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# DENR

## IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



# Palace vows measures to avert water crisis

By ALEXIS ROMERO

Malacañang yesterday vowed to institute measures to address the "water crisis" in Metro Manila after National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. warned that the problem would persist unless long-term programs designed to develop new water sources are implemented.

Water concessionaires Maynilad and Manila Water announced rotational interruptions last week due to the drop in water levels at Angat and Ipo dams.

The decreasing water elevation, caused by lower-than-normal rainfall, forced the utilities to implement water rationing in affected areas.

"We will find ways so the crisis won't worsen. If there is a problem, there is a solution. So I think those people responsible for that will have to do their jobs," presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said in a radio interview.

Panelo noted that it was not the first time the metropolis experienced a water shortage.

"If you recall, it has been addressed before. Perhaps there is a new problem," he said.

Last Friday, Esperon cited the need for the government and the water concessionaires to develop other sources of water to prevent shortages in the future.

Lawmakers, for their part, are rushing the creation of a new department that they are hoping can solve the recurrent water supply problem.

The House of Representatives expects to pass the bill creating the

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Department of Water Resources (DWR) in January, according to Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, one of the authors of the measure.

He said the new department would be responsible for formulating comprehensive and integrated policies and programs on water, as well as managing the ownership, appropriation, development, use and protection of the country's water resources.

"It will ensure the optimal use of water for domestic, commercial, hydropower, irrigation, sanitation,

industry, navigation, recreation, fisheries and aquaculture. It will be tasked to implement Presidential Decree 1067 and Republic Act 9275 or the Water Code and Clean Water Act, respectively," Salceda said.

He added that there would be a Water Regulatory Commission under the proposed DWR that would regulate distributors of water for household, commercial or industrial use.

Salceda lamented the present state offices that have to do with

water have "overlapping and fragmented management and regulation of water resources and services."

"(This) hinders the development of a comprehensive, integrated and doable long-term solution to address keen competitions, imbalanced resources utilization and conflict of interest among water users, especially in areas already identified as water-stressed," Salceda said.

### Inhumane increase

Sen. Imee Marcos, for her part, called on the two water conces-

sionaires to reveal their master plan to ensure stable and steady water supply for their customers as stipulated in their contracts with the government over 20 years ago.

She said the two firms have been reliant on rains to fill the dams that provide water to their respective systems but they have been tasked in their concession agreements in 1997 to implement a master plan that would ensure steady supply even during drought.

"The MWSS (Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System) has given these companies a very long time, so they should have thought of ways not to inconvenience and cause trouble to our countrymen, especially our hospitals that need ample supply of water," Marcos said.

She noted that under the concession agreements, the MWSS gave the two firms 37 years to rehabilitate and repair the water and sewerage systems in the two zones even as they were tasked to look for long term and stable water sources or put up reservoirs.

The two companies provide services to over 16 million people.

Buhay party-list Rep. Lito Atienza said the two water concessionaires have been raking in as much as P5.3 billion annually for the last 13 years.

He said they should not threaten to make water rates skyrocket if they are forced to comply with the Clean Water Act.

"Based on our scrutiny of publicly available financial filings, we've gathered that Manila Water Co. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. raked in an aggregate of P138 billion in net profits from 2006 to June 2019," Atienza said.

He said the two water suppliers in Metro Manila do not have the right to threaten government as well as consumers on the basis that they are "definitely not having any difficulties producing profits for their stockholders."



"Both firms also rewarded their shareholders a combined P49 billion in cash dividends over the same period," Atienza said.

Last week, Sen. Christopher Go warned the two concessionaires not to burden their customers further, including passing on to them costs that the concessionaires should shoulder.

Go said Duterte was enraged over the recent developments, including the threat of the Ayala-owned Manila Water to raise its rates by 780 percent.

Go said there was water flowing in the taps in areas

in Metro Manila where there were reports of water shortage.

He also called on water suppliers not to pass the burden to the people and to resolve issues as indicated in their contracts.

"Don't pass the burden on our people. You got into that business, so that is your responsibility. Don't sign contracts if you can't comply with supplying water," Go said.

Senators Sherwin Gatchalian and Aquilino Pimentel III also opposed the plan of the east zone concessionaire to raise rates if the Supreme Court does not reverse its ruling imposing a P921-million fine for not complying with the Clean Water Act.

"Increasing rates by 780 percent is unconscionable and downright a highway robbery. No business in the world earns 780 percent in profit. Government regulators should never allow this inhumane increase," Gatchalian said.

Asked why Manila Water is passing on its consumers the penalty the government imposed on them for water shortages, Gatchalian said it was not the consumers who have been remiss in their obligations and violated the law.

He said Manila Water should be the one to shoulder the penalty for its wrongdoings.

Pimentel said transferring a fine onto consumers was not only unfair "but also utterly baseless."

He said customers are suffering from poor water services, and a planned increase would burden them even more.

"The people should not be the one to pay for their environmental violations. It must be noted that consumers already suffered from the month-long water interruption last June," Pimentel said.

He said the private owners of the water concessionaires must bear the cost of their penalties, this being the nature of the business they entered into.

"Less or no profit for them this time. Their profits are not guaranteed by their customers. They must run their businesses professionally, ethically, and lawfully," Pimentel said.

Last April, Duterte scolded officials of the MWSS for supposedly failing to prepare for El Niño and assailed what he described as "rich guys" who tried to profit out of the water crisis.

Duterte also accused water utilities of not doing their jobs and threatened to terminate their contracts.

Asked to react to water concessionaires' plan to hike rates, Panelo said: "All of these are being studied by the President and he will undertake steps to fulfill his promise that there should be no water crisis in the country."

Panelo denied that the water supply issue is just a front to push the controversial P12.2-billion Kaliwa Dam project. He said the project is being investigated but could not provide updates on the investigation.

Some local officials and civil society groups have claimed that the China-funded Kaliwa Dam would cause floods and displace communities in Quezon province. — **Jess Diaz, Delon Porcalla, Paolo Romero**



# Looming water crisis real – Malacañang

By ARGYLL CYRUS B. GEDUCOS  
and ELLSON QUISMORIO

Malacañang has denied allegations that the looming water crisis in Metro Manila is just a front so the government can push for the China-funded New Centennial Water Source-Kaliwa Dam Project in Tanay, Rizal.

Militant groups doubt that there is really another pending water crisis in Metro Manila, saying the government may have just been using it as an excuse to push for the dam project.

“Ang administrasyong ito walang mga tinatawag na front o mga kasingungalingan na mga kinakalat nila (This administration does not use

fronts or spread lies like they do),” presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said, citing the allegation that Duterte was snubbed in Japan as an example of a lie.

According to Panelo, water officials should do something about the water crisis.

“Gagawan natin ng paraan para hindi maging ▶ 9

malubha ang krisis na ‘yan. Kung mayroong problema eh, may solusyon (We will do something so it won’t have much effect. If there’s a problem, then there’s a solution). So I think those people responsible for that will have to do their jobs,” he said.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) reported last week that Angat Dam’s water level was at 186.23 meters, a figure below the normal high level of 210 meters. It also said that Ipo Dam’s level was at 100.43 meters also below its normal high water level of 101 meters.

National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon on Friday warned that Metro Manila cannot escape water interruptions as long as the government is not able to find a new water source.

The Kaliwa Dam project in Tanay, Rizal, is facing opposition from environmental groups and local officials, saying it will displace indigenous peoples and will have an adverse effect on the environment.

The project, funded through China’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the Philippines, will cost \$248 million or ₱12.2 billion to complete. It aims to address the water shortage in Metro Manila.

### Big money

Meanwhile, Buhay Party-list Rep.

Lito Atienza dismissed the claim made by water concessionaires Maynilad and Manila Water that service rates could skyrocket if they are forced to comply with the Clean Water Act.

Although they may have problems meeting their obligations to deliver round-the-clock running water to their 14 million customers and to establish sewerage systems, the two Metro water companies are definitely not having any difficulties producing profits for their stockholders, Atienza said on Sunday.

“Based on our scrutiny of publicly available financial filings, we’ve gathered that Manila Water Co. and Maynilad Water Services, Inc., raked in an aggregate of ₱138 billion in net profits from 2006 to June 2019,” he said.

“Both firms also rewarded their shareholders with a combined ₱49 billion in cash dividends over the same period,” added Atienza, a former three-term mayor of Manila.

The veteran solon said that it has become “abundantly clear” that the two firms are making a lot of money. “This is why they have no excuse whatsoever for failing to meet their obligations, including their obligation to put up adequate sewerage networks and wastewater treatment facilities.”



# RODY VOWS TO AVOID WATER CRISIS AMID SERVICE ROTATION

By MJ Blancaflor  
and Rio N. Araja

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte will take the necessary measures to keep his promise to stave off a water crisis, the Palace said Sunday.

"We will do something on the matter so the crisis will not worsen. If there's a problem, there's a solution," said presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo as the two private water concessionaires serving Metro Manila announced the beginning of service interruptions due to the low water levels in the Angat and Ipo dams.

"The President will study it and he will do what is needed to avoid a water crisis," Panelo told a radio interview.

Maynilad said service interruptions were necessary due to the lower water allocation given them—40 cubic meters per second (CMS) compared to the normal 48 CMS.

Manila Water also previously warned of possible service interruptions if Angat Dam's levels continue to decrease and said this is necessary to ensure that the water supply will last even beyond the summer of 2020.

They also warned that the water rationing may last until next year.

Maynilad handles the west concession zone while Manila Water

*Next page*

services the east concession zone of Metro Manila and its nearby provinces.

In March, President Duterte threatened to scrap the concession agreements of the two companies after

millions of their customers were left waterless.

Duterte also warned Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS)

officials that they would get fired if he was not satisfied with their actions to address the water shortage.

Militant groups have criticized the water concessionaires, saying that they should no longer be allowed to collect the remaining rate hike.

"Are we facing a permanent water crisis? It appears that since the water crisis broke out in March 2019, there has been no significant improvement in the sourcing of water aside from that which comes from Angat dam," Bayan Secretary-Gen-

eral Renato Reyes Jr. said.

Both Maynilad and Manila Water were given substantial water rate hikes in October last year.

The water elevation in Angat Dam in Bulacan on Sunday continued to dip due to a lack of rainfall.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration said the dam's water level went down from Saturday's 185.64 meters to 185.41 meters on Sunday, a decrease of 0.23 meters.



# Solons rap water firms for rate-hike warnings

By JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ

@joveemarie

**L**AWMAKERS on Sunday disputed the warning by the two private water firms that rates could shoot up by 780 percent, or by as much P26.70 per cubic meter, if they are forced to connect all their customers to a sewage collection, treatment and disposal system, as mandated by the Clean Water Act.

Buhay Rep. Lito Atienza, in a statement, said there's no need for water rates to skyrocket as these two firms have drawn P138 billion in net profits from 2006 to June 2019.

"There's absolutely no need for them to jack up water rates. They've clearly been making a lot of money over the years, and some of those profits came from the 20-percent environmental charge and 30-percent sewer charge they've been col-

lecting from customers," Atienza said.

"They should have fully invested the revenue from these charges to build sewerage networks and wastewater treatment facilities, but they clearly chose to do something else with the money," added Atienza, who as then environment secretary had initiated the move to penalize the water concessionaires for their failure to speedily lay down

the sewerage networks, leading to water pollution. The case reached the Supreme Court, which upheld the government position.

For his part, Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate also hit Manila Water Co. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. for trying to pass on to consumers the P1.843 billion fine imposed by the SC.

With their profits, the lawmakers said the firms have no excuse whatsoever for failing to meet their obligations, including their obligation to put up adequate sewerage networks and wastewater treatment facilities.

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## Water firms... CONTINUED FROM A16

In August, the SC upheld a 2009 Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) order penalizing the two water suppliers and the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) for violating Section 8 of the Clean Water Act. The SC imposed a total P1.84 billion in combined fines.

"In fact, over the years, they've invoked their need to provide sewerage networks and wastewater treatment facilities to borrow cheap funding from abroad for 'green' projects. We don't know what they did with the money," Atienza said.

According to Atienza, they may be having problems meeting their twin obligations to deliver round-the-clock running water to their 14 million customers and to establish sewerage systems, but Metro Manila's two water concessionaires are definitely not having any difficulties producing profits for their stockholders.

"Based on our scrutiny of publicly available financial filings, we've gathered that Manila Water Co. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. raked in an aggregate of P138 billion in net profits from 2006 to June 2019," Atienza said.

"Both firms also rewarded their shareholders a combined P49 billion in cash dividends over the same period," added Atienza.

Until they fully comply with the Clean Water Act, the SC had said that Manila Water, Maynilad and the MWSS will have to continue to pay a P322,102 daily fine that escalates by 10 percent in two years, plus legal interest of 6 percent per annum.

In asking the SC to reconsider

its order, Atienza said the water firms had warned that water rates could hit the roof, should they be compelled to pay the fine until they complete their sewerage projects.

Zarate, meanwhile, was appalled by recent statements from Manila Water. "Manila Water is saying that there would be a 780-percent water rate increase for their customers because of the Supreme Court-imposed fine. They were the ones who violated the law, yet they have the temerity to pass the fine to long-suffering consumers. This is the height of corporate impunity, insolence and greed," said Zarate.

