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DENR

NEWS ALERTS

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TITLE:

PAGE:

DATE:

NAMRIA pushes ₱1.38-B budget for '23 in Congress

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

@jonlmayuga

THE National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA), an attached agency of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is seeking the approval of a ₱1.38-billion budget for 2023.

NAMRIA's proposed budget is equivalent to 5 percent of the DENR's total proposed budget of ₱23 billion.

NAMRIA, the central mapping agency of the government, aims to update the topographic-based maps, which are the basis of various maps produced by various government agencies, including the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), which produces the geohazard maps.

During the DENR's budget hearing conducted by the Senate Subcommittee on Environment and Natural Resources led by Senator Cynthia Villar on Tuesday, Senate Pro Tempore Loren Legarda questioned the need for a ₱312-million budget for mapping activities.

Mandated to provide the public with map-making services and to act as the central mapping agency, depository and distribution facility of natural resources data in the form of maps, charts, texts, and statistics, NAMRIA is targeting next year the production and updating of 1,500 large-scale 1:10,000 digital line maps for Quezon, La Union, Ilocos Sur, Bataan, Albay, Antique, Capiz, Southern Cebu and Agusan del Norte and 45 medium-scale 1:50,000 topographic maps for Mindoro and Negros.

From 2021 to 2022, the DENR established the National Natural Resource Geospatial Database.

The move aims to strengthen information technology support, development of Integrated Information Systems, Geospatial Database Development for Natural Resources, and Operationalization of Climate Change Information and Management Systems.

During her interpolation, Legarda noted that 15 years ago, Congress allocated funds for the production of geohazard maps and every year thereafter, also for the production of more maps.

"These maps were supposed to be given to local government units so that they can be assisted in disaster risk reduction effort," Legarda said.

Legarda then asked the DENR as to the status of the maps, noting that every year, Congress allocates funds for the purpose.

"Have you given all 1,600 plus cities and municipalities and 42,000 barangays the maps? What are these maps? What are the vulnerabilities? Why are the mappings never completed?" she asked.

Undersecretary Peter N. Tiangco, NAMRIA administrator, in response said the agency produces different types of maps at different scales.

He said Legarda might have been referring to the topographic maps, which he insisted "needs to be upgraded."

"In other countries, this is updated every 3 years or every 5 years. Topographic maps are used as base maps for a lot of schematic applications like the MGB," Tiangco explained.

The MGB is mandated to produce geohazard maps to identify highly-at-risk areas or areas that are prone to geological hazards like floods, earthquakes and landslides.

According to Tiangco, topographic-based maps include data sources for elevation data.

"This elevation data needs very high-resolution satellite imageries in order to have the elevation data overlaid on the same. MGB uses the topographic-based maps to overlay their schematic layer to produce the geohazard maps," Tiangco said. He added that such is costly but the DENR uses the cheapest possible technology available.

Tiangco said NAMRIA had already completed the topographic-based maps with a scale of 1:10,000 and were in fact used to produce geohazard maps that were eventually distributed to all 1,600 cities and municipalities, including 42,000 barangays.

The topographic maps, Tiangco said, are sold at a cost of ₱120 per sheet but the schematic applications are given out for free.

Legarda said on top of giving out the geohazard maps, the DENR should initiate a project to capacitate local government units (LGU) so that they would understand the maps and know how to use them, such as declaring an area off-limits to housing or building construction.

Legarda mentioned that several years back, lives were lost because of flash floods and landslides.

She said lives could have been saved if the locality knew of the hazards.

DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said there are efforts to integrate the data and analysis to produce the geological risks with that of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), using a mobile application called HazardHunter.

"In terms of contribution of the DENR, its flood, and landslide from MGB," she noted.

No-build zones

VILLAR and Legarda said in addition to making maps, the DENR should help LGUs identify "no build zones" and wants all stakeholders, including the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), LGUs, and even the Department of Education (DepEd) to know more about the application of the geohazard maps to prevent tragic deaths.

In response, Yulo-Loyzaga said such action is a governance question.

"What is important is a convergence between the DILG, LGUs, and DENR and agencies that provide scientific information. In terms of compliance, we need coordination and very strong collaboration with DILG in order for different LGUs to comply at the ground level, including DepEd," she said.



10-14-22

TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

DENR urged: Revoke ECCs for reclamation projects

A fisherfolk group has reiterated its appeal to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to revoke the 21 environmental compliance certificates (ECCs) issued for reclamation projects in Manila Bay.

"We understand that these environmental permits were issued before DENR Secretary (Antonia) Yulo-Loyzaga assumed office. But if she allows these ECCs to proceed, then it will make her accountable to the affected fisherfolk and the marine environment that her agency is mandated to protect," Fernando Hicap, chairman of the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas, said in a statement.

The issuance of the 21 ECCs for the Manila Bay reclamation projects was disclosed last Tuesday during the Senate hearing on the P23 million proposed budget of the DENR for 2023.

During the hearing, Sen. Cynthia Villar, who chairs the Senate committee on environment and natural resources, lambasted the DENR over reclamation projects in Cavite, which she said could cause severe flooding, especially in areas within four rivers set to be affected by the projects.

Villar said the communities to be affected include the Zapote River in Las Piñas.

— Elizabeth Marcelo



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AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

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9
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

10-14-22

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

DENR urged to revoke 21 ECCs for Manila Bay reclamation projects

By JEL E. SANTOS

A group of progressive fisherfolk has urged the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to revoke the 21 environmental compliance certificates (ECCs) it issued for reclamation projects in the Manila Bay.

In a statement, the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) urged Environment Secretary Ma. Antonia "Toni" Yulo-Loyzaga to "immediately and unconditionally revoke" the ECCs.

The group said the ECCs have been issued under term of Lozaga's predecessors.

"But if she allows these permits to proceed amid the legitimate environmental concerns raised by stakeholders, then it will make her accountable to the affected fisherfolk and the marine environment that her agency is mandated to protect," Pamalakaya Chairman Fernando Hicap said.

The issuance of the 21 ECCs for reclamation projects in Manila Bay was disclosed by DENR officials during its budget briefing at the

Senate on Tuesday, Oct. 11

Senator Cynthia Villar, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, lambasted the DENR during the budget briefing over the ECCs for the reclamation projects in Cavite that could cause severe flooding in Las Piñas City and other coastal areas.

Reacting to Villar's tirade, the Pamalakaya said the DENR "had it coming, as it keeps on turning a blind eye" on concerns previously raised by fishers, coastal residents, environmentalists, and scientists on the socio-economic and environmental costs of reclamation

"We demand the DENR to revoke all the ECCs issued to every reclamation project in Manila Bay and across the Philippine waters, as it has been long proven by no less than the fisherfolk and marine experts that this profit-driven activity is a disaster to the environment and the people. Instead, the DENR should pursue a genuine rehabilitation of Manila Bay that will restore its marine biodiversity and fishery resources."



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE



5
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

10-14-22

IIIIF

PAGE

DATE

DENR pursues sustainable 'green, blue' economy

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources spent the first 100 days under the Marcos administration pursuing sustainable management and development of the environment while creating "green" jobs and ensuring investments and revenue for the government.

In an accomplishment report dated September 29, the DENR said it has been pursuing a "blue" and "green" economy, referring respectively, on the fisheries and marine sectors, and agriculture and forestry sectors, into which strategies to address climate mitigation and adaptation are incorporated.

It said it has prepared four resiliency roadmaps and Investment Portfolios for Risk Resilience for the climate-vulnerable provinces of Eastern Samar, Northern Samar, and Siquijor, as well as climate-vulnerable city of Metro Iloilo.

By December 2022, 12 more resilience roadmaps are expected to be completed for nine climate vulnerable provinces and three major urban areas.



10-14-22

TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

Prevention best approach to climate change

By **CORY MARTINEZ**

THE best approach to climate change is "prevention more than response."

This was stressed by Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Lozaga during the recent deliberations of the House of Representatives on the DENR's proposed P23.04-billion budget for 2023.

Lozaga claimed that the ideal combination to address the impact of climate change comes from highlighting "green nature-based" solutions with grey infrastructure solutions.

She also said that extreme weather events will cause different impacts on

the various services of the country's landscape and forests.

"What the DENR is doing now is actually valuing and inventorying the services that the forest covers. For example, forests provide ecosystem services in terms of preventing soil erosion that could lead to the siltation of our rivers and waterways. As such, forests eventually prevent flooding," Lozaga said.

She further noted that if there is adequate ground and forest cover, floods can be prevented.

With the help of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Lozaga also pointed out that there are plans to converge the different resources that

are available in each national government agency to address the impacts of climate change both on the national and local level.

Meanwhile, Analiza Rebuelta-Teh, DENR Undersecretary for Finance, Information Systems and Climate Change, said that the "budget of the DENR is largely intended to support the climate actions of the government."

"Out of the P15 billion that we have for operations, around P7 billion is intended to support climate action mainly on sustainably managing natural resources, clean and healthy environment, and a sustained natural resiliency program," Teh said.

The DENR is also planning to work with the Department of Education

(DepEd) to incorporate climate and disaster risk reduction education into the basic education school curriculum.

Lozaga added that the agency needs to build a strategic communication and education program for all the different stakeholders, including the youth.

The main agenda of the DENR under the helm of Lozaga is to work together with other national government agencies to implement climate adaptation and mitigation, which is also in line with the climate agenda of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr.

Likewise, the priority thrusts and directions of the DENR include adopting a climate risk lens in national planning and policy-making.



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

BusinessWorld™

4
PAGE

UPPER
LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

80-14-22

TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

Diokno: Developing countries need help funding climate efforts

DEVELOPING countries are heavily dependent on outside financing to execute their climate-change mitigation plans, Finance Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno said at the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in Washington, DC.

