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DENR

NEWS ALERTS

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



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Making environmental action and sustainability matter

A recent media event held at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to celebrate World Environment Day, led by DENR Secretary Toni Yulo-Loyzaga, was a showcase of some of the strategic partnerships that the DENR has entered into with the private sector and with LGU's (local government units), in order to help accelerate environmental action and sustainability. And what was great to note was how these partnerships have a strong, positive impact on the communities that live in the localities where the synergies are occurring.

What I liked about the event was how it turned environmental action and sustainability into achievable goals, with realistic targets to pursue. Too often, we've been presented both concepts as pie-in-the-sky objectives and/or dream aspirations, with ideas such as carbon emissions neutrality eliciting blank stares or "kamot-scratching" moments. Filipinos are "ma-pride," and I know so many will just dismiss talk of sustainability with "Alam ko na yan," or with a nod and a raising of the eyebrows.

So this was DENR and Sec. Toni Yulo-Loyzaga presenting a diverse number of initiatives that specifically speak of combatting climate change, arresting the proliferation

of plastic waste, and advocating the UN sustainability goals – in a concrete manner that the communities directly affected could appreciate and/or participate in.

Present on the rostrum were representatives from the Japanese trading giant Marubeni, the Swiss cement company Holcim, the Razon-led Prime Infrastructure Capital, Inc., the familiar SM Supermalls and San Miguel Corporation, and surprise participants DMCI Mining Corporation and Makilala Mining Company, Inc., – surprising to me,



ENGINEER BIEN MATEO VP for Operations, SM Supermalls.

because we don't immediately associate mining with sustainability. Then, there were HOPE/Century Food, Inc., and Basic Environment Systems and Technologies, Inc.

Did I not mention diverse? And yet, there was a common thread running through all these corporate entities and their specific initiatives – and how they're working with the DENR. It was about the DENR mantra on natural resources – protect, rehabilitate, restore and regenerate, and the mantra on waste – reduce, reuse, recycle.

I was especially taken by the SM Supermalls presentation, and how there was diversity and a multi-pronged approach to addressing environmental issues. They had a Cash for Trash program, solar panels on mall rooftops, indoor gardens, water storage and treatment facilities, weekend markets for farmers' produce, plus disaster resilient construction features.

Further to this forum, other activities marked the DENR and Phil-



HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRIPE-VINE: OUR NEW ABNORMAL

PHILIP CU UNJIENG

ippine Environment Month. A Luntiang Puso – Women in Action for Environment Awarding Ceremony recognized women's organizations and their contributions to the planning, implementation, and monitoring of Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) projects.

In partnership with the United Nations Development Programme Philippines and the Climate Change Commission, the nationwide campaign of LOOPFORWARD: Linking Opportunities and Partnerships Towards Circular Economy through EPR was launched last June 19. The aim of this campaign is to gather knowledge, awareness and support for the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Act of 2022. This law addresses the mismanagement of plastic waste, and upholding circularity.

A marine litter learning activity was held on June 21-23, a joint initiative of the DENR and UN-Habitat Philippines, with strong representation from youth-led organizations that foster spreading awareness on marine litter and its impact on communities and wildlife. Loyzaga recognizes how important it is to engage the youth and have them ally with the DENR; as they are the more passionate, and more invested.

Just the other day, on June 30, the DENR-Environmental Management Bu-

ENVIRONMENT FOR



CELEBRATING WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY, DENR Sec. Toni Yulo-Loyzaga (right), with Vince Dizon of Prime Infrastructure Capital, and Shimoda Shigeru of Marubeni.

reau (EMB) launched the Luntiang Puso – Outstanding Community Livelihood Projects Through Local Waste Recovery. While it may be a mouthful to read out, it's the EMB recognizing livelihood programs initiated by communities in their effort to reduce and recover wastes. It's part of raising environmental consciousness at the grass roots and barangay level, by recognizing and rewarding their efforts.

While we may still be in the midst of the struggle to significantly reduce plastic waste, the DENR, through the leadership of Sec. Yulo-Loyzaga is taking a multi-pronged approach to addressing the issue of plastic waste, and sustainability, and seeking across the board support for their efforts and programs. We should recognize the value of these initiatives and lend our support in any way possible – even if on a soft impact manner, every little bit helps, as it's all about fostering the right mindset.



Century Pacific launches 'Saving Our Seas' campaign for circular economy, biodiversity

CENTURY Pacific Food Inc. (CNPF), one of the leading branded food and beverage manufacturing companies in the Philippines, has taken another step toward achieving cleaner seas with the launch of its new Saving Our Seas Campaign.

Established in 1986, Century Tuna, the country's leading canned tuna brand, aims to lead in promoting the circular economy and biodiversity in partnership with impact organization HOPE through its "Aling Tindera Waste-to-Cash" program.

Carlo Endaya, CNPF's vice president and general manager for Century Tuna, said, "The Philippines is among the top contributors of plastic waste in the world, posing a threat to communities and marine life."

