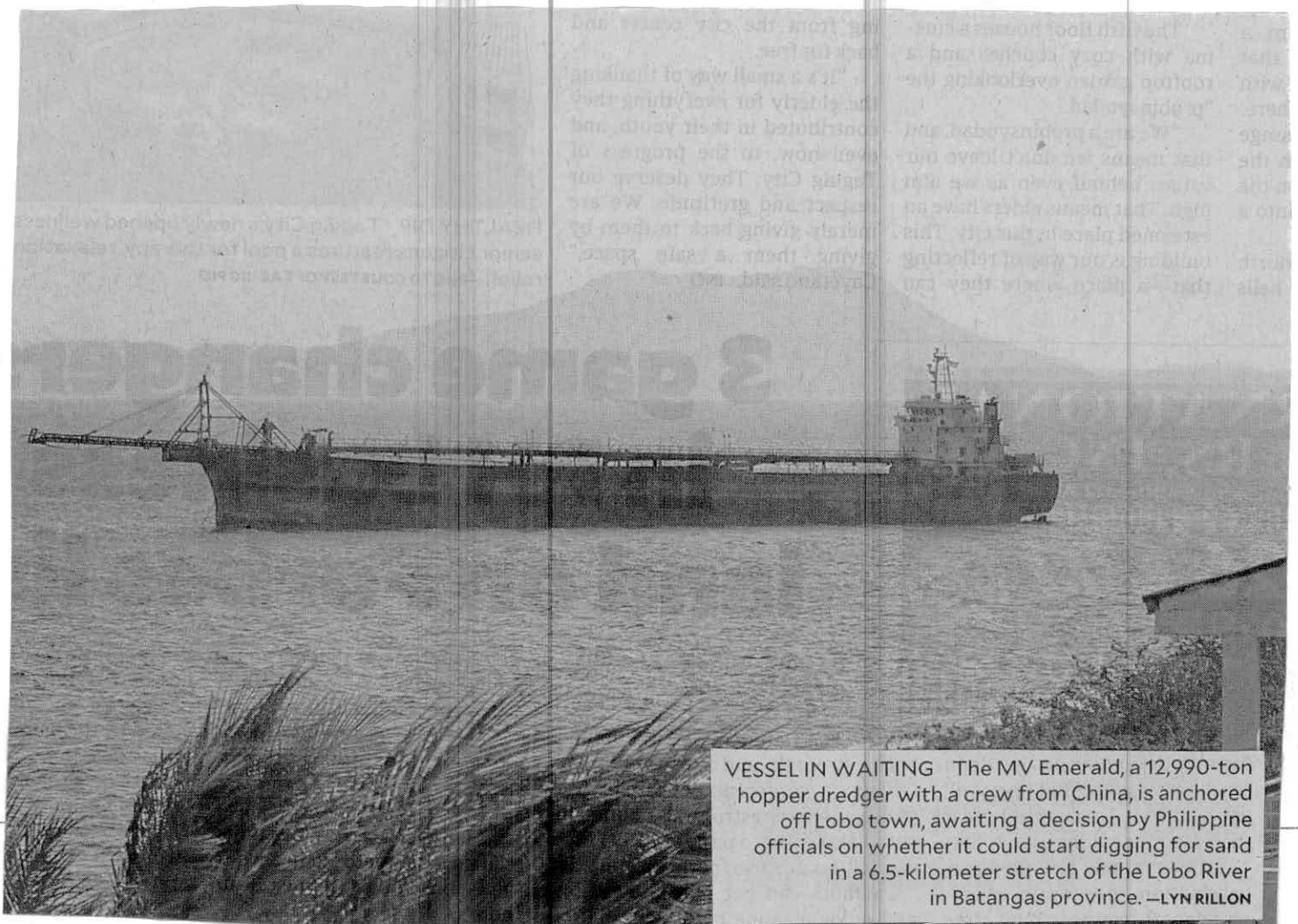
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CHINESE- MANNED SHIP ALARMS TOWN

STORY BY MARICAR CINCO

Officials of Lobo town oppose a plan to dredge their river for sand to build a runway in Hong Kong, saying it will harm their mangrove forest and part of the Verde Island Passage, a marine sanctuary.



VESSEL IN WAITING The MV Emerald, a 12,990-ton hopper dredger with a crew from China, is anchored off Lobo town, awaiting a decision by Philippine officials on whether it could start digging for sand in a 6.5-kilometer stretch of the Lobo River in Batangas province. —LYN RILLON



FROM A1

By Maricar Cinco
@maricarcincoINQ

The sudden appearance of a large Chinese-manned dredging vessel not only caused alarm among residents of a fishing village in Lobo town, Batangas province, but also unraveled a plan by a private company to ship tons of sand from their river to build a runway of Hong Kong International Airport, the Inquirer learned on Tuesday.

The MV Emerald, a 2,990-ton hopper dredger suddenly appeared off Barangay Lagadlarin on Thursday and anchored close to its 30-hectare mangrove forest, according to village chief Mafriel Dimaano.

The 99-meter-long, 17-meter-wide ship sailed into Lobo's waters without prior notice or permission from local officials, Dimaano said on Tuesday.

"Why would a ship that big suddenly dock here when we don't even have a pier?" Dimaano told the Inquirer.

It was not until Monday that a representative of Seagate Engineering and Buildsystems visited Lagadlarin and apologized for causing alarm. He explained that the company had planned to put up signages regarding a project to dredge the Lobo River, Dimaano said.

'Totally hysterical'

"I went totally hysterical and raised my voice at him. I told him, how come their ship came ahead and only thought of putting up signages afterwards. We were not informed at all," he said.

Lobo Mayor Jurly Manalo said Seagate's representative, who was not immediately identified, cited a supposed deal struck between the company and a former mayor in 2008 to dredge the river, but this did not push through. He said the company representative showed an environmental compliance certificate (ECC) issued for the project in 2018 by the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB).

"I told him we wouldn't allow the dredging because we have a dike which would mostly likely collapse if they dredge the river. We also wouldn't allow them to destroy our sea," Manalo said.

The mayor ordered the ship to leave, but it remained anchored off Lagadlarin on Tuesday.

Dredging agreement

The Inquirer has learned that the former mayor was Manalo's younger brother, Virgilio, who was authorized by the municipal council then to enter into a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with Seagate to dredge the river.

According to documents seen by the Inquirer, the council, through an Oct. 28, 2008, resolution, authorized then Mayor Virgilio Manalo to enter into a MOA with Seagate to dredge "180,000 square meters and expandable as necessary" of the Lobo River for flood control.

But it was only almost 10 years later, on July 6, 2018, that

Seagate obtained the ECC from the Calabarzon regional office of the EMB for the "desilting, dredging and remediation" works for the Lobo River Basin Periphery Project.

One document dated Feb. 28, 2019, seen by the Inquirer was a purchase order made by a company called Synergy Plus Holdings Ltd. to Seagate for the purchase of 2 million cubic meters of Lobo River sand for \$2 per metric ton "at source" to be used for the Hong Kong International Airport Three Runway System Project.

Governor not aware

It was unclear whether Seagate could export the sand or even begin the dredging because the regional Mines and Geosciences Bureau office denied the company's request in February for a mineral ore export permit and the current officials of the town were against the dredging.

Seagate officials could not

be reached for comment.

Batangas Gov. Hermilando Mandanas also said he was not aware of the ship's arrival and had not issued any dredging permit.

Police Lt. Col. Crisostomo Ubac, chief of the Batangas Police Maritime Group, said the ship dropped anchor just 500 meters from the shore, which happened to be a mangrove reserve.

Lobo is part of the Verde Island Passage, a marine sanctuary being what scientists call the world's center of the center of marine shorefish biodiversity.

Scientists say mangroves help prevent soil erosion in areas with strong waves, remove dirt and pollutants from the land and could even act as a buffer to storm surges brought by strong typhoons. They say mangroves also help in the healthy growth of seagrass and coral reef ecosystems.

Manalo said barangay officials were prevented from boarding the ship. Only mem-

bers of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the Batangas and maritime police, who arrived at the village on Friday afternoon, were allowed to board.

"I was also afraid it carried drugs so I asked for the [assistance of] PDEA (Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency)," Manalo said.

No firearms or illegal drugs were found on the ship.

No basis to arrest

Ubac said at least nine Chinese men were on board, while Lobo Mayor Jurly Manalo said they might be from Taiwan after he spoke with one of the crew members on Saturday.

"I asked for the (ship) captain to come down and see me but they said he couldn't speak (Filipino) so they sent the (crew member) and a Filipino as his interpreter. The Filipino was also with them," he Manalo said.

Ubac said the vessel may have violated environmental laws when it dropped anchor off Lagadlarin, but the marine protected area has not been officially declared in writing so there was no legal basis to arrest the crew.

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He said the crew intended to conduct underwater quarrying, particularly at the mouth of Lobo River, but they could not present any document for that.

According to Dimaano, there is a small mangrove forest close to the mouth of the river that is adjacent to his village's own mangrove reserve.

Manalo said the ship's anchor might have already dam-

aged the sea grass, a breeding ground for fish and sea turtles.

"A basic and fundamental rule is they communicate with us. They prefer bullying. We don't even allow our own fishing rafts to anchor there, how much more a foreign vessel?" he said.

Palace: We will verify

In Manila, presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo said the military was now looking into the arrival of the ship.

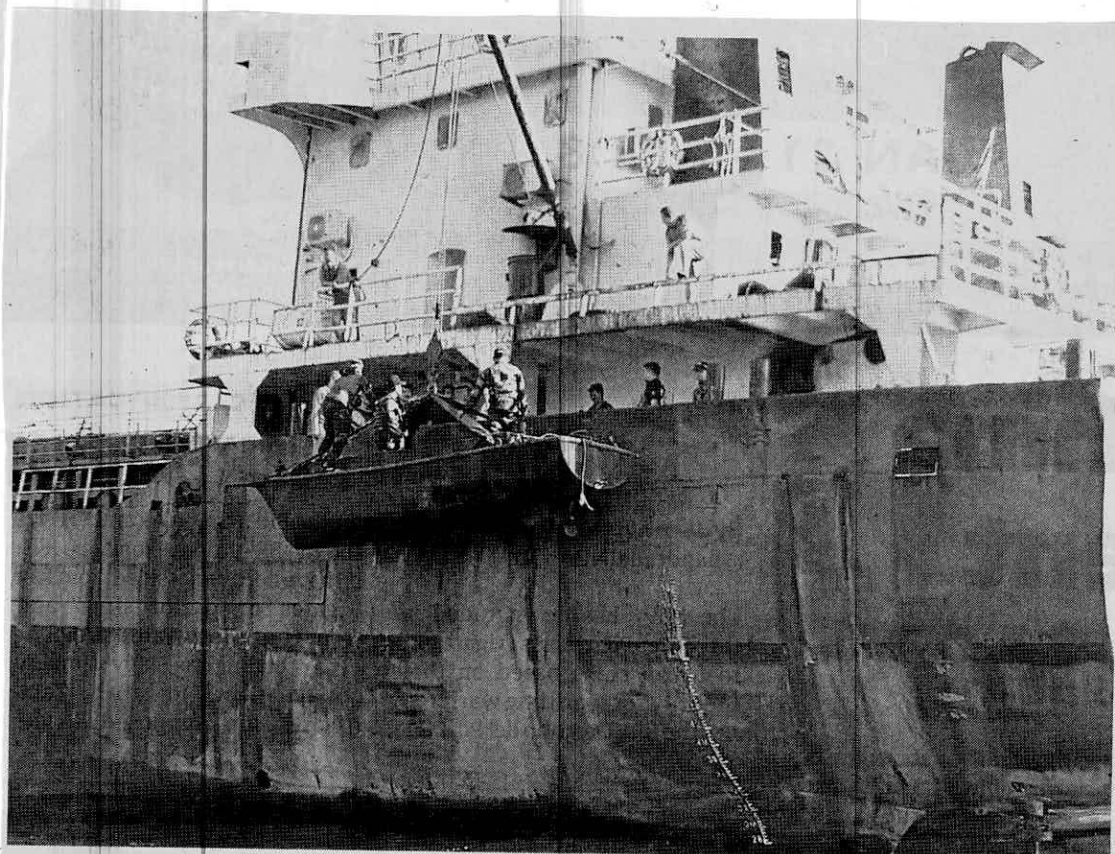
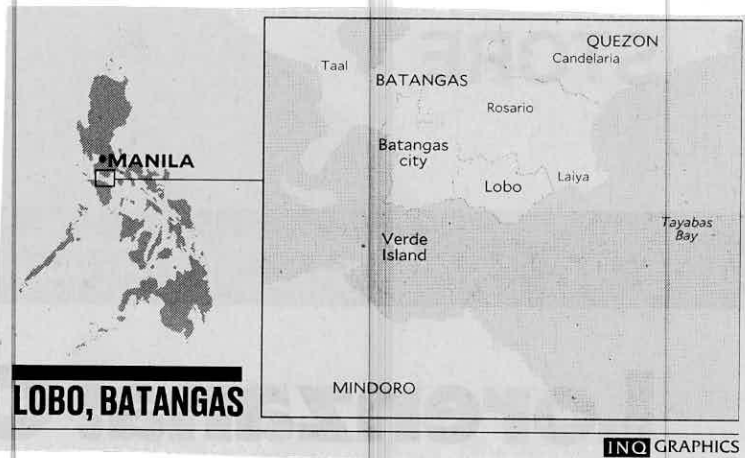
"We will verify," Panelo told reporters, adding that he had texted the head of the military's Southern Luzon Command, whose area of operation includes Batangas.

