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DENR

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Ex-EMB head 'missing' since March—source

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA
@jonlmayuga

WILLIAM CUNADO, the former Director of the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), has not officially resigned, and neither did he officially file his retirement, a source said.

Cunado's status is "complicated" and the DENR is at a loss as to his status for now because the former EMB chief has not reported back to work since filing a leave of absence.

Cunado was among the officials removed from their posts by DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga who issued a series of special orders in January this year.

Cunado was replaced by Gilbert

Gonzales as Director of EMB and who will be performing in a concurrent capacity as OIC Assistant Secretary for Luzon and Visayas.

However, Cunado who is supposed to be on "floating status" and was assigned to report to the office of DENR Undersecretary Miguel Cuna, has not reported back to work since then.

"He is still part of the DENR. But he is a no-show here in the DENR since March," an official of the DENR who spoke on condition of anonymity said.

"As far as the DENR is concerned, he is not officially retired or even resigned," the official said, adding that Cunado's status is currently "on leave".

Sought for interview by the BUSINESSMIRROR on the issue of land reclamation, Cunado defended the

grant of environmental compliance certificates (ECCs) for land reclamation projects in Manila Bay, saying the proponents of the projects complied with the requirements of the law.

The BUSINESSMIRROR learned that in Manila Bay alone, during Cunado's stint as EMB Director, a total of eight reclamation projects were granted ECCs.

Early this month, President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. ordered the suspension of all reclamation projects in Manila Bay pending the conduct of a cumulative impact assessment by the DENR.

Subsequently, at the budget hearing for DENR early this month, Yulo-Loyzaga bared that she is ordering an investigation to determine if there was an irregularity in the issuance of ECCs and vowed to im-

pose sanctions if concerned DENR officials committed infractions.

Sought for comment, Cunado said it was in his capacity as EMB Director to approve ECC applications, adding that the proponents of the projects applied and went through the tedious process before having their projects approved.

None of the three ongoing land reclamation projects were granted ECCs during Cunado's term as they were granted area clearances and ECCs before he assumed the top EMB post in 2021.

The BUSINESSMIRROR learned that a total of 18 ECCs were granted by the DENR and most of these were during the past administration, under the leadership of then Secretary Roy A. Cimatu, who resigned his post due to health reasons before the last presidential election.



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Phil metallic production up 8% in H1

By DANESSA RIVERA

Robust gold and nickel output pushed the value of the country's metallic mineral production up by eight percent in the first six months of the year.

Latest data from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) showed metal production in the first semester increased by 8.06 percent to P123.07 billion.

Nickel was the top contributor to the total production value, with P57.32 billion, equivalent to 46.57 percent.

Gold took the second spot with P51.22 billion or 41.62 percent, followed by copper with P12.74 billion or 10.35 percent.

Meanwhile, the consolidated value of silver, chromite, and iron ore accounted for about 1.46 percent or P1.79 billion of the total production value, the MGB data showed.

In terms of prices, gold prices went up by 3.17 percent to \$1,933.95 per troy ounce from P1,874.47 per troy ounce.

Silver prices also inched up by 1.18 percent to \$23.57 per troy ounce from \$23.30 per troy ounce.

On the other hand, nickel and copper prices went down by 15.27 percent and 10.73 percent, respectively during the period.

Nickel prices declined to \$10.98 per pound from \$12.95 per pound while copper fell to \$3.95 per pound from \$4.43

per pound.

Nickel ore output saw an 18 percent jump in volume to 16.87 million dry metric tons from 12.01 DMT.

Ore production also rose to 3,997,829 DMT from 3,792,676 DMT.

The MGB said the top two producers during the period were Taganito Mining Corp. with 2.43 million DMT and Rio Tuba Nickel Mining Corp. with 2.12 million DMT.

In terms of location, the top nickel producing provinces were Surigao del Sur with 3.72 million DMT, Palawan with 3.28 million DMT and Surigao del Norte with 3.2 million DMT.

For gold, production volume increased by three percent to 15,102 kilograms from 14,670 kilograms.

