

21 September 2023 Thursday



DENR

NEWS ALERTS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



PH to file suit vs China

BY FRANCO JOSE
C. BAROÑA AND
BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO

THE Philippines will file environmental cases against China for its destructive activities in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) before the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA).

The announcement came just days after the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) reported the severe damage inflicted by Chinese operations on the marine environment of Rozul Reef and Escoda Shoal, both parts of the Philippine exclusive economic zone.

"We will pursue these cases against China since we already have a lot of evidence," said Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla, noting discussions on the matter were ongoing with Executive

Secretary Lucas Bersamin.

He said the filing of complaint has no connection with the Philippines' territorial dispute with China, stressing that "destruction of the environment is a sin against humanity."

Solicitor General Menardo Guevarra confirmed the plan to file charges against China before the PCA.

Remulla said the Philippine government has been gathering evidence of China's destructive activities in the WPS for many years, adding the documentation has gained momentum in the last few months.

The PCG said it conducted extensive underwater surveys of the seabed in Rozul Reef and Escoda Shoal, revealing that the marine ecosystem "appeared lifeless, with minimal to no signs of life."

The survey revealed potential dumping of dead corals that were previously processed and cleaned before being returned to the seabed.

"The continued swarming for indiscriminate illegal and destructive fishing activities of the Chinese Maritime Militia in Rozul Reef and Escoda Shoal may have directly caused the degradation and destruction of the marine environment in the WPS features," said PCG spokesman Commo. Jay Tariela.

"The PCG emphasizes the importance of protecting and preserving our marine environment, which plays a crucial role in sustaining marine life and supporting local communities," he added.

A section of the July 12, 2016 ruling of the Arbitral Tribunal on environmental issues involving China in the South China Sea said, "China had caused severe harm to the coral reef environment."

The Tribunal was specifically referring to China's large-scale land reclamation and construction of artificial islands in the South China Sea, which it described as a "marine paradise" due to the "highly productive fisheries and extensive coral reef ecosystems, which are among the most biodiverse in the world."

The Chinese Foreign Ministry argued that China's construction projects have gone "through years of scientific assessments and rigorous tests, and are subject to strict standards and requirements of environmental protection."

It maintained that "China cares about protecting the ecological environment of relevant islands, reefs, and waters more than any other country, organization, or people in the world."

'Just another show'

Herman Tiu Laurel, president of Manila-based think tank Asian Century Philippines Strategic Studies, said the initiative was just a part of the "United States-inspired China-threat propaganda series."

"How can an environmental case versus China prosper when even the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) and PCG reports of coral destruction continue to be based in their own words on mere suspicion," Laurel told *The Manila Times* on Wednesday.

"They cannot present proof because they have nothing except oral diarrhea," Laurel added.

He said the coral destruction in the South China Sea has been a "half-century-old problem" caused by destructive dynamite and cyanide fishing.

Such illegal fishing practices, he said, were due to the government's neglect of the Filipino fishermen's economic plight, failure of the policing by the PCG, and in recent decades due to the warming of the oceans and rising acidity of the sea.

"Like the fraudulent charge of Chinese coast guard harassment of Filipino fishermen that has never been proven, this 'environmental case' will ultimately backfire on the credibility of the Philippine government and the PCG," he added.



PAGE



UPPER
LOWER



PAGE 1
STORY



BANNER
STORY



EDITORIAL



CARTOON

09-21-23

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

■ SUIT FROM A1

PH to file suit vs China

It ruled that by undertaking such activities, China had "violated its obligation to preserve and protect fragile ecosystems and the habitat of depleted, threatened, or endangered species" and "inflicted irreparable harm to the marine environment."

Scientists and marine experts testified before the Tribunal that the process employed by Chinese poachers in carrying out their illegal fishing activities destroyed the coral reefs surrounding the clams and may have actually caused more environmental destruction.

Chinese dredging and island-building activities have damaged or destroyed at least 55 square kilometers of reef, while the destructive methods of giant clam fishermen have destroyed 104 sq km of once-living coral.

The Tribunal also determined that the Chinese government was responsible for the poaching that ensured the devastation of coral reefs.

It noted that Chinese authorities were aware that their fishermen had harvested endangered sea turtles, coral, and giant clams on a substantial scale in the South China Sea using methods that inflict severe damage on the coral reef environment.

The Tribunal accused China of not fulfilling its obligations to stop such activities and even suggested that Chinese fishermen were allowed to harvest the clams on land features in the South China Sea, where China would soon be building.

It said it had asked China to provide its environmental assessment studies, which are required by Article 206 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos).

Since it refused to participate in the arbitration proceedings and did not recognize the legality of the Tribunal ruling, China did not comply.

Numerous statements issued in the past by the Chinese government rejected the notion that China's island-building activities in the South China Sea were harming the environment.

Reparation

Sen. Ana Theresia "Risa" Hontiveros said China should pay environmental damages for the destruction of the reef ecosystems in the WPS arising from its reclamation activities in the area.

"We have the right to demand payment," Hontiveros said in a statement in Filipino.

Dr. Deo Onda, a scientist from the University of the Philippines' Marine Science Institute, estimated that the Philippines was losing around P33.1 billion annually from the damaged reef ecosystems in Panatag Shoal and Spratlys Islands due to China's reclamation activities in the WPS.

Onda said the amount was determined using a baseline value of \$353,429 or P18 million per hectare per year for coral reefs based on a study by Elsevier, a Dutch company specializing in scientific, technical, and medical information and analytics.

"We should seek payment for damages caused by China in the WPS. We could obtain billions [of pesos] if we can obligate China to pay [damages]," Hontiveros added.

The senator filed Resolution 804, condemning China's massive coral harvesting in the area as she sought an inquiry into the matter.

Hontiveros said that if China pays all its debts to the Philippines, "it would surely help address" the economic crisis it was facing.

"This will not be the first time for us to seek reparations. Japan paid our country for her destruction of Manila during World War 2," Hontiveros said.

She added, "And in more recent history, the United States of America also paid the Philippines P87 million after the USS Guardian damaged Tubbataha Reef in the Sulu Sea."

The 2016 Arbitral Award clearly invalidated China's sweeping and expansive claims in the WPS, she said.

"This is a case we won because of our dogged commitment to abide by international law and uphold the truth. It is only right that we pursue all options to make China pay," Hontiveros added.



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE



PAGE



UPPER

LOWER



PAGE 1
STORY



BANNER
STORY



EDITORIAL



CARTOO

09-21-23

TITLE:

1/3

PAGE

DATE

Gov't mulls environment case vs China over corals

By DAPHNE GALVEZ

The Philippines is considering filing a new complaint against China before an international tribunal following the reported harvesting and destruction of corals in the disputed West Philippine Sea.

Solicitor General Menardo Guevarra said yesterday that his office is in the "fact-finding and data gathering stage" in studying its legal options regarding issues on the West Philippine Sea.

*France renews offer to help build submarine for Phl.
Story on Page 6*

"We shall evaluate the merits of each and every legal option, including the possible filing of a new complaint against China before an international tribunal," he told **The STAR** in a text message. "These matters require a lot of prudence and circumspection in view of their potential impact on our national interests."

The Department of Justice (DOJ) has recommended the filing of cases against China over the harvest and destruction of corals in the West Philippine Sea.

Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla said he will discuss the matter with Executive Secretary

Turn to Page 4



Gov't mulls From Page 1

Lucas Bersamin at "the soonest possible time."

He said the case is a "very good" one to file in behalf of the Philippines "for the sake of humanity itself."

In 2013, the Philippines filed a complaint against China for its massive claims in the South China Sea under its nine-dash line claim.

The Permanent Court of Arbitration, in 2016, ruled in favor of the Philippines, saying the nine-dash line has no legal basis under international law. China, however, refused to recognize the ruling.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines Western Command (AFP-WESCOM) earlier reported the discovery of missing and destroyed corals after Chinese militia vessels left Rozul Reef.

"*Tandaan natin*, with or without a territorial dispute, the destruction of the environment is a sin against humanity. It's a very ripe case for adjudication," Remulla said at a press briefing.

The Philippine government, the DOJ chief said, can tap the best legal experts to help with the case, adding that the country already has a lot of evidence for its case against China since the destruction of coral reefs "has been happening for many years."

"The matter is ripe for the filing of a case in international tribunals," he added.

At the Senate, Sen. Risa Hontiveros filed proposed Senate Resolution 804 condemning the massive coral harvesting and urging the appropriate Senate committee to conduct an inquiry into the matter.

"We should seek payment for damages caused by China in the WPS. We will get billions if China is

forced to pay. They are robbing our fishermen of their livelihood, they are even destroying our natural resources. If China can pay off all its debts to the Philippines, it will definitely help in the economic crisis we are facing," Hontiveros said.

Resolution 804 also stated that the government cannot tolerate the continuing harm to the environment, economy and security brought about by China's incursions, and must explore available resources to hold China accountable, including a claim for damages to be filed with the Court of Arbitration.

Farmers back case

The Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. (PCAFI) on Wednesday said that the government should file a case against those involved in the destruction of coral reefs in Rozul Shoal near Palawan, widely believed to have been perpetrated by the Chinese.

At a press conference, PFAFI president Danilo Fausto said the country's coral reefs are bigger compared to the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.

"*Nakakaiyak*," Fausto said when asked after the AFP-WESCOM reported the plunder of corals in Rozul Reef, with Chinese as primary suspects.

The United States - through its top diplomat in the Philippines - has expressed alarm over the destruction of corals in the West Philippine Sea.

"We have more coral reef than the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, 2,500 (individual reefs) I think in Australia, we have 3,500. What is worse is that these are the homes of the fish, the corals. If you cut the corals, they can still grow but in this case, even the roots were removed," Fausto said.

"We would like to strongly encourage the government to file a case, an environment case against those people who did this. The entire world should know what they are doing to our environment, to our coral reefs, to the future food of our people. They destroyed the coral reefs, that's below the belt," he added.

For his part, Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) national chairman Fernando Hicap said the country should raise the issue to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

"Our call for the Marcos administration is to elevate the issue to the UN General Assembly so that the matter will be discussed. What China did was illegal, arbitrary after it entered our jurisdiction and damaged our resources," Hicap said.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo, Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga and Health Secretary Ted Herbosa lead the Philippine delegation to the 78th session of the UNGA at the UN headquarters in New York City from Sept. 18 to 26, 2023.

At the same time, Hicap backed the statement of the President that the government will implement fishing ban to address overfishing and secure fish stocks.

