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DENR

IN THE NEWS

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26 MAR 2019

TITLE:

PAGE 1/

DATE

Cordillera fire task force formed

By Aldwin Quitasol

A memorandum of understanding creating the Regional Inter-Agency Task Group to be chaired by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) regional director and assisted by the Bureau of Fire Protection RD was forged at the DENR office in Baguio City Monday.

The task force shall work to prevent forest fires, mitigate El Niño effects prevalent during the dry months; protect communities facing threats from environmental law violators, and promote coordination of jurisdiction, responsibilities and capabilities.

Accordingly, two designated representatives with additional personnel as needed will attend meetings as called for, provide fast and efficient response to verified reports of forest fires and El Niño phenomenon from any source and man checkpoints and stations set up for the purpose.



TITLE:

PAGE 1/

DATE



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ALEX MAGNO

Impressive

Landfill

All the feverish activity going on at Clark could run into an unexpected hindrance, however.

All the trash being generated at Clark and nearby provinces goes to a high-tech sanitary landfill operated by Metro Clark Waste Management (MCWM) in Kalangitan, Capas, Tarlac. For a time, LGUs from as far as Baguio City and the coastal areas of Pangasinan deposited their waste at the MCWM facility. The Kalangitan facility now serves 90 LGUs in Central Luzon.

Unlike that landfill in the Navotas-Obando coastline that serves the Manila area, the Kalangitan facility uses modern technology to treat industrial waste, preventing leeching of heavy metals into the water table. Chemicals from the trash dumped at the Navotas site seeps straight into Manila Bay.

The Kalangitan facility uses the most advanced technology of clay and plastic linings to prevent waste from escaping to the water table. The methane generated by trash as it rots is trapped and used to produce electricity. A high temperature flare is used to capture the rest of the escaping gas that will otherwise contribute to global warming.

MCWM enjoys a waste service management contract with the Clark Development Corp. (CDC). Through the life of the contract, the Filipino-German joint venture will pay CDC a total of P1 billion in royalties. The company derives its business from the collection of tolling fees for every ton of trash dumped in its landfill. So far, it has proven to be a sustainable business model.

Recently, the DENR's Manila Bay Coordinating Office threatened the MCWM with closure on a number of minor technical issues – all of them suitably addressed. There is really no need for the threat of abrupt closure unless someone else wants the business.

The abrupt closure of MCWM will send the trash from Clark and 190 other municipalities to unsafe dumping sites. That is a worse outcome.

On one hand, DENR Undersecretary Sherwin Rigor must be congratulated for extending the campaign for cleaning up Manila Bay to as far as the dumping sites of Central Luzon. Rigor is the "ground commander" of the Manila Bay rehabilitation program. Any leeching in the Central Luzon dumpsites could run through the rivers to Manila Bay.

On the other hand, the DENR must realize that summary measures could cause more harm than good. There are not enough suitable sanitary landfills to serve the Mega Manila area and surrounding provinces. The agency must appreciate the necessity for cooperative efforts to upgrade waste handling in place of summary measures.

If we want to stop leeching of toxic substances into the Bay, the most urgent measures will require closure of the Navotas and Payatas dumpsites. Neither is even designed as a sanitary landfill engineered to prevent the escape of heavy metals onto the air and groundwater.





Metro Manila water supply assured

Angat Dam may breach 180-meter low water level by end of April

1/2

By **ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ**

Supply of domestic water would remain normal even if water level at Angat Dam, the major source of Metro Manila's water supply, may breach its 180-meter low water level by end of April.

Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) hydrologist Gine Nievares gave this assurance, citing the National Water Resources Board's (NWRB's) protocol in the release of water from Angat Dam.

Under the NWRB protocol, water releases for irrigation needs in Bulacan and Pampanga will be temporarily halted once the dam's level falls below its 180-meter minimum operating level as domestic water supply to Metro Manila is prioritized over irrigation and power generation.

But Nievares said that if the water level at Angat Dam reaches the 160-meter critical level, domestic supply in Metro Manila will be significantly affected. The dam breached its 160-meter critical level in 2010.

As of Sunday, the current **►9**

level of Angat Dam – which supplies 96 percent of Metro Manila's domestic water needs – was 195.91 meters, lower than the 196.24 meters the previous day.

The projected 180-meter level by end of April was based on the weekly average deviation of Angat Dam's water level, monthly rainfall forecast, and current water allocation for irrigation and domestic needs, Nievares said.

Nievares said the last time Angat Dam reached its low water level of 180 meters was in May 2014 and May 2015. An El Niño event also occurred in 2015.

Water bill adjustment pushed

Meanwhile, Senator Grace Poe on Monday pressed the Manila Water Company, Inc. to implement a fair and just adjustment in the bill of its affected customers for the month of March and the succeeding months without water supply.

Poe reiterated her call as she expressed belief that the apology of the East Zone water concessionaire is best expressed to consumers by lowering its charges for the months when it failed to supply water. She believes the Ayala-led company will be able to manage, anyway.

"Manila water can absorb it, their income will not dry up. It is a drop in their bucket of profits. An apology is best expressed monetarily," the chair of the Senate Committee on Public Services said in a statement.

"Manila Water should not be reaping profits even if the taps have run dry...Kung walang tumulong tubig sa gripo, bakit tayo magbabayad?" she added.

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) met officials of the Manila Water on Monday

to discuss the adjustments.

MWSS Chief Regulator Patrick Ty said Manila Water was given until next week to explain why the government should not penalize it based on their concession agreement.

But uncertainties loom on how the government will make the Ayala-led Manila Water accountable for the water supply interruption that 1.2 million of its consumers had to bear over the last weeks.

Ty also admitted that MWSS could not impose administrative penalties to the company even if they caused inconvenience to millions of its customers.

