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DENR

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Marcos issues EO for investment 'green lanes'

By HELEN FLORES

To further promote the Philippines as an investment destination, President Marcos has issued an order directing the establishment of green lanes for strategic investments in all government agencies.

Executive Order 18, signed on Thursday by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin for the President, covers all national government agencies and their regional and provincial offices, government-owned and controlled corporations and other government instrumentalities, as well as local government units, involved in the issuance of permits, licenses, certifications or authorizations covering strategic investments.

The move is consistent with the Eight-Point Agenda of the administration and is "part of the continuing efforts of implementing ease of doing business reforms," as "it is imperative to adopt measures that will expedite transactions with the government."

The EO specifies strategic investments as those aligned with the Philippine Development Plan or any similar national development plan and can be characterized by significant capital or investment in the country.

Strategic investments – according to the EO – are also those with consequential economic impact, positive impact on the environment, significant contribution to the country's

balance of payments, with complex technical processes and engineering designs and will improve the country's infrastructure capabilities.

They also include highly desirable projects, foreign direct investments and projects or activities under the Strategic Investment Priority Plan, it said.

Within six months from the issuance of the EO, the Department of Trade and Industry-Board of Investments (DTI-BOI) shall establish a One-Stop-Action-Center for Strategic Investments (OSAC-SI), which shall serve as the single point of entry for all projects qualified as strategic investments.

Aside from addressing investor concerns such as identifying strategic

investments, the OSAC-SI will also include aftercare or post-investment assistance as part of its services, EO 18 said.

The DTI-BOI, within three months from the issuance of the order, shall produce and regularly update an investor manual or guidebook or its equivalent, containing the list of government requirements for the establishment of strategic investments per sector, as well as the concerned NGAs, LGUs or quasi-judicial bodies issuing relevant permits and licenses.

"The DTI-BOI will be supported with additional manpower, including the designation of Account Officers for Strategic Investments, as well as equipment necessary to operation-

alize the OSAC-SI, in coordination with the Department of Budget and Management," the EO read.

It also directs the Department of Information and Communications Technology to make available to LGUs the software for the computerization of the business permit and licensing system, with the help of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

A Technical Working Group (TWG), to be headed by the DTI-BOI, will be formed to ensure the implementation of the order.

Member agencies of the TWG include the DTI, DILG, Department of Finance, National Economic and Development Authority and the Anti-Red Tape Authority.



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Youth given voice for climate action

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will launch youth-centered initiatives to promote dialogue between decision-makers and young leaders to accelerate climate actions.

During the Philippine Environment Summit in Tagaytay City, DENR Undersecretary for Field Operations Juan Miguel Cuna said that the inclusion of young voices is the best way to bring innovations to the government's campaign against climate change.

"In the words of former UN secretary-general Ban Ki Moon, 'youth are the most important generation in our history.' The actions you take and the influence you bring to decision-makers will decide the fate of all future generations," Cuna said.

At the same time, the summit provides "a unique opportunity to unite the youth, listen and involve all of you in meaningful policy decisions and actions on climate change. As the President [Ferdinand Marcos Jr.] said, 'if we cannot mitigate climate change, all our plans for the economy ... for the future will be forgotten,'" he added.

The Philippines has been ranked as the first among the countries most at risk of natural hazards by the United Nations World Risk

report, making it also one of the most globally vulnerable to climate change.

Cuna pointed out that this vulnerability "is directly related to exposure that is being driven by our development trajectory, which has been characterized by inequities in social protection and by disregard for the ways by which our ecosystems support our communities."

Future global risks

The World Economic Forum's 2023 Global Risks Report considers natural disasters and extreme weather to be the most severe risks facing the world in the next two years.

"Because we live in a multi-hazard environment and an interconnected world, the risks we face cut across communities, sectors and scales," Cuna expounded. "The interventions we design to confront this complexity must therefore be [transdisciplinary], time-sensitive and spatially targeted in order for them to be transformational."

The DENR will push for the establishment of a national natural resource geospatial database, the acceleration of climate action and the enhancement of the integrity of ecosystems.

BELLA CARIASO



■ DENR Undersecretary for Field Operations Juan Miguel Cuna said that the inclusion of young voices can bring innovations to the government's campaign against climate change. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



PBBM orders creation of Green Lanes for strategic investments

By ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS

To address the concerns of foreign investors and promote the Philippines as a top investment destination, President Ferdinand "Bongbong" R. Marcos Jr. has ordered the establishment of Green Lanes for strategic investments in government offices.

Malacañang issued EO No. 18 on Friday, Feb. 24, which Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin signed the day before on Feb. 23.

President Marcos said the EO was part of the "continuing efforts of implementing ease of doing business reforms."

"It is imperative to adopt measures that will expedite transactions with the government," Marcos said.

EO 18 covers all national government agencies (NGAs) and their regional and provincial offices, government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs), other government instrumentalities, and local government units (LGUs).

Government offices issuing permits, licenses, certifications, or authorizations covering Strategic Investments are also covered by the order.

The EO specifies strategic investments as those aligned with the Philippine Development Plan or any similar national development plan and can be characterized by:

- The significant capital or investment in the country.
- The consequential economic impact.
- The positive impact on the environment.
- The significant contribution to the country's balance of payments.
- Complex technical processes and engineering designs.
- Those that would improve the country's infrastructure capabilities.

EO No. 18 added that strategic investments include highly desirable

projects, foreign direct investments, and projects or activities under the Strategic Investment Priority Plan.

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"The DTI-BOI will be supported by additional manpower, including the designation of Account Officers for Strategic Investments, as well as equipment necessary to operationalize the OSAC-SI, in coordination with the Department of Budget and Management," President Marcos said.

The EO also directs the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) to make available to LGUs the software for computerizing the business permit and licensing system, with the help of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

A Technical Working Group (TWG), which the DTI-BOI would head, will be formed to ensure the implementation of the EO.

Member-agencies of the TWG include the DTI, DILG, Department of Finance, National Economic and Development Authority, and the Anti-Red Tape Authority.



Most Filipinos prefer 'green' goods - survey

A SURVEY has shown that 83 percent or 8 out of 10 Filipinos prefer to patronize products and services of enterprises that have environment-friendly operations and goods, according to Pulse Asia Research Inc. on Thursday.

During a forum on sustainable and strategic waste management, which was organized by the Stratbase ADR Institute and the Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship (PBEST), the Philippines was also shown as the third-largest contributor to plastic waste in the world, generating an estimated 2.7 million tons of plastic waste per year.

"The message is clear: A sizable majority of Filipinos will support enterprises that have environment-friendly operations and products. Filipinos know that there are certain things that are happening in the country that require us to be more socially conscious," Pulse Asia President Ronald Holmes explained.

"The question now is whether industries or firms will be able to cater to this preference," Holmes said.

According to Environment Undersecretary Carlos Primo David, "with many of our policies in the past, it is indeed implementation that will spell the success or failure of the waste-to-energy and of the EPR (extended producer

responsibility) program."

He said, "For our part on the DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources), we hope to make the EPR procedures as straightforward as possible, less paperwork hopefully, and focus first on the registration of all plastic producers."

Meanwhile, Management Association of the Philippines Vice President Alexander Cabrera believes that there is a need to provide incentives to and impose taxes on businesses to effectively address the waste problem in the country.

"The compulsion of taxing end-of-life plastic use will force people to reinvent their packaging because they don't want to pay tax. It's not a question of whether it can be done, it's a question of political will," Cabrera said.

Last month, DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga signed the implementing rules and regulations for the EPR law of 2022.

This measure requires enterprises to offset their plastic packaging footprint by 20-80 percent starting this year until 2028 and beyond.

These producers are obliged to form and implement their EPR programs to divert plastic packaging waste from landfills and prevent its leakage into the environment.

JENICA FAYE GARCIA



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Survey: 8 out of 10 Pinoys prefer environment friendly products

APULSE Asia survey has shown that 83 percent of Filipinos prefer to patronize products and services of brands that have environment-friendly operations and products.

Pulse Asia President Ronald Holmes presented the survey results during a forum on sustainable and strategic waste management on Thursday organized by the Stratbase ADR Institute and the Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship (PBEST). The survey was conducted from November 27 to December 1, 2022, and was also commissioned by Stratbase.

