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Mining firms buck new tax regime

By DANESSA RIVERA

Mining companies are opposing a new tax regime that is seen impeding the revitalization of the mining industry in the country, according to the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines.

The COMP is now urging Congress to revisit the bill and allow for consultations with stakeholders.

"This will give all affected parties an opportunity to contribute to the passage of a mining fiscal regime that will encourage investments and finally unlock the industry's huge economic potential," COMP said.

According to the chamber, the mining tax bill recently passed by the House Ways and Means Committee is contrary to the pronouncements of the new administration to accelerate the industry.

After languishing in a restrictive policy environment for more than a decade, the chamber said it had welcomed the new government's support to the industry's post-pandemic recovery efforts.

Moreover, it was only recently that the government lifted the nine-year moratorium on new mining projects and four-year ban on open pit mining. The COMP sees this contributing to the revitalization of the industry and encouraging badly needed foreign investments.

The COMP said the new mining tax bill "will once again set back the revitalization of the industry."

"We lament the fact that no consultations took place with the industry that would have allowed us to prove that the onerous provisions of the bill would make the Philippine mining industry one of the highest taxed in the world," the chamber added.

The group pointed out that the industry's effective tax rate at 38 percent shown during the committee hearing was woefully out of date as the report was done in 2000, prior to the doubling of the excise tax on mineral products under Republic Act 10963 or the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN 1) law.



Mining group bucks tax bill, says sector may lose gains

By Othel V. Campos

THE Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (CoMP) expressed concern over a proposed tax measure that may push back recent gains for the mining sector and deter prospective investments in the sector.

The bill passed by the House committee on ways and means proposes the imposition of a royalty tax of 5 percent on gross output of large-scale

mining operations, while increasing the share of the government to 60 percent of net revenues.

The proposed legislation will also place a 10-percent export tax on mineral ore exports, to encourage domestic processing of mineral products.

CoMP said that while the proposed measure runs contrary to pronouncements of the new administration, there were no consultations that would enable industry

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Mining...

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stakeholders to oppose provisions of the bill they found onerous.

"We also maintain that figures shown during the committee hearing that purported to show the industry's effective tax rate at 38 percent was woefully out of date as such report was done in the year 2000, prior to the doubling of the excise tax on mineral products under TRAIN 1," CoMP said in a statement.

Once passed into law, the bill will render the Philippine mining industry as one of the highest taxed mining countries in the world,

It will also jeopardize the sector's contribution to economic development in host communities that may result in a substantial reduction of exports and tax revenues and a considerable amount of social expenses.

In addition, a number of large-scale operations run the risk of closure, resulting in massive unemployment in their areas of operations.

CoMP noted that the bill will once again put into question the stability of mining policies, which is most detrimental to attracting foreign investments in such a capital-intensive industry.

"Foreign investors will simply look elsewhere, we are not the only country blessed with mineral resources. If further tax increases are unavoidable, the tax structure should not be onerous as to stop investments from coming in," the group said.

"We thus call on Congress to revisit the bill recently approved by the committee on ways and means and allow for full and meaningful consultations with stakeholders," CoMP said.



Mining Tax Bill contrary to gov't pronouncements of support

THE Chamber of Mines of the Philippines in a statement welcomed pronouncements that mining - after languishing in a restrictive policy environment for more than a decade - will be accelerated under the new administration to support post-pandemic recovery efforts.

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Speaker Martin G. Romualdez delivers Friday morning his preliminary remarks during the House of Representatives' first hearing on the proposed P5.268-trillion 2023 "Agenda for Prosperity" national budget. Members of the Development Budget Coordination Committee briefed the House Committee on Appropriations on the state of the economy and the macroeconomic parameters the Executive Branch used in putting together next year's spending program. Photos by VER NOVENO

MINING

FROM PAGE 1

The rest of the statement reads:

The lifting of the moratorium on new mining permits and the open pit ban in 2021 will indeed contribute to the revitalization of the industry and will encourage badly needed foreign investments.

We submit, however, that the mining tax bill recently passed by the House Ways and Means Committee will once again set back the revitalization of the industry, contrary to pronouncements of the new administration. We lament the fact that no consultations took place with the industry that would have allowed us to prove that the

onerous provisions of the bill would make the Philippine mining industry one of the highest taxed in the world. We also maintain that figures shown during the Committee hearing that purported to show the industry's effective tax rate at 38% was woefully out of date as such report was done in the year 2000, prior to the doubling of the excise tax on mineral products under TRAIN 1.

Once again, the mining industry is faced with a drastic policy change that will not be conducive to its growth, preventing it from playing a major role in the recovery of our economy. Should this bill become law, three flagship mining projects that can otherwise substantially contribute to economic devel-

opment in areas where they are located, result in a substantial amount of exports and tax revenues and a considerable amount of social expenses will instead be in jeopardy. In addition, a number of large-scale operations run the risk of closure, resulting in massive unemployment in their areas of operations.

Simply put, the onerous tax bill will once again put into question the stability of our policies, which is most detrimental to attracting foreign investments in such a capital-intensive industry. Foreign investors will simply look elsewhere; we are not the only country blessed with mineral resources. If further tax increases are unavoidable, the

tax structure should not be onerous as to stop investments from coming in. This will sustain existing mines and encourage quality investments in the hugely untapped Philippine minerals sector, ultimately expanding considerably the tax base and providing far larger tax revenues to government.

We thus call on Congress to revisit the bill recently approved by the Committee on Ways and Means and allow for full and meaningful consultations with stakeholders. This will give all affected parties an opportunity to contribute to the passage of a mining fiscal regime that will encourage investments and finally unlock the industry's huge economic potential.



COP warns 3 mining projects in jeopardy if mining tax bill is passed

By BERNIE G. HILES-MAGKILAT

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) warned that three flagship mining projects will be in jeopardy while a number of large-scale operations run the risk of closure, resulting in massive unemployment once the mining tax bill is passed into law.

The proposed mining tax bill was recently passed by the House ways and means committee.

In a statement, the miner's group said the three flagship mining projects are expected to substantially contribute to economic development as their operations would result in substantial amount of exports and tax revenues and social expenses. The statement, however, did not identify these mining projects.

Aside from the three unnamed mining projects, the COMP said that a number of large-scale mining operations might just fold up, resulting in massive unemployment in their areas of operations.

"Simply put, the onerous tax bill will once again put into question the stability of our policies, which is most detrimental to attracting foreign investments in such a capital-intensive industry," the COMP statement added.

In addition, the miners said "Foreign investors will simply look elsewhere; we are not the only country blessed with mineral resources."

The group, however, said that if further tax increases are unavoidable, "the tax structure should not be onerous as to stop investments from coming in."

A tax structure that is not "onerous" will sustain existing mines and encourage quality investments in the hugely untapped Philippine minerals sector, ultimately expanding considerably the tax base and

providing far larger tax revenues to government.

The group cited the earlier pronouncements by the Marcos administration to make mining industry an important part in the economic recovery of the domestic economy.

In fact, they said that the lifting of the moratorium on new mining permits and the open pit ban in 2021 will indeed contribute to the revitalization of the industry and will encourage badly needed foreign investments.

But the proposed mining tax bill will once again set back the revitalization of the industry, contrary to pronouncements of the new administration to accelerate mining to support post-pandemic recovery efforts.

