

22 September 2023 Friday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**



# Marcos ratings show 'significant' decline

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

**P**RESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. continues to enjoy the trust and approval of the people, despite having "significant" drops in his ratings, PUBLiCUS Asia Inc.'s third quarter survey released on Thursday showed.

The September 7 to 12 survey results showed 55 percent of 1,500 respondents appreciated the President's work performance, a seven-point decline from the 62 percent in the second quarter.

The President recorded lower ratings in Metro Manila (61 percent in second quarter to 52 percent in third quarter), North Central Luzon (60 percent to 56 percent), South Luzon (55 percent to

49 percent), and Visayas (71 percent to 52 percent).

His approval rating rose slightly from 63 percent to 64 percent in the Visayas.

"Connected to the less positive sentiments of Filipinos this quarter, approval ratings of the top country officials take a significant blow, hitting lowest in five quarters," PUBLiCUS said.

>DeclineA2



"All regions except Mindanao contribute to the overall weakened approval but in varying extents," it added.

The President's trust ratings also dropped from 54 percent to 47 percent.

Vice President Sara Duterte had a 62-percent approval rating and a 55-percent trust rating.

Senate President Juan Miguel "Migz" Zubiri continues to have a steady approval rating of 43 percent and 33 percent trust rating, while House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez had a stable approval rating of 37 percent and a 29 percent trust rating.

Chief Justice Alexander Gesmundo's approval (36 percent) and trust (29 percent) ratings were unchanged.

The survey also showed that Duterte — who concurrently serves as Education secretary — had the highest approval rating among Cabinet members at 52 percent.

Duterte was followed by Marcos, with a 49 percent approval rating, for his role as head of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

The approval ratings of other Cabinet officials: Defense Secretary Gilberto "Gibo" Teodoro Jr. (46 percent), the late Migrant Workers Secretary Maria Susana "Toots" Ople (45 percent) Social Welfare Secretary Rexlon "Rex" Gatchalian (43 percent), Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno (41 percent), Interior Secretary Benjamin "Benhur" Abalos Jr. (40 percent), Science and Technology Secretary Renato Solidum Jr. (39 percent), Health Secretary Teodoro "Ted" Herbosa (36 percent), Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco (34 percent), Labor Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma (33 percent), Transportation Secretary Jaime Bautista (32 percent), Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo (32 percent), Information and Technology Secretary Ivan John Uy (32 percent), National Economic and Development Authority Arsenio Balisacan (31 percent), Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman (31 percent), Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual (31 percent), Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin (31 percent), Public Works Secretary Manuel Bonoan (31 percent), Environment Secretary Toni Yulo-Loyzaga (31 percent), Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin "Boying" Remulla (30 percent), Housing Secretary Jose Rizalino Acuzar (29 percent), Agrarian Reform Secretary Conrado Esrtrella 3rd (29 percent), and Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla (29 percent).

Approval of the President's self-appointment as Agriculture secretary also dropped to 53 percent in the third quarter from 57 percent in the second quarter.

"As secretary, he must address the 'shortage' in rice, sugar and other agricultural products, which is likely a contributory factor to the most pressing issue on inflation," PUBLiCUS said.

Agreement with Duterte's appointment as secretary of the Department of Education (DepEd) also "significantly weakened," from 66 percent in the second quarter to 60 percent in the third quarter.

The P150-million confidential and intelligence fund (CIF) for DepEd "is now at the forefront as the most pressing issue hurting her overall performance," PUBLiCUS said.

Duterte has said the proposed CIF was for the agency's anti-insurgency efforts.

"Education is intertwined with national security. It's important for us to mold children who are patriotic, who will love our country and defend our country," said Duterte, who is also the co-vice chairman of the government's anti-communist insurgency task force, the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict.

The noncommissioned survey was conducted from September 7 to September 12. Its respondents were randomly drawn from the market research panel of over 200,000 Filipinos maintained by the Singapore office of PureSpectrum, a US-based panel marketplace.

The respondents were spread across five geographical areas — National Capital Region, North Central Luzon, South Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.



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## Phl signs historic UN high seas treaty

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The Philippines signed on Wednesday the landmark United Nations High Seas Treaty that seeks to deliver stronger protection for oceans under the framework of the

1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

"Honored to sign today the historic Agreement under #1982UNCLOS on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity

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of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement," Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo said in a post on social media platform X, formerly Twitter.

"The Philippines is proud to take this step to protect the world's oceans for present & future generations," he said.

Manalo is in New York City to lead the Philippine delegation to the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Week from Sept. 18 to 26.

The UN oceans treaty protecting marine biodiversity, commonly known as the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) treaty or High Seas Treaty, was agreed upon in June following nearly two decades of negotiations and is the first ever treaty to protect the world's high seas.

As of Sept. 21, nearly 70 countries have signed the UN High Seas Treaty, which also seeks to strengthen the legal regime in the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in over two-thirds of the world's oceans.

The UN's 193 member-states, including the Philippines, in June ratified the legally binding marine biodiversity agreement under its own domestic pro-

cess. The High Seas Treaty comes into force after 60 countries have ratified it.

The Philippine Mission to the UN in New York said the BBN Agreement, which imposes rules aimed at protecting the environment and heading off disputes over natural resources, shipping and other matters in waters beyond any country's national jurisdiction, was adopted by consensus, with delegates "erupting into applause following the adoption."

The Philippines participated for two decades in the process leading up to the adoption of the agreement.

The high seas are defined as the ocean area starting beyond countries' exclusive economic zones, or 200 nautical miles off coastlines—covering nearly half the planet.

