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Manila Bay rehab remains DENR's top priority

By ELLALYN-DE VERA-RUIZ

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Tuesday said the rehabilitation of Manila Bay remains its top priority in the next two years.

DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu, who chairs the Manila Bay Task Force (MBTF), said more needs to be done to achieve the ultimate goal of making the bay fit again for swimming and other forms of contact recreation.

The Manila Bay rehabilitation kicked off in January, 2019.

"Our effort to restore Manila Bay is now in full swing and we hope to sustain the momentum of restoring it to its former glory in the coming years," Cimatu said.

The rehabilitation is currently in its first phase, which is the cleanup and water quality monitoring.

The next two phases will be relocation and rehabilitation, and education, protection and sustainment.

Over 2.3 million kilograms of solid wastes through cleanups, trash boats, and garbage traps have been collected in Metro Manila, Central Luzon, and Southern Luzon.



Cimatu says Manila Bay restoration on track

By Rio N. Araja

SECRETARY Roy Cimatu on Tuesday said the Department of Environment and Natural Resources "is more determined than ever to restore Manila Bay."

He vowed to be "more determined than ever to win the so-called Battle for Manila Bay," saying the rehabilitation of the heavily polluted water body was an "extremely difficult task."

He said much had been achieved since the Manila Bay cleanup and rehabilitation kicked off in January last year.

"Our effort to restore Manila Bay is now in full swing and we hope to sustain the momentum of restoring it to its former glory in the coming years," he said.

He said the Manila Bay rehabilitation will remain a top priority of the government until 2022.

According to Cimatu, chairman of the Manila Bay Task Force, the rehabilitation was just in its first phase—the cleanup and water quality monitoring.

The next two phases would be relocation and rehabilitation, and education, protection and sustainment, he said.

As of Sept. 26, the DENR's Environmental Management Bureau and the Laguna Lake Development Authority inspected 9,708 commercial establishments around Manila Bay.

Of this number, 2,478 were issued notices of violations and 107 were slapped with cease-and-desist orders.



CTALK
CITO BELTRAN

Boracay revisited

Our "Eat, Drive and Pray" band of adventurers has finally made it to Boracay, and after spending several nights on the No. 1 beach in the world, we have mixed reviews about the island and its current status. As I mentioned in my earlier column, there is a serious need for the DENR, DILG and DOT to go back and include a clean up and redesign of the Caticlan area that caters to tourists. Those unfamiliar with the town will surely get stressed out trying to figure where things are, where to park or leave vehicles overnight, especially what the step by step procedures are when going through the passenger ferry terminal. Directional signs are so tiny if not non-existent. When we entered the main terminal, it was hot and dark because typhoon Ursula had knocked out the power. This however is not an excuse because such a facility should have its own emergency power generator that is large enough to support lights, computers and air-conditioning.



When we got to the registration counters, the young ladies were cheerful and helpful and asked us to show proof of our hotel bookings. When I asked about tourist numbers and loads no one really knew and there were no electronic LEDs indicating the current number of people on the island as per regulations on carrying capacity and daily entrance. I found out from several sources that government personnel monitoring the influx allegedly do so between 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or government office hours. Locals tell me that a big number of unauthorized people enter the island before or after the 8 to 5 watch. Because tourists, employees or regular residents are not requested or required to wear "baller bands" or some sort of ID, there is no way of knowing who illegally enter the island. This explains the big number of hawkers, "commissioners" offering island hopping, para-gliding and banana boat trips, as well as people offering hair extension and braiding on side streets.

Upon arriving on Boracay itself, the first challenge was finding a tricycle or a van to get us to our hotel. The designated parking was not properly fenced, shaded, and organized with guard rails. The area was not paved or covered with concrete and there was no system except someone collecting the payment for the vans. Who gets the money? Does the national or local government get a share or does it line some politician's pockets? As we drove through the main and inner streets every gas station was crowded with people and hundreds of plastic fuel containers and one station had an ominous sign saying "No Diesel

until Jan. 2." A local told me that even the e-trikes were affected because they could not recharge fast enough! As a result of the typhoon, most establishments were running on generators that would have to be cooled down for two hours after a ten-hour run. Again, let's not use the typhoon as an excuse. With all the employment, profit and taxes that Boracay generates, the least that the government should do through the Dept. of Energy and the Dept. of Tourism and DILG is to make Boracay "storm-proof" by installing alternative fuel sources such as giant wind turbines (which have been installed on Caticlan near the San Miguel Corp Airport), a solar farm like those installed in Negros province, and maybe ask Petron to set up a bigger than normal fuel storage and filling facility that will ensure against shortages or poor delivery because the gas stations on the island don't have commercial size generators.

