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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



AS WATER FIRMS TAKE DECADES TO FIX SEWERS, CIMATU EYES ESTEROS

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Roy A. Cimatu insists that rehabilitating Manila Bay can be done, as he bared plans to target "billionaire" esteros to bring down the coliform level in the country's historic body of water. This, even as he acknowledged that the real, long-term solution is for the private water concessionaires to fulfill their commitment to fix sewer lines in their respective areas in order to prevent the discharge of dirty water into Manila Bay.

"The long-term plan is the presence of the sewer lines all over Metro Manila. This is the mandate given to the concessionaires, Maynilad and Manila Water. The completion of all this will be in 2037. That is our problem," Cimatu said.

Since 2037 is a long way off, Cimatu explained his agency needed to do something in the meantime. "Unless we can accelerate this one... We need to start really. We should shorten this as much as possible. We should do something. The problem is coming from esteros in Metro Manila. The condition of the esteros, if I will describe it, we have two billionaire esteros," he said, referring to the coliform level of the water.

The former Armed Forces Chief of Staff said he and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will find a way to prevent the direct discharge of untreated wastewater into at least four esteros in Metro Manila, all of which lead out to the Board Walk area in Manila Bay, while waiting for the private water concessionaires of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS)—Manila Water and Maynilad Water Services Inc., to fix sewer lines in their respective areas.

A former DENR secretary, Buhay Party-list Rep. Lito Atienza, had stressed in a forum last week that the government should prod Maynilad and Manila Water to fulfill their mandate to set up proper sewer lines within a shorter time frame. This is the only way to clean up the bay as it prevents the discharge of untreated wastewater, Atienza said.

For his part, Cimatu said he will target the most polluted esteros in Metro Manila, by cleaning the esteros of garbage and preventing the direct discharge of untreated wastewater from households and business establishments.

"I accept the challenge to rehabilitate Manila Bay. If nobody else will do



"The long-term plan is the presence of the sewer lines all over Metro Manila. This is the mandate given to the concessionaires, Maynilad and Manila Water. The completion of all this will be in 2037.

That is our problem."—Cimatu

it, who will do it? I am optimistic that it can be done. I hope that all of us join us in this endeavor that will save Manila Bay," Cimatu said.

The short-term target, he said, is to improve the quality of water by reducing the coliform level in Manila Bay by the end of 2019.

The long-term target, he said, is to make the water of Manila Bay safe for bathing and swimming.

Using its regular budget for the implementation of Clean Water Act, the DENR will work on targeted esteros, including the Pasig River, to bring down the coliform level in areas in Manila Bay, particularly along Bay Walk to "100 most probable number per 100 milliliters" (MPN/100 ml), the level safe for swimming.

Water in some portions of Manila Bay, particularly fronting the Board Walk, right now register coliform levels of up to 333 million MPN/100 ml.

Cimatu said the DENR will count on the support of all stakeholders—particularly local chief executives and the private sector.

He said the DENR has received offers from industries to help out.

"I was asked, and I am even grateful for the offer of assistance from heads of industries to help us in this. There were offers and suggestions, including the use of resources. What we will do, by January 15, is to present the problem and probable solution and receive the offer of assistance," he said.

According to the DENR chief, he has already asked the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority to come up with a map of all esteros in Metro Manila to identify the problem esteros.

"If we will be able to contain this pollution we can reduce the reading... just like what happened in Boracay. Those coming out in Bulabog Beach, we were able to prevent it and reduce the coliform level," he explained.

Jonathan L. Mayuga



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MASUNGI GEORESERVE Global model for conservation innovation

STORY BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA [@jonlmayuga](#)

ARE you looking for unique outdoor fun and adventure? Or do you simply want to spend the weekend away from the stressful city life? Try the Masungi Georeserve in Baras, Rizal.

A conservation project in the Southern Sierra Madre Mountain Ranges, Masungi Georeserve was recently honored as a global model for conservation innovation and excellence at the inaugural Pathfinder Awards.

