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MINING PORT SA SIBUYAN NI GATCHALIAN ILEGAL

(Romblon News Network)

SABADO / PEBRERO 11, 2023

Editor: Jose Randy E. Hagos

MINING PORT SA SIBUYAN NI GATCHALIAN ILEGAL

Inihayag ni Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) general manager Jay Daniel Santiago na wala silang ibinigay na permit para sa pantalan o daungan na ipinatayo ng William Gatchalian-owned Altai Philippines Mining Corporation (APMC) sa Sibuyan Island sa Romblon.

Sa panayam ng programang 'Dos Por Dos' nina Anthony Taberna at Gerry Baja, sinabi ni Santiago na inatasan na niya ang Port Management Office sa Batangas na siyang may hurisdiksiyon sa Romblon para alamin kung anong nangyari at huwag maglalabas ng kahit na anong permiso hangga't hindi nareresolba ang isyu ng mining company sa Sibuyan.

Ang proseso aniya para makapagtayo ang isang kompanya ng pribadong port o pasilidad ay kailangang kumuha sa PPA ng permit to develop and construct. Kasama rin ang mga clearance mula sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) at sa local government pati na rin ang tinatawag na foreshore lease.

"Ayon po sa ating dokumentasyon po dito sa PPA Batangas, nag-apply po sila, nagbigay po sila ng letter of intent at sila naman po ay sinagot ng PPA Batangas at sinabi po sa kanila na ito po 'yung mga requirements, hindi pa rin po nasa-submit 'yung mga requirements na kailangan,' pahayag ni Santiago.

Hindi rin aniya mabibigyan

ng anumang permiso ang APMC para magkaroon ng kahit na anong port site operation dahil ilegal ito.

"Well, unang-una po as far as PPA is concerned po ano? Hindi po sila mabibigyan ng kahit na anong permiso para magkaroon po ng kahit na anong port site operation dahil nga ilegal nga po or unregistered 'yung pasilidad nila,' ayon kay Santiago.

Kamakailan inutos ng DENR na itigil ang construction at operation ng causeway at ore transport ng APMC sa Sibuyan dahil sa ilan umanong paglabag. Napag-alamang gumagawa ang APMC ng causeway nang walang aprubadong lease agreement at environmental compliance cer-



Editorial

Tagumpay laban sa mga sumisira sa kalikasan

SALAMAT at umaksyon din ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sa matagal nang panawagan na kanselahin ang kasunduan laban sa mga kompanyang lumalabag sa kasunduan sa pagku-quarry at pagmimina. Ang mga paglabag na ito ang pinag-uugatan ng pagkasira ng kapaligiran lalo na sa mga watershed protected areas. Hindi isinasaalang-alang ng mga kompanya ang magiging masamang epekto ng kanilang walang patumang-gang pagku-quarry na maglalagay sa panganib nang maraming tao. Kapag ipinagpatuloy ang walang habas na pagku-quarry at pagmimina, masisira ang kabundukan, guguhong lupa, at babaha ng putik at bato. Malilibing ang mga nakapaligid na barangay.

Pagkaraan ng tatlong taon na kampanya ng Upper Marikina Watershed Coalition, narinig din at natamo nila ang hinihiling para maipatigil ang isinasagawang quarrying sa Upper Marikina watershed sa mga bayan ng Baras at Tanay, Rizal. Kinansela ng DENR ang tatlong mineral production sharing agreements (MPSAs) sa quarry operators.

Sa kautusan na may petsang Disyembre 19, 2022 na inilabas lamang ngayong linggo, nakasaad ang pagkansela sa MPSAs ng mga kompanyang Rapid City Realty and Development Corp., Quarry Rock Group, Inc. at Quimson Limestone, Inc. Ang order ay nilagdaan ni Environment Undersecretary Juan Miguel T. Cuna. Ang kanselasyon ng MPSAs ng tatlong kompanya ay para sa 1,343 ektarya sa mga barangay ng Pinugay, Baras; at Cuyambay at Tandang Kutyo, Tanay.

Nakahinga nang maluwag ang mga residente ng mga nasabing barangay sa aksiyon ng DENR. Hindi lamang ang kanilang kaligtasan ang naisalbak kundi ang marami pang mamamayan sa Metro Manila na maaaring maapektuhan ng baha kung hindi naipatigil ang quarrying.

Nagtagumpay din naman ang mga taga-Sibuyan, Romblon na maipatigil ang pagmimina sa kanilang lugar. Ipinatigil ng DENR ang operasyon ng ALTAI Philippines Mining Corp. dahil sa mga paglabag kabilang ang paggawa ng causeway na walang pahintulot ng environmental clearance. Nilabag din ng kompanya ang kautusan makaraang putulin ang mga kahoy. Nakahinga nang maluwag ang mga taga-Sibuyan sa aksiyon ng DENR.

Ang pagkilos ng DENR sa mga walang pakundangang kompanya na sumisira sa kalikasan ay harinawang pangmatagalan at hindi ningas-kugon lamang.



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VLOGGER LINKED TO WILDLIFE TRADE

IN S. COTABATO, DENR RESCUES 21 BIRDS FROM ONLINE MARKET

By **Edwin O. Fernandez**
@InqNational

KORONADAL CITY—The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Soccsksargen (South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani and General Santos) region is stepping up its monitoring of the wildlife trade, especially on social media, following a raid on the house of a vlogger in South Cotabato province who was illegally keeping birds and offering these for sale.

Khadija Bayam Benpolok, DENR regional information chief, on Friday said that they discovered the online transactions through the raid at Barangay Danlag in Tampakan town on Feb. 1.

Authorities were tipped off about the caged birds in the house of the still unnamed vlogger, prompting DENR regional director Felix Alicer to form teams to investigate and

eventually launch the operation, Benpolok said.

With the backing of local police, DENR personnel seized 21 birds, some of these kept by the vlogger and others held by neighbors. The suspect was not around during the raid and had yet to be found as of Friday.

Benpolok said some of the birds were being sold online while others were used in shows or content on social media that were produced to demonstrate bird trapping, hunting, and making of birdcages and traps. A social media channel featuring this content has at least 22,000 subscribers, he said.

In cahoots with hunters

Mama Samaon, DENR assistant regional director for technical services, said the vlogger was in cahoots with local bird hunters whom they would identify once the complaints were filed.