Endaya added: "Conversely, this presents an opportunity to unlock value in plastic waste and prevent it from leaking into nature by incentivizing critical movers in the cycle and creating a circular economy—a win-win scenario for both people and the planet."

In the campaign, Century Tuna's initiative kicked off in Mabini, Batangas, globally renowned for its lush marine life and biodiversity and a haven for scuba divers.

A total of 212 volunteers, including Century Tuna Ambassador Alden Richards and the Century Tuna Superbods, collected 805 kilograms of trash, among the largest volumes collected in the area.

To encourage the residents to get involved, multiple plastic waste col-



lection points were installed within the coastal areas, where community members can sell plastic trash in exchange for cash.

The drop off points are managed by community's *sari-sari* (variety) store owners from HOPE's Aling Tindera Program.

The women micro-entrepreneurs collect the plastic waste and have them properly recycled and upcycled back into the circular economy.

There are currently more than 100 Aling Tindera sites in the country.

Plastic waste accumulated from Aling Tindera sites is then sold to the Plastic Credit Exchange (PCX), generating income for the women.

PCX is a global plastic solutions platform and credit exchange with an ecosystem of partner companies, who can process, recycle and upcycle post-consumer plastic waste into useful materials or energy.

Furthermore, PCX converts recycled/upcycled plastic waste into plastic credit, creating an offsetting mechanism for companies who want to reduce their plastic waste footprint and commit to Net Zero Plastic Waste.

"The Saving Our Seas Campaign goes beyond beach cleanups," Endaya explained.

It is a proactive approach to sustainability and in securing future food supply by creating systemic change through partnerships and community engagement, he said.

"We believe this is relevant and necessary, especially in light of the EPR [Extended Producer Responsibility] law," he added.

The EPR Act of 2022 required companies to establish programs that would reduce their production, importation, supply, or use of plastic products, such as reduction initiatives, recycling, and offsetting platforms.

Century Tuna further aims to extend its reach nationwide, emphasizing the importance of plastic pollution prevention at home.

Endaya pointed out the need for every Filipino to participate in the campaign, regardless of their proximity to coastal areas, saying that "plastic pollution prevention starts within our homes."

"We encourage responsible plastic waste management and promote the use of recovery facilities, such

as the Aling Tindera sites, which are conveniently located nationwide. This is a message we want to convey to the public."

With these programs, CNPF affirms its commitment to reducing its plastic waste footprint.

The company has a 3P sustainability strategy—Protein Delivery, Planet Preservation and People Development.

Under the environmental pillar, the company made a commitment to achieve Net Zero Plastic footprint in 2019.

As of 2022, all its brands that utilize flexible plastic packaging have been certified as Net Zero Plastic Waste brands by PriceWaterhouseCoopers through a partnership with PCX.

"Embracing more responsible and sustainable business practices is front and center at Century. We strive to operate in a way where progress, growth and sustainability are inextricably linked. Doing so hopefully secures our longevity as a food company, enabling us to provide affordable nutrition to Filipino families for many more years and beyond," Endaya said.



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Group takes action to reforest mountain range

MANGATAREM, Pangasinan: Every week, Celso Salazar and a group of volunteers would drive to an area along the scenic Daang Kalikasan that links this town to Sta. Cruz in Zambales province.

They would bring with them seedlings of native trees to be planted on the Pangasinan side of the Zambales Range. They would also bring jugs of water to wet the seedlings they had previously planted.

The trip last Sunday, June 25, was no different from the other trips his group had done since 2021. Only this time, Salazar was with a group of teachers from the Urbiztondo National High School in Urbiztondo, Pangasinan.

"We were only 20 when we started planting here," said Salazar, a forester and president of the Pangasinan Native Tree Enthusiasts (PNTE).

"But then, we were eventually noticed in social media, so that teachers, students and nongovernment organizations of all kinds re-

quested us to allow them to join our tree-planting activities," he added.

Today, PNTE has more than 1,200 members.

Salazar said that after registering PNTE with the Securities and Exchange Commission, he applied at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for a 20-hectare site to reforest under the National Greening Program.

"Since 2021, we have planted around 5,000 native trees in the area. We have also planted close to 150 native tree species, out of the 3,600 native tree species that we have in the country. These are mostly unknown to the Pangasinense," Salazar said.

Among the native trees that were planted in the area are arangen, dao, lamio, ipil supa, tibig hauli, alim, binunga, batino, molave, lanete, tuai and narra.

Salazar said that there are also native trees similar to cherry blossoms, such as malabulak, banaba, bagawak morado, balai lamok, paguringon and patalsik pula, which

is one of the rarest native trees.

"We intend to bring more native trees from the different parts of the country," Salazar said.

Salazar's enthusiasm to plant native trees began when he was still a DENR executive.

"One of my dreams was to plant native trees. But then, we were only limited to planting mahogany and narra, so when I got tired and retired, I made a covenant with myself that I'm going to restore native trees in Pangasinan," Salazar said.

