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THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1880
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

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UPDATES ON EPR LAW – Senator Cynthia Villar asks officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) for updates on the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Act during the organizational meeting of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources at the Senate on Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2022. (Photo from the Senate PRIB)



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CLEAN UP AT DOLOMITE BEACH. Members of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) organize a cleanup at Manila Dolomite Beach on September 6. The PCG said it has collected more than 50 bags of garbage during the marine environmental protection initiative. **CCGNO MWR Arcena & CCGNO JMB Marcos/CGPA**



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Senate wants wildlife trade kept in check

SENATORS said the penalties for wildlife trafficking are currently not strong enough to deter the growing trade in wild animal species.

"Penalties have become outdated and mere slaps on the wrist when compared to the severity of wildlife trafficking," Senator Cynthia A. Villar said at a hearing on Tuesday.

"The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic made us realize the importance of strengthening the conservation of wildlife. It is the constant exploitation of the wild that raises the risk of zoonotic disease transmissions," she added.

The joint hearing of the committees on Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change; Finance, Sustainable Development Goals, Innovation and Futures Thinking, and Ways and Means, was called to draft the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 11898 or the Extended Producer Responsibility Act.

The law contains guidelines on wildlife conservation and protection.

Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Y. Loyzaga said that the current law discouraged wildlife-related crimes to some extent but failed to deter wildlife traffickers "who take advantage of the gaps in the legislation."

"The potential value of wildlife has captured the interest of large organized criminal syndicates. Globalization has created a new platform and deceptive means for illegal wildlife trade at the expense of our country's wildlife resources. This has led to the need to enhance our laws," she said.

Ms. Loyzaga said that the government should pass more stringent laws and increase penalties for criminals.

"The Philippines has suffered a loss of P50 billion due to the illegal wildlife trade... it has become a destination and shipping point," she added.

She proposed amendments to the law, including penalizing the crime of wildlife trafficking as a separate offense and clas-

sifying it as a transnational offense. She also proposed that crimes committed by two or more persons be treated as organized crime.

"It's high time to add the threats to biodiversity like overexploitation. It's also time to make the health of our ecosystem as a priority (around which to) center all our plans and policies," she said.

ASEAN Center for Biodiversity Director Alvin C. Diesmos said controlling the illegal wildlife trade will help mitigate the risk of pandemics.

"We appreciate this timely effort in response to the growing threat of wildlife trade in the region (and) the importance of protecting our wildlife resources to reduce risks of future pandemics," he said.

"Southeast Asia is both a source and transit point for illegally traded wildlife. The Philippines can take the lead in working with ASEAN neighbors," he added.

Forest Management Bureau legal officer Ray Thomas F. Kabigting added that more wildlife protection officers are needed to cover not only animals, but also endangered plants. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jacson**





Addressing the challenge of agricultural development:

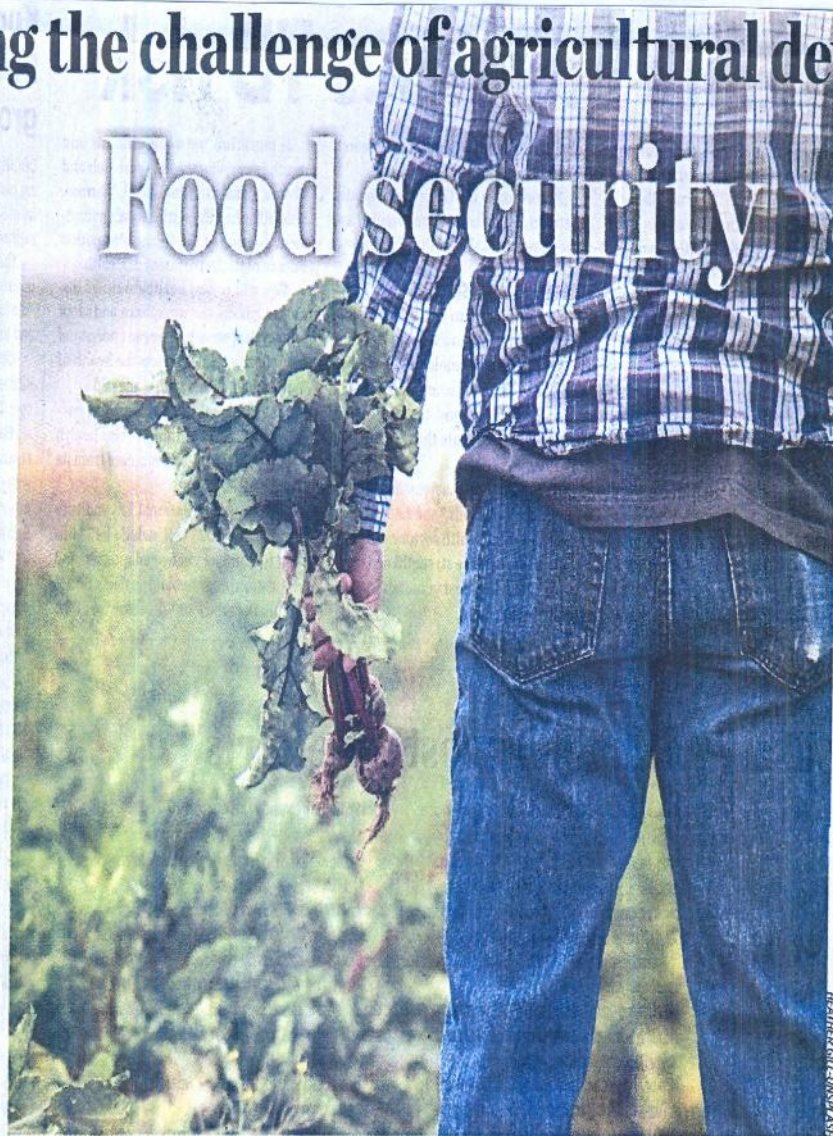
(Part 3)