The PCG spokesperson, Capt. Armand Balilo, tried to quell apprehensions about the vessel, saying it had a contract to dredge and desilt a 6.5-kilometer stretch of the Lobo River.

Balilo also said the ship had an importation clearance from the Maritime Industry Authority as well as an anchorage clearance issued by the Philippine Ports Authority. Its crew of nine Chinese nationals also hold valid visas.

Based on the environment compliance certificates issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the dredging operations will cover parts of the villages of Fabrica, Lagadlarin, Olo-Olo, Poblacion, Tayuman, Mabilog na Bundok and Nagtaluntong.

—WITH REPORTS FROM LYN RILLON, JOVIC YEE AND CHRISTINE O. AVENDAÑO INQ



INSPECTION A team from the Philippine National Police Maritime Group in Batangas province boards the dredging vessel MV Emerald, docked in the waters off Lobo town, for inspection. The team did not find any firearms, contraband or illegal drugs. —PHOTO COURTESY OF BATANGAS POLICE MARITIME GROUP



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Chinese dredging vessel, ininspeksiyon

Sumakay at ininspeksiyon ng awtoridad ang isang Chinese dredging vessel sa Lobo, Batangas nitong linggo, sa gitna ng mga alegasyon ng paulit-ulit na pag-atake sa teritoryo ng Pilipinas.

Ayon kay Police Captain Rommel Alcantara, hepe ng police of Lobo Municipal Police Station, sinamahan nila ang Maritime Group at Coast Guard personnel sa pag-iinspeksiyon sa vessel, nitong Biyernes ng hapon.

"The inspection was done because the barangay officials reported that the vessel was dredging sand at the Protected Marine Area of Lobo," sinabi ni Alcantara sa *BALITA*.

Ang Emerald Dredging vessel ay may siyam na crewmen at pawang may legal na dokumento, ayon kay Alcantara.

Kinilala niya ang mga crew na sina Li Yongping, kapitan; Wang Lei, chief officer; Zhao Zhaoyin, 2nd officer; Du Zhengxu, chief engineer;

Cheng Jiayi, 2nd engineer; Cai Yueliang, 3rd engineer; Zhao Xiang, oiler; Tang Shilin; Du Qincheng; Li Long; Li Yongjun; at Chen Niudi, cook.

"All of them have passport, visa and seaman book. The inspection resulted negative of any infraction," sabi ni Alcantara.

"There was no sand inside the vessel, and it was found out that there was no violation," aniya.

Aaron Recuenco



Rody in favor of a Department of Water

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By **ALEXIS ROMERO**

President Duterte is in favor of the proposal to form a separate department for water-related concerns, believing it will prevent a repeat of the water service interruption experienced recently in parts of Metro Manila and Rizal province.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said the creation of a water department was one of the topics discussed during the 36th Cabinet meeting last Monday in Malacañang.

"It will synchronize all the acts from other agencies hopefully to prevent the occurrence of the water stoppage that we had last time," he added.

Panelo said the creation of a water department would not add to the layers of bureaucracy because only one body would handle all water issues.

Last month, Socioeconomic Planning secretary Ernesto Pernia proposed the creation of a "Department of Water," saying it would integrate all measures designed to ensure adequate water supply in the country.

Panelo previously said such agency may no longer be necessary because the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System and water concessionaires

were able to come up with a solution to the water crisis.

The creation of a water department is one of the proposals in a road map that seeks to mitigate the effects of El Niño and water shortage. The road map was also discussed during last Monday's meeting, Panelo said.

He described the road map as something that would include immediate, medium and long-term interventions such as making an intensive campaign for the conservation of water and energy and creating a Department of Water and a Department of Disaster Resilience.

The other measures contained in the road map are the dredging of waterways, replacement of tunnels and aqueducts, installation of water tank systems in all hospitals under the health department and funding the establishment of water treatment plants.

At the same Cabinet meeting, National Economic and Development Authority Undersecretary Adoracion Navarro presented the proposed executive order that seeks to transform and strengthen the National Water Resources Board (NWRB).

Panelo said the order would merge the NWRB and the River Basin Control Office into

the National Water Management Council.

"This will streamline and consolidate planning and regulation of all water and river basins in the country. It will also draft a National Water Management Framework Plan," the spokesman said.

P5-billion damage

The latest data released by the Department of Agriculture (DA) Disaster Risk Reduction Management Operations Center showed that the damage and losses from the weak El Niño have already increased to P5.05 billion from P4.35 billion in just two days, although significant increases are no longer expected.

This effect is equivalent to an estimated volume of 276,568 metric tons of agricultural products and 177,743 hectares of damaged agricultural areas, affecting 164,672 farmers and fisherfolk.

"I think this is already the peak of the damage report. It's this big because these are the farmers who still planted after the typhoons last year," Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said in a briefing on Tuesday. "We made enough efforts and information campaign that there will be an El Niño coming, but we can't blame them for taking a



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chance (and still planted)."

The affected regions are the Cordilleras, Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol, Western Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Zamboanga peninsula, Northern Mindanao, Davao, Soccsksargen and ARMM.

For rice alone, the damage has reached P2.69 billion affecting 111,851 hectares and production volume of 125,589 MT. For corn, damage has increased to P2.36 billion affecting 65,892 hectares of lands with volume loss at 150,978 MT.

Despite this, the DA maintained that it does not expect the damage to have an adverse impact on national production.

"Our losses in relation to our national projection will only be 0.63 percent for rice and 1.2 percent for corn," Piñol said.

The DA has an estimated P2 billion worth of supply on hand and can be allocated right away. This includes P860 million under the quick response fund and more than P1 billion of combined funds from the department's loaning programs.

It added that it continues to conduct field validation to assess the damage and losses, and monitor standing crops in areas at risk.

A total of P96 million in

financial assistance from DA-attached agency Agricultural Credit Policy Council has been allotted under the Survival and Recovery Assistance Program that will benefit 3,835 affected farmers.

The processing of documents is now ongoing for areas declared under state of calamity due to El Niño, which include Rizal, Occidental Mindoro, Zamboanga City, Zamboanga Sibugay, Cotabato, Maguindanao and Negros Occidental.

The Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. has so far paid P43 million of insurance to 3,534 affected farmers in the provinces of Ilocos, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Western Visayas and Northern Mindanao.

To help ease the situation, the DA has prepositioned seed reserves for rice and corn and released nearly P20 million for various cloud seeding operations nationwide to its regional field offices and to the Philippine Air Force.

At least three sorties have been accomplished out of the 75 planned sorties to be done up to May 2019 as the state weather bureau PAGASA already said hotter days may begin this quarter coupled with lesser rainfall and dry winds and will likely affect 47

provinces in the country.

Starting this month, PAGASA said 42 provinces will experience a dry spell and 22 others will experience drought. The drought is expected to worsen by May.

In a visit to Bayambang in Pangasinan, Sen. Cynthia Villar told newsmen that she is pushing for the construction of more Small Water Impounding Project (SWIP) to address the scarcity of water during the dry spell brought by El Niño.

She cited a study that only four percent of the total rainfall is saved for use during the onslaught of the phenomenon.

"We need to construct many SWIP so that when there is heavy rainfall that results in flooding, the water can be saved," Villar said as she urged Filipinos to be prepared for the onset of El Niño that affects their agricultural produce and their families.

Bulacan province is also preparing for the effect of the dry spell as the National Irrigation Administration announced that it would cut irrigation supply to several towns and cities in Bulacan and Pampanga.

- With Louise Maureen Simeon, Eva Visperas, Ramon Efren Lazaro



Duterte approves creation of Department of Water

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Duterte approved the creation of a proposed Department of Water during the 36th Cabinet meeting in Malacanang on Monday night, Palace officials said yesterday.

Duterte is also supporting the creation of the proposed Department of Disaster Resilience.

Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo, concurrent presidential spokesman, said the creation of the new departments is part a "roadmap" that included immediate, medium and long-term interventions to address and mitigate the effects of the El Nino phenomenon and the water crisis in the country.

The measures included making an intensive campaign for the conservation of water and energy, dredging of waterways, replacing tunnels and aqueducts, installing water tank systems in all Department of Health supervised hospitals,

providing funding for the establishment of water treatment plants, and creating the two departments.

Panelo had previously rejected the proposed Department of Water, saying it may not be needed because the current water crisis was due to inefficiency and mismanagement that can easily be resolved.

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles previously said the Cabinet supports creating two bodies that would oversee all activities and issues concerning water, particularly one handling the economic and financial regulation aspect, and the other focusing on policy formulation and resource regulation.

Among the pending bills in Congress regarding the proposed departments is Bohol Rep. Arthur Yap's House Bill 2457 or Rationalizing the Re-

See DUTERTE > Page B3

DUTERTE

source Management of the Water Sector, Creating the Department of Water, Sewage and Sanitation which aims to address the fragmented and overlapping functions of water agencies in the country.

Nograles yesterday said there is also a pending bill in the Senate on the creation of a Department of Disaster Resilience which is unlikely to be passed under the current Congress.

"I don't know if there is still enough time to pass it after elections and before the end of the 17th congress. But for sure we will push it again in 18th Congress," he said.

Panelo said the Cabinet also discussed the proposed strengthening and merging of the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) and the River Basin Control Office under a National Water Management Council.

He said that in National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Undersecretary Adoracion Navarro's report to the Cabinet, the merging of the two bodies under the NWMC will streamline and consolidate plan-

ning and regulation of all water and river basins in the country. NWMC shall also oversee the drafting of a National Water Management Framework Plan.

Nograles said an executive order that would implement the merger is now being finalized.

Duterte last month ordered the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to submit a report on the causes, status and actions taken to address the water supply problem in Metro Manila and nearby areas.

He gave MWSS officials until April 10 to submit the report. He also threatened to cancel the contracts of private concessionaires Manila Water Services and Maynilad Services Inc. if he is not satisfied with the actions taken to address the water supply shortage problem.

WATER LEVEL DOWN

Water reserves at Angat Dam in Bulacan and La Mesa Dam in Quezon City further dropped in the past 24 hours, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said.

Hydrologist Sonia Serrano said Angat's water level dipped to 192.36 meters at 6 a.m. yesterday. The dam's water reserve on Monday morning was at 192.76 meters.

Angat's water level has been declining since early March, but Serrano noted that the 192.36-meter elevation was still above its critical level of 180 meters.

Angat supplies 97 percent of Metro Manila's water needs. It also provides water for the irrigation requirements of thousands of hectares of farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga. A part of the dam's water supply is also used to generate electricity for Luzon.

Serrano said water level at La Mesa dropped to two centimeters in the last 24 hours. At 6 a.m. yesterday, she said the water reserve in the dam was at 68.51 meters, lower than the 68.53 meters on Monday morning.

The dam breached its critical level of 69 meters last March 10.

