

09 December 2022, Friday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**



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# GOTCHA

JARIUS BONDOC



12-09-22

DATE

## Marikina watershed quarries: 2 cancelled, 2 next - Loyzaga

Two of four dubious rock quarries inside Marikina watershed have been cancelled. The two remaining are in the process of cancellation. Sec. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga announced this at the Senate hearing Nov. 16 on the 2023 budget of her Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources.

If so, this solves the foremost cause of deadly floods below: Marikina, San Mateo, Cainta, Antipolo, Quezon City, Pasig and San Juan, among others. Hundreds died in 2009 and 2020 when mud and heavy rains gushed onto thousands of homes, shops and vehicles there.

Marikina watershed in the mountains of Rizal province consists of forests, rivers and ponds. Although inoperational, quarries there host illegal woodcutters, slash-and-burn farmers, rich squatters and a dozen unlicensed swimming pool resorts. Forest denudation, hill levelling and river diversion trigger flash floods and mudslides.

On questioning by Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel III, Yulo-Loyzaga said she cancelled the quarries for being inoperational since 2004. Cancellation forecloses extension after the 2024 expiration of permits.

Only the DENR secretary can initiate the process and actually cancel Mineral Production Sharing Agreements over mines and quarries. Yulo-Loyzaga spoke under oath at the Senate.

For whatever reason, however, she has not publicized the signed cancellations. Unanswered to date is a Nov. 23 request from the Upper Marikina Watershed Coalition for copies of the cancellation notices and status reports.

UMWC secretariat head Anna Maria Eliza Reyes invoked transparency in writing Yulo-Loyzaga. Two groups of ethnic Dumagat Remontados also thanked Yulo-Loyzaga for closing the quarries that encroach on and desecrate ancestral lands and burial grounds.

Yulo-Loyzaga subalterns disavow the quarry cancellations. On Nov. 21, Mines and Geosciences Bureau Southern Tagalog regional director Dondi Sarmiento told Reyes: "Our records show there are no Orders of Cancellation for the MPSAs within the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape, [only] Orders of Suspension issued on May 25, 2022."

Goons of resort owners continue to harass park rangers of Masungi Georeserve that overlaps with the quarries. Authorized in 2017 by then-DENR head Gina Lopez, Masungi Georeserve Foundation rangers have been rewilding with indigenous trees 3,000 hectares of protected watershed.

Excerpts of the Nov. 16 Senate hearing:

Pimentel: I am just alarmed. Is it possible? May MPSA covering some 1,500 hectares in the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape and nearby protected areas? Could that theoretically happen or is that allowed by law? That an MPSA exists inside a protected area?

Yulo-Loyzaga: Mr. Senator, the information we have on record, the MPSAs were granted prior to the designation of the protected area. Right now po, two are already canceled and the other two are recommended for cancellation na po.

Pimentel: So apat lang po lahat yan?

Yulo-Loyzaga: Yes po.

Pimentel: Naninigurado lang po ako. So two cancelled. When you say cancelled, effectively cancelled - talagang no more activity?

Yulo-Loyzaga: Cancelled na po.

Pimentel: And two for cancellation. Anong timetable natin dito?

Yulo-Loyzaga: Sir, there is a three-letter notice and a 90-day period before it finally takes effect.

Pimentel: More or less, can you give me the month and year they have effectivity?

Yulo-Loyzaga: The recommendation for cancellation was two weeks ago. So there's a 90-day period from then before effectivity.

Pimentel: Sabay sila?

Yulo-Loyzaga: Yes.

Pimentel: So these will be cancellations for cause or these will be cancellations which will be contested by the holders of the MPSAs?

Yulo-Loyzaga: For cause po.

Pimentel: And then the two cancelled, did they accept the cancellations?

Yulo-Loyzaga: The information we have on record is that the two that were cancelled never operated, did not operate.

Pimentel: So that was easy for you. Dito tayo sa more difficult. These two that are about to be cancelled, operated?

Yulo-Loyzaga: The remaining two have not operated since 2004.

Pimentel: OK so basta ang mangyayari, all the four will be formally and officially cancelled. Therefore after the effectivity, we can say that there is no more MPSA inside the protected area of the Upper Marikina River Basin. That's a fact?

Yulo-Loyzaga: Yes sir.

Catch Sapul radio show, Saturdays, 8 to 10 a.m., dwIZ (882-AM).

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## Mining industry sparkles, to end year on high note

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sees a promising mining industry performance, with output expected to end on a high note by yearend.

DENR Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said the mining industry would have a "quite positive" performance this year.

"It's very promising, as you know, for this year. We don't have the figures for the final semester yet (but as early as) the first semester, we have noticed the uptick already in revenues," she said.

Latest data from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) showed the country's metallic mineral production remained upbeat as output expanded by nearly 30 percent as of end-September due to higher output and prices of nickel and gold.

Production value rose by 29.21 percent to P175.61 billion from January to September this year. This was driven by bullish metal prices of nickel ore and gold as well as higher output of gold, silver, chromite and iron ore during the period.

Prices of nickel ore jumped by 47.21 percent to \$11.97 per pound.

Gold also saw a 1.36 percent increase in prices from \$1,801.97 per troy ounce to \$1,826.47 year-on-year, based on the Bangko Sentral Ng Pilipinas (BSP) bulletin.

MGB data showed nickel ore together with its nickel

by-products - mixed nickel-cobalt sulfide (MNCS) and scandium oxalate - continued to have the largest share at 49.4 percent, contributing P86.94 billion.

Gold came in second, cornering 38.32 percent and raking in P67.45 billion.

Copper took the third spot, accounting for 10.79 percent, with a value of P19 billion.

The collective value of silver, chromite and iron ore contributed about 1.49 percent of the total at P2.63 billion - the first time that the joint values of these three commodities exceeded the P1-billion mark.

To sustain this growth, the DENR said it was looking closely at small-scale mining and the policies that need updating.

As of August, the country had 53 Minahang Bayan - 17 in Luzon, three in the Visayas and 33 in Mindanao.

DENR Undersecretary for policy, planning and international affairs and spokesperson Jonas Leones said small-scale mining is not accounted for in the MGB report.

"What we have is the large scale, but for the small scale, there's no accounting. There's also no social protection, and we don't see where their output is sold. The scheme now is Minahang Bayan so that we can regulate them, we can protect them, we can assist them," he said.

To develop small-scale mining, Loyzaga said the agency plans to adopt a big

Turn to B2

### Mining... From B1

brother, small brother approach.

"We're hoping that some of the large companies can help us with the social protection and environmental protection side for the small-scale miners," she said.

