

22 April 2023 Saturday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**



# DENR urges swift climate action in response to IPCC report

By FRANZ LEWIN EMBUDO



Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Antonia Loyzaga and British Ambassador to the Philippines Laure Beauflis signed the Partnership Agreement on Climate Change and Environment, which lays the groundwork for deeper collaboration between the Philippines and the UK towards enhancing climate resilience and protecting and conserving the environment.



Secretary Antonia Loyzaga, designated head of the Philippine delegation by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., during the 2023 United Nations (UN) Water Conference in New York City last March 22

**T**he urgency for effective climate action by all levels of government and other stakeholders has become even more pressing, according to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), in light of the new report released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

IPCC, the world's official body for the assessment of climate change, recently released its synthesis report confirming that humans are unequivocally increasing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to record levels.

Unless immediate actions are taken, the latest IPCC report said losses and damages will continue to increase in the future, putting the most vulnerable people and ecosystems at risk.

The synthesis report was finalized by the IPCC during its 58th Session held in Interlaken, Switzerland from March 13 to 17.

In a statement delivered on behalf of the Philippine delegation, DENR Undersecretary Analiza Rebuelta-Teh said the report will be crucial in shaping

evidence-informed decisions and actions, particularly for developing and vulnerable countries.

The report highlighted the need to accelerate climate action and adaptation measures. To limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the report stated that deep, rapid, and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions will be required across all sectors.

In its intervention during the week-long plenary session, the Philippine delegation supported the inclusion of emissions avoidance in the report as a recognition of risk- and outcomes-based approaches to curb GHG emissions with the use of the best available non-GHG emitting technologies.

The Philippines also backed the inclusion of green and blue infrastructure, which helps reduce risks from extreme weather events.

## TAKING ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE PARTNERSHIP TO NEW HEIGHTS

Recently, the Philippines, through the DENR, renewed talks on climate and environment issues with the United Kingdom (UK),



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through the British Embassy Manila, during the 3rd UK-PH Climate Change and Environment Dialogue.

The agreement lays the groundwork for a deeper collaboration between the Philippines and the UK towards enhancing climate resilience, driving down global emissions, and protecting and restoring the environment.

Moreover, both countries committed to working together to deliver shared priority objectives: enhancing the resilience of respective economies, ecosystems, and communities; accelerating clean energy transition; mobilizing climate finance; and driving an inclusive, cross-sectoral collaboration to achieve these goals.

"One of our takeaways from COP27, UN Biodiversity Conference in Montreal, and

the UN Water Conference is the need for a comprehensive climate and disaster risk assessment to de-risk investment and accelerate action towards both green and blue economic development," DENR Secretary Antonia Loyzaga said.

By taking all hazards and climate change as risk drivers, Loyzaga added that countries such as the Philippines have the opportunity to address urgent and specific challenges across sectors and scales.

On Nov. 27, 2020, the first PH-UK CCE partnership deal was sealed, serving as a platform to facilitate discussions on shared priorities on climate change and the environment between the two governments, with a joint focus on energy transition, nature-based solutions, and green economic recovery.

In the second partnership

agreement, the Philippines and the UK agreed on a joint work plan that served as a guide in identifying priority areas of collaboration last Feb. 10, 2022.

### COMMITTING TO A GLOBAL WATER RESILIENCY AGENDA

The Philippines also committed to accelerate action towards attaining universal, adequate, affordable, and equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation services during the 2023 United Nations (UN) Water Conference in New York City.

The DENR has established a national natural geospatial database to achieve cross-cutting development goals, de-risk investments, and improve water resource management down to the community level.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has also directed the creation of the Water Resource Management Office (WRMO) under the DENR, an apex body that will integrate the functions of all agencies with water-related mandates.

Loyzaga added that vertical integration is also being pursued to ensure the alignment of local government water-related policies and actions with the Philippine Development Plan.



MANILA BULLETIN  
APRIL 22, 2023

# Climate change: Act now before it's too late

**T**o say it's been hot everywhere the past few days is an understatement.

The fact is, sweltering temperatures have been experienced in various parts of the country for a while, with the highest observed heat index of 47°C recorded in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, on March 25.

On Thursday, April 20, Dagupan City in Pangasinan and the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Pasay City registered a 43°C heat index.

A day earlier, the following areas experienced heat indices of 42°C or higher: Aparri, Cagayan (46°C); Dagupan City, Pangasinan (46°C); Casiguran, Aurora (45°C); Catarman, Northern Samar (43°C); Butuan City, Agusan del Norte (42°C); Davao City, Davao del Sur (42°C); Dipolog, Zamboanga del Norte (42°C); Guiuan, Eastern Samar (42°C); Masbate City, Masbate (42°C); San Jose, Occidental Mindoro (42°C); and Sangley Point, Cavite (42°C).

According to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), heat indices between 42°C and 51°C carry impending "danger" as "heat cramps and heat exhaustion are likely" and "heat stroke is probable with continued activity."

The heat wave doesn't come as a surprise. It's now being experienced around the world.

In fact, recent reports showed that a large part of South and Southeast Asia have been experiencing hotter than normal temperatures. At least 13 people have died in India and two in Thailand due to heatstroke.

Thailand's Meteorological Department told

Agence France-Pressé that temperatures hit a record-equaling 44.6°C in the western province of Tak on April 15, while Bangladesh's temperatures hit 40.6°C—the highest recorded since the 1960s.

The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its 6th Assessment Report, said "human activities, principally through emissions of greenhouse gases, have unequivocally caused global warming" and warned that "every increment of global warming will intensify multiple and concurrent hazards."

To address climate change, the UN panel called for "rapid and far-reaching transitions across all sectors and systems to achieve deep and sustained emissions reductions and secure a liveable and sustainable future for all."

That's easier said than done, but the world has to heed this call for sustainable gas emissions for humankind's survival.

A whole-of-society approach to address climate change is necessary if we are determined to avoid further its catastrophic effects. Everyone—from the government down to the private sector and to every individual—must share responsibility in this endeavor. Without a concerted effort, we are bound to suffer its consequences.

Already, we are now experiencing frequent floodings even in areas that had not experienced this in the past. Now, heatwave has become more intense. What more are we waiting for before we finally move?

Now is the time to act to address climate change. Tomorrow might be too late.



## Recycling coalition steps up on zero-waste commitment



■ DENR officials, led by Undersecretary Juan Miguel Cuna (center), hold up the PARMs EPR Program plan presented by PARMs President Crispian Lao at this year's 22nd signing anniversary of the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act. PHOTO FROM PARMs

THE Philippine Alliance of Recycling and Materials (PARMs), an industry-wide nonstock and nonprofit coalition of stakeholders across the supply and waste value chain, laid out plans to step up their Zero Waste to Nature roadmap, which aims to implement up-to-date sustainable practices and systems across the industry and the country to reduce, collect and recycle waste.

This declaration of commitment, which was first announced in 2020, was reaffirmed in PARMs' recent gathering for the 22nd Signing Anniversary of Republic Act (RA) 9003.

RA 9003, or the "Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000," mandates a necessary policy framework, institutional mechanisms and mandate to the local government units (LGUs) to achieve 25-percent waste reduction through establishing an integrated solid waste management plan based on 3Rs — reduce, reuse and recycle.

The two-day conference recently held in Quezon City discussed the new Extended Producers RA 11898, explaining how enterprises are mandated to divert a certain percentage of their verifiable plastic footprint year on year.

"In 2023, we mark the start of the Extended Producers Responsibility (EPR) journey in achieving a waste-free Philippines," said Commissioner Crispian Lao, vice chairman of the National Solid Waste Management Commission and

the founding president of PARMs.

In 2020, PARMs also announced Zero Waste to Nature: Ambition 2030 to reduce, collect and recycle waste with the 2025 sustainable packaging commitments.

Other industry partners include Plastic Credit Exchange (PCX) and Basic Environmental Systems & Technologies Inc. (BEST) also showcased their programs to aid in post-consumer plastic collection.

"With the commitment and support of the government, private sector, civil society and NGOs (nongovernmental organizations), we can kick-start plastic waste circularity while investing in the waste sector and its many workers and groups." Lao highlighted the opportunity for green jobs.

"We need to change the mindsets fundamentally about plastics and focus where plastic streams are seen as a resource with value. Only with this value proposition is realized, we will see positive change," said Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Toni Lozaga in her keynote address during the conference, as read by Undersecretary Juan Miguel Cuna. "We look forward to the successful implementation of the new EPR Act, and as we continue to harmonize our efforts in reducing the country's plastic waste to achieve plastic neutrality."

THE MANILA TIMES



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## Editorial

### Hope for a mild El Niño experience

**L**AST month, when it became clear that the Philippines will experience the effects of the periodic El Niño climate phenomenon this year, we issued an urgent call to the government to act immediately to prepare for it, as the El Niño typically brings near-drought conditions that threaten our water supplies. It is encouraging to be able to report that the warnings have been taken seriously; while we may not completely escape the ill effects of the El Niño, the steps taken by the government so far seem to have at least ensured that those effects are not a foregone conclusion and will be less stressful than they could be.

The El Niño is a recurring climate phenomenon that is characterized by an increase in ocean temperature in the eastern Pacific, a natural cycle that according to climate scientists is intensifying due to global warming. It typically causes drier weather in the Philippines, and can lead to drought conditions; it also usually results in fewer, though more intense tropical storms for a period of time that may last from a few months up to a year or more.

