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**DENR**

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# Mining industry finds favor with Marcos after Duterte snub

**But Diokno says mineral extraction must be sustainable**

**By Ronnel W. Domingo**  
@RonWDomingoINQ

The mining industry could help ensure a sustainable recovery of the Philippine economy from the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic as this activity requires sizable investments while demand for mine output is high, according to President Marcos' top economic manager.

"The mining industry holds the greatest potential to be a key driver in our economic re-

covery and long-term growth, especially now that world metal prices are high," Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno said in a statement.

"The Philippines, after all, is one of the world's most richly endowed countries in terms of mineral resources," Diokno said.

The finance chief attended the listing of Philex Mining Corp.'s new common shares (sold through a stock rights offering) on the Philippine Stock

Exchange on Wednesday. Diokno noted that Philex's Silangan underground project in Surigao del Norte, was considered as one of the biggest copper-gold mines in the country.

#### Windfall

He said Philex's listing meant that more jobs would be created, local economies would be reinvigorated, and additional revenues would be contributed to the government.

The Department of Finance

estimates that the project will generate around P8.5 billion in excise taxes alone for its entire mine life.

According to the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, Silangan is expected to yield a total of P80 billion to the government throughout its mine life, including taxes and royalties.

Diokno also said that the Philex listing would send a strong signal to the mining industry that the Philippines' capital markets were viable in-

struments for fast-tracking the development of large mining projects.

"We recognize that apart from boosting local development, mining is a strong magnet for investments that can propel our economy into a higher growth trajectory," he said.

#### Directive

Diokno said that the government was expecting the mining industry to strictly

adhere to responsible and sustainable mining practices. He added that the mining industry should strike a balance between protecting the environment, uplifting local communities and supporting the government's socioeconomic agenda.

"This is a nonnegotiable condition so we can guarantee the sustainability of the industry and the strong economic growth of its host communities," Diokno said. INQ



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## *MGB adopts digital platform for monitoring*

The Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) is piloting a digital platform aimed at improving monitoring activities and compliance in the mining industry.

The MGB said it is developing a system that will serve as a digital platform for the submission of compliance by the mining companies and stakeholders with the terms and conditions of the contracts/permits/other similar mining tenements, and other pertinent laws, rules, and regulations.

The project, which was approved for implementation by the MGB management last July 12, has three phases based on its scope and coverage in terms of mining scale, mineral type, and policy requirements.

Phase I will serve as the pilot phase that aims to use the system by the selected mining companies that will initially be

engaged in the design, development, and implementation. This is expected to be completed end-September.

Phases II and III will commence after the successful pilot testing and integration of provisions in the mining-related policies that will serve as the legal basis for its implementation.

The MGB said the success of this project would improve the organizational productivity of the agency and mining companies' technical personnel conducting the monitoring activities and mining compliance, respectively.

Likewise, it will provide an efficient and effective way of delivering services to its stakeholders because of the conversion of manual to electronic and digital transactions. It is also expected that related information would easily be generated and shared to the public. — Danessa Rivera



## Diokno expects mining to 'flourish' under Marcos

The Department of Finance (DOF) assured on Wednesday, Aug. 3, that the Marcos administration would create an enabling environment for mining activities to flourish in the country.

At the listing of Philex Mining Corp.'s (Philex) common shares in the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE), Finance Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno said that the mining industry is a potential source of sustained economic growth.

Diokno also underscored the benefit of mobilizing investments for mine development.

"The mining industry holds the greatest potential to be a key driver in our economic recovery and long-term growth, especially now that world metal prices are high," Diokno said.

"The Philippines, after all, is one of the world's most richly endowed countries in terms of mineral resources," he added.

The finance chief said the Marcos administration is committed to continue creating an enabling environment for mining activities to flourish in the country as he looks forward to similar listings in the future.

"We recognize that apart from boosting local development, mining is a strong magnet for investments that can propel our economy into a higher growth trajectory," Diokno said.

But Diokno also pointed out that the government expects the mining industry to strictly adhere to responsible and sustainable mining practices.

He said that the mining industry should strike a balance between protecting the environment, uplifting local communities, and supporting the government's socioeconomic agenda.

"This is a non-negotiable condition so we can guarantee the sustain-

ability of the industry and the strong economic growth of its host communities," Diokno said.

Philex is currently mobilizing investments for the development of its Silangan underground copper-gold mine in Surigao del Norte.

In a disclosure to the PSE, the company said it is offering a maximum of 842 million common shares at the rate of one offer share for every 5.8674 shares owned for ₱3.15 each to raise a total of ₱2.652 billion new equity.

The Stocks Rights Offering (SRO) period started last July 12 and ended July 25, 2022.

The Silangan project, considered one of the biggest copper-gold mines in the country, is planned to be mined in two phases. The first phase has a mineable ore reserve of 81 million metric tonnes which will be mined for 22 years at a rate of 4 million tonnes per year.

The mine is targeted to commence commercial operations in the first quarter of 2025.

Diokno said that Philex' SRO listing demonstrates the mining industry's confidence in the country's promising economic growth prospects.

He said that the offering means more jobs will be created, local economies will be reinvigorated, and additional revenues will be contributed to the government.

The Department of Finance estimates that the project will generate around ₱8.5 billion in excise taxes alone for its entire mine life.

Diokno said that the listing sends a strong signal to the mining industry that the country's capital markets are viable instruments for fast tracking the development of large mining projects. (Chino S. Leyco)



# Govt commits to enabling environment

BY MAYVELIN U. CARABALLO

**T**HE government is committed to fostering an environment that would allow the mining industry to thrive in the country, Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno said.

In his remarks at the listing of Philex Mining Corp.'s (Philex) common shares in the Philippine Stock Exchange on Wednesday, he said that given the current high level of metal prices in the world, the mining sector has the greatest potential to play a significant role in the country's recovery and long-term growth.

"The Philippines, after all, is one of the world's most richly endowed countries in terms of mineral resources. Under the Marcos administration, the government commits to create an enabling environment for mining to flourish in the country," Diokno added.

He further said the government is aware that mining, in addition

to encouraging local development, is a strong magnet of investments that may catapult the economy onto a greater growth trajectory.

Diokno said the government also expects the mining sector to closely adhere to ethical and sustainable standards.

"This is a nonnegotiable condition so we can guarantee the sustainability of the industry and the strong economic growth of its host communities," he emphasized.

In the meantime, the Finance chief said the Philex listing reflects trust in the country's bright prospects for economic growth.

He also said Philex would establish a new mine in Surigao and enhance its operations through the offering, which would result in the creation of more jobs, the revitalization of local communities and the contribution of more funds to the government.

Additionally, the listing sends a clear message to the mining sector that capital markets are effective tools for accelerating the development of significant mining projects. Diokno noted that mobilizing mining investments will aid in hastening the rehabilitation and expansion of the economy.

He added that Philex has been a pioneer in ethical mining as one of Southeast Asia's top producers of copper and gold. It has been a fervent supporter of accountability and transparency in the mining industry as well as a dependable government partner in the pursuit of better resource and revenue management.

"I challenge Philex to continue setting an example for the country's mining industry in striking a delicate balance between protecting the environment, uplifting local communities and supporting our socioeconomic agenda," Diokno said.



■ Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno. TMT PHOTO



## DoF chief to miners: Follow sustainable practices

MINING COMPANIES can potentially be a key driver of the Philippines' long-term growth, but Department of Finance (DoF) Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno made it clear that they should follow responsible and sustainable practices.

"The mining industry holds the greatest potential to be a key driver in our recovery and long-term growth, especially now that world metal prices are high... We recognize that apart from boosting local development, mining is a strong magnet for investments that can propel our economy into a higher growth trajectory," Mr. Diokno said during the listing of Philex Mining Corp.'s (Philex) common shares at the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) on Wednesday.

The Marcos administration is committed to creating an enabling environment that will allow the mining industry to flourish, he added.

"In turn, we expect the mining industry to strictly adhere to responsible and sustainable practices. This is a non-negotiable condition so we can guarantee the sustainability of the industry and the strong economic growth of its host communities," Mr. Diokno said.

The Finance chief said Philex, one of the biggest copper and gold producers in Southeast Asia, has been an industry leader in principled mining.

"I challenge Philex to continue setting an example for the country's mining industry in striking a delicate balance between protecting the envi-

*Miners, S1/9*

### Miners, from S1/1

ronment, uplifting local communities, and supporting our socioeconomic agenda," Mr. Diokno said.

Philex on Wednesday held a listing ceremony for its stock rights offering (SRO). Around P2.65 billion raised from the SRO will be used for its Silangan project located in Surigao del Norte.

The Department of Finance in a statement estimated the Silangan project will generate around P8.5 billion in excise taxes alone for its entire mine life.

In 2021, the mining and quarrying industry posted output growth of 5%, from 2.6% in 2020, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority.

The Duterte administration began a crack-down on the mining industry in 2016 as part of its effort to reduce the damage to natural resources.

However, the government lifted the four-year ban on open-pit mining in December 2021. In April this year, President Rodrigo R. Duterte had also lifted the nine-year moratorium on granting mining permits. — **Diego Gabriel C. Robles**



## DepEd, YSEALI boost climate change educ

**T**HE Department of Education (DepEd), in partnership with Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), exchange alumni, is boosting climate change education through the conduct of Climate Changemakers.

