

21 MAR 2019

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Thursday

DAY :

DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

No letup in beach clearing in Boracay

Remaining structure violating easement rule on White Beach demolished

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
@nestorburgosINQ

ILOILO CITY—Sections of a resort on Boracay Island, allegedly encroaching on the beach easement, were demolished on Tuesday after a 15-day ultimatum issued by Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu expired.

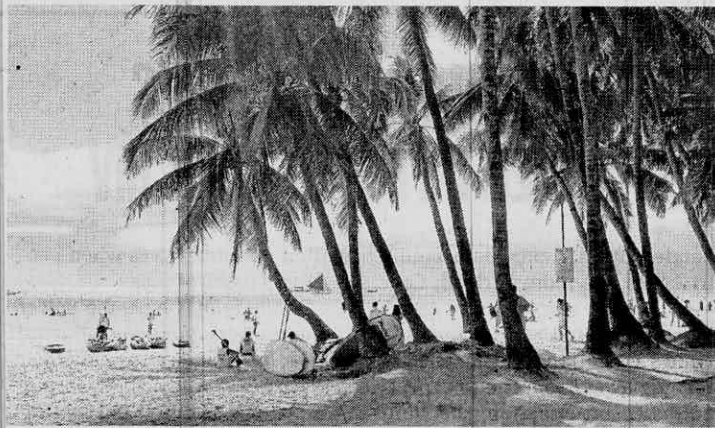
Workers, supervised by the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force, tore down parts of the building of Boracay Plaza Resort on the island's popular White Beach.

The demolished structure was built on 1,000 square meters of land within the easement zone, according to a statement of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) released on Wednesday.

Lacks permits

The DENR said Boracay Plaza Resort was also found to be operating without permits and had not complied with three orders to vacate and demolish its structure.

The orders were issued on



CARLOTA PALILEO / CONTRIBUTOR

ALL CLEAR The six-month rehabilitation of Boracay has given tourists and residents wider and cleaner beaches in this world-famous resort island in Aklan province.

April 26 last year, the start of the six-month closure of the island to tourists to undergo rehabilitation.

The Inquirer earlier sought comment from the owner of Boracay Plaza Resort but its business operator declined to issue any statement.

Acting Malay Mayor Abram Sualog said Boracay Plaza Resort's structure was the only

one remaining out of 10 resorts and hotels along the long beach that were found violating the 30-meter beach easement.

The nine others had either partially or completely demolished their structures.

These were the Blue Lilly Hotel, Calveston International Inc., Exclusive Dawn VIP Boracay Resort, Little Prairie Inn,

New Wave Divers, Steve's Cliff/Boracay Terraces Resort, True Homes, Watercolors Dive Shop and Willy's Rock Resort.

Bulabog beach

The easement, measured from the mean high water line, has been strictly enforced as part of the rehabilitation of the island.

The boundary of the easement had been a contentious issue as many property owners and residents argued that they were allowed to construct based on the easement defined by government agencies.

Sualog said the local government would issue next week notices of demolition to owners of more than 10 properties that were also found violating the rules on beach easement along Bulabog beach.

Boracay Island was closed down from April 26 to Oct. 25 last year to undergo rehabilitation due to environmental issues brought about by decades of unregulated tourism and construction activities. INQ



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Non-compliant Boracay resort demolished

The government has demolished a beach resort in Boracay for violating the 30-meter easement rule.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources said the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force carried out the demolition work of structures at the Boracay Plaza resort after the deadline given to establishments that encroached on the shoreline easement zone

expired on March 4.

"Erring establishments were given more than enough time to shape up since the closure (of Boracay). It would be unfair to those who voluntarily demolished and complied with the easement rule if we will not enforce the law to those who did not," Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said.

Boracay Plaza was also found to be operating without

the required permits. The task force issued three orders to vacate and demolish the structures at the resort since April 26 last year.

Existing laws and regulations set the coastal easement on the island at 30 meters and the road easement at six meters from the center of the road.

Nine other establishments in the area – Blue Lilly Hotel, Calveston International Inc.,

Exclusive Dawn VIP Boracay resort, Little Prairie Inn, New Wave Divers, Steve's Cliff/Boracay Terraces resort, True Homes, Watercolors Dive shop and Willy's Rock resort – had voluntarily demolished their structures.

With the demolitions, the task force said establishments are fully compliant with the 30-meter beach easement rule.

– Louise Maureen Simeon



BIATF tears down encroaching parts of Boracay Plaza

THE BORACAY Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) has carried out the demolition of Boracay Plaza Beach Resort's structures found in violation of the 30-meter easement zone after its operator failed to heed orders for self-demolition.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the lead agency of the BIATF, said on Wednesday that the resort has not been given the required permits to operate.

The resort, owned by a certain Anita Aguirre, has structures built on approximately 1,000 square meters of land within the easement zone, according to the DENR.

"Erring establishments had already been given more than enough time to shape up since the closure," DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu said in a statement.

"It would be unfair to those who voluntarily demolished and complied with the easement rule if we will not enforce the law to those who did not," he added.

DENR said Boracay Plaza was issued orders to vacate and self-demolish its structure in April 2018, when the island was closed for rehabilitation.

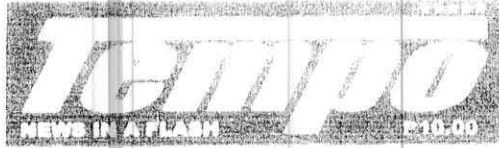
On Feb. 28 this year, the BIATF gave a 15-day ultimatum to 10 establishments to self-demolish their structures for being located within the easement zone, all of which complied except for Boracay Plaza, DENR said.

The other nine establishments are: Blue Lilly Hotel, Calveston International Inc, Exclusive Dawn VIP Boracay Resort, Little Prairie Inn, New Wave Divers, Steve's Cliff/Boracay Terraces Resort, True Homes, Watercolors Dive Shop, and Willy's Rock Resort.

Boracay was closed last year for a six-month rehabilitation after President Rodrigo R. Duterte called it a "cesspool" due to waste water from establishments going directly to the sea for lack of sewage treatment facilities. — **Reicelene Joy N. Ignacio**



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DENR demolishes Boracay resort

The Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) on Tuesday led the demolition of a resort that failed to heed orders to self-demolish in violation of the 30-meter easement rule.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources-led (DENR) task force carried out the demolition work of structures belonging to Boracay Plaza Beach Resort after the final 15-day ultimatum given to establishments encroaching on the shoreline easement zone had expired.

All other establishments responded positively to the ultimatum issued by BIATF, except for Boracay Plaza, which is owned by a certain Anita Aguirre.

The resort has structures built on approximately 1,000 square meters of land within the easement zone.

DENR Secretary and BIATF chair Roy Cimatu announced the ultimatum during the meeting of the task force held last Feb. 28.

"Erring establishments had already been given more than enough time to shape up since the closure," Cimatu said.

"It would be unfair to those who voluntarily demolished and complied with the easement rule if we will not enforce the law to those who did not," he added.