Serrano said Ipo Dam maintained its water level of 101 meters from Monday until yesterday morning. Its critical water level is 97 meters. — *With Angela Lopez de Leon*



Roadmap to mitigate dry spell up

- Creation of Water Department, National Resilience urged
- Improved support for agriculture pushed
- Water and energy conservation measures suggested

The sweltering heat, according to the agency, could be felt all the way until June, as the effects of El Niño continue

By Kristina Maralit, Elmer Manuel and Francis Earl Cueto

A roadmap detailing how the government will mitigate the effects of El Niño and prevent another water supply crisis from happening was presented to President Rodrigo Duterte, Malacañang confirmed yesterday.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo bared that the roadmap, which included the proposed creation of the Departments of Water and National

Resilience, was discussed with the Chief Executive during Monday night's Cabinet meeting in the Palace.

"The Cabinet discussed the first item on the agenda, which is mitigating the effects of El Niño and water shortage. A roadmap was presented, which included immediate, medium, and long-term interventions, such as making an intensive campaign for the conservation of water and energy, creating a Department of Water and a Department of Disaster Resilience," Panelo said in a statement.

The contingency plan also contained the "dredging of waterways, replacing tunnels and aqueducts, installing water tank systems in all Department of Health hospitals and providing funding for the establishment of water treatment plants," according to the official.

With the dry spell already at its peak, the Department of Agriculture (DA) pegged the damage to the agriculture sector at P4.35 billion.

Amid the dry spell affecting several areas of the country, senatorial aspirant and former Special Assistant to the President Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go stressed the need to expand government support for the agriculture sector.

According to the advisory of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and

Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) issued on 28 March, at least 10 provinces – six in Luzon and four in Mindanao – are likely to experience drought in the coming days. Likewise, the weather agency said 41 provinces in the country are likely to experience the dry spell.

The sweltering heat, according to the agency, could be felt all the way until June, as the effects of El Niño continue.

PAGASA said water levels in the country's major dams continue to go down but have not reached critical level.

Go stressed that one of his legislative priorities is to push measures to support the agriculture sector to enable the farmers and fishermen earn more and uplift their lives.

"I will push for additional incentives for our farmers and easy access to low interest

credit facilities, machines, fertilizer, and other farm inputs so they will be more productive," he said.

In addition, Go said family members of farmers and fishermen should also be provided with free business and skills trainings they could use to further increase their income.

"We will also have Tienda Malasakit stores in key cities for farmers to easily sell their produce directly to consumers without passing through middlemen," he added.

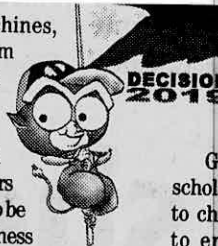
To support this program, Go is pushing for the provision of storage facilities in food terminals to be established in key regions in the country. This will include central refrigerated warehouse, chilling rooms,

freezer storage, ice plant, blast freezers and refrigerated processing rooms to prevent spoilage of the harvest of farmers and the catch of the fishermen.

Go is also proposing to provide scholarship grants and other incentives to children of farmers and fishermen to encourage them to stay in the agriculture sector.

According to Go, the program may be initially funded by tariff and duties from agricultural imports.

During the Cabinet meeting, National Economic and Development Authority Undersecretary Adoracion Navarro presented the proposed executive order on transforming and strengthening the National Water Resources Board.





Twisted Slugs #199

The Manila Times

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Govt crafts roadmap to address El Niño

THE government has come up with a roadmap to mitigate the effects of a prolonged El Niño and ensure ample supply of water in the country, Malacañang said on Tuesday.

Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo said the roadmap, which was presented when President Rodrigo Duterte met with his Cabinet in Malacañang on Monday, included the proposal to create the Department of Water and Department of Disaster Resilience.

"We had a serious and productive April Fools' Day as President Rodrigo Duterte presided a fruitful 36th Cabinet meeting," Panelo said in a statement.

"The Cabinet discussed the first item on the agenda, which is mitigating the effects of El Niño and water shortage. A roadmap was presented, which included immediate, medium and long-term interventions, such as making an intensive campaign for the conservation of water and energy, creating a Department of Water and a Department of Disaster Resilience," he added.

The roadmap also involved "dredging of waterways, replacing tunnels and aqueducts, installing water tank systems in all Department of Health hospitals and providing funding for the establishment of water treatment plants."

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has said damage to agriculture caused by drought had reached P5 billion.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration said El Niño had peaked and would start weakening in the next months.

Several parts of Metro Manila have also been hit by water shortage.

Panelo said National Economic and Development Authority Undersecretary Adoracion Navarro presented a proposed Executive Order (EO) on transforming and strengthening the National Water Resources Board (NWRB).

"The EO will merge the NWRB and the River Basin Control Office into the National Water Management Council," Panelo said.

"This will streamline and consolidate planning and regulation of all water and river basins in the country. It will also draft a National Water Management Framework Plan," he added.

Optimistic

The DA, however, is optimistic that the agriculture sector would still be able to hit its production target for rice and corn despite El Niño.

Agriculture Secretary Em-

manuel Piñol said that while the total damage and losses from El Niño have reached P5 billion, the drought would not cut down the national production for this year.

"In fact, the records will show that our losses in relation to our national production projection for rice would only be 0.63 percent. We are still keeping our [still record-high] production target of 20 million metric tons (MT), lower by about 500,000 MT than our previous target," he added.

Last year, the country's total rice output hit 19.07 million MT, which was 1.1 percent lower from 19.28 million MT recorded in 2017 caused by monthly tropical disturbances.

For the corn sector, Piñol said the DA estimated that the total damage would reach a rate of 1.2 percent.

Meanwhile, he sought an "institutional change" in the way the country handles calamities like El Niño, saying the government should stop its "post-disaster intervention mindset."

"The only way we can mitigate the damage of drought, dry spell and El Niño is to come up with a viable national irrigation program that would prepare the funds for calamities like this. Unless we do that, we will always be picking up the pieces after every disaster and we will be spending a lot to rehabilitate and assist our farmers," Piñol said.

**CATHERINE S. VALENTE AND
EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ**



Water dep't mulled amid El Niño onset

By Nat Mariano, Rio N. Araja
and Alena Mae S. Flores

MALACAÑANG said Tuesday the Duterte administration was considering the creation of a Department of Water to mitigate the effects of El Niño and water shortage in parts of the country, coinciding with official reports an estimated P5.05 billion worth of agricultural crops had been destroyed by the phenomenon.

At the same time, National Grid Corporation of the Philippines again placed the Luzon grid on yellow alert for several hours on Tuesday, the second consecutive day due to insufficient operating reserves amid the forced and unplanned outages of power plants.

NGCP issued the yellow alert notice, which means the reserve power was low, starting from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. and then at 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. The yellow alert was lifted at 4 p.m.

"Please be informed that the Luzon grid is on yellow alert due to insufficient operating reserve," it said.

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Water...

From A1

The Luzon grid's system capacity was placed at 10,985 megawatts yesterday versus demand of 10,267 MW.

In a statement, Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said President Rodrigo Duterte and his Cabinet discussed plans to address the recurring dry spell in the country.

"A roadmap was presented, which included immediate, medium and long-term interventions, such as making an intensive campaign for the conservation of water and energy," Panelo said.

According to Panelo, the roadmap shown included the plans to "create a Department of Water and a Department of Disaster Resilience."

"[There are also plans of] dredging

waterways, replacing tunnels and aqueducts, installing water tank systems in all Department of Health hospitals, and providing funding for the establishment of water treatment plants," Panelo said.

DA's Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Operations Center said agricultural damage went up from P4.35 billion to P5.05 billion.

Production losses due to drought and dry spell ate up an estimated volume of 276,568 metric

tons of rice and corn from 233,007 metric tons recorded on March 31.

Of the total 177,743 hectares affected by El Niño, 164,672 farmers were severely hit.

In another 149,914 hectares, at least 138,859 farmers were affected.

As far as the rice sector is concerned, the loss/damage was estimated at P2.69 billion with 125,590 metric tons volume

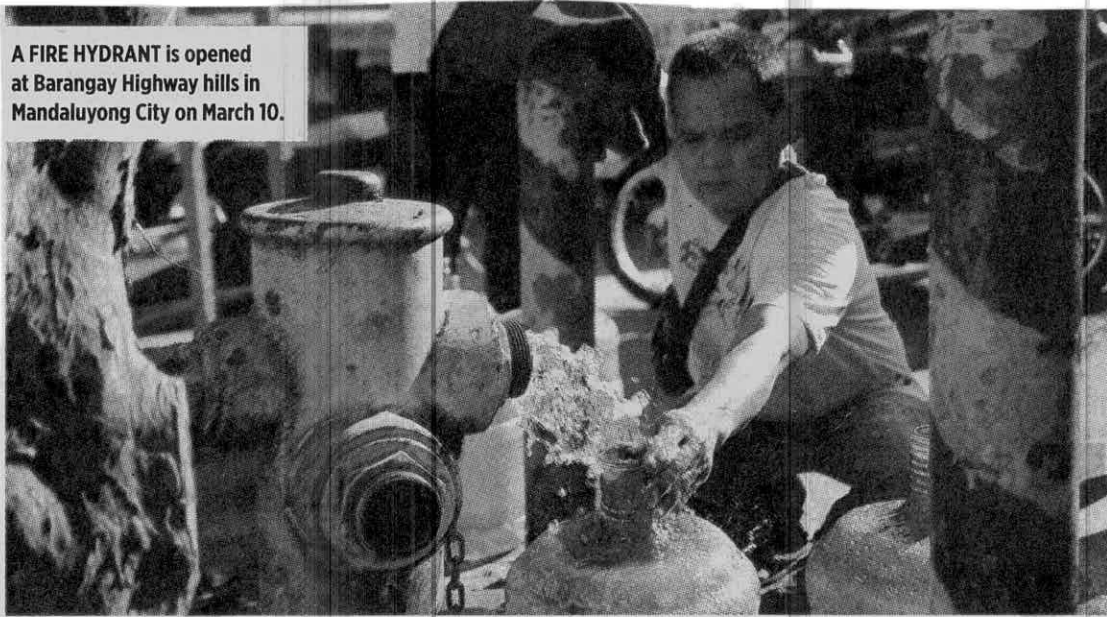
production loss, 111,851 hectares, and 108,845 farmers affected in 37 provinces.

For corn, the losses were pegged at P2.36 billion with 150,978 metric tons volume production loss, 65,892 hectares, and 55,827 farmers affected in 17 provinces.

El Niño ruined Caraga Region, Abra, Apayao, Ifugao, Kalinga, Mt. Province, Ilocos, Pangasinan, Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino, Bulacan, Batangas, Laguna, Rizal, Quezon, Occidental Mindoro, Albay, Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte, Masbate, Aklan, Antique, Iloilo, Negros Occidental, Biliran, Leyte, Northern Samar, Samar, Zamboanga City, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay, Zamboanga del Norte, Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental, Davao del Sur, Cotabato, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao.



A FIRE HYDRANT is opened at Barangay Highway hills in Mandaluyong City on March 10.



PHILIPPINE STAR/MICHAEL VARCAS

President agrees to roadmap coordinating gov't water agencies

MALACAÑANG on Tuesday said President Rodrigo R. Duterte gave his consent to the proposed creation of a Department of Water that would “synchronize all the acts from other agencies to prevent the recurrence of a water shortage.”

In a statement, the President’s Spokesperson Salvador S. Panelo said that a proposed roadmap, which includes the creation of a Department of Water, was presented at the 36th Cabinet Meeting at the Palace on Monday.

“A roadmap was presented, which included immediate, medium and long-term interventions, such as making an intensive campaign for the conservation of water and energy, creating a Department of Water and a Department of Disaster Resilience, dredging of waterways, replacing tunnels

and aqueducts, installing water tank systems in all Department of Health hospitals and providing funding for the establishment of water treatment plants,” he said.

Asked for more details at a news conference, Mr. Panelo said the President was “okay” with the proposal to create a new department that would focus on all activities having to do with the water resource.

“Well, it will synchronize all the acts from other agencies hopefully to prevent the occurrence of the water’s stoppage that we had last time,” he said.

Mr. Panelo, however, rejected the proposal in March when it was suggested by Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto M. Pernia.

“Opinion *ko lang naman iyong sinabi ko noon diba, hindi naman opinion ng Malacañang.* (That

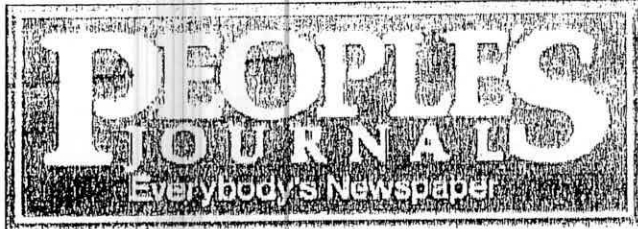
was just my opinion at the time, and not the government’s official position”) he said.