Climate Changemakers is the first climate change training course recognized by the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) as part of the Professional Development Priorities of the Department.

The program aims to increase the capacities of teachers to effectively teach climate change competencies, integrate climate change in competencies, and commit to climate action.

"Time is of the essence. Climate change is an emergency. The time to act is now," DepED-DRRMS Director Ronilda Co emphasized.

Some 400 teachers completed the 10n-week online course that utilized synchronous and asynchronous modalities focusing on correcting misconceptions about climate change. It also provided a space for teachers to reflect on their learning and share challenges and good practices.

The course featured lectures from exchange alumni of the YSEALI program of the US Department of State, representatives and former and present members of the National Panel of Technical Experts of the Climate Change Commission, technical specialists and teachers from the Department of Education, and climate

change-focused organizations like the Oscar M. Lopez (OML) Center and Youth Strike for Climate Philippines.

The first batch of the training was held from November 2021 to March 2022, and completers were trained to be mentors in partnership with the Divisions of Apayao, Sorsogon, Iloilo City, Eastern Samar, and Surigao Del Sur from the Cordillera Administrative Region, Region V, VII, VIII, and Caraga, respectively.

The second batch was opened to all K-12 teachers from public and private schools across the country; hundreds applied and completed their synchronous and asynchronous activities.

"Following the ongoing K-12 curriculum review and revision, we will also further enhance the Climate Changemakers online training course before its next release in 2023 and we hope to continue training our teachers to effectively teach climate education and ultimately answer the call to commit to climate action in the Philippines," Director Co added.

Climate Changemakers is also supported of the US Embassy in the Philippines, Save the Children Philippines, YGoal Philippines, Climate Reality Project Philippines, and Climate Action for Sustainability Initiative.

An Online Completion Ceremony for the 400 completers was held last July 29, 2022. For more information on Climate Changemakers, please e-mail [climatechangemakersPH@gmail.com](mailto:climatechangemakersPH@gmail.com) and [drmmo+ccam@deped.gov.ph](mailto:drmmo+ccam@deped.gov.ph).



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## ***Bohol suspends trips to Panglao island over 'expensive' food***

The provincial government of Bohol has suspended boat trips to Virgin Island in Panglao pending an investigation into alleged overpriced food being served in the tourist destination.

Gov. Erico Aristotle Aumentado issued the directive on Tuesday after the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources ordered a probe into a viral post on Facebook, which showed that a group of tourists was charged P26,100 for seafood and drinks ordered in one meal.

Panglao Mayor Edgardo Arcay, for his part, suspended the operations of food establishments on the island while the issue is being resolved in consultation with vendors, who said they buy seafood from outside the island.

Arcay inspected the establishments on Virgin Island on Monday and confirmed that food prices there were expensive.

The Department of Tourism will look into the issue, Secretary Christina Frasco said, noting that allegations of overpricing is a matter that the DOT takes seriously.

She said the DOT regional office is coordinating with concerned local government units in Bohol to provide guidance on standards on the provision of goods and services to tourists.

News reports said that the group of 13 ordered, among other items, oysters, sea urchin and scallops.

- Emmanuel Tupas, Robertzon Ramirez





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# In Bohol, island trips halted over pricey food

Gov suspends visits to Panglao's Virgin Island amid probe of tourists' complaint

By Leo Udtohan  
@leoudtohanINQ

PANGLAO ISLAND, BOHOL—Gov. Aris Aumentado has ordered the suspension of trips to Virgin Island here while an investigation is being conducted over the alleged overpricing of food sold to tourists at a popular sandbar.

Aumentado on Tuesday expressed dismay over reports that a group of 13 tourists was charged P26,100 for the seafood that they consumed during a recent trip.

"We are grateful to social media because it has given us a solid reason for the Sangguniang Panlalawigan to craft resolutions or ordinances that can provide protection and order to tourists that have been exploited for a long time by some businessmen in Panglao and other cities," he said in a post on Facebook.

Aumentado said the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) wanted to close Virgin Island after its officials found out that vendors and tourists violate guidelines on waste management in the area and that businessmen there lacked business permits. Also among the DENR findings were the unregulated prices of food, and the "double collection" of environment user and protected area fees.

## Serious matter

"The DENR wants to close the island to tourists. I, as governor, support the plan of DENR because what happened damaged our tourism industry because many people have complained. We will find a solution



DIALOGUE Panglao Mayor Edgardo "Boy" Arcay (second from left) talks to vendors on Virgin Island on Tuesday amid the controversy generated by their supposedly overpriced seafood.

—LEO UDTOHAN

for this," the governor said.

Tourism Secretary Christina Frasco, in a statement, said she was grateful to Aumentado and Panglao Mayor Edgardo "Boy" Arcay for immediately conducting an investigation on the matter.

"The alleged overpricing of seafood by vendors [on] Virgin Island ... is a matter that the Department of Tourism (DOT) takes seriously, especially as it concerns the welfare of tourists whose continued support for our destinations is critical to the recovery of the tourism industry," she said.

Frasco said her office also requested the Department of Trade and Industry to ensure that "reasonable pricing standards are upheld for purposes of consumer protection."

"While the DOT understands the current predicament and challenges faced by many tourism-related businesses and establishments that are gradually recouping losses due to previously imposed travel restrictions, I believe that due care must always be given to the overall ex-

perience of tourists whether it concerns upholding the quality of accommodations, attaining a certain level of service, or ensuring the reasonable pricing of products," she said.

Arcay on Tuesday talked to vendors on Virgin Island and warned them about the implications of overpricing food and other items sold there.

## Viral post

"If you overprice goods, no one will visit Panglao ever again," Arcay said. "We should take care of the Virgin Island because this is our treasure. Tourists come to Panglao because of beautiful beaches [as well as] honest and hardworking people."

On Monday, Vilma Uy posted on Facebook that her friend's group who visited Virgin Island paid over P26,100 for their food. "Is this how expensive food at Virgin Island, Bohol is?" said Uy in her post.

She also took a photo of the handwritten bill where "lato" (seaweed) was priced at P800,

"tuyom" (sea urchin) at P2,300, and a bunch of 27 bananas at P900.

Engineer Eulalio Colubio Jr., who went to Virgin Island with 12 others on July 29 for an island-hopping activity, filed a complaint at the Panglao Tourism Office regarding the high food prices on the island.

Colubio's wife, Joeper, said they ordered a variety of seafood for lunch and expected to pay only P12,000 to P15,000. After lunch, they were told that their bill reached P26,100.

"We have no intention to ruin their [vendors] reputation. I hope they will put the right price to what they are selling," she said.

Fidel Clenista, 57, and the vendor from whom the group bought their food, said he informed the Colubios about the price before they ordered the food. He said it was the first time a customer complained about their pricing in his eight years of selling food on Virgin Island.

"We might end up losing our livelihood because of what they (Colubios) did to us. Many vendors will be affected," Clenista said.

Vendors sell a medium-sized "kapinan" (abalone) for P100, while large ones are sold for P200. A cluster of "alimango" (crabs) sells for P1,300, sea urchin for P10 to P20 apiece, four pieces of sea cucumber for P100, and squid for P50 to P100 per stick.

German Bongcac, president of Doljo Fishermen's Vendors Association, said the vendors had no intention to dupe tourists.

"There is no overpricing here. That's really the price of the food," he said in Cebuano. —WITH A REPORT FROM TINA G. SANTOS INQ



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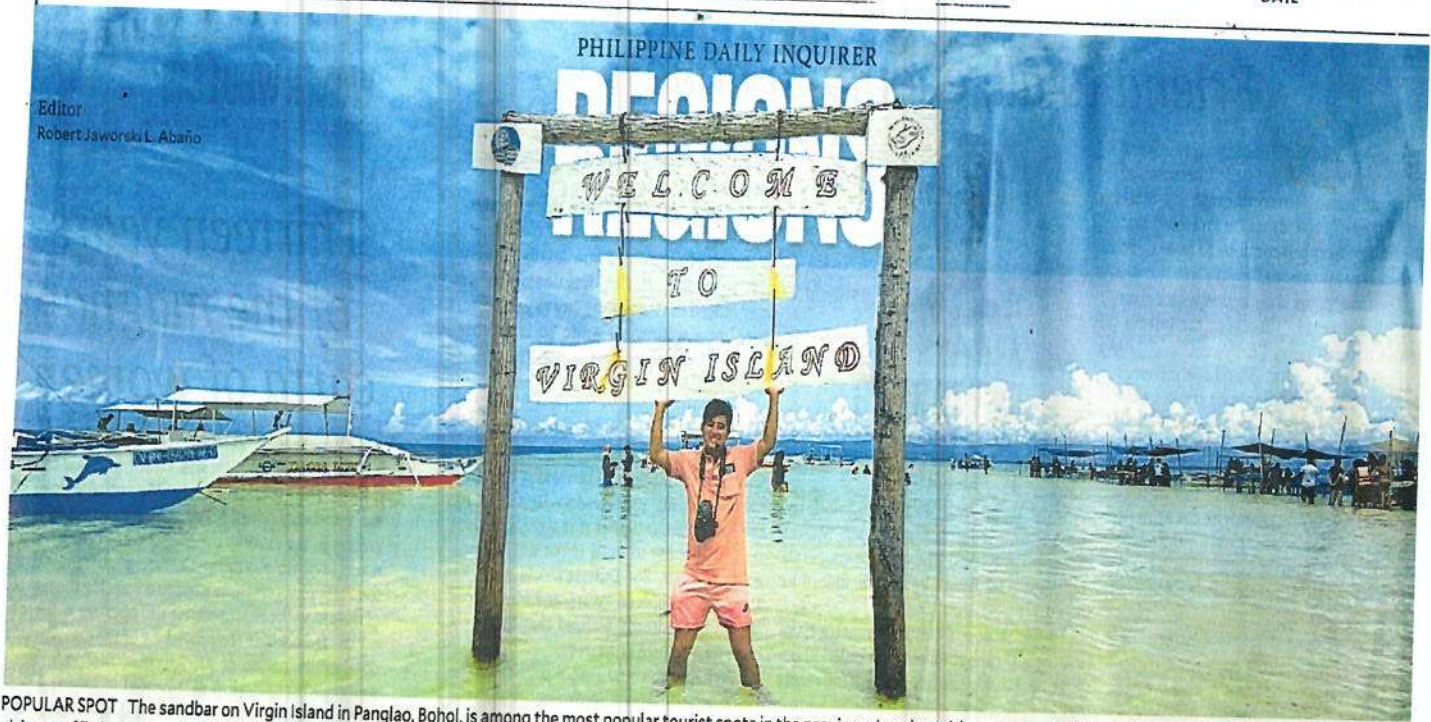
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Editor  
Robert Jaworski L. Abano