"We are extremely humbled and honored to receive such a prestigious award at the global stage," Billie Dumaliang, a trustee and advocacy officer of Masungi Georeserve, told the BUSINESSMIRROR through Messenger.

"The recognition by no less than world conservation leaders reaffirms our efforts to conserve Masungi, despite the many challenges we encounter on a day-to-day basis," she added.

World-class conservation approach

THE award to Masungi was lauded by an international biodiversity expert, Theresa Mundita S. Lim, the executive director of Asean Centre of Biodiversity (ACB).

A former director of the Biodiversity Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Lim said effectively using innovative approaches in raising funds for conservation initiatives is "a very notable and praise-worthy feat for any management of biodiversity-rich protected areas."

"Finding a strategy and successfully implementing it in generating income, while at the same time conserving the environment, is a challenge," Lim said.

The UN award Masungi received not only brings honor and recognition to the Philippines, Lim said, but also to the Asean region as it shows that Filipinos and the Asean people are capable of achieving world-class conservation approaches.

"This is the kind of innovation that we are developing in our protected areas and Asean Heritage Parks—localized strategies that meet each area's unique conservation needs," Lim said.

The Asean Heritage Parks is one of the flagship programs of ACB. They are selected protected areas in Southeast Asia known for their unique biodiversity and ecosystems, wilderness and

outstanding values. They were given the highest recognition because of their importance as conservation areas.

Tourist attractions

ESTABLISHED in 1996, the georeserve at Kilometer 47, Marcos Highway, is characterized by rugged limestone karst peaks, steep slopes and surrounding lush montane rainforests.

Among the popular attractions in the park is the Sapot or "cobweb" made of a metallic platform with wooden steps. It allows visitors to walk on suspended netting above the karst and get a 360-degree view of the Sierra Madre and the Laguna de Bay.

It also has Duyan, a giant rope hammock, spanning a few hundred feet.

The Masungi Georeserve only allows guests to the conservation area on a limited number and via a trail visit request. Guests are guided by an experienced park ranger throughout the trek who also provides in-depth information about sustainable tourism.

Not a glamorous task

ACCORDING to Dumaliang, conservation "is not a glamorous task," describing it as "being long days under the heat of the sun or standing your ground against big interests."

"The award encourages us, our park rangers and the people who have sacrificed so much to protect Masungi from various threats for over more than 20 year, to continue what we are doing. We hope it inspires others, too, to choose the important and necessary task of protecting the Philippine environment," she said.



p. 2 Masungi Georeserve ...

The Pathfinder Awards was presented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and WildArk during the plenary session of the 14th Conference of Parties of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt, last month.

International jury

MASUNGI Georeserve was

awarded the 2018 Pathfinder Award Special Commendation for its "outstanding and innovative" approach to conservation financing and resourcing.

The local conservation project protects a geological heritage comprising the Masungi karst landscape and its rich biodiversity in Baras, Rizal.

A high-level international jury composed of experts on protected area financing and resourcing selected the winners from over 200 nominations from around the world.

The jury includes Inger Andersen, director general of the IUCN; Yasmine Fouad, minister of Egypt; Mark Hutchinson, founder of WildArk; Kathy MacKinnon, chairman of IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas; Cristiana Paşca Palmer, executive secretary of CBD; Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, minister of Costa Rica; and Achim Steiner, administrator of UNDP.

Innovative solutions

THE Pathfinder Award recognizes outstanding and innovative solutions for protected and conserved areas, developed and implemented by individuals, organizations or groups.

The inaugural awarding edition celebrates solutions that address insufficient investment for protected and conserved areas. While protected and conserved areas provide considerable and diverse financial and nonmonetary benefits, the global funding gap to effectively manage these sites is huge—estimated at the \$30 billion to \$35 billion a year.

The jury lauded Masungi's innovative techniques and approaches in conservation financing, using geotourism to fund and achieve conservation objectives.

