

26 MARCH 2022, Saturday



NEWS ALERTS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



DENR seeks media help to monitor mining

By Che Palicte March 25, 2022, 6:34 pm



RESPONSIBLE MINING. Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Jim Sampulna calls on the media Friday (March 25, 2022) to help monitor large-scale mining operations in the country, to make sure that they follow the policies set by the government. Sampulna says irresponsible miners have no place in the country. *(PNA photo by Che Palicte)*

DAVAO CITY – Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Acting Secretary Jim Sampulna said Friday that they need help from the media to monitor mining in the country.

In an interview here Friday, Sampulna underscored the importance of closely watching mining activities in the country as not to put the environment in danger.

"We only need responsible miners, we say no to irresponsible ones. They will be properly monitored by the DENR and the media," he said.

Sampulna underscored the media's vital role in protecting the environment.

Recently, the DENR in Davao Region served a cease and desist order to the Riverbend Consolidated Mining Corporation/Arc Nickel Resources, Inc. (ANRI) located in Banaybanay, Davao Oriental, for the siltation incident in the area on January 14.

The siltation took place at the Mapagba and Pinatatagan Rivers in Banaybanay town after more than 12 hours of heavy downpour.

According to DENR-11, the potential source of siltation and discoloration in the two rivers were traced to the active mining activity of the company, based on the multi-agency investigation and assessment conducted on January 15. *(PNA)*

Source: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1170658>



DENR Supports Envi Protection in Samar

[Friday, March 25, 2022 Journal Online](#)



Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Acting Secretary Jim O. Sampulna (right) expresses support for the environmental plans of Samar 2nd District representative Sharee Ann Tan during their meeting at the **DENR** Central Office in Quezon City last March 17, 2022. Tan sought support in overcoming biodiversity conservation challenges in mining, coming up with an e-library of its protected areas, and strengthening the engagement and accountability of the local government units in the province of Samar.



DENR urges public to practice 'environment stewardship' on Earth Day

Published March 25, 2022, 10:24 AM
by [Faith Argosino](#)

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) urged the public to practice “environmental stewardship” by going beyond the traditional hour-long switching of light as the world observes Earth Day on Saturday, March 26.



(Courtesy of EcoWaste Coalition)

DENR Acting Secretary Jim O. Sampulna encouraged the public to join the Earth Hour event m by switching off their computers, television sets, air conditioning units, and non-essential lights from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

“Apart from safeguarding ourselves from the COVID-19 virus under the new normal, let us also create a norm that puts our planet and, ultimately, our people first. Sustainability should already be a lifestyle and a common goal for each Filipino,” Sampulna said.

Prior to this, Sampulna revealed that the national government has pledged to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change a projected greenhouse gas emissions reduction by 75 percent (2.71 percent unconditional, 72.29 percent conditional) from 2020 to 2030.

He added that the government would only obtain this goal with the public’s help.



DENR urges public to practice 'environment stewardship' on Earth Day

To alleviate the effects of climate change, Sampulna vowed to intensify enforcement of the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999, and Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004.

Moreover, Sampulna said that the agency is also committed to strengthen its National Greening Program while protecting 8.7 million hectares of forests and conserving the biodiversity of terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

“Climate change is no longer a foreign term for all of us. With all the typhoons and disasters we have experienced in the past, I hope that Filipinos are already conscious and responsible towards taking care of the environment,” Sampulna said.

“Apart from these, individuals can contribute to saving the planet by eating more sustainably, not wasting food, reducing plastic usage, being energy-efficient, being a conscious consumer, being supportive of the government’s environmental programs, and being environmental ambassadors in their sphere of influence,” he added.



DENR, HINIMOK ANG PUBLIKO NA ISAGAWA ANG EARTH DAY BUKAS

by [DWIZ 882](#) March 25, 2022



Hinimok ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) ang publiko na isagawa ang “environmental stewardship” sa pamamagitan ng lampas na pagpatay ng mga ilaw sa tradisyunal na oras bilang pag-observa sa Earth Day bukas, Marso 26.

Ayon kay DENR Acting Secretary Jim Sampulna, kabilang dito ang pagsara ng computer, television, air conditioning units at non-essential lights mula 8:30 p.m hanggang 9:30p.m.

Samantala, sinabi ng kalihim na nangako ang gobyerno sa United Nations Framework Convention on climate change na tinatayang 75% ang inaasahang mababawas sa greenhouse gas emissions mula taong 2020 hanggang 2030. – **sa Airiam Sancho**



DENR-6 calls for public participation in Earth Hour

By Perla Lena March 25, 2022, 7:09 pm



LIGHTS OUT. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Western Visayas is urging the public to switch off lights for one hour to show their solidarity with the Earth Hour celebration on Saturday (March 26, 2022). The global environmental campaign aims to raise awareness on climate change and energy saving. *(Photo lifted from Earth Hour Home FB)*

ILOILO CITY – Residents of Western Visayas are encouraged to switch off non-essential lights for one hour to show their solidarity to the Earth Hour celebration on Saturday starting at 8:30 p.m.

“By joining the Earth Hour, your simple act of switching off lights and other appliances is an essential part of a collective effort to save Mother Earth,” said Regional Director Livino Duran of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Western Visayas in a statement released Friday through the Regional Strategic Communication Initiatives Group (RSCIG).

He said that everyone has experienced hardships for the past two years due to the health pandemic and series of environmental crises.

“For us to start a positive change, we need to switch off our inaction and speak up for nature,” he added.

The environmental campaign that started in Sydney, Australia in 2007 was aimed at raising awareness about climate change and energy saving.

This year, the theme will be “Shape of Future”, which according to Duran is a critical year for everyone and the planet as they move forward in pursuit of change and progress.

“It is up to us to #ShapeOurFuture by bringing attention to the critical issues our planet is facing today,” he said. *(PNA)*



EMB cites Dumaguete's 'trash-to-treasure' MRF project

By Mary Judaline Partlow March 25, 2022, 3:02 pm



TRASH TO TREASURE. Workers are seen in this undated photo segregating garbage at the Central Materials Recovery Facility of the Dumaguete City government. Environmental Management Bureau-Central Visayas (EMB-7) regional director William Cuñado and Mayor Felipe Antonio Remollo led Thursday (March 24, 2022) the formal inauguration of the facility in Barangay Candauay in the Negros Oriental capital. *(Photo courtesy of Lupad Dumaguete Facebook page/City PIO)*

DUMAGUETE CITY – The city government’s Central Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) that converts trash into useful by-products has earned the approval of a key Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) official who wanted the facility to be part of the National Ecological Center.

“I would like to ask our DENR Secretary Jim Sampulna to give a commendation to Mayor (Felipe Antonio) Remollo and the City Council for a job well done. And not only that, but I would also like to recommend this place as part of the National Ecological Center to train the waste sorters how to improve their skills,” William Cuñado, director of the Environmental Management Bureau-DENR (EMB-DENR), said during Thursday’s inauguration of the facility here.

Cuñado and Remollo led other DENR and city officials during the formal inauguration of the facility situated in Barangay Candau-ay, a media release from the City Hall said midnight Thursday.

The DENR official lauded the mayor and the Sangguniang Panglungsod for putting up the “first MRF in the Philippines” that generates a PHP500,000 monthly income and provides a livelihood for waste-pickers through “proper and sustainable solid waste management.”

The city’s MRF is part of the eight-hectare Eco-Park Solid Waste Processing Facility, which is also a recipient of the plastic-to-chair recycling equipment, glass pulverizer, bio-shredder, and bio-composters from the DENR.

Meanwhile, Paquito D. Melicor Jr. Regional Executive Director of DENR Central Visayas (Region 7), said he was inspired by how the city, under Remollo’s helm, managed to close the open dumpsite last March 30, 2021, and was able to establish the MRF in so short a time.



EMB cites Dumaguete's 'trash-to-treasure' MRF project

The DENR had repeatedly sent closure notices to the city government to shut down the open dumpsite, which was operating for about 30 years, in Barangay Candauay despite it already being outlawed in the country, and establish the mandated sanitary landfill instead.

While the city could not yet find a suitable place for the sanitary landfill, Remollo instead established the MRF to immediately attend to the city's garbage collection woes.

The facility not only segregates garbage but also treats them to prevent the emergence of infectious diseases.

The DENR officials from the Central and Regional Offices were toured around the facility to see the machines already operating inside the City MRF.

The MRF has the following: a pyrolysis gasification equipment that turns solid wastes into construction materials like hollow blocks and bricks and pavers to be used in infrastructure projects; plastic shredder and densifiers; bio-shredders and composters to convert solid wastes into organic fertilizer, soil conditioner, and mulch to improve plant growth; glass pulverizer/shredder, and plastic recycling equipment that can convert plastic wastes into chairs. *(PNA)*



Bacolod City Council ratifies garbage hauling contract



BACOLOD. The Bacolod City Council ratifies the contract of services with IPM-Construction and Development Corp. for the P131.9 million collection, hauling, and disposal of garbage in the city on Wednesday, March 23. (File photo)

MERLINDA A. PEDROSA
March 26, 2022

THE contract of services entered between the City Government of Bacolod and the IPM-Construction and Development Corp. (IPM-CDC) for the P131.9 million collection, hauling, and disposal of garbage was ratified by the Sangguniang Panlungsod Wednesday, March 23.

The contract of services for the P63.9 million operation and management of sanitary landfill in Barangay Felisa between Bacolod City and the IPM-CDC was also ratified.

Vice Mayor El Cid Familiaran, who served as a presiding officer, said that the IPM-CDC's contracts are for the periods of May to December this year.

The IPM-CDC was the lone bidder for the collection, hauling, and disposal of garbage and for the operation and management of sanitary landfill.

The city's garbage hauling was collecting 600 tons of garbage daily in the city.

Meanwhile, the city government is also preparing for the construction of the third cell of the city's sanitary landfill at Barangay Felisa for the city's waste disposal.



Bacolod City Council ratifies garbage hauling contract

The Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) of the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has earlier said the landfill can no longer accommodate the city's garbage within eight to 10 months.

"It is going to help us a lot in anticipating the possible problems in the city (but) rest assured that we are on time," Mayor Evelio Leonardia earlier said.

Cell Nos. 1 and 2 were also constructed by IPM-CDC.



For the first time, microplastics have been found in human blood

Published March 25, 2022 6:09pm



A Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) worker on Sunday, December 26, 2021, places a trash boom made of used plastic bottles to prevent solid waste from houses along the shoreline of the Baseco Compound from entering Manila Bay. DANNY PATA

May this study push everybody to manage plastic pollution better, because for the first time, microplastic pollution has been found in human blood.

According to a study published in [journal Environment International](#), polymers from plastics were detected and quantified in human blood for the very first time.

There were 22 anonymous healthy volunteers who participated in the study, which aimed to identify and quantify five high production volume polymers in plastic materials: PMMA, PP, PE; PS, which is used for food packaging, and PET, which is commonly used in drink bottles.

Of the 22 participants, 17 were found to have plastic particles in their blood.

PET plastic was found in half of the participants, followed by PS plastic, which was found in a third of the participants. PE plastics were found in 23%, while PMMA was found in 5% of the participants.

[Speaking to The Guardian](#), ecotoxicologist professor Dick Vethaak said "it is certainly reasonable to be concerned."

According to the study funded by the Dutch National social enterprise for Health Research and Development and Common Seas, what becomes of the plastic particles in the bloodstream needs further study.



For the first time, microplastics have been found in human blood

But because plastic particles are found in blood, there is reason to believe these particles are transported throughout the body, Vethaak told The Guardian.

“The big question is what is happening in our body?” Vethaak said. “Are the particles retained in the body? Are they transported to certain organs, such as getting past the blood-brain barrier?” And are these levels sufficiently high to trigger disease? We urgently need to fund further research so we can find out.”

It is certainly worrisome but not all unexpected. Plastic pollution has been in the forefront of headlines regarding climate change and global warming.

In 2018, [Department of Health](#) already sounded the alarm about microplastic already found in sea salt samples?

In the same year, [a UN report found that the Philippines](#) is among the Top 5 countries producing half of the world's plastic waste.

With microplastic already found in blood, here's hoping the [plastic pollution problem](#) will be taken more seriously by everybody. — LA, GMA News



SCotabato governor upholds mining ban

By [Jerry Adlaw](#)

March 26, 2022

THE Panaghugpong Mindanao environmentalist group commended South Cotabato Gov. Reynaldo Tamayo Jr. for favoring the approval and endorsement of a resolution for the retention of the 12-year-old ban on open-pit mining in the province.

Panaghugpong Mindanao chair Neptalie "Jake" Oquendo said that Tamayo's gesture is a sign of a responsible and accountable leader of the province.

The Provincial Development Council (PDC) has approved the resolutions passed by the body's Social Development Committee, the Institutional Development Committee, and the Disaster Risk Reduction/Climate Change Adaptation Committee, upholding the controversial ban on open-pit mining in South Cotabato.

Tamayo leads the PDC composed of mayors, members of the House of Representatives and nongovernment organizations in the province.

He endorsed PDC Resolution 2022-01 or the "Resolution Supporting to Uphold the Environment Code in Banning the Open Pit Mining in the Province of South Cotabato."

Tamayo also endorsed to the Sangguniang Panlalawigan the adoption and approval of PDC-ENRM-DRR/CCA Committee Resolution 2022-01, PDC Social Development Committee Resolution 2022-01 and PDC Institutional Development Committee Resolution 2022-01, all of which resolved to uphold the ban on open-pit mining.

Oquendo stressed that the ban on open-pit mining is for the protection and for the general welfare of the people not only in South Cotabato but also to the provinces nearby.

Oquendo said records showed that at least 93,453 signatures were opposing the lifting of the open-pit mining method.

Meanwhile, the Tampakan gold and copper mining project operated by SMI Inc. had recommended that the most viable way to extract the minerals is through open-pit mining.

SMI's Tampakan project is considered as the largest undeveloped copper-gold minefield in Southeast Asia, and among the biggest of its kind in the world that yields a potential average of 375,000 tons of copper and 360,000 ounces of gold in concentrate per annum in the expected 17-year mine life, according to the management of the SMI Inc., as it is committed to applying "responsible and accountable" methods in the mining project in the area.



OceanaGold to reduce emissions by 2030



By [Leander C. Domingo](#)

March 26, 2022



OceanaGold's Didipio Gold and Copper Project in the upland barangay (village) of Kasibu in Nueva Vizcaya.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

AUSTRALIAN mining firm OceanaGold is aiming to reduce its carbon footprint by 2030, according to a company report released on Wednesday.

Already in 2020, OceanaGold said they are committed to achieving net-zero greenhouse emissions by 2050, and during 2021, operational and corporate sustainability teams of the company worked together to identify specific actions to reduce emissions across the company, taking into account the projects already underway and emerging technologies and actions by governments to increase renewables in their power grids.