"We lament the fact that no consultations took place with the industry that would have allowed us to prove that the onerous provisions of the bill would make the Philippine mining industry one of the highest taxed in the world," said the COMP statement.

Had they been consulted, COMP said they would have been able to prove that the "onerous" provisions would setback the Philippine mining industry again.

The miners stressed that the figures shown during the Committee hearing that purported to show the industry's effective tax rate at 38 percent was "woefully out of date" as such report was done in the year 2000, prior to the doubling of the excise tax on mineral products under TRAIN 1.

Once again, COMP said, the mining industry is faced with a drastic policy change that will not be conducive to its growth, preventing it from playing a major role in the recovery of the domestic economy.

The group further urged Congress to revisit the bill and allow for full and meaningful consultations with stakeholders.



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Better LGU management of environment pushed

BY BELLA CARIASO

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has vowed to strengthen the capability of the local government units (LGUs) in environmental management as part of the agency's campaign to protect indigenous species and their habitats.

Environment Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and International Affairs Jonas Leones said this is part of the government's efforts to mitigate climate change at the local level.

Leones added that the DENR will guide LGUs in implementing their respective environmental conservation and protection programs.

"There is a need to enhance programs that protect our very own indigenous practices and species by developing several livelihood programs, indigenous practices, systems and procedures," Leones added.

He said some countries and foreign companies come to the Philippines to learn from Indigenous

Peoples, particularly in managing natural resources.

"If we can harness our native knowledge, these have the potential to also boost our economy," he added.

Leones noted that just this year, the DENR-Biodiversity Management Bureau and the United Nations Development Program held a national inception workshop for a Global Environment Facility-funded project entitled "Implementing the National Framework on Access and Benefit Sharing of Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge in the Philippines."

The activity was conducted to increase economic opportunity and biodiversity conservation of local communities and Indigenous

Peoples in the country, stemming from fair and equitable sharing of biodiversity benefits.

Leones added that it also aims to address biopiracy, which is unethical or illegal appropriation or commercial exploitation of biological resources that are native to a country or territory without providing fair financial compensation to its rightful owners.

He said the Environment department's priorities also include establishing a nationwide geospatial system containing environmental information, accounting of natural resources, implementing climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, and anchoring DENR programs on sustainable climate action.



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New commish on plastic recycling set to work

IN three months' time, a new commission under the supervision of Malacañang shall begin work on upgrading the recycling or reuse of discarded plastic containers and packaging materials, in pursuit of a circular economy or

the "green" model of production and consumption, according to Camarines Sur Rep. and National Unity Party (NUP) president LRay Villafuerte.

Villafuerte said this 13-member panel named the Na-

tional Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC) is mandated under a congressional proposal that lapsed into law last month—Republic Act (RA) No. 11898—to see to it that big producers along with their distributors and retailers are re-

sponsible for the proper disposal of their waste products after their goods have been sold to and used by consumers.

In the previous Congress, Villafuerte authored House Bill (HB) No. 9859 that was one of the measures incorporated into

HB 10696, which, in turn, was reconciled with the Senate's version of the EPR bill (Senate Bill or SB 2425) to come up with the final congressional measure that was eventually transmitted to the Palace for the President's signature.. **RPP**



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Editorial

Release the NEAP now

ONE of the provisions of Republic Act (RA) 9003, otherwise known as the "Ecological Solid Waste Act of 2000," directs the National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC) to publish a list of "non-environmentally acceptable products" (NEAP) and update it on an annual basis, in order to prevent the manufacture, import, and use of products and materials that are harmful to the environment.

Twenty-one years have passed since RA 9003 took effect, and the country is still waiting for the first installment of this list. This is negligent mismanagement that verges on being criminal, as the NEAP is a clear requirement of the law.

The NSWMC is a multi-agency body created by RA 9003 to be the chief implementer of the Solid Waste Act. It is chaired by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and most of the work of the commission is handled by the DENR's Solid Waste Management Division (SWMD). The purpose of the NEAP is actually quite practical, as it gives the NSWMC the authority to impose bans on harmful products without the need to pass a new law each time the DENR makes a determination that something needs to be added to the list.

Of course, it can only work if the DENR and NSWMC carry out their mandate as the law intended. What they have done instead is to build a record of 20 years of half-hearted actions and feeble excuses that should shame every official responsible for it during that time.

Actually, check that: It's only 15 years; it took the NSWMC until 2006 to adopt a resolution to form a technical working committee to develop guidelines for determining what products should be placed on the NEAP list.

It took another three years for those guidelines to be completed, an additional six years for a study on life cycle analysis, a key tool for assessing potentially harmful products to be accepted, and a further six years for any other meaningful action to be taken. That most recent action, in February 2021, was to adopt a resolution stating that plastic straws and coffee stirrers should be added to the NEAP list.

Twenty-one years have passed since the Ecological Solid Waste Act took effect, and the country is still waiting for the first installment of the list of 'non-environmentally acceptable products.' This is negligent mismanagement that verges on being criminal.



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In August last year, the DENR issued a letter to the NSWMC ordering the release of the NEAP list, but at the same, also directing the NSWMC and SWMD to "begin drafting" the NEAP guidelines. That suggested the list was nowhere near ready for implementation, which certainly seems to have been confirmed by the fact that, a year later, no list has appeared, even though at the time (according to news reports dated Aug. 12, 2021) then environment undersecretary Benny Antiporda said he expected the NEAP list to be released "in about a week."

Concerned environmental groups have understandably lost patience with the DENR and NSWMC. In recent comments to *The Manila Times*, lawyer Gloria Estenzo Ramos, the vice president of Oceana Philippines, said: "There is an absolute necessity to stop single-use plastic at source — from manufacture, production, importation and distribution — through the full implementation of RA 9003. Oceana and our partners from various sectors have been urging the NSWMC to perform all of its mandates under the law, including the annual listing of non-environmentally acceptable products and packaging as defined by the regulations, which includes single-use plastics. That needed action from the commission is more than 20 years overdue." In October last year, a group led by Oceana and former senator Sergio Osmeña 3rd filed a petition before the Supreme Court for a writ of kalikasan to compel the NSWMC to abide by the law and release the NEAP list.

We wholeheartedly support that initiative, but it shouldn't have to come to that; Supreme Court intervention to force agencies to do the jobs they are mandated by law to do is a terribly inefficient way to manage a country. Recently appointed Environment Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga can and should make good use of her new authority, and order the immediate release of the long and unnecessarily delayed NEAP list.



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SMC completes Tullahan River cleaning project

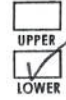
SAN Miguel Corporation (SMC) has officially completed its P1-billion Tullahan River cleanup project, which it started in 2020 together with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in support of the government's flood mitigation efforts and the rehabilitation of the Manila Bay.

SMC president and CEO Ramon S. Ang said that on its last day of operations at the Tullahan River, SMC's cleanup teams extracted 1,342 tons of solid wastes, bringing the total for the more-than-two-year run of the project to 1.12 million tons of waste removed.

"We are happy to report that in just a little over two years, we've accomplished our primary objectives: to remove accumulated silt and solid wastes from the river bed, as well as deepen and widen it to increase its water holding capacity to reduce severe flooding," Ang said.



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San Miguel completes Tullahan River cleanup

By DANESSA RIVERA

Diversified conglomerate San Miguel Corp. (SMC) has completed its P1-billion Tullahan River cleanup project, with 1.12 million tons of wastes removed during the over two-year duration of the project.

