

14 MAY 2022, Saturday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**





DZRH News ✓

18 hrs · 🌐

ICYMI: Tuloy ang planong pagbubukas sa publiko ng Dolomite Beach sa Hunyo. Sa panayam ng DZRH kay DENR Sec. Jim Sampulna na kung walang mababago sa schedule, sa June 12, Independence Day ang opening ng proyekto. Aanyayahan din anyang dumalo si Pang. Duterte sa muling pagbubukas nito.  
#SamaSamaTayoPilipino



**DOLOMITE BEACH TARGET  
NA BUKSAN MULI SA JUNE 12  
— DENR SEC. JIM SAMPULNA**



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Sama-sama Tayo, Pilipino!



## PH adopts forest stewardship system



By [Eireene Jairee Gomez](#)

May 14, 2022

THE [Philippines](#) is adopting the [Forest Stewardship Council](#) (FSC) certification system that is seen to open opportunities for export of forest products, paper and wood to Europe from well-managed, sustainable forests.

An FSC certification is an assurance that forest goods come from legal sources, as required by the European Union Timber Regulation and [Lacey Act](#) in the United States. It certifies that the goods come from forests that do the least damage to the environment and forest-dependent indigenous communities.

The [Department of Environment and Natural Resources](#) (DENR) is mapping an accreditation system for people's organizations (POs) to become certified under the FSC, especially as POs desire to export their forest products.

This is also aligned with the Philippines' hopes to pursue industrialization that will require excellent management of natural resources.

"[PO](#) accreditation is an important mechanism to transform POs into exemplary resource managers. POs are considered 'de facto' managers, a partner rather than a contractor," said DENR Assistant Secretary [Marcial Amaro](#).

Amaro said there is a need to revisit the draft department administrative order on PO accreditation to put this policy in place.

"[We need] to conduct a national consultative meeting for possible institutionalization of PO accreditation with concerned CBFM (community-based forest management) personnel by the fourth quarter of 2022," he said.

The PO accreditation will have a significant role in providing a sustainable livelihood for upland residents in order to discourage them from illegal logging and wildlife hunting. The accreditation system was piloted under DENR's Integrated Natural Resources and [Environmental Management Project](#) (INREMP).

"The pervasive problems of poverty and landlessness have driven people to use public lands. Inevitably, POs have become important players in the management of public land — timberland and multiple-use zones in protected areas," said Dr. [Manuel Bonita](#), DENR INREMP consultant.

The accreditation under FSC standards will enable POs to have easier access to export markets that look for international forest management certification.

Some 20 POs operating in nine provinces in four regions have already been accredited through the piloted accreditation program in 2019-2021 of INREMP. Having gained the trust of INREMP, the POs were allowed to enjoy substantial cash advances as an intervention to natural resources management.



## PH adopts forest stewardship system

This allowed INREMP to accelerate lagging disbursement of the project's fund.

"In the future, forest products chain-of-custody must be added to the PO accreditation system. This facilitates regulation of forest product harvesting and inhibits corrupt practices," said Bonita at an [INREMP Exit Conference](#) last April 21.



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Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/100064206931542/posts/373688871448008/?app=fbl>



## Climate action tips for offices and communities



By [Ludwig Federigan](#)

May 14, 2022

AS the country marches away from the medical and economic setbacks of the [Covid-19](#) pandemic, itself exacerbated by the worsening climate, climate resiliency must be one of the priorities of every person, household, office, community and the entire nation. This ensures that humankind will continue to survive and thrive.

We need to build a system that is more resilient to pandemics, climate change and other emerging global challenges. The menu for environment-friendly initiatives is long and can be adopted to ensure that climate change considerations are observed and practiced in our everyday lives.

Here are eight tips:

**Harvesting rainwater.** Rainwater harvesting can serve as an alternative source of water. It provides water when there is a drought and can help mitigate flooding. The collected rainwater can be used for cleaning office areas, flushing toilets and gardening.

A law that will mandate the construction of water wells and rainwater collectors, developing springs, and rehabilitating existing water wells in barangay (villages) nationwide must be passed by [Congress](#). At the local level, [Marikina City](#) has implemented initiatives to establish rainwater harvesting facilities in government facilities and school buildings.

– **Greening workspaces.** Through simple ways, we can convert vacant spaces in our offices and homes, and even in public areas, to plant fruits, vegetables, and herbs for food sufficiency and sustainability. Having plants and trees also improves air quality, reduces stress and enhances the environmental landscape.

Just make sure to plant species that are native to the area and can withstand the problems present in the community such as pollution, floods, etc.

– **Reducing energy consumption and harnessing solar and other renewable energy sources.** Today, more and more establishments are choosing renewable energy. Onsite renewable power generation like the use of solar panels is a way to cut emissions related to electricity consumption.

Installing energy-efficient lights by replacing incandescent lamps with compact fluorescents or light-emitting diodes, turning off office lights, slightly lowering the heating or the air conditioning, or unplugging devices when not needed are some good individual actions to implement.

– **Implementing solid [waste management](#) practices:** recycling, reusing and refusing single-use plastics and reducing food waste. Aside from being dangerous pollutants, single-use plastics are fossil fuel products that contribute to climate change. Shifting to reusable containers or to products sold in bulk is a solution to reduce plastic waste.





## Climate action tips for offices and communities

Another way to reduce our climate footprint is to reduce the amount of waste that goes into landfills. Segregate wastes by type. Recyclable materials such as newspapers, glass bottles, aluminum cans and discarded metal parts can be sent to junk shops and recycling facilities.

The food waste we generate also leaves a higher carbon footprint. In order to reduce biodegradable waste, let us consume food responsibly. Unavoidable food by-products such as leaves and branches, peels, seeds, etc., can be used as natural fertilizers through biodegradable composting.

– Choose greener equipment. When the time comes to buy new office materials or machines, if the old ones can't be fixed or more are needed, choose the most efficient (energy-wise) and sustainable ones. We should also make the effort to choose suppliers who demonstrate good environmental practices.

It is also important to use equipment and devices properly to avoid their deteriorating faster, and to repair gadgets when they break down instead of replacing them with new ones.

– Optimizing transportation and promoting environmentally friendly ways of working. As we know, transportation is one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions. By encouraging employees to use sustainable modes of transportation or by providing shuttle services, companies can significantly reduce indirect CO<sub>2</sub> (carbon dioxide) emissions and therefore their impact on the climate.

Some ways of working are more ecological than others: telecommuting, for example, has many ecological advantages. One can also consider videoconferences that avoid employees traveling by car for meetings with clients.

– Building the capacity of local communities to prepare and respond to climate and health risks. Understanding local climate and disaster risks and improving multi-hazard early warning systems will ensure early action and preparedness at the agency and community level.

Ensure that our buildings and infrastructure can cope with extreme weather impacts such as strong typhoons and floods. Incorporate expected climate impacts in planning and decision-making, such as undertaking a climate risk assessment in our locales.

Strengthening emergency preparedness and response capacities, including warning system communication protocols, evacuation procedures, contingency and recovery planning, and regular simulation exercises and drills in establishments and facilities will not only save lives but also enable communities to build back better from extreme weather events.

– Raising awareness through information dissemination and capacity building. We all have a role in raising community awareness. Organizing webinars and learning sessions to raise and improve awareness on climate issues is a great idea.

These initiatives gradually create the ground for best practices that individuals then reproduce at home and transmit to their families, friends and communities — the snowball effect, so to speak.



## Climate action tips for offices and communities

There is a greater need to climate-proof our facilities now, more than ever, for we do not have the luxury of time to remain still if we want to halt the trend of devastating climate change impacts on communities.

We must learn from another, support each other's climate actions, advise on strategies and strike convergence where possible. The need to work together — as a community, as a nation and as a planet — is more urgent now as we continue to take pathways to creating a safer, sustainable and resilient future for us and the next generation.

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





## 20 tons of campaign materials being collected daily; poses environmental risks

Job Manahan, ABS-CBN News  
Posted at May 13 2022 05:00 PM



People pass by various campaign posters along C. P. Garcia in Quezon City on April 27, 2022. Jonathan Cellona, ABS-CBN News

MANILA — The Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) on Friday said it has collected up to 20 tons of campaign materials since election day, just as it urged all candidates to help clean up the potential environment hazard.

MMDA Chairman Romando Artes said they would turn the collected posters over to Ecowaste Coalition, which upcycles thick tarpaulins into eco-bags, aprons, covers, among other things.

The thinner ones would be shredded to become part of MMDA's eco-brick project, he added.

"Napakarami po talaga ng mga campaign materials na nakukuha natin... Sa isang araw po siguro nakaka-18 to 20 tons po tayo ng campaign paraphernalia," said Artes in a televised briefing.

(We have collected a lot of campaign materials. In one day we have collected around 18 to 20 tons of campaign paraphernalia.)

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) urged both winning and losing candidates to help clean up campaign materials within this week, saying local government units must ensure its proper disposal in line with environmental laws.

"Campaign propaganda made of plastics and other non-biodegradable materials, if improperly disposed of, may have detrimental effects on public health and the environment," the statement read.



## 20 tons of campaign materials being collected daily; poses environmental risks

"We have done our part in exercising our right to vote. Let's continue to participate in governance through our simple ways of cleaning up our neighborhood from election litter," said Interior Secretary Eduardo Año.

### ENVIRONMENTAL RISK

Some campaign paraphernalia are made of polyvinyl chloride or PVC plastics. An [analysis](#) by Greenpeace USA had described PVC as the "most environmentally damaging of all plastic" that even recycling it would be "impractical" because of the harms through its additives.

The Ecowaste Coalition, meanwhile, urged the public to limit the upcycling of tarpaulins for non-food and non-child purposes because some materials contain hazardous content.

