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Disaster Resilience Champions Honored by Office of Civil Defense



The Dangal Bantayog ng Katatagan awardees (starting from third from left): Department of Science and Technology Secretary Renato Solidum, Jr., Center for Disaster Preparedness President Zenaida Delica-Willison, Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Maria Antonia "Toni" Yulo-Loyzaga, and SM Prime Holdings, Inc. Chairman of the Executive Committee Hans Sy. They are joined by from left: Office of Civil Defense (OCD) Assistant Secretary Raffy Alejandro IV, OCD Undersecretary Ariel Nepomuceno, Department of National Defense (DND) Senior Undersecretary Irineo Espino, and DND Assistant Secretary Joselito Ramos.

In celebration of the National Disaster Resilience Month (NDRM) last July, the Department of National Defense (DND) - Office of Civil Defense (OCD) and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) concluded the NDRM with a culminating activity themed "Pagpupugay sa Bidang Pilipino".

DND-OCD and its partners, NDRRMC, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), National Resilience Council (NRC), and ARISE PH co-presented the "Dangal Bantayog ng Katatagan" awards, which recognize national decision-makers, local actors, and change-makers on the ground.

The four awardees include SM Prime Holdings, Inc. (SMPHI) Chairman of the Executive Committee Hans Sy, DENR Secretary Maria Antonia "Toni" Yulo-Loyzaga, Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Secretary Renato Solidum, Jr., and Center for Disaster Preparedness President Zenaida Delica-Willison.

In his welcome remarks, OCD Undersecretary Ariel Nepomuceno said, "The impeccable performance [of our awardees] over the years inspires the Bayanhan spirit and contributes to a safe, secured, and resilient way of life for every Filipino. They exemplify the value that no one is left behind amid managing disaster risks."

Meanwhile, DND Undersecretary Irineo Espino, on behalf of DND Secretary and NDRRMC Chairperson Gilberto Teodoro Jr., ex-



OCD Undersecretary Ariel Nepomuceno



DND Undersecretary Irineo Espino



DOST Secretary Renato Solidum, Jr.



DENR Secretary Maria Antonia "Toni" Yulo-Loyzaga



SM Prime Holdings, Inc. Chairman of the Executive Committee Hans Sy



Center for Disaster Preparedness President Zenaida Delica-Willison

tended his congratulations to the awardees and urged stakeholders to continue working together, coming up with new ideas, and advocating for policies that increase the resilience of the country.

The Dangal Bantayog ng Katatagan Awardees

DENR Secretary Maria Antonia "Toni" Yulo-Loyzaga was conferred with "Dangal ng Pilipino sa Pagtataguyod ng Pampublikong Katatagan" for her exemplary service as the incumbent Secretary of the DENR and Chairperson on Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation, and Disaster Risk

Reduction of the Cabinet Cluster.

DOST Secretary Renato Solidum, Jr. on the other hand, received the "Dangal ng Pilipino sa Pagpapaulad ng Kagalingan at Katatagan" award, recognizing his decades of public service in the field of DRR management and his fundamental contributions in research and development as a scientist.

Another staunch advocate of DRRM is Ms. Zenaida Delica-Willison who received the "Dangal ng Pilipino sa Bayanhan at Kaligtasan ng Pamilyanan" for pioneering the advancement and promotion

of community-based DRRM at the national, regional, and international levels.

Mr. Hans Sy was awarded the "Dangal ng Pilipino sa Pag-Agapay sa Ligtas na Sambayanan," the first-ever awardee from the private sector.

"I stand here today as a believer in the whole-of-society approach as well as the use of science and technology. This and the public-private collaboration are pivotal in addressing systemic risk and reducing disaster losses," he said. "Let us all bounce forward and embrace the spirit of resilience in everything we

do. Together, we can create a world not only that endures but thrives in the face of challenges."

Mr. Sy is the Chairman of the Executive Committee of SPHI, Co-Chair of the United Nations DRR Private Sector Alliance for Disaster Resilient Societies or ARISE Philippines, and Co-Chair of the National Resilience Council for the Private Sector.

Under his dedicated guidance, SMPHI has continuously promoted environmental sustainability and disaster resilience, giving the next generations hope for progress and prosperity. w

Expanding DRRM Partnerships

A summit with a number of seminars was held during the morning session before the awards presentation. The summit's talks were put in motion by one of the keynote speakers, Senate President Pro-Tempore, Senator Loren Legarda.

She underlined in her message that improving the nation's resilience to climate change and natural disasters requires a whole-of-government and whole-of-nation strategy. Sen. Legarda also highlighted the need to effectively apply all pertinent legislations in order to achieve the objective of creating communities that are more secure and resilient.

SM, DENR, and San Miguel Corporation likewise linked a memorandum of agreement regarding Bataan's adoption of mangrove areas in the municipality of Abucay and the city of Balanga.



Senate President Pro-Tempore, Senator Loren Legarda



Hans Sy (middle) receives the "Dangal ng Pilipino sa Pag-agapay sa Ligtas na Sambayanan" Award for his outstanding leadership and unwavering support to the effective delivery of core Disaster Risk Reduction and Management mandates that served as both bridge and catalyst for all stakeholders. The award was presented by the Office of Civil Defense Undersecretary Ariel Nepomuceno (left) and Department of National Defense Senior Undersecretary Irineo Espino.