Through this model, the reserve is able to complement the work of the government and local communities in taking care of the country's threatened ecosystems.

In particular, the jury noted Masungi's practices that balance the attractiveness of the park to visitors with low pressure on the environment.

A model Protected Area

IN a joint statement, the UNDP, IUCN, WCPA and WildArk noted: "The nomination by Masungi Georeserve Foundation describes an innovative approach to ecotourism, based on the pillars of conservation, education/research and sustainable development, and using 'mindful engineering' through tourism infrastructure that mimics nature, e.g., spider webs."

They noted how the reserve can be replicated by other protected and conserved areas around the globe when it comes to creating long-term and sustainable value for environmentally sensitive areas.

"You cannot tell how impressed I was with [Masungi Georeserve's] work. [They] must continue what they are doing," said Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, Costa Rica's environment and energy minister and Pathfinder jury member who presented the awards to Masungi Georeserve Trustees sisters Ann and Billie Dumaliang.

Unique limestone formation, rich biodiversity

A CONSERVATION initiative of Masungi Georeserve Foundation in partnership with the DENR, the Masungi Georeserve is home to a sprawling limestone formation dating back 60 million years that was the subject of rampant environmental degradation and real-estate speculation.

After 20 years of daunting dedicated conservation work, it is coming back to life and is now a sanctuary for more than 400 species of flora and fauna, many of which are endemic to the Philippines and Luzon island.

The project's latest mission is to restore and conserve in perpetuity some 3,000 hectares of denuded mountains around the geological reserve through the Masungi Geopark Project.

The mountains remain in constant threat of quarrying, illegal logging, (slash and burn), treasure-hunting and land speculation despite previous efforts to conserve them.

"This singular honor from the UN and IUCN will boost the spirit of our team on the ground, and those in the government, private sector and civil society who tirelessly toil for the environment and even risk their lives protecting it, and inspire others to follow in their footsteps and join our movement," Ann Dumaliang, also the project manager of Masungi Georeserve, said in a statement.

This year's award is organized in cooperation with the UNDP-Biodiversity Finance Initiative and the Panorama-Solutions for a Healthy Planet initiative, which IUCN co-leads.



IMUS BLAZING THE TRAIL

Eco-friendly solutions to garbage woes

STORY & PHOTOS BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA [@jonlmayuga](https://twitter.com/jonlmayuga)

IMAGINE yourself carrying a fashionable *bayong* (native market bag) for the charcoal briquettes you will buy, while briskly walking on a clean and green sidewalk made of eco-friendly bricks.

Then you harvest or buy organic vegetables grown in your community using compost as a soil enhancer.

This is how officials of the Provincial Government Environment and Natural Resources Office (PGENRO) of Cavite province imagine life should be in pursuing various programs to get rid of the province's burgeoning garbage problem.

Fortunately, PGENRO Anabelle L. Cayabyab, Cavite's top environment and natural resource official, said there are best practices in various local governments on proper solid-waste management.

Besides implementing integrated coastal management (ICM) anchored on "ridge-to-reef" environmental protection program, Cayabyab said proper solid-waste management is a major strategy in addressing the province's looming water crisis.

Pemsea ICM site

A PARALLEL site for the ICM of the Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia, Cavite province became an ICM site in 2004.

The program covers the province's nine coastal towns, providing a framework and process for Cavite to strengthen coastal governance, as well as the implementation of management programs to address the threats and challenges of unbridled development, land conversion, pollution from industrial, commercial and residential areas, illegal fishing and a growing population.

The ICM activities in Cavite include the development of long-term strategy, information management, awareness-raising and mobilizing stakeholders' support, development of coastal use-zoning plan to address multiple-use conflicts, marine-protected areas management, implementation of oil spill contingency plan and rehabilitation of major river systems.

As an ICM site, Cavite also became a part of Pemsea's Network of Local Governments (PNLG).