Philippines Gold Processing and Refining Corp. in Masbate was the top gold producer during the quarter with 3,010 kilograms valued at P10.35 billion followed by OceanaGold Phils Inc. (OGPI) with 1,828 kg valued at P6.22 billion.

The MGB said better gold prices mainly drove the yellow metal's performance this year.

"Another positive development was the increase in the Bangko Sentral Ng Pilipinas (BSP) gold purchases volume and value by 11 percent and 21 percent, respectively, from 3,686 kilograms with an estimated value of P11.59 billion to 4,103 kilograms with an

estimated value of P13.99 billion, year-on-year," the bureau said.

White metals saw a lackluster performance as volume fell by 12 percent to 23,316 kilograms from 26,635 kg.

Government data showed the Balabag Gold-Silver Project of TVI Resource Development (Phils) Inc. in Zamboan-

ga del Sur grew its production but its output fell 24 percent to 8,940 kilograms.

On the other hand, copper output increased by six percent to 133,072 DMT from 125,852 DMT, mainly on higher mine production from Carmen Copper Corp. (CCC) in Cebu.

Turn to B4

Phil From B1

"The growth was attributed to the 17 percent or 11,211 increase in the mine production of Carmen Copper Corporation from 65,189 dry metric tons to 76,399 dry metric tons, year on year," MGB said.

The other top copper miners - OceanaGold Phils Inc. (OGPI) in Nueva Vizcaya and Philex Mining Corp. (PMC) in

Benguet - saw lower output by nine percent and four percent, respectively.

Iron ore production grew 17 percent to 56,131 DMT from 47,797 DMT, solely from the Bulacan mine of Ore Asia Mining & Development Corp.

Chromite production rose 20 percent to 47,449 DMT from 39,522 DMT with the good performance of Taganito HPAL Nickel Corp.



Metallic mineral output up 8% in H1

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

THE value of metallic mineral production in the Philippines rose by 8.06 percent during the first six months of 2023, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Mines and Geosciences Bureau (DENR-MGB) said on Monday.

Data from the DENR-MGB showed that the value of domestic metallic mineral production increased in the first six months of the current year to P123.07 billion from P113.89 billion in the same period of 2022 due to the good performance of gold and nickel.

Nickel ore, together with its nickel products, took the biggest share at P57.32 billion, or 46.57 percent of the total value.

"Despite the sluggish nickel price in H1 (first half) 2023, nickel ore, together with its nickel products, continued to dominate the production scene," said MGB.

Production volume of nickel ore went up by 40 percent to 16.86 million dry metric tons (DMT) from the previous year's 12.01 DMT.

The price of nickel for the first half of 2023 fell to \$10.98 per pound from \$12.95 per pound, year on year.

Gold followed with a production value of P51.22 billion, or 41.62 percent of total metal production.

"The price of gold was impressive at \$1,933.95 per troy ounce, in contrast with last year's first-half average price of \$1,874.47 per troy ounce, up by \$59.48 per troy ounce," it said.

Its production volume rose by 3 percent to 15,102 kilograms (kg) from 14,670 kg posted in the first half of 2022.

Copper came in third with 10.35 percent, or P12.74 billion, an increase of 1 percent from P12.63

billion recorded last year, with a production volume of 133,072 DMT.

The collective values of silver, chromite and iron ore accounted for P1.79 billion, or 1.46 percent of the total production value.

In terms of producers, the Taganito Mining Corp. produced the largest volume of nickel ore at 2.42 million DMT and Rio Tuba Nickel Mining Corp. with 2.11 million DMT.

The top three provinces for nickel were Surigao del Sur with 3.71 million DMT; Palawan with 3.28 million DMT; and Surigao del Norte with 3.19 million DMT.

Top producers of gold were Philippines Gold Processing and Refining Corp. in Masbate with 3,010 kg; OceanaGold (Phils) Inc. in Nueva Vizcaya with 1,828 kg; and FCF Minerals Corp. also in Nueva Vizcaya with 1,443 kg.

