

03 October 2022, Monday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**



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## Point of view

# Looking at garbage and birds in the eye

By MICHELE T. LOGARTA

One Sunday in September, on the small strip of beach on Long Island in the Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area (LPPCHEA), we looked garbage straight in the eye.

The weekend had been designated as International Coastal Cleanup (ICC), the world's largest volunteer effort for the ocean's health initiated by Ocean Conservancy, a non-profit organization and world leader in ocean conservation.

Here in the Philippines, the DENR spearheaded the activity, calling on Filipinos "to fight for trash-free seas."

An army of 2,000 volunteers had come the day before to clean up Freedom Island beach in LPPCHEA. We, a 50-man contingent of the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines (WBCP), followed closely on their heels, on a mission to do what we could for Long Island, the other finger of land in the area that was littered still with trash.

Recent typhoons had brought enormous amounts of garbage to the shores of this part of Manila Bay.

Squatting low to the ground, on our haunches, we picked at the sand and retrieved all things plastic – bottles and bottle caps, shampoo sachets, candy wrappers, toothbrushes and toothpaste tubes, cups, drink straws, bags and other undistinguishable flotsam. "Leave the biodegradables like branches, twigs, leaves alone," we were told. "They will become part of the environment."

Plastic pollution, we all know, is a colossal problem that seems insurmountable. Ocean Conservancy, in its website, states that "your small actions can make a difference. From plankton to whales, animals throughout the ocean are finding their homes polluted by plastics. Every bottle, every straw, every piece of trash you clean up can lead to a cleaner, healthier ocean."

Through the ICC initiative, the organization has mobilized 17 million people and collected more than 350 million pounds of plastic. That's quite a feat. But to me, looking at the garbage on the beach that day, the numbers didn't mean anything.

By mid-morning, we were done trash-picking. We did what we could – and, sadly, it was not much.

We birders had responded to the WBCP's call to help our birds by cleaning up their habitat at LPPCHEA. Sadly, this is where many of the resident and migrant waterbirds come to rest and feed, the Club said.

The LPPCHEA comprises 175 hectares of protected land, straddling Las Piñas and Parañaque cities. It is declared a Ramsar site, under the Ramsar Convention of UNESCO. This means it has been identified as a significant and important wetland, crucial to biodiversity conservation.

But despite its Ramsar status, it is constantly threatened by so-called "development" and "progress."

Environmentalists, scientists and fishermen were in the news last August when they converged at the DENR to seek its support to stop reclamation projects in Manila Bay. Such projects will change the face of Manila Bay as we know it, cause damage to marine and coastal ecosystems, affect the lives of humans that depend on the seas for their livelihood and inevitably alter the balance of nature, irreversibly.

While there are many birds that live at LPPCHEA all year round, migratory birds come to join them, finding food and refuge there. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's online platform, eBird, which is used by millions of birders and scientists around the world, lists an all-time high number of 155 bird species observed in the mudflats, mangroves and beach forests of LPPCHEA.

The WBCP, whose records helped earn LPPCHEA its Ramsar status, counts more than 80 bird species in the area, including the vulnerable endemic Philippine Duck. The Club's records also show that LPPCHEA is the winter home for more than one percent of the East Australasian-Asian Flyway population of the Black-winged Stilt and the Common Greenshank.

The Bar Tailed Godwit, the long hauler that flies from Alaska to New Zealand, was seen making a stop-over at LPPCHEA. The Near Threatened Red Necked Stint and Grey Tailed Tattler and the Vulnerable Chinese Egret have made their passage there as well.

One of my most unforgettable experiences in birding occurred at LPPCHEA late last year. It was a moment shared with WBCP president Mike Lu.

As we were walking through the forest, I spotted a small bird on the embankment of a pond. It looked to be an ordinary brown bird. Nothing fancy. No flamboyant colors. It was not easy to see because it blended so well with the browns of the stones and the ground. I told Lu about the bird and asked him what it was. And he said it looked like a Pechora Pipit. Before we could take pictures, it quickly disappeared into the undergrowth. Lu promised to tell me what the bird was, on further investigation and a look at the books.

Lu was right. He told me later another birder who was there when we were also confirmed it. It was, indeed, a Pechora Pipit.

Described in the books as an uncommon winter visitor and by Google as a small passerine bird which breeds in the East Palearctic tundra and densely vegetated areas near river bank ranges from the Pechora River to the Chukchi Peninsula.

I have no photo to show for it but I will always have that memory of it.

But yes, that moment – of looking at the little bird right before me and knowing it flew all the way to the Philippines from the remote cold tundras of the Arctic – I will always carry with me and hold like treasure.

Looking back to that day, I now wonder if, years from now, our winged friends from faraway lands will have this place to call home when theirs in the northern hemisphere turn cold and wintry.

Will we – today – be able to look these birds in the eye and say yes? Or our children's eyes, for that matter?

Who will be first to blink?

\* \* \*

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## Editorial

### Laguna de Bay requires urgent attention, rehab

**R**EPORTS of the penalties imposed on the Maynilad Water Company Inc. (Maynilad) touched on an issue that should be receiving more attention from policymakers and perhaps even everyone else. That issue is the condition of Laguna de Bay, where an algal bloom was blamed for water interruptions from May to July 2022. That may be a harbinger for even greater problems later on.

