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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



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Kalidad ng hangin sa M. Manila, patuloy na bumubuti – DENR

PATULOY na bumubuti ang kalidad ng hangin sa Metro Manila at sa ilang karatig-lalawigan.

Ito ay kasunod ng nag-papatuloy na phreatic eruption ng Bulkang Taal.

Gayunman, sa pana-yam ng Radyo Inquirer, sinabi ni DENR Under-secretary Benny Antiporda na hinihikayat pa rin ang publiko na magsuot ng face mask.

Bagaman unti-unti nang nagiging malinaw ang hangin, mapanganib pa rin

aniya ang mga natirang ash fall sa kalsada.

Ito aniya ang inaalala ng mga otoridad hindi lamang ang posibleng pagsabog pa ng bulkan.

Paliwanag pa ni Antiporda, malaki kasi ang posibilidad na matanghap ito ng publiko.

Hindi aniya ito ligtas para sa kalusugan ng publiko dahil maaari itong magdulot ng allergy o anumang problema sa respiratory system ng tao.



Taal Lake fish kill feared

By ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ
and GENALYN D. KABILING

Fish kill due to high sulfur content in Taal Lake could damage around 6,000 fish cages with production loss estimated at 15,033 metric tons, according to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

Sulfur upwelling, which is due to the ongoing eruption of Taal Volcano, could affect tilapia, as well as *Sardinella tawilis*, that are mostly thriving in Taal Lake.

Sardinella tawilis, which can only be found in the Philippines, is an endangered fish species under the list of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

With this development, Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) director Renato Solidum said fishing activity should be prohibited, especially given the evacuation implemented within the 14-kilometer danger zone around the restive volcano.

"Pag sinabi natin within 14 ►5

Taal Lake fish...

kilometers, kasama na Taal Lake, dapat walang tao. (When we say within 14 kilometers, it includes Taal Lake where there should be no people)," Solidum said in the "Laging Handa" (Always Ready) press briefing at the Palace.

"Pag sumabog 'yun ng malakas, gagapang 'yung above lake water. 'Pag nandun ka sa lake, delikado (If there's a strong explosion, it will spread above lake water. If you're in the lake, it is dangerous)," he said, adding that the Alert Level 4 status over Taal remains.

Fish from Taal not safe

Likewise, the public is also strongly discouraged from eating fish from Taal Lake to avoid food poisoning and other health problems, Health Assistant Secretary Maria Franca Laxamana said.

Laxamana, in the same press briefing, said people who eat contaminated fish might experience symptoms such as stomach ache, vomiting, and diarrhea.

"Pinagbawal na. Definitely may advisory na lahat nanggagaling diyan sa area ng Taal, Batangas dapat wala na bibili kasi hindi natin maaasahan 'yung safety ang ating mamamayan (It is prohibited. We have an advisory that no one should buy fish from Taal because we cannot ensure the safety of the people)," she said.

"Parang food poisoning 'yan, walang tigil ang pagtatae at pagsusuka. Ang number one natin gawin ay rehydrate ang pasyente (It's like food poisoning. There will be nonstop diarrhea and vomiting. The number one remedy is to rehydrate the patient)."

In a later media interview, Laxamana said fish from Taal Lake may not be safe for human consumption following the volcano's release of toxic materials.

"We advise people not to eat fish from the lake kasi lumabas na yung mga toxic materials from the volcano (because the volcano has unleashed toxic materials)," she said.

"If you have diarrhea, you can go into dehydration. Akala nila ordinary stomach pains, pagtatae; pag walang consultation na ginawa, akala nila ordinary lang 'yun (they think it's just ordinary stomach pain, diarrhea, if

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there no medical consultation)." She said the resumption of consumption of fish from Taal Lake will depend on advice from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Department of Agriculture (DA).

Stronger eruption possible

Meanwhile, Taal spewed lava, ash and steam, and trembled constantly Tuesday on the third day of an eruption that could portend a much bigger and dangerous eruption, officials warned as tens of thousands of people fled ash-blanketed villages in the danger zone.

The continuing restiveness of the Taal volcano after it rumbled to life Sunday indicates magma may still be rising to the crater, Phivolcs said.

The volcano was spurting fountains of red-hot lava 500 meters (1,640 feet) into the sky with dark-gray plumes of ash-laden steam that reached 2 kilometers (more than 1 mile) high. The massive volcanic column at times flashed with streaks of lightning.

No slowing down

Solidum said on Tuesday that the volcano is not showing signs of slowing down as its main crater continued to spew lava and ash, triggering series of tremors in the area.

While lesser volcanic activities have been observed in the surface crater of Taal such as weaker lava fountaining, Solidum said that strong and recurring volcanic quakes indicate that there is still a movement of magma beneath Taal Volcano's edifice which may further lead to explosive eruption.

According to Phivolcs' Volcano Monitoring and Eruption Prediction Division chief Mariton Bornas, a total of 355 volcanic quakes were recorded near Taal as of 10 a.m. Tuesday, since Sunday afternoon prior to its phreatic eruption.

"These earthquakes were measured with magnitude of up to 4.1 and were felt with intensities ranging from Intensity I to V in Tagaytay City in Cavite, and Alitagtag, Lemery, Sto. Tomas, and Talisay in Batangas," Bornas explained in a press conference.

Bornas pointed out that the tremors recorded in areas near the volcano were slightly stronger for a volcanic earthquake, meaning there is



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a continued movement of significant volume of magma beneath Taal.

Fissures have also been found in Lemery and Talisay in Batangas, Bornas said.

Damage

As of Tuesday, the Department of Agriculture-Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon) has reported combined agricultural sector damage and losses P577.59 million, affecting 2,772 hectares of farms and 102 animal heads.

The National Food Authority (NFA) assured that it has enough rice stocks in areas affected by Taal Volcano's eruption.

It could supply the rice needs of local government units, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and other relief agencies for the volcano victims, with a total of 4,090,000 bags from the affected regions.

NFA Administrator Judy Dansal guaranteed that the rice stocks are safe for human consumption as they are stored in properly maintained warehouses away from ash fall.

Secretary William Dar has directed DA-Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Service, Regional Agribusiness, Marketing Assistance Divisions, and BFAR to intensify price monitoring, as well as to source needed food supply for Metro Manila markets.

Still at Alert Level 4

As this developed, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) has advised the public to get only accurate and reliable information and updates on Taal Volcano's eruption from reliable sources such as official government websites and social media accounts.

"Fake news is circulating across social media platforms about the recent Taal volcanic activity that can misinform and confuse those who come across them. Do not entertain posts from unofficial sources," the NDRRMC said in an advisory on Monday night.

The NDRRMC issued the advisory due to social media posts circulating that Taal's alert status has already reached level 5, which it denied.

As of Tuesday midnight, the NDRRMC said the alert status of Taal remains at level 4. (With reports from AP, Alexandria San Juan, and Martin A. Sadongdong)



More cracks detected on

VOLCANO experts have detected new cracks in various parts of the volcano island in Batangas as Taal Volcano continues to display magmatic and hydro volcanic activity.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) reported in its Volcano Bulletin issued 1 p.m. Tuesday that lava fountains generated 800-meter tall

dark gray steam-laden plumes that drifted to the general southwest.

"New fissures or cracks were observed in Sinisian, Mahabang Dahilig, Dayapan, Palanas, Sangalang, Poblacion, Lemery; Pansipit, Agoncillo; Poblacion 1, Poblacion 2, Poblacion 3, Poblacion 5, Talisay and Poblacion, San Nicolas. A fissure was also documented across the road connecting Agoncillo to

Taal Volcano island

Laurel, Batangas," it said.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Seismic Network recorded a total of 49 volcanic earthquakes in the Taal region from 2 a.m. to 10 a.m. on Tuesday, including seven that were felt with intensities ranging from intensity 2 to 4 in Tagaytay City.

Interviewed by the BUSINESS-MIRROR, Lincoln Olayva, Science Research Specialist 1 at Phivolcs,

said the intense seismic activity and the fissuring on the island mean continuous magma intrusion beneath the Taal edifice. "This may or may not lead to a hazardous eruption," he said.

By this time, he said livestock and domestic animals, including fish in the lake, could have been succumbed or are in extreme danger already.

More cracks...

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eruption columns or by massive collapses of the summit lava dome. This also means deadly pyroclastic flows, surges and or lateral blasts and widespread ashfall are generated.

Under this alert level, additional danger areas may be declared.

"In the next few hours, we anticipate hazardous eruption to take place. But the volcanic activity can also stop. We still don't know for sure what can happen next," he said.

As such, Alert Level 4 still remains in effect over Taal Volcano, which means that hazardous explosive eruption is possible within hours to days, according to Phivolcs Volcano Bulletin. **Jonathan L. Mayuga**

* "It is highly possible that because of the volcanic activity, even fish in the lake are already affected," he said.

As such, he said the entire volcano island should have been deserted by now, and that it should stay as a "no man's land."

"Remember that the entire volcano island is within the 14-kilometer permanent danger zone. Anyone who are still there on the island are in grave danger," he said in a mix of Filipino and English.

Thousands of affected communities fled their homes as the volcano started to erupt Sunday afternoon and are sheltered in over 40 temporary evacuation camps put up across Batangas province. Ashfall from the volcano had reached areas as far as Quezon City on Sunday and Monday, prompting Malacañang to suspend classes in all levels, as well as work in government offices on Monday.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) through its Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) deployed field personnel to rescue affected wildlife and bring them to safety.