The Bayan Muna party-list "will do all we can to stop this humongous water rate hike and at the same time make the water concessionaires accountable for their neglect of the environment."

Earlier, Manila Water insisted that it has complied with its responsibilities under the Clean Water Act and should not be fined a total of P921 million. Manila Water has already filed a motion for reconsideration.

Also, Maynilad Water Services Inc. earlier maintained that it would be "legally and physical impossible" to comply with the SC's directive to provide wastewater treatment facilities and to connect sewage lines in all establishments, including households, within a five-year period.

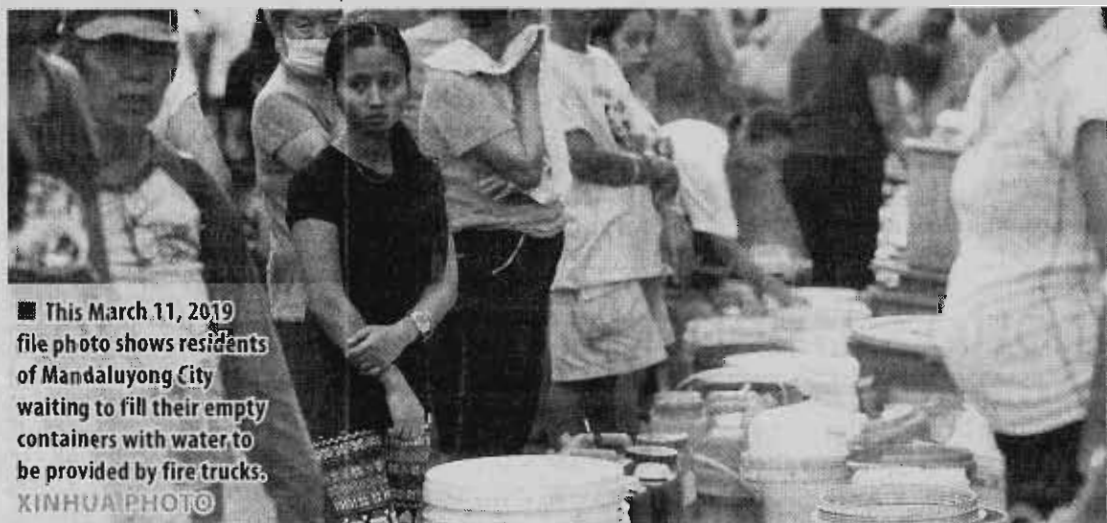
Maynilad through its lawyers also asked the SC to set aside its August decision directing it along with Manila Water and MWSS to pay a fine for violating Philippine Clean Water Act.



# Supply shortage weighs on Manila Water shares

BY TYRONE C. PIAD

**L**ISTED Manila Water Co. Inc. seems to be not only lacking enough water for its customers, but also positive market sentiment, as investors sold off their positions after a supply-rotation schedule took effect.



■ This March 11, 2019 file photo shows residents of Mandaluyong City waiting to fill their empty containers with water to be provided by fire trucks. XINHUA PHOTO

The Ayala-led water concessionaire's shares on Friday plunged by 29 centavos or 1.43 percent to close at P19.96 apiece amid the 0.36-percent drop for the benchmark Philippine Stock Exchange index.

Shares have gone down by 27.81 percent from their year-to-date peak of P27.65 on January 4 and are nearing their October 3 year-to-date low of P19.68.

Year-to-date, shares have gone weaker by 25.10 percent. A 1.10-percent dip, meanwhile, was recorded week-on-week.

"Sentiment toward the company is clouded by the water shortages, which occurred in this year's first half, as well as the threat of another shortage amid the continuous decline in the water level of Angat Dam," Philstocks Financial research associate Japhet Tantiangco said.

Manila Water, along with Maynilad Water Services Inc., announced last week that rotating service interruptions would be implemented in Metro Manila and nearby provinces as Angat's water

level continues to decrease. It was implemented on Thursday.

Because of declining reserves, the National Water Resources Board cut the water distribution to the affected areas to 40 cubic meters per second (m<sup>3</sup>/s) from the normal 48 m<sup>3</sup>/s.

But Manila Water assured that supply would be equally distributed among its 6.8 million customers in its East Zone concession area.

The affected areas are the cities of Caloocan, Las Piñas, Makati, Malabon, Mandaluyong, Manila, Marikina, Muntinlupa, Navotas, Parañaque, Pasig, Pasay, Quezon, San Juan, Taguig and Valenzuela, and the town of Pateros. Bulacan and several areas in Cavite were also affected.

Tantiangco also said Manila Water might face penalties for allegedly violating Republic Act 9275, or the "Philippine Clean Water Act," which could further sink its shares.

The Supreme Court in August slapped Manila Water and Maynilad with a P921.46-million fine for

not putting up sewerage systems. This, in addition to a daily fine of P322,102, which is subject to a 10-percent increase every two years until they achieve full compliance.

Manila Water earlier appealed before the high court to reconsider the penalties, as the laws were not clear on the time frame for establishing sewerage lines. It added that it was not feasible to construct a sewerage system catering to a large service area within five years.

"This (penalty) will dent its financial performance, which is already suffering from the water shortage problems," Tantiangco said.

This week, Manila Water shares will trade with a downward bias amid shortage threats, Tantiangco said, adding it might retest the P20 support level.

"If it won't be able to get back above the said level, then it could decline to its next support line, which is P18," he added.

Regina Capital Development Corp. head of sales Luis Limlingan said investors were now on the lookout for its nine-month earnings report.

"Since earnings season has begun, perhaps they (investors) will look forward to the upcoming release [of Manila Water's latest financial performance], plus guidance from any investor/media briefing," he added.

Manila Water saw its net income plunge by 18 percent to P2.92 billion in the first half of the year from P3.55 year-on-year, which was blamed on the impact of the water shortage.



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# Show roadmap or deals are off

Go will suggest to President Rodrigo Duterte to review Maynilad's and Manila Water's contracts noting that these private firms are penalizing consumers

**By Hananeel Bordey**

Concessionaires Manila Water Company Inc. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. were asked to show a multi-year masterplan for the improvement of water services or risk their contracts with the government being revoked.

At least three pro-administration senators are seeking accountability from the two water concessionaires operating in Metro Manila as residents suffer from the new wave of service interruptions.

Senators Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go, Francis Tolentino and Imee Marcos made statements indicating their inclination to revisit the concession agreements of both firms after both implemented water rationing in Metro Manila due to the claimed falling water level at Angat Dam.

The former presidential aide and now Sen. Go reiterated that he will

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## I do not believe that there is a shortage. Do not pass the burden to the people

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suggest to President Rodrigo Duterte to review Maynilad's and Manila Water's contracts noting that these private firms are penalizing consumers.

"I do not believe that there is a shortage. Do not pass the burden to the people. You entered into that business, you should have an answer for that. You should have not signed the contract if you cannot comply with (your commitment) to supply water," Go said.

"The President should have those (concession agreements) reviewed. I will suggest to the President to review the contracts that are not in favor of our countrymen," he said.

### Your plan pls

In a statement, Marcos demanded the release of comprehensive master plans from the two water companies in which solutions to the yearly water shortage will be stated.

She pointed out that the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) had granted Maynilad and Manila Water 37 years to facilitate the operations, repair and refurbishment of movable assets and sewerage services in the west and east areas, respectively.

"With the long period given by the MWSS to these two water companies, they should think of ways that will not disturb and interrupt our countrymen especially in hospitals that need enough supply of water," she said.

Previously, Marcos said she is considering an investigation of the concession agreements.

"Remember, they were already warned by President (Rodrigo) Duterte last March that their concession agreements will be terminated due to their failure, but until now they can't still provide solutions to the problem in the water supply?" she said.

### Not only poor but no service

This was affirmed by Tolentino, saying the review of concession agreements should not be limited to their failure to give solutions to the water interruptions, but they must also answer their failure to build the required water sewerage facilities, which were also part of the monthly bill paid by the consumers.

"The concession agreements should be revisited not just because of the water shortage but the failure to establish

the water treatment plants required and part of the environmental fees the consumers pay," Tolentino told *Daily Tribune*.

Last August, the Supreme Court slapped both water concessionaires with a total of P921,464,184 in fines and the government-run MWSS was also held jointly liable for violating the Clean Water Act.

A fine of P322,102.00 per day was also assessed for non-compliance with the Clean Water Act, stemming from a case filed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) during the term of former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

The case stemmed from the failure of Maynilad and Manila Water to put up sewage lines and sewage treatment facilities despite charging millions of households for such service. According to reports, the fines piled up because the law imposes a daily fine for each infraction.

Both Maynilad and Manila Water have filed separate motions for reconsideration before the SC contesting its ruling even as they threatened to pass the penalties imposed against them to the customers.

During his recent speech at the 45th Philippine Business Conference and Expo, Duterte lashed out at the water companies for their failure to build water treatment facilities.

The President did not explicitly name the water companies, but he was apparently referring to Maynilad and Manila Water.

"So, let us not forget the environment. Like these... I am not sure what. I think these guys do not like me and I do not like them... We've been paying, the Filipino people, Manila, we have been paying for water treatment fees, which have not been delivered by the water companies," Mr. Duterte said.

"Up to now, there is no water treatment. The water in the canal, it passes through a nylon mosquito... but there is no water treatment and yet we are paying," he added.

In an exclusive interview with *Daily Tribune*, the President had already threatened to terminate the agreements with the private firms. He even suggested that these companies may be committing plunder for collecting fees on services that they are not delivering.

### Do your job

Chief Presidential Legal Counsel and presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo

stressed Malacañang will find ways to avert a looming water crisis.

"We will find ways to prevent it from getting serious. If there is a problem, we will find a solution," Panelo said in a radio interview.

### You should have not signed the contract if you cannot comply with your commitment to supply water.

"So, I think those people who are responsible for that will have to do their job," he added.

The official also assured the public that President Rodrigo Duterte is expected to take the necessary steps to prevent a water crisis from happening.

The President had threatened to fire officials of MWSS and to terminate the concession agreements due to the poor water services.

"All of that will be studied by the President and he will do the necessary steps in order to fulfill his previous statements that there should not be any water crisis in the country," Panelo said.

When asked if the Chief Executive will summon MWSS and officials of the water concessionaires for another meeting, he said he is still not sure.

### P138-B profit in 13 yrs

They may have problems meeting their obligations to deliver round-the-clock water service to their 14 million customers and to establish sewerage systems, but the concessionaires are definitely not having any difficulties producing profits for their stockholders, Buhay Rep. Lito



**God's arc** Rainbow which was once common after a rain had been blotted out by pollution but not in Surigao Strait where the natural phenomena showed its full radiance.

ROMAN PROSPERO

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Atienza added.

"Based on our scrutiny of publicly available financial filings, we've gathered that Manila Water Co. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. raked in an aggregate of P138 billion in net profit from 2006 to June 2019," Atienza, former three-term mayor of Manila, said.

"Both firms also rewarded their shareholders a combined P49 billion in cash dividends over the same period," he added.

"It has become abundantly clear they've been making a lot of money. This is why they have no excuse whatsoever for failing to meet their obligations, including their obligation to put up adequate sewerage networks and wastewater treatment facilities," he further said.

The solon also disputed the threat made by the water firms that rates could shoot up by 780 percent or by as much P26.70 per cubic meter if they are forced to connect all their customers to a sewage collection, treatment and disposal system, as mandated by Section 8 of the Clean Water Act.

"There's absolutely no need for them

to jack up water rates. They've clearly been making a lot of money over the years and some of those profits came from the 20 percent environmental charge and 30 percent sewer charge they've been collecting from customers," Atienza said.

"They should have fully invested the revenue from these charges to build sewerage networks and wastewater treatment facilities, but they clearly chose to do something else with the money," he stressed.

"In fact, over the years, they've invoked their need to provide sewerage networks and wastewater treatment facilities to borrow cheap funding from abroad for 'green' projects. We don't know what they did with the money," he added.

The Supreme Court in August upheld a 2009 DENR order penalizing the two water suppliers and the MWSS with P1.84 billion in combined fines for violating Section 8 of the Clean Water Act. Atienza himself issued the 2009 order when he was DENR head.

**Francis Wakefield  
and Pat C. Santos**



## Water



A RECENT article in the Financial Times caught my attention because it is portentous of events likely to happen in many parts of the world, especially in the tropics.

Ethiopia and Egypt are disputing the use of the water in the river Nile, the world's longest river that empties into the Mediterranean after passing several countries in Africa.

The Nile has two major tributaries, the White Nile whose headwaters begin in Tanzania where the huge Lake Victoria sits, and goes through Uganda, Rwanda, the Congo, Kenya, Sudan and other countries, through Egypt where it empties into the sea. The Blue Nile, though shorter, sources its water from Ethiopia. The two rivers meet in Sudan, from whence the waters flow into Egypt.

Ethiopia, one of the fast-rising economies in Africa, is building what it calls the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the upper reaches of the Blue Nile. Egypt fears that when the dam is operational, it will restrict the flow of water into the Egyptian part of the river, which is lifeline for the country, whose crops are dependent on it for irrigation.