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

The treaty 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. — With AFP



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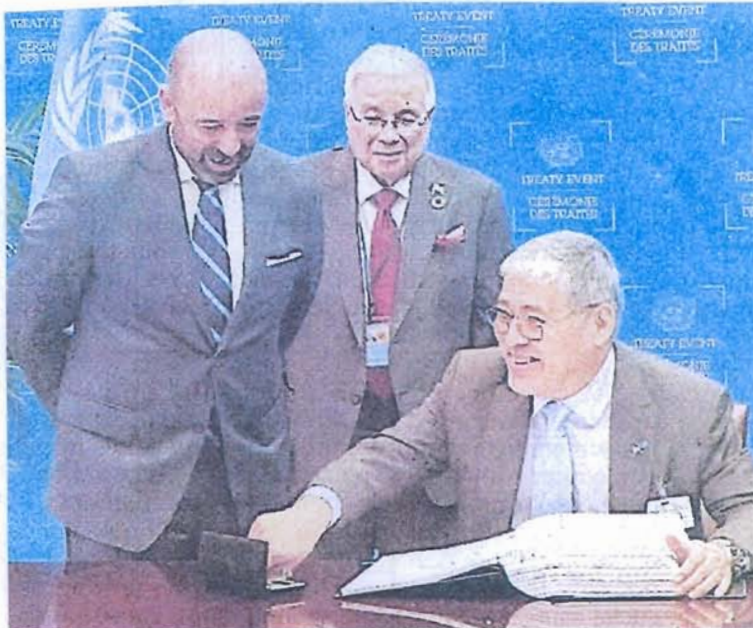
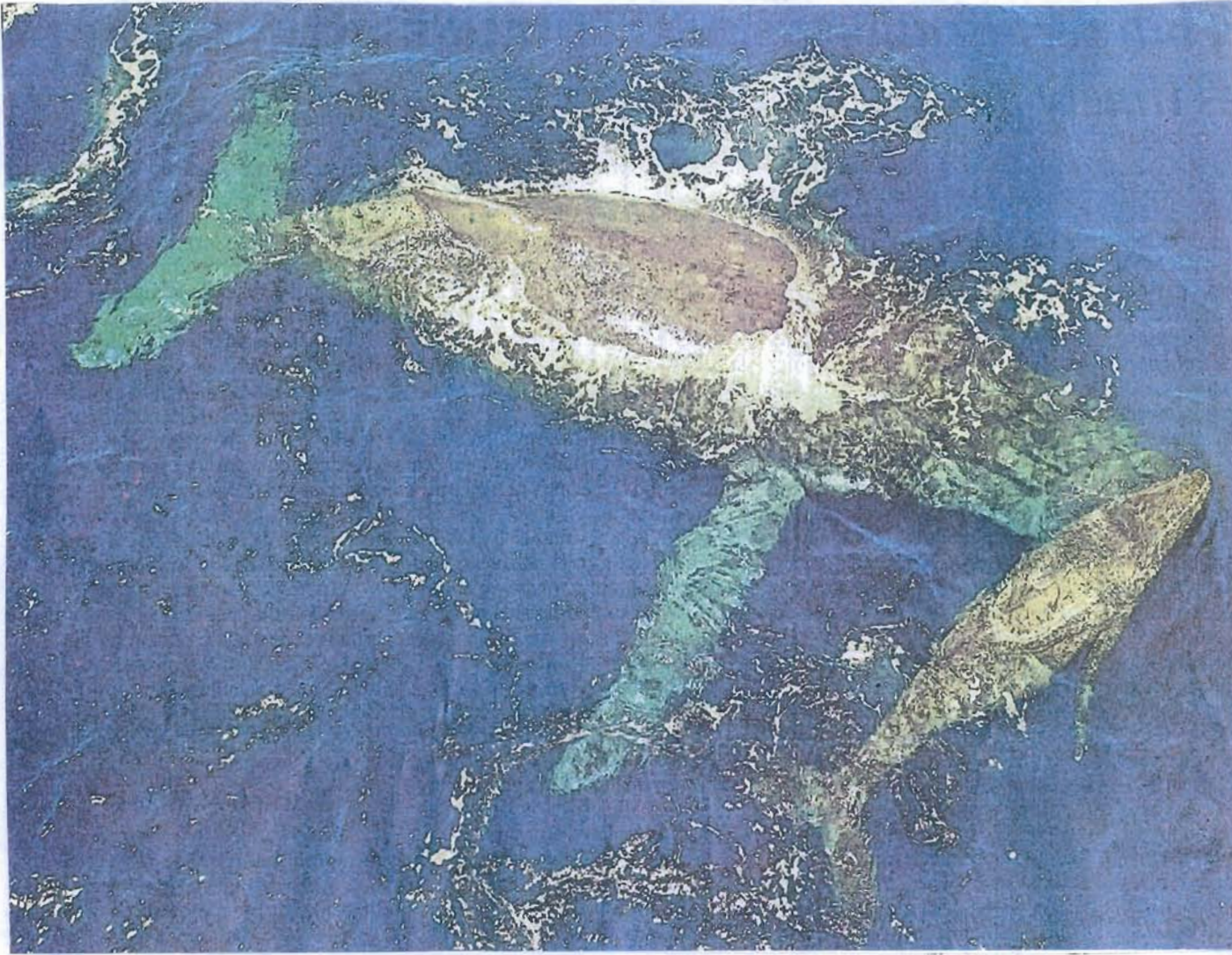
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**A humpback whale and calf swim in the waters in the Pacific Ocean. The United Nations earlier this year adopted the High Seas Treaty on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction of countries, recognizing the need to address biological diversity loss and degradation of ecosystems of the ocean in a coherent and cooperative manner. Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo of (inset) was among those who signed the other day the landmark treaty, which he said was 'a step to protect the world's oceans for present and future generations.' AP**



## PH signs historic High Seas Treaty

By JOSEPH PEDRAJAS

Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo signed the first-ever international treaty on ocean protection as the Philippines joined the world in efforts to protect marine biodiversity.

In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Manalo said Wednesday night he was honored to sign the historic agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ►11

## PH signs historic High Seas Treaty ◀1

(UNCLOS) on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ agreement).

Manalo is currently in New York for the UN General Assembly, scheduled bilateral talks, and other related meetings.

"The Philippines is proud to take this step to protect the world's oceans for present and future generations," he said.

For about two decades, the Philippines had participated "with high hopes and inspiration" in the process of coming up with the agreement that is also known as the High Seas Treaty.

In June 2023, the United Nations adopted the BBNJ. With the UNCLOS as the "guidepost," then Foreign Affairs undersecretary and now Philippine Permanent Representative to the UN Carlos Sorreta said member states approached the process with the following principles:

- Common heritage of mankind
- Fair and equitable sharing of benefits
- Rights and jurisdiction of adjacent coastal states
- Special recognition for archipelagic states

- Precautionary principle
- Transparency of action and support

In a June statement, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said the agreement was adopted by consensus and is consistent with the provisions of UNCLOS on protecting and preserving the marine environment.

It recognizes the need to address biological diversity loss and degradation of ocean ecosystems in a coherent and cooperative manner, DFA said.

The agreement also underscores the need for a comprehensive global regime, under UNCLOS, to better address conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond jurisdiction, it added.



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## PH, 60 countries sign treaty protecting high seas

By Rey E. Requejo

THE Philippines joined over 60 other countries at the United Nations in signing the first-ever treaty on protecting the international high seas, raising hopes that it will come into force soon and protect

threatened ecosystems vital to the planet. 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.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo, in a post on X (formerly Twitter) from New York where he was attending the UN General Assembly, said he was "honored" to sign the historic agreement. "The Philippines is proud to take this

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### PH,...

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step to protect the world's oceans for present & future generations," the country's top diplomat said in his post.

Sixty-seven countries signed the treaty on the first day, including the United States, China, Australia, Britain, France, Germany and Mexico as well as the European Union as a whole, according to the UN.

But each country must still ratify the treaty under its own domestic process. The treaty will come into force 120 days after 60 countries ratify it.

"It is clear that the ocean is in urgent

need of protection," said Belgium's deputy prime minister, Vincent van Quickenborne.

Without action, "it's game over," he said.

After 15 years of discussion, the United Nations sealed the first treaty on the high seas in June by consensus, although Russia said it had reservations.

The start of signatures marks "a new chapter" of "establishing meaningful protections" for the oceans, said Nichola Clark of the Ocean Governance Project at The Pew Charitable Trusts.

The high seas are defined as the ocean area starting beyond countries' exclusive economic zones, or 200 nautical miles (370 kilometers) off coastlines—covering nearly half the planet.

