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TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

PROTECTING SMALL-SCALE OPERATIONS

EASE RULES FOR POCKET MINERS, DENR TOLD

By Vincent Cabreza
@InqNational

BAGUIO CITY—The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) should come up with better incentives and regulations to help pocket miners who have not been earning enough despite the risks of digging through small tunnels, a former government official said here.

At a recent mining summit here, Edwin Domingo, former deputy director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), urged Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga to overhaul her agency's policies governing small-scale mines so this sector would get better protection.

The small-scale mining sector shoulders part of the blame for toxic mine waste that pollutes waterways because some unlicensed operations were in remote locations and could not be properly regulated, according to some industry accounts.

A number of mining operators have also used mercury to dissolve rock ore containing gold, based on studies.

Domingo said the People's Small-Scale Mining Act of 1991 (Republic Act No. 7076), and several provincial ordinances were enacted to legitimize micro and small to medium enterprises in the mining industry.

RA 7076 created the "Minahang Bayan," which are exclusive zones for licensed pocket miners, whether artisanal (hammer and mortar operators) or small-scale operations that use heavy equipment.

"But after 31 years [since the law was enacted], the government has declared only 49 Minahang Bayan areas over a period of more than two decades," Domingo said during the Annual National Mine Safety and Environment Conference here last week.

ready occupied by miners as Minahang Bayan," Domingo said.

He said DENR should put up custom mills to reduce or eliminate mine pollution from pocket mining.

The mills may also serve as a convergence point for small miners, who may trade their gold at buying stations to be put up by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas there, Domingo said.

According to Domingo, the pocket miners' financiers and the black market for gold take a huge portion of their revenues.

"So when a small-scale miner runs out of money, he looks for anyone willing to buy his 'bahay,' their term for gold, which is the size of the head of a matchstick, regardless of the price that is going to be offered," Domingo said. "Where are the benefits we speak about for small-scale miners then?"

Insurance system

The government should also build an insurance system for pocket miners, such as a Small-Scale Miners Protection Fund, he added.

According to the National Coalition of Small-Scale Miners of the Philippines, over 500,000 pocket miners make a living from small-scale mines all over the country.

Small-scale mines proliferated across the country in the late 1970s and early 1980s when world metals prices shot up to a high of \$800 an ounce, and pocket miners learned to extract gold from rocks using the carbon in pulp technique (also referred to as gold cyanidation), Domingo said.

In the Cordillera, gold mining is a traditional industry of indigenous communities, said Eric Andal, resident manager of Itogon-Suyoc Resources Inc.'s (ISRI) Sangilo Mines and vice president for geology and exploration at Apex Mining Corp., which acquired ISRI.

'Complicated' permits

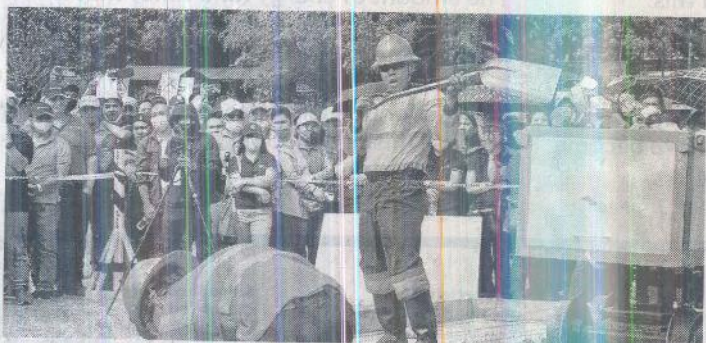
Securing permits to operate in Minahang Bayan is also too complicated and expensive, he added.

Instead of simply waiting for applicants, MGB should explore and identify future Minahang Bayan sites, he said.

"We must be proactive. What happens now is that the government declares areas al-

"They (indigenous peoples) have been panning gold in river systems since time immemorial until the beginning of commercial mining during American times," he said at the symposium.

Benguet province is home to the country's pioneer mines, beginning with the first corporate mine, Benguet Corp., which was established in 1904. Sangilo Mine was put up in 1924. INQ



GOLD DIGGERS During this year's mining conference in Baguio City, mine industry workers demonstrate the skills they need to work in the country's mine tunnels in search of gold and other minerals. —EV ESPIRITU



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PAGE



UPPER

LOWER



PAGE 1
STORY



BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

25-22

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

TUCP supports BBM's move to protect small-scale miners

THE Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), the country's biggest labor group, has thrown its support behind the call of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. to bolster regulation of the small-scale mining industry to ensure the welfare of small-scale miners.

The move, the labor group said, stands to benefit from 200,000 to 500,000 workers in the small-scale mining industry in terms of safety, social protection and welfare.

"Like the President, our clarion call is clear: the legitimization and formalization of our small-scale mining industry is the key to improved productivity, sustainable growth and just work conditions of the hundreds of thousands of workers in this industry, alongside their families and communities," said the TUCP in a statement.

It said that small-scale miners contribute as much as 70 percent to 80 percent of the entire mining industry's total output, which translates to P90 to P145 billion every year.

Earlier, the President ordered the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to strengthen its regulatory powers for small- and large-scale mining to ensure

that standards are updated and that mining firms are strictly implementing their respective safety and health programs for workers.

The Chief Executive expressed concern on the risk that small-scale miners confront while working inside mines with inadequate safety measures, and without social protection and security.

TUCP said that as long as workers in the small-scale mining industry remain invisible and informal, they have little social protection and social benefits.

"They have no labor and health and safety standards. They lack access to personal protective equipment and medical personnel. By operating unregistered, they are further vulnerable to corrupt practices, with miners forced to pay bribes to authorities," it said.