**POPULAR SPOT** The sandbar on Virgin Island in Panglao, Bohol, is among the most popular tourist spots in the province. Local vendors set up makeshift seafood stalls there to take advantage of visitor traffic but a complaint over pricing that went viral on social media puts their livelihood at risk. —LEO UDTOMAN



## Virgin ...

(From Page 1)

The Panglao Municipal Tourism Council had earlier recommended the immediate closure of Virgin Island to Arcay when the issue was tackled during their emergency meeting last Monday.

In a statement, Leucodio Trotin, chairman of PMTC, said the body recommended the closure of Virgin Island for food vendors and other tourism activities effective August 3.

The issue stemmed from the viral post on Facebook of a woman showing the prices of seafood that she and her group from Baybay, Leyte ordered.

Their total bill amounted to P26,100.

The food included Abalone for P2,500, "tinolang isda" for P1,800, "kinilaw na isda" for P3,000, "sinugba'ng isda" for P2,500, scallops for P3,000, oyster (P3,000), squid (P2,500), 'lato' (P800), baby squid (P1,500), sea urchin (P2,300), banana (P900), softdrinks (P1,300), and beer (P1,000).

Bohol Gov. Aris Aumentado and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Central Visayas (DENR 7) have ordered an investigation into the matter.

"Further, the council recommends for the continuance

of the island-hopping operations of boats provided that such activity shall be limited only for sightseeing," Trotin said.

While planning for "a well-organized and long-term resolution," the tourism council recommended that a "food street or night market" in Panglao should be put up in which displaced vendors will be prioritized.

"To be fair and just to the affected vendors as well, they shall be able to continuously sell out whatever perishable stock on hand," Trotin said.

The council also recommended the creation of an accredited association of vendors to be invited as member of the council so they could take part in making policies and planning process.

The DENR 7 is now investigating the incident.

"DENR 7 is currently investigating the excessive charging of food meals by vendors in Virgin Island in Panglao, Bohol after the issue circulated on social media," Paquito Melicor Jr., regional executive director of DENR 7, said in a statement on Tuesday.

Melicor said the island is within the Panglao Island Protected Seascape, which is created pursuant to Republic Act 11038 or the Expanded National Integrated Protected Area System Law.



## Villar says rice tariff law 'working well'

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

SENATOR Cynthia A. Villar yesterday questioned calls to review the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL), which liberalized the importation of rice.

Villar, the chairperson of the Senate committee on agriculture and food, is the principal author of Republic Act 11203.

Several sectors earlier sought to repeal the law for failing to serve its purpose.

But Villar insisted that the RTL is working well, especially the P10-billion Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF).

Reacting to tirades that it failed to lower the price of rice, Villar said the cost of

producing palay in the Philippines is now pegged at P11.50 from P12.00 per kilo.

The PhilRice studies showed that producing palay in Vietnam costs P6.22 and P8.86 in Thailand.

She also attributed the increase in the cost of rice to the high price of fertilizers. Villar said this is the reason why she has been promoting the use of kitchen and garden wastes as organic fertilizers.

"You can solve (the high cost of fertilizers) by giving composting machine," also said Villar as she related that majority of wastes in her hometown in Las Pinas are being turned into organic fertilizers and recycled into hard and sturdy school chairs,



## Editorial

### Senator Marcos' meritorious suggestion

ON July 27, in the immediate aftermath of the powerful magnitude 7 earthquake that struck the Ilocos Region, President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. expressed support for pending legislation that would create a dedicated Department of Disaster Resilience (DDR). Efforts to create such a department have been ongoing for several years, and we have expressed support for the idea on several occasions, for a variety of reasons. One of the most important ones was expressed by the president himself, the need to improve the government's rapid response to natural and other disasters.

However, just a day later the President walked back those comments, saying that he agreed instead with a recommendation made by his sister, Sen. Maria Imelda Josefa "Imee" Marcos. Senator Marcos has filed a bill in the Senate that would upgrade and expand the authority of the existing National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC), rather than create an entirely new department.

Without necessarily dismissing the idea of the DDR just yet, we believe Senator Marcos' suggestion has merit, and should be studied carefully. There are a couple of issues to consider.

As the President noted, and as the various legislators who have sponsored DDR measures have described it, the new department would be roughly modeled on the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). FEMA has its own budget, personnel and material assets, and can coordinate the efforts of other government agencies as needed in a disaster; its jurisdiction in a disaster area is activated by a federal disaster declaration signed by the president.

However, in terms of the two main priorities of our government, disaster first response, which was mentioned by President Marcos, and overall disaster preparedness, FEMA may not actually be a good model after all.

Neither first response nor ongoing disaster preparedness are the top priorities of FEMA; although it does have some role in those, its primary concern is disaster recovery. There are two layers of first response before FEMA even arrives on the scene; first, local assets such as police and fire departments, and second, state-level assets, including the National Guard. As for ongoing disaster preparedness of the sort that is important to us here in the Philippines — identifying hazard areas, protecting or moving vulnerable populations, improving the resiliency of infrastructure and built environments — FEMA does offer some planning expertise, but the actual responsibilities for carrying out the work and monitoring lie with other agencies, or other government levels.

Senator Marcos correctly recognized that the existing NDRRMC has most of the tools it needs to carry out the broad mandate stretching from disaster resilience, to response, to recovery, but that it suffers from an inefficient organizational design and some constraints on its ability to act. A dedicated DDR could, if designed properly and given the proper authority, solve those problems, but it may not be the only solution.

As it stands now, it is difficult to argue that the NDRRMC is ineffective or a failure. Perhaps it could perform better, but its results have markedly improved over the past few years, particularly since the catastrophic Typhoon "Yolanda" in 2013 that exposed many of the disaster management framework's shortcomings in spectacular fashion. The response to the Ilocos earthquake has been about as good as can be expected under the current organization, and has largely been effective; simply using the occurrence of the earthquake as an indicator of a certain need for the DDR, as some lawmakers have tried to do, is a bit of a non sequitur.

And, as the senator pointed out, the formation of a new department would inevitably lead to the creation of a number of new executive offices, and the budget expense to go along with those. At a time when the government is launching a campaign to actively cut waste and improve government efficiency, forming a new department when an equally effective alternative using existing resources may be possible is contradictory, and perhaps even irresponsible.

Senator Marcos' "enhanced NDRRMC" idea may not turn out to be the best solution after all, once it is properly analyzed, but the idea certainly seems viable at this point. It should be considered carefully by Congress.

## More than a hundred bills lapsed into law

SENATE President Juan Miguel Zubiri on Tuesday said that 110 local and national bills submitted to former president Rodrigo Duterte for signature during the 18th Congress have lapsed into law.

"Much attention was given to five vetoed bills when there are at least 110 bills that will now have the full effect and force of the law," Zubiri said during plenary session.

Among the bills that lapsed into law were Republic Act 11683 (requisites for the conversion of a municipality into a component city); RA 11697 or "Electric Vehicles and Charging Stations Act"; RA 11698 or "Vintage Vehicle Regulation Act"; RA 11700 (designating Catanduanes as abaca capital of the Philippines); RA 11707 or "Egg Basket Act"; RA 11840 or "Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation Charter"; RA 11861 or "Expanded Solo Parents Welfare Act"; RA 11897 or "National Baptist Day Act"; RA 11898 or "Extended Producer Responsibility Act"; RA 11899 or "Second Congressional Commission on Education Act"; and RA

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## More than

11901 or "Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development Financing Enhancement Act."

Zubiri earlier called on President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. to convene the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (Ledac) to discuss the executive branch's legislation concerns.

The members of the Ledac are the vice president; Senate president and three senators; the House of Representatives speaker and three congressmen; seven Cabinet members whom the President will choose; and representatives of local governments, the youth and the private sector. The President is the chairman of the council.

