

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

DATE : 11 OCT 2016

DAY : Tuesday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

MGB appointment throws cloud over mine audits

REGULATORS officially released yesterday the contents of a presidential order appointing a replacement to engineer Leo L. Jasareno, the official who oversaw an audit of the environmental practices of miners.

The replacement throws the industry into further uncertainty, mining companies said, as it threatens to prolong the audit process, putting the future of many mining operations under a cloud.

A letter from the Office of the President to the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) was shown to reporters Monday, naming Mr. Jasareno's acting replacement and transmitted by Executive Secretary Salvador C. Medialdea on Sept. 28.

"I am pleased to transmit herewith the appointment letter

of Wilfredo G. Moncano, signed by President Rodrigo R. Duterte, as Acting Director IV, Mines and Geosciences Bureau, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), vice Leo L. Jasareno" Mr. Medialdea wrote.

In a copy obtained by *BusinessWorld* last week, the same letter was received by the DENR on Sept. 30, a few days before the release of the mine audit results. The audit, identified 20 more miners to add to the 10 earlier recommended for suspension. On Oct. 4, Mr. Jasareno, in a presentation, reported on the audit results.

Mr. Jasareno was the acting director IV of the MGB and was designated as the officer-in-charge senior undersecretary of the agency, placing under his purview the operations of the

Environmental Management Bureau. Functions delegated to him include the conduct of the mine review via a special order signed on Aug. 3 by Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez.

Mr. Jasareno headed the MGB for the past five years but had to file a resignation letter after the president ordered appointees of former President Benigno S. C. Aquino III to vacate their positions.

"With the issuance of the order of the president, then the position of acting director IV of Leo now goes to Attorney Moncano. Attorney Moncano has taken his oath of office. In the meantime he will remain as the regional director of MGB Region XI," Environment Undersecretary and MGB Concurrent Director Luis A. Jacinto told reporters on Monday.

In a brief phone interview on the same day, Mr. Jasareno confirmed that he no longer holds a position in government but "is assisting the secretary" who will now head the audit while waiting for the pending approval of the letter she earlier sent to the Office of the President recommending Mr. Jasareno hold a certain position in the Environment Department.

Asked for comment, the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (CoMP) said that the appointment is "cause for concern for us primarily because he is the person tasked to head the audit."

CoMP Vice-President for Legal and Policy Ronald V. Recidoro, in a phone interview on Monday, added: "We are concerned that

have an impact on the final outcome... It impacts the reputations of the companies named during the (Oct. 4) press conference and prolongs the uncertainty."

Mr. Recidoro also raised the issue of Ms. Lopez moving to place the audit directly under her supervision.

"It can lead to many unintended consequences," CoMP's Mr. Recidoro added, without elaborating.

Ms. Lopez assured, however, that the mine audit will stay on track. "It goes on. The good has to be done," she said in an earlier phone interview.

Ms. Lopez added that she intends to engage the president in a dialogue with the aim of keeping Mr. Jasareno in some capacity, with continued involvement in

"I will meet the president first. I don't want to go against him but if someone did good you don't let him go. What he did in the audit, it takes a lot of courage," she added.

Mr. Jasareno had said that the DENR will send out to miners the reports on the findings of their respective operations accompanied with letters requiring miners to explain why their operations should not be suspended.

Mr. Recidoro said that miners have not received the audit reports.

The DENR has recommended the suspension 30 metal miners representing three-quarters of the industry.

Of these, 18 are nickel producers that account for 55.5% of the country's total nickel ore output based on last year's production. —

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Uncertainty mars fate of 20 miners

BY JAMES KONSTANTIN GALVEZ

THE fate of 20 mining operations hangs in the balance after President Rodrigo Duterte sacked the head of the audit committee tasked to review all large-scale mining operations in the country.

Environment Undersecretary Mario Luis Jacinto on Monday announced that President Duterte has already appointed Lawyer Wilfredo Moncano as the new director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, replacing Environment Undersecretary Leo Jasareno's item as a Director IV.

"Leo [Jasareno] has been replaced by the President. Officially, he does not have a position anymore so he cannot function for government," Jacinto told MGB employees during Monday's flag-raising ceremony.

Jasareno could no longer continue his function as Environment undersecretary as his appointment letter remained pending at the Office of the President, Jacinto noted.

Jasareno and other department officials filed their resignation letters

on the heels of an order by President Rodrigo Duterte for appointees of former President Benigno Aquino 3rd to vacate their positions.

"Malacañang found out he's acting Director IV," Jacinto said. "In government, you need an item so that you can function. I have to announce it to end speculations regarding the president's order."

"With the issuance of the order of the president, then the position of acting director IV of Leo now goes to Attorney Moncano, who has taken his oath of office," he added.

Jasareno, who headed the MGB for the past five years before he was appointed by Environment Secretary Gina Lopez as officer-in-charge and senior undersecretary for Environment in a special order on August 3, 2016.

The former MGB chief was tasked

to supervise the operations of the Environmental Management Bureau, as well as other functions assigned or delegated by the DENR secretary—including the mining audit.

In a separate telephone interview, Moncano said that they have yet to receive an official order from the Environment secretary about his function, but that there are no major changes in the audit timetable. "The audit will push through."

Lopez, who has a positive perception of Jasareno, said she will meet with President Duterte to discuss the matter.

"I cannot let that happen. I like Leo. I love Leo," she said, adding that she needs somebody "technical and honest" like Jasareno in her office.

"The good has to be done. If someone did good, you don't let him go. What he did in the audit, it takes a lot of courage," she added.

So far, 10 mines that included eight nickel producers have been suspended for environmental lapses since the audit started on July 8.

The audit teams also recommended the suspension of 20 other miners for environmental

violations, unsystematic mining methods and outstanding social issues. The companies, mostly nickel operations, would be suspended unless they are able to address the shortcomings.

Among those recommended for suspension were Libjo Mining Corp., AAM-Phil Natural Resources Exploration and Development Corp., Parcel 1 and Parcel 2B, Kromincó Inc., Carrascal Nickel Corp., Marcventures Mining and Development Corp., Filminera Resources Corp., Strongbuilt Mining Development Corp., Sinosteel Philippines HY Mining Corp., Oriental Synergy Mining Corp., and Wellex Mining Corp.

Also recommend for suspension were Century Peak Corp., Rapid City Nickel Project and Casiguran Nickel Project, Oriental Vision Mining Philippines Corp. and CTP Construction and Mining Corp., Agata Mining Venture Inc., Hinatuan Mining Corp., Benguet Corp., Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co., Oceana Gold Phils Inc., Adnama Mining Resources Inc., and SR Metals Inc.

► **Miners B:**

Uncertainty

The suspended miners and those recommendation for suspension represent three-quarters of the operating mines in the country, including 18 nickel producers that account for 55.5 percent of the total nickel ore output.