Maynilad was ordered to pay P9 million for the prolonged and recurring water supply interruptions, even as it vowed to continue upgrading its treatment facilities in Muntinlupa City. "While this has helped to improve our capacity to maintain water production despite major shifts in raw water quality, the ultimate solution would be to protect Laguna Lake from further degradation," Maynilad said in a statement. "We continue to work closely with all Laguna Lake stakeholders to ensure that it is protected so that the lake's potential as a long-term supply source for drinking water can be fully realized."

Maynilad brings up an important point about the lake. In fact, there should be a massive rehabilitation program for Laguna de Bay to counteract the negative impact of urban and industrial development around it and along the rivers and tributaries that feed into the lake. The authorities should also check the wastes from fish pens as well as from residential areas, industries and other possible sources that pollute the lake. Furthermore, there should be tree-planting programs around the lake to mitigate the siltation, which reduces its capacity to hold water.

Laguna de Bay is critical to Metro Manila, and not only as a source of potable water. The lake is also important to flood control, irrigation and power generation. Plus, its potential for tourism and transportation has yet to be realized.

Imagine, for example, ferry services connecting Metro Manila with the provinces of Rizal and Laguna. If that transport system existed, fewer people would have to travel over land, which would help ease traffic congestion in and around the National Capital Region.

Moreover, the lake is important to providing Metro Manila and its neighboring provinces with freshwater fish, which further underscores the need to keep that body of water clean. But fish pens also cause problems, with unconsumed feeds and feces falling to the lake bottom and contaminating the water and feeding the algae and water lilies that typically bloom during the summer months.

### Cleaning attempts

There have been attempts to rehabilitate Laguna de Bay. The Arroyo administration contracted a Belgian firm to dredge it, but the succeeding Aquino 3rd government scuttled the contract, allegedly because of corruption. Unfortunately, the Aquino administration did not initiate a program of its own, as if the lake's rehabilitation was not already needed back then.

During the Duterte administration, the Laguna Lake Development Authority endorsed a P609-billion rehabilitation plan, which was submitted to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) for review. The Marcos government should ask NEDA about that, and perhaps see how it could hasten the cleanup.

Laguna de Bay's importance cannot be stressed enough. It is the largest freshwater lake in the Philippines and the third-largest in Southeast Asia. When water conservationists bring up the need for rain catchment systems, they often neglect to mention Laguna Lake, which has a surface area of 900 square kilometers.

Even with illegal reclamation and soil erosion, the lake holds 3.2 billion cubic meters of water. Sedimentation has been estimated at least 1 centimeter per year for many decades now, and the average depth of the lake has fallen to around 2.5 meters. With rehabilitation, it can hold more water.

If Laguna de Bay was in better shape, there would be less demand for drinking water from Angat, Ipo and La Mesa dams. There might also be less urgency to construct new dams that can be destructive to the few forests remaining in the Philippines, not to mention disruptive to the communities that have to be relocated.

Regrettably, valuable resources are often taken for granted. Unless that changes for Laguna de Bay, it will not just be Maynilad and its customers that will likely suffer.



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# BSP issues guidelines on environmental social risk management

By LAWRENCE AGCAOILI

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) has issued guidelines on the implementation of the environmental and social risk management system (ESRM) for banks and financial institutions.

BSP Deputy Governor Chuchi Fonacier said the guidance aims to inform banks on the initial steps or approaches that may be considered in developing an ESRM system.

"The BSP recognizes that climate change and environmental hazards could pose significant risks to the safety and soundness of individual financial institutions and the entire financial system," Fonacier said.

Fonacier said the guidelines under Memorandum Order 2022 - 042 describes the regulators minimum

expectations as embodied in the issued circulars and provides information and reference to publications of the Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS) and the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS), among others, to support the development of an ESRM system.

Consistent with the principle of proportionality, the BSP official said banks should adopt an ESRM system commensurate to their size, risk profile and complexity of operations.

"Banks may employ other approaches which are considered more feasible considering their business model, risk appetite, and operational capacity, provided that these are consistent with the BSP regulations and international standards," she said.

According to Fonacier, banks

are also encouraged to keep abreast with the local and global developments in the sustainability front and strengthen their awareness and capacity in response to the evolving climate, as well as environmental and social risks.

Environmental and social risk is defined as potential financial, legal, and/or reputational negative effect of environmental and social issues on the bank. Issues may include climate risk, both physical and transition risks; environmental pollution; hazards to human health, safety and security; and threats to community, biodiversity, and cultural heritage, among others.

"These risks are inherent and can directly or indirectly affect banks," Fonacier said.

The central bank recognizes the

ongoing efforts of banks to develop or enhance policies and strategies in line with the expectations set out under the circulars on the Sustainable Finance Framework, the ESRM framework and the guidelines on the integration of sustainability principles in investment activities of banks.

Under the guidelines, the board of directors and senior management are expected to institutionalize and oversee the adoption and implementation of sustainability principles, including those covering environmental and social risk areas, in the corporate governance and risk management frameworks, as well as in the strategic objectives and operations of the bank.

Banks are also required to provide clear guidance in assessing environ-

mental and social risks in the bank's operations, products and services, transaction, activities, and operating environment.

These institutions are also required to provide the tools for monitoring environmental and social risks, as well as the compliance with sustainability-related standards, laws and regulations. Likewise, they are directed to provide tools for assessing identified environmental and social risks and for considering the same in the aggregate exposures of the bank.