The Ledac provides the deliberation process wherein lawmakers discuss what bills the executive branch wants the Congress to pass.

Senate Majority Leader Emmanuel Joel Villanueva said awaiting review were 19 bills that President Marcos mentioned in his State of the Nation Address.

"As Senate majority leader, [I] will pay close attention [to] and prioritize these proposed laws. It is clear that these proposals are rooted in the experience and lessons from the crises of the pandemic, in the economy, energy and education. These give the proposals a sense of urgency," Villanueva said.

Also on Tuesday, Senate Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs Chairman Sen. Ronald "Bato" dela Rosa told his fellow senators that his bill to strengthen the private security industry was among the more than 100 measures that lapsed into law.

"Mr. President, you just said a while ago that *basahin na lang ng ating* majority leader (Villanueva) *'yung mga nag-lapse* into law (the majority leader should just read the list of bills that lapsed into law), but I cannot help to inform you that another happy bill that lapsed into law was RA 11917 or the 'Private Security Services Industry Act,'" dela

Rosa said.

"*Pinaghirapan namin ito ni* (former) Senator Franklin Drilon (Former senator Franklin Drilon and I fought hard for this)," he added.

RA 11917 mandated the stricter regulation of security agencies.

Dela Rosa said that the new law ensures that private security agencies shall be 100 percent-owned and controlled by Filipinos, provided that they shall not employ more than 2,000 private security professionals.

Meanwhile, Malacañang on Wednesday denied that Marcos was on a "veto spree," saying that out of the 41 bills that recently lapsed into law, only five were vetoed by the President.

"*Gusto ko lang linawin, hindi po nagkaroon ng veto spree ang ating Pangulo* (I just want to clarify, the President did not go on a veto spree). Forty-one bills lapsed into law, and only five were vetoed. So, it's not a spree," said Press Secretary Rose Beatrix "Trixie" Cruz-Angeles in a news conference.

The Palace was reacting to a statement by Sen. Francis "Chiz" Escudero, saying that Marcos Jr. was on a "bill vetoing spree" after the Chief Executive thumbed down tax exemption of the honoraria for teachers rendering service during elections.

The five measures vetoed by the President were the creation of the Bulacan Airport City Special Economic Zone; Office of the Government Corporate Counsel Charter; Davao Light and Power Company Inc. Franchise; Philippine Transportation Safety Board Act; and Exempting From Income Taxation the Honoraria, Allowances, and Other Financial Benefits of Persons Rendering Service During Elections.

"*Yung pag-veto ng Presidente* (The President vetoing some bills) is a matter of good housekeeping. ... It is not a spree. *Tinotono lang naman ng ating Pangulo du'n sa mga sistema 'yung mga batas natin* (Our President just wants our laws to be attuned to the system)," Cruz-Angeles said.

**JAVIER JOE ISMAEL  
AND KRISTINA MARALIT**



## NATIONWIDE ROUND-UP

### US looking to assist the Philippines in clean energy transition

THE AMERICAN government is looking to provide assistance to the Philippines' clean energy transition through the United States Trade and Development Agency (USTDA), the US Embassy said in a statement on Wednesday.

USTDA Director Enoch T. Ebong is coming to the Philippines later this week to explore collaborations on sustainable infrastructure with public and private entities, the embassy said.

"USTDA works in close partnership with the public and private sectors in the Philippines and South Africa to advance the development of sustainable infrastructure projects that each country has established as its priorities," Ms. Ebong said in a statement on Tuesday.

"Our model of assistance focuses on access and inclusivity and is based on the core principles of mutual benefit and trust," she added.

She will be joining US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken during his visit to the Philippines and South Africa.

The Department of Foreign Affairs earlier announced that Mr. Blinken is scheduled to visit the Philippines from August 5 to 6. It will be his first visit to the country since assuming office in January last year.

While in Manila, he will meet Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique A. Manalo to discuss the coronavirus pandemic, climate crisis, and other regional and global challenges. — **Alyssa Nicole O. Tan**



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# Committed power capacity up 16%

THE total capacity of committed power plants from the private sector increased by more than 16 percent as of first half of 2022, according to the Department of Energy (DOE).

The agency said the number increased to 8,867.69 megawatts (MW) for the period, compared to the 7,628.17 MW recorded as of first half of 2021.

DOE considers power plants as committed when they have achieved power supply agreements, financial close, system impact study and other key permits from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Energy Regulatory Commission.

Projects in the list are those expected to be built from this year until 2027 and even those that are

## Summary of committed power projects

As of June 30, 2022

Plant type	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	TBD	Total
Coal	668.00	644.40	270.00	1,000.00	1,836.00	270.00	-	4,488.40
Oil-based	33.25	-	-	-	-	-	8.50	41.75
Natural gas	-	-	1,312.50	-	-	1,100.00	1,087.50	3,500.00
Renewable energy	416.42	363.12	8.10	18.00	10.00	22.00	-	837.64
Geothermal	3.00	79.50	4.50	10.00	10.00	22.00	-	129.00
Hydropower	137.37	83.83	3.60	8.00	-	-	-	232.80
Biomass	19.60	41.00	-	-	-	-	-	60.60
Solar	256.45	158.79	-	-	-	-	-	415.24
Wind	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,117.67</b>	<b>1,007.52</b>	<b>1,590.60</b>	<b>1,018.00</b>	<b>1,646.00</b>	<b>1,392.00</b>	<b>1,096.00</b>	<b>8,867.79</b>
BESS	690.13	420.00	460.00	500.00	-	-	-	2,070.13

Source: DOE

yet to be decided.

The total number also only reflected capacity from traditional power plants and excluded committed battery energy storage

facilities whose number went down by almost two percent to 2,070.13 MW from first half 2021's 2,110 MW.

Bulk of the committed ca-

capacity as of first half-2022 equivalent to 8,085.06 MW are located in Luzon or over 91 percent of all planned projects nationwide.

On a nationwide basis, coal still has the highest share in committed projects: 4,488.40 MW followed by natural gas-fired power plants with 3,500 MW, solar

with 415.24 MW, hydro with 232.80 MW and geothermal with 129 MW.

Committed capacities for both biomass and oil-based power

projects are minimal at 60.60 MW and 41.75 MW, respectively.

There are no committed capacities for wind power projects. - **Jed Macapagal**





## Battling the carbon crisis: the need to enhance operational efficiency

By Soham Chokshi

SCIENTISTS have warned us with proven evidence that our planet is on the verge of a climate crisis. It brings our attention to how global warming is a distressing fact. Climate change has impacted our planet so much that every year, a gigantic 750 billion tons of ice melt as a result of global warming. The temperature of land and ocean has risen at an average rate of 0.08°C every decade since 1880.

One of the sectors that is accountable for such impacts is logistics. Despite the fact that any economy relies so much on the transportation and logistics industry, these sectors also contribute significantly to the increase in carbon emissions; thus, climate change.

Transport in Southeast Asia is responsible for 40% of global greenhouse gas emissions and 23% of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). As one of the most at-risk parts of the globe, Southeast Asia's many coastal regions and island cities are lagging in climate action and may bear the brunt of climate change. The Indonesian government has renewed its commitment to reduce greenhouse gases by 29% below business-as-usual rates in 2030, which will help counter the adverse effects of climate change by the end of the decade.

### BATTLING THE CARBON CRISIS: THE TECHNOLOGY IMPERATIVE

Many governments around the world are also taking action to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by implementing regulations and adopting policies that can help businesses to manage their logistics and transportation pro-

cesses. Apart from government policies, implementing tech-driven supply chain and logistics management on a larger scale can help logistics stakeholders to build resilient and sustainable supply chains.

Below are some critical ways for logistics-powered businesses to reduce their carbon footprint while saving costs:

#### 1. Decreasing miles traveled

An online report shows that cutting off the number of miles traveled by vehicles, optimizing delivery routes, and avoiding traffic gridlocks can help reduce harmful CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 37 million metric tons per year. Smart logistics management tools reduce the distance traveled by 5% and lower trip volumes by 6%, making the drivers more time-efficient in executing the delivery tasks.

#### 2. Reducing empty miles

Empty miles or deadhead miles occur

when a transport vehicle delivers goods to its destination but returns to base with an empty container. Automated logistics solutions overcome this problem by ensuring that each vehicle's capacity is entirely utilized during each journey.

#### 3. Boosting productivity with order clubbing and multi-drop pickup

Logistics providers who still practice traditional delivery management may require massive investments in infrastructure and drivers to deliver orders. The smart route order clubbing and multi-drop/pickup feature allows managing multiple orders in a single trip to improve delivery efficiency.

#### 4. Reducing returns

Delays in deliveries are one of the main reasons behind the increase in the number of returns. Returning goods causes landfill waste of 5 billion pounds

in the US alone, contributing to 15 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. These numbers are predicted to increase by 30% by 2030.

Incorrect/poor quality addresses are also a cause of delay. Advanced logistics solutions automate order dispatching and AWB generation, eliminating the risk of error in the delivery addresses. Geocoding helps convert addresses into exact coordinates that direct drivers to the precise delivery location.

Increasing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is not just an environmental problem; it is also a business problem. Businesses have to exercise best practices that help bring financial and sustainability benefits to the ecosystem.