20 tons of campaign materials being collected daily; poses environmental risks | Video from PTV

These include cadmium and phthalates, "which may leach and contaminate the food or expose children to chemical risks," said the environment group.

"To make the reusing or repurposing of campaign materials easier, the group reiterated its plea to prohibit the use of cadmium, phthalates and other toxic chemical additives in plastics and for the authorities to require the use of recyclable, non-toxic campaign materials in future elections," they said.

ABS-CBN News has discussed the dangers of some upcycling methods extensively [here](#).

Artes said the campaign materials should be removed before it becomes a problem for the environment.

"Tayo ay nananawagan na rin po sa ating mga kandidato whether or not nanalo or natalo na tumulong po sa pagbabaklas nitong mga campaign materials na ito para sa gayon ito po ay hindi kumalat at eventually mauwi sa mga kanals o sa mga esteros na pagmumulan o magiging sanhi ng pagbaha pagdating ng tag-ulan," he said.

(We are calling on our candidates, those who won or not, to help the removal of these campaign materials so these do not end up in waterways that may cause flooding.)

A study last year showed that the Philippines is the worst plastic polluter in the oceans, contributing to over a third of the global plastic waste, even surpassing economic giants in Asia like India and China.

Seven of 10 major polluting rivers were located in the Philippines, with Pasig River identified as the top plastic pollution source.

Filipinos use an average of 48 million plastic bags daily, translating to 17.5 billion pieces a year, a study by the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) has shown.

Source: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/spotlight/05/13/22/20-tons-of-campaign-materials-being-collected-daily-poses-environmental-risks?fbclid=IwAR2IVxfgVoVsBTwto8vIDbwXjCOFydSgPTE5OSLEddCldqrZhyayCDz2oY>



## Campaign materials gagawing ecobags, ecobricks – MMDA



May 13, 2022 @ 4:00 PM 15 hours ago

MANILA, Philippines- Inihayag ng Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) nitong Biyernes na ang mga nakolektang campaign materials pagkatapos ng halalan ay ire-recycle bilang “ecobags” at “ecobricks”.

Sa Laging Handa public briefing, sinabi ni MMDA chairperson Romando Artes na nakipag-ugnayan ang environmental group na Ecowaste Coalition sa ahensya upang makagawa ng ecobags mula sa nakolektang campaign materials.

“In fact, nagpulong na po sila ng aming mga tauhan para ‘yung makakapal at magaganda pa po na tarpaulins ay magawa pong ecobags,” aniya.

Para naman sa maninipis na tarpaulin, sinabi ni Artes na ishe-shred ang mga ito sa granulator at gagawing sangkap sa paggawa ng hollow blocks at ecobricks.

Gagamitin ang hollow blocks at ecobricks sa pocket parks na dine-develop sa Metro Manila, aniya.

“Ito po ay gigilingin at gagawing pong sangkap sa paggawa ng hollow blocks at ecobricks na siya naman pong gagamitin natin sa dini-develop po nating pocket parks dito sa Kamaynilaan,” paliwanag niya.

Isang araw makalipas ang May 9 national and local elections, nakakolekta ang MMDA sa pamamagitan ng Operation Baklas ng 98 tonelada ng campaign materials nitong Martes. Nitong Miyerkules, 154 tonelada ng campaign materials ang nakolekta.

Hinikayat naman ni Artes ang mga kandidato na tumulong sa pagbabaklas ng kanilang campaign materials. **RNT/SA**





## Third district officials lead removal of campaign materials



PAMPANGA. Personnel from the campaign staff of Pampanga Third District board member-elect Mica Gonzales and San Fernando councilor-elect Brenz Gonzales have begun the removal of campaign materials in different areas of the third district. (Ian Ocampo Flora)

### [IAN OCAMPO FLORA](#)

May 13, 2022

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THE supporters and staff of Pampanga Third District board member-elect Mica Gonzales and San Fernando councilor-elect Brenz Gonzales have removed the campaign materials left behind in public places of the recent May 9 national and local polls.

Both local officials said that they have instructed their personnel to remove their campaign materials like tarpaulins, streamers, and stickers in the City of San Fernando and all the towns of the third district.

Reelected Third District Representative Aurelio Gonzales, Jr. said that it is the responsibility of elected officials, as well as those who did not win in the elections, to remove their campaign paraphernalia.

The removal of the campaign wastes in the third district have been started by the Gonzales family ahead of the advisory of the Commission on Elections and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

The elder Gonzales said that they will adhere to the advisory of the DILG on the proper disposal of election propaganda materials in line with environmental laws and local ordinances and regulations against illegal dumping, open burning, and littering.





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## Third district officials lead removal of campaign materials

The DILG earlier warned local officials that improper disposal of materials may have a negative impact on public health — adding that it must be in accordance with Republic Act No. 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, which says that “segregation and collection of solid waste shall be conducted at the barangay level specifically for biodegradable, compostable and reusable wastes.”

## Biomass burning booms in East Asia despite Paris Agreement goals

Over the past decade, Japan and South Korea have increasingly turned to burning wood pellets for energy, leaning on a UN loophole that dubs biomass burning as carbon neutral.



An area of land that has been burned and cut in Indonesia. Image: [CIFOR, CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via [Flickr](#).

By Justin Catanoso, [Mongabay.com](#)  
11 minute read May 13, 2022

The European Union and the United Kingdom are ramping up controversial wood burning to generate energy and heat as they follow legal mandates to phase out coal. But this practice is leaving [smokestack carbon emissions uncounted](#) and the atmosphere in arguably worse shape.

Now, on the other side of the world, two industrial Asian giants are following Europe's lead, though with less media scrutiny to date.

Japan and South Korea, the world's third- and 10<sup>th</sup>-largest economies, have been increasingly relying on burning wood for energy since 2012, taking advantage of a United Nations-tolerated loophole that enables them, like the EU and the UK, to allow emissions from [biomass burning](#) to be counted as carbon neutral, putting it in the same category as renewables such as solar and wind energy.

The result may be an undercounting of their actual greenhouse gas emissions, allowing them to meet their Paris Agreement goals — at least on paper. Both Japan and South Korea pledged in 2020 to reach net-zero emissions by 2050; the EU and the UK have the same goal.

## Biomass burning booms in East Asia despite Paris Agreement goals

### Intensifying pressure on forests

Western and Eastern biomass usage is creating a surging demand for wood pellets, putting even more pressure on native forests in the southeastern United States, western Canada, and Eastern Europe. Experts say this demand could lead to similar logging in Southeast Asia, especially Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Biomass is jeopardizing South Korea's renewable energy sector and negating global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Soojin Kim, senior researcher, NGO Solutions For Our Climate

The [Environmental Paper Network](#), a global coalition of forest advocates that tracks biomass usage, estimates that demand for pellets in Japan will rise to 9 million metric tons annually by 2027, up from 0.5 million metric tons in 2017. It estimates that South Korea will hit 8.2 million metric tons annually by 2027, up from 2.4 million metric tons in 2017. The Asian combination is close to future demand predicted for both the EU and the UK

In South Korea, government subsidies for further biomass development have been so heavy that [they are reducing investment in renewables](#) such as wind and solar, according to a report by Seoul-based NGO Solutions For Our Climate (SFOC).

Meanwhile, "proposed Japanese demand for wood pellets would require the use of all the forests in Virginia," Tim Searchinger, an expert on biomass for the World Resources Institute, told environmentalists in Japan during a recent presentation to forest advocates. More ominously for forests, his research indicates that "to provide 2 per cent of global primary energy from wood requires doubling global commercial wood harvest." Searchinger based the 2 per cent prediction on current rising demand forecasts.

This trend comes even as nations proclaim the value in keeping forests intact. In November of last year, more than 100 nations agreed at the UN climate summit in Glasgow to reduce global deforestation as a primary climate-mitigation strategy. But the nonbinding pledge left [plenty of room](#) for commercial logging, which feeds wood-pellet manufacture, to continue unabated.

"[W]e cannot credibly claim to protect the world's forests while continuing to log hundreds of millions of hectares of irreplaceable primary forests each year," Cyril Kormos of [Wild Heritage](#), an NGO in the US, said of the Glasgow agreement.

### A controversial practice and policy

Burning wood for heat and cooking is a common practice in homes and communities around the world — and has been ever since humans learned to use fire. But forest advocates have been arguing for years that burning wood for energy on an industrial scale, a practice virtually nonexistent little more than a decade ago, poses a host of environmental threats while undermining climate action; these include increased deforestation, elevated carbon emissions, loss of carbon sequestration capacity, and adverse biodiversity impacts.

## Biomass burning booms in East Asia despite Paris Agreement goals

But industrial-scale wood burning in the form of compressed wood, or wood pellets, is on the rise. The EU is currently the world's largest wood-pellet market, consuming nearly 31 million metric tons in [2020](#), up 7 per cent over 2018's 29 million metric tons. The EU and the UK operate more than 100 biomass plants producing energy and heat, according to Environmental Paper Network research.

The multibillion-dollar wood-pellet industry argues that it uses mostly waste wood to make pellets — lumber waste, limbs and tree tops, plus trees killed by pest or disease. But forest advocates have used their [close monitoring of the industry](#) to show that big international biomass companies, such as Enviva, actually use whole trees logged and clear-cut from native forests and tree plantations for at least half of wood-pellet production, and that may be a significant underestimate.

Yet because trees grow back, policymakers see them as a renewable energy source. In fact, the emergence of industrial-scale wood-pellet production can be traced back to the Kyoto Protocol of 1997. In that United Nations document, woody biomass was defined as a “renewable energy” source on par with zero-carbon wind and energy — a finding informed by the science at the time.

