

MWSS urges public to conserve water amid El Niño

MANILA - While there is enough water supply, the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) on Friday appealed to the public to conserve water to cushion the effects of El Niño during the summer months.

“Since we primarily source our water from Angat-Ipo-La Mesa water system, we have to do our share to help lessen the effect of El Niño not only on our need for water in our households and industries but also on agriculture,” MWSS administrator Reynaldo V. Velasco told the Philippine News Agency (PNA).

He said there is always a need to use water wisely to prevent shortage and ensure its the steady supply, especially during the dry season; and to contain the effects of El Niño in the tropical Pacific although weak it may be.

According to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), this development has resulted in the upgrade of the ENSO Alert System to El Niño Advisory, adding that this year may be the warmest year in record because the El Niño is worsened by man-made global warming as bared by scientists.

Velasco said that, as a rule, discharge for potable water supply becomes the priority during drought events, reducing water releases for agricultural irrigation and power generation.

Water from Angat passes through Ipo Dam where it is then released to La Mesa Dam. According to PAGASA, La Mesa Dam has a 47-cubic-meter-per-second (cms) allocation of water from Angat Dam, higher than the 44 cms the government normally earmarks for it during the dry season.

Velasco said the water level at La Mesa is recorded below normal level and has prompted calls for water conservation from concerned sectors to maintain water reserve availability.

A MWSS bulletin said as of March 5, its reservoir water level is 69.47 meters, down from its normal high

water level of 80.15 meters.

The onset of the dry season and the increasing demand from burgeoning population contributed to the decline in water level.

This does not mean, however, that a water shortage looms in the horizon for residents of Metro Manila and neighboring provinces unless there is disregard for water conservation until the rainy months set in.

The rainfall for Angat watershed for March is forecast at 38.1 percent, way below normal and 68.8 percent, below normal for April. Rainfall condition is way below normal if the percentage is less than or = 40; below normal if it is 41-80; near normal, 81-120; and above normal if it is greater than 120.

Forecast rainfall for Metro Manila in percent of normal is 37.8 percent in March, way below normal. April, May and June rainfall forecasts are below normal.

The province of Bulacan that hosts the Angat reservoir also has a way below normal rainfall forecast at 32.1 percent in March. Except for southern Mindanao

and Surigao del Sur where near normal is likely, most parts of the country is forecast to have way below to below normal rainfall conditions this month.

According to PAGASA's Climate Outlook for March-August 2019, average to slightly warmer than average temperature will prevail during the period.

Six to nine tropical cyclones may develop/enter the Philippine area of responsibility but the frequency will be below average based on historical perspectives.

PAGASA also forecast meteorological dry spell to drought conditions in most areas of the country in the coming months.

MWSS has its water security plan for 2018-2023 in place and is aimed at easing the strain on the Angat-Ipo-La-Mesa water system and ensure water supply during the occurrence of El Niño, among others.

This stop-gap measure consists of the A-B-C projects and Wawa Dam Project of the consortium of Enrique Razon and Oscar Violago, pending the completion of the Kaliwa Dam. (PNA)

Tambungan assumes as new EPD chief

MANILA – Police Brig. Gen. Christopher Tambungan formally assumed as the new director of the Eastern Police District (EPD) on Thursday.

Tambungan, a member of PNPA Class 1987 and former Manila Police District Deputy Director for Administration, replaced Police Brig. Gen. Bernabe Balba, who was relieved from the post after a member of the EPD's District Drug Enforcement Unit (DDEU) was arrested for robbery extortion.

"It's just normal. As President Rodrigo Duterte said, we will intensify our campaign against illegal drugs as well as our internal cleansing," Tambungan told reporters after the turnover ceremony at the EPD headquarters in Pasig City.

Tambungan noted that he will check on the performance of the EPD personnel first before implementing a reshuffle.

Balba, for his part, thanked the EPD personnel and encouraged the public to continue reporting unscrupulous activities committed by police officers.

"Let me thank you all for your cooperation as I carry out my duties as your District Director. I hope I've cre-

ated marks in your lives and somehow I got the chance to help you, influence you to keep on doing the right thing. I encourage you to keep being a good example to others. Let us continue to love our job and work with professionalism and discipline. Thank you very much once again and may God bless us all," Balba told reporters.

Meanwhile, NCRPO head, Maj. Gen. Guillermo Eleazar, who led the turnover ceremony, instructed all police directors, commanders, and chiefs of units and offices to properly and constantly supervise their personnel to maintain discipline and order within the ranks and ensure their compliance with all lawful orders, policies, rules and regulations.

