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DepEd, UN promote forest conservation with Fil. kids

FILIPINO children will soon learn the vital link between a healthy forest cover and steady food supply through the United Nations' (UN) Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

VICE President and Secretary of Education Sara Duterte welcomes FAO representative Dr. Lionel Dabbadie. OFFICIAL FACEBOOK PAGE OF INDAY SARAH DUTERTE

Dubbed as "Forests for a Sustainable Future: Educating Children," Vice President and Education Secretary Sara Duterte said the program would "create opportunities" for her department and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to work with FAO on sustainable forest management.

"In the Department of Education [DepEd], we have...many [underutilized agricultural and fishery high schools] with regard to the properties that they own," she said during the visit of Dr. Lionel Dabbadie, UN's FAO country representative.

She mentioned visiting a school in Leyte with around 6 hectares of land area; however, it only has 1 to 3 hectares planted with vegetables due to fund constraints.

With the project, the Education chief added that students may learn about sustainable management of forests, food production and food security, among others.

"Through interactive learning approaches and the development of strategic education modules, the project will equip younger generations with the necessary skills and knowledge to address current food production, distribution and nutrition challenges," Duterte said.

Stephanie Sevillano/PNA

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Villar wants graduating students to plant trees

With almost two million students graduating from senior high school and college annually, Sen. Cynthia Villar filed Senate Bill 2228, an act requiring all graduating senior high school and college students to plant two trees each as a civic duty for environment protection and preservation.

"With an estimated two million students graduating from senior high school and college annually, the Act could potentially add about four million trees to our forest cover each year, fostering an environment-conscious mindset in our young citizens, while significantly contributing to reforestation. It outlines the youth's crucial role in nation-building and their holistic development, alongside the State's commitment to secure a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature," Villar said in her explanatory note.

The senator explained that forests serve as shield from natural disasters, ensure water and food security, shelter diverse ecosystems and preserve rich indigenous traditions.

"Our forests, integral to the country's ecological balance, are experiencing a decline at an alarming rate, with the Forest Management Bureau reporting an annual loss of approximately 47,000 hectares," she added.

"It is, therefore, a matter of urgency that we restore our forest cover, not just for environmental integrity, but also for our survival and sustainability. As we are now undergoing the UN Decade of Ecological Restoration, this legislation serves as a significant step in our battle against climate change and our pursuit of sustainable development," she said.

She noted the bill will nurture in our youth a sense of responsibility, encouraging their active engagement in crucial environmental and sustainability initiatives, which is a counterpart measure of House Bill 978 filed by Rep. Mark Go, chairman of the committee on higher and technical education in the House of Representatives.

– **Cecille Suerte Felipe**

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Bill to require tree-planting in schools

A BILL requiring all graduating senior high school and college students to plant two trees each as a civic duty for environment protection and preservation has been introduced by Sen. Cynthia Villar.

In the explanatory note of Senate Bill (SB) 2228, or the "Graduating Students for Reforestation Act of 2023," Villar said the Philippine Constitution recognizes the fundamental roles that both the youth and the environment play in the nation's present and future.

"It outlines the youth's crucial role in nation-building and their holistic development, alongside the State's commitment to secure a balanced and healthful ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature," she added.

Villar is the chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change.

With an estimated 2 million students graduating from senior high school and college annually, she pointed out that the Act could potentially add about 4 million trees to the country's forest cover each year, fostering an environment-conscious mindset in young citizens, while significantly contributing to reforestation.

Villar said Philippine forests are experiencing a decline at an alarming rate, with the Forest Management Bureau reporting an annual loss of approximately 47,000 hectares.

She also said these forests shield the country from natural disasters, ensure water and food security, shelter diverse ecosystems, and preserve rich indigenous traditions.

"It is, therefore, a matter of urgency that we restore our forest cover, not just for environmental integrity, but also for our survival and sustainability," the senator explained.

As the country is observing the UN Decade of Ecological Restoration, Villar said, her proposal serves as a significant step in the battle against climate change and pursuit of sustainable development.

"It nurtures in our youth a sense of responsibility, encouraging their active engagement in crucial environmental and sustainability initiatives," she added.

SB 2228 is a counterpart measure of House Bill 978 filed by Rep. Mark Go, chairman of the Committee on Higher and Technical Education in the House of Representatives.

JAVIER JOE ISMAEL

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Pangasinan ventures into salt production

BY GABRIEL CARDINOZA

LINGAYEN, PANGASINAN: To produce more and better quality salt, the provincial government here will be introducing innovations in salt production when it begins to operate a salt farm in the coastal town of Bolinao in July.