* Members of animal rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) are in Batangas to help provide medical attention to affected domestic animals, some of which were left behind on the volcano island as those being evacuated in the past two days were not allowed to bring with them their pets or even livestock.

According to Olayva anything can happen in the next few hours and days, including tsunami. "But this ground fissure is not likely to trigger a tsunami. A tsunami happens in case of flank collapse," he said, explaining that volcanic earthquakes may lead to a rupture on the island's wall. When a big chunk of the wall collapses, he said it is like dropping a huge rock in a basin filled with water.

Alert Level 5

THIS can happen in case of the hazardous eruption which means that the Alert Level over Taal will also be raised from 4 to 5.

Alert Level 5 means magmatic eruption characterized by explosive production of tall ash-laden

SEE "MORE CRACKS," A2



Go: PRRD ordered immediate aid to Taal eruption victims

SENATOR Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go said that President Rodrigo Duterte has been in contact with government agencies, giving them orders to immediately address the problems caused by the Taal Volcano eruption.

"Ang sabi niya, importante dito lahat ng ahensya ng gobyerno ay nakatutok, handang rumsponde, lalona ang DSWD (Department of Social Welfare and Development).

"Nakausap niya ang hepe ng Air Force na sumalubong sa kanya, at nag-deploy naman posila ng eroplano at handa po silang tumulong kaagad. Ang Department of Health, pakinggan natin ang kanilang mga payo, lalung-lalo na sa ating kalusugan," he said.

"Sangayon po ay pina-check niya lahat. Hinihingi niya ang reports, lalung-lalo na po sa mga bayan na talagang tinamaan, at ako naman bilang committee chair sa Senado sa health ay kausap ko rin po si Health Secretary Francisco Duque paano tayo makakatulong. Sa abot ng aking makakaya po ay tutulong po kami," he added.

Go said the President is also concerned about the effect of the eruption to the economy and to the livelihood of Filipinos.

"Talagang worried po ang ating Pangulo dahil malaking kawalan po ito, lalung-lalo na po sa businesses dahil magiging paralyzed po ang negosyo, trabaho. Malaking kawalan po 'yun sa ating bayan," he said.

Meanwhile, Go urged the public to cooperate with the government in order to help those most affected by the disaster. He also urged the public to be informed and follow the advisories of concerned agencies, especially from DOH.

"Importante po ang kalusugan. Stay indoors and keep your family safe. If kailangan lumabas, magsuot ng tamang mask para maprotektahan ang sarili sa ashfall," Go said. The DOH has already issued several health advisories and guidelines on how the public should act to protect themselves from the effects of the disaster.



On the way to Manila from Davao City President Rodrigo Duterte and Senator Bong Go the other day undertook an aerial survey of the effect of the Taal Volcano eruption. The President's plane flew around Metro Manila and Southern Luzon.

The health department is also providing health kits, masks, eye drops and medicines to affected communities.

The DOH delivered to affected LGUs around 20 thousand dust masks and will conduct an emergency procurement of 300 thousand more for distribution to affected areas. It will also be distributing eye drops in affected areas and conduct close monitoring of evacuation centers.

Meanwhile, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) cautioned the public on inhaling smaller volcanic ash. Its air quality monitoring system in Las Piñas City confirmed the presence of Particulate Matter (PM) 10 in the air in Metro Manila which is unhealthy to people with respiratory ailments. What is particularly dangerous is PM2.5 which is far smaller and invisible. When inhaled, it may go directly to the lungs and be absorbed by the bloodstream.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has also dispatched teams to monitor prices of dust masks, particularly the N95 mask recommended by health authorities to prevent inhalation of the dangerous volcanic ash.

also working double time to fix transportation services, especially affected airports and seaports. It has also placed several buses on standby for possible deployment to assist stranded passengers.

DSWD officials and personnel are already on the ground to assist affected communities, especially those in evacuation centers. Relief goods, food packs, and sleeping kits are being provided.

Three cities and 14 towns in Batangas and Cavite have conducted their own emergency evacuations already. As of January 13, 6AM, DSWD - CALABARZON reported that at least 15,000 affected individuals are already staying inside 62 evacuation centers. DSWD has 4,863 family food packs available in the Greater Metro Manila warehouse worth P1.77 million and P6 million worth of non-food items. Another P5.2 million standby fund is also available.

Batangas is already under a state of calamity, allowing the provincial government to access its disaster funds.

Lastly, Go urged the public to remain calm and reflect on what they can do to help fellow Filipinos.

"Sa mga oras na ito tayo pinakakailangang magkaisa, isantabi muna ang pansariling interes para makatulong at makapagserbisyo sa kapwa. Together as one nation, let us pray for our country and do what we can to help our fellow Filipinos," he said.

DTI also warned that it will not hesitate to file charges against unscrupulous store owners who take advantage of the situation by raising their prices.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) is also working with several local government units (LGUs), particularly in Metro Manila, regarding this skyrocketing prices of N95 masks.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) has issued its full alert status for all units and offices in its national headquarters, CALABARZON, Central Luzon, and National Capital Region. All police personnel were directed to be ready for deployment to assist in disaster and relief operations.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has directed its regional office in CALABARZON to conduct initial damage assessments of affected farmers and fishermen.

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) has already deployed its personnel and equipment to assist in rescue and evacuation. The AFP and PNP have been deploying trucks and personnel.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) is



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Don't eat fish from Taal Lake, public told

Authorities have pushed for a temporary ban on fishing in the lake around Taal Volcano and on consuming possibly contaminated fish following the restive volcano's ash explosion.

According to Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) director Renato Solidum, fishing activity should be prohibited, especially given the evacuation implemented within the 14-kilometer danger zone around the restive volcano.

"Pag sinabi natin within 14 kilometers, kasama na Taal Lake, dapat walang tao," Solidum said in the "Laging Handa" press briefing at the Palace.

"Pag sumabog 'yun ng malakas, gagapang 'yung above lake water. 'Pag nandun ka sa lake, delikado," he said, adding that the Alert Level 4 status over Taal remains.

The public is also strongly discouraged from eating fish from Taal Lake to avoid food poisoning and other health problems, Health Assistant Secretary Maria Francia Laxamana said.

Laxamana, in the same press briefing, said people who eat contaminated fish might experience symptoms such stomach ache,

vomiting, and diarrhea.

"Pinagbawal na. Definitely may advisory na lahat nanggagaling diyan sa area ng Taal, Batangas dapat wala na bibili kasi hindi natin maaasahan 'yung safety ang ating mamamayan," she said.

"Parang food poisoning 'yan, walang tigil ang pagtatae at pag-susuka. Ang number one natin gawin ay rehydrate ang pasyente."

In a later media interview, Laxamana said fish from Taal Lake may not be safe for human consumption following the volcano's release of toxic materials.

"We advise people not to eat fish from the lake kasi lumabas na 'yung mga toxic materials from the volcano," she said.

"If you have diarrhea, you can go into dehydration. Akala nila ordinary stomach pains, pagtatae; pag walang consultation na ginawa, akala nila ordinary lang 'yun."

She said the resumption of consumption of fish from Taal Lake will depend on advice from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Department of Agriculture (DA).
(Genelyn Kabiling)



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Taal: Clearing the air

Taal's Sunday eruption spewed not just ashfall, but also a tsunami of panic. Face masks ran out quickly, and soon a black market emerged, especially for the N95 type. People began to fret: How long was the ash flow going to continue, and how dangerous was the ash? Was Taal going to erupt again any time soon?

Over at UP Diliman, the College of Science contacted me early Monday morning asking to organize a press conference to, well, clear up the air, meaning deal with misconceptions. Dr. Giovanni Tapang, the College of Science dean, is a firm believer in public science, as is Dr. Lemnuel Aragon, director of the Institute of Environmental Science and Meteorology (IESM).



PINOY KASI
MICHAEL L. TAN

The press conference was held Monday afternoon with good media attendance. Speakers were Dr. Mario Aurelio, director of the National Institute of Geological Sciences, and from the IESM, Dr. Gerry Bagtasa and Jamaica Pangasinan. I played my role as chancellor by welcoming them, then wore my other hat as a media person, taking notes.

Some important information from that press conference, supplemented by some research I dug up:

There were no warning signs that Taal was going to erupt. These signs would have been: a warming of Taal lake waters, fishkill and the odor of sulfur. Taal has been on Alert 1 level since March last year, but the situation seemed stable until Sunday afternoon, with some seismic activity (volcanic earthquakes) detected, leading to a level 2 alert.

Taal erupted Monday at around 3 a.m., when alert level 4 was raised. There is still a possibility that level 5 could be raised, meaning an even stronger eruption, but there is no way of telling if and when this will happen.

The Sunday eruption resulted in a huge plume reaching as high as 30 kilometers at one point. When the press conference was held, the plume was about 12.5 kilometers high. In sharing this information, Gerry's main point was that much of the fine ash was up there in the atmosphere, and that the plume was moving in a northeast direction, toward the Pacific and Okinawa.

The panic comes from the ash that ended up on our rooftops and vehicle windshields, but Gerry pointed out these range from 50 to 170 μm (micrometers), tiny but still too large to be inhaled. (Please don't try!) For purposes of comparison, the diameter of hair is about 50 micrometers.