Under the leadership of former Secretary of Agriculture William Dar, working closely with a private Advisory Group (resembling what President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. has assembled early on in his presidential term), a new thinking was introduced into the Department of Agriculture (DA) to address directly the obstacles identified to agricultural development and food security enumerated in the earlier pieces in this series. A major feature of this "new thinking" is the holistic approach that made sure that the target for increased productivity and effectiveness was not limited to the farming sector but embraced the whole agribusiness value chain, from farming to downstream activities such as post-harvest (e.g., harvesting, drying, milling, etc.) as well as processing, warehousing, cold storage, logistics, wholesale, retailing and down to the ultimate consumers.

By shifting the focus away from mere farming to the entire agribusiness value chain, there will be efforts to increase the productivity not only of the farmers but also all the links of the value chain. In this way, the results will be quality and nutritious food (i.e., food safety), at affordable prices (i.e., price stability and sustainability). With a holistic approach to the entire agribusiness sector, our farmers will be rendered competitive with tillers from neighboring countries and selected producing nations in the world. We should especially compare our agribusiness sector to our neighboring countries in the ASEAN, such as Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam that have more or less similar natural resource endowments.

It has to be stressed that "food sufficiency" is not the ultimate objective, since no country in the world has become completely food sufficient. The more realistic goal is "food security" which accepts the reality that not all food can be produced cheaply within the country because of agro-climatic limitations. The obvious examples are milk, soybeans, apples, oranges, and grapes. I still remember the tragicomic example in the 1970s of planters in the Philippines trying to produce grapes profitably. Much money — that could have been more profitably spent on increasing the supply of onions, garlic, papaya, and mangoes — was wasted in the futile attempts to grow grapes in the tropical setting of the Philippines. We can never ignore the importance of international trade in ensuring an adequate supply of quality and nutritious food at affordable prices for the consumers. This would be especially crucial to the most vulnerable in our population, babies and children, who need milk for their healthy growth, especially for their brains.

Replacing the goal of "food sufficiency" with the more realistic one of "food security," the DA (now under the President himself) can position the agricultural sector in a larger context of policies that take into account the dynamics of the entire range of players who are involved, from input supply and production, aggregation, processing, transporting, warehousing, marketing, distribution and consumption of food products that



Food security

HUMAN SIDE OF ECONOMICS BERNARDO M. VILLEGAS

proceed from the agriculture, fisheries and forestry (AFF) sector. We have to be thankful to the leadership in the DA of the last Administration for contributing this new way of looking at food security. It is an all-encompassing fresh system which takes account all the major dimensions or sub-systems — economic, social and environmental — that can have a ripple effect on the entire system and must be primarily considered when pursuing food security and sustainability. By adopting the systems thinking approach, the DA will be enabled to quickly respond to feedback loops within the system, mapping out impacts, as well as vulnerabilities and risks, thus identifying effective interventions for stronger food security.

Probably because of a silo mindset, previous leaderships of the Agriculture department failed to take a holistic approach to understanding and responding to the challenges besetting the Philippine agriculture (more precisely, agribusiness) sector. As a consequence of this limited approach, the DA had a bias in its budget programming in favor of production and production subsidies. This bias could explain the slow growth of the agricultural and fisheries sector.

A more controversial issue, however, is whether or not the DA has been getting its fair share of the national budget, con-

sidering the greatest importance of food security and sustainability for the country, not only to attain high GDP growth but, more importantly, to significantly reduce mass poverty. The DA has been vocal about the necessity of exponentially augmenting general appropriations for the sector. The very slow growth of income generated by the agricultural sector has been attributed by DA officials to the meager percentage of the general budget that it has been receiving. Over the last 10 years, the Philippines has allotted only an average of 1.5% of its total budget to AFF sector. This pales in comparison to the shares in the total government budgets enjoyed by the AFF sectors of other ASEAN countries such as Vietnam (6.5%), Indonesia (3%) and Malaysia (2.3%).

It will not be smooth sailing, however, for President Marcos Jr. as concurrent Secretary of Agriculture, to convince the Philippine Congress to increase the budget of agriculture because some very powerful members of the Senate (which include the President's sister, Senator Imee Marcos) have been very critical about how some officials of the DA in the last Administration had miserably underspent their budgets.

In a recent hearing of the Senate committee on agriculture, Senators Cynthia Villar and Imee Marcos lashed out at officials of the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (PhilMech) for grossly underspending their budgeted amounts to help rice farmers improve their earn-

ings through increased mechanization of their farms, which was mandated by Republic Act No. 11203, or the Rice Tarification Law (RTL). According to Senator Villar, one of the most vocal advocates for improving agricultural productivity in the Philippines, she agreed to the passage of the RTL mainly because the tariff revenues to be generated were supposed to benefit the farmers through the support they will get for farm mechanization and purchase of superior quality seeds. The Senator was justly angered to find out that the PhilMech was able to spend only 3.2% of its budget. Also castigated by Senator Villar was the Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM) for its failure to distribute to farmers composting facilities for biodegradable wastes which could have helped them overcome the high cost of fertilizers.

