

28 January 2023, Saturday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



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## Loyzaga names new execs in series of memos

DEPARTMENT of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga has issued a series of special orders on January 23, 24, and 25, creating new positions and designating key officials with specific tasks and functions.

Some of the officials were named to newly created positions or offices and somehow duplicating existing the functions of other offices or officials who already have multiple functions under their present designation.

On January 23, invoking "in the interest of the service," Loyzaga assigned Undersecretary Ignatius Loyola A. Rodriguez as undersecretary for Special Concerns and Legislative Affairs.

The function of the newly created position is to maintain an awareness of development that might affect the DENR, its property, personnel and prepare reports for the DENR chief. It was noted that this is may have the same function of the existing Office of the Undersecretary for Legal Affairs and Administration. **Rio Araja**



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## Visayan forum gathers 200 sectoral leaders

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) gathered at least 200 industry and sector leaders in the Visayas to generate recommendations as it refines its Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) Framework in a two-day forum in Iloilo City.

Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said the Visayas leg of the forum was a continuation of the Luzon Multistakeholder Forum attended by President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. in Manila last year. Joining him then were over 300 stakeholders from the government, private sector, civil society, academic and scientific institutions, and the country's international development partners.

"The DENR Multistakehold-

er Forum aims to produce evidence-informed actions for the protection, conservation, enhancement and regeneration of the Philippines' ecosystems," Yulo-Loyzaga said.

The sectoral experts shared knowledge, expertise, innovations and best practices unique to the Visayas region to serve as inputs to the DENR's ENR Framework, which she said "will serve as the foundation for science-based, data-driven, and socially, politically and culturally sensitive decision-making."

At the same time, the DENR will continue to integrate scientific, technological and traditional knowledge into the agency's strategies, policies and processes.

Yulo-Loyzaga affirmed the government agency's continued

commitment to addressing environmental challenges through partnership, consultation and collaboration which "can yield the most significant results. This synergy will generate new capacities for everyone to protect, restore and enhance our rich but threatened ecosystems."

Support and collective effort from the concerned parties will enable them all "to craft adaptive, inclusive and sustainable development pathways built on strategic partnerships and sound science," she added.

### Improving ecosystem capacity

DENR Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and International Affairs Jonas Leones presented the agen-

cy's developing ENR Framework for Multistakeholder Engagement, highlighting the national government's commitment to providing livelihood opportunities to communities while improving the capacity of ecosystems to withstand the climate crisis.

Leones also tackled how businesses can act as collaborators in decarbonized and regenerative activities to prevent greenhouse gas emissions.

He underscored the importance of giving a platform to communities that are vulnerable to the impact of the climate crisis.

Leones said the DENR will serve as a central hub for data to efficiently quantify the risks of the climate crisis and the value of recommended actions.

**BELLA CARIASO**



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■ Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga (center) and 200 sectoral leaders discuss evidence-informed actions that can protect the Philippine ecosystem. PHOTO FROM DENR



## DENR pursues green recovery programs

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga vowed to push for green recovery programs as the Philippine government prepares its portfolio of environmental projects for consideration under the eighth funding replenishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF-8).

The Philippines is allocated over \$52 million in funding support, the country's largest allocation so far.

Yulo-Loyzaga added that the country continues to face more complex challenges toward achieving ecosystem integrity, and enhancing climate and disaster resilience.

She underscored the importance of holding the GEF National Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue to develop projects that respond to the Philippines' environmental challenges and priorities.

"The 'healthy planet, healthy people' framework, as the heart of the overall global GEF-8 architecture, emphasizes the critical connection 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," Yulo-Loyzaga said.

She said the country values the importance of consultative process in designing integrated approaches necessary to address the intersectionality of development, climate change, biodiversity and disaster resilience. It also recognizes the value of a comprehensive risk management approach that integrates a system lens and optimizes the resources available to improve quality of life.

Yulo-Loyzaga gave her assurance that the Philippines will 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.