SMC president and CEO Ramon Ang said in a statement the company extracted 1,342 tons of solid waste on the last day of the cleanup operation.

"We are happy to report that in just a little over two years, we've accomplished our primary objectives: to remove accumulated silt and solid wastes from the

river bed, as well as deepen and widen it to increase its water holding capacity to reduce severe flooding," Ang said.

The project was launched in 2020 with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in support of government's flood mitigation efforts and the rehabilitation of the Manila Bay.

With the completion of the Tullahan cleanup project, SMC also marked the first year of its P2-billion cleanup initiative for the Pasig River – also a major tributary to the Manila Bay.

As of Aug. 13, the company had removed some 510,760 metric tons of silt and waste from the polluted Pasig river, which continues to be a dumping site for untreated wastewater and solid wastes coming from multiple cities in Metro Manila.

The Tullahan cleanup project – which is aligned with SMC's push towards greater sustainability and is part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives – immediately benefits flood-prone cities along the Tullahan river, including Navotas, Malabon, Valenzuela, and Caloocan.

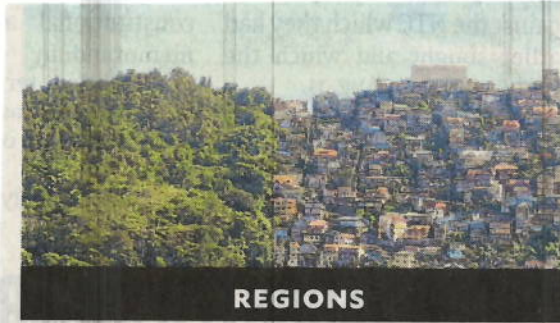
It complements the government's pro-

gram to install pumping stations and build river walls along the Tullahan.

In accordance with the dredging plan prepared by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) for the initiative, the Tullahan River rehabilitation effort covered a total of 11 kilometers, starting at the Manila Bay in Navotas City, to the section near the North Luzon Expressway in Caloocan City.

"I'm proud that our river rehabilitation teams were able breach the one-million ton target for the Tullahan in just over two years, despite pandemic restrictions. We owe it to the support of the DENR and local governments, as well as the dedicated work of our dredging teams. Through their efforts and with the right equipment, we were able to overcome the challenges of completing this important project amidst the pandemic," Ang added.

According to Ang, stakeholders can build on what had collectively been achieved at the Tullahan River with a holistic approach that will involve not just the regular removal of wastes, but also efforts to ensure that no wastes or untreated water are dumped into the river in the future.



REGIONS

Baguio takes steps to save pine trees

Three proposed ordinances seeking to protect the pine tree, which has become a symbol of Baguio City, have received the full support of barangay leaders, including one draft measure that calls for a 5-year moratorium on tree cutting. According to the latest inventory by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, there are about 500,000 Benguet pines left in the summer capital. —STORY BY VINCENT CABREZA

AB

INCLUDING 5-YEAR CUTTING MORATORIUM

BAGUIO VILLAGE CHIEFS BACK PINE TREE PROTECTION MEASURES

BAGUIO CITY—Village leaders here supported the three proposed ordinances that would protect the city's remaining pine trees, including a five-year moratorium on tree cutting.

Lagasca and other village leaders, in a consultation on Thursday, also reviewed a second pending measure that classifies all pine trees as heritage properties, and a third proposed ordinance that would spare existing and future urban forests, green belts and tree parks from development.

These proposed ordinances would change the city's 10-year

comprehensive land use plan due for review and amendment in 2023, said Councilor Betty Lourdes Tabanda, chair of the committee on health and ecology, who led the consultation.

However, some village leaders were concerned that these measures, while necessary, could "delay progress" in their territories if it obstructed ongoing building projects.

Ramon Tagle, Baguio chair of the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders Association, and other local developers reserved their comments on the moratorium. But he expressed the

sector's support for all efforts to preserve the Benguet Pine in the summer capital.

Half a million

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) pegged the city's pine tree population at less than 500,000, or just a fifth of an estimated 2.5 million trees of various species that make up Baguio's woodlands.

The proposed five-year tree-cutting moratorium, which was sponsored by Councilors Levi Lloyd Orcales and Arthur Allad-iw and former Councilor

Joel Alangsab, is meant to arrest Baguio's receding tree line, citing an urban carrying capacity study showing that the city's population of 366,35 has breached the carrying capacity threshold for urban tree canopy, which is now 28.28 percent. The ideal tree canopy is 40 percent of Baguio's total land area.

Heritage property

Its authors pointed out the period not only involves a natural healing process for the forest but also time for the city to plan and execute a 10-year reforestation master plan.

But the village officials were yet to reach a consensus on the proposed measure that would declare all pine trees as heritage properties protected by law, or only those that are 50 years old and above, as defined by DENR.

While supportive, the leaders of villages and government agencies like the Department of Agriculture urged the council to address the impact of this measure on barangay budgets and the city's current arrangements over government reservations.

This proposal lists 15 water-

shed and forest reservations, including the 112-hectare Buyog watershed, which is being straddled by the dense residential areas of Quirino Hill.

The segregation of urban forests, watersheds and other woodlands within barangay territories could hinder ongoing negotiations to separate communities nestled within forest lands, said Councilor Leandro Yangot, chairs the committee on urban planning, land and housing and author of the heritage pine tree measure, who joined the consultation.

—VINCENT CABREZA INQ



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PS-DBM dapat buwagin, mga sangkot sa korapsyon panagutin



SEN. RISA HONTIVEROS

Kung may matindi tayong kalaban sa mga panahong ito bukod sa pandemya, ito ay korapsyon.

Korapsyon ang ugat ng kahirapan at pagkasadlak ng bansa. Imbes na mapunta sa mga serbisyo at proyektong magpapaunlad sa ating mga mamamayan, kinakamkam at pinakikinabangan lang ng iilan ang pera na sana ay para sa taumbayan. Kanser ika nga. Mabilis kumakalat at mabilis na pinapatay ang sinumang kapitan nito.

Nitong Huwebes ay nagsagawa ng pagdinig ang Blue Ribbon Committee hinggil sa mga anomalya sa pagbili ng laptop ng Department of Education na dumaan sa procurement service ng gobyerno, sa Department of Budget Management Procurement Service (PS-DBM).

Napakahalaga ng diskusyon at dapat ma-

kialam sa usapin ng overpriced laptops ng DepEd. Itong mga nagdaang araw, dahil first days of classes, nababalitaan natin sa news ang ibayong mga sakripisyo ng ating mga teacher para sa kanilang mga estudyante, para sa ating mga anak.

Sabi ng COA, 28,917 laptop ang hindi nabili dahil sa sinasabing overpricing na ito. 28,917 na mga guro at school administrator na dapat sana ay may magandang laptop na pampagaan ng kanilang trabaho.

Mariin ang panawagan ko, kasama ng iba pang mga Senador na buwagin na ang PS-DBM. Hindi ito unang beses na nasangkot ang ahensya sa usapin ng korapsyon at anomalya sa kanilang mga transaksyon.

Kung matatandaan ninyo, pinaputok natin ang mga pinrocure ng ahensya na overpriced o labis-labis na halaga ng personal protective equipment o PPEs. Bukod sa napakamahal at substandard pa ang ilan sa mga ito. Magtataka ka talaga dahil hinayaan ang Pharmally na maging contractor gayong kuwestyonable ang kredibilidad nito bilang isang kompanya. Sino ang nakinabang sa deal na ito?