"They were given notice to explain. After that, we will proceed to study how much [rebate] or if there is violation. Then we will decide a corresponding action," Ty told reporters on Monday.

"The set up would be is [since] we can't impose fines, we can just impose rebate because that is part of the penalties based on their concession agreement [with MWSS]. Another op-

tion is the cancellation of concession agreement," he added.

During the meeting, Ty asked officials of Manila Water the possibility of not collecting the payment for March water billing from its customers who suffered from the water interruption.

"[To order Manila Water not to collect payments] is beyond MWSS-RO [MWSS-Regulatory Office]. But (we) would give them the moral pressure. We will ask them to do the right thing," he said, but adding that the priority right now is for Manila Water to stabilize its supply.

Poe said MWSS must be vigilant in making sure that the public is not shortchanged by the computation of the bill reduction. She said the bill adjustment should come after the meeting of MWSS and Manila Water, and be immediately felt by the people in their next billing.

"This should be treated as an urgent matter, and should be felt by the consumers as soon as possible," she appealed.

Raw water

Meanwhile, seven business groups led by the Management Association of the Philippines (MAP) said private water concessionaires should be allowed the option to provide raw water supply for their respective zones.

The business groups stressed this as they expressed full support to the directive of President Duterte to solve the water service disruption


PAGE
UPPER

LOWER
PAGE 1
STORY
BANNER
STORY
EDITORIAL
CARTOON

26 MAR 2019

DATE

TITLE:

PAGE 1/

2/2

in the East Zone concession of the Ayala-owned Manila Water Co. within 150 days.

"We are heartened by the fact that measures have been developed in consultation with and cooperation of all stakeholders, including government water agencies, regulators and the two private concessionaires. Accordingly, we are encouraged and confident that these interim measures will adequately resolve the water shortage and bring relief to consumers in the shortest possible time," according to the joint statement.

For the longer term, the groups cited the resoluteness manifested by the Duterte administration in undertaking solutions to ensure sustainable supply of raw water is most encouraging.

"Looking to the future, we also need to secure a secondary water source to address the growing needs of Metro Manila and its surrounding areas," the business groups said.

Already, Prime Infra of businessman Enrique K. Razon recently signed a memorandum of understanding with Manila Water to cooperate in the possible development of the Wawa Bulk Water Supply Project. The agreement formalizes the formation of a technical team that will conduct a technical study, of which shall be reviewed and approved by the MWSS. (With reports from Vanne P. Terrazola, Madelaine B. Mirafior, and Bernie Cahiles-Magkilat)



Megawide, partner build

Maynilad's largest wastewater treatment facility

By RODERICK L. ABAD [@rodrik_28](#)
Contributor

INFRASTRUCTURE and engineering company Megawide Construction Corp. and the MUL Consortium officially launched the construction of Maynilad Water Services Inc.'s (Maynilad) largest wastewater treatment facility located in Las Piñas amid the ongoing massive rehabilitation of Manila Bay.

"This is our first engineering project in wastewater treatment, and we're proud to be partner to

Maynilad in this undertaking," said Eric Tan, deputy head for construction of Megawide.

The West Zone concessionaire's Las Piñas Water Reclamation Facility (WRF) has a capacity of 88 million liters per day (MLD).

Once completed in 2022, it will serve potable water to around 660,000 customers of Maynilad.

Megawide tied up with MUL, comprised of Toshiba Water Solutions and LinkENERGIE, to deliver the design and build component of the project.

"Together with MUL, we are looking forward to delivering a first-world facility that meets the standards of Maynilad and benefits the greater community," Tan said.

The new WRF backs up the cleanup initiatives for Manila Bay as mandated by the Supreme Court, LinkENERGIE CEO Francisco Matias said. "Once the Las Piñas WRF is operational, it will

process raw sewage to conform to DENR [Department of Environment and Natural Resources] standards of cleanliness."

"It will discharge only clean water into the river system that drains directly to Manila Bay," he added.

Publicly listed Megawide is the private partner for other key infrastructure projects in the country, such as the Mactan-Cebu International Airport and the Parañaque Integrated Terminal Exchange.

Toshiba Water Solutions is a global environmental services company that specializes in wastewater collection, treatment and disposal.

Homegrown firm LinkENERGIE is among the leading electromechanical contractors in the Philippines.



26 MAR 2019

DATE

Megawide starts construction of water treatment plant

MEGAWIDE and the MUL Consortium (MUL) have started the construction of the Las Piñas water reclamation facility (WRF), the largest wastewater treatment plant of Maynilad Water Services Inc. at 88 million liters per day capacity.

MUL consortium is comprised of Toshiba Water Solutions Pvt Ltd and LinkENERGIE.

"This is our first engineering project in wastewater treatment, and we're proud to be partner to Maynilad in this undertaking. Together with MUL, we are looking forward

to delivering a first-world facility that meets the standards of Maynilad and benefits the greater community," said Eric Tan, Megawide deputy head for construction.

Megawide and MUL will deliver the design and build component of the Las Piñas WRF. MUL is comprised of Toshiba Water Solutions, an international environmental services company that specializes in wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal; and Filipino company LinkENERGIE, one of the leading electromechanical contractors in the Philippines.

According to LinkENERGIE chief executive officer Francisco Matias, the new WRF will greatly support the Supreme Court-mandated cleanup efforts for Manila Bay.

"Once the Las Piñas WRF is operational, it will process raw sewage to conform to DENR standards of cleanliness. It will discharge only clean water into the river system that drains directly to Manila Bay."

The Las Piñas Water Reclamation Facility will serve around 660,000 customers once completed in 2021.



Megawide tapped to build Maynilad's new treatment plant

By Jenniffer B. Austria

MEGAWIDE Construction Corp. and the MUL Consortium said Monday they started the construction of Maynilad Water Services Inc.'s water reclamation facility in Las Piñas City.