### Strategic programming and positioning directions

As a member of the GEF-8, countries are encouraged to move more of their programming through 11 integrated programs, including food systems; landscape restoration; clean and healthy oceans; circular solutions to plastic pollution; elimination of hazardous chemicals from supply chains; net-zero, nature-positive accelerator; sustainable cities; greening infrastructure development; and wildlife conservation for development.

The multistakeholder dialogue was designed to stir discussions toward finalizing the Philippines GEF-8 portfolio in accordance with the GEF-8 strategic positioning and programming directions.

Implementing a whole-of-society approach, the projects under GEF-8 will be implemented by national government agencies, local

government units, development partners, nongovernment and people's organizations, scientific institutions and the academe, and other stakeholders during the four-year cycle covering 2023 to 2026.

The GEF-funded projects are expected to realign private sector capital to achieve a wider scale and impact, empowering local communities to harness their resources and capacities to protect livelihoods, uplift socioeconomic conditions and enhance resilience.

Since 1992, the GEF has become one of the major driving force supporting the country to achieve global environmental benefits embodied in various international environmental agreements.

At least 128 GEF-funded projects that are being implemented in the country have been approved since the pilot phase up until its Seventh Replenishment Cycle. These cover the five focal areas of biodiversity, climate change mitigation, land degradation, chemicals and waste, and international waters.

**BELLA CARIASO**



# CCC seeks single-use plastics ban

BY BELLA CARIASO

**T**HE Climate Change Commission (CCC) and various environmental groups called on Congress to pass a measure banning single-use plastics as the country commemorates the National Zero Waste Month and the 22nd anniversary of the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act this January.

A photo exhibit dubbed #PlasticFreePilipinasSaSenate was launched to drum up efforts to phase out single-use plastics.

Under the proposed bill entitled Single-Use Plastics Regulation and Management Act of 2022, the manufacture and importation of single-use products will be regulated by providing penalties, levies and incentives for industries and consumers.

"This measure will provide an ambitious yet comprehensive approach to solving the problem of single-use plastics, and support the development and use of more eco-friendly products and packaging. We will continue to lobby against single-use plastics and foster discussions on initiatives that advance real, demonstrable

and lasting solutions to the plastic pollution crisis in the country," said Sen. Lorna Regina "Loren" Legarda, the main proponent of the bill who joined the launching of the photo exhibit.

The photo exhibit held at the Senate features a documentary screening of "The Story of Plastic" and "Ang Huling Plastic," detailing the problems brought by single-use plastics. It will run until February 2023, while the documentaries will be screened on February 2 and 9, 2023.

## Activities for awareness

A Zero Waste Bazaar will also run from February 13 to 22, 2023, showcasing viable alternatives



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■ Sen. Lorna Regina 'Loren' Legarda at the #PlasticFreePilipinasSaSenate photo exhibit. PHOTO FROM THE PHILIPPINE SENATE FACEBOOK PAGE

to single-use plastics from eco-friendly micro, small and medium enterprises such as Candles by Ilka, The Bamboo Company, Armari Organics and Sabon Express.

To cap off the monthlong celebration, a Waste-to-Energy (WTE)

Legislative Forum will be held to dig deeper into the WTE issue.

The #PlasticFreePilipinas-SaSenate photo exhibit was organized by the Plastic Free Pilipinas Project collaborators including EcoWaste Coalition, Global Alli-

ance for Incinerator Alternatives, Mother Earth Foundation, Greenpeace Philippines and Ocean Conservancy, together with the CCC and Oceana Philippines.

Earlier, Environment Secretary Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga signed the

implementing rules and regulation of Republic Act 11890, or the "Extended Producer Responsibility Act of 2022." The law mandates large-scale companies to establish a mechanism for the recovery of their plastic packaging.



FEEDING, BREEDING SITES

## DENR: THRIVING WATERBIRDS MEAN HEALTHY SOCCSKSARGEN WETLANDS

By Edwin O. Fernandez  
@InqNational

TACURONG CITY—Environmental authorities in the Soccsksargen region had concluded that local wetlands are in good health as indicated by the still vibrant stock of waterbirds found in various sites.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, personnel of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani provinces held a simultaneous Asian waterbird census, which is done every January to monitor the condition of wetlands and the status of resident and migratory birds in the area.

