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Budget release slows in July as new gov't adjusts

By **LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON**

The release of notices of cash allocation (NCAs) in July slightly slowed as the government transitioned under a new leadership.

Latest data from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) showed that NCA releases in July declined 8.72 percent to P406.27 billion, from P445.07 billion in the same period last year.

Nonetheless, the utilization rate for NCAs during the month still improved to 71 percent, from just 58 percent in July 2021. The month of July was the first month in office of the Marcos administration and its predecessor had only started to transition various government operations.

For the seven-month period, however, budget releases were higher by 2.47 percent to P2.44 trillion, from P2.38 trillion in 2021.

Utilization rate for the January to July period also improved to 94

percent from 89 percent.

Amid the transition, most agencies in July recorded below 70 percent utilization rate. The highest was at 97 percent utilized by the Commission on Elections.

But year-to-date, most agencies have recorded above 80 percent utilization rate.

In July, about 67 percent of NCA releases were secured by line departments at P272.11 billion. The remaining 33 percent or P134.16 billion was allocated to government-owned and controlled corporations and local government units.

Of the total P406.27 billion NCAs in July, the government utilized P290.25 billion while P116.02 billion was unused during the month.

NCAs are disbursement orders by the DBM to government banks servicing the release of funds to agencies. State agencies are expected to use the NCAs to pay for the cash requirements of their programs and projects.

As of end-July, DBM data showed that agencies that posted above 90 percent utilization of their NCAs include the Office of the Vice President and the Departments of Agrarian Reform, Education, Energy, Environment and Natural Resources, Foreign Affairs, Health, Interior and Local Government, Justice, National Defense, Public Works and Highways, Science and Technology, Trade and Industry as well as Transportation.

Also included are the Office of the Press Secretary, the judiciary, Civil Service Commission, Commission on Audit, Office of the Ombudsman, the Commission on Human Rights and state universities and colleges.

The Department of Information and Communications Technology recorded the lowest utilization rate at 64 percent as of end-July. The Office of the President and the Department of Labor and Employment also posted below 80 percent utilization rate.



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EMB lauds enactment of law on plastic packaging

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)'s Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) lauded the timely enactment of a law mandating companies to establish programs for their plastic packaging.

According to EMB Director William Cuñado, the passage of RA 11898 or the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Act of 2022 addresses the urgency and necessity for collaboration between the public and private sector to combat environmental damages caused by plastic pollution and climate change.

Penalties for the non-compliance of EPR duties range from P5 million to P20 million, or "twice the cost of recovery and diversion of the footprint or its shortfall, whichever is higher."

Under the new law, companies will have to establish EPR programs for plastic waste reduction, recovery and diversion.

Joel dela Torre



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Regional Updates

DENR ramps up flood mobilization measures in Manila

THE DEPARTMENT of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said it is ramping up its implementation of immediate flood control strategies and long-term defenses following floodings in the capital Manila last week.

DENR Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and International Affairs Jonas R. Leones said in a statement that the "holistic design" of the Manila Bay rehabilitation already involves mitigating measures to accommodate heavy rains and prevent flooding.

The DENR will be working with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), and the local government for the "reinforcement of collective actions to address the recent flooding experienced in the city of Manila."

"A part of the overall rehabilitation plan is to install mitigating strategies and infrastructures that address flooding. These measures, which are managed by the DPWH and MMDA, are necessary as these ultimately affect the Manila Bay waters," Mr. Leones said.

Manila Bay Coordinating Office Director Jacob F. Meimban said areas near Taft-United



THE PHILIPPINE STAR/MIGUEL DE GUZMAN

MOTORISTS drive through a flooded portion of Taft Avenue in Manila following a heavy downpour midnight of Aug. 9.

Nations, Padre Faura, and Ermita-Malate will be prioritized as these are low-lying and flood-prone areas.

He said they are now working on interventions such as de-clogging drainage canals.

"The de-clogging operations last year have uncovered a significant amount of plastic bottles and grease and oil build-up along drainage canals in Manila. These were

observed to come from business establishments and the wanton disposal of garbage in the streets."

