

31 August 2023 Thursday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

## DENR cracks down on illegal lead smelters

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has commenced the crackdown on illegal recyclers of used lead acid batteries (ULABs) due to harmful effects to the environment.

DENR assistant secretary for field operations Gilbert Gonzales said his office has already coordinated with the regional offices concerning operations of illegal lead smelters that are treating ULABs.

Likewise, the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) has also directed its regional offices to conduct surveillance and monitoring in their respective areas of responsibility.

Gonzales said ULAB recyclers and lead smelters need to secure the "necessary environmental permits, such as an environmental compliance certificate, discharge permit, permit to operate, and registration certificate as a treatment, storage, and disposal facility."

The EMB has vowed to immediately carry out field verification of ULAB processing facilities to validate compliance, as well as conduct saturation drives to identify individuals and establishments engaged in the illegal processing of ULABs.

The bureau will also implement an enhanced information education campaign to encourage the public to report illegal ULAB processing activities.

The EMB will also explore potential collaboration with accredited ULAB treaters to establish an

incentives program for those who will provide credible information that will lead to the successful identification of individuals and establishments engaging in illegal processing of ULABs.

The campaign was in response to the order of the Office of the President to look into the report of Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI) chairman Jesus Arranza that illegal lead smelters are now operating without the necessary government permits in Valenzuela, Bulacan, Pampanga, Tarlac, Cavite, Cebu, Bacolod, and Davao.

Meanwhile, the FPI welcomed the government's immediate action in addressing the problem.

"We at the FPI are confident that with the directive from Malacañang and swift action from the DENR, we will start seeing in the coming days successful raids and closures of these illegal ULAB recyclers and lead smelters, as well as the prosecution of their operators," Arranza said.

He disclosed that the FPI was provided with photos and videos showing how illegal lead smelters are operating facilities that are shabby and ill-equipped to handle the hazardous materials where they are deriving their secondary lead.

Arranza said the lead smelters do not have adequate anti-pollution systems and proper disposal facilities for the acids and other chemicals.

- Danessa Rivera



STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE



PAGE



UPPER

LOWER



PAGE 1  
STORY



BANNER  
STORY



EDITORIAL



CARTOON

08-31-23

TITLE

PAGE

DATE

# PNIA crafts blueprint for globally competitive nickel industry

By DANESSA RIVERA

The Philippine Nickel Industry Association (PNIA) has revived its offer to craft an industry blueprint with the government to unlock the potential of the local nickel sector through value added processing to become globally competitive.

PNIA chairman Antonio Co said the group made the pitch to key government agencies involved in the development, regulation, and promotion of the mining sector amid new conditions after the pandemic and when it first announced its intent to draft an industry blueprint in 2019.

These agencies include the Departments of Environment and Natural Resources, Trade and Industry, Finance, Science and Technology, Interior and Local Government, plus the Board of Investments and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB).

"The nickel sector is still vulnerable to global and local uncertainties, but we are hopeful that we will make significant progress this time because government is actively championing the development and promotion of the mining industry," Co said.

As the government pushes for value-added processing in the nickel sector, the PNIA said this requires at least \$1.5 billion investment, guaranteed access to more than 100 million tons of raw nickel ore, importation of technology, stable and cost-effective electricity, highly technical skills, and efficient logistics.

Co said developing an industry blueprint would prescribe how all of these should be lined up while clearly outlining mitigation measures against risks that could

spook investors.

"There's so much interest right now to invest in Philippine mining, but investors are also calculating risks because of the huge investment and effort required in mining," he said.

"Having an industry blueprint will help sustain interest and boost investor confidence as it signifies clear direction and commitment in the execution of policies and programs needed to promote the growth of the nickel sector and to make it globally competitive," the PNIA official said.

Based on Fraser Institute's 2021 Survey of Mining Companies, which covered 84 jurisdictions, the Philippines ranked second in the tally of 10 least attractive jurisdictions based on its 13-Policy Perception Index (PPI).