"The message is clear: a sizable majority of Filipinos will support enterprises that have environment-friendly operations and products...Filipinos know that there are certain things that are happening in the country that require us to be more socially conscious. The question now is whether industries or firms will be able to cater to this preference," Holmes said.

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Last month, Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga signed the implementing rules and regulations for the Extended Producer Responsibility or EPR law of 2022. This measure requires enterprises to offset their plastic packaging footprint by 20-80 percent starting this year until 2028 and beyond. They are obliged to form and implement their EPR programs to divert plastic packaging waste from landfills and prevent its leakage into the environment.

Environment Undersecretary Carlos Primo David said since the EPR was launched, more than 500 companies already registered to comply with the law.

"With many of our policies in the past, it is indeed implementation that will spell the success or failure of the waste-to-energy and of the EPR program. For our part on the DENR, we hope to make the EPR procedures as straightforward as possible, less paperwork hopefully, and focus first on the registration of all plastic producers...I am hopeful of the EPR program having heard of the willingness of the private sector to be part of the program," David said.

For Stratbase ADRi President Dindo Manhit, addressing the waste problem in the country entails a whole-of-society approach.

"While the government plays a key role through the formulation and implementation of policies, industry players are also expected to equally contribute through their investments and programs that enable circular business models," Manhit said.

"As a problem that drastically affects the future of all, everyone, including the public must act jointly...Discipline, especially on the part of consumers, in proper waste disposal, or simply by not littering will already drastically reduce

the tonnage of garbage in our waterways," he added.

Management Association of the Philippines Vice President Alexander Cabrera believes there is a need to provide incentives and impose taxes to businesses to effectively address the waste problem in the country.

"There must be an incentive integrated in the EPR or supplement to it when collecting your plastic or repackaging in order for your products to be more environment friendly. Meanwhile, the compulsion of taxing end-of-life plastic use will force people to reinvent their packaging because they don't want to pay tax. It's not a question of whether it can be done or not, it's a question of political will," Cabrera said.

David agreed to Cabrera's proposal.

"THE role of government is to provide incentives and disincentives towards behavior that we want to achieve...We want a deeper learning and understanding of issues. First is put in the policies, then put in the incentives for people to do the behavior that is desired," David explained.

Environment Assistant Secretary and DENR-Environmental Management Bureau Director Gilbert Gonzales said the complex waste management problem in the Philippines is a result of a linear economic model, which follows a "take-make-dispose" process for products.

"Pursuing a circular economy offers a strategy and a pathway that could potentially reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the economic sectors and value chains, by transforming the way products are designed and used, and derive more value from products through better product design, increased value-retention of materials, and diversion of waste from landfills," Gonzales said.

"It can also create new investment and job opportunities, enhance local and global competitiveness, and improve resilience and vulnerability to economic shocks," he added.

Climate Reality Project Philippine Branch Manager Nazrin Castro said it is in the best interest of the Philippines to shift to a circular economy.

"A circular economy can help avoid excessive consumption, waste and use of fossil fuels by leasing, reusing, repairing, and recycling existing materials and products," Castro said.

Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship Secretary General, Engr. Felix Vitangcol for his part, said that "the potential benefits of the circular economy are enormous, and they go beyond waste reduction and environmental protection.

"The transition toward a circular economy is not an easy task and requires a long-term vision and commitment from all stakeholders. It requires a change in mindset, behavior, and systems," Vitangcol said.



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'Pinoy's prefer eco-friendly products'

A PULSE Asia survey shows that 83 percent of Filipinos prefer to patronize branded products and services that are environment-friendly.

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Last month, Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyza signed the implementing rules and regulations for the Extended Producer Responsibility or EPR law of 2022.



TURTLE HATCHLINGS. Local and foreign guests of the Anvaya Cove Golf and Sports Club in Morong, Bataan witness the release of exactly 58 baby turtles at the shore of the disputed West Philippine Sea over the weekend. **Manny Marcelo**



■ The Kaliwa River leads to a habitat of various endangered species.
PHOTO FROM DENR CALABARZON



DENR: Protect Kaliwa River Forest Reserve

Measures to sustain the perpetual existence of all native plants, animals and natural resources

BY BELLA CARIASO

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has backed the passage of a proposed bill declaring the Kaliwa River Forest Reserve as a protected area under the National Integrated Protected Areas System (Nipas).

Rizal Rep. Emigdio "Dino" Tanjuatco 3rd filed House Bill 5055, which seeks to establish the Kaliwa River Forest and Wildlife Sanctuary (KRFWS).

According to the DENR, the government supports all efforts to further protect and preserve the Kaliwa River Forest Reserve and the rest of the Sierra Madre Mountain Range.

Republic Act (RA) 7586 or the "Nipas Act," as amended by RA 11038 or the "Expanded Nipas Act of 2018," mandates the DENR to implement measures to sustain

the perpetual existence of all native plants, animals and natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

The proposed KRFWS, which has a total area of 31,883 hectares, is under the jurisdiction of the municipalities of Tanay, Rizal and General Nakar, Quezon.

It is regarded as the home of various endangered wildlife species such as the Northern Philippine hawk-eagle (*Nisaetus philippensis*), Philippine Brown Deer (*Rusa marianna*), Philippine

Warty Pig (*Sus philippensis*) and the Northern Rufous Hornbill (*Buceros hydrocorax*), among others. It is also the habitat of the critically endangered Philippine Eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*), a species endemic to the Philippines.

The proposed KRFWS has 12,147 hectares of remaining forest with approximately 172 types of plant species, 39 of which are endemic and 17 are classified as threatened. Some species that can be found in the area are Rafflesia (*R. philippinensis* and *R. lagascae*) and Tayabak or Jade Vine (*Strongylodon macrobotrys*).

Endemic species

A recent study led to the discovery of a new species of Pungapong (*Amorphophallus funtarumii*), which was first found in a portion of the proposed KRFWS. This

new species has been classified as highly endangered due to the threats of forest degradation and destruction.

DENR Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon) Regional Director Nilo Tamoria said that the aforementioned species are endemic, can only be found in the Philippines and are considered "keystone species, with crucial roles in defining an entire ecosystem. Once legislated, fund support for the management of the KRFWS is assured and stringent regulations will be implemented."

Apart from its rich biodiversity, the Kaliwa River Forest Reserve is also home to the Indigenous Peoples of the Dumagat-Remontado of the Sierra Madre who play an important role in the conservation and protection of the environment and natural resources within the area.



Senate to probe BuCor plan in Masungi

By PAOLO ROMERO

The plan of the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) to build its headquarters in an environmental reserve in Tanay, Rizal is set to be probed by the Senate committee on tourism.

The inquiry was prompted by a resolution filed by the committee chair, Sen. Nancy Binay, who cited the warning of the Masungi Georeserve Foundation that the BuCor's plan would have an adverse impact on the environment and the tourism industry.

"The Masungi Georeserve is a conservation area and a rustic rock garden tucked in the rainforests of Rizal. Masungi's name is derived from the word 'masungki,' which translates to 'spiked' - an apt description for the sprawling limestone landscape found within," Binay said in her Senate Resolution 495.

"The Masungi Georeserve is a symbol of sustainable development and at the forefront of efforts to conserve, restore and improve the environment in the face of climate change, which must be protected by the government and private sector at all costs," she said.

"While the initiatives of the BuCor to have a new headquarters and housing for its personnel are reasonable, it is important to weigh the possible consequences of building its headquarters in an ecotourism

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site like the Masungi Georeserve, which may affect the environment and tourism in the country," she added.

Binay cited news reports quoting acting BuCor Director General Gregorio Cata-pang Jr. as having claimed that the bureau is the owner of the 270-hectare land in Tanay where its headquarters and residential sites for personnel will be put up. This claim, however, is strongly

being contested by the foundation.

She noted that in 2019, the Masungi Georeserve received international recognition for its sustainable tourism practices at the annual World Tourism Organization Awards.

Ann Dumaliang, co-founder of the Masungi Georeserve, said the site being eyed as a relocation site is home to fragile limestone

formations and included in conservation efforts under the Masungi Geopark Project between the Masungi Georeserve Foundation and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, through a valid and binding memorandum of agreement signed by then environment secretary Gina Lopez in 2017.