The DPWH will also work on long-term plans to abate flooding by constructing more box culvert canals and pumping stations along T.M. Kalaw and Taft Avenue so that water could recede immediately. —

Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jacson





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Lacuna revamps Manila SWMB

MANILA Mayor Maria Sheila "Honey" Lacuna-Pangan ordered the reorganization of the City Solid Waste Management Board (SWMB) to further strengthen the city's 10-year Solid Waste Management Plan.

Under Executive Order (EO) No. 23 Series of 2022, Mayor Honey created the new composition of the City Solid Waste Management Board wherein she will act as Chairperson while City Administrator Bernie Ang and Kayle Nicole Amurao, Officer-in-Charge (OIC) of Department of Public Services (DPS) will be her Vice Chairpersons.

The City Legal Officer and heads and OICs



of the city's departments and bureaus, including some members of the City Council, representatives of recycling and plastic industries, Director of the Department of Interior and Local Government-Manila Field Office, Director of Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA)- Solid Waste Management Office and

Regional Director of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau of the National Capital Region would serve as members.

Mayor Honey the order shall take effect at once and all officials and members shall convene immediately, upon issuance.

Edd Reyes



Mayor Honey aprubado na bagong lupon ng Solid Waste Management

Ni **EDD REYES**

LUNGSOD NG MAYNILA - Iniyutos ni Manila Mayor Maria Sheila "Honey" Lacuna-Pangan ang muling pagsasaayos sa hanay ng mga opisyal at miyembro ng Solid Waste Management Board upang lalo pang mapalakas ang inilatag na 10-taong pagpapalano sa wastong pamamahala sa mga basura.

Sa ilalim ng inilabas na Executive Order (EO) No. 23 Series of 2022 ng alkalde, muling bubuo ng bagong komposisyon ng mga tatayong opisyal ng Solid Waste Management Board kung saan siya ang magiging chairperson habang sina City Administrator Bernie Ang at Officer-In-Charge (OIC) ng Department of Public Services

(DPS) na si Kayle Nicole Amurao ang tatayong mga vice chairpersons.

Ang pinuno naman ng City Legal Officer at halos lahat ng pinuno at OIC ng mga tanggapan ng kagawaran at kawanihan ng Lungsod ng Maynila, kabilang ang ilang miyembro ng Sangguniang Panlungsod, kinatawan ng ilang mga kompanya ng plastic, director ng Department of the Interior and Local Government-Manila Field Office, director ng Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA)-Solid Waste Management Office at regional director ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)-Environmental Management Bureau ng National Capital Region (NCR) ay magsisilbi namang mga miyembro ng

lupon.

Ang mga bagong opisyal, sa ilalim ng Section 2 ng naturang kautusan, ang magpapalakas at mag-update ng nailatag na 10-taong plano sa wastong pamamahala ng mga basura, pati na ang tamang pamamahala at paglutas sa mga ilang problemang pang-ekonomiya, panglipunan at pang-administratibo, pagbuo ng tamang mekanismo at panuntunan, magpatibay ng mga hakbang upang matiyak itong maipatutupad, at iba pang kanilang mga tungkulin at responsibilidad.

Nakasaad din sa EO ni Mayor Honey ang agaran nitong pagpapatupad at ang pagpupulong ng mga bagong itinalagang opisyal ng lupon sa oras na mailabas na ang nilagdaan niyang kautusan.



Isinaayos ni Manila Mayor Honey Lacuna ang pamunuan ng Solid Waste Management ng lungsod para sa mga pagwawasto ng kalinisan at basura.
Kuha ni Jon-jon Reyes

Ang Lungsod ng Maynila ay inatasan ding magpadala ng kopya ng kautusan sa tanggapan ng Pangulo ng Pilipinas sa Malacañang batay na rin sa probisyong nakasaad sa Local Government Code.



Awkward accountability

LAST month, in a discomfiting but obviously quite necessary candid admission, the environmental group Ocean Conservancy issued a "statement of accountability" concerning what was at the time a landmark report titled "Stemming the Tide," which the group published in September 2015. The report was significant to the Philippines because at the time, and for several years after the report's publication, the Philippines was identified as one of the world's biggest sources of plastic pollution in the ocean.

Ocean Conservancy has since retracted that report, and in its statement dated July 10 (which you can find at <https://oceanconservancy.org/trash-free-seas/take-deep-dive/stemming-the-tide/>) the group explained and apologized for several errors it had made.

