

DATE : 10 JUL 2019

DAY : Wednesday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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DENR reopens dump in Baguio

By **ZALDY COMANDA**

BAGUIO CITY – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Cordillera granted the request of the city to reopen the Irisan dumpsite to head off another garbage crisis.

DENR-Cordillera Regional Director Ralph Pablo informed Mayor Benjie Magalong that the agency decided to reopen the facility on condition the city collect the mixed waste that was piling up by the end of the month.

The city must also see to it that the two Environmental Recycling System (ERS) machines for converting biodegradable waste will be operational by that time.

During a meeting at the dump, Magalong directed the partner of the

local government, Rapport Innovations, to speed up the upgrading of the machines.

Last June 26, Undersecretary Benny Anteporda issued a temporary order stopping Baguio from operating the ERS machines because of alleged environmental violations.

Among the other conditions for lifting the order are the proper collection of biodegradable waste and the conversion of the area into an eco-friendly park by December 31.

Magalong said the over 40,000 cubic meters of raw compost in the dump must be converted into compost fertilizer by the third quarter of next year so that converting the dump into a park could be finished by the first quarter of 2021.



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Angat Dam water level inches back to critical level

By **ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ**

Angat Dam's water level has further declined on Tuesday amid a weak southwest monsoon or "habagat" prevailing over the country.

Based on the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration's (PAGASA) monitoring as of Tuesday morning, the water level at Angat Dam was down to 160.58 meters, which was 0.43 meters lower than last Monday's 161.01 meters.

It was once again inching closer to its 160-meter critical level for domestic water supply.

National Water Resources Board (NWRB) Executive Director Seville David Jr. said they are maintaining the 36 cubic meters per second (cms) water allocation for July. This is for distribution by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to its concessionaires Maynilad and Manila Water.

The current level was still way below Angat Dam's minimum operating water level of 180 meters, and normal high water level during the rainy season of 210 meters.

David said that once the Angat Dam reaches its 180-meter mark, the NWRB may increase the water allocated for Metro Manila's domestic requirements. The normal water allocation is 48 cms.



Angat water dips further

By Michael Pingol

Despite rains the past week, the water level in Angat Dam continues to drop further on Tuesday, from 161.01 meters on Monday to 160.58 meters, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

In a statement, the weather bureau said that the level was once again inching closer to its 160-meter critical level for domestic water supply amid a weak southwest monsoon or *habagat* prevailing over the country.

With the continuous drop on the dam's water level – which supplies 96 percent

of Metro Manila's water needs – the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) said that it will cut the amount of water allocated to Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) from 46 cubic meters per second to 36.

NWRB executive director Seville David Jr. said the current level was still way below Angat Dam's minimum operating water level of 180 meters and normal high water level during the rainy season of 210 meters.

David said that once the Angat Dam reaches its 180-meter mark, the NWRB may increase the water allocated for Metro Manila's domestic requirements. The normal water allocation is 48 cubic

meters per second.

However, this may still take some time to implement due to a weak southwest monsoon that may bring less rainfall over the country in the coming days.

"It is a priority of the technical working group composed of NWRB, MWSS and its concessionaires, NIA (National Irrigation Administration), NPC (National Power Corporation, and AHC (Angat Hydropower Corporation), to sustainably manage the water in Angat Dam to ensure that the year-end elevation is sufficient to supply the multi-requirements on domestic supply, irrigation and energy at least until the first half of 2020," David said.



Angat Dam, pa-critical na naman

Lalo pang bumaba kahapon ang tubig ng Angat Dam, sa kabila ng may mahinang habagat na umiiral sa bansa.

Ayon sa pagmo-monitor ng Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration's (PAGASA), kahapon ng umaga ay bumaba pa sa 160.58 metro ang water level, 0.43 metrong mas mababa sa 161.01 metro nitong Lunes.

Ibig sabihin, muli na namang dumidikit sa 160-metrong critical level ang tubig sa Angat Dam.

Sinabi naman ni Seville David

Jr., executive director ng National Water Resources Board (NWRB), pinapanatili nila ang 36 cubic meters per second (cms) na water allocation para sa Hulyo. Ito ang ipamamahagi ng Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) sa Maynilad at Manila Water.

Ang kasalukuyang water level sa Angat ay malayo pa sa minimum operating water level na 180 metro, at normal high water level kapag tag-ulan na 210 metro.

Ayon pa kay David, kapag naobot na ng Angat ang 180-meter mark, maaaring itaas na muli ng NWRB ang

alokasyon ng tubig sa Metro Manila sa normal level na 48 cms.

Samantala, patuloy pa ring umiiral sa extreme portion ng Northern Luzon ang mahinang habagat hanggang kahapon, ayon kay PAGASA weather specialist Meno Mendoza.

Inaasahan namang magiging mainit sa Metro Manila, pero magkakaroon ng panaka-nakang pag-ulan sa tanghalj at gabi.

Ayon kay Mendoza, hindi nakikita ng PAG-ASA na may mabubuog low pressure area o bagyo sa susunod na dalawa o tatlong araw.

Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz



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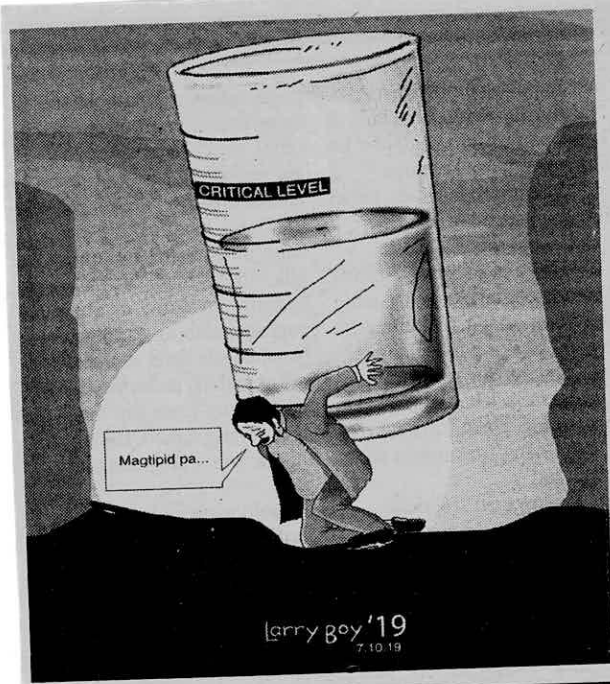
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Editorial

Ipagpatuloy ang pagtitipid sa tubig

HUWAG mag-aksaya sa paggamit ng tubig. Ito ang paalala ng mga opisyal ng National Water Resources Board (NWRB). Ito rin ang kahilingan ng dalawang water concessionaires – Maynilad at Manila Water. Ito ay kasunod nang pagbaba na naman ng water level sa Angat Dam na pinagkukunan ng tubig na sinusuplay sa Metro Manila at mga kalapit na probinsiya. Nasa kritikal na level na naman ang Angat at kung hindi titipirin ang paggamit ng tubig, maaaring bumaba pang lalo ang level nito.

Ayon sa NWRB, umabot na sa 161.01 ang level ng tubig sa Angat kaya nabawasan na naman ang daily



water allocation para sa Metro Manila concessionaires. Ipagpapatuloy naman ng Maynilad at Manila Water ang pagpapatupad ng water interruptions sa customers.

Kahit na umulan noong mga nakaraang linggo, hindi rin ito nakasapat at bahagya lang ang naidagdag na tubig sa Angat kaya balik uli sa kritikal na level. Sabi ng PAGASA, maaaring sa katapusan pa ng Hulyo maibalik ang dating dami ng tubig sa dam. May dalawa o tatlong bagyo umano ang dadalaw sa bansa at maaaring ito ang kasagutan sa natutuyong dam.

Dapat namang magsagawa na ng cloud seeding ang NWRB sa tapat ng Angat Dam para madagdagan ang tubig. Kailangan na ito para hindi na umabot pa sa malalang problema ang sitwasyon. Kahit na sinasabi ng PAGASA na may paparating na sama ng panahon, huwag itong hintayin at isagawa ang cloud seeding.

Magtipid sa paggamit ng tubig at pangunahan ito ng pamahalaan. Maraming tanggapan ng gobyerno ang bulagsak sa paggamit ng tubig at sila ang dapat kastiguhin. Mag-inspeksiyon naman ang Maynilad at Manila Water sa Metro Manila at maaaring may mga leak sa kalsada. Pangunahan ng pamahalaan ang pagtitipid at susunod ang mamamayan. Kailangang magpakita ng halimbawa sa pagtitipid.



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Lapid may solusyon sa water crisis

NAGHAIN si Senador Lito Lapid ng isang panukala na naglalayong lumikha ng Water Resources Authority of the Philippines (WRAP) na tutugon sa kakulangan ng suplay ng tubig sa Metro Manila.

Sa ilalim ng Senate Bill No. 52 o Water Resources Management Act, sa pagtatayo ng WRAP, makakatulong ito para matiyak ng 'long-term sustainable management' sa pinagkukunan ng tubig sa bansa.

"Nais nating matugunan at masolusyunan ang problema sa tubig ng ating mga kababayan sa pamamagitan ng pagtatayo ng isang ahensiya na siyang mamamahala sa ating pinagkukunan ng tubig," ani Lapid.

Ang WRAP aniya ang magsisilbing 'long-term solution' sa kinakaharap na problema ng water sector.

Ayon pa kay Lapid, ang nararanasang water shortage sa Metro Manila ay pagpapakita lang ng hindi kahandaan ng bansa para maresolba ang nasabing krisis. **(Dindo Matining)**



ALARM RAISED

**ENVIRONMENTAL
GROUPS HIT ECC
FOR INT'L AIRPORT**

By **Jhesset O. Enano**
@JhessetEnanoINQ

Environment and fisherfolk groups have raised an alarm over the issuance of an environmental compliance certificate (ECC) to the company that will develop an international airport in Bulacan province, saying the P734-billion project would have adverse ecological and economic impact on communities surrounding Manila Bay.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said it had approved last month the ECC of Silvertides Holdings, a contractor of San Miguel Corp., to develop 2,070 hectares in the coastal villages of Bambang and Taliptip in Bulacan town.

But while the ECC certifies that a proposal would not have significant negative environmental impact, environmental advocates say otherwise, stressing that the planned reclamation would disrupt the natural ecosystems thriving in the northern part of Manila Bay.

Leon Dulce, a convener of the People's Network for the Integrity of Coastal Habitats and Ecosystem, said the project site lies at the last remaining expanse of mangrove forests in the bay.

"This serves as the heart of the whole Manila Bay ecosystem," he said in an interview on Tuesday.

Affect food security

"If the project continues, it will not only disrupt the biodiversity there, but would also affect the food security considering the catch that we get from Manila Bay," Dulce added.

While no construction has started yet, more than 600 mangrove trees were cleared from the planned site last year.

Government officials, however, said there was no evidence directly linking the project to the damage.

The proposed reclamation, Dulce said, was also "diametrically opposed" to the ongoing rehabilitation of the Manila Bay which aims to restore the heavily polluted waters to its original ecological integrity.

"If they want a true rehabilitation, there should be a moratorium on all proposed and developing reclamation project until such time that a holistic and ecological assessment is done," he said.

Also at stake is the 25-hectare fishing reservation areas established by the DENR across Taliptip's coastal waters, said fisherfolk group Pamalakaya.

"This means loss of traditional fish species and depletion of fish catch by small fisherfolk in the entire province of Bulacan," said Bobby Roldan, Pamalakaya's vice chair for Luzon.

While the construction may provide temporary jobs to people living near the project site, it is an unsustainable solution that would ultimately take away their primary means of livelihood, said Krista Melgarejo, chair of Advocates of Science and Technology for the People Diliman chapter. INQ



ECC for SMC Bulacan airport plan justified, but draws flak

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has issued an environmental compliance certificate (ECC) for food and beverage conglomerate giant San Miguel Corp.'s (SMC) P700-billion airport project in Bulacan, Bulacan.

In a statement, San Miguel said, "Our proposal for the New Manila International Airport [NMIA] project is still currently undergoing a Swiss challenge. We would like to assure everyone that we will work closely with all stakeholder groups to make sure this vital infrastructure project will be sustainable and will deliver positive economic, social and environmental benefits.

"The NMIA project, a P14-billion investment, will be our largest contribution to the Philippine economy thus far. It's a project that will benefit not just us today, but many future generations of Filipinos.

"It will generate about a million jobs and jump-start economic growth in Bulacan and neighboring provinces. Apart from improving tourism and addressing congestion problems, it will boost small local industries, manufacturing, exports and possibly give rise to new ones. We are committed to helping the government deliver on our nation's goals and helping the local communities thrive and improve their quality of life.

Dubbed the Bulacan Aerotropolis, the multibillion-peso project is being strongly opposed by militant fishers under the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya), slamming the DENR for giving businessman Ramon Ang's SMC the green light to proceed with the project, which they claimed requires massive land reclamation within a 2,500-hectare fishpond area in the coastal barangay of Taliptip.

The project will decongest air traffic at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) in Pasay City and will also help improve traffic in Metro Manila as travelers going in and out of the National Capital Region (NCR) via airplane will be diverted to Bulacan, a province outside but still near the country's capital region.

The group issued the statement in reaction to a news report that the DENR Central Luzon led by its Regional Executive Director Lormelyn Claudio approved the ECC of Silvertides Holdings, which is reportedly linked to SMC.

Silvertides Holdings had reportedly acquired fishponds covering

around 2,000 hectares in the areas to be developed as part of the project.