According to OceanaGold, the company's board approved last month an interim target to reduce carbon emissions per ounce of gold produced by 30 percent by 2030 (based on 2019 performance levels).

"This interim climate change target is based on a clear action plan to help reach OceanaGold's goal to net-zero operational greenhouse emissions by 2050," OceanaGold said in its report.

The report said the company is working on decarbonization, which is seen as a major disrupter in the mining and metals industry.



OceanaGold to reduce emissions by 2030

OceanaGold cited the World Gold Council (WGC), which recognized the need for strong action within the industry, identifying four key focus areas to manage GHG emissions: decarbonization of mobile equipment fleet; decarbonization of electricity supply; energy efficiency in the static plant; and carbon capture, sequestration and offsets.

In the company's non-linear approach to net zero, Greg Scanlan, OceanaGold general manager for Health, Safety and Environment, said the 2030 target was determined following industry benchmarking; the establishment of an emissions intensity baseline; and identification of reduction opportunities at an operational level.

"There is a long way to go to net zero and our journey won't be linear. Our interim 2030 climate change targets will help drive focus and innovation across the company, meet our stakeholders' expectations and set a challenging but achievable pathway in line with industry targets," he added.

Scanlan said OceanaGold in 2019 (its baseline year) generated 0.52 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) per ounce of gold produced, lower than the industry average of 0.8 tons of CO₂e per ounce of gold produced as reported by the WGC.

He also noted that OceanaGold as a responsible miner continuously improves and innovates the way it explores, extracts and processes minerals, drawing on the latest advanced technology and systems to improve performance.

"We are on an exciting journey of innovation and transformation in an industry which is vital to us all as we transition to a low-carbon world. Since 2018, OceanaGold has been implementing a company-wide program of automation, digital and process transformation, which is helping our company define the journey to operate the mines of the future," Scanlan said.

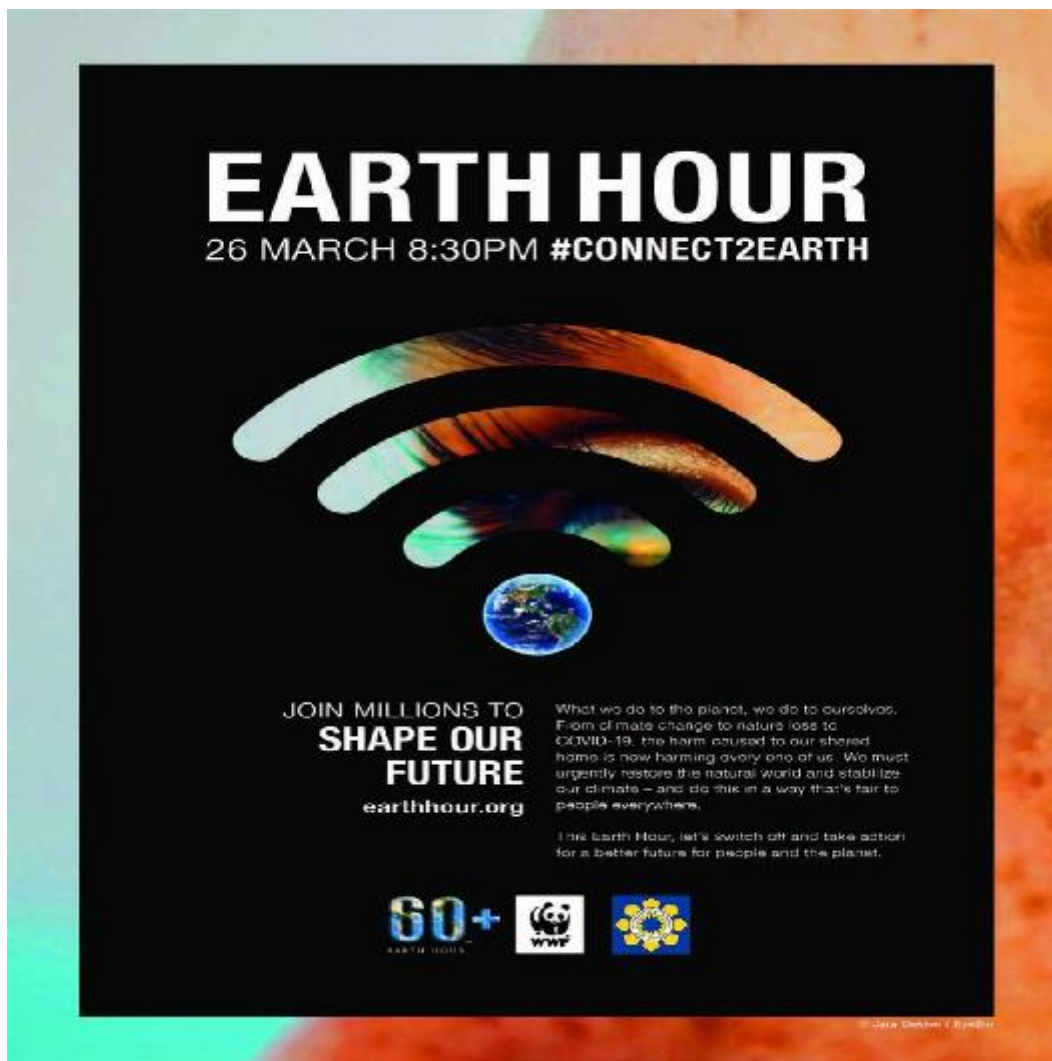
OceanaGold operates the Didipio Gold and Copper Project in Kasibu town in Nueva Vizcaya under another 25-year financial or technical assistance agreement or FTAA.



DOE Earth Hour



Published 6 hours ago
on March 26, 2022 12:01 AM
By [TDT @tribuneph](#)





Why even 1 hour matters: Earth Hour





Why even 1 hour matters: Earth Hour



[LUISA QUIBRANZA III](#)

March 25, 2022

- A A +

We cannot bet our lives and the lives of the generations that will follow us on wild theories or science fiction—we are not going to be living on Mars or the Moon anytime soon, and perhaps, ever!



Why even 1 hour matters: Earth Hour

The Earth is humanity's one and only home. All 7.7 billion people on this planet should, first and foremost, realize this fact and hold it close to their hearts.

Natural disasters and calamities, even health concerns like the recent pandemic, are all effects of how we collectively treat the environment. According to data presented at worldpopulationreview.com, the top five countries who are responsible for the most carbon emissions are China, the United States, India, Russia and Japan. These five countries alone make up 58.34 percent of the world's total carbon emission!

In the Philippines, Earth Hour will be from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Observing Earth Hour is more than a press event—it is a revolution. A revolution that calls for change in the way we do things that impact the environment negatively.

Earth Hour is a collective effort. Here are some things you can do to contribute to the revolution:

Connect with nature

When we shut down our lights, we see the stars better at night. Try to hang out with friends or family and go stargazing whether it's at the beach or in your home garden. Enjoy the fresh air, too!

Connect with loved ones

Turning off the lights and lessening the use of electronic gadgets feels like your modern-day sacrifice. Turn the "hurt" into something productive and fun! Play board games with the group. Cook and have friends over for dinner in the dark.

Connect with the community

Find out what other establishments are doing. Are they hosting clean-up drives or fun runs in observance of Earth Hour? Even if these events have passed, make sure you connect with the people who are in-charge and find ways on how to contribute to a more sustainable environment not only for an hour a year, but all 365 days.



1st ever Earth Hour virtual run launched

By [Rhodina Villanueva](#) (The Philippine Star)

- March 25, 2022 - 12:00am



The event is led by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)-Philippines in coordination with Pinoy Fitness, a web-based running and fitness community of athletes and fitness enthusiasts in the country.
STAR/File

MANILA, Philippines — A group of environmentalists has launched the first ever “Earth Hour Virtual Run” to encourage the Filipino running community to promote environmental conservation.

The event is led by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)-Philippines in coordination with Pinoy Fitness, a web-based running and fitness community of athletes and fitness enthusiasts in the country.

Dubbed “Earth Hour Virtual Run: Shape Our Future,” the event is in line with the celebration of Earth Hour 2022 tomorrow.

Pinoy Fitness CEO Jeff Lo said the running community could utilize their platform to support environmental protection and conservation.

“For us in the running and fitness community, we believe that advocating for personal health should go hand-in-hand with advocating for the health of the environment,” Lo said.

“Some of the ways that members of the fitness community have been taking to promote environmental conservation are through calling people’s attention to the importance of not just their personal well-being but of the environment,” he added. “Pledging and participating in cause-centric events like distance and virtual runs aimed at raising funds for action groups on sustainability are also among the things that the running community takes.”



1st ever Earth Hour virtual run launched

The virtual race, which will support the organization's environmental conservation efforts across the country, will begin tomorrow until April 22.

Runners who will complete the 10 kilometer, 20 km, 40 km, or 60 km cumulative distance over the course of the run will receive a special Earth Hour finishers' kit and have the chance to bag goodies from Adidas, Rustan's, Rudy Project, Natura Yoga; virtual workout session from fitness trainer Carla Piscosso, Urbanashramyoga, Pinoy Fitness and WWF-Philippines.

Various social media influencers including WWF-Philippines ambassadors Rovilson Fernandez and Karen Ibasco, and celebrities Troy Montero and Carla Piscosso have confirmed to join the run.

Registration is until April 9 through the Pinoy Fitness Atleta app.

For more information, e-mail WWF-Philippines at donations@wwf.org.ph.

Starting out as a symbolic "lights out event" in Sydney in 2007, WWF said Earth Hour has grown as the world's largest grassroots movement for the environment spanning over 192 countries and territories across the globe.

It brought out more than 9.6 billion impressions, with related hashtags trending in 42 countries last year.

Theme #ShapeOurFuture this 2022, the WWF network aims to remind the public that everyone has a role in shaping a new future for people and the planet - from taking individual steps toward living sustainably to urging companies and governments to help build a nature-positive and carbon-neutral future.



Earth Hour: What are bets' environment platforms?

By [Rhodina Villanueva](#) (The Philippine Star)
- March 26, 2022 - 12:00am



WWF said the “lights off” activity can be used as a platform for inspiring collective action for the environment by raising awareness on key issues that everyone, especially the country’s leaders, should address effectively.

MANILA, Philippines — Conservation group World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) said the observance of Earth Hour tonight will highlight the need for Filipinos to be decisive in the coming May elections.

WWF said the “lights off” activity can be used as a platform for inspiring collective action for the environment by raising awareness on key issues that everyone, especially the country’s leaders, should address effectively.

The group noted, “The Earth Hour activity this year comes at a time when over 67 million Filipino voters are about to choose a new set of leaders who will set the tone and define how the country will respond to the dual challenge of climate change and biodiversity loss in the next six years.”

“It is for the Filipino voters, for the sake of our children, to let our leaders know that nature is important to you so that it will be important to them. Speak out about issues of the environment and ask, ‘what is your plan to secure the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe? How will you protect the ecosystems that give us a chance of bouncing back from climate disasters and to prevent future pandemics?’” Katherine Custodio, WWF-Philippines executive director, said.

Earth Hour, one of the largest global grassroots movements for the environment, will virtually bring together millions of people, businesses and leaders from around the world to speak up for nature.

WWF-Philippines is inviting Filipinos to turn off their lights during the annual celebration of Earth Hour at 8:30 p.m. local time, as a symbol of a broader commitment toward the planet. This



Earth Hour: What are bets' environment platforms?

global celebration started as a symbolic event in Sydney, Australia in 2007 and has grown into one of the world's largest environmental movements spanning 7,000 cities and 193 countries and territories.

Custodio added, "As humanity's unsustainable demands on the natural world are leading to climate breakdown, habitat loss and decline of wildlife, Earth Hour is celebrated every year on the last Saturday of March as an opportunity to invite individuals and institutions to take substantial action for the planet. The core message of this movement lies in going 'Beyond the Hour' – what actions people can do after the lights go back on."

"Through Earth Hour, we want to engage over a billion people worldwide, and engage decision makers whether in business, institutions and governments, to move the agenda of nature up the priority list in the global sphere and in the national agenda. We want people to lend their voices as we're shaping our future and, hopefully, we'll be changing the ending for the positive – for both people and the planet," Angela Ibay, climate and energy program head of WWF-Philippines, said.

This year's Earth Hour also takes place at a particularly crucial time as it calls for increased ambition and urgent action to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030. It also takes place before the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP15, initially scheduled for April 25 to May 8, where leaders from around the world will gather to decide on a new global action plan for nature for the coming decade.

WWF aims to build a groundswell of actions and noise en masse, including on the news, to put pressure on world leaders in the build-up to CBD COP15.

At the same time, Earth Hour 2022 also puts forward a broader call to action for individuals to step toward living sustainably and for companies and governments to help build an equitable, nature-positive and net-zero carbon future.

For a decade since its inception back in 2007, Earth Hour focused on building awareness of climate change. From 2018, the focus of the movement pivoted to include both climate and nature as their interconnectivity became more evident, with human activity causing direct negative impacts on nature and the environment, which then contributes to biodiversity loss and climate change.

Ibay added, "While COVID-19 has prevented people from interacting in person, this has been an opportunity to connect to millions of people in digital spaces and engage with decision-making institutions to secure a new deal for nature with the aim of halting the loss of biodiversity by the end of the decade."

WWF said the Philippines has earned the distinction of being an "Earth Hour Hero Country" by consistently registering the most number of participating towns and cities since it first joined the event in 2009.



Water and sanitation, a better future for girls and our planet

DAKAR, Senegal: At the World Water Forum this week (March 21 to 26, 2022), the international community will raise awareness of the 2 billion people worldwide who lack access to clean water and sanitation. Among them are millions of women and girls, who walk hundreds of miles each year to find water for their families and are blocked from education and economic empowerment also due to poor sanitation services.

For years, we've talked about the costs to women and girls if we don't solve water, sanitation and hygiene issues. But what of the costs to our communities if we fail to act?

Today the world is facing a triple crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic, climate emergency and struggling economies — all of which have reversed hard-won gains on women's rights.

Twelve years of quality education for women can meet the consequences of this triple crisis head on. Women's empowerment, gender equality and sustainability strategies go hand in hand. And it all starts with that most basic of human needs — water.

Poverty, gender bias and humanitarian crises are some of the more obvious barriers to ensuring that girls stay in school. However, one of the biggest obstacles is lack of access to water, sanitation and hygiene.

Every day, millions of children go to school in unsafe learning environments, with no drinking water, no proper toilets, and no soap for washing their hands. Nearly 584 million children worldwide lack basic drinking water services at their schools, while 698 million children lack basic sanitation services, and nearly 818 million children lack basic hygiene.

Sanitation facilities that are shared with other households and open defecation practices place women and girls at risk for sexual assault and impede their ability to manage menstruation with privacy and dignity.

Stigma and social exclusion around periods lead many girls to drop out of school. Without proper sanitation, one in three adolescent girls misses school each month due to lack of privacy and access to water to wash their hands after changing sanitary towels.

