

03 December 2022, Saturday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

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# Stronger Asean ties eyed for 'green cities'

BY BELLA CARIASO

**T**HE Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR) said that the recently concluded regional research and development (R&D) conference will boost the partnership among Southeast Asian countries in pushing for the development of urban parks and green cities across the region.

DENR Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau Director Maria Lourdes Ferrer said the "R&D Conference on Urban Parks and Green Cities: A Sustainable Future in Southeast Asia" in Manila brought together R&D specialists from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) to discuss the future of urban parks and green cities in the region amid the threats of climate change and other environmental issues.

Ferrer added that the research papers presented showed that metropolitan parks and green spaces were declining due to rapid urbanization.

"Metropolitan parks and green spaces are declining and are victims of mismanagement and overexploitation thereby placing environmental challenges and livability risks," Ferrer said.

Ferrer expressed hope the conference was able to stimulate new and stronger partnerships among Asean member countries for improved strategies, measures and policies to address environmental

challenges faced by urban parks and green spaces.

"Through this scientific gathering, we have now started our partnership in our effort to help mitigate the effects not only of climate change but also of other environmental issues and concerns to the urban ecosystem in particular," Ferrer added.

## Science-based approach

Ferrer added that the conference was in line with Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga's directives to adopt science-based adaptation strategies in combating the national and local effects of climate change.

At least 75 research works written by local and international experts were presented that focused on green and resilient urban communities, urban biodiversity, ecosystem and economics, management and impact of urban parks, and urban governance and policies of greener cities.

"We have shared a wealth of scientific information in this conference, and it is part of our responsibility as researchers and scientists to communicate these to those who could join hands with us in creating lasting change. These may be the national government policymakers, the local government units, even the communities," Ferrer said.

Among the research works presented were studies from different urban parks and cities in Southeast Asia on the evaluation of ecosystem services, risk reduction planning and management, and public value and roles of urban parks.

Presentations also include the sustainability of water and sanitation, assessment of flora and fauna in urban areas, landscape restoration in urban parks, and policy review, formulation and institutional arrangement.

Conference participants were introduced to new research methodologies from each other's works, stirring inspiration to replicate the studies and adapt them locally in their countries.

The conference was attended by participants from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam and the Philippines.

The said initiative supports the United Nations' 11th sustainable development goal to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Korean Air (KAL) has taken

delivery of its first A321 neo, becoming a new operator of the best-selling A320 series.

KAL has so far ordered 30 A321 neo aircraft. Powered by Pratt & Whitney GTF engines, the A321neo brings a 25-percent reduction in fuel consumption and emissions per seat compared with previous generation aircraft. It also features the new Airbus Airspace cabin, bringing premium widebody features to the single aisle market.

"Korean Air becomes the first airline in Asia to take delivery of an A321 neo with the complete Airspace cabin. This features new lighting and ambiance systems, larger overhead bins and full connectivity throughout, giving passengers the highest levels of in-flight comfort. The Airspace cabin also offers hygienic space and antimicrobial surfaces in all lavatories," Airbus said in a statement.

For its A321 neo fleet, KAL has specified a high comfort two-class layout, with eight full-flat seats in Business Class and 174 in Economy.

KAL is Airbus' longest standing customer from outside Europe, making its first order in 1974. The airline's fleet currently includes 50 Airbus aircraft, comprising the A220, A330 and A380. In the single aisle segment, the A321neo will complement the A220 fleet at KAL, enabling maximum operational flexibility.

At the end of October 2022, the A320 neo series had received over 8,500 orders from over 130 customers worldwide.





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## More sustainable dev't of urban parks seen

A MORE sustainable development and management of urban parks and green cities across Southeast Asia is seen following the recently concluded regional research and development (R&D) conference held in Manila.

Director Maria Lourdes G. Ferrer of Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) expressed hope the conference was able to stim-

ulate new and stronger partnerships among ASEAN member countries for improved strategies, measures and policies to address environmental challenges faced by urban parks and green spaces.

The ERDB-hosted "R&D Conference on Urban Parks and Green Cities: A Sustainable Future in Southeast Asia," which was held from October 11 to 13 in Manila, brought together R&D specialists from the Association of Southeast

Asian Nations (ASEAN) to discuss the future of urban parks and green cities in the region amid the threats of climate change and other environmental issues.