Megawide said in a statement the water reclamation facility was the company's first water project. It is also Maynilad's largest wastewater treatment plant with a capacity of 88 million liters per day.

"This is our first engineering project in wastewater treatment and we're proud to be the partner to Maynilad in this undertaking. Together with MUL, we are looking forward to delivering a first-world facility that meets the standards of Maynilad and benefits the greater community," said Megawide deputy head for construction Eric Tan.

Under the plan, Megawide and MUL will deliver the design and build the component of the Las Piñas water reclamation facility.

MUL is comprised of Toshiba Water Solutions, an international environmental services company that specializes in wastewater collection, treatment and disposal; and Filipino company LinkEnergie, one of the leading electromechanical contractors in the Philippines.

LinkEnergie chief executive Francisco Matias said the new WRF would support the Supreme Court-mandated cleanup efforts for Manila Bay.

"Once the Las Piñas water reclamation facility is operational, it will process raw sewage to conform to DENR standards of cleanliness. It will discharge only clean water into the river system that drains directly to Manila Bay," Matias said.



MWSS eyes cloud seeding;

Manila Water sued

Stories on Page 6

By **LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON**

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) is recommending cloud seeding as the Angat Dam, Metro Manila's water source, is nearing critical level.

MWSS administrator Reynaldo Velasco said formal recommendations have been sent to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) and the Bureau of Soils and Water Management to ease Angat's declining water level.

"The best we can do is cloud seeding and we are requesting that to be done so that there will be no blame game eventually," Velasco said.

PAGASA has warned that Angat Dam might hit critical level by the end of April as its water level is now at 195 meters, or 16.09 meters below its normal high level of 212 meters.

The dam will reach critical level once it breaches the 180-meter mark. The water level has been dropping by an average of 41 centimeters

every day.

"I am not comfortable with 180 (meters). We should not fall below 190, especially now that we are facing El Niño. And the water there is not only for Metro Manila, we also have to allocate for irrigation and power," Velasco said.

National Water Resources Board executive director Sevilla David Jr. said the decreasing water level in Angat is normal during the summer, although the agency is still monitoring the level due to El Niño.

"Included in our plan is the amount of water that we are supposed to release. As of now, we are still able to provide for the current needs," David said.

Located in Barangay San Lorenzo in Norzagaray, Bulacan, Angat Dam supplies 97 percent of Metro Manila's water needs and powers the Angat hydroelectric power plant.

The 131-meter high dam impounds water from the Angat River that subsequently created Angat Lake.

PAGASA said lesser rainfall and dry winds would likely affect 47 provinces. Of the figure, 42 will be hit by dry spell and 22 others will experience drought, which is expected to worsen by May.

El Niño is associated with below normal rainfall and is expected to last until August.

Welcomed

Nine business groups welcomed the steps taken by the government to address the water shortage in Metro Manila as they cited the need to come up with a secondary source to meet the rising demand and prevent a repeat of the problem.

In a joint statement issued yesterday, the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, Asia Pacific Real Estate Association, Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines, Foundation for Economic Freedom, Institute of Corporate Directors, Management Association of the Philippines and Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants said they support the directive of President Duterte to solve the water shortage within 150 days.

"We are heartened by the fact that measures have been developed in consultation with and cooperation of all stakeholders, including government water agencies, regulators and the two private concessionaires," they said.

They lauded the behavior of Velasco and the apology issued by Manila Water's chief executive officer Ferdinand dela Cruz on the water shortage, which also affected some of the Ayala-led company's customers.

"While disappointment and anger are understandable reactions, we should recognize that the water service interruption is not a total failure of the system. It must be noted that the water service in Metro Manila has vastly improved in almost two decades since the service was privatized," the groups said.

Even as the interim measures are seen as adequate to address the water shortage, the groups expressed belief that other actions need to be taken in the longer term to prevent a similar incident from happening.

"The private water concessionaires, being accountable

for rendering water service to the public, should be allowed the option to provide raw water supply for their respective zones," the groups said.

"Many lessons can be learned from this unfortunate episode and, hopefully, they will be employed to further improve the service and avoid a recurrence in the future," they said.

Meanwhile, another business group, the Makati Business Club (MBC), also expressed support for the efforts being done by the MWSS, Manila Water and other authorities to solve the water shortage and determine accountability and responsibility.

"The MBC recognizes that it is critical for the government, the concessionaires and other stakeholders to develop long-term solutions for both supply and demand. It stands ready with other business organizations to gather business sector

inputs and support for these efforts. The most important among these solutions are to prioritize the development of and streamline the approval process for new water sources, but also include more efficient usage," it said.

While it sees the need for long-term measures to address the problem on water supply and demand, the MBC expressed belief that public-private partnership works and the privatization of Manila's water system serves as a good model globally.

"Our members suffered with the rest of public, from the shortage of water in our homes and our businesses. But service is indisputably better than before privatization. We are confident in the resolve of the concessionaires and regulators to make all efforts to improve reliability in the months and years ahead," the MBC said.

- With Louella Desiderio



Wawa Dam proponent told to give up case vs gov't

By **MADELAINE B. MIRAFLOR**

The Wawa Dam project is pushing through and is expected to deliver treated water by 2022, but the condition of Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) for one of the project's proponents to drop the case it filed against the government regarding his "water rights" in the surrounding watershed still stands.

MWSS Administrator Reynaldo Velasco said he still won't allow port magnate Enrique Razon and businessman Oscar Violago to build the Wawa Bulk Water Supply Project if Violago won't drop the case he filed against the government years ago regarding his water rights.

Razon's Prime Infra, through a partnership with Violago's San Lorenzo Ruiz

Builders and Developers Group (SLRBD), signed a memorandum of understanding last week with Manila Water Company Inc. to cooperate in the possible development of the Wawa Bulk Water Supply Project.

But it was not made clear whether Violago already withdrew his case against the government or Velasco just simply took back his condition.