Simply ensuring that schools have safe water, toilets and soap for handwashing, increases the likelihood that girls will attend while on their periods.

Better and resilient access to clean water translates into immediate economic improvements. Reducing the time women and girls take to collect water and giving them more time for school and careers. Over the next two weeks alone, women will miss out on 2.5 million working days while fetching water.

A World Bank study estimates that limited educational opportunities for girls cost countries between \$15 trillion and \$30 trillion in lost lifetime productivity and earnings. That is the sort of avoidable economic car crash that any decent policymaker should be rushing to solve.



Water and sanitation, a better future for girls and our planet

But the benefits extend far beyond economic gain alone. Take for example, the rising climate crisis which is driving mass displacement, intensifying food insecurity and fueling violent competition over dwindling natural resources in many regions of the world.

Extreme weather patterns have immense impact on women and girls — increasing maternal mortality as pregnant women on the run from climate disasters lack access to vital health services and heightening the risk of human trafficking as women and girls flee to find shelter.

Our humanitarian sectors are desperate for more bright women leaders at the table, with solutions to the problems they face each and every day. And the research is proving that they are more than equal to the task.

A study in India discovered that the number of drinking water projects in areas with women-led councils was 62 percent higher than in those with men-led councils. More than powerless victims, women are already spearheading transformative change. It is our duty as the international community to remove the barriers in their way.

Young female activists can also become powerful agents of change in their communities if they are given the chance to become educated and activated on environmental issues at school. Consider the power and influence of Greta Thunberg who has revolutionized the way we think about climate challenges.

Indeed, research suggests that girls' education can strengthen climate strategies in three ways: by empowering girls and advancing their reproductive health and rights, fostering girls' climate leadership and pro-environmental decision-making, and developing girls' green skills for green jobs.

If we are truly going to tackle the triple threat of health, economy and climate change, the international community must prioritize the needs of women and girls. We must ensure access to proper water, sanitation and hygiene services so that they are able to stay in school and focus on their futures.

It is economic common sense. It is a moral obligation. And more than that, it is a legal obligation too. Governments around the world have undertaken a pledge to uphold international human rights, for all people everywhere. It is time we kept our promises.

Looking at this year's roll call for the Sector Ministers' Meeting, organized by the Sanitation and Water for All partnership in Jakarta, there is reason for optimism.

For the first time it will bring together ministers of water, sanitation and hygiene with their counterparts responsible for climate, environment, health and economy. Without a genuinely integrated policy approach, we can't hope to realize the overlapping benefits of something as important as girls' education.

If we want to contain climate change, if we want economic progress, if we want to hold back the next pandemic, then we need to secure quality education, water, and sanitation for all women and girls, everywhere.

Source: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/03/26/opinion/columns/water-and-sanitation-a-better-future-for-girls-and-our-planet/1837630>

Getting our urban environment to net-zero

Our urban infrastructure is responsible for almost 40 per cent of global carbon emissions. Climate solutions need to include the biggest energy guzzlers, clean energy and retrofitting old buildings.

By [Eco-Business](#)
1 minute read March 25, 2022

Decarbonising cities is no easy feat, with its high electricity consumption, demand for cooling and embedded emissions from the construction of buildings.

The task is particularly challenging for small and dense Singapore, which has no natural hinterland to absorb the city's emissions.

So solutions will need to cover all aspects of the built environment – from data centres, which consume a large amount of power, to waterworks and even old buildings, which form the bulk of Singapore's infrastructure.

Plan it well, and some of these climate mitigation features could also help to protect the city's inhabitants from the effects of global warming, such as sea-level rise and the fluctuations in rainfall and temperatures that threaten to submerge cities or make them too hot to live in.

Initiatives by Keppel, a Singapore-headquartered multinational company providing solutions for sustainable urbanisation, strive to show the journey to net-zero for urban environments.

The video, "Journey to Net Zero", is produced with Keppel ahead of Earth Hour 2022, a worldwide movement to commemorate climate action.

Climate justice requires women's leadership

Women are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis, but they are also important agents of change. Top decision-makers today are still predominantly male.



Txai Suruí, a Brazilian indigenous activist at the opening of COP26 climate talks. Image: [Flickr](#), [CC BY-NC-SA](#)

[2.0](#)



By [Laura Chinchilla](#) and [María Espinosa](#)
4 minute read March 25, 2022

The world is well aware that the climate crisis is one of the main stumbling blocks to sustainable development. And yet, despite the dramatic evidence of the lethal consequences of climate change, and despite possessing the knowledge, technologies, and resources to fix it, we continue on the same high-carbon path that threatens our survival.

We also know that climate stabilisation depends on a whole-of-society response, and thus on all citizens' equal and fair participation in governance. That has not happened, either: Women have been [underrepresented](#) in climate decision-making. And while this trend has slowly been reversed, much more needs to be done to advance a gender-sensitive response to climate change. Three imperatives stand out: women's leadership, indigenous rights, and education.

Climate justice requires women's leadership

Efforts to improve gender parity in climate governance have been ongoing for nearly a decade. In 2014, delegates to COP20 adopted the Lima Work Programme on Gender to encourage the inclusion of more women in climate-change negotiations. But five years later, at COP25 in Madrid, [60 per cent](#) of government delegates and 73 per cent of heads and deputy heads of delegations were men.

This imbalance led to the adoption of the [Enhanced Lima Work Programme and Action Plan on Gender](#). Under the enhanced plan, the parties to global climate talks pledged to appoint and provide support for national gender and climate-change focal points for climate negotiations, and for project implementation and monitoring. Even so, from 2019 to 2021, women occupied only [33 per cent](#) of all leadership positions in climate-change negotiations and expert mechanisms.

But efforts to include women in these discussions continue. The [final agreement](#) issued at the close of last November's COP26 in Glasgow included gender equality and women's leadership as central components of climate policy and action strategies. This represents clear recognition that the transition to net-zero will be possible only through active citizenship, with women playing a vital role.

Women are [disproportionately affected](#) by the climate crisis, but they are also important [agents of change](#). Giving women a seat at the decision-making table and using a gender lens to shape low-carbon development strategies will go a long way toward making progress on efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The transition to carbon neutrality requires a radical change in production systems and consumption patterns across all sectors. Women must be part of the process to develop effective policies. The task is daunting, but there are examples to follow.

Much more needs to be done to advance a gender-sensitive response to climate change. Three imperatives stand out: women's leadership, indigenous rights, and education.

Costa Rica, for one, has set a clear path toward net-zero carbon dioxide emissions. Since 2014, more than 98 per cent of the energy generated in Costa Rica has come from renewable sources. And in 2021, the country was awarded the [Earthshot Prize](#) for its conservation model, according to which local citizens are paid to preserve and restore natural ecosystems, including rainforests. Costa Rica's success can be attributed largely to the commitment of its citizens to sustainable development and the involvement of indigenous and rural women in climate adaptation, knowledge production, and efforts to strengthen resilience.

Indigenous and rural women in particular are the most vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation. The inclusion of these women in creating sustainable practices is thus central to ensuring the effectiveness of climate-related decisions. Initiatives such as Club de Madrid's [Shared Societies](#) approach emphasise that indigenous communities have the right to be involved in these discussions, and acknowledge that local communities are more likely to support and implement conservation plans when they are fully invested in their development.

Education is also a crucial component of inclusive climate decision-making. In 2021, UNESCO called for [environmental education](#) to be a core curriculum component in all countries by 2025. The [Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development](#) states that environmental education must be available to girls and boys alike from an early age to ensure that future generations have sufficient



Climate justice requires women's leadership

knowledge to respond to climate change. Emphasising gender equality and non-discrimination in access to climate knowledge and skills will boost the ability of young people to effect change.

The recent [all-male](#) “CEO lunch” convened at the Munich Security Conference shows that women are still missing from the highest levels of global decision-making. Yet women’s leadership is needed to respond effectively to shared global challenges. Without the active and meaningful participation of women and girls in local, national, and global climate strategies, a carbon-neutral future will remain out of reach.

Laura Chinchilla is the vice president of Club de Madrid, a forum of former world leaders of democratic nations. She is a former president of Costa Rica. María Fernanda Espinosa is a member of multilateralism and gender equality advocacy group, GWL Voices for Change and Inclusion. She is also a fellow at Robert Bosch Academy, and was a former president of the UN General Assembly.

Tropical forests turn down the planet's heat by 1C, scientists find

Forests should be valued not only for their role in curbing emissions and as a source of carbon credits but also for the direct benefits they offer to communities, researchers say.



A fisherman rows his boat on a peatland river in the Kerumutan protected forest near Teluk Meranti village in Pelalawan, Indonesia's Riau province, November 11, 2009. Image: REUTERS/ Beawiharta

[Thomson Reuters Foundation](#)

3 minute read March 25, 2022

Tropical forests cool the world by more than 1 degree Celsius, increase rainfall, and shield people and crops from deadly heat, researchers said, showing the climate benefits of trees go beyond sucking planet-warming carbon dioxide out of the air.

In a [new study](#) released on Thursday, they outlined different ways the Earth, its climate and its inhabitants rely on forests.

As every tenth of a degree of warming fuels threats from extreme weather and rising seas, lead author Deborah Lawrence said it is key to “acknowledge that tropical forests have a very important role in maintaining temperatures at a safe level”.

Cutting down forests puts at risk the Paris climate accord’s goal of capping the rise in global average temperatures at “well below” 2C and ideally 1.5C above pre-industrial times, as trees absorb about a third of carbon emissions produced worldwide.

Tropical forests turn down the planet's heat by 1C, scientists find

The planet has already heated up by about 1.1C, bringing more extreme weather and higher sea levels.

Besides cooling, forests - including in tropical countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Brazil and the Democratic Republic of Congo - also provide food and livelihoods, clean the air, support human health and are an essential habitat for wildlife.

But in 2020, an area of tropical forest [the size of the Netherlands](#) was lost, according to monitoring service Global Forest Watch.

During the hottest seasons, forests reflect sunlight back into space, absorb heat and release moisture that cools the air and helps form clouds, creating rainfall and conditions that protect local people and crops, the new study found.

Forests should be valued not only for their role in curbing emissions and as a source of carbon credits but also for the direct benefits they offer to local communities, said Lawrence.

The University of Virginia professor, who first began researching forests on the island of Borneo, called for more tree-planting initiatives in both urban and rural areas.

"Tropical forests are like a big insurance policy for the planet," she said. "We give them up at our peril. We need to keep these forests around."

Danny Marks, assistant professor of environmental politics at Ireland's Dublin City University who did not contribute to the study, said healthy forests are vital to fighting climate change - both to limit emissions and adapt to a warmer world.

More should be done to stop rising deforestation in its tracks, he said, including providing new financing and placing a higher value on the services provided by forests.

Marks cited [Costa Rica](#) as a good example, where a tax on fossil fuels has enabled payments to protect nature and forests.

Beyond capturing carbon, the list of benefits tropical forests offer is endless, said Damian Fleming of green group WWF's global forest practice.

Research shows forests can also lower blood pressure, reduce the risk of lung disease and improve mental wellbeing, he said, adding the new study's finding that tropical forests keep the planet 1C cooler is "staggering".

"That's a significant feat, which proves how illogical it is that rainforests are one of the most endangered habitats on Earth and most vulnerable to deforestation," he added.

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Australia declares 'mass bleaching' at Great Barrier Reef

David Williams, Agence France-Presse
Posted at Mar 25 2022 05:58 PM



Tropical fish swim along the edges of a coral reef off Great Keppel Island, Queensland, Australia, on November 25, 2016. *Dan Peled, EPA-EFE/file*

Australia's spectacular Great Barrier Reef is suffering "mass bleaching" as corals lose their color under the stress of warmer seas, authorities said Friday, in a blow widely blamed on climate change.

The world's largest coral reef system, stretching for more than 2,300 kilometers (1,400 miles) along the northeast coast of Australia, is showing the harmful effects of the heat, said the Reef Authority.

Aerial surveys detected coral bleaching at multiple reefs across a large area of the system, "confirming a mass bleaching event, the fourth since 2016," it said in a report.

The Great Barrier Reef, home to some 1,500 species of fish and 4,000 types of mollusc, was suffering despite the cooling effect of the La Nina weather phenomenon, which is currently influencing Australia's climate, the authority said.

The area, which comprises about 2,500 individual reefs and more than 900 islands, suffers from bleaching when corals expel algae living in their tissues, draining them of their vibrant colors.

Though bleached corals are under stress, they can still recover if conditions become more moderate, the Reef Authority said.

"Weather patterns over the next couple of weeks continue to remain critical in determining the overall extent and severity of coral bleaching across the Marine Park," it said.



Australia declares 'mass bleaching' at Great Barrier Reef

The mass bleaching report emerged four days after the United Nations began a monitoring mission to assess whether the World Heritage site is being protected from climate change.

- 'Ghostly white coral' -

UNESCO's mission is to assess whether the Australian government is doing enough to address threats to the Great Barrier Reef -- including climate change -- before the World Heritage Committee considers listing it as "in danger" in June.

"The beloved, vibrant colors of the Great Barrier Reef are being replaced by ghostly white coral," said Greenpeace Australia climate impact activist Martin Zavan.

He pressed the government to show the damaged areas to the UN mission now inspecting the reef rather than the picturesque areas that have been untouched.

"If the government is genuine about letting the UN mission form a comprehensive picture of the state of the Reef, then it must take the mission to the northern and central Reef," Zavan said.

"Here, corals are being cooked by temperatures up to four degrees above average, which is particularly alarming during a La Nina year when ocean temperatures are cooler."

The World Heritage Committee's decision to not list the Great Barrier Reef as being in danger last July surprised many, given UNESCO had recommended the listing weeks earlier.

When the UN previously threatened to downgrade the reef's World Heritage listing in 2015, Australia created a "Reef 2050" plan and poured billions of dollars into protection.

Amanda McKenzie, chief executive of Australian climate action body the Climate Council, said the world's oceans reached record high temperatures last year.

"Unfortunately, as more severe bleaching is reported across our beloved Great Barrier Reef, we can see these devastating events are becoming more common under the continuing high rate of greenhouse gas emissions," she said.

"To give our Reef a fighting chance, we must deal with the number one problem: climate change. No amount of funding will stop these bleaching events unless we drive down our emissions this decade."

'No safe limit'

Researchers last month warned coral reefs that anchor a quarter of marine wildlife and the livelihoods of more than half-a-billion people will most likely be wiped out even if global warming is capped within Paris Agreement climate goals.

An average increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels would see more than 99 percent of the world's coral reefs unable to recover from increasingly frequent marine heatwaves, they reported in the journal PLOS Climate.

At two degrees of warming, mortality will be 100 percent, according to the study, which used a new generation of climate models.



