

18 September 2022, Sunday



**DENR**

**NEWS**

**ALERTS**

**NEWS  
CLIPPINGS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**



## Pagluwag sa face mask kabawasan ng basura - DENR

Naniniwala ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na malaki ang magiging kabawasan sa mga basura ang pagluluwag sa paggamit ng face mask kapag nasa labas o outdoor area.

Sabi ng DENR, nasa 50 porsiyento ang inaasahang mababawas sa basura matapos payagan ni Pangulong Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos na gawin na lamang opsyonal ang pagsusuot ng face mask sa mga outdoor area.

"Assuming at least 50 percent of the population will not use face mask, that will be a good contribution in terms of the reduction of the solid waste or infectious wastes," ayon kay DENR Environmental Management Bureau Director William Cuñado sa isang press conference.

Sinabi pa ng opisyal na inirerekomenda rin ng ahensya na magsuot ng mga reusable face mask.

"In terms of solid waste volume, this will greatly reduce the volume of the masks that will be disposed of or stored in our sanitary landfill area after the treatment," dagdag ni Cuñado. **(Issa Santiago)**



## Navotas joins int'l coastal cleanup day

IN celebration of the International Coastal Cleanup Day 2022, Navotas held simultaneous cleanup drives in Barangays Bagumbayan North, Tangos North and Tangos South, and Tanza Marine Tree Park.

More than 150 individuals participated in the event, including employees from the city government and national government agencies, barangay officials and staff, students, teachers, and employees from private institutions.

Mayor John Rey Tiangco encouraged the partici-

pants to make coastal cleanup "a habit".

"Navotas is surrounded by bodies of water, and many Navoteños live on fishing and other fishing-related activities. It is then our duty to keep our coastal areas clean to maintain the ecosystem in these waters and sustain a healthy aquatic environment," he said.

"Keeping our environment clean should not only be done as part of events such as the International Coastal Clean-up Day but should be part of our lifestyle," he added.

Among the trash and de-



**Mayor John Rey Tiangco (left) collects trash during the simultaneous cleanup drive celebrating the International Coastal Clean-Up Day. Photo by Edd Reyes**

bris collected by the participants are plastic caps, bottles, sachets, styrofoam materials, driftwood, and an

assortment of metal items.

Volunteers are required to submit a copy of the volunteer ocean trash data form to record debris and trash items they have gathered during the event. Edd Reyes



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*Bumuhos ang mga volunteers at kawani mula sa mga government agencies sa Dolomite Beach at nagsagawa ng clean-up drive sa mga naipong mga basura sa Manila Bay kahapon. -Walter Bollozos-*



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**Matamang nakamasid ang pulis na ito sa iba't ibang grupo at organisasyon na nakilahok sa 37th International Coastal Clean-Up kahapon sa Baseco, Tondo, Maynila. (Jonas Sulit)**



## NEWS BRIEF

### PAF namulot ng basura sa dolomite

Kasangga sa pagsasagawa ng coastal clean-up kahapon ang Philippine Air Force (PAF) sa Manila Dolomite Beach sa Roxas Boulevard.

Ito ay bunsod na rin sa layon nilang makiisa sa International Coastal Clean-Up Day na isinagawa kahapon.

Kabuuang 150 sako ng iba't ibang basura tulad ng plastics, wrappers, face masks, plastic bottles at iba pang waste materials ang nakuha sa lugar.

Kabilang sa nakilahok sa nasabing linis, pulot basura ang mga officer, Enlisted Personnel at Civilian Human Resource ng Philippine Air Force Human Resource Management Center na pinamunuan ni Lieutenant Colonel Joan Dalmacio bilang bahagi ng kanilang pre-anniversary celebrations.



**NAKILAHOK sa coastal cleanup drive ang Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) sa bahagi ng Dolomite Beach sa Manila Baywalk area sa Maynila kung saan daang sako ng basura sa dalampasigan ang nakolekta.**  
(Jeff Tumbado)



### 'Dolomite beach' stars in Coastal Clean-Up Day

The controversial "dolomite beach" in Manila became the focus of Saturday's local observance of International Coastal Clean-Up Day, and the irony was not lost on its critics. **A2**

## 'DOLOMITE BEACH' BECOMES FOCUS OF COASTAL CLEANUP

**FROM A2**

The agency on Saturday posted a "public advisory" on its Facebook page inviting the public to take part in the cleanup.

Leones said when reached for comment that this "aims to help clean our seas and oceans through volunteerism and emphasize their life-giving importance to humans."

But the post prompted criticism on Facebook and other social media platforms.

"You spent millions for the dolomite, then it would be the Filipino people who ended up cleaning," said one commenter.

Jon Bonifacio, national coordinator of Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment, said it was important to clean up trash washed up on shores.

But "cleanup drives like this risk just being photo opportunities for our public officials," he said.

Von Hernandez, global coordinator of the group Break Free From Plastic, said: "We can't be spending millions of resources

yearly without effectively addressing the roots of the problem."

"[I]t's better investment for the government to [just] compel producers and companies to reduce and stop the production of single-use plastics and invest in proven reusable and ... refill[ing] systems," he added.

The project, which began in the pandemic year of 2020, had been touted by the previous administration of then President Rodrigo Duterte as a way to ease the mental health of Filipinos amid the pandemic lockdowns. **INQ**

### 5,000 VOLUNTEERS SHOW UP

## 'DOLOMITE BEACH' BECOMES FOCUS OF COASTAL CLEANUP

By **Dempsey Reyes**  
and **Angel Yabut**  
@Team\_Inquirer

In celebration of International Coastal Clean-Up Day on Saturday, the government took part in a cleanup drive right on the coast where it stirred up controversy over its expensive beautification of Manila Bay.

Around 5,000 volunteers took part in the cleanup effort led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Climate Change Commission and other agencies, according to Environment Undersecretary Jonas Leones.

Members of the Philippine Coast Guard roamed the bay, collecting trash from its waters, while Manila Mayor Sheila "Honey" Lacuna, joined by members of the Manila police and other volunteers, concentrated their efforts at Baseco Beach at Manila's port area.

Environmental groups were already at the historic bay ahead of International Coastal Clean-Up Day, which was first observed in the American

state of Washington in 1986.

On Friday, 20 people from the Earth Island Institute undertook cleanup efforts at the Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat Ecotourism Area—a part of the 1,994-square-kilometer bay which the group said has become a habitat for marine animals and migratory birds from other parts of Asia.

Earth Island Institute said it was able to collect more than 20 sacks of plastic waste. The group attributed the proliferation of plastic waste to the increased use of plastics in the delivery of goods, as people were restricted in their mobility because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It also noted that many used face masks and test kits were collected, saying the "amount of medical waste that is not properly collected is concerning."

But no other area at Manila Bay highlighted the importance of the environmental activity being celebrated on Saturday better than Dolomite Beach—which critics saw as an unnecessarily costly project on the watch of the DENR at that. **A3**





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# Daily Tribune

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PHOTOGRAPH BY BOB DUNGO JR. FOR THE DAILY TRIBUNE @tribunephil\_bob

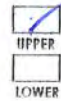
TONS of garbage were taken from the Dolomite Beach during the International Cleanup Drive Saturday along Manila Bay.



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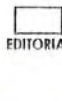
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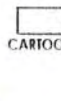


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MANILA Mayor Honey Lacuna leads the clean-up drive at Baseco Beach as part of the 37th International Coastal Cleanup Day yesterday. Government and private groups participated in the simultaneous cleanup of Baywalk on Roxas Boulevard and different esteros and waterways in Manila. (Manny Llanes)



## Navotas joins Int'l Coastal Cleanup Day

IN celebration of the International Coastal Cleanup Day 2022, Navotas held simultaneous clean-up drives in Barangays Bagumbayan North, Tangos North and Tangos South, and Tanza Marine Tree Park.

More than 150 individuals participated in the event, including employees from the city government and national government agencies, barangay officials and staff, students, teachers, and employees from private institutions.

Mayor John Rey Tiangco encouraged the participants to make coastal cleanup a habit.

"Navotas is surrounded by bodies of water and many Navoteños live on fishing and other fishing-



**Mayor John Rey Tiangco is seen picking up trash during the simultaneous clean-up drive in celebration of the International Coastal Clean-Up Day.**

*Photo by Edd Reyes*

related activities. It is then our duty to keep our coastal areas clean to maintain the ecosystem in these waters and sustain a healthy aquatic environment," he said.