Before I get into those details, let me offer a couple of puzzling observations. First, given the dent the original report inflicted on the Philippines' reputation, it is surprising that its retraction did not receive much media attention. This country has historically been hypersensitive to perceived slights, so it would have been understandable — and probably even justified — for the withdrawal of and apology for a rather substantial one that has persisted for a few



**ROUGH
TRADE**
**BEN
KRITZ**

years to have been big news. It wasn't, and I'm frankly mystified as to why not.

Second, I was rather surprised that the anti-climate action zealots among us did not immediately seize on Ocean Conservancy's *mea culpa*, as it would seem to be just the sort of "gotcha" moment they seem to be so desperately wishing for. Their entire campaign to sabotage any effort to minimize destruction of the planet and forestall human extinction is based on loudly and repeatedly arguing that climate activism uses selective science to drive hysterical fearmongering, and from a tree-hugger's point of view, I'd have to say Ocean Conservancy walked right into it. Or would have, if the thought processes of the anti-climate types and the right-wing media hacks they copy and paste didn't lie so close to the surface and cause them to overlook it.

Bad judgment

The Ocean Conservancy report,

the group explained in its statement, was based on an otherwise scientifically bulletproof study published in the journal *Science* in February 2015, which had inventoried the plastic waste production of all 192 countries and territories with a coast. Using that as a starting point, Ocean Conservancy worked with several outside consultants to develop its report, which focused on the East and Southeast Asia regions.

The "Stemming the Tide" report was wrong on three counts, according to the Ocean Conservancy statement. One, the report endorsed incineration and waste-to-energy technology as acceptable means to prevent plastic waste from reaching the oceans. This was wrong, the accountability statement said, because "[w]e did not consider how these technologies support continued demand for plastic production and hamper the move to a circular economy and a zero-carbon future."

Two, the September 2015 report "failed to confront the root causes of plastic waste or incorporate the effects on the communities and NGOs working on the ground in the places most impacted by plastic pollution," which the statement implies would have changed the conclusions about who is most

responsible for marine pollution. Finally, that misappropriation of blame was compounded by the report's narrow focus on East and Southeast Asia, which "failed to acknowledge the outsized role that developed countries, especially the United States, have played and continue to play in generating and exporting plastic waste to this very region."

Please, don't feed the trolls

The statement of accountability is welcome only in the sense that it was the right thing to do, but it is not at all admirable because the damage the faulty report has caused to climate mitigation efforts is substantial. Worse still, these were not errors in misinterpreting or having incomplete scientific data, but errors in judgment that led to *exactly* what the anti-environment trolls accuse the climate change movement of doing regularly: selectively framing existing data to present a conclusion that depicts reality as being somewhat worse than it is.

I would assume Ocean Conservancy has learned its lesson, but confessing an error does not necessarily absolve one of any consequences for it. We simply cannot

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afford for credible environmental organizations to act so recklessly, no matter how well-meaning they may be, and if sanctions are in order to prevent it from happening again, then they should be imposed. That would be a matter for Ocean Conservancy's funding benefactors to decide; the organization took in about \$53.5 million in financial and in-kind contributions in 2021, according to its financial statements.

With all that being said, it is important not to take the Ocean Conservancy's statement of accountability the wrong way. It does not mean that the Philippines (or any other country in the region) doesn't have a serious pollution problem; the original study published in *Science* objectively shows that it does, and one that is not simply serious, but extreme. Whether the problem here can be fairly and accurately described as the worst, or one of the

worst in the world is debatable. It is also completely irrelevant. There is no spectrum for human pollution of the environment in any form; there is no "acceptable" level of plastic pollution.

All Ocean Conservancy's statement really means is that causes, effects and solutions are a great deal more complex than we perhaps wish them to be, and that in order to understand and productively respond to them, we must be very thorough and objective in gathering and distilling data. Most environmental advocates who, after all, are simply trying to make sense of a visible reality all around us rather than trying to make that reality fit ideological assumptions and self-serving opinions, already understand that. But it is good to be reminded of it once in a while, even if the reminder makes us uncomfortable.

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Extreme weather events and conflict (3)

Cotabato City—Here in the seat of the autonomous Bangsamoro region, some regional and local officials do not seem to realize the urgency of the impacts of climate change in more than 1,000 barangays within it. Members of our small research team noticed that some officials in executive level positions tend to brush aside issues and challenges posed by the intersections of extreme weather events and community security, and on how some of their so-called urgent programs (like dumping a town's solid wastes near a barangay road) have even aggravated the negative consequences of such environmental phenomena. In contrast, community members seem to be more insightful than their leaders.

