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Bill pushing for WPS protection gains support

By JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ
@joveemarie

A BILL for the environmental protection and preservation of the West Philippine Sea (WPS) has been gaining ground among key government agencies.

Palawan Third District Rep. Edward Hagedorn said he has met with officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and Department of National Defense (DND) who voiced their interest for the passage of the bill.

House Bill No. 6373 aims to declare all low-tide elevations and high-tide features, and an area of three

nautical miles around the Kalayaan Island Group and Scarborough Shoal as a Marine Protected Area.

This amid heightened tensions in the WPS where a Chinese coast guard blocked a Filipino fishing vessel.

"I thank the DENR, DILG, DND, and all the other experts who have engaged me in discussion and have shown genuine interest in protecting our environment. The discussions made during the meetings are positive and we have found that our views are aligned," Hagedorn said.

"The invaluable insights of these government officials will all help in shaping the bill into something that will strengthen the protection and preservation of the atolls, coral reefs, and other vital marine resources in

the Kalayaan Island Group and Scarborough Shoal. Indeed, this is a cause that we should unite for," he added.

Rep. Eddie Villanueva has also expressed his full support for the bill, calling it an "important and timely initiative that could provide a common ground and shared interest for all contending states."

Meanwhile, the bill is set to be deliberated upon in Congress on January 25.

Hagedorn also thanked House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez for prioritizing the hearing of HB6373.

The bill cited Republic Act No. 11038 or the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act of 2018 and the Arbitral Ruling in seeking to declare the said areas

as a Marine Protected Area.

In its explanatory note, it cited a 2012 study by Rudolf de Groot, et al, which stated that coral reefs are our "single most valuable ecosystem."

"A hectare, or about 2.5 acres, of reef can produce a potential value of approximately \$350,000 a year. The coral reefs in the Spratlys, which serve as the breeding ground of fish in the South China Sea, comprise 34 percent of the world's total coral reefs, despite the South China Sea occupying only 2.5 percent of world's total ocean and sea surface," it read.

"As such, the South China Sea is one of the richest marine areas in the world, which is home to diverse marine ecosystems with over 3,000 species of fish and 600 species of coral reef," it added.



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Panukalang batas sa environmental protection sa WPS, umusad na sa Kamara

Sa gitna na rin ng nararanasang 'harassment' ng mga Pilipinong mangingisda sa Chinese Coast Guard at militias, umusad na sa Kamara ang panukalang batas sa mga ahensya ng pamahalaan para protektahan ang kapaligiran ng pinagtatalunang teritoryo sa West Philippine Sea (WPS).

Ang House Bill (HB) 6373 ay inihain ni 3rd District Palawan Rep. Edward Hagedorn ay naglalayong ideklara ang low-tide elevations at high-tide features at layong 3 nawtikal na milya sa Kalayaan Island Group (KIG) at Scarborough Shoal bilang Marine Protected Area.

Si Hagedorn ay nakipagpulong sa mga opisyal ng Department of Environment and Natural

Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) at Department of National Defense (DND) hinggil dito.

"I thank the DENR, DILG, DND, and all the other experts who have engaged me in discussion and have shown genuine interest in protecting our environment", ani Hagedorn na sinabing positibo ang resulta ng kaniyang pakikipagpulong sa mga opisyal ng nasabing mga ahensiya.

Inihayag ng solon na makikipagtalastasan siyang muli sa nasabing mga ahensya ng pamahalaan para ipagpatuloy ang diskusyon kung paano mapapalakas pa ang nasabing panukalang batas na tatalakayin na

sa darating na Enero 25.

Samantalang pinsalamatan rin ni Hagedorn si House Speaker Martin Romualdez sa pagpapayoridad sa pagding ng HB 6373. Tinukoy sa nasabing panukalang batas ang

Republic Act No. 11038 o ang Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act of 2018 at maging ang Arbitral Ruling upang ideklara ang nasabing lugar bilang Marine Protected Area. (Joy Cantos)



Hagedorn bill on West PH Sea protection gains support

By Jester Manalastas

PALAWAN Rep. Edward Hagedorn was elated over the support of some key government officials for agencies on his bill about environmental protection and preservation of the West Philippine Sea.

House Bill No. 6373 aims to declare all low-tide elevations and high-tide features, and an area of three nautical miles around the Kalayaan Island Group and Scarborough Shoal as a Marine Protected Area.

Hagedorn also thanked House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez for prioritizing the hearing of HB 6373.

This amid heightened tensions in the West Philippine Sea, wherein a Chinese coast guard blocked a Filipino fishing vessel.

Hagedorn has met with officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and Department of National Defense (DND).

Congressman and evangelical leader Eddie Villanueva also expressed

his full support for the bill, calling it an "important and timely initiative that could provide a common ground and shared interest for all contending states."

"I thank the DENR, DILG, DND, and all the other experts who have engaged me in discussion and have shown genuine interest in protecting our environment. The discussions made during the meetings are positive and we have found that our views are aligned," Hagedorn said.

"The invaluable insights of these government officials will all help in shaping the bill into something that will strengthen the protection and preservation of the atolls, coral reefs, and other vital marine resources in the Kalayaan Island Group and Scarborough Shoal. Indeed, this is a cause that we should unite for," he added.

The bill, which is set to be heard on January 25, cited Republic Act 11038 or the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act of 2018 and the Arbitral Ruling in seeking to declare the said areas as a Marine Protected Area.

"A hectare, or about 2.5 acres, of reef can pro-

duce a potential value of approximately US \$350,000 a year. The coral reefs in the Spratlys, which serve as the breeding ground of fish in the South China Sea, comprise 34 percent of the world's total coral reefs, despite the South China Sea occupying only 2.5 percent of world's total ocean and sea surface," it read.



