

DATE : 09 JUL 2019

DAY : Tuesday

DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service

Cloud seeding to increase Angat Dam level

By HELEN FLORES

Despite rains from the southwest monsoon and thunderstorms, cloud seeding operations will continue over Angat Dam in Bulacan to help increase the water supply at the reservoir, an official of the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) said yesterday.

As of 6 a.m. yesterday, water level at Angat Dam – the main source of water of Metro Manila residents – was at 161.01 meters, just a meter above its critical level of 160 meters.

“The MWSS (Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System)’s and BSWM’s (Bu-

reau of Soil and Water Management) cloud seeding operation is still ongoing, considering the level of Angat Dam is only at 161.01 (meters) today,” NWRB executive director Sevillo David said in a text message to **The STAR**.

“We believe cloud seeding operations can still be conducted as a strategy to increase the level in Angat,” he said.

“Everything is on standby including the plane, equipment and staff. Once the opportunity arises in terms of presence of seedable clouds, then the team will be dispatched immediately to do the cloud seeding operations,” he added.

David said the NWRB will keep the daily water allocation for Metro Manila concessionaires at 36 cubic meters per second for the whole of July even if the water level at Angat slightly increased in the past days.

“In the current situation of 161.01 meter level, we are looking at the minimum operating level of around 180 meters to bring the allocation to its normal amount of 46 cubic meters per second,” he said.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said Angat is likely to recover by mid-July.



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
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Warm, humid week ahead

By **ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ**

Warm and humid mornings with chances of short-duration rainfall in the afternoon or evening will persist in the country throughout the week.

Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) weather specialist Ezra Bulquerin said a weak southwest monsoon or habagat will prevail over the entire country in the coming days.

Warm weather condition in the morning with some short-lived rains in the afternoon or evening is expected in Metro Manila and the rest of the country, Bulquerin said.

He added that PAGASA does not see the formation of a low pressure area or tropical cyclone that may affect the country in the next three to five days.

The weather bureau warned that sudden rains due to severe thunderstorm activity may cause flash floods

or landslides in low-lying or mountainous areas.

Due to the scarcity of rainfall brought about by a weak habagat in the past few days, Angat Dam has again consistently dwindled close to the 160-meter critical level for domestic water supply.

Based on PAGASA's monitoring, the Angat Dam's level was down to 161.01 meters on Monday morning, from 161.22 meters last Sunday.

It is still above Angat Dam's 160-meter critical level but remains way below its 180-meter minimum operating level and 210-meter normal high water level.

The National Water Resources Board is expecting the water supply to normalize during the peak of southwest monsoon or habagat season between July and September but the public is still encouraged to continue conserving water to help in the Angat reservoir's water level recovery.

Unusual daily Pagasa reporting on Angat Dam



Cecilio T. Arillo DATABASE

FIVE presidents in more than 33 years, with the exemption of President Duterte who has yet to finish his term in 2022, merely resorted to buck-passing, finger-pointing or down-right negligence instead of providing a concrete and lasting solution to the Angat Dam water complex intended to provide Metro Manila with unhampered potable water supply 24 hours a day.

Worse, the dam is now treated as if it's just a typical weather problem, with the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) dishing out daily news on the dam's water level.

On second thought, though, could it be that Pagasa's unusual interest in the dam is just a coverup for unscrupulous people with administrative and criminal liability for the man-made destruction of the dam's original 67,000 hectares of virgin forest that had been subjected to unabated logging and turned the dam into an enormous wetland?

Unknown to many, the dam's size, depth and breadth is just 3 hectares less than the size of Metro Manila's 64,000 hectares.

From President Corazon Aquino to Presidents Ramos, Estrada, Macapagal-Arroyo and Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, unabated logging continued and the dam's original 217-meter water level, before Pagasa surprisingly came into the picture, was reported at 85 meters lower and thus deprived Metro Manilans the equivalent of 132 meters deep of reserved water.

According to reports, the Angat Hydropower Electric Power

Plant (AHEPP), which is running the plant, is a local corporation co-owned by K-Water (40 percent) with local conglomerate San Miguel Corp. (SMC) Global Power, through its subsidiary Powerone Ventures Energy Inc. for the remaining 60 percent, after a 2014 PSALM deal during President Noynoy Aquino's term.

Under the operations and management agreement between the National Power Corp. and the K-Water, the AHEPP is committed to conduct mandatory rehabilitation projects that would include, among others, strengthening the Angat Dam and dikes.

Originally, the dam aqueduct was supposed to flow 22 cms (cubic meters per second) of clean water from Angat to La Mesa Dam and thus supply the water requirements of Metro Manila and the adjacent provinces of Bulacan, Pampanga and Nueva Ecija.

What remains of the 67,000 hectares is now only about 25,000 hectares and the reservoir with 85 meters deep, according to reports reaching the National Association of Lawyers for Justice and Peace (NALJP) and the Confederation of Government Employees Organization (COGEO),

headed by Atty. Jesus I. Santos, who consistently championed the dam's preservation.

Santos never got a coherent answer after he wrote Secretary Roy Cimatu of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, bringing to his attention the problem of water shortage, the unabated logging in the Angat Dam watershed and the continued siltation of the water reservoir.

Santos, in his letter to Cimatu, cited the destructive logging in the Angat watershed and the death and destruction due to flooding.

Angat Dam watershed was then a virgin forest and its man-made destruction effectively started when the administration of President Corazon Aquino promulgated on July 16, 1987 Executive Order 224, empowering the National Power Corp. (NPC) to cut trees in the Angat reservation.

Because of the massive denudation, the dam is now seriously silted due to landslides and rampaging volumes of deadly floodwater and debris from the watershed.

In one incident in 1978, floodwaters cascaded down from the watershed, flooding large parts of Bulacan, Pampanga and Nueva Ecija, killing more than 300 people and destroying houses, poultrys, piggeries and other valuables.

On February 22, 2018, fearing that a deadly disaster might happen again, NALJP and the COGEO wrote the DENR to call a meeting regarding the continuous illegal logging in the watershed. The DENR granted this meeting and the governor of Bulacan and the PNP area commander attended.

Surprisingly, the DENR during the meeting informed the group that there was a permit granted by the government to cut 26,000 trees but the DENR reduced it to 3,000 trees only based on a press release dated



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Unusual daily Pagasa reporting on Angat Dam

June 19, 2017.

The NALJP and COGEO asked the DENR local director as to what actions were taken on the following:

“The tree-cutting projects granted to Angat Hydropower Corporation and Dyke Rehabilitation Projects which was contained in a letter dated April 27, 2017, as per letter of the Regional Director dated July 7, 2017.

“What happened to the 3,000 cut trees delivered to the compound of the controversial Hanjin Corporation? According to Director Francisco Milla, of DENR’s Region 3, the trees could only be taken out from the Hanjin compound with his consent.”

What really surprised Santos and local officials is that instead of the national government stopping the denudation of the Angat watershed, it was, in fact, the one abetting the destruction of the watershed.

The Angat Dam was constructed in November 1961 and was completed in July 1967 with a 16-megawatt auxiliary generator and a 200-MW main generator to supply the power requirements of Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon.

The dam then was also designed to irrigate 23,000 hectares during the wet season and 27,000 hectares during the dry season in 20 towns in Bulacan and Pampanga when the sluice gates were opened.

As the current rainy season progresses, only a presidential action can save the continued destruction of the watershed by ordering those concerned to deepen the dam to its original level and reforest its watershed, instead of ordering to log it, so that the free flow of potable water to Metro Manila is restored.

Not only that. President Duterte should also investigate and punish the people involved in the massive destruction of the dam.

To reach the writer, e-mail cecilio.arillo@gmail.com.



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Weak 'habagat' prevails

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ECC for P734-B airport project OKd

With the ECC, Silvertides Holdings can now proceed in developing a 2,070-hectare area in the coastal Barangays of Bambang and Taliptio in Bulacan town

By Maricris Guerrero

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has issued an environmental compliance certificate (ECC) to a private company that will pave the way for the construction of a P734-billion international airport in Bulacan province.

Lormelyn Claudio, director of DENR-Central Luzon, approved the ECC applied by Silvertides Holdings, on 14 June – clearing the way of any negative environmental impact of the massive infrastructure project.

An ECC is issued to certify that a proposed project will not cause significant negative environmental impact, as validated by DENR's environmental impact assessment review committee.

With the ECC, Silvertides Holdings, a contractor of San Miguel Corp. (SMC), can now proceed in developing a 2,070-hectare area in the coastal Barangays of Bambang and Taliptio in Bulacan town.

Claudio, however, stressed that under the ECC, Silvertides Holdings is required to strictly observe preventive measures as presented during the environmental impact assessment.

According to Claudio, the company is tasked to properly manage and dispose of the debris and spoils of the construction to prevent any harmful effect.

Philkairos Inc., which conducted the environmental impact assessment, also recommended the building of drainage canals during land development to prevent flooding as the site is situated on a low ground.

Earlier, SMC announced it was readying construction teams for its proposed international air gateway in Bulacan.