Aside from violating the easement rule, Boracay Plaza was also found to be operating without the required

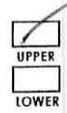
permits.

Boracay Plaza had been issued three orders to vacate and self-demolish its structure since April 26, 2018 when the island was ordered closed for six months to pave the way for much-needed rehabilitation. The owner defied all three orders.

The demolition team was supervised by BIATF management group manager and DENR Director Natividad Bernadino, Aklan provincial police chief Senior Supt. Lope Manlapaz, Malay Acting Mayor Abram Sualog, representatives from the Department of the Interior and Local Government and the Department of Tourism, and DENR lawyers. **(Ellalyn Ruiz)**



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES SERVICE



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Lumabag sa 30-meter easement rule

RESORT SA BORACAY GINIBA

GINIBA ng isang inter-agency task force ng gobyerno nitong Martes ang pasaway na establisimiyento sa Boracay na nabigong i-demolish ang kanilang ari-arian na lumabag sa 30-meter easement rule.

Ayon sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), hindi na nagdalawang-isip pa ang Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) na pinamumunuan ng kagawaran na gibain ang Boracay Plaza Beach Resort matapos magbigay ng 15 araw na palugit.

Ang naturang resort ay may mga istrukturang nakatayo sa higit-kumulang 1,000 square meters na nakapaloob sa easement

zone.

Maliban sa Boracay Plaza, sumunod naman sa ibinigay na palugit ang ibang establisimiyento at kusang giniba ang kani-kanilang mga istraktura matapos na mabigyan din ng 'warning' ng BIATF dahil na rin sa kanilang paglabag.

Ang ibinigay na ultimatum ay binanggit ni Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu sa ginanap na pulong ng task force kamakailan.

"Erring establishments had already been given more than enough time to shape up since the closure," ani Cimatu.

"It would be unfair to those who voluntarily demolished and complied

with the easement rule if we will not enforce the law to those who did not," dagdag pa niya.

Bukod sa paglabag sa ipinatutupad na 'easement rule', napatunayan din na walang kaukulang permiso ang Boracay Plaza para makapag-operate.

Tatlong beses na ring nabigyan ng kautusan ang Boracay Plaza na kusang i-demolish ang establisimiyento ngunit binalewala lamang ito ng may-ari.

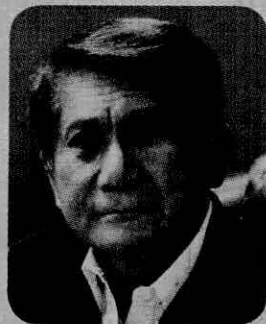
Nabatid na una ay noong Abril 26 ng nakalipas na taon nang pansamantalang isara ang Isla ng Boracay ng anim na buwan para sa rehabilitasyon.

Ang ginawang demolisyon ay pinangunahan nina BIATF management

group General Manager at DENR Director Natividad Bernardino, kasama sina Aklan provincial police chief Senior Supt. Lope Manlapaz, Malay Acting Mayor Abram Sualog, mga kinatawan ng Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) at Department of Tourism (DOT), at mga abogado ng DENR.

Iniulat ni Bernardino na siyam na iba pang establisimiyento na nabigyan ng 15-day ultimatum noong March 4 ang kusang nag-demolish ng kanilang istraktura habang ang iba ay nagsisimula na ring gibain nang kusa ang kanilang ari-arian.

Ang naturang siyam na establisimiyento ay ang



Sec. Roy Cimatu

Blue Lilly Hotel, Calveston International Inc., Exclusive Dawn VIP Boracay Resort, Little Prairie Inn, New Wave Divers, Steve's Cliff/Boracay Terraces Resort, True Homes, Watercolors Dive Shop at Willy's Rock Resort.

BENEDICT ABAYGAR, JR.



Pasaway na Boracay resort, giniba

Pinamunuan ng Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force (BIATF) nitong Martes ang demolisyon ng isang resort na hindi sumunod sa mga kautusan na magkusang gibain ang istruktura nito dahil sa paglabag sa 30-meter easement rule.

Isinagawa ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources-led (DENR) task force ang demolisyon sa mga istruktura ng Boracay Plaza Beach Resort, na pag-aari ng isang Anita Aguirre, matapos pumasok ang huling 15-day ultimatum na ibinigay sa mga establisimyento na sinasakop ang shoreline easement zone.

Nagtayo ang Boracay Plaza ng mga istruktura sa tinatayang 1,000 square meters ng lupa sa loob ng easement zone.

Bukod sa paglabag sa easement rule, nadiskubre rin na ang Boracay Plaza ay nag-o-operate nang walang mga permit.

Iniulat ni BIATF management group manager at DENR Director Natividad Bernadino na siyam pang establisimyento na binigyan ng parehong 15-day ultimatum noong Marso 4 ang nagkusa nang gibain ang kanilang mga istruktura.

Ang mga ito ay ang Blue Lilly Hotel,

Calveston International Inc., Exclusive Dawn VIP Boracay Resort, Little Prairie Inn, New Wave Divers, Steve's Cliff/Boracay Terraces Resort, True Homes, Watercolors Dive shop, at Willy's Rock Resort.

Ang lahat ng 10 establisimyento, kabilang ang Boracay Plaza, ay ang huling nalalabing mga istruktura sa White Beach na giniba bilang pagtupad sa 30-meter beach easement rule.

Ipinahayag ni DENR Secretary at BIATF chair Roy Cimatu ang ultimatum sa pagpupulong ng task force noong Pebrero 28.

Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz

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SILT TAKEN FROM MANILA BAY POSITIVE FOR HEAVY METALS

By **Jhesset O. Enano**
@JhessetEnanoINQ

Aside from monitoring the water quality in the heavily polluted Manila Bay, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) also has its eyes set on another potential foe in the waters: toxic heavy metals.

Sediment samples taken from the silted seabed of the bay have revealed traces of heavy metals, including mercury, lead, cadmium, arsenic and zinc, according to reports from the DENR's Environmental Management Bureau (EMB).

EMB director Metodio Turbella, however, said that the levels of the metals were still within the permissible limits set by the World Health Organization.

Naturally occurring

He added that some of the observed chemicals, such as mercury, might be naturally occurring in certain quantities, so their presence in the silt could not be fully attributed to factories and other industries that may be dumping their wastes into the bay and its connecting waterways.

"We still have to study and monitor these samples, as well as determine the source of these metals," Turbella said.

Vizminda Osorio, EMB assistant director, said they had set up over 150 monitoring sta-

tions to look into the water and sediment quality of Manila Bay, which was undergoing massive rehabilitation.

She said the bureau had been collecting sediment samples since February, although to establish trends, there must be at least a year's worth of data.

Continuous monitoring

"But we are continuously monitoring in case the levels are rising," Osorio added.

Earlier this month, the Department of Public Works and Highways started dredging operations to remove thick layers of silt and garbage that had gathered on the sea floor of Manila Bay. The DENR said the silt, which had accumulated over the years, had reached a depth of 4 meters, or over 13 feet.

Militant fisherfolk group Pambalakaya, however, cautioned against the dredging, noting a decrease in their catch with the movement of solid particles, noise pollution and the release of toxic contaminants into the water.

