

08 May 2021, Saturday



NEWS ALERTS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Illegal Wildlife Online Traders Still Monitored by Enforcers

by  [Village Connect](#) about 10 hours ago



Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu warned the culprits taking advantage of the internet for illegal wildlife trading that their activities are being monitored by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

"Mobility restrictions may cause some deterrence to our wildlife enforcers, but these shall not stop them from implementing environmental laws to protect our natural resources," Cimatu said.

Cimatu made the statement following the arrest of a certain Benjie Saunar for illegal possession and selling of two Umbrella cockatoos (*Cacatua alba*) in a buy-bust operation conducted by the DENR's Environmental Protection and Enforcement Task Force (EPETF).

The operatives also recovered a Palm cockatoo (*Probosciger aterrimus*) from the suspect's possession.

Saunar was monitored by the DENR- EPETF operatives to have been selling illegal wildlife species online. He was apprehended in an entrapment operation conducted by the DENR EPETF, in coordination with the Manila Police District Station 8 and Manila District Anti-Cybercrime Team, led by Maj. Reynaldo Salim.

During the operation last April 28, 2021, in a gasoline station in Sta. Mesa, Manila, Saunar was not able to present any relevant permits such as a Certificate of Wildlife Registration or Wildlife Farm Permit and Local Transport Permit to support and prove that he is authorized by law to possess, transport, and trade wildlife.



Illegal Wildlife Online Traders Still Monitored by Enforcers

The suspect Saunar is currently undergoing inquest proceedings at the Manila City Prosecutors Office and shall be charged for violating Republic Act (RA) 9147 or the Wildlife Resources Protection and Conservation Act of 2001.

Section 23 of RA 9147 states that collection of threatened wildlife including the by-products and derivatives shall be allowed only for scientific, or breeding or propagation purposes, and provided that only the accredited individuals, business, research, educational or scientific entities shall be allowed to collect for conservation breeding or propagation purposes.

As of May 3, the wildlife species, along with other paraphernalia, such as the motorcycle and cellphone used by Saunar, are under the custody of the DENR-NCR Office, while awaiting the results of the case filed against the suspect.



DENR-12 probes illegal tourism establishments in Mt. Matutum

By Allen Estabillo May 7, 2021, 4:14 pm



Mt. Matutum, South Cotabato province's highest peak (*PNA GenSan file photo*)

GENERAL SANTOS CITY – The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has launched an investigation into the presence of illegal tourism establishments within the Mt. Matutum Protected Landscape (MMPL) in South Cotabato province.

A team from the DENR-Region 12 enforcement division launched a series of inspections early this week to identify and inventory all tourism establishments situated in areas classified as timberland, forestlands and protected areas.

Lawyer Felix Alicer, DENR-12 executive director, directed the inspection through Regional Special Order No. 81-187 and gave the enforcement team at least seven days to complete their fieldwork.

The agency identified at least 10 tourism establishments situated in Tupi and Polomolok towns that are within the MMPL.

These are the SG Farm, Matutum Blooms and the proposed cultural village in Sitio Glandang of Barangay Kablon, and the Magsangyaw Land of Praise in Barangay Linan, all in Tupi.

In Polomolok, the identified establishments are the Japanese Tunnel and Eco-Park in Sitio Tinefulan, Barangay Maligo; Ed Eumz Eco, Matutum Sky and Mt. Nabol Integrated Farm in Purok Estrebilla, Maligo; Paraiso de Amtutung, Ante Native Farm and Ante Agro Farm in Barangay Landan.

“(These) eco-tourism sites have been operating without clearance from PAMB (Protected Area Management Board)-MMPL,” it said in a statement on Friday.



DENR-12 probes illegal tourism establishments in Mt. Matutum

The establishments mainly violated Sec. 20 of Republic Act (RA) 7586, as amended by RA 11038, which prohibits “constructing, erecting, or maintaining any kind of structure, fence, or enclosures, conducting any business enterprise within the protected area without prior clearance from PAMB and permit from DENR.”

Such violation carries a minimum fine of PHP1 million and up to PHP5 million as well as imprisonment of six to 12 years.

Last month, DENR-12 ordered the closure of 17 inland resorts here and in Polomolok town for violation of the forestry law.

The resorts in question were found within areas classified as timberland or forestland that are not covered by Forest Land Use Agreement for Tourism (FLAgT).

FLAgT is a contract between the DENR and a tourism project developer authorizing the latter to “occupy, manage and develop, subject to government share, any forestland of the public domain for tourism purposes. (PNA)



DENR EMB calls for cooperation on waste segregation in Marawi

By Lou Ellen L. Antonio Published on May 8, 2021



MARAWI CITY, May 9 (PIA)--As the city government steps up its efforts for solid waste management, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources - Environmental Management Bureau called for the cooperation of residents for waste segregation.

DENR-EMB Region 10 focal person Abbas Lao urged the different households in the city to support the government by segregating their garbage for the effective collection and disposal of solid waste.

