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NEWS ALERTS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



DENR taps USAID on climate change response

We want to make sure that we are aligned with your priorities so that we could support and know we're going in the right direction

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By [Maria Romero](#) @tribunephil_mbr



The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has tapped the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to further mitigate the effects of climate change in the country.

Last week, US Charge d'Affaires Heather Variava, USAID Mission Director to the Philippines Ryan Washburn, and USAID Philippines Environment Office Chief John Edgar paid a courtesy visit on DENR Acting Secretary Jim Sampulna in acknowledgment of the longtime partnership between USAID and DENR.

DENR and USAID are planning to come up with more activities for the other priority programs of the DENR, including the rehabilitation of Manila Bay, illegal wildlife trade, marine litter and climate change.

"We want to make sure that we are aligned with your priorities so that we could support and know we're going in the right direction," Washburn said.

He also mentioned the Climate Resilient Cities project, which is the latest USAID project that aims to help the Philippines adapt to, mitigate and endure the impacts of climate change.

Currently, the National Water Resources Board is implementing the Safe Water project as DENR's focal agency, among three regional offices in Palawan, Negros Occidental and Mindanao.

Meanwhile, DENR-Biodiversity Management Bureau's SIBOL project team recently worked on the Siargao seascape, which was badly hit by typhoon "Odette" in December 2021.

USAID provides technical assistance to the projects, with the Safe Water initiative aiming to improve the sustainable management of the country's water resources, and SIBOL on reducing environmental crimes and improving water security.

Former DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu signed a five-year partnership with USAID for SIBOL and Safe Water programs on 27 May 2021.

These projects are under the P7.25 billion USAID-Philippines agreement on enhanced and community resilience signed by the National Economic and Development Authority and USAID in February 2021.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2022/03/08/denr-taps-usaid-on-climate-change-response/>

USAID Pays Courtesy Visit to DENR Chief



Department of Environment and Natural Resources (**DENR**) acting Secretary Jim O. Sampulna (5th from left) join officials from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Environment Office Chief John Edgar, Mission Director to the Philippines Ryan Washburn, and US Charge d’Affaires Heather Variava (2nd , 3rd and 4th from left, respectively) on their visit to the **DENR** to discuss strengthening partnership on environmental protection and climate change mitigation. They are joined by (from left to right) DENR Foreign Assisted and Special Projects Service Project Management Division Chief Eddie B. Abugan Jr., Biodiversity Management Bureau OIC Director Natividad Y. Bernardino, National Water Resources Board Executive Director Seville D. David Jr., Policy and Planning Service OIC Director Glenn Marcelo C. Noble, and Project Preparation Division Chief Conrado A. Bravante, Jr.



Bong Go: DENR ginawaran ng lupa, 41 residente sa Taytay

MANILA, Philippines — Binati ni Senator Christopher “Bong” Go ang 41 bagong may hawak ng titulo ng lupa mula sa Taytay, Rizal sa turnover ceremony na pinangunahan ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources noong Marso 4.

Dalawampung 100- square meter na lote sa Lupang Arenda, Barangay Santa Ana ang ipinamahagi sa mga informal settlers at miyembro ng Samahang Masigasig Tapayan Homeowners Association (SAMATHOA). Ang hakbang ay pagtupad sa pangako ng administrasyong Duterte na lutasin ang mga isyu sa pagmamay-ari ng lupa sa bansa.

Umaasa si Go na magbibigay ito ng inspirasyon sa mga residente na pangalagaan ang lupain at paunlarin ito.

Bilang pakikiisa sa mga benepisyaryo, ang grupo ni Go ay namahagi ng mga pagkain pagkatapos ng seremonya sa Quarantine Facility sa C6 Road sa Taytay.

Nangako ang senador na patuloy na susuportahan ang mga mamamayan ng Rizal bilang “ampon” ng rehiyon ng CALABARZON.

Saksi sa seremonya sina DENR acting secretary Jim Sampulna, Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development Secretary Eduardo del Rosario, National Irrigation Administration Senior Deputy Administrator at dating Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda, Mayor George Gacula II, at iba pang lokal na opisyal.

Kuya Bong lauds award of land titles to 41 in Taytay



Sen. Christopher “Bong” Go congratulated 41 new land title holders from Taytay, Rizal, during a turnover ceremony led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources on Friday, 4 March.

Twenty 100-square-meter lots in Lupang Arenda, Barangay Santa Ana, were distributed to the informal settlers and members of the Samahang Masigasig Tapayan Homeowners Association (SAMATHOA). The move marks the latest demonstration of the Duterte Administration’s commitment to solve land ownership issues in the country.

“Natutuwa ako sa araw na ito dahil matutupad na ang pangarap ng ilan nating SAMATHOA members na magiging may-ari ng kanilang sariling lupain. Ang mga lupa na ito ay handog ng gobyerno sa inyo na bungad din ng inyong pakikinegosasyon sa ating pamahalaan.”

“Nawa’y magbigay inspirasyon ito para pangalagaan niyo ang mga lupain at paunlarin ito. Asahan ninyo na nandito kami ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte kasama ang ating buong pamahalaan na laging handang tulungan kayo sa inyong pagsisikap ... na magkaroon ng isang masagana at magandang buhay.”

To express his solidarity with the beneficiaries, Go’s team distributed meals after the ceremony at the Quarantine Facility, along C6 Road in Taytay.

In a separate distribution, representatives from the Department of Social Welfare and Development extended financial support under the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation component of its protective services for the poor, marginalized and vulnerable.

Concluding his remarks, the senator pledged to continue advocating for the people of Rizal as an adopted son of the CALABARZON region. He swore to push for similar programs, projects and initiatives that will benefit more communities, especially the underrepresented segments of the population.

The senator has already assisted thousands of indigent residents, displaced workers, typhoon and fire victims, and other vulnerable groups in Antipolo City, Angono, Cainta, Rodriguez, San Mateo, Taytay and Teresa in 2021 alone. More recently, his team assisted 3,352 residents in Rodriguez on February 25 and 26.

The lawmaker has also successfully pushed for the establishment of Malasakit Centers at the Antipolo City Hospital System Annex IV, Bagong Cainta Municipal Hospital, Casimiro A. Ynares Sr. Memorial Hospital in Rodriguez, and Margarito A. Duavit Memorial Hospital in Binangonan.

Source: <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2022/03/07/kuya-bong-lauds-award-of-land-titles-to-41-in-taytay/>



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“Natutuwa ako sa araw na ito dahil matutupad na ang pangarap ng mga miyembro ng SAMATHOA na maging may-ari ng kanilang sariling lupain. Ang mga lupa na ito ay handog ng gobyerno na bunga din ng inyong pakikinegosasyon sa ating pamahalaan,” sabi ni Go sa kanyang video message.

Umaasa si Go na magbibigay ito ng inspirasyon sa mga residente na pangalagaan ang lupain at paunlarin ito.

“Asahan ninyo na nandito kami ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte kasama ang ating buong pamahalaan na laging handang tulungan kayo sa inyong pagsisikap ... na magkaroon ng isang masagana at magandang buhay,” ayon sa senador.

Bilang pakikiisa sa mga benepisyaryo, ang grupo ni Go ay namahagi ng mga pagkain pagkatapos ng seremonya sa Quarantine Facility sa C6 Road sa Taytay.

Sa isang hiwalay na pamamahagi, ang mga kinatawan mula sa Department of Social Welfare and Development ay nagpaabot naman ng pinansiyal na suporta sa ilalim ng Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation na bahagi ng mga serbisyong proteksiyon nito para sa mahihirap, marginalized at bulnerable.

Nangako ang senador na patuloy na susuportahan ang mga mamamayan ng Rizal bilang “ampon” ng rehiyon ng CALABARZON.

Siya ay nanumpa na isusulong ang mga katulad na programa, proyekto at mga hakbang na pakikinabangan ng mas maraming komunidad.



“Bilang inyong kuya Bong Go, gagawin ko rin ang lahat ng aking makakaya upang isulong ang mga programa, proyekto at inisyatiba na makatutulong sa kapakanan ninyo at magpapaganda ng estado ng ating bansa. Kami po ni Pangulong Duterte ay naririto at handang magserbisyo sa inyong lahat sa abot ng aming makakaya,” pahabol ni Go.

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NWRB eyes cloud seeding operation in Angat Dam

By [Maria Romero](#)



The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) will have to resort to cloud seeding operations to mitigate a looming water crisis due to the continuous decline of water elevation in Angat Dam.

In a radio interview, NWRB Executive Director Sevillo David Jr. expressed concern over the “quite low” water level in Angat Dam, the main source of water supply in Metro Manila.

“If we compare to previous years it is quite low so we need to prepare for the situation,” David said.

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“If we compare to previous years it is quite low so we need to prepare for the situation,” David said.

The water level in the Angat Dam in Bulacan slightly dropped to 195.31 meters on Monday from 195.5 meters over the weekend. Its spilling level is 217 meters.

The NWRB attributed the decline in low precipitation in the watershed. As forecasted by the weather bureau, Luzon will remain dry until the end of February.

While it can still cover the water requirement of Metro Manila, the metropolitan cannot afford yet another water crisis amid the approaching summer months while the country battles a global pandemic.

Based on the latest data from the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), the water level in Ipo Dam in Bulacan also slightly dipped to 98.48 meters on Monday from 98.55 meters on Friday.



The La Mesa Dam in Quezon City likewise marginally dropped to 78.20 meters from 78.32 meters.

To recall, Angat Dam ended 2021 with 202.66 meters water elevation — 10 meters lower than the 212 meters year-end target. But the MWSS said, in an advisory posted on its website, that the current supply is still sufficient to meet the summer requirements.

To avert a looming crisis, both the Manila Water Co. and Maynilad Water Services, Inc. have placed their respective contingency plans.

East zone concessionaire Manila Water said it is maximizing the 100 million-liter-per-day (MLD) capacity of the Cardona Water Treatment Plant, which draws water from Laguna Lake.

It is also operating its deep wells which can provide an additional 115 MLD and its 20-MLD Marikina Portable Water Treatment Plant, which can treat water from the Marikina River.

Meanwhile, west zone concessionaire Maynilad said it optimizes its two water treatment facilities in Muntinlupa that now produce 300 MLD of water also drawn from Laguna Lake.



NWRB, nagkakasa ng cloud seeding para tumaas ang lebel ng tubig sa Angat Dam | Saksi



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Using this or water being fog (it can help) may contribute to normal and water level sa Angat Dam. Kaya may itinakda ang cloud seeding operations ang mga 11 hours sa

Saksi is GMA News' late night newscast hosted by Anne Clare and Risa Arangal. It airs Mondays to Fridays at 11:00 PM (7-11 Time) on GMA 7. For more videos from Saksi, visit: <https://www.gmanews.saksi.com>.

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Angat Dam water level lower than usual: NWRB | TeleRadyo

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Angat Dam water level lower than usual: NWRB | TeleRadyo

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The Philippine government is preparing flood-avoidance operations this month after the dropping of the lower-than-usual water level at Angat Dam.

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Davao River, umapaw kasunod ng flashflood sa Calinan, Davao City

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FLASHFLOOD SA DAVAO CITY



Davao River, umapaw kasunod ng flashflood sa Calinan, Davao City

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Sitwasyon ngayong gabí sa Calinan, Davao City kung saan naghaharda ang mga awtoridad para magsagawa ng search and rescue operations sa mga residenteng na-trap sa kanilang mga bahay na lumubog matapos umapaw ang Davao River. Nagkaroon ng flashflood sa lugar na dulot na paruloy na pag-ulán dahil sa low pressure area na umilral sa Davao region.

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Main Samar highways closed due to flooding

By Sarwell Meniano



FLOODED ROAD. The flooded highway in Arteche, Eastern Samar as taken Sunday (March 6, 2022). Flooding has rendered some road sections in Eastern Samar and Northern Samar provinces impassable due to incessant rains. *(Photo courtesy of Department of Public Works and Highways)*

TACLOBAN CITY – Flooding has rendered some road sections in Eastern Samar and Northern Samar provinces impassable due to incessant rains in the region the past days.

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) said flooding has closed a section of a major highway in Bigo village, Arteche, Eastern Samar. This is part of the road network that links the provinces of Eastern Samar and Northern Samar.

Motorists are advised to take the alternate route – the Imelda, Lapinig-Jipapad Road.

DPWH Eastern Samar district engineering office chief Ma. Margarita Junia said in a phone interview Sunday that flooding is common in Bigo village every rainy season since the road section is a catchment area every time there is an overflow from Oras River.

A viaduct is needed along the road section to elevate road grade line from the maximum flood level.

“The proposal is to build a viaduct, elevating road grade line from the maximum flood level. It will provide motorists safe access even during heavy rains,” Junia said.

In Lope de Vega, Northern Samar, flooding was recorded on Sunday along the road that connects the capital town of Catarman, Northern Samar to Calbayog City, Samar. The incident has closed the road to light vehicles for several hours until late Sunday, according to DPWH.

The incessant rains since Sunday is brought by a low pressure area affecting Visayas and Mindanao.

Frequent rainfall will likely prevail in Eastern Visayas in the early part of March due to the northeast monsoon or “amihan” and La Niña.

Rains may continue this month since there are existing weather systems that have been affecting the region.

The region has been experiencing rains weekly since November 2021 and the wet season persists until March even as the country observes Fire Prevention Month.

People living in low-lying areas near these river systems have been advised to stay alert for possible flash floods during rainy days.

Those residing near mountain slopes have been told to watch out for signs of landslides. **(PNA)**

Source: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1169134>



'434 foreigners visited Boracay since reopening'

[Ghio Ong](#)



MANILA, Philippines — Only a few foreign tourists have visited Boracay since the world-famous island was reopened to international travelers last month or two years after it was closed due to the COVID pandemic.

Of the 80,882 travelers who flew to Boracay in February, only 434 were foreigners, data from the municipal tourism office of Malay, Aklan showed.

A majority of the foreigners came from the United States with 136, followed by Germany with 39, the United Kingdom with 37, Canada with 27 and Australia with 23.