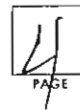
We should be more concerned about fine particulate matter; the one from Taal is mostly high up in the atmosphere. In fact, UP Diliman's monitoring of air quality in Quezon City showed levels that were actually good on Monday, at about 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (micrograms per cubic meter), below the World Health Organization's unsafe threshold of 25 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. Gerry said that on Sunday night, the levels did reach 60, but had gone down after.

The WHO threshold, added Gerry, is equivalent to one stick of a cigarette. The fireworks on New Year's eve, on the other hand, pushed air pollution levels to as high as 200 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$!

In terms of hazards, the area around Taal and the southern Tagalog provinces do face the greatest risks in terms of pollution, and residents would do well to take precautions, especially in the case of children, the elderly and those with chronic conditions like asthma, bronchitis and emphysema. But for Metro Manila, we should be more worried about the daily air pollution we get from vehicular emissions, industrial pollution, and even people smoking cigarettes. Oh, and I was reminded by Gerry that one effective natural protection against polluting particulate material is the hair inside our nose—so don't trim it!

Gerry has been providing us with valuable information on monsoon rains and typhoons, especially when we hold our commencement exercises in June, right at the start of the typhoon season. I hope his work and that of the IESM can guide our mayors and governors before they suspend classes in the aftermath of the Taal eruption. Gerry said there was no need to suspend classes and work in Metro Manila. We'll be posting more updates in the UP Diliman website (www.upd.edu.ph).

mtan@inquirer.com.ph



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Ang problema ng DENR

ISA sa mga importanteng mandato ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources ang pagpapatupad ng mga alituntunin at programa sa pagbawas sa pagdumi ng hangin nilalanghap ng tao o air pollution.

Ngunit kung ang pagdumi ng hangin ay gawa ng kalikasan at hindi ng tao, walang anumang human intervention ang puwedeng gawin para pigilin ito. Ang tinutukoy natin ay ang air pollution na idinudulot ngayon ng pagputok ng Taal Volcano na ngayon ay nasa ikatlong araw na.

Sa supresang pagsabog nito noong linggo, pati ang hangin sa Metro Manila at iba pang bahagi ng Northern Luzon ay naapektuhan ng ashfall, o nakalalasong alikabok mula sa pusod ng bulkan. Mabuti at nagbago ang ihip

ng hangin at mula sa dating direksyon na northward, ito ay naging eastward kung kaya't hindi na makakaranas ng ashfall ang Metro Manila at ibang bahagi ng Luzon, maliban na lang kung muling magbabago ang direksyon ng hangin ay muling humihip sa nauna nitong direksyon.

Ngunit kawawa pa rin ang mga taong nasa lugar na daraanan ng ashfall. Ayon sa DENR bagama't nabawasan na ang pollutants sa Metro Manila, nananatiling may dalang panganib ang hangin. Bukod diyan, sinasabi ng mga eksperto na posible pang may malaking pagsabog na magaganap dahil nagpapakita pa ng pag-aalboroto ang bulkan. Idalangin nating huwag na sanang maganap iyan.

Anang DENR, magmula noong tanghali ng Lunes, ang pollution na dala ng pagsabog ng Taal ay nananatiling mapanganib doon sa mga tinatawag na "unhealthy sensitive group" o mga taong may karamdaman sa baga tulad ng asthma, emphysema, bronchitis at iba pa. Kaya ang payo ng DENR, pati na ng Department of Health ay magsuot ng kinakailangang surgical mask at goggles o pananggalang sa mata upang hindi makapasok sa ating katawan ang alikabok mula sa bulkan.

(Sundan sa pahina 5)

AKSYON NGAYON

... Mula pahina 4

Dagdag ng DENR, ang kalidad ng hangin sa Malabon at San Juan ay "good" samantalang sa Pasig at Parañaque moderate to fair.



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Reclamation projects seen to propel Bacoor into new growth center

By IRIS GONZALES

Two reclamation projects in Cavite are expected to transform Bacoor into a new center of growth.

The Bacoor Reclamation and Development Project (BRDP) and the Diamond Reclamation and Development Project (DRDP) have already received the support of the local communities, the city

government of Bacoor said in a statement.

BRDP has a total size of 320 hectares, while the DRDP consist of a one 100-hectare property.

The city government hopes to integrate in these two projects a cost effective approach to the long-term clean-up of Manila Bay.

The two projects along the Manila Bay have a program for

relocation and resettlement of informal settlers living along the 10 coastal barangays.

With the reclamation projects, Bacoor is seen to be transformed into a new center of growth in line with President Duterte's vision to decongest Metro Manila and spread development to other areas of the country.

As much as 73 percent of Bacoor's available land space

is already devoted to residential use, with only two percent utilized for commercial purposes, according to the city government.

On the other hand, the agri-fishery areas – covering all rice lands, other productive agricultural lands, and water bodies or fishponds – shrank to a total area of 410 hectares or a mere 6.61 percent of the total land area of Bacoor.



Bacoor pitches reclamation as a flood control measure

THE PROPOSED 420-hectare reclamation project along CAVITEX in Bacoor City is expected to address flooding and facilitate the relocation of informal settler families, the Bacoor City government said in a statement on Monday.

The statement was issued after stakeholders attended a public hearing on the Manila-Cavite Expressway project conducted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Jan. 9.

The Bacoor Reclamation and Development Projects consist of islands of up 320 hectares, while the Diamond Reclamation and Development Project is a 100-hectare island executed via a public-private partnership.

The project is opposed by fishermen, who said Tuesday that the reclamation expels the area's fishing community and harms the environment in order to make way for a business hub.

"The City hopes to integrate in these two projects a most effective approach to the long-term

clean-up of Manila Bay as mandated by a SC (Supreme Court)... being the only projects along the Manila Bay that carry with them a program for relocation and resettlement of Informal Settler Families (ISFs) living along the 10 coastal barangays," Bacoor said in its statement.

Bacoor City's Barangay Alima will be turned into a fisherman's village to resettle families living along Bacoor Bay.

"*Masasabi natin na ito ay isa sa mga iilang reclamation projects sa Pilipinas na may in-city relocation (This is one of the few reclamation projects in the Philippines that has in-city relocation),*" Bacoor Mayor Lani M. Revilla said.

A national organization of fishermen, the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (PAMALAKAYA) said in a statement that its members protested the hearing and claim that many residents will be relocated to non-coastal areas such as Naic, Cavite and the Molino district of Bacoor.

Alyansa ng mga Magdaragat sa Bacoor Bay spokesperson Joel C. Falcis said that the mayor cannot "arbitrarily uproot the lives of tens of thousands of fisherfolk by relocating them to areas far from their source of livelihood."

"Our collective and humble appeal to our Mayor is to reconsider her decision to eject us from our fishing community to pave way for private establishments that are of no benefit to her constituents," he said.

PAMALAKAYA in an e-mail Tuesday also disputed the city government's claim that it received "overwhelming" support from stakeholders at the hearing, saying that not everyone present was sufficiently informed beforehand.

Ms. Revilla said the project is integrated with various long-term flood mitigation projects of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

"The Flood Risk Management Project of the DPWH will improve river channels and create

diversion channels from Imus to Bacoor City which will serve as the flood discharge system of the rainwater catchment basin of Bacoor in Buhay na Tubig," the statement said.

The channels between the island are also aligned with existing river outflows. The statement said that studies conducted by the private sector also found that the islands can serve as the city's storm surge defenses.

The reclamation project, the city said, is also expected to create 700,000 jobs due to new investments and businesses in the residential, leisure, commercial and education and technology mixed-use zone.

"Increased revenue will also enable the city government to improve the delivery of government services, particularly through extensive use of smart technology," Ms. Revilla said.

PAMALAKAYA last year filed a formal complaint with the DENR regarding the three ongoing reclamation activities in Cavite. —
Jenina P. Ibañez



Bacoor reclamation project draws support from stakeholders

THE proposed 420-hectare reclamation projects in Bacoor City have earned support from directly-impacted stakeholders during the public hearing held by the Environmental Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

This was gleaned during a public hearing on January 9, which was part of the Environmental Impact Assessment System as mandated by law under Presidential Decree 1586 and DENR Administrative Order 2003-30.

The City Government of Bacoor is the proponent of twin reclamation projects, namely Bacoor Reclamation and Development Project, consisting of a total of 320-hectare islands, and the Diamond Reclamation and Development Project consisting of one 100-hectare island via Public-Private Partnership under the PPP Code of Bacoor.

The City hopes to integrate in these two projects a most effective approach to the long-term

clean-up of Manila Bay as mandated by a SC continuing mandamus, being the only projects along the Manila Bay that carry with it a program for relocation and resettlement of Informal Settler Families living along the 10 coastal barangays, according to an official statement.

City Mayor Lani M. Revilla explained that the proposed projects will also address flooding in the city as she made sure they are integrated with the various long-term flood mitigating projects of the Department of Public Works and Highways.

The Flood Risk Management Project of the DPWH will improve river channels and create diversion channels from Imus to Bacoor City which will serve as the flood discharge system of the rainwater catchment basin of Bacoor in Buhay na Tubig.

The proposed reclamation islands are so situated and formed as to conform with the anti-flooding projects of DPWH, having more than sufficient channels in between the islands which

are aligned with existing natural river outflows.

The studies conducted by the private sector partners of the city show that the islands will also serve as anti-storm surge walls of the City, the statement said.