At ngayon sa pag-aaral natin sa 2021 reports ng Commission on Audit, nakita na napakaraming ahensya ng gobyerno ang may 'unserved' and 'unremitted' na pondo

sa PS-DBM. Umabot pa sa P6.5B ang mga iregularidad sa mga transaksyon nito.

Nasilip ng COA ang PS-DBM dahil wala itong iprinisintang proof of purchase o non-delivery ng mga item na nagkakahalaga ng mga sumusunod: P1.696B sa Philippine National Police (PNP), P795.7M sa Department of Agrarian Reform, P704.9M sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), at P60.36M sa Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

Kasama rin sa ulat ang overpriced na mga laptop para sa Department of Education (DepEd) at pagbili ng PS-DBM ng COVID-19 items. May mga transaksyon din na hindi na-liquidate.

Kulang pa ang mga COA report niyan. Baka nga mas malaking halaga pa ang involved dito.

Maghahain tayo ng resolusyon para i-abolish o tuluyan nang buwagin ang PS-DBM at imbestigahan ang lahat ng transaksyon nito.

Kitang-kita na pugad ang PS-DBM ng inefficiency, kapabayaang sa sinumpaang tungkulin at korapsyon. Walang puwedeng magbuwag sa kanser na ito kundi ang ating sama-samang pag-aksyon at pagbabantay sa kaban ng bayan.



Most Filipinos remain worried about climate change

A NEW report titled "International Public Opinion on Climate Change, 2022" revealed that 85 percent of Filipinos were "somewhat worried" to "very worried" about climate change. Eighty-eight percent, meanwhile, believed that climate change was currently happening and 87 percent felt that it represented a "somewhat a serious threat" to a "very serious threat" in the next 20 years.

Extreme weather events, a manifestation of climate change and considered a global risk, are clear and present dangers to Filipino lives and livelihoods. The World Economic Forum, in its 2022 Global Risks Report, ranked extreme weather events as the second most severe risk on the global scale over the next 10 years.

Eight of the top 10 costliest typhoons, "Yolanda" (2013), "Odette" (2021), "Glenda" (2014), "Pablo" (2012), Ompong (2018), "Ulysses" (2020), "Rolly" (2020) and "Lando" (2015), happened in



ALL ABOUT CHOICES

LUDWIG O. FEDERIGAN

the last decade (2012-2021).

The issue of climate change, defined as "the idea that the world's average temperature has been increasing over the past 150 years, will increase more in the future, and that the world's climate will change as a result," has become personally important to Filipinos.

Eighty-two percent said the issue of climate change was personally either "very important" to "extremely important," and the majority thought it would harm them personally. Seven out of 10 Filipinos thought climate change would harm them by either "a moderate amount" or "a great deal."

Eight out of 10 Filipinos, meanwhile, thought that climate change would harm future generations by a "a moderate amount" or "a

great deal."

If the Filipinos' clamor to address climate change remains unanswered, 8 out of 10 Filipinos (79 percent) also said they "definitely" or "probably" would participate, or currently were participating, in a citizens' campaign to convince their leaders to take action to reduce climate change.

Nine out of 10 Filipinos said climate change was happening when asked the question. Only 3 percent replied otherwise. Overall, the great majority of respondents believed that climate change was happening.

Thirty-two percent of Filipinos said climate change was mostly caused by human activities, while 40 percent said that it was equally caused by human activities and natural changes.

But as only 3 out of 10 Filipinos (32 percent) said they were hearing about climate change at least once a week to once a month in their daily lives, i.e., from TV, newspapers, social media, or con-

versations with friends and family, this conveys a strong message that articulating climate change and its related issues must be a top priority. Media has a crucial role to play in bringing current realities down to the grassroots.

With climate change as an "everything issue," it should no longer be considered an environmental matter and thereby part of environmental education. It is an opportune time to consider and treat climate change education as separate from environmental education.

With a multitude of crises on the horizon, we must continue to build a nation of climate-literate Filipinos. Without a strong understanding of climate change — its science, impacts and solutions — we will fall short of efforts to respond.

The international public opinion report also revealed that the majority of Filipinos (95 percent) believed that climate change should be a government priority. Amid the

backdrop of global emergencies that has disrupted and destroyed millions of lives and livelihoods, 64 percent also believed that actions reducing climate change would improve economic growth and provide new jobs.

As we all know, in December 2015, top leaders from every country in the world met in Paris at the United Nations Climate Change Conference and negotiated and adopted a global agreement to limit global warming. The Philippine delegation was led by then-President Benigno Aquino 3rd.

In April 2017, the Instrument of Accession that ratified the Paris Agreement, signed by Aquino's successor, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, was submitted to the United Nations. Four years later, the Philippines submitted its first Nationally Determined Contribution to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change conveying an ambitious 75-percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

The International Public Opinion on Climate Change, an international survey initiated by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, in partnership with Data for Good at Meta, investigated public climate change knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, policy preferences, and behavior among Facebook users in more than 192 countries and territories. Of the 108,946 Facebook monthly active users that participated in the study, 1,246 respondents were from the Philippines. The Yale research team was supported by the MacArthur Foundation and the 11th Hour Project.

The author is the executive director of the Young Environmental Forum and a nonresident fellow of the Stratbase ADR Institute. He completed his climate change and development course at the University of East Anglia and an executive program on sustainability leadership at Yale University. You can email him at ludwig.federigan@gmail.com.

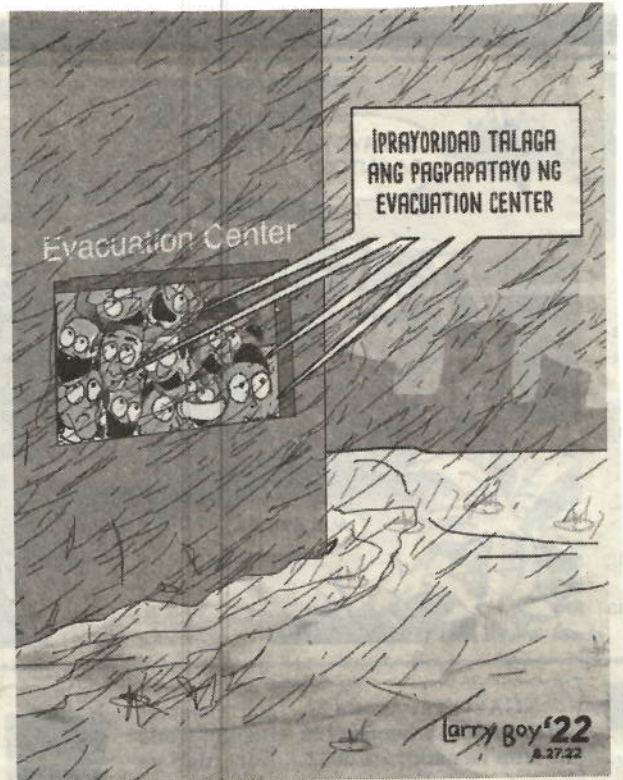


Editorial

Siksikan na naman sa evacuation centers

MARAMING napinsala ang Bagyong Florita sa Northern at Central Luzon noong Martes. Ayon sa National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) mahigit 200 pamilya ang naapektuhan at dinala sa evacuation centers. Pinakamarami ang na-evacuate sa Cordillera Administrative Region na binubuo ng 110 pamilya samantalang 70 pamilya naman sa Region 2. Ayon sa NDRMMC, naging maayos ang kalagayan ng evacuees sapagkat agad na kumilos ang Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). Binigyan sila ng pagkain, tubig, gamot, kumot, at iba pang pangangailangan habang nasa evacuation centers.