"These are where we need to concentrate [on] because, as you know, there are needs as far as the Minahang Bayan process is concerned, especially in the protection of our small-scale miners. There's also an aspect to environmental protection because as you know small-scale miners are only allowed to use certain artisanal tools," Loyzaga said.

The DENR is also working with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization to help shift away from the use of mercury in the small-scale mining areas.

The agency also cited the need for a collaboration and close cooperation with local government to further develop Minahang Bayan.

"We are very keen to actually expand the conversation with DILG, especially with their local chief executives because they are at the forefront of the Minahang Bayan practice," Loyzaga said.



## DENR: Metallic mineral production value promising

BY JED MACAPAGAL

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is optimistic the growth of the country's metallic mineral production value has been sustained this quarter.

"It's very promising... for this year. We don't have the figures for the final semester yet but in the first semester, we have noticed the uptick already in revenues. It's really a balancing act, we need to be able to enjoy these economic gains. It will also balance the environmental protection side for the mining industry," said DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga in a briefing in Pasay City on Wednesday.

The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) reported the country's metallic mineral production value jumped 29.21 percent in the first nine months of 2022 to P175.61 billion from P136.21 billion in the same period in 2021 pushed by higher metal prices of nickel ore and gold paired by increased mine output of gold, silver, chromite and iron ore.

The DENR is set to update the Small-Scale Mining Act by adopt-

ing "big brother, small brother approach." "We're hoping some of the large companies can help us with the social protection and environmental protection side for small-scale miners," Loyzaga said.

There are 53 Minahang Bayans that can possibly be subdivided into little plots where "different individual or small-scale miners can actually partake of the values...," she said.

A Minahang Bayan is a common area where small-scale miners are allowed to legally operate. Most of these are in the Cordillera Administrative Region and Davao Region.

Loyzaga said immediate concerns in Minahang Bayan include the protection of small-scale miners and environmental protection as small-scale miners are only allowed to use certain artisanal tools.

DENR Undersecretary Jonas Leone said policy improvements related to small-scale mining are needed as the sector's contribution and production are hard to account.

Leones added small-scale miners do not have social protection and an assured market and are not properly regulated and assisted by the government.



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PHILIPPINE DAILY  
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# Strong Q4 seen for mining sector

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**  
@jordeenelagare

A government official is expecting the Philippine mining sector to sustain its upbeat performance for the entire 2022 after remaining in positive territory as of end-September.

"It's very promising for this year. We don't have the figures for the final semester yet but in the first semester, we have noticed the uptick already in revenues," Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said in a chance interview. "It's

quite positive."

The value of metal production in the country has been on the upside since the beginning of 2022, implying its recovery from the inconsistencies in the rules governing the industry.

The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) earlier reported metallic production reached P48.61 billion in the first quarter, representing an expansion of 36.21 percent.

Then, in the first semester, the value of metal production surged by 39.42 percent to P112.66 billion.

Just this week, the MGB said local metallic mineral production grew by 29.21 percent to P175.61 billion.

For these reference periods, the sector's optimistic performance has been primarily attributed to high metal prices, coupled with rising metal production.

"Overall, there was a remarkable increase in the value of mineral commodities, year-on-year," the MGB said in a report released this week.

The MGB noted in the international scene, experts project metal prices to decline in the

fourth quarter of 2022 up to next year, "reflective of weaker global growth and concerns over a slowdown in China's demand due to its zero COVID policy and slowdown of its real estate sector."

"But still, experts went on to say that prices are expected to remain higher than their average over the past five years, which is a positive thing for our local mining industry," it added.

Back home, the government is banking on the potential of the mining sector to drive the country's economic growth through the declaration of more

Minahang Bayan or small-scale mining sites.

Identifying additional Minahang Bayan areas "is the government's strategy to first, effect an orderly, systematic, and ecologically balanced administration and disposition of small-scale mining areas," the MGB noted.

To date, the Philippines has declared 53 Minahang Bayan sites—17 in Luzon, three in Visayas and 33 in Mindanao.

For metallic minerals, commodities will be limited only to gold, silver and chromite, and shall have a term of two years, renew-

able for a similar period but not to exceed a total term of six years.

In line with President Marcos' directive, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is strengthening the regulatory framework governing the mining sector, specifically small-scale mining.

"We are looking very closely [into] this Small-Scale Mining Act and what needs to be done to update it," said Loyzaga in a briefing.

The government, she said, is putting a prime on small-scale mining to ensure their safety and protection. **INQ**



# Manila Standard



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## NAC ENVIRONMENTALISTS.

Nickel Asia Corp. environmental teams, with representatives from its subsidiaries, get together for the first time as a group in Surigao del Norte province to map their corporate direction for 2023 and to dissect and absorb the new environmental law issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources this year.

Department Administrative Order 2022-04 issued in March mandates all mining companies to incorporate the principles and processes of biodiversity assessment and ecological protection right before the start of actual mining operation and not only during rehabilitation proceedings that continue up to end of mine life.





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# SM Cares leads kick-off of National Bike Weekend in Pasay City



SM CARES TOGETHER WITH THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF PASAY CITY KICKED OFF THE NATIONAL BIKE WEEKEND AND THE FOUNDATION WEEK OF THE CITY LAST NOVEMBER 26 AT SM BY THE BAY IN THE MALL OF ASIA COMPLEX, PASAY CITY.

Hundreds of cyclists joined "Padyak Pasay: Moving Together Towards One Eco City," a fun bike ride around the Mall of Asia Complex as part of the festivities. The bike ride celebrated Pasay as an eco-city, as the local government endeavors to make environmental awareness a driving force to achieve greater growth and development for the city. Pasay City Mayor Hon. Eral Calixto-Rubiano opened the bike ride, together with City Councilors and representatives of SM Prime Holdings, Inc., SM Supermalls, the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and bike organizations such as Beesekleta For Every Juan.

"These celebrations are very important to us at SM Cares, because we believe that progress should be as sustainable as it is achievable. Proof of this is our advocacy to create a bicycle-friendly community for everyone, where we work with our local governments to make bike facilities more accessible—from bike lanes, to bike racks and bike repair stops in our various properties," Queenie Dizon-Rodulfo, SAVP for Mall Based Business Units and Operations Services of SM Supermalls said.

A Bike Safety Clinic taught children how to bike responsibly in the city by wearing safety gear and observing road signs.

Meanwhile, SM Cares also held a Bike Safety Clinic especially designed for Kids. Thirty children from Pasay together with their parents were educated about the meaning of various road Signages, hand signals, and were also instructed on how to properly wear safety equipment. The children received their personal helmets, elbow and knee pads from SM Cares to encourage them to have a lifelong affinity for biking. This event was supported by DOT, Decathlon Philippines, MKJ, Beesekleta for Every Juan and Tropang Women Bikers.

