

17 November 2022, Thursday



DENR

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DENR investigates 'quarrying' at NBP

BY BELLA CARIASO

An official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources said that the DENR-Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) has started its investigation on the controversial quarrying inside the New Bilibid Prison (NBP).

In a radio interview, DENR Undersecretary for Policy Planning and International Affairs Jonas Leones said based on the initial report of the MGB Region 4A (Calabarzon), at least 10,000 cubic meters of soil were extracted from the quarrying site, with at least 6,000 cubic meters of soil missing.

"Based on the initial investigation conducted by members of the MGB Region 4A, they saw a tunnel and heavy equipment no longer

operating. Based on the estimate of our personnel from the MGB, approximately, at least 10,000 cubic meters [of soil] were extracted but the stockpile was only 4,000 cubic meters. We want to know where the 6,000 cubic meters are," Leones said.

Leones added that based on the initial assessment of the DENR-MGB, there was an ongoing quarrying activity inside the NBP.

"The MGB personnel said it seems like a quarry, although

we need to investigate further," Leones added.

Leones said the DENR is having difficulty getting information from the people inside the NBP.

"People we interviewed inside the NBP provided limited information. It seems they are withholding vital facts," Leones added.

Leones said that the members of the DENR-MGB will ask the assistance of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and other intelligence agencies to be able to probe properly.

"Our personnel are also concerned about their safety so we will seek the assistance of the PNP, together with other intel agencies to get to the bottom of the quarrying operation inside the NBP," he added.

According to Leones, the DENR

also secured a sample of the soil extracted from the quarrying site to analyze its quality.

"We will analyze the soil if it has value to determine if the objective is to sell the ore in case it has value," Leones said.

Leones vowed that the DENR will issue its findings in the coming weeks.

"We will still have an in-depth visit or ocular inspection and then probably, we can interview people to determine the purpose of the tunnel. In the next few days or weeks, we could determine the bottom of this excavation inside the Bilibid Prison," he said.

Suspended Bureau of Corrections Director General Gerald Bantag claimed the hole would be used for scuba diving.



THROUGH NEW TECHNOLOGY, REFORESTATION PROJECTS

PH MINING FORUM REPORTS STEPS TOWARD 'DECARBONIZING'

By Vincent Cabreza
@InqNational

BAGUIO CITY—The country's mining industry has been "decarbonizing" its operations and has developed processes to recycle mine tailings to help beat climate change, mine leaders said at this year's Mine Safety and Environment Conference here.

The annual event has been gathering corporate leaders and mining engineers for the last 68 years to share environmentally sound practices and new technologies, but this year's conference coincides with the ongoing COP27 (Conference of Parties or the 27th United Nations Climate Change Conference) in Egypt.

Mine leaders are aware of what's at stake and have kept tabs on developments at COP27, veteran diplomat Delia Albert, former ambassador to Germany and a Baguio-born mining advocate, said during a briefing on Tuesday.

For example, Helix Mining and Development Corp. (for-

merly Holcim Mining) is accessing battery technology to reduce its carbon footprint, said the company's president, Renato Baja, who is also a director of the Philippine Mine Safety and Environment Association (PMSEA).

"We are looking at decarbonizing our mining operations. We are seriously looking at equipment that operate using batteries and PMSEA has committed to support these initiatives of decarbonizing," Baja said.

Decarbonizing refers to the reduction or elimination of carbon emissions generated by equipment that run on fossil fuels such as diesel and gasoline. Carbon emissions produce the so-called greenhouse effect that traps planetary heat, according to various studies, which warned that extreme global warming would be dangerous to human, animal and plant life in the near future.

Decarbonization was a subject during a "lengthy discussion" with Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo

Loyzaga, Baja pointed out.

"It is very interesting to hear the shift of focus from 'prevention' to 'limitation' [of global warming at COP27]," said Albert, who is the first woman to serve as foreign secretary during the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

"Instead of saying 'preventing,' which was the term used in COP26 [held last year in Glasgow, Scotland], COP27 has focused on limiting carbon emissions," which could shape the country's commitments to fighting climate change, added Albert, who chairs the woman-led movement Diwata which promotes responsible mining.

Environmental targets

Local mines have set environmental protection targets years ago, Baja said.

"When the government launched the National Greening Program [in 2011], over a thousand hectares have been planted with trees by mining companies to mitigate the carbon



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Senate grills DENR on Masungi Georeserve

BY BUTCH FERNANDEZ

@butchfBM

AFTER prolonged deliberations over the agency's handling of the growing controversy—and potential violence—in the land claims in the world-acclaimed Masungi protected area in Rizal province, the budget of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) was approved by the Senate.

Sen. Cynthia A. Villar, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Climate Change, defended the proposed P23.13-billion 2023 budget of the DENR and its attached agencies at the Senate plenary session Wednesday.

This, even as Senator Raffy Tulfo also took the floor to raise concern over reports of roaming

“armed goons” wielding high-powered firearms, “unlike regular forest guards” prompting a motion to create a task force to look into the matter.

Tulfo also admonished the DENR to more actively “protect the welfare” of indigenous peoples (IP) who were displaced in the continuing tug of war for land.

The Senate temporarily suspended its rules to allow Environment Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga to directly respond to queries of senators on matters concerning not just the DENR proposed budget, but also the reported presence of armed men in the Masungi Georeserve.

Minority Leader Koko Pimentel and Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda also weighed in on the controversy arising from the DENR's agreement with the Masungi Georeserve Foundation on

the management of the ecotourism and conservation site.

Asked by Pimentel if it was the DENR's official stand to void the agreement forged with Masungi Georeserve Foundation during the term of the late DENR Secretary Gina Lopez, Yulo-Loyzaga said it was DENR's position, adding that a study it conducted showed the contract with the foundation was, despite the accomplishments of Masungi Georeserve in growing the forests, disadvantageous to government and legally infirm.

At the same time, the senators were informed that Office of the Environment Secretary got the lion's share of the total DENR budget for 2023, with P17.94 billion while P2.328 billion of the DENR budget went to the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB).

The DENR 2023 budget pie was further divided into the following agencies: Mines and Geosciences Bureau (P1.25 billion), National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (P1.378 billion), National Water Resources Board (P142.72 million), and the Palawan Council For Sustainable Development (P87.87 million).

“We are hopeful that this proposed budget, once approved, will be efficiently utilized toward the conservation, management, development, and the proper use of environment and natural resources, which constitute the primary responsibility of the DENR and to fulfill the constitutional duty of the State to protect and advance the rights of the people to a balance and helpful ecology,” Villar assured colleagues.



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MGA DENR EXEC, ILLEGAL MINER SABWATAN

Hiniling ni Senador Raffy Tulfo sa liderato ni Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Ma. Antonio Yulo-Loyzaga na imbestigahan at magsagawa ng lifestyle check laban sa ilang opisyal ng ahensya.

Sa deliberasyon ng Senado sa panukalang budget ng DENR sa 2023 na ginanap nitong Miyerkoles, sinabi ni Tulfo na may pruwera siya laban sa ilang tiwaling opisyal ng ahensya na kasabwat diumano ng mga illegal miner.

"Marami po d'yan mga usec (undersecretary) na panahon pa ng dinosaur nandyan na po sa puwesto. Puwede ho ba pakiimbestigahan

'yang mga usec na 'yan at sa tinagal-tagal nila ay mukhang nagkakaroon na sila ng dementia, hindi na po nila nagagawa 'yung tamang trabaho nila," sabi ni Tulfo.

"Maybe it's about time na ma-assess n'yo kung sino-sino 'yang mga usec na 'yan na pagkatagal-tagal ng panahon nandyan pa rin. Siguro it's about time na i-reassess n'yo po 'yung mga position d'yan sa DENR," dagdag pa ng senador.

Iginilit naman ng DENR chief na bumuo na sila ng team na may parehong pananaw, integridad at pangako sa misyon ng ahensya.

Subalit hindi nakumbinsi si Tulfo sa sagot ng kalihim.

"I'm not gonna mention names, I have with me proof to show you na marami kang mga tiwaling tauhan d'yan sa loob ng DENR," lahad ni Tulfo.

"Kailangan po siguro gumawa kayo ng lifestyle check tungkol sa mga buhay-buhay nila, kung sino sila," diin pa ng senador.

"Marami po sa inyo d'yan sa mga tauhan ninyo ay naki-pagsabwatan po sa mga illegal miners. Alam n'yo po ba yan? Don't tell me na hindi nakakarating sa inyo ang ganung klaseng impormasyon? Marami po d'yan," ayon pa kay Tulfo. **(Dindo Matining)**



Watershed care taught to learners in Rizal, 2 NCR cities

By Jane Bautista
@janebautistaINQ

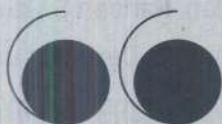
Basic education students in Rizal province and two cities in Metro Manila will be taught about protecting the country's watershed areas like the Masungi Georeserve in the Sierra Madre range under a training program tailored for those communities.

Teachers in Baras and Tanay towns will receive training, teaching kits and an opportunity to immerse in the Masungi geological park under the Localized Watershed Education program, a partnership between the Department of Education (DepEd) Schools Division Superintendent's Office of Rizal and Masungi Georeserve Foundation Inc. (MGFI).