The PPI includes factors such as uncertainty concerning the administration of current regulations, regulatory duplication, political stability, legal system and taxation regime, uncertainty concerning protected areas and disputed land claims, and quality of geological database among others.

PNIA's offer to form a blueprint was made as part of its comprehensive partnership proposal to the government that includes the institutionalization of private-public dialogue mechanisms, conduct of scientific studies on the Philippines' nickel reserves and applications, and exploration of research and development on viable alternatives in nickel processing technologies.

Co said the nickel industry blueprint may require consultation and inputs from many stakeholders and other industries as

it should ideally cover the entire value chain of nickel minerals development from mineral extraction, to nickel processing, to downstream application in finished products.

Further, the nickel industry blueprint should provide credible data on the economic potential of the Philippines nickel reserves, define where the Philippines should play in the global nickel production and processing trade, provide prescriptions on how to address complex policy and regulation issues that are triggering uncertainties, and establish the timeline of the industry development effort.

The nickel industry blueprint also needs to have strong sustainability component that enhances the environment and social development impact of the nickel sector to uphold the lives and livelihood of families in mining communities.

"As in any industry development effort, the goal is to promote inclusive and sustainable economic development by mitigating environment footprint, generating economic opportunities, improving quality of life, and promoting self-reliant communities. Environment protection, social development, and sustainability are at the core of the Philippines' policy framework on mining. Sustainability will be a key pillar in the nickel industry blueprint," Co said.

The Philippines is among the top nickel producers in the world. Last year, PNIA nickel mining companies produced over 11 million dry metric tons of nickel. Based on latest MGB data, 33 out of 56 operating metallic mines in the country are nickel mines.



## Govt launches crackdown vs illegal recyclers of used lead acid batteries

**T**HE government has started a nationwide crackdown against illegal recyclers of used lead acid batteries (ULABs) following reports of the rampant smelting of lead in several provinces.

Smelting of lead is harmful to the environment and could pose serious health risks to communities.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Assistant Secretary for Field Operations Gilbert C. Gonzales, responding to instructions from Malacañang, said his office has already coordinated with the regional offices of the DENR concerning operations of illegal lead smelters that are treating ULABs.

The Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) has also directed its regional offices to conduct surveillance and monitoring in their respective areas of responsibility.

This was in response to the order of the Office of the President to the DENR to look into the report of Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI) chairman Jesus L. Arranza that illegal lead smelters are now operating without the necessary government permits in Valenzuela, Bulacan, Pampanga, Tarlac, Cavite, Cebu, Bacolod, and Davao.

ULAB recyclers and lead smelters need to secure the "necessary environmental permits, such as an environmental compliance certificate, discharge permit, permit to operate, and registration certificate as a treatment, storage, and disposal facility," Arranza said in his report to Malacañang.

In response, the DENR through the EMB, started conducting field verification of ULAB processing facilities to validate compliance, as well as saturation drives to identify individuals and establishments engaged in the illegal processing of ULABs.

At the same time, the EMB also vowed to conduct an "enhanced information education

campaign" to encourage the public to report illegal ULAB processing activities.

The DENR and EMB are also intensifying monitoring activities focusing on junk shops that engage in the trade of ULABs in coordination with concerned local government units.

The DENR and EMB are also exploring collaboration with accredited ULAB entities for the establishment of an incentive program for the general public who will be able to provide credible information that will lead to the successful identification of individuals and establishments engaging in illegal processing of ULABs.

In a statement, Arranza has commended lawyer Rodolfo John Robert C. Palattao IV, Undersecretary for Legal and Monitoring at the Office of the President, and the DENR's EMB and Field Operations for their immediate action in addressing the problem.

"We at the FPI are confident that with the directive from Malacañang and swift action from the DENR, we will start seeing in the coming days successful raids and closures of these illegal ULAB recyclers and lead smelters, as well as the prosecution of their operators. We will now coordinate with them so we can provide any assistance that they will need if necessary," Arranza said.

