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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



Kaliwa Dam's forthcoming risks



Rev. Fr. Antonio Cecilio T. Pascual

SERVANT LEADER

BROTHERS and sisters, despite the continuous opposition to the Kaliwa Dam project, particularly by environmental groups and native communities like the Agta-Dumagat-Remontado allegiance, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) issued an Environmental Compliance Certificate to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) this month. The ECC is a document needed for infrastructure projects that can negatively affect the environment. The ECC is one of the documents needed for the New Centennial Water Source—Kaliwa Dam project to push through.

The DENR action got negative comments from different sectors because of the many irregularities mentioned in the processes it took. According to the Commission on Audit, the victory of the China Energy Engineering Corp. in the public bidding is suspicious since it did not have the required permits, licenses and other important documents. It seemed that an agreement between the MWSS and the CEEC occurred first before the bidding because, according to the law, a bidder would be disqualified if the

documents are incomplete.

From the Indigenous Political Structure of Dumagat-Remontado Tribes in Tanay, Rizal, the free, prior, and informed consent wherein all information and details related to the project must be given permission by the tribes before initiating any construction, has not been completely implemented. Aside from this, the construction of the access road toward the damsite is currently progressing, at 35 percent. It is also clear in the FPIC that the affected communities have the

opportunity to approve or disapprove the project without force, but it has not happened.

Second, the Kaliwa Dam will imperil around 170 species of plants found in almost 12,000 hectares of forests. The construction of the dam threatens the rich flora and fauna in the mountains of Sierra Madre, which serves as the oxygen tank for the adjacent towns.

It is also important to focus on the great effect of the Kaliwa Dam on the lives of the natives. In constructing the dam, many natives are nearing the loss of their rights on their native land, livelihood and culture. Meanwhile, repaying the country's debts to China will come from every Filipino. Eventually, we will pay for the destruction of our natural resources. If the Kaliwa Dam is aiming to solve the water crisis, is it not a better way to focus on preserving and restoring our forests and mountains?

Brothers and sisters, is it righteous to build the Kaliwa Dam despite numerous anomalies and the possible damage the project can cause? From DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda's statement, majority of the people will benefit from the Kaliwa Dam compared to those who oppose it. But is it necessary to compromise the welfare of the natives and the environment for the

sake of our needs here in the Greater Manila area?

In his encyclical called *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis said that there is greater destruction to be caused by not giving importance to the environment, where the number of species of plants and animals would cease to exist, compared to the benefits from destroying nature. If the government continues to be blinded and remains ignorant of the issues surrounding the Kaliwa Dam, what is said in the *Book of Isaiah 24:4-6* may occur: "The Earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the heavens languish with the Earth. The Earth is defiled

by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the Earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore Earth's inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left."

Brothers and sisters, let us not be silent if we benefit from temporary solutions at the expense of humanity and the destruction of nature.

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KALIHIM NATIN



Karlo Nograles

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Inatasan ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) na busisiin ang kontrata ng mga water concessionaire sa Kalakhang Maynila kasunod ng pagkadismaya ng Pangulo sa ipinatutupad na patigil-tigil na serbisyo sa daloy ng tubig.

Hindi na dapat muling nararanasan ng mga taga-Metro Manila ang panibagong

pagrarasyon ng suplay ng tubig dahil nangonsumi na tayo mula dito noong Marso at nabigyan na ito ng solusyon. Ito ang dahilan kaya nais silipin ng Palasyo ang anumang paglabag ng mga water concessionaire at papanagutin sa kanilang pagkukulang.

Bunsod ng nauulit na kahirapan sa supply ng tubig, patuloy ang masusing pagsusuri at komprehensibong pagbabalangkas sa isang polisiya na layong magpatupad ng reorganisasyon sa lahat ng ahensya ng gobyerno na may kinalaman sa tubig bilang paghahanda sa pagbuo ng Department of Water na nasa balikat ngayon ng dalawang kapulungan ng Kongreso.

Mapapansin natin na kalat-kalat ang mga ahensya kaya nagtuturuan kung sino ang responsable sa kakapusan ng supply ng tubig. Dapat ding magpaliwanag ang mga water concessionaire kung kaya pa ba nilang gawin ang kanilang obligasyong suplayan ng tubig ang mga nasasakupan ng kani-kanilang prangkisa.

Maliban sa naunang mga pagtugon, pinamamadali na rin ng Pangulo ang maaayos na pagtatayo ng mga bagong pagkukunan ng supply na isa sa nakikitang solusyon ng gobyerno upang maibsan ang kalbaryo ng mga taga-Metro Manila.