"We strongly support the call for the World Bank, the IMF, and all other multilateral institutions to continue providing technical and financial assistance that will cater to emerging and developing countries on a much greater scale. This will provide us with better opportunities to access funding that is tailored to fit each country's needs," Mr. Diokno said on Tuesday.

Mr. Diokno was addressing the 108th Meeting of Ministers and Governors of the Intergovernmental Group of 24 on International Monetary Affairs and Development (G-24), according to a statement carrying his remarks issued by the Department of Finance (DoF).

The World Bank Group has said that it is ready to increase its support for the Philippines in the areas of agriculture, education, tourism, water and energy.

Approved commitments for this year amount to \$1.5781 bil-

lion. As of March, the World Bank was the Philippines' third-largest source of official development assistance, with loans and grants accounting for 23.38% of the total.

"At present, the World Bank Group has a Global Crises Response Package to help countries navigate multiple crises, including food and energy security, learning losses due to school closures during the pandemic, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and other long-term development challenges," the DoF said.

Last year, the World Bank, also known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, provided \$1.376 billion in budget support loans to the Philippines, accounting for 12% of that year's external financing.

During an intervention before the constituency members of World Bank Executive Director Erivaldo Gomes, Mr. Diokno outlined several of the Philippine government's policy interventions against rising inflation.

"To cushion the effects of inflation, the Philippine government continues to extend targeted support to the most vulnerable sectors, including public trans-

port workers, farmers, fisherfolk, and indigent senior citizens," Mr. Diokno said. "We are also investing in improvements to local food production, ensuring the timely importation of goods, improving distribution efficiency, ensuring adequate power supply, and carefully monitoring policy considerations on wage and transport fare hike petitions."

"We expect inflation to remain elevated as long as world prices of oil remain high," he added. "Nevertheless, with our combination of fiscal and monetary policies, we are optimistic that the average inflation rate will be within our target of 4.5% to 5.5% for 2022."

On the monetary side, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has so far raised borrowing costs by 225 basis points since May.

Concerning climate change, Mr. Diokno said that the integrated green, resilient, and inclusive development (GRID) strategies baked into its post-pandemic recovery plans.

Mr. Diokno affirmed Philippine commitments under the Paris Agreement, specifically the adoption of its first nationally determined contribution (NDC) of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2030, among others.

"As in other countries, these NDC actions are heavily reliant on external financing. We see the key role of the World Bank Group — the largest multilateral provider of climate finance — in mobilizing more international public and private finance to accelerate GRID programs," Mr. Diokno said.

Last month, Mr. Diokno said that he was not concerned about the tight prevailing fiscal conditions as he sought to finance the government's climate change initiatives. In the P5.268-trillion proposed budget for 2023, the climate change adaptation budget has increased to P453.1 billion from P289.7 billion this year.

At the end of the second quarter, the Philippines' debt-to-gross domestic product ratio was 62.1%, above the prescribed 60% threshold multilateral lenders recommend for developing economies. Its rise from 39.6% at the end of 2019 reflects the debt taken on to finance pandemic containment measures.

Mr. Diokno has said that the government intends to keep foreign borrowing at 25% of the total, falling eventually to 20%, in order to minimize foreign exchange risk. — **Diego Gabriel C. Robles**



PH calls for stronger support from multilateral institutions

BY ANGELA CELIS

FINANCE chief and World Bank governor for the Philippines Benjamin Diokno has called on multilateral institutions for stronger commitment and financing support to emerging and developing countries amid concerns on rising inflation, climate change and other global challenges, according to a statement sent by the Department of Finance (DOF) yesterday.

“During this turbulent time, stronger commitment from our multilateral partners will help us overcome the adverse socio-economic impacts of these crises and build resilience from future shocks,” Diokno said earlier this week in his intervention during the 108th Meeting of Ministers and Governors of the G-24.

The G-24, or the Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-four on International Monetary Affairs and Development, coordinates the position of developing countries on monetary and development issues. Diokno represents the Philippines as the Second Vice-Chair of the G-24 Bureau.

Among the priority discussion

areas were high inflation, debt distress, climate change and the growing need to expand liquidity support and development financing.

Diokno said the continued financing support to the Philippines of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group has helped bridge the gaps in the country’s priority policies and initiatives and “enables us to pursue our socioeconomic agenda of achieving a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable economy.”

Diokno also met with World Bank Group president David Malpass on October 11 at the World Bank Headquarters in Washington to discuss the Philippines’ ongoing loan portfolio with the multilateral agency and seek support from the Bank for the Marcos administration’s comprehensive eight-point socioeconomic agenda.

The bilateral meeting was held on the sidelines of the 2022 Annual Meetings of the IMF and World Bank Group.

The finance chief called for the Bank’s support for key program areas in line with the Marcos administration’s goal of creating more

jobs, improving food security and strengthening climate resilience.

Meanwhile, Diokno also bared policy measures that the Philippines is undertaking to address the impact of high inflation and climate-related risks.

“To cushion the effects of inflation, the Philippine government continues to extend targeted support to the most vulnerable sectors, including public transport workers, farmers, fisherfolk and indigent senior citizens,” Diokno said in an intervention before the constituency members of World Bank executive director Erivaldo Gomes.

Other measures to address high inflation include investing in improvements to local food production, ensuring the timely importation of goods, improving distribution efficiency, ensuring adequate power supply and monitoring policy considerations on wage and transport fare hike petitions.

Diokno also emphasized the role of external financing in climate action.

“As climate change threatens the resilience of our communities, the government has integrated green, resilient and inclusive develop-



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ment or GRID strategies in our post-pandemic recovery plans,” Diokno said.

The Philippines adopted its first Nationally-Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement, which aims to address climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 75 percent by 2030; adapting to the impacts of climate change; and mainstreaming gender and social inclusion into climate action.

“As in other countries, these NDC actions are heavily reliant on external financing,” Diokno said.



Tarsier—near threatened

DENR calls on Samar community to protect, not collect, tarsiers

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has called for community participation to protect the Philippine tarsier after the recent rescue of the animal in captivity in a remote village in Basey town, Samar province.

Joseph Cabigayan, environmental management specialist of the

Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) based in Santa Rita town in Samar, says villagers should be aware that it is prohibited to catch the world's smallest primate listed



RELEASED A Philippine tarsier caught by residents of Roxas village in Basey town, Samar province in this Oct. 1, 2022 photo. The tarsier was released back to the wild after three days.

On DENR Administrative Order 2019-09, the updated national list of threatened Philippine fauna and their categories, the Philippine tarsier is categorized as 'Other Threatened Species.'

under "near threatened species" by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

"This is our focus now to raise awareness of people, especially in communities living near the Samar Island Natural Park (SINP), the natural habitat of some of our endangered species," he says.

The CENRO Sta. Rita team rescued the tarsier locally known as "mago" on Oct. 3, two days after it was caught by two residents while they were cutting grass on a farm in Basey.

"A group of farm workers from Roxas village in Basey saw the captured tarsier in nearby Mongabong village, posted the photo on social media, and it went viral," says Cabigayan.

The rescued tarsier was found healthy and released in a forested area in Guirang village in Basey within the SINP on Oct. 4.

The area is one of the DENR's biodiversity monitoring site.

On DENR Administrative Order 2019-09, the updated national list of threatened Philippine fauna and their categories, the Philippine tarsier is categorized as "Other Threatened Species." "This means that the species is under threat from adverse factors, such as over-collection and is likely to be moved to the vulnerable category in the near future," explains Cabigayan.

Vulnerable species are considered to be facing a high risk of extinction in the wild.

In upland farms in Basey and nearby towns, tarsiers are frequently sighted by villagers.

Under R.A. 9147, the "Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act," it is unlawful for any person to willfully and knowingly exploit wildlife resources, according to Cabigayan.

This includes killing and destroying wildlife species, injuring and mistreating, collecting, hunting, or possessing wildlife, and trading them.

Depending on the category of wildlife they are putting in harm's way, those found guilty will face imprisonment of five days to as long as 12 years and a fine of ₱200 to as high as ₱1 million. (PNA)



Customers and investors drive sustainability efforts in PH – Kyndryl

EXPECTATIONS by customers and investors on environmental and social consciousness are the main driver for local business organizations' efforts to be socially and environmentally responsible, a study by a US-listed service provider said.

In its "ASEAN Digital Transformation Study 2022," Kyndryl said customers drive organizations to be responsible more than regulations do. It noted that this is especially true in countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand.

"Organizations in the Philippines are responding most to customer expectations around environmental and social responsibility from organizations – including their high preference for eco-friendly products," said Kyndryl, which designs, builds, manages, and modernizes information systems.

The study shows that 40% of the Philippine organizations that participated have their sustainability efforts driven by consumer and investor expectations.

This makes the Philippines the top among the five countries covered by the study to have consumer and investor expectations as the main driver. It was then followed by Indonesia with 31% and Thailand with 30%.

Meanwhile, Singapore's sustainability efforts were mainly driven by compliance, while Malaysia was the most successful in accessing sustainability-related funding.

The study also found that environmental, social and governance awareness is growing within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with some industries leading the way.

Kyndryl said that "organizations are still lacking a holistic strategy and are grappling with

how to integrate their data to set science-based targets, all while navigating external challenges such as stricter regulations."

Kyndryl said that although organizations from the five countries are aware of their environmental and social responsibilities, challenges such as operational costs, data availability and lack of dedicated resources hinder them from achieving their sustainability goals.

According to the study, over eight out of 10 organizations in the Philippines aim to become sustainable. However, only 22% of them have built a strategic sustainability roadmap.

"I strongly believe that the success of sustainability lies in how well an organization can integrate its people, processes and technology to achieve a common goal," Kyndryl Philippines Managing Director Wilson Go said.