The belief then, long since challenged by scores of [research reports](#), was that carbon emissions from burning trees would be quickly offset by existing forest growth and tree planting. Kyoto created what forest advocates argue is an accounting loophole by defining wood burning as carbon neutral, with countries not required to count smokestack emissions from their wood-pellet burning.

Carbon neutrality is possible, but only over a long period, says Massachusetts Institute of Technology biomass expert John Sterman. He [estimates](#) that the carbon released today by burning wood pellets will take 44 to 104 years to be reabsorbed by new tree plantings — that is, if trees are planted at all and allowed to grow that long, and are not consumed by fire, disease or insects before that time.

But that's time the world may not have: The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that unprecedented carbon emission reductions must come [in just eight years](#) from the world's largest economies to avoid an exponentially worse global climate crisis than [what we're experiencing today](#).

In 2009, Searchinger co-wrote a [commentary](#) in *Science* pointing out this carbon accounting error, believing policymakers would respond to ensure accurate carbon accounting. But with the UK and the EU facing legal mandates to reduce fossil fuel emissions by 2030, they both turned to industrial-scale wood burning to replace coal, clinging to Kyoto's carbon neutrality definition for biomass, with subsidies in the EU and the UK reaching into the millions annually. Japan and South Korea have followed suit.

“Once you have an accounting error, you never know where it's going to go,” Searchinger told Mongabay. “That's been the story of biomass for energy. Once people start miscalculating emissions, you never know how bad it's going to get. These countries are given credit for burning biomass by calling it carbon neutral. That's the challenge.”



## Biomass burning booms in East Asia despite Paris Agreement goals

Making matters worse, wood pellets produce [more carbon emissions per unit of energy](#) than even carbon-intensive coal, because wood isn't as energy dense as coal.

"Increasing biomass burning for energy in place of coal [fails] to reduce emissions at the smokestack and actually increases them," said Peg Putt, a leader of the Environmental Paper Network in Australia. "Also, where forest biomass from natural forests is burnt, it is depleting the carbon stocks of those forests and undermines their potential to sequester carbon during the vital period for emissions reductions between now and 2050."

### The tsunami that delivered Japanese biomass

Japan's interest in biomass energy was caused by a single event: the Fukushima nuclear disaster of 2011, according to Roger Smith, a forest advocate with the NGO [Mighty Earth in Tokyo](#). After a 9.1-magnitude earthquake triggered a tsunami and led to a meltdown at the Fukushima plant, Japan took most of its nuclear power plants offline, which spurred rolling blackouts and an increase in fossil fuel consumption to meet its energy needs.

At the time, subsidised biomass was already gaining traction in the EU, as countries at first burned wood pellets alongside coal, in a process known as co-firing, and claiming they were gradually reducing emissions. Japan followed their lead, introducing a renewable energy subsidy in 2012 that likewise included biomass. While biomass organic material sources can range from agricultural waste to biofuels made from corn and soy, woody biomass (primarily wood pellets made from logged trees) is the greatest concern for forest and climate advocates.

"Japanese officials didn't think through all the steps you have to do to actually build biomass power plants," Smith said. "For example, you need a long-term fuel supply. You need emission policies in place to make sure you are mitigating climate change not making it worse. None of those elements were in place in 2012."

In the five years after the Fukushima disaster, Japan invested in solar power, but it also pressed forward with the use of existing coal-fired plants, where coal was mixed with imported wood pellets and palm kernel shells. Over the past few years, Japan has pushed for wood pellets and palm kernel shells to replace coal or to "lower" coal plants' emissions through co-firing.

"Once Japanese policy, or Japanese companies, do something, they want to keep doing it and improve it incrementally over time," Smith said. "So, on energy, the utilities and heavy industry are very invested in the status quo, which used to be a large baseload of centralised plants using nuclear, coal, natural gas and oil. That's what makes biomass so appealing to them."

There does appear now to be a slight shift in how Japan will approach biomass burning in the future. A year ago, Smith said, Japanese policymakers seemed open to arguments that biomass might not be the climate solution they originally imagined.

And last month, they implemented a "life cycle greenhouse gas assessment standard" that limits future biomass expansion. It does not, however, apply to existing biomass power plants, of which there are currently at least 34 throughout the country at 50 megawatts or larger, [according to monitoring by the Environmental Paper Network](#).

## Biomass burning booms in East Asia despite Paris Agreement goals

### Japanese government views

A Mongabay interview in April with Japanese officials confirmed the country's commitment to wood pellets, with minor caveats just now being implemented.

"Unlike solar and wind, biomass is a renewable [energy source] that isn't reliant on the weather and can produce a stable supply of electricity," said Japanese officials in charge of biomass at the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy's New and Renewable Energy Division, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The officials said biomass will play an expanding role in achieving Japan's goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 46 per cent by 2030. Because Japanese policy requires biomass energy sources to be sustainable, the nation hopes to produce more biomass in-country, farming fast-growing cedar and cypress that can be harvested in 10-year cycles to make pellets, according to the anonymous officials.

The officials added that trees should be replanted wherever they're harvested for biomass, but researchers say this will have little climate impact in the near term, since it would take decades for the lost carbon to be stored in growing trees.

In April 2022, the Japanese government, following recommendations made by its biomass working group, introduced a requirement that newly certified biomass projects receiving subsidies must reduce life cycle greenhouse gas emissions by 70 per cent compared with fossil fuels from 2030 onward.

Japan's existing 34 plants, however, are exempt. So, this new regulation would clearly not reduce the nation's current biomass usage, Smith said, noting that "There have been almost no [newly certified biomass projects] in recent years." The fight for NGOs now, he said, is to get the new rule applied to existing biomass plants, given that Japan has only three new plants in planning.

Not everyone agrees with prevailing Japanese views. Seiji Hashimoto, a professor at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto and a member of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) biomass working group, said he's deeply skeptical of the claim that biomass is carbon neutral and agreed with the bulk of research showing that "paying back" the carbon debt from burning biomass takes decades.

"Biomass is not carbon neutral simply because it is biomass," Hashimoto told Mongabay. "We need to think about how to use biomass in a carbon-neutral way in order to lower emissions. In doing so, it is important to not reduce the amount of carbon stock stored in biomass [forests], but to enhance it if possible."

However, Smith of Mighty Earth views Hashimoto's hope as unrealistic that Japan can satisfy its demand for wood pellets while simultaneously improving the carbon storage capacity of forests.

### South Korea's biomass trajectory

It didn't take a tsunami to introduce biomass to South Korea in 2012. The industrial giant merely reviewed EU and UK policies and made biomass a part of its renewable energy portfolio standard.

## Biomass burning booms in East Asia despite Paris Agreement goals

As in Europe, lucrative subsidies for woody biomass were put in place, called renewable energy certificates (RECs).

South Korean companies are required to get 6 per cent of their energy from renewables, according to Soojin Kim, a former senior researcher at the NGO Solutions For Our Climate in South Korea. RECs can be traded on the market, thus companies can either meet their quota or trade for certificates.

“Because biomass was included in the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard, it has been given a lot of attention,” Kim said. REC inclusion made it “easier for power producers, especially coal-power producers, to burn biomass in their own existing facilities without having to invest in another renewable source.”

Currently, South Korea has 17 biomass power plants, some still co-fired with coal, with three under construction and one more planned, according to the Environmental Paper Network. A report by Solutions For Our Climate found that electricity generation from biomass in South Korea increased by a factor of 61 in megawatt hours between 2012 (106,000 MWh) and 2018 (6.49 million MWh). The latter year, the country imported 3.4 million metric tons of wood pellets, with only the UK and Denmark importing more.

“Biomass is jeopardizing [South] Korea’s renewable energy sector and negating global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions,” states the report co-authored by Kim.

South Korean government officials declined to comment. Kim said that government scientists tell her that newly planted trees absorb more carbon than older trees, so harvesting older trees is a helpful climate-mitigation strategy.

That claim is the exact opposite of what forest ecologists have [concluded](#) for years: The older and larger the tree, the greater its carbon sequestration and storage capacity. Every time an old tree is burned for energy, all of the carbon it has stored for decades — sometimes centuries — is released into the atmosphere.

A week prior to the 2021 UN climate summit in Glasgow, 12 NGOs in Japan and South Korea co-wrote a letter to the Japanese prime minister and South Korean president. They decried the growing use of biomass and rising subsidies. They summarised the science that challenges the widespread, though scientifically dubious, idea that burning wood is carbon neutral. And they blamed national biomass policies for worsening the global climate crisis.

They urged both leaders to announce reforms protecting global forests, requiring that renewable energy reduce near-term emissions, and creating more transparent regulations to make existing biomass burning more sustainable.

During the two-week UN summit in early November, the issue of biomass policy was never a part of the official agenda. It wasn’t discussed or debated during negotiations. And the leaders of Japan and South Korea ignored the NGOs’ requests.

*This story was published with permission from [Mongabay.com](#).*

Source: <https://www.eco-business.com/news/biomass-burning-booms-in-east-asia-despite-paris-agreement-goals/>

## Climate adaptation is a business opportunity — but at what cost?

The Asia Pacific region is at the forefront of climate risks, and could benefit tremendously from adopting climate defenses early. However, money issues could get in the way.



A thunderstorm in Singapore in April 2022. The Asia Pacific region is set to face more severe flooding and storms due to climate change, putting businesses and the lives of millions at risk. Image: Eco-Business/ Liang Lei.

By [Liang Lei](#)

6 minute read May 13, 2022

Fancy getting real-time data on where lightning is striking during a thunderstorm, accurate to under a hundred metres, using a couple of lightweight ground-based sensors?

It might sound appealing if you handle ground operations in an airport, and need help keeping flights safe while minimising costly downtime – at least that is how German firm Nowcast is pitching their product.