Mercury expert Ted Monroy said it was necessary to first determine the levels of mercury that had accumulated in the silt from the bay, as every movement of the sediments could distribute the chemicals into the water.

Exposure to heavy metals, even in small amounts, can lead to adverse effects on humans, causing illnesses and even death in extreme cases. INQ

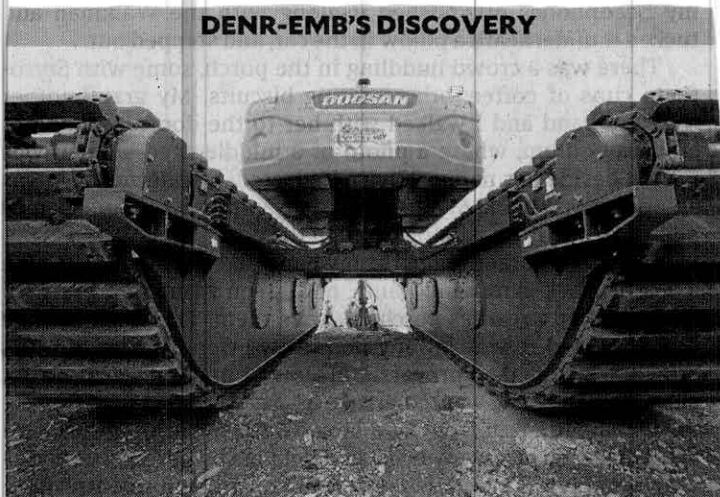
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DREDGING ONGOING The Department of Public Works and Highways is spearheading the desilting of Manila Bay using amphibious excavators. —MARIANNE BERMUDEZ



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What it takes to bring back Manila Bay's glory

TO sustain the momentum of cleaning up the Manila Bay, the Department of the Interior and Local Government has ordered local chief executives of 178 cities and municipalities inside the Manila Bay Watershed Area to see to it that all business establishments in their respective areas would comply with the provisions of environmental laws, including the National Building Code, the Fire Code, the Code on Sanitation, and other related laws, regulations, and policies. Interior Secretary Eduardo M. Año issued a memorandum directing all mayors in the National Capital Region, Central Luzon, and Calabarzon to revoke the business permits of establishments violating environmental laws.

The DILG chief said that a business or mayor's permit is not a right but a privilege granted by the state, and LGUs play a big role to ensure the success of the Duterte administration's ongoing efforts to clean and rehabilitate Manila Bay. "Let us sustain the momentum of cleaning up Manila Bay. The DILG is committed to doing our role in the interagency Manila Bay Task Force, which include supervision of LGUs whether they are judiciously inspecting all establishments in their respective areas," he said, as he instructed concerned DILG regional directors to report to him those LGUs and local chief executives who fail to abide by this directive.

Año knows the hugeness of the problem, which is why he also wants to involve all leaders of 5,714 barangays inside the Manila Bay Watershed Area to contribute to the rehabilitation of the polluted bay by organizing weekly cleanup drives in their localities.

Presidential Spokesman S. Salvador Panelo earlier said that President Duterte is prepared to show political will to enforce the cleanup of Manila Bay, to the extent of closing down polluting establishments in the cities and provinces around it. What the government did in Boracay, he said, it will also do in Manila Bay. However, Manila Bay is a bigger cesspool than Boracay—a hundred times bigger. And the fecal coliform bacteria level in the bay has now reached 350 MPN (most probable number), compared to the 100 MPN around Boracay when it was closed down for six months.

It will take a tremendous amount of political will to compel the polluting towns and cities with their factories and their millions of homes spewing untreated sewage into the streams and rivers flowing into the bay. Reports said around 1 million informal settlers have been using Manila Bay for their own hygienic purposes. Business establishments have also been dumping raw sewage into the bay, choosing not to build their own sewage-treatment plants to save on costs.

We are confident that President Duterte will carry out this herculean task of rehabilitating Manila Bay with the same steely political will he displayed in Boracay. But the massive cleanup is a daunting task that could take years to complete. For starters the entire catchment of Manila Bay measures 1.7 million hectares, equivalent to 1,700 Boracays. This means that the number of business establishments causing pollution in the bay is a lot more than in Boracay.

To put that in perspective, more than 40 tons of garbage were removed from Manila Bay on January 27, the start of a campaign to clean up one polluted stretch of its coastline. The 11 truckloads of garbage were collected by 5,000 volunteers, including government employees. It will take more volunteers and workers, and more taxpayers' money to complete the job of cleaning up the bay, which is famous for its sunset views. But with the firm resolve of the Duterte administration to bring Manila Bay back to life, we believe the results will be beneficial to the whole country and to all Filipinos.



Mga pasaway na kompanya lagot kay Cimatu, mga mayor

Nagbanta ang mga local government unit (LGU) na kastiguhin at makakatikim ng kaparusahan ang mga matitigas na ulo na may-ari ng mga establishment na patuloy na nagtatapon ng basura sa estero.

Ito ay makaraang atasan ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) at Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) ang mga LGU

na magpatupad ng istriktong panuntunan sa paglilinis ng mga estero sa kanilang nasasakupan.

Ikinasa ng DENR katuwang ang mga barangay cap-

tain ang sabay-sabay na paglilinis ng mga estero at kanal sa Metro Manila sa darating na Marso 31.

Nabatid na nagsagawa ng diyalogo ang DENR sa pa-

ngunguna ni Secretary Roy Cimatu sa mga barangay captain ng Metro Manila kung saan itinakda ang paglilinis ng mga kanal at estero.

Inaasahan rin na maki-kiisa sa nabanggit na aktibidad ang mga Mayor ng Metro Manila at iba pang opisyal ng LGU.

Bahagi umano ito ng isinasagawang rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay.

Ang paglilinis ng waterways at estero ay makakabawas sa mga basura at iba pang polusyon sa Manila Bay.

Ang lahat ng makukuhang basura sa naturang aktibidad ay ire-record ng DENR.

Inaasahan umano ng DENR ayon kay Secretary Roy Cimatu, ang pakikilahok ng iba't ibang sektor sa gagawing sabayang paglilinis ng mga estero at kanal sa Metro Manila.

Kasama sa lilinisin ang Tullahan river na dumadaloy sa maraming siyudad sa lilinisin kung saan magpipinta rin ng mga Murals sa mga strategic point ng mga waterways.

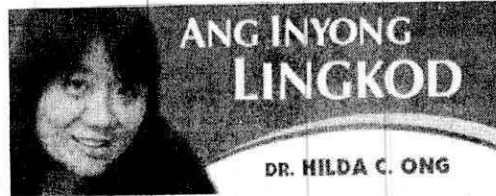
Sinabi ni Cimatu na ang tagumpay o kabiruan sa paglilinis ng mga waterways ay nasa kamay ng mga Barangay Captain. (Juliet de Loza-Cudia)





MANILA BAY TASK FORCE "BATTLE FOR MANILA BAY"

Naniniwala si Department
of Environment and Natural
Resources (DENR) Secretary
Roy A. Cimatu na nasa ta-



mang direksyon ang tinatahak
ng isinasagawang rehabili-
tasyon ng Manila Bay na si-
nimulan mahigit isang buwan
na ang nakalilipas.