Susan Orbiana, school division superintendent at DepEd Rizal, said the collaboration with experts and advocates such as MGFI would empower teachers "to be able to really educate our children so that the responsibility for Mother Earth will be implanted in their hearts."

Waterway board game

One of the highlights of the training is the distribution of "Lakbay-Daloy" board game, a nature-based version of Snakes and Ladders illustrating positive and negative actions affecting the eco-



**Awareness
is the [first] step
to protecting
our environment,
preventing
devastating floods**

Vico Sotto
Pasig City Mayor

logically important waterways.

A watershed is an area of land that drains the rainfall downhill into rivers, streams, lakes and oceans.

Vico: Awareness is 1st step

Teachers in Pasig and Marikina, two flood-prone cities that benefit from the Upper Marikina Watershed, of which the Masungi Georeserve is part, will also receive training under the program supported by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives.

"The Upper Marikina Watershed regulates water flow and reduces the risk of floods and landslides in Rizal province

and cities like Marikina and Pasig," according to MGFI.

"We realize that we could not save the watershed alone; we need to empower more citizens, including the youth, to take cognizance and care of the watershed against destructive activities," said Billie Dumaliang, an MGFI trustee.

On Nov. 4, MGFI presented the learning module to the city government of Pasig, along with the board game developed for students.

"Awareness is the [first] step to protecting our environment, preventing devastating floods," Pasig City Mayor Vico Sotto said in a social media post.

Masungi Georeserve, an award-winning conservation initiative, originally covered a 400-hectare land in Baras town but has since been expanded to include 3,000 ha of degraded forests for restoration.

Integrated into curriculum

The site is home to endangered flora and fauna as well as unique rock formations, including a 60-million-year-old limestone pinnacle karst, or the landscape shaped by the erosion of limestone.

The area has been subject to land grabbing attempts due to valuable mineral and other

resources since it was declared a protected area in 2011.

Private settlements and establishments set up within the reserve had led to several conflicts between Masungi forest rangers and the alleged interlopers.

Under Republic Act No. 9512, or the Environmental Awareness and Education Act of 2008, environmental awareness must be integrated into the curriculum of learners at all levels.

The law states that environmental education "shall encompass environmental concepts and principles, environmental laws, the state of international and local environment, local environmental best practices, the threats of environmental degradation and its impact on human well-being, the responsibility of the citizenry to the environment and the value of conservation, protection and rehabilitation of natural resources and the environment in the context of sustainable development."

It mandates that DepEd and other agencies, in consultation with environment and academic experts, "shall lead in the implementation of public education and awareness programs on environmental protection and conservation through collaborative interagency and multisectoral effort at all levels." INQ



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Moderated greed

“
Bishop Alminaza said Negros had stood firm on the deleterious environmental and economic effects of the project.

Groups seeking ecological responsibility from big business claimed victory after San Miguel Corporation appears to have backpedaled from a P18.5 billion Negros Occidental liquefied natural gas project.

SMC withdrew its application for an environmental compliance certificate for its proposed 300-megawatt LNG combined cycle power plant project in San Carlos City.

Such projects that involve land excavation and which have the potential of disrupting the natural environment of a community are required to secure an ECC.

The project would have been developed by SMC unit Reliance Energy Development Inc. as part of the conglomerate's aggressive build the use of imported LNG as fuel for a host of its power plants.

Groups based in Negros led by Bishop Gerry Alminaza of the Diocese of San Carlos, who is also a convenor of the clean energy group REpower Negros, opposed the project as it will degrade the city's ecological balance.

The withdrawal was confirmed by the Environmental Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

“Negrosanons made their voice clear that they preferred renewable energy to LNG in sourcing their power for the island. Although LNG is considered a ‘transition fuel’ by some, it is unnecessary for Negros, which boasts of extensive renewable energy facilities,” Avril de Torres, Deputy Executive Director of the Center for Energy, Ecology and Development, said.

Bishop Alminaza said Negros had stood firm on the deleterious environmental and economic effects of the project.



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No public funds used in NBP diggings

BY ALVIN MURCIA AND PAULA ANTOLIN

The diggings inside the New Bilibid Prison compound were kept secret because it has no funds.

This was revealed by Bureau of Corrections officer-in-charge Gregorio Catapang yesterday, saying there were no public funds appropriated for it which is why it was kept secret by the previous leadership.

The local government of Muntinlupa, he said, also did not authorize the said excavation but it has been monitored by the local officials

From page 1

Catapang said it is up to the investigators to recommend charges against Bantag over the said excavation — a 30-meter high and 300-meter wide tunnel dug under a swimming pool inside the national penitentiary.

He said they will leave it to the investigators to give their recommendations.

Catapang added that they already identified the contractor of the said project but they will still verify the accuracy of the information.

He said the guard told them about the construction firm that is working on the excavation site.

They will also have to find out if the construction firm workers are the ones digging inside the NBP.

He said they already asked for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources help as the excavation inside the NBP does not have a permit.

The local government of Muntinlupa, he said, also did not authorize the said excavation but it has been monitored by the local officials.



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Lihim na paghuhukay sa Bilibid, 'di pinondohan ng gobyerno - Catapang

Tiniyak ni Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) officer-in-charge Gregorio Catapang na walang pamublikong pondo na inilaan para sa paghuhukay sa loob ng New Bilibid Prison (NBP) kaya inilihim ito ng nakaraang pamunuan.

"Walang pondo 'yan kaya nga nililihim 'yan e," ani Catapang.

Hindi rin aniya, ginastusan ng sariling bulsa ni Bantag dahil ang mga equipment sa BuCor ang ginamit, kahit ito ang nag-utos na gawin ang paghuhukay.

Ayon kay Catapang, bahala na ang mga imbestigador kung magrekomenda na sampahan ng kaso si Bantag.

Tukoy na rin aniya, ang

kontraktor ng nasabing proyekto, bagamat beniberipika pang kung tama ang mga nakuha nilang impormasyon.

Hiningi na rin ang tulong ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sa kawalan ng permit at maging ang Muntinlupa City government.

"Ang quarters ko, director's quarters, 'yon ang pinakadulong property ng BuCor na may pader at may creek na puwede ka na rin tumakas," ani Catapang.

Una nang nagpahayag si suspended BuCor director general Gerald Bantag na siya mismo ang nagpapahukay para sa planong gumawa ng pinakamalalim

na swimming pool para pagpraktisan dahil isa siyang master scuba diver.

"Alam ko 'yun, 'yung hukay na 'yon. Ako rin ang nagpahukay noon. Diver ako e. Scuba diver. Ang plano namin doon deep swimming pool," ani Bantag.

Itinanggi ni Bantag na ang paghuhukay ay hindi para gumawa ng tunnel.

"Di ka naman makapaghukay nang malalim kung 'di ka gagawa ng daan. Kaya sabi nitong Catapang, gagawing tunnel? Ang layo layo nun. Ano siya minero para makagawa ng tunnel? Di ba? Boplaks din e. Sabi na mga taga-NCR, boplaks e," ani Bantag. (Ludy Bermudo)



Bantag's 'pool' project in Bilibid surprises DOJ

FROM A1

were not aware of the excavation prior to its discovery by Catapang.

"Not at all," he told the Inquirer. "We were all surprised to see pictures and videos."

Clavano said Catapang had been directed to investigate the excavation and submit a report.

According to Catapang, part of the excavation was an unfinished "tunnel," which was around 170 centimeters high at the entrance. He said the tunnel could extend to Muntinlupa's Poblacion River, and might be an escape route for inmates.

'Illegal quarrying'

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) gave no permit for the excavation, which it considered an "illegal quarrying" activity, according to Catapang.

He said officials were waiting for the "expert advice" from the DENR on what to do with Bantag's project.

Bantag said no tunnel was being made and that the hole in a rock wall that was seen by Catapang and shown in the news was "just for the waterway of the underwater pool."

He also dismissed allegations that it could be used by inmates to escape, saying that it was "very far" from their location.

The excavation site itself is about a kilometer away from the NBP's maximum security compound.

The deepest diving pool in Metro Manila is currently the 6-meter indoor pool at Scuba Studio in San Juan City. The world's deepest is 60 meters at Deep Dive Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

Tunnel not vertical

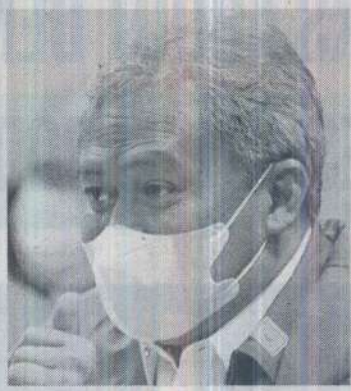
A master scuba diver trainer, who requested anonymity, said Bantag's statement that the excavation was meant for



DEEPEST DIG The "tunnel" built in what suspended corrections chief Gerald Bantag said was to have been part of a diving pool could be seen at the bottom of a rock wall at the deepest site within a 4-hectare excavation area inside the New Bilibid Prison reservation. —RICHARD A. REYES



Gerald Bantag



Gregorio Catapang Jr.

—PNA PHOTO

a diving pool was "nonsense." "I will believe it's a scuba diving pool if the tunnel was vertical. The direction of the tunnel was not vertical, it was horizontal," he said. "It's impossible [for it to be a diving pool], unless he is planning to construct a resort."

Catapang also rejected Bantag's explanations, and proceeded with his investigation.