Lao echoed his call during Friday's episode of Kalilintad Andaka program of DXSO Radyo Pilipinas Marawi.

"Hinihingi po natin sa mga kababayan natin na magcooperate sila sa program natin kasi one of the very important components of solid waste management is the cooperation of the different household. Yung pagmamana sa basura natin kung pwede po strictly implement nila ang segregation," said Lao.

[We call on the residents to cooperate in our program because one of the very important components of solid waste management is the cooperation of the different households. They should strictly implement the management and segregation of wastes.]

As part of its information campaign, the agency also capacitated the residents in each barangay on proper waste segregation. Segregation garbage bins will also be provided to further boost the waste management in their areas.



DENR EMB calls for cooperation on waste segregation in Marawi

The central material recovery facility in Barangay Dulay is also set to be inaugurated this month. This facility will cater to non-residual waste which can be recovered or recycled while the bulk biodegradable waste will be catered through the sanitary landfill to be constructed in the boundary of Malimono in the city and Kasayanan of Kapai town.

With funds from the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management – Marawi Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction Program, DENR also procured five quarter dump trucks, nine mini dump trucks, two units six-wheeler garbage collector, nine skid loaders, one case crawler-type excavator, one waste handling dozer, one vibratory roller, and two wheel-type excavators. (LELA/PIA ICIC)



3 officials tagged in permits scam

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:12 AM May 07, 2021

MANILA, Philippines — The Presidential Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC) has filed graft complaints against three officials of the Department of Public Works and Highway (DPWH) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for the alleged issuance of permits and certifications for a flood-control project in Zambales.

PACC chair Greco Belgica identified the officials as DPWH Assistant Secretary Antonio Molano Jr., DENR Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) director Metodio Turbella and DENR-EMB regional director Lormelyn Claudio.

Belgica said the complaint stemmed from the Sto. Tomas-Maculcol River flood-control dredging project in Zambales.

—LEILA B. SALAVERRIA

Read more: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/?p=1428351#ixzz6uDFnomkj>

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Sandiganbayan clears former Bulacan environment officers of graft charges

Published May 7, 2021, 3:43 PM
by [Czarina Nicole Ong Ki](#)



Sandiganbayan

The Sandiganbayan has acquitted two former officials of the Bulacan Environment and Natural Resources Office (BENRO) and two private individuals of their graft charges involving the alleged illegal sale, transport and export of extracted minerals in 2011 and 2012.

Acquitted of two graft charges each were former BENRO Provincial Department Head Rustico de Belen and Officer-in-Charge of the Natural Resources Management (NRM) Division Antonio A. Cacdac.

Also acquitted were private individuals Lucila S. Valdez and Eduardo D. Mercado were charged with four counts of graft each.

With their acquittal, the anti-graft court ordered the P240,000 bail of De Belen released, while the bonding company of Cacdac, Valdez and Mercado was ordered relieved of its obligations and duties as bondsman.

The 99-page decision was written by Associate Justice Ma. Theresa Dolores C. Gomez Estoesta.

The two public officials alleged caused undue injury to Reynaldo R. So of Atlantic Mines and Trading Corporation (AMTC) when they allowed Valdez and Mercado to sell, transport or export the extracted and stockpiled minerals and iron ores even while their small-scale mining permits (SSMP) had already been declared null and void by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

But the anti-graft court said that there is no mining law or established DENR rule or regulation which would prohibit accused De Belen from issuing ore transport permits (OTPs) and mineral ore export permit (MOEP) despite the earlier cancellation of the SSMPs.



Sandiganbayan clears former Bulacan environment officers of graft charges

"Oddly, while the SSMPs were already declared null and void, application for subject OTPs and MOEP were still processed by the BENRO for verification and validation of the minerals extracted, not just by accused Cacdac alone... but with the assistance of two BENRO officials," the court said.

"While a conspiracy angle is imputed at this instance by the prosecution, the same cannot be hastily concluded as it is not just the BENRO which conducted the verification and validation but the Provincial Mining Regulatory Board (PMRB) as well," it added.

It stressed that it would require "damning evidence" to show that De Belen and Cacdac, in conspiracy with one another, exhibited manifest partiality or evident bad faith in the processing of the OTPs and MOEP.



Anti-coal group pats ADB's back; here's why

Published May 7, 2021, 8:48 PM

by [Ellson Quismorio](#)

Clean energy group Center for Energy, Ecology, and Development (CEED) hailed on Friday, May 7 the apparent decision of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to move away from coal, which has long been regarded as a dirty energy source.



(Photo by Wander Fleur / Unsplash)

"Today, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) unveiled the long-awaited draft of its updated energy policy, which, once approved by its Board of Directors by October 2021, would repeal the 2009 energy policy which saw the bank abet the growth of coal and other fossil fuels in developing countries in Asia," CEED said in a statement.

