

13 November 2022, Sunday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



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## *DENR reaffirms Phl commitment to One Planet Initiative*

By **ROMINA CABRERA**

Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga yesterday reaffirmed the Philippines' commitment to the One Planet Initiative that aims to fight climate change during her meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron.

During a high-level summit on vital reserves of carbon and biodiversity, Lozaga, who heads the Philippine delegation to the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP 27),

expressed the country's willingness to engage in more partnerships to explore ways on how parties can work together to achieve the goals of the One Planet Initiative.

The One Planet Initiative aims to mobilize high-level commitment among countries to respond to the ecological emergency faced by the world today due to worsening climate change.

Before the summit,  
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Loyzaga also held a bilateral meeting with French Minister for Ecological Transition and Cohesion of the Territories Christophe Bechu.

The environment chief stressed that the Philippines is one of only two Asian countries that signed the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, which aims to protect over 30 percent of land and sea by 2030.

It also seeks to protect biodiversity and ecosystem services

by increasing public and private financing, local governance and having clear participation mechanisms.

Bechu expressed France's desire to pursue further bilateral discussions with the Philippines to explore areas for cooperation such as technical assistance.

The 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference is the largest annual gathering focused on climate change.

It is co-hosted by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat and the government of Egypt.



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# DENR, Rotary Club Manila boost Pasig River rehab

These trash barriers will prevent garbage from floating down into the Pasig River, thus helping bring back the Pasig River to its pristine condition,' said RCM president Herminio S. Esguerra.

BY GIGIE ARCILLA

The government found the right partner in the Rotary Club of Manila in sustaining the rehabilitation of the Pasig River.

True to its commitment to support environmental protection initiatives as one of its areas of focus, the Rotary Club of Manila, Asia's first Rotary Club, donated 395 floating trash traps to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Pasig River Coordinating and Management Office on 8 November 2022.

RCM president Herminio S. Esguerra said the floating trash barriers will be positioned at the opening of 18 *esteros* within the 420-meter stretch of the Pasig River.

"These trash barriers will prevent garbage from floating down into the Pasig River, thus helping bring back the Pasig River to its pristine condition," he said.

A flagship project of the Rotary Club of Manila, the trash traps, according to Esguerra, are the first of their kind to ever be installed in any of the Philippines' waterways.

Esguerra, a long-time environmental advocate, said his involvement traces back to 1995 when he was a donor of the "Piso para sa Pasig" project under the Clean and Green program of then First Lady Amelita Ramos.

The Pasig River rehabilitation, he said, should be a multisectoral partnership of the

media, local government units, the church, and the Department of Education.

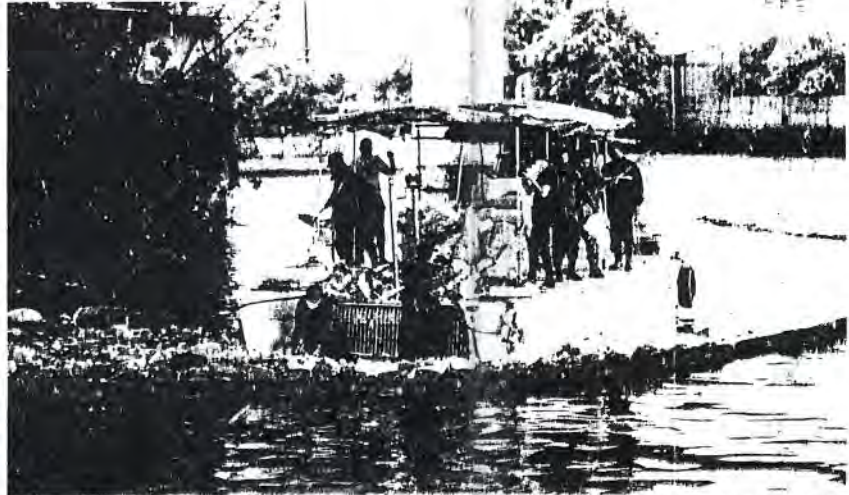
"It should be included in the school curriculum. The LGUs must impose a strict penalty on polluters while the Church can help by including it in their homilies. The media, of course, plays a very important role in information dissemination," he said.

He added that no matter how the government works to clean Pasig River, it wouldn't be sustainable without the cooperation of the public.

Esguerra said he looks forward to the time when each one takes the responsibility of caring for the river just like how they do in other countries.

"A healthy river leads to economic and tourism development," he added.

DENR Assistant Secretary Joan A.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY LARRY CRUZ FOR THE DAILY TRIBUNE

A FLAGSHIP project of the Rotary Club of Manila, the trash traps are the first of their kind to ever be installed in any of the Philippines' waterways.

Lagunda, Executive Director of the Pasig River Coordinating and Management Office, said the donated trash traps are a great help to river warriors who have to endure the difficult job of clearing the river of trash every day.

Citing a television documentary that showed the extent of the problem in waste management and rehabilitation of Pasig River, Lagunda lamented that the problem is not simply garbage disposal.

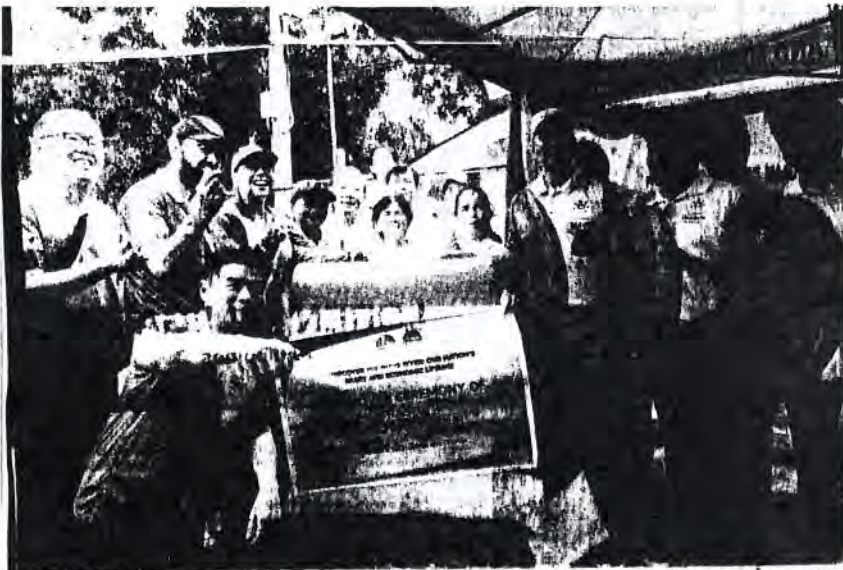
"The problem is not just cleaning the river, not just the amount of pollution and waste. Our problem is behavior, which cleaning alone cannot solve. Our enemy is human behavior, and the solution is knowledge, change, and action," she said in Filipino.

Lagunda cannot thank the RCM enough and the whole Rotarian community for their concern for the river warriors and Pasig River.

"I know that the Rotarian community is capable, not just because it has vast resources, but because it is made up of people who share a passion for and commitment enhancing communities and improving lives through its seven areas of focus," she added.

Lagunda, along with RCM Community Service Director Hans Palacios and Sa Manila Bay/Pasig River Committee chairperson Junjie Vasquez, received the blessing of the PRCMO's new trawler boat at the Lawton Ferry Station.

"We can see that the Pasig River is no longer dirty and pungent. The Pasig River of today is gradually evolving into the new Pasig River — the Pasig River of tomorrow," she said.



ROTARY Club of Manila president Herminio S. Esguerra (third from right) with fellow Rotarians during the turnover of 395 floating trash traps to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, represented by Assistant Secretary Joan A. Lagunda (standing, third from left), Executive Director of the Pasig River Coordinating and Management Office, at the Lawton Ferry Station on 8 November 2022.





# Environmental changemakers tagged as 2022 Asean Biodiversity Heroes

By PAMELA REBLORA  
& LILAY CASTILLO

**A** LEGISLATOR, a veterinarian, a youth leader, a conservation geology advocate, a marine conservation trailblazer, a sanctuary manager, a marine biodiversity scientist and

Biodiversity Heroes program in 2017 to celebrate the exemplary everyday heroes whose initiatives and projects have contributed significantly to biodiversity conservation and advocacy efforts in their respective communities and the region.

Project partners for the regional initiative are the European

educator, an environment official and a forester at an Asean Heritage Park, received the 2022 Asean Biodiversity Heroes award, an honor bestowed to individuals who have dedicated their lives to conserving the web of life.

The heroes were recognized at an awards ceremony held in Bogor, Indonesia, on November 2 as one

Union, through the Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in Asean project, and Metro Pacific Investments Corp. The ACB is the awards secretariat.

The Asean Biodiversity Heroes were selected based on the relevance of their contributions to biodiversity

of the highlights of the Seventh Asean Heritage Parks Conference organized by the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) and Indonesia's Ministry of Environment and Forestry-Directorate of Biodiversity Conservation of Species and Genetics.

The Asean established the Asean

conservation, the impact of these contributions to biodiversity conservation efforts in their respective countries and the region, the replicability of their actions, and the recognition they received in communities where they belong.

The Asean is proud to present its new set of biodiversity heroes.



■ **Liaw Lin Ji** is the founder of the Biodiversity and Natural History Society (BruWILD) and head of Environmental Solutions and Brunei country manager of DHI Water and Environment.

Liaw Lin Ji founded the nongovernment organization Biodiversity and Natural History Society (BruWILD) in 2014 to encourage people to do their share in conserving Brunei Darussalam's flora and fauna through nature-based education.

Eight years later, BruWILD has remained one of the most prominent youth-led environmental groups in Brunei, reaching hundreds of schoolchildren and inspiring them to take part in biodiversity conservation and climate change-related initiatives.

She is also the head of Environmental Solutions, and is Brunei country manager of an international environmental consultancy firm, DHI Water and Environment, where she has been ensuring that project development impacts to biodiversity are prevented or minimized.

She was also one of the 2019 Young Biodiversity Leaders of the ACB's Asean Youth Biodiversity Programme.



■ **Chak Sokhavicheboth** is the deputy director of Biodiversity Department of the Ministry of Environment in Cambodia.

In the past three decades, Chak Sokhavicheboth has been in the frontlines of Cambodia's efforts to conserve its rich biological resources.

He was among the first researchers in the country to focus on wildlife research, focusing on large mammals and prey species.

His book on mammals is a key resource used by wildlife researchers in Cambodia.

As director of the wildlife sanctuary from 2001 to 2010, he was able to cut down criminal activities, including wildlife hunting, illegal logging, land encroachment and wildlife trapping.

Under the Ministry of Environment, he trained park rangers on protected area management, wildlife survey, patrolling, and field practices—crucial components to wildlife protection.



■ **Dr. Anhar Lubis** is the coordinator of Leuser Wildlife Rescue Team and veterinarian of Leuser Conservation Forum in Indonesia.

Since earning his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree in 1996, Dr. Anhar Lubis has devoted his time and skills to play a crucial role in wildlife conservation in Indonesia.