"Why would he need another swimming pool? Did he destroy the old swimming pool to make another one?" he said.

According to the BuCor OIC, a guard posted at the director's quarters told investi-

gators that he and the others were "prevented from moving around."

"They were told not to go near the ongoing quarrying or excavation. They also needed to leave their communication devices at the guard house before they entered the director's quarters," Catapang said.

The construction company contracted for Bantag's project has been identified, but Catapang did not disclose its name pending the investigation.

BuCor records show that the agency awarded a project worth P994,000 in July to a construction company based

in Canaman, Camarines Sur, for the "renovation of directors quarters' facilities."

'Urban legend'

According to Catapang, they also found metal detectors at the excavation site, fueling speculations that officials of the previous prison administration were "treasure hunting."

Venancio Tesoro, a former superintendent of NBP, said there was an "urban legend" that Japanese soldiers buried treasures, including gold, at the NBP reservation during World War II.

Both the Director's Quarters and the NBP Administration Building were built in 1940.

"But these were just rumors and have no basis," he said in a message exchange with the Inquirer.

But he said that an excavation for purposes other than a pool was "possible."

"If that's really a tunnel, either they will put something there, or it will be a passageway for a clandestine operation. In a penal setting, tunnels are naturally meant for escaping or breaking out," Tesoro told the Inquirer. **INQ**

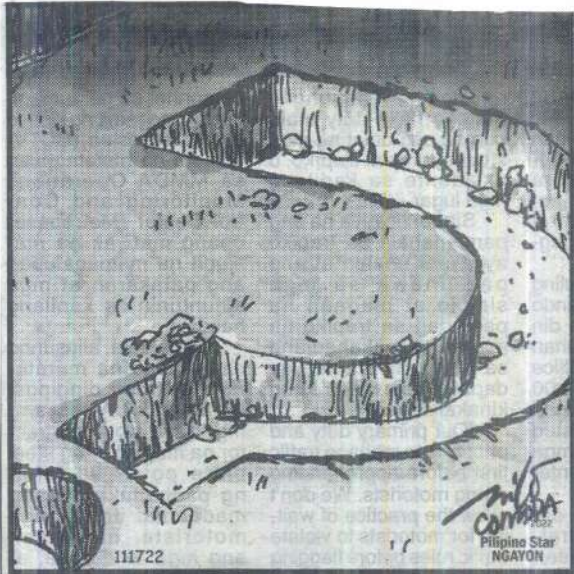


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Editorial

Mahiwagang hukay sa Bilibid

BILIBID or not pero may hukay sa compound ng New Bilibid Prison (NBP) na ang lalim ay kumbas ng apat na palapag na gusali. Malapit ang hukay sa tirahan ni suspended Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) chief Gerald Bantag. Ang hukay ay karugtong ng tunnel na pinaniniwalaang ginawa pa ng mga Hapones noong World War II.

Mismong si BuCor officer-in-charge Gregorio Catapang Jr. ang nagbunyag sa ginagawang hukay. Sa mga lumabas na video at retrato sa pahayagan, makikita ang backhoe na ginamit sa paghuhukay. Makikita rin ang tunnel kaya halatang malalim na ang hukay. Ayon kay Catapang, posibleng ang hukay ay dahil sa sinasabing "gold hunting" sa lugar. Sa interbyu naman ng Teleradyo kay dating PNP chief at ngayon ay senador Ronald "Bato" de la Rosa, narinig na umano nito na may hinahanap na Yamashita treasures sa lugar. Hindi nito sinabi kung ang paghuhukay ay may kaugnayan sa paghahanap ng kayamanan.

Ipinahayag naman ni dating BuCor chief Bantag na siya ang nag-utos sa paghuhukay sa compound ng NBP. Gagawin umanong swimming pool ang hukay. Siya raw ay lisensiyadong scuba diver. Hindi raw lagusan ang hukay paloob o palabas ng bilangguan.

Mula nang maganap ang pagpatay sa mama-mahayag na si Percival Mabasa na lalong kilala bilang Percy Lapid noong Oktubre 3, marami nang lumutang na kakaibang nangyayari sa NBP. Si Bantag at si Ricardo Zulueta ang mga tinuturong "utak" sa krimen at ganundin sa pagpatay sa "middleman" na si Jun Villamor. Si Villamor ay pinatay ng mga kapwa bilanggo, ilang oras makaraang sumuko ang killer ni Lapid na si Joel Escorial. Bago pinatay, nai-text ni Villamor sa kapatid na babae kung sino ang "utak" sa krimen. Noong Martes ay naisilbi na ang subpoena kay Bantag at Zulueta.

Marami pang nagsisingawan sa NBP na nasa ilalim ng BuCor. Halukayin pa ito. Unahin naman sana ang misteryong pagkamatay ng 167 bilanggo na itinambak sa isang punerarya. Pagkatapos ay saka halukayin ang misteryosong hukay.



PH Mining

footprint of mining and other industries," he said.

The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) has also been encouraging mining companies to tap new technology that enables miners to recycle and process small and uneconomical traces of minerals like copper and nickel that are deposited in their tailings or waste dams, said Mateo Marcial, who heads the MGB mine safety, environment and social development division.

He cited Taganito Mining Corp. in Surigao del Norte province and Rio Tuba Nickel Mining Corp. in Palawan province, which have invested in high pressure acid leaching to refine nickel from waste.

PMSEA officials did not reflect on the industry's history with ecological disasters, stressing instead that mine geologists and volunteer miners have lent their skills to rescue and restoration efforts during calamities.

At the height of the lockdowns, 200 mines donated P407

million to buy vaccines and the other emergency needs of their host communities, Marcial said.

But Annie Dee, president of Teresa Marble Corp. and a PMSEA director, stressed that no more serious mining disasters have taken place since the industry embraced responsible mining principles.

Eased restrictions

Mining is a key industry being eyed by the Marcos administration to kick-start the economy, which is still recovering from the stringent mining environment during the Duterte regime.

The late former Environment Secretary Regina Lopez in April 2017 issued Administrative Order No. 2017-10, which banned the open-pit method of mining, leading to the closure or suspension of 26 mining operations.

In October 2017, the inter-agency Mining Industry Coordinating Council voted to recommend a reversal of the

policy, but the open-pit mining ban stayed on for four years in the absence of any new directive from Malacañang.

Former President Rodrigo Duterte had also previously attacked the mining industry, saying he wanted to put a stop to it after landslides occurred in the wake of deadly typhoons:

But in April 2021, Duterte lifted the nine-year moratorium on new mining agreements to boost government revenue, create more jobs and prop up the economy.

Duterte's Executive Order No. 130 overturned the moratorium on new mining permits or mining production sharing agreements that was ordered by the late President Benigno Aquino III in 2012.

On Dec. 23, 2021, then Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu also signed Department Administrative Order No. 2021-40, officially lifting the four-year-old ban on the open-pit method of mining. —WITH A REPORT FROM IN-

QUIRER RESEARCH INQ



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Negrosanons wrote SMC president and Chief operating officer Ramon Ang about these concerns.

"I am grateful for the help of the Almighty in ensuring that the voice of the people of Negros was heard and that the natural beauty of our island can be preserved through the minimal use of fossil fuel," the prelate said.

The groups wanted to preserve the reputation of Negros Occidental as the center of renewable energy in the country.

With the victory, the local groups plan to reach out to other communities where SMC is putting up LNG projects.

The Asian food giant is veering towards a hard industry primarily energy generation. Its 14.1 gigawatts of proposed LNG projects account for half of the planned gas expansion in the Philippines and is also by far the largest in the region for one company.

Accelerating the adoption of more affordable and sustainable renewable energy should be the country's goal, the province's ecological warriors said. The next target of the groups is for the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of the province to take back the resolution of non-objection which the bishop said was issued "prematurely to the project."

"The groups wanted to preserve the reputation of Negros Occidental as the center of renewable energy in the country."

"We remain committed as partners in caring for our environment and renew our call for SMC and other companies, as well as for the government to hasten the shift to RE, and for financial institutions to stop financing fossil fuels," Bishop Alminaza said.

The Negros experience and the recent ruling of the Energy Regulatory Commission to deny SMC's petition for rate increases prove that concerted public outcry forces big businesses to moderate their profit greed.



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Senate seeks data on 187 reclamation projects

WITH several reclamation projects being questioned for their environmental impact as the country continues to reel from a string of disasters, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) was

directed to submit in writing the updated data of the 187 reclamation projects all over the country.

The directive was given as one of the "to do" list of senators to DENR, even as they approved its 2023 budget after prolonged deliberations. *See re-*

lated story on page A16, "Senate grills DENR on Masungi Georeserve."

"I just want an update on what happened to the 21 reclamation projects that were issued environmental compliance certificates (ECCs) even without proper consultation with the

stakeholders. And some fisherfolks are calling the Senate for an investigation into the 187 reclamation projects," Senate Majority Leader Joel Villanueva said in issuing the request to DENR officials.

Sen. Cynthia A. Villar, sponsor of the DENR budget, said based on the data at the DENR central office, there are 19 reclamation projects in Manila Bay, two in Cebu and two in Samar. However, the data from the regions are not included, Villar said.

Villar herself has been strongly opposing a reclamation project that she said would destroy a critical ecosystem in southern Metro Manila and cause flooding and other disastrous events. *Butch Fernandez*

helpful ecology," Villar assured colleagues.