Pamalakaya said around 700 fishing and coastal families in seven sitios of Barangay Taliptip in Bulacan are threatened to be displaced by the project.

In a statement, Pamalakaya said the Bulacan Aerotropolis is the fourth reclamation project to be given an ECC by the DENR.

Not reclamation

SOUGHT for reaction, DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda, deputy spokesman of Secretary Roy A. Cimatu debunked Pamalakaya's allegations.

He said based on his understanding, SMC or Ramon Ang bought the land from individual private landowners.

"Its private land as far as I know. Let us not put political color on this," Antiporda told the BUSINESSMIRROR. He said the DENR Central Luzon Regional Office also assured him that no fishers will be affected because the area to be developed under the project involves private fishponds.

"It is not a reclamation project, but land development. The airport project will prioritize qualified local labor for job requirements. It's a government project. It should be a priority like all other vital infrastructure projects. There is no Protected Area as the project area involves titled properties," he said via text message.

Other projects that have already acquired an ECC include the 419-hectare Horizon Manila Project, the 148-hectare Manila Solar City,



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ECC for SMC Bulacan airport plan justified, but draws flak

and the 318-hectare Manila Water-front Project.

"How ironic that the agency that leads the task force to rehabilitate Manila Bay is the one giving a go-signal to reclamation projects that will effectively destroy the environment," Pamalakaya said in a statement.

More than 600 mangrove trees were already cleared in Barangay Taliptip where the airport will be built. Based on the Coastal Resources Management Project conducted by the scientist group Agham, at least 670 kilos of fish will be lost for every hectare of mangrove that will be destroyed. Pamalakaya also cited the existing 25-hectare fishing reservation areas established by the DENR itself across Taliptip's coastal waters.

"Twenty-five hectares of fishing reservation areas are at stake courtesy of the land reclamation of SMC; this also means loss of traditional fish species and depletion of fish caught by small fishers in the entire province of Bulacan. On top of the existing fishing reservations, Manila Bay is currently undergoing a massive rehabilitation program by the government and building infrastructures through dumping landfills will defeat the purpose of restoring its pristine state," the Pamalakaya statement added.

"We reiterate our call to revoke all the ECCs issued to reclamation projects in Manila Bay and promote a genuine rehabilitation program that will restore its traditional use as communal fishing grounds," the statement said. **Jonathan L. Mayuga and VG Cabuag**



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Bohol municipalities urged to use geohazard maps

TAGBILARAN CITY – The Bohol Provincial Disaster and Risk Reduction Management Office (PDRRMO) is urging all local government units (LGUs) in the province to make use of the geohazard maps provided by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) in granting building permits.

PDRRMO action officer Anthony Damalerio made the appeal after noting that local governments have been granting permits

to build in areas identified as vulnerable to storm surges, flooding, landslides and even in flood-prone areas or over sinkholes.

Damalerio said LGUs granting building permits could be criminally and administratively liable when disaster hits these structures. "The government has spent so much to help guide us to be prudent, why not use it?" he said.

The national government spent a lot in coming up with disaster/geohazard maps

so that local governments can avoid issuing building permits in disaster prone areas, particularly no-build zones, Damalerio said.

"Only very few local government units however have available options for those people whose available lots lie in areas prone to disaster. Such options include barter for lots, adoption of more resilient designs and disaster proofing," he noted. (Minerva BC Newman)



Albay to get strict on plastic bag use

By **NINO N. LUCES**

STO. DOMINGO, Albay – The newly elected mayor of Sto. Domingo town vowed to strictly enforce the anti-plastic ordinance in the first 100 days of his term.

Jun Aguas told the Manila Bulletin that after inspecting the town's public market Monday, he noticed that the implementation of the ordinance regulating the use of plastic bags he filed when he was councilor has been lax.

"We admit na since the time na nag-resign ako as municipal administrator kasi nga tumakbo ako as mayor, nag slow down yung implementation. So this time, within my first 100 days, we will strictly implement it," he said.

Located at eastern seaboard of Luzon, the town of Sto. Domingo's business center is just a few kilometers from its black sand beaches, the historical Bantayan ruins and the Coral Genesis project.

"We have to do something about it. Hindi natin pwedeng pabayaang ito. Nanganganib ang ating yaman naturales na bumuhay ng ating turismo," Aguas explained.

He said he has consulted with groceries and other businesses owners on enforcing the ordinance to the letter. "Kakausapin din natin yung mga barangay captains na i-adopt din yung ordinansa at istrik-tong ipatupad. Kung ayaw nilang sumunod, nandyan naman ang Ombudsman," he added.

He said the use of plas-

tic bags is only allowed at the wet market. The dry good sections must use paper bags or eco-bags. "Sayang yung ating mga tourism sites na yan kung hindi nating pangangalagaan ang ating kapaligiran. Sa baba lang natin, mga resorts na.

Nandyan yung Coral Genesis Project natin na ire-rehabilitate uli natin dahil may mga sira na dahil sa pwera o alon ng dagat. Nakipag usap na rin tayo sa JCI para sa pagsasaayos," he said.

The Coral Genesis project is a 300-square-meter coral formation at the bottom of the sea. It has solar-powered artificial reefs that enhance the growth of corals and serve as a breeding site for fishes.

Aguas also said the Bantayan ruins should also be protected from waste since it has been endorsed to the National Commission for Culture and the Arts of the Philippines (NCCA) as a heritage site.

Also endorsed to the NCAA were the Sto. Domingo church and the Pugad Lawin Park. In Albay province, the anti-plastic ordinance was filed by former 3rd District Board Member Arnold Embestro and approved by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan in 2012 but according to its author, it was not fully implemented.

The Provincial Environment and Natural Resources (ENRO) chief, Ma. Theresa Atos, admitted there are still municipalities that do have an anti plastic ordinance.



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SINUSUBAYBAYAN natin ang mga nagaganap sa paligid, mga Bro, at lumilitaw na napakalaking bagay ang pagkilos ng mga local government unit para maging partner ng pambansang pamahalaan sa lahat ng usaping panggobyerno.

May mga sariling hurisdiksyon o sakop ang mga LGU gaya ng mga barangay, bayan, lungsod, lalawigan at rehiyon sa kalsada, kapaligiran, edukasyon, negosyo, pulitika, krimen at iba pa.

Gayunman, konektado ang mga ito sa mga kalsada, kapaligiran, edukasyon, negosyo, pulitika, krimen at iba pa.

Kung maghaharangan, magpabaya at iba pa ang mga LGU, kasama ang pambansang pamahalaan, walang magiging biktima kundi ang taumbayan.

Kaya, nangangailangan ang lahat ng organo ng pamahalaan na maayos at nasa kumpas ang kanilang mga relasyon.

KALSADA AT TRAPIK

Sa Metro Manila lamang, partikular ang kahabaan ng mga kalsadang pambansa na Rizal Ave na magsisimula sa Monumento, Caloocan City hanggang Sta. Cruz, Manila at ng Taft Avenue mula Lawton, Manila hanggang EDSA, Pasay City, marami rito ang mga barangay at city road ng Caloocan, Manila, Makati at Pasay ang nakakonekta sa dalawang pambansang kalsada.

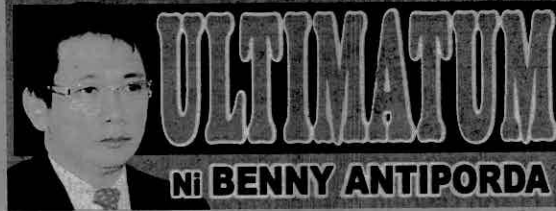
Ang Caloocan ni Mayor Oca Malapitan ay nakikitang maayos ang pamamahala sa kahabaan ng Rizal Avenue extension at hindi gaanong kinakikitaan ng mabigat na trapik, bukod lang sa mga rush hour.

Pero ang Maynila at Pasay, hindi pa gaanong nakikitaan ng maayos na daloy ng trapiko.

Mula sa kanto ng Abad Santos hanggang Sta. Cruz, Manila, pinaghaharian pa rin ng mga pasaway na traysikel at dyip ang kahabaan ng Rizal Avenue.

Ganito rin ang nakikita sa Taft Avenue lalo na sa kahabaan nito mula sa Buendia St. hanggang sa dulo ng Taft Avenue sa EDSA.

Kung magagawan lang ng paraan ng mga concerned na lokal na pamahalaan ang mga pasaway ng traysikel dri-



LGU, MAMAMAYAN: PARTNER NG NATIONAL GOVT

ver at jeepney driver sa Manila at mga pasaway ring mga traysikel, dyipni at bus driver sa Taft Avenue, maraming pakinabang ang matatamasa ng taumbayan.

KALSADA AT BASURA

Itong problema sa basura ay nauugat hindi lang sa kapabayaang ng mga lokal na pamahalaan.

Muli, sa kahabaan Rizal Avenue mula Abad Santos hanggang Sta. Cruz, Manila, marami talagang nagtambak na basura na kung hindi matatagpuan sa Rizal Avenue mismo, nasa bungad o gilid-gilid ng mga barangay at city road.

Ganito rin lalo na Taft Avenue sa parteng Pasay na masikip na, ang basura ay itinatambak kahit saan, sa Taft at mga barangay at city road.

Sa pagsasaliksik ng ating Uzi, mga Bro, kumplikado ang problema.

May mga balasubas na garbage contractor na ayaw magkarga kung walang bigay ang mga residente, sa kabila ng kontrata nila sa mga lokal na pamahalaan.

Marami ring mamamayan ang pasaway at nagtatapon kung saan-saan ng basura.

Pati nga ang mga may babala na "Huwag magtapon ng basura rito", eh, siya namang tinatambakan.

SI MAYOR ISKO

Ang ginagawa ni Mayor Isko Moreno na laban sa basura at trapik ay dapat na suportahan.

Nakikita si Mayor Isko na nangunguna sa pagpapaluwag ng mga kalsada sa pag-alis at pagdurog sa mga bara at basura.

Pero dapat bang siya lang ang kumilos?

Dapat kumilos din ang mga chairman, kagawad, tanod at iba pa sa barangay.

Ang totoo, nasasagasaan ni Mayor Isko ang mga alaga at pinagkakakitaan ng mga kapitan.

Sana, makipagtulungan ang mga kapitan kay Mayor Isko laban sa mga bara sa lansangan at basura.

SAYANG NA SAYANG

Kung umikot kayo, mga Bro, sa mga barangay na may mga estero at ilog, napakarami ang binabakuran ng Department of Public Works and Highways, Metro Manila Development Authority at pamahalaang lungsod.

Matataas at lampas tao ang mga bakod na bakal, tubo at cyclone wire ng mga ilog at estero bilang pamigil sa mga residente na magtapon ng basura sa ilog.

Pero sa sumbong ng ating Uzi, anak ng tokwa, ginagawa pa ring parang ring ng basketball ang mga bakod na bakal at cyclone wire at ringleless kung mag-shoot ang mga mamamayan sa gitna ng mga estero at ilog.

Hindi rin nila pinupulot ang kanilang mga basura na winawalis at sinushoot din sa mga drainage.

Resulta: napupuno ng basura ang mga drainage, estero at sapa.

At kung umulan, nandiyan na ang trapik dahil lumuluwa ng basura at baha ang mga drainage, estero at ilog.

Nasisira rin ang mga pumping station dahil hindi tubig-baha kundi basura ang nasisipsip at iniluluwa ng mga ito.

Sayang ang milyong pisong gastos ng gobyerno na buwis ng buong bayan para sa mga bakod at paggawa ng mga pumping station.

Sana, may nauumpisahan ng katulad nina Mayor Oca at Mayor Isko, ang mga mamamayan din ay tumulong at sumunod sa kumpas ng mga ito.

Nariyan din lang ang pambansang pamahalaan na gumagawa ng lahat para maayudahan ang mga LGU at mamamayan sa laban sa trapik, basura, baha at kawalan ng disiplina na sumisira sa buhay at ari-arian ng lahat.

Anomang reaksyon o reklamo ay maaaring iparating sa 0922840-3333 o i-email sa banti-porda@yahoo.com.



17 more mines to undergo gov't audit

By Ben O. de Vera
@bendeveraINQ

Another 17 mining operations will undergo audit by the inter-agency Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) starting this month to determine if they have been following the country's mining regulations and standards, the Department of Finance (DOF) said Tuesday.

The upcoming second round of "objective, science-based, and fact-finding" audit was expected to be finished by January next year, according to the DOF, which

co-chairs the MICC together with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

However, the DOF did not identify the mining operations to be included in the next batch of review.

During a recent MICC meeting, Finance Undersecretary Bayani H. Agabin disclosed that the next audit would be undertaken by the same technical teams that reviewed 26 mining sites last year.

"The MICC will complete the review and management teams in the second and third week of July.

We will tap around 15 experts from the same technical teams that did the first audit," Agabin said.

The 15 experts will be grouped into three teams with five members for each panel, and will have senior and junior technical and research assistants to help them with the audit. The review will cover the environmental, economic, social, legal and technical aspects of the mining operations.

Last January, Agabin said the DOF and the DENR allotted P25 million from their respective budgets to fund the next

round of review of mining operations.

The MICC initially wanted to start the second round of audit last March for completion in June, but it had been delayed by one quarter.

The upcoming round will complete the audit of all active mining firms as only about 40 remain operating to date.

In 2018, the MICC audited 26 mining companies, which former environment Secretary Regina Paz Lopez had ordered shut down or suspended due to "adverse findings."

That first round of review was delayed by more than a year due to lack of funding.

Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III had nonetheless said that the technical review teams they hired to audit mining operations were "highly commendable."