But an early warning service for extreme weather should be available for wider use, says Resurgence, a London-based consultancy, to protect the most vulnerable from hydrometeorological hazards such as tropical cyclones, flash floods and coastal storm surges.

Globally, a third of the world's population is not covered by weather warning systems that the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) says is key to saving lives and property. The organisation is looking to solve this problem in [five years](#) – an effort that requires an estimated US\$1.5 billion in investments.



## Climate adaptation is a business opportunity — but at what cost?

“National meteorological and hydrological services and national disaster management organisations are encouraged to collaborate with the private sector to ensure that stakeholders and the communities in Asia Pacific take appropriate action in the face of extreme weather events and other hazards,” said Ben Churchill, head of the regional office for Asia and the Southwest Pacific at WMO. He was speaking at the [Asia Climate Forum](#), a recent trade conference in Singapore.

Weather and disaster monitoring services, once predominantly the responsibility of national meteorological offices, is now a [booming global industry](#), growing from US\$2.1 billion in 2016 to an expected US\$4 billion in 2025.

The Asia Pacific region is expected to lead this growth, due to its rapid economic and urban development. Moreover, the region, already the [most disaster-prone](#) part of the world, is also set to be hit hard by climate change – millions of people live in areas at risk of inundation from rising seas and stronger storms.

Weather and flood defence systems are lacking in some Asia Pacific countries. Many areas in the region currently [face difficulties](#) in reporting regular readings from land-based weather stations, which the WMO uses for global weather forecasting. Where they exist, the resolution and timeliness of data may be poor, and nowhere near what the latest technologies can offer. The problem is especially severe in the Pacific island states.

The private sector thinks it has some answers to this climate problem.



Trade visitors at the Asia Climate Forum held in Singapore, where over 20 firms specialising in meteorology, flood control and air quality management showcased their services. Image: Eco-Business/ Liang Lei.

## Climate adaptation is a business opportunity — but at what cost?

“We don’t often think about climate change as an opportunity. Undoubtedly, it is an opportunity we all wish we could have lived without,” said Jim Anderson, chair of the Association of Hydro-Meteorological Equipment Industry.

“The creativity of the private sector and its initiative for change is something that can be harnessed more. We should leverage this dynamic of action and innovation as we work to address climate change,” said Anderson.

### Managing upfront costs

American start-up Tomorrow.io has its sights set high – into space. It wants to launch a constellation of satellites the size of mini hotel refrigerators, to provide instant data on rain, clouds and temperature readings.

“It will be really important how these impact agriculture, particularly in developing and least developed countries where rainfall measurements continue to be an issue,” said Ari Davidov, director of international government sales at the weather-tech firm.

The satellites are designed to provide global coverage, but the data, for the most part, is a paid service that not all governments can afford.

“We recognise that there are costs associated with this work,” said Davidov. He added that the costs could be shared via partnerships with humanitarian agencies and donors. Specific products could also be tailored based on how much a client can pay and what information is most relevant.

Cost could be an especially big issue for Asia Pacific, even though a basic premise of engaging with the private sector is lower prices, at least in a competitive market. The region is home to several emerging economies, and also several small island states which have tighter purse strings.

“An effective way to resolve this is to start small, prove success and sustainability, then scale up,” said Churchill, on how governments and the hydromet industry should approach weather solutions.

In any case, the price tag of climate defence is no excuse for inaction, said Louis Gritzo, vice-president of research, international codes and standards at FM Global, an American commercial property insurer. Instead, it should spur firms to plan early and spread costs over time, to ease the pain of shelling out money for extreme weather protection.

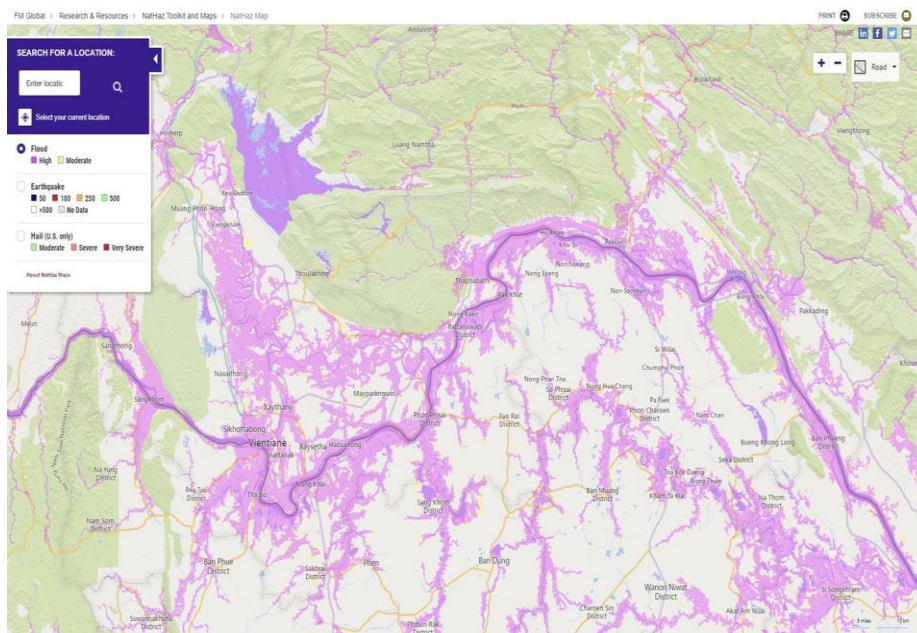
The worst thing in the world is for a company to spend money to reduce losses, then for the solutions to not work.

Louis Gritzo, vice president of research, international codes and standards, FM Global

“There is no doubt that if a storm hits, the cost of resilience is much less than the damage,” Gritzo told Eco-Business, on the sidelines of the Asia Climate Forum. The WMO [estimates](#) that spending US\$800 million on weather warning systems in developing countries could avoid losses of up to US\$16 billion a year.

## Climate adaptation is a business opportunity — but at what cost?

Better planning can also ensure that the money spent on climate resilience does not go to waste.



A global natural hazards map that highlights areas prone to floods and earthquakes. Image: [FM Global](#). [Click to enlarge]

In practical terms, this could mean deploying flood defences to protect key business installations such as computer systems and warehouses, rather than using the same amount of money to buy enough substandard equipment to protect entire commercial compounds. New infrastructure should be sited properly to avoid climate risks like floods in the first place.

“The worst thing in the world is for a company to spend money to reduce losses, then for the solutions to not work,” Gritzko added.

For the small businesses that make up some 97 per cent of businesses in Southeast Asia, high-tech flood protection may be out of reach. Neighbouring shopkeepers could pool resources to unlock more options. They should also take steps such as shifting warehouses to higher floors of a building and putting in place emergency response plans, Gritzko said.

### Trust

Asia is relatively new ground for the hydrometeorology industry, comprising firms that forecast weather, track storms, survey watersheds and advise on nature’s impacts on human activity.

In the West, weather forecasting is an [established enterprise](#), which both helps public agencies improve their services and competes with the government for market share. It has led to some concerns about the private sector sidelining existing, predominantly public, forecasting providers and prioritising profit over safety.

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## Climate adaptation is a business opportunity — but at what cost?

The more successful businesses are those that take a holistic approach, have an eye on global and regional trends, and collaborate with rather than compete against the public sector.

Ben Churchill, head, regional office for Asia and the Southwest Pacific, WMO

“In some markets, traditionally, maybe there has been reluctance to partner with the private sector,” Anderson told Eco-Business.

“There is always a risk that a new product or service will not make it to market, or will not hit the mark in terms of effectiveness,” Churchill.

“The more successful businesses are those that take a holistic approach, have an eye on global and regional trends, and collaborate with rather than compete against the public sector,” he added.

On its part, the WMO launched a new [financing mechanism](#) to help countries adopt weather monitoring tools late last year. It’s aiming to provide 55 countries with US\$200 million in the next four years.

Meanwhile, the World Bank has about a billion dollars invested in meteorological services through its disaster reduction and recovery programme.

Developing relationships with governments in the Asia Pacific region is key to maximising benefits for the wider public, said Davidov.

“A lot of this hinges on being able to sit in a conference room and agree on working together,” he added.





## Ecosystem restoration good for your health

By: [Abi Vanak](#), [Anuja Malhotra](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)  
[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:03 AM May 13, 2022

New Delhi—Humanity currently faces multiple, interlinked existential crises. The catastrophic consequences of climate change, ecological degradation, and biodiversity loss have cascading knock-on effects on human health and well-being. As the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates, ecosystem damage can contribute significantly to a global public health emergency. But scientists are also increasingly finding that ecological restoration, by reversing the threats to soil, biodiversity, water, and other ecosystem services, can deliver major health benefits.

There have been many attempts to understand the nexus between ecological degradation and human health. A recent study of over 6,800 ecosystems across six continents provided further evidence that deforestation and extinction of species will make pandemics more likely. Ecosystem damage also leads to water contamination, creating breeding grounds for infectious diseases. Similarly, soil degradation not only reduces agricultural productivity, but also has been linked to disease and increased mortality.

The emergence and spread of zoonotic diseases like COVID-19 are closely associated with the health of ecosystems. For example, 75 percent of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic, caused by unsustainable use of natural resources, factory farming of animals, and other industrial-scale anthropogenic factors.

Ecosystem decline has also contributed in recent decades to reduced immunological resilience and an increase in allergic conditions in humans. The effects are not limited to physical health, but also include mental health problems, such as an increase in eco-anxiety, or fear of environmental damage due to ongoing ecosystem degradation.

