

25 September 2023 Monday



**DENR**

# **NEWS ALERTS**

# **NEWS CLIPPINGS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**





## DENR: 33 air monitoring stations in MM need upgrade

By BELLA CARIASO

The 33 air monitoring stations in Metro Manila need upgrading to ensure accurate data, an official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said over the weekend, after pollution-related smog smothered Metro Manila residents on Friday, forcing local government units to suspend classes due to poor air quality and visibility.

In a radio interview, DENR Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) National Capital Region Environment

Turn to Page 3

## DENR From Page 1

Monitoring Enforcement Division officer-in-charge Linel Manayang added that the air has improved in Metro Manila after some parts were deemed "acutely unhealthy" for residents on Friday.

"So far, we have 33 air quality monitoring stations in Metro Manila situated in all the cities, including the municipality of Pateros. So far, all the air quality monitoring equipment is properly maintained and operational, but some need to be upgraded for better catchment and good result of air quality data, so that our readings will be more accurate," Manayang said.

He said that the EMB plans to increase the monitoring screens in Metro Manila to inform the public of the actual air quality in their respective areas.

"We have a data center, wherein all the results of the air quality mon-

itoring stations are being captured in real time, and we flash in certain public places like in Ortigas. We have identified possible additional sites like Parañaque, Commonwealth Ave. to install additional screens where the public can have air quality real time monitoring," Manayang added.

According to him, the air quality in Metro Manila ranged from good to fair in the last days, but deteriorated on Friday due to the volume of vehicles in the streets.

"Our normal (air quality) was only 35 (micrograms per normal cubic meter or  $\mu\text{g}/\text{Ncm}$ ), but on Friday the air quality in some areas reached 128,141  $\mu\text{g}/\text{Ncm}$ ," Manayang explained.

The DENR classifies air quality of 101 to 150  $\mu\text{g}/\text{Ncm}$  as unhealthy as people with respiratory disease such as asthma are advised to limit outdoor exposure; while air quality of 151 to 200  $\mu\text{g}/\text{Ncm}$  is considered as very unhealthy as pedestrians are

advised to avoid heavy traffic areas; and 201 to 300  $\mu\text{g}/\text{Ncm}$  as acutely unhealthy as pedestrians should limit outdoor exposure.

Based on the monitoring of the EMB on Sept. 22, the air quality index (AQI), which monitors six criteria pollutants to determine how clean or polluted the air is, reached as high as 217 points in Parañaque City, 141 points in Pateros and 128 points in Makati.

"The high air quality level, which resulted in smog, was due to excessive emission of heavy traffic, especially during rush hour," Manayang added.

Based on latest data from the DENR, the air quality in Mandaluyong City and Antipolo City in Rizal ranged between 51 and 100  $\mu\text{g}/\text{Ncm}$  or classified as fair; and between one and 50  $\mu\text{g}/\text{Ncm}$  or good in Caloocan City, Makati City, Parañaque City, Pateros, San Juan City, Taguig City, Pateros and Batangas.





## PAGASA reports 'clearer' air in Metro Manila, nearby areas

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) stated on Sunday, Sept. 24, that it has not observed any noticeable smog in the National Capital Region (NCR) and neighboring areas as of 8 a.m.

In a phone interview with Manila Bulletin, PAGASA weather specialist Benison Estareja said there was "no current threat" from the smog.

"For now, based on our observations, it's [smog] really not a threat," Estareja said.

On Sept. 22, smog cloaked Metro Manila and other areas. PAGASA said the smog was due to "thermal inversion", which occurs when "cool air, typically found at higher altitudes, remains closer to the earth's surface than warm air."

Meanwhile, Estareja explained that the air condition in the National Capital Region (NCR) and other nearby areas was much "clearer", and the environment was "safer" compared to the conditions in the past few days.

Despite this, PAGASA is not ruling out the threat of smog, and urged the public to exercise caution by carrying face masks when outdoors.