Ipinag-utos naman ni President Ferdinand Marcos



Jr. sa Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) na tukuyin ang mga available na evacuation centers. Siguruhin na maging maayos ang kalagayan ng evacuees.

Taun-taon, 20 bagyo ang tumatama sa bansa at karamihan sa mga ito ay malalakas at sumisira ng mga bahay. Bukod sa bagyo, pumuputok din ang mga bulkan at nagkakaroon din nang malalakas na lindol.

Sa kabila nang mga nangyayaring ito, walang nakahandang evacuation centers ang pamahalaan. Kapag dumating ang delubyo, walang pagdalhan sa mga tao. Karaniwang sa mga school dinadala kaya apektado rin ang pag-aaral ng mga bata. Inaabot nang ilang araw, minsan ay isang buwan ang inilalagi ng evacuees kaya hindi magamit ang mga school. Malaking problema na kapag natapos nang gamitin ang mga school bilang evacuation centers, marumi na ang mga classroom at ang ilan ay mga sira-sira na. Paano pa kung magtagal ng ilang buwan ang evacuees?

Nararapat nang magtayo ang pamahalaan nang maayos na evacuation centers sa bawat bayan para mayroong pagdadalhan sa mga biktima ng kalamidad. Kailangan ay matibay ang evacuation centers at kumpleto ito sa pangangailangan. Tuunan sana ito ng pansin sapagkat ang bansa ay laging nakaharap sa maraming kalamidad. Ang kaligtasan ng mamamayan ang nararapat maging prayoridad. Sikaping magtayo sa bawat bayan nang maayos at matibay na evacuation centers.



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STARGAZER
BERNIE V. LOPEZ

Mount Banahaw: Sacred mountain

locally as *contra* ("against" in Spanish). So that was the end of that. We went back to the tricky trek going down. It was harder to go down than to climb up the mountain.

Back in Dolores, over bottles of Siok Tong, a powerful Chinese medicinal herbal wine, we encountered some Rizalistas who consider Jose Rizal to be the messiah. We tried to engage them into a biblical debate, but they spoke a deep ancient form of Tagalog we had never heard before. They had a deep understanding of the Bible, quoting from it casually.

A moratorium was imposed on the Dolores and Banahaw trails in March 2004 up to February 2015, 12 long years, because of the tons of garbage that had accumulated through the years

In Dolores, we met an elderly American considered to be "mad" by local residents. He said he used to walk often in the rainforests of Banahaw. One day, he saw an old woman, who suddenly vanished behind a giant balete tree.

For months, he took regular hikes in the rainforest, looking for the woman. Finally, after three months, there she was, staring him in the face. She taught him how to levitate, the ability to use one's mind to lift one's self off the ground. The woman said

"The woman said she came from a twin planet of Earth in the Andromeda galaxy. She and others of her kind with extreme mental powers traveled through a time tunnel.

Mount Banahaw in Southern Luzon is called a "holy mountain," or *bundok dambana* (altar mountain); it is replete with folk legends. It is a dormant volcano, rising 2,170 meters above sea level, with a deep crater hosting the legendary rivers of milk (limestone) and

blood (red iron-rich soil).

I visited Mount Banahaw with a friend during one Holy Week in the late 1980s. At that time, it was teeming with thousands of pilgrims and mountain climbers. We took the most frequented of four trails to the crater, full of *puestos* or holy sites, from Barangay Kinabuhayan in the town of Dolores.

Pilgrim sites we visited included two caves with small altars, where we said quick prayers, and two mini waterfalls, the first emanating from "sacred springs" with reputed holy healing waters, according to legends. We took a quick shower in the icy waters. Folklore said that that was a form of "baptism," which protected pilgrims from all kinds of dangers while on the mountain. From the start, I had an eerie feeling of spiritual awareness of the sacred mountain.

From atop the rim of the deep crater, we viewed the rivers of milk and blood. We were told we were lucky because seldom did the crater clear up of a semi-permanent mist to reveal the twin rivers. One had to use ropes for the dangerous trek down the crater. We opted to stay at the rim. Let the mountain climbers do that.

It was Good Friday. At the crater, a small crowd gathered around a woman who was supposed to be nailed to a makeshift wooden cross in celebration of the crucifixion of our Lord. I readied my camera for the precious footage. But alas, the woman backed out at the last minute, just as the first nail was about to be hammered into her hand. She said there was someone in the crowd opposing her psyche, called

from thousands of pilgrims and mountain climbers. To date, many sections of Banahaw are still closed to the public, which is actually located in a protected area, the Mounts Banahaw-San Cristobal Protected Landscape. If the Department of Environment and Natural Resources imposed a clean-up protocol to tourists passing a checkpoint to be given flyers on how to clean up after themselves, and to warn of heavy fines from mountain rangers, the moratorium could have been avoided.

she came from a twin planet of Earth in the Andromeda galaxy. She and others of her kind with extreme mental powers traveled through a time tunnel that split up, ending in Mt. Banahaw and Mt. Pinatubo. That is why, she said, there are many faith healers today in Zambales, Pangasinan, and Quezon provinces. This was one of the many "modern legends" I encountered briefly in the mystique of this sacred mountain.

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California phasing out gas-powered vehicles in fight vs climate change

SACRAMENTO, California—California has set itself on a path Thursday to end the era of gas-powered cars, with air regulators adopting the world's most stringent rules for transitioning to zero-emission vehicles.

The move by the California Air Resources Board to have all new cars, pickup trucks and SUVs be electric or hydrogen by 2035 is likely to reshape the US auto market, which gets 10 percent of its sales from the nation's most populous state.

But such a radical transformation in what people drive will also require at least 15 times more vehicle chargers statewide, a more robust energy grid and vehicles that people of all income levels can afford.

"It's going to be very hard getting to 100 percent," said Daniel Sperling, a board member and founding director of the Institute of Transportation Studies at the University of California, Davis. "You can't just wave your wand, you can't just adopt a regulation—people actually have to buy them and use them."

Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom told state regulators two years ago to adopt a ban on gas-powered cars by 2035, one piece of California's aggressive suite of policies designed to reduce pollution and fight climate change. If the policy works as designed, California would cut emissions from vehicles in half by 2040.

Other states are expected to follow, further accelerating the production of zero-emissions vehicles.

Washington state and Massachusetts already have said they will follow California's lead and many more are likely to—New York and Pennsylvania are among 17 states that have adopted some or all of California's tailpipe emission standards that

are stricter than federal rules. The European Parliament in June backed a plan to effectively prohibit the sale of gas and diesel cars in the 27-nation European Union by 2035, and Canada has mandated the sale of zero-emission cars by the same year.

California's policy doesn't ban cars that run on gas—after 2035 people can keep their existing cars or buy used ones, and 20 percent of sales can be plug-in hybrids that run on batteries and gas.