Speaking to Bulletin on Monday, Velasco said his condition still stands.

"It is still a must. It is still one of the requirements and Mr. Razon, who bought 80 percent of the water rights from Mr. Violago, knows that," Velasco said in a phone interview.

"I won't let them present that project to the MWSS Board if they still have a case against us," he added.

Violago, who is involved in the construction of hydropower plants, began proposing to convert Wawa Watershed in Montalban, Rizal into a dam in the early 1990s.

In 1993, he claimed he obtained the water rights to develop the Wawa Dam Project but MWSS and the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) still won't allow him to push through with it.

He even claimed that Manila Water "wants to grab" the project from him.

But in October last year, Velasco said the agency has considered the proposal of Violago and its newly tapped partner, Razon, the owner of International Container Terminal Services, Inc. (ICTSI) and Bloomberry Resorts Corp.

However, Velasco said the Wawa Dam

will not push through until Violago withdraw the case and allow Manila Water be the off-taker for the water to be treated out of the dam.

"The condition is for proponents to drop the case and allow Manila Water to tap at least 80 mld [million liters per day] so they can distribute," Velasco said.

With a planned capacity of over 500 mld, Wawa Dam is at the Wawa catchment area traversing the municipality of Rodriguez and city of Antipolo, both in the province of Rizal. It is strategically located to serve the expansion areas Manila Water

Water experts have long-cited Wawa as the best potential water supply source for Metro Manila.

►B-2

Compared to Laguna Lake and other similar water supply options, it does not require an expensive treatment technology like reverse osmosis. At its capacity, it can serve more than 500,000 households in the MWSS franchise area.

The recently agreement between Prime Infra and Manila Water formalizes the formation of a technical team that will conduct a technical study on the Wawa Dam project, which shall be reviewed and approved by the MWSS.

Talks are now ongoing between Prime Infra and

Manila Water to start the project at the soonest possible time, especially considering the current water crisis.

"The proximity and water source quality of the Wawa catchment area will allow us to deliver first water no later than 2022. Because of the scale and life cycle cost of large dams, the public can be assured that we will deliver it in a cost-effective manner," Prime Infra President Guillaume Lucci said.

Manila Water is now in hot water for its implementation of low to no water supply interruption, affecting 1.2 million of its customers.



Dam, lake water levels drop further

Water levels in the country's lakes and reservoirs may suffer further decline as the State weather bureau forecasts way below to below average rainfall over the watershed areas in April.

According to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration, Angat Dam in Bulacan could receive way below normal rainfall next month.

Below normal rainfall is expected over Magat Watershed in Isabela, Malinao Watershed in Albay, Pantabangan Watershed in Nueva Ecija, San Roque Watershed in Pangasinan, Lake Buhi in Camarines Sur, and Lake Lanao in Lanao del Sur.

Based on PAGASA monitoring yesterday, water levels at Angat,

San Roque, Pantabangan, and Magat Dams have further declined.

Angat's water level further decreased from 195.91 meters last Sunday to 195.54 meters yesterday. Its normal high water level is at 210 meters.

Water levels at San Roque Dam also went down from 261.70 meters to 261.34 (normal high water level is at 280 meters); Pantabangan Dam from 201.23 meters to 200.92 meters (normal high water level is at 216 meters); and Magat Dam from 164.84 meters to 164.36 meters (normal high water level is at 190 meters).

Last Sunday, PAGASA warned that Angat Dam, which is Metro Manila's major source of domes-

tic water supply, is in danger of breaching its 180-meter low water level by end of April.

Should the Angat Dam reaches its 180-meter low water level, PAGASA said the supply of domestic water would remain normal.

However, it urged the public to conserve water as early as now. Hot and humid weather will prevail over most of the country throughout the week, as the easterlies will continue to be the dominant wind system coming from the Pacific.

PAGASA said Aurora, Quezon, Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Masbate, Sorsogon, Visayas, and Mindanao will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers. **(Ella-lyn V. Ruiz)**



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3
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

26 MAR 2019

TITLE:

PAGE 1/

DATE



Beat the heat People try to battle the heat with water from a defunct but still watery reservoir at the Wawa Dam in Montalban in Rodriguez, Rizal.

AFF



DAVAO ORIENTAL GOVT.

THE Mt. Hamiguitan Range was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014 for its rich, diverse and intact ecosystem. It spans several towns, including Governor Generoso.

DAVAO: GOVERNOR GENEROSO, DAVAO ORIENTAL Davao Oriental says no to mineral reservation near UNESCO heritage site

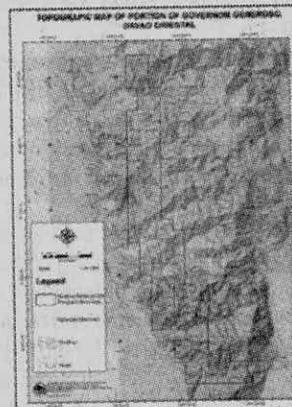
THE PROVINCIAL board of Davao Oriental is now working on a resolution that will formalize the local government's stand against the declaration of an area in General Generoso town as a mineral reservation site. In a statement, Gov. Nelson L. Dayanghirang said the proposed mining area is "in close proximity to Davao Oriental's crown jewel, the Mount Hamiguitan Range Wildlife Sanctuary which is Mindanao's first and only World Heritage Site declared by the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)." Following a two-day consultation with stakeholders and officials of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) last March 12-13, Mr. Dayanghirang said the province's municipal governments as well as barangays have also agreed to issue local resolutions opposing the plan.

MINERAL RICH

The proposed mineral reservation area, according to the MGB, covers around 8,497 hectares that survey results indicate have rich deposits of chromite, nickel laterite, and copper. The area is also home to several watersheds which have "water quality classified as Class AA." During the consultation, MGB's Noel Angeles assured that any decision for a declaration still rests on the local government and the people. "If there's no support from the community to push for the declaration, the proposition will not move," he said.

