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# NEWS ALERTS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE





## Langun-Gobingob Cave, largest in PHL, needs sustained management like others



[BYBUSINESSMIRROR](#)

JULY 3, 2022



Inside Langun-Gobingob Cave in Samar, these flowstones, as tall as a small skyscraper, are possibly among the largest on the planet. They occasionally glitter due to calcite crystals inside. Declaring caves as protected areas are among the best ways to protect their treasures from miners, who would mine million-year old stones for profit. Photo from

The Philippines has over 3,100 known caves. Among them is the Langun-Gobingob Cave in Samar. It features 12 chambers over its 7-kilometer span, making it the king of the country's caves.

Discovered by Italian Guido Rossi in 1987, Langun-Gobingob Cave was opened to the public in 1990, a news release said.

Caves are underground chambers, usually in mountains, hills or cliffs. Generations of imaginative fear-mongers have made them the home of everything from treasure-hoarding dragons to a whip-wielding Balrog.

In reality, caves are special ecosystems which need protection, particularly from unscrupulous miners who would break apart tons of rock for a handful of precious stones.

### Unique but threatened biodiversity

Samar Island, overshadowed by more popular places like Palawan and Boracay, isn't usually considered a top tourist destination, owing to its long history as a hotbed for insurgencies and it is often visited by typhoons.

Although the Philippines's third largest island exudes rugged beauty, its real value as an ecotourism destination lies beneath the earth.



## Langun-Gobingob Cave, largest in PHL, needs sustained management like others

"Samar is unique because it is a karst landscape made primarily of limestone. Millions of years of weathering has created numerous caves and sinkholes on the island," explained Anson Tagtag, head of the Caves, Wetlands and Other Ecosystems Division of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

"Caves are special ecosystems which harbor highly evolved fauna, most of which have adapted to darkness," Tagtag said.

Birds, bats, spiders, snakes, crickets and blind cave fish thrive inside the Langun-Gobingob Cave. The lack of light confines plants to its entrances, but mushrooms and other types of fungi cling to life as discreet denizens of the dark.

"The speleothems or rocks in caves are in a very real sense 'alive'— they just grow and move at timescales difficult for people to comprehend," explained Dr. Allan Gil Fernando, a professor at the National Institute of Geological Sciences in University of the Philippines Diliman.

"The constant dripping of water, for instance, leaves minute traces of minerals like calcite. Over time these traces pile up to form hanging stalactites and their inverted kin, stalagmites. It takes about a century for a stalactite or stalagmite to grow one inch," Fernando added.

It is because of their surreal beauty that many caves are plundered.

"People used to enter the Langun-Gobingob Cave to break apart and mine stalagmites plus white calcite rocks for collectors," said Assistant Superintendent Eires Mate of the Samar Island Natural Park (SINP).

Cave guide Alvin Raffles confirmed this. "Locals used to mine the cave for Taiwanese businessmen, who paid a paltry P7 for a kilogram of rock. Balinsasayao, or swiftlet nests, were plucked out too, to be shipped to Chinese markets," he said.

The cave was finally declared a protected area in 1997. "Thank God for legal protection. Mining was effectively stopped," Mate said.

The Langun-Gobingob Cave is just one of many natural systems benefiting from the country's protected area system.

"Declaring key biodiversity sites as protected areas is one of the best ways to ensure that future generations can continue enjoying their beauty," Anabelle Plantilla, United Nations Development Programme Biodiversity Finance Initiative manager, was quoted in the news release.

"Visitors should positively support local communities but be mindful of the environmental impacts of their travels. They should, for instance, avoid taking wild plants or leaving trash in tourist sites," Plantilla pointed out.



## Langun-Gobingob Cave, largest in PHL, needs sustained management like others

### Year of the Protected Areas

Launched in May 2022, Year of the Protected Areas (YOPA) hopes to generate funds from tourists to ensure the continued management of protected areas hard-hit by Covid-19 budget cuts.

The Langun-Gobingob Cave is part of SINP, one of YOPA's six highlighted parks. The others are the Bongsanglay Natural Park in Masbate, Apo Reef Natural Park in Occidental Mindoro, Balinsasayao Twin Lakes Natural Park in Negros Oriental, Mount Hamiguitan Range Wildlife Sanctuary in Davao Oriental, and Mount Timpoong Hibok-Hibok Natural Monument in Camiguin.

The country's caves are now open for tourism, but visitors should know what not to do inside them.

"Cave tourism should be well managed and there are cave do's and don'ts," said Buddy Acenas from the GAIA Exploration Club, a Manila-based caving and exploration group.

"A comprehensive assessment should be conducted before a cave is opened for tourism. Trained guides and set trails should be used to minimize human impacts. Like so many of our fragile wilderness areas, caves must be stewarded by those visiting them," Arcenas said.

For its part, the Philippine government is doing what it can to promote responsible tourism.

"Our caves, mountains, beaches and other protected areas are now open for tourism. We invite both Filipinos and foreigners to come and visit, but to do so in an environmentally-responsible manner," said Director Natividad Bernardino of the DENR-Biodiversity Management Bureau.

"By practicing responsible and regenerative tourism in protected areas, we're helping our national parks flourish and recover from the economic blow they suffered from the Covid-19 pandemic," Bernardino added.



## Sibugay Coastal Wetlands eyed for Ramsar listing

Zamboanga Peninsula's wetland of international importance



[BYJONATHAN L. MAYUGA](#)

JULY 3, 2022



[DENR/Growth Publishing](#)

Migratory waterbirds depend on healthy, well-preserved wetlands to survive their annual migration.

Home to a variety of native and migratory birds, including waterbirds, the Sibugay Coastal Wetlands (SCW) in Zamboanga Peninsula is undeniably a wetland of international importance.

With an area of 172,007.25 hectares, this economically important ecosystem is now being pushed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for inclusion in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance.





## Sibugay Coastal Wetlands eyed for Ramsar listing



[DENR/Growth Publishing](#)

### Strong commitment

The push for the designation of the Sibugay Coastal Wetlands as a Ramsar Site demonstrates the country's strong commitment to the Ramsar Convention as well as to the Convention on Biodiversity and Convention on Migratory Species, said Michael F. de la Cruz, chief of the Sibugay Technical Services in the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (Penro), in a news release on June 6.

Besides the presence of important ecosystem-forming species like coral reefs, mangroves, seagrass and mudflats, SCW serves as a staging, roosting and foraging grounds for other equally important species like marine turtles and whale sharks.

Ramsar Sites are covered by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat, an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.

Known as the Convention on Wetlands, it is named after the city of Ramsar in Iran, where the convention was signed in 1971.

### Philippines Ramsar Sites

A member of the Ramsar Convention, the Philippines is bound to work toward the wise use of all its wetlands and designate suitable wetlands to the list of Ramsar Sites.

The country currently has eight Ramsar Sites, namely: Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary, Naujan Lake National Park, Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary, Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park, Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park, Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism



## Sibugay Coastal Wetlands eyed for Ramsar listing

Area, Negros Occidental Coastal Wetlands Conservation Area, and the Sasmuan Pampanga Coastal Wetlands

### International importance

Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim of the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) told the BusinessMirror the importance of acquiring such a distinct title as a Ramsar Site.

"We support the DENR and the Sibugay LGU [local government unit] on their nomination of the SCW as a Ramsar Site. With the area being used as a watering hole and sanctuary by migrating birds, [it] is a crucial part of the East Asia-Australasian Flyway," said Lim, a former director of the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB), when asked for her comment via Messenger on June 22.

According to Lim, a biodiversity conservation expert, the whole of the Sibugay Coastal Wetlands also has a huge potential for nature tourism and is already a source of livelihood to the people in the area.

### Key to fisheries sustainability

Keeping the coastal areas healthy is key to the sustainable food supply from fisheries, she added.

"Before the pandemic, I was able to visit the [Sibugay] wetlands, and saw the amazing flight of fruit bats at dusk from a view deck in the municipality of Siay, and was given a taste of the rich fishery resources, attributed to the wetlands as spawning and growing ground for the seafood," she recalled.

The ACB provided support to Siay for bird monitoring and to help in its enforcement before the pandemic.

"We look forward to supporting more activities related to the listing of the Sibugay Wetland Natural Reserve as a Ramsar Site," Lim pointed out.

### Ecological connectivity

Anson Tagtag, OIC division chief of the Caves, Wetlands and Other Ecosystems Division of the DENR-BMB, for his part, said wetlands all over the world are connected and are being used by migratory species during different stages of migration.

In the Philippines, Ramsar Sites are staging grounds.

"We need to preserve these habitats. Once lost, the [birds'] migration process will be interrupted," he said, referring to the destruction of the important habitats.

Tagtag said wetlands are important for the survival of various species.

"Inland and coastal wetlands cater to different groups of migratory birds. Of course, in coastal wetlands, besides migratory waterbirds or shorebirds, there are mangroves and grasses," he added.

### 'Restaurant' of migratory waterbirds

Tagtag described Sibugay Coastal Wetlands as a "restaurant" of migratory waterbirds.



## Sibugay Coastal Wetlands eyed for Ramsar listing

"Those migrating from Alaska to Australia, from October to March, many waterbirds stop by Sibugay to feed," he told the BusinessMirror via telephone interview on June 23.

Tagtag also noted that SCW is known to have mudflats and seagrasses, which are key to the survival of many coastal and marine species.

Since the Philippines is in the middle of an important migratory pathway for waterbirds, the need to protect and conserve Ramsar Sites is paramount.

"Imagine if our mudflats have been destroyed? Where will the migrating birds stop to rest and eat?" he asked.

According to Tagtag, what makes Sibugay Coastal Wetlands extra special is its vast tract of mangrove forests which serves as home to over 300,000 flying foxes, or fruit bats, whose existence could not be over-emphasized.

"These flying foxes are silent planters. They help maintain a healthy forest," he said, compared to inland wetlands.

### Ecological and economic importance

A coastal area located at the southern portion of the peninsula, the Sibugay Coastal Wetlands has a total of 5,154.74 hectares of mangroves, 3,697.15 hectares of mudflats, as well as estuarine and coastal waters, the DENR's Penro in Zamboanga Sibugay said.

The SCW stretches along a 146-kilometer coastline covering a total of nine municipalities and 63 barangays.

It plays a substantial role in the natural functioning of a river basin, or coastal system.

### Haven for migratory waterbirds

According to the Zamboanga Sibugay Penro, the wetland serves as a staging, roosting, foraging and breeding ground to various waterbirds, including migratory species.

"During the 2018 AWC [Asian Waterbird Census], 291 heads of the endangered far eastern curlew were recorded in the wetland," stated a document from the Zamboanga Sibugay Penro that was furnished to the BusinessMirror.

Proponents of the study revealed that banded, or flagged birds, were also documented in the wetland with banding sites from China, Russia, Australia and Japan.

### Home to threatened species

SCW also supports threatened species—such as marine turtles, whale sharks, sea cows and saltwater crocodiles.

The vast mudflat is also home to a variety of oysters, scallops and other mollusks.

The bay supports fishing and other marine-related livelihoods which serves as the main source of subsistence for most of the coastal barangays.





## Sibugay Coastal Wetlands eyed for Ramsar listing

In a telephone interview on June 21, Georgina L. Fernandez, chief of Conservation and Development Section/Focal-Nagao Funded Project of Penro Sibugay, said mapping of the Sibugay Coastal Wetland is ongoing to include an updated list of mangroves and mudflats.

“To date, we have documented 68 species of waterbirds, 42 are considered migratory species. And we have identified four threatened species. Eleven are considered near-threatened species,” Fernandez said.

### Opening up new opportunities

The Sibugay Coastal Wetlands will be renamed Sibugay Wetland Nature Reserve upon its inclusion on the Ramsar List when contracting parties meet in Gland, Switzerland, in December.

As such, it will undergo a more stringent management regime.

Fernandez said the title will also open opportunities for international cooperation on research, allowing the DENR and its partners to learn more about SCW.

“It will also help raise funding for conservation and protection of the site,” she added.

### Wise use of resources

For his part, Penro Chief Edgardo P. Montojo said in a news release that it is important to advocate for the wise use of the wetlands’ resources so they will be enjoyed by future generations.

“Here, the Ramsar list will play a unique role,” he said.

Currently, the DENR-Region IX is preparing the documents for the inclusion of the SCW into the list. The documents will be submitted to the DENR-BMB, the designated Ramsar National Administrative Authority, for endorsement to the Office of the DENR Secretary who will then endorse it to the Ramsar authorities.

Image credits: [DENR/Growth Publishing](#)



## Partnership steps up forest protection in Leyte town

By Elvie Roa July 2, 2022, 3:16 pm



NATURAL HABITAT. A grey heron takes flight on a mangrove forest along Carigara Bay in Leyte in this undated photo. This town's wide forest will be greener after an agreement among the government, private groups, and the academe strengthening the advocacy. *(Photo courtesy of DENR Region 8)*

CARIGARA, Leyte – This town's wide forest will be greener and its protection strengthened after an agreement among different actors from the public and private sectors, and the academe.

The town's remaining forests and wildlife are now protected and preserved following the signing of the memorandum of agreement for all the member agencies of the Multi-Sectoral Forest and Environmental Protection Committee (MFEPCC) at this town's municipal hall on Friday.

First Gen's Energy Development Corporation (EDC) is the prime mover in the mission hoping to preserve the rich lands for these to flourish.

Other MFEPCC members are the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the local government of Carigara, Philippine National Police, Armed Forces of the Philippines, Bureau of Fire Protection, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Agriculture, Perpetual Help Community Cooperative, Eastern Visayas State University, Holy Cross Parish, and people's organizations.

Based on the Global Forest Watch data, Carigara has 3,720 hectares of natural forest, extending over 66 percent of its land area in 2010.

By 2021, the municipality has already lost 906 hectares of natural forest.



## Partnership steps up forest protection in Leyte town

The Carigara Bay Wetlands has been identified as one of the seven bird sites in Eastern Visayas where diverse and numerous species of migratory birds have been documented.

The partnership will augment and support the limited manpower of the EDC and DENR-led forest protection team.

“We at DENR are grateful to all of the members of this committee who are committed and find time to be here, to help us in the protection of your remaining forest here in Carigara” said Crisostomo Badeo, Jr., chief of the Community Environment and Resources Office based in Palo, Leyte

The forest in Carigara is a part of the geothermal reservation protected by EDC, the operator of the 711-megawatt Leyte Geothermal Project, the world’s largest geothermal steam field, that straddles Ormoc City and the town of Kananga.

As a member of the MEFFPC, EDC commits to organize a village forest protection brigade for the town’s two communities- Paglaum and Caghalo - and provide financial support and insurance to the members.

The company promised to continue its support to the host communities in the area through livelihood and capacity-building activities, which include refresher training on forest laws and regulations, forest fire prevention and control.