"We are happy that ADB finally decided to abandon coal once and for all in this draft policy," said the group, whose executive director, Gerry Arances, is a vocal environmental activist.

CEED said that for years, civil society members have engaged ADB to turn it away from "the destructive impact of its carbon-intensive investments, in view of the rapidly shifting global energy landscape and imperatives posed by the climate emergency".

"By seeking to 'support the phase-out of coal fired power plants in the region', ADB finally recognizes the need to rectify its mistake of causing the suffering of many communities in the Philippines and across Asia through the coal-fired power plants it helped build," the group said.

But CEED said that the soon-to-be 55-year-old regional development bank must have the immediate and complete phase-out of coal in mind.

"Retrofitting and any allowances for emissions in current projects would defeat the stated objective of the draft policy," it reckoned.



Anti-coal group pats ADB's back; here's why

"We hope other financial institutions would see this announcement from ADB as a sign to follow suit, paving the way for SEA (Southeast Asia) to join the global exodus from coal," it said.

Despite it welcoming ADB's draft policy, CEED expressed worries that the bank still intends to support "destructive renewable energy systems like large hydropower plants, which are not ecologically just".

"The ADB must remove these from its definition of 'clean energy'," CEED said.

"We from civil society together with communities from all over the region will continue to assess ADB's energy directions and push for a policy that fully aligns with the 1.5 degree C Paris Ambition and the respective climate mitigation and adaptation needs of our own nations," it concluded.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2021/05/07/anti-coal-group-pats-adbs-back-heres-why/>



Asian Development Bank proposes ending financing for coal plants

Published May 7, 2021 10:05pm

MANILA, Philippines - The Asian Development Bank will stop financing new coal power plants under a draft energy policy released Friday that was cautiously welcomed by environmental groups.

The ADB, which provides loans and grants for projects in the poorest countries in the Asia Pacific region, said its current policy was "no longer adequately aligned with the global consensus on climate change".

"Coal and other fossil fuels have played a large part in ensuring access to energy for the region's economic development, but they have not solved the energy access challenge, and their use harms the environment and accelerates climate change," the Manila-based bank said in the document.

The lender will also no longer fund "any coal mining, oil and natural gas field exploration, drilling or extraction activities", it said.

However, under certain conditions, it would provide funds for natural gas projects and "hybrid electricity solutions" involving fossil fuels as backup systems, according to the draft.

Between 2009 and 2019 the ADB funneled \$42.5 billion into energy sector projects in Asia, where around 60 percent of electricity is generated by coal, its data show.

The final version of the energy policy is expected to be submitted to the ADB board of directors by October.

Earlier this week, US climate envoy John Kerry called on the ADB to adopt a "more restrictive fossil fuel financing policy", warning that island nations faced a situation "beyond existential" due to climate change.

While welcoming the ADB's policy proposal, Greenpeace said it was "long delayed and incremental".

"Communities throughout Asia have struggled for decades to demand ADB to stop financing dirty energy," Greenpeace Southeast Asia program director Jasper Inventor said in a statement.

"While this new policy puts the brakes on coal financing, it still opens doors for fossil gas development."

Hasan Mehedi from the Coastal Livelihood and Environmental Action Network in Bangladesh said it was a "sweet victory".

But he said the ADB must "urgently phase out fossil gas, waste to energy, and large hydro projects to achieve the Paris Goal of staying below 1.5 degrees".

The goal of checking global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial times was the aspiration set in the Paris Agreement to avoid the most severe effects of climate change.



Asian Development Bank proposes ending financing for coal plants

Speaking at a seminar during the ADB's annual meeting, Kerry called for an end to fossil fuel subsidies and coal plant financing.

He warned the 20 countries responsible for most of the world's emissions were not "moving in the same direction" or fast enough to tackle warming.

ADB president Masatsugu Asakawa told the same seminar that the Asia Pacific -- which includes China, the world's biggest polluter -- was responsible for about 50 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

As the market for coal, oil and gas rebounds this year, he warned that more than 80 percent of the expected growth in coal demand would be from Asia. — Agence France-Press

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/scitech/science/786687/asian-development-bank-proposes-ending-financing-for-coal-plants/story/>



Thirsty? Don't even think about drinking from these bottles, says environmental group

Published May 7, 2021, 4:42 PM

by [Ellson Quismorio](#)

It might get excruciatingly hot this dry season, but please try not to quench your thirst with these "water bottles".



(Photo courtesy of EcoWaste Coalition)

Environment and toxics watchdog EcoWaste Coalition cautioned the public on Friday, May 7 about the unintentional ingestion of alcohol and bleach products packaged in containers that are often used for water and other beverages.

The group gave this warning after purchasing alcohol and bleach products in clear polyethylene terephthalate (PET) containers, which are popularly used for drinking water. The products were bought from a home improvement supplies retailer and two "sabon (detergent)" stations.