*SOHAM CHOKSHI is the CEO and Co-Founder of Shippy.*

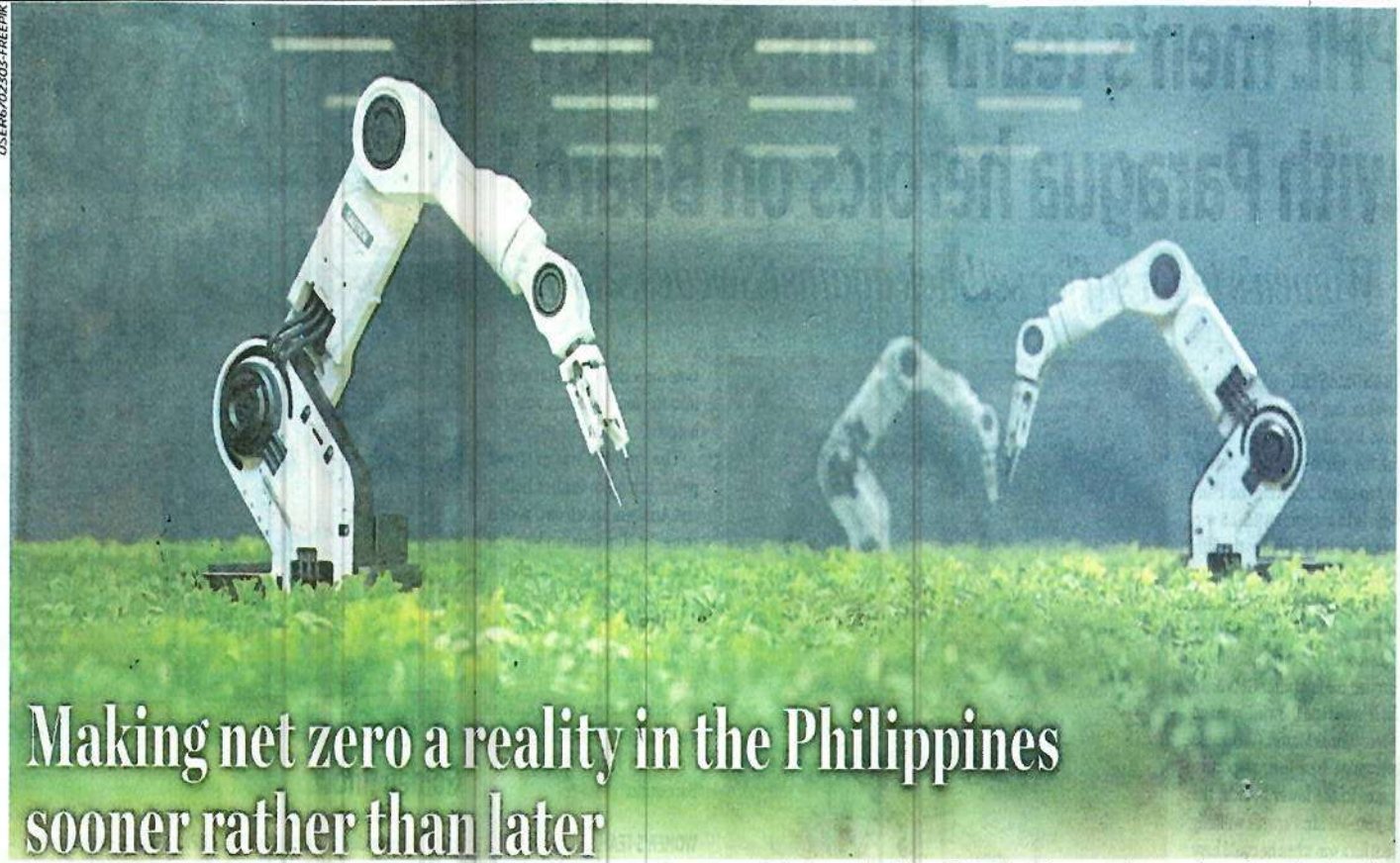


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## Making net zero a reality in the Philippines sooner rather than later

By Jon Canto

A NUMBER of countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including China and Indonesia, have set aggressive targets to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, despite significant coal exposure. The Philippines has not yet followed suit. Instead, it has pledged to reduce emissions by 75% from the “business as usual” trajectory by 2030; this promise is also almost entirely conditional on international financial support that has so far not been forthcoming. The Philippine Energy Plan forecasts emissions increasing until at least 2040.

That said, there has been some action. The Department of Energy has set an objective of 50% renewable energy in power generation by 2040, and in 2020 imposed a moratorium on construction of new coal-fired power stations. In transport, there are mandates for biodiesel and bioethanol and targets for electric vehicle (EV) penetration. There are also goals for energy efficiency in buildings and for planting new forests. But it is not enough.

A more aggressive approach that would cut emissions 44% by 2030 and reach net zero by 2060 — as China and Indonesia have pledged — is not only possible, but could bring substantial benefits, in the form of cleaner air, healthier land, and new sources of economic value and growth.

There is great potential in four areas.

**Expanding renewable power generation capacity** to 80% of supply, including decommissioning and conversion of existing thermal plants and modernization of the electricity grid. Solar power would contribute the biggest share, accounting for about 40% of total capacity by 2060, with wind contributing more than 20%. For this to happen, the Philippines would need to build long-duration energy storage to give the system the necessary flexibility to operate with a higher renewable share. All this would enable a full phase-out of coal-fired generation by 2050, with some installed coal capacity retro-fitted with carbon capture and storage (CCS) equipment. The shift to renewables and phase-out of coal would bring about a 98% reduction in emissions from the power sector by 2060, even as demand is expected to rise more than 150% over that period.

**Introducing mechanical farming techniques**, especially in rice cultivation. This will require educating farmers and coordinating with many small landowners; there may also be a role for subsidies to finance the transition. More efficient cultivation could cut emissions 70% by 2060, and also improve water management. In addition, restoration of forest areas and other land-use improvements could abate 20 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e), the basic unit of greenhouse-gas accounting.

**Creating new green-value chains in emissions-intensive**

**industries**, including installation of CCS devices on industrial plants and adoption of new electric technologies for manufacturing steel. For example, 100% of cement production could be decarbonized through CCS and electrification.

**Converting to low-emission technologies in transport and buildings.** Converting the road fleet from internal combustion engines (ICE) to EYs will take time, as well as regulatory support and further technology improvements. But improving efficiency 60% by 2040, and an additional 1% a year thereafter, would get the Philippines to net zero in transport.

In the building sector, the opportunity is for electrification, for example shifting from gas to electric cooking in residences would improve indoor air quality and improve health. Regulatory support for this shift in the form of subsidies could incentivize this change. For instance, in the UK a government scheme makes grants available to homeowners to replace oil and gas boilers with electric heat pumps, opening up the likelihood of clean energy usage, kickstarting the British heat pump industry, and buffering consumers against unexpected hikes in oil and gas prices.

Given appropriate investment, all these activities could serve to create new sources of value and growth.

Private companies and startups in the Philippines are already at work on green-growth initiatives. A number of companies

are producing power from biomass waste. For instance, by end 2022, SMC Global will complete 1,000 MW of BESS facilities. Prime Infrastructure Holdings has also invested P3.5 billion in Solar Philippines Project Power Holdings for >340 MW of solar, and has partnered with US-based WasteFuel Global for a 30-million-gallon synthetic crude oil biorefinery pilot targeted to be operational by 2025. Victorias Milling Company has one of the largest biomass power plants (63 MW) in the Visayas. In the area of transport, EV startup QEV Philippines plans to roll out 50,000 electric jeepneys over the next five years by replacing their ICES with lithium-ion batteries.

That is the potential; getting there, however, means putting sustainability at the heart of strategy. For government, that starts with reporting emissions and setting ambitious and quantifiable sector-level decarbonization goals. This would provide a framework within which individual agencies could work with the private sector to devise action plans. The government can also put emissions reduction at the heart of its investment strategy, for example by working with business to build charging infrastructure for EVs and establishing a market for carbon credits, which could support investment in these areas.

The private sector must be involved — and it can be in their interest to do so. International experience shows that businesses that act to reduce their carbon

footprint can improve returns and cut costs, including the cost of capital. A recent example in the Philippines includes RCBC bank, the first bank in the Philippines to issue green bonds. In 2019, RCBC listed P15 billion worth of green bonds, which ended up directly correlating with the bank achieving a low borrowing cost of 7%, the lowest of any bank. Another example is telecoms provider Globe which set itself a goal of being net zero by 2050. To this end, it has been proactively undertaking sustainable practices even before regulatory compliances require them to do so, including installing hybrid generators at off-grid sites, which have resulted in a 60% reduction in fuel and maintenance costs. A number of other companies in the Philippines have made similar pledges to become net zero and are establishing targets and prioritizing budgets to cut emissions, such as Ayala Corp., Nestlé, and Shell.

Finally, the Philippines' current modest strategy envisions support from international investors and donors; a more ambitious one will likely do the same. One priority is to mobilize green finance to support investment in decarbonization, for example through public-private partnerships in the power sector. The Asian Development Bank is already playing a crucial role in supporting the development of green financing instruments. NGOs and donors also have an opportunity to scale up investment in low-carbon programs

such as microgrids and sustainable agriculture, by providing technical assistance and innovative financing.