"I can proudly say, we
are on the right track," de-
klarasyon ni Cimatu sa kauna-
unahang pagpupulong ng Ma-
nila Bay Task Force (inter-
agency body) ginanap sa
Quezon City na pinamumu-
nuan ng DENR matapos buuin
ni Pangulong Rodrigo Roa
Duterte noong nakalipas na
buwan ang task force sa pa-
mamagitan ng Administrative
Order No. 16 na magpapabi-
lis sa isinasagawang rehabi-
litasyon at restorasyon ng
coastal at marine ecosystems
ng Manila Bay.

Ayon kay Cimatu, ang
paglagda sa administrative
order ay nangangahulugan na
labis ang tiwala at kumpiyan-
sa ng Pangulo sa mga hak-
bang na maaaring gawin

upang matupad ang misyon
sa rehabilitasyon ng Manila
Bay.

Bago nilagdaan ang ad-
ministrative order ay inilunsad
ng DENR noong Enero 27 ang
tatlong bahagi ng rehabilita-
tion project na tinawag na
"Battle for Manila Bay" kung
saan ay mahigit 10,000 katao
ang nakilahok sa isinagawang
cleanup activity sa kahabaan
sa iba't ibang lugar sa Manila
Bay region.

Sinabi pa ni Cimatu, ang
makasaysayang clean-up ac-
tivity na ito ay naging posible
dahil na rin sa nakapalaking
suporta na ipinakita ng mga
local government units, pri-
vate sectors, academe at non-
government organizations.

"We were more than
10,000 at that time, all with
hearts and minds set to reha-
bilitate and restore Manila Bay
to its former glory," sabi pa
nito.



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DENR sees defects in sewage system in Siargao tourist-belt

By **MIKE U. CRISMUNDO**

BUTUAN CITY - The Task Force Siargao of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Tuesday reported that dozens of commercial establishments and "Homestay" units in the tourist-belt zone in Siargao Islands Protected Land and Seascape (SPLAS) have been allegedly found to have no proper sewage system.

This is the initial observation, during the first day of their 45-day inspection and evaluation of Task Force Siargao which was launched on Monday at the country's surfing capital of General Luna town, Siargao Island, Surigao del Norte province.

The provincial government of Surigao del Norte is assisting the task force in an effort to help preserve and protect the environment in the "Paradise Island" of Siargao.



Mapua engineers develop dam monitoring system

A dam monitoring system developed by Mapua University engineering researchers and scientists may be a crucial tool to prevent future water shortage crises, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) said.

Enrico Paringit, executive director of the DOST Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and Emerging Technology (PCIEERD), said the automated real-time monitoring system for dams and reservoirs developed by a team of Mapua University researchers was already being used by the National Water Resources Board.

Both the PCIEERD and NWRB had provided funds to the research and development of the ARMS project.

The ARMS employs wireless sensors to provide the NWRB, the regulating agency for all water resources development and management activities in the country, access to real-time data on water levels and a decision support tool for the daily management of reservoirs.

In cooperation with dam administrator National Power Corp., Mapua was able to deploy the ARMS system in the cascading Ambuklao, Binga and San Roque dams along the Agno River.

The cost-effective ARMS system provide NWRB real-time data on water level, rainfall, humidity, temperature, atmospheric pressure, soil moisture and wind speed – all hydrological parameters necessary for monitoring water availability and managing the reservoirs.

Paringit expressed confidence that the ARMS can help government in mitigating risks in watersheds like drought and floods as it provides real-time data on the conditions of the dams.

“We can outsmart water scarcity by employing smart technologies and using real data to create science-based decisions and policies to ensure ample water supply. ARMS is locally developed, making it a cost-effective tool for our water companies,” he said.

ARMS project leader Francis Aldrine Uy said all of the data coming from the deployed sensors are received in real-time at the NWRB office.

“These data help the NWRB and dam operators in making smart decisions regarding dam operation specifically in the utilization of water,” he said.

Uy said that for data storage and archiving, the web portal “Arms4Dams” was also developed for information viewing at different access levels for the public, government agencies and other relevant stakeholders.

Uy added that these data can be used for hydraulic simulations that can alert operators on possible dam overflow, therefore providing readiness for water discharge and evacuation in the area as needed.

He expressed hopes that ARMS can be deployed in all dams in the country to help government officials and dam operators in managing water resources.

In the future, ARMS will also be installed and deployed in Magat and Pantabangan dams and reservoirs in partnership with the National Irrigation Administration. – Rainier Allan Ronda



El Niño and the lack of water

By ANTONIO CLAPAROLS

El Niño is back with a vengeance. Prolonged hot weather due to climate change has resulted in dried up dams and rivers. Humans can survive without food for days but not without water. Water is the source of all life and now, we have so little of it. While the Earth's surface is covered by over 70 percent water, barely two percent of the existing fresh water can be used. The other one percent is locked inside glaciers. And those glaciers are in the process of melting daily.

The United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC) holds many Conference of the Parties (COPs) yet nothing has really been done to mitigate carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide emissions continue to increase, and the last count saw the figures breaching 400 parts per million (ppm). The seas are also

getting warmer, absorbing over 50 percent of all atmospheric carbon dioxide while releasing over 70 percent of all oxygen, a necessary element for living things to survive. The seas are alive with a rich ecosystem yet unmitigated pollution gave rise to giant trash gyres in the ocean and expansive dead zones covered in plastics.

Climate change deniers and global warming skeptics have yet to realize the fact that we are running out of time and water. This year's El Niño will take its toll on us like no other season. The La Mesa Dam is drying up and all other big dams and rivers will follow suit as well. There has always been constant opposition against large dams because of the damage they cause to nature. The Aswan Dam in Egypt, the Three Gorges in China and even the San Roque Dam in Pangasinan have destroyed native river ecosystems and forested land. Yet there is more talk about

damming our remaining good rivers.

In the past, rainwater is stored by trees in the forest, gathering in the ground within the roots before being released slowly into rivers and streams. In this way, ground water would be replenished and aquifers would be filled. Rivers teemed with life as it exits into the seas. Today, when it rains, raging floodwaters destroy everything above ground before eventually silting the seas and killing coral colonies.

As of writing, the summer season has just begun. Water pressure and supply is running scarce. For those who don't know, a golf course, on the average, consumes over one million cubic meters of water a day. Today's water scarcity has left these once green grass fields brittle and dry. When I was appointed by then president Fidel Ramos as part of the Golf Course Construction and Development Committee with the mandate to protect the environment,

the main issue was water. In the end, we only approved seven out of the more than 100 applications.

Our appointment was co-terminus with the Ramos presidency so after that, all the golf courses were constructed and we ran out of the greatest recourse. With all this occurring, the country is still in a building mode continuing with the old development model – the model that has ruined us all.