For 26 years, he has lent his veterinary expertise to various groups, as well as contributed his knowledge to books and publications that aim to generate awareness about mitigating and preventing human-wildlife conflicts.

As the head veterinarian and coordinator for the wildlife rescue team at the Leuser Conservation Forum (Forum Konservasi Leuser), he has been involved in rescuing and rehabilitating animals in the Leuser Ecosystem, a majestic and ancient biodiversity hotspot in Aceh and North Sumatra provinces on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia.

He has been conducting educational and community outreach activities to give voice to those who are often threatened and misunderstood but cannot speak for themselves—the creatures of the wild.



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■ **Khamphay Xayyalad** is the manager of The National Eld's Deer Sanctuary Areas in Lao PDR.

As manager of The National Eld's Deer Sanctuary Areas, Khamphay Xayyalad has been playing a crucial role in conserving the endangered Eld's deer, or Ong-Mang.

He has devoted his time to studying the species, mobilizing funds for conservation projects, working with ranger teams and engaging with the local communities in the sanctuary.

His leadership of the Project of Sustainable Forest and Land Management in the Dry Dipterocarp Forest Ecosystems of Southern Lao PDR (SAFE Ecosystems Project) yielded tangible results, such as the significant increase in the number of Eld's deer from less than 10 deer at the beginning of the project in 2004 to 175 deer at present.

Xayyalad's dedication and contributions to forest and biodiversity conservation are bringing back the ecological equilibrium to nature and improving the well-being of the local people.



■ **Prof. Ibrahim Bin Komoo** is Professor Emeritus at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Dr. Ibrahim Bin Komoo is an academic known for his integrated approaches related to natural heritage conservation (including biodiversity), geohazards and sustainability sciences.

He introduced the concept of "integrated heritage," which emphasizes finding close links between geological, biological and cultural heritage to ensure that the Earth's heritage is translated holistically to represent the true value of human heritage.

Professor Ibrahim's researches have greatly contributed to the strengthening of national environmental and sustainability policies, as well as policy implementation actions by public agencies.

Some of his contributions, particularly those related to national and Unesco global geopark development, are important scientific and social innovations in natural resource management.

He is an academic who strikes balanced contributions between knowledge generation, knowledge sharing with fellow experts and knowledge transfer for society.



■ **Nay Win Swe** is a forester at Inlay Lake Wildlife Sanctuary in Myanmar.

A native Intha, which literally translates to "sons of lake," Nay Win Swe was born and raised in a village at Nyaung Shwe town which straddles the Inlay Lake.

For nearly three decades, he has devoted his time, knowledge and skills to do his part in protecting and conserving the Inlay Lake Wildlife Sanctuary's valuable biodiversity.

Swe has been wearing several hats in the course of his profession as a forester.

He has been leading in awareness-raising, engaging with locals, leading patrolling teams, conducting training for local tour guides, conserving breeding grounds for birds, and collecting biodiversity data needed for the development of the sanctuary's management plan.

Swe's love for the Inlay Lake Wildlife Sanctuary and in his fellow lake dwellers are shown in his actions and contributions that go beyond his primary duties as a forester.



■ **Sen. Loren Legarda** is Senate President Pro-Tempore in the Philippines.

As an award-winning broadcast journalist, Sen. Loren Legarda used the powerful platform of the media to fight for environmental protection.

Determined to see her fight translated into tangible results, she decided to bring her cause to the national legislative arena in 1998.

Now in her fourth term in the

Senate, Legarda has become known as the most prominent environment politician and the Philippines's foremost advocate of green development.

In the past three decades, she has worked, sponsored and authored landmark laws on climate change, environmental governance, protection of the environment, and conservation of natural resources, among other issues.

Over the years, Legarda has emerged as a game changer for Asia, with her compelling vision for a just, safer and greener world for all.

Her inspiring advocacy for environmental protection has earned her global recognition. She has been recognized as a Global Leader for Tomorrow by the World Economic Forum and was among the Global 500 Roll of Honor of the United Nations Environment Programme.



■ **Prof. Chou Loke Ming** is Emeritus Professor of the Department of Biological Sciences at National University of Singapore.

To say that Prof. Chou Loke Ming is an unrelenting champion of marine protection and conservation is an understatement.

He is a respected pioneer of marine conservation not only in Singapore, but also within the region and around the world.

Of all his valuable contributions that have created a lifelong impact on biodiversity conservation in the country, the most inspiring testament to his success is the different generations of marine scientists, academics, and researchers that he has mentored.

Chou's expertise in marine biodiversity and conservation has resulted in the formulation of policies and in designing

management strategies, leading to better institutional research capability, stewardship and governance of the marine environment.

An important icon of marine diversity and conservation, Chou has largely contributed to the milestones that shaped the marine diversity and conservation landscape of Singapore's recent history.



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# BusinessMirror

*A broader look at today's business*

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■ **Prof. Suchana Chavanich** is a professor at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand.

For Dr. Suchana Chavanich, scientists also have to effectively communicate their work and messages in a language that the public would easily understand to ensure real-world impact.

Throughout her 20 years of experience as a marine

biodiversity expert, researcher and teacher, she has become a role model to other scientists in terms of increasing the reach and understanding of studies outside their community.

As a marine biodiversity expert, Chavanich has delivered valuable contributions to the science community, including the discovery of new species of soft

corals and nudibranchs.

Her research work on marine biodiversity and conservation on both tropical and polar regions has significantly advanced the understanding of conservation in a changing environment. It has inspired people in Thailand and other countries to know more about biodiversity and how to conserve it.



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# Legarda recognized as ASEAN Biodiversity Hero

For her significant contributions to biodiversity efforts in the country, Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda was recognized as an Association of Southeast Asian Nations Biodiversity Hero on 2 November in Bogor, Indonesia.

Joining the awarding ceremony virtually, Legarda, a longtime advocate of environmental protection and a champion of green development, thanked ASEAN for the recognition and for acknowledging the efforts of individuals from various sectors who fight for the environment.

She also expressed gratitude to the European Union and Metro Pacific Investments Corporation for supporting and making the second staging of the ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes Awards possible.

"It is an honor to be recognized by the ASEAN as one of this year's ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes. It is heartening that what I advocated to do by being a planetary inhabitant has impacted not only my fellow Filipinos but also the peoples of ASEAN and hopefully the world," Legarda said in her acceptance speech.

The ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes Awards, a flagship initiative of the ASEAN, is one of the commemorative activities for the 55th anniversary of ASEAN and the 17th anniversary of the ASEAN Center for Biodiversity.

Initiated in 2017, the award was designed to recognize individuals from ASEAN member states who contribute significantly to biodiversity conservation in their countries and the region, raise awareness

about biodiversity, and support ASEAN's vision of "One Community."

It has showcased the work of outstanding individuals from different sectors such as business, academe, non-profit, and government to make the world a healthier place for future generations.

Aside from Legarda, the awardee from the Philippines, citizens with outstanding achievements in biodiversity advocacy from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore and Thailand also received the award.

**'We must never lose sight of the fact that... survival of the fittest is not on the level of the individual but at the level of social groups working together for the common good.'**

"The ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes are being challenged further to get political consensus for habitat integrity. The task ahead of us is to ensure that the ASEAN is ahead of the pack in demonstrating that equity and planetary stewardship are built into our every decision, individually and collectively," Legarda said.

"We must never lose sight of the fact that, as expounded on in recent evolutionary work, survival of the fittest is not on the level of the individual but at the level of social groups working together for the common good. The ones that cooperate instead of competing, and exhibit care instead of violence, are the ones that thrive," she added.

During the ceremony, the ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes submitted their commitments on how they will help protect the ecosystem.

Legarda pledged to "further improve the policy environment that will see

full implementation, transition the country toward a blue economy, sustainability and climate resilience for future generations."

As a senator, Legarda has authored numerous environmental laws, including the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, Philippine Clean Air Act, Renewable Energy Act, Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act, National Environmental Awareness and Education Act, Climate Change Act, and Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act.

In 2017, she sponsored the Philippines' concurrence in ratifying the Paris Agreement, an international climate change treaty adopted in 2015 by members of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as former Chairperson of the Subcommittee on the Paris Agreement under the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Aside from this, she leads the Philippines into assenting to the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, which aims to protect at least 30 percent of the world's lands and oceans by 2030.

Above and beyond being a legislator, Legarda is the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Global Champion for Resilience, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change National Adaptation Plan Champion, and the Commissioner of the Global Commission on Adaptation and Climate Vulnerable Forum Ambassador for Parliaments.

Her dedication to her work has been acknowledged through numerous global recognitions, such as the Global Leader for Tomorrow given by the World Economic Forum. She is also a United Nations Environment Programme Laureate, and the Global Ambassador for Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change, and Environment of the Women Political Leaders.





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## LOREN B. LEGARDA Philippines

is hereby conferred the ASEAN BIODIVERSITY HERO award for championing biodiversity conservation in the Philippines and in the ASEAN region.

May this award serve as an inspiration to every individual to take valiant actions towards sustainable use of biological resources for the present and future generations.

This award is presented this second day of November 2022 during the ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes Award Ceremony at the Grand Ballroom, Novotel Bogor Golf Resort and Convention Center in Bogor, Indonesia.

**Dato Lim Jock Hei**  
Secretary-General, ASEAN

JOINING the awarding ceremony virtually, Legarda thanked ASEAN for the recognition and for acknowledging the efforts of individuals from various sectors who fight for the environment.





## Lapid resolution commends Dagupan HS for winning world prize for restoring mangroves

**S**EN. Manuel "Lito" M. Lapid filed a resolution congratulating and commending Dagupan's Bonuan Boquig National High School (BBNHS) for winning the 2022 World's Best School Prize for Environmental Action.

In Senate Resolution 278, Lapid recognized the efforts of the Pangasinan public high school to restore lost mangroves and reverse the environmental devastation caused by the 2009 Typhoon Ondoy (international name Ketsana) to local communities, a news release said.

"I greet the students and teachers of BBNHS for the prestigious award and recognition that you received. I believe that your expertise and modern knowledge in education will serve as inspiration to other schools and teachers to improve the quality of education inside and outside the country," he said in Filipino.

Lapid cited in his resolution that the BBNHS has been a fierce advocate of the environment, educating their students on the importance of environmental preservation and protection, and has started many projects for their students to participate in and learn from.

The senator also highlighted the school's efforts in partnering with their local communities to get them engaged in their advocacy for the environment, equipping them with the necessary knowledge that they can help spread and pass on to the next generation of Filipinos.

The school bested other foreign finalists, such as the International School of Zug and Luzern in Switzerland, and the Green School of Bali in Indonesia, along with other competing schools from Argentina, Canada, Columbia, Greece, Malawi, Palestine and the United Arab Emirates.

BBNHS was announced the winner of the education award through a live-streamed ceremony last October 14, where it was presented the award alongside the four other schools who won awards in different categories.

The World's Best School Prizes is hosted by T4 Education, a global education organization that aims to recognize the excellence and dedication of schools from all over the world who go the extra mile for the sake of transforming the lives of their students and the generations to come.