Nangako naman ang Department of Envi-

ronment and Natural Resources (DENR) na babantayan ang implementasyon ng Kaliwa Dam project, na isa lamang sa maraming proyektong nakaamba, kasunod ng paggawad dito ng Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC).

Tiniyak nito na anumang paglabag at hindi pagsunod sa inilalatag na kondisyon ng gobyerno ay magreresulta sa kanselasyon ng kanilang ECC.

Samantala, ito naman ang kauna-unahang Undas na hindi na namin makakasama sa pagdalaw sa puntod ng aming mga mahal sa buhay ang aming ama - si Speaker Prospero Nograles, bagkus kasama na siya sa aming dadalawin sa

sementeryo.

Maliban sa masayang pamilya na aking nakagisnan sa piling ng aking mga magulang, ang aking butihing ama ang humubog sa akin sa larangan ng mapagtugong pangangasiwa at pamumuno sa gobyerno. Sa kanya ako natuto, at mula sa kanyang giya, nakamulatan ko ang tamang gawi at katarapatan sa paglilingkod-bayan. Utang na loob ko sa aking tatay ang lahat ng kung sino at nasaan ako ngayon.

Sa lahat ng ating mga kababayan, sa paggunita natin ng Undas ngayong taon, nawa'y taimtim nating ipagdasal ang kaluluwa ng ating mga namayapang mahal sa buhay.

Solusyon sa kakulangan sa supply ng tubig ilalalatag na



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Water department ikakasa bago mag-Pasko

Magiging pamasko ng liderato ng Kamara kay Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang pagpasa sa panukalang batas na magtatatag sa Department of Water.

Sinabi ni Secretary to the Cabinet Karlo Alexei Nograles na ang Department of Water ang medium term plan ng Duterte administration para magkaroon ng kaunting gin-hawa sa nararanasang problema sa kakapusan ng supply ng tubig lalo na sa Metro Manila.

Ayon kay Nograles, nangako si House Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano kay Pangulong Duterte na tatapusin niya ang panukala bago mag-Pasko at sikaping makalusot ito sa third reading.

"Yung sa Department of Water, ang promise po ni Speaker Cayetano ay tatapusin niya itong panukala bago mag-Pasko. So pagbalik nila from November to December ay maaaring maaprubahan na 'yan on third reading sa House of Representatives," ani Nograles.

Pagkatapos aniya ng Pasko ay ang mga senador naman ang didinig sa panukalang Department of Water para kung sakaling mapagtibay ito ay agad na pipirmahan ni Pangulong Duterte.

"Pagbalik natin after Pasko 'yung Senado na lang ang kukumpleto niyan para mapirmahan na agad ni Pangulong Duterte," dagdag pa ni Nograles. **(Aileen Taliping)**



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Facing a water crisis

The alarm bells have been sounded this early. The rains this year failed to fill up Metro Manila's one main source of water supply: Angat Dam. Fearful of being blamed again, the water concessionaires are starting to ration water supply.

Actually, even before they started rationing, the volume of water released from Angat Dam was at 40 cms (cubic meters per second) vs. normal release of 48 cms. This is because dam level remained below normal.

Rains over Ipo Dam allowed the water companies to sustain services despite the reduced allocation from Angat. They were

DEMAND AND SUPPLY



BOO CHANCO

hopeful that the dam would fill up by year end so we can get through summer.

But it hasn't been raining enough lately. So, the water companies pulled the trigger and declared rationing. This simply means we have to be more sensible in using water.

Perhaps we don't have to clean the cars daily. We can recycle water used in washing clothes and dishes to flush toilets. We can be more conscious of pipe leaks in our homes and even in public places.

Early this week, President Duterte threatened to use his extraordinary powers to get the construction of the Kaliwa Dam started. Given the opposition from indigenous tribes in the area supported by noisy leftist groups, breaking ground for the dam project will be a big test of Duterte's so-called political will.

I agree with President Duterte on this one. That dam project has been talked about for decades, but no president had the balls to get it constructed. And that's one big reason why we have a water crisis in Metro Manila today. Without the dam, we are just throwing away eight billion liters of water per day from the Sierra Madre mountains to the Pacific Ocean.

President Duterte is right to point out that the welfare of the 20 or so million people in Mega Manila supplants whatever rights a small group of people claim they have. But government must make sure the tribes are properly compensated and assisted to move to another nearby area.