Last February, his group was among the signatories to a memorandum of agreement with Gov. Ramon Guico 3rd and various groups that would help provide a long-term solution to climate change.

"Our role will be to interface the planting of native trees as a nature-based solution to climate change," Salazar said.

Asked why his group chose to plant native trees, he said, "Native trees are very resilient. They also preserve biodiversity

in Philippine forests."

To ensure a high survival rate for the trees they have planted, Salazar launched Project Dilig Kalinga para sa Punong Katutubo, where volunteers join the trip to the reforestation area to water the trees.

"In five to ten years, we will see fully grown trees. We used to plant 1.5-foot-high seedlings. Now, we are planting bigger trees," Salazar said.

Alcide Amador, former provincial environment and natural resources officer in Tarlac province, said that it is high time for the DENR to promote the planting of native trees.

"It's better that we bring back the native trees all over the country," said Amador, who is also a PNTE member.

A longtime resident of this town said that native trees used to cover the mountains. But, he added, massive deforestation decimated the forests.

"Sana dumami ulit ang mga puno (I wish there will be more trees again)," he said.

GABRIEL CARDINOZA



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■ IDSI FROM A5

Japan plans to dump nuclear wastewater near the Philippines

poorest sectors of our society. In September 2016, then-senator Francis Pangilinan reported that the average fishermen earned P178 a day. But their lot improved significantly under the administration of former president Rodrigo Duterte.

According to a Philippine Statistics Authority report, from 2015 to 2018 poverty decreased across the board for fishing communities facing the WPS, and their catch even increased.

Fisherman Sofrinio Lopez told the media that Filipino fishermen in the WPS are not experiencing harassment from the Chinese, and asks why the media are entering the area when everyone knows that it will only provoke tensions (PTV Ulat Bayan).

"There is peaceful co-existence between Chinese and Filipino fishermen," an Inquirer story in 2019 quoted Eric Naboa, president of the Cato Fishermen Association.

Life has significantly improved for our fishermen on Pag-asa Island

For the first time, the remote fishing village saw 24/7 electricity, new road infrastructures, a new pier and runway, and supply of fishermen boats, which led to an increase in tourism, as well as the villagers' productivity, said Larry Hugo, president of the Kalayaan Palawan Farmers Fishermen Association, in a report by SMNI, which sent to the WPS a reporter who was after an accurate story, not sensationalized *u. ma.*

What is often not reported is the significant growth in income enjoyed by the fishermen-turned-boatmen/tour guides, especially those who are the beneficiaries of the

increased number of Asian travelers. At the peak of Chinese arrivals before the pandemic, the fishermen reported that their incomes increased at least three to four times. But there are now reports that our Philippine consulates in China are limiting the issuance of visas and charging excess fees. Who stands to gain from such maneuvers?

As IDSI has written in the past and facts on the ground have proven: "We have achieved relative peace in the SCS (South China Sea) with China and other neighbors, our fishermen reported increased fish catch on top of major economic benefits received from China to develop our economy (across trade, infrastructure, technology, agriculture, education, etc.) — all gained not from military alliances, but from peaceful engagements already benefiting millions of our kababayan (countrymen)."

Some Philippine politicians and media seem to now like playing up issues, instead of clarifying situations, that they often have not researched on — very much in US and Western style instead of the Asian approach of looking for common ground.

The forces that create division and hostility in nations in the world are now in the Philippines.

We should make every effort to keep out these provocateurs who profit from military conflicts they stir up with their NGOs, think tanks, media networks, and eventually, by their command of our armed forces; **but at the cost of the lives of the countries they enter, not their own** in the hundreds of thousands killed like in Ukraine, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, Venezuela, etc. Time for the Filipinos to "get smart!"



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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1898
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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Reclamation activities in Manila Bay monitored; DENR flags one project

By BETHEENA UNITE

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is undertaking a cumulative impact assessment on reclamation projects in Manila Bay and has already flagged one party for potential

Reclamation activities in Manila Bay monitored; DENR flags one project

non-compliance with government regulations.

Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga, in a recent Palace briefing, said they are now looking at the compliance of those who have already begun their reclamation projects in the bay.

She said "there are discussions ongoing with at least one party" over compliance issues.

"They will be called in for a technical conference to see whether may explanation po sila sa mga in-observe na potential non-compliance (they have an explanation on the potential non-compliance that was observed)," Loyzaga said.

Loyzaga bared this as several groups have urged President Marcos to unconditionally revoke all Environmental Compliance Certificates (ECCs) for the Manila Bay reclamation projects.

"Right now, what I have been given some latitude to do is to actually present a cumulative impact assessment of the different individual projects," Loyzaga said, noting that the past project evaluations were done on an individual basis. "Globally po, ang (the) practice whenever you have several projects in a single ecosystem, you need a cumulative

impact assessment and so we are undertaking that."

The DENR chief said they are using the baseline of the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan and comparing it with the technical descriptions of all the different reclamation projects in Manila Bay.

The Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan was contracted during the previous administration.

Reclamations impede SC task

Complicating the matter, she further said, was the Supreme Court's decision tasking the DENR, together with other agencies, to rehabilitate Manila Bay.

"What we are concerned about is that our task in terms of implementing that mandamus, okay, is actually going to be impeded by some of these developments," Loyzaga pointed out.

"We have a mandamus that we need to implement, that by law, already by the decision of the Supreme Court, and we need to also now actually evaluate the cumulative impact of all of those projects together," she added.



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Japan plans to dump nuclear wastewater near the Philippines

JAPAN is set to start dumping 1.3 million tons of nuclear wastewater from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant into the Pacific Ocean, estimated to take at least 40 years to finish. Why are most of the Philippines' media and lawmakers quiet?

Would the same silent treatment be extended if the subject was China?

The fishermen in Fukushima themselves and other fishing communities in Japan have protested Tokyo's decision to release the wastewater into the ocean, even though the Tokyo Electric Power Co. (Tepco) has offered them compensation. People from South Korea, Pacific Island nations and the Philippines have also protested Japan's unilateral decision. Leaders from neighbouring nations have also voiced their concerns, and reasonably requested for adequate and transparent consultation and time to be given to better assess the potential impacts.

Even the Group of Seven (G7) did not give its unanimous support to the move, in contrast to Japan's claims that the G7 "welcomes the release of Fukushima wastewater." German Environment Secretary Steffi Lemke clarified that, while she respected the efforts of [Japan] after the nuclear accident, Germany couldn't welcome the discharge of the contaminated water. The G7 communiqué does not say the G7 ministers "welcome" the release of the water, but instead says they "support the IAEA's (International Atomic Energy Agency) independent review... and that it will not cause any harm to humans and the environment."

Scientists, like Ferenc Dalnoki-Veress, a Nobel Prize laureate in physics who worked at the Max Planck Institute for Nuclear Physics in Germany and Princeton University, and who was part of a team to review the safety measures Tepco implemented,



NEW WORLDS
(The IDSI Corner)

MARIO
FERDINAND
PASION

said: "It's like a student handing in a poorly written assignment with no effort... I found so many problems. Then, when we met with Tepco, they dumped a massive PowerPoint two hours before the meeting...!"

In fairness, Japan Times allowed the position of the team of scientists, representing the 18-nation Pacific Island Forum, to be published. "The bottom line," the scientists said, "is that it is impossible to assess the impact of any release plan without first knowing what is in the tanks..."

"Once the discharge commences, the opportunity to examine total costs and weigh the ocean discharge option against other alternatives will have been lost," they warned.

The US National Association of Marine Laboratories, an organization of more than 100 member-laboratories, also expressed their opposition, "there is a lack of adequate and accurate scientific data supporting Japan's assertion of safety and an abundance of data demonstrating serious concerns about releasing radioactively contaminated water."

The Western media often include the IAEA report that backs the safety of Fukushima wastewater release, as some sort of safety assurance, but this fails to question the inherent conflict of interest, given that the agency is supposed to promote the use of nuclear energy. There is also a foreign report, based on an anonymous source, that Tepco donated 1 million euros to the IAEA, which

JAPAN TO DUMP NUCLEAR WASTEWATER INTO PACIFIC OCEAN



NEW WORLDS IDSI IMAGE

Japan has denied but the IAEA has remained quiet about. The UK's The Independent did report in May 2022 that Japan was to donate \$2 million to the IAEA for its efforts to secure the safety of Ukraine's nuclear facilities.

Japan has rejected available alternative, more expensive, options of storage and discharge.

Double standard of Senator Hontiveros?

Have Senators Risa Hontiveros and Francis Tolentino extended support for our fishermen who have pleaded for Japan to delay the wastewater's release? The lawmakers would rather have the Filipino taxpayers pay for the bringing of the West Philippine Sea (WPS) issue against China to the United Nations, which the Inquirer and the Philippines Star headlined on their front pages, but hardly a mention on the rallying cries by the fisherfolks and environmentalists against Japan's plans to dump nuclear wastewater into the ocean.

Is Hontiveros aware that:
- 147 countries ignored the Permanent Court of Arbitration

(PCA) decision?

- 33 countries, including the European Union, "acknowledge the ruling but do not call for compliance"?

- Seven countries oppose the award, including Russia and Taiwan?

- Only seven countries demanded that China comply with the award — the US is not a signatory to the Unclos (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea), and the rest are mostly US allies?

This information was first reported by Rigoberto Tiglao in his *Manila Times* column. His source? "The Asian Maritime Transparency Institute, a think-tank/propaganda platform the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies set up to disseminate US views on the South China disputes."

Did Hontiveros ask Taiwan's leader Tsai Ing-wen why Taipei opposed the PCA decision?