Nonetheless, they have long been ig-

nored 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 one 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.

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 pro-

tect 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. **With AFP**



# UP marine experts to assess damage to WPS corals

By **BELLA CARIASO**

It will take years or even decades for the coral reefs destroyed by the Chinese in Rozul (Iroquois) Reef and Escoda Shoal in the West Philippine Sea to return to life or get restored with human intervention, a marine science expert from the University of the Philippines said yesterday.

In an interview with ANC, UP Marine Science Institute (UPMSI) associate professor Vanessa Baria-Rodriguez made the assessment based on initial findings of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), on the extent of the destruction of the corals.

Rodriguez, who is also the deputy director of the Bolinao Marine Laboratory, said a panel of experts that she heads would make a trip to affected areas to make its own assessment, with the help of the PCG.

"The whole team in the UPMSI will be joining, together with (members) of the Philippine Coast Guard. We will have a meeting to finalize what we will do," Rodriguez said.

"We still have to check what are

the species there because... different species of corals have different growth (rates) so basically it will take long years for you to recover," she said.

A "totally dead reef" would achieve natural recovery after "several decades," but restoration efforts would shorten the recovery time, she added.

"We need a source of corals for it to recover, like semilla in the area or in the nearby reefs in Iroquois Reef and active transplantation will be done," Rodriguez added.

Rodriguez said the coral reefs are very important as they serve as breeding ground for fish.

"The coral reefs are the home of fish. If the coral reefs are gone, there will be no breeding ground for small fish and eventually will result in the disappearance of fish," she pointed out.

Rodriguez added that results of their evaluation would also determine the value of the damage to the coral reefs, which can be used as basis for filing an environmental case against the perpetrators.

Solicitor General Menardo Guevarra on Wednesday said the Philippines is considering filing a case before an international tribunal to make China accountable for environmental depredation.

"That (total value of damaged coral reefs) can be looked into as we will determine the extent of the damaged area and once we determine the damage, we can compute how much the value of the damaged area is," Rodriguez said.

She stressed the government should finance the fact-finding mission. "(We will need) funding as it is an offshore (assessment) and it is far, around 300 kilometers actually from the mainland of Palawan. It is costly to sail as we need to stay there to monitor," she said.

## Affected countries

Other countries, she said, have also been affected by the destruction of coral reefs in the West Philippine Sea.

"We will have problem in the food supply as the West Philippine Sea in general, is called ecologically as source and sink, 'sink' meaning it is

a recipient of fish in nearby islands, source meaning it provides fish for the nearby islands or nearby countries, in fact among the countries that can be affected are Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam and China," Rodriguez added.

She said that a full assessment may be completed in one to two weeks.

"We are now finalizing our schedule with the Philippine Coast Guard. It may take one week but for more details, it will take two weeks," she said.

At the same time, Rodriguez said that the Armed Forces of the Philippines should make sure no other activity takes place in Rozul Reef while the assessment work is ongoing.

"Ideally, there should be no activity in the affected reefs. We will go there basically to assess the whole area, the extent of the damaged reefs," Rodriguez said.

She said harassment from Chinese vessels is possible, hence the need for security guarantee from the AFP.

"We hope that the tailing of Chinese militia can be prevented, hope-

fully we will not experience it so we are praying in case we will sail in the area," she pointed out.

Earlier underwater surveys conducted by the PCG confirmed previous reports by the military regarding significant loss of marine life around Rozul Reef and Escoda Shoal.

"The results of these surveys showed that the marine ecosystem in the subject West Philippine Sea features appeared lifeless, with minimal to no signs of life," the PCG said in a statement.

Crushed corals found indicated a potential act of dumping, possibly involving the same dead corals that were previously processed and cleaned before being returned to the seabed, the PCG said.

While ship grounding could have also caused the devastation, according to Rodriguez, PCG spokesman Commodore Jay Tarriela said that underwater survey activities in Escoda Shoal showed "visible discoloration of its seabed," indicating "deliberate activities" intended to modify the natural underwater topography.

- With Rudy Santos



# SolGen should file case on destruction of coral reefs, ex-Justice Jardeleza says

By JEFFREY DAMICOG

**T**he Philippines should no longer hire local or foreign lawyers to handle the filing of a case against China on the destruction of coral reefs in the West Philippine Sea (WPS), former solicitor

general and retired Supreme Court (SC) Justice Francis H. Jardeleza said on Thursday, Sept. 21.

Jardeleza said the filing of the case should be handled by the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG), the government's chief lawyer.

"I proposed that we should file a

case. This time, the OSG should handle the case," he stressed.

Jardeleza was the solicitor general when the Philippines filed in 2013 an arbitration case against China before the Permanent Court of Arbitration which issued the landmark 2016 ruling in favor of the Philippines' claims over the WPS.

He said that based on what he learned from then solicitor general Estelito P. Mendoza, who also served as justice minister, there "should be political accountability."

"If you're the lawyer, then you should be held liable. More important than the money is political accountability," he pointed out.

Jardeleza lauded the initiative taken by Solicitor General Menardo I. Guevarra to study the legal options that the Philippines should take against China over the destruction of coral reefs.

"I'm so glad that Solicitor General Menardo Guevarra, himself, said he is now studying what actions to take," he said.

At the moment, Jardeleza said it is not yet clear before which international court the Philippines would file a case.

While the filing of a case would cost millions of pesos, the Philippines has a strong case in view of the 2016 ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.





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## We need to preserve our coral reefs

**H**ow important are coral reefs? According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, "coral reefs are some of the most diverse and valuable ecosystems on Earth. Coral reefs support more species per unit area than any other marine environment, including about 4,000 species of fish, 800 species of hard corals and hundreds of other species. Scientists estimate that there may be millions of undiscovered species of organisms living in and around reefs. This biodiversity is considered key to finding new medicines for the 21st century. Many drugs are now being developed from coral reef animals and plants as possible cures for cancer, arthritis, human bacterial infections, viruses, and other diseases."

That is how valuable coral reefs are to mankind. Therefore, it is incumbent upon everyone — Filipino or otherwise — to preserve them for our existence.

The subject is brought to the fore in the wake of the destruction of corals and coral reefs at Rozul (Iroquios) Reef and Escoda (Sabina) Shoal, both located in the West Philippine Sea and within the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the Philippines.

Rozul Reef, located at the southern end of Recto (Reed) Bank in the northeastern portion of Kalayaan Island Group (Spratly Islands) in Palawan, is known as a haven for different species of fish and other marine life because of the natural coral reef growing around it which serves as their shelter.

Based on a recent survey conducted by the Palawan-based Western Command (WesCom) of

the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), there was nothing left of the corals at Rozul Reef and Escoda Shoal.

"There's nothing left, they are destroyed and only debris was there," Vice Admiral Alberto Carlos, WesCom commander, said in a recent news forum.

The WesCom said the destruction of corals and coral reefs were discovered after Chinese vessels swarmed the areas.

In view of this, the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) has begun studying the best legal course of action to take.

"The OSG is in the fact-finding and data gathering stage of its study on legal options regarding WPS issues," Solicitor General Menardo I. Guevarra said on Wednesday, Sept. 20. "These matters require a lot of prudence and circumspection in view of their potential long-term impact on our national interests."