Australia declares 'mass bleaching' at Great Barrier Reef

"The stark reality is that there is no safe limit of global warming for coral reefs," lead author Adele Dixon, a researcher at the University of Leeds' School of Biology, told AFP.

"1.5C is still too much warming for the ecosystems on the frontline of climate change."

The 2015 Paris Agreement enjoins nearly 200 nations to keep global heating "well below" 2C.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/27254475167/posts/10160201606585168/?app=fbl>

26 MARCH 2022, Saturday



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Practice 'environment stewardship' — DENR



By FAITH ARGOSINO

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) urged the public to practice "environmental stewardship" by going beyond the traditional hour-long switching off of lights as the world observes Earth Day today, March 26.

DENR Acting Secretary ► 8

Practice 'environment... 1◀

Jim O. Sampulna encouraged the public to join the Earth Hour event by switching off their computers, television sets, air conditioning units, and non-essential lights from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

"Apart from safeguarding ourselves from the COVID-19 virus under the new normal, let us also create a norm that puts our planet and, ultimately, our people first. Sustainability should already be a lifestyle and a common goal for each Filipino," Sampulna said.

Prior to this, Sampulna revealed that the national government has pledged to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change a projected greenhouse gas emissions reduction by 75 percent (2.71 percent unconditional, 72.29 percent conditional) from 2020 to 2030.

He added that the government would only obtain this goal with the public's help.

To alleviate the effects of climate change, Sampulna vowed to intensify enforcement of the Ecological

Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999, and Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004.

Moreover, Sampulna said the agency is also committed to strengthen its National Greening Program while protecting 8.7 million hectares of forests and conserving the biodiversity of terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

"Climate change is no longer a foreign term for all of us. With all the typhoons and disasters we have experienced in the past, I hope that Filipinos are already conscious and responsible towards taking care of the environment," Sampulna said.

"Apart from these, individuals can contribute to saving the planet by eating more sustainably, not wasting food, reducing plastic usage, being energy-efficient, being a conscious consumer, being supportive of the government's environmental programs, and being environmental ambassadors in their sphere of influence," he added.



Living each day

like it's

Earth

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As the *earthhour.org* website says: 'Every year, at 8:30 pm on the last Saturday of March, supporters in over 190 countries and territories unite, taking action on and raising awareness of the issues facing our one home'

BY MIKAELA KRISTINA
ACIDO-MUEGA
Contributor

The goal of the annual Earth Hour — or the switching off of lights for 60 minutes starting at 8:30 p.m., to be observed this year on 26 March — is to raise awareness of the need to take care of the environment for humanity's survival.

The youth have a major role to play in helping save and preserve our surroundings. We need to be part of every Earth Hour conversation.

As the *earthhour.org* website says: "Every year, at 8:30 pm on the last Saturday of March, supporters in over 190 countries and territories unite, taking action on and raising awareness of the issues facing our one home.

"But Earth Hour is more than just an hour for Earth — it's a movement for our own future, for the benefit of people and the planet.

"And it's not only a symbol of solidarity — it's a catalyst for change, harnessing the power of the crowd."

Talking to others about the worrisome state of the environment will allow us to get closer to nature and see how we can protect it.

Social media can amplify the efforts and enable us to reach out to each other and discuss lessons learned from years of apathy, if not ignorance, of the importance of caring for the planet.

For instance, throwing trash in the bin, recycling old possessions, and planting more trees are simple things we can do to minimize the damage people have caused the earth.

Watching documentaries on Mother Nature and the cycle of life



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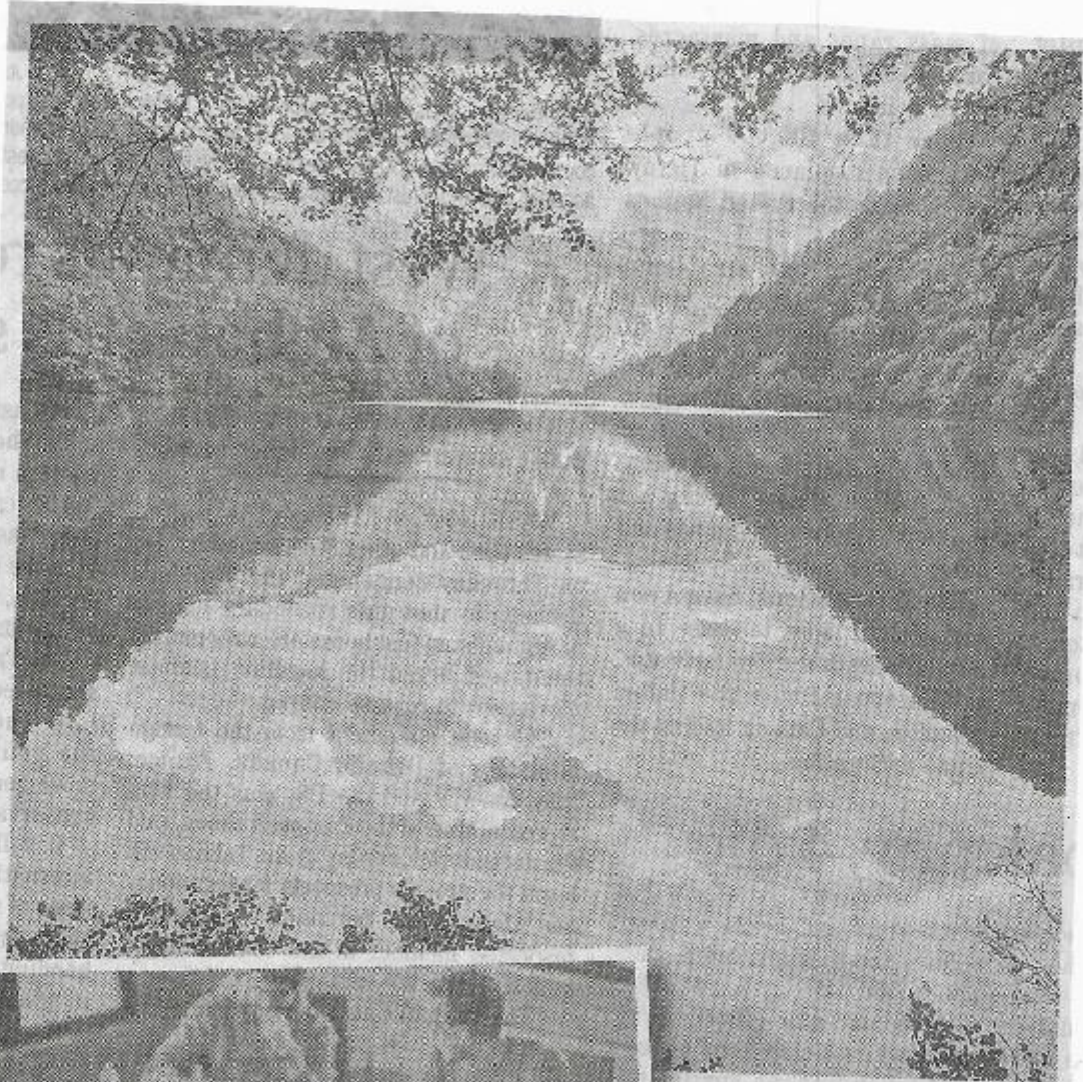
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THE: Living each day like it's Earth Day

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PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF UNEMPLACI IREKA MARINCŠAK AND ANNIE SPRATT
'EARTH Hour is more than just an hour for Earth — it's a movement for our own future, for the benefit of people and the planet.'

will help us understand why climate change is now a worrisome reality.

Reading up on ecological problems and solutions will be beneficial to our mission to make the observance of every Earth Hour more relevant and inspiring.

Encouraging fellow youth to think of other ways to make Earth Hour something to look forward to is a nice gesture.

Hopefully, we'll get into the habit of living each day like it's Earth Hour. Now is the time to get started. Visit <https://www.earthhour.org/>



Connect with Earth, save future — Cusi

The DoE highly encourages everyone to participate in this year's Earth Hour. In just 60 minutes, we would already be able to make a significant contribution to our country's energy efficiency and conservation efforts.

BY MARIA ROMERO
@tribunephd_ymlr

The world is changing, and its natural resources are slowly depleting. Hence, there has been an aggressive push to manage energy usage to limit people's impact on the environment.

The Department of Energy (DoE), for instance, targets to lower the amount of energy the country uses, starting with the government agencies, to slow down fuel reduction and clean up the environment.

On Friday, the energy department reiterated its support for the World Wide Fund for Nature Philippine Earth Hour campaign.

With the theme, **"#CONNECT2EARTH SHAPE OUR FUTURE!"**, this year's Earth Hour is on Saturday, 26 March, from 8:30

p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

"Everyone is invited to be a part of Earth Hour 2022 by switching off all non-essential lights for the night. When we connect with the earth, we can help shape our future," Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi said.

"The DoE highly encourages everyone to participate in this year's Earth Hour. In just 60 minutes, we would already be able to make a significant contribution to our country's energy efficiency and conservation efforts," Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi said.

Cusi noted that Earth Hour also serves as an "opportune reminder of how simple practices could have a great impact on ensuring a brighter future for our country."

Earth Hour 2022 will be celebrated via a digital on-the-night doubling, which would



NOEL CEL/SAGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

DANCERS walk along a road before an Earth Hour observance in Makati, the financial district of Manila. Millions of people are expected to switch off their lights for Earth Hour on 26 March 2022, in a global effort to raise awareness about climate change. Since it began in Sydney in 2007, Earth Hour has grown to become what environmental groups say is the world's largest demonstration of support for action on carbon pollution.

serve as an avenue to communicate the urgent need for world leaders to come up with a new global action plan for nature in the coming decade.

The DoE, as the lead implementing agency

of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act, continues to promote practices and measures that would not only reduce energy consumption but would also address environmental concerns. **Turn to page 14**



Connect with Earth, save future — Cusi

From page 12

Govt to save P840M

DoE said it expects to slash as much as P840 million in government spending by efficiently managing the use of electricity in government offices.

If the "Mandatory Implementation of Energy Efficiency and Conservation Programs and the Strict Observance of the Government Energy Management Program Guidelines" will be strictly implemented, the government can save at least 10 percent in electricity and fuel consumption.

The move will mitigate the adverse impacts of the Russia-Ukraine crisis and will also help secure the availability of electricity during the dry season, especially during the national and local elections.

"We issued this advisory to highlight the role of energy efficiency and conservation in ensuring the sufficiency of petroleum products' supply amid the Russia-Ukraine crisis," Cusi said.

Efficient habits needed

Particularly, the DoE proposed that government agencies make it a habit to turn off the lights and computers during

lunch breaks — except in offices where the "No Noon Break" policy is implemented — and after office hours, and whenever not in use.

They should also adjust their air-conditioning unit thermostat to not lower than 24 degrees Celsius and implement an eight-hour-straight office operation whenever practical and applicable.

The DoE said they can also help cut power costs by activating sleep settings on office equipment and keeping doors of air-conditioned spaces closed to maintain ambient temperature.

Moving forward, the DoE said it stays at the forefront of the strict implementation of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act.

As a net importer of oil, the country remains volatile to fuel price hikes since it heavily relies on the international market. This week, oil companies implemented a big-time rollback in pump prices of petroleum products after 11 straight weeks of increase.

However, the one week relief for motorists is only temporary as the upward trend in the international market this week will most likely prompt another round of hikes from 29 March to 4 April.



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DOE seeks higher participation by PH in this year's 'Earth Hour'

By MYRNA N. VELASCO

The Department of Energy (DOE) is encouraging consumers to turn off their lights for an hour from 8:30 pm to 9:30 pm in observance of the "Earth Hour" on Saturday, March 28.

The energy department is collaborating with World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)-Philippines for the "Earth Hour" campaign to raise the awareness of Filipino consumers on the significance of conserving the environment, while they also continuously use energy resources to power homes and businesses.

Last year, the "Earth Hour" was participated in by 192 countries and territories, including the Philippines. Celebrations had been mainly done via virtual platforms because of the niggling pandemic.

Energy Secretary Alfonso G. Cusi sounded off that "the DOE highly encourages everyone to participate in this year's Earth Hour. In just 60 minutes, we would already be able to make significant contribution to

our country's energy efficiency and conservation efforts."

In 2021, the department logged more than 73 megawatts of electricity demand reduction when Filipino households as well as commercial establishments and other entities had to put off lights for the Earth Hour - and the biggest demand cut was registered by Visayas grid at 53.34 megawatts; followed by Luzon with 10.6MW demand drop; and then Mindanao with usage decline of 9.07MW.

The government has been intensifying its plea for Filipino consumers to make a conscious choice of pursuing energy-efficient lifestyles; especially so since the country - primarily Luzon grid - still continues to wade through 'thin power supply' predicaments.

According to the energy chief, the Earth Hour "serves as an opportune reminder of how simple practices could have a great impact on ensuring a brighter future for our country."

For this, year, the Earth Hour

celebration will still be carried out digitally with "on-the-night doubling, which would serve as an avenue to communicate the urgent need for world leaders to come up with a new global action plan for nature in the coming decades."

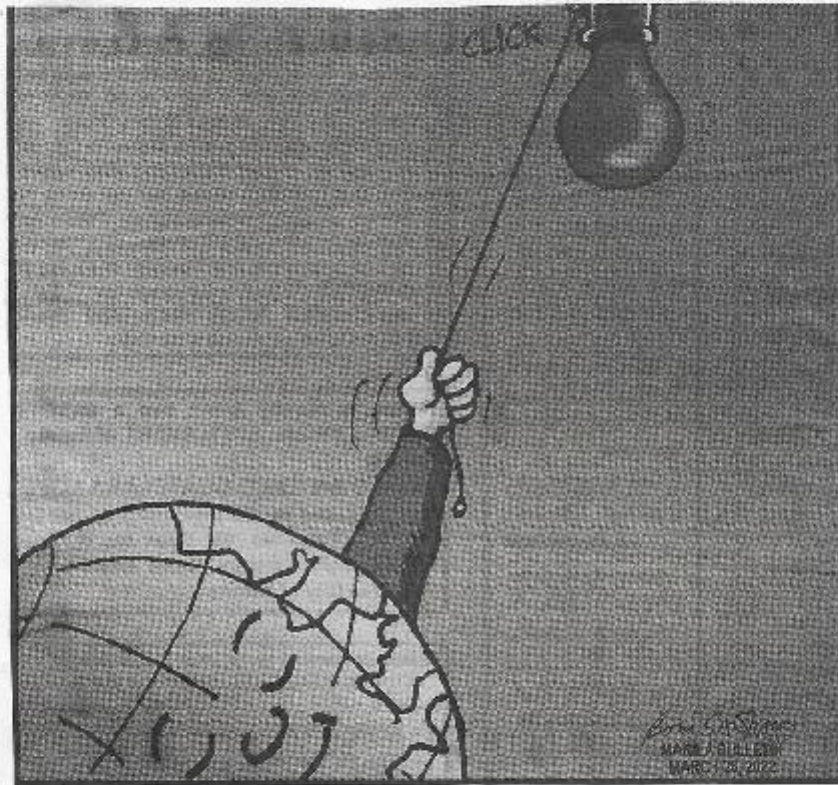
Relative to DOE's mandate and mission, it will also be utilizing this opportunity "to promote practices and measures that would not only reduce energy consumption, but would also address environmental concerns."

