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IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service

Mandatory repatriation remains only in Iraq

By CHRISTINA MENDEZ

Only Filipinos in Iraq will be covered by the mandatory repatriation ordered by the Philippine government, as hostilities between the United States and Iran appeared to taper off.

Malacañang welcomed the "good

news" that US President Donald Trump was not pursuing further military action against Iran as the latter appeared to be standing down after its missile attacks on two military facilities in Iraq housing American troops and personnel.

The attacks were in retaliation for the killing of Iran's top military com-

mander Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani in a US drone strike in Iraq.

"Good news! Good news for all of us. If the conflict has de-escalated instead of escalating, then that's good news for everyone especially for our overseas workers," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said yesterday. "But

nevertheless, the move to evacuate and repatriate is still going on."

Special envoy to the Middle East Roy Cimatu and Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III are in charge of the government's evacuation and repatriation efforts.

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In a statement, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) said mandatory repatriation will only apply to Filipinos in Iraq and not to those in other countries in the Middle East.

In a statement, DOLE said Filipino workers in Iran and Lebanon will no longer be forcibly repatriated.

Bello said alert levels in Iran and Lebanon have been downgraded.

"Initially, the level of alert for Iran, Iraq and Lebanon are the same—[Alert Level] 4. Although it was unofficial, I was informed yesterday that the alert level in Lebanon was put down to level 2 and I understand that there's no more alert level in Iran," Bello said in a statement.

He stressed, however, that deployment of Filipino workers to Iran and Lebanon is still prohibited.

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration

the Middle East.

"The President is correct. You cannot take the words at face value when it comes to unspoken war like this. These parties are planning retaliation and retaliation to retaliation, and the problem is there are so many Filipinos there in the Middle East," Cayetano added.

Yesterday, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana presided over a meeting of an interagency committee created to oversee the repatriation of OFWs.

"The prime consideration of the plan is the safety and welfare of Filipinos in Iran, Iraq and other neighboring countries who may be affected by the current situation in the Middle East," defense spokesman director Arsenio Andolong said.

"The committee will be constantly monitoring the situation between the United States and Iran, and further updates will be provided as soon as they become available," Andolong said.

(POEA), Bello said, will not process any application for jobs in the two countries.

For Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano, the raging tension between the US and Iran should not justify the evacuation of all Filipinos from the Middle East.

"Unless it's a nuclear war—God forbid and no one wants that—our fellow Filipinos will have nowhere to hide there (in the Middle East). But if it's not a nuclear war, there are areas in the Middle East where we can move and keep our OFWs (overseas Filipino workers) for safety," he said in an ambush interview. He also cited the "logistical nightmare of bringing all of them home."

He said Philippine ambassadors in countries involved in conflict situations should be made to submit their respective contingency plans to the Palace.

Cayetano said the government may also consider sending unarmed military

Before departing for Baghdad via Qatar on a Philippine Airlines flight, Cimatu told reporters they should not let their guard down despite what seemed to be the easing of tensions between Iran and the US.

"I was told there are some airlines still operating and roads are still open so we will take the opportunity to move out our people in Iraq."

Cimatu said the worst-case scenario that should be considered in repatriation efforts would be attacks on US bases in and around Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar.

He said every nation in the Middle East has its missile system, hence missile attacks are always a scenario.

"They have the option to press the trigger. We have to be ready in case there will be some incidents along the way," he said.

He also disclosed receiving information that "about 1,600 Filipinos" have manifested their desire to be repatriated.

"We are going to talk to the undocumented OFWs'

personnel to its embassies in the Middle East.

"Time and time again, it has been proven that when there's military, evacuation is more organized... It is very hard for embassies and embassy officials to secure the OFWs if the embassy, embassy vehicles and embassy official business is not secured," he said, citing the country's experience in Libya as an example.

P20-B standby fund

The Speaker revealed the government would need some P20 billion in standby contingency funds to bankroll possible repatriation of OFWs in the Middle East if trouble in the region escalates.

Duterte has called for a special session of Congress ahead of the resumption of session on Jan. 20 so it could map out contingency plans as well as allocate funds necessary.

He said the President has made the right move when he insisted on having contingency measures in place despite the supposed easing of tensions in

families here in the country, help them ask to move out and go directly to the Philippine embassy for possible repatriation," he said.

While 2016 data from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration showed 679 OFWs in Iran and Iraq, labor group Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino said there could be "thousands more" undocumented Filipinos in the region.

According to the DFA website, Alert Level 4, which calls for evacuation or mandatory repatriation, is issued "when there is large-scale internal conflict or full-blown external attack."

Bureau of Immigration (BI) Commissioner Jaime Morente said he has ordered all BI personnel at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) and other international ports to be ready for any eventuality should the conflict escalate further. - With Pia Lee-Brago, Rudy Santos, Robertzon Ramirez, Mayen Jaymalin, Edu Punay, Jaime Laude



'Unpredictable' Mideast calls for forced evacuation—Cimatu

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA [@jonlmayuga](#)
& RENE ACOSTA [@reneacostaBM](#)

THE mandatory evacuation of Filipinos out of Iraq will proceed as planned to ensure their safety amid the growing tension in the Middle East, Environment Secretary and Special Envoy to the Middle East Roy A. Cimatu said on Thursday.

This, even as Tehran and Washington separately signaled on Thursday they will stop further military hostilities.

A former Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff, Cimatu said despite the public pronouncements from Tehran



"We are hoping for the best but we would rather err on the side of safety. Over preparation is better than under preparation."
—Cimatu

and Washington, the situation remains unpredictable.

"It is better to err on the side of safety," he said. He flew to Doha on Thursday afternoon on a Philippine Airlines (PAL) flight to carry out his mission to coordinate interagency efforts on the ground in the Middle East, to ensure the protection of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

Before leaving, Cimatu joined an interagency meeting, presided over by Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, of the committee created to oversee the repatriation of Filipinos from the Middle East.

Pursuant to the directive of President Duterte, Lorenzana chaired the committee composed of National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. as the vice chairman, and the secretaries of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and Department of Transportation (DOTr) as members.

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Cimatu...

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Lorenzana called the meeting to "fine-tune" and coordinate the repatriation plan for the Filipinos in the Middle East in light of the tensions in Iraq and Iran.

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III, Interior Secretary Eduardo Año, Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade, and Cimatu, together with the representatives of other member-agencies, attended the committee meeting.

"The prime consideration of the plan is the safety and welfare of Filipinos in Iran, Iraq, and other neighboring countries, who may be affected by the current situation in the Middle East," DND Spokesman Director Arsenio Andolong said.

The AFP has already been directed to stand ready to deploy assets and personnel to help Filipinos in affected countries return home. The government is also seriously considering the use of commercial aircraft and ships due to the potentially large number of evacuees.

"The Committee will be constantly monitoring the situation between the United States and Iran, and further updates will be provided as soon as they become available," Andolong said.