We have long advocated to change this model but lo and behold, the rich have gotten richer and fewer. Meanwhile, the poor have increased and gotten poorer at the expense of our ecological wealth. We are a mega biodiversity country in danger. We are so rich and yet so poor. It is time for a radical change, yet we do not have the luxury of time. Zamboanga is already in a state of calamity and Lake Uyaan has literally dried up. More Arab Springs may be in the making. At this point, having a healthy environment is a good economic policy.

The author is president of the Ecological Society of the Philippines.



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EDITORIAL

CARTOON

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Achieving water security

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(First of two parts)

NEWS that water lack is hitting some areas in the country, including those that host farming, deeply bothers me. I mean, here we are again in a situation where we are "reactive," taking action only when a crisis manifests itself. What should have been done was anticipate the coming dry spell and make preparations, especially when water supply was still adequate or in abundance. Besides, do we need an army of PhDs or rocket scientists to say that there would be an El Niño episode this year?

I hope lessons would be learned from how we will deal with this year's El Niño episode and input them into the solutions, programs and projects to avoid a major water crisis in the Philippines.

And today (March 21), the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) will be holding the National Water Summit (NWS) aimed at making the country achieve "water security." As preparations for the NWS, the NWRB on March 5 held a focus group discussion (FGD) on water security for three clusters: governance, resilience and environment; domestic and urban; and agriculture and

economics. I chaired the FGD for agriculture and economics, and would discuss part of the output in this column-series.

During the FGDs, representatives from the NWRB, National Irrigation Administration (NIA), Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM), Board of Investments, National Economic and Development Authority, Department of Finance and National Power Corp. (Napocor) gave their views on how to resolve the web of issues surrounding the utilization of water, primarily for agriculture. To date, agriculture accounts for about 80 percent of freshwater usage in the Philippines and approximately 70 percent worldwide.

Before I proceed on the consensus generated from the FGD, let me state that the Philippines is still blessed with enough water resources, as our rainfall is 2,400 millimeters (mm) per year, or three times that of India's 700 mm. However, India exports more farm products than the Philippines.

Also, based on the Masterplan for Water Resources Development in the Philippines undertaken by the NWRB and the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the country is projected to have

a surplus in water resources by 2025 estimated at 60,856 million cubic meters (MCM), with total output from potential water sources pegged at 145,990 MCM and usage/demand at 85,401 MCM. However, the bulk of the potential water supply would come from surface water sources, or 125,790 MCM or about 86 percent. The remaining water supply would be taken from groundwater sources.

And here is the crux of the matter — unless we take steps to rejuvenate, preserve and improve the country's rivers, lakes, wetlands and watersheds from this year until 2025, the country would face a possible water crisis.

So, what is the way forward to this issue?

Issues on governance, infrastructure, environment

Three issues were highlighted during the March 5 FGD: governance, infrastructure and environment.

In the area of governance, there is a need to resolve overlapping functions of about 30 agencies that have mandates on water. Among these agencies are the NWRB, NIA, BSWM, Napocor and the Depart-



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DR. WILLIAM DAR

ment of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

There is also little to no coordination among agencies in undertaking water programs, projects and master plans, which could result in waste of public funds.

While NIA and BSWM are stepping up efforts to build more irrigation systems, it was revealed during the FGD that NIA was venturing into the construction of small irrigation systems that BSWM had been building in the past years. So there was some kind of conflict or overlap here.

NIA also voiced out concerns on the condition of watershed areas, as these provide the water for the national irrigation system (NIS). But watershed management and rehabilitation is part of the DENR's mandate.

I am sure there are many other conflicts between agencies with mandates on water that did not surface during the FGD. However, the participants in the FGD agreed to the creation of a Department of



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Achieving water security

Water including a Water Regulatory Commission. I will discuss that issue in my next columns, also taking into account inputs from today's NWS.

On the issue of infrastructure, NIA did not repudiate the fact that the country's NIS functions at 40-percent efficiency.

According to the paper "Water in Philippine Agriculture" by the University of the Philippines Los Baños, irrigation is supposed to achieve 200-percent cropping intensity. But one of the key findings of Inocencio, David and Briones (2013) in a rapid appraisal of the irrigation program from 1993 to 2013 showed cropping intensity in areas covered by the NIS was 78 percent during the wet season and 65 percent during the dry season.

NIA already has a Development Master Plan for 2017-2026 that will make current irrigation systems more climate-resilient, increase NIS coverage, and manage developed water resources. However, at the rate NIA is going, or placing an additional 300,000 hectares of land under the NIS within the Duterte administration, it will take 10 to 15 years to fully cover the 3 million hectares of irrigable lands.

Rainharvesting is also very low in the Philippines at 4 percent,

which results in flooding of farmlands during torrential rains and eroding of precious top soil.

One of the solutions to improve irrigation infrastructure in the Philippines is to invite private sector participation and introduce new technologies. The Board of Investment can support this by granting incentives to private firms that will pioneer projects for the country's irrigation system.

In the area of environment, one issue stood out: the need to rehabilitate the 18 major river basins in the country. NIA also wants the watersheds currently serving the NIS to be rehabilitated and the conversion of irrigable lands to non-agriculture use be stopped.

What I have discussed are simply the "tip of the iceberg" on water issues related to agriculture and economics. That means there are more issues to discuss, and the NWS is the perfect venue for that.

Also, we should make NWS the venue to formulate and develop solutions over the short, medium and long term to make the country achieve water security.

In the second part of this column-series, I will discuss more solutions to help the country achieve water security.

EDITORIAL

'Done deal'?

Call it a silver lining: Out of the oppressive water crisis that hit Metro Manila in the past weeks, an inadvertent light has been shone on the hitherto obscure but now controversial Kaliwa Dam project.

Malacañang had forthwith proposed the project as the solution to the metro's water crisis. Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III said a Kaliwa Dam in the Kaliwa-Kanan-Agos River Basin in Quezon would "absolutely" solve the water woes. If only past administrations had pursued the project, he rued, "the water crisis will be much less serious or much less of a threat."

Then the punch line, if you will: In fact, Dominguez pointed out, the Duterte administration is well on its way to realizing the P18.7-billion project—through a loan from China.

The loan agreement for the New Centennial Water Source Project (NCWSP), as the new project is called, was quietly signed during the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping in Manila in November 2018. While no one was looking, it seemed, the groundwork had been paved for the Chinese project in record time. The National Economic Development Authority (Neda), chaired by the President, approved the project, a "bidding" happened (which actually was just picking from three Chinese contractors submitted by China itself), and the winner was the China Energy Engineering Corp.

Many immediately sat up at the news, noting that something smelled fishy in the fact that the project, and its push by Malacañang, came to light just as taps around the metropolis suddenly went dry. Could the water shortage have been staged in some way to drum up acceptance for the Chinese deal? It didn't help that Malacañang announced that the National Water Resources Board would now be placed under the Office of the President (a neat way to hand out water projects to China?).

All these would have remained a wild conspiracy theory—until it emerged that a Japanese company had proposed a similar project 10 years ago, on terms and conditions that appear far more generous than those in the Chinese-funded project.