The MICC, formed through Executive Order No. 79 issued by former President Benigno Aquino III in 2012, was mandated to conduct a multistakeholder review of mining operations every two years, but only now was it able to do so.

Agabin earlier said the result of the MICC's first review was already submitted to the Office of the President, while the DENR was conducting its own separate audit.

Last year, the MICC deferred the recommendation to lift the moratorium on the issuance of new mineral agreements as the new revenue-sharing scheme increasing the government's share from mining operations under the comprehensive tax reform program's proposed package "2 plus" remained pending in Congress. INQ



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE

THE EXHIBIT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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MICC to audit second batch of mining companies

By **CHINO S. LEYCO**

The interagency Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) is undertaking the second round of its “objective, science-based, and fact-finding” audit of mining operations in the fourth week of July, and expects such a review to be completed by January next year.

In a statement, Finance Undersecretary Bayani H. Agabin said the second audit, which will cover 17 mining operations across the country, will be conducted by the same technical teams that undertook the first round of reviews last year covering 26 mines.

“The MICC will complete the review and management teams in the second and third week of July. We will tap around 15 experts from the same technical teams that did the first audit,” said Agabin who chaired an MICC meeting held recently

at the DOF headquarters in Manila.

Agabin said the 15 experts will be grouped into three teams with five members for each panel, and will have senior and junior technical and research assistants to help them with the audit.

The review will cover the environmental, economic, social, legal and technical aspects of the mining operations, he said.

Earlier, the MICC deferred a recommendation on the lifting of the moratorium on the issuance of new mineral agreements.

Executive Order (EO) 79 imposed a moratorium on new mineral agreements “until a legislation rationalizing existing revenue sharing schemes and mechanisms shall have taken effect.”

The Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Law or Republic Act No. 10963 increased the excise tax on mineral products from 2 percent to

4 percent.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) queried whether the increase would be considered as having satisfied the condition of a legislation rationalizing the existing revenue sharing scheme.

However, the DOF clarified that TRAIN only increased the excise taxes and did not cover the implementation of a new fiscal regime for mining. The new fiscal regime proposed by the DOF covers other taxes and fees, such as royalty, windfall, profit, and incentives.

Given the clarification, the MICC resolved to defer a recommendation to lift the moratorium on new mineral agreements, stressing that a new revenue-sharing scheme and mechanisms for mining will be covered in the Package 2 plus of the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program (CTRP), which will have to be refiled in the incoming 18th Congress.

Second round of mining audit starts this month

By MARY GRACE PADIN

The inter-agency Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) is set to start this month the second round of industry audit which will cover 17 mining sites across the country, the Department of Finance (DOF) said yesterday.

Finance Undersecretary Bayani Agabin said the second audit of mining operations would begin on the fourth week of July, and is expected to be completed by January next year.

It comes after the first audit last year, which involved 26 mining sites in the country.

Agabin said the audit will be conducted by the same technical teams that undertook the first round of review.

"The MICC will complete the review and management teams in the second and third week of July. We will tap around 15 experts from the same technical teams that did the first audit," said Agabin, who chaired an MICC meeting held recently.

Agabin said the 15 experts will be grouped into three teams with five members for each panel, and will have senior and junior technical and research assistants to help them with the audit.

Much like in the first audit, Agabin said the experts would assess the environmental, economic, social, legal and technical aspects of the mining operations.

Under Executive Order 79, the MICC is tasked to conduct multistakeholder reviews every two years and advise the

Turn to C4

Second round... From C1

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on the performance of existing mining operations, in consultation with local government units.

The council initially conducted a review on 26 mining operations ordered closed or suspended by former environment secretary Regina Lopez last year.

Following the audit, the DENR decided to suspend three mining companies which failed the MICC review, and warned nine others of possible suspension

subject to the implementation of a rehabilitation plan.

Earlier, the MICC also deferred making a recommendation on the lifting of the moratorium on the issuance of new mineral agreements, pending the passage of a bill which seeks to overhaul the mining industry's fiscal regime.

Under EO 79, a moratorium on new mineral agreements should be implemented until a legislation rationalizing existing revenue sharing schemes and mechanisms have taken effect.



17 mines to be put under 2nd audit round – DoF

THE interagency Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) will begin conducting the second round of its “objective, science-based and fact-finding” audit of mining operations in the fourth week of July, the Department of Finance (DoF) announced on Tuesday.

In a statement, Finance Undersecretary Bayani Agabin said the review, covering 17 mining operations na-

tionwide, “will be conducted by the same technical teams that undertook the first round of reviews last year

covering 26 mines.”

The mining operations were not identified.

“The MICC will complete the review and management teams in the second and third week of July. We will tap around 15 experts from the same technical teams that did the first audit,” he added.

According to the official, the experts will be divided into three teams with

five members each, and have senior and junior technical and research assistants to help them.

The MICC will commission the review that will cover the environmental, economic, social, legal and technical aspects of the 17 mines.

In an email to *The Manila Times*, Agabin said his department was “finalizing the terms of reference for the

► **Audit B4**

■ AUDIT FROM B1

17 mines

experts” and it expected “to finish the audit in six months from August 1.”

He also said the council would also “conduct another round of reviews” as part of its mandate “to review mining operations.”

Earlier, the MICC deferred a recommendation on the lifting of the moratorium on the issuance of new mineral agreements.

Executive Order 79 imposed that moratorium “until a legislation rationalizing existing revenue-sharing schemes and mechanisms shall have taken effect,” the DoF said.

In January 2018, Republic Act 10963 or the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (Train) Act took effect, increasing the excise tax on mineral

products from 2 percent to 4 percent.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources had asked if the increase would be considered as having satisfied the condition of a legislation rationalizing the existing revenue sharing scheme.

The DoF, however, said Train only raised the excise taxes and did not cover the implementation of a new fiscal regime for mining.

The regime proposed by the Finance department covers other taxes and fees, such as royalty, windfall, profit, and incentives.

Given this clarification, the MICC decided to defer the recommendation to lift the moratorium, stressing that a new revenue-sharing scheme and mechanisms for mining will be covered in the Package 2+ of the government’s Comprehensive Tax Reform Program that will have to be refiled in the 18th Congress. **EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ**



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Council to start second round of mining review

By Julito G. Rada

THE interagency Mining Industry Coordinating Council is set to launch the second round of “objective, science-based and fact-finding” audit of mining operations later this month, Finance Undersecretary Bayani Agabin said Tuesday.

Agabin said the review would cover 17 mining operations across the country and would be conducted by the same technical teams that undertook the first round of review last year covering 26 mines. The second round was expected to be completed by January 2020.

He said the MICC would complete

the composition of management teams by the second or third week of July. “We will tap around 15 experts from the same technical teams that did the first audit,” said Agabin who chaired the MICC meeting held recently at the DOF main office in Manila.

Agabin said the 15 experts would be grouped into three teams with five members for each panel. They would include senior and junior technical and research assistants to help them with the audit.

The review will cover the environmental, economic, social, legal and technical aspects of the mining operations, he said.

The MICC earlier deferred a recommendation on the lifting of the moratorium on the issuance of new mineral agreements

Executive Order 79 imposed a moratorium on new mineral agreements “until a legislation rationalizing existing revenue sharing schemes and mechanisms shall have taken effect”.

The Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion Law or Republic Act 10963 increased the excise tax on mineral products from 2 percent to 4 percent. The Environment Department asked if the increase had satisfied the condition of the law rationalizing the existing revenue sharing scheme.

The Finance Department, however, said the Train law only increased the excise taxes and did not cover the implementation of a new fiscal regime for mining. The new fiscal regime proposed by the DOF covers other taxes and fees, such as royalty, windfall, profit and incentives.

After considering the clarification, the MICC resolved to defer a recommendation to lift the moratorium on new mineral agreements, saying that a new revenue-sharing scheme and mechanisms for mining would be covered in Package 2 plus of the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program which will have to be refiled in the incoming 18th Congress.



Second audit on mines set

BY ANGELA CELIS

THE interagency Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) is scheduled to start its audit of 17 mining operations this month, and expects the review to be completed by January 2020.

Bayani Agabin, Department of Finance (DOF) undersecretary, said the second audit will be conducted by the same technical teams that undertook the first round of reviews last year covering 26 mines.

"The MICC will complete the review and management teams in the second and third week of July. We will tap around 15 experts from the same technical teams that did the first audit," Agabin, who chaired an MICC meeting held recently, said.

Agabin said the 15 experts will be grouped into three teams with

five members for each panel, and will have senior and junior technical and research assistants to help them with the audit.

The review will cover the environmental, economic, social, legal and technical aspects of the mining operations, he said.

Earlier, the MICC deferred a recommendation on the lifting of the moratorium on the issuance of new mineral agreements.

Executive Order (EO) 79 imposed a moratorium on new mineral agreements "until a legislation rationalizing existing revenue sharing schemes and mechanisms shall have taken effect."

The Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Law increased the excise tax on mineral products from two percent to four percent.

The DOF said the Department of Environment and Natural

Resources queried whether the increase would be considered as having satisfied the condition of a legislation rationalizing the existing revenue sharing scheme.

However, the DOF clarified that TRAIN only increased the excise taxes and did not cover the implementation of a new fiscal regime for mining. The new fiscal regime proposed by the DOF covers other taxes and fees, such as royalty, windfall, profit and incentives.

Given the clarification, the MICC resolved to defer a recommendation to lift the moratorium on new mineral agreements, stressing that a new revenue-sharing scheme and mechanisms for mining will be covered in the Package 2 plus of the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program, which will have to be refiled in the incoming 18th Congress.



New round. This covers the environmental, economic, social, legal and technical aspects of mining operations.



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Gov't sets second round of mining audit

By Reicelene Joy N. Ignacio

Reporter

THE GOVERNMENT will start towards the end of this month the second round of its audit of the mining industry in order to ensure operations do not harm the environment and benefit host communities, the Finance department said on Monday, adding that it expects the review "to be completed by January next year."

The department's press statement quoted Finance Undersecretary Bay-

ani H. Agabin as saying that this round will cover 17 mining operations nationwide and will be conducted by the same technical teams that undertook the first round of reviews last year that covered 27 mines.

The department issued the announcement as head of the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC), which it co-chairs with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The MICC also consists of the Department of Justice, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples and the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines.

"The MICC will complete the review and management teams in the second and third weeks of July. We will tap around 15 experts from the same technical teams that did the first audit," Mr. Agabin said in the press release, explaining that the experts will be grouped into three teams with five members each.

He added that the review will cover the environmental, economic, social, legal and technical aspects of mining operations.

Sought for comment, Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (CoMP) Chairman Gerard H. Brimo, chairman and

chief executive officer of Nickel Asia Corp., said in a mobile phone message that "audits by MICC are always welcome."

"They've been done well — thoroughly and fairly — and when they're done in this manner, the industry has no reason to object."

CoMP Executive Director Ronald S. Recidoro said, "We are hopeful that these companies, many of them members of the chamber of mines, will again pass scrutiny by government regulators."

"We also hope that, with the completion of the audits by January 2020,

government will have finally resolved the major issues confronting the mining industry — legal, technical, social and environmental — and formulated a comprehensive policy to move it forward," he added.

The first audit resulted in 23 cleared to continue operations after being found compliant with environmental and other state regulations. Four mines did not pass that first review round and were recommended for closure, although they were allowed to appeal the decision with the Office of the President.

Mining, SI/4

TITLE: Gov't sets second...

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BN FILE PHOTO

MINERS in the country have been reeling from a negative regulatory environment since mid-2012, when the government imposed a moratorium on new permits until the industry's tax structure is overhauled to give the state a bigger take in revenues.

Mining,
from S1/1

The industry's review is being undertaken pursuant to Executive Order No. 79, issued in June 2012, which imposed a moratorium on new mining permits "until a legislation rationalizing existing revenue-sharing schemes and mechanisms shall have taken effect."

Republic Act No. 10963, an encompassing tax reform package that slashed personal income tax rates but increased or added levies on several goods and services when it went into effect in January last year, doubled the excise tax on mineral products to four percent.

The Finance department had clarified, however, that the provision did not satisfy EO 79's requirement for the lifting of the moratorium on new permits, since an overhaul of the mining industry's fiscal regime should also cover royalty, windfall profit and other taxes and fees, as well as incentives.

METALLIC MINERAL OUTPUT

MGB data as of May 30 show metallic mineral production growing in value by 11.57% to P27.466 billion in the first quarter from P24.618 billion a year ago.

The same comparative periods saw gold production increasing by 12% in volume to 5,651 kilograms (kg) from 5,034 kg and by 10% in value to P12.225 billion from P11.107 billion.

Silver increased by 11% in volume to 8,469 kg from 7,613 kg and by three percent in value to P217.292 million from P210.342 million.

Copper concentrate grew in volume to 81,059 dry metric tons (DMT) from 69,839 DMT, but slipped by three percent in value to P5.059 billion from P5.202 billion.

Mixed nickel-cobalt sulfide output rose in volume by four percent to 22,270 DMT from 21,394 DMT, while value surged 35% to P7.102 billion from P5.274 billion.

Hence, the MICC deferred a decision to lift the moratorium until a new industry fiscal scheme is in place.

In a text message, Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) Director Wilfredo G. Moncano, said, "MGB has recommended to the MICC, co-chaired by (Finance) Sec(etary Carlos G.) Dominguez (III) and (Environment) Sec. (Roy A.) Cimatu the lifting of the moratorium on processing of MPSA (Mineral Production Sharing Agreement) applications so that we can have new mines opened and operating."

"However, we may have to wait until a new fiscal regime other than the doubling of taxes is passed by Congress..."