IMPACT

Mr. Dayanghirang said while mining would provide an economic boost to the province, the cost on the environment and communities in the surrounding areas is far greater. The mayor said the provincial government is working on bringing in more investments in other sectors such as agriculture and tourism, which would provide a more sustainable development. "The foreseen financial income or revenues purported to be gained through mining operation in the site could not equate with the value of the destruction of the area such as the would-be forgone ecological values of the biodiversity as well as the biological assets like the local watersheds and scenery which would all be negatively affected by eventual mining operation," he said, "What's important is that we preserve our natural resources for the next generation."



MGB PHOTO



26 MAR 2019

TITLE:

PAGE 1/

DATE

Squandered wealth

Are we a rich country pretending to be poor? Or could our problem be that we don't recognize our wealth enough? Or is it because we don't know how to handle our wealth?

There's no question that we're exceptionally blessed with nature's bounty. With 30 million hectares of land area, 36,289 kilometers of coastline and abundant inland waters, we have an extremely rich array of terrestrial, marine and freshwater resources known to be among the richest and most diverse in the world. According to the Convention on Biological Diversity, our country hosts two-thirds of the earth's biodiversity, and between 70 and 80 percent of the world's plant and animal species.

The Philippine archipelago lies within the "Coral Triangle," center of the most diverse habitat in the marine tropics. Philippine coral reefs make up more than one-fourth of the total reef area in Southeast Asia, and are recognized to be among the richest and most diverse in the world, with about 464 species of hard corals and more than 50 species of soft corals identified. All these have given the Philippines the distinction of being named one of the 18 "megadiversity" countries of the world, which collectively account for 60-70 percent of global biodiversity.

But we have also been tagged internationally as a biodiversity "hot spot"—meaning, a country where biodiversity is under extreme threat from deforestation, conversion, fragmentation of natural habitats, unregulated trade and low overall environmental quality. Nearly 200 of our vertebrate species are now threatened by extinction, the best-known being the Philip-



NO FREE LUNCH

CIELITO F. HABITO

pine eagle. In the sea, nearly a third of our coral reefs are considered to be in poor condition. There has been a steady decline in the quality of the coral reefs, and it has been estimated that we have lost a third of our corals in the last 20 years. Overfishing, pollution and other human economic activities on the coasts are further degrading our erstwhile rich marine resources. Strong population pressure in coastal communities has stretched the country's coastal fishery resources to their limits.

In our forests, illegal logging and rampant conversion of uplands to monoculture (single-crop) farming has been the single biggest enemy of biodiversity in the Philippines. Our animal biodiversity is severely threatened by hunting, including by aliens, of animals in our seas and forests, much of it feeding illegal trade. Another source of damage is the reckless introduction of invasive alien plant or animal species to our islands, such as the giant catfish, black bass, golden snail, various toads including the marine toad, and the American bullfrog. Invasive

aquatic plants like the water hyacinth and water fern have also adversely affected wetland biodiversity. Few of us notice it, but the risks from such biotic invasions have risen enormously in recent decades.

Jesus Christ told the parable of the three servants who were entrusted by their master with portions of his wealth. The first two had doubled their portions upon the master's return, but the third, who merely buried the wealth and kept it intact, incurred the master's ire. We've done worse than that third servant, having recklessly squandered the abundant wealth God has entrusted us Filipinos with.

It's no surprise, then, that with all our natural wealth, we seem to be a classic illustration of the so-called "natural resource curse" described by various authors, notably economist Jeffrey Sachs. Also called the "paradox of plenty," this is the phenomenon whereby countries rich in natural resources end up much poorer than those far less endowed. We only need to look at neighbors like Singapore and Japan to appreciate the contrast.

Wealth, after all, is not just about natural or material assets. One Buddhist philosopher defined "wealth" to comprise three elements: material wellbeing, the common good and beauty. We're certainly well endowed in the third. And while we have much of the first, too much of it is in the hands of too few. It is thus in promoting the second—the common good—that we as a society appear to have fallen short, both in our personal actions and in our government decisions.

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Sapol

NI JARIUS BONDOC



Climate change: Pilipinas magiging disyerto, lilisanin

PATULOY ang industriyalisasyon ng mayayamang bansa sa temperate zones: America, Europe, at Australia. Tulad nila, wala rin pakialam ang China, India, Russia, Brazil, at South Africa, limang pinaka-malalaki't matataong umuunlad na bansa, sa climate change. Dahil sa usok ng sasakyan at pabrika, init ng mga bahay at pagkalbo ng kagubatan, at methane sa utot ng bilyun-bilyong pinapastol na baka at tupa, patuloy na umiinit din ang panahon. Natutunaw ang yelo sa North at South Poles; tumataas ang karagatan sa Equatorial Belt.

Dahil dito, tinatayang trilyon-trilyong dolyar na halaga ng ari-arian sa mga pampang sa Amerika, Europe, at Australia ang lulubog. Hindi pa binibilang diyan ang sa China, India, Russia, Brazil, at South Africa. At hindi pa rin kinuwenta ang sa 250 pang maliliit na bansa.

Tinatayang sa taong 2035, malamang na 4 degrees centigrade na ang dagdag-init sa Singapore kumpara nu'ng 1950. Hindi na raw ito matitirhan. Bagamat ang constructions ngayon sa islang bansang 'yon ay palalim nang palalim underground, lalamunin ng dagat ang maraming reclamations. Maglalaho ang pinaka-mayamang maliit na bansa.

Hindi lalayo sa Singapore ang kalagayan ng Pilipinas. Mas mataas lang ito nang konti sa Singapore mula sa Equator. Magiging sobrang init na rin ang Greater Manila, at metropolitan Dagupan, Baguio, Cebu, Iloilo, at Davao. Matutuyot ang mga taniman. Walang mapagpapastulan ng livestock; masisira ang mga manukan, babuyan, at palaisdaan.