Cairo wants Addis Ababa to guarantee a minimum flow from the dam to maintain the level of its Aswan Dam farther downstream to ensure enough water for their agricultural and power generation requirements. Ethiopia, which has had a long history of conflict with its northwestern neighbor, balks at Egypt's demands.

The 4.8 billion dollar "renaissance" dam will be the largest hydropower project in Africa once it is completed by 2022, capable of generating 6 gigawatts of electricity.

The Egypt-Ethiopia water conflict is but one of many possible conflicts between countries arising from the use of water resources. India and Pakistan resolved their water conflicts

by the Indus Water Treaty in 1960, creating a joint management body to oversee their shared water resources.

In the volatile Middle East, Turkey, Syria and Iraq have conflicts over the biblical Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Similarly, the use of the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized is disputed by Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine.

In the Indo-Chinese peninsula, Laos has been building hydroelectric dams and apart from their domestic use, they sell power to neighboring countries, principally Thailand. With the help of China, the Laotians are now building another giant dam, and its neighbors feel that this will constrict the flow of water to the Mekong and Tonle Sap.

*“ Issues on this precious resource will continue to hound us. ”*

The bigger hold China has on the economies of the Indo-Chinese peninsulars, namely Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam is the geopolitical reality that the headwaters of their major rivers are situated in China, principally the Tibetan highlands, whose snow after the long winter flows into the low countries.

In the Philippines, many of whose islands are limestone formations with little topsoil and even less aquifers beneath the land surface, water has become such a precious commodity whose scarcity impacts not only on its disparate islands like Boracay, but on mega-cities like the national capital region and Cebu.

As far back as the time of President Cory, Gov. Lito Osmena had proposed to build a submarine pipe between his province and Bohol, to tap the Inabanga River and supply the water needs of the Cebuanos. But Bohol would hear none of it.

Truth is, Cebu whose mountains

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are mostly denuded and even inhabited, has few sources of water. Population pressures through the last 30 years have worsened the water problem of Cebu, particularly the capital city, neighboring Mandaue and Lapu-lapu.

Now the city officials are thinking of desalination as a source of potable water. But the process, although improved through the years, can still be quite expensive. Thus, many Cebuanos balk at the potential high cost of their daily water needs. But then again, if push comes to shove, do they have much choice?

In the NCR area, we experienced extreme scarcity last summer, when the water level in Angat, which feeds La Mesa Dam, went down to precarious levels. Angat also supplies irrigation water for Bulacan, and last summer, our water managers had to deprive the Bulacan farmers of water from their own source.

There was relief when the rains came in July, but now we are told the water levels in Angat have once again receded. In some parts of Metro-Manila, the two water distribution

facilities, privatized since the Ramos presidency, are limiting supply to certain hours of the day.

On the demand side, we keep increasing our numbers, and each added member of our race increases the water requirements, not to mention the number of tourists as well as the POGO employees we import.

On the supply side, our traditional water sources are affected by climate change. It will get worse.

So our government has to look for additional sources, and good for Metro Manila, we have some other than Angat.

There's Laguna de Bay. There's Wawa in Montalban. Farther off, we could pump up the waters of Lake Taal, purify the same in Mount Gonzales, and let gravity course the water from pipes to the capital region, even neighboring Laguna.

But our private distributors, Manila Water for the eastern section, and Maynilad for the west, have done little to tap other sources, even if this is provided for in the concession agreement signed with MWSS or what we used to call Nawasa when NCR's water service was privatized.

Neither have they built wastewater treatment facilities, so the Supreme Court no less has ordered them to im-

mediately do so, but the construction timetable is not only too expensive; it would mean digging up our already traffic-choked streets. That would not only worsen carnageddon; it would mean absolute gridlock.

Fortunately, government has finally given the green light for the construction of Kaliwa Dam in location bordering Quezon and the Sierra Madre foothills of Rizal. Once completed four to five years from now, that would relieve us of having to rely solely on Angat.

There are the usual objectors, from the Dumagats to environmentalists, as well as the noisy Left which rides on every issue that could unnerve government. Of course, Duterte is not easily unnerved, which is why he keeps riding a motorbike despite his age and brittle bones. Or perhaps to get his mind off the so many problems he inherited from his Luzon predecessors by becoming the first president from Mindanao.

But water issues will continue to hound us, whether it is because costs need to be borne by ever-complaining consumers who multiply ever so often, even as climate change impacts negatively on the supply of this most basic of all commodities (other than air).



LESS RAINFALL

# NEW WATER CRISIS LOOMS AS ANGAT DAM LEVEL RECEDES

By **Jhesset O. Enano**  
@JhessetEnanoINQ

Another potential water crisis looms for residents in Metro Manila and nearby provinces, as the water level in Angat Dam continues to recede, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said on Sunday (*See related story on Page A10*).

As of Saturday morning, the dam's elevation was recorded at 185.64 meters, down by 0.23 meters from the previous day.

While it remains above the 180-millimeter minimum operating level, consumers need to

be more conscious of their water usage amid the possibility of supply interruptions, said Pagasa hydrologist Sonia Serrano.

Based on Pagasa's forecast, rainfall in November is expected to be "near normal," while it is seen to be "below normal" in December, Serrano said.

This means that there would be most likely less rainfall toward the yearend, which may not be enough to increase the water level in Angat.

Metro Manila and adjacent provinces plunged into a water crisis earlier this year, after levels in Angat and La Mesa dams dipped to historic lows.



# Water firms: Huge profits, bad service – solon

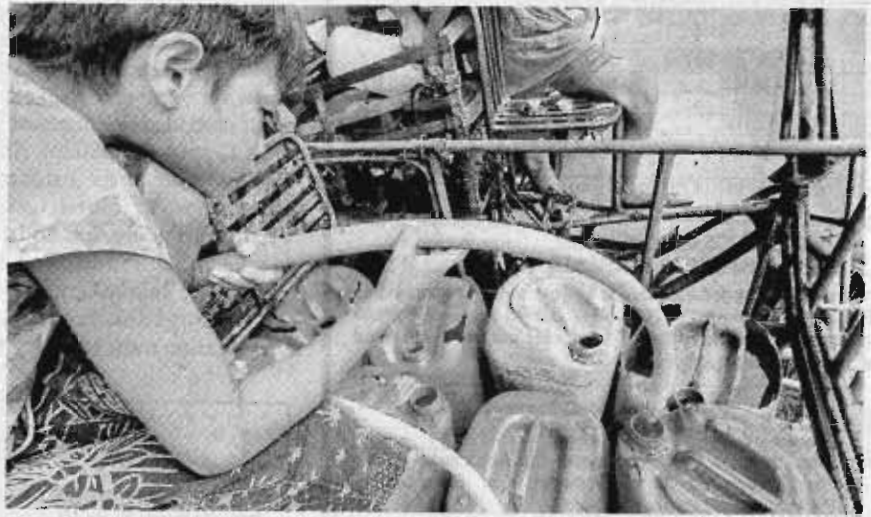
BY WENDELL VIGILIA

WHILE Maynilad and Manila Water are failing to meet their obligations to deliver round-the-clock running water to their 14 million customers and establish sewerage systems, the two water concessionaires are not having any difficulties producing profits for their stockholders, a party-list lawmaker said yesterday.

Based on his review of publicly available financial records of the two concessionaires, Buhay party-list Rep. Lito Atienza said Manila Water Co. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. raked in an aggregate of P138 billion in net profits from 2006 to June 2019, a 13-year period.

Both firms also rewarded their shareholders a combined P49 billion in cash dividends over the same period, said Atienza, a former three-term mayor of the city of Manila.

“It has become abundantly clear (that) they’ve been making a lot of money. This is why they have no excuse whatsoever for failing to meet their obligations, including their obligation to put up ad-



**Making a living.** A boy fills water containers, charging P3 per container, in Del Pan, Tondo, hours ahead of the scheduled water supply interruption. PHOTO BY RHOY COBILLA

equate sewerage networks and wastewater treatment facilities,” Atienza said.

As announced last week, water service interruptions will start today and may last until next year if water level at Metro

Manila’s major water sources will not improve over the next few months.

Metro Manila, which has a population of 12 million, gets its water supply from the Angat-Ipo-La Mesa water system.

Angat Dam supplies 97 percent of Metro Manila’s water needs, releasing about 4 million liters of water per day, while La Mesa Dam is supposed to serve as a reserve for Manila Water.

Manila Water, in a statement, said its scheduled water interruption will be felt by all its 6.8 million customers and will range from 4 to 10 hours.

Affected areas include Rizal, Makati, Mandaluyong, Marikina, Pasig, Parañaque, Pateros, Quezon City, San Juan, and Taguig, among others.

Atienza also slammed the water firms’ warning that their rates could shoot up by as much as 780 percent, or by P26.70 per cubic meter, if they are forced to connect all their customers to a sewage collection, treatment and disposal system, as mandated by section 8 of the Clean Water Act.

“There’s absolutely no need for them to jack up water rates. They’ve clearly been making a lot of money over the years, and some of those profits came

from the 20 percent environmental charge and 30 percent sewer charge they’ve been collecting from customers,” Atienza said.

“They should have fully invested the revenue from these charges to build sewerage networks and wastewater treatment facilities, but they clearly chose to do something else with the money,” he added.

Over the years, Atienza said the concessionaires have invoked their need to provide sewerage networks and wastewater treatment facilities to borrow cheap funding from abroad for “green” projects but “we don’t know what they did with the money.”

The Supreme Court in August upheld a 2009 Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) order penalizing the two water suppliers and the Metropolitan Waterworks Sewerage System (MWSS) with P1.84 billion in combined fines for violating section 8 of the Clean Water Act.

Atienza himself issued the 2009 order when he was the environment secretary.

The High Court had ruled that until

they fully comply with the Clean Water Act, Manila Water and Maynilad and the MWSS will have to continue to pay a P322,102 daily fine which increases by 10 percent in two years, plus legal interest of six percent per annum.

In asking the Supreme Court to reconsider its order, the water firms had warned that rates could shoot up should they be compelled to pay the fine until they complete their sewerage projects.

Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo, concurrent presidential spokesman, belied allegations that the water shortage problem was a mere creation of the government to justify the need for the China-funded New Centennial Water Source-Kaliwa Dam project.

Panelo, in a radio interview, said the water supply issue is not just a “front” used by the government to make sure that the Kaliwa Dam project will proceed.

“Definitely, hindi (front). Ang administrasyon na ito walang mga tinatawag na front o mga kasi-nungalingan na mga kinakalat nila (Definitely, it’s not a front. This administration does not use fronts or lies like the ones that they are

spreading),” Panelo said.

Panelo said that as far as he was aware, the water supply problem from late March until the summer months in Metro Manila and the surrounding areas had already been resolved.

Panelo said the government is looking into the water supply problem and that officials overseeing the water services are doing their jobs.

“Gagawan natin ng paraan para hindi maging malubha ang krisis na iyan. Kung merong problema ay may solusyon (We will do something so the crisis will not worsen. If there’s a problem, then there’s a solution),” he said.

Last Friday, National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. emphasized the urgency of finding a new source of water amid the supply rationing in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

Among the projects being pursued by the government is the China-funded Kaliwa Dam project which is, however, being opposed by environmental, tribal and militant groups due to its alleged adverse effect on the environment and the threat to displace indigenous and tribal people in the area. — *With Jocelyn Montemayor*



## On a roll

**T**HE Kaliwa Dam New Centennial Metro Manila water supply project has just been awarded its Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) by the DENR despite delays caused by NGOs, while the Chico River dam irrigation project is in the advanced stage of development.

The P175-billion Philippine National Railways (PNR) Long Haul railway project funded by China is expected to be awarded in the last quarter of this year. The two bridges donated by the Chinese government are nearing completion, and several drug rehabilitation centers in Luzon and Mindanao have been finished and now are operational.

The projects that began negotiations as soon as the Duterte administration was inaugurated in 2016 are rolling on as can be expected. Delays experienced had mostly been to domestic regulatory, environmental and political hurdles. The projects in Luzon, called Phase One or Basket One, are beginning to take off. Basket Two in the Visayas and Mindanao are presently on the drawing board.

**‘The Philippines-China projects are all on a roll, and President Duterte may just prove that his independent foreign policy that pivots toward China is working well for the Filipino people.’**

The visit of China’s Vice-Minister Hu Chunhua occasioned the signing of many of the Phase Two projects focused on the needs of the Philippine South, such as the Panay-Guimaras-Negros Island Bridge, the Davao City Expressway and the Marawi sports-market complex vital to the rehabilitation of the terror-devastated city. Other projects are in communications and trade facilitation, broadcasting equipment and mobile container/vehicle inspection system and CT Scan inspection systems.

Other equally important Phase Two projects are China’s assistance to the Philippine government in crucial communications and trade facilitation equipment in this second phase: broadcasting equipment and mobile container/vehicle inspection system and CT Scan inspection systems.