Community discussion participants of the four towns covered in our study (Datu Piang, Rajah Buayan, Datu Salibo, and Pagalungan) shared how they coped with extreme weather events, sans government aid. These municipalities have one thing in common—they are situated in low-lying parts of Maguindanao province that are straddled by the sprawling Ligawasan Marsh, one of the Philippines' largest wetlands. These areas are flooded even on rainless days: heavy downpours in mountainous areas from Bukidnon in Northern Mindanao; Isulan and Esperanza towns in Sultan Kudarat province cause water levels in local rivers and streams to rise.

Prolonged droughts make waterways dry up, creating patches of arable land for planting crops that can be harvested after two months. Community members welcome this, but it also gives rise to tensions among them since they compete against one another to plant on these artificially created patches of land. Community members who own work animals shared being wary of *guman-*



KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

RUFA CAGOCO-GUIAM

del (Magindanawn pun on the English word "commander") that refers to cattle rustlers. The Magindanawn root word *gandel* means "to pull." A *gumandel* pulls a carabao or cow stealthily in the dead of the night, and this is done easily and faster during prolonged droughts. Informants also shared they have witnessed how victims of cattle rustling resorted to violent confrontations against suspected perpetrators. This is one root cause of revenge killings, locally referred to as *rido* (a Maranaw term) or to *kapedsulia* (Magindanawn term for revenge).

Older community informants also recalled that at the height of martial law years (1970s), violent encounters between Philippine military forces and Moro rebel fronts intensified in the Ligawasan Marsh areas. A prolonged dry season facilitated the mobilization of army tanks and other war materiel, causing more casualties and damaging huge swaths of corn fields. One former rebel group member shared that he and his brothers had planted corn in one hectare of their farmland and were about to harvest the corn when military tanks flattened their corn field, destroying it completely. The money

they would have received from the sale of their corn was intended for their mother's hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) as their gift to her.

One municipal official said in an interview that they have come to "befriend water," as flooding is almost a daily occurrence in the areas we studied. One research team member asked the official the meaning of "making friends with water," expecting the municipal government will implement climate change mitigating measures for flood control, among other related initiatives. But for them, "making friends with water" simply meant that all of their social and cultural activities will be held in the *Pulangi* or *Rio Grande de Mindanao*.

Given this simplistic understanding of the nature of water and flooding, local officials will realize too late that not preparing to mitigate its effects can wreak havoc on their already impoverished local government units, destroying poorly constructed infrastructure and other facilities. Community tensions can also arise, as resources become scarce and costly to acquire during episodes of natural disasters. In the words of former UN secretary-general Ban Ki-Moon, the "Extreme weather events continue to grow more frequent and intense in rich and poor countries alike, not only devastating lives but also infrastructure, institutions and budgets—an unholy brew which can create dangerous security vacuums."

Our community respondents have felt this security vacuum during heavy rains that happened when government forces chased suspected rebel or terrorist groups in the marsh. As one of them said, "*dito, umulan ng bala at tubig*" (literally: it rained bullets and water here).

Comments to rcguiam@gmail.com



A model for climate change response

On Aug. 5, Makati City Mayor Abby Binay declared a state of climate emergency in the city in response to the crisis brought about by climate change. "As temperatures and sea levels continue to rise, low-lying coastal areas in cities like Makati have become more vulnerable to strong typhoons that bring floods and landslides. This will result not only in the disruption of public services but also the displacement of families and even entire communities," Binay said during a webinar organized by Makati Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (MDRRMO).

Legend has it that in one of his upriver expeditions after torrential rain, the Spanish conquistador Miguel Lopez de Legaspi stopped over in one of the barangays of Manila. When he came ashore, the tides were rushing up the river banks. Legaspi asked the barangay chief what the place is called. Not understanding Spanish, the chief pointed to the fast receding waters, saying "*Makati na, kumakati na,*" which means "The tide is ebbing." Legaspi took the chief's words as the answer to his question. So, he wrote down "Makati" as the name of the barangay.