Soccsksargen, formerly the central Mindanao region, is composed of the provinces of South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani and the highly urbanized General Santos City.

The birds were monitored in Baras bird sanctuary in Tacurong City, Sultan Kudarat; Lake Buluan in Lutayan, Sultan Kudarat; and in various areas of Sarangani, according to DENR regional director Felix Alicer.

Badjury Mustapha, chief of the DENR's community environment and natural resources office in Tacurong, said the annual census seeks to monitor the population and distribution of waterbirds as well as the condition of the wetlands.

Mustapha identified the sighted species of birds as the great egret (*Ardea alba*) and

black-crowned night heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) in Baras.

The great egret was also seen in Lake Buluan, along with Chinese egret (*Egretta euphotes*), cattle egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) and Brahminy kite (*Haliastur indus*).

In eight sites of Sarangani, including the villages of Kawas of Alabel town, Badtasan in Kiamba and Old Poblacion in Maitum, among the waterbird species sighted included black-winged stilt, cinnamon bittern, whimbrel, common sandpiper, kentish plover, whiskered tern, lesser frigatebird, wandering whistling ducks, curlew and common ringed plover.

### Key indicators

Maria Elvira Lumayag, Sarangani provincial environment and natural resources officer, said the sighted species include resident and migratory birds that utilize wetlands for breeding, feeding and resting.

In Barangay Buayan of General Santos City, the census personnel counted 2,593 waterbirds during one observation trip.

The most common species that were observed during the census were the little egret (*Egretta garzetta*), great egret, black-winged stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*), lesser sand plover (*Charadrius mongolus*) and whistling ducks (*Dendrocygninae*).

"Their presence is one of the key indicators which tell whether wetlands, such as mangrove areas, are still ecologically healthy," Alicer explained. INQ





## Editorial

### Filipino farmers facing a fertilizer crisis

Although Filipino farmers and consumers did not already face enough threats to the stability of our agricultural system and food supply, there is growing concern about the global supply of phosphorus, a critical ingredient in fertilizer. With research indicating phosphorous supplies could begin running out as early as next decade, the Philippines will need to work quickly to find alternatives in order to avert a serious food crisis.

The beneficial effects of phosphorus-based fertilizer on crop growth have been known since the 1800s, and the amount the world has used, particularly since the end of World War 2, is astonishing. According to a paper published this month in the journal *Nature Geoscience* that detailed how much phosphorus 176 countries have used between the years 1950 and 2017, phosphate rock in the form of fertilizers accounts for around 50 percent of the world's soil productivity. In an article about the study by the magazine *Wired*, James Elser, an ecologist with Arizona State University and the University of Montana who studies the global phosphorus cycle, said "that we've been able to mobilize phosphorus from these ancient geological deposits, and spread it around the world enough so that half of soil phosphorus is now comprised of industrial anthropogenic fertilizer, is pretty stunning."

The heavy use of phosphorus in agriculture has led to a number of problems. First, even though it is not a rare element, it is non-renewable. Phosphorus used as fertilizer eventually finds its way into freshwater supplies and the oceans through leaching out of the soil or plant, animal and human waste, and cannot be recovered. This also causes a great deal of ecological harm; phosphorus in the water depletes dissolved oxygen, putting fish populations at risk and can cause algae blooms. It is likely that many of the frequent "red tide" events that we experience here in the Philippines are caused or aggravated by the heavy use of pesticides on land.

Another major problem is that phosphate-bearing ores, the only economical source of phosphorus, are concentrated in relatively small parts of the world; about 75 percent of known reserves are in mines in Morocco and the Western Sahara. This drives up prices for phosphorus, as does competition for supplies for the increasing manufacture of lithium iron phosphate batteries. Global phosphorus prices experienced an almost 800-percent spike in 2008, moderated for a time, but then jumped another 400 percent last year due to Covid-related trade bottlenecks.