EDC’s Leyte geothermal facility currently supplies more than 30 percent of the country’s installed geothermal capacity. (PNA)

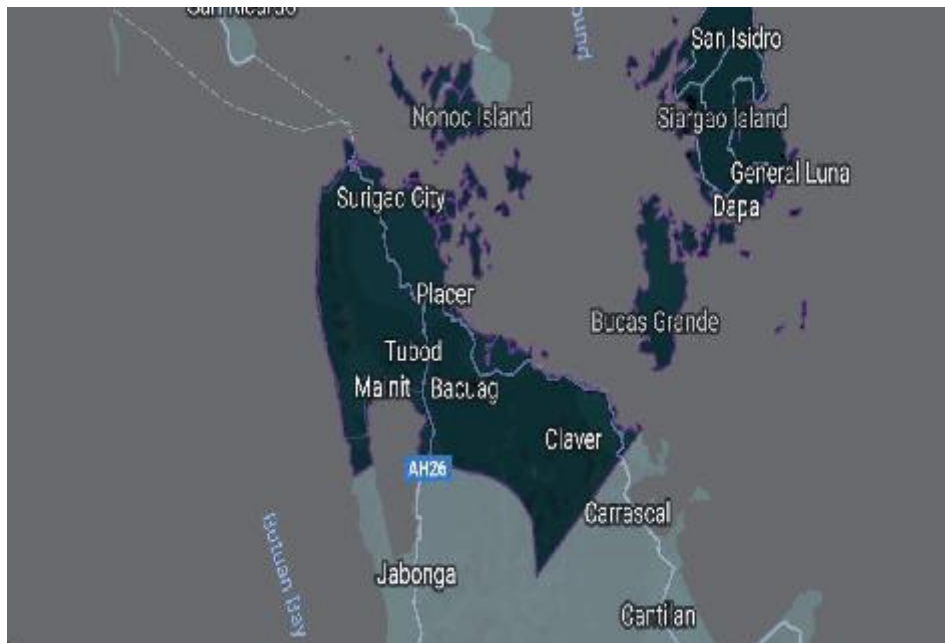




## Wildlife traders arrested in Surigao



Published 4 hours ago  
on July 3, 2022 03:45 AM  
By [TDT](#) [@tribunephil](#)



The Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) office in Surigao del Norte has reported the arrest of two alleged sellers of wild birds in an entrapment operation.

In a report on Saturday, the CIDG said personnel of the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office reported that a certain Maximino Lanugon Jr. was posting on his Facebook account the sale of Malayan Hornbills and Indian Peafowls at P25,000 each.

The social media post led to an entrapment operation carried out along the national highway in Barangay Mabini, Placer, Surigao del Norte.

The cops arrested Lanugon and his accomplice, identified as Sulpicio Bangonon, after they sold the wild birds to a police officer posing as a buyer.

Seized from their possession were seven Malayan Hornbills and two juvenile female Indian Peafowls.

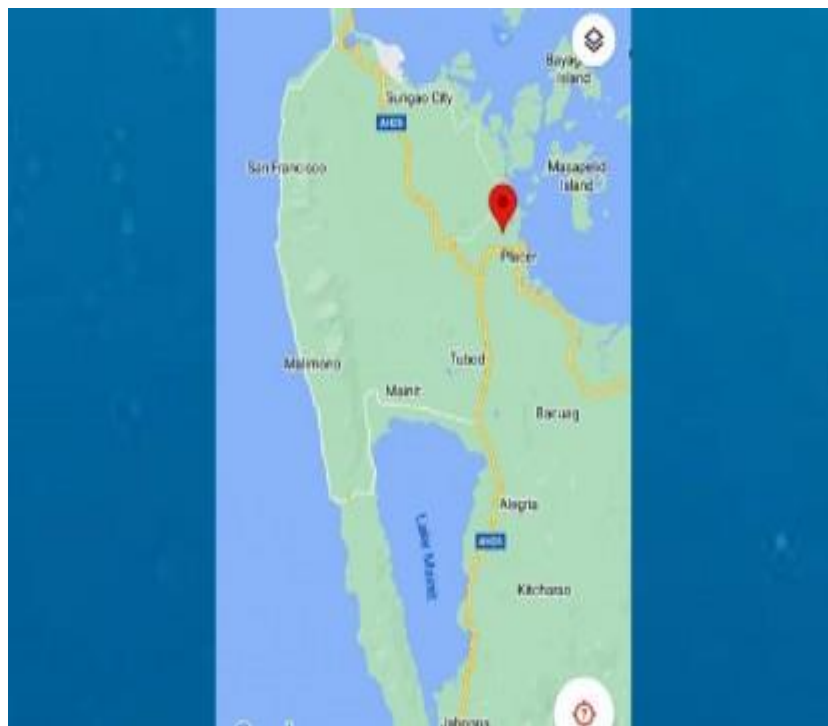
"The suspects will be charged with violating the provisions of Republic Act 9147 or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act," the CIDG said.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2022/07/03/wildlife-traders-arrested-in-surigao/>



## Sellers of wild birds intercepted in Surigao Norte

By Alexander Lopez July 2, 2022, 5:12 pm



Map of Placer, Surigao del Norte (*Google map*)

BUTUAN CITY – Police officers of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) in Surigao del Norte arrested two sellers of wild birds in an entrapment operation on Thursday afternoon.

In a report on Saturday, the CIDG said personnel of the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) have reported that a certain Maximino Lanugon Jr. was posting on his Facebook account the sale of Malayan Hornbills and Indian Peafowls at PHP25,000 each.

In an entrapment operation carried out along the national highway in Barangay Mabini, Placer, Surigao del Norte, the authorities arrested Lanugon and his accomplice, identified as Sulpicio Bangonon, after they sold the wild birds to a police officer posing as a buyer.

Seized from their possession were seven Malayan Hornbills and two juvenile female Indian Peafowls.

“The suspects will be charged (with) violating the provisions of Republic Act No. 9147 or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act,” the CIDG said. (*PNA*)



## Villar's 11 bills on marine hatcheries now laws

Published July 2, 2022, 2:36 PM

by [Mario Casayuran](#)

Senator Cynthia Villar highlighted Saturday, July 2 that 11 of her local bills seeking the establishment of multi-species marine hatcheries in various locations nationwide are now laws.

Villar, chairwoman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food, has pushed for the passage of these measures in the 18th Congress because of the high agriculture poverty incidence in the fisheries sector.

"The productivity of our marine fisheries resources has been declining because of environmental degradation and ineffective natural resources management," she stressed.

The significant reduction in the country's fish catch, Villar said, has compromised food sufficiency and income of our people.

Furthermore, the country's fisheries sector provides an inexpensive source of animal protein for the population, livelihood for over one million Filipinos, and generates foreign exchange, she explained.

"With the growing population of the Philippines, fishing is one of the major industries seen as a positive contributor to the developing economy," she added.

"Thus the need for hatcheries be established in our country which provide the seed for aquaculture and some commercial fisheries," she pointed out.

"A hatchery is where fish and shellfish are spawned, hatched and cared for. They remain at the hatchery until they are large enough to be transferred to a fish or shellfish farm or released into the wild as part of a stock enhancement program," explained the senator.

The fishing industry sectors- commercial, aquaculture and shellfish farms require a steady, predictable source of juveniles from hatcheries in order to stay in operation and provide a consistent product.

The mangrove crab or alimango farming industry delves in the trade of a high-value resource that accounts for a P5.2-billion industry, and huge demand and high value in the international market.

In 2019, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) said 860.75 million fries were produced by registered milk fish (bangus) hatcheries in the country while 19.5 million were caught in the wild. This only accounts for 24 percent of the total annual fry requirement.

To compensate, bangus fish farmers are forced to import fry to sustain annual production.

"The BFAR also said tilapia fry and fingerling production was 208.35 million in 2020 while the annual demand is 2.1 billion tilapia fingerlings," the lady senator said.





## Agencies eye planting 10 million trees by 2030

By [Janvic Mateo](#) (The Philippine Star)  
-July 3, 2022 - 12:00am



Photo from Pixabay shows seedlings.

Pixabay via jag2020

MANILA, Philippines — A multi-sectoral partnership between various government agencies and the private sector is eyeing to plant 10 million trees by 2030 through different science-based reforestation initiatives across the country.

The Climate Change Commission (CCC), Professional Regulation Commission, Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Society of Filipino Foresters Inc. (SFFI) formed the Carbon Neutral Program Convergence to help the country achieve its carbon emission reduction targets.

Among the program's initiatives is a series of forestation activities aimed at increasing the carbon sequestration capacity of country's forests.

Carbon sequestration is the process of capturing and storing carbon dioxide, which contributes to global warming.

According to SFFI, a tree that is at least three years old can sequester about 10 kilograms of carbon dioxide per year. An average individual is estimated to contribute one ton or 1,000 kilograms of carbon in his or her lifetime.



## Agencies eye planting 10 million trees by 2030

“Each person should plant and grow at least 100 trees to be carbon neutral,” the CCC said, citing a recent seminar conducted by the SFFI.

The United Nations Environment Program defined carbon neutrality as achieving close to zero carbon emissions “by balancing a measured amount of carbon released with an equivalent amount sequestered or offset.”

Climate Secretary Robert Borje stressed the importance of the partnership, noting that government agencies and professional organizations must lead in promoting and achieving carbon neutrality.

The PRC recently spearheaded a nationwide tree planting activity, where about 32,000 saplings of different tree species were planted in different areas.

Partner agencies and organizations also pledged to plant at least 1.7 million more trees this year during a session with the Million Trees Foundation Inc.



## PAGKAWASAK NG LAGUNA DE BAY

[14 hours ago](#) [jake](#)

### SAKSI NGAYON **INSIDER** ni FERNAN ANGELES



#### SAKSI NGAYON INSIDER Ni FERNAN ANGELES

HINDI kalayuan sa kabisera matatagpuan ang pinakamalaking lawa sa Pilipinas – ang Laguna de Bay na pinangangasiwaan ng Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA), isang ahensya sa ilalim ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Ang totoo, mandato ng DENR ang tiyakin at panatilihing malusog ang lawang may sukat na 91,170 ektarya ng malawak na pangisdaan ng mga mamamalakaya sa mga lalawigan ng Rizal, Laguna, katimugang bahagi ng Metro Manila.

Subalit sa nakalipas na 50 taon, ang dati-rating tahanan ng mahigit 40 uri ng isdang tabang, unti-unting nalason kasabay ng industriyalisyong mistulang kinukunsinti ng LLDA na piniling maningil na lang ng environmental user's fee (EUF) kesa supilin ang mga mapaminsalang pabrika.

Sa mga pag-aaral, lumalabas na anim na lang mula sa nasa 40 uri ng isdang tabang ang nabubuhay sa naturang lawa. Bakit kamo? Kasi nga, nalason na ng mga kemikal na itinatapon ng mga pabrika, basurang inaanod ng mga ilog patungo sa Laguna de Bay.

Wala na ang martiniko, igat, talakitok, biyang bato, kansuswit, biyang tulog, biyang puti, buan-buan, bulong; talilong, dalag, papalo, tawes, kitang, baliga, plaside, burdadong plaside, hipong tabang, at iba pang 'di ko na matandaan ang katawagan.

Kaunti na lang din ang kanduli, hito, karpa, bangus, ayungin at tilapia.

Kung mayroon mang sagana sa lawa, yun ay ang mga mapaminsalang janitor fish at basurang tangay-tangay ng agos ng mga ilog patungo sa nasabing lawa.

Batay sa mga pag-aaral ng mga dalubhasa, bumabaw na ng bongga ang lawa. Ang dating lalim na 12.5 metro, mahigit dalawang metro na lang dahil sa banlik at basura. Pati ang lapad ng Laguna de





## PAGKAWASAK NG LAGUNA DE BAY

Bay, mistulang umurong na rin bunsod ng mga kabi-kabilang reclamation projects na isinagawa ng mga pribadong kumpanyang hanap ay pinakamalapit na tapunan ng kanilang industrial wastes.

Bigla kong naalala ang isang dating LLDA general manager – si Atty. Joey Mendoza na minsang nagsabing hindi na maiiwasan ang tuluyang pagkawasak ng lawa dahil sa mekanismong EUF na nagbibigay pahintulot sa mga industriyang lasunin ang naturang lawa, kapalit ng kitang ginagamit ng naturang ahensya sa kanilang araw-araw na operasyon, bonggang sahod, bonus at allowances ng mga opisyal, ang magarbong opisina, at mga programang wala namang magandang dulot sa lawa.

Kailangan pa ba gumastos ng gobyerno para lang wasakin ang lawa? Pwede naman yatang buwagin na lang yan. Kung pwede lang naman.

(Si Fernan Angeles ay editor-at-large ng SAKSI Ngayon)

Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/107427980954216/posts/pfbid0UZ3YrDcZ4kg72BLck6X7uA9VhJiySCEhCT753ZjsziYikoSy1UHWgocGdEmLjAKKI/?app=fbl>



## A quarry-free Masungi and Upper Marikina Watershed



By [Ludwig Federigan](#)

July 2, 2022

Second of two parts

LIKE any other protected landscape in the country, the Masungi Georeserve and the Upper Marikina Watershed are not free from encroachment and destructive activities.

A total of 1,343 hectares of the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape, Unnamed National Park and the [Masungi Strict Nature Reserve](#) and Wildlife Sanctuary were discovered to be under three mineral production sharing agreements (MPSAs) despite being protected by law and official mining and mineral exploration policies.

Presidential Proclamation 1636 signed by then-President [Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr.](#) on April 18, 1977, declared a certain parcel of land situated in the provinces of Bulacan, Rizal, Laguna and Quezon as a national park, wildlife sanctuary and game preserve.

[Department of Environment and Natural Resources](#) (DENR) Department Administrative Order (DAO) 33, signed by then-Secretary [Angel Alcalá](#) on May 10, 1993, declared the Masungi Rock and its vicinity as a strict nature reserve and wildlife sanctuary. DAO 33 declared the area "closed to mining location, exploration, development and exploitation, and other activities which might adversely affect the habitat and the ecological balance in the area."

Presidential Proclamation 296, signed by then-President Benigno Aquino 3rd on Nov. 24, 2011, declared the Marikina Watershed Reservation in Antipolo and the municipalities of Baras, Rodriguez, San Mateo and Tanay, all in the province of Rizal, as a protected landscape pursuant to [Republic Act](#) (RA) 7586 or the "[National Integrated Protected Area System](#)" (NIPAS) Act of 1992. The area was named the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape.

RA 11038 or the "Expanded National Integrated Protected Area [System Act](#) of 2018" amended RA 7586 that included "undertaking mineral exploration and extraction" and "engaging in commercial and large-scale quarrying" within the protected area as prohibited acts.

A quarry is a place where rocks, sand or minerals are extracted from the surface of the Earth. It is also called an open-pit mine because it is open to the Earth's surface. Quarrying results in irreversible damage to the soil and plants and forces animals out of the area. Aside from the negative impacts to the ecosystem, quarrying also increases the risk of flooding, landslides, water loss and biodiversity loss.

Based on the data from the DENR's Mines and [Geoscience Bureau](#), three companies — [Rapid City Realty](#) and [Development Corp.](#), [Quarry Rock Group Inc.](#) and [Quimson Limestone Inc.](#) — received the questionable MPSAs. Two years ago, in March 2020, then-Environment Secretary [Roy Cimatu](#) took out the fences installed by Rapid City Realty and "vowed to close down the quarry and cancel the mineral production sharing agreements issued in the protected area and reforestation site."