Among the birds recovered are crested goshawk and sev-

eral short-billed brown doves.

The rescued birds have been turned over to the DENR Regional Wildlife Rescue Center in Lutayan town, Sultan Kudarat province, for proper care and temporary custody before these are released back to the wild.

Samaon said the suspects violated Republic Act No. 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act, which prohibits the collection, hunting or possession of wildlife.

"We are already preparing the filing of criminal charges against the suspects," Samaon said.

Juvenile wild birds are sold between P2,000 and P5,000 in Tampakan. The price goes higher depending on the species and when the bird is an adult, according to the environment officials.

"We advise the public not to capture any wildlife species. Let them live in their natural habitat," said forester Dirie Macabaning, chief of the DENR enforcement division in the region. INQ



Cagayan students pledge wetlands protection

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) enlisted about 100 students through the Cagayan provincial environment and natural resources office for the protection and restoration of wetlands in the town of Buguey in Cagayan province.

Students and teachers from Leron Elementary School and Minanga Elementary School have

committed to join the DENR's effort to protect said 500-hectare wetlands which compose 80 percent of the municipality's total land area.

Carolyn Tumamao, DENR Region 2 information officer, said the "Pinas: The Basura Buster" (PBB) program helped the students pledge to practice solid waste management by proper segregation at the source, as well

as proper disposal and recycling to keep wastes from going to the different bodies of water.

PBB is a mascot that serves as an icon for the DENR's solid waste management program.

The PBB environmental education session on Feb. 2, 2023 also kicked off this year's celebration of World Wetlands Day as part of the Buguey Wetlands Awareness Campaign.

Meanwhile, a tree-growing activity was conducted around Bangalao Lake in Santa Teresita town in Cagayan. It was spearheaded by the community environment and natural resources office (Cenro) in Aparri town with the participation of Cenro employees, local government unit personnel, *barangay* (village) officials and residents.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO



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PH, JAPAN INK 35 INVESTMENT AGREEMENTS

**By Julie M. Aurelio
and Alden M. Monzon**
@Team_Inquirer

TOKYO—Halfway through his five-day working visit here, President Marcos witnessed the signing of 35 letters of intent (LOIs) with several Japanese companies, assuring them of ease of doing business in the Philippines.

In a speech before business leaders on Friday morning, the President said “We have eased restrictions on foreign nationals to own businesses in the Philippines. The Philippine government is also enabling cross-cutting mechanisms to ease investments. Very soon, you can expect reduced transaction costs in doing business in the Philippines.”

Development deals

These efforts, he said, were “vital and game-changing reforms to improve the country’s business environment.”

“It is our hope that companies such as yours will not only find the Philippines to be an attractive investment destination. We are designing our efforts to encourage you to stay and find our country to be a place where your businesses

will thrive,” he added.

The 35 LOIs between the Philippines and Japan included partnerships in manufacturing, infrastructure development, energy, transportation, health-care, renewable energy and business expansion to improve foreign investor confidence.

The signing came a day after Marcos sat down for a bilateral meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

Marcos expressed hope that Japanese investors would “find it encouraging that our national priorities align with building an enabling environment for companies like yours.”

He cited the passage of economic liberalization measures—such as the Retail Trade Liberalization Act, Public Service Act, Foreign Investments Act and Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises Act—as steps taken by the government to “offer more encouraging incentives to support foreign businesses, including those from Japan.”

Marcos later attended a networking event organized by the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Japan-Philippines Economic Cooperation Committee, Mitsubishi Corp. and Marubeni Corp.

He was accompanied by former President and Senior Deputy Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri, Speaker Martin Romualdez, Special Assistant to the President Secretary Antonio Lagdameo, Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual and Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno.

‘Shared value’

Several Japanese companies expressed their support for the Marcos administration’s development agenda: the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sumitomo Chemical Co., Ltd., Sompo Holdings, Inc. and Marubeni Corp.

Masakazu Tokura, Keidanren chair and Sumitomo Chemical Ltd. chair, noted that “the Philippines and Japan share a fundamental value of freedom and democracy.”

Marcos said Tokyo’s pandemic assistance to Manila became “central to our policy for the recovery and the transformation of the Philippine economy.”

He said the two countries both saw how their respective micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) went through “a very, very rough time during the lockdowns,” with many going out of business while

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PH, JAPAN INK 35 INVESTMENT AGREEMENTS

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still doing their best to support their employees.

DTI-Jetro accord

Also on Friday, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) reported that Secretary Pascual cosigned agreements with Japanese business representatives.

These include a memorandum of cooperation between DTI and Japan External Trade Organization (Jetro), represented by its chair and chief executive Nobuhiko Sasaki.

A DTI statement listed the 35 signed LOIs involving the following companies and specific business activities: Asti Corp. (for wiring harness manufacturing); Brother Industries Ltd. (printer manufacturing); DoubleDragon Corp./Iwata Chizaki Inc. (hotel construction); Itochu Corp. (pineapple production); Japan Tobacco Inc. (factory expansion project);

Kurabe Industrial Co Ltd. (auto-parts factory); Marubeni Corp. (energy, transport, health-care and afforestation projects);

MinebeaMitsumi Inc. (optical image stabilizer and solar factory); Mitsubishi Corp. (infrastructure, construction, transportation, commercial and real estate development); Mitsubishi Motors Corp. (automobile manufacturing); Nidec-Shimpo Corp. (speed reducer gear manufacturing); Nomura Real Estate Development Co. Ltd./ GT Capital Holdings (property development); Renova, Inc. (renewable energy); Sojitz Corp. (property development and telecommunications project); Taiheiyo Cement Philippines Inc. (kiln renewal, distribution terminal and berth reinforcement project).

Tamiya Inc. (plastic models, RC cars factory); TDK Corp (HDD heads and components project); Toyota Motor Corp. (light commercial vehicle manufacturing project); and Yamaichi Electron-

ics (IC sockets factory); Kawasaki Heavy Industrie /Aboitiz/Amber Kinetics/IKS Co. Ltd. (energy storage technology project); Ubicom Holdings Inc./Advanced World Systems Inc. (software development outsourcing project).