Jacinto refused to comment on how Jasareno's case would affect the timetable for

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MGB audit team leader axed; miners seek direction

BY MADELAINE B. MIRAFLO

Miners are now asking the government for clear direction after President Duterte displaced former Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) Director Leo Jasareno, who was in charge of the government's nationwide audit on all mining operations.

New MGB Director Mario Luis Jacinto confirmed on Monday that Jasareno, who was tasked to lead the mining audit, is now out of the office.

"Officially, he (Jasareno) doesn't have a position anymore so he can't function for government," Jacinto told reporters.

Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) Vice President for Policy Ronald Recidoro said in a phone interview that this development raises a lot of questions as to what will happen to the mining audit.

To recall, only 11 companies out of 41 metallic mines have passed the government's nationwide audit, while 20 have been recommended for suspension.

These firms that are at risk of being suspended should receive a show cause letter from the DENR asking them to explain why their operations shouldn't

be stopped.

But according to Recidoro, none of COMP's member companies recommended for suspension has yet to receive any letter.

"(The displacement of Jasareno) raises a lot of questions. What will happen to the audit? But we welcome this development and we are willing to meet as promised," Recidoro said.

Jasareno will be replaced by Wilfredo Moncano who has been with MGB for 16 years now.

DENR Secretary Gina Lopez, who retained Jasareno as DENR undersecretary after being replaced by Jacinto as MGB Director, said she will talk to the President and convince him to keep him.

"I can't let that happen... I need somebody technical and honest... I will meet with the President first. Of course, I don't want to go against him but if someone did good, you don't let him go. What he did in the audit, it takes a lot of courage," Lopez said.

But Jacinto, during the flag ceremony at MGB office in Quezon City, already formally announced on Monday the appointment of Moncano.

"It's the prerogative of the Presi-

dent to appoint people. As the director of MGB, I will work with the people here. The important thing is that people will be able to perform their functions and jobs," Jacinto said in an interview.

This is not the first time that the President attempted to ax Jasareno out of this administration.

To recall, while in the middle of the audit, Duterte suddenly decided to appoint Jacinto as MGB chief.

In his Presidential Directive No. 002, Series of 2016, Duterte designated Jacinto as the new director of the MGB in a concurrent capacity corollary to his appointment as undersecretary at the DENR.

Jasareno had been the MGB director for the past five years and had been orienting and mentoring Lopez about the sector since Day One of her appointment.

The appointment also came amid the much talked about ongoing audit on mining firms, which is being led by Jasareno and Lopez herself.

Despite Jacinto's appointment, Lopez designated Jasareno as the one "on top of the operations" of the ongoing audit.

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LOPEZ FINDS ALLY IN MARIANO, WHO VOWS TO UPHOLD CLOAs

Another Duterte official stands in way of miners

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

MINERS have another Cabinet official to contend with, aside from Environment Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez.

Agrarian Reform Secretary Rafael V. Mariano said he is bent on upholding the validity of issued certificate of land ownership award (CLOA), even if it would affect mining sites, like in the

case of the Tampakan Copper-Gold Project. Mariano said that, if he could have his way, the Tampakan project will not be able to operate, at least under the Duterte administration.

Mariano, a militant farmer-leader and advocate, added that he is not keen on canceling the CLOAs issued within the Tampakan mines in Southern Mindanao.

Before his appointment to the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Mariano was chairman of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), a vocal critic of the mining liberalization policy under the past two administrations.

"If there are CLOAs, if the CLOAs are duly registered, beneficiaries are legitimate, if there is no error in the

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issuance of CLOAs, and if the lands are prime agricultural lands, unless the CLOAs are cancelled, we will uphold their security of tenure," Mariano said. Mariano added that the conflicting land use is not unique to Tampak-an. "There are similar cases. That is why the issue should be resolved through interagency cooperation. The police should also be involved because in installing farmers, we need their assistance."

"I already asked the field operation office and legal affairs to call for an interagency dialogue to discuss the issue," he added.

Agrarian Reform Undersecretary for Legal Affairs Luis Pangulayan said interagency coordination is being observed in resolving issues involving conflicting land-use policies, such as in Tampak-an's case.

He assured that the DAR is coordinating with various agencies to ensure that no rights, whether that of indigenous peoples (IPs) or

farmers, shall be trampled upon.

"The talks with IPs have started during the previous administration and it is continuing. What we want to make sure is to respect the rights of the farmers and IPs," he said, adding that Lopez also assured that no agricultural land will be covered by mining.

Mining sites are mostly happening in areas covered by Certificate of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADTs) or covered by claims by various IPs as part of their ancestral lands.

According to Mariano, his agency would initiate an interagency meeting between the DAR, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP) to discuss the issue.

The existence of CLOAs issued to farmer-beneficiaries under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) within the proposed Tampak-an mine site is one of four major issues hounding the \$5.9-billion Tampak-an copper-gold project.

According to DAR records, the DAR issued the CLOAs in May and July 2008, covering a total of 3,921 hectares in five different barangays in Tampak-an, South Cotabato, where the project proponents intend to operate an open-pit mine.

The DENR, led by Lopez, had openly opposed the multibillion-dollar mining project because of its potential impact to the environment and the people. Lopez is concerned about the destructive nature of open-pit mining method, with approximately the size of 700 football fields to be affected.

Last month Lopez announced issuing a show-cause order against the project, threatening to cancel its environmental compliance certificate (ECC) for failing to address the CLOA issue.

The Sagittarius Mines Inc. (SMI) had already issued a reply to the show-cause order, and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) and the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) are now coordinating to come up with a decision, Environment Senior Undersecretary Leo L. Jasareno said.

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Another Duterte official stands in way of miners

"It is up to the EMB and MGB now," he said.

To recall, the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) tasked the DAR, DENR, DILG and NCIP to resolve the issues hounding the Tampakan copper-gold project.

The MICC, mandated to resolve big mining issues, has not yet been convened under the Duterte administration. Tampakan has the world's largest undeveloped copper-gold deposits.

It straddles four provinces in Southern Mindanao, namely, South Cotabato, Sarangani, Sultan Kudarat and Davao del Sur. Its proponents are the SMI, the holder of the Mineral Processing and Sharing Agreement, and the Australian firm Indophil Resources NL, owned by Alsons Prime Investments Corp. of the Alcantara group.

SMI has so far secured the endorsement of local government units for the project, as mandated by the Philippine Mining Act of 1995.

South Cotabato, which has an existing ban on open-pit mining method, is the only LGU that has not given its consent to the project.

Mine audit

MEANWHILE, Jasareno said printing of the audit reports showing the findings and recommendations of the mine-audit teams is causing the delay in the conduct of audit covering all nonmetallic mines.

Jasareno, the designated overall head of the mine audit, said printing of the audit reports for all 41 operating mines and their distribution to mining companies is ongoing. He said they intend to complete the distribution within the month.

"Printing is difficult because the reports are voluminous," he said. So far, the DENR has copy-furnished the first batch of 10 mining companies issued with suspension orders.

