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IN THE NEWS

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Manila Bay cleanup must continue beyond 2 years

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The rehabilitation process began in January, 2019, he said, and "our efforts to restore Manila Bay are in full swing and we hope to sustain the momentum of restoring it to its former glory in the coming years."

It was a statement of hope that goes with the start of a new year. But, lest we become too hopeful, we must not forget that when Secretary Cimatu first came face to face with the Manila Bay problem, he said it would take ten years to clean it up.

President Duterte ordered the rehabilitation of Manila Bay after the tourist island of Boracay was cleaned up in six months. But the Manila Bay problem is a hundred times bigger than that of Boracay.

This tourist island was visited by 1.6 million tourists in the first nine months of 2019, staying an average of three days. In comparison, Metro Manila has 12 million permanent residents plus another 4 million workers in the daytime coming from surrounding provinces. And all the time, their sewage has been dumped into the 203 esteros and other streams and rivers flowing into the Pasig, on to Manila Bay.

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of their wastes into these rivers.

The two Metro Manila water concessionaires were supposed to provide sewage treatment facilities, collecting fees all these years from water customers, but it is only now that they are announcing plans for sewerage treatment plants that have been needed for years. The end result of this entire situation is a Manila Bay that is so polluted that it is unsafe for swimming or any other water contact sports. Every time it floods anywhere in Metro Manila, the people are warned to avoid wading in the flood waters, lest they get infected with leptospirosis or other ailments.

Secretary Cimatu said that its rehabilitation plan for the bay is in its first phase – cleanup and water quality monitoring. The second phase will be relocation of millions now living along its river banks. The third will be education, protection, and sustainment.

The second phase alone will take not only years but also billions of pesos to carry out. With only two years left in the Duterte administration, the major part of the rehabilitation of Manila Bay will have to be carried out by the next two administrations.

We hope that these next administrations will have the political will to carry on what President Duterte and Secretary Cimatu have begun. So that ten years from now, we can take real pride in a Manila Bay that is not only known for its beauty, particularly its sunset as seen from Manila, but also for its clean water good for swimming and other sports, as ordered by the Supreme Court, no less, in 2008.



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EDITORIAL

Kailangang magpatuloy ang Manila Bay cleanup

NANANATLING prayoridad ang rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay sa susunod na dalawang taon, pahayag nitong Martes ni Secretary Roy Cimatu ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources, bilang pagtanaw sa pagsisimula ng bagong taon.

Nagsimula ang proseso ng rehabilitasyon noong Enero, 2019, aniya, at "our efforts to restore Manila Bay are in full swing and we hope to sustain the momentum of restoring it to its former glory in the coming years."

Isang pahayag na puno ng pag-asa kasabay sa pagpasok ng bagong taon. Ngunit sa kabila ng malakas na pag-asang ito, kailangan nating maalala na nang unang maharap si Secretary Cimatu sa problema ng Manila Bay, sinabi nitong aabutin ng sampung taon bago malinis ang lugar.

Ipinag-utos ni Pangulong Duterte ang rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay, matapos ang matagumpay na rehabilitasyon sa isla ng Boracay na inabot ng anim na buwan. Gayunman, daang beses na mas malala ang problema ng Manila Bay kumpara sa Boracay.

Ang sikat na islang ito ay binisita ng 1.6 milyong turista sa unang siyam na buwan ng 2019, na nanatili doon ng may average na tatlong araw. Kung ikukumpara, ang Metro Manila ay may 12 million permanenteng residente dagdag pa ang apat na milyong manggagawa na dumadayo sa lugar mula sa mga kalapit nitong probinsiya. At sa lahat ng oras, ang mga sewage system nito ay naglalabas ng dumi sa may 203 esteros at ibang anyo ng tubig na dumadaloy patungo sa Pasig, patungong Manila Bay.

Dumadaloy rin sa look ang mga sewage na nagmumula sa ilang mga bayan sa Bataan, Pampanga, Bulacan, at Cavite. Daan-daang babuyan ang matagal nang nagtatapon ng kanilang mga dumi sa mga ilog na ito.