"To achieve this goal, we need to put people at the center and embed sustainability principles at all levels of the organization culture," he added.

The study had 500 C-suite leaders as participants, 100 of whom came from the Philippines. It is a collaborative study of the information technology infrastructure services provider Kyndryl and the technology research and advisory firm Ecosystem.

"While sustainability is an integral part of many businesses in ASEAN, there is a lot more that needs to be done to build sustainability competencies and fully understand what data organizations have access to and identify the data gaps to support corporate sustainability goals," Ecosystem Chief Executive Officer Ullrich Loeffler said.

Kyndryl said its more than 90,000 employees serve over 4,000 customers in more than 100 countries around the world.

— Justine Irish D. Tabile



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

A12
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

70-14-22

TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

The healing power of forests

Mt. Pandadagsaan, Davao de Oro—After two days of trekking up steep, narrow trails—serendipitously spotting a rafflesia along the way—the moss offered us a green carpet welcome en route to the summit where our team of mountaineers, Department of Environment and Natural Resources field officers, local government staff, and local guides is now encamped. Literally meaning “the gathering place” due to its abundance of wildlife, this mountain is nicknamed “White Peak” by mountaineers, owing to its light-colored rocky summit that stands 2,670 meters above sea level.

Mt. Candalaga rises prominently to the south, and farther to the southwest, Mt. Apo’s summit peeks above the clouds, flanked by Mt. Talomo. Seeing all these mountains, which I have also climbed in the past, adds to the joy of being here.

People always ask me what I get out of these climbs. And I have always struggled to give a full answer, only saying that since I was a kid, I’ve always yearned for the mountains, and that they have taught me so much about the world, the country, other people, and my own self.

I have a more recent realization, though: that all these years, the mountains have been sustaining my physical and mental health. For reasons I cannot fully articulate, being outdoors—especially in the deep forests—gives me a sense of life that reinvigorates me and inspires me to keep going.

We can dismiss this claim as a fanciful anecdote, but it is actually supported by research—from experimental psychology to evolutionary biology—finding that being with nature reduces stress, lowers blood pressure, improves sleep, fosters physical activity, boosts the immune system, and enhances creativity, among other benefits. Studies conducted during the pandemic (e.g., Labib, et al., 2022) have further confirmed these findings.

Remarkably, the scholarship suggests that even just a short time with nature—20 minutes per week—can improve health out-



SECOND OPINION

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comes, and that even some kind of greenery—like walking on tree-lined streets—has some salutary effects. All of these findings have spurred interest in nature immersion, particularly *shinrin-yoku* or “forest bathing,” which has gained global adherents since being introduced in Japan in the 1980s.

Despite the healing power of the forests, fewer and fewer people are in contact with nature today, in what the conservationist Robert Pyle once called “extinction of experience.” Our lifestyles, our cities, and, oftentimes, our policies have made it difficult for us to be with green spaces—and all too often, access to nature is a matter of privilege.

Amid the lingering effects of the pandemic, and in response to an ever-growing mental health crisis, how can we militate against this trend and tap into the healing power of the forests?

First and foremost, we need to protect them in the first place—or else, there will be nowhere to go. Our forests remain under threat on different fronts, and their defenders—activists, forest guards, and indigenous communities—are just as endangered. The fact that Chad Booc was killed in the very *sitio* in Brgy. Andap, New Bataan, where we started our hike, speaks of how people’s struggles and the forests’ predicaments are inseparable.

Second, we need to bring forests to the

people. The stressfulness of cities like Metro Manila is partly rooted in the fact that they don’t have enough trees; conversely, some of the world’s “happiest cities”—like Helsinki and Wellington—are characterized by greenery. We need more urban parks (e.g., Manila’s Arroceros), green spaces (e.g., Iloilo’s Esplanade), and trails (e.g., Baguio’s Yellow Trail), and we need to make these accessible to the public even amid (and especially during) a pandemic when people can’t travel far.

Third, we need to bring people to the forests. If the ability to be with nature is a matter of equity and inclusivity, then we should make our forests more accessible and affordable to people regardless of age, gender, ability, or income. Let there be free and family-friendly green spaces in every city and town!

All of the above will require multisectoral collaboration, with the Department of Health and the medical community prescribing access to nature as both prevention and treatment; the Department of Education enabling children to have outdoor experiences; the Department of Science and Technology supporting local researches to validate scientific findings elsewhere. The tourism officer of New Bataan, Marlon Esperanza, is with us in the summit, and our conversations remind me that local government units, too, can take leadership in this aspiration.

At a personal level, of course, we can literally bring people—our family and friends—to the forests, and help them plan and prepare for their trips.

Ultimately, however, achieving interconnectedness with the environment involves rethinking our very notion of development, from nature as “resource” to nature as “home”: a revolutionary process that may well be facilitated by the forests themselves. As the novelist Glenn Diaz recently wrote, “the absorption, incubation, and enactment of anticapitalist thought is the tropical forest’s most vital agency.”

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EcoWaste warns vs battery-powered Halloween costumes, toys

By ELIZABETH MARCELO

Trick-or-treaters are forewarned that Halloween costumes and toys powered with button cell batteries may lead to accidental choking and chemical burns that may even result in death.

Toxicity watchdog EcoWaste Coalition issued the warning after purchasing several Halloween themed headbands with unsecured battery covers, posing the risk of ingestion of button batteries especially by children.

Sold for as cheap as P20 per piece, the unlabeled headbands decorated with plastic devil horns, pumpkins and skulls, are widely available in the market and are often worn by kids in Halloween parades and parties, the group said.

"These headbands with blinking or non-flashing lights contain tiny button cell batteries measuring 10 millimeters in compartments that are not screwed shut. Kids may open the case out of curiosity, get hold of the batteries and play with them," EcoWaste national coordinator Aileen Lucero said.

"A child may accidentally swallow the tiny battery or insert it in her or his ear and nose while playing, causing choking, chemical burns to the throat or stomach or death," she said.

Lucero cited the case of a three-year-old Skye Ong, a Filipino boy, who unin-

tentionally pushed a button battery into his nostrils in June 2021, and the tragic case of three-year-old Australian girl, Brittney Conway, who died in July 2020 after ingesting a button battery.

Aside from headbands, other Halloween costumes, toys and accessories sold in the market may contain button batteries, the EcoWaste warned.

The EcoWaste stressed a previous warning by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which stated that "when it comes into contact with body fluids, the battery generates a current that produces small amounts of sodium hydroxide, which is lye."

"If the battery gets stuck somewhere in the body, the lye burns a hole at that spot. Infection usually follows. The result can be serious injury and illness, long-term disability, or even death," the American Academy of Pediatrics said.

To prevent chemical burns, choking and death due to button battery ingestion, the EcoWaste reminded the public to never buy toys if the button battery compartments can be broken or opened easily.

EcoWaste said that the adults must also ensure that button batteries in children's products and household items are duly secured with a screw and that button batteries, old or new, are kept out of children's sight and reach.



TITLE:

PAGE

1/2

NO-14-22

DATE



Making haste slowly

As his 100th day in office on Oct. 8 approached, President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. said in a speech on Oct. 5 that he has put in place a “functional government.”

He bragged that he has secured trade, investments and other agreements with Indonesia and Singapore in the course of his state visits to both countries, and that at the United Nations General Assembly where he spoke on Sept. 20 (Sept. 21st in the Philippines), he had shown that “the Philippines is standing on its feet” and that his administration is in the process of realizing Filipino “dreams and aspirations.”

Mr. Marcos also claimed that he has managed to recruit “the best and the brightest” officials to his administration, particularly for the economic and development cluster of the Cabinet.

“We are grateful for their talent,” he said, and “to have them in place gives us a distinct advantage as we try to transform our economy for (sic) the next two years.”

Implicit in these statements is Mr. Marcos’ supposed commitment to the making of a better Philippines. But he made the “functional government” boast in the wake of three key resignations — those of his Chief of Staff, his Press Secretary, and his chosen Chair of the Commission on Audit (CoA) — and his appointment of two Commissioners, one of them as Chair,

VANTAGE POINT LUIS V. TEODORO

to the Commission on Human Rights (CHR).

One could say that neither the resignations nor the latter appointments are indicative of any serious missteps and due only to Mr. Marcos’ still feeling his way through the bureaucratic maze. But it could also be argued that he was also as hasty in his earlier choices, such as his designation of Vice-President Sara Duterte, who has no background as an educator, as head of the Department of Education (DepEd).

His CHR appointments could be in the same category of recklessness — or politics. Neither of those appointees has any background in human rights work, hence the possibility of their eventually resigning — or being forced to do so. On the other hand, in contrast to the speed with which he named the three resigned officials is his failure to name a Secretary of the Department of Health (DoH), even as he remains his own Secretary of Agriculture. Mr. Marcos is making haste — slowly.

Like the national budget, appointments to key government posts are suggestive of the policies an administration intends to pursue as well as of its priorities. Whether the second Marcos regime will introduce new policies

to replace those of the Duterte regime, or at least modify them enough to mitigate their failures and stop the abuses they encouraged, is necessarily of interest to, among others, those Filipinos who took to heart Mr. Marcos’ campaign promises to unify the country and hasten its recovery from the incompetence that exacerbated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the citizenry.

Among the first indicators if there will be policy changes or not are thus who are appointed to which posts, what their qualifications and backgrounds are, and what they intend to do once in office.

The now resigned Press Secretary was the only one of Mr. Marcos’ first appointees to outline her plans. Unfortunately, those plans were not indicative of any departure from the policies of the Duterte regime. Her declared intentions provoked suspicions that the past regime’s policy of limiting access to the Office of the President to “friendly” media organizations and their reporters would continue.