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**Among Don Emilio T. Yap's many legacies is the conservation of Philippine plants realized through Dr. Emil C. Yap III.**

*Dendrobium sanderae* var. *emilianum* (Photo courtesy of Dr. Miguel David de Leon)

## Saving *emilianum*

Spared from extinction, the new orchid variant honors the late philanthropist Don Emilio T. Yap

By JULES VIVAS

There is so much to be gained in the pursuit of preserving orchids and their role in biodiversity. The nonwoody perennial herb is worth

conserving for its aesthetic and intellectual value, hiding in its genomes and distribution the secrets of evolution.

Interconnected with other organisms in its surroundings, the

monosymmetrical flora is a canary in the coal mine, indicative of the dangers of the environment and a healthy, functioning ecosystem.

The most evolved of flowering plants, orchids are also among the most vulnerable, threatened by various elements from climate change to habitat destruction and human depredations.

In the international botanical scene, the eighth volume of *Die Orchidee*, a German journal on orchidology, features how a new *Dendrobium* variant in the Philippines has been discovered and kept from ► **8**

## Saving *emilianum* 1◀

being lost forever.

The article "A spectacular new variety of *Dendrobium Sandra* saved from extinction," under the Taxonomic Notices section of the e-paper by the German Orchid Society, contains important details on the *Dendrobium sanderae* var. *emilianum*, including its origin story.

Blessed with an abundance of natural resources, the Philippines has more than a thousand orchid species, of which 90 percent are endemic. Helping keep these unique blooms alive and relevant in the country is the Department of Science and Technology, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the University

of the Philippines, as well as private collectors and growers, to name a few. One of the most active in promoting orchid growing locally is the non-profit organization, Philippine Orchid Society (POS).

In 1990, the Aetas of Zambales province in Western Luzon gifted the late lecturer, conservationist, and POS co-director Andres Golamco Jr., Jun as he is fondly called, a few *Dendrobiums*.

After learning that the species in his possession were unrecorded, Jun passed on the new plants for cultivation and propagation to his fellow conservationist Dr. Emilio C. Yap III, Emil as he is called by his peers, the president of The Manila Bulletin Publishing Corp.

A year later, the explosion of Mount Pinatubo, the second largest volcanic eruption in the 20th century,

changed the landscape of Zambales and neighboring provinces forever. The native orchids from the disaster zones were seemingly gone for good.

As luck would have it, progenies have been produced from the dozen or so original orchids in Dr. Emil's horticulture and tissue culture facility. The laboratory-produced offspring is a homage to Dr. Emil's grandfather, the late Emilio T. Yap, more commonly addressed as Don Emilio, hence the varietal epithet, *emilianum*.

The Filipino-Chinese businessman, Don Emilio, was the chairman The Manila Bulletin Group, where Emil is now vice chairman. Among Don Emilio's many legacies is the conservation of Philippine plants realized through his grandson Emil.

*Den. Sandra Rolf* is closely related to *Dendrobium sanderae* var. *emilianum*, different only by the number



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of morphological features. The stiffly erect stems of the latter reach lengths of over 60 cm by 0.5 to 2 cm.

The leaves of the emilianum are oblong-ovate to oblong-lanceolate. Its sepals are slightly recurved. The lateral lobes of the labellum are elliptic, short, upright, and faintly curved. The mid lobe is flabellate-obtuse, a little curved downward. The spur of emilianum is short and narrowly acute.

Over three decades have passed since the calamity. Now Dr. Emil plans to reintroduce the species to its former habitat.

Miguel David De Leon, Derek Cabactulan, Villamore T. Usita, and Miguel David De Leon are co-authors of "A spectacular new variety of *Dendrobium Sandra* saved from extinction," published in the *Die Orchidee* journal.



*Dendrobium sanderae*  
var.  
*emilianum*  
(Photo  
courtesy of  
Dr. Miguel  
David de  
Leon)



## Dangerous predisposition



**T**HE hitherto purpose of government — its departments, bureaus and frontline agencies — is to serve its citizens efficiently and effectively. Thus, the manner with which the bureaucracy works becomes the hallmark of every government administration. And naturally, all Philippine presidents — past and present — yearn to have their Cabinet functioning like a well-oiled machine and able to cater to the exacting demands of public service.

In 2018, then-President Rodrigo Duterte proposed to Congress the establishment of the Department of Disaster Resilience, the Department of Water Resources, the Water Regulatory Commission and the Department of Overseas Filipinos. Paradoxically, he also pushed for the government right-sizing bill in his State of the Nation Address (SONA) "to reconfigure the existing Metro Manila-centric bureaucracy and streamline government systems in order

to deliver services without delay and within a short timeline." The pieces of legislation remain pending in Congress.

Among President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr.'s (BBM) first initiatives upon assumption as chief executive is also right-sizing of the government. This was a promise he made during his first SONA among other items in his 19-point legislative agenda. He sees that a lean and mean bureaucracy would "enhance the government's institutional capacity to perform its mandate and provide better services, while ensuring optimal and efficient use of resources." And to make sure that he will measure up

to the expectations of Filipino voters, he declared all government positions vacant and gradually fielded his best men and women to fill the emptied posts. But not unlike his predecessor, he also batted for the creation of a National Disease Prevention Management Authority, a Virology Institute of the Philippines, a Department of Water Resources and a Department of Migrant Workers. But at this time when the national budget deficit is P179.8 billion as of September and inflation rate is 7.7 percent as of October, the creation of these government offices may have to wait on the back burner.

Unlike his immediate predecessor, BBM has the propensity to allocate unto himself or the Office of the President important positions where the going is rough. He said with conviction that he will not appoint a secretary of the Department of Health to replace officer in charge Undersecretary Ma-

Rosario Vergeire until the health emergency has subsided. He also committed to remain the concurrent secretary of the Department of Agriculture until he has solved the deeply rooted problems besetting the department.

Just recently, with massive devastations brought about by typhoons "Obet" and "Paeng" that ravaged the country, the President announced his intention to place the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) under the Office of the President. But with all due respect to the wisdom of the President that the functioning of the NDRRMC will be made efficient by placing it under his office, he should abandon this plan. Doing so will only add another layer to the bureaucracy contrary to what he thought of streamlining disaster response thereby. It will also bring additional burden to his already heavily-laden office. Besides, with some 16 Cabinet officials — all

alter egos of the President already at the management council as vice chairmen of specific areas of concerns — and with the secretary of the Department of National Defense as chairman, the President is already the de facto head of the NDRRMC.

If the intent is to make the NDRRMC "a robust system," there are many other ways through which disaster risk reduction and response can be improved. Pushing through with the plan would imply that the NDRRMC and its component agencies are not functioning, and the way to make it work is to place it under the President's office. This is an unhealthy predisposition, although arguably in the case of the NDRRMC, placing it under the office is better than creating the Department of Disaster Resilience that is now being pushed in Congress.

If this will be the way forward, it will

► **ArevaloA6**



Dangerous pre disposition

## ■ AREVALO FROM A5

# Dangerous

cause demoralization among members of the Cabinet and trigger mounting criticisms against the President who already has too many things on his plate. He is already buttressed with many pressing concerns as the Chief Executive and taking on the jobs of Cabinet secretaries will distract his attention from more important affairs of the state other than domestic. To continue to tread on this path may soon force the President to take on the task to lead or place under the office the Bureau of Corrections, the Department of Energy, the Department of Transportation and other agencies that have serious concerns and deeply rooted problems.

While tropical storm "Paeng" caused an estimated P12.5 billion in total damage to infrastructure, agriculture and livestock, it was not the result of inefficiency. Experience has taught government agencies to make adequate preparations days before the arrival of the storm. Preemptive relocations, and where necessary, forced evacuations were enforced. Relief goods were prepositioned. Announcements of typhoon signals, forecasts of its track and rainfall warning advisories were regularly issued. Government disaster response personnel, vehicles and equipment were placed on standby alert and were deployed immediately as needed.

The matter could also be addressed by further enhancing and capacitating government agencies. New and state-of-the-art equipment for the Philippine Astronomical Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) will enable the agency to provide more accurate forecasts. More robust climate change mitigation measures should be instituted along with disaster resiliency and preparedness. Geohazard maps must be widely available and strictly referred and adhered to in issuing building permits. The President's intended review of the National Building Code must be pursued to ensure that structural integrity and resilience to earthquakes are staple in the designs of many massive structures and tall edifices that have mushroomed, especially in the metropolis. But not necessarily placing disaster risk reduction and management — or other Cabinet functions for that matter — under the Office of the President.

BBM should allow his Cabinet members and his other appointees who are supposed to be experts in their fields to contribute to his administration. While he emphatically said during his SONA that he will get the job done — with or without people's support — that should not apply to the members of his team. The President should not be an enabler and instead, as team captain, demand that his mates deliver. He must hold them answerable to him as he is accountable to the people. Because if he is not satisfied with the yield, he may consider separating the grain from the chaff.



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## PPP Center pushes creation of Dep't of Water Resources

By LOUELLA DESIDERIO

The Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Center is pushing for the creation of the Department of Water Resources to help in the implementation of projects in the water sector.

During the Water Challenge Forum organized by the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, PPP Center executive director Ma. Cynthia Hernandez said the agency is supporting the passage of a bill seeking to create the Department of Water Resources.

"As the head of the PPP Center, it is really a challenge for us to be able to respond to the emerging needs for PPPs in the water sector... The creation of Department of Water Resources would be a good start because having that clarity in let's say regulatory environment, who will we be getting permits from, who

will be setting the regulation pricing in the sector, would be key to moving forward with a cohesive approach on the water sector," she said.

Under the proposed measure, the department would serve as the primary agency responsible for policy, planning, coordination, implementation and monitoring of the development and management of the country's water resources.

The bill is among the priority legislative measures announced by President Marcos during his State of the Nation Address.

It was also among the priority measures discussed during the first meeting of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council last month.

Aside from the Department of Water Resources bill, the PPP Center is also pushing for the enactment of the PPP Act,

which seeks to address ambiguities in the Build-Operate-Transfer law.

"Hopefully, with the policy agenda of the current administration, having priority for the Department of Water Resources and for the PPP Act as priority legislation in Congress, we hope with that foundation in place, we would be able to move forward decisively to help improve the water sector both from the business or financial point of view and also from the viewpoint of meeting sustainable development goals, meeting equity considerations in development as well," Hernandez added.

Amid interest for PPPs in the water sector, she said the center would want to have a more comprehensive regulatory and policy environment for PPPs and to increase capacity building activities for local government units (LGUs) and water districts.

She said the PPP Center also wants to institutionalize best practices in PPP projects in the sector.

The PPP Center is providing support to LGUs and local water districts in sourcing or procuring bulk water supply, septage and water supply projects.

At present, Hernandez said the PPP Center is providing assistance in the development and implementation of four PPP projects in the water sector.

Of the four PPP projects, she said two are being eyed for bidding by the first quarter of next year.



