

26 September 2023 Tuesday



DENR

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Palace to public: Keep masks on

By ALEXIS ROMERO

While the air quality in Metro Manila and nearby areas has returned to normal due to the subsiding volcanic smog or vog from Taal Volcano and pollution-related smog, Malacañang is still recommending the wearing of face masks as a protection against pollution.

"The latest DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) update indicates favorable air quality readings at its monitoring stations," the Presidential Communications Office posted on Facebook on Sunday.

"While no cautionary measures are necessary, it is advisable to wear a face mask to safeguard against potential air pollution from vehicles," it added.

As of Sept. 24, the DENR

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Palace From Page 1

reported "good" air quality in Caloocan, Makati, Parañaque, Pateros and Antipolo for PM 2.5, which measures finer particles such as black carbon particulates from vehicle transportation.

Good air quality was also reported in parts of Quezon City for SO₂ or sulfur dioxide emissions that can be associated with volcanic eruptions.

The DENR said that some air quality stations show "unhealthy" readings but these cannot be attributed directly to the Taal emission.

Taal remains on Alert Level 1, which means that hydrothermal or tectonic activity beneath the volcano may be occurring and steam-driven, gas or hydrothermal explosions can occur without warning.

Threat remains

Vog from Taal Volcano remains a threat as the volcano continues to emit sulfur dioxide, according to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs).

"Those living near Taal Volcano should be prepared as this will be a recurring threat as long as the Taal Volcano is spewing out sulfur dioxide, the threat of vog is always there," Phivolcs Director Teresito Bacolcol said yesterday.

"This morning, the Taal main crater was clear so no vog was formed but we recorded steaming reaching 2,400 meters and it is drifting towards north northwest," he added.

Based on Phivolcs' latest monitoring, at least 2,730 tons per hour of sulfur dioxide were recorded amid the upwelling of hot volcanic fluids in the main crater.

No vog was monitored on Sunday.

"It was clear but towards the afternoon, a vog was formed in the crater of Taal but fortunately, it rained in the evening and washed out the vog," he noted.

The smog that enveloped Metro Manila on Sept. 22 did not come from Taal's vog.

Local government units had to suspend classes due to poor air quality and hazy visibility.

"The vog is volcanic smog. It is smog with sulfur dioxide. The smog (in Metro Manila) came from pollutants coming from vehicles while the haze is the result. We cannot see because of the smog," Bacolcol explained.

Residents near Taal should wear N95 masks.

- With Bella Cariaso, Arnell Ozaeta



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EDITORIAL



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426 beneficiaries get land titles

ILAGAN CITY: To address land tenure issues and promote social and economic development, 124 land titles were awarded to beneficiaries from 15 municipalities and one city in Isabela province.

Regional executive director Gwendolyn Bambalan of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Cagayan Valley, said on Monday that the titles are in addition to the recently awarded 302 patents to beneficiaries in Cagayan province.

Bambalan said land titles are also set to be distributed in Batanes, Quirino and Nueva Vizcaya provinces within the week.

She also urged the agency's field officials to streamline and expedite processing.

Bambalan explained that there are 125 days as a maximum period to complete the process from application to the registration of land titles as mandated by law.

"We will do our best to expedite granting of land titles to eligible beneficiaries," Bambalan

said, noting the importance of land as a finite resource and the need for landowners to have secured and legally recognized titles.

DENR Isabela chief Orly Carizozo said the recent Handog Titulo Program held in Tumauni town in Isabela has addressed long-standing issues on land tenure in the province.

Expressing gratitude for the distribution of land titles in the municipality, Tumauni Mayor Venus Bautista said, "The beneficiaries are indeed fortunate to have received this support from the government and the DENR."

Renita Consejo of the Registry of Deeds also stressed the importance of having titles in ensuring the security and legitimacy of land ownership.

Meanwhile, Rebecca Valdez, principal of Sinamar North Elementary School in San Mateo town, thanked the DENR for its assistance in processing the school's land title.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO

Director
MIRO A.

Chief, NCED
TITLE TORQUE JERIN

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INT'L COASTAL CLEANUP DAY

12,500 VOLUNTEERS JOIN COASTAL CLEANUP OF MANILA BAY

Watsons Philippines' goal is to collect 65,000 kg of trash by 2030

By Joanna Mangalino
@joaINQ

The sun had barely peeked from the horizon when scores of people of various affiliations began picking up litter on the coast of Manila Bay last Sept. 16. Students and teachers, young scouts in their uniforms and employees of establishments surrounding SM By the Bay looked enthusiastic as they participated in the International Coastal Cleanup Day (ICC).

Among them were employee-volunteers from Watsons Philippines. Watsons joined forces with SM for the coastal cleanup initiative as part of its continuous demonstration of its commitment to the environment and ongoing efforts in making a positive impact on both the planet and the community.

Senior sustainability manager Lexie Coloma said that Watsons has always integrated sustainability into its corporate strategy and has been consistently at the forefront of encouraging its employees and customers alike to be more hands-on in cleaning up the environment and making it a better place to live in for future generations.

"One of the goals is to be able to collect 65,000 kilograms of trash by 2030," she says, adding that while it may



Employee-volunteers of Watsons help collect coastal waste.

—PHOTOS BY JOANNA MANGALINO

seem like a bit too grand a goal, the partnership with SM for the ICC is a step closer to that goal.

During the program, officials from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Philippine Coast Guard conducted a brief orientation on coastal cleanup. They emphasized proper care of our oceans and the importance of reducing plastic consumption, given a staggering 2.7 million tons of plastic waste flow into Philippine waters and impact marine species every year.

Incentivizing customers

In addition to actively organizing and participating in coastal cleanups, Coloma also shared how the retailer has be-

come more socially conscious as a company, through initiatives like "Operation Smile," which are free procedures for children with cleft palates, and other community medical missions. It also explores renewable energy sources like solar energy, and uses less and recycled plastic packaging for their products.

Moreover, Watsons offers initiatives that incentivize customers to recycle in exchange for special Watsons deals, like the "Recycle for Rewards" and "Trash to Cash" programs.

She also said they are looking at the possibility of partnering with their suppliers in building refilling stations to further promote reusing of plastic containers and reducing waste.

Ninety-eight percent of Watsons' employees get trained in sustainability practices and are given opportunities to incorporate sustainability into their professional and personal lives, according to Coloma.

More than 12,500 volunteers participated in this year's ICC. Backed by Presidential Proclamation No. 47, the cleaning initiative is observed every third Saturday of September, looking to raise awareness of the growing garbage problems affecting coastlines around the world. INQ



Volunteers pick up trash by the coast.



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CSC leads tree-planting initiative to celebrate Civil Service Month

The Civil Service Commission (CSC) spearheaded the nationwide simultaneous fun run, trail hike and tree planting events collectively dubbed as the Plant-Run on Sunday, 17 September 2023. The activity is one of the highlights of the celebration of the 123rd Philippine Civil Service Anniversary (PCSA).

In the National Capital Region (NCR) and Region IV, CSC Chairperson Karlo Nograles led government employees in planting indigenous, fruit-bearing, and bamboo trees in Yes City, Barangay Cuyambay Tanay, Rizal.

Together with Chairperson Nograles were Tanay Municipal Mayor Rafael A. Tanjuatco, Anti-Red Tape Authority Director General Ernesto Perez, Laguna Lake Development Authority General Manager Senando A. Santiago, Bureau of Fire Protection Calabarzon Fire Senior Inspector Argie J. Baniel, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer Forester Ramil Limpiada, Philippine National Police Rizal Province OIC Provincial Director PCOL Rainerio M. De Chavez and Bureau of Customs Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr.

"Happy Philippine Civil Service Anniversary! *Nais kong batuin ang lahat ng mga ahensya na kasama natin ngayon dahil ang PCSA ay hindi lamang anibersaryo ng CSC, ito ay anibersaryo ng lahat ng civil servants, the 1.9 million workforce of the government nationwide. Sa Plant-Run po na ito natin makikita na tayong mga civil servants, isinasabuhay natin ang lagi nating sinusumpa tuwing Panunumpa ng Katapatan sa Watawat at Panunumpa ng Lingkod Bayan- ang pagiging maka-kalikasan,*" remarked Chairperson Nograles.

He congratulated CSC Regional Office IV, led by Regional Director Maria Leticia G. Reyna, for organizing the activity that will raise funds for Pamanang Lingkod Bayani, a program that honors government workers who died in the line of duty through the provision of one-time financial assistance plus scholarship opportunities to their family members.

