

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
News and Information Bureau

PRESS BRIEFING OF MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ
WITH DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS
(DPWH) SECRETARY MANUEL BONOAN,
NATIONAL IRRIGATION ADMINISTRATION (NIA) ADMINISTRATOR EDUARDO GUILLEN
AND DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES
(DENR) UNDERSECRETARY CARLOS PRIMO DAVID
MAY 7, 2024 [11:08 A.M. – 11:50 A.M.]

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Magandang umaga, Malacañang Press Corps, and welcome sa ating press briefing ngayong araw, May 7.

In today's sectoral meeting about our country's water resources and management, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. directed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and relevant agencies to focus on the 40 million underserved population found to have no formal water supply. He reiterated the importance of the integrated water resource masterplan and managing water resources in the time of El Niño and mitigating flood during La Niña. He directed the relevant agencies to further explore foreign funding for identified priority investment areas for both local and international stakeholders.

It can be recalled that in April of last year, 2023, President Marcos signed an executive order creating DENR's Water Management Office. In the mapping and inventory done by the DENR, they found that 20 million are served by MWSS, 22 million by water districts, 20 million by LGU-run utilities, 10 million by private water supply providers but 40 million are still underserved by formal water supply. He directed the continued development of National Irrigation Administration dams for multipurpose use to include agricultural irrigation, fresh water supply, power supply, and flood control.

And to give us detailed information on water resource management and flood control measures, we are joined by DENR Undersecretary Carlos Primo David, Department of Public Works and Highways Secretary Manuel Bonoan and National Irrigation Administrator Eduardo Guillen. Good morning, gentlemen. Let's start with Secretary Bonoan, sir?

DPWH SEC. BONOAN: Good morning everybody. This morning actually, I presented in the sectoral meeting with the president, the sectoral cabinet meeting with the president, actually the flood management program of the Department of Public Works and Highways. I presented to him all the projects that were being implemented with local funds and, of course, the foreign-assisted projects.

In my briefing to him, actually, I said... the president asked me that, you know, I think we have to integrate our flood control management programs with the other sectors so that the water that we manage in the flood control do not go to the sea directly, and to the extent possible,

that we have to conserve and utilize it for the other purposes like for irrigation, water supply and power, if necessary.

So, this is a direct instruction of the president to me that we have to integrate all these components particularly in the major flood control projects of the department we've been undertaking, so this is what we are going to do in. Although there have been some flood control projects that the department has been implementing with these components but we will, of course, enhance actually the formulation of the other structures that are needed for irrigation, water supply and power because the budget of the Department of Public Works and Highways over the years for flood control program has increased tremendously.

And, actually, for 2024 if I recall, actually the total budget of the department for flood control projects for both foreign-assisted and locally funded runs to about, I think more than 300 billion pesos 'no. I think this is a good source of what the president calls the integrated water resource management program for irrigation, water supply and power if necessary.

So, thank you very much for that.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you, Secretary Bonoan. Undersecretary CP David, would you like to expound on the 40 million underserved and the other priority programs that you identified?

DENR USEC. DAVID: Thank you, Daphne, and good morning everyone.

It has been a year since the president created the Water Resources Management Office 'no, April 27 of 2023 to be exact, when he signed the executive order creating our office. The main objective of the office is to integrate and harmonize the different programs of the various agencies of government with water-related functions such as DPWH, NIA, the water districts, LWUA and the MWSS 'no.

And I'm happy to report to everybody that after one year, first and foremost, we have completely mapped out our resources, our water resources. Believe it or not, we are actually very rich in water resources. I should probably qualify that because we are rich in water resources during the rainy season; and during the dry season, this is our perennial issue – that there is not enough water for irrigation, even for drinking water and power generation such as what we are now seeing in Mindanao.

I'm also happy to report to everybody that over the past year, we have been coordinating with NIA, with Admin Guillen in transforming the different NIA facilities to become multipurpose facilities and not just for irrigation. I think this is a big step 'no towards integrating our water resources. And then for this year, we are again integrating flood control 'no with Sec. Manny Bonoan and DPWH, and I think this is a more harmonized way of rationalizing the infrastructure requirements that we have, serving various purposes including water supply, flood control, irrigation, maybe even for ecotourism, power generation, aquaculture and so on and so forth.