## A quarry-free Masungi and Upper Marikina Watershed

In November 2020, due to the flooding caused by Typhoon "[Ulysses](#)," former Rizal governor [Rebecca](#) Ynares issued a memorandum ordering a stoppage on all quarrying and mining operations and related activities within the province. The same issuance strongly urged the DENR to immediately stop all mining agreements that it granted, including all crushing plant operations that it was authorized to operate.

In February 2021, national scientist and former Environment secretary Alcala wrote a letter to Cimatu urging the latter for the "immediate cancellation of MPSAs in Masungi of Rapid City, Quarry Rock and Quimson Limestone."

In March 2021, the [Upper Marikina Watershed Coalition](#) with over 80 signatory organizations (as of July 2021) called on the government to make a quarry-free Upper Marikina Watershed.

On April 21, 2021, the MGB gave show-cause orders to the MPSA holders to explain why their contracts should not be canceled as there were gross violations found constituting breach in their contracts, the [Philippine Mining Act](#), and implementing rules and regulations. Unfortunately, the MPSAs have not yet been canceled.

Three months ago, in April 2022, concerned leaders, experts and citizens published a joint letter to then-President [Rodrigo Roa Duterte](#) and acting Environment Secretary [Jim Sampulna](#) to put conservation first in Masungi and the Upper Marikina Watershed by immediately cancelling the MPSAs.

In the joint letter, it cited that "in the period of 2014 to 2018, the [Manila Observatory](#) found a persistent decline in the tree-covered area of the Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape despite its most recent proclamation as a protected area in 2011. Independent scientific studies estimate the remaining forest cover of the Upper Marikina Watershed to be 19.4 percent in 2006 and only 11 percent in 2021. This dire situation could significantly worsen the extent of flooding in low-lying reaches of the Upper Marikina Watershed, including the cities and communities of Metro Manila and Rizal."

On April 26, 2022, the Palace, through the [Office of the Presidential Spokesman](#), ordered the DENR to investigate illegal activities within Masungi.

A few days ago, Pasig Mayor [Vico Sotto](#), together with Marikina Mayor [Marcelino Teodoro](#), Muntinlupa Mayor [Jaime Fresnedi](#) and Angono Vice Mayor [Gerardo Calderon](#), added their voices and urged the DENR to cancel three large-scale quarrying permits in the Upper Marikina Watershed, citing possible widespread flooding and landslides.

In a joint statement, they warned of "disastrous floods and landslides" accelerated by "unlawful and misplaced quarrying, unscrupulous resort constructions, and other harmful activities that level mountains, obstruct waterways and vanish forests."

The action must be bold and immediate — the MPSAs must be canceled.

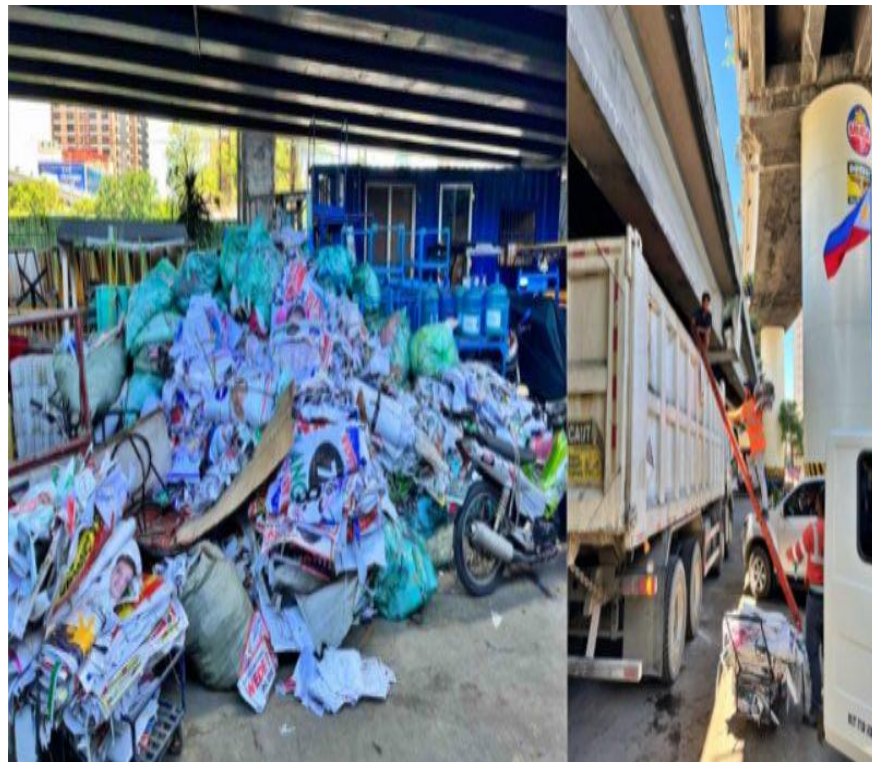
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## CEMEX supports MMDA on waste management of election campaign materials

 [BYBMPLUS](#)

JULY 2, 2022



CEMEX Philippines supports MMDA on the waste management of election campaign materials.

The May 2022 national and local elections in the Philippines left tons of election posters and banners across the country with no more use, and left undisposed may end up in waterways or fill more space in landfills.

In line with global CEMEX's commitment to reduce carbon footprint every step of the way, CEMEX Philippines will co-process these election-related materials in its Solid Cement Plant in Antipolo City. The Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) will consolidate these materials such as tarpaulin, banners, and posters all over the metro.

"Working with external partners further supports the pillars of CEMEX's Future in Action agenda focused on developing lower-carbon products, solutions, and processes and become a net-zero CO2 company," Luis Franco, CEMEX Philippines President said.

"Efforts such as this prevent wastes from ending in landfills and waterways, and by co-processing helps lessen dependence of fossil fuels through the use of alternative energy sources," Franco added.

An initial 3,000 kgs of discarded election campaign materials were collected by CEMEX's haulers from the MMDA site located in EDSA-Ortigas in Quezon City. These materials go through pre-treatment process before going to the plant's co-processing facility.





## CEMEX supports MMDA on waste management of election campaign materials

Co-processing is a proven sustainable waste disposal solution recognized by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. It involves the use of a cement kiln, a furnace continuously operating at extremely hot temperatures of around 1,500 degrees Celsius that guarantees the complete breakdown of waste and toxic substances, ensuring that no residual waste materials are created. Co-processing effectively reduces wastes being dumped on landfills and water bodies which is in line with the company's commitment on sustainability and environmental management.



## PH, UAE agree to work on climate change, agricultural cooperation

Published July 2, 2022, 10:42 PM

[by Joseph Pedrajas](#)

The Philippines and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have forged a partnership that aims to curb climate change and boost the two countries' agricultural cooperation under the administration of President Marcos, who will temporarily head the Agriculture Department.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said the two countries agreed to work together after Philippine Ambassador to UAE Hjayceelyn Quintana, and UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment Usec. Noora Karam signed a Memorandum of Understanding on June 27.



Department of Foreign Affairs

Their aim, said Quintana, was to put the two countries' "engagement in this area of cooperation at a higher level," considering that we "grapple with the effects of climate change and international conflicts on our food security."

According to the diplomat, the Philippines, as one of the countries affected by climate change, sees the partnership "as timely and relevant as it paves the way for a Joint Committee where officials of the Philippines and the UAE will set directions for cooperation."

Particularly, the two countries will cooperate in soil science and management, biotechnology, post-harvest, agriculture research and development, agri-innovation, protected agriculture technology, irrigation, and water resources.

The DFA said the memorandum would even provide a "strong framework" for the Marcos administration to work with UAE as a partner in the Middle East for agricultural innovation, especially as he will temporarily take charge of the Department of Agriculture.



## PH, UAE agree to work on climate change, agricultural cooperation

"It will build upon complementarities between the Philippines and the UAE, each having different climatic conditions and equipped with unique and specific areas of specialization that can be applied towards providing solutions in agricultural production," DFA said.

In fact, the agency added, the Philippines is UAE's largest market in the Middle East in terms of agricultural food products.



## The energy crisis in the Philippines

By [Elfren S. Cruz](#) (The Philippine Star)  
- July 3, 2022 - 12:00am

I can still remember vividly the worst energy crisis that I lived through back in 1973 and 1979. That was the Middle East oil crisis when the Middle Eastern countries suddenly decided to retake control of their oil industry and oil prices skyrocketed together with severe shortages. In the Philippines, we did not have any independent oil source and the result was the long, long line of vehicles at every gas station. Many gas stations even closed because of lack of supply.

As a side story, I was lucky because my wife had a cousin who owned a gas station. I remember going in the middle of the night so that they could clandestinely give us gasoline without anyone knowing. So we were spared the agony of lining up for hours to get rationed gasoline at then ridiculously high prices.

Today we are approaching a repetition of that scenario where for a variety of reasons like wars, climate change and greed, oil-exporting countries have refused to increase their oil production so that they can exploit the increase in oil prices. While the short-term effect of artificial oil shortages and exploitative oil price increases places a terrible burden on populations all over the world, the long-term effect is just as negative. The worst effect will be again the delay on the shift towards renewable energy as companies and nations are already trying to find a way to ramp up fossil fuel projects that can be operational as soon as possible. The already existing poor response to the climate crisis will even be worse as governments find an excuse to transfer resources from renewable energy to fossil fuels that will generate more poisonous emissions into the atmosphere.

In the urgency to find immediate solutions to this looming energy crisis, governments and consumers will be tempted to engage in projects that may even be considered dangerous. An example is that in the Philippines, there are now discussions to revive the Bataan-based nuclear plant. This specific nuclear power plant was closed due to its proximity to an earthquake belt, which could therefore cause serious disaster.

For those who are interested, there is a newly published book, "A Toms and Ashes" by Serhii Ploky. This is an account of the world's six worst nuclear accidents today. A recent book review said it "captures those occasions with haunting drama." Among those accidents discussed in detail is the Castle Bravo hydrogen bomb test on Bikini Atoll, a group of islands in the South Pacific. The other stories include that of a reactor on fire at Windscale in northwest England, the infamous nuclear disaster at Chernobyl and the Three Mile Island nuclear plant in Pennsylvania.

The author states that nuclear accidents are inevitable. He also argues that nuclear power should be allowed to "drift into disuse rather than give it a new role in the fight against climate change."

The proponents of nuclear power, however, believe that it is possible to set up climate-friendly nuclear power plants and to make them easier to build. It should be noted that renewable energy is becoming cheaper and may ultimately produce power cheaper than nuclear plants.

For example, according to The Economist, a new power plant in Britain is expected to produce electricity at \$145 for every megawatt hour. The same amount of energy for a new offshore wind farm also in Britain is expected to cost \$60 per megawatt hour. This proves that renewable energy can produce energy at a lower cost than nuclear power. The problem is that governments are facing the political problem of producing solutions sooner than later.





## The energy crisis in the Philippines

Energy policy makers should be aware of the severity of greenhouse gas emissions of different sources of power. The top three worst sources ranked according to their severity are coal, oil, and natural gas.

On the other hand, the most climate-friendly sources of power, ranked according to their amount of greenhouse gas emissions are solar, nuclear and wind. To show the huge difference between the worst and the least source of gas emissions, coal produces 800 CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per gigawatt hour (GWH) of electricity produced, while solar, nuclear and wind produce 4-5 CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per GWH of electricity produced.

The future of nuclear power lies in the new types of reactors that are now in their experimental stages. According to The Economist, "... these small modular reactors (SMRS) promising as these may be, are still for the most part at early stages of development."

Unless the Philippines is willing to risk a nuclear disaster due to an accident, the most practical solution is increasing its sources of natural gas. The only source now is the Malampaya. Natural gas is still not ideal because its level of greenhouse emission is approximately 500 CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent of electricity produced.

There are reportedly rich potential sources of natural gas in the West Philippine Sea. The ideal solution on the medium to long-term basis in the Philippines is the expansion of renewable energy especially solar, wind and possibly geothermal. In this way, our country may yet become self-sufficient in sources of energy at the same time keep greenhouse gas emissions to a basically negligible level.



## The genetic power of ancient trees

(Image credit: Jordan Siemens/Getty)



By Jim Robbins 29th June 2022

Even as we discover the incredible benefits of the world's most ancient trees, we are losing them to climate change, writes Jim Robbins. But cloning could offer an answer.

I

In 2005, several of the centuries-old ponderosa pine trees on my 15 acres (0.06 sq km) of forest in the northern Rocky Mountains in Montana suddenly died. I soon discovered they were being brought down by mountain pine beetles, pernicious killers the size of the eraser on a pencil that burrow into the tree.

The next year the number of dying trees grew exponentially. I felt powerless and grief-stricken as I saw these giant, sky-scraping trees fading all around me, realising there was nothing I could do to stop it.

While the [native bugs were the proximate cause](#), the underlying reason for the unprecedented mortality in my home state and throughout the Rockies was that winters had stopped getting really cold. When I first moved to Montana in the late 1970s, temperatures of -34C (-30F) or even below -40C (-40F) were common in winter, sometimes for weeks at a time. The [coldest temperature on record in Montana](#) is -57C (-70F). These days wintertime minimum



## The genetic power of ancient trees

temperatures rarely get below -18C (0F) or so. If they do, it is usually just for a day or two. That's not nearly cold enough to kill pine beetles, which [make their own natural antifreeze](#).

Within three years, more than 90% of my forest had died. We hired loggers to cut the trees down and truck them to a factory, where they were pulped and turned into cardboard.

*Trees clean our water, affect our climate, provide wood for building and supply sources of food for us and many of the animals we eat*

But it wasn't just here. Trees were dying all over Western North America. British Columbia lost 80% of its mature lodge pole pine in 2006 and 2007 [and has gone from being a carbon sink to a carbon source](#). Trees have continued to die across the West; a few years ago [129 million trees died in California](#).

The experience of watching my forest die sparked in me a renewed interest in what was happening to trees, both in Montana and globally. I began a now two decade-long inquiry into the lives, and deaths, of trees and forests.

Trees [clean our water](#), [affect our climate](#), provide wood for building and supply sources of food for us and many of the animals we eat. They even, somehow, seem to be [connected to the stars](#). Yet we know astonishingly little about their role in our world.

We also lack knowledge about the genetics of trees: especially the effects on the gene pool of cutting down virtually all of the biggest, most robust trees for lumber over many centuries. And we are also mainly in the dark about how those trees that have survived will fare in a hotter and drier world.

In the last few years, however, scientists have started to unpack the importance of ancient tree genetics, with mounting evidence showing they will play a critical role in the future of the Earth's forests. This research follows efforts by one group of tree enthusiasts to attempt to replicate and plant the largest of these giants to protect their ancient DNA in what they call "living libraries". It appears to be prescient.





## The genetic power of ancient trees



*Redwoods are one of North America's most iconic trees, but are also found elsewhere as in this forest planted in Victoria, Australia (Credit: James Yu/Getty)*

Craig D Allen has been on forest death-watch for much of his career. He has [been dubbed as a "tree coroner"](#) due to his desire to understand how trees are dying from climate change. Despite recently retiring from the US Geological Survey, he is now busier than ever researching the crisis in the world's forests and serving as an adjunct professor of ecology at the University of New Mexico.

Years ago now, I walked with him through acre upon acre of dying pinyon pine forests on the sere landscapes around Santa Fe, killed by prolonged drought and heat. When I saw him again recently, he told me that forest die-off is accelerating globally.