Fonacier said BSP-supervised financial institutions should provide measures to be taken in case of breaches in limits or thresholds or non-compliance with sustainability-related standards, laws and regulations.



## P286-M Benguet road upgrade stalled

SABLAN, Benguet – The upgrade of a P286-million Benguet road system in this town has been delayed after the local government stopped the implementation of the project.

The upgrade was intended to hasten the transport of farm produce and other government services in areas covered by the project.

Lawyer Edward Raymund Palsiw, counsel for private construction firm PHESCO Inc., told journalists on Friday that the closure orders issued earlier by former mayor Manuel Munar Jr. and incumbent Mayor Alfredo Dacumos against the company's batching plant delayed the completion of the project.

Palsiw said the batching plant is crucial in the delivery of concrete materials that would be used for the road system.

He said it has been almost four months since the construction was stopped.

The batching plant is equipped with support facilities and has a certificate of non-coverage from the regional office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, he said.

"The batching plant is mobile and removable once the project is completed," Palsiw said.

In the closure order issued on Sept. 28, Dacumos said the batching plant was operating without a business or mayor's permit, and outside the industrial zone.

A dialogue is scheduled tomorrow to settle the issue, Dacumos said.

– Artemio Dumlao



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## Kasalanan daw ng tao, hindi ng quarries, ang baha

BALUKTOT ang katwiran ng bureaucrats ng Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources. Kesyo hindi raw nagdudulot ng baha ang rock quarries sa taas ng bundok. Dahil taun-taon ang tag-ulan, natural lang daw bahain ang mga lambak sa ibaba. Bukod du'n, tambak ang basura sa mga komunidad na nagbabara sa mga kanal.

Totoong bumabagyo kada taon. Totoong maiipon ang ulan sa lambak, tulad ng Marikina-San Mateo-Cainta. Totoong nakakadagdag sa baha ang basura. Pero kapag kinalbo ang gubat sa bundok, mawawala ang pampigil sa baha. Bubulwak agad sa mga komunidad. Mali ang pahiwatig ng DENR bureaucrats na dapat umalis ang mga tao sa ibaba para hindi mapinsala ng quarries sa itaas.

Mag-aral sana sila ng kasaysayan. Mahigit 500 taon na may naninirahan sa Marikina-San Mateo-Cainta. Ang Cainta noon ay kutang Malay na napapalibutan ng kawayan at kanyon. Kasama ang ilang Bisaya, nilakbay ng mga barkong pandigma ni Legaspi ang Ilog Pasig at nilupig ang kuta. Sa madaling salita, komunidad na noon ang ibaba.



## Sapol

NI JARIUS BONDOC

Nagkaroon lang ng quarries sa Upper Marikina Basin Watershed nitong nakaraan 50 taon. Mula nu'n, naging problema na ang baha.

Sa pananaw ng DENR bureaucrats, tungkulin nila ipamahagi imbis na protektahan ang likas na yaman ng bansa. Paspasan nila pinahihintulutan ang pagmimina maski salaula ang kumpanya. Kesyo raw mauudlot ang infrastructure program ng gobyerno kung walang quarries na pagkukuhanan ng graba.

Kalokohan! May bagong teknolohiya na ngayon sa paggamit ng lumang gulong ng sasakyan at basurang plastic para gawing kalsada.

Pinupulbos ito bilang pamalit sa semento at aspalto. Kapag tinibag ang bundok, hindi na ito tutubo muli.

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Makinig sa Sapol, Sabado, 8-10 ng umaga, DWIZ (882-AM).



## SA PILING MO, O SIERRA MADRE

PADER laban sa bagyo o 'stormwall'. 'Yan ang bansag sa bulubundukin ng Sierra Madre.

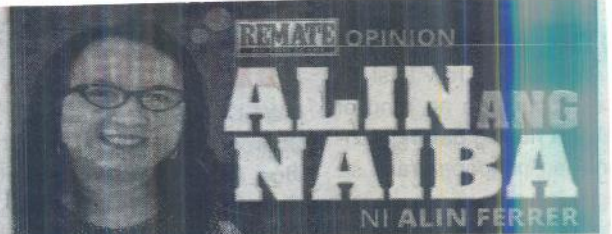
Halos 540 na kilometro ang haba niya na binabaybay ang sampung probinsya sa silangang bahagi o 'eastern portion' ng Pilipinas, at ang pinakamataas na rurok nya ay nasa 1,915 na metro. Sampung probinsya mula Cagayan hanggang bahagi ng Rizal at Laguna at may lawak na 1.4 milyong hektarya ang abot nya.

Pinatunayan ulit ni Sierra Madre ang napakahalagang serbisyo n'ya sa mga Pilipino, nang basagin nya si Super Typhoon "Karding" noong nakaraang linggo. Pinahina ng Sierra Madre si Karding bago ito dumaan ng Metro Ma-

nila at Central Luzon at tuluyan na ngang lumabas sa Pilipinas.

Kasabay nang paghagupit ni Karding dumagsa sa social media ang mga puna at paalala ng mga netizens. Kung meron lang akong piso sa bawat "sana" na naka-post sa mga socmed, baka milyonaryo na ako ngayon.