'Best time is now'

IN Cimatu's view, "the best time to evacuate Filipinos out of Iraq is now, while airports are still operating and the roads are clear; while there are still no military operations."

Cimatu said a worst-case scenario is a simultaneous attack by Tehran targeting US Embassies outside Iraq, such as in Doha and Bahrain.

He said this means military operations become inevitable, airport operations may cease and road blockades put up—making the Filipinos' exit from conflict areas harder.

Hence, he said the plan to forcibly evacuate Filipinos out of Iraq stays, and it applies even in the case of Iran and Lebanon, saying they are not taking any chances as the situation may eventually get worse anytime, any day.

"We are hoping for the best but we would rather err on the side of safety," he said.

"Over preparation is better than under preparation," he said.

Cimatu said he has instructions to move out some 1,600 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) including some undocumented ones, "while the Baghdad airports and roads are still open." If the "worst-scenario occurs, we will never go wrong if we move now."

In Doha, Cimatu will meet government representatives and the rapid response team in Qatar to discuss how they will move out the OFWs out of Iraq despite the easing of tension to the region, when Trump did not respond

to Iran's rain of missiles on Baghdad facilities hosting US troops.

"We will discuss the plan for the repatriation of OFWs in some areas affected by the Level 4 mandatory announcement. Level 4 means mandatory repatriation," he said, "as we will coordinate logistic requirements for the repatriation," Cimatu said during a press briefing at the airport's dignitaries lounge.

"Assuming Baghdad is closed, we will go to Erbil but there is no direct flight to Manila so the OFWs will have to fly to Qatar and Dubai.... I was told there are some airlines still operating and roads are still open so we will take the opportunity to move out our people in Iraq."

Cimatu said the worst-case scenario for the ongoing repatriation efforts would be for US bases in and around Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar to be targeted.

Every country in the Middle East has its own missiles as the situation is unpredictable; sometimes there are instances of surprise missile attacks, Cimatu said, adding, "They have the option to press the trigger. We have to be ready in case there will be some incidents along the way."

According to Cimatu, the government decided to take the safest route with repatriation given the many other risks involved.

He said that repatriation in Lebanon was not necessarily because of the tension between the US and Iran, but that they were simply "preparing for possible actions of Hezbollah, a militant group there."

Once in Doha, Cimatu said he will immediately call a meeting with Philippine Embassy officials there. He said he needs to know details of how embassy officials in Baghdad plan to start moving Filipinos out of Iraq. So far, he said around 1,600 Filipinos are registered and ready for repatriation.

He wants to know: what vehicles are available and how many can they transport safely, the routes to be used and how to move Filipinos to the Baghdad Airport; and, in case flights are canceled, how to get out of Baghdad to the nearest airport as soon as possible.

"We are preparing for the worst but hope for the best," Cimatu said.

He said in Lebanon, because of the tension now, it is best to prepare the repatriation. The presence of a proxy of Iran in the area "might change the complexion of the repatriation plan in Lebanon."

"Right now, the repatriation in Lebanon is because of labor issues. But because of this tension, we must expedite the repatriation," he said. "We cannot wait for postponement out of Lebanon," he said, adding that the nature of the conflict is unpredictable. "Anything can happen. The problem is also the time of the attack. We cannot wait so we need to move them out before the situation deteriorates," he said. **With Recto L. Mercene and Samuel P. Medenilla**



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PH cancels

repatriation bid

OFWs in Iran, Lebanon may stay but evacuation from Iraq pushed

By MJ Blancaflor, Vito Barcelo and Joel E. Zurbano

THE government has called off the mandatory repatriation of Filipinos in Iran and Lebanon following what appeared to be a de-escalation of tensions between Washington and Tehran.

Crisis Alert Level 4 remained in effect in Iraq, however, which means mandatory evacuation will push through for at least 1,600 Filipino workers there, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III said.

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, moreover, will still not process any application for deployment of workers to Iran and Lebanon.

"Initially, the level of alert for Iran,

Iraq, and Lebanon are the same at Alert Level 4. Although it was unofficial, I was informed yesterday that the alert level in Lebanon was put down to level 2 and I understand that there's no more alert level in Iran," Bello said in a statement.

Environment Secretary and former special envoy to the Middle East Roy Cimatu said now is the most opportune

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time to move out the Filipinos in Iraq as tensions diffuse.

"This is the time to get out while there are no military operations," said Cimatu, who is bound for Qatar where he would oversee the evacuation efforts.

"We have to be ready in case there are incidents," Cimatu added.

Speaking on the ANC news channel, Susan Ople, a former labor undersecretary and head of non-profit overseas Filipino workers advocate group Blas F. Ople Policy Center, said the government needs to update its contingency plans.

"A massive repatriation may not be necessary but it's also good for the crisis committee of the Palace, DOLE (Department of Labor and Employment), DFA (Department of Foreign Affairs) to keep abreast of what's going on," she told ANC's Early Edition.

"This can be a good opportunity... to update

existing contingency plans, develop a network of influencers in the community that embassies can tap in case a crisis does erupt, and for our crisis managers to touch base with the leaders of these host government."

The Bureau of Immigration said it was bracing for the possible influx of returning workers if the crisis in the Middle East worsens.

Immigration Commissioner Jaime Morante has ordered all BI personnel at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport and other international ports to prepare and be ready for any eventuality should the conflict escalate further.

BI port operations division chief Grifon Medina instructed airport heads to ensure that all terminals are fully manned to ensure the smooth processing of possible repatriates.

Manila International Airport Authority general manager Eddie Monreal on Thursday alerted his men and ordered them to be prepared for the expected influx of workers from the Middle East.

"We will support government efforts the



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best we can. We shall provide holding areas where OFWs can be processed and given briefings. We are also ready to deploy our medical team at the holding areas for those who may need medical help upon arrival," the MIAA chief said.

The airport authority is part of the inter-agency team in repatriation and has been involved in previous mass repatriations that the government has undertaken in previous years.

Cimatu on Thursday urged Filipino workers to move out of Iran and Iraq immediately.

"We are preparing for the worst, but hoping for the best," he said.

He said the situation in Iran and its neighboring countries is "unpredictable," and that "the worst might come."

"We have to move them out. We won't go wrong if they move out," he added.

"The nature of the situation is unpredictable. Anything can happen in the form of an attack or missile... The problem is [also] the time of the attack. There is still time to repatriate while some airports are still open and the roads, [too]," he said.

President Rodrigo Duterte has designated Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana as head of a new government committee overseeing the repatriation of citizens from the conflict areas, Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo said.

He said National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. has been designated as the vice chairman of the Committee.

Others members of the Committee were Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr., Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III, Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año, and Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade.

The chairman of the House of Representatives' committee on labor, Rep. Eric Pineda, on Thursday supported the order of President Duterte to repatriate Filipino workers in Iraq.

"I call upon our 4,000 overseas Filipino workers in Iraq to closely coordinate with our diplomatic post so that they may be able to facilitate moving them from harm's way," Pineda said. **With Maricel V. Cruz**



Evacuation ng Pinoys sa Iraq, tuloy - Cimat

Tuloy ang paglikas sa mga appektadong OFWs sa Middle East, ayon kay Environment Sec. Roy Cimat na siya ring special envoy to Middle East.