Mining has been in the doldrums since EO 79 was issued in mid 2012, although experts abroad have noted that the Philippines has substantial mineral deposits to keep foreign miners interested in the country.

Finally, production of nickel direct shipping ore grew volume by three percent to 2.969 million DMT from 2.895 million DMT, while value roughly steadied at P2.769 billion from P2.758 billion.

Mining contributed about 0.66% to gross domestic product (GDP) in this year's first three months, roughly steady since at least 2016.

Taxes, fees and royalties from the industry have been on a steady decline from P35.494 billion in 2016 to P25.691 billion in 2017 and to P11.733 billion last year. Levies totaled some P268.8 million in the first quarter.

"We wanted to increase mining industry's contribution to... GDP... from the current 0.7% to 4-5%," Mr. Moncano said.

"This can be done by opening four new major mines as soon as possible and data from small-scale mining are captured." —
with Reuters

Hence...

Finally...



Mining review report completed soon

The so-called second round of assessment of mining companies is seen completed within the month, Finance Undersecretary Bayani Agabin said on Tuesday.

According to Agabin, who led the recent MICC (Mining Industry Coordinating Council) meeting at the Department of Finance (DoF), an analysis of the performance of 15 mining firms is seen completed on the fourth week of July and the full review completed by January next year.

"The review will cover the environmental, economic, social, legal and technical aspects of the mining operations," Agabin said.

"The MICC will complete the review and management teams in the second and third of July. We will tap around 15 experts from the same technical teams that did the first audit," he added.

According to Agabin, the experts are constituted into three five-member groups with senior and junior assistants, both for technical and research, to help in the audit.

The MICC, which was co-chaired by the secretaries of the DoF and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) deferred a recommendation on the lifting of the moratorium on the issuance of new mineral agreements.

Executive Order 79 "imposed (a) moratorium on new mineral agreements until a legislation rationalizing existing revenue sharing schemes and mechanisms shall have taken effect."

The Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Law or Republic Act 10963 increased the excise tax on mineral products from 2 percent to 4 percent.

The DENR earlier asked whether the excise adjustment satisfied the condition for a legislation rationalizing the existing revenue sharing system. The DoF said the TRAIN only adjusted the excise tax and did not touch the mining industry's fiscal regime.

Joshua Lao



Senate chief seeks to hike state's take from miners

By Charmaine A. Tadalán
Reporter

A MEASURE increasing the government's take from mining revenues, which forms part of the Duterte administration's comprehensive tax reform program, has been filed anew in the Senate.

Under Senate Bill No. 240, Senate President Vicente C. Sotto III proposed to impose royalty on miners operating outside mineral reservations, which is currently levied only on firms located inside such sites.

"There is a need to amend the existing mining fiscal regime and further enhance equitable share of the government in the utilization of natural resources," the Senate President said in the explanatory note of the bill, dated July 8.

Mr. Sotto adopted the version, proposed by the Department of Finance in the 17th Congress, which sought to retain the royalty at five percent of the gross output of the minerals/mineral products extracted, currently imposed only on firms in mineral reservations.

The bill also introduces royalty on firms outside such reservations which will be phased in from three percent in the first three years of implementation, four percent in the fourth year and five percent from the fifth year onward.

This will be levied on top of other taxes, such as the corporate income tax, excise tax which Republic Act No. 10963 doubled to four percent, royalty to host indigenous communities and local business tax, among others.

The bill defined gross output as the "actual market value of minerals or mineral products from each mine or mineral land operated as a separate entity,

Miners, S1/4

Miners, *from S1/1*

without any deduction for mining, processing, refining, transporting, handling, marketing or any other expenses"

Moreover, Mr. Sotto proposed an additional government share, equivalent to the difference between the 50% of net mining revenue (gross output less deductible expenses) and the basic government share consisting of direct taxes and royalty. "Royalty is imposed to compensate the state for the utilization of natural resources by mining contractors, while the proposed additional government share becomes due when prices and profits are high," he explained.

The government currently gets additional share from mining contractors under a Financial Technical Assistance Agreement, which applies to large-scale operations.

Mr. Sotto's proposal also seeks to prevent excessive debt by disallowing deduction of interest expense when a company records a debt-to-equity

ratio in excess of 1.5 to one.

A bill overhauling miners' fiscal regime nearly made it out of the recently concluded 17th Congress after the Senate Ways and Means committee adopted the House of Representatives' version with minor amendments. But it failed to bag second and third reading approval before the June 3 adjournment.

The previous version proposed to reduce the royalty on large-scale mining in reservations to three percent of gross output from five percent currently and introduce a 1-5% margin-based royalty on those outside mineral reserves. The Senate, however, excluded non-metallic mining operations from the coverage.

Sought for comment, Finance Assistant Secretary Ma. Teresa S. Habitan said in a mobile phone message on Tuesday: "We would like to take a look at the bill first, although it is favorable that royalty will cover all mining areas, whether in or outside mineral reservations."



MICC gears up for second round of mining audits as group presses for transparency, accountability

BY JONATHAN L. MAYUGA [@jonlmayuga](#)

THE interagency Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) said it will conduct the second round of mining audit from July to January next year as part of the continuing effort of the

Duterte administration to promote responsible mining in the country.

The audit, which the MICC promises to be "objective, science-based and fact-finding," will cover 17 mining operations across the country.

The same technical teams that conducted the first round of reviews last year covering a total of 26 mines will do the second mining audit.

"The MICC will complete the review and management teams in the second and third week of July. We will tap around 15 experts from the same technical teams that did the first audit," Finance Undersecretary Bayani H. Agabin, who chaired a MICC meeting held recently at the Department of Finance main office in Manila, said in a news statement.

Agabin said the 15 experts will be grouped into three teams with five members for each panel and will employ senior and junior technical and research assistants to help them with the audit.

The review will cover the environmental, economic, social, legal and technical aspects of the mining operations, he added.

Earlier, the MICC deferred a recommendation on the lifting of the moratorium on the issuance of new mineral agreements.

Executive Order (EO) 79 imposed a moratorium on new mineral agreements "until a legislation rationalizing existing revenue sharing schemes and mechanisms shall have taken effect."

The Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) law, or Republic Act 10963, increased the excise tax on mineral products from 2 percent to 4 percent, even as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sought clarification on whether the increase would be considered as having satisfied the condition of legislation rationalizing the existing revenue-sharing scheme.

However, the Department of Finance clarified that TRAIN only increased the excise taxes and did not cover the implementation of a new fiscal regime for mining. The new fiscal regime proposed by the DOF covers other taxes and fees, such as royalty, wind-fall, profit and incentives.

Given the clarification, the MICC resolved to defer a recommendation to lift the moratorium on new mineral agreements, stressing that a new revenue-sharing scheme and mechanisms for mining will be covered in the Package 2 plus of the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program (CTRP), which will have to be refiled in the incoming 18th Congress.

'Questionable'

SOUGHT for comment, anti-mining groups under the Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM) lauded the move, saying such mine audit has, in fact, been long overdue.

Jaybee Garganera, national coordinator of ATM, also questioned the outcome of the first review, which he pointed out has not been made public by the DENR and the MICC in the first place. "This leads us to question the results of the first round of the MICC review," Garganera said.

Under the watch of then-DENR Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez, who initiated a mining audit in 2016 and 2017, a total of 26 large-scale operating mines were recommended for suspension or closure for failing environmental standards.

The DENR audit was based on a set of criteria that include environmental, social and biodiversity concerns, deviating from the usual technical and economic aspects of mining operations. The ATM and its member organizations in mining-affected communities were part of the audit.

This prompted mining companies to appeal their case to the MICC, including some that directly filed their appeal in Malacañang.

The MICC, hence, conducted a review of the DENR recommendation and its own mining audit where it cleared most of the mining companies but declined to give out details as to the methods.

Such lack of transparency, Garganera said, puts into question the entire MICC audit process.



P-2

MICC gears up for second round of mining audit as group presses for transparency, accountability

The lack of transparency and accountability of DENR is precisely the reason communities and local governments like in Nueva Vizcaya are barricading the operations of Oceana Gold Philippines Inc., Garganera said.

"So yes, MICC should proceed immediately with their second round of mine audit reviews and they should release the results and methodologies of the first round of review," he said.

"How come that from an original order of closure and cancellation of mining contracts, the recommendation of DENR has been reduced to mere suspension of... operations?" Garganera asked.

According to Garganera, members of ATM have given the DENR a copy of its "people's mine audit," which, he said, gives the testimonies and evidence gathered by mining-affected communities across the country.

"The evidences clearly show that mining companies violated our environmental laws or failed to comply with their own contractual obligations. These are enough bases to have their mining contracts canceled," he said.

Fishermen withdraw from 'kalikasan' petition

1/2

By EDU PUNAY

The government's chief lawyer yesterday moved for the withdrawal of a petition in the Supreme Court (SC) seeking to compel the government to protect marine resources in

the West Philippine Sea, saying 19 fishermen listed as petitioners had already backed out.

In the continuation of oral arguments on the petition, Solicitor General Jose Calida manifested to the high court that the Integrated Bar

of the Philippines (IBP) filed the petition without the express consent and knowledge of fishermen from Palawan and Zambales who were named petitioners in the case.

The solicitor general submitted to the justices affidavits of the 19 fishermen manifesting their withdrawal as petitioners in the case filed by the IBP's Andre Palacios and human rights lawyer and former senatorial candidate Chel Diokno.

Calida also presented a video of the

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interview with the fishermen where they narrated the circumstances that had made them initially involved in the case.

The group's leaders, Monico Abogado and Roberto Asiado, revealed in their respective affidavits that they were "deceived" into signing the petition.

"Isang malaking panlilinlang ito at paggamit sa aming asosasyon. Pinapatanunayan namin na wala kaming kinalaman sa naturang petisyon laban sa anumang ahensya nang gobyerno (This is a big deception and manipulation of our association. We attest that we have no knowledge of this petition against agencies of the government)," Abogado said in his affidavit.

"Wala kaming alam dito at hindi namin suportado ang inihaing petisyon (We don't know anything about this and we don't support the petition filed)," Asiado added.

With this, Calida moved for the dismissal of the petition because the counsels for petitioners no longer have legal standing to pursue the case without the petitioners.

"They (IBP) bastardized the lofty ideals of IBP when they used it as a battering ram to take down the Duterte administration. One thing is sure, they won't get away with impunity. For these defects, the petition must be dismissed," he told the justices in his opening statement.

Because of the development, Chief Justice Lucas Bersamin and the justices quickly suspended the hearing and called the counsels of both parties to a closed-door conference.

After about 15 minutes, the conference ended and the Court as a whole decided unanimously to suspend the oral arguments on the case and give parties time to file a joint motion and "move in the premises," which insiders said could mean a move for dismissal of the case.

Calida had already sought the dismissal of the petition in the return of writ he filed.

Task carried out

He argued that there is no need for the petition as the government has been performing its duties to protect the environment in the West Philippine Sea.

Calida explained that the respondents – Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Agriculture (DA), Philippine Navy, Philippine

Coast Guard, Philippine National Police and Department of Justice – have "complied with environmental laws and regulations."

He informed the Court of actions taken by the agencies for this purpose, including the implementation of the West Philippine Sea Marine Protected Areas Network Strategic Action Plan and Coastal Assessment for Rehabilitation Enhancement that included scientific expeditions in the West Philippine Sea in 2017.

The programs, he said, resulted in the proposal by DENR last year for declaration of Pag-asa Island and Eastern Kalayaan as protected areas.

Calida said another marine scientific research was conducted last April and May.

The solicitor general further revealed that the agencies have also moved to pursue legal actions against China for the destruction of marine environment in the West Philippine Sea.

Calida said the DA, on the other hand, made several apprehensions of foreign fishing vessels in the West Philippine Sea and conducted seaborne operations at the Panatag Shoal and Kalayaan Group of Islands through its Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources along with the Philippine Navy, PCG and PNP's Maritime Group.

He said the Philippine Navy has been providing "logistics for the Unified Command to reinforce actions of the relevant commands of the Armed Forces of the Philippines which perform their respective mandates in the West Philippine Sea."

Calida said the PCG, for its part, has been "conducting seaborne and air-borne patrolling missions in the West Philippine Sea" and "also constructing lighthouses and aids of navigation in the different islets in the Kalayaan Island Group."

The solicitor general also argued that the incidents cited by petitioners were already raised by the government in its case against China before the Permanent Court of Arbitration that ruled in favor of the Philippines in 2016.

While the government is doing its mandate in the West Philippine Sea, Calida argued that such duty "transcends mere enforcement of environmental laws" and involves matters that are beyond the power of the judiciary.

He also said petitioners failed to exhaust administrative remedies and violated the doctrine of hierarchy of courts

in directly filing the suit before the SC, adding that they also failed to comply with the verification rule under the Rules of Procedure in environmental cases.

Show naval might

Meanwhile, Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. dared yesterday the United States to bring its 7th Fleet to Manila Bay to show Manila the strength of US commitment under the Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT).

Locsin said the US 7th Fleet anchoring in Manila Bay or Subic is allowed under the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

"Why not bring it into Manila Bay. Show the capital the strength of US commitment under the MDT," Locsin tweeted.

On Monday, Locsin said having the US 7th Fleet anchor in Manila Bay is "actually not a bad idea."

"But for fuel efficiency's sake 7th Fleet should anchor in Manila Bay or Subic which is allowed under VFA. No I said on American Independence Day that the motto of our race is like that of New Hampshire: 'Live free or die.' And 'Better dead than Red,'" Locsin said on Twitter.