Finally, the directive of the president this morning was very clear – 40 million of our residents ‘no, of Filipinos do not have access to a formal water supply. They still access water from springs, from creeks, some even rainwater ‘no – they rely on rainwater for drinking water purposes. And while we have big projects in line for large cities such as Bacolod, Cebu, Cagayan de Oro, Tarlac City and so on, we have to focus on the 40 million underserved population and there are a few strategies that we have in mind in order for us to provide water to these communities.

Thank you.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Administrator Guillen, would you like to give some examples again of the multipurpose dams that the president asked everyone to focus on as well?

NIA ADMINISTRATOR GUILLEN: Good morning, everybody.

Huwag na tayong lalayo ano, ito na lang sa ating Pantabangan Dam. Actually, mag-50 years na iyan sa September ano. Ang laki po ng impact sa atin niyan, in fact last year nagkaroon tayo ng malalaking bagyo kagaya kay Egay, Falcon – hindi ho nag-release ang Pantabangan Dam ng tubig. So, imagine ang effect sa Central Luzon kung wala iyong Pantabangan Dam ano.

So, iyon ang message ng ating pangulo, iyon ang gusto niyang mangyari. In fact, last year pa, kinausap na niya kami ni Sec. Manny Bonoan ano, ang DPWH at nag-a-identify na kami since last year pa ng puwede naming convergence na mga projects. Kasi sabi niya, ang message natin na unity dito eh simulan nga natin sa national government muna, pagsama-samahin iyong resources para sa ikabubuti ng ating mga proyekto, makatipid tayo sa implementation at mas maraming pakinabang.

Again, ang gusto po ng ating pangulo ay iyong water management ano para mayroon tayong pang-irigasyon. Nabanggit kanina iyong sa flood control, itong hydroelectricity/water, itong power; hindi lang iyon, may aquaculture pa tayo, may pang-tourism pa ano po, so iyon po ang ginagawa natin ngayon. Iyong resources natin ay nag-uusap po kami para mas marami pong pakinabang at mas makatipid tayo sa implementation ng mga projects.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Maricel Halili, TV-5.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: Magandang umaga po. May we know kung anu-anong areas iyong sinasabi natin na 40 million underserved population, saan po ang pinakamarami?

DENR USEC. DAVID: Thank you, Maricel. By far, most of them are in Mindanao. A lot of the communities in BARMM still do not have access to a formal water supply. I should also mention, and this is a statistic that I hope everyone remembers – we have roughly around 7,600 plus islands but not many people know that 5,500 of those are small islands and many of these small islands do have communities, mostly fisherfolks and each and every one of

those do not have access to water. The islands that I refer to have an area, on average, of around one square kilometer ‘no, so they’re really tiny islands and this is what the president wants us to focus on.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: And, Usec, you mentioned earlier na mayroon kayong mga strategies in mind, anu-ano po itong strategies na tinutukoy ninyo?

DENR USEC. DAVID: Sige po. Iyong unang istrategiya na naisip namin para sa small island barangays at nakakasa na po ‘yan, nagsimula na kami nitong programa na ‘to, ay bigyan sila ng freshwater, ng tubig pang-inom through the desalination process. Alam po ng lahat iyong desalination, mahal po iyan na proseso at saka kailangan ay may volume para medyo maibsan iyong cost noong imprastruktura. But over the years the technology has improved tremendously and now we have what are called the modular desalination systems – sinlaki lang siya ng container van at it can provide water to up to around 500 families in each and every desalination plant.

MARICEL HALILI/TV 5: Sorry, gaano kalaki po iyong cost na tinitingnan natin for this, sir?

DENR USEC. DR. DAVID: Depende sa dami ng seserbisyuhang tao; pero roughly five to eight million pesos per plant.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Racquel Bayan, Radyo Pilipinas.

RACQUEL BAYAN/RADYO PILIPINAS: For DENR. Sir, iyong binabanggit ninyo po kanina na gagawin po nating mga strategy para po matutukan iyong 40 million, may enough budget po tayo for that; binabanggit ninyo pong five to eight million po iyong kailangan natin?