"Because of their water-like appearance, rubbing alcohol, bleach, and disinfectant bleach solution can be mistaken for drinking water, especially by an unsupervised child who wants to quench her/his thirst," said Thony Dizon, chemical safety campaigner, EcoWaste Coalition.

"A child is easily misled into drinking alcohol or bleach if it is packaged in a container commonly used for drinking water," he pointed out.



Thirsty? Don't even think about drinking from these bottles, says environmental group



(Photo by Munro Studio / Unsplash)

With the increased demand for alcohol and bleach products as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, particularly for disinfection, the EcoWaste Coalition emphasized the need to use them responsibly to avoid getting poisoned.

“Not a few people, children as well as adults, have been poisoned due to the ingestion of rubbing alcohol or bleach,” Dizon said, citing the 2020 data from the UP-PGH National Poison Management Control Center (NPMCC).

According to the NPMCC, isopropyl/ethyl alcohol ranked no.1 among the top 10 agents for pediatric poisoning cases (9.03 percent of 2,425 cases) last year, followed by sodium hypochlorite, an active ingredient of bleach (7.18 percent). For adult poisoning cases, sodium hypochlorite ranked no.1 (10.05 percent of 2,726 cases) while isopropyl/ethyl alcohol was no.7 (3.26 percent).

To prevent poisoning, the EcoWaste Coalition urged manufacturers of rubbing alcohol and bleach products to strictly use proper containers and to conspicuously label their products.

“Products that are not compliant [with] packaging and labeling requirements should be immediately recalled or withdrawn from the market in the interest of public safety,” Dizon said.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2021/05/07/thirsty-dont-even-think-about-drinking-from-these-bottles-says-environmental-group/>



DOT wants stricter enforcement of waste management rules in tourist destinations

Published May 7, 2021, 1:26 PM

by [Alexandria Dennise San Juan](#)

As part of efforts to promote sustainable tourism amid the pandemic, the Department of Tourism (DOT) is calling for stricter monitoring and implementation of waste management protocols in all tourist destinations in the country.



(Photo by Vova Drozdey / Unsplash)

This, after a total of 378 kilograms of garbage were collected in the water of Samal Island in Davao Del Norte during an underwater clean-up activity organized by the DOT Region XI.

The initiative dubbed "Scubasurero: Stand up, save our reefs" bats for the preservation of marine biodiversity as well as the promotion of marine tourist destinations in Davao del Norte.

"As embodied in the DOT's Save our Spots (SOS) campaign, creating a culture of sustainable tourism begins with engaging others on responsible travel and involving more people to act for the preservation of our natural wonders," the department said in a statement.

Launched in 2019, the DOT's SOS campaign intended to inspire tourists, businesses, as well as local communities to have a long-term view on tourism by protecting the country's destinations and natural resources.

The DOT likewise called on tourists and residents in all marine destinations in the Philippines to maintain the cleanliness of their areas to preserve its natural beauty. With this, they will continue to attract visitors once travel restrictions are lifted.

"The COVID-19 (coronavirus disease) pandemic has further underscored the importance of sustainable tourism, with environmental protection as one of its major pillars," the DOT said.



DOT wants stricter enforcement of waste management rules in tourist destinations

“Compliance of the public with waste management protocols will help keep our waters clean, protect its rich marine life, and ensure its beauty will be retained for generations to come,” it added.

Meanwhile, the agency expressed gratitude to its regional offices, other government agencies, members of the Philippine Coast Guard, and the private sector for their continuous efforts in conserving and protecting the country's natural resources.

08 MAY 2021, Saturday



DENR

NEWS ALERTS

COVID-19 NEWS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



COVID-19 recoveries surpass 1 million as deaths top 18,000

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published May 7, 2021 4:10:41 PM



The number of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in the country exceeded one million on Friday, the Department of Health said, as the death toll surpassed 18,000. (FILE PHOTO)

Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, May 7) — The number of patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in the country exceeded one million on Friday, the Department of Health said, as the death toll surpassed 18,000.

The infection tally also rose to 1,087,885 with 7,733 new cases, the DOH bulletin showed. Active or currently ill patients are at 66,626 - about 6.1% of the COVID-19 total - with 94.4% experiencing mild symptoms, 2% without symptoms, 1.5% with severe symptoms, 1.1% in critical condition and 0.98% moderate.

The DOH counted 1,003,160 recovered cases - which is 92.2% of the case tally - after 4,227 more survivors were recorded. Meanwhile, 108 more people lost their lives to the disease, raising the death toll to 18,099 or 1.66% of the case count. The department said it reclassified 64 recoveries into fatalities and deleted 20 duplicates, including 14 survivors.

The department said all laboratories submitted data on time.

The daily positivity rate, or rate of infected patients among those tested, is 14.1% out of 50,815 tests as of May 5. The recommended rate by the World Health Organization is below 5%, since high numbers may mean high transmission.