Those plans did not materialize, but depending on who will replace her could still be implemented. If that happens, it would continue to adversely affect the capacity of the independent press to provide their audiences the information about what government and its officials are doing, to which the people have a right.



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7
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

10-14-22

TITLE: MAKING HASTE SLOWLY

PAGE 2/2

DATE

Both press freedom and the people's right to know are among the casualties of the killing of journalists, about which the Oct. 3 shooting of Las Piñas, Metro Manila broadcaster Percy Lapid (Percival Mabasa) reminded the country. In a demonstration of the Marcos administration's seeming concern over the targeting of journalists by those individuals in power who resent their exposing their wrongdoing or just their reporting the truth, a number of government officials have condemned it while Mr. Marcos himself has declared that his administration will protect the rights of journalists.

Both seemed to depart from the indifference to, and even approval of, the killing of journalists by the past regime, during the six years of which 23 more journalists were added to the then 152 killed for their work since 1986, for a total of 175 when Mr. Marcos assumed the Presidency on June 30. But the killing of Lapid is already the second under the Marcos Jr. regime, after a Negros Oriental broadcaster was killed on Sept. 18. The current total since 1986 is 177, with less than 20 cases resolved.

As seemingly positive as the current regime's response to the Lapid killing has been, it still has to be validated by more specific acts and policy declarations that could help stop the killings. To achieve that aim, the prosecution of the killers and

the masterminds behind them is imperative.

The "Culture of Impunity" — the exemption from prosecution and punishment of wrong-doers — is what has encouraged the killing of journalists. The prosecution of the killers and the brains behind them should stop, or at least reduce the number of journalists' being killed annually in this country, which international press freedom watch groups have described as "the most dangerous" and "the most murderous" place in the world in which to practice journalism.

Whether the Marcos administration's response will go beyond mere words is what the independent press, media advocacy groups, journalists' unions, and free expression defenders and advocates should be monitoring in the coming weeks and months of the Marcos watch.

But as urgent as the need to uphold and defend press freedom and the people's right to know is, there are other issues that should be of immediate concern to government.

Among them is who (and when) Mr. Marcos will appoint to the DoH in the context of the multiplying public health issues that have added to Filipino woes over inflation, unemployment, and the COVID-19 contagion. Still under an officer-in-charge who cannot initiate new policies and who is mandated to continue the policies of the previous Secretary, the DoH is the lead agency

in the drive to contain the infection, which, after all, was one of Mr. Marcos' promises during his campaign for the Presidency.

But equally as urgent is his halting the increase in the numbers of the unemployed (now 2.68 million), and the surge in the inflation rate (6.3% in August) that in combination are making both ends meet in these isles more and more difficult if not impossible for the impoverished millions.

As global warming intensifies, there is also the rising cost in lives, crops, and infrastructure of the powerful typhoons that every year strike the Philippines, from one of which, super typhoon Karding, 46,000 men, women, and children are still in makeshift evacuation centers.

The problems that continue to haunt these isles as Mr. Marcos marked his 100th day in office should have convinced him by now that being President is a full-time responsibility incompatible with partying and jet-setting. The Philippines is in one of the most acute stages of the crisis that has long afflicted it. Leaving the country just to watch the Formula 1 Grand Prix championships in Singapore at taxpayer expense did not help alleviate it. ■

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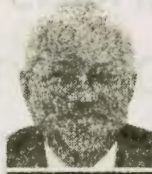
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PAGE

DATE

THE recent super typhoon (Karding/Noru) has again jogged the forgetful memories of Filipinos:

1. A low-pressure area can develop into a super typhoon within a matter of hours;
2. There is a recurring need to update weather monitoring systems and measurement techniques conforming to international standards;
3. Living beside waterways and water systems even in urban areas can and will be risky to life;
4. People must heed the early warnings and monitoring updates. Delays in voluntary evacuation will only result in unnecessary loss of life;
5. It is imperative that our mountain ranges and hills be full of greenery (trees, shrubs, plants etc.) endemic to the region. Those which are not endemic will uproot easily and are useless in extreme weather conditions, becoming dangerous floating debris. Devoid of trees and stable roots to hold the soil together, denuded mountains will only bring landslides, mudslides and rockslides to low-lying areas resulting in injuries, death



LIFE PLUCKS

JOHN LESACA

- and extensive damage to property;
6. If you think throwing a small piece of bubble gum wrapper on the streets will not cause any harm, then you are one of the causes of flooding and disasters; check out Manila Bay after every typhoon and try to convince yourself that you are not part of the garbage strewn everywhere;
 7. Residents who do not cooperate with government agencies only become bigger headaches to rescue operations and cause unnecessary distractions for those who are in dire need of help from the start;
 8. LGUs must stop encouraging and protecting squatters and informal settlers from staying in their locales for votes. These people do not pay taxes and do not deserve the right to vote as responsible citizens. For lack of enough space, they are allowed to live beside the waterways,

Disasters



- clogging and polluting the same with their garbage and excreta;
9. Part of disaster preparedness is maintaining the rescue equipment as "newly arrived" or mint condition always. Rubber boats that get chewed by rats and vermin, those that have cockroaches, leaking rafts, submersible vehicles with flat tires, engine boats with sputtering engines, fire trucks without water or leaky hoses, hydrants with low pressure, no fuel and no drivers available, the list goes on;
 10. We need a more efficient system of distributing electricity and telecom signals all over. Cable spaghetti rolled up beside poles that seriously rival the leaning tower of Pisa are a sight to behold. Obviously, one felled tree is enough to cut the power lines and disable communication systems;
 11. We need our heroes alive for the next emergency.

In 2010, I was able to visit many depressed areas in Quezon City. One of these locales had a small entrance to a very dark, long path, with pitiful shanties on both sides of the pathways. Using a flashlight, I entered one house and noticed there

was no toilet. A creek was running below the pathway. Go figure...

With no electricity and only candles as the cheapest source of light, these shanties which, more often than not, have common walls made of either cardboard or wood, are prone to a conflagration that will certainly lead to many losses of life and property. Mind you, the dark tunnel stretches for quite a distance.

Once you leave the same way you entered, your eyes hurt from the bright light of the sun. *Susme...*

Many have forgotten the effects of Typhoon "Ondoy": The tall bamboo trees got entangled with plastic garbage up to the top. Mud entered houses. The Marikina River overflowed, quickly putting many vehicles under water.

Because people have a penchant for looking at the greener side of the pasture, they have failed to look deep inside of themselves and realize that they have become the problem. But still, they blame the government for this, when they themselves do not know how to

live properly, hygienically. Throwing their garbage, napkins and feces all in one place, they fail as community members.

Go up the leadership ladder and think very hard if you still want to be the leader of a nitpicking people with their kind of attitude.

Gone are the days when Asians were looked upon as simple clean people.

That's why education is a vital component in nation building. I have high hopes for Vice President and concurrent Secretary of Education Sara Duterte. She knows what to do.

Respect is hard to earn these days. Social media has made many individuals think they are quite righteous and a cut above the rest, unwilling to give in to reason and insisting they are always correct. We have ceased to be a humble people.

Throw enforcement in the mix for good measure so we maintain discipline.

However, we are improving on disaster preparedness. With the uncertainty of the disaster and the attitude of the residents, cooperation is key.



Half of world lacks disaster warning system

Disasters are deadlier in countries without advance warning system for extreme weather

GENEVA, Switzerland (AFP) — Even as extreme weather and climate disasters are multiplying, half of countries lack the advanced early warning systems needed to save lives, the United Nations warned Thursday.

In a fresh report, the UN agencies for weather and for disaster risk reduction found countries with poor early warning systems on average see eight times greater mortality from disasters than countries with strong measures.

Proper early warning systems for floods, droughts, heatwaves, storms or other disasters allow for planning to minimize adverse impacts.

“Extreme weather events will happen. But they do not need to become deadly disasters,” UN chief Antonio

Guterres said.

As the impacts of climate change are increasingly felt, the world is seeing more disasters that have “compounding and cascading impacts,” Thursday’s report said.

Countries should therefore be equipped with multi-hazard early warning systems, but only half of the world’s nations currently have such mechanisms in place, the report found.

Poorer regions, often the most vulnerable to climate shocks and natural disasters, are the worst equipped with countries increasingly facing situations with multiple impacts.

‘Significant gaps’

Fewer than half of the world’s least developed

countries and only one-third of small island developing states have multi-hazard early warning systems, it said.

Mami Mizutori, head of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, voiced alarm at the “significant gaps in protection.”

Countries with poor early warning systems on average see eight times greater mortality from disasters.

“This is a situation that needs to urgently change to save lives, livelihoods and assets.”

As the threats rise, early warning systems have meanwhile contributed towards significantly reducing disaster-related mortality.

The UN report showed the number of people affected by disasters had nearly doubled from an average of 1,147 per 100,000 per year between 2005

and 2014, to 2,066 from 2012 to 2021.

At the same time though, the number of people killed by or missing after disasters annually fell from 1.77 per 100,000 people in the earlier period to 0.84 in the later one.

Mizutori pointed to the recent catastrophic monsoon floods in Pakistan, which submerged one-third of the country, and left nearly 1,700 people dead.

“Despite this carnage, the death toll would have been much higher if not for early warning systems,” she said.

The UN wants all countries to put in place early warning systems within five years, and is due to present an action plan during November’s COP27 climate summit in Egypt.

“Those who have done the least to cause the climate crisis are paying the highest price,” Guterres said.



TITLE:

PAGE

1/2

DATE

Unity we need most

It used to be that the Philippines was only "one of" the most disaster-prone countries in the world, as a report on Relief Web described the country. Now the status has been "elevated" to "most disaster-prone," and that is according to the results of a study released recently.