A silver lining in this present Administration, though, may be that as Secretary of Agriculture, President Marcos Jr. may be able to crack the whip and attain greater unity of purpose and action among the different departments and agencies in the Executive branch that have to do with the entire agribusiness value chain.

He should start by making sure that the related departments of Agriculture, Agrarian Reform, and Natural Resources — supported by the departments of Trade and Industry, Transport and Public Works and Highways — will address the entire agribusiness value chain as one unit. Although I respect the contrary opinion that the President may be chew-

ing too much by taking upon himself the responsibility of leading the Department of Agriculture, I consider the next six years as very crucial in our finally addressing the weakest link, the Achilles heel of the Philippine economy.

I would like President Marcos Jr. to be known in the future as the leader who finally brought the Philippine agribusiness sector to the same level as those of our neighbors such as Thailand, Vietnam, and Malaysia. He does not have to reinvent the wheel. He can learn much from the recent experiences of these Southeast Asian tigers.

If I were to choose two sectors that should be given special priority by the President, I would focus on the High Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP) and the coconut industry which can have the greatest impact in reducing mass poverty.

The Marcos Jr. Administration can build on what had been started in the last Administration. Coffee shows great promise, and here we can learn a great deal from Vietnam which almost overnight became the second largest exporter of coffee in the world, following Brazil. Despite the 3% decline in area dedicated to coffee, there was a 1% increase in production from 2018 to 2020, which could be attributed to tree rehabilitation efforts and assistance given to farmers in farm inputs, training, and machinery.

The production volume of cacao rose by an average of 10.5% from 2016 to 2020, thanks to the intensified expansion of production areas, improvement in farm practices, and rehabilitation of cacao trees.

Under Bayanihan II, DA-HVCDP established 52 Urban Mushroom Houses, 180 Community Gardens, 266 Greenhouses with Deep Irrigation and/or Hydroponics Systems which can produce an average of 3 metric tons of leafy vegetables per site annually.

Seven units of the country's first-ever climate resilient-monolithic dome-type cold storages and packing houses in various regions were also established during the last Administration. Each facility can store a maximum of 350 metric tons of agricultural products to prolong shelf life and maintain their quality.

Finally, in partnership with the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao's Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrarian Reform and the Korea International Cooperation Agency, a total of 39 smart greenhouses were established in four major regions to demonstrate the advanced production technology of tomatoes, bell pepper and other high-value crops, which can be replicated and adopted by the farmers.

These technologies could very well address the recent shortages of onions and garlic that hit the first months of the Marcos Jr. Administration. ■

(To be continued.)

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NO PERMIT TO OPERATE Bulacan Gov. Daniel Fernando (center), Bulacan Environment and Natural Resources Office chief Atty. Julius Degala (left) and CIDG-Bulacan Provincial Officer Maj. Banate Tabigo-on visit the site where an illegal quarry operation was discovered and shut down in Sitio Alimasag, Barangay Camangyanan, Santa Maria, Bulacan on Friday, Sept. 2, 2022. PHOTO BY FREDERICK SILVERIO



ILLEGAL QUARRY SHUT DOWN IN BULACAN

BULACAN Gov. Daniel Fernando inspected on Tuesday the illegal mining operation authorities halted due to lack of operating permit.

The quarry is located in a five-hectare lot in a hidden farmland in Sitio Alimasag, Barangay Camangyanan, Santa Maria, Bulacan where high-grade escambo, a type of natural resource, is being mined without authorization.

The operation to close the mine was done by personnel from the Bulacan Environment and Natural Resources Office (Benro) and the

Criminal Investigation and Detection Group-Provincial Field Unit (CIDG-PFU) on Friday.

The governor was disappointed when he saw the giant pit where 29,625 cubic meters of escambo have been reportedly excavated.

Fernando said five people whose names were withheld for the time being were arrested.

The governor also instructed Benro chief Atty. Julius Degala and Bulacan CIDG provincial officer Maj. Banate Tabigo-on to further investigate why and how the mine has operated without a permit.

Degala said the five arrested individuals will be charged with mineral theft under Section 103 of Republic Act 7942, Illegal Quarry-

ing of Provincial Ordinance C-005 and violation of Executive Order 21, series of 2022.

FREDERICK SILVERIO



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Poor air quality increases TB risk

By Patricia B. Mirasol *Reporter*

AIR POLLUTION has an unequal impact on health, with the most vulnerable people bearing the brunt of its ill effects, according to Greenpeace.

In a report released on Sept. 1, the independent global campaigning network said that socioeconomic deprivation increases an individual's vulnerability to air pollution and chronic health conditions.

Among them is tuberculosis (TB), a continuing problem in the Philippines, which has the third highest TB prevalence rate in the world and where nearly 10 million people reside in urban slums.

"We have [made] significant strides in TB control and improving the health

of Filipinos nationwide. However, Filipinos would continue to suffer and [be] more susceptible to TB if we allow the continued deterioration of the quality of the air that we breathe," said Michelle Lang-Alli, director of the Office of Health at USAID Philippines, at a webinar organized by non-profit human development organization FHI 360.

An estimated 66,000 Filipinos die every year due to poor air quality. The economic cost of ambient air pollution is P4.5 trillion, roughly equivalent to \$87 billion, said Climate Change Commissioner Rachel Anne S. Herrera at the same webinar.

This cost is 23% of the country's gross domestic product in 2019, she added, citing a November 2021 study by the Institute for Climate and Sustain-

able Cities and the Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air.

According to the Greenpeace report, Benguet, Rizal, and Metro Manila have the worst air quality in the Philippines.