Early this month, Lopez said that, based on the findings and recommendations, 20 other large-scale metallic mines face suspension and would be subsequently issued show-cause orders.

Mining companies have been complaining against the impact of the DENR's announcement, which they said affect investors' confi-

dence. They said they are still waiting for the official communication from the DENR.

Asked how long it would take the DENR to print the documents, he said: "It is ongoing."

Each report, he said, is about two-inch thick and the DENR is producing seven copies, one each for the offices represented by the audit team and the mining companies. "After printing and distribution of the audit reports, we will proceed with the audit of nonmetallic mines."

According to Jasareno, the audit covers all 65 nonmetallic mines, including quarry sites.

He said the same audit teams will conduct the audit and expects to do it within a month. "The same process and the same criteria will be used in the conduct of the audit." Lopez said the ongoing campaign would not spare non-metallic mines and quarry operations, as she vowed to weed out irresponsible mining companies that cause environmental degradation and suffering to people in host communities.

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DENR cancels license of mine near Heritage site

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources will cancel the environmental permit of a nickel miner that began operations this year as the government intensifies a campaign to punish mineral producers harming natural resources.

The Philippines is the world's top nickel ore supplier and an environmental crackdown that has halted a quarter of its 41 mines, and the risk that 20 more may be shuttered has spurred a rally in global nickel prices.

But the nickel mine now threatened with a shutdown, in southern Davao Oriental province and run by private-owned Austral-Asia Link Mining Corp, was not among those suspended or recommended for suspension.

The issue with the mine is it sits between

Mount Hamiguitan, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and Pujada Bay, a marine protected area, said Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Regina Lopez who calls its approval "madness".

"The ECC (environmental compliance certificate) was reviewed and as far as I know it will be cancelled," Lopez told Reuters. The ECC "should have never been given," she said.

Cancelling the ECC would halt the operations of Austral-Asia's nickel mine, which started up in January, said an official at the Mines and Geosciences Bureau who declined to be named because he was not authorized to speak with media.

The miner was also issued a permit to export

50,000 tons of nickel ore with iron content to China in June, the official said.

An official at Asiaticus Management Corp, which runs Austral-Asia, did not return a call from Reuters seeking comment.

Manila has already halted 10 mines, eight of them nickel, for environmental infractions in a two-month audit that began in July.

Twenty more have been recommended for suspension, although Lopez said on Sept. 30 that not all 20 may be frozen.

In all, the nickel producers, including those suspended and those at risk, account for more than half of the Philippines' 2015 nickel ore output.

The environment agency also reviewed the

ECCs of other projects, including the undeveloped \$5.9 billion Tampakan gold-copper mine and an expansion venture of Semirara Mining and Power Corp SCC.PS, the Philippines' top coal producer.

Lopez declined to say whether the ECCs for Tampakan and Semirara will be cancelled, adding that it will be discussed at an upcoming media briefing.

She said in August that Tampakan should not have been given an ECC since the planned mine would cover an area the size of 700 football fields in what otherwise would be agricultural land.

Semirara said earlier that a government audit found its expansion project to be "technically sound". - Reuters

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Ilocos region top PH hot spot for sea mammal stranding

2015 was the worst year so far, with 112 trapped, according to marine biology experts

By Yolanda Sotelo
@yzsoteloINQ

VIGAN CITY — At dawn on Oct. 6, a melon-headed whale died right after it was taken from intensive care in a facility in Alaminos City. Hours later, a weak rough-toothed dolphin was found beached off Sto. Domingo town in Ilocos Norte province.

The two incidents occurred on the first day of a national symposium on marine mammals here, as if to emphasize the need to enhance sea environment protection to shield these animals from harm.

The Ilocos region is a hot spot in marine mammal stranding, topping all regions in the last 11 years. A total of 692 stranding incidents have been recorded since 2005, most involving spinner dolphins.

Worst year

Last year was the worst so far for animal stranding, with 112 marine mammals trapped or stranded, said Dr. Lemuel Aragon, president of the Philippine Marine Mammal Stranding Network (PMMNSN).

There are several reasons



Workers of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources bring a dead dolphin to its grave at the Fish Cemetery in Dagupan City. —WILLIE LOMIBAO

marine mammals go to the beach. A 2010 study made by Aragon shows that sudden explosions from dynamite fishing give sea animals "acoustic trauma."

Sea mammals, like whales, navigate by sending out sound

pulses to find prey and determine their surroundings. When they lose their hearing, they lose their way, Aragon said.

Some animals suffer injuries because of fishing activities. Dolphins have been tangled in fishing nets or gears.

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SEA MAMMALS

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FAST FACTS

- Of 692 stranded stranding cases in the country since 2005, 153 sea mammals were found in the coastal areas of the Ilocos region.
 - Sixty of 68 provinces have seen stranded animals.
 - The top three provinces are Pangasinan, with 63 stranding incidents; and Ilocos Norte and Cagayan, with 40 each.
- DATA FROM PHILIPPINE MARINE MAMMAL STRANDING NETWORK

Biotoxins and human interaction are also cited as reasons for the stranding.

But the Philippines also has a high rate of live stranding, a reference to sea animals who survive their ordeal at the shore.

Records show 65 percent of beached marine mammals were alive. Of the 692 stranded sea mammals in 11 years, 418 lived. A total of 187 survivors were released back to the sea after receiving supportive care.

"Globally, two or three sea animals are dead when they get to shore," Aragonés said.

Dramatic decline

This year, stranding cases have slid down dramatically, with only 51 beached sea animals recorded as of Oct 6.

Thirteen of these animals were found or treated in the Ilocos region.

The PMMSN said it has a 27 percent success rate in the rehabilitation of stranded marine mammals. The group has no funding, Aragonés said, and is dependent on member agencies to subsidize projects to save sea animals.

The group said all regions should have a speed boat that would serve as an animal ambulance that could carry 3-meter long dolphins and whales. The Ilocos region has such an ambulance, which can be filled with water and is equipped with a stretcher. INQ

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Public urged to plant a tree

By Joel dela Torre

INTERIOR and Local Government Secretary Ismael Sueno has encouraged the public to plant a tree and be a partner for change.

"Making a change can be as simple and heroic as planting a tree that slows the effect of global warming," he said.

Sueno, who is also the concurrent vice chairperson for Disaster Preparedness of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council urged all

punong barangays to coordinate with the concerned environment and natural resources office in their province, city or municipality in order to harmonize the conduct of tree planting activity within their respective areas.

The activity is in support of Republic Act 10176 known as Arbor Day Act of 2012 and the Expanded National Greening Program of the government.

Promulgated in 2011, RA 10176 revives the observance of Arbor Day by authorizing local government units to set a day for tree-planting activity each year.

The DILG Secretary advised all sangguniang barangays to enact appropriate ordinances directing all building owners and homeowners to plant trees in their backyard or frontage of the building and houses to contribute to the efforts to combat global warming.