"We are proud to announce that we have exceeded the target number of participants for this event by 180%. Time and time again, *kapag gumagawa tayo ng mga events kung saan makikita ang pagkakaisa ng mga civil servants and with a good cause, pinapalabas talaga natin ang ating pagmamahal sa bayan at pagmamahal sa kalikasan,*" he added.

For his part, Mayor Tanjuatco expressed appreciation to the CSC for choosing Yes City as the venue for this year's Plant-Run.

"*Karangalan na maging panauhin kayo dito sa Tanay. Tayo ay nasa pinakamataas na bahagi ng Tanay at ang bundok na ito ay bahagi ng upper Marikina protected area. Boundary rin ito Kaliwa River kung kaya mahalaga na mapangalagaan arig lugar na ito,*" said Mayor Tanjuatco.

Also present during the event were CSC Assistant Commissioners Ariel G. Ronquillo, Karin Litz P. Zerna, Judith A. Dongallo-Chicano, Nerissa B. Canguilan; CSC NCR Director IV Victoria F. Esber; and Public Assistance and Information Office Director Maria Luisa Salonga-Agamata.



CSC Chairperson Karlo Nograles, together with Tanay Municipal Mayor Rafael A. Tanjuatco and CSC officials led government employees during the Plant-Run in Yes City, Barangay Cuyambay Tanay, Rizal in celebration of the 123rd Philippine Civil Service Anniversary (PCSA).

Among the government agencies which participated in the event were the Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Tourism, Department of Health, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Philippine Space Agency, Philippine Statistics Authority, Bureau of Immigration, Human Settlements Adjudication Commission, and National Museum.

Also present at the event were representatives from the Office of the President, Bureau of Broadcast Services, National Commission on Muslim Filipinos, Philippine Sports Commission, Philippine Normal University, Development Academy of the Philippines, Tanay Water District, Government Service and Insurance System, National Council on Disability Affairs, Philippine Commission on Good Governance, Office of Civil Defense, Philippine National Police, and Philippine Army.



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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1900
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Five-minute Boracay daily cleanup launched

By TARA YAP

ILOILO CITY — A five-minute daily cleanup has been launched at world-famous Boracay Island as part of the recent Tourism Week celebration of Malay town, Aklan province.

The five-minute daily program known as "High 5 Boracay" on the stretch of the white sand beach at the country's most popular each destination is the pet project of an alliance formed as Boracay positions

itself as Asia's next big destination for meetings, incentives, conventions, conferences, exhibitions, and events or MICE.

The song "Isla Boracay" composed by Daniel Fernandez of Palawan which won in a song-writing competition was played to perk up participants.

The Boracay MICE Alliance is backed by the Department of Tourism-Western Visayas led by Director Crisanta Marlene Rodriguez.

It November 2021, the DOT-Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) gathered industry stakeholders for the MICE Buyers Invitational Program that looked into how the country's most famous beach destination can be a major MICE player in Asia.

The country's MICE industry leaders want to boost Boracay's capability to host incentive travel and small- to medium- size conferences in the future.



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Dead, crushed corals cover sandbar near Pag-asa Island

By Geraldford Ticke
@InquirerLuzon

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY— Piles of dead corals have covered the entire Sandy Cay 2, a small sandbar situated 3 kilometers (2 miles) west of Pag-asa (Thitu) Island in Kalayaan town, Palawan province.

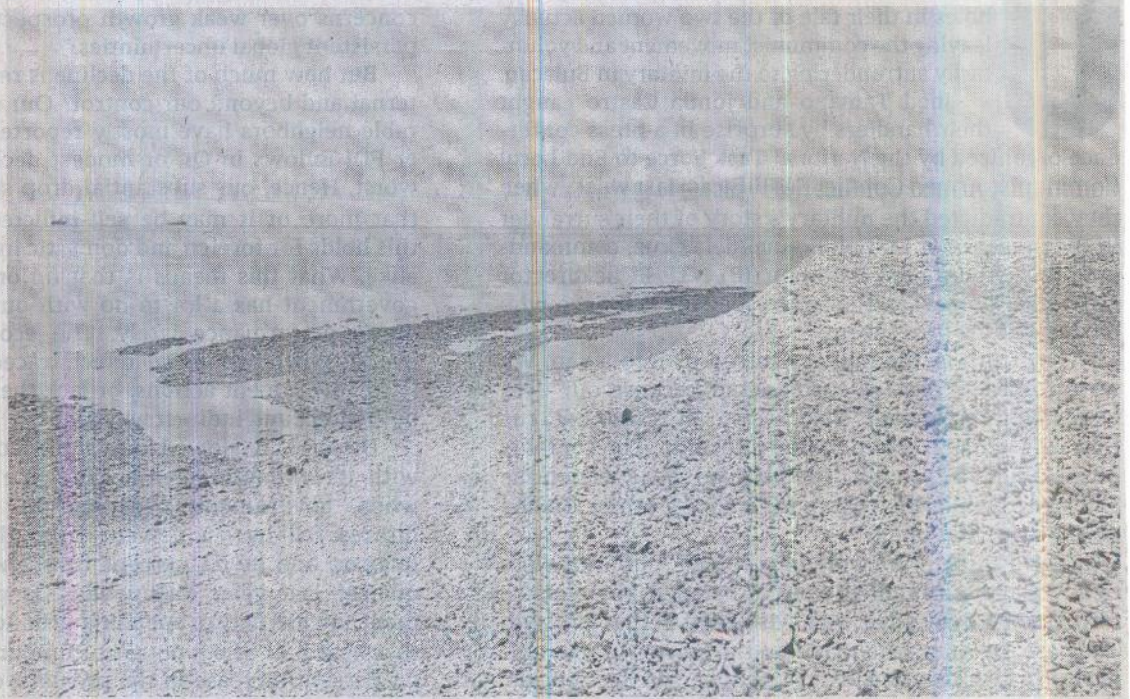
In a visit to the area by the Inquirer on Sept. 22, the heaps of dead corals were seen reaching about 2 meters high and appeared to have been deliberately dumped onto the sandbar in an apparent attempt to reclaim the area.

The sandbar and the smaller Sandy Cay 1 that is closer to Pag-asa Island form part of the country's territorial claims but are also being claimed by China, which has built facilities in adjacent Zamora (Subi) Reef.

Chinese maritime militia (CMM) vessels have been posing as fishing boats in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) swarming the Escoda (Sabina) Shoal and Sandy Cay 2, according to the Philippine Army's Western Command (Wescom).

For artificial islands

Last week, government officials disclosed that China might be destroying and harvesting corals which they use in reclamation and construction of artificial islands



PRELUDE TO RECLAMATION? A portion of Sandy Cay 2 off Pag-asa Island in the West Philippine Sea is now covered with dead, crushed corals in this photo taken on Sept. 22—**GERALDFORD TICKE**

in the WPS.

The Philippine Coast Guard also released a video last week showing the destroyed and bleached corals in Escolta Shoal.

In a previous report, Wescom said at least 33 Chinese militia vessels were spotted in the vicinity of Escolta Shoal on Sept. 6 and Sept. 7.

On Sept. 22, around 12 militia vessels were seen in the vicinity of Sandy Cay 2, along with a Chinese Coast Guard ship.

At least 42 more militia

vessels were spotted while anchored near Rozul (Iriquois) Reef the following day.

Fishermen blocked

The Chinese Coast Guard ship is also intercepting and warding off small boats that are trying to access Sandy Cay 2, Wescom said.

Chinese Coast Guard vessels blocking fishermen from going to Sandy Cay 2 from Pag-asa Island was first reported by the Philippine government in 2021.

In an interview, Wescom chief Vice Adm. Alberto Carlos also confirmed the recent swarming of militia vessels in Sandy Cay.

"Sandy Cay is a known swarm area of CMM and the Chinese Coast Guard. During our last visit [on Sept. 22], there were at least 12 CMM vessels surrounding Sandy Cay 2. This is only 2 miles from Pag-asa Island where our troops regularly patrol," Carlos said. **INQ**



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'DMCI Mining to surpass '22 nickel ore output, shipments'

By VG CABUAG
@villygc

DMCI Mining Corp. said it is on track to surpass its 2022 nickel ore production and shipments after recording improvements in the first semester.

From January to June, production nearly doubled to 1.12 million wet metric tons (WMT) from 567,000 WMT. The figure is even better than its 2022 full-year output of 1.03 million WMT.

Meanwhile, shipments in the first half reached 1.06 million WMT, equivalent to 73 percent of the total sales volume of 1.45 million WMT in 2022.

"We attribute our strong

performance to improved operational efficiency and permit timing," DMCI Mining President Tulsi Das C. Reyes said.