"Pwede namang magtanggap ng mask, but make sure na mayroon kayong dala (You can remove your mask, but make sure you have one with you)," Estareja explained. (Lizst Torres Abello)





## Vog, smog, haze worsen quality of air; public awareness on pollution heightened

**M**etro Manilans and those in the Calabarzon region received a generous dose of science education last Friday, Sept. 22, when the hazy atmosphere prompted the suspension of classes. Alerts were also given to those proximately affected by Taal Volcano's continuing activity.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) retracted its initial declaration that volcanic smog, or vog, was the cause of the haze, noting the west-southwest direction of the emissions from Taal Volcano toward other Batangas towns, and not toward Metro Manila.

Another agency, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) stated that "hazy skies in Metro Manila...may be attributed to ground-level and suspended Particulate Matter (PM) concentration. Then, another term — thermal inversion — was injected into the briefing. Thermal inversion occurs when the layers of the atmosphere do not mix, causing aerosols to get trapped.

DENR-EMB explained further: "Normally, air temperature decreases with increasing altitude, but during an inversion, warmer air is held below the cooler air. An inversion can also suppress convection which is the ability of pollutant(s) to move vertically, causing visibly trapped particulate matter closer to the ground."

The main cause of the phenomenon, therefore, was the presence of significant amounts of Particulate Matter — in simple terms, air pollution — that hovered closer to the ground, instead of drifting into the skies.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services (PAGASA), our good old

weather bureau, chimed in to explain the rather unusual "meteorological conditions" last Friday in Metro Manila, Calabarzon and some Central Luzon provinces. It cited "the presence of very small particles...trapped close to the surface (or nearer ground level) due to the presence of a thermal inversion, high humidity, and calm wind conditions." Usually "the inversion disappears later in the day as heat from the sun allows the mixing of the air, allowing the aerosols to disappear." But the haze persists when cloudy conditions prevail.

Meanwhile, residents in the immediate vicinity of Taal Volcano, have been warned of the persistent and rising amount of vog whose chemical component is sulfur dioxide, which can irritate the eyes, throat, and respiratory system.

To recap, the smog that blanketed Metro Manila last Friday and through Saturday, was caused by heavy traffic emissions and thermal inversion, not by Taal Volcano's continuing smoke emission.

This drives home anew the imperative need to curb air pollution to ensure that the air we breathe does not endanger our health.

Law enforcement agencies must intensify and sustain their campaign against smoke belching vehicles. More effective public transport systems such as the EDSA Bus Carousel system should be sustained and further enhanced. The use of hybrid or electric vehicles could also contribute significantly to the mitigation of air pollution. Meantime, if air pollution persists or worsens, commuters will be constrained to wear anew face masks for health protection.

Concerned government agencies must do what is needed to give accurate and reliable public information for the citizenry's guidance.





STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE

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

8  
PAGE

UPPER  
 LOWER

PAGE 1  
STORY

BANNER  
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

09-25-23

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE







TITLE :

PAGE

DATE

# Smog is not vog

Looking out the window from the sixth floor of a high-rise on a busy Thursday afternoon brought a momentary sense of relief. This was largely brought on by the sight of trees that managed to block the streets below. Imagine waking up the next day to see a less-than-clear view. Upon stepping out of the building, there was a distinct but indescribable scent and the air felt dense.

My chest felt a little heavy and the act of breathing became a conscious effort. Checking for other signs that would prompt even a hard-headed physician to go for a consultation and finding none, I went on to face a full day of work but not without having intermittent thoughts of how we have not only contributed but continuously added to the possible threat of eventually putting a price on something that is for free: the air we breathe.

According to the World Health Organization website, in 2018, ambient (outdoor) air pollution was estimated to have caused 4.2 million premature deaths worldwide. From that number, 88 percent occurred in low- and middle-income countries, with the greatest number in the WHO Southeast Asia and Western Pacific regions." Having written about other public health concerns in the past, it is without a doubt that we are strong contenders to winning a race that nobody wants or wishes to win.

