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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Court tells agencies to report on, assess Manila Bay reclamations

By Rey E. Requejo

THE Supreme Court has required concerned government agencies to submit a report on the ongoing land reclamation projects in Manila Bay, including their assessment of the impact of these

activities on the environment.

The SC issued the order through an en banc resolution as part of its continuing mandamus issued in 2008 ordering the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and other government

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agencies to clean up, rehabilitate, and preserve Manila Bay.

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System on Friday said it will follow the order of the High Court.

"We have to look at the SC order, and we will definitely comply with the order of the Supreme Court," MWSS spokesperson Patrick Dizon told GMA News Online.

"MWSS is regularly submitting reports to SC [every quarter] of our projects and their accomplishments," Dizon added.

Earlier, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ordered the suspension of all reclamation projects in Manila Bay pending a review of their economic, environmental, and social impacts.

The SC also set for oral arguments on the issue concerning the suspended reclamation projects in Manila Bay but did not announce yet the date for the proceedings.

Nonetheless, it required the parties to "move in the premises" or to inform the Court by September 30, 2023, of their measurement benchmarks of the pollution in Manila Bay; current government

strategies being implemented to comply with their mandate to clean up, rehabilitate, and preserve Manila Bay, and to make it fit for swimming, skin-diving, and other forms of contact recreation; realistic targets for the next five years; and ongoing reclamations and their respective impact on the environment.

The concerned government agencies are the Metro Manila Development Authority, DENR, Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Agriculture, Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Budget and Management, Philippine Coast Guard, Philippine National Police Maritime Group, Department of Interior and Local Government, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, and Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System.

In 2009, the SC created the Manila Bay Advisory Committee to monitor the compliance of concerned government agencies to the Court's 2008 decision with continuing mandamus.

Under the continuing mandamus, the concerned government agencies are mandated to submit to the Court a quarterly progressive report of the activities undertaken to clean up and rehabilitate the waters of Manila Bay.



TITLE:

Study: Air pollution severe in Northern Manila

AIR pollution in the Philippines is at its worst and more severe in Northern Manila mainly due to vehicle emissions. Other sources include mobile sources, power plants and industrial plants.

These are the first findings released by Prudential pic, Pru Life UK's parent company, from a two-year research project that examines the current state of global air quality and its health implications across 10 countries and cities, including the Philippines.

The research project called "Climate Impacts Initiative" assesses the air quality in Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Kenya and the Philippines. The study, which is a partnership between Prudential's ESG (environmental, social and governance) unit and the Earth Observatory Singapore (EOS) of Nanyang Technological University (NTU), aims to provide useful references for policy formulation among governments covered in the study.

"For a country as environmentally vulnerable as the Philippines, it is important to raise awareness about the repercussions of air pollution and climate change to the environment and people's health. This makes climate change a public health issue, and we at Pru Life UK believe that financial security is a climate adaption measure. We remain committed to fostering meaningful conversations to drive positive change in this arena," says Emeren Vallente, Pru Life UK senior vice president and chief ESG, legal and government relations officer.

The first phase of the research involves reviewing historical records of air quality and health impacts,

analyzing trends of air quality and estimating health impacts of exposure to the air pollutants in the studied countries and cities in the recent two decades. The second phase entails projecting future air quality and its health impact on individuals that consider several emission scenarios.

This follows Pru Life UK's 2021 independent study that looked at how climate change affects Filipinos' health, well-being and financial security.

Apart from the apparent environmental risks of worsening air pollution, the paper also cited negative health implications. Long-term exposure to air pollution can cause severe respiratory diseases, lung cancer, cardiovascular disease and premature disease.

"The Prudential EOS Climate Impacts Initiative white paper is a powerful reminder of the need to minimize the effects of air pollution. Everything we do today will help secure a healthier future for generations to come," shares Steve Hung-Lam Yim, associate professor at the NTU's Asian School of the Environment and principal investigator at EOS.

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation reported that the Philippines is one of the 10 nations with the most air pollution-related mortality, with 64,000 deaths in 2019 and a predicted rise in the following years.

From 2000 to 2020, the premature death rate due to air pollution in Southeast Asia increased by 33 percent.

"In the Philippines, there is a clear upward trend in air pollution-related diseases and deaths," adds Yim.