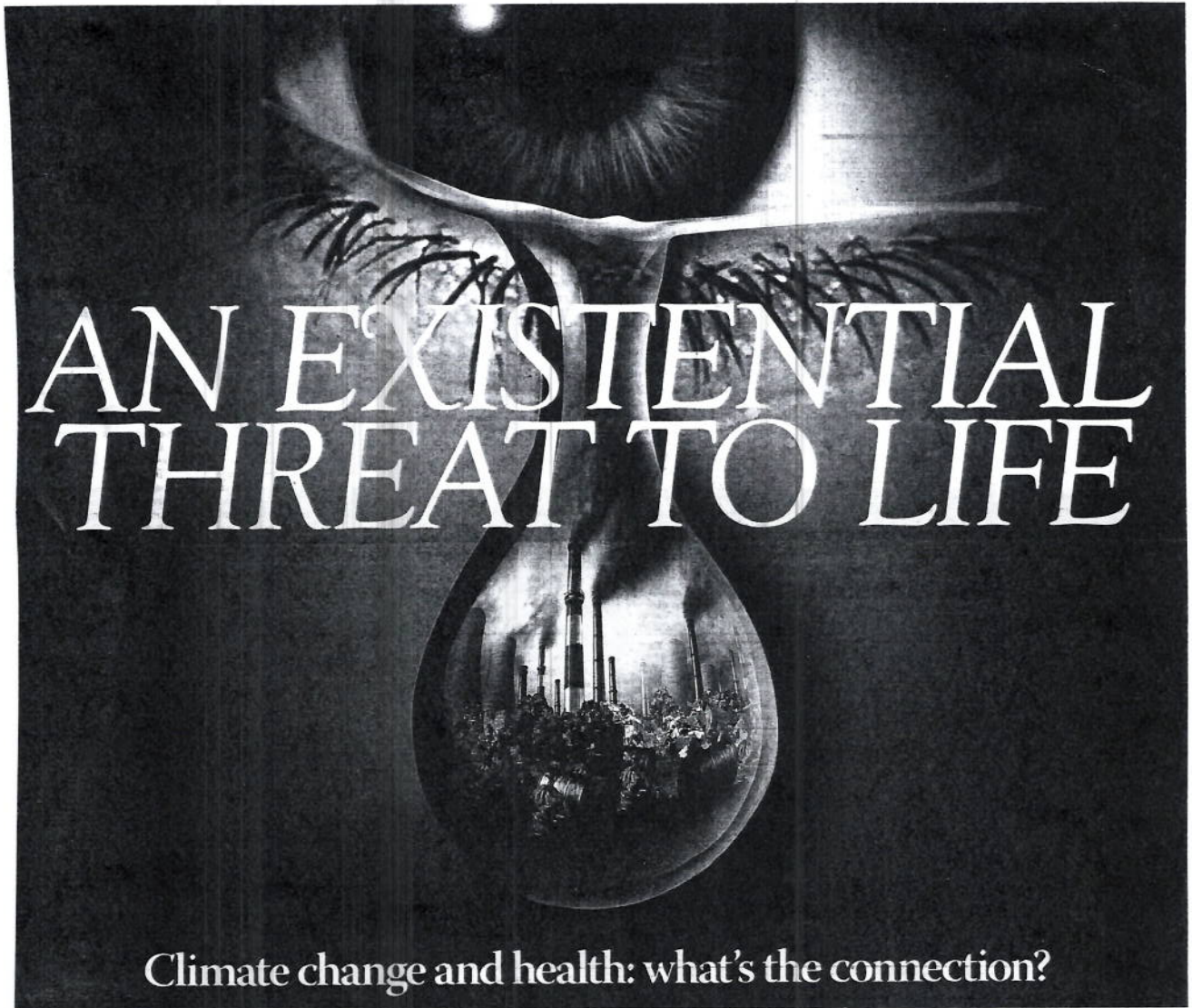
Though hydrogen is a fuel option under the new regulations, cars that run on fuel cells have made up less than 1 percent of car sales in recent years.

The switch from gas will drastically reduce emissions and air pollutants. Transportation is the single largest source of emissions in the state, accounting for about 40 percent of the state's greenhouse gas emissions. The air board is working on different regulations for motorcycles and larger trucks.

California envisions powering most of the economy with electricity, not fossil fuels by 2045. A plan released by the air board earlier this year predicts electricity demand will shoot up by 68 percent. Today, the state has about 80,000 public chargers. The California Energy Commission predicted that needs to jump to 1.2 million by 2030.

The commission says car charging will account for about 4 percent of energy by 2030 when use is highest, typically during hot summer evenings.

That's when California sometimes struggles to provide enough energy because the amount of solar power diminishes as the sun goes down. In August 2020, hundreds of thousands of people briefly lost power due to high demand that outstripped supply. **AP**



BY RORY VISCO

THERE is definitely a continuing destabilization in the world's climate system in the past several years as the world has witnessed extreme weather events that are unpredictable and have become more intense and frequent.

But it's no longer just the weather anymore. Forest fires, drought, melting of the ice caps, changes in the behavior of animals and insects and a range of disastrous situations are becoming more and more frequent.

Forty years ago, the World Health Organization (WHO) published "Our Planet, Our Earth," a report by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The report

called on nations to "address poverty, food and agriculture, water, energy, industry, human settlements, urbanization and basic services, transboundary and international issues—if the population of the world was to be healthier."

Today, WHO describes climate change as "the single biggest health threat facing humanity—and health professionals worldwide are already responding to the health harms caused by this unfolding crisis."

A brief look at climate change

THE United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change describes climate change as "a change of climate, which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods."

Dr. Carlos Gundran, who chairs both the Disaster Risk Management Subcommittee and the Department of Health Policy and Administration at UP Manila's College of Public Health, said climate change happens when burning fuel increases the level of carbon dioxide (CO₂). This, in turn, creates the "greenhouse effect," where heat from the sunlight is trapped instead of it being reflected outside the planet. "The extra trapped heat disrupts many of the interconnected systems in our environment, and this is what we feel, as we know, as climate



DR. Carlos Gundran: "It's probably best to prepare how the country will effectively and efficiently respond to these [extreme climate] events. I believe this is where we should put more focus on." CPH,UPM,EDU,PH

change," Dr. Gundran said in his talk at the recent "Stop Covid Deaths" webinar "Climate Change and Health: Bakit Natin Kailangan Alamin," organized by the University of the Philippines and UP Manila NIH National Telehealth Center in cooperation with UP Philippine General Hospital.

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An existential threat to life

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Effects of climate change

SOME of the known effects of climate change, according to Dr. Gundran, include extreme temperatures, where increased levels of temperature in the atmosphere and oceans related to climate change can cause changes in wind direction, moisture content in the air, and heat circulation patterns in the air, including underwater in the oceans.

"These changes cause shifts in extreme weather events, including extreme heat events such as droughts. There are also deep-freeze situations so it's not just very hot but also very cold temperature," he said.

There are also extreme events such as natural disasters that have an even bigger impact and damage caused on the environment, like more frequent and intense rains (remember Ondoy, which dumped an unusual amount of rain for a short period of time), more intense hurricane rainfall, plus rising of sea level where extreme weather events increase chances of storm surges.

"Extreme events also alter global rainfall patterns due to changes in wind directions. Example is the Mindanao area, which is also experiencing typhoons, unlike before," Gundran pointed out.

Climate change also affects air quality, where air is becoming less healthy to breathe due to harmful emissions in the air, where higher temperatures lead to increase in pathogens and other harmful air

pollutants. Also, the high- and low-temperature extremes and rain patterns can also affect the distribution, seasonality and prevalence of vector-borne diseases such as dengue, malaria, chikungunya, Japanese encephalitis, or leptospirosis and can affect disease outbreaks where pathogens can be carried to humans.