Dahil sa taggutom sa Middle East, Central Asia, at Africa, tumutungo na ang mga tao sa Europe sa norte. Gan'un din ang mga taga-South America at Mexico -- patungong United States at Canada.

Makakawawa ang mga taga-isla sa Pacific Ocean
(Sundan sa pahina 5)

SAPOL...Mula pahina 4

-- tulad ng mga Pilipino. Hindi sila basta makakapaglakad patawid ng borders.

Kakailanganin ng milyun-milyong biyaha ng barko para maitawid sila sa mainland Asia. At 'yon ay kung papapasukin sila ng mga dayuhan.



EDITORIAL

PH vs China 2.0

A “futile exercise” is how presidential spokesperson Salvador Panelo described the case lodged by two Filipino citizens against Chinese President Xi Jinping before the International Criminal Court (ICC), the court mandated through the Rome Statute to fight against global impunity, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Panelo and his principal, President Duterte, sounded more concerned that this new case would not affect relations with China, and forthwith predicted it would be dismissed, as China is not a member of the ICC and the Philippines had withdrawn its membership effective March 17. “They are entitled to file the case, and I will say there is no jurisdiction of this country and of China, even more so with China,” Mr. Duterte said.

But many others are lauding the case filed by former foreign secretary Albert del Rosario and former ombudsman Conchita Carpio Morales. Certainly no pushovers, Del Rosario and Morales’ communication asks the ICC to hold China accountable for “atrocious actions” in the South China Sea that have brought about the “most massive, near permanent and devastating destruction of the environment in humanity’s history.” China’s systematic plan to take over the disputed waters, they said, has deprived Filipino fishermen of their livelihood even within the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone, and could bring about a fisheries collapse and serious food shortage among other countries also claiming parts of the South China Sea. These, they said, constitute crimes against humanity that are within the jurisdiction of the ICC.

It remains to be seen whether the ICC will take up the novel test case, and China is by no means going to be rattled by it. Yet the Del Rosario-Morales case may already score on moral grounds, as it further emphasizes China’s image as an Asian bully and the Duterte administration’s spineless handling of Beijing’s repeated violations of Philippine sovereignty and interests.

Consider this case as PH vs China 2.0—another venue to reinforce the Philippines’ major victory against China when it won its international arbitration case in 2016.

It’s no coincidence that Del Rosario is at the center of this new case; he was the secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs when the Philippines filed and won that case at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague. The legal team included another Carpio—Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio of the Supreme Court.

The hard-fought victory would have been a bonus for the Duterte administration, which took power just two weeks before the ruling was handed down. But Mr. Duterte quickly set aside the Philippines’ important legal victory and veered toward China.

Still, the new case derives strength from the 2016 ruling, which unequivocally ruled that China’s actions in the South China Sea were unlawful. It will be hard put for the ICC to ignore that judgment.

The Del Rosario-Morales case also cited the Duterte administration’s defeatist attitude toward China as a ground for the ICC’s intervention. There has been no case against Xi and other officials to account for their intrusions, they said, and Mr. Duterte “has repeatedly and publicly declared his deferential attitude” toward Xi and China, even publicly declaring his “love” for Xi.

Yet the Philippines continues to suffer from Mr. Duterte’s acquiescence to Beijing. Since 2016, numerous instances have been recorded of Filipino fishermen barred from fishing in their own territory. In April 2017, the Chinese coast guard fired warning shots at Filipino fishermen from Union Bank, just 230 kilometers west of the Philippine coast; in June 2018, they went further, seizing the fishermen’s catch; in November 2018, the Chinese drove away a GMA 7 crew from Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal. And on Feb. 5, 2018, the Inquirer published exclusive photos showing that China was almost done putting up military bases on seven reefs claimed by the Philippines. No diplomatic protests were ever made about these incidents.

The ICC communication is not expected to alter Mr. Duterte’s love affair with China in any way. But the Del Rosario-Morales case plants the flag of principle for Philippine sovereignty and dignity—and, in the current climate, that show of defiance and will by Filipino citizens to underline the inaction of their Beijing-infatuated government is an inspiring, encouraging development.



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The Manila Times

A2
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

MAIN
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

26 MAR 2019

DATE

PH to file protest if China drives away Pinoy fishers

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

THE Philippine government would file a protest against China if reports that Filipino fishermen were being driven away from the Panatag Shoal (Scarborough Shoal) by Chinese Coast Guards were confirmed, Malacañang said on Monday.

Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo made the statement after Senate candidate Neri Colmenares released a short documentary on the alleged harassment of local fishermen by Chinese coast guard personnel.

The six-minute clip showed fishermen from Masinloc, Zambales detailing how the Chinese Coast Guard would seize their catch and drive them away from the area.

Panelo said Filipinos fishing in Panatag shoal or anywhere in the country's waters should "not be touched or harassed."

"They have to show proof that's being done now again. If that is being done, certainly we will protest. We will not allow our countrymen

to be subjected to that kind of harassment," Panelo said during a press briefing.

"If there was a negotiation, there was an agreement not to touch them and then one incident, two incidents violate this agreement, then we have to tell them and they will have to correct it," he added.

The Philippines and China previously agreed to let fishermen to freely navigate the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea) except for marine protected areas.

Former Foreign Affairs secretary Albert del Rosario, former ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales and Filipino fishermen had filed a communication against Chinese President Xi Jinping be-

fore the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity.

Panelo acknowledged that while the country continues to attest that the territory is "ours," China has "control" over the area since it built structures there.

"*May magagawa ba tayo? Sila ang may control as of now. Meron silang pwera doon.* We can only protest like any other country *na nagke-claim* (Can we do something about it? They control it as of now. They have forces there. We can only protest like other claimant countries)," he said.