Still, the Kaliwa Dam will not solve the expected severe water crisis by March 2020 or earlier. There are no immediate solutions that will deliver the volume of water Angat and Ipo dams cannot supply.

The closest near-term strategy for the water firms is to build additional water treatment capacity in their Cardona and Putatan facilities that draw water from Laguna de Bay.

Tapping Laguna lake had always been a logical option. It is the country's largest lake and it is in a very convenient location. But people have used the lake as their toilet for years. It is quite expensive to clean lake water to potable quality.

The cost of treating Angat water is Php 0.45 per cubic meter versus Laguna water of P5.00 to P6.50. Maybe wider use of solar and wind energy can bring the cost down. Then again, too, additional Laguna lake treatment plants can go on line faster and capex shouldn't be as forbidding as building something like the Kaliwa Dam.

The water companies invested in the Putatan and Cardona treatment plants because they had to expand their service areas. It was obvious MWSS will not be able to provide new water sources soon.

I understand that Maynilad plans to increase water treatment plant capacity in Putatan from 300 mld to 900 mld, equivalent to 600 mld, initial capacity of Kaliwa Dam. They will do this in modules of 150 mld. The first 150 mld is set for bidding.

As for the current crisis, Randolph Estrellado, COO of Maynilad said "upcoming mitigating measures are the increased production of our second Putatan plant from 100 mld (million liters per day) to 150 mld, activation of around 50 mld of deep wells, 20 mld of mobile treatment plants, and around 100 mld from continuing reduction of NRW (non-revenue water)."

Rene Almendras, who now runs Manila Water for the Ayalas told me that they were given permission by MWSS to put up an additional 250 mld in Cardona, on the eastern shore

of Laguna lake. If things go smoothly with environmental regulators and the LGUs, Manila Water can have 50 mld by 2020 and the 200 in 2021.

Manila Water will also depend on the rehabilitation of Wawa Dam that was built during the colonial American occupation in early 1900s. For a time, Wawa was the only water source for Metro Manila. It was abandoned in the late 1960s when Angat Dam became operational.

I am told that Wawa is waiting for final documentation approval from MWSS and other government regulators. Wawa Dam can add about 500 mld of new water source.

Prime Water, the company Ricky Razon is using for the Wawa project, said it would accelerate water availability by delivering 80 mld by 2021. Still not soon enough to help us next year.

One last point. There seems to be an eagerness to wash away government's fault in this crisis. The presidential spokesman is talking of taking over the private water distribution companies.

Of course, that delivers no new single drop of water. Worse, government management jeopardizes water distribution because government simply wouldn't know how to run the operations that are otherwise efficiently managed by the two private water firms.

These private companies have the expert staff and capability to deliver water to all of us. There is no problem with the filtration, and distribution infrastructure. The problem is water supply, and government is supposed to be responsible for that.

Remember the days when government was responsible for delivering water to our homes? Those were horrible days we shouldn't want to experience again.

The private companies made a big mistake when they agreed to tweak their agreements to allow MWSS to be responsible for water supply. Government has a record of miserably failing to keep up with our infrastructure needs. It was stupid to forget that.

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Taking over water utilities



WITH the relentless efforts of Buhay Party-List Rep. Lito Atienza, Congress just might grant President Rodrigo Duterte power to take over public water utilities.

This development came in the wake of more water service interruption by concessionaires Manila Water and Maynilad.

Atienza, who is unrelenting in his campaign against the water utilities' neglect since he was Environment secretary in 1997, was able to get President Duterte to act on the people's complaint of poor water distribution.

The lawmaker has been very vocal

“The water companies should be made accountable for their inadequate service.”

about making the water utilities accountable for their inadequate service despite huge amounts of funds being collected from resident consumers and business establishments for a water treatment facility.

“If these public utilities were implementing a wastewater treatment facility, we could have been already availing of alternate sources in Manila and Laguna de Bay,” said Atienza, pointing out that the water level supply of the precious liquid continues to go lower in La Mesa Dam.

He thanked President Duterte for acting on his longtime advocacy of an efficient water distribution system.

Atienza also wants the water concessionaires to account for the money they have been collecting from consumers and funds borrowed from foreign institutions under a Philippine government sovereign guarantee. He pointed out that the water concessionaires are easily able to secure these loans under the universal clean environment and climate change principles.

Water concessionaires Maynilad and Manila Water so far have not responded to Atienza's call for accountability. What he noticed is that leftist militants are now also picking up his advocacy. He said that given the Left's communist ideology, the demand for better water service might assume a tainted public perception.