Untold stories of our fishermen in WPS

It is an unfortunate truth that our Filipino fishermen have been the
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MAYOR ABBY BINAY REMINDS MAKATIZENS OF THEIR ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

DURING the first-ever Gawad Kalikasan held last June 27 at the Makati City Hall, Makati Mayor Abby Binay delivered an inspiring speech during her State of the Environment Address, reminding her constituents of their responsibility to empower communities toward the collective journey of achieving sustainable climate goals.

"It is incumbent upon us to serve as a role model to other localities and to share our knowledge, experiences, and best practices to help them attain their climate goals. Such a huge responsibility calls for every Makatizen to do their part in sustaining the health of the environment," she said.

Binay also called upon the Makatizen's cooperation and unity, which have brought significant efforts in championing sustainability in the city as a vital part of their present and future success.

The Gawad Kalikasan recognizes the stakeholders' efforts in rehabilitating, conserving, and preserving the city's environment while documenting conducive approaches and increasing the community's compliance with environment-related ordinances.

It also coincides with June as the Philippine Environment Month.

Several barangays, private sectors, departments, offices, and other stakeholders took home the recognition for their outstanding efforts toward environmental protection within Makati.

Patricia Taculao



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MAKATI SOLON BACKS PBBM'S BID TO REUSE METRO MANILA FLOODWATER FOR IRRIGATION

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s plan to collect, impound, and recycle Metro Manila's stormwater for agricultural irrigation in surrounding provinces has drawn the support of a senior member of Congress.

"We are all for it. Assuming the government can establish new large stormwater reservoirs for farm irrigation, then all of Angat Dam's water reserve may be freed up and devoted exclusively to supplying Metro Manila's demand for potable water," Makati City Second District Representative Luis Campos Jr. said

in a statement last Sunday.

"At present, besides supplying 90 percent of Metro Manila's water requirement, Angat also provides water to irrigate some 28,000 hectares of farmland in Central Luzon," Campos pointed out.

Campos's remarks came as Angat's water level continued to drop due to abnormally low rainfall amid a looming El Niño event.

By 6:00 am last June 25, Angat's water level fell to 184 meters or just four meters above the dam's 180-meter critically low water mark.



Angat Dam supplies Metro Manila and nearby provinces with water

The dam's standard high water level is 210 meters. In previous dry spells, Angat, which is in Norzagaray, Bulacan, had stopped releasing farm irrigation water to conserve water supply for Metro Manila.

Initially, President Marcos said the government plans to tap the multibillion-peso annual budget for flood control projects to create large stormwater impounding areas for farm irrigation purposes.

Stormwater refers to excess groundwater from heavy rains, which causes flooding until it's drained into natural waterways such as rivers and lakes.

Campos had previously filed House Resolution No. 906, which pressed for a congressional inquiry into the "unsuccessful implementation" of the Rainwater Collection and Springs Development Law 1989.

The 34-year-old law requires the Department of Public Works and Highways to construct rainwater collectors in all barangays.

Read the full story on manilastandard.net.



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40 areas 'at risk'

from

'alarming' climate

crisis

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

FORTY areas in the Philippines are "at most risk" because of the climate crisis, which a government official has described as "alarming."

Climate Change Commission (CCC) Vice Chairman and Executive Director Robert Borje said these areas, which were identified by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), were considered as the most vulnerable to the impacts of extreme weather.

"There are 40. There have been 40 that have been identified by the DILG, and they're the focus of the whole-of-a-government approach on what needs to be done," Borje said during a media interface on Friday.

Borje stressed that the Philippines, though a minor contributor to climate change globally, is one of the most vulnerable countries to its effects.

"The climate crisis is alarming not just in the Philippines but in the entire world. Why? The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) has already identified

►CrisisA2



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40 areas at risk from...

■ **CRISIS FROM A1**

40 areas 'at risk'

it as an existential threat. When it's an existential threat, it means that our life is at risk," Borje said.

He said that it becomes "more alarming for countries like the Philippines because we are a developing country, we are an archipelago and we are situated where we are."

Asked to name those most vulnerable areas in the country, Borje said, "We can't preempt, we can't tell them yet because this might be the subject of pressure. There's a protocol already that's followed."

He said, however, that there are 35 from different parts of the country that will be visited and will be up "for assessment."

Local climate action plan

Borje encouraged local government units (LGUs) to formulate their own Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCCAP) that would serve as their plan for enhancing local climate resilience.

"Our LGUs are encouraged to have their own local climate change action plan, LCCAP. That's the partnership of the CCC with the DILG that we want to reach 100 percent," he said in mixed English and Filipino.

Borje said that LGUs can also submit climate adaptation proposals to access the People's Survival Fund (PSF), a grant facility for initiatives that will help communities deal with the impacts of climate change.

"It's meant to be a supplementary fund for an LGU that has a climate change-related project. You can go to PSF for funding," the CCC official said.

"Right now, we've already received a lot of applications, and we are in the phase of assessing and making the visit to the LGUs that have applied

for PSF," he said.