Conversely, restoring natural ecosystems could provide pathways for reversing some of the effects of climate change and ease the global chronic disease burden, thus improving human health and well-being. One recent study showed that soil restoration and the reintroduction of native plant species led to a reduction in physical and psychological impacts of certain diseases. In another case, ecological restoration of an urban river in northwest England was linked to psychological benefits for surrounding communities.

There is also evidence that ecological restoration can protect people from extreme climate events and related public health crises. Finally, using alternative cooking fuels such as biogas in improved stoves, thereby reducing the need for fuelwood and helping to prevent forest degradation, has been shown to improve respiratory health and household diets.

The economic case for ecological restoration is strong. Rising public health costs and the significant disease burden—exacerbated by the pandemic—strengthen the case further. The World Health Organization estimates that global spending on health rose continuously between 2000 and 2018, to \$8.3 trillion, or 10 percent of world GDP.

In recent decades, researchers have developed various models—including the Mandala of Health, the Wheel of Fundamental Human Needs, and, more recently, the One Health approach—to capture the interconnected relationship between humans and nature. The challenge now is to develop a unifying framework to maximize the synergy of ecological restoration and human health. Policies designed to address one should not exclude the other.



## Ecosystem restoration good for your health

We, therefore, need to redefine ecological degradation, understand its far-reaching effects on human health, and recognize that these effects cannot be fully addressed without structured, context-specific ecological restoration plans. Achieving this will require institutionalizing and mainstreaming intersectoral collaboration between scientists and practitioners from the ecological, medical, and sustainability domains.

Alliances and a sense of ownership among core governance structures of public health and ecosystem restoration will be crucial. In India, for example, a pioneering effort to mainstream cross-disciplinary initiatives is bringing together the government, scientists, and local partners and practitioners with the aim of improving zoonotic-disease control. Such a framework can generate valuable knowledge and insights for similar collaborative initiatives elsewhere.

Ecological restoration is a clear and identifiable way to tackle the global disease burden and improve public health. As the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration commences, policymakers should encourage collective action to spur inclusive, interdisciplinary activities that demonstrate the positive global benefits of restoration for social, physical, and mental health. We owe it to ourselves and to the planet to mitigate at least some of the threats we have created. Project Syndicate

Anuja Malhotra is a policy analyst at the Centre for Policy Design at the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE). Abi Vanak is honorary professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, and a senior fellow at the Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation at the ATREE.

Read more: <https://opinion.inquirer.net/152923/ecosystem-restoration-good-for-your-health#ixzz7TDCctUga>

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE





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# Manila Standard

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**GOLD SOURCING.** The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas signs a purchase agreement with OceanaGold Philippines Inc., which operates a mine in the Nueva Vizcaya-Quirino area under a financial or technical assistance agreement with the government. Under the agreement, OGPI will offer for purchase not less than 25 percent of its annual ore production at fair market prices. It forms part of the BSP's efforts to promote livelihood, productivity and sustainable gold production by expanding BSP's gold sourcing beyond small-scale mining to include large-scale miners. Displaying the documents of the agreement are (from left) Finance Undersecretary Bayani Agabin, BSP Governor Benjamin Diokno, OGPI president and general manager Joan Adaci-Cattiling and acting Environment Secretary Jim Sampulna.





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Tone-toneladang basura ang dulot ng mga election material na ipinaskil at ipinamahagi ng mga kandidato sa nagdaang National and Local Elections.

Karamihan pa sa mga basurang ito, naglalaman umano ng mapanganib na kemikal na posibleng may masamang epekto sa kalusugan at kapaligiran.

Kaya nanawagan ang environment group na Ecowaste Coalition sa mga politiko na kusang alisin at pagbabaklasin ang mga election material na kanilang ipinakalat nitong nakalipas na botohan.

Pero hindi raw ito natatapos sa simpleng pagtatapon ng basura, dapat din daw na maging wasto at tamang ang pag-dispose sa mga ito.

Ayon kay Eileen Lucero, National Coordinator ng Ecowaste Coalition, hindi dapat sunugin ang election materials lalo na ang mga gawa sa plastic gaya ng tarpaulin. Nagdudulot daw

## Kalat mo, linis mo

ito ng harmful effects sa kalikasan dahil may cadmium content ang mga naturang election paraphernalia.

Kung tutuusin, puwede itong i-recycle para mapakina-

sa paghikayat sa mga kandidato na magkusang linisin ang sariling kalat dulot ng mga ipinamahagi nilang campaign materials.

Sa 2nd District ng Caloocan, ang nanalo mismong kinatawan na si Mitch Cajayon-Uy ang nanguna sa pagbabaklas ng mga sarili niyang campaign posters. Ipinost pa niya ang aktuwal na pagtatanggal ng election materials sa kanyang Facebook account.

Dito sa Tanza, lalawigan ng Cavite, nagkusa na ang mga residente na linisin ang mga

paligiran.

Samantala, tila hindi naman nagkamali ang mga botante na muling mahalal at makapasok sa magic 12 si Reelectionist Senator Francis 'Chiz' Escudero.

Sa pag-aaral at pagsasaliksik ng Luntiang Bayan na aliyansa ng mga maka-kalikasang grupo, si Chiz ang lumalabas na 'greenest' Senator sa mahigit 60 Senatorial aspirants.

Nilinaw ng grupo na wala silang ineendorsong kandidato. Sadyang napili lang daw nila si Chiz dahil sa mga batas na nagawa niya na may kaugnayan sa pagkalinga at pagpapahalaga sa kalikasan.

Sa huli, importanteng makisali tayo sa mga programa ng gobyerno na may kaugnayan sa pagpapanatili ng malinis na kapaligiran dahil tayo ring mga Pilipino ang makikinabang dito.



*Lifestyle*



election poster na nakapaskil sa kani-kanilang gate at pader. Ayon sa ilang nakausap ko, ito raw ang nakikita nilang kontribusyon sa lipunan para mapanatili ang malinis na ka-



JULIUS SEGOVIA

Tonite

ANG SA  
AKIN LANG

Ang MMDA naman, patuloy





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The Manila Times

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# Policy review calls for single-use plastics ban

**THERE** is a dire need for the passage of House Bill (HB) 9147 or the Single-use Plastic Products Regulation Act on account of the grave impacts of plastic pollution in the country, according to a policy note recently released by a group of AB Development Studies students at the Ateneo De Manila University and The Climate Reality Project Philippines.

The policy note is part of Mag-ASUP Tayo, an advocacy project of the Climate's Eight from Ateneo and the Youth Cluster of Climate Reality Philippines on anti-single-use plastics (ASUP) policies and practices. Its findings and recommendations were presented

during the 28th episode of Climate Reality Philippines' Klimatotohanan webcast series.

The policy review evaluated the local government units (LGUs) of Marikina, Makati and Quezon City according to the impact, efficiency and consistencies of their existing plastic waste management policies.

HB 9147 provides for the gradual phase-out of single-use plastics, which it defines as "plastic products designed to be disposed of, destroyed or recycled, after only one use."

Ryan Opinion, head of the Climate's Eight Policy Note Team, said the passage of HB 9147 would operationalize a national

definition of single-use plastics in the country and enable LGUs to act in a streamlined and coordinated manner.

In the absence of a law that will ban single-use plastics, Opinion said that the policy note highlighted the need for the National Solid Waste Management Commission to issue and promulgate the Non-Environmentally Acceptable Products (NEAP) list, as mandated by Republic Act 9003 or the "Ecological Solid Waste Management Act."

The NEAP list, which has been overdue for over two decades, would identify and eventually ban products that are deemed harmful to

the environment.

The policy note discussed best practices from target LGUs that could be adopted by other LGUs to improve their own plastic waste management and reduction systems.

For one, it credited consumer-targeted campaigns for effectively evoking behavior changes in plastic consumption among the LGUs' constituents.

"Consumer-targeted campaigns are effective as supporting programs for ordinances that target establishments. Such programs should aim at incentivizing consumers and targeting behavioral change," Opinion said.

EIREENE JAIREE GOME





## Post-poll cleanup

**IT is pro-active local leadership in action.**

Civic-minded local leaders who won in the recently concluded elections showed the way in post-poll community cleanup.

Campaigns and elections always generate tons of solid waste, the bulk of which are non-biodegradable plastic and other synthetic materials.

Thankfully, hundreds of tons of election paraphernalia and other junk left behind during the recent national elections would be collected and recycled by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority and the EcoWaste Coalition.

MMDA Chairman Romando Artes said 'Operation Baklas (tear down) 2022' began on Tuesday, with the cleanup expected to be completed in two weeks.

"We have many teams deployed for the teardown and we are assisted by other branches of the government including LGUs," Artes said.

So far, the MMDA has collected 28 truckloads equaling 98 tons of junk on Tuesday and 43 truckloads equaling 154 tons of junk on Wednesday -- totaling 254 tons of election trash during the first two days of the cleanup drive alone.

Despite the massive amounts of junk to be collected, he said these would not be dumped into sanitary landfills and instead would be recycled into hollow blocks and bricks through an existing brick-making facility at the Vitas Pumping Station.

"We have a waste granulator where we will ground these tarpaulins and pieces of plastic to be used in making ecobricks," Artes said.

He said these ecobricks are used in the rehabilitation of sidewalks and parks in Metro Manila.

The program, he said, was launched in 2021 and funded by the World Bank.

"It reduces waste. Instead of being thrown in a landfill, it can be used to make hollow blocks and bricks," he said.

The MMDA chief also said the EcoWaste Coalition, in a meeting requested by the group on Wednesday, will be given tarpaulins collected by the MMDA to be made into ecobags.

"We discussed providing them with tarpaulins that are in good condition which they can turn into ecobags," Artes said.

To ensure the cleanliness in Metro Manila and the rest of the country, he called on election candidates and their supporters to help take down their election posters and other paraphernalia.