Department of Environment and Natural Resources/Marubeni Corp./Dacon Corp. (joint credit mechanism project); Hitachi, Ltd. and Filinvest Development Corp. (development and desalination facilities for Metro Cebu).

Sumitomo Corp. (North South Commuter Rail/Metro Manila Subway rolling stock project); Oriental Energy and Power Generation Corp./Marubeni Corp. (renewable energy plants).

Murata Manufacturing Co. Ltd.'s (ceramic capacitors factory); Kenko Tokina Co. Ltd. (telescope factory); Hankyu Hanshin Properties Corp. and W Landmark Inc. (REIT coinvestment and real estate joint venture); and JeraCo. Inc. and Aboitiz Pow-

er Corp. (ammonia and hydrogen value chains development and feasibility study on ammonia co-fired power generation).

Sojitz Corp. and Maestro Holdings, Inc. (health-care, logistics, warehousing, education); Vista Land & Lifescapes Inc. and Mitsubishi Estates Co. Ltd. (housing project); and Bases Conversion and Development Authority and New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization (smart mobility development).

MSME support

Also at the signing, Go Negosyo founder Joey Concepcion thanked the Japanese government for supporting MSME development through entrepreneurial mentorship.

Through the Japan-Asean Integration Fund, Tokyo extended a \$681,339 grant to the Asean Mentorship Entrepreneurs Network (Amen), one of the efforts covered by the 35 agreements. INQ



Constitutionally infirm

Last December, the House of Representatives approved on final reading a bill seeking to amend Republic Act 10845, or the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016, to include large-scale agricultural smuggling of tobacco and other tobacco products as a crime of economic sabotage.

With an overwhelming 225 votes, the Lower Chamber approved House Bill 3917 which amends Section 3 of the law enumerating how the crime of large-scale agricultural smuggling is committed.

Under the amendment, the crime of economic sabo-

HIDDEN AGENDA



MARY ANN
LL. REYES

tage through large-scale agricultural smuggling of tobacco, whether manufactured or unmanufactured, including finished products such as cigars, cigarettes or heated tobacco products, with a minimum excise tax and value-added tax payable in amounting to P1 million as valued by the Bureau of Customs, is committed by importing into the Philippines without the required import permit from the regulatory agencies; using import permits of persons, natural or juridical, other than those specifically named in the permit; or using fake, fictitious or fraudulent import permits or shipping documents, among others.

The current law only penalizes large-scale smuggling of sugar, corn, pork, poultry, garlic, onion, carrots, fish and cruciferous vegetables, in their raw state, or which have undergone the simple processes of preparation or preservation for the market, with a minimum amount of P1 million or for rice, with a minimum amount of P10 million.

The bill also amends Section 4 of the law by imposing the penalty of imprisonment of 30 to 40 years, and a fine of twice the fair value and the aggregate amount of the taxes, duties and other charges avoided by the smuggling of tobacco, whether manufactured or unmanufactured, including finished products such as cigars, cigarettes or heated tobacco products. These penalties may be imposed on registered owner and its lessee or charterer of a chartered boat, truck, warehouse or president or chief executive officer of the private port, fish port, fish landing sites, resorts, who knowingly transport the tobacco product subject to economic sabotage. The offense is non-bailable.

The authors of the bill include House Senior Deputy Majority Leader Ferdinand Alexander Marcos and House Majority Leader Manuel Dalipe, among others.

At the Senate, a bill was filed seeking to include the smuggling of tobacco, both in its raw form or as a finished product, as constituting economic sabotage.

Both proposals smack of constitutional infirmity.

This is because Article VI Section 26(1) of the 1987 Constitution itself prohibited the inclusion of riders when it provided that "every bill passed by the Congress shall embrace only one subject which shall be expressed in the title thereof."

In a landmark ruling of the Supreme Court deciding en banc as early as 1968, it explained that this constitutional provision precludes the insertion of riders in legislation, a rider being a provision not germane to the subject matter of the bill.

What is the purpose of RA 10845?

The law, enacted in 2016, is entitled "An Act Declaring Large-Scale Agricultural Smuggling as Economic Sabotage, Prescribing Penalties Therefor and For Other Purposes."

In Section 2, it provides that it is the policy of the State to promote the productivity of the agriculture sector and to protect farmers from unscrupulous traders and importers, who by their illegal importation of agricultural products, especially rice, significantly affect the production, availability of supply and stability of prices, and the food security of the State.

In Section 3, it provided for the crime of large-scale agricultural smuggling as economic sabotage, involving sugar, corn, pork, poultry, garlic, onion, carrots, fish and cruciferous vegetables, in their raw state, or which have undergone the simple processes of preparation or preservation for the market and the acts constituting the crime, while Section 4 provided for the penalties for their commission.

The Revised Penal Code does not define the crime of economic sabotage although there are laws that classify certain acts as economic sabotage. And one of these is RA 10845, which classified large-scale agricultural smuggling as economic sabotage.

Economic sabotage is a serious offense. In fact, RA 10845 imposed the penalty of life imprisonment and fine for large-scale agricultural smuggling.

In statutory construction, there is this rule that where general words follow an enumeration of persons or things, by words of a particular and specific meaning, such general words are not to be construed in their widest extent, but are to be held as applying only to persons or things of the same general kind or class as those specifically mentioned. This rule is called the ejusdem generic rule.

There is also another rule of statutory construction on associated words or noscitur sociis which provides that where a particular word is equally susceptible of various meanings, its correct construction may be made specific by considering the company of terms in which it is found or with which it is associated.

By looking at the purpose of RA 10845 and the enumeration of products that follow the term agricultural in Section 3, it is obvious that what the law seeks to protect is food self-sufficiency and that the term agricultural (products) under this law only encompasses those that we eat, whether in raw form or those which have undergone simple processing of preparation or preservation.

How can tobacco and cigarettes be included in this enumeration, as contemplated by the proposed amendments to

RA 10845?

All these food products enumerated under RA 10845 are essential. Tobacco products are non-essential. Tobacco may be an agricultural product but it is not something that we eat. Tobacco leaves do not undergo simple preparation or preservation to become cigarettes so tobacco products such as cigarettes are definitely non-agricultural and are not within the contemplation of RA 10845.

If the customs bureau and our borders cannot put a stop to cigarette smuggling, that's the problem of law enforcement. After all, there are many laws and regulations already in place to curb smuggling of tobacco products. And yet, tobacco smuggling continues. Amending RA 10845 in a constitutionally infirm manner will not solve the problem.