The PSF is an annual allocation for LGUs and accredited organizations to carry out climate adaptation projects that include water resources management, land management, agriculture and fisheries, health, and other activities that serve as guarantee for the risk insurance needs of farmers, agricultural workers and other stakeholders.

The PSF is managed and administered by the People's Survival Fund Board, which is headed by the Department of Finance.

LGUs with high poverty incidence, are exposed to climate risks and have a key biodiversity area, that will be prioritized.

The PSF was created under Republic Act 10174, which amended the Climate Change Act of 2009. The P1-billion replenishable annual allocation intends to provide support on top of the year appropriations to LGUs for climate change-related programs and projects.

Meanwhile, the CCC official reiterated President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s continuing mandate to work for "climate justice."

"The vision of the President has been very clear, and his order has been very clear. We work for climate justice and then we work on the basis of our responsibility as a responsible member of the international community. So that means we do what we can based on our commitments and our obligations," Borje said.

"But again, that also means that we are aware that it's not just the problem that we have to solve, that has to be solved by other stakeholders as well. That's when the commitments of the developing countries come in, kick in, and that is something that we should harness to the Philippines' advantage," he added.



CCC: Climate crisis more alarming; 40 areas at risk

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) has said that climate crisis is becoming "more alarming" for the Philippines with around 40 areas in the country considered most vulnerable to weather extremes fueled by climate change.

In a media interface held Friday night at Malacañan Compound in San Miguel, Manila, CCC vice chairperson and executive director Robert Borje stressed the need to improve the country's climate action plan to achieve resiliency and sustainability.

"The climate crisis is alarming not just in the Philippines but in the entire world. Why? The IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] has already identified it as an existential threat. When it's an existential threat, ibig sabihin buhay na ang nakataya dito (it means that lives are already on the line)," Borje said. "But it becomes more alarming for countries like the

Philippines because we are a developing country, we are an archipelago and we are situated where we are."

While the Marcos administration is "on the right path" toward addressing climate change, Borje said it "can always do better" to mitigate the effects of "historic, global and systemic" phenomenon on the country.

"May iba't ibang programang ginagawa ang pamahalaan pero kinakailangan pa talagang i-ramp up siya, paiging pa dahil nag-iiba ang nature ng hamon ng climate change (The government is implementing various programs, but it needs to boost and strengthen its efforts because of the shifts in the nature of challenges brought about by climate change)," he said.

He said the CCC is in close coordination with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), which is in charge of identifying the localities that are most affected by climate change.

He refused to identify the 40 areas that are at risk of climate disaster but noted that 35 of these are "for assessment."

Borje said the cooperation between the CCC and the DILG aims to make sure that 100 percent of the local government units (LGUs) nationwide are implementing their respective Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCCAPs).

He added that the 40 highly vulnerable areas are the "focus of the whole-of-government approach," considering that climate change has an adverse impact on the country's development goals and objectives.

"Yun ang partnership ng CCC with the DILG, na gusto naming umabot ng (That is the partnership of the CCC with the DILG

that we want to achieve) 100 percent. We know that the system is not perfect. We want better quality for LCCAP," Borje said. "So, the coherent and integrated approach would perhaps become one of the bigger challenges that we have so there will be institutional and systemic solutions to the problems that we have."

Data from the CCC showed that LCCAP submissions increased by 95 percent from 715 submissions in 2021 to 1,397 as of Dec. 31, 2022.

The CCC's target is to have 100 percent compliance from 1,715 LGUs by 2024.

The LCCAP, which serves as the LGU's plan for enhancing local climate resilience, includes information on fit-for-purpose climate actions anchored on site-specific risks and vulnerabilities.

Borje said the CCC also seeks to step up partnership with the private sector and its development partners to intensify the country's fight against climate change.

The Philippines has allocated US\$8.2 billion, or nine percent of its total national budget, for climate change adaptation and mitigation programs this year.

Climate action and disaster resilience are among the expenditure priorities that are reflected in the 2024 budget priorities framework, the Department of Budget and Management said earlier this month.

The CCC is the lead policy-making body of the government tasked to coordinate, monitor, and evaluate government programs and ensure mainstreaming of climate change in national, local, and sectoral development plans toward a climate-resilient and climate-smart Philippines. (PNA)



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Criticism of WB climate funding misses the mark

OVER the past several months, financing for climate change response has attracted a great deal of attention, most of it unfavorable. The general global consensus is that there is not nearly enough investment in climate adaptation and mitigation, particularly for the most climate-vulnerable countries, and that what investment is being made is being misdirected and characterized as "climate funding" when it really is not.

The World Bank, as the largest and most capable of the world's development finance institutions, has been the target of much of the criticism, some of it justified; after all, it has spent the last several years being led by an appointee of the former occupant of the White House, a climate denier at heart who perfectly reflected the previous US administration's lack of dynamism. Even under the retired David Malpass, however, the World Bank was aware of the growing perceptions of a huge global funding gap, and embarked on a series of reforms intended to address that, as well as other inefficiencies in the institution.