Dapat sanang ipagkaloob ng dalawang water concessionaires ng Metro Manila ang sewage treatment facilities, lalo't matagal na itong nangongolekta ng bayad mula sa mga consumer nito, ngunit ngayon pa lamang ito nag-anunsiyo ng plano para sa sewerage treatment plants na matagal nang kailangan. Resulta nito, naging matindi na ang polusyon ng Manila Bay na hindi na ligtas paglanguyan o pagdausan ng anumang aktibidad sa tubig. Sa tuwing bumabaha saanmang dako ng Metro Manila, mahigit na pinaalalahanan ang mga tao na iwasang magbababad sa baha, dahil sa posibilidad ng impeksyong maaaring makuha tulad ng leptospirosis o iba pang karamdaman.

Sinabi ni Secretary Cimatu na parte ng unang bahagi ng rehabilitasyon sa Manila bay- ang cleanup at water quality monitoring. Ang ikalawang bahagi ay ang pagpapa-relocate ng milyon-milyong tao na ngayo'y naninirahan sa mga gilid ng estero at mga ilog. At ang ikatlo ay ang pagbibigay ng edukasyon, proteksiyon at pagpapanatili.

Ang ikalawang bahagi ng plano ay hindi lamang mangangailangan ng ilang taon, ngunit gayundin ang bilyong piso para maipatupad. Sa natitirang dalawang taon ng administrasyong Duterte, malaking bahagi ng rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay ay kailangang maipagpatuloy ng susunod na dalawang administrasyon.

Umaasa tayong ang susunod na mga administrasyong ito ay may malakas na political will upang maituloy ang anumang nasimulan nina Pangulong Duterte at Secretary Cimatu.

Upang sampung taon mula ngayon, muli nating maipagmamalaki ang Manila Bay hindi lamang para sa kagandahan nito, partikular ang sunset na masisilayan, ngunit gayundin para sa malinis nitong tubig na mainam para paglanguyan at pagdausan ng anumang sports, san a rin sa utos ng Korte Suprema noong 2008.



EDITORIAL

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TITLE:

Kaliwa Dam project: Gov't to relocate IP communities

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

The government will ensure that indigenous people (IP) communities to be affected by the Kaliwa Dam project will be provided a proper relocation site, according to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System.

MWSS Administrator Emmanuel Salamat said they would coordinate with concerned local government units to provide homes for families to be displaced by the project.

Around 400 IP households in 55 barangays will be affected by the P12.2-billion project, according to earlier reports.

"We will continuously coordinate with indigenous communities and local government units to address their specific needs," Salamat told an interview on *GMA's Dabol B sa News TV*.

The Kaliwa Dam is en-

visioned to provide Metro Manila residents with 600 million liters of water per day. Construction of the dam may take two to three years.

"China will ensure the design and construction. They will also provide technical assistance," Salamat said.

He said 85 percent of the project would be funded under a loan agreement with the Chinese government.

Meanwhile, civil society groups said there are viable alternatives to provide Metro Manila's water needs that would not displace IP communities or cause environmental damage.

President Duterte said he is open to reviewing the project to address concerns that it may contain provisions disadvantageous to the public.

The President also stressed the need to finish the Kaliwa Dam and the Razon-led Wawa Dam projects, calling them the "last resort to have water for Manila."



Angat water level still critical

Because the water level is only 204 meters, water services will still be affected and rotational water interruptions are a possibility

Despite the continuous improvement in the water level of Angat Dam, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) said Saturday it is still below the normal level of 212 meters, the ideal scale to keep water services in Metro Manila uninterrupted.

NWRB Executive Director Sevillo David Jr. said in a television interview that the water level at Angat Dam has reached 204.05 meters as of 6 a.m., higher by 36 centimeters compared to Friday's level of 203.69 meters.

"Because the water level is only 204 meters, water services will still be affected and rotational water interruptions are a possibility," David said.