It stressed that without legitimization and regulation, workers in the small-scale mining industry are trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty where they continuously suffer the day-to-day grind, risking spinal injuries and pollution exposure, yet earn barely enough.

According to the Office of the Press Secretary, the President may certify urgent bills

on small-scale mining such as amendments to Republic Act (RA) 7096 or the "People's Small-scale Mining Act of 1999."

The TUCP president and concurrent party-list Rep. Raymond Mendoza said that he will move for the amendment of RA 7096 and Executive Order 79, series of 2012 to make the law more responsive to the needs of all small-scale mining stakeholders. The aim is to fulfill the law's ultimate goal of incentivizing the wider formalization of the industry.

"Our proposed reforms and advocacies center on promoting the ease of formalization of the existing informal operations of small-scale mining enterprises, taking into consideration their peculiar stature vis-a-vis the large-scale mining rights holders," he said.

"This can be achieved by streamlining the Minahang Bayan petitioning, licensing, and registration processes. This can be done by promoting localized access, simplifying documentary requirements, ensuring affordable fees, ensuring reasonable application time, establishing one-stop-shops and leveraging technology," he explained.

WILLIAM B. DEPASUPIL



TITLE :

PAGE

DATE

Nickel Asia claims environment awards on the heels of financial achievements

NICKEL Asia Corp. (NAC) once again took center stage as two of its affiliates were accorded the most coveted Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Award (PMIEA) in the recently concluded 68th Annual National Mine Safety and Environment Conference (ANMSEC) in Baguio City.

"At NAC, we align profit with purpose amidst the challenges of climate change and these honors only demonstrate that caring for the environment goes hand in hand with good business performance," says JB Baylon, Chief Sustainability Officer and SVP for Public Affairs and Communications.

NAC recently reported more than P21 billion in gross revenues. NAC's attributable net income reached P6.9 billion from January to September, up from last year's P6.17 billion.

Hinatuan Mining Corporation (HMC) and Taganito Mining Corporation (TMC), both subsidiaries of NAC, are recipients of the prestigious PMIEA this year, a back-to-back win for both.

In addition, the Best Mining Forest Award and the Most Improved Safety Performance under the Safest Mines Award were also accorded to TMC, with operations based in Claver, Surigao del Norte.

"We persevered and worked hard to clinch these most coveted awards this year and being acknowledged for our commitment to responsible mining is an honor and an exhilarating feeling for all our employees," says Engr. Artemio Valeroso, Resident Mine Manager for TMC.

It is also a back-to-back win for HMC this year. HMC, with operations based in Tagana-an, also in Surigao del Norte, was the grand slam winner during the 67th ANMSEC last year, sweeping all major honors from the country's most prestigious award-giving body in the mining industry.

"Last year was our first and a grand slam! This year, taking home the Presidential award and the third runner-up honor for Best Mining Forest, remind us to remain steadfast, focusing on our goals and to keep working hard to sustain the good business of NAC in the industry of

responsible mining", says Engr. Francis Arañes, HMC's Resident Mine Manager.

Two more NAC subsidiaries were honored - Cagdianao Mining Corp. (CMC), with operations in Dinagat Islands, a Platinum Achievement Awardee for Surface Mining Operation Category; and Rio Tuba Nickel (RTN) in Palawan, the two-time ASEAN Awardee for Best Mining, was a Platinum Awardee for its nickel operations and Titanium Awardee for its limestone project.

RTN was also declared the grand slam champion in the safety competition during the "Mine Safety Field Demonstration and Field Competition" held on the fourth day of the conference.

The Annual Mine Safety and Environment Conference is organized by the Philippine Mine Safety and Environment Association (PMSEA) in coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Mines and Geosciences Bureau, the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, the Philippine Society of Mining Engineers (PSEM).



NICKEL Asia subsidiaries are recipients of prestigious Environment Awards



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE



PAGE



UPPER
LOWER



PAGE 1
STORY



BANNER
STORY



EDITORIAL



CARTOON

25-22

TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

Nickel Asia propagates tree seedlings in support of Nat'l Greening Program

Listed mining firm Nickel Asia Corp. (NAC) and its subsidiaries are propagat-

ing their support to the government's National Greening Program (NGP) by venturing into the production of seedlings for fruit-bearing trees and donating a substantial number of them to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Remedios Collado-Camo, NAC AVP for industrial safety and OIC of its environment sector, said seedlings production is an important part of the operations of the mining companies under the NAC Group.

"Propagation of seedlings is a complex responsibility of the environment group of the NAC organization because we have a goal to produce enough seedlings to cover the hectares upon hectares of mined-out areas ready for rehabilitation, plus there is our commitment to DENR's NGP," Collado-Camo said.

NAC has donated 185,466 seedlings worth about P8.5 million and has planted 234,873 trees within the mining camps

this year.

Jomer Tiamson, environment manager for NAC subsidiary Hinatuan Mining Corp based in Surigao del Norte, said the past year has seen an increase of requests for seedlings for fruit-bearing trees which is much more expensive to generate as compared to seedlings for forest trees.

Tiamson explained that it further proves NAC's commitment to the greening programs because the cost of generating a seedling for a forest tree is estimated to be at P10 each, while a seedling for a fruit tree costs about P30 each.

The Philippine Mining Act of 1995 obliges mining companies to plant 100 trees to replace every tree they cut due to their operations. This is part of the mining industry's rehabilitation programs embedded in the Mining Act and the mining companies' commitment to the greening of communities where they operate.