The project was branded as the company's answer to the worsening air traffic congestion at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.



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DENR gumastos ng P10-M dahil sa delayed project implementation - COA

PINUNA ng Commission on Audit (COA) ang mabagal na implementasyon ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sa dalawang proyekto na pinondohan ng ibang bansa.

Batay sa annual report ng COA; nabatid na gumastos ng P10.7-milyon ang gobyerno bilang commitment fee ng proyektong Forestland Management Project (FMP) na naabot lang ang 76-percent accomplishment rate.

Ang naabot na completion ng proyekto ay taliwas sa ipinangako ng pamahalaan sa Japan International Cooperation Agency na nagpondo nito.

Samantala, nasa 38-percent lang ang natapos para sa proyektong Integrated Natural Resources and Environmental Management Project (Inremp) na funded na Asian Development Bank.

Dahil dito, inirekomenda ng COA sa DENR na pagsabihan ang hanay ng Foreign-Assisted and Special Projects Services hinggil sa pagre-review ng kanilang mga hawak ng proyekto.



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Magalong wants Baguio City to be a 'mining-free zone'

By **ZALDY COMANDA**

BAGUIO CITY - If Mayor Benjamin Magalong will have his way, he wants this city to become a "mining-free zone" so that it could preserve and protect the Summer Capital's environment, which was one of his administration's core priorities.

City Information Office staff Gaby KeCity Information Office staff Gaby Keith, said Magalong relayed Magalong's intentions after the executive-legislative meeting at city hall, which was the new mayor's first since assuming the chief executive post.

Also present were re-elected Rep.

Mark Go, newly- and re-elected councilors, department heads, police, jail and fire personnel and other guests.

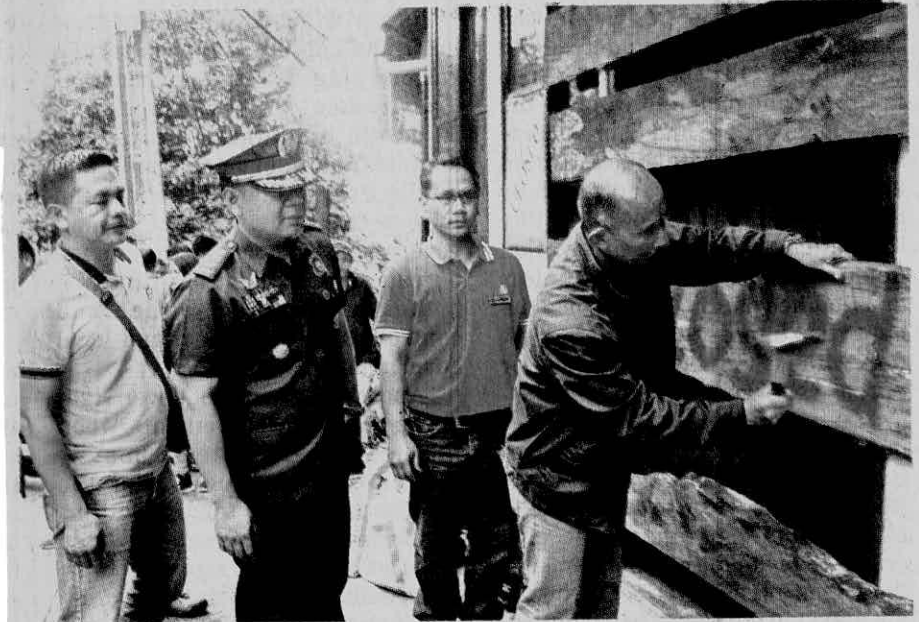
He said Magalong also requested the support of the councilors in possibly passing legislation that would prohibit any mining activities in the Summer Capital since, he claimed, that these contribute to the degradation of the city's environment.

The meeting also included comprehensive powerpoint presentations by the Local Finance Committee on the financial

status of the city, by the City Planning and Development Office on development plans and the City Buildings and Architecture Office and the City Engineering Office on infrastructure works.

He stressed that the weekly joint meeting aims to foster transparent relationship between the executive and legislative departments of the city government.

Magalong also ordered city officials to convert the decommissioned Irisan dumpsite into an ecological park.



ON THE JOB - Baguio City Mayor Benjamin Magalong personally nails down a wooden plank across the entrance of a business establishment along Upper Session in Baguio City, which was the subject of various complaints like having no building and occupancy permits. (Zaldy Comanda)



QC told: Get P316-M

'green fund'

COA calls on city gov't to demand from retailers

plastic bag taxes collected since mid-2012



PLASTIC FEE Retailers charge customers P2 per bag. —PDI FILE PHOTO

By Jhesset O. Enano
@JhessetEnanoINQ

The Commission on Audit (COA) has called on the Quezon City government to collect from retailers about P316.5 million worth of plastic bag taxes that the agency said were public funds.

In its report, COA found out that since the implementation of the plastic bag tax in the second half of 2012, only P24.8 million out of the P341.4 million collected—or a mere 7.27 percent—was actually spent for various environmental projects, leaving a balance that remained with business establishments across the city.

In 2012, the Quezon City government implemented Ordinance No. SP-2140, or the Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance which instituted the Plastic Recovery System Fee (PRSF) that earmarked a "green fund," supposedly for pro-

environment programs in the city. This provision was echoed in City Ordinance No. SP-2350, or the Quezon City Environment Code that was implemented in 2014.

Under the PRSF, supermarkets, department stores, grocery stores, fast-food chains and pharmacies charged P2 per plastic bag sold to customers.

Public fund

But in January, a COA Commission Proper (CP) ruled that the green fund was a public fund that must be subjected to audit by the agency and city officials.

"It concurred in the recommendation of the Legal Affairs Office, Legal Service Sector that the imposition of the Plastic Recovery System Fee is in the nature of a regulatory fee," the CP said.

"The green fund, having been acquired through police power of the city government, is a public

fund subject to COA's audit jurisdiction," it added.

In its reply, the Quezon City government said the proposed amendments to the city ordinance about the remittance of the remaining fund would be subjected to deliberations by a technical working group overseeing its enforcement.

However, COA said that it was still waiting for demand letters to be issued to retailers.

It also recommended that the local government include a provision in the amended ordinance that would require retailers to remit their collections on a regular basis to the city treasurer's office.

One of the proposed amendments was that the city government should implement the environmental projects from the collected tax, not the retailers, as it was mandated to protect the environment. INQ



CoA: Remit, use Green Fund now

QC pressed on unused fees

LGU, not retailers, should hold environmental budget

By Hananeel Bordey

The Commission on Audit (CoA) has pressed the Quezon City government to collect P341,428,658 in so-called Green Fund from retailers who levy customers the fee for not bringing with them reusable bags.

The Green Fund created by a QC ordinance (SP-2350, S.2014) was declared by the CoA in December 2018 as a public fund subject to CoA examination to ensure their proper utilization.

Malls, supermarkets and department stores, as well as similar establishments, collect the amounting to two pesos Plastic Recovery System Fee to encourage the public to bring along reusable bags when shopping.

The fees collected are held by the retailers to support environmental initiatives of the city government. However, CoA noted the marginal utilization of the fund which as of end 2018 stood at P341 million.

Unused

Of the said amount, P24,830,307.52 was spent by the retailers for various environmental projects, leaving a balance of P316,598,350.48.

For 2012, 2013 and 2015, the Green Fund collected was not used for any environmental projects of the local government in Quezon City.

In 2018, P17,508,174.72 was spent, the highest expenditure

for the green programs of the city.

CoA pushed the local government of Quezon City to order the immediate remittance of the remaining Green Fund maintained by retailers, with the city government proposing to amend the ordinance that created it.

TWG created

The proposed amendments will undergo deliberations in a technical working group (TWG) which will review the implementation and enforcement of the ordinance.

In a rejoinder, CoA said that state auditors are still waiting for the demand letters issued to the retailers for the immediate remittance of the Green Fund.

CoA recommended the amendment of section 14 (1) of the city ordinance to increase the penalties on retailers not remitting the fund to the local government's coffers.

The ordinance imposed a P1,000 fine for the first offense of non-remittance, P3,000 for the second offense and P5,000 and cancelation of the business permit for the third offense.

The audit body wanted a definite schedule of remittance, either monthly or quarterly, to be recorded under the General Fund, under the Trust and Liabilities Account.

CoA also asked the local government unit to be decisive in using the fund to ensure the welfare of its constituents.



Plastic sachets na basura, umaapaw na

NANG bumaha noong nakaraang linggo sa ilang lugar sa Maynila at Quezon City, nakita kung gaano karaming plastic na basura ang umapaw sa kalsada. Nang humupa ang baha, namulaklak ang sangkaterbang plastic sachets sa kalsada ganundin ang mga supot na plastic na halatang ginamit ng vendors.