"We are not against the fishing ban as it is being implemented already during the breeding season of fish in specific areas, not the entire fishing grounds," he added.

He stressed the need to strictly implement the Fisheries Code of 1998 to ban foreign fishing vessels from encroaching on the country's fisheries resources.

"At least 80 percent of our imported fish comes from China but the Chinese sourced these in West Philippine Sea. That's the reason why



there is a 70 percent drop in the fish of our local fisherfolk" since 2020, Hicap added.

Further decline is expected amid reports of massive poaching of corals by the Chinese, he said.

Fishers group Tugon Kabuhayan convenor Norberto Chingcuanco said that various fisherfolk organizations support the government campaign to make China accountable for the destruction of coral reefs in West Philippine Sea.

"We are fish farmers, we are not fish hunters, nonetheless, we join the West Philippine Sea alliance, a loose group by private sector aimed to help develop our towns along the coast and to create more activities in the West Philippine Sea. We are very glad that the government is currently pursuing many activities... We have to allow them to take the lead," Chingcuanco said.

No harm

At the Philippine Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, the country highlighted the "no harm rule" obligation of states not to harm or pollute marine environment and ensure this is carried out.

The mission took part Tuesday in the proceedings on the request submitted by the Commission of Small Island States (COSIS) to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea for advisory opinion that has potential to impact how the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is interpreted in the future.

The request is unprecedented for the law of the sea, and is the first such opinion sought on specific issues associated with sea level rise and climate change in general.

Ambassador Maria Angela Ponce, assistant secretary for maritime and oceans affairs of the Department of

Foreign Affairs, said the South China Sea arbitration – cited by many states participating in these proceedings – provides determination on the obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment.

"The South China Sea arbitration is legally binding international law, with its proceedings faithfully carried out in accordance with UNCLOS. It has been cited by this Tribunal itself in its *Mauritius v. Maldives* decision. Its validity cannot be assailed," Ponce said.

She said the Philippines considers the South China Sea arbitration as "part of customary international law which covers areas within national jurisdiction as well as areas beyond national jurisdiction."

Ponce said this requires states to take active measures to prevent harm, to "conserve marine living resources" and "preserve the ecological balance of the oceans as a whole."

She discussed the "no-harm" rule as a customary norm and the obligation of due diligence as an imperative duty.

Carlos Sorreta, Philippine permanent representative to the UN in Geneva, said vulnerability is evident in Philippine coastal and marine ecosystems now deteriorating at alarming rates.

"Studies and reports reveal coastal erosion, bleaching of coral reefs, loss of sea grass and conversion of mangrove areas which, in turn, affect marine resources and the livelihood of our coastal communities," Sorreta said.

Assistant Solicitor General Gilbert Medrano said the questions posed by COSIS are legal in nature as they require the tribunal to interpret specific provisions of UNCLOS "without implicating any dispute between or among States Parties."

-With Bella Cariaso, Cecille Suerte Felipe, Pia Lee-Brago



Hontiveros wants China to pay for environmental damage at WPS

Deputy Minority Leader Senator Risa Hontiveros, on Wednesday, September 20, renewed her call for China to indemnify the Philippine government for the environmental damages it caused in the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

Hontiveros made the push after the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) recently confirmed the destruction of coral reefs in Rozul Reef and Escoda Shoal that was most likely caused by Chinese maritime militia vessels.

In response to this, the senator filed Senate Resolution No. 804, condemning the massive coral harvesting, and urging the appropriate Senate committee to conduct an inquiry into the matter.

"We should seek payment for damages caused by China in the WPS. Aabot ng bilyon-bilyon ang makukuha natin kung maoobligang magbayad ang Tsina (China will be obligated to pay us in billions if we do so)," Hontiveros said.

"Ninanakawan na nga nila ng hanapbuhay ang ating mga mangingis-da, winawasak pa nila ang ating likas-yaman. Kung mabayaran ng Tsina ang lahat ng utang niya sa Pilipinas, siguradong makakatulong ito sa kinakaharap nating krisis sa ekonomiya (Not only are they stealing from the livelihood of our fishermen, they are also destroying our natural resources. If China will pay us for all that they owe us, I'm certain this will help us solve the economic crisis we are facing)," she further said.

During the height of the pandemic, Hontiveros also filed Senate Resolution No. 369, calling on the Executive to ex-

ert legal and diplomatic efforts so that China would foot the bill of the country's COVID-19 response.

This was after a scientist from the University of the Philippines' (UP) Marine Science Institute Dr. Deo Onda estimated that the Philippines was losing around P33.1 billion annually from the damaged reef ecosystems in Panatag Shoal and Spratlys Islands due to China's reclamation activities in the area.

According to Onda, the amount was determined using a baseline value of \$353,429 or P18-million per hectare per year for coral reefs based on a study conducted by Elsevier, a Dutch company specializing in scientific, technical, and medical information and analytics.

"This will not be the first time for us to seek reparations. Japan paid our country for her destruction of Manila during World War II, and in more recent history, the United States of America also paid the Philippines P87-million, after the USS Guardian damaged Tubataha Reef in the Sulu Sea," Hontiveros recalled.

"May karapatan tayong maningil (we have the right to charge them for it)," Hontiveros explained.

In the explanatory note of her resolution, Hontiveros reiterated that the protection of the country's marine life requires effectively securing its territorial integrity. Thus, the government cannot tolerate the continuing harms done to its environment, economy and security brought about by China's incursions. (Hannah Torregoza)



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

PCAFI, RISA: SUE CHINA FOR CORALS DAMAGE

By JASPER EMMANUEL Y. ARCALAS

@jearcalas

THE Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. (PCAFI) urged the Marcos Jr. administration to pursue the filing of an environmental case against China over the destruction of coral reefs in the West Philippine Sea.

PCAFI President Danilo V. Fausto said they are "strongly encouraging" the government to file an environmental case against the people behind the destruction of the country's coral reefs in the West Philippine Sea.

In doing so, Fausto pointed out, the world would be aware of what is happening to the future food sources of the Filipinos.

"*Nakakaiyak. Iyong sinira ang coral reefs, below the belt na iyon* [That's so heart-breaking. Destroying the coral reefs, that's below the belt]," PCAFI President Danilo V. Fausto said during his group's forum on Wednesday.

"*Iyong political, territorial, okayyon pag-awayan politically, diplomatically. Pero iyong corals eh bahay ng mga isda, hindi na*

makatao iyan," he added.

(It is okay to dispute territories politically and diplomatically. But to destroy the corals, which house the fish, that's inhumane.)

Earlier this week, defense officials confirmed that coral reefs in Rozul Reef and Escoda Shoal in the West Philippine Sea were destroyed by Chinese Maritime Militia. (**Related story: <https://BUSINESSMIRROR.com.ph/2023/09/18/pcg-confirms-severe-reef-damage-in-2-wps-features/>**)

Diovanie De Jesus of Oceana said it might take decades for coral reefs in the area to recover since they were totally destroyed.

De Jesus also noted that payment for damages may not be enough to cover the rehabilitation of the area but would still be better than zero.

"At least we can ask for something. We can use these payments for other projects like establishing marine protected areas in the West Philippine Sea and protect existing reefs other than these destroyed reefs," he said in a television interview on Wednesday.

CONTINUED ON A5



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

PCAFI, RISA: SUE CHINA FOR CORALS DAMAGE

De Jesus pointed out that this is not the "only case" where the country's coral reefs in the West Philippine Sea were destroyed.

Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla earlier said the Department of Justice (DOJ) will recommend to Malacañang the filing of cases against China for the destruction of coral reefs and harvesting of corals in the West Philippine Sea. (Related story: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2023/09/19/doj-to-recommend-filing-of-case-vs-china-over-destruction-of-maritime-environment-in-wps/>)

In 2019, the BUSINESSMIRROR reported that China's increasing demand for food will deplete marine resources in the West Philippine Sea and wreak havoc on the country's fish supply in the near future. (Related story: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2019/07/04/china-fast-outstripping-phl-fish-catch-in-eez-maritime-experts-warn/>)

The loss is not just on account of China's rapid devouring of Philippine fish. Its massive reclamation and artificial island building has destroyed vital coral reefs that provide habitat to marine resources. According to estimates by marine experts, the

Philippines is losing at least \$647.5 million (P33.67 billion) annually from the marine resources—within the country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ)—that were destroyed by China.

Senate push

MEANWHILE, senators are stepping up a clamor for China to pay for environmental damages it caused in the West Philippine Sea.

Deputy Minority Leader Risa Hontiveros led the push after the Philippine Coast Guard recently confirmed that the destruction of coral reefs in Rozul Reef and Escoda Shoal was most likely caused by Chinese maritime militia vessels.

The senator then filed Proposed Senate Resolution No. 804, condemning the massive coral harvesting and urging the appropriate Senate Committee to conduct an inquiry into the matter.

"We should seek payment for damages caused by China in the WPS. Aabot ng bilyon-bilyon ang makukuha natin kung mao-obligang magbayad ang Tsina. Ninanakawan na nga nila ng hanapbuhay ang ating mga mangingisda, winawasak pa

nila ang ating likas-yaman. Kung mabayaran ng Tsina ang lahat ng utang niya sa Pilipinas, siguradong makakatulong ito sa kinakaharap nating krisis sa ekonomiya. [We can get billions of compensation if China is obliged to pay up. They have not just deprived our people of livelihood; they have stolen our natural riches. If China is made to pay up all it owes the Philippines, that can help us deal with the economic crisis]," Hontiveros said.

In 2020, at the height of the pandemic, the senator filed PSR No. 369, calling on the Executive to exert legal and diplomatic efforts so that China would foot the bill for our Covid-19 response. This call came after Dr. Deo Onda, a scientist from the University of the Philippines' Marine Science Institute, estimated that the Philippines was losing around P33.1 billion annually from the damaged reef ecosystems in Panatag Shoal and Spratlys Islands due to China's reclamation activities in the area.

Onda then explained that the amount was determined using a baseline value of \$353,429 or P18 million per hectare per year for coral reefs based on a study conducted by Elsevier, a Dutch company

specializing in scientific, technical, and medical information and analytics.

"This will not be the first time for us to seek reparations. Japan paid our country for her destruction of Manila during World War II, and in more recent history, the United States of America also paid the Philippines P87 million, after the USS Guardian damaged Tubbataha Reef in the Sulu Sea. May karapatan tayong maningil [We have the right to demand payment]," Hontiveros explained.

The resolution also states that the government cannot tolerate the continuing harms to the environment, economy, and security brought about by China's incursions, and must explore available resources to hold China accountable, including a claim for damages to be filed with the Permanent of Court Arbitration.