Some quarters have been either unrealistic or too impatient, but so far China has been proving them wrong as progress in China’s delivery of its promises is steady and on schedule. It seems to be the track record of China in its dealing with developing countries. In the case of Indonesia, the fast train that connects Jakarta and Bandung with top speed of 350 km per hour commenced construction last Sept. 30.

The Kaliwa Dam, when completed, will be the new and reliable source of water for Metro Manila’s burgeoning population. The region’s perennial traffic problem will also be considerably eased by the PNR long haul train project.

Despite the usual delays from local acquisition of rights-of-way and properties that is the role of the domestic partner, the feedback on China-funded and engineered projects is quite satisfactory. The “debt trap” scare has long been debunked and corruption fears addressed firmly by local and Chinese authorities.

The Philippines-China projects are all on a roll, and President Duterte may just prove that his independent foreign policy that pivots toward China is working well for the Filipino people.

# Valenzuela, QC prepare for dry spell

Local governments take measures to ensure adequate water supply for residents

By Meg Adonis  
and Matthew Reysio-Cruz  
@INQ

As water concessionaires implement a new round of rotational service interruptions due to Angat Dam's declining levels, owners of businesses heavily dependent on a reliable water supply are bracing themselves for the worse.

"Once water service interruptions happen, we consume entirely the supply we have [stored] in our tank and in that situation, we are forced to stop operations," Alma Jose, a worker in a laundromat on MacArthur Highway in Valenzuela City, told the Inquirer.

Based on the advisory issued by Maynilad Water Services Inc., parts of Valenzuela City would have dry taps from 10 a.m. to 5 a.m. the next day, or a total of 19 hours.

Jose said that on weekends, they would usually serve as many as 40 to 50 customers in the self-service laundry shop which was open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily.

But when they run out of water, they could sometimes



**HOT COMMODITY** Water containers are again in demand at the Kamuning Market in Quezon City as rotational water service interruptions make the taps go dry in parts of Metro Manila.

—NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

serve only half of their clients, she added.

"We get their contact numbers instead and ask them to leave their laundry here. Once [the] water supply returns, we just get in touch with them so they can come back," Jose said.

Arnaldo Antonio, head of Valenzuela's Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Of-

fice, said that while the city government had promised help, including financial aid, to small-time businesses affected by the ongoing service interruptions, they (traders) should also stock up on water to meet customers' demands.

"It's not that we don't understand their plight. But small businesses and residents would

be having the same experience, so they should store whatever they could," he said.

Antonio said that the city had enough deep wells to provide the precious commodity, as well as 20 fire trucks that could be deployed to affected barangays.

"We could also tap the local government of neighboring Bu-





lacan province should the [whole of] Valenzuela City run out of water," he added.

Antonio said that the city had also required private and government buildings to install rain catchment facilities so that the stored water could be used by residents for nondrinking purposes.

#### Monthly reports

In Quezon City, water concessionaires must now submit monthly reports on efforts to fix leaks and crack down on illegal connections—a new requirement meant to stave off the worst effects of a looming water shortage, the local government said on Sunday.

The more aggressive monitoring by Manila Water Co. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. was aimed at hopefully reducing the amount of water lost to easily remediable issues.

The Department of the Building Official was also asked to expedite the processing of excavation permits submitted by concessionaires for emergency repairs, while barangay officials were instructed to take part in monitoring individual

households and offices for leaks.

These were among several orders issued by Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte to the private concessionaires and government agencies, which were directed in an Oct. 21 memorandum to undertake initiatives to curb the city's water usage.

The Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office was tasked to work with Manila Water and Maynilad for the use of their treated wastewater, which the concessionaires pledged to provide for the upkeep of public parks and the Bureau of Fire Protection's operations.

The General Services Department (GSD) and City Engineering Department were also ordered to inventory all schools and city-owned buildings, with an eye on installing rainwater harvesting systems, water storage tanks and toilets with a half-flush option.

"The GSD will record baseline data on water consumption per office, building and barangay and come up with an incentive scheme for those who will be able to reduce their water consumption per month," the city government said. INQ



# PALASYO KUMILOS VS WATER CRISIS

KUMIKILOS at gumagawa na ng solusyon ang Palasyo ng Malakanyang kaugnay sa nakaambang krisis sa tubig sa Metro Manila.

**SUNDAN  
SA  
PAHINA  
15**

*(Mula sa pahina 1)*

Layon nito, ayon kay Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo na hindi na lumala ang problema.

"Eh gagawan natin ng paraan para hindi maging malubha ang krisis na iyan. Kung merong problema eh bibigyan natin ng solusyon. So I think those people who are responsible for that will have to do their job," ani Panelo.

Tinukoy rin ni Panelo na pinag-aaralan din ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang hirit ng mga water concessionaire hinggil sa pagtataas ng singil sa tubig.

"Eh lahat 'yan eh pag-aaralan din ng presidente at gagawa siya ng mga kaukulang hakbang upang magkaroon ng katuparan 'yung mga sinabi niyang kailangan walang water crisis sa

bansa," giit ni Panelo.

Samantala, nilinaw ni Panelo na hindi gawa-gawa lamang ang nakaambang krisis sa tubig para itulak ang Kaliwa Dam project na pondohan ng China.

Ani Panelo, hindi pa matiyak kung tuloy ang Kaliwa Dam project.

Ang Kaliwa Dam ang sinasabing isa sa maaring solusyon sa kakulangan ng supply

ng tubig hindi lamang sa Metro Manila kundi sa irigasyon sa mga lawigan.

Una nang nagbabala si National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon, Jr., na huli na kung hindi magkakaroon ng 'long-term programs' ang gobyerno at private concessionaires upang makagawa ng panibagong pagkukunan ng tubig. **VICKY C**



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# TUBIG SA ANGAT DAM BUMABABA

**PATULOY** na bumababa ang lebel ng tubig sa Angat dam sa harap na rin ng limitadong pagbuhos ng ulan sa iba't ibang panig ng bansa.

Sa datos mula sa Pagasa Hydrometeorological Division kahapon ng umaga ay bumagsak sa 185.39 meters ang lebel ng tubig sa Angat kumpara sa 185.41 me-

ters kamakalawa.

Maliban sa Angat dam, bumaba rin ng bahagya ang lebel ng tubig sa iba pang mga dam tulad ng Ipo, La Mesa maging sa Caliraya dam.

Ayon sa Pagasa, kinakailangan ng 900 hanggang 1000 milimetro ng tubig ulan ng Angat dam sa loob ng isang buwan para madagdagan at manumbalik sa normal ang lebel ng tubig dito.

**DWIZ 882**



## QC workers urged to conserve water

Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte yesterday ordered local government workers to conserve water amid the possible water shortage in Metro Manila, which could last for months.

In a memorandum, Belmonte directed the city department heads to practice water conservation measures.

"Check households and offices for leaks and report these to the general services department, barangay officials and water concessionaires," she said.

Belmonte said barangays and public schools in the city should also conserve water.

She instructed the general services and

engineering departments to conduct an inventory of schools and city-owned buildings for the installation of rainwater harvesting systems and water storage tanks.

The mayor ordered barangay officials to monitor leaks and illegal water connections in their areas.

Belmonte also asked Maynilad and Manila Water to submit to the city government monthly reports on repairs and illegal connections in their jurisdiction.

"The concessionaires have committed to provide the city with treated wastewater that can be used in case of fires, and to water plants in public parks," she said.

- Emmanuel Tupas



# WATER SHORTAGE TATAPUSIN NI DUTERTE

## WATER SHORTAGE TATAPUSIN NI DUTERTE

TINIYAK ng Malacañang na hindi uupuan ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang nararanasang water shortage sa Metro Manila.

"Gagawan natin ng paraan para hindi maging malubha ang krisis na yan. Kung merong problema, ay may solusyon. So I think those people responsible for that will have to do their job," ayon kay Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo.

"Lahat yan ay pag-aaralan ni Presidente. Gagawa siya ng mga kaukulang hakbang upang magkaroon ng katupuran ang mga

sinabi nya na kailangan walang water crisis sa ating bansa," dagdag ni Panelo.

Matatandaang sinipa ni Pangulong Duterte si Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System administrator Reynaldo Velasco matapos makaranas ng water shortage ang Metro Manila at katabing lalawigan noong panahon ng tag-init.

Nagbanta rin ito na putulin ang kontrata ng dalawang concessionaire kung hindi mareresolba ang water shortage.

Nagpatupad na noong nakaraang ling-

go ng rotational water interruption ang Maynilad at Manila Water bunga ng patuloy na pagbaba ng lebel ng tubig sa Angat Dam.

Giit naman ni Senador Imee Marcos, dapat umanong maglatag ng komprehensibong master plan ang Maynilad at Manila Water nang sa gayon ay masolusyunan ang nararanasang krisis sa tubig sa Metro Manila at mga kalapit ng lalawigan.

Sabi ng senadora, hindi dapat umaasalang sa buhos ng ulan sa dam ang dalawang concessionaire dahil tiyak na mas malala pa ang

mararanasang problema sa tubig kapag sumapit na ang tag-init sa susunod na taon.

Batay sa concession agreement, binigyan ng Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) ang Maynilad ng 37 taon para pangasiwaan, i-operate, i-repair, at i-refurbish ang lahat ng fixed and movable assets para sa water and sewerage services sa west area.

Samantala, ang Manila Water ay binigyan din ng MWSS ng exclusive rights sa east service area sa loob din ng 37 taong operasyon.

Ayon kay Marcos,

dapat nakapaloob sa masterplan ang pagtatayo ng dagdag na water reservoir na salo ng ulan na dala ng malalakas na bagyo sa bansa.

Tinatayang may 15-milyong kustomer ng Maynilad at Manila Water ang apektado ngayon ng water shortage sa lungsod ng Mandaluyong, Maynila, Marikina, Navotas, Muntinlupa, Malabon, Makati, Las Piñas, Caloocan, Valenzuela, Parañaque, Pasay city, Quezon City, Rizal, Cavite at ilang bayan sa Bulacan.

(Prince Golez/Dindo Matining)



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## ROTATIONAL WATER SERVICE INTERRUPTION NAGSISIMULA NA!

MARAMI ang natutuwa dahil nagkakaroon ng madalas na pag-ulan nitong mga nakaraang buwan, ngunit, hindi pa rin ito sapat upang mapunuan muli ang Angat Dam at La Mesa Dam.

Kung titingnan natin ang ulat ng Bulacan Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDR-RMC), ang lebel ng tubig noong Miyerkules ng umaga (Oktubre 23) ay bumaba sa 186.22 na lamang, kulang ng 25.78 meters base sa 212 normal high water level (NHWL).

Nakatulong ang mga pag-ulan ngayong taon, ngunit hindi pa rin ito naging sapat upang makamit ng Angat Dam ang inaasahang lebel nito para may magamit sa susunod na taon.

Kaya kinakailangang magpatuloy tayo na maging responsable sa paggamit ng tubig upang mapagkasya natin ang limitadong supply hanggang sa panahon ng tag-init at maging sa kabuuan ng taong 2020.

Tulad ng palagiang ba-

bala mula pa sa National Water Resources Board (NWRB) at Manila Water noong nakaraang linggo, ipatutupad na ng Manila Water ang rotational water service interruption simula sa gabi ng Oktubre 24, 2019 dahil sa patuloy na pagbaba ng lebel ng Angat Dam.

Ito ay kailangang isagawa upang mapagkasya ang limitado pa ring supply ng tubig upang may magamit sa susunod na tag-araw, kung sakaling hindi na umabot pa sa inaasahang 212 meters na lebel ang Angat Dam sa pagtatapos ng 2019.

Ang Manila Water ay nanawagan at naghihikayat sa mga customer na maging mas responsable sa paggamit ng tubig. Mag-ipon ng tubig habang may makukuha sa mga gripo at ipunin lamang ang sapat na dami para matugunan ang pangangailangan sa loob ng mga oras na walang tubig.

Ang detalyadong iskedyul ng service interruption ay matatagpuan sa website ng Manila Water ([www.manilawater.com](http://www.manilawater.com)), Facebook

page ([www.facebook.com/manilawater](http://www.facebook.com/manilawater)), at Twitter account ([www.twitter.com/@manilawaterph](http://www.twitter.com/@manilawaterph)).

Para sa karagdagang katanungan, maaari ring tumawag sa Manila Water Customer Care Hotline 1627.

### MANILA WATER, IBINAHAGI ANG PROGRAMANG "TOKATOKA" SA MGA TAGA-ANTIPOLO

Sa layong mapalawak ang kamalayan ng publiko ukol sa tamang pamamahala ng nagamit na tubig o 'wastewater', nagtungo ang Manila Water sa lokal na pamahalaan ng Antipolo upang ibahagi ang adbokasyang TokaToka, ang una at nangatanging programang nakatuon sa pamamahala ng nagamit



## ANG INYONG LINGKOD

DR. HILDA C. ONG

na tubig sa bansa.

Higit 4,000 ang nakilahok sa programa kung saan ipinagdiwang din ng lokal na pamahalaan ng Antipolo ang "Employees' Month and Civil Service Month" na may temang "One Day, Fun Day".