Allen is one of a small group of researchers meticulously unpacking what climate change is doing globally to ancient forests – forests which are at least several centuries old, the ones we know and love, especially old growth forests. It's a complex subject, but Allen points to research results published in the past decade which to him sum up the egregious impacts of a warmer planet on these ecosystems.

The first of these, a 2012 paper co-authored by Allen, [combined tree ring data, climate records and future climate projections](#) in the south-west of the US. It found that future megadroughts caused by climate change could have a devastating impact on the forests of the region. The crux of the issue is that even as air temperatures rise linearly, the atmosphere's ability to hold water increases exponentially. This means that the atmosphere is growing thirstier at a breakneck pace, and droughts snatch an ever increasing amount of water from the soil, trees and other plants.

A second study published in 2012 by an Australian research team [gathered data about the water columns](#) – the routes that water takes within the tree from the roots to the crown – in hundreds





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of tree species. It found that hotter droughts are pulling water out of forests at an accelerating pace and in many places trees can no longer keep up with the stress of increased pumping, which causes something akin to an embolism.

The third is a 2015 study looking at the [vulnerability of trees around the world to drought](#). "It says that every major forest type, from Arizona and Algeria to Alberta and Argentina, wet and dry, is dying in ways that are historically unusual, from heat and drought events," Allen tells me.

The bottom line is that hot droughts, which are becoming more frequent and hotter, stress trees to the breaking point.



*Rip Tompkins from the Archangel Ancient Tree Archive climbs a Giant Sequoia in Sequoia Crest, California (Credit: Ethan Swope)*

Because [the warming atmosphere can hold more precipitation](#), in places that are both warmer and wetter, some forests are doing extremely well, better than ever, say Allen and William Hammond, a plant ecophysiologicalist and global change ecologist at the University of Florida. But where there are hot droughts, they are dying in increasing numbers. "Extreme events kill trees," Allen says. "And the worse periods are getting worse." Unprecedented extreme events are being seen, [such as the 49C \(120F\) reached in British Columbia this past summer](#).

[The trees on the front line of this changing world are the ancient ones](#), many of them over 200ft (61m) or even 300ft (91m) tall.



## The genetic power of ancient trees

"One of the reasons big old trees are at risk is they have a really high cost to continue survival: bigger bills to pay," says Hammond. They need more water, and more energy to pump this water to their crown. They can be done in by drought, or weakened so much that they fall prey to insects, disease or fire.

*The 1% largest trees hold 50% of the carbon held in forests*

More frequent hot droughts also means trees have less time to recover. "After a drought event has ended and the trees are well watered again, they have a chance to regrow and recover some of their damaged organs," says Anna Trugman, an assistant professor at the University of California in Santa Barbara, where she studies the effect of climate change on forests. "But if you get more frequent droughts, back to back, that can result in a longer term decline because they are not able to recover."

The big old trees are sitting ducks.

That's a problem because not only are they big and old and awe-inspiring, they are critical for storing carbon to keep the world from warming even faster. The [1% largest trees hold 50% of the carbon held in forests](#).

This dire future for trees comes even we are still learning basic things about them. Suzanne Simard, an ecologist at the University of British Columbia, has found that there are [family relationships between trees](#) and that, through their roots and fungus, they communicate with each other and shuffle resources around. Author and researcher Diana Beresford Kroeger has argued that [the abundant aerosols that trees emit](#), such as terpenes and limonenes, are natural antibiotics, antivirals and chemo-preventatives that help keep the natural world – including humans – healthy.

Hammond and Allen predict widespread die-off of the world's biggest trees and historical forests. And [research shows the up-and-coming forests of today](#) are very different than historical forests, in part because of the new hotter and drier conditions. "Forests are getting shorter, they are getting younger, and dominant species are shifting," said Hammond. "Trees will persist. They are going to be with us a long time. But they are going to change."

So what can be done? Reducing CO2 to slow warming is at the top of the list, but that might not help for decades. In some places, [mechanical thinning of forests or prescribed fire would help](#). Some forests have 800-1,000 trees per acre which means stiff competition for water; a healthy forest should be a tenth of that. [Irrigating some of the sequoias is being considered](#).

And then there is the mammoth attempt to replicate the largest of these living giants.



## The genetic power of ancient trees



*A controlled burn at the General Sherman tree in Sequoia National Park removes white firs and decayed matter without harming the sequoias (Credit: Raymond Gehman/Getty)*

[Back in the 1990s](#), a father and son team in rural northern Michigan hatched a plan to clone the largest trees of each species in the US.

It was home-spun scheme called the Champion Tree Project. David Milarch is a fourth-generation farmer who raises shade trees. He looked up the largest tree of every species in the [National Register of Big Trees](#), a list maintained by American Forests, a non-profit in Washington, DC. He and his son Jared would drive to the champion tree and ask the owner if they could take some cuttings.

They'd unload the ladder from the back of their pick-up truck and Jared would climb the tree to take a few small branches. The cuttings were sent to a nursery to have copies grown. Then Milarch and his son would plant the clones in various settings – cemeteries or parks – in what Milarch called a living archival library. The idea was to preserve the genetics of 800, 2,000 or 5,000-year-old trees in places around the world, in case the original tree died.

"The genetics of the big trees is disappearing," he told me when I [reported on the scheme back in 2001](#). "Someone's got to clone them and keep a record. No one knows what they mean."

*A 2,000-year-old tree knows a thing or two about survival – David Milarch*

Milarch's project has come to focus primarily on America's oldest, most iconic trees: the redwoods and sequoias. Over two decades ago now, I watched as his team climbed some of the biggest trees in the world so they could cut needles from high up, the best material for cloning. Among them



## The genetic power of ancient trees

was the magnificent Waterfall Tree, a sequoia in a privately owned grove in central California, a whale of a tree with reddish-orange bark that dwarfed humans. A photo of it became the cover of my [book](#), which told the story of the shade tree farmer's quixotic efforts to clone the world's largest trees and plant them around the world.

I went on to other things, but in the summer of 2021 my two decade-old experience with Milarch came rushing back. Fires swept through the famous sequoias in California, killing a fifth of them. One of them was the Waterfall Tree – burned to a crisp.

### CARBON COUNT

*The emissions from travel it took to report this story were 0kg CO<sub>2</sub>. The digital emissions from this story are an estimated 1.2g to 3.6g CO<sub>2</sub> per page view. [Find out more about how we calculated this figure here.](#)*

Long thought of as indestructible, [these trees have been dying in increasing numbers](#) in recent years. "What we are seeing now is that wildfire is capable of incinerating large giant sequoias in large numbers," said Christy Brigham, chief of resource management and science for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. "The primary driver is the 100-year history of fire suppression, but it's being made worse by climate change-driven hotter drought."

The disappearance of giant sequoia genetics is also a concern. "We don't know what we may have lost," said Brigham. "But we are talking about a species that has already gone through a genetic bottleneck and is only found in 78 groves. Now we have these wildfires that have burned up 19% of the adult large-tree population. In one grove, 80% of the grove is gone."

Milarch's organisation, now called Archangel Ancient Tree Archive, is still cloning trees, and they are now heading to California to search for, and hopefully clone, a "lost" grove of sequoias that Milarch believes may set a new record for size.

They are also planting old growth groves. "We planted 75 redwoods cloned from old growth trees at the Presidio," he told me recently, referring to a former army base that has since become a park. "And we've planted sequoias in 41 cities in the Puget Sound area as part of assisted migration."





## The genetic power of ancient trees



*Jesse Ketchum from Archangel Ancient Tree Archive plants a sequoia (Credit: Ethan Swope)*

The Archangel Ancient Tree Archive's philosophy is that while these 2,000-year-old trees can't move, their genetics can. While cloning them and planting them to create a new forest doesn't save the trees, it does perpetuate their old growth genetics. In autumn 2021, the organisation, which grows cloned trees in its own greenhouse, planted clones of the Waterfall Tree and others, as well as seedlings, on the site where forests were destroyed by this summer's fires, as well as further north where the climate may be more conducive to sequoias in a warmer future. "A 2,000-year-old tree knows a thing or two about survival," Milarch says.

The potential importance of old growth genetics inspired composer and music producer Timothy Smit to grow 49 clones from the Archangel Ancient Tree Archive sequoia collection at his Eden Project in Cornwall, UK, which houses thousands of plant species from around the world. "They went in as 3ft (0.9m) high babies and are now some 15ft (4.6m) tall," he told me recently. "All have survived."

*These ancient trees represent individuals that established and survived through long cycles – Chuck Cannon*

After two decades of cloning on faith, a study published this year validates Milarch's approach of preserving the genetic of old trees. It concluded that [old and ancient trees radically boost genetic diversity](#) and thus contribute to the long-term resilience of the surrounding forest and its ability to adapt.

"These ancient trees represent individuals that established and survived through long cycles," says Chuck Cannon, co-author of the study and the director of the Morton Arboretum's Center for



## The genetic power of ancient trees

Tree Science in Illinois. "The particular combination of genetics they contain can bridge over the intervening centuries and contribute genes that are beneficial under environmental extremes that have not been present for hundreds of years. They are vital to a forest long-term adaptive capacity."

Despite this, very little research on old trees' genetics has been done, because old trees are both rare and hard to identify, says Cannon. That's why he thinks Archangel Ancient Tree Archive's cloning of old growth trees matters so much.

"Learning to propagate these living materials could be invaluable so that we do not lose the unique genetic combination represented by these trees," he says. Essentially, creating this ark of old tree material could help other forests to increase their genetic diversity and ability to adapt to our rapidly changing world.

When I walk across my property these days it is heartening to see that the offspring of my departed pine trees are coming back on their own. No replacement for the grandfather trees that once stood here, but the mountain forests in this part of the world are not giving up the ghost, at least not yet.

But forests and trees are something we can no longer take for granted. Their existence is increasingly fragile and their loss would be incalculable.

## Marcos' vision in achieving a country all Filipinos deserve



By [New Worlds](#)

July 3, 2022

PRESIDENT Ferdinand "[Bongbong](#)" Marcos Jr.'s inaugural speech was solemn yet powerful. He recognized the challenges of today as an accumulation of problems over the years and warned that the road ahead will be difficult given the volatile and unstable global environment.

More importantly, he embraced the people's fears and aspirations, frankly told the people what the government will do and will not do, and called on everyone not to dwell on the past but rather to gain inspiration and strength from what we have today — to recognize the mistakes of yesterday, "to rebuild... a house divided," and to start working now for a better tomorrow.



Former presidents [Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr.](#), [Rodrigo Duterte](#), Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Benigno 'Noy' Aquino 3rd, and current President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' [Marcos Jr.](#) [COLLAGE BY IDSI](#)

He is aware that the mandate he has been given represents the voters' rejection of the old ways of "politics of division." But he also acknowledged our common aspirations as a people; even with rivals he saw "little incompatibility with my own ideas about jobs, fair wages, personal safety and national strength and ending want in a land of plenty."

Learn from the world, but be circumspect and avoid blindly copying



## Marcos' vision in achieving a country all Filipinos deserve

He mentioned Ukraine three times, suggesting that he is monitoring and studying lessons from around the world... for which we must also prepare. As IDSI Director [George Siy](#) said, "Ukraine is a real life lesson for countries sandwiched between superpowers."

PBBM reminded us that those bearing the brunt of superpowers' conflict are also those that are non-protagonist. Disasters await those with poor strategy, and impulsive and unmeasured decision-making. Even far away from the conflict, our kababayans suffer from the rising prices of oil and food. "The rich world talks a great deal but does a lot less about it than those with much less but who suffer more."

On foreign policy, PBBM cautioned against "solutions from outside that divided us, none deepened our understanding. They were at our expense... The policy of the richest countries boils down to 'don't do as we do. Do as we tell you to'..."

Domestically, he acknowledges building on the successes of his predecessors, not on taking sole credit. In spite of the decades of demonizing by his family's critics, as if the son should accept the rival's anti-Marcos narrative and disown the father, President Bongbong continues to give tribute to his father. What most critics missed is more than recognizing the lasting contributions of his father, he was raising aspirations in his listeners: that once upon a time we, Filipinos, have achieved something great, and we can do it again!

He then gives tangible prognosis and direction on the current factors that ill our society in various priority sectors: trade, agriculture, energy, education, OFWs, infrastructure, regional development, health, tourism, economic development and foreign policy.

Top priorities — agriculture, education, regional development, environment.

Acknowledging the damaging impact of the pandemic and laying out his plans to rectify the shortcomings of our health system, he also reminded us that "The virus is not the only thing to blame..." the pandemic only exposed the crevices long cracking underneath. We depended too much on following the model of development that "trade policy of competitive advantage made the case that when it comes to food sufficiency, a country should not produce, but import what other countries make more of and sell cheapest..." Now, our people's very survival may be under threat, where no amount of money can help us if there's no supply to buy from.

For too long also we relegated education as second priority, perhaps resting on the laurel as formerly the most fluent English speaking Asian country... but the series of PISA and TIMSS results that showed the [Philippines](#) lagging spectacularly far behind the rest of the world in Reading, Math and Science — despite the K to 12 implementation and pouring in billions into DepEd — should already be a wake-up call that quantity is not quality. He proposed that our "educational materials must be retaught..."

He referred to the German model for vocational training. IDSI recommends that we should also look at the education models of South Korea, Singapore, China, which have already localized what they've learned from Germany for the Asian culture... For the first time, our President publicly admitted that "our teachers are heroes fighting ignorance with poor paper weapons..." and that





## Marcos' vision in achieving a country all Filipinos deserve

"we are condemning the future of our race to menial occupations abroad," and appointed his vice president at the helm of the Department of Education.

On regional development, PBBM recognized the lasting legacies of his father and President Duterte were the roads they built across the country. "Development was brought to the countryside. Investors are now setting up industries along the promising routes built." Ang hindi marunong lumingon sa pinanggalingan, hindi makakarating sa paroroonan.

On the environment and international community, he took stock of the reality that "[s]ufficient fossil fuel-free technology for whole economies has yet to be invented and it is not seriously tried by rich countries." But at the same time, he said "we will look to our partners to help the Philippines..." BBM was also honest to mention that we are the third biggest plastics polluter, and we must do our share to clean up! Boracay and Manila Bay are prime examples that the Filipinos can move significantly in that direction.

While revealing his leadership philosophy, he also answered the critics, who painted him as weak during the campaign especially when he avoided some of the presidential debates, that it was a conscious philosophy to "the hesitation to quarrel over differences, and to never ever give up hope of reconciliation," echoing Jesus' compassion of "turn the other cheek" and wisdom of "walk the extra mile."

Inauguration speeches are a reflection of the current times the President is inheriting, the lens through which to see his character before he takes over the levers of power of "one of the most powerful presidencies in the whole world," as UP Professor [Felipe Miranda](#) once quipped. They are among the rubrics for which history will judge him.

With this clarifying and moving speech, even critics are beginning to open their minds to a possible even brighter future. But we have many stirring speechmakers in our history. Let's watch for delivery, and rather than just wait for, do our part to help achieve a future we built together.