Among the sectors represented in the public hearing were the concerned barangay officials, the fisherfolk, Informal Settler Families, student leaders, mussel and oyster farmers, businessmen, environmental groups, and other concerned government agencies.

The fishermen are most satisfied with the proposed Fisherman's Village in Barangay Alima which is also part of the proposed reclamation projects in order to make sure that they will not be displaced from their industry.

The proposed projects are expected to uplift their living conditions with the establishment of the Fisherman's Wharf along Sinaguelasan coasts which will also develop and preserve the 40-hectare mangroves plantation of the City.



Digong nawindang sa Manila Bay reclamation project

NAWINDANG si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte sa mga reclamation project sa Manila Bay.

Labis na ikinabigla ni Pangulong Duterte ang panukala para sa reclamation ng 10,000 hektarya mula Navotas City hanggang Cavite.

Noong Disyembre ay binigyan ng go signal ng Philippine Reclamation Authority ang apat na reclamation project sa Manila Bay.

Ito ay ang Navotas City Coastal Bay Reclamation Project, Pasay 360-Hectare Reclamation Project, Pasay 265-Hectare Reclamation Project, Horizon Manila 418-Reclamation Project.

"If it's an investment to infuse more money into the Philippine economy, it's OK. But reclaiming 10,000 hectares of the Manila Bay is mind-boggling. There might be some

offices and residences," saad ni Duterte.

Tiniyak pa ng Pangulo na hindi siya handa na aprubahan ang reclamation project maliban na lang kung may mga nakalatag na hakbang para mapangalagaan ang kalikasan at kalusugan ng mga tao.

(Prince Golez)



EDITORIAL

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Duterte rejects reclamation projects

STUPEFYING and mind-boggling are adjectives you seldom hear from a President, even from Trump whose pastime is writing and sharing his thoughts on Twitter.

But these are the words President Duterte used to describe several proposals filed with the government seeking to reclaim portions of Manila Bay for commercial, residential and leisure purposes. The latest of these proposals and feasibility studies include the Navotas City Coastal Bay Reclamation Project, a 360-hectare Reclamation Project in Pasay City, a second 265-hectare reclamation project also in Pasay City, and the Horizon Manila's 418-hectare reclamation project.

Before former Manila Mayor Joseph Estrada, also a former President, left City Hall in June last year, there were five reclamation projects already approved by the city and awaiting approval by the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Malacanang Palace. These projects may be the motivating factor why incumbent Mayor Isko Moreno moved heaven and earth to ensure his winning the elections in Manila. But all these will come to naught if President Duterte sticks to his word.

'Duterte said he was not ready to approve reclamation projects if there were no concrete plans showing how the environment would be protected.'

"Not under my watch," the President's words were emphatic, as he stressed he was unlikely to approve any proposed reclamation project in Manila Bay as he expressed concern on these ambitious projects' impact on the environment in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

It is interesting to note that the Office of the President's own Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) has a contrary announcement or position on this issue, as the PRA last month assured that at least four reclamation projects in Manila Bay were already proceeding without problems.

PRA General Manager Joselito Gonzales even cited in a radio interview that four proposals – Navotas, Manila and two in Pasay City – had been given the green light. But this is typical of the way governance is conducted inside the Duterte Administration: the officials below are often not told of decisions made at the top. Often, too, some officials are considered out of the loop.

Duterte said it was simply "mind-boggling" to reclaim a total of 10,000 hectares from the waters off Manila Bay and dump rocks and soil in the area, to be able to construct buildings, roads and resorts. The President talked about where all the waste water would go, whether marine life in the Bay would survive this onslaught of modernization.

"You have to make an audit now of whether or not the environment of the entire area there can absorb the waste and where would it go after being treated. Because now, you must have water treatment. If you have a new building, make sure you are connected to water treatment facility," Duterte added.

Duterte said he was not ready to approve reclamation projects if there were no concrete plans showing how the environment would be protected. This policy will again put the President in direct collision with oligarchs and the very rich who have invested and are preparing to invest in these reclamation projects. And not to mention the mayors, vice mayors and councilors of Manila, Pasay City, Paranaque, Navotas and similar places who have salivated and planned on how to spend all the money that are forthcoming from these reclamation projects.



'Not in my time'

Environmental advocates should be happy that President Duterte is putting his foot down on planned massive reclamation projects in Manila Bay. From Navotas City to the province of Cavite, there are 25 reclamation projects covering 10,000 hectares of the bay that are under consideration.

In December last year, the Philippine Reclamation Authority said four of the projects have been given notices to proceed, but would have to undergo value engineering approval before actual reclamation starts.

Before this happens, the President should make good on his pronouncement that "I am not ready to grant it... not in my time, as long as there is no guarantee that the environment will be protected and the health of the people will be safeguarded."

Protecting the environment is unlikely in any project that entails reclaiming large portions of the country's busiest bay. Many of the proposed reclamation projects are being pushed by local government units. The Duterte administration should remind these LGUs that they must give priority to the President's instruction to clean up and rehabilitate Manila Bay.

Instead of reclamation, a good model is the creation of a mangrove

EDITORIAL

forest and eco-park in the coastal area of Las Piñas. The 175-hectare Las Piñas-Parañaque

Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area has been declared a protected wetland of international importance, covered by the Ramsar Convention of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

This is the only protected wetland in congested Metro Manila. The mangrove forest serves as a sanctuary and breeding ground for birds and aquatic creatures, and plays a significant role in flood control. Trees serve as the lungs in mega cities. The coastal communities around the bay need more of such mangrove forests instead of a further expansion of the concrete jungle, with all the pollution engendered by urban centers.

In recent years, the western part of Metro Manila has been hit by destructive storm surges. Experts have warned that global warming will worsen the risks faced by coastal areas that have been sinking steadily even before climate change became a buzz phrase. Manila Bay is the only bay enjoyed by people in the heavily congested National Capital Region. It should be preserved and rehabilitated for the enjoyment of the majority instead of being awarded for commercial purposes to a handful of private interests.



MAKIISA SA PAGTITIPID AT HUWAG MAG-AKSAYA SA PAGGAMIT NG TUBIG

SA susunod na buwan ng Pebrero, ika-26 ng Pebrero ang Miyerkules ng Abo o Ash Wednesday, dito sa Pilipinas, ito ang araw na nagmamarka sa simula ng panahon ng Mahal na Araw. Ang Mahal na Araw ay isang panahon kung kailan maraming mga Kristiyano ang naghahanda para sa pagkabuhay ng Panginoo sa pamamagitan ng pagmamasid sa isang panahon ng pag-sayuno, pagsisisi at matalimtin na pagdarasal.

Base sa aking pagmamasid sa mga nakalipas na taon, pagpasok ng araw ng Miyerkules ng Abo, mararamdaman na natin ang matinding init ng panahon hanggang sa buwan ng Mayo.

Base sa Hydrological in-

formation ng Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRPMC), nasa 204.40 meters ang level ng tubig sa Angat Dam, base sa pinakahuling ulat (Enero 14, 2020, 8:00AM). Humigit na sa Angat Dam's Minimum Operating Water Level (MOWL) of 180 meters, ngunit hindi pa natin naabot ang inaasam na target goal na 212.00 meters, kaya kinakailangang ang pagtitipid upang may magamit sa panahon ng tag-init.

Babala ni Dr. Sevillo David, Jr. ng National Water Resources Board (NWRB), palagi pa rin nating isaisip ang pagtitipid at huwag mag-aksaya sa paggamit ng tubig, sapagkat, gaano man karami ang tubig, kapag hindi tayo marunong magtitipid, siguradong

magkakaroon ng kakulangan sa tubig. Kaya, ang tamang nating gawin,

Ayon kay Executive Director David, "Sapat pa rin ang tubig sa Angat Dam para sa lahat nang pangangailangan, maging sa mga irigasyon. Ngunit, dahil sa pagpasok ng tag-init, marapat lamang na ang bawat isa, ay makapag-isip nang mabuting paraan kung papaano limitahan ang paggamit ng tubig. Kailangang maintindihan at pakadibdin ang kataga ng pagtitipid."

MANILA WATER NAGPADALA AGAD NG TUBIG PARA SA MGA APEKTADO NG PAGSABOG NG TAAL

Inilaan ng Manila Water ang tatlong (30) water tankers nito bilang tugon sa pangangailangan sa tubig sa mga iba't ibang evacuation sites sa Timog Luzon, para sa mga naapektuhan ng pagputok ng Bulkang Taal.

Sa pamamagitan ng pagsisikap ng subsidiary nitong Laguna Water, ang unang mga tankers ay ipapadala sa tatlong bayan sa lalawigan ng Batangas. Apat na tanker ang



papunta sa mga sumusunod na lugar sa Tanauan City: Poblacion Balele West Covered Court, Poblacion Gloria at sa Tanauan City Gym 2; dalawa naman ang ipadadala sa PUP Gymnasium sa Sto. Tomas habang anim naman ang hihimpil sa Bolbok Provincial Sports Complex sa Batangas City. Nakatanggap na rin ang Laguna Water ng karagdagang hiling para sa water tanker para sa San Luis Municipal Hall at Taal Municipal Hall, gayundin para sa bayan ng Alfonso sa Cavite.

Ang natitirang mga water tanker ay naka-standby para sa mga iba pang local government unit na hihiling ng ayuda sa tubig para sa kani-kanilang evacuation sites.