PH to pursue green recovery, build resilient communities with GEF \$52M funding

By Joel dela Torre

ALLOCATED with a largest funding support at US\$52 million, the Philippines through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has vowed to pursue green recovery, build resilient, inclusive and sustainable communities in the post pandemic era under the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

In a two-day GEF-National Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue (NMSD) in Taguig City, the DENR went on to prepare its portfolio of environment projects for consideration un-

der the 8th (GEF) funding.

According to Environment Secretary Antonia Loyzaga, the Philippines continues to face more complex challenges towards achieving ecosystem integrity and enhancing climate and disaster resilience.

Loyzaga said she considered the holding of the GEF-NMSD as an opportunity to develop projects that respond to environmental challenges and priorities of the Philippines.

A climate and disaster resilience advocate, Loyzaga pointed out; "The healthy planet, healthy people framework, as the heart of the overall global GEF-8 architecture, emphasizes the critical con-

nection between humanity and the environment – thus the importance of urgent environmental threats reduction and protection of our natural resources to improve human well-being (cannot be overemphasized)."

Prior to the dialogue, the GEF Secretariat paid a courtesy visit to Loyzaga as she gave assurance that the Philippines will deeply value the consultative process in designing integrated approaches necessary to address the intersectionality of development, climate change, biodiversity and disaster resilience.

The DENR chief also promised to adopt a comprehen-

sive risk management approach that integrates a system lens a system lens and optimizes the resources available to improve quality of life, which she said "will ensure that no community and ecosystem is left behind."

Loyzaga said the Philippines shall work with the GEF in strengthening national commitments and institutionalizing capacities to translate these commitments to meaningful actions to support sustainable development since the GEF-8 calls for a systematic and transformational strategy that responds to the urgency of raising global climate ambition.



Iligal na tabla nakumpiska sa Romblon

KINUMPISKA ng mga awtoridad ang mga iligal na tabla sa ikinasang anti-illegal logging operation sa San Fernando, Sibuyan island, Romblon.

Sa Facebook post ng Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) sa Romblon, kasama nila ang mga tauhan ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Sibuyan sub-station, San Fernando Municipal Police nang **isagawa** ang operasyon sa baybayin ng Barangay Campalingo, San Fernando nitong Sabado, Enero 21.

Bago ang operasyon, nakatanggap ng impormasyon ang mga awtoridad kaugnay ng naiwang mga putol na tabla sa nasabing lugar.

Nasa 13 piraso ng tabla na nagkakahalaga ng P22,026.04 ang nakuha sa lugar.

Hinala ng pulisya, iniwan ng mga illegal logger ang mga nilagaring tabla nang matunugan ang operasyon.

Matagal nang inireklamo ng mga concerned citizen ang talamak na illegal logging sa Sibuyan island.

Inimbestigahan pa ng pulisya ang kasó.



Lupa sa gubat sinakop, 7 dinampot

Inaresto ng mga ahente ng National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) ang pitong indibiduwal dahil sa pagsakop umano sa kalupaan o forest land kamakailan sa Palompon, Leyte.

Kinilala ng NBI-Environmental Crime Division (NBI-EnCD) ang naarestong sina Christian David Calo Madrona, Milven Gonzaga Cardello, Domingo Borinaga Bula-

han, Sunny Boy Merced Isidro, Bryan Joseph Magallanes, Jonathani Cabo Calo at Gina Labor Quumbo.

Nag-ugat ang operasyon matapos ireklamo ang isang poultry establishment na itinayo sa loob ng lupain na kinlasipika bilang Timber land/Forest land sa Brgy. Lat-osan, Palompon, Leyte.

Kinilala ng NBI-EnCD na "Zachary farm" sa pamamagitan ng isina-

gawang mga surveillance at beripikasyon sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources Region 8 kung saan wala umanong ibinigay na permit sa kahit na sinong indibiduwal para makapagtayo ng istruktura.

Nitong Enero 17, pinuntahan ng NBI ang lugar dahilan nang pagkakaaresto ng 7 indibiduwal. **(Juliet de Loza-Cudia)**



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BOON OR BANE?

2 GROUPS CLASH OVER WHALE SHARK FEEDING IN BOHOL

By Leo Udtohan
@leoudtohanINQ

TAGBILARAN CITY—Two fisher groups clashed on Monday as they expressed opposing views on whether or not they should feed the whale sharks that have now found a home in the waters of Bohol province.

At least 50 fishermen from Loay town, unhappy with dwindling catch blamed on these giant sea creatures, asked Mayor Don Ritchie Buates of the neighboring town of Alburquerque to stop the feeding of four whale sharks, locally known as “tuki-tuki” or “butanding,” that appeared in the waters of the two municipalities in September last year.

But Buates and at least 20 fishers from Alburquerque maintained there was no harm in feeding the whale sharks in

their seas, a move they saw as a means to promote local tourism.

The clashing positions surfaced during the joint meeting on Monday of the Provincial Board’s committees on agriculture and natural resources and environmental protection presided by Vice Gov. Victor Balite, who chairs the board’s committee on agriculture.

Another meeting will be called to thresh out their differences and find a common ground among concerned stakeholders, Balite said.

Threat

Calino Permoso, 44, president of the Alegria Sur Fishermen Association in Barangay Alegria Sur of Loay, said feeding the whale sharks with “bolinaw” (anchovy) on a daily basis in a protected area encouraged the butandings to stay.



SPOTTED A whale shark is spotted in the sea off Alburquerque town in Bohol province in this photo taken in December 2022. —CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

“Whale sharks eat the anchovies, our source of livelihood. That, in a way, threatens us,” he said.

Whale sharks, also known as the gentle giants of the sea, feed on plankton, along with tiny seagrasses and small fishes.