Karaniwang sachets ng shampoo, hair conditioner, 3 in 1 coffee, catsup, toothpaste at kasama rin ang mga plastic straws na ginagamit sa softdrinks, milktea at iba pa ang makikitang iniwan ng baha. Namulaklak din ang sachets sa mga estero at canal. Ang mga ito ang nagpapabara sa mga drainage at nagiging dahilan ng pagbaha. Kung hindi lilinis ang drainages, hindi masosolusyunan ang pagbaha dahil hindi naman nabubulok ang plastic sachets. Kahit abutin ng 10 taon hindi mabubulok o masisira ang mga plastic sachets. Mas matibay ang mga sachets kaysa sa karaniwang plastic bag. Mas makuat ang pagka-plastic ng sachets.

Nagbabala ang coalition ng environmental groups na kung hindi gagawa ng paraan ang pamahalaan para mabawasan ang paggamit ng single use plastic, aapaw ang may 59.7 bilyong sachets sa Metro Manila. Malulunod ang mga residente sa basurang plastic sachets at iba pang basurang hindi natutunaw. Kailangan na umano ang isang batas para rito at hindi na dapat ipagwalambahala ang problemang ito.

Hindi lamang pagbaha ang dulot ng mga basurang plastic kundi banta rin sa buhay ng mga laman-dagat. Dahil sa maling pagtatapon ng basurang plastic, humahantong sa dagat ang mga ito at nakakain ng mga isda kabilang ang balyena. Marami nang balyena na sumadsad sa dalampasigan at namatay. Nang suriin kung ano ang ikinamatay ng mga ito, napag-alaman na dahil sa mga nakaing plastic na basura. Iba't ibang uri ng plastic ang nakuha sa bituka ng mga kawawang balyena.

Noong nakaraang Marso, isang balyena ang nanghihinang sumadsad sa dalampasigan ng Mabini, Compostela Valley, Kinabukasan, patay na ang balyena. Sinuri ng marine biologist na si Darrel Blatchley ang tiyan ng balyena at na-shock siya sa nakita. Tumambad ang 16 na empty bags ng bigas, 4 na banana plantation style bags at mga plastic shopping bag.

Batas ang kailangan para makontrol ang paggamit ng plastic. Ito sana ang gawin ng mga bagong halal na mambabatas sa kasalukuyan. Hindi dapat ipagwalambahala ang problemang ito.



HELP 'UNTRASH' OUR PLANET

INSTEAD of using sophisticated ways to destroy waste, industry and retailers must stop making products and using packaging that have to be buried or burned, in order to "untrash" the planet.

This was stressed by Dr. Paul Connett, a retired British professor on environmental chemistry and toxicology, as he urged the people to give chance to "Zero Waste" solution in addressing the waste crisis plaguing the entire planet, the Philippines included.

Connett, a long-time advocate for the Zero Waste solution, is in the country for the five-day advocacy tour organized by the No Burn Pilipinas. The last leg of Connett's advocacy tour was the event called skillshare which was organized by the EcoWaste Coalition for its over 120 members and partners.

Connett emphasized the need for key sectors to assume responsibility to reach the goal of changing our throw-away society.

"Our task is to not to

find more and more sophisticated ways to destroy material resources but to persuade industry and retailers to stop making products and using packaging that have to be buried or burned. Instead of destroyed resources, let us give Zero Waste solution the chance to untrash our planet," he said.

He added that Zero Waste is possible and that many cities and towns around the world are pooling their creative minds and energies to prevent the generation and destruction of dis-

cards.

Connett's advocacy tour brought him to the bustling cities of Cebu, Davao, Baguio and Quezon to talk about the pitfalls of incinerating waste and the benefits of moving toward the Zero Waste direction.

Connett warned the national and local government authorities against watering down the country's ban on waste incineration that is enshrined in two major environmental laws, RA 8749 or the Clean Air Act and RA 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act through the so-called waste-to-energy schemes.

"Burning waste materials in waste-to-energy incinerators or cement kilns will not rid our planet of garbage. Even if incinerators or cement kilns burning waste are made safe, we would never make them sensible. The waste problem will not be solved with better technology, but with better organization, education, and better industrial design," he pointed out.

Cory Martinez

GOLD STEVIE AWARDS. Maynilad wins a Gold Stevie for its "Green Badge: Uniform Upcycling Program" at the 2019 Asia-Pacific Stevie Awards held recently at the InterContinental Hotel in Singapore. Accepting the award is Maynilad's Advocacy and Marketing team (from left) Mayna Salindong, Rosmon Tuazen, Abigail Ho-Torres and Arriane Gamotin. Green Badge is a corporate social responsibility (CSR) program, which involves engaging an urban poor community to repurpose old company uniforms into new items that Maynilad donates to charity and relief operations. The Asia-Pacific Stevie Awards are the only business awards program to recognize achievement in workplace innovations in 29 nations of the Asia-Pacific region.





The new Pasig, Manila and QC mayors

“Corrupt policemen operating in Pasig City have been reported to extort money from motorists caught unwittingly violating the ‘odd-even’ restriction.”

The new mayors of Pasig City, Manila and Quezon City, are in the news.

Vico Sotto, the young and charismatic new Pasig City Mayor has lived up to his campaign promise to do away with the unfair, arbitrary “odd-even” vehicle use restriction policy dictated on the people of Pasig by his predecessor, Mayor Robert Eusebio. Last 1 July, Sotto suspended the unpopular “odd-even” scheme in his first executive order as the new city mayor.

Approved by the Pasig City Council in 2016, the “odd-even” rule, euphemistically called by Eusebio’s stooges in the city council as the “modified vehicular volume reduction scheme,” prohibits four-wheeled motor vehicles from using certain streets of the city on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, or on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, depending on the last digit of a vehicle’s license plates.

Sotto was the solitary city councilor who voted against the “odd-even” restriction. One of his campaign pledges in the last election is the abolition of the restriction.

Motorists traversing the Pasig City roads complained that the “odd-even” scheme conflicted with the number coding restriction currently being enforced by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority. It created an undue restriction on motorists who needed to use the city’s roads to get to destinations other than Pasig City.

Corrupt policemen operating in Pasig City have been reported to extort money from motorists caught unwittingly violating the “odd-even” restriction. Motorists also lament that



THE SCRUTINIZER
Victor Avecilla

city officials and favored employees are exempted from the “odd-even” restriction.

The Eusebio political dynasty, which controlled the city for 27 years, lost its 27-year control of the city upon being defeated in the May 2019 election.

After suspending the “odd-even” scheme, Sotto happily announced that “Everyone is now welcome in Pasig.”

Over in the City of Manila, Francisco “Isko Moreno” Domagoso announced that the 2.1-hectare Arroceros Forest Park along the south bank of the Pasig River, a stone’s throw away from city hall, will be preserved for public enjoyment. Environmentalists call the forest park “as the last lung of the city.”

Past city mayors wanted to demolish the forest park and replace it with a city building. Analysts say that corrupt politicians often resort to construction projects to profit from them.

During his time, Mayor Joselito Atienza tore down 200 trees, or approximately one-third of the population of trees in the forest park, to make way for a building. The park’s thick canopy of shade trees was obliterated almost overnight.

Mayor Atienza also ordered the demolition of the iconic and historic Jai-Alai Building along Taft Avenue near Rizal Park. The building was a showcase of art-deco architecture pre-war Manila was known for. A high-rise building now stands on the site.

Domagoso’s decision to preserve the Arroceros Forest Park distinguishes himself from his predecessors.

Over in Quezon City, the new mayor, Joy Belmonte, looks forward to a wonderful time at city hall. She is a member of the Belmonte political dynasty which held power in the city since 2001.

Last week, the news media reported that Belmonte will have at her disposal P26.27-billion in the city’s treasury. That’s a lot of money. In fact, it’s the biggest treasury fund among the cities of Metropolitan Manila.

Despite all that money in the treasury, Quezon City residents are asking why the Quezon City government still increased real estate taxes by a whopping 5 times more than the current rate. The city intends to collect the higher real estate taxes before year’s end.

“Domagoso’s decision to preserve the Arroceros Forest Park distinguishes himself from his predecessors.”

Actually, the higher real estate taxes were supposed to be collected earlier this year but Mayor Herbert Bautista suspended the collection in the meantime. Collecting the higher real estate taxes in the months prior to the May 2019 election would have created bad political publicity for Belmonte, who was the Bautista’s anointed successor.

Belmonte cannot deny her role in the increase in real estate taxes. As the vice mayor, she was the presiding officer of the Quezon City Council which ordained the higher real estate taxes.

Despite the city government’s overflowing treasury chest, will Belmonte do a Bautista by selling more of the city’s valuable real estate to private real estate developers? This column will be monitoring developments at city hall.