Sana alagaan natin ang Sierra Madre. Sana huwag nating sirain ang mga kagubatan n'ya. Sana magpatuloy ang mga serbisyong pangkalikasan ni Sierra Madre tulad ng pagpapadaloy ng tubig, tirahan ng mga hayop at insekto, pag-higop ng maduming 'carbon dioxide' sa hangin at pagbuga ng malinis na 'oxygen'. Sana manati-



ling malinis ang mga ilog. Sana huwag mapaalis ang mga katutubo sa lupaing minana sa mga ninuno nila. Sana huwag hayaang makalbo ang gubat.

Pero sa dami ng gustong pagka-kitaan ang Sierra Madre, baka sa loob ng isang henerasyon, hindi na kakayanin ng kabundukan ang pagbalahura sa kanya. Nariyan ang mga iligal na pagtrotroso, pagmimina at quarrying. Ang Kaliwa Dam at projects ng residential subdivisions. Mga malakaking hi-way at diver-

sion roads sa gitna nga mga kagubatan. Kahit nga tourism attractions ay meron ding negatibong epekto sa kabuuan ng Sierra Madre.

Nagulangang tayo sa mga nabalitang pagbaha sa Pampanga, Bulacan, Metro Manila, Laguna at Rizal. Pag nagpatuloy ang paghalay sa Sierra Madre, mas doble ang pinsala at sakuna na makikita natin sa susunod na super typhoon.

Huwag sanang mangyari-iyon, sa piling mo, Sierra Madre.



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**LABINDALAWA** ang patay na iniwan ng bagsik ng Bagyong Karding, 5 rito ay magigiting nating rescuers mula sa Bulacan at dalawa sa Zambales.

Habang nasa P3 bilyon ang pinsala ng bagyo sa ating agrikultura, Aruy, nakupo! Kawawa ang ating farmers, anihan pa naman.

Malaki ang naging papel dito ng ating kabundukan sa Sierra Madre. 'Ika nga, durog ang werpa (power) ni "Karding" sa tibang ng bundok.

Nababawasan nito ang lakas ng super typhoon na tumatama sa kalupaan ng Luzon.

At ayon nga sa meteorologist natin, bumaba ang rainband ng bagyo nang

hampasin nito ang Sierra Madre — ang pinakamahabang mountain range sa Pilipinas.

Dahil nadiskaril ang sirkulasyon o ikot ng hangin, tuluyan nang humina ang bagyo nang dumaan ito sa Central Luzon.

FYI, mga friendship, ayon sa ating mga meteorologist, madaling tawirin ang Central Luzon kasi walang bundok.

Pagkatawid ng Sierra Madre, dire-diretso ang bagyo at mas bumilis pa si "Karding" nang nasa dagat na.

Talaga namang masasabi nating "Wow, bundok" ang tikas talaga ng Sierra Madre — ating lifesaver. Pero, napababayaan na rin ang ating kabundukan.

Dahil ito ang pinakamatibay nating tiga-harang ng bagyo, mas alagaan natin ito. Paano?

IMEEsolusyon na panatilihin nating mape-preserve ang mga puno sa bundok na 'yan, tuluy-tuloy ang pagtatanim d'yan, suportahan natin ang mga katutubong Dumagat na nangangalaga sa ating kabundukan.



### LIFESAVER NG MGA PINOY KONTRA BAGYO ANG SIERRA MADRE!

Kung walang mga puno, nababawasan ng matinding ulan at hangin ang lupa.

IMEEsolusyon din na bantayan natin ang mga mapagsamantalang umuuka ng bundok, sa pagmimina at pati na rin sa pagpapalawak ng urban development.

Well, DENR, plis lang, 'wag silang pabayaan na makapasok ng ganun na lang sa Sierra Madre.

Riyan sa dako ng Montalban at San Mateo, Rizal, na pangunahing nadale ng Bagyong Ondoy, nagiging bahain. Bakit? Panay-panay ang quarrying.

Panlaban sa bagyo ang ingatan ang ating kabundukan. 'Yan ang proteksyon natin!





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# 'PH in the grip of water crisis'

BY FRANCO JOSE C. BAROÑA

**A** TOP executive of a global nonprofit organization working to bring water and sanitation to the world said access to clean, potable water in the Philippines has become a real crisis.

Guesting on "Business and Politics," a weekly program on SMNI hosted by *The Manila Times* Chairman and CEO Dante "Klink" Ang 2nd, Griselda Santos, Water.org regional director for Southeast Asia, noted that based on a recent Unicef study, 780 million people across the world do not

> Grip A2



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■ GRIP FROM A1

## PH in the

have access to clean, potable water, and every 2 minutes a child dies of waterborne diseases.

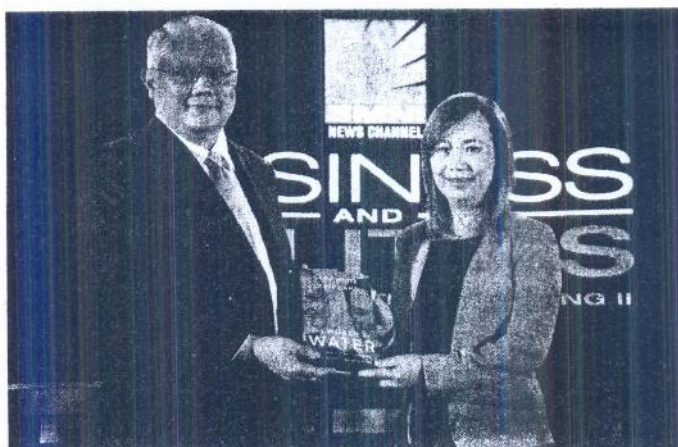
At the same time, women and children spend 200 million hours fetching water for household consumption.