COVID-19 recoveries surpass 1 million as deaths top 18,000

The OCTA research team noted that the daily average of 2,454 cases in Metro Manila on April 30 to May 6 is 56% lower compared to the peak surge. Cases are on a downward trend in Metro Manila with a reproduction number of 0.70. The national reproduction number or number infected by one case is 0.86. Experts earlier said the number should remain below one for a number of weeks to decongest hospitals. However, they noted that there is still continued increase in occupied beds in intensive care units with more than 850 beds in use.

Among Filipinos abroad, 45 more caught the disease, while 27 recovered and 12 passed away, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs. The infection total in 94 countries rose to 18,524 with 11,333 survivors, 1,159 fatalities and 6,032 undergoing treatment.

Global coronavirus cases exceed 155 million

May 7, 2021, 6:28 pm



MOSCOW – The total number of coronavirus infections worldwide has surpassed 155.9 million, according to TASS' calculations based on data by authorities, experts and media.

Thus, the share of the infections makes up more than 2 percent of world population, which the UN Population Fund estimated at 7.795 billion people as of mid-2020.

To date, over 155,912,000 cases of the disease have been registered worldwide.

About half of the cases are distributed between five countries – the US (32.7 million), India (21.5 million), Brazil (15 million), France (5.8 million), and Turkey (5 million).

The highest share of the infections is recorded in countries with a relatively small population, Thus, in Andorra, 17% of the population (13,400 people) have contracted the disease, while in Montenegro, this indicator is at 15.7% (98,000).

In Russia, this indicator makes up about 3.3% (4.86 million people).

Many countries are currently registering a third wave of the infection while some states talk about the fourth wave already.

A sharp rise in incidence was detected worldwide in early January when over 800,000 cases were being registered daily, yet by the end of February, the situation has stabilized and the indicators decreased almost two-fold.

In the spring, the infection spread resumed its rapid growth with a new high of over 904,700 confirmed daily infections recorded on April 29.



Global coronavirus cases exceed 155 million

Still sick

The share of recoveries to date makes up about 86%. At the same time, at least 19 million people continue treatment. However, this data is incomplete since many countries do not publish the relevant statistics.

The number of fatalities caused by the coronavirus infection has increased to 3.2 million, which is 2.1% of all infections.

The majority of fatalities were recorded in the US (583,000), Brazil (415,000) and India (230,000). The highest lethality indicators were registered in Yemen (19.6%) and Mexico (9.3%). In Russia, 112,200 people or 2.3% died.

The outbreak of a disease caused by the novel coronavirus was recorded at the end of 2019 in Central China, later spreading to the majority of countries.

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic. (TASS)



Locsin speaks with US special envoy Kerry on climate change

Published May 7, 2021, 3:53 PM

by [Roy Mabasa](#)

Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin, Jr. on Friday spoke over the phone with United States Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John F. Kerry to discuss major initiatives to address the climate crisis.



Foreign Affairs Sec. Teodoro Locsin, Jr. (left) and United States Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John F. Kerry (right). (DFA)

In a statement issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs, it said Locsin and Kerry both recognized that climate change is one of the key areas where the Philippines and the United States can cooperate more closely to strengthen their bilateral relations and their alliance.

During the phone conversation, Locsin congratulated the United States for successfully hosting the virtual Leaders Summit on Climate held on April 22, 2021.

Both leaders agreed to promote collaboration on the climate crisis the whole world is facing through various regional and multilateral fora, especially through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

On the part of the Philippines, Locsin emphasized that climate change is one of the core priorities of the government, which is committed to advancing climate justice.

Last month, the Philippines has submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) with a target of 75 percent greenhouse gas emissions reduction and avoidance by 2030.

In its submission to the UN climate body, the Philippines noted that the country's loss and damage from extreme weather events are increasing at an unacceptable rate, reaching 4 percent of Gross Domestic Product in 2013 due to Super Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan). It added that the



Locsin speaks with US special envoy Kerry on climate change

successive typhoons in October and November 2020 alone resulted in approximately \$852 million in losses and damages in agriculture and infrastructure.

In the energy sector, Super Typhoon Goni alone destroyed USD 56.3 million worth of infrastructure in 25 provinces in the country.

"The implementation of the mitigation commitments shall be undertaken through bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation. In addition, the benefits of market and non-market mechanisms under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement shall continue to be explored, consistent with national circumstances and sustainable development aspirations," the Philippines said in the documents it communicated with the UNFCCC in April 15, 2021.



Locsin, Kerry discuss climate change plans

posted May 07, 2021 at 10:10 pm

by [Rey E. Requejo](#) and [Rio N. Araja](#)

Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin, Jr. on Friday discussed with United States Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John F. Kerry various major initiatives intended to address the climate crisis.

The Department of Foreign Affairs said Locsin and Kerry talked over the phone and both acknowledged that climate change is one of the key areas where the Philippines and the United States can cooperate more closely to strengthen the two countries' bilateral relations and their alliance.

During conversation, Locsin applauded the US for successfully hosting the virtual Leaders' Summit on Climate held on April 22, 2021.