The *USS Montgomery* departed Davao on July 1, leaving a powerful statement of the importance of US-Philippine relationship in "ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific."

USS Montgomery, an Independence-class littoral combat ship, arrived in Davao on Saturday for a port visit – its first – to the Philippines.

The warship is described as a fast, agile and mission-focused navy vessel designed to operate in near-shore environments for surface warfare, mine countermeasures and anti-submarine warfare.

On Monday, President Duterte also dared the US to send the entire 7th Fleet to the South China Sea to confront Chinese forces.

At the 243rd US Independence Day reception last week, Locsin said the Philippines will continue to count on the "dependable" presence of the United States and on the "clarity and celerity" of Washington's commitment to defend allies.

"Her crises are followed closely by Filipinos; for upon the current condition of her undoubtedly superior strength depends, on the one hand, the clarity and celerity of her commitment to defend allies; and on the other, the ambiguity and indecision of that commitment when she gets up on the wrong side of the bed. But she is all we have," Locsin said in a speech. – Pia Lee-Brago

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Fishers withdraw writ of kalikasan suit

By Hector Lawas

THE government and petitioners in a writ of kalikasan case yesterday agreed to dismiss the petition during an oral argument proceeding at the Supreme Court.

Solicitor General Jose Calida revealed in open court that the 19 petitioner-fishermen withdrew their signatures from the petition.

"Wala kaming alam dito at hindi namin suportado ang inihaing petisyon," Calida said during the oral arguments quoting an affidavit from one of the fishermen.

"These statements show deception, your honors. As for petitioner IBP, they did not even allege in what capacity it is suing. Or what injury it has sustained," Calida added.

The petition sought the issuance of a writ of ka-

likasan asking the government to preserve, restore, and rehabilitate Panatag Shoal, Ayungin Shoal, and Panganiban Reef amid the dispute with China.

These areas, internationally known as Scarborough Shoal, Second Thomas Shoal, and Mischief Reef, are all part of the West Philippine Sea.

They noted the marine features have been heavily damaged due to China's reported artificial island

building activities in the area.

The group also explained that Ayungin Shoal and Panganiban Reef are part of the exclusive economic zone where the country has jurisdiction, as declared by the 2016 decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration. They said Scarborough Shoal, on the other hand, is part of the EEZ under Republic Act 9522 to the Philippine Baselines Law.



Calida: Parties agree to junk writ of kalikasan petition

BY ASHZEL HACHERO

SOLICITOR General Jose Calida yesterday said parties in a petition seeking a writ of kalikasan “agreed that the petition be dismissed by the Supreme Court.”

The writ of kalikasan petition seeks to compel government to save

and protect the environment in the West Philippine Sea. The petitioners said Chinese fishermen have been harvesting and endangering marine resources in the WPS and government has not stopped the activities.

The SC said it cannot confirm what was agreed on by the parties in the case. The court decided to

suspend the oral arguments “in view of the submissions of the Solicitor General and the manifestations of counsels during the oral arguments,” said SC spokesman Brian Keith Hosaka.

Calida, at the resumption of oral

.....
See CALIDA ► Page B5

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CALIDA

arguments on the petition, told the High Court that 19 fishermen from Palawan and Zambales who were among the petitioners have withdrawn their signatures on the plea.

“Anyway, that withdrawal of signatures is moot and academic now because both parties agreed to dismiss the case,” Calida told reporters in an ambush interview after the oral arguments adjourned early.

“The parties, petitioners and respondents, agreed that the case be dismissed by the Supreme Court. To us, that’s a win because we are the respondents,” he added.

Calida told the SC, quoting from the fishermen’s affidavits, they were withdrawing their signatures because they did not know or did not support the cause behind the plea that accused the Duterte administration of neglect the WPS.

The petition was filed by the Kalayaan Palawan farmers and Fishermen Association and Zambales Fishermen with the Integrated Bar of the Philippines and human rights lawyer Jose “Chel” Diokno helping prepare the plea.

Diokno said he spoke to three fishermen from Zambales who he said seemed “very aware and very willing” to sign the petition which

said government did not act to stop to environmental damage at the Panatag and Ayungin Shoals and Panganiban Reefs.

Calida slammed the IBP, saying it has deceived the fishermen, the public and the SC.

“The IBP lawyers involved in this case foisted egregious deceit not only on the fisherfolk petitioners but also on this Honorable Court. They bastardized the lofty ideals of the IBP when they used it as a battering ram to take down the Duterte administration,” he said in his opening statement to the Court.

Calida then moved to submit the fishermen’s affidavit, prompt-

ing Diokno to object, saying he has not read the documents and that arguments not raised in the return of the writ are deemed waived, meaning the Calida’s office has lost the chance to raise the issue.

In an official statement sent to reporters, Diokno and IBP lead counsel Andre Palacios did not discuss Calida’s claim about the dismissal of the petition, saying only that a joint motion will be filed.

“After being called to chambers, both parties agreed to explore the filing of a joint motion in the premises and were given until Friday to do so,” the statement said.



#nationataglance

Petitioners in West PHL Sea protection case before SC agree to drop case

SOLICITOR-GENERAL Jose C. Calida said both parties in the petition for Writ of Kalikasan seeking the enforcement of environmental laws and protection of territories in the West Philippine Sea have agreed to dismiss the case. Mr. Calida said the petitioners, composed of a group of fisherfolk and the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP), agreed to drop the case by Friday. "The parties, petitioners and respondents, agreed that case be dismissed... To us that's a win because we are the respondents, I'm the lawyer of the respondents," Mr. Calida told reporters after the oral arguments for the petition. On the other hand, Supreme Court (SC) Public Information Chief Brian Keith F. Hosaka said the court cannot confirm what was agreed upon by the parties of the case. "The Supreme Court decided to suspend the oral arguments in view of the submissions of the Solicitor General and the manifestations of counsels during today's oral arguments," he said in a text message. Before he delivered his opening statement in the oral arguments, Mr. Calida moved to submit 19 affidavits from petitioners who withdrew their petition. He also noted that the IBP did not include in what capacity they are suing and what injury they have sustained. — **Vann Marlo M. Villegas**



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THE LEGAL FRONT

Oral arguments in the Supreme Court



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By **JUSTICE ART D. BRION (RET.)**

I INTERRUPT my Legal Education series to write and hopefully provide the public greater awareness of a Supreme Court proceeding now currently in the news – oral arguments.

I find this topic to be timely as a very interesting case – the writ of kalikasan petition for the enforcement of our environmental laws against intruding Chinese fishermen – is now going through oral arguments before the court.

Our courts generally hear litigants through pleadings or the written submissions of their claims and defenses. Witnesses actually appear before the courts during trial to prove the facts alleged in the pleadings. Proof of these allegations is through the testimonies of witnesses and physical evidence introduced during the trial.

No counterpart process for the reception of evidence takes place in the Supreme Court because it is not, as a rule, a trier of facts; it does not receive and evaluate evidence. The role of the court is to apply the law and decide the case based on the facts before it and its interpretation of the applicable law.

In petitions filed directly and originally with the court (i.e., not as an appeal of cases coming from the lower courts), the parties' positions on the applicable law are submitted through written pleadings, i.e., through petitions, comments, and the memoranda the court may require. After an exchange of pleadings that gives the disputing parties the chance to present their respective positions, the court declares the case submitted for decision.

In cases involving difficult and complicated issues, the court may opt to hear the parties' positions on the applicable law in oral face-to-face arguments, to allow the parties' counsels the chance to argue directly before the members of the court who may then ask them questions.

This is the oral argument proceeding now taking place at the Supreme Court on the writ of kalikasan case.

At the oral arguments, the court may also clarify factual (i.e., evidentiary) issues before it, but does not receive evidence on these issues. In rare cases, however, the court has been known to allow (and even compel) the parties to submit evidence, for or against one another.

This rare occurrence happened in the DAP case where Secretary Butch Abad was present in court as a respondent and was called by the court to the stand to shed light on the complicated factual issues of the case.

He ended up making admissions and submitting packets of evidence, signed by President Aquino, showing how they engaged in the unconstitutional transfer of funds. These admissions and packets of evidence – which the court admitted – were the evidence that served as basis for the court's DAP decision.

Despite the importance that oral arguments may assume in critical cases, the Rules of Court and the court's Internal Rules do not provide elaborate rules regulating the conduct of its proceedings.

Whether or not to call a case for oral arguments is discretionary on the court; it may call for oral arguments at its own initiative or at either party's motion.

An advisory – that the court issues usually after conference with the parties – defines the issues for argument. In the Kalikasan case, the court specified procedural issues (those relating to the required procedures in bringing the case directly to the court or in its handling) as well as substantive issues on the merits (i.e. on whether the grant of the writ is legally proper).

Even procedural issues may assume importance in resolving a case. For example, a defined issue in the Kalikasan case is whether the petitioners observed the hierarchy of courts principle when they filed their petition directly with the court, not with the lower courts with concurrent jurisdiction with the court. The public should watch this procedural issue in light of the stress the court gave this principle in its recent Gios-Samar ruling.

The advisory governs the counsels' presentation of arguments, the order of presentation, and their allotted time. The petitioner argues first, followed by the respondent, then by the amicus curiae (friend of the court), if one has been appointed by the court. The amicus is an expert called upon by the court to help in interpreting legal provisions in issue and their application to the facts of the case.

The time allotted for presentation varies from case to case, depending on the issues and the

complexity of the case. In the Disini case, the number of petitions (15) filed against the constitutionality of various parts of the Cybercrime Law, led the court to be strict in the number of counsels allowed to argue and in their allotted time.

Members of the court may interpellate counsels (i.e. ask them questions) after their respective presentations to clarify the difficult questions to be resolved.

While interpellations usually come after each counsel's presentation, some justices have thrown questions at counsels even in mid-presentation. Members of the court likewise do not have time limitations in their interpellations.

In the Grace Poe case, one former justice asked questions for 3 hours. In the Mercy Gutierrez case, the justices' interpellation of one counsel – an elderly former member of the Court – lasted for more than 5 hours.



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In the past, oral arguments required extended sessions that went far into the night. The current and immediately past court leaderships, however, have set time limits; the Chief Justice usually defers an oral argument session for another day if the session would go beyond the time limit set for the day.

While arguable issues are defined and limited by the advisory, the range of the justices' questions is not similarly limited. Some justices ask questions only tangentially related to the case. Thus, counsels should be ready to discuss not only the direct facts and issues of the case, but other surrounding issues as well, factual or legal.

For example, questions in the present *Kalikasan* case dwelt not only with the deficient performance of incumbent government officials, but extended as well to the performance of the past Aquino administration whose officials are not respondents in the case. The recent sinking of a Filipino fishing vessel by a Chinese ship is expectedly fair game for the justices' interpellations.

How the court will decide the case remains hanging until deliberation day. Justices have their own unique view of the case as the oral arguments show, but their lines of questioning may not really indicate how they will individually vote.

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'New Clark City to benefit farmers, IPs'

By Krixia Subingsubing
@krixiasINQ

Farmers and indigenous tribes would be "the first and biggest beneficiaries" of the P607-billion New Clark City (NCC) metropolis being developed in Capas, Tarlac province, the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) said on Tuesday, amid scrutiny into the plight of the communities still left in the dark about the project.

'1st green city'

In a statement, Leilani Barlongay Macasaet, BCDA assistant vice president for corporate communications, said the NCC—reportedly the country's first smart, green and "climate-resilient" city—would "create opportunities for everyone, es-

pecially the IP (indigenous peoples) groups and farmers who may be affected [by] the development of roads and other infrastructure."

No ancestral domains

The assertion followed an Inquirer report saying that tens of thousands of local farmers and Aeta tribespeople living along the 9,450-hectare project are likely to be displaced from their lands.

Macasaet strongly denied that these communities, especially the Aeta, would be displaced since there were no declared ancestral domains across the development area.

However, she added that it was making available financial assistance packages worth P300,000 per hectare, as well as in-site relocation sites for those

affected by the project.

This was made clear in the Inquirer's interviews with farmers who used to till the land along Phase 1A in Sitio Kamatis and Aranguren, who accepted these compensatory packages and were already relocated within the area.

Phase 1A nears completion

But they said these packages merely masked the threat to their living conditions and food security, as the farms that sustained them for generations were already cemented over.

Phase 1A, which is near completion, would house the massive sports complex that will be used as the stage for the upcoming Southeast Asian Games in November.

Macasaet added that it was

in partnership with the University of the Philippines (UP) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) to make sure the city's master plan was "inclusive and sustainable."

It also expressed willingness to dialogue with the research team from the University of Glasgow (UG) and UP, whose countermapping project was used as the basis of the Inquirer report.

The UG/UP team asserted that the massive project was a classic case of development aggression, in that the stakeholders were left largely unaware of the extent of the project.

Macasaet said they were in constant touch with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to ensure they would be includ-

ed in the development.

But the communities are still largely underrepresented, because both the BCDA and the NCIP are only in dialogue with one NCIP-accredited Aeta tribe.

Changes to ecosystem

The UG/UP research also noted the drastic changes made to Capas' ecosystem, like changing the flow of the Cut-cut and Marimla rivers to construct a river park, compounded New Clark City's natural vulnerabilities to landslides and flooding.