Cusi stressed that an hour reflect on how Filipinos could judiciously manage electricity consumption by turning off non-essential lights will enable them to "connect with the earth," and via that initiative, "we are able to help shape our future."



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Switch off the lights for the planet

Tonight, at 8:30 p.m., take time to switch off the lights at home or in the office, to celebrate Earth Hour, and join supporters of this movement in over 190 countries.

Earth Hour, which started in 2007 and organized by WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature), has become a symbol of hope and a demonstration of collective action to raise awareness on the issues facing our planet. More than just the fact that we feel one with the global community, the action is a reminder that individual actions, no matter how seemingly small, can have an effect on change.

"Shape our future" is the theme for Earth Hour 2022 – because doing things to reduce our carbon footprint can inspire others to do the same, and thus help save our home planet. Earth Hour, in only 15 years since it was initiated, has become a "movement for our own futures, for the benefit of people and planet."

"And it's not only a symbol of solidarity – it's a catalyst for change, harnessing the power of the crowd," declares "Join us for Earth Hour" page at www.earthhour.org.

The movement, started in Sydney, Australia, has grown into a worldwide action supported by millions of people who have initiated action for the environment through legislative changes. It continues to inspire more supporters as it starts with a simple act of switching off the lights in one's home or office for an hour on the last Saturday of March.

According to the Earth Hour movement website, "people around the world have come together every Earth Hour to support efforts to tackle climate change. And, together, we have created a powerful movement that helped deliver strong global commitments to tackling this threat. Climate change remains a big challenge for us all."

"But another urgent threat now demands our attention: the staggering loss of biodiversity and nature. Earth

Hour today endeavors to spark global conversations on protecting nature not only because it is our strongest ally against the climate crisis, but also because of its importance in ensuring our own health, happiness, prosperity, and even survival."

Coincidentally, the third day of this month was World Wildlife Day, which highlighted the invaluable contribution of fauna and flora across the world and their role in ecosystems and in building a healthy biodiversity. Climate change does not only affect us as it is the greatest threat to wildlife. Because of climate change, intense storms destroy the habitat of all animals, from land to sea. Because of climate change, high temperatures result in ocean acidification causing the bleaching of coral reefs. With warmer waters, ocean currents change and alter migration patterns. The dire effects go on and on. And if we don't do anything to address climate change, it will be too late to keep the planet healthy and ready for the next generation.

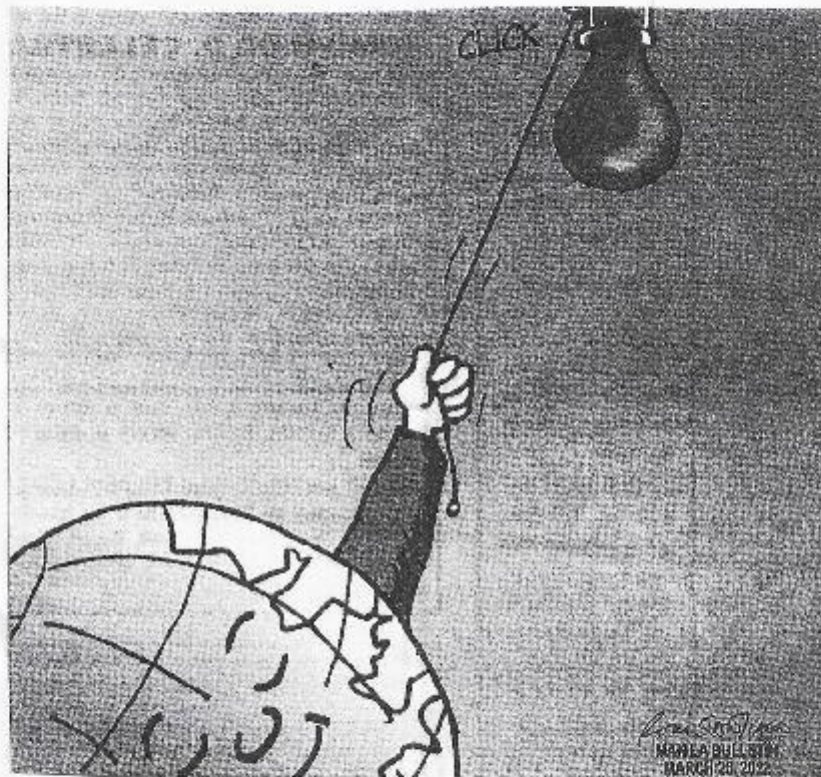
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Earth Hour: What are bets' environment platforms?

By RHODINA VILLANUEVA

Conservation group World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) said the observance of Earth Hour tonight will highlight the need for Filipinos to be decisive in the coming May elections.

WWF said the "lights off" activity can be used as a platform for inspiring collective action for the environment by raising awareness on key issues that everyone, especially the country's leaders, should address effectively.

The group noted, "The Earth Hour activity this year comes at a time when over 67 million Filipino voters are about to choose a new set of leaders who will set the tone and define how the country will respond to the dual challenge of climate change and biodiversity loss in the next six years."

"It is for the Filipino voters, for the sake of our children, to let our leaders know that nature is important to you so that it will be important to them. Speak out about issues of the environment and ask, 'what is your plan to secure the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe? How will you protect the ecosystems that give us a chance of bouncing back from climate disasters and to prevent future pandemics?'" Katherine Custodio, WWF-Philippines executive director, said.

Earth Hour, one of the largest global grassroots movements for the environment, will virtually bring together millions of people, businesses and leaders from around the world to speak up for nature.

WWF-Philippines is inviting Filipinos to turn off their lights during the annual celebration of Earth Hour at 8:30 p.m. local time, as a symbol of a broader commitment toward the planet. This global celebration started as a symbolic event in Sydney, Australia in 2007 and has grown into one of the world's largest environmental movements spanning 7,000 cities and 193 countries and territories.

Custodio added, "As humanity's unsustainable demands on the natural world are leading to climate breakdown, habitat loss and decline of wildlife, Earth Hour is celebrated every year on the last Saturday of March as an opportunity to invite individuals and institutions to take substantial action for the planet. The core message of this movement lies in going 'Beyond the Hour' - what actions people can do after the

lights go back on."

"Through Earth Hour, we want to engage over a billion people worldwide, and engage decision makers whether in business, institutions and governments, to move the agenda of nature up the priority list in the global sphere and in the national agenda. We want people to lend their voices as we're shaping our future and, hopefully, we'll be changing the ending for the positive - for both people and the planet," Angela Ibay, climate and energy program head of WWF-Philippines, said.

This year's Earth Hour also takes place at a particularly crucial time as it calls for increased ambition and urgent action to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030. It also takes place before the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP15, initially scheduled for April 25 to May 8, where leaders from around the world will gather to decide on a new global action plan for nature for the coming decade.

WWF aims to build a groundswell of actions and noise en masse, including on the news, to put pressure on world leaders in the build-up to CBD COP15.

At the same time, Earth Hour 2022 also puts forward a broader call to action for individuals to step toward living sustainably and for companies and governments to help build an equitable, nature-positive and net zero carbon future.

For a decade since its inception back in 2007, Earth Hour focused on building awareness of climate change. From 2018, the focus of the movement pivoted to include both climate and nature as their interconnectivity became more evident, with human activity causing direct negative impacts on nature and the environment, which then contributes to biodiversity loss and climate change.

Ibay added, "While COVID-19 has prevented people from interacting in person, this has been an opportunity to connect to millions of people in digital spaces and engage with decision-making institutions to secure a new deal for nature with the aim of halting the loss of biodiversity by the end of the decade."

WWF said the Philippines has earned the distinction of being an "Earth Hour Hero Country" by consistently registering the most number of participating towns and cities since it first joined the event in 2009.



Malls go dark for environment

Campaign focuses on how the country can work together in halting and reversing climate change and nature loss by 2030.

SM Supermalls, through its corporate social responsibility arm SM Cares, is again joining the world in observing Earth Hour, with this year's theme "Shape Our Future," as part of the company's sustainability efforts.

The campaign focuses on how the country can work together in halting and reversing climate change and nature loss by 2030.

Earth Hour is an annual campaign launched in 2007 that encourages the turning off of non-essential power use as part of energy conservation efforts for the planet. Since its first observance in the Philippines in 2008, SM has joined the campaign every year, being one of the first in the private sector to support it.

This year, SM will continue to promote the campaign by being one of the official partners of World Wildlife Fund (WWF) for the Earth Hour Virtual Run, to be held from 26 March to 22 April. Aside from this, all SM malls will be joining the light switch-off on 26 March from 8:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

"SM is proud to have been supporting Earth Hour throughout the last 14 years. Every year, we partake in this very important movement because we

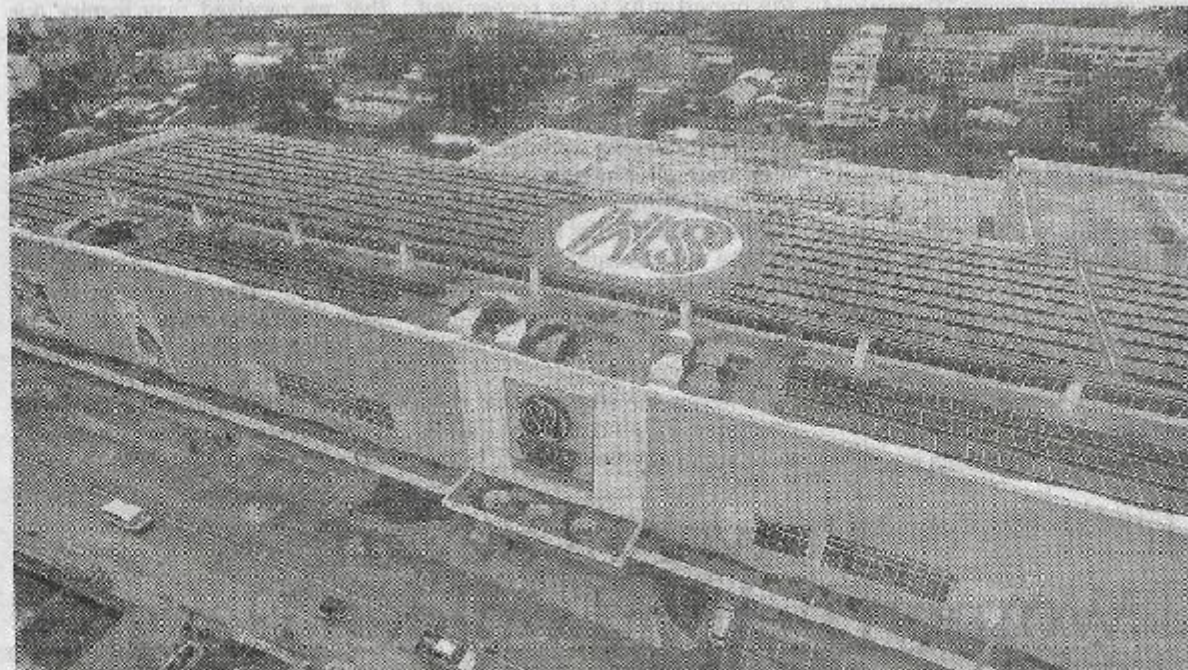
want to inspire people to action and tell them that no matter how small their contribution is, it will go a long way if we work together," Engr. Liza Silerio, SM's vice president for corporate compliance and head of sustainability, said.

Nature agenda

"Through Earth Hour, we want to engage over a billion people worldwide and engage decision-makers whether in business, institutions, and governments, to move the agenda of nature up the priority list in the global sphere and in the national agenda. We want people to lend their voices as we're shaping our future," she added.

Hopefully, we'll be changing the ending for the positive for both people and the planet," lawyer Angela Ibay, climate and energy program head of WWF-Philippines, said.

Aside from joining the campaign every year, SM has been active in environmental protection in many ways. For instance, all SM malls are equipped with energy and water conservation facilities. The company also regularly joins tree planting activities, and has waste management initiatives such as



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SM SUPERMALLS
ROOFTOP of SM City Tuguegarao Downtown is a showcase of the group's renewable energy shift.



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Trash-to-Cash, e-waste and used acid lead batteries collection programs, and the plastic waste collection program with the Plastic Credit Exchange.

SM has also been investing more in renewable energy. Eight malls in the country and three in China are now equipped with solar panels, with more to follow in the coming months. SM also pledged to increase its use of renewable energy to 50 percent of its overall energy usage by year-end.

Awareness drive

SM's other sustainability initiatives include the annual Green Film Festival, promoting environmental awareness among students and the youth through films; the AwesSMSeas project, promoting awareness on the negative impact of plastic waste on seas and oceans; and the International Coastal Cleanup joined by thousands of volunteers every year, to name a few.

SM Cares is the corporate social responsibility arm of SM Prime Holdings, supporting initiatives that focus on communities and the environment. In addition to its programs on the environment, SM Cares' advocacies include programs on women and breastfeeding mothers, persons with disabilities, senior citizens, children and youth, and the Bike-Friendly SM Program.



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SMC pushes 'safe, reliable, sustainable' Parex

Motorists, public transport, cyclists to be accommodated, says Ramon Ang

By Tyrone Jasper C. Piad
@TyronePiad

San Miguel Corp. (SMC) said on Friday the 19.27-kilometer Pasig River Expressway (Parex) is a "safe, reliable and sustainable infrastructure" that can benefit motorists, public transport, cyclists and pedestrians amid opposition from advocacy groups over environmental concerns.

"In all our major infrastructure projects, we always take into consideration the effects on the environment, putting greater emphasis on how we can build the infrastructure while at the same time preserve or enhance the environment," SMC president and CEO Ramon Ang said in a statement.

He added that the conglomerate engages "all stakeholders and in particular, partner with local communities to ensure environmental measures and mitigations are successful for the long-term."

This, as Move As One Coalition questioned how thorough was the project's environmen-



Palafox Associates' Parex design study showing dedicated bus, pedestrian and bicycle lanes. —CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

tal impact assessment (EIA).

"If the EIA is undertaken correctly and comprehensively, the EIA will show that the damage from Parex significantly outweighs its questionable and likely small benefits," the group said in a statement.

Incorporated sustainability

To ensure that sustainability is incorporated in the design, Ang said architect Felino Palafox Jr., a renowned urban planner and green architect, is onboard with the project.

"For many decades we have been emphasizing green architecture and green urbanism in our projects in the Philippines and abroad. For the Parex project, our approach will be the same, we are designing not just infrastructure, but an urban landscape," Palafox said.