If Sec. Roy Cimatu and Sec. Berna Romulo Puyat went to Boracay I'm sure they would have been pissed off to see uncollected piles of commercial garbage bagged in plastic and sitting right along the pathway of tourists from all over the world. In any other country dependent on tourists, there would be dumpsters or at least a lot more garbage bins on wheels. Why not make this mandatory for all establishments in Boracay? We also saw several protruding sewage pipes, covers and PVS pipes along the main pathway that could hurt or injure tourists. Considering all the money collected for environmental impact or protection, why did the garbage go uncollected for several days? Speaking of fees being collected, a local resident pointed out to us a nice looking blue pontoon about 100 meters long where all passengers of island hopping boats and the likes are required to use for the small amount of P30. You might say it's a small amount but compare that to the P30 boat ride from Caticlan to Boracay! Small until you multiply P30 by several thousands a month then the amount becomes several million pesos collected with no receipts and based only on an alleged executive order. Calling on the political trinity overlooking Boracay: Please explain who built and runs the pontoon bridges at station 1 and station 2? Was this publicly bid out, which agency gets revenues from the mysterious P30 pesos times thousands? Why are operators not issued receipts for the said amount?

Another resident shared with me that there seems to be two laws in Boracay on the Smoking Ban. If you are a local, you will almost surely be accosted or arrested for smoking in the beach. But if you are a foreigner, you could get away with it because someone at the Mayor's Office does not want the beach patrol to arrest foreigners because it might drive the tourists away. Word is the beach patrol can't get the Mayor's office to issue enforcers the tickets so don't blame the beach patrol if foreigners are puffing away in your face!

My final observation was that the beach has been cleared of obstruction, cleaned up of illegal structures and the beauty of Boracay beach has been restored. But all that press release that things have quieted down must be Fake News because the bands are still playing our songs until midnight. He he he.

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Happy
New
Year!

Looking back

EDITORIAL

Tracking the results of a Pulse Asia poll, which showed 93 percent of Filipinos welcoming 2020 with hope rather than fear, a Social Weather Stations survey showed an even higher 96 percent of Filipinos greeting the New Year with hope.

On the first day of the year, it is good to look back on the positive developments in the past year. The Philippine team's top performance in the 30th Southeast Asian Games made up for the snafus and still unresolved controversies that hounded the country's hosting of the biennial event.

Also providing a positive note to the end of the year was the resolution of the Maguindanao massacre case after a decade, with key members of the Ampatuan clan convicted and sentenced to life in prison without parole.

For 19 days in November, Vice President Leni Robredo was at the helm of the war on drugs, during which she showed that battling the menace need not be so brutal and bloody, and drug personalities deserved a second chance.

The midterm elections in May were generally peaceful and orderly. Whether the results were good or bad obviously depends on one's political preferences. The Senate race was a big win for President Duterte and his administration slate but a debacle

for the opposition Otso Diretso. Rehabilitated Boracay won accolades and drew tourists as foreign arrivals hit eight million by yearend, although it's hard to determine how many of those arrivals were Chinese who went to the Philippines to work for offshore gaming operators.

Build, Build, Build was derailed by the nearly five-month delay in the enactment of the 2019 national budget. The ambitious infrastructure project, however, began regaining its pace in the second half of the year. The delayed budget also put a drag on economic growth, but targets are expected to be achieved by next year.

Inflation eased during the year, thanks in part to falling rice prices, although it meant suffering for the country's 2.7 million rice farmers and their families. Saving the local rice industry must be given priority this year.

Around Christmas, inflation was felt in the most basic items. Onions can make you cry, and their holiday prices made people sob. The Department of Agriculture says it is readying the approval of onion importation to pull down prices.

The changing of the year is always a time to rectify errors and learn from mistakes of the past year, dwell on the positive and build from the gains.

A happy New Year to one and all!



Reduced water allocation from Angat Dam to continue

By RAMON EFREN LAZARO

MALOLOS – The water level in Angat Dam did not reach its ideal end-of-the-year mark of 212 meters.