Also included in the tally were six tourists from China and three from India. Both countries do not enjoy visa-free entry privilege in the Philippines.

The Department of Tourism assured international travelers that their visit to Boracay would be free from inconvenience.

Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo-Puyat said the country is the first in Asia to reopen its borders to international travelers, who should be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 before entry.

Puyat said foreign tourists could visit all reopened destinations in the country, provided they comply with the requirements set by the local government units.

The country started welcoming foreign tourists on Feb. 10, following approval by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases.

Tourists should be fully vaccinated against COVID and test negative for the virus two days before leaving their point of origin. They would be required to present proof of complete COVID vaccination, negative RT-PCR test result, return ticket and travel insurance.



Tourists will not be required to undergo quarantine, but will be asked to monitor themselves for any COVID symptom.

Should they feel unwell, they must report to the local government unit that has jurisdiction over the area they are visiting.



EcoWaste calls out online shops for selling mercury-containing skin whitening products

by [Faith Argosino](#)



“Despite supposed policy disallowing the sale of prohibited products and those flagged by health authorities, defiant third-party dealers continue to advertise and sell skin whitening products laden with mercury in online shopping sites,” EWC National Coordinator Aileen Lucero said in a statement on Monday, March 7.

According to Ateneo Center for Research and Innovation Environmental Health Specialist Dr. Geminn Louis, “mercury is a toxic element, and even small amounts of this chemical are hazardous to human health.”

Apostol added that mercury-containing products might affect infants’ developing brain and nervous system and cause neurodevelopmental disorders when used by pregnant women.

To prevent mercury exposure among women, the Minamata Convention on Mercury, an international agreement, entered into force in August 2017. It lists cosmetics such as skin lightening creams and soaps with mercury content above 1 part per million (ppm) among products that should be banned by 2020.

Moreover, the country is a member state of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations subscribed to the ASEAN Cosmetic Directive, which included mercury and its compounds on the “list of substances which must not form part of the composition of cosmetic products” in 2007.

However, EWC experts discovered mercury up to 22,100 ppm in 26 samples bought in online shops using an Olympus Vanta M Series X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) analyzer recently.

The products from mainland China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Thailand with the highest mercury content were:



Ailke Perfection Salvation Rosy Whitening A+B (22,100 ppm of mercury)

Goree Day & Night Cream (17,850 ppm)

Goree Beauty Cream (17,690 ppm)

Ailke Boost Luster Superior Whitening (14,000 ppm)

Parley Beauty Cream (8,600 ppm)

Feique Herbal Extract Whitening Anti-Freckle Set (6,990 ppm)

Jhalak Beauty Cream (6,400 ppm)

Feique (Lemon. 3-in-1) (6,320 ppm)

Parley Goldie Beauty Cream (6,310 ppm)

Meyyong (Seaweed) Super Whitening Extra Whitening & Face Lift (5,500 ppm)

Feique Papaya Whitening Cream (4,900 ppm)

Golden Pearl Beauty Cream (4,560 ppm)

Collagen Plus Vit E Day & Night Cream (4,150 ppm)

Temulawak Day & Night Cream (3,460 ppm)

Morning Face Beauty Cream (2,940 ppm)

Santen (1,022 ppm)

S'Zitang 10-day Specific Whitening & Spot AB Set (829 ppm)

Jiaoli Miraculous Cream (720 ppm)

The environmental group has reported the results of its investigation to the FDA and urged the agency to issue a new advisory reiterating the ban on the manufacture, importation, distribution, and trade of mercury-containing cosmetics.

“Embrace your natural skin tone and reject chemical whiteners, which tend to reinforce colorism or the discrimination based on skin color,” the EWC and the International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN) advised female consumers to avoid mercury exposure.



200 Seedlings ng Guyabano at Mahogani itinanim sa isinagawang Tree Planting Activity sa Paligid ng Ipo Dam, Norzagaray Bulacan





Pangasinan ‘shells out’ P5.4-M for 268K kilos of plastic waste

By Hilda Austria



TURNING PLASTICS INTO GOODS. Residents in Bautista town, Pangasinan weigh their plastic waste to determine the amount of goods they will have in exchange. This is a project of the provincial government of Pangasinan called Kalinisan Karaban wherein plastic wastes are collected from residents in exchange for grocery items. *(Photo courtesy of Province of Pangasinan)*

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan – The provincial government of Pangasinan has collected some 268,297 kilograms of plastic waste from January to December last year, which was replaced with goods through its “Kalinisan Karaban” project.

In a phone interview on Monday, General Services Office chief Evan Gladish Domalanta said the groceries and other goods distributed to residents in the different parts of the province in exchange for their plastic wastes amounted to PHP5.4 million.

“Amid the pandemic, we continued the program and collected plastic wastes through the Abig (heal) Pangasinan Kalinisan Karaban, which was held 93 times last year with 7,973 participants from the different municipalities and cities of the province,” she said.

She added they recently collected 80 tons of plastic wastes and have given PHP1.6 million worth of grocery items in Bautista, Basista, Asingan, and Tayug towns.

Domalanta said the plastic waste collected through the program were turned into eco-bricks which were used in schools or provincial government facilities.

The Kalinisan Karaban was initiated by Governor Amado Espino III aimed at clearing the streets of Pangasinan of plastic wastes, and encouraging the love for the environment through segregation, especially among the children.

Domalanta said the Kalinisan Karaban store truck, which started going around the province in 2019, operates in a designated place where residents can bring their segregated wastes, such as plastic containers, shampoo sachets, sando bags, and candy wrappers, which would be weighed and exchanged with goods.

“Every kilo of plastic waste is equivalent to PHP15, which they could use to buy goods from our store truck,” she said.

The plastic wastes, she added, should be separated from wrappers and sando bags.

Domalanta said the project was institutionalized through Provincial Ordinance 32-2019 by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan (SP).

Source: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1169220>



Amid pandemic easing, Olango Wildlife Sanctuary reopens



LAPU-LAPU CITY, Cebu – Reeling from the onslaught of supertyphoon Odette, residents of Olango island have expressed hopes to slowly get back on their feet again with the reopening of the world-famous Olango Wildlife Sanctuary amid the easing of the novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic.

The Olango Wildlife Sanctuary serves as a paradise for the birds that fly back and forth to places such as Siberia, Northern China, Japan, and South Korea trying to “get warm” after the winter seasons.

“Hinaot unta nga modagsa ang mga turista aron naa na sab mi panginabuhian. Pait kaayo ang among kinabuhi tungod sa pandemya ug nisamot pa human nihapak ang bagyong Odette (We hope that many tourists will come so we can have our livelihood again. We really suffer much due to the pandemic and worse when typhoon Odette struck),” the residents told Maharlika TV.

Eight barangays in the island of Olango are under the jurisdiction of this city and most houses were destroyed and plunged into total darkness when supertyphoon Odette struck on December 16 last year.

The residents said the reopening of the wildlife sanctuary would further boost the island’s tourism industry and provide additional income to their families.

Lapu-Lapu City has eight barangays on the island of Olango where most houses were destroyed and plunged into total darkness when supertyphoon Odette struck on December 16 last year.

It was learned that there are more than one species of birds being observed in Olango Sanctuary. About 48 of them are migratory birds while the remaining number comprises the residents on this haven.

The website of Olango Island Wildlife Sanctuary identified some of the birds as the Chinese Egret, Little Egret, Little Heron, Grey Plover, Kentish Plover, Greater Sand-Plover, Far Eastern Curlew, Eurasian Curlew, Whimbrel, Bar-tailed Godwit, Common Redshank, Common Greenshank, Common Sandpiper, Terek Sandpiper, Grey-tailed Tattler, Ruddy Turnstone, Asian Dowitcher, Great Knot, Rufous-necked Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Gull-billed Tern, Whiskered Tern, Common Kingfisher, White-collared Kingfisher, Barn Swallow, Pacific Swallow, Yellow-vented Bulbul, Golden-bellied Flyeater, Pied Fantail, Brown Shrike, and Olive-backed Sunbird. (ai/mtvn)

Source: <https://maharlika.tv/2022/03/07/amid-pandemic-easing-olango-wildlife-sanctuary-reopens/?fbclid=IwAR2KMddayris2jsLTduiQjY1BBKX9pObSZ0LGtbEfiK3i-JHauK6LvEqMi0>

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BY MARIA ROMERO
@tribunephil_mbr

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DENR, USAID boost tieup for env'tal protection, climate change mitigation

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA [@jnimayuga](#)

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) are exploring ways to enhance the partnership in environmental protection and climate change mitigation.

DENR Officer in Charge Secretary Jim O. Sampulna, on Thursday (March 3) met with US Charge d'Affaires Heather Variava, USAID Mission Director to the Philippines Ryan Washburn, and USAID Philippines Environment Office Chief John Edgar who paid him a courtesy visit at the DENR Central Office.

"It is our great pleasure to meet you today and have the opportunity to personally thank the US government for always being supportive in our efforts of meeting our agenda in the environment and natural resources," Sampulna told the US officials. The new DENR chief, who had been a regional director from 2009 to 2018, cited that several USAID projects were implemented during his time on the field and hoped to continue doing so under his leadership.

"I came from the field, from the region, and I have implemented many USAID projects," he said.

Among the notable joint projects of the DENR and USAID is the Safe Water project and the ongoing SIBOL Project or Sustainable Interventions for Biodiversity, Oceans and Landscapes.

For his part, National Water Resources Board (NWRB) Executive Director Seville D. David Jr. said the Safe Water project is currently being implemented by NWRB as DENR's focal agency, among three regional offices in Palawan, Negros Occidental and Mindanao.

DENR-Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) OIC Director Natividad Y. Bernardi-

no shared that the SIBOL project team has recently worked on the Siargao seascape, which was badly hit by Typhoon "Odette" in December 2021.

"The work that USAID does to the country's resources is so important to the whole world, and the Philippines is one of our priorities for safe and resilient water," Variava said.

USAID provides technical assistance to the projects with the Safe Water initiative aiming to improve the sustainable management of the country's water resources, and SIBOL on reducing environmental crimes, and improving water security.

It was former DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu who signed the five-year partnership with USAID for SIBOL and Safe Water programs on May 27, 2021.

These projects are under the P7.25-billion USAID-Philippines agreement on enhanced and community resilience were signed by the National Economic and Development Authority and USAID in February 2021.

Aside from these projects, DENR and USAID discussed looking into coming up with more activities for the other priority programs of the DENR, including the rehabilitation of Manila Bay, illegal wildlife trade, marine litter, and climate change.

"We want to make sure that we are aligned with your priorities so that we could support and know we're going in the right direction," Washburn said.

He also mentioned the Climate Resilient Cities project, which is the latest USAID project that aims to help the Philippines adapt to, mitigate, and endure the impacts of climate change.

Washburn expressed hope that the DENR will continue to support the dissemination of climate information to local communities to increase the resilience of communities to the impact of climate change.



DENR AT USAID PARTNERSHIP SA IMPLEMENTASYON NG SAFE WATER PROGRAMS

TUTUKLAS ng mga bagong paraan ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources at United States Agency for International Development upang mapalakas ang partnership ng Pilipinas at ng United States para sa environmental protection at climate change mitigation.

Noong Marso 3 nang bisitahin nina US Charge d'Affaires Heather Variaya, USAID Mission Director to the Philippines Ryan Washburn at USAID Philippines Environment Office Chief John Edgar

si DENR Actng Secretary Jim O. Sampolna bilang pagkilala sa matagal nang partnership sa pagitan ng USAID at ng DENR.

Sinabi pa ng bagong DENR chief na dati ring regional director mula 2009 hanggang 2018, na ang ilang USAID projects ay naimplementa na sa kanyang panilbihan sa field at umaasa din ito na maipagpapatuloy ito sa kanyang pamumuno.

Ayon kay National Water Resources Board Executive Director Seville D. David, Jr., patuloy ang implementasyon ng NWRB ng Safe Water project bilang focal agency ng DENR, sa tatlong regional offices sa Palawan, Negros Occidental at Mindanao.



REMATE OPINION

ANGINYONG LINGKOD

NI DR. HILDA C. ONG

Samantala, ibinahagi naman ni DENR-Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) OIC Director Natividad Y. Bernardino na ang SIBOL project team ay kasalukuyang ginagawa ang Siargeo seascape na labis na naainsala ng Typhoon Odette noong Disyembre 2021.

Ang USAID ay nagbibigay ng technical assistance sa mga proyekto at ang inisyatiba sa Safe Water ay layuning mapabuti ang sustainable management ng water resources ng bansa at ang SIBOL ay upang mabawasan ang environmental crimes at maisaayos ang water security.

Si dating DENR Secretary Roy A. Cimatu ang lumagda sa five-year partnership ng USAID para sa SIBOL at Safe Water programs noong Mayo 27, 2021.

Ang proyektong ito ay nakapaloob sa P7.25 billion USAID-Philippines agreement on enhanced and commu-

nity resilience na nilagdaan ng National Economic and Development Authority at USAID noong Pebrero 2021.

Bukod sa proyektong ito, pinag-usapan din ng DENR at USAID ang paghahanap sa mas maraming aktibidad para sa iba pang prayondad na programa ng DENR kabilang na nito ang rehabilitasyon ng Manila Bay, illegal wildlife trade, marine litter at climate change.

Binanggit din nito ang Climate Resilient Cities project, ang pinakabagong USAID project na layuning matulungan ang Pilipinas para maka-adapt, matugunan at mapagaan ang epekto ng climate change.

Umaasa rin si Washburn na ipagpapatuloy ng DENR ang pagbibigay ng suporta sa pagpapakalat ng climate information sa mga lokal na komunidad upang madagdagan ang katatagan ng mga komunidad sa epekto ng climate change.



Bong Go: DENR ginawaran ng lupa, 41 residente sa Taytay

Binati ni Senator Christopher "Bong" Go ang 41 bagong may hawak ng titulo ng lupa mula sa Taytay, Rizal sa turnover ceremony na pinangunahan ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources noong Marso 4.