[Austin Ong](#) has assisted Philippine agencies in organizing training programs for Filipino entrepreneurs. He taught global developments in [De La Salle University](#) and studied in UP Diliman, Tsinghua and Northeastern Boston.



## Western sections of Northern, Central Luzon expected to have cloudy skies, rains due to Habagat

By GMA News

Published July 2, 2022 6:07pm

The Southwest Monsoon or Habagat will bring cloudy skies with scattered rains and thunderstorms over the western sections of Northern and Central Luzon, according to weather bureau PAGASA on Saturday.

PAGASA said it was also monitoring Tropical Storm Aere (formerly known as Domeng), which was last spotted 955 kilometers northeast of extreme Northern Luzon, or outside the Philippine Area of Responsibility (PAR).

It has sustained maximum winds of 85 kilometers per hour, and gustiness of up to 105 kph. It was moving north northwestward at 30 kph, the weather bureau said.

According to PAGASA's 4 p.m. weather forecast, the Ilocos Region, Zambales, and Bataan will have cloudy skies with scattered rain showers and thunderstorms with possible flash floods or landslides due to moderate to at times heavy rains.

Metro Manila and the rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers or thunderstorms with possible flash floods or landslides during severe thunderstorms.

Meanwhile, the northern and western sections of Luzon will experience moderate to strong wind speeds moving south to southwest while coastal water conditions will be moderate to strong.

The wind speed forecast for the rest of the country will be light to moderate moving southeast to south, while coastal water conditions will be slight to moderate. — Richa Noriega/VBL, GMA News

Source: [https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/scitech/weather/836839/western-sections-of-northern-central-luzon-expected-to-have-cloudy-skies-rains-due-to-habagat/story/?just\\_in&fbclid=IwAR2bRn8da79hF-snBxtSkvjLB2xk3qRRzqMTPqwW2rsaiQbJ0Hn5\\_CUq61o](https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/scitech/weather/836839/western-sections-of-northern-central-luzon-expected-to-have-cloudy-skies-rains-due-to-habagat/story/?just_in&fbclid=IwAR2bRn8da79hF-snBxtSkvjLB2xk3qRRzqMTPqwW2rsaiQbJ0Hn5_CUq61o)



03 JULY 2022, Sunday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE





## DENR cites janitors, clerks for hard work

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has recognized its employees, especially the janitors and clerks, for their continuing commitment and dedication to public service even during challenging times.

DENR Officer-in-Charge (OIC) Joselin Marcus Fragada led the recognition ceremony where they issued certificates as an added "motivation" to the hard-working personnel and

staff.

"We have issued individual certificates to recognize that no matter [what] your job is as a janitor, as a clerk, we always recognize the hard work that people do for the agency. Kaya maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat!" Fragada told DENR workers during the "HR@ Ur Service" closing ceremony.

A total of 86 employees from the DENR Central Office got the morale-boosting awards just when the present admin-

istration has yet to name a new secretary.

"I would also like to recognize our employees from the Strategic Communication and Initiatives Service, Human Resource Development Service (HRDS), and the Administrative Service. I think this is the only time we can recognize you for the efforts and services you do for the department, the constituents, and others. Maraming salamat po sa tulong at pagsisilbi ninyo," he said.

By **JOEL DELA TORRE**

For his part, DENR Assistant Secretary for Human Resources, Strategic Communication and Sectoral Initiatives Hito Masuda said that this year's event highlighted the Duterte administration's whole-of-society framework of "leaving no one behind", especially during the pandemic.

"All tasks, big or small, are vital to accomplishing a goal. Whether white-collar or blue-collar jobs, their efforts should not be left on the sidelines. We want to make sure that they are given appropriate recognition as a gratitude for their sacrifices," Masuda pointed out.





DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
1680 Alabang Road, Marikina City

BusinessMirror

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# 'NEW WATER': A SAFE, SUSTAINABLE OPTION?

When 'reused' H<sub>2</sub>O evolves into a potable commodity amid climate change

By JONATHAN E. MAYUGA

**M**AYNILAD Water Services Inc. recently launched its "New Water" project which aims to recycle treated used water from its sewage treatment plants (STP) in Parañaque City for redistribution to the taps of water customers within its concession area.



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
 Manila, Philippines

# WATER SUPPLY

Water Supply

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The New Water that Manila produces using raw water supply from its Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) in Parañaque City has been issued a Certificate of Potability by the Parañaque City Health Office, Parañaque Department of Health, after completing collecting samples of New Water from the company's New Water Treatment Plant for testing. In the presence of representatives from the Parañaque City Health Office, the collected samples were tested by WHO-accredited laboratories to ensure that the water is safe to drink. The issuance of a Certificate of Potability proves that New Water meets the Philippine Medical Standards for Drinking Water. New Water is distributed to supply that is sourced from the used water generated by households. Manila now produces New Water by collecting the treated wastewater from the Parañaque Water Reclamation Facility and purifying it through a secondary treatment plant for a secondary purification process to make it potable. [www.doh.gov.ph](http://www.doh.gov.ph)





Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
 DENR-Region 4  
 Office of the Regional Director  
 Cebu City

# BusinessMirror

South Luzon Edition

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Company officials said with its New Water project, Maynilad would be able to augment the limited supply coming from Angat Dam, initially by 10 million liters per day (MLD), and avoid the perennial problems encountered in extracting raw water from surface water like Laguna de Bay, such as the algal bloom and high water turbidity during typhoons and heavy downpour.

The New Water will be blended with treated water from Maynilad's treatment plants in La Mesa and will be supplied to Barangays San Dionisio and San Isidro in Parañaque City, which are the areas nearest to the modular treatment plant (ModTP) location.

According to Maynilad, some 38,700 customers in these barangays will benefit from the additional supply, as it will improve water availability in the area sans added cost to its customers.

Maynilad officials led by its President and CEO Ramoncito Fernandez assured the public that Maynilad's New Water passed the Philippine National Standard for Drinking Water, hence, safe to drink.

## Potable, safe

ACCORDING to Maynilad, its New Water is the potable water supply that is produced after used water from households passes through rigorous and stringent treatment process to become drinkable.

"Maynilad is moving towards potable water reuse in a bid to boost available supplies given the growing demand for water, as well as the strain on existing raw water resources due to the impact of climate change," Maynilad said in its Frequently Asked Questions posted in its website.

During the project's launch on June 29, 2022, Fernandez was joined by guests from the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage

System (MWSS), the local government unit (LGU) of Parañaque, and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for the ceremonial drink-up of Maynilad's New Water to prove that it is indeed "safe to drink."

## Socially acceptable

PER Maynilad, it has been conducting a series of social acceptability tests and public consultations involving residential and commercial customers, LGUs and government agencies, including the Department of Health, the DENR, the MWSS and the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) to ensure that the New Water will be acceptable to consumers.

Maynilad further said that based on its initial social acceptability test, residential and commercial customers of Maynilad have expressed willingness to use New Water after seeing the product water and understanding the idea behind it.

## A first in PHL

WHILE Maynilad will be the first to do it in the Philippines, converting used water to potable water is already being done in other countries such as Namibia, South Africa, and some areas in the United States that are known to implement direct potable reuse.

Maynilad said other countries such as Belgium, Singapore, the United Kingdom, Australia, and some parts of the US adopt an "indirect potable reuse" through groundwater recharge and surface water augmentation.

Maynilad said it benchmarked with Namibia and Singapore before its move to tap treated used water for drinking.

According to Maynilad, Namibia, a pioneer in developing potable supply from reused water, has

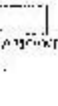
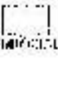
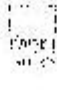
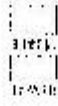
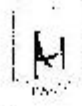
been recycling treated used water since 1968. In fact, Windhoek City is currently getting 24 percent of its drinking water from this source.

Meanwhile, Singapore—an island city-state with little water supply—produces NEWater to meet water demand. NEWater now supplies around 40 percent of its drinkable and non-drinkable water, Maynilad pointed out.

## New Water: Doable

ASKED to weigh in on Maynilad's New Water initiative, Antonio Tompar, a Cebu-based businessman and a pioneer in water desalination or the process of converting salt water into freshwater, said Maynilad's move to tap treated used water from its STPs to make it drinkable is doable, and, in fact,





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more economical than tapping water from rivers or lakes.

He said it would be a lot cheaper to treat water from its STPs than making potable water extracted from Laguna de Bay or Pasig River drinkable.

#### It comes with a cost

"THE cost of treating water goes up depending on the level of pollution," says Tompar. He said turbidity alone is a big problem.

Tompar, CEO of Mactan Rock Industries Inc., is known as "Cebu's Water King." His company, a pioneer in bulk water supply and water technology provider in the Philippines, has been providing various institutions with desalinated water for decades. Industry-wise, Mactan Rock has secured more than half of Cebu's milk water supply, and perhaps in the entire country, serving industries with its lowest water rate ranging from P75 to P85 per cubic meter, as compared to the more than P100 per cubic meter offered by other companies.

He said producing fresh water that is drinkable or safe to drink is doable, thanks to modern technology.

#### 'All in the mind'

HOWEVER, Tompar said persuading water consumers to drink used water from the STPs is a rather different story altogether.

"It's psychological. It will be hard to convince people to drink used water. Even in Singapore, a lot of people buy mineral water," he told the *BusinessMirror*.

As a technology provider, Tompar made a stunning declaration of its plan to make water from Pasig River, one of the country's dirtiest rivers, drinkable—using reverse osmosis.

Tompar's Mactan Rock has been providing safe drinking wa-

ter to various clients, including hotels and economic zones.

#### A welcome initiative

DR. Sevilla David Jr., executive director of the NWRB, said Maynilad's New Water initiative is a welcome development.

"Any initiative to recycle water to use water again will be helpful," says David.

David said water recycling, in fact, should be practiced even by households by maximizing water use before they finally dispose of it.

While treated used water is already being converted into drinkable water in other countries, it is best to make sure that the technology we have for such projects is equally reliable and safe.

*Dapat pa rin rating pag-walun-lalo at makakatulong naman talaga ito,* he said.

The official said water level at Angat Dam remains below the normal working level of 180 meters above sea level despite several days of rains. To ensure a sustainable water supply, however, he said the best option is to develop new water sources like the Kaliwa Dam, and make people realize the importance of conserving freshwater.

#### Netizens' reaction

MAYNILAD'S New Water, as expected, drew varied reactions. While many lauded the effort and thanked the company for its initiative, some remain skeptical, at the least.

Veteran journalist Alfredo Gomez Pedraza, responding to a casual survey via Facebook, said: "All the water we use, drink, bathe with, cook with, have been used through the ages. The water we drink used to be urine and sewage water. Water is naturally recycled and who knows, we have probably

drunk what used to be the urine of our forefathers."

"Perhaps I'd puke to drink water from purified septic tank water, but what we don't know don't hurt. There's now a modern technology being used for the purpose," he added.

Communication expert Roland Alino Iniong said water recycling to augment potable water is real and they also call it "New Water."

"Check Singapore. They are drinking purified sewage water. I was there when the Prime Minister tasted the first processed water. New Water ang tayag nila noon [is what they call it over there]," Iniong said.

In Maynilad's official FB page, netizen Jay Nady Genertano Libardo said: "Congrats team Maynilad for such effort to produce more sources of potable water."

Some netizens, however, remain skeptical, even attacking the company's poor services, especially in Imus, Cavite, which has been experiencing frequent water service interruption.

Nadine Villanueva dared Maynilad officials to first try for themselves by drinking water provided by the company to residents of Imus.

"Try drinking your water here in Imus once the water supply resumes. It smells like sewer," Villanueva lamented.

Netizen Paw Son Mateo, for his part, said he may not appreciate New Water because they are always sleeping late at night to wait for water to flow from the taps. "Di naman nina-appreciate pag kasi naging pat kani magmamang tubig."

Roi Cabalida from Imus also lamented that they have been experiencing water scarcity in Imus for a very long time already.

Now, that's another story.





## BBM shoots down Airport City perks

BY RAADER SAUSA

Citing the need for fiscal prudence, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. vetoed a proposed bill to designate

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I cannot support the bill considering the provisions that pose fiscal risks to the country and its infringement

the massive airport project of conglomerate San Miguel Corp. as a special economic zone and freeport.

"Resources are scarce and needs are abundant," indicated a portion of Marcos' veto message to the Senate President dated 1 July to reject House Bill (HB) 7575 or the Bulacan Airport City Special Economic Zone and Freeport Act.

Under the bill, any foreigner who invests at least \$200,000 either in cash or equipment to a registered enterprise in the ecozone shall be entitled to an investor's visa.

Registered enterprises operating within the Bulacan Ecozone would also be entitled to fiscal incentives granted under Executive Order 226, as amended, otherwise known as the Omnibus Investments Code of 1987 and to other fiscal incentives that may be provided by law.

"While this administration recognizes the objective of the proposed measure of accelerating economic growth in its locality, I cannot support the bill considering the provisions that pose fiscal risks to the country and its infringement on or conflict with other agencies' mandates and authorities," the veto has read.

Marcos said the proposed measure would

"significantly narrow the tax base with its mandated incentives applicable to registered enterprises."

The President's message also cited Republic Act (RA) 11534 or the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises (CREATE) Act that already provided tax incentives to new business projects.

According to the President, the enrolled measure also "lacks coherence with existing laws, rules, and regulations" and noted that it lacked provisions for a review by the Commission on Audit, the process for the expropriation of land awarded to agrarian reform beneficiaries and a masterplan that sets the boundaries of the proposed economic zone.

### Power to make own rule

The bill gives the proposed economic zone authority "rule-making powers relative to environmental protection that is not found in the charter of other economic zones" and also "blanket powers to handle technical airport operations in contravention of existing aeronautical laws," Marcos said.

Airport City is also near the Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga, "which is against the government's policy on creating special economic zones in strategic locations."

In 2020, the House of Representatives passed the bill with 205 affirmative votes, six negative votes and one abstention.

Also raised in the veto message was that the proposed measure seeks to grant the proposed economic zone "rule-making powers relative to

environmental protection that is not found in the charter of other economic zones," as well as "blanket powers to handle technical airport operations in contravention of existing aeronautical laws."

The measure's aim was contrary to the government's objective of developing a tax system with low rates and a broad tax base, as it "will significantly narrow our tax base with its mandated incentives applicable to registered enterprises."

In 2020, the House of Representatives passed the bill with 205 affirmative votes, six negative votes and one abstention.

"As the system would be rendered incapable of generating a yield sufficient to sustain the country's social and economic infrastructure, the government would be forced to seek new sources of revenue through additional taxes or borrowings in the future. In the end, it is the taxpayers who will ultimately bear the brunt of the burden," Marcos said.

He noted that the National Economic and Development Authority and the Regional Development Council III asserted "the need to thoroughly study and assess the costs to ensure that the establishment of the economic zone would be beneficial to the whole country."

"Subject to the review and approval of the Fiscal Incentives Review Board, tax incentives may be availed by qualified enterprises and will be enjoyed longer if investments are located in less-developed areas," Marcos added.





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# BBM vetoes bill creating Bulacan Airport ecozone

By ALEXIS ROMERO

A multibillion-peso project spearheaded by one of the country's biggest conglomerates to decongest the country's main international airport in Manila and provide more employment outside the capital has suffered a setback, following a presidential veto on a bill supporting it.