DENR USEC. DR. DAVID: Marami tayong iniisip na pagkukunan ng pondo – siyempre government funds; we are also looking at the possibility of soft loans from development partners and organizations; na-bring up ko rin kay Presidente kaninang umaga kung puwede tayong mag-isyu ng government bonds for water projects; and of course PPP ‘no, sa pagtutulungan ng private sector.

RACQUEL BAYAN/RADYO PILIPINAS: And, sir, may ibinigay po bang target si Pangulong Marcos kanina na by 2024 mapababa natin for a certain number iyong 40 million?

DENR USEC. DR. DAVID: Wala po siyang ibinigay na timeline pero ang natatandaan ko sa presentation namin kanina soon after we ended our presentation, iyon mismo iyong sinabi niya right away – ang sabi niya, *“Hindi acceptable that we have 40 million of our countrymen that do not have access to formal water supply.”*

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Alvin Baltazar, Radyo Pilipinas. Please pass the mic.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Doctor David, magandang umaga po. Iyong nabanggit ninyo kanina na desalination, ginagamit na po ba ito doon sa mga affected areas na apektado ng El Niño particularly po doon sa mga nag-declare na ng state of calamity?

DENR USEC. DR. DAVID: Salamat sa tanong. Wala pa po tayong na-install na bagong desalination system dahil sa problema ng El Niño but what I can share with you is that there are at least 20 of these island barangays that actually are already utilizing a similar system 'no – so, proven na iyong technology.

Last week nag-meeting ako with five potential suppliers of desalination plants, ang hiningi ko lang naman dito sa mga kumpanya na ito, local and international, you can be a supplier and therefore focus on selling these technologies to us or you can be a partner because if you are a partner then you are part of the program of being able to sustain this equipment and that you are part of the actual community development that our country wants.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Doctor David, follow up lang po. In layman's term po para maintindihan din noong ating mga kababayan, ano po ba iyong desalination process?

DENR USEC. DR. DAVID: Okay. Ang desalination process, very succinctly, is the conversion of sea water to fresh water and the main component of a desalination system is a membrane filter. So, siguro tatagalugin ko – para siyang pang-sala na kung saan ay through pressure ay pipilitin na pumasok iyong tubig dito sa membrane na ito at maiiwan, dahil maliliit lang iyong butas noong filter – maiiwan ang lahat ng salt at ang lalabas lang ay iyong fresh water.

So, medyo mahal iyong technology dahil sa membranes, very power-intensive din siya pero sa ngayon iyong technology has evolved so much that these filters are now modular in size – maliliit na lang sila and they can now be powered by solar power.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Pasensiya na, Doktor. Iyong sa desalination, so safe ito? Kapag dumaan na sa desalination process – safe pong inumin iyong tubig mula doon sa tubig na alat?

DENR USEC. DR. DAVID: Of course, yes. In fact iyong mga bansa na wala masyadong fresh water sources – Middle East for example, even the United States 'no, in some parts, they rely already on the desalination system. Pero bago itong technology na ito na modular. Iyong mga planta na nasa abroad malalaki iyan, in fact we have one already that is about to be online for Cebu City – can you imagine 'no Cebu City will have its own desalination plant. But what we are referring to here are small water treatment plants/desalination plants specific in size for the different island barangays.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Tuesday Niu, DZBB.

TUESDAY NIU/DZBB: Good morning po. Doctor David, sir, follow up lang doon sa question ni Kuya Alvin. Sa 40 million po na mga Pilipinong walang access sa formal water supply mga ilang

units ng desalination system iyong kailangan para ma-accommodate lahat itong 40 million na ito?

DENR USEC. DR. DAVID: Okay. So, i-qualify lang po iyan – iyong 40 million include those in the island barangays and also upland barangays – so, wala namang desalination na kailangan doon, iba naman iyong technology na kakailanganin; and then for Mindanao, I think may source of fresh water pero walang infrastructure at dito natin kailangan iyong pagtutulongan with NIA and DPWH – mayroong malaking ilog o kaya ground water pero walang imprastraktura.

TUESDAY NIU/DZBB: So, papaano po iyong...