After this process began, which coincided with the arrival of the new World Bank president Ajay Banga, a rather harsh report was published by the Center for Global Development (CGD) that presented the findings of a study of World Bank's climate financing from 2000-2022. The researchers wrote, "We find that financing is skewed toward mitigation projects. These projects lack estimates of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions, and there is no standardized reporting on GHG estimates across the portfolio. Further, hundreds of projects tagged climate — many in poorer countries — appear to have little to do with climate change mitigation or adaptation."

In other words, climate projects funded by the World Bank and intended to reduce GHG emissions generally did not have a way to measure whether they had actually done so; too many projects were directed toward mitigation — i.e., emissions and other environmental impact reductions — which apply to more middle- and upper-income countries than the poorer and more climate-vulnerable ones; and many projects were recorded as being climate-related without having an obvious connection to climate action.

These are alarming conclusions because they imply, first of all, that there are many unmet needs, which in the case of climate adaptation very well could result in losses of property, livelihoods and lives. They also imply that a considerable amount of donor funds — the money capable World Bank member-countries contribute to the institution to fund development and other projects — has been going to waste.

And these kinds of conclusions are a concern for the Philippines, because not only is this one of those climate-vulnerable countries that are supposed to be the beneficiaries of the developed world's financial obligations, the World Bank is one of the "big three" in terms of development aid to this country, the others being the Asian Development Bank and the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

Whenever I see these kinds of reports, especially from credible sources such as CGD, I tend to give them the benefit of the doubt, which is not actually the best perspective to take, I suppose, but it is frankly



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response to climate change is, in general, woefully inadequate, bogged down in red tape and bureaucracy, and in far too many instances more performative than proactive. It is easy to find problems in the realm of climate policy and action, and so when an apparent one appears, the assumption is that it is a problem that is more often than not appropriate.

In this case, however, it seems the World Bank deserves some credit rather than polite censure, both on a general scale and as it relates to this country specifically.

A careful reading of the CGD study reveals that, indeed, the problems it identifies — mislabeled projects, an imbalance in favor of climate mitigation projects and a lack of standards for quantifying climate mitigation impacts — were commonplace in the first half or two-thirds of the 2000-2022 timeframe covered by the research. Things began to change significantly in the 2015-2022 period, however; the World Bank's overall funding for climate projects soared, and in spite of there being some misbalance between mitigation and adaptation across its entire portfolio, where it concerned low-income countries — those with GDP (gross domestic product) per capita of between \$1,086 and \$4,255, which includes the Philippines — adaptation projects outweighed mitigation projects in both the number of individual projects and their dollar value.

While miscategorization of projects may have been a problem elsewhere, that does not appear to have been the case here in the Philippines. There are a total of five projects listed in the Appendix of the report as part of the study's dataset, and all of them are accurately described as either partial mitigation or partial adaptation projects. These include the Northwind Bangui Bay Project (2005); the Ethanol Plant Wastewater Biogas Project (2009); Methane Recovery from Waste Management Project (2010); technical assistance for the Risk Resiliency and Sustainability Program (2017); and the Customs Modernization Program (2021), the latter having a small 3.0 percent counted as adaptation funding.

And, even though I am fairly certain the timing was entirely coincidental, on the same day the CDG report landed in my inbox, the Philippine country office of the World Bank issued a press release announcing the approval of a \$750-million loan to the Philippines to support "ongoing government reforms to attract private investment in renewable energy; enhance plastic waste management through reduction, recovery and recycling; promote green transport, including the use of electric vehicles; and reduce climate-related fiscal risks from the agriculture sector."

Rather than being criticized for bad acting in climate funding, it seems the World Bank ought to be credited for recognizing at least some of its own shortcomings and implementing improvements. As I said, there are plenty of bad guys and problems to identify; it is just as important, however, to acknowledge what seems to be on the right track, so that good ideas and practices can be copied and spread.



Exposure to wildfire smoke affects voice, health of endangered Bornean orangutans

BORNEAN orangutans are one of three orangutan species, all critically endangered. They thrive in carbon-rich peat swamp forests on the Indonesian island of Borneo. These habitats are also the sites of massive wildfires.

Indonesian wildfires in 2015 caused some of the worst fire-driven air pollution ever recorded. The fires were driven by an El Niño climatic cycle, which caused especially dry weather in the region.

Compared to other wildfires, peatland fires smolder underground and produce exceptionally high levels of hazardous gases and particulate matter—a leading cause of global pollution-related deaths and illnesses.

Orangutans are well known as an “indicator species”—one that can serve as a proxy for the health of an ecosystem.

Changes in their environments often cause conspicuous changes in the apes’ health and behavior. Frequent and persistent exposure to toxic smoke could have severe consequences for orangutans and other wildlife.

Toxic air pollution also poses serious health and safety risks for researchers. However, remote sensing techniques, such as satellite images, GPS data and acoustic monitoring, are increasingly popular ways to track wildlife populations and see how creatures respond to changes in their environments.