The production of copper, meanwhile, was attributed to the 17-percent increase in the mine production of Carmen Copper Corp. from 65,189 DMT to 76,399 DMT, year on year.

Iron ore production volume

grew by 17 percent to 56,131 DMT. For chromite production, volume went up by 20 percent to 47,449 DMT.

From the metallic mineral mining activities, the national government during the first half of this year collected P3.25 billion in excise taxes while royalties collected about P932.02 million.

"Currently, we have 21 mining projects located within the mineral reservation areas, 20 nickel mining projects and a chromite mining project," it added.

The DENR-MGB said that mineral reservations were established by the government mainly to advance wise and efficient disposition, development, utilization and conservation of the country's mineral resources.

"The government may directly utilize the mineral resources or indirectly through operating agreements or contracts with qualified individuals, and royalty share from the minerals/mineral products produced from mineral reservation areas exclusive of all other taxes accrues to the government," DENR-MGB said.



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ADVERSE EFFECT ON LOCAL SERVICES

COALITION BLOCKS MOVES TO REDUCE MINING ROYALTY OF LGUS

By Bong S. Sarmiento
@InqNational

DAVAO CITY—Several groups have opposed the move at the House of Representatives to reduce the royalty fee imposed on mining companies and granted to local government units (LGUs) hosting their operations.

Beverly Besmanos, national coordinator of *Bantay Kita*, a coalition of civil society organizations advocating for transparency and accountability in the extractive industry, said the lowering of the royalty from 5 percent to 3 percent would have adverse impact on the royalty share of LGUs.

House Bill No. 8937, or An Act Enhancing the Fiscal Regime for the Mining Industry, proposed to lower to 3 percent the royalty on gross output for large-scale metallic mining operations within mineral reservations. It had been approved at the committee level in a hearing on Aug. 22, said Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, committee chair.

Bermanos, in a phone interview on Sunday, said the reduced royalty rate would likely result to rise in mining activities but would also a cause a drop in

the income of host localities.

She noted that under Section 13 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act No. 7942 or the Philippine Mining Act of 1995, the royalty should not have been less than 5 percent of the market value of the gross output for mining companies operating in mineral reservations, exclusive of all other taxes. The same rate was also originally contained in the 2022 committee report of the House ways and means committee.

Besmanos said that while the government aimed to generate more revenue from mining, the committee-level approval of HB 8937 failed to secure increased financial gains from the mining industry and instead “protects the financial risks of mining companies rather than the impacted communities.”

Negative implication

A tax advocacy expert, who requested not to be named, explained in a separate interview the negative implication of a reduced royalty rate to host LGUs.

In the case of Claver town in Surigao del Norte province, lowering the royalty to 3 percent

means reducing the share of the municipality from P137.7 million to P82.6 million, a reduction of P55 million or 40 percent.

He said the amount was equivalent to 76 percent of the town’s P72.63-million spending for social services and social welfare in 2022.

As of 2022, almost half of Claver, a second-class town with a population of 36,033, had been covered by mining tenements. These mining tenements covered 15,226 hectares within mineral reservations and 688 ha outside mineral reservations.

Mindanao hosts at least eight operating metallic mines within mineral reservation areas.

These are in Loreto, Libjo, Basilisa and San Jose, and Tubajon in Dinagat Islands; Claver and Tagana-an in Surigao del Norte; Carrascal in Surigao del Sur; and Rosario in Agusan del Sur.

These localities would definitely all face reduced incomes should HB 8937 gets enacted into law.

Margin-based royalty

HB 8937 also seeks a margin-based royalty from 1 percent to 5 percent for large-scale

metallic mining operations outside mineral reservations. For instance, a 1-percent royalty will be collected from a mining firm if the profit margin is between 1 and 10 percent, 1.50 percent from above 10 percent up to 20 percent, and so on.

On the other hand, small-scale metallic mining operations will be levied a royalty rate of one-tenth of 1 percent of gross output.