Are the water utilities letting the Left speak up on the issue given their questionable credibility? Why don't they respond instead to relevant issues raised by Atienza who said that “in my case I don't have any ideology except to serve the people.”

Indeed, Atienza, according to many supporters, should aspire for higher office. But the Buhay Party-List congressman does not want to see any agenda attributed to his advocacy. He said such aspiration for higher office will be up to the people to decide at the right time.

Meanwhile, the Manny Pangilinan-owned Maynilad Water Services reiterated its support for the government Kaliwa Dam project, saying it is a viable long term solution to augmenting Metro Manila's water supply shortage. There have been calls to stop the project by indigenous tribes in Quezon and Rizal. They claim that the project in their ancestral domain would destroy their livelihood. The P18.7-billion project is funded by China as a result of Duterte's official visits to Beijing.

But will the Kaliwa Dam serve the poor and Metro Manila residents or will it simply fill the pockets of businessmen operating the two water utilities?

Turn to A5

Taking...

From A4

Atienza has his doubts about big business giving priority to its consumers which is why he is strongly for government to take over the water utilities. With many of the House members realizing Atienza's advocacy, Congress might just grant the President the power to cancel the concessionaires contract and take over their operations.

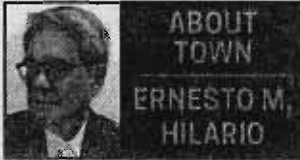
Atienza does not consider this as his victory but a win for the people who have suffered long from the poor and costly water services of the water utilities.

“The government has been pushing for the project but we have been working with them in the process of developing the raw water sources because we understand the urgency of meeting Metro Manila's water needs,” said a Maynilad statement. The statement added that as a water distributor, the company can only distribute water volume from the raw water source.

Maynilad stated that it had been doing its part in implementing the necessary infrastructure to meet the requirements of a growing population in the Metro area. Maynilad said it is maximizing the limited supply so it can mitigate the impact of the current low level of the Angat Dam water.



Dead in the water



THE late Senator Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel Jr. was the most ardent advocate of a shift to a federal-parliamentary system of government to replace the unitary-presidential one that we have at present. He even sat as co-chair of the Consultative Committee that President Rodrigo Duterte convened to draft a new Constitution that would set into motion the shift to federalism. But with his recent passing, is the federalist project still viable?

Federalism's fervid advocates still insist that the shift to federalism would bring the country to a state of political, economic and social nirvana—or reasonably close to it—with the various regions, especially the poor ones, such as the former Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and rechristened as the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region, Caraga and Bicol, enjoying sustained economic growth and well on the way to emancipation from poverty. But will it really?

First of all, there's the gargantuan economic cost of the shift, with no less than the National Economic and Development Authority saying last year that it would cost a whopping P253.5 billion, and this will be on top of the total cost of running the government.

Under two scenarios using the draft federal charter, NEDA said the incremental cost of federalism would be a minimum of P156.6 billion and a maximum of P253.5 billion on average.

In the first year of implementation, an additional P10 billion would be spent on building new offices for each of the 18 federated regions. The incremental costs running to billions of pesos will cover personnel services, maintenance and other operating expenses, as well as the equalization fund equivalent to not less than 3 percent of the annual national budget.

The agency likewise warned that the proposed federal charter would lead to "inevitable disruptions to the economy's growth momentum and progress in infrastructure improvement efforts," and would bring about "fiscal

pressures" and pressure on the budget deficit cap.

NEDA's conclusion: The proposed shift would lead to "unquantifiable economic costs" and it would be "difficult to ascertain whether or not a federal structure will work in the Philippines." Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto M. Pernia, who is also NEDA Director General, had also earlier warned that the regions in the country are not ready for federalism, that the momentum of infrastructure improvement in the regions is going to be disrupted, and that the shift to federalism would entail immense expenditures, which may increase the fiscal deficit to gross domestic product ratio.

“With Pimentel's recent passing, is the federalist project still viable?”

Other economic managers also take a dim view of a shift to a federal system at this point.

Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III has gone on record as saying that he is not totally opposing federalism as it is, but could not endorse the federal road map in its present form, based on the draft shown to him, citing its "adverse impact on fiscal space." Dominguez told senators last year that the country's positive credit rating may be put at risk if its proponents fail to address the fiscal issues related to the proposed shift to federalism. Rushing the transition to a federal system without addressing fiscal issues, he said, may result in a large deficit and imperil country's credit rating.