"We have been advocating road safety for our cyclists by partnering with



428 cyclists across Pasay City residents and partner organizations joined the bike ride which started and ended at SM by the BAY.



SM PadyaKabuhayan bicycle carts were granted to 4Ps beneficiaries, including technical business training and bike safety tips for vendors.



A Bike Safety Clinic taught children how to bike responsibly in the city by wearing safety gear and observing road signs.



the Department of Transportation and bicycle organizations to provide safety manuals and training. From adult cyclists and delivery riders, we are teaching our children to become responsible cyclists, too" Dizon-Rodulfo said.

The event also saw the launch of SM PadyaKabuhayan, a program that promotes sus-

tainable livelihood through sustainable mobility. The program provides a means of earning for families in need, many of them beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program or 4Ps. It also expands the benefits of bikes, from being more than an environmentally-friendly form of transportation to a sustainable source of income.

Beneficiaries of the program received bicycle food carts, comprehensive training on handling a business and road safety tips for bicycle vendors. The program was undertaken in partnership with Pasay City's Social Welfare Department, Kalye Negosyo, and DTL.

"SM Cares believes in working together with a multi-stake-

holder approach for our programs. We have always been about supporting communities, and we believe that social inclusion is vital in creating lasting change. Through this, we hope to help achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals 'SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities,' which underscores the importance of making cities

and settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable," said Dizon-Rodulfo.

National Bike Day, which is celebrated every fourth Sunday of November, is celebrated in line with Proclamation No. 1052—which was signed by former President Rodrigo Duterte in 2020—with the aim to promote the environmental benefits of using bicycles.

SM Cares is the Corporate Social Responsibility arm of SM Supermalls, with programs that support communities, promote social inclusion, and care for the environment. Aside from the creation of bike-friendly SM Malls, its advocacies include Programs for the Environment, Persons with Disabilities, Women & Breastfeeding Mothers, Children & Youth, and Senior Citizens.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT

WWW.SMSPRIME.COM/SMCARES



# Save the environment, minimize or terminate use of plastics

**“P**lastic pollution seriously endangers the ecosystem, especially bodies of water like rivers that are vital to fishermen’s livelihood.”

With this in mind, the House of Representatives passed on third and final reading this week House Bill No. 4102 that proposes to raise the ₱20 excise tax on single-use plastic bags by 400 percent. The bill defines single-use plastic bags as secondary level plastics made of synthetic or semi-synthetic organic polymer such as “ice,” “labo,” or “sando” bags, with or without handle, used as packaging for goods or products.

This is another step in the right direction to reduce plastic waste and help save the environment. It will likewise be a good complement to Republic Act No. 9003 (Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000) and Republic Act No. 11898 (Extended Producer Responsibility Act).

The environment problem is enormous, no doubt about it. In fact, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres amplified the magnitude of the global problem when he called on governments and multinational corporations to stop the “the orgy of destruction.”

“With our bottomless appetite for unchecked and unequal economic growth, humanity has become a weapon of mass extinction,” Guterres said ahead of the formal opening of biodiversity talks in Canada. “Our land, water, and air are poisoned by chemicals and pesticides, and choked with plastics.”

In pushing for House Bill 4102, Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, one of the authors, noted that the Philippines is the third largest contributor to plastic pollution. This is backed by a World Bank study that shows “a staggering 2.7 million tons of plastic waste are generated in the Philippines each year, and an estimated 20 percent

ends up in the ocean.”

With stiffer tax under this measure, together with the Extended Producer Responsibility Act, we express hope that this will discourage manufacturers from producing single-use plastic and instead come up with more environment-friendly packaging products in a bid to lessen plastic pollution that seriously impacts biodiversity and climate change.

As the product connotes, single-use plastic is used only once. The product doesn’t fully decompose and only breaks down into pieces, the process of which takes hundreds of years. And since it is produced from fossil fuels, the greenhouse gases it emits during production contributes to climate change.

And just to underscore the adverse effects of single-use plastic, American oceanographer and environmental activist Philippe Cousteau Jr. once said: “One of my big pet peeves is single-use plastic bags. I think it’s one of the stupidest ideas in the world.”

The single-use plastic bag bill is a good complement to the Extended Producer Responsibility Act, which requires obliged corporations—the brand owners and product manufacturers—to recover 80 percent of their plastic packaging wastes or face up to ₱20 million fine.

We commend our lawmakers for coming up with measures to address this global concern. Discouraging the production and use of single-use plastic bags may come with a stiff price as producing a more environment-friendly product may mean higher cost. But the higher price tag is pittance compared to its long-term beneficial effect on mankind. What is paramount is the preservation of the environment for the sake of survival.

Let humanity be an instrument of survival, instead of being a weapon of mass extinction.