Meanwhile, environmentalists on Friday lauded the Asian Development Bank for its draft energy policy to abandon the use of coal to produce power.

Gerry Arances, the Center for Energy, Ecology and Development executive director, said the ADB's move is a welcome development.

Scientists have repeatedly warned of the coal's looming dangers, citing coal-fired power plants are linked with asthma, cancer, heart and lung ailments, neurological problems, acid rain, global warming, and other severe environmental and public health impacts.

Locsin and Kerry agreed to promote collaboration on the climate crisis the whole world is facing through various regional and multilateral fora, especially through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

On the part of the Philippines, the DFA chief stressed that climate change is one of the core priorities of the government, which is committed to advancing climate justice.

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It added that the successive typhoons in October and November 2020 alone resulted in approximately \$852 million in losses and damages in agriculture and infrastructure.

In the energy sector, Super Typhoon Goni alone destroyed \$ 56.3 million worth of infrastructure in 25 provinces in the country.

"The implementation of the mitigation commitments shall be undertaken through bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation. In addition, the benefits of market and non-market mechanisms under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement shall continue to be explored, consistent with national circumstances and sustainable development aspirations," the Philippines said in its submission with the UNFCCC last month.



Locsin, Kerry discuss climate change plans

"Today, the ADB unveiled the long-awaited draft of its updated energy policy, which, once approved by its Board of Directors by October 2021, would repeal the 2009 energy policy which saw the bank abet the growth of coal and other fossil fuels in developing countries in Asia," Arances said.

He said their group and other civil society organizations, for the longest time, have reiterated the destructive impact of its carbon-intensive investments with the rapid shift of global energy landscape and imperatives posed by the climate emergency.

"We are happy that ADB finally decided to abandon coal once and for all in this draft policy. By seeking to support the phase-out of coal fired power plants in the region, the ADB finally recognizes the need to rectify its mistake of causing the suffering of many communities in the Philippines and across Asia through the coal-fired power plants it helped build," he said.

He said they hope that other financial institutions would follow suit, paving the way for Southeast Asia to join the global exodus from coal.

"Nevertheless, we are concerned that the ADB shall continue funding the expansion of fossil gas in the region in their draft energy policy. Asian communities, which are some of the most climate vulnerable and are paying some of the highest electricity rates in the world, need access to clean and affordable renewable energy. Fossil gas will just delay the necessary transition, at great cost to these communities," he said.



ARTA wants to make e-signatures mandatory for gov't agencies, LGUs

May 8, 2021 2:12 AM by [Kristan Carag](#)



The Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) wants to require national government agencies (NGAs), and local government units (LGUs) to use digital signatures or e-signatures for all public issuances.

ARTA director general Jeremiah Belgica said that the Commission on Audit (COA) has started to draft a circular to recognize the use of digital signatures in all government transactions, as well as to craft guidelines on the use of digital signatures.

Belgica urge NGAs and LGUs to subscribe to the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) in order to acquire a digital signature.

"The NGAs, the LGUs may utilize digital signatures, such as made available by DICT such as the PNKPI (Philippine National Public Key Infrastructure)," Belgica said on Thursday, May 6, during the Ease of Doing Business Summit.

Belgica added that DICT can also accredit the digital signatures of private institutions.

ARTA also proposed the implementation of an unified online payment system for all fees, contributions, or taxes due to the national government or LGUs.

"We already have initial talks and discussions with the concerned agencies and we are proposing that the Landbank of the Philippines as one of the government banks to be the payment aggregator on all of these payments," Belgica said.

"The Landbank of the Philippines, the DBP (Development Bank of the Philippines), and other government banks will now be technologically capable to actually accept, and aggregate payments for all other government agencies," he added.



ARTA wants to make e-signatures mandatory for gov't agencies, LGUs

Belgica also said that Department of Finance, and the Philippine Public Financial Management Committee work hard to iron out guidelines in the issuance of electronic copies of receipts by NGAs and LGUs.

During the 2020 State of the Nation Address, President Rodrigo Duterte tasked ARTA and other government offices to make all possible services available online.

President Duterte said that the Philippine government needs to 'adjust to and adopt a paper-less type business and work performance'.



Brazil's Amazon: Deforestation rises ahead of dry season

Published
5 hours ago



IMAGE COPYRIGHTGETTY IMAGES

image captionConservationists are worried about the rise in deforestation ahead of the dry season

Deforestation of the Amazon rainforest in Brazil rose by 43% in April compared to the same month last year, government data has shown.

A total of 1,157 sq km (446 sq miles) of rainforest were destroyed in the first four months of 2021. This was down 4% from a year earlier.

The Amazon is a vital carbon store that slows down the pace of global warming.

Scientists say the loss of forest has accelerated since Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro took office in 2019.

The president has encouraged agricultural and mining activities in the world's largest rainforest, and rolled back environmental legislation.