"For us to address the problem, the water level should be at 212 meters," he said.

Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System also on Saturday made assurances that the government

will provide a proper relocation site for indigenous people (IP) communities that will be affected by the Kaliwa Dam project.

"As per our consultation with local governments, we assured them that we will provide relocation sites," MWSS administrator Emmanuel Salamat said in a separate interview.

Some 400 individuals from 55 barangays will be affected by the P12.2-billion, China-funded project.

"Our consultations with indigenous communities and local governments are continuous to address specific needs of the community to be affected by the construction," Salamat added.

Once constructed, the Kaliwa Dam will provide Metro Manila with 600 million liters of water per day from the dam, whose construction may take two to three years.

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MWSS ASSURES KALIWA DAM IP GROUPS OF RELOCATION

THE Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System gave assurances on Saturday the government would provide a proper relocation site for indigenous people communities affected by the Kaliwa Dam project.

MWSS administrator Emmanuel Salamat said in an interview on Dohol B sa News TV, heard nationwide, some 400 individuals from 55 barangays would be affected by the P12.2-billion China-funded project.

He said officials were continuing a dialogue with IP communities and local government units to address their needs with the

construction of the project.

Once constructed, the Kaliwa Dam will provide Metro Manila with 600 million liters of water per day from the dam, whose construction may take two to three years.

"China will ensure the design and construction. *Sila rin po ang magpoprovide ng technical assistant sa dam,*" Salamat said.

Salamat added 85 percent of the project would be funded through Chinese loan, while the remaining 15 percent would be financed by the MWSS.

Last Monday, President Rodrigo Duterte warned courts against issuing temporary restraining orders that would delay the construction of the Wawa and Kaliwa dams.

Duterte said the dams were "the last resort" for Metro Manila to have adequate water supply.

The President assured the public that those who would be affected by the controversial project would be paid and relocated.

The dam projects in Rizal and Quezon were seen to affect at least 56 in-

igenous people households and will place around 284 tribal households at risk of flooding, according to the Environment Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

In his speech, Duterte blamed the indigenous communities and restraining orders from the courts for supposedly "delaying" the projects.

"Those who live there are, of course, they are all natives. They're trying to delay the project and we need water for Manila," he said.

Duterte last expressed support for the project in October, citing the water crisis that left dry faucets in Metro Manila.



Higher irrigation supply allocation appealed

The NWRB allocated only 10 cms instead of the normal 30 cms for irrigation this month

Farmers in Bulacan have appealed to government officials to intercede on their behalf with the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) for an increase in the allocation of irrigation water supply as water elevation in Angat Dam continues to rise.

Gov. Daniel Fernando on Friday held a dialogue with farmer leaders and officials of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) in response to the farmers' request as the NWRB allocated only 10 cubic meters per second (cms) instead of the normal

30 cms for irrigation this month.

"There is a chance that the NWRB would increase the irrigation water allocation to Bulacan farmlands at 20 cms and possibly to its normal 30 cms if the water elevation in Angat Dam continues to improve," Fernando said.

Angat Dam is the main source of Metro Manila's potable water and irrigation for rice lands in Bulacan and some parts of Pampanga.

The 10 cms irrigation allocation was only provided to the NIA's north zone service areas, which include the towns of Baliwag, parts of Calumpit, Pulilan, San Ildefonso and San Rafael in Bulacan, and San Simon, Apalit, Candaba and San Luis in Pampanga.

This leaves the south zone service areas of NIA, such as the towns of Hagonoy, Balagtas, Bocaue, Bustos, Bulakan, Plaridel, parts of Calumpit,

Angat, Guiguinto, Pardi, Paombong and the City of Malolos without irrigation water allocation coming from Angat Dam.

Meanwhile, NIA regional manager Josephine Salazar said they have scheduled a meeting with the farmer leaders from the north and south zones service areas of the agency so that they can come up with a plan on how to maximize the irrigation water supply.

Angat Dam supplies irrigation water to 20,000 hectares of farmland in Bulacan.