Japan and the United States have joined the Philippines in deploring the massive destruction of corals and coral reefs in areas within the Philippines' EEZ.

We call on all responsible nations to join the Philippines in denouncing this deplorable act as this impacts global food security considering that millions of people depend on the vast South China Sea, where the West Philippine Sea is located, for their food and livelihood. They should also help in the preservation of marine habitats to ensure that we have food on the table everyday.

This is not a matter of territorial dispute, this concerns food security for all.

We should all act now before it's too late.



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

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AN OFFICIAL TAKES measurements of the blooming *Rafflesia Arnoldi* flower at the *Rafflesia Arnoldi* flower conservation center, in Pematang Kota Agung Utara, on Nov. 1, 2022. (AFP)

## Most species of 'world's largest flower' risk extinction – study

By AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**B**ANGKOK, Thailand – Most species of the famously large *Rafflesia* flower, which has long captured the imagination with its enormous speckled red petals, are now at risk of extinction, new research warned 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.

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 Wednesday in the peer-reviewed *Plants, People, Planet* journal.

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.



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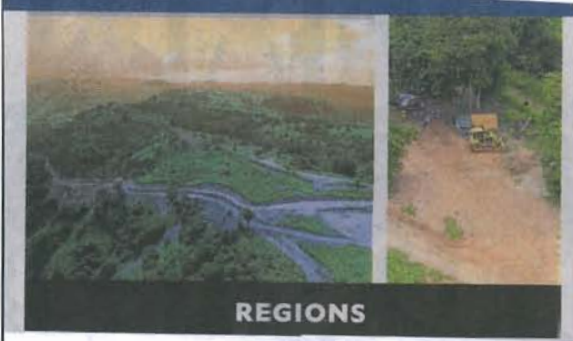


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REGIONS

## Road clearing in Aeta land halted by CDC

MABALACAT CITY—The Clark Development Corp. (CDC) has stopped the digging and other earth-moving activities in an Aeta ancestral domain inside the Clark ecozone due to the lack of environmental and construction permits. The person overseeing the project said he was hired by leaders of Tribong Ayta to clear the community's road in Calumpang village so tribe members could bring their harvests to the city center easily. —STORY BY JUN A. MALIG **A9**

# CDC stops digging, road clearing in Aeta land

**State firm managing Clark says earth-moving activities in ancestral domain within ecozone lack permits**

By Jun A. Malig  
@InqNational

MABALACAT CITY—The Clark Development Corp. (CDC) has issued a cease-and-desist order against the digging and other earth-moving activities being done in an Aeta community inside the Clark Special Economic Zone here.

In a statement on Thursday, the CDC said it halted the road clearing operations at Sitio Monicayo and Sitio Calapi, both located in Calumpang village in this city and situated inside the 32,000-hectare special economic zone.

According to the CDC, the area is covered by Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title 025-A and is jointly managed by the CDC, the local indigenous group Tribong Ayta and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP).

Engineer Leoncio Tan, CDC's acting building official and manager, issued the order on Sept. 12 against Rolando Capiz, who allegedly has been renting heavy equipment for the unauthorized activities in Calumpang.

"The order was prompted by the lack of the required environmental and construction permits, as mandated by the CDC," the state-owned corporation said, adding that the issuance of the order was based on the provisions of the National Building Code requiring permits for construction activities and similar works.



TRIBAL PROPERTY This undated aerial image of a portion of Barangay Calumpang in Mabalacat City shows the extent of land clearing in an Aeta ancestral domain within the Clark Special Economic Zone. The digging and other earth-moving activities in the area were stopped by the Clark Development Corp. (CDC) due to lack of permits. —PHOTOS COURTESY OF CDC



In a chat message to the Inquirer on Thursday, Capiz, however, said he was hired by leaders of Tribong Ayta to clear the road in the area.

### Hired by tribe

"As far as I know, that road is being cleared of obstructions to help members of that Aeta community to conveniently bring their goods to the city [center]. No development is being done here," Capiz said.

He said he did not rent the heavy equipment or hire workers for the road clearing operation.

"I'm just a daily wage worker of the IPs (indigenous peoples)," Capiz said.

The CDC said lawyer Agnes Devanadera, the state corporation's president and chief executive officer, wrote to Director Gilbert Gonzales of the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) on Aug. 11 "urging action on the extensive 300-ha earth-moving activities."

Devanadera also requested that the EMB issue appropriate sanctions since the activity lacked the required environmental compliance certificate.

On July 31, CDC Assistant Vice President for external affairs Rommel Narciso wrote to NCIP Central Luzon Director Roland Calde to determine if a Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) process, or proper consultation with IP groups, was done and if a Certification Precondition (CP) was issued for the development activities being conducted in the area.

The CP is a certification issued by the NCIP "as a precondition to the grant of permit, lease, grant, or any other similar authority for the disposition, utilization, management and appropriation by any private individual, corporate entity or any government agency, corporation or subdivision thereof on any part or portion of the ancestral domain taking into consideration the consensus approval of the ICCs (indigenous cultural communities)/IPs concerned."

Calde, in a Sept. 12 letter, informed the CDC that an investigation had been conducted on Aug. 29, revealing that the earth-moving activities had no FPIC application, the CDC said.

No officials of Tribong Ayta were immediately available for comment on Thursday. **INQ**



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Watsons employees turning over the trash that they have picked-up during the International Coastal Cleanup event in SM by the Bay



Watsons Philippines continues to help cleaning up the environment with its #DoGoodfortheOceans

## Retail giants partner for cleaner Manila Bay

WATSONS Philippines, the leading brand in health, wellness, and beauty retail, continues to demonstrate its commitment to the environment through its annual coastal clean-up initiative. This endeavor reflects Watsons' ongoing efforts to make a positive impact on both the planet and the community.

This year, Watsons joined forces with SM for the International Coastal Cleanup celebration at SM by the Bay, held on September 16. Recognizing the potential for a greater impact through collective action, Watsons, an affiliate of SM, collaborated as one of the teams that successfully contributed and collected an impressive 66,200 kilograms of trash during the activity.

The focal point of this year's coastal clean-up was the iconic Manila Bay coastline, a heavily frequented area by the public. Watsons, along with the entire team, is dedicated to ensuring the continued cleanliness, beauty, and safety of this cherished destination.

"As a part of Watsons' sustainability goals, we are committed to help clean up the environment, especially our waterways. One of the goals we've set for ourselves is to be able to collect 65,000kg of trash by 2030. It looks like a big goal to achieve but with our partnership with SM for the International Coastal Clean Up, we are one step closer to

that," says Senior Sustainability Manager, **Lexie Coloma**.

A total of 12,580 volunteers, including Watsons employees, suppliers, partners, media representatives, and even social media influencers, gathered at dawn to contribute to this meaningful event and do their part in environmental preservation.

During the program, officials from DENR and the Coastguard conducted a brief orientation on coastal clean-up, emphasizing the proper care of our oceans and the importance of reducing plastic consumption. Participants were so encouraged to adopt the 3Rs - Reuse, Reduce, and Recycle.