In a press conference it held this week to appeal to President Duterte to reconsider the awarding of the project to China, the Global Utility Development Corp. (GUDC) of Japan reiterated that its Kaliwa Water Intake Weir proposal was a safer, more sustainable and faster project compared to its Chinese counterpart.

GUDC chief executive officer Toshikazu Nomura said the Japanese project will be a 25-year build-operate-transfer scheme, at no cost to the Philippines, with the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) paying through the agreed water rates. The Chinese project, meanwhile, entails a loan with an interest rate of 2 percent, said to be eight times higher than most Japanese loans.

The Chinese project will also cost double at \$800 million, compared to the Japanese project cost of \$400 million for almost the same capacity (600 million liters per day for China and 550 MLD for Japan). It would take the Japanese only 36 months to finish, well during Mr. Duterte's term. The Chinese? Fifty-four months.

Nomura also touted the GUDC project as highly sustainable and will not inundate communities, since only a weir will be built—a low dam of 7 meters high and 16 kilometers long across the river. China, on the other hand, is set to build a 62-meter-high dam and a 27.7 km conveyance water tunnel to Tanay, Rizal, that will flood Barangay Daraitan and other areas.

"We cannot understand why MWSS wants such high dam, we only need 600 MLD. It does not make common sense," Nomura pointed out. And he added a damning detail: The GUDC had secured a memorandum of understanding from the MWSS as early as 2009, and was asked to resubmit its offer in 2017. However, Nomura said, "somebody in your government gave pressure" on the MWSS not to entertain GUDC anymore.

The uncharacteristic bluntness coming from a Japanese executive only underlines how seemingly irregular the Duterte administration's decision-making process has been in this case. Why was the Chinese contract favored over the Japanese one, when a perusal of their terms suggests the latter is far more beneficial for the country?

Given the compelling comparison shown by the Japanese, the government, at the very least, should show good faith by reexamining its deal with China. But MWSS administrator Reynaldo Velasco, for one—for all the missteps his agency has inflicted on the public these past days—is being obdurate about the project. It's already "a done deal," he said, and nothing can be done about the GUDC proposal.

Nothing more can be done—despite the glaring onerousness on view? That would amount to sheer dereliction of duty to protect the Philippines' interests in this case, and the kind of suspicious dismissal of basic good sense that won't hold water with the public.



Ways cutting trees help the environment

They believe that by ensuring that there is a balance between the needs of the people and the viability of the forests, a more prosperous and sustainable future for the entire country can be achieved

Trees play a vital role in providing natural carbon storage for the environment, helping to sequester it from the atmosphere and helping mitigate climate change. Trees are important in our goal to help stop global warming on its tracks, but the need of our country for wood and other by-products is undeniable. Aside from this, many of our countrymen's livelihood depend on the forestry sector. As such, proper management of forests is of tantamount value.

Sustainable forest management is the holistic approach to the problems that local forests encounter today as it not only focuses on the well-being of the environment but also zeroes in on the needs of the people who directly benefit from it. Among the recommended options to maintain the forests' health is to harvest mature trees to make way for new ones. Here are five ways cutting trees can help the environment:

It does not release the carbon stored inside.

Unless these trees are allowed to decay or burn, the fear of contributing to climate change through cutting of

trees is out of the question. Matured trees that are later on processed to become wood products continue to store that carbon and keep it out of the atmosphere for decades. Based on a study, the net CO2 emission of wood recorded only -1,000 kilograms per cubic meter, making it the most sustainable building material option in terms of carbon emissions.

Wood as a raw material is renewable.

Responsibly sourced wood is the only renewable raw material there is today. This means that trees that are harvested are 100 percent biodegradable and can possibly be replenished for new growth. If we refuse to cut down trees, we'll hinder the production of fuel and fiber needed in providing warmth and shelter through the products derived from them.

Cutting mature trees provides regeneration.

The moment forests become too crowded, there will be increased competition among trees for light and water, which will make them more susceptible to drought and insect attacks. Cutting mature trees provides regeneration, improves the habitat of many species and maintains forest

health in the long run.

Sustainable forest management provides livelihood opportunities.

Investing in the industry makes way for more jobs in the upland and rural areas as it requires an abundant amount of manpower to harvest and process wood. An increase in Sustainable Forest Management income-generating projects means more revenue to farmers and workers which will provide additional taxes to the government while preserving the environment.

Wood produces essential products.

Wood products come in many forms such as lumber, paper and pulp, chemicals, food and furniture. One can only imagine life without it, giving up common necessities such as toilet paper and reading materials.

One of the organizations pushing for sustainable forest management is the Philippine Wood Producers Association. They believe that by ensuring that there is a balance between the needs of the people and the viability of the forests, a more prosperous and sustainable future for the entire country can be achieved. They continually promote the market of wood, which when harnessed sustainably, can be an important driver for growth and development for many communities and by extension for the entire economy as well.



IT is very clear the conscientious cutting of trees benefit rather than harm the environment.

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Arroyo urges friendlier government stance on mining

Congress "should not have an adversarial stance" toward mining, Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo told industry leaders on Tuesday, in a major departure from President Duterte's stance on the sector. Instead, the legislature should help the mining industry and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to come up with mechanisms to boost government revenue from the sector, the former President said in a forum organized by the Philippine Nickel Industry Association in Taguig City. Arroyo noted that the mining sector grew even during the presidency of her successor, Benigno Aquino III, who had wanted to ban mining. "I have said earlier that even under my successor, who was very strict about mining, the sector even grew compared to my time, and [that is] what we want to do now," she said. "My successor was against mining and apparently wanted to ban it but his executive secretary, I've [been] told ... pointed out that there was no legal basis for a ban," Arroyo said. —DJYAP



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SGMA to mining trade: Help DU30

SPEAKER Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has called on the mining industry to help President Rodrigo Duterte achieve his economic and environmental agenda by working closely with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to make sure laws on sustainable and responsible mining are carried out. /Page 11

SGMA

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"We should help the sector and help the DENR. Because when the industry players and the DENR work together, your sector can contribute greatly to government revenues, exports, economic growth, job creation and the progress and development to the local communities that host mining," Arroyo told mining

industry leaders at the Philippine Nickel Industry Association (PNIA) Nickel Initiatives Forum at Shangri-la Towers in Bonifacio Global Center (BGC) Tuesday.

Arroyo pointed out the mining industry should endeavor to work closely with the DENR in order for it to grow even with the strict stance of President Rodrigo Duterte on mining.

"I have said earlier that even under my successor who was very strict about mining, the sector even grew com-

pared to my time, and thus what we want to do now. Even in today's policy and regulatory environment, we want to have the sector grow and contribute to sustainable national development," the Speaker said.

Arroyo stressed the nickel mining industry can contribute largely to President Duterte's economic policies particularly on his Build, Build, Build program and tax reform program.

"It is so important for

the Philippines because the Philippines is the 2nd largest supplier of nickel in the whole world. So hopefully, if we end up on the same page with government in mining and we were able to revitalize the manufacturing industry, because President Duterte's economic policies on "Build, Build, Build" and tax reform, are truly revitalizing our economy, then nickel ore production will increase in the coming years," said Arroyo.