Also in his statement, Mr. Panelo said: “Related to this was the second item in the Cabinet agenda where National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Undersecretary Adoracion Navarro presented the proposed Executive Order (EO) on transforming and strengthening the National Water Resources Board (NWRB).”

“The EO will merge the NWRB and the River Basin Control Office into the National Water Management Council (NWMC). This will streamline and consolidate planning and regulation of all water and river basins in the country. It will also draft a National Water Management Framework Plan,” he added. — **Arjay L. Balinbin**



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE



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Action plan against El Niño discussed

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte and his Cabinet discussed possible interventions to mitigate the adverse effects of the ongoing El Niño across the country that has damaged over P5 billion worth of agricultural products.

In a statement, Presidential spokesman Sal Panelo identified various proposed measures that were taken up in Monday's cabinet meeting, among these, were the creation of a Department of Water and a Department of Disaster Resilience, and water conservation campaigns. Officials also recommended the "dredging of waterways, replacing tunnels and aqueducts, installing water tank systems in all Department of Health hospitals" and increased funding for water treatment plants as addition-

al solutions.

The El Niño has led to rice and corn production losses worth over P5 billion since the start of 2019, affecting 138,859 farmers across 12 regions.

"The agenda last night was with respect to the effect of the dry spell what are we going to do about it to diminish the effects of this dry spell and we discussed about the water problem, how to do something about it," Panelo said.

To remedy the water crisis which struck Metro Manila last month, Panelo said the National Economic and Development Authority proposed an executive order to create a National Water Management Council (NWMC). The NWMC will be composed of the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) and the

River Basin Control Office under the environment and natural resources department.

"This will streamline and consolidate planning and regulation of all water and river basins in the country," Panelo said in a statement.

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles first raised changes to the NWRB on March 17, saying they sought to place the agency under the Office of the President. He said they were still drafting the executive order on the proposal at that time.

Customers of water concessionaire Manila Water suffered from days-long water shortages during the first week of March. Manila Water attributed the service interruptions to the depleting supply of the La Mesa reservoir in Quezon City due to the dry spell.

EMontano



PAGBABAGO

Water crisis and environmental risks



By **FLORANGEL ROSARIO BRAID**

WHILE the recent water crisis was primarily confined in Metro Manila, it was serious enough to send a warning that it could worsen in the months to come. Scientists say that 2019 may be the hottest year yet because of El Nino and climate change which is expected to heat up the planet. And all of us, not just Manila Water and the MWSS would have to share the collective responsibility of doing something about it.

A survey of world leaders' perceptions of the top ten risks in 2019 for the Global Risk Report of the World Economic Forum shows that for the past three years, environmental risks have dominated the list. And that of all the risks, it is in relation to the environment that the world is most clearly sleepwalking, the report notes.

Most of the risks that are perceived as having great impact or likelihood of occurring, and being interconnected as well, are familiar occurrences in the country. Among them are extreme

weather events such as floods or storms; failure of climate mitigation and adaptation; major natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions; man-made environmental damage and disasters such as oil spills and radioactive contamination; major biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse (terrestrial or marine); and water crisis.

Additionally, threats to national security and economy such as massive incidence of data fraud/theft, large-scale cyberattacks, large-scale migration, financial market volatility resulting in asset bubble economy, multilateral trading rules and agreement, and weapons of mass destruction are seen as major risks.

The good news is that we are not doing too badly in terms of environmental performance. Which means that our policies and programs that address major environmental concerns such as health and vitality of our ecosystems are acceptable based on our ranking. The 2018 Environmental Performance Index ranked the Philippines at 8th out of 26 Asian countries. Globally, the coun-

try ranked 82nd out of 180 countries.

But other surveys show otherwise. An HSBC survey in 2018 ranked the Philippines 3rd as most vulnerable country in the world. India is first, followed by Pakistan, with Bangladesh in the fourth spot. According to the International Red Cross, the Philippines is the fourth most disaster-prone country in the world. The 2016 World Risk Report published by the United Nations University in Tokyo ranked the Philippines third among the most disaster-prone countries in the world.

A review of research literature, policies, programs in environment and climate change would show that we have performed creditably. But, as the Global Risk report indicates, there has been a failure of regional and global governance in climate change. A Toda Research Institute policy paper notes some priorities such as "need for conflict-sensitive

climate change adaptation strategies which understand localized power relations and capacities. It recommends "reducing dependency on outside experts" and that it must address "potential conflict arising from displacement and dislocation of people from their homes."

A UN study calls for urgent rethink of resources use which are skyrocketing. Resource extraction has more than tripled since 1970 – a fivefold increase in the use of non-metallic minerals and 45% increase in fossil fuel use. Extracting and processing of materials, fuels, and foods contribute half of total global greenhouse emission and over 90% of biodiversity loss. From 2015 to 2060, natural resource use is expected to grow by 110%, leading to reduction of forests by over 10% and reduction of other habitats like grasslands by over 20%. Implications

for climate change are severe as there will be an increase in greenhouse gas emissions by 43%.

Meantime, the world's poorest countries have rarely seen any growth in material consumption

A transformation of our food system to save our climate will consist of a (1) transition from energy-intensive industrial agriculture, especially massive-scale meat and dairy production; (2) expansion of diversified, resilient, organic, and regenerative farming systems; (3) Government must stop subsidizing environmental damage by supporting loans and research funds to support large-scale industrial agriculture (large-scale livestock, monoculture production systems geared to animal feed, fuel and junk food. Instead, it must support local, regional organic farming and disadvantaged farmers.



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PLASTIC IS
HARMING MARINE
LIFE

EDITORIAL

Water crisis

THE government would do well to approve the recommendations of Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel "Manny" Piñol on how to address the looming water crisis in the Philippines.

It is certainly ironic that the Philippines, a nation surrounded by water, faces a serious water supply crisis.

No less than Piñol witnessed the "horrifying scenes" of silted and drying up rivers, waterless creeks and denuded mountains when he conducted an aerial inspection in Northern Luzon.

We share the view of Piñol, a farmer and a former newspaperman, that massive deforestation results in the drying up of creeks, rivers and streams in various parts of the country.

"As a farm boy I saw how springs dried up when the trees around them were cut. I must admit that what I viewed from the air scared me no end," said Secretary Piñol.

The agriculture secretary wants the government to implement as soon as possible a multi-pronged national program aimed at locating and protecting the country's headwaters.

Denuded mountains ought to be reforested not only by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources but also by local government units (LGUs) to ensure the success of the program.

Likewise, Piñol recommended the construction of water catchments, small water-impounding areas and mini dams.

He admitted, however, that the task will not be easy and the results will not be quick.

Without doubt, the recommendations of the agriculture department, which were submitted during the last High Level Cabinet Meeting on Water, will go a long way in addressing the looming water crisis.



Of Trees and Forest

Senator Manny Villar

What's the matter with our water?

LAST March 22, the global community celebrated World Water Day 2019. It is ironic that on the day the United Nations (UN) designated to emphasize the global aim to ensure availability and sustainable management of water, many Filipinos in Metro Manila and Rizal were on the second week of misery from a water mess that had disrupted their lives. Even as we go to press, many Metro Manila villages are experiencing water interruption.

The water service interruption which started on March 6 was so abrupt many were not able to store water the night before. Safe drinking water was a problem because even water refilling stations were unable to produce distilled water for their customers. People could not take a bath before going to work or school. Worse, sanitation problems were experienced by many, especially Mandaluyong residents who were hardest hit by the service interruption.

The most heartbreaking scene was to see people lining up for hours to get water from a swimming pool of a condominium tower. People also stayed late at night up to early in the morning to queue for water from fire trucks. While at this, kudos to our firefighters who stepped up and helped residents even during ungodly hours.

So what happened? The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) cited the failure to construct

a treatment facility on time and the wrong simulation on how to address its supply shortage created a "domino effect."

The president of Manila Water faced a Congressional inquiry and explained that on March 6, the La Mesa Reserve breached the critical level of 69 meters which prevented them from getting 150 million liters per day from the La Mesa Reserve.

The UN has proclaimed as a fundamental human right "the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation. The human right to water "entitles everyone, without discrimination, 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."

To be clear, compared to what we experienced in Metro Manila, billions of people have been experiencing worse. Even today, many people are still living without "safe water - their households, schools, workplaces, farms, and factories struggling to survive and thrive." According to water.org, nine million Filipinos still rely on unimproved, unsafe, and unsustainable water sources and 19 million lack access to improved sanitation.

But the water interruption that happened is unacceptable. It exposed a failure in planning and the inability

to anticipate problems such as what transpired. I can understand the fury of President Rodrigo Duterte. He has always protected the Filipino public. I remember him demanding government agencies to improve services because he does not want Filipinos lining up for hours for services they deserve. I totally agree.

We need to fast-track the infrastructure necessary to be able to cope with the increase in demand. A growing economy like that of the Philippines will necessarily require more resources (water, electricity). Some of the plans for the expansion of our water sources were crafted decades ago. One wonders why they have not yet been implemented.

But the public needs to do its share, especially in terms of water conservation. We need to understand that making our water supply sustainable is the responsibility of all - government, the business sector, and the public. Remember, conserving water does not only save the environment and sustain a valuable but finite resource; it will also allow you to save money on your utility bill.

We also need to rethink our response to similar problems in the future. Our lack of preparedness resulted in the suffering of our people. We cannot allow that to happen again. Denying our people safe water is denying them livelihood, a decent quality of life, and it is tantamount to denying them their fundamental human right.



**PANANAW
NI MANNY V**
Manny Villar

Ano'ng problema ng tubig natin?

IPNAGDIWANG ang World Water Day 2019 nitong Marso 22. Kakatwa naman na sa mismong araw na itinakda ng United Nations (UN) ang pagbibigay-diin sa pandaigdigang layunin na matiyak ang tuluy-tuloy at maayos na pangangasiwa sa tubig, maraming Pilipino sa Metro Manila at Rizal ang dalawang linggo nang problemado sa kawalan ng tubig, na labis na nakaperhuwisyo sa kanilang mga buhay. Sa katunayan, hanggang ngayon, may mga barangay pa rin sa Metro Manila ang hindi normal ang supply ng tubig.

Biglaan at talagang nakawiwindang ang water service interruption na nagsimula nitong Marso 6, kaya naman marami ang hindi nakapag-imbak ng tubig. Problema rin ang malinis na mainom dahil maging ang mga water refilling

stations ay hindi makapagserbisyo sa kanilang mga customer. Hindi rin makaligo ang mga tao para pumasok sa trabaho o eskuwela. At ang pinakamalala, naging malaking problema ang sanitasyon, partikular na sa maraming taga-Mandaluyong na pinakamatinding naapektuhan ng kawalan ng tubig.

Makadurog-puso naman ang eksena ng ilang oras na mahabang pagpila ng mga taong sasalok ng tubig mula sa swimming pool ng isang condominium tower. Napipilitan ding magpuyat ang mga tao, o kaya naman ay gumising nang napakaaga upang maihilera ang kanilang mga balde sa mga nirarasyunan ng tubig ng mga truck ng bombero. Saludo ako sa ating mga bombero na walang pagod na umaayuda sa mga residente, kahit pa sa mga oras na dapat ay natutulog sila.

Ano nga ba ang nangyari? Idinahilan ng Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) ang kabiguan ng mapagana kaagang isang treatment facility, at nagdulot ng "domino effect" ang maling mga hakbangin sa pagresolba sa kakapusan sa tubig.

Humarap ang presidente ng Manila Water sa imbestigasyon ng Kongreso at ipinaliwanag na noong Marso 6, naabot na ng La Mesa Dam ang critical level nitong 69 na metro, kaya hindi na sila uubrang makapagpalabas ng 150 milyong litro kada araw mula sa nasabing reservoir.

Idineklara na ng UN bilang pangunahing

karapatang pantao ang "right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation". Ang karapatan ng sangkatauhan sa tubig "entitles everyone, without discrimination, 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."