"Shortly after Zambales Diversified Metals Corp. (ZDMC) was granted an ECC amendment, we worked on securing the auxiliary permits, local manpower and heavy equipment needed to boost our production capacity."

Last January, ZDMC was

granted an amended environmental compliance certificate (ECC) that allowed the company to raise its annual production to a maximum of 2.7 million dry metric tons.

"To sustain our growth momentum and offset the impact of our Berong mine depletion, we are looking to open new mines in Zambales," said Reyes.

Reyes said one mine will be operational by December this year and another is set to open by second quarter of 2024.

"Now we're talking about a new company and new mine, that is maybe three weeks or one month behind our permit for that asset inside ZDMC," he said.

"I strongly believe that we have a very good chance to get this permit before year-end, but please note we

have to get tree-cutting permit afterwards. Once we get the tree cutting permit, we can mine."

If there were delays, it could start in January or February but maybe due to the cutting of trees and mobilization of heavy equipment, which needs lead time, according to Reyes.

"I'm confident we'll get the permit, shovels in the ground. But I'm very confident it'll happen within the proper time frame plus minus one month."

For the first half of 2023, DMCI Mining recorded a net income of P708 million, a 35-percent drop from last year's P1.09 billion owing to lower selling prices and increased costs from higher shipments, fuel consumption, depreciation, amortization and labor expenses.



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DMCI Mining nearly doubles ore output

THE mining subsidiary of listed DMCI Holdings Inc. said it was "on track to surpass its 2022 nickel ore production and shipments" after first-half output reached 1.12 million wet metric tons (WMT), up 98 percent or nearly double the year-earlier 567,000 WMT.

In a disclosure, DMCI Mining Corp. said first-half production was "even better than its 2022 full-year output of 1.03 million WMT."

"We attribute our strong performance to improved operational efficiency and permit timing," DMCI Mining President Tulsi Das Reyes said.

"Shortly after Zambales Diversified Metals Corp. (ZDMC, a subsidiary of DMCI) was granted an ECC (environmental compliance certificate) amendment, we worked on securing the auxiliary permits, local manpower and heavy equipment needed to boost our production capacity," he added.

Last January, ZDMC was granted an amended ECC that allowed it to raise its annual production to a maximum of 2.7 million dry metric tons.

DMCI Mining said shipments in the first six months of this year reached 1.06 million WMT, equivalent to 73 percent of the total sales volume of 1.45 million WMT in 2022.

Reyes said that they were looking to expand operations to sustain growth momentum via two new mining sites: one inside the ZDMC area, to be called Zambales Chromite Metals Corp. (ZCMC), and another one set to open by the second quarter of 2024.

This move, he added, will help offset the impact of the Berong mine depletion. Berong Nickel Corp. is a subsidiary of DMCI Mining and operates a mining site in Quezon, Palawan.

"I strongly believe that we have a very good chance to get this permit before year-end," Reyes said, adding that ZCMC would be operational by December.

"But please note we have to get a tree-cutting permit. Afterward, once we get the tree-cutting permit, we can already mine. So, if there's a slight delay, [perhaps] January or February."

Delays could also come from the delivery of heavy equipment, for which orders have been made, and the time it would take to gather mine workers.

He added that the ZCMC project would cost the company around P300 million.

For the first half of this year, DMCI Mining recorded a net income of P708 million, down 35 percent from the P1.09 billion posted in the same period last year.

The profit drop was attributed to lower selling prices and increased costs from higher shipments, fuel consumption, depreciation, amortization and labor expenses.

Shares of DMCI Mining's parent firm DMCI Holdings Inc. were down by 18 centavos to P10.18 apiece on Monday.

JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL



US-backed anti-China groups seeking to influence water projects, governance?

A FOREIGN relations specialist is accusing groups reportedly backed by the United States of spreading anti-Chinese sentiment to influence countries that have received funding for water system projects from China.

In a Quezon City media forum, Ado Paglinawan said that the US government, through US-funded groups, is spreading lies to stop projects being funded by China.

"There is a lobby to stop the Kaliwa Dam and the impounding system to be constructed in Candaba, Pampanga. The US, Japan and Korea do not have money to fund these projects. China will surely finance it. I hope the opposition will stop spreading lies because this is the solution for the Central Luzon flooding, at least for the meantime."

Paglinawan also accused the United States government of attempting to revive the Cold War by spreading lies against China, particularly over the propaganda being spread by US-backed groups over the issue of the Mekong River water system.

"Western propagandists claim that the dams built by China caused the decrease in the volume of water flow of the Mekong River to the downstream countries of Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand. However, the truth is that 87 percent of the water flow goes out, and only 13 percent remains in China. All because the US wants to rekindle the Cold War."

However, Paglinawan refused to name the alleged US-backed groups.

At the same time, Paglinawan criticized the Department of Foreign Affairs for failing to take steps to ensure the target number of visa issuances to Chinese tourists.



NAKED THOUGHT

CHARLIE V. MANALO

more visa requirements for Chinese tourists.

"Just like in Hong Kong, if you are to stay for 30 days, you don't need to secure a visa. If you intend to stay longer, that's when you must secure a visa. Tourism contributes a lot to the income of the government."

* * *

Speaking of projects involving bodies of water, Gadon chastised critics of the Manila Bay reclamation projects, claiming that President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has been fed with wrong information about the reclamation projects. The President had ordered the projects suspended.

Gadon said that even Singapore, whose progress and development are the envy of many Filipinos, has been benefiting from reclamation projects.

With a small land area, Singapore has also embarked on reclamation projects, the biggest earner of which is Marina Bay, Gadon said.

He said he would draft an executive summary regarding the Manila Bay reclamation projects, which he will submit to the Chief Executive.

"With the reclamation projects, millions of jobs can be created aside from the vast revenues that the national government would get. And more than that, some 160 hectares from the 320 hectares to be reclaimed would be turned over to the government as recurring investment."

Gadon also allayed fears that the reclamation projects in Manila Bay would deprive the poor of the view of the world-famous Manila Bay sunset.



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The Manila Times



opinion

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"The government's target is 8 million tourists. Two million will come from China. Yet, the DFA can only issue 300 to 500 tourist visas a day at the maximum. To reach 2 million tourists from China, they must process 5,000 to 8,000 visas a day. Is the DFA conniving with the US Embassy to prevent Chinese tourists from coming over? The government may lose up to P2 billion if the target of 2 million Chinese tourists will not be met."

The presidential adviser for poverty alleviation, Secretary Larry Gadon, who was at the press forum, agreed to investigate the matter. Gadon said that he agrees with the insights of Paglinawan. He said that there should be no

"We have had reclamation projects in Manila Bay even during the time of President Ferdinand Marcos Sr. The Cultural Center of the Philippines, the Folk Arts Theater and other edifices in the Manila area are results of the reclamation projects during the time of the late president. Recent reclamation projects have also resulted in new casino hotels and a big mall in the reclaimed area, but we can still enjoy the view of the world-famous Manila Bay sunset," said Gadon. He stressed that there would still be a 12-meter easement from the bay proper.



EDITORIAL

Climate change no far-off threat

IT IS a continuing disaster, as climatologists and analysts tell us.

And climate change is endangering humans and natural environments in every continent, and the United Nations says the world is running out of time to keep at bay the most devastating consequences of global warming.

Experts have raised the bulletin board that global warming impacts everyone's food and water security.

They add climate change has been a direct cause of soil degradation, which limits the amount of carbon the earth is able to contain, pointing out that some 500 million people today live in areas affected by erosion, while up to 30 per cent of food is lost or wasted as a result.

The report, released by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, outlines the increasing risk that climate change poses to human health, infrastructure, the stability of food and water resources and the biodiversity of the planet's ecosystems.

The assessment, produced by 270 scientists from 67 countries who make up the IPCC's

so-called Working Group II, represents broad consensus within the research community about how global warming is affecting people and the environment – and the potential consequences of inaction.

The impacts of climate change in the Philippines, which loses P26 billion per year from this weather phenomenon, are immense

Beyond doubt, we have seen in recent months increased heatwaves, droughts and floods which are exceeding plants' and animals' tolerance thresholds, driving mass mortalities in species such as trees and corals.

Climate scientists who have been warning about the long-term and inequitable effects of global warming say the need for immediate and comprehensive action cannot be overstated.

Rising temperatures are fueling environmental degradation, natural disasters, weather extremes, food and water insecurity, economic disruption, conflict, and terrorism.

Sea levels are rising, the Arctic is melting, coral reefs are dying, oceans are acidifying, and forests are burning.

The impacts of climate change in the Philippines, which loses P26 billion per year from this weather phenomenon, are immense, including annual losses in GDP, changes in rainfall patterns and distribution, droughts, threats to biodiversity and food security, sea level rise, public health risks, and endangerment of vulnerable groups such as women and indigenous people.