The agency that arguably has the biggest role to play in ensuring that Filipinos have adequate water supplies through the upcoming dry spell is the Local Water Utilities Authority (LWUA), whose recently appointed administrator, lawyer Vince Revil, took time out from his busy schedule to share LWUA's plans in an interview at *The Manila Times* on Thursday. LWUA is responsible for overseeing and supporting the water districts — a total of 532 of them — in the country outside of the greater Metro Manila area, where water management is under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System.

Steps being taken by LWUA include carrying out an inventory of the country's water supplies in order to identify potential trouble spots, directing the individual water districts to implement their conservation plans and coordinating with other agencies such as the National Irrigation Administration, Department of Public Works and Highways and the Department of the Interior and Local Government to identify potential additional sources of water and coordinate efforts to see that distribution needs are met.

Revil expressed confidence that the measures being undertaken would get the country through the El Niño period, pointing out that it is not an unfamiliar situation because it occurs every few years. However, he also stressed that his agency and the country at large cannot be complacent, and that everyone has a role to play by using water wisely and practicing conservation.

LWUA's response to the El Niño comes on the heels of other significant action taken by the government, including the formation of a Water Management Resources Office through an executive order at the end of last month and the creation of an "El Niño team" under the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council.

All of the above are temporary measures, however, which to the credit of LWUA's Revil and other administration officials, are clearly understood and regarded as such. Longer-term, sustainable solutions are badly needed, in particular the coordination of water resources and use that can be achieved with the creation of a Cabinet-level Department of Water. A strong push to create this department has been supported for several years by all concerned — even agencies such as LWUA, which might actually disappear under a new department — except for Congress, which has endlessly and irresponsibly delayed action on the measure, making only empty promises to prioritize it.

In the meantime, LWUA is doing what it can to fully exercise its mandate and ensure water security. Administrator Revil highlighted an ambitious plan by his agency to invest some P25 billion to expand water supply and sanitation throughout the country, targeting an increase of 45 percent in the number of households with water connections by 2028. However, it will need resources to do that; some may come from outside sources, such as official development assistance from other countries, but ultimately, the biggest responsibility will lie with those who hold the purse strings here. We certainly hope that administration policymakers and our easily distracted lawmakers can be made to see the value of making the investment.



## Oil spill task force ramps up recovery, response programs

AN INTER-AGENCY group created to address impacts of an oil spill from the sinking of motor tanker MT Princess Empress off the town of Naujan in Oriental Mindoro on Feb. 28, 2023, is accelerating its operations and reinforcing its response and recovery programs.

The National Task Force Mindoro, led by the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), said as of Friday, April 21, the oil spill has already affected 38,871 families in Mimaropa, Western Visayas and Calabarzon.

Mimaropa groups Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Romblon and Palawan, and Calabarzon Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon.

A total of P279.7 million worth of assistance from the national and local governments, nongovernment organizations and other partners has been provided to the affected families.

The OCD said it continues to orchestrate response operations and maintain close coordination

with various government agencies in addressing the impacts of the oil spill.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) reported providing more than P262.3 million worth of assistance to affected communities such as family food packs and nonfood items, and through its Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations, Emergency Cash Transfer and Cash for Work programs.

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) has reported that it will continue joint shoreline surveys, analysis of findings of the remotely operated vehicle survey that was conducted on March 22, as well as engagement with international counterparts, such as the Oil Spill Response Limited from Singapore.

Reporting on the quality of water, the Department of Health (DoH) said it will also continue surveillance of drinking water sources and exposed individuals and conduct health impact assess-

ment along with the issuance of regular health advisories.

It also reported providing health commodities, supplies and services to the affected areas.

The DoH and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) are set to release another joint statement early next week on the water quality in certain areas of Puerto Galera in Oriental Mindoro.

On the fishing ban and samples tested, the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) said it will provide the complete set of data results on fish testing by the second week of May.

Analysis of the second batch of samples is ongoing, the BFAR added.

It earlier banned fishing activities and cautioned communities on the dangerous pollutants found in fish samples.

To further assist the communities, a "menu of recovery programs" is being discussed by the

task force and its member agencies.

The DENR is also implementing the Cash for Work for Cleanup Operations program through a joint effort with the DSWD, Department of Labor and Employment and DoH.

On international assistance, the Department of Foreign Affairs is coordinating the offer of assistance from France and vowed to support the Department of Science and Technology in coordination with the PCG in requesting the US government the standards required for the fingerprinting of the oil and explore whether the "testing of the fingerprinting of the oil" can be included in the diplomatic pouch for the call for international assistance.

National and regional Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) teams will be activated.

The PDNA process will include a scientific discussion to be attended by experts and concerned agencies.

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## DOH monitoring water quality in OrMin

By MARTIN SADONGDONG

The Department of Health (DOH) is monitoring the quality of drinking water in Oriental Mindoro amid the massive oil slick in the province that has since spread to other areas.

This was among the developments reported by the National Task Force (NTF) Mindoro, an inter-agency group created to address the impacts of the oil slick chaired by the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), during a coordination meeting on Thursday, April 20, attended by member-agencies.

The meeting was presided over by Undersecretary Ariel Nepomuceno, OCD administrator, at the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) Operations Center in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

It was attended by representatives from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), co-chairs; and member-agencies DOH, Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Department of Agriculture (DA), Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Philippine National Police (PNP), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

Officials of the RDC Reield Marine Services (owner of MT Princess Empress), Harbor Star (onshore contractor), and P&I Correspondent Aqueous Inc. (insurance company) also attended the meeting.

During the meeting, it was bared that the DOH has been monitoring the quality of drinking water in Oriental Mindoro following the sinking of

motor tanker M/T Princess Empress off Naujan town on Feb. 28 and the consequent leakage of 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil it was carrying.

"Reporting on the quality of water, the Department of Health said that it will continue surveillance of drinking water sources and exposed individuals, and conduct health impact assessment along with the issuance of regular health advisories," Assistant Secretary Bernardo Rafaelito Alejandro IV, OCD deputy administrator for operations, said on Friday, April 21.

A situational report released by the NDRRMC on Friday said at least 208 individuals suffered from different illnesses in the municipality of Pola since the oil spill occurred in Oriental Mindoro.

The symptoms experienced by the patients ranged from abdominal pain, chest pain, lower bowel movement (LBM), and vomiting, among others, but all of them have already recovered. However, it has yet to be confirmed whether these symptoms were connected to the quality of the drinking water in the area.

"The DOH and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources are set to release another joint statement early next week on the water quality in certain areas of Puerto Galera," Alejandro added.

Alejandro noted that the DOH has already provided "health commodities, supplies, and services" to the affected areas.

The oil spill has affected a total of 40,897 families or 193,436 individuals in Oriental Mindoro, Palawan, Antique, and Batangas as of April 21.

### Oil spill response

Meanwhile, Alejandro said that

DA-BFAR will provide a complete set of data results on fish testing in oil spill-affected areas by the second week of May.

The BFAR banned fishing activities and cautioned communities on the dangerous pollutants found in fish samples.

The DSWD also reported during the meeting that it has provided more than ₱262.3-million worth of assistance to the affected communities. The aid came in the form of family food packs, non-food items, and cash assistance.

The PCG said that it will continue its joint shoreline surveys and analysis of the findings of remotely operated vehicle (ROV) during underwater inspections to drain the leaking oil from M/T Princess Empress.

The DENR presented a list of programs based on its oil spill recovery plan harmonization activity which will be turned over to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and OCD to enable communities to immediately get back up from the setbacks caused by the incident.

On international assistance, Alejandro said that the DFA has been coordinating with France after it expressed commitment to help in the oil spill response.

The DFA was also in contact with the United States government to request the standards required for the fingerprinting of the oil and explore ways whether it can be included in the diplomatic pouch for the call for international assistance.

Oil spill fingerprinting and matching is important for oil classification to determine whether oil samples collected in certain areas match with the source of the oil spill.





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# Frasco: Apart from P. Galera, Mindoro has more attractions

By Othel V. Campos and Rio N. Araja

**A**MID concerns on water quality in certain areas of Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro, Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco urged tourists to explore other attractions in the island apart from swimming and water sports. Meanwhile, advocates, supporters, and other sectoral representatives have joined residents within the Verde Island Passage (VIP) in Batangas and formed a human boom in observance of Earth Day, seeking justice over the oil spill that has poisoned the sea waters around the island.

Frasco noted that while the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) advised against consumption of water in some areas of Puerto Galera, the DOH in a subsequent announcement, advised travelers to temporarily avoid recreational seaborne activities in areas affected by the oil spill.

"We wish to highlight the plethora of offerings that this beautiful town and province has to offer, particularly to nature lovers and adventure seekers. Paramount of course is the safety of tourists while giving importance to the need to balance the life and livelihood of the people," Frasco said.

She said tourists could go climb Mt. Malasimbo or enjoy the scenic Tamaraw waterfalls and other attractions in the area, including the Galera Mangrove Conservation and Ecotourism Area, and the Iraya Mangyan Village.

There are other cities and municipalities in Oriental Mindoro that also have a wide range of tourism offerings. Tourists can explore the riverside and go on picnic at the Infinity Farm in Baco which just takes an hour land travel from Puerto Galera, or go on a food crawl in Calapan City or visit sites such as the Silonay Mangrove Conservation Ecopark and Oriental Mindoro

Heritage Museum, Frasco said.