Among the trash and debris collected were plastic caps, bottles, and sachets, styrofoam materials, driftwood, and an assortment of metal items.

**Edd Reyes**



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*Nakiisa ang mga miyembro ng Philippine Coast Guard katuwang ang mga volunteers sa paglilinis sa sandamakmak na basura na inanod sa Dolomite Beach, Manila Bay. (Walter Bollozos)*



## Cleanup day comes to Manila Bay

By **ROBERTZON RAMIREZ**

Hundreds of volunteers joined a mass cleanup drive along the coast of the polluted Manila Bay, including the Dolomite Beach, to mark International Coastal Cleanup Day yesterday.

Volunteers and government workers, including hundreds of coast guard personnel, collected sachets, rubber slippers and other non-biodegradable waste that washed up in the Manila Bay, a 60-kilometer semi-enclosed estuary facing

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Volunteers join members of the Philippine Coast Guard in collecting rubbish which washed ashore along the Dolomite Beach during a cleanup drive as part of International Coastal Cleanup Day yesterday. Inset shows a volunteer in a Spider-Man costume picking up discarded beverage bottles from the Manila Bay breakwater.

MIGUEL DE GUZMAN,  
ERNIE PEÑAREDONDO



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CLEANUP DAY COMES TO MANILA BAY

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## Cleanup From Page 1

the West Philippine Sea.

"This initiative will help make our coastal area in Manila Bay better so that our tourists and visitors will see the beauty of the bay," college student Kendrick Lopez, 18, told *Reuters* during the cleanup drive.

Waters along the Manila Bay, famous for its idyllic sunsets, are heavily polluted by oil, grease and trash from nearby residential areas and ports.

The Philippines is rich in marine resources, with nearly 36,300 km of coastline in the archipelago of more than 7,600 islands.

But it is the world's top polluter when it comes to releasing plastic waste into the ocean, ac-

counting for roughly a third of the total, according to an April 2022 report by the University of Oxford's *Our World in Data*, a scientific online publication.

Over a thousand sacks of trash were collected from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. yesterday, said John Ybañez of the Philippine Coast Guard's (PCG) Public Information Office.

"We need to do these (cleanup drives) for our environment and to discourage people from throwing trash on the seaside," Janet Panganiban, a 36-year-old volunteer, told *Reuters*.

The PCG was joined by volunteers organized by various agencies of government and even Manila residents

led by the city government of Mayor Honey Lacuna-Pangan. In the Navotas City stretch of Manila Bay, over 150 volunteers collected trash on the shores of Barangays Bagumbayan North, Tangos North and Tangos South as Mayor John Rey Tiangco encouraged his constituents to make coastal cleanup drives a habit.

Critics say laws regulating

solid waste are inadequate and poorly enforced, leaving governments and communities struggling to address the pollution crisis.

International Coastal Cleanup Day is held every third Saturday of September to raise awareness of the growing garbage problems affecting coastlines around the world.

- With Ghio Ong, *Reuters*



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## 70-ton tarps recycled into tote bags

The Quezon city government's Vote to Tote program at SM North EDSA highlighted that more than 70 tons of election tarpaulins collected in the city were recycled as tote bags.

Women from marginalized communities and persons deprived of liberty participated in the recycling campaign and were represented during the launch of the SM Supermalls' 100 Days of Happiness.

The "happiness walk" was attended by representatives of various sectors and city officials, including Mayor Joy Belmonte and Vice Mayor Gian Sotto.

Also present in the event were SM Supermalls president Steven Tan, designer Zarah Juan, executive director of Spark PH Maica Teves, Girl Scouts of the Philippines national president Dr. Cristina Yuson, and Dustin Michael Ngo of Brownies Unlimited.

CHERK BALAGTAS



## Solo parents tapped to clean Baseco beach

The City of Manila is planning to hire solo parents at Baseco compound in Port Area to help in regularly cleaning up the beach by picking up trash washed ashore.

Manila Mayor Honey Lacuna revealed Saturday her administration's plan during the 37th International Coastal Clean-up Drive at Baseco beach which she led with other officials of the local government unit.

The solo parents shall be paid based on the volume of garbage retrieved from the beach and turned over to authorities for weighing and processing per sack.

"This is a good idea to help Baseco solo parents earn money while we clean up Baseco beach. We will prepare the plan as soon as possible on how we will buy the collected garbage from them," Lacuna said.

The program will be spearheaded by the Department of Public Services of the city government, the mayor said. PAT SANTOS



MANILA Mayor Honey Lacuna (center) bends over to collect garbage at Baseco beach in Port Area, Manila Saturday during the 37th International Coastal Clean-up Drive. PHOTOGRAPH BY BOB DUNGO JR. FOR THE DAILY TRIBUNE @tribunephil\_bob





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# Solar rooftop seen as solution to PH power crisis

The installation of solar rooftops on homes as well as businesses is seen as a key solution to the recurring power crisis that has been tormenting the country's power grids, according to the Philippine Solar and Storage Energy Alliance (PSSEA).

The organization said commercial and industrial (C&I) users as well as Filipino homes can be spared from experiencing distressing rotational blackout if they would opt for solar rooftop as alternative source of their electricity services.

PSSEA emphasized "encouraging homes, offices and factories to install solar on their roof will accelerate the generation of more clean electricity."

With solar rooftop installation, these consumers generating their own power supply – or the so-called "prosumers" can depend on their generated electricity when the sun shines; while on periods when the skies are overcast or at night time, they can draw electricity service from the grid.

If there is battery storage supporting their solar rooftop facilities, the consumers would be able to gain



Shown in photo is the solar rooftop installation at Mary Johnston Hospital in Manila designed to produce over 10 million kWh of solar-generated electricity for 25 years. (Noel Pabalate)

further leverage because they can tap into that stored electricity at sundown or even during rainy days.

Solar rooftop installations could shave off power demand in the grid – especially during the peak demand-

months of summer because that is when solar generation would also be optimized. On that premise then, the available supply in the grid can be re-channelled to other users; because the 'pro-sumers' can already provide for

their own power needs.

As illustrated by PSSEA, "if government targets solar rooftop in 5.0-percent of households, a potential of 673 megawatts can come online within 12 months. This will provide relief to the grid and is certainly an immediate solution compared to the development of utility scale solar which takes three (3) years to deploy."

The group, in particular, has unveiled its four-point policy agenda to accelerate the deployment of rooftop solar – and such include: the removal of the 100-kilowatt cap for net-metering; simplified application of incentives; standardized protocol for LGU permit issuance; and access to financing."

It qualified that "the continuous decline in the cost of solar panels shortens the payback period of rooftop solar to four (4) years."

PSSEA added "no other financial instruments promise such returns considering the savings to be generated for the remaining 20-year life of the solar panel after payback." (Myrna M. Velasco)



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## Solon pushes for evacuation center in each city, town

**By Jester  
Manalastas**

**PART of the preparation for the rainy season and other natural calamities is the construction of evacuation centers, a House leader stressed in his proposed law.**

IPACMAN Representative Mikee Romero, chairman of the House Committee on Poverty Alleviation, filed House Bill 4381 or "An Act Providing for Evacuation Centers in every City and Municipality."

"Because we are frequently hit by typhoons, we need to take more necessary steps. Although, we

already strengthened the capacities of provinces – the towns and the barangays, in fact to address any adverse effect of the rainy season," Romero said.

However, Romero pointed out that there's more to be done especially now that the country is still dealing with pandemic.

The measure seeks to establish a unified protocol, standard system to create evacuation centers in all cities and municipalities as needed.

The solon stressed the need to have practical preparedness actions during

the pandemic.

Under the bill, Local Government Units (LGUs), disaster risk reduction and management experts as well as civil society must be consulted in the construction of common evacuation centers.

To date, most of the LGUs still don't have enough evacuation centers that adhere to the minimum design standards.

"On top of this, there is still no comprehensive, up-to-date database of evacuation centers in the country, which could help in the pre-disaster planning process," he also said.

The measure states that each location for every evacuation center shall be determined by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in close coordination with the LGUs.

The evacuation center must be centrally located in the community; must be of safe distance. From large trees, structures where hazardous materials are used and stored, of high voltage power lines; must be near a health facility; must be located on geo-technically stable land to avoid risk of landslides and must be located near military base camps.