Binay also said scientists of the National Museum of the Philippines warned that developing the relocation site will have dire consequences for the environment.



Compelling public need

In April last year, there were 180 pending reclamations across the country reported by the Philippine Reclamation Authority, which were initiated either by the PRA, the local government units, the national government, or government-owned or controlled corporations.

The PRA is the lead government instrumentality which serves as the clearing house for all reclamation projects in the country.

In an interview with the Oxford Business Group, PRA chairman Alberto Agra emphasized that reclamation is not an end in itself, but a transformative and goal-oriented endeavor such that in the development stage of any land reclamation project, there must be a vision that highlights the ultimate goal which is to lift people's quality of life, reducing poverty, generating jobs, and strengthening the collaboration between the government and the private sector.

HIDDEN AGENDA



MARY ANN
LL. REYES

He said that working with concerned stakeholders, they create legacy islands on water for the country's coastal defenses, and sites for residential, commercial, and industrial enterprises to offer stable and comfortable amenities, and advance the country's development goals.

But he stressed that moving forward, reclamation projects must follow certain minimum criteria to ensure their role as community builders, such as striving to create smart cities, including corporate social responsibility components, and establishing reliable and independent power supply systems.

Reclamation has to strike a balance between development and potential adverse environmental impact. This is the reason why the Department of Environment and Natural Resources requires proponents of reclamation projects to secure environmental clearance with the Environmental Management Bureau.

For country's like Singapore with limited land, reclamation provided the key to building new opportunities. Through land reclamation, they were able to create space for new areas like Changi Airport, Jurong Island, and Tuas Port. And just like in Singapore, other small Southeast Asian coastal territories such as Hong Kong and Macau, it has been reported

that their rate of reclamation has been an index of the rate of economic development.

Back in 1991, around 10 percent, five percent, and 33 percent of the total land surfaces of Singapore, Hong Kong, and Macau respectively comprise land reclaimed from the sea. In the past 200 years, the total land area of Singapore has increased by 25 percent, from 578 square kilometers in 1819 to 719 sqk in 2018. Reclaimed areas accounted for around 19 percent of Singapore's total area.

Meanwhile, a 2018 report disclosed that around seven percent of Hong Kong's total area is reclaimed land. Since its first days as a city, Hong Kong's land reclamation turned 733 kilometers of craggy shoreline into a global metropolis, with the most notable project being the Hong Kong International Airport at Chep Lap Kok.

In the Philippines, interestingly, a lot of reclamation projects have been going on in Manila Bay, considered as one of the most important fishing grounds in the country. In a Senate hearing last November, the DENR revealed that there are around 19 ongoing reclamation projects in the bay area. A report by esquiremag.ph noted that beyond Manila Bay, the actual number of reclamation projects in coastal or municipal waters would reach 187.

In a documentary titled "Reclamation Nation," meanwhile, it is said that there are 24 planned reclamation projects in Manila Bay that will occupy 9,000 hectares of the sea, larger than the combined size of Manila, Makati, Pasay, San Juan and Pateros.

The PRA, which has both regulatory and proprietary functions, is overseeing various reclamation projects that when completed will convert 5,667 hectares of Manila Bay coastal areas into city blocks, benefitting mainly property developers.

The agency has been under heavy criticism lately from those who say that while it has a longstanding policy of approving land reclamation projects based on the standard of public need, most of the projects it approved in the past six years can be described as vanity projects and for non-public service.

Considering the potential adverse environmental and social impacts, including human population displacement that many of these reclamation projects can cause, the PRA should make sure that only projects whose benefits outweigh the costs should be approved. Parts of the sea do not have to be reclaimed just to give way to residential and commercial buildings, retail outlets, and even casinos which can be built somewhere else.

Part 1



Part 2

In the past six years, the PRA received proposals for 19 reclamation projects that are now in varying stages of application or implementation. Seven of these projects were already up for implementation as of April 2022.

In one hearing last October, Sen. Cynthia Villar who heads the Senate committee on environment, lamented that dump-and-fill projects would result in more flooding, as she lashed out at DENR officials after learning that 21 Manila Bay reclamation projects have secured environmental compliance certificates.

Worse, in the past 30 years, PRA has not been held accountable for any failure by developers to adequately deliver reclaimed lands owed to the government.

The promotion of public welfare and interest should be the primary consideration for the approval of any proposed reclamation project. These include airports, roads, seaports, logistics facilities and rail systems which show much higher economic rates of return and net present values of economic benefits compared to vanity projects.

Priority should be given to projects that will decongest the cities of Metro Manila such as relocating the international airport and seaport outside the metropolis. Only then can we justify the social and environmental impact of these reclamation projects.

Environment Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga earlier said that the Marcos administration will review the government's policy on reclamation.

Reclamation if done correctly can be a very powerful tool to aid economic development. In Hong Kong, reclamation played a huge role in reducing overcrowding in urban areas and improving living environments.

Under its Protection of the Harbour Ordinance in fact, a presumption is made against reclamation within the Victoria Harbour and there must be a compelling and overriding public need to displace the duty of protection and preservation to rebut this presumption. A compelling and overriding public need, meanwhile, refers to the current pressing need for reclamation where there are no other reasonable alternative.

All pending reclamation projects in the Philippines must likewise establish a compelling and overriding public need before the PRA approves it and the DENR issues the required environmental clearances. Otherwise, we might see large parts of our sea being covered, marine life being buried under, people being displaced, just for the sake of having a project with a nice view of the sea.

For comments, e-mail at mareyes@philstarmedia.com



Editorial

DENR should heed calls to review dredging activities

ENVIRONMENTAL and fisherfolk's groups have called on the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), along with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), to intervene in widespread dredging activities in the Manila Bay that the groups say are causing significant environmental damage and destroying fish stocks. Given what is known about the dredging operations, including recent revelations of illegal dredging by some Chinese contractors, the groups' request to the DENR to impose a temporary suspension on dredging work until ongoing projects can be carefully reviewed is not only reasonable, it is an imperative.

The dredging work is being done to mine sand for several reclamation projects that are being constructed in other parts of Manila Bay. These projects have likewise been in activists' crosshairs for their potential damage to the bay ecosystem and livelihoods, particularly since some of the work was hastily approved without public consultation during the pandemic by the previous administration. The dredging activity, however, is seen as a more immediate and destructive problem.

According to statements from Agham-Advocates of Science and Technology for the People and the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) groups at the beginning of the week, the critical area of concern is along the San Nicholas Shoal, which lies offshore from the Cavite province towns of Rosario, Naic and Ternate. Dredging activity has already reportedly caused a noticeable decline in the fish population, presumably due to the degradation of water quality from stirred-up mud and sand. Fishermen in the area have also sounded the alarm over the destruction of the seabed that serves as a nursery for some fish species, which will cause an even more precipitous decline in the fish population.

The Pamalakaya group also said there have been several incidents of fishermen's nets being snagged and destroyed by the dredging equipment.

The concerned groups reported that they had sent formal letters to both the DENR and BFAR requesting a dialogue to air their concerns, and recommending that the DENR impose a temporary halt to all reclamation-related dredging activity in Manila Bay until the various projects could be reviewed and the complaints properly addressed. Spokesmen for the groups told the media that they had hoped the requesting meetings could have been held this past week, but as of Friday it did not appear that either agency had even acknowledged receipt of the letters, let alone make any arrangements to hear the complaints.

While any dialogue should certainly include all the parties concerned — the developers and contractors carrying out the dredging and reclamation work as well as the affected communities — there is ample justification for the DENR to do exactly what the groups have recommended, which is to halt the dredging activity until matters can be satisfactorily resolved. At about the same time the groups were attempting to reach out to the DENR and BFAR, it was disclosed to the public that several Chinese vessels, evidently contractors for the ongoing reclamation projects, had been identified by the National Coast Watch Center as being engaged in "suspicious activities" and "operating outside their approved areas of operation."