President Marcos has vetoed a bill establishing the Bulacan Airport City Special Economic Zone and Freeport, saying the measure poses "substantial fiscal risks" and lacks coherence with existing laws.

In a letter addressed to senators dated July 1, Marcos said fiscal prudence must be exercised, particularly at times when resources are scarce and needs are abundant.

He added that the enrolled measure would significantly narrow the tax base with its mandated incentives applicable to registered enterprises, contrary to the government's aim of developing a tax system with low rates and a broad tax base.

"While this administration recognizes the objective of the proposed measure to accelerate economic growth in its locality, I cannot support the bill considering the provisions that pose substantial fiscal risks to the country and its infringement on or conflict with other agencies' mandates and authorities," the President said in his veto message.

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## BBM vetoes From Page 1

"As the system would be rendered incapable of generating a yield sufficient to sustain the country's social and economic infrastructure, the government would be forced to seek new sources of revenue through additional taxes or borrowings in the future. In the end, it is the taxpayers who will ultimately bear the brunt of the burden," he added.

The bill would have created a Bulacan ecozone authority with a corporate life of 50 years. The economic zone would have covered San Miguel Corp. (SMC)'s P740-billion New Manila International Airport, which can serve up to 100 million passengers per year and is expected to decongest

the Philippines' main gateway, Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

Marcos said Republic Act No. 11534 or the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises (CREATE) Act already allows eligible enterprises to apply for and avail of tax incentives outside economic zones by providing a favorable incentive package without the need for creating new special economic zones.

He noted that tax incentives may be availed of by qualified enterprises and would be enjoyed longer if investments were located in less-developed areas, subject to the review and approval of the Fiscal Incentives Review Board (FIRB).





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The President added that the proposed measure "lacks coherence" with existing laws, rules and regulations by failing to provide audit provisions for the Commission on Audit, procedures for expropriation of lands awarded to agrarian reform beneficiaries and a master plan for the specific metes and bounds of the economic zone.

The bill also granted the economic zone authority rule-making powers on environmental protection that is not found in the charter of other economic zones, as well as blanket powers to handle technical airport operations, in contravention of existing aeronautical laws, he added.

Marcos also pointed out that the proposed economic zone is located in close proximity to the Clark Special

Economic Zone, which is against the government's policy on creating special economic zones in strategic locations.

"Further, the National Economic and Development Authority and the Regional Development Council will assert the need to thoroughly study and assess the costs to ensure that the establishment of the economic zone would be beneficial to the whole country," the President said.

Former senate president Vicente Sotto III said he received the veto message Friday night. He said he would suggest to incoming senators the re-filing of the bill and the removal of the provisions vetoed by Marcos.

SMC president and chief executive officer Ramon Ang defended the intentions of the bill, the first to

be vetoed under the Marcos administration.

"Bulacan economic zone will be managed by (the Philippine) government and tax incentives will need DOF (Department of Finance) FIRB review and approval. It's aligned with CREATE law," Ang told The STAR.

"My intention is to help create (a) science and technology export hub with cheapest logistics cost because of nearest airport and Manila seaport. World-class semiconductor manufacturing power battery storage, manufacturing electric vehicles (and) manufacturing and modular nuclear power assembly plants target to export \$200 billion annually to help our GDP (gross domestic product) growth," he added.



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# FIRST VETO: MARCOS NIXES BULACAN FREEPORT BILL

STORY BY DAXIM L. LUCAS, NESTOR CORRALES AND MIGUEL CAMUS

The Chief Executive says the proposed special economic zone will pose fiscal risks to the country and can considerably reduce its tax base, decreasing revenue at a time when 'needs are abundant.' Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, a principal author of the measure, says the President's concerns will serve as a guide in making amendments to the bill which he will refile.

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## First veto: Marcos nixes Bulacan freeport bill

### FROM A1

By Daxim L. Lucas,  
Nestor Corrales  
and Miguel Camus  
@Team\_Inquirer

President Marcos has vetoed a bill that would have granted tax perks to a proposed special economic zone backed by a key campaign supporter in a surprise move that was one of his first acts as the country's Chief Executive.

The project, the Bulacan Airport City Special Economic Zone and Freeport, would have been located adjacent to the New Manila International Airport in Bulakan, Bulacan, which is being built by billionaire Ramon S. Ang's San Miguel Corp. as a private P740-billion venture.

Ang apparently got no hint of the veto when he was invited as one of the guests on the stage at the President's inauguration on Thursday.

"At the foreground, fiscal prudence must be exercised particularly when resources are scarce and needs are abundant," Mr. Marcos said in his veto message to the lawmakers on the enrolled House Bill No. 7575.

"While this administration recognizes the objective of the proposed measure to accelerate economic growth in its locality, I cannot support the bill considering the provisions that pose fiscal risks to the country and its infringement on or conflict with other agencies' mandates and authorities," he said.

San Miguel, one of the country's biggest conglomerates, is investing P740 billion to turn a 2,500-hectare property in Bulakan into an aerotropolis fea-





turing a world-class gateway capable of handling 100 million passengers annually, plus an adjacent urban and industrial hub.

#### Sister's measure

The bill was sponsored in the Senate by Marcos' sister, Sen. Imee Marcos. There were no immediate comments from the senator.

The measure would have granted incentives to locators that invest and set up shop in the ecozone, the airport, the airport city adjacent to it and the adjoining lands later.

According to the President, the bill did not provide procedures for expropriation of lands awarded to agrarian reform beneficiaries and granted "blanket powers" to the economic zone authority to handle technical airport operations, which would violate aeronautical laws.

He pointed out that the proposed ecozone would be located near the Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga province that borders Bulacan. This is against government policy on creating special economic zones in strategic locations, Mr. Marcos said.

He said that under Republic Act No. 11534, or the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises (Create) Act, eligible enterprises could apply and avail of tax incentives outside economic zones.

"Contrary to the government's objective of developing a tax system with low rates and a broad tax base, the enrolled bill will significantly narrow our tax base with its mandated incentives applicable to registered entities," he said.

The President could have anticipated the potential relocation of companies from plac-



**The enrolled bill will significantly narrow our tax base with its mandated incentives applicable to registered entities**

#### President Marcos

es where they are paying taxes now to the ecozone to enjoy the tax breaks.

With these considerations, the President said he was "constrained" to veto the bill.

#### RSA defends project

In a text message to the Inquirer, Ang defended the ecozone project, saying that it would be built on land owned by the conglomerate but would, in fact, "be managed by the Philippine government."

Any tax incentives that will be granted to companies which plan to relocate there will have to be first reviewed and approved by the Department of Finance and its Fiscal Incentives Review Board.

Most importantly, Ang said the bill was "aligned" with the Create law, which is a set of tax reform measures enacted by the previous administration.

"My intention is to help create a science and technology export hub with the cheapest logistics cost because of the nearest airport and Manila's seaport," he said.

Ang said that world class manufacturers of semiconduc-





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—ELOISA LOPEZ/REUTERS

tors, battery storage for electricity, electric vehicles and modular nuclear power assembly plants which he invited to the planned ecozone are targeting to export products worth up to \$200 billion annually to help our gross domestic product growth."

The San Miguel chief stressed that the conglomerate's privately funded airport project—the single most expensive public or private infrastructure project in the country's history—will proceed as planned even without the tax perks in the proposed ecozone.

The airport project is governed by a separate 50-year Congressional franchise which became law in December 2020.

**Positive signal**

Michael Sagcal, country representative at infrastructure consultancy firm Astris Finance, said the veto sends a positive signal as it reflected the "hard reality that our government can't afford to forego much-needed revenues in today's economy."

"It is important for this administration's position to remain consistent though, other-

wise it may be perceived to be a simple changing of personalities rather than a genuine improvement of policies," said Sagcal, a former transportation official who served under the late President Benigno Aquino III.

Ang's aeropolis has been criticized by environmentalist and residents in the areas affected by the massive project.

In December 2020, they asked the Supreme Court to stop the project, saying it would jeopardize Manila Bay's marine life and ecosystem and the livelihood of local farmers and fishermen.

The petitioners said in their request for a "writ of kalikasan" that the project was not compliant with environmental laws and regulations and it "flouted existing laws" when it started construction before securing the required permits.

The high court dismissed the petition in January for lack of "sufficient form and substance."

**Conflict**

The Bulacan airport also came into conflict with proponents of other airports who supported Mr. Marcos in the presidential campaign.

Once completed, Bulacan airport was seen to lure traffic away from the Clark, about 72 kilometers to the east in the home province of former President and Pampanga Rep. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Clark's airport operations are now privatized and operated by a venture led by the Gokongwei and Gotianun groups.

The Remulla clan of Cavite is also pushing for the construction of an international airport at Sangley Point, 82 kilometers to the south of the Bulacan project. One of its prominent mem-

bers, former Cavite Rep. Jesus Crispin Remulla, will serve as Marcos' justice secretary.

There were no immediate reactions to the veto from former Sen. Richard Gordon, one of the main proponents of the bill in the Senate. In May, 21 senators approved the bill.

**Up to next Congress**

Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, one of the principal authors of the measure, said the incoming 19th Congress will address the concerns of the President and he will refile the bill with the veto message serving as "a guide."

"Essentially, the concerns are that the Authority being created has extraordinary powers, the metes and bounds are undefined, and the costs and benefits of the proposal appear to not yet be clear in the determination of the executive branch. I acknowledge the wisdom in his concerns," Salceda said in a statement sent to the Inquirer.

"The revisions, then, should revolve around these questions," he said.

Bulacan Gov. Daniel Fernando also accepted the veto, saying the President "knows better what is best for the country."

Fernando said Bulacan's economic growth prospects are expected to be propelled by the world-class international airport under construction, not by the planned ecozone.

"We believe and support the President. He is correct that there is a need to increase tax collection. Our country really needs a high collection of taxes," the governor said in a phone interview with the Inquirer.

—WITH REPORTS FROM JULIE M. AURELIO, CARMELA BEYES-ESTROPE AND INQUIRER RESEARCH INQ





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## 11 bills ni Villar sa marine hatcheries, batas na

Batas na ang 11 local bills na inisponsor ni Senator Cynthia Villar sa nakalipas na 18th Congress para sa pagtatayo ng multi-species marine hatcheries sa iba't ibang lugar sa bansa.

Ininulong ni Villar, chairperson ng Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food, ang bills upang maging batas dahil sa mataas na antas ng kahirapan sa sektor ng pangangisda.

"The productivity of our marine fisheries resources has been declining because of environmental degradation and ineffective

natural resources management," giit ni Villar.

"Ayon pa sa senador, nakokompromiso ang ating pagkakaroon ng sapat na pagkain at pinagkakakitaan ng mga nasa sektor ng pangangisda sanhi ng pagbaba ng kanilang nahuhuli.

Bukod dito, ang sektor ng pangangisda ang murang pinagkukunan ng 'animal protein' para sa populasyon, pangkabuhayan sa mahigit isang milyong Pilipino at foreign exchange.

"With the growing population of the Philippines, fishing is one of the major industries

seen as a positive contributor to the developing economy," panayag ni Villar.

"Thus the need for hatcheries be established in our country which provide the seed for aquaculture and some commercial fisheries," dagdag pa niya.

"A hatchery is where fish and shellfish are spawned, hatched and cared for. They remain at the hatchery until they are large enough to be transferred to a fish or shellfish farm or released into the wild as part of a stock enhancement program," paliwanag pa ng senador.



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## 11 bills ni Villar sa marine hatcheries, batas na

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## Agencies eye planting 10 M trees by 2030

A multi-sectoral partnership between various government agencies and the private sector is eyeing to plant 10 million trees by 2030 through different science-based reforestation initiatives across the country.

The Climate Change Commission (CCC), Professional Regulation Commission, Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Society of Filipino Foresters Inc. (SFFI) formed the Carbon Neutral Program Convergence to help the country achieve its carbon emission

reduction targets.

Among the program's initiatives is a series of forestation activities aimed at increasing the carbon sequestration capacity of country's forests.

Carbon sequestration is the process of capturing and storing carbon dioxide, which contributes to global warming.

According to SFFI, a tree that is at least three years old can sequester about 10 kilograms of carbon dioxide per year. An average individual is estimated to contribute

one ton or 1,000 kilograms of carbon in his or her lifetime.

"Each person should plant and grow at least 100 trees to be carbon neutral," the CCC said, citing a recent seminar conducted by the SFFI.

The United Nations Environment Program defined carbon neutrality as achieving close to zero carbon emissions "by balancing a measured amount of carbon released with an equivalent amount sequestered or offset."

Climate Secretary Robert Borje stressed the importance of the part-

nership, noting that government agencies and professional organizations must lead in promoting and achieving carbon neutrality.

The PRC recently spearheaded a nationwide tree planting activity, where about 32,000 saplings of different tree species were planted in different areas.

Partner agencies and organizations also pledged to plant at least 1.7 million more trees this year during a session with the Million Trees Foundation Inc.

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## ECUA UPRIS plants 1,000 seedlings in watershed areas

CABANATUAN CITY — A thout and seedlings were planted during a mass tree-planting activity spearheaded by the National Irrigation Administration-Upper Pampanga River Integrated Irrigation System (NIA-UPRIS) in line with the government's National Greening Program.

The one-day activity, which was part of the agency's 59th founding anniversary celebrations, was launched at the watershed areas of the Macanac Dam in Lupao and Pantabangan Dam.

Engineer Rosalinda Bote, NIA-UPRIS chief, said it was held to showcase the agency's rehabilitation and reforestation efforts as per NIA's theme of "greening the Philippines the NIA way with trees, water, life."

At least 700 seedlings of ipilabano, cashew, sampaloc, and dilhal were planted at the Macanac watershed, while 300 additional seedlings of cacao and bamboo were planted in Bay, Infang, Pantabangan.

Bote said the mass tree-planting activity was a collaborative effort of the Division 1, 3, 5, Interim Division 6, the Dam and Reservoir division, the head office, Division 2, and 4, in cooperation with Engineering and Operations Division manager Vivencia Dela Cruz and Administrative and Finance acting Division chief Edna Permin.

She said it was launched in a bid to promote the importance of planting trees and protecting the watershed to be able to attain sustainable irrigation development. **Steve Gosuico**



# Gov suspends quarrying in Albay

**L**EGAZPI CITY — Governor Noel E. Rosal on his first day in office on Friday, July 1, signed Executive Order (EO) No. 1 suspending temporarily quarry operations in Albay Province.

Rosal said Section 138, Paragraph 2 of the Local Government Code of 1991 states "the permit to extract sand, gravel, other resources shall be issued exclusively by the provincial governor under the Ordinance of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan (SP)."

He said he would check all the envi-

ronmental compliance certificates (ECCs), including the location clearances as well as the status clearance, business permits, and the certification from the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to make sure the quarry operators are compliant with the one-kilometer distance from any government infrastructure.

"I will not tolerate operating the quarry operators without a permit, expired permit, and over the volume of quarry materials," Rosal said.

He added that he will create a provin-

cial mining regulatory board as required by law to be composed of representatives from the Mines and Geo Science Bureau (MGB), accredited non-government organizations (NGOs), and also

people from the small and large-scale mining groups.