"Our 2016 Arbitral Award clearly invalidated China's sweeping and expansive claims in the WPS. This is a case we won because of our dogged commitment to abide by international law and uphold the truth. It is only right that we pursue all options to make China pay," Hontiveros concluded.

With a report by Butch Fernandez



Protect Chocolate Hills from dev't, DENR told

Bohol exec seeks halt to construction activities near natural attraction in 6 towns as resorts, tourism establishments rise

By **Leo Udtohan**
@leoudtohanINQ

TAGBILARAN CITY—A Bohol official has asked the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to stop the construction of structures within the vicinity of the Chocolate Hills to help preserve the province's major tourist attraction spanning at least six towns.

Board Member Jamie Aumentado Villamor, a lawyer and the chair of the provincial board committee on environment, said there should be no room for ambiguity in the guidelines set by DENR's Protected Area Management Board (PAMB).

"The DENR-PAMB, in consultation with stakeholders, must address the ambiguity of the rules and guidelines in the development and management of our protected areas to ensure long-term protection and conservation," she said.

PAMB, which oversees the Chocolate Hills, is led by the DENR regional director with the provincial governor, mayors and barangay captains in the towns of Carmen, Bilar, Batuan, Sagbayan, Sierra Bullones and Valencia as members.

Villamor asked the PAMB to stop the applications for any construction activity in areas near the Chocolate Hills while the provincial board is discussing amendments to Resolution No. 5, Series 2012, which guides the ecotourism development and management of the Chocolate Hills.

The latest attractions—Cap-



TOO CLOSE Guests at Captain's Peak Garden and Resort in Sagbayan, Bohol, get to see the world-famous Chocolate Hills up close. —**LEO UDTOHAN**

tain's Peak Garden and Resort in Sagbayan town and Bud Agta in Carmen town—became controversial due to the construction of "illegal and informal" structures, including swimming pools, slides and cottages that were too close to the mounds.

Under the guidelines, however, private property owners near the Chocolate Hills are allowed to develop their land.

First geopark

The Chocolate Hills was declared as the country's first geopark by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco). The attraction is composed of 1,776 limestone mounds, which look like chocolates during dry season and which create an otherworldly backdrop. The biggest concentrations of hills are in the towns of Carmen, Batuan and Sagbayan.

Some structures were built near the Chocolate Hills to accommodate tourists. The

Chocolate Hills complex was constructed in Barangay Buenos Aires in Carmen town in the 1970s. The development of the Sagbayan Peak and the Chocolate Hills Adventure Park (CHAP) followed later.

These structures, however, were developed even before the Chocolate Hills had been proclaimed as a protected area.

Recently, Gov. Aris Aumentado ordered an investigation into the defacement of the Chocolate Hills due to illegal structures.

"All these Chocolate Hills must be accounted for. We can't afford to lose [even] one," he said.

On Sept. 8, Villamor's committee conducted an investigation on the construction of structures at Captain's Peak Garden and Resort in Barangay Canmano in Sagbayan.

During the inspection, Villamor and other board members found out that the resort built cottages and water slides for a swimming pool at the foot

or sides of at least three hills.

Villamor said the PAMB failed to explain fully why it allowed the resort to use at least a 20-percent portion of the Chocolate Hills.

Following rules

But in a Facebook post, Captain's Peak Garden and Resort said the establishment followed all laws and regulations set by the government.

"Captain's Peak Garden and Resort management will take care of the Chocolate Hills that surround the area," said its owner, Edgar Button.

Another resort, Bud Agta, in Barangay Tamboan in Carmen was also cited by environmentalists for illegal structures built near the Chocolate Hills.

Villamor said that while development was essential for growth and progress, it was equally important that this would be done in accordance with the policy of the state.

"My hope is for leaders, different government agencies, and all stakeholders to work on policies that truly preserve and conserve our natural heritage, especially so that this is a protected area under the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act of 1992," she said.

"Even before Bohol was declared as the only Unesco geopark in the Philippines, Chocolate Hills (already) signify the natural abundance of the province. While development is important, it must strike a balance with environmental and cultural preservation," Villamor said. **INQ**



PAGE



UPPER
LOWER



PAGE 1
STORY



BANNER
STORY



EDITORIAL



CARTOON

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

High seas treaty moves closer to reality

UNITED NATIONS: Dozens of nations are set Wednesday to sign a historic treaty on protecting the high seas, seeking the quick entry into force of an accord designed to protect ecosystems vital to the planet.

The United Nations in July sealed the first treaty on the high seas after 15 years of discussion.

The start of signatures, during the

annual UN General Assembly, "represents an important step to establishing meaningful protections," said Nichola Clark of the Ocean Governance Project of The Pew Charitable Trusts.

"We begin a new chapter where the global community must take bold action in order to realize those protections, and ensure the ocean's enormous reservoirs of biodiversity

continue to provide benefits for ocean health and the communities across the globe that depend on it," she said.

The text of the treaty was formally adopted by consensus even though Russia said that parts of it were unacceptable.

The high seas start beyond countries' exclusive economic zones, or

►RealityA8

■ REALITY FROM A1

High seas treaty moves closer to reality

200 nautical miles (370 kilometers) off coastlines — covering nearly half the planet.

Nonetheless, they have long been ignored in discussions on the environment.

A key tool in the treaty will be the ability to create protected marine areas in international waters — only around 1 percent of which are now protected by any sort of conservation measures.

The treaty is seen as crucial to an agreement to protect 30 percent of the world's oceans and lands by 2030, as agreed by governments in a separate historic accord on biodiversity reached in Montreal

in December.

'Race to ratification'

The treaty will come into force 120 days after 60 countries ratify it.

According to the United Nations, more than 60 governments plan to initial the treaty starting Wednesday. But formal ratification depends on each country's own domestic process.

Mads Christensen, interim executive director of Greenpeace International, voiced hope that the treaty would come into force in 2025, when the next UN Oceans conference takes place in France.

"We have less than seven years to protect 30 percent of the oceans. There is no time to waste," he said.

"The race to ratification has begun and we urge countries to be ambitious, ratify the treaty and make sure it enters into force in 2025." But even if the treaty draws the 60 ratifications needed to come into force, it would still be well below the universal support for action sought by environmental defenders.

Oceans are critical for the health of the whole planet, protecting often microscopic biodiversity that supports half of the oxygen breathed by land life. The oceans

are also critical to limiting climate change by helping absorb greenhouse gas emissions.

The treaty, officially known as the treaty on "Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction" or BBNJ, also introduces requirements to carry out environmental impact studies for proposed activities on the high seas.

Such activities, while not listed in the text, would include anything from fishing and maritime transport to more controversial pursuits such as deep-sea mining or even geo-engineering programs aimed at fighting global warming.

AFP



TITLE:



Can 'blue economy' help raise PHL to middle-class status?

DIPLOMATIC DISPATCH

Malou Talosig-Bartolome

MANY Filipinos are probably unaware that their national government has a grand vision of eliminating poverty by 2040.

Recently, the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) and the National Security Council (NSC) released two interesting documents that spelled out the plans of the Marcos Jr. administration: the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028, and the Philippine National Security Policy (NSP) 2023-2028.

"By 2040, the Philippines shall be a prosperous, predominantly middle-class society where no one is poor; our peoples shall live long and healthy lives, be smart and innovative, and shall live in a high-trust society where families thrive in vibrant, culturally diverse, and resilient communities," Neda wrote about the PDP.

The NSC, on one hand, incorporated for the first time its vision for the Philippines as an archipelagic country: "A free, resilient, peaceful, and prosperous archipelagic and maritime nation, at peace with itself and its neighbors, enabled and protected by reliable defense and public safety systems."

The policy-making body on the overall security of the country finally declared that the core of Philippine existence and consciousness lies in its being a group of islands.

"We are a maritime nation. [We stand for what we are.] This is a big shift of how we see ourselves," Assistant Secretary Jonathan Malaya of the NSC said in a seminar by Waypoints Project to the media last September 8.

Can this new realization of national identity as a maritime nation steer the economy toward the middle-income bracket?

The blue economy

THE maritime space is bigger than the "land space" in the Philippines. But most of the country's laws, policies and economic activities are focused on land, lamented Dr. Julio Amador who is the founder of Amador Research Services.

No wonder, despite our vast natural marine resources, the fisherfolk sector is the poorest among the poor in our nation.

Based on the 2022 survey of the Philippine Statistics Authority, the poverty incidence among fisherfolks is at 30.6 percent. Dr. Rosalie Hall, University of the Philippines-Visayas professor, said almost 2 million of these small-scale fishermen are engaged in capture fishing as livelihood. They use non-motorized boats and with that limitation, they can only fish in municipal waters, and not in the exclusive economic zone—including the Kalayaan Island Group.

The solution? Develop the country into a "blue economy."

The terms means the country will employ the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth. The key word is "sustainable," as simple exploitation of marine resources would also deprive the next generation of such in the future. Blue economy consists of fisheries and aquaculture on one hand, and maritime transport such as ports, containers, ships and tankers on the other.

To achieve a state of blue economy, the departments of Agriculture, Trade and Industry, Environment and Natural Resources, Science and Technology, as well as other "relevant agencies," must "allocate the needed resources to harness the full potential of the blue economy."

By how much? It didn't say.

Dr. John Paolo Rivera, who is Oikonomia Advisory and Research's president and chief economist, acknowledged that these plans are "good," but said "there are policy challenges reminiscent of what we have experienced in the 'green economy.'"

He thinks the public has to be, first and foremost, aware of the need to save the oceans and seas to bring food to the table: "Conservation and preservation efforts should be part of our system. Sustainability must be a part of our economy, politics, society, way of living."

I also could not find specific plans about research and development; more so, scientific research on minerals and marine environment. R&D is the most important investment that can identify one's most important asset, ways to harness such, and how to beat the competition.

Can PHL beat the deadline?

NEDA targets that the average family income of farm laborers and fisherfolk would improve by 20 percent to 30 percent by 2025, and the same by 2027 compared with 2015 to 2018 levels.

But what is the 2015-2018 level? "Baseline and targets will be updated upon the release of the official 2021 data from the 'Family Income and Expenditure Survey' in the 1st quarter of 2023," the footnote reads. (Now, forgive me. I can't find data on the FIES that was supposedly released this year.)

Neda plans are not specific with timelines and target numbers. Just generalizations, and they would not even pass the S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) method of goal-setting.

Dr. Rivera said beating poverty in 12 years can still be achieved. But we should have done concrete actions "yesterday."