Under the IRR for RA 7942, mining firms need to pay another royalty of not less than 1 percent of their gross output to indigenous cultural communities if the operation is within an ancestral domain.

HB 8937 also introduces a profit-based windfall tax design, which levies metallic mining companies 1 percent if the profit margin from its operation would reach 35 to 40 percent, 2 percent if more than 40 percent to 45 percent, with the tax increasing up to 10 percent as the margin increases.

HB 8937, a substitute bill for House bills 373, 2014, 2246, 3888 and 8050, was included in the calendar of business of the House of Representatives on Aug. 30. **INQ**



Govt urged to keep tighter watch on 'toxic' Christmas decors, lights

A LOCAL toxic waste advocacy group on Monday urged concerned government agencies to conduct post-market surveillance of Christmas lights and decorations being sold in the market to ensure that the products pass the quality and safety standard regulations.

The call was made as public markets started to sell Christmas lights and decors for early shopping, prompting the group BAN Toxics to raise the alarm to the public against poor quality and substandard products.

TBT Patrollers of BAN Toxics noticed the early selling of Christmas lights and decorations in stores in Pasay City over the weekend and started documenting the varieties of holiday products.

The team found out that the decors had no proper labeling, while the Christmas lights have no Philippine Standard (PS) mark or Import Commodity Clearance (ICC) sticker indicating its product safety and quality.

"The sale of improperly labeled and/or unregistered holiday decorations can be a potential source of toxic chemical exposure such as lead and cadmium that may cause unreasonable risk to public health," Thony Dizon, Toxics Campaigner of BAN Toxics said in a statement.

"We call the attention of our regulatory

agencies to conduct post-marketing surveillance in public markets and eventual confiscation of the products if they do not comply with the regulation in the country," he added.

Last year, the group issued a warning over the sale of holiday lights that contain high levels of lead and cadmium ranging from 25,500 parts per million (ppm) to 224,000 ppm, way above the 1,000 parts per million (ppm) limit for lead. The lights also had cadmium ranging from 265 ppm to 506 ppm, which is above the 100 ppm limit for cadmium under the European Union Directive on Restriction of Hazardous Substances (RoHS).

Lead exposure can have serious consequences for the health of children. At high levels of exposure to lead, the brain and central nervous system can be severely damaged causing coma, convulsions and even death, while cadmium exerts toxic effects on the kidneys as well as the skeletal and respiratory systems. It is classified as a human carcinogen.

"BAN Toxics will continue to conduct market monitoring to raise awareness against toxic chemicals in consumer products to protect the public against hazards to health and safety," the group lamented.

Jonathan L. Mayuga



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PCG to monitor fuel extraction from beached vessel

The extraction of 15,148 liters of marine diesel oil from the fuel tank of a cargo vessel that ran aground in Occidental Mindoro will be monitored by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG).

In a statement released yesterday, the PCG said it would ensure the safety of the oil extraction from motor vessel *Joegie 5*.

The *Joegie 5* was sailing toward Sablayan, Occidental Mindoro from Bauan, Batangas when it hit shallow waters near Barangay Harrison in

Paluan town on Friday.

Aside from diesel oil, the vessel was loaded with 28,020 bags of cement.

The PCG-Southern Tagalog district said the extraction has yet to start as of 3 p.m. yesterday as officials were still waiting for a barge that would be sent by the Preeminent Shipping and Management Corp., owner of *Joegie 5*.

PCG-Southern Tagalog district chief Commodore Geronimo Tuvilla directed the shipping company to hire an accredited salvage company for the safe removal of the vessel.

No oil spill has been reported in the area, authorities said.

The vessel's skipper, Capt. Amie Alberto, said that big waves and strong winds battered the *Joegie 5*.

He said seawater had entered the ship, which can cause the vessel to sink if it continues to sail.

Alberto and his 13 crewmembers were rescued by village residents.

Eight of them were allowed to go home while the rest stayed for investigation.

Meanwhile, in Cebu, spill booms

and absorbent pads were laid out at an anchorage area where a motor tugboat sank on Sunday.