Included in the photo are: (L-R, front): SM Supermalls Senior Assistant Vice President for Operations of the North Junias Eusebio, Bataan Governor Jose Enrique Garcia III, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Undersecretary for Field Operations Juan Miguel Cuna, Balanga, Bataan Mayor Francis Anthony Garcia, and Tingng Mandaragat Chairman Ferdinand Herrera. (L-R, back): SM Supermalls Vice President for Corporate Compliance Group Liza Silerio and DENR Undersecretary Mariou Erni.



(From left) National Resilience Council (NRC) Science Policy Practice Expert Jessica Bercilla, SM Prime Holdings, Inc. Chairman of the Executive Committee Hans Sy, Senate President Pro-Tempore Senator Loren Legarda, SM Supermalls Vice President for Corporate Compliance Group Liza Silerio, Local Climate Change Adaptation for Development Chairman Nong Rangasa, Women's International Network on Disaster Risk Reduction Founding Member Atty. Violeta Seva, Department of Environment and Natural Resources Undersecretary Mariou Erni, Office of Civil Defense Assistant Secretary Raffy Alejandro IV, and NRC Executive Director Silvestre Barrameda, Jr.



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Save the sunset: Senators seek reclamation review

By **MARC JAYSON CAYABYAB**

Senators are calling for the suspension of reclamation projects in Manila Bay, citing their adverse impact on the environment, including spoiling the view of the famed Manila Bay sunset.

Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) announced on Friday the formation of a team to review all ongoing reclamation projects for their impact on the environment.

Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla is also pushing for a review of all the contracts for the reclamation projects in Manila, saying the awarding of reclamation contracts by the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) was "rushed" and that no public hearing was held.

In a radio interview on *dwIz* on Saturday, Sen. JV Ejercito expressed fears the famous Manila Bay sunset would soon be gone as he called for a review of the impact of the reclamation projects on the environment.

Ejercito said he had fond childhood memories of feeling the sea breeze and watching the sunset in Manila Bay along Roxas Boulevard.

"I remember as a child, we would go to Dewey Boulevard (the old name of Roxas Boulevard) to smell the ocean breeze," Ejercito said in Filipino.

"Dati, nagpapahangin tayo

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sa Manila Bay. Ngayon, nagpapabuhangin na tayo," he added, playing on the Filipino words for breeze and sand.

He urged authorities to review the reclamation projects in Manila Bay, which – if allowed to continue – could obstruct the view of the sunset and worsen flooding in the metropolis.

"I will miss the charm of Manila Bay. Time will come when we won't be seeing the sunset anymore," Ejercito said.

Sen. Cynthia Villar has also voiced opposition to the projects, saying it could worsen flooding in Las Piñas and threaten the Las Piñas-Parañaque wetland park.

She thanked the DENR for looking into the environmental consequences of reclaiming land, as she called for a review of the approved projects despite a Supreme Court mandamus order to rehabilitate the historic bay.

"The Manila Bay is ours, owned by the government and the people. Why should the private sector benefit from it? They should halt construction and determine first the permanent damage it could inflict on Metro Manila," Villar said in Filipino in the same *dwIz* interview.

"I think the government is serious about it now because of several complaints," Villar added, citing the concern raised by the US embassy in Manila. The US embassy earlier said the joint venture project involves a subsidiary of a Chinese state firm blacklisted by Washington for its role in building militarized artificial islands in the South China Sea.

– With Daphne Galvez



EYES WIDE OPEN

IRIS GONZALES

Battle of Manila Bay, reclamation version

There's a modern-day battle taking place in Manila Bay, our famed natural harbor, and Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga is leading the fight.

It's an uphill battle as she goes against proponents of the different reclamation projects – big businesses – in her mandate to review the cumulative impact of these projects.



This is positive news for the environment and Manila Bay. Perhaps, the DENR should also order a halt to all ongoing construction while the review is ongoing.

As Oceana said, "The DENR cannot be reviewing all these projects without exercising precaution. It is clear that these projects have already started and resulted in an alarming degradation of the environment, destroying the mangroves, denying fisherfolk their fishing livelihood and sources of food and the destruction of seagrass and the seabed by dredging."

Recently, the spotlight is on plastics king William Gatchalian's 318-hectare Waterfront Reclamation Project after the US embassy raised concerns on the ongoing reclamation projects in Manila Bay. It was Bilyonaryo which first reported the story.

While the US embassy did not specify any project, it mentioned China Communications Construction Co., which is an affiliate of Gatchalian's EPC contractor China First Highway Engineering Corp.

"We have expressed concerns about the potential negative long-term and irreversible impacts to the environment, the resilience to natural hazards of Manila and nearby areas, and to commerce. We are also concerned that the projects have ties to the China Communications Construction Co., which has been added to the US Department of Commerce's Entity List for its role in helping the Chinese military construct and militarize artificial islands in the South China Sea. The company has also been cited by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank for engaging in fraudulent business practices. We continue to support high quality, sustainable and transparent investments to benefit the Filipino people and will continue to engage with the appropriate authorities on this matter," the US embassy said.

Actually, I heard that most of the reclamation project proponents tapped Chinese contractors. I hope we won't be paying for the implications of this, one way or another, in the future.

As of this writing, the Chinese embassy in Manila has not responded to requests from reporters to comment on the US embassy's statement.