Ito'y sa kabila ng pahayag ng Iran na tapos na ang kanilang ganti sa pagkakapatay kay Gen. Qassem Soleimani matapos ang kanilang missile strikes sa US base sa Iraq habang nagsabi na rin si US President Donald Trump na hindi na magsasagawa ng retaliatory attack at handa itong pag-usapan ang kapayapaan sa Tehran.

Bago lumipad kahapon papuntang Middle East, sinabi ni Sec. Cimat na walang pagbabago sa hakbang ng gobyerno at hindi maaaring magpakampante sa pahayag ni Trump.

Sa kanyang pananaw, baka may darating pang mas malaking gulo lalo't nakakabahala ang pagpadala ng Amerika ng 82nd Airborne Fleet sa Kuwait.

Hindi bale na umanong mag-over react kaysa magsisi kapag nalagay na sa panganib ang buhay ng mga Pilipino sa oras na may mangyaring giyera.

Sa Dubai at Qatar nila ibubuhos ang pondo at logistics dahil dito dadalhin ang mga OFWs para ipasakay ng mga eroplano.

Kung wala anyang airport sa Baghdad na magagamit sa paglikas sa mga Pinoy sa Iraq at hindi magagamit ang AFP aircraft ay mapipilitan silang umarkila ng shuttle bus na maghahatid by batch sa mga Pinoy papuntang Jordan na mas ligtas na lugar at saka isasakay ang mga Pinoy pa-Dubai at papuntang Maynila.

Anyo, pipilitin ng pamahalaan na sumama ang mga Pinoy sa Iraq para makabalik ng Pilipinas sa ayaw nila at sa gusto.

May 2,000 Pinoy anyo ang nasa Iraq na ang iba ay nagkaroon na ng asawa doon. (Angie dela Cruz)



Pangulo nakasubaybay sa atake ng Iran at US

TINIYAK ni Senator Christopher "Bong" Go na "closely monitored" ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang palitan ng pag-atake ng Amerika at Iran sa isa't isa.

Kaugnay nito, sinabi ni Go na pinakilos ni Pangulong Duterte ang DND, AFP, DFA at

maging si Secretary Roy Cimatu para masiguro ang repatriation ng mga apektadong Filipino sa Iraq at iba pang lugar na apektado sa Middle East.

Ayon kay Go, nagpapahanda na rin ang pangulo ng pondo na magagamit para sa paglilikas sa mga Pinoy

dahil base sa itinaas na alert level 4 ay kailangan talagang mailikas ang mga kababayan na nagtatrabaho roon.

Inilinaw din ni Go na 'ASAP' o agaran ang kautusan ni Pangulong Duterte na pagkilos para masiguro ang kaligtasan ng mga Filipino na

kinabibilangan ng 1,600 kabilang ang 400 naka-pag-asawa na sa Iraq.

Dagdag ni Go, base sa napag-usapan sa pulong ay gagamitin ang mga asset ng gobyerno sa paglilikas gaya ng C-130, mga barko ng Navy at Philippine Coast Guard.

(CYNTHIA MARTIN)



KINATAWAN Isa-isang sinasagot ni Environment Secreàtry Roy Cimatu ang mga mamamahayag sa isang pulong balitaan bago ito lumipad pa-Doha, Qatar kung saan tuluyang tutungo sa Baghdad, Iraq para sa posibleng paglilikas ng mga Pinoy worker.



DENR reports completed road, bridge projects for Nueva Vizcaya

By Ben Moses Ebreo

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya—Officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources have announced that three road and bridge projects have been completed in the province.

Edgar Martin, Provincial Environment

and Natural Resources officer, said the completed projects were the P19-million construction of the Lower Ammueg Bridge Reinforced Concrete Deck Girder in Ambaguio town, the P11-million Pallas-Nansia-kan Tire Path, and the P18-million Nursery-Capacnaan Tire Path in Kayapa town.

“These projects, which were awarded

contracts in 2018, were already turned over to the concerned local government units,” Martin said.

He said the 60 lineal meter Ammueg Bridge will benefit 15,300 upland farmers in Ambaguio, while the tire paths will ease transport burdens of 1,800 villagers in Kayapa.

These projects were funded by the DENR under the Agroforestry Support Facilities component of the Forest Management Project.

“These projects will improve the agroforestry productivity of our partner people’s organizations and uplift their economic status,” Martin added.



TITLE:

DENR resumes public hearing for proposed Bacoor, Cavite land-reclamation projects

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

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the local government unit (LGU) of Bacoor, Cavite, have resumed public hearing on Thursday for two massive land-reclamation projects along Manila Bay.

The public hearing for the proposed 320-hectare Bacoor Reclamation and Development Project and proposed 100-hectare Diamond Reclamation and Development Project, was held at the Bacoor City Gymnasium, and was spearheaded by the DENR's Environmental Management Bureau (EMB).

DENR and the Bacoor LGU have earlier posted public announcements about the public hearing at the City Hall and barangays halls of Bacoor last week to the surprise of community-based organizations who have expressed strong opposition to the project.

The public hearing was held after Sen. Cynthia Villar and the proponents of the project reached an agreement that major issues and concerns raised by various stakeholders on the multibillion land-reclamation projects will be addressed, Environment Undersecretary for Climate Change and Mining Concerns Analiza R. Teh told the BUSINESSMIRROR in an interview.

Villar, whose political bailiwick includes Las Piñas, earlier expressed alarm over the potential environmental impact of the project and grilled DENR officials during a budget hearing last year. She said a study showed that Las Piñas City will go under floodwater should the project, also called dump-and-fill to pave the way for the development of Bacoor's "central business district" projected to be bigger than the Bonifacio Global City, is implemented. This compelled officials of the DENR to issue a statement that the project will be discontinued.

Strong opposition to the ambitious development projects was made by the Alyansa ng mga Magdaragat sa Bacoor, Cavite, a local chapter of the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya), who questioned the project's wisdom, especially now because Manila Bay is currently the subject of massive rehabilitation works by the Duterte administration.

They alleged that any development project would further cause the economic dislocation of small fishermen and coastal communities, and cause the death of Bacoor's, otherwise, thriving oyster and mussel industry. Bacoor is the acknowledged birthplace of oyster and mussel farming which started in the mid-1950s.

Teh said the project was not really stopped, and neither was it abandoned by the project proponents, saying it was the conduct of the public hearing that was temporarily suspended.

The agency's supervising official for the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) who was designated by Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu to oversee the operation of the EMB, Teh admitted that the agency has no power to stop the project given that land-reclamation projects is not within the agency's mandate and authority, but that of the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA).

"The DENR, through the EMB, was only informed about the agreement reached by the Office of Senator Villar, and the project proponents. And the DENR has no power or authority to stop it, really, as land reclamation is under the mandate and authority of the PRA," she said in a mix of English and Filipino.