Buates stressed residents in his town have not been actively feeding the whale sharks in their waters but admitted they

planned to develop “whale shark watching” in Alburquerque.

“We have not yet started [the whale shark watching project] but some [fishers] are already complaining. Our tourism activities will continue, including whale [shark] watching, as part of our tourism plan and approved by an ordinance. I believe this will uplift the lives of our people,” said Buates.

Arsenio Plaza-Aclan, president of the East Poblacion Fishermen Association of Alburquerque, said the project would be of great help to them, like what happened in the town of Oslob in Cebu province where fishermen are protecting whale sharks.

In Oslob, most fishermen have stopped fishing and turned to feeding whale sharks with tiny amounts of krill to draw them closer to shore so tourists can snorkel or dive with them.

“We want our town to progress. That is for our own good just like the fishermen in Oslob,” said Reynante Asingua, 54, an Alburquerque fisherman.

Ecological trap

Board Member Jamie Aumentado Villamor, who chairs the committee on natural resources and environmental protection, noted that before

deciding on whether or not to turn the whale sharks into a tourist attraction, they should review Republic Act No. 8550 (Fisheries Code of the Philippines), which requires government agencies, private corporations, firms and entities to prepare a detailed Environmental Impact Statement prior to undertaking any activities and projects involving marine life.

Environmental advocates, including Tagbilaran Bishop Alberto Uy, have opposed the feeding of whale sharks, saying feeding the giant sharks for business rather than conservation was improper.

“Feeding whale sharks is an ‘ecological trap.’ These are highly migratory animals that should not be trained to stay in one place. Learn more and do something to save our environment,” said Uy in a social media post. INQ



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BIZ BUZZ: Hot infra theme

Philippine Daily Inquirer / 02:03 AM January 24, 2023

We've heard about the likes of BlackRock, Glencore and Morgan Stanley whose leaders met with President Marcos and his economic team in Davos last week, and thereafter signified their intention to bring in new investments.

But there were bilateral meetings with other groups that did not yet want to be named but were just as promising. According to Transportation Secretary Jaime Bautista, one of the biggest aviation services in the world is raring to enter the picture and participate in aviation services and ground cargo handling.

"They operate in more than 70 countries and said they are happy with their Filipino employees and that's one of the reasons why they also want to invest in the Philippines," Bautista said.

The transport czar also met with another "promising" group that wants to invest in the land transportation business. It is also one of the biggest in the world in its field but wants to keep a low profile for now.

It's also infrastructure that investment giant BlackRock is interested in. And because it's Bautista whom they had sought for a bilateral meeting, we can assume that it's related to transportation, too.

"So I think this participation in this World Economic Forum is very important because as mentioned by the other cabinet secretaries, we are selling the Philippines. Now they have more understanding of what are the projects of the Marcos administration," Bautista said.

~~✗~~ Doris Dumlao-Abadilla

~~✗~~ No ECC? No problem!

A controversial firm owned by a Chinese businessman, which is engaged in nickel mining operations in the province of Zambales, is once more in the spotlight after it managed to obtain a Palace ruling that basically overruled a ban imposed on it by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Biz Buzz sources said that the company—Yinglong Steel Corp.—was ordered by the DENR's Environmental Management Bureau to stop its nickel mining operations in Zambales because it didn't have a valid environmental clearance certificate.

All this happened over the holiday season with a sub-Cabinet level Palace official basically overruling the DENR, effectively allowing the firm to export a quarter of a million metric tons of nickel ore before the end of the year.

The order comes at an opportune time for the Chinese firm, of course, because nickel prices have been rising steadily in recent months.

Yinglong insists that it has the right to operate its nickel mining activities by virtue of an ECC issued to Filipino-owned Westchinamin Corp. which sold its mining rights to Yinglong a few years ago.

But a 1970s-era executive order specifies that environmental clearances cannot be passed on to new owners, who must obtain new regulatory approvals to continue operating.

To make matters worse, Westchinamin says that Yinglong has yet to settle the P1 billion that the Chinese firm owes it for its mining rights, with several of the checks for the installment payments having allegedly bounced.

Westchinamin has since appealed to various authorities on the national level as well as with the provincial government of Zambales to stop Yinglong's operations, but its pleas have so far fallen on deaf ears. We wonder why.

Will Yinglong be able to continue operating? Will Westchinamin ever get paid? Will authorities do the right thing on this issue? Abangan!

—Daxim L. Lucas

<https://business.inquirer.net/383566/biz-buzz-hot-infra-theme>



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Gov't to bring in more mining firms

They added that the chamber has subsequently been working closely with both legislators and Department of Finance officials 'who we believe have seen our viewpoint on the matter'

BY RAFFY AYENG
@tribunephil_raf

Following his meeting with a major mining company in Switzerland during President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s recent trip to Davos, Switzerland, Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual on Monday said the government is pushing the realization of bringing in more mining companies to the country, especially sustainable ones.

Pascual said had a chance to meet with Gary Nagle, chief executive officer of Glencore, last week to discuss the company's interest in expanding its mining and processing operations in the Philippines.

"Mineral processing is crucial given our resources of green metals such as nickel, copper, and cobalt. These minerals can be used for downstream industries such as EV battery manufacturing, hyperscale data centers, and renewable energy projects," Pascual said.

Glencore's operations comprise around 60 mining, metallurgical, and oil production assets, to responsibly source the commodities that advance everyday life.

He said the possible deal with Glencore entails policies that were conceptualized by the DTI to attract investors and entrepreneurs to the Philippines, particularly the strategy of the Industrial, Manufacturing and Transport or IMT cluster, which includes aerospace, electric vehicles, advanced electronics chips and products, semiconductors,

and advanced manufacturing technologies, among others.