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### Editorial

## Problema sa air pollution

**S**A unang SONA ni President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Noong nakaraang Hulyo, binanggit niya ang problema sa plastic pollution, kung saan isa ang Pilipinas sa nagko-contribute sa tone-toneladang single-use plastic sa karagatan. Sabi niya, tutulong ang Pilipinas sa paglilinis sa basurang plastic. Hindi aniya tatalikuran ang responsibilidad sa problema.

Pero mayroong nakaligtaan si Marcos na problemang kasingbigat din ng plastic pollution—ang problema sa air pollution.

Mabigat ang problema sa air pollution na kapag walang ginawang hakbang ang pamahalaan, maraming magkakasakit at ang pamahalaan din ang mahihirapan sapagkat dadagsa sa ospital ang mga biktima.

Noong 2020 na kasagsagan ng pandemya, bahagyang bumaba ang lebel ng air pollution dahil napilay ang transportasyon. Walang biyahe ang mga jeepney, bus at maski taxi na nagbubuga ng may lasong usok. Tigil din ang mga pabrika.

Subalit ngayon na nagluwag na sa restrictions at nagbalikan na sa kalye ang mga sasakyan at balik operasyon ang mga pabrika, balik din ang air pollution. Araw-araw nang nakalalanghap ng may lasong usok ang milyong residente sa Metro Manila.

Sa pag-aaral ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), ang mga sasakyan ang numero unong nagdudulot ng air pollution sa Metro Manila. Umano'y 70-80 percent ng emissions ay galing sa mga tambutso ng sasakyan. Ang maruming usok na ito ang nalalanghap ng commuters.

Ayon sa Department of Health (DOH), ang mga sakit na nakukuha sa paglanghap ng hangin na may lason ay allergies, acute respiratory infections, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, cancer at cardiovascular diseases. Ayon sa report, 120,000 Pilipino bawat taon ang namamatay dahil sa pagkalanghap ng hangin na may lason. Ayon pa sa report, pangtatlo ang Pilipinas sa mga bansa sa Asia na maraming namamatay sa air pollution.

Para masolusyunan ang air pollution, lahat nang karag-karag na sasakyan ay ipagbawal na sa kalye. Ipagpatuloy ang smoke belching campaign para masiguro na ang mga sasakyang yumayaot ay hindi nagbubuga ng may lasong usok. Lagyan ng ngipin ang Clean Air Act of 1999.



# Climate change to cause more diseases – study

CLIMATE change may trigger more ailments such as heat-related, vector-borne and infectious diseases with pandemic potential, a study commissioned by an insurance firm showed.

Based on the 2021 Healthscape Study commissioned by PruLife UK, climate change leads to injury and deaths due to typhoons and floods but also to soil-borne diseases due to poor hygiene and sanitation, water-borne and food-borne

diseases, air and water pollution, and forced displacement due to these disasters.

It also said that climate change could have contributed to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dr. Renzo Guinto, one of the researchers of the study, said that the Philippines should learn from the lessons of the pandemic as it is a “dress rehearsal” for more pandemics in the future.

“If we are not reaping the lessons of

this crisis in order that we ensure that we have a stronger capacity not just to address the future one, but to prevent future pandemics, then it is likely we will be seeing the same effects not only in human health, but also on the economy and society,” Guinto added.

Eng Teng Wong, president of PruLife UK, said that insurance companies like theirs are “more prepared” to face similar events with the adoption of

“pandemic playbooks” and creation of policies that are more attuned to the evolving landscape.

He added that they are continually raising awareness of the importance of insurance protection against climate health risks.

“We have become more resilient and more understanding in terms of how we can reach Filipinos who are underserved and unserved,” Eng said.

**RED MENDOZA**



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## What President Marcos should push at the UN

**T**HREE things: lives, lives, lives. To be exact, the lives of Filipinos and tens of millions of other unfortunates threatened by climate change. Plus: countless breaths stilled by disease as a result of medical and nutritional inequities and perhaps bioweapons research gone wrong.

And third, the past, present and future victims of war making, now consuming not just lives but livelihoods with over \$2 trillion spent on arms and armies while jacking up prices worldwide with trade sanctions and disruptions.

For sure, our national concerns over sovereign maritime rights must be aired, along with the needs of our economic and social recovery from the pandemic. But really, these issues do not impact our country and citizens as much as the three life-threatening scourges cited above.

### Stop the real killers

For all the affront to national pride and patrimony from foreign



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encroachments on our lands and waters, including not just Chinese and Vietnamese occupation of our claimed shoals and islets but also deliberate sailings by the United States Navy challenging our claims over inland seas, none of them ever cost a single Filipino life.

But yearly superstorms, from "Ondoy" and "Pepeng" in 2009 to "Yolanda" in 2013 and "Odette" last year with many more yet to come, have bashed, drowned and swept away thousands of our countrymen — with winds and waves whipped up by world-warming emissions mostly coming from wealthy countries, including our security allies.

Recovery from the coronavirus disease 2019 or Covid-19 pandemic and the economic woes it spawned are of course most urgent

and imperative now. But both would have been made much less deadly for lives and livelihoods if medical knowledge and resources in the developed world were shared and deployed based on saving lives everywhere, not primarily among nations that most enriched pharmaceuticals giants.

How much fewer the worldwide Covid body count would have been if doctors and nurses in poor nations were prioritized for vaccines and medicines over and above far less endangered populations in rich countries who got jabs and boosters first on top of world-class hospital care even as the virus was decimating unvaccinated medical professionals in impoverished nations, depriving their communities of lifesaving care.

And while rule of law must be upheld to safeguard national sovereignty and territory, the same adherence to legalities, especially intellectual property statutes, kept the world from ramping up Covid vaccine production, which

patent-wielding Big Pharma controlled to keep prices and profits up instead of saving more lives by waiving proprietary rights.

This despite the little-known fact that research risk was drastically cut by billions of dollars in state grants as well as advance job orders by governments and the WHO-led vaccine aid program. Truly the Covid vaccine inequity and Big Pharma greed unleashed "a moral catastrophe" of planetary proportions, as rightly denounced by World Health Organization Director General Tedros Ghebreyesus.

As if that pandemic suffering and death were not enough, big-power rivalry between the West and Russia led to failed peace efforts and ignited war. That unleashed massive economic sanctions not just on Moscow, but most of the world already reeling from food and fuel price hikes even before the February conflict.

Western nations and media put all the blame on Russian President Vladimir Putin. But as

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## ■ SALUDO FROM A4

# What President Marcos should push at the UN

even Western diplomats warned since the 1990s, the American-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the most powerful alliance on earth with no less than three nuclear-armed member-nations, has long stirred fears in Moscow by taking in its former allies and expanding closer and closer to Russia.

Even Pope Francis, who deplores the Ukraine war, said in May that President Putin might have been spurred to invade because of "NATO barking at Russia's gate" with Ukraine poised to join the alliance.

On the flight back to Rome from an interfaith conference in Kazakhstan last week, he urged Ukraine to consider dialogue with Russia even as the West has prodded and weaponized the country to prolong the war and degrade Russian forces.

Thus, war continues along with its painful economic fallout on the world, including escalating food, fertilizer, and fuel prices and problems. And with sabers clashing or rattling in Europe and Asia, arms and armies are sucking even more funds that should go to feeding, clothing and housing the global poor.

Military expenditures topped \$2 trillion for the first time last year, and nuclear weapons spending began rising again after decades of decline. Result: Less money for human needs and more reason for human fears.

### What to say on Tuesday

With these three life-threatening global concerns, here are a few paragraphs to possibly insert into President Marcos' UN General Assembly address and his media soundbites:

I speak not only for my nation of 110 million, but the billions of humanity crushed or killed by global injustice and conflict, especially this millennium.

First, we must take concrete steps to prevent another "moral catastrophe," as World Health Organization Director General Tedros Ghebreyesus put it, of rich nations and profit-hogging pharmaceutical giants depriving even health workers in poor nations of life-preserving vaccines and medicines. If the world can forge intellectual property agreements that incentivize invention, we must also find consensus to make those rights subservient to the imperative to save lives.