Two German institutions – Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft and the Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict at Ruhr University Bochum – in their World Risk Index said "the Philippines is facing the greatest disaster risk among 193 countries in the world based on its exposure and vulnerability to natural disasters."

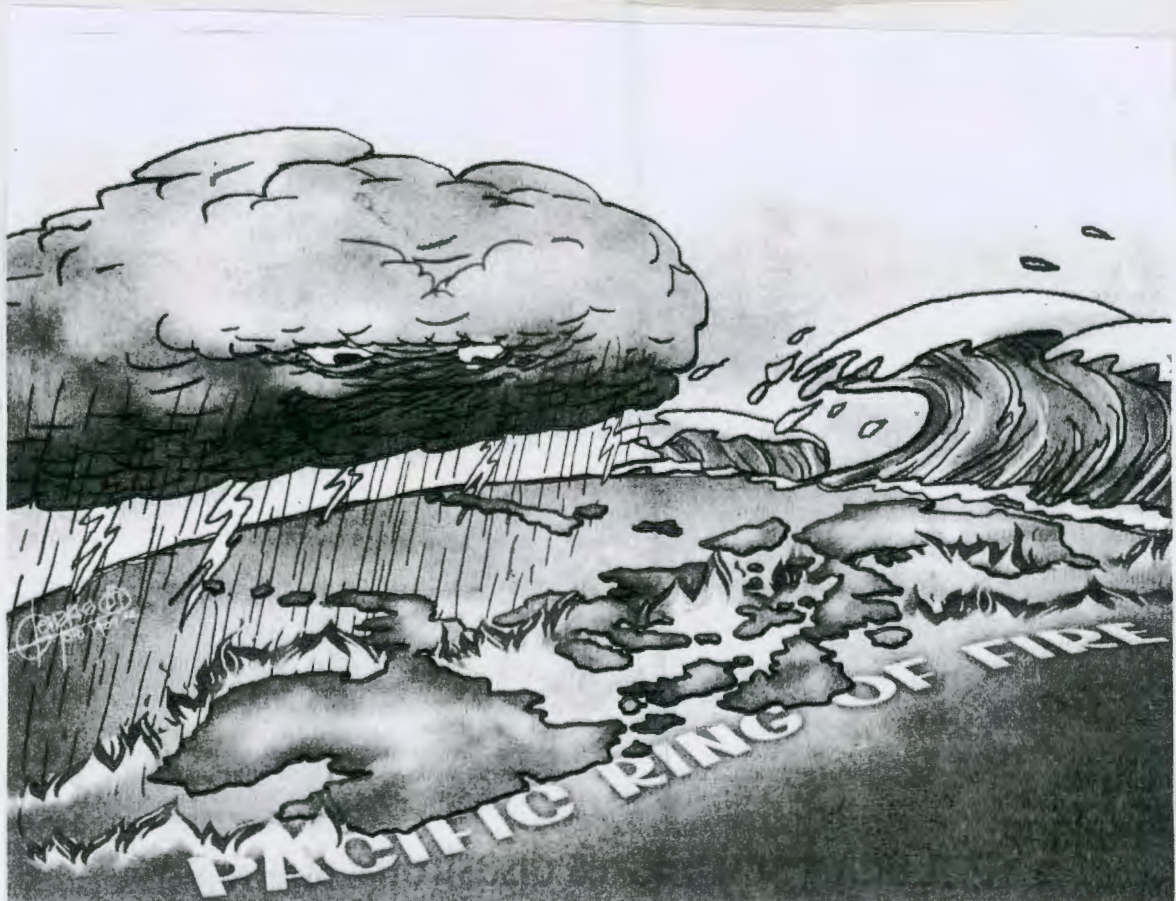
The Philippines lies in the typhoon belt of Asia, and each year, some 20 tropical cyclones pass through our archipelago. In the past decade alone, these have left massive floods and property destruction in their wake.

The most recent one flattened vast agricultural lands in Luzon, almost ready for harvest most of them.

Following President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s optimistic pronouncements about transforming the Philippines' agricultural sector, the entry of super-typhoon "Karding" into the country's area of responsibility last September kept expectations low.

It was the Sierra Mountain range that, experts say, lessened the degree of damage the 11th tropical cyclone to

“It was the Sierra Mountain range that, experts say, lessened the degree of damage the 11th tropical cyclone to have entered the Philippines wrought on surrounding cities.”





have entered the Philippines wrought on surrounding cities.

Filipinos have gotten used to the increasing intensity of these super typhoons. Many are likely to heed local government calls to action, such as evacuation to safer places.

Yet one thing that perhaps many fail to realize is that the yearly occurrences are not likely to ease – they are getting stronger, and government agencies tasked to manage disaster response and relief efforts must always prepare for the worst.

As a “strong advocate of climate change and mitigation,” Senator Loren Legarda recently emphasized, “At no other time in the history of this country have we seen the confluence of high-level reactions to the dual threats of climate change and biodiversity collapse.”

The senator is a key figure in the Philippines’ participation in global efforts to stem the degradation of the planet, including the High Ambition Coalition and Global Ocean Alliance.

“The HAC has set an aspiration of protecting at least 30 percent of the world’s land and ocean, through increased public and private financing, to ensure long-term management and local governance, and clear implementation mechanisms to nature so we can recover ecosystems by the year 2030,” she said.

With the Philippines identified as the most vulnerable to disasters, it behooves the government to put in place not just disaster management but also resilience.

“Pro-active” is the word used by Assistant Secretary Bernardo Rafaelito Alejandro IV of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council in a report of an online news site. Improving the country’s disaster preparedness, he said, is a task shared by each one of us.

In the realm of government, it is not enough to rely solely on a “department of disaster resilience,” a proposal renewed in the Senate following “Karding.”

We need not just “first responders” to calamities, but also the different departments of government to collectively create a Philippine Development Plan that could save us in a future of at least 20 ever-intensifying cyclones a year.

To quote Legarda once more: “For preserving the life-giving capacity of our archipelago, we need all hands on deck, a whole of government and a whole of society approach.”

“
In the realm of government, it is not enough to rely solely on a ‘department of disaster resilience,’ a proposal renewed in the Senate following Karding.”



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

Amid Covid, climate risks, decent work is a top challenge in Asean

By SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA

@sam_medenilla

ENSURING decent work amid the effects of climate change, the pandemic, and other calamities topped the agenda of labor groups in Southeast Asia during the forum held by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Makati earlier this week.

To realize the agenda, the concerned group urged the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to provide a voice to the labor sector in its policy-making initiatives.

The 30 representatives from trade unions and organization from

came from Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam.

Safety net

IN their conclusion, they stressed the important role of labor groups to push for the adoption of inclusive social protection measures in Southeast Asia to "mitigate the negative impacts on workers and their families in the event of a pandemic, climate event, or other natural and man-made disasters."

Workers affected by such calamities, they said, should still be covered by international labor standards, including occupational safety and health standards (OSHS).

They also discussed the need to organize workers with new forms of employment such as platform work, and the promotion of "green jobs" and "just transition" in addressing

the two-day Trade Union Strategies for Resilience and Renewal post-Covid 19 (novel coronavirus disease) subregional conference of ILO issued a two-page joint conclusion containing the said initiatives.

The representatives of the forum

climate change.

Also tackled in the document were the appeal for the restoration of democracy in Myanmar and for stakeholders to respect human and labor rights in the Philippines.

Timely conclusion

A CRUCIAL step towards ensuring these goals will be achieved, they said, is for the ASEAN to accredit and recognize the ASEAN Trade Union Council (ATUC) to become its "social dialogue partner" in developing its labor policies.

ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) Director Maria Helena André welcomed the "timely" joint conclusion from the participants especially as countries are now engaged in pandemic recovery initiatives.

"It is important that workers

organizations are also ready to contribute to that," André told reporters in an interview on Tuesday.

The ILO official noted governments, employers, and workers should strive in creating "development models and development packages that take into consideration workers interest and workers rights."

ILO, she said, is ready to extend more assistance to the labor sector to help create solidarity among their ranks through capacity building and organizing dialogues and forums.

"We remain committed to supporting the trade unions in the region in every step, to promote inclusive, equitable and sustainable development to advance the Decent Work Agenda and safeguard the rights of all workers in the region," André said.



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B1
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

10-14-22

TITLE:

PAGE:

DATE

BSP pushes for sustainable finance as compliance to Agri-Agra law

By IEE C. CHIPONGIAN

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) is still working on including sustainable projects or "green" financing as part of banks' compliance to the revised Agri-Agra law.

BSP Governor Felipe M. Medalla said the inclusion of funding green finance as Agri-Agra compliance is part of measures to incentivize the financing of sustainable projects.

"We hope to get the necessary revisions in the Agri-Agra Law so that sustainable finance can form part of compliance with mandatory credit to the agri-agra sector," said Medalla.

A new law was recently enacted which is consistent with the Agri-Agra law. Republic Act No. 11901 or the "Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development Financing Enhancement Act of 2022" lapsed into a law last July.

Medalla has vowed to efficiently and effectively implement RA No.

11901 to help the agricultural sector recover from the impact of the pandemic. Considered a new Agri-Agra law, it provides a comprehensive financing framework for the development of the involved sectors, and it also enhance access of rural communities and agricultural and fisheries households, including their micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), to financial services and programs.

Basically, the new Agri-Agra law expanded agricultural credit and rural development financing to include agri-tourism, digitalization of agricultural activities and processes, public rural infrastructure, programs that promote health and wellness of rural communities, and activities that improve livelihood skills.

The law also promotes financing toward environmental, social, and governance projects, including green projects that support sustainable and inclusive economic growth. However it does not include these sustainable

projects as banks' alternative compliance to the Agri-Agra law.