01-25-22

TITLE :

PAGE

DATE

Bill mandates ecotourism devt for Malamawi Island in Basilan

By JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ

@joveemarie

TO foster economic development in Basilan province, a lawmaker from Mindanao has filed a so-called livelihood bill, declaring Malamawi Island in the City of Isabela, Province of Basilan, an ecotourism zone.

Basilan Rep. Mujiv Hataman filed House Bill 6293 that seeks to declare the island in the volatile south an ecotourism zone and mandates the Department of Tourism (DOT) to develop the island as a tourism destination.

"First and foremost, this is a livelihood measure," said Hataman.

According to the measure, Malamawi is a small island in Basilan with a long stretch of white sandy beach on its northern coast. Because of its crystal blue water, refined white sand, and breathtaking scenery, Malamawi Island has become a popular tourist attraction.

Tourist arrivals in Isabela City—both accommodation-based and day tours—have jumped from 60,549 in 2019, to a whopping 112,275 as of October in 2022. Arrivals dropped in 2020 and 2021 understandably due to Covid-19 restrictions.

"The Malamawi Island, in the City of Isabela, Province of Basilan is hereby declared an ecotourism zone. Its development shall be prioritized by the DOT, subject to the rules and regulations governing the development of ecotourism

zones," HB 6293 mandates.

"Within one year after the approval of this Act, the DOT shall, in coordination with the local government units of the City of Isabela...and agencies of the government, prepare a tourism development plan involving the construction, installation, and maintenance of appropriate infrastructure and facilities that shall encourage tourism in the area," it added.

Any tourism development plan of the DOT should be consulted with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) so that any activities and development to be carried out in the area should conform to the concept of ecotourism.

"The Secretary of Tourism shall include in the DOT's program the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act and from internally generated funds of the DOT," the bill added.

Hataman is confident that with the national government's help, Malamawi could rival the country's great beaches such as Boracay and Siargao.

"Cognizant of its importance to the overall development of Isabela City and Basilan province as a whole, the local government unit has poured programs and projects to the island and its communities to bolster its capacity to accommodate visitors and improve the lives of its people, and enrich visitor and tourist experience," he said.



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

Malamawi Island pushed as ecotourism zone

By **RYAN PONCE
PACPACO**

BASILAN Representative Mujiv Hataman has filed a bill seeking to declare Malamawi Island in Basilan as an ecotourism zone.

"Panahon na para magbunga naman ang pinagtulang-tulongan at pinaghirapang kapayapaan para sa kapakanan at ika-unlad ng mga komu-

nidad sa Basilan. Ang pagpapaganda ng Malamawi Island ay isang hakbang tungo sa isang progresibong kinabukasan," Hataman said.

This is according to Hataman, as he filed on Tuesday night House Bill (HB) No. 6293 that seeks to declare Malamawi Island in the City of Isabela, Basilan, an "ecotourism zone" and mandates the Department of Tourism (DOT) to develop the island as a tour-

ism destination.

"Sa katunayan, madami na ang pumupunta sa Malamawi Island para magbakasyon dahil tunay na napakaganda ng tanawin doon. Ang nakikinabang sa maraming bisita ay ang mga komunidad sa isla sa ilalim ng pagpapatrubay ng lokal na pamahalaan ng Isabela City," Hataman declared.

According to the measure, Malamawi Island is a small island in Basilan with

a long stretch of white sandy beach on its northern coast.

Because of its crystal blue water, refined white sand, and breathtaking scenery, Malamawi Island has become a popular tourist attraction.

Hataman is confident that with the national government's help, Malamawi Island's already deserved prestige can rival that of the country's great beaches, such as Boracay and Siargao.



Israel offers PH water management technology

ISRAEL is offering innovative solutions to help the Philippines improve water resource management and conservation.

Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation and the United States Agency for International Aid shared with the Philippine government and local water concessionaires in the Philippines the expertise and experience of Israel on water resource management.

"Israel invested in technology to support the growing demand and urbanization in the country," said Israeli Ambassador to the Philippines Ilan Fluss during a recent seminar.

The technologies, he said, "were introduced together with good policies and regulations that made Israel the leading country in the world in managing the water sector."

►WaterA2

■ WATER FROM A1

Israel offers PH water

"From desalination to reuse of sewage, minimum loss of water and more," the ambassador said.

"Through this seminar, we hope that the Philippines' key implementing agencies will gain insights from the Israeli experience and adapt them to local conditions," he added.

He noted that Israel faced challenges in water conservation and management. The Middle East is a dry area and more than 50 percent of "Israel is actually desert," he said.

The Israeli Embassy in Manila said National Water Resources Board Director Susan Abano shared the challenges that the Philippines faces as water availability continues to fall due to rising demand.

The embassy said that engineers Rodel Rik Tumanda and Jon Michael Esteban of Maynilad and Manila Water, respectively, as well as Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System chief regulator

Patrick Ty presented their perspectives on managing water scarcity.

"These were analyzed by the Israeli water delegation and presented advanced solutions to better manage the water sector of the country," the embassy said in a statement.

"The Israeli companies highlighted Israel's innovation and technology to inspire and encourage the Philippine water sector, businesses and local government units to invest in technologies that will help manage water sustainably," it added.

Among the Israeli companies who presented their water technologies were ARAD Group, Atlantium, Okiana and Watergen. The firms offer cutting-edge Israeli technologies in advanced metering infrastructure, water and wastewater management and treatment solutions, water control solutions, and turnkey projects.

BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO



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PAGE

DATE



ARYA

IRWIN CORPUZ

Solusyon ng QC sa Climate Change at ang Save Water ng Norzagaray!