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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS  
SINCE 1900  
**MANILA BULLETIN**  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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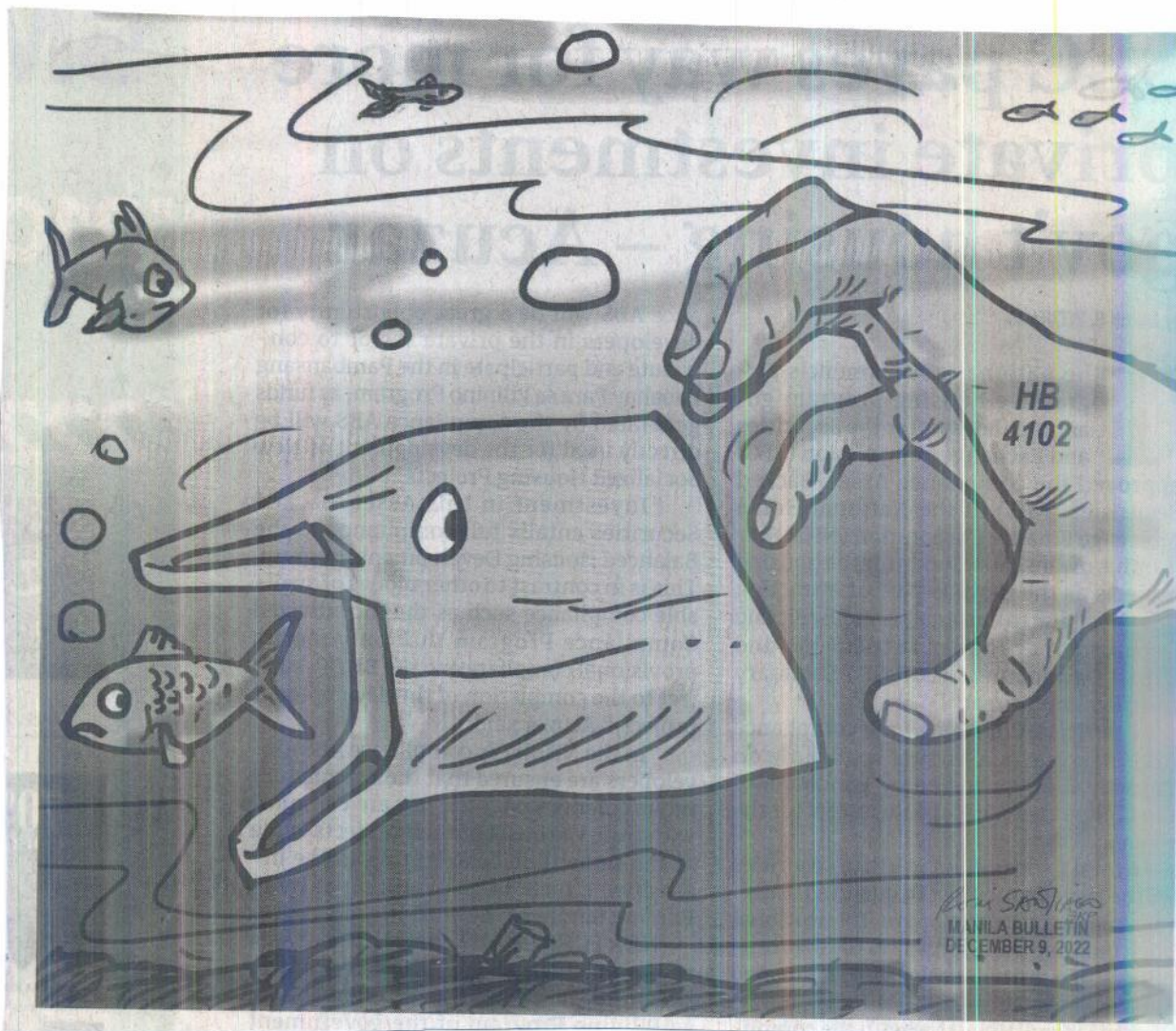
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USE OF PLASTICS"

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## EDITORIAL

### Save the environment, minimize or terminate use of plastics

"Plastic pollution seriously endangers the ecosystem, especially bodies of water like rivers that are vital to fishermen's livelihood."

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Founded October 1950

# The Manila Times

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## Egrets, cards — it's Christmas!

IT seems we are into pandemic revenge mode. Traffic is back and with a vengeance. Parties are proliferating. Shopping despite inflation goes on as though there is nothing to worry about. Yes, there are complaints about traditional media noche offerings being scarce or expensive, but it only means people are bent on getting them. One cannot forget that Christmas is upon us from the riot of lights and decorations in public places, buildings and churches. Sometimes it is overwhelming, other times it is an ordeal, many times it is just the normal end-of-year ritual.

For me, it is the end-of-year ritual and I look at what, for me, makes it familiar and at the same time novel.

Has anyone noticed the egrets that have come to our public spaces, usually those with water and trees and open fields? These graceful birds, extraordinarily thin, with long curved necks, yellow beaks, white feathers and gray feet appear from the Asian mainland and maybe farther off in the winter months. They are called Great Egrets (*Egretta Alba*). They have traveled from afar at approximately 25 miles an hour with wingspans that reach 5 feet. They can stand three feet tall when they extend their

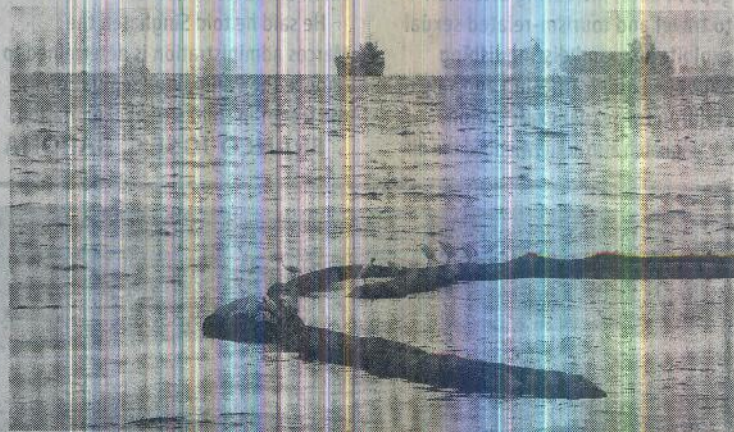


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MA. ISABEL  
ONGPIN

necks. Outside Metro Manila, in the rice fields and fishponds, they come in numbers at this time of year. They can be seen in the Candaba Swamp, or Batanes, or Palawan, or Ilocos Norte, they can be everywhere that welcomes them with open spaces and water. In Metro Manila, they come to the golf courses. One just sees white feathers on the move, usually walking though they do fly, of course. That is how they got here. In agricultural fields, they hang around watching the carabaos, the farmers at work, sometimes taking a view from the trees around them. Often one can see a tree full of white objects, those are the egrets hanging on them.

Long ago, they almost became extinct when feathers were a prized item for fashion. The egret's long white feathers caused them to be hunted down in droves. Fortunately in the early 1900s, enlightenment came to humans and laws were enacted to protect them. They are no longer



■ Egrets rest on top of floaters as dark clouds roll in Manila Bay near Roxas Boulevard on June 4, 2021. PHOTO BY J. GERARD SEGUIA

endangered, but are thriving species. It also helps that there is no meat worth having from their thin bodies.

In the golf courses, egrets watch the players struggling with their game noncommittally. Sometimes they make a gallery of watchers, four or six just walking about observing the game of golf, maybe trying to decipher what it is all about with mild curiosity. They do not intrude, they just observe. Then they go about their business. They are accepted almost as a comfort because they are here again.

Egrets are actually climate migrants, looking for a safe haven. There are animal migrants and human migrants.

The latter of which have increased as parts of the world stumble into chaos because of war, famine, climate change, unendurable hardship. Migrants get observed and judged, welcomed or not welcomed. The egret migrants elicit only curiosity and interest, not hostility. They are a sight to see, with behavior that attracts notice for being visitors and being birds.

Sometime before March they will disappear though one might take up residence in a place of its liking. But in general they leave for what we suppose is where they came from when things have turned more comfortable

► OngpinA5



## Egrets, cards — it's Christmas!

many distances from here.

Seeing them to me means the year has ended and we have our year-end visitors to contemplate as they contemplate us. It is a feeling of a cycle coming to a close. Time to review what the year has brought. Time to remember that the more things change the more they are the same.