The conventional wisdom is that action on climate change is inimical to economic growth. On the contrary: the right strategy could bring new green growth opportunities, particularly in power and carbon management. Capturing these opportunities depends not on innovations yet to be seen or unrealistic business models, but on proven, economically competitive technological solutions.

Indeed, *not* going in this direction poses long-term risks. Climate change is becoming a factor in international policies on trade and investment; countries that fall short risk being subject to punitive trade measures. In addition, international investors are increasingly focused on sustainability.

Finally, let's not forget that the Philippines archipelago is already exposed to significant risks from climate change, including sea levels rising at three times the global average. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization projects that falling crop yields will cause a 6% annual loss of GDP by 2100 if climate change continues unabated.

The imperative is clear, and so are the opportunities. A start has been made; now it's time to advance. ■



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## Regional Updates

### Sta. Cruz town reopening

### Mt. Apo trail to climbers in Sept.

THE STA. CRUZ trail of Mt. Apo, the Philippine's highest peak, will be reopening in September and bookings up to December are already being accepted, according to the town's tourism office.

Under the new guidelines released on Tuesday, the maximum number of daily slots that will be available Monday to Thursday would be 35, and 50 on Friday-Sunday.

"The guide or any representative from the climbing group should physically visit the Tourism Office to book for dates and pay. Bookings through phone calls, messenger messages and text messages will no longer be entertained," the office said, citing wasted slots in the past due to no-show trekkers.

Priority will also be given to guides who have undertaken the "Retooling Training" conducted in June and those who have regularly attended meetings for certified guides.

"Each guide is allowed to book only two weekends per month to give equal opportunities to others to climb on weekends," the tourism office said.

Total permit fees are P2,000 per person.

Officers of the Mt. Apo Sta. Cruz Guides Association headed by Jake Caspi recently met with the local Investment Promotions and Tourism Office to align planned activities ahead of the resumption of Mt. Apo trekking on Sept. 1.

The group will have a preparatory climb on Aug. 24-26 to check the trails and existing facilities as well as meet with the Sibulan Porters Association based at a community within the mountain leading up to the summit.

An off-season is observed at Mt. Apo, a declared protected area, from June to August to allow for biodiversity preservation, natural rehabilitation, and improvement of public services and facilities. — MSJ



STA. CRUZ TOURISM FACEBOOK PAGE

**MEMBERS** of the diplomatic corps in the Philippines scale Mount Apo through the Sta. Cruz Circuit Trail on Feb. 21-23.

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Second of a series

First word

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OBSERVER

YEN MAKABENTA

ity of the climate movement is the fact that by whatever name it may call itself today, it must account for the bizarre implosion of former US vice president Al Gore from reigning as the public face and oracle of climate change to being the sound of embarrassed silence on climate change today. ►MakabentaA5

MAKABENTA FROM A1

# Like Al Gore, Senator Legarda may have nothing left to preach on climate change

Gore, who at one time stood just a few hundred votes from the US presidency, is arguably the biggest success and alternately the biggest failure of the church of global warming and the climate movement.

From a classroom in Harvard where he first heard the theory of global warming from one professor, to the campaign trail where he grafted the climate as a political slogan, Gore shot to prominence as an environmentalist and climate crusader. He started evangelizing against man-made global warming (anthropomorphic global warming or AGW). AGW was only the pet teaching of a corps of believers and fanatics, but after Gore started preaching and because of his political influence, AGW became a fad.

## Climate prophet

On Oct. 12, 2007, the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced the award of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize, in two equal parts, to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, founded in 1988) and Al Gore (b. 1948) "for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change."

In Oslo on Dec. 10, 2007, the presentation was made with a speech by Ole Danbolt Mjøs as chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, followed by Nobel lectures given by Dr. Rajendra K. Pachauri, representing the IPCC, and Al Gore. In his lecture, Pachauri thanked those contributing to the IPCC:

"I pay tribute to the thousands of experts and scientists who have contributed to the work of the panel over almost two decades of exciting evolution and service to humanity."

Gore responded with a speech rich with sentiment and sound bites:

"I want to end as I began with a vision of two futures — each a palpable possibility — and with a prayer that we will see with vivid clarity the necessity of choosing between those two futures, and the urgency of making the right choice now."

"The future is knocking at our door right now. We have everything we need to get started, save perhaps political will, but political will is a renewable resource."

So, let us renew it, and say together: "We have a purpose. We are many. For this purpose, we will rise and we will act."

Buoyed by the Nobel prize and his rising popularity, Gore embarked on a new trajectory, presenting himself as a prophet on the climate and the planet. He ventured into predictions about the last days and the end of the world.

The problem with prophecies is that people do not forget, they come around to collect when the predictions come due. The prophet is then exposed as having no clothes.

In 2007, Gore boldly told his supporters that the world had until Jan. 27, 2016 to end its addiction to fossil fuels or that it would come to an end. Gore did not specify what householders might expect to happen on that day, but he was clear that this would be the end.

The claim was part of the marketing campaign for his hit documentary "An Inconvenient Truth," which he maintains was not a cheap attempt to make money off the green frenzy. Although, by sheer coincidence, it did make him a pile of cash.

Shortly before the film's release, Gore warned the day would see "a true planetary emergency." Once again, he offered few details of the problems people might face on their weekly visit to Walmart.

He went on to tell the press: "If you accept the truth of that,

then nothing else really matters that much... We have to organize quickly to come up with a coherent and really strong response, and that's what I'm devoting myself to."

## Failed prophecies

After making multiple climate predictions, none of which came true, journalists started asking questions about Gore's failed prophecies, and his silence on many issues in the UN climate agenda.

In 2010, Mark Landsbaum of the *Orange County Register* asked aloud: "Where's Al Gore now that global warming is cooling off?" He wrote:

"It seems we're not the only ones to wonder why Al's been kind of on the silent side. Fox News reports (you decide): "... in the last three months, as global warming has gone from a scientific near-certitude to the subject of satire, Gore — the public face of global warming — has been silent on the topic."

"The former vice president apparently finds it inconvenient even to answer calls to testify before the US Senate..."

Oklahoma Sen. James Inhofe — a prominent skeptic of global warming theory and the Republican leader of the Senate's environment and public works committee — had issued a request for Gore to come testify on global warming. Inhofe said he wanted Gore to appear because "it will be interesting to ask him on what science he based his movie," a film the senator considers "science fiction." Gore did not respond.

In a Dec. 14, 2009, speech at the Copenhagen Climate Conference, Gore suggested the possibility of the Arctic losing some or all of its ice in the summer months within five to seven years, citing researchers associated with the Naval Postgraduate School.

Gore said there was a 75 per-

cent chance that ice in the Arctic could be gone during at least some summer months within five to seven years. Reports indicate that he misrepresented the details of the research.

Dr. Rajendra Pachauri who received the Nobel prize jointly with Gore for IPCC died in February 2020.

Al Gore has survived and still enjoys his prize. But for many years now, he has been absent from various international climate summits and conferences, and he has avoided speaking on the subject of climate change or a climate emergency. It appears that he has learned to keep his trap shut on anything concerning the climate and the future of the planet. He realized that there is nothing left for him to say or preach on the two issues.

The same fate could befall Sen. Loren Legarda in her frenetic efforts to fan climate anxiety or fright among our people and within the government.

The senator was ecstatic when she heard President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. speak a few words about climate change and renewable energy in his State of the Nation Address on July 25.

But President Marcos is hardly the sort to qualify or register as a climate fanatic. Serious Filipino politicians are far more attuned to the weather, or the political weather, which can easily change overnight.

Senator Legarda's climate advocacy calls for the expenditure of plenty of public money on actions to avert the effects of climate changes or disasters.

She needs to watch more keenly what is happening in other countries where climate policies, once thought essential for survival, are now coming undone.

(Third part on Saturday, Aug. 6, 2022)

yenobserver@gmail.com



## Can inflation reduction save the planet?

By PAUL KRUGMAN

*The New York Times*

After all the false starts and dashed hopes of the past two years, I'm reluctant to count my chickens before they've actually been signed in the Oval Office. Still, it appears that Democrats have finally agreed on another major piece of legislation, the Inflation Reduction Act. And if it does become law, it will be a very big deal.

First, would the law, in fact, reduce inflation? Yes, probably – or at least it would reduce inflationary pressures. That's because the legislation's increased spending, mainly on clean energy but also on health care, would be more than offset through its tax provisions; so it would be a deficit reduction act, which other things being equal would make it disinflationary.

But you want to think of the Inflation Reduction Act as being like the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act of 1956, which probably did strengthen national defense a bit but mainly benefited America by investing in the nation's future. This bill would do the same, and maybe even more so.

To understand why this bill inspires so much hope, it's helpful to understand what has changed since Democrats' last big effort to deal with climate change, the 2009 Waxman-Markey bill, which passed the House but died in the Senate.

The core of Waxman-Markey was a "cap and trade" system that would, in practice, have operated a lot like a carbon tax. There were and are good arguments for such a system, which would give companies and individuals an incentive to cut emissions in multiple ways. But politically, it was easy to portray it as an eat-your-spinach plan, one demanding sacrifices from ordinary workers.