Macasaet said the construction followed the river's natural flow as advised by the ADB, who also commissioned a biodiversity study to protect the flora and fauna along the area. INQ



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PADDLERS' PARADISE Surigao City has been steadily attracting dragon boat racers as the Surigao del Norte capital hosts the 2nd Surigao International Dragon Boat Festival that has drawn more than 600 participants this year. —ERWIN MASCARIÑAS

INTERNATIONAL DRAGON BOAT RACE HOST

DOT EYES SURIGAO AS HUB FOR WATER SPORTS, SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

SURIGAO CITY—This capital city of Surigao del Norte province, which has been hosting the International Dragon Boat Festival since last year, is being positioned to become a center for water sports as the Department of Tourism (DOT) and local officials push sustainable tourism in the country.

“With our success in hosting this international race for the

second year, we want to develop an identity for Surigao City as a water sports hub that is in balance with our ecotourism advocacy,” said Surigao City Mayor Ernesto Matugas Jr.

He said Surigao, as a coastal city, would be most suited to host not only the dragon boat event but also other water activities in the future. The event this year drew 608 participants.

Tourism Undersecretary Arturo Boncato Jr. said Surigao City and Surigao del Norte would have big roles to play in the growth of tourism in the Philippines.

“The dragon boat festival is one of the most sustainable activities that a city, like Surigao, can pursue. It does not involve fuel or anything that could harm the environment. With

that, we will support Surigao City and we will focus on sustainable tourism as it is the key to the future. With it, we hope to provide opportunities for everybody,” Boncato said.

DOT records showed that 288,219 tourists visited Surigao City in 2018. Surigao del Norte, with Siargao Island as its major destination, welcomed 206,411 visitors last year.

Ana Nuguid, DOT director for Caraga, said the agency would package the region as a premier sports tourism destination.

She said other international sports events had been drawing visitors to Surigao for several years.

Nuguid said the annual Siargao International Surfing Cup celebrated its 25th year this

2019. “That’s the longest running international independent sporting event in the Philippines,” she said.

She said the province, in April, held the 12th International Game Fishing Tournament in Pilar town, while the third Siargao International Marathon would be held in Del Carmen town on July 13. —ERWIN MASCARIÑAS INQ

Phi wins third consecutive term in Unesco's oceanographic body

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The Philippines won a seat on the executive council of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IOC-UNESCO) for the period 2019-2021, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said yesterday.

This is the Philippines' third consecutive term as one of 40 members of the IOC Executive Council after winning a seat during the elections held at the 30th session of the IOC Assembly at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France.

"As a maritime and archipelagic state located at the center of the world's marine biodiversity, the Philippines will continue to contribute to the Commission's unique

role in fostering international cooperation in ocean science and in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, particularly Goal 14 on Life Below Water," DFA said in a statement.

Established in 1960 as a body with functional autonomy within UNESCO, the IOC is the competent organization for marine science within the UN system.

The IOC promotes inter-

national cooperation and coordinates programs in research, services and capacity-building, in order to learn more about the nature and resources of the ocean and coastal areas and to apply that knowledge for the improvement of management, sustainable development, protection of the marine environment and the decision-making processes of its member-states.



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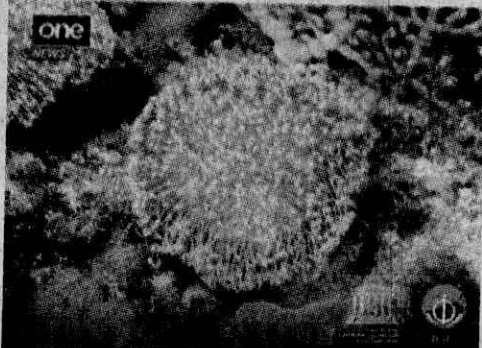
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 The Philippines joins 39 other members on the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Executive Council for the third consecutive year.
FULL STORY | <https://bit.ly/2NHriOp>



PH GETS THIRD TERM ON IOC-UNESCO EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
The Philippines secured a seat at the IOC-UNESCO's 39th general meeting (33rd session) in Rome, Italy, for the period of 2019 to 2021 by acclamation, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

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Suplay ng isda nanganganib sa plastic pollution

NANGANGANIB na bumaba ang suplay ng isda sa ating karagatan sanhi ng plastic pollution kaya hinimok ni Sen. Cynthia Villar ang aquaculture practitioners at fish farmers na makilisa sa solusyon.

Sa pagtatapos ng 32 fish farmers mula sa Calabarzon, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Marinduque, Albay, Catanduanes, Masbate, Camarines Sur, Sorsogon, Aklan, Pasay at Paranaque, sa 5-day freshwater aquaculture training course sa Villar Sipag Farm School sa Bacoor, Cavite, iginiit ni Villar na seryoso ang suliranin natin sa plastic pollution.

Sinabi Villar na mismong mga eksperto ng United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization ang nagsabing sa 2050 o 30 taon mula ngayon, maaaring wala nang isda sa mga karagatan at aasa na lang tayo sa mga produkto ng aquaculture gaya ng fishpond.

Paliwanag pa niya, maaaring maganap ang sinasabi ng UNFAO dahil mula sa 70%, bumagsak na ang huli sa karagatan sa 50% at aquaculture mula sa 50% sa 30%.

Kasama umano sa mga pumapatay sa isda ang mga nalulunok nilang plastik kaya dapat umanong labanan ang pangyayaring ito.

Lalo umanong mahalaga ang pagtutulongan sa Pilipinas dahil ikatlo ito sa pinakamalaking tagagawa ng plastik sa buong mundo.

ERNIE REYES



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FISH FARMERS TUMULONG SA PLASTIC POLLUTION

HINIMOK ni Senadora Cynthia Villar ang aquaculture practitioners at fish farmers na makiisa na solusyunan ang plastic pollution sa karagatan ng bansa na naglalagay sa panganiib sa suplay ng isda.

Ito ang naging panawagan ni Villar sa mga nagsipagtapos na 32 fish farmers mula sa Calabarzon, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Marinduque, Albay, Catanduanes, Masbate, Camarines Sur, Sorsogon, Aklan, Pasay at Parañaque sa kanilang 5-day freshwater aquaculture training course sa Villar Sipag Farm School sa Bacoor, Cavite na makipagtulungan para mabawasan ang suliranin sa plastic pollution.

"None other than the experts of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, have predicted that by 2050 or 30 years from now, there will be no more fish in the ocean and we will be relying on aquaculture to supply our need for fish," ani Villar.

Ayon sa senadora, hindi malayong mangyari ang prediksiyon na patuloy na bababa ang suplay ng isda mula 70 percent wild catch at 30 percent aquaculture sa nakalipas na 20 taon sa 50 percent wild catch at 50 percent aquaculture sa kasalu-

kuyan dulot ng plastic pollution.

"I urge everyone of you to take part in solving this plastic pollution by observing within your homes and your communities proper waste disposal. The livelihood of millions of our kababayan and our food security is at stake," panawagan ni Villar.

Idinagdag pa nito,

kailangang magtulungan ang mga Filipino lalo na't ang Filipinas ang ikatlo sa pinakamalaking producer ng plastic wastes sa karagatan kasunod ng China at Indonesia.

Hinimok din ni Villar ang mga nagsipagtapos na samantalain ang oportunidad sa aquaculture at seryosohin ang pagiging trainors

na magbabahagi ng kanilang natutunan sa ibang tao sa pagbabalik sa kani-kanilang mga lugar.

"Napakaimportante ng aquaculture because it is a source of livelihood sa ating mga kababayan. Kaya naman kami rito sa Villar Sipag kasama ang Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, gusto naming makatu-

loñg directly sa fishing communities at fish farmers kaya kami nagtuturo ng freshwater aquaculture lalo na sa aspeto ng bagong technology at proseso sa aquaculture. As you know, technology and technical expertise are important for farmers para mas maging profitable and competitive sila," dagdag pa ni Villar.

VICKY CERVALES



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Nestlé Waters teams up with Ocean Legacy for plastic waste cleanup

PARIS — Nestlé's bottled water division Nestlé Waters, owner of Perrier and Vittel, said it would team up with Canada's Ocean Legacy Foundation to help to clean up plastic pollution.

Consumer goods companies, such as Nestlé, are under pressure to do more to reduce the waste their business generates as consumers become increasingly aware of the damaging impact of plastic that ends up in landfill and oceans.

Many of them, including Nestlé and French peer Danone, have made voluntary pledges to make all of their plastic packaging reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2025.

But environmental groups say the key to reducing plastic

pollution is prevention, notably through the introduction of bottle deposits.

Non-profit group Ocean Legacy Foundation fights plastic ocean pollution with clean-up expeditions, land-based plastic collection, recycling, education and pollution hot-spot mapping.

Paris-based Nestlé Waters will work with Ocean Legacy to support clean-up projects for communities around the world, including education and infrastructure, Nestlé Waters Head of Sustainability Carlo Galli said in a statement.

But Thibault Turchet, with environmental campaigning group Zero Waste France, said of the Nestlé alliance with Ocean

Legacy that it would be better for Nestlé and other large plastic waste producers to return to bottling drinks in glass and cut down on plastic packaging that is unrecyclable.

"They send organizations to work on beach cleaning and education, but they don't work on prevention and waste production," Thibault said.

Nestlé Waters said that 20% of the water it sells globally is already packaged in returnable and refillable bottles and that a further 2% is sold in returnable and refillable glass for the hotel and restaurant trade.

"We are continually testing and developing viable alternatives, such as biodegradable and

bio-based materials, glass, aluminium and carton packaging," a Nestlé Waters spokeswoman said.

In early 2020, Nestlé Waters will also launch new high-tech water dispensers, allowing consumers to fill their own reusable bottles. It also works with local governments and communities to develop PET (plastic) collection adapted to each country.

The Nestlé Waters partnership with Ocean Legacy involves an undisclosed yearly funding agreement, initially for five years.

The program will also include tools and education materials to help communities in creating new products and value from the waste collected during the clean-ups. — **Reuters**



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California quakes remind us of our 'Big One'

TWO big earthquakes hit southern California last week, renewing fears of the "Big One" that Californians have long been warned about. Fortunately, the earthquakes – magnitude-6.4 on Thursday followed by magnitude-7.1 on Friday – hit a sparsely populated area 18 kilometers from the city of Ridgecrest, but they were enough to damage some buildings, crack roads, and disrupt some water and gas lines in an area from Sacramento City to Mexico in the south.

The two earthquakes were not even on the San Andreas Fault, a major crack beneath the earth that runs along Western California, alongside Los Angeles, and cuts across California's thickly populated San Bernardino County. In 1994, a magnitude-6.7 earthquake – only a quarter as powerful as the 7.1 second Ridgecrest earthquake – killed 57 people and injured over 8,700, because it hit close to LA. Today, the people of LA live in fear of the "Big One" – a magnitude-7.8 earthquake which geologists said is long overdue.

We in the Philippines also have long lived in fear of our own magnitude-7.2 "Big One" which, it is said, could come at any time. We have beneath Bulacan, Metro Manila, Cavite, and Laguna a "West Valley Fault" which caused a major earthquake in 1658 and, it is feared, will snap again after some 400 years and cause a 7.2 earthquake in Metro Manila.

When that happens, a study by the Japan Inter-

national Cooperation Agency said, the death toll could reach 34,000, with 300,000 injured as many buildings collapse. It is for this reason that we have been holding annual "Shake Drills," with everyone asked to "Duck, Cover, and Hold" under a table or other solid support and protect one's head from falling objects.

Most of the world's earthquakes have occurred on the so-called Pacific Ring of Fire, filled with so many volcanoes and with underground earth masses grinding against each other. This ring goes around the Pacific – from Alaska in the northeast, along the western coasts of North, Central, and South America, to the islands of the South Pacific, the islands of Southeast Asia, to Japan, Kamchatka peninsula, back to Alaska.

Nearly all of the world's most powerful earthquakes have taken place along this Ring of Fire. The most powerful was a magnitude-9.5 that hit Chile in 1960, followed by a magnitude-9.2 in Alaska in 1964, a magnitude-9.1 in Sumatra in 2004, and another magnitude-9.1 in Japan in 2011. Hundreds of weaker earthquakes have occurred over the centuries. Only this Monday, a 6.9 earthquake struck off the coast of Indonesia's Sulawesi island directly south of us.

Following the two Ridgecrest earthquakes last week, the people of California are on alert. We too should continue to be on alert for our own "Big One" by joining the annual exercise and taking all the suggested precautions, such as being ready with emergency food and medical kits.



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One town, one evacuation center

The heavy monsoon rains have started, and weather experts have warned that this year's

El Niño, although considered weak, will mean a stronger storm season. The experts also warned that some weather disturbances might rival the torrential rains and flooding spawned by Tropical Storm Ondoy in 2009 in Metro Manila and nearby areas.

In November 2013, Super Typhoon Yolanda killed thousands and unleashed apocalyptic destruction across much of Eastern Visayas. The government has been implementing disaster mitigation programs for many years, but nothing prepared the country for Yolanda's fury. Yolanda, Ondoy and several other powerful tropical cyclones showed the inadequacy of programs for disaster resilience, starting with the most basic — a place to seek shelter from nature's wrath.

With the 18th Congress about to open its session this month, a bill has been refiled by Sen. Ralph Recto, seeking the establishment of a decent evacuation center in every city and municipality nationwide. Recto noted that the Department of Public Works and Highways

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has constructed 82 evacuation centers in 52 provinces, with 55 more underway. Yet

in many areas, schools continue to serve as evacuation centers during calamities.

Schools are not designed for mass housing. There have been numerous stories of diseases spreading in crowded evacuation centers, where there is often inadequate supply of water and basic sanitation facilities. Children and the elderly are the most vulnerable to health risks in such cramped evacuation sites.