Nagpasalamat naman si Manila Water Advocacy Manager Claudine Siao bilang kinatawan ng silangang konsesyunaryo sa tiwala at patuloy na pagtangkilik ng lokal na pamahalaan ng Antipolo sa adbokasyang TokaToka. Dagdag pa ni Siao, malaking bahagi ang tulong ng Antipolo LGU na masiguro ang patuloy na pangangalaga ng kapaligiran, kabilang na dito ang pagpapasipsip ng

poso negro, paglilinis ng daluyan ng tubig, ilog at creek, gayundin ang iba't ibang aktibidad ukol sa pagpapahalaga ng ating likas na yaman at kapaligiran.

Sa ilalim ng adbokasyang TokaToka, hinihikayat ng Manila Water ang iba't ibang organisasyon at indibidwal na makilahok sa pamamagitan ng pagsunod sa apat na payak na gawain o tungkulin na kinabibilangan ng tamang pagtatapon ng basura, pagpapasipsip ng poso negro, pagkonekta sa sewer line ng Manila Water, at aktibong pakikiisa sa mga talakayan hinggil sa halaga ng tamang pamamahala ng nagamit na tubig.



## Probe vs 2 water concessionaire, iginiit

Nais ng isang senador na maimbestigahan ang Maynilad at Manila Water company dahil sa kabiguan nitong maglatag ng komprehensibong master plan upang masolusyunan ang nararanasang water shortage sa Metro Manila at mga karatig lugar.

Sinabi ni Senator Imee Marcos, hindi dapat umaasa lang sa buhos ng ulan sa dam ang dalawang concessionaire dahil tiyak na mas malala pa ang mararanasang

problema sa tubig kapag sumapit na ang tag-init sa taong 2020.

"Hindi pa naman summer. Bakit may water shortage na? Nasaan ang plano ng Maynilad at Manila Water sa nangyayaring water crisis? pagtatanong ng senador.

Sa ilalim ng concession agreement, binigyan ng MWSS ang Maynilad ng 37 taon para pangasiwaan, i-operate, i-repair, at i-refurbish ang lahat ng fixed and movable assets para sa water and sewerage services sa west

area.

Ang Manila Water ay binigyan din ng MWSS ng exclusive rights sa east service area sa loob din ng 37 taong operasyon.

Giit ni Marcos, dapat nakapaloob sa masterplan ang pagtatayo ng dagdag na water reservoir na sasalo ng ulan na dala ng malalakas na bagyo sa bansa.

Tinatayang nasa 15 milyong customer ng Maynilad at Manila Water ang apektado ngayon ng water shortage sa lungsod ng Mandaluyong, Maynila, Marikina, Navotas, Muntinlupa, Malabon, Makati, Las Piñas, Caloocan, Valenzuela, Parañaque, Pasay City at Quezon City, Rizal, Cavite at ilang bayan sa Bulacan.

**Leonel M. Abasola**



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## Water crisis sa MM 'di front para sa Kaliwa Dam project

NI ARGYLL CYRUS B. GEDUCOS

Itinanggi ng Malacañang na ang namumuong water crisis sa Metro Manila ay front lamang para maituloy ng gobyerno ang China-funded New Centennial Water Source-Kaliwa Dam Project sa Tanay, Rizal.

Ginawa ni Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo ang pahayag matapos pagdudahan ng mga militanteng grupo na talagang mayroong isa pang krisis sa tubig sa Metro Manila, sinabing maaaring ginagamit lamang itong palusot ng gobyerno para maitulak ang proyekto.

Sa isang panayam sa radyo kahapon, sinabi ni Panelo na hindi ugali ng administrasyong Duterte na magkalat ng mga kasinungalingan.

"Definitely, hindi (it's not a front)," aniya.

"Ang Administrasyong ito walang mga tinatawag na front o mga kasinungalingan na mga kinakalat nila," dagdag niya, binanggit ang alegasyon na si Duterte ay inisnab sa Japan bilang halimbawa ng kasinungalingan.

Ayon kay Panelo, dapat gawan ng paraan ng water officials ang krisis sa tubig.

"Gagawan natin ng paraan para hindi mag-

ing malubha ang krisis na 'yan. Kung merong problema eh, may solusyon. So I think those people responsible for that will have to do their jobs," aniya.

Nauna nang iniulat ng pababa na ang lebel ng tubig sa at Ipo Angat Dam.

Sinabi nitong Biyernes ni National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon na hindi mata-takasan ng Metro Manila ang water interruptions hangga't hindi makahahanao ang bansa ng bagong pagkukunan ng tubig.

Tinutulan ng environmental groups at mga lokal na opisyal ang Kaliwa Dam project sa Tanay, dahil itataboy nito ang Indigenous Peoples at magkakaroon ng masamang epekto sa kapaligiran.

Ang proyekto, pinondohan sa pamamagitan ng Official Development Assistance (ODA) ng China sa Pilipinas, ay gagastusan ng \$248 milyon o P12.2 bilyon para matapos. Nilalayan nitong matugunan ang water shortage sa Metro Manila.





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# Water concessionaires earn billions in profit amid crisis -- Atienza

By  
**Ryan  
Ponce  
Pacpaco**

A VETERAN congressman on Sunday said the Manila Water Co. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. registered a combined P138 billion net profits from 2006 to 2019 despite their supposed problems in meeting their obligations to deliver round-the-clock running water to their 14 million customers and to establish sewerage systems.

"Based on our scrutiny of publicly available financial filings, we've gathered that Manila Water Co. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. raked in an aggregate of P138 billion in net profits from 2006 to June 2019," said Buhay Hayaang Yumabong (Buhay) Party-list Rep. Lito Atienza, noting that Metro

Manila's two water concessionaires are definitely not having any difficulties producing profits for their stockholders.

"Both firms also rewarded their shareholders a combined P49 billion in cash dividends over the same period," said Atienza, former three-term mayor of Manila.

"It has become abundantly clear they've been making a lot of money. This is why they have no excuse whatsoever for failing to meet their obligations, including their obligation to put up adequate sewerage networks and wastewater treatment facilities," Atienza said.

Atienza also disputed the threat made by the water firms that rates could shoot up by 780

percent, or by as much P26.70 per cubic meter, if they are forced to connect all their customers to a sewage collection, treatment and disposal system, as mandated by Section 8 of the Clean Water Act.

"There's absolutely no need for them to jack up water rates. They've clearly been making a lot of money over the years, and some of those profits came from the 20 percent environmental charge and 30 percent sewer charge they've been collecting from customers," Atienza said.

"They should have fully invested the revenue from these charges to build sewerage networks and wastewater treatment facilities, but they clearly chose to do something else

with the money," he added.

"In fact, over the years, they've invoked their need to provide sewerage networks and wastewater treatment facilities to borrow cheap funding from abroad for 'green' projects. We don't know what they did with the money," Atienza said.

The Supreme Court (SC) in August upheld a 2009 Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) order penalizing the two water suppliers and the Metropolitan Waterworks Sewerage System (MWSS) with P1.84 billion in combined fines for violating Section 8 of the Clean Water Act.

Atienza himself issued the 2009 order when he was DENR head.

Until they fully comply with the Clean Water Act, the Supreme Court had said that Manila Water, Maynilad and the MWSS will have to continue to pay a P322,102 daily fine that escalates by 10 percent in two years, plus legal interest of six percent per annum.

In asking the SC to reconsider its order, the water firms had warned that water rates could hit the roof, should they be compelled to pay the fine until they complete their sewerage projects.



## Palasyo 'tamilmil' sa hirit na taas-singil ng water groups

**PAG-AARALAN** ng Palasyo ang hirit na taas-singil ng water concessionaires.

"E lahat 'yan pag-aaralan din ng presidente at gagawa ng mga kaulang hakbang upang magkaroon ng katuparan ang mga sinabi niyang kailangan walang water crisis sa bansa," ani Presidential Spokesman Salvador Panelo.

Noong nakalipas na linggo, binatikos ng mga mambabatas ang plano ng Manila Water na 780 porsiyentong taas-singil kapag hindi binaliktad ng Supreme Court ang desisyon na patawan ng multang P921-milyon dahil sa paglabag sa Clean Water Act.

Tiniyak ni Panelo, gagawa ng paraan ang Malacañang upang hindi na lumala ang nararanasang krisis sa tubig.

Nakararanas nang hanggang 15 oras na walang tubig ang mga residente sa Metro Manila at karatig lalawigan dahil sa ipinatutupad na rotational water inter-

ruption ng Manila Water at Maynilad.

Iginiit niyang hindi peke ang water shortage para itulak ang kontrobersiyal na Kaliwa Dam project na popondohan ng China.

Sa ngayon, sinabi ni Panelo, hindi pa matiyak kung tuloy ang Kaliwa Dam project.

"Hindi natin alam 'yung... ang alam natin iniimbestigahan 'yung sa dam project na 'yun. Hindi ko pa alam kung ano ang latest doon. Definitely hindi. Ang administrasyong ito ay walang mga tinatawag na front or mga kasinungalin na ikinakalat nila," ani Panelo.

Kaugnay nito, sa ginawang press briefing sa Palasyo noong Biyernes, sinisi ni National Security Adviser Hermonogenes Esperon, Jr., ang kabiguang i-develop ang Laguna Lake na maaaring pagkuhaan ng 100 milyong litro kada araw.

"We also saw the shortage because there are supposed to be pro-

duction, a production coming Laguna Lake. But that has not yet been totally put in place. They are supposed, each one of them is supposed to get 100 million litres a day from Laguna Lake. But they were not able to do that. Part of the discussions last time we had in the cabinet was to further harness these sources from Laguna Lake and look at the other sources like Kaliwa or Wawa dam," aniya.

"The most immediate that we could get from, would be of course from Laguna Lake, but it turns out that Laguna Lake costs so much more to purify, because of the character and quality of water that is there. It's no longer as pure as good as we want it. So, part of the solution would be also to make Laguna Lake clean. How do you do that? Probably dredge it, and also dredge Pasig River for a better outlet, and all those things," sabi ni Esperon.

(ROSE NOVENARIO)



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## DENR releases wildlife into Zambo del Sur forest

PAGADIAN CITY — The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in the Zamboanga Peninsula region on Friday returned six wildlife species to their natural habitat at the foot of Mt. Pinukis in Barangay Lison Valley here.

The released animals were a Philippine hawk eagle (*Nisaetus philippensis*) which is an endangered specie, three reticulated python (*Python reticulatus*), a Brahminy Kite (*Haliastur indus*), and a yellow-headed water monitor lizard (*Varanus cumingi*).

Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer Ben Acana told the *Inquirer* the animals were either

rescued by wildlife officers or surrendered to authorities by concerned individuals as part of the DENR's advocacy on wildlife conservation.

The animals were temporarily sheltered at the Regional Wildlife Rescue Center (RWRC) in Barangay Baklay of Tukuran town where they underwent care and rehabilitation.

"They were released back to their natural home after being monitored to already be in good condition," Acana said.

Acana said Friday's release was the first since the RWRC was established in the province.

He added that Mt.

Pinukis was chosen as the natural habitat for the rehabilitated animals as the area was already being considered for declaration as a wildlife sanctuary.

Environment authorities gave warnings to the community that those who might get close contact with the wildlife species should refrain from offering food to the released animals to avoid their dependency on humans.

The release took place during the 56th Araw ng Lison Valley attended by DENR and Zamboanga del Sur officials. —*Inquirer*



ZAMBOANGA del Sur officials lead the release of wildlife at the foot of Mt. Pinukis, Barangay Lison Valley, Pagadian City Friday. PHOTO BY DENR-IX



# The continuing worldwide drive on plastic wastes

**T**he Philippines is invariably mentioned in reports of worldwide plastic pollution. For we have been found to be the third top producer of plastic wastes dumped in the world's oceans, after China and Indonesia.

But the global coalition Break Free from Plastics in its latest report on the continuing world problem said the real drivers of much of the plastic pollution in Asia are multinational companies of Europe and the United States, led by mass producers of beverage and food products, medicine, personal health aids, and cigarettes. At a recent "World Cleanup Day" in 51 countries, 43 percent of the wastes collected carried the marks of the big consumer brands.

The coalition's report said only 9 percent of all plastic produced since the 1950s has actually been recycled. Single-use sachets used in selling medicine to low-income families in Southeast Asia were seen as the "most damaging type of plastic packaging."

A positive note in the report was the public commitment made by all the companies named in the coalition's report to reduce plastic waste and increase recycling. Beverage giants Coca-Cola and Pepsico along with Nestlé pledged to make their packaging recyclable, reusable, or compostable by 2025.

Along with reports like this of companies vowing to reduce and eventually eliminate the plastic

wastes for which they are responsible, we welcome reports of scientific research efforts to find ways to develop alternative materials and systems, recycle plastic wastes, and even convert plastics into fuel or energy.

Several petrochemical and consumer-goods companies, members of the Alliance to End Plastic Waste, have committed to spend \$1.5 billion in the next five years on the problem. Sophisticated incinerators are now in use in Europe and the US, burning 42 percent and 12.5 percent of their wastes, respectively, instead of dumping it in landfills. In Asia, China already has some 300 waste-to-energy plants operating.