"Tomorrow might be too late. Enough of unnecessary debates in government if we want the blue economy to happen by 2040," he concluded.



Most Rafflesia species risk extinction – study

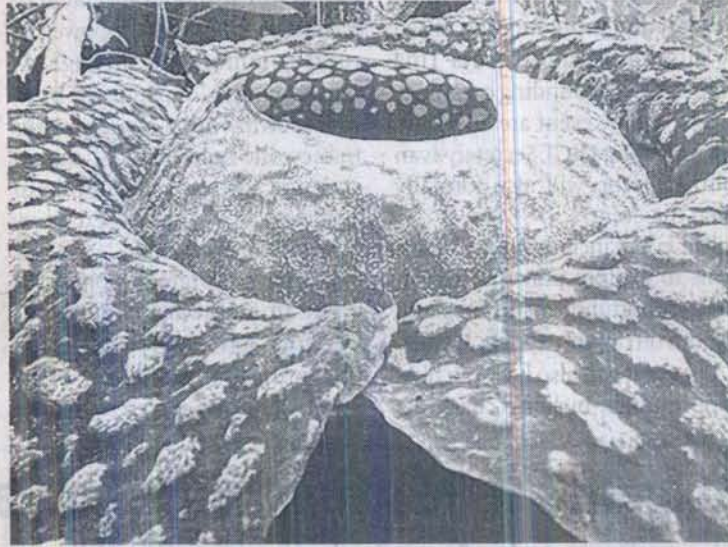
BANGKOK: Most species of the famously large Rafflesia flower, which has long captured people's imagination with its enormous speckled red petals, are now at risk of extinction, new research warned on Wednesday.

Rafflesia is actually a parasite, and lives on tropical vines across parts of Southeast Asia, producing blooms that are among the largest in the world.

It is something of an enigma, with its flowers emerging unpredictably, and botanists have had limited success propagating it outside its natural environment.

One species of the flower is currently classed as "critically endangered," according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

To better understand the plant and its conservation status, an international group of botanists examined 42 known Rafflesia species and their habitats, primarily Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.



BIG 'BLOSSOM' The Rafflesia flower is pictured at an unidentified location in this undated photo. AFP FILE PHOTO

Based on the rapid disappearance of its forest habitats, as well as insufficient conservation strategies and protection plans, the plant is at far greater risk than previously known, they said.

"We estimate that 60 percent of Rafflesia species face a severe risk of extinction," the researchers

wrote in the study, published in the peer-reviewed "Plants, People, Planet" journal on Wednesday.

Some species risk going extinct before they are even known to science, the study said, urging more research into the unusual plant.

"We urgently need a joined-up, cross-regional approach to save

some of the world's most remarkable flowers, most of which are now on the brink of being lost," said Chris Thorogood, deputy director of Oxford University's Botanical Garden and a study author.

The research points out that the plant is believed to grow in fairly limited areas, making it particularly vulnerable to habitat destruction.

It also highlights several bright spots in conservation efforts, including successful propagation at a botanical garden in Indonesia's West Java, and sustainable ecotourism around the plant in West Sumatra.

Last year, nations pledged to protect 30 percent of the world's land and seas by 2030 in a landmark deal to slow the disappearance of species and ecosystems.

Repeated studies have warned that the twin threats of climate change and environmental destruction caused by humans are dramatically reducing biodiversity worldwide.

AFP



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

DENR exec vows push for responsible, globally competitive mining industry

AN official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said the agency is committed to establishing a responsible and globally competitive mining industry, which is faced with yet another mining tax regime in the offing.

Interviewed at the sideline of the 2023 Mining Philippines International Conference and Exhibition in Mandaluyong City on Tuesday, DENR Undersecretary for Integrated Science Carlos Primo David said starting next year, the DENR will push for a more efficient and transparent system in the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), which regulates mining, as an integral part of the administration's mining governance efforts.

The event came a day after the House appropriations committee approved the new fiscal regime for the mining sector, a measure that will generate an additional P37.5 billion in revenues for the government in the first full year of its implementation. The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) had earlier said the current mining tax regime is already high and an additional increase in mining tax will hobble industry growth.

David, who represented DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga, delivered the

keynote speech during event at the EDSA Shangri-La in Mandaluyong City on Tuesday.

According to David, to help the industry, the DENR will introduce positive changes in both mining regulation and governance "for the expressed purpose of establishing a more professional, responsible and globally competitive mining industry."

Organized by the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines COMP, the event, which came following a four-year hiatus, is expected to reignite discussions on the future of mining in the Philippines. With the theme "Seeing Green: Shaping a Sustainable Minerals Development Industry," the event brought together a diverse assembly of participants, including government officials, private sector representatives, academics, indigenous communities, and mining host communities, with the hope of charting the future of mining in the Philippines.

According to David, several initiatives started by the DENR aim to improve both the regulation and governance of mining.

A licensed geologist and expert in environmental science, David said the DENR pilot-tested a new process called Negotiated Sustainability and Resilience Agreement or NSRA and will work towards

its implementation next year.

"It's an add-on to the ECC [Environmental Clearance (certificate) process]," he said.

It would include a dialogue between the DENR and the mining company to identify and negotiate shared goals such as reduced environmental impacts, renewable energy adoption, and community resilience for the overall improvement of their quality of life. "It will take only 90 minutes to complete," he said, assuring mining companies that it will not be a burden or an additional regulation for miners.

Nevertheless, the official said the NSRA goes beyond compliance.

"It is a partnership based on agreed values, principles, and specific milestones," he said.

"To date, two mines have undergone the process—a new gold mine up in Kalinga and one of the largest copper mines in the Visayas," he said.

"When in full swing, the agreed goals will be the hallmark of the evolution of a green mine," David added. Meanwhile, the official said that the DENR is now also reviewing the Social Development Management Program (SDMP) to link it to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to build with the assurance that it responds to

host community and host ecosystems needs, and to ensure that any local vulnerability is transformed into capacity.

"We shall soon be calling on industry partners to review the new program before we put it into a DAO [Department Administrative Order]," he said.

David also stated that DENR is investing in the digitization of all mining-related information and the processing of applications and permits. "We have substantially completed migrating all data onto a single platform, with the exception of data from one last division in the MGB [Mines and Geosciences Board]. Digitization should address making our procedures more efficient, leading to shorter and more transparent processing permits and applications," he pointed out.

To boost the process, he said the agency has engaged the expertise of PricewaterhouseCoopers International Limited-Philippines, a British multinational professional services brand of firms, operating as partnerships under the PwC brand.

"The PwC will be supporting our department-wide process as we ensure that the bureaus and their people and technologies are fit for purpose," he ended.

Jonathan L. Moyuga



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

DENR outlines new direction in exploration of energy transition minerals for RE market

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is looking at a more focused government-led exploration of critical metals needed for renewable energy (RE) transition with the end-goal of encouraging the private sector to invest and boost mining prospects in the Philippines.

DENR Undersecretary for Environment and Integrated Science Carlos Primo David issued this statement during a news briefing at the sidelines of the ongoing Mining Philippines 2023 International Conference and Exhibition organized by the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) at the Edsa Shangri-La in Mandaluyong City on Tuesday.

With the theme "Seeing Green: Shaping a Sustainable Minerals Development Industry," the event brought together a diverse assembly of

participants, including government officials, private sector representatives, academics, indigenous communities, and mining host communities to chart a new path for the future of mining in the Philippines.

Representing DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga, David expressed DENR's support to the mining industry in terms of governance and regulation, citing the potential of the country's minerals development sector to be an important player in the global RE transition market.

"The government has a budget of P60 million for minerals exploration. But it's like a 'shotgun exploration.' What we want to do is to focus it on certain areas," he explained.

David pointed out such a budget, which is for the whole country, is divided into 16 for equal

distribution for every region, including Metro Manila. Such a budget, he added, is not enough and the DENR now finds it imperative to focus the exploration activities for critical minerals, for instance, because of the increasing global demand for electric vehicle batteries.

"We wanted to focus that small budget and revive exploration by government. Hopefully, when we do the initial exploration, there is enough information for the private sector to get interested and continue the exploration," he said.

David said the objective of would-be government-led exploration is to be able to identify minerals and declare more mineralized areas.

"We wanted to help the industry with this critical step. Before you develop, mining starts with exploration. It should be government-initiated," he stressed. Among the targeted critical mineral deposits are nickel and chromium, David said.

He said the government, through the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), will also follow up on previously explored areas that were eventually left or discontinued.

He said there's one potentially gold-rich area that is not known to be a gold district that such government-led exploration discovered before. "We want to revive those," he said.

To do this, David said, a Department Administrative Order or Memorandum Circular will be needed "all for the purpose of being able to declare an area a mineral area, through government-led exploration, for any mining development in any mineral area goes additional royalty for government, and jobs, too," said David, a licensed geologist and an expert in environmental science.

For gold, he said, it would require a little more extensive exploration. David said the plan is to drill one or two holes and see if there's enough deposit in the area. For the nickel deposit, which is at the surface, exploration will cover a bigger area, he said.

David said potential nickel deposits that can be explored by the government are those in the areas of Zambales, Isabela, and Antique. *Jonathan L. Mayuga*



MVP: Amid risks, mining helps people, enables 'green' tech

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA @jonmayuga

BUSINESSMAN Manuel V. Pangilinan underscored the need for metals to enable renewable energy technologies, not to mention the economic benefits it brings in terms of jobs and revenues that translate to better social services particularly in far-flung areas.

Speaking during the second day of the 2023 Mining Philippines International Conference and Exhibition on Wednesday, Pangilinan admitted there are inherent risks of mining accidents such as the Padcal mine tailings leak in Benguet that polluted nearby water bodies.

However, he said, mining, done responsibly, can provide the much-needed boost to the economy and enable technology that allows the world to transition from fossil fuel to the more sustainable renewable energy path.

"With the theme 'Seeing Green: Shaping a Sustainable Minerals Development Industry,' the mining event brought together a diverse assembly of participants, includ-

ing government officials, private sector representatives, academics, indigenous communities, and mining host communities.

Mining is important in the production of e-vehicles and batteries - which will require nickel, graphite, aluminum, and copper constitute their metal bodies and batteries, Pangilinan said.

Meanwhile, he said solar panel and wind farms need steel, arsenic, gallium, germanium, indium, and tellurium. Wind turbines, on the other hand, need aluminum and a number of rare earth compounds to make their generators lighter and more efficient.

In many respects, sustainability rests on green technology -- and

by extension, reliance on mining would continue, he said.