**Smog vs Vog.** Smog is a term derived from the union of two words, smoke and fog. If you have heard the term "London fog," it was a crisis in the 19th century brought on as a result of the burning of fossil fuels, largely from coal. The resulting air pollution not only reduced visibility but was a cause of respiratory ailments namely pneumonia and bronchitis and worse, death. Today, what we are experiencing and seeing is more of a photochemical smog which is described as a complex chemical reaction from sunlight, nitrogen oxides, and volatile organic compounds generated from daily human activities (use of fuel, paints, etc.) that



## IN THE PINK OF HEALTH

FATIMA IGNACIO GIMENEZ

are present in the atmosphere. Volcanic smog or vog on the other hand, as lifted from the recent infographic released by our colleagues from the Philippine Academy of Pediatric Pulmonologists, "is a visible haze which often smells like fireworks and contains highly acidic aerosols comprising of sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and other pollutants emitted by the volcano. It is an irritant to the skin, eyes, nose, throat, and is known to aggravate preexisting abnormal lung conditions."

From that same document, in line with increasing the level of awareness that may hopefully promote better health-seeking behavior, adherence to preventive measures, and self-care, it stated the different symptoms that can manifest from vog exposure namely, shortness of breath, cough, headache, low energy level, increased phlegm production, watery, or red eyes and subsequent recommendations in verbatim:

1. Avoid outdoor activities that cause heavy breathing.
2. Drink plenty of fluids, maintain adequate hydration.
3. Avoid tobacco/vape use and exposure.
4. Stay indoors. Keep windows and doors closed to prevent entry of vog.
5. Set air conditioner to recirculate mode when in use at home or in vehicles.

6. Always keep emergency and maintenance medications on hand and readily available.

7. Make outdoor trips quick and wear a high particulate filtration quality face mask like N95 for protection.

8. Seek medical consultation if you develop symptoms of vog exposure.

There are several things that I would like to point out.

First, before we are subspecialists and pediatricians, we are general physicians and these aforementioned recommendations are not specific to the pediatric population, though children are more vulnerable.

Second, whether vog or smog, both are capable of causing major health concerns that can initiate and precipitate both communicable and noncommunicable diseases, and exacerbate preexisting health conditions.

Third, number seven was written in the context of vog exposure. Nevertheless, the pandemic has taught everyone the value of wearing a face mask as one of the preventive measures in helping prevent the risk of transmitting respiratory diseases, not only the COVID-19 virus but influenza and other viruses that can cause the common cold. Though generally self-limiting, these viruses may be exceptionally dangerous for the vulnerable and the immunocompromised.

In the past weeks, the majority of the consultations in the clinic have been respiratory in nature which has caused children to be absent from school. Colleagues have come down from it as well. Yes, it is that season. Stay up to date on your needed immunizations and adhere to basic hygienic practices.

Last but not least, looking at the whole situation, we have to be more conscious about doing our share in curbing pollution, and I am not just speaking of the environmental kind.

tingim\_67@yahoo.com





TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

PAGE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## Taal's sulfur dioxide emissions drop

The air quality in Batangas improved yesterday after the sulfur dioxide emissions of Taal Volcano dropped to at least 2,000 tons from more than 4,000 tons per day during the previous days.

Citing reports from the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs), Batangas Vice Gov. Mark Leviste said the atmosphere in Talisay, one of the towns located near the volcano, has cleared and brightened up.

"The volcanic smog has decreased. The smell of sulfur is no longer strong," Leviste said, noting that in the past two to three days, the clouds in Batangas were hazy and grayish.

The province's tourism and cultural affairs office advised tourists and travelers to reconsider their plans over the weekend due to the volcanic smog or vog.

"Those who are already in resorts or facilities near Taal Lake and Volcano, and other areas directly affected by the direction of the wind should stay indoors, and wear N95 masks. They were told to stay updated about the situation through reliable news sources," Leviste said.

The provincial disaster risk reduction and management office (PDRRMO) had reported that there were students who experienced difficulty in breathing, eye irritation, sore throat, flu and non-ordinary coughs due to the smog and vog.

The PDRRMO distributed oximeters to monitor the oxygen level of the affected people as well as thermometer and N95 masks through local government units.

Leviste gave assurance that the operation centers of the provincial government would continue to monitor the situation on the ground.

Based on Phivolcs' monitoring, Taal released at least 2,730 tons of sulfur dioxide yesterday.

State volcanologists said they observed an upwelling of hot volcanic fluids in the main crater.