The FPI was provided with photos and videos showing how these illegal lead smelters are operating facilities that are shabby and ill equipped to be able to handle the hazardous materials where they are deriving their secondary lead.

Arranza said these lead smelters do not have adequate anti-pollution systems and proper disposal facilities for the acids and other chemicals, which make their operations hazardous to human health and the environment. **Jonathan L. Mayuga**



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

## El Niño plan: Save, rehab farm areas

THE Office of Civil Defense said it has started implementing interventions to mitigate the effects of the El Niño phenomenon even as disaster management officials downplayed the possibility that a prolonged dry spell will result in a declaration of a nationwide state of calamity.

"The impact of El Nino will be area specific. I doubt we will come to a point where a national state of calamity will be declared but we are prepared for that," Department of the Interior and Local Government

Director Edgar Allan Tabell said.

The state weather bureau said the El Niño phenomenon could peak in the last quarter of this year and drag on until February next year.

"[But] it does not mean that after February, the El Niño is over.

There is a residual effect so you have to prepare for a long time," said OCD administrator Ariel Nepomuceno.

As of August 21, PAGASA said 10 areas are already experiencing the dry spell, including Aklan, Capiz and parts of Mindanao.

"We are in the implementation phase because the situation calls for the immediate execution of the needed interventions. Now, to make the plan more comprehensive and encompassing, we are in discussion with private, local and international organizations," Nepomuceno said.

Part of the government masterplan to counter the impacts of El Niño are to save vulnerable agricultural areas through appropriate water management and to rehabilitate irrecoverable areas.

*Next page*

### El Niño...

From A1

Agencies such as the departments of Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources, Energy, Health and Interior have already presented their plans and activities for the areas of food security, water security, energy security, health, and public safety, respectively.

Joining the discussion with government agencies were officers and representatives from the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF), Arise Philippines, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA) and UN-Food and Agriculture Organization (UN-FAO).

The UN-OCHA and UN-FAO highlighted the support given by the UN humanitarian country team in previous El Niño experiences, including the distribution of farming equipment to agricultural folk.



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COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE

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**INQUIRER**



PAGE



UPPER  
LOWER



PAGE 1  
STORY



BANNER  
STORY



EDITORIAL



CARTOON

08-31-23

DATE

TITLE:

PAGE

# 'Goring' worst to hit Iloilo City since 2008

Mayor wants gov't agencies, experts to sit down, find solution to widespread flooding

By Joey Marzan  
and Carla Gomez  
@inquirervisayas

ILOILO CITY—Floodwaters about a meter high greeted residents here at the beginning of the week due to heavy rains accompanying Typhoon "Goring" (international name: Saola).

According to the City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (CDRRMO), 90 of 180 barangays in the city remained flooded as of Wednesday. These include 24 from Jaro district, 16 from Mandurriao district, 13 from City Proper, 10 each from La Paz and Molo districts, and five from Lapuz.

The highest flood levels reached 38 inches, or almost a meter, which were logged in the Barangay Cuartero on Monday and Camalig village on Tuesday.

The city logged a total rainfall volume of 356 millimeters from Aug. 1 to Aug. 30, with 256 mm attributed to Goring.

A total of 6,072 families (23,260 people) from 58 barangays were reported to have been affected as of 8 a.m. on Wednesday, with 16,751 people from 47 villages forced to evacuate.

In a statement, Mayor Jerry Treñas described Goring as the "most severe" to hit the city since Typhoon "Frank" (Fengshen) in June 2008.

"More than 12,000 [people] were at the evacuation centers as of 12 noon [on Aug. 29]. I thank the [City Social Welfare and Development Office] for making sure everyone had enough food. I also thank all Ilonggos who contributed food



ENSURING SAFETY Policemen and emergency responders, in this photo taken on Tuesday, help evacuate residents of Barangay Sooc in Arevalo district as floods hit a large part of Iloilo City.