However, she said as mandated by the environmental impact statement law, the DENR has the power to grant, or reject, the application for environmental compliance certificate (ECC) which requires the conduct of a public hearing.

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She said further studies may be required of the project proponents while in the process of securing the ECC, assuring the public that the various environmental, and socio-economic issues and concerns previously raised by environmental groups, people's organizations and community-based groups will be addressed.

"Maybe we can also require the conduct cost-benefit analysis on top of environmental impact assessment because we are talking about the displacement of hundreds of people," she said.

Teh added that she will initiate a meeting between the Manila Bay Task Force composed of the DENR, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Tourism and other concerned national government agencies, the Bacoor LGU and its private-sector partner for the project, and the DENR's Manila Bay Coordinating Office, to discuss the projects' potential impact on the ongoing efforts to clean up Manila Bay.

"We really need to sit down, and talk about this to know what's the impact of the project on the ongoing rehabilitation of Manila Bay. The public hearing is just a step leading to the issuance or rejection of the ECC. It's a long way to go before actual land reclamation happens," she assured.



Angat's water level can hold until next rainy season – NWRB

By ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

Despite being below its normal high water level, the continued increase in Angat Dam's water level is still significant to extend

the supply of water until the next rainy season in June, according to the National Water Resources Board (NWRB).

It said the rising water level "will help stretch ample water supply for Metro Manila and its neighboring provinces until the next rainy season comes."

Based on the latest monitoring of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), the water level in Angat Dam slightly increased to 204.39 meters on Thurs-

day from 204.28 meters last Wednesday.

It is still 8 meters short of the 212-meter normal high water level to fully supply the domestic and irrigation requirements of Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

However, the NWRB is optimistic that the additional water helps stretch the supply until the rainy season starts in June.

NWRB Executive Director Seville David Jr. said water allocation from Angat Dam for this month is 40 cubic meters per second (cm) for Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), while 10 cm for the National Irrigation Administration (NIA).

The reduction of allocation from its normal number is a management measure to ensure that water supply is sustained in the critical summer months this year, he explained. The normal allocation is 46 cm for domestic requirements and 40 cm for irrigation needs.

"The government is working steadfastly to efficiently manage the limited water resources," he added.

Angat Dam is being monitored by a technical working group composed of NWRB, PAGASA, MWSS, NIA and National Power Corporation.

NWRB asked the public to do its part in the responsible utilization of water, noting that "simple water conservation measures that can save at least one liter a day equate to unutilized liter in Angat Dam."



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BIGGER ALLOCATION

BULACAN, PAMPANGA FARMERS TO GET MORE IRRIGATION WATER FROM ANGAT DAM

CITY OF MALOLOS—Thousands of rice farmers preparing for their second cropping in Bulacan and Pampanga provinces will receive more irrigation allocations from Angat Dam this month, National Irrigation Administration (NIA) officials said.

Felix Robles, the NIA water control chief in Bulacan, said the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) had approved the 20-cubic-meter-per-second allocation for 21,000 hectares of rice fields in the two provinces.

The NWRB started to cut the allocation for farmers last month since the Angat Dam reservoir's water level had been dropping.

Seventeen farming towns in the two provinces get their irrigation water supply from the dam through lower Bustos

Dam, also in Bulacan.

Angat Dam is also the major source of water for domestic consumption in Metro Manila.

Delay

Monsoon rains had raised the dam's stock to around a meter daily since last week, prompting Bulacan farmers to seek additional allocation up to 30 cms.

Idefonso Canquin, a farm leader in Bulacan, said the lack of allocation for irrigation had delayed their second cropping that should have started in November or early December.

Robles said the NIA had been releasing about 10 to 14 cms of water to irrigate farms in five towns in Bulacan and four towns in Pampanga since December.

But Canquin said the other

farms in Bulacan had yet to receive their allocation.

Last week, Bulacan Gov. Daniel Fernando asked the NIA and the NWRB to increase the allocation for farmers. Although the NWRB had approved the 20-cms allocation for irrigation, no schedule had been set yet for the release.

Pantabangan Dam

In Nueva Ecija province, the water level at Pantabangan Dam has not reached the targeted elevation to irrigate 128,014.53 ha of rice fields covered by the Upper Pampanga River Integrated Irrigation System (UPRIIS) in the province as well as in Pampanga and Bulacan.

According to UPRIIS, the

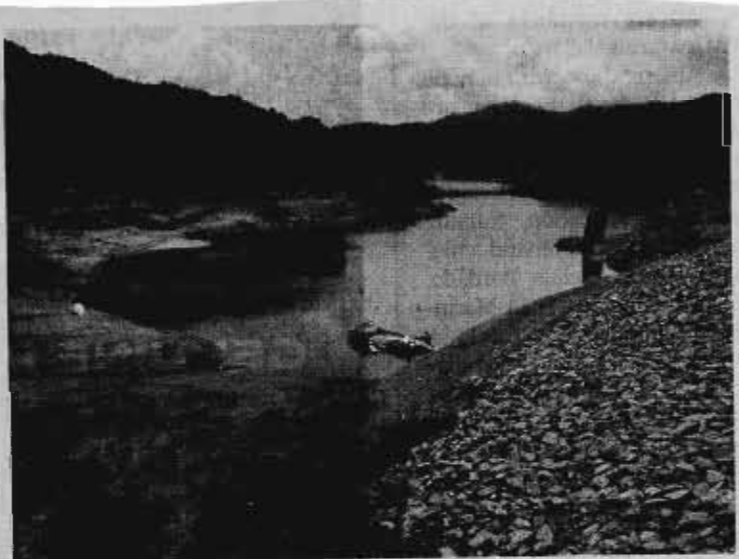
water level at Pantabangan Dam only reached 212 meters above sea level, 5 m short of the target by the end of the rainy season.

Rosalinda Bote, UPRIIS department manager, said 6,000 ha of farms in the outskirts of Nueva Ecija and Tarlac province, particularly Anao town, would not be irrigated due to the limited dam stock.

But Bote said the affected farmers would get assistance from the government.

She said the Department of Agriculture would distribute seeds for high value crops while the NWRB offered to conduct cloud seeding operations over the Pantabangan Dam.

—REPORTS FROM CARMELA REYES-ESTROPE AND ARMAND GALANG INQ



GERIG C. MONTEGRANDE

WATER SOURCE The Angat Dam, shown in this June 2019 photo with its dwindling reservoir level, is a major water source of households and businesses in Metro Manila. The dam also supplies the irrigation needs of farms in Central Luzon.



Farmlands get higher irrigation supply

By Rex Estuye Espiritu

MALOLOS, National Board the water farmlands

Bulacan - The Water Resources (NWRB) increased allocation for the of Bulacan due



to the improvement of water levels in the Angat Dam.

This was following appeals by farmers to government officials to intercede on their behalf with the NWRB for an increase in the allocation of irrigation water supply.