Monitoring by the Bulacan provincial disaster risk reduction and management office showed that as of 8 a.m. yesterday, the dam's water level was 10.49 meters short of its ideal mark.

Sevillo David Jr., executive director of the National Water Resources Board, told

The STAR this means that reduced water allocation for Metro Manila residents and irrigation of Bulacan and Pampanga farms would be maintained.

Water supply for Metro Manila's consumption remains at 40 cubic meter per second, six cms less than its

regular allocation.

The allocation for Metro Manila will return to 46 cubic meters per second if the dam's water level will reach 212 meters, David had earlier said.

Daily rotational service interruptions were previously implemented because of low water elevation in Angat and Ipo dams.

Angat Dam supplies 97 percent of Metro Manila's water needs.

Water for irrigation of

Bulacan and Pampanga farms is still at 10 cms. The normal allocation is 30 cms.

Bustos Dam supplies water to irrigate 12,000 hectares of rice fields in Bulacan and 9,000 hectares in Pampanga, but the bulk of the allocation comes from Angat Dam.

David said cloud seeding might be conducted in the watershed of Angat Dam as part of the contingency plans to raise the water level.



Digong desidido sa Kaliwa at Wawa Dam

Desidido si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte na pasimulan na ang pagpapatayo ng Kaliwa dam at Wawa dam upang hindi na dumanas ng krisis sa tubig ang Metro Manila.

Nangako ang Pangulo na babayaran ang mga apektadong katutubo at bibigyan sila ng reloasyon.

"This will be the last resort to have water in Manila. I will order them to go ahead," wika pa ng Pangulo.

Nagbabala ang Pangulo sa korte na huwag magpapalabas ng temporary restraining order (TRO) bagkus ay inatasan ang mga ahensiya ng gobyerno kapag may ganito.

"But for the courts to issue itong mga TRO, sabi ko nga, do not take it to the point na sabihin ko 'ignore them,' " giit pa ng Pangulo.

Ang Wawa dam ay itatayo sa Rizal habang sa Quezon naman ang Kaliwa dam.

Samantala, nagbanta ang Pangulo na sususpendihin niya ang writ of habeas corpus upang arestuhin ang mga nasa likod ng water concession agreements.

"I want billionaires inside the prison. Makatikim talaga 'yang mga y***' na 'yan. Sabi ko nga sa mga military, and you, if perchance I do not make it to the finish line, 'wag ninyong bitawan 'yang kalokohan ng mga mayayaman. You continue fighting them. They are there really to scratch everything from the bottom of the barrel," wika pa ni Pangulong Duterte.

(Rudy Andal)



Du30 not threatening SC on dam projects—DOJ

THE Department of Justice on Tuesday clarified that President Rodrigo Duterte is not threatening the judiciary when the Chief Executive warned court judges against issuance of temporary restraining order to stop the construction of the Kaliwa Dam and Wawa Dam projects, which he earlier approved to end the water supply problems in Metro Manila.

Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra explained that President Duterte was not threatening the judiciary or suppressing the rights of parties to seek redress from courts.

"No. The president knows that the judiciary is independent of the executive branch. he was merely expressing, in his own usual tough style, a personal sentiment and hope that the courts will not obstruct the pursuit of major development projects," Guevarra said in a text message.

Guevarra recalled that there is an existing law that prohibits all courts, except the Supreme court, from issuing restraining orders/preliminary injunctions against national government infrastructure projects.

The DOJ chief was referring to Republic Act 8975, entitled "An act to ensure the expeditious implementation and completion of government's infrastructure projects by prohibiting lower courts from issuing TROs, preliminary [prohibitory] injunctions, and preliminary mandatory injunctions."

"That law is still in effect and provides the legal basis for the President's recent statement on the Kaliwa and Wawa dam projects," Guevarra said. **Rey E. Requejo**



Solon wants focus on climate crisis

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

LIBERAL Party president Senator Francis Pangilinan has expressed hope the public will focus on climate crisis and food security this 2020.

"As 2019 winds down and we look toward 2020, let's make a commitment to continue standing up for our rights and what is true, and for our future and our children," he said.

"We will be faced with fresh challenges anew—higher prices triggered by TRAIN Law, low farmers' incomes, climate crisis," warned Pangilinan.