This is due to the country's high exposure to natural hazards (cyclones, landslides, floods, droughts), dependence on climate-sensitive natural resources, and vast coastlines where all of its major cities and the majority of the population reside.

We note the Philippines submitted its Nationally Determined Contribution to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in April 2021.

It pledged a projected reduction and avoidance of greenhouse gas emissions of 75 percent for the period 2020–2030, of which 2.71 percent is unconditional and 72.29 percent is conditional.



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PCG removes China barrier

President orders Ano, task force to open shoal to Pinoy fishers

By Charles Dantes, Vince Lopez, and Rey E. Requejo

ON THE orders of the President, National Security Adviser Eduardo Ano directed the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) yesterday to remove the floating barriers installed by China at a shoal in the West Philippine Sea, which blocked Filipino fishermen from the fish-rich area.

In a statement, the National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea (NTF-WPS) headed by Ano said the PCG was directed "to execute a special operation to remove the floating barrier that obstructed the southeast entrance of the Bajo De Masinloc (BDM)."

According to the PCG, the barrier "posed a hazard to navigation and a clear violation of international law."

"It also hinders the conduct of fishing and livelihood activities of Filipino fisherfolk in BDM, which is an integral part of the Philippine national territory," the Coast Guard added.

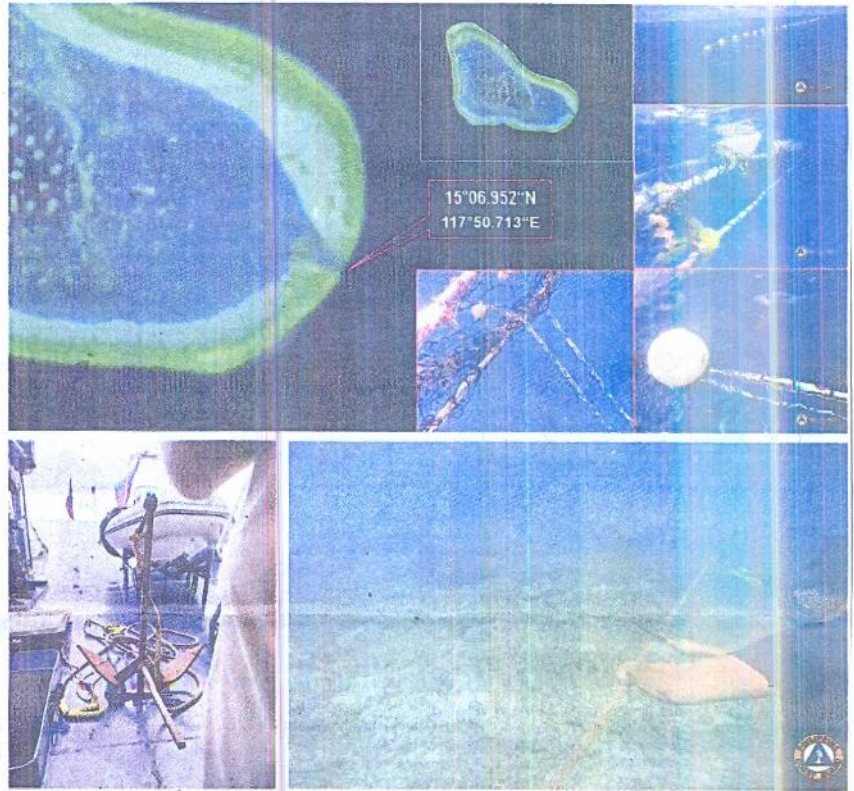
Ano earlier said President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. "is well-informed" in all the developments in the West Philippine Sea, including the areas surrounding the BDM or Scarborough Shoal and Ayungin Shoal, and that the government would protect the rights of fishermen in the area.

"The decisive action of the PCG to remove the barrier aligns with international law and the Philippines' sovereignty over the shoal," the task force said.

The government had vowed to take "appropriate action" as the National Security Council (NSC) and the Department

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LOCATION OF THE BUOY ROPE BARRIER



BARRIERS CUT. These photos from the Philippine Coast Guard show how it conducted the operation to remove the 300-meter-long floating barrier installed by China's naval forces at the Bajo de Masinloc. PCG Photos

PCG...
From A1

of Foreign Affairs (DFA) condemned China's installation of a 300-meter barrier across the mouth of the shoal and chasing away fishermen who tried to enter the fish-rich area.

Ano emphasized that the placement of barriers violates the "traditional fishing rights" of the country's fishers, whose rights were affirmed by the 2016 ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA).

The arbitral court, Ano said, ruled

categorically that such actions by China violated the traditional fishing rights of Filipino fishermen in the shoal who have been fishing there for centuries.

"Any state that prevents them from doing artisanal fishing there violates UNCLOS and international law, in general," he added, referring to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

China, on the other hand, said it set up the barrier to prevent a Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) ship from "trespassing" into Scarborough Shoal, which Beijing insists is Chinese territory—despite the finding of the PCA.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said the Philippine vessel entered the disputed shoal, referred to as Huangyan Island by the Chinese, without permission.

On Sunday, the Philippine Coast Guard reported that Chinese vessels had installed a 300-meter floating barrier in Scarborough Shoal, barring Filipino fishermen from fishing in the area.

The DFA said the Chinese barrier was illegal as it infringed on Philippine sovereignty.

"Bajo de Masinloc (Scarborough Shoal) is an integral part of the Philip-

pines over which we have sovereignty and territorial jurisdiction," the DFA said, citing UNCLOS.

"The 2016 Arbitral Award affirms it as a traditional fishing ground of Filipino fisherfolk," the department said.

"China's reported installation of barriers and its negative impact on the livelihood of Filipino fisherfolk or any other activity that infringes upon the Philippines' sovereignty and jurisdiction in Bajo de Masinloc are violations of international law, particularly UN-

CLOS and the Arbitral Award," it added.



Crowdfunding conservation: A Pacific island's plan to protect its waters

By ISSAM AHMED

United Nations, US (AFP) – For a little under \$150, you can now directly sponsor marine conservation across one square kilometer of the Pacific Ocean, through a novel scheme announced this week by the tiny island of Niue.

Located halfway between Fiji and the Cook Islands, the vast waters of the “Rock of Polynesia” are home to coral reefs and undersea mountains that host diverse species, including sharks, dolphins, turtles and more.

But finding the resources to protect these habitats from the threats of illegal fishing, climate change and pollution had proven challenging for one of the world's smallest self-governing nations.

“We’ve been going to conferences for so long, telling our story, but it seemed like we weren’t getting anywhere,” Niue’s Premier Dalton Tagelagi told AFP in an interview at the United Nations headquarters in New York, adding he had come to view summits as “talk fests with no action.”

Under the new plan, companies, philanthropies and individuals can pay 250 New Zealand dollars (US \$149) to protect and manage one or more square

kilometers of water, called Ocean Conservation Commitments (OCCs).

There are 127,000 OCCs in total, corresponding to the size in square kilometers of Niue’s “no-take” protected marine zone, which represents 40 percent of its overall sovereign waters.

Niue is thus hoping to raise \$18 million through the initiative, which covers a period of 20 years.

“It’s very exciting,” said Tagelagi, adding that the government itself was sponsoring 1,700 units, one for each of the island’s residents.

Most of the fishing on Niue takes place nearshore at subsistence level, involving traditional canoes.

But as technology has improved over the years, both in terms of fishing gear and also refrigeration of food, the amount harvested has increased, Brendon Pasisi, project manager of the Niue Ocean Wide Project, a public-private entity running the initiative, told AFP.

On top of that, plastic pollution and effluent runoff are contributing to the degradation of the marine environment, he added.

Then there are external challenges in the form of foreign fishing fleets that can intrude into the protected zone.

“It’s a vast area to cover on patrol boats so we’re looking at drones,” said Premier Tagelagi, which the scheme will fund.



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PRECIOUS CARGO A recovery team member examines a space capsule carrying NASA's first asteroid samples on Sunday, Sept. 24, 2023. Scientists hope the asteroid sample aboard the spacecraft will provide humanity with a better understanding on the formation of our solar system and how Earth became habitable. AFP PHOTO

Major asteroid sample brought to Earth in NASA first

DUGWAY, Utah: A seven-year space voyage came to its climactic end Sunday when a NASA capsule landed in the desert in the US state of Utah, carrying to Earth the largest asteroid samples ever collected.

Scientists have high hopes for the sample, saying it will provide a better understanding of the formation of our solar system and how Earth became habitable.