Arroyo stated the DENR should view itself

not just a regulator but also as a promoter of responsible, world-class, efficient and mining businesses.

The Speaker noted the mining has always been a major sector of the Philippine economy. However, after EDSA I, in the mid-1980s, mining was virtually banned.

"Then during my presidency, I revived the mining industry. In January 2004, I issued EO 270, declaring the policy to promote responsible mineral resources operation, development and

utilization in a manner that is conducive to sustainable development and with due regard to justice and equity, and sensitivity to the culture of the Filipino people, and respect for Philippine sovereignty. That is what my EO 270 did as it provided for the guideline for reviving the mining industry," said Arroyo.

In December 2004, the Speaker said they were able to reverse a Supreme Court ruling that was adverse earlier. The high court ruled

favorably on the issue of foreign participation in mining.

"I think those two acts in 2004 were what led to the present modern day mining boom in the Philippines," said Arroyo.

"My successor was against mining and apparently wanted to ban it but his Executive Secretary, I've told, and pointed out that there was no legal basis for a ban on mining. So what he did was to only ban new permits," Arroyo added.



Bill on new fiscal regime for mining on track

SPEAKER Gloria Macapagal Arroyo on Tuesday expressed optimism that House Bill No. 8400, which she co-authored, will be passed before the 17th Congress ends.

Arroyo, in her speech during the Nickel Initiative 2019 held at the Shangrila Hotel BGC in Taguig City, said among the key provisions of the bill include the imposition of a margin-based royalty for large-scale mining, starting from one-percent for a margin of 1-10 percent, gradually increasing to five percent as the margin increases to 70 percent.

"This makes them liable as well to pay royalty tax as large-scale mining operators inside mineral reservations," she said.

Arroyo said large-scale mining operations located inside within mining reservation areas "shall be imposed a royalty tax equivalent to three percent of the gross output of the minerals of the gross output of the minerals."

For small-scale mining, she said mining contractors within or outside mineral reservations shall pay to the government a royalty equivalent to one-tenth of one percent of gross output.

As such, from PHP18.71 billion in 2017, the government

stands to get around PHP22 billion, including taxes.

In terms of mining royalty, Arroyo said, the government will earn PHP2.57 billion instead of the present PHP1.13 billion.

The proposed measure also requires small-scale miners to register with the Mining Board of concerned local government unit and Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) that would entail them secure a Tax Identification Number (TIN) from the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR).

HB 8400, which according to Arroyo was adopted by the Senate committee level, aims to promote fairness by providing fiscal regime that is applicable to all existing and prospective large metallic, non-metallic, and small-scale mines, and shall be applied to all mines regardless of whether the mine is located outside or inside a mineral reservation.

It would also enhance the equitable share of the government in the utilization of natural resources without compromising the mining sector's need for reasonable return on its investment.

Meanwhile, the House Speaker said that the mining

sector grew under the present administration than it did when she was still the President despite the former's stand on mining.

"I have said that even under my successor, who was very strict about mining, the sector grew even more than it did in my time," she said. "That's what we want to do now. Even in today's policy and regulatory environment, we want to help the sector grow and contribute to national development."

But in doing so, the Speaker stressed, there should be a framework that will approximate the thinking of President Rodrigo Duterte.

As what the President stated in his state-of-the-nation-address last year, Arroyo said, raw materials from mining operations in the country should be converted to finished products.

"In line with the President's other statements regarding raw materials..., your projects would ideally include processing facilities if not today, at least in the realistic future."

In doing so, she said mining companies should include in their proposed expansion the setting up of processing facilities.



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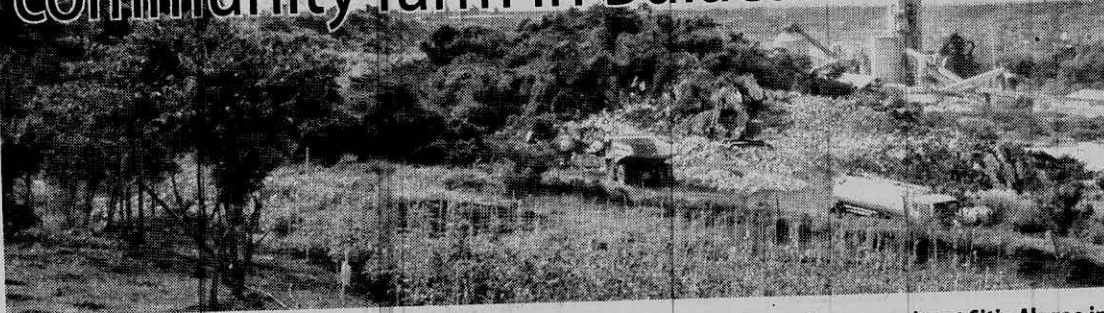
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Republic Cement inaugurates community farm in Bulacan



■ A portion of the 4-hectare farm established by Republic Cement Services Inc. at its quarry site at Sitio Alagao in Barangay Minuyan, Bulacan. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CONSTRUCTION material provider Republic Cement Services Inc. recently inaugurated its first agro-farm facility in its Bulacan plant, providing additional livelihood support to its host community.

The four-hectare farm, situated in the plant's quarry site at Sitio Alagao in Barangay Minuyan, was opened in November 2018 as part of the company's Environmental Protection and Enhancement Program and Social Development and Management Program.

It includes a 590-square-meter nursery and 5.3-square-kilometer vegetable farm, with the remaining areas to be planted with bamboos and fruit bearing trees.

In a statement, Republic Cement said the nursery and vegetable farm currently serves as a training ground for the 57 farming families in Minuyan, where they could enhance their farming skills, with an

emphasis on organic farming.

"Opening our first agro-farm facility to our host communities gives us the opportunity to extend our assistance and support to the growth and prosperity of the families in our Bulacan plant," said Nabil Francis, president and chief executive officer of Republic Cement.

"We hope we could do more of this in the future, as we go about our mission of building a stronger Republic," Francis added.

The Republic Cement Bulacan Agro-farm initiative was conceptualized in 2017 in response to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR) strict directive to the mining industry to practice responsible mining.

Through DENR's Mining and Geosciences Bureau-Central Luzon, a directive was issued to all mining organizations to implement the progressive rehabilitation

in every active quarry site.

Republic Cement's Bulacan plant also launched a vermiculture training center for farmers. Residents who are members of the Sulong Pa Minuyan Cooperative were tapped to maintain the facility, generating additional employment for the community.

The Alagao-Banahaw para sa Kaunlaran, a people's organization established through Republic Cement's Social Development and Management Program, also took the initiative in providing the marketing strategy for the vegetables harvested from the agro-farm. Portion of the produce will also be sold to Republic Cement-supported *Kusina ng Kalinga* in Bulacan. *Kusina ng Kalinga* (kitchen of care) is Republic Cement's flagship anti-hunger program established in partnership with Gawad Kalinga.