Some 2,000 hectares of Pampanga's farmlands in Candaba and the borderlands of San Luis and Santa Ana also get their water supply from the dam.

The NWRB also allocated only 40 cms for Metro Manila's domestic water needs instead of the normal 46 cms for January.



Editorial

Worthwhile to revisit Kaliwa Dam project

A FEW days ago, there was a Palace statement saying President Rodrigo Duterte was open to reviewing the Kaliwa Dam project. The statement sounded conditional though, adding that the President would do so if someone pointed out the onerous provisions of the contract. Granted, Palace statements are notorious for being vague and, at times, for reversals. But if accurate and firm, then we are for a review.

For starters, the President should look at a full accounting of the costs. Remember that before the deal with China, the previous administration approved a Japanese proposal under a BOT or build-operate-transfer scheme. The Japanese project would cost \$410 million. The China proposal, which comes as an ODA or official development assistance, is reported to cost \$810 million or P40.5 billion.

The government disputes those numbers. According to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, the China-funded project would cost only P12.2 billion, not P40.5 billion. The government also stresses that the China project is an ODA, but even then, it is not without costs to the Philippine government.

Besides, those figures only refer to the cost to build. Besides that, President Rodrigo Duterte should also consider the full economic cost. In a speech, he did express willingness to pay for the relocation of the indigenous people there, some 10,000 of them, and other local communities that would be affected. But not even that covers a full economic accounting.

The China project entails building a 73-meter-high dam that will flood part of the Sierra Madre mountain range, which is home to our last remaining forests. Besides dislocating people, this project will destroy the habitat of endangered wildlife, including the Philippine Eagle. That area is also home to the endangered Philippine Hawk-Eagle, the Philippine Brown Deer, Philippine Warty Pig and Northern Rufous Hornbill, among others. In fact, the area is a forest reserve by virtue of Presidential Decree 1636 issued in 1977. Plus, part of that area is a national park and wildlife sanctuary.

In contrast, the Japanese design has a smaller footprint. Their proposal calls for a low dam of only 7 meters that will divert water to a treatment plant elsewhere in Rizal province. That system promises to supply 550 million liters per day, which would not be much less than the Chinese high dam — 10 times bigger — that promises to deliver 600 million liters day. The difference in capacity does not justify the China project's higher monetary and environmental costs.

Other options

Even though the Japanese project bears a smaller cost, we have said before in this space that we are not for building any type of dam. But the last time we ran an editorial saying that, some challenged us to come up with alternatives.

There are a few actually, but one possible source of drinking water for Metro Manila is Laguna de Bay, one of the largest freshwater lakes in Southeast Asia. In fact, one of the two water concessionaires, Maynilad Water Services Inc., has been tapping it since 2009.

Obviously, rehabilitating and developing Laguna de Bay so that it can supply more potable water is not without major investments and issues. For one, there is a need for better enforcement of environmental laws and local ordinances against reclamation. Second, the lake needs dredging, which was halted by Benigno Aquino 3rd's administration on the grounds of some dubious engineering reasons. Silting and illegal reclamation have lowered the average depth of the lake and diminished its capacity to hold water.

Also, there may be a need to further reduce the fish pens on Laguna de Bay. They add to pollution, because of the fish feed that collects at the bottom of the lake. Lastly, to arrest silting, there is a need for a massive reforestation program in the mountains and other areas around the lake. And of course, water will need to be pipelined to the East Zone water concession area.

Obviously, the cost of rehabilitating and developing Laguna de Bay is no small tab. But if done, we would be all better off for it.



Ex-MILF rebels now BARMM forest rangers

COTABATO CITY: Former Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebels are now gainfully employed as forest rangers in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), where the MILF chairman is now the interim vice chairman of Chief Minister Ahod "Al Haj Murad" Ebrahim

Some 400 former rebels have been deployed to serve as forest rangers.

Member of Parliament (MP) Bai Maleiha Candao of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority on Saturday lauded the deployment of former rebels as forest rangers, saying remaining forests in the BARMM will now be secured from man-made forest destruction.