Former board member Von Mark Mendoza, who is now Gov. Ramon Guico 3rd's special assistant, said that the provincial government will be replicating salt production practices they have observed during a recent benchmarking trip to Surabaya, East Java in Indonesia.

The provincial government ventured into salt production after Guico signed a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in December that authorized the provincial government to manage a 473-hectare foreshore area in Barangay Zaragoza in Bolinao for salt production.

The area, which used to be a salt farm operated by the Pacific Farms Inc., was the country's largest salt producer, contributing up to 25,000 metric tons (MT) a year to the country's total salt production.

The DENR closed the salt farm in February 2021 after the company's lease contract expired and was not renewed.

"By July this year, we will start our preliminary activities in the farm so that by October, we will already start harvesting salt," said Nestor Batalla, assistant provincial agriculturist.

Mendoza said that in terms of innovation, the provincial government will be using the "tunneling style" of production.

"In Indonesia, they cover the salt beds with plastic-roofed tunnels so that even when it rains, they can produce salt," Mendoza said.

Salt production in western Pangasinan towns rely heavily on the sun's heat. Salt is produced after the seawater evaporates from a tiled shallow bed, leaving salt crystals behind.

During rainy months, the salt beds are turned into fish ponds.

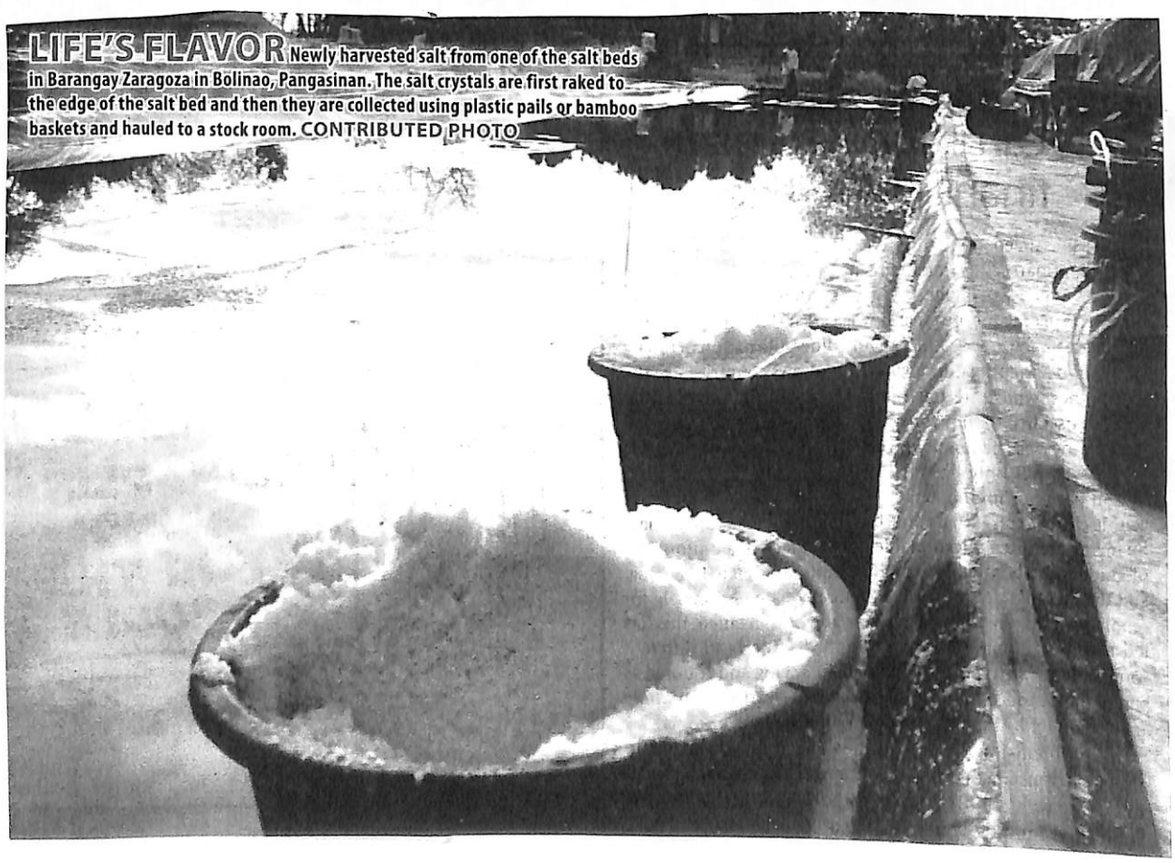
Mendoza also said that another innovation is the use of high-density polyethylene sheets, instead of ceramic tiles, as linings of the salt beds. This way, he said, there will be higher yield and a better quality of salt will be produced.