Conservationists are fearing the worst ahead of this year's dry season, when deforestation usually peaks from May to October.

In November last year the country's space agency (Inpe) reported that deforestation of [the Amazon had surged to its highest level since 2008](#).

media captionA section of the Amazon forest is systematically removed over a three-year period



Brazil's Amazon: Deforestation rises ahead of dry season

In recent months, the international community - led by the US administration of President Joe Biden - has put greater pressure on Brazil to scale back deforestation of the Amazon.

At a US-led climate summit last month, President Bolsonaro promised to double the money reserved for environmental enforcement and to end illegal deforestation by 2030.

But critics have questioned his commitment to those pledges.

They have pointed to [a recent cut to the environment ministry's budget](#) as an example of President Bolsonaro reneging on his promises.



IMAGE COPYRIGHTGETTY IMAGES

image captionBrazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has come under international pressure to curb deforestation

They have also condemned proposed legislation that could legalise the private occupation of public land.

Next week, Brazil's upper house of parliament - the Senate - is expected to vote on a bill, which critics say could accelerate deforestation in the Amazon.

[A group of food businesses in the UK have threatened to stop sourcing products from Brazil](#) if the bill is passed.

"The Amazon has become an open bar for land grabbers, illegal loggers and miners," says Marcio Astrini, executive secretary of Observatorio do Clima, a campaign group.

"And several attempts are being made by the government and Congress to eliminate legal protection of forests, such as the amnesty for land grabbing and now the licensing bill."