Dalawampung 100-square meter na lote sa Lupang Arenda, Barangay Santa Ana ang ipinamahagi sa mga informal settlers at miyembro ng Samahang Masigasig Tapayan Homeowners Association (SAMATHOA). Ang hakbang ay pagtupad sa pangako ng administrasyong Duterte na lutasin ang mga isyu sa pagmamay-ari ng lupa sa bansa.

Umaasa si Go na mag-

bibigay ito ng inspirasyon sa mga residente na pangalagaan ang lupain at paunlarin ito.

Bilang pakikilisa sa mga benepisyaryo, ang grupo ni Go ay namahagi ng mga pagkain pagkatapos ng seremonya sa Quarantine Facility sa C6 Road sa Taytay.

Nangako ang senador na patuloy na susuportahan ang mga mamamayan ng Rizal bilang "ampon" ng rehiyon ng CALABARZON.

Saksi sa seremonya sina DENR acting secretary Jim Sampulna, Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development Secretary Eduardo del Rosario, National Irrigation Administration Senior Deputy Administrator at dating Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda, Mayor George Gacula II, at iba pang lokal na opisyal.



41 TAYTAY RESIDENTS BINIGYAN NG LUPA P.2 NG DENR—BONG GO

BONG GO

41 TAYTAY RESIDENTS BINIGYAN NG LUPA NG DENR - BONG GO

BINATI ni Senator Christopher "Bong" Go ang 41 bagong may hawak ng titulo ng lupa mula sa Taytay, Rizal sa tumover ceremony na pinangunahan ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources noong Marso 4.

Dalawampung 100-square meter na lote sa Lupang Arenda, Barangay Santa Ana ang ipinamahagi sa informal settlers at miyembro ng Samahang Masigasig Tapatyan Homeowners Association (SAMATHOA).

Ang hakbang ay pagtupad sa pangako ng administrasyong Duterte na lutasin ang

mga isyu sa pagmamay-ari ng lupa sa bansa.

"Natutuwa ako sa araw na ito dahil matutupad na ang pangarap ng mga miyembro ng SAMATHOA na maging may-ari ng kanilang sariling lupain. Ang mga lupa na ito ay handog ng gobyerno na bunga rin ng inyong pakikipagnegosasyon sa ating pamahalaan," sabi ni Go sa kanyang video message.

Umaasa si Go na magbibigay ito ng inspirasyon sa mga residente na pangalagaan ang lupain at paunlarin ito.

"Asahan ninyo na nandito kami ni Pangulong Rodrigo

Duterte kasama ang ating buong pamahalaan na laging handang tulungan kayo sa inyong pagsisikap ... na magkaroon ng isang masañana at magandang buhay," ayon sa senador.

Bilang pakikilisa sa mga benepisyaryo, ang grupo ni Go ay namahagi ng mga pagkain pagkatapos ng seremonya sa Quarantine Facility sa CG Road sa Taytay.

Sa isang hwelay na pamamahagi, ang mga kinatawan mula sa Department of Social Welfare and Development ay nagpaabot naman ng pinansiyal na suporta sa ilalim ng Assistance to Individual

duals in Crisis Situation na bahagi ng mga serbisyong proteksyon nito para sa mahihirap, marginalized at vulnerable.

Nangako ang senador na patuloy na susuportahan ang mga mamamayan ng Rizal bilang "ampon" ng rehiyon ng CALABARZON.

Siya ay nanumpa na isulong ang mga katulad na programa, proyekto at mga hakbang na pakikinabangan ng mas maraming komunidad.

"Bilang inyong kuya Bong Go, gagawin ko rin ang lahat ng aking makakaya upang isulong ang mga programa, proyekto at inisyatiba na makatutulong sa kapakanan

ninyo at magpepaganda ng estado ng ating bansa. Kami po ni Pangulong Duterte ay naninito at handang magserbisyo sa inyong lahat sa abot ng ating makakaya," pahabol ni Go.

Saksi sa seremonya sina DENR acting secretary Jim Sampuina, Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development Secretary Eduardo del Rosario, National Irrigation Administration Senior Deputy Administrator at dating Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda, Mayor George Gacula II, at iba pang lokal na opisyal.

RNT



Bong Go lauds awarding of land titles to 41 residents in Taytay, Rizal

Gives additional aid to support pandemic recovery

SENATOR Christopher "Bong" Go congratulated 41 new land title holders from Taytay, Rizal during a turnover ceremony led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources on Friday, March 4.

Twenty 100-square meter lots in Lupang Arenda, Barangay Santa Ana were distributed to the informal settlers and members of the Samahang Masigasig Tapayan Homeowners Association (SAMATHOA). The move marks the latest demonstration of the Duterte Administration's commitment to solve land ownership issues in the country.

"Natutuwa ako sa araw na ito dahil matutapad na ang pangarap ng ilan nating SAMATHOA members na magiging may-ari ng kanilang sariling lupain. Ang mga lupa na ito ay handog ng gobyerno sa inyo na bungad din ng inyong pakikinegosasyon sa ating pamahalaan," Go said in a video message.

"Nawa'y magbigay inspirasyon ito para pangalagaan niyo ang mga lupain at paunlarin ito. Asahan ninyo na randito kami ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte kasama ang ating buong pamahalaan na laging handang tulungan kayo sa inyong pagsisikap ... na magkaroon ng isang masagana at magandang buhay," he continued.

To express his solidarity with the beneficiaries, Go's team distributed meals after the ceremony at the Quarantine Facility, along C6 Road in Taytay.

In a separate distribution, representatives from the Department of Social Welfare and Development extended financial support under the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation component of its protective services for the poor, marginalized and vulnerable.

Concluding his remarks, the senator pledged to continue advocating for the people of Rizal as an adopted son of the CALABARZON region. He swore to push for similar programs, projects and initiatives that will benefit more communities, especially the underrepresented segments of the population.

"Bilang inyong kuya Bong Go, gagawin ko rin ang lahat ng aking makakaya upang isulong ang mga programa, proyekto at inisyatibo na makakatulong sa kapakanan niyo at magpapaganda ng estado ng ating bansa. Kami po ni Pangulong Duterte ay nariti handang magserbisyo sa inyong lahat sa abot ng aming makakaya," ended Go.

The senator has already assisted thousands of indigent residents, displaced workers, typhoon and fire victims, and other vulnerable groups in Antipolo City, Angono, Cainta, Rodriguez, San Mateo, Taytay and Teresa in 2021 alone. More recently, his team assisted 3,352 residents in Rodriguez on February 25 and 26.

The lawmaker has also successfully pushed for the establishment of Malasakit Centers at the Antipolo City Hospital System Annex IV, Bagong Cainta Municipal Hospital, Casimiro A. Ynares Sr. Memorial Hospital in Rodriguez, and Margarito A. Duavit Memorial Hospital in Binangonan.

Meanwhile, as Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Finance, he supported the construction of the Taytay Sports Complex and numerous other infrastructure initiatives to create new jobs and improve the delivery of public services in the province.





DEPARTMENT OF
 ENVIRONMENT AND
 NATURAL RESOURCES
 NATIONAL WATER RESOURCES BOARD

NWRB warns against looming water crisis

BY MARIA ROMERO
 @tribunephil_mbr

The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) will have to resort to cloud seeding operations to mitigate a looming water crisis due to the continuous decline of water elevation in Angat Dam.

In a radio interview, NWRB Executive Director Sevilla David Jr. expressed concern over the "quite low" water level in Angat Dam, the main source of water supply in Metro Manila.

"If we compare to previous years, it is quite low so we need to prepare for the situation," David said.

The water level in the Angat Dam in Bulacan slightly dropped to 195.31 meters on Monday from 195.5 meters over the weekend. Its spilling level is 217 meters.

The NWRB attributed the decline to low precipitation in the watershed. As forecasted by the weather bureau, Luzon will remain dry until the end of February.

While it can still cover the water requirement of Metro Manila, the metropolis cannot afford yet another water crisis amid the approaching summer months while the country battles a global pandemic.

Based on the latest data from the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), the water level in Ipo Dam in Bulacan also slightly dipped to 98.48 meters on Monday from 98.55 meters on Friday.

The La Mesa Dam in Quezon City likewise marginally dropped to 78.20 meters from 78.32 meters.

Angat Dam ended 2021 with 202.66 meters water elevation – 10 meters lower than the 212 meters year-end target. But the MWSS said, in an advisory posted on its website, that the current supply is still sufficient to meet the summer requirements.

To avert a looming crisis, both the Manila Water Co. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. have placed their respective contingency plans.

East zone concessionaire Manila Water said it is maximizing the 100 million-liter-per-day (MLD) capacity of the Cardona Water Treatment Plant, which draws water from Laguna Lake.

It is also operating its deep wells which can provide an additional 115 MLD and its 20-MLD Marikina Portable Water Treatment Plant, which can treat water from the Marikina River.

Meanwhile, west zone concessionaire Maynilad said it optimizes its two water treatment facilities in Muntinlupa that now produce 300 MLD of water also drawn from Laguna Lake.



Boracay Water invests P4.3B in capex

BORACAY Water, which recently marked 12 years of providing reliable water supply and wastewater services to the country's top tourist destination, has invested more than P4.32 billion in various infrastructure facilities.

Boracay Water is a public-private partnership between the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority and Manila Water's fully owned subsidiary, Manila Water Philippine Ventures.

Immediately after Boracay Water began its operations in 2010, the company developed a 25-year master plan anchored on environmental sustainability, service continuity, service accessibility and water security, to support the economic potential of the Island as a major tourist haven.

"Boracay Water made sure that safe and reliable water supply is available in the Island and at the same time, ensured proper wastewater management in the island's three barangays namely Manocmanoc, Balabag, and Yapak including the white beach's popular commercial stations 1, 2, and 3"

By 2015, various projects were implemented to improve water supply network from source to distribution which increased water availability in the Island, allowing 100 percent of Boracay Water's customers to experience 24/7 supply from only 13 hours or less back in 2010.

Some of the major projects completed included the rehabilitation of the water treatment plant in Caticlan



BORACAY Water continues to implement upgrades and projects to expand proper wastewater management services in the Island. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

with a capacity of 25 million liters per day, the one-kilometer submarine water pipeline along the Caticlan-Boracay channel that supplies water to Boracay from mainland Malay town, repairs and replacement of kilometers of old networks along with expansion of piping system, rehabilitation and construction of pumping stations and booster pumps to serve the highest and farthest areas of the Island.

Boracay Water also focused on reducing systems losses due to leaking old pipes which was at a high of 37 percent of total production in 2010. To date, the company has brought the level of water losses down to 18 percent. Water recovered from leakages is brought back to the system and distributed to customers.

Aside from implementing projects that will ensure the continuous supply of potable water to the Island, Boracay Water began the herculean task of upgrading and expanding its wastewater facilities. The company started to immediately address the deterioration in coastal water qual-

ity by rehabilitating the existing Balabag sewage treatment plant and sewer network which only provided wastewater service to 22 percent of the Island.

Rehabilitation of the Balabag sewage facility was completed in 2011—four years ahead of target. Aside from doubling treatment capacity from 2.6 to 6.5 million liters a day (MLD), Boracay Water guaranteed that the facility complies with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' discharge standards.

Regular desludging services of septic tanks was also provided for unsewered areas through Boracay Water's fleet of vacuum trucks. Septage collected from septic tanks is also treated in the same Balabag plant. In September 2016, the company inaugurated its second wastewater facility, the Manocmanoc Sewage Treatment Plant that has the capacity to process 5 million liters daily in order to manage the increasing volume of wastewater due to the influx of tourist arrivals in Boracay.



Boracay Water to continue infrastructure investments

Boracay Water, a public-private partnership between the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) and Manila Water's wholly owned subsidiary, Manila Water Philippine Ventures (MWPV), said it would continue to invest and expand its infrastructure in the island in preparation for more tourist arrivals.

"As Boracay Water prepares for more tourist arrivals with the easing of mobility restrictions, it will continue to invest and expand its infrastructure in the island to ensure availability of clean, safe, reliable water supply," the company said.

Tourist arrivals in Boracay have been increasing since the year started as travel restrictions ease.

Data from the Malay Tourism Office showed that a total of 80,882 tourists arrived in Boracay in February. This is more than double the 35,799 tourist arrivals registered in January.

Boracay Water, which recently marked its 12th year of providing reliable water supply and wastewater services to the island, has already invested more than P4.32 billion in various infrastructure facilities.

"Boracay Water made sure that safe and reliable water supply is available in the Island and at the same time, ensured proper wastewater management in the island's three barangays, namely Manoc-manoc, Balabag, and Yapak, including the white beach's popular commercial stations 1, 2, and 3," said the company.

By 2015, various projects were implemented to improve the water supply network from source to distribution, which increased water availability in the Island, allowing 100 percent of Boracay Water's customers to experience 24/7 supply from only 13 hours or less back in 2010 when it first entered the island.

Among the major projects completed by the company are the rehabilitation of the water treatment plant in Caticlan with a capacity of 25 million liters per day, the one-kilometer submarine water pipeline along the Caticlan-Boracay channel that supplies water to Boracay from mainland Malay town, repairs and replacement of kilometers of old networks along with the expansion of piping system, rehabilitation and construction of pumping stations and booster pumps to serve the highest and farthest areas of the island.

Boracay Water also focused on reducing systems losses due to leaking old pipes, which was at a high of 37 percent of total production in 2010.

"To date, the company has brought the level of water losses down to 18 percent. Water recovered from leakages is brought back to the system and distributed to customers," Boracay Water said.

Apart from implementing projects that will ensure the continuous supply of potable water to the island, Boracay Water upgraded and expanded its wastewater facilities.

The company began to immediately address the deterioration in coastal water quality by rehabilitating the existing Balabag sewage treatment plant and sewer network, which only provided wastewater service to 22 percent of the island. This was completed in 2011.