"I will continue to do my job properly. The relief of personnel could be a catalyst towards what we want to achieve. This serves as an example to other units. As what the PNP chief (Gen. Oscar Albayalde) warned, all the commanders on the ground, even the district and regional directors, they will be accountable when-

ever there are problems or wrongdoings of their respective drug units," Eleazar told reporters after the ceremony.

PNP chief, Gen. Oscar Albayalde, meanwhile reminded all police personnel that he will never tolerate illegal acts or wrongdoings committed by anyone within their ranks.

"When a recruit takes his oath as a professional police officer, he automatically loses or waives some of his rights in favor of organizational discipline, duties and responsibilities. So, being scolded, reprimanded, bawled out, or dressed down for misdemeanor, misconduct or commission of crime is just part and parcel of his life being in the uniformed service," Albayalde said in a statement.

"This is a stern warning to all PNP personnel. We will be adding more teeth to our campaign against those rogues and scallwags among our ranks. We will not hesitate to relieve any official from their posts should any incident like this extortion and robbery case would happen again," the PNP chief added. (PNA)

Require aliens to get work visa first before coming to PH: Bello

MANILA – The government plans to require foreign nationals to secure working visas before coming to the country.

According to Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Secretary Silvestre Bello III, the measure was discussed during their recent inter-agency meeting with the Department of Justice, Bureau of Immigration, Department of Finance, and Bureau of Internal Revenue.

Under this policy, foreigners who want to seek employment Authority (NEDA) Board approved the PHP211.42-billion PNR North 2 (Malolos-Clark Airport-Clark Green City Rail) project; the PHP175.32-billion PNR South Long Haul (Manila-Bicol); and, the PHP124.14-billion PNR South Commuter Line (Tubatan-Los Banos).

"We have three main thrusts: revitalization, transformation and the horizon," Magno said. (PNA)

ment in the country will have to secure working visas from the Philippine embassy in their respective countries.

"When you come here, you must come here to work. And for that purpose, you must have a working visa from your place of origin. For example, if you are a Chinese, you get from our Consular Office a working visa. If you are Japanese, you also get from our Consular Office in Japan," Bello said in an interview Thursday.

He noted that the proposal aims to screen foreigners looking to work in the Philippines.

"We need to be certain that the work they will do here cannot be done by a Filipino. This way, we can already control the entry of foreign workers," Bello said.

Bello, however, said the government also considers retaining the current system, wherein short-term employment will require a Special Working Permit from the Bureau of Immigration (BI) while a long-term employment requires an Alien Employment Permit from DOLE.

Reforms cut down PNR expenditures by almost 50%

MANILA -- The Philippine National Railways (PNR) reported that its operating expenses have been reduced by almost half in 2018.

PNR General Manager Junn Magno credited the significant decrease, from PHP771 million in 2017 to PHP395 million last year, to the transformation initiative of the government under President Rodrigo R. Duterte.

"PNR is embarking on transformation, we cannot absorb all these changes without embarking on the internal transformation being a 125-year old corporation and we survived as a culture-based company," Magno said in the weekly economic briefing in Malacañang on Wednesday.

"With all these new developments, we need to

transform ourselves to become an innovation-based competency corporation and as a GOCC (government-owned and controlled corporation)," he added.

Magno also noted the improving financial stability of PNR, with its rail revenues increasing by 6 percent from PHP239 million to PHP255 million in 2018, while its non-rail revenues increased by 9 percent from PHP159 million to PHP174 million.

"We streamlined the logistical processes: buying the diesel, obtaining security and all the stuff. Medyo na-improve namin iyong (We somehow improved the) efficiency," he said.

Magno said this transformation also resulted in more passengers being serviced by their trains.

"Operational-wise,

when we came in to power, we only serve 28,000 passengers per day in the South Corridor. In 2017, we increased it to 45,000. Right now, we are serving 65,000 per day," he said.

Magno said the nine new trains that the PNR bought from Indonesia will arrive by December this year.

He said the PNR wanted to increase the reliability of its trains to about 90 percent.

"With the rolling stock: we have 11, we used to have 14, but our reliability when we came in, was as low as 28 percent, we were able to increase it to 54 by end of the year. We want to increase our reliability as high as 90 percent -- the same with MRT 3," he said.

Recently, the National Economic and Develop-