If these vessels were able to operate illegally for a period of time, it is a near-certainty that there is other unauthorized or reckless dredging activity being carried out. The costs of a temporary suspension of operations pales in comparison to the costs of the potential long-term damage if illicit or destructive dredging is allowed to continue. As for the ongoing reclamation projects, they need not necessarily stop if dredging is temporarily halted, but will simply have to find an alternative source of materials while the dredging issues are being resolved.

How those might be resolved will have to be worked out by the various stakeholders and the relevant agencies, but solutions should be available. For example, a satisfactory fix may be as simple as moving dredging operations to areas where the impacts will not be as severe, or combining dredging operations for construction materials with dredging done for flood control purposes and maintenance of navigation channels.



MARCOS SNUB DISMAYS MARCHERS VS KALIWA DAM PROJECT

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
@dtmallarijrINQare

LUCENA CITY—A tribal chief-tain from the Sierra Madre mountains in Quezon province was dismayed that President Marcos ignored them following their nine-day protest march to reach Malacañang on Friday to dramatize their opposition to the Chinese-funded Kaliwa Dam.

"After such a long and grueling march, his (Marcos) failure to face us is infuriating," Agta community leader Ramcy Astoveza said in a phone interview.

He said the march was an indication that there was a growing opposition to the dam project, which would inundate the homes of Agta families in Quezon.

"A lot of people have joined and expressed solidarity with

us in the protest march," Astoveza said.

On Feb. 15, more than 300 members of the indigenous community from the Sierra Madre and representatives of multisectoral organizations supporting them started their 150-kilometer protest march from Quezon's General Nakar town to Malacañang in Manila.

Mendiola barricade

Rene Cerilla, president of Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka (Pakisama), who was one of the marchers, was also disappointed over the reported snub by the President.

"We marched peacefully, but the President did not even notice the appeal of the indigenous people. Instead, he barricaded Mendiola with lots of anti-riot policemen," Cerilla said.

He described the long trek



GRUELING MARCH About 300 members of the Agta indigenous community from Quezon province march along the Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City on Friday on their way to Malacañang to protest against the construction of the Chinese-funded Kaliwa Dam project that will inundate their ancestral homes. —MARIANNE BERMUDEZ

under the blazing sun and cold rain as "really punishing for the body."

"We endured hunger, thirst, mosquito bites and pavements

as sleeping mats. And yet, not even a short statement from Malacañang was issued, and not even a lowly official was sent to meet us," Cerilla lamented.

But still, Astoveza and Cerilla considered their antidam protest "a success."

Cerilla pointed to the "warm support" they received from the public, religious and local officials along the march route.

Astoveza said their opposition to the dam project would continue.

"Our struggle to save Sierra Madre and protect our people will not stop," he vowed.

Hardship on the road

A heavy downpour drenched the marchers in Real town on their second day on the road, forcing some of them to chopped off broad banana leaves along the route for use as protection against the rain.

When the day's march ended, some of the participants fell ill.

Expidito Agripa, media coordinator for the Stop Kali-

wa Dam (SKD) group, said the marchers treated themselves with herbal medicines that they brought with them and those they had found along the way.

SKD is a network of local and international organizations, institutions and multisectoral groups that oppose the P12.2-billion dam, which is one of the flagship projects under the Duterte administration's "Build, Build, Build" program.

The construction of the dam, which has been touted to solve the looming water crisis in Metro Manila, was awarded to the Chinese company China Energy under an official development assistance agreement between Manila and Beijing.

But the project could submerge parts of the Sierra Madre in Tanay town, Rizal province, and General Nakar and Infanta towns in Quezon province.

FROM A2

The construction is expected to flood a 9,700-hectare watershed and affect 1,465 families, according to studies by the Save Sierra Madre Network Alliance.

The project will also include the Upper Marikina Watershed and the Kaliwa Watershed Forest Reserve, a conservation site in the Sierra Madre Biodiversity

Corridor, which was designated as a protected area by Presidential Proclamation No. 1636.

Tunneling in progress

Early this month, the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) announced that the dam could be completed by 2026 and start operating the following year.

In December last year, MWSS administrator Leonor Cleofas said the project would be pushing through after se-

curing all the necessary construction permits, including the certificate of pre-condition from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, and the free, prior and informed consent of concerned indigenous communities.

In the same month, the MWSS and the Department of Public Works and Highways began digging a tunnel from Teresa to Morong towns in Rizal province.

The 22-kilometer tunnel is one of the two major phases of the project. The second is the actual dam construction.

According to Cleofas, the construction of the dam may begin once the 46 families directly affected by the project were relocated.

Once operational, the project is expected to provide 600 million liters per day to augment the needs of some 17 million residents in "Mega Manila." —WITH A REPORT FROM INQUIRER RESEARCH INQ



Matapos ang 9-araw na martsa mula Quezon...

IPS NA TUTOL SA KALIWA DAM INISNAB NI PBBM!

NATAPOS Huwebes ng gabi ang siyam na araw na pagmartsa ng mga miyembro ng Dumagat-Remontado indigenous group na tutol sa itatayong Kaliwa Dam sa kanilang lupain nang hindi nakausap si Presidente Ferdinand Marcos Jr. tungkol sa kanilang ikinababahala sa P12.2-billion project.

Ang mga indigenous people mula sa mga lalawigan ng Rizal at Quezon ay dumating sa Maynila nitong Huwebes, umasang makadayalogo si Pangulong Marcos para mapatigil ang pagpapatayo sa

dam. Pero nang makarating ang grupo sa paanan ng Mendiola, sinalubong sila ng mga pulis na nagbarikada at pinagbawalan silang makaapak sa gate ng Malacañang. Natapos ang

kanilang 150-kilometer journey na nagsimula sa bayan ng General Nakar, Quezon, sa Paco Catholic Church.

"We are sad that we will return to our homes without the good news that our communities expect: that our concerns will be heard," sabi ng lider ng IPs na si Conchita Calzado.

Sa siyam na araw nilang paglalakad, ang daan-daang Dumagat-Remontados at kanilang supporters ay dumaan sa mga bayan ng Quezon, Laguna

at Rizal, at sa mga kalye ng Metro Manila, sinabi sa mga tao na ang Kaliwa Dam ay nagpapalubog sa kanilang ancestral domain, sisira sa kanilang livelihoods at wawasak sa kanilang cultural heritage.

Ang Kaliwa Dam, funded ng loan mula China, ay isang flagship project ni dating Presidente Rodrigo Duterte sa "Build, Build, Build" program.

Ang dam ang sinasabing solution sa problema ng water supply sa Metro Manila. Makakapagbigay daw ito ng higit sa 600 million liters kada araw sa capital region na mayroong 14 milyong tao. Ang Metro Manila sa kasalukuyan ay umaasa lamang sa suplay ng Angat Dam sa Bulacan.



BALANSE

Ni Ba Ipe

Magulong industriya

LABIS na nagugulo ang industriya ng pagmimina. Mukhang hindi naintindihan ni Toni Yulo-Loyzaga, kalihim ng DENR, ang nangyayari sa kanyang bakuran. Kamakailan, ninombrahan ni Toni Loyzaga si Danilo Uykieng bilang OIC ng Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB). Pinalitan niya si Engr. William Cunado na nanilbihan bilang acting chief ng ilang buwan.

Wala sanang problema kung maayos si Uykieng bilang opisyal. Ngunit hindi siya maayos, sa diretsong pangungusap. Mayroon siyang mga nakabinbin na mga kaso sa Office of the Ombudsman. Inakusahan siya ng paglabag sa mga batas sa kaligiran. Ito ang dahilan kung kuwestiyunin ang kanyang pagiging epektib sa poder. Tinanggal si Uykieng ni Roy Cimatu bilang hepe ng MGB Region 3.

Naging komplikado ang isyu ng pagnombra sa kanya bilang OIC ng MGB dahil inaakusahan si Uykieng sa mismong industriya ng pagmimina. Kamakailan, may mga bintang na minanipula niya ang MGB upang paboran ang isang kompanyang Intsik, ang Yinglong Steep Corporation, upang kunin ang mga deposit na mga nickel ore sa Zambales at iluwas sa China.