Scientists are unsure how long the world's supply of phosphorus will last. Some research indicates that "peak phosphorus," the point at which production begins to rapidly decrease in successive years, might be reached as early as 2030, although other studies suggest reserves may last for a few decades beyond that. However, it will eventually run out, and some alternative means of fertilizing crops will have to be found.

This puts the Philippines in a bad position, having to compete with larger economies for phosphorus-based fertilizer supplies at ever-increasing prices. Agricultural policymakers and researchers should begin now on the effort to develop alternatives to conventional fertilizer use and make it a top priority.

The study published in *Nature Geoscience* recommended combining cropland and livestock areas to more easily recycle phosphorus from manure, or planting trees or cover crops, like mustard or barley, that prevent soil erosion in a farm's off-season to reduce fertilizer pollution in waterways. There are some more technical alternatives that are being researched as well, such as distilling phosphorus from urine, adding magnesium to wastewater to create "struvite," an alternative fertilizer, or using the solid waste product from biogas production.

None of these promising alternatives to phosphorus dependence will do the Philippines any good, however, unless they are pursued by the government and the agricultural sector. Once one or more effective and economical substitutes for conventional chemical fertilizers are found, the government must overcome a second challenge — getting the nation's farmers, who have traditionally been slow to embrace innovation, to embrace the alternatives. Doing it now in a manageable way, rather than later when circumstances force a chaotic, rapid change, will be much better for the farm sector, and for the population who relies on it.



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# One third of Amazon 'degraded' by human activity, drought — study

By AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

**W**ASHINGTON, United States — More than one third of the Amazon rainforest may have been degraded by human activity and drought, researchers said Thursday, and action is needed to protect the critically important ecosystem.

In a study published in the journal *Science*, the researchers said the damage done to the forest which spans nine countries is significantly greater than previously known.

For the study, they examined the impact of fire, logging, drought

and changes to habitat along the forest borders — what they called edge effects.

Most previous research into the Amazon ecosystem has focused on the consequences of deforestation.

The study found that fire, timber extraction and edge effects have degraded at least 5.5 percent of all remaining Amazonian forests, or 364,748 square kilometers, between 2001 and 2018.

But when the effects of drought are factored in, the degraded area increases to 2.5 million square kms, or 38 percent of the remaining Amazonian forests.

“Extreme droughts have be-

come increasingly frequent in the Amazon as land-use change and human-induced climate change progress, affecting tree mortality, fire incidence, and carbon emissions to the atmosphere,” the researchers said.

“Forest fires intensify during drought years,” they said, warning of the dangers of “much larger megafires” in the future.

The researchers from Brazil’s Universidade Estadual de Campinas and other institutions used satellite images and other data from 2001 to 2018 to reach their conclusions.

In a separate study published in *Science* of the human impacts



**FIRE, TIMBER** extraction and edge effects have degraded at least 5.5 percent of all remaining Amazonian forests. (AFP)

on the Amazon, researchers from the University of Louisiana Lafayette and elsewhere called for action.

“The Amazon is perched to transition rapidly from a largely natural to degraded and transformed landscape, under the combined pressures of regional deforestation and global climate change,” they said.

“The changes are happening much too rapidly for Amazonian species, peoples, and ecosystems to respond adaptively,” they said. “Policies to prevent the worst outcomes are known and must be enacted immediately.”

“To fail the Amazon is to fail the biosphere, and we fail to act at our peril,” they said.



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## Probe on pollution in San Simon set

SAN FERNANDO CITY- To avert the impending health and environment crisis in this municipality, the DENR Regional head ordered Environment Management Bureau (EMB) personnel to conduct air sampling and wastewater sampling tests in two smelting and steel plants in San Simon.

The order came on the heels of reported massive air pollution being spewed on a daily basis for the past weeks by Wan Chiong Steel Corp. and Melters Steel Corp.

The air particles and pollutants reportedly continue to affect at least 6 barangay in San Simon.