Despite the joy of 2019, he told the public to always remember "our countrymen who lost their homes, jobs and lives due to natural disasters."

"It would be a bigger disaster if we will neglect and ignore the threats of climate crisis. climate crisis is a crisis of humanity," he said.

He said this would affect food production or farming or fishing.

The task ahead, he said, is enormous, but the people's fighting spirit is greater.

Due to this, he exhorted everybody to heed the call of scientists to lower our so-called carbon footprint and reduce pollution. Let us start in our home and community: Reduce, reuse, recycle *ng mga gamit, kasama na ang tubig at kuryente.*

Senator Juan Edgardo Anagara wished for a health care that would heal us when sickness strikes.

"Better schools for our children, so they can go through life as far and as fast as their talent will take them. Jobs for all Filipinos, one that will put food on the table, roof over his head, and hope in the hearts of his loved ones."

"For those who feed us, a better year, bumper harvest and bountiful catch."

"To those who labor overseas, more reunions with loved ones, and finally, after dreams have been met, a one-way ticket to the homeland, for their families to be complete again."

To civil servants, he said the continuing passion to serve the people, whether molding the minds of the youth, defending the country's borders, or keeping the streets safe.

He also wanted entrepreneurs profit with honor, a just return to the audacity of their investments, including millennials in brave start-ups.



Fireworks injuries continue to climb

By SHEILA CRISOSTOMO

Eight more persons were added to the list of firecracker-related injuries yesterday morning, bringing the total cases to 62 since Dec. 21, the Department of Health (DOH) reported.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said the recent development "is not a good sign" as the figure is higher by two

cases compared to the same period last year, which had 60.

"Maybe because we have good weather now. While in 2018, it rained and people were not able to use firecrackers," Duque said.

He said what was alarming was that a majority of the victims are children, the youngest just one year old.

Based on its latest report, *piccolo* is the leading cause of in-

juries, accounting for nine cases.

It was followed by *boga* and *kwitis* with six each, and 5-star and *lucis* with five cases each.

"Forty-seven or 76 percent suffered blast or burn injuries not requiring amputation, 16 or 26 percent had eye injuries and two or three percent required amputation. Of the 62 cases, two had multiple injuries," the report said.

The National Capital Re-

gion has the highest reported cases with 27, followed by Ilocos region with eight.

Cagayan Valley, Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon) and Bicol have four cases each.

Total ban

Senators have pushed anew for a total ban on the sale and use of firecrackers and other pyrotechnic devices except for

authorized fireworks displays.

The lawmakers made the call as the DOH recorded 62 firecracker-related injuries since Dec. 21, including the case of a seven-year-old boy from General Trias, Cavite whose two fingers were amputated.

According to the DOH, 35 of these cases involved the use of illegal firecrackers such as *piccolo* and *boga*.

The DOH said a total ban on

firecrackers may not be possible now, although it is the best measure to prevent injuries.

Duque said it is easy to impose a ban, but the livelihood of the workers in the firecracker industry must be considered.

"But down the road, the direction should be the total prohibition of firecrackers," he said. — With Paolo Romero, Ramon Efren Lazaro, Marc Jayson Cayabyab



Government to require energy efficiency rating for vehicles

By MYRNA M. VELASCO

The government will be enforcing "energy efficiency rating" or fuel economy performance for transport vehicles in compliance with the prescriptions of Republic Act 11285 or the Energy Efficiency and Conservation (EEC) Act.

The implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of the law stipulated that the Department of Energy (DOE), in collaboration with the Department of Transportation (DOTr) and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) shall "prescribe fuel economy performance labeling requirements for transport," which shall then be enforced to all manufacturers, importers, distributors and dealers of vehicles in the country.

As mandated, the DOE shall commission the research and development of "vehicle fuel economy rating scale" with due consultation will all affected stakeholders.

"The rating scale shall be comparable with baseline data,"

according to the energy department; and such must be understandable to the consumers.

The fuel economy label for vehicles, the DOE emphasized, shall contain the vehicle model and make; production year of the vehicle; fuel economy rating in kilometers per liter; carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions in ton per kilometer; and vehicle emission standards.

It has to be enforced also that "the fuel economy label shall bear the DOE logo and the fuel consumption rating" of the vehicles.