It is also time for the Christmas card, a tradition that I hold on to for my friends and relatives far away. I belong to the generation before the electronic Christmas card that comes into your device, stays for a while and then disappears. I want a card to hold, to keep and to look up the next year and carry on from there. I want to see

an address, a stamp on an envelope and let the memories of who it comes from, where it originates and what is happening there flood back.

As for gifts, the simpler the better. In our class we came up with photos of student days and passed them around. They were gifts and they came in this season of remembrance and rever-

ence, of memories of past days, past experiences, past joys and sorrows. Some of our contemporaries have gone, some long gone, but they live within us for the memories they have left behind. We are what they were, we are what we are, all of us human beings, social animals, who relate to the past, present and future and

each other. It is this time more than ever that one should celebrate one's humanity and the gift of life. Welcome the egrets, do the Christmas cards.

There is much to worry about, but there is also hope that through goodwill and best effort we will overcome what causes our pain and grief, our distrust and unease

by better days. Everyone alive must be grateful for the gift of life, despite whatever negatives it may bring. It is worth celebrating because it is ultimately a gift, originating from the divine.

Egrets and Christmas cards have brought this on.

An early Merry Christmas to all.



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THE EXPONENTIAL GROWTH OF THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMY  
SINCE 1980  
**MANILA BULLETIN**  
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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## 185 exotic wildlife species rescued in Laguna – DENR

By DANIEL ESTACIO

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna – The Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG)-Laguna Provincial Field Unit rescued exotic wildlife species valued at ₱800,000 following a buy-bust operation in Sitio 4, Barangay Oogong, Santa Cruz, Laguna.

Police, assisted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Region 4-A-Enforcement Division (ED) and Licenses, Patents, and Deeds Division (LPDD),

recovered 185 exotic wildlife species, among them a ball python (*Python regius*), emperor scorpion (*Pandinus imperator*), and Mexican rose tarantula (*Aphonopelma Pallidum*).

These are classified as Appendix II in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Other non-CITES wildlife confiscated were a Leopard Gecko (*Eublepharis macularius*) and adult and juvenile Bearded Dragons (*Pogona vitticeps*).



PANDEMIC WOES SPUR WILDLIFE TRADE

# ADDED STRESS ON THE PHILIPPINE EAGLE—AND THEIR PROTECTORS

By **Erwin M. Mascariñas**  
and **Ryan D. Rosaura**  
@InqNational



**DAVAO CITY**—In March last year, a group of three Manobo tribesmen on their way to gather rattan in the uplands of Lingig, Surigao del Sur province, heard the cries of a huge bird caught in a trap for monitor lizards.

The hunters however demanded a P5,000 ransom for the bird, which sent one of the tribesmen, Cabungso-an councilman Jerry Cotic, back to the village to raise the money. The bird, which was released to the wild eight months later, turned out to be a Philippine Eagle, the critically endangered national bird.

In August 2020, another raptor was sold off in Gigaquit town, Surigao del Norte province. Ryan Orquina bought it from wildlife traders for P8,000, and contacted the Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF) to take the bird to its conservation facility in Davao City.

### Human persecution

These incidents are alarming, according to Dr. Jayson Ibañez, PEF's director for research and conservation, as they reduce the national bird into items of trade. He noted

that the pandemic-triggered economic hardship had driven people in communities near the forests to rely on timber poaching, wildlife hunting and slash-and-burn farming for survival, thus putting greater pressure on conservation work.

From March 2020 until March 2021, PEF had recorded and attended to 10 rescued eagles in Mindanao, of which five were returned to the wild. Seven of them had suffered human persecution: four were trapped, one hit by an improvised shotgun and two hunted down. Conservationists define human persecution as activities that threaten the species, such as shooting, hunting and deforestation. This prompted PEF during the pandemic to bolster its support for patrols by community volunteers to check on these unsustainable practices and protect the raptors.

In partnership with private and government agencies, PEF trained and provided support for at least 250 forest guards in communities hosting eagle nesting sites around Mt. Apo, and in the provinces of Bukidnon, Cotabato, Davao Oriental, Leyte and Southern Leyte.

In remote indigenous and local communities vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19, PEF provided emergency aid in exchange for their continued conservation work. In Arakan,

Cotabato, 28 families got food packs for gathering and donating 14,000 seedlings of endemic trees, which were later planted in barren lands close to an eagle nesting site. Four women's groups in various areas were also given small grants for emergency livelihood initiatives.

According to Ibañez, finding eagle pairs and protecting their families are integral to the raptor's conservation.

In 2020, amid pandemic travel restrictions, PEF field researchers documented four eagle pairs, bringing to 42 the number of known raptor couples in Mindanao: 14 in Bukidnon, 11 in Davao Oriental, 10 around Mt. Apo and the rest in parts of the Caraga region, Sarangani, Misamis and Zamboanga provinces. There is also a known pair in Luzon and three pairs in Samar.

### Financial challenges

PEF has mobilized volunteers to restore the forests in Davao City and Arakan, where raptors get shelter and food, and where they reproduce and nourish their offspring.

But the lockdowns have presented financial challenges to the foundation, as they crippled tourism in Davao City where PEF is both a conservation facility and an ecotourism site. Before the pandemic, some

200,000 tourists visit the center every year, with PEF earning from the entrance fee that has since been raised to P300 because of added tour activities.

At the height of the lockdowns, PEF lost P2 million in revenues.

According to PEF executive director Dennis Salvador, they currently operate on an annual budget of P30 million to P40 million, with the revenues from the center contributing a fourth of it, and the rest coming mainly from corporate and private grants and sponsorships.

Organized in 1987, PEF is "dedicated to saving the endangered Philippine Eagle and its rainforest habitat." The raptor is among the rarest in the world as it can only be found in the islands of Luzon, Samar, Leyte and Mindanao. The International Union for Conservation of Nature estimates that there are only 400 pairs left in the wild.

In 1992, the Davao facility successfully hatched the captive-bred eaglets Pag-asa (Hope) and Pagkakaisa (Unity), a breakthrough in eagle conservation. In December last year, the 29th chick was hatched.

Salvador said the goal was to see more eagles reproduce and thrive in the wild, which means biological research should also be supported. INQ



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PHILIPPINE DAILY  
BALANCED NEWS + FEARLESS VIEWS  
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# Masungi Foundation stands its ground for nature

Its park rangers have been facing threats, its officers on edge. The situation at the Rizal georeserve shows why the country is now deemed one of the world's most dangerous places for environmental defenders

The fight for the environment, the humane treatment of animals and the protection of endangered species could not be relaxed or downscaled just because cities and towns were paralyzed by lockdowns. From groups that share these objectives come stories of sustained, if not intensified campaigns even as the pandemic still raged. They include one company that used technology and its wide reach to organize and educate

By **Dempsey Reyes**  
@dempseyreysINQ



In September this year, Masungi Georeserve Foundation bagged the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Award, which honors change-makers and initiatives that drive transformative action around the world.