The situation holds true in the Philippines, Santos said. Children and women "do not have a childhood to speak of. As early as 7 years old, they have been fetching water for hours every day."

"In rural areas it's always the women and children who are delegated with this task," she said. "Imagine as a woman, aside from taking care of the household, you are also tasked to fetch water especially for lower income families. It helps a lot for both the husband and the wife to work to sustain the family, but because water is an issue for these lower income households they are not becoming a productive member of society helping the family financially."

The water crisis in the country is more widespread than people realize, she said. Many local government units do not have the financial resources to provide clean water to their constituents.

"It's really a challenge, especially for Water.org. We have seen several stakeholders, bigger entities approaching us seeking help, and I



■ Griselda 'Gay' Santos, Southeast Asia regional director of Water.org, with The Manila Times Chairman Dante 'Klink' Ang 2nd on SMNI's 'Business and Politics' aired on Saturday, Oct. 1, 2022. PHOTO BY J. GERARD SEGUIA

think that is a red flag already if you see big players in water sanitation and ecosystem ... approaching you as an NGO ... [it] means that they cannot do it alone," said Santos.

She said the need for clean water can easily be taken for granted, particularly by policymakers, because the misconception persists that water is an endless resource.

But with a new leadership taking over the government, "everything sounds promising," Santos said, citing the first State of the Nation Address of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and his recent speech at the United Nations General Assembly where he focused on climate change.

Climate change "is definitely within our scope of concern because it directly

affects the quality of water," she said. "It's a good analogy, it is hard to disassociate climate change and water; it is so interrelated because both affect the most vulnerable, the most helpless."

Santos stressed that although everything hinges on increasing awareness, "definitely financial resources are also important to address the water issue."

"There has not been much appreciation or recognition that addressing the water issue is the intersection of addressing gender inclusion, financial inclusion and poverty alleviation," Santos said.

The private sector must be made to realize "that if you solve the water issue you are solving the financial inclusion and you are solving poverty

alleviation as well as gender inclusion," she said.

Today, a lot of financial institutions, and even the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, advocate financial inclusion as the key to economic growth.

"It sounds like a very sexy thing, but they do not realize that even sexier is the issue of water if you are able to address it," Santos said.

Established in 2009, Water.org has made it its mission to bring water and sanitation to the world.

Founded by Gary White, an engineer, and Hollywood actor Matt Damon, the group pioneers in market-driven financial solutions Water.org offers a portfolio of smart solutions that break down the financial barriers between people living in poverty and access to safe water and sanitation.

It started its operations in the Philippines in 2014.

"We help lower income households to have access to financial institutions or finance so they can afford to install water pipes or afford the water meter to be attached to their households. With Water.org connecting them, we stand as the honest broker vouching for them then it opens the doors for these lowest income families to take that first step towards a financial relationship with financial institutions," said Santos.

"You will be amazed at how much has been done by Water.org in the country in terms of reaching people who are in dire need of water as well as mobilizing capital," she said.



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## Revisiting climate change

I MUST have written about climate change in previous columns, so why am I writing about it again? Recent events have made it a current topic and perhaps it will never be outdated since climate change is a perennial problem. Typhoon "Karding" had just passed our country and resulted in so much damage to property and lives. My heart goes out to the rescuers who died while trying to perform their tasks. The efforts exerted by both public and private sectors during the typhoon and the floods deserve a lot of commendation. We saw how government organizations, especially the local government units (LGUs), immediately came to the rescue of the affected residents and their properties. Evacuation was orderly even if we had the usual resistance from people who would not leave their homes. Television and radio stations were announcing the developments as they occurred and immediately sent relief goods to the evacuation centers. Large malls like the SM Malls offered to shelter people at the height of the floods. Their parking areas were opened to the stranded vehicles in flood-prone areas.



INSURANCE  
INSIGHTS

**HERMINIA  
"MING" JACINTO**

How admirable! It looks like we have learned a lot about coping with such events considering that the Philippines is visited by about 20 typhoons a year. Not to mention the flooding and the storm surges that accompany such typhoons. But we are not always successful. Inevitably, there is the resulting damage to crops, property and even lives which take a long time for us to recover. Yes, there are mechanisms and opportunities to recover through insurance and other solutions which are now available in the market. But how does one recover from the loss of a loved one and the destruction of livelihood? Maybe never.

From my perspective as an insurance practitioner, I am appalled at the lack of attention and concern about climate change, an issue which is now the subject of discussions in global conferences. Since typhoons and floods occur

► **JacintoA6**



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## JACINTO FROM A5

# Revisiting climate change

frequently in our country, we may just accept it as something that will come anyway, so let it come! It is our business in insurance to provide solutions and products that will restore property after the event and we make money doing this. But it is also our business that we help our clients cope with these events with less cost and heartaches!