THE MANILA TIMES



Steve Hung-Lam Yim presents the study on worsening air pollution in the National Capital Region. PHOTO FROM PRU LIFE UK



Youth leaders in Zamboanga Del Norte vow to take action on climate and plastic crisis



ELEVENTH HOUR

THE CLIMATE REALITY PROJECT PHILIPPINES

Youth leaders and faculty members of Jose Rizal Memorial State University (JRMSU) in Dapitan City, Zamboanga Del Norte recently pledged their commitment to pave the way for a low-carbon, plastic-free, and climate-resilient university community.

The commitment was made during the two-day session of Klima Eskwela: Climate Science, Arts, and Action, conducted by The Climate Reality Project Philippines in partnership with the Climate Change Commission (CCC) and the JRMSU Supreme Student Government in the university.

Klima Eskwela is Climate Reality Philippines' knowledge exchange program that provides opportunities for young climate advocates and other stakeholders to deepen and broaden their understanding of climate science, policy, and governance.

"[Climate change] awareness should not be confined to scientists only. It is necessary to bring this knowledge to the common men, too. The way the population is increasing, the pressure on Earth coming from this is undoubtedly going to increase critically," said Dr. Venus Namoc, JRMSU dean for student affairs and services.

Jerome Ilagan, CCC Policy and Research Division chief, echoed Namoc's sentiment. "The collec-



Participants harnessed their creativity to communicate their vision of a sustainable future.

tive consciousness of young people will determine the kind of climate policies in 2050 and beyond," he said.

"We recognize that despite being the least responsible for the prevailing climate crisis and bearing the brunt of its impacts, the youth play a crucial role in charting a more sustainable and climate-resilient future," said Ferth Manaysay, Climate Reality Philippines Plastic-Free Reality lead, underscoring the need to empower the youth to become agents of change.

Interlinked challenges of the climate and the plastic crises

The two-day Klima Eskwela session held in Dapitan City delved into the intersection of plastic pollution and the climate crisis.

Marine science and climate change expert Dr. Richard N. Muallil, vice chancellor for Research and Extension of the Mindanao State University-Tawi-Tawi and member of the CCC National Panel of Technical Experts (NPTE), led the discussion on the need to tackle both crises hand-in-hand.

"The plastics industry is the fastest-growing source of industrial greenhouse gases in the world. The United Nations Environment Programme estimates that the greenhouse gas emissions from plastic production, use, and disposal could account for 19 percent of the total global carbon budget by 2040," Muallil explained.

According to Muallil, about 99 percent of plastics originate from fossil fuels like oil, gas, or coal. As a result,



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due to the energy-intensive processes required, the production of plastics generates enormous amounts of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Aside from reducing individual plastic footprints, Muallil underscored the need for youth leaders and faculty members to advocate for and support the implementation of policy and legislation to reduce plastic production, boost circular design, improve waste management, and hold polluters accountable.

Need to reduce plastic waste at the source

A new report released by the UN Environment early this year revealed that the global community can reduce plastic pollution by 80 percent by 2040 using existing technologies and solutions.

To do this, international cooperation and local policies must (1) accelerate the market for reusable products; (2) accelerate the market for plastics recycling; (3) re-orient and diversify the market for sustainable and safe plastic alternatives.

The said report was unequivocal that the most powerful market shift is reducing waste at source. This means eliminating single-use plastics and

adopting reuse schemes.

This is why Climate Reality Philippines has been advocating for national legislation that will ban single-use plastics in the country.

Integrating youth leadership, arts, and climate action

Toward the end of the Klima Eskwela session, participants vowed to minimize the consumption of single-use plastics, collaborate with school administration and local authorities to implement and expand plastic-free policies, support and actively participate in university-led initiatives to promote renewable energy sources, and prioritize sustainable transportation options, among others.

Participants were also given the opportunity to harness their creativity to communicate their vision of a sustainable future during the "Poets for Climate" art workshop held on the second day of the event.

Literary pieces, songs, and artworks created by the participants will be showcased in the online platforms of Climate Reality Philippines and the global poetry and art movement called "When Is Now."



Students pledged to support eco initiatives for Mother Earth.



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Climate Change: No nation can stand on the sidelines

OUR planet is facing an existential and systemic crisis: climate change. It knows no borders and leaves no one untouched — meaning none of us is safe.