Mining company cited

Filipino mining company Eramen Minerals Inc. was recently cited for its exceptional commitment, initiative, and innovation in environmental protection, safety, and health management by no less than the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB).

The company was bestowed the prestigious Presidential Mineral Industry Environmental Award (PMIEA) in the surface mining category and first runner-up in the Best Mining Forest in the Metallic Category at the 68th Annual National Mine Safety and Environment Conference in Baguio City.

In 2021, Eramen launched the Mine Environment Modernization Program which included the development of a new one-hectare forest nursery with a capacity to grow 500,000 seedlings.

The new nursery is also the location of Eramen's forestry research laboratory which was put up to boost the cultivation of high-quality seedlings, particularly the Mindoro Pines, using in vitro germination. The program also included silvicultural training and a waste-to-nutrient project that captures biological macro-elements, such as nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus, and beneficial micro-elements to produce cytokinin enhancers for seedlings.

Eramen has planted over 510,000 trees covering more than 657 hectares in mined-out sites, buffer zones, NGP, and DENR-Eramen bamboo plantation program areas.

In addition to the forest nursery, Eramen also developed an organic agroforestry farm to grow a variety of fruits, vegetables, and other crops. It maintains a program to manage air quality through road watering activities by installing road water sprinklers spanning nine kilometers. Meanwhile, it addresses siltation issues through a combination of mega silt ponds and a company-developed filtration module in all discharge points to filter sediment and fine silts.

Eramen invested P50 million in its mine environmental management for 2021-2022 alone and another P36 million for its social development and management program and CSR projects for the same period.



Economic blueprint envisions sustainable economic growth



President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. (left) leads the launching of the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028.

THE government renews its commitment to sustainable economic growth with the launch of a new economic blueprint that underscores the importance of protecting the environment to achieve its goal of having a prosperous society by 2040.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. unveiled in January 2023 the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028—the blueprint for deep economic and social transformation to reinvigorate job creation and accelerate poverty reduction by steering the economy back on a high-growth path.

The President said this growth should be inclusive—building an environment that provides equal opportunities to all Filipinos and equipping them with skills to participate fully in an innovative and globally competitive economy.

The plan was based on the president's 8-point socioeconomic agenda that tackle immediate, on-the-ground concerns such as high inflation, scarring due to COVID-19 and the tight fiscal space; address long-standing, critical constraints to generating more jobs, quality jobs and green jobs over the medium term; and provide the necessary enabling environment—level playing field and peace and security in the long term.

President Marcos issued Executive Order No. 14 to adopt the plan that will set the Philippines towards becoming an



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upper middle-income country by the year 2025. "But beyond economic development, the plan also focuses on social development and protection, disaster resilience digital transformation and many other things," the President said.

Under the PDP, the government aims to achieve a gross domestic product growth of 6 percent to 7 percent in 2023 and 6.5 percent to 8 percent from 2024 to 2028, following the 7.6-percent expansion in 2022—the fastest since 1976. The plan also seeks to reduce the unemployment rate to a range of 4 percent to 5 percent by 2028 after settling at 4.2 percent in November 2022, the lowest in nearly two decades.

National Economic and Development Authority Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said PDP 2023-2028 would serve as the country's development roadmap that would help improve the economic performance over the next six years.

"While the pandemic exposed the frailties and weaknesses within our system in the past few years, we were able to draw from those lessons and can now move forward with a better sense of what our priorities and urgent needs are," Balisacan said.

The Philippine Statistics Authority reported that the 2022 gross domestic product expanded by 7.6 percent—the fastest in 46 years. This surpassed the government's target range of 6.5 percent to 7.5 percent for the year despite the global headwinds highlighted by higher interest rates and elevated inflation.

"The trajectory of our post- pandemic recovery is undoubtedly promising. Still, we cannot rest easy, knowing that we have much work ahead of us as we strive to sustain and improve our performance," Balisacan said.

"In these next six years, we can look forward to seeing the government take swift and decisive action, with various agencies working in synergy towards our shared goal of significantly improving the quality of life of the Filipino people and working towards a prosperous, inclusive and resilient society," Balisacan said.

The plan clearly and coherently maps out the vision, timeline and strategies for deep and genuine socioeconomic transformation. By 2040, the Philippines is envisioned to be a prosperous, predominantly middle-class society where no one is poor. To push for economic transformation in a post-pandemic context, a favorable business environment is required.

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

Environment protection plays an important role in the development plan. It recognizes the importance of feeding a population of 110 million which is expected to further rise in the future, while sustaining the country's natural resources.

It acknowledges climate change and recommends action to reverse the trend. It noted a dramatic shift in the world's weather patterns, as temperature records have been routinely set every three years since 1981.

The Philippines is considered "one of the most, if not the most, vulnerable countries in the world to the effects of climate change."

WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY APPROACH

Both the government and the private sector have crucial roles to play to mitigate the impact of climate change on the population and the economy.

Strategies in the PDP will support human and social development, including protection from risks and preparation for future economic disruptions.

The government is determined to spearhead a whole-of-nation approach in the implementation of strategies and programs laid out in PDP 2023-2028.

"This has to be a whole-of-government and whole-of-society collaboration for economic transformation," Balisacan said.

"In these next six years, we can look forward to seeing the government take swift and decisive action, with various agencies working in synergy towards our shared goal of significantly improving the quality of life of the Filipino people and working towards a prosperous, inclusive, and resilient society," he said.

President Marcos said "every part of society must be part of this transformation."



LGUs can avail of funds for climate adaptation projects

THE Climate Change Commission (CCC) said that local government units (LGUs) can now submit project proposals to access the People's Survival Fund (PSF), a grant facility enabling them to implement local climate change adaptation initiatives.

The Department of Finance (DoF), chairman of the PSF Board, issued the call for proposals for the LGUs.

According to CCC, LGUs need to complete the following documentary requirements to access the PSF: the letter of intent;

accomplished project proposal template; adaptation references such as climate risk and vulnerability assessments; enhanced comprehensive land use, development plans, local climate change action plan; and the annual investment plan.

The PSF was launched to provide long-stream finance for adaptation projects of LGUs and local community organizations aimed at increasing the resilience of communities and ecosystems to climate change.