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# Daily Tribune

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**HEY!**

San Miguel Energy Corporation, a subsidiary of SMC Global Power, has been acquiring and clearing vast tracts of land in the Daguma mountain range in the provinces of South Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat for a coal project which is feared to cause ecological degradation.





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# DOE crafts EO for offshore wind dev't

By **RICHMOND MERCURIO**

The Department of Energy (DOE) aims to address the strong clamor for offshore wind development in the country by streamlining processes and requirements.

The agency is crafting an executive order to strengthen and rationalize the regulatory framework for the immediate development of offshore wind energy given the "tremendous interest" from foreign and local investors.

"Because of the nascent nature of OSW (offshore wind development), the President has approved the concept of an offshore wind one stop shop (OWOSS) through the issuance of an EO," Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said.

"The proposed EO would spell out the regulatory framework in building a robust OSW industry and covers a long-term vision, infrastructure development, investments and sound policies," he said.

Apart from the DOE, the roll-out of OSW will require processing through more than 10 government agencies.

Coordination and simplification of the approval process for OSW development would involve agencies such as the Bureau of Fishery and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA), Department of Environment and Natural Resources

(DENR), Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), Philippine Ports Authority (PPA), Bureau of Customs (BOC), Philippine National Police (PNP), Bureau of Immigration (BI), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Philippine Space Agency, and the Philippine Navy, among others.

The objective is to streamline processes and requirements of these agencies as well as the grid operator.

Critical to the timely and massive rollout of OSW farms is the development of a marine spatial planning (MSP) system aligned with the best international industry practice.

Turn to B2

## DOE From B1

The MSP is a practical way to establish a more rational use of marine space and the interaction among its uses, to balance demands for development with the need to protect the environment, and to deliver social and economic outcomes in an open and planned way.

"Once the EO is in place, the timelines, and processing of OSW applications will

be incorporated in the existing Energy Virtual One Stop Shop (EVOSS) System," Lotilla said.

The EVOSS is an online platform under the supervision of the DOE which enables a coordinated submission and synchronous processing of data and information relative to applications for energy projects.

The EVOSS steering committee is chaired by the President and the Energy Secretary

as vice-chair.

The DOE said it would also revisit the OSW service contract to better reflect reasonable timelines and divide into clear phases.

These would include data acquisition, study phase and permitting; development plan, grid integration and final investment decision phase; construction, installation, and connection phase; commissioning and production phase; and de-

commissioning phase.

There are currently 42 OSW wind service contracts awarded with an indicated 31.5 gigawatts (GW) of installed capacity.

The prime areas identified are in Northern Luzon, Verde Island Passage, Northern Mindanao and Southern Mindoro.

A recent World Bank report showed that the country has the potential to develop up to 178 GW of offshore wind.





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## BREAKTHROUGH

ELFREN S. CRUZ

### No to greenwashing

At the start of the ongoing UN-sponsored climate change summit in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, "We must have zero tolerance for net-zero greenwashing. Today's Expert Group report is a how-to guide to ensure credible, accountable net-zero pledges."



The term "greenwashing" refers to the "process of conveying a false impression or misleading information about how a company's products are environmentally sound. Greenwashing involves making an unsubstantiated claim to deceive customers into believing that a company's products are environmentally friendly or have a greater positive impact than is true."

This definition could very well refer to the obviously public relations campaign being launched by certain governments and corporations, especially fossil fuel producers who try to appear as if they are at the forefront of the fight against global warming. There are several oil companies, for example, who have launched advertising campaigns showing their efforts to combat climate change. At the same time, there are reports that the biggest lobbyist against laws protecting the environment and reducing emissions are these same fossil fuel producers.

Scientists and climate activists have reported during the same summit that global fossil fuel emissions will reach record highs in 2022. The current trend also shows that the world will be further away from the agreed goal of stopping global warming. For example, the NGO Global Carbon Project reported that the world emitted one percent more this year than in the previous year. In the Paris Agreement seven years ago, there was a global agreement to stop adding carbon dioxide to the atmosphere by 2050. The goal was to stabilize global temperatures and minimize the risks from deadly heat waves, the rise of sea levels and the collapse of the ecosystem. At the current rate of emission, experts say that the 2050 deadline is impossible to meet.

Glen Peters, research director at the Center for International Climate and Environmental Research based in Norway, said, "Every year that emissions go up makes it that much more challenging to bring them back down again by a certain date." He was referring to the global warming target.

One of the major topics discussed was the need for richer countries to subsidize the efforts of poorer countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The rationale is that the principal emitters are the rich countries while the poorer countries who have very little emissions suffer from the effects of global warming like typhoons, floods, sea level increase. In fact, very few countries account for the majority of the world's fossil fuel emissions. These countries are China, responsible for 32 percent; the US, 14 percent; the European Union, 8 percent and India, 8 percent. In all these places, it seems that it is only Europe making a serious effort in the stopping of the use of coal-fired power plants.

China and India are still using coal as the major source of power. This is the reason why Chinese and Indian cities are the most polluted in the world. In fact, the most polluted city in the world is New Delhi in India. In Europe, there is a sudden rise in the use of coal because countries like Germany and Austria have restarted the long dormant coal-fired power plants.

Previously, the major source of fuel for the European countries was natural gas from Russia. Because of the Ukraine-Russian war, Russia has cut off its natural gas supply for Europe. The end of the pandemic has also been one reason why there has been an increase in the need for power. The increase in consumption as lockdowns have ceased has increased the need for power. Thus, adding to the emissions. The sudden rise of travel has also increased aviation, another source of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Middle East, led by Saudi Arabia, has decided to reduce crude oil production in spite of the need for additional crude oil. The seemingly obvious reason or motivation for this is to keep the price of oil and natural gas high.

Antonio Guterres in his opening speech at the Climate Summit has called for a "historic pact between developed and emerging economies - a Climate Solidarity Pact. A pact in which all countries make a special effort to reduce emissions this decade in line with the 1.5-degree goal. A pact in which wealthier countries and international financial institutions provide financial and technical assistance to help emerging economies speed their own renewable energy transition."

In the Philippines, we should remind our government that one of the major causes of climate change and global warming is deforestation. If we are to seriously address

the problems caused by typhoons and floods, it is not better evacuation plans or faster warning systems that are needed. The problem of deforestation caused mainly by illegal logging, farming and mining must be seriously addressed.



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# PBBM pressures claimants to approve COC

## China willing to handle South China Sea issues properly based on mutual respect – Premier Li

By JOSEPH PEDRAJAS

**P**HNOM PENH, Cambodia—A Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea must be concluded as soon as possible.

President Marcos made the call on Friday, Nov. 11 during the 40th and 41st Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit and Related Summits here as he faced the leaders of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam who are claiming parts of the contested waters. ▶ 3

## PBBM pressures claimants to approve COC ◀

Taiwan and China are also claiming territories in the South China Sea.

In his intervention speech for the 25th ASEAN-China Summit, President Marcos said the immediate conclusion of the COC has become more relevant now as countries involved mark 40 years of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and 20 years of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC).

“It shall be an example of how states manage their differences: through reason and through right. I, therefore, welcome the progress on textual negotiations on the COC this past year and hopefully an approved code of conduct in the very near future,” he said.

Currently, there are only little developments in the crafting of the COC two decades since ASEAN members made attempts to draft such a code.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) earlier said there was some sort of agreement among ASEAN members, particularly on what to do

during certain situations in the contested waters.

### Mutual respect

Without a chance for a formal bilateral talk, President Marcos and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met at the sidelines of the ASEAN-Plus Three (APT) Summit for a brief conversation where they agreed to strengthen ties of both countries.

Talking to Marcos through an interpreter, Li said he believes there should be continued growth of China-Philippines relations as he underscored that what the two countries have in common “far outweighs” their differences, to which the Philippine leader agreed.

“I absolutely agree. And I thank you for remembering my father and his initiative to come to China and it was he after all who made Philippines and China family,” Marcos said in response.

During Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi’s visit to the Philippines

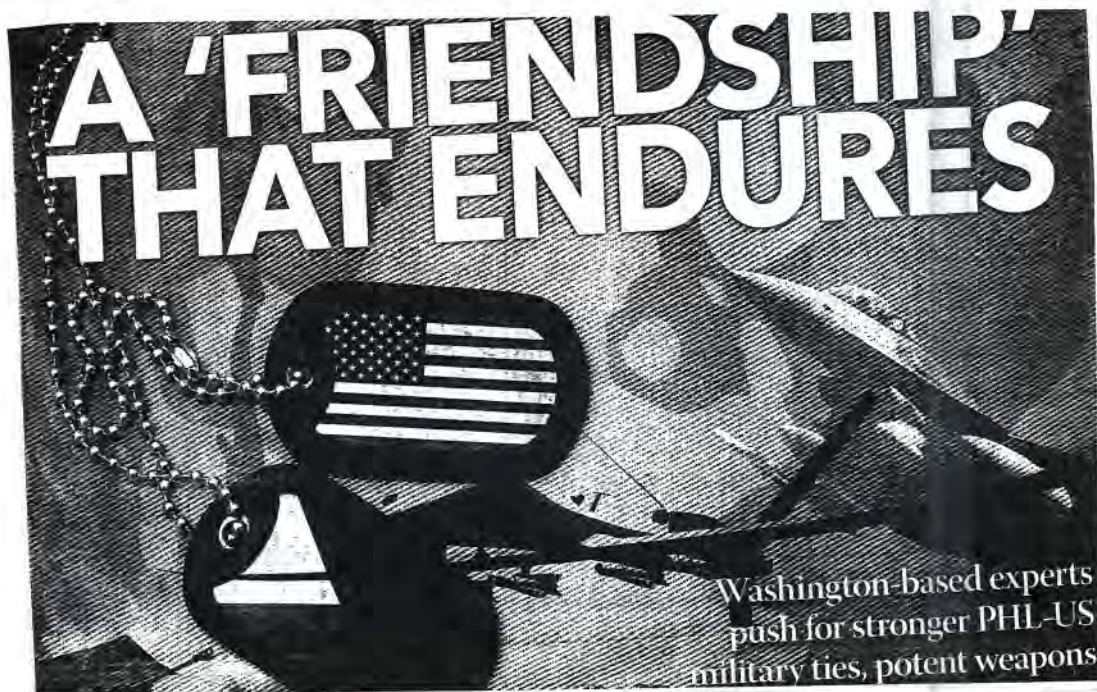
in July, the governments of both countries agreed to work on agriculture, infrastructure, energy and people-to-people exchanges.

Marcos said he looks forward to discussing all possible partnerships with China as he said “it has been proven right because the partnership with China has been a great benefit to both our countries.”

Li responded by saying he also looks forward to working with the Philippines in upholding the unity and cooperation between China and ASEAN.

“I look forward to working with the Philippines to uphold the unity and cooperation between China and ASEAN and also look forward to working with the Philippines and other countries in ASEAN for peace and stability in South China Sea on the basis of mutual respect and respect for the DOC and international law including the 1982 UNCLOS,” Li added.