The key is prevention. We should harness all available solutions to help us mitigate the impact of these events. Recent posts in Facebook make fun of the "builder or creator" of the Sierra Madre mountains, which were reactions to articles

about the role the mountain range played in preventing Karding from doing more damage to the places traversed by the typhoon. Setting aside the memes, there is a lot to be grateful for that we have these God-given natural resources to protect us from strong winds. Inquirer.Net correctly says "Sierra Madre stands up to Karding, but needs protection vs the human it serves." What comes to mind is the mining of dolomite from a mountain in Cebu to create a Boracay type beach in Manila Bay. The so-called dolomite beach is now the receptacle of all the garbage brought by the flood from various places near

Manila. It is providential that the new government has stopped the so-called rehabilitation of the Manila Bay and save the mountains from being denuded. Another natural resource that the Philippines is gifted with is the abundance of mangroves in the countryside. Experts on natural disasters say that mangroves are many times more cost-effective than building a concrete sea wall over a 15-year investment. I hope our own weather experts will develop our own natural resources to prevent or reduce flooding.

Until recently, not many knew that there was a Climate Change

Commission which was created in 2011. Among its several purposes is for a successful transition toward climate-smart development. The chairman of this commission is no less than the President of the Philippines with three commissioner-members and has been provided with an ample budget to do its job. I just hope that the president will give it the time and attention it needs. Now is the time for them to implement what they have learned from the various conferences they have attended and the inputs from the National Panel of Technical Experts. The LGUs are waiting for you!



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# DA must prioritize pest management—salceda

BY JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ  
@joveemarie

**A**MID reports of fresh onion shortages in fast food chains, and the continuing infestation of armyworms in onion farms in North Luzon, a vice chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture and Food called on President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to prioritize integrated pest management.

Albay Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda said the Department of Agriculture (DA's) integrated pest management is "one of the more successful agriculture programs in the country."

"Integrated pest management will be the new normal in climate

change. As temperatures rise and climate conditions change, some pests will breed faster and become more resistant. Agriculturists in North Luzon are already pointing out that pests like armyworms are becoming stronger every season, because of, not despite pesticides," Salceda said.

"So, I am recommending to the DA that we classify integrated pest management as a flagship program of the DA, so that it's not buried as just one small program under the Agricultural Training Institute [ATI]."

According to the lawmaker, integrated pest management is the use of multiple techniques, including multicropping, biological control, habitat manipulation, modifica-

tion of cultural practices, and use of resistant varieties to control and prevent infestation.

Among Salceda's recommendations are to have at least one farm school offering integrated pest management in every province, and to ensure that all municipal agriculturists are trained and can eventually train farmers on integrated pest management.

Salceda cited research which indicates that integrated pest management caused farmers to spend less on pesticides and have higher incomes.

"There is strong evidence to suggest that the first integrated pest management school in 1994 helped its farmer beneficiaries re-

duce pesticide costs."

## 'New normal'

SALCEDA said armyworms have continued to ravage onion farms in provinces such as Pangasinan.

He said last year's infestation damaged as much as 212 hectares of onion farms, adding that the infestation in 2016 affected as much as 1,000 hectares.

"This year's infestation appears to be growing worse, and could approach 2016 levels. That was also one year when onion smuggling got so bad, we passed a law declaring large-scale agri smuggling as economic sabotage," Salceda said.

"This could get bad. And I'm very

sorry to say, because of climate change, loss of forests, intensified use of pesticides, and loss of genetic diversity in crops, we will get infestations every year. Part of climate change adaptation is not just preparing for disasters. Pest management will be key to ensuring we have enough food amid climate change."

Salceda said he thinks fighting infestation will be the new normal.

"In the South, we tend to suffer from viruses on our rice, bananas, and other crops. So, it's going to be a continuing national challenge. That's why it needs to be a flagship program."

As a cautionary tale, Salceda cited

the case of Albay's abaca industry in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

"In Albay, we know very well how pests can impoverish entire generations. There are records that show us to be the richest province in the early 1900s because of abaca exports. By the 1960s, the abaca sector had already collapsed, in part because of pests. We never recovered from that. Let that be a warning to the onion and garlic sectors in North Luzon, our fruit export sector in Mindanao, and our sugar sector in Visayas," he said.

"Pests will continue to grow stronger in this changing global climate. We either adapt, or we see entire crop sectors wiped out."



# SKETCHES

ANA MARIE PAMINTUAN

## Innovation-driven growth

Many reasons have been put forward by players in the different sectors of agriculture to explain why domestic production of basic commodities from rice to sugar to salt and onions is disappointingly low.

But there has been little emphasis on the weak capability to innovate and harness technology to boost agricultural production and make agrarian reform work to lift peasants from poverty.

Industry players complain that we lack an accurate inventory of agricultural production and other relevant data. In other countries, drones are being used to monitor farms, record relevant data to enhance production and maintain accurate inventories of various crops.

We need not import drones for such uses. Filipinos have developed satellites; surely there are Filipinos who can develop drones for agricultural and industrial uses.

In our country, a pest infestation can decimate many adjacent trees. The entire tree is also treated with pesticide in amounts based on guesswork, which also risks killing the tree. Again citing my favorite innovators, the Israelis, they developed a device with smart sensors. It is attached to a tree for precise and early detection and extermination of the pest before it can destroy the tree.