In the migration from fossil fuel to e-vehicles, for instance, he said charging stations would have to be built but it would be impossible to do so without metals.

"Beyond minerals, mining means jobs and incomes for our people, especially since mines are typically located in rural areas, where poverty exists and jobs are scarce," he said.

At a press briefing at the sideline, he then added that in the countryside and rural areas, mining brings about economic benefits, helping people escape poverty through job generation, and national and local government taxes paid by mining companies are translated to projects and better social services that benefit the people.

The world is now entering an era of sustained resource demand as economies expand and the population explodes, he said.

"The Philippines missed the economic bus during the manufacturing cycle in the 50s and 60s, and the export boom in the 70s and 80s. This time, we cannot miss this bus yet again, with our available mineral resource base," he said.

He warned that if the Philip-

pines failed to board the bus, it would leave the country no option but to import, which means paying for someone else's cost of mineral products, and their profits, plus the cost of protecting the environment. "This is not only absurd, it is also sad ... too lazy to exploit our inherent mineral wealth and an insult to us when others - the South Africans, Australians, Indonesians, and Chinese - operate and manage their mining businesses well enough," he stressed.

Pangilinan said that if these countries can conduct their mining operations responsibly and sustainably, so can the Philippines, adding that the industry has to further level up when it comes to sustainability practices and standards. The industry, he said, should not be judged based on the performance of its worst member, but rather on how the industry as a whole practices mining responsibly. He cited the case of Philex which, on its own, stopped all operations and addressed the tailings pond leak problem, even to the point of promptly paying the P1 billion fine imposed by the government for the accident caused by unprecedented rain volume on its mining area.



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

Philex plans to venture into nickel mining

By Othel V. Campos

PHILEX Mining Corp. is seeking a partner to venture into nickel mining, a top executive said Wednesday.

"This is our first time to go into nickel. We've been in the copper-gold production for a long time. That's why it is imperative for us to get a partner who knows nickel mines," Philex president and chief executive Eulalio Austin Jr. said at the Mining Philippines International Conference and Exhibition at EDSA Shangri-La Manila in Mandaluyong City.

He also disclosed that Philex was in

talks to acquire the old Dizon mines in Zambales province.

Austin said that on its \$2-billion copper-gold project in Mindanao, the company expects to release an updated prefeasibility study (PFS) to present a solid offer for investors. He said the initial findings of the updated PFS might be released as early as the fourth quarter of 2023.

"Hopefully with that, we will be able to see the revised figures based on current prices, revenues and cost. We believe that the financials will definitely be a lot better than the 2013 PFS," he said.

Austin said this year saw a marked increase in global gold prices which hit the \$1,900-per-ounce mark, higher than \$1,250/oz estimate in the 2013 PFS. Copper prices are now at \$380/oz, also higher than in the past decade.

Philex is looking for a strategic partner for Silangan mine as demand for copper increased three-fold, supported by electric vehicle (EV) and EV battery production.

Meanwhile, Philex chairman Manuel Pangilinan underscored the contribution of mining to the economy, saying it enables green technology to flourish, creates jobs, brings revenues and provides additional benefits that uplift the lives and promote the welfare of the people, particularly in far-flung areas.

"I would then argue that in many respects, sustainability rests on green technology, and by extension, reliance on mining would continue," he said.

Pangilinan said the migration from fossil fuel to electric vehicles would be impossible without metals. "Beyond minerals, mining means jobs

and incomes for our people, especially since mines are typically located in rural areas, where poverty exists and jobs are scarce," he said.

Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary Fred Pascual also noted the significant contribution of the mining industry. "Mining is not just an extraction process that leaves behind a barren landscape. It is a means of converting our natural resources into valuable assets that can power the engines of our economy, create jobs and lay the foundation for infrastructural advancements that will benefit not just our generation but those to come," Pascual said.

He said the DTI is aggressively promoting the development of the green metals sector as a major contributor to the economy.



TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

Vivant unit to complete seawater desalination project

By DANESSA RIVERA

The water unit of listed Vivant Corp. is completing the country's first and biggest utility-scale seawater desalination project in Cordova, Cebu by year-end to meet the potable water needs of the province.

In a statement, Isla Mactan-Cordova Corp. (IMCC) said it is set to complete its P2-billion utility-scale seawater desalination project in December.

At 70 percent project completion, the company will begin installing key components for the state-of-the-art seawater reverse osmosis (SWRO) technology.

Reverse osmosis is a globally utilized technology to remove salt from the seawater and produce drinking water.

The project aims to address the gap between water demand and supply while allowing severely extracted groundwater aquifers to replenish naturally.

Once completed, the desalination plant can generate 20 million liters a day of potable water in the first phase.

IMCC president and CEO Jess Anthony Garcia pointed out that 20 million liters a day is equivalent to the average daily consumption of 20,000 Filipino households.

He said that the generation capacity of the plant, which is expected to begin commercial operations early next year, can be expanded to 50 million liters a day.

The seawater desalination facility will be operated and managed by IMCC, a subsidiary of Vivant Hydrocore Holdings Inc., which was awarded a 25-year contract to supply desalinated water to the Metropolitan Cebu Water District (MCWD).

The project is being constructed by Watermatic Philippines (WMP), a joint venture company of Vivant Corporation and WaterMatic International of Israel, while the project site was provided through a partnership with the municipal government of Cordova.

Lawmakers have lauded the project, which is seen as a step towards a water-secure Philippines, stressing that access to safe and reliable water is an inalienable human right.

In his speech in a recent ceremonial equipment installation of the project, Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri said that by ensuring uninterrupted access to safe and potable water, the facility will be instrumental in helping Mactan's continued growth and development while addressing insufficient access to drinking water.

"No household should have to suffer the indignity of unclean water, and the risk of illness and hospital expenses that comes with it," he said.

Senate deputy minority floor leader Risa Hontiveros said the project would reduce the health risks among Cebuanos which are associated with unclean and inadequate water supply.

"Our communities, and cities, and municipalities like Cordova need clean and sufficient water supplies to ensure that they will continue to be livable and nurturing spaces," she said.

Hontiveros said the Senate would continue to push legislative reforms and policies that will foster investment and use of environmentally and energy-efficient technologies towards water security like desalination plants and others.



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

THE EXPONENT OF PHILIPPINE PROGRESS
SINCE 1900
MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

B3
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

09-21-23

TITLE _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

Vivant unit to complete ₱2-B Mactan desalination plant by December

Isla Mactan-Cordova Corporation (IMCC), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Vivant Hydrocore Holdings Inc., is set to complete the country's first utility-scale seawater desalination project in Cordova, Mactan by December this year.

In a statement, parent company Vivant Corporation said the

₱2 billion desalination plant, which can generate 20 million liters a day of potable water in the first phase, will be operated and managed by IMCC which was awarded a 25-year contract to supply desalinated water to the Metropolitan Cebu Water District (MCWD).

IMCC President and CEO Jess Anthony Garcia pointed out that 20 million liters a day is equivalent to the average daily consumption of 20,000 Filipino households.

He said that the generation capacity of the plant, which is expected to begin commercial operations early next year, can be expanded to 50 million liters a day.

The project, which is now 70 percent complete, will begin installing key components for

the state-of-the-art seawater reverse osmosis (SWRO) technology.

Reverse osmosis is a globally utilized technology to remove salt from the seawater and produce drinking water. The project aims to address the gap between water demand and supply while allowing severely extracted groundwater aquifers to replenish naturally.

Plant construction on the project site which was provided through a partnership with the Municipal Government of Cordova, is being undertaken by Watermatic Philippines (WMP), a joint venture company of Vivant Corporation and WaterMatic International of Israel. Israel is a world leader in water production, conservation, and technology.

The desalination plant is seen as a step towards a water-secure Philippines and will be instrumental in helping Mactan's continued growth and development while addressing insufficient access to drinking water. (James A. Loyola)



Vivant unit set to complete first desalination plant in PH

By Alena Mae S. Flores

ISLA Mactan-Cordova Corp. (IMCC) said Wednesday it expects to complete the country's first utility-scale seawater desalination project in Mactan, Cebu at a cost of P2 billion in December.

IMCC, a subsidiary of Vivant Hydrocore Holdings Inc., will operate and manage the desalination plant in Cordova town, which can generate 20 million liters a day of potable water in the first phase.

IMCC was awarded a 25-year contract to supply desalinated water to the Metropolitan Cebu Water District (MCWD).

IMCC president and chief executive Jess Anthony Garcia said the plant's generation capacity is equivalent to the average daily consumption of 20,000 Filipino households.

He said the plant, which would begin commercial operations next year after testing and commissioning, could be ex-

panded to 50 million liters a day.

The project is already 70-percent complete, with key components for the state-of-the-art seawater reverse osmosis (SWRO) technology set to be installed.

Reverse osmosis is a globally utilized technology to remove salt from the seawater and produce drinking water.

The project aims to address the gap between water demand and supply while allowing severely extracted groundwater aquifers to replenish naturally.

Plant construction is being undertaken by Watermatic Philippines (WMP), a joint venture company of Vivant Corp. and WaterMatic International of Israel. Israel is a world leader in water production, conservation and technology.

The site was provided through a partnership with the municipal government of Cordova.

Two senators said the desalination plant is a step towards a water-secure Philippines.



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

ARTA may resolve Bohol water concern



BUREAUCRATIC red tape in most, if not all, government offices remains a chronic problem confronting Filipinos. A good citizen transacts business with government, pays taxes, seeks business or other kinds of permits, clearances, applies for land titles or anything for whatever official need or reasons. Anyway, who can ever escape having to transact business with local government units or national offices?

Applicants wait for days, weeks, months or longer; made to go from one desk to the other; the documents required, instead of being fully listed, are demanded in batches or on installment. It's typical for government office personnel to freeze the processing, or dilly-dally in deciding on the application.

Well, we've got information how complaints filed with the Office of the Ombudsman takes time to resolve too, although some are acted with expediency. Why they are not consistent, we don't know.

Well, the creation of Anti-Red

Tape Authority (RA 11032) in 2018 should be God's blessing, with its mandate to ensure no red tape and promote ease of doing business with government.

Luckily, last Thursday, September 14, 2023, at the Rotary Club of Manila's regular meeting held at Manila Polo Club in Makati City, we had an opportunity to hear from ARTA Director General Ernesto V. Perez what they are doing and the steps, the measures they are undertaking to minimize red tape that is prevalent in most government offices.

It was reassuring to hear directly from Director General Perez himself. And we mentioned ARTA because Boholanos' quest for a steady supply of potable water is at risk. The fact is that the water rights application filed by Bohol-based Richli Corp. has been pending with the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) for a couple of years.