Ang mga water tanker

na gagamitin ay pupunuang muli ng Laguna Water hangga't kinakailangan. Susuporta rin ang mga kawani ng Laguna Water sa tankering activities na ito.

Samantala, ang Manila Water Foundation (MWF) ay magpapadala rin ng 2,000 ng 5-gallon na lalagyan ng mail-nom na tubig para sa mga evacuation sites, sa pakikipagtulungan sa Batangas Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO).

Nagpadala ang Manila Water ng 30 water tankers para umayuda sa mga apektado ng pagputok ng Bulkang Taal sa iba't ibang evacuation sites sa Timog Luzon, sa pagsisikap ng subsidiary nitong Laguna Water.





TITLE:

Endangered birds flocking Bulacan

A large number of black-faced spoonbills (*Platalea minor*), a migratory bird considered an endangered species, was spotted during the annual Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) in Barangay Talitip in Bulakan, Bulacan last 11 January.

Twenty-four individual black-faced spoonbills, the highest number ever reported for the species in the Philippines, were recorded during the census and

were seen feeding and resting along the tidal flats and mangrove areas along the Manila Bay section.

The last sighting of this species in the country was on 12 January 2019 also in the course of the AWC along Manila Bay in the coastal wetlands of Sasmuan, Pampanga.

For over a century before last year, sightings of the black-faced spoonbill have not been recorded in the Manila Bay as the species' most recent appearances were recorded in Palawan, the Bicol River Estuary, Olango Island in Cebu and Batanes.

This rare migratory bird originates from mainland China and North Korea and travels during the winter to the southern coast of China in countries such as Hong Kong, Macau, Japan and Taiwan.

According to Arne Jensen, Wetlands International Associate Expert and WBCP records committee chair, around 200,000 waterbirds spend the winter months along Manila Bay's coastline.

The black-faced spoonbill is the only spoonbill categorized by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as endangered. It is heavily dependent on undisturbed coastal wetlands rich in tidal flats.

Its migration route along the East-Asian Australasian Flyway needs the involvement of countries and policy agreements between government agencies and the private sector for the conservation of coastal wetland areas.

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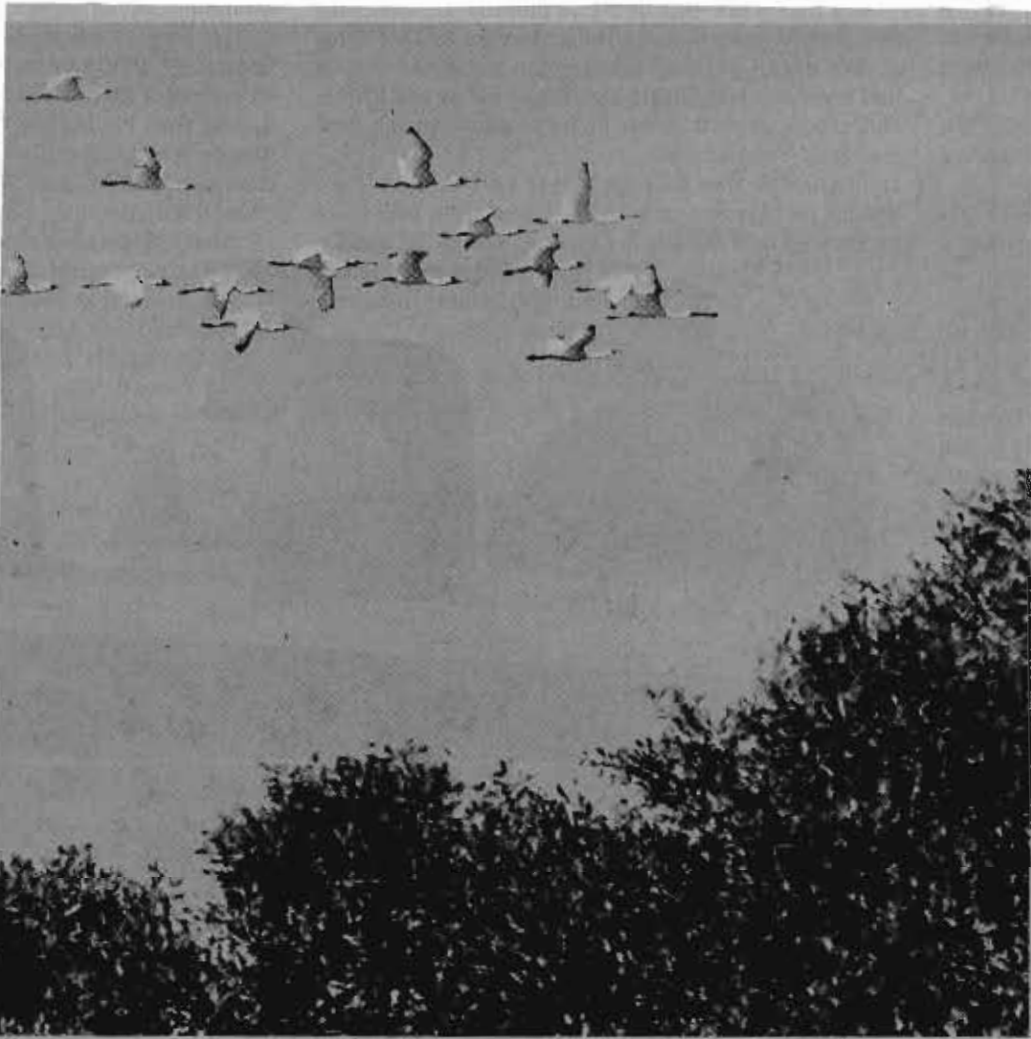
The AWC was conducted in multiple sites in collaboration with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau, Wetlands International Philippines and the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines.

International conservation societies such as the Taiwan-based Black-faced Spoonbill Association monitor the sightings of these birds to help guide efforts to bring up populations from the drastic drop to under 300 individuals in the '80s to the 2018 census count of 3,941.

For two-thirds of the population to survive, 10 areas along river deltas and mudflats have been identified as needing protection and restoration. Yet, only 1 percent or 200 hectares of Manila Bay is protected and reclamation threatens to destroy critically vulnerable wetlands.

Jensen reminds that the Philippines, as a signatory to the Convention for Migratory Species and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International importance, has to take immediate actions to protect and restore remaining wetlands. This is not only for the survival of migratory species that the country agreed to protect through international agreements.

R. Espiritu



A FLOCK of black-faced spoonbills were seen flying northwards in Barangay Talitip, Bulakan, Bulacan. Twenty-four were counted – the highest for black-faced spoonbills ever recorded in the Philippines – during a recent census of waterbirds in the country.

JASMIN MEREN



New climate model suggests Paris goals may be out of reach

PARIS—New climate models show carbon dioxide is a more potent greenhouse gas than previously understood, a finding that could push the Paris treaty goals for capping global warming out of reach, scientists have told AFP.

Developed in parallel by separate teams in half-a-dozen countries, the models—which will underpin revised UN temperature projections next year—suggest scientists have for decades consistently underestimated the warming potential of CO₂.

Vastly more data and computing power has become available since the current Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projections were finalized in 2013.

“We have better models now,” Olivier Boucher, head of the Institut Pierre Simon Laplace Climate Modeling Center in Paris, told AFP, adding that they “represent current climate trends more accurately”.

The most influential projections from government-

backed teams in the US, Britain, France and Canada point to a future in which CO₂ concentrations that have long been equated with a 3C world would more likely heat the planet’s surface by four or five degrees.

“If you think the new models give a more realistic picture, then it will, of course, be harder to achieve the Paris targets, whether it is 1.5 or two degrees Celsius,” scientist Mark Zelinka told AFP.

Zelinka, from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California, is the lead author of the first peer-reviewed assessment of the new generation of models, published earlier this month in *Geophysical Research Letters*.

For more than a century, scientists have puzzled over a deceptively simple question: if the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere doubles, how much will Earth’s surface warm over time?

The resulting temperature increase is known as Earth’s “climate sensitivity”.

That number has been hard to pin down due to a host of elusive variables. Whether oceans and forests, for example, will continue to absorb more than half of the CO₂ emitted by humanity is hard to predict.

But the biggest wild card has always been clouds.

“How clouds evolve in a warmer climate and whether they will exert a tempering or amplifying effect has long been a major source of uncertainty,” explained Imperial College London researcher Joeri Rogelj, the lead IPCC author on the global carbon budget — the amount of greenhouse gases that can be emitted without exceeding a given temperature cap.

The new models reflect a better understanding of cloud dynamics in at least two ways that reinforce the warming impact of CO₂.

Zelinka said new research had confirmed high clouds in the bottom layer of Earth’s atmosphere boost the Sun’s radiation—and global heating accentuates that dynamic. **AFP**



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Our restless planet

We live on a restless planet. Below us, tectonic plates are shifting, as they have since time immemorial, with the clashing edges producing towering mountains or fiery volcanoes. Magma, boiling to steam-hot temperatures, seeks a way to escape earthly confines, rising as plumes of smoke and ash or as fiery columns illuminating the night sky. And when the heated activity simmers down, we are left beholding a new crater or a new island, earth and rock that has risen from the unknown depths to awe us puny humans.

We hardly feel it, but below our feet is a roiling mass of unstable earth floating above a sea of heated tides. We are caught unawares, until it happens near to or where we are living. But at any time around the world volcanoes are erupting in various degrees of strength and power, temblors are shaking the ground, tides are swirling toward shore, and above us, clashing heated and cooling air produce rain and winds, snow and tornadoes that buffet the earth below.