The architect said that it is their goal to "seamlessly" incorporate green modes of transportation, including pedestrian pathways and bicycle highways, into Parex.

"We believe that if done

right and in line with sustainability and green architecture principles, Parex will be a model road infrastructure that further democratizes the benefits and convenience of infrastructure," he added.

Meanwhile, Ang reported that the conglomerate's Pasig River clean-up initiative has collected 295,260 metric tons of silt and solid waste since last year.

It has a target daily output of at least 2,000 MT of waste which can total to 600,000 MT every year.

"The government, led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, has done an excellent job in rehabilitating the Pasig River in recent years. We are helping take these efforts to next level, by deepening and widening the river, to enable it to carry more floodwaters, especially during rainy season," he said.

Ang said SMC hopes this initiative will mitigate "severe" flooding that has burdened cities near the Pasig River. **INQ**



SMC reaffirms commitment to build PAREX sustainably

SAN Miguel Corporation (SMC) has reaffirmed its commitment to build the Pasig River Expressway (PAREX) as a safe, reliable and sustainable infrastructure crucial for an inclusive recovery and growth beyond the pandemic.

SMC President and CEO Ramon S. Ang said that building the 19.37-kilometer road that will link the eastern and western sections of Metro Manila—from Rizal province to the City of Manila—will complement its P2 billion, five-year rehabilitation effort for the historic tributary that already started in July last year to mitigate its impact on the environment.

"In all our major infrastructure projects, we always take into consideration the effects on the environment, putting greater emphasis on how we can build the infrastructure while at the same time preserve or enhance the environment. We engage all stakeholders and in particular, partner with local communities to ensure environmental measures and mitigations are successful for the long-term," Ang said.

PAREX will be a hybrid infrastructure that can be used by motorists, public transport, cyclists, and pedestrians, to further enhance accessibility and traffic decongestion, while encouraging multiple modes of transportation. Its design will also incorporate green architecture principles.

Ang bared that the country's top urban planner and green architect, Arch. Felino "Jun" Palafox Jr., through his firm, Palafox Associates, has signed on to help with the sustainable design for the project.

"We share the vision of SMC and Mr. Ramon S. Ang for sustainable infrastructure. For many decades we have been emphasizing green architecture and green urbanism in our projects in the Philippines and abroad. For the PAREX project, our approach will be the same, we

are designing not just infrastructure, but an urban landscape. We are promoting sustainability through architecture, with a holistic vision," said Palafox.

"Mr. Ang already has so many good ideas, including incorporating green modes of transportation. Our job is make sure these ideas—pedestrian pathways, bicycle highways, landscaped planting strip, public transport, are integrated seamlessly into the PAREX," he added.

"We believe that if done right and in line with sustainability and green architecture principles, the PAREX will be a model road infrastructure that further democratizes the benefits and convenience of infrastructure. These are the types of infrastructure we will need in the future—adaptable to the growing and changing needs of our people," Ang said.

He also touted plans to put up a Bus Rapid Transit on the PAREX and the existing Skyway system, which will interconnect, completing the north-to-south and east-to-west connection throughout Metro Manila.

This, he said, will enable faster, more reliable, safer, comfortable and affordable commutes for many Filipinos. Ang said that with this, people will spend lesser time spent stand-still traffic, which exacerbates pollution.

Meanwhile, the chief executive reported that its ongoing Pasig River clean-up initiative has also ready yielded some 295,260 metric tons of silt and solid waste since it started middle of last year.

SMC maintains its target daily output of at least 2,000 metric tons of waste, to meet the monthly target of at least 50,000 metric tons, for a total of 600,000 metric tons extracted every year.

Ang said that the company's ongoing rehabilitation effort is in response to government's call for the private sector to help clean major tributaries in line with Manila Bay rehabilitation project that began in 2019.

"The government, led by



Design study from Palafox Associates for an elevated expressway along the Pasig River, incorporating dedicated bus lanes and pedestrian and bicycle lanes.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources, has done an excellent job in rehabilitating the Pasig River in recent years. We are helping take these efforts to next level, by deepening and widening the river, to enable it to carry more floodwaters, especially during rainy season. Through this, we will reduce incidences of severe flooding that has affected many cities located near the Pasig River," he added.

Ang emphasized: "Rehabilitating the river does not only involve dredging and removing visible wastes especially plastics that eventually go to the sea. It is only part of the solution. What is needed is a more holistic approach, which will involve building a sewage system that would prevent it from being the dumping area of industrial and solid wastes."

"We are committed clean the Pasig River and we are happy that more and more people see its value. In particular, NYK of Japan has joined our efforts and committed \$1.2 million worth of equipment and we expect the equipment to arrive by April," Ang said.

Ang said that as of now, two shallow portions of the river are the primary focus. These are the mouth of river near the Manila Bay, and the area at the Marikina River junction.

"We're also prioritizing the Marikina River junction as this section acts as sort of a bottleneck, where water flowing from the Marikina river is restricted, therefore becoming a partial

cause of the massive flooding in areas upstream of the Marikina river," Ang said.

Dredging the Marikina River section can also help reduce the peak water flows that normally go into the Laguna Lake through the Manggahan Floodway, and reduce flooding experienced by many lakeside towns in Rizal and Laguna provinces," Ang said.

Ang added that thus far, SMC has made significant progress in deepening portions of the Pasig River, particularly sections of the river in Pandacan/Sta. Mesa, Paco/San Miguel area. According to hydrographic or depth surveys before and after dredging, sections that only measure two to three meters in depth are now more than five to six meters deep.

"We are confident that in the coming rainy seasons, the increased capacity of the river will reduce flooding in many areas in Pasig, Makati, Mandaluyong, and Manila. And if ever these will be flooding, it can quickly subside in just a few hours," Ang said.

"This was our experience in the ongoing Tullahan River rehabilitation. To date, our extraction output there

has reached 825,142 metric tons and with more personnel and equipment, we expect to hit the one-million mark before or by June this year. According to feedback from local government units, including Valenzuela, flooding has subsided faster than usual in their areas," said Ang about the P1-billion Tullahan River rehabilitation effort that started in June 2020.



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Batangas joins World Water Day celebration

By JOJO CESAR MAGSOMBOL

BATANGAS - The provincial government of Batangas, through the Provincial Government Environment and Natural Resources Office (PGENRO), has joined in the celebration of "World Water Day," held in March each year to raise awareness among the people about the importance of proper use, management, and protection of waters and oceans.

The theme of this year's festival is "Groundwater: Making the invisible visible."

As part of the monitoring and assessment of marine protected areas (MPAs), the PGENRO Ba-

atangas Environment Laboratory conducted water sampling and on-site testing of selected parameters in 34 MPAs from 13 coastal cities and towns, such as Batangas City, Bauan, San Luis, Lian, Lemery, Calatagan, Taal, Nasugbu, San Juan, Lobo, Mabini, and Tingloy for the entire month of March 2022.

It aims to establish water quality monitoring data and trending analysis, assess the extent of pollution caused by human activities and climate change in the water quality of MPAs in accordance with the terms of the level

of water pollution and the compliance of water quality with the General Guidelines on Ambient Water in accordance in DAO 2016-08, and identify and monitor possible sources and routes of pollutants or contamination.

The first water samples were taken on March 1, at San Pablo de Bauan MPA from Bauan followed by San Luis (1 MPA), Lian (3 MPAs), Lemery (2 MPAs), Calatagan (11 MPAs), Taal (1 MPA), Nasugbu (8 MPAs), and Lobo (5 MPAs) assist the Municipal Office of Natural Resources and Environment, Municipal Office of Agriculture, and Coast Guard.

Sampling will continue in Batangas City (4 MPAs), San Juan (11 MPAs), Mabini (4),

and Tingloy (2 MPAs) until March 31.

Water samples will be analyzed for dissolved oxygen, fecal coliforms, nitrate, pH, phosphate, temperature, oil and grease, and total suspended solids. The results, 20 days after sampling, will be sent to towns for their information which will be the basis for planning and implementing programs to maintain "standard" water quality in MPAs to protect marine resources most beneficiaries are citizens and fishermen of the province of Batangas.

On the instructions of Batangas Gov. Dodo Mandanas, continued PGENRO's various initiatives are



Batangas province recognizes the importance of mangroves. Photo courtesy of Batangas PIO

to maintain a smooth, clean and healthy ocean throughout the province in collaboration with coastal LGUs (local government units), academe members, non-government organizations (NGOs), and private organizations, even during this pandemic.



'Green' wastewater plant to be built in Subic

SUBIC, Zambales. A new "green" wastewater treatment plant will be constructed by Subicwater together with the Technological Institute of the Philippines (TIP) and the Department of Science and Technology (DoST), with the aim of creating a cost-effective way to treat wastewater and its effluents.

The treatment plant will be the first of its kind in the Philippines as it will use a technology called "Phyto Vortex," which will separate wastewater and its effluents, or the sediment that remained in the wastewater.

Coupled with the use of indigenous Filipino plants, the aim is to extract the nutrients coming from the effluent sediments to be discharged to the environment while bringing back some form of wastewater that could be re-used as irrigation or as flushing water.

Subicwater will use as a pilot site its own wastewater facility located near the old campus of The Manila Times College in Upper Cubi, which was constructed during the time American forces were in the freeport zone.

Benjamin Antonio 3rd, Subicwater chief executive officer and general manager, said the sewage treatment plant will be "unique" in the country and will address the government's order in the upgrade of sewage treatment plants under the Clean Water Act.

"Through our collaboration with TIP and the DoST, theoretically, we were able to come up with a solution that uses plants, coupled with a technology being used in India called the Vortex, which we [will then] place the plants but when we looked at the

data, we felt that it would be better that they help each other and this is what we are going to pilot now," Antonio told The Manila Times during the groundbreaking event.

Antonio added that if the new facility works, it may become a cheaper option for conventional treatment plants as it will not only be environmentally friendly, but will use less chemicals and can be replicated in other places in the country.

He said that there had been many unsuccessful plans to use plants to treat wastewater. Now, they aim to revisit those failed attempts and see how it would become a viable alternative.

Angelo Lahoz, TIP senior vice president, said the school will give time, effort and expertise to research, simulate

and help propose the proof of concept which Subicwater can emulate.

"What this brings is it levels the playing field and allows Filipinos to mix and match and bring technology from elsewhere that is not dependent on supply and limitations and put together the best solution to problems," Lahoz added.

He said that Subicwater's planned wastewater facility will be more superior than the previous attempts at wastewater treatment using plant-based materials, and if this becomes successful, it can be easily replicated elsewhere.

The treatment plant is expected to be operational in June of this year and will be able to process up to five cubic meters per day.

RED MENDOZA



1,424 violate creek easements in Baguio

BAGUIO CITY: In its campaign to remove obstructions along waterways and lessen water pollution, the city government discovered that 1,424 structures have encroached the prescribed creek easements in the city.

Engineer Stephen Capuyan of the City Buildings and Architecture Office (CBAO) reported on Thursday that 630 structures are found encroaching the 3-meter easement along Saguin-Balili River, 346 along Bued River, 290 along Asin Galiano River, 107 along Naguillian River and 57 along Ambalanga River.

Capuyan said that owners of the structures were already issued notices of violation by the CBAO and that a number of conferences were already conducted to inform them of the desire of the local government to clear waterways from obstructions that constrict the smooth flow of water in the different river systems.

The deputy city building official said that some of the owners of the structures that were identified to have encroached on the creek easement presented titles over their properties, but what has been emphasized to them is the existence of the prescribed 3-meter creek easement which must be strictly observed.

Capuyan added that one of the violations of the structures is the direct connection of their septic tanks to the creeks and rivers, which has a significant impact on the pollution of the waterways. He said property owners have been required to correct the issue to avoid the imposition of fines and penalties against them based on existing laws, rules and regulations.

He expressed his gratitude to the property owners for their utmost cooperation and understanding because such an initiative is for the overall welfare of the populace.

DEXTER SEE



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DEXTER SEE

Growing role of natural resources governance by women

The Women Go project of the EU aims to increase the level of influence and leadership of rural women in the governance of protected areas and in sustainable programs on Climate Change Adaptation, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Livelihood

European Union (EU) Ambassador to the Philippines Luc Véron recently went on a two-day visit to Quezon province to meet with women leaders and discuss the role of women in natural resources governance projects.

"Women are key actors in the inclusive and sustainable management of natural resources in the Philippines," Véron said.

His visit consisted of holding an audience with the women leaders of Kalipunan ng Liping Pilipina Federations and Organizations, Kilos Unlad ng Mamamayan ng Real.

Véron also met with Infanta Mayor Filipina Grace America, General Nakar Mayor Eliseo Ruzol, and Real Mayor Diana Abigail Aquino.

The Women Go project of the EU aims to increase the level of influence and leadership of rural women in the governance of protected



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF EUROPEAN UNION IN THE PHILIPPINES

DURING his visit, Ambassador Véron met with women leaders of Quezon province to discuss their role in natural resources governance projects.

areas and in sustainable programs on Climate Change Adaptation, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Livelihood.

"The EU is determined to act on the gender dimension of environmental degradation and climate change and wants to contribute to promoting girls' and women's participation and leadership, through support to civil society organizations' initiatives like the project implemented by Haribon," Véron said.

Among the activities were: A training on Environmental Leadership and Organizational Development for women leaders; a Gender Sensitivity and Natural Resource Management Training Workshop for women leaders and their husbands; a Lemongrass planting site as the livelihood project of KALIPi Cawayan, in Real; and a Native and Fruit-bearing Tree Nursery site of the Forest Guard group SANAMAGMA in Infanta.

Forests play a significant role in the context of climate change by absorbing CO₂, helping prevent floods, retaining water for domestic use and agriculture and providing various sources of livelihood.

It is why the EU supports forest governance actions.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF EUROPEAN UNION IN THE PHILIPPINES
AMBASSADOR of the European Union to the Philippines Luc Véron.

PAULINE SONGCO @tribunephil_pau



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Loren Legarda on the Golden Age of Antique

ILLUSTRATION BY GLENZKIE TOLO



Antique: Where the Mountains Meet the Sea is a 10-minute documentary that aims to highlight the Visayan province's marine life. Sebaste Shoal in particular boasts of 150 oceanic manta rays.

BY PAULINE L. SONGCO
@tribunephil_pau

Deputy Speaker and Representative of the Lone District of Antique Loren Legarda has always been for the protection and documentation of Antique's rich marine biodiversity.

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Loren Legarda

on the Golden Age of Antique

'Antique is seemingly undiscovered unlike other ecotourism spots in the Philippines. Sometimes I want it to remain a hidden gem, because I want to sustainably develop it. We must protect it with all our knowledge, wisdom, power, influence and might.'



FILE: Loren Legarda on the Golden Age of Antique

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PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF
IG/LOREN LEGARDA
'AS leaders of our
country and our
communities, we must be
answerable to the present and
the future generations for the
kind of society that they will
inherit,' Loren Legarda said.