Many concerned individuals, notably Mr. Willy Ramasola, a Boholano journo and blogger, Mr. Gregorio Madanguit IV, among many others, are so worried, which led them to unite under the group Bohol Clean Water Alliance (BCWA). Now, this group is at the forefront, advocating the expeditious resolution of this life-threatening issue.

It is sad to note that due to the pendency, Madanguit IV, along with two others, filed on August 9, 2023 a complaint against several high officials of the DENR and NWRB before the Ombudsman, for alleged violation of the Anti-graft and Corrupt Practices Act arising, in part, on the water rights application permit pending for a source located in Lourdes, Cortes, Bohol.

We don't want to discuss the merits of the complaint due to the rule on subjudice. We opted to check the applicant's documents, which show that all permits and fees required have been submitted or complied well. That's aside from the fact that Richli Corp. has a good track record as utility provider for over a decade.

Lately, they even invested another P100 million in Trinidad, Bohol water supply project. With that, we wonder what reason there is in the delay of either extending or approving the water rights permit application of the said water utility entity in sourcing water from Uhan Spring in Cortes, Bohol.

Presently, Richli Corp. is the only water supplier to Tagbilaran City, Dauis, Baclayon, Cortes and Trinidad as well as the Panglao International Airport and almost all the resorts and hotels in the famous tourist area. Now, the operation of the new P9 billion Cortes Hospital is in jeopardy, scary at that, since it has no source for its water requirement.

Well, we really understand the anxiety of Boholanos. Like all Filipinos, they all deserve to have clean and steady potable water supply. So we pleaded with the ARTA official to act and call the attention of NWRB/DENR to resolve the issue and grant the water permit applied for with urgency.

All the provincial and local officials are called upon too, to unite, support and set aside, if there be any, the politics that hinder the granting of water rights to Richli Corp. for the greater interests of Boholanos. Remember that all of you took an oath to serve the people.

For comments, tweet@billyandal or e-mail @andalbilly@yahoo.com



TITLE:

PBBM certifies as urgent 2024 budget bill after Ledac meet

BY SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA

[@sam_medenilla](#)

BY JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ

[@joveemarie](#)

WITH Congress already scheduled to take its break next week, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Wednesday certified as urgent House Bill (HB) No. 8980 or the 2024 General Appropriations Act (GAA).

In his message addressed to leaders of both houses of Congress, the chief executive said he made the decision to ensure the continuous government operations following the end of the current fiscal year.

He also said it will help expedite the funding of various government programs.

The President made the decision despite the commitment by Senate President Juan Miguel "Migz" F. Zubiri and House Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez during Third Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) to pass the 2024 GAA by December.

Following the certification of HB 8980, Congress can approve it on second reading and third reading during the same day.

Currently, the bill is still under period of interpellation at the House of Representatives.

It will still undergo the period of amendments before being approved for second reading and third and final reading.

Congress is scheduled to close its session on September 29 and adjourn from September 30 to November 5, 2023 for the Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections next month.

It will resume its session on November 6, 2023.

Malacañang said the Marcos administration is on track of achieving its 20 priority legislation goals, which include the 2024 GAA, before the end of the year.

During the LEDAC meeting, Senate President Juan Miguel "Migz" F. Zubiri informed the chief executive that Senate already "completed" almost half of the legislative wish list of the Executive Department.

"Those pending will become law within the next few weeks, and hopefully the President will be able to sign it," Zubiri told the President in Filipino during the meeting.

The 20 bills identified as priority measures include the National Employment Action Plan, LGU Income Classification, Internet Transaction Act, BOT/PPP Act, Salt Development Industry Act, Ease of Paying Taxes, Real Property Evaluation and Assessment Reform Act, Magna Carta for Seafarers, and Anti-Agriculture Smuggling Act.

Also included in the list are the Waste-to-Energy Bill, National Disease Prevention Management Authority, Amendments to the Banking Act or the Fund Secrecy Law, Medical Reserve Corps, Virology Institute of the Philippines, E-Governance Act, New Philippine Passport Act, the National Government Rightsizing Act, the National Scamming Act, the National Citizens Service Training Program Act, and the Military and Uniformed Personnel Pension System Act.

Zubiri gave his assurance the Senate will pass the pending bills by December. For his part, House Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez said 18 of the 20 priority legislation have been passed by the House of Representatives.

"Before we go on break, we will finish all of the 20 priority Ledac measures. At the end of September or three months in advance of the prescribed deadline we made an agreement with the Senate President and the President," Romualdez said.

As for the two remaining Ledac measures, Romualdez said HB 8969, or the Military and Uniformed Personnel Pension System Act, was approved on second reading during the plenary session Tuesday and slated for approval on third and final reading next week.

He added that the House Committee on Agriculture and Food also approved on Wednesday the substitute bill consolidating all measures seeking amendments to the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act, paving the way for its scheduled approval in plenary by next week.



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

09-21-23

TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____



Over 17,000 volunteers across 15 SM malls in 12 locations nationwide helped create waves of positive change with the biggest haul of trash collected at 100,432.50 kilos during the 38th International Coastal Cleanup on Sept. 16. Leading the activity at SM by the Bay at the MOA complex are (from left) Geronimo Reyes, ICC Philippines project head; Orliber Paule, SM Estates SAVP; Joaquin San Agustin, SM Supermalls SVP for marketing; Michael Drake Matias, DENR-NCR officer-in-charge regional executive director; Jessica Bianca Sy, SM Prime Holdings Inc.'s project director AVP; Pasay Mayor Emi Rubiano-Calixto; Ignatius Loyola Rodriguez, DENR undersecretary for special concerns and legislative affairs, and Perkin Bentley So, SM Supermalls SAVP for mall operations.



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

Villar leads celebration of ICC at LPPWP, renews call to protect our seas

OUR commitment to safeguard our seas today for the benefit of everyone must be clear, said Sen. Cynthia A. Villar.

During the International Coastal Clean-up Day or ICC celebrated at the Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park, the chairperson of the Senate committees on Environment and Natural Resources, said we must strongly adhere to protecting our environment and our seas because we and our fisherfolks all depend on the bounties of the seas.

"This year's ICC theme, 'Clean Seas For Healthy Fisheries,' emphasizes the crucial connection between ocean health and the abundance of our fisheries. Clean waters are essential for the well-being of marine life and a vibrant fishing sector.

Held annually on the third Saturday of September, the ICC represents the world's largest volunteer effort for ocean health.

Volunteers from around the globe gather on beaches, coasts, rivers, other waterways, and dive sites to remove trash and document the volume and type of trash collected.

While our fishermen strive to provide us with the ocean's bounty, Villar lamented that they are often the ones most impacted by the worsening state of the seas, fish habitats, and climate events such as El Niño and frequent storms.

"Sadly, our seas face threats from habitat degradation and pollutants like plastics, which not only reduce the fish population but also affects the livelihood of our fisherfolks," also said the chairperson of the Senate Committee on



International Coastal Clean-up. Senator Cynthia A. Villar leads the opening celebration of the International Coastal Clean-up Day at Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland (LPPWP) on Saturday. Held annually on the third Saturday of September, this year's ICC theme "Clean Seas For Healthy Fisheries", emphasizes the crucial connection between ocean health and the abundance of our fisheries. Senator Villar remains optimistic that our continuous efforts will soon reflect in cleaner waters and a thriving marine life.

Agriculture and Food.

"We are fortunate to have our ICC here in Las Piñas - Parañaque Wetland Park, a place where we can immerse ourselves in nature while participating in the clean-up," she added.

She noted that our wetland park is protected under RA No.

11038 or the Expanded NIPAS Act of 2018, which she pushed in the Senate.

Aside from this, LPPWP was recognized as the sixth Wetland of International Importance under the International Convention for the Conservation of Wetlands or Ramsar Convention.

As member of the Ramsar Convention, it is the duty of our government to protect Ramsar sites, including LPPWP for long term protection of our natural resources.

Beyond its ecological significance, the LPPWP offers crucial benefits to the local

residents of Las Piñas, Parañaque, and Bacoor. It safeguards against flooding, high tides, and storm surges. In tune with our ICC theme, it also serves as a vital livelihood source for numerous fisherfolk and the urban poor who rely on it daily.



TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

Pinoys may be underutilizing valuable medicinal plant resources—experts

THE Philippines may be underutilizing its plant resources, including rare trees that have medicinal values, underscoring the need for protection and conservation amid climate change threats.

At the recently held Asean Conference on Medicinal Forest Trees in Pampanga, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB) said the country has yet to maximize the economic benefits of medicinal plants despite their huge potential for health and wellness.

The event gathered some 117 participants from the Philippines, Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan who took part in the three-day conference.

According to ERDB Director Maria Lourdes G. Ferrer, forest species studies reveal

interconnected relationships between nature and human health used by indigenous people worldwide for disease treatment.

Ferrer added there is a need to gather and preserve indigenous knowledge on medicinal plants and medicinal forest trees given their benefits and potential for economic activity.

"As we embark on this intellectual journey, let us remember that our discoveries have the potential to touch lives, alleviate suffering, and shape the course of healthcare and medicinal forest tree species conservation," said Ferrer.

For his part, ERDB Assistant Director Conrado B. Marquez said habitat protection through active management of forests, and governance with the appropriate funding allocation are vital for medicinal forest trees to adapt and become resilient to climate change.

Jonathan L. Mayuga



OPINION

09-21-23

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

Enabling political violence against environmental defenders

EVERY Filipino must be saddened

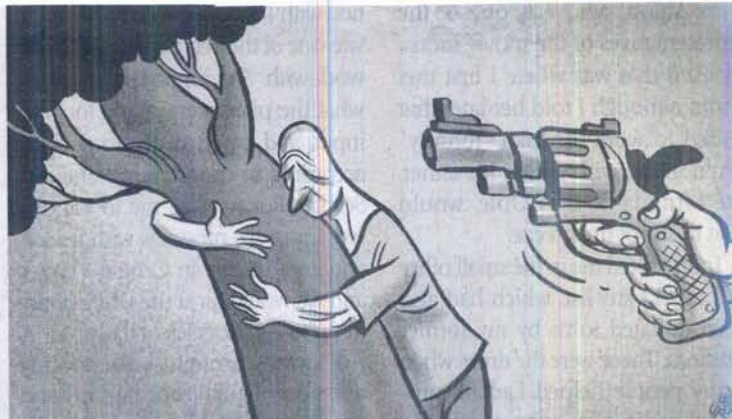


ON THE CONTRARY

ANTONIO CONTRERAS

by the fact that for the 10th year, the Philippines has been the deadliest place in Asia for environmental defenders. Out of the 16 reported deadly attacks in 2022, 11 happened in the Philippines. Since 2012, 281 environmental activists have been killed.