Visitors were also encouraged to go walking, biking, or jogging around Naujan Lake; trek to Talon Falls, or see the famed heritage houses in Pola; and go on a culinary tour in Pinamalayan.

The DOT, Frasco said, adheres to the recommendations of the DENR and the DOH with respect to tourism activities that should be allowed in the island given the current oil spill event.

The DOT, she added, is ready to assist affected tourism workers and front-liners should the destination be closed or tourism activities be suspended.

"In addressing the needs of tourism stakeholders, we look not only at the primary tourism enterprises but also the secondary enterprises as well as the entire tourism value chain involved including all of the informal and indirect employment generated in the areas like the vendors, for instance, the boat men, the pasalubong makers, the dive shops, divers, among others," Frasco said.

The DOT provides training and livelihood programs, as well as other forms of assistance in partnership with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) to equip qualified beneficiaries with alternative means of livelihood as tourism-related activities continue to be affected by the oil spill crisis in the province.



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# Manila Standard

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# Task force focuses on oil siphoning to manage spill

By Charles Dantes

**O**FFICE of Civil Defense (OCD) administrator Ariel Nepomuceno on Thursday said siphoning off the remaining industrial oil should be a priority to manage and prevent further damage to affected areas of a recent oil spill.

In a press conference with the National Task Force for Oil Spill, Nepomuceno added that siphoning operations usually take two months to finish and can prevent additional harm to other coastal areas.

The operations will include 7 to 10 days of evaluation, 7 days for the arrival of the machines, and 21 days for actual operations.

Nepomuceno also said that the lack

of personal equipment is proving to be detrimental to the clean-up efforts.

"Wala po tayong sariling equipment, inaamin po natin 'yan. Kaya dapat meron tayong sariling equipment, that is the lesson," Nepomuceno said.

Nepomuceno also added that the bagging operations have been a tremendous help in slowing down the leak from the sunken vessel.

"Nakita po noong una na may 23 pinaglalabasan po ng langis, based on the recent reports from the Coast Guard, out of 23, 11 na lang ang nilalabasan ng langis," he added.

MV Princess Empress sank in the waters off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro last February 28, while carrying more than 800,000 industrial fuel.

As of April 20, the OCD reported more than P3.7 billion worth of damages and losses to agriculture from the incident.

Meanwhile, 103 areas in Oriental Mindoro, Palawan, Antique, and Batangas have been affected by the oil spill and a total of 37,871 families or 178,306 individuals have also been affected.

# Group wants justice for oil spill victims

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

**A** GROUP of environment advocates, residents of Isla Verde, and other concerned sectors want the people responsible for the oil spill in Oriental Mindoro to be punished and brought to justice.

Protect VIP, a coalition group that vows to protect the marine biodiversity-rich Verde Island Passage, said that the oil leak has "poisoned the Verde Island Passage, a biodiversity hotspot that

provides food and livelihood to over two million Filipinos."

The group formed a "human boom" in Isla Verde, Batangas on Friday as an observance of Earth Day. The human boom is a symbol

of unity and determination of the affected communities to fight and save the VIP from the oil spill.

"This Earth Day provides us with more fortitude to call for the protection of our common home and to call for everyone to be better stewards of the environment," said Fr. Edwin Gariguez, convenor of Protect VIP.

He also said that it is "unthinkable" for a disaster like this to remain unpunished.

The group also said that the incident continues to pose threats to health, lives and livelihood.

The Bureau of Fisheries and

Aquatic Resources (BFAR) reported that the damages due to the leak are about to breach the P1-billion mark, but Gariguez said that the government seems "toothless" in implementing the law.

Christopher de Castro, a fisherman from Isla Verde, said that a simple cleanup drive will not solve the damages done to their fishing areas and to their livelihood.

"We are calling on to identify who must be accountable and give assistance not only to those who lost their livelihood but to the destruction of our sea," said de Castro.

He also said that the problem will only get worse if the oil slick is not directly addressed.

The affected communities need legal protection and policies to safeguard the "ecologically fragile marine corridor."

"We want the government to move — move faster in removing the ship, stopping the spread of the spill, and providing compensation for everyone who lost their livelihood. We want concrete actions and for the government to show us that they have learned their lesson from this incident," said Gariguez.

"Finally, we want justice. We want the government to name names and bring them to account for what has happened," he added.

The MT Empress Princess was carrying 800,000 liters of industrial fuel when it sank off the coast of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, on Feb. 28, 2023.

A cleanup drive has been continuously implemented in the affected areas, headed by the Philippine Coast Guard. There are still 60 to 70 percent of oil that needs to be collected, said Mayor Jennifer "Ina Alegre" Cruz of Pola, Oriental Mindoro.



## Primer on oil spills

FOR archipelagic states like the Philippines, oil spills happen in many different ways. The recent (Feb. 28, 2023) MT Princess Empress oil spill in the waters of Oriental Mindoro was preceded by major spills such as the oil spills in Cavite (2001); Semirara (2005); Guimaras (2006); Cebu and Manila Bay (2013); and Iloilo (2013 and 2020).

### What is an oil spill?

Oil spill is a type of pollution that occurs when liquid petroleum hydrocarbon is released into the environment, particularly the marine environment.

### How do oil spills occur?

Oil spills can result from a) crude oil being released from tankers, offshore platforms, drilling rigs as well as from refined petroleum products (e.g., gasoline and diesel); b) heavier fuels used by big ships like bunker fuel; or c) the spill of any oily waste or garbage.

### Do oil spills happen only by accident?

While natural catastrophes like typhoons result in oil spills, people also illegally dump used oil into oceans, so they will not spend money in decomposing used oil. Oil spills can also happen when oil leaks off a ship during refueling operations, tankers running aground or problematic drilling operations. Intentional acts committed by warring countries can also lead to oil spills.

### How does oil spill affect the environment?



### AMBASSADORS' CORNER

AMADO S. TOLENTINO JR.

Oil spills are extremely detrimental to marine mammals and birds as well as to fish, shellfish and corals. Feathers of birds lose their capacity to repel water, leaving them vulnerable to the elements. When trying to clean themselves, many birds and mammals swallow oil which is poison to their system. Oil can render birds blind while dehydration and intestinal dysfunction result after oil consumption. Needless to say, oil destroys corals which take many years to grow and function as protectors of marine species.

Additionally, exposure to oil spills has adverse effects on human health, including liver and brain damage as well as respiratory and renal problems. Spills can also contaminate food sources, poisoning the fragile chain of food for humans.

### How should we get ready for oil spills?

Governments and the oil sector must have strategies in place in the event of an oil spill. In this regard, regular spill response training is a must. Small spills can be managed locally, larger spills nationally while major spills require international response.

Mechanical methods such as booms and skimmers are used for containment and skimming. Skimmers, which are adapted

boats, skim the oil off the surface of the water while booms, which are floating physical barriers, prevent oil from spreading. Manual cleanup campaigns are often used when oil spills are close to the shoreline and deterrents such as floating dummies and balloons are used to keep wildlife away from the affected area.

For individuals, educating oneself, the family and the community about the danger of oil spills can help spread awareness and lessen their negative impacts on the environment. In fact, individuals have an immediate role in helping clean up an oil spill depending on the amount of time it takes for the cleanup team to reach the spill site, the type of oil, the type of shoreline and the possibility of ecocatastrophe or a major upset in the balance of nature, especially when caused by the intervention of man. A local crew can attempt to confine and skim the oil if they can get to a spill in the shortest time possible. It is more difficult to clean up oil after it spreads out or hits the shoreline.

### What are the Philippine government agencies that are involved in oil spills?

The following are among the Philippine government agencies most involved in oil spills: Department of Environment and Natural Resources (to safeguard the security of the environment and to exert best efforts during extensive oil spills); Department of Health (to provide necessary assistance to those who reside in and around oil spill areas

in regard to their safety and health concerns); Department of Science and Technology (to offer technological solutions for the prevention and cleanup of large scale oil spill); Department of Tourism (to guarantee tourists' safety from oil spills); and the Department of Education (to inform the public of the best guide to stop an extensive oil spill).

The relevant Bureaus are: Ecosystem Research and Development Bureau (to ensure ecosystem balance despite effects of oil leaks and determine how improvements can be achieved after the oil spill); Environmental Management Bureau (to ensure effective management of the environment during emergencies); and the Biodiversity Management Bureau (to ensure protection of declared "protected areas" during spills as well as safety of marine life in the sea or ocean covered by the spill).

Other government agencies: Philippine Coast Guard (to enforce Philippine laws, carry out maritime security and safeguard the environment and marine life); Marine Environmental Protection Command (a division of the Philippine Coast Guard that hosts the National Operation Center for Oil Pollution. It is the point of contact for oil spill response and operations. It acts as the national on-the-scene command and has the authority to request assistance of foreign governments.

This primer was done with the assistance of Ms. Shazynay Pitogo.