"If these are not cleaned up by the rainy season, these usually end up in canals or estuaries, causing floods," he said.

He noted that the MMDA is in close coordination with the Commission on Elections for the continued cleanup of election paraphernalia and other junk.



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## Cavite starts removal of campaign materials

NAIC, Cavite – Every locality in Cavite province, particularly in Naic, immediately conducted a major clean-up drive to comply with the DILG order a day after the May 9, 2022 national and local elections.

MENRO (Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office) staff removed used campaign materials such as tarpaulins, posters, and streamers of the candidates here, which they will collect and turn into reusable bags and plastic bricks to avoid en-



**Members of Naic MENRO are removing campaign materials along Antero Soriano highway in Naic, Cavite, as part of their clean-up drive after the May 9, 2022 elections. Photo by Dennis Abrina**

vironmental pollution.

Meanwhile, Naic Municipal Board of Canvass-

ers James Andrew Recio, Edenlita Mojica, and Gloria Mojica proclaimed Councilor Raffy Dualanas mayor-elect and Mayor Junio Dualan as vice mayor-elect.

“Ngayong tapos na ang eleksyon, mahalagang mapanatili natin ang kalinisan at kaayusan ng ating kapaligiran lalo na sa ating mga campaign materials. Kaya naman kanina, umpingisahan na ng ating lokal na pamahalaan ang pagtatanggal ng mga tarpaulin ng lahat ng kandidatô bilang bahagi ng ating

major clean-up. Maraming salamat po sa lahat ng tumugon at tumulong upang ating mapanatili ang kalinisan ng ating bayan, outgoing Mayor Jun Dualan said. *Dennis Abrina*





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## 18K toneladang basura sa kampanya nahahakot kada araw

Hindi bababa sa 18 tonelada ng campaign materials ang nahahakot ng Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) araw-araw.

Ito ang ibinunyag ni MMDA chairperson Romando Artes.

Aniya para mapakinabangan ito ay nakipag-ugnayan na sila sa environmental group Ecowaste Coalition para

gawin itong 'ecobags' at 'ecobricks'.

"In fact, nagpulong na po sila ng aming mga tauhan para 'yung makakapal at magaganda pa po na tarpaulins ay magawa pong ecobags," dagdag nito.

Ang mga maninipis na tarpaulins, ay idadaan naman sa mga granulator at gagamiting sangkap sa pagbuo ng hollow blocks at ecobricks. **(Kiko Cueto)**



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## Priority: Environment

The incoming government has not just a full plate but a platter brimming over with problems that must be attended to immediately... if not sooner.

COVID is still with us, and complacency with health protocols is as serious a threat as any new variant that may emerge to bring about another surge. The economy is slowly – hopefully surely, too – recovering, people are going out more, eating out more and tourists are coming in again, but the economic engine needs a lot more steam to get it to running at pre-pandemic levels. Students in all levels have a lot of catching up to do after two years in front of screens often with spotty internet connection, away from classrooms, away from teachers and classmates and science labs and gyms.

One item that I hope will also be at the top of the new government's agenda will be the environment – climate change, resilience in the face of changing patterns of natural phenomena like heat, drought, extreme rainfall, typhoons...

We can't control nature, of course, but we can control how we react. We keep

talking about building back better, but we seem to be facing the same problems and issues each time a storm hits. Residents return to areas prone to flooding and storm surges, houses rebuilt are not storm-resistant (there are actually designs that are not only sturdy but also inexpensive, functional and look nice).

Trees are still being cut in watersheds and mountainsides, causing landslides and flooding. Rivers are polluted and heavily silted; in urban areas they are giant garbage dumpsites, despite repeated efforts to clean them up and endless reminders for people not to dump their trash into the waterways.

And speaking of garbage, when are we going to get serious about waste reduction – zero waste, recycling, re-using, upcycling? These are simple things each one of us can do, and if each one of us will do our part it will add up to something truly significant for our environment.

So hopefully the new government will make environment and climate change a top priority, and galvanize efforts in all sectors – and that includes you and me.

– DAKILA D. IGNACIO, Bulacan





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## Scientists successfully grow plants in soil from Moon

**AFP -** That's one small pot of soil, one giant leap for man's knowledge of space agriculture: scientists have for the first time grown plants in lunar soil brought back by astronauts in the Apollo program.

The ground-breaking experiment, detailed in the journal *Communications Biology* on Thursday, has given researchers hope that it may be possible to one day grow plants directly on the Moon.

That would save future space missions much hassle and expense, facilitating longer and farther trips.

However, according to the study's University of Florida authors, much remains to be studied on the topic, and they intend to leave no stone unturned.

"This research is critical to NASA's long-term human exploration goals," said Bill Nelson, the head of the US space agency. "We'll need to use resources found on the Moon and Mars to develop food sources for future astronauts living and operating in deep space."

For their experiment, the researchers used just 12 grams (a few teaspoons) of lunar soil collected from various spots on the Moon during the Apollo 11, 12, and 17 missions.

In tiny thimble-sized pots, they placed about a gram of soil (called "regolith") and added water, then the seeds. They also fed the plants a nutrient solution every day.

The researchers chose to plant *Arabidopsis thaliana*, a relative of mustard greens, because it grows easily and, most importantly, has been studied extensively. Its genetic code and responses to hostile environments -- even in space -- are well known.

As a control group, seeds were also planted in soil from Earth as well as samples imitating lunar and Martian soil.

The result: after two days, everything sprouted, including the lunar samples.

"Every plant -- whether in a lunar sample or in a control -- looked the same up until about day six," Anna-Lisa Paul, lead author of the paper, said in a statement.

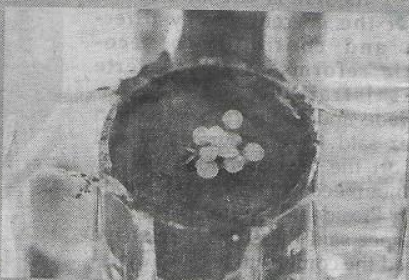
But after that, differences started to appear: the plants in the lunar samples grew more slowly and had stunted roots.

After 20 days, the scientists harvested all the plants, and ran studies on their DNA.

Their analysis showed that the lunar plants had reacted similarly to those grown in hostile environments, such as soil with too much salt, or heavy metals.

In the future, scientists want to understand how this environment could be made more hospitable.

NASA is preparing to return to the Moon as part of the Artemis program, with a long-term goal of establishing a lasting human presence on its surface.



**PHOTO shows several Arabidopsis plants sprouting from lunar soil at a laboratory at the University of Florida in Gainesville. AFP**





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**\$150M IN INITIATIVES**

# BIDEN WELCOMES ASEAN LEADERS WITH ENERGY, MARITIME PLEDGES

WASHINGTON—President Joe Biden on Thursday welcomed Southeast Asian leaders to Washington with promises to support clean energy and maritime security, hoping to showcase a US commitment as China makes wide inroads.

Top leaders from eight of the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) flew to Washington for the two-day summit, which opened with a closed-door White House dinner of thyme poached chicken and vanilla ice cream.

The Biden administration, which took office describing China as the top international challenger, is eager to prove it is still prioritizing Asia despite months of intense focus on repelling Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The White House announced some \$150 million in new initiatives—a modest sum compared with a \$40-billion package for Ukraine and with the billions pumped into the region by China, which has also flexed its muscle in the dispute-rife South China Sea.

### Private package

But the United States said it was working with its private sector and it plans to unveil a broader package, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, when Biden travels next week to Tokyo and Seoul.

House speaker Nancy Pelosi, welcoming Asean leaders to lunch earlier in the day, drew a link as she encouraged Southeast Asia to stand firm

against Russia's invasion.

"If left unchecked, we leave the door open to additional aggression, including maritime issues and other issues in the South China Sea," she said.

Pelosi called the summit "another manifestation of America's commitment to be a strong, reliable partner in Southeast Asia."

### Maritime commitment

In the biggest chunk of the new funding, the White House said it was committing \$60 million to new maritime initiatives that will include the deployment of a Coast Guard cutter and personnel to fight crime including illegal fishing.

The White House said it was also devoting \$40 million to invest in clean energy in the climate change-vulnerable region and was working with the private sector to raise up to \$2 billion.

Another initiative includes a project to test for emerging respiratory diseases through a new office in Hanoi of the US Centers for Disease Control.

"I hope this meeting can build a momentum for the return of the US presence in the region," Indonesian President Joko Widodo said.

The United States symbolically represented Myanmar with an empty chair at the summit.

The Philippines also did not send its leader and was represented by its foreign minister after holding elections on Monday. —AFP



14 MAY 2022, Saturday



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



## Bagong subvariant ng Omicron natukoy sa 14 katao sa NCR, Puerto Princesa

By [James Relativo](#)(Philstar.com)

- May 13, 2022 - 4:29pm



Lines are still long in Pinyahan Elementary School despite sweltering heat, and malfunctions of Vote Counting Machines, May 9, 2022.