Using schools as shelters also displaces students. Even when the weather has improved sufficiently for classes to resume, evacuees may not yet be ready to move out for lack of new shelters. Recto is proposing a "one town, one evacuation center" program, with the centers sturdy enough to withstand earthquakes of up to intensity 8 and typhoon winds of up to 300 kilometers per hour.

When not in use, the centers can serve as multipurpose halls, housing libraries or used for sports and other community events. Constructing such centers will require significant funding, but it will be an investment in saving lives.



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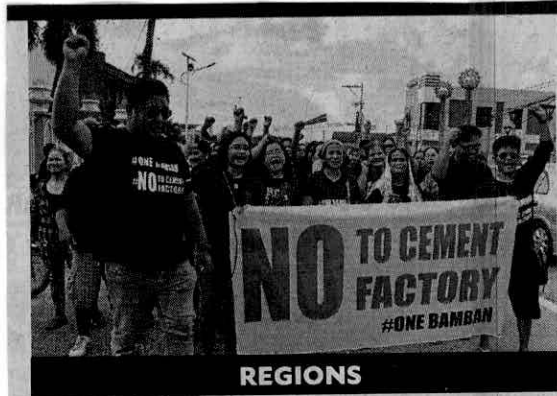
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REGIONS

Tarlac folk keep cement firm out

BAMBAN, TARLAC—Mayor Jose Feliciano said the plan of a cement company to put up a P6-billion plant here would not push through after residents mounted protests over its potential impact on public health. He said the company's withdrawal jeopardized some local government projects that would have been funded from the income the town would have gotten from the plant's operation.

—STORY BY MARIA ADELAIDA CALAYAG

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Cement firm backs out of Tarlac project

Mayor says P6-B grinding facility stopped as Bamban residents mount protests

BAMBAN, TARLAC—A cement manufacturer has backed out of its plan to put up a grinding facility in this town after residents staged a series of protests denouncing the project.

Clad in black shirts bearing the message “No to Cement Factory,” the protesters walked for two hours from Metro Bamban subdivision in Barangay Anupul to Santo Niño Parish in the town proper, where they heard a Mass and lighted candles as part of the culminating protest actions on Saturday.

The protesters said the construction of the cement grinding facility owned by Big Boss Cement would pose health risks to the community where it would be located.

The plant will be built at Sitio Pinandakitan, about 500 meters from San Roque National High School with 4,000 students, said Dianna Lacamana-Figueroa, president of the Coalition of Concerned Citizens of Bamban (CCCB).

Investment

The proposed site is also an agricultural land that traverses four villages.

On June 15, CCCB also led a



BAMBAN PROTEST Residents of Bamban, Tarlac, protest the establishment of a cement grinding facility in their town due to possible health risks to the community. —MARIA ADELAIDA CALAYAG

motorcade around this town to denounce the project.

Bamban Mayor Jose Feliciano on Monday said the cement firm had withdrawn its P6-billion investment for the grinding facility.

He said the protest rallies staged by the residents here had discouraged the company officials.

“Upon learning that the people in Bamban had contested its project, Big Boss Cement

backed out,” Feliciano said during Monday’s flag-raising ceremony at the town hall.

He said the firm’s withdrawal had jeopardized some of his projects, which were supposed to be funded from the income the town would get from the facility’s operation.

According to Feliciano, the project is a processing and not a manufacturing plant. “It means no dust will be let out and no kiln or high intensity heat instru-

ments for burning will be used. This is what they call ‘green cement,’ and German-made machines will be used here,” he said.

“Any plant is hazardous if it’s not compliant with the law,” he said.

The site for the facility was previously classified as agricultural land but was later reclassified as industrial, he said, adding that the company had bought the land from farmers.

—MARIA ADELAIDA CALAYAG INQ



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IS PH RIPE FOR ELECTRIC- POWERED VEHICLES?

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By Charles E. Buban

Electric vehicle ownership is rising fast. Last year, 2.1 million new electric vehicles were sold worldwide with China cornering 56 percent of the market as 1.2 million units were bought. In fact, the International Energy Agency predicts that there will be 125 million in use worldwide by 2030.

The same report adds that this number could potentially double should governments step up the pace in making its ownership more affordable. To encourage the sale of more electric vehicles—EVs—as well as other non fossil fuel alternatives, Germany has already announced it will stop the sale of all new gasoline and diesel powered vehicles from 2030, Scotland from 2032, and France and the United Kingdom from 2040.

The risk of polluted air in addition to climate change have convinced more and more countries to start looking for ways to reduce the effects that come with vehicles that rely on fossil fuel. China is learning this the hard way. Its Ministry of

Ecology and Environment last year reported that emissions from its more than 300 million vehicles have become a major source of air pollution: 333 million tons of carbon monoxide, 57.4 million tons of nitrogen oxide (NOx), 40.7 million tons of hydrocarbon, and 5 million tons of particulate matter (PM).

These vehicle exhaust emissions brought about several environmental problems including dust haze, acid rain and photochemical smog in a number of its heavily contaminated cities such as Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai. This development forced China to vigorously promote the usage of clean diesel-powered vehicles and green transportation that included EVs.

Today, EVs have become a large part of Chinese daily lives. In the southern city of Shenzhen, for example, all buses are now 100 percent electric powered. The city, dubbed as “China’s Silicon Valley”, is also home to BYD, the world’s second largest EV manufacturer in 2018 after Tesla of the United States.



Forging a strong partnership (from left): Department of Energy Assistant Director Jesus Anunciacion; MMPC VP Renato Lampano; Araga; Bureau of Investments Executive Director Ma. Corazon Halili Dichosa; EVAP Chairman Rommel Juan; and Meralco VP and Head Strategy and Business Development Raymond Ravelo

Growing popularity

“We want a similar development to happen here in the Philippines. In fact, the local electric vehicle industry scene has never been more exciting as EVs are now becoming mainstream. Infrastructure and government support to sustain the growth of the industry are now being set up, for example the

3,000 Bemac eTrikes of the Department of Energy now being deployed nationwide are becoming more visible in various LGUs. Of course, there’s the eJeepney deployments that are being done in Metro Manila, as well as in Visayas and Mindanao as part of the government’s Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP),” in-

forms Edmund Araga, president of Electric Vehicle Association of the Philippines (EVAP).

Regarded as the main voice of the EV industry in the country, EVAP is looking forward to its upcoming Philippine Electric Vehicle Summit happening from July 17 to 18 at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City.

“The Philippines is slowly learning the benefits of adopting to EVs in order do away with the negative effects that come with vehicles running on fossil fuel,” says Araga. Indeed, making the switch to electric vehicles to help improve the country’s overall air quality and lower carbon emissions, as Araga advocates, is somehow supported by an interesting study that the Northwestern University in Illinois recently published.

The said study provided evidence that even when the electricity is generated from combustion sources, EVs have a net positive impact on air quality and climate change. The study quantified the differences in air pollution generated from battery-powered EVs versus internal combustion engines.

Exciting time

“This is a very exciting time for the country because not only is the government, through its PUVMP that aims to upgrade some 200,000 public utility jeepneys over the next six years with Modern PUV powered by either a

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Euro 4 diesel engine or an electric motor, but even some of the world’s biggest auto manufacturers and allied companies, are here to entice the market with their fascinating products. Nissan, Mitsubishi and Hyundai is set to exhibit their respective EV models while a few EVs converted from their regular conventional engine configuration will also be showcased. Even battery maker Motolite will unveil a new EV model that it has been keeping under wraps for so long,” informs Araga.

All in all, about 15 vehicles, composed of electric tricycles, cars, SUVs and jeepneys participating in the PUVMP are expected to be exhibited during the two-day summit. “Moreover, visitors will even

have the opportunity to test drive some of these EVs at the grounds near SMX. The best news is that if you visit the summit, you might bring home an eTrike that will be raffled off,” adds Araga.

Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp. (MMPC), one of the summit participants, has been a leading proponent of EVs, as well as hybrid vehicles for years, even donating a number of electric i-MiEV and Outlander plug-in hybrids (PHEV) to both national and local governments. MMPCs hopes that with the cutting-edge technology, unrivaled safety and greener credentials that both models offer, policy makers would be convinced to price them very close to their gasoline or diesel powered counterparts, which is now seen as a major hindrance

for their rapid adoption here.

One solution is to cut the taxes and duties for both models down to zero. Currently, the best incentive the government could offer is a 50-percent exemption in taxes for EVs. Somehow this is not extended to PHEVs, as they are not exempted from both taxes and duties.

But beyond lowering import taxes and other fiscal incentives, Hyundai Asia Resources Inc. (Hari), the official importer and distributor of Hyundai cars in the country, urges the government to also look into non-fiscal incentives such as free registration for hybrid/EVs, parking, and toll fees to encourage the public’s shift to more eco-friendly modes of transport.

Hari becomes the first in the country to offer commercially,



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all-electric powered models such as the all-electric version of the Ioniq, which currently costs P1.868 million and the all-electric version of the Kona, which costs P2.388 million.

Nissan Philippines on the other hand, has announced that it is set to bring by next year, the world's best selling electric vehicle, the Nissan LEAF. Over 400,000 Nissan LEAFs have been sold since the original model's debut in 2010. While it is estimated to be priced around P2 million, its final price tag here in the Philippines will still depend on additional tax incentives the government may grant.

Beyond the product

Aragá explains that with all these positive EV developments unfolding this year, the Philip-

pine Electric Vehicle Summit 2019 with its theme, "Modernizing the Transport Landscape: Driving Sustainable Growth" will no longer focus on just introducing products but towards actual end-user adoption and how they can be fully utilized for a truly sustainable and electrified Philippine transport.

"EVAP has recently talked with the Philippine Nickel Industries Association to explore the possibility of manufacturing locally nickel metal hydride and lithium ion batteries for automotive application. The Bureau of Philippine Standards is now busy crafting a complete set of standards for electric vehicles that will cover parts, components, testing parameters and procedures and safety feature," informs Araga.

Also participating public

transport officials, local government representatives, members of the academe and electric vehicle and automotive industry players will also be attending during technical sessions to cover topics including how to make electric vehicles more mainstream in the Philippine setting.

"We invite enthusiasts and the general public to come and see what the Philippine Electric Vehicle Summit 2019 has to offer—the future of automotive industry. We are sure that our displays and scheduled talks from various experts will be both educational and enlightening for all involved," says Araga.

To facilitate entry into the summit, one may register online in advance through the event website: <http://www.pev-summit.com/>

COMMONSENSE

MARICHU A. VILLANUEVA

Averting a potential power crisis

Amid recurring power shortages in Luzon, the Supreme Court (SC) is emerging as a crucial player in addressing the country's energy security situation. This is because a number of pending legal cases have turned the 15-member High Court into a virtual battleground of vital energy-related issues.



Thus, whatever decisions the SC will eventually hand down would have an impact in the country's energy security in the future.

Last month, in a decision penned by Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio, the SC rejected power supply agreements (PSAs) signed in 2016 by the Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) with its subsidiaries or related power generation companies. Consumer groups complained that the PSAs were overpriced and failed to undergo a competitive selection process (CSP).

As a result, the SC decision put on hold the construction of seven coal plants – located in Subic, Bataan, La Union, Batangas, Quezon and Iloilo – that could generate 3,551 megawatts (MW). Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, chairman of the Senate committee on energy, believes the decision is a major victory for consumer protection, and a welcome surprise for environmental groups and communities that have campaigned to lessen dependence on "dirty" energy.

The decision also demonstrates that the SC, now headed by Chief Justice Lucas Bersamin, is independent and not beholden to any powerful business interests.

In yet another petition filed in June 2017, the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice asked the SC to order the Department of Energy (DOE) and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to stop issuing permits for new coal plants. The Philippines is a signatory to the Paris Climate Change Agreement, but growth in the use of renewables and clean energy has been slow. Coal is projected to dominate, with its share in the power generation mix increasing from 47 percent in 2016, to 70 to 80 percent by 2030.

There are other cases pending before the SC that warrant special attention as they could impact consumer welfare and energy security.

In December 2016, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry

(PCCI) asked the High Court to declare void orders of the DOE and Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) to implement Retail Competition and Open Access (RCOA).

The RCOA is a mechanism that allows end-users to choose electricity suppliers. Under RCOA, qualified end-users can choose to buy only from clean energy sources such as geothermal, hydro, wind, solar or natural gas.

In February 2018, a consumer group asked the SC for a temporary restraining order against the implementation of the Renewable Energy Law or Republic Act (RA) 9513, particularly its provisions on renewable portfolio standards and the feed-in-tariff. The petitioner argued that the subsidies to be given cannot be justified and would be a heavy burden on consumers.

Thus, whatever decisions the SC will eventually hand down would have an impact in the country's energy security in the future.

In May 2018, the Service Contract 38 (SC 38) consortium operating the Malampaya Project asked the SC to overrule Notices of Charge issued by the Commission on Audit (COA) against the DOE and the consortium, starting in 2010. According to the COA, it was wrong for the DOE to include the income tax of consortium members in the government's 60 percent share of Malampaya revenues. Consequently, there was under-collection of the government's share by more than \$3 billion, reckoned from 2002 to 2017.

The Malampaya gas fuels five power plants in Batangas having a combined capacity of 3,211 MW. These plants provide 30 to 40 percent of the power needs of Luzon and have contributed immensely to energy security. The government has earned more than \$10 billion from Malampaya since 2001. In 2018 alone, the government earned \$766 million. By the end of August 2019, government revenues from Malampaya are expected to reach \$11 billion.

In addition to judicial proceedings here in our country, there are also arbitration cases involving local power plant projects with foreign investors as partners. As they included transactions with foreign investments, the arbitration cases were lodged before the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID).