More water-borne diseases are also expected due to climate change that can affect marine and freshwater food sources and increase people's exposure to water-borne contaminants. Climate change is also very likely to affect global, regional and local food security—temperatures and increased rains can increase pathogen load, rising CO₂ can affect foods' nutritional content, and warmer temperatures equate to more food spoilage, and can even disrupt distribution.

Finally, climate change can affect mental health, where extreme weather events, climate-induced illnesses, injury and deaths, damage to home and livelihood can cause mental stress. "Exposure to these can affect mental stability."

Climate change's effects on health

GUNDRAN cited a variety of effects, such as increased hospital and/or emergency room visits due to heat-related illnesses, especially among the elderly and the young, people working outdoors, and the economically disadvantaged during extreme temperatures.

Extreme natural disasters can cause death, injury or illness such as during earthquakes, worsen

underlying medical conditions (when hospitals are inaccessible), affect mental health, and access to healthcare and emergency services is disrupted. "Most likely, even the responders like ambulances or emergency medical teams themselves were affected," he said.

The effects of climate change on air quality can also be dangerous for those who suffer from respiratory disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD), those with lung cancer or cardiovascular diseases, those with acute symptoms and high allergic sensitivity, even loss in school or work days. Climate change can increase water-borne diseases like increase in the level of toxins that create harmful algae, cholera, diarrhea and intestinal diseases, wound, eye and ear infections, etc.

"As regards mental health, climate change can cause serious mental health consequences such as anxiety, depression [from] the deaths that occur during disasters, chronic psychological dysfunction, while people with mental illness are at a higher risk for poor physical and mental health due to extreme heat," Dr. Gundran pointed out.

So, what should the Philippines be preparing for? According to Gundran, since the country experiences severe typhoons and more intense rain levels and flooding, this is what the country should prepare for. "It's probably best to prepare how the country will effectively and efficiently respond to these events. I believe this is where we should put more focus on."



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ASIA'S LARGEST MALL PROPERTY EMPLOYS SOLAR PANELS FOR CLEAN ENERGY

ALL MALLS HAVE BEEN DESIGNED TO BE BOTH ENERGY AND WATER EFFICIENT. IT USES LED LIGHTING SYSTEMS WHICH HAS 50 PERCENT ENERGY SAVINGS, AND SENSOR-ACTIVATED ESCALATORS THAT SAVE ANOTHER 30 PERCENT. THE SKYLIGHTS, GREEN WALLS AND WINDOWS ALSO MAKE FULL USE OF NATURAL LIGHT. IT IS ALSO THE FIRST MALL CHAIN IN THE COUNTRY TO INSTALL E-VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS.

SM Supermalls has consistently made green milestones by implementing various measures to be more energy-efficient and make better use of natural resources in order to protect the environment.

Here are some of the sustainable practices encouraged by the country's top chain of shopping mall chains, which can be emulated on a smaller scale by households and small to medium businesses.

1 Switch to solar panels. SM Supermalls utilizes solar energy as part of its commitment to sustainability. Mall of Asia was the first Philippine mall to use rooftop solar decks. Now, these are used in 10 of SM malls, with plans to install 50 more over the

next few years.

The mall chain is sourcing around 68 percent of its energy from renewable sources, which has helped reduce energy consumption by 28 percent, and carbon emissions by 31 percent.

Home solar panels are now becoming more affordable, and with the money one can save on electricity bills, these eventually pay for themselves. Start with small changes like switching to outdoor solar lights or solar water heaters.

2 Employ energy-efficient appliances. If you can't switch to solar yet, you can look for appliances that use less electricity. You can get inverter air conditioners or refrigerators and check any product's energy-efficiency factor number, which is usually on a yellow sticker. You can also get a smart plug, which can be programmed to turn off an appliance when it is on standby.

All malls have been designed to be both energy and water efficient. It uses LED lighting systems which saves energy by 50 percent, and sensor-activated escalators that save another 30 percent. The skylights, green walls and windows also make full use of natural light. SM is also the first mall chain in the country to install e-Vehicle charging stations.



SM Supermalls' Trash to Cash Recycling Market provides a convenient way for mallgoers to turn their recyclable waste into cash.

3 Use less gasoline. Gasoline prices are at an all-time high, so budget-savvy Filipinos are turning to cheaper (and greener) forms of transportation, such as riding the bicycle and carpooling. Aside from saving money, biking has zero



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SM Supermalls is the first mall in the country to install e-Vehicle charging stations.

pollution and carpooling has lower carbon emissions.

SM Supermalls has long supported the use of environment-friendly transportation. It has dedicated bike lanes, hundreds of bike racks, vending machines and service repair stations. It also has produced Biker's Safety Videos and Manuals which one can be download from the SM Supermalls website.

4 Segregate trash. The malls follow a strict trash segregation program. In fact, compostable waste undergoes a conversion process. The produced compost is then distributed through various community programs.

SM Supermalls also supports the recycling efforts of the surrounding communities, with its Trash to Cash Recycling Market.

Every first Friday and Saturday of the month, you can bring your recyclables like plastic bottles, aluminum and tin cans, old papers and books, and metal cookware and kitchen items and exchange them for cash. You can also join its Plastic Waste Collection Program, and regular Electronic Waste Programs at participating SM Cyberzones.

5 Collect rainwater. Water is a valuable resource. That's why SM malls have rainwater catchments to harvest rainwater, especially in flood-prone areas, which serves the double purpose of conserving water and helping its communities to stay safe and flood-free.

When it rains, 20 SM malls can catch up to 79,257 cubic meters of rainwater, which is enough to fill 32 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

At home, collect rainwater in large barrels for gardening or cleaning the floors. There are many guides you can find online that can teach you how to save rainwater.

6 Join the SM Green Movement. All these measures are part of SM Supermalls' commitment to protecting the planet. "SM has always strived to nurture and give back to all the communities we serve. That includes creating a greener, safer environment," says Steven Tan, SM Supermalls president. "Through our programs, we also hope to make it easier for people to make eco-friendly choices in everyday life. The Green Movement is not just about what SM does within the malls, but what we can do together as a community."



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Economic managers brief House on P5.268-T nat'l budget

By DELON PORCALLA

President Marcos' economic managers briefed leaders of the House of Representatives yesterday on the proposed P5.268-trillion budget for 2023, presenting it as a springboard for economic recovery in post-pandemic times.

Members of the Develop-

ment Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC), among them Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Felipe Medalla, National Economic and Development Authority Director General Arsenio Balisacan, Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno and Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman, took

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turns in reassuring lawmakers of a "robust economy." Speaker Martin Romualdez - joined by Ako Bicol party-list Rep. Zaldy Co and Marikina City Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo, House committee on appropriations chairman and vice-chair, respectively - vowed to scrutinize the National Expenditure Program (NEP).

"We will make sure that each bit of spending will contribute to our goal of reigniting the fires of our economic forges and at least propel the country to reach economic growth at pre-pandemic levels," said Romualdez, who represents the 1st District of Leyte.

The budget season has officially started and the President's economic team is making sure that as the House begins deliberating on the NEP, it is properly briefed on macroeconomic and growth assumptions; the government's fiscal and revenue collection performance and how the budget will be financed in 2023 and over the medium-term.