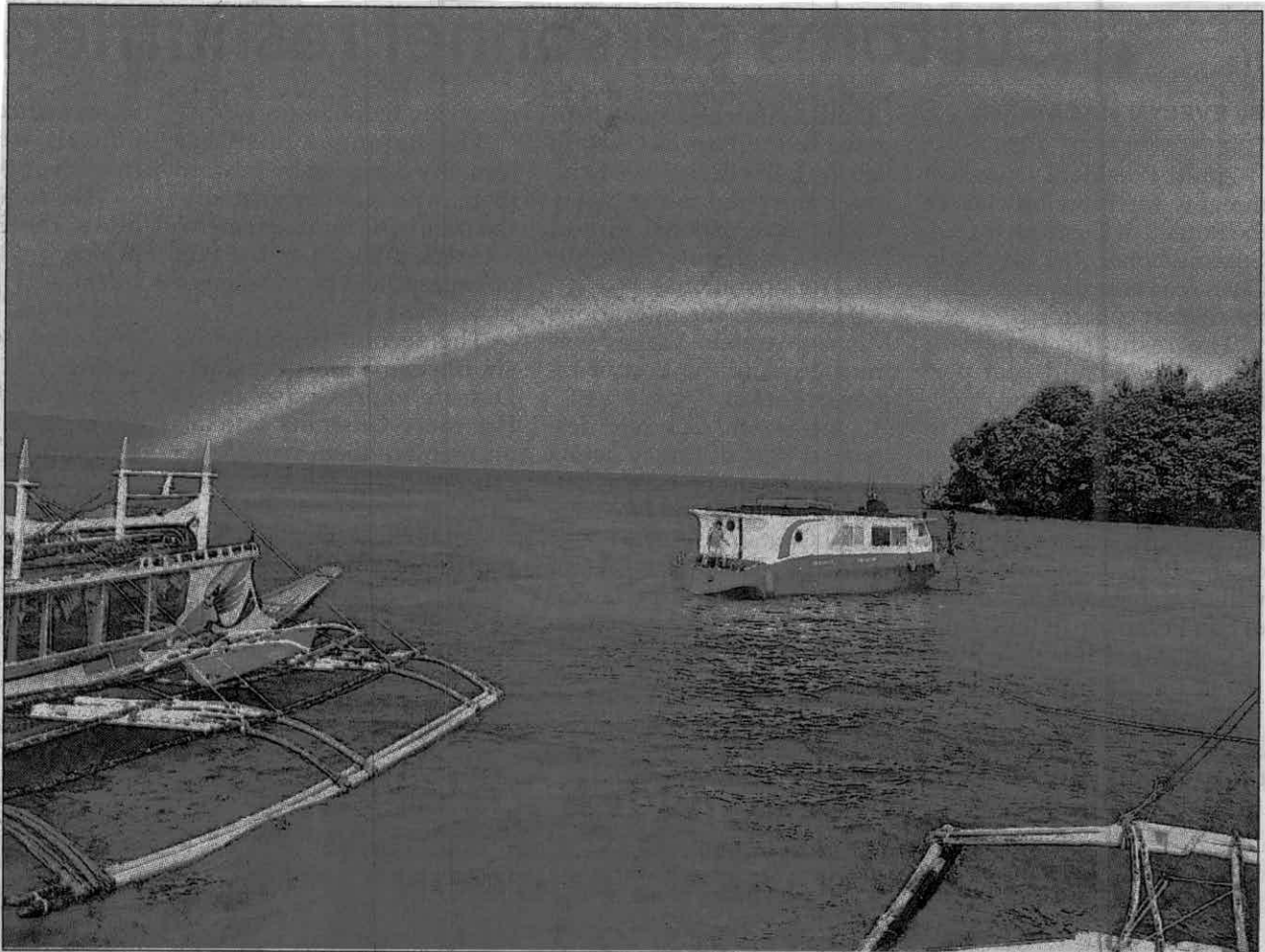
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A double rainbow greets visitors arriving in Boracay yesterday. Double rainbows are formed when sunlight is reflected twice within a raindrop with the sequence of colors being inverted compared to the primary rainbow. **BERNARDO BATUIGAS**



SC resumes oral arguments on WPS environment damage suit

BY ASHZEL HACHERO

THE Supreme Court will resume oral arguments today on the petition for a writ of Kalikasan that will compel the Philippine government to preserve and safeguard the environment in the West Philippine Sea.

The SC Public Information Office said the oral arguments will resume at 2 p.m. on Tuesday.

Fisher folks from Palawan and Zambales have asked the Supreme Court to hold numerous government officials liable for not taking necessary legal actions as mandated by Philippine laws such as the Philippine Fisheries Code to "stop, prevent and prosecute the perpetrators of illegal acts" in the WPS.

Named respondents are Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Pinol, Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra, BFAR Director Eduardo Gongona, Philippine Navy Chief Vice Admiral Robert Empegrad, Coast Guard Commandant Elson Hermogino, PNP chief Director General Oscar Albayalde, and PNP-Maritime Group Director Rodelio Jocson.

Petitioners said the extent of environmental damage in the Panatag and Ayungin Shoals and the Panganiban Reef - the main focus of their petition - is documented in reports by various government agencies, including the BFAR.

They insist that respondents should ensure that Philippine

environmental laws are strictly followed in the Panatag and Ayungin Shoals and in the Panganiban Reef to conserve and manage the natural resources, preserve the marine environment, and prevent and control pollution in the country's exclusive economic zone.

During oral arguments on the petition last week, several justices led by Francis Jardeleza and Diosdado Peralta questioned the lack of cause of action of the petitioners.

A cause of action is the core of any complaint that initiates a lawsuit. Without an adequately stated cause of action, the case can be dismissed even at the outset. It is not sufficient to merely state that certain events took place that entitle petitioners relief from the court.

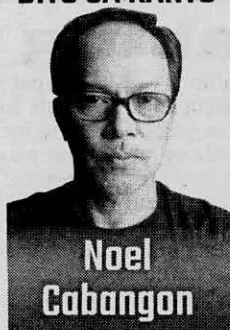
Jardeleza, the solicitor general when the then Aquino administration filed a case against China before the arbitral tribunal challenging its sweeping claims in the South China Sea, said this failure on the part of the petitioners was a violation of due process.

Jardeleza also questioned why the petitioner did not allege that damage to the environment was continuing.

Solicitor General Jose Calida, who will represent respondents in the proceeding, had asked the SC to dismiss the petition for lack of merit because there was allegedly no reason or need to compel the government because it has been performing its duties to protect the environment in the WPS.



DITO SA KANTO



Noel
Cabangon

TWITTER: @noelcabangon

Napabalitang P33 bilyon na ang pinsalang dinudulot ng Tsina sa ating mga bahura (reefs). Ang mga bahurang ito ay santuwaryo ng likas na yamang dagat. Dito nangingitlog ang mga isda at iba pang mga yamang dagat na siyang pinagmumulan ng ating inihahain sa hapag kainan.

Napakalaking hala-

ga ng pinsalang dulot ng mga Tsino, taon-taon. Ilang henerasyon kaya ang katumbas ng pinsalang ito? Ilang milyong Pilipino ang walang kasiguruhan na mia-enjoy ang ating yamang dagat?

Ang pinsalang dulot ay pagkain natin at kabuhayan ng ating mga mangingisda. At ngayon, imbes na proteksyunan ito ng pamahalaan ay tila binibigyan pang kahulugan na ito'y ipinapahiya pa ang ating bansa.

Ang Writ of Kalikasan at Writ of Continuing Mandamus na inihain ng mga magsasaka at mangingisda ng

Palawan sa pama- magitan ng Integrated Bar of the Philippines, ay paggigiit sa Supreme Court na ipatupad ito at igiit ang proteksyon sa ating pag-aaring karagatan at pangisdaan, at panagutin at kasuhan ang mga lumalabag dito.

Subalit maging ang isang miyembro ng Hukom ay nagsabi na ito ay magdudulot lang ng kahihiyan sa ating bansa.

Ang mga batas na ito, Writ of Kalikasan at Writ of Mandamus, ay mga batas na nariyan para protektahan ang ating kapaligiran at kalikasan. Kung kaya't ang mga maliliit na kababayan nating

mangingisda at magsasaka ay naghain ng petisyon. Dahil 'yan na lamang ang tanging matatakbuhan nila para magisuron na mayroon pa silang kabuhayan o karapatan na makapaghanapbuhay, at maproteksyunan ang pinagmumulan ng kanilang kabuhayan. Ayon nga sa dating Pangulo ng Pilipinas na si Ramon Magsaysay, "those who have less in life should have more in law." "Silang mga kapos sa buhay ay dapat sagana sa batas." Nasaan kaya ang hustisya?

Kung ganyan ang tila pagbabalewala sa petisyon ng mga mahihirap nating

mga kababayan, ay ano na lang ang mangyayari sa ating kinabukasan?

Hahayaan na lang bang masira ang ating karagatan? Babalewalain na lamang ba ang mga batas na naggarantiya ng proteksyon sa ating mga karapatan? Saan pa tatakbo ang ating mga kababayan? Mabuti pa ang mga Tsino, tila automatic na pinapahalagahan ng ating pamahalaan.

Ilang heherasyon ang kailangang du- maan para manumbalik ang pinsala sa karagatan? P33 bilyon ang pinsalang dulot ng Tsina, 'di ba nakakahiya naman sa atin?

Nakakahiya naman sa atin



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NEWS

New Clark City: Dev't for whom?