"With Divine intervention and if our salt production will succeed, we can become a trailblazer. We will be the leading local government unit in the country in salt production," Mendoza said.

Last year, industry experts said the country imported 93 percent of its salt requirements of 600,000 MT per year.

Pangasinan, whose name is derived from "asin," the local term for salt, is the country's largest salt producer.

In 2021, the province produced 64,156 MT from its 1,432.4-hectare salt farms in seven towns and Alaminos City, according to the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist.



LIFE'S FLAVOR Newly harvested salt from one of the salt beds in Barangay Zaragoza in Bolinao, Pangasinan. The salt crystals are first raked to the edge of the salt bed and then they are collected using plastic pails or bamboo baskets and hauled to a stock room. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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Nueva Vizcaya Gov. Jose Gambito (center) checks the solid waste management equipment that uses non-biodegradable materials in producing bricks and hollow blocks. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Local govts to turn waste into bricks

THE Department of Science and Technology in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) provided funds for the province to purchase two sets of solid waste management equipment for bricks and hollow blocks made of waste materials.

The local government units (LGUs) of Ambaguio and Dupax del Sur received the two machines with mixers in separate ceremonies on May 17 and 18, 2023 led by the newly installed governor Jose "Jing" Gambito and Vice Gov. Eufemia Dacayo.

The Provincial Science and Technology Office in Nueva Vizcaya, headed by Director Jonathan D.R. Nuestro, explained that the provision of the solid waste management equipment supports the provincial local government of Nueva Vizcaya's solid waste management efforts.

The initiative's objective "is to minimize residual waste by transforming it into usable and value-added products," Nuestro said.

During the turnover, Nuestro challenged the LGUs of Ambaguio and Dupax del Sur to maximize the potential of the equipment in solving the solid waste issue in their municipalities. He also instructed the operators of said machines to incorporate at least 50 percent of plastic or non-biodegradable materials into the production of hollow blocks, bricks and other related items.

Municipal Councilor Aldwin Aban of LGU Dupax del Sur representing Mayor Neil Magaway assured the attending officials that they would utilize the equipment to its fullest extent, effectively reducing waste in the municipality.

Mayor Ronelio Danao of the LGU acknowledged as a priority "the establishment of a sanitary landfill to address future concerns about solid waste in our municipality."

The turnover ceremonies were also attended by Forester Tito Tanguilig, Nueva Vizcaya Provincial Environment and Natural Resources officer; Samuel Galate, municipal ENR officer designate of LGU Ambaguio; and Melvin Gorospe, municipal ENR officer of LGU Dupax del Sur, among others.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO

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'Few to no oil' coming from sunken tanker – PCG

"Few to no oil" is coming out of the sunken motor tanker *Princess Empress*, according to the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG).

The dynamic support vessel, *Fire Opal*, which was deployed to siphon the remaining fuel oil from the tanker, used remotely operated vehicles and opened the cargo oil tanks on Thursday.

The PCG said around 50 liters of oil were found in the cargo oil tank on the right side of the vessel and 75 liters on the left side.

The agency said the hatch cover of one of the cargo oil tanks is open, but "no oil is coming out."

The amount of oil in the cargo oil tanks in the starboard and port may also have minimal amount of oil, the PCG said.

Two other cargo oil tanks will be checked.

The PCG said it is monitoring oil that may leak from the tanks.

Princess Empress was carrying 800,000 liters of fuel oil when it sank off the coast of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro on Feb. 28.

The PCG had earlier said between 120,000 to 240,000 liters of oil would be removed from the sunken tanker.

It may take 20 to 30 days before siphoning of oil can be completed, the National Task Force on Oil Spill Management said.

– Ghio Ong

Office of Civil Defense chief Ariel Nepomuceno announces during a press briefing that siphoning of the remaining fuel oil by the dynamic support vessel *Fire Opal* from the sunken tanker *Princess Empress* will begin today.

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Innovations for climate action: Biophilic architecture and green buildings

AMBASSADORS' CORNER
AMADO S. TOLENTINO JR.

ONE of the lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdowns mandated in some jurisdictions is the introduction of the use of a biophilic environment that creates good space for better mental health. Singapore led the Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) in introducing biophilic design in recently constructed buildings. It was done by incorporating plots of land greenery by planting trees in addition to infrastructures and utilities like appropriate waste disposal systems.

Biophilic design combines components like lighting, ventilation, natural landscape features and other elements in the building design. It actually connects our human nature of longing for greenery. A pioneer biologist describes biophilic design as an attempt to "replace walls, windows, neon signs with leaves, barks, birds and insects."