"Aside from doubling treatment capacity from 2.6 to 6.5 million liters a day (MLD), Boracay Water guaranteed that the facility complies with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' discharge standards," the company said.

The regular desludging services of septic tanks was also provided for unsewered areas through Boracay Water's fleet of vacuum trucks.

- Catherine Talavera



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES
DENR

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SEA Coalition calls for safekeeping 30% of land, water forms by 2030

IN celebration of World Wildlife Day on March 3, the 30x30 SEA Coalition launched its official website to call for the protection of 30 percent of the world's land and water forms by 2030 through the involvement of indigenous peoples and local communities.

The 30x30 campaign, globally known as Campaign For Nature, was a global campaign Southeast Asian groups were adopting to urge government leaders to join the High Ambition Coalition (HAC); thereby, agreeing to protect at least 30 percent of the world's land and water forms during the Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of Parties or COP15 in China later this year.

HAC for nature and people is an intergovernmental coalition of more than 80 countries, co-chaired by Costa Rica, France and the UK, championing the 30x30 goal. Cambodia was the first and currently only HAC member from the Association of Southeast Asian

Nations (Asean) region. Other Asian members included Japan, India, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and the Maldives.

Asean was a biodiversity hotspot, containing 3 of the 17 megadiverse countries in the world: Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia. In these countries, 4 of the world's 25 biodiversity hotspots could be found.

However, the region was also a deforestation hotspot, losing 1.2 percent of forests annually, leading to severe biodiversity loss, according to Nanyang Technological University research in 2020. The Philippines, Myanmar and Thailand were also three of the most consistently vulnerable countries on the planet to extreme climate events since 1999, according to an Eckstein, et. al report in 2021). Current trends indicate stakeholders were only going to impacted worse with each new year.

To join the coalition, visit bit.ly/30x30Partner



Science Park of the Philippines: Embracing ESG for long-term sustainability

As one of the longest-standing private ecozone developers with strong environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices in the Philippines, we have always been committed to green and sustainable developments driven by industry-leading standards from site selection, to design, construction and operations.

Environmental Practices

Our commitment to minimize our carbon footprint in the day-to-day operations of our ecozone parks has earned us numerous recognitions over the years.



Awards received include PEZA Hall of Fame for pioneering environmental practices, 2020 PEZA Excellence Award for Green, Healthy, Smart and Sustainable Ecozone, 2021 DENR Best Environmental Practices of Private Sectors and the prestigious LEED Gold certification for our LISP IV administration building.



Notable undertakings of SPPI include masterplan designs considering the impact of climate change; generous and green open spaces; efficient operations towards resource conservation, pollution prevention, and waste minimization; use of renewable energy; adoption of smart technologies; and development of integrated townships.

Long before green efforts and sustainability became a mandate in the industrial park industry, we introduced the centralized wastewater treatment plant and this pioneering effort has become a standard requirement by PEZA for all parks since then.



We have pushed ourselves to improve our sustainability programs by setting reduction goals for greenhouse gas emissions by providing e-vehicles to

our locators and employees; by using energy efficient lighting fixtures, appliances and air conditioning systems; and installing solar panels and conducting periodic vehicle emission testing.

Social Factors

We conscientiously and proactively serve the social needs of our host communities, employees and locators through advocacy works on skills enhancement, literacy programs and providing education to the underprivileged. These programs are complemented by provision of transportation allowance to students, book donation as well as facilities improvements and school repairs.



Basic Entrepreneurial Training for community women in Malvar, Batangas



Trabaho Caravan in Calamba, Laguna employs hundreds from our host communities

We incentivize and provide trainings and sustainable livelihoods to our host communities in Laguna, Batangas, Pampanga, Bataan, Cagayan de Oro and Cebu.



Special humanitarian response such as donation of essential goods like sacks of rice, drinking water, and solar lamps which are distributed in active partnership with local government units and agencies, civil society organizations and other like-minded groups.

In response to the challenges of the present times, we have enforced company protocols and preventive measures like park wide vaccination to help achieve herd immunity for a safer working environment in all parks under the new normal.

Governance factors

SPPI adheres to the highest ethical and professional standards through its competent and experienced corporate leaders which results in transparency of operations as well as institution of organizational policies that promote employee integrity. Our Board is composed of Directors with a collective mix of competence, experience, gender representation and expertise, complemented by Independent Directors who provide guidance towards credible governance standards.



SENTINEL

RAMON T. TULFO

Terrorists in their midst?

The Lalamove delivery service left to fend for himself its rider, John Michael Hipona, who was arrested and jailed for trying to deliver a package that turned out to be contraband.

Lalamove received the package from a Jay Marvic Ramirez for delivery to somebody waiting at a restaurant on Roxas Blvd. in Manila.

The online delivery service company assigned the task to Hipona, who is being paid based on the number of packages he delivers.

The package contained an Asian leaf turtle and a Philippine forest turtle, both considered endangered species; their possession is illegal.

Hipona was arrested by a joint group of Manila policemen and employees of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The poor guy was taken to Station 9, booked for violation of an unknown conservation law and jailed for four days. His motorcycle and cellular phone were also confiscated.

The police didn't allow him to call Lalamove, his employer. Neither was he read his Miranda Rights.

Despite his protestation of innocence, Hipona was brought before Inquest Prosecutor Aris Panaligan who ordered his release for "further investigation."

This means that the prosecutor didn't believe that delivery boy Hipona was liable for the crime of which he was being charged.

The police didn't charge Lalamove and their inaction is very suspicious. Hipona was made a scapegoat.

Isumbong mo kay Tulfo tried to get the side of Lalamove after Hipona came to us Friday, Jan. 4, a few hours after his release from custody.

The delivery service firm didn't want to issue any statement. Neither did it want to apologize to Hipona for abandoning him.

Hipona's motorcycle and cellular phone were still being held by S/Sgt. Ed Dyson Banaag, the arresting officer, despite the messenger's release.

I asked Banaag the whereabouts of the motorcycle and the cellphone. He pointed to the DENR.

We're helping Hipona file possible criminal charges against Banaag and the DENR personnel who took part in arresting the messenger.

We're consulting some of my lawyer friends on what charges could be filed against Lalamove for not coming to the aid of its delivery boy, Hipona.





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Study: Closing gender employment gaps to hike GDPPC by 22.9 percentage points

By CAI U. ORDINARIO

✉ @caiordinario

CLOSING all gender employment gaps in the Philippines would lead to a 22.9-percentage-point increase in GDP per capita (GDPPC) over time, according to a Policy Research Working Paper released by the World Bank.

The paper, titled "A Gender Employment Gap Index [GEGI]: A Simple Measure of the Economic Gains from Closing Gender Employment Gaps, with an Application to the Pacific Islands" authored by World Bank Economist Steven Pennings, showed that this estimate based on the end of the simulation period in 2050.

The simulation also showed that by increasing female employment immediately would already yield an 11-percentage-point increase in GDP per capita or about half the maximum increase in GDPPC over time.

"In the default calibration for the Philippines, the increase in female employment increases GDPPC immediately by almost 11 percent, or half of the GEGI. This is the direct effect of higher employment on GDP. The size of the direct effect is governed by the labor share of GDP, which is 0.5 in the default calibration for the Philippines," Pennings said in his paper.

"By the end of the simulation period in 2050, GDPPC [long-run GDP] is about 20 percentage points higher, or almost 90 percent of the increase in the GEGI. In other words, it takes around 30 years after the period of the policy change to achieve 90 percent of the GDP gains in the GEGI," he added.

Pennings explained that the GEGI is a new measure of the effect of closing gender employment gaps on long-run GDP. The impact of the GEGI is equal to the percentage increase in GDPPC, making it "easy to interpret."

The data showed that Austria, the Philippines, and Jamaica were the only countries, which saw a higher share of sole women entrepreneurs from a list of 62 countries.

Based on the data, women in the Philippines accounted for 52.2 percent of sole proprietors in 2015 and 53.1 percent in 2016. This meant the gender gap in terms of sole proprietorship is in favor of women.

However, the average share of female sole proprietors in many countries only saw a slight increase or two percentage points between 2014 and 2020.



The computation took into consideration employment to population rate between male and female workers. For the Philippines, 73 percent of the male population and 46 percent of the female population are employed.

The computation also took into consideration "better employment," which is not about formality or informality but about the organization of work in a team where employees are paid for their work rather than working out of familial obligation.

In the Philippines, male Filipinos aged 15 to 64 years old who are in better employment is 43 percent while for females, it is lower at 27 percent. This results in a better employment gap of 23.1 percent.

Pennings also took into consideration other employment, which referred to all types of employment other than better employment, and is calculated as the difference between total employment and better employment.

In terms of other employment, the rate for males is 30 percent while for females, it was pegged at 19 percent. This results in a gap of 22.1 percent.

The paper also took into consideration the human capital index score for both genders based on the 2020 Human Capital Update. The value for the Philippines is 0.52.

"The Philippines was chosen because of the other gender work in that country and an existing LTGM [Long Term Growth Model] calibration. However, its LTGM calibration is fairly similar to that in other developing countries, and so this exercise is likely informative for other countries," Pennings explained.

Earlier, the World Bank said the Philippines is one of only three countries where female sole proprietors exceeded males.

"On average across countries, the GEGIs indicate long-run GDP per capita would be around 19 [percentage points] higher if gender gaps could be closed by increasing female employment to that of men, though for individual countries with the largest gaps, GDP could be up to 85 [percentage points] larger. Long-run GDP per capita would be about 22 [percentage points] larger on average across 11 Pacific Islands from closing gender employment gaps," he explained.



Gender equality for sustainability

On the eve of International Women's Day, President Duterte signed a law raising the age of sexual consent from 12 to 16. This should improve the country's efforts against statutory rape, child prostitution and online sexual exploitation of children, with girls still the biggest victims.

Beyond protecting women and girls from sexual abuse, this year's Women's Day continues to focus on achieving gender equality, with the United Nations emphasizing its importance in sustainability efforts.

The world has come a long way in terms of gender equality. Even during the pandemic, women have been in the front lines of providing health care. Women are also actively participating in research for COVID vaccines and treatments.

In the past year, Danish toy giant Lego ended its gender-targeted packaging of its products. Women accounted for a record 49 percent of athletes who participated in the Olympic Games in Tokyo. And US electronic stock exchange NASDAQ required 3,000 publicly traded companies to include in their boards at least one woman and one self-identified LGBTQ+ as well as promote racial diversity.

Also last year, Kamala Harris was sworn in as America's first woman vice president, and the first of Black and Asian descent. For the first time, the World Trade Organization also picked

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a woman and African as its head: Nigerian Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.

In 2021, several countries elected or swore in women heads of state or government: Barbados, Estonia, Moldova, Tanzania, Samoa, Uganda, Tunisia, Sweden and Honduras.

Gender equality is one area where the Philippines has ranked high in international surveys. The country has had two women presidents, and the incumbent vice president is running for the highest office in May. Filipino women have distinguished themselves in many sectors and have broken the glass ceiling in areas long dominated by men.

The country has passed landmark laws against gender discrimination, domestic violence and sexual harassment including catcalls and wolf whistles. Enforcement, however, has been spotty, and many women are unaware of their rights guaranteed by law. It also took time before legal impediments against the full implementation of the reproductive health law were removed.

Apart from the political sphere, the UN is pushing for greater participation of women in climate change adaptation and response. The theme for today's observance is "gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow." Climate change will be around long after the COVID-19 pandemic has reached endemic state, and women play a critical role in confronting climate change.



How PHL can attain a sustainable future

TODAY, March 8, is International Women's Day. It is a global holiday celebrated annually to commemorate the cultural, political, and socioeconomic achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality. The United Nation's theme for this year's observance is "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow" in recognition and celebration of the women and girls who are leading the charge on climate-change adaptation and response and to honor their leadership and contribution towards a sustainable future. The campaign theme of IWD 2022 is *#BreakTheBias*, which encourages everyone to develop a greater understanding about gender bias and be more aware of its existence.

The Philippines has been scoring well on international gender equality measures and indices, but more is needed to overcome the remaining challenges. We are the only Asian country that made it to the top 20 tier in terms of closing the gender gap, according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2020 of the World Economic Forum. The report shows that the Philippines has closed 78 percent of its overall gender gap, garnering a score of 0.781 (down by 1.8 percentage points from .799 in 2019).

The Global Gender Gap Report 2020 measured countries on their progress towards gender parity in four dimensions: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. The 2020 report shows that the Philippines remained strong in three of the four dimensions. The dip in the country's ranking is traced to the Political Empowerment gap, which has widened over the past two years. From 41.6 percent in 2019, the political empowerment score is down by 6.3 percentage points to 35.3 percent in 2020.

According to the report, the downgrade is due to the lower female representation in the Cabinet, which declined from 25 percent to 10 percent from 2017 to 2019. Female representation in Congress also fell slightly, at 28 percent at the beginning of 2019.

"The Philippines has closed 80 percent of the Economic Participation and Opportunity gender gap, with women outnumbering men in senior and leadership roles, as well as in professional and technical professions. It is only one of four countries to achieve this feat. The country ranks fifth on the indicator assessing gender wage equality, with a score of 81.2," the report said.

Philippine Commission on Women Chairperson Dr. Rhodora Bucoy takes this as a challenge to further strengthen the drive for gender equality and women's empowerment. "The Philippines's ranking may have dropped but this will not discourage but rather motivate us even more to work on breaking gender-based stereotypes and misogyny so that women are given equal opportunities with men," Bucoy said, adding that PWC will "reinforce our partnerships with different national government agencies to ensure that educational, health, and economic services are provided to women. We will continue to work for the increased participation and representation of women in government seats, political parties, development councils and planning bodies, as provided in the Magna Carta of Women (Republic Act 9710)."

In terms of employment opportunities, more women in the country are left behind. Data obtained by the BUSINESSMIRROR from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed that 17.428 million women were not in the labor force as of December 2021. This accounted for 65.9 percent of the total number of Filipinos who chose to stay out of the country's pool of workers.