Second, even as the world rightly strives to push and fund climate change mitigation, the inconvenient truth is that the international community, especially industrialized nations, is falling short and would likely continue to do so. Hence, there must be much greater emphasis and resources than before devoted to climate change adaptation, especially the safeguarding of countless communities threatened by destructive weather arising from global warming.

Third, the great majority of nations and people call on the big powers now contending on the geopolitical stage to work more seriously toward ending current conflicts rather than prolonging them, negotiating arms reductions especially where armies are in close proximity and could ignite clashes, and most of all, enacting a global tax on military spending that exceeds a certain level per capita, with the proceeds channeled to alleviating global hunger.



## Marcos flies to US today

President Marcos will fly to the United States today to attend the 77th United Nations General Assembly in New York, the first to be held completely in person since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020.

Marcos is expected to deliver his departure message at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport at around 8 a.m.

At a recent press briefing, Press Secretary Trixie Cruz-Angeles said the primary purpose of the President's visit to the US is to attend the UN General Assembly.

"That is the main purpose of the trip. There are no calendared activities other than that, and those congruent are

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## Marcos From Page 1

collateral to this address. Well, of course, aside from ... what he usually does, meeting with the Filipino community when the opportunity arises," Angeles said.

Officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) earlier said the President would be accompanied by top government officials, including Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo, members of Marcos' economic team and senior business leaders.

Marcos will be the second speaker in the afternoon of Sept. 20, the first day of the "high-level general debate," where he will deliver the Philippine statement, according to officials of the DFA.

The President is expected to discuss his administration's

priorities, which include climate change, the rule of law and food security, according to Kira Christianne Azucena, assistant secretary of the DFA's Office of the United Nations and International Organizations.

Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary Jose Victor Chan-Gonzaga, who heads the office of American affairs, earlier said Marcos would also deliver a speech during an economic briefing in New York, where he will outline the key economic priorities of his administration.

Gonzaga added that Marcos would also participate in CEO roundtables on targeted sectors, designed to project the Philippines as an important emerging economy and in-

vestment destination in Asia.

The Chief Executive is likewise expected to meet with US companies that could contribute to the country's efforts to achieve food security, energy security and sustainable economic development, among others, according to Gonzaga.

Marcos is also expected to meet with the US Chamber of Commerce, the US-ASEAN Business Council and the US-Philippine Society.

"The President has made it very clear from the initial discussions preparatory to this trip to New York that it will be more than his debut on the world stage. He gave unequivocal instructions that his meetings, whether with fellow world leaders or with US corporations, should focus on finding the necessary partnerships or synergies that will benefit the Philippine

economy and the Filipino people," Gonzaga said.

Philippine Ambassador to Washington Jose Manuel Romualdez earlier said Marcos is scheduled to hold bilateral meetings with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and two other world leaders on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

It remains uncertain whether Marcos will have a one-on-one meeting with US President Joe Biden.

Romualdez, however, said Marcos would see Biden when the latter hosts a reception for all the heads of state present in New York.

Marcos will be in the US from Sept. 18 to 24.

- Helen Flores



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## No, we are not going to be able to save the planet

**I** THINK my empirically justified disgust with climate change denialism is fairly obvious at this point, but in one sense I understand the frustration of climate deniers with what they perceive as self-serving dogma: the constant mantra, "We must act to stop climate change before it's too late," annoys me to no end, just not for the same reasons.

It annoys me because it is naïve; it is already "too late" to reverse the effects of human activity on the climate. The most optimistic models already indicate that, if all human-generated greenhouse gas emissions were to instantly cease and disappear forever, the warming of the climate that began in the late 19th century and has accelerated at an exponential rate since about 1970 would continue for some time. The best case scenario is that average global temperatures would reach about 1.8 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels; given the results of some recent research, a more likely level of global warming is between 2.0 and 2.4 C.

For reference, global average temperatures are now between 1.1 and 1.3 C above the benchmark, and are increasing by 0.2 to 0.3 C every 10 years. At the 2015 Paris climate



### ROUGH TRADE

**BEN KRITZ**

summit, it was agreed that the most catastrophic effects of climate change could be avoided if global warming was kept below 2.0 C, and that ideally, 1.5 C should be the goal in order to keep climate impacts to a level to which a majority of the human population could adapt without unimaginable disruption to civilization.

The problem with these targets, however, is that they are as much politically motivated as they are indicated by scientific research; they are expressions of "what the market is willing to bear," so to speak, with the empirical findings essentially only serving as parameters for debate.

Recent research has revealed that these targets are very likely ludicrously optimistic, and that several critical climate "tipping points" will be crossed before 1.5 C of warming is reached, and may have already gone past the point of no return.

In a widely reported paper published on September 9 in the journal



■ Displaced people seek refuge from recent unprecedented floods in Pakistan AFP PHOTO





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Science, researchers identified six such tipping points, defined as events which, once they occur, are irreversible and cannot be stopped even if no further warming occurs. These are: the collapse of the Greenland ice sheet; the collapse of the West Antarctic ice sheet; the collapse of ocean circulation in the North Atlantic, which is mainly caused by ice melting in Greenland; the widespread die-off of corals in tropical regions; the thawing of the permafrost in the northern regions; and the loss of permanent sea ice in the Barents Sea.

Except for the loss of the North Atlantic ocean circulation, which is unique among the effects in that it would happen more or less instantly, all of these effects are already happening on a large scale. There is just simply no way to be certain yet, without observing them for a few more seasons, whether they have actually "tipped" and become self-sustaining, runaway effects.

Over the past two or three years, it has become painfully obvious, both through scientific research such as the recently published study and through

observation of spectacular heat waves, droughts, floods and other extreme weather phenomena, that the "effects of climate change" are much closer to real time than anyone imagined even as recently as the Paris summit. Despite climate deniers' efforts to paint climate science as irrationally pessimistic, it turns out that it has been, in fact, entirely too optimistic.

The notion of expecting positive results — that is, being able to maintain a close approximation of our way of life by being just a bit more environmentally responsible — from the exhortation to "stop climate change before it's too late" is a fallacy. Our life as a species on this planet is going to change profoundly, in ways that are going to be uncomfortable for almost all of us, and unfortunately, probably fatal to millions.

And the most terrifying realization in all of this is that scientists do not yet understand and are not able to predict what lies beyond the tipping points. It is understood that a failure of one system can lead to the failure of another, such as ice melt from Greenland stopping the North Atlantic ocean circulation, but the impacts of other tipping points are not as easy

to identify, particularly when several of them are occurring all at once.

So no, we are not going to save the planet by buying electric cars or using wooden stir sticks in our morning coffee instead of plastic ones. Climate advocates consider this sort of "doomism" heretical; if we give the impression that climate mitigation efforts are essentially futile, then no one will bother to make those efforts. Even if they believe at heart — and I think many of them must — that we and the planet are actually doomed, saying so out loud will stop people from making more responsible, sustainable choices.

That shouldn't be the case, because every step taken to mitigate climate change is also a step taken to adapt to it. We might not be able to save ourselves, but there is no reason not to try extend our survival for as long as we can. And contrary to what the climate activists who are afraid to say that aloud believe, maybe if people understood it they would try to make the time we have left a little more meaningful.

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## A South Asian nation in the midst of crisis

**T**he people of Pakistan have demonstrated not only their unwavering commitment to nation building and democracy, but also their profound humanitarian spirit by welcoming and protecting millions of Afghan refugees, sharing their limited resources.

Thus, it breaks our heart to see these kindhearted people suffering enormously from the incessant flooding two months ago, which has claimed the lives of nearly 1,500 people and devastated some 33 million more. Some one-third of the country remains submerged and the number of victims continue to rise.

The Pakistani government, United Nations, and other international organizations have warned of a looming health crisis in the South Asian country.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres described the massive deluge as "never seen climate carnage," and denounced the lack of attention the world, especially the industrialized nations, has given to climate change.

We know that the Pakistani people will recover from the catastrophe, which some observers described as of gigantic proportion, given their indomitable spirit. It, however, behooves on the international community to support the people of Pakistan as they try to recover from the colossal difficulties, they are in. We urge the peoples and government around the world to extend compassion and solidarity with the Pakistani people in their hour of need.

On a more personal note, Pakistan has a special place in our heart as we have built friendships there in the course of our modest foray into political party — and parliamentary diplomacy for many years.