Watsons not only encourages its employees to participate in the yearly

coastal clean-up but also integrates sustainability practices into their daily routines. "Ninety-eight percent of Watsons' employees are trained in sustainability practices. As a company committed to doing good, our employees are empowered and provided opportunities to incorporate sustainability into their professional and personal lives," Coloma added.

In addition to actively organizing and participating in coastal clean-ups, Watsons offers other sustainability programs like Recycle for Rewards and Trash to Cash. These initiatives incentivize customers to recycle in exchange for special Watsons deals. Furthermore, Watsons has partnered with Plastic Bank with the ambitious goal of collecting and recycling 40 million plastic bottles by 2030.



Watsons Employee-Volunteers on their #DoGoodfortheOceans initiative during the International Coastal Cleanup Event held at SM by the Bay



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## Group seeks inclusion of envi education under DepEd's 'Matatag'

**E**NVIRONMENTAL group BANToxics called for an improved basic education that considers the environment in enhancing basic education program under "Matatag."

Citing information from the Department of Education Order No. 13, s. 2023, the MATATAG agenda has four critical components: MAKE the curriculum relevant to produce competent and job-ready, active, and responsible citizens; TAKE steps to accelerate delivery of basic education facilities and services; TAKE good care of learners by promoting learner well-being, inclusive education, and a positive learning environment; and Give support to teachers to teach better.

"As DepEd sees the need to revise the basic education curriculum recognizing structural challenges burdening our education system, real and meaningful reforms in the education system need to be holistic. DepEd must take into account our planet's critical investments if we are to build a stronger nation," said Rey San Juan, executive director of BAN Toxics.

"As MATATAG seeks to revise the K to 12 curriculum, we call on DepEd to incorporate environmental education to produce responsible young people who learn and act for our planet," he added.

A study by UNESCO reveals that education is not giving students sufficient knowledge to adapt, act, and respond to climate change and environmental crises.

"The country faces serious environmental challenges disproportionately impacting the poor and vulnerable. Let us educate and build the ability of our young ones and future generations to become environmentally resilient, better able to cope with the impact, and meet their own needs."

BAN Toxics has been ramping up its campaign Toxics-Free and Waste-Free School Program (TFSP) to raise awareness of toxic pollution in schools. The TFSP aims to promote safe and environment-friendly alternatives and engages schools and communities on proper sound chemicals and waste management. *Jonathan L. Mayuga*



# BATANGAS FOLK FEAR HEALTH RISKS FROM TAAL VOG

The provincial government of Batangas has expressed alarm over the presence of volcanic smog or vog from the continued sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) emission from Taal Volcano, which has already caused schools in some areas in the province to shift to distance learning to protect their students' health.

On Wednesday, the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO) called for an emergency meeting with representatives of municipal disaster response units to address the situation that threatens the health and safety of residents around the lake.

Jocelyn Tangpuz, Balet disaster management officer, reported in the meeting held in Batangas City that at least six senior high school students in the town had experienced skin irritation, difficulty in breathing and asthma attacks due to air pollution caused by Taal's emission.

"Some schools in the towns of Agoncillo and Laurel, as well as the city of Tanauan, affected by the smog, temporarily switched to modular distance learning or an alternative delivery mode," the Batangas public information office said in a report.

Among the Batangas localities surrounding Taal Volcano are the towns of Balet, Laurel, Agoncillo, Mataas na Kahoy, Talisay, Sta. Teresita, San Nicolas, Alitagtag and Cuenca and the cities of Tanauan and Lipa.

Vog consists of fine droplets containing volcanic gas such as SO<sub>2</sub> which is acidic and can cause irritation of the

eyes, throat and respiratory tract with severities depending on the gas concentrations and durations of exposure.

Authorities warned that people who may be particularly sensitive to vog are those with health conditions such as asthma, lung disease and heart disease, the elderly, pregnant women and children.

### Avoiding exposure

The PDRRMO encouraged residents around Taal Lake to refrain from unnecessary outdoor activities to minimize exposure to vog.

Dr. Amor Calayan, PDRRMO chief, reminded residents to use only standard N95 face masks to ensure protection against smog and its potential effects.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) has observed continued and increased degassing activity from Taal Volcano, which remains under alert level 1 (low level of volcanic unrest).

A total of 4,322 metric tons per day of SO<sub>2</sub> emissions from Taal's main crater were measured on Thursday, the agency said in an advisory.

Steam plumes rose 2,400 meters before drifting in the south-southwest, north-northeast and southwest directions.

On Sept. 15, Phivolcs issued a public advisory on the condition of Taal Volcano.

"Vog has been affecting the Taal region since the first week of September 2023 as degassing activity from Taal Volcano continues to date," it said. —DELFIN T. MALLARI JR. INQ



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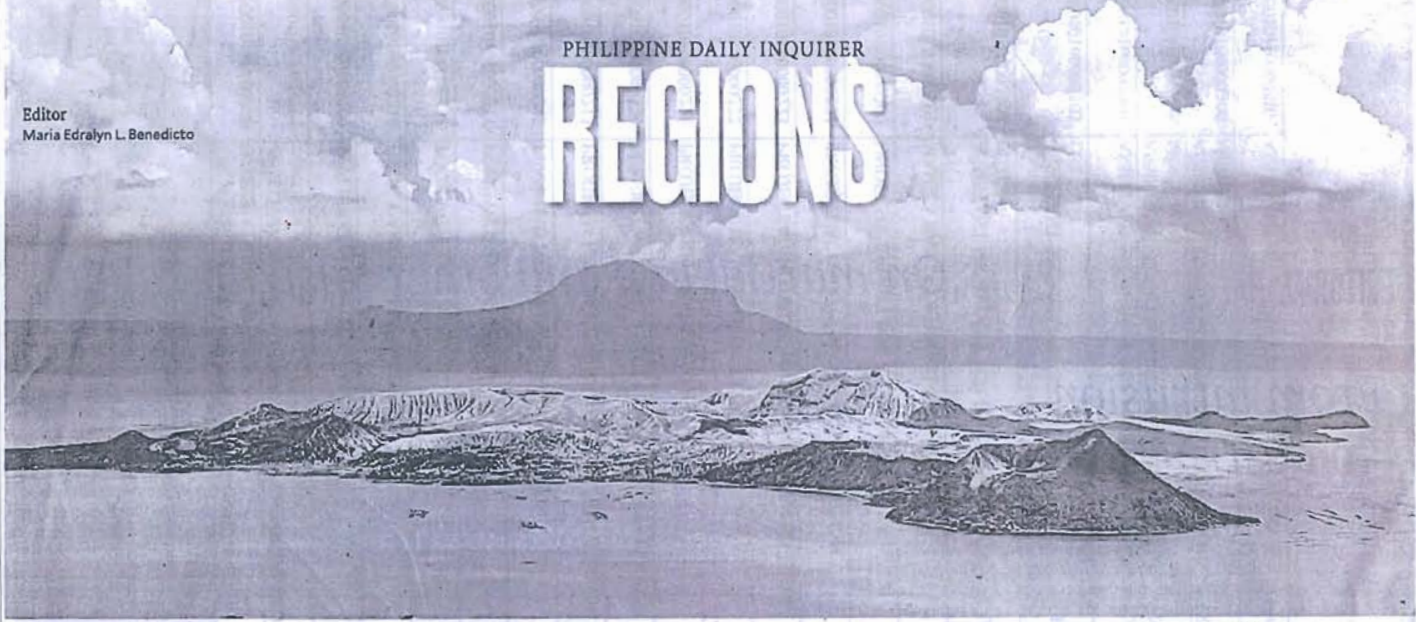
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Editor  
Maria Edralyn L. Benedicto