He enjoined all governors and mayors to supervise, monitor and extend necessary assistance to punong barangays in the conduct of tree planting and to institute effective and efficient means of monitoring to ensure that the planted trees will grow to maturity.

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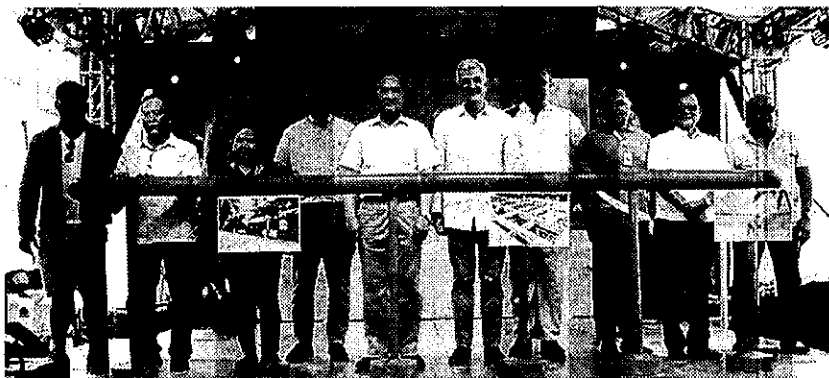
Boracay Water opens new sewage treatment plant

BORACAY Water, the water and used water service provider in the Island of Boracay, formally inaugurated the Manocmanoc sewage treatment plant which is designed to treat five million liters of wastewater or used water per day.

The Manocmanoc sewage treatment plant is Boracay Water's second major used water facility and is expected to increase used water service coverage to 61 percent in the Island.

The P570-million facility is dedicated to treat mixtures of domestic raw sewage and/or septic tank effluent coming from connected households and establishments in Barangay Manocmanoc.

With an activated sludge system, the Manocmanoc Sewage Treatment Plant ensures that used water goes through a rigorous process to comply with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Class SB Effluent



(From left) PCCI-Boracay board member Jude Adlaton; Boracay Foundation Inc. president Dionisio Salme; TIEZA chief regulator Ma. Teresa Alvarez; Manila Water COO Ferdinand Dela Cruz; Manila Water CEO Gerardo Ablaza Jr; Manila Water chairman Fernando Zobel de Ayala; Manila Water Philippine Ventures president Virgilio Rivera, Jr.; Boracay Water general manager Joseph Michael Santos; Aklan Gov. Florencio Miraflores; and Malay Mayor Ceciron Cawalling.

standards. With this, treated water from the facility is guaranteed safe for marine life and suitable for recreational activities before it is discharge to the sea.

Along with the continuous provision of safe, reliable potable water supply to its customers, Boracay Water furthers its pledge of sustaining the island's viability by promoting proper used water

management through the continuous expansion of its used water services.

The Manocmanoc facility will assist the Balabag sewage treatment plant, the company's first used water plant with a capacity of 6.5 million liters of used water per day, in fulfilling the used water needs of the Island.

The Manocmanoc sewage treatment plant along with its other used water projects, are in accordance with Boracay Water's service obligation, to treat all used water generated

by its customers and to ensure reliability of existing sewerage infrastructure.

Boracay Water was formed through the partnership of Manila Water and the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority in 2009, and provides water and used water services in the island's three barangays -- Manocmanoc, Balabag, and Yapak.

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Airline pollution deal hinges on carbon offsets

The United Nations (UN) aviation climate accord hinges on creating a system requiring companies to spend billions of dollars to protect forests, build solar farms and more. The trick will be ensuring those projects are legitimate.

The agreement finalized Thursday in Montreal calls for airlines to compensate for their emissions growth beyond 2020 by buying credits to back eco-friendly initiatives. The idea is that as airlines add new routes, they'll help finance projects to counteract the additional pollution. Think of it as planting trees to absorb every new ounce of carbon dioxide.

Yet what types of credits, or carbon offsets, will be eligible and how the UN will verify their ecological integrity remains unresolved. The quality of these offsets varies. Last year, the research group Stockholm Environment Institute said about 75 percent of offsets of-

fered through the UN's second-biggest program had dubious environmental value, including claims that some Russian factories were boosting emissions solely to sell offsets generated by later cutting them. Ultimately, the Montreal accord's success depends on ensuring offsets bought by airlines are authentic.

"We have to be cautious," said Paul Steele, senior vice president of the International Air Transport Association, a trade association representing 265 airlines. "There are a lot of credits out there that are not particularly robust."

In theory, carbon offsets are a zero sum tool for the atmosphere. If a company increases its emissions by 100 tons of carbon dioxide, it can buy offsets to preserve an endangered forest, saving enough trees to suck up 100 tons of carbon. The environmental damage is,

theoretically, negated.

Carbon offsets are sold by companies. They're backed by a wide variety of programs, ranging from massive solar farms that reduce the need for coal-fired power plants to projects in Chinese villages to fuel cook stoves with methane derived from animal dung.

Rules Needed

Environmentalists say it's possible to create a successful program for the airline industry. The key, they say, is establishing strict protocols to verify that projects are legitimately lowering emissions and not also being used to satisfy national targets under the Paris agreement or any other accord.

"If we can get the rules right, we can build something that's durable," said Annie Petsonk, international counsel for the Environmental Defense Fund. "The industry wants predictable rules here." (Bloomberg)

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'Clean earth for good health'

HEALTH Secretary Paulyn Jean Ubial said health authorities must advocate environmental protection, clean-energy sources and transport, healthy housing as well as other means of promoting human well-being.

"As a public health practitioner, I know health cannot be improved without addressing the environment," she said.

The environment department is seeking more experts who can help government develop sustainable science-based models

which converge efforts for better promoting environmental protection and health nationwide.

"Our environment and health are interrelated—protecting the former will benefit the latter so I'm interested in having scientists and other experts join us

in such endeavor," Environment Secretary Gina Lopez said Saturday on the side of the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment held at WHO Regional Office at the Western Pacific Building in Manila.

Lopez noted such experts' inputs would help bolster ongoing work on developing models that can be replicated in urban and rural areas around the country.

"The selling point of such models is improving quality of life," she said, highlighting urgency for convergence.

Such goal was in line with the administration's bid to promote social justice nationwide, Lopez noted.

"I hope we can have different models on the ground," she said.

DENR and its partners already identified 26 rural and urban areas nationwide where government would pilot the models, she said.

UN assistant secretary-general and UNEP deputy executive director Ibrahim Thiaw lauded health and environment experts' participation in the regional forum.

"Without a healthy environ-

ment, we can't have healthy people," Thiaw told the forum's press conference also on Saturday.

He believes health and environment experts' interest in the forum can "help break down barriers and nurture integration in many other areas like finance, transport, energy and security."