New Science Secretary Renato Solidum, better known for his expertise in seismology, has said he wants to provide more government support for innovators and start-ups in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Let's hope he gets the needed resources and political support for this.

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## Time to walk our talk



Atty. Jose Ferdinand M. Rojas II

### RISING SUN

**S**USTAINABLE" has been a buzzword for quite some time now, but for many businesses, the ESG (environmental, social, and governance) framework is relatively recent. The two are related in that ESG features lead to sustainability. ESG features are guideposts that a company's management group and stakeholders use to make business decisions. The impact of these decisions on the world and environment is what makes them sustainable or not.

Sustainability and ESG standards are crucial for today's businesses and organizations because of the global challenges that our planet is facing. We can be sure that we will be hearing or encountering more of them in the years to come, which makes it obvious that businesses truly need to align with these standards as soon as possible in order to remain relevant, competitive, and cooperative.

Aligning means making investment/business decisions based on

ESG elements or frameworks. In the long run, it is good not just for the planet and its inhabitants, but also for the organizations themselves as more investors, employees, consumers, and stakeholders demand that companies be more responsible and sustainable.

For instance, last year the European Commission adopted a finance package that would require around 50,000 EU companies to report on ESG issues starting in 2023. In the Philippines, the Ayala Group has em-

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barked on a long journey of actualizing its "commitment to sustainability through the ESG metrics." This is according to the conglomerate's chairman himself, Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala.

To work within the ESG framework, an organization needs to have a strategy that focuses on the environmental, social, and governance pillars. Some of the actions that can be taken include: taking measures to decrease pollution and CO<sub>2</sub> output, having an inclusive workforce, reducing waste, addressing climate

change and issues related to biodiversity, human rights, health and safety, corruption, and so on. The scope is much wider, but you get the picture. Every organization chooses the ESG issues that affect them, tries to address these, and reports on them.

On the surface, ESG may look expensive and time-consuming to implement, but as mentioned, it brings rewards to the organization and its people, as well as to the world and its citizens.

HERE'S an invitation to watch the films that are part of the Spanish Film Festival, which opens on October 5, at 7:30 p.m. at the Shangri-La Plaza Red Carpet Cinema in Mandaluyong. There will be screenings at the Institute Cervantes de Manila in Intramuros from October 10-12 and a screening at the UP Film Center in Diliman on October 13. All other screenings will be held in Shangri-La. For the complete list of films and their screening times, please visit the Facebook page of Instituto Cervantes de Manila. The public is invited to watch the free screenings of these exceptional Films in Spanish, with English subtitles.



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## What is a green bond?

**I**nvestopedia defines a green bond as a type of fixed-income instrument that is specifically earmarked to raise money for climate and environmental projects. Investopedia explains that green bonds are sometimes referred to as climate bonds, but the two terms are not always synonymous.

"Whereas climate bonds specifically finance projects that reduce carbon emissions or alleviate the effects of climate change, green bonds represent a broader category of instruments related to projects with a positive environmental impact. Green bonds are part of a larger trend in socially responsible and ESG investing."

One such green bond is the recently-listed peso-denominated ASEAN Green Bond of AC Energy (ACEN), the listed energy platform of the Ayala group. The ₱10 billion

bond due 2027 will support the operations of the following renewable projects of ACEN, namely, 1) the 283 MWdc San Marcelino Solar 1 farm in Zambales 2) the 42-MWdc expansion of the 72-Wdc Arayat-Mexico Solar farm in Pampanga and 3) the construction of the 133-MWdc Cagayan Solar farm in Lal-lo, Cagayan.

"The successful offering will help us realize ACEN's vision of reaching 20 GW of renewables capacity by 2030," ACEN President/CEO Eric Francia said.

The issue attracted so much investor interest that it was 8.6 times oversubscribed. The five-year bond offered a fixed annual



### SPEAKING OUT

IGNACIO R. BUNYE

rate of 6.05 percent and was given the highest possible rating of PRS Aaa by the Philippine Ratings Services Corporation.

It is ACEN's maiden peso-denominated ASEAN Green Bond – the first tranche under a ₱30 billion borrowing program registered with SEC. The previous offerings by ACEN had been dollar-denominated. Including this one, ACEN has raised a total of US\$1.6 billion.

It is no wonder that for the second consecutive year, ACEN was recognized as the Most Outstanding Company in the Philippines in the energy sector in Asia money's Outstanding Company Poll. Over 900 fund managers, analysts, bankers, and ratings agencies took part in the poll, which concluded in July. The formal listing of the ACEN Green Bond at the Philippine Dealing and Exchange Corporation (PDEX) last Sept. 22 was witnessed by ACEN Deputy CFO Mary Syquia, BPI Capital President Chiqui Huang, ACEN CFO and Treasurer Cora Dizon, ACEN President/CEO Eric Francia, SEC Commissioner Kelvin Lester Lee, PDEX President/CEO Antonino Nakpil, BDO Capital President Ed Francisco, PDTC President/CEO Ma. Theresa Ravalo, RCBC Capital SVP Arsenio Kenneth Ona, and SB Capital President Virgilio Chua.





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**SPEAKING  
OUT**



**By IGNACIO  
BUNYE**

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Chua.

## BPI Organizational Changes

During its last meeting, the Bank of Philippine Islands (BPI) board approved the resignation for medical reasons of Fernando Zobel de Ayala (FZA) as director and as chairman/member of key committees.