Ginamit umano ni Uykieng ang MGB upang gipitin ang kompanyang Westchinamin Corp. May plano umano si Uykieng kasama ang Yinglong Steel na hanapan ng violation ang Westchinamin para hindi maibalik ang kanilang dalawang mineral production sharing scheme (MPSA) na naunang nasuspinde kasama ang hawak ng Yinglong Steel

Ibinalik sa poder si Uykieng para matuloy ang P100 milyon transaksyon ng Yinglong Steel pero ibang kumpanya ang pagbibigyan nila pero Yinglong pa din kasi nakatanggap umano ng downpayment ang grupo na kasali sa transaksyon.

Noon Enero, pinigil ng Philippine Coast Guard ang MV Knight sa pagluluwas ng mga nickel ore ng Yinglong Steel sa China. Nag-isyu ng "cease and desist order" ang Bureau of Customs dahil walang kaukulang permit ang Yinglong Steel sa pagluluwas ng nickel ore.

Noong Oktubre, 2022, ipinatigil ni Cunado ang operasyon ng Yinglong Steel sa mga bayan at Sta. Cruz at Candelaria sa Zambales dahil sa kakulangan ng environmental clearance certificate (ECC) mula sa DENR at iba pang permit. Si Cunado ang hepe noon ng MGB.

NAKAG JLAT ang background ni Uykieng, ang bagong OIC ng MGB. Noong ika-3 ng Pebrero, sinampahan siya ng sakdal ng apat na magsasakang residente ng Sta. Cruz, Zambales ng graft sa Office of the Ombudsman dahil sa pagbibigay ng "unwarranted benefits" sa apat na mining firm na nagbunga ng "direct injury" sa sambayanan ng Sta. Cruz people, noong siya ang MGB Region 3 director mula 2011 hanggang 2015.

Sa kanilang reklamo, sinabi ng apat na magsasaka na nagpakita si Uykieng, bilang MGB regional director, ng "intentional gross neglect," o pagpapabaya sa kanyang tungkulin nang hayaan niya ang apat na mining firms na magsagawa ng "strip mining" para kumuha ng nikel at sirain ang kabundukan ng Sta. Cruz na nagging sanhi ng baha sa mga bukirin. Ang mga mining firm ay Benguet-Corp Nickel Mines Inc. (BNMI), Eramen Mineral Inc., Filipinas Mining-Corporation/Int Archipelago Minerals, Inc. and Zambales

Diversified Metals Corp.

Itinuturing na dokumentado ni Eduardo Ravana, Marciano Corpus, Efrén Misoles a Anselma Corpuz ang kanilang alegasyon na walang ginawa si Uykieng upang ipatupad ang opisyal na aksyon ng provincial government at ang suspension order na ibinaba ng Zambales office ng DENR (ENROZ).

"Uykieng did nothing to stop the damage the environment and help the affected farmers either by sheer refusal or by negligence so gross it could be called intentional," ayon sa sakdal ng apat na magsasaka na kinakatawan ni Mark John Melgrito, manananggol ng Reyes Esguerra Baluyut & Benitez Law Offices

Ayon sa sakdal, nagreklamo ang Concerned Citizens of Sta. Cruz (CCOS) at Tricycle Operators and Drivers Association of Sta. Cruz sa provincial government na nagpaliwanag ng masamang epekto ng pagmimina sa kanilang bayan at kasama sa kanilang reklamo ang pagragasa ng putik mula minahan sa kanilang bayan tuwing tag-ulan at ang pagpuputik sa kanilang palyan na pumigil sa kanila na magtanim.

Noong ika-4 ng Pebrero, 2013, kinilala at tinalakay ng Zambales Sangguniang Panlalawigan ang isyu sa kanilang regular session at naglabas ng resolusyon na humihingi sa ENROZ na suspendihin ang operasyon ng mga mining firms sa Sta. Cruz at mag-imbestiga ng to, ayon sa sakdal.

Binanggit ng sakdal noong ika-14 ng Marso, 2013 ang ulat ng ENROZ na nagmumungkahi ng kabayaran sa mga apektadong magsasaka-residente at ang pag-aalis ng putik sa mga apektadong bukirin. Binanggit ng ulat matinding pagpuputik ng pitong etkarya ng bukirin sa dalawang barangay doon at ang paglisan at relokasyon ng hindi mabilang na mga mamamayan na nagreklamo ng polusyon at kakulangan ng maiinom na tubig.

Binanggit ng reklamo ang paper trail ng mga opisyal na pagkilos Zambales Sangguniang Panlalawigan, ENROZ, at Provincial Assessment Team of Zambales nakumpirma sa pagkawasak ng kaligiran ng mining operations doon at nagpanukala ng kabayaran ng P3.2 milyon sa mga apektadong 30 pamilya ng ika-24 ng Mayo, 2013.

"The damages to the environment and to the farmland are certain. The team recommended scraping, deep plowing, soil rehabilitation, and fertilizer for soil amelioration and others," ayon sa sakdal.

Binanggit rin ng sakdal ang resolusyon ng Sangguniang Panlalawigan na humihingi sa Mine Rehabilitation Fund Committee (MRFC) na pinangungunahan ni Uykieng na gamitin ang kanilang Contingent Liability and Rehabilitation Fund upang bayaran ang mga magsasaka at papanumbalik sa dating maayos na kalagayan ang mga lugar na sinira ng operasyon ng pagmimina.

Binanggit ng sakdal ang kumpirmasyon ng Sangguniang Panlalawigan noong ika-24 ng Mayo, 2013 sa Final Assessment Report at liham noong ika-14 ng Hunyo, 2013 ng ENROZ sa presentasyon ng final report sa MGB. Ito ay upang magkaroon ng batayan sa pagbabayad sa mga apektadong pamilya.

Ngunit si Uykieng, ayon sa sakdal, ay hindi kumilos dahil sa katwiran na "no compensation was made and no rehabilitation was conducted." Hindi kumilos si Uykieng, ayon sa sakdal kahit na kinilala ng MGB officer-in-charge ang memorandum na kumilala sa paglabag umano sa paglabag sa mga mining law ng apat na mining firms.

"The mining contractors were found to be employing unsystematic mining or shipping methods, wherein benches are being used as stockpiles areas," ayon sa reklamo. "Since the mined areas cover some 600 hectares, Atty. Uykieng would have either refused to implement and law and the DENR procedures or would have been absent from office."



Human barricade vs mining to continue

BY BELLA CARIASO

MEMBERS of environmental groups and residents on Friday said that the human barricade in Brooke's Point, Palawan will continue as they asked the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to stop the operation of Ipilan Nickel Corp. amid the alleged violations in its operation.

Job Lagrada, leader of the demonstrators barricading the area,

said the mobilization will go on until the DENR issues a cease and

desist order against Ipilan Nickel. "The DENR must take action on the violations of the Ipilan Nickel and hold the mining firm accountable by issuing a cease and desist order," Lagrada said.

Brooke's Point Mayor Cesareo Benedito Jr. said that Ipilan Nickel has been "blatantly disrespecting the law by ignoring his order to stop its operations."

Benedito said that the Ipilan Nickel is operating without a mayor's permit. For his part, Indigenous Peoples

(IP) leader Nelson Sombra said that the mining firm also disregarded the Philippine Indigenous Peoples Rights Act or IPRA after it failed to secure a certificate of pre-condition from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples.

"It operates without the required consent of indigenous groups. Clearly, it gives no consideration to the sentiments and will of the IPs," Sombra added.

Alyansa Tigil Mina National Coordinator Jaybee Garganera as-

sured full support to the residents of Brooke's Point in not allowing destructive mining in their area.

"The DENR should heed the people's demands and act accordingly. A cease and desist order is the immediate action for the DENR to take," he said.

Environment Legal Assistance Center member, lawyer Asia Wy, said the group is prepared to take legal actions against Ipilan Nickel.

Brooke's Point Vice Mayor Jean Feliciano said that Environment

Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga should cancel the Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) of Ipilan Nickel.

"I support the call of the people of Brooke's Point. The only action that can prevent the destruction of the environment and the suffering of the people is for DENR Secretary Loyzaga to ultimately cancel INC's MPSA. Definitely, the preservation of our natural forests and the protection of our watersheds cannot be compromised," Feliciano said.



Anti-mining bills hurdle committee level

CALAPAN CITY, Oriental Mindoro: The two bills seeking to ban all forms of mining on the island of Mindoro have passed the committee level at the House of Representatives, a lawmaker said on Thursday.