The Philippines, it might be pointed out, prohibits by law the incineration of wastes because of the air pollution. But worldwide research continues on ways to convert waste to energy, including gassification and pyrolysis. Perhaps, the time may come when ways will be discovered to achieve safe incineration of wastes and the Philippines could lift the present ban which is serving to fill our landfills all over the country.

Until then, we must do what we can to solve the worldwide problem of plastic wastes. We now have a growing movement to stop single-use plastics such as softdrinks straws and stirrers. More and more food outlets are now using small cardboard boxes instead of plastic containers which were once in widespread use.



STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE

THE EXHIBIT OF THE PHILIPPINE PROGRAM  
SINCE 1908  
**MANILA BULLETIN**  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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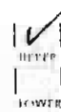
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## Manila, private firms launch plastic waste program to save Pasig River

**T**HE Manila City government, in partnership with the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) and various private companies, on Saturday launched an incentivized plastic waste collection program as part of efforts to address the country's waste problem and save Pasig River from pollution.

Manila Vice Mayor Honey Lacuna said the community-based program dubbed as "Kolek, Kilo, Kita para sa Walastik na Maynila" aims to maintain a healthy relationship among residents, the local government unit (LGU) and private partners in protecting the environment.

"Residents here are encouraged to collect their light plastic wastes and surrender it to the Unilever Philippines, every kilo of plastic waste corresponds to a P10 worth of Unilever's home care products as their incentive," Lacuna said.

"This is [a] partnership along with [Mayor Isko Moreno's] 'May Pera sa Basura Program,' the residents will be compensated but not in [monetary form]. Instead, they will be getting usable products," she added.

Lacuna reiterated Moreno's call for proper waste disposal and solid waste management.

Unilever Philippines Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Benjie Yap said collection centers are installed in every barangay accessible to the residents.

The collection of the plastic waste materials will be twice or once a month depending on the agreed schedules of a certain barangay and Unilever counterparts.

Yap added the company will be accepting plastic waste products—regardless of its brand, as long as these are recyclable.

"To make sure that plastics will not end up in the oceans and landfills instead will be converted into fuel, residents can also benefit from the product incentives. So we are appealing to everyone to support this program," he said.

Unilever Philippines has been doing the same measure through its "Misis Walastik Program" where single-use sachets are converted into chairs, cement pavers and fuel for energy.

Meanwhile, Renato Sunio, president of Republic Cement, said everybody has a crucial role in environmental protection.

"Our part in this endeavor is to help lessen community waste products going to the garbage landfills, the Republic Cement supports the program by contributing to the recycling process," he said.

All collected plastic wastes from Unilever Philippines will be transferred to Cemex and Republic Cement for an alternative waste management solution in which plastic wastes are converted into fuels.

"We call it coprocessing, we will be collecting waste products that can be burned to create cement, that's our contribution to the environment," Sunio added.

In cement kiln coprocessing, plastic materials are burned to a temperature as high as 1,400 degrees Celsius.

When processed, raw products, such as calcium carbonate, silica along with fuel processed into a kiln, create cement.

Sunio envisioned a waste-free Manila through collection and recycling waste products.

Meanwhile, Barangay Chairman Bobby Hernan of Balut, Tondo, admitted discipline is important to achieve an environmental-friendly community.

"We are not only maintaining cleanliness in the area, but we also help our residents to gain from this program," Hernan said.

Every last Saturday of the month, barangay officials collect plastic wastes from the residents, he said.

The program was piloted at 36 barangays of Tondo and Punta, Santa Ana. It would also be done at the creek-nearby (estero) communities based on the PRRC's recommendations.

Based on the 2017 Solid Waste Report of the Senate Economic Planning Office, the country's waste generation increased to 40,087.45 tons in 2016, with an estimated average per capita waste generation of 0.40 kilograms per day.

The report also said the National Capital Region generated 9,212.92 tons of solid waste per day in 2016. *PNA*



## EDITORIAL

### The continuing worldwide drive on plastic wastes

**T**HE Philippines is invariably mentioned in reports of worldwide plastic pollution. For we have been found to be the third top producer of plastic wastes dumped in the world's oceans, after China and Indonesia. But the global coalition Break Free from Plastics in its latest report on the continuing world problem said the real drivers of much of the plastic pollution in Asia are multinational companies of Europe and the United States, led by mass producers of beverage and food products, medicine, personal health aids, and cigarettes. At a recent "World Cleanup Day" in 51 countries, 43 percent of the wastes collected carried the marks of the big consumer brands. The coalition's report said only 9 percent of all plastic produced since the 1950s has actually been recycled. Single-use sachets used in selling medicine to low-income families in Southeast Asia were seen as the "most damaging type of plastic packaging." A positive note in the report was the public commitment made by all the companies named in the coalition's report to reduce plastic waste and increase recycling. Beverage giants Coca Cola and Pepsico along with Nestle pledged to make their packaging recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025. Along with reports like this of companies vowing to reduce and eventually eliminate the plastic wastes for which they are responsible, we welcome reports of scientific research efforts to find ways to develop alternative materials and systems, recycle plastic wastes, and even convert plastics into fuel or energy. Several petrochemical and consumer-goods companies, members of the Alliance to End Plastic Waste, have committed to spend \$1.5 billion in the next five years on the problem. Sophisticated incinerators are now in use in Europe and the US, burning 42 percent and 12.5 percent of their wastes, respectively, instead of dumping it in landfills. In Asia, China already has some 300 waste-to-energy plants operating. The Philippines, it might be pointed out, prohibits by law the incineration of wastes because of the air pollution. But worldwide research continues on ways to convert waste to energy, including gassification and pyrolysis. Perhaps, the time may come when ways will be discovered to achieve safe incineration of wastes and the Philippines could lift the present ban which is serving to fill our landfills all over the country. Until then, we must do what we can to solve the worldwide problem of plastic wastes. We now have a growing movement to stop single-use plastics such as softdrinks straws and stirrers. More and more food outlets are now using small cardboard boxes instead of plastic containers which were once in widespread use.



## EDITORIAL

# Ang patuloy na kampanya ng mundo laban sa plastic wastes

**N**ABABANGGIT ang Pilipinas sa mga ulat ng plastic pollution sa buong mundo. Ito ay dahil natuklasan na tayo ang top three producer ng plastic wastes na itinatapon sa mga karagata ng mundo, kasunod ng China at Indonesia.

Ngunit sinabi ng global coalition na Break Free from Plastics sa huli nitong ulat sa patuloy na problema ng mundo na ang tunay na drivers ng malaking plastic pollution sa Asia ay ang multinational companies ng Europe at United States, sa pangunguna ng mass producers ng mga inumin at food products, gamot, personal health aids, at sigarilyo. Sa "World Cleanup Day" kamakailan sa 51 bansa, 43 porsiyento ng mga basurang nakolekta ay natataglay ng mga marka ng malalaking consumer brands.

Nakasaad sa ulat ng coalition na 9 na porsiyento lamang ng lahat ng plastic produce simula 1950s ang talagang nare-recycle. Ang single-use sachets na ginagamit sa pagbebenta ng mga gamot sa low-income na mga pamilya sa Southeast Asia ay nakikitang "most damaging type of plastic packaging."

Isang positive note sa ulat ay ang public commitment ng lahat ng mga kumpanyang pinangalanan sa ulat ng coalition na babawasan nila ang plastic waste at itataas ang recycling. Ang beverage giants tulad ng Coca Cola at Pepsico kasama ang Nestle ay nangakong gagawing recyclable, reusable, at compostable ang kanilang packaging pagsapit ng 2025.

Kasabay ng mga ulat na ito ng mga kumpanya na nangangakong babawasan at kalaunan ay aalisin ang plastic waste nila, ikinalulugod natin ang mga ulat ng mga pagsisikap ng scientific research na makahanap ng mga paraan para makadebelop ng mga alternatibong materyales at sistema, mag-recycle ng plastic wastes, at i-convert ang plastics sa fuel o energy.

Ilang petrochemical at consumer-goods companies, mga miyembro ng Alliance to End Plastic Wastes ang nangakong gagastos ng \$1.5 bilyon sa susunod na limang taon sa problema. Ginagamit na ngayon ang sophisticated incinerators sa Europe at US, nagsusunog ng 42 porsiyento at 12.5 porsiyento ng kanilang mga basura, ayon sa pagkakasunod, sa halip na itapon ang mga ito sa landfills. Sa Asia, ang China ay mayroon nang 300 waste-to-energy plants na gumagana.

Maaaring ipunto na ipinagbabawal ng batas ng Pilipinas ang pagsunog ng mga basura dahil sa polusyon sa hangin. Ngunit nagpapatuloy ang mga pananaliksik sa buong mundo para maghanap ng mga paraan na magawang enerhiya ang mga basura, kabilang na ang gasification at pyrolysis. Marahil, darating ang panahon na madidiskubre ang mga paraan para matamo ang ligtas na pagsunog ng mga basura at maaalis na ng Pilipinas ang kasalukuyang pagbabawal na dahilan ng pagkakapuno ng ating mga landfill sa buong bansa.

Habang wala pa, dapat nating gawin ang lahat ng ating makakaya para masolusyunan ang pandaigdigang problema sa plastic waste. Mayroon na tayo ngayong lumalawak na kilusan para itigil ang single-use plastic gaya ng mga straw at stirrer. Parami nang parami na rin ang food outlets na gumagamit ng cardboard boxes sa halip na plastic containers na dati ay malawakang ginagamit.





## REFORESTATION CRUCIAL TO PHIL EFFORTS AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

**A**s countries around the world endeavor to prevent the global climate crisis from reaching catastrophic levels by 2030, reforestation remains a basic but vital strategy in mitigating climate change. A study by academic journal *Science* revealed that 1 billion hectares of forest could reduce 300 gigaton of carbon, or 25 percent, in the atmosphere.

In the Philippines, restoring forest cover is not only a matter of climate solution but of environmental survival.

According to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Forest Management Bureau (DENR-FMB), every year the country loses 47,000 hectares of forest cover.

Around 1.2 million hectares of denuded and degraded forest lands of the country need to be rehabilitated by 2022 to prevent landslides and ensure water availability.

In the private sector, renewable-energy leader Energy Development Corp.

(EDC) is at the forefront in responding to these challenges, leveraging its flagship environmental program Binhi to reforest degraded lands, rescue vanishing native trees, develop ecotourism areas and provide livelihood to local communities.

Since its launch in 2011, EDC's Binhi has successfully restored 9,500 hectares of forest land with 96 premium native trees species under threat of extinction. This year, the program is expanding its scale to increase the Philippines's forest cover.

In its recent celebration of Binhi Day, EDC's facilities across the country—the Mount Apo Geothermal Project (MAGP), Leyte Geothermal Project, the EDC-Burgos Wind Power Corp., Bacon-Manito Geothermal Project (BMGP), Southern Negros Geothermal Project and EDC Head Office—rallied employees, community members and other institutional partners to plant more trees in their respective areas. A total of 10,578 trees were planted across the different sites.

Binhi's partners for these tree-planting activities included the DENR and the Community Environment and Natural Resources Offices, local government units, schools, barangays and even volunteers from the military.

The BMGP and MAGP power plants also engaged in river cleanup activities in their respective areas of operation.

MAGP adopted Marbel and Matingao rivers in Barangays Balabag and Ilomavis in Kidapawan City, while the BMGP implemented cleanups along Rizal River in Barangay Rizal, Sorsogon City.

"The scale and breadth of our reforestation efforts is proof that business and the environment can co-exist sustainably. Doubling our efforts to restore our forests can take us a long way in protecting our planet and securing it for the generation who will bear the brunt of our inaction," said Atty. Allan V. Barcena, head of EDC's Corporate Social

Responsibility and Public Relations Group.

Earlier this year, the Binhi program also joined a global effort to identify, assess and protect native trees species. Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI), the world's largest plant conservation network and the International Union for Conservation of Nature's secretariat, tapped EDC as the first Philippine partner for its Global Tree Assessment program.

BGCI aims to create the first global list of tree species and their conservation assessments by 2020. To date, only 25,000 of the world's 80,000 tree species have global or national assessments for their risk of extinction.

As BGCI's partner, EDC will gather information on 800 Philippine endemic tree species.

Binhi also won the best corporate social responsibility project in environment at the first CSR Guild Awards this year, hosted by the League of Corporate Foundations.



# Pitfalls remain on Boracay's road to sustainable tourism



STILL A MALL WORLD AFTER ALL Boracay has come a long way from being a mere sand-and-sea paradise, as shown by its highly commercialized strip known as D'Mall. —NESTOR BURGOS JR.

## SPECIAL REPORT

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.  
@nestorburgosINQ

(Last of three parts)

BORACAY ISLAND, AKLAN—Spencer Anderson was walking on the main road last March on his way to meet his wife to view the sunset.

The 71-year-old retiree from Canada, who has been living in Boracay for 10 years, stopped briefly across Crafts store near Lake Town to greet friends when suddenly, the ground he was standing on gave way and he fell into a 2-meter-deep hole with protruding pieces of rebar.

He was apparently standing on a piece of thin plywood that covered an excavation on the

road, where a sewer construction project was going on.