Experts said the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women is most evident in job losses. Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Karl Kendrick T. Chua recently quantified the country's losses as a consequence of the absence of 17 million Filipino women from the labor force. Batting for the reopening of schools nationwide, Chua said: "For every week that schools remain closed, the economy loses P12 billion. That's because a fourth of parents would not be able to report to work if their children continue studying from home." (Read, "Neda bares P12-billion weekly loss if schools remain closed under AL 1," in the BUSINESSMIRROR, March 1, 2022).

The celebration of International Women's Day should serve as an occasion to highlight the need for all sectors to help empower Filipino women. In the time of the pandemic, when many of them lost their jobs, the best way to help millions of women is to invest in programs and projects that make them economically productive. Gender dividend refers to the increased economic growth that could be realized with investments in women. Reforms that allow women to realize their full potential are needed for the country to attain a more sustainable future.

ADB, WB urge PH for worker upskilling reforms, climate change mitigation

BY ANNA LEAH E. GONZALES

THE Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank said the Philippines should implement reforms that will address the labor market adjustment and climate change.

ADB Country Director for the Philippines Kelly Bird, during *The Manila Times* "Economic Outlook for 2022: Looking Beyond the Pandemic Endgame" virtual forum on March 1, said labor market adjustment and climate change are the two major challenges to the country's long term growth.

"The pandemic has created a massive reallocation of jobs across sectors, away from those sectors that are contact intensive like tourism, retail [and] transport; toward sectors that are more information-related," he said.

According to Bird, while many of these jobs will be returned as the economy recovers, the relocation across sectors will persist as businesses adapt to new strategies such as digitalization, automation of production and work-from-home arrangements.

Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed that as of December 2021, the country's unemployment rate was at 6.6 percent, a huge improvement from the 17.7 percent recorded in April 2020 when the Philippines was under enhanced community quarantine.

The number of underemployed persons or employed persons who expressed their desire to have additional hours of work in their present job or to have additional jobs or to have a new job with longer hours of work, however, was at 14.7 percent.

"The longer jobseekers remain unemployed, the faster their skills depreciate and the less employable they become. These factors together have created this significant jobs mismatch, and many older workers will find it difficult to transition to new jobs because of the wrong skill sets and experience," Bird said.

The ADB country chief pointed out that focusing on skills development and employment facilitation is needed to help expedite changes in the labor market.

"We also need to think about new ways of delivering technical skills to job seekers and workers to ensure that they do have those skills that are relevant to the private sector and relevant to employers. This is going to require reforms to the apprenticeship programs and introduction of innovative workplace skills, funding schemes," he said.

As part of the ADB and the government's move to upskill workers, an employer-led training grant scheme

is set to be launched within this month.

Bird said ADB, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Labor and Employment, and the Department of Tourism will reach out to those in the agro business, construction, information technology and animation, tourism and women-owned enterprises for training grants.

For climate change, Bird said addressing and mitigating its impact should also be one of the priorities of the Philippines.

"The Philippines is affected by climate change, and it is depleting water supplies, and it threatens food systems in the long term. This means both public and private sectors will have to invest in climate change, mitigation and adaptation investments, and these will become substantial over the next two decades," he said.

Data released by the Department of Finance earlier showed that over the last 10 years, the Philippines incurred an estimated P506.1 billion worth of losses from climate-related hazards.

The amount is equivalent to an annual average of P48.9 billion or about 0.33 percent of the annual average gross domestic product.

"The key for the Philippines is to plan now for both mitigation and adaptation investments both in terms of mass public transportation, agriculture and the health sector that are going to be critically important to adapt to climate change but also in the energy sector," Bird stated.

During the forum, Bird also highlighted the several opportunities that the Philippines can tap in the area of renewable energy.

"The government can develop a strategy for renewable energies. It could create a very important growth sector, and that could attract a lot of investment, and it can create some very high quality jobs here in the Philippines," he said.

The World Bank, for its part, also believes that reforms that will help mitigate the impact of climate in agriculture and urban areas should be prioritized.

World Bank Country Director for the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Brunei Ndiame Diop said the Philippines should invest more on drainage systems,



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flood management, flood control systems and housing standards.

Diop also underscored the importance of enticing businesses to invest in renewable energy.

The Philippines, through its National Renewable Energy Program (NREP) 2020 to 2040, targets to increase the share of renewable energy in the country's power generation mix to 35 percent by 2030 and 50 percent by 2040.

The NREP lays down the foundation for developing the country's renewable energy resources, stimulating investments in the

RE sector and developing technologies and pushes for national and local renewable energy planning that will help identify the most feasible and least-cost renewable energy development options.

"I think what is really important now is to go a bit more granular as to, you know, how do you translate that plan into more specific areas that could galvanize investment," Diop said.

"I think the clarity of the plan in the trajectory will be really important to guide private investment and to align financing as well," the World Bank official added.



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
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A business approach to end plastic pollution

A study commissioned by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) estimates that humans ingest in a week the equivalent of five grams of plastic or about the weight of a credit card. This is so because all the improperly disposed plastic wastes through decades continue to leach microplastics that are finding their way into our food ecosystem.

Faced with this scientific finding and the growing awareness of people of the harm that plastics can pose to their health and the environment, businesses are increasingly feeling the pressure to come up with a sustainable approach

BIZLINKS



REY GAMBOA

to plastic use and to start to take a more active hand in the world's battle against plastic pollution.

For now, some companies are voluntarily initiating programs to eliminate plastics use even if their competitors do not, and this usually happens when the concerned business entity has a strong brand presence that will not sway its consumer base to turn to another.

McDonald's, for example, has done away with styropor packaging and plastic utensils even if other fast food chains offering burgers or chicken do not. The company believes that its patrons are not going to shift their loyalties even if they do have to pay more on food offerings.

Starbucks is another food vending company that has slowly shifted its corporate policies in line with its commitment to reduce plastic use, especially the non-biodegradable type. It first started with eliminating all plastic straws, a big problem for customers who buy iced coffee or tea and frappes. Somehow, it has managed to make the transition.

Creating level playing fields

Those who have not made the move are waiting for a consensus among all industry members to recognize the hazards of plastic use and to commit to a plan. For example, everyone now realizes that product sachets are one of the biggest single-use plastic pollutants now, but everyone should agree to stop its phase out, thus creating a level playing field.

Another way to make this happen, they say, is to have government enact laws that will compel businesses to cut down on plastic use. Current prohibitions on the use of plastic straws and sando bags are examples, but they must be strictly enforced at all levels and at all times.

A more radical solution would be to prohibit the manufacture and sales of plastic carry bags, PET bottles, and straws. If these were not made available to the market, then there would be less plastic wastes generated. Studies show that such single-use plastics account for more than 50 percent of plastic pollutants found in oceans.

The suggested solutions seem simple enough, except that it requires an ironclad commitment by governments to wage a full war on plastics. Unfortunately, very few governments have been able to come up with comprehensive laws and regulations to address plastics and its pollution.

Business' initiative

In the face of this seeming stalemate, more than 70 businesses and financial institutions signed a petition last January calling on the United Nations to come up with a legally binding treaty addressing plastic pollution. Some of the companies involved are Nestle and the Coca-Cola Company, as well as BNP Paribas Asset Management.

The petition was an offshoot of a paper published by The Ellen MacArthur Foundation, together with the WWF and Boston Consulting Group in 2020, that expounded on the growing crisis of plastic pollution for both the environment and businesses, and the need for the United Nations to draft a treaty, much like the Paris Agreement of 2015.

Release of the petition was timed a month or so before the fifth United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA-5) meeting in Nairobi, Kenya where close to 200 representatives from member states were to meet to discuss and act on the world's most pressing environment challenges.

Among the salient points discussed in the petition was the need for a treaty that will keep plastics in the economy, but out of the environment and prevent the production of plastics from fossil fuels. In addition, the treaty needs to shape a shared approach by government, business, and society to address the issue. Finally, the treaty should put in place a governance structure for countries to enforce compliance.

Legally binding treaty by 2024

Last week, on March 2, representatives of 175 countries agreed to come up with a legally binding treaty by end 2024 that will end plastic pollution. An Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) will be formed, and is expected to lead discussions and constitute a forum before the end of the year.

What is historic in the UNEA-5 agreement is the recognition that a total plastic ban is not going to be sustainable in today's modern society, and instead pushes for the concept of sustainable consumption and production, including circular economy approaches, in developing national action plans.

This would involve rethinking the way plastics are being manufactured in the future, and its use and disposal so that they do not become pollutants on land, in the air, and in our waters.

The task is gargantuan, to say the least. Plastic production is now estimated at about 400 million metric tons a year, and will likely double by 2040. Encouraging countries to ban single plastic use will in itself be challenging, but the UN points out that we should all set our hearts to accomplish this goal.

Not to do so would be endangering further human lives.

Facebook and Twitter

We are actively using two social networking websites to reach out more often and even interact with and engage our readers, friends and colleagues in the various areas of interest that I tackle in my column. Please like us on www.facebook.com/ReyGamboa and follow us on www.twitter.com/ReyGamboa.

Should you wish to share any insights, write me at Link Edge, 25th Floor, 139 Corporate Center, Valero Street, Saicedo Village, 1227 Makati City. Or e-mail me at reydgamboa@yahoo.com. For a compilation of previous articles, visit www.BizlinksPhilippines.net.



**DOST-DA-DENR-DOH-DILG
 Joint Department Circular¹
 No. 01, series of 2021**

Subject: Rules and Regulations for the Research and Development, Handling and Use, Transboundary Movement, Release into the Environment, and Management of Genetically Modified Plant and Plant Products Derived from the Use of Modern Biotechnology

WHEREAS, the Constitution protects the rights of the people to life, to health and to a balanced and healthful environment;

WHEREAS, the Philippines is a party to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety;

WHEREAS, Executive Order (E.O.) No. 514, series of 2006, "Establishing the National Biosafety Framework, Prescribing Guidelines for its Implementation, Strengthening the National Committee on Biosafety of the Philippines, and for other Purposes," was issued to guide the development, adoption and implementation of all biosafety policies, measures and guidelines and in making decisions concerning the research, development, handling and use, transboundary movement, release into the environment, and management of regulated articles;

WHEREAS, under E.O. No. 514, series of 2006, the National Committee on Biosafety of the Philippines (NCBP) shall be the lead body to coordinate and harmonize inter-agency and multi-sector efforts to develop biosafety policies in the country and set scientific, technical and procedural standards on actions by agencies and other sectors to (a) promote biosafety in the Philippines; (b) oversee the implementation of the National Biosafety Framework (NBF); (c) act as a clearing house for biosafety matters; and (d) coordinate and harmonize the efforts of all concerned agencies and departments in this regard;

WHEREAS, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), under E.O. No. 292, series of 1987, "Instituting the Administrative Code of 1987," is mandated to provide central direction, leadership and coordination of scientific and technological efforts and ensure that the results therefrom are geared and utilized in areas of maximum economic and social benefits for the people;

WHEREAS, under the NBF, the DOST shall take the lead in evaluating and monitoring regulated articles intended for contained use;

WHEREAS, the Department of Agriculture (DA), through the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), is responsible for the prevention of introduction, incursion, establishment and subsequent spread of plant pests by regulating the international and domestic movements of plants and plant products, under Presidential Decree (P.D.) No. 1433, as amended, "Promulgating the Plant Quarantine Law of 1978, thereby Revising and Consolidating Existing Plant Quarantine Laws to Further Improve the Plant Quarantine Service of the Bureau of Plant Industry";

WHEREAS, the DA, under E.O. No. 292, series of 1987, is responsible for promoting the well-being of farmers and other rural workers, by providing an environment in which they can increase their income, improve their living conditions, and maximize their contributions to the national economy;

WHEREAS, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), under E.O. No. 192, series of 1987, "Reorganization Act of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources," is the primary agency responsible for the conservation, management, development and proper use of the country's environment and natural resources, and the regulation of projects and activities that may significantly affect the environment;

WHEREAS, the Department of Health (DOH), under E.O. No. 292, series of 1987, is primarily responsible for the formulation, planning, implementation, and coordination of policies and programs in the field of health, with the primary function of promoting, protecting, preserving or restoring the health of the people through the provision and delivery of health services and through the regulation and encouragement of providers of health goods and services;

WHEREAS, pursuant to Republic Act (R.A.) No. 7160, otherwise known as the "Local Government Code of 1991," the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) has the power and function to establish a system of coordination and cooperation among the citizenry, local executives and other departments, to ensure effective and efficient delivery of basic services to the public, specifically, agricultural extension and on-site research services and facilities, which include prevention and control of plant and animal pests and diseases;

WHEREAS, Sections 2(c), 26, and 27 of R.A. No. 7160 require prior consultation with local government units (LGUs) and relevant stakeholders to explain the goals and objectives of a project or program, its impact upon the people and the community in terms of environmental or ecological balance, and the measures that will be undertaken to prevent or minimize the adverse effects thereof;

WHEREAS, the Departments of Agriculture, Health, and Interior and Local Government, are responsible for the enforcement of food safety and sanitary rules and regulations, including inspection and compliance, under Republic Act No. 10611, otherwise known as the "Food Safety Act of 2013";

WHEREAS, under Republic Act No. 7394, "Consumer Act of the Philippines," it is the policy of the State to protect the interests of consumers, promote their general welfare, and to establish standards of conduct for business and industry including the protection against hazards to health and safety;

WHEREAS, under Republic Act No. 11032, "Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018," the State shall take appropriate measures to promote transparency in each agency with regard to the manner of transacting with the public, which shall encompass a program for the adoption of simplified requirements and procedures that will reduce the red tape and expedite business and nonbusiness related transactions in government;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Departments of Science and Technology, Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources, Health, and Interior and Local Government issue this Joint Department Circular governing the research and development, handling and use, transboundary movement, release into the environment, and management of genetically modified plant and plant products derived from the use of modern biotechnology.