Benazir Bhutto, who served as the first woman prime minister of

Pakistan and in the Muslim world, accepted our invitation to address the founding and launching of ICAPP, the International Conference of Asian Political Parties, in Manila in September 2000. Our wife Gina and we were heartbroken when she was assassinated in December 2007, for she was a dear friend to us.

Her 34-year-old son, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, is now the foreign minister of Pakistan and reportedly the youngest to be appointed to the post.

*UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres described the massive deluge as 'never seen climate carnage,' and denounced the lack of attention the world has given to climate change.*

We first met the then 22-year-old Bilawal when he spoke at the conference of ICAPP in Nanning, China. Like his late beloved mother Benazir, Bilawal is bright, eloquent and outspoken.

Then there's Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, the brilliant geopolitical expert, who is chairman of the powerful Senate committee on defense and defense production, and earlier, the committee on foreign relations.

Senator Mushahid also serves as vice chairman and special rapporteur of our 350-member International

Conference of Asian Political Parties and co-founded with us in 2006 the Asian Parliamentary Assembly, APA, which is now composed of more than 40 parliaments in Asia.

Incidentally, on our invitation as then Speaker of the House, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf addressed the joint session of the House of Representatives and Senate in April 2005, during his state visit to the Philippines.

It was also during our time as House leader that, also on our modest invitation, US President George W. Bush addressed the joint session of the Philippine Congress on October 2003; Chinese President Hu Jintao on April 2005; and Indian President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam on February 2006.

The Philippines and Pakistan established diplomatic relations on Sept. 8, 1949. Presidents Diosdado Macapagal and Fidel V. Ramos visited Pakistan in 1962 and 1997, respectively. On the other hand, Pakistani prime ministers Husseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, Mohammad Khan Junejo, and Benazir Bhutto and President Pervez Musharraf have visited our country.

Official Philippine data show that bilateral trade between our countries stood at US\$215.95 million in 2021. In February 2022, Pakistan's exports to the Philippines amounted to US\$25.25 million and imports from the Philippines at US\$3.65 million.

There are approximately 2,000 Filipinos in Pakistan, around 1,000 of whom are professional and non-professional workers. Some are married to Pakistani nationals. There are also a number of Pakistani nationals in the Philippines.



### PEACE-MAKER

JOSE DE VENECIA JR.  
FORMER SPEAKER  
OF THE HOUSE



## Sustainability, and beyond being green

**O**n Nov. 23 and 24 of this year, the Manila Bulletin will mount its first ever Sustainability Forum. The reason behind our mounting this is quite simple. When MB President and Vice-Chairman Emil Yap, Jordan Tan, and I were talking earlier in the year, we were remarking about how generally, the sustainability efforts of the various companies championing the cause were under-appreciated, if not outright ignored.

Trying to understand why this was the case, we agreed there was still a disconnect between the concept of sustainability and the general public; and that even the MSME's of our business landscape seemed to shy away from the concept. There seemed to be a prevailing perception that sustainability was either an elitist concept, expensive to institute, or that an ESG (environment, social and governance) agenda would be an additional burden on any company's OpEx.

Personally, I felt that one of the root causes for this disconnect is that not many had bothered to even study the 17 UN Sustainability Development Goals. That there was a small's' sustainable word already existing meant so many presumed that they already understood what the capital 'S' of the UN Sustainability Development Goals was all about. As a result, a good number would equate sustainability with being pro-environment or being

style choice - there are a myriad of ways to support sustainability, and make it an easy, and accessible, facet of our lives.

And as Jordan and I would present our deck, and make the case for why this kind of forum needed to happen, we were constantly encouraged by the nodding heads we'd elicit, the knowing smiles that would break out on the faces of the talking heads of the companies we were approaching. They readily concurred that this gap of a disconnect did exist. And yes, they may have been guilty of preaching to the choir and the converted when mounting their own webinars and forums that often bordered on the technical and



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MANILA BULLETIN and Our November Sustainability Forum.



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“green,” when that is only one aspect of the multi-pronged approach of the UN Sustainability Goals. In fact, a cursory check-listing of the 17 goals would reveal that only five of the 17 have a direct impact founded on the environment.

Further to this is how it's very human to cover up or gloss over our ignorance, and as many of us presumed we already knew what sustainability was all about, we would persist in this partial knowledge, and not bother discovering what the real, full picture is. I myself, am often guilty of this frailty; and it's from this self-realization that we agreed and pushed that we mount this forum.

The MSME's, and how so many of them still shun incorporating sustainability into their operations was another deciding factor. A conversation with BPI's Jo Ann Eala and her casually mentioning that the bank enjoys zero percent non-performing loans in their sustainability portfolio was proof positive that being sustainable and profitable can go hand in hand, and it was time to debunk the notion that sustainability was a financial liability.

Unlike other forums that talk sustainability and are led by a particular industry or retail category, what the Manila Bulletin Sustainability Forum intends to achieve is to showcase the many, diverse, and interconnected touch points of sustainability in our lives. That it doesn't matter if one is talking about going carbon neutral and diminishing emissions, or whether it's a soft impact life-

esoteric. To mount this type of forum and hopefully start from the basics, and muster new “believers” into the metaphorical church of sustainability was a welcome move, and one they would support.

From sustainability in where we live and work, to sustainability in how we spend, eat and enjoy, all the way to sustainability where we may not see it – we have three main story silos to umbrella each of the virtual sessions that will happen in November. We've looked for companies and retail brands that have substantial histories of sustainability, so that their stories will possess the benefit of the time-tested and sustained. And we've asked them to talk about specific programs and initiatives, in order to keep information overload from happening, and so that minimal overlap would occur.

From the developer of malls, offices, residences, hotels and resorts; to manufacture, wholesale and retail, to modes of transportation and to travel/tourism itself; I'm happy that we have most sectors covered as they relay to us their respective sustainability stories. And it's in the properties of storytelling that we hope to make sustainability a byword, a conscious choice, and an anthem for our present and future.

Because really, if not now, then when? What kind of legacy do we leave our children and our children's children? This is the only planet we have – and we have to ensure that a respectable quality of life can be preserved.



# Climate-fueled hunger more than

## doubles in worst-hit countries — report

By AGENCE-FRANCE-PRESSE

**W**ASHINGTON, United States — From record droughts to catastrophic floods, the world's worst climate hotspots are seeing a surge in acute hunger, according to an Oxfam report that called on rich nations to drastically cut their emissions and compensate low-income countries.

The analysis, "Hunger in a heating world," found that acute hunger had risen 123 percent over six years in the 10 most-affected nations, defined by the most number of UN weather appeals.

"The effects of severe weather events are already being felt," Lia Lindsey, Oxfam America's senior humanitarian policy advisory told AFP, adding the report was timed to pressure world leaders at the UN General Assembly to act.

The countries — Somalia, Haiti, Djibouti, Kenya, Niger, Afghani-

stan, Guatemala, Madagascar, Burkina Faso and Zimbabwe — have repeatedly been battered by extreme weather over the last two decades.

An estimated 48 million people across those countries suffer acute hunger, defined as hunger resulting from a shock and causing risks to lives and livelihoods and based on reports compiled by the World Food Programme.

That figure is up from 21 million people in 2016; 18 million people are on the brink of starvation.

The report acknowledges the complexity surrounding the causes of global hunger, with conflict and economic disruption — including those from the Covid-19 pandemic — remaining key drivers.

"However, these new and worsening weather extremes are increasingly peeling away the abilities of poor people particularly in low-income countries to stave off hunger and cope with the next



DISPLACED FLOOD-AFFECTED people stand in a queue to receive food at a makeshift camp in flood-hit Sehwan, Pakistan. (AFP)

shock," it said.

Somalia, for example, is facing its worst drought on record, forcing one million people to flee their homes.

Climate change is also causing more frequent and intense heat

waves and other extreme weather including floods, which covered one-third of Pakistan, washing away crops and topsoil and destroying farming infrastructure.

In Guatemala, weather conditions have contributed to the loss of close

to 80 percent of the maize harvest, as well as causing a "coffee crisis" in the region that has hit vulnerable communities hardest and forced many to migrate to the United States.

Oxfam stressed that climate-fueled hunger is a "stark demonstration of global inequality," with the countries least responsible for the crisis suffering most from its impact.

Polluting industrialized nations such as those of the G20 are responsible for more than three-quarters of the world's carbon emissions, while the 10 climate hotspots are collectively responsible for just 0.13 percent.