Across these IMT subsectors, the common thread is that the electronics and electrical parts are now part of the global value chains.

"The Philippines can be a vital partner for these critical minerals, not as an exporter of raw ores, which is what is happening now, but as a processor and producer of semi-finished and finished products. We have Indonesia as a model," he said.

Chamber of Mines' support

Earlier, the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines or COMP, in a letter to its members, said it has laid out its thrusts as well as its programs and partnerships to sustain advocacy work and planned activities for the year, as well as to strengthen the relationship with the new administration.

The group said COMP was named chair of both the Steering Committee and the Communications Sub-Committee of the National Unified Information Education Communication Program, an



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initiative of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau that seeks to improve the public perception of mining using a fund from Social Development and Management Program Information, Education and Communication budgets of operating projects.

"The initiative, which involves four other mining industry associations, has selected a prominent PR and communications agency and, despite some delays, will proceed earnestly with its plans this year," the letter, signed by Michael Toledo, COMP chairperson, said.

In terms of policies, COMP said several factors provide them with renewed hope for the flourishing of the mining industry, which includes the lifting of the ban on open pit mining and the moratorium on new mining projects in 2021, the renewal of the Free Trade Area of the Americas of Oceana Gold, the highly publicized pronouncements of support for mining by Cabinet officials of the Marcos Administration given the need to help fund the country's post-pandemic socio-economic recovery efforts, as well as the global demand for mineral products that will help address climate change.

"We, nonetheless, remain steadfast in our position

that for our industry to grow, our country requires stable business policies that do not change mid-stream. These policies include a fiscal regime that ensures the Philippines' competitiveness *vis-à-vis* other mining jurisdictions worldwide."

"We thus expressed our strong opposition to the passage in September of a House Bill that would have rendered the country's mining tax structure even more onerous than that currently being levied on FTAAAs and put into question the stability of our policies, which is most detrimental to attracting foreign investments in such a capital-intensive industry. We also called on Congress to revisit the said bill and allow for full and meaningful consultations," the letter of COMP officials to its members last 12 January read.

They added that the chamber has subsequently been working closely with both legislators and Department of Finance officials "who we believe have seen our viewpoint on the matter."

"We are optimistic that our efforts will contribute to the passage of a mining fiscal regime that will encourage investments and finally unlock the industry's huge economic potential."



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Philex keen on 90-year-old mining firm



PHOTO FROM WWW.PHILEXMINING.COM.PH

By JASPER EMMANUEL Y. ARCALAS
@jearcalas

PANGILINAN-LED Philex Mining Corp. on Monday said it aims to expand its gold mine operations as it signified an interest to acquire shares of the Macawiwili Gold Mining and Development Co. Inc. (MGMDCI).

In a disclosure to the local bourse, Philex said it recently signed a term sheet with MGMDCI that outlined the parties' "clear" intentions "to explore commercial financial and technical" avenues in preparation for possible shares acquisition by Philex.

Philex said it will conduct due diligence and scout drilling activi-

ties on the property of MGMDCI covered by its Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) in Itogon, Benguet.

The mine site of MGMDCI, a 90-year-old company, covers about 800 hectares of contract area under its MPSA and is also adjacent to Philex's existing Padcal mine.

"Our interest to pursue investments in the Macawiwili property is part of our business direction for this year to broaden interest in 'green metals' through mergers and acquisitions," Philex President and CEO Eulalio B. Austin, Jr. said.

"We need to hit the ground with this at the soonest possible time considering that this property is

adjacent to our Padcal mine and would go a long way in fulfilling company plans for expansion and extension of the life-of-mine of Padcal," Austin added.

Philex Chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan said the planned acquisition of MGMDCI's mine is a "good addition or extension to the Padcal mine."

"I hope that this is the start of something good and that it would ride the wave of higher metal prices in gold and copper," Pangilinan said.

"Any addition, expansion, or extension to the Padcal Mine would greatly benefit not just our employees and their families, but also our host and neighboring communities, and our nation as a whole."



Illegal quarrying raps eyed against Bantag

BY RAYMOND AFRICA

INCOMING Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) chief Gregorio Catapang Jr. yesterday said the bureau is readying charges against former chief Gerald Bantag, other BuCor officials, and a private contractor in connection with an excavation discovered inside the New Bilibid Prison compound in Muntinlupa City last year.

Catapang said the bureau initially asked the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to lead the filing of charges against Bantag and company, but the latter said that it is better if BuCor will file the case because the excavation is in its jurisdiction.

He said he then instructed BuCor's legal team to file a case of illegal quarrying against Bantag and others "within this week" at the Department of Justice.

He also said the digging will have to be covered by the bureau so as to prevent a landslide from happening.

Catapang said the Agua Tierra Oro Mina (ATOM) Development Corporation, the private contractor tapped to do the diggings, will also be included in the charge.

On Oct. 8, 2021, Bantag and lawyer Virgilio Bote, ATOM president, signed a joint venture agreement, wherein the contractor

donated 234 hectares of land in General Tinio, Nueva Ecija to the BuCor, where a new prison will be built for prisoners from the NBP and Correctional Institution for Women in Mandaluyong City.

The facility will be built by ATOM with no cost to the BuCor.

Once vacated, the 375.6-hectare NBP reservation will be converted into a commercial, residential and industrial area at no cost to the BuCor. The parties agreed to a revenue sharing of 65 percent for ATOM and 35 percent for the BuCor.

But in November last year, ATOM withdrew from the deal due to issues which came out in connection with the excavation.

Catapang said they will seek Bote's disbarment.

Catapang also said they plan to file plunder cases against Bantag "early next week" for allegedly endorsing P300 million in unauthorized advance payments for unfinished prison projects.

