

Manila Bay cleanup ongoing

image: <https://www.philstar.com/images/authors/1805274.jpg>

[SHOOTING STRAIGHT](#) - [Bobit S. Avila](#) (The Philippine Star) - January 15, 2019 - 12:00am

Over the weekend, I had fun watching the events posted on my Facebook page with no less than Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy Cimatu visiting the Manila Yacht Club for a look and see of the Manila Bay accompanied by my good friend, MYC Commodore Robert “Bobby” Joseph. The beauty in that meeting is that it took some time for them to finish as the problem of Manila Bay is enormous to say the least. Because of that meeting the DENR Secretary decided to break up the cleanup of Manila Bay into four areas, which is for me the right approach as Manila Bay has a 200-plus kilometer roadway that passes along the bay.

Also we learned from Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Undersecretary Martin Dino that the mayors of Manila and Pateros are non-compliant in Manila Bay cleanup and this includes a hundred barangay captains whom Dino said that if these people do not deliver this time around, cases will be filed against them. Usec Dino is now a year in his position and with DENR Sec. Roy Cimatu and no less than Pres. Rodrigo Duterte already using the Manila Bay cleanup as their advocacy, I would like to believe that half the problem in this cleanup is already done.

No doubt New Year 2019 has truly begun with great strides when last week Pres. Duterte warned hotels operating along Roxas Blvd that he would shut them down if they continued to throw their waste into Manila Bay. Thus no less than the President has taken a role in the cleanup of Manila Bay. Now we learned that the DENR is now testing the quality of the water in Manila Bay before they do the rehab. I’m sure that quality would be close or worse than the toilet in your house. At this point, let me say that we are merely reporting the start of this cleanup... we shall continue writing on this issue until the day when Manila Bay will smell nice and sweet so we could all enjoy the famous Manila Bay sunset by the bay itself!

* * *

Early morning last Saturday, we drove to the Island Mall in Lapu-Lapu City for the inauguration of the Topline Express, a ferry company that brings its passengers from Pier 3 in Cebu City to Island Mall wharf. This is designed for the thousands of workers who work in the Mactan Export Processing Zone (MEPZ-1). One of the biggest problems of MEPZ-1 workers is the heavy or clogged traffic from Cebu City to Lapu-Lapu City, which often takes two hours for one single trip. If you take the Topline Express, you are assured of a maximum of 20-minute ferry ride and a free bus shuttle to the Island Mall next to the wharf.

On hand to inaugurate Topline Express was former president and now House Speaker Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (GMA). It was a pleasant surprise for us to meet last Saturday as the last time we saw each other was two years ago when she was my first visitor in my house two weeks after my kidney transplant. In her speech during the inauguration of Topline Express she pointed out that this company was created to help Cebu cope up with its tremendous traffic problem. She pointed out that when she was president, she did a lot for Cebu.

Since we were seated in the same table, I reminded GMA that she was humble enough to forget that while Mayor Tomas Osmeña conceptualized Cebu City’s South Road Properties (SRP) ... it was approved by then President Arroyo... as told to me by her late press secretary Cerge Remonde. Unfortunately, Mayor Osmeña conveniently forget to tell this fact to his Cebuano constituents.

Then I also reminded GMA that since the martial law days, we had to suffer from anti-carnapping permits (Ancar permits) where Cebuanos could not bring their cars to Dumaguete or from Toledo City to San Carlos City unless they had proof that it was not stolen. So when then vice president GMA took the presidency on Jan. 20,2001, one of the first things that happened was that the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) Secretary called me for a meeting and he flew to Cebu to note my writings against the Ancar permits.

In one Executive Order, Ancar permits were removed and so the backbone project of the Arroyo administration became a reality called "Strong Republic, Nautical Highway." By removing the Ancar permits, GMA created a new travel industry where numerous Ceres buses crossed the Tañon Strait from Bato to Tampi and now in Sibulan, Negros Oriental. Also from Toledo City to San Carlos and Tabuelan to Escalante City. Incidentally, the DOTC Secretary who talked with me was Sec. Pantaleon "Bebot" Alvarez, whom GMA replaced as House Speaker last July 2018.

Read more at <https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2019/01/15/1885134/manila-bay-cleanup-ongoing#wXlBy38IheEJvUWf.99>