Local authorities earlier sounded the alarm over what they perceived as a looming environmental and health crisis posed by at least five steel plants operating within their localities.

Municipal councilor and barangay Randie Flores, together with his colleagues in the municipal council aired their concern about the continuous degradation of air quality in many barangays posing imminent health risks to their constituency.



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**STARGAZER**  
BERNIE V. LOPEZ

## Politics can cause garbage crisis

We often take waste management for granted. Metro Manila spews out thousands of tons of garbage per day. Any sudden clog-up in the garbage collection flow will cause a deep socio-environmental crisis, like a clogged as \_\_\_ le. If you got to go, you got to go, and nothing can stop you, the same with garbage.

**“** *But some situations tend to demonstrate how politics can cause a garbage crisis.*

demonstrate how politics can cause a garbage crisis. Here is a true story that will help us think of quick solutions before the sh\_t hits the fan.

Without an onboard compactor, a garbage truck would take about 4 hours instead of 30 minutes to handle a small subdivision. And so it happened that in a particular Metro Manila district, the new mayor wanted his own garbage contractor to replace the old one that had been picked by the old mayor, for obvious reasons, namely, income from ‘commissions’ (*patong* in the vernacular) from the new contractor.

The new contractor, however, was not ready to take over. His garbage trucks were simple dump

trucks without the compactors required by law. He thought he could hack it, not knowing that it would blow up in his face. The smelly garbage piled up before it could be collected. This happened not in one or two subdivisions but in dozens handled by the new contractor.

Pandemonium ensued. There were angry protests from dozens of subdivisions. The new contractor did not know what to do. The new mayor feared losing reelection votes if he could not solve the problem quickly. It was a first-class crisis that had to be solved right away.

Now comes a medium-sized relatively affluent subdivision, whose president, instead of going on a tantrum, asked the new contractor how they could help. He made several suggestions and the contractor was somewhat relieved because, for the first time, there was a ‘gentle protestor’. Before he could get trucks with compactors, he needed remedial solutions. The ‘gentle protestor’ suggested the new contractor talk not to subdivisions but to their federations. This would solve half the problem instantly.

In gratitude, without being asked, the new contractor collected the garbage of the ‘gentle protestor’s’ subdivision, up to the early morning hours. But this did not solve the problem. It was simply a lesson in gentleness not temper during a time of crisis.

As of this writing, we do not know how things will go for the new contractor and the new mayor, who are on the verge of a nervous breakdown, while we wait for the compactor trucks to come into the picture. It is possible the new contractor could get compactor trucks soonest. If not, the old contractor could replace the new

one, with the new mayor arranging for his ‘*patong*’ in the same way, not that we condone the practice, but to contain the crisis quickly.

We hope there is no concerted effort for an organized suit by dozens of subdivisions and their federations against the mayor and the contractor. Heaven forbid that a TRO, which would perhaps give more time to the new contractor to solve the problem, would be issued that could freeze the garbage collection and pose a bigger crisis.

Now, we begin to wonder if this is happening in other districts. Old contractors do not have to be replaced and new mayors can still get their ‘commissions’ from the old contractors, again, not that we condone the practice.

To solve the problem, is it not possible to assign the garbage collection to a central agency, perhaps an MMDA affiliate, for the entire Metro Manila, if only to ensure this crisis does not happen again? The mayors can contribute to the fund for the central agency.

There is no question of finances. The central agency can have its own inventory of accredited contractors with good track records and compactor trucks.

Let us just hope that, in our corruption-prone governance, a powerful central agency does not blackmail mayors to also give ‘commissions’, and does not exact bribes from unqualified contractors.

**“** *Metro Manila garbage collection is overseen by local government units that hire garbage contractors to pick up the trash.*



## Govt boosts investments for bamboo

THE government is boosting investment interest in bamboo as it launches the Center Innovation and Technology for Enterprise (CITE) as a training center for the Philippine Bamboo Industry Development Council's (PBIDC) capacity building and consultative programs.

To be launched in February 2023, the CITE facility of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) will be the home base for the sector.