Often, we take for granted the planet we live on, forgetting frequently how we are at nature's mercy and defying the limits of our environment to seemingly bend and use it for our own needs and greed.

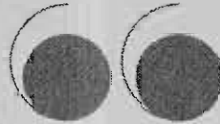
Someone posted on social media how the natural shocks and catastrophes we have lately lived through are but nature's way of expressing its anger at the way we—humanity—have abused its generosity and destroyed its integrity. "Global warming" is a disaster entirely of humankind's doing, producing heated air and breaching the natural ozone cover through our own carelessness and greed. It is no accident that heated oceans, the result of rising greenhouse gases, have produced weather disturbances of unprecedented fury and unpredictable frequency, while heedless habits of trash disposal and waste production have befouled our creeks, rivers, oceans and the earth.

Taal Volcano, the iconic "volcano within a volcano" and "lake within a lake," provided both residents and visitors a serene view from above on the hills of Tagaytay, while



AT LARGE

RINA JIMENEZ-DAVID



**OFTEN, WE TAKE FOR GRANTED
THE PLANET WE LIVE ON,
FORGETTING FREQUENTLY HOW
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providing adventure-seekers a relatively "easy" climb or horse ride through its slopes to its crater that smelled of "rotten eggs." Today, it is a frightening sight, beautiful in some aspects but alarming for the show of fire and clouds of ash that have turned its surroundings to gray desolation. How quickly nature can turn on us humans! But it is only right, because we have become, through generations, careless caretakers and heedless guardians of our restless planet.

Still, despite the chaos and threats to health produced by the falling silica and other volcanic material, humanity prevails. At the height of the ashfall and the desperate diaspora of weekend warriors seeking escape from the brewing volcano below, thoughtful residents lined the roadsides providing water for thirsty commuters and spraying unbidden ash-covered windshields to make driving safer for those fleeing Taal's wrath.

First the Divine Word Seminary in Tagaytay, then churches around Cavite and Batangas, opened their doors to desperate refugees. Proprietors of small eateries who had lost their usual weekend customers provided free food for whoever needed a meal. And then local governments, with the Office of the Vice President taking the lead, followed by the Red Cross and other private entities, rushed to the aid of those in need of succor. The only sour note was the call issued by the Department of the Interior and Local Government for "donations" of essential goods from the public, even if the national government has billions in relief funds. That, and the crass words of our President who seemingly challenged nature's fury if only to show off his macho bravado.

As pointed out before, the natural calamities we confront are our own doing, the result of our heedless greed and refusal to prepare adequately and compassionately for the shocks that nature deals us. But the plight of victims and refugees is made worse by government incompetence and indifference—inexcusable unpreparedness given how often the Philippines has to deal with disasters from underground, on the ground and in our swirling, angry skies.

We are caught on our restless planet, and the task at hand is to understand it, prepare for its shocks, mitigate the damage, and lead the recovery to hopefully create a kinder, more compassionate society.

rdavid@inquirer.com.ph



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EXTRA INNING

AFP seizes top seeding in UNTV Cup semis

Defending champion Armed Forces of the Philippines clinched the top seeding in the semis with a 90-83 win over Department of Environment and Natural Resources while Judiciary completed a four-game sweep of the second round of elims in the 8th UNTV Cup held over the weekend at the Paco Arena in Manila.

With Boyet Bautista and Darwin Cordero presiding over the team's assault, the AFP Cavaliers erased a double-digit deficit early in the second quarter on the way to finishing the elims with an 8-1 record.

Cordero topscored with 17 points while Bautista chipped in 15.

Despite losing two of their last three games, the DENR Warriors got the other automatic semis slot with a 7-2 mark in the event organized by UNTV president and CEO Dr. Daniel Razon.

The Judiciary Magis, on the other hand, closed out with a 7-3 mark for fourth place after capping their perfect second round show with a 66-59 victory over the PITC Global Traders.

Former PBA player Chester Tolomia, who led Judiciary's decisive third quarter run, scattered 25 points for a team eager to end a five-year title drought.

The Magis, along with the NHA Builders, Department of Agriculture Food Masters and Global Traders play another round in the quarters with the top two finishers completing the semis cast.

Onte, Bona sizzle in PPS Trenas netfest

Young Alexandra Onte and Kendrick Bona came away with a pair of straight-set triumphs to share MVP honors in the PPS-PEPP Mayor Jerry Trenas national age-group tennis tournament at LaPaz Plaza courts in Iloilo City over the weekend.

Onte toppled top seed Aleeva Suaco, 6-1, 6-0, in the girls' 12-and-under finals then the rising local star crushed Dolores Hofileña, 6-2, 6-3, to pocket the 14-U diadem in the Group I tournament presented by Dunlop.

Fellow Ilongga Althea Martinez, however, foiled her bid for a third crown, scoring a 6-4, 6-2 victory in the 16-U finals before blasting Abigail Aguirre, 6-0, 6-1, for the 18-U plum to likewise complete a two-title feat in the second leg of a 40-leg junior circuit put up by Palawan Pawnshop-Palawan Express Pera Padala headed by president/CEO Bobby Castro.



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ESCALATING TENSIONS

POEA TOTALLY BANS DEPLOYMENT OF OFWS TO IRAQ

By Krixia Subingsubing
@krixiasINQ

The Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) has imposed a total ban on the deployment of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to Iraq, formalizing the government's efforts to repatriate Filipinos amid escalating tensions between the United States and Iran.

POEA Board Resolution No. 2020-2, issued on Jan. 14, formally bans the processing and deployment of all OFWs to Baghdad after the Department of Foreign Affairs raised the alert level in the whole of Iraq to level 4.

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello signed the resolution on Jan. 8.

The POEA resolution followed the Department of Foreign Affairs'

marching orders for the mandatory repatriation of Filipinos in Iraq last week, after several coordination meetings on the situation in the Middle East.

Iraq, which hosts several thousands of US troops, is feared to be used as a staging ground for the violent conflict raging between Washington and Tehran, after President Donald Trump ordered the assassination of Tehran's military architect, Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

In retaliation, Iran bombed two US military bases in Iraq.

Iran, however, mistakenly shot down a commercial Ukrainian plane hours after its missile attacks on the US bases.

President Duterte has already ordered Environment Secretary and Middle East envoy Roy Cimatu to oversee the evac-

uation of Filipinos in the region.

Filipinos have been advised to coordinate with the embassy and their employers to secure their exit visas and plane tickets.

Calling the task a "sacred mission," the President said he was willing to fly to the Middle East to aid in the repatriation efforts should the situation worsen.

"This is a sacred mission and it is really to safeguard the lives of the Filipino people. I tasked you this duty with a prayer and with a hope that you will carry out your mission successfully and that everybody will be safe," he said.

He added: "I hope that this mission will succeed. Do not worry, I will be with you and if need be, I will go there myself if

things get worse."

He made the remarks as he led send-off rites for two Philippine Navy ships at Pier 13 at the Manila South Harbor on Tuesday.

The Navy's BRP Davao del Sur and BRP Ramon Alcaraz will be deployed to the Middle East to help in the evacuation and repatriation of affected OFWs.

Last week, the Chief Executive ordered the mandatory repatriation of OFWs in Iraq amid brewing tension between the US and Iran.

Although the tension appeared to have deescalated, the Philippines said it would still push through with the mandatory evacuation.

—WITH A REPORT FROM JULIE M. AURELIO INQ



A subaltern's view: OFW evacuation, reintegration, and deeper OFW concerns

OFWs are once again in the news as calls for revenge and bugles of war fill the air in troubled Iran and Iraq. They could be in harm's way as they work, not only in Iran and Iraq, but also in the neighboring countries of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Lebanon, Syria, Libya, Jordan, and Israel, where turmoil can potentially spread.

This region has not been the most peaceful in the world, a fact we have always known since we began sending workers to Saudi Arabia in 1973. Time and again in the past, we evacuated our workers from the region's troubled areas.

I was an active participant in one of the earlier evacuations, when Israel invaded Lebanon and besieged Beirut during the first Israel-Lebanon War in 1982. We again evacuated our workers during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s; during the Iraq-Kuwait and US invasion in the early 1990s; the Iraq War in 2003; and in other incidents of turbulence in the region.

These experiences made us see the stark realities and risks of working in the troubled Middle East.

As background on the magnitude of our OFW situation, a good 12% (or approximately 12 million) of our countrymen have immigrated or are temporarily working overseas.

The most numerous are in the US (about 4,030,000) and Canada (approximately 850,000). Many are permanent residents or have become US or Canadian citizens, but a good (but undetermined) number are still illegally staying in their host countries.

We have about 1,020,000 workers in Saudi Arabia; approximately 680,000 in the United Arab Emirates; about 276,000 in Kuwait; 240,000 in Qatar; and 31,000 in Israel. Almost all of them are on time-specific contracts that, unless renewed, require them to return to our country.

DOLE Secretary Silvestre Bello has been quoted as saying that while there are only 1,600 Filipinos in Iraq and 1,000 in Iran, there are more than 2,000,000 Filipino OFWs in the whole Middle East.

Another OFW reality is the amount of remittances that they send home – an all-time high of US\$32.21 billion from worldwide sources in 2018, up from US\$31.29 billion in 2017. These remittances support and provide stability to their families and are major contributions to our economy.