DENR USEC. DR. DAVID: We have a priority list of 65 island barangays that we want to start with – 65.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay, same corner? Sam Medenilla, Business Mirror.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: For Sec. Bonoan, na-mention po nila na target po ng DPWH na ma-allocate ng 300 billion for both integrated water systems – mas tumaas po ba ito compared doon sa mga previous years? Iyong January po kasi parang mayroon po yatang information from DENR na 250 billion iyong original na budget, bakit po kaya siya na-increase to 300 billion?

DPWH SEC. BONOAN: Well, let me just clarify a little bit ‘no. Iyong sinasabi ko kanina na allocation for flood control projects is about more than 300 billion this year ‘no – 300 billion projects ‘no flood control – sa buong Pilipinas na iyon ‘no. And what the president is telling me, well, instructed me actually this morning is sabi niya “*Saan ba mapupunta iyong mga tubig kapag nag-flood control project kayo?*” Sinasabi ko lang kay Presidente, of course it will go to the sea, ang sabi niya “*Naku! Eh huwag naman itatapon lahat iyan, kailangan i-conserve natin. Napakarami pala tayong tubig, itinatapon lang natin. So, why don’t you integrate iyong pag-conserve ng water natin with facilities so that we can use it for irrigation, we can use it for water supply, in some instances baka puwede rin nating gamitin for power generation.*” So, this is what we’re going to do actually.

In many of the flood control projects that we’ll be implementing, we will have to coordinate with the National Irrigation Administration or iyong sa water supply naman. For structures or mga water impounding dams actually to be specific, that, we will integrate it into the flood control programs that the department will be undertaking.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Sir, so separate po ito doon sa 250 billion for infrastructures for generating water po – iyong flood control na 300 billion or same lang po ba?

DPWH SEC. BONOAN: Hiwalay iyon.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Tapos, sir, mayroon po bang update doon sa proposed na Candaba impounding..?

DPWH SEC. BONOAN: Yes. Actually, I almost presented this in the sectoral program. Kasi iyong Candaba flood control project, ang binabalak namin dito is actually to construct what we call the Pampanga Major Flood Control Project. This will be a construction of a floodway from San Antonio swamp in Nueva Ecija, a new floodway that will go through the Pampanga Delta area; about 62 kilometers 'no of new floodway that will address the perennial problems of flooding in Bulacan, Nueva Ecija and Pampanga and we are now in the process of discussions with the Asian Development Bank for the implementation of this project.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Sir, ask ko lang kung magkano iyong budget for this at saka kung ano iyong possible timeline?

DPWH SEC. BONOAN: This year we will be doing the detailed engineering design, and so we are now in the process of procuring the consultancy services to do the detailed engineering design. That will determine actually kung magkano iyong cost of the project. Ang initial estimate yata namin naman is almost about ₱70 billion or something. But we will know the final engineering and that will determine kung magkano talaga iyong cost niyan. But what is important here is actually, on this project, we will make sure that iyong instructions of the president that there will be, the components for water supply, irrigation, sa tingin ko, water supply and irrigation will be integrated into this program.

NIA ADMINISTRATOR GUILLEN: Mayroong ginagawa ang NIA ngayon doon, actually for bidding namin maybe next month or this month, iyong Cабiao Water Impounding Project natin na directly makaka-affect iyon sa Candaba. So, maghuhukay kami doon, within doon sa mega dike ng DPWH ng impounding dam para sa aming irrigation, but malaking tulong iyong sa flood control. And on top of the Talavera River, for implementation na rin namin iyong Maringalo Dam. Malaki din tulong ito, kasi directly iyon ang makaka-affect sa San Antonio Swamp.

So, kung nakikita ninyo iyong ating methodology ngayon, iyong project ng highways, nagko-complementary kami sa NIA para mapakinabangan natin iyong tubig. Again, ang instruction sa atin ng ating pangulo, dapat water management, hindi natatapon sa dagat.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: Kay Dr. David po. Sir, it is possible po na pagpasok ng La Niña, problema naman natin iyong matinding pagbaha? If in case po na mangyari iyon, what are the measures po that the government should undertake to prevent massive flooding po?