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PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THERMA MARINE

(FROM left) AAQMS DENR PENR Officer Achilles Anthony C. Ebron, Regional Director EMB III OIC Albert G. Arcamo, Agata Mining Ventures Inc. MEPEO Head Len Marc Tagud, Cabadbaran City Mayor Judy C. Amante, and AboitizPower FVF-Oil BU Cirilo A. Nanaul Jr. at the turnover ceremony and inspection of the CAAQMS.

Therma Marine gives EMB Caraga air quality monitor

Therma Marine Inc., a subsidiary of Aboitiz Power Corporation, together with Agata Mining Ventures, Inc. and Philsaga Mining Corporation, recently turned over a Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring System to the local government of Cabadbaran City in Agusan del Norte.

The donation is an initiative under the Adopt-a-CAAQMS program of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and its attached agency, the Environmental Management Bureau.

The CAAQMS is used to assess the level of pollutants in the air and enables the EMB to monitor the quality of air in real-time.

The Adopt-a-CAAQMS pools resources from private donors to help build more air monitoring facilities across the country, strengthening the DENR's management capabilities in this area.

TMI has been an active contributor to different environmental projects in the region. Through the CAAQMS, TMI reinforces its commitment to comply with environmental standards.



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Global population, food security, climate change

Don't look now, but no less than the United Nations projected the world population to reach 8 billion last Tuesday, 15 November, double the population of 48 years ago. It is a milestone occasion celebrated as World Population day.

Amid falling growth rates, however, the latest projections suggest that the world's population could grow to around 8.5 billion in 2030 and 9.7 billion in 2050. It is projected to reach a peak of around 10.4 billion people during the 2080s and to remain at that level until 2100.

More than half of the projected increase in the global population up to 2050 will be concentrated in eight countries that include the Philippines. The rest are the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, and the United Republic of Tanzania.

By next year, India is expected to surpass China as the world's most populous country.

Although World Population Day should be an appropriate time to celebrate humanity's diversity and marvel at advancements in health that have extended lifespans and dramatically reduced maternal and child mortality rates, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said

“ Often, the most vulnerable people in these countries face the greatest harm from climate change without having the resources to protect their health and environment.





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Global population - -

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it is also a reminder of our shared responsibility to care for our planet and a moment to reflect on where we still fall short of our commitments to one another.

With such ballooning figures, questions are inevitably raised. Will we have enough food for a growing population? How will we take care of more people in the next pandemic? How do we manage climate change?

Environmentalists contend that all these risks have three things in common – health, climate change, and a growing population. Of the three, climate change is what medical experts and groups consider the one at the top of the totem pole due to its consequences on human health.

No less than President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. called on world leaders to act decisively and immediately on pressing global issues, primarily climate change and food security.

In the recent ASEAN summit, Marcos cited the Philippines' experience in dealing with severe tropical storm "Paeng" as among the direct effects of climate change.

"It was a very strange one because it was the very first one in our history where every single part of the country was affected by one typhoon," he told Trudeau.

"From up in the northern part, the northern island of Luzon, all the way down to the southern part of the Philippines. Everybody felt it and felt it badly."

Marcos explained that the consequences of climate change severely impacted the Philippines, which is very vulnerable due to its geography. He described the Philippines as a sink that absorbs carbon dioxide.

During his intervention in the 17th East Asia Summit, the President likewise underscored the importance of attaining self-sufficiency, as well as the adaptability of the Association of Southeast Asian nations despite numerous threats to the global food chain.

"It has become glaringly clear that there is a dire need to strengthen food security towards self-sufficiency in our region, to increase adaptability and resilience in the face of threats to the global supply chain," he said.

Indeed, it is incumbent upon us, for our sake and that of future generations, to act decisively and immediately on climate change.

Addressing the health burden on low and middle-income countries is pivotal. Often, the most vulnerable people in these countries face the greatest harm from climate change without having the resources to protect their health and environment. Population growth can deepen these iniquities.

The impact that food security and climate change have on human health has emerged as a dominant topic in public health research. Therefore, understanding and assessing the role these environmental exposures play in observed health concerns is critical for informing and developing clean air and climate policies, health promotion strategies, and interventions.

“More than half of the projected increase in the global population up to 2050 will be concentrated in eight countries that include the Philippines.”



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Fight pollution, climate change

YESTERDAY I saw on the internet 1978 photos of Plaza Miranda and, across from the Quiapo Church, the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene, is the iconic Mercury Drug branch, now a 57-year old structure as old as I am.

The area is a personal favorite and an important part of my life being a long-time devotee of Mahal Na Poong Nazareno.

But what struck me in one of the nostalgic pictures is the air monitoring apparatus that stood in front of the Mercury Drug store near the foot of the Quezon Bridge.

The robust black steel structure indicates in big bold digits the "air pollution index" and exact time of day.

Understandably, the air quality monitor was a device that measured the level of common air pollutants in the area which effectively served as a visual reminder of the importance of clean air.

Students at high schools nearby were assigned to report on the air pollution index as indicated on the said digital device in their Science class daily.

I remember the same air quality monitors were erected in other locations including EDSA.

I do not know why they removed such digital devices in key locations in Metro Manila which did not obstruct vehicular traffic anyway.

Although such information on air quality in different localities may now be available online, we must promote awareness about clean air and effects of climate change in every way we can.

Climate change should be everyone's concern as its repercussions will increasingly impact the lives of future generations.



POINT OF
IMPACT
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TULFO

The country's resiliency and adaptation to climate change is a national priority, President Ferdinand Bongbong Marcos, Jr. (PBBM) has said repeatedly.

PBBM said combating climate change is a "battle we must wage and a battle that we must win."

"We must ensure that the initiatives we will take will be smarter, more responsible, and more sustainable," PBBM added.

When he spoke before the UN General Assembly, he made the urgent call on industrialized countries "to lead by example by immediately fulfilling their obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement to cut their greenhouse gas emissions, and providing climate financing and technology transfer for adaptation for the most vulnerable and developing countries."

He strongly delivered the same message during last week's 40th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

While we build resilience against

impacts of climate change, we should ensure that the country's emissions of greenhouse gases (methane and carbon dioxide) are strictly checked.

The Philippines' greenhouse gas emissions rank in the top 25 percent among low-and middle-income countries, with emissions from the energy sector projected to quadruple by 2030, particularly with the transport sector doubling its emissions.

Meanwhile, super typhoons and dry spells have alternately hit various regions of the country, causing massive losses to the agricultural sector.

"The country's rich biodiversity is constantly under threat from human activities, including deforestation and forest degradation, illegal fishing and illicit wildlife trade"

A study on climate change by the international Climate Central shows that regions where some 150 million people currently live are projected to submerge by 2050, including the Philippines.

That means people living along the coastlines of the country's 7,641 islands will be affected, including top tourist destination Boracay island.

Apart from global warming and climate change, the country is beset by illegal mining and logging, deforestation, threats to environmental activists, dynamite fishing, landslides, coastal erosion, and biodiversity extinction.

The country's rich biodiversity is constantly under threat from human activities, including deforestation and forest degradation, illegal fishing and illicit wildlife trade.

The keyword in what President BBM said about climate change is "sustainability" which means we should conserve and protect the environment from destruction so that natural resources will be available to us in the years to come.

Let us stop "killing ourselves." Instead we must do everything to mitigate the effects of climate change for the sake of our children.



Pagbuo ng climate change resilience, inilatag sa Kamara

Itinaas ni San Jose del Monte City Representative Florida "Rida" Robes ang mga alarma sa lumalalang kondisyon ng klima sa buong mundo at nasa isang estado ng emergency sa pagbabago ng klima at dapat simulan ang pagpapalakas ng kakayahan sa human resource.

Iminungkahi ni Rep. Robes na dapat simulan agad ng gobyerno ang pagtugon sa isyu ng climate change upang mapalakas ang polisiya sa pagbibigay ng proteksyon sa kapaligiran tulad na nangyaring Bagyong Karding.

Anya, nakalulungkot at nakaaalarma na malaman na ang Pilipinas, sa mga tuntunin ng pandaigdigang sukatan, ay niranggo sa ika-2 sa 2018 Climate Risk Index sa mga bansang lubhang nappektuhan ng matinding lagay ng panahon at ika-11 sa 180 na mga bansa sa 2020 Environmental Performance Index (EPI).

Dahil dito, ang bansa ay dumaranas ng mala-

king pagkalugi sa ekonomiya (mga \$3.5 bilyon batay sa mga pagtatantya ng World Bank) taun-taon dahil sa mga natural na kalamidad.

Hindi bababa sa 5239 Bulakeños, 1571 pamilya, kabilang ang 1447 bata at 231 senior citizens ang nawalan ng tirahan at napilitang lumikas upang makatakas sa baha, na naging sanhi din ng buhay ng limang emergency volunteer sa proseso at ang pagbabago ng klima ay

hindi na nalalapit.

"Nasa state of climate emergency na tayo. Ang ating Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. ay humarap sa UN General Assembly na nagdeklara na ang bansa ang ikaapat na pinaka-bulnerable na bansa sa pagbabago ng klima.