While evacuation of Filipinos from Iran and Iraq may be manageable in terms of numbers, their extraction from politically turbulent areas can never be simple as our experiences have shown. The spread of

hostilities to OFW-intensive areas (such as Saudi Arabia) could render OFW evacuation a nightmare. The economic impact on their families and to the country could also be disastrous.

Fortunately for us, the President has assigned retired Gen. Roy Cimatu (now, of the DENR) to oversee our evacuation efforts. The general has brilliantly undertaken this task before and will no doubt hit the ground running.

On site in the Middle East, of course, are our corps of ambassadors, foreign service officers, and labor attaches, all of them trained and attuned to the plight of our OFWs.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has specialized agencies attending to migrant workers' concerns – the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs (OUMWA) and the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO).

At the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) end are the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) with their separate OFW-related tasks. The POEA handles OFW deployment while the OWWA looks after OFW welfare. Both are supported by the DOLE's corps of labor attaches and overseas labor officers.

In an emergency situation, the private sector has always helped; this time, both PAL and Cebu Pacific Airways have already indicated their readiness.

The ample available support in looking after our OFWs in the Middle East in the present emergency renders further comments on the actual evacuation plans and operations unnecessary.

I shall take this opportunity instead to comment on related OFW concerns, in particular, on the consequences of evacuation and on otherwise hidden but deeper OFW concerns. The first, among these, is the reintegration of our returning OFWs.

Aside from the POEA and the OWWA, the DOLE has established the National Reintegration Center for OFWs (NCRO) whose operations may extend overseas but whose concerns are largely local – what happens when the OFW comes home and how do they affect the country they return to.

Reintegration is a scenario that arises, not only in emergency evacuation situations, but in all other situations when OFWs return to the country after their overseas work. Smoothly sliding back into our society is not an easy task to undertake, more so for OFWs with few

local linkages and sparse resources and skills.

The NCRO is now a fully functioning office with core programs to assist returning OFWs reintegrate themselves into our society after their years overseas.

Unfortunately, it is not yet seen as a major player in the OFW scene. In fact, it is not a major DOLE office at all; it is still an office within the OWWA which has a broader OFW mandate and is not totally focused on reintegration at home.

To its credit, the NCRO has developed from 2011 to 2019 a whole structure for start-up and livelihood assistance; employment facilitation; advocacy, communication, and network building. The extent of its actual reach, however, is still far from its fullest potentials considering the number of our permanently returning countrymen.

I am sure the NCRO could have reached more returning OFWs and provided vaster reintegration assistance if it only had better funding; ampler staffing; fuller flexibility; more effective campaign communications; a wider network of branches nationwide; and wider support from the private sector.

Under these circumstances, reintegration may perhaps be an area ripe for the Duterte administration's greater focus, not only for the soon-to-return OFWs, but for all returning OFWs who have skills and job experiences to contribute, and whose business or workplace participation or non-participation could affect our local employment situation.

Another ripe area for focused re-examination, after 5 decades of sending contract workers overseas, is our overall deployment policy.

The time is perhaps right to fine tune our policies to consciously keep our overseas workers out of potential harm's way. This is a conscious and deliberate decision we have to make; market forces cannot solely guide our deployment decisions.

Last but not the least, we should perhaps also revisit the plight of our women OFWs many of whom are in domestic services in countries whose cultural regard for women is different from ours.

Evidence of abuse of OFW domestic helpers are now too glaring to be ignored. Our neighbor, Indonesia, has responded by banning the deployment of women for domestic services since 2015. We have so far been blind to realities.

An administration with the will



THE LEGAL FRONT

JUSTICE ART D. BRION (RET.)

to frontally confront illegal drugs should likewise be able to face up to deeper OFW-

related challenges.

artbrion.legalfront.mb@gmail.com



TITLE:

PAGE 17

APRUB tayo sa aksyon ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na ipalulusob nito sa militar ang mga tindahan na nagtitinda ng overpriced na face mask na N95 at ibang uri.

Dapat ding damputin na rin ng mga mamamayan ang mismong mga nagtitinda ng nasabing face mask nang sobra-sobra ang halaga.

Ang N95 ay nasa P35-P50 lang ang halaga bawat piraso samantalang ang ordinary face mask ay P1-2 lamang.

Kapag may nagtinda ng mahigit sa 10 porsyento ang halaga nito, itawag na lang kaagad sa mga kinauukulan para madampot o maaresto sa overpricing, makasuhan at mabilanggo.

Magtulung-tulong po tayo na pigilan ang pagsasamantala sa mga nangangailangan, lalo na ang mga biktima ng pagsabog ng Taal Volcano at ang mga taong pumupunta roon para maghatid ng tulong sa abot ng kanilang makakaya.

SYRIAN VLOGGER

Sa balita ng GMA 7, may Syrian vlogger na matagal nang naninirahan sa mahal kong Pinas ang nakipag-unahan sa pagbili ng mga N95 face mask.

Nakipag-unahan siya dahil nagkabalitaan na may mga pumapakyaw ng mga N95 mask saka ibinebenta nang mahal, nasa P200-P400 bawat piraso.

Nakabili naman si Basel ng ilang kahon at siya na mismo ang naglakad, nang may mga kasamahan din, para ipamudmod nang libre sa mga biktima ng bulkan ang face mask.

May kasama pang relief goods ang dala ng grupo Basel.

Itong si Basel ay gayun na lang ang pagmalasakit nito sa mga nangangailangan dahil minsan na rin itong naging biktimang krisis nang sumiklab sa giyera ang Syria noong 18 anyos pa lang siya.

Nilisan niya ang Syria at nanirahan na siya sa Pinas simula noon at itinuturing na niya ang Pinas na kanyang sariling bansa.

NAKAAANTIG NA KWENTO

Napakalalim, mga Bro, ang hinagpis ni Mayor Daniel Reyes sa nangyari sa kanyang bayang Agoncillo, Batan-



MGA SWITIK DURUGIN AT ISANG DAYUHAN

gas.

Naging ghost town ang kanyang bayan na isa sa pinakabiktima ng sumasabog na Bulkang Taas.

Nang umulan nang abo at bato mula sa bulkan, nagsilikas sa kalagitnaan ng gabi ang kanyang mga kababayan.

Nakararami ang pwersahang pinagbakwit palayo kahit saan upang maligtas sa kamatayan at anomang uri ng kapahamakan.

Binalot ng dilim ang kanyang bayan sa kasagsagan ng kalamidad at halos wala siyang magawa mismo bilang mayor.

Halos maparalisa ang buo niyang pamahalaan dahil hindi sila makagalaw sa dulas ng mga daan, pagtigil ng trapik, pagkakaroon ng masakit sa balat na galing sa bulkan, hirap na pagdilal ng mga mata.

At tinamaan ang lahat: babae, lalaki, bata, matanda, malusog, mausakit.

Iniwan ang lahat: bahay, trabaho, mga alagang halaman at hayop, mga pinagpaguran, pati mga damit, pagkain, gamot at iba pa.

Sino ang hindi tatangis na lider ng bayan sa ganitong kalagayan?

Pero nanatili si Mayor Reyes sa kanyang bayan at tiningnan kinabukasan kung sino-sino at ano-ano ang natira sa kanyang bayan sa magdamag na kawalan at paghihirap para mapangalagaan pa rin.

MGA AMA AT INA

Saludo tayo sa mga ama at ina na nilusob ang panganib para iligtas ang kanilang mga pamilya, anak at iba nilang miyembro ng pamilya.

May mga ama na umakay sa kani-kanilang mga pamilya patungo sa mga ligtas na lugar.

Gayundin ang mga ina, kahit ang mga bagong panganak at nagpapasuso pa lang ng kanilang mga sanggol.

Tatlo, apat, lima, anim na oras na lakaran sa gitna ng dilim ng gabi, habang umuulan ng asupre, abo at bato sa kanilang mga daan.

Iniwan nila ang lahat at tanging ang kanilang mga saplot sa katawan at sarili nila ang daladala patungo sa mga ligtas na lugar at sa kalaunan sa mga evacuation center.

Sadyang napakabilis ang deadly na pagkilos ng bulkan kaya hindi nakapaghanda ang libo-libong residente.

Ang lakas na loob at pananampalataya sa Diyos para mabuhay ang nagligtas sa kanila sa tiyak na kamatayan.

NAGSAMA-SAMA ANG LAHAT

Mabilis ding kumilos ang lahat.

Makaraang ideklara ng Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology bandang hapon ang Alert Level 3, lalo na nang ideklara ang Alert Level 4 dakong alas-8:00 ng gabi, karambola na ang lahat para tumulong.

Halos maparalisa man ang mga ahensya ng gobyerno sa sabay-sabay na pag-alsa balutan ng mga turista at mamamayang apektado, ang mga lokal na pamahalaan ay kumilos para tumulong sa pagbabakwit at maglagay ng gabay sa pagbakwit at pagbiyahe palayo sa kalamidad.

Kinabukasan, pumasok na rin ang mga pambansang ahensya para tumulong sa pagclear sa mga kalsada, pagbabakwit ng mga mamayan sa mga evacuation center at pag-aasikaso sa mga ito.

Ang media, hindi rin natulog upang makapaghatid ng balita para sa kaligtasan ng mga biktima at mismong mga awtoridad na rin na umaayuda sa mga mamamayan. Wala pang nakaaalam kung hanggang kailan magwawakas ang kalamidad.