Gatchalian: We are compliant

Sought for comment, Gatchalian said that with or without reclamation projects in Manila Bay, parts of Manila would still be submerged in flood, and so will other cities.

The solution is to fix the entire drainage system which, he said, is old and outdated.

He also said that the City of Manila and Waterfront Manila are compliant with all the requirements of the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA), including the payment of regulatory fees of about P800 million to the government.

There was also "no objection to the project" after it was given a Notice to Proceed by the PRA.

Not surprisingly, of course, Gatchalian touts the project's benefits, including potential economic activities across business sectors and "around 100,000 employment opportunities, billions of taxes and the much-needed income to the country in general and to the City Government of Manila and its constituents in particular."

He also said during our phone chat that reclamation has socio-economic benefits well recognized by the State as early as the time of then President Marcos Sr.

"This has been continued with the successful establishment of the CCP Complex, Mall of Asia (MOA) and the like," he said.

Finally, he also noted that their Chinese contractor is a different entity from China Communications.

Even before the US embassy raised its concerns though, Secretary Loyzaga has already made it clear that her department would be reviewing all reclamation projects.

This is really a welcome development. Doesn't it feel like all of a sudden, there's more than a dozen "new cities" rising in Manila Bay which seemed to have started years ago while we were sleeping?

A thorough review would put all questions and concerns aside.

Should results of the review call for the government to scrap projects, then the Marcos administration must have the political will to do this.

Cumulative impact assessment

In a forum on Friday, Sec. Loyzaga cited Executive Order 74 which directs the DENR to conduct a cumulative impact assessment on all reclamation projects.

"What has happened here is that individual projects were somehow processed without taking into consideration the cumulative impact of all the projects together. This is actually critical for future use," she said.

The DENR will form a team to review all ongoing reclamation activities, she said.

She added that the mandamus issued by the Supreme Court ordered 13 agencies, including the DENR, to ensure that Manila Bay is rehabilitated "to the point that people can actually swim in it."

"What we were not able to do at this point is implement that order and also make sure that all of these other developments will take place because the permits were processed. There is ecological concern, socio concern, obviously regulatory concern because of the mandamus order and we do need to balance all of these now into a set of recommendations," she said.

Bravo, Sec. Loyzaga!

May you have the strength to endure this uphill battle. May we all support this review because once reclamation happens, we can never reverse it.

While it's true that past reclamation projects have been successful and useful, in this era of a burning planet, that may no longer be the case.

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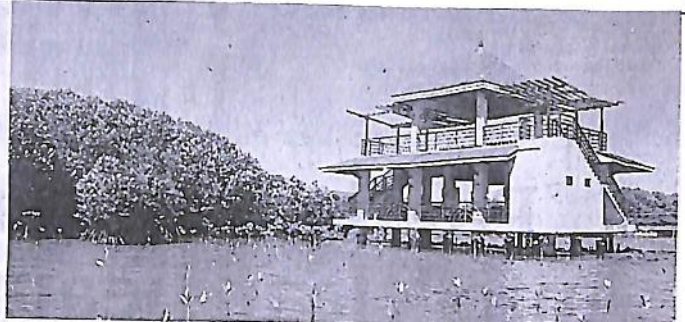
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SEA STEWARDSHIP Shore It Up! volunteers collecting underwater rubbish. —CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



ECO-OUTPOST The Mangrove Propagation and Information Center in Alaminos City, Pangasinan

Metro Pacific deepens 15-year-old advocacy to clean up the seas

By Vanessa B. Hidalgo
@hidalgovinq

Our unique and rich marine biodiversity is home to a vast number of species whose numbers are greatly diminishing because of a host of factors. In addition, over 3 billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods, not to mention that it also plays a major role in mitigating climate change. Thus, there is a call for collective action to save life below water.

Collaboration between local governments and the private sector has proven to be a winning formula in the conservation of marine life. The exchange of knowledge and resources between the two sectors creates more long-range, impactful and sustainable programs. Among those that have heeded the call to act in the last 15 years is tycoon Manuel V. Pangilinan (MVP)-led Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC)

The infrastructure conglomerate dives deep into corporate social responsibility through Metro Pacific Investments Foundation (MPIF) with programs that have far-reaching impact of helping promote marine biodiversity, ecological balance and ecotourism.

Its environmental advocacy called Shore It Up! (SIU) was born in the dive resort town of Mabini, Batangas. It began as MPIC's humble contribution to the annual International Coastal Cleanup and also a response to Metro Manila's inundation caused by Typhoon "Ondoy" (international name: Retsana) in 2009.

MPIF used innovative ways to modify the typical cleanup

Our archipelago is teeming with world-renowned hubs of biodiversity and requires a strong support system from the private sector when it comes to preservation and conservation

Melody del Rosario
MPIF president

by enlisting volunteer divers to clear the seabed of solid waste and implement community-based educational and livelihood activities to help reduce solid waste at the source.

For more than a decade, these activities served as the template of SIU, which will later develop into a comprehensive and multi-awarded biodiversity program, both here and abroad. This program was replicated in key coastal areas such as Alaminos City in Pangasinan; Del Carmen in Siargao Island, Surigao del Norte; Medina in Misamis Oriental; Cordova in Cebu; and Subic Bay.