In a message, Oriental Mindoro First District Rep. Arnan Panaligan said that his House Bill (HB) 3891 and Second District Rep. Alfonso Umali Jr.'s HB 6219 had been deliberated and approved by the Committee on Natural Resources.

"After the committee hearing, the bills would be deliberated during the plenary of the House, which I believed would be ministerial. It would be elevated to the Senate's

Committee on Natural Resources where we are expecting opposition. But we will lobby and seek the support of friendly Senators," Panaligan said in his message.

The Committee on Natural Resources is headed by Cavite Fourth District Rep. Elpidio Barzaga.

Anti-mining advocates and environmental groups praised the two solons for pushing to declare the island of Mindoro as a mining-free zone.

"The happiness index of the people of Mindoro is getting high because of this latest development," Evelyn Cacha, co-convenor of the Alyansa Laban sa Mina, said in a text message.

The environmentalist leader added that strong statements should be issued against those that open up mining investments in poor countries that are a threat to sustainability and equitable benefits from resources which should benefit the people.

"The transnational [mining] companies profit from our resources, but we are left with nothing, not to mention the damage to our agriculture and other means of livelihood. We launched the anti-mining campaign to prevent the exacerbation of poverty. We are trying to protect the watersheds to protect lives. And thanks to our congressmen, they heeded the call of the people," Cacha said.

The Koalisyon Sagip Mindoro, another environmental group on the island, also lauded the passing on committee level of the two House Bills. They said that this will bolster the campaign for the protection of the island's fragile environment.

"We are home to different species of flora and fauna, some of which are endemic to the island like the Tamaraw (scientific name: *Bubalus mindorensis*) and mining activities threaten their existence. We commend the bills of the two lawmakers, and we will support efforts for their passing into a law," Carlo Alcobia, lead convenor of the coalition, said in a message. **IRE JOE V.C. LAURENTE**



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Tax court stops mining firm levy

SMI holds a financial, technical and assistance agreement to explore for and extract copper deposits within Tampakan in South Cotabato, Kiblawan in Davao del Sur, Malungon in Sarangani, and Columbio in Sultan Kudarat.

BY GILBERT GORGONIO

GENERAL SANTOS CITY — The Court of Tax Appeals has ordered the local government of the town of Tampakan in the province of South Cotabato to stop collecting business taxes from a mining company.

The CTA enjoined the local government unit last 10 February from levying taxes on Sagittarius Mines, Inc. until the case it filed against the company has been settled with finality.

Said promulgation also granted petitioner Sagittarius Mines its urgent motion for the issuance of a suspension order, with prayer for a preliminary injunction and temporary restraining order.

SMI holds a financial, technical and assistance agreement to explore for and extract copper deposits within Tampakan in South Cotabato, Kiblawan in Davao del

Sur, Malungon in Sarangani, and Columbio in Sultan Kudarat.

The mining firm challenged the assessment made by the Tampakan LGU that was based on Municipal Ordinance 66. Sagittarius was told to pay P401,454,015 as business tax.

In the last quarter of 2022, the Tampakan government ordered the mining firm to cease from operating due to alleged non-payment of business taxes.

At the time, the mining firm was yet to commence operation after being blocked by the South Cotabato provincial government for allegedly resorting to open pit mining.

If it goes into full operation, Sagittarius's operation in the province would be one of the biggest in the mining sector with an investment of \$5.9 billion being seen.

The Tampakan LGU was yet to respond to the development at press time.



Deadly accident exposes danger in China's rush to mine more coal

A DEADLY mine accident in northern China is casting a spotlight on the dangers inherent in the country's effort to prioritize energy security by boosting coal production.

At least six people are dead and 47 missing after a wall collapsed at Xinjing Coal Industry Co.'s open-pit mine in a remote part of Inner Mongolia. Police are investigating the cause of the disaster and have detained several people suspected for being responsible, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

The mine in question has a history of safety violations and was shut down for three years before 2021, when government officials gave the company permission to reopen it and convert it from a below-ground to an open-pit operation, consultancy Fengkuang Coal Logistics said in a research note.

That year, China began a campaign to boost coal production after a shortage of the fuel caused widespread power outages. The efforts paid off, with production jumping 10 percent last year and China getting through the winter without supply disruptions and with ample stockpiles.

But even at the time, industry executives warned that the push to produce more would likely cost lives as companies reopened and expanded smaller mines that, prior to the crisis, had been deemed unnecessary.

Among the safety problems at the Xinjing mine, it faced administrative punishment for not having signs for speed limits and crossings on the main road to the pit, and for failing to have a warning sign in a landslide area, according to Fengkuang.

It was forced to stop production in 2015 for not receiving approval to begin construction and for not implementing environmental impact assessment requirements, the consultancy said.

As rescue crews continue their search for the remaining missing workers, government officials in Inner Mongolia and neighboring provinces have launched safety inspections to try to prevent more accidents. That may slow production in the first quarter, but the impact is likely to be limited as Beijing continues to prioritize producing enough coal to fuel its economic rebound, according to a note from Citic Futures Co.



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GILBERT PERDEZ

Climate actions ng CCC at split project ng DAR

TULOY-TULOY ang pakikipag-ugnayan ng Climate Change Commission (CCC) sa pamahalaang nasyunal at lokal upang mas mapaigting pa raw ang antas ng paghahanda ng mga Pilipino sa panahon ng sakuna o kalamidad.

Ginawa ni CCC Secretary Robert Borje ang pahayag matapos maglabas ng General Flood Advisory ang Department of Science and Technology-Philippine, Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (DOST-PAGASA) dulot ng masamang panahon.

Aba'y ayon kasi sa DOST-PAGASA, ang Eastern Samar, Southern Leyte, Northern Samar, Leyte, Biliran, Samar, Camiguin, Misamis Occidental, Lanao del Norte, Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental, Davao del Norte, Davao Oriental, Davao del Sur, Davao de Oro, Davao Occidental, Surigao del Norte, Dinagat Islands, Agusan del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Maguindanao, at Lanao del Sur ay marapat na maghanda laban sa mabilisang pagragasa ng baha at pagguho ng lupa sanhi ng pag-ulan.

Habang tinitipa ko ang kolum na ito, nagbabala ang ahensya ng posibleng pagkakaroon ng kalat-kalat na pag-ulan sa hilagang bahagi ng Luzon dulot ng amihan at 'isolated at localized thunderstorms' naman sa Palawan, Visayas, at Mindanao.

Nabanggit ni Borje na nakapagtala na raw pala ang National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) ng pagbaha sa 118 lugar sa CARAGA kung saan aabot sa P9.4 milyon ang halaga ng pinsala sa imprastraktura sa Region 11 habang nasa P7.8 milyon naman ang pinsala sa sektor ng agrikultura sa Regions 6, 10, 11, at 12.

Mahalaga nga naman ang patuloy na pakikiisa nating lahat sa climate actions.

Sabi nga ni Borje, sa ganitong paraan, ay "mas masisigurong mapoprotektahan ang buhay, kabuhayan, at kinabukasan ng mga Pilipino laban sa mga epekto ng nagbabagong klima."

Maging ang mga komunidad at local government units (LGUs) ay pinaaalalahan din ng kalihim, lalo na ang mga nasa matataas at mabababang mga lugar, na maghanda sa mga posibleng sakuna gaya ng landslides at flashfloods.

Samantala, mas pinaigting nga pala ng pamahalaan ang implementasyon ng Support to Parcelization of Lands for Individual Titling (SPLIT project).

Ayon kay Presidential Communications Office (PCO) Sec. Cheloy Valicaria-Garafil, ang pagpapatupad daw ng

proyekto ay pinangungunahan ngayon ng Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) na nasa ilalim ng pamumuno ni Sec. Conrado Estrella III.

Katunayan, ayon kay Garafil, natupad na raw ang pangarap ng 1,321 na agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) mula sa Bohol, Cebu, at Negros Oriental na magkaroon ng sariling lupang sakahan sa tulong ng SPLIT project ng ahensya.