I have studied the behavior, ecology and acoustic communication of wild primates in Indo-

nesia since 2005. In a new study, my co-authors and I investigated how wild orangutans in Borneo were affected by toxic emissions from Indonesia’s 2015 peatland wildfires—by studying their voices.

Smoke exposure poses long-term risks

AROUND the world, wildfires are on the rise. They often produce a thick blanket of haze that contains diverse hazardous gases and particulate matter (PM).

Most recently, smoke from Canadian wildfires blanketed the US East Coast and Midwest in early June 2023, turning skies orange and triggering public health alerts.

Studies have shown that human health risks from wildfire smoke include respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses, systemic inflammation and premature death.

Much less is known about how smoke affects wildlife, but in a pair of studies published in 2021 and 2022, scientists at the California National Primate Research Center reported alarming findings.

After less than two weeks of exposure to high concentrations of PM—in particular, ultrafine particles measuring less than 2.5 microns in diameter, which are known as PM2.5—captive rhesus macaques suffered a spike in pregnancy loss.

What’s more, surviving fetuses and infants suffered long-term effects on lung capacity, immune responses, inflammation, cortisol levels, behavior and memory.

During Indonesia’s 2015 fires,



A MALE Bornean orangutan in Taman Safari park in Bogor, Indonesia. WIKIPEDIA CC BY-SA 4.0

Borneo’s air had PM concentrations nearly an order of magnitude higher than the levels in these studies. This made the potential implications for people and wildlife who gasped through Indonesia’s wildfire smoke for nearly two months extremely worrying.

Orangutans in the haze

I WAS studying wild orangutans in the forests of Indonesian Borneo when the 2015 fires started. My colleagues and I at the Tuanan Orangutan Research Station tracked local fires and patrolled nearby hot spots to assess the risk of fire spreading to our research area.

Wearing N-95 masks, we continued to monitor orangutans in hopes of learning how the animals were coping with encroaching fires and thick smoke.

A few weeks into the fire season, I noticed a difference in the sound of the males’ “long call,” which was

the focus of my research.

Long calls are booming vocalizations that can be heard over distances of more than 1 kilometer. Orangutans are semi-solitary and live in dispersed communities, so these calls serve an important social role.

Adult males make them to advertise their prowess to listening females in the area and to scare off any eavesdropping rival males.

A couple of weeks after the smoke had appeared, I thought these males sounded raggedy—a little like humans who smoke a lot.

We observed the orangutans for 44 days during the fires, until large blazes encroached on our study area. At that point, we stopped the study to help extinguish the blazes with local firefighting teams and other government and nonprofit groups. Fires burned in our study area for three weeks.

Using data that we collected before, during and after the fires,



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I led an analysis of this Bornean orangutan population's behavior and health. My co-authors and I found that in the weeks after the fires, the apes reduced their activities—resting more and traveling shorter distances—and consumed more calories than normal.

But although they were eating more and moving less, we found by collecting and testing the apes' urine that they were still burning stored fat—a sign that they somehow were using up more energy.

We hypothesized that the cause might be inflammation—the swelling, fever, pain and fatigue that human and animal bodies experience in response to infection or injury.

Sentinel sounds

STUDIES have shown that when humans are exposed to particulate matter, they can experience inflammation, both in their respiratory tracts and throughout their bodies.

We wanted to know whether inhaling wildfire smoke would cause vocal changes in orangutans, just as inhaling cigarette smoke does in humans.

For this study, my co-authors and I carefully analyzed more than 100 sound recordings of four male orangutans that we followed before and during the fires to measure their vocal responses to wildfire smoke.

Research has shown that a suite of vocal features—including pitch, vocal harshness or hoarseness and shaky voice—reflects the underlying health and condition of both

human and nonhuman animals.

We were looking for acoustic clues about how this toxic air might be affecting the orangutans.

During the fires and for several weeks after the smoke cleared, these males called less frequently than usual.

Normally, orangutans call about six times a day. But during the fires, their call rate was cut in half. Their voices dropped in pitch, showing more vocal harshness and irregularities.

Collectively, these features of vocal quality have been linked to inflammation, stress and disease—including Covid-19—in human and nonhuman animals.

Listening to vocal species

INCREASINGLY frequent and prolonged exposure to toxic smoke could have severe consequences for orangutans and other animals.

Our research highlights the urgent need to understand the long-term and far-ranging effects of peatland fires in Indonesia, which is one of the most biodiverse countries in the world.

By uncovering the linkages between acoustic, behavioral and energetic shifts in orangutans, our study highlights a way for scientists and wildlife managers to safely monitor the health of orangutans and other animals.

Using passive acoustic monitoring to study vocally active indicator species, like orangutans, could unlock critical insights into wildfire smoke's effects on wildlife populations worldwide. *Wendy M. Erb, Cornell University/The Conversation (CQ) via AP*