DENR USEC. DAVID: Tama iyong sinabi mo, Eden, parang parte na iyan ng pagiging Pilipino na kulang ang tubig kapag dry season, sobra naman iyong tubig, baha, traffic and so on during the wet season. We have to change the paradigm the way we look at water – that is how I see it: The water that we see has a disadvantage because it creates flooding and all the

disadvantages, like crops being destroyed or traffic; it is actually the same water that we will require for irrigation and drinking water purposes. So, kapag iniba natin iyong pagtingin natin sa isang resource na ganito and start impounding water for example during the wet season, so that we will be able to use it during the dry season. We will realize that water is actually the biggest asset of the country.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: So, papaano po natin maiipon itong mga darating na maraming tubig para naman po mangyari po iyong inyong mga binabanggit kanina?

DENR USEC. DAVID: So, iyon na nga iyong ini-explain kanina na lahat na ng facilities natin, maging primary purpose niya is flood control or kaya for irrigation, eh gagawin na natin siyang multipurpose na puwede na siyang gamitin for various purposes – aquaculture, water supply and so on. So, kailangan talaga, siguro in the past, ang planning natin was very individualistic. NIA will look at what is required for food security, irrigation lang ang focus nila; DPWH for flood, kami water supply, and now I think, it's about time that we integrate all those.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: But iyong nabanggit nina Secretary and Administrator, for the long-term solution, hindi po ba? Iyon pong short term lang kasi we are expecting na after May, magsisimula na po iyong La Niña and iyon nga, problema sa baha.

DENR USEC. DAVID: Si Sec. Manny ang sasagot niyan sa baha.

DPWH SEC. BONOAN: Alam ninyo, at this point of time, I think this is, hindi natin muna siguro maiiwasan iyong mga pagbaha in some areas. Of course, we are implementing flood control projects. But sinabi ko nga kanina doon sectoral cabinet meeting kanina that flood control infrastructure program is just one of the components to address flooding problems. Kasi sabi ko nakita namin kasi that one of the causes of flooding in many areas is actually iyong, for the longest time ay walang nagdi-desilt ng mga rivers, so the riverbeds are very shallow now. So in the event of any rainfall na medyo intense, siyempre umaapaw na kaagad iyan because the riverbeds are very shallow now. So, we have to—one of the programs of the department is to undertake iyong desilting and dredging of iyong mga major rivers and tributaries para magkaroon ng increase carrying capacity of the rivers.

But having said that sabi ko, again, alam ninyo iyong mga debris, mga silts, comes from erosion from the mountain sides or other from the areas. So, sabi ko, we have also to integrate not only on the infrastructure sector, pero doon sa environment management, actually. Kailangan natin, kabi nga ni Presidente, kailangan natin mag-reforestation, kasi mukhang medyo kuwan na iyong mga mountain slopes natin, and so these are the sources of erosion that fills up actually iyong mga waterways natin, so iyan kailangan din natin.

In coordination with the DENR, we will be entering into a memorandum of agreement so that we can actually implement iyong water management through reforestation – DPWH and the other agencies for that matter. So it's a long-term process but I think, we now also have to address these kinds of issues.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: I would like to add also. Like you are saying, so uulan na naman baka magbaha. Hindi naman ngayon lang magpaplano, mayroon din kanina, ni-report ni Secretary Bonoan, maraming completed projects ang Marcos administration from July 2022 to 2024, mga 4,700 flood control projects have been completed; ongoing, there are 4,200 ongoing projects including big ticket projects and then of course some proposed ones are in the line. Thank you.

JEAN MANGALUZ/INQ. NET: Can I ask, how long does it take to create water impounding system and aabot po ba siya or will we be able to prepare them in time for the La Niña and likewise, how long does it take to establish modular desalination systems and aabot po ba siya within the El Niño?

NIA ADMINISTRATOR GUILLEN: Well, take the case of Jalaur Dam, sinimulan iyon noong 2019, iyong mobilization, eh nagka-pandemic pa. Eh tapos na po namin iyong tatlong dam. So, actually mabilis lang naman iyan, iyong mga nasa 100 meters na dam ay kaya nating tapusin iyan ng three years lamang. And of course mayroon din tayong mga 30-meters na dam, mga one year to two years lamang po iyan.