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GMA appeals to mining firms to help Du30 achieve PH goals

By Maricel V. Cruz

HOUSE Speaker Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has called on the mining industry to help President Rodrigo Duterte achieve his economic and environmental agenda by working closely with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to make sure that laws on sustainable and responsible mining are carried out.

"We should help the sector and help the DENR. Because when the industry players and the DENR work together, your sector can contribute greatly to government revenues, exports, economic growth, job creation and the progress and development to the local communities that host mining," Arroyo told mining industry leaders at the Philippine Nickel Industry Association Nickel Initiatives Forum at Shangri-La Towers in Bonifacio Global Center Tuesday.

Arroyo said the mining industry should endeavor to work closely with the DENR in order for it to grow even with the strict stance of President Duterte on mining.

"I have said earlier that even under my successor who was very strict about mining, the sector even grew compared to my time, and thus what we want to do now. Even in today's policy and regulatory environment, we want to have the sector grow and contribute to sustainable national development," she said.



Panay River yields 10,000 kilos of trash

By **TARA YAP**

ILOILO CITY – A total of 10,692 kilos of trash were hauled from the Panay River, the 152-kilometer river system of Capiz province.

Ruel De Los Reyes, chief of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Capiz, said the trash was taken mainly from Roxas City, the provincial capital.

Majority of the trash collected by volunteers were plastic. Earlier findings by DENR Capiz indicated that uncontrolled disposal of garbage along the riverbank, particularly in Roxas City, led to the growth of high coliform bacteria.

Water pollution also poses a risk to the river that is classified as vital body of water for the province because oysters are grown along its banks.



Duterte issues EO authorizing funding for gov't salary hikes

PRESIDENT Rodrigo R. Duterte has signed an executive order authorizing funding for the fourth tranche of the salary hike for government workers against any available appropriations from the reenacted 2018 budget, as the contentious process of enacting the 2019 budget threatened to outlive the 17th Congress.

Malacañan Palace released to reporters on Wednesday a copy of Executive Order No. 76, which amends EO No. 201 (Series of 2016). The new EO carries the title "Modifying the salary schedule for civilian government personnel and authorizing the grant of additional benefits for both civilian and military and uniformed personnel."

Mr. Duterte signed EO No. 76 on March 15, citing the need to implement the fourth tranche salary schedule for civilian government personnel by Jan. 1 of 2019 as indicated in EO 201.

Congress has yet to transmit the 2019 budget to the Palace for signing after it was approved by the bicameral conference. Representatives to the committee from the House have claimed that lump-sum items in the approved document need further "itemization," creating a standoff with the Senate, which insists that the version approved by the bicameral committee be preserved. The House retrieved the budget sent to the Senate on Wednesday

pending further negotiations.

The delay in transmitting the budget for the President's signature has raised fears that the 2019 budget could be passed as late as August, or after the adjournment of the 17th Congress for the mid-term elections in May.

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) has warned that a budget signing in August could dampen economic growth to around the 5% range because of the unavailability of funding for new projects.

EO 76 notes that Congress has failed to pass the 2019 budget. Hence, the GAA for the preceding year "shall be deemed reenacted and shall remain in force and in

effect until the general appropriations bill is passed."

Section 15 (a) of EO 201 is "hereby amended" under the new EO. The amendment reads: "Pending the enactment of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 GAA, the funding requirements for the compensation adjustment for FY 2019 shall be charged against any available appropriations under the FY 2018 GAA, as reenacted, to be determined by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), subject to existing budgeting, accounting and auditing rules and regulations."

The order takes effect immediately upon its publication in a newspaper of general circulation.

— **Arjay L. Balinbin**



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The Senate is firm on the need for the House to pass the version ratified by the Bicameral Conference Committee.

Apart from the negative impact of a reenacted budget on economic growth, Zubiri said the budget impasse could also affect government workers who are employed through job orders.

According to Zubiri, since January those employed under job orders have yet to receive their salaries.

"You have to remember that the government is the biggest employer in our country. Almost 25 percent of total employment comes from government. As a matter of fact, the job orders were not paid since January because there is no budget for JO for this year," explained Zubiri.

According to him, all government agencies from the Departments of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to Agriculture (DA), employ about 30 percent of their work force under a job order set up.

"This is across the board from the DENR to the DA; no job for 30 percent of their plantilla," decried Zubiri.

He said the number could run to "tens of thousands" of government workers.

The budget stalemate at the Senate and the House of Representatives persisted after Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on Tuesday refused to recall the budget measure it transmitted to the Senate as agreed upon with Sen. Panfilo Lacson and her emissary Rep. Ronnie Zamora.

The Senate is firm on the need for the House to pass the version ratified by the Bicameral Conference Committee.



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'HOW WOULD NATURE SOLVE IT?' Kalikasan solusyon sa basura at climate change

Ni Zea C. Capistrano

Dalawang graduating students ng University of the Philippines sa Mindanao ang nakatuklas ng kakaibang paraan kung paano magagamit ang kalikasan upang malutas ang problema sa basura at climate change.

Kapwa ginamit ni Alma Jo Latada, 21, BS Architecture; at Michael Jayson Saturos, 23, ng BS Food Technology, ang kalikasan upang mahanap ang solusyon sa ilang problema sa kalusugan at kapaligiran sa Pilipinas, kabilang ang pagbabawas ng mga plastic waste, food waste, pag-iwas sa food poisoning, at ang lumalalang epekto ng climate change.

Pinahanga ni Latada ang mga manonood nang mapagwagian niya ang unang "3 Minute Thesis Competition", gamit ang kanyang presentasyon na may titulong "How Would Nature Solve It?"

Mula sa ideya ng Biomimicry o biomimetics, isang konsepto ng paggaya sa isang natural na proseso o teknolohiya, naging inspirasyon umano ni Latada ang pine cones sa paggawa ng mga panel prototypes mula sa mga puno ng Tanguile at Gmelina, na nagbubukas at nagsasara depende sa klima.

Umaasa siya na tatanggapin ng mga komunidad ang kanyang pag-aaral upang

magbigay sa mga ito na mas magandang bentilasyon sa mas mababang halaga. "Nature breeds sustainable solutions, all we need to do is listen," ani Latada.

Samantala, ang naging pag-aaral ni Saturo ang maaring maging solusyon para mabawasan ang plastic waste, food waste, at food poisoning.

Tinawag na "Power Plastics", nakasentro ang kanyang pag-aaral sa paggamit ng plant-based plastic na gawa sa starch ng buto ng jackfruit o langka at iba pang halaman na matatagpuan sa Pilipinas.

Natuklasan niyang na ang mga alternative food packaging material na ay magkapagpapababa ng food microorganisms na Staphylococcus aureus, na kalimitang nakikita sa mga durian candies, yema, o iba pang candies na ibinebenta sa merkado.

Bukod sa food poisoning, hangad din ng "power plastic" ni Saturo na makapag-ambag sa pagpapababa ng paggamit ng plastic at food waste.

"It's utilizing what we have and what we usually throw away such as food wastes. It's hitting two birds with one stone," aniya.

Si Saturos ay bahagi rin ng walong finalist sa nasabing kompetisyon.