"We should spread these emerging partnerships to other sectors like air pollution which can't be tackled without coordinated effort across transport, energy and finance," Thiaw said.

Ubial stressed the urgency for

environment protection as she said providing more health facilities and professionals was not the sole means of promoting public health.

Established in 2007, Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment is a multi-country initiative for strengthening cooperation on health and the environment particularly amid climate change's threats.

UN said during the forum, officials from 14 countries signed the Manila Declaration which seeks action on four emerging issues. **PNA**

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Philippines: A hotspot for water crisis

BY BEN KRITZ

THE PHILIPPINES, despite being surrounded by water, is likely to face shortages of water for drinking, sanitation, agriculture, and industry within the next ten years unless stronger management and conservation efforts are initiated. The situation will impact dire consequences on the population, the economy, and the ecosystem. This is the general conclusion of studies conducted by the government, environmental groups, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

In its latest study, Asian Water Development Outlook 2016, ADB scores countries on a scale of 0 to 100 in terms of "national water security," which encompasses key factors such as access to clean water, sanitation systems, water sources for agriculture and industry, laws designed to protect water resources, and conservation efforts. It has found that in the three years since its previous assessment of Asia's water resources, water management has indeed improved in the Philippines and throughout the region.

For example, in 2013, the Philippines had a "national water security index" score of 35; in the 2016 ADB report, that had improved to 40.4, largely

which includes Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam — had generally made significant gains in improving water security, but still faces a challenging future. Despite improvements in managing water resources, "the region is a global hotspot for water insecurity," the ADB said. Sixty percent of the world's population and the world's poorest people live in Asia, ADB pointed out, with agriculture consuming 80 percent of the region's water.

"Industrialization and economic transformation require more power and a shift to more water-intensive diets, thus increasing competition between water users like in

electricity generation. Agriculture will need to produce 60 percent more food globally by 2050, and 100 percent more in developing countries, using diminishing water resources."

PH mirrors region, globe

The challenges the Philippines is facing mirror the regional and global water outlook on a smaller scale. Over the past several years, numerous studies have reached a similar conclusion: Unless water demand is slowed to match the rate the country's water resources are replenished, the Philippines will face serious water shortages.

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Philippines: A hotspot for water crisis

with dire consequences for the population, the economy, and the ecosystem.

According to data from the National Water Resources Board (NWRB), the total freshwater resources in the Philippines, including water from lakes and river basins and groundwater, is about 149.5 billion cubic meters per year. According to data compiled by the World Bank, as of 2014 the Philippines' total water demand – the amount extracted from the environment – is about 81.6 billion cu-

bic meters per year.

That sounds like a healthy margin, but the surplus is rapidly shrinking year after year as the population and the economy grow. Agriculture by far is the biggest user of the country's water, accounting for more than 85 percent of yearly demand, most of it for irrigation, according to NWRB data. Alarming, this demand may increase very rapidly. According to a report by environmental watchdog Greenpeace, only about 47 percent of the agricultural land that could be irrigated is covered by irrigation systems. With expanding irrigation a key part of the Duterte

administration's socioeconomic strategy, which suggests that a significant expansion of irrigated land area is on the horizon, demand for water can very quickly exceed the country's available supplies.

The shrinkage of annual water supplies is already starkly evident in the data, even without large-scale projects like expanded irrigation. In 2003, a study conducted by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) estimated that by 2025, only 1,970 cubic meters of fresh water per capita (per person per year) would be available, which would make it the

➤ Hotspot12

■ Unless water demand is slowed to match the rate the country's water resources are replenished, the Philippines will face serious water shortages, with dire consequences for the population, the economy, and the ecosystem. BY DJ DIOSINA



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second-lowest supply in Southeast Asia. As of right now, however, based on the latest available data on water resources and population, the water supply is already well below that estimate at just 1,457 cubic meters per capita, meaning that the water shortage crisis projected for the year 2025 may happen much sooner, and perhaps already is.

Areas of concern

Among the agencies working to mitigate the potential water crisis the Philippines faces, the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) has identified areas where water issues need the most attention. Disparities between supply and demand are a particular concern, with urban areas using more than they should, causing seasonal shortages not only for their own populations, but those in watershed areas as well. NEDA also cited what it called "a lack of a water allocation formula" as a major problem; laws and regulations on water allocation, use, and conservation are still largely based on the old principle of "first in time, priority in right," NEDA explained, which is no longer practical or fair.

Other problems highlighted by NEDA included the poor enforcement or weak regulations on water use, which is partly attributable to a lack of government resources to properly investigate and process water permit applications; inefficient water use, and waste due to poorly-maintained supply and drainage systems; excessive groundwater extraction due to unlicensed wells, which can cause ground subsidence and sea water intrusion into water tables in coastal areas; and fragmented management, with too many government agencies having conflicting or overlapping responsibilities for monitoring and managing water resources.

Industry efforts

Fortunately, many Philippine companies, particularly large users of water,

have in the past few years stepped up to the challenge to protect water resources for the future. Most recently, the Coca-Cola Company pledged P25 million for a five-year project in cooperation with the World Wildlife Fund to rehabilitate and conserve part of the Ipo watershed, an important source of Metro Manila's drinking water. In a statement, the company also highlighted its commitment to restoring 100 percent of the water it uses in producing its beverages back to the environment or affected communities by 2020.

Likewise, food conglomerate Nestlé Philippines received a Sustainable Business Award in 2014 for its water conservation efforts, which include the installation of wastewater treatment facilities in each of its manufacturing plants, and its Project WET (Water Education for Teachers), a curriculum activity-based training on water and related environmental concerns, and the Greening the Supply Chain Program.

The cement industry, one of the Philippines' key manufacturing sectors and an extremely heavy user of water – the Cement Manufacturers' Association of the Philippines (CeMAP) estimates the industry uses 3.2 billion liters (3.2 million cubic meters) of water per year – has since 2013 pursued an industry-wide initiative to capture and utilize rainwater for many of its production needs, potentially saving hundreds of thousands of cubic meters of water per year.

Many more examples of water conservation efforts among industries, environmental action groups, non-government organizations, and local communities abound, and the increasing concern and effort to ensure a sustainable future for our most critical resource is encouraging. But as experts from ADB, NEDA, and environmental groups such as Greenpeace and the WWF all agree, much more needs to be done, not only by business and government, but individuals as well if we are to avoid a serious water crisis in the years ahead.