Candao said the rangers will form part of implementation of the Integrated Bangsamoro Greening Program (IBGP) aimed at protecting the remaining forest

covers in the region.

The BARMM is composed of the provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, the cities of Cotabato, Marawi, Lamitan and 63 villages in North Cotabato that opted to join the region.

The IBGP aims to reforest about 10,000 hectares of forests in Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur that had been denuded over the years.

Other parts of the region will soon have their own forest rangers, Candao said.

Data from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources showed that as of December 2010, the region had 99,889 hectares of closed forests, another 146,431 hectares of open forests and 55,574 hectares of mangroves, or a total of 301,894 hectares of forest cover.

JULMUNIR I. JANNARAL

Close mines, scrap concessions, break up haciendas



SUNDAY STORIES

**MARLEN V.
RONQUILLO**

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte's threat to "jail" the Filipino billionaires who run the metropolitan water concessions — I don't know if it was mere coincidence — came after a lengthy *New York Times* article that essentially said this: Mr. Duterte has turned his back on the landless that he vowed to emancipate during his presidential campaign. The story was datelined Sagay City and it started with Eliza Balayo, the widow of a landless farmer who was gunned down while trying to claim a piece of land in that feudal city of a few landlords and legions of landless peasants.

Mr. Duterte and his propaganda networks would have dismissed the critical story if it were about his drug war — his drug war is very popular back home despite the blood and mayhem. But it was not the usual critical stuff about the drug war and human rights. It was about turning his backs on the poor whose lives he vowed to lift during his 2016 campaign for the presidency.

Right after the headline, the lengthy story on how Mr. Duterte has allegedly propped up, not dismantled, the feudal land structure in the traditional *haciendas*, there was a story summary and it went like this: Riding a populist backlash against the elite, President Rodrigo Duterte vowed to rescue landless peasants from poverty. Instead, he has reinforced the monopolistic grip of landowners.

Again, human rights stories are stories Mr. Duterte can ignore. But that story touched a raw nerve. It was about a broken promise to break up the mini feudal kingdoms owned by a few and give away their lands to the landless who have been tilling these lands for generations. It was the poor, the landless, the earth's wretched, remember, who delivered the votes for Mr. Duterte in massive numbers in the 2016 presidential elections. The same constituencies whose faith and trust Mr. Duterte has to maintain.

The threat to jail the billionaires was apparently an oblique move to send the message that he remains on the side of the masses and belie the issue of betrayal that was raised in the hacienda-focused story.

► Ronquillo A5

Talk to the people on the ground and this is their collective sense. Mr. Duterte, if he wants to prove the sincerity of his pro-poor programs need not even go into the jailing of the Ayalas and Manuel Pangilinan. He just needs to carry out three bold dramatic steps, which are:

- Scrap the water concessions and turn the two into giant, flourishing water cooperatives.

- Reappoint Rafael Mariano as Department of Agrarian Reform secretary and start a real effort to break up the feudal structure in the hacienda areas.

- Uphold the environmental policies of the late Environment secretary Gina Lopez, the closing of complacent mining firms and the cancellation of those one-sided and onerous mine exploration contracts, in particular.

The economic team may tell Mr. Duterte that the three moves will be politically senseless, economically ruinous decisions. They are not. They are politically correct and economically sensible.

Let us look at Number 3, the closure of reckless, non-compliant mining firms and the end of those one-sided exploration contracts.

This country is the only country we have. And if look at the areas that are often devastated, that suffer from massive deaths and equally massive destruction during earthquakes and powerful typhoons, you will see that these are the over logged areas and areas where the giant mining concessions operate.

Oftentimes, whole communities are buried, including most of the inhabitants.

If you compare the lives lost and the communities lost to these destructive calamities, all the economic calculations of the pro-mining lobby about taxes paid and revenue generated would appear very negligible in comparison to the permanent loss of lives and entire communities.

Closing the reckless miners as identified by the late Lopez would be one big, lasting step for the environment. One giant step for

Mother Earth. Closing the mines will be a win-win thing.