In fact, this month mayroon kaming iti-turnover na mga projects dito sa Bohol, dito sa may Quezon, Jalaur Dam sa may Iloilo, sa Ilocos, marami kaming natatapos na mga projects na. And of course, kapag kailangan natin talaga iyong pangmalakihang solution diyan, iyong mga long-term solution natin, mga high dams talaga. Dapat may high dams sa lahat ng major river basins natin para at least mayroon tayong malaking reservoir.

And sa NIA naman, iyong immediate solution natin, nakita rin namin na makakatulong din iyong kapag pinalitan namin iyong cropping calendar natin. Like in the case of Pantabangan Dam, December kasi kami nagpapatanim diyan, so babaguhin namin iyan, ipapasok namin iyong dalawang cropping natin sa October so mama-maximize natin iyong utilization ng tubig. Kapag na-maximize mo iyon, ibig sabihin, mas lesser iyong tendency na magkabaha. October, aani kami ng February, and then aani ulit ng July, so may hitting two birds with one stone eh – makaka-increase ka ng food security, ma-maximize mo pa iyong utilization ng tubig ng ating mga dams.

DENR USEC. DAVID: Quickly answer on Jean's question on desalination. We were looking for suppliers from Israel, Netherlands, Singapore and I was pleasantly surprised that we have four companies that have the technical capabilities to implement these kinds of projects. So, in four-week time puwede tayong mag-install, dahil lokal na siya.

ALEXIS ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR: Kay Doctor David, he mentioned the possibility of issuing government bonds for—is it infrastructure or water projects po ba?

DENR USEC. DAVID: Tama po. This is one idea that we were thinking about in DENR. Sa ngayon ang modalities ng financing ay PPP o kaya ay loan. Iyong government bonds kasi are mend to fund government projects, priority projects and this is another possible source of funding other than of course obviously iyong GAA natin. And so, the directive of the president is to start studying, ask help from our development partners World Bank, ADB and so on, to implement this.

ALEXIS ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR: Magkano po iyong debt papers na pino-propose, iyong i-issue for that?

DENR USEC. DAVID: Wala pa po, pero kapag tiningnan mo iyong mga government bonds ngayon, the interest that's being provided ranged from five to about seven percent interest.

ALEXIS ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR: Pero magkano po kaya iyong uutangin through bonds?

DENR USEC. DAVID: Wala pa akong idea diyan. Pero there are several priority projects that we have in mind, and there's number for that, and that is what we intend to reach over the years.

ALEXIS ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR: Commercial po ba o global market iyong pagbibentahan kung sakali?

DENR USEC. DAVID: I think we should start with local.

ALEXIS ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR: And then, what was the president's stance on your proposal to issue bonds for those projects?

DENR USEC. DAVID: Sabi niya to study. Study the possibility of issuing bonds and ask help from our development partners on how to go about this.

ALEXIS ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR: So, wala pa pong amount?

DENR USEC. DAVID: Wala pa.

ALEXIS ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR: Salamat po.

NIA ADMINISTRATOR GUILLEN: Gusto ko lang dagdagan iyon 'no. Gusto ko i-point out na iyong sa directive ng ating presidente ngayon, malaki po ang matitipid natin sa funding. Take the case of halimbawa itong DPWH magtayo ng sabo dam, iyong sabo dam na iyan iyong 500 million na sabo dam ay makakatipid ang NIA doon kasi mismo iyong sabo dam na ang gagamitin namin para sa diversion dam.

So, iyong direktiba ng ating pangulo—binibiro ko nga si Sec. Manny Bonoan kapag mga Ilocano pala ang nag-uusap kuripot nakakatipid 'no. Malaki ang matitipid ng ating gobyerno dito at saka mas magiging effective po siya.

OSEÑA-PAEZ: Katrina Domingo, ABS-CBN.

KATRINA DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Hi, sir. Sir, aside from Cebu, mayroon pa po bang ibang cities that are set to construct or to operate large desalination system?