—PHOTO COURTESY OF ILOILO CITY CDRMO-URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE

... for the evacuees," he said.

Treñas on Wednesday asked representatives from the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the government weather bureau, and the academic community and other experts to sit down with local governments in Iloilo province to discuss the recent flooding.

"For the first time in Iloilo City, areas which were not previously flooded experienced intense flooding. We should study the situation seriously so that we can prevent similar occurrences in the future. Projects of the DPWH in the future should be able to prevent the same to preclude damage to property and worst, loss of lives," the mayor said.

"On our part, we need to intensify our efforts for tree planting, conversion to renewable energy, bigger drainage systems, more pumping stations, more cisterns, more rainwater harvesting facilities and other measures," he added.

Meanwhile, the Bureau of Fire Protection stationed in the southern Iloilo town of San Joaquin advised against the use of the Antique-Iloilo Mountain Road connecting to Hamtic town in Antique after a typhoon-related landslide was reported in the area on Aug. 28.

## Situation in Negros

A Philippine Information Agency advisory asked travelers to use instead the Antique-Iloilo Coastal Road connecting San Joaquin to Anini-y, Antique.

In Negros Occidental, the provincial government said typhoon-related losses in agriculture, fisheries and livestock in the province and Bacolod City reached at least P115 million. Reports from the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said 25,709 families (82,594 people) were affected by flooding in 10 towns and six cities in Negros Occidental as of 5 p.m. Tuesday.

Among the areas hit by heavy rain and floods were the cities of Bago, Himamaylan, Silay, San Carlos, Valladolid, La Carlota, Binalbagan and Talisay; and the towns of Pulupandan, San Enrique, Pontevedra, Murcia, Hinigaran, Isabela, La Castellana and EB Magalona.

Classes in 26 Negros Occidental localities and work in government offices in 14 towns and cities were suspended on Tuesday.

Joe Recalex Alingasa Jr., disaster risk reduction and management officer of San Carlos City, advised motorists using Eco Translink Highway to be on alert as their initial assessment and monitoring of the upper portion of this road showed there were signs of an active landslide or rockslide caused by high saturation of water along its steep slopes.

Two landslides were also reported in Don Salvador Benedicto town.

In Bacolod City, at least 31 villages were hit by floods, affecting 2,644 families (8,642 people). Reports said at least 6,781 residents were staying in evacuation centers. INQ



STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE



PAGE



UPPER  
LOWER



PAGE 1  
STORY



BANNER  
STORY



EDITORIAL



CARTOON

Opinion

08-31-23

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

## FIRST PERSON

ALEX MAGNO

### Sensibilities

The debate over the Manila Bay reclamation projects is ultimately a clash of sensibilities.

On one side, there are the conservationists who hark back to an age when white beaches lined the Parañaque seafront and where the view of the Bay's blazing sunset is unperturbed. That age will never return. But they will fight reclamation to the end for a romantic vision of what the Bay should be.

On the other side, the metropolis is land-starved and the only way to build anything of significance is to reclaim land. Developers have invested decades drawing up the engineering plans for new economic nodes that will not clog water channels and add to the pollution of the Bay. Most of these engineering designs use state-of-the-art technologies for water treatment and traffic management.

This is an irresolvable debate between romantics and pragmatists. The former would rather the Bay remains as it is. The latter believes reclamation will bring huge benefits to a metropolitan area that has run out of space to grow.

Reclaiming land from the Bay is not anything new. The western portion of Intramuros is reclaimed land. During the Spanish colonial period, the authorities thought it best to deepen the South Harbor, using the sludge to fill up the fort.

Bagumbayan, the open field where Jose Rizal was shot, is called such because it was new land taken from the Bay. Roxas Boulevard involved major reclamation. The Cultural Center complex, including the PICC and Sofitel, sits on reclaimed land. The entire Mall of Asia complex, up to the bird sanctuary that strangely sits on the flight path of planes, have all been taken from the sea.