"Leaders especially of rich polluting countries must live up to their promises to cut emissions," said Gabriela Bucher, Oxfam International executive director, in a statement.

"They must pay for adaptation measures and loss-and-damage in low-income countries, as well as immediately inject lifesaving funds to meet the UN appeal to respond to the most impacted countries."



## PH, NZ to strengthen ties on agri, climate change

**THE Department of Agriculture has discussed plans for more agricultural trade and partnership with New Zealand.**

New Zealand Amb. Peter Kell visited the DA office and met with Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban and tackled plans to improve bilateral ties as well as combat climate change.

"The meeting aims to further strengthen partnership in areas such as market access of high-value products, research, and development, livelihood assistance to local farmers, and other initiatives that will help the agriculture sector generate high-quality products suitable for the export market. The officials also discussed possible collaboration to address climate change," the DA said.

Panganiban then invited Kell to visit the country's iconic places, including Guimaras, the "Mango Capital of the Philippines."

Besides intensifying international cooperation, the DA-Agricultural Credit Policy Council partnered with private group Jollibee Group of Foundations on Thursday to help farmers.

In a Memorandum of Understanding, the DA-ACPC and JGF agreed to perform six cooperation projects including "loan provision, agro-enterprise training, capacity building for farmers, dissemination of testimonials, and assessments, among others".

Panganiban said this move would help realize their primary agenda of achieving self-sufficiency in the food supply, under the administration of

President Marcos.

"I do believe that this project, together with the rest of the projects that we are undertaking in the Department, would be very important to the program of the President in food security," he said.

Under the signed MoU, both parties are expected to provide farmers with the "right training tools and adequate capital" that would help them increase both production and profit, and give them the opportunity to upskill, as well as help them avoid suffering from low income due to low farmgate prices.

The Philippine Council for Agriculture and Fisheries, the policy-making arm of the DA, meanwhile underscored the role of women in the administration's thrust to boost Philippine agriculture.



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# Crises greet UN summit

'Are the widest they have been since  
at least the Cold War.'

NEW YORK (AFP) — The United Nations General Assembly is back in person after the pandemic disruption but in a world as full of crises as ever, with the war in Ukraine set to pit the West against Russia.

Some 150 world leaders will descend on New York for a week of diplomacy, with all required to come in person to speak save one — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, granted an exception as he leads the fight against Russian invaders.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, speaking ahead of the summit that formally begins Tuesday, said that the world's divisions "are the widest they have been since at least the Cold War."

"Our world is blighted by war, battered by climate chaos, scarred by hate and shamed by poverty, hunger and inequality," Guterres said. "As fractures deepen and trust evaporates, we need to come together around solutions."



## Minda taps UN-awarded scientist for Climate Smart Mindanao 2050

**T**HE Mindanao Development Authority (Minda) tapped internationally acclaimed Filipino climate expert and science diplomat, Glenn Banaguas, to spearhead climate change and disaster mitigation efforts across the region under the aegis of Climate Smart Mindanao 2050.

The initiative aims to enable the region to reduce its carbon footprint and empower its people to proactively assess and manage its climate risks, Minda said in a news release.

"Climate-change response is a fundamental pillar of Minda's long-range plans for Mindanao," Secretary Maria Belen Acosta said during the memorandum of collaboration signing in Makati City on September 14.

"The region's socioeconomic growth hinges on our capacity to confront, mitigate and hopefully even avoid the looming dangers of global warming," Acosta said during the event that was graced by a full complement of Mindanao's decision-makers and stakeholders.

"It is an absolute honor to work with Minda on the furtherance of Mindanao's climate action goals. In terms of biodiversity and natural reserves alone, the region is one of the most resource-rich places in the world. Mindanao deserves nothing less than our undivided support and protection, as it is a source of economic, cultural, historical, and national pride," Banaguas said.

Climate Smart Mindanao 2050 is an enhanced version of the original Climate Smart Mindanao program, which was supported and implemented by the late Minda secretary, Datu Abul Khayr Alonto, Undersecretary Janet Lopez and Assistant Secretary Romeo Montenegro for the welfare of Mindanawons.

"Through Climate Smart Mindanao, Alonto led the way for sustainable

climate action in the region. There is no higher tribute to his memory than to further his work," Banaguas added.

The new and enhanced Climate Smart Mindanao 2050 actively strives to:

- Deliver and deploy region-wide climate-change mitigation and adaptation solutions;

- Develop the region's capability to address climate issues by way of broader discourses and cooperation on interrelated food, water, and energy issues;

- Provide training, capacity building, and consultation workshops on climate and sustainability financing; and

- Work towards net zero emissions through greenhouse-gas accounting under the Mindanao Decarbonization Roadmap.

"Besides addressing climate change and disaster risks, it is also the goal of Climate Smart Mindanao 2050 to continue promoting peace and de-escalate tensions by bringing parties in conflict together to address environmental and social issues," Banaguas explained.

Banaguas is the president and founder of the Environmental and Climate Change Research Institute.

In 2010, he also spearheaded the institute's flagship program, Climate Smart Philippines, of which Climate Smart Mindanao 2050 is a constituent program.

The initiative brings scientific experts and stakeholders together to address disasters and prevent losses from climate change and other hazards.

For his pioneering work, Banaguas received the prestigious UN Sasakawa Award for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2022, besting over 200 nominations from around the world to become the first individual Filipino recipient in the award's 35-year history.





## edotco Group pledges to protect endangered birds nesting on towers

**K**UALA LUMPUR, Malaysia—edotco Group, a leading integrated telecommunications infrastructure services company in Asia, including the Philippines, has pledged to protect endangered birds residing in their telecommunication infrastructures as part of their mission to connect the world equitably and sustainably.

The Bird Watch Pledge, which was signed with the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) at the launch event of edotco's Sustainability Blueprint, reflects the company's commitment toward the conservation of Malaysia's wildlife habitats, edotco said.

edotco Group operates and manages a regional portfolio of over 54,000 towers across Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, the Philippines, Myanmar and Laos.

A transaction with PLDT that was announced in April makes edotco the leading Tower Company in the Philippines. It was also granted the commitment to build and develop 750 build-to-suit sites for leasing to PLDT.

According to MNS, telecommunications towers have become a preferred breeding site for wild birds of prey due to their stability, height and location.

However, their nests are often disturbed or destroyed, contributing to a dwindling habitat and reduced population numbers.

With over a fifth of Malaysia's 822 bird species classified as Threatened or Near Threatened as of 2020, new conservation strategies are crucial to preserve the ecological balance, edotco said.

Created in accordance with the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010, edotco's Bird Watch Pledge aims to implement new policies and processes to minimize destruction to bird nests on its towers, create awareness about the importance of raptor conservation among employees.

It also aims to collaborate closely with MNS, BirdLife International, Jabatan Perlindungan Hidupan Liar dan Taman Negara Semenanjung

Malaysia (Perhilitan) and similar organizations on relevant bird conservation programmes.

"The recent launch of our edotco Sustainability Blueprint underscores our unwavering commitment to the sustainability agenda," said edotco Group CEO Adlan Tajudin.

"Managing environment impact is part of the environmental sustainability pillar in our sustainability strategy, and we recognize our responsibility to drive sustainable development to preserve the future of our majestic wild birds. With the Bird Watch Pledge, we aim to work hand-in-hand with local nature organizations to strike a balance between technological advancement and wildlife preservation," Adlan said.

edotco said it will also work with MNS and Perhilitan to conduct wildlife monitoring at selected towers in key biodiversity areas and run raptor conservation awareness programmes to educate edotco employees.

Its employees will also be able to volunteer for MNS's annual Pesta Sayap (Festival of Wings), which aims to raise awareness of and collect data on birds in the forest and wetlands habitats.

In 2021, edotco planted more than 40,000 trees across its regional footprint, innovated new green designs, improved energy efficiency and invested in renewable technologies among other milestones.

That same year, it was awarded Company of the Year for Excellence in Environmental and Community Welfare Initiative at the Sustainability and CSR Malaysia Awards 2021.

It was also the first telecommunications infrastructure company in Malaysia to be appointed as a Signatory Member of the UN Global Compact Network Malaysia and Brunei.