My father taught me how to drive on the runways of the abandoned airport in Makati in 1955. The town was marshland then. Behind Makati Medical Center in 1969 were rice paddies. The Asian Institute of Management moved to its new campus on Paseo de Roxas, Makati in 1970. While a group of faculty members were having coffee in the Faculty Lounge, one professor said to us, "Look out the window, many years from now you will be talking about it." The scenario was of the operator of the tractor answering the call of nature. What used to be rice paddies had been filled up and was being graded. That is now Legaspi Village.

I relate all this to point out to the generation born after 1980 that Makati is a low-lying area and prone to floods. CNN re-

MUSINGS

OSCAR P. LAGMAN, JR.

ported every day last week that Arctic and Greenland glaciers are melting four times faster than those in other parts of the world. Scientists project that if emissions continue to rise unchecked, the Arctic could be ice free in the summer as soon as the year 2040 as ocean and air temperatures continue to rise rapidly. The rise in the sea level could threaten low-lying cities like Makati with perennial floods.

Since the early 1900s, many glaciers around the world have been melting at a rapid pace. Carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions have raised temperatures higher in the poles, resulting in the rapid melting of glaciers. According to the data from the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), there has been a 0.75 degrees Celsius increase in the country's annual temperature over the past 70 years and by 2050, the temperature increase is expected to reach as high as 1.8° Celsius.

Even if emissions are reduced significantly in the coming decades, scientists predict more than one third of the world's remaining glaciers will melt before the year 2100. Melting glaciers raise sea levels, which in turn increases the rate of erosion of coastal communities and elevates storm surges as warm air and ocean temperatures create more frequent violent typhoons.

As glaciers melt and oceans become warmer, ocean currents will continue to alter weather patterns worldwide. Countries that consider fisheries a major industry will be affected as warmer waters will kill certain species of fish. The flood caused by the rise in sea level and the increased salinity of the flood waters call for raising crop yields significantly to offset the loss of agricultural

land and to increase the income of farmers.

Violent typhoons and wide-scale floods will wreak tremendous damage on coastal towns, even on whole provinces, as they have done in recent years. Climate change has also caused changes in seasonal rainfall patterns and droughts, resulting in considerable losses to the farming sector.

Scientists consider it reasonable to assume that the sea level will rise by 30 to 40 centimeters in the next 50 years. That means not only a loss of land for farming and housing but the increased susceptibility to floods as already being experienced in many parts of Metro Manila and in many towns of the Central Plain provinces of Bulacan and Pampanga.

Climate change demands well-thought-out action plans such as preparing communities for impacts that are already being experienced now. It also means looking to the future, like reducing gas emissions. Last Saturday, the CNN anchor asked the scientist studying the situation in Greenland what his message is to the people in their homes. His curt message: "Clean the air." It calls for the support and involvement of every sector of society, businessmen, professionals, academics, the youth, ordinary folks, and even Indigenous People.

Makati Mayor Binay's programs and initiatives intended to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions in the city include the purchase of electric vehicles (e-vehicles) to be used by the city government, installation of solar panels in public schools and government offices to minimize energy consumption and to ensure continuity of services during calamities.

The program also strictly implements the Solid Waste Management Code, Makati Green Building Code, the plastic ban among households and business establishments, a ban on cigarette smoking, an Anti-Smoke Belching Ordinance, and the Green-



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house Gas Reduction Ordinance.

We bring our used plastic food packages and empty soft drinks bottles to a junk shop for recycling. My driver said, "Why don't you save yourself the trouble by just throwing them away as many neighbors do."

That brought to mind the time I was teaching in the Ateneo Graduate School of Business (AGSB). The International Labor Organization (the ILO) offered the school study grants on Environmental Management at the Centre d'Etudes Industrielles (CEI) in Geneva. The ILO specified that one of the grantees be a Marketing professor to reorient his thinking to environmental protection and preservation.

Marketing practitioners have the reputation of being spoilers of the environment. They are the ones who came up with the idea of plastic grocery bags and soft drinks bottles, throw-away styropor food packs, tetra packs, air fresheners, wet wipes, etc. Fr. Thomas Fitzpatrick, S.J., dean of the school, nominated me as I was then the chair of the marketing faculty. I was supposed to replicate the CEI program in Ateneo.