In a speech at the ASEAN on Friday, Li said China is willing to handle South China Sea issues properly, based on mutual respect. (With a report from Bloomberg)



BY RENE ACOSTA

**W**ASHINGTON, D.C.—A private group of experts, comprising mostly defense and security analysts from leading think tanks in the United States, is prodding the US government to provide mobile state-of-the-art weapons systems for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) as a deterrent to China's security threat, even as they pushed for the revitalization of the Philippines-US military alliance.

"Prioritizing provision to the Philippines of items such as land-based mobile anti-air and anti-ship systems, as opposed to big-ticket items, makes sense from both a practical and cost perspective," the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) US-Philippines Alliance Task Force said in a recently released report. The report examined how the US could reinvigorate its military relations with its Southeast Asian ally and provide it with much needed military support.

"Items such as drones and other equipment that can be used for intelligence collection, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance serve both the Philippines' goals of enhancing its own maritime security and the US objective to bolster joint maritime domain awareness," the task force added in the report, entitled "Revitalizing the US-Philippines Alliance to Address Strategic Competition in the Indo-Pacific."

The task force, formed by the Washington, D.C.-based think tank CNAS, counts former senior

US officials, private-sector representatives and academic and think tank experts, who are mostly based in the US capital, as members. It is headed by Liza Curtis, senior fellow and director of CNAS's Indo-Pacific Security Program.

#### Strategic value

THE report said the "Philippines' strategic location in the South China Sea" and its "position in the first island chain is important to American security and the integrity of the US alliance system in the Indo-Pacific," noting that if an "adversary can coerce or easily penetrate the Philippine archipelago, Japan and Taiwan are easily flanked." China maintains a dispute over an island nationalized by Japan in the East China Sea while it also wants to reunite Taiwan.

The Philippines is currently contending with China's aggressive claims in its territory in the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG) and in its exclusive economic zone it calls the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

China, meanwhile, has occupied some of the features claimed

or owned by the Philippines, while at the same time maintaining military and paramilitary ships in those territories. The ships are often used to harass Philippine resupply missions to its forces in the features that Beijing disputes.

#### Territorial issue

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s foreign policy is to make the Philippines friendly to all states and maintain it, but he also declared that he would not cede any inch of the country's territory, apparently referring to the maritime issue with China. Marcos said that the Philippines has no dispute with China, but what it has is "China's claiming of a Philippine territory."

Marcos's clear and strong stance on the territorial issue with Beijing reinvigorated the country's relations with its allies and other like-minded states. Experts have earlier described such relations as becoming "wobbly" during the time of his predecessor, Rodrigo Roa Duterte, due to the latter's inclination for China and his declared friendship with Chinese Communist officials, including President Xi Jinping, despite Beijing's persistent muscling in the KIG and WPS.

The task force viewed the election of Marcos to the presidency as an opportunity for the US to revive its "critical alliance" with the Philippines and set it on "firmer footing."

Summing up the Philippines-US relations during the term of Duterte, the task force declared, "The alliance had faltered under Duterte's administration due to his counter-narcotics campaign that resulted in human-rights abuses—including thousands of extrajudicial killings, attempts to reorient the Philippines' foreign policy toward China and abrogation of the US-Philippines Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) in early 2020."

With its recommendation to prioritize the sale of asymmetric defense and maritime domain awareness equipment to the Philippines, the task force said the next move would be to explore financial arrangements such as the US Foreign Military Financing program to help Manila purchase "more expensive, sophisticated items" such as F-16 fighter aircraft.

#### How weapons are acquired

MOST of the military equipment sold or transferred to the Philippines by the US government, if not donated, were given through a military sales program. Recently, US Ambassador to the Philippines MaryKay Carlson announced a new \$70 million in defense aid to the country.

Aside from equipping the AFP, the CNAS US-Philippines Alliance Task Force recommended the creation of the 2+2 dialogue with the Philippines, where representatives on the US side are the heads of the Departments of State and Defense, to enhance the alliance by raising both countries' level of consultations on "strategic and operational planning."

By holding consultations, the task force said the Philippines and US would be prepared to "deal on an immediate basis with any contingency that may arise in the Indo-Pacific."

While the US has been vocal on its commitment to defend the Philippines under the Mutual Defense Treaty, the task force said both countries should put forward a common strategic vision based on the Philippines' strategic autonomy and a rules-based order.

#### EDCA approach

"AS part of this effort, the United States should be explicit that Washington would consider any construction of permanent military or dual-use structures at Scar-



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# BusinessMirror

A weekly look at today's business



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borough Shoal unacceptable and a potential trigger for employing Article IV of the Mutual Defense Treaty, the provision that is commonly interpreted to mean that an attack on one party is considered as an attack on both parties," it said.

Delving into the security agreements between both countries, the task force recommended the full and immediate implementation of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), with more Philippine military camps as hosts, seeing this as both beneficial to both countries.

Likewise, it pushed for the US's enhanced cybersecurity partnership with the Philippines as it noted China's 40-percent stake in the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP).

Outside the issue of defense and security, the Philippines is seen to gain in other areas out of the revitalized alliance as the task force prodded the US to invest more in peace efforts in Mindanao, the health sector and to provide the country with funds under the Millennium Challenge Corporation, especially in the areas of renewable energy, transportation infrastructure and post-pandemic economic recovery.

"The United States should seek to maximize the Philippines' role in the White House's Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. One area of opportunity is working toward a digital standards agreement, as the Philippines concurs with US-favored digital standards, which help underpin its business-process outsourcing sector," it also said.

The task force pushed for the amendment of the Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Act, which should raise the compensation of World War II veterans.

"The US Congress should increase the remaining \$55 million in

funds allocated to the Department of Veterans Affairs for Filipino veterans and amend the 2009 Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Act to raise individual payments to non-citizen Filipino veterans to the same level as Filipino-American veterans. Congress should also institute a more streamlined verification process that balances the desire to prevent fraudulent disbursements with the guarantee that remaining veterans receive their rightful compensation," it said.

A peace monument was also recommended to be constructed on the site in Sulu where an estimated 1,000 Moros, including women and children, were killed by the US Army in 1906.

### Truly a friend and an ally

IN pushing for a reinvigorated alliance, the task force recognized the Philippines-US relationship's "deep historical and cultural ties" as well as the presence of a significant Filipino-American community in the US, aside from Manila's strategic importance.

"Furthermore, the Philippine is an ally and friend within the Asean at a time when Southeast Asia is emerging as the epicenter of geopolitical competition," it said.

"With an alliance in place for over 70 years, the two countries have fought side by side in several wars and cooperated on common diplomatic and security objectives including during the Cold War when the United States had a massive military presence in the Philippines," it added.

*Rene Acosta, a reporter for this paper is currently a visiting fellow at the East West Center in Washington, where he researches US-Philippines defense and security relations under the US-Philippines Alliance Fellowship. He is the program's first visiting scholar.*



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YOUNG GERMAN CAMPAIGNERS STAND THEIR GROUND VS MINING

# CLIMATE ACTIVISTS TAKE TO THE TREES TO SAVE VILLAGE

LUETZERATH, GERMANY—After the last farmer packed up and left in October, climate activists are the only people left in the village of Luetzerath, Germany, which sits above a rich vein of coal.

In huts perched six meters aboveground in the trees, the young campaigners say they can hold out against the authorities if they try to clear them out.

They are there in an effort to stop the village being bulldozed to allow the extension of a neighboring open-air coal mine.

They do not know when the police might come to force them out, but with Germany in need of more coal, most think it will be soon.

Europe's largest economy has restarted part of its mothballed inventory of coal power plants to relieve the pressure on gas-powered facilities, following a cut to supplies from Russia in the wake of the inva-



HERE TO STAY Environmental activists living in the village of Luetzerath place a sign that reads "remain" on a street to express opposition to a mining project. —REUTERS

sion of Ukraine.

Several thousand protesters are expected to descend on Saturday on Luetzerath, now a symbol of the resistance to fossil fuels, to urge more action from participants in the COP27 conference in Egypt.

"We do not know when the evacuation is planned," says Alma, a French activist who uses a pseudonym.

"It's a question of responsibility, one that is difficult to take for the authorities because it's a huge operation, for which thousands of police officers need to be mobilized over several weeks," she says.

### Mining deal

After studying, Alma decided to go full time as an activist and was one of the first to set up the activist camp in Luetzerath two years ago.

One by one, the residents of Luetzerath have left as their homes were expropriated and they were compensated and rehoused.

She and the dozens of others who have joined her in the occupied village felt betrayed earlier this year when the government, led

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# CLIMATE ACTIVISTS TAKE TO THE TREES TO SAVE VILLAGE

## FROM A3

by Social Democrat Olaf Scholz, announced a compromise with the energy giant RWE to allow the extension of the nearby mine.

Under the agreement, five nearby villages will be spared, but Luetzerath is set to disappear.

Even though RWE, long one of Europe's biggest emitters, said it would stop producing electricity with carbon in 2030, the activists are not persuaded.

"If RWE extracts all the coal under Luetzerath, Germany will certainly violate the Paris [climate] accord because of the emissions from the mine. The village is therefore not just a symbol, it's a critical point in the fight against climate change," says Alma.

On the other side of the road sits the coal pit, where excavators move across golden-black

dunes of sand.

The lignite still in the ground here will be needed "from 2024" to supply power plants as other mines close, RWE says.

According to a 2021 report by the DIW economic think-tank, the energy company could extract a further 100 million tonnes of coal without having to demolish Luetzerath and the other five villages.

### 'In danger'

Despite resorting to more coal power in the current energy crisis, Germany says it is not wavering from its aim of exiting coal power in 2030.

Though the climate activists want action accelerated to bring down emissions.

In recent months, some activists have turned to more extreme means to get their voices heard—including by sticking themselves on main roads and halting traffic.

Recently, some activists also flung mashed potatoes at a Monet painting in a Potsdam museum.

In Luetzerath, climate activists have set up an intricate camp in the trees to avoid being quickly evicted by the police.

Using a network of cables, they have connected their encampment. The militants think they can hold out for several weeks, six meters (12 feet) above the ground.

On the ground, in the middle of the camp, around 20 militants try to raise a pole made of a giant tree trunk with a system of pulleys.

"The poles are tied to the trees in a way that ought to make it impossible to cut the ropes without putting someone's life in danger," Alma says.

Underlining their commitment, an anonymous activist said facing death is the activists' "entire strategy." —AFP



## EGYPT, HOST OF COP27, TAKES A STEP TOWARD GREEN ENERGY

BY SAMY MAGDY  
& JACK JEFFERY  
*The Associated Press*

**B**ENBAN, Egypt—From a distance, the endless landscape of solar panels stretching toward the horizon can easily be mistaken for crops nearing harvest. But here in the desert in southern Egypt, workers have been cultivating another precious commodity: electricity.

After the sun strikes the photovoltaic solar panels, a thermal charge generates electricity that runs to four government-owned power stations distributing power across Egypt's national grid.