Ang kawalang-katarungang ito ay dapat itama, at ang mga kailangang gumawa ng higit pa ay dapat kumilos ngayon," wika ni Robes. -Joy Cantos-



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Bilang panimula, iminungkahi niyang palakasin ang tungkulin ng mga rescuer at first responder partikular ang tungkol sa estado ng mga disaster volunteer na ginagamit ng pambansa at lokal na pamahalaan bilang pangunahing depensa ng ating bansa laban sa mga kalamidad.

Naghain si Robes ng dalawang hakbang na nagbibigay kapangyarihan sa mga emergency volunteer gamit ang HB 5584, o ang Emergency Volunteer Protection Act of 2022 at HB 5650 o Magna Carta para sa Public Disaster Risk at Emergency Responders. (Joy Cantos)



Greta Thunberg: Climate Cassandra becomes book creator/curator

First
word

As a
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OBSERVER

YEN
MAKABENTA

climate debate, I regularly monitor and report on developments on both sides of the fence. I do not focus only on reports and opinions that agree with my view of the issues. I think it also vital to know how the issues look from the other side.

►MakabentaA11

I want to say a few words today on the latest news on Greta Thunberg, the Swedish teenager who has captured global interest as a relentless climate change crusader and advocate of radical climate action.

Thunberg, who turns 20 on January 3 next year, is the creator/curator of a new book called *The Climate Book*, which came off the press this year in London.

Allen Lane, the book's publisher, bills it as "created by Greta Thunberg."

The Guardian calls the book "an angry call for action." In it, the environmental activist curates a supergroup of climate experts in a valuable set of essays, which at times risk overwhelming the reader.

Writing on Thunberg on November 5 in *The Guardian*, Dorian Lynskey reported:

"Being Greta Thunberg is no picnic. Still not yet 20, she has fame but not wealth and an army of obsessive detractors who cannot seem to decide whether she is a puritanical fanatic, a gullible puppet or an attention-seeking hypocrite and therefore call her all three. What they hate most, I think, is her effectiveness. A teenager from Sweden has succeeded in dramatically escalating the discourse around the climate emergency. Global heating is not a dire possibility but a present reality; reducing it is no longer just a question of looking after the planet but of preserving human civilization in a recognizable form. ...

century. As Thunberg writes: 'Hope is something you have to earn.'

"Thunberg's first book was a slim jeremiad called *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference*, but there is nothing small about her latest. This time she takes on a curatorial role, convening a kind of supergroup of scientists, activists and authors, each of whom contributes a short essay about the mess we're in. Big names such as Margaret Atwood and Naomi Klein mingle with veterans who have been raising the alarm for decades. Amid all the maps, graphs and hair-raising statistics, Thunberg's connective essays give the book an angry moral pulse. The crisis cannot be addressed, she writes, without talking about 'morality, justice, shame responsibility and guilt.' She is not in the feelgood business.

"Given the facts the writer are working with, the book is relentless and somewhat repetitive. The cumulative effect of all this writing about heatwaves wildfires, hurricanes, droughts floods, epidemics, species extinctions and melting ice sheets walks a fine line between galvanizing and paralyzing. ...

"What some readers, even those who recycle diligently and drive electric cars, may find hard to take is the book's political prescriptions: systemic change, including an end to the obsession with economic growth. The phrase 'green industrial revolution,' embraced by both Labor and Conservatives, inspires only contempt from Thunberg.

Angry moral tone

"Thunberg is unusual (but should not be) in speaking and behaving in a manner appropriate to what the science tells us, ripping away the standard sticking plasters of reassurance and consolation to leave only raw urgency. She is often dismissed as a Cassandra but, of course, the whole point of the Cassandra story is that she was right. The *Climate Book* coincides with COP27, just as the UN environment agency has acknowledged that there is 'no credible path' to keeping global heating below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The current figure is 3.1; at the present rate of carbon emissions, it could go as high as 3.2 by the end of the

When some parts of the world are suffering from the emissions produced by wealthier parts, Thunberg argues, avoiding the question of injustice would be dishonest."

Climate anxiety disorder

The view of Thunberg from the other side is, not surprisingly, critical and scathing. Sebastian Gesler, writing in *Bild* on November 4, said:

"For years, the media told us that Greta Thunberg was driven by a love of nature. It's now clear she is more driven by a hatred of capitalism. Overconfident and smug, Thunberg inadvertently let her green mask slip at a book event in Britain. Now, some in the news media are turning against her.



Greta Thunberg: Climate Cassandra becomes book creator/curator

"The marketing of Greta Thunberg by her parents and cynical media elites over the last three years was appalling. Thunberg became the primary vehicle for an anti-human, pro-scarcity and anti-capitalist agenda that contributed significantly to the energy crisis ravaging Europe.

"Thunberg's defenders say she was a model of youth engagement. What she did required courage, they say. We should applaud her.

"But Thunberg incited panic, made outrageously false claims, and triggered a wave of climate anxiety.

"'Around the year 2030,' she said in 2019, 'we will be in a position where we set off an irreversible chain reaction beyond human control that will most likely lead to the end of our civilization as we know it.'

"Thunberg repeatedly attacked the two main sources of emissions reductions — nuclear energy and natural gas.

"Nuclear is 'extremely dangerous, expensive and time-consuming,' she said, at the very moment Germany, Belgium and Sweden were shutting down nuclear plants.

"Thunberg repeatedly encouraged dangerous behavior. 'I want you to panic... If standing up against the climate and ecological breakdown and for humanity is against the rules then the rules must be broken.'

"Two days later, two male Extinction Rebellion protesters stood on top of a train, to block it from moving forward, in the London Tube. Angry commuters kicked and beat one of the young protesters and another young man filming the event.

"Time and again, Thunberg used fear and anger to bully people. 'This is all wrong,' she screamed at the UN. 'I shouldn't be standing here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet

order, and yet she, her handlers, and her parents all suggested that it stemmed from her profound concern over climate change. That turned out to be a lie.

"Thunberg's mother admitted as much in 2020 when she decided she needed to publish her own book. The media lapped it all up without ever asking: is this healthy psychologically for the Thunbergs and the rest of the society?

"Of course, it wasn't. Thunberg, more than anyone else, contributed to a wave of climate anxiety disorders.

"And yet the media egged her on and insisted that anybody who dared question whether it was ethical or healthy for the world's most influential teenager to urge panic was a 'climate denier' who was somehow psychologically threatened by a child. The gaslighting was grotesque.

"Let's be clear about what occurred. The news media weaponized a teenage girl suffering from severe anxiety disorders to advance a radical, anti-capitalist agenda...

"And they're not done. Thunberg Inc. and the media are now delivering her up as a savior from the mass psychopathology they created. You couldn't make it up. This isn't just cynical, it's also inhumane.

"At this point, it's pointless to blame Thunberg and her handlers. They clearly have an agenda, and Thunberg's made it clear that it's a radical anti-capitalist one.

"Beyond changing news media coverage from uncritically fawning to balanced and critical, journalists should reflect upon their irresponsible coverage of Thunberg and climate change. It was actively harmful not just to Thunberg but to billions around the world.

"Around one-third of people in the world think climate change will make humans extinct. That's pseudoscience on the same level

you all come to us young people for hope? How dare you!

"Thunberg's behavior over the last three years was obnoxious. Her parents should never have allowed it. Her handlers and hosts should never have allowed it. Instead, they encouraged it and smeared anyone who dared to raise concerns about it.

"It was clear from the beginning of Thunberg's stardom that she suffered from an anxiety dis-

as believing that Earth is flat. People didn't come to that belief on their own. It was drilled into their brains over 30 years.

"Climate change is real, but it's not the end of the world. Emissions have dramatically declined in rich nations and globally over the last decade, thanks mainly to natural gas and nuclear. We need more of both."

yenobserver@gmail.com



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BREAKTHROUGH

ELFREN S. CRUZ

Highway to climate hell

Each year, the United Nations sponsors a climate summit to discuss how to reverse the continuous problem of global warming. Seven years ago, during the climate summit in Paris, the agreement was for the world to limit the global warming temperature to 1.5 degrees C above pre-industrial level. At this date, the world is already suffering from an increase of global warming to 1.1 degrees C above pre-industrial level. If the present trajectory is not reversed, then the world will suffer from global warming higher than the 1.5 degrees C target.



UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said that the planet is "fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible." He told the delegates to the ongoing climate summit in Egypt that despite the challenges of rising inflation, geopolitical tensions and an energy price crisis, the world must be ready to forge a "new climate solidarity pact." All countries must contribute their fair share of effort and funding to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. He also told the delegates that the world was facing a choice between cooperation or a "collective suicide pact" caused by rising temperatures.

In last year's climate summit in Glasgow in the United Kingdom, the focus was on the pledges to attain net zero targets by 2050, cut methane emissions and halt deforestation. Among these problems, the Philippines must pay special attention to halting deforestation, which has been a major cause of floods and the accompanying landslides.

In our country, the main causes of deforestation have been illegal logging and mining. It is only by stopping deforestation and implementing a program of reforestation that we can alleviate the tremendous damage inflicted by typhoons.

At the Glasgow summit last year, a Forest and Climate Leaders Partnership (FCLP) was launched to protect forests around the world. Its aim is to ensure that the Glasgow Summit Pledge to halt and reverse global forest loss by 2030 is delivered. The Partnership will supposedly work on the deployment of carbon markets, community initiatives and other strategies for tackling deforestation needed to meet the 2030 goal.