New Clark City is envisioned to be a world-class, smart and climate-resilient city for the younger generation, officials say. But old inhabitants of the land fear this vision will cost them their livelihood and ancestral land. "They see this type of development as a threat to their means of livelihood," said Ony Martinez, assistant professor at the UP Department of Geography. —SPECIAL REPORT BY

KRIXIA SUBINGSUBING AND MARIEJO S. RAMOS

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New Clark City: Dev't for whom?

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SPECIAL REPORT

By **Krixia Subingsubing**
and **Mariejo S. Ramos**
@Team_Inquirer

(Last of two parts)

When the Japanese army tore through Manila during World War II, Petronila Muñoz's tribespeople, the Aeta Hungey, took a fabled American soldier to the green slopes of Sapang Kawayan in Tarlac province.

Part of these mountains was just across from their cogon hut, separated only by the Cutcut River that irrigated their fields. "My father and grandmother hid Captain Bruce in one of the natural caves there," said Muñoz, the 62-year-old leader of the Hungey. "We sheltered him for years."

There, Alfred Bruce formed and led a squadron of Aeta guerrillas from 1942 until 1944. But Bruce "had to feed himself with stray plants from the mountain," Muñoz recalled her father saying, "because my own father and aunts didn't have food."

To the tribe, whose name means "old blood" in their native tongue, such stories are proof of their inviolable ties to the earth. They have weathered two world wars, martial rule, and the ravages caused by the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in 1991 to their lush 18,000-hectare ancestral land.

But they worry that where nature failed to move them, the *unat* (lowlanders) might have found a way.

In 2015, Muñoz said, people who refused to identify themselves surveyed the Aeta Hungey's lands without seeking their permission. The tribe later learned that the visitors were representatives of the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA).

New Clark City

Muñoz said the BCDA was eyeing parts of Sapang Kawayan and neighboring towns in the 9,450-hectare former US military base that would be developed into a sprawling metropolis called New Clark City (NCC).

Finding the balance between environmental sustainability and inclusivity remains a challenge for the BCDA, the main government agency in charge of the NCC project.

Now, under the Duterte administration's "Build, build, build" program, NCC is envisioned to be a world-class, smart and climate-resilient city for the younger generation—a city "that provides the quality of life that Filipinos only experience when they live and work abroad," said BCDA Chair Vince Dizon.

But while NCC—set to formally open on Nov. 6—is being

built for the future, old inhabitants of the land where it stands fear that this vision will eventually cost them their livelihood and ancestral land.

The assurances of both the BCDA and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) that there would be no ancestral domains hit by the development obscure the most obvious struggle for IPs like the Aeta: the difficulty in securing certificates of ancestral domain titles (CADT) to prove their ownership of the land.

"Some communities here have been tilling their lands for more than a century. They have with them the stories of how their forefathers cultivated these lands," said Andre Ortega, a research fellow at the University of Glasgow who led a field investigation of NCC.

In a collaborative study, Ortega and researchers from the University of the Philippines found that the main issue hounding the communities covered by NCC was lack of security of land, housing and livelihood.

Displacement

"Although some households don't register outright their resistance to the development, they still fear possible displacement once the project is completed. They see this type of development as a threat to their means of livelihood," said Ony Martinez, assistant professor of the UP Department of Geography.

Residents of Barangays Cutcut and Aranguren, for instance, still look to farming as their primary source of livelihood.

"It is not true that the lands here are idle, as the developers claimed. We've been planting rice and other vegetables here for as long as I can remember," said "Lorna," the 55-year-old matriarch of a family of farmers in Aranguren.

In 2017, when the NCC contractors began building Phase 1A along Aranguren to make way for the National Government Administrative Center, the first batch of farmers convinced by the government and private investors to sell their land were offered two choices: *halaman o lupa* (crops or land)?

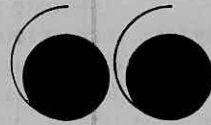
Lorna is one of the few who declined the buyout. She showed these reporters the family's many claims to their land, including a title given to her grandfather by the Americans that permitted them to till the earth.

"I was lucky because at least I was a little knowledgeable about land claims," Lorna said, highlighting a common issue among the poorest sector of the country.

But it is unclear until when they can resist the bulldozers, especially since their home is a tricycle ride away from the main NCC area.



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It is not true that the lands here are idle, as the developers claimed. We've been planting rice and other vegetables here for as long as I can remember

'Lorna'

Matriarch of a family of farmers

Others, like Tito Capitulo, were "simply offered to be compensated for the crops or the value of the land, which would amount to around P300,000," Lorna said.

Capitulo, also an Aeta Hungey, heads one of the 12 households that lived along Phase 1A. For years he lived on the land passed on to him by his parents, and used the crops to sustain his family.

But last year, he was told to relocate to Cutcut in exchange for P270,000—the total estate value of his land, part of which was supposed to be turned into a golf course.

'Genuine' development?

Last month, the BCDA opened a Swiss challenge for the development of a 450-hectare parcel into a proposed luxury mountain resort, including an 18-hole championship golf course.

Though the BCDA has not disclosed where it is, it is believed that it would cover the lands of the displaced farmers.

Worse, Capitulo said, his family was advised that they could face relocation again in five to 10 years once the development hits full stride.

"What is the point of being a

progressive country?" he said. "In all honesty, if you are truly progressive, there would be no casualties of this development. That for me is real development. But this project? It's only for their benefit."

The same is true for the Aeta Hungey of Sitio Sapang Kawayan in Cutcut, who depend on their vegetable and root crops for daily sustenance.

"They've been constructing buildings left and right, but we cannot eat those buildings. Here we produce our own food and we never have to worry about it every day," said Petronila Muñoz.

According to Dizon, NCC will host industries such as manufacturing and business process outsourcing, in the next 10-15 years.

Asked whether this plan would benefit the farming and indigenous communities, Dizon said: "It must. It has to."

Pending land claims

But the massive development plan continues to stir anxiety in Muñoz's tribe, which has a pending application for a CADT at the NCIP.

According to NCIP Bamban officer in charge Melecio Polon, there are no claims or pending applications for ownership to

the lands that would be hit by the NCC development.

But Casimira Maniego said the Aeta Hungey had applied for a CADT thrice for 18,000 hectares of ancestral land in Capas since 1999. The second application was filed in 2014, and the most recent, only last May.

The NCIP refused to acknowledge the document the tribe presented proving its 1999 application for a CADT, she said.

This means that when NCC was launched by the BCDA with its old name, Clark Green City, in 2013, the NCIP had claimed no knowledge of a pending CADT application from the Hungey, said Maniego.

"It is not true that the NCIP does not know there are IPs and an ancestral domain claim in our area. We have the receiving copy of the 1999 document, but they told us they don't have it in their files," she added.

In 2018, the tribe filed a complaint against NCIP officials, demanding that the document for their first CADT application be located. Nothing happened.

Now that the impending development of a bridge would once again challenge their historical claim over their land, the council of elders of the Aeta Hungey has submitted these recommendations to the BCDA:

• The creation of a committee that would engage in a field investigation of their ancestral land composed of government agencies—the Department of Justice, Commission on Human Rights, BCDA, NCIP, Department of Social Welfare and Development, National Economic and Development Authority, Department of Environment and Natural Resources—and an independent, third-party unit.



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GOV'T WAY New Clark City, as envisioned by the government, is a world-class, smart and climate-resilient city for the younger generation. It “provides the quality of life that Filipinos only experience when they live and work abroad,” according to Vince Dizon, chair of the Bases Conversion and Development Authority. —KATHLEEN LEI LIMAYO/CONTRIBUTOR

• A formal dialogue for free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), which the tribe said the BCDA had yet to initiate.

Under Republic Act No. 8371, or the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997, the FPIC serves as the first line of defense of IPs against “exploration, development, exploitation and utilization of natural resources within ancestral domains/land” and prevents displacement and forced relocation of their communities.

With the NCIP's financial and logistical limitations, the tribe hopes it could raise a legal fund for its CADT application.

“What kind of government do you know?” I told a BCDA representative once,” said Maniego. “The government I know is the one ruled by the people. So how can they tell us that our land can be taken because it is owned by the government? Only death can make us surrender our fight.”

In one of the BCDA's dialogues with an NCIP-accredited Aeta group, Dizon said he assured the IPs that their lands would not be forcibly taken and that “a relationship built on trust” would be maintained.

Dwellers' requests

Among the old dwellers' requests are road access, schools, water and power to communities, he said.

“A CADT does not mean you cannot develop [the ancestral land]. But you have to develop it with [their] consent, and develop it with them. They have to be a part of it,” he said.

Dizon said the BCDA was already in talks with the IPs in an ancestral domain that would be affected by road construction.

“They must be compensated. There are houses to be hit, and the government must provide for an alternative relocation site for them,” he said.

But Ortega said a massive urban project like NCC illustrates the double face of development in the Philippines, where new jobs are created but the poor and marginalized are pushed to the fringes.

“People outside the area should realize that under the veneer of urban projects, there should lie solutions to social issues. We have to examine: How would it benefit the poor?” he said.