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**NEWS BRIEFS**

**Maynilad Water suspends water interruptions**

Maynilad Water Services Inc. has suspended prolonged service interruptions in its concession area, following the additional allocation granted by the National Water Resources Board (NWRB). Maynilad head of corporate communications Jennifer Rufo on Thursday said the suspension was effective on April 18 for areas served with water coming from Angat Dam. The suspension covers some portions of Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, Valenzuela, Pasay, Manila, Parañaque and Quezon cities in Metro Manila. Earlier this week, the NWRB approved an additional allocation of 2 cubic meters per second to allow more water to flow into Maynilad's service area. Rufo noted, however, that service interruptions would continue in parts of Cavite City, Rosario and Noveleta in Cavite province, as well as Las Piñas City in Metro Manila, to give way to "intensified cleaning" of filters in the Putatan water treatment plants.

—MEG J. ADONIS



STRATEGIC  
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# Water levels in 5 dams continue to drop - Pagasa

By **BELLA CARIASO**

The water level of Angat Dam, the main source of potable water for Metro Manila, and four other major dams in Luzon continue to drop amid the ongoing dry season, authorities warned

yesterday.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) reported that the water level of Angat Dam decreased by 0.25 centimeters to 196.86 meters at 6 a.m. yesterday from its

previous level of 197.11 m.

Amid the continuous reduction observed in the level of Angat Dam, it is only 9.26 m away from its rule curve elevation of 187.60 m, the level required to fulfill its functions.

To address the water interruption

being experienced by customers of Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water Co. Inc., the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) has approved the conditional allocation of 52 cubic meters per second until May.

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## Water From Page 1

NWRB Executive Director Sevilla David Jr. said the conditional approval of the allocation for the two water concessionaires is dependent on whether they will be able to fulfill their commitments, which include water augmentation and conservation efforts.

The NWRB and the Metropolitan Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) have assured the public that Angat Dam will be able to supply the water requirement in Metro Manila and other provinces until December.

Angat Dam supplies more than 90 percent of Metro Manila's potable water needs and provides irrigation to 25,000 hectares of farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga.

Meanwhile, the water level of La

Mesa Dam also decreased to 77.19 m from its previous level of 77.20 m or 0.01 cm less.

Other dams with water levels dropping are the Ambuklao Dam, down to 740.18 m from 740.38 m or 0.20 cm less; San Roque Dam, down to 236.16 m from 236.33 m (0.17 cm less); and Caliraya Dam, now 286.40 m from the previous 286.85 m or (0.45 cm less).

David said the government has learned from the previous El Niño experience in which Angat Dam reached its lowest level of 116 m in June 2019.

He gave assurance that concerned government agencies, including the MWSS and National Irrigation Administration, hold coordination meetings regularly in preparation for this year's El Niño expected by PAGASA to begin in June or July.



## EDITORIAL

# Invest in our planet

The country joins the world in celebrating Earth Day today as coastal communities in several provinces continue to reel from the impact of a massive oil spill.

The motor tanker *Princess Empress* was transporting 900,000 liters of industrial fuel oil from the SL Gas Harbor Terminal in Limay, Bataan to Iloilo when it sank off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro early in the morning of Feb. 28, eventually settling at a depth of about 400 meters.

Tanker owner RDC Reield Marine Services, which reportedly refurbished the 50-year-old vessel described by the justice secretary as a "rebuilt scrap" originally known as *Dorothy Uno*, lacked the resources to contain the oil spill or even pinpoint its exact location in the depths of the sea. The country had to wait for a remotely operated vehicle provided by Japan, which finally located the tanker on March 21 and began plugging the leaks.

Today, fisheries and tourism in at least nine towns in Oriental Mindoro have ground to a halt. In a peak travel season, Puerto Galera has seen a drop in tourist arrivals amid concerns over pollution from the toxic black oil reaching the popular dive destination. There are continuing fears that the oil slick might reach the Verde Island Passage, the global center of marine biodiversity.

Even without the oil spill, however, Philippine waters and marine life, notably the country's extensive coral reefs, have been facing threats of degradation from pollution, destructive fishing methods and unfettered reclamation projects including in Manila Bay.

Greater awareness of environmental issues and the existential threat posed by climate change has led to the enactment of Philippine laws to promote a green economy. As in much of the world, however, progress has been spotty. The investment required in shifting to green technology is not cost-effective for many developing countries, which point out that even advanced economies cannot afford to wean themselves completely away from crude oil, and are in fact among the biggest consumers of fossil fuels.

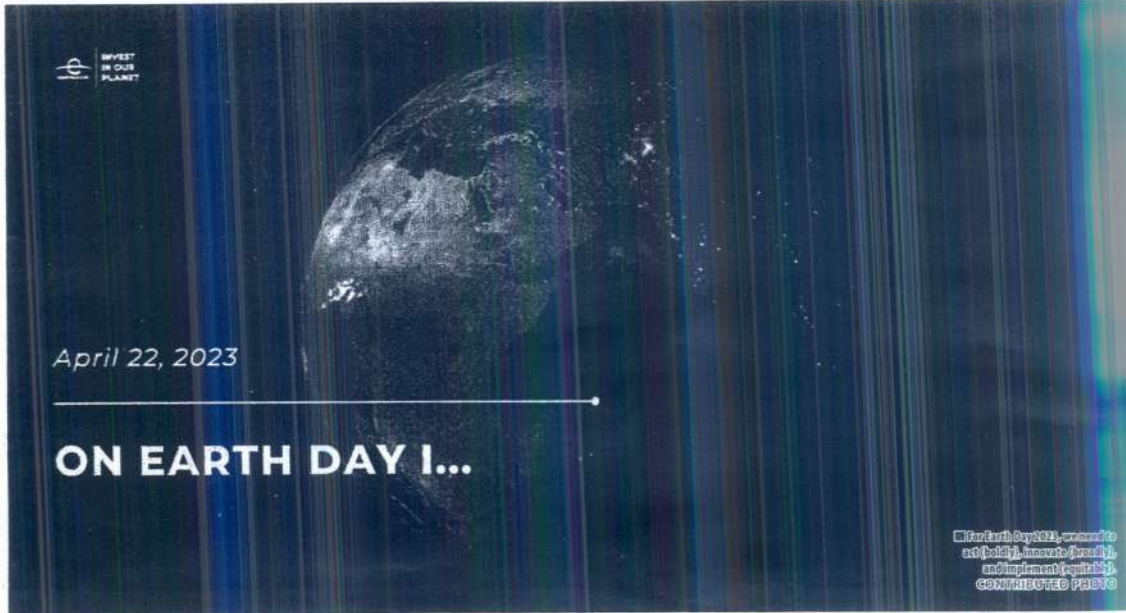
Still, programs are being rolled out to provide incentives for the development and use of alternative energy. Better waste management schemes are being drawn up, especially for underserved communities, not only to reduce pollution but also to promote public health. Efforts to protect wildlife and preserve fragile ecosystems have intensified in the past decades.

Despite the progress, there's still a lot of work ahead. The commitment to invest in our planet can be renewed this Earth Day.



EARTH DAY 2023

# Time to invest in our planet



BY EDISON JOSEPH GONZALES

**E**VERY year on April 22, Earth Day marks the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement in 1970. On this day, stakeholders of all backgrounds come together to advance sustainability and climate action in commemoration of Earth Day.

The global organizer of Earth Day, earthday.org (EDO), and the largest recruiter of the environmental movement worldwide, works in countries around the world to drive meaningful action for our planet.

This year, EDO said the Earth Day 2023 theme is focused on engaging the more than one billion people, governments, institutions, and businesses who participate in Earth Day to recognize the collective responsibility and to help accelerate the transition to an equitable, prosperous green economy for all.

EDO urges everyone once again to be a part of the solution and build a brighter, greener and more equitable future for generations to come.

"We are focused on reframing the conversation, accelerating action, and bringing everyone together to understand that this is





within our reach if we work together," the EDO also said. "Investing in our planet is necessary to protect it and the best way to pave a path toward a prosperous future."

### More ways to invest in our planet

According to EDO, there are more ways to invest in our planet such planting trees, reducing plastic consumption, participate in advocacy and learning the importance of sustainable fashion, among others.

### Plan your own event

It is easy to start your own Earth Day event as EDO recommends activities for your community like planning a march or rally and hosting a community cleanup.

Other popular Earth Day events that can be held include educating your peers or students about the importance of environmental action and supporting local population of butterflies, bees and other organisms that are critical to biodiversity as well as forming a community sustainability committee.

### Earth Day ideas for communities

**Universities:** The next generation of leaders are today's students and it is essential students entering fields across all sectors are educated in how their work intersects with the climate and our environment.

**Professors:** Write a letter to your school administrators demanding your university take measures to improve campus sustainability and make climate investments.

**Students:** Make climate a class by planning a teach-in for your students on Earth Day.

**Administrators:** Invest in a sustainable campus as cultivating a biodiverse, green space will create a healthy and enriching campus environment for your students.

**Homeowners:** A home that is equipped with efficient power/water/heating systems, coupled with renewable energy, will save you thousands

of dollars per year while drastically reducing your impact on the environment.

**Parents:** Commemorating Earth Day as a family is key to nurturing these values and ensuring that nature and sustainability are an important part of your child's identity.

**Schools:** Teachers and school administrators are in a unique position to nurture the children to grow into intelligent and responsible citizens.

**Businesses:** When businesses invest in Our Planet, they are aligning themselves with the modern economy, invariably leading to a more cost efficient, respected, and profitable enterprise.

**City Governments:** When city governments invest in Our Planet, they are taking an essential step in securing a happy, healthy and wealthy future for their community, all while saving millions of taxpayer dollars.