Nor is reclamation something only Filipinos do. The sprawling Kansai airport, off Osaka, is a man-made island sitting right in the middle of a bay. The majestic Hong Kong airport was built on reclaimed land. Singapore has clawed back precious land from the sea to create a vibrant ultra-modern commercial zone.

Last month, after storms inundated Central Luzon, there was huge outcry against reclamation projects in Manila Bay – even as no causality between the reclamation projects and the floods could be established. One senator, carried away by his own grandstanding, pledged to resign if it is proven the projects did not cause the floods. That defies elementary logic: the negative could not be proven. But no one expects this senator to actually resign.

Responding to the outcry, President Marcos ordered the Manila Bay reclamation projects "suspended." The timetable for keeping these projects suspended is not clear. The engineering plans have been studied and restudied for decades. They were approved by all the concerned agencies and given clearance to proceed.



There are billions and billions in sunk (literally and figuratively) costs in these projects. While work is suspended, the financing costs continue to run – estimated at hundreds of thousands of dollars per day. If the suspension continues indefinitely, the investors could bleed into bankruptcy akin to what is happening to China's biggest property developers today.

The least the President could do is to provide a deadline for the "studies" to be done. Or else the constantly shifting policy in this case could be another major blow to investor confidence in our economy.



TITLE:

PAGE

## Driving towards a greener future

The Philippines is on the brink of a significant transformation as Filipinos accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs), driven by both government initiatives and the pioneering efforts of innovative organizations. Fueled by the urgent need to combat climate change and reduce carbon emissions, we see this shift extending its influence across diverse industries.

The ongoing transition towards cleaner and more sustainable transportation solutions is evident on the global stage. Recent data from the International Energy

### Z-FACTOR



JOE  
ZALDARRIAGA

Agency sheds light on this, highlighting a remarkable surge in EV sales. In 2021, the number of electric vehicles sold doubled compared to the previous year, reaching a record of 6.6 million units.

Nearly 10 percent of all global car sales were electric, marking a fourfold increase in market share since 2019. This surge has propelled the total count of electric cars on the world's roads to approximately 16.5 million, a threefold rise from the figures reported in 2018. In 2022, the momentum continued, with two million electric vehicles sold in the first quarter alone, reflecting a 75 percent increase over the same period in 2021.

While the appeal of EVs continues to grow among consumers worldwide, the rate of adoption varies significantly across countries. Deloitte's 2023 Global Automotive Consumer Study underscores this evolving landscape. Because of hyper-inflationary conditions, consumers are increasingly attracted to EVs as a solution to mitigate operational costs. Nevertheless, the journey towards universal EV adoption is not without difficulties.

Diverse challenges persist in different markets, with some of the more significant hurdles including affordability; the lingering fear of limited travel range (referred to as range anxiety); and concerns regarding battery safety. These underscore the need for a multi-faceted approach to address the concerns of potential electric vehicle adopters.

EV growth in the Philippines has been exhibiting a more moderate growth compared to neighboring countries in Asia. The good news, though, is that reports indicate that more car buyers in the Philippines are getting convinced to make the switch to electrified vehicles. Electric Vehicle Association of the Philippines (EVAP) cited data from the Land Transportation Office (LTO) showing that from 2014 to 2022, there are already 9,666 EVs registered.

EVAP projects that EVs by 2030 will reach more than six million units 83.12 percent of which are two-wheelers; 5.29 percent passenger cars; 4.53 percent three-wheelers; 4.53 percent are other utility vehicles; and the rest include public utility jeeps, trucks and buses.

The Deloitte study showed that Filipino consumers are willing to make the switch due to 1) lower fuel costs; 2) better driving experience; 3) reduced maintenance; 4) concerns about personal health; and 5) the potential to use the vehicle as an alternate power source at home.