It is only by stopping deforestation and implementing a program of reforestation that we can alleviate the tremendous damage inflicted by typhoons.

For the higher-income nations to pay reparations to vulnerable nations struggling with the impact of climate change. "Loss and damage" refers to the idea that the wealthier countries are responsible for almost all the emissions. However, the poor countries who have a very small share of the global emissions must bear the burden of the negative effects of climate change.

For example, China is responsible for 34 percent of the world's emissions. The United States and the European Union are each responsible for 18 percent or a total of 36 percent. Together, China, the US and Europe account for 70 percent of the world's emissions. Other major sources of emissions are rich countries like Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom.

Recently, Pakistan was hit by a \$30-billion loss and damage as a result of devastating floods. According to Pakistan's Prime Minister Sharif, the provision of funding from rich countries for countries affected by climate change was a matter of "climate justice."

So far, the reception to the concept of "loss and damage" has not been met with any enthusiasm by the rich countries. In his speech to the delegates at the climate summit in Egypt, US President Biden did not even mention the concept of "loss and damage." Even worse, China said that it felt no obligation to give reparations to the poorer countries for the negative effects of climate change because China says it is still a developing country, not a rich one.

The Prime Minister of Barbados Mia Mottley said that it is not only the governments who should provide loss and damage funding. She argued that oil and gas companies should also contribute. She asked: "How do companies make \$200 billion in profits in the last three months and not expect to contribute at least 10 cents in each dollar of profit to a loss and damage fund?"

It should be remembered that fossil fuels like oil and natural gas are among the biggest sources of greenhouse gas emissions. While the climate summit in Egypt is still ongoing, it has become obvious that even the world leaders are not ready to take all the necessary action to prevent a climate catastrophe. As UN Secretary General Guterres warned the world leaders, the world is "on a highway to climate hell with its foot on the accelerator."

Perhaps we must be prepared for the inevitability of increased global warming before we can expect the world to wake up and take the necessary drastic action to reverse the current trend.

* * *

Our November writing dates: Nov. 19, 10:30 am – last class for adult writers for the year with facilitator Dinah Roma on the art of poetry. Nov. 26, 2-3 pm, Young Writers' Hangout with returning facilitator Susan Lara. Contact writethingsph@gmail.com. 0945.2273216



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

Trusted Since 1948

The Manila Times

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FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE Civil society organizations march at the Quezon City Elliptical Circle for the 'Asian Day of Action for Climate and Economic Justice' on Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2022. The rally also coincides with the COP27 Climate Summit in Egypt and G20 Summit in Indonesia where the climate crisis is among the top agenda. PHOTO BY JOHN ORVEN VERDOTE



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BBM leaves for APEC leaders' summit

By HELEN FLORES

President Marcos flew to Bangkok, Thailand yesterday afternoon to attend the 29th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting (AELM), where he is expected to make a pitch for the Philippines as an investment destination in the region.

This will be the first APEC Summit to be held in person since the pandemic hit in 2020 and also Marcos' first as Chief Executive.

Among those who attended the sendoff ceremony at Villamor Air Base in Pasay City were Vice President Sara Duterte, former president and Pangasinana Rep. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo,

Armed Forces chief of staff Lt. Gen. Bartolome Bacarro and Philippine National Police chief Gen. Rodolfo Azurin Jr.

First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos accompanied the President to Bangkok. Marcos' first cousin, Speaker Martin Romualdez, is also part of the Philippine delegation.

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BBM From Page 1

"It will be an honor for me to represent the Philippines at the APEC. APEC remains to be one of the prime platforms to engage the economies of the Asia-Pacific region. The importance of this region to us and to the rest of the world cannot be overstated," the President said in his departure speech.

"I will meet of course with Thai business leaders on the APEC sidelines to invite investments and seek business opportunities, to promote the Philippines - our economic agenda and our exports," he said.

The AELM will take place on Nov. 18 and 19.

Marcos will also participate in panel discussions on "The Global Economy and the Future of APEC," among select heads of state. The event was organized by top business leaders from across the region.

The President said his goal is to unlock economic potential, further the country's participation in the digital economy and sustainable development, as well as address the climate change crisis, among others.

He will also be engaging with other leaders on how to tackle food and energy security and the economic inclusion of the country's micro, small and medium enterprises.

In addition to the APEC meetings, the President and the First Lady will meet King Maha Vajiralongkorn Phra Vajirakulachaoyuhua and Queen Suthida Bajrasudhabimalalakshana, who granted a royal audience for the APEC leaders and spouses.

Bilateral meetings were also arranged for Marcos with some economic leaders and heads of state to discuss the strengthening of diplomatic relations.

The Asia-Pacific region hosts 38 percent of the world's population, 48 percent of its trade and 62 percent of its gross domestic product.

It also hosts the largest segments of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), with

the Philippine regional trade accounting for 85 percent, providing Filipino consumers access to goods and services from the region.

Marcos will also meet the Filipino community in Thailand.

The President arrived early Monday from Phnom Penh, Cambodia where he participated at the four-day Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit.

Marcos' visit to Thailand is his fifth official foreign trip since assuming office in June. He visited Indonesia, Singapore and the US in September.

Marcos is also expected to attend the ASEAN-EU Commemorative Summit in Brussels, Belgium this December and fly to China in January next year for a state visit.

During the ASEAN Summit, Marcos accepted several state visit invitations, including from Vietnam, Brunei and Thailand.

'Stellar Q3 growth'

The so-called "revenge spending" that resulted in the 7.6 percent economic growth during the third quarter of this year is one good reason to entice foreign investors to the country, Speaker Romualdez said yesterday, before joining the presidential entourage to the APEC Leaders' Summit in Bangkok.

"I think now is the time to herald that the Philippines is doing well, its economy is doing well and now is the time to invest in the Philippines so that we get more foreign direct investments (FDI) for the capital that we need," he told reporters.

The leader of the 312-member House of Representatives said the country needs FDI "to generate more jobs and livelihood for Filipinos and to bring about a stronger and more vibrant economy so that all Filipinos have a safe and comfortable life."

Such economic growth is also timely with President Marcos' participation in the APEC meeting in Thailand this week with world leaders in attendance.

- With Delon Porcalla



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LETTER FROM AUSTRALIA

HK YU, PSM



ASEAN & Australia: partners, but above all friends

Dear friends,
As some of you may have already seen in the news this week, Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese traveled to Cambodia for the Second Annual ASEAN-Australia Summit as well as the 17th East Asia Summit. The Prime Minister's attendance is a demonstration of the importance Australia attaches to its relationship with ASEAN. It was an opportunity for Prime Minister Albanese to meet several of his ASEAN counterparts in-person for the first time, including President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.

At both the opening and close of the summit, Prime Minister Albanese remarked on the depth and maturity of ASEAN-Australia ties. Indeed, I am very proud that Australia is ASEAN's oldest Dialogue Partner. I would like to share with you all a few highlights from his address, as it reaffirms Australia's commitment to Southeast Asia and what we can achieve together.

First, Australia is part of the region – geographically and politically. This means that we share a common future. For almost half a century, Australia has reached out as a steadfast partner and friend to connect and engage with our ASEAN neighbors on the basis of mutual respect and co-operation among sovereign nations. With the Philippines, this engagement has been underpinned by a strong emphasis on education, maritime security, development co-operation, combatting transnational crime and disaster preparedness. This geographic focus is a constant of Australian foreign policy.

As we confront an increasingly complex and changing international landscape, it is more important than ever for us to seek a strategic equilibrium and to uphold a rules-based regional order with ASEAN at the center.

Second, Australia was deeply honored to become a Comprehensive Strategic Partner of ASEAN in 2021. Our contemporary relationship with ASEAN is focused on driving sustainable economic growth; realizing the potential of digital economies; developing smart cities and jointly pursuing science and innovation. Not only does this play to the natural strengths of our region, but it is obviously highly complementary with the digitization agenda outlined by President Marcos in his July 2022 State of the Nation Address.

Third, the Australian Government is matching its words with action. We have committed to concrete action to implement the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and we are substantially increasing our development assistance to Southeast Asia. In our recent budget, Australia boosted development assistance to the region by AUD470 million, which includes extra-funding for the Philippines (which, at AUD85.5 million, is already Australia's fifth largest bilateral program).

We have also committed to deepening our economic integration with our neighbors. Our leaders have agreed to an ambitious upgrade of the ASEAN-



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Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area. This proposal will help to further reduce trade barriers between our countries and deliver strong outcomes for businesses, investors and more than 600 million Southeast Asian citizens. The encouraging words from President Marcos on this upgrade – particularly the potential for expansion in trade in services – speak to the benefits that both the Australian and Filipino economies can gain from this initiative. Unlocking our shared economic dynamism is key.

Significantly, Prime Minister Albanese also used the opportunity to announce the appointment of an eminent business leader, Nicholas Moore, as Australia's Special Envoy to Southeast Asia, whose mandate is to drive delivery of a comprehensive Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040.

Fourth, as a long-time friend of Timor-Leste and its largest development partner, the Australian Government welcomes ASEAN Leaders'

in principle agreement to admit Timor-Leste as the eleventh member of ASEAN. Australia affirms its ongoing commitment to Timor-Leste to help it build capacity to enable full ASEAN membership.