NWRB Executive Director Seville David Jr. said Monday that the water board reviewed and discussed the water level improvement of the Angat Dam, which is the main source of Metro Manila's potable water as well as irrigation for rice lands of Bulacan and some parts of Pampanga.

Data from the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (PDRRMO) of Bulacan's monitoring showed that Angat Dam's water level increased to 204.29 meters from 201.60 meters as of 5 p.m. of 31 December last year.

"This is an increase of 2.79 meters on the dam's water elevation, however, this is still below the desired water level of 212 meters by this time," PDRRMO head Liz Mungcal explained.

With this, the NWRB will give an increased allocation to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System of 42 cubic meters per second (cms) for Metro Manila and nearby cities and municipalities of Bulacan and Rizal, while the National Irrigation Administration received an increase of 20 cms for irrigation for the provinces of Bulacan and Pampanga for the month of January.



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Baguio City gears for rehab

The commitment to our mandate to sell and protect our natural attractions remains our paramount objective

By Aldwin Quitasol

BAGUIO CITY — The nation's summer capital is all ears in seeking solutions to its various problems as three government agencies will meet with Baguio City government executives to discuss the city's intensive rehabilitation plan this week.

Baguio officials Mayor Benjamin Magalong and Rep. Mark Go will be meeting with Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat and Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) chief Eduardo Año today to discuss Baguio City's prevailing problems of traffic congestion, pollution, urban decay and over-tourism.

"The commitment to our mandate to sell and protect our natural attractions remains our paramount objective. It is a shared responsibility, however, among government and our people to be responsible stewards of our planet," Romulo-Puyat said in a statement.

Priority areas to be tackled include the Burnham Park rehabilitation, the construction of pay parking buildings, interventions on improving the quality of waste water, water quality management and solid waste management.

The group will also discuss sustainable infrastructure rehabilitation projects on the carrying capacity of Baguio, La Trinidad, Itogon, Sablan, Tuba and Tublay as well as other plans to revitalize and decongest these areas.

The City Planning and Development Coordinator and the Baguio City Tourism Office will also give situational reports to the group on the tourism situation and land use plan.

Aside from this, the team will make ocular visits to the sewage treatment plant, the Balili River and the Irisan sanitary landfill.

Magalong advised the people of Baguio to brace for the coming rehabilitation, further clarifying that unlike the rehabilitation of Boracay, the city will not be closed to tourism.



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STUDY ON ISLAND'S CARRYING CAPACITY

CAMIGUIN EYES GAP ON TOURIST ARRIVALS

By Jigger J. Jerusalem
@InqNational

MAMBAJAO, CAMIGUIN— Long positioned as a prime tourist destination in Northern Mindanao region, leaders of Camiguin now want to regulate the influx of visitors to the tiny island province to ensure that its natural riches remain intact.

On Tuesday, Gov. Jurdin Jesus Romualdo said one way to protect the province's natural resources was to regulate the entry of tourists to the optimum that it could handle.

"We are happy to share that we have started since last year [the] first steps toward establishing carrying capacity limits in our ecotourism sites, to determine the maximum number of people that can be sustained by the environment," Romualdo said in his state of the province address at Camiguin Convention Center here.

He said he wanted to have a computed total carrying capacity for tourists for the entire island.

"Before, we wanted to have as many people coming in. But it wasn't right. There should be a carrying capacity to sustain our environment," Romualdo said.

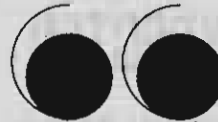
From January to September last year, the province recorded more than 500,000 tourists, an average of 55,000 a month or close to 2,000 in a day.

Romualdo noted the increase in tourist influx owing to the opening of daily flights to the island from Cebu province, and flights from Manila five times a week.

Protecting ecosystem

He said there was a need to protect and conserve Camiguin's ecosystem amid the increase in the number of tourists.

With an area of 238 square kilometers, Camiguin has 90,000 people in five towns. It is popu-



**Before, we wanted
to have as many
people coming in.
But it wasn't right**

Jurdin Jesus Romualdo
Camiguin Governor

lar for its beaches, sandbars and springs. Its hiking trails around the active Hibok-Hibok volcano are also a major attraction.

During Holy Week, Catholic devotees trek to the volcano through the Panaad Walkway that features the stations of the cross.

Another tourist draw is the Lanzones Festival every October.

Livelihood activities

Officials also want to promote local livelihood activities like crop production that will not harm the environment. Already, the provincial environment and natural resources office has focused on expanding and protecting the province's forest cover, enhancing biodiversity conservation, and developing its marine and coastal ecosystem.

Romualdo also emphasized the need for farmers to switch to organic agriculture to preserve the soil.

"While it is good to note the economic gains of having numerous investments in Camiguin, residents and visitors should make sure that the island's environment is healthy and its tourist sites sustained so these could be enjoyed by more people in the years to come," he said. INQ



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YOUR ZERO WASTE QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Diving into the zero-waste lifestyle



ILLUSTRATION BY ARIANA MARALIT

This January we celebrate National Zero Waste Month, and that means promoting a zero-waste lifestyle. Here is *Manila Bulletin Lifestyle's* helpful primer on all things zero-waste to help you get engaged in the movement, with questions asked by the hypothetical YOU.

YOU: So, what exactly is the zero-waste movement?

MB LIFESTYLE: The zero-waste movement is a mindset rather than a hard target. The goal is to produce zero waste and eliminate all trash and garbage. This is a lifestyle that can be adopted by individuals, companies, and countries. According to *Bea Johnson*, author of *Zero Waste Home*, people who live zero-waste lifestyles do so by following a series of principles defined by the 5Rs.

YOU: 5Rs? Doesn't she mean 3Rs?

MB LIFESTYLE: While many people are familiar with the 3Rs, proponents of zero-waste lifestyles suggest that there are in fact 5Rs we as individuals should be concerned with: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rot.

YOU: Hold on, shouldn't companies and corporations get involved in this movement too?

MB LIFESTYLE: You are absolutely right! Even our local, national, and international governments and leaders! Currently, our products are made with a cradle-to-grave model. At the end of a product's life, it gets dumped some-

where, creating waste, trash, garbage, however you call it. For companies to adopt a zero-waste lifestyle, products need to be made with a closed loop cradle-to-cradle model: the resources that go into a product should be repurposed for other uses at the end of the product's lifecycle, just like in nature where one part of the ecosystem helps sustain another.

YOU: Well, that sounds like a good idea, but it also sounds like a lot of work. Why should we care about National Zero Waste Month?

MB LIFESTYLE: The lifestyle most of us currently adopt is not sustainable for our planet, and the 3Rs of reduce, reuse, and recycle are simply not enough to save us. According to the British Royal Statistics Society, only nine percent of all plastics get recycled, the rest is either thrown into landfills, burned in fires that create smoke that damages our atmosphere, or dumped into the ocean. The World Economic Forum suggested

that the amount of waste dumped into the ocean "is equivalent to dumping the contents of one garbage truck into the ocean per minute".