When they learned that the capsule's main parachute had deployed, "I literally broke into tears," the Osiris-Rex mission's principal investigator Dante Lauretta told a press conference.

"That was the moment I knew we

made it home. ... For me the real science is just beginning." The 3.86-billion-mile (6.21-billion-kilometer) journey marked the United States' first sample return mission of its kind, the US space agency said in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

NASA chief Bill Nelson hailed the mission and said the asteroid dust "will give scientists an extraordinary glimpse into the beginnings of our solar system."

The Osiris-Rex probe's final, fiery descent through Earth's atmosphere was perilous, but NASA managed to engineer a soft landing at 8:52 a.m. local time (1452 GMT), in the military's Utah Test

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1501 TEROID FROM A1 Major asteroid sample

and Training Range.

Four years after its 2016 launch, the probe had landed on the asteroid Bennu and collected what NASA estimated is roughly 9 ounces (250 grams) of dust from its rocky surface.

Even that small amount, NASA says, should "help us better understand the types of asteroids that could threaten Earth."

The sample return "is really historic," NASA scientist Amy Simon told AFP. "This is going to be the biggest sample we've brought back since the Apollo moon rocks" were returned to Earth.

Osiris-Rex released its capsule early Sunday from an altitude of more than 67,000 miles.

The fiery passage through the atmosphere came only in the last 13 minutes as the capsule hurtled downward at a speed of more than 27,000 miles per hour, with temperatures of up to 5,000 degrees Fahrenheit (2,760 degrees Celsius).

NASA images showed the tire-sized capsule on the ground in a desert wash, with scientists approaching the device and taking readings.

Eventually they concluded the

capsule was not breached, meaning its all-important air-tight seal remained intact, avoiding any contamination of the sample with desert sands.

The team then lifted the capsule by helicopter to a nearby "clean room."

Meanwhile, the probe that made the space journey fired its engines and shifted course away from Earth, NASA said, "on its way" for a date with another asteroid.

Japanese samples

On Monday, the sample heads to Johnson Space Center in Houston for additional study, and NASA plans to announce its first results at a news conference October 11.

Roughly one-fourth of the sample will be immediately used in experiments, and a small amount will be sent to mission partners Japan and Canada.

But most of it will be saved for future generations — a "treasure for scientific analysis for years and years and years to come, to our kids and grandkids and people that haven't even been born yet," Lori Glaze, director of NASA's Planetary Sciences division, said.

AFP



TITLE:

Republic of the Philippines
DA - DAR - DENR - DILG
National Convergence Initiative for Sustainable Rural Development (NCI-SRD)
JOINT MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR (JMC)
DA-DAR-DENR JOINT MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR (JMC) NO. 1
Series of 2022

Subject: Revised Unified Scholarship Guidelines for the NCI-SRD Master in Public Management Major in Rural Development (MPM-RD) Scholarship Program

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

Pursuant to Executive Order No. 6, series of 2016 mandating the adoption of "AmBisyo-Aasin 2040" as a guide for development planning in the country, the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022 directing the government to complement strategic efforts with environmental and governance strategies through the national convergence initiatives using the ridge-to-ridge approach and the Sustainable Integrated Area Development (SIAD) for the sustainable management of natural resources and rural development, and the Joint Administrative Order (JAO) No. 01, series of 2020 (Revised JAO No. 01, series of 2019: Strengthening the Implementation Framework for the DA-DAR-DENR-DILG National Convergence Initiative for Sustainable Rural Development), the DA-DAR-DENR-DILG NCI-SRD Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) on the Revised Unified Scholarship Guidelines for the NCI-SRD Master in Public Management Major in Rural Development (MPM-RD) Scholarship Program is hereby issued.

SECTION 1. Objective

These guidelines aim to provide guidance on the implementation of the NCI-SRD MPM-RD Scholarship Program. Specifically, it shall provide the following:

1. overview of the program and its program management;
2. rules and procedures for the scholarship;
3. obligations and benefits of the scholars; and
4. sanctions and grounds for termination of the scholarship.

SECTION 2. Scope and Coverage

These guidelines shall apply to all permanent personnel of the DA, DAR, and DENR who shall avail of the scholarship program. It shall specifically apply to the MPM-RD scholarship program implemented by the NCI-SRD in partnership with the Department of Education (DepEd). The guidelines shall be implemented in accordance with the MPM-RD Program Design document, which provides detailed information on the MPM-RD Scholarship Program.

SECTION 3. Definition of Terms

- 3.1 Blended learning - educational approach that combines the effectiveness and socialization opportunities of the traditional classroom with the active learning possibilities of the technology-based online environment rather than a ratio of delivery modes.
- 3.2 Double-degree degree - degree conferred to the scholar which is recognized by two separate institutions. Upon confirmation, the MPM-RD graduate shall be recognized as a graduate and alumni of two schools.
- 3.3 Face-to-face learning - instructional method in which students, faculty in charge, **LEARNERS ACQUISITS SKILL RESOURCES PERSONS MEET TOGETHER IN THE SAME PLACE AND AT THE SAME TIME.**
- 3.4 Online learning - instructional method through the utilization of computers or mobile devices and the facilitation of learning through the internet for teacher/student interaction and distribution of class materials. This is sometimes interchangeably called e-learning, distance education or internet-based learning.
- 3.5 Rural Development Action Plan and Project (RDAPP) - final paper submitted by the scholar as a requirement for graduation. The RDAPP serves as the thesis equivalent of the program which shall be completed individually.
- 3.6 Agency Scholarship Committee (ASC) - Scholarship Committee of DA-DAR-DENR.
- 3.7 Executive Scholarship Committee (ESC) - oversight Scholarship Committee of the DA-DAR-DENR Agency Scholarship Committee, which gives the final approval on all applications endorsed to the NCI-SRD National Steering Committee.
- 3.8 Distinguished scholar - scholar who is identified with the scholarship but unable to complete the program and its requirements within the prescribed period with no justifiable reason.
- 3.9 Scholarship Service Contract - agreement between the grantee, the guarantor and the grantor, especially one that is written and enforceable by law.
- 3.10 Grantee - person to whom a scholarship grant is made.
- 3.11 Grantor - agency that grants the scholarship.
- 3.12 Total cost - total amount of the program including tuition fees, allowances and other benefits related to the course.

SECTION 4. MPM-RD Scholarship Program

- 4.1 Design
 - 4.1.1 The program shall utilize a blended approach to instruction, which is a combination of online learning and traditional face-to-face teaching methods. Twenty-two hours (22) shall be allotted for online sessions (synchronous and asynchronous learning) and thirty-two (32) hours for face-to-face sessions per course. The blended approach shall allow students the flexibility to engage in a work-study scheme, regardless of where they are based.
 - 4.1.2 The curriculum shall be composed of 39 units divided into the following: core courses (15 units), elective courses (21 units), comprehensive examination, and RDAPP (3 units).
 - 4.1.3 The duration or period of completion of the MPM-RD Scholarship Program shall be 14 to 18 months. Extension for completion of the program may be allowed under circumstances indicated under Section 10.
- 4.2 Policies
 - 4.2.1 The program shall subscribe to the principle of equitable scholarship opportunities for DA-DAR-DENR personnel at the national and regional levels.
 - 4.2.2 The program shall subscribe to the goals of the NCI-SRD and in the implementation of joint planning, joint budgeting, and joint monitoring and evaluation of the programs, activities, and projects (PIA/Ps) identified by the NCI-SRD.
 - 4.2.3 Preference shall be given to those who are active members of the NCI-SRD's Component Working Groups (CWGs), Regional Convergence Initiative Technical Working Groups (TCI TWGs), and their Secretariat who have met the basic qualification requirements of the scholarship program.
- 4.3 Implementing Units
 - 4.3.1 The MPM-RD Scholarship Program shall be jointly implemented by the four (4) NCI-SRD agencies, namely, DA, DAR, and DENR in partnership with the DAP as the lead of the Educational Consortium on Rural Development (ECRD).
 - 4.3.2 The DAP shall implement the partnership with the following academic institutions:
 - 4.3.2.1 Aleneo School of Government (ASG-ADMU)
 - 4.3.2.2 UP-National College of Public Administration and Governance (UP-NCPAG)
 - 4.3.2.3 Xavier University (XU)
 - 4.3.3 Partnerships with other educational institutions may be included in the implementation of the MPM-RD Scholarship Program upon approval of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with DAP and other prospective schools.