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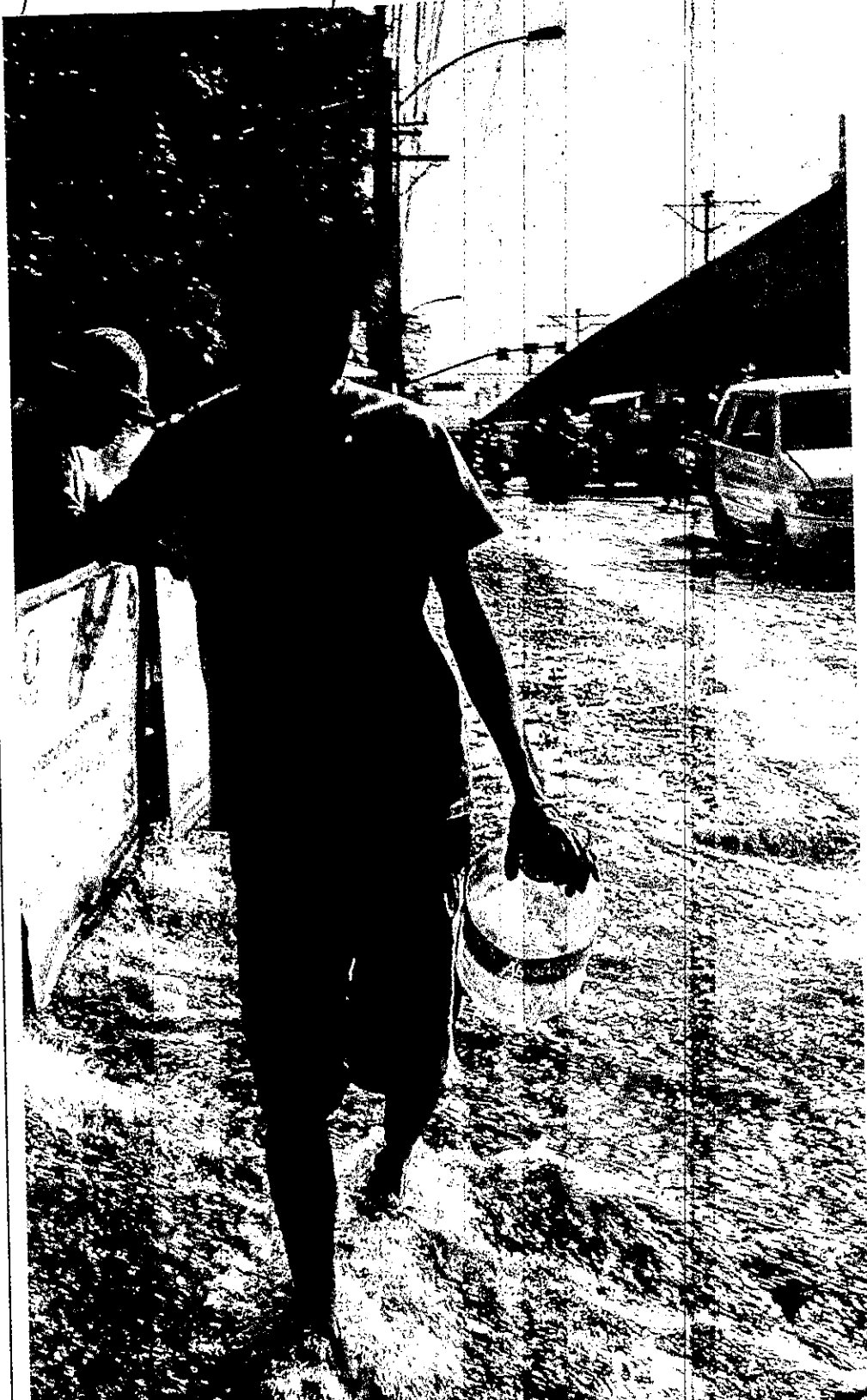
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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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PROTECTORS OF THE TERRACES — Farmers from Barangay Nagacadan in Klangan, Ifugao deposit the mud to protect the terraces from erosion. Many farmers in the province are now preparing their rice terraces for the planting season next month. (Zaldy C. Comanda)

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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'NO TO COAL' - Protesters march towards Mendiola, Manila as part of nationwide rallies against the use of existing and proposed coal projects in the country. The protest, organized by the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice, was held in line with the culmination of the two-day Global Day of Action Against Dirty and Harmful Energy. (Jansen Romero)

The picture 'Yolanda' provided

COMMENTARY

LAURENCE DELINA

Boston, Massachusetts—Next month we will mark the third anniversary of "Yolanda," the deadliest tropical typhoon in our nation's recorded history. As we revisit this memory, our preparations for better climate resiliency also need to be revisited, and adjusted as necessary. Climate vulnerabilities in terms of extreme weather, reduced water and food supply, droughts, and flooding will increase the disruptions and damage in the spaces we occupy. Understanding these risks and preparing for them have to be localized—in our households, communities, barangays, towns, cities and provinces.

Extreme weather events, such as stronger typhoons and longer droughts, will inevitably come with increasing frequency. While the Philippines is considered a climate hotspot, climate change will impact every locality in the country in various ways: Some will be exposed to repeated and worsening droughts, others to flooding or extreme heat.

At any rate, a disorganized, uncoordinated, and inefficient response during these weather events could shake our institutions and governance systems, and cost lives. Remember Yolanda in Eastern Visayas in 2013 and El Niño in Central Mindanao early this year.

Coastal flooding is where the vulnerabilities of our many communities are the

most critical. The Philippines being an archipelago, its critical infrastructure will be subjected to rising sea levels and more intense coastal storms in the coming decades. Take note that its major cities are on the coasts. The risks with the interior communities, meanwhile, will include more frequent and extreme droughts, high temperatures that could lead to heat waves, and increasing heavy downpours. These will put us and our livelihoods, food systems, infrastructure, and social order at higher risks.

The exposure of our critical infrastructure systems to these hazards further magnifies our vulnerabilities because our energy, transportation, telecommunication, and water systems are highly interdependent. An impact on one can quickly cascade onto other infrastructure systems during an extreme event.

Yolanda provided us with this picture: Energy supply was totally cut off. Electricity was not immediately restored. Food and fuel were in short supply. Roads and an airport were physically damaged. These made the provision of immediate care, restoration of electricity and roads, and relief work in hardest-hit areas extremely challenging.

The most important aspect of a climate-resilient Philippines, therefore, is understanding the varied risks relevant for each community, and cascading this understanding to municipality, city, provincial, and interprovincial levels. This requires Filipinos to know the risks of climate change as it impacts (or may impact) their own lives.

This exercise involves producing long-term risk assessments, scenario analyses, and forecasts of local climate risks that span the potential changes in local land use, population movements, and infrastructure brought about by climate-induced changes in our physical world. Giving premium to local knowledge helps in dealing with the many associated uncertainties of current and future climate risks. Interconnecting these understandings with our socioeconomic circumstances, and relating them to those produced by our neighboring communities, are also essential. Only until we have a locally generated understanding of these risks and seamlessly integrated local action plans can we bring ourselves closer to a climate-resilient Philippines.

Dr. Laurence Delina (ldelina@bu.edu), from South Cotabato, is a sustainability scientist at Boston University. His research is focused on climate change, energy security, and international development. He is the author of "Strategies for Rapid Climate Mitigation: war mobilisation as model for action?" (Routledge 2016).