It's part of the country's push to increase renewable energy production. With near-perpetual sunshine and windy Red Sea coastlines, experts say Egypt is well positioned to go green.

Yet it is also a developing country and like many others faces obstacles in making the switch. Much of its infrastructure depends on fossil fuels to power the nation of some 104 million people.

The solar panel farm—Egypt's flagship project named Benban, after a local village—puts it at the African continent's forefront when it comes to renewable energy. But questions remain over Egypt's long-term green energy strategy, and whether there are enough incentives for the cash-strapped government to supply 42 percent of the country's electricity from renewable resources by 2035, as it has announced.

Karim el-Gendy, an expert at Chatham House who specializes in urban sustainability and climate policy,

says Egypt has failed to meet its goal of having 20 percent of its electricity sourced from renewables by 2022. The current figure is now closer to 10 percent, according to his estimates, based on government data.

There's less demand for solar energy, partly due to the influx of natural gas, thanks to new discoveries located in Egypt's section of the Mediterranean Sea.

"We have seen less interest in the past couple of years in integrated renewable energy projects in Egypt, both in terms of solar, in the south, and wind," he said.

As host of this year's global climate summit, known as COP27 and now underway in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt has said it will pressure other nations to implement climate promises made at previous conferences. Egypt is not bound by any carbon emissions cap, but it has vowed to mitigate and curb its emission rises across key polluting sectors, such as electricity and transport.

Its use of natural gas has also helped, allowing Egypt to move away from burning coal and oil, much dirtier industries—but nevertheless, gas is still a fossil fuel.

The government has revealed few details on how it will implement or finance the 2035 vision. Foreign investment will likely play a big part, as countries in Europe look south for solar power. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has allotted \$10 billion of funding for over 150 projects across Egypt, with Benban claimed as one of its major successes.

The farm is designed to grow as demand for solar energy increases.

"It offers great potential for us and other investors," said Faisal Eissa, general manager for Egypt at Lekela, a Dutch company that has invested in Benban.

Egypt's New and Renewable Energy Authority claims Benban has already reduced the country's annual greenhouse emission output. But there is still a long way to go. In 2020, renewables accounted for 6 percent of Egypt's energy consumption, according to the US Energy Information Administration, with petroleum products accounting for 36 percent and natural gas for 57 percent. Coal accounted for just 1 percent.

Egypt may also have less of an incentive to invest in renewables as it grapples with domestic challenges, including an economic crisis brought on by the coronavirus pandemic, Russia's war in Ukraine and a years-long government crackdown on dissent. Last month, Cairo reached a preliminary deal with the International Monetary Fund that would allow access to a \$3 billion loan.

Effects of climate change are already being felt in the Nile River Delta, where rising seas have brought on creeping salt that eats away roots and cakes farms, devastating the livelihoods of Egyptian farmers.

The Arab world's most populous country accounts for only 0.6 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions. But it faces high levels of urban pollution. Most of the population lives in densely packed neighborhoods along the fertile banks of the Nile and its northern delta. Here, car

fumes and mass transport running on diesel clog the streets. Egyptians' exposure to air pollution is, on average, 13 times higher than the World Health Organization's recommended guidelines. It was responsible for 90,559 premature deaths in 2019, according to statistics gathered by the United Nations.

The remaining 90 percent of Egypt's land is uninhabitable desert. By better utilizing the vast expanse and coastlines, the Dubai-based International Renewable Energy Agency said the North African country could generate over half of its electricity from renewables by 2030.

It's a different way of viewing the country's sun-scorched landscape.

"People here have started to look at the sun as a source of power," said Ahmed Mustafa, who runs one of the area's

many new logistics companies that work alongside Benban's developers and engineers, supplying them with equipment.

For the locals, the solar farm has been transformative. Thousands worked at the site when it was under construction, and many stayed as technicians and cleaners once it became fully functional.

Ultimately, the development of more wind and solar capabilities will come down to what makes business sense for the government, despite its expressions of good intent, according to el-Gendy.

"The need to expand its renewable sector all depends on Egypt's commercial interests," he said.

*Jeffery reported from Cairo.*



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## EYES WIDE OPEN

IRIS GONZALES

### A Filipina at COP27

In the Egyptian resort town of Sharm el-Sheik, between the desert of the Sinai Peninsula and the Red Sea, as countries gathered to discuss the pressing issue of climate change, a Filipina addressed world leaders to share the situation in our country.



At the ongoing 27th United Nations Climate Change Conference, more commonly known as COP27, Ann Adeline Dumaliang, managing trustee of the Masungi Georeserve Foundation, shared what her group is doing as she brought to the world's attention the situation of deforestation in the Philippines and our overall climate situation.

Ann makes all of us proud – a small, lone voice speaking on the world stage and sharing the success of Masungi, a story of fighting the good fight despite threats from land grabbers and greedy developers.

#### What is the Masungi Georeserve?

To those not familiar with this piece of paradise somewhere in the Sierra Madre mountain range, Masungi is a conservation area and rustic limestone landscape tucked in the rainforests of Rizal.

Here, the air is crisp and fresh; wildlife and plant species abound. It's a community rich with heritage and life but threatened by modern-day developments.

One could see the cityscape of Metro Manila, a panoramic view of towering buildings glistening under the golden Philippine sun.

There's a breathtaking view of the skyline; of skyscrapers kissing the clouds and of towering buildings casting shadows on a mirage of the fast-moving and dynamic life in the sprawling world down below.

The group behind it is the Masungi Georeserve Foundation Inc. (MGF), a non-profit organization.

#### Climate awakening

Shared Ann during the COP27:

"My climate awakening really happened when I was about 18 years old when Typhoon Ketsana (Ondoy) came. More than 600 lives were lost. More than a billion dollars in damage; lots of floods and landslides that have inundated towns and cities.

"Unfortunately, the forests kept on dwindling. In 2008, the Manila Observatory reported that the forest cover was at 19 percent. Come 2021, it went down to 11 percent. So in 2017, when then secretary Gina Lopez invited us and challenged us to participate in the reforestation of this area, we took on the challenge. Then the Masungi Geopark Project was born.

"This is basically a youth-led initiative spanning 3,000 hectares or so that is all about landscape restoration, which is a nature-based solution. In this project, we are doing things at no cost to the government. We are financing it through low-volume, nature-based conservation-based experiences. We were meant to collaborate with this at the national level directly, which was done basically to overcome the number and the multitude of vested interests on the ground."

Masungi, says the Foundation, is a microcosm of the environmental situation in a highly sensitive karst landscape which serves as a natural filter for vital waterways.

As it is now, surrounding mountains remain desperately threatened by land trafficking, slash-and-burn farming, quarrying, illegal logging and resort developments, practices that continue because of government neglect and corruption among law enforcement officials.

As such, the Foundation strives to protect the area, comprising 430 hectares of secondary forest and 2,270 of grasslands from deforestation and which currently stores an estimate of 160,000 tons of carbon or the equivalent of 66 million gallons of gasoline consumed.

The Foundation seeks to restore nearby forests to protect the natural ability of the watershed to regulate water. Watersheds are important because they provide many ecosystem services including carbon and water storage, erosion and flood control, increased biodiversity and many more.

#### The Philippine delegation

Ann Dumaliang of course isn't the only Filipina in the ongoing conference in Egypt. But her presence there is important because it means that civil society has become more aggressive in making the Philippines heard.

Heading the Philippine delegation is Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga, who assured Filipinos that the country will continue to assert its entitlement to support and assistance as a country vulnerable to climate change.

The delegation, says Sec. Loyzaga, will reiterate calls for bolder climate action and demand the delivery of what is due for the developing countries which hardly produce any greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, yet suffer the most and continue to bear the brunt of the adverse impacts of climate change.

"As developing countries need resources for climate adaptation, the Philippine delegation will continue calling on developed countries to step up to these obligations and deliver without delay on their commitments on climate finance, technology transfer and capacity building," Sec. Loyzaga added.

COP27 opened a week after Severe Tropical Storm Paeng ripped through the country, leaving over a hundred people dead and causing devastating damage. This is a stark reminder that the fight against climate change must continue.

Indeed, for governments, the time for pledges is over. The time for honesty, delivery and accountability is long overdue.

As Sec. Loyzaga said, we must continue pressing developed countries for bigger climate action such as assistance to countries like ours.

Here at home, we must drastically protect our forests and other protected areas at all costs. The Masungi Foundation shows us that it can be done.

Individually, we must also change our usual ways; we must be more conscious with our respective environmental footprints and our daily consumption – from food to energy.

And if you still don't know where to start, find time to visit Masungi and see for yourself why we must all do our part in protecting the world we live in.

Email: [eyesgonzales@gmail.com](mailto:eyesgonzales@gmail.com). Follow her on Twitter @eyesgonzales. Column archives at EyesWideOpen on FB.





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## 'Life of the planet' at stake in climate crisis — Biden

SHARM EL SHEIKH, Egypt (AFP) — President Joe Biden told the COP27 conference Friday the “very life of the planet” is at stake in the climate crisis as he gave an assurance that the United States is on track to slash carbon emissions.

“The climate crisis is about human security, economic security, environmental security, national security and the very life of the planet,” he told an audience at the conference in Egypt.

Biden said the United States is “on track” to achieve its pledge of cutting emissions 50-52 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.

“The United States will meet our emissions targets,” he said, laying out major legislation passed under his presidency, including the largest ever US government investment in clean energy.

Biden, who was spending only a few hours in the resort of Sharm el-Sheikh before travelling on to ASEAN and G20 summits in Asia, challenged other countries to do more to cut carbon emissions in the hope of bringing global warming under control.

“Every nation needs to step up. At this gathering, we must renew and raise our climate ambitions,” he said in a speech that lasted about 22 minutes and was briefly interrupted by unidentified people in the crowd making howling noises.

“It’s a duty and responsibility of global leadership. Countries that are in a position to help should be sup-



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SHARM EL-SHEIKH  
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porting developing countries so they can make decisive climate decisions — facilitating their energy transitions, building a path to prosperity compatible with our climate imperative.” In a pointed criticism of the upheaval sparked by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Biden said the conflict gave fresh impetus to the ongoing push to replace oil and gas with renewable sources. As a major energy exporter, Moscow has for years had a strong economic grip on energy poor western Europe.

“Russia’s war only enhances the urgency of the need to transition the world off its dependence on fossil fuels,” Biden said.





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## DIPLOMATIC POUCH

ILAN FLUSS

# Israel's climate of innovation on COP 27



The world is drastically changing and we are in the midst of a powerful climate crisis that is only getting worse. Widespread floods, devastating typhoons, severe droughts, biodiversity and more pressure on different species – this is only a partial list of the major disasters which UN experts have told us, time and time again, are only likely to increase as we continue to emit greenhouse gases.

The climate crisis spares no one. The Philippines, for example, is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. In my more than a year of residing here as a diplomat, I have experienced a number of typhoons and have seen the damages they brought to the livelihood, infra-structure, agriculture and lives of Filipinos. The climate crisis that the world is going through today is making typhoons worse, which is more challenging not only for the Philippines but also for the whole world.