Para mas malinaw, kumpara sa naranasan natin sa Metro Manila, bilyun-bilyong tao ang mas matindi pa ang sinasabaka sa kawalan ng tubig. Hanggang ngayon, marami pa ring tao ang walang "safe water" - their households, schools, workplaces, farms and factories struggling to survive and thrive". Ayon sa water.org, siyam na milyong Pilipino ang umaasa pa rin sa tradisyunal, hindi ligtas, at hindi nasusustain na pinagkukunan ng tubig, at 19 na milyon ang walang access sa pinabuting sanitasyon.

Pero hindi katanggap-tanggap ang nangyaring krisis sa tubig. Nailantad nito ang kabiguan sa pagpapalano at ang kawalang kakayahan na resolbahin ang mga problemang gaya ng nangyari. Nauunawaan ko ang galit ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte. Lagi niyang pinoproteksiyunan ang publiko. Naaalala ko nang utusan niya ang mga ahensiya ng pamahalaan na pagbutihin ang kanilang serbisyo dahil ayaw niyang ilang oras na pumipili ang mga tao para makamtan ang serbisyo ng karapat-dapat sa kanila. Sang-ayon ako sa kanya.

Kailangan nating bilisan ang pagtatayo ng mga imprastrukturang kinakailangan upang makaagapay sa lumalaking pangangailangan. Ang lumalagong ekonomiyang tulad ng sa Pilipinas ay inaasahan nang mangangailangan ng mas maraming mapagkukunan (tubig, kuryente). Ang ilan sa mga plano sa pagpapalawak ng ating water sources ay nailatag ilang dekada na ang nakalipas. Kaya naman nakapagtata kang hindi pa naipatutupad ang mga ito hanggang ngayon.

Pero mahalagang makipagtulungan ang publiko sa pagtitipid ng tubig. Kailangan nating maintindihan na ang pagkakaroon ng tiyak at tuluy-tuloy na supply ng tubig ay responsibilidad ng lahat sa atin - ng gobyerno, ng mga negosyante, at ng publiko. Sa katunayan, hindi lang kalikasan ang nakikinabang sa matipid na paggamit natin ng tubig, dahil nababawasan din ang binabayaran natin sa nakokonsumo nating tubig buwan-buwan.

Dapat din nating pag-isipang mabuti ang ating pagtugon sa mga parehong suliranin sa hinaharap. Ang kawalan natin ng paghahanda ay nagdulot ng hindi birong perhuwisyo sa mamamayan. Hindi natin dapat payagang maulit ito. Ang pagkakait sa mamamayan ng malinis na tubig ay pagkakait din sa kanila ng kabuhayan, ng disenteng uri ng pamumuhay, at katumbas ng pagkakait sa kanila ng kanilang pangunahing karapatan bilang tao.



BULGAR

BOSES ng PINOY, MATA ng BAYAN

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Solusyon sa krisis sa tubig

DEPT. OF WATER, OKS — PALASYO

PABOR ang administrasyong Duterte kaugnay sa panukalang paglikha ng Department of Water upang matugunan ang kakapusan ng suplay ng tubig at epekto ng El Niño.

Sa isinagawang 36th cabinet meeting sa Palasyo, kamakalawa, sinabi ni Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo na kailangan ang lehislatura para sa pagbuo ng bagong ahensiya at tinalakay din ang pagtatag ng Department of Disaster Resilience.

Bukod dito, tinalakay din ang dredging ng mga daanan ng tubig, pagpapalit ng mga tunnel at aqueduct, paglagay ng mga water tank sys-

tem sa mga ospital at paglalaan ng pondo para sa pagpapatayo ng water treatment plants. Una nang ipinankala ni Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto Perina ang pagbuo ng water department.

Ipinrisinta naman ni National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Undersecretary Adoracion Navarro ang panukalang Executive Order na magpapaigting sa National Water Resources Board (NWRB).

Sa ilalim ng panukalang EO, pag-iisahin na ang NWRB at River Basin Control Office bilang National Water Management Council (NWMC).

Kaugnay nito, magkakaroon na ng streamlining at mapag-iisa ang planning at

regulation sa lahat ng water at river basins sa buong bansa at kalaunan ibabalangkas

ang National Water Management Framework Plan.

(Mylene Alfonso)



NWRB MAGSASAGAWA NG REGULAR INSPECTION SA MGA DEEP WELL NA NASASAKUPAN NG MANILA WATER

AYON kay Dr. Seville D. David Jr., Executive Director ng National Water Resources Board (NWRB), 97% ng "raw water" na nagmumula sa Angat Dam ay ginagamit sa Metro Manila at ng magsasaka para sa patubig sa 28,000 hectares ng bukiran sa Bulacan at Pampanga, 2% ginagamit sa flood control at 1% sa ground water.

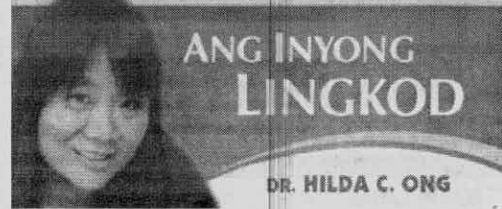
Nagbigay ng pahayag naman ang Monitoring and Enforcement Division, Engineer Gino Mangosing, "ang pagkuha ng tubig sa pamamagitan ng mga hinukay na deep wells ay ipinagbabawal na sa buong Metro Manila gayundin sa ilang bahagi ng mga lalawigan ng Bulacan (Guiguinto, Bocaue, Marilao at Meycauayan) at Cavite (Das-mariñas), samantalang kinakailangan ng kaukulang permiso mula sa NWRB para sa ibang bahagi ng bansa."

Pinayagan ng NWRB ang pansamantalang pagku-

ha ng karagdagan tubig ng Manila Water mula sa 13 deepwells upang maaksyunan ng Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) ang PEKENG WATER CRISIS. Ano nga ba ang tootong problema ng Manila Water?

Wala naman water shortage, kung titingnan natin ang pinakahuling ulat ng Hydrological Information ng Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRRMC), nasa 194.77 meters ang lebel ng tubig sa Angat Dam noong March 27, 2019 (8:00AM), kulang ng 17.23 meters base sa 212 normal high water level (NHWL). Humigit pa sa Minimum Operating Water Level (MOWL) of 180 meters.

Base sa ulat ng Manila Water, sinimulan na nila patak-buhin ang labing-tatlong deepwells sa iba't ibang lugar na nasasakupan nito. Nito lamang Marso 27, higit sa 15 na mil-



DR. HILDA C. ONG

yong litro ng tubig kada araw (MLD) na ang karagdagang supply na nakukuha mula sa mga deepwell at tinatayang mas marami pang supply ng tubig galing sa mga deepwell ang madaragdag sa mga sunod na buwan.

Bago pa man patak-buhin ang bagong deepwells, higit sa 9 MLD na supply ang nang-gagaling mula sa limang deepwells sa Curayao, Rodriguez. Inaasahang aabot sa 30 MLD ang supply na mang-gagaling sa mga deepwell sa katapusan ng Marso ngayong taong ito.

Sa kasalukuyan, aabot sa 100-150 MLD ang kinakailangang karagdagang supply ng Manila Water para sa mga kostumer nito kumpara sa alokasyon na 1600 MLD na nakukuha nito mula sa Angat Dam. Bukod sa mga deepwells, sinisikap ng Manila na mapunan ang dagdag na pangangailangan ng supply sa pamamagitan ng Cardona Water Treatment na ngayon

ay nagbibigay na ng 23 MLD. Nagsimula na ring makakuha ng dagdag na tubig mula sa crossborder flows ng Maynilad na ngayon ay umaabot sa 11 MLD.

Sa ngayon ay 97% ng mga kostumer ng Manila Water ang may tubig na sa loob ng 8-12 oras na umaabot sa unang palapag ng mga kabahayan. Patuloy pa ring isinasagawa ang mga operational adjustments at network solutions tulad ng paglalagay ng line boosters at paglalagay ng mga karagdagang liinya upang mas maging tuloy-tuloy ang supply ng tubig sa mga malalayo at matataas na lugar na sineserbisuhan ng Manila Water.

Tuwig ika-15 at bago magtapos ang buwan ng Abril at Mayo, ang NWRB ay magsasagawa ng inspection at pagmonitor at sa mga strategic areas, water discharge, water quality ng drinking water nakukuha mula sa deep wells.



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757 tarantulas seized at NAIA

The Bureau of Customs (BOC) confiscated 757 live tarantulas that arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport

(NAIA) Central Mail Exchange Center on Monday from Poland.

The tarantulas, valued at P310,900 and declared as "collection items," were hidden in nine boxes of oatmeal and cookies sent by Wojciech Pakasz of Poland to Jesse Camaro of Caloocan City, the BOC said.

Camaro was arrested after claiming the boxes and was charged before the Pasay prosecutor's office with violating Republic Acts 10863 (Customs Modernization and Tariff Act) and 9147 (Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act) yesterday, NAIA-BOC district collector Mimel Talusan said.

- Rudy Santos



Kiss from a tarantula: Airport Customs foil attempt to smuggle lethal arachnids

BY RECTO MERCENE [@rectomercene](#)

WILDLIFE trafficking remains a lucrative business mainly fueled by collectors willing to pay top money, no matter if it involves the smuggling of deadly arachnids.

Customs agents at the Central Mail Exchange Center (CMEC) reported on Tuesday that they had foiled an attempt to smuggle into the country some 700 live tarantula spiders, widely considered by wildlife specialists as an endangered species.

Customs District Collector Mimel Talusan said the tarantulas, valued at P300,000, came from Warsaw, Poland, on April 1, 2019, and misdeclared as "collection items."

An inspection, he said, revealed that smaller tarantulas were placed inside plastic tubes, while the bigger ones were placed in plastic film carriers, and concealed inside nine boxes of oatmeal and cookies.

Talusan said the listed consignee was identified as Jesse Camaro of Caloocan City, while the sender was Wojciech Pakasz of Poland. Camaro was arrested after attempting to claim the live contraband.

He was brought to the Pasay City Prosecutors Office for inquest in violation of Republic Act 10863 (Customs Modernization and Tariff Act, and RA 9147 (Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act.

Camaro is facing imprisonment of six months and one day to one year, and a fine of P1000 to P100,000 if found guilty, Talusan said.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) at airport said that all trading, collecting, hunting and possession of wildlife without proper documentation is punishable by law.

The airport Customs bureau said from 2018 up to present, it has turned over a total of 2,152 wildlife and endangered species, including 250 geckos, 254 live corals and reptiles to the DENR.

All were intercepted through air parcels, baggage and shipments.

Earlier this year, airport Customs personnel seized 63 Iguanas, chameleon and bearded dragons.