The Philippine National Police will guard the areas to secure the location to make sure the quarry operators cannot operate until

the EO is lifted, he said.

He added that only 10-wheeler trucks would be loaded with aggregates or quarry materials.

Truck routes will be divided with barangay roads being off-limits to delivery trucks loaded with aggregates to avoid destroying these.

Quarrying at night will no longer be allowed in order not to disturb the people, Rosal added. (PNA)





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**RESPONSIBLE MINING ADVOCATE:** Mining experts at Cagdianao Mining Corp. and Hinatuan Mining Corp., both subsidiaries of Nickel Asia Corp., recently briefed a delegation of officials from Eastern Samar on the companies' efforts to promote responsible mining. The group visited Dinagat Islands, where CMC has its operations, and Surigao del Norte, where HMC operates, for back-to-back comprehensive mine tours.



# Gov't spending on environment protection dips by 4.5% last year

By LOUELLA DESIDERIO

Government spending on efforts to protect the environment declined by 4.5 percent last year from a year ago, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority.

Data from the statistics agency showed government environmental protection expenditures amounted to P25.43 billion last year, down from P26.64 billion in 2020.

Environmental protection activities cover those aimed at the prevention, reduction and elimination of pollution and other forms of degradation.

These include protection of ambient air and climate, wastewater

management, waste management, protection and remediation of soil, groundwater and surface water, noise and vibration abatement, protection of biodiversity and landscapes, protection against radiation, as well as research and development (R&D).

Of the total expenditures on the environment, the bulk or 45 percent at P11.47 billion went to the protection of biodiversity and landscape.

This was followed by environmental protection not elsewhere classified with a 25 percent share amounting to P6.54 billion.

Waste management came in third with a 13 percent share at P3.3 billion.

Spending on pollution abatement last year reached P2.79 billion.

Meanwhile, P1.24 billion went to R&D efforts on environmental protection.

The government is spending on environmental protection efforts given the critical role of the environment and natural resources on the country's development.

Under the Philippine Development Plan, the government has identified strategies to rehabilitate and restore degraded natural resources and protect fragile ecosystems, while improving the welfare of resource-dependent communities.





# MURO-AMI: TRADISYONG DELIKADO SA KARAGATAN



**K**ung yamang tubig lamang ang pag-uusapan ay talaga namang sagana ang Pilipinas diyari.

Magtataka pa ba naman tayo gayong napaliibutan ang bansa ng tubig at dahil dito ay sagana tayo sa mga makukuha sa ilalim ng tubig na ito. Pero ang totoo hindi tayo ganoon kasagana dahil marami sa atin ang nagpapabaya at walang alam kung paano ito gagamitin, iingat na ito pasasaganahin.

Sa isang datos, umaabot sa halos limang milyong katao ang nabubuhay sa pangingsda sa Southeast Asia.

Dito sa atin, 80 hanggang 90 porsento ng pinagkakakitaan ay nanggagaling sa pangingsda. Ngunit may iba rin naman sa ating mga kababayan ang tila buhay lamang nila ang inaataupag at walang paggalang sa mga buhay na nasa ilalim ng karagatan.

May kanya-kanyang paraan para makuha ang anumang makukuha sa ilalim ng dagat para kumita ng salapi. Hindi rin naman

lingid sa kaalaman natin na may pumaparaang hindi patas at nagiging ilegal ang kanilang ikinabubuhay mula rito tulad ng pagdidinamita at ang kilalang muro-ami.

May mga gumagamit ng mga dinamita bilang madalang paraan para lamang makapangisdang nang marami. Ngunit sa pagdidinamitang ito ay nasisira rin naman ang ating

coral reefs.

Samantala, ang muro-ami o muroami ay katagang ginagamit bilang pamamaraan ng pangingsda – epektibo ngunit delikado.

Ang coral reef ay ecosystem na nasa ilalim ng tubig na dapat sana ay naingatan.

Ang mga koral ay matatagpuan saan mang karagatan sa buong mundo Ayon



sa kasaysayan, nagsimula ang muro-ami sa Pilipinas noong 1930s na ipinakilala at itinuro sa ating mga Pinoy ng mga Hapon.

Ang muro-ami ay epektibong paraan para ang mga mahihirap kungin mga isda tulad ng labahita, dalagang-bukod at iba pa nito ay maling malambat.

Ang mga nagsagawang muro-ami ay ang mga menor de edad na ang mga pinipili ay mga lalaki. Hindi basta simpleng dami nila ang kailangan para magawa ang pamamaraang ito. Karaniwang umaabot sa isandaang bilang ng mga batang lalaki ang isinasabak sa ganitong gawain.

Karaniwan ding isang malaking barko ang mga sinasakyan ng mga bata at sa kalagitnaan ng karagatan ay gagamit dito ng napakalaking lambat hanggang sa bumababa ito sa tubig at pumailalim pa.

Goggles lamang ang gadget ng mga diver kaya't ang mga kilos nito sa ilalim ng dagat ay kailangang madalian dahil delikado at maari nilang ikapa-

hamak. Minsan pa ay may namamatay sa kanila kapag sadyang kinukulang sa hangin.

Susundan ito ng pagtalon sa tubig at pagsisid ng mga bata ng may lalim na 90 talampakan. Hawak ng mga batang ito ang kanilang mga matibay na bato o metal weights na siyang ipupukpok sa mga koral upang gambalain at palabasin ang mga iba't ibang uri ng isda at lamang-dagat na narinto.

Kapag nakalabas na ang mga isdang ito hanggang sa sila ay pumormang isang malaking grupo ay agad din namang kikilos ang mga bata upang masigurong malalambat talaga ang kanilang mga target.

Mapanganib ang muro-ami dahil sinesira nito ang coral reefs at naaabuso ang mga bata.

Nakalulungkot na batay sa pag-aaral, kapag nasira ang coral reefs ay aabot pa ng 35 hanggang 50 taon para ito ay maka-recover pero hanggang sa 50 porsyento lamang.

Ang nakalulungkot pa rin dito, may balita pa ring may gumagawa pa ng tradisyong muro-ami. Kawawa ang karagatan at ang mga nabubuhay dito. Ganoon din ang mga bata at iba pang divers na nagsasagawa nito.







**Editorial**

## Problema sa plastic pollution

**S**A talumpati ni President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Noong Huwebes, binanggit niya ang problema sa plastic pollution. Ayon sa kanya, ikatlo ang Pilipinas sa mga bansa sa buong mundo na nagko-contribute sa plastic pollution. Nangako siya na sosolusyunan ang problema. Hindi tatakasan ang problemang ito at lilinisin ang mga kalat.

Maganda at habang maaga, napagtuunan ni Marcos ang problema sa plastic pollution na naka-igtan o napabayaang ng mga nagdaang presidente. Dahil sa kapabayaang, sikat ang Pilipinas sa pagiging plastic polluter.

Katunayan sa pagiging plastic polluter ay ang tone-toneladang plastic na basura sa Manila Bay na iniluwa ng Pasig River. Ayon sa pag-aaral na nalathala sa Science Advance Journal, ang Pasig River ay nakakapag-contribute ng mahigit 358,000 metriko tonelada ng plastic na basura sa karagatan bawat taon.

Problema ang plastic na basura hindi lamang sa Metro Manila kundi sa maraming lugar sa bansa. May mga ipinatupad na batas ukol sa pagbabawal sa paggamit ng plastic pero ningas kugon lamang. Sa simula lang ipinatutupad at pagtumagal, wala na.

Noong Pebrero 12, 2020, inaprubahan ng National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC) ang isang resolusyon na nagbabawal sa single-use plastics sa lahat ng government offices. Inatasan ng NSWMC ang Department of Environment ang Natural Resources (DENR) na ipatupad ang kautusan. Subalit wala nang narinig ukol dito. Patuloy pa rin ang paggamit ng single-use plastics.

Ang mga single-use plastics na kinabibilangan ng sachets ng shampoo, hair conditioner, 3 in 1 coffee, catsup, toothpaste, straw at mga sando bage na karaniwang ginagamit sa palengke ang nakatambak sa mga estero at kanal na nagiging dahilan nang pagbaha.

Nagbabala ang coalition ng environmental groups na kung hindi gagawa ng paraan ang pamahalaan para mabawasan ang paggamit ng single use plastic, apaw ang may 59.7 bilyong sachets sa Metro Manila.

Ngayong nangako si President Marcos na lilinisin ang mga basurang plastic, pakilusin na niya sa lalong madaling panahon ang DENR at iba pang ahensiya upang mapigilan ang plastic pollution. Bago pa maging huli ang lahat.



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**MOA TO COLLECT, RECYCLE PLASTIC TRASH:** First Balfour Inc., the Lopez Group's engineering and construction arm, recently reached an agreement with The Plastic Flamingo Philippines, a pro-environment social enterprise and recycler, to help reduce the country's problem with plastic waste. Under their memorandum of agreement, First Balfour employees have volunteered to help gather discarded plastic products, while First Balfour itself agreed to turn its headquarters in Parañaque City into a designated private plastic waste collection hub. Signing the agreement are (from left) Carlos Pedro Salonga, First Balfour human resources group head; Erica Reyes, The PLAF chief operating officer; and Vicente de Lima II, First Balfour strategic business planning and corporate communications head.



# The catastrophe to come — nuclear power plants

WHEN former president Rodrigo Duterte signed an executive order that allowed nuclear power plants to be considered as a source of electricity generation in the Philippines, a wave of concern swept through the minds and hearts of the security, environmental, medical and renewable-energy thinking community.

Department of Energy officials started to talk about the possibility of building several advanced small modular reactors, including floating SMRs, all around the Philippines. We surmise that the hearts of the energy tycoons and political cronies heard faster.

The gray-haired veterans of the anti-Bataan Nuclear Power Plant campaigns, such as famous campaigner Prof. Roland Simbulan of Nuclear-Free Philippines, will recall the hundreds of millions of dollars that were siphoned off the deal into the private accounts of cronies of Ferdinand Marcos Sr. Had the nuclear plant been operational, the Mount Pinatubo volcanic eruption and the many earthquakes would have likely caused a nuclear disaster.

The real possibility of a nuclear accident is what rightly scares millions of people away from nuclear power as a source of electricity generation when there are many alternatives to renewable energy available in the Philippines.

Solar and wind farms, hydro dams, geothermal energy and biomass are all available and at much lower cost in comparison to nuclear, coal, oil and gas imports. According to a report by the Philippine Electricity Market Corp., the few existing renewable energy (RE) projects, especially solar and wind power, have already saved the Philippines P4.04 billion.

Besides, renewable energy sources of electricity are free, thanks to nature. The wind blows, the sun shines and volcanic heat is always present for geothermal plants and



REFLECTIONS  
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delivered by nature without cost. They just need more investment and harnessing and they pose no danger.

The Philippines has the highest electricity cost in Asia, thanks to energy corporations making secret price-fixing deals with corrupt government officials. That is a form of corruption that cannot be cured. Gazi the government of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. promote renewable energy projects without corruption and dirty deals by cronies? We hope so and all true honest Filipinos need to monitor and evaluate the projects.

Nuclear power and oil and coal power plants are damaging the health of Filipinos and the environment and generating huge amounts of carbon dioxide that are causing global warming and dangerous climate change, which damage crops and the environment. Smaller harvests of mango and other fruits are an indicator. Mangos are splitting open on the trees because of the heat.

A strong earthquake or tsunami can cause a nuclear accident at an SMR that would release radioactive isotopes into the atmosphere and widespread death-dealing cancer would result. The radiation that would escape will cause widespread contamination, poisoning people, plants, animals, groundwater and the oceans. Sea life would be contaminated if an SMR was to leak radiation or if cooling water was released into the oceans. Huge areas of land would be uninhabitable for hundreds of years and thousands could eventually die from cancers.

Nuclear power plants such as Fukushima in Japan exploded on March 11, 2011, after an earthquake and tsunami. Three Mile Island in

the United States in 1979 and the Chernobyl meltdown in Ukraine in 1986 showed that the accidents released radioactive materials into the atmosphere and the oceans. The death-dealing radioactive gases blown by the wind caused unknown amounts of radiation sickness in thousands of people. There is still long-term cancer and thousands of people are dead some are still dying slowly. The governments and industry cover up the extent of the damage to health.

The latest nuclear technology SMRs are used in the US, South Korea and Russia. Germany is phasing out all nuclear plants because of public rejection of nuclear plants. Nuclear power plants are very dangerous in the Philippines since the country sits on the "Ring of Fire," an earthquake-prone area of the planet. Besides danger from devastating earthquakes, typhoons and volcanic eruptions, there is one other potential danger — human error. The Three Mile Island and Chernobyl accidents were caused by inattentive engineers.

The engineers on watch failed to notice the sudden temperature rise when water pumps, cooling the core rods, stopped operating. The steel and concrete dome at Three Mile Island contained most of the radiation but at Chernobyl, there was no dome and it exploded into the atmosphere contaminating Europe. At Fukushima, the reactor exploded into the sky, also contaminating hundreds of square miles. Millions of people were evacuated, never to return.

With almost everybody focused on their cell phone all the time accidents will happen when engineers engage in other prohibited activities at work. There are hundreds of such near-accidents in nuclear power plants. They are caught just in time to prevent a disaster. The incidents are never publicized, just covered up.

When the invading Russian troops entered a nuclear plant in eastern Ukraine this year, they ordered all personnel to leave the plant and assemble in a hall. Such was the Russian level of ignorance they stupidly forced employees to stop monitoring the reactors. An accident could have happened at the time. When they captured the closed Chernobyl plant, they were so stupid they dug trenches in the highly radioactive soil still contaminated after 37 years. Soon those soldiers will surely get cancer.

Every small modular reactor is a ticking time bomb for terrorists of which there are many waiting to get control of a plant and blackmail the nation with threats of blowing it up and contaminating an entire region. Even in Europe, security forces have intercepted communications of terrorists planning to capture a nuclear plant. Several attempts have been thwarted.

Nuclear power generation is not a safe or feasible option anywhere despite all the reassurances and false news by nuclear proponents. The greatest challenge is disposing of safely the deadly contaminated nuclear waste from nuclear plants that will last for thousands of years. A Department of Energy consultant proposes burying the waste on a remote island. For sure, the contamination will leech into the ocean and poison sea life and those who eat fish.

The future of the planet and the human species lies in stopping burning fossil fuels, such as coal, oil and gas, as well as global warming and accelerating renewable energy projects. Just 30 percent of the country's energy supplies come from renewable generation. This has to double in the next few years if we are to save the nation from an economic meltdown with the rising cost of coal and oil, which we are experiencing everywhere today.





## PH, UAE ink MOU for agri innovation

By **CRISTINA LEE-PISCO**

THE Philippines and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on agricultural cooperation on June 27, 2022, that will provide a strong framework for President Ferdinand "Bongbong" R. Marcos, Jr. and concurrent Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary, to work with Emirates country as a partner in the Middle East for agricultural innovation.

This MOU is expected to help the new administration, especially as the new Philippine president will concurrently take the helm of DA, indicating a "strong" focus on agriculture.

Philippine Ambassador to the UAE Hjayceelyn M. Quintana was accompanied by Assistant Undersecretary Noora Karam of the UAE's Ministry of Climate Change and Environment (MCCE) during the signing ceremony.