According to Cayabyab, during the PNLG meeting in Ansan, South Korea, Cavite, Gov. Jesus Crispin Remulla signed the Ansan Declaration, committing to work toward the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly SDG 6, or "Ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all."

Looming water crisis

INTERVIEWED by the BUSINESS-MIRROR recently, Cayabyab said a 2012 study on water supply availability in Cavite revealed that by 2020, or two years from now, the province, with its current population of 3.9 million, will experience severe water shortage, estimated to reach by as much as 51 million liters per day.

"Water and sanitation has been Governor Remulla's topmost priority. All our programs are focused on addressing the water problem," Cayabyab said in mixed English and Filipino.

According to Cayabyab, another study revealed high fecal coliform level in coastal areas despite years of coastal cleanups and relocation of informal settlers.

"Pollution comes from upstream. There are six major rivers in Cavite and we are monitoring them now," she said.



p. 2 Eco-friendly solutions to garbage woes

According to Cayabyab, of the 10 companies that offer septic-tank cleaning service operating in Cavite, only Maynilad has its own wastewater-treatment facility, as well as adequate health and sanitary permit or accreditation from the Department of Health.

"The rest have no wastewater-treatment facility and we have proof that they are dumping the sludge in the river upstream," Cayabyab said.

Worse, she said septic tanks in the old days were built with no concrete to prevent leak that contaminate groundwater.

"When met with the LGUs [local government units], we informed them of the problem and we also warned them against issuing [building] permits [without proper septic tanks]," she said.

According to Cayabyab, the Cavite government had also advised LGUs to tighten their watch over junk shops that buy and sell home appliances and other e-waste that require proper handling as mandated for by Republic Act 6969, or the Toxic Substances and Hazardous and Nuclear Waste Control Act of 1990.

She said the provincial government supports local government initiatives to address the garbage problem, whether they require financial or technical support.

"Fortunately, we have LGUs with best practices, which we can promote as model for replication," she added.

Model LGU

ONE such LGU with best practices on solid-waste management is Imus City.

The city has blazed the trail in finding eco-friendly solutions to the city's garbage problems, particularly plastic and biodegradable waste.

Under the mantra "May Pera sa Basura [There is money in waste]," Imus has endeavored to make the 3Rs—Reduce, Reuse and Recycle—of solid-waste management work.

The city is currently producing bags and wallets from recycled plastics, which it sells from P50 to P150. It also produces charcoal briquettes made from coconut shell, twigs and dried leaves that produce less smoke and more heat in cooking, and sold for only P35 per pack, or three for P100.

To rid the city's plastic waste, it also makes eco-bricks, made of shredded plastics mixed with cement that it sells for P12 a piece.

The local government is also producing vermicompost and compost soil enhancers from food waste and other biodegradables collected from households and public markets, which it distributes for free to farmers and the community for backyard or urban farming and gardening.

Top waste producer

WITH its population of 403,785 based on a 2015 census, Imus is

besieged by environmental problems associated with unbridled development—garbage.

The indiscriminate dumping of garbage and poor collection and hauling system was a major problem until the local government started implementing various programs and introduced environment-friendly solutions.

Doris L. Sagenes, supervising environmental management specialist of Imus, said until now, waste segregation remains a big challenge.

"The people are accustomed to just throwing away garbage," she told the BUSINESSMIRROR in a recent interview.

She said the city environment office implements information, education and communication campaigns in various day-care centers and schools, to educate the young about the importance of proper solid-waste management.

Also, the owners and managers of various business establishments, she said, undergo seminar and training on proper solid-waste management.

"Before we issue a [business] permit, they have to undergo seminar and training," she said.

According to Sagenes, Imus is currently producing 200 tons of garbage a day. Based on the latest waste characterization and analy-

“Fortunately, we have LGUs with best practices, which we can promote as model for replication.”

