



Manila Bay, Pasig River cleanup ordered

By Aurea Calica
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President Arroyo challenged Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes yesterday to take the lead in cleaning up the murky waters of Manila Bay and Pasig River so they could become a sustainable source of food and livelihood.

The President posed this new challenge to Reyes, a former defense chief and Armed Forces chief who successfully curbed kidnapping incidents in the country.

Mrs. Arroyo said the foreign chambers were impressed with Reyes for reducing kidnapping cases to an all-time low while he was still interior secretary.

"And if you could bring kidnapping at an all-time low, almost zero, I think you're the one who will be able to rehabilitate the Pasig River and Manila Bay," the President told Reyes during the National Forum of Sustainable Development Strategy of Coastal Marine Resources.

The President said she wanted the forum held in a hotel fronting Manila Bay to "physically face the problem."

"Let's do it in front of the problem. Let's physically face the problem. Let's do it facing Manila Bay," she said.

"Once upon a time when we were very young, Manila Bay gave us the biggest fish. Now, Manila Bay gives us a tiny fraction of the entire marine production of our country," Mrs. Arroyo said.

The President signed an executive order adapting Integrated Coastal Management as a national strategy for the sustainable development of the country's coastal and marine habitats and resources.

"I'm further directing Secretary Reyes to be the lead, to formulate jointly with the Department of Agriculture (DA), the local governments involved, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), the Department of Tourism (DoT) and the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) a National Integrated Coastal Management Plan in accordance with the agreements that we may forge in this forum and in other consultations with various sectors," Mrs. Arroyo said.

"We must act together and act now. And on this note, I open this very important forum on sustainable development strategy for Manila Bay," she added.

The President said the Manila Bay Environmental Management project is a good test case to demonstrate that the country's most important source of fish can meet the needs of all sectors relying on it for food, livelihood, commerce and transportation while protecting it from further degradation.

Mrs. Arroyo said part of her medium-term development plan is to manage natural resources and protect the environment to improve Filipinos' quality of life and that of future generations.

The President also said her government would also ensure clean water by implementing the Solid Waste Management Act of 2001 and the Clean Water Act of 2004, which were both enacted into law during her administration.

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