Government efforts stand as a pivotal force propelling the shift toward sustainable transportation. The Department of Energy (DOE) is at the forefront of this, executing essential programs that align with renewable energy laws. DOE is already crafting the Comprehensive Roadmap for the Electric Vehicle Industry (CREVI) and is holding public consultations on both the Vehicle Fuel Economy Labeling Program (VFELP) and the Fuel Economy Performance Rating (FEPR).

But the true game-changer is the realization of the Electric Vehicle Industry Development Act (EVIDA), also known as Republic Act 11697. This legislation, passed into law in April 2022 and enacted in May of the same year, saw its implementing rules and regulations come into effect in September 2022. EVIDA heralds a profound paradigm shift by cultivating an environment that fosters nationwide electric vehicle adoption.

EVIDA's impact is far-reaching, creating a ripple effect of incentives that help drive the widespread adoption of electric vehicles. Key strategies include the dedicated allocation of parking slots in establishments, the designation of green routes across urban landscapes, and exemption of these vehicles from traffic coding schemes – advantages that encourage EV adoption.

However, the success of this transition hinges on the establishment of a robust EV charging infrastructure. In a recent statement, Manuel V. Pangilinan, the chairman and CEO of the Manila Electric Company (Meralco), underscored the pivotal role of a well-structured charging network. As the largest electricity distribution utility in the Philippines, Meralco is strategically poised to spearhead the deployment of comprehensive EV charging facilities across the nation. Nonetheless, Pangilinan points out that the acceleration of electric vehicle demand is needed to justify these investments.

The path towards sustainability requires collective efforts, with private sector initiatives complementing government policies.

As businesses strive to align their strategies with sustainability goals, they can play a crucial role in cultivating a robust market for EVs. This, in tandem with government policies that incentivize and promote EVs adoption, creates a synergy that can validate infrastructure investments and propel the nation toward a greener and more electrified future.

As EV adoption gathers momentum, the Philippines has the opportunity to reshape its transportation landscape, reduce its carbon footprint, and pave the way for a greener, more sustainable future.





# House joint panels okay Water Resources Dept bill

**H**OUSE Ways and Means Chair Joey Sarte Salceda (Albay, 2nd district), principal author and technical working group chair for the National Water Act, said on Wednesday that the creation of the Department of Water Resources will help address urban flooding issues, by providing a framework for stormwater and drainage services.

The National Water Act, which creates the DWR and the Water Regulatory Commission, was approved by the Committees on Public Works and Government Reorganization on Wednesday.

"The National Water Act will

fulfill the mandate of Executive Order No. 22, which creates the Water Resource Management Office to shepherd the eventual creation of the Department of Water Resources," Salceda said. "This is also in line with President Marcos's

mention of the Department of Water Resource Management as an urgent presidential priority in the State of the Nation Address."

Salceda explained that the bill "unifies policy-making, planning, and management for water and septage under a single department called DWR. The DWR Secretary is given functions of presidential adviser on all water-related issues."

"The measure also unifies regulatory, rate-setting, and licensing functions under the Water Regulatory Commission, a quasi-judicial body similar to the ERC; It also fills in policy gaps including water regulation in provincial areas."

The measure also creates the National Water Resource Allocation Board, "basically the approval body for using water resources, including dam construction—chaired by the DWR secretary, with a technical committee for

smaller decisions, and a secretariat called the Resource Allocation Office attached to the DWR, for day-to-day functions." Salceda also said the measure creates a framework for stormwater management, the first in the country.

"There is no existing regulatory framework for stormwater and drainage management by the private sector in our laws. The Clean Water Act [RA 9275] merely mentions storm water in the context of sewage treatment standards."

"Nothing in our laws gives us a regulatory framework for stormwater management. This will change that," Salceda said.

Salceda also said that the bill prioritizes surface water development, "which will reduce groundwater use. That is what's causing flooding in areas like Bulacan, which is sinking by 1.5 to 2.4 inches annually." *Jovee Marie N. dela Cruz*



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

## A maligned industry, a defamed profession

SIGNIFICANT section of our public



ON THE CONTRARY

ANTONIO CONTRERAS

discourse is roused into anger every time rice importation is reported in the news. The Senate held a public hearing on the controversial importation of sugar. Social media is full of noise whenever we hear about the importation of onions and fish.