Basically under the new law, the BSP said banks are no longer required to allot 10 percent of their lending portfolio for agrarian reform beneficiaries and 15 percent for agricultural activities. The law now provides banks with more flexibility in allocating the combined 25 percent mandatory credit or quota to a range of borrowers in the agriculture, fisheries, and agrarian reform sectors.

Last month, the BSP issued proposed rules and regulations that will govern the mandatory agriculture, fisheries and rural development or AFRD financing under RA No. 11901.

The draft circular said BSP expects banking institutions to design and offer financial products and services that "suit the specific requirements of their agricultural clients, taking into account their cash flows and the gestation and harvest period of the agricultural produce/activity/project being financed."

AFRD financing refers to loans and investments to increase agricultural sector productivity and competitiveness, and fund rural areas' sustainable development.

Prior to the new law, banks' loanable funds for agriculture and agrarian reform credit continue to fall short of the mandatory allocation.

Bank lending to the agricultural sector totaled P847.95 billion as of end-June this year, up by 7.4 percent compared to same period last year of P789.66 billion.

The amount fell short of the mandated credit allotted as agricultural loans in the Agri-Agra law. Of the P847.95 billion, banks' direct compliance totaled P436.07 billion while alternative compliance under the law amounted to P411.89 billion during the period. Based on BSP data, banks should have loaned P822.34 billion as direct compliance and P1.23 trillion as alternative compliance to the previous Agri-Agra law.



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

Manila Standard

BB
PAGE

UPPER
LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

00-1A-22

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

UN eyes 'complete transformation' of global energy system

GENEVA, Switzerland—Climate change risks undermining global energy security unless the use of renewables is dramatically scaled up, the UN warned Tuesday, suggesting the Ukraine conflict's ripple effects could speed up the green transition.

Not only is the energy sector a major source of the carbon emissions that drive climate change, it is also increasingly vulnerable to the shifts that come with a heating planet, the UN's World Meteorological Organization stressed.

In its State of Climate Services annual report, the WMO warned that increasingly intense extreme weather events, droughts, floods, and sea-level rise—all linked to climate change—were already making energy supply less reliable.

It pointed, for instance, to a historic heatwave that sparked massive power outages in Buenos Aires in January, while experts

mentioned recently disrupted electricity production amid heatwaves and shrinking reservoirs in Europe and China.

WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas warned that "in the future these kinds of events will become more and more frequent", pointing out that much of the world's energy infrastructure is today in areas vulnerable to climate change.

In 2020, a massive 87 percent of global electricity generated by thermal, nuclear, and hydroelectric power plants directly depended on having freshwater for cooling, the WMO said.

'Changing before our eyes'

But a third of power plants running on fossil fuels are in areas of high water stress, as are 15 percent of existing nuclear power plants—a share expected to swell to 25 percent in the next 20 years.

Eleven percent of hydroelectric dams are also located in highly water-stressed areas, while more than a quarter of hydropower plants are in river basins struggling with water scarcity, the WMO said.

"Time is not on our side and our climate is changing before our eyes," Taalas said.

"We need a complete transformation of the global energy system."

Taalas pointed out that the energy sector is itself a part of the problem since it is the source of around three quarters of global greenhouse gas emissions that are changing the climate.

"Switching to clean forms of energy generation... and improving energy efficiency is vital," he said.

But he cautioned that reaching net-zero emissions by 2050 would only be possible "if we double the supply of low-emissions electricity within the next eight years." **AFP**



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But he cautioned that reaching net-zero emissions by 2050 would only be possible "if we double the supply of low-emissions electricity within the next eight years".

The report, which WMO drafts with input from more than two dozen organisations, said shifting to renewable energy would help alleviate growing global water stress, pointing out that the amount of water used by solar and wind is much lower than for traditional power plants.

The energy security crisis caused by the war in Ukraine and disrupted access to Russian gas has sparked fears that countries will fall back on dirty fuel sources like coal.

Taalas acknowledged this could be the case in the short term, but said the war was demonstrating the dangers of dependence on unreliable energy sources, and would surely speed up the green transition.

"From a climate perspective, the war in Ukraine may be seen as a blessing," he said.

WMO warned that the current pledges by countries to cut carbon emissions "fall well short" of what is needed to meet the objectives set by the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change.

The report said global investments in renewable energy "need to triple by 2050 to put the world on a net-zero trajectory".

It called in particular for more clean energy investments in Africa.

The continent, which is already facing massive droughts and other severe effects from climate change, has seen only two percent of clean energy investment in the past two decades.

And yet with 60 percent of the best solar resources on the planet, it has the potential to become a major player in solar energy production, the report said.

However, significant investments are required.

"Bringing access to modern energy for all Africans calls for an investment of \$25 billion annually," the report said.

That is the equivalent of around one percent of global energy investment today.



10-14-22

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

Creation of renewable energy body proposed

BY EDJEN OLIQUINO
@tribunephil_eao

Veteran lawmaker Rufus Rodriguez on Thursday proposed the establishment of the Philippine Renewable Energy Corp., which will focus on renewable energy that would lower the country's reliance on imported fossil fuels and minimize the effects of climate change.

Rodriguez pointed out that to sustain economic growth and improve the country's well-being, Congress must pass legislation to help ensure a stable, affordable, and reliable electricity supply.

He said it is also crucial that the government play a more active role in ensuring an adequate electricity supply through renewable energy sources.

Turn to page A2

Creation of renewable energy body proposed

From page 1

"There is also an urgent need to undertake electrification projects through the development of renewable energy sources in underserved, unserved, and missionary areas," said the lawmaker of Cagayan de Oro City.

Section 2 of Rodriguez's House Bill 4205 states that "It is hereby declared the policy of the State to accelerate the exploration and development of renewable energy resources to achieve energy self-reliance through the adoption of sustainable energy development strategies to reduce the country's dependence on fossil fuels."

Electricity shortage next year

The Mindanaoan solon even emphasized the importance of creating new RE projects, noting Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla's recent warning of a tight electricity supply in the first half of 2023.

Rodriguez explained that accelerating existing projects and finding new sources will eventually boost supply.

RE resources under the proposed measures include biomass, solar, wind, geothermal, ocean energy, and hydropower.

It will, however, abolish the Philippine National Oil Corp.-Renewables Corp. and transfer to the proposed PREC its power, functions, projects, investments, finances, property and other assets, and personnel.

The proposed new entity would also take over the Agus-Pulangui Hydroelectric Power Plant complex and its facilities, which are currently managed and operated by the National Power Corp.

The bill provides that the complex, consisting of seven power plants and located along the Agus and Pulangui rivers in Lanao and Bukidnon, shall be exempt from privatization.

The plants generate about 1,000 megawatts of electricity, which shall be retained to generate a buffer supply for Mindanao, according to Rodriguez.



WILDLIFE POPULATIONS PLUNGE 69% SINCE 1970

WILD populations of monitored animal species have plummeted nearly 70 percent in the last 50 years, according to a landmark assessment released Thursday that highlights "devastating" losses to nature due to human activity.

Featuring data from 32,000 populations of more than 5,000 species of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish, the WWF Living Planet Index shows accelerating falls across the globe. **➤PlungeA8**

■ PLUNGE FROM A1

WILDLIFE POPULATIONS PLUNGE

In biodiversity-rich regions such as Latin America and the Caribbean, the figure for animal population loss is as high as 94 percent.

Globally, the report found that monitored animal populations had fallen 69 percent since 1970.

Marco Lambertini, director general of WWF International, said his organization was "extremely worried" by the new data.

"[It shows] a devastating fall in wildlife populations, in particular in tropical regions that are home to some of the most biodiverse landscapes in the world," he said.

Mark Wright, director of science at WWF, said the figures were "truly frightening," particularly for Latin America.

"Latin America is renowned for its biodiversity of course, it's really important for lots of other things as well," he said.

"It's super important for regulating the climate. We estimate currently there's something like 150 to 200 billion tons of carbon wrapped up in the

forests of the Amazon."

That is equivalent to 550 to 740 billion tons of CO₂, or 10 to 15 times more than annual greenhouse gas emissions at current rates.

The index found that freshwater species had declined more than those found in any other habitat, with an 83-percent population fall since 1970.

The report found that the main drivers of wildlife loss are habitat degradation due to development and farming, exploitation, the introduction of invasive species, pollution, climate change and disease.

Lambertini said the world needed to rethink its harmful and wasteful agricultural practices before the global food chain collapsed.

"Food systems today are responsible for over 80 percent of deforestation on land, and if you look at the ocean and freshwater they are also driving a collapse of fishery stocks and populations in those habitats," he said.

With world leaders due to convene in Montreal for the COP15 biodiversity summit in December, the report au-

thors called for an international, binding commitment to protect nature, similar to the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change.

'Need to act now'

The Living Planet Report argues that increasing conservation and restoration efforts, producing and consuming food more sustainably, and rapidly and deeply decarbonizing all sectors can alleviate the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.

It also calls for governments to properly factor into policymaking the value of services rendered by nature, such as food, medicine and water supply.

"We need to stress the fact that nature loss is not just a moral issue of our duty to protect the rest of the world. It is actually an issue of material value, an issue of security for humanity as well," said Lambertini.

Some areas experienced more population loss than others — Europe, for example, saw a wildlife population decline of 18 percent.

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70-14-22

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

Heatwaves will make regions uninhabitable within decades — UN, Red Cross

By ROBIN MILLARD

GENEVA, Switzerland (AFP) — Heatwaves will become so extreme in certain regions of the world within decades that human life there will be unsustainable, the United Nations and the Red Cross said Monday.

Heatwaves are predicted to “exceed human physiological and social limits” in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and south and southwest Asia, with extreme events triggering “large-scale suffering and loss of life,” the organizations said.

Heatwave catastrophes this year in countries like Somalia and Pakistan foreshadow a future with deadlier, more frequent, and more intense heat-related humanitarian emergencies, they warned in a joint report.