Pero sana, hindi tayo magsasawa na tumulong sa lahat ng mga biktima.

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



BP WATERWORKS, INC.,
Applicant.

Case No. 19-2862

NOTICE OF HEARING

This is an application for Certificate of Public Convenience to operate and maintain a waterworks system within Urban Deca Homes Manila, Barangay 99 Vitas Street, Tondo, Manila, with the following proposed rates:

PROPOSED TARIFF

Public Tap	0-5/cu.m.	6-10/cu.m.	11-20/cu.m.	21-30/cu.m.	31-40/cu.m.	Over 40/cu.m.
Pipe Size 1/2"	₱ 253.50	₱ 55.70	₱ 60.80	₱ 70.90	₱ 81.10	₱ 86.10

Residential and Institutional

Pipe Size	0-5/cu.m.	6-10/cu.m.	11-20/cu.m.	21-30/cu.m.	31-40/cu.m.	Over 40/cu.m.
1/2"	₱ 266.00	₱ 58.30	₱ 62.80	₱ 82.10	₱ 91.70	₱ 101.30

Commercial and Industrial

Pipe Size	0-15/cu.m.	16-30/cu.m.	31-500/cu.m.	501-1000/cu.m.	Over 1000/cu.m.
1/2"	₱ 1,519.50	₱ 126.70	₱ 152.00	₱ 152.00	₱ 152.00

This application will be initially heard by the Board on February 3, 2020, hearing will start at 9:00 o' clock in the morning at the NWRB-WUD Conference Room, 8th Floor, NIA Building, EDSA, Quezon City at which time applicant shall present its evidence.

At least fifteen (15) days prior to the scheduled hearing, applicant shall publish this notice once in a daily newspaper of general circulation in Metro Manila and serve by personal delivery or registered mail a copy of the (i) application and its attachments, and (ii) this notice, to all affected parties appearing on page 2 hereof.

Parties opposed to the granting of the application must file their written opposition supported by documentary evidence on or before the above scheduled date of hearing, furnishing a copy of the same to the applicant.

Failure on the part of any person affected to file its opposition on time and to appear at the hearing will be construed, as a waiver of their right to be heard and the Board will proceed to hear and decide the application based on the evidence submitted.

Likewise, failure by the applicant to appear at the hearing shall amount to lack of interest on its part and the instant application shall be dismissed accordingly.

Witness the Honorable Executive Director of the National Water Resources Board this 23rd day of December 2019.

By Authority of the Board:

Dr. SEVILLO D. DAVID, Jr., CESO III
Executive Director

Affected Parties:

The Secretary
Sangguniang Bayan
Tondo, Manila

The Homeowners Assn. President
Urban Deca Homes Manila
Barangay 99 Vitas Street
Tondo, Manila

The Barangay Chairman
Barangay 99 Vitas Street
Tondo, Manila

The Administrator
Metropolitan Waterworks & Sewerage System
MWSS Compound, Katipunan Road
Balara, Quezon City 1105



BP WATERWORKS, INC.,
Applicant.

Case No. 19-2863

NOTICE OF HEARING

This is an application for Certificate of Public Convenience to operate and maintain a waterworks system within Urban Deca Towers EDSA, Barangay Highway Hills, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila, with the following proposed rates:

PROPOSED TARIFF

Public Tap	0-5/cu.m.	6-10/cu.m.	11-20/cu.m.	21-30/cu.m.	31-40/cu.m.	Over 40/cu.m.
Pipe Size 1/2"	₱ 335.50	₱ 73.80	₱ 80.50	₱ 93.90	₱ 107.40	₱ 114.10

Residential and Institutional

Pipe Size	0-5/cu.m.	6-10/cu.m.	11-20/cu.m.	21-30/cu.m.	31-40/cu.m.	Over 40/cu.m.
1/2"	₱ 352.50	₱ 77.20	₱ 83.20	₱ 108.70	₱ 121.50	₱ 134.20

Commercial and Industrial

Pipe Size	0-15/cu.m.	16-30/cu.m.	31-500/cu.m.	501-1000/cu.m.	Over 1000/cu.m.
1/2"	₱ 2,013.00	₱ 167.80	₱ 201.30	₱ 201.30	₱ 201.30

This application will be initially heard by the Board on February 3, 2020, hearing will start at 9:00 o' clock in the morning at the NWRB-WUD Conference Room, 8th Floor, NIA Building, EDSA, Quezon City at which time applicant shall present its evidence.

At least fifteen (15) days prior to the scheduled hearing, applicant shall publish this notice once in a daily newspaper of general circulation in Metro Manila and serve by personal delivery or registered mail a copy of the (i) application and its attachments, and (ii) this notice, to all affected parties appearing on page 2 hereof.

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Witness the Honorable Executive Director of the National Water Resources Board this 23rd day of December 2019.

By Authority of the Board:

Dr. SEVILLO D. DAVID, Jr., CESO III
Executive Director

Affected Parties:

The Secretary
Sangguniang Panlungsod
Mandaluyong City

The Homeowners Assn. President
Urban Deca Towers EDSA
Barangay Highway Hills
Mandaluyong City

The Barangay Chairman
Barangay Highway Hills
Mandaluyong City

The Administrator
Metropolitan Waterworks & Sewerage System
MWSS Compound, Katipunan Road
Balara, Quezon City 1105



PILIPINAS WATER RESOURCES, INC.,
Applicant.

Case No. 19-2865

NOTICE OF HEARING

This is an application for Certificate of Public Convenience to operate waterworks system and sell water through bulk rates within Deca Homes Pavia Phases 1 and 2, Providence Subdivision and Montecillo Villas, Barangays Balabag and Pandac, municipality of Pavia, province of Iloilo, with the following proposed rates:

PROPOSED TARIFF
Bulk Water Rate

Pipe Size	Per cubic meters
1"	₱ 67.90/cu. m.

This application will be initially heard by the Board on February 3, 2020, hearing will start at 9:00 o' clock in the morning at the NWRB-WUD Conference Room, 8th Floor, NIA Building, EDSA, Quezon City at which time applicant shall present its evidence.

At least fifteen (15) days prior to the scheduled hearing, applicant shall publish this notice once in a daily newspaper of general circulation in the province of Iloilo and serve by personal delivery or registered mail a copy of the (i) application and its attachments, and (ii) this notice, to all affected parties appearing on page 2 hereof.

Parties opposed to the granting of the application must file their written opposition supported by documentary evidence on or before the above scheduled date of hearing, furnishing a copy of the same to the applicant.

Failure on the part of any person affected to file its opposition on time and to appear at the hearing will be construed, as a waiver of their right to be heard and the Board will proceed to hear and decide the application based on the evidence submitted.

Likewise, failure by the applicant to appear at the hearing shall amount to lack of interest on its part and the instant application shall be dismissed accordingly.

Witness the Honorable Executive Director of the National Water Resources Board this 23rd day of December 2019.

By Authority of the Board:

Dr. SEVILLO D. DAVID, Jr., CESO III
Executive Director

Affected Parties:

The Secretary
Sangguniang Bayan
Pavia, Iloilo

The Homeowners Assn., Inc.
Deca Homes Pavia Phases 1 & 2,
Providence Subdivision & Montecillo Villas,
Barangays Balabag and Pandac
Pavia, Iloilo

The Barangay Chairman
Barangays Balabag & Pandac
Pavia, Iloilo

The General Manager
Metro Iloilo Water District
Eonifac Drive, Iloilo City 5000



PILIPINAS WATER RESOURCES, INC.,
Applicant.

Case No. 19-2864

NOTICE OF HEARING

This is an application for Certificate of Public Convenience to operate waterworks system and sell water through bulk rates within South Road Properties, Barangay Mambling, Cebu City, with the following proposed rates:

PROPOSED TARIFF
Bulk Water Rate

Pipe Size	Per cubic meters
1"	₱ 66.20/cu. m.

This application will be initially heard by the Board on February 3, 2020, hearing will start at 9:00 o' clock in the morning at the NWRB-WUD Conference Room, 8th Floor, NIA Building, EDSA, Quezon City at which time applicant shall present its evidence.

At least fifteen (15) days prior to the scheduled hearing, applicant shall publish this notice once in a daily newspaper of general circulation in the province of Cebu and serve by personal delivery or registered mail a copy of the (i) application and its attachments, and (ii) this notice, to all affected parties appearing on page 2 hereof.

Parties opposed to the granting of the application must file their written opposition supported by documentary evidence on or before the above scheduled date of hearing, furnishing a copy of the same to the applicant.

Failure on the part of any person affected to file its opposition on time and to appear at the hearing will be construed, as a waiver of their right to be heard and the Board will proceed to hear and decide the application based on the evidence submitted.

Likewise, failure by the applicant to appear at the hearing shall amount to lack of interest on its part and the instant application shall be dismissed accordingly.

Witness the Honorable Executive Director of the National Water Resources Board this 23rd day of December 2019.

By Authority of the Board:

Dr. SEVILLO D. DAVID, Jr., CESO III
Executive Director

Affected Parties:

The Secretary
Sangguniang Panlungsod
Cebu City

The Locators Assn. President
South Road Properties
Barangay Mambling
Cebu City

The Barangay Chairman
Barangay Mambling
Cebu City

The General Manager
Metro Cebu Water District
Magallanes-Lapu-Lapu Sts.
Cebu City 6000