08 MAY 2021, Saturday



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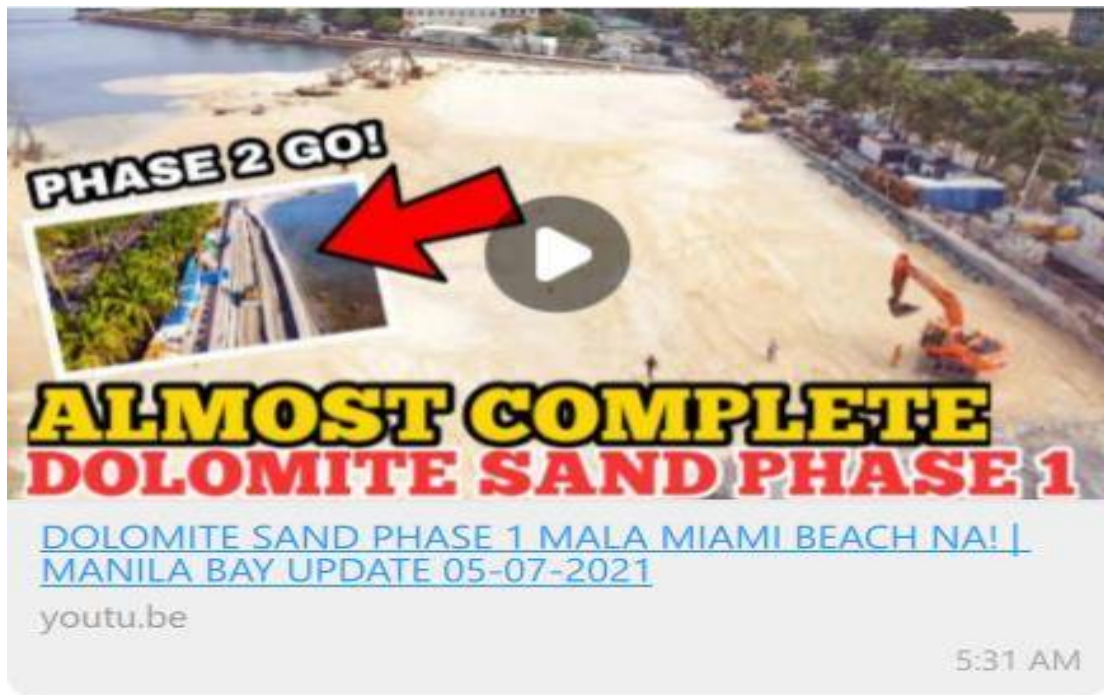
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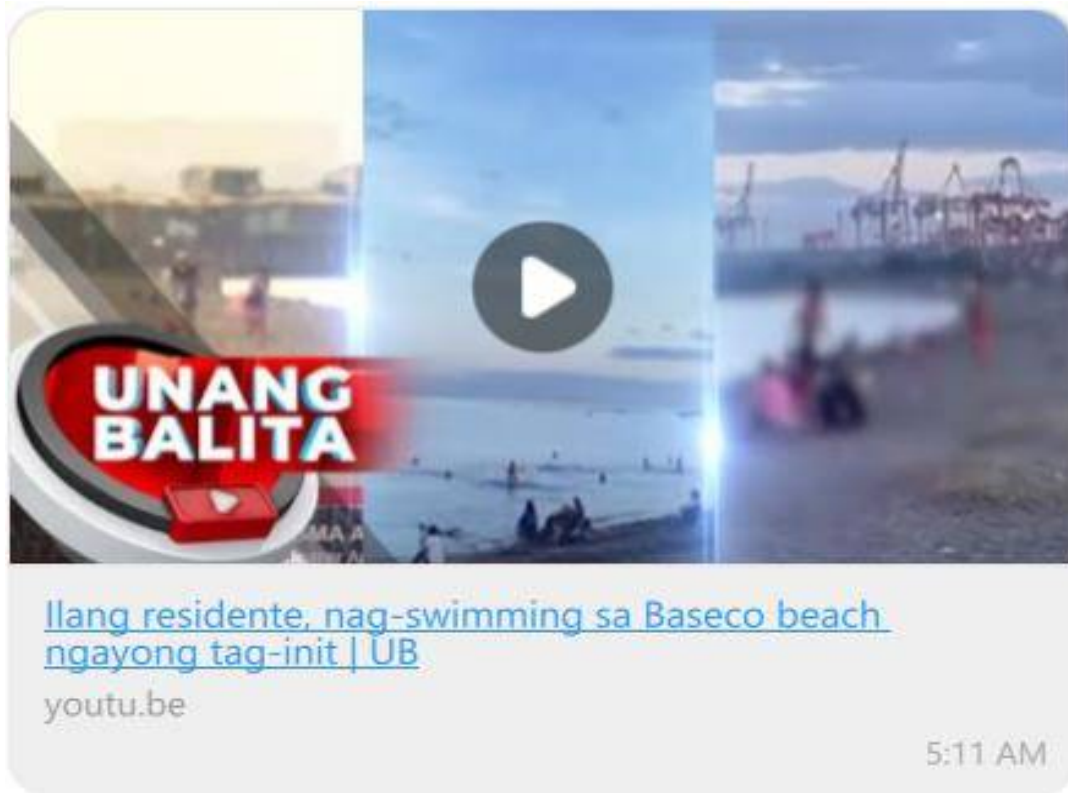
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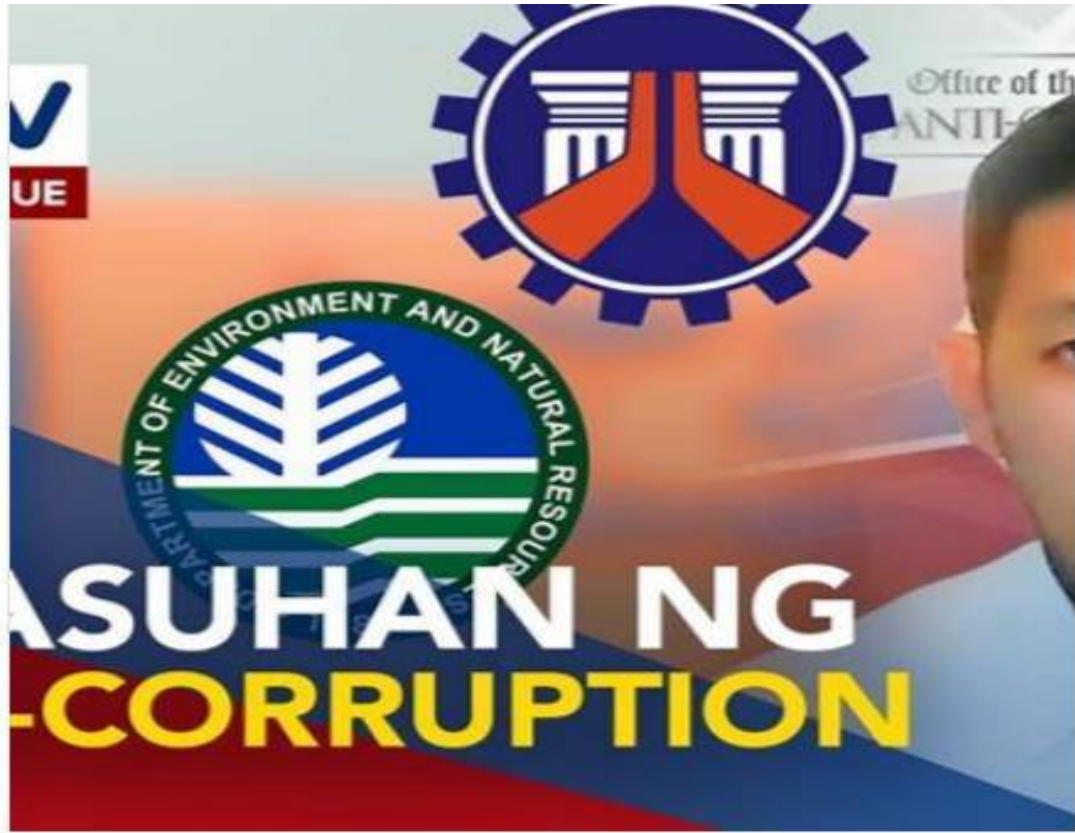
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