DPWH SEC. BONOAN: Baka may maisip pa ako mamaya. Pero iyong nasa Cebu City, it has been constructed already, they're doing the finishing touches in terms of operating it. Ganoon iyong kakulangan natin ng tubig sa iba-ibang parte ng Pilipinas. Buti na lang sa Cebu City, it is financially viable dahil there are 4.1 million Filipinos living in Metro Cebu.

Pero iyong gap natin ngayon are the smaller communities, they may not be as financially viable when you implement the projects there but nevertheless we cannot leave behind our countrymen. Not just because they are not financially viable, it doesn't mean that we forget about them.

KATRINA DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Sir, ano po iyong solutions natin for upland communities given na itong mga desalination modular systems are for island barangays?

DPWH SEC. BONOAN: Sure. For upland communities, in most cases they source their drinking water from springs, ito iyong mga bukal sa kabundukan. In most cases malinis din iyong mga springs natin. Ang kulang sa kanila ay infrastructure to bring that water from the spring source to the communities. So, ang nangyayari pa nag-iigib pa sila from the source at kailangang maglakad, so I think an infrastructure issue.

KATRINA DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Sir, slightly different topic lang po, on the effect of El Niño to several ecosystems in the country, saan po natin pinakanakikita iyong malaking damage?

DPWH SEC. BONOAN: Ecosystem. Definitely, those that are in fresh water ecosystem, kasi natutuyuan iyong mga swamp areas natin, peatlands and so on. Pero in terms of the heat naman because of El Niño, malaki rin iyong epekto ryan sa terrestrial forest natin. Napansin ninyo medyo dumadami iyong mga forest fires, iyan lang ay isang epekto na nakikita natin visually pero hindi natin alam iyong epekto niyan exactly sa ecosystem kung nagsu-survive iyong plants and animals doon.

KATRINA DOMINGO/ABS-CBN: Sir, last from my end. Do we have ballpark figure as to how much damage po, when it comes to our environmental resources because of the El Niño?

DPWH SEC. BONOAN: Dahil po tinanong po ninyo iyan, magko-compute mamaya pag-uwi ko sa opisina, but it's a very important number 'no, so that the next phases of El Niño, we will already know the value of what is being lost, not just monetarily but in terms of biodiversity.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Kenneth Paciente, PTV4

KENNETH PACIENTE/PTV4: Kay Usec. David po. Sir, kumustahin lang po namin, kung kumusta po iyong water supply sa Metro Manila sa ngayon, sir?

DENR USEC. DAVID: Sige po, I'm sure marami rin magtatanong nito: Nasa 185 meters po ang level ng Angat Dam; ang minimum operating level, in other words, ang checkpoint natin, next checkpoint level ay 180 meters, so we are still five meter above the minimum operating level of the dam.

Ang pinakaproblema sa tingin ko ay iyong mabilis na pagbaba ng level, hindi iyong actual level sa ngayon dahil we're still okay in terms of volume. Pero, dahil na rin sa init at nag-increase din tayo ng consumption sa Metro Manila, napakabilis noong pagbaba ng level sa Angat. So, ito na ngayon iyong binibigyan natin ng solusyon para maitawid natin iyong supply ng ating farmers sa Bulacan at Pampanga na kumukuha rin ng tubig sa Angat at iyong water supply ng Metro Manila for the months of May and June bago dumating iyong ulan ng July.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Melvin Gascon, Philippine Daily Inquirer.

MELVIN GASCON/PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER: Good morning, sir. Kay Secretary Bonoan. Sir, noon pong deliberation ng budget for 2024 naging malaking usapin po iyong pag-divert ng mga funds for flood control projects na sinabi po mismo ng DPWH, hindi po sa inyo galing iyong proposal. Naging issue po paulit-ulit iyon pong absorb tip capacity ng DPWH and other agencies, hindi po natatapos iyong mga projects dahil hindi ma-implement nang maayos. Ang ending: Problema pa rin po natin iyong flooding! May question, sir is, have all of these problems been taking to an account doon po planning na ginawa po ninyo?

DPWH SEC. BONOAN: Well, alam mo admittedly the process of getting the budget of the department goes through several stages actually. So Congress, ang sabi nga nila they have the power of the purse. But eventually, after all these projects have been incorporated doon

sa budget namin, we have to see to it that these are vetted down, na bine-vet namin ito sa location of the projects, of course, the necessary engineering preparation for these projects.