—CAYABYAB



83 Eco-friendly solutions to combat waste

sis, Imus's garbage is composed of 27.2 percent recyclable, 36.78 percent biodegradable; 21.93 percent residual, 13.99 percent plastic and Styrofoam, and 0.10 percent toxic and hazardous waste.

Plastic waste

IMUS is besieged by plastic pollution. To address this concern, the city government maximized the use of the city's Ecology Center in Barangay Buhay na Tubig.

The ecology center does training on composting, organic farming and gardening, recycling waste and rainwater harvesting system.

A major initiative of the city environment office is the implementation of the "Basura Raffle" project, wherein people bring to the barangays in exchange of raffle tickets the plastic waste, which junk shops do not buy.

"One kilogram of plastics earn them one raffle ticket. They get the chance to win raffle prizes like an electric fan or rice cooker," she said.

According to Sagenes, through the project, the environment office is able to collect 1.5 tons of plastic a month, which they bring to the Villar Foundation to be recycled into school chairs.

So far, Imus's partnership with the Villar Foundation has yielded 300 chairs of recycled plastics.

Imus City is also known for producing eco-bricks, part of which is made from plastics, made in partnership with Clean Technology.

Some of the eco-bricks were used as paving blocks for the repair of sidewalks in front of the city hall, the city plaza, in Barangay Anabu and Nueno Avenue.

Agricultural, kitchen wastes

TO rid the city of another major waste problem—the biodegradable waste from public markets and kitchen waste from households—it has established a composting facility along Pedro Reyes Street in Barangay Malagasang 1A.

During a site visit, environment office employees showed the city's 2,300-square-meter facility and explained the process of producing compost.

It also has three bioreactor machines that act as digester for

various agricultural waste collected from public markets and food waste from households.

"It is able to serve two clustered barangays. We receive an average of 6 tons of vegetable and food waste a week," said Maximiano Villanueva, administrator of the composting facility.

According to Villanueva, several steps are followed to make compost for effective soil enhancers. The vegetables from the market are shredded and digested using the bioreactor. After three days, the byproduct is applied with effective microorganism and dried in open air.

The vegetables are shredded and dried anew. Without a bioreactor, the process will take three months, at least.

The kitchen and food wastes undergo almost the same process, except that sawdust are added to boost the drying process. The byproduct is dried and shredded anew before packing for distribution.

"We distribute them for free. Sometimes, the demand for compost is big, maybe because it is free and it works," Villanueva said in mixed English and Filipino.

Solid-waste dilemma

IN a recent interview with OIC Antonio Bernan T. de la Cruz of the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office, he said garbage is a major cause of water pollution in Imus.

"We conduct IEC information, education and communication campaign. From time to time, from January to December, we implement IEC campaign to inform the people about our programs," he said.

He said Imus City, under Mayor Emmanuel L. Maliksi, is determined to boost the implementation of the city's eco-friendly solutions.

"We have identified three possible sites for composting facility. By next year, we are eyeing to put up one facility in Pasong Buwaya. It can accommodate three to four clustered barangays. Hopefully, in the next three years, we will be able to accommodate all 97 barangays in Imus," he said. The city's barangays are clustered into nine groups.

According to de la Cruz, he is proposing the formation of cooperatives in every barangay to engage the communities more and become part of the solution.

"Just like our 'Basura Eskwela' initiative, through a cooperative, parents can gain something from recycling. From garbage to money. *Pera sa basura*," he said.

He said once the cooperative grows from waste recycling, they could start to try other livelihood activities.

"There will be profit sharing and they can also start their own livelihood program," he said.

"Although there are existing and active cooperatives in some barangays, we plan to tie up with them. It will be like an ecological cooperative working to address our garbage problem," he said.



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Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

EcoWaste Coalition warns against products with mercury

By **CHITO A. CHAVEZ**

The toxic watchdog EcoWaste Coalition asked government authorities to enforce the full force of the law against sectors selling, distributing and manufacturing of the banned over-the-counter mercury-laden skin whitening cosmetics.