Established in 2012, edotco Group is the first regional and integrated telecommunications infrastructure services company in Asia, providing end-to-end solutions in the tower services sector from tower leasing, colocations, build-to-suit, energy, transmission and operations and maintenance.



# Climate change 'heading into uncharted territory'

Cities, hosting billions of people, are responsible for up to 70 percent of human-caused emissions.

**"C**limate science is clear: we are heading in the wrong direction," declares a major, multi-agency United Nations climate science report released recently, focusing on increasing fossil fuel emissions and rising greenhouse gases, now at a record high, which risk thwarting plans to reduce global temperatures and avoid climate catastrophe.

The researchers behind "Uniting in Science," coordinated by the World Meteorological Organization, studied several factors related to the climate crisis — from CO2 emissions, global temperature rises and climate predictions, to "tipping points," urban climate change, extreme weather impacts, and early warning systems.

One of the key conclusions of the report is that far more ambitious action is needed if we are to avoid the physical and socioeconomic impacts of climate change having an increasingly devastating effect on the planet.

Greenhouse gas concentrations continue to rise to record highs, and fossil fuel emission rates are now above pre-pandemic levels after a temporary drop due to lockdowns, pointing to a huge gap between aspiration and reality. Cities, hosting billions of people, are responsible for up to 70 percent of human-caused emissions: They will face increasing socioeconomic impacts, the brunt of which will be faced by the most vulnerable populations.

In order to achieve the goal of the Paris Agreement, namely keeping global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, greenhouse gas emission reduction pledges need to be seven times higher, says the report.

### High chance of climate 'tipping point'

If the world reaches a climate "tipping point," we will be faced with irreversible changes to the climate system. The report says that this cannot be ruled out: The past seven years were the warmest on record, and there is almost a 50-50 chance that, in the next five years, the annual mean temperature will temporarily be 1.5 °C higher than the 1850-1900 average.

The report's authors point to the recent, devastating floods in Pakistan, which have seen up to a third of the country underwater, as an example of the extreme weather events in different parts of the world this year.

Other examples include prolonged and severe droughts in China, the Horn of Africa and the United States, wildfires, and major storms.

"Climate science is increasingly able to show that many of the extreme weather events that we are experiencing have become more likely and more intense due to human-induced climate change," WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said.

"We have seen this repeatedly this year, with tragic effect. It is more important than ever that we scale up action on early warning systems to build resilience to current and future climate risks in vulnerable communities."

### 'Early warnings save lives'

A WMO delegation led by Taalas joined Selwin Hart, Assistant Secretary-General for Climate Action, and senior representatives of UN partners, development and humanitarian agencies, the diplomatic community and WMO members at a two-day event in Cairo .

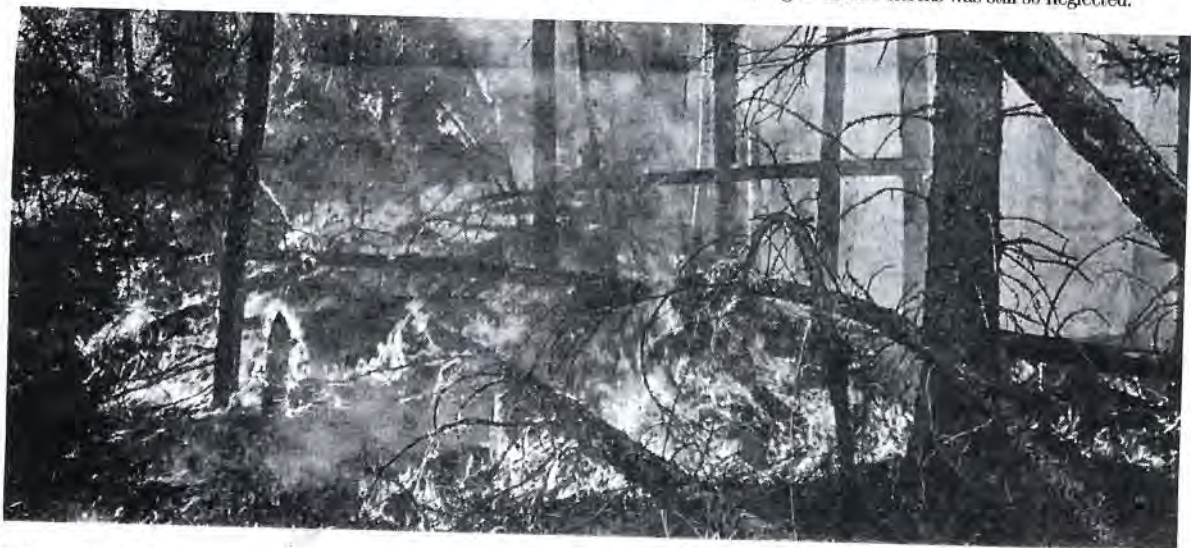
The meeting advanced plans to ensure that early warnings reach everyone in the next five years. This initiative was unveiled on World Meteorological Day — 23 March 2022 — by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who said that "early warnings save lives."

Early warning systems have been recognized as a proven, effective and feasible climate adaptation measure that save lives and provide a tenfold return on investment.

### 'Still way off track'

The harmful impacts of climate change are taking us into "uncharted territories of destruction," Guterres said.

Responding to the "Uniting in Science" report, Guterres said that the latest science showed "we are still way off track," adding that it remains shameful that resilience building to climate shocks was still so neglected.



THIS forest fire in Saskatchewan, Canada is one of the manifestations of climate change in the developed world.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF UN



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# Tapping into nature's pharmacy

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

**A** STUDY on the bark and branch wood of narra tree, a critically endangered species, confirmed its anti-oxidant properties and potential to improve the lives of millions of Filipinos, the De La Salle (DLS) Dasmariñas College of Pharmacy recently bared.

As early as 2002, narra, which is popular among furniture enthusiasts, has been found to have medicinal value and was used as the main ingredient of a dietary supplement to improve the quality of life of those with diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, bladder stones and infectious diseases.

The study, commissioned by Ecarma Health Options, a Filipino health and wellness firm, has once again proven that the forest, nature's pharmacy, is indeed the key to human survival.

### Traditional medicine

BESIDES food, clothing and shelter, Filipino ancestors have been using traditional medicines from a concoction of leaves, barks and roots of plants.

Even today, many Filipinos use medicinal plants to cure cough and cold, fight diarrhea by drinking "miracle tea," or applying them to heal wounds or skin rashes.

Some have even learned to bring nature's pharmacy in their own backyard, planting them in pots or plots, along with fruit-bearing

written by Pastor L. Malabrigo Jr. and Arthur Glenn A. Umali.

Launched at the Victor O. Ramos Arboretum in Natividad, Pangasinan, the book, which contains over 300 species of native trees, is "dedicated to the next generation of environmental warriors who can learn from the long histories of these trees and how they can adapt, survive and thrive in our rapidly changing planet."

Most of the trees in the book are considered endemic, or can only be found in the Philippines but are critically endangered, or considered at high risk of getting extinct.

"Most of the trees are unknown to the public due to lack of awareness and dissemination. The government and the private sector should do an in-depth study of these native trees to maximize their potential use. The more we study and get to know their uses, there is a greater chance of finding the right cure for diseases, while at the same time helping preserve these endangered species from extinction," Tungol said.



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trees and easy-to-grow vegetables.

Sought for comment, native-tree advocate Arceli M. Tungol told the BUSINESSMIRROR that there is so much to learn about not just narra, but other Philippine native trees.

### Research is key

"It is good that research on native trees, such as narra, is now being pursued by the DLS Medical and Health Sciences Institute. There is very slow progress in the research on the potential health benefits and application of medicinal potential of our native trees in a commercial scale," added Tungol, who created the Facebook Group Philippine Native Tree Enthusiasts.

She said one of the successful research is the cure for cough using the native tree "lagundi" (*Vitex negundo*).

"We now have an approved cough syrup using the extract from lagundi tree," she said via Messenger on September 8.

She noted that of Department of Health's (DOH) 10 herbal medicines, only three—"lagundi, tsaang gubat" and "niyog-niyogan"—are native to the Philippines, while the rest are introduced plants.

"We have over 3,600 native tree species. Our indigenous people depended highly on these in the past for the cure of their ailments. There were no doctors or hospitals nor available pharmacy in the barrios or forest where they live. These native trees gave them the necessary medicines," she said.