► **ContrerasA5**



And these numbers do not even include harassment and attempted killings, such as those experienced by two forest rangers in the Masungi Georeserve who survived after being shot at by unknown assailants while resting in their stations last July 24, 2021.

Being at the top of the list in Asia is an embarrassing place to be in, considering how the Philippines projects itself as a democracy. It is easy to deploy as justification the usual narrative that most of the casualties are leftist troublemakers, or are in fact involved in the guerrilla movement. This rationalization is to be expected in a country where the dominant narrative embraced by many is that communism and terrorism are synonyms, and where a huge majority seem to have accepted the mantra popularized by the previous Duterte administration that killing communists is justified to save the Republic.

However, what happened to the forest rangers of the Masungi Georeserve is far from being a case of Marxist rebels threatening state security. In fact, these rangers were simply doing their jobs of protecting the georeserve from encroachment by land speculators, developers and other commercial interests. Playing the communist card does not also apply to the cases of foresters and forestry workers who have been harassed and attacked, some of whom even died simply because they were performing their duties to protect our country's forests.

This is what is happening in the Masungi Georeserve, where it is the DENR which is now at the forefront in delegitimizing the Masungi Georeserve Foundation Inc. (MGFI), a private entity with whom, ironically, the DENR, through its former secretary, the late Gina Lopez, signed a memorandum of agreement (MoA) for the protection of the georeserve in 2017. MGFI delivered its part, effectively reforesting a large swath of formerly degraded areas, and protecting the georeserve, enough for it to win accolades and awards, both locally and internationally. In fact, it is the DENR that failed to deliver its obligation under the agreement, by failing to appoint a project manager and to seat the oversight committee.

After Lopez's departure from the Environment department, it is apparent that some of its top officials have either ignored the MoA, or even openly worked against it. Allegations of violations of the law, even of the Constitution, were raised by DENR officials against MGFI during the open congressional hearings. Granted that the agreement was infirm, all the DENR could have done was to convene the oversight committee to cure the agreement. That was the most prudent and rational thing to do, considering that MGFI was doing its job in helping the DENR protect and rehabilitate the georeserve.



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

■ CONTRERAS FROM A1

Enabling political violence against environmental defenders

It is the duty of the state to protect those who are tasked to protect the environment. Obviously, being at the top in terms of having the highest number of casualties in the war to defend the environment in Asia, with the Philippines accounting for nearly 70 percent of the casualties reported in 2022, is clear and indisputable evidence that the state has failed.

It is one thing when the failure is because of the inability of the responsible government agencies to deploy their police and quasi-police powers, perhaps because of lack of resources or capacity. It is here that it becomes problematic when intelligence funds apportioned for government agencies that are involved in surveillance activities pursuant to their work, in order to further national security, are given more to agencies that need them the least. Certainly, environmental destruction is a national security threat, in the same light that the recruitment of students by leftists is. It becomes dubious when we find justification to allot P500 million in intelligence funds to the vice president who, by the nature of her mandate as defined by the 1987 Constitution, does not have national security responsibilities, while the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) would be given less, or none at all.

However, what is even worse is when the state, through its actions, is unknowingly enabling the audacity of unscrupulous environmental stakeholders, from illegal squatter syndicates to quarry operators, to resort owners and other business interests. What is worse is when the state itself is the one that officially undermines the legitimacy of environmental defenders.

However, instead of improving the MoA, the DENR led the assault on MGFI. Its agents took part in the propagation of the narrative that many of the land speculators and private parties had in fact legal property rights within the protected area by virtue of Presidential Decree (PD) 324 issued by then President Ferdinand E. Marcos which earlier declared some portions as alienable and disposable.

The DENR appears to be enabling the use by watershed syndicates of PD 324. It fails to cite the succession of laws and issuances that effectively repealed PD 324, namely Presidential Proclamation 1636, PD 705 and the succession of laws on protected areas, namely RA 7586 and its amendment, RA 11038. The DENR failed to tell the claimants that they have the burden of proving that they are exempted from the limitation on private ownership within protected areas that are imposed by this succession of laws. It doesn't help that some DENR functionaries were even complicit in documents that awarded rights to private claimants, or in the approval of quarrying permits within critical watersheds.

Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga appears to be one with her own people in their assault at MGFI. She boldly refused to grant MGFI an audience simply because of her perception that MGFI was adversarial to DENR. The DENR has openly called the MGFI as a violator of laws and procedures, and of the Constitution.

This behavior of DENR toward MGFI is problematic. DENR is unknowingly enabling forces against MGFI to become bolder. Every time DENR officials delegitimize MGFI, they become complicit in the harassment, even political violence, that are unleashed against it.



TITLE :

1/2

PAGE _____

DATE _____

CASE NOT CLOSED

ARMY READIES PERJURY RAPS; ACTIVISTS' ALLIES CRY COERCION

By **Krixia Subingsubing,**
Dempsey Reyes
and **Frances Mangosing**
@Team_Inquirer

With both accuser and accused sticking to their respective stories, the filing of charges and countercharges could be the next development in the case of environmental activists Jonila Castro and Jhed Tamano who claimed they were abducted by the military and then forced into signing affidavits of surrender after supposedly leaving the communist movement.

Dino de Leon, the lawyer of Castro and Tamano, told the Inquirer on Wednesday that they were "prepared to protect" the two activists amid the Department of National Defense's (DND) threat to charge them with perjury. He added that they would "hold to account those who [would] file false charges against them."

At a press briefing organized by the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-Elcac) on Tuesday, hours before they were reunited with their families, **A3** both women accused the



ARMY READIES PERJURY RAPS; ACTIVISTS' ALLIES CRY COERCION

FROM A1

military of kidnapping them in Orion, Bataan province, on Sept. 2.

"The DND should not be peddling lies and tolerating those among its ranks who are ruining the reputation of the Armed Forces of the Philippines," De Leon said. "Neither should the department be engaged in cover-ups, and it should not stick with the contrived stories of its erring members."

According to the lawyer, they were considering charges against the NTF-Elcac for its role in his clients' forced disappearance and for coercing them to sign affidavits under duress.

"You've seen the resolve of [our] clients, their courage," he said. "We leave it up to them to decide what course of action they want to take from here on."

While De Leon refused to say what happened to Castro and Tamano while they were in military custody, he pointed out that their stories confirmed the findings of an initial fact-finding mission by rights group Karapatan which said the activists may have been abducted by state forces.

House floor tussle

During plenary debates on the DND's proposed 2024 budget at the House of Representatives on Wednesday, Negros Occidental Rep. Mercedes Alvarez said the AFP was considering suing Castro and Tamano.

But Alvarez, the sponsor for the department's budget, did not give other details, prompting Kabataan Rep. Raoul Manuel to interpellate her.

"Mr. Speaker, we are so shocked with that kind of response from the AFP. What is the

basis for them to file cases against the two brave women whom they abducted and illegally detained in a military camp?" he asked.

Manuel said that Castro and Tamano were "coerced" and forced to sign the affidavits which claimed they "voluntarily surrendered" to authorities.

Alvarez insisted that there were witnesses during the signing, saying, "The PAO [Public Attorney's Office] lawyers were there, the stepfather of one of the ladies were there, and they were even asked if they were coerced into signing by her stepfather, and she denied being coerced, Mr. Speaker."

"Again, there are witnesses, Mr. Speaker. They made a sworn statement, which of course if you made a sworn statement and [if] you recant it, you will be submitted to perjury charges if needed," she added.

This was also the position of National Security Council Assistant Director General and spokesperson Jonathan Malaya who announced last week that Castro and Tamano were "safe and sound" in government custody after yielding to authorities.

"If it is proven that they executed this [affidavit] falsely, that what they were saying is correct, they can be open to perjury charges," he said in an interview with ABS-CBN News Channel on Wednesday.

'Good faith'

Malaya reiterated that they were standing by the military and police accounts that both women gave themselves up voluntarily to the 70th Infantry Battalion (IB) in Bulacan province after they were reported missing.

"The 70th IB in good faith accepted them because we have

a program for rebel surrender-ees," he said.

According to Malaya, they would "slowly expose all of the information we have" on the two activists. "Why would the military abduct them and present them to the media? It doesn't make sense. But we are unfazed. We will continue to fight for the truth," he said.

The Philippine Army's 7th Infantry Division (ID) said in a statement that it was also considering filing "appropriate criminal charges" against Castro and Tamano. The military unit based in Palayan City, Nueva Ecija province, conducts anti-communist operations in Central Luzon and is under the 70th IB based in Doña Remedios Trinidad, Bulacan, which took custody of the two women after their supposed surrender.

The 7th ID said that it was

sticking to its report that the activists voluntarily turned themselves in.

It stressed that Tamano categorically said in her affidavit that she was a member of Kabataan Makabayan, an underground youth organization of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Environmental and rights group, however, said the 22-year-old Tamano is a coordinator for the Ecumenical Bishops' Forum's Community and Church Program for Manila Bay, while 21-year-old Castro is a community organizer for Akap-Ka Manila Bay.

At the time of their disappearance, both were preparing for relief operations in Bataan where coastal towns are threatened by reclamation projects.

—WITH REPORTS FROM CARMELA REYES-ESTROPE, JANE BAUTISTA AND TINA G. SANTOS INQ



TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

Rising sea levels could shift maritime boundaries, PH says

By JOSEPH PEDRAJAS

The Philippines has expressed alarm over the rising levels of waters caused by climate change as this could adversely affect the stability of international territorial boundaries.

In its submission for the advisory proceedings before the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), the Philippines pushed the tribunal to define the obligations of small island states in protecting the



Rising sea levels could shift maritime boundaries – PH 1◀

marine environment in relation to climate change.

This came as the Philippines said it was concerned about the “grave consequence of sea level rise to peace and security” as currently, it also faces territorial challenges in the South China Sea.

“The rising levels of the oceans will inundate islands of low-lying coastal states, which could potentially shift maritime boundaries,” the Philippines said in a 33-page submission alternately delivered by Philippine Permanent Representative to the United Nations Carlos Sorreta, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Assistant Secretary Maria Angela Ponce and Assistant Solicitor General Gilbert Medrano.

“The potential loss of maritime boundaries as a result of sea level rise will inevitably lead to conflicts in fisheries and other marine resources but more importantly could impact the stability of boundaries,” it added.