ARTICLE I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 1. Applicability. This Joint Department Circular shall apply to the research, development, handling and use, transboundary movement, release into the environment, and management of plants and plant products derived from the use of modern biotechnology. Consistent with the National Committee on Biosafety of the Philippines Resolution No. 001, series of 2020, "The Regulation of Plant and Plant Products Derived from the Use of Plant Breeding Innovations (PBIs) or New Plant Breeding Techniques (NBTs)," products of PBIs or NBTs that do not contain novel combinations of genetic materials obtained through the use of modern biotechnology are not covered by this Circular.

Section 2. Definition of Terms. For purposes of this Circular, the following terms shall mean:

- a) "Applicant" - refers to the juridical person who, for the duration of the proposed activity, has control over the importation or release into the environment of a regulated article and shall ensure compliance with all the requirements in this Circular and the conditions specified in the relevant permit. An applicant may be: (1) any of the departments or agencies of the Philippine Government; (2) a university-based research institution in the Philippines; (3) an international research organization duly recognized by the Philippine Government and based in the Philippines, subject to terms and conditions agreed between the organization and the government of the Philippines; (4) a corporation registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of the Philippines; or (5) a cooperative registered with the Cooperative Development Authority of the Philippines;
- b) "Biosafety" - refers to the condition in which the probability of harm, injury and damage resulting from the intentional and unintentional introduction and/or use of a regulated article is within acceptable and manageable levels;
- c) "Biosafety decision" - applies to the development, adoption and implementation of all biosafety policies, measures and guidelines and in making decisions concerning the research, development, handling and use, transboundary movement, release into the environment, and management of regulated articles;
- d) "Biological diversity" or "biodiversity" - refers to the variability among living organisms from all sources including, among others, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems;
- e) "Commercial propagation" - refers to the introduction or delivery for introduction into commerce of a regulated article for regeneration into plants or plant products for consumption by humans or animals;



- f) **"Contained use"** – refers to any operation, undertaken within a facility, installation or other structures, which involves genetically modified organisms (GMOs) that are controlled by specific measures that effectively limit their contact with, and their impact on, the external environment. Containment may be achieved by physical, biological, chemical, or temporal measures, or a combination of these;
- g) **"Country of origin"** – refers to the country where the genetically modified plants or plant products were developed or produced;
- h) **"Ecosystem"** – refers to a dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit;
- i) **"Environment"** – refers to any ecosystem that is likely to come into contact with a regulated article;
- j) **"Environmental risk assessment (ERA)"** – refers to the evaluation of the likelihood that adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity may occur as a result of exposure to a regulated article;
- k) **"Field trial"** – refers to any intentional introduction of a regulated article into the environment, as authorized by the Bureau of Plant Industry, wherein specific isolation and mitigating measures are imposed to restrict movement outside an approved site;
- l) **"Genetically modified organism (GMO)"** – also refers to "living modified organism" under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and refers to any living organism that possesses a novel combination of genetic material obtained through the use of modern biotechnology;
- m) **"Handling and use"** – refers to the process by which regulated articles are moved, carried, transported, delivered, stored or worked with;
- n) **"Hazard"** – refers to any source of potential damage, harm or adverse effects;
- o) **"Modern biotechnology"** – refers to the application of: (1) in vitro nucleic acid techniques, including recombinant deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) or direct injection of nucleic acid into cells or organelles; or (2) fusion of cells beyond the taxonomic family, that overcome natural physiological reproductive or recombination barriers and that are not techniques used in traditional breeding or selection;
- p) **"Plant"** – refers to any living stage or form of any member of the plant kingdom and parts thereof, including seeds, rhizomes, bulbs and corms, grafts, leaves, roots, scions and others that may be used for propagation;
- q) **"Plant product"** – refers to any material derived from plants in their natural state or in processed form;
- r) **"Person"** – refers to any natural person or juridical entity, such as an organization, corporation, or cooperative;
- s) **"Pest-protected plant"** – refers to any plant that is made pest-resistant through the use of any of the techniques of modern biotechnology;
- t) **"Plant-incorporated protectant (PIP)"** – refers to pesticidal substance produced by plants and the genetic material necessary for the plant to produce the substance;
- u) **"Public hearing"** – refers to the face-to-face or virtual meeting with stakeholders to provide information and opportunity for them to submit comments on any application for field trial of a regulated article;
- v) **"Public participation"** – refers to the promotion, facilitation and conduct of public awareness, education, and meaningful, responsible and accountable participation in the development and adoption of biosafety policies, guidelines and measures, and applies to all stages of the biosafety decision-making process from the time the application is received. Public participation shall include: (1) notice to all concerned stakeholders, in a language understood by them and through media to which they have access; (2) adequate and reasonable timeframes for public participation procedures; (3) public consultations, as a way to secure wide input into decisions to be made; (4) written submissions; and (5) consideration of public concerns in the decision-making phase following consultation and submission of written comments;
- w) **"Regulated article"** – refers to genetically modified plants and plant products under the scope of this JDC;
- x) **"Release into the environment"** – refers to the field trial or commercial propagation of a regulated article;

- y) **"Responsible officer"** – refers to an officer appointed by the applicant for the importation or release into the environment of a regulated article who shall ensure that all appropriate measures are taken to prevent significant risks to human health and the environment. The responsible officer shall be a resident of the Philippines and the highest-ranking officer of the applicant;
- z) **"Risk"** – refers to the likelihood of the occurrence of damage, harm or an adverse effect;
- aa) **"Risk assessment"** – refers to the scientifically based process of hazard identification and estimation of risk;
- bb) **"Risk management"** – refers to the appropriate mechanisms, measures and strategies to regulate, mitigate, and control risks identified in the risk assessment;
- cc) **"Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance (SPSIC)"** – refers to the document issued prior to importation by the concerned bureau or agency to ensure that the products being imported meet standards to protect human, animal or plant life or health, ensuring that the agricultural and fishery products are safe for consumers and to prevent the spread of pests or diseases among animals or plants. Such document also prescribes the conditions to be complied with by the importer for the maintenance of quality and suitability of the product for intended purpose;
- dd) **"Stacked events"** – refer to genetically modified plants and their products that have been developed using multiple transformation events encoding several proteins that confer specific traits;
- ee) **"Transboundary movement"** – refers to the movement of living modified organisms from one country to another; and
- ff) **"Transformation event"** – refers to the uptake and integration of specific sequences of DNA in the genome of the host organism in which the introduced DNA is intended to change the phenotype of the recipient organism in a predictable manner.

ARTICLE II. BIOSAFETY DECISIONS

Section 3. Guidelines in Making Biosafety Decisions. The principles under the NBF shall guide concerned agencies in making biosafety decisions to determine whether a regulated article does not pose greater risks to human health and the environment compared to its conventional counterpart. In making biosafety decisions, the concerned agencies shall take into account the following:

- A. **Standard of Precaution.** Lack of scientific certainty or consensus due to insufficient relevant scientific information and knowledge regarding the extent of the potential adverse effects of a genetically modified organism on the environment, particularly on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, and on human health, shall not prevent concerned government departments and agencies from making the appropriate decision to avoid or minimize such potential adverse effects. In such cases, concerned government departments and agencies shall take the necessary action to protect public interest and welfare.
- B. **Risk Assessment.** Risk assessment shall be mandatory and central in making biosafety decisions, consistent with policies and standards on risk assessment issued by the NCBP; and guided by Annex III of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Pursuant to the NBF, the following principles shall be followed when performing a risk assessment to determine whether a regulated article poses significant risks to human health and the environment:
 1. The risk assessment shall be carried out in a scientifically sound and transparent manner based on available scientific and technical information. The expert advice of and guidelines developed by relevant international organizations, including intergovernmental bodies, and regulatory authorities of countries with significant experience in the regulatory supervision of the regulated article shall be taken into account. In the conduct of risk assessment, the principles articulated by the Codex Alimentarius Commission Guidelines 44-2003: *Principles for the Risk Analysis of Foods Derived from Modern Biotechnology* and 45-2003: *Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Foods Derived from the Recombinant-DNA Plants*, including subsequent amendments thereto, shall be adopted;
 2. Lack of scientific knowledge or scientific consensus shall not be interpreted as indicating a particular level of risk, an absence of risk, or an acceptable risk;
 3. The identified characteristics of a regulated article and its use which have the potential to pose significant risks to human health and the environment shall be compared to those presented by the non-modified organism from which it is derived and its use under the same conditions;
 4. The risk assessment shall be carried out case-by-case and on the basis of transformation event. The required information may vary in nature and level of detail from case to case depending on the regulated article concerned, its intended use and the receiving environment; and
 5. If new information on the regulated article and its effects on human health and the environment becomes available, and such information is relevant and significant, the risk assessment shall be readdressed to determine whether the

representatives must not be affiliated with the applicant and must be actively engaged in community affairs in the locality where the activities are to be conducted.

The IBC approved by the DA-BC shall have joint responsibility with the applicant for the conduct of the initial risk assessment and preparation of proposals for risk management of the proposal for field trial. It shall also have joint responsibility with the applicant for ensuring compliance with any permit conditions that may be imposed on the field trial.

Section 9. External Technical Experts. The DOST, DA, DENR, and DOH may appoint one (1) external expert each to act as their Biosafety Committee's consultant to the Joint Assessment Group. The external expert shall complement the existing technical expertise of the Departments represented in the JAG. Such technical experts must be well-respected in the scientific community as evidenced by positions held in science-based organizations, awards and recognitions, or publications in local and international peer-reviewed scientific journals.

ARTICLE IV. CONTAINED USE OF REGULATED ARTICLES

Section 10. Policy on Contained Use of Regulated Articles. The contained use of regulated articles shall be governed by the DOST Biosafety Committee (DOST-BC) in accordance with the *Biosafety Guidelines for Contained Use of Genetically Modified Organisms* approved by the National Committee on Biosafety of the Philippines. The risk assessment shall also be governed by the *Biosafety Guidelines for Contained Use of Genetically Modified Organisms*.

The DOST-BC shall make public a summary of each application for contained use through the DOST website and shall include the action/decision taken on such application.

ARTICLE V. FIELD TRIAL OF REGULATED ARTICLES

Section 11. Policy on Field Trial of Regulated Articles. No regulated article shall be released into the environment for field trial unless a Biosafety Permit for Field Trial has been secured in accordance with this Circular. Applications for such permits for regulated articles developed in the Philippines may be filed with the BPI provided that their contained use has satisfactorily been completed. Applications for permits for regulated articles developed in other countries may be filed directly for a Biosafety Permit for Field Trial if the BPI determines that the data set generated in other countries is applicable to the local setting.²

Section 12. Procedural Requirements for Securing a Biosafety Permit for Field Trial. Any applicant who desires to conduct field trial of regulated articles shall submit an application to the BPI. An application for field trial of a regulated article may cover single or multiple field trial sites, the size and duration of which will be specified by the applicant. The suitability of each field trial site shall be assessed separately by the Joint Assessment Group for purposes of determining any potential risks to the environment or health.

For pest-protected plants, the applicant may apply for a field trial to meet the data requirements for biosafety evaluation under this Circular and PIP registration following PPA guidelines on the registration of biorational pesticides.

A. Filing of Application Form and Supporting Documents for Field Trial.

1. Application Form. - A printed copy and an electronic copy of the Application for Field Trial;
2. When applicable, certification from the DOST-BC that the regulated article has completed contained use, including recommendations of the DOST-BC on conditions or issues to be addressed during field trial;
3. Copy of the initial risk assessment and proposed management procedures prepared by the IBC, which may be supplemented by a technical dossier consisting of relevant scientific information available at the time the application was filed. The proposed field trial management procedures must provide details on how to ensure reproductive isolation of the regulated article and prevent its accidental release or movement beyond the confines of the trial site;
4. Details of a contingency plan in case of *force majeure* or intrusions in the field trial site;
5. Copy of the proposed Public Information Sheet (PIS) for Field Trial;
6. National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP) Certification Precondition (if applicable);
7. If the site is within an ancestral domain or ancestral land, the applicant shall secure the Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) of the concerned Indigenous People/Indigenous Cultural Community in accordance with the Indigenous People's Rights Act. If the site is within a protected area under the National Integrated Protected Area System, the applicant shall secure an endorsement from the Protected Area Management Board of the protected area; and
8. Proof of payment of application fees.

B. Acceptance of Application. Upon receipt of the application, the BPI shall determine if all the required documents are submitted. No application shall be formally accepted unless documentation is complete. An accepted application shall be posted on the websites of the (1) NCBP and BPI, and (2) DA offices in the province, city or municipality where the field trial will be conducted. The public may submit their comments on the uploaded information within fifteen (15) working days from the first day of posting.