Kung hindi ako nagkaka-mali, nasa 1,171.34 hektarya ng mga lupang pang-agrikultura ang naipagkaloob ng gobyerno sa mga benepisyaryo sa rehiyon.

Maliban dito, sinasabing nangako ang DAR na magkaloob din ito ng iba pang tulong sa mga mag-sasaka alinsunod sa direktiba ni Pang. Ferdinand Marcos Jr. bilang parte ng food security agenda ng kanyang administrasyon.

Mabuhay po kayo at God bless!



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Nat-gas shining rock star in PH transit to RE

Everything is theoretically impossible until it is done. – Don't Look Up

ECONOMIC, environmental, and geo-political realities are mainstreaming renewable energy at a pace not seen at any other time in the past, and the trend is manifesting itself in the country.

International Energy Agency chief Fatih Birol said supply security concerns and lower RE costs would become the main drivers of the anticipated, unprecedented growth in renewables over the next five years amid growing demand and economies recovering from the impacts of coronavirus disease 2019, according to an online news wire report.

Renewables are forecast to account for over 90 percent of global electricity expansion over the next five years, overtaking toxic coal to become the largest source of electricity by early 2025.

Sarah Brown, a senior energy and climate analyst at independent energy think tank Ember, noted that fossil fuels do not provide energy security and that renewables do.

Brown said the question is no longer whether the deployment of wind and solar should happen but rather how it can happen much faster and at a greater scale with the removal of existing barriers.

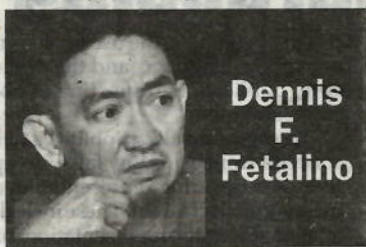
Global RE capacity is set to almost double, increasing by 2,400 gigawatts to reach 5,650 gigawatts by 2027, the IEA said.

The forecast increase in renewables is now 30 percent higher than the growth volumes anticipated one year ago, it added.

Brown claimed that fossil fuels do not provide energy security and that renewables do, noting that: "Gas is no longer viewed as a viable transition fuel in Europe."

PED XING

dftwrit@gmail.com



**Dennis
F.
Fetalino**

But in the country natural gas is the shining rock star as a transition fuel.

In fact, the country's gas consumption outlook remains bullish.

"The outlook for gas consumption remains bullish both (for) reference and clean energy scenarios," Fitch Solutions said. "Overall, the outlook for LNG imports remains bullish."

Under the PEP 2022-2040, the government aims to expand the gas-fired power-generating capacity to 24.3 gigawatts in the Reference Scenario – under which present development trends and strategies continue – and to 18.9 GW in the Clean Energy Scenario from the current capacity of 3.45 GW.

For its part, Prime Infrastructure Capital, Inc. president and chief executive officer Guillaume Lucci said the consortium remains committed to ensure gas supply from the depleting Malampaya gas field.

Prime Infra operates the Malampaya deep water gas-to-power project along with the other members of the Service Contract 38 consortium—UC38 LLC and state firm Philippine National Oil Co.-Exploration Corp..

"We're here to stay, we're here to invest, we're here to increase dramatically the gas production with the extended term of the service contract and resource available and, more impor-

tantly, we are trying to make sure we produce the least cost to consumers," Lucci said at a recent energy forum.

"Our drop-dead day to produce new gas or new well is first quarter of 2026, and we hope we can actually accelerate that as much as possible while doing it safely and reliably," he said.

Energy sec. Raphael Lotilla earlier acknowledged that the "present Malampaya-Camago field is a finite one".

The Malampaya project is one of the country's most important power assets, as it produces natural gas for power plants in Batangas City that account for around 20 percent of the country's total electricity requirements. It had already remitted \$13 billion to the national government since inception.

It began operations in 2001, with the consortium's license for the project set to expire in 2024.

The Malampaya asset is a significant addition to Prime Infra's growing energy portfolio as it reduces the country's reliance on imported fuel and helps drive economic productivity and industrial growth.

Prime Infra's investment in the expansion of Malampaya operations would also be critical in providing the necessary infrastructure to support the development of natural gas in the area, one of the key points defined in the Marcos administration's energy agenda.

"The objective really is to produce gas, and ensure we have the least cost of gas in the country. We have a deep obligation to ensure that," said Lucci.

Fitch Solutions said that with the DoE approval of seven gas-fired power plants with a combined capacity of 7.1 GW, the country's demand for

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Nat gas...

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liquefied natural gas from the power sector could go up to six million tons per year.

The demand excludes requirements from the existing five power plants that source gas from the Malampaya gas field project.

Also, 10 proposed gas-fired power projects have yet to be approved. They have a total capacity of 8.8 GW.

With the expected depletion of the Malampaya gas field next year, Fitch Solutions said the country would become reliant on LNG imports for power generation starting in 2025.

This year, some LNG import terminals would start their operation to supply the gas demand.

Japanese players jumping in

Following President Marcos' visit to Japan, two major Japanese players have signed deals with local energy giants to develop LNG facilities in the country.

The investment and partnership of Japan's largest power generation company with Aboitiz Power Corp. is expected to support the development of the country's power sector.

Aboitiz Group president and chief executive officer, Sabin Aboitiz, announced that JERA bought a 27-percent stake of Aboitiz Equity Ventures, Inc. in Aboitiz Power Corp.

"We welcome JERA's trust and expertise and commitment to help the

Aboitiz Group drive change for a better world by accelerating the Philippine economic growth and promoting the development of clean energy," Aboitiz said.

Aside from being the largest power generation firm in Japan, JERA is also the largest single buyer of liquefied natural gas worldwide.

Aboitiz Power president and chief executive officer Emmanuel Rubio added that JERA's expertise would specifically help the company boost clean energy share in its portfolio and generally support the government's vision for a decarbonized future.

Aboitiz Power eyes clean energy share in its power portfolio to reach 50 percent or 4,600 megawatts by 2030.

"Our new partnership with JERA will be a key enabler in this journey," Rubio said.

Meanwhile, Tokyo Gas Co. Ltd. is investing in an LNG terminal in the country.

The Japanese company is partnering with the Lopez-led First Gen Corp. in an LNG terminal project in Batangas, whose construction is now nearing completion.

First Gen chairman and CEO Federico Lopez joined Tokyo Gas officials in reaffirming their commitment to help assure energy security for the country.

First Gen is a clean and renewable energy company, whose power plants run either on RE, such as hydro, geo-

thermal, solar, and wind; or on nat-gas, considered the cleanest fossil fuel.

These plants have a total installed capacity of 3,492 megawatts.

First Gen's natural gas-fired power plants located in Batangas currently get their fuel from Malampaya gas field off the shores of Palawan.

First Gen and Tokyo Gas are constructing the LNG terminal to insure fuel for nat-gas plants while there is search for new indigenous gas.

In its long-term energy plan, the government aims to expand renewable power capacity from 7.6 GW in 2022 up to 53.2 GW in the reference scenario and 81.5 GW in the CES. //



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Climate feedback loops and slow-onset events

The Climate Change Commission has expressed concern over a study which showed how dangerous climate feedback loops are increasing global warming and risk, causing a permanent shift away from the Earth's current climate.

In a new study published in the scientific journal *One Earth*, researchers identified 41 climate feedback loops, of which 27 are driving up global temperatures while only seven are helping slow the pace of the world climate crisis.

The study was conducted by a group of international scientists from several institutions that include the Oregon State University, Exeter University and Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany.

The scientists explained that climate feedback loops are cyclical chain

reactions that happen when one change triggers further changes, in a process that keeps on repeating itself. Some of these feedback loops drive down warming, but others amplify it.

"Take Arctic ice, for example. Warming temperatures cause sea ice to melt, revealing the dark ocean water beneath. As dark surfaces absorb more heat than reflective surfaces like ice, the ocean warms and more ice melts," they noted.

Climate Commissioner Albert Dela Cruz reiterated his call for united efforts to urgently address the impact of climate change.

Last week, Dela Cruz stressed the need for immediate climate change action to address both extreme and slow onset events or those that emerge gradually over time.

"Climate action in the Philippines must address both extreme and slow onset events. Adaptation and mitigation actions, some of which are

already underway in the country, would reduce vulnerability and future losses if fully implemented," he pointed out.