BUNSOD sa pabago-bagong panahon na epekto ng CLIMATE CHANGE at pinagsisikapan ngayong masolusyunan ng iba't ibang mga lider ng bansa ay isa si QUEZON CITY MAYOR JOY BELMONTE ang naging panahin at nagbahagi ng programang isinasagawa sa kanilang lungsod sa inilunsad na programa ng EUROPEAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF THE PHILIPPINES (ECCP).

Ang programa ng ECCP ay ang kampanyang NET ZERO CARBON PHILIPPINES., tinalakay ang kahandaan sa mga CLIMATE EMERGENCY na pumapaloob dito ang iba't ibang pamamaraan o proyektong makatutulong upang mabawasan ang iba't ibang polusyon sa kapaligiran.

Sa naturang programa ay ibinahagi ni MAYOR JOY ang iba't ibang programa sa kanilang lungsod bilang pagtugon sa mga epekto ng global climate change., kabilang na ang pagtatatag ng CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY DEPARTMENT at pagbuo sa ENHANCED LOCAL CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN katuwang ang C40 CITIES.

Binigyang-diin ni MAYOR JOY ang kahalagahan ng pagkakaisa sa lahat ng sektor., mula sa mga civil society organization hanggang sa mga residente para maisakatuparan ang climate goals sa kanilang lungsod.

Inihayag pa nito na upang makamit ang target na mabawasan ng 30 porsyento ang carbon emissions ay iba't ibang proyekto at plano ang binuo sa kanilang lokal na pamahalaan tulad ng pagpapalawig ng BIKE LANE NETWORK., SOLARIZATION sa kanilang CITY-OWNED HOSPITALS at viable SCHOOL BUILDINGS, pagpapatayo ng GREEN CORRIDOR at pagsusulong ng URBAN AGRICULTURE.

SAVE WATER CAMPAIGN NG NORZAGARAY!

"Nabubuhay ang tao nang walang pag-ibig pero walang nabubuhay nang walang tubig.", mga katagang sinambit ni NORZAGARAY MAYOR ELENA GERMAR nang ito ay dumalo sa SAVE WATER ADVOCACY PROGRAM na inilunsad ng LOCAL WATER UTILITIES ADMINISTRATION (LWUA) sa NORZAGARAY WATER DISTRICT

nitong nakaraang November 23, 2022 sa lalawigan ng BULACAN.

Ipinunto ni MAYOR GERMAR na kinakailangan ang pagpapahalaga sa tubig at ang marapat na paggamit upang huwag humantong sa pagiging tagtuyot.

Ang SAVE WATER ADVOCACY PROGRAM (SWAP) ay dinaluhan ng mga opisyal mula sa NORZAGARAY WATER DISTRICT at mga opisyal mula sa mga bayan ng PANDI, ANGAT, SAN ILDEFONSO, SAN RAFAEL at STA. MARIA WATER DISTRICTS gayundin ng mga COMMUNITY SOCIAL WORKERS, BARANGAY HEALTH WORKERS, TEACHERS, LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS at BARANGAY OFFICIALS.

Inihayag ni LWUA PUBLIC RELATIONS CHIEF JANNET GOJOCO na ang SWAP ay inilunsad ng LWUA para sa puspusang kampanya hinggil sa WATER CONSERVATION sa pakikipagtugon ng mga stakeholders upang maimpormahan at maturuan ang mga tao sa pagpapahalaga sa tubig.

Ipinunto naman ni NWD GENERAL MANAGER AIMER CRUZ na 91% sa mga kinukunsumong tubig sa mga residente ng METRO MANILA ay nanggagaling sa ANGAT at IPO DAM na dapat ay mapalawig pa ang reforestation o mapalawak pa ang pagtatanim ng mga puno.

Sa naturang programa ay naging tagapagsalita rin sina DOST PAGASA

WEATHER SPECIALIST MARY MAY VICTORIA CALIMASO; NWRB WATER RESOURCES ASSESSMENT SECTION HEAD JOSEPHINE BILLONES; LWUA WATER SUPPLY SANITATION PLANNING AND DESIGN DEPARTMENT MANAGER VIRGILIO BOMBETA., at si JOSEPH ROON TUAZON, MAYNILAD WATER SERVICES COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP HEAD.

na tinalakay ng mga ito ang epekto at wastong paggamit o pagpapahalaga ng tubig!

Kung may reaksiyon lalo na sa mga nakakanti ng ating kolum ay maaari po kayong mag-email sa corpuzirwin074@gmail.com o magtext lamang sa 0969 536 8851 para sa inyo pong mga panig.



TITLE :

PAGE

DATE

Listed firms need to improve focus on biodiversity - study

By IRIS GONZALES

Listed companies in the Asia Pacific region including those in the Philippines need to improve their sustainability thrusts, according to key findings of a report, Nature-related Reporting in Asia-Pacific Corporations: State of Corporate Practices.

According to the report, only 28 percent among 410 top listed firms in the region view nature and biodiversity as a priority issue among sustainability concerns. Industrial and consumer staples companies are the most nature-conscious while health-care firms are the least.

The study, published by the Centre for Governance and Sustainability (CGS) at the National University of Singapore (NUS) Business School, examined the top 50 listed companies by market capitalization in each of 13 Asia-Pacific regions.

Among this group, there were 600 companies which

published their sustainability report in English in 2021 or 2022. Researchers delved into the sustainability reports of these 600 businesses, focusing on their approach to reporting, materiality or whether biodiversity could affect the firm's ability to create value in the short, medium and long term, governance, strategy, risk management, and metrics and targets.