YOU: That does not sound very good...

MB LIFESTYLE: It really, really, really isn't. By reducing waste we not only conserve our resources, but we also minimize the water and air pollution that contribute to climate change.

YOU: Okay, so what do I do now?

MB LIFESTYLE: This month, we are publishing articles by the youth of the Philippines on the zero-waste movement. You can check them out on our website, or you can even send us an article through mblifestyleyouth@gmail.com and we will get back to you as soon as we can.

Most important, do what you can to minimize your waste, encourage the people around you as well, and do not be afraid to demand more of companies and

the government. In the words of *Margaret Mead*, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."



REFUSE

REDUCE

RECYCLE

'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.' — Margaret Mead



Eco group bewails mounds of trash left by devotees

By CHITO A. CHAVEZ

Quezon City-based environmental group EcoWaste Coalition on Thursday expressed extreme frustration over the mounds of trash left behind by the devotees of Traslacion 2020.

"Soon after the carriage bearing the revered image left Quirino Grandstand, we saw lots of bins and bags teeming with mixed garbage, including sleeping materials, food leftovers, urine-filled plastic bottles, dirty diapers, and hordes of single-use plastics," the group said in a statement.

"Despite the signage warning visitors that the law penalizing littering is 'strictly' enforced at the sprawling park,

some people recklessly threw their rubbish anywhere, which government workers and volunteers from church, school and environmental groups had to pick up," it added.

Every year, EcoWaste Coalition had pleaded to the devotees of the Black Nazarene to maintain cleanliness along the procession route and surrounding areas. But the pleas have not decreased the amount of garbage that is left behind.

"The repeated call by various sectors, including the Manila City Government, Quiapo Church and the EcoWaste Coalition, for an environmentally-responsible expression of piety and devotion again fell on deaf ears," the group lamented.



RESPONDE



BY GUS ABELGAS

Tone-toneladang basura!

TONE-TONELADANG basura na naman ang nahakot matapos ang isinagawang Traslacion kahapon.

Noon lamang nakalipas na buwan matapos ang holiday seasons, sangkaterba o tone-tonelada ring basura ang nahakot partikular sa mga pampublikong lugar at mga pasyalan.

Nagkaroon ng kalamidad sa mga pagtama ng bagyo, hindi nga ba't ganito rin ang naging senaryo, ang makahakot ng sangkaterbang basura lalo na sa mga baybayin.

Hindi nauubos, hindi kumokonti bagkus parami pa nang parami ang mga nahahakot na basura.

Mga basura na itinapon na lang sa kung saan-saan ng mga pasaway nating kababayan.

Garbage crisis, 'yan na ang paniwalang nagaganap sa bansa dahil sa mga nahahakot na basura.

Kaya nga konting pag-ulan lang nandiyan na ang nararanasang matinding mga pagbaha. Kasi nga nababarahan na ng basura ang mga daluyan ng tubig, kanal o estero.

Matinding problema ang kinakaharap ng bansa ukol dito.

Nakikita lamang dahilan dito ay kawalan ng disiplina ng marami.

Ang nakakalungkot bakit pagdating sa sarili nilang bansa, hindi magawang maging disiplinado o magawa ang maayos na pagtatapon ng basura sa tamang lugar.

Pero kapag dumayo sa ibang bansa, tila bantay na bantay ang sarili at kahit maliit na basura ibubulsa.

Sa taong ito, inaasahan na rin ang pag-ban sa paggamit ng plastic. Inaasahang sa ganitong paraan bahagyang makakabawas ng basura sa kapuluan.

Sana ay hindi dito matapos ang pagsisikap na masolusyunan ang matinding problema sa basura bagkus simulan ang solusyon sa sarili o indibiduwal na bahagi.



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TREES OF HOPE

Suntrust Properties, Inc. conducted a tree planting activity today, Dec. 23, 2019. A total of 100 seedlings were planted in Cavite under its Suntrust Cares Program in an effort to raise environmental awareness. Joining the initiative were Municipal Environment and Natural Resource Office of Tanza representatives led by Mr. Menandro R. Dimaranan, staff Bombie Santillan and Alex Tahimic.



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'Hot logs' nasabat sa Nueva Ecija

GEN. TINIO, Nueva Ecija - Aabot sa 320 board feet ng kahoy na nakasakay sa dalawang tricycle ang sunud-sunod na nasabat ng pulisya na ikinaaresto ng dalawang katao sa Barangay Rio Chico at Bgy. Concepcion sa nasabing bayan, kamakailan.

Sa ulat ni Capt. Gregorio Bautista, hepe ng Gen. Tinio Police, naharang nila ang isang tricycle na may kargang kahoy sa Bgy. Rio Chico, nitong Martes, dakong 5:50 ng umaga.

Inaresto ang drayber na si Alvin Bacani, 26, binata ng Bgy. Concepcion nang walang

maipakitang dokumento para sa dalang 250 board feet na kahoy na nagkakahalaga ng P7,000.00.

Dakong 6:15 ng umaga naman nang parahin ng mga awtoridad ag isa ring tricycle sa Bgy. Concepcion, dahil sa kargang kahoy.

Agad na dinakip ang driver nito na si Lito Evangelista, 55, may-asawa, magsasaka, taga-Sitio Pantay.

Ayon pa kay Bautista, resulta lamang ito ng pinaigting nilang kampanya kontra illegal logging operations sa lalawigan.

Light A. Nolasco



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MASTER PLAN — Cagayan Economic Zone Authority (CEZA) Administrator and Chief Executive Officer Secretary Raul L. Lambino (second from left) turns over the CEZA Master Plan and Feasibility Studies for the development of Palauí and Nangaramoan Beach Tourist destinations in Northern Luzon to Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu. The turnover of the master plan was recently held at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) head office in Quezon City. Also in photo are CEZA's Special Assistants Raymond T. Roquero (left) and Robert Dioso (right) and DENR Undersecretary Jonas Leones (fourth from left).



SOCCSKSARGEN: TUPI, SOUTH COTABATO

To visit the tarsier sanctuary in Tupi, you got to plant trees

THOSE WHO want to visit the tarsier sanctuary in Tupi, South Cotabato will have to sign up for the "Voluntourism" program, wherein they will have to help plant trees to get the chance to see the smallest primates in their natural habitat. In a statement, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Region 12 (DENR-12) office said walk-in visitors are no longer allowed as part of the conservation efforts. The sanctuary is located within the Mt. Matutum Protected Landscape (MMPL). "Tarsiers are nocturnal animals, hence they sleep during the day and are active only during the night, like owls. Hence, visitors are enjoined to avoid disturbing these animals in their natural habitat or when visiting the Tarsier Sanctuary," said Gabriel M. Baute, the Protected Area superintendent of the 13,947-hectare MMPL. DENR-12 also noted that tarsiers are known to commit suicide when in captivity and exposed to such stressors like camera flash, human touch, and other sources of disturbance.