The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) released the report in advance of next month's COP27 climate change summit in Egypt.

“We don't want to dramatize it, but clearly the data shows that it does lead toward a very bleak future,” said IFRC secretary-general Jagan Chapagain.

They said aggressive steps needed to be taken immediately to avert potentially recurrent heat disasters, listing steps that could mitigate the worst effects of extreme heat.

Limits of survival

“There are clear limits beyond which people exposed to extreme heat

and humidity cannot survive,” the report said.

“There are also likely to be levels of extreme heat beyond which societies may find it practically impossible to deliver effective adaptation for all.”

“On current trajectories, heatwaves could meet and exceed these physiological and social limits in the coming decades, including in regions

urban areas will jump by 700 percent by 2050, particularly in west Africa and southeast Asia.

“Projected future death rates from extreme heat are staggeringly high — comparable in magnitude by the end of the century to all cancers or all infectious diseases — and staggeringly unequal,” the report said.

Agricultural workers, children, the elderly and pregnant and breastfeeding women are at higher risk of illness and death, the report claimed.

“As the climate crisis goes unchecked, extreme weather events, such as heatwaves and floods, are hitting the most vulnerable people the hardest,” said UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths.

“The humanitarian system is not equipped to handle crisis of this scale on our own.”

Previously unimaginable

Chapagain urged countries at COP27 to invest in climate adaptation and mitigation in the regions most at risk.

OCHA and the IFRC suggested five main steps to help combat the impact of extreme heatwaves, including providing early information to help people and authorities react in time, and finding new ways of financing local-level action.



PHOTO TAKEN on May 11, 2022 shows Shivaram, a villager walking through the cracked bottom of a dried-out pond on a hot summer day at Bandai village in Pali district. (AFP)

such as the Sahel and south and southwest Asia.”

It warned that the impact of this would be “large-scale suffering and loss of life, population movements and further entrenched inequality.”

The report said extreme heat was a “silent killer,” claiming thousands of lives each year as the deadliest weather-related hazard — and the dangers were set to grow at an “alarming rate” due to climate change.

According to a study cited by the report, the number of poor people living in extreme heat conditions in



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

Manila Standard

A3
PAGE

UPPER
LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

10-14-22

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

'CANCEL ILLEGITIMATE DEBTS'

Debt justice campaigners hold a rally in front of the Philippine Senate in Pasay City on October 13. The protest calls for the cancellation of unsustainable and illegitimate debts as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank hold their annual meetings from October 14 to October 16. **Jimmy A. Domingo**





STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

Malaya Business Insight

1
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

14-22

TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____



No to debt. Anti-debt protesters call for immediate debt cancellation and freeing up of funds for people's rights and survival, in a rally in front of the Senate building in Pasay City. Simultaneous rallies were held in India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan and other countries worldwide as part of the Global Week of Action for Justice and Debt Cancellation.

PHOTO BY RHOY COBILLA



DENR chief Yulo vows closer coordination in enforcement of small-scale mining law

BY JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ
@joveemarie

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has assured Congress it will work closely with local government units (LGUs), the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and other concerned agencies for the full implementation of the "People's Small-Scale Mining Act" to better regulate the activity and flush out illegal miners.

Camarines Sur Rep. and Commission on Appointments majority floor leader LRay Villafuerte said DENR Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga gave this assurance to the Commission on Appointments (CA) during a recent committee meeting of the 25-member bicameral panel prior to its confirmation of her appointment as secretary.

Yulo-Loyzaga said she supports this enterprise as a means to lift certain populations out of their socioeconomic conditions, "[but] we do feel at least at the DENR at the moment, that we need to strengthen our capacity to observe, to monitor, to evaluate the environmental impacts of these activities at the local level."

Villafuerte, at the same time, suggested to the DENR secretary to look into current mining technologies that already allow miners to process gold without using mercury, a pollut-

ant that adversely affects humans and ecosystems.

"There are already so many technologies, mercury-free processing of gold. So, I suggest that the department can research on this and be updated, because every day there are new technologies and processes that are being implemented," he said. "As you mentioned, [the use of mercury] is really dangerous."

Villafuerte, a former CamSur governor, noted that although the Small-Scale Mining law was enacted in 1991, not so many such activities have been legalized thus far, hence the proliferation of illegal small-scale miners.

When Yulo-Loyzaga revealed that the DENR has recognized 50 Minahang Bayan projects since the law took effect in 1991, Villafuerte said, "That's what we want to know, because 31 years since the law was enacted, it's very sad to hear that there are actually only 50 [Minahang Bayan projects]. And I'm sure you know that there is probably hundreds of illegal small-scale mining waiting to be accredited. And as Secretary, it's a law and, as you mentioned, you support it as long as it's within the mandate of the law."

The former governor asked Yulo-Loyzaga how she intends to implement this Republic Act or RA 7076, given that "there has been a proliferation of illegal small-scale miners" be-

cause previous administrations had failed to promote legitimate small-scale mining.

He said one other thing that the DENR could look into is to streamline the process of business registration under the law in order to encourage small-scale miners to go legit instead of continue engaging in illegal mining.

To create more jobs and ensure a more equitable sharing of natural resources, RA 7076 was signed into law to develop, protect and rationalize viable small-scale mining in mineralized areas, or those with naturally occurring mineral deposits of gold, silver, chromite, kaolin silica, marble, gravel and clay.

RA 7076 lets the government forge joint venture or mineral production sharing agreements with small-scale miners for mining small plots or mineral lands, mainly relying on manual labor and using simple tools and methods in lieu of explosives or heavy equipment.

To be able to secure mining contracts, these small-scale miners have to first voluntarily form cooperatives duly licensed by the DENR, and their cooperatives must then be registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Yulo-Loyzaga told Villafuerte she has had "initial conversations already on how we might be able to coordinate more closely with the

DILG, in particular, in order for us to be able to maintain some integrity in the ecosystems despite the necessity of this activity being made available to communities who actually need the incomes at the barangay and at the community level."

Moreover, she said the DENR would like to work closely with LGUs and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in addressing Gender and Development (GAD) issues related to small-scale mining as there are women who work in the mines.

The DENR would similarly like to address the issue of child labor as there are also children working in mine sites, she said.

"...There are a number of child laborers as well as, of course, also, women who are working in this field. This is a social issue, and we hope to be able to work with the GAD offices at each of the LGUs, in order to help support this particular—addressing this particular issue," she said. "At this point, the issue of child labor is a particularly complex one. And so, we hope to work with the local governments, DSWD, as well as the department on trying to resolve this issue."

Yulo-Loyzaga said, "Among the first things we will be doing—and as I've already informed the team at the DENR—we will be conducting a full process review of this approval process, not just for the small-scale mining, but for other activities of the DENR as well."

"This will actually allow us to determine where the gaps are in terms of translating policy into actual implementation at the local level," she said.

"It is very crucial for us to keep in close coordination with the DILG because as you [Villafuerte] mentioned, there are possibly hundreds, if not more, illegal small-scale mining activities, which we will need the

cooperation of the LGU, in order for us to actually identify, and monitor and make that part of the formalization process under this law," Yulo-Loyzaga said.

She added, "I would also like to state that the DENR also needs the cooperation at the local government level in terms of monitoring the way the small-scale mining activities are being conducted, because at the end of the day, as you probably will know, the DENR is always blamed for a particular disaster because of the lack of the monitoring. And so, we hope we can work with you, as well as with the different LGU chief executives, in order for us to continue to expedite and provide the means of livelihood in a safe and as resilient way as possible."

Villafuerte and three other CamSur lawmakers are backing the swift congressional approval of a consolidated bill meant to guarantee the national government (NG) a fairer share of revenues from mining, while providing better protection to the environment as well as to local communities hosting big miners.

He, along with CamSur Reps. Miguel Luis Villafuerte and Tsuyoshi Anthony Horibata, and Bicol Saro Rep. Nicolas Enciso VIII earlier introduced House Bill (HB) 2014, which was one of several similar measures incorporated into the consolidated bill that the House committee on ways and means chaired by Albay Rep. Jose Ma. Salceda approved last month for plenary approval.

The panel had approved a consolidated bill in support of the proposal of the Department of Finance (DOF) for a new, single fiscal regime for all current and future mines, regardless of location, and that raised the tax rate for big-time miners from the current 38 percent to 51 percent, in a bid to raise P37.5 billion in mining taxes in this proposal's first full year of implementation.



10-13-22

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

Villanueva seeks additional budget for Sierra Madre mountain range preservation

SENATE Majority Leader Joel Villanueva on Tuesday vowed to help the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) seek additional budget for the preservation of the Sierra Madre mountain range.

Like in previous instances, the 540-kilometer mountain range that spans Cagayan and Quezon provinc-

es was believed to have saved several parts of Luzon from the wrath of Typhoon "Karding" on September 25.

Villanueva was shocked to hear that the budget of DENR for Sierra Madre preservation amounts to just P9.9 million.

"Let me put into record *nanlata ako* [that I was disheartened]. P9.9 million?" he said after hearing DENR

Undersecretary Analiza Rebueta-Teh read the budget allocated for the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park during the budget hearing.

The budget allocation is intended for the marcatian, updating of management plan, monitoring of flora and fauna, and hiring of protected area superintendent and park rangers.

Villanueva noted the significance

of preserving the Sierra Madre mountain range for slowing down flooding and reducing typhoon-related calamities.

The lawmaker said the mountain range shields Metro Manila and the provinces of Cagayan, Bulacan, Isabela, Nueva, Vizcaya, Nueva Ecija, Quirino, Aurora, Quezon, Rizal, and Laguna.