The research papers presented bared that due to rapid urbanization, metropolitan parks and green spaces are declining and are victims of mismanagement and overexploitation thereby placing environmental challenges and liveability risks.

"Through this scientific gathering, we have now

started our partnership in our effort to help mitigate the effects not only of climate change but also of other environmental issues and concerns to the urban ecosystem in particular," Ferrer said.

Ferrer said the conference was in line with DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga's directives to adopt science-based adaptation strategies in combating national and local effects of climate change.

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## MORE SUSTAINABLE

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Seventy-five research works written by local and international experts were presented which focused on Green and Resilient Urban Communities, Urban Biodiversity, Ecosystem and Economics, Management and Impact of Urban Parks, and Urban Governance and Policies of Greener Cities.

"We have shared a wealth of scientific information in this conference, and it is part of our responsibility as researchers and scientists to communicate these to those who could join hands with us in creating lasting change. These may be the national government policymakers, the local government units, even the communities," Ferrer said.

Among the research works presented were studies from different urban parks and cities in Southeast Asia on the evaluation of ecosystem ser-

vices, risk reduction planning and management, and public value and roles of urban parks.

Presentations also include the sustainability of water and sanitation, assessment of flora and fauna in urban areas, landscape restoration in urban parks, and policy review, formulation and institutional arrangement.

The conference participants were introduced to new research methodologies from each other's works, stirring inspiration to replicate the studies and adapt them locally in their countries.

Ferrer said the ERDB

aims to gather the experiences and studies from other ASEAN countries and determine strategies that can be used for policymaking and environmental programs for the Philippines.

The conference was attended by participants from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

The said initiative supports the United Nations' 11th sustainable development goal to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.



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## BoC foils bid to smuggle spiders from Vietnam

BUREAU of Customs (BoC) agents at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) have seized a shipment of 23 smuggled tarantulas at the Central Mail Exchange Center in Pasay City.

The parcel came from Hanoi, Vietnam and consigned to a claimant in Makati City, was declared as "Snacks and other Foodstuffs." When examined, 23 tarantulas were discovered concealed in plastic containers.

The arachnids were turned over to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for monitoring and safekeeping.

The importer will be charged with violation of the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act.

Port of NAIA district collector Carmelita Talusan said the Bureau of Customs supports the initiatives of the government in upholding the conservation and protection of wildlife, thus prohibiting wildlife smuggling.

"Together with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Port upholds wildlife protection and its conservation initiatives," she said.

Two months ago, the Customs bureau and the DENR won legal cases against the owners of smuggled wildlife species from Poland and Malaysia.

**Joel E. Zurbano**





## Bamboo planting best antidote to mining flak

By **CORY MARTINEZ**

**TAX incentives must be granted to the investments of the mining sector in large scale bamboo plantations that will help boost watershed conservation and disaster risk reduction.**

This is the appeal of the bamboo propagation and mining sector advocates from the Junction Ridge Resources Development Corp. (JRRDC) and the Kilusang 5K (Kawayan: Kalikasan, Kabuhayan, Kaunlaran, Kinabukasan) to the government saying that bamboo planting will be the best antidote to pervading criticisms thrown on mining.

The groups said that granting them the tax incentives will also result to the generation of as much \$3-billion in long term revenue.

Banker and mining leader Isidro C. Alcantara Jr. of JRRDC said bamboo plantations in mining areas can generate huge revenue that can even equal the country's gold, copper, and nickel revenue.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported in November 2020 that the mining and quarrying sector generated P189.9 billion (\$3.45 billion) revenue.

"To understand why we should concentrate on bamboo, it can generate \$3 billion or 10% of China's (bamboo revenue). It can equal the mining industry's out-

put of gold, copper, and nickel," said Isidro.

Alcantara was chairman of Marcventures Holdings Inc. (Marcventures Mining parent firm) prior to his retirement. Its mining operation in Surigao del Sur has so far grown 30,875 bamboo plants in the area, pioneering the effort in mining.

He added that the Philippines can earn \$3 billion revenue if only at least 10% of such China industry (\$35 billion) is created.

At an estimated area of around 400,000 hectares, this is less than 10% of China's bamboo area of seven million hectares.

"This is doable. We have so much land to make large scale bamboo plantations," said Alcantara.