Under Republic Act 10174 of 2012, the PSF

is managed by a board, chaired by the DoF, with the Climate Change Commission Philippines, the Department of Budget and Management, the National Economic and Development Authority, the Department of the Interior and Local Government, the

Philippine Commission on Women and sectoral representatives as members.

Submissions can be made through the PSF Board Secretariat in the DoF. The deadline for the call for proposals will be on March 31, 2023.

BELLA CARIASO



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NAVY CLEANUP The Philippine Navy celebrates its 12th Civil Military Operations Group founding anniversary with a coastal cleanup on Friday, Feb. 10, 2023. The event, spearheaded by Sen. Cynthia Villar (not in photo), is also in partnership with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park. PHOTO BY RENE DILAN



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Manila Standard fuels 'IntegriTree' Adopt-A-Tree Program with 11th sowing



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Adopt - A - Tree Program with
11th Sowing

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By Charles Dantes

A SMALL amount of charity and compassion will go a long way in protecting Mother Nature as climate change worsens.

For the past 14 years, Manila Standard has heeded the call of Mother Earth and been a strong advocate of environmental preservation and conservation toward building a brighter future for everyone.

After a long hiatus due to the pandemic, **Manila Standard**, through its corporate social responsibility, held its 11th sowing of the MS "IntegriTree" Adopt-A-Tree Program in Tanay Rizal last September 2022, as it continues to give back to the environment and set a positive example to the community.

In partnership with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office in Rizal, together with the Tingog Partylist and United Riders Charity

Philippines, the tree-planting program was a success as more than 400 bamboo seedlings have been planted along the bank of Lamitan River, within the Kaliwa Watershed Forest Reserve as recommended and advised by DENR.

A symbol of strength, flexibility, and growth, the bamboo has been the ideal image for **Manila Standard's** CSR, as the company resumed adapting, growing, and fortifying its own roots to survive during these trying times.

This 2023, expect a bigger, better Adopt-A-Tree program as Manila Standard vows to expand its ongoing CSR projects to uphold its fight against climate change and light up hope for everyone toward a sustainable and greener future.





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National Scientist Alcala laid to rest

NATIONAL Scientist Dr. Angel Chua Alcala was laid to rest on Friday in Dugaguete City.

A memorial service was held at the Silliman University Church and was streamed live on the Facebook page of the National Academy of Science and Technology.

It was later followed by a state funeral, where his remains were later moved to The Gardens Memorial Park, where he was laid to rest.

Family, friends, colleagues in the academe and government, and marine life advocates gathered to celebrate the life of the late marine scientist, who also served as Environment Secretary and the first chairman of the Commission on Higher Education.

Alcala died on February at the age of 93. **ARIC JOHN SY CUA**



DOF welcomes bill ending 'throw-away culture'

By Julito G. Rada

THE Department of Finance expressed support to proper plastic waste management involving the use of recyclable packaging to put an end to the "throw-away culture."

Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno welcomed the approval of a proposed bill that imposes excise tax on single-use plastics (SUPs).

The House of Representatives approved on third and final reading in November 2022 House Bill 4102 or the Single-use Plastic Bags Tax Act, imposing an excise tax of P100 for every kilogram of SUPs removed from the place of production or released from custody of the Bureau of Customs.

The bill seeks to help regulate the consumption of SUPs as part of the country's efforts to reduce plastic pollution.

Diokno thanked the House under the leadership of Speaker Ferdinand

Martin Romualdez for exercising swift and careful judgment on the approval of the Single-use Plastic Bag Tax Act. The bill was transmitted to the Senate on Nov. 15, 2022.

"This is our contribution to the global movement to reduce pollution, while raising revenues needed to manage economic risks and rehabilitate the country—like hitting two birds with one stone," Diokno said in a statement.

The price of a pack of plastic *labo* bags is estimated to increase by around 75 percent in the first year of the proposed law's implementation, with an estimated decline in volume by around 24.7 percent.

The retail price of *sando* bags is expected to rise 79.3 percent, which is expected to result in a 26.1-percent decline in volume.

The proposed tax will increase yearly by 4 percent beginning 2026, and incremental revenues collected will be allocated to the Department

of Natural Resources' programs for the implementation of Republic Act 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

A 70-percent assumption in collection efficiency will translate into estimated revenues of P38.06 billion for five years of implementation beginning 2023.

If passed into law, the bill will address the long-standing issue of plastic waste management by promoting the use of recyclable packaging, and ending the "throw-away culture."

Studies showed that market-based instruments, such as taxes aimed at discouraging the use of SUPs, proved effective in curtailing plastic waste generation.

In the ASEAN region, Brunei and Vietnam imposed taxes on SUPs. Vietnam saw a 23-percent reduction in daily plastic consumption—from 746 tons a day in 2014 to 577 tons in 2017.

In the United States, Washington D.C., San Francisco and Seattle curbed plastic consumption by 85 percent, 72 percent and 78 percent, respectively after taxing SUPs.

According to the World Bank, the Philippines, China, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam account for 55 percent to 60 percent of plastic wastes entering the oceans. SUPs were also found to be among the primary wastes collected during DENR coastal clean-up campaigns.

ROLE OF LGUS

Diokno also sought the expanded role of local government units in the fight against climate change.

He said LGUs should play a broader role in helping reduce the country's greenhouse gas emissions by teaming up with the national government in implementing "green" programs such as reforestation, rehabilitation and development of mangroves and transitioning to clean and renewable energy sources, to name a few.