EcoWaste noted the rampant sale of these dangerous items in Cubao, Quezon City.

The group specifically expressed alarm over the dangerous Jiaoli and S'Zitang skin whitening products from China.

EcoWaste Coalition said the sale of these products were prohibited under Quezon City Ordinance No. 2767.

Jiaoli and S'Zitang are among the skin whitening products banned by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) due to their mercury content, which "pose imminent danger or injury to the consuming public," according to the agency.

Approved by Quezon City Mayor Herbert Bautista on November 19, 2018, City Ordinance No. 2767 authored by District 1 Councilor Elizabeth Delarmente prohibits "the manufacture, importation, marketing and promotion, distribution and sale of cosmetics with mercury content in excess of 1 part per million (ppm).

The said ordinance also bans "the sale, wholesale or retail, of cosmetics that have not been authorized by the FDA and/or have not complied with the labeling requirements," as well as "the open dumping, open burning and/or disposal of banned, recalled and/or confiscated mercury-containing cosmetics along with regular solid waste."

The continuing trade of banned mercury-laden skin whitening cosmetics in Cubao should prompt the city government into conducting effective public information and law enforcement activities starting January 2019 to meet the objectives of City Ordinance 2767, the EcoWaste Coalition pointed out.

The EcoWaste Coalition called on the retail stores to immediately halt their unlawful business, which can endanger the public health and pollute the environment with mercury.

"These non-compliant stores should do the right thing and not wait for their business license to be cancelled by the city authorities," the group said.

Mercury is a highly toxic chemical with no known level of exposure that is considered safe, the EcoWaste Coalition emphasized.



Manila Standard

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Group hits mercury-laden whitening make-up

A TOXICS watch group has deplored the over-the-counter sale of banned mercury-laden skin whitening cosmetics by some retail outlets in Cubao, Quezon City.

The EcoWaste Coalition chanced upon the illegal sale in Cubao of dangerous Jiaoli and S'Zitang skin whitening products from China, an act that is forbidden under Quezon City Ordinance No. 2767.

Photos taken by the group showed Jiaoli and S'Zitang products on display in at least three stores operating inside Shopwise-Cubao. The unnamed stores sell beauty and herbal products.

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The continuing sale of banned mercury-laden skin whitening cosmetics in Cubao should prompt the city government into conducting effective public information and law enforcement activities starting January 2019 to meet the objectives of City Ordinance 2767, the EcoWaste Coalition pointed out.

Mercury is a highly toxic chemical with no known level of exposure that is considered safe.

EcoWaste said fetuses, babies, children, and pregnant women are most vulnerable to the health effects of mercury.

According to the World Health Organization and the United Nations Environment, "mercury use in cosmetic products can have adverse effects including skin rashes, discoloring and scarring, reduce skin's resistance to bacterial and mycotic disorders, and cause damage to the brain, nervous system and kidneys."



Tree-planting frenzy

Lawmakers seem to be in a tree-planting frenzy. After last week's approval on second

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BAKA
MAPUNO AKO
SA INYO



Tree-planting frenzy

From page 1

reading of House Bill (HB) 8727 or the Family Tree Planting Act, the chamber did the same this week for HB 8728 or the Graduation Legacy for the Environment Act.

HB 8727 principally authored by Baguio City Rep. Mark Go requires all parents residing in the country, whether legally married or not, to plant two trees for every child born to them within 30 days after birth.

HB 8728 principally authored by Magdalo Partylist Rep. Gary Alejano, requires all graduating elementary, high school and college students to plant at least 10 trees as a prerequisite for

graduation. The trees shall serve as their living legacy to the environment and to future generations of Filipinos.

If more similar bills come up, every Filipino may be required to plant a tree in every stage of their life from birth to death.