The UN award acknowledges the risks that the Masungi foundation has faced especially in 2022. Such dangers are replicated in other parts of the country, earning it the unenviable reputation of being one of the deadliest places for environmental defenders.

In February, seven Masungi park rangers were assaulted by a group of men believed to be working for resorts illegally constructed in the conservation area. While the park rangers were eating at a canteen, 30 men surrounded their vehicles, hurling a big rock and damaging one of them.

Two rangers were hospitalized after they were mugged. One of the attackers was identified by the foundation as the suspect in a shooting incident



**SELF-SUSTAINING** The Masungi Georeserve has become one of the largest collaborative reforestation efforts in the country using self-generated funds from geotourism. Through visits to the trails, the foundation is able to sustainably finance the conservation of the area. All these were achieved despite the risks faced by the staff, park rangers and officers from vested interests encroaching into the protected area. —MASUNGI GEORESERVE FOUNDATION/INQUIRER PHOTO

where other park rangers were targeted in July last year.

The mauling in February prompted the foundation to make yet another appeal to the government, urging the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to take a "proactive" stand and condemn the violence directed at the Masungi rangers. The DENR regional of-

ice in Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Rizal and Quezon), however, downplayed the incident and tried to turn the tables on the foundation by alleging that the rangers were carrying arms themselves.

The foundation's mandate to protect and conserve the 2,700-hectare land around the Masungi Georeserve is covered by its memorandum of agree-

ment (MOA) with the DENR, signed during the term of the late Gina López in 2017. The task would prove to be Herculean with the resort owners and their security contractors constantly testing the foundation's resolve and the DENR seemingly looking the other way.

In September, some 30 armed men, allegedly belonging to a se-

curity agency, encamped along the Marikina-Infanta Highway near the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape which is under the foundation's watch. Police, however, made no arrests despite seizing over a dozen firearms from that group. The authorities did not file any charges, while the DENR sounded "dismissive" of





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# MASUNGI FOUNDATION STANDS ITS GROUND FOR NATURE

**FROM F1**

what could have been a violent confrontation, according to Ann Dumaliang, one of the trustees of the foundation.

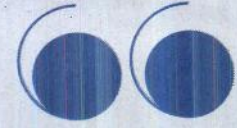
To assure the foundation members of their security, Interior Secretary Benhur Abalos later paid a visit to Masungi, bringing along officials from the Philippine National Police and the DENR.

"It's time for the government to act, so much has been lost and our lives are in danger," said Masungi foundation president Ben Dumaliang, Ann's father, venting out his frustration over the DENR's "negligence" despite the MOA they signed with the agency five years ago.

Despite those tense encounters this year, the foundation perseveres. "Because at the end of the day, despite the disinformation and efforts to undermine our work, we believe that it will speak for itself," said Billie Dumaliang, Ann's sister and fellow trustee.

The recent UN award was the 10th accolade received by the foundation for protecting the georeserve. Aside from earning international recognition, its work has also been acknowledged and validated by climate advocates around the world.

In November, Ann Dumaliang was invited to speak at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Egypt, where she again shared the foundation's



**The recent UN award was the 10th accolade received by the foundation for protecting the georeserve. Aside from earning international recognition, its work has also been acknowledged and validated by climate advocates around the world**

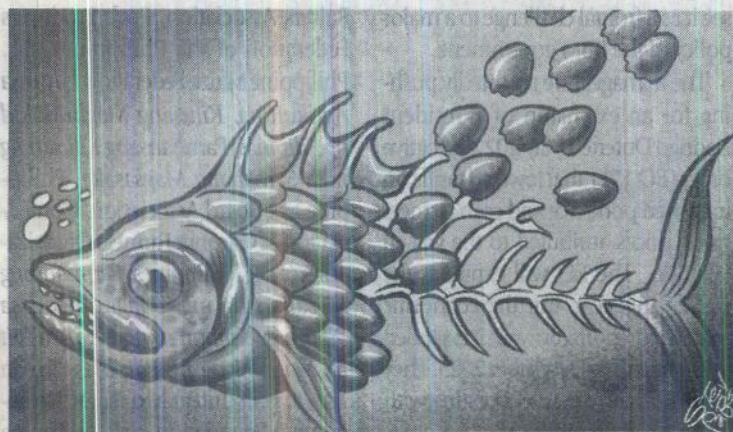
efforts to protect rainforests, especially the natural resources of the Masungi geopark.

Billie, for her part, voiced out the group's determination to face the continuing challenges head on.

"We won't back down. We are holding our ground quite literally," she said. "[Our efforts] may not be a hundred-percent successful but we are at least achieving baby steps in our work," she added. INQ



## Endangered fish, exploited children



Asians are known to be mainly fish eaters and this region of 10 countries which comprise the Asean, collectively contribute more than 20 percent of global fish production.

Among the top 20 countries in the world for fish production are Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines. According to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, "the Philippines ranks 8th among the top fish-producing countries in the world with a total production of 4.25 million metric tons of fish, crustaceans and aquatic plants including seaweeds."

Researches have indicated that the region's fishing industry is fast approaching critical levels. The fisheries sector is labor-intensive and the region is known for the exploitation of child labor in fisheries. This is the reason that the United States Department of Labor (US DoL) in cooperation with Asean, the region's workers' organizations represented by the Asean Trade Union Council (ATUC) and the Association of Asean Employers, recently launched in Bali, Indonesia, a multi-million dollar project called Addressing Labor Exploitation in Fishing in Asean (ALFA). This project aims to raise awareness among government member states, employers and workers of the nefarious practices in the industry, particularly the use of forced and child labor.

The ALFA project notes that "as global demand for fish and fish products has rapidly increased while catch are in constant decline, social and environmental issues began to emerge as common regional challenges. These issues entail, among others, overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and human rights concerns related to workers as well as the proliferation of forced labor and trafficking in persons."

It is also very important to look at the exploitative conditions in the fishing industry and the difficulties involved in the enforcement and monitoring of the minimum conditions of work aboard fishing vessels. It has been noted that the eight-hour labor law, the law on night work, overtime and rest days, and even the laws strictly prohibiting child labor and forced labor, are often not enforced.