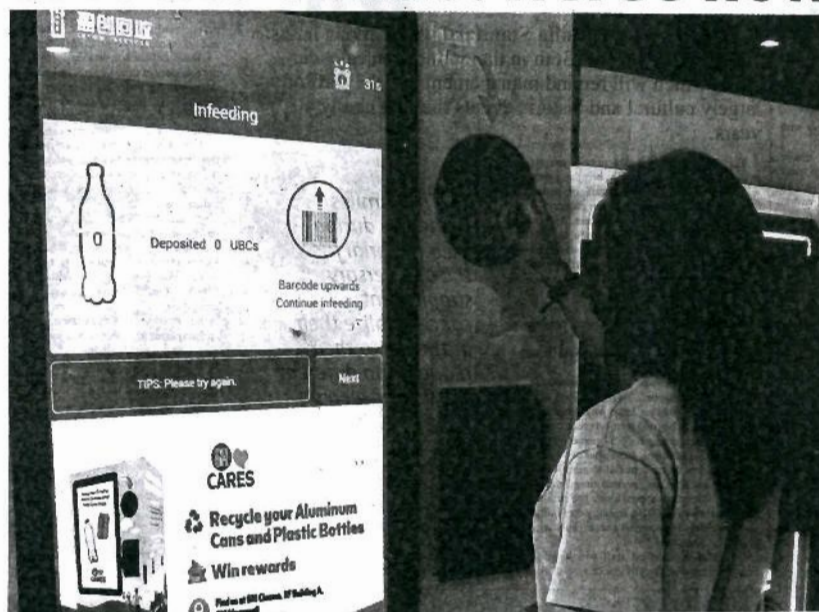
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Recycling definitely hits different with SM's Eco Vendo! Here's how



AS PART of its Environmental Programs on Solid Waste Management, SM Cares recently deployed special recycling booths in two of the biggest SM malls in the country, providing mall-goers with a fun and convenient way of disposing of their recyclable plastic bottles and aluminum cans.

Through the Reverse Vending Machine of SM Cares called "Eco Vendo", the FIRST MALL of its kind in the private sector, SM mall goers can enjoy special discounts in exchange for their PET bottles and aluminum cans. To participate, they can simply deposit these recyclable items in the specially designed vending machines located in specific areas in select SM malls.

For every 1,000 mL worth of polyethylene terephthalate or PET bottles and/or aluminum soda cans deposited, the customer can choose one of the following reward discounts: 15% off at SM Skating, or 15% off at SM Bowling. The machine will then print a voucher that the customer can use to redeem their discount. Customers can use one discount per transaction, and it must be claimed within 60 days from date of issuance, from Monday to Thursday in the following branches: SM Megamall, SM North EDSA, and SM Fairview (for SM Bowling); and SM Megamall and SM Mall of Asia (for SM Skating). Or, if the recycled items are less than 1000 ml, proceeds will automatically go to SM Cares, which will support its various programs.

In partnership with Spurway Enterprises, SM Cares deployed one Eco Vendo each in SM Mall of Asia and SM Megamall, which will be available from January 20 to April 20, 2023. These can be found in the following locations: SM Cinema, 3F Building A, SM Megamall (near Snack Time counter) & SM Cinema, 2F Entertainment Mall, SM Mall of Asia (near Snack



An SM employee & mall goer trying out the new SM Eco Vendo located at SM Mall of Asia and SM Megamall

Time counter). "With the continued degradation of our environment due to the global waste crisis, we need to ramp up our efforts to mitigate it. Every little thing counts," said Program Director for SM Environment and Sustainability Engr. Liza Silerio. "Through our Reverse Vending Machine project, we want to communicate to our mall-goers that properly disposing of even just one plastic bottle already makes a difference."

"By doing this, participants can also avail of rewards they won't get anywhere else. But of course, nothing can be as rewarding as everyone being able to enjoy their right to a healthy environment," she added.

Other sustainability projects of SM Cares include the Trash-To-Cash Market where individuals can drop off their recyclable waste such as paper and plastic in exchange for cash; the Plastic Waste Collection Program in partnership with NGO HOPE that aims to help redirect plastic waste

from ending up in landfills; and the Electronic Waste Collection Program where individuals can bring in their old gadgets and other e-waste for proper disposal by accredited hazardous waste collection partners, just to name a few.

These initiatives align with many of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including "SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation," "SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities," "SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production," "SDG 13: Climate Action," and "SDG 14: Life Below Water."

SM Cares is the corporate social responsibility arm of SM Supermalls, responsible for initiatives that promote sustainability and the development of the community, including programs on Women and Breastfeeding Mothers, Persons with Disabilities, Senior Citizens, and Children and Youth, as well as the Bike-Friendly SM initiative, in addition to its Programs on Environment.



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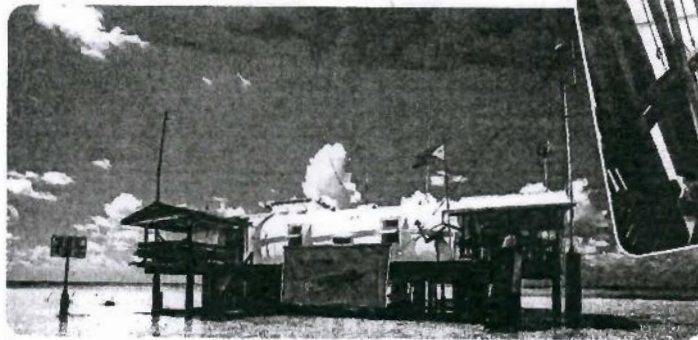




MPIF, TMO partnership strengthens Tubbataha Marine Conservation



Tubbataha Marine Park Rangers



Tubbataha Ranger Station pre-December



Wreckage of Tubbataha Ranger Station after December weather disturbance

METRO Pacific Investments Foundation, Inc.'s (MPIF) commitment to support the conservation of the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park and World Heritage Site (TRNP) has reinforced its Biodiversity and Habitat Protection, Research, Monitoring, and Restoration program by providing the necessary funding to mobilize ecosystem research, monitoring, and enforcement.

From January to September 2022, MPIF has funded two of three of the six annual relieving trips for marine park rangers, including their corresponding subsistence allowance. MPIF's financial support has also allowed for the Tubbataha Management Office (TMO) to pursue its water quality monitoring and beach forest reforestation initiatives, as well as its equipment and supplies procurement.

"MPIF's commitment to Tubbataha recognizes that strengthening its marine conservation includes supporting the stewards who work in service of the environment," said MPIF President Melody del Rosario. "Safeguarding the Philippines' Crown Jewel should be a collective effort inclusive of all stakeholders and thus benefiting the common people."

This partnership between MPIF and TMO envisions to result in the improved conservation and protection of Tubbataha by determining ecosystem health, generating sound scientific information, serving as a basis for formulating proactive strategies, measuring biophysical indicators of management effectiveness, and ensuring the Park's integrity and safety.