From page 1

While it is known for its majestic mountains, cascading waterfalls, white sand beaches and rich fishing grounds, Antique is still not as prominent as its nearby tourist destinations Boracay and Aklan.

"Antique is a paradise where the mountains meet the sea. It is a province that may have been in the doldrums for three decades but is now experiencing its Golden Age," Representative Legarda said in a recent virtual press conference for her new environmental project.

Antique: Where the Mountains Meet the Sea is a 10-minute documentary that highlights the Visayan province's marine life. Sebaste Shoal, in particular, boasts of 150 oceanic manta rays.

"The discovery and sighting of the existence of the manta ray in our waters is so important because it shows they thrive in a healthy marine ecosystem. And the manta ray, of course, must be protected at all costs, especially because it is identified as possibly threatened for extinction," Legarda said.



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FILE: Loren Legarda on the Golden Age of Antique PAGE 4/4

Antique: Where the Mountains Meet the Sea was produced in partnership with Studio H2O, Discovery Channel Asia, Department of Tourism and Province of Antique through the Office of the Deputy Speaker. It follows Legarda's earlier documentary *Our Fragile Earth* in 2017. Her other works *Buhos* (2010), *Ligtas* (2013), *Taklub* (2015) were all in collaboration with Cannes Film Festival best director Brillante Ma. Mendoza.

"Antique is seemingly undiscovered unlike other ecotourism spots in the Philippines. Sometimes I want it to remain a hidden gem, because I want to sustainably develop it. We must protect it with all our knowledge, wisdom, power, influence and might.

"The source of life of our food, our oceans, our mountains must be protected, not just for ourselves but for the next generation.... As leaders of our country and our communities, we must be answerable to the present and the future generations for the kind of society that they will inherit," Legarda said.

Legarda authored the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System (ENIPAS), Climate Change Act, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System, National Environmental Awareness and Education Act, People's Survival Fund Act, Ecological Solid Waste Management Law, Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act and the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act.

Antique is one of the provinces of Panay in Western Visayas. It is composed of 18 municipalities, three of which are inland, 14 are coastal and one municipality. It was classified as a second class province as of January 2002.



ANTIQUÉ is rich in marine biodiversity.



Pursuing a sustainable food system



ALL ABOUT
CHOICES

LUDWIG O.
FEDERIGAN

THERE is no better time than today to discuss effective sustainable dining strategies and initiatives. Sustainability is a complex issue in which the food production system and our diets play a critical role. But first, what exactly is sustainability? And how does it relate to food?

The term "sustainability" is difficult to define since it may refer to a variety of things depending on the context. The most commonly used definition, however, is that it involves "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Like all living creatures, humanity relies on nature for food, water and other resources for its existence as well as protection from environmental dangers such as diseases, natural hazards and human-induced disasters. But as a species that relies on what scientists refer to as "environmental services," we are failing to safeguard the physical foundation of our lives.

Indeed, the environment, economy, health, nutrition and other related dynamics all fall under the scope of sustainability.

Today, millions of people around the world are malnourished and billions consume less food than what they need. At the same time, the global population is quickly growing, with estimates that the 10-billion mark will be exceeded by 2050. In the case of the Philippines, the population is projected to reach 142 million by 2045, according to 2010 census-based projections.

When it comes to sustainable food development, our objective is to ensure that the growing population has both adequate food and access to

high-quality and nutritious meals in the future. One way to do this is to ensure that the agriculture sector thrives, even under the stress caused by climate change.

Agriculture, however, is also one of the leading sources of climate change due to anthropogenic activity. Food production accounts for around 30 percent of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions. As a result of climate change, increased mortality, illnesses and food insecurity are all indicators of permanent and catastrophic changes in the Earth's food system. Agriculture, in its current form, is both a driver and a victim of the said phenomenon.

We will fail to fulfill the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement if no action is taken. Simply put, the global food system must be sustainable. We must reconsider how we consume as well as how we generate food.

The transition to a sustainable food system is an unprecedented challenge. A combination of significant dietary changes, huge reductions in food losses and waste, and significant improvements in food production methods are required to make this transformation.

These measures must be pursued:

- Make healthy foods more readily available, accessible and affordable, whereas harmful and unsustainable meals must be discouraged.

- Increase the diversity of nutrient-rich crops rather than focusing on high volumes for a few crops.

- Use technology and system innovation to cultivate existing land to get higher yields, sequester carbon and conserve biodi-



OceanaGold to reduce emissions by 2030



OceanaGold's Didiplo Gold and Copper Project in the upland *barangay* (village) of Kasibu in Nueva Vizcaya. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

AUSTRALIAN mining firm OceanaGold is aiming to reduce its carbon footprint by 2030, according to a company report released on Wednesday.

Already in 2020, OceanaGold said they are committed to achieving net-zero greenhouse emissions by 2050, and during 2021, operational and corporate sustainability teams of the company worked together to identify specific actions to reduce emissions across the company, taking into account the projects already underway and emerging technologies and actions by governments to increase renewables in their power grids.

According to OceanaGold, the company's board approved last month an interim target to reduce carbon emissions per ounce of gold produced by 30 percent by 2030 (based on 2019 performance levels).

"This interim climate change target is based on a clear action plan to help reach OceanaGold's goal to net-zero operational greenhouse emissions by 2050," OceanaGold said in its report.

The report said the company is working on decarbonization, which is seen

as a major disrupter in the mining and metals industry.

OceanaGold cited the World Gold Council (WGC), which recognized the need for strong action within the industry, identifying four key focus areas to manage GHG emissions: decarbonization of mobile equipment fleet; decarbonization of electricity supply; energy efficiency in the static plant; and carbon capture, sequestration and offsets.

In the company's non-linear approach to net zero, Greg Scanlan, OceanaGold general manager for Health, Safety and Environment, said the 2030 target was determined following industry benchmarking; the establishment of an emissions intensity baseline; and identification of reduction opportunities at an operational level.

"There is a long way to go to net zero and our journey won't be linear. Our interim 2030 climate change targets will help drive focus and innovation across the company, meet our stakeholders' expectations and set a challenging, but achievable pathway in line with industry targets," he added.

Scanlan said OceanaGold in 2019 (its

baseline year) generated 0.52 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) per ounce of gold produced, lower than the industry average of 0.8 tons of CO₂e per ounce of gold produced as reported by the WGC.

He also noted that OceanaGold as a responsible miner continuously improves and innovates the way it explores, extracts and processes minerals, drawing on the latest advanced technology and systems to improve performance.

"We are on an exciting journey of innovation and transformation in an

industry which is vital to us all as we transition to a low-carbon world. Since 2018, OceanaGold has been implementing a company-wide program of automation, digital and process transformation, which is helping our company define the journey to operate the mines of the future," Scanlan said.

OceanaGold operates the Didiplo Gold and Copper Project in Kasibu town in Nueva Vizcaya under another 25-year financial or technical assistance agreement or FTAA.

LEANDER C. DOMINGO



Climate change—it's not just about the gasses

BY RORY VISCO

WITH the country's population growing dangerously every year, the amount of garbage likewise grows, but even more lamentably, not too many know how to dispose of it.

The National Capital Region (NCR), with an estimated population of 12 million, which worldpopulationreview.com said expands to about 15 million during the daytime (most likely because of people coming from the nearby provinces whose work is in the NCR), tops the waste production category among all regions, and some studies say the region spews about 10,000 tons of waste per day.

So, what does solid waste have to do with climate change?

According to Crispian Lao, Vice Chairman of the National Solid Waste Management Commission under the Office of the President and also the private sector representative for the recycling industry, solid waste is an integral component of climate change.

"When we speak of climate change, we look into methane or greenhouse gas and emissions, and from the perspective of solid waste, we normally look at methane and emissions in our landfills, black carbon from the transport of waste to the disposal facility as well as open burning of waste so it's very important for us that when we deal with climate change, we have to focus also on how our waste will contribute to climate change," Lao explained during the recent "Do Good for the Earth" webinar by Watsons Philippines.

Currently, the Philippines has enacted Republic Act 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 that provides the spectrum to address solid waste management problems.

Lao said the law defines the roles of barangays, the local government unit (LGU) with the job of setting up MRFs (Material Recoveries Facilities) to deal with biodegradable and recyclable waste and to properly dispose of the residual as well as hazardous ones.

With regard to compliance of LGUs, only 35 percent of barangays have MRFs as mandated by law. "Only 31 percent of our local governments have access to solid waste or sanitary landfill disposal facilities. So, it's very important for everyone as well as corporate partners to deal with the waste that we generate so that it doesn't end up in an open environment."

So, what can be done? The National Solid Waste Management Commission is advocating for a food waste management program, he said. "We need to compost as much as possible our biodegradables, follow the hierarchy of waste avoidance, or avoid generating waste in the first place, bring our own bag when going to the groceries, participate in different programs that aim to reduce generated waste, then reuse and recycle. For the recyclables, it is important, if we cannot avoid generation of wastes, to choose recyclables such as paper, plastic, glass, and metals."

For paper, white paper is highly recyclable, including carbon boxes. Newspaper because the junk shop will still accept it and the junk shops will send it to recycling facilities, Lao said.

But some papers like thermal paper, carbon paper, wax coated papers, photo papers, scented papers, are not recyclable, same with those that came in contact with food, grease, and oil, the paper used in toilets, tissue paper because of the potential risk of pathogen contamination, Lao explained.

As for plastics, Lao said, it is



categorized as rigids and flexible. For rigids, they are the beverage containers, containers for shampoo, cleaning materials in the form of polyethylene and polypropylene. Then the flexibles, which Lao said are a bit challenging to recycle. There are recycling infrastructures for flexibles as well and even sachets. But it's important to participate in programs that recover and recycle flexible plastic materials. Of course, glass is highly recyclable, but don't include in the recycling stream like light bulbs and ovenware, which contains boric acid.

Of course, tin cans are highly recyclable, aluminum cans, and all metals including copper. "We can participate in alternative residual technologies such as conversion to building materials, school chairs, and other different projects done by many social enterprise groups. "There are drop-off centers in some of the biggest malls for recyclable materials," Lao pointed out.

But for David Katz, founder and CEO of Vancouver, Canada-based Plastic Bank, has a different story when it comes to plastic wastes. He believes there is a solution to ending poverty through plastics using a circular economy model.

"The plastic that others considered waste or garbage, we consider as worth. It is about the opportunity to collect and exchange plastic for school tuition, or medical insurance or Wi-Fi, or cellphone minutes, or in other parts of the world, clean water or diversified food source," Katz said.

The Plastic Bank is powerfully tackling this very opportunity, starting off with Haiti, then the Philippines, Indonesia, Brazil, Egypt, and then moving into Thailand and Cameroon.

"We won't end hunger, we won't get to gender inequality, we won't touch on education if we don't end poverty. Recycling is a way of being

and the way of thinking in the world. And that's what the world needs more of," Katz said.

Katz said their partnership with Watsons is an opportunity for the world to be witness of great change, to witness great organizations that are truly standing on the right side of history.

"You see, it takes the bold and the authentic to do something that hasn't been done before. And we know with our partnership with Watsons, the world is powerfully going to not just witness the change of the communities and the lives of our collectors, but they are going to see a new way of thinking and new way of doing business," Katz said.

For Viki Herrera-Encarnacion, Watsons Philippines Public Relations and Sustainability Director, they are proud of their partnership with Plastic Bank, where they recycled 833,000 plastic bottles, including providing customers with almost 1,200 sustainable products with better packaging and ingredients and help them switch to more sustainable options.

Encarnacion said that the world relies on fossil fuels that give gas, heat and oil, daily essentials that also cause greenhouse gas emissions. Same with animals that emit methane when they digest their food and pass gas contribute to global warming, while deforestation reduce trees that can absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

But while it may be impossible to totally prevent global warming, there are some things that can be done to lessen the earth's greenhouse effect, Encarnacion pointed out. "Walk more or bike or carpool. Turn off the lights or use alternative energy and grow a tree. Consume less. And if you really need to buy something, consider more sustainable products."



■ The MPT South Hub in Imus, Cavite has received a LEED Gold Certification for its green features and initiatives. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

MPT South Hub gets green building certification

METRO Pacific Tollways South Management Corp.'s (MPT) headquarters in Imus, Cavite has been certified by a world-renowned body as a green building, with the company committing to advance sustainability in its infrastructure projects.

MPT South — a subsidiary of Metro Pacific Tollways Corp. (MPTC) — the toll road development arm of Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC), received a LEED Gold Certification for its headquarters, MPT South Hub.

LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is a globally recognized symbol of excellence in green building. LEED certification ensures electricity cost savings, lower carbon emis-

sions and healthier environments where people live, work, learn, play and worship.

MPT South Hub achieved LEED Gold Certification as it excelled in using sustainability practices in the way that it was designed and constructed, garnering a score of 66 points. It sits in a 5,237-square-meter four-story building located in Imus. It has a biophilic design with a full view of the outside surroundings and natural daylight and ventilation. The MPT South hub consumes at least 40-percent less indoor water with the use of modern water-efficient fixtures and 50-percent less outdoor water through rainwater harvesting.

The building also has an EV charging station for the compa-

ny's e vehicles, as it plans to transition to an all-electric fleet. It is also the very first MPTC infrastructure that acquired LEED certification.

The certification was awarded to MPT South by Green Business Certification Inc., USGBC's unit that administers LEED, from technical review, verification and certification in a virtual ceremony.

"MPTC is committed to advancing sustainability. We are extremely honored to have one of our facilities certified by a world-renowned body as a green building. This inspires us to continue the implementation of our infrastructure projects with the least disruption to the communities and the environment," said Rodrigo Franco, MPTC president

and chief executive officer.

Through MPT South, MPIC has repeatedly proven its expertise in building sustainable infrastructure. "It already began integrating energy-efficient and resource-saving technologies

while maintaining the high standard of road safety features along Calax (Cavite-Laguna Expressway). Existing toll plazas of the operational sections of Calax were equipped with rooftop solar panels that power its own operations. Roadway lighting systems

use LED fixtures, thereby improving energy efficiency," said Christopher Lizo, MPIC chief finance officer and executive sponsor for sustainability.

EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ



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BSP invests \$550M in green bonds

BY MAYVELIN U. CARABALLO

THE Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) revealed it has already invested more than \$550 million in green bonds and will continue to do so in the future.

Green bond investment, central bank Governor Benjamin Diokno said in a virtual briefing on Friday, is part of a global initiative by central banks to include sustainability objectives into their policy frameworks, which includes reserve management.

"BSP recognizes the importance of responsible investing. As such, we are working toward incorporating sustainability principles into our reserve management framework, asset allocation

and overall investment process," he added.

Diokno said the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) pioneered a green bond project in 2019 in response to rising demand for sustainable investments, which was carried out through a BIS Investment Pool (or Bisip) in collaboration with a group of central banks including the Bangko Sentral.