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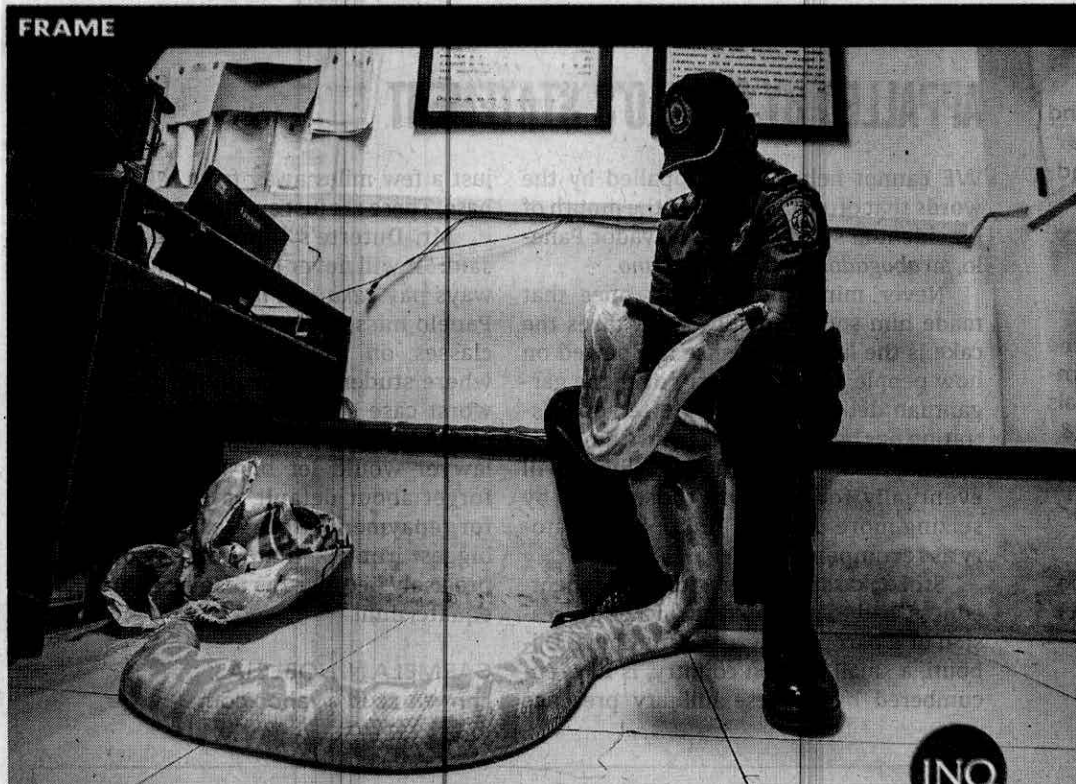
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UNWANTED VISITOR An albino Burmese python ends up at the Batasan police station in Quezon City after it was found by a Barangay Batasan resident. The snake was to be turned over to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. —JAM STA ROSA



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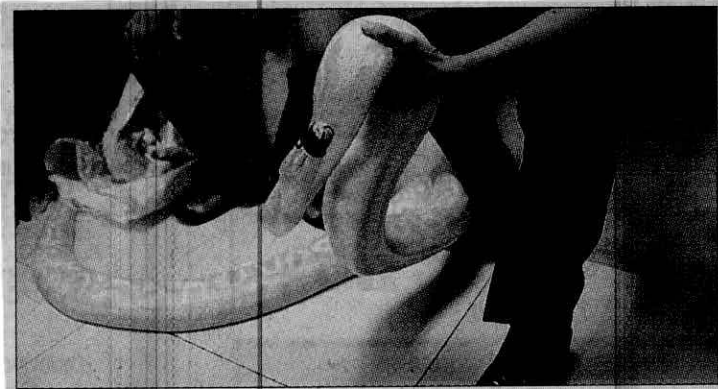


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A policeman holds a Burmese python caught by Francis Palamos in Barangay Batasan Hills, Quezon City before dawn yesterday. Palamos told police he was attending to guests at his father's wake when the python slithered out of a nearby creek. The python was turned over to the Quezon City Wildlife Center.

MICHAEL VARCAS



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

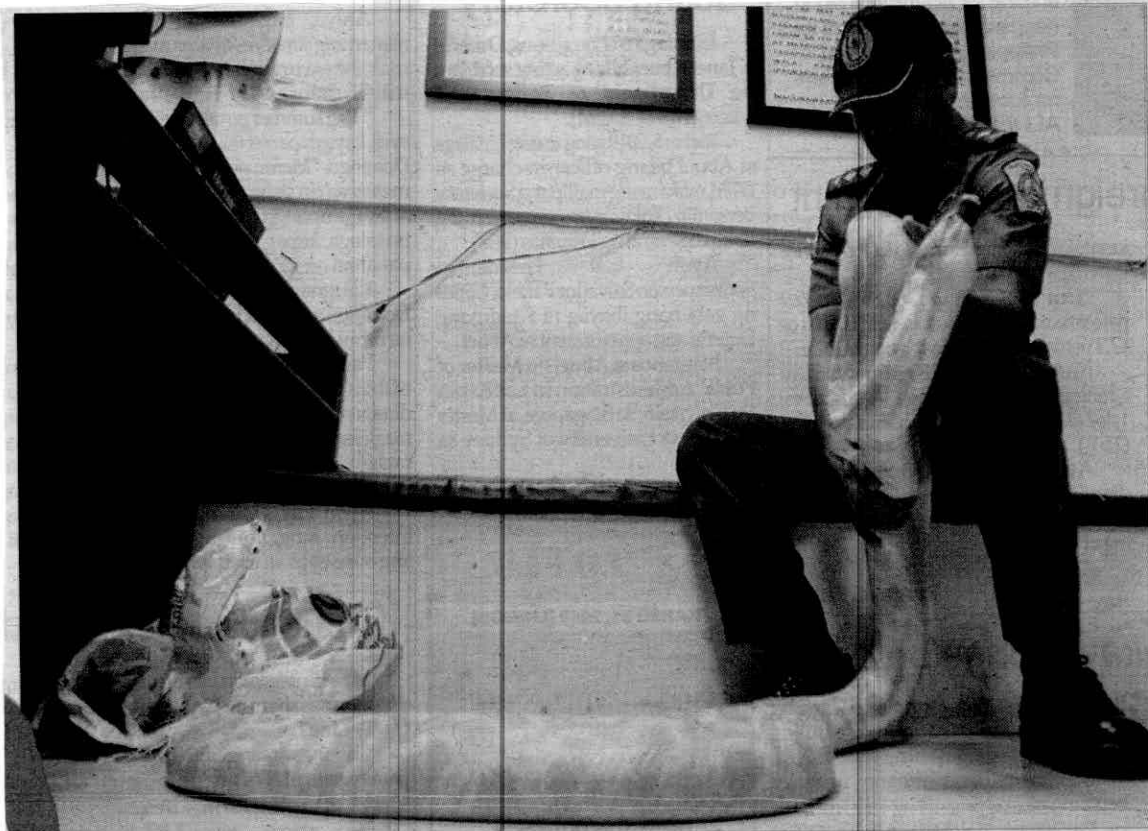
Balita

ANG NANGUNGUNANG PAHAYAGANG TAGALOG SA BANGSA



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KAKAIBANG HULI Maingat na hinawakan ng pulis ang 12-talampakang Albino Burmese python na dinala sa Quezon City Police Station 6 sa Batasan Hills, matapos na matagpuan sa isang creek sa Bgy. Kalayaan B, bandang 3:00 ng umaga kahapon. **MARK BALMORES**



Medina shores up its marine resources

THE environmental situation in Medina, a fishing town in Misamis Oriental province, has been experiencing a 180-degree turn after the municipal government embarked on a comprehensive marine protection and conservation program last year.

According to Medina Mayor Donato Chan, the local government has been implementing monthly cleanups in all coastal barangays, and conducting seaborne and foot patrols to enforce ordinances against illegal fishing which include prohibition of non-residents from fishing in municipal waters, and the use only of hook and line fishing at fish aggregate device.

A partnership with the Metro Pacific Investments Foundation, the Municipality of Medina has been reaping the benefits of the Marine Protection, Inspection and Conservation which has helped restore the balance of the area's marine ecosystem.

Incepted in January 2018, the project trained and deputized 27 volunteers who later became the MPIC Guardians who were instrumental in the enforcement of fisheries-related ordinances.

Chan noted that the program has made positive economic and social impact on the community, evident in the increase of daily catch of fishermen of up to 10 kgs.



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PEOPLES JOURNAL
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**SAY MO
ATTORNEY?**



**By ATTY. PERSIDA
RUEDA-ACOSTA
KGG. na Chief Acosta,**

Nais naming magtayo ng sari-sari store o tindahan malapit sa landfill na matatagpuan sa aming lugar sapagkat alam namin na maraming bibili na mangangalakal dito. May batas ba na nagbabawal sa aming plano?

**Lubos na gumagalang,
Nic**

Dear Nic,

Para sa inyong kaalaman, ang batas na na-

Pagtayo ng tindahan malapit sa landfill

kasasaklaw sa inyong katanungan ay ang Republic Act (R.A.) No. 9003 o mas kilala sa tawag na Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000. Nakasaad sa Section 48 (15) nito na: "Section 48. Prohibited Acts -- The following acts are prohibited.

(15) The construction of any establishment within (200) meters from open dumps or controlled dumps, or sanitary landfill;"

Ayon sa Rule III ng Implementing Rules and Regulations ng nasabing batas, ang kahulugan ng sanitary landfill ay "waste disposal site designed, constructed, operated and maintained in a manner

that exerts engineering control over significant potential environmental impacts arising from the development and operation of the facility."

Kaugnay nito, ipinagbabawal ng batas ang pagtatayo ng establisimyento sa mga open dumps, controlled dumps, o sanitary landfill. Nakasaad din sa batas na ito na ang sinumang lumbag ay maparusahan ng kulong ng isang (1) taon hanggang anim (6) na taon. Maaari rin silang magmula ng halagang P100,000 hanggang P1,000,000. Maaaring maipataw ang parehong kaparusahan batay sa diskresyon ng korte.

Nawa ay nasagot namin ang inyong mga katanungan. Nais naming ipaalala sa inyo na ang opinyon na ito ay nakabase sa inyong mga naisalaysay sa inyong liham at sa pagkakaintindi namin dito. Maaaring maiba ang opinyon kung mayroong karagdagang impormasyon na ibibigay. Mas mainam kung personal kayong sasangkutan sa isang abogado.

Maraming salamat sa inyong patuloy na pagtitiwala.

**Ang inyong Lingkod
Bayan,
DR. PERSIDA V.
RUEDA-ACOSTA, DSD
Punong Manananggol
Pambayan**



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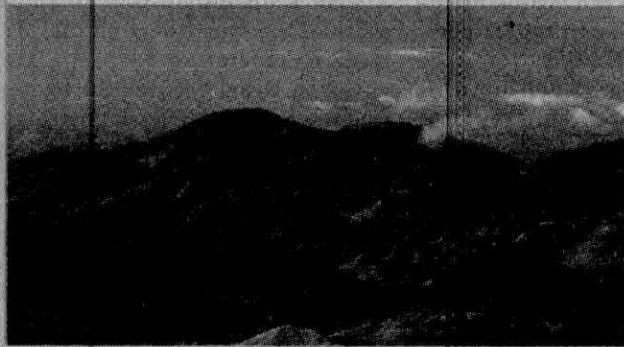
DAVAO: STA. CRUZ, DAVAO DEL SUR

Sta. Cruz prepares for nature festival while Mt. Apo trail temporarily closed due to El Niño

STA. CRUZ town in Davao del Sur is gearing up for the annual Pista sa Kinaiyahan (Feast of Nature) on April 13-14, which will feature clean-up activities at Mt. Loay and the coast and a video. Meanwhile, the temporary closure of the Mt. Apo trail took effect April 1 to avoid potential forest fires and risks to climbers' health due to the prevailing El Niño phenomenon. The regional office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) announced earlier in March the closure of all the other Mt. Apo trails in Magpet, Makilala, and Kidapawan.

INCOME

Meanwhile, the Sta. Cruz local government, through the Investment Promotions and Tourism Office, turned over last Monday the revenue shares of the indigenous community and the DENR-Integrated Protected Area Fund (IPAF) from trekking fees generated in the second half of 2018. The Kapiid Ka Banua received the share for indigenous people amounting to P526,440.50. The DENR-IPAF received P373,537.50 intended for local operations, and P124,512.50 for the national office.



BW FILE PHOTO



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MT. APO TRAIL ISINARA SA TREKKERS

DAVAO DEL SUR
- **PANSAMANTANG** isinara sa mga trekker ang pamoso na may 9,692 feet (2,954 meters) na taas na Mount Apo simula noong Lunes, Abril 1.

Sa ipinalabas na temporary closure order

ng pamunuan ng Protected Area Management Board noong Marso 28, ay isinara ang Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur trails na sakop ng mga bayan ng Sta. Cruz, Bansalan at sa Digos.

Ipinagbabawal ang pag-akyat, trekking,

camping at iba pang activities upang maiwasan ang sinasabing forest fires dahil sa matinding init ng panahon na epekto ng El Niño.

Noong Marso 7, naunang isinara ang North Cotabato Trails ng Mt. Apo dahil na rin

sa nakaambang forest fire.

Base sa tala, ekta-ektaryang forest na bahagi ng 80, 864 hectares ng Mt. Apo ang nasunog noong 2016 kung saan nawalan ng tirahan ang mga ibon kabilang na ang ilang Philippine eagle.

Pinayuhan naman ang mga trekker na mag-refund o magpare-schedule ng plano sa pag-akyat sa Mt. Apo.

Sinumang grupo ng trekker na lumabag sa kautusan ay may karampatang parusa na mahaharap sa kasong paglabag sa RA 9237 (Mt. Apo Protected Area Act of 2003).

MHAR BASCO



Baguio promotes indigenous waste management

By Aldwin Quitasol

Long before the engineered sanitary landfills and other garbage collecting schemes were utilized in the country, the indigenous people of the Cordillera were already practicing proper and ecological

way of waste management.