BREAKING DOWN SILOS

There is a need to break down silos among agencies toward the development of green technologies needed for climate-resilient communities, said Ms. Herrera, adding that legislators are looking to update the Clean Air Act of 1999.

"We recognize that we should look at long-term solutions," she said in a Sept. 6 e-mail. "Our health sector must be resilient and must be strengthened — so it can protect the most vulnerable against climate change."

Integration between climate and health is possible through research and advocacy, said Dr. Rosalind G. Vianzon, head of the healthy settings and environment division of the Health Promotion Bureau of the Department of Health.

"We will review healthy settings like homes, schools, and workplaces, and adopt a life-cycle approach, so we can understand how climate change affects the health of babies, children and adults," she said.

The National Government has earmarked P296.3 billion for the health sector in 2023, a 10.4% increase from its 2022 budget.

The proposed National Expenditure Program for 2023 will include P453 billion for climate change adaptation and mitigation programs and projects, 56.4% higher than the P289.73 billion for 2022.



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HP to recycle 1.2 million tons of hardware by 2025

HP Inc. launched the “HP Supplies Impact” Program to enable channel partners to help HP commercial users increase their ink and toner cartridge recycling across the Philippines, Australia, Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore, with New Zealand and Thailand to follow later this year.

The ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region is increasingly in the spotlight as a source of ocean-bound plastic pollution, which the World Bank has recognized with a US\$20 million grant to support the current Southeast Asia Regional Program on Combating Marine Plastics.

HP’s new initiative encourages businesses of all sizes to turn ad-hoc recycling events into a simple, seamless, continuous practice, helping HP customers and partners contribute more to sustainability efforts while aligning with HP’s global mission to recycle 1.2 million tons of hardware and supplies by 2025.

“Our aim is to continually increase

the collection and recycling of Original HP supplies across Southeast Asian countries like the Philippines with sustainability today an absolute imperative for a better environment, society, and business. HP Supplies Impact makes sustainability more attainable for customers of all sizes and sectors,” Samir Shah, HP’s Vice President and Head of Print Category, Greater Asia said.

“This is in line with our sustainable impact goal – guided by the belief that companies have a role in reversing climate change. In fact, it has become a conscious decision for customers to take part in this movement. A 2022 research report reveals that 75 percent of Filipino consumers prefer sustainable and eco-friendly brands, while 25 percent say they prefer to buy items from sellers with sustainability practices. Through the HP Supplies Impact program, we are amplifying our efforts while at the same time providing more opportunities for the wider community to lessen carbon

footprint and close the loop,” added Christian Reyes, Managing Director of HP Philippines.

To simplify the recycling process for customers, HP is providing biodegradable green recycling bags to partners from the HP Amplify Impact program, who will distribute these to customers during regularly scheduled visits. Customers can deposit all used HP ink and toner cartridges into the recycling bags for convenient collection by HP partners, who then pass all collected supplies to the HP Planet Partners program, a global initiative to collect and recycle used products in 76 countries and territories worldwide.

For every 30 ink or toner cartridges returned by a customer, HP is partnering with One Tree Planted, an environmental non-profit organization, to plant a tree in approved locations on behalf of the customer to help combat deforestation.

As part of its broader sustainability strategy, HP has set an ambitious

goal to enroll at least 50 percent of Amplify partners in the Amplify Impact program by 2025. A voluntary initiative within the global HP Amplify program, it provides more than 10,000 partners with the opportunity to join HP in its efforts to generate meaningful impact across climate action, human rights, and digital equity. In the Philippines, 38 percent of its managed resellers already signed up under the Amplify Impact program versus the target of 30 percent by April 2022.

“The strength and reach of our partner and customer network are a huge asset and by bringing our partners with us on this journey, we can work together to create a more sustainable and just world. HP Supplies Impact helps our Amplify Impact partners forge a unique movement to deliver long-term sustainability while differentiating themselves competitively,” said David Tan, Head of Channels and Supplies, Greater Asia, HP.



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ENVIRONMENT CHAMPIONS.

Mandaluyong City's Palit Basura Project wins the top prize in Manila Water Co.'s Kampeon ng Kalikasan as the water distributor marks the 10th year of its Toka Toka advocacy. The winning program highlights the community's sustainable environmental program that protects waterways from further pollution. Manila Water honored three outstanding environmental programs and 84 barangays within the East Zone concession area that reached or exceeded desludging targets for 2021.



PANAWAGAN NG NWRB SA MA-BAGYONG BUWAN NG SETYEMBRE, INAASAHAN NG PAGASA



REIMATE OPINION

ANG INYONG LINGKOD

NI DR. HILDA C. ONG

HANGGANG tatlong bagyo ang inaasahan ng PAGASA o Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration na papasok sa PAR o Philippine area of responsibility ngayong buwan ng September 2022.

Pagliliinaw ng PAGASA, hindi pa kabilang si Super Typhoon Henry o "Hinnamnor" sa mga bagyong inaasahan ngayong buwan dahil ito ay nabuo at pumasok sa PAR

nitong August 30, 2022.

Bagamat hindi tumama sa kalupaan ng bansa ang bagyo, pinalakas naman nito ang Habagat kung kaya naging maulan sa halos buong Luzon at Metro Manila nitong nagdaang Biyernes, Sabado at Linggo.

Kaya sabi ng weather bureau, asahan ang maulang buwang ito na maaaring magdulot ng pagbaha at landslides sa mga bulubunduking bahagi ng Luzon.