As early as 2020, the World Economic Forum had considered real estate development mindful of the environmental impact and practices in incorporating ecological features in its structure giving rise to a healthy environment for everyone by, among others, shielding people from the impacts of global heating.

In the Philippines, the population census revealed that 12.37 percent of the population are concentrated in the National Capital Region. The housing backlog stands at 6.5 million, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which includes the majority of the 3.7 million informal settlers.

Vertical villages can be one of the multiple ways to solve the housing problem while providing a quality of living away from processes of modern technology and modern life which brought about polluted air and water. New subdivisions of house and lot could move away from Metro Manila with options available in Cavite and Rizal.

Green buildings

Green building is the practice of creating structures using means that are environmentally responsible and resource-efficient throughout a building's life cycle from siting to design, construction, operation, maintenance, renovation and deconstruction. This style expands and complements the traditional building design concerns of security, utility, sustainability and comfort. For the US Environmental Protection Agency, green building is also known as a sustainable or high performance building.

Green buildings are designed to reduce the overall impact of the built environment on human health and the natural environment by: 1) effectively using energy, water and other resources; 2) protecting occupants' health thus improving their productivity; and 3) reducing waste pollution by providing self-sustaining environmental features such as recycling of rain water or harvesting energy through solar panels integrated into the structure.

For a developing country like the Philippines, this would entail reforms in Building Code provisions, e.g., better typhoon- and natural disaster-resilient houses, insurance programs against disasters or acts of nature that will effectively implement green buildings for a generational environmental sustainability.

As new concepts, biophilic architecture and green buildings fit well into Philippine laws on property ownership that encourage the use of the environment for a better quality of generational lives. Related laws are those on the Environmental Impact Assessment System as well as on zoning and building requirements.

In connection therewith, mention should be made of Republic Act (RA) 11469 of 2020, otherwise known as the "Bayanihan to Heal as One Act," declaring a national emergency and granting greater flexibility to the chief executive in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. Aside from community quarantine and incentives to health workers, the president embarked on a social amelioration package (e.g., emergency monthly subsidy, availability of health services, provision of personal protection equipment, etc.).

RA 11469 law proved that countries are not powerless against the health impacts of climate change. It showed that a health-related law could be the basis of people's "personalization" of the individual's right to a safe climate.

Biophilic architecture vs green buildings

But what really is the difference

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between biophilic architecture and green buildings? Biophilic architecture is a sustainable design incorporating features in the built environment that brings people to nature together. The difference is biophilia strongly addresses the reconnection with nature design strategy.

Actually, biophilia could be said to be part of the green building design standard given its contribution to the quality of the indoor environment. Consequently, this evoked practical and creative solutions from architectural and design groups. In fact, a Singapore survey of office buildings suggests that green buildings, at least in the minds of users, are biophilic. It stands to reason that making green tools that adopt biophilic designs increase public interest.

Be that as it may, developers complain that there is as yet too little consumer interest in biophilia. There are also comments that green buildings focus on avoidance or on what not to do in the interest of occupants' health and comfort which in some ways affect architectural form and appearance.

Perhaps, there ought to be more ecological education, particularly in Asia, where biophilic design has more qualitative goals, specifically human well-being tied to the presence of natural elements in buildings such as greenery and water or access to attributes and qualities found in nature.

Green buildings and traditional buildings

Moving on, how do green buildings differ from traditional buildings? For one, a green building tries to minimize its environmental impact while still being functional. It usually uses less energy and water compared to traditional buildings. The latter, on the other hand, do not factor in environmental issues on energy conservation during construction.

To be more specific, traditional buildings use materials like cement, brick, glass, steel and wood. Green buildings rely more on durable adobe, renewable wood, rapidly reusable bamboo, stronger recycled steel, to name a few.

In the final analysis, why not resort to practices that promote survivability, self-sufficiency and sustainability as an innovative and transformative climate action.

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Editorial

PH can improve climate finance reporting

AS has been frequently reported, a key feature of the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement on combating climate change was a pledge by the developed nations that are most responsible for the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that are causing it to provide funding for vulnerable nations' climate adaptation and mitigation needs. This allows countries like the Philippines, which are most at risk but contribute very little GHG emissions, to aim for much larger climate actions than would otherwise be possible with their own resources alone.

However, not only have rich nations yet to meet the $100 billion per year funding target — although they are gradually getting closer to it — what contributions they do make to climate financing are often questionable due to a lack of a uniform set of guidelines about what actually counts as climate financing, and the fact that donor nations themselves are responsible for reporting it. As a recent Reuters special report detailed, this has led to a vast number of foreign-funded projects in different countries that are reported as climate financing and counted as part of the donor countries' obligations, but clearly have nothing at all to do with climate adaptation or mitigation.