"Our archipelago is teeming with world-renowned hubs of biodiversity and requires a strong support system from the private sector when it comes to



BIODIVERSITY FORUM (From left) MPIC head of government relations and public affairs Michael Toledo, Bohol Rep. Edgar Chatto, Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyza, Sen. Cynthia Villar, Tourism Undersecretary Shereen Gail Yu-Pamintuan, Metro Pacific chief finance, risk and sustainability officer Chaye Cabal-Revilla and MPIF president Melody del Rosario

preservation and conservation. We at the Foundation want to ensure that we play our part in future-proofing what we have and help mitigate climate change," says Melody del Rosario, president of MPIF.

Fifteen years later, SIU has expanded its footprint to 12 locations, mobilizing some 87,000 volunteers, 2,600 runners and 1,034 scuba divers. It has since then reached out to 464 organizations and local governments, 180 families and 2,800 schoolchildren or the Junior Environmental Scouts.

It has also trained and provided support to 10 eco-guides and 36 marine guardians to protect the coastal and aquatic resources, helping boost ecotourism in the process.

A prominent program component is the Mangrove Propagation and Information Center, which was put up in Alaminos, Siargao and Cordova, Cebu. These multipurpose pavilions serve as a reception area for tourists before heading out to the Hundred Islands in Alaminos, the Mangrove Forest and Sugba Lagoon in Siargao, or viewing the panoramic Cebu-Cordova Link Expressway across the Mactan Channel.

'Gabay Kalikasan'

In addition, SIU also helps protect and preserve two sites that are classified as "Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance" under the Ramsar Convention. One is Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park in Cagay-

ancillo, Palawan. This is the country's largest marine protected area and is a Unesco World Heritage Site. The other is Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park in Manila Bay. SIU is currently helping Del Carmen town, home to 4,871 hectares of contiguous mangrove forest, to attain membership in the prestigious Ramsar Convention.

With its vast coverage, SIU has emerged as the flagship program of the MPIF, which is part of Gabay Kalikasan, one of the business group's advocacies for a sustainable Philippines.

A multisectoral forum titled "Enlarging our blue footprint for Philippine marine biodiversity conservation," which gathered top government policymakers on the environment,

was recently held in celebration of SIU's 15th anniversary.

The highlight of the event was the in-depth discussion on collaborative efforts in safeguarding Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park, facilitated by Angelique Songco, superintendent of the park area.

Situated in the Sulu Sea off mainland Palawan, Tubbataha is a 96,828-hectare award-winning biodiversity-rich marine protected area. It is a recipient of financial and logistical support from the MPIF for the physical upkeep of the ranger station, as well as regular marine patrols to prevent illegal entries into the world-renowned marine park.

The forum was also attended by Sen. Cynthia Villar, chair of the Senate committee on environment and natural resources, Bohol Rep. Edgar Chatto, chair of the House standing committee on climate change, Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyza and Department of Tourism Undersecretary Shereen Gail Yu-Pamintuan.

Metro Pacific chief finance, risk and sustainability officer Chaye Cabal-Revilla represented the private sector. She also outlined the MVP Group's sustainability practices through the Gabay Kalikasan program, which is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

MPIF also signed a memorandum of agreement with the University of the Philippines (UP) and the UP Marine Science Institute to jointly address marine environmental concerns, and promote good governance for effective management of the country's natural resources and marine ecosystems. isq



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DFA: Diplomats safe in PH

By JOSEPH PEDRAJAS

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has assured the safety and well-being of diplomatic missions in the Philippines after the US embassy in Manila expressed concern on the hazards and security risk posed by reclamation activities in Manila Bay.

Ma. Teresita Daza, DFA spokesperson, said DFA is aware of the concerns raised by the US embassy, which is headquartered in the vicinity of Manila Bay, as well as "the risk of further exacerbating the coastal erosion and flooding in the area."

"We note that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is already preparing to un-

dertake a cumulative impact assessment to determine the impact of the projects on the ecology and safety of the surrounding areas," she said. "We are also aware that the DENR is looking into the compliance of the projects with the conditions of their permits, as well as with existing environmental laws and regulations."

On Wednesday, Aug. 2, the US

embassy raised alarm not only on the environmental and commercial impact of the reclamation activities but also on the company that the projects may have ties with.

Kanishka Gangopadhyay, the embassy's spokesman, said the projects may be connected to a Chinese communications company "which has been added to the US Department of

Commerce's Entity List for its role in helping the Chinese military construct and militarize artificial islands in the South China Sea."

"The company has also been cited by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank for allegedly engaging in fraudulent business practices," Gangopadhyay added.

In response, the DFA said it "is fully committed to working with relevant government agencies to ensure the safety and well-being of diplomatic missions accredited to the Philippines."



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Amid El Niño, UP scientists highlight need for research in marine science

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

AMID the looming El Niño, scientists find themselves in a tight spot, compelling them to do more research to come up with science-based solutions to the problem brought about by climate change to the country's rich marine biodiversity.

At the forefront of recent discussions on the future of the country's marine ecosystem and the people who depend on the so-called blue economy, scientists from the University of the Philippines Dilliman-College of Science's Marine Science Institute (UPDCS MSI) presented over 100 papers at the recent 17th National Symposium on Marine Science in Batangas City from July 20 to 22.

With the theme, "Saving Our Seas: Restoring Marine Systems for People and Nature," the national symposium was sponsored by the Philippine Association of Marine Science (PAMS).