Panelo, however, clarified that the government did not agree that China should have control over the territory that belongs to the country.

"Certainly that is ours and the arbitral ruling says it's ours," he said.

For now, Panelo said the country would pursue diplomatic negotiations with China to resolve the territorial dispute, adding it could not afford to wage war with the Asian neighbor.

He said President Rodrigo Duterte preferred the country to

hold a dialogue with China, especially when no one could enforce the arbitral ruling that backed the country's claims in the West Philippine Sea.

"What I'm saying is tell me has any arbitral ruling by this international court been enforced previously? *Kung mayroon, may pag-asa. Sa ngayon, wala pa tayo magagawa so pag-usapan na lang natin* (If there is, we still have hope. For now, we can't do anything so let's just talk about it)," Panelo said when asked if the country was powerless against China.

"What is important is we are not agreeing to what they are doing to us. We are not allowing it. We're opposing it," he added.

Since assuming his post, Duterte has sought to downplay Manila's maritime dispute with Beijing in exchange for improved ties with the world's second largest economy.

Duterte has also refused to flaunt the Philippines' victory against China in a United Nations-backed arbitration court in 2016, which invalidated Beijing's expansive claims to the waters.



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

PEOPLES JOURNAL Tonight

4
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

DATE

EDITORIAL

Disaster preparedness

ADMITTEDLY, poverty-stricken Philippines is one of the world's favorite "sparring partners" of powerful typhoons and destructive floods, particularly during the rainy season.

Almost throughout the year, disasters -- man-made and natural -- claim the lives of many people in various parts of this Southeast Asian nation of more than 100 million people.

Aware that there's no room for complacency, this early, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) launched an enhanced version of "Operation LISTO Manual."

DILG Secretary Eduardo M. Año, a retired military general, said the revised manual contains minimum actions that local government executives must do in preparation for typhoons.

Año said the updated manual now includes a preparedness guide for provincial governors.

It contains the step-by-step guide for local executives during typhoons. All that they have to do is execute the detailed preparedness and critical actions specified in the document.

The previous edition of the manual only focused on the preparedness checklist of city and town mayors, DILG field officers and chiefs of the Philippine National Police and Bureau of Fire Protection.

"We do not want to take the governors out of the equation because as head of their respective provincial disaster risk reduction and management councils, they can help cities and municipalities in their disaster preparedness efforts," said Año.

The failure of a local chief executive to comply with the manual, like physical presence during disasters, may lead to disciplinary action from the DILG, according to Año.

Under the new manual, a local government executive may undertake pre-emptive or mandatory evacuation based on his/her assessment of the prevailing situation on the ground.

In revising the "Operation LISTO Disaster Preparedness Manual Volume 3," the DILG believes that there is always room for improvement.



Earth Day Run sa kalikasan

HANGAD mo na mapanatili ang malinis na kapaligiran?

Kung ang misyon mo ay makatulong para mailigtas ang Inang Kalikasan sa anumang banta dulot ng iba't ibang sanhi ng polusyon at kawalan ng malasakit sa kapaligiran, makiisa sa muling paglarga ng National Geographic Earth Day Run sa Abril 14 sa MOA ground sa Pasay City.

Ang makabuluhang programa ay bahagi ng pagdiwang ng Earth Day at pagpapalakas sa kampanya para labanan ang anumang uri ng polusyon na nakasisira sa Inang Kalikasan.

Ang taunang patakbo naglalayon na pataasin ang kaalaman ng sambayanan sa masamang epekto na idinudulot ng labis at walang katuturang paggamit ng plastic.

Bawat isa ay may katungulan para mapangalagaan ang kalikasan kung kaya't bukas para sa lahat – sports enthusiast at running buff o simpleng mamamayan -- na makilahok sa National Geographic's Earth Day Run.

Para sa online registration, bisitahin ang www.natgeoearthdayrun.com.

Sapagtataguyod ng Immunomax, inaasahang sasabak sa ika-10 edisyon ng Earth Day Run ang kabuuang 15,000 running enthusiasts para sa kategoryang 3K, 5K, 10K at 21K.

"We are proud of how Earth Day Run has played a vital role in bringing awareness to environmental issues in the country. Now on our 10th year, we are excited to once again share everyone's passion in caring for one's

self and the environment as we run together for the planet. With this year's theme Planet or Plastic, we aim to raise awareness on the effects of single-use plastic and how important it is to take action today. It is our goal to make Earth Day Run a change driver with how people live their lives. By being more conscious of our actions and the footprint we leave behind, we recommit and strengthen our promise to help and protect our planet," pahayag ni Charo Espedido, Director at Head of Marketing ng FOX Networks Group Philippines.

Makasaysayan ang paglulunsad ng Earth Day Run 2019 bunsod nang pagbibigay ng kahalagan sa pagiwas sa paggamit ng anumang uri ng plastic.

Batay sa pag-aaral may 9 milyon tonelada ng iba't ibang uri ng plastic ang naitatapon sa karagatan at lahat ng anyong tubig sa bansa na nagdudulot ng kasiraan sa tanging yaman.

Sa isa pang pananaliksik, umaabot sa 450 taon ang mga plastic sa karagatan

at iba pang anyong tubig.

Target ng NatGeo na mapigil ang pagdami ng karagatan dahil sa walang habas na pagtatapon ng mga basura at plastic na umaaabot na sa mga baybayin at nagdudulot ng pagkamatay sa lahat ng uri ng buhay sa karagatan.

"In support of Planet or Plastic? and in celebration of Earth Day, we're asking runners in Asia to choose the planet. As a global movement dedicated to raising awareness of pollution, Earth Day is the perfect moment to bring environmental issues around climate change, plastic pollution and the health of marine life into the spotlight. Raising awareness of these critical issues through events such as the National Geographic Earth Day Run is key to kick-starting lasting change across the region," pahayag ni Jude Turcuato, SVP and General Manager ng FOX Networks Group sa bansa.