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

editorial

Applause for Gina Lopez

WHEN the big miners expressed confidence that it would be easy for them to meet the conditions given by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for them to avoid getting padlocked, the soundness of Secretary Regina Paz L. Lopez's mining audit was proven on many fronts.

First, it showed that Lopez's demands for "responsible mining" were reasonable after all. According to Ronald Recidoro, vice president for Legal and Policy of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP), the one-page letters from the environment department to members detailing grounds for suspension often listed administrative matters, ranging from "small violations" of the mining act to insufficient tree-planting.

With this, OceanaGold President and CEO Mick Wilkes said: "I am highly confident that our Didipio operations will continue to operate without interruption." Nickel Asia President Gerard Brimo commented: "We remain confident that Hinatuan Mining Corp.'s operation will not be suspended." Now, perhaps using the principle of estoppel, the miners can no longer challenge Lopez's mining audit.

Second, these statements from the miners also proved that Lopez is not just out to stop all mining operations in the country—just the unscrupulous ones. So mining investors—if they really do not have foul intentions—have no reason to fear the country's top environment protector.

This is much just like President Duterte's "Oplan Tokhang," or even the now household initials EJK (extra-judicial killings). Law-abiding citizens that have no connection whatsoever with the illegal-drugs trade will not fear getting "slaughtered" by Mr. Duterte's alleged "death squad".

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Editorial

Applause for Gina Lopez

Related to this is the next important point in Lopez's campaign—the mining industry really needs to be purged of bad eggs, not by guns, but by a mining audit with stringent criteria. The COMP has been saying the operations of its members have complied with international certification standards; yet, about three-quarters of the mining sites fell short in the audit, with 20 mines facing suspension on top of the 10 already halted.

Fourth, and again related to this, López was proven right in saying there should be a better way of gauging the operations of miners, probably through the TEV, or the total economic valuation, scheme. "We will monetize the benefits from mining. Then we will monetize the destruction...land, water, [impact to] health," Lopez said. "If the cost outweighs the benefits, it follows that the project should be scrapped."

Of course, miners would say this is another form of changing the rules in the middle of the game. But again, if you're above-board on all fronts, why fear scrutiny in whatever manner.

Indeed, mining is not just about money, taxes, revenues, exports, salaries and progress. More important, it's about the lives of people in the host communities and the next generation of Filipinos that would inherit what would be left of the mined-out areas. For ensuring this does not escape the consciousness of all stakeholders, Lopez deserves a round of applause.

River dredging starts to ease Bulacan floods

BOCAUE, BULACAN—Work has started here to dredge the Bocaue River for the next six months to reduce flooding in Bulacan towns lying on natural catch basins of a major Central Luzon river system.

The project to clean the Bocaue River was launched on Saturday by Sen. Joel Villanueva, who lives in this town.

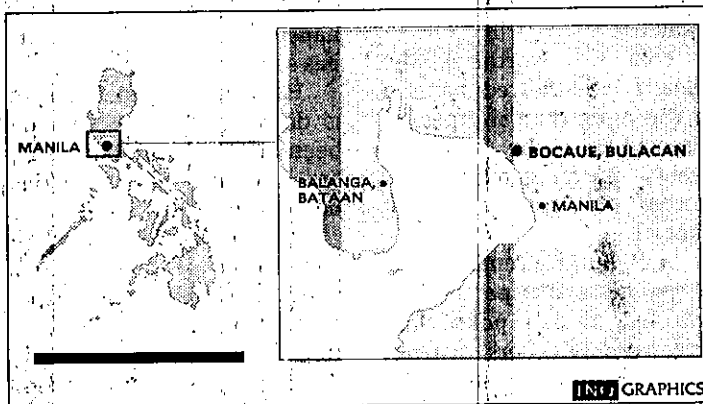
The silted Meycauayan-Marilao-Obando river system, which includes the Bocaue River, has caused the perennial flooding in Central Luzon region, especially in the Bulacan towns of Hagonoy and Calumpit.

On Villanueva's request, Public Works Secretary Mark Villar sent a dredging machine to Bocaue to dredge portions of the river.

Last month when Typhoon "Helen" struck, the stretch of the MacArthur Highway from Bocaue to the Meycauayan City was submerged under .91 meters (3 feet) of water, rendering it impassable to light vehicles and stranding commuters.

In low-lying villages, floods rose by 1.52 meters (5 feet) on Sept. 26 and 27, prompting the evacuation of nearly 2,000 residents.

Government studies showed that water from the Sierra Madre mountain ranges cascades down to San Jose del Monte City, then flows to Sta. Maria and Marilao towns and Meycauayan City, before it



The coastal areas in Central Luzon ... have suffered too long

Joel Villanueva
Senator

reaches Obando and Bulacan towns through the Bocaue River. The water then discharges into Manila Bay.

Because Bocaue River is heavily silted, water tends to rise and spill into communities for days during the monsoon season.

Antonio Molano, regional director of the Department of Public Works and Highways

(DPWH), informed Villanueva that the dredging machine could dig up as much as 16 meters (52.49 feet) of silt. It would continue dredging operations until March 2017.

Villanueva said the dredging project would be funded by his office, the DPWH and the town government of Bocaue.

"The coastal areas in Central Luzon, particularly those in Calumpit and Hagonoy, have suffered too long from floods which several administrations have failed to correct," he said.

Marilao and Meycauayan have been undertaking their own dredging programs, which would be coordinated with the cleanup of the Bocaue River, Molano said.

He said P116 million has been allocated in the proposed 2017 national budget for flood control projects in six villages of Bocaue. —CARMELA REYES-ESTROPE INQ

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ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

IN LAKE CLEANUP, SAN PABLO FOLK JOIN HANDS TO FIND LONG-TERM SOLUTION

By Maricar Cinco
@maricarcincoINQ

With the goal of protecting one of the natural wonders of San Pablo, City, in Laguna province, at least 400 residents and members of civic groups picked up their brooms and cleaned up the 3.7-kilometer circumference of Sampaloc Lake recently.

Fishermen and Philippine Army reservists, meanwhile, collected several tons of garbage, which were picked up by dump trucks in several trips. "The keyword here is unity," said Mandy Marino, one of the people who organized the community lake cleanup in San Pablo last month.

Marino rallied for support through social media, saying the initiative was the community's response to the local government's efforts to protect Sampaloc Lake.

San Pablo is home to seven interconnected lakes—Sampaloc, Palakpakin, Calibato, Bunot, Yambo, Pandin and Muhicap.

Sampaloc, located at the center of the city, is the largest and most popular. Tourists are drawn to a view that has Mt. Cristobal in the background. Locals rent out bicycles, while several stalls offer food and catering to joggers and families out on weekend picnics.

'Threatened'

In 2014, the Germany-based Global Nature Fund (GNF) cited San Pablo's lakes as "threatened" for the year, the first time an international organization cited a water body in the Philippines for environmental deterioration. The GNF said threats from illegal settlers were compounded by the proliferation of tilapia cages which, as of 2012, have already

eaten up 40 percent of the lake surface, exceeding the 10 percent allowable space for fish structures.