It was held on the heels of the World Meteorological Organization's warning that global sea surface temperatures hit all-time record highs in June.

Knowledge-sharing, best practices

DURING the event, Dr. Gil Jacinto, who recently retired from MSI, highlighted the importance of the country's researchers in his speech.

Dr. Florence Onda, MSI deputy director for research, meanwhile, said that symposiums like that by PAMS give UPDCS MSI an opportunity to share results and best practices to other researchers.

"The discussions allow us to build on what we already know, help others progress in their own work and learn from feedback on how to improve further," Onda said.

"Moreover, PAMS strengthens camaraderie, widens networks, and facilitates future collaborations," he added.

Dr. Jayvee A. Saco, PAMS 17 president and organizer of the event that is held every two years, said it is an avenue for everyone in the Philippines, and even those from abroad, to gather in one venue and share scientific research on marine science.



PHOTOS show coral bleaching of up to 16-meter depth in Janao Bay in Mahol, Batangas. The temperature was 29 degrees Celsius when the photo was taken by conservation advocate and underwater photography expert Danny Ocampo on August 21, 2020. Scientists explain that elevated temperatures fueled by an El Niño climate pattern can harm corals, which experience coral bleaching, thereby also adversely affecting many species.



Wealth of knowledge in marine science

THE Philippines has a wealth of knowledge in marine science, thanks to scientists and researchers who tirelessly work to learn about the effects of climate change to the country's marine ecosystem.

During the event, at least 230 oral presentations and more than 130 poster presentations geared toward the restoration of marine research, said Saco, a 2020-2021 Balik Scientist of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST). He is also the head of the Verde Island Passage Center for Oceanographic Research and Aquatic Life Sciences-Labo Campus.

"This is the best time for us to share our research and have information on best practices from different universities, NGOs [nongovernment organizations], academe and government," said Saco, an expert from the Batangas State University who the BUSINESSMIRROR interviewed via Zoom on July 30.

Experts from various fields of marine science spoke during the plenary. Besides the plenary, a total of 230 parallel sessions were simultaneously held during the three-day symposium, wherein current trends in marine science, best practices and the latest technology, such as in aquaculture, were discussed, especially those being cultured, to boost production.

Younger scientists, researchers

SCIENTISTS and researchers in marine science are now attracting younger generations of scientists and researchers as observed in the symposium.

"The trend is that many young scientists and researchers are now getting involved in marine science," which is very encouraging for the future of marine science in the Philippines, Saco pointed out.

He said that younger researchers are actively helping in the knowledge-generation task of experts in various fields of marine science.

"We observed that a lot of participants are joining and doing more research and their studies are very much aligned to the theme of the symposium," Saco said.

Resilience to climate change

THE symposium, he noted, covered challenges posed by the changing climate and changing environment, including El Niño, which is seriously posing a threat to the country's marine ecosystem and rich biodiversity.

In the face of El Niño, the importance of research in marine science is highlighted, said Charina Lyn Amedo-Repollo, program head, Professional Masters in Tropical Marine Ecosystems Management and Assistant Professor in Physical Oceanography at the UPD MSI.

"Marine science is very important;

you learn a lot of disciplines. It is very important for an archipelagic country like the Philippines," said Amedo-Repollo, underscoring the vast potential of harnessing resources in the so-called blue economy during a separate interview with the BusinessMirror via Zoom on July 30.

Filling the knowledge gap

ACCORDING to Amedo-Repollo, while there are tons of researches in marine science, there is still a wide gap that compels more studies on the subject matter, particularly because of climate change.

For one, she said the Philippines has no economic valuation of the various ecosystem services. Studies on putting value to the country's natural resources, like corals, mangroves, and other habitat-forming species, or the marine species themselves are still lacking.

She added that the country lacks a national database on marine resources, which is a must for the country to know on what needs to be protected, harnessed, or used to maximize the benefits from the so-called "blue economy."

"Other countries, like Japan and the US have national database of their natural resources. We don't," Amedo-Repollo lamented.

"We are recommending to our national government to have a centralized database. We have database from Namria [National Mapping and

Resource Information Authority], there is also database on biodiversity, but they are bits and pieces," she explained.

Climate change-related research

ACCORDING to Amedo-Repollo, El Niño is very evident in the country's weather pattern.

"We feel it. If there's El Niño, we experience drought [while] there's flooding in other parts. It impacts on agriculture, fisheries, flora and fauna, and there are organisms and animals that could not cope with the effect of El Niño," she pointed out.

It's adverse impact in terrestrial area also affects the marine environment.

"We have this so-called ridge-to-reef approach in environmental protection and conservation. What happens to our forest also affects our reefs and coastal and marine environment," she added.

On the marine environment, El Niño has adverse impact, such as coral bleaching.

Amedo-Repollo said while there are indeed tons of researches, the challenge is how to translate them into policies.

"The government knows there is a need for scientific research. They even fund some researches. Even the DENR [Department of Environment and Natural Resources] recognizes the importance of research and they use

it in planning. This includes taking into account climate change," she said.

Target-specific research

DR. Aletta T. Yañiguez, an expert in Marine Ecology, Biological Oceanography and Ecological Modeling, said there is still a wide gap in marine science research, to ensure science-based management of the country's marine resources.