And yet, there is very little disruption in our ordinary lives; no senator rises to deliver a privilege speech, and no grassroots organization mobilizes and rallies against the fact that, as of today, we are practically importing much of our raw wood supply. From a timber exporter, we are now a net timber importer.

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■ CONTRERAS FROM A1

## A maligned industry, a defamed profession

In 2021, based on the reported data by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), our exports of forest-based products amounted to \$1.082 billion, while our imports of the same amounted to more than twice that at \$2.391 billion. The numbers do not even tell us the entire story, since there is reason to believe that our exported forest-based products in fact use imported wood materials. Someone from the Philippine Wood Producers Association (PWPA) personally vouched that the industry imports at least 70 percent of its wood requirements.

The Philippines embarked on a policy regime that opted for a twin approach of banning logging from natural forests and adopting a more aggressive reforestation strategy through the National Greening Program (NGP). Banning logging in primary forests is indeed a rational response to the unbridled, unscientific and illegal logging activities that severely degrade and deforest natural forests. However, the problem now lies in a reforestation strategy that has prioritized the replanting and recovery of forests without a robust mechanism to allow for the harvesting of plantations. The needs of society for wood have been relegated to secondary status to the maintenance and nurturing of planted trees. This has been further given impetus with forestry science now becoming more and more of an environmental science and less of a production science.

There is a fundamental lie that needs to be corrected. The popular line being

swallowed hook, line and sinker by the public is that cutting trees, even if they are from plantations, is bad for climate change. Trees sequester carbon from the atmosphere, and cutting them is misconstrued as universally adverse to the attainment of a carbon-neutral economy. It is unfortunate that professional foresters, including forestry educators and scientists, have failed to impress upon people that this premise is not based on science. Trees use carbon in order for them to grow. They follow a sigmoidal-curve pattern where tree growth is faster at a young age but slowly tapers off upon maturity. Hence, their consumption of carbon will follow the same pattern. Cutting over-mature trees and immediately replacing them with fresh stock will optimize the sequestration of carbon. This will be further amplified if large areas are subdivided into sections where harvesting and planting are done on a rotational basis, thereby leaving very little space and time for a portion of land to be totally bare.

What is also not talked about in popular discourse is that converting harvested trees into wood for construction and manufacturing of wood-based products is an efficient way of carbon sequestration since it traps carbon permanently. Thus, an integrated forest plantation-wood industry strategy would lead to an optimal, nature-based approach to carbon sequestration. Planting and harvesting trees, and converting them to wood instead of just keeping them as live biomass, is a dynamic process of

carbon sequestration consistent with the tenets of a green economy, where livelihood is enabled through income and employment generation. It also reduces our trade deficit.

Unfortunately, the wood industry has been severely demonized as the culprit behind the climate disaster. Cutting down trees has been universally imaged as essentially bad for the environment, with it being painted as the root of all floods and climate disasters. There is no debate that unbridled and unrestrained logging, even by those with legal permits, occurred in the past and had serious environmental impacts and outcomes. But it is not entirely scientific to conclude that logging is the sole cause of floods. The recent floods in Bulacan have shown that maldevelopment, reclamation and urban sprawl are equally culpable. Furthermore, not all deforestation is caused by commercial logging. Some are caused by agricultural encroachment and urbanization.

The forestry profession has been likewise defamed. Aside from mining engineers, foresters have been implicated as the usual culprits in environmental destruction. The profession is even symbolically diminished by practically changing the labels of plantilla forester items in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). But unlike the discipline of mining engineering, which was effective in reinventing the science to adopt environmental parameters in the form of sustainable mineral production, the discipline of

forestry, where sustainable forest management was in fact already part of the purview of the science, appears to have succumbed to the pressures of reimagining forestry science to now displace forest production as a core competency. Forestry scientists, instead of asserting the sustainability of forestry production, have joined the bandwagon created by no less than the current DENR leadership in pushing for plantation forests not for production purposes but to offset carbon emissions.