**Faith Leaders:** As a faith leader, you are in an essential position to foster the community's identity and guide their values. Every religion and spiritual practice includes the call for humanity to act as stewards of creation.

**Community Groups:** Bring your organization together for Earth Day and give back to the public spaces that your group calls home.

**Senior Activists:** A respected source of wisdom and guidance for our families and communities, they can make a valuable contribution to conserving our common home.

**Creators:** Share your vision and inspire the public to make a difference.

**Non-Profit Organizations:** Your audience cares about making the world a better place; this April mobilize them to come together on Earth Day and advocate for the common goals.

### Try a simple act of green

EDO advised to add reusable eating utensils to everyday carry, always carry a reusable bag, make your next meal plant-based and speak up for the Earth.

More than one billion people now participate in Earth Day activities each year, making it the largest civic observance in the world.



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THE CLIMATE REALITY PROJECT PHILIPPINES

# MAKE EACH DAY AN EARTH DAY

## 8 simple ways to invest in our planet

For many years now, the scientific community has painted a grim scenario of what the future holds if the world fails to act with the urgency and scale needed to address the climate crisis.

To ensure a livable future, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) said that global emissions must fall by 43 percent by 2030 compared to 2019 levels.

While individual actions matter, what will ultimately save our only home, the Earth, from deterioration are systemic changes across the energy, transport, forestry, and other sectors, and

the adoption of low-emission or zero-carbon pathways.

This is why we need to band together to demand our leaders and decision-makers both in the public and the private sector to shift from the current extractive, carbon-intensive, and exploitative economic system to a sustainable and low-carbon economic system.

But everyone has to start somewhere somehow. And to jumpstart your journey of being an environmental and climate warrior, here are a few tips:

►SS-2

'It takes teamwork and a collective voice to truly have an impactful stand for the planet. Find a community or group that will support your climate and sustainability journey and will help you become a better advocate.'



### Make each day...

SS-1



**First, if you can, shift to reusable and eco-friendly products.**

Start your green journey with using eco-friendly products. Expand your list of reusable and eco-friendly home items from eco-bags, tumblers, and bamboo straws to shampoo bars, all-natural tooth powder, and refillable beauty and care products. Imagine the tonnage of waste, especially plastics, that can be avoided by shifting away from single-use and investing in more sustainable home items.



**Second, if you can find a space, grow your own food.**

If possible, and if you have the space, you can grow your own food. Start saving the seeds of your fa-

vorite fruit and vegetable, and plant them in your backyard, pocket or vertical garden, or even in small containers or pots. Adding edible plants to your home jungle can help protect the health of your soil, reduce your own carbon footprint, and live more self-sufficiently.



**Third, use active and renewable transport.**

Cycling is both good for the environment and your health. Cycling to work, to school, or to run errands is good for your heart and health. The world we live in today will never be the same in the future because of climate change. While we still have the time, cycle going to local cafes and shops, in parks, or in places that bring childhood memories.

Both the government and private sector must work together to invest in end-of-trip facilities and bicycle-friendly infrastructure like safe bicycle lanes and public parking spaces to encourage more Filipinos to cycle and walk.



**Fourth, join the call for a renewable energy transition.**

It's time for renewable energy, which can be sourced from the sun and wind. We need to view renewable energy development not just from an environmental or climate standpoint, but from an economic standpoint as well. Many studies and experts are saying that renewable makes good economic sense here in the Philippines, where most electricity is sourced from dirty, expensive, and imported fossil fuels.

Renewable energy will bring down our electricity rates, allow for grid stability and fewer brownouts, provide energy access for all Filipinos, especially those living in communities not connected to the grid; create more jobs, and ultimately result in healthier for the people and planet.



**Fifth, share the reality of climate change and the urgency of acting**

now with your family, friends, and colleagues.

Talk to your family and friends about the urgency of climate action. Change starts at home. It starts with planting a seed of information that everyone can be part of the solution — may it be changing our own personal lifestyle to be more mindful consumers, writing to your local government leader to support a policy banning single-use plastics, or discussing with a private business owner the opportunities of installing solar panels.



**Sixth, protect your mental health.**

To combat eco-anxiety, take a breather, such as walking in nature. The impacts of climate change and the anxiety of climate inaction from our leaders are putting a strain on people's mental health. When everything feels overwhelming, breathe and reconnect with nature by hiking, swimming in rivers and lakes, walking in the park, or tending to your edible home garden.

**Seventh, find local climate and environmental causes to support.**

Volunteer your time and effort to contribute to saving the planet. Be involved in your community. Learn about the climate and environmental issues in your city or municipality. Find local organizations supporting environmental protection and

climate action in your city or municipality. Whenever possible, volunteer your time and talent to help make the local climate and environmental initiatives a success.



**Lastly, join a climate change / environmental group.**

It takes teamwork and a collective voice to truly have an impactful stand for the planet. Find a community or group that will support your climate and sustainability journey and will help you become a better advocate.

Fighting for our planet is not something you should do alone. You are not alone. We cannot work in silos. We should come together and create dynamic synergies in climate action so that we can build replicable, scalable, and sustainable projects, programs, and practices.

Collectively, our voices are stronger. You have many roles to play — from grassroots mobilizers, educators and influencers, to policymakers and project implementers in your own right.





## Every day should be Earth Day

THIS April 22, we will celebrate the 53rd Earth Day.

The first was in 1970 when a United States senator arranged a demonstration to bring light to environmental issues.

This brought them the Environmental Protection Agency by the end of the same year.

Fifty-three years later, we still face environmental issues, certainly much worse and more catastrophic than in the 70s.

Extreme weather events are only getting stronger, the sea levels are getting to the point of entire islands disappearing, and the floods are happening more and more. In the Philippines, the typhoons seem to be stronger every year and the heat of our summers is becoming unbearable.

Just last February 28, 2023, the oil spill in Oriental Mindoro from the sinking of MT Princess Empress with 800,000 liters brought about more environmental issues.



EAGLE EYES  
TONY  
LA VIÑA

*“With our children's future on the line, every day should be Earth Day.”*

According to Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, the damage from the oil spill is about to hit the P1 billion mark.

More than a month later, residents from the most affected areas continue to suffer the consequences.

According to them, even with their income and the aid combined, their money remains insufficient.

Some of them have not been able to earn at all.

As these coastal communities rely on fishing for a living, the impact has been huge, to the point that they are not able to send their kids to school since they cannot provide allowance.

On top of this, they have also had to face health hazards.

In a slightly ironic occurrence, we see the way fossil fuel and their companies impact our environment, not just in the waste they produce, but also in irresponsible and unregulated decisions made such as what led to the oil spill.

On the 53rd Earth Day, it is quite sad to reflect on where the Earth stands now. According to the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), “Human activities, principally through emissions of greenhouse gases, have unequivocally caused global warming, with global surface temperature reaching 1.1°C above 1850–1900 in 2011–2020.”

This and climate change have caused extremes in the form of heatwaves, heavy precipitation, droughts, and tropical cyclones.

With this, 3.3-3.6 billion people are highly vulnerable as they live in areas prone to the impacts of climate change.

That is almost half of the entire world's population.

While climate adaptation and

mitigation appear to have positive effects, we do not seem to be doing enough.

Some effective options we have for adaptation being soil moisture conservation, irrigation, agroforestry, community-based adaptation, use of agroecological principles and practices, and other approaches that work with natural processes. The problem is even with the upward trend in global climate finance, the finance for adaptation is becoming more and more insufficient with effects becoming more drastic.

Additionally, most of the climate finance is already put into mitigation, and yet we still fall short on limiting global warming below 2°C or to 1.5°C according to the IPCC report.

If we continue with the same (or higher) greenhouse gas emissions, it will increase global warming with an estimate of 1.5°C and every increment will come with intensified hazards.

Higher global warming would mean more abrupt and irreversible changes.

When we speak of climate change and our future like this, it is very easy to despair.

There's no challenge in thinking that there is nothing we can do anymore.

That is not true.

The IPCC report enumerates different solutions for different industries that are a part of one whole.

For energy systems, net zero CO2 would demand things such as a big reduction of fossil fuel use, carbon capture and storage technology, and electricity systems free of CO2 emissions.

For industry and transport, mitigation options must be promoted that consider energy and materials efficiency.

Cities also need to develop urban systems that include adaptation and mitigation elements.

Old infrastructures can be reused, and public transport can be prioritized. For land, ocean, food, and water, the biggest call is to save our forests. The restoration of forests promises the highest mitigation potential.

There are many key areas that we can improve on to save our planet, but it is important to call on the government to support projects and initiatives that lead to climate justice.

Government actions in different levels, with civil society and the private sector, are crucial to develop plans that will lead us to sustainability and climate resilience.

They must prioritize risk reduction, equity, and justice when they make decisions for their constituency.

During a time when our home is close to killing us because we killed it first, we must not stop at honoring and fighting for it on Earth Day.

That is not enough.

With our children's future on the line, every day should be Earth Day.