While in Geneva, I and the other attendees of the program were taken to a plant which converted solid waste into energy. The power generated was enough to light up half of Geneva at night. The residue from the process was something like asphalt.

Mayor Binay had announced previously that electric buses (e-buses) will soon be a part of the regular public transportation sector in the city following the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between the city government and an international government organization on the establishment of a smart public transport system in the city. She said, "Apart from the Makati Subway, this new public transport system is in line with our efforts to

transform

Makati into a smart city. We need to upgrade our systems because smart transportation is more convenient, safe, and cost-effective for both the city and commuters than traditional frameworks."

The city government will provide the land for the construction of the EV bus depot and parking area, oversee the implementation of the project, and secure a sufficient amount from its budget to cover the expenses required for the operation of the project, including the cost of proper storage, utilities for operation, and maintenance of ICT system and EV buses.

Laudable is Mayor Binay's initiative. Many of the cities in Metro Manila — Navotas, Malabon, Manila, Pasay, Parañaque, and Las Piñas — lie on the shore of Manila Bay. The major port cities of Cebu, Iloilo, Cagayan de Oro, and Davao are vulnerable to the dangers of climate change, as are all the other coastal cities of the Philippines. Heads of these government units should emulate Abby Binay and imitate her initiatives.

In fact, Mayor Binay made this appeal: "We call upon everyone to come together and act now. We must ensure aggressive application of the whole-of-society approach in combating climate change. We heard the data. We understood the science, and we are feeling its impact. Now is a crucial time to act, and we need to act fast. We need thinkers, doers, and movers. The time for action is now. As the new breed of Makatizens and global citizens, it is our responsibility to take care of our city and ensure that it remains a liveable place for future

generations. We must promote sustainability and climate consciousness in all our actions. We must be the change we want to see in our city and the world."

That brings me back to the executive program on Environmental Management I was developing for Ateneo's Graduate School of Business. After attending the program in Geneva, Fr. Fitzpatrick, Associate Director Lydia Echaz, a number of AGSB professors, CEI Environmental Management program director Michael Royston, and I went to a conference venue in Caliraya to develop the Ateneo version of the program.

Just as we had finalized the curriculum and I had written some teaching materials, Fr. Fitzpatrick asked to be assigned as a missionary, as was his original goal in joining the Jesuit order, in Africa. A lay person, an MBA from Stanford, replaced him. The new dean immediately scrapped the proposed course. He didn't find it appropriate for graduate studies in Business.

Some heads of local government units very vulnerable to problems caused by climate change may not consider response to climate change challenges important. Philip Bowring, editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, who has an across-the-board and objective view of the Philippine situation, points out in his book, *The Making of the Modern Philippines*, that many local government units are run by and for an elite of families and interests, provincial and central. To them, political interests come first before good governance.

Has the call of Mayor Abby Binay to come together to combat climate change fallen on many deaf ears? ■

OSCAR P. LAGMAN, JR. is a retired corporate executive, business consultant, and management professor. He has been a politicized citizen since his college days in the late 1950s.





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France, PHL eyeing more green energy, agri projects

BY BERNADETTE D. NICOLAS
@BNicolasBM

THE Philippines and France are eyeing to boost development cooperation in agriculture and green energy, among other areas, the Department of Finance (DOF) said.

Finance Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno met on Monday with French Ambassador to the Philippines Michèle Boccoz.

At the courtesy call meeting, Diokno expressed interest in two countries having more cooperation projects in agriculture.

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. is concurrently the secretary of the Department of Agriculture.

"We have many projects in the pipeline with France in the areas of infrastructure, maritime security, disaster risk management, agriculture, green energy, education, and climate change," Diokno said in a tweet following his meeting with the French Ambassador.

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France...

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The French government is currently working on several agriculture-related projects in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) while French companies are also leading some local agricultural projects, such as dairy and rice production, the DOF said.

A team of experts from France is also coming to study the African Swine Fever outbreak in the country.

Apart from agriculture, Boccoz also broached the possibility for the two countries to forge partnerships on biodiversity, green energy, and waste management, as she cited examples of private sector-led technologies resulting in the production of fertilizers and green energy from waste. Moreover, she said France has a lot of expertise in the nuclear sector in terms of energy production.

Responding to Boccoz's suggestion, Diokno welcomed the idea and asked Boccoz to help local government units (LGUs) with such projects through Public-Private Partnership (PPP).