SECTION 5. MPM-RD SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

The MPM-RD Scholarship Program shall be managed by the following, as shown in Annex A of this guideline:

- 5.1 The NCI-SRD represented by the National Steering Committee (NSC) composed of the DA, DAR, and DENR Secretaries or their permanent alternate Undersecretaries, shall have oversight functions on the implementation and monitoring of the MPM-RD scholarship program;
- 5.2 The DAP shall be the primary academic institution in managing the MPM-RD scholarship program;
- 5.3 The Partner Universities (ASG-ADMU, UP-NCPAG, and XU) shall serve as the academic institutions which shall provide the lecture and learning resources;
- 5.4 The ESC, composed of the Chairman of the Capacity Development Component Working Group and the representatives from the ASC, shall conduct the final review and endorsement of applicants for the scholarship to the NCI-SRD; and
- 5.5 The ASC of the respective Departments shall conduct the initial review and endorsement of applications to the ESC.

SECTION 6. MPM-RD SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM APPLICATION PROCESS

- 6.1 Qualification Requirements

The following are the qualification requirements for the scholars:

- 6.1.1 Not be more than fifty (50) years old at the time of nomination;
- 6.1.2 Have attained a bachelor's degree from a CHED-recognized institution. If the degree was earned abroad, applicant must have certification from CHED that the degree earned is equivalent to a Philippine bachelor's degree;
- 6.1.3 Computer literate with basic skills on Microsoft Word and Excel;
- 6.1.4 Pass the ASC requirements and DAP school admission requirements;
- 6.1.5 Hold a permanent position at the time of application and performing technical duties and responsibilities relevant to rural development;
- 6.1.6 Preferably not a holder of master's degree at the time of application;
- 6.1.7 Have resided in **at least two (2) years of cumulative relevant** assigned in the NCI-SRD agency as permanent employee and/or under contract of service/job order/contractual;
- 6.1.8 Have a rating equivalent to at least Very Satisfactory (VS) in the Individual Performance and Commitment Review (IPCR) for two (2) consecutive rating periods immediately preceding the nomination;
- 6.1.9 Have not previously availed of any scholarship, study program, or study grant in the past two years due to service obligation cancellation;
- 6.1.10 Physically and mentally fit to undergo the course with no contraindication to assume coursework in a work-study scheme;
- 6.1.12 No pending administrative/criminal case.

6.2 Documentary Requirements and Submissions

- 6.2.1 Documentary Requirements

The MPM-RD scholarship program applicants shall submit the following documentary requirements:

- 6.2.1.1 Fully accomplished application form;
- 6.2.1.2 Letter of Application addressed to the respective ASC;
- 6.2.1.3 Letter of Application addressed to the respective ASC;
- 6.2.1.4 Three (3) Reference Letters (submitted in an envelope and submitted to the ASC);
- 6.2.1.5 Three (3) Proposed RDAPP Topics;
- 6.2.1.6 Latest Personal Data Sheet (PDS);
- 6.2.1.7 Certified True Copy of Transcript of Records (TOR);
- 6.2.1.8 Certified True Copy of College Diploma;
- 6.2.1.9 Certificate of Employment;

- 6.2.1.10 Authenticated Copy of PSA Birth Certificate;
- 6.2.1.11 Endorsement from the head of office;
- 6.2.1.12 Photo copy of Individual Performance and Commitment Review (IPCR) during the two (2) rating periods preceding the application;
- 6.2.1.13 Certificate of no pending application for scholarship under another study program;
- 6.2.1.14 Certificate of No Pending Case; and
- 6.2.1.15 Medical Certificate issued by government-accredited hospital/physician

6.2.2 Additional Requirements

Additional requirements shall be required by DAP from the applicants upon endorsement of the applicants by the NCI-SRD, which are as follows:

- 6.2.2.1 Copy of submitted documentary requirements indicated in Section 6.2.1;
- 6.2.2.2 Written examination (admission test); and
- 6.2.2.3 Oral Interview through physical or virtual meetings whichever is practicable.

The following additional requirements shall be required by the ASC from the applicants upon endorsement of the applicants to the NCI-SRD, which are as follows:

- 6.2.2.4 Copy of service record;
- 6.2.2.5 Copy of duties and responsibilities; and
- 6.2.2.6 Copy of appointment.

6.3 The final nominated scholars shall be officially notified through their respective ASCs.

6.3.1 The DAP shall schedule a written examination (admission test) and oral interview within ten (10) days upon receipt of the final list of nominated scholars.

6.3.2 The nominated scholars who pass the DAP admission test and oral interview shall be formally notified through their respective ASCs within five (5) working days upon receipt of the official letter from the NCI-SRD.

6.3.3 The qualified scholars shall officially confirm acceptance of the scholarship program through their respective ASCs within ten (10) working days after receipt of the final result of the admission test by signing the Scholarship Contract Agreement. Failure of an applicant to confirm within the given period shall render their slot void.

SECTION 7. OBLIGATIONS OF THE SCHOLAR

The following shall be the obligations of the MPM-RD scholars:

- 7.1 Sign a Scholarship Service Contract with their respective NCI-SRD agencies binding themselves to terms and conditions pursuant to the Joint Memorandum Circular. The contract shall be signed by the grantee and their assigned co-pastor or guarantor and shall be witnessed by the immediate superior or Head of Agency.
- 7.2 Comply with the standards set by the partner universities for the MPM-RD scholarship program and abide by the conditions specified by the scholarship grant.
- 7.3 Conduct themselves in a manner as not to bring disgrace or dishonor to their respective NCI-SRD agencies during the scholarship period.
- 7.4 Not engage in any work for pay or accept other forms of scholarship or fellowship during the scholarship period without the consent of their respective NCI-SRD agencies.
- 7.5 Complete all the requirements for the MPM-RD scholarship program within the period of 14-18 months, or if under extension, as indicated under Section 10, complete the RDAPP during the provided period.
- 7.6 Maintain a minimum passing grade in all subjects set by the degree-granting institutions and pass, specifically, the comprehensive examination;
- 7.7 Submit the following requirements:
 - 7.7.1 RDAPP in hard copy or thesis equivalent of the scholar which is a requirement for graduation;
 - 7.7.2 Seven (7) hard copies of the RDAPP (five copies to be given to the partner institutions and two copies for the Department); and
 - 7.7.3 Original copy of the TOR and photocopy of the Diploma to their respective NCI-SRD agencies after the completion of the course.
- 7.8 Be active members of their respective NCI-SRD national, regional, and local Technical Working Groups (TWGs) for a minimum of 3 years as stipulated in NCI-SRD Joint Resolution No. 02 (Designation of the Master in Public Management Major in Rural Development (MPM-RD) Scholarship Program Graduate as Members of the National and Regional Technical Working Groups/Component Working Groups of the NCI-SRD) and No. 18 (Inclusion of the NCI-SRD Activities in the Individual Performance Commitment and Review (IPCR), and Division IPCR (DIPCR) and Office IPCR (OIPCR) Health and Resilience) of the Department of Education, Series of 2016;
- 7.9 Submit annual reports on the implementation status/progress of the RDAPP for three (3) years to ensure the sustainability of the agency and the NCI-SRD National Secretariat;
- 7.10 Be responsible for the logistical arrangements and expenses of their panel members, including travel allowance, and participating in the RDAPP presentation and defense by inviting only a maximum of five (5) persons to be covered under each arrangement.

SECTION 8. SCHOLARSHIP BENEFITS

The following are the benefits of the MPM-RD scholar:

- 8.1 Conferral of a double-degree master's degree in MPM-RD or a master's degree recognized by two institutions after fulfillment of all scholarship requirements;
- 8.2 Full basic salary and other benefits from the mother agency for the duration of the program;
- 8.3 Full tuition and miscellaneous fees including:
 - 8.3.1 Scholar's Stipend/Production Allowance: ten thousand pesos (P10,000.00) per semester;
 - 8.3.2 Internet Allowance: two thousand pesos (P2,000.00) per month;
 - 8.3.3 RDAPP Support: fifty thousand pesos (P50,000.00). RDAPP support shall be for the following purposes: equipment, research, and research Assistant (RA) stipend/allowance for RA, including research activities such as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), survey, interviews, feedback, consultation with RDAPP Advisor and other related activities or expenditures;
 - 8.3.4 Travel Allowance: provision of round-trip fare to and from the place of residence to the place of assignment, charged against the scholar's respective office, including the scholar's precaution. Travel expenses shall be charged against the scholar's respective office. The number of the face-to-face sessions shall depend on the final design of the course. Term building sessions are included to the face-to-face sessions.
 - 8.3.5 Graduation Fee: The amount to be assessed by the DAP shall be directly paid by the Department/agency to the DAP.
- 8.4 At least one (1) day of rest per course work from the 1st month up to the 14th month of the course. By the 16th to 18th month, the scholar shall be given at least 2-days per week for the RDAPP.