Then Budget secretary and now Central Bank Governor Benjamin Diokno has opined that although he wanted the economy opened up, the draft Charter prepared by the Constitutional Committee "does not do that." He said it would be key to a useful debate on federalism if there was a study "looking at various scenarios. We can't just adopt a system of government without knowing the implications."

Turn to A5

Dead...

From A4

For his part, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana has also cautioned against rushing Cha-Cha and the shift to federalism, saying the government needs to conduct a comprehensive public information drive to let the people know how federalism works.

But it's not only top public officials who look askance at federalism. Last year, surveys indicated that three in four Filipinos do not approve of Charter change that would bring about the shift to a federal system of government

as they are more concerned with coping with high prices, and getting or keeping a job so they can feed their families three square meals a day.

Filipinos also tend to look with suspicion at any attempt to revise the fundamental law as they fear that behind this are ulterior motives, including extending the term of elective officials. Initiatives by the Ramos and Arroyo administrations to change the 1987 Constitution, for instance, failed to take off as these were perceived to be nothing more than ill-disguised moves to extend their terms beyond their mandated six years without reelection.

There's also the very real fear that the shift to federalism, unless accompanied by a clear prohibition on political dynasties, would only strengthen their hold on political and economic power. As we know, new and old political families already dominate Congress. Once it transforms into a constituent assembly, would these political families willingly give up their positions of power? I seriously doubt it.

Given all this, I wouldn't be surprised at all that federalism has been effectively defenestrated and now practically dead in the water.

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EDITORIAL

Takeover of water companies a bad idea

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte's warning to declare a state of emergency and take over the operations of the two water concessionaires in Metro Manila amid a supply shortage will not solve the situation in hand.

The shortage in Metro Manila and outlying areas stems from the dwindling supply of the Angat and Ipo dams and the failure of the government itself to timely develop a new source of water despite offers from the private sector.

Rising population and economic expansion have caught up with the limited water supply in the capital region. Authorities, including the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, already knew of a supply deficit of 57 million liters a day as early as 2016. The supply gap, according to a University of the Philippines National Engineering Center study, could balloon to 624 MLD in 2021 unless the present administra-

tion vigorously pursues water security infrastructure projects.

President Duterte is empowered by the 1987 Constitution to declare a national emergency and order the state to temporarily take over the operation of privately-owned public utility or business affected with public interest.

The option, however, will merely bring the situation back to square one. The same water shortage will persist because the government cannot draw much further on Angat Dam's resource.

The state, as proven in the past, is also a bad business manager. The MWSS ceded its control over water distribution in the capital region because of funding problems and budgetary constraints.

The agency grappled with non-revenue water, or water pilferage, and failed to efficiently run the distribution business.

The government, thus, had to privatize water distribution in the capital region. MWSS, for one, cannot handle the huge investment outlays required in upgrading water pipes and putting a stop to water pilferage.

But Duterte can use his powers to push for the speedy construction of the long-delayed 600 MLD Kaliwa Dam and other similar water infrastructure projects to address the overdependence of concessionaires on the Angat Dam that supplies 97 percent of the needs of Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

The Kaliwa Dam and other infrastructure projects that address the basic needs of consumers should receive national priority and be treated as "projects of national significance."


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'Angat can withstand strong quake'

By RAMON EFREN LAZARO

MALOLOS – Angat Dam has already been retrofitted to withstand a strong earthquake, officials said yesterday.

Sevillo David Jr., executive director of the National Water Resources Board, said the rehabilitation of Angat Dam in Bulacan, the primary source of water supply in Metro Manila, was done two years ago.

In light of the series of earthquakes that rocked Mindanao, David said they have anticipated the "Big One" that might occur so they decided to strengthen the dam structure.

Dam officials earlier explained the main supply for the domestic water needs for Metro Manila comes from Angat Dam that flows down toward Ipo Dam then La Mesa Dam, before final distribution

to the Balara Water Filtration Plant then to households in Metro Manila.

Meanwhile, an environmentalist group in Bulacan raised the scenario of a major earthquake striking the province and where the evacuation centers should be located.

Martin Francisco, chairman of the Sagip Sierra Madre Environmental Society Inc., pointed out the risk of an "Angat Dam break scenario" where villages would be in harm's way should the dam break during a major earthquake.

"We are reiterating our call to the local government units of Bulacan to make public where the evacuation centers are located in case a strong earthquake hits the West Valley Fault Line, causing the destruction of the Angat, Ipo and Bustos dams," he said.