Illegal settlers

Marino, 78, claimed the GNF findings are inaccurate and dismissed these as a "hoax." He said space occupied by fish cages was just 10 percent of surface water and the number of illegal settlers, which peaked at 400 families decades ago, had gone down to an estimated 80 families in 2014.

Among the 20 organizations that joined the cleanup were a city-based group called "Friends of Rody Duterte" and Yakap sa Lawa, headed by Msgr. Jerry Bitoon.

"We are looking at not only short-term solutions," said Bitoon, director of the ministry on ecology of the Diocese of San Pablo. INQ

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SEA ROW WITH CHINA

PRESIDENT SAYS PH CAN'T WIN IN SCARBOROUGH SHOAL

By Gil Cabacungan
@gcabacunganINQ

President Duterte has a "good feeling" that the Philippines will be "OK" with China as long as the Filipinos do not make the Chinese froth at the mouth by claiming Scarborough Shoal.

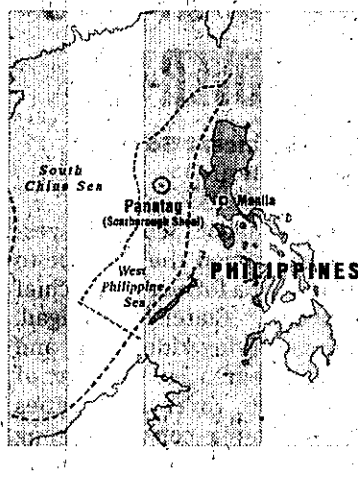
"We cannot win that," he said in a speech to residents of Lamitan, Basilan province, on Monday, referring to the traditional fishing ground known to Filipinos as Panatag Shoal that China seized from the Philippines after a two-month maritime standoff in 2012.

Without military muscle to fight for Panatag, the Philippines sued China in the UN-backed Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, asking the court to invalidate Beijing's claim to nearly all of the South China Sea and demanding Manila's right to fish and explore for resources in waters within its 370-kilometer exclusive economic zone (EEZ) be respected.

Jet ski to Spratlys

On April 8, presidential candidate Rodrigo Duterte told a news conference in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan province, that, if elected, he would protect Philippine territory and he was willing to be blasted into pieces for it.

"I will ask the Navy to deliver me to the nearest area tolerable to them and I will ride a jet ski and carry a pole and a flag. When I reach the Spratlys I will erect the Philippine flag," he said.



"You want to shoot me with your missile, fine," he added, referring to the Chinese.

He repeated his pledge during a presidential debate organized by ABS-CBN on April 24.

On July 12, the Hague court ruled in favor of the Philippines, saying China's claims in the South China Sea had no legal basis and that Beijing had violated Manila's sovereignty by preventing it from fishing and exploring for resources in waters within its EEZ.

Panatag is for all

The court, however, ruled that Panatag Shoal, which does not generate an EEZ, is a common fishing ground—meaning all the claimants can fish there.

But China rejected the ruling. It has cordoned off Panatag and drives Filipino fishermen

from Oct. 19 to 21 to begin mending ties between the two countries that have been frayed by the dispute, said a key strategy of his China initiative was not to make an issue of the tribunal's ruling.

"I have a good feeling that we will be OK with them. But first let's not touch the Scarborough Shoal issue because we cannot win that," he said.

"Even if we get angry, we'll just be putting on airs. We can't beat [China]. We'll ask them to allow our fishermen to [return] to their traditional fishing ground in Scarborough," he said.

Mr. Duterte said he had already agreed to "this concession" in return for China's relaxing its quarantine restrictions on banana and pineapple exports from the Philippines.

Help for Basilan

He promised the people of Basilan his administration would make up for the government's neglect of the war-torn island if he got a windfall from his China visit.

"I have a good feeling they (China) really want to help us in a big way. If I get something big, I promise you I will build hospitals and schools from the soft-term loans we will get (from China). If there is anything left, I will use it to help you build a power plant," he told the residents of Lamitan.

He said the power plant, which would be powered by sea waves, would be a catalyst for change in the lives of the people of Basilan.

Mr. Duterte gave P10 million in seed money for livelihood projects of coconut farmers in Lamitan and Isabel towns whose farms had been ravaged by cocolisap.

He also handed out 70 motorized, fiber glass fishing

Daily Tribune

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SMB's regreening program kicks off in Angeles City

More than 10,000 seedlings of hardwood, mangrove and fruit-bearing tree species were planted in select areas nationwide as part of San Miguel Brewery, Inc.'s (SMB) long-running Trees Brew Life program.

The program, a re-greening and volunteerism initiative the company has been running for the past seven years, kicked off recently in Sapang Bato, Angeles City.

Since then, "Trees Brew Life" tree-planting activities have also been conducted in Makati, Cebu, and Tarlac every Saturday of the month.

Through the regreening program, the beer market leader said it hopes to contribute to the preservation and rehabilitation of the country's forest cover and mangrove areas; protection of water sources and the propagation of seedlings for future re-greening activities.

"Dwindling forest covers, scarcity of water resources and climate change are pressing concerns for future generations," SMB chairman Ramon Ang said.

"With every seedling we plant, we hope to help address these issues and contribute to the government's greening program.

We also hope to encourage other stakeholders to continue supporting this cause and pursue sustainable environmental initiatives," he added.

Similar activities will also be mounted in Brgy. Estefania in Bacolod City, Brgy. Matina Pangi in Davao City, the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Nasyon ng Kabataan Compound in Mandaluyong City, and the Nuvali Evolving ecopark in Santa Rosa City, Laguna.

SMB is also actively involved in programs that promote education, health and basic services, and livelihood.

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SMB's regreening program kick off
in Angeles City



SMB brew trees San Miguel Brewery Inc. president Roberto N. Huang (right), together with employee volunteers, led the planting of 10,000 tree seedlings nationwide as part of the company's "Trees Brew Life" regreening initiative, which is now on its seventh year. The program is aimed at helping protect the country's forest cover, mangrove areas, and water sources.

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GO ORGANIC
for Zero Waste and
Toxic-Free Philippines
Eco Waste Coalition

TURAL. Quezon City Vice Mayor Joy Belmonte (right) leads Ecowaste Coalition's celebration of Green Action Week to promote organic farming and gardening in settings to mitigate hunger and malnutrition and create greener and zero waste communities. Manny Palmero

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

SMB plants 10,000 seedlings in select areas nationwide



SAN Miguel Brewery Inc. President Roberto N. Huang (right), together with employee volunteers, leads the planting of 10,000 tree seedlings nationwide as part of the company's "Trees Brew Life" greening initiative, which is now on its seventh year. The program is aimed at helping protect the country's forest cover, mangrove areas and water sources.

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