The project intends to have a significant environmental im-

act through large-scale climate-friendly investments while also demonstrating the central banks' commitment to green finance.

Diokno said the BSP was an early investor in the BIS' first green bond fund, the Bisip G1, investing \$150 million in October 2019.

He said, "BSP has increased its Bisip G1 investment, which now totals around \$550 million."

"Our investment in green bond fund is less than 1 percent of our gross international reserves," the Bangko Sentral chief added, "so you can expect more investment in green bond fund."

He also said that using the country's international assets to support the funding of green initiatives, particularly in Asia Pacific, is a vital approach to promote

sustainability.

"Also, from a portfolio management perspective, we expect the exposure to high-quality green bonds to provide benefits to the BSP in terms of diversification and return," Diokno added, emphasizing that the green bonds the Bangko Sentral invests in are subject to international standards set by the International Capital Market Association and the Climate Bonds Initiative.

He further said that the green bond market has steadily grown in size and is anticipated to develop much more in the coming years and that the BSP's participation in this fund strengthens its active involvement with its financial market partners in fighting climate-related risks.



DA intensifies partnership with IRRI

BY EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has forged a stronger partnership with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) as the country gears toward attaining food sovereignty amid the pandemic, Ukraine Russia conflict and climate change.

During his visit at IRRI headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna earlier this week, Agriculture Secretary William Dar said the strengthened partnership will sustain increased productivity and incomes not only of Filipino rice farmers, but also of their counterparts in the Asia-Pacific region and the rest of the world.

"The significant way we can boost productivity is to apply science and technology and support research for development. Innovations continue to be the hallmark of agricultural development, today

and in the future," Dar said.

"So, let's build this partnership between the Philippine government and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI). Thus, we continue to respect, appreciate and recognize the work of IRRI, not only here in the Philippines, but throughout the world," he added.

Dar also called for the participation of all stakeholders in the country's food system — the private sector groups, local government units and food producers — to help the Duterte administration attain food sovereignty for key food security commodities in the Philippines such as rice, corn, sugar, cooking oil, fish, pork, poultry, vegetables, among others.

"With all the challenges that Philippine agriculture is facing right now, we have responded to the urgent need to rethink current policies on food production. The DA is ready to propose and present

to the incoming administration the food sovereignty roadmap," Dar told IRRI officials, led by Director General Dr. Jean Balié.

For his part, Balié discussed priorities for DA-IRRI collaboration, including initiatives on crop diversification and conduct of more demand South-South partnership, which aims to strengthen the research expertise and capacity of rice-growing countries in the region.

He also reaffirmed IRRI's commitment to continue working with the Agriculture department to address the country's food security and climate change challenges. He also recognized the department's major role in achieving milestones on Golden Rice, which was approved for commercial farming in July 2021. Golden Rice is a variety developed to complement existing interventions to address vitamin A deficiency.

"The next step is embarking on a

country programming framework and defining together what would be the priorities for collaboration in the next few years and the timeframe," Balié said.

This year, the DA and IRRI, together with the DA Regional Field Offices, will implement a rice breeding technology for province-specific direct-seeded rice varieties or the "OneRicePH," an initiative to unify rice breeding and dissemination strategy for the Philippines. It is a five-year P300-million project.

Another joint project with IRRI is the Pest Risk and Identification and Management, undertaken by the DA's Philippine Rice Research Institute and Bureau of Plant Industry. The four-year project targets determining risk factors for pest outbreaks and identifying appropriate management strategies and tactics to reduce crop losses. It is slated to end this year.



Stockholm +50, UNGA New York@77:

Climate crossroads

THE title could have included the recent Glasgow Summit but since it was already concluded, the author deemed it proper to make a reference to its decisions so as not to miss their importance in the converging solutions to global warming.

Flashback to Glasgow. At the December 2021 Climate Summit in Glasgow (Scotland), climate vulnerable developing countries expected to see progress in the areas of more ambitious emission reduction and the fulfillment of existing funding pledges per the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015) as well as the matter of compensation to victims of losses and damage from failed agricultural production due to climate-related disasters or climate-induced harm.

Sadly, the Glasgow Summit basically decided to leave the world's most vulnerable communities behind as there was only marginal movement in regard to climate finance. Take note also that the COP



AMBASSADORS' CORNER

**AMADO S.
TOLENTINO JR.**

outcome document states coal needs to be "phased down" over the years rather than "phased out."

Be that as it may, there is still a chance for more mitigation dynamism in the coming years. From the point of view of editor in chief Hans Dembowski of D + C (Development + Cooperation), the reasons are: 1) climate changes are increasing and becoming hard to deny; 2) major private sector industries are now taking the related risks very seriously with the outbreak of the war in Ukraine as a moment of truth for energy and food security; and 3) political movements are becoming more assertive. In that regard, the timeliness of the EUs decarbonization agenda whose guiding principle is commitment to climate neutrality by 2050 is confirmed.

Stockholm +50. The story of international environmental governance began in Stockholm (Sweden) 50 years ago with the first UN International Conference on the Human Environment. It produced the UN Declaration on the Environment which sets out basic principles of international environmental policy and law. The narrative is marked by four major follow-up international conferences held every 10 years or so, publication of landmark results, including an action plan with regard to sustainable development — Agenda 21. Simultaneously, adoption of major treaties followed in earnest now numbering 1,400 more or less — outcomes of the emerging environmental diplomacy.

The Stockholm Conference also had a structural effect with the creation of the United Nations Environment Program (which is also commemorating UNEP@50 this year).

Global environmental governance has gone a long way. Last year,

the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) couldn't be more clear when it said "... the reality of climate change is unequivocal, its effects are already playing out in every region of the planet, and we need to act now before the outlook gets worse." In that connection, the assertion of many experts is "Stockholm +50 should be more action-oriented to strengthen the interface between science and international environmental law and policy."

Sustainable Development Goals.

On the occasion of the UN's 60th anniversary, 189 UN members pledged to meet seven Millennium Development Goals (MDCs) by 2015.

The MDCs consist of a framework for national strategies to combat poverty as well as development cooperation wherein law formulation and implementation is an acknowledged strategy. The seventh goal is to "ensure sustainable development."

In 2015, however, the UN General Assembly decided instead to set in place 17 interlinked Sustainable

► TolentinoA5



■ TOLENTINO FROM A4

Stockholm +50, UNGA New York@77: Climate crossroads

Development Goals (SDGs) designed to be a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all as follows: 1) no poverty; 2) zero hunger; 3) good health and well-being; 4) quality education; 5) gender equality; 6) clean water and sanitation; 7) affordable and clean energy; 8) decent work and economic growth; 9) industry, innovation and infrastructure; 10) reducing inequality; 11) sustainable cities and communities; 12) responsible production and consumption; 13) climate action; 14) life below water; 15) life on land; 16) peace, justice and strong institutions; and 17) partnership for the goals.

The SDGs are intended to be achieved by 2030, but for some of the targets, no end date was given. Though the goals are broad, they are interdependent, meaning there is recognition that action in one area will affect outcome in the others and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. As an example, climate action (SDG 13) is connected to the goals on poverty, good health and well-being, clean water and sanitation, etc. Viewed from another angle, the ongoing unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic requires a lot to be done that cannot be helped but that the search for a global solution is often discussed alongside the SDGs relating to zero hunger, clean water and sanitation, and economic growth, among others.

And, with parts of the world emerging from the pandemic, leaders should aim to seize the critical moment. Improvement of resilience to climate change and promotion of sustainable growth vis-à-vis the post-Covid-19 recovery must focus not only on decarbonization but most importantly, on protection of nature as well.

Biodiversity loss and food security. A big challenge faced by humanity aside from climate change is food security. Among its many meanings, let us simply refer to getting ready with food in times of disaster. Chronicles have been made about the lack of food

in many developing countries hit by droughts, wildfires, strong typhoons and tsunamis. The situation usually leads to the movement of people to other areas where food is available giving rise to internally displaced persons and environmental refugees.

Biodiversity loss, on the other hand, is the dying out of species because of global climate change, natural disasters and even exploitation of species for human use. Concomitant with biodiversity loss is habitat destruction. As more and more people need space, damaging human activities continue to encroach on natural environments, thereby destroying the habitats of countless species. As the population increases, cities and industrial areas are growing, fragmenting the remaining habitats and leaving "isolated islands" of natural population of plants and animals which are too small to survive. Research shows that only one quarter of land areas and one third of oceans remain undamaged by human activity.

To cite an example in our Asean region, "...Countries could devote new sources of finance into conservation measures that connect ecological corridors along watersheds and integrated seascapes," said esteemed Filipino climate law pioneer, Antonio La Viña. These corridors could be established across borders to protect vital concentrations of species in carbon-rich forests and peatlands, coral reefs and deep seabeds.

UNGA New York@77. With the UN General Assembly's 77th session this year, the body is expected to consider a "third generation of human rights" expanding on the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1947) and two international human rights covenants on civil and political rights and on economic, social and cultural rights adopted in 1996.

Referred to as the Global Pact

for the Environment, the proposed accord is planned to be re-launched at the UN General Assembly for deliberation and adoption as a multilateral environmental agreement among UN member states. It represents another great opportunity to elevate environmental law at the global level, using the principles as a framework for enhancing international human rights law and strengthening international environmental cooperation.

Among the principles and rights mentioned are the polluter-pays principle, intergenerational equity, precautionary principle and the new principles, e.g., protection of the environment in times of armed conflict, the right to a healthy environment as a human right, commitment to ecological disaster resilience and non-regression principle which calls on governments to refrain from repealing or weakening environmental laws.

As a "hard law" instrument, the Global Pact is expected to become a legally binding international treaty that will lead governments to conform with the pact. It would mean that people can bring states to court to have them responsible or compel them to adopt laws that are more protective of the environment. It would even allow civil society to play a monitoring role with respect to governments. Even French philosopher Dominique Bourg remarked, "..... We now need new binding principles based on the reality of the Anthropocene era, i.e., a planet whose functioning has been deeply modified by human activities...."

Global crisis, global solidarity, global solution. At the crossroads for solutions to global warming and realization of the sustainable development goals is a World Health Organization (WHO) proposal for a global convention on pandemic preparedness and response setting out how to handle the next crisis and strong enough to prevent a repeat disaster. It revolves around a "planetary health approach" considering the close interdependence between human health, animal health, environmental quality and climate change.



The draft convention integrates the well-being of humanity and safeguards all other forms of life and urges states to put in place national coordinated strategies involving health, veterinary and environmental institutions to strengthen epidemiological surveillance through early detection and warning systems. In particular, the state must alert the population when a pandemic is detected and safeguard them effectively by means of an emergency plan. Vaccine equity is enshrined recognizing universal access to vaccines. In this regard, all states must cooperate in providing and receiving all necessary assistance bearing in mind the special needs of developing countries, i.e., the transfer of technologies and knowhow. An Intergovernmental Panel of Experts on Pandemics is to be set up to provide scientific, technical, socioeconomic and legal advice.

To facilitate its effective implementation, the WHO, FAO, UNEP, WTO and the World Bank ought to increase their coordination of actions. States, on the other hand, must commit to allocating predictable and sustainable financial resources for pandemic preparedness and response programs.

A global fund for global health is also being thought of to help developing countries build strong and resilient health systems ensuring universal health care for all their citizens.

Hopefully, the convention will help to enhance engagement of all stakeholders, consolidate multi-sectoral partnerships, offering a dialogue and convergence framework for coherence of approaches, coordination of action and synergy of interventions.

"Life is the path left after the crossroads." (Anonymous)

26 MARCH 2022, Saturday



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65.5M Filipinos fully vaxxed; 11.7M with Covid-19 booster shots

By Lade Jean Kabagani March 25, 2022, 8:25 pm



(PNA file photo by Rico H. Borja)

MANILA – The Philippines has administered 141.2 million doses of coronavirus diseases (Covid-19) vaccines nationwide, with over 65.5 million individuals already with full protection, including those who received the single-shot Janssen and Sputnik Light jabs.

As of Friday, 11.7 million of those fully inoculated have booster shots, according to the latest data from the National Task Force (NTF) Against Covid-19.

NTF chief implementer, Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr., earlier said the government will focus on the Covid-19 vaccination program in regions and provinces that are lagging behind their targets.

The country's massive vaccination program has contributed to the decline of cases, with the number of infections this week down by 15 percent compared to last week, as reported by the Department of Health (DOH).

DOH Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said in a Palace briefing Friday there are 454 daily cases on the average, lower than the 490 in December before the surge of the Omicron variant.

“We have done the massive vaccination at the time that there were surges and we immediately decided to administer a booster three months after the administration of primary boosters,” Galvez said in a previous interview.

Since February last year, the Philippines has received more than 239.7 million doses of Covid-19 jabs, both procured and donated.

The latest addition is the shipment of 936,000 doses of Pfizer on Thursday night. **(PNA)**

Source: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1170674>



Covid-19 cases continue to dip since Omicron wave in January

By Ma. Teresa Montemayor March 25, 2022, 3:59 pm



(PNA photo by Avito Dalan)

MANILA – The number of coronavirus cases in the country is on a steady decline since the Omicron wave last January, a health official said Friday.

The number of infections in the recent week has gone down by 15 percent compared to last week, Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said in a Palace briefing.

"Sa kasalukuyan, tinatayang 454 cases ang mayroon tayo kada araw, mas mababa ito ng kaunti kumpara noong nag-umpisa tayo nung nakaraang Disyembre na nasa 490 cases kada araw bago tayo tamaan ng Omicron (Currently, we have an average of 454 daily cases, this is a bit lower compared to the 490 cases daily last December before Omicron)," she added.

The national admissions for Covid-19 cases have declined by 75 percent from the peak of 5,218 admissions last January.

The country's total beds utilization remains at low risk at 17 percent of 104,351 beds as of March 23.

"Bumaba rin po ang bilang ng ating mga kababayang na-aadmit sa ating ICU na sa ngayon ay nasa 575 admissions na lamang. Bumaba po ito ng 71 percent mula nang tumaas ang kaso noong Enero (The number of cases admitted in the ICU also decreased which is currently 575 admissions only. It went down by 71 percent when the cases started in January)," Vergeire said.

The nation's ICU bed utilization also remains at low risk at 16 percent of 3,529 beds as of March 23.

As of March 24, the government has reached 72.81 percent of its target population or more than 65 million individuals who are fully vaccinated.



Covid-19 cases continue to dip since Omicron wave in January

Meanwhile, about 78.57 percent or more than 70.7 million individuals have received their first dose of Covid-19 vaccine.

Some 12 million individuals got their booster shot.

Vergeire said 736,143 children are now fully vaccinated against Covid-19 and 1.8 million have received their first dose since the pediatric vaccination started two months ago.

Almost 8.9 million adolescents are fully vaccinated while 9.78 million have received their first dose. *(PNA)*

Source: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1170657>

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