Also present was Consul General Marford Angeles and Agriculture Attaché Nolet Fulgencio.

"As we grapple with the effects of climate change and international conflicts on our food security, this

MOU on Agriculture puts Philippines-UAE engagement in this area of cooperation at a higher level. The Philippines, being one of the countries most affected by climate change, views the signing of this MOU as timely and relevant as it paves the way for a joint Committee where officials of the Philippines and the UAE will set directions for cooperation in soil science and management, biotechnology, post-harvest, agriculture R&D (Research & Development), agri-innovation, protected agriculture technology, irrigation, and water resources," said Quintana.

It will build upon complementarities between the Philippines and the UAE, each having different climatic conditions and equipped with unique and specific areas of specialization that can be applied towards providing solutions in agricultural production for the benefit of both countries, as well as set the stage for maximum exploration of the huge potential for growth in agricultural cooperation.

The importance of the UAE to the Philippines in agricultural terms cannot be overemphasized, as the country was the Philippines' largest market in the Middle East for agricultural food products, with exports amounting to almost US\$94 million in 2021.



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ARUN BANKAR/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Plastic crackdown** Pulses packed in single use plastic bags are seen at a stall in a local market in Chennai. India imposed a ban on many single-use plastics on Friday in a bid to tackle waste choking rivers and poisoning wildlife, but experts say it faces severe headwinds from unprepared manufacturers and consumers unwilling to pay more.



## Daan-daang dolphin sa Aklan naispatan

DAAN-DAANG dolphin ang naispatang nagsisilundagan habang lumalangoy sa Numancia, Aklan kamakailan.

Batay sa lumabas na ulat, mahigit 500 dolphin ang nakitang lumalangoy sa karagatang sakop sa nasabing lugar.

Sinabi ng agricultural technologist sa Numancia na taong 2005 nang unang mamataan ang mga dolphin sa lugar.

At simula rin nang magsimula ang panahon ng pandemya dulot ng COVID 19 ay dumami na umano ang mga namamataang dolphin sa nabanggit na lugar.





# 154-M Covid doses administered – NVOC

The agency said 'everything is status quo' until the next Health chief has been named or President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has issued new directives

The National Vaccination Operations Center (NVOC) said Saturday in Manila that the country has already administered 154,237,449 doses of the coronavirus disease 2019 vaccine nationwide.

The NVOC reported that 70,853,659 Filipinos have received complete coronavirus primary series vaccines, and 15,017,716 have gotten their first booster doses.

It added that 801 individuals aged 12 to 17 with underlying co-morbidities have been given their first booster doses.

"As provided for in [Department of Health (DoH)] DM No. 2022-0263, the roll-out of the first booster/third dose

for all adolescents ages 12 to 17 may proceed as soon as the Local Vaccination Operations Centers, implementing units, and vaccination sites/teams are ready," the NVOC said in a statement.

All regions in the country have fully vaccinated more than 40 percent of their target population for senior citizens (A2 priority group), with the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao having the lowest with 46 percent, the NVOC said.

The Cagayan Valley Region and Cordillera Administrative Region have the highest coverage of fully vaccinated elderly at 92.8 percent and 90.7 percent, respectively, it

pointed out. Meanwhile, the DoH said it is closely coordinating with the proper offices to collate the final report on the number of doses expiring soon.

The World Health Organization-led COVAX Facility has pledged to replace all of the country's expired vaccines. It also vowed to deliver at least 17 million more doses of Covid-19 jabs to the Philippines.

The government is looking to include Covid-19 jabs in its routine immunization program to ramp up inoculation in certain areas with low jabs uptake.

"During this transition period, the NVOC and vaccination sites will still continue with current operations in administering vaccines and boosters to the eligible population," the DoH said Saturday.

"NVOC is also reviewing existing policies to identify possible points for revision, one of which is the integration of Covid-19 vaccines to routine immunization," it added.

The agency said "everything is status quo" until the next Health chief has been named or President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has issued new directives.

At the moment, the DoH and NVOC will focus efforts to ramp up the rollout of vaccines and ensure that strategies to increase coverage are "tailor-fitted to best suit a given area or region."

"We will inform the public of updated plans and programs and provide data updates once everything has settled down and has been accounted for," the statement noted.





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THE EXPERIMENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS  
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THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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# DOH: 40% of seniors fully vaxxed against Covid-19

By ANALOU DE VERA

**A**ll regions in the country have already fully vaccinated more than 40 percent of their respective elderly population, the Department of Health (DOH) said on Saturday, July 2.

"As of June 29, 2022, all regions have fully vaccinated more than 40 percent of their A2 priority group/senior citizens," the DOH said in a statement, citing data from the National Covid-19 Vaccination Operations Center (NVOC).

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) has "the lowest coverage with only 46 percent of the target population for A2 (senior citizens) being fully vaccinated," the DOH said.

On the other hand, Cagayan Valley and Cordillera Administrative Region

"hold the highest coverage" of fully vaccinated senior citizens at 92.8 percent and 90.7 percent, respectively, the DOH said.

Based on the DOH's Covid-19 vaccination dashboard, there are now 70.8 million Filipinos fully vaccinated against Covid-19 as of July 1. Of the figure, 6.7 million are senior citizens.

#### Vaccine integration

The NVOC is also eyeing to integrate Covid-19 vaccines with the government's routine immunization program, the DOH said.

The DOH said this is one of the strategies the NVOC is looking into under its new chief - Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire.

"During this transition period, the NVOC and vaccination sites will still continue with current opera-

tions in administering vaccines and boosters to the eligible population," the DOH said.

"NVOC is also reviewing existing policies to identify possible points for revision, one of which is the integration of Covid-19 vaccines to routine immunization," it added.

At present, the NVOC is focusing its efforts on increasing uptake of Covid-19 vaccines.

"DOH and NVOC are currently focusing efforts to ramp-up the rollout of vaccines for our current priority groups through granular and localized analysis of areas with low vaccine coverage of first boosters and high numbers of unvaccinated," the state health agency said.

"This is to ensure that strategies implemented to increase coverage are tailor-fitted to best suit a given area or region," it added.



# UK monkeypox symptoms different from prior outbreaks

The World Health Organization is investigating cases of semen testing positive for monkeypox but has maintained that the virus is not sexually transmitted and is primarily spread through close contact.

PARIS, France (AFP) — British monkeypox patients are exhibiting symptoms that differ from previous outbreaks, the first study examining UK cases said on Friday, leading researchers to call for the definition of the disease to be updated.

Until a few months ago, monkeypox had been largely confined to West and Central Africa, where new outbreaks were mostly caused by humans being infected with the virus by animals like rodents.

But since May, more than 3,400 cases have been recorded worldwide, the large majority of them in Western Europe among men who have sex with men and have no known links to the sub-Saharan African cases.

Britain detected some of the earliest new global cases and the first study into patients there was published in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* journal on Friday.

The researchers analyzed 54 monkeypox patients in London, all men who have sex

with men, who represented 60 percent of UK cases as of 26 May.

All but two were unaware they had been in contact with someone who had monkeypox.

A quarter of the men were HIV-positive and a quarter had a sexually transmitted disease while they had monkeypox.

All patients had skin lesions, of which 84 percent were in the genital and anal areas.

These factors suggest that the virus is being transmitted during skin-to-skin contact as during sex, the study said.

The World Health Organization is investigating cases of semen testing positive for monkeypox but has maintained that the virus is not sexually transmitted and is primarily spread through close contact.

## Less fever, fatigue

Only 57 percent of the UK cases suffered fevers, compared to 85-100 percent of cases in outbreaks before this year.





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## Manila Water releases desludging sked for July

MANILA Water has announced its desludging schedule for the month of July as it encourages its customers to avail of the services to prevent clogging of their septic vaults in order to help protect waterways, creeks and rivers from untreated septic tank overflows.

Manila Water assured that barangays scheduled for this month will not be charged any additional fees to avail of the desludging services.

Manila Water Corporate Communication Affairs Group Head Jerry Sevilla Jr. said that customers simply need to coordinate with their respective barangay offices for their siphoning schedules.

"It is important to do septic tank cleaning and siphoning every five to seven years to ensure that the wastewater collected from septic vaults will undergo proper treatment through Manila Water's septic treatment plants before they are discharged back to creeks and waterways," Sevilla explained.

Residents of Barangays 766, 770, 772, 780, 782, 783, 792, 793, 866, 869, 873, 874, 875, 876, 894, 896, 898, 899, 903, 904 in the city of Manila; Brgys. Calumpang and Sta. Elena in Marikina City; Brgys. San Miguel and Santa Rosa

in Pasig City; Brgys. Blue Ridge A and B, Cailak, Kauratran, Laging, Handa, Morilog, Matandang, Bafara and Pansol in Quezon City; Brgy. Tibagan in San Juan; Brgy. Bagumbayan in Taguig; Brgys. Carmona, Poblacion, Santa Cruz and Tejeros in Makati City; Brgy. Addition Hills (Welfareville) in Mandaluyog City; Brgy. Dolores (Upper) in Taytay; Brgys. Dalig and San Isidro in Antipolo; Brgys. Santa Rosa and Santo Niño in Cainta; Rizal would get a chance to avail of the septic tank cleaning for the month of July.

"If not on the list, please verify the desludging schedule of your barangay by calling the Manila Water Consumer Desk Hotline 1627," Sevilla added.

Prior to the desludging schedule, Manila Water will also be conducting a census or survey of each incalhm to keep track of the residents' desludging cycle.

To be more efficient, Manila Water also reminds the customers to ensure that their septic tanks are already unclogged on the actual day of desludging to help expedite the siphoning process. Manila Water urges its customers to avail of the desludging service even if their septic tanks are not yet full.

03 JULY 2022, Sunday



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## DOH: No FDA-EUA application yet from manufacturers of COVID-19 vaccine for kids below 5

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published Jul 2, 2022 5:53:25 PM



Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, July 2) — Manufacturers of COVID-19 vaccines to be used for children before 5 years old have not yet applied for Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) before the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Department of Health said.

"This initiative will still have to be stringently reviewed and studied by regulatory institutions and our panel of experts before consideration for implementation," the DOH said in a statement on Saturday.

In mid-June, vaccine expert Dr. Nina Gloriani expressed support for the move to inoculate children aged 5 and below amid rising cases of COVID-19 in the country.

"Yes, *kasi bubuuin 'yan, makukumpleto 'yung ating* [because that will complete our] immunization coverage," she pointed out.

"*Pero* [But] of course, we have to consult the pediatricians also," she added. "*Titingnan natin kung sino yung mga bata na talagang pwedeng-pwede diyan*. Normally, we're looking at the more healthy children *pero sa totoo lang, ang binibigyan din natin ng bakuna* against COVID *ay mas 'yung may mga maysakit, kasi sila 'yung mas makaka-experience ng* more severe form of COVID-19."

[Translation: We will see who among the children are eligible for that. Normally, we're looking at the healthier ones but actually, we are giving more priority to those who are sick because they are the ones who will experience a more severe form of COVID-19.]





## DOH: No FDA-EUA application yet from manufacturers of COVID-19 vaccine for kids below 5

The vaccine expert also shared that upon application of EAU, evaluation and approval process may take three to four months.

*"Pero isipin natin na meron pang second layer of approval, 'yan po 'yung sa DOH-HTAC (Health Technology Assessment Council)," she noted. "Kasi kung bibilhin ng gobyerno 'yung bakuna, kailangan pong dumaan sa HTAC tapos 'yung procurement process, so baka mga 6 months before children below 5 can be vaccinated."*

[Translation: But let's take note that there's a second layer of approval from the DOH-HTAC. If the government will buy the vaccine, it should go through HTAC. Then there's the procurement process, so it may probably take six months before children below 5 can be vaccinated.]

Meanwhile, the DOH said the department and the National Vaccination Operations Center (NVOC) are currently focusing their efforts to ramp-up the vaccine rollout to current priority groups, to areas and age groups with a high number of unvaccinated individuals, and to those yet to receive their first booster.

"The country's COVID-19 response actions, along with actions for all other non-COVID health matters, continue through senior DOH officials supervising specific bureaus, offices, and units," it added.

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr., who assumed office on June 30, has yet to appoint a new health secretary.

## COVID-19 air war being lost, experts warn

(Agence France-Presse)  
- July 3, 2022 - 12:00am



Residents engage in outdoor activities at the Marikina River Park on Friday, Jan. 28, 2022.

The world is still not using one of its most effective weapons against COVID properly ventilating public spaces more than two years into the pandemic, experts warn.

At the moment there is a “fragile, armed peace” with COVID-19, said Antoine Flahault, director of the Institute of Global Health at the University of Geneva.

“In the hopes of stemming the tide of the pandemic and reducing mortality, we need to reduce the level of contamination, which the vaccine cannot do alone,” he told AFP. “We need a new phase – improving the quality of indoor air.”

COVID-19 is primarily transmitted through the air. It is carried in large droplets or fine aerosols when an infected person breathes – and even more so when they talk, sing or shout.

In a closed off or poorly ventilated room, these aerosols can remain in the air for some time, moving around the space and greatly increasing the risk of infection.

While it is generally accepted that COVID can be transmitted within two meters (6.5 feet) via both droplets and aerosols, there is still no consensus on the importance of long-distance airborne transmission indoors.

A team of researchers from the UK Health Security Agency and the University of Bristol reviewed 18 studies in several countries on airborne transmission.

In research published in the BMJ this week, they found that people can infect each other when they are more than two meters apart.



## COVID-19 air war being lost, experts warn

Open that window

We know one thing for sure: if you open a window, or well-ventilate a space, the virus-carrying aerosols dissipate like smoke.

But experts say that nowhere near enough is being done to ventilate public and private spaces across the world.

“On the whole, this is an issue that governments have not yet taken up,” Flahault said.

He called for massively increased funding to ventilate many public spaces, starting with schools, hospitals, public transport, offices, bars and restaurants.

“Just as we knew to filter and treat drinking water” in homes at the beginning of the 1900s, “one can imagine some households will equip themselves with air purifiers and consider opening their windows,” Flahault said.

Only a few countries have announced ventilation plans since the start of the pandemic.

In March the US government called on all building owners and operators, as well as schools and universities, to “adopt key strategies to improve indoor air quality.”

The plan, dubbed the Clean Air in Buildings Challenge, is covered by previously announced COVID funding and also includes a review of existing ventilation, heating and air conditioning systems.

The European Union has not issued any binding statements on improving air quality in light of COVID.

However, Belgium has announced a plan to have a carbon dioxide meter situated in all places open to the public. Having such a meter is voluntary until the end of 2024, when it becomes mandatory.

Stephen Griffin of the School of Medicine at Britain’s University of Leeds lamented that the UK had not acted more on ventilation.

“Sadly, the UK has not embraced the opportunity to safeguard its citizens in public spaces, its children in schools, or the longevity of the vaccination program in this way,” he told the Science Media Center.

He said that setting minimum safety standards for ventilation in public buildings would also “greatly mitigate the impact of other diseases.”

“Better ventilation also improves cognition by reducing carbon dioxide levels and, along with filtration, can reduce the impact of pollen and other allergies.”

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/07/03/2192645/covid-19-air-war-being-lost-experts-warn/amp/>



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
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




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