DENR-SOCCSKSARGEN

PROTECTION

The Voluntourism program was developed by the Tupi municipal government. Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Officer (MENRO) Rolando T. Visaya said they want to attract visitors who have "high regard and motivation for the protection and conservation of biodiversity, especially the tarsiers." The Philippine tarsier (*Tarsius Syrichta*) has been declared a "specially protected faunal species" of the country through Proclamation No. 1030 signed on June 23, 1997 by then President Fidel V. Ramos. — MSJ

Those who want to visit the sanctuary may contact the Tupi MENRO at (083) 226-2800 or the MMPL PASu at (083) 228-1404.



SOUTHCOTABATO.GOV.PH

THE PHILIPPINE TARSIER (*Tarsius Syrichta*) is an endemic species found in the southeastern part of the country, particularly on the islands of Bohol, Samar, Leyte and Mindanao. Among their homes is the Mt. Matutum Protected Landscape, which covers the towns of Tupi, Tampakan and Polomolok in South Cotabato, and Malungon in Sarangani. They are called 'mal' by the indigenous groups Blaans and Tbolis who live in these areas.



BW FILE

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION: MANILA CITY Ordinance proposed declaring Arroceros Park as permanent forest area

AN ORDINANCE has been proposed declaring Arroceros Forest Park, dubbed as the last lung of Manila, as a permanent forest park. Draft Ordinance No. 7981, filed in September last year and published on Jan. 9, mandates the city government "to protect and conserve the integrity of the last environmental frontier of the city." The 2.2-hectare land located in Arroceros Street beside the Pasig River is considered significant for "scientific, educational and recreational use." The forest park was developed in 1993, following a memorandum of agreement signed by then mayor Alfredo S. Lim and the Winner Foundation, Inc. for the creation and enhancement of an ecological environment of the nation's capital. Republic Act No. 5752 or the Local Autonomy Act states that each municipality or city must initiate the establishment of a permanent forest tree parks in their jurisdiction equivalent to 2% of the entire area. Arroceros Park came under threat when former mayor Joseph E. Estrada planned to build a gymnasium inside it in 2017. The plan did not push through. Another ordinance, approved in November last year, already closed for public use a land near the park for future expansion. — Vann Marlo M. Villegas



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Ididiliber na sana sa mall: Karneng may 'swine fever' naharang

Nasabat ng mga miyembro ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Quarantine-Pangasinan (DENRQ-Pang) kahapon ang kulang-kulang sa 2,000 kilo ng karne ng baboy na pinaghihinalaang may African Swine Fever (ASF) sa Barangay West, Rosales, Pangasinan.

Ayon sa DENRQ-Pang, ang mga karne ng baboy na kanilang nasabat ay nangyari bandang alas-11:05 ng umaga sa isang checkpoint sa nasabing barangay.

Sa report ng nasabing ahensiya, ang mga nasabing karne ay lulan ng isang Elf van na may con-

duction sticker 1-104-0856 na pag-aari ng Atkins Import and Export Inc. na nakabase sa Mecauayan, Bulacan.

Sinabi ng DENRQ-Pang, ang nasabat na mga karne ay idi-deliver sana sa Robinson's Mall sa Dagupan City, Pangasinan.

Sinabi ng DENRQ-Pang sa Abante na ang mga kumpiskadong karne ng baboy ay dadalhin sa lokal na meat inspection bureau para maeksamin.

Sa ngayon, patuloy ang ginagawang checkpoint ng nasabing ahensiya sa mga pumapasok sa bayan ng Pangasinan. **(Alian Bergonia)**



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PAGPAPASALAMAT SA MAKABULUHANG BUHAY



PANINIWALA nga ng marami sa atin, maikdi lamang ang ating paglalakbay sa buhay na ito, kaya naman dapat na gawin itong makabuluhan sa pamamagitan ng paggawa ng mabuti sa kapwa-tao. Sa pagpasok ng taong 2020, isang bagong dekada, lubos na nagpapasalamat ang inyong lingkod sa Dakilang Panginoon para sa isang mabiyaya, mabunga at matatag na nagdaang nakaraang dekada (2007 - 2019).

Sa nagdaang labing-tatlong taon ay mas lalo kong naintindihan kung bakit mula sa Accountancy ay napadpad ako sa mundo ng mass media. Sadyang dito ako itihulak ng kapalaran upang makapagbigay ng paglilingkod sa ating mga kababayan na bagamat nangangailangan ng tulong ay determinadong mismong matutungan ang sarili, iba ito sa mga taong iniaasa ang buhay sa iba. Ibig kong sabihin, dapat na positibo pa rin ang pag-uugali ng binibigyan ng tulong at nakikita mo na sa kanyang kakayahan ay sadya siyang kumikilos at may ginagawang pansariing diskarte. Napa-

kasarp tulungan ng mga ganitong klase ng tao.

Paglilinaw lang din po ng inyong lingkod, nagiging instrumento lamang ako ng mga kaibigan at kakilala na may mabuting kalooban na nais magpaabot ng tulong pero ayaw nilang malantad ang kanilang mga mukha sa social media. Ako ang kanilang isinasalang bilang mukha ng pagtulong upang makapagbigay na rin ng inspirasyon sa marami pang may mabubuting kalooban. Ang pagtulong ay wala sa halaga, pupuwedeng ibahagi ang oras, kakayahan o kagalingan o anumang meron ka.

Kaya sa ngalan ng mga napag-abutan natin ng tulong, pag-asa at inspirasyon ng ayong taon, maraming salamat sa aking mga anonymous friend donors sa patuloy na pagtitiwala at paniniwala sa kabutihan. Sa tuwina, ang Dakilang Diyos na lamang ang siyang bahalang magbalik ng inyong nagagawang kabutihan.

Maliban sa mga kaibigan may malalambot na puso, kredibilidad at pakikisama rin ang siyang puhunan ng inyong lingkod kung kaya't madali tayong makakuha ng tulong

sa mga ahensiya ng pamahalaan katulad ng Presidential Complaint Center (PCC), Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO), Lung Center of the Philippines (LCP), National Children Hospital (NCH), Quirino Memorial Medical Center, (QMMC) Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PHILHEALTH), Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), Social Security System (SSS), Pag-IBIG Fund, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Caritas Manila, Dugong Alay, Dugtong Buhay, Inc. (DADBI), Dr James G. Dy, President ng Chinese General Hospital and Medical Center at iba pang mga organisasyon.

Bukod nga sa mga nakuhang kong iba't ibang parangal

nitong mga nakaraang taon, nais ko po, nagpapasalamat muli sa DABDI, sa Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), at sa PIA para sa mga pagkilala sa taong 2019. Nakakapawi ng pagod ang mga ito. Nagpapasalamat din ako sa mga kasamahan ko sa Radio Veritas 846 kHz, sa DWIZ 882 kHz, sa mga kaibigan ko sa MBC-DZRH at abangan po ninyo ang nalalapit na pagbabalik ng 'Health & Travel @ Serbisyo Publiko' sa DWBL 1242 kHz sa buwan ng Marso.