In the Philippines, there is no lack of laws that prohibit forced and child labor. Foremost among the Philippine laws that address working conditions in the fishing industry is Republic Act 2531 entitled "An Act Providing for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Affording Protection for the Working Child." The Philippines has also ratified the ILO conventions on child and forced labor. This includes the 38 ILO Conventions, e.g., all fundamental conventions covered by the 1998 Declaration on the Principles and Rights at Work.

The Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE) prescribes



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18 years of age as the minimum age for employment aboard fishing vessels. This is in accord with International Labor Convention 182 which sets the minimum age requirement at 16 and 18 years if the "work is likely to jeopardize the health, safety or morals of young persons or if there is night work."

In fixing the minimum age at 18 years, the DoLE categorized work on board fishing vessels as hazardous.

The laws regulating the industry may be sufficient in terms of the minimum conditions of work in the fishing industry. However, what is severely deficient is the enforcement of these laws despite the fact that there are seven government agencies that are tasked by law to regulate the industry.

These agencies are the DoLE, Department of Transportation and Communications, Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Maritime Industry Authority (Marina), Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority.

While these agencies do not overlap in terms of mandate, there is a need to coordinate their activities. The formulation of policies, rules and regulations of working conditions is primarily given by law to the DoLE. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources is mainly concerned with environmental matters that are necessarily impacted by the fishing industry. In doing so, it has the power to inspect the fishing vessels. The PCG safeguards the territorial integrity of the country. It has the authority to board ships. The Marina in turn, registers all sea vessels. The Philippine Ports Authority regulates the use of ports in the country.

The ALFA project of the US DoL and Asean intends to see whether the laws and regulations in each Asean member state proscribing child and forced labor are sufficient in scope and are effectively implemented. ALFA is noteworthy because it is tripartite: it involves the industry's stakeholders, namely the government, employers and workers, in addressing the exploitative working conditions in the Asean fishing industry.

For coordinative and collaborative purposes, these seven agencies entered into a memorandum of agreement in January 2015. In the agreement and in accordance with each agency's legal mandate, they have clearly delineated their respective responsibilities.

It is hoped that this activity will improve the laws and regulations on conditions of work and their implementation in all the 10 member states of Asean. The ATUC, of which I am currently the general-secretary, pledges its full cooperation in the implementation of the objectives of ALFA.

For after all, labor matters.

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## Editorial

### The heavy yoke of climate injustice

**A**T a climate summit in Canada earlier this week, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres fired a stinging rebuke at multinational corporations for turning the world's ecosystems into "playthings of profit."

"With our bottomless appetite for unchecked and unequal economic growth, humanity has become a weapon of mass extinction," Guterres said.

The UN chief, who has made climate change a personal crusade, has reason to be piqued. While there has been some progress in creating a road map for climate action, international efforts to cut planet-heating emissions continue to founder.

Addressing last month's COP27 summit in Egypt, Guterres warned world leaders that humanity has two choices: work together to fight global warming or commit "collective suicide."

The threat of a slow extermination is all too real: Ecosystem degradation is expected to result in \$3 trillion in economic losses annually from 2030, putting heavy pressure on global GDP.

The world's biggest economies may consider the figure a trifle. But for the countries that are in deep financial straits, it is a life-and-death struggle.

To be fair, there have been important developments in climate action this year. At the COP27, a milestone agreement was made to establish a loss and damage fund to help vulnerable countries cope with the onslaught of climate change. Under the setup, wealthy nations will pay for climate damage unleashed on poorer countries.

Guterres welcomes the proposed fund, but strongly believes that what is needed is "a giant leap on climate ambition."

Already, the fund faces formidable roadblocks. Wealthy countries are still not comfortable about funneling more money to developing nations for conservation.

This is a clear case of climate injustice. Rich nations have been guilty of it, because most of them, including the United States and China, are among the world's biggest polluters. And developing nations are the most exposed to the risks of climate change.

At last year's climate talks in Glasgow, the participating nations pledged to step up efforts to cut down on emissions. The goal is to keep carbon dioxide emissions to within an acceptable 1.5 degrees Celsius. To do that, emissions must be slashed by 45 percent by 2030, and cut to net zero by the middle of the century.

Only about 30 countries have complied, and the world is now on its way to heating up by about 2.5 degrees Celsius.

Guterres warned that the "red line we must not cross is the line that takes our planet over the 1.5 degree temperature limit."

The world, however, is inching nearer to that red line.

Extreme weather events this year have shown us the devastating impact of global warming.

Scorching heatwaves have damaged crops from China to Europe, and severe drought threatens to bring famine to Africa.

Floods induced by increasingly stronger storms have caused extensive damage and economic losses across the world.

A climate scientist has predicted that 2022 "will be one of the hottest years on earth, with all the phenomena that go with higher temperatures."

It's just the beginning. Another climatologist said that a severe El Niño event could create a "new level" in warming.

As early as last February, UN climate scientists released a report which they described as an "atlas of human suffering" unleashed by climate change. The report, unfortunately, did not trigger any alarm bells.

#### Ecosystem degradation

For Guterres, global warming has a twin that must also be addressed: ecosystem degradation.

One-third of all the world's land has been despoiled, and fertile soil is being lost.

Reports have long indicated that chemicals, plastics and air pollution are choking land, water and air.

"We are treating nature like a toilet," Guterres lamented.

For climate action to succeed, biodiversity must be protected and preserved. The two challenges have to be dealt with together.

Much more needs to be done, and time is short.

Some observers say the COP27 agreement is far from being a game changer. They say it is not forceful enough to encourage the setting of more ambitious national targets and the scaling back on the use of fossil fuels.

Unless these issues are addressed, the needle will not move. Poorer nations will continue to be the victims of climate injustice.



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## BAYANI NG KARAPATAN AT KALIKASAN

DISYEMBRE 10, bukas, gugunitain ng buong mundo ang Human Rights Day. Hinihikayat ng United Nations ang lahat ng mga bansa na makiisa sa napakahalagang araw na ito.

Noong Disyembre 10, 1948, tinanggap at pinagtibay ng buong kapulungan ng UN ang Universal Declaration on Human Rights o UDHR.

Sa pagpapatibay na ito, nangako ang maraming mga bansa na ipagtanggol, itaguyod at tuparin ang lahat ng karapatang-pantao para sa lahat ng tao. Taun-taon, meron tema para gabayan ang mga selebrasyon. Ngayong 2022 ang tema ay "Dignity, Freedom and Justice for All".

Ambagat nyan - "Dangal,

Kalayaan at Katarungan para sa Lahat!"

Malawak ang ating mga karapatan, pero simplehan na lang natin. Mula sa UDHR ay sinalamin naman ng ating Saligang Batas, nakalista ang mga karapatan natin na mabuhay at mamuhay ng malaya at may dignidad.