As specified, "the rating shall not be implemented for the first two (2) years from the effectivity of the law's IRR in order to allow the DOE to collect fuel economy data from the relevant industry players."

The law's IRR had been promulgated and signed this 2019, entailing then that the energy efficiency rating policy for vehicles or the transport sector shall not be implemented until year 2021.

The energy department indicated that the relevant data it

shall be gathering from relevant stakeholders and industry players shall become the basis for it to formulate the rating levels to be enforced on the transport sector.

The EEC law chiefly requires that "vehicle manufacturers, importers and dealers shall comply with the fuel economy performance labeling requirements," as set by the DOE.

Further, the vehicle manufacturers, importers and dealers are directed to "provide technical information on the fuel economy rating of the engine that will allow the consumers to make an informed decision in choosing vehicles for their use."

At the same time, these players in the transport sector must allow the DOE or its authorized representatives "to conduct market monitoring in their local showroom to verify attachment of energy label" in their cars or vehicles.

"The monitoring schedule for each showroom shall be done at least once a year," the energy department has specified.'



TITLE:

Creation of Autonomous Region of Cordillera pushed

Thirty-two years since the promulgation of the Constitution, the region of Cordillera has yet to achieve real autonomy

By **Hananeel Borley**
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A bill establishing the Autonomous Region of Cordillera (ARC) was filed at the Senate which seeks to provide "real autonomy" to the people from the northern mountains and give them the authority to create their own policies for the region.

Senate Bill 1232, or An Act Establishing the Autonomous Region of the Cordilleras, was filed by Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri last 11 December 2019 and will be subject to the Senate's committee deliberation.

In his explanatory note, Zubiri said that just like in Muslim Mindanao, the 1987 Constitution provided for the autonomy of the Cordilleras. However, the Cordillera region's autonomy has not yet been granted up until today.

"Thirty-two years since the promulgation of the Constitution, the region of Cordillera has yet to achieve real autonomy. The establishment of an autonomous region of Cordillera is important to provide a basic structure of government in the region and to secure the identity and cultural heritage of the people of Cordillera," he said.

By establishing a law for the autonomy of the current Cordillera Administrative Region, the indigenous tribes will be authorized to decide on what policies and

programs that will best benefit the region and they will have the freedom to pursue their political, economic, social, and cultural development.

Zubiri said that this freedom will still be within national sovereignty and in consonance with their local practices and cultural identity.

"With genuine regional autonomy, it is our belief that underdevelopment and poverty in the Cordilleras can be more effectively addressed," Zubiri said.

The Cordilleras are composed of indigenous tribes collectively known as Igorots but there are 12 ethnolinguistic groups in the region namely the Applai, Balangao/Balihon, Bontok, Kankanaey, Iwak, Karao, Ibaloy, Kalarugaya, Ifugai, Isnag, Kalinga and Tingguian.

Under the bill, the ARC will remain an integral and inseparable part of the Philippines and the national government will still provide the

ARC a proportionate and equitable share in the annual national budget and foreign-assisted projects.

The ARC will remain a democratic political system that will still allow people to participate in all political processes. It will also adopt a policy on local autonomy where regional powers will be devolved to local government units particularly in education, health, human resources, to cite some.

The bill also proposes to give ARC the authority to declare holidays, public administration and bureaucracy in the region; and identification; generation, mobilization of international human resources for capacity building.

The ARC could also create sources of revenue as they were given the authority to regulate power generation, transmission, and distribution operating exclusively in their area. It can also impose taxes except for those which were already levied by the national and local government.

They are also accountable for the protection of the ancestral domains and lands consistent with Republic Act 8371 or the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act.

The bill includes sections for ARC's preamble and requirements for Cordilleran identity.

ARC will have elective officials such as the Regional Governor, Regional Vice Governor, and Members of the Regional Assembly.

The elected Regional Vice-Governor must be with the same party as the Vice Governor as the bill provides that the vote to the Governor will be counted as a vote for his running mate for Vice Governor. They are given three years to serve the region and can only serve for three consecutive terms.

The ARC will also have its Executive Secretary, Regional Accountant, Regional Budget Officer, Regional Administrator, Regional Legal Officer, Regional Treasurer, and Regional General Services Officer.



Unloading bay A van unloads a truckload of deliveries in Divisoria.

ROMAN PROSPERO