3rd quake hits South, landslides alert raised

By MANUEL T. CAYON [@awimailbox](#)
Mindanao Bureau Chief
& JONATHAN L. MAYUGA [@jonlmayuga](#)

A NOTHER strong earthquake hit Cotabato on Thursday morning, the third to hit the same area this month, sending people scrambling to open spaces seeking safety, as thousands of affected families are still reeling from the two previous earthquakes.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) is verifying reports that a barangay chairman was killed by falling debris of a covered court in Makilala, a first-class

municipality in the Province of Cotabato.

So far, the three earthquakes have resulted in the death of eight people and injuries to 395 people, according to Mark Timbal, spokes-

man of the NDRRMC.

"Our operations in the affected areas are ongoing. Hopefully, there will be no more reported casualties," Timbal said.

The 6.5-magnitude earthquake which struck Cotabato around 9:11 a.m. on Thursday sent frantic residents scampering for safety outside residential and commercial buildings.

One such mid-rise condominium building outside downtown Davao City partially collapsed on the third strong quake after being condemned by engineers last Tuesday after the second quake.

Davao City Hall extended the suspension of all classes and work in public offices up to Monday (November 4) to reassess the effect of the temblor.

The second floor of the five-story Ecoland 4000 condominium

“We’ve already monitored cracks in steep slopes in some areas. This means the soil is unstable and this could result in landslides. It is best for LGUs to evacuate people at risk, if there are any, to safer grounds to avoid disaster.”—BAUTISTA

collapsed on Thursday morning, bringing the entire building one floor down, with wide cracks at its center. Nine occupants were injured and were rescued, eight of them treated on site, and one sent to a hospital for treatment of a laceration at the forehead.

SEE “3RD QUAKE,” A2

The epicenter of Thursday’s quake was located 33 kilometers northeast of Talunan, Cotabato, near the epicenters of the 6.6-magnitude earthquake last October 29 and a 6.3-magnitude tremor recorded on October 16, also in Cotabato.

PHIVOLCS Deputy Director Bart Bautista told the *BusinessMirror* the earthquakes are all tectonic. “Earthquakes happening in the same area several times is normal because of the movement of plates underground. There are several local active faults in the area, so we expect more earthquakes to happen,” he said.

Warning on landslides

PHIVOLCS is ruling out the possibility of tsunamis, Bautista advised concerned LGUs, particularly in areas where the tremors were strongly felt, to be cautious against the possibility of landslides.

“Landslides can happen in steep slopes in the affected areas,” he said.

“We’ve already monitored cracks in steep slopes in some areas. This means the soil is unstable and this could result in landslides. It is best for LGUs to evacuate people at risk, if there are any, to safer grounds to avoid disaster,” he said in a mix of English and Filipino.

Aside from the Cotabato area, intensity 7 ground shaking was also felt in Kidapawan City, Santa Cruz, Matanao, Bansalan and Magsaysay in Davao del Sur.

Intensity 4 to 6 were felt in Tampakan, South Cotabato, General Santos City, Tupi, and Isulan, and Lebak, in Sultan Kudarat, all the way to Gingoog City and Cagayan de Oro City where an intensity 3 earthquake was recorded.

Evacuation continues

SINCE the first earthquake, a 6.3-magnitude that struck on October 16, residents of affected areas have started to evacuate. The evacuation continued as a stronger 6.6-magnitude earthquake was felt anew.

So far, a total of 4,604 individuals are currently staying in three emergency evacuation centers, said Timbal. These evacuation centers—one in Magsaysay, Davao del Sur, and two in Makilala and Kidapawan City in North Cotabato—are now providing temporary shelter to 2,035 individuals.

Timbal credited the concerned LGUs with immediately providing the evacuees their basic needs such as food, water and medicine, as is the NDRRMC protocols.



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3rd quake hits South, landslides alert raised

"We have a regulation that LGUs, in case of natural calamities, will take care of the evacuees. There is already prepositioned food, water and medicines in the areas near the evacuation centers," he said.

Aside from evacuees sheltered in the three evacuation centers, 2,035 others have opted to put up camps in open spaces near their homes, Timbal said.

According to Timbal, all evacuees are adequately provided for by LGUs, but he said the NDRRMC has sent augmentation supply to the affected areas as early as

Wednesday.

"Just in case the local supply runs out, the augmentation supplies will be used," he said.

Meanwhile, he cautioned the public against spreading or passing on "fake news" predicting the next strong earthquake.