Inaanyayahan ang lahat ng Pilipino na makiisa sa Earth Day Run.



MULING nananawagan ng pagkakaisa para sa Inang Kalikasan ang NatGeo Earth Day Run.



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INITIATIVES
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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

PAGE
UPPER

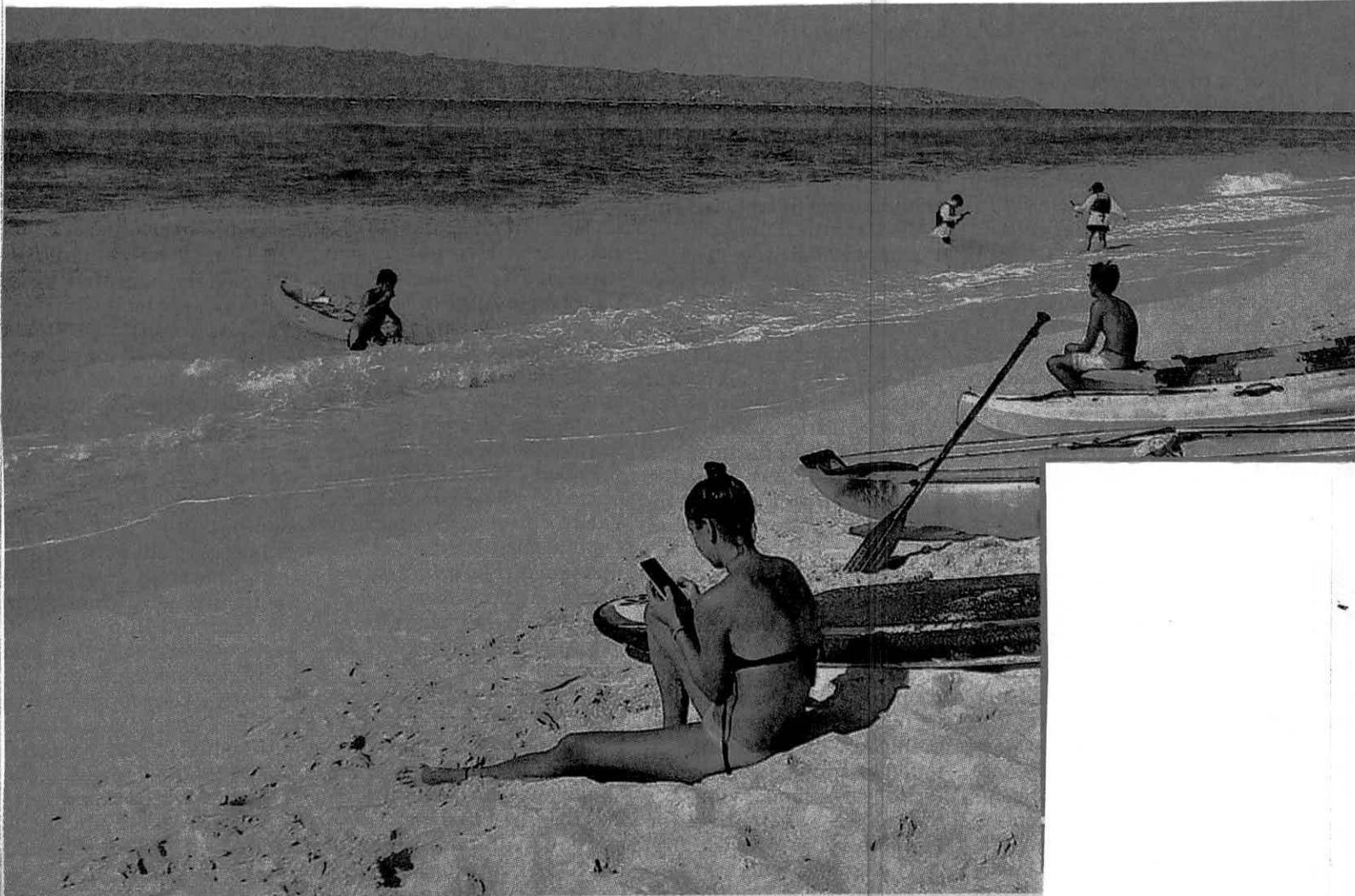
LOWER
PAGE 1
STORY
BANNER
STORY
EDITORIAL
CARTOON

28 MAR 2019

TITLE: _____

PAGE 1/ _____

DATE _____



Tourists sunbathe in Boracay yesterday. The resort island underwent a six-month rehabilitation last year after President Duterte called its waters a 'cesspool.'

BERNARDO BATUIGAS



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

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Tribune**
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PAGE



PAGE 1
STORY



BANNER
STORY



EDITORIAL



CARTOON

26 MAR 2019

TITLE:

PAGE 1/

DATE



They can do it all day In Tondo, there is Baseco Beach which has vastly improved from its polluted state not a few months ago and it is now the site of family fun. **BOB DUNGO JR.**



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

26 MAR 2019

DATE

TITLE:

PAGE 1/

CHERISHING

WATER. Children enjoy the water supply in Purok 5, Barangay Depore, Bayog, Zamboanga del Sur. Ninety families in a farming community in Zamboanga del Sur now enjoy a steady supply of safe, potable water in their village, ending 24 years of having no direct access to basic drinking water. The project is funded by TVI Resource Development Philippines Inc., a mining company operating the Agata Nickel Project in Agusan del Norte province and the ongoing final mine rehabilitation of its gold and copper project in Zamboanga del Norte province.





ENVIRONMENTAL advocates seek poll candidates' compliance to the ban on plastic propaganda in Quezon City.

Bigla
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