Climate change is not an abstract concept or a distant threat. It is a stark reality that is unfolding before our very eyes. Rising temperatures, melting glaciers, more frequent and intense storms, prolonged droughts and unpredictable patterns of rainfall all serve as unmistakable evidence of the changes in our climate.

As we witness the increasingly devastating impacts of extreme weather events — record-breaking cyclones in Africa, wildfires in Chile and Canada, scorching heat across Europe and Asia, and powerful ice storms in the United States, it becomes abundantly clear that we must come together as a global community to tackle this pressing challenge head-on.

No less than the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said: “The era of global warming has ended; the era of global boiling has arrived.”

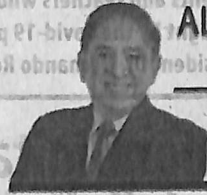
The consequences of this phenomenon go far beyond environmental concerns; they permeate every aspect of our lives, from economic stability to social cohesion and human well-being.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Working Group 2 report, entitled “Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability” revealed: “[T]he specific evidence is unequivocal: climate change is a threat to human well-being and the health of the planet. Any further delay in concerted global actions will miss the brief, rapidly closing window to secure a livable future.”

Existential threat

Disaster resilience stands as a beacon of hope in the face of climate-related catastrophes. It is the ability of individuals, communities and nations to anticipate, respond, recover from and adapt to such disasters, minimizing their impact on lives and livelihoods. The task ahead of us is colossal, but it is not insurmountable.

We must recognize that climate change is an existential threat that demands immediate and unified action. No nation can afford to stand on the sidelines, for the consequences of inaction will reverberate across the globe. We must forge strong international partnerships and foster a spirit of collaboration that transcends political differences. We need to establish a united front against



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climate change, where nations work together to share knowledge, technologies and resources to combat this common challenge.

Investment in research and innovation is paramount in our quest for climate resilience. We must support scientists, engineers and visionaries who are developing groundbreaking solutions to mitigate climate change and bolster disaster preparedness. Whether it be renewable energy technologies, sustainable agriculture practices or innovative approaches to urban planning, we must wholeheartedly embrace these advancements.

We must urge global leaders, the heads of private corporations, and other stakeholders to realize that making policies and passing laws is no longer enough. We have done enough talking — it is time to focus our resources into implementing these policies and laws, and start building resilience from the ground up.

Empowering local communities is central to building resilience. We must ensure that those on the frontlines of climate impacts have the resources and knowledge to adapt and respond effectively. This means investing in education, health care and infrastructure in vulnerable regions, so they are equipped to withstand the blows of climate change and recover swiftly from disasters.

As we work to adapt and mitigate, we must also address the underlying causes of climate change. Our reliance on fossil fuels, deforestation and unsustainable consumption patterns have significantly contributed to the crisis we face today. We must transition to a low-carbon economy, promoting renewable energy sources, conserving forests and adopting circular economic models that reduce waste and pollution.

Action plans

We have the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act for proper segregation of waste at source; the Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act for reducing pollution; the Renewable Energy Act for promoting clean, sustainable energy; the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act for building resilience against disasters; the

Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas Act for ensuring ecosystems integrity; the Environmental Education and Awareness Act for inculcating love for nature among our youth; the People’s Survival Fund Act to provide funding for adaptation projects by local governments and community organizations; and the Green Jobs Act for fostering a just transition toward a green economy, among others.

We must not forget the human aspect of climate change. As we strive for resilience, we must prioritize climate justice. The burden of climate change disproportionately falls on vulnerable communities and developing nations despite their minimal contribution to the problem. We must ensure that the actions we take to combat climate change uplift those who are most affected, safeguarding their dignity, rights and livelihoods.

Our individual actions matter, too. Each one of us can play a role in driving positive change. We can reduce our carbon footprint, embrace sustainable practices and raise awareness about climate change in our community. Small actions collectively lead to significant impacts, and we must lead by example for a brighter and more sustainable future.

The challenges of climate change and disaster resilience are immense, but so, too, is the potential of human ingenuity and compassion. We have the tools, the knowledge and the resources to confront this crisis and build a more resilient world. It is not a question of capability but one of willpower and determination.

By working together, we can rise above the barriers that divide us and work as a global family to safeguard our planet for the current and future generations.

We must be remembered as the generation that chose to protect rather than plunder, to unite rather than divide and to secure a sustainable future for all.