It is the opportune time as bamboo is just starting to gain interest among private and public investors in light of the post-Covid scenario and efforts to fight climate change, flooding, and natural disasters.

PBIDC Vice Chairman Deogracias Victor Savellano said bamboo is now being recognized as a new "tree of life" that gives livelihood to the poorest in the countryside.

That includes even Indigenous People (IP)-occupied ancestral domains that dominate 30 to 40 percent of the Philippines' potential productive land.

"DTI Secretary [Alfredo] Pascual who has reconvened the PBIDC has thrown his support for our bamboo programs. Even nongovernment organizations have laid out their plans for the industry. The private sector is very serious about planting bamboo," said Savellano.

The CITE facility in Marikina City houses training machines, equipment, function rooms, a dormitory for in-



■ Bamboo-made furniture.  
PHOTO BY BAMBOO  
NETWORK PH

house training and offices.

The CITE also has a Bambusetum in Marikina City that showcases different bamboo varieties and their uses.

It has been offering training on bamboo propagule production and bamboo product processing.

"Nobody used to give attention to bamboo before. With PBIDC now reconvened, bamboo programs will have continuity," said PBIDC Executive Director Butch Madarang.

As the involvement of local government units (LGUs) is crucial to bamboo planting, Savellano said the PBIDC executive committee is enjoining the Department of Interior and Local Government and League of Cities to be part of PBIDC.

Technical Education and Skills Development Authority and the Climate Change Commission should also be part of it.



# Climate change affects your kids health

There are some ways parents can protect their kids from climate change's ill effects.

When it comes to climate change, no one is exempt from experiencing its impact on their health — and our children are bearing the most brunt.

Human activities like burning fossil fuel to operate our vehicles; cutting down trees; clearing vast tracts of land; and dumping garbage on landfills; and other human activities all contribute to the release of carbon dioxide and methane in the atmosphere. These and other gasses trap the sun's heat, creating what is known as a greenhouse effect and, in turn, global warming. Global warming is just one of many consequences of climate change. Note the rising sea waters, warmer oceans, melting glaciers, intense droughts, and more damaging storms.

"While it may not be apparent at first, climate change directly affects our children's health," says Dr. Romina Gerolaga from the Department of Pediatrics of one of the top hospitals in the Philippines, the Makati Medical Center. "Our kids' immune system and organs are not quite fully developed; children breathe at a faster rate and therefore, this increases their exposure to toxic air pollutants, which can damage their lungs."

The doctor points out that

this was confirmed by a study conducted by Harvard University, in collaboration with the University of Birmingham, University of Leicester, and University College London. Thousands of kids under age five die each year due to respiratory infections attributed to fossil fuel pollution.

"Moreover, the hotter temperature makes it dangerous for kids to play outdoors for a prolonged period of time," the pediatrician shares. "With limited physical activity though, they set themselves up for obesity, another major health challenge facing our children today. But if they do play outdoors, the poor air quality could trigger allergies or asthma attacks while prolonged direct sun exposure may cause skin diseases."

Furthermore, natural disasters worsened by climate change can bring flooding, which brings in diseases caused by contaminated water, trauma or relocation that impact children's mental health.

The reality is that climate change isn't going anywhere anytime soon. Slowing it down takes a concerted global effort over a significant number of years. Until then, there are some ways parents can protect their kids from climate change's ill effects.

**More plants on your plate.** Shifting to a more plant-based diet is good for not just your kids' health but also the environment.



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"We are already aware of how beneficial a plant-based diet is, and it can help lessen the world's global greenhouse gas emissions since livestock contributes roughly 15 percent to that annually according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations."

**Protect your child's skin from the sun.** The sun casts its damaging UV rays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the expert points out. "If your kids want to be outdoors at those hours, remember to slather them with sunblock and provide them with cold drinks. Playing in the shade also shields them from direct heat and the sun's harmful rays or schedule their playtime or outdoor walks during the early mornings," Dr. Gerolaga says.