"We advise the public not to believe in these hoaxes because they only add to the tension and cause panic. We advise the public to monitor official reports from the NDRRMC and Phivolcs only," said Timbal.

Cracks on building

THE 56-room Ecoland condominium in Davao City was recommended to be condemned after city engineers found cracks on the building during the second strong quake on Tuesday (October 29). Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio said city engineers visited the condominium and already informed the building administrator a day earlier. She also called on the administrator to check if they were informed of the order to condemn the building. She said the administrator confirmed the information but disclosed some renters did not heed the information, purportedly because they have nowhere to transfer immediately.

The mayor was told that only 15 rooms were occupied that time. A check by 911 Emergency responders from the rooftop down to the third floor found no one nor did they hear of any distress call. The responders have been helped by a Coast Guard canine unit trained to sniff cadavers to check on the second and lower floors.

Duterte-Carpio said the second floor had collapsed and the 911 responders have to use a boom equipment to avoid touching anything that might cause further damage.

Elsewhere, Duterte-Carpio disclosed that cracks and damage were found in the two main bridges in downtown. Engineers will reassess the Bankerohan Bridge over the new cracks found and have limited the entry of vehicles at the Bolton Bridge to only below 20 tonnage weight, saying engineers detected a damage on the diaphragm wall of the bridge.

She said there was no tsunami alert or warning.

NGCP sustains damage

THE National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP) said it sustained damage to its Kidapawan City substation due to Thursday's earthquake but assured the public its Mindanao transmission backbone is intact.

It did not elaborate on the extent of the damage but said it has made "necessary technical adjustments." For the meantime, it shifted the load to Tacurong substation while it was undertaking measures to restore transmission services to affected customers.

It said there were no other reports of transmission facilities or high-voltage equipment affected in the areas where the earthquake was felt.



Polillo Group of Islands at Mauban, Quezon bilang national tourism zone

IPINANUNUKALA ni Quezon Rep. Mark Enverga na ideklara ang Polillo Group of Islands at Lang munisipalidad ng Mauban, Quezon bilang national tourism zone.

Sinabi niya na ang mamamayan ng Quezon province ay tiyak na makikinabang sa kanyang panukala, dahil lilikha ito ng kabuhayan at maghihikayat sa mas maraming aktibidad sa kanilang probinsiya.

"Tourism plays a significant role in the social, economical, cultural, and environmental development of the society. It contributes to sustainable development of the country. It creates jobs and opportunity for people to increase their income and improve their living conditions," ani Enverga, chairman ng House Committee on Agriculture and Food.

"The tourism industry is one of the world's fastest growing economic sectors and largest employer of country's manpower," banggit niya.

Isinulong ni Enverga ang pagpasa ng House Bill 2680 na nagdedeklara sa Polillo Group of Islands, na binubuo ng mga bayan ng Polillo, Burdeos, Panukulan, Patnanungan at Jomalig; at ng munisipalidad ng Mauban bilang national tourism zone.

"Polillo Main Island, consisting of coastal municipalities of Polillo, Burdeos, and Panukulan are holiday paradise in the Pacific Ocean, has remained largely untouched by tourism to this day. In between these municipalities are various existing and potential beach resorts notably, Treasure Island in Panukulan and Isla Polillo and more than a dozen resorts. Not to mention the famous Balesin Island Resort and the Minasawa Game Refuge and Bird Sanctuary an islet where threatened birds live and thrive," sinabi niya.

Binanggit niya na sa bayan ng Polillo lamang, 25,000-ektarya ng coral reefs ang matatagpuan.

Sinabi ni Enverga na ang kahit na hindi kasama ang Mauban, Quezon sa Polillo Group of Islands, ito ay isa ring "tourism potential."

Sikat sa Mauban ang Cagbalete Island, na bantog sa mahaba nitong dalampasigan tuwing low tide.

Ang isla ay matatagpuan sa Lamon Bay, Mauban at madalas na maikukumpara sa Boracay Island sa Aklan.

"This bill seeks to commence the development and promotion of the tourism potentials of the Polillo Group of Islands and Mauban, Quezon by declaring it as a tourism zone. Through this, heightened economic activities will happen and the people will benefit and the development of the islands will be achieved," ani Enverga.

Inaatasan ng HB 2680 ang Department of Tourism (DoT) sa pakikipagtulungan ng Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) at ng iba pang kaukulang ahensiya ng gobyerno na maghanda ng development plan na kinabibilangan ng pagtatayo, pagkakabit at pagmamantine ng mga naayong pasilidad at imprastraktura sa grupo ng mga isla.