Slow-onset events, as initially introduced by the Cancun Agreement (COP16), refer to the risks and impacts associated with: increasing temperatures; desertification; loss of biodiversity; land and forest degradation; glacial retreat and related impacts; ocean acidification; sea level rise; and salinization.

In 2009, Congress passed the Climate Change Act creating the CCC to develop policies and coordinate government programs on climate change.

The CCC, in turn developed the National Climate Change Action Plan that serves as a road map for all climate change programs in the Philippines.

Behold God's glory and seek His mercy.

Pause, ponder, pray, and proceed, people.



DLSU STARTUP IMAGINES GREEN FUTURE ONE SHIRT AT A TIME

Each Migliora Eco Polo shirt is made of RPET fabric from recycled plastic bottles

By Jesse Pizarro Boga
@Inq_Lifestyle

They call it the Eco Polo. "It marks the beginning of our sustainable revolution," said Paulo Melvin Teng, an entrepreneurship major at De La Salle University (DLSU).

Together with his teammates Jameson Bactat, Krista Mae Estrada Rebutillo, Kelyn Soriano and Jayzel Marlyse Xu, they contribute a piece to the much-needed conversation on sustainability today. They pooled in their vision and efforts and came up with a brand called Migliora (pronounced *mil-yo-ra*).

"Migliora was formulated during our online classes at the height of the pandemic. In one of our entrepreneurial classes, we were required to submit a business plan. The group has a passion for sustainability and fashion, so why not combine them together?" Paulo said.

Migliora is an Italian word that translates to "improve" or "get better" and it is exactly how the group wants to get business done: in better ways.

They have seen a problem and they want to do something about it.

"We want to lessen the plastic waste and consumption of the community and end the fast-fashion industry's hazardous practices and traditions," Paulo said. "It is clear that there is an excessive amount of plastic waste in our country," he added.

According to a 2021 World Bank report, the country produces over 2.7 million tons of plastic waste annually and more than 20 percent of this pollutes our oceans. Migliora's business is born out of a solid understanding of plastics—a problem but can be a solution in itself.

Paulo and his team jour-

neyed into fashion and sustainability with this in mind.

RPET fabric

"Some businesses utilize *retaso* (scrap fabrics); others upcycle thrifted shirts by manufacturing them into new wearable clothing. For us, we introduce a new life to plastic bottles. We exclusively use recycled polyethylene terephthalate (RPET) fabric which helps decrease plastic

waste and introduce slow fashion into the market," he said.

Each Migliora polo shirt recycles 14 to 18 plastic bottles. The journey of their shirt starts with a piece of plastic being collected somewhere. Paulo and his team work with a supplier overseas for the process of turning plastic into fabric. The fabric rolls are transported to Migliora's temporary ware-

house, which is a house owned by a teammate. They work with partner local tailors in bringing Eco Polo shirts to life.

Each shirt has inspired their shoppers to journey on to sustainability through fashion. Social media and pop-up shops are creating a community among customers who resonate with the message that Migliora brings. The experience is centered around the idea that shopping a wardrobe essential at Migliora means taking home a message on sustainability.

"The message we want to convey to our customers when they shop is the significant impact they leave when they take the first step to sustainability with us. We want them to become environmentally conscious and make conscious decisions starting

with our Eco Polos," Paulo said.

"We urge our customers to keep sustainability and our global goals in mind through small or big actions. We believe in a sustainable future, but we cannot do this alone, and we need to help each other out."

Diverse ideas

A retail transaction is powerful and this is magnified when people do it together. This is why Paulo and his group are also seeking out to explore partnerships with companies who want to practice sustainability when it comes to producing and wearing uniforms.

"Aside from retail customers, we aim to convince other companies to make the switch by offering our Eco Polo as company uniforms. We imagine a major corporation and its employees all wearing eco-friendly outfits to promote sustainability," he said.

The Migliora business journey has been fueled by grit and teamwork. Paulo's group celebrates diverse ideas that make their business thrive.

"One thing that I love about my group is we have diverse and sometimes conflicting views on things. We do not usually agree on everything at once," he said.

It may seem unusual, but Paulo likes how this diversity in thought brings out the best for the work that

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they do together. It is never easy doing business on top of school work but Paulo and his mates make things work for their brand.

"It is both challenging and fulfilling. We feel we're doing something right whenever we

receive positive responses such as a hand gesture of approval, verbal appreciation, a smile. We are reminded that we are in business not just for profit but also to start a change," he said.

He believes that with the growing interest of sustainability in today's conversations,

people are becoming more willing to spend for more sustainable options because they want to make a difference through their purchases.

"Migliora's customers are conscious individuals who are passionate about sustainability and care about the impact their

fashion choices have on the planet. Our goal is to raise brand and environmental awareness to urge people to shift to sustainability."

Migliora wants to step into the future with a vision rooted in contributing to the country.

Paulo said that they want to be a part of a system that pro-

motes sustainability, provides employment opportunities to Filipinos and creates meaningful products.

"We want to be partnered with barangays, schools or institutions to include a segregation system wherein we collect PET bottles to recycle," he said. To

him, this loop will truly make their brand collaborative and connected to the community.

—CONTRIBUTED INQ

Follow Migliora's journey to sustainability at facebook.com/miglioraph; miglioraph.com.



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PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PCG

PHILIPPINE Coast Guard District Southwestern Mindanao personnel conduct simultaneous coastal and underwater clean-up activities starting Friday, 24 February, as part of its 55th Founding Anniversary celebration themed 'Sustainable Coast Guarding through Dynamic Stewardship in Southwestern Mindanao.'



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Global wildlife contaminated by 'forever chemicals'

PARIS, France (AFP) – From pandas to sea lions to tigers, hundreds of wildlife species across the globe are contaminated by potentially harmful "forever chemicals," according to a review of hundreds of peer-reviewed studies.

Over 300 wildlife species showed traces of the nearly indestructible synthetic chemicals, according to a report from the Environmental Working Group's (EWG) PFAS Project Lab.

The mapping of over 125 peer-reviewed scientific studies is the first global scoping of the problem in wildlife, the authors said.

An in-depth investigation in Europe, where more data is available than in other parts of the world, on Thursday revealed so-called perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in 17,000 sites across the continent.

More than 2,000 are classified as hazardous to human health.

"No matter the country or continent, if species are tested for PFAS contamination, these harmful chemicals show up," said the EWG.

The report estimated that PFAS place a burden of tens of millions of euros on European health systems each year.

Blank spots on the global map – notably in Africa and South America – are likely due to a lack of data, according to the report.

Non-degradable repellent PFAS, also known as "forever chemicals," were introduced in the 1940s. The best known is the Teflon used for non-stick cookware.

Persistent chemicals pollution is present in air, water and soil, and has been shown to pose health risks – including cancer – to humans.

The European survey was the result of a months-long investigation by 18 European newsrooms collectively called "The Forever Pollution Project."

'Planetary boundaries'

Their analysis concluded that Europe is far more contaminated by PFAS than previously understood, and that it will cost tens of billions of euros (dollars) to rid nature of these hazardous chemicals.

"They don't degrade in the environment and are very mobile, so they can be detected in water, air, rain, otters and cod, boiled eggs and human beings," the researchers said.

Their investigation found 20 producers of PFAS in Europe and 232

industrial manufacturers – predominantly in Germany – where PFAS turned up in plastics, pesticides and water-proof textiles.

The map also reveals over 2,100 "hotspots" where the concentration of PSAS reached the more than 100 nanograms per litre of water – the health hazard threshold for human health.

Some "forever chemicals" are known to cause cancer and reproductive problems, but little is known about their combined effect.

A study published Wednesday in Environmental Health Perspectives found that exposure to multiple PFAS found in the environment can lead to developmental disorders, cardiovascular disease and many types of cancer.

"Most people carry a mixture of the chemicals in their blood," the study noted.

PFAS emissions are not regulated at a US- or EU-wide level, but the European investigation uncovered an "extensive lobbying process to water down the proposed EU-wide bans".

Last year a peer-reviewed study found that widespread concentration of synthetic chemical pollutants has already spilled deep into the danger zone.