ON ENFORCEMENT AND ECOSYSTEM RESEARCH

TRNP was named a Ramsar site—a wetland site of international importance—by the Ramsar Convention or "The Convention on Wetlands", an intergovernmental environmental treaty established in 1971 by UNESCO. The Convention provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

Placing more importance to this integral biodiversity location, enforcement is one of the key elements in protecting and conserving the TRNP. Beyond funding three relieving trips conducted last April 11, June 8, and December, MPIF financed the subsistence allowances for 51



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marine park rangers who were assigned to the park from January to December.

Aside from law enforcement, they were tasked to monitor the population of giant clams, deploy and check the hydrophone, monitor the reefs for bleaching and crown-

of-thorns starfish infestation, conduct monthly turtle surveys, check the status of the seabird nesting structures, conduct monthly distance and quarterly direct counts of seabirds, conduct surface and coastal clean-ups, maintain equipment

and lighthouse in South Islet, repair and maintain the ranger station, and maintain moorings.

Water quality monitoring and beach reforestation initiatives were conducted to fulfill their ecosystem research and

monitoring initiatives. With the assistance of the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) staff, water samples and situated water parameters were collected from the 20 monitoring sites on the reef, inside the lagoon, and in the buffer zone of the park.

The parameters collected included temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, total dissolved solids, conductivity, and salinity. Water samples were taken to the PCSD Environmental Laboratory for analysis.

Since the saplings planted in Bird Islet in 2021 did not thrive due to the lack of fresh water, excessive pressure from seabirds, and disproportionate amount of sea spray due to rough seas, TMO partnered with residents of Cagayancillo to propagate beach forest trees for planting in Tubbataha during the season. MPIF defrayed the costs of propagation, transportation, and planting of the saplings.

“Our partnership with MPIF has ensured that we continuously value Tubbataha as an integral site for Philippine marine biodiversity. The initial stages of our collaboration have already resulted in beneficial initiatives and we look forward to pursuing equally important efforts for the coming years,” said Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park Protected Area Superintendent Angelique Songco.

At Christmastime, monster waves and winds battered the 23-year-old ranger station so that marine park rangers had to be evacuated to safety by the Western Command. MPIF committed to provide an additional PIM this year for the repairs of the heavily-damaged Tubbataha Ranger Station.

The new ranger station complex will include the ranger quarters, a research station, and a helipad.

Shore It Up!’s commitment to Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park is aligned with Gabay Kalikasan, one of the MVP Group’s Gabay Advocacies for a Sustainable Philippines. It is also in line with MPIC’s efforts to contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly SDG 14 Life Below Water, 15 Life on Land, and 17 Partnerships for the Goals.

This partnership bolsters MPIF’s role alongside MPIC, as the largest catalyst for a Sustainable Philippines, aimed to improve the lives in the country through providing essential services and mobilizing advocacies that uplift the quality of life of all Filipinos.



Firms adopt ESG standards to drive sustainability agenda

By Jenniffer B. Austria

ENVIRONMENTAL, social and corporate governance or ESG is becoming a major influence on the way Philippine conglomerates and core subsidiaries operate, enabling them to rise above challenges and address the needs of their stakeholders amid the pandemic.

Many publicly listed firms, including Ayala Corp., SM Investments Corp. and JG Summit Holdings Inc., have committed to adopting ESG standards that support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Ayala Corp, which has investments in property, banking, telecom, power generation and automotive businesses, announced its commitment to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

It also plans to finalize its Net Zero Roadmap by end of 2023. This encompasses full accounting and validation of emissions, intervention assessments and setting science-referenced targets for each business unit.

AC is bringing new technologies to expand access to sustainable energy and mobility. It is also adopting a mindset of stewardship and a guiding principle of creating shared value that will pave the way towards long-term resilience, sustainability and equality.

The conglomerate's power generation arm ACEN Corp. targets to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This will involve the early retirement of its remaining coal plant by 2040 and transitioning the company's generation portfolio to 100-percent renewable energy by 2025.

Ayala Land Inc. made bolder commitments of reducing and removing 100 percent of controllable emissions within the group by 2030 and reaching net zero emissions by 2050.

Automotive unit AC Motors announced plans of selling electric vehicle Kia EV6 this year, while ALI started operating EV charging stations across malls, offices and estates.

SM'S INITIATIVES

SM Investments Corp., one the biggest conglomerates in the country, is focusing its initiatives on incorporating sustainability and resiliency strategies across its various projects.

It allocated 10 percent of its capital expenditure into incorporating disaster resiliency and sustainability in its infrastructure designs, disaster preparedness of communities and forwarding disaster resiliency advocacy among local governments and international communities.

SM Prime Holdings Inc., the conglomerate's property and mall developer, plans to increase the renewable energy utilization of its property portfolio to 50 percent.

JG SUMMIT'S PROGRAMS

Another major conglomerate that is accelerating its sustainability approach to emerge as a stronger business post-pandemic is JG Summit Holdings Inc., which has substantial interests in food manufacturing and agro-industrial and commodities, real estate and hotels, air transportation, banking and petrochemicals.

JG Summit said its sustainability agenda is ingrained in its five-year business strategy as it aims to accelerate and transform its operations in the new normal.

The group is expanding its low-carbon operations and strengthening its climate-related risk management across core businesses.

Its malls and manufacturing facilities, both here and abroad, have switched to greener energy sources to help cut down greenhouse gas emissions.

Robinsons Land installed rooftop solar panels in 24 Robinsons Malls, which are capable of generating 30.79 megawatts in total, while Universal Robina Corp.'s plants in Laguna and Thailand have rooftop solar panels with a combined capacity of 7 megawatts, generating 3,490.83 megawatts-hour of renewable energy.

Cebu Pacific, its airline unit, is modernizing its fleet and improving fuel use by refueling with Airbus A330neo aircraft, which consumes 25 percent less fuel than the previous generation aircraft.



Top ecotourism awards given in the first global green travel mart in Silang, Cavite

GUESTS and participants from all over the world will witness rites to award the winners in the AEN (Asian Ecotourism Network) International Ecotourism Awards. These are aimed at recognizing best practices in ecotourism that works at conserving the environment while aiming at socially and economically sustaining the well-being of the local people.

The global selection is one of the highlights of the world's first International Ecotourism Travel

Mart (IETM) which takes place in Silang, Cavite, Philippines from March 29 to April 2, 2023.