Out of these 600 firms, 68 percent or 410 companies made disclosures related to nature or biodiversity.

Of these 410 firms that published nature-related disclosures, 28 percent or 114 companies view biodiversity as a priority issue.

Another key finding is that across 11 industries, industrial and consumer staples companies are most nature-conscious, as they depend heavily on nature for raw materials.

On the other hand, "health-

care and communication services firms show lesser concern."

In the region, Japan and Australia fare best in active conservation.

"There is no observation of any company completing a biodiversity audit for its value chain, signifying that the full scope of business impacts is not accounted for," the report said.

Professor Lawrence Loh, director, Centre for Governance and Sustainability, NUS Business School, said effective nature reporting is a critical component in the global effort to halt biodiversity loss.

"Achieving consistency in nature reporting gives confidence to investors and helps businesses embrace sustainability in their operations. The global race toward net-zero ambition is crippled unless a net positive ambition for biodiversity is taken in stride as a business norm," he said.



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

'DEFICIT-TO-GDP RATIO, FISCAL DATA IMPROVING'

By CAI U. ORDINARIO

@caiordinario

Deficit-to-GDP... CONTINUED FROM A1

THE Department of Finance (DOF) said the government's fiscal indicators are improving as the increase in the deficit to GDP ratio slowed and revenue generating agencies hit double-digit growth in their collections.

Finance Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno told reporters on Thursday that the national government's deficit as percent of GDP for the first three quarters slowed to 6.5 percent from 8.3 percent a year ago.

He added that for the 10-month period, the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) also collected P1.9 trillion, up by 12.6 percent while the Bureau of Customs (BOC) increased its collections by 35.8 percent to P713.5 billion in the same period.

"Tax effort, defined as taxes as percent of GDP, rose to 15.3 percent from 14.8 percent in 2021," Diokno told reporters via Viber.

SEE "DEFICIT-TO-GDP," A2

Climate risk

MEANWHILE, Diokno urged climate experts and leaders from the public, private, and development sectors to invest in adaptation to reduce climate risks and disasters.

"We must urgently increase the availability of adaptation and resilience finance, particularly for sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure," Diokno said at the recent Climate Investment Forum organized by the Climate Change Commission (CCC).

The country's high exposure to climate and disaster risks, he stressed, has pushed the government to be more proactive in prioritizing disaster risks and climate change impacts.

As such, the Department of Finance (DOF) proposed a three-pronged blended approach of grants, investments, and subsidies as modalities of climate finance.

This considers the private sector, multilateral development banks (MDBs), and global financial regulatory bodies as vital partners in the mobilization of financing for adaptation and mitigation projects.

The government also continues to seek support from international channels and partners to ensure sufficient fiscal space in addressing the climate crisis.

The Philippines submitted its first nationally determined contribution or NDC in April 2021.

"The first NDC commits to a projected greenhouse gas emission reduction and avoidance of 75 percent, representing the country's ambition for GHG mitigation by 2030 for the agriculture, waste, industry, transport, and energy sectors," he explained.

He called the private sector an important pillar in a just transition to a low-carbon economy through energy transition, technology development and deployment, and building of climate-resilient communities, with due regard to natural resources and ecosystem integrity.

To encourage private sector participation, the DOF and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) have also established a sustainable finance ecosystem to synergize public and private investments in green projects and create the environment for greener policies.

SEC guidance

MEANWHILE, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has released guidelines on the issuance of Green Bonds under the Asean Green Bonds Standards.

"This provides a reference point for determining the eligibility of green projects covering renewable energy, energy efficiency, pollution prevention and control, environmentally-sustainable management of living natural resources and land

use, clean transportation, and adaptation of green infrastructure," Diokno said.

The government has also developed the Sustainable Finance Framework laying down the process for ensuring transparency and disclosure of the use of proceeds, as well as the expected environmental and social impact of eligible green and social projects, in keeping with international best practices.

"These efforts have helped us successfully issue our first-ever sustainability global bonds worth \$1 billion, and sustainability samurai bonds worth \$600 million," Diokno said.

Mandanas ruling

THE DOF also called on local government units (LGUs) to optimize their increased transfers from the Mandanas ruling in setting up plans on capital investments to address basic and growing needs of their constituents.

EO No. 138, s. 2021 strengthens the autonomy of LGUs, granting them, among others, the ability to borrow resources to improve local facilities and services.

"[A]s we implement the full devolution of certain functions from the executive branch to local governments pursuant to EO Number 138, series of 2021, local government units are confronted with the challenge of funding the expanded scope of basic services and local development projects. It is therefore imperative that LGUs put in place plans on capital investments," said Diokno.

However, data showed that LGUs had a low appetite for borrowing. In the past five years, only around 62 percent of LGUs have availed themselves of credit. For 2021, LGU borrowings only amounted to P136.6 billion or around 0.74 percent of the country's GDP.

The Bureau of Local Government Finance (BLGF), tasked to monitor and evaluate LGU borrowings, noted that LGUs were only able to utilize 51.5 percent of their borrowing capacity in the past five years.

These were most commonly used for the construction of local government buildings and roads, acquisition of lots, and procurement of heavy equipment.

To encourage local borrowing, the BLGF issued the Certificate of Net Debt Service Ceiling and Borrowing Capacity to establish a maximum credit amount that LGUs can refer to.

The initiative is part of the government's engagement with the World Bank Group where LGUs, especially city government stakeholders, are given access to knowledge and tools to design creditworthy local strategies in planning and implementing capital investment projects, said Diokno.