The problem for the Philippines and other countries in similar circumstances is that the dubious, unorganized system could very well cripple climate response objectives because the needed funding is being wasted on irrelevant or counterproductive activities. As we know, about 72 percent of the Philippines' 75-percent GHG emissions-reduction pledge is "conditional," meaning that it can only be achieved with outside assistance. This is fair, because the Philippines contributes so little to the global problem but "conditional" in no sense means "optional." The Philippines needs to reach the goal because the process of pursuing it encompasses developing more secure and sustainable energy, improving disaster resilience, reducing traffic congestion and creating new areas for economic growth. All that is put at risk if the developing countries are not sincerely doing their part, which unfortunately seems to be the case at the moment.

The Reuters story highlighted several examples of ludicrous projects, totaling $2.6 billion, that the donor countries counted as part of their climate financing commitments. "Italy helped a retailer open chocolate and gelato stores across Asia. The US offered a loan for a coastal hotel expansion in Haiti. Belgium backed the film 'La Tierra Roja,' a love story set in the Argentine rainforest. And Japan is financing a new coal plant in Bangladesh and an airport expansion in Egypt," it said.

From our point of view, the entire system is completely backwards. Beneficiary countries, which best understand their climate response needs, should determine what foreign assistance truly applies to those, rather than accepting donors' definitions. That smacks of colonialism, quite frankly, and it is most unfortunate that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that is ostensibly responsible for overseeing the global effort has not considered the problem.

The Philippines can be a big part of a rational solution to that problem, and perhaps even lead the initiative by example. What that requires is for the government to develop a set of guidelines for defining "climate financing" in this country, detailing what uses of funds (whether sourced from foreign or domestic sources) legitimately address climate adaptation or mitigation needs. Then, funding received, whether in the form of grants, loans, equity investments or other contributions, should be assessed against this framework and regularly reported publicly, as well as to the UNFCCC. The donor countries, of course, will likely continue to follow their own reporting standards, such as they are, but as discrepancies between what recipient countries report and what donor countries claim become more obvious, pressure will be put on them to improve their performance.

Once that begins to happen, the framework developed by the Philippines and its peers can be used as the basis for the badly needed global standard. That is something that should have already been developed in the eight years since the signing of the Paris Agreement, but since it has not been, the Philippines should take the initiative to help create it. Even if that effort is unsuccessful, the country will have at least implemented a framework that more effectively answers its own climate response needs.

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Manila Water invests P4.2 B to expand sewer services

By DANESSA RIVERA

East zone concessionaire Manila Water Co. Inc. is investing P4.2 billion to implement a massive sewer project to improve sanitation and promote a cleaner environment for Metro Manila communities.

The company said the Mandaluyong West–San Juan South–Quezon City South Sewer project forms part of the company's mandate to provide quality sanitation to its growing 7.6 million customers in the east zone of Metro Manila and parts of Rizal.

This is also on top of implementing measures to ensure 24/7 clean water service to its customers.

This 51-kilometer combined sewer system will have a 60-million-liter-per-day (MLD) capacity sewage treatment plant, which is expandable to 120 MLD.

The network will be supported by one major pump station, 13 lift stations, 276 interceptor boxes and a 16-channel interceptor.

Manila Water said the project is expected to serve 704,260 additional residents in Mandaluyong, San Juan and Quezon City by 2037.

With 25 years of service, the water concessionaire said it has already gained considerable ground in its wastewater service in the east zone with 41 wastewater treatment facilities with a total treatment capacity of 410 MLD, a 1,025 percent increased capacity from 1997.

"Wastewater management is an integral part of Manila Water's sustainability efforts. We have the responsibility of augmenting our wastewater services to reach more customers, and as a result, lessening our environmental impact," Manila Water corporate communications affairs group director Jeric Sevilla said.

Currently, the construction of the Mandaluyong West Sewer Network Package 1 is underway in Barangay Hulo, Mandaluyong City.

To lessen impact on traffic along affected roads – Coronado St., F. Blumentritt St., Private Road, Saniboy St., and San Francisco St, the project employs micro-tunneling technology instead of conventional open-trench pipelaying.

Manila Water said construction in these affected roads is expected to be completed by August.

Manila Water serves the east zone of the Greater Manila Area, covering parts of Makati, Mandaluyong, Pasig, Pateros, San Juan, Taguig, Marikina, most parts of Quezon City, portions of Manila, as well as several towns in Rizal.