Kaugnay nito, nagpaalala si NWRB o National Water Resources Board executive director Dr. Seville David sa publiko na samantalain ang pagbuhos ng malakas na ulan sa kanilang mga lugar at magipon ng rain water na maaaring magamit sa mga pang-araw-araw na pangangailangan katulad ng panglinis ng bahay at kotse, pambuhos sa banyo, at iba pa.

Batay sa dam elevation level monitoring ng MWSS o ng Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, bagamat sunod-sunod ang pag-ulan sa Mero Manila, hindi naman ito direktang bumubuhos sa Angat Dam kung kaya't mababa ang elebasyon ng tubig.

Base sa dam elevation level kahapon, ika-6 ng Set-

yembre 2022, ang lebel ng tubig sa Angat Dam ay nasa 177.19 meters, mas mababa ng 2.81 meters, kung ikukumpara sa minimum operating level na 180 meters. Mas lalo pang bumaba sa normal high-water level (NHWL) na 210 meters.

Hinikayat din ni executive director David ang mga magpapatayo o magpapagawa ng bahay na ikunsidera na ang paglalagay ng rain water harvesting para matiyak na malinis ang tubig ulan na maiipon at magagamit sa kanilang mga tahanan.

Ang rain water harvesting ay bahagi ng adoption and resiliency sa climate change and global warming na nararansan na ng kasalukuyang henerasyon.



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Indonesia may export more coal, fertilizer to Philippines — Marcos

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. on Tuesday said he discussed the possibility of securing coal and fertilizer supply from Indonesia during his meeting with President Joko Widodo.

Mr. Marcos, who ended his state visit to Indonesia on Tuesday, said he “brought up” agriculture with Mr. Widodo because that’s “a very important subject that needs to be discussed.”

“We talked about the possibility of them supplying us with fertilizer, with urea from Indonesia,” he told reporters in Jakarta, based on a transcript provided by Malacañang.

As a net importer of fertilizer, the Philippines is vulnerable to global supply disruptions and price fluctuations.

Fertilizer prices have sharply increased in recent months as supply was affected by the Russia-Ukraine war. Russia is the world’s biggest supplier of fertilizer.

The Philippines’ primary sources of fertilizer imports from 2018 to 2021 are China (40.66%), Indonesia (16.70%), and Malaysia (12.20%), according to data from the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA).

In July, Mr. Marcos said he would reach out to Indonesia, China, Russia, Malaysia, and the United Arab Emirates to secure cheaper fertilizer through government-to-government deals.

During his state visit, Mr. Marcos said he also asked Indonesia for assistance in strengthening the local fisheries sector.

“I also asked for help on fisheries because I am obsessed with the fact that the Philippines

imports *galunggong*. I can’t accept it,” he said. “So I asked for help because their fisheries sector is stable.”

Mr. Marcos, 64, has promised to boost local food production and limit imports as much as possible. But experts said this would be challenged by elevated inflation and rising costs of farm inputs.

COAL IMPORTS

Mr. Marcos, who has vowed to pursue a shift to renewable energy, said the country is poised to secure more coal exports from Indonesia.

“There was a time a few weeks back where they stopped exporting coal. We asked them and they included us in the list. They would export coal to us,” he said.

Indonesia, the world’s largest exporter of coal, has implemented coal export bans to ensure there is enough domestic supply.

Mr. Marcos said he and Mr. Widodo also talked about the green energy shift, noting that coal is not seen as environmentally friendly.

He noted the state visit to Indonesia was “more productive than we had expected.”

“I think the most extensive subject matter was in fact, PPP (public-private partnership). Because we are here to encourage PPPs with the Philippine government,” Mr. Marcos said, adding that they also sought to encourage joint ventures between Philippine and Indonesian companies.

Marcos, SI/3

Marcos, from SI/1

Mr. Marcos also said he is considering building state-run malls in the Philippines to promote small enterprises and local products. This, after Mr. Widodo gave him a tour in a mall run by the Indonesian government.

INVESTMENTS

Meanwhile, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) wooed Indonesian companies to invest in the Philippines.

“The Philippines is open for business. Recent policy reforms, particularly on foreign investment ownership and other restrictions as well as on incentives, have made the Philippines more conducive for foreign businesses, including those from Indonesia,” Trade Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual said during a roundtable meeting with Indonesian executives in Jakarta on Sept. 5.

He touted the passage of economic reforms such as the Corporate Recovery and Tax In-

centives for Enterprises (CREATE) law, which offers incentives to investors.

Mr. Pascual said the Philippines is seeking partnerships and investments in the industrial, manufacturing, and transport cluster; the technology, media, and telecommunication cluster; and the health and life sciences cluster.

“We continue to invest in physical and cyber infrastructure, power generation and transmission, and logistics, as well as in modern and efficient air, land, and sea transport facilities. To build more of these support and service facilities, we welcome the participation of the private sector, both local and foreign,” he added.

Mr. Pascual said Indonesia is one of the top 10 sources of net foreign direct investments in the Philippines as of August this year. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza and Revin Mikhail D. Ochave**



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Go wants pro-people gov't services

'We all know that the barangay and its officials are the immediate provider of frontline services to our fellow countrymen. And it is because of this reason that we have to further improve the barangays and address the woes of our barangay officials'

Senator Christopher "Bong" Go has filed in the 19th Congress various measures aimed at modernizing the bureaucracy to better respond to the challenges of modern times and improve the efficiency, effectiveness and equity of public services.