"A 900-meter-high moderate emission was seen drifting northeast and north-northeast," they said.

Phivolcs said that despite the recent increased activity, Taal remains under Alert Level 1.

- Bella Cariaso





09-25-23

TITLE

PAGE

DATE

## Transition to renewable energy must accelerate

TRANSITIONING to renewable energy is the key to securing humanity's survival, as "without renewables, there can be no future," says UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

Renewable technologies like wind and solar power are, in most cases, cheaper than the fossil fuels that are driving climate change, but the world needs to prioritize the transformation of energy systems to renewable energy.

Fossil fuel subsidies are one of the biggest financial barriers hampering the world's shift to renewable energy.

The UN Secretary-General has consistently called for an end to all international public and private funding of fossil fuels, one of the major contributors to global warming, calling any new investments in them "delusional."

"All actors must come together to accelerate a just and equitable transition from fossil fuels to renewables, as we stop oil and gas expansion and funding and licensing for new coal, oil, and gas," he said.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that \$5.9 trillion was spent on subsidizing the fossil fuel industry in 2020 alone. The figure includes subsidies, tax breaks, and health and environmental damages that were not priced into the initial cost of fossil fuels. That's roughly \$11 billion a day.

Shifting subsidies from fossil fuels to renewable energy leads to a reduction in their use and also contributes to sustainable economic growth, job creation, better public health, and more equality, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable communities around the world.

An estimated \$4 trillion a year needs to be invested in renewable energy until 2030 in order to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. Net zero is the term which describes achieving the balance between carbon emitted into the atmosphere and the carbon removed from it.

Investment in renewables will cost significantly less compared to subsidizing fossil fuels. The reduction of pollution and climate impact alone could save the world up to \$4.2 trillion per year by 2030. **UN News**





TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

## SKETCHES

ANA MARIE PAMINTUAN

### Legacy mode

**P**icture this: 28 kilometers of jogging paths, 78 km of bicycle lanes with a 12-km dedicated bike highway, and 14 kilometers of waterfront promenade from which to watch the magnificent sunset over Manila Bay, all for free to the public.

The lanes will gird 70 hectares of open parks where concerts and similar activities can be staged. The parks will not be fenced off, unlike the bayfront along Roxas Boulevard in Manila that cordons off the high-maintenance dolomite beach.

Glenn Ang, who was appointed president of SM Smart City Infrastructure and Development Corp. in November last year, categorically told me last week that there would be no SM mall in the planned new reclamation area, although the three islands would of course be connected to SM's Mall of Asia complex.

Instead the SM group will partner with two or three top universities, providing and maintaining the infrastructure on the new reclaimed area for extensions of their schools, research centers and medical facilities.

As far back as 2012, Ang said the Sy clan – the country's richest according to Forbes – was already considering a legacy project, a way of giving back for their immense blessings. A proposal of the Pasay City government provided the opportunity.

High-rise buildings will be discouraged on the three interconnected reclaimed islands in Manila Bay that SM will develop and maintain, at no cost to the government or the public, since monetization is not the primary objective, Ang said.

There could be food outlets on the islands, but these cannot be on high-rises. The rentals and lease payments will go to the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) and Pasay City governments, which will own the reclaimed land and will be allocated certain areas whose use will be at their discretion. Whether the two government agencies will limit the commercialization of their allocated spaces will be up to state regulators.

There will be two kilometers of "living shorelines" to ensure the proper flow of water, on top of the natural channels in Libertad in Pasay and Baclaran in Parañaque. Dutch technology is being tapped to prevent the project from causing flooding in the two cities, and a "wave wall" is designed to break the impact of storm surges.

Skeptics may not trust any altruistic claims of the country's uber wealthy. But if there's a family that may be able to persuade the public about being on legacy mode and wanting to give back, it will be the Sys.

Unfortunately for the family, their legacy project is currently in limbo, bogged down in the jumble of controversies involving reclamation activities in the bay.

And unfortunately for all the proponents, reclamation, like mining, is never pretty. The proponents must sell to a leery public the idea that (as described by an SM member) reclamation is like making sausages: it looks awful while in production, but the finished product is good.