Israel, on the other hand, is a country located in an arid region and facing chronic water shortages and droughts, high temperatures, changing patterns of rainfall and a difficult environment for agricultural development. Israel has had to invent innovative solutions to address these challenges.

Through decades of knowledge and experience, Israel has found practical solutions to climate challenges, which it wishes to share in the ongoing COP 27 annual climate conference in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. World leaders, government and private sector representatives, experts and policy formulators gather around to discuss ways to prevent the climate crisis. Participating from Israel is a high-ranking delegation led by the president and joined by representatives from all sectors.

Israel's efforts and investments are towards research and development of innovations, technologies and practices that involve areas essential to handling the climate crisis. Israel has established a community of innovation called plan-etch, it includes all relevant stakeholders and looks into developing innovation good for the planet. Some of the areas we are looking at are efficiency of water resources and creation of new water sources, drought-resistant and precision agriculture, invention of animal protein substitutes and sustainable crops, energy efficiency and energy storage, restoration and preservation of forests in arid areas, circular economy and the production of new materials that are environment-friendly. Many ideas also come from an active and aware civil society, which contributes to the climate-environmental discourse and activities that are often integrated into government action.

Evidence of Israel's desire to share information and experience is the establishment, for the first time, of an Israeli pavilion at a COP conference. The pavilion will focus on climate innovation and solutions, and dozens of events aimed at creating international and regional cooperation in the Middle East. Regional and international cooperation is critical to dealing with the climate crisis, therefore, our goal is that every event at the Israeli pavilion will create a long-term partnership and process.

Speaking of partnership, here in the Philippines, the embassy of Israel con-

tinues to collaborate with the relevant government agencies and private sector to exchange knowledge and experience, as well as assist in the implementation of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, especially to achieve food security. Israel is collaborating with TESDA for an 11-month agriculture internship program in Israel. Filipino interns learn from Israel's advanced techniques and methods of smart agriculture, with the goal that they would apply the learnings once they go back to the Philippines. An estimated number of 10,000 Filipino professionals has benefited from this program.

Another example is MASHAV – Israel's agency for international development cooperation, which is active here in the Philippines. Filipino scholars attend MASHAV training courses to immerse in Israel's environmental management, climate change initiatives, renewable energy management and more.

As the Ambassador of Israel to the Philippines, I am eager to introduce Israeli innovation and technology to the Philippines that could help prevent the climate crisis.

In fact, the embassy is initiating an exhibit at the Philippine Senate of Israeli technologies present in the Philippines. The said technologies address the challenges for smart agriculture, water shortage and more. Aside from the exhibit, a series of roundtable discussions between relevant Philippine government officials and Israeli experts will be conducted to bring more Israeli innovation and technology to the Philippines, especially on climate innovation.

International cooperation in the field of climate innovation provides an excellent opportunity to strengthen the economy for the benefit of all, create new jobs and advance human prosperity, while preserving nature, the climate and ecological diversity. One example of such collaboration is the triangular project where solar technology will produce energy in the desert in Jordan. This will be channeled to a water desalination plant in Israel that will supply potable drinking water back to Jordan. This is supported by investment from the UAE. It's a private sector led initiative supported by the government. This project is a reflection of the new Middle East collaboration on critical issues of sustainability and for the survival of the people and countries of the region.

The success of the COP 27 conference is of the utmost importance, as well as the advancement of all the issues it will focus on: the continuation of global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adoption of a global goal for adaptation and adjustment to the climate crisis, development of technologies, international cooperation mechanisms and more.

Israel, as a climate of innovation, is proud to join countries around the world in the COP27 and to share creative Israeli solutions, which are contributing to the fight against climate change. Israel hopes that the Sharm el-Sheikh conference will mark a positive turning point in the future of humanity. Come and see us at the Israeli pavilion at COP 27!

*Ilan Fluss is the Israeli Ambassador to the Philippines.*





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## US, Japan-led climate pact set to offer Indonesia \$15 billion

By JENNIFER A. DLOUHY & YUDITH HO

**T**HE US, Japan and other countries will offer a climate finance deal worth at least \$15 billion to help Indonesia shift its coal-dominated power grid away from the polluting fossil fuel.



TUGBOATS guide barges transporting coal on Mahakam River in Samarinda, East Kalimantan, Indonesia on October 13, 2021. Coal prices are likely to remain high after soaring to new records on strengthening power demand and challenges in key supplier nations, according to a major Australian producer. BLOOMBERG

Details of an agreement will be announced during the Group of 20 meetings in Bali next week after talks between US President Joe Biden and Indonesian President Joko Widodo, Coordinating Maritime Affairs and Investment Minister Luhut Panjaitan said Friday, confirming an earlier Bloomberg News report.

The "just energy transition partnership," or JETP, pact with Japan, the US and others follows roughly a year of negotiations and could be announced as soon as Tuesday, according to people familiar with the plans, who asked not to be named because the details aren't yet public.

A spokesperson for the US Treasury Department and Japan's foreign ministry declined to comment.

The deal would enable Indonesia to accelerate efforts to shutter excess fossil fuel generation capacity, and to limit its pipeline of coal power projects, factors that are currently thwarting the development of renewable energy, the people said.

"I do hope the size is going to be big enough to create confidence in terms of delivering the transition of energy," Indonesia's Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati said Friday at the Bloomberg CEO Forum in Bali.

Southeast Asia's largest economy will need about \$600 billion to phase out coal generation, add a similar amount of renewable capacity and make other changes like developing an electric vehicle sector over the next three decades, State-owned Enterprises Minister Erick Thohir said in a September interview.

Indonesia recently stepped up its emissions reduction targets with plans for more aggressive greenhouse gas cuts by 2030, and has set out a goal of reaching net-zero by 2060 by developing more solar, geothermal and nuclear power. Coal currently dominates the nation's economy, accounting for more than half of the country's electricity and is a key driver of growth—Indonesia is the world's top exporter of thermal coal.

The agreement is modeled after a similar \$8.5 billion climate finance deal for South Africa first outlined at last year's UN climate summit, while talks are also under way on efforts to strike pacts for nations including Senegal and India. South Africa only this month published a detailed investment plan, showing how complex it can be to turn initial bare bones deals into fully realized proposals.

However, unlike the South African deal, which was hastily

advanced at last year's climate summit, the Indonesian JETP is the product of a full year of negotiations and the initial framework is more detailed, according to some of the people.

US officials have been working to steer some of the world's most populous countries to cleaner forms of energy, including talks with Indonesia and Vietnam, US special presidential envoy for climate John Kerry said in an interview last month.

Panjaitan spoke with Kerry on the issue on Thursday night and parties hope to make an announcement by Wednesday, he told the B-20 Net Zero Summit on Friday in Bali. "Indonesia needs to transform, we care very much about this and our negotiation with US and JETP went very well," he said.

Though the announcement is set to be delivered alongside the G-20 meetings, the details will reverberate all the way to the COP27 climate summit in Egypt, where a central issue is how to get more investment dollars to work building renewable power



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projects in developing nations.

Indonesia's abundance of thermal coal and large volume of potential power plant projects have long been cited as a barrier to the nation bringing on more capacity in renewables. State-run electricity utility Perusahaan Listrik Negara, or PLN, has a pipeline of about 13.7 gigawatts of new coal generating capacity under construction or development.

Under the JETP, some of those new coal plants would not be built and total new coal power capacity additions would shrink to about 10 gigawatts, some of the people said. PLN didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

It's not immediately clear how many existing coal plants PLN would commit to closing early under the deal, though company executives previously have identified 6.7 gigawatts for potential early retirement.

*With assistance from Isabel Reynolds, Eko Listiyorini, Grace Sihombing, Norman Harsono and Emi Urabe/Bloomberg*



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# PH, Asean partner on food security

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE



**ENERGIZING TIES** President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and his South Korean counterpart Yoon Suk Yeol meet on the side of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations + 3 Summit in Cambodia on Friday, Nov. 11, 2022. Marcos has expressed his intent to explore technological cooperation on renewable energy sources with the Republic of Korea. PHOTO BY THE OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY



## THE Philippine government is ready to work with the partners of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) to ensure food security in the region, President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. said on Saturday.

Marcos made the statement as he joined his fellow leaders during the 25th Asean Plus Three (China, Japan, South Korea) Summit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

"Attaining food self-sufficiency and security by seeking innovative solutions through adoption of new technologies and enhanced connectivity to national, regional and global value supply chains — this must be one of our priorities in the region," Marcos said.

"The Philippines reaffirms our commitment to actively engage in the Asean Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve or Apterr. Apterr is extremely beneficial to our countries. We are vulnerable to many hazards and natural calamities due to topography and geographic location," he added.

The President also said that the country

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### ASEAN FROM A1

## PH, Asean partner

is prepared to collaborate with Asean Plus Three (APT) partners on the New Work Plan 2023-2027, which will serve as a guide in the next five years.

The plan will tackle various areas such as public health, food security, financial cooperation and digital economy, particularly as the region moves toward the post-pandemic recovery.

To enhance food security, Marcos also suggested diversifying Apterr by adding other commodities and staple food to the reserve.

The President also recommended the exploration of smart agriculture and conduct of capacity-building programs for Asean members as well as continuing the conduct of forums that serve as platforms to discuss regional concerns on agriculture and food security.

Furthermore, as part of the region's post-pandemic recovery, Marcos underscored the need for promoting an environment of peace and security, particularly in the maritime domain.

"Inasmuch as our region is primarily maritime in character and concerns, we must put a premium in strengthening the multi-faceted nature of our maritime cooperation," Marcos said.

"Let us continue to work with our APT partners through activities such as safety and freedom of navigation,

with the end view of promoting peace, stability, security and prosperity in accordance with the relevant international and regional treaties and agreements, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos)," he added.

The President also delved on the Korean Peninsula issue, calling on the North Korean government to abide by the UN Security Council Resolutions.

### Marcos invited to WEF in Switzerland

President Marcos has also been invited to the World Economic Forum in Switzerland in January next year, Malacañang announced on Saturday.

Office of the Press Secretary Officer in Charge Cheloy Garafil said the invitation was extended to Marcos by WEF founder and Executive Chairman Klaus Schwab during a breakfast meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on Saturday.

"World Economic Forum (WEF) founder and Executive Chairman Klaus Schwab today invited President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to the WEF in Davos, Switzerland on January 16-20, 2023," Garafil said in a statement.

Garafil said Schwab commended Marcos "for the strong showing of the economy" despite the prevailing



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coronavirus pandemic.

"Schwab told Marcos his attendance to the WEF serves as a good opportunity to let the global business community know about the dynamism and positive developments happening in the Philippines in a bid to attract more investors," she added.

Established in 1971, WEF serves as an international organization for public-private cooperation.

The annual WEF convenes leaders from government, business and civil society to address the state of the world and discuss priorities for the year ahead.

Marcos is currently in Cambodia for the 40th and 41st Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit and Related Summits.