Among the measures include Senate Bill No. 194 or the proposed E-Governance Act of 2022, mandating the government to establish an integrated, interconnected, and interoperable information and resource-sharing and communications network, an internal records management information system, an information database, and digital portals for the delivery of public services.

The measure pushes for the digitization of paper-based and other traditional modes of workflows for a more efficient and transparent public service.

Go said that the public must feel that the government is actually and truly at their fingertips, bringing key government services closer to the people.

He likewise reintroduced in the Upper House SBN 1185 or the proposed Bureau of Immigration Modernization Act of 2022. Go noted that the Commonwealth Act of 1940 which provided the mandate of the BI is "an outdated law passed during the American regime."

While amendments have been introduced over the years, Go explained that the immigration system needs to be updated to reflect the present challenges of modern times.

Under the bill, co-terminous positions are created for the Office of the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners. New positions will also be created under the Directorate for Planning and Research, and Directorate for Human Resources Management and Development.

New positions

The creation of new positions under the bill, according to Go, could boost the productivity and efficiency of the BI.

Go also reaffirmed the need to empower barangays, as the country's primary unit of governance, by providing barangay officials more opportunities to develop their capabilities as well as provide them regular pay and other benefits.

This prompted him to refile SBN 197 which would provide for a Magna Carta for Barangays.

"We all know that the barangay and its officials are the immediate provider of frontline services to our fellow countrymen. And it is because of this reason that we have to further improve the barangays and address the woes of our barangay officials," he added.

Under SBN 197, barangay officials will be treated as regular government employees. The Punong Barangay, members of the Sangguniang Barangay, the Sangguniang Kabataan chairperson, the barangay secretary and barangay treasurer will be entitled to salaries, emoluments, allowances such as hazard pay, representation and transportation allowance, 13th-month pay and other benefits that regular government employees enjoy.

Go is also pushing for a measure that would provide more resilient, affordable and decent houses to disadvantaged Filipinos across the country.

SBN 426 provides for the National Housing Development, Production and Financing Program which seeks to increase housing production by forging partnerships among relevant stakeholders to address the social housing demands of the Filipino families.



Creating a biking culture for health and pocket



WITH the traffic problem nowhere near solved, and a transportation crisis linked to the high cost of petroleum products exacerbated by the weakest peso to dollar rate in history (which hit one centavo shy of Php57 to \$1 as of yesterday), what's the government doing to get public transportation solutions on track?

One idea that has been in the throes of development – or at the very least wishful thinking – for years is the creation of a bike riding culture in the Philippines.

Some strides have been made toward creating dedicated bike lanes in the PH, particularly under the last administration. Then Public Works Sec. Mark Villar issued a policy prescribing the standard design of bike lanes along national highways.

To help protect cyclists, the Land Transportation Office issued Memorandum Circular 2021-2267 in May 2021, a list of guidelines for motorists.

The first guideline forbids motor vehicles from crossing or parking on bicycle and pedestrian lanes. However, many violations of this rule related to the encroachment of cars and motorcycles onto bike lanes make bike riders feel unsafe.

One lady biker's story

There is also the problem of crimes against bikers.

Just last month, a friend who works in the CCP area, and bikes to and from her home in Cavite, had her mobile phone snatched when she stopped at a streetlight to use her phone. This frightened

her so badly that she slept at her office that night.

However, she is still biking and hasn't given up on it despite the risk because the alternative – public transportation situation on jeepneys, buses, and the like – is horrendous on a daily basis.

She started commute biking in the first place when she found it difficult to get rides at PITX.

Sometimes she would get home in the wee hours of the morning, sleep a few hours, and wake up early again for the slog to work. When she bikes, though, it takes her less than two hours to go the distance, and she looks very fit and healthy now.

“Going green” in terms of transportation will benefit commuters on many levels, including relieving the pressure of high fuel prices and easing the air pollution problem.

Why can't the government – and I am speaking of past administrations over decades in addition to the current one – get its act together on this fairly simple matter?

If we need a benchmarking and best practices model, there's always The Netherlands, which many consider to be the premier biking country of the world.

They have tons of information on the subject. For one, check out the website run by nonprofit

group Dutch Cycling Embassy that exists for the purpose of sharing information about the Dutch bike culture with the rest of the world.

Dutch infrastructure supports biking to a great extent, with dedicated bike lanes that are so safe parents feel secure enough to take their babies and toddlers on 'bakfietsen,' cargo bikes with a huge holdall in between the wheels.

Bicycle Act of 2022

This year, Villar, now a senator, filed the Bicycle Act of 2022, that provides for the creation of a Local Bikeway Office (LBO) to be supervised by city and municipal engineering offices.

A similar bill – the Bicycle Act of 2020 – was filed around December of that year by Mark Villar's sister Carmille Villar-Genuino as Las Piñas representative. That law contains many of the same provisions in yet another previous iteration filed by their father Manny Villar in 2011 when he was a

senator.

The LBO will manage the “construction and maintenance of a bikeway network” that will incorporate safety features into its design to protect cyclists.

It also enumerates many rights, responsibilities, and obligations of cyclists, including adhering to the proper speed, wearing a helmet with chin strap at all times, no riding on crosswalks or sidewalks, and the like.

This set of rules right off the bat riled some cyclists who commented: come up with the actual bikeways first before telling cyclists what to do and not to do!

It's interesting to see how this particularly political family has not given up on getting their Bike Act passed. In any case, if passed it would be a leap forward for the biking community as it gives commuters a healthier and cheaper option for going

places.

However, I suggest checking in with the cycling community again via a consultation or focus group discussion regarding the inclusion of some provisions which some may find objectionable or unnecessary.