Website: [tonylavina.com](http://tonylavina.com). Facebook: [tonylavs](https://www.facebook.com/tonylavs) Twitter: [tonylavs](https://twitter.com/tonylavs)



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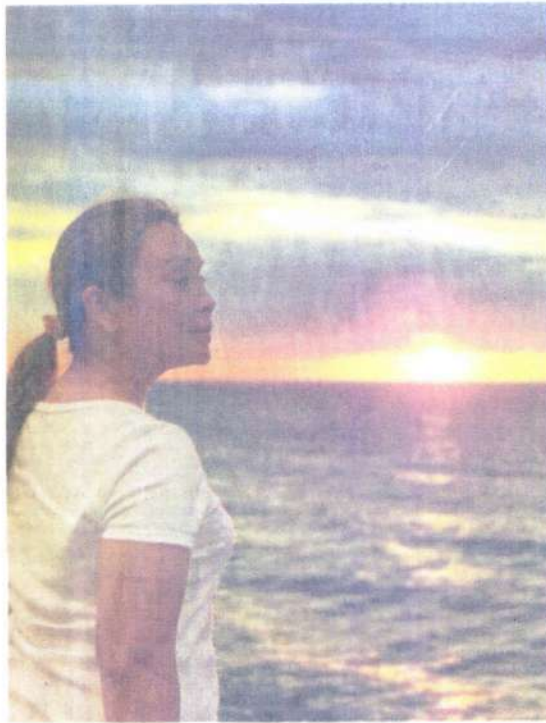
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# LEGARDA: INVEST IN OUR PLANET, SAVE OUR FUTURE

**“O**ur actions and decisions now will impact on the state of our future. It is up to us whether to turn a blind eye to our responsibility or heed the call to invest in our planet. I call on every decision-maker, every stakeholder in government, business, and the communities and households to contribute what you can to usher in a new dawn of sustainability and resilience for all,” said Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda in the observance of this year’s Earth Day celebration.

With the global scientific community already warning the world about the dangers of climate change, Legarda said that our society should already be moving towards a sustainable and resilient development path where we harness more renewable energy for power, adopt more low-carbon transport systems and vehicles, strengthen capacities



to cope with climate impacts, and integrate more circular approaches within industries to reduce waste and pollution. But adequate investments must pour in quickly to enable widespread societal transformation.

Legarda shared that there has been a notable increase in the government’s national budget for climate change projects, programs, and activities. Citing figures from the Climate Change Expenditure Tagging (CCET) program, which monitors

government allocation and spending, Php464.5 billion is for climate initiatives this year, a 4.87% increase from the allocation in last year’s General Appropriations Act (GAA).

She noted, however, that while there is increased public spending on climate change, investments from the private sector and access to funding from multilateral banks, United Nations (UN) bodies, and philanthropies are needed.

“Government resources are

limited, and budget for climate initiatives often compete with other development programs on education, poverty alleviation, and employment. To complement this, we must access more climate funding from development partners, banks, and philanthropic organizations. But I see our businesses and companies having the greater potential to turn the tide as they have the resources to invest in green projects and programs and the means to change their business

operations and influence the society for the better,” Legarda said.

“I am happy that the private sector is now more conscious of integrating sustainability in their operations and value chain. Many companies are greening their systems and pledging net zero carbon targets. And I hope, on this Earth Day, that more businesses and companies will also commit to doing more for our planet and our future,” she added.

## A Champion of the Environment

Legarda is known as a staunch advocate of protecting and preserving the environment. Her passionate and strong commitment to such advocacy is reflected through her significant and life-changing initiatives, which are valuable and beneficial both in the country and globally.

As a senator, she has authored numerous environmental laws, including the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Renewable Energy Act, Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act, National Environmental Awareness and Education Act, Climate Change Act, People’s Survival Fund Law, Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, and Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System (ENIPAS) Act, among other measures.

In 2017, Legarda sponsored the



Philippines’ concurrence in ratifying the Paris Agreement, an international climate change treaty adopted in 2015 by members of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Aside from this, she leads the Philippines into assenting to the High Ambition Coalition (HAC) for Nature and People, which aims to protect at least 30% of the world’s land and ocean by 2030.

“The impacts of climate change, air pollution, biodiversity loss, and

poor ocean health are already being felt, causing vast suffering in many parts of the world. In the Philippines, we have experienced extreme weather events resulting in loss of livelihood and human lives,” Legarda said.

“I remain committed to improving the policy environment for sustainability and climate resilience for future generations, and I hope these initiatives will benefit my fellow Filipinos and the world. May our love for our environment and our planet not only be during Earth Day

celebrations. Every day, let us be stewards of the earth we live in,” she added.

Above and beyond being a legislator, Legarda is the United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Global Champion for Resilience, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) National Adaptation Plan Champion, Board Member in the Global Centre for Adaptation, and Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) Ambassador for Parliaments.

Her dedication to her craft was acknowledged through numer-

ous global recognitions, such as the Global Leader for Tomorrow given by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in year 2000. She is also a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Laureate in 2001, the Global Ambassador for Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change, and Environment of the Women Political Leaders, a Chevalier (Knight) in the Ordre national de la légion d’Honneur (National Order of the French Legion of Honor), a Commandatore to the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic, and an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Biodiversity Hero. (30)



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

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# Legarda calls for strict implementation of environmental laws for sustainability



**E**nvironmental advocate Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda pushed for cooperation between the community and the government in implementing ecological laws to attain a sustainable life.

As the author of several fundamental environmental laws, including the Renewable Energy Act (RA 9513),

Environmental advocate Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda is the author of several fundamental environmental laws.

Climate Change Act (RA 9729), Ecological Solid Waste Management Act (RA 9003), and People's Survival Fund Act (RA 10174), Legarda is urging government agencies to prioritize the enforcement of these laws not only to protect the environment but also to promote sustainable development.

"Let's make our laws work because these laws are meant to help us live a sustainable life on our planet," Legarda said.

In 2012, with the legislation of the People's Survival Fund Act, every local government unit (LGU) and accredited local community organization became entitled to the one billion pesos annual funding allotted for climate change adaptation projects.

The law aims to ensure that vulnerable communities are equipped to deal with the impacts of climate change.

On the other hand, Legarda reminds the people of their roles in contributing toward the country's sustainable development.

With the RA 9003 that she authored in 1998 and passed into law in July 2000, the growing problem of waste management in the country was addressed. The measure promotes proper handling, segregation, treatment, and disposal of solid waste to protect public health and the environment.

Legarda, however, stressed that the law's success depends highly on the active participation of communities at the household level.

Responsible waste management in every household, such as segregation and recycling, she said, can help reduce the amount of waste in landfills and contribute to a more sustainable future.

"I authored these environmental

laws to protect our country's natural resources, preserve biodiversity, and promote sustainability. These laws provide a framework for regulating people's activities that impact the environment and ensure that individuals and organizations are held accountable for their actions," she stated.

The challenge now, as she stressed, is for the government agencies to implement the mandates of these laws strictly and for the community to play their part in practicing energy conservation, and waste segregation, among other ways of protecting the environment.

"By enforcing these laws, we can reduce the negative impacts of pollution, climate change, and resource depletion and work toward a more resilient and sustainable future," Legarda said. ([www.lorenlegarda.com.ph](http://www.lorenlegarda.com.ph))



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GREENPEACE PH CAMPAIGN

# IMAGINE A 'PLASTICS-FREE FUTURE'; THESE AI-MADE PHOTOS CAN HELP

By **Dempsey Reyes**  
@dempseyreyesINQ

A world "liberated" from over-dependence on plastic packaging. If you can't imagine it—let AI, or artificial intelligence, do it for you.

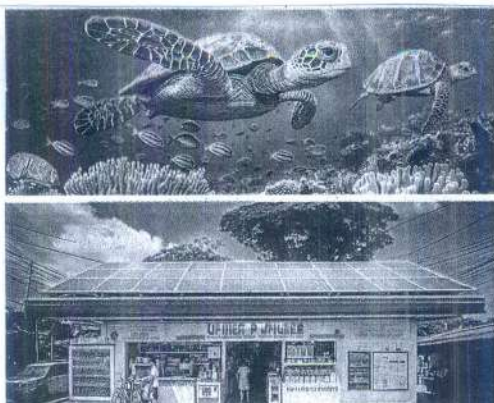
The environmental group Greenpeace is marking Earth Day by challenging consumers—and governments and companies—to make plastics-free living a viable, doable option even in today's world.

While small victories have been won through ordinances



regulating the use of single-use plastics, such measures remained too few and far between to reverse the trend especially in the Philippines, which now has the unenviable reputation as one of the biggest generators of

**A2-2**



**NO HAZARDS, LESS WASTE** A marine environment devoid of plastic debris and a store making 'refills' mainstream. —PHOTO BY AI/GREENPEACE

## IMAGINE A 'PLASTICS-FREE FUTURE'

FROM A2-1

plastic waste in the world.

But picture a city, district or even just a neighborhood where plastics are banished or properly disposed of.

Greenpeace Philippines on Friday shared AI-generated photos of a "plastics-free future." The group said the initiative was inspired by the essays written by students from the University of the Philippines, University of Santo Tomas and De La Salle University.

Two of the five photos depict an underwater scenario, wherein turtles and other sea creatures swim freely without the threat of being entangled in or ingesting plastic wrappers.

Another image shows a tree-lined road bereft of plastic litter that could clog drainage systems and cause floodfloods during a heavy downpour.

The fifth photo is that a small store where the use of refillable containers has become "mainstream."

Greenpeace Philippines

campaigner Marian Ledesma said it was inspiring to see the images generated by AI technology based on the aspirations shared by the youth.

"Protecting the planet from plastic pollution also means protecting the youth," Ledesma said. "They deserve to live in a world free from the harmful effects of single-use plastics."