The booms and pads were intended to stop the spread of the bilge coming from the *M/T Sugbo 2*, according to PCG-Central Cebu station acting chief Commodore Mark Larsen Mariano.

The *Sugbo 2*, which sank at the Naga Anchorage Area in Naga City at around 5 p.m., had 10 crewmembers on board.

- Evelyn Macairan, Ed Amoroso

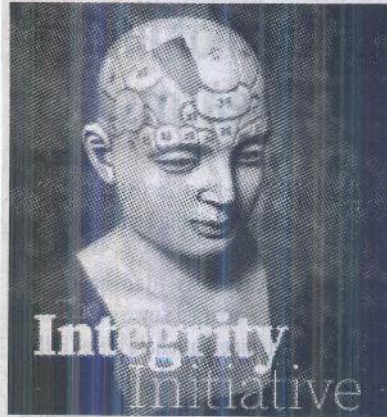


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Let's build a Sustainable Future



By HENRY J. SCHUMACHER

BUSINESS and government must understand how sustainability requirements filter down throughout companies and government operations. Please allow me to highlight a few areas for your considerations.

The quality of the environment.

A sustainable community sees itself as existing within a physical environment and natural ecosystem and tries to find ways to co-exist with that environment. It does its part by avoiding unnecessary degradation of the air, oceans, fresh water, and other natural systems. It tries to replace detrimental practices with those that allow ecosystems to continuously renew themselves.

I was shocked to read that water wasted annually is equivalent to half of Angat Dam capacity. Around 488 million cubic meters of water a year are lost to waste, mainly in water districts outside Metro Manila, says the Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA). Of course, the recent and present flooding in many parts of the country cannot be seen as reasons to neglect the water management. It is trusted that the LWUA finds partners in government and the private sector to see water management as part of disaster resilience.

Disaster resilience and mitigation

WE must understand that a community must be resilient in the face of inevitable natural disasters like typhoons, earthquakes, floods, and drought. The community must take steps to ensure that such events cause as little damage as possible, that productivity is only minimally interrupted, and that the quality of life remains at (or quickly returns to) high levels. A disaster-resilient community further takes responsibility for the risks it faces and tries to be self-reliant. Ensuring

food sustainability and security remains a big task in the Philippines. It is a daunting endeavor, but not impossible.

We have to say goodbye to plastic waste.

According to environmental experts, the total clean-up of plastic pollution in seven major rivers across Southeast Asia will cost \$297 million. In addition, plastic pollution is costing these countries \$23,100 to \$270,000 per square kilometer of coral reef. The proper management of plastic wastes must include plastic bags, sachets, labels, laminates, and both rigid and flexible plastic used for such products.

There is no question that we must get rid of single-use plastic!

Degradable plastic is another option that needs to be taken seriously. That's why Matter makes all sorts of goods with plant-based biopolymer and fiber. Think trash bags, food storage containers, tableware, plates, and bowls. They're like sustainable superheroes of the real world.

All of their products:

- Return valuable nutrients to the soil
- Reuse crop waste
- Are certified compostable.

Beyond all that, creating Matter products uses less energy than conventional manufacturing.

Check out Matter and replace your (garbage) plastic items with something a lot better. I suggest you look at Matter products to buy or to develop your own.

A Sustainable Suture can be created by integrating sustainable consumption and production principles into policymaking, business practices, and consumer behavior. Furthermore, investing in new technologies is crucial.

There is hope that government, non-government organizations, the private sector, and sustainability advocates will do their share to attain the dream of a Sustainable Future. The nation's commitment to maintain a delicate equilibrium between growth and sustainability on one side, and environmental stewardship on the other, is a holistic approach that encompasses people, planet, and prosperity!

In this context, I thoroughly enjoyed Lazarda's annual environment, social and governance (ESG) impact report, highlighting four pillars under its ESG commitment: empowering communities, a future-ready workforce, environmental stewardship, and effective governance.