Their method was showcased in the exhibit called *ayyew* or the Igorot culture of zero waste and recycling.

Women members of the *Ayyew-Ubbo* Network, a group that promotes the reduction of waste through indigenous means, presided in the holding of the exhibit that started the other day and will end today.

She said this is their contribution to the city which is currently being hounded by congestion, housing problems and economic hardships.

Their displays consist of agricultural and ornamental products that were raised using vermicomposting where vermiworms or African nightcrawlers feed on vegetable peelings and other biodegradable waste and turn them into nutrient-filled gardening materials.

Gerry Cacho, chairman of *Tongtongan Ti Umili*, a community discussion group based

in Metro Baguio, said the practice of *ayyew* is very important in minimizing the volume of garbage in the city.

She said this is their contribution to the city which is currently being hounded by congestion, housing problems and economic hardships.

Cacho added the Igorots who migrated to Baguio brought with them the culture of *ayyew* through *inayan* or resentment to throw away something that is still usable or with value.

She also said the Igorots have the habit of feeding their leftover foods to their pets instead of throwing them away.

This system is proven to be more economical and environment-friendly than throwing them in garbage yards.

Also, to minimize garbage, Igorots do not throw away their used clothing but give them to other members of their families especially the younger ones.



Native style Baguio women display their products derived from their practice of *ayyew*, an indigenous way of zero waste management and recycling. AQUITASOL



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Department of Environment and Natural Resources
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BOSES ng PINOY, MATA ng BAYAN

KAMAKAILAN lamang ay nilinis ang Estero de Binondo bilang bahagi ng clean up drive at cleaning operation kung saan inabot ito ng kalahating araw sa tulong ng iba't ibang ahensiya.

Kaya lang, matapos ang paglilinis nito ay nagsibalikan din umano ang mga illegal vendor para ipagpatuloy ang kanilang pagtitinda.

'Yung tipong kalilinis lang ng estero, pero ang mga tindero, agad nang bumalik para magbenta rito na pinaniniwalaang isa sa mga dahilan kaya lalong dumarami ang basurang itinatapon ng mga tao.

Gayunman, ang buwelta ng mga nagtitinda, may binabayaran umano sila sa munisipyo kaya sila nakapagtitinda rito ngunit, ang sagot ng munisipyo, matagal nang isyu ang ganu'ng kalakaran at kung totoo man ito ay kanila namang iimbestigahan.

Alam nating lahat na posible ang mga ganitong pamamaraan kung saan kinukurakot ng ilan ang perang ibinabayad nila dahil alam nilang madaling kakagat ang mga ito, lalo na at ito ang kanilang kabuhayan na pinagkukunan ng ipinantutustos sa kanilang pamilya.

Pero, sa totoo lang, ang pagiging malinis o pagtatapon sa tama ay hindi maibabase sa mga nagtitinda sa nasabing lugar dahil kung walang disiplina ang indibidwal kahit saan pa siya



BOSES

NI RYAN B. SISON

Mga iligal na tindero sa Estero de Binondo, bumalik matapos ang paglilinis dito!

bumili ng partikular na bagay kung itatapon niya ito sa estero, siya na mismo ang may pagkukulang at kasalanan.

Samantala, ang panawagan natin sa lahat kung hindi tayo makatutulong sa paglilinis dito, mainam kung huwag na tayong magtapon kung saan-saan, hindi naman siguro mahirap maghanap ng basurahan, maliit o malaki, mas mainam kung dito ilalagay nang sa gayun ay hindi bumalik sa atin sa oras ng kalamidad.

Matuto tayong alagaan ang ating kapaligiran dahil ito ay atin din namang napakikibangan!

Para sa inyong opinyon, sumbong, hinaing o nais hingin tulong ito ang pagkakataong marinig ang inyong boses, sumulat lamang sa BOSES ni RYAN SISON at ipadala sa Bulgar Bldg. 538 Quezon Avenue, Quezon City o mag-email sa bores.bulgar@gmail.com.



'Increase support for climate adaptation projects'

By JANVIC MATEO

The Philippines has joined three other Asian countries in calling for increased support for climate adaptation projects in developing countries.

Representatives from Bhutan, Mongolia and Vietnam signed a joint declaration with the Philippines during a learning exchange program in Quezon City last week.

In the declaration, the four countries called for the highest political commitment to combat climate change and its adverse impacts, and to pursue green growth as a matter of urgent priority for Asia-Pacific countries.

"(We) declare our strong solidarity with countries

such as ours that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and underscore the need to support efforts aimed to enhance adaptive capacity and build resilience," read the declaration.

"Recognize the need for countries to deliver enhanced and updated Nationally Determined Contributions by 2020 – when ambition updates need to come – that are fully integrated with our national development strategies as we actively explore enhanced assistance and cooperation on climate finance, capacity-building and technology transfer, to better enable climate action," it added.

The four countries also called for increased project support and the realization of the \$100 billion annual funding target for the Green Climate Fund, which was es-

tablished to provide financial mechanism to climate adaptation projects in vulnerable countries.

In the declaration, the four countries said the successful replenishment of the GCF would be an expression of global solidarity and partnership, stressing the need for it to be urgently allocated to adaptation and mitigation priorities of climate-vulnerable communities.

The group also committed to ensure that all stakeholders respect the principle of country ownership during the country programme development process for the GCF, as well as recognized the role of the private sector, civil society, academe and other stakeholders to help governments succeed in accessing climate finance to combat climate change.



editorial

Climate-proofing PHL agri sector

LESS than two weeks after the state weather bureau announced that the Philippines will experience a full-blown El Niño, the Department of Agriculture reported that the weather phenomenon has destroyed crops valued at P150 million (See, *"Initial damage to farms from El Niño hits P150M," BUSINESSMIRROR, March 4, 2019*). The value jumped to P1.3 billion two weeks after the DA first came out with its damage report (See, *"Losses from El Niño now P1.3 billion," BUSINESSMIRROR, March 20, 2019*). The figure will be updated by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, which indicated that the weather phenomenon's damage to crops rose to P2.68 billion (See, *"El Niño farm damage doubles to P2.68 billion," BUSINESSMIRROR, March 28, 2019*).

The latest report from the DA revealed that the losses incurred by farmers and fishermen have already reached P4.35 billion (See, *"Farmers, fisherfolk bear P4.35-B loss from El Niño," BUSINESSMIRROR, March 31, 2019*). In just a span of a month, the government has seen how destructive a full-blown El Niño can be, even if the state weather bureau has characterized the latest episode as "weak." As El Niño results in below normal rainfall conditions, which is bad for rice crops, farmers planting the staple food bore the brunt of its wrath. Rice crops destroyed by the weather phenomenon accounted for a huge chunk of the damage inflicted on the agriculture sector.

Unfortunately, the damage could still worsen in the coming days as El Niño is expected to last until June. Citing the state weather bureau, the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) said 51 provinces will experience drought and 32 will have to endure a dry spell by the end of April. Of the 51 provinces seen experiencing drought by the end of April, around 27 are in Luzon. Based on the results of an assessment by the Department of Science and Technology, which was released on March 19, provinces that will experience dry spell are mostly in Central Luzon—considered the country's rice granary.

The expected delay in the onset of the rainy season due to El Niño could also discourage farmers from planting rice. Harvest will end in late April or early May, and most farmers will begin preparing their land around that time. The current rice inventory may be ample but supply in the second half could become problematic, particularly during the lean months.

The government has been banking on the rice trade liberalization law to ease supply problems that may be caused by the weather phenomenon. Based on the movements of international prices, there is enough rice stocks for Filipino traders who want to import. But how the government could ensure that these stocks would reach consumers is another matter. Nothing stops traders from profiting from the misery of their countrymen as hoarders are seldom punished. Because rice can be stored for a long time, traders are not also under pressure to unload their stocks.

El Niño will also affect other farm subsectors, such as poultry. When the weather phenomenon hit the country in 2010, poultry growers complained that they incurred losses because El Niño caused broilers to stunt and weigh less. Poultry growers are again facing the possibility of earning less this year not only because of El Niño but also because of the supply glut in recent weeks that has sent farm-gate prices on a downward spiral.

While the damage that may be inflicted by El Niño on food production and the farm sector may be "minimal," this should not make officials complacent. (See, *"Neda: El Niño will have minimal impact on GDP," BUSINESSMIRROR, March 29, 2019*). What is crucial is for the government to ensure that interventions to mitigate its impact are in place. Because banks are hesitant to extend credit to farmers, the government must be able to provide loans carrying low interest rates to farmers. Mechanisms that will prevent profiteers from taking advantage of El Niño should also be set up.

The government's ultimate goal should be to "climate-proof" the agriculture sector. Weather phenomena like El Niño and strong typhoons make it difficult for the government to strengthen the farm sector because it would have to focus on rehabilitation efforts. Also, funds for rebuilding damaged farms should be channeled to initiatives aimed at increasing productivity.

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"MARCOPPER" PAGE 1/2

The Marcopper mine spill and the unending wait for justice

BY NIKKO DIZON, VERA FILES

Photos by Erik de Castro
(First of two parts)

BOAC, Marinduque. – The people of this island province have endured the brunt of the worst mining disaster in the country, but the bigger heartbreak in their two-decade long quest for justice might just be the wait for redress that is not sure to come.

There's nothing more tragic than to hear stories repeatedly told, but nothing done. It's been 23 years since March 24, 1996, when a badly-sealed drainage tunnel in Marcopper Mining Corporation's Taipan pit burst, spilling 1.6 million cubic meters of toxic mine tailings that choked Boac River, flooded villages and killed marine life.

One village, Barangay Hinapulan, was buried in six feet of muddy floodwater, displacing 400 families. Cows, pigs and sheep, including pets, were poisoned and died. Crops were destroyed. Boac River, a source of sustenance for surrounding communities, was declared unsafe.

Three years before that, the company's Maguila-guila siltation dam also burst, flooding the town of Mogpog, where two children drowned in the mine waste.

Soon after the mining disaster, the United States Geological Survey said in a study that the Makulapnit and Maguila-guila siltation dams were in danger of collapsing.

In 2001, Canadian research firm Klohn Crippen – hired by Marcopper's Canadian mother company Placer Dome Inc. as consultant – issued a similar warning.

"They are a clear and present danger to us," said Joven Lilles of the dams. Lilles is the provincial government's environmental management specialist and is part of the province's disaster management council.

Catherine Coumans, research and Asia-Pacific program coordinator of Mining Watch Canada told Vera Files in an email that a lot of mine waste remains at the mine site. Marcopper started operations in Marinduque in 1969.



Abandoned Building. A run-down office Building inside the Marcopper mining area, abandoned in 1997, after Placer Dome, Inc. left the Philippines following the mine spill.

"The acute danger is being swept away by the waste and drowning in it," said Coumans, who had lived on the island for two years before the 1996 mine spill.

"The longer-term harm is from the toxicity of the waste," Coumans said of the highly acidic and metal laden tailings. "It is extremely environmentally toxic and can destroy productive ecosystems that people rely on."

The last known inspection of the Marcopper property was done on January 23, 2017 by the office of Marinduque Rep. Lord Allan Jay Velasco, together with engineers and geologists of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and Mines and Geosciences Bureau's regional office.

The team discovered a leak in the Upper Makulapnit Dam and heavy siltation in the Maguila-guila spillway tunnel. That prompted Velasco to ask the MGB to regularly inspect structures within the

Marcopper site, a task that's not easy because the area is off-limits. But the MGB and provincial officials, managed to find ways to get information.

The Velasco briefing paper listed among MGB's concerns:

- "possible seepage" from the Tapian Pit observed at the Lower Makulapnit Dam.

- monitored seepage in Hinapulan Creek from the plug installed after the 1996 mine spill. "The bright blue discoloration can be attributed to the presence of heavy metal, particularly copper, in the water."

- The Makulapnit Bypass Tunnel was described as a "problematic MMC structure." Fresh water was leaking from a busted pipe and a build-up of water inside the tunnel "might lead to an eventual flooding of downstream communities along Boac River."

But what "needs the most immediate attention," the MGB team said, is the Maguila-guila siltation dam as also pointed out by the USGS and Khlon Crippen reports 20 years ago.