The images should be a "good reminder," especially for nations and corporations, that the younger generations "have the most to gain if we act on the plastics issue—and the most to lose if we don't."

In observance of Earth Day today, Greenpeace Philippines, along with the coalition Break Free From Plastic (BFFP), the Climate Change Commission and the Quezon City government renewed their calls for the immediate phaseout of single-use plastics.

Greenpeace Philippines warned that plastic production in the country may "triple by 2050" if their campaign remains unheeded, frustrating the sustainable development goals set by the United Nations.



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# PLASTIC IS FANTASTIC

## Envirotech's 'We Reuse Your Refuse' gives plastic waste a new lease in 'life'

It is rare for the adjective "fantastic" to be associated with plastic, particularly plastic waste. More often than not, it is responsible for water pollution. However, plastic waste itself is not the enemy — in fact, it's human activity. It's how we manage plastic waste that can transform it into a "fantastic" material; or, if neglected or discarded irresponsibly, it can be the face of "tragic" consequences.

This is certainly the belief of Winchester O. Lemen, founder of Envirotech Waste Recycling Inc. (EWRI), a company that transforms plastic waste into functional items. He founded Envirotech with a mission to "win the battle against single-use plastics and recycle them into useful products. Its battlecry is apt (and creative): "We Reuse Your Refuse."

In his profile, Lemen recalled that he was "born" into the plastic recycling business in Marikina City. Growing up, he was surrounded by a large number of plastic waste not being utilized and not being disposed of properly, ending up in a landfill or worse as marine litter. His father was one of the pioneers who produced Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) products and recycled them as well. The system that his father created started his interest in turning EPS into packaging materials and recycling back into the same form.

"I was inspired by the works of my father, so I became an environmen-



Winchester Lemen, founder of Envirotech, sitting on a school chair made from recycled plastic in its warehouse in Davao City.

talist and an advocate of single-use plastic recycling," said Lemen, who is a mechanical engineer.

He started doing small items like

school chairs, tables, furniture, and the like. The first few years of his advocacy were not easy. He felt that people did not believe that he can combine

all kinds of plastic materials, mix all of them, and make products by using a different process. For the past 18 years, he's been tirelessly advocating giving discarded plastic waste a second chance.

Eventually, he was able to instill awareness and consciousness among individuals and communities. LGUs recognized his work and adopted his system. Multinational companies also started engaging with him to show support for this advocacy. He founded Envirotech in 2010.

So far, he recycled approximately 5,000 tons of single-use plastics and the products were distributed all over the country. Currently, Envirotech is venturing into making construction materials, housing products, and innovative products to extend the value of single-use plastics.

One of the company's recent projects is the Envirohome, a 28-sqm house made with recycled plastic waste, where 95 percent of the materials are made with soft plastic waste, preventing the cutting of at least 22 mature trees. According to Lemen, a new home can be installed in only a day because of its interlock-

ing feature. Due to that attribute, any part that gets damaged can be easily replaced for free. It also lasts 20 to 25 years against wear and tear. Lemen believes that this project would be the quickest possible solution to the 5.7 million housing backlog that the Philippines is experiencing while also addressing the country's single-use plastic problem.

With the growing amount of trash the world is producing, Envirotech can only do so much with its resources, so it needs all the support it can get.

One of Envirotech's supporters is The Incubation Network. It launched "The Plastic Waste to Value Southeast Asia Challenge" in cooperation with the Global Plastic Action Partnership, UPLink by the World Economic Forum, and the Alliance to End Plastic Waste. The challenge aims to tackle plastic waste mismanagement in the region. Out of 101 applicants, five were chosen, one of which is Envirotech as the country's representative.

"The selected innovators will receive partnership-building opportunities, mentorship, increased visibility, access to networks, and grants to scale their solutions," according to The Incubation Network.

When asked what advice he would give to those who are inspired by Envirotech, Lemen said, "Never stop doing what you are already doing. We have to make sure that plastic waste doesn't become litter, will not go to the landfill, or to the ocean as marine litter. Instead of branding plastics as the undefeatable global enemy, plastic recycling can become a practical solution."



Envirohome, a 28-sqm house made with recycled plastic waste, where 95 percent of the materials are made with soft plastic waste.



A worker from Envirotech is priming and sanding a school chair made from recycled plastic, getting it ready for painting.



Single-use plastics are broken down into smaller pieces ready to be processed into functional products.



## Miming and Friends Recycle Plastic

### • Mondelez Philippines and Save Philippine Seas Launch Episode 2 of Miming and Friends Youtube Series

**Manila, Philippines - April 19, 2023-** Recycling is a word that Filipinos are familiar with. In keeping with local waste management needs, many recycling industries have been developing in the Philippines. In the new episode of the YouTube series Miming and Friends, the process of

recycling is explored more. This aims to help kids understand how they can make an impact, and families to know how else their plastic waste can be recycled in their communities.

Miming and Friends, led by Cat-Fish Miming, flying lizard Buboy, and Unicorn Anacorn, is an animated YouTube channel. Their video topics include values, how to count and sing, and the importance of caring for each other and the environment - all from the multilingual and multicultural perspective of the Filipino experience. The channel is the creation of Miming and Friends Animation Studios, formed by partners Ramon and Meryll del Prado from Dumaguete, Negros Oriental.

In 2022, Miming and Friends partnered with snacks company Mondelez Philippines to create content about waste management at home to serve as educational materials for children and their families. Mondelez Philippines is the maker of beloved snack products such as *Tang*, *Eden Cheese*, *Cheez Whiz*, *Oreo*, *Cadbury Dairy Milk*, *Toblerone* and *Chips Ahoy!* to name a few. With a legacy of 60 years in the Philippines, the Company's purpose has been to empower people to snack right, with the right snack, for the right moment, and made the right way. Making snacks the right way means growing their business with a positive impact for people and the planet. One of the Company's focus areas is using less packaging for their products, utilizing better packaging, and helping improve systems for waste management and recycling.

#### Miming and Friends for the Extended Producer Responsibility Law

Information and education campaigns like the partnership with Miming and Friends are one of the ways Mondelez Philippines complies with the Extended Producer Responsibility on Plastic Packaging Waste Law or the EPR Law. This newly passed law establishes a national



policy on adopting a systemic, comprehensive, and ecological solid waste management program. Among other provisions, identified companies such as Mondelez Philippines are required to retrieve and divert 20% of their total plastic output starting this year. "Beyond compliance, we have pledged to not only achieve what is required by law but as much as 100% of our plastic packaging output for the year 2023," shares **Caitlin Punzalan, CGA Lead of Mondelez Philippines**. "In addition, we employ information and education campaigns like our partnership with the Miming and Friends series, which is geared to inform our consumers of among others, responsible management of plastic waste."

#### Continuing Partnership with Save Philippine Seas

Providing waste management knowledge for the Miming and Friends series is Save Philippine Seas (SPS), led by **Executive Director and "Chief Mermaid" Anna Oposa**. SPS is an organization that aims to empower citizens towards environmental consciousness, leading to collective action, and behavior change. "The first episode of our partnership launched last year was about waste segregation. Proper waste segregation increases the chances of materials finding their way to their own recycling streams. While there is much to be developed, we have a growing recycling industry here in the Philippines. This episode aims to encourage us all to find partners in our communities, from individual waste collectors to junk shops, and work with them to ensure our waste does not end up in oceans."





## TIPS ON HOW TO CELEBRATE EARTH DAY 2023

### CLEAN THE SURROUNDINGS

Whether an organized clean-up drive between the government, businesses, and organizations, or personal initiatives, take the time off from your schedule to minimize environmental waste



### IDENTIFY YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

Find out how much waste and carbon you return to the environment to get a better view of how to switch to a more sustainable lifestyle



### LEARN ABOUT CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT LITERACY

Attend classes by educators, local or foreign, to understand how climate change affects everyone and how to play your part in environmental preservation

### CHOOSE SUSTANABLE AND ORGANIC PRODUCE

Buy from local farmers who practice organic farming and advocate for sustainable practices in food production

### AVOID SINGLE-USE ITEMS

Switch to reusable products to lessen the amount of plastic in the environment



NO  
PLASTIC  
BAG



EAT LOCAL  
FOOD





STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE

PHILIPPINE DAILY  
BALANCED NEWS + FEARLESS VIEWS  
**INQUIRER**



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**NEWS BRIEFS**

**P400K illegal logs seized in Quezon**

The National Bureau of Investigation seized P400,000 worth of illegal forest products loaded on a 12-wheeler truck and arrested four persons involved in Pagbilao, Quezon Province, on April 18. The police report identified the suspects as Mavie Jusayan Catarus-Escobar, Juanito Lara Jr., Julius Abtado Merencillo and Oeth Doinog. According to the NBI Lucena District Office, the 12-wheeler truck was intercepted along Maharlika highway, Barangay Malicboy, Pagbilao, on Sunday night. Agents found 7,000 board feet of fitches of "lauan" with an estimated value of P423,000 on the truck. The suspects could not present permits for the transport of the logs, which came from Calbayog City in Samar and bound for Malvar in Batangas. The suspects face criminal charges in violation of the Forestry Reform Code of the Philippines and Section 77 of Presidential Decree No. 705 before the Provincial Prosecutors Office in Lucena City. —**ABBY BOISER**



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# Aiming for butterfly effect: PH firms commit to CO2 reduction

By Meg J. Adonis  
@MegINQ

Consider it a "bayanihan"-driven movement to reduce the country's carbon footprint.