Ortega suggested building a network of allies—including government agencies—that would work together to ensure that the massive development would be inclusive and sustainable.

Until then, he said, the question for the envisioned smart and green city would remain: For whom is it being developed? INQ

(Editor's Note: This story was written with the support of Internews' Earth Journalism Network.)



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Monitoring Sulu Sea's reef region

DIVING FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING. The team of researchers from DLSU-SHORE and WWF-Philippines conducts reef research trips to assess coral cover and recruitment in Sulu Sea.

A GROUP of researchers recently embarked on consecutive reef research trips in Sulu Sea, said to be the richest reef region in the world, to monitor the coral reef situation in Tubbataha, Cagayancillo islands, Honda Bay, and Taytay in Palawan.

With grant from World Wide Fund for Nature Singapore, Dr. Wilfredo Licuanan with his team of research assistants from the De La Salle University Br. Alfred Shields FSC Ocean Research Center (DLSU-SHORE) and the WWF-Philippines, conducted reef monitoring for the project dubbed Designing of Monitoring and Evaluation System for Coral Reef Resilience and Fisheries Sustainability in Northeast Palawan through Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) or Network of MPAs.

The project kicked off with a week-long navigation in Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park, where 10 previously established coral monitoring stations were surveyed, including the ship grounding sites of Ming Ping Yu and USS Guardian.

In 2013, the grounding sites of the two vessels left fields of rubble, an environment where little to no coral could recruit. However, upon consistent monitoring, Dr. Licuanan found that some plots, specifically in the USS Guardian, are recovering.

"Our projections on recovery rates at the USS Guardian site appear accurate. The impact plots should look like how it was before the grounding in four years,"

expounded Dr. Licuanan.

"One Ming Ping Yu plot is also doing well," he added

In June, the research team established monitoring stations in Arena atoll, and in Cawili, Calusa, and Dondonay islands—all part of the Cagayancillo group of islands 178 nautical miles off the coast of Puerto Princesa, and approximately four hours away from Tubbataha.

"The Cagayancillo reefs are interesting as most sites we visited have coral cover levels of oceanic reefs and atolls yet also have the diversity of inshore fringing reefs," said Dr. Licuanan.

During his surveys, he also observed that the corals in the Arena atoll are most likely prone to temperature fluctuation because of the surge of warm water from the lagoon as the tide changes. This brought him to a hypothesis that the Arena might have climate-resilient corals.

"I suspect it will be tested in the next few weeks as the seas are expected to get warmer in the region," he said, adding, "I wish we can revisit those reefs sooner."

Before the month ended, DLSU-SHORE and WWF-Philippines organ-

ized a reef assessment training in Puerto Princesa with delegates from the Tubbataha Management Office, Western Philippines University, Palawan State University, Palawan Council for Sustainable Development, Office of the Provincial Agriculture, Office of the Puerto Princesa City Agriculture, Provincial Environment Office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and Smart Seas Philippines.

The collaboration with concerned stakeholders and academic institutions is key for establishing a reef monitoring system in the region.

"Working with local people to effectively manage MPAs entails having a common understanding about the situation of the marine environment in the area. Science plays a significant part to achieve this. As we experienced in the past, research results helped explain better the local observations and insights, thus creating a platform for meaningful conversations," averred WWF-Philippines project manager Marivel Dygico.

For Dr. Licuanan, monitoring reefs is a necessary step after the three-year nationwide coral reef assessment project.

"Monitoring allows us to generate information that we can act on, and potentially save corals. Assessments are useful only for writing obituaries for nature," he opined.



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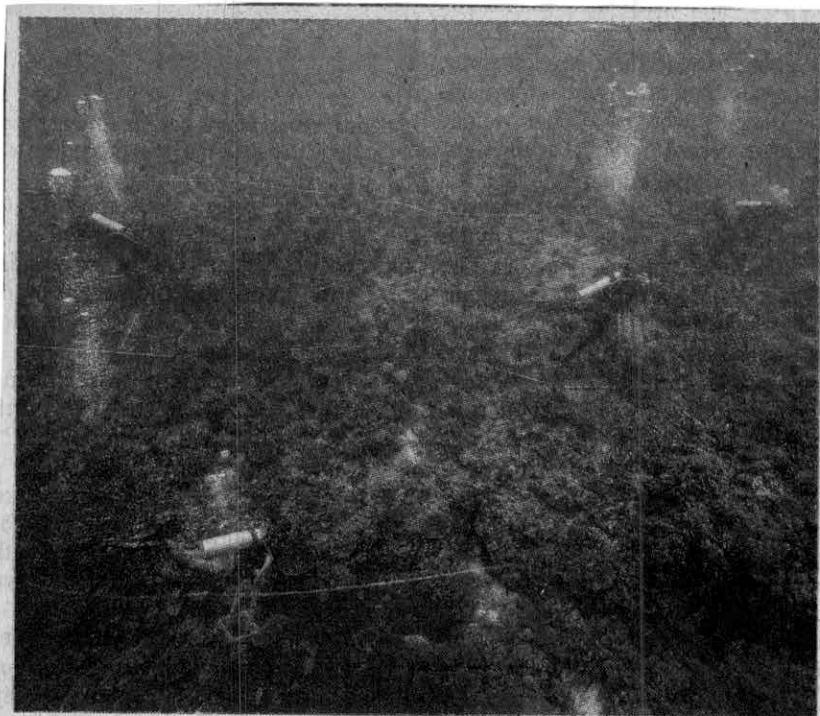
MONITORING SUM SURVEY

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Reef survey team gears up for the establishment of a monitoring site in Calusa island.



Researchers assess the situation in Cagayancillo.



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letters

Maritime security in Sulu and Celebes Seas

Maritime security and law enforcement, fisheries management, promotion of coastal welfare, and illicit trade are among the problem areas the Philippines and neighboring countries face in the Sulu and Celebes Seas. Two non-profit organizations jointly organized a workshop to explore solutions to these various challenges and opportunities. Stakeholders from the government, private sector, academe, and non-governmental organizations participated in the workshop held on June 10 and 11 at the Heritage Hotel Manila.

Manila-based think tank Asia Pacific Pathways to Progress teamed up with Colorado-based One Earth Future Foundation for this event, which looked at a recently published report by OEF on Sulu-Celebes maritime concerns. The report identified poor coastal welfare and weak rule of law as mutually reinforcing factors contributing to the proliferation of crimes such as piracy, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and kidnap-for-ransom among others.

Efforts to improve maritime security

must also be attentive to socio-economic development in the poor coastal areas of the Philippines along the Sulu and Celebes seas, according to participants of the workshop. In particular, government must be prepared to tailor-fit maritime regulatory policies to different conditions in the coastal areas of Southern Mindanao. The concerns and capacity of local government units need to be taken into account in the crafting of maritime policies and they must be better integrated in the planning process. There is also a need to have a whole-of-government approach in addressing the overlapping concerns over maritime security, marine environment, and fisheries, considering the difficulty of dispersed mandates across many government agencies.

The workshop participants further found that regional economic cooperation through the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines - East Asian Growth Area did not produce the desired economic benefits in the past. According to private sector participants, there is over-regulation on the

maritime industry sector that disincentivizes investment in connectivity.

Among the recommendations of the workshop are to harmonize efforts of government agencies, identify the root causes of unsecured waterways, and increase the involvement of communities, businesses, NGOs and local government stakeholders in the Sulu and Celebes Seas management.

Asia Pacific Pathways to Progress is a think-tank seeking to promote future-oriented, people-centered, peaceful and independent Philippine foreign relations, with maritime development and security as one of its focal programs. Stable Seas is a program of One Earth Foundation that promotes collaborative maritime solutions to organized political violence and other threats to coastal welfare.

The workshop was conducted in cooperation with the National Coast Watch Council Secretariat. - AILEEN SP BAVIERA, president, Asia Pacific Pathways to Progress



RARE SHARK ENDS UP ON DINNER TABLES IN CAGAYAN DE ORO VILLAGE

BFAR STARTS INVESTIGATION

By Jigger J. Jerusalem
@jjerusalemINQ

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—A rare shark that was entangled in a fisherman's net off Macabalan Bay in this city last week ended up being slaughtered and eaten by residents, a fisheries official said.

The megamouth shark (*Megachasma pelagios*), which is protected under the country's fisheries law as it is considered endangered, was alive but wounded when it was trapped in a fishing net off Barangay Cugman here on Friday, said Cheryl Magante, fishing regulation officer of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in Northern Mindanao region.

Magante said when BFAR officials reached Barangay Cugman, residents had already slaughtered the shark and divided the meat among themselves. The shark weighed about 400 kilograms and was 3 meters long and a meter wide.

Magante said the BFAR only recovered about half of the

shark and its tail, which they buried in Barangay Kauswagan.

Entangled

One of the fishermen interviewed by a local radio station on Saturday, however, claimed that the megamouth shark was eating their catch of small fish. The fisherman, who was not identified in the interview, said they were forced to spear and kill the shark because it was weighing down their net.