A professor at the UPD MSI and head of UP Cradle that is based in Puerto Galera, Yañiguez told the BUSINESSMIRROR via telephone interview on July 31 that impacts of climate change, such as on El Niño, affect behaviors of fish and other marine wildlife.

Yañiguez, whose most recent work on long term trends for the northern Zamboanga sardine fishery including climate/the El Niño-Southern Oscillation, said sardines are affected by change in temperature of the ocean.

She cited a recent study by a team of researchers focused on the effect of El Niño to sardines production, underscoring the economic importance of sardines as part of the dietary requirements of Filipinos, to canning industry, and of subsistence fishermen who depend on the bounty of the ocean.

"We need long-term planning for fisheries based on this research. We need to know why fisheries production is going down, besides overfishing, what is affecting our fish stock," she said.

According to Yañiguez, other marine species and the marine environment are affected by climate change.

She agreed that there is a need to come up with science-based policies to effectively manage the country's resources, with intense research focusing on marine science.

"We really need to do more collaborative research—a collaboration between the academe, the government and other funding institutions and other stakeholders—and translate these researches into meaningful policies and action to maximize the benefits of having a healthy and biodiversity-rich marine environment," Yañiguez pointed out.



Phl produces 61,000 million metric tons of waste daily

By BELLA CARIASO

The Philippines generates at least 61,000 million metric tons of waste daily, 24 percent of which is plastic waste, according to Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga.

Loyzaga added that 70 percent of the material value plastics is lost to the Philippine economy each year, equivalent to value loss of \$790 million to \$890 million per year.

"Today, humans consume 1.75 times the national resources that the earth is capable of regenerating. Moreover, as highlighted in the circular gap report, the majority or 70 percent of greenhouse gas emissions come from materials handling and use," Loyzaga said on Friday during the launching of LOOPFORWARD, a joint undertaking between the DENR and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Pasay City.

The partnership between the DENR and the UNDP aims to ensure full compliance of industries with the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Act of 2022 or Republic Act 11898.

Loyzaga noted that the country produces 163 million plastic sachet packets, 48 million shopping bags and 45 million thin-film bags daily.

She added that 33 percent

are disposed of in landfills and dumpsites, while 35 percent are leaked into the open environment and oceans.

"The EPR Act institutionalized the extended producer responsibility mechanism as a practical approach to efficient waste management, focusing on waste reduction, recovery and recycling and the development of environment-friendly products that advocate the internationally-accepted principles on sustainable consumption and production, circular economy and producers' full responsibility throughout the life cycle of their product," she added.

Loyzaga also underscored the need to improve the livelihood of waste pickers and their communities.

For his part, UNDP Resident Representative Selva Ramachandran said that while there was significant progress over the last century, the growth was accompanied by excessive abuse of resources and environmental degradation.

"The 2023 Circularity Gap Report indicates that only 7.2 percent of the global economy is circular. The rising extraction and use of material has shrunk global circularity from 9.1 percent in 2018 to 7.2 percent in 2023. This leaves a significant circularity gap. The world almost exclusively relies

on new materials, more than 90 percent of materials are either wasted, lost or remain unavailable for reuse for years," Ramachandran said.

He added that studies place the Philippines among the highest ocean plastic waste polluters globally.

According to Ramachandran, the challenge at hand is how to leapfrog the implementation of EPR in the Philippines.

"We can no longer afford to remain business-as-usual and only focus on downstream solutions. We challenge the obliged enterprises to put more focus on waste avoidance and reduction, including through product redesign to improve reusability, recyclability or retrievability, and employing reuse and refill strategies."

Environment Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and International Affairs Jonas Leones said that only 28 percent of the country's plastic waste gets recycled and at least 800,000 metric tons of plastics are disposed of annually.

"Majority of the material value of plastics is lost to the Philippine economy," Leones added.

He added that under the EPR law, violators will face a fine of P5 million to P20 million and automatic suspension of business permit until the requirement of RA 11898 is complied with.



Medical groups unite on environmental awareness

DIFFERENT medical organizations joined together on Saturday to increase awareness on air pollution, climate change, and health in the country.

The partnership, called Health Alliance for Climate and Clean Air Philippines, was forged to engage with government and nongovernment stakeholders to raise awareness on the health impact of air pollution and climate change, as well as to conduct research studies on the impact of air pollution and climate change in the country.

The alliance is composed of the Philippine College of Chest Physicians (PCCP), Philippine College of Physicians (PCP), Philippine Society of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology (PSAAI), the Lung Center of the Philippines (LCP) and Healthcare Without Harm-Southeast Asia.

This comes as the country continues to experience climate change, being one of the three countries in Southeast Asia out of the top 10 being most affected by climate change.

Similarly, the World Health Organization (WHO) said that there were 45.3 air pollution deaths for every 100,000 people in the Philippines, which is the third highest in the world.

In remarks read by its vice president, Dr. Imelda Mateo, PCP president Dr. Rontgene Solante said that the group is giving its "unwavering commitment" to the collective goal of addressing cli-

mate change and improving air quality in the Philippines.

"I understand the critical importance of our work in safeguarding the health and wellbeing of our citizens. Climate change is an imminent threat that poses significant risks to our natural environment and public health," Solante said.

Dr. Eileen Aniceto of the PCCP added that climate change and worsening air quality have a huge effect on lung health, with dirty air conditions leading to respiratory diseases such as coughing, wheezing, lung tissue swelling and lung cancer.