Despite what the doubters and doomsayers would always say, more and more Philippine companies and institutions have committed themselves to the reduction of carbon emissions that cause global warming.

It is the pledge they have made as members of the Net Zero Carbon Alliance (NZCA), a multisectoral consortium established by Energy Development Corp. (EDC) in September 2021 that seeks to achieve carbon neutrality for the country, starting with the private sector.

While still predominantly dependent on coal for its energy, the Philippines, as one of the signatories of the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, is pressing on to reduce carbon emissions attributable to eco-



**In describing the companies' individual efforts, Energy Development Corp. deputy chief operating officer Jerome Cainglet makes a reference to the so-called butterfly effect—the notion that small, seemingly insignificant movements can ultimately reshape large, complex systems**

nomically by as much as 75 percent by 2030, or less than seven years from now.

In describing the companies' individual efforts, EDC deputy chief operating officer Jerome Cainglet makes a reference to the so-called butterfly effect—the notion that small, seemingly insignificant movements can ultimately reshape large, complex systems.

"Indeed, what we in NZCA are doing is flapping our butterfly wings to help achieve the 1.5-degree-Celsius Paris Agreement ambition," Cainglet told NZCA members.

#### Two-pronged target

The 13-member NZCA sums up its target on two key points: Avoid technologies or operational systems that can worsen the car-

bon footprint, or reduce emission levels in setups or situations that could no longer be reversed.

Among the NZCA's member-partners is international consumer goods manufacturer Unilever, which has laid out a Climate Transition Action Plan, "a range of targets and actions designed to deliver an emissions reduction pathway" that aligns with the Paris Agreement, Cainglet said.

Property developer Arthaland, meanwhile, has also taken concrete steps toward its zero-emission goal with "multicertified green properties" across the country. Arthaland's Cebu Exchange Tower in Cebu City is one example.

The Lopez-led construction company First Balfour Inc., another NZCA member, has put up a solar panel rooftop at its Parañaque City head office. It has also been pushing for the deployment of electric buses in Iloilo City.

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## AIMING FOR BUTTERFLY EFFECT: PH FIRMS COMMIT TO CO2 REDUCTION

### FROM A2-1

These green efforts, according to Cainglet, can be replicated by the current and potential members of the alliance. "We clearly have a shared vision that would serve as our engines for moving in sync leading to NZCA's success," he added.

#### Gold, silver, bronze

This year, NZCA hopes to

come up with a report on the members' individual "journeys" in emission reduction. Later, once they have reached more advanced stages, the monitoring will include a recognition system wherein the companies will be given a "gold, silver or bronze" citation as a measure of their success.

Other alliance members include electronics manufacturer Knowles Corp.; Silliman University in Dumaguete City, the Negros Oriental provincial government;

sustainability communications agency Drink; professional services company SGV & Co.; internet service provider Converge ICT Solutions Inc.; air transport firm Inaer Aviation Corp.; property developer Menarco Development Corp.; The Linden Suites hotel; and hygiene solutions provider Ecolab.

Transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy is just one of the zero-emission tracks being charted by the alliance.

In the long term, NZCA would like to see its members engaged more deeply in forest protection and organic farming, among others.

"As we continue to grow, let us continue to flap our butterfly wings, consistently show how our actions speak louder than our words, and get more companies to join us in this journey toward a decarbonized and regenerative future for our country and our planet," Cainglet said. INQ



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Senator Nancy Binay's visit last Tuesday could not come at a better time as the world celebrates Earth Day in the same week.

## Earth Day: Nature finds unlikely ally in tourism



THE GREEN TEA  
BILLIE DUMALIANG

Senator Nancy Binay, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Tourism, visited the Masungi Georeserve in Baras, Rizal last Tuesday, April 18, 2023, as part of the Senate's investigations into plans to turn the wildlife sanctuary into a facility of the national penitentiary.

The senator said the visit was an "eye-opener" and that she would not allow the construction of Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) facilities on the land. In September 2022, the vast majority of the title to Masungi Geo-

reserve was transferred to the name of the BuCor without the knowledge of key stakeholders and the public.

Binay also said it was high time for cabinet-level officials to visit the georeserve to come up with solutions to persistent threats such as quarrying, political harassment of environment defenders, and the proliferation of land syndicates.

Her visit could not come at a better time as the world celebrates Earth Day in the same week. Every April **▶SS-2**

## Earth Day: Nature...

22nd since the birth of the modern environmental movement in 1970, people, governments, institutions, and businesses march and take action for a greener and more equitable world.

This year's theme — Invest in our Planet — is of particular importance to the Philippines.

We are one of the 17 mega-biodiverse countries in the world, and yet we see the protection and preservation of our natural resources as a liability rather than an investment. Real changes in the funding and management of our protected and conserved areas, despite so many conferences and plans to this effect, rarely see the light of day. Destructive projects continue to be proposed and entertained in environmentally critical areas.

Tourism can be our unlikely ally in the struggle for economic prosperity and the rehabilitation of nature.

When done properly, it presents us an alternative future for green spaces to be preserved instead of exploited for short-term gains.

Masungi Georeserve's tourism dimensions — besides its nature conservation dimension — is one of the reasons why the Senate Committee on Tourism in conjunction with the Committee on the Sustainable Development Goals chaired by Senator Pia Cayetano is conducting these investigations on the national level.

Tourism links nature to the economy and the larger society. It creates advocates beyond the core environmental groups and activists. It puts value into our biodiversity and landscapes in a way

**SS-1**

that decision-makers and policy-makers understand. Thankfully, there are a few groups already working on linking nature and tourism more strongly.

Forty students and professors from University of the Philippines Los Baños School of Environmental Science and Management (UPLB-SESAM), led by

**'Tourism can be our unlikely ally in the struggle for economic prosperity and the rehabilitation of nature. When done properly, it presents us an alternative future for green spaces to be preserved instead of exploited for short-term gains.'**

Professor Antonio Contreras, visited Masungi Georeserve on April 13 to learn more from our experience. Creating a valuation of the Masungi Georeserve from multiple perspectives is one of the partnerships we are aiming to secure with them in the following months.

We are also part of the Technical Working Group (TWG) on the Proposed Senate Resolution 472 — "A Resolution Directing the Senate Committee on Tourism to Examine the Creation of Policy Reforms and Budgetary Expenditures to Develop the Philippines' Potential to be the Leading Country in the World for Sustainable Nature-Based Tourism (NBT)" authored by Senator Sonny Angara.

We are delighted to take part in the TWG's consultations toward the dream to put the Philippines on the world map for nature-based tourism. As we mentioned in the committee meeting, a genuine push for nature-based tourism will entail a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach, encompassing reforms from the security of public lands to citizen education and

country marketing. We proposed that the resolution be written in the light of the 80 percent biodiversity financing gap in the Philippines and to create a multi-sectoral NBT Advisory Council, which will advocate for out-of-the-box mechanisms to fulfill the vision.

Responsible nature-based tourism can be our country's competitive advantage and nature's liberation from constant neglect and abuse. We need passionate citizens and leaders to make this the standard and not the exemption for our destinations. I am convinced that if we come together for this goal, we can create a greener, more equitable future for our country.

Billie Dumaliang is advocacy officer and trustee of the Masungi Georeserve Foundation, which she co-founded with sister Ann. Masungi Georeserve is a conservation and geotourism project awarded with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Award in 2022, and the Global Water Changemakers Award in 2021, among others.



STRATEGIC  
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**Half-underwater image shows a tourist snorkeling in the clear waters of Boracay in Aklan. Today's celebration of Earth Day carries the theme 'Invest in Our Planet,' tackling pressing environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss and waste reduction.** MIGUEL DE GUZMAN



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## QC HEAT INDEX COULD HIT 'DANGEROUS' LEVELS TODAY

THE heat index in Quezon City will likely reach 50 degrees Celsius today, Saturday, the highest since the start of summer, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said Friday.

Pagasa said the 50 C will be the highest in its five-day heat index monitoring that began last April 21, based on the forecast of its Science Garden station in Quezon City.

► 'Dangerous' A2

### ■ 'DANGEROUS' FROM A1

## QC HEAT INDEX COULD HIT 'DANGEROUS' LEVELS

The agency's stations in Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) in Pasay City and Port Area in Manila are both predicting a 42-degree heat index today.

Heat index is what the temperature feels like to the human body when relative humidity is combined with the air temperature.

Pagasa has warned that a heat stroke is likely if a person is exposed to a heat index ranging from 42 C to 52 C.

It advised the public to limit outdoor activities and keep hydrated by drinking plenty of water, especially at noontime and early afternoon, when the heat is most intense.

A heat index of 52 degrees

Celsius and higher is considered extremely dangerous.

"Continued exposure to high temperatures and exhausting activities could lead to heat exhaustion, heat cramps and, worse, heat stroke," Pagasa said.

Over the next 24 hours, the easterlies — winds blowing from the Pacific Ocean that bring warm and humid temperatures — will affect the eastern sections of Visayas and Mindanao, weather specialist Benison Estareja told *The Manila Times*.

Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon will be partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated showers or thunderstorms, Estareja said.

**ARLIE O. CALALO**