I look forward to your comments. Please email me at hjschumacher59@gmail.com/



Climate change may hamper

Phl's income goals

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

Climate change is exacting a heavy toll on Filipino lives, properties and livelihoods, the United Nations said, warning that it could hamper the Philippines' ambition of becoming an upper middle-income country by 2040 if left unaddressed.

Multiple indices rank the Philippines as among those most affected by extreme climate events. Over the past decade, highly destructive typhoons have hit almost every year, with related annual losses estimated at 1.2 percent of overall gross domestic product.

In July, Typhoon Egay (Doksuri) brought widespread flooding and landslides to the Philippines, killing at least 39 people and forcing 12,000 from their homes.

The UN cited the mountainous province of

Bukidnon in the southern Philippines where "local indigenous groups are being forced to adapt to the alarming impacts of climate change."

With UN support, communities are making significant strides, using centuries-old knowledge to forge sustainable solutions.

Local tribal leader Jemuel Perino discussed the success of local initiatives, supported by the UN Development Program's Adaptation Fund Climate Change Innovation Accelerator (AF-CIA), in educating his community on effective prevention and mitigation techniques to deal with the growing impacts of climate change.

"The indigenous cultural communities have their own centuries-old knowledge, systems and practices and have kept them alive," Perino said. "In the Philippines, the government is promoting their use in environmental protec-

tion and conservation."

As chairman of the Council of Elders of the Bukidnon Umayamnon community, Perino has seen the impact of climate change up close. Erosion, deforestation and biodiversity loss have emerged as key threats with devastating implications for the culture, youth and livelihood of his people.

"In the Philippines, most of our forest lands and headwaters fall within the ancestral domains of the various indigenous cultural communities," he said. "There is a real need for the world to fully recognize their important contributions in conserving the environment that benefits the entire population."

To combat the growing impacts of climate change in the region, Perino coordinates a locally organized project under the community-based organization, Bukidnon Umayamnon

Tribe Kapu-unan To mga Datu.

Supported by the UN via an AFICIA grant, the project also seeks to tackle deforestation and pollution while generating sustainable income for indigenous peoples by promoting the planting of bamboo and cocoa by local farmers in Mindanao. That includes training people on cultivating, harvesting and marketing.

Perino explained that the initiative is slated to plant 20 hectares of vegetation along the Pulangi River. He added that bamboo is favored by the community to build houses that are more resistant to floods and storms.

After creating new bamboo and cocoa plantations in July 2022, farmers have already started to benefit. The project is currently providing income to farmers through temporary labor opportunities and is supporting families to buy food and other basic items.



'Study fiscal impact of lower govt staff's retirement age'

BY BUTCH FERNANDEZ [@butchfBM](#)

SENATOR Sherwin T. Gatchalian is seeking a rigid actuarial analysis and the fiscal implications of lowering the compulsory and optional retirement age for government personnel.

"It seems everyone supports the reduction of mandatory and compulsory age retirement and everyone agrees that upon retirement, the basis of pension computation should be one salary grade higher," Gatchalian noted at a recent public hearing conducted by the Senate Committee on Civil Service on the proposal.

The hearing also tackled a separate measure that calls for the automatic promotion of government officials and employees upon retirement from government service.

"The sustainability of such a pension design boils down to the computation of the life of the fund," Gatchalian said during the hearing. "Also, if you want to maintain the life of the fund, I want to know how much the government is going to subsidize in terms of equity as both proposals call for an early payout or a bigger payout."

The senator was referring to the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), which provides social security coverage for employees in the public sector.

Gatchalian emphasized the need for the GSIS to be present during the hearing "to enlighten us and provide

us with the computations."

As chief of the Senate Committee on Basic Education, he has been receiving calls for legislation that would allow public school teachers to retire early. At the recent hearing, Gatchalian also asked the Civil Service Commission to study the pension systems in different countries and determine the best practices.

The senators said lawmakers "need to find out the best practices being done in other countries in terms of civil servant retirement so we will have an idea of how other jurisdictions are doing this.

"Some trends are changing such as life expectancy, which will affect pension schemes; and we should study those very carefully," the lawmaker added.