Our collective journey toward a more resilient and sustainable world begins now. After all, our life is all about choices.

Ludwig O. Federigan is the executive director of the Young Environmental Forum and a nonresident fellow of Stratbase ADR Institute. He completed his climate change and development course at the University of East Anglia (United Kingdom) and an executive program on sustainability leadership at Yale University (USA). You can email him at ludwig.federigan@gmail.com.



EDITORIAL

Commitment to climate resilience

ONLY recently we heard Greenpeace accusing major European gas and oil companies of doing nothing to transition towards cleaner energy and “just pretending” to be working towards their climate commitments.

Contrary to public perception, wind and solar power production by big oil companies is still surprisingly low, according to the Amsterdam-based environmentalist group.

The non-government organization was presenting, in the middle of a European heatwave, an analysis of a 110-page report written by German energy expert Steffen Bukold.

At home, the echoes from Greenpeace accusation were loud and clear, and many have wondered what the Philippine government has done and is doing.

Right from the hip, Congress passed in 2009 the Climate Change Act creating the CCC to develop policies and coordinate government programs on climate change.

The CCC in turn developed the National Climate Change Action Plan that serves as a road map for all climate change programs in the Philippines.

Within the Framework, the country developed a National Climate Change Action Plan that outlines a long-term program and strategies for climate change adaptation with

“President Marcos Jr. emphasized the urgency to handle the climate crisis, stating nature’s fury is already impacting communities and people.”

the national development plan for 2011 to 2028.

It focused on seven thematic priority areas: food security; water sufficiency; ecosystem and environmental stability; human security; climate-smart industries and services;

sustainable energy; as well as knowledge and capacity development.

What has been done in these areas?

We note the government’s commitment to climate change has been demonstrated by the increase in climate change expenditure.

Instance, for the fiscal year 2023, National Government Institutions have allocated P453.1 billion for adaptation and mitigation programs, representing a 56 percent increase from the previous year’s budget.

President Marcos’s commitment to sustainability and climate resilience is reflected in the Philippine Development Plan in which a whole-of-government approach has been welcomed by the CCC.

The PDP sets the goal for communities, institutions, and the natural and built environment to become more resilient to natural hazards and climate change impacts by 2028.

We rally behind the President for his declared commitment to address climate change, given that the vulnerability of this country of 114 million was underlined by its ranking as the first among 193 countries in the World Risk Index 2022.

President Marcos Jr. emphasized the urgency to handle the climate crisis, stating nature’s fury is already impacting communities and people.

We would like to see what is actually being done beyond the declared commitment.



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Angat Dam seen to reach maximum level by yearend

By **BELLA CARIASO**

The water level of Angat Dam is expected to reach maximum elevation of 213 to 214 meters as more typhoons are expected to enter the country before the end of the year.

Based on the forecast of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration, at least six to eight more typhoons will enter the country until December, making it possible for Angat Dam to reach maximum capacity before the summer of 2024, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) division manager Patrick Dizon said in a radio interview recently.

Dizon added that the dam's water level is expected to reach 200 meters soon as based on the monitoring of the state weather bureau yesterday, it was at 199.15 meters compared to its previous level of 198.14 meters, increasing by 1.01 meters.

Angat Dam supplies more than 90 percent of Metro Manila's potable water needs and provides for the irrigation needs of 25,000 hectares of farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga.

Dizon defended the decision of MWSS

to release water from Ipo Dam in Bulacan, saying it is necessary to ensure the integrity of the water reservoir.

"Starting yesterday, at 3 p.m., we opened the gates of Ipo. At present, we are releasing around 60 cubic meters per second (CMS) of water. On average, we have already released at least 27 CMS. We are doing this as part of operational procedure. If we do not open the gates, the integrity of the dams will diminish," Dizon said.

He added that the water from Ipo has no effect on residents living near the dam.

"Based on our observation, the water from Ipo has no effect on the Angat River. The reported flooding in Hagonoy, Bulacan was caused by the high tide in Manila Bay," Dizon said.

He gave assurance that the MWSS is coordinating with the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council and Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office in case residents need to evacuate because of possible flooding.

Meanwhile, Bustos Dam in Bulacan has also been releasing water since Aug. 30 due to the monsoon rains brought by Typhoon Goring.

— With Ric Sapnu