Villanueva, a native of Bulacan, noted that Sierra Madre also stabilizes water flow, prevent typhoon-related calamities and provides a path for slowing down and often taking the impact of the typhoon.

"The rugged mountain slopes can mitigate strong winds. The forest also absorbed the heavy rains," he said.

Villanueva assured DENR officials

the Senate is "here to help" and will find out how much the agency needs.

According to the data of the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority, the Sierra Madre covers 1,417,472.81 hectares of land area.

Its closed forest land covers 553,637 hectares and its open forest land 537,065 hectares. PNA



TITLE :

PAGE 1/3

DATE

Pandemic disruptions, new climate risks spur revisiting of 6-yr-old Green Jobs Act

By SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA

THE imminent threat of climate change and the mass labor displacement caused by business disruptions from the pandemic have reinvigorated the government efforts to push for the creation of more "green jobs."

Unfortunately, Republic Act 107741 or the Green Jobs Act, which was supposed to help in that initiative, has yet to be fully implemented six years after it was signed by former President Benigno S. Aquino III.

In his speech at the 55th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. reiterated that his administration will aim for creating a "green sustainable and climate-resilient" economy.

He said this will boost interna-

tional efforts to address rising sea levels and the increasing incidents of destructive extreme weather, which scientific experts attributed to climate change.

Marcos also hoped that "greening" specific parts of the economy like the energy industry will reduce the number of unemployed workers, which remained at 2.6 million as of July 2022.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimated the so-called green economy is expected to generate between 15 million and 60 million jobs worldwide by 2030.

Green Jobs Act

RA 107741 aims to establish the National Green Jobs Human Resource Development Plan (NGJ-HRD) and provide incentives to employers who will engage in green practices and industries.

These incentives include fiscal and nonfiscal, such as a special deduction from taxable income, equivalent to 50 percent, for skills training and research and development expenses, as well as tax- and duty-free importation of capital equipment.

Under the Implementing Rules

and Regulations of RA 107741, as issued by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) in 2017, the Climate Change Commission (CCC) was tasked to develop the standards that government will use to assess the qualified applicants for the incentives.

But in an e-mail to the *BusinessMirror* in August, CCC Development Management Officer Arnold G. Belver said they are still finalizing their "green thresholds" mandated by the said legislation.

CONTINUED ON E2



A "GREEN" sari-sari store in Puerto Galera, September 30, 2021. CHEYERAHALINO/DREAMSTIME.COM



TITLE: Pandemic Disruptions

PAGE

2/3

DATE

10 = 13-22

CONTINUED FROM B1

"We are currently in the process of completing the data sets in the so-called 'green thresholds' of industry activities, and fine-tuning development and regulatory aspects of the draft guidelines and standards for the assessment and certification of green goods and services, and green technologies and practices for the purpose of regulating the availment of incentives, and ensuring green jobs content pursuant to the National Green Jobs Human Resource Development Plan spearheaded by the DOLE," Belver said.

Among the challenges CCC faces in crafting the said standards were the overlapping provisions of RA 107741 with RA 11534 or the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises Act (CREATE), particularly those involved in the processes and innovations related to environmental protection systems and sustainability strategies.

The quarantine restrictions, which took effect during the onset of the pandemic, also caused delays in the consultations held by CCC for RA 107741.

The thresholds should have been completed by the CCC 120 days after the effectiveness of the IRR.

As of October 3, 2022, the CCC said the thresholds are still pending.

Just transition

THE former dean of the University of the Philippines-School of Labor and Industrial Relations (UP-SOLAIR), Rene E. Ofreneo, lamented the long delay in the full implementation of RA 107741, saying it would have encouraged more employers to create green jobs.

The legislation defined green jobs as "decent and productive employment that contributes to preserving or restoring the quality of the environment."

"The vision and program of CCC [regarding RA 107741] will be critical for the green transformation of the economy," Ofreneo said.

Aside from providing incentives to the private sector to adopt more sustainable measures, he said the law should also facilitate the "just transition" of workers from traditional less efficient and carbon-emitting activities, which are being phased out, to jobs with more sustainable operations.

The NGJ-HRD, which was finalized by DOLE in 2020, stipu-

Navigating

@17



BusinessMirror

Continuing the journey in a pandemic world

lates the importance of facilitating such transition through the consultation and capacity building of all tripartite stakeholders, including the affected workers, before the implementation of any economic restructuring to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Through such transition, the government will establish a framework to ensure the displaced workers will still enjoy basic labor rights through employment-centered macroeconomic policies and environmental regulations.

In his 2019 paper titled "Is the Philippines Getting Green and Just? A Baseline Study on the Application of Just Transition Framework in the Philippines," labor leader Wilson Fortaleza noted that such a framework is currently lacking in the local power and transportation sector.

"The lack of a just transition process in the power sector was due to the fact that there was no phaseout plan for fossil fuels to begin with, while the continuing dispute between the government and the transport sector on PUV [public utility vehicle] modernization also points to a shoddy process as well as fear of economic dislocation among PUV drivers," Fortaleza said.

Both sectors, he said, are currently the top sources of carbon emissions in the country.

He estimates around 4,500 workers employed in the power sector, and 3.2 million in the PUV sectors, will be affected if the government decides to decommission coal power plants and modernize PUVs, respectively, as part of efforts to achieve its carbon emissions reduction targets.

Implementation challenges

BESIDES incentivizing the creation of green jobs and ensuring the rights and welfare of affected workers are protected, the NGJ-HRD also contained capacity-building provisions.

A study conducted by the Institute of Labor Studies (ILS), an attached agency of DOLE, disclosed that a major challenge in promoting green jobs is the lack of professionals and workers with skills and competencies, which are necessary for implementing "environmentally sustainable activities, products and services."

The said activities include mitigation actions (activities, products and services to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases); adaptation to climate change and disaster risk management; protection of the ecosystems and habitats and prevention of land degradation from human activities; efficiency of water and natural resources management; pollution prevention and control; environmental compliance; education and training; and public awareness.

The Bureau of Local Employment (BLE) said these emerging demands from employers have led to the creation of "green occupations," such as Solid Waste Management Equipment Operator, Recycling Worker, Solar Technician and Urban Gardener, among others.

ILS noted that identifying the skill demands from the private sector will be crucial so schools and technical-vocational training centers could produce graduates to fill the new vacancies.

Other issues that hamper efforts of firms to implement green initiatives are existing regulatory environment constraints for businesses; inefficient infrastructure services; internal conflicts and climate change; and the lack of sustainable actions for enterprises to go green.

The NGJ-HRD has listed the measures to address such challenges, which include environmental education and skills development as well as the integration of green strategies on the industry road maps for the private sector and in the Philippine Development Plan for the public sector.

With the start of the Marcos administration, ILS Executive Director Charisma Lobrin-Satumba

CONTINUED ON E4



TITLE: Pandemic disruption...

PAGE 3/3

NOV 13-22

DATE

CONTINUED FROM E2

said some of the provisions of the plan may have to be updated to fit the current priorities of the present government leadership.

She said this may include the newly signed memorandum of agreement between DOLE and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), wherein emergency employment beneficiaries will be tapped to help in the reforestation efforts.

"The HRD plan, while it was already formulated in 2020, needs to be updated given the transition [in the government]. It will then be shared again with the [21] implementing agencies," Satumba said.

To further institutionalize the NGJ-HRD, its provisions will be integrated in the new Labor and Employment Plan of DOLE, which is expected to be completed before the end of the year, she said.

Commercial value

BUT even with the delays in the implementation of RA 107441, the National Tripartite Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC) said some companies are already engaging in green initiatives, cognizant of its inherent advantages to their operations.

"Business-wise, there is commercial value in going green or

Navigating @17



Continuing the journey in a pandemic world

adopting green practices/processes as consumers nowadays place a lot of premium in an establishment providing green services and products," NWPC Executive Director Maria Criselda R. Sy told the *BusinessMirror* in an email interview.

Likewise, she noted that green practices are also cost-efficient since these involve using locally available resources as well as conservation of energy and materials.

"This is timely amid the rising price of electricity and fuel," Sy said.

"The labor official said NWPC teaches such practices through their 7 S of Good Housekeeping modules (sort, systematize, sweep,



DOLE-DENR MOA SIGNING President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. witnesses the signing of the memorandum of agreement between the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on the implementation of the DOLE's Iulong Panghanapbuhay sa Atinang Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (IUPAD) Program in areas under the DENR's improved National Forest Protection Program during the 2022 DENR Stakeholders Forum at the Diamond Hotel in Manila. Labor Secretary Bienvenido E. Laguesna (seated right) and DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga (seated left) sign the agreement that exemplifies DOLE and DENR collaboration and partnership in providing gainful employment opportunities and in ensuring the availability and sustainability of the country's natural resources for the welfare of the present and future generations. House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez (standing left) joins the President during the ceremony. ALEJANDRO P. DELA CRUZ/ENR

standardize, safety, self-discipline, and sustain), which teach employers how to keep their operations clean, organized, systematic and safe—resulting in fewer wastage of raw materials, energy and water in their operations.

"The implementation of productivity programs ultimately aims to improve the bottom line [of the companies], leading to expansion and growth, thus more employment opportunities," Sy said.

Despite the positive feedback from those who availed themselves of their "greening" modules, NWPC reported that only around 10,000 of the over 900,000 firms nationwide have implemented the programs.

Of these, 3,004 firms applied for NWPC's Green My Enterprise (ME) module since 2012, while the remaining 7,157 made use of their 7 S of Good Housekeeping module since 2002.

Fortaleza said once the Green Jobs Act takes full effect, it will greatly help in mainstreaming such green activities and generate new employment opportunities.

"Tens of thousands of green and climate jobs can be created depending on what sector, type of technology, level of investment, and the kind of policies and programs the government employs," Fortaleza said.