SECTION 9. GROUNDS FOR TERMINATION

The following shall be considered grounds for termination, subject to due process for verification of the act from the MPM-RD Scholarship Program:

- 9.1 Formal charge of an administrative case, unlawful behavior, gross negligence or the loss or conviction of an offense involving moral turpitude during the duration of the program;
- 9.2 Dishonesty including plagiarism, submission of fake documents, cheating, and deception;
- 9.3 Enrollment in another scholarship program during the duration of studies under MPM-RD;
- 9.4 Present or accepted pardon of unexcused absence; and
- 9.5 Other cases analogous to the foregoing in the context of the academic exercise.

SECTION 10. SANCTIONS FOR NON-FULFILLMENT OF OBLIGATIONS

If a scholar fails to attempt presenting the RDAPP, the scholar shall consider all expenses for the re-defense, including logistical arrangements and expenses of invited participants to the RDAPP presentation;

- 10.2 Failure to complete the program, pass a course or comply with any requirement within the duration of 18 months shall hold the scholar liable and subject to each corresponding agency's rules or penalties for failing to complete the scholarship requirement within the given period. For the procedure on re-try, the scholar may refer to Section 11.
- 10.3 A scholar may be allowed an extension for six (6) months to complete the RDAPP in cases of force majeure or in extenuating reasons deemed acceptable by the DAP, involving natural calamities or various health problems.

SECTION 11. PROCEDURE FOR REFUND AND OTHER PAYMENT OBLIGATIONS

- 11.1 For any grounds for termination as enumerated in Section 9 hereof, a scholar shall refund the full amount advanced by the agency upon receipt of a demand letter;
- 11.2 In case the scholar voluntarily withdraws or drops out from the scholarship program after already signing the Scholarship Contract Agreement, payment obligations may be fulfilled through benefit deduction of the scholar or negotiation of payment terms with the ASC and DAP. In case of payment for refund when applicable amount to within three (3) years immediately after the expiration of withdrawal from the scholarship program.

SECTION 12. MANDATORY REVIEW

These guidelines shall be regularly reviewed and revised as the need arises.

SECTION 13. REPEALING CLAUSE

This revised Unified Scholarship Guidelines supersedes the previous Unified Scholarship Guidelines of the MPM-RD Scholarship Program and revokes all other issuances inconsistent therewith.

SECTION 14. EFFECTIVITY

This revised JMC takes effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in one (1) newspaper of general circulation and upon registration with the Office of National Administration Register (ONAR).

Department of Education
Department of Agrarian Reform
Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)



TITLE

PAGE

DATE

Republic of the Philippines
BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO
 Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Energy
 OFFICE OF THE MINISTER
 Bangsamoro Government Center, Governor Guillermo Ave., RH-7, Cotabato City
 Tel. No. (084) 421-4387

IN RE: CANCELLATION OF MINERAL PRODUCTION SHARING AGREEMENT (MPSA) NO. 01-ARMN-07 ISSUED TO FS BORJA TRADING AND MINING CORPORATION

ORDER

WHEREAS, Section 2 of Republic Act No. 7942 otherwise known as "the Philippine Mining Act of 1995" states that "All mineral resources in public and private lands within the territory and exclusive economic zone of the Republic of the Philippines are owned by the state. It shall be the responsibility of the state to promote their rational exploration, development, utilization and conservation through the combined efforts of government and the private sector in order to enhance national growth in a way that effectively safeguards the environment and protect the rights of affected communities;"

WHEREAS, Section 1, Title III of the Bangsamoro Administrative Code states that the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Energy shall exercise power, authority and right to explore, develop and utilize the natural resources, including mines and minerals in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region;

WHEREAS, on October 23, 2007, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (predecessor of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region), through its Department of Environment and Natural Resources - ARMM (DENR-ARMM) and FS Borja Mining and Trading Corporation (FS Borja) executed Mineral Production Sharing Agreement No. 01-ARMN-07 (the "MPSA") for the exploration, development and utilization of nickel and other mineral deposits within the contract area of 6,044.44 hectares located in the municipalities of Languyat, Tandubas, Sape-Sape and Panglima Sugata, all in the province of Tawi-Tawi;

WHEREAS, the MPSA has a term of twenty-five (25) years from Effective Date, which may be renewed thereafter for another term not exceeding twenty-five (25) years;

WHEREAS, Sections 86 and 87 of Republic Act (RA) No. 7942 provide that violation of the terms and conditions of a permit or agreement and failure to pay the taxes and fees due to the government for two (2) consecutive years shall cause the cancellation of the permit or agreement;

WHEREAS, Section 230 of DENR Administrative Order (DAO) No. 2010-21 provide that the following are the grounds for cancellation, revocation and termination of a permit or agreement: (a) falsehood or omission of facts in the application which may alter, change or affect substantially the facts set forth in said statement; (b) non-payment of taxes and fees due to the Government for two consecutive years; (c) failure to perform all other obligations, including abandonment, under the permit or agreement; (d) violation of any of the terms and conditions of the Permit or Agreement; and/or (e) violation of existing laws, policies, and rules and regulations;

WHEREAS, Section 15.2 of the MPSA provides that the MPSA terminate or may be terminated for the following causes: (a) expiration of its term, whether original or renewal; (b) withdrawal from the Agreement by the Contractor, (c) violation by the Contractor of the Agreement's terms and conditions; (d) failure to pay taxes, fees or charges or financial obligations for two (2) consecutive years; (e) false statement or omission of facts by the Contractor; and (f) any other cause or reason provided under the Act and its implementing Rules and Regulations, or any other relevant laws and regulations;

WHEREAS, the records show that FS Borja failed to -

- Pay the annual Occupation Fees under the MPSA since CY 2007. In violation of Section 5.3 of the MPSA, Section 218 of DAO No. 2010-21, and Section 06 of RA No. 7942;
- Commence Exploration activities not later than three (3) months after the Effective Date of the MPSA for a period of two (2) years renewable for like periods but not to exceed a total term of six (6) years; and
- Submit compliance reports including but not limited to Work Programs and Budget (Section 5.2 of the MPSA), Reporting (Section 5.6 of the MPSA) and Environmental Work Program (Section 10.3 of the MPSA);

WHEREAS, on September 26, 2022 and June 16, 2023, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and Energy (the "Ministry") sent letters requiring FS Borja to show cause why the MPSA should not be cancelled;

WHEREAS, FS Borja failed to respond to any of the letters sent by the Ministry;

WHEREAS, on July 17, 2023 the Ministry sent another letter requiring FS Borja to show cause within fifteen (15) days from receipt thereof why the MPSA should not be cancelled (the "SCC") and to attend a technical conference to discuss and clarify the recorded violations of FS Borja;

WHEREAS, during the technical conference held on August 22, 2023, no representatives appeared to represent FS Borja;

WHEREAS, on August 22, 2023, FS Borja replied to the SCC and averred that:

- It is willing to settle the occupation tax with the Ministry and pay the appropriate taxes and fees due to the Local Government Units within the jurisdiction of the MPSA;
- In 2013, it fielded an exploration team together with a Project Manager for the geological mapping and ocular inspection of the areas where FS Borja will undertake initial exploration and drilling works, during which it tried to establish rapport with the impact community and acquire favorable resolution, however, the appointment with LGU facilitated by some landowners and IP tribal leaders was not accomplished for unknown reasons;
- Sometime in April 2014, while their team was preparing in Bonggao for their travel to the MPSA area, they were advised by officers of the Philippine Marine Corps not to proceed to the MPSA area because of safety and security concerns;
- Its planned in-house exploration and other operational activities were put on hold for various reasons including the supposed threat upon entry into the MPSA area and denial of their Project Manager who was knowledgeable on the project.

WHEREAS, despite its commitment to settle the occupation tax and the appropriate taxes and fees due to the government, FS Borja still failed to comply as of date of this Order;

WHEREAS, FS Borja failed to substantiate or support, with any proof or documentation, its reasons for the delay in the commencement of its exploration activities;

WHEREAS, the failure of FS Borja to comply with the basic obligations under the contract puts doubt on its financial and technical capability as a Contractor of an MPSA;

WHEREAS, the primary purpose of the Government agreeing to appoint FS Borja as a Contractor of an MPSA is its assurance and warranties that it has the financial resources, technical competence, and skills to conduct mining operations;

WHEREAS, the Government is on the losing end if the MPSA remains idle and non-moving, thus, it is better for the Government to hand it to another deserving and more capable mining contractor qualified under the law;

WHEREAS, the above violations by FS Borja are grounds for the cancellation of the MPSA;

WHEREAS, under Title III, Chapter 1, Section 2 of the Bangsamoro Administrative Code, the Ministry shall be primarily responsible for the exploration, utilization, management, conservation, protection and sustainable development of the region's environmental, natural resources and energy sources;


WHEREAS, under Title III, Chapter 1, Section 2 of the Bangsamoro Administrative Code, the Ministry shall exercise supervision and control over mineral resources within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region;

WHEREAS, pursuant to the exercise of the mandate and the powers of the Ministry, the Minister evaluated the reported non-compliance by FS Borja with the terms of the MPSA and with the provisions of the mining laws and rules and deemed that such non-compliance constitutes valid grounds under the MPSA and the pertinent mining laws and rules;

NOW, WHEREFORE, the foregoing premises considered, the Mineral Production Sharing Agreement No. 01-ARMN-07, previously issued to FS Borja, is hereby CANCELLED.