"Since the water flowing through the spillway has no viable exit point due to the siltation clog, there is a possibility that the water pressure will build up and force its way out through the existing structures, causing damage to the latter," the briefing paper said.

After its last visit to the MMC premises, the MGB team found out water has decreased to ground level. "However, there is still an increased amount of siltation inside the facility which may clog the hole of the down-drain tunnel," the briefing paper added.

In 1990, residents of Mogpog town, comprised of 13 villages, had opposed the building of the Maguila-guila dam, but Marcopper was allowed to construct it the next year. The dam was needed as another repository for the San Antonio pit's waste which the Tapian pit would not be able to hold.

(B)



Malaya Business Insight

35 PAGE UPPER LOWER BANNER STORY EDITORIAL CARTOON

Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

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"Marcopper" PAGE 2/2

Marcopper denied responsibility when the Maguila-guila dam burst in 1993. Mining officials blamed an unusual rainfall brought by a typhoon. But the Velasco paper noted that when the dam was rebuilt, "an overflow was added for the first time, in an implicit acknowledgment of faulty engineering."

Repairing dams, tricky ownership issues

MGB's regional director Roland de Jesus said his office plans to secure the dams and waterways near the mining site. However, the

safety features, estimated to cost some P25 million, will be built outside the Marcopper property because "legalities" prevent even government officials from entering the site.

De Jesus said P5 million has been earmarked for the safety measures' design. With no project bidder, the MGB initiated a negotiated one "to start the ball rolling."

"There's a continuous monitoring being done in the area. There's sufficient time to install the prevention design," De Jesus said.

But who is really responsible for the dams' repair?

"This question is critically important," Coumans said.

It leads to the complicated and tricky ownership of the Marcopper mining site, the structures inside it, and everything left behind by MMC and Placer Dome, Inc., and Placer Dome Technical Services Inc., a subsidiary set up by Placer Dome in 1997 to clean up the mine spill.

Placer Dome, Inc. owned 40 percent of Marcopper shares but divested from it a year after the mine spill. Five years later, it closed its Philippine office. In 2006, the Toronto-based Barrick Gold Corporation, the world's largest gold mining company, acquired Placer Dome, Inc.'s remaining common shares.

Coumans said Placer Dome divested to F Holdings, known as the Bernardino Group, "through its wholly-owned Cayman Islands subsidiary—MR Holdings."

The Supreme Court, in a 2012 ruling, described MR Holdings, Ltd. as "a non-resident foreign corporation, organized and existing under the laws of Cayman Island."

"It is a subsidiary corporation of Placer Dome, Inc. (Placer Dome), a foreign corporation which owns 40% of respondent Marcopper-Mining Corporation," it said.

Coumans said she would have been unaware that MR Holdings was exercising ownership over the Marcopper property "if not for the lawsuit by the Solid Bank to recover money it had lent Marcopper before the Boac Spill."

She said MR Holdings, possibly still the legal owner of assets and mineral rights at the site, has not maintained the area and neither has F Holdings.

"Unless Marinduqueños find a way to hold MR Holdings' parent company, now presumably Barrick Gold, to account, the state will likely have to step in to maintain the mine structures in order to protect Marinduqueños," she added.

Ghost town

More often than not, it is difficult to enter Marcopper's abandoned mine site. Provincial officers like Lilles had been denied entry several times. Even then Environment Secretary Gina Lopez was said to not have been allowed to inspect the area.

But there was no guard in sight when Vera Files went there one afternoon in February. The guide surmised the guards may have skipped work that day.

The area looked like a ghost town. The power lines had collapsed, the wires a tangled mess on the ground. The doors of a warehouse, a backhoe, a couple of vehicles, even the crushing machinery were decaying and rusty. "MR Holdings" was painted on the primary crusher.

In its heyday, the Marcopper site was like a "city within the forest" with first class apartments and amenities, including a golf course, the guide said. No trace of that upscale community remains.

From a hill, Tapian and San Antonio pits looked like serene lakes surrounded by lush trees.

But Coumans cautioned that the bluish green water is highly toxic. "The pit water will be acidic and the strange color in the shallower areas is metal leaching, likely copper sulphate," she said.

Heavily silted with mine tailings, Boac and Mogpog rivers are both considered biologically dead. Lilles said no carabao drinks water from Mogpog river because of its high acidity. Even the coconut trees along Mogpog river have been slowly poisoned, dying one by one.

Boac river is less acidic because of the mix of "mineral and criminal water" that it gets from two different tributaries.

"The mineral, or clean, water comes from its upper tributaries in the villages of Canat, Bayote, and Tambunan. The criminal water is from Upper Hinapulan and Makulapnit, and the Bol river, all of which have been contaminated by the mine tailings," Lilles said.

(With contributions by Nancy Carvajal. To be continued.)

(This story is produced by VERA Files under a project supported by the Internews' Earth Journalism Network, which aims to empower journalists from developing countries to cover the environment more effectively. VERA Files is published by veteran Filipino journalists taking a deeper look into current Philippine issues. Vera is Latin for "true.")



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EDITORIAL

CARTOON

03 APR 2019

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Is the Senate, particularly Lacson, out to sabotage Duterte's reform program?

I AM becoming convinced more and more that indeed the Yellows in the Senate, exploiting the chamber's clubbish nature, are succeeding in sabotaging President Rodrigo Duterte's reform momentum through its power over determining the national government's budget.



RIGOBERTO D. TIGLAO

► Tiglao A5



■ **Blocking 'Build, Build, Build'? Senate removes from budget P11.3B for right-of-way projects.**

After all of Sen. Panfilo Lacson's blah-blahs, full of "pork" sound bites, but hardly any empirical proof, the Senate's interference with the budget approved by the House of Representatives resulted in billions of pesos of funds for the President's key programs being deleted from the budget for this year.

It is an indication of the Yellows' hold on media that the statement the other day of Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr., chairman of the House committee that drafts the budget after its submission by the executive department, wasn't reported at all, or was relegated to the inside pages. The *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, for example, reduced the issue of delays in the House's approval to Lacson's allegations that it was due to a feud between Andaya and his political rival in Camarines Sur, Luis Villafuerte.

The remnants of the Yellows haven't given up, strategizing that sabotaging Duterte's reforms at this stage would weaken him politically and thereby increase the opposition's chances of recovering power in 2022.

Andaya's press statement the other day explained how the budget has been mangled by the Senate. I am taking this unusual move to publish it in full, verbatim, although I have emphasized certain points through italics.

You decide if his allegations are accurate.

Andaya's statement:

"The 2019 General Appropriations Bill [GAB] has been transmitted for the signature of President Duterte, and we expect it to be signed after the Office of the President has wrapped up its review of the veto message.

We respect the veto power of the President, and we are convinced

that he will exercise such authority for the benefit of the nation and of our people. Nevertheless, we wish to clarify allegations from the Senate that the amendments introduced by the House of Representatives in the bicameral conference committee meetings were meant to debilitate the Executive Department in implementing the President's priority programs and projects.

The House of Representatives never made a move to reduce the 2019 budget for infrastructure projects as appropriated in the National Expenditure Program.

In fact, the *House introduced amendments increasing the budget for infrastructure projects* without breaching the total amount pegged by the National Expenditure Program. This would allow the Executive Department to spur economic growth through increased public expenditure. We made sure, however, that such amendments will pass the test not only of constitutionality and legality, but also of transparency and accountability.

It is the Senate that may find itself liable to accusations of sabotage when it decided, *unilaterally, to cut down the allocation for the President's Build, Build, Build program and other priority projects*. We are confident that the Office of the President would consider these items in their review and find ways on how to restore them in the President's veto message.

The items taken out of the 2019 GAB by the Senate include, but not limited to, the following:

1. Department of Transportation — P5 billion for right-of-way projects
2. Department of Public Works and Highways — P11.033 billion for right-of-way projects
3. Foreign-assisted projects under

DPWH — P2.5 billion

Depriving the government of funds for right-of-way and other infrastructure projects will surely hamper the implementation of the President's Build, Build, Build program. Construction of priority projects, including mass transit and railway systems, will be mostly affected.

4. Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda) — *P3 billion for scholarship of rebel returnees, out-of-school youths and rehabilitating drug dependents enrolled under the Universal Access to Tertiary Education*. As a result, at least 320,000 students enrolled under the program will lose their scholarships this year.

5. Department of Environment and Natural Resources — P2.254 billion for National Greening Program, which resulted in 50 percent budget cut for all PENROs except Antique.

6. Department of Foreign Affairs — P7.5 billion budget for SEA Games taken out, but P5 billion transferred to the Philippine Sports Commission and P2.5 billion nowhere to be found.

7. Miscellaneous Personnel Benefit Fund — *P13.4 billion. The MPBF is one of three sources of money paid to government personnel*. The other two are the budgets lodged under each agency and the Pension and Gratuity Fund. Under Special Provision 1, the MPBF may be used for "deficiencies in authorized salaries, bonuses, allowances, associated premiums and other similar personnel benefits of national government personnel...."

8. *Pension and Gratuity Fund — P39 billion*. This fund covers the payment for the following:

- Pension of AFP retirees; war or military veterans of the DND; retired uniformed personnel of the DILG, PC-INP, NAMRIA and Philippine Coast Guard; and other retirees of the

National Government.

- Retirement benefits for optional retirees of the National Government; retired personnel of GOCCs which are financially unable to pay said benefits; and personnel devolved to LGUs.

- Separation benefits or incentives of affected personnel pursuant to the implementation of: (i) restructuring of agencies affected by the integration and automation of the Budget Treasury and Management System and the operationalization of the Treasury Single Account; and (ii) rightsizing, merger, streamlining, abolition or privatization.

- Monetization of leave credits of National Government personnel and transferred leave credits of those devolved to the LGUs.

The details of these budget cuts were not fully discussed in the bicameral conference committee. The senators unilaterally decided on the budget cuts and realigned them with other items based on the request of individual proponents. Up to now, the Senate has yet to make public a detailed report on the proponents who recommended the individual realignments."

I certainly hope Lacson replies to Andaya's claim. I will publish his reply in my column — but only if he himself issues it, and not his incompetent yet arrogant office boy who always does the replying for him. Either Lacson is so insecure as to reply himself, or he thinks responding to columnists himself is beneath someone of his exalted stature.

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PHL-US Starts Balikatan'19 Exercise

A rough justice is better than no justice at all



Teddy Locsin Jr.
FREE FIRE

Continued from A1

THEY know climate change is happening and its effects are as bad as anticipated. And it is coming faster than estimated. We all see it; but, far more than some, most suffer it. There are none so blind as those who will not see; because then they'd make less money—and might have to spend to clean up the part of the Earth they ruined.

"The least able to withstand climate change are the most powerless to slow, let alone stop it—except in small ways. Some countries can better cope with climate change—and they are the ones most responsible for it; this explains their capacity to dampen its worst effects on themselves. Those most to blame for

climate change have the wherewithal but not the desire to do it in big ways. Preaching to the choir has gone on too long; everybody knows—even climate-change deniers. They're just lying.

"If climate action does not measure up to what is needed, we all face the same fate: diminished existence

or extinction altogether. But the most to blame will suffer less and only much later—than those the least to blame.

"Not a rich country but getting there, the Philippines has carried out effective programs for more accurate and integrated disaster anticipation, prevention and adaptation. To some extent it is a model for those endeavors. But if we have done well, others better off could do much more for others less able to soften and absorb the blows of climate change. But they think it is enough to hector the less able to listen to them pontificate. And the talk's not cheap, as holding colloquia in expensive places shows.

"If the most capable and able will not do more to slow and halt climate change, most will eventually stop talking about it and let it run its full and fatal course: in the desertification or inundation of our planet; the starvation and extinction of populations; and the end of everything worthwhile attained by

human ingenuity.

"We shall descend into the last violent throes of mankind; when the strong can stay safe but not for long. Those who cannot help themselves much against climate change—having had nothing all this time—will have even less to lose if they give up. They will be less inclined to preserve and protect a world where they have had nothing while there was plenty enough to share. And they know they will still have nothing when that plenty is kept for the same few who have always had it.

"Then indeed will that dark wisdom show its face that misery craves company. Because it is a kind of justice when those who had—but did not share with those who did not—suffer the same fate for which the former bear the greater blame. A counsel of despair but satisfying in a way. A rough justice, absent a finer one, is better than no justice at all. Thank you."

Gloom but I think well received.