He said they chopped a section of the shark and sliced this into pieces while they were still at sea. The fishermen continued doing this after they reached shore on July 5.

According to Oceana, an international ocean advocacy group, the megamouth shark is considered the smallest of three species of filter-feeding sharks after the whale shark and the basking shark. This rare shark, distinguished by its large and circular mouth, can weigh up to 1,215 kg, it said.

"This species has only been



LEFTOVER Fishermen hold the severed head of a megamouth shark after the rare marine animal was slaughtered in Cagayan de Oro City. The rare shark was found wounded and entangled in a fishing net in Macabalan Bay on July 5. —MENZIE MONTES / CONTRIBUTOR

observed in the wild a few times, and less than 60 individuals are known by scientists to ever be captured or observed," Oceana said in its website.

Catching, transporting and killing endangered marine

species are considered criminal offenses under Republic Act No. 8550, or the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998.

But Magante said the BFAR had not yet taken any legal action as the agency had yet to identify people who slaughtered and ate the shark.

Krill trail

She said it was possible that the shark was following the trail of krill when it got caught in the fishing net.

Although megamouth sharks can usually be found in deep waters, some of them have been seen in shallower waters in this city in recent months.

Magante said a group of at least seven megamouth sharks was seen just near the shore of Cugman early this year.

Megamouth sharks and whale sharks, the latter locally known as "tawiki," were seen in Macajalar Bay off the coast of Misamis Oriental province in the early 2000s.

Townfolk in the coastal town of Talisayan in Misamis Oriental even used to celebrate the Tawiki Festival due to the abundance of whale sharks in the area. However, the whale sharks eventually disappeared from the town's waters, forcing the community to stop holding the festival. INQ



people&events



COASTAL CLEANUP IN LA UNION: Clean-up drive of Caba La Union coastal town in Sol Arena beach resort with the Peace Builder President's League (in-coming president Rey Morales) in partnership with the Manuel P. Manahan Foundation (executive director Ma. Socorro Manahan) and the MRRD-NECC (Mayor Rodrigo Roa Duterte National Executive Coordinating Committee) under Secretaries Emily Padilla and Virginia Orogo last June 24.



POISED TO GET 'DOWN AND DIRTY': Members of Club 200 led by Reghis 'Red' Romero III (standing, 4th from right) as president are poised to get 'down and dirty' literally in planting tree seedlings at the La Mesa Watershed so as to protect and preserve Metro Manila's main water source. Club 200 is an organization of sports buffs with motorcycles having engine displacements of 200 cc and up.



Department of Environment and Natural Resources
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THE EXHIBIT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
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THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



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#MINDANAO

Tough governance has become sexy



By JOHN TRIA

THE assumption of many local officials into have greeted their constituents with a bang, creating waves of change on many things that their voters have longed for.

In many cities, quick victories in terms of decongesting streets clogged with vendors were achieved. These dovetail on earlier achievements in cleaning up Boracay, Manila Bay, and other important waterways.

Whatever snarky remarks and opposition received from illegal vendors and detractors, it is clear that those who broke the law have to comply. Streets and waterways are not toilets and mall spaces meant for the exclusive use of those who profit from them at the expense of a safe and healthy environment; they are for everybody.

Apart from law and order and enhanced services, tough economic reforms pushed by the economic managers are also a result of political will.

One of them is the steady fall in inflation now at 2.7% in June, 2019, half of last year's results, which can be traced to lower food costs stemming from the long awaited entry of cheaper rice stocks, courtesy of the rice tariffication law -- a tough economic reform many never thought possible. Bureau of Customs (BOC) data show that government has so far collected P5.9 billion in tariffs from 1.43 million metric tons (MT) of rice imported by private traders.

This supply has begun to reach consumers. A simple survey of rice retailers in nearby public markets already shows more rice variants between 5 and 10 pesos cheaper per kilo than last year's retail prices.

That this lower inflation figure was achieved despite the higher amounts of cash in the pockets of thousands courtesy of the TRAIN Law's tax exemptions dispels the notion that the tax measure raised inflation.

What remains is the lowering of retail food prices for other commodities, which we will need to pressure the Agriculture and Trade and Industry departments to deliver on. Perhaps the return of the affordable "Kadiwa" type stores are the answer to help bring more affordable food items to our consumers.

Whoever the next agriculture secretary will be, we demand a better game plan for reducing retail prices without hurting farmers incomes

and a stronger will to implement the measures needed to boost production. This is a balancing act but it can be done if better logistics can be achieved.

Truly, the 2019 midterm elections have not only refreshed the mandate of the current Duterte administration, but reflect the people's approval of stronger governance approaches that yield results not just for the appeasement of the intellectual elites that have always dominated political discourse, but for the ordinary folk who have tasted the initial positive effects of the government they voted for in 2016.

Cleaner beaches, waterways, and streets, universal health care, free state college education, new infrastructure projects and public transport improvements, easier access to passport and driver's license renewals- all of these renewed faith in government's capability to deliver, melting away the hopelessness and cynicism that was built among the people in the last 20 years. Slowly, tough governance has become desirable, and sexy.

The challenge moving forward is to address the roots of the problem, and temper the greed that allowed these problems to fester. This is a role for government. The lasting solutions are often the most difficult ones.

The public clamor for consistent governance and the implementation of necessary measures to improve lives has become the battlecry for continuity. The voters have been inspired by the achievements of the first three years, they will want, and demand more in the next.

We need a speaker who will deliver

Recent discussions on the speakership of the House saw Davao City's Isidro Ungab emerge as a viable unity candidate.

Whoever the next speaker will be, we hope that he or she will not allow last year's budget delay under then Speaker Gloria Arroyo to happen again. This outcome, the result of political wrangling allegedly due to last-minute "pork" insertions favoring certain congressmen (that were vetoed by the President), set our growth back a bit in the first half due to reduced spending from a reenacted 2018 budget.

For reactions: [facebook.com/john.triapa](https://www.facebook.com/john.triapa)



Time to declare a climate emergency



EAGLE
EYES
TONY
LA VINA

WITH this column, I begin a new series on the climate emergency. I write this first article from Songdo, South Korea where I am attending the Board meeting of the Green Climate Fund and I am realizing that there is a lot of new information and important global and Philippine developments on this issue. This series will shed light on these.

Last year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world's preeminent scientific body on climate change, published a report with a long and complex title: "Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty." With such a title, the message of the report could be lost in translation.

That is a pity because the findings of the report are crystal clear. As Brookings's Institution's Nathan Hultman pointed out in a blog posted right after the IPCC report was released: "An equally accurate but more evocative title could have been "We're almost out of time."

In essence, we only have until 2030 to transform the global economy to avoid the worst impact of climate change by 2050. This is very different from when I did a law dissertation on the subject for Yale Law School in the early 1990 when the science was much more uncertain and the projections of the worst scenarios were for the end of the 21st century or 2200 and thereabouts.

Of course, between the 1990s and the 2010s, we have seen how the early science has underestimated in terms of timing and severity the arrival of the impact of climate change. In the 1990s, whenever I talked about climate change, I always mentioned how one day typhoons like Yolanda, Pablo, Sendong, Ondoy, etc. could devastate our islands and cities. But in my first presentations, because of the scientific information available then, I always said these storms were like to happen later in the 21st century or early in the 22nd century. I was a hundred years off in my projection.

Nowadays, in my climate change

lectures, I point to our vulnerable cities, foremost of which are those in the Manila Bay region. I tell my usually younger audiences that I will not be surprised if within their lifetimes, they would have to deal with major storm surges that threaten the reclaimed areas and Manila's historic sites. When I give my usual lecture to our young diplomats undergoing training as cadets at the Foreign Service Institute, I ask them to imagine themselves or their colleagues one day trapped by floods and/or storm surges, exacerbated by sea level rise in the old Department of Foreign Affairs building in Roxas Boulevard.

In the context of the threat of climate change, all the efforts of Mayor Isko Moreno to revive the glory of Old Manila will come to naught. Certainly, all proposed reclamation projects in the region should be abandoned as they will increase the threat for all of us.

"Hope must be grounded in courage to change things. Without courage, hope is false."

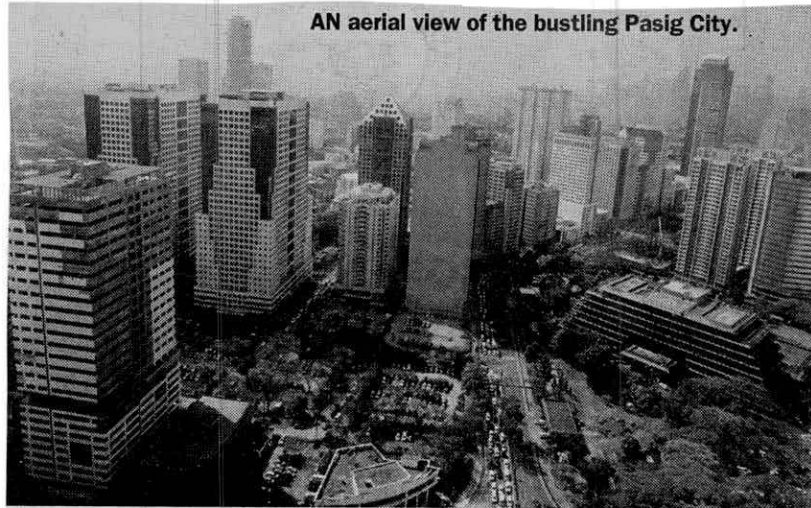
Given the magnitude of the climate change impact we are facing, it is time now to declare a climate emergency. The global community should do that. The Philippine government must do that. The city of Manila, all the cities of our metropolis, and all our coastal cities and provinces must do that.