With the failure of Waxman-Markey, the Obama administration was reduced to a much more limited agenda, one that relied on carrots rather than sticks – tax breaks for clean energy, loan guarantees for companies investing in renewables. I think it's fair to say that most economists didn't expect these measures to achieve much.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the climate apocalypse: There was revolutionary progress in renewable energy technology, probably jump-started, at least in part, by those Obama-era policies. In 2009, electricity generated by wind power was still more expensive than electricity generated by burning coal, and solar power was more expensive still. But over the next decade wind power costs fell 70 percent, solar costs 89 percent.

Add in plunging battery prices and it has become possible to see the outlines of an economy that achieves drastic reductions in carbon emissions with little if any sacrifice, using electricity generated by renewable energy – as opposed to burning fossil fuels – to heat and cool our buildings, run our factories, power our cars and more.

The climate portion of the Inflation Reduction Act is, for the most part, an attempt to accelerate that energy transition, mainly by offering tax credits for the adoption of low-emission technologies, including electric vehicles, but also by offering incentives to use less energy in general, notably by making buildings more energy efficient.

There's every reason to believe that these measures would have large effects. Unlike fossil fuels, which have been around for a long time, renewable energy is still an "infant industry" with a steep learning curve: The more we use these technologies, the better we get at them. So providing incentives for clean energy now will make that energy a lot cheaper in the future. And support for electric vehicles also helps solve a chicken-and-egg problem, in which drivers are reluctant to go electric because they aren't sure they'll find charging stations, and businesses don't provide many charging stations because there aren't yet that many electric cars.

The point is that while the climate and energy provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act – about \$370 billion over the next decade – would be only about 0.1 percent of projected gross domestic product over the same period, they could well have a catalytic effect on the energy transition.

And they could also transform the political economy of climate policy.

For years, environmentalists have been arguing that transitioning to clean energy should be considered an

opportunity rather than a burden – that in addition to saving the planet, the transition would create many jobs and new business opportunities. But that's a hard point to get across without widespread concrete examples of success. As long as serious climate policy was a proposal, not a reality, it was vulnerable to attacks from right-wingers portraying it as a nefarious plan to undermine the American way of life.

But those attacks will become less effective once people start to see the real-world effects of climate action (which is why the right is so frantic about trying to block this legislation). If Democrats can pass this bill, the chances of additional action in the future will rise, perhaps sharply.

So let's hope there aren't any last-minute snags. The Inflation Reduction Act won't deliver everything climate activists want. But if it happens, it will be a major step toward saving the planet.



## Guidelines for online businesses

**T**WO years into the Covid-19 pandemic, we have witnessed how consumers transitioned from being buyers from traditional brick-and-mortar businesses to online shoppers. Indeed, online transactions provide a more convenient means for consumers to avail of goods and services.

With this rise of online businesses, there also arises the need to regulate them in order to protect the rights and interests of consumers. In this regard, several government agencies — Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Agriculture, Department of Health, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines and the National Privacy Commission — issued Joint Administrative Order (JAO) 22-01 dated March 4, 2022 (Guidelines for Online Businesses Reiterating the Laws and Regulations Applicable to Online Businesses and Consumers) providing guidelines for online businesses based on the existing laws and regulations and stating a non-exhaustive list of penalties in case of violations.

### Obligations of online businesses

It is the obligation of online businesses to comply with all Philippine laws, rules and regulations and value consumer rights to the same extent as transactions made through traditional means.

Firstly, the JAO reminds online sellers about the laws and regulations providing protection to online consumers from hazards to health and safety. It also reiterates that online sellers are prohibited from conducting deceptive and/



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**AZIZA HANNAH BACAY**

or unfair sales acts and practices provided under Republic Act (RA) 8923, or the "Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines." These include false advertisements, misrepresentations, taking advantage of consumer's conditions, among others.

Online businesses are also reminded that it's their responsibility to comply with warranty provisions, labeling requirements and price tag placements under RA 7394, or the "Consumer Act of the Philippines," and other relevant laws. Accordingly, the product listings in online platforms and marketplaces must display the price of the products or services, payment policies, delivery options, returns, refunds and exchange policies, and other details. If a seller communicates the price of its products to consumers through direct messaging, instead of public listing, then such act shall be considered a violation of the Price Tag Law (Article 81, Consumer Act of the Philippines).

If the goods are regulated items, then online businesses must exhibit the corresponding license number or permit as prescribed by the applicable government agencies. However, in no case shall the online seller be allowed to sell goods or services that are prohibited by law, such as counterfeit products, precious metals, artifacts and weapons.

Consumer information security is also enforced by applying

the provisions of RA 10173, or the "Data Privacy Act," to online businesses. For this, the JAO emphasizes that the personal information collected by online sellers, merchants or e-retailers shall be retained and processed only for legitimate purposes. It is also the online businesses' responsibility to implement reasonable and appropriate security measures to ensure that data collected shall not be used for purposes other than what the consumer has consented to.

### Liabilities of online sellers, e-commerce platforms or marketplace

Consistent with the Consumer Act of the Philippines, online businesses shall be held liable when the products supplied are defective and the manufacturer of the product cannot be properly identified. Furthermore, the sanctions under the Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines shall also be imposed if the online business is found to be engaged in selling counterfeit and/or pirated goods.

It is noteworthy that the JAO imposes additional obligations to e-commerce platforms or marketplace and treats them in the same manner as online sellers, merchants or e-commerce retailers, in terms of liabilities. As such, e-commerce platforms or marketplace have the duty to verify and ensure that the goods being sold in their respective platforms are authentic and not prohibited.

In case of prima facie violation of any pertinent laws or regulations committed in an online post by the online seller or merchant, e-

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e-retailer, e-commerce platform, e-marketplace and the like, the concerned government agency shall issue a notice giving the violator a maximum of three (3) days within which to take down the post. If the violator fails to take down the post within the period provided, then such act shall be taken as intentional and shall aggravate the offense charged.

Similarly, the JAO extends the liability to delivery platforms upon notice that they are carrying or delivering restricted, prohibited or infringing items.

In case of violations thereof, the online consumers have the remedy of filing their complaints to the DTI, through written or electronic means.

Senate Bill 2489, or the "Internet Transaction Act"

While the JAO consolidates the existing rules and regulations applicable to online businesses, it is still imperative that national legislation be enacted in view of the continuing growth of the digital economy. In fact, there is a proposed Senate Bill 2489, or the "Internet Transaction Act," pending before the Congress. This proposed bill intends to promote the growth of e-commerce in the country and to ensure sustainable and fair-commerce market practices in the country.

*Aziza Hannah A. Bacay is an Associate of Mata-Perez, Tamayo & Francisco (MTF Counsel). This article is for general information only and is not a substitute for professional advice where the facts and circumstances warrant. If you have any question or comment regarding this article, you may email the author at [info@mtfcounsel.com](mailto:info@mtfcounsel.com) or visit MTF website at [www.mtfcounsel.com](http://www.mtfcounsel.com).*



## EDITORIAL

# Coping with disasters

**A** WEEK after the magnitude 7.0 earthquake hit Abra and other areas in Luzon, it's only now that we are getting a clearer picture of the devastation it caused.

As of end-July, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council reported that the temblor left 10 dead, 320 injured and 228,238 individuals or 62,024 families displaced in the Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley and the Cordillera Administrative Region.

The NDRRMC also estimated the cost of damage to infrastructure and property at P1.2 billion – and counting.

The strong earthquake has once again renewed calls for the establishment of a separate department to address the problem of disasters and reduce their adverse effects on lives and property.

As we know, it is the NDRRMC that now oversees the government's disaster response efforts. It is a multi-sectoral, multi-organizational structure consisting of more than 40 people from almost all departments, including, would you believe, the Foreign Affairs Secretary!

As a council, the NDRRMC decides only on policies, and leaves the actual work to the Office of Civil Defense under the Department of National Defense.

This underscores once again the urgent need for Congress to fast-track the passage of a bill creating the Department of Disaster Resilience, which will be the primary agency responsible for disaster preparedness, prevention, mitigation, response, recovery and rehabilitation.

Once the DDR is up and running, it can facilitate the creation of permanent evacuation centers and the formulation of disaster management plans at the local

*“The strong earthquake has once again renewed calls for the establishment of a separate department to address the problem of disasters and reduce their adverse effects on lives and property”*

levels to meet the ideal goal of zero-casualty in times of disaster.

The creation of the DDR would ensure a more efficient, coordinated, and complete system of disaster management – from risk assessment to emergency response right down to reintegration assistance and rehabilitation.

The proposed department would take on the powers and functions of the Office of Civil Defense, the Climate Change Office of the Climate Change Commission, the Geo-Hazard Assessment and Engineering Geology Section of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, and other agencies now performing disaster response and management functions. That is how it should be.

There are in fact at least 12 bills proposing the creation of the DDR, but not one of these has been passed by Congress.

But wait. Not everyone agrees that a separate department is needed to respond to disasters.

Some are saying what is needed is to strengthen the NDRRMC and not create another layer in the already bloated bureaucracy, especially at this time when the economy has yet to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. They have a point there.

In any event, we know that the Philippines is among the most disaster-prone countries in the world.

We lie in the path of destructive typhoons from the Pacific Ocean that cause flooding and landslides that lead to loss of lives and property.

We are also part of the so-called 'Pacific Ring of Fire' consisting of active volcanoes that can cause massive destruction once they erupt.

We likewise know that here in our country there are geographic faults that trigger earthquakes and cause death and destruction in our communities.