Such could “trigger conflict” among concerned nations, according to the Philippines.

The country also noted an arbitral tribunal’s concern when it settled a maritime dispute between India

and Bangladesh after raising that maritime would be jeopardized if climate-related changes were allowed to influence the delimitation process.

“The Philippines believes that international courts and tribunals, and the world itself, would not necessarily have to face this dilemma if we are able to stay a step ahead of climate change,” it said. “Staying a step ahead, is the existential challenge for us all, as emphasized by President Marcos at the UN General Assembly last year: ‘There is no other problem so global in nature that it requires a unified effort.’”

Advisory proceedings at the ITLOS, which started on Sep. 11, are being held until Sep. 25 after the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS) requested the tribunal last year to issue an advisory opinion with regards to the members’ obligation in protecting the marine environment.

The Philippines said ITLOS has jurisdiction to and must provide advice as its decision “could and should be a crucial and pivotal part” of fighting negative effects of marine environment degradation caused by climate change.



TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

US, China absent from major UN climate meet

UNITED NATIONS, United States (AFP) – China and the United States, the world's top two emitters, will be absent from speakers at a UN climate summit Wednesday after promises only to include the most ambitious.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, announcing the summit in December, said he would make the summit “no nonsense” and include only leaders of countries with concrete plans to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions.

A list released by the United Nations showed 41 speakers that did not include China or the United States.

US President Joe Biden is in New York for the United Nations and has

launched sweeping legislation to reduce carbon emissions.

He has set a goal of a net-zero emissions economy by 2050 but critics say the United States has not yet taken enough action to reach the goal, especially with political opposition on climate from the rival Republican Party.

The “Climate Ambition Summit,” however, will include California, represented by Governor Gavin Newsom.

Countries invited to participate include Brazil, Canada and France as well as the European



Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (AFP)

Union. Speakers include London Mayor Sad Khan but not the United Kingdom as a whole.

Guterres, addressing the General Assembly on Tuesday, pointed to record-breaking climate change and said he did not want the “same old broken record” of countries waiting for others to go first.

“To all those working, marching and championing real climate action, I want you to know that you are on the right side of history and thank you for being there with me,” he said.



85.95% of LGUs complete climate change plans

By HELEN FLORES

Almost 90 percent of local government units (LGUs) have completed their Local Climate Change Action Plan (LCCAP), which aims to increase climate and disaster risk resilience of communities, according to the Climate Change Commission.

CCC vice chair and executive director Robert Borje said 85.95 percent or 1,474 of the 1,715 LGUs have submitted their LCCAPs to the CCC as of August.

Palawan achieved a 100 percent compliance rate, with all its 25 LGUs having submitted their LCCAPs, Borje said in a statement released on Tuesday.

"We recognize the vital role of LGUs in adaptation and climate resilience," he said.

The CCC has been conducting capacity-building activities and assisting LGUs in different parts of the country access and utilize the People's Survival Fund (PSF).

The PSF is an annual fund in-

tended for LGUs and accredited local or community organizations' implementation of climate change adaptation projects that would better equip vulnerable communities against climate change.

The CCC, Borje said, conducts training workshops on enhanced local climate change action plan or eLCCAP, which provides a comprehensive understanding of the key components of the LCCAP and knowledge about developing science-based and risk-informed

plans.

He said the CCC would continue working closely with LGUs to ensure the successful implementation of the eLCCAP and further enhance resilience against climate change impact.

The LCCAP serves as a roadmap for local-level climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, outlining specific actions and measures tailored to the unique needs and vulnerabilities of each locality.

The submission of the LCCAP is

mandated under Republic Act 9729 or the Climate Change Act and Department of the Interior and Local Government Memorandum Circular No. 2021-068.

In an interview in Zamboanga City on Tuesday, President Marcos, who chairs the CCC, said climate change is already taking its toll on communities as those who do not usually experience flooding in the past could now be easily inundated as a result of the changing weather patterns.



09-21-23

TITLE :

PAGE

DATE

COP28's biggest conflicts are on display at the UN General Assembly

By ZAHRA HIRJI

As world leaders gathered at the United Nations General Assembly in New York City this week, everyone seemed to agree on one thing: Climate change is among the biggest problems facing the planet. US President Joe Biden walked through a laundry list of climate calamities in his UN speech on Tuesday, and Colombian President Gustavo Petro said climate change "has shown its teeth like never before." In passionate opening remarks, UN Secretary-General António Guterres noted that the world has just survived its hottest summer on record.

But in hours of back-to-back speeches, UN officials and world leaders also offered a preview of battles to come—over the responsibility rich countries have to reduce emissions, over the financing needed for climate adaptation and over what exactly it means to move away from fossil fuels. When many of the same leaders gather in Dubai for the UN's COP28 climate conference in November, those disconnects are sure to be front and center.

"Record-breaking heat waves in the United States and China. Wildfires ravaging North America and southern Europe. A fifth year of drought in the Horn of Africa. Tragic, tragic flooding in Libya," Biden said on the UN stage. "Together these snapshots tell an urgent story of

what awaits us if we fail to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and begin to climate-proof the world."

Tuesday's bluntest message came from Guterres, who opened the UNGA proceedings by saying that current climate action is "falling abysmally short." Guterres specifically zeroed in on the obligation high-emitting countries have to address a crisis they helped create.

"G-20 countries are responsible for 80 percent of greenhouse emissions. They must lead," he said. "They must break their addiction to fossil fuels, stop new coal." Guterres went on to say that "the fossil fuel age has failed" and called for a global phase-out of oil and gas.

The exact nature of a fossil fuel "phase-out" will be a major topic

of conversation in Dubai. Biden's "reduce our dependence" phrasing on Tuesday was more muted than Guterres, and COP28 President Sultan Al Jaber has said climate diplomacy should focus on phasing out emissions from oil and gas, leaving the door open for the continued use of fossil fuels alongside technologies to capture the carbon pollution produced by burning them. This is also known as phasing out "unabated" fossil fuels; on Tuesday, US Climate Envoy John Kerry co-authored a Washington Post editorial that called for the end of new unabated coal plants.

Money is sure to be another source of tension at COP28. Multiple UNGA speakers noted that wealthy countries are not providing enough aid to help developing countries cope with climate disasters, adapt to warming that's already locked in and decarbonize their economies. The developed world has yet to meet a commitment to provide \$100 billion in annual climate finance to developing countries, and while COP27 last year concluded with a last-minute deal to create a "loss and damage" fund to aid poor countries struggling with climate impacts, little progress has been made.

"Rich countries grew based on a

model of high rates of climate damaging gas emissions," Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said on Tuesday. "We, developing nations, do not want to repeat this model."

That sentiment was echoed in a speech by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa. "Centuries after the end of the slave trade, decades after the end of the colonial exploitation of African resources, the people of our continent are once again bearing the cost of the industrialization of the north and the development of the wealthy nations of the world," he said. "This is a price that the people of Africa are no longer willing to pay."

Determining emissions accountability, boosting climate finance and agreeing on a fossil fuel phase-out is a tall order for the UN climate conference. But events on the UNGA sidelines this week offered a glimpse of the solutions world leaders will be looking for. On Tuesday, the US Treasury released new principles for financial institutions making voluntary net-zero commitments, and the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero announced that 50 US financial institutions will publish net-zero transition plans over the next year. *With assistance from Laura Milan and Eric Roston / Bloomberg*



Belmonte joins climate summit in New York

Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte was among the leaders from around the world who took part in the United Nations Climate Ambition Summit (UNCAS) convened by UN Secretary General António Guterres in New York.

During a press conference organized by the C40 Cities, a global network of mayors taking action against the climate crisis, Belmonte shared the different initiatives adopted by the local government in line with QC Enhanced Local Climate Change Action Plan.

According to the city government, among the programs she discussed were the city's urban farms as well as decarbonization strategies such as by installing solar panels in city-owned buildings and facilities and adopting an energy-efficient transportation fleet.

Belmonte also discussed the city's plan to pass an enhanced green building ordinance, as well as highlighted the importance of climate financing "to fully accelerate a green, sustainable and fossil-fuel-free future."

She was joined in the press conference by Mayors Eric Adams of New York City, Giuseppe Sala of Milan in Italy and Yvonne Aki-Sawyer of Freetown in Sierra Leone as well as C40 Cities executive director Mark Watts.

The Quezon City government was among the six cities that will receive funding of up to \$60,000 under the Inclusive Climate Action Cities Fund of C40 Cities.

It will use the budget to develop a storybook that will feature a children's version of the city's climate action plan.

Belmonte was joined by Quezon City Councilor Joseph Juico and QC Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Department head Andrea Villaroman in New York to attend the UNCAS.

In May, Belmonte attended the International Forum to end Plastic Pollution in Cities, organized by the United Nations Environment Program in Paris, France, where she joined a panel discussion on local innovations to beat the global plastic crisis.

— Janvic Mateo



TITLE :

PAGE

South Korea empowers Phil. cities vs. climate challenges

SOUTH KOREA'S government will boost some Philippine cities' climate resilience by enhancing their capacity to understand and use climate-adaptation technology.

A signing event formalized the launch of the "Philippine Climate Resilient Cities (PCRC)" project through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (Koica) and the city governments of Batangas, Legazpi, Iloilo, Borongan, Cotabato and Zamboanga.

The South Korean Embassy explained the primary intent as strengthening the local government units' understanding of climate-adaptation technologies and facilitate their practical application. To achieve this, Koica will also organize local capacity-building workshops, conduct invitational training sessions

in its country, and dispatch Korean experts who will provide technical guidance to the LGUs.

Koica signed a grant arrangement with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Phils. for the said project worth \$1.25 million to improve the cities' resilience by strengthening their capacities in adapting to, mitigating, and managing impacts of climate change and disasters.

For the Korean Embassy, the arrangement served as a tangible realization of the objectives outlined in the memorandum of understanding between USAID Phils.



OFFICIALS from the Korea International Cooperation Agency and beneficiary-LGUs will lead the implementation of the "Philippine Climate Resilient Cities" project. EMBASSY OF SOUTH KOREA

and Koica Phils. back in April 2021. It set the groundwork for strategic cooperation, particularly in priority sectors such as climate change, with the shared goal of propelling the host-nation's growth and development.

Along with the arrangement framework established between

both agencies, Koica will provide an additional \$750,000 in grant funding through the PCRC project to deliver vital technical assistance in promoting the use of climate-adaptation technologies. Comprehensive guidelines will be developed for the six designated cities based on their local circumstances.