[Philstar.com/Jazmin Tabuena](https://www.philstar.com/jazmin-tabuena)

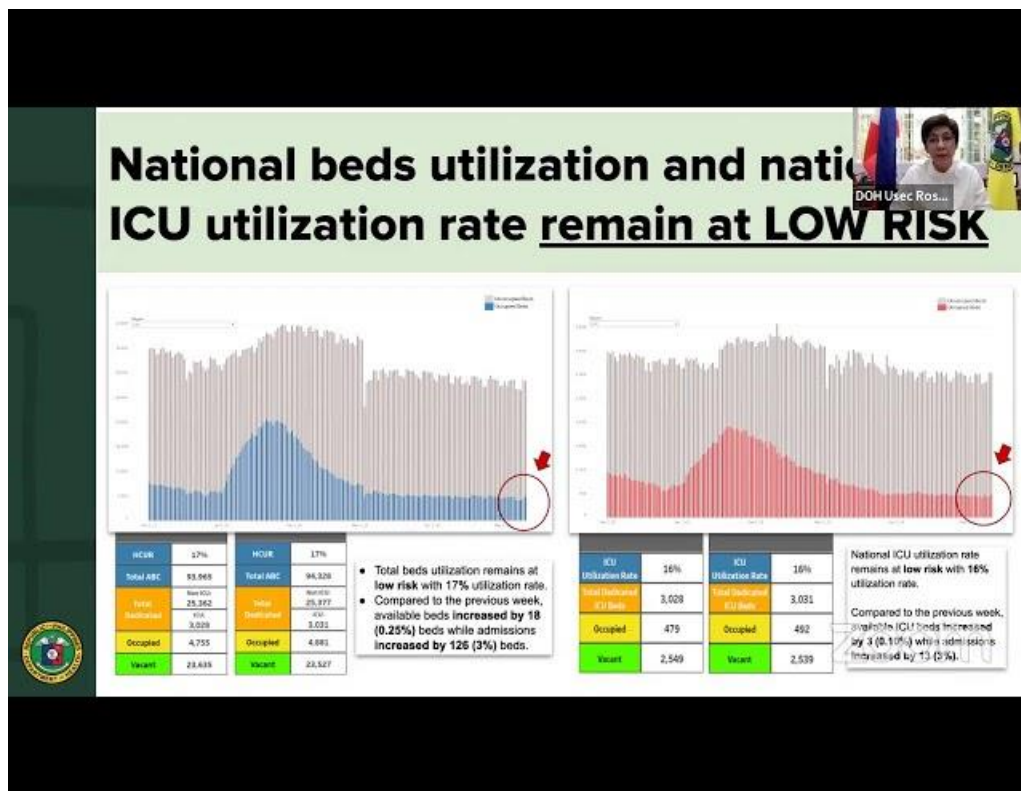
MANILA, Philippines — Na-detect ang unang 14 kaso ng mas nakahahawang BA.2.12.1 Omicron subvariant sa National Capital Region at probinsya ng Palawan, ayon sa pahayag ng Department of Health (DOH) ngayong Biyernes.

Nagmula sa Metro Manila ang unang dalawang kaso sa Metro Manila, habang 12 naman sa kanila ay galing sa Puerto Princesa, Palawan. Parehong local cases ang mga nasa Kamaynilaan habang 11 dayuhan at isang local case naman ang nasa Puerto Princesa.

"Lahat naman sila [sa NCR] ay nakapagpa-booster na kaya naman mild ang kanilang sintomas noong tinamaan sila ng virus," wika ng DOH official.

"They have completed home isolation and are now tagged as asymptomatic and recovered."

## Bagong subvariant ng Omicron natukoy sa 14 katao sa NCR, Puerto Princesa



Sinasabing may 39 close contacts ang dalawang nanggaling sa Metro Manila at hindi nagpapakita ng anumang sintomas. Bineberipika pa naman ang kanilang testing, quarantine at vaccination status.

Fully-vaccinated ang 12 na bagong subvariant sa Palawan, na siyang bahagi ng 15 COVID-19 cases doon noong ika-29 ng Abril.

"Sa kasalukuyan, lahat ng kaso [noon sa Palawan] ay asymptomatic at recovered na," dagdag pa ni Vergeire.

"Lahat sila ay bakunado. Ang kanilang 28 close contacts ay negatibo naman sa COVID pero inaalam pa rin ang kanilang kondisyon at vaccination status."

Sinasabing 23-27% na mas mataas ang growth rate ng BA.2.12.1 kumpara sa BA.2 (stealth Omicron). Tinitignan na may "immune evasion" ngunit wala pa naman daw ebidensya na mas malalaking COVID-19 ang idinudulot ng BA.2.12.1.

Abril lang maitala ang [unang kaso ng BA.2.12 sa Baguio mula sa isang 52-anyos na babae mula sa Finland](#). Gumaling naman na siya at umuwi ng kanilang bansa noong ika-21 ng Abril, 2022. — **James Relativo**

Source: <https://www.philstar.com/pilipino-star-ngayon/bansa/2022/05/13/2180879/bagong-subvariant-ng-omicron-natukoy-sa-14-katao-sa-ncr-puerto-princesa/amp/>





## PH records lowest Covid-19 cases average

By Ma. Teresa Montemayor May 13, 2022, 4:55 pm



(PNA photo by Ben Briones)

**MANILA** – The number of Covid-19 cases continues to decline nationally, breaching the lowest recorded average prior to the peak of the Omicron variant, a health official said Friday.

In an online media forum, Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said only 971 new cases or 146 new daily cases were logged nationally for the period of May 6 to 12.

"So far, *ito ang pinakamababang recorded average ng Covid-19 cases bago po tayo nagkaroon ng Omicron experience kung saan nakapagtala tayo ng 254 new cases per day noong December 18 to 24 ng 2021* (this is the lowest recorded average of Covid-19 cases before we had an Omicron experience where we logged 254 new cases per day last December 18 to 24 2021)," Vergeire said.

Of the total cases, about 53.45 percent are asymptomatic and 42.92 percent are mild.

Only 16 cases are classified severe and critical.

"*Sa kabuuan, nanatili pa ring nasa 1.1 percent ang ating positivity rate* (As a whole, the positivity rate remains at 1.1 percent), national and majority of the regions are at minimal risk case classification," Vergeire said.

The national beds utilization and national intensive care unit (ICU) utilization rate remains at low risk.

The utilization rate of Covid-19 beds nationwide is 17 percent while the utilization rate of ICU beds is 18 percent. (PNA)

Source: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1174400>



## DOH warning vs 2nd booster

By [Caecent No-ot Magsumbol](#)(The Freeman)

- May 14, 2022 - 12:00am

CEBU, Philippines — Vaccinators and their vaccination sites, as well as local government units, will be held liable if found administering a second booster shot or fourth dose of COVID-19 vaccine to individuals not covered by guidelines approved by the Department of Health (DOH).

As of this writing, only specific immunocompromised individuals are allowed a second booster shot.

“Para naman po doon sa nagbibigay, just like to advise our vaccination sites, kung ano lang po ang ang meron tayong guidelines galing sa Kagawaran ng Kalusugan, yun lang po sana ang ating ipapatupad,” said DOH spokesperson, Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire.

Vergeire said they have been receiving reports of some individuals getting a second booster shot even if they are not covered by the guidelines.

“Marami po kaming naririnig na nagbibigay na ng fourth doses even in the general population... wag po nating gawin yan dahil wala pa po tayong rekomendasyon... at guidelines hinggil dyan,” Vergeire said during a virtual presser on May 13, 2022.

Should those having received the shot experience serious side effects, the vaccinators and their vaccination site, as well as the LGU where the site is located, will be held liable.

“Kapag mayroon pong naging ibang effect or adverse events ang mga kababayan natin na nabigyan nitong fourth dose na hindi naman kasama sa ating current guidelines, maari po na ang mananagot ay yung vaccination site , yung local government at pati na yung nagturok ng bakuna na yun... because national government only recommended and provided guidelines specific sa immunocompromised,” Vergeire said.

DOH is yet awaiting guidelines for seniors and health care workers.

“At ngayon inaantay natin, maaring by next week, ang ating mga senior citizens and health care workers... Maliban dyan, sa general population, wala pa po tayong guidelines... wala pang rekomendasyon ang ating experto,” Vergeire said.

Vergeire said they have already asked for the Health Technology Assessment Council (HTAC) recommendation on the appeal of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) for a fourth dose.

“We already have seek the recommendations of HTAC regarding our appeal OFWs and senior citizens... ito ay pinag-aaralan pa lang ng DOH... sa mga susunod na araw, magpapalabas po tayo ng information and guidelines so we can start to doing this,” she said.

Vergeire called all vaccination implementing units to follow the guidelines.

“Sana po, lahat ng ating implementing units ay sumunod sa ating mga pamantayan sa ating mga kababayanan,” Vergeire said.

She also called on the public to get a fourth shot only when it is already recommended by experts.



## DOH warning vs 2nd booster

“Gusto ko lang ibigay na abiso sa inyo na sana po wag tayong tumanggap ng fourth doses kung hindi pa po ayon sa inyo batay po sa rekomendasyon ng ating expert... Tandaan po natin, bago ang mga bakunang ito kaya kailangan nang masusing pagsusuri bago natin ibigay ang rekomendasyon,” Vergeire said.

### Immunocompromised

For Filipinos who are immunocompromised, HTAC recommended a fourth dose of AstraZeneca, CoronaVac, Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech, and Sinopharm for 18 years old and above, granting they received the third dose or the first booster shot at least three months prior.

HTAC has a preference for mRNA vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna) based on available real-world evidence on the immunogenicity and safety of a fourth dose among the immunocompromised, including individuals who have been receiving active cancer treatment for tumors or cancers of the blood; those who have received an organ transplant and are taking medicine to suppress the immune system; and those who have undergone stem cell transplant within the last two years or are taking medicine to suppress the immune system.

A second booster shot has also been recommended for individuals with moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency (such as DiGeorge syndrome, Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome), as well as for those with advanced or untreated HIV infection and active treatment with high-dose corticosteroids or other drugs that may suppress immune response.

It has also been recommended to those on chronic dialysis, people living with autoimmune disease, those receiving treatment with specific immunosuppressive medications, and those diagnosed with conditions considered to have an equivalent level of immunocompromise as advised by the physician like severe malnutrition.