Last, as we confront an increasingly complex and changing international landscape, it is more important than ever for us to seek a strategic equilibrium and to uphold a

rules-based regional order with ASEAN at the center. Australia cannot accept large countries unilaterally determining the fate of smaller ones — that is why Australia has repeatedly called out Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine, which violates not only the UN Charter, but also the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation.

Looking ahead, 2024 will mark the 50th anniversary of Australia becoming ASEAN's first Dialogue Partner, and we look forward to commemorating this very special chapter in our shared history.

Australia understands the central role of ASEAN in promoting a secure and sustainable future based on dialogue and where international law and norms are upheld. The upcoming 12th ASEAN Maritime Forum and the 10th Expanded Maritime Forum, which the Philippines is hosting here in Manila in December, is a clear illustration of the value that regional co-operation provides. As President Marcos himself observed during the ASEAN-Australia Summit: "[l]et us continue this positive momentum so that we can look forward to achieving yet more in the coming years."

Yours truly,
HK

* * *

HK Yu is the Australian Ambassador to the Philippines. You can follow Ambassador Yu on Twitter @AusAmbPH.





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15 research studies presented on UN SDGs

BY MANUEL T. CAYON
@awimailbox
Mindanao Bureau Chief
& ANDREA E. SAN JUAN

DAVAO CITY—Fifteen research studies have been presented during the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Research Symposium at a university here, all dealing with “sustainable living practices and to promote the United Nations’ [UN] SDGs.”

The presented studies tapped various sustainable goals, “including, No Poverty [SDG 1], Zero Hunger [SDG 2], Good Health and Well-being [SDG 3], Quality Education [SDG 4], Clean Water and Sanitation [SDG 6], Decent Work and Economic Growth [SDG 8], Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure [SDG 9], Sustainable Cities and Communities [SDG 11], Responsible Consumption and Production [SDG 12], Climate Action [SDG 13], Life Below Water [SDG 14], and Life on Land [SDG 15],” the Interfacing Development Interventions for Sustainability (IDIS) said.

The symposium held at the Mapua Malayan Colleges of Mindanao on November 11 carried the theme “Enhancing Sustainability and Climate Action for Davao Region through SDG-Oriented Studies,” and the studies covered “multifaceted topics aiming to enhance the replication of sustainable living practices and to promote the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals for adoption and localization in the Davao Region and the rest of South-Central Mindanao.”

“The Philippines ranks 103rd out of 191 countries that committed to promoting the 17 sustainable development goals. With this, we have a very long way to go. Hence, research is a very relevant tool in achieving these SDGs with a multi-sectoral and collaborative effort. May we continue to support research studies of our people to make a difference in our society while leaving no one behind,” said lawyer Mark Penalver, IDIS executive director.

These were the research studies

presented during the symposium:

1. Species Composition of Volant and Small Non-Volant Mammals in the Green Spaces of Davao City, Davao del Sur, Philippines by Brian Pototan

2. Opportunities for Enhancing Epidemic Preparedness through Wastewater-based Epidemiology in Highly-Urbanized Cities by Maria Otero

3. Optimal Process Network for Integrated Solid Waste Management in Davao City, Philippines by Kristin Olalo

4. Improper Disposal of Covid-19 Associated Waste in Davao City: A concern to Health and Environment by John Paul Banzon

5. Risk Factors Associated with Severity and Survivability of Covid-19 Patients: Empirical Evidence from Davao Region by Charisse Miguel

6. Vulnerability Assessment of Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID) in Davao City, Southern Philippines by Marie Damgo

7. The Mediating Effect of Synchronous E-Learning on the Relationship between Digital Literacy and Writing Skills of English-Major College Students: A Mixed Methodology Study by Dr. Febbie Ramos

8. The Influence of Level of Sustainability Reporting on the Financial Performance of Publicly Listed Companies in the Philippines with Firm Size as Moderating Variable by Ianah Guzman

9. Synthesis of Nanocellulose from Durian Rinds for the Preparation of a Self-Healing Smart Concrete with Augmented Mechanical Properties by Ivanbert Damasco

10. Statistical Approach in the Determination of Causality Factors of Seismic Capacity of Reinforced Concrete Residential Buildings by John Liu, et. al

11. “KALINAW”—A Proposed Forest Education Center and Stormwater Park: A study on Utilizing Flood Retention Zones as Spaces for Ecological Literacy by Christian Sangadi, et. al

12. Stakeholders Valuation on Davao City Parks: A Study on Determining Public Value by

Angelo Regalado

13. Is the Government’s Socialized Housing Program Serving the Needs of Low-Income Households? The Case of Davao City by Micah Yares

14. Characterizing the Urban Green Spaces in Davao City, Philippines: Implications for Design and Management by Ryan Songcayaoun

15. Land Use Change of Urban Wetlands in Davao City by Lemuel Lloyd Manalo

Dr. Gernelyn Logrosa, head of office for Research, Development, and Innovation of MMCM, called on the youth and the students “to look into the society’s core problems and challenges, then produce SDG-driven research for the progressive advancement of the region and the country.”

“As educators and researchers, challenges [in our society] remind us of our purpose—give real-life solutions to a real-life problem,” said Dr. Febbie Ramos, in presenting here research paper.

Representatives from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) 11, Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA), Office of Civil Defense (OCD) XI, Department of Human Settlement and Urban Development (DHSUD) 11, and the office of Councilor Luna Acosta attended the symposium.

Acosta’s representative said the councilor has expressed support to research studies on renewable energy, zero waste, watershed protection, sustainable agriculture, and disaster-resilient and green community.

Alvin Angelo A. Salting, chief of Research, and Development Unit of DENR XI, encouraged the participants to continue doing research and apply the concept of basket research which means integrating various SDG goals into the research. “We won’t have what we have now if not because of research,” Salting said.

PCCI and UP-CIFAL SDG program
THE Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and the



on UNSDGs

UP-CIFAL recently launched a leadership program to educate Philippine companies on the impact of the SDGs on businesses.

In a news statement issued on Wednesday, the PCCI said that the leadership program also aims to ensure that the country achieves the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Dubbed the SDGs4Biz: A Leadership Program on Sustainable Development Goals for Transformational Domestic and Export Enterprises, PCCI said the program is participated in initially by 50 industry leaders and business executives from South Luzon and the National Capital Region (NCR) and will run from November until December 15.

The business group said the target number of participants for the two batches under the first run of this course is 200.

For his part, PCCI President George T. Barcelon underscored the importance of educating business enterprises, particularly the micro, small and medium enterprises on the principles of the SDGs and how compliance can provide opportunities and new market trends for businesses to take on while contributing to the 2030 objective of leaving no one behind.

"Frankly, there is a need to intensify the awareness campaign on SDG and PCCI, together with UP-CIFAL and with the support of the Export Development Council [EDC], has started implementing SDG activities to capacitate our members and make them informed of the benefits and opportunities of SDG," Barcelon said.

The head of PCCI said that the activity provides participants with the tool to guide them as they recover from the disruptions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic and navigate aground a revitalized and resilient Philippine economy.

According to PCCI, the program has two components: Professional Course on SDGs for Transformational Business and the IDEATHON Transformational Business Strategy.



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Good and bad of plant-based eating

A growing number of Filipinos, mostly young adults, are embracing a lifestyle of alternative protein intake or what is now more popularly known as plant-based eating. Usually, it comes from a desire to eat healthy, which jives with an overall increased awareness of the need for healthy living.

One other prevalent reason is linked to the ideological movement to protect Earth, following the United Nations' recommendation for humans to shift to a plant-based diet and alternative sources of protein to cut methane emissions, thereby helping slow down global warming.

BIZLINKS



REY GAMBOA

Whether plant-based diets will become mainstream in people's lives or cool down to become a niche community of hard-core believers, much like vegetarianism, is yet to be seen. Already, however, a few critical views of plant-based eating are emerging that give pause to its health and environmental benefits.

Years ago, before this explosion of plant-based foods, doctors who confronted unhealthy patients for overeating meat and its processed derivatives like bacon, canned meat loafs, and hot dogs were asked to shift to a diet of less fatty meats, more leafy vegetables, and no processed foods. Beans and tofu were often made to substitute for animal meats; sugar and salt were carefully measured. This could become quite tedious.

Like real meat

Today, those who watch their diets can simply choose to buy plant-based meats, as more companies now produce them. However, with the wider choice available, it has become essential to read the labels closely before actually buying. Many of the plant-based sausages, burgers, or nuggets, for example, are often fried, seasoned with salt, and zested with ingredients that are not healthy.

The production of plant-based meats have acquired a certain sophistication, so that it tastes more palatable, thanks to a host of flavorings, artificial colors, and processing aids to make them almost indistinguishable from real meat.

While feasting on plant-based meats is may be healthier than consuming cholesterol-laden beef, pork, lamb, or chicken for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, some dietary values have supposedly gone missing. Plant-based meats go through a high level of processing that ultimately removes some of its health values.

These new findings, coupled with the high cost of plant-based meats, pose questions on this nascent industry's sustainability.

Ultra high processing

As the popularity for plant-based lifestyles increases, the problems associated with commercialization crop up. In order to meet growing demand, companies resort to ultra high processing, which scientists warn can generate green house gas (GHG) emissions that negate gains achieved from lowering the mass production of livestock.

The production of milk from plants such as almonds, soya, and coconut to replace animal milk is another area where ultra high processing technology cannot be avoided. Additionally, most plant-based milks contain sugar, oil, salt, and thickening and stabilizing agents.