"Pollutants also impact on the Earth's climate and ecosystem and any action to reduce air pollution offers a win-win strategy for health and climate," Aniceto added.

The group said it has reached out to the DoH and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), with the DoH being aware of the initiative.

"We will be engaging with them moving forward," Jit Sohal, regional climate manager of Healthcare Without Harm-Southeast Asia said.

They also aim to conduct a national campaign to raise awareness on the health impact of air pollution and climate change, as well as organizing seminars, workshops and roundtables among health professionals, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

RED MENDOZA



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DOLOMITE CLEANUP. Members of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) conduct a clean-up drive of Dolomite Beach at Roxas Boulevard on Saturday, removing debris and trash brought by strong waves because of the recent typhoon.
Manny Palmero



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Mitsubishi Motors PH completes forestation project

Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corporation (MMPC) said it has successfully completed its three-phased forestation project as part of its continuing environment sustainability and community development initiatives.

The car company has planted various species of trees on a 100-hectare land in different provinces in Luzon. "As part of its commitment to make Filipinos' lives better, MMPC embarked on a large-scale forestation project that aligns its vision for a greener and more sustainable future," said MMPC in statement.

Recognizing the pressing need to address the environmental issues that Filipinos are facing, MMPC initiated its 100-hectare forestation agreement with Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), adopting 3 different locations in the country - Bangui, Ilocos Norte; Siniloan, Laguna and its last site, Infanta, Quezon Province.

The latest tree planting activity took place in Barangay Pinaglapatan, Infanta, Quezon Province where a beach forest was established by planting bamboo, mangrove, and other beach



MITSUBISHI MOTORS PHILIPPINES CORP. (MMPC) COMPLETES PHASED FORESTATION PROJECT - MMPC Chairman Noriaki Hirakata (let) and DENR Region 4A Executive Director Nilo Tamera during the tree planting activity in Barangay Pinaglapatan, Infanta, Quezon on July 14, 2023.

forest species along Agos River. This effort, initiated by Samahan ng Mag-sasaka at Mangingisda ng Pinaglapatan (SMMP) through the support of MMPC and DENR, aims to rehabilitate the riverbanks, preventing soil erosion in the area.

With the combined efforts of dedi-

cated MMPC employees, local communities and government, a total of 78,700 tree seedlings were planted on the 38-hectare land along Agos River which will be continuously monitored by MMPC with the help of DENR. Along with the trees planted, MMPC also donated a lighthouse to help assist

fishermen and farmers.

"For 60 years, it's been MMPC's commitment to make life better for Filipinos not just through our vehicles, but also through our services and CSR efforts. And today, we are about to nurture this community's future, one seed at a time. I hope that the seeds we plant today will flourish for generations to come," said MMPC Chairman Noriaki Hirakata in a statement during the tree planting activity.

In another initiative, MMPC partnered with Philippine Business for Social Progress to formalize its Balik-Bateria Scholarship Program. The program, which began in 2019 in collaboration with Oriental Motolite Marketing Corporation (OMMC), involves the proper recycling and disposal of used hazardous lead-acid batteries generated in the MMPC Plant.

Proceeds from recycling are allocated to MMPC's CSR fund, part of which is now being directed towards scholarships for senior high school students of Don Jose Integrated High School and Biñan City Senior High School - Timbao Campus. (Bernie Cahiles-Magkilat)



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Keeping track of our indigenous people and communities

On Aug. 9, 2023 we commemorate the 29th International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. The date was chosen by the United Nations General Assembly to mark the first meeting of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1982. There are at least 110 indigenous cultural communities/indigenous peoples (ICC/IP) in the Philippines. Individually, they number anywhere between 14 and 17 million. Geographically, they are predominantly located in Mindanao (61 percent) and Northern Luzon (33 percent). While they represent a sizeable chunk of the population, IPs continue to be among the most disadvantaged groups in the country.

The World Bank previously noted that IPs, while comprising only six percent of the global population, account for nearly 20 percent of the world's extreme poor. According to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, more than 70 percent of the world's population are living in countries with rising income and wealth inequality, including indigenous peoples who already face high rates of poverty and acute socio-economic disadvantages. They attribute the high levels of

inequality to institutional instability, corruption, financial crises, increased crime and lack of access to justice, education and health services.

In its report on the Philippines, the International Labor Organization took note of how IP communities, generally located in distinct ancestral territories, have high rates of unemployment, underemployment, and illiteracy. While their socio-economic, cultural, and spiritual lives revolve around their ancestral domains, indigenous peoples see their ownership of land shrinking and disregarded.

The Philippines was among the 144 countries of the UN General Assembly that voted to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) on Sept. 13, 2007. It establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the IPs of the world and it elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific situation of IPs.

The UNDRIP affirms that indigenous



BETTER DAYS
SENATOR SONNY ANGARA

peoples are equal to all other peoples. Reaffirms that indigenous peoples, in the exercise of their rights, should be free from discrimination of any kind. It recognizes the urgent need to respect and promote the rights of indigenous peoples.

Our Constitution mandates that the State shall recognize, protect, promote and fulfill the rights of IPs. In 1997, Republic Act 8371 or the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) was enacted, fulfilling the State's constitutional duty to recognize the millions of ICCs and IPs in the country. The IPRA has been around for 26 years but little headway has been made to improve the lives of our IPs.