Mahaba-haba na rin ang panahon na itinaya sa panindigan at mga pinaglapan ng maraming tao para seguruhin na ang mga karapatang ito ay kinikilala at nirespeto ng mga gobyerno. Ang popular na tawag sa mga taong nagtataguyod ng lahat at anomang uri ng mga karapatan ay "human rights defenders" o HRDs. Ibig sabihin, tagapagtanggol ng



REIMATE OPINION

## ALINANG NAIBA

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mga karapatan.

Marami pa tayong pwedeng pag-usapan tungkol sa karapatan. Pero gusto kong idugtong ang kolum ko sa katatapos lang na Climate Change Summit sa Egypt at ang kasalukuyang Conference on Biodiversity sa Canada.

Sa panahon natin ngayon, ang pangagalaga sa kalikasan ang isa sa pinakamahalagang krisis na hinaharap natin bilang mga tao at ng planeta natin mismo.

Kailangan ni Inang Kalikasan ng mga bayani para pangalagaan siya at pigilan ang paglulustay at paglapastangan ng likas na yaman at pagkasira ng mundo. Ika nga ay kailangan natin ng mga bayani para sa kalikasan. Ang tawag naman sa kanila ay mga "environmental rights defenders" o tagapagtanggol ng kalikasan.

Ang mga bayaning ito ay nagtataguyod din ng ating mga karapatan, kasi kapag hindi natin naalagaan ang kalikasan, mawawala ang masagana at mabuting buhay natin.

Kaya magisip-isip ka rin. Bayani ka rin ba para sa kalikasan at mga karapatan?



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# Fragile glaciers, fragile planet

**E**l Chaltén, Argentina—It was an image that seemed to be frozen in time as was frozen in space: a sprawling blue glacier—as far as the eye can see—extending deep into the Patagonian mountains.

Then, suddenly, the sound of a crack is heard, like distant thunder—and part of the glacier comes crashing into the milky green lake beneath.

Witnessing such a spectacle as our boat approached Perito Moreno glacier—perhaps the most famous glacier in Argentina—I cannot help but think of the climate crisis and what it means for the world.

The vastness of the Southern Patagonian Ice Field (16,480 square kilometers)—of which the glacier is part—means that such loss of ice—known as “calving” in glaciology—would not in themselves signify anything as being part of a glacier’s life cycle. Some years back, it was reported that Perito Moreno itself was actually growing instead of shrinking: a phenomenon that remains not fully explained.

In any case, the reality is that, taken together, the Patagonian glaciers are melting at one of the fastest rates on the planet, significantly contributing to sea level rise. According to a 2019 study by Michael Zemp and colleagues, the world is losing 335 billion tons of ice each year, corresponding to a nearly 1-millimeter rise in sea levels annually.

In Argentina—which (as its officials in the COP27 meetings in Egypt were quick to point out) contributes to 0.7 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions—the impacts of climate change are already manifesting in the form of unstable weather patterns, increased precipitation (and risk of floods) in the north, and decreased precipitation (and risk of droughts) in the south. The country has taken steps to address its own emissions—which mainly comes from the energy sector (54 percent) and



## SECOND OPINION

GIDEON LASCO

livestock farming (20.7 percent) with its over 50 million heads of cattle. However, underscoring the challenges for a country facing a severe economic crisis, it has also stressed the importance of natural gas in their *transición energética*—and has defended its agriculture and livestock industries amid concerns that they are leading to deforestation.

The Philippines is faced with a similar predicament. As one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, we have already seen the devastation brought about by ever-stronger typhoons and ever-more vicious floods. And even as the country has been very active in climate leadership for decades (When I was attending a workshop at Harvard back in 2019, Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor and international mediator Prof. Lawrence Susskind cited our own Tony La Viña as an exemplar of negotiation skills), our governments have vacillated in making strong climate commitments, likewise citing our minuscule contribution to global emissions.

In the wake of COP27, John Leo Algo of Living Laudato Si’ Philippines noted: “While the nation has a right to pursue development on its own terms, it is hypocritical for the Philippines, one of the most vulnerable to the

climate crisis to keep supporting further use of the same fossil fuels that are clearly harming it in many ways.”

Even as leaders on both sides of the Pacific rightfully demand climate justice and pay obeisance to words like “climate action,” “mitigation,” and “sustainability,” will they actually take steps to protect places like Gran Chaco and Sibuyan, Yungas and Palawan, from destructive projects—and an equally destructive development paradigm?

Amid the grandeur and sheer beauty of Patagonia, concerns around climate crisis and the environment can feel distant, and the thoughts provoked by the crashing glaciers can prove transient. Taking the bus from El Calafate to El Chaltén—the “trekking capital of Argentina”—I saw wild guanacos as they grazed on the grasslands, and only the snow-capped peaks on the background, behind which lies the Chilean part of the region, could take my eyes off such scenes. Here, in El Chaltén itself, the Andean condors circle the peaks as I trekked under the shadow of its famous monolithic peaks like Cerro Torre and Mt. Fitzroy.

But nothing lasts forever, and the timelessness of such scenes is belied by the science that shows that their foundations are unsustainable, with glaciers, guanacos, and condors alike facing the threat of disappearance. And the same can be said of the taken-for-granted comforts of our ways of life—more so for those who are already marginalized, from the Mapuche in Gran Chaco and the “lumad” in Mindanao, to the urban poor in Buenos Aires, Manila, and elsewhere.

We need a politics that acknowledges that our planet is as beautiful and as fragile as its glaciers.

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## **Bulkang Kanlaon nakataas sa Alert Level 1**

NASA alert level 1 ang Bulkang Kanlaon matakapos makapagtala ng dalawang volcanic earthquake sa nakalipas na magdamag iniulat kanina ng Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs).

Ayon sa Phivolcs namataan ang bahagyang pamamaga ng bulkan subalit wala naman naitalang pagsingaw ng usok sa bunganga ng bulkan.

Sinabi pa ng Phivolcs na mahigpit na ipinagbabawal ang pagpasok ng sino man sa 4-kilometer (4km) radius Permanent Danger Zone (PDZ) sa paligid ng bulkan.

Nagbabala rin ang ahensya na ipinagbabawal ang pagpapalipad ng anumang uri ng aircraft malapit sa tuktok ng bulkan dahil sa banta ng pagsabog.

Ang bulkang Kanlaon ay itinuturing na aktibong bulkan dahil sa mga nakalipas na pag-aalboroto nito na matatagpuan sa lalawigan ng Negros Occidental at Negros Oriental. (Boy Celario)