He cited the country's 5.59 million hectares of arable land. This is only 4.4% of the country's nine million hectares of mineralized land based on Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB-Department of Environment and Natural Resources) data.

Kilusang 5K Foundation Chairman Deogracias Victor B. Savellano, on the other hand, said that bamboo is one of the best crops for land restoration.

Savellano explained that bamboo plants are the best tools for fighting climate change as it releases 35% more oxygen than other trees. Bamboo plants sequester 12 metric tons of carbon per hectare annually.

"Bamboo is one of the

best crops for land restoration especially in mined-out areas," Savellano added.

It is President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr himself who said during the United Nations General Assembly that climate change preparedness is a priority of his administration, he stressed.

"Bamboo planting in mining areas has been required by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) since 2020 to plant bamboo to 20% of their declared mining area," said Savellano.

Meanwhile, Kilusang 5K Foundation Executive Director Butch Madarang said a "middleground" can be achieved between mining and environment advocates. Bamboo planting in mining areas plays a significant role in balancing economic gains and environmental protection.

"Environmental degradation in abandoned mines leave land barren and with permanent scars in the natural landscape. (But) a middleground can be achieved as bamboo restores lands, and it is a ticket to our poverty reduction," said Madarang.

Alcantara, meanwhile, said that among the incentives that may be granted mining companies are tax credits for the investment amount, special tax rate of 5% (under CREATE-Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives Law), and limited term income tax holiday starting on the sixth year onwards.



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Climate reparations  
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gotiators in the recently concluded COP27 (Conference of the Parties) in Egypt are probably congratulating themselves for having achieved a breakthrough in the long-stalled negotiations between developed and developing countries on the issue of climate reparations.

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## MAKABENTA FROM A1

# Climate reparations fund exposes travesty of UN's climate agenda

At the end of the summit on November 20, the countries reached agreement on the creation of a loss and damage fund to aid poor countries in coping with and mitigating the effects of extreme weather and climate change on their countries and economies.

The prospect of partaking in reparations is partly why many developing countries, including the Philippines, sheepishly support the UN's climate program and uncritically accept its climate change dogma and other nostrums.

This delusion will soon be exploded, however, when COP gets down to the business of determining who will get what and how much from the reparations fund.

Alas and alack, it turns out that the world's biggest climate polluter, China, could maneuver to claim a huge slice of the loot, with the assistance and blessing no less of the United Nations and its secretary-general, Antonio Guterres.

The *Washington Post* has blown the lid off this scandalous situation in a report published on Nov. 23, 2022, "How China, the world's top climate polluter, avoids paying for the damage."

### China still a developing country

The analysis was written by Maxine Joselow with research assistance from Vanessa Montalbano. They reported as follows:

"The UN still considers China, now the world's second-largest economy and biggest annual polluter, a developing country.

In 1992, the United Nations classified China as a developing country, as hundreds of millions of its citizens lived in poverty.

A lot has changed since 1992: China is now the world's second-largest economy and the biggest annual emitter of planet-warming greenhouse gases. Average Chinese today are 34 times richer and nearly four times more polluting.

But the classification has stayed the same for the past three decades, frustrating diplomats from developed nations who say it has allowed Beijing to avoid paying its fair share to help poor countries cope with the ravages of climate change.

The debate over what China owes to countries that are least responsible for global warming — but most harmed by its effects — has dramatically intensified in the wake of the recent UN Climate Change Conference in Egypt.

At the end of the two-week summit, known as COP 27, negotiators from nearly 200 nations agreed to establish a fund to compensate vulnerable countries for the costs of addressing rising seas, stronger storms and other effects of a warming world. Analysts say it is unlikely that China will pay into the fund despite its rapidly rising contribution to the greenhouse gases heating the planet.

"The facts are clear: China is the largest emitter in the world now," said Li Shuo, a senior policy adviser at Greenpeace East Asia. "So it is a very valid question to talk about growing responsibility from China on the international stage."

The question is a politically sensitive one. Beijing policymakers bristle at the suggestion that China should be considered a developed nation, pointing to pockets of extreme poverty that persist across the country. They also highlight the obligations of the United States, which has pumped more greenhouse





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gases into the atmosphere than any other nation in history, even as China surpasses America in terms of annual carbon dioxide emissions.