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

Loss and damage fund a win for PH, climate vulnerable countries -- Legarda

SENATE President Pro-Tempore Loren Legarda yesterday lauded the new global deal to establish a "loss and damage" facility as compensation for climate-vulnerable developing countries, including the Philippines, due to the destruction brought about by climate change, which they did not cause.

The deal was included in the decision adopted by countries at the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), following two weeks of negotiations in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

"Today, we celebrate a historic win for the developing world with the establishment of a loss and damage fund as reparation for the lives, livelihoods, assets, and opportunities destroyed within climate-vulnerable countries, including the Philippines.

This is a welcome development of a decade-long battle on loss and damage, but we remain steadfast in our continuing call for climate justice as we demand the developed countries to actually deliver on their commitments in the Paris Agreement," Legarda said.

Senator Legarda explained that developed countries have failed to meet their obligations in the climate treaty, particularly, in annually mobilizing US\$100 billion of climate finance for developing countries starting in 2020. This failure, she added, has delayed progress and raised doubts about the developed countries' genuineness and solidarity with the developing world.

She stated that there must be clarity and a new roadmap to deliver on this promise and for new commitments, including the loss and damage fund and the doubling of adaptation finance. She also supported the call to open more access to climate finance from public and private sources and philanthropies, and for multilateral development banks and financial institutions to improve their business models to accept risks and leverage finance for developing countries.

However, she lamented that the COP27 decision is remiss in conveying stronger language against fossil fuels and increasing countries' targets to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, in support of the 1.5 degrees Celsius climate goal of the Paris Agreement.

"Central to our pursuit for climate justice is our call to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius—our climate survival threshold. Current commitments to reduce emissions still lead to a level way beyond that threshold, and it's worrying for countries like ours that already find it hard to adapt at the current level. Despite this, however, the benefits of renewable energy, especially in terms of savings to power costs, speak for themselves and encourage nations to sustain the momentum for RE and put an end to the fossil fuel era," Legarda said.

PS Jun M. Sarmiento



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DATE _____



FIRING LINE

ROBERT B. ROQUE, JR.

Change of stand at COP27?

At the close of the 27th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, last Sunday, a landmark agreement for the setting up of a "loss and damage" finance facility was reached. The rules have yet to be cast in stone, but this is undoubtedly a step in the right direction for climate change justice for the world's most vulnerable communities and nations, like the Philippines.

Kudos to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for pushing for the "adoption of a precise definition of 'loss and damage' to include impacts from extreme climate events and slow

onset change, to cover economic and non-economic losses, and to establish a mechanism that would fund and deliver technical support to help countries manage loss and damage."

Soon enough, this fund will cover immediate calamity relief and reparations for communities affected by severe weather disturbances and hazard pay for displaced workers.

* * *

Still, environmentalists and climate change watchdog organizations were grossly disappointed that the Philippine delegation kept mum over the issue of phasing out fossil fuels at the COP27.

Gerry Arances, ex-

ecutive director of the Center for Energy, Ecology, and Development (CEED), voiced out the great expectation that our delegation would stand up to ensure that the world meets the target to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures, as stated in the Paris Agreement.

It had been the country's stand for so long – even consistent with the Marcos administration's push for cleaner energy sources – yet our delegation seemed to have abandoned it because of our power sector's dependence on fossil fuels such as coal.

* * *

In May of 2021, 6,000 residents of Quezon City converged at a community pantry in Old Balara organized by a dozen personnel and about 50 staff members of then-Councilor Franz Pumaren's office.

Although he'd be cleared of any violation, Pumaren apologized for the "unseen event" of a likely superspreader at the height of

the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now that he's a congressman, little has changed about Pumaren and his apparent ascent to becoming QC's very own "Superspreader King" – this time, holding a meet-and-greet at the Teodoro Alonzo Elementary School in Project 4.

Disgruntled parents do not appreciate that their elementary kids were herded in the hundreds on the grounds of the public school as a "welcoming party" for the newly elected congressman. He even attracted kids to mill around him for petty games with much pettier cash prizes.

Will he be answerable if any of these kids contract COVID-19? Most likely not.

* * *

SHORTBURSTS. For comments or reactions, email fringline@gmail.com or tweet @SideView. Read current and past issues of this column at TEMPO begins at 40



Zero tariff on e-vehicles

NEDA endorses draft EO for Marcos' approval

By BETHEENA V. UNITE

An executive order (EO) to enforce a zero-tariff policy on electric vehicles has been endorsed for the approval of President Marcos, National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said.

Balisacan revealed during a Palace briefing on Thursday, Nov. 24, that the executive order on tariff modification is up for President Marcos' approval and signing.

The move, he said, intends to reduce pollution in the country and address climate change.

"In particular, the EO will temporarily reduce the most favored nation (MFN) tariff rates to zero percent for five years on completely built up (CBU) units of certain EVs, except for hybrid-type EVs," Balisacan said.

The EO also seeks to implement tariff modification on certain parts

and components of EVs from five percent to one percent for five years.

It will be reviewed after one year, the NEDA chief said, to assess its impact on the development of the EV industry ecosystem.

According to Balisacan, the endorsed EO modifying tariff rates covers e-vehicles (EVs), such as passenger cars, buses, mini-buses, vans, trucks, motorcycles, tricycles, scooters, and bicycles, including EV parts and components.

Aside from addressing environmental concerns, the move also aims to encourage consumers to consider acquiring EVs, improve energy security by reducing dependence on imported fuel, and promote the development of the EV industry ecosystem. ▶7

Zero tariff on e-vehicles 1◀

"We want to encourage the use of e-vehicles because that will address pollution issues and our adaptation to climate change and we believe that's the future," he said.