The board thereafter approved the following organizational changes.

1. Nomination of Jaime Z. Urquijo as director vice FZA.

2. Appointment of Cesar P. "Bong" Consing as vice chairman of the board of directors and as member of the nomination committee.

3. Appointment of Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala (JAZA) as member and chairman of the personnel and compensation committee.

4. Appointment of Romeo L. Bernardo as member of the Executive Committee.

At Ayala Corporation, the board formalized the appointment of Bong Consing as president/CEO and Mercedita S. Nolleto as director vice FZA.



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# Green economy within horizon

As we improve the investment attractiveness of our domestic economy, I am confident that we will be able to meet the growth targets

BY RAADEE SAUSA

The government is ready to build a stronger and greener economy fit for the 21st century, a Cabinet official said.

"We have the right people at the helm and we have a clear, focused plan to make this lofty goal happen," Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno said recently.

"As we improve the investment attractiveness of our domestic economy, I am confident that we will be able to meet the growth targets indicated in our Medium-Term Fiscal Framework," the secretary added.

Diokno has expressed optimism that the country's improving investment climate will enable the government to reach its medium-term goals.

## Rating affirmed

Moody's recently reaffirmed the country's Baa2 rating with a stable outlook, citing the resilience of the country's economic recovery to external pressures and the government's commitment to policy continuity. Moody's said that the country is not significantly exposed to geopolitical risks and is less dependent on external demand as compared to Asia-Pacific peers given its relatively large domestic market, which in turn is further supported by stable remittance inflows from overseas Filipinos.

Earlier, Diokno assured stakeholders and partners in the development and private sectors that the government is supportive of initiatives toward achieving universal access to clean water. "Allow me to assure you that in our capacity as chair of the administration's economic team, the Department of Finance stands ready to support all efforts toward our shared goal of achieving universal access to clean water and fighting climate change at the soonest possible time," the secretary said.



STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE

## Solon urges: Prioritize integrated pest management

The country would either adapt or see entire crop sectors wiped out, as pests would continue to grow stronger in this changing global climate

BY EDJEN OLIQUINO  
@tribunephil\_eao

Albay Representative Joey Salceda is urging President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to promote integrated pest management as a departmental priority program amid reports of a fresh onion shortage and the ongoing armyworm infestation in North Luzon's onion farms.

Salceda, who also chairs the House Ways and Means Committee, stressed that integrated pest management would be the new normal in climate change.

"As temperatures rise and climate conditions change, some pests will breed faster and become more resistant. Agriculturists in North Luzon are already pointing out that pests like armyworms are becoming stronger every season because of, not despite, pesticides," Salceda said.

He added that multi-cropping, biological control, habitat change, alteration of cultural methods and resistant cultivars are a few

approaches used in integrated pest management to manage and avoid infestation.

The lawmaker also recommended that every province should have at least one agricultural school that teaches integrated pest management and ensures that all municipal agriculturists are educated and capable of eventually training farmers in integrated pest management.

"The country would either adapt or see entire crop sectors wiped out, as pests would continue to grow stronger in this changing global climate," Salceda said.

Armyworm infestations have continued to ravage onion plantations in regions like Pangasinan. Up to 212 hectares of onion farms suffered damage in 2021 due to infestations. Damage in 2016, meanwhile, resulted in up to 1000 hectares.

Crop-damaging pests, according to scientists, will only become more harmful as climate change brings hotter weather and more unseasonable rainfall.



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# DoJ okays foreign ownership on renewable energy

BY MARIA ROMERO  
*@tribunephil\_mbr*

The Department of Justice has allowed full foreign ownership in companies undertaking renewable energy development in the country to support the government's bid to achieve energy security.

In its Opinion No. 21 series of 2022 dated 29 September, the DoJ asserted that the exploration, development, and utilization of inexhaustible renewable energy source are not subject to the 60:40 foreign equity limitation as provided under Section 2, Article XII of the Constitution.

The DoJ noted that foreign ownership restrictions which hamper the flow of investments in the renewable energy sector should be relaxed.

It also pointed out that the Constitutional foreign ownership restriction on the exploration, development and utilization of natural resources only covers things that are susceptible to appropriation, thus excluding the sun, the wind and the ocean.

Moreover, the intent of the Constitutional foreign ownership restriction was to preserve for Filipinos limited and exhaustible resources.

However, the DoJ stressed that the Implementing Rules and Regulations of

Republic Act 9513 must be amended by the Department of Energy and added that the "appropriation of waters, direct from the source, for power generation" shall continue to be subject to the foreign ownership restriction in the Water Code.

**The DoJ noted that foreign ownership restrictions which hamper the flow of investments in the renewable energy sector should be relaxed.**

"We express our appreciation to DoJ Secretary Crispin "Boying" Remulla and his legal team for this favorable development which will pave the way for the opening of foreign investments in renewable energy development," Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said.

Lotilla added that the DoE will now be addressing the 40 percent equity limit for foreign investors stipulated in the Implementing Rules and Regulation of the RE Law.

"The DoE is preparing the necessary amendments to Rule 6, Section 19 of the IRR of the RE Law," Lotilla said.

Rule 6, Section 19 (B) of the IRR of the RE Law stipulates that "the exploration, development, production and utilization of natural resources shall be under the full control and supervision of the State."