It's uncertain if the suspension can be lifted piecemeal, if the SM project passes an ongoing assessment.

Business groups have warned that the mess has become a cautionary tale for investors studying prospects in the Philippines.



The Department of Environment and Natural Resources is conducting an assessment of 22 reclamation projects in Manila Bay. The DENR assessment will involve "trans-disciplinary work," according to a statement from the Presidential Communications Office, with "inputs from social scientists, communities, experts and academicians."

Apart from the social scientists, the DENR will tap the expertise of oceanographers, climate scientists, geologists and other physical scientists, the Malacañang statement declared.

All 22 projects were approved between 2019 and 2021 by the administration of Rodrigo Duterte, who in 2018 had ordered Boracay shut down at the height of the summer travel season because he said the water smelled like "s\*\*\*" and the island had turned into a "cesspool."

The DENR said only three of the 22 Manila Bay projects are ongoing; the rest are going through various stages of the approval process. Fisherfolk, on the other hand, say reclamation work has started in other projects, disrupting their livelihoods and causing flooding in affected communities. Did proponents of these projects get clearance to proceed from the PRA?

All reclamation activities in the bay are supposed to be suspended, but a TV report showed work continuing in one project.

Environment advocates surely welcome the suspension order and the thorough review being carried out by the DENR. But in countries with coherent policies, the process is reversed: the multidisciplinary assessment comes first, not of each project application, but of the long-term policy on bay reclamation.

The basic question should have been answered first, based on multi-stakeholder consultations: do we want further reclamation in Manila Bay? If yes, what would be the impact of the policy on different aspects of life? Should decisions on reclamation be allowed piecemeal, with local government units authorized to solicit proposals and give the green light for specific projects? Does the bay belong to any particular LGU? Since local executives serve for only three years, with no certainty of reelection, their decisions can be overturned with a change of administration.

A decade ago, the Pasay government decided it wanted to allow the expansion of its reclaimed area, and proposed a public-private partnership, which drew an offer from the SM Group. The offer was subjected to a Swiss challenge. When rival Ayala Land failed to submit a counter-proposal, SM became the joint venture partner of Pasay for a 300-hectare reclamation project costing P54.5 billion, to be fully financed by SM and targeted for completion in seven years.

This was back in 2013. SM also later bagged a reclamation deal for another 360 hectares with the Parañaque government. The two projects went through a decade of vetting by over a dozen government agencies including the DENR.

SM got the formal clearance to proceed from Pasay in 2019, but the pandemic forced the suspension of all work, and it turned out that it needed a final green light from the PRA. This was granted in 2021. By that time, however, other developers including a Davao-based group had jumped into the fray and wanted, literally, their own pieces of the bay.

A project near the US embassy includes the destruction of the area behind the Quirino Grandstand that houses Ocean Park. The project was denounced by the embassy for the involvement of a state-owned Chinese firm blacklisted by the US government in 2020 for its participation in artificial island building in the South China Sea.

Following the US denunciation, President Marcos suspended all reclamation projects in the bay.

This controversy has become a showcase of the many ills plaguing our country.

★





TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

## Economic impact of reclamation projects



### LITO GAGNI

**M**UCH of the hullabaloo over the reclamation projects in Manila Bay is centered on one particular project that has drawn the attention of the US embassy and since then, the work in the others have been stopped while studies are being done on their impact to the environment. This has created an unlikely impasse that begs the question on the impact of a reclamation project.

Are reclamation projects per se good for us? And here the issue of the environment crops up. Taken, however, from an economic lens, the reclaiming of lands has huge economic benefits that far outweigh that of the environment, a fact that has not been lost on Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

In a budget hearing of the appropriations committee, he surmised that at a conservative estimate of P2,500 per square meter, the combined 6,000 hectares of land will translate to half of the country's gross domestic product. And that is just the cost of the land, which is actually a fourth of its prevailing worth. Add the economic value of business

development such as the building of a tourist-oriented establishment that will mean more jobs created, the taxes that will accrue to the LGUs, and the increased economic activity are enough reasons to nudge the government to green light the projects.

After all, it is imperative for the country to energize the economy given the gargantuan debts we have to pay down the road, no