### Threatened resources

TUNGOL lamented that the country's native trees are unfortunately being pushed to a decline due to massive deforestation to give way to human settlements.

Tungol is part of a group that recently launched the book *Alay: Philippine Native Trees*,

### Indigenous knowledge

ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim said much of the medicines from nature that we know today are associated with traditional knowledge, applied by Indigenous peoples (IPs) and passed on from one generation to the next.

"It is also this knowledge that provide the means to extract or use the parts and derivatives of native species of plants and animals without having to over-extract them to extinction," she lamented.

According to Lim, an international biodiversity expert, the appreciation and recognition of the close relationship and interconnection between the traditional lifestyle and practices of the indigenous peoples, and the continuing medicinal benefits that can be derived from the natural ecosystems, is the "first step toward incentivizing protection and retention of indigenous knowledge."

The ACB has been supporting the protection and conservation of Protected Areas in Asean through the Asean Heritage Parks Programme.

Some of the AHPs, like those in the Philippines, are known to host plant species like "tsaang gubat," or the Philippine tea tree, "sam-bong," and "pansit-pansitan" that can also be found in other Asean countries, where they are known to provide traditional cures for various illnesses.

### Recognizing IP rights

LIM noted that the Philippines has been one of the successful countries in Asean for recognizing the rights of IPs, because of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997, where Free and Prior Informed Consent is already embedded as



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A NARRA tree that was planted by then-President Benigno C. Aquino III on May 13, 2011, during the first National Greening Program at the Ninoy Aquino Park and Wildlife Rescue Center, is now a fully grown tree. COURTESY OF GAUDENCIO AUDIEL DE LA CRUZ/DENR



THE cover of the book *Alay: Philippine Native Trees*

part of the required processes prior to the utilization of resources within IPs' lands.

plants and other sources, together with private companies.

Besides lagundi, they have developed tawa-tawa as supplement against dengue, virgin coconut oil for Covid-19, and are more are being developed.

### Forest: Treasure-trove of food, medicine

"WE casual trekkers often see simple walls of green when passing through forests. But our first-nations people, the Indigenous communities, who call our forests home, can see a treasure-trove of food and medicine. Their knowledge of indigenous plants is unparalleled," said explorer Gregg Yan.

Yan graduated from Subic Bay's Jungle Environment Survival Training (JEST) Camp in 2014, where he learned how Aeta survive in the jungle.



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As such, she said that policies must be issued and effectively implemented that will provide incentives for local companies to invest in research and development in producing health and wellness products sustainably derived from nature.

Meanwhile, Lim said government support is vital to encouraging the private sector to venture into nature-based pharmaceuticals.

"These support could be through tax breaks, subsidies, or deregulation, for as long as safeguards are in place to ensure that the utilization and production is sustainable, and benefits accrue to those responsible for protecting the resource," she said.

"Science is just recently proving the presence of medicinal value in narra and other native plants. [Narra's] healing properties have been known to our grandparents and their grandparents before them way before this decade. It's sap used to be recommended by village albularyo [herbal doctors] to treat mouth sores in children," she said.

It should be noted that the Department of Science and Technology, through its Philippine Council on Health Research and Development, has been developing medicines and supplements from local

"The Aeta or Agta people of Zambales, for instance, boil the leaves of guava, mango, pandan or banaba as calming tea. Their leaves can also be crushed to a paste to disinfect open wounds. Lagundi is a well-known cough remedy. The Taw'buid people of Mindoro use a plant called bun-garngar (*Chromolaena odorata*) to relieve stomach aches," Yan told the BUSINESSMIRROR via e-mail on September 12.

Yan, who frequents the mountains of Mindoro said: "Our forests harbor so many useful plants. A 1984 study by Garan and Quintana identified 128 medicinal plant species used by various Mangyan tribes in Mindoro alone."

"Our JEST camp teachers also showed us many practical uses for the plants and trees we commonly encounter in the forest," he said.

He noted that gugo [*Entada phaseoloides*] often grows near water. Its bark can be soaked and used as a shampoo to clean the hair.

"Did you know that kupang [*Parkia javanica*], a fairly common tree with distinctive seed pods, can be used as an alternative to coffee? The beans are taken from the seed pods and dried. The dried seeds are roasted and ground before being mixed with hot water. It actually did taste pretty good—like smoky coffee!"



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## United Nations: An important platform for our diplomacy

The United Nations has been criticized in the past about its perceived failures, with critics saying that its powerful body – the Security Council – has been ineffective in maintaining peace and security and easing tensions between nations as some disputes have escalated into armed conflicts, pointing to the war in Ukraine as a recent example.



Others also accuse the UN of being inefficient when it comes to achieving the goal of mitigating hunger and poverty despite the billions of dollars being spent on economic and social development programs. In fact, the relevance of the 76-year-old organization in today's world is being questioned by some sectors who claim that it is continually going on a decline and nearing obsolescence, supposedly because of its bureaucratic systems, coupled by its perceived inability to evolve amid the changing geopolitical landscape.

But while it has been less than perfect, many people still look at the United Nations in a positive light, as evidenced by the 2021 Pew Research Center survey conducted in 17 countries that showed 67 percent of respondents expressing a favorable opinion of the UN regarding its handling of many issues, including climate change. The same results are also reflected in the latest Pew Research Center survey released last month, with "a note of positivity" also seen among survey respondents (65 percent) across 19 nations regarding their view of the UN.

Interestingly, a big number of people are optimistic that "the problems facing their country can be solved by working with other countries," with 64 percent of the respondents in the 2022 survey saying they believe "many problems can be solved by working together," as against 31 percent who say that few problems can be solved by way of international cooperation. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing war in Ukraine and other global challenges and threats, climate change emerged as the major concern, particularly among people living in advanced economies.

In fairness to the UN, it has been successful in bringing attention to issues of global importance and has promoted discussion in a peaceful manner. Take, for instance, the upcoming UN General Assembly that, obviously, continues to be an important forum for world leaders to discuss various threats and concerns that vary from the social to economic to political and environmental.



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As the Pew report noted, people still see "the benefits of international cooperation for solving problems and the importance of common values for bringing nations together" despite the "many depressing stories dominating the international news cycle."

Not surprisingly, a lot of interest is being generated regarding the participation of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in the 77th UN General Assembly in New York, where he is set to deliver a speech on Sept. 20 which is the first day of the high-level general debate with the theme "A Watershed Moment: Transformative Solutions to Interlocking Challenges."

The UN General Assembly is an important part of our diplomacy. No doubt the participation of President Marcos is an opportunity for the country to take center stage because of the high level of interest on what the President will say during his speech. As I said during my interview with CNN's "The Source" hosted by Pinky Webb, the President will likely call attention to climate change, a top priority of his administration.

The Department of Energy in fact is looking at alternative sources of energy, most especially clean energy. While we are still dependent on fossil fuel, we have to start looking at the future and, on many occasions, the President has talked about clean energy sources, particularly small modular reactors that hopefully would be available to the world initially in the next year or so. The Philippines has a lot of potential energy sources including hydro, solar and wind power, which the President is very familiar with because of the windmills in Ilocos Norte which contribute to the power supply in the province.

We are also opening up our mining sector, which is a very good development because the Philippines has an estimated 4.8 million metric tons of nickel reserves - one of the largest in the world. Nickel is a major component in battery production and so we anticipate a strong market for nickel in the future with electric vehicles being the wave of the future.

The President's schedule is extremely tight, with a large number of requests for meetings from state leaders including those from Latin America and the African states. Among those finalized are the meetings with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan and Prime Minister Ismail Sabri bin Yaakob of Malaysia, and other state leaders that are awaiting confirmation so most likely the President will have about six to eight bilaterals.

We are still finalizing the bilateral meeting between President Bongbong Marcos and US President Joe Biden, but as we all know, the sad news about the passing of Queen Elizabeth II has changed a lot of schedules. Nevertheless, we are hopeful that this would happen, with the US being an important ally of the Philippines.

A number of American businessmen are also eager to meet President BBM, and we have also received many requests from members of the Filipino community from as far as Guam and Honolulu and across the US. We have instructed the consulates to coordinate and have them in one place, possibly at the Kalayaan Hall in our consulate in New York, where the President can hopefully meet them and reiterate the message of unity, which he believes is the only way we can surpass the challenges and problems that the world faces today.

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