"But more importantly, we want to be part of the value chain globally in this drive to get to this new industry, new growth drivers and hopefully we develop our own industries and this reduction of tariff is part of that building up ecosystem," he added.

The NEDA official said tariff modifications on e-vehicles have been enforced over the years, from 30 percent down to seven percent to five percent.

Traditional jeepney phaseout?

Asked whether the move also aims

to further the shift from traditional jeepneys to e-vehicles, Balisacan said it is not the main objective, but it will eventually lead to that.

"Hindi naman sa pagpe-phase out (It's not about phaseout), but eventually this technology, these EVs become more popular and as prices for these vehicles become more competitive, eventually people will switch to these EVs," he said. "As of now, as you may know, the costs are still quite high but technology is developing rapidly and this cost, including the battery, are going down."

Once the EO is signed, the zero-tariff policy will be implemented. But Balisacan did not disclose when the President is expected to sign it.



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DATE

Pinatubo Lake and Occam's Razor

THE
Active
Mount
Pinatubo
volcano
is located



LABOR
MATTERS

**RUBEN
D. TORRES**

in the mountain range of Zambales. It erupted in June 1991 after more than 600 years of dormancy as many volcanologists and geologists tell us. Its geological history was relatively unknown until it became active and eventually erupted. **>TorresA11**

■ TORRES FROM A1

Pinatubo Lake and Occam's Razor

The massive eruption of Pinatubo is considered to be "the second largest terrestrial eruption of the 20th century, after the 1912 eruption of Novarupta in Alaska. Mount Pinatubo emitted 10 billion tons of lahar and 20 million tons of sulfuric acid (CO₂) depositing minerals and toxic metals into the environment."

Pinatubo, during its week-long eruption, deposited an enormous amount of lahar, which phenomenon President Corazon Aquino considered then as a bane. Now it is a boon to the economy of Central Luzon as the lahar sand emitted by the volcano is being quarried for use in construction and reclamation projects. Many politicians and business people have become rich because of lahar. Secretly, I surmise, they thank Mount Pinatubo for the bounty.

Another significant consequence of the eruption was the formation of the summit lake. The newly formed lake is located on the Botolan side of the volcano. This lake's depth is estimated to be 115 meters. The water catchment area is around 5 square kilometers. The primary outflow of water from the lake is the Bucao River in my hometown of Botolan, Zambales.

the country has excellent geologic and civil engineers who can design and construct the outflow channel.

Eventually, the head of Phivolcs, Dr. Raymundo Punongbahan, and the DPWH engineers agreed to consider my proposed solution. The government dug a 5-meter wide channel from the edge of the volcano's crater, which drained a quarter of the lake's water and directed the water flow to the Bucao River.

When the rains came and the final breach was to be done, the governor of Zambales Vicente Magsaysay, the mayor of Botolan, myself, and other local government officials waited for the expected huge flow of water in the Bucao River. For the three hours that we were on top of the Bucao bridge, we did not see any significant increase in water flowing through the river despite the warnings of the Phivolcs. The governor had to call off the mass evacuation of residents living near the river.

Apparently, the plan for a controlled flow of water from the lake volcano worked. Even then President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo was elated that the feared flooding of Botolan did not happen. Addressing the Zambales government officials at the provincial capitol building, President Arroyo thanked me for the proposal to dig an outflow channel of the waters of the lake.

In early 2001, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) estimated that in the coming rainy season, the accumulated rainwater in the lake would overflow its rim and would result in flooding of the town of Botolan with flood waters reaching two meters. There was also the imminent danger of the volcano's caldera collapsing due to the pressure of the accumulated water which would cause enormous loss of lives and property in my town.

For an appropriate disclosure, in 2001, I was the congressman of the second district of Zambales. I was invited to attend a meeting of volcanologists and engineers and briefed on the dangers to my town and on the proposed solution of installing a huge water pump on top of the volcano for a controlled draining operation at the onset of the rainy season. I thought this would cost millions of pesos to purchase the machinery, as well as operate and maintain.

I suggested that instead of the proposed huge water pump, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) should consider digging a channel wide enough to relieve the lake of water in a controlled manner. The well-known volcanologist Dr. Kevin Rodolfo who was the proponent of the water pump proposal told us that this was never done before. I argued that if my proposal to create a channel before the rains come was never done before, it doesn't mean it could not be done. It was just an engineering problem, and

From 2001 to the present or a span of more than two decades, the residents of Botolan, Zambales, no longer have to worry about massive flooding due to the breaching of the volcano lake's rim. The national government did not have to spend money to import, maintain and operate water pumps to reduce the water in the lake. Moreover, digging the 5-meter water channel provided employment, albeit on a short-term basis, to indigenous people who have returned to resettle at the foot of the volcano.

It is said that a simple theory or solution to a complex problem "when everything else seems equal is better than a complicated one." This is known as Occam's Razor. This maxim was named after William of Ockham.

Occam's Razor is also known as "the law of economy or law of parsimony." According to this famous logician and philosopher, "plurality should not be posited without necessity. The principle gives precedence to the simplicity of two competing theories, the simpler explanation [or solution] of an entity is to be preferred."

My proposal to solve the accumulation of water in the Pinatubo lake and the feared collapse of its rim is my humble interpretation and application of Occam's Razor. Now, nobody talks of danger of flooding due to a sudden massive release of water accumulated in the Pinatubo lake.



editorial

79-25-22

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DATE

Defending PHL's territorial integrity

AT a special summit held virtually on November 22, 2021 between leaders of China and Asean to commemorate 30 years of dialogue relations, Chinese President Xi Jinping assured Southeast Asian leaders that China does not seek hegemony and will not bully its smaller neighbors.