Anderson had to be pulled out by other residents. He suffered a deep wound below his knee that required seven stitches to close. He was immobilized for weeks.

"It's negligence on the part of contractors," he told the Inquirer.

### No warning signs

Several other tourists and residents have been injured after falling into road excavations with no barriers or warning signs.

Natividad Bernardino, general manager of the Boracay Interagency Rehabilitation Management Group (BIRMG), said the contractors, government agencies and private companies undertaking road projects had been directed to cover the exca-

uations or put up barriers and warning signs.

The Department of Public Works and Highways has also covered the unattended excavations.

### Rehabilitation

The upgrading and widening of the 20-kilometer road network on the island, along with the upgrading of the sewer system, are main components of the rehabilitation of Boracay.

The road is designed to be 6 meters wide, with a two-lane carriageway and 2-meter sidewalks on each side. It will also have loading and unloading bays, pavers, streetlights and vegetation.

Despite the six-month shutdown of the island, only the first phase of the project worth P490 million has been completed. It

covers 4.12 km from the Cagban port in Barangay Manoc-Manoc to the Elizalde property in Barangay Balabag.

The second phase covering 3.3 km and worth P300 million was started last Jan. 10 and is due for completion on July 28, 2020. It covers the 1.9-km road from the Elizalde property to CityMall in Barangay Yapak at the northern end of the island, where most of the high-end resorts are located. It also includes a 1.4-km span from the Crossing Rotunda to the Tambisaan port.

### Traffic jams, mud

Travel on the unfinished portion of the main road is rough and dusty. There are traffic jams on hot days and mud on rainy days.

Last May and July, flash floods hit Boracay.

## FROM A4

Tourists and residents had to wade in floodwaters up to a meter, triggering outrage from the latter.

"The Department of Tourism is brandishing Boracay as a model for sustainable tourism. Maybe sustainable flooding?" an irate resident said.

The BIRMG has appealed for understanding. "We are still not done with all these projects [which] will be completed by the middle of next year," Bernardino said. "In the meantime ... we need to bear with many pains and sacrifices."

### 1st among 30

This month, Boracay ranked first in the 2019 Readers' Choice Award of Condé Nast Traveler's "30 best islands in the world outside the United States" category.

Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat said the recognition showed that "the rehabilitation was worth it amid many hardships."

Puyat said the Department of Tourism was regulating the number of tourists to ensure that it would be within the island's carrying capacity of 19,215 at any given time and daily arrivals of 6,405.

As of last Sept. 24, the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) had accredited as compliant to environmental and other requirements 378 accommodation establishments with a total of 14,021 rooms.

From January to September this year, 1,601,450 tourists visited the island, or an average of 5,931 daily, bordering the average daily carrying capacity. The figures are more than the 1,529,895 visitors recorded for the same period in 2017.

Tourists are required to prebook accommodation before they are allowed to proceed to the island from the Caticlan jetty port.

"LaBoracay" beach parties involving tens of thousands have also been prohibited.

# PITFALLS REMAIN ON BORACAY'S ROAD TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

## Cruise ship tourists

But a number of business operators and residents are questioning the continued policy of allowing stops of cruise ships on the island. They say whatever benefits the visits of cruise ships bring to Boracay are offset by the road and beach congestion.

These visits are also contrary to the government's announced thrust of regulating tourist arrivals.

"Sustainable tourism entails stopping mass tourism. We must also decide: What kind of tourism and tourists do we want to attract?" a resident who runs a business on the island said, adding:

"Do we want cruise ship tourists, Chinese mass tourism, high-end casino players, or ecotourism? To mix all these kinds of tourism is not healthy and is not working."

## Boracay Action Plan

In December 2018, or two months after the island was reopened to tourists, government agencies adopted the Boracay Action Plan—a road map for rehabilitation and development efforts. President Duterte approved the plan last July.

The 152-page plan lays down key areas: enforcement of laws and regulations, pollution control and prevention, rehabilitation and recovery of the ecosystem, and sustainability of island activities.

Implementation of the projects, programs and activities under the plan will cost P25.27 billion until 2022, when Mr. Duterte steps down.

The bulk, or P16.21 billion, will be allotted for infrastructure, and P5.13 billion for pollution control and prevention.

The private sector will finance P15.89 billion, or about 63 percent of the total cost.

The plan includes the creation of an institutional structure that will manage Boracay after the mandate of the BIATF ends in April 2020, unless extended by the President.

It calls for studies on appropriate structures, including one that is led by national agencies with local government participation, or by a self-regulating body led by the tourism services industry similar to the Bali Tourism Board.

There have been previous proposals for the creation of a Boracay Island Council, or an authority that will remove the island from the sole administration of local government units.

## Bills filed

Sen. Franklin Drilon has refiled a bill for the creation of a Boracay Development Authority. Aklan Rep. Teodorico Haresco Jr. has authored a related bill for a Boracay Island Council.

The measures would grant supervisory, management and regulatory powers to the multi-agency body.

A number of residents and business owners are hoping that the administrative body will be created when the mandate of the BIATF ends.

"At the very least we should have a board composed of experts managing everything on the island professionally, and not attached to politics," a resident said.

## Yearly visitor

Olga Zubritskaya has been vacationing in Boracay yearly since 2010. She spends four months on the island in every visit, along with her husband or her children aged 7 and 5.

The Moscow resident welcomed the improvements on the island following its closure. She said the roads were wider, making it faster to travel from the port to the hotel.

She also welcomed the clearing of illegal structures on White Beach.

But Zubritskaya frowned on the total ban on beach beds and tables under coconut trees and at the vegetation line.

"I don't want to lie on the sand even with a towel because I could be bitten by ants, and dogs urinate on the sand," she said.

## 'Beach much wider'

She suggested that a limited number of tables and chairs be allowed at a specific time along the vegetation line.

Residents and business owners have also welcomed the major improvements.

"White Beach is now much wider and looks like a beach again, and not a street market," said an expatriate living in Boracay for decades.

But many tourists, residents and business owners said some of the policies being implemented should be changed because these were affecting the tourists' experience.

"White Beach might be looking nice and wider, but it is missing many components that international travelers expect: beach beds and sun umbrellas, and also dinner within the vegetation area," a resident said. INQ



## 'Govt inaction' on land reclamation activities on Manila Bay criticized



**"Even by DENR's own account, Cavite is one of the resource-rich areas situated along Manila Bay and, yet, reclamation activities are already taking place in the province." "This clearly is...a violation [of the] Supreme Court order to preserve and restore the deteriorating Manila Bay."—Hicap**

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

@jonlmayuga

**T**HE Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) slammed what it calls "government inaction to stop the massive land-reclamation activities in Bacoor and Cavite City along the historic Manila Bay.

In response to what the group described as apathy shown by concerned government agencies on the massive destruction of coastal and marine ecosystems, coastal communities in Bacoor launched the Manila Bay Watch Reporting, which aims to closely monitor and expose reclamation activities in the Cavite coastal areas.

"If officials [of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)] have no plans of going outside their comfortable offices, [fishermen] would be the ones to take the task of monitoring these environmentally destructive projects. Ultimately, their inaction will only prove that all the blabber about Manila Bay rehabilitation

early this year, is just a ploy of the Duterte government," Fernando L. Hicap, national coordinator of Pamalakaya, said in a statement.

Members of Pamalakaya in Bacoor City and environmental group Center for Environmental Concerns (CEC) conducted on Sunday an on-site investigation on a fishpond adjacent to Manila Bay where land reclamation, also called dump-and-fill activity, has been reported last week.

According to Pamalakaya, the project details and permit, if there is any, for the land-reclamation activities were not disclosed to the public. Because of this, the group is holding the Manila Bay Task Force (MBTF) led by the DENR accountable.

The group alleges that the MBTF's inaction is a dereliction of their duty and mandate to rehabilitate Manila Bay and protect the newly discovered live corals in Cavite Province. Aside from land reclamation in Bacoor, the group recently reported ongoing land reclamation activities near Sangley Point, a naval base in Cavite City.

Created by virtue of Administrative Order 16, the MBTF is tasked to expedite the rehabilitation of Manila Bay.

Unfortunately, Pamalakaya said the DENR, which is leading the special task force, is seemingly "forsaking its duty to protect Manila Bay against destructive projects."

Pamalakaya cited the DENR's Ecosystems Research and Develop-

ment Bureau's (ERDB) report and discovery of live coral covers in the Southern part of Manila Bay. The DENR also claimed that 72 percent of the estimated reef area in Manila Bay is found in Cavite.

"Even by DENR's own account, Cavite is one of the resource-rich areas situated along Manila Bay and; yet, reclamation activities are already taking place in the province," Hicap said. "This clearly is...a violation [of the] Supreme Court order to preserve and restore the deteriorating Manila Bay."

He added that "the discovery of live corals in the southern part of Manila Bay was an indicator that the bay is still alive and well, and rehabilitation is feasible only if there are a political will and sincerity from the enforcing agencies, with the holistic participation of the fishing communities that genuinely advocate the restoration of our traditional fishing grounds."

According to Hicap, small fishermen were evicted from their homes and traditional fishing grounds to pave way for reclamation projects intended for commercial and business establishments.

He said no less than 26,000 fishing and coastal families in Cavite are facing the looming threat of dislocation courtesy of reclamation.

Hicap vowed to oppose "this grand sellout of Manila Bay and conversion of our communities in a form of reclamation galore at all cost."



FREE PATENTS

# POOR FAMILIES IN MINDORO GET LAND TITLES

Families living on Ilin Island in San Jose town, Occidental Mindoro province, were awarded land titles through the government's land disposition program.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the registry of deeds awarded 202 agricultural and residential free patents to the families at Barangay Catayungan in San Jose.

In September, regional government agencies also completed the distribution of 1,479 titles in the region. Awarded were 638 titles in Occidental Mindoro, 184 in Oriental Mindoro, 561 in Marinduque and 96 in Romblon.

As a way of returning the favor to the government, Occidental Mindoro Rep. Josephine Sato urged the new title holders to plant at least 10 trees in their lands.

The awarded titles each covered an average three hectares of land.

On Ilin Island, about an hour by boat from the mainland, families rely on fishing. Many of them are classified as indigent by the government.

The Residential Free Patent Act (Republic Act No. 10023) allows for longtime residents to own titled property. Early this year, Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu ordered DENR personnel to fast-track the land titling applications.

Ernesto Tañada, the DENR chief in Occidental Mindoro, said they were working on processing hundreds of land titles in Lubang, another remote island in the province.

"A land title becomes your safeguard from land grabbers. It is also something, that even the poor, could claim as their own and pass on to their children," he said. —MARICAR CINCO AND MADONNA VIOLA INQ



# Congress revives push for better land use

A MEASURE deemed priority by the current administration and business groups that will improve the use of land and resources has been filed anew in Congress.

Senate Bills 38, 358, 510 and 886 that mandate the National Land Use Commission (NLUC) to draft a unified framework that will govern the use of land resources have been filed by Senators Francis N. Pangilinan, Risa N. Hontiveros, Pia S. Cayetano and Ramon B. Revilla, Jr., respectively.

In his explanatory note, Mr. Pangilinan said the bill seeks to harmonize and integrate "conflicting laws, policies, principles and guidelines on land use and physical planning."

Mr. Revilla noted that there are around 30 overlapping environmental and ecological protection laws and policies on the use of water and land management.

Counterpart measures which have been filed at the House of Representatives now await action at the committee level.

Sought for comment, House Majority Leader Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez of Leyte's 1<sup>st</sup> district said the chamber would "speed up" action on the measure.

"We will work doubly hard to speed up the approval and the eventual passage into law of the President's priority measures that he enumerated during his SoNA, including the proposed National Land Use Act. We are determined and focused to pass his priority bills, especially those aimed at improving the lives of

our people," Mr. Romualdez said in a mobile phone message on Sunday.

The bills generally provide that the NLUC will draft a National Physical Framework Plan (NPPF) that will guide land use planning and management at the national and sub-national level within a 30-year time frame. The plan will be reviewed and updated every 10 years.

The plan will indicate "broad spatial directions, and policy guidelines on settlement devel-

opment, production land use, protection land use, social services and utilities, and transportation and communication."

There will also be frameworks at the regional, provincial, as well as city and municipality level which will be aligned with NPPF.

Frameworks will have as general land use categories: protection, production, settlements and infrastructure development.

Planning for "protection" type of land use is aimed at food self-sufficiency, water and energy

security, environment stability and ecological integrity; while planning for "production" land use is directed at determining the most sustainable, efficient way of managing land for production of crops, fisheries, livestock and poultry among others. Settlement development will cover improvement of existing settlements in urban and rural areas and ensuring that residents have access to basic services, while infrastructure development will focus on

*Land use, S1/2*

transportation, communication and water resources, among others.

Frameworks may also allow multiple land use for specific land resources for settlements, tourism, agriculture and forestry, but may not be permitted in areas classified under protection land use.

The proposal was among the measures pushed by President Rodrigo R. Duterte in his fourth State of the Nation Address last July 22.

It was also on the list of legislative measures which 14 local and foreign business groups submitted to Congress earlier that month.