Catapang earlier said he discovered that 95 percent of the P1-billion funding for the modernization of four BuCor facilities -- the Davao Prison and Penal Farm in Panabo City, Iwahig Prison and Penal Farm in Puerto Princesa City, Leyte Regional Prison in Abuyog town, and Correctional Institution for Women in Mandaluyong City

-- has been released to the private contractor. But an inspection conducted by field engineers showed that the construction of four buildings in the penal colonies was only 60 percent complete, which belied earlier reports sent to BuCor that they were 95 percent finished.

Catapang aid only around P650 million, not P950 million, should have been released to the contractor, based on the actual progress of the construction.

"The prison cells they called 95 percent finished don't even have roofs yet. How will our PDLs (persons deprived of liberty) be housed there? Because of this, the implementation of our reform agenda has been stalled... If we have already paid 95 percent of the contract, then the construction should have also been 95 percent finished," Catapang said.

He did not identify the construction company whose contract to build the facilities lapsed in August.

Meanwhile, Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla said the department will ask the court to issue a hold departure order against Bantag to make sure that he will be always available when charges against him, in connection with the October 2022 killing of broadcaster Percival "Percy Lapid" Mabasa -- are being heard.

"Yes we will do that kasi may pending cases na naman being evaluated by the prosecution and about to be filed in court (Yes we will do that because there are already pending cases that are being evaluated by the prosecution and about to be filed in court)," Remulla said.

Bantag, who was suspended last October, has been tagged the brains in the Lapid killing as he reportedly ordered the hit through his trusted man, BuCor superintendent Ricardo Zuleta, to tap inmates of the New Bilibid Prison.

Bantag was also charged in the killing of Jun Villamor, the NBP inmate who allegedly acted as the middleman between.

Remulla said Catapang will formally assume as BuCor chief this week as he will seek the approval of President Marcos during their Cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

"Well, it can be a matter of hours but tomorrow (Tuesday) is a Cabinet meeting. I might get it (Catapang's appointment papers) tomorrow (Tuesday)," Remulla said.

Remulla said it took months before Catapang will formally assume Bantag's vacated post since "we have to study everything and we have to wait for the developments to come in for us to really be sure of what we are doing."



P500B inilaan sa climate change mitigation

NAGLAAN ang pamahalaan ng P500 bilyon para sa mga proyektong gagawin nito na may kinalaman sa climate change mitigation.

Sinabi ni Department of Budget and Management Secretary Amemar Pangandaman, na bahagi ito ng 2023 national budget at gagamitin sa mga proyektong ilalatag ng gobyerno para mabawasan ang masamang epekto ng pagbabago ng panahon.

Batay sa mga ikaka-sang proyekto ng gobyerno na may kinalaman sa climate change, ang mga hakbang para mapigilan ang deforestation, gagawing pag-aalaga sa mga watershed at protected areas, pagsasagawa ng pagsisiyasat o re-

search para sa climate change adaptation gayundin ng mga pagsasanay hinggil sa community-based climate change adaptation at disaster risk reduction.

Magugunita sa naging budget message noon ni Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., sinabi nito na dapat na magkaroon ng climate change expenditures na tutulong sa food security, water sufficiency, ecosystem and environmental stability gayundin sa human security at climate smart industries and services.

Bahagi ng nasabing P500 bilyong piso na budget para sa climate change ng P5.268 trillion national budget para sa fiscal year 2023 na mas mataas ng 4.9% sa 2022 budget. **KRIS JOSE**



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EDITORIAL



CARTOON

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FIRST PERSON

ALEX MAGNO

Unquantifiable

The gains from top-level diplomacy are often unquantifiable – although our domestic audience routinely expects the gains from every trip by the President to be translated in peso terms.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s attendance at the World Economic Forum (WEF) last week was high-energy diplomacy. In the space of two days, the President attended a whirlwind of briefings with some of the world's most influential business and political leaders. He even found the time to meet with the Filipino community in Switzerland.

Unlike the usual state visits, no bilateral agreements were signed. This forum was not designed for that. But the President's attendance, with his pitch for more investments, made a clear impression on the attendees. His discussion with WEF president Borge Brende was a good introduction to the rest of the world. At the very least, this event put the country in the global investments radar.

After that discussion, WEF leaders coined the term "VIP club," referring to the three Southeast Asian countries – Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines – with propensity for high growth in the coming period. This axis of vigorous economies might also be called the "7 percent club" as all three economies aspire to sustain that growth rate despite looming recession in some of the industrial economies.

The pitch for investments is timely. The Philippines has now hit its demographic sweet spot. With an average age of 23.5 years, the country has an abundance of skilled young workers who will reach the prime of their productivity over the next two decades. This contrasts with the rapidly aging populations of most mature economies, especially Japan that now has the oldest population in the world. Our young workers are not only skilled; they are fluent in English – the language of global business.

Our comparatively young workforce is a challenge. Unless we grow our economy quickly, our young workers might have difficulty finding jobs. That could reflect in greater social stresses. Looking after the good health and excellent education of this young population is the challenge of our time.

It is a good sign that we managed, the pandemic notwithstanding, to bring down our unemployment rate to only 4.2 percent. Our underemployment numbers, however, remain high.

We are in a race with our own demographic trends. We need, for instance, to move quickly modernizing our infrastructure backbone to support more efficient manufacturing and agriculture. We need to attend to the bottlenecks of development: backward food policies, red tape and corruption.

As much as a young population is a big challenge, it is also our strongest asset. It is the human capital the global economy needs to sustain growth.

President Marcos' economic team demonstrated to the business leaders gathered at Davos that they are fully conversant with all the challenges and opportunities the country faces at this historic juncture. They delivered an upbeat message that should encourage potential investors to take a much closer look at our country's prospects and promises.