C. Processing of Application.

1. Within three (3) working days upon receipt of the application, the BPI shall forward the application, together with the supporting documents to the DOST, DA, DENR, and DOH Biosafety Committees. At the same time, the BPI shall review the PIS for Field Trial and, if found sufficient, shall advise the applicant to post the approved PIS within three (3) working days based on Section 13 (Public Participation for Field Trial) below.
2. The public comments on the PIS shall be addressed to the Office of the BPI Director, which shall forward the comments to the applicant for response. The public comment period shall commence from the first day of posting of the PIS and shall have a duration of fifteen (15) working days. Within two (2) working days after the termination of public comment period, the BPI shall compile all comments received and transmit this to the applicant. Within five (5) working days upon receipt, the applicant shall submit to the BPI its response, addressing the concerns raised by interested parties. Within two (2) working days after receipt of the applicant's response, the consolidated report reflecting the comments from the public and the response of the applicant to such comments shall be submitted to the BPI Director.
3. Within ten (10) working days upon receipt of the application, the DOST, DA, DENR, and DOH Biosafety Committees shall review the application and designate two (2) representatives to the Joint Assessment Group (JAG). The DA-BC may make a determination of non-coverage for the specific application for field trial. Such determination must be officially communicated to the Chair of the JAG. Should a Biosafety Committee decide to engage outside expertise, the committee shall advise the Chair of the JAG of the participation of one (1) external technical expert in the meeting(s) to address specific issues in the application.
4. The JAG shall be chaired by the Department of Agriculture Biosafety Committee Chair or his designee who must also be a member of the DA-BC. The Chair shall be an additional member to the JAG aside from the two representatives from the DA.
5. Within ten (10) working days after receipt of the application, the Chair of the JAG through the BPI shall schedule and convene the first meeting of the JAG. The Chair of the JAG may invite the applicant to address concerns that may be raised during the meeting.
6. During the first meeting, the JAG and the external expert(s), if any, shall discuss and review the Risk Assessment Report and other supporting documents. The applicant shall ensure that its authorized representative is available to join the meeting through tele- or video-conferencing in case the JAG has questions for the applicant. The JAG may set a second meeting if there are additional concerns that require further discussion. The JAG shall immediately communicate to the applicant the need for additional information. This information must be provided by the applicant within five (5) working days from receipt of the request. If no additional concerns or clarifications are raised, the JAG shall draft a recommendation document for the BPI Director.
7. Should a second and final meeting be required, this should be scheduled within five (5) working days from receipt of the additional information. The JAG shall draft a recommendation document for the BPI Director at the end of this meeting.
8. Should any implementing agency be unable to send representatives to the JAG or perform any of functions within the periods prescribed in this Circular, the evaluation of the remaining members of the JAG shall proceed, and the application shall be processed on the presumption that the said agency poses no objection to the conclusions reached and recommendations made by the JAG.
9. The BPI shall document the discussions of the JAG during its meetings and assist in the preparation of the recommendation document for the BPI Director. The Chair of the JAG shall facilitate the finalization of the draft recommendation document after circulating it to the members of the JAG for any comments and their signature. The final recommendation document shall be submitted to the BPI Director within seven (7) working days after the conclusion of the meeting(s), resolving all requests for additional information and other outstanding issues.

D: Action on the Application. The Director of the Bureau of Plant Industry shall issue a decision to approve or disapprove the application within five (5) working days upon receipt of the recommendation document from the JAG, based on the following considerations:

1. Compliance with administrative procedure and requirements;
2. Recommendation of the Joint Assessment Group;
3. Issues and concerns raised during the public participation period; and
4. Applicant's response to the issues and concerns raised for the applied regulated article.

E. If the application is approved, a Biosafety Permit for Field Trial shall be issued. The original copy of the biosafety permit shall be transmitted to the applicant. Certified true copies shall be provided to the DA, DOST, DENR, DOH, NCBP, and the DA Regional Executive Director concerned. The BPI Director shall keep a duplicate copy for documentation and to maintain the application file.

F. Issuance of the permit shall be announced via the DA-BPI website within 24 hours from receipt thereof by the applicant.

G. A Biosafety Permit for Field Trial shall be issued for every approved field trial site. The applicant must commence with the activity within two (2) years from date of issuance of the permit, unless it is sooner revoked for any of the reasons set forth in Section 12.K. *Revocation of Biosafety Permit for Field Trial.*

H. **Permit Conditions.** The permit holder shall comply with the following conditions and such other conditions which the BPI shall state in the Biosafety Permit for Field Trial:

1. The permit holder shall submit to the BPI monitoring reports on the performance characteristics of the regulated article in accordance with the monitoring and reporting requirements specified in the biosafety permit;
2. The permit holder shall immediately notify the Director of BPI, in writing, should any of the following cases occur:
 - a. In the event that new information becomes available, indicating that the regulated article would pose greater risks to human health and the environment as compared to its conventional counterpart;
 - b. In cases wherein risk mitigation measures implemented were found to be insufficient; and
 - c. In cases wherein contingency measures had to be implemented.

I. **Compliance with Other Agency Regulations.** The Biosafety Permit for Field Trial shall not excuse the applicant from complying with relevant regulations of other government agencies.

J. **Submission of Report.** Within ninety (90) working days from the completion of the field trial, the applicant shall submit to the BPI two (2) hard copies and a soft copy of the terminal report on the results of the field trial. The report shall be in the format prescribed by the BPI and state, among others, whether the objectives of the field trial were achieved; a description of any unforeseen risks to human health and environment observed during the conduct of the field trial; the steps taken by the applicant to mitigate them; and the final disposition of the regulated article. Such report must be endorsed by the IBC. The first copy shall be retained by the BPI and the second copy shall be transmitted to NCBP for its reference and file.

K. **Revocation of Biosafety Permit for Field Trial.** A Biosafety Permit for Field Trial may be revoked for any of the following grounds:

1. Provision of misleading information in the Application;
2. Discovery of new, relevant and significant information that the regulated article poses greater risks to human health and the environment compared to its conventional counterpart;
3. Non-compliance with the conditions of the permit;
4. Failure to allow monitoring of activities within the field trial site; and
5. Other grounds the relevant regulatory agencies may deem necessary to protect human health and the environment.

Section 13. Public Participation for Field Trial.

A. The BPI shall make public all applications and Biosafety Permits for Field Trial through posting on the websites of the (1) NCBP and BPI, and (2) DA offices in the province, city or municipality, and barangay where the field trial will be conducted.

B. The applicant, in consultation with the City/Municipal Local Government Operations Officer (C/MLGOO), shall inform the local chief executive, through written correspondence, of the proposed field trial(s) to be conducted in the LGU, together with a request to conduct a public hearing. The letter shall include a copy of the PIS for Field Trial approved by the BPI and the risk assessment documents submitted to BPI.

C. In consultation with the LGU(s), the applicant shall post the PIS in at least two (2) conspicuous places within the vicinity of the city/municipality and at least two (2) conspicuous places within the vicinity of the barangay where the proposed field trials will be conducted. Posting shall be done at least five (5) working days prior to the public hearing. The PIS shall be written in a language understood by the community and shall include, among others the following:

1. Name of the applicant and contact details;
2. Name and contact details of the responsible officer/authorized representative;
3. Description of the regulated article for field trial;
4. Description, size, duration, and purpose of the proposed field test;
5. Potential benefits and risks of the regulated article; and
6. An invitation for interested parties to (a) send their comments on the proposed field trial to the BPI Director within the fifteen (15)-working-day posting period, and (b) attend the public hearing.

D. Comments may be sent by personal delivery, registered or ordinary mail, courier service, or electronic mail, but must be received by the Office of the BPI Director within the fifteen (15)-working-day posting period. The BPI shall forward to the applicant comments that must be addressed. The applicant's responses will be submitted to the Office of the BPI Director and will be part of the considerations for his decision to approve or disapprove the application.

E. At least five (5) working days after the posting of the PIS, the applicant, in consultation with the C/MLGOO, shall inform the local chief executive of the proposed field trial(s) to be conducted in the LGU, together with a written request to conduct a public hearing. The public hearing shall be conducted within twenty (20) working days after receipt of the request, after which the City/Municipal Sanggunian shall issue its resolution.

F. Within two (2) working after the issuance of the Sanggunian resolution, the applicant shall submit to the BPI a written report on the public consultation containing the following: (1) summary of issues and comments raised during the posting period and public hearing, and how these concerns were addressed; and (2) the resolution of the City/Municipal Sanggunian concerned pursuant to Section 27 of the Local Government Code. If, within the required period, the applicant fails to secure the city/municipal resolution endorsing the conduct of the field trial, the applicant may request the BPI Director for extension of time to comply with this requirement.

ARTICLE VI. COMMERCIAL PROPAGATION OF REGULATED ARTICLES

Section 14. Policy on Commercial Propagation of Regulated Articles. No regulated article shall be released for commercial propagation unless: (a) a Biosafety Permit for Commercial Propagation has been secured in accordance with this Circular; (b) the field trial conducted in the Philippines shows that the regulated article does not pose greater risks to human health and the environment as compared to its conventional counterpart; (c) food and feed safety studies show that the regulated article does not pose greater risks to human health as compared to its conventional counterpart, consistent with the Codex Alimentarius Commission Guidelines 44-2003: *Principles for the Risk Analysis of Foods Derived from Modern Biotechnology* and 45-2003: *Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Foods Derived from the Recombinant-DNA Plants*; and, (d) if the regulated article is a pest-protected plant, its transformation event producing the active ingredient that serves as plant-incorporated protectant (PIP) has been duly registered with the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA).

Section 15. Procedural Requirements for Securing a Biosafety Permit for Commercial Propagation. Any applicant who desires to register a regulated article in the Approval Registry for Commercial Propagation shall submit an application to the BPI.

A. Filing of Application Form and Supporting Documents for Commercial Propagation.

1. Application Form. - A printed copy and an electronic copy of the Application for Commercial Propagation;
2. Technical dossier consisting of scientific literature, unpublished studies or test data, or such other scientific materials relied upon by the applicant to show that, for the use it is intended, the regulated article does not pose greater risk to human health and the environment as compared to its conventional counterpart;
3. Applicant's Risk Assessment Report for Commercial Propagation;
4. Copy of the proposed Public Information Sheet (PIS) for Commercial Propagation; and
5. Proof of payment of application fee.

B. Acceptance of Application. Upon receipt of the application, the BPI shall determine if all the required documents are submitted. No application shall be formally accepted unless documentation is complete. An accepted application shall be posted on the DA-BPI website and the public may submit their comments on the uploaded information within fifteen (15) working days.

C. Processing of Application.

1. Within three (3) working days upon acceptance of the application, the BPI shall forward the application, together with the supporting documents, to the DOST, DA, DENR, and DOH Biosafety Committees. At the same time, the BPI shall review the PIS for Commercial Propagation and, if found sufficient, shall advise the applicant to publish the approved PIS in one (1) newspaper of general circulation within three (3) working days. The approved PIS shall also be published in the official website of the applicant and the official website of the BPI.
2. The public comments on the PIS shall be addressed to the Office of the BPI Director, which shall forward the comments to the applicant for response. The posting and publication of the PIS should be consistent with Section 16 (Public Participation for Commercial Propagation). Within two (2) working days after



received and transmit this to the applicant. Within five (5) working days upon receipt, the applicant shall submit its response to the BPI, addressing the concerns raised by interested parties. Within two (2) working days after receipt of the applicant's response, the consolidated report reflecting the comments from the public and the response of the applicant to such comments shall be submitted to the BPI Director.

3. Within ten (10) working days upon acceptance of the application, the DOST, DA, DENR, and DOH Biosafety Committees shall review the application and designate two (2) representatives to the Joint Assessment Group (JAG). Should a Biosafety Committee decide to engage outside expertise, the committee shall advise the Chair of the JAG of the participation of one (1) external technical expert in the meeting(s) to address specific issues in the application.
 4. The JAG shall be chaired by the Department of Agriculture Biosafety Committee Chair or his designee who must also be a member of the DA-BC. The Chair shall be an additional member to the JAG aside from the two representatives from the DA.
 5. Within ten (10) working days after receipt of the application, the Chair of the JAG through the BPI shall schedule and convene the first meeting of the JAG. The Chair of the JAG may invite the applicant to address concerns that may be raised during the meeting.
 6. During the first meeting, the JAG and the external expert(s), if any, shall discuss and review the Risk Assessment Report and other supporting documents. The applicant shall ensure that its authorized representative is available to join the meeting through tele- or video-conferencing in case the JAG has questions for the applicant. The JAG may set a second meeting if there are additional concerns that require further discussion. The JAG shall immediately communicate to the applicant the need for additional information. This information must be provided by the applicant within five (5) working days from receipt of the request. If no additional concerns or clarifications are raised, the JAG shall draft a recommendation document for the BPI Director.
 7. Should a second and final meeting be required, this should be scheduled within five (5) working days from receipt of the additional information. The JAG shall draft a recommendation document for the BPI Director at the end of this meeting.
 8. Should any implementing agency be unable to send representatives to the JAG or perform any of functions within the periods prescribed in this Circular, the evaluation of the remaining members of the JAG shall proceed, and the application shall be processed on the presumption that the said agency poses no objection to the conclusions reached and recommendations made by the JAG.
 9. The BPI shall document the discussions of the JAG during its meetings and assist in the preparation of the recommendation document for the BPI Director. The Chair of the JAG shall facilitate the finalization of the draft recommendation document after circulating it to the members of the JAG for any comments and their signature. The final recommendation document shall be submitted to the BPI Director within seven (7) working days after the conclusion of the meeting(s), resolving all requests for additional information and other outstanding issues.
- D. Action on the Application.** The Director of the Bureau of Plant Industry shall make a decision to approve or disapprove the application within five (5) working days upon receipt of the recommendation document from the JAG, based on the following considerations:
1. Compliance with administrative procedure and requirements;
 2. Recommendation of the Joint Assessment Group;
 3. Issues and concerns raised during the public participation period; and
 4. Applicant's response to the issues and concerns raised for the applied regulated article.
- E.** If the application is approved, a Biosafety Permit for Commercial Propagation shall be issued. The original copy of the biosafety permit shall be transmitted to the applicant. Certified true copies shall be provided to the DA, DOST, DENR, DOH, and NCBP. The BPI Director shall keep a duplicate copy for documentation and to maintain the application file.
- F.** Issuance of the permit shall be announced via the DA-BPI website within 24 hours upon its receipt by the applicant.

G. The Biosafety Permit for Commercial Propagation shall remain valid unless revoked for any reasons set forth under Section 15.3, Revocation of Biosafety Permit for Commercial Propagation.

H. Permit Conditions. The permit holder shall comply with the following conditions and such other conditions which the BPI shall state in the Biosafety Permit for Commercial Propagation:

1. The permit holder shall immediately notify the Director of BPI, in writing, in the event that new information becomes available, indicating that the regulated article would pose greater risks to human health and the environment as compared to its conventional counterpart;
2. In the event new information becomes available indicating that the regulated article could pose greater risks to human health and the environment as compared to its conventional counterpart, the applicant shall, on its own, immediately take measures necessary to protect human health and the environment;
3. The permit holder shall not cause the commercial propagation in areas where the local government unit has a known policy or ordinance prohibiting the propagation or entry of regulated articles. For this purpose, it shall include in the labeling of products that these are not intended for propagation in prohibited areas.