What exacerbates the situation of our IPs is the absence of reliable public data on ICCs and more often than not, this leads to situations where they are neglected in the delivery of basic, social, technical and even legal services. It is for this reason that we filed Senate Bill 1167 in August last year, which calls for the establishment of ICC/IP resource centers in strategic areas in the country, as determined by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples. These centers will be composed of three major service areas, namely: The Statistical Service Area; Human Development Index Service Area; and the Domains Management Service Area.

The Statistical Service Area will be responsible for the documentation and recognition of ICCs and IPs, their indigenous knowledge, systems and practices, political structures, and customary laws through census, appraisal and baseline reports and libraries. For the Human Development Index Service Area, it will address the problems of ICCs and IPs and provide basic and necessary services through link-ups with concerned government de-

partments and agencies, such as training programs, grant of scholarships, employment, livelihood and enterprises, and health services. In the case of the Domains Management Service Area, it will be tasked to promote participatory programs, projects and activities for ICCs and IPs to effectively deliver their responsibility of maintaining ecological balance, restore denuded areas, observe laws, and ensure the implementation of the Ancestral Domains Sustainable Development and Protections Plans and other existing programs.

We authored Republic Act 10908 or the Integrated History Act of 2016 to raise the awareness and understanding of our youth on Filipino-Muslims and IPs. The law mandates the teaching of Filipino-Muslim and IPs history in basic and higher education in the country. I believe that raising the awareness of people about the history, culture and practices of our IPs by educating them in their early years, will help in fostering inclusivity and in eliminating discrimination.

ICC/IPs have unique practices and customs that contribute to the richness and complexity of Philippine culture and heritage. They deserve to be noticed and just like any other Filipino, their needs should not be neglected and the services provided by government should reach all of them, wherever they are situated. (Email: sonnyangara@yahoo.com | Facebook, Twitter & Instagram: [@sonnyangara](https://www.instagram.com/sonnyangara))

(Senator Sonny Angara has been in public service for 18 years — nine years as Representative of the lone district of Aurora, and nine as Senator. He has authored, co-authored, and sponsored more than 330 laws. He is currently serving his second term in the Senate.)



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World's oceans getting hotter; new temperature record set – EU monitor

PARIS, France (AFP) – The world's oceans set a new temperature record this week, raising concerns about knock-on effects on the planet's climate, marine life and coastal communities.

The temperature of the oceans' surface rose to 20.96°C (69.7°F) on July 30, according to European Union climate observatory data.

The previous record was 20.95°C in March 2016, a spokeswoman for the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service told AFP on Friday.

The samples tested excluded polar regions. ► 5

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which uses a different database, has also recorded a similar trend in recent months.

It said the average sea surface temperature record was reached on April 4 this year at 21.06°C, overtaking the previous high of 21.01°C in March 2016. On Aug. 1, average temperatures were at 21.03°C, it said.

Oceans have absorbed 90 percent of the excess heat produced by human activity since the dawn of the industrial age, according to scientists.

This excess heat continues to accumulate as greenhouse gases—mainly from burning oil, gas and coal—build up in the Earth's atmosphere.

Globally, the average ocean temperature has been topping seasonal heat records on a regular basis since April.

'Immediate threat'

"The ocean heatwave is an immediate threat to some marine life," said Piers Forster of the International Center for Climate at Britain's University of Leeds.

"We are already seeing coral bleaching in Florida as a direct result and I expect more impacts will surface."

The overheating of the oceans is predicted to have other effects on marine plant and animal life too, including on the migration of certain species and the spread of invasive species.

This could threaten fish stocks and thus undermine food security in certain parts of the globe.

Warmer oceans are also less capable of absorbing carbon dioxide (CO₂), reinforcing the vicious cycle of global warming.

And higher temperatures are likely to come, since the El Niño phenomenon, which tends to warm waters up, has only just begun.

Scientists expect the worst effects of the current El Niño to be felt at the end of 2023 and continue into subsequent years.

Like bath water

"While there are certainly short-term factors, the main long-term cause is without a doubt the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere caused by human activity, primarily by the burning of fossil fuels," said Rowan Sutton, director of climate research at the University of Reading.

The latest figures follow a string of record highs around the world.

Last month, temperatures of 38.3°C—as hot as a jacuzzi—were recorded off the Florida coast, which could be a world-record high for a point measurement if the figure is confirmed.

The surface waters of the North Atlantic rose to a record-high average temperature of 24.9°C last week, according to provisional data from the NOAA.

The North Atlantic usually only reaches its peak temperature in September.

Since March, the month when the North Atlantic begins to warm up after winter, temperatures have been higher than in previous years and the gap with past records has continued to widen in recent weeks.

The region has become a key point for observing the heating of the world's oceans.

In July, the Mediterranean Sea broke its daily heat record, with a median temperature of 28.71°C, according to Spain's leading maritime research center.

Marine heatwaves have become twice as frequent since 1982, according to a 2019 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

By 2100, they could be 10 times more intense than they were at the beginning of the 20th century if pollutant emissions are not reduced.

The use of coal, oil and gas is expected to be at the center of debates in the upcoming United Nations climate talks, dubbed COP28, scheduled to take place at the end of the year in Dubai.