All in all, this mission to Davos was most productive – even if we cannot fully quantify the investment flows spurred by this roadshow.



All that trash

Today, the Parañaque city council will begin what should be a thorough investigation into the controversial P414-million contract the city mayor entered into with a new and apparently inexperienced trash collector. The deal was sealed while everyone was preoccupied with the Christmas holidays.

Councilors Marvin Santos, chair of the rules and oversight committee, and Jomari Yllana, chair of the committee on environment, natural resources and waste management, are spearheading the inquiry. Vice Mayor Joan Villafuerte expressed concerns over the manner Mayor Eric Olivarez entered into a garbage collection deal without consulting the 28-member city council.

Over the past nine years, the city was served rather satisfactorily by Leonel Waste Management Corporation. Last Dec. 27, without consulting the council, Olivarez signed a contract with Metrowaste Solid Waste Management Corporation for a whopping P414,803,520.

In a privilege speech, Vice Mayor Villafuerte argued Mayor Olivarez violated Section 22 of the Local Government Code. That section reads: "Unless otherwise provided in the code, no contract may be entered into by the local executive in behalf of the local government unit without prior authorization by the Sanggunian..."

Two other councilors delivered privilege speeches denouncing the "very inadequate and poor" garbage collection by the new contractor. They likewise took the mayor to task for lack of foresight in the handling of the city's trash.

As a consequence of the abrupt termination of the old contractor and the entry of the new contractor, the councilors claim they are receiving numerous complaints from their constituents about uncollected garbage. They claim that since Jan. 1, tons of garbage have been piling up along the city's streets.

First to be summoned for today's hearing is Bids and Awards Committee chair and city administrator Voltaire de la Cruz. He will be asked to explain why the old contract was terminated and the new contract was awarded without informing the city council as required. The city's legal officer and the head of the City Environment and Natural Resources Office have also been summoned.

The city officials will be confronted by stakeholders, especially the city's 16 barangay chairmen, who are complaining about the whole city being swamped by uncollected trash. Mayor Olivarez and his men should have convincing answers to the angry questions expected to be raised today.

The stink of the trash is compounded by the heavy odor of scandal.





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Phl makes headway in decarbonizing aviation

By DANESSA RIVERA

The Philippines is making headway in pursuing decarbonization in the commercial aviation sector with the use of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) said.

In a report, the USDA said the Philippine aviation industry has started recovering last year from the slump at the height of the COVID pandemic that disrupted transportation.

"Demand for jet fuel is on its way to reach the pre-pandemic level, providing much opportunity for SAF as a better fuel for decarbonization," it said.

SAF is an environmentally sustainable alternative to fossil jet fuel. It uses a variety of sources, including used vegetable oils, household waste, waste gases, animal fats, forestry residue, and even CO2 captured directly from the air.

The USDA said SAF could be used as a direct replacement for fossil jet fuel as it is chemically similar and can be safely mixed with regular jet fuel to varying degrees.

It is compatible with existing jet engines and fueling infrastructure, requires zero additional investment, and does not have any negative impact on performance or maintenance. SAF can also use existing infrastructure for transportation, storage, and distribution at airports.

In line with this, the USDA said the Philippines shows initiatives in addressing the effects of climate change because of domestic and international aviation.

Supporting this effort is the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) collaborating with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to address aviation's impact on the environment.

The ICAO adopted Resolution

A37-19, which aims to reduce the aviation emissions' contribution to climate change.

"The CAAP supports the policy of ICAO, Department of Transportation, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and Climate Change Commission," the USDA said.

While SAF is not specifically mentioned in the Renewable Energy Act and Biofuels Act of the Philippines, preliminary discussions were done on this last month.

"The Department of Energy plays a role in the implementation of the renewable energy policy. There were initial discussions on SAF on December 2022, and developments on SAF initiatives in the country are expected to continue," the USDA said.

Apart from government, local airlines have also charted initiatives to fly green.

The USDA cited Cebu Pacific

(CEB), which started to use SAF in its Airbus 320neo, with its ninth aircraft using SAF received on Jan. 1 from the Airbus Hamburg facility in Germany.

"There are reports that CEB is expecting 10 brand new Airbus NEO planes in 2023. To date, CEB has 55 Airbus planes which can be fueled with SAF in its fleet," it said.

CEB first used SAF in May last year, making it the first low-cost airline to incorporate SAF into its operations.

In September, CEB signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Shell Eastern Petroleum to make SAF more widely available.

On Sept. 28 last year, CEB operated its first commercial passenger flight from Singapore to Manila using SAF produced by Neste in Singapore, and supplied by Shell Eastern Petroleum at Changi International Airport.

The neo Airbus is certified to oper-

ate with a 50 percent SAF blend, and Airbus is committed to enabling the use of up to 100 percent SAF by 2030.

"CEB seeks to further utilize SAF by launching green routes in approximately three years. One challenge, however, is the high price, making it uncertain if the higher use of SAF will impact CEB's low-cost business model," the USDA said.

Flag carrier Philippine Airlines (PAL) is also working toward developing sustainable fuel for its airline fleet, the US agency cited.

"PAL supports the zero-emission initiative of the International Air Transportation Association (IATA). PAL is already working on its plan to incorporate SAF into its operations," it said.

"PAL began its process on net zero goal by shifting to renewable energy for the electricity supply of its major offices and has started working on the potential use of SAF to power its fleet," the USDA said.



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RAZON'S PRIME INFRA TAKES OVER CEBU WASTE MANAGEMENT FIRM

A unit of Prime Infrastructure Capital Inc. has completed its acquisition of Cebu-based ARN Central Waste Management Inc. (ACI), marking the Razon group's foray into solid waste solution business.