The break-up oh big landholdings is often opposed by an argument called "economies of scale," which simply means that you have to farm big in order to generate a decent yield. Thus, small farms are disdained and automatically dismissed as losers. The problem is not scale. In areas like Taiwan, small farmers can net at least P1 million per year from a 1-hectare farm because the production environment is modern and the market is constant. Put in place the proper production environment and the proper market support, and the 1-hectare farm becomes viable.

Even if local farmers do not meet the Taiwan average net of P1 million per year, a net of P750,000 a year will be a welcome relief from the poverty-level income of 99 percent of small farmers right now.

Just imagine a rural Philippines without the feudal landholding structure. That alone is liberating and emancipating enough. It would even convince the young to pursue their farming dreams.

Mr. Duterte's war on the water concessionaires is backed by legal and moral justifications. Simply put, it is a just war. If the oligarchs deserve jail terms, well and good. The problem is this. The Duterte administration cannot just jail one set of oligarchs, the oligarchs perceived as unfriendly to his administration. The legal basis for jailing the Ayalas and Mr. Pangilinan would be enough to jail 99 percent of oligarchs with government concessions and franchises because of the inherent and built-in terms that favor the franchise holders and screw the end-users of the utilities and services.

Most people think scrapping the concessions and turning the two concessions into thriving water coops is enough.

The only thing to avoid is handing over the concessions to Dennis Uy and Manuel Villar. That would be Marcos-style cronyism.



2 bus at van natabunan ng landslide sa Samar



DALAWANG pampasaherong bus at isang van ang natabunan ng malaking landslide sa Barangay Binaloan, Taft, Eastern Samar, Biyernes ng hapon.

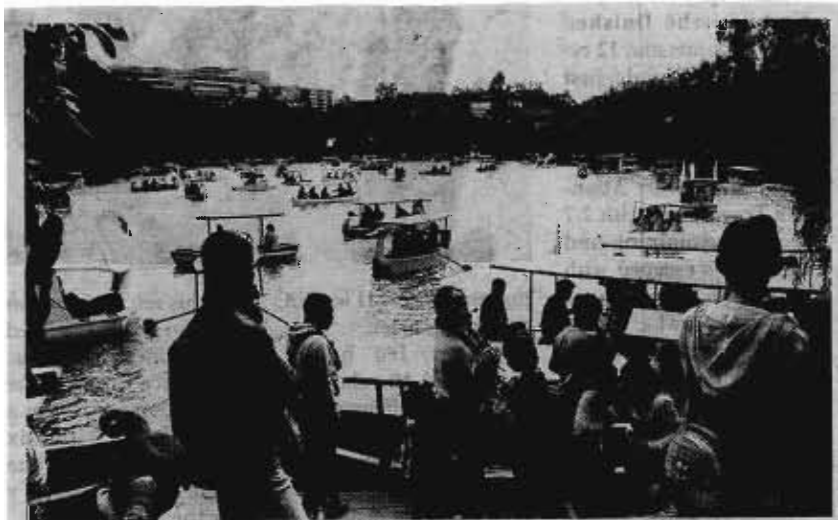
Bago ang insidente, nagkaroon pa ng dalawang

landslides sa lugar sa umaga dahil sa mga pag-ulan, ayon sa Department of Public of Works and Highways (DPWH) Eastern Samar.

Pansamantala rin munang pinahihinto ang clearing

operation para narin sa kaligtasan ng publiko.

Ayon kay Police Lt. Ruben Caspe ng Taft Philippine National Police, ligtas na nakalabas agad ang mga sakay ng mga sasakyan.



BONE-CHILLING COLD WEATHER. Tourists from Manila and the nearby provinces enjoy the cold weather in Burnham Park, Baguio City. Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration said at 5 a.m. yesterday, the temperature in Baguio City dropped to 11.4 degrees Celsius caused by the cold wind brought by northeast monsoon or "amihan," which normally peaks from January to February.

Photo by Cesar Reyes