And we have our fair share every year of man-made disasters, such as fires that exact a heavy toll on lives and property and even on the economy as a whole, and armed conflict in some parts of the country that lead to displacement of people from their homes.

The sad reality is that developing countries such as the Philippines are the most vulnerable to the adverse impact of natural disasters.

In other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, the annual economic loss due to natural disasters is around 0.6 percent to 0.7 percent of the country's GDP.

Natural disasters exact a heavy toll on the Philippine economy annually, amounting to as much as P130 billion in damages, according to the Department of Finance, equivalent to about 1.1 percent of the country's gross domestic product, by DOF estimates.

The higher we try to climb up the economic ladder, we find ourselves falling every time a disaster strikes.

This should not be our ineluctable fate at all, if only we are fully prepared to cope with natural disasters, whether it is a full-fledged department or another agency with clear responsibilities to protect lives and property from both natural and man-made catastrophes.





# Cracked mountain causes forced evacuation of 128 families in Abra town

By Jane Eleda

A TOTAL of 128 families living at the foot of a mountain found to have cracks were forcibly evacuated from their homes in San Quintin, Abra.

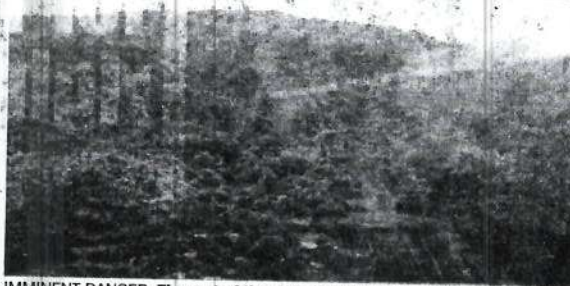
The affected families were residents of Zones 2 and 3 in Bgy. Tangadan, San Quintin town.

They are temporarily seeking shelter at tents in the nearby Zone 1.

San Quintin Mayor Jovelyn Aznar said the forced evacuation was a preemptive measure to prevent accidents or loss of lives if there will be landslide or any calamity.

"Nag-conduct na ng inspection ang Phivolcs (Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology) at ang sabi nila ay hindi safe ang lugar. May big possibility ng pagguho kaya nagsagawa na ng forced evacuation," the mayor said.

"Nung July 16, 1990, nag-start na magkaroon ng bitak ang bundok. Dahil ito ang sentro noong lumindol



**IMMINENT DANGER.** The part of the mountain in Bgy. Tangadan, San Quintin, Abra with huge crack that poses threat to people living in the area.

ng nakaraang linggo, lumaki ang gap, tinignan ng Phivolcs at sinabing hindi safe kaya lumikas ang mga apektadong residente," she added.

Police and village watchmen were dispatched to Zone 2 and Zone 3 to conduct patrol and provide security to properties while the affected families are seeking refuge at a nearby evacuation area.

"Habang hindi pa tapos ang temporary shelter, pinapayagan sila na bumalik sa kanilang bahay para lang mag-cr o alagaan ang kanilang mga hayop. May mga pulis at tanod na nagbabantay sa kanilang mga bahay," the mayor said.

Relief operations continue in Abra, which was placed under a state of calamity, after a magnitude 7 earthquake hit the province and caused massive destruction on July 27.

Authorities placed the damage to agriculture and infrastructure to P1.2 billion.



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# Bong Go and Robin seek quick rehab

Parts of the facade of the 16th-century Vigan Cathedral have crumbled and cracks have marred some century-old ancestral houses

Senators Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go and Robinhood Padilla, in a joint effort, wanted immediate government support in the restoration of quake-affected cultural heritage sites and national landmarks

Stressing the constitutional mandate of the State to conserve, promote and popularize the nation's historical and cultural heritage and resources, Go filed Senate Resolution 86 on 1 August, urging the Executive Department to immediate restoration of heritage sites and national landmarks damaged by the 7.0-magnitude earthquake that struck Northern Luzon last 27 July.

With Sen. Padilla, who co-sponsored the resolution, Go earlier inspected some of the quake-hit areas and personally assisted over 1,000 earthquake victims in Bangued and Lagangilang, Abra, and Vigan City, Ilocos Sur.

"Upon arriving in the town of Bangued last Sunday, 31 July, I and my team, together with fellow Senator Robinhood Padilla, were greeted by several destroyed houses, buildings and power lines," Go shared.

"Meanwhile, in Vigan City, Ilocos Sur, parts of the facade of the 16th-century Vigan Cathedral have crumbled and cracks have marred some century-old ancestral houses and buildings in several other heritage sites," he added.

Several historic sites in the two provinces that Go and Padilla visited were not spared from the disastrous impact of the earthquake, according to the Department of Tourism. These include the Sta. Catalina de Alexandria Church and the San Lorenzo Ruiz Shrine in Abra, both of which had been declared as National Cultural Treasures.

## Legacy edifices affected

Meanwhile in Ilocos Sur, damages were recorded in the Vigan Cathedral and Syquia House, both in Vigan City; the Bantay Bell Tower in Bantay; and the St. John the Baptist Church in San Juan.

The resolution cited "historical edifices" which serve as constant reminders of "an important era in our culture where we are reminded of our diverse and symbolic history."

Go also remarked: "These sites are also major tourist attractions, generating income for the local inhabitants. Faster restoration of these sites will help ensure that people regain their livelihoods as soon as possible and, at the same time, preserve our culture and traditions."

The resolution went on to note that according to the Department of Labor and Employment, "thousands of individuals in earthquake-hit areas were displaced from their jobs, including those who work for tourism establishments."

Thus, it added that the restoration of the damaged cultural heritage sites and national landmarks has the end view of "ensuring the conservation and preservation of their historical significance and the regeneration of affected jobs and livelihoods."

## Go pitches for resilience

Meanwhile, to promote disaster resilience in the country, Go maintained the need to create a Department of Disaster Resilience (DDR) and to establish mandatory evacuation centers in every municipality, city and province across the country.

"I have long been pushing for these bills. I filed them in the 18th Congress and once again filed them as among my priority measures in the 19th Congress because the Philippines' experiences with natural disasters have shown that the existing laws, policies, resources and institutional arrangements governing disaster management lack responsiveness to the country's requirements for disaster resilience."

Senate Bill 188 aims to establish a DDR which will bring together all essential functions and mandates currently scattered among various disaster-related agencies.



STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE

# PHONES Tonight



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## Senators Bong Go, Robin Padilla: Restore quake-affected cultural heritage sites, nat'l landmarks

STRESSING the constitutional mandate of the State to conserve, promote and popularize the nation's historical and cultural heritage and resources, Senator Christopher "Bong" Go filed Senate Resolution No. 86 on Monday, August 1, urging the Executive Department to immediately support the restoration of cultural heritage sites and national landmarks which were damaged by the 7.0-magnitude earthquake that struck Northern Luzon last July 27.

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## **Bong Go, Robin calls for immediate restoration of quake-hit cultural heritage sites, national landmarks**

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## Mudslide rumagasa sa Ilocos Sur: 1 sugatan

LUBOG sa putik ang isang bahay nang tamaan ng mudslide dulot ng malakas na pag-ulan Lunes ng gabi, Agosto 1, sa Sitio Immalsong Kiblongan, Barangay Suyo, Ilocos Sur.

Sa ulat, pag-aari ang bahay ni Onofre Licnad, 55, may asawa.

Hindi kaagad nakapagsagawa ng search and rescue operation ang rescue team sa erya nitong Lunes dahil patuloy pang may mga nahuhulog na bato at halos tuloy-tuloy din ang mudslide.

Nasugatan sa mudslide ang isang Gemma Butangen, 37, may asawa, ng Sigay.

Bukod kay Butangen, wala nang naiulat na iba pang su-gatan sa insidente.

Bandang 9:50 ng umaga nitong Martes, muling nagsagawa ng search and rescue operation sa lugar ang mga miyembro ng Suyo MPS, MDRRMC, BFP Suyo at mga volunteer.



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## Meteorite bumagsak sa Palawan

NAKAPULOT ang isang magsasaka ng bumagsak na bahagi ng meteorite sa bulubunduking lugar sa Palawan.

"Pinatingnan ko na po ito sa mga medyo may alam. Base po sa kanilang advise sa akin, isa nga daw po itong meteorite," ayon sa isang Pastora.

"Nabangga lang ito ng paa ng kapatid ko na magsasaka kaya napansin niya. Kumakarit sila doon sa bundok. Nabangga ng paa niya. Tumama sa bota niya, lumagutok."

"Pinulot niya po, tapos tinago niya tapos tinanong niya ako kung may alam akong pwedeng may kilalang magbili ng bato".

"Ni-research ko po kasi, sa pagkaka-intindi ko sa item na 'yun... Kabilang siya sa tatlong klase na sinasabing meteorite."

"Pag-iniilawan ko po siya may tatlong klaseng kulay na lumalabas sa loob ng bato. Binibili sa'min ng P300,000.00 pero hindi ko binigay."

"Gusto ko po mabenta sa tamang bibili [presyo]," Pastora. Kamakailan, may iniulat na isang OFW sa Saudi Arabia na nakapulot ng isang bulalakaw o meteorite na nagkakahalaga ng 11.6 million riyals o mahigit sa 170 million pesos.