SO ORDERED.

SEP 25, 2023, Cotabato City, BARMM


 Minister

MT - Sept. 26, 2023

Republic of the Philippines
BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO
 Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Energy
 OFFICE OF THE MINISTER
 Bangsamoro Government Center, Governor Guillermo Ave., RH-7, Cotabato City
 Tel. No. (084) 421-4387

IN RE: CANCELLATION OF MINERAL PRODUCTION SHARING AGREEMENT (MPSA) NO. 01-ARMN-07 ISSUED TO AMRC MINING RESOURCES CORPORATION

ORDER

WHEREAS, Section 2 of Republic Act No. 7942 otherwise known as "the Philippine Mining Act of 1995" states that "All mineral resources in public and private lands within the territory and exclusive economic zone of the Republic of the Philippines are owned by the state. It shall be the responsibility of the state to promote their rational exploration, development, utilization and conservation through the combined efforts of government and the private sector in order to enhance national growth in a way that effectively safeguards the environment and protect the rights of affected communities;"

WHEREAS, Section 1, Title III of the Bangsamoro Administrative Code states that the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Energy shall exercise power, authority and right to explore, develop and utilize the natural resources, including mines and minerals in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region;

WHEREAS, on December 27, 2007, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (predecessor of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region), through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources - ARMM (DENR-ARMM) and Adarna Mining Resources Corporation (AMRC) executed Mineral Production Sharing Agreement No. 01-ARMN-07 (the "MPSA") for the exploration, development and utilization of nickel and other mineral deposits within the contract area of 8,100,000 hectares located in the municipalities of Languyat, Tandubas, and Sape-Sape all in the province of Tawi-Tawi;

WHEREAS, the MPSA has a term of twenty-five (25) years from Effective Date, which may be renewed thereafter for another term not exceeding twenty-five (25) years;

WHEREAS, Sections 86 and 87 of Republic Act (RA) No. 7942 provide that violation of the terms and conditions of a permit or agreement and failure to pay the taxes and fees due to the government for two (2) consecutive years shall cause the cancellation of the permit or agreement;

WHEREAS, Section 230 of DENR Administrative Order (DAO) No. 2010-21 provide that the following are the grounds for cancellation, revocation and termination of a permit or agreement: (a) falsehood or omission of facts in the application which may alter, change or affect substantially the facts set forth in said statement; (b) non-payment of taxes and fees due to the Government for two consecutive years; (c) failure to perform all other obligations, including abandonment, under the permit or agreement; (d) violation of any of the terms and conditions of the Permit or Agreement; and/or (e) violation of existing laws, policies, and rules and regulations;

WHEREAS, Section 15.2 of the MPSA provides that the MPSA terminate or may be terminated for the following causes: (a) expiration of its term, whether original or renewal; (b) withdrawal from the Agreement by the Contractor, (c) violation by the Contractor of the Agreement's terms and conditions; (d) failure to pay taxes, fees or charges or financial obligations for two (2) consecutive years; (e) false statement or omission of facts by the Contractor; and (f) any other cause or reason provided under the Act and its implementing Rules and Regulations, or any other relevant laws and regulations;

WHEREAS, the records show that AMRC failed to -

- Pay the annual Occupation Fees under the MPSA since CY 2007. In violation of Section 5.3 of the MPSA, Section 218 of DAO No. 2010-21, and Section 06 of RA No. 7942;
- Commence Exploration activities not later than three (3) months after the Effective Date of the MPSA for a period of two (2) years renewable for like periods but not to exceed a total term of six (6) years; and
- Submit compliance reports including but not limited to Work Programs and Budget (Section 5.2 of the MPSA), Reporting (Section 5.6 of the MPSA) and Environmental Work Program (Section 10.3 of the MPSA);

WHEREAS, on June 5, 2023 the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and Energy (the "Ministry") required AMRC to show cause why the MPSA should not be cancelled;

WHEREAS, AMRC failed to respond to the letter sent by the Ministry;

WHEREAS, on July 16, 2023 the Ministry sent another letter requiring AMRC to show cause within fifteen (15) days from receipt thereof why the MPSA should not be cancelled (the "SCC") and attend a technical conference to discuss and clarify the recorded violations of AMRC;

WHEREAS, on July 20, 2023, the Ministry received a letter reply from AMRC in reply to the SCC which averred that:

- Sometime in 2013, it fielded an exploration team together with a Project Manager for the geological mapping and ocular inspection of the areas where AMRC will undertake initial exploration and drilling works, during which it tried to establish rapport with the impact community and acquire favorable resolution, however, the appointment with LGU facilitated by some landowners and IP tribal leaders was not accomplished for unknown reasons;
- Sometime in April 2014, while their team was preparing in Bonggao for their travel to the MPSA area, they were advised by officers of the Philippine Marine Corps not to proceed to the MPSA area because of safety and security concerns;
- Its planned in-house exploration and other operational activities were put on hold for various reasons including the supposed threat upon entry into the MPSA area and denial of their Project Manager who was knowledgeable on the project.

WHEREAS, during the technical conference held on August 22, 2023, a representative from AMRC, Antonio M. Lento, appeared to reiterate the contents of the letter reply sent by AMRC to the Ministry and reiterated details of their supposed attempts in the past to commence Exploration activities in the Contract Area of the MPSA. Additionally, Mr. Lento reported the following:

- AMRC sent numerous documents pertaining to their compliance to MENRE including bank certificates and exploration work program thru JRS express. However, he failed to show proof of such submissions;
- AMRC paid the occupational fees until 2012 or 2013 but he could not present the receipts as proof of said payments;
- AMRC failed to pay the occupational fees from 2013 to present; and
- AMRC did not file any reports or provided updates to the Mines and Geosciences Service (MGS) on their operations because they had a contractor which they expected to register itself with MENRE as a contractor of AMRC and to file reports and updates on behalf of AMRC.

WHEREAS, despite its admission on non-payment of pertinent fees, AMRC failed to undertake to pay and to pay the unpaid fees until date of this Order;

WHEREAS, AMRC failed to substantiate or support, with any proof or documentation, its reasons for the delay in the commencement of its exploration activities;

WHEREAS, AMRC failed to show any proof of his supposed payment of fees or submission of compliance reports to MGS/MENRE;

WHEREAS, the failure of AMRC to comply with the basic obligations under the contract puts doubt on its financial and technical capability as a Contractor of an MPSA;

WHEREAS, the primary purpose of the Government agreeing to appoint AMRC as a Contractor of an MPSA is its assurance and warranties that it has the financial resources, technical competence, and skills to conduct mining operations;

WHEREAS, the Government is on the losing end if the MPSA remains idle and non-moving, thus, it is better for the Government to hand it to another deserving and more capable mining contractor qualified under the law;

WHEREAS, the above violations by AMRC are grounds for the cancellation of the MPSA;

WHEREAS, under Title III, Chapter 1, Section 2 of the Bangsamoro Administrative Code, the Ministry shall be primarily responsible for the exploration, utilization, management, conservation, protection and sustainable development of the region's environmental, natural resources and energy sources;


WHEREAS, under Title III, Chapter 1, Section 2 of the Bangsamoro Administrative Code, the Ministry shall exercise supervision and control over mineral resources within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region;

WHEREAS, pursuant to the exercise of the mandate and the powers of the Ministry, the Minister evaluated the reported non-compliance by FS Borja with the terms of the MPSA and with the provisions of the mining laws and rules and deemed that such non-compliance constitutes valid grounds under the MPSA and the pertinent mining laws and rules;

NOW, WHEREFORE, the foregoing premises considered, the Mineral Production Sharing Agreement No. 01-ARMN-07, previously issued to AMRC, is hereby CANCELLED.

SO ORDERED.

SEP 25, 2023, Cotabato City, BARMM


 Minister

MT - Sept. 26, 2023