In April this year, the ICC arbitration tribunal voted 3-0 to affirm the position of the SC 38 consortium that income tax forms part of the government share, and that there was no under-collection. The tribunal is composed of Yves Fortier, David Williams, and our own highly respected former chief justice Reynato Puno. In a statement, Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi welcomed the ruling: *"This victory would go a long way in giving exploration and development activities in the country a much needed and long overdue boost as investors will now have renewed confidence in our upstream gas industry."*

Speaking of Malampaya, our country's premier source of natural gas reserves has been irreversibly depleted. There is an urgent need to explore and develop new sources of indigenous energy. Ever since the COA issued the Notices of Charge in 2010, petroleum exploration companies have stayed away due to concerns on contract sanctity and fiscal stability. So naturally, exploration activities declined and there have been no major discoveries.

In the first three years of the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte, only one petroleum service contract has been awarded. Signed in October 2018 was Service Contract 76 entered into with Ratio Petroleum Ltd. of Israel.

On Nov. 22 last year, Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles and Secretary Cusi launched the Philippine Conventional Energy Contracting Program (PCECP). Nograles represented President Duterte in the program. The PCECP seeks to attract investors to explore and develop indigenous oil and gas resources here in our country. The success of the PCECP significantly depends on whether the SC will reverse the questioned COA Notices of Charge.

With these pending legal cases before the SC, averting a potential power crisis clearly looming in the horizon lies in the hands of the Chief Justice and 14 magistrates. They wield the judicial power beyond the reach of President Duterte.





SC key to averting power crisis

APART from being a lofty legal arena, it is an exalted judicial clearing house for socio-economic policy.

As the highest judicial authority in the land, the Supreme Court can choose either to act as an agent of development or a protector of the status quo.

Aside from adjudicating constitutional challenges to official conduct and personal disputes, SC decisions impact on commercial and industrial activities.

And since the prospect of most workers staying on the payroll and sustaining families hinges on the viability of business and industry, they also inevitably affect the rest of society.

The consequences are far greater when strategic industries are at the core of such decision-making process.

Amid recurring power shortages in Luzon, the SC has emerged as a crucial player in the country's drive towards energy security. It has become a battleground for the settlement of vital issues, and its decisions would shape the country's energy future.

Last month, in a decision penned by Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio, the High Court rejected power-supply agreements signed in 2016 by main power distributor Manila Electric Co. with its subsidiaries or related power-generation companies.

Consumer groups had complained that the PSAs were overpriced and had failed to undergo a competitive selection process.

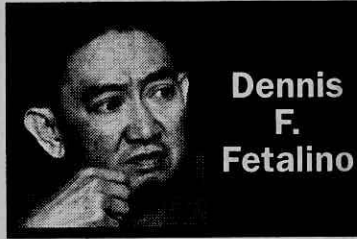
The SC decision put on hold the construction of seven coal plants with a total capacity of 3,551 megawatts, located in Subic, Bataan, La Union, Batangas, Quezon, and Iloilo.

Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian, chairman of the Senate committee on energy, said "[t]he SC decision ordering the bidding of all power supply agreements submitted by distribution utilities (DUs) from June 30, 2015 is a win for all power consumers who are distrustful of sweetheart deals between DUs and generating companies."

The decision is a major victory for consumer protection and a welcome surprise for environmental groups and communities that have campaigned to lessen dependence on 'dirty' energy. It also demonstrates that SC is independent, not beholden to powerful

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There are other cases before the SC that warrant special attention as they could impact energy security and consumer welfare.

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By the end of next month, state revenues from Malampaya are expected to reach \$11 billion.

In May last year, the Service Contract 38 consortium operating the Malampaya Project asked the SC to overrule 'Notices of Charge' issued by the Commission on Audit against DoE and the consortium, starting in 2010.

CoA said it was wrong for DoE to include the income tax of consortium members in the government's 60-percent share of Malampaya revenues, resulting in an under-collection of the government's share by more than \$3 billion (for the period from 2002 to 2017).

Apart from local proceedings, there are arbitration cases before the International Chamber of Commerce and the International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes.

In April this year, the ICC arbitration tribunal voted 3-0 to affirm the position of the SC 38 consortium that income tax forms part of the government share, and that there was no under-collection. The tribunal is composed of Yves Fortier, David Williams, and the highly respected former SC Chief Justice Reynato Puno.

In a statement, Energy Sec. Cusi welcomed the ruling thus: "This victory would go a long way in giving exploration and development activities in the country a much needed and long overdue boost as investors will now have renewed confidence in our upstream gas industry."

As Malampaya reserves dwindle there is an urgent need to explore and develop new sources of indigenous energy.

Ever since CoA issued the Notices of Charge in 2010, petroleum-exploration companies have steered clear due to on contract sanctity and fiscal policy consistency. Exploration turned lethargic, and no major discoveries made.

Into the first three years of the Duterte administration, only one petroleum service contract has been awarded - Service Contract 76 signed in October 2018 with Ratio Petroleum Ltd. of Israel.

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On Nov. 22, 2018, Cabinet Sec. Karlo Nograles (representing President Duterte) and Cusi launched the Philippine Conventional Energy Contracting Program. The PCECP seeks to attract investors to explore and develop indigenous oil and gas resources in the country.

The success of the PCECP significantly depends on whether the SC would reverse the CoA Notices of Charge.

A decision overruling the CoA would make it more likely that investors would participate and ensure the success of the PCECP.

Conversely, a decision affirming the CoA would spell disaster for the PCECP, and undercut government efforts for greater energy security.

And so, as the old cliché goes, the ball is in the hands of the SC.

Behold God's glory and seek His mercy.

Pause and pray, people.



A hotter, scarcer and more open world

Recently, we were privileged to host business strategist and best-selling author Andrew Winston at our first Climate Dialogues in Manila. Winston's best-selling book is titled "The Big Pivot," which is essentially a challenge to business enterprises to cope with and even prosper under three conditions prevailing in the world today—hotter, scarcer and more open.

First, we live in a hotter world as greenhouse gases continue to push air temperatures up. Recently, the carbon dioxide concentration (the most important greenhouse gas) of the earth's atmosphere breached 415 parts per million, the highest ever in recorded history. In the Philippines, Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration records show an average warming rate of 0.1 degree Celsius per decade. Thus, the future is bound to be even hotter, which will bring with it more extreme events and disasters of unprecedented proportions.

Second, we live in a world where our natural capital is rapidly depleting. For example, lush tropical forests used to cover 90 percent of the Philippines, but now we have barely 25-percent forest cover. Mangrove forests have declined by more than 50 percent from about 500,000 hectares in the early 1920s to around 250,000 ha today (Philippine Climate Change Assessment Report, 2017).

COMMENTARY

RODEL D. LASCO

Third, we live in an ever-connected world through the internet and 24/7 cable TV, where what happens in one obscure corner of the globe can become viral in an instant.

What are its implications? Winston's "The Big Pivot" details how business enterprises can navigate this new world. But what about other sectors of society, especially in a developing country like the Philippines?

First, our policy makers and local executives must realize that business-as-usual risk-coping mechanisms will no longer work. While risks of climate-related disasters increase, the natural capital needed to address them has decreased.

For instance, as sea level rises (because of hotter climate), there will be higher storm surges. Mangrove forests could help reduce the impacts of storm surges, but we have lost most of our mangrove forests through deforestation and coastal degradation. Given this scenario, more innovative ways of responding to disaster risks are needed.

Second, we must redouble our efforts to conserve and manage our remaining natural resources. There is very little we can do to stop global warming. But there is

much we can do to conserve our remaining forest, land, coastal and water resources.

Third, we must take advantage of the information highway that the internet has created. A more open world means that ordinary citizens can access information that hitherto was available only to a privileged few. This increased transparency makes it harder for those who contribute to making our world warmer and resources scarcer to hide their deeds. We must find ways to make government, business and ordinary citizens more accountable for their actions through the openness that the wired world affords us.

While the Philippines shares in the experience of these global megatrends, it faces some of its own seismic societal transformation such as rapid urbanization and demographic shifts. But with an emerging change of voter preferences in local leaders, there may be hope for lasting societal change that will allow us to cope and even prosper in a hotter, scarcer and more open world.

Rodel D. Lasco is an author of several Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports including the forthcoming sixth assessment report. He is the executive director of The OML Center, a foundation devoted to discovering climate change adaptation solutions (<http://www.omlopezcenter.org/>).



Deforestation+climate change = dead end for wildlife

By Marlowe Hood

CLIMATE change combined with galloping tropical deforestation is cutting off wildlife from life-saving cooler climes, heightening the risk of extinction, researchers said Monday.

Less than two-fifths of forests across Latin America, Asia and Africa currently allow for animals and plants to avoid potentially intolerable increases in temperature, they reported in the journal *Nature Climate Change*.

"The loss of tropical forests between 2000 and 2012 led to an area larger than India losing the capacity to protect species from the effects of climate change," lead author Rebecca Senior, a professor at the University of Sheffield, told AFP.

"Not only does forest loss remove habitat directly, it also makes it harder for species to move."

The lack of escape routes to cooler habitats means that warming "will likely result in national and global extinction of vulnerable species," she added.

At current rates of climate change, animals and plants moving to the least heat-ravaged spots accessible today would, on average, be exposed by 2070 to an environment 2.7 degrees Celsius (4.8 F) hotter than during the second half of the 20th century, the study found.

Even under a best-case scenario in which humanity caps global warming at 2 C—an increasingly unlikely prospect—species in tropi-

cal regions would still see a jump of 0.8 C by that date.

Extreme fragmentation

The 2015 Paris climate treaty enjoins nations to hold warming to "well below" 2 C.

Last year, the UN climate science panel concluded that even this threshold would not prevent severe impacts, such as the loss of shallow-water coral reefs, which anchor a quarter of marine life.

A single degree of warming since the industrial revolution has already boosted the frequency and intensity of heat waves, droughts and tropical storms.

Animal and plant species have always moved up or down mountains, towards or away from the poles, or into cooler or warmer waters when faced with shifts in climate.

But rarely has climate change been so rapid, and never has it been combined with extreme habitat fragmentation.

"Tropical species are particularly sensitive to temperature change," Senior said. "Most are found nowhere else on Earth, and make up a huge proportion of global biodiversity."

Scores of studies have shown how rising temperatures have forced fauna and flora to adapt their behaviour in ways that curtail their ability to collect food, reproduce or both.

Some 550 species—more than half already threatened with extinction—are listed as vulnerable to

droughts and temperature extremes on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Red List.

Nail in the coffin

They include mammals such as red-handed howler monkeys, jaguars and giant otters.

Amphibians—already besieged globally by mysterious pathogens—are especially vulnerable.

"They are highly specialized to particular habitats, can't move very far, and are very sensitive to overheating and drying out," Senior pointed out.

"This is another nail in their coffin."

Higher temperatures force some tropical hummingbirds to seek shade rather than forage, testing their capacity to adapt.

Other research has documented species decline and loss due to forest loss and fragmentation, which has created islands of primary forest hemmed in by palm oil plantations, biofuel crops, cattle ranches and the soyabean crops used to feed livestock.

An area of tropical forest five times the size of England—some 600,000 square kilometers (230,000 square miles)—has been destroyed since 2014, according to Global Forest Watch, a research unit at the University of Maryland.

The new study, however, is the first to investigate the interaction between tropical habitat loss and climate change on a global scale over more than a decade. AFP

Opinion



National ID system, census of population to cost P25B

BY CAI U. ORDINARIO [@caiordinario](#)

THE national government will spend P25.23 billion for its various statistical activities, including the implementation of the National ID System and the conduct of a census on population and housing units in the Philippines, in 2020.

The rollout of the Philippine Identification System (Philsys) and the conduct of the Census of Population and Housing (CPH) next year was based on Resolution

No. 8, Series of 2019, released by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) Board.

"The PSA, cognizant of the importance of ensuring a linkage

between planning and budgeting, defined the budgetary thrusts of the PSS [Philippine Statistical System] for FY 2018 to 2020 through PSA Board Resolution No. 02, Series of 2017—Approving the Budgetary Thrusts of the Philippine Statistical System for the Period, 2018 to 2020," the resolution read.

The budget is composed of the allocations for the PSA worth P25.19 billion, and P548.69 million for eight other government line agencies for their statistical activities.

The Bureau of Customs was given P5.55 million; Commission on Higher Education, P34.66 million; and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources

(DENR), P330.21 million.

The list also includes the Department of Information and Communications Technology with a budget of P75.74 million; Department of Energy, P7.06 million; Department of Health, P107.78 million; Department of Justice, P8.18 million; and the Philippine Statistical Research and Training Institute, P20.28 million.

The PSA said 10 agencies responded to its budget call for Tier 2 or new statistics budget among agencies. It added that the budget of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) was not approved, while the amount sought by the DENR was not granted in full.

"No recommendations were made on the proposed statistical budget of Neda given the lack of detailed breakdown and justifications for their proposed budget," the resolution read.

"The proposed statistical budget of DENR was not recommended in full given the lack of detailed breakdown for repair and maintenance expenses," it added.

The PSA budget for 2020 will support Personnel Services costing P79.06 million;

Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses, P15.48 billion; and Capital Outlays, P9.09 billion.

It will be used for the implementation of the Philsys; the conduct of the Census of Population and Housing, which is done every 10 years; and the Unified Multi-Purpose Identification System Central Verification and Enrolment Agency (Umid-CVEA) component.

The money will also go to Labor Force Surveys, efforts to improve the national accounts to meet the country's Sustainable Development Goal commitments; development of the subnational statistical system project, and the 2nd Philippine Data Festival.