May nagtanong sa akin minsan kung papasukin ko raw ba ang magulong pulitika kung kaya tayo tumutulong? Hindi po, wala po sa isipan ko ang pulitika. May posisyon o

wala ay handa pong tumulong ang inyong lingkod batay sa aking kapasidad at kakayahan. Hindi po ako milyonarya, mga kaibigan may ginintuang puso lamang ang nagbibigay suporta sa ating mga gawain at adbokasiya.

Sa taong 2020 at sa bagong dekada, ipagpapatuloy ng inyong lingkod ang ating paghahatid ng agarang serbisyo at adbokasiyang makakatulong sa mga mamamayan katulad ng tamang kaalaman at ang ating 'Tanggap Kuto' campaign kasama ng ating mga partners.

Katulad ni Pope Francis, hiling ko lang ay isama ninyo ako sa inyong mga panalangin para sa mas maayos na kalusugan at kaligtasan.





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MATATANGGAP na ng mga empleyado at opisyal ng pamahalaan ang dagdag-sahod at iba nilang benepisyo sa mga darating na sahurang.

Pinirmahan na kasi ni Pangulo ng Rodrigo Duterte ang Salary Standardization Law 5 na magbibigay ng dagdag-sahod mula ngayong taon hanggang taong 2023.

Ang maganda, maa-gang naaprubahan ng Kongreso ang pambansang budyet para sa taong ito at makaraang mabusisi nang husto ng Pangulo ang mga reklamo ay pinirmahan na rin niya ito.

Hindi katulad ng 2019 budget na saka umiral sa buwan ng Mayo dahil nabalam ang pag-apruba ng mga kongresman at senador na nag-away-away sa nasa P95 bilyong pork barrel na na-veto rin ng Pangulo.

PASILIP

Mahigit sa 1.4 milyong obrero at opisyal na pambansa ang mabibiyayaan ng dagdag-sahod.

Maging minimum nang sahod sa pinakamababang uri ng empleyado ang P13,000 mula sa P11,000 habang pinakamalaki ang matatanggap ng mga grupong katulad ng mga titser at nurse na may Salary Grade Level na 10-15 sa dagdag na 20-30 porsyento.

Ang mga mas mataas na empleyado at opisyal, hanggang 8% lang ang dagdag-sahod samantalang wala nito ang Pangulo ng Pilipinas, mga kongresman at senador.

Kasama sa matatanggap ng mga opisyal at obrero ang mga mid year bonus na bibigay sa buwan ng Mayo at bonus at cash gift na P5,000 sa Nobyembre.

MGA LOKAL NA PAMAHALAAN

Ang mga lokal na pamahalaan, bahala silang magdagdag kung makakayanan nila.

Karaniwan narin ang mapagbigay-biyaya ang mga lokal na pamahalaan, lalo na ang mga mayayamang local government unit.

Kung minsan, nakatatanggap halimbawa ang mga pamahalaang barangay mula sa mga pamahalaang bayan, lungsod, talawigan at maging sa mga kongresman at senador.

May mga LGU namang mayayaman na may pabiyaya halimba-



ni BENNY ANTIPORDA

GOOD NEWS SA MGA OBRERO NG PAMAHALAAN

wa sa mga nakararating sa edad na 80 pataas at nagbibigay ng mga cash gift na P100,000, libreng gamot, ospital at iba pang serbisyo.

Sana naman, hindi da-anin sa kama-kamag-anak, kai-kaibigan at pamumulitika ang pinalakas na Pantawid Pamilya Pilipino Program.

Sana rin hindi bababuyin ng mga benepisyaryo ang programang ito na tunay namang nakatutulong sa mga mahihirap na pamilya.

Problema lang ang mga korap na hindi nagdedeklara ng mga natatanggap at sinosolo ng isa o lilan ang biyaya.

IRA LALAKI NA RIN

Isa sa mga pag-asa ng mga LGU para makayanan ang pagpapalaki ng mga sahod at benepisyo ang pinalaking bahagi ng mga ito sa Internal Revenue Allotment.

Naglabas ang Supreme Court nitong nakaraang Abril 2019 ng desisyon na hindi na lang magmumula sa kita ng Bureau of Internal Revenue ang IRA.

May share na rin sila sa kita ng Bureau of Customs, 50% ng value added tax, 30% ng koleksyon nasyonal na buwis sa Bangsamoro Autonomous in Muslim Mindanao, 60% mula sa mga buwis sa pambansang likas na yaman, 85% mula sa buwis ng tabako at iba pa.

Kaya lang, sa 2022 pa iiral ang batas na ito para mapakinabangan nang husto ng mga LGU, empleyado at opisyal ng mga ito at mga mamamayang lokal.

Muli, sana, hindi susulpot ang mga walang ginawa kundi magpayaman at pwesto at manatili sa pwesto by hook or by crook.

SAGANDA ANG SERBISYO-PUBLIKO

Maasahan ang gaganda ang serbisyo-publiko dahil sa pagtaas ng sahod ng mga nasa pamahalaan.

Op kors, lalaki rin ang kaltas sa kanilang sahod na Government Service Insurance System, Pag-IBIG, PhilHealth at iba pa na malaking kabawisan

sa kanilang take home pay.

Pero dahil lalaki ang kaltas sa GSIS, Pag-IBIG at PhilHealth, mas malaki ang benepisyo ng mga benepisyaryo mula sa mga ahensyang ito.

Para sa mga magiging pensyonado ng GSIS halimbawa, mas malaki ang aasahan nila pagdating ng kanilang retirement.

Swerte ang mga malilibre sa buwis dahil sa mas mababa nilang sahod na nasa antas ng minimum wage.

Bibili man ng isang kahon ng chalk si Madam Teacher dahil kulang siya sa suplay, kaya na nitong itawid nang walang reimbursement.

Si Miss Nars nama, kapag itinakbo niya sa ospital ang pinalaking bahagi ng traysikel, kaya na rin niyang itawid.

Hindi na gaanong iiyak ang mga titser at nars na napipilitang gumastos ng parte ng sahod nila dahil sa kanilang paniniibihan sa bayan.

Pero ang higit na mahalaga, ang pang-araw-araw na gastos mahahabol nila at hindi na gaanong magkukulang.

PASASALAMAT

Sabi lagi ni Pang Digong, trabaho lang tayo.

Hindi kailangan ang papuri dahil obligasyon ng mga opisyal ang mag-silbi sa bayan.

Trabahanite lang ang mga opisyal ng mamamayan na dapat kumilos.

Pero magandang lingunin na pangako ni Pang. Digong ang dagdag-sahod sa mga opisyal at empleyado ng pamahalaan at noon pa sa kanyang huling State of the Nation Address; dinan ito at sinundan ng certification sa Kongreso na urgent ang patukalang batas.

May your tribe increase.

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Anomang reaksyon o reklamo, maaaring ipairating sa: 0922840-3333 o i-email sa bantiporda@yahoo.com.