I. Compliance with Other Agency Regulations. The Biosafety Permit for Commercial Propagation shall not excuse the applicant from complying with relevant regulations of other government agencies.

J. Revocation of Biosafety Permit for Commercial Propagation. A Biosafety Permit for Commercial Propagation may be revoked for any of the following grounds:

1. Provision of misleading information in the Application;
2. Discovery of new, relevant and significant information that the regulated article poses greater risks to human health and the environment compared to its conventional counterpart;
3. Non-compliance with the conditions of the permit; and
4. Other grounds the relevant regulatory agencies may deem necessary to protect human health and the environment.

Section 16. Public Participation for Commercial Propagation.

- A.** The BPI shall make public all applications and Biosafety Permits for Commercial Propagation through posting on the NCBP and BPI websites.
- B.** The applicant shall prepare the PIS which shall include, among others, the following:
1. Name of the applicant and contact details;
 2. Name and contact details of the responsible officer/authorized representative;
 3. Description of the regulated article for Commercial Propagation;
 4. Potential benefits and risks of the regulated article;
 5. Countries where approvals have been granted; and
 6. An invitation for interested parties to send their comments on the proposed commercial propagation to the Office of the BPI Director within a period of fifteen (15) working days from the date of publication.
- C.** Within three (3) working days upon approval by the BPI, the applicant shall publish a copy of the approved PIS for Commercial Propagation in one (1) newspaper of general circulation. The approved PIS shall also be published in the official website of the applicant and the official website of the BPI.
- D.** During the comment period, any interested person may submit to the BPI written comments regarding the application, which may include issues related to social, economic, ethical, and cultural considerations arising from the impact of regulated articles on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Comments may be sent by personal delivery, registered or ordinary mail, courier service, or electronic mail, but must be received by the Office of the BPI Director within the prescribed period of fifteen (15) working days from the date of publication.
- E.** The BPI shall forward to the applicant comments that must be addressed. The applicant's responses will be submitted to the Office of the BPI Director and will be part of the considerations for his decision to approve or disapprove the application.

ARTICLE VII. DIRECT USE OF REGULATED ARTICLES FOR FOOD AND FEED, OR FOR PROCESSING

Section 17. Policy on Direct Use of Regulated Articles for Food and Feed, or for Processing. No regulated article, whether imported or developed domestically, shall be permitted for direct use as food and feed, or for processing, unless: (a) a Biosafety Permit for Direct Use has been issued by the BPI; (b) in the case of an imported regulated article, the regulated article has been authorized for commercial distribution as food and feed in the country of origin; and (c) regardless of the intended use, the regulated article does not pose greater risks to human health as compared to its conventional counterpart, consistent with the Codex Alimentarius Commission Guidelines 44-2003: Principles for the Risk Analysis of Foods Derived from Modern Biotechnology and 45-2003: Guidelines for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Foods Derived from the Recombinant-DNA Plants.

Section 18. Procedural Requirements for Securing a Biosafety Permit for Direct Use for Food and Feed, or for Processing. Any applicant who desires to register a regulated article in the Approval Registry for Direct Use shall submit an application to the BPI.

A. Filing of Application Form and Supporting Documents for Direct Use.

1. Application Form. - A printed copy and an electronic copy of the Application for Direct Use;

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- article at each of the intended destinations, where appropriate;
6. Description of the methods and plans for emergency response in case of accidental release of the regulated article into the environment; and
 7. Description of the proposed method of final disposition of the regulated article.

C. The BPI shall inform the applicant if the information the latter identified as CIC does not qualify for such treatment and shall provide the applicant an opportunity for consultation and review of its decision prior to disclosure to any third party.

D. An applicant may refer to data or results from applications previously submitted by other applicants: Provided, that (1) the information, data or results are not CIC, or (2) if the otherwise, the previous applicants have given their consent in writing to the use of their confidential information, data or results.

E. Documents that are made available to stakeholders and the public shall exclude portions that are marked as "CIC"; however, the documents shall clearly indicate with "CIC deleted" the part where the confidential information was removed.

Section 32. Outside Experts and Accredited Laboratories. In the implementation of this Circular, the concerned department or agency may coordinate, seek the services of, and consult with international or governmental agencies and public or private research institutes or accredited laboratories, educational establishments, and individuals or entities with expertise relevant to biosafety. In cases of conflicting scientific findings among experts, the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) shall act as the final authority in the resolution thereof.

Section 33. Fees. As may be authorized by law, fees may be imposed by the concerned department or agency in such amount as may be necessary to cover the costs of evaluating applications and petitions and monitoring compliance with permit conditions.

Section 34. Petition for Reconsideration. In case of the applications for field trial, commercial propagation, and direct use, an aggrieved party may file a request for the reconsideration of the decision with the DA Secretary within fifteen (15) working days from the announcement of the decision.

The petition for reconsideration may involve payment of fees to cover the cost of re-evaluation of the decision made.

Section 35. Funding. The DOST, DA, DENR, DOH, and DILG shall allocate from their present budgets such amount as may be necessary to implement this Circular, including support to operations of their respective Biosafety Committees.

Section 36. Remedies. In cases of violations of laws, rules and regulations related to biosafety, the following remedies shall apply:

- A. **Administrative Remedies.** The concerned departments and agencies shall ensure, in accordance with law, that administrative remedies, including the right to appeal, are available to applicants and stakeholders in biosafety decisions.
- B. **Criminal Liability.** Natural or juridical persons committing offenses in violation of existing laws shall be prosecuted and penalized in accordance with such laws.
- C. **Civil Liability.** Philippine laws on liability and compensation shall apply to all damages and injuries arising from any violation of this Circular.
- D. **International Law.** International legal norms on liability and compensation, including those developed and adopted under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, shall likewise apply.

Section 37. Issuance of Implementing Orders. The concerned national government agencies may issue subsequent implementing orders pursuant to their respective functions in this Circular, subject to prior notice with the other national government agencies.

Section 38. Transitory Provisions.

- A. Regulated articles with Biosafety Permits issued under the DOST-DA-DENR-DOH-DILG Joint Department Circular no. 1, series of 2016, for commercial propagation and direct use have undergone the required safety assessment involving all concerned regulatory agencies. All existing original and renewed Biosafety Permits for commercial propagation and direct use issued therein shall remain valid unless otherwise revoked under conditions set in Section 15.J, for Commercial Propagation and Section 18.J, for Direct Use of this new Joint Department Circular.
- B. All new applications for Biosafety Permit for contained use, field trial, commercial propagation and direct use shall be processed in accordance with this new Circular.


C. All pending applications for Biosafety Permit, both original and for renewal, filed under the DOST-DA-DENR-DOH-DILG Joint Department Circular no. 1, series of 2016, shall be processed in accordance with the provisions thereof within eighty-five (85) working days from the acceptance of the application for biosafety permit under the said Joint Department Circular no. 1, series of 2016.

D. All pending petitions for deregulation filed pursuant to Article IX of the DOST-DA-DENR-DOH-DILG Joint Department Circular no. 1, series of 2016, shall be resolved in accordance with the provisions thereof within twenty (20) working days from the effectivity of this Circular.

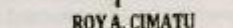
Section 39. Repealing Clause. Unless otherwise repealed or amended expressly, all DA administrative orders and memorandum circulars consistent with this Joint Department Circular relating to the technical evaluation and monitoring of regulated articles are deemed adopted and issued under this Circular. All existing rules and regulations inconsistent with this Circular are hereby modified, revoked, or repealed accordingly.

Section 40. Separability. The provisions of this Circular are hereby declared to be separable. If any part or provision of this Circular shall be declared invalid, the remaining portions or provisions shall not be affected thereby and shall be construed as if it did not contain the invalid term or provision.

Section 41. Effectivity. This Joint Department Circular shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation. A copy of this issuance shall also be submitted to the University of the Philippines Law Center.

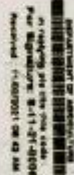

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FRANCISCO T. DUQUE III
Secretary
Department of Health


EDUARDO M. AND
Secretary
Department of the Interior and Local Government



¹ Circulars shall refer to issuances prescribing policies, rules and regulations, and procedures promulgated pursuant to law, applicable to individuals and organizations outside the Government and designed to supplement provisions of the law or to provide means for carrying them out, including information relating thereto xxx [E.O. 292, Bk. IV, Ch. 11, Sec. 50 (1)].

² Consistent with the decision by the National Committee on Biosafety in the Philippines reached during its 21st meeting held on 26 March 2021.

08 MARCH 2022, TUESDAY



DENR

NEWS ALERTS

COVID-19 NEWS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Covid-19 cases in NCR, areas under AL 1 continue to decline

By Ma. Teresa Montemayor [March 7, 2022, 4:37 pm](#) [Updated on March 7, 2022, 5:07 pm](#)



(File photo)

MANILA – The number of new Covid-19 cases in the National Capital Region and 38 other areas under Alert Level 1 continues to go down, an OCTA Research Group fellow said Monday.

Since the group's prediction of less than 1,000 new cases by March, Dr. Guido David noted that the numbers might continue to decrease to a few hundred at the end of the month.

"Medyo nag-slow down, pero bumababa pa rin, 'yun ang mahalaga (It has slowed down, but it's still going down, that's the important thing)," David said in a televised public briefing. *"About 300 to 500 [new cases] tulad ng nakita natin December last year bago pumasok ang taon na ito (just like what we've seen in December last year before this year entered.)"*

The slow downward trend in the Covid-19 numbers could be attributed to decreased vaccination data and population protection, he added.

To continue the decrease in cases, the group said the public must continue adhering to minimum public health standards.

"Baka nagiging kampante pa rin 'yung iba nating mga kababayan. At least, 'yung pagsuot ng face mask, ito ay napakahalaga, napakalaking tulong ito para maalis 'yung (Maybe, some of our fellowmen are being complacent. At least, wear a face mask because this is very important to eliminate the) infection," David said, warning that the coronavirus is causing a rise in cases in other Southeast Asian nations.

He said there could be more areas that are qualified to deescalate to Alert Level 1 considering the low number of new cases and healthcare utilization rate nationwide.

However, there are areas with very low vaccine coverage, one of the metrics used by the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases and the Department of Health in the Alert Level System classification.

"Sana patuloy yung pagpapabakuna, isa rin 'yan paraan para ma-protect tayo sa spike in cases kase 'yung immunity bumababa rin over time kahit na-vaccinate na tayo o na-expose tayo kaya maganda pa rin mapa-booster mga kababayan natin for additional layer of protection (I hope people will decide to get vaccinated, it's for us to be protected against a spike in cases because our immunity level decreases over time after being fully vaccinated or exposed. It's best that we receive booster shots for additional layer of protection)," David said.



As of March 5, the National Covid-19 Vaccination Dashboard showed that a total of 135,929,478 doses have been administered.

Of the total doses, about 10,518,413 were given as booster shots.

Despite the decline in coronavirus cases, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) reminded anew both employers and employees of the strict observance of health protocols inside workplaces under the most relaxed Alert Level 1.

“The face mask will still be worn whether indoors or outdoors and the ventilation in closed spaces should also be complied with, and the vaccinations. The most important thing, we already know that and we have the mindset to wear a mask, your ventilation, especially when we enter the office and it is considered a closed space, if you have windows especially, you can open them so that your airflow is good,” Labor Assistant Secretary Ma. Teresita Cucueco said in a Laging Handa briefing.

Cucueco added that the policy requiring unvaccinated on-site workers to submit negative reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test results every two weeks remains in effect. **(with report from Ferdinand Patinio/PNA)**



Second booster for seniors eyed

Published 3 hours ago on March 8, 2022 03:40 AM

By **TDT** @tribunephil



Photo: Analy Labor

The national government is looking at the possibility of giving a second coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) booster shots to senior citizens and immunocompromised individuals who are most at risk for hospitalization and death due to coronavirus infection.

According to infectious disease expert Rontgene Solante, the second booster shot is being eyed for the said groups for now, but not yet for the younger population or general public.

“We are pushing for a second booster shot for the more vulnerable population like the 60 years old and above and the immunocompromised, so they could get protected against the severe form of Covid-19,” said Solante in a radio interview.

Local health experts and the Department of Health are expected to finalize this week their recommendation on the possible administration of a second Covid-19 booster shot for the said sectors which completed their primary vaccine series.

Source: https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2022/03/08/second-booster-for-seniors-eyed/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=second-booster-for-seniors-eyed



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**Covid-19
Situation and Response**



National COVID-19 Case Bulletin

March 7, 2022

Official DOHgov
@DOHgovph

Healthcare Utilization

(as of March 6, 2022)

18.4%
Non-ICU Bed Utilization
4,543 out of 24,678 non-ICU beds used

25.7%
ICU Bed Utilization
807 out of 3,138 ICU beds used

1,055
Severe and Critical Admissions
16.1% of total COVID-19 admissions

Vaccination Accomplishment

(as of March 6, 2022)

70.76%
% Coverage of Target Population*

74.22%
% Coverage of Target A2 Population**

Fully Vaccinated Individuals
63,690,701
+598,206 vaccinated on Feb 28 to Mar 6

Individuals with Booster/Additional Dose
10,554,093
+416,218 vaccinated on Feb 28 to Mar 6

(added on Mar 1 to Mar 7)



COVID-19 Cases

(as of March 7, 2022)

New Cases
+6,297
Daily Average Cases = 899
(Lower by 30% than cases reported on Feb 22 to Feb 28)

New Severe and Critical Cases
+3
(0.05% of new cases)

Deaths Verified During The Past Week
+615



*Target population refers to 80% of the total population (90,005,357 individuals)
**Target A2 population refers to 85% of the total Senior Citizen population (8,721,357 individuals)

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For health concerns and emergencies, you may access here the DOH hospital hotlines across the country:

bit.ly/DOHHospitalHotlines

DOH ONE HOSPITAL COMMAND CENTER (OHCC) HOTLINES

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• 02-886-505-00 • 0919-977-3333

bit.ly/OHCCHotline

DOH TELEMEDICINE CONTACT DETAILS

bit.ly/DOHTelemedicine

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MedCheck
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