"The development plan shall ensure the preservation, protection and enhancement of the natural features, historic significance and cultural heritage of the tourism zone, while providing sustainable economic opportunities for the local community," nakasaad sa panukala.

Charissa M. Luci-Atienza



Chile cancels APEC summit, major climate gathering

SANTIAGO — Chile withdrew on Wednesday as the host of an APEC summit next month at which the United States and China had been expected to sign a deal to ease a trade war that has hurt the global economy, as raging street protests gripped the South American country.

The abrupt move — which came after weeks of riots over inequality in Chile that have left at least 18 people dead — plunged the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting into disarray, with participating countries caught off-guard and no alternative venue lined up.

Chilean President Sebastian Piñera, fighting for his political survival, said he had taken the “painful” decision to cancel the summit, as well as the high-profile COP25 international gathering on climate change in December, to focus on restoring law and order and pushing through a new social plan.

“As president to all Chileans I must always put the problems and interests of Chileans, their needs, their desires and their hopes, first,” he said in a brief statement at the La Moneda presidential palace in Santiago.

The APEC summit was scheduled to bring together 20 world leaders on Nov. 16-17. US President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping had been due to sign an interim agreement to end the 15-month-old trade war.

The cancellation might deny the two leaders a chance to meet on neutral soil soon but the Trump administration said it still expects to sign the deal with China next month. A White House official told Reuters that Chile’s cancellation of the trade summit had caught the administration by surprise.

Violent riots have left large parts of Santiago shut down, with the metro transport system suffering nearly \$400 million in damage.

A total 7,000 people have been arrested and Chilean businesses hit with losses of around \$1.4 billion.

The Chilean government said on Wednesday that the final of the Copa Libertadores, the region’s top soccer tournament, would still go ahead as planned at Santiago’s national stadium on Nov. 23 between Argentina’s River Plate and Brazilian club Flamengo.

CLIMATE CHANGE SUMMIT

The major United Nations COP25 climate summit had been due to take place in Chile between Dec. 2 and Dec. 13.

That summit would have brought delegates from around 190 nations to talks aimed at thrashing out details of how to reduce global emissions to meet the Paris climate agreement.

Climate change teen activist Greta Thunberg, who was traveling across the Americas to

the event, said on Twitter: “My thoughts are with the people of Chile,” adding that she would now pause her voyage and await further information.

The United Nations is urgently seeking a new venue for the conference, but said it may need to be delayed.

Chile’s environment minister, Carolina Schmidt, said several options were on the table, including the United Nations’ headquarters in New York and Geneva. She said three other countries had also expressed interest but did not name them.

Ms. Schmidt said Chile would retain presidency of the meeting.

‘VERY DIFFICULT’

The environment minister of Costa Rica, which hosted a smaller climate change meeting known as PreCOP25 earlier this month, said it looked very difficult to stage a replacement COP like Chile had planned.

“Anyway you look at it organizing a COP in Costa Rica is illusory, it’s impossible, beyond our capabilities, it’s out of the question,” Costa Rica’s Environment and Energy Minister Carlos Manuel Rodriguez said.

Chile’s withdrawal — the first time a nation has pulled out of hosting a major climate summit at such short notice — threw the process into confusion and dealt a further blow to Chile’s much-vaunted image as one of the most stable countries in Latin America.

“This has been a very difficult decision, a decision that causes us a lot of pain, because we fully understand the importance of APEC and COP25 for Chile and for the world,” Mr. Piñera said.

A foreign diplomat in Chile who asked not to be named characterized the reaction to the cancellation as “more sad than angry,” but said he and others breathed a collective sigh of relief as logistical and security concerns had mounted with the unrest in Santiago.

Mr. Piñera fired almost half his cabinet this week — including his finance, interior and economy ministers — in a bid to quell the protests, but to little effect.

With Mr. Piñera’s popularity at an all-time low, Chileans have been calling for new protests, while the UN has said it will send a team to investigate allegations of human rights abuses by security forces.

Jorge Heine, a former Chilean minister and now politics professor at the Pardee School of Global Studies at Boston University, said the effects of the decision on Chile’s international standing could be significant.

“Such summits cannot be rescheduled at will, as heads of state have their agendas full,” he said.

“The credibility of Chile as a serious international actor and interlocutor has been compromised, and will not be easy to recover.” — **Reuters**