The measure was also among the 28 bills identified as priority by the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council in the 17<sup>th</sup> Congress that ended early last June. It secured final-reading approval at the House as House Bill No. 5240 but failed to hurdle the Senate. — **Charmaine A. Tadalán**

## Why not forestry?

**Y**es, why not forestry as a driver of economic growth, together with tourism, mining, and agriculture, which are sources of jobs in the countryside?

We used to export logs, lumber and other forestry products. Now, we are a net importer of forestry products. We import as much as 75% of our wood requirements. Really sad.

There are several reasons why we should promote the forestry industry and make it a growth driver of jobs in the uplands.

We have a competitive advantage in forestry production. The Philippines is in the tropical zone. Trees can reach full maturity in 10 to 15 years, depending on the specie, compared to 20 to 30 years in temperate zone countries. There's no reason why the Philippines can't produce forestry products and export again.

According to Petteri Maki-talo, Vice-President of the Nordic Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, the Philippines can be a superpower in forestry. Finland, which is a forestry superpower, produces only six, and in extraordinary circumstances, 15 cubic meters per hectare. The Philippines, being a tropical country, can produce 100 cubic meters or more per hectare.

It can generate jobs in the uplands, where about 25 million people live. Most of them are poor. It's therefore a poverty-reducing industry.

It can also help combat insurgency in the uplands. The uplands, where the forests are, are a focus of recruitment by the New People's Army.

However, the tree huggers and environmental Talibans will say that the forestry industry is the cause of the massive denudation of Philippine forests. The only solution to stop denudation is the total log ban which we have in place.

Not true. It's government policies which caused the massive denudation. In the 1960s, the government promoted logging and mining to generate dollars and feed the import-dependent, inward-looking protectionist economy. However, government policy didn't put the incentive on wood and logging companies to reforest by giving them long term and secure property rights. Instead, it imposed a reforestation fee on logging companies because it, rather than the private sector, assumed the task of reforestation.

Of course, government being government, the funds from the reforestation didn't go into replanting and reforestation. It went to the pockets of officials. On the other hand, since the logging companies never got long-term secure property rights (at least 50 years) over their concessions, with short-term concession permits being the norm, logging companies' incentive revolved on just cutting and exploiting the forests.

Because the main source of dollars to feed our import-dependent, debt-laden economy shifted to OFW remittances in the 1970s, government basically neglected the forestry industry and committed policy error after policy error, driven by political grandstanding, which led to the gradual decline of the industry and the country becoming a net importer of wood products.

The worst grandstanding gesture was made by former President Aquino who imposed a total log ban on natural and residual forests (Executive Order 23 issued in 2011). This resulted in regulatory overreach, affecting even man-made forests or tree plantations. Permits were needed for everything: permit to plant, permit to cut, and permit to transport, even for planted trees. One hundred percent inventory was required prior to harvest. Permits had to be signed by officials high up in the bureaucracy. Moreover, wood processing plants were required to renew their permits every three years, and every purchase of logs was required to show certifications where the logs came from. Extortion and bribery became the norm.

The result, according to Dr. Vic Paqueo, a retired former World Bank economist who had invested in a tree farm in Surigao from his retirement money, was that of 119 wood processing plants in Caraga region, 116 plants closed and demand for planted trees collapsed.

It's arguable whether the total log ban is successful. Government is incompetent in policing the forests since *kaingin* farming (slash and burn agriculture) is the main culprit of denudation. Government's other solution — a massive P7 billion tree planting program — was a failure, according to the Commission on Audit.

In fact, in other countries, most productive forests are privately owned. These privately owned forests are passed on

### INTROSPECTIVE CALIXTO V. CHIKIAMCO

from generation to generation. In Finland, 85% of the forests are privately owned.

In Germany, almost half are privately owned. It's not hard to see why. Private owners have an economic incentive to maintain and police the forests in order to sustain their business for many, many years.

The solution to denudation is to assign property and tenurial rights to private entities, whether communal or individual. The Leftists, for whom only government is the solution, would probably cry murder.

However, let's concede to the Leftists and environmental Talibans the policy of relying on government to enforce a total log ban on natural and residual forests. How do we move forward?

We need to customize the policies in order to promote tree plantations. Planted trees should be treated like a vegetable crop and not be over-regulated.

For planted trees, a 5% inventory, instead of 100%, is enough. Issuance of permits should be devolved to the CENRO (Community Environment and Natural Resources Office) of the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR) instead of it going to the regional level or the DENR Secretary. Permits for the cutting of trees in plantations should be done away with. A system of forest certification by accredited forest certifiers should be enough so that logs can be freely transported and traded. The setting up of wood processing plants should be completely deregulated and treated like any other business.

Fortunately, the DENR under Secretary Roy Cimatu is more enlightened and looking to emphasize promotion of tree plantation rather than regulation. However, investors need more secure and long-term property rights and the passage of the Sustainable Forest Management Act (SFMA), which passed in the House in the last Congress, is urgently needed to boost the industry.

The benefits of tree plantation and forestry production are enormous.

Tree farming can be a hugely profitable business. According to a study, the IRR or Internal Rate

of Return on falcata (a type of fast growing wood specie) production with a 12 year crop rotation is 48.2% per annum. For gmelina, another wood specie with an eight year crop rotation, the IRR is 29.7% pa.

It's an ideal investment for pension and retirement funds, whether local or foreign because of the long-term nature of these funds. Investment yields far surpass that of bonds. Investors could also earn and sell carbon credits. Furthermore, investment in tree farms would burnish the green credentials of any company or individual.

Tree farming is also good for the environment. Not only would more trees result in more carbon capture, they are also essential in water conservation. Water conservation, in turn, is important for irrigation and renewable energy generation.

It will spur the development of the downstream wood industries, such as furniture and housing construction. It can also help narrow the trade gap, initially with import-substitution and later on, export development.

Most importantly, it will promote peace and development in the uplands. It can reduce poverty and curb rural insurgency. With just a million hectares for tree plantation, the industry can generate up to \$20 billion in revenues.

Unlike Build Build Build, the government's infrastructure program, the promotion and development of the forestry industry require no government funds. All it needs is the tweaking of government policies.

So, why not forestry? ■

*Those who want to order the book, Momentum: Reforms for Sustaining Economic Growth, a curated collection of articles in this column by National Scientist Raul Fabella, Dr. Emmanuel de Dios, Romeo L. Bernardo, Calixto V. Chikiamco, and the late Dr. Cayetano Paderanga Jr., may call the Foundation for Economic Freedom office at 3453-2375 or e-mail [fef@fef.org.ph](mailto:fef@fef.org.ph).*

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# Avoid urban decay, Baguio neighbors told

Research team says 5 Benguet towns need to look at carrying capacity to stop overdevelopment

By Vincent Cabreza  
@InqNational

BAGUIO CITY—The carrying capacity of La Trinidad, Benguet province, and its four nearby towns has to be measured to ensure that they would not repeat mistakes made by Baguio City, which is reeling from “overloaded” public services and an unregulated construction boom.

Baguio, a tourism and educational center; La Trinidad, a vegetable trading hub; Itogon, a pioneer mining town; and Sablan, Tuba and Tublay, which are food producers, are part of an intergovernmental economic and resource sharing arrangement called BLISTT to spread out business investments in the Cordillera.

BLISTT is the acronym of Baguio and its neighboring towns La Trinidad, Itogon, Sablan, Tuba and Tublay, all in Benguet.

This cooperation initiative is Baguio’s “salvation” because channeling capital flow to the Benguet towns would decon-



VALLEY RISING La Trinidad valley, the provincial capital and the business center of Benguet, has been confronting problems brought about by urbanization and congestion. —EV ESPIRITU

gest the city that is barely served by its natural and public resources, said Candido Cabrido, head of the research team commissioned to study its urban carrying capacity.

Carrying capacity is the extent by which members of a community share resources like its forests or water supply. Once the carrying capacity is breached, residents suffer from a deteriorated environment and over-

loaded infrastructure and public services, according to Cabrido’s consultancy group, Certeza Infosys, which disseminated the study’s final report last week.

### ‘Warning bells’

Described as the country’s first comprehensive carrying capacity study, the report provided timetables to set off “warning bells” when certain resources become inadequate

for Baguio needs.

“Elevators have carrying capacities. [Each lift] can carry only a certain number of people. When occupants of the elevator exceed the mandated weight, it will trigger an alarm, so one of them will have to step out. This study sets the alarms for Baguio,” Cabrido said.

Some of Baguio’s alarm bells were set off decades ago, giving the city’s administrators an idea of how long reforms needed to catch up, he said.

Warning bells would have rung in 1985, for example, when Baguio roads exceeded their user threshold. The city’s road system, spanning 349 kilometers, supports 145,416 residents in an urban area populated by 345,366 as of the 2015 census.

BLISTT was popularized by retired city architect Joseph Alabanza in 1990, and was explored by European urban planners, geologists and engineers for the 1992 Baguio-Dagupan urban planning project, which found the rolling hills of Tuba and Itogon and

vast open lands in nearby towns as suitable for new subdivisions and business centers.

Alabanza, who was Cordillera director of the National Economic and Development Authority at the time, advocated for Baguio’s decongestion.

### Economic sharing

Aside from being the summer capital, the city draws migrants because it is the economic hub of the Cordillera being home to one of the oldest economic zones and some universities.

In 2012, BLISTT mayors signed a memorandum of understanding regarding the goals of the economic sharing initiative.

Baguio Rep. Marquez Go has sponsored a bill creating a BLISTT governing body similar to the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority. Baguio Mayor Benjamin Magalong chairs the BLISTT council of mayors.

Cabrido said BLISTT would solve Baguio’s key resource problems, like its potable water supply, that had been strained by its growing population. INQ





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## Tampakan copper-gold project still faces hurdles

WHILE the environmental compliance certificate of the Tampakan copper-gold mine has been reinstated, the project will still face hurdles, such as the open-pit mining ban in South Cotabato. Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) Director Wilfredo G. Moncano told *BusinessWorld* that Sagittarius Mines, Inc.

[SMI], which holds the concession for the Tampakan project, has already secured the reinstatement of its ECC from Malacañang.

>> [bit.ly/TampakanMineHurdles](http://bit.ly/TampakanMineHurdles)

OVER  
THE  
WEEKEND



## Forest ranger, nirapido ng tandem

SAN JOSE CITY - Huling naiulat na nasa malubhang kalagayan ang isang forest ranger ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) nang pagbabarilin ng riding in-tandem sa Zone 6, Barangay Villa Joson, ng nabanggit na lungsod, kamakailan.

Ang biktima ay kinilala ni Kt. Col. Heryl Bruno, hepe ng San Jose City Police, ang biktima na si Ronald Corpuz, nakatalaga sa Muñoz Science City.

Aniya, nasa kritikal na kalagayan si Premiere General Hospital sa Cabanatuan City, dahil sa mga tama ng bala sa iba't ibang bahagi ng katawan.

Sa imbestigasyon, nagsasara ng kanilang gate ang biktima nang biglang dumating ang dalawang suspek na lulan ng motorsiklo at pinagbabaril ito.

Inaalam pa ng pulisya ang pagkakakilanlan ng mga suspek at motibo ng mga ito.

**Light A. Nolasco**



## Takbo Para sa Kalikasan 2019 sa Bulacan

Hinikayat ni Bulacan Governor Daniel R. Fernando ang lahat na makiisa sa nalalapat na Takbo Para sa Kalikasan 2019 fun run sa pakikipagtulungan sa Department of Interior and Local Government na may temang 'Philippines Run in Support of the Battle for Manila Bay' sa darating na Nobyembre 10, 2019.

Magsisimula ang fun run sa ganap na alas-kuwatro nang madaling-araw sa Bulacan Sports Complex sa Barangay Bagong Bayan (Sta. Isabel) sa lungsod na ito bilang starting point.

Layunin nito na mapalawak ang kaalamang hinggil sa rehabilitasyon ng mga coastal area kung saan ang 3K U-turn run ay magtatapos hanggang sa Dunlop repair shop sa McArthur Highway, Barangay San Pablo habang ang 5K U-turn run naman ay magtatapos sa Tikay Elementary School at ang 10K U-turn run naman ay magwawakas sa harap ng Bulacan Polytechnic College pabalik sa starting point.

Ayon kay Jayson Vinta, tumatayong pinuno ng Provincial Youth, Sports and Public Employment Office, mahigit 15,000 ang inaasahang lalahok sa pagtakbo at ang mga magwawagi ay gagawaran ng perang ganimpala, mga medalya at tropeo sa bawat kat-

egorya.

Makikipagtulungan din ang Red Cross Philippines-Bulacan Chapter at Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office upang masiguro ang kaligtasan ng mga mananakbo.

Samantala, sinabi naman ni Fernando na ang fun run ay 'di lamang mabuti sa kalusugan kundi pati na rin sa kalikasan.

"Napakagandang ideya ng fun run na ito dahil hindi lamang ang kalusugan natin ang mabebenepisyuhan kundi mapangalagaan din natin ang ating kapaligiran lalo na ang mga coastal area sa pamamagitan ng pagpapakalat ng mga kaalaman tungkol dito," anang gobernador. **(Jun Borlongan)**