In the summit, President Marcos also called on all parties to work together to complete the much-awaited South China Sea Code of Conduct (COC) to ensure peace and stability in the region.

The President said the immediate conclusion of the COC becomes more relevant as nations mark 40 and 20 years of Unclos and the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), respectively.

He said that it is important that the Unclos continues to be upheld as the universal framework in oceans and sea activities.

"It shall be an example of how states manage their differences: through reason and through right. I,

therefore, welcome the progress on textual negotiations on the COC this past year and hopefully an approved code of conduct in the very near future," Marcos said.

In October, Secretary General Dato Paduka Lim Jock Hoi said the Asean and China were already working on the second draft of the COC in the South China Sea.

Lim said despite the challenges, including the delay because of the Covid-19 pandemic, "Asean member-states and also China have exerted effort to resume the negotiation on COC and maintain the momentum of work, including utilizing virtual platforms and videoconference."

In his opening remarks, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang stressed that both China and Asean countries uphold peace and stability in the South China Sea.

The Philippines and China have been in a long-standing maritime dispute as Beijing claims almost the entirety of the South China Sea, which overlaps with the West Philippine Sea.

Apart from the Philippines and China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei have also competing territorial claims in the South China Sea.

The Philippines scored a victory against China in the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, Netherlands in 2016. The arbitration court declared Beijing's claim over nearly the entire South China Sea as illegal.

China has refused to acknowledge

the ruling and continues to claim nearly the entire South China Sea.

## PH committed vs climate change

President Marcos also renewed the commitment of the Philippines to fighting climate change, saying it is the greatest threat affecting nations and the people.

In his remarks during the Asean-UN Summit in Phnom Penh Friday, the President said: "The Philippines is committed to supporting and collaborating with the UN in the global effort to fight climate change and other environmental issues."

The President's statement came after he urged his fellow Asean leaders to come up with a "collective" action to fight climate change.

He said the Asean can address these challenges by strengthening its cooperation mechanism on environmental sustainability and holistic green economic strategies.

He also emphasized the need to enhance climate resilience in developing nations by "using new agricultural technologies" to strengthen food security cooperation and food self-sufficiency in the region.

Meanwhile, Marcos assured the UN of the Philippines' resolve to continue its engagement with the international body.

He also mentioned his administration's commitment and advocacy for youth empowerment, peace-building,

and security initiatives, citing the launch of the Philippine National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security (NAP-YPS) in August this year.

Anchored on the five YPS pillars defined in the UN Security Council's Resolution 2250, the NAP-YPS seeks to recognize, enrich, and maximize local and international existing mechanisms to address institutional, structural and cultural barriers hindering young people's involvement in conflict resolution, prevention, management and peace-building.

"As I mentioned during our meeting in New York [in September 2022], we intend to enhance our role in peace-keeping operations, especially where there is a huge concentration of overseas Filipinos," Marcos said.

Marcos also emphasized the need for all UN member-states to respect the rule of law and international laws, particularly the 1982 Unclos.

The President noted that the Philippines' commitment to an "open, inclusive and rules-based" international order is unwavering.

He also expressed appreciation for the assistance given to the Asean member-states by the UN to help them address the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Our close cooperation has helped see all of us through the worst of the pandemic. I am looking forward to further cooperation in our pandemic recovery efforts to 'build back better'," Marcos said.



## The climate crisis hits poor countries the hardest



REFLECTIONS

FR. SHAY  
CULLEN SSC

THE Philippines is the hardest-hit country in Asia by the frequency and greater intensity of typhoons indisputably caused by climate change. The World Meteorological Organization says the Philippines' climate disasters have increased five times more intensely in the past 50 years. What you read here is the truth: it is a painful and self-inflicted pain by humankind, but knowing the truth might set us free.

Heating of oceans and rising sea levels all impact the Philippines. Roxas Boulevard will be underwater in 20 years. The mango and banana harvests have been badly affected with a decline in mango production by 4 percent, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) in 2022.

The 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) of the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) is ongoing in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt until Nov. 18, 2022, and over 100 heads of state have attended. For the past 10 years, the rich countries have promised to reduce greenhouse gases, move away from fossil fuels and compensate the poor countries but most

The general secretary of the UN, Antonio Guterres, said the world is on the road to a fatal crash with its foot on the accelerator for not stopping the burning of fossil fuel. In fact, the world has increased its output of deadly CO2 by 14 percent. Governments of rich nations continue to give financial subsidies to oil exploration companies. "The fossil fuel industry is killing us," Guterres also said, "and leaders are out of step with their people, who are crying out for urgent climate action." This increase in emissions means that holding the global temperature below a 1.5-degree increase will not be possible. The planet has warmed continually for the past eight years and will continue to get hotter. We can expect more disastrous climatic events.

The climate crisis is getting worse, not better, and the planet is in

never did. In fact, carbon dioxide emissions have increased, a record of shameful lies. Corporations have lied, too, by "green-washing" their CO2-polluting projects. Al Gore reveals at COP27 "...that the top 14 individual polluters are all gas and oil fields and their associated facilities, despite their emissions being "significantly underreported" by 50 percent.

Methane leaks and flaring was found to be three times more than what they reported to the UN. Methane is 80 times worse for the atmosphere than CO2.

In fact, all the oil companies lied again and again and still lie to the world and make billions of extra profits from selling oil and gas at exaggerated prices upon which the world economy depends. The European Union passed a law forcing them to pay an extra "windfall" tax.

convulsions. If you have doubts about it, consider the following. Thousands of experts and scientists report that 2022 is the worst year for climate disasters. The Philippines has had the worst series of super typhoons in living memory, bringing floods and devastation.

Pakistan had a massive drought with 62 percent less rain and endured temperatures of 40 degrees Celsius. Then the non-stop rains came and 33 million people had to flee as one-third of the country was underwater. About 1,500 people died. China, the worst producer of CO2 in the world, had temperatures over 40 degrees as well that lasted for 70 days, followed by floods. Massive floods also devastated parts of South Korea with twice the average rainfall and the worst floods in 80 years.

India had temperatures as high as 49 degrees. Many died on the hottest days in 122 years since records began. There was 71 percent lower rainfall and drought. Huge wildfires raged in Europe with the worst drought in 500 years. Siberia and the United States also had their worst droughts in living memory. Australia lost \$3.5 billion to massive floods. Somalia is suffering four years of devastating drought, and thousands are enduring famine. Low-lying South Pacific Islands are going underwater.

Despite the call at COP27 for trillions of dollars to be paid by way of justice for the damage caused by the rich countries to the poor, the rich give mostly promises but little money despite the fact that they are causing the climate crisis. There is little chance that the Philippines will be compensated for the disasters and losses by the more intense typhoons. The Philippines is adding CO2 to global warming from its present 28 coal-fired power generation plants. These supply



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44.5 percent of the total energy supply since 2015. Twenty-two new plants are approved by the government but are on hold over public outcry against them and the commitments of the Philippines to the Paris Agreement to reduce CO2 emissions.

There are just a few alternative renewable power generation projects supplying electric power. Renewable and totally free power sources are available in the Philippines — hydropower, solar panels, wind turbine, geothermal and biomass — that can replace oil and coal so investors should focus on more renewable energy sources.

Guterres called for climate justice and said the promises of the 2015 Paris agreement for rich developed nations to give \$100 billion to the poor as compensation and to mitigate the disasters of climate change have not happened. "I emphasized the need to double [the] adaptation support to \$40 billion a year by 2025," as was agreed in Glasgow COP26 last year. "Climate destruction is happening now. People are suffering now."

What people everywhere can do is organize their communities to get everyone to start tree nurseries in their backyards and when the rainy season starts, they have community planting in reserved areas or with the Indigenous people. The Preda Foundation has records showing it planted (with the help of the Aeta Indigenous people of Zambales) a total of 49,150 mango saplings and other fruit trees on their ancestral lands since 2002 and many more planted before that date. Those trees absorb at least 8.3 tons of CO2 every year. Anyone can join this ongoing project. Email to [predainfo@gmail.com](mailto:predainfo@gmail.com)

The Indigenous people are lovers of nature and the forest. They are living in harmony with what is left of it. They were the hunters and gatherers before the political logging families cut down the rainforests, exported raw logs, and sold them to rebuild Europe and Japan. The powerful families then claimed ownership of the denuded ancestral lands of Indigenous people and planted 3.2 million hectares with 325 million coconut trees that made them incredibly rich and powerful enough to rule the Philippines.

The destruction of the Philippine rainforests is a crime against the indigenous people but also against a stable climate for Filipinos. Greater harm is coming to the Philippines as the planet grows warmer and temperatures increase and rural areas become poorer for millions of small tenant farmers. The Philippines must phase out coal plants and go for renewable sources of power.





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# Phl, other countries to miss UN sustainable development goals

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

SINGAPORE – Citing COVID-19's impact on health systems, a scientist said that it will be impossible for countries including the Philippines to hit the targets set under the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"When you look at pandemic preparedness and specifically, as it impacts on sustainable development goals, we can speak in general terms that all countries will not be able to hit the SDG targets, all 17 of them, precisely because of the impact of COVID-19 and how it affected health systems across all countries," said Dr. Jaime Montoya, executive director of the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development, in an interview.

Montoya, who was appointed by the UN Secretary General to be one of 15 leading scientists from around the world to draft the UN Global Sustainable Development Report for 2023, was guest speaker in a session under the World One Health Congress-Temasek Foundation Pinnacle Series held at the Sands and Expo Convention Center here.

"As a member of the independent group of scientists, we are supposed to have a midterm assessment which falls in 2023 – the middle, because the SDGs were developed in 2015 so we are midway. We are supposed to have a global assessment of how the countries are faring as far as the SDG goals and targets are concerned as a build-up to 2030 which is the end of the SDG goals by which countries will really be assessed," he explained.

According to Montoya, as defined by the

UN, the SDGs are a collection of 17 inter-linked global goals designed to be a "shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future."

In particular, SDG 3 refers to good health and well-being. "This is to ensure a healthy life and well-being for all ages," said Montoya.

The SDGs were set up in 2015 by the UN General Assembly and are intended to be achieved by 2030.

Montoya said that in the case of the Philippines, a lot of work has to be done.

"I don't want to sound pessimistic but not only for the Philippines but for most countries, we should address this with a sense of urgency and implement all of the strategies such as 'One Health' in order to be prepared for the next pandemic so as to at least hit

some of the targets set by the SDGs," he said. But, Montoya added, the reality is "we are far from it and unless we really do something drastic, we do not hope to achieve those goals even by 2030."

At the same time, "We have to learn from our past experiences and it seems that we did not learn from it despite the fact that we were affected by many pandemics in the past. There is the coronavirus in 2003, then we have the pandemic influenza in 2009 and then the ebola in 2014 but then we did not learn."

He added, "It's like the problems are recurrent and the problems that were identified in the current pandemic were pre-existing, they are not new. They were already existing even prior to the pandemic, it just got worse because of the pandemic. In that respect, we are not yet resilient."