**AIR POLLUTION WOE** Taal Volcano, shown in this photo taken from Tagaytay City in May, remains under alert level 1 or low level of unrest. Volcanic smog or vog from Taal has worried residents of towns and cities surrounding the volcano in Batangas due to its impact on their health. —REM ZAMORA

*[Handwritten signature]*





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TEXTILE EXHIBIT AT MANILA HOTEL — Senate Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Climate Change Chairperson Sen. Cynthia Villar, accompanied by Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Assistant Secretary Dr. Napoleon K. Juanillo Jr., looks at a bamboo textile exhibit at 'KAWAYARN: The Bamboo Textiles PH' at the Manila Hotel on Thursday, Sept. 21, 2023. (Noel B. Pabalate)



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**MANGROVE PROTECTION.** Executives of GNPowder Mariveles Energy Center Ltd. Co., along with representatives from provincial government of Bataan, municipality of Orani, Department of Environment and Natural Resources lead the implementation of Baka1 Bataan, the company's mangrove adoption and protection project. The P7-million project, with a duration of five years and an option for an extension, is part of the company's corporate social responsibility program.



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**Why can't we?**

**M**anny V. Pangilinan aka MVP recently asked the question in relation to mining in the Philippines: *"If the South Africans, Australia, Indonesia and China operate their mining businesses well enough; if others can conduct their mining operations responsibly and sustainably, why can't we?"*



As the keynote speaker of the 2023 Mining Conference at the EDSA Shangri-la hotel, MVP raised and revived several mining-related issues and concerns that clearly need to be properly addressed based on research and correct policies.

What initially caught my attention was the fact that he started his speech by sharing a story from August 2012.

*"Euls Austin, president of Philex Mining, called to report that due to two weeks of heavy rains, their tailing pond in Pacdal, south of Baguio, had developed a problem, resulting in significant amounts of water and mud escaping to the valley below.*

*"We decided – voluntarily, and without government prompting – to shut down all mining operations immediately and move swiftly to repair the damage and avert a major environmental crisis. That midnight I messaged President Noynoy Aquino about the mining accident, and the timely steps we've taken.*

*"There were no fatalities and PHILEX paid a fine to the government of more than P1 billion. Yes, for the first time in my career, I saw the inherent risks associated with mining. But more importantly, what responsible mining means in the face of a consequential crisis."*

Most speech writers, PR specialists and even public speakers would have advised against opening MVP's speech with a negative narrative or a story that could be used against him or the mining industry. You let sleeping dogs lie, lest they bite you.

But as I read the printed version of MVP's speech, I got the impression that he was driving home not just lessons but proof that, contrary to the negative hype against mining, companies like PHILEX were professionally run, responsive and took responsibility for "consequential crisis." By pointing out that the company paid over P1 billion in fines, not to mention stringent corrective measures, MVP reminds us that the government does its part in regulating as well as penalizing industry players for their mistakes or short comings.

MVP pointed out that the world has now more than ever become dependent on metals and minerals that are needed in producing technology such as computers, cellphones and various other electronics and mining will be a major contributor in providing the key ingredients for those technology.

*"The world is entering an era of sustained resource demand as economies expand and population explodes. The Philippines missed the economic bus during the manufacturing cycle in the 50's and 60's, and the export boom in the 70's and 80's. This time we cannot miss this bus yet again, with our available mineral resource base."*

The Philippines was not blessed with oil fields like the Middle East or some of our neighbors in the region. Our only income generating export are OFWs and even that is beginning to shrink due to competition and technology. President Marcos Jr. has confirmed our over dependence on importation while the Department of Finance has no choice but to borrow in the billions in order to fund the supersized bureaucracy that is the Philippine government.

Despite its many imperfections, mining in the Philippines does offer us options in terms of high value exports, job generation, a revenue source for the national and local governments as well as a source of foreign currency to counterbalance our international debts.

But in front of all this the emphasis of MVP's speech was on responsible mining, where all stakeholders do their part with a spirit of cooperation.

*"I'd be first to admit that our industry has to level up when it comes to sustainability practices and standards. But the mistakes of a few should not lead to the notion that the whole is wrong. An industry should not be judged based on its worst members."*

As was expected of a keynote speaker, MVP essentially set the course of action that the conference participants and industry players could undertake to improve the state of mining in the Philippines.

*"First, address health-related and safety concerns, the exploitation of women and child workers. The lack of clarity of plans and actionable post-mining rehabilitation, which can restore mine sites to their original natural state.*

*"Second, the private sector should help government raise its supervisory capabilities through funding of scholarships and training here and abroad, procurement of equipment and hiring of requisite personnel.*

*"Third, separating the functions of regulation and the promotion of the mining industry. The Mining and Geosciences Bureau is charged with the promotion, development and supervision of mining. The Environmental Management Bureau's mandate is to enforce environmental laws on mining. Both fall under the supervision of the DENR.*

*"These apparently conflicting goals can at times place the DENR in a policy dilemma. Our suggestion is to spin off the EMB into a separate and independent body, similar to the Environmental Protection Agency in the US.*

*"Fourth, PHILEX is open to a profit-based fiscal regime as proposed by House Bill No. 8937 providing for a Royalty Rate against margins realized by mining companies, as well as a windfall profits tax.*

*"Finally, the mining benefits between host LGUs and the national government should be shared more equitably. The national government must ensure the timely remittance of taxes due to LGUs. After all, mining is location specific and LGUs naturally desire to realize the fruits of the resources situated in their communities."*

Given how President Bongbong Marcos has expressed support for the development of mining in the Philippines, perhaps it would be best for all concerned to also invest time, money, resources and expertise in developing the "handbook" for Philippine mining so we can stop asking: "Why can't we?"

E-mail: [utalk2ctalk@gmail.com](mailto:utalk2ctalk@gmail.com)



## Miners vow to support new mining tax regime

By JONATHAN L. MAYUGA

[@jonlmayuga](#)

AS the House of Representatives appropriations committee passed on second reading a proposed mining tax measure, the mining industry players under the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) vowed to work with lawmakers to help put in place a mining taxation they claim will make the country's mineral development sector globally competitive and attractive to local and foreign investors.

COMP Chairman Michael T. Toledo welcomed the House version of the bill and said the industry would work with the Senate when it starts hearing on the proposed mining tax version.

"In a nutshell, we do welcome the House passage of the bill. We were working closely with the House leadership and hoping it would also pass in the Senate," he told reporters at the sideline of the "2023 Mining Philippines International Conference and Exhibition" last Wednesday.