Let the goal be the creation and implementation of a biking environment similar to that of The Netherlands. “Going green” in terms of transportation will benefit commuters on many levels, including relieving the pressure of high fuel prices and easing the air pollution problem.

What's needed to get this done sooner rather than later is political will, not only at the lawmaker level but also at the local government level, as LGUs will be responsible for creating and maintaining proper bikeways in their areas.

*** FB and Twitter: @DrJennyO



G7 company emissions fall short of global climate goal

COMPANIES in the Group of Seven (G7) economies are failing to meet Paris Climate Agreement objectives, non-profit disclosure platform CDP and global management consultancy Oliver Wyman said on Tuesday, based on current corporate pledges to cut emissions.

Under the global 2015 Paris deal, countries agreed to cut greenhouse gas emissions fast enough to limit global warming to 2 degrees Celsius (°C) and aim to keep the rise below 1.5°C, which scientists say would avert some of its worst effects.

Across the G7, which consists of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States, corporate emissions targets are overall on a 2.7°C warming trajectory, CDP and Oliver Wyman analysis showed.

"It is not acceptable for any country, let alone the world's most advanced economies, to have industries displaying so little collective ambition," Laurent Babikian, Global Director of Capital Markets at CDP, said in a statement.

"Momentum is growing, but as we approach COP27, we must get our 1.5°C goal off life support," he added.

Collective emissions of US and Canadian firms are seen matching the pace of decarbonization required to restrict global warming to 2.8°C and 3.1°C, respectively, with the study stating that it is "largely the result of companies completely lacking targets, rather than targets that lack ambition".

The study revealed that firms in Germany, Italy and the Netherlands had the most ambitious targets to lower emissions in the G7, as they align with 2.2°C on average, while France is at 2.3°C and the United Kingdom at 2.6°C.

"The analysis highlights big differences in ambition and willingness across companies to take a lead with their targets, and the urgent need to spread best practices further and faster," Partner, Financial Services at Oliver Wyman James Davis said. — Reuters

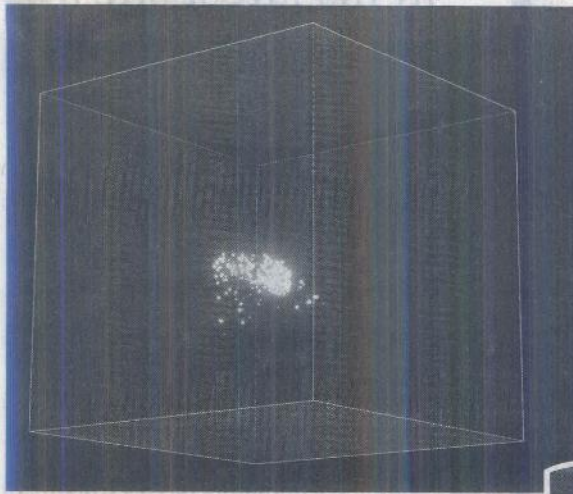


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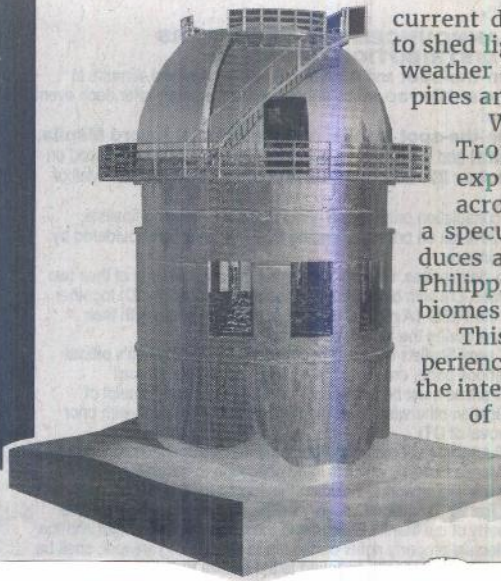
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The art and science of climate change ◀B-8



ENVIRONMENTALISM From left: Derek Tumala's creations *Heatbox* and *Obsrbatoryo*, both rendered by Justin Lanuza



current data, and future forecasts to shed light on shifting patterns of weather and climate in the Philippines and the region.

With diorama as a model, Tropical Climate Forensics explores the climate crisis across the past, present, and a speculative future. Derek produces a taxonomy specific to the Philippines as a tropical site, with biomes to represent his study.

This exploratory sandbox experience is the Philippines' entry at the international online exhibition of 28 arts agencies launched by the World Weather Network, a community of creatives reporting on weather and climate.

The global project has art agencies showcase various atmospheric conditions of participating countries through artworks and images, stories, and reflections to construct an archipelago of world views and

change through art, science, and digital technology.

His exploratory works, majority of which engage new media, have been presented at the Art Basel Hong Kong, Salzburg Global Seminar, Tokyo Design

With diorama as a model, Tropical Climate Forensics explores the climate crisis across the past, present, and a speculative future.

voices that better depict the issue of climate change across multiple languages and localities.

Derek was commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD) of De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde (DLSB). The institute was supported by the British Council's Creative Commissions for Climate Action, a program that dissects climate

Week, and Beyond Time Residency Poland. He also initiated Mvltiverse, a group of multimedia artists that probes the wonders of moving images, as well as STEAM/Projects, a collective of technologists and artists.

Tropical Climate Forensics is on view until July 2023 at worldweathernetwork.org/station/mcad/ | mcad@benilde.edu.ph.