Pangandaman, who chairs the DBCC, stressed that the 2023 NEP embodies the country's "agenda for prosperity."

This is aimed at attaining the headline goals of bringing down the budget deficit and debt ratio as a percentage to the national economy, as well as reducing the poverty rate.

"Our agenda for prosperity is one that ensures inclusivity, that no Filipino would be left behind; and sustainability, that our eco-

nomics progress is mindful of climate change and sustainable development goals," Pangandaman said.

"The budget is consistent with the priorities outlined by the President during his first State of the Nation Address. This budget is a springboard for the economy's full-speed recovery and meaningful

structural reform," she said.

Diokno, for his part, maintained that the economic team's proposed 2023 budget will bolster the country's bid for a strong recovery and accelerated growth.

As the economic team gave assurance that the government's fiscal policies stand on solid ground, Balisacan said he is looking forward to a "prosperous, inclusive and resilient economy."

The 2023 budget was crafted based on and in support of the administration's eight-point socioeconomic agenda and on pillars that address the immediate and pressing concerns of all Filipinos in the near and medium-term.

It is anchored on strengthening the purchasing power of Filipinos, reducing vulnerability and mitigating scarring from the pandemic, enhancing bureaucratic efficiency through digitalization, supporting local governments through full devolution, among other programs. On the part of Congress, Co said they will work "double time" to ensure that President Marcos' first full-year budget would be passed into law before the Christmas break.

"The ball is now in the hands of the committee, whatever disposition we shall take. We must act and work together to scrutinize every aspect of this budget to ensure that it is consistent with the socio-economic agenda of the President," he said in his opening remarks.

"We shall guarantee that every peso authorized in this budget is directed to address food security and inflation, reduce poverty and provide the necessary stimulus for economic transformation," Co said.

Quimbo also promised to help expedite budget deliberations and pass it the

soonest. She maintained that it is critical for lawmakers to approve a well-targeted budget that will be instrumental in paving the country's path moving forward. The proposed 2023 budget is 4.9 percent higher than the 2022 appropriation of P5.02 trillion. It is also equivalent to 22.2 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

Budget hearings

The House has set the budget hearings, starting with two of the government's revenue-generating agencies - Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office and the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. - on Aug. 30.

The Departments of Tourism and of Foreign Affairs present their spending plan the next day (Aug. 31), followed by the judiciary, led by Chief Justice Alexander Gesmundo for the Supreme Court down to the lowest courts, on Sept. 1.

The Departments of Energy and of the Interior and Local Government as well as the Energy Regulatory Commission get their proposed budgets scrutinized also on Sept. 1.

On Sept. 2, Executive Secretary Vic Rodriguez will defend the 2023 budget of the Office of the President, where officials of the Departments of Agrarian Reform and Environment and Natural Resources will also appear before the Co-led committee.



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It will be the turn of the Department of Agriculture and the National Irrigation Administration on Sept. 5, followed by the Department of Social Welfare and Development the next day.

The Departments of Justice and of Science and Technology will present their spending plans on Sept. 7, while the last agency to defend their budget will be the Department of Public Works and Highways on Sept. 16.

- With Louise Maureen Simeon



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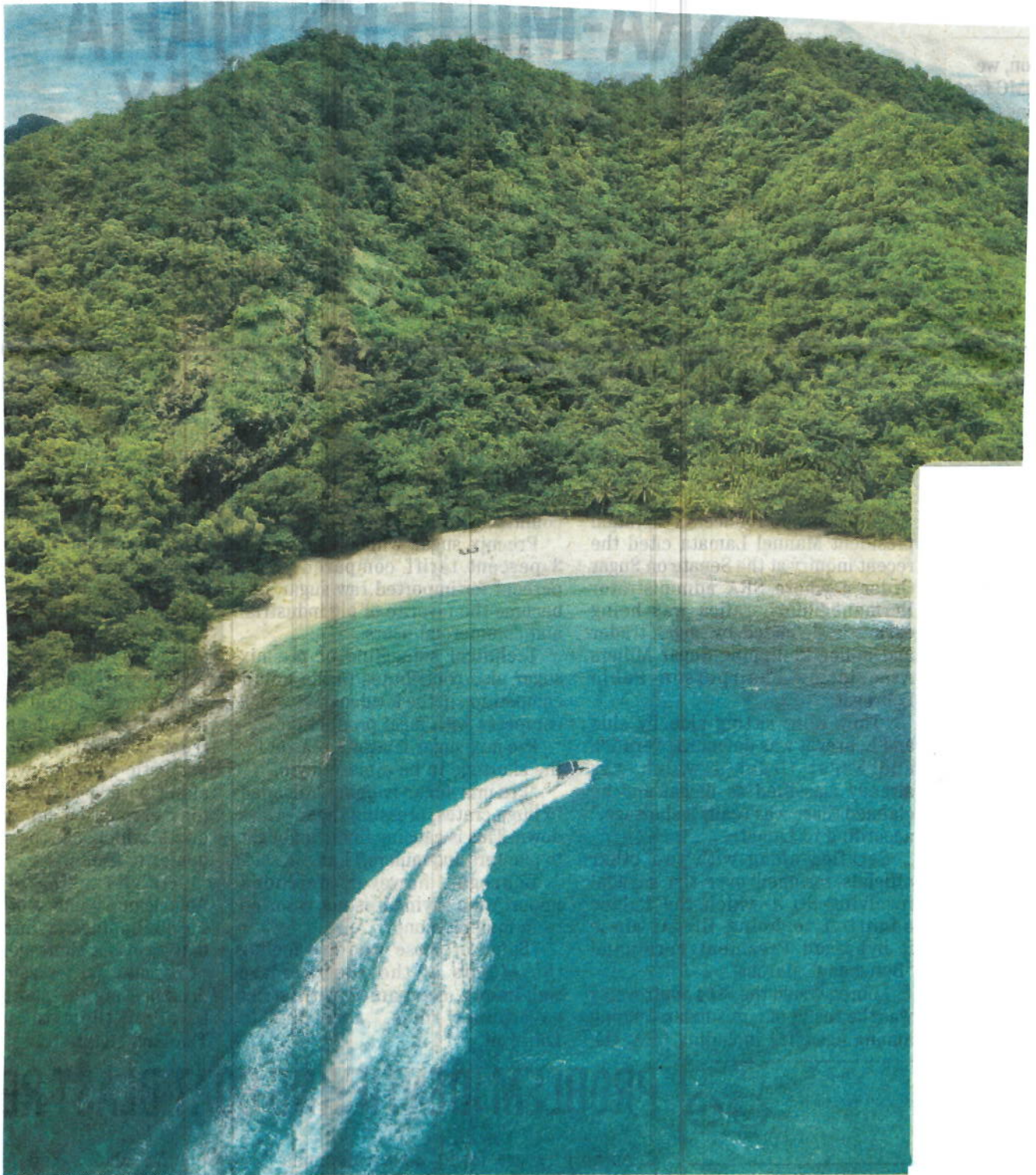
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Not-so-hidden gem Santelmo Cove in Hamilo Coast, Nasugbu, Batangas, is among the spots in the Philippines declared

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF HAMILO COAST
as a Marine Protected Area — a coastal zone

where human activity is strictly regulated to ensure its long-term conservation.



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HEY!

Recycling of juice packs earn up to P300 a day for a former jail inmate