House Bill (HB) 8937 proposes a royalty-calculated tax against margins realized by mining companies. It also pushes for a windfall profits tax.

Toledo described the House version as "fair" and "progressive" as "it is not based on revenue, but on profit."

As it is still a bill, he said COMP will work with the Senate to convince lawmakers of a taxation scheme that would make the Philippine mining industry competitive.

Toledo said the industry, in general, supports tax based on windfall profits based on margins. He added miners are confident that lawmakers will heed the industry's appeal.

### Equitable sharing

PHILEX Mining Corp. Chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan also cited that a new mining fiscal regime is a welcome development and assures government of "an appropriate share" of the benefits derived from the business.

In his speech during the conference, Pangilinan highlighted the need for equitable sharing from mining revenues, wherein the National Government and local government units (LGUs), will share revenues from mining taxes more "equitably."

"The national government must [ensure] the timely remittance of taxes due LGUs. After all, mining is location-specific and I sympathize with LGUs' desire to realize the fruits of the resources situated in their communities," he said.

Pangilinan recalled there was a proposal in Congress for excise tax shares be directly remitted to the LGU hosting the mining operations. Unfortunately, the proposal was not properly discussed, he added.

### 'False choice'

PANGILINAN said tax issues confronting the mining industry may be a handful. Nonetheless, Philex remains optimistic, he added, because the Marcos administration "has been clear, predictable and transparent with respect to mining."

"We applaud the president's desire to expand the industry, spread the benefits of mining into the countryside, and incent the processing of ores into higher value-added export products," says Pangilinan said.

He noted that President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and his economic managers "have unequivocally identified mining—done sustainably and responsibly" as important to progress. Pangilinan also noted that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) "is making decisions based on empirical data and consultation with all stakeholders."

"Such fair and practical governance has always been part of our wish-list as an industry, we keep an eye on challenges—and we do acknowledge with thanks and wish fulfilled."

The Philex Mining executive emphasized that "mining is not the enemy. Poverty is."

"The most damaging myth with which our industry must contend with is the idea that we must choose between sustainability and mining," Pangilinan said. "This is a false dichotomy—It is a false choice."



## CamSur mayor charged with illegal quarrying

UP FOR deliberation by the Office of the Ombudsman is a joint affidavit-complaint filed last September 8 by three members of Task Force Sagip Kalikasan against Mayor Fermin Mabulo of San Fernando municipality in Camarines Sur, along with five barangay chairmen, for alleged illegal quarrying.

The evidence attached to the affidavit-complaint alleged that Mabulo and his wife Michelle had long engaged in quarrying in the barangays where the DENR had banned such activity in 2021.

In the SB session of February 7, 2022, councilors said one of the trucks used in the quarrying belonged to Michelle Mabulo.

The mayor's wife claimed her quarrying activity was legitimate and she had been paying municipal taxes for every trip of the trucks.

But a certification from the Provincial Treasury showed there was no record of such supposed tax payments made by the family-owned LDGM Construction and Supply Corp.

The complaint also alleged that Mayor Mabulo and the five barangay chairmen failed to stop the rampant illicit quarrying in their respective areas of jurisdiction despite repeated complaints by the town's SB about the illegal activity, the use of government equipment for quarrying, and involvement of the mayor and his wife in quarrying as documented in the SB's legislative sessions between July 2021 and February 2022.

Then there was the submission by Vice Mayor Allan Valenzuela of a letter-complaint to Malacañang in June 2021 about the numerous illegal quarrying sites in San Fernando town whose operators were in cahoots with at least two local officials.

The letter-complaint said 12 of the 14 quarrying sites in the town were "illegally operated," and that the illicit activities continued despite several notices of violations served by the DENR Region V office to the operators.

The complainants accused Mabulo et. al. of violating the provision on "theft of minerals" of RA 7942 or the Philippine Mining Act of

1995, for the extraction of minerals in San Fernando without any mining agreement, lease, permit or license issued by the DENR-MGB.

They also charged the respondents with gross neglect of duty, grave misconduct and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service for their failure to act on the illegal quarrying in their respective areas of jurisdiction.

The complainants accused Mabulo of

*“The complainants are seeking the immediate suspension without pay of Mabulo and the five barangay chairmen”*

violating Republic Act 3019 or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act and of illegally using public property (technical malversation) under the Revised Penal Code for the apparent use in illegal quarrying of a government truck – a Foton dump truck with conduction sticker GC 2412 -- earlier issued to the municipal government for its official use.

The task force members charged respondents with violating Section 20 of CamSur's Provincial Ordinance 30 series of 2014, as amended by PO 16 series of 2017, for the extraction of sand, gravel and other quarry resources without any permit issued by the Office of the Provincial Governor.

The three complainants said "grave injury" was done to the municipality, the province and the country in general because, in the absence of any authorization from the MGB to conduct quarrying in San Fernando, Mabulo did not pay the government an estimated P54.4 million in taxes due on P544.29 million worth of minerals believed to have been extracted by the mayor over the



ABOUT TOWN  
**ERNESTO M. HILARIO**

past several years.

The foregone revenue of about P54.4 million was based on the supposed taxes due the municipality equivalent to 10 percent of the fair market value per cubic meter of ordinary stones, sand, gravel, earth and other quarry resources extracted from public lands or from the beds of seas, lakes, rivers, streams, creeks, and other public waters within a particular territorial jurisdiction.

The computation of foregone revenue was based on a document issued by the Office of the Provincial Treasurer of Camarines Sur.

The complainants asserted their case against Mabulo et. al. stands on strong legal ground because the respondents are liable for complicity or inaction on the DENR-flagged illegal quarrying in San Fernando, based on the Supreme Court's previous rulings.

The complainants are seeking the immediate suspension without pay of Mabulo and the five barangay chairmen, as they cited Section 9 Rule III of the Ombudsman rules, which states that, pending investigation, respondents may be suspended for six months without pay if the evidence against them is found to be strong, and if they are accused of grave misconduct or neglect in the performance of duty.

The task force enforcers backed their Sept. 8 joint affidavit-complaint with ample evidence – DENR and provincial government documents, minutes of Sanggunian sessions, photos of quarrying sites and seized trucks, and police blotter reports and video clips of apprehended truck drivers admitting to have received their quarrying instructions from Mayor Mabulo himself.

(Email: ernhil@yahoo.com)



## IMCC to complete desalination plant in Dec

**I**SLA Mactan-Cordova Corp. (IMCC), a unit of publicly-listed Vivant Corp., said it will complete its P2-billion utility-scale seawater desalination project in Cordova, Mactan in Cebu by the end of the year.

The desalination plant, which can generate 20 million liters a day of potable water in the first phase, will be operated and managed by IMCC, a subsidiary of Vivant Hydrocore Holdings Inc.

IMCC has been awarded a 25-year contract to supply desalinated water to the Metropolitan Cebu Water District.

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

He said 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 70 percent complete, will begin installing key components for the seawater reverse osmosis technology, he said. *VG Cabuag*



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## Climate crisis has 'opened the gates to hell' – UN chief

**UNITED NATIONS, United States:** UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Wednesday (Thursday in Manila) told world leaders the climate crisis had "opened the gates to hell" during a summit where leading polluters China and the United States were conspicuously absent.