To support the devolution of LGU's disaster risk reduction and management and climate action, the French government's public development bank-Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency)—is financing a EUR 250 million Credit Facility Agreement (CFA) for the Disaster Risk Reduction Enhancement at the Local Level Program or DRREALL.

Boccoz also told Diokno there are about 120 French firms in the Philippines working in construction, logistics, business process outsourcing, shipping, water engineering services, and subway construction and 20 large French companies are coming to the Philippines in October to meet with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the local business sector.

"I also encouraged French companies to invest in the [Philippines], especially now that we have amended the almost century-old Public Service Act, which opened up public services to 100-percent foreign ownership," Diokno said.



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Left to right: WMRC Director for Safety & Security Col. Vic Vicente, Director for Corporate Communications Mr. Jami Ledesma, Director for Gaming Compliance & Operations Mr. Darwin Cusi, President & COO Mr. Jeff Evora; with AFI Operations Manager for Save La Mesa Watershed Project Ms. Sarah Alcayde-Agcaoili and team mates Ms. Rona May Cadelino & Ms. Mar Zeri Ramirez.

Winford Manila plants for a cleaner, greener PH

WINFORD Manila Resort & Casino (WMRC) has joined forces with ABS-CBN Foundation, Inc. (AFI) at the La Mesa Nature Reserve for a scheduled tree-planting activity.

Bannered under WMRC's Green Drive corporate social responsibility (CSR) program geared toward promoting environmental sustainability through employee engagement, WMRC executives and employees were welcomed by Sarah Alcayde-Agcaoili, AFI operations manager for Save La Mesa Watershed project.

The project is part of AFI's environmental program, Bantay Kalikasan, which is committed to preserving and enhancing Philippine biodiversity and making every Filipino a vigilant steward of the environment.

Jeff Evora, WMRC president and chief operating officer, said in 2019, WMRC held its first tree-planting activity at Angat Watershed in Bulacan "to raise awareness of climate change and how planting trees can help diminish its negative effects."

"Today, we revisit our environmental cause by appreciating our country's biodiversity up close," Evora added. "All these trees provide fresh air and clean water not just for us to breathe and drink, but for our grandchildren and future generations to benefit from as well."

Evora and his WMRC team then proceeded to plant 400 young trees across one hectare of forest as part of their efforts to realize the shared vision with AFI for a cleaner and greener Philippines. WMRC participants were guided by experienced Bantay Kalikasan forest workers during the activity.

"With the help of partners like WMRC, we have rehabilitated 1,552 hectares of forest for over 20 years now," said Agcaoili. "We have also established protocols and systems that ensure successful reforestation based on science and best practices."



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Magnitude 5.6 na lindol niyugyog Davao del Sur

**NI JUN I.
LEGASPI**

YINUGYOG ng magnitude 5.6 na lindol Lunes ang Davao del Sur, ayon sa Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs).

Ayon sa agency, naramdaman ang malakas na lindol 4:23 p.m., 36 kilometers west ng Mag-saysay, Davao del Sur.

Tectonic ang origin ng lindol at may lalim na 006 kilometer, saad ng agency.

Nagbabala ang (Phiv-

olcs) sa posibleng mga aftershocks kayat pinag-iingat nito ang mga residente sa lugar kung saan tumama ang lindol.

Sa lakas ng lindol naramdaman ang Intensity V sa Kidapawan City; Davao City; Tupi and Polomolok, South Cotabato; Malungon, at Sarangani; Intensity IV - Sta. Cruz, Bansalan, Digos City, and Matanao, Davao del Sur; Koronadal City; Tampakan, Norala, and Banga, South Cotabato; Alabel, Sarangani; Lutayan, Columbio, Pres. Quirino,

Senator Ninoy Aquino, Sultan Kudarat; Tulu-nan at M'lang, Cotabato.

Intensity III naman ang yumanig sa Cotabato City; Tantaran, Surallah, Kiamba, and Glan, Sarangani Palimbang, Isulan, Tacurong, and Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat; Magpet, Arakan, Pigcawayan at Pres. Roxas, Cotabato.

Intensity II ang naramdaman sa Maasim, Sarangani, at Davao de Oro, Intensity I sa Gingoog City at Misamis Oriental.