In July, HB 7373 or An Act Requiring the Planting of Trees for Any Construction of Residential, Commercial, Industrial and Public Buildings, was approved on third and final reading. The measure principally authored by Rep. Emmeline Aglipay-Villar requires all

applicants for building permits of residential, commercial, industrial and public development projects to set aside and properly maintain areas adequate for planting and maintaining trees and flora in said property. Under the measure, at least one tree should be planted for every 500 square meters of property to be developed for commercial or industrial purpose or one tree for every 250 square meters for housing development projects.

If more similar bills come up, every Filipino may be required to plant a tree in every stage of their life from birth to death.



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The Manila Times

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CARTOON

24 DEC 2013

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Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

Andaya OKs bicam report on Road Board abolition

HOUSE Majority Leader Rolando Andaya Jr. on Sunday said he is "positively responding" to the call of Sen. Miguel Zubiri to have both chambers of Congress meet in a conference to hammer out provisions on the abolition of the graft-tainted Road Board.

"Senator Zubiri's proposal is the way forward, for both Houses to jointly cure the bill of its defects, instead of carelessly sending to the President a flawed and faulty one, which does not offer reforms but more of the same bad practices," Andaya noted.

His move came just days after the House of Representatives heeded the call of President Rodrigo Duterte to abolish the Road Board, which oversees funds from the

Motor Vehicle User's Charge (MVUC).

"On the part of the House, we will designate the members of our contingent to the bicameral conference committee on our first session day next year, on January 14," he said.

Andaya added that they will follow the President's lead by crafting a version that will truly abolish the board and "move the spending of the MVUC collection from darkness into light."

"The House advocates the 100-percent dismantling of the Road Board. We do not want its powers to be merely transferred to three secretaries who will in effect be Three Road Kings who can spend the MVUC at will," he said.

The Senate approved Senate Bill 1620

on February 12, then adopted on September 12 the counterpart measure House Bill 7436 filed by then-speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, citing misappropriation of funds in the agency.

But on the same day, Andaya moved to rescind the measure.

As former Budget secretary under the Arroyo administration, he had been insisting that the call for the agency's abolition would only transmit powers to "Three Powerful Road Kings" which will disburse the road users' tax — the Department of Public Works and Highways, the Department of Transportation and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

"We will ensure that all proceeds from

the MVUC form part of the General Fund. We want to strip MVUC collection of its status as a hidden off-budget item that will be spent by one person in an untransparent way. We want itemized spending the people can see," he said.

Andaya added that non-road use activities like garbage collection would have to be stricken off the spending menu.

"If [the House and Malacañang have] now resolved to abolish the Road Board like we do in the Senate, we can recall the enrolled copies sent to Malacañang and reconvene the bicameral committee to further strengthen the abolition of the corruption-riddled agency," Zubiri said on Saturday.

GLEE JALEA



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER



24 DEC 2013

DATE

Senate, House agree to abolish Road Board in January conference

By DJ Yap
and Marlon Ramos
@Team_Inquirer

Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri and his House counterpart, Rolando Andaya Jr., on Sunday agreed to speed up the process of abolishing the Road Board by meeting in conference in January.

Zubiri said the two chambers could meet on Jan. 14, when the legislative session resumes,

to decide on a uniform version of the bill that would scrap the corruption-riddled agency.

Like coco levy bill

"We did this with the coco levy measure that needed further refinements, so we reconvened the bicam," he said, referring to the bill establishing a coconut levy fund for farmers.

The House majority bloc on Saturday capitulated to the wishes of President Duterte and

the Senate to dissolve the Road Board amid allegations of massive corruption involving the use of the P45-billion road user's tax controlled by the agency.

"We are positively responding to Senator Zubiri's call that the Senate and the House meet in conference to hammer out a genuine Road Board abolition bill," Andaya said on Sunday.

3 Road Board kings

But Andaya claimed that

House Bill No. 7436, principally authored by former Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, would not actually dismantle the seven-member agency but would only hand over its authority to the "three powerful Road Board kings."