Finalists under nine categories were announced last December in Seville, Spain during Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) conference in Seville, Spain on December 12, 2022 and spearheaded by Masaru Takayama, chairman of the AEN.

AEN is a co-organizer of the IETM, together with the Silang-based International School on Sustainable Tourism. AEN is the Asian

initiative of the Global Ecotourism Network based in Costa Rica.

The Philippines's Ten Knots Development Corp. which owns and operates the Palawan resort El Nido and the Lio Tourism Estate are finalists in three categories.

Finalists for the category Destination Governance are South Korea's Ulsan Metropolitan City and Taiwan's North East and Yilan Coast National Scenic Area Administration; for Sustainable Building are Sukau Rainforest Lodge in Malaysia, and Howard Restor Xitou in

Taiwan; for Community Benefit are Sukau Rainforest Lodge, Feynan Ecolodge in Jordan, Wando County and Gudeuljangnon Conservation Council, South Korea; for Climate Action are Ulsan Metropolitan City and Feynan Ecolodge; and for Biodiversity Conservation are Ten Knots Group in the Philippines, Taehwa River Ecotourism Association in South Korea.

Finalist for the category Waste Management is the Lio Tourism Estate in the Philippines; and for Ecotourism Promotion are Ten

Knots Group, and Japan National Tourism Organization; for Environment Leadership are Taiwan Ecotourism Association and Jeju Ecotourism Association in South Korea; for Innovative Ecotourism are Wando County and Gudeuljangnon Conservation Council, Taiwan Ecotourism Association and Toucheng Leisure Hotel in Taiwan; and for Community Champion, the Wando County and Gudeuljangnon Conservation Council.

IETM program and activities include the following: buyers and sell-

ers mart for ecotourism packages and related services; exhibition of ecotourism, green technology, and environment-management and conservation related programs, services and a market place to buy beautiful green and sustainable products from different regions; and a two-day forum that covers the A- to-Zs of ecotourism.

IETM will have over 21 countries in participation.

More details available on its website www.internationalecotourismtravelmart.com.



Humanity: Biggest obstacle to climate change

Why is it so difficult to tackle climate change?

Sixty years ago, the Club of Rome's report "Limits to Growth" already projected how human activity was going to change the planet, heating up the climate through carbon emissions that would raise the sea level, change the weather, and damage food, water, and natural resources.

Since most people do not understand how their individual activities change the planet, scientists worked hard to provide more evidence, but economists thought they had a perfect market solution. If carbon markets can be created to price carbon costs and benefits, emitters could pay those who are willing to sequester carbon at the right price. Unfortunately, carbon markets are still nascent in most countries and are so fragmented that their impact is limited. People don't trade carbon if they don't understand it.

Dealing with climate change is a complex system change. This is tough because everyone is connected or interdependent in this complex world. This leads to "collective action traps." Human beings find it difficult to work together because of different values, objectives, and circumstances. Each expects the other to act, whereas if all do not cooperate, nothing will change. Like a network of individuals bound to each other, one virus can take the whole network down. This inability to act is called the "tragedy of the commons" because individuals, for their selfish actions, destroy the commons, or what is considered public good.

When the corporate world adopts ESG (environment, society, and governance) standards to improve corporate social responsibility (CSR), it forgets that all three are entangled together. Fundamentally, poor human governance is actually the evil that creates environmental destruction and social injustices.

United Nations special envoy on climate action Mark Carney identified what he called the "tragedy of horizon," namely, people cannot cooperate because of different time

COMMENTARY

ANDREW SHENG

horizons. Profit-motivated companies are reluctant to cut carbon emissions because they involve additional costs. Corporate quarterly and annual financial reporting cycles mean that CEOs whose bonuses are tied to short-term profits decline long-term investments for the future.

Similarly, few politicians in a democracy will make very tough decisions for the long term because they all face electoral cycles of not more than four to five years. In seeking popularity, they will not act to inflict pain through tougher regulations or higher taxes. The tragedy of horizons almost guarantees that long-term or public interests will be sacrificed for short-term gain.

All these explain why governments and corporations find it hard to change. However, communities (either urban or rural) that face the consequences of climate change, such as those hurt by wild forest fires, rising seas, food shortages, water pollution, etc., are more driven to work together when they identify common threats. The bottom-up approach works better because those who are most directly affected by climate threats have a common fate and therefore are incentivized to work together to meet these challenges. On the other hand, governments and corporations are hierarchical, divided into top-down bureaucracies that have few incentives to work together because each seeks to deliver partial results for their own vested interests.

The tragedy of horizons reveals a fundamental mismatch of different cycles. What goes around must come around—meaning that there are consequences for any action. Agricultural communities work together because planting any crop works in cycles and seasons. You cannot rely on too many chemi-

cal fertilizers or pesticides without polluting or poisoning the crops. Grain crops like rice and wheat or vegetables can be planted once or twice a year. Fruit trees and trees cultivated for their wood have cycles that last decades, since the former may take four to five years before they bear fruit, and commercial forests may take much longer, requiring planned cutting, planting, and replanting. Indigenous farmers know that you cannot rely on monocrops, which kill the soil, and that diverse crops, as well as crop rotation, would regenerate the soil.

The real barrier in tackling climate change is therefore high population *Homo sapiens*, a species that has grown to become a monoculture that is killing biodiversity through the overconsumption of natural resources. Indigenous people have always lived with nature. Life is a cycle from dust to dust, but death returns our physical body to the soil, so that microbacteria, viruses, and fungi replenish the soil from which other plants, worms, and life regenerate. Tackling climate warming and biodiversity cannot be two separate tracks, as is being done through COP27 in Egypt and COP15 on biodiversity in Canada.

When individuals, communities, corporations, and states want to deal with climate action, they only have to look in the mirror as to the major culprits. Until we become aware that we, the collective humanity, are the ultimate threat to our own existence, through either nuclear war or wanton waste of what nature provided, we will never stop climate warming.

Life begins with a single cell, and is a journey from life to death to renewal. Not dust to dust, but soil that nurtures life to soil. Destroy that diversity, and we destroy ourselves as part of that diversity. *Asia News Network*

Andrew Sheng is former chair of the Hong Kong Securities and Futures Commission.

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