"Developed countries, including the United States, must shoulder more responsibilities," Liu Pengyu, a spokesman for the Chinese embassy in Washington, said in an email. "This is not moral but with reason. From mid-18th century to 1950, developed countries accounted for 95 percent of all the carbon dioxide released."

Liu added that developed countries have still not followed through on their 2009 pledge to provide \$100 billion annually to help developing countries transition to greener economies and adapt to mounting climate disasters. In 2020, rich countries fell nearly \$20 billion short of what they had promised.

### 'A red line for China'

Chinese officials have not officially said whether they will contribute to the "loss and damage" fund. When asked about the issue at COP 27, Chinese climate envoy Xie Zhenhua said: "China strongly supports the claims of developing and vulnerable countries for 'loss and damage.' China is also a developing country, and this year climate disasters have also brought huge losses to China. We sympathize with the suffering of developing countries and fully support their demands."

Xie added that China has already set aside 2 billion yuan (\$280 million) to help developing countries cut emissions and adapt to global warming through a separate South-South Climate Cooperation Fund, rather than through UN channels.

Analysts said it appears unlikely

that Beijing officials would send more climate aid overseas when they are under pressure at home to address an economic slowdown caused in part by China's strict "zero-Covid" policy and a property market downturn.

While American diplomats agreed to establish the "loss and damage" fund, reversing longstanding US resistance to the idea, there is no guarantee that Congress will appropriate the money. Last year, President Biden requested \$2.5 billion for international climate finance but secured just \$1 billion, and that was when Democrats controlled both chambers.

This year, Biden has asked for a record \$11.4 billion. But Republicans, who generally oppose climate aid, are poised to take control of the House in January, further dampening the prospects for the funding."

### Climate cult meets reparations lunacy

In a commentary in *The Washington Times* on Nov. 25, 2022, Tom Basile said the COP climax was a case of "the climate cult meeting reparations lunacy."

He said pointedly: "Nations are responsible for their own environmental conditions that affect the health of their citizens far more than any marginal rise in temperatures could do. The Biden administration, however, is now on record saying Americans should be held liable for smog, devastating droughts, crop failures and famine in developing nations."

The US and its allies need to reject this position forcefully or it will continue to weaken the West's ability to counter an ascendant communist China."

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**RECYCLABLES.** Workers bring in used light bulbs, car batteries, paint cans, electronic discards, and old air conditioners as companies in the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) take part in the two-day "11th Recyclables Collection Event (RCE)" organized by the SBMA yesterday. **Joseph Muego**





## WWF-PH supports EPR Law

**CONSERVATION** group World Wide Fund for Nature Philippines (WWF-Philippines) is releasing a white paper to help the Philippine government in the upcoming implementation of the Extended Producers Responsibility (EPR) Law.

After years of dialogues, the Extended Producers Responsibility Act of 2022 finally lapsed into law last July 23. Right after its passage, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) started multi-sectoral consultations to craft the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the EPR Law.

EPR is an environmental policy approach that emerged in the 1990s and is now increasingly recognized globally as a useful tool for accelerating the transition to sustainable waste management and a circular economy. This scheme encourages waste reduction through the elimination of unnecessary packaging of products, the development of more environmentally friendly packaging design, and the recovery of plastic packaging from the trash in order to reuse or recycle them back into the

production process.

To successfully implement the EPR Law in the country, WWF-Philippines, through discussions with other stakeholders from different sectors, highlights several key points that the IRR must include and give clarity.

First, the IRR must clarify the role and powers of the Producer Responsibility Operator (PRO) as they will play a huge role in the implementation of the EPR system. Secondly, eco-modulation or the adjustment of the EPR fees based on the packaging of the product should be emphasized and ensure that the fees will support the improvement of our solid waste management system. Investments should also be made in research and development, technology sharing, and the reduction of plastic waste in the country.

The latest study showed that Filipinos each consume a yearly average of 20kgs of plastics, and 15.43kgs of it becomes total plastic waste. The country is also suffering from a very low plastic recycling rate of nine percent. The report further estimates that the

country leaks about 35 percent of plastic waste into the environment.

"We at WWF-Philippines commends the Philippine government for taking concrete actions against plastic pollution. Our work now is to implement together with all stakeholders and ensure that we are adopting a human-rights-based approach in doing so," said Czarina Constantino - Panopio, Program Manager for No Plastics in Nature initiative.