Among others, instead of withdrawing or minimizing our diplomatic engagement on climate change, we actually need to give it more priority and emphasis. Our strong voice, effective for many years (including up to the 2015 Paris meeting, the last important gathering of heads of state), is needed to push this important goal of having the global community declare a climate change emergency.

I would encourage Foreign Affairs Secretary Teddy Boy Locsin, a man I will always admire even when I sometimes disagree with him, to plan ahead for the 2020 Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. That is a critical conference if we want to push the agenda of climate justice forward.

A climate emergency declaration is also

Turn to A5



AN aerial view of the bustling Pasig City.

13 cities qualify for OPCC 2019

THIRTEEN cities from Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao have successfully met the qualifications to participate in the 2019-2020 edition of World Wide Fund for Nature's (WWF) One Planet City Challenge (OPCC), following guidelines that were posted earlier this year by the international organization.

The OPCC, once known as the Earth Hour City Challenge (EHCC) when it was first launched in 2011, is a biennial global challenge that recognizes infrastructure, housing, transportation, and mobility commitments of cities to a low-carbon, climate-resilient future.

WWF recognizes the importance and highlights the roles of cities in combatting climate change, with 55 percent of the human population residing in urban centers and with 70 percent of global emissions emanating from them.

The call for applicants was given out in February this year inviting cities from around the globe to show tangible commitments in line with the Paris Agreement and the 1.5C global warming goal and to report ambitious, cross-cutting, inclusive big-win climate action plans that deliver on those commitments.

Now on its sixth run, the OPCC has grown to become the largest and longest-running challenge of its kind, with 411 cities having accepted the challenge and recorded a total of 5,732 recorded actions. With these positive impacts, WWF projects that 3,856 metric tons of greenhouse gases

could potentially be saved by the year 2050.

Previous OPCC global winners include Vancouver, Canada in 2013; Cape Town, South Africa in 2014; Seoul, South Korea in 2015; Paris, France in 2016; and Uppsala, Sweden in 2018.

Pasig City was named as Philippine's winner during the 2017-2018 iteration of OPCC, while Santa Rosa City took the award during 2015-2016 edition, the country's first time participating in the challenge.

Returning to OPCC 2019 - 2020 after having participated in the previous rounds of the challenge in the country are Batangas City, Cagayan de Oro City, Parañaque City, Pasig City, Quezon City, Santa Rosa City, San Carlos City, and Tagum City. Joining them are first-time qualifiers Davao City, Dipolog City, La Carlota City, Malolos City, and Muntinlupa City. To guide these cities, WWF Philippines has partnered with ICLEI Southeast Asia to provide technical assistance.

WWF-Philippines President and CEO Joel Palma was pleased with the addition of five new

Philippine cities to the roster of OPCC participants, and encouraged other cities to make similar commitments to the environment.

"With these new cities joining this iteration of the OPCC, it shows that, year by year, we as a country are becoming increasingly concerned with our impact on the environment. I hope in the future runs of OPCC, we will see even more Philippine cities joining, and that as a nation we begin taking our commitments to the climate more seriously," Palma said.

Qualifiers from the country will now join contending cities from across the globe which will be required to report the following most important components of the OPCC assessment: Existing targets and commitments of applying cities; Action plans; Greenhouse gas inventories; and Renewable energy and/or energy efficiency solutions. These cities will then be put before an international jury of experts, who will assess each cities' performance in working towards a global warming cap of 1.5 degrees Celsius.



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT
GENERAL SOLANO STREET, SAN MIGUEL, MANILA

BUDGET CIRCULAR

No.: 2019 - 4
July 5, 2019

To : All Heads of Departments, Agencies, State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and other Offices of the National Government, including Commissions/Offices under the Constitutional Fiscal Autonomy Group (CFAG); Government-Owned or -Controlled Corporations (GOCCs); Heads of Local Government Units (LGUs); and All Others Concerned

Subject : **CLARIFICATION ON THE GRANT OF MID-YEAR BONUS TO GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ON SCHOLARSHIP**

1.0 Background

Section 4 of Executive Order (EO) No. 201, s. 2016¹ provides for the grant of a Mid-Year Bonus equivalent to one (1) month basic salary as of May 15 to those who have rendered at least four (4) months of satisfactory service and are still in the service as of same date, to be given not earlier than May 15 of every year.

Section 16 of the same EO authorized the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to issue the guidelines necessary to implement the provisions of the EO.

Pursuant thereto, DBM issued Budget Circular (BC) No. 2016-3² and BC No. 2017-2³ to prescribe the rules and regulations on the grant of the annual Mid-Year Bonus. Under these Circulars, the basic conditions on the grant of Mid-Year Bonus are as follows:

- a) Personnel has rendered at least a total or an aggregate of four (4) months of service from July 1 of the immediately preceding year to May 15 of the current year;
- b) Personnel remains to be in the government service as of May 15 of the current year; and
- c) Personnel has obtained at least a satisfactory performance rating in the immediately preceding rating period, or the applicable performance appraisal period.

However, there is a need to clarify the guidelines on the grant of the Mid-Year Bonus to personnel who are on full-time scholarship.

2.0 Purpose

This Circular is issued to clarify the guidelines on the grant of the Mid-Year Bonus to personnel who are on authorized attendance in a scholarship grant or program.

3.0 Coverage

This Circular shall apply to personnel who are on authorized full-time attendance in a scholarship grant or program on official time, wherein the fees and expenses for the grant/program are sponsored by the government or a partner donor institution, and whereby said personnel are allowed temporary release from their official duties and responsibilities for the period of the scholarship, with continued payment of authorized salaries and allowances for the duration of the program.

4.0 Guidelines

Officials and employees who are on authorized attendance in a scholarship grant or program on official time may be given the Mid-Year Bonus, subject to the following guidelines:

- 4.1 The scholarship grant is part of the human resource development program of the agency and is aimed at directly enhancing the capability of the official/employee to perform the duties and responsibilities of his/her position and contribute to the achievement of the agency's performance objectives.

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- 4.2 A scholar who has rendered at least four (4) months of actual performance of duties with at least a satisfactory rating for the period of July 1 of the immediately preceding year to May 15 of the current year, and is still in the service as of May 15 of the current year may be entitled to the Mid-Year Bonus. Actual performance of duties means that the employee is reporting for work and actually delivering the services required of his/her position.
- 4.3 A scholar with less than four (4) months of actual performance of duties for the period of July 1 of the immediately preceding year to May 15 of the current year, and is still in the service as of May 15 of the current year may be entitled to the Mid-Year Bonus, subject to the successful completion of the course program and fulfillment of the conditions stipulated in the scholarship contract.
- 4.4 A scholar with less than four (4) months of actual performance of duties for the period of July 1 of the immediately preceding year to May 15 of the current year, and who was not able to successfully complete the course program or failed to fulfill all the conditions stipulated in the scholarship contract, shall not be entitled to the Mid-Year Bonus.
- 4.5 The grant of the Mid-Year Bonus to qualified scholars shall be subject to the rules and regulations stipulated in BC No. 2016-3 or BC No. 2017-2, as applicable.
- 4.6 The payment of the FY 2019 Mid-Year Bonus to qualified scholars shall be without prejudice to the refund thereof by the scholars concerned should they fail to complete the course program or abide by the terms of the scholarship contract.

5.0 **Fund Sources**

The amounts required for payment of the Mid-Year Bonus to qualified scholars shall be sourced from the following:

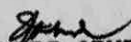
- 5.1 For national government agencies, from the available released allotment for Personnel Services in the agency budget;
- 5.2 For GOCCs, from their respective corporate funds; and
- 5.3 For LGUs, from their respective local government funds.

6.0 **Retroactive Application**

The provisions of this Circular shall apply retroactively to the grant of the Mid-Year Bonus to qualified scholars beginning FY 2016.

7.0 **Effectivity**

This Circular shall take effect immediately.


JANET B. ABUEL
Officer-in-Charge, DBM



¹ Modifying the Salary Schedule for Civilian Government Personnel and Authorizing the Grant of Additional Benefits for Both Civilian and Military and Uniformed Personnel dated February 19, 2016

² Rules and Regulations on the Grant of the Mid-Year Bonus for FY 2016 dated April 28, 2016

³ Rules and Regulations on the Grant of the Mid-Year Bonus for FY 2017 and Years Thereafter dated May 8, 2017