With the commercialization of plant-based foods comes the unavoidable use of packaging to protect or extend shelf lives, not to mention the freezing and refrigeration necessary to store them.

Today, a number of companies have invested big in plant-based food manufacturing, marketing, and distribution. Some of them, like Los Angeles-based Beyond Meat and UK-based Quorn have global networks that have reached even the Philippines.



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Locally, Century Pacific Food and San Miguel Corp. are two of the country's food conglomerates that have recently ventured into plant-based foods. Both have an expanding presence in the country, and are competing well against imported brands.

Keeping track

Truly, the production of the "modern" plant-based meats has moved up to a different level, quite unlike the traditional method of pulsing or grinding of legumes to produce soymeal or tofu and soy milk that most traditional vegetarians favor.

Mindful of this, scientists issuing in cautionary warnings about the need to continually monitor that the benefits of producing meat alternatives for the world's 8 billion people in the future will not undermine the intended health and environment goals.

The 2022 UN Climate Change Conference or COP27 is winding down this week, and the targets set in the COP21 Paris Agreement to keep global temperatures from rising more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels, ideally not above 1.5°C, continue to be in danger of not being met.

The operational details for the practical implementation of the binding Paris agreement involving 196 countries, colloquially called the Paris Rulebook, was finalized only last year during the COP in Glasgow, Scotland, representing a six-year administrative delay.

Among the action plans that nations are expected to draft deals with changes in the food sector, particularly reducing emissions in agriculture and across the food chain. Eating less meat and dairy products, especially from ruminant animals, is a recommended action point.

The UK, for example, targets to reduce consumption of most carbon-intensive foods like beef, lamb, and dairy by at least 20 percent per capita to plant-based options by 2030, and a further 15 percent by 2050.

A new study by scientists from Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley supports the view that phasing out animal agriculture over the next 15 years would have the same effect as a 68 percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions through 2100. This alone represents more than half of the net emission reductions needed to limit global warming to 2°C.

As the world's population is cajoled to adopting plant-based eating in favor of a healthier diet and for the world's survival, I think about that juicy steak that I could have for dinner today. Luckily, it's still one pleasure to enjoy, albeit in moderation.

Facebook and Twitter

We are actively using two social networking websites to reach out more often and even interact with and engage our readers, friends and colleagues in the various areas of interest that I tackle in my column. Please like us on www.facebook.com/ReyGamboa and follow us on www.twitter.com/ReyGamboa.

Should you wish to share any insights, write me at Link Edge, 25th Floor, 139 Corporate Center, Valero Street, Salcedo Village, 1227 Makati City. Or e-mail me at reydgamboa@yahoo.com. For a compilation of previous articles, visit www.BizlinksPhilippines.net.




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REIMATE OPINION



ANG INYONG LINGKOD

NI DR. HILDA C. ONG

LIMANG TAONG PROGRAMA NG MANILA WATER, MAGSEGURO SA MAAYOS NA SUPLAY NG TUBIG

BILANG pagtupad ng Manila Water Company, Incorporated sa pangako nitong paghahatid ng magandang serbisyo ng paghahatid ng tubig sa 7.4 million nitong customers sa easter side ng Metro Manila at lalawigan ng Rizal, ay magsasagawa ng limang taong programa ang kumpanya mula taong 2023 hanggang 2027 na alinsunod sa service continuity, service accessibility at environmental sustainability.

Maglalaan ang Manila Water ng kabuuang halagang 181 billion pesos kung saan ay 105 billion pesos ang ilalaan sa massive capital expenditure program nito.

Patuloy na lumalaki ang pangangailangan sa tubig ng mga residenteng binibigyang serbisyo ng kumpanya na tumataas ng dalawa hanggang tatiang porsiyento bawat taon. Umaasa ang Manila Water

sa suplay ng tubig nito mula sa halos fifty-years ng Angat dam, gayundin ang isa pang water concessionaire.

Nagsimulang kumuha ng tubig mula sa Laguna de Bay ang kumpanya bilang paghahanda sa epekto ng climate change. Natapos na rin nito ang Cardona Water Treatment Plant kung saan kumukuha ng aabot sa 100 million liters ng tubig bawat araw ang nakukuha mula sa gitnang bahagi ng lawa.

Kabilang din sa Laguna Lake Water System ang East Bay Water Supply Project Phases 1 at 2 na may kapasidad na 250 million liters per day

Maging ang Antipolo Water System na magmumula sa Wawa Calawis Water Supply Project kung saan ang phase 1 ay magbibigay ng 80 MLD at karagdagang 438 million liters per day (438 MLD) sa taong 2025.

Nagpapatuloy din ang koordinasyon ng Manila Water sa MWSS o Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System para sa Sumag River Diversion Project at sa Umiray-Angat Transbasin Rehabilitation Project na inaasahang magdaragdag sa kapasidad ng Angat dam.

Asahan din ang pagpapatubay sa mga imprastruktura ng Manila Water bilang kahanandaan sa pagtama ng mga kalamidad katulad ng paglindol at malalakas na bagyo kabilang ang retro-fitting, pagseseguro sa structural integrity ng mga pasilidad, rehabilitasyon ng mga mainlines, at paggawa ng mga emergency reservoirs.

Magtatayo din ang kumpanya ng wastewater treatment facilities na alinsunod sa new standards on biological nutrient removal para maseguro na malinis ang tubig na muling ibabalik sa mga water receiving bodies alinsunod sa probisyon ng Clean Water Act.



FILRT approves Boracay land purchase

FILINVEST REIT Corp. (FILRT), approved to purchase 2.9 hectares of land owned by Filinvest Development Corp. (FDC) on Boracay Island through a deed of sale for P1.05 billion.

The land is being leased by Boracay Seascapes Inc. (BSI), the building owner of Crimson Resort & Spa Boracay and a subsidiary of FDC.

The acquisition of this land will directly contribute to FILRT's income starting January 2023, adding to the earnings generated by the company's existing 17 buildings. This will expand FILRT's portfolio in terms of size by 29,086 square meters or by 10 percent to reach 330,448.3 square meters of gross leasable area.

This, likewise, will improve oc-

cupancy by 1-percentage point to 89 percent and extend weighted average lease expiry to 6.83 years. FILRT's total property value upon infusion will rise to P49.5 billion.

On another note, the board of directors, during its Nov. 15, 2022 meeting, approved the declaration of P0.088 per outstanding common share in cash dividends, maintaining the same level as the previous quarter.

This declaration brings year-to-date dividends to P0.404 per outstanding common share, which is equivalent to an annualized yield of 7.0 percent based on the market price on Nov. 14, 2022 of P5.81 per share. The cash dividends will be payable on Dec. 20, 2022 to stockholders on record as of Dec. 1, 2022.

JENYL CZARINA T. MALATA



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DIY TIPS TO SAVE WATER AS LEGACY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

THE thoughtlessness of wasting water has become another threat to our ill-fated planet. As The Guardian reported, "Now the world is running out of water and by the year 2025, two-thirds of the world's more-than-8-billion population will face a water shortage." In fact, it continued, "Our demand for water has doubled over the last 40 years."

That is serious enough for us to start saving water now, especially since the dry season has

caused the levels of our dams, the main source of rainwater supply, to subside dangerously.

In every home, some 50 liters of water are used by individuals for their daily shower or bath. Much more are used to clean our homes using synthetic chemicals that eventually pollute natural waterways. It's time for us to reduce the amount of time we spend cleaning up, and to start using natural and organic toiletries and cosmetics instead. Using

diluted vinegar, lemon juice, and baking soda are good alternatives, just as household borax has proven to be an efficient antibacterial bleaching agent for bathrooms, and a fungicide as well.

Washing dishes when the sink is full can also save water, as would using the "gray water" from final rinsing as this could be stored for watering the plants, ideally in the morning or early evening to minimize water loss from evaporation.

During the wet season, saving rainwater can help top up our water supply for plants, cleaning, and flushing the toilet.

Using fully loaded washing machines and washing clothes with environment-friendly detergents would save water as well, just as drying clothes naturally under the sun or in the wind would save energy.

Outside our homes, we also need to be mindful of saving water and protecting it by clean-

ing up extant springs and other waterways. Planting trees and mangroves and engaging the Coast Guard to oversee Manila Bay, Laguna de Bay, the Pasig River, and other major bodies of water are a good way to do this.

In the absence of dams in larger communities, local government units can conserve water by constructing safe and well-protected catch basins for floodwaters that can be used for households and farms

during the dry season.

We are all responsible for saving water in this wonderful but endangered planet. Once we get into the habit of saving water, it becomes second nature to us. Like footprints left on Mother Earth, this will be our legacy to fellow residents on earth in the near or distant future.

PIT M. MALIKS,
founder,
Mga Apo ni Tomas



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PUBLIC HEARING ANNOUNCEMENT

Project Name : SMFI Cebu Feed Mill Expansion Project

Proponent : San Miguel Foods, Inc.

Project Location : Barangay Looc, Mandaue City, Cebu

Date and Time : November 22, 2022 (Tuesday) at 10:00 a.m.
(Registration Starts at 9:30 a.m.)

Venue : Looc Barangay Gymnasium

*For further details of the project,
please visit the link shorturl.at/cOY25.*



(PDI - Nov. 12 & 17, 2022)