It was a game of duplicity. Xi was paying lip service to the idea because a week before the online event, two Philippine boats headed for Ayungin Shoal with food supplies for our military forces there were blocked by Chinese Coast Guard vessels, which blasted the Philippine ships with water.

President Duterte took the opportunity at the virtual summit to condemn the act: "We abhor the recent event in the Ayungin Shoal and view with grave concern other similar developments," he said, adding that the episode "does not speak well of the relations between our nations and our partnership."

From the Associated Press: "The Chinese coast guard forcibly seized floating debris the Philippine Navy was towing to its island in another confrontation in the disputed South China Sea, a Philippine military commander said Monday. The debris appeared to be from a Chinese rocket launch. The Chinese vessel twice blocked the Philippine naval boat before seizing the debris it was towing Sunday off Philippine-occupied Thitu Island (Pag-asa Island), Vice Admiral Alberto Carlos said Monday. He said no one was injured in the incident."

With this brazen act of seizing objects in the possession of another nation's military, China wants to show how it can intimidate and bully small nations like the Philippines, which can't match its military might.

The Philippines on Thursday issued a diplomatic note to China seeking explanation on a South China Sea incident where the Chinese Coast Guard "forcefully retrieved" a suspected rocket debris being towed by the Philippine Navy near Pag-asa Island. The Department of Foreign Affairs wants China to clarify what happened between the Philippine Navy and the Chinese Coast Guard in waters off Pag-asa Island on November 20, said DFA spokesperson Ma. Teresita Daza in a statement.

From the Associated Press: "Vice President Kamala Harris urged countries on Tuesday to stand up for territorial integrity and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, which has been challenged by China, and said Washington would press an international campaign against "irresponsible behavior" in the disputed waters. Harris did not cite China by name but was obviously referring to Beijing when she underscored America's support to treaty ally the Philippines in the face of intimidation and coercion in the South China Sea."

"We must stand up for principles such as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, unimpeded lawful commerce, the peaceful resolution of disputes," Harris said. "We will continue to rally our allies and partners against unlawful and irresponsible behavior. When the international rules-based order is threatened somewhere, it is threatened everywhere," she said.

Harris reaffirmed Washington's commitment to defend the Philippines under a 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty that obligates the allies to help defend either side that comes under attack. "An armed attack on the Philippines armed forces, public vessels, or aircraft in the South China Sea would invoke US Mutual Defense commitments," Harris told President Marcos. "And that is an unwavering commitment that we have to the Philippines."

China is a signatory in the United Nations Law of the Sea Treaty. But it continues to breach the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. On January 22, 2013, the Philippines instituted arbitral proceedings against China in a dispute concerning their respective maritime entitlements and the legality of Chinese activities in the South China Sea. China refused to participate in the arbitral proceedings. On July 12, 2016, the Arbitral Tribunal in the South China Sea Arbitration issued a unanimous award largely favorable to the Philippines.

China's vast territorial claims on historical grounds in the South China Sea have been invalidated. Still, China wants to reach global superpower status, and it is happy to bully its way into this dream. It shows no respect for the Philippine Navy. To defend its territorial integrity, the Philippines needs all the support it can get from the community of nations. It's time to ask China to respect international law.



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

Malaya Business Insight



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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES
CALACA

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office at Calaca, Batangas will accept oral or written bids not later than Dec. 16, 2022 on 10:00 AM for the lease for Industrial Port purposes of the tract of land herein below described:

Location : Brgy. Puting Bato West, Calaca, Batangas
Description : Miscellaneous Lease Application No. 041007-6-A
Area : 20,000 sqm.
Applied for by : Calaca Industrial Seaport Corp.
represented by Mr. Chryst Alfontus V. Damuy

The right to lease the land will be awarded to the person offering the highest annual rental, which shall not be less than three per centum (3%) of the value of land plus one per centum (1%) of the value of the proposed and / or existing improvements. In order that a person may be entitled to participate in a bidding, he must be a qualified public land applicant, and must, before the commencement of the same, make a deposit of equivalent to three (3) months rental. Only deposit in cash, money order treasury warrant, certified checks, cashier's check or manager's check can be accepted. A person bidding in representation of another may do so under a duly executed power of attorney. During the bidding, the bidder has to make an additional deposit every time his bid is raised, to complete the three (3) months rental, otherwise, such bid as raised shall not be accepted. The right is reserved to reject any or all bids.

Date _____

ISAGANI Q. AMATORIO
CENRO Officer



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES
CALACA

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Location : Brgy. Puting Bato, Calaca, Batangas
Description : Miscellaneous Lease Application No. 041007-6
Area : 9,831 sqm.
Applied for by : Calaca Industrial Seaport Corp.
represented by Mr. Ramson E. Llanto

The right to lease the land will be awarded to the person offering the highest annual rental, which shall not be less than three per centum (3%) of the value of land plus one per centum (1%) of the value of the proposed and / or existing improvements. In order that a person may be entitled to participate in a bidding, he must be a qualified public land applicant, and must, before the commencement of the same, make a deposit of equivalent to three (3) months rental. Only deposit in cash, money order treasury warrant, certified checks, cashier's check or manager's check can be accepted. A person bidding in representation of another may do so under a duly executed power of attorney. During the bidding, the bidder has to make an additional deposit every time his bid is raised, to complete the three (3) months rental, otherwise, such bid as raised shall not be accepted. The right is reserved to reject any or all bids.

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