The consequence of ignoring the production aspect of forest plantations may not be as dramatic and urgent in the consciousness of people, and of politicians. Importing wood may not cause a public outcry compared to rice importation. But ignoring the fact that we are now facing a serious shortage of wood and that we are now importing it practically renders our country a perfect recipe for a state of wood insecurity. Timber and wood insecurity due to a shortage of local supply is a ticking time bomb, considering that there is no viable alternative to wood that would be less climate-harmful and more carbon-neutral.

Relying on imports is draining our economy. Without a robust eco-labeling mechanism to ensure that our imported wood is sourced only from sustainably produced timber, relying on imports simply allows us to wash our hands of the guilt of cutting our own trees, even if the wood we import may be coming from tainted or even carbon-emitting sources.



TITLE :

PAGE

DATE



Republic of the Philippines  
Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
**ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT BUREAU**  
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION  
EMB-NCR Bldg. National Ecology Center Compound, East Ave., Diliman, Quezon City  
E-mail: [ncr.emb@denr.gov.ph](mailto:ncr.emb@denr.gov.ph) | [ncr.emb@emb.gov.ph](mailto:ncr.emb@emb.gov.ph)  
Tel.#: 8931-1331 local | CPD:1110-1113 | EMED:1116-1124 | FAD:1163-1107 | ORD:1114-1117

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**

On the ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS) REPORT of the proposed **THE OBSERVATORY** project, a Mixed-use Building of **FEDERAL LAND NRE GLOBAL, INC.** to be located in Pioneer and Sheridan Sts., Brgy. Buayang Bato and Barangka Ilaya, Mandaluyong City.

Notice is hereby given to all parties who wish to give their opinion regarding the implementation of the proposed **THE OBSERVATORY** to attend the **PUBLIC HEARING** on:

Date	Time	Venue
September 6, 2023	10:00 AM	Shakey's Pioneer Pioneer St., Buayang Bato Mandaluyong City

The Public Hearing is being conducted in connection with the review of the EIS Report of the aforementioned project by the Environmental Management Bureau-National Capital Region of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The following are the project details:

Project Name	<b>THE OBSERVATORY</b>
Project Location	Pioneer and Sheridan Sts., Brgy. Buayang Bato and Barangka Ilaya, Mandaluyong City
Lot Area	44,872 square meters
Project Size (Gross Floor Area)	400,187.64 square meters
Project Rationale	The Observatory Project will offer residential and retail experiences, and an office tower. Being connected to Makati and BGC through EDSA and the BGC Link Bridge, the development is envisioned to be an extension of the outgoing and multicultural lifestyles of those business districts, while at the same time being more accessible to those with more modest means.
Project Components	8 Residential Tower 6-Level Basement, Podium for Parking and Retail, Office Spaces and other amenities
Proponent	<b>FEDERAL LAND NRE GLOBAL, INC.</b>

All interested parties who wish to attend or participate in this Public Hearing should preferably confirm their attendance/participation or give their opinion(s) in concise position paper to the EIA Section of this Office through mail or through email at [cpd.eia.embnrc@gmail.com](mailto:cpd.eia.embnrc@gmail.com) at least three (3) days before the Public Hearing Schedule. Those who will not able to register or submit their written positions may be given opportunity to share their issues on the day of the hearing itself.

The Project's EIS Report and Executive Summary for the Public are downloadable at our website: [ncr.emb.gov.ph](http://ncr.emb.gov.ph). (Kindly access the Notice of Public Hearing link found in our website).

For more details, please contact the EIA Section of Clearance and Permitting Division of this Office at telephone number 8931-1331 local 1111 through the project casehandler Ms. Riza C. Arjona.

**ATTY. MICHAEL DRAKE P. MATIAS**  
Regional Director