Prime Infra said on Monday that its subsidiary, Prime Integrated Waste Solutions Inc. (PWS) had sealed the deal to purchase ACI during a ceremonial signing held at its office in Pasay City.

ACI is the first waste management business that Prime Infra is developing, with an aspiration to upgrade and bring it at par with world-class materials recovery facilities in more advanced countries like Singapore.

At present, the entity receives around 1,000 tons of Cebu's municipal solid waste daily.

'World-class'

Prime Infra earlier explained that PWS aimed to immediately address methane emissions; prevent ocean, water and air pollution through efficient waste management; and enhance the quality of life in surrounding communities by supporting critical infrastructure in Cebu.

According to Prime Infra president and CEO Guillaume Lucci, PWS was established in response to market demand for modern waste recovery

facilities to accommodate the rapid increase in solid waste output every year.

"Through PWS, we plan to deliver world-class waste management services that will create a positive impact on both the environment and the surrounding communities," he added.

Biorefinery

In line with this transaction, PWS is planning to develop two more materials recovery facilities in Luzon within the next two years.

"The transaction is also part of Prime Infra's overall strategy to establish an integrated waste management and sustainable fuels solution that will help tackle the solid waste problem in the Philippines," said Lucci.

Together, PWS and WasteFuel Philippines comprise Prime Infra's water business, which focuses on investing in various assets such as energy, access to clean water and critical infrastructure.

WasteFuel Philippines, which intends to develop its first biorefinery in Cebu City, aims to convert organic waste and agricultural feedstock into green methanol and sustainable aviation fuel. This company is a partnership with US-based WasteFuel Global.

—JORDEENE B. LAGARE INQ



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BW FILE PHOTO

Prime Infra unit acquires Cebu-based waste management company ACI

PRIME Infrastructure Capital, Inc. (Prime Infra) said on Monday that its unit Prime Integrated Waste Solutions Inc. (PWS) has fully acquired ARN Central Waste Management, Inc. (ACI).

"We are excited about this acquisition which marks Prime Infra's entry into the waste business. Prime Infra established PWS as a response to the market demand for modern waste recovery facilities to accommodate the rapid year-on-year increase in solid waste output," Prime Infra President and Chief Executive Officer Guillaume Lucci, said in a media release.

ACI is a Cebu-based waste management company that offers treatment services and air purification.

Prime Infra said that the acquisition was sealed during a ceremonial signing of the share purchase agreement held last week.

Prime Infra said that ACI will be the first waste management business that it will develop. ACI receives about 1,000 tons of Cebu province's solid waste daily.

Prime Infra said it targets to "bring it at par with world-class materials recovery facilities (MRFs) in other developed countries like Singapore."

To achieve this, Mr. Lucci said that Prime Infra's unit, PWS, will deliver waste-management services that will create a positive impact on the environment and on the communities.

PWS is also planning to develop two more MRFs in Luzon in the next two years.

"The transaction is also part of Prime Infra's overall strategy to establish an integrated waste management and sustainable fuels solution that will help tackle the solid waste problem in the Philippines," Mr. Lucci said.

Meanwhile, Prime Infra said that another unit, WasteFuel Philippines, is planning to put up its first biorefinery in Cebu City.

WasteFuel Philippines, which is engaged in the waste business, converts organic waste and agricultural feedstock into green methanol and sustainable aviation fuel. — Ashley Erika O. Jose



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Are natural disasters 'natural'? (2)

The study on climate fragility risks in Maguindanao that I have described last week used a mixed-method approach, looking at both quantitative and qualitative data to answer our basic research questions. Quantitative sources of information included a four-decade tracking of climate and rainfall data, vegetation health indices and land use changes, food price changes, as well as conflict incidence culled from data sets of the International Alert (through its Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System or BCMS), and the Uppsala Conflict Dataset Program). The time period for the climate, rainfall, and food price variations was from 1960 to 2020, while the period for tracking conflict incidents was from 2010 to 2020. Qualitative approaches included two focus group discussions in each of the four study areas, and key informant interviews of 10 individuals that included key actors in both barangay and municipal governments, and four regional officials in the Bangsamoro region.

Two other researchers completed our small team, aside from our team leader, Dr. Laurence Delina, and myself. They are Jon Gaviola, now pursuing his Ph.D. at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, and Homer Pagkalinawan, a geographic information system specialist. Delina, Gaviola, and Pagkalinawan collected and analyzed the quantitative data for the study, while I conducted the field-based qualitative data collection.

While limited in scope in terms of its coverage, our study came out with key findings that resonate with recent studies on climate change impacts in other parts of the world that are similarly situated as the four towns we covered. One key finding in these studies is that climate change is a



KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

RUFA CAGOCO-GUIAM

“threat multiplier.” The devastating effects of extreme weather events like flooding and drought exacerbate existing debilities in local governance and long-standing structural weaknesses that have pushed many communities to abject poverty. These include the lack of capacities among local officials tasked to deal with managing disaster risk reduction and mitigation efforts in their localities, and the failure of local governments to implement fully important legislations that are designed to mitigate and even prevent adverse effects of both “natural” and human-induced disasters.

After collating the results of the focus group discussions and key informant interviews, we realized that many of the preventable impacts of extreme weather events are the result of human exploitation of the environment referred to as “anthropogenic actions.” These include human activities that impact the evolution of species like the removal of groundwater sources, removing vegetation, and chemical explosions, among others. Among the most

common of these is the faulty way solid wastes are being managed by local government units. In one fieldwork area, one site in its barangay (located at the side of a barangay road) became the dumping site of the town’s garbage for more than 10 years. I learned that the local government has rented the site from the owner for a measly P5,000 a month, in exchange for using his land as the town’s garbage dump. The site is near a body of water, a pond that has been created after a long period of its being part of the catch basin of floodwaters in the Ligawasan. This small pond did not exist during my first exposure to doing fieldwork for my first graduate paper back in the late 1970s and early ’80s.