The talks were partly overshadowed by an announcement from Britain — also not present — that it was rolling back policies that would help it achieve its net-zero goal.

Despite increasing extreme weather events and record-shattering global temperatures, greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise and fossil fuels remain subsidized to the tune of \$7 trillion annually.

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## ■ GATES FROM A1

# Climate crisis

Guterres had billed the "Climate Ambition Summit" as a "no-nonsense" forum, making clear that only leaders who had made concrete plans to achieve net-zero greenhouse emissions would be invited.

In his opening address, he evoked 2023's "horrendous heat" and "historic fires," but stressed: "We can still limit the rise in global temperature to 1.5 degrees," referring to the target seen as needed to avoid long-term climate catastrophe.

"Humanity has opened the gates to hell," Guterres warned.

After receiving more than 100 applications to take part, the UN released a list of 41 speakers which did not include China, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan or India.

Several major leaders didn't bother making the trip to New York for this year's UN General Assembly, including President Xi Jinping of China and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak from the United Kingdom.

Sunak also chose Wednesday to announce he was adopting a more "pragmatic" approach to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, including pushing back a ban on the sale of cars fully run on fossil fuels and easing energy efficiency targets for rental properties.

The moves come as Sunak's Conservative Party is trailing in the polls behind the Labor opposition amid a cost-of-living crisis.

US President Joe Biden, who addressed the General Assembly on Tuesday, sent his climate envoy John Kerry to the meeting — although Kerry wasn't permitted to

speak in the high-level segment.

Catherine Abreu, executive director of nonprofit Destination Zero, said it was "perhaps a good-news story that we see Biden not being given a speaking slot at the summit" because the United

States is aggressively expanding fossil fuel projects even as it makes historic investments in renewables.

Anger is building among climate activists, particularly younger people, who turned out in tens of thousands last weekend for the "March to End Fossil Fuels" in New York.

## Broken promises

There were some bright spots.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz touted his country's 2 billion euro (\$2.1 billion) commitment to a fund that finances climate action in developing countries, while Brazil said it would reach zero deforestation of the Amazon by 2030 — a major reversal from the policies of former president Jair Bolsonaro.

"The small steps countries offered are welcome, but they're like trying to put out an inferno with a leaking hose," said David Waskow of the World Resources Institute, adding: "Far too many key players didn't touch the accelerator."

The issue of money has long plagued climate action. Advanced economies, responsible for the lion's share of historic emissions, vowed in 2009 to channel \$100 billion annually to less developed countries by the year 2020 — a promise that remains unfulfilled.

AFP





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# Zero-tariff for construction items OK'd

By SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA @sam\_medenilla

**T**HE National Economic Development Board (Neda) Board approved the reduction to zero the tariff for gypsum and anhydrite, which are used for cement and plaster board production. Currently, the tariff for both construction materials is 3 percent.

"With the reduction in tariffs, we anticipate a decrease in production cost and an improvement in the industry's competitiveness as we ramp up our infrastructure drive,"

Neda Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan said in a news briefing at Malacañan Palace.

According to Balisacan, the Neda Board chaired by President Ferdi-

nand R. Marcos Jr. made the endorsement during its meeting last Thursday.

The measure, Balisacan said, is part of the administration's "aggressive advance in infrastructure development in order to enable social and economic transformation and support the attainment of our development goals in the medium term."

Also part of the said initiative was the Board's confirmation of the proposed executive order (EO) that will enable the expeditious processing of licenses, clearances, permits, certifications and authorizations for the government's infrastructure flagship projects (IFPs).

"The primary goal of this proposed EO is to minimize, if not, eliminate delays in the implementation of IFPs," Balisacan said.

"The simplified requirements will

be applicable to both pending and new applications within the NEDA Board approved list of IFPs as well as any additions to the updated IFP list," he added.

Balisacan said the draft EO is now being finalized and will soon be issued. He added the Neda and the Anti-Red Tape Authority (Arta) will establish a reporting framework for the implementation of the EO.

The Neda chief added that the Board also decided to reconstitute its Committee on Infrastructure to include the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Department of Information and Communication Technology.

The NEDA Board also confirmed the proposed national government-local government unit (LGU) co-sharing schemes for financing infrastructure projects.

"This aims to delineate the roles of the national government [and] the LGUs particularly in resourceful areas or for resources may be needed to carry out the devolved functions and shared between the national government and LGUs," Balisacan said.

In another matter, the Neda chief said the proposal of the government economic managers to reduce the tariff for rice from 35 percent to zero percent has yet to reach the level of the President.

The government's chief socio-economic planner said the Neda Board will "have a meeting soon on that where we will present the options."

The proposed measure aims to help stabilize the price of rice, however, it was heavily opposed by some lawmakers and groups since it can negatively affect the income of farmers.



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Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
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Tel #: 8931-1331 local | CPD-1110-1113 | EMED-1118-1124 | FAD-1103-1107 | ORD-1114-1117

### NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

On the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Report of the **PSA Complex** project, a government office building of **Philippine Statistics Authority** located in East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City.

Notice is hereby given to all parties who wish to give their opinion regarding the implementation of the abovementioned project to attend the PUBLIC HEARING on:

Date	Time	Venue
September 29, 2023 (Friday)	10:00 AM	Philippine Statistics Authority Office, 12 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Conference Room, Eton Centris, Cyberpod 5, Diliman, Quezon City

The Public Hearing is being conducted in connection with the review of the EIS Report of the aforementioned project by the Environmental Management Bureau-National Capital Region of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.


The following are the project details:

Project Name	<b>PSA Complex</b>
Project Location	East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City
Project Size (Gross Floor Area)	8,296.92 square meters
Project Rationale	The project aims to provide excellent and efficient government services.
Project Components	The PSA Complex will consist of the following components: 1. 23-Storey PSA Office Building 2. CRS Building 3. TAM Building 4. ICVEA Building 5. Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) 6. Gen Set Houses 7. Material Recovery Facility 8. Food Park 9. Operation and Maintenance Office.
Proponent	<b>Philippine Statistics Authority</b>

All interested parties who wish to attend or participate in this Public Hearing should preferably confirm their attendance/participation or give their opinion(s) in concise position paper to the EIA Section of this Office through mail or through email at [cpd.eia.embnccr@gmail.com](mailto:cpd.eia.embnccr@gmail.com) at least three (3) days before the Public Hearing Schedule. Those who will not able to register or submit their written positions may be given opportunity to share their issues on the day of the hearing itself.

The Project's EIS Report and Executive Summary for the Public are downloadable at our website: [ncr.emb.gov.ph](http://ncr.emb.gov.ph). (Kindly access the Notice of Public Hearing link found in our website).

For more details, please contact the EIA Section of Clearance and Permitting Division of this Office at telephone number 8931-1331 local 1111 through the project casehandler Mr. Jhonel S. Siarez.

  
**ATTY. MICHAEL DRAKE P. MATIAS**  
Regional Director