Gatchalian had earlier filed Senate Bill 944, which seeks to amend Republic Act 8291 (Government Service Insurance Act of 1997) to lower the compulsory and optional retirement age of government employees from 65 years old to 60 years old and from 60 years old to 55 years old, respectively. The measure has already been approved by the House of Representatives in January this year.

"If approved into law, there will be employment opportunities for more Filipinos, particularly the younger generation who are more adept in new methods and technological advancements which are now becoming essential in the workplace," Gatchalian said.



Hanna out, but monsoon rain persists

By BELLA CARIASO

Typhoon Hanna has exited the Philippine area of responsibility but will continue to enhance the southwest monsoon and bring rains in many areas in the country, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

PAGASA said the eye of Hanna (international name Haikui) was located at 360 kilometers northwest of Itbayat, Batanes with maximum sustained winds of 120 kms. per hour near the center and gustiness of up to 165 kph as it moves north-northwestward at 15 kph.

"The southwest monsoon currently enhanced by Typhoon Hanna will bring rains over the western portion of Luzon in the next three days," PAGASA said.

According to the state weather bureau, Hanna will slowly move west northwestward over the Taiwan Strait while gradually weakening.

"It is forecast to make landfall over the coast of Guangdong or Fujian, China (Tuesday) morning or afternoon as a severe tropical storm. Rapid weakening will ensue as the tropical cyclone moves further inland over Guangdong, China," it added.

At a press briefing, PAGASA weather forecaster Obet Badrina said the weather bureau is currently monitoring cloud clusters in Northern Luzon.

"This (cloud clusters) is not yet a low-pressure area, but we will continue to monitor. We are not dis-

counting the possibility that it will develop into a low-pressure area in the next few days," Badrina said.

He said the enhanced southwest monsoon will continue to bring rains in many areas in Northern Luzon, particularly the Ilocos region, as well as Central Luzon, Bataan, Zambales, Metro Manila, certain areas in Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon) and portions of Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan).

"Strong rains will persist in Ilocos Region, Zambales, Bataan, Occidental Mindoro, Metro Manila, Cordillera Administrative Region, Tarlac, Pampanga, Bulacan, Rizal, Nueva Ecija, Cavite, Batanes and many parts of Calabarzon," Badrina added.

He said that by Wednesday, the concentration of rains will be in the Ilocos, Zambales and Bataan.

"The rains brought by the enhanced southwest monsoon will decrease significantly, particularly in the western section of Luzon, once Typhoon Hanna makes landfall over the coast of Guangdong, China," Badrina said.

PAGASA said a gale warning is in effect for the seaboard of Northern Luzon, western and southern seaboard of Luzon and the western seaboard of Visayas.

Damage to agriculture

Heavy rainfall due to the southwest monsoon enhanced by typhoons Goring and Hanna over the past several days has caused damage to agriculture reaching

more than P584.7 million.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said Western Visayas was most affected, with damage reaching P356.1 million as of Sept 4.

Cagayan Valley also sustained heavy losses to agriculture currently at P192.6 million, followed by Mimaropa at P29.6 million and Central Luzon with P5.7 million.

The NDRRMC said these include crop area damage, damage to infrastructure, machinery and equipment and overall production losses.

Heavy rains, flooding and other related incidents left at least two persons dead in Western Visayas and the Cordilleras, and one reported missing also in Western Visayas.

The NDRRMC said a total of 140,101 families or 514,153 persons have been affected by the monsoon rains in eight different regions including Metro Manila.

Of the number, 915 families or 3,251 persons are still staying in 52 different evacuation centers in affected Luzon and Visayas provinces.

The NDRRMC said a total of 1,349 damaged houses were reported in the Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Western Visayas and the Cordilleras.

In Pampanga, at least 48 barangays are still flooded due to continuous rains, disaster authorities reported yesterday. - With Michael Punongbayan, Ramon Efren Lazaro, Ric Sapnu, Cesar Ramirez, Rudy Santos