Another anthropogenic action that led to huge devastation of communities at the foothills of Mt. Minandar, in Datu Odin Sinsuat municipality, was the gravel quarrying in it. Gravel and other rocks were mined in the mountain for local business people who have built some coastal resorts in Barangay Kusiong, just near where Minandar is located. On Oct. 29, 2022, strong winds and floodwaters brought by Typhoon “Paeng” caused the gushing of not only floodwaters but also of huge rocks from the now fragile and overexploited Mt. Minandar, submerging a community of indigenous peoples in the area, causing the deaths of more than 50 people, and more than 10 missing up to now.

These findings tell us that natural disasters are devastating not because they are manifestations of acts of nature but largely because of rapacious human interventions, the outcomes of crass materialistic greed.

Comments to rcguiam@gmail.com



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Alamat ni Sierra Madre: isapuso, isakatuparan

MILYONG taon nakalipas, nu'ng mga higante ang nakatira sa mundo, may isang pamilya: si mandirigmang Lusong, ang magandang asawang Sierra, at kambal na anak na Iloco at Tagalo. Humahango sila ng pagkain sa dagat, nangangaso at pumipitas ng prutas sa gubat.

Malimit silang gambalain ni Bugsong Hangin, hari sa silangan, na dating manligaw ni Sierra. Galit siya dahil hindi siya ang pinakasalan ni Sierra. Tinatangka ng hukbo ni Bugsong Hangin na lupigin ang pamilya. Tinutumba ang mga puno, binubunot ang mga tanim, nilulunod ang mga hayop.

Sa isang paglusob, nagtuos sina Bugsong Hangin at Lusong. Nagapi ang huli sa matinding labanan habang nanonood ang kanyang pamilya. Naghihingalo, ibinilin ni Lusong kay Sierra na ipagtanggol ang kambal. Nangakong tutupad si Sierra. Humiga siya patalikod sa dagat, nakabantay kina Iloco at Tagalo. Muli umatras ang kalaban.

Tumubo at yumabong ang gubat sa katawan ni Sierra. Dumaloy ang maraming ilog. Nanirahan doon ang maririkit

Sapol

NI JARIUS BONDOC



na bulaklak, paruparo, ibon at usa. Puro likas na yaman. Malimit pa rin nambubulabog si Bugsong Hangin, pero parati siyang sawi. Umaatras sa silangan, bumubuo ng bagong hukbo at pinaplano ang muling pagsalakay.

Tulongan natin ngayon si Sierra Madre. Huwag natin hayaang manaig ang anumang sumisira sa kanya. Ihinto ang pagkakaingin na kumakalbo sa gubat at pumapatay sa hayop. Tigilan ang pagmimina na pumapatag sa bundok at lumalason sa ilog.

Patuloy ang quarrying sa gilid-gilid ng Sierra Madre, sa ngalan ng "infrastructure development". Binabaha tuloy ang mga bahayan mula Cagayan sa hilaga hanggang Quezon-Bicol sa timog. Nalulunod ang tao. Nasisira ang sakanan, tirahan at tindahan. Panahon nang kumilos.

Makinig sa Sapol, Sabado, 8-10 ng umaga, DWIZ (882-AM).



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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
NATIONAL WATER RESOURCES BOARD
8th Floor NIA Bldg., EDSA, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines 1100

SIBULAN COUNTRY HOMES HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION, INC. (SCHHA),
Applicant.

Case No. 22-3508

NOTICE OF HEARING

This is an application for Certificate of Public Convenience to operate and maintain a waterworks system within Sibulan County Homes Subdivision, Barangay Maslog, municipality of Sibulan, province of Negros Oriental, with the following proposed rates:

PROPOSED TARIFF

Residential and Institutional

Pipe Size	0-5 m3 (min.)	6-10 m3	11-20 m3	21-30 m3	31-40 m3	Over 40 m3
1/2"	P 138.50	29.00	30.40	31.80	33.20	35.90

This application will be initially heard by the Board on 13 February 2023. The hearing will start at 9:00 o'clock in the morning at the NWRB-WUD Conference Room, 8th Floor, NIA Building, EDSA, Quezon City, at which time applicant shall present its evidence.

At least fifteen (15) days prior to the scheduled hearing, applicant shall publish this notice once in a newspaper of general circulation in the province of Negros Oriental and serve by personal delivery or registered mail a copy of the (i) application and its attachments, and (ii) this notice, to all affected parties appearing on page 2 hereof.

Parties opposed to the granting of the application must file their written opposition supported by documentary evidence on or before the above scheduled date of hearing, furnishing a copy of the same to the applicant.

Failure on the part of any person affected to file its opposition on time and to appear at the hearing will be construed as a waiver of their right to be heard. The Board will proceed to hear and decide the application based on the evidence submitted.

Likewise, failure by the applicant to appear at the hearing shall amount to lack of interest on its part and the instant application shall be dismissed accordingly.

Witness the Honorable Executive Director of the National Water Resources Board this 15th day of December 2022.

By Authority of the Board:

Dr. SEVILLO D. DAVID, Jr., CESO III
Executive Director

Affected Parties:

- The Secretary - Sangguniang Bayan, Sibulan, Negros Oriental
- The Barangay Chairman - Barangay Maslog, Sibulan, Negros Oriental
- The Homeowners Association President
Sibulan Country Homes Subdivision, Barangay Maslog, Sibulan, Negros Oriental
- The General Manager - Sibulan Water District, Nillas St., Poblacion, Sibulan, Negros Oriental 6201

(REMATE: Jan. 24, 2023)