Andaya was referring to the heads of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Department of Transportation and the Department of Public Works and Highways. INQ



House ready for bicam on Road Board abolition

By **DELON PORCALLA**

The leadership of the House of Representatives served notice yesterday about its willingness to discuss with the Senate, through the bicameral conference committee, President Duterte's order to abolish the graft-tainted Road Board.

"We are positively responding to Senator Migz Zubiri's call that the Senate and the House meet in conference to hammer out a better and genuine Road Board abolition bill," House Majority Leader Rolando Andaya Jr. said.

The House, he added, will soon be designating members of a contingent to the bicameral conference when both chambers resume session on Jan. 14.

"Senator Zubiri's proposal is the way forward, for both houses to jointly cure the bill of its defects, instead of carelessly sending to the President a flawed and faulty one, which does not offer reforms but more of the same bad practices," Andaya also said.

He stressed that the House wanted an "itemized spending (that) people can see," referring to the billions of pesos generated from the Motor Vehicle User's Charge (MVUC) that the board manages.

"We will ensure that all proceeds from the MVUC form part of the General Fund. We want to strip MVUC collections of its status as a hidden off-budget item that will be spent by one person in an un-transparent way," he pointed out.

Andaya vowed to "heed the President's guidance by crafting a version that will truly abolish the board and move the spending of MVUC collection from darkness into light."

"The House advocates the 100 percent dismantling of the Road Board. We do not want its powers to be merely transferred to three secretaries who will in effect be 'Three Road Kings' who can spend the MVUC at will," he added, referring to the secretaries of public works and highways, transportation, and environment and natural resources.

He recalled that in 1998 he and Zubiri (then a congressman) opposed the passage of the law creating the Road User's Tax, "which was aggressively pushed then by some people who are now in the President's Cabinet."

Zubiri, current Senate majority leader, said Congress is moving to retrieve from Duterte's desk the bill that seeks to abolish the Road Board and to reconvene the bicameral conference committee to remove questionable provisions and come up with a fresh version.

The bill as passed months ago by both the Senate and the House of Representatives did not really abolish the body but instead called for a new set of board members composed of the three government secretaries.

"We can recall the enrolled copies sent to Malacañang and re-convene the bicameral conference committee to further strengthen the abolition of the corruption-riddled agency," Zubiri told reporters.

He said the Senate and the House can re-convene the committee upon the motion of both chambers on Jan. 14, "and meet for a day to simply craft the wordings to the law that will abolish the agency and revert the income and the funds to either the DPWH or the National Treasury."

The Senate passed its version last February while the House approved a counterpart bill in May. The two chambers convened the bicameral conference to reconcile conflicting provisions of their versions of the measure. However, last September, upon the motion of Sen. Manny Pacquiao, the Senate decided to simply adopt the House version to hasten the transmittal of the measure to Malacañang and obviate the need to convene the committee.

Zubiri said there are precedents on such a move, the most recent of which was with the Coco Levy Law that Congress recalled after sending it to Malacañang.

He said he wants the billions of pesos in MVUC collections included in the an-

annual General Appropriations Act (GAA) to fund the Free Tertiary Education law and the anti-poverty measures.

The bill as passed by the two chambers retains the MVUC collections - estimated to be at P45 billion - as a trust fund or beyond the scrutiny of Congress in the GAA. It also mandates that 80 percent of the trust fund will be controlled by the DPWH secretary, 10 percent by the DOTr secretary, and 10 percent by the DENR secretary.

It also creates a new spending criteria for garbage collection, waste disposal and solid waste program, which is seen to be contrary to the MVUC's rationale that registration fees paid by vehicle owners should be spent for road transportation projects.

The retention of 10 percent for the DOTr was also questioned by some quarters as

the agency has been repeatedly hit for its poor absorptive capacity.

Some lawmakers said it would have been better if the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority - not the DENR - was made a recipient of portions of the MVUC collections. - **With Paolo Romero**