### Vaccination Status

As of this writing, at least 68.2 million Filipinos have been vaccinated fully – 2.3 million from the five to 11 years old bracket, 9.2 million from the 12 – 17 years old bracket, 50.2 million from the 18-59 years old bracket, and 6.5 million from the 60 years old and above bracket.

Booster shot numbers, however, remain low, Vergeire said. She did not disclose figures during the presser.

Booster shots are needed since effectiveness of vaccines wanes but DOH emphasized it should be administered following guidelines from the department.

### Petition

Meanwhile, various groups are asking the Supreme Court to declare as null and void any government policy that makes COVID vaccination mandatory for being allegedly constitutional and violative of international laws.

A petition was filed by Covid Call To Humanity (CCH), Concerned Doctors And Citizens Of The Philippines (CDCPh), Legal Lightworkers For Life And Liberty (L4), and Juan Dakila (JD) Movement on May 12.





## DOH warning vs 2nd booster

They asked the Supreme Court to issue a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) against these policies while their petition is being heard.

The lead counsel for the petitioners' 11-person legal team is Pacifico Agabin, former dean of the UP College of Law and one of the country's leading experts in Constitutional Law and the Bill of Rights.

Named respondents in the petition are the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF), Health Secretary Francisco T. Duque III, Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, DILG Secretary Eduardo Año, DOTr Secretary Arthur Tugade, Education Secretary Leonor Briones, and Makati City represented by Mayor Mar-Len Abigail Binay.

"We hope that the Supreme Court will be open and take judicial notice of the massive amount of legal evidence against mandatory vaccinations that we have presented. If the people feel that the government leaders have failed them, they should still be able to rely on the courts to uphold the Constitution and the Bill of Rights," said Atty. Aaron Soguilon, convenor of Juan Dakila movement and a member of the legal team. - **JMO (FREEMAN)**

## SC asked to halt implementation of policies, issuances of mandatory COVID-19 vaccination

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published May 13, 2022 11:33:58 PM



**Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, May 13)** — Concerned groups composed of professionals including doctors, scientists, teachers, employees, and religious leaders file a petition before the Supreme Court to immediately stop the implementation of policies and government issuances on mandatory vaccination against COVID-19.

"The governmental acts being challenged herein enforce vaccine mandates that 'responsibilize' citizens by conditioning them to perform their 'moral obligation' through COVID-19 vaccination and coercing them to get vaccinated under pain of penalty," the petitioners said.

Named respondents are the Interagency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, Health Secretary Francisco Duque III, Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Ano, Transport Secretary Arthur Tugade, and Makati City represented by Mayor Abby Binay.

In the petition, the group asked to "declare illegal and unconstitutional" regulations and ordinances as these are being "contrary to law", specifically IATF Resolution No. 148-B that requires on-site workers to be fully-vaccinated against COVID-19.

Other IATF resolutions they seek to stop enforcement are the following: mandatory face-to-face classes, requirement of RT-PCR test for on-site work, presentation of proof of full vaccination, and limitation on the movement of unvaccinated individuals.

The petitioners also asked the high court to ensure that those who submit themselves for vaccination "do so freely, voluntarily, and intelligently, after a written acknowledgment that they have been advised of all the possible side effects of the vaccines on their health and of their full understanding thereof."



## SC asked to halt implementation of policies, issuances of mandatory COVID-19 vaccination

Direct respondents are also asked to make all officially recognized side effects of the COVID-19 vaccines and all adverse events reported after vaccination available to the public and widely disseminated in various forms of media.

Health authorities have been assuring the public that vaccines are safe as it went through studies and tests.

The government also continues with its vaccination program including the inoculation of booster shots for eligible individuals.



14 MAY 2022, Saturday



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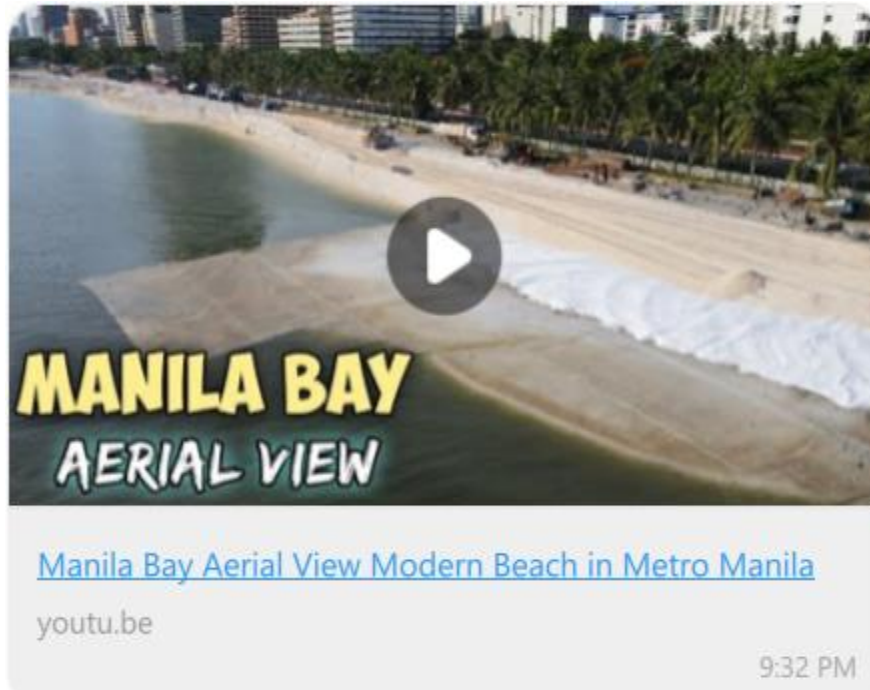
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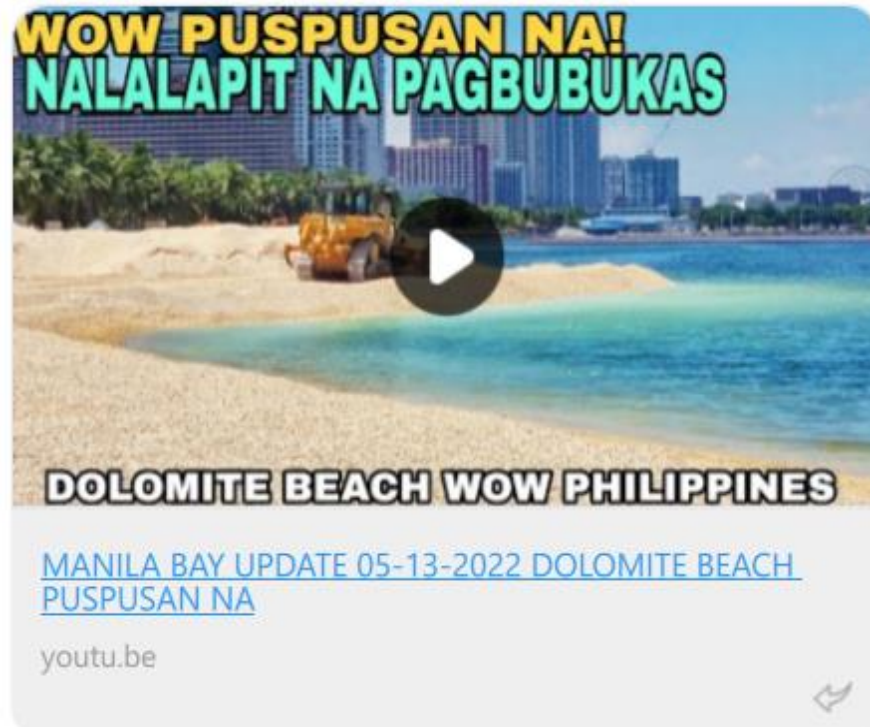
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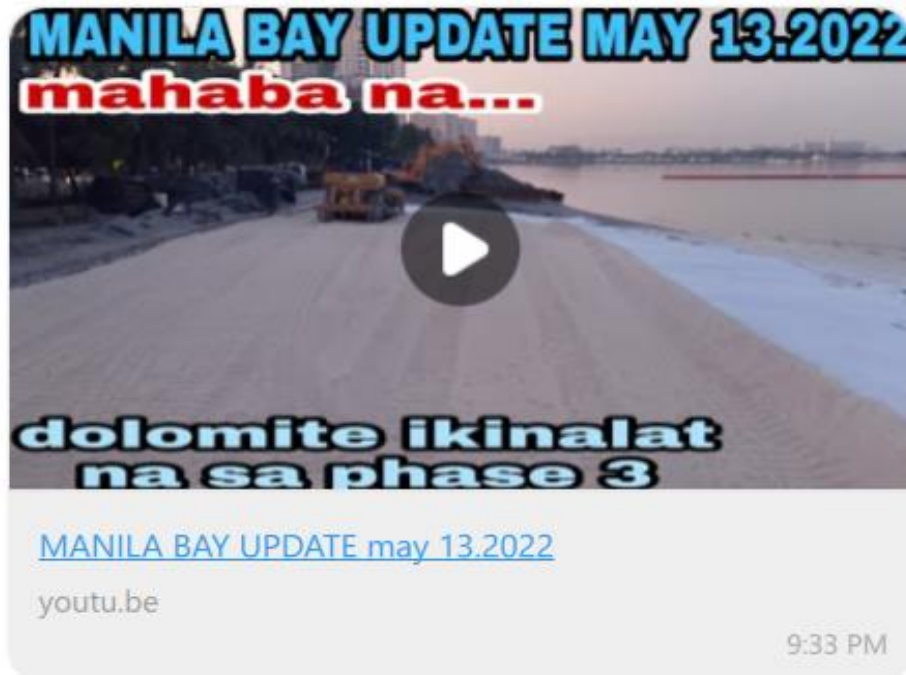
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