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The art and science of climate change

A discussion on one of today's hottest topics, the death of the world warming up



JULES VIVAS

The end is near! The quote from the New Testament that claims the final judgment is more real than we acknowledge it to be. That is, if we don't do something about climate change.



WORLD DEGREDDATION *Diorama of the Climate Crisis* by Derek Tumala, rendered by Justin Lanuza; and (bottom) portrait of the artist



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Editorial

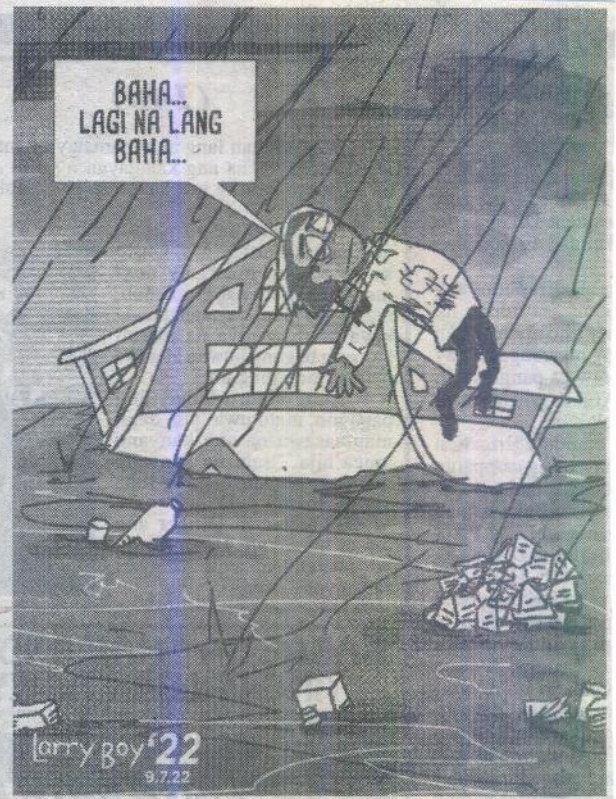
MMDA at DPWH: Lutasin ang pagbaha sa Metro Manila

MARAMING lugar sa Metro Manila ang binabaha. Nangunguna rito ang Maynila, Quezon City, Malabon, Valenzuela, Marikina, Makati at Pasay.

Sa Maynila, sa panahon ng tag-ulan, lubog sa baha ang Sampaloc area kabilang ang España Blvd., Governor Forbes, Blumentritt at Maceda Sts. Baha rin sa Taft at Quirino Avenues at sa bahagi ng Intramuros at Rizal Avenue. Kapag bumaha sa mga lugar na nabanggit, hindi na makakaraan ang mga maliliit na sasakyan. Mapiipilitang maglakad sa baha ang mga tao.

Baha rin sa Mother Ignacia, Roxas District, Quezon at Araneta Avenues, sa Quezon City. Hindi madaanan ang Araneta Avenue dahil sa malakas na agos na nagmumula sa umapaw na creek.

Marami ring kalye ang bumabaha sa Makati at



Pasay Cities. Hindi madaanan ang Buendia Avenue, Pasay Road at Pasong Tamo Extension. Ang Harrison at Libertad St. sa Pasay City ay umaapaw din sa baha kahit sandali lang ang pag-ulan.

Maraming lugar sa Metro Manila ang binabaha at sa ganitong sitwasyon, ang Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) at ang Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) ang binabatikos. Nasaan na ang flood control project na pinondohan nang malaki?

Ayon sa Commission on Audit (COA), may 22 projects ang MMDA na hindi pa natatapos at may 39 pang hindi kumpleto at nagtapos na ang kontrata noong nakaraang taon. Ayon pa sa COA, ang DPWH at MMDA ay may naka-allocate na mahigit P125 billion para sa flood control ngayong taon.

Sabi naman ng MMDA, ang sinasabi ng COA na na-trasadong flood control projects ay nakumpleto na umano ngayong taon. Ang iba pang sinasabing hindi natapos ay dahil sa delayed procurement process dahil sa COVID-19 pandemic at mga na-pending na pag-iisu ng clearances.

Sabi naman ng DPWH, nakumpleto na umano nila ang flood control project sa Sampaloc, Manila. Nakapaglatag na umano ng concrete box culverts sa Josefina-Lepanto and Lepanto-Gov. Forbes Drainage Mains kaya mabilis nang humuhupa ang baha sa Sampaloc area.

Ang problemang pagbaha sa MM ay malaking pag-subok sa kakayahan ni MMDA chairman Engr. Carlo Dimayuga III. Ang MMDA ang nangangasiwa sa flood control projects at harinawang malutas na niya ang ilang dekada nang problema. Ipakita na kaya niya ang problemang baha na pasang-krus ng mga taga-Metro Manila.



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NEWS BRIEFS

Angat Dam still below minimum operating level

The water level in Angat Dam, which supplies 90 percent of Metro Manila's water requirements, has remained below its minimum operating level, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) said on Tuesday. "Currently, the water level in Angat Dam is at 177.93 meters," Seville David Jr. executive director of the NWRB, said during the Laging Handa briefing. The dam is 2.07 meters below its minimum operating level at 180 meters. Seville said the rains brought by the recent tropical storms in the country were not enough to raise the water level in the dam. "If we compare it to the previous years, the water level is still low because we want it not to be lower than the minimum operating level of 180 meters," he said. According to him, the target water level for Angat Dam to ensure enough water supply for next year is at 212 meters. —NESTOR CORRALES