And then there are just but a few of these projects na identified additionally that have some problems admittedly. But most of these projects are implementable, so I don't see much of any these problems actually for the implementation of projects in the department at this point of time. So everything is being implemented.

We have to understand also that implementation of projects on a year-to-year basis, we're allowed two years to implement, iyon ang cash budget programming na tinatawag namin, that two years. So, we have the ample of today to implement these projects.

MELVIN GASCON/PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER: Isa pa pong question sana, last from my end. Kay Administrator Guillen po or Secretary Bonoan, kung sino pong makakasagot. Many years back, pinag-usapan po iyong possibility na i-desilt iyong atin pong mga malalaking dams – Magat, Pantabangan, rather than mag-build po tayo ng mga bagong dams. Iyon po bang pagdi-desilt ng mga existing, feasible pa rin po ba?

NIA ADMINISTRATOR GUILLEN: Well, may pag-aaral nang nagawa diyan ano, na may negative impact din iyong basta i-desilt mo iyong like the case of Magat Dam ano. So, ang ating naging proposal po diyan, magtatayo kami ng... nag-uusap din kami ng Highways (DPWH) na sana sa taas ng aming mga dams, naglalagay sila ng mga sabo dams para ma-prevent iyong siltation ano po.

At sa NIA naman, sa amin mayroon kaming proposed na Alimit Dam sa taas ng ating Magat Dam para makatulong sa sedimentation control at the same time, makadagdag din ng ating tubig. So, iyon po muna ang ating... and then mayroong... mahaba ang pag-aaral diyan ng JICA sa ating proposal. So, habang hinihintay natin iyong pag-aaral na iyan, iyon muna ang ating solution. Mayroon pa kaming dam diyan, iyong isa 'no, iyong sa Tumauni, so iyon muna ang ating ano para sigurado tayo sa solution natin.

MELVIN GASCON/PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER: So, wala po munang desiltation?

NIA ADMINISTRATOR GUILLEN: Wala munang desiltation ang malalaking dams po natin.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. We're about to wrap up, as you can see Undersecretary David of DENR had to leave already. Anymore questions? Final questions? Okay. Kenneth Paciente, PTV-4.

KENNETH PACIENTE/PTV4: Kay Sir Guillen po. Sir, nag-o-offer na raw po ng 20 pesos na bigas sa mga Kadiwa sa NIA. Saan pong mga lugar po ito nag-start na, sir?

NIA ADMINISTRATOR GUILLEN: Well, tuluy-tuloy... inisyatibo po ito ng ating mga irrigators' association ano po. Sabi nila noong kinakausap ko sila, bilang pasasalamat nila sa napakarami nilang tinatanggap na mga ayuda sa atin, sa gobyerno natin, nag-o-offer din sila ng 20 pesos na bigas. Sabi ko, "*Hindi ba kayo lugi niyan?*" "*Ah, hindi...*" sabi nila kasi, again, ang input cost, simple math lang po 'no – ang cost ng inbred, kapag nagtanim ka ng inbred is 30,000 pesos; ang yield nila is 5,000. So, kung gamitin mo nga naman iyong 63% na formula ng NFA, mga 3,150 – so 30,000 divided by 3,150, nasa ten pesos lamang po ang production cost natin ng bigas. So kahit na doblehin mo iyon, may kita pa rin silang 100 percent.

So ang atin po, sa NIA naman, mayroon din kaming project na malaki ngayon – iyong ating contract farming ano po and iyon, ganoon din ang ating ano. In fact, ang aming estimate diyan, nasa mga 29 pesos puwede na kaming magbenta; by August naman kami. And we have around 100 million kilos of rice na projected na ma-produce po natin by August. Iyon po ang target ng DA, iyon po ang target natin. Ang sabi ng DA, July may supply sila eh. Pero ang NIA, by August po kami, iyong 29 pesos na bigas.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you. That's a good way to end this press briefing I believe. Thank you so much, Secretary Bonoan, Administrator Guillen, and of course, to Undersecretary David; and maraming salamat, Malacañang Press Corps. Good afternoon.

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