**Improve air quality.** Though you cannot control air pollution outdoors, you can certainly keep the air in your home clean by purging air and allowing better air flow; and if possible, by investing in a portable air purifier or a high-efficiency air filter. Dr. Gerolaga suggests: "Cleaning your house regularly and making sure fans and filters of air conditioning units are regularly checked also improves air quality and prevents dust accumulation."

**Prevent diseases.** Stop dengue fever in its tracks by clearing your immediate surroundings of standing water, where mosquitoes typically

breed. When going out, you can also apply a mosquito repellent for extra safety. Repellents made from natural ingredients which are safe for children are already available in the market. "Also, do not let your kids wade or play in flood water," the doctor underlines. "This ensures their safety against leptospirosis, cholera, and other illnesses from contaminated water."

**Prep for emergencies.** "When preparing an emergency bag for your child, fill it with essentials like clean potable water in bottles and ready-to-eat food, clothes, toiletries, a flashlight, and medicines," Dr. Gerolaga says. "You may opt to include comforting things like a blanket or their favorite small toy, a book, and some paper and pencils to keep them busy and pleasantly distracted from unfamiliar surroundings or a stressful time."

Climate change can be such a complicated issue, especially now that it is hitting home and affecting the most vulnerable in your household. That is why Dr. Gerolaga reminds you to get help from health experts when it comes to your child's health. "It is best to let your child's pediatrician in on what's going on. They will be able to offer a workable solution for your child's overall well-being despite the challenges," the expert recommends.



## Scuba divers train in ecosystem assessment

A TRAINING session for the implementers of the Coastal and Marine Ecosystems Management Program (CMEMP) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley) was conducted to improve the assessment of coastal and marine resources.

DENR Regional Executive Director Gwendolyn Bambalan said the training was intended for regional and field program implementers, and trained scuba divers to come up with a more accurate evaluation of marine habitats in the region.

The participants were tasked to assess the four National Integrated Protected Areas System-Marine Protected Areas (NIPAS-MPAs), which are found within the Batanes Protected Landscape and Seascape (PLS), Palau Island PLS, Peñablanca PLS and the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park.

Bambalan noted that their priority programs include the scaling up of coastal and marine habitats.

"This is why we are also leveling up the competencies of our program implementers through a learning event," the executive regional director said, adding that the training also aims to capacitate the participants to better assess the status of the region's marine resources.

During the three-day training, which started on Jan. 18, 2023, resource speakers shared their expertise to enhance the assessment of coastal and marine ecosystems.

### From data gathering to socioeconomic improvement

Enrique Pasion, Conservation and Development Division (CDD) chief, said the training aims to orient the CMEMP implementers on uniform data gathering, analysis and reporting processes to attain even outcomes.

He said the assessment of coastal

and requires several procedures for the implementers to master the right tools and actions to obtain the right results.

Engineer Salome Bonnit, CDD assistant chief, also noted that the proper assessment of marine resources is linked to the improvement of the socioeconomic condition of the coastal and nearby communities.

Arnold Battung, Coastal Resources and Foreshore Management Section chief, also expressed that upon orderly assessment, "we are able to implement proper management measures within MPAs, thus achieving sustainability of ecosystem resources and food security among localities."

Meanwhile, Cherish June Holongbayan, senior ecosystems management specialist in Community Environment and Natural Resources in Palanan — a town in Isabela province — noted that the yearly assessment of CMEs is also relative to promoting climate change mitigation concerning marine and human life.

Holongbayan explained that the scientific data they gather serves as their bases for assessing the vulnerability and resilience of marine ecosystems, and adaptive capacities in response to environmental changes due to climate change.

Carolyn Annang-Tumamao, DENR Region 2 information officer, said learning service providers, both from the DENR and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, equipped the participants on the basic concept implementation of coral, mangrove, seagrass and fish ecology assessment.

She said the participants were trained in proper and accurate data gathering and analysis, and report writing. With the data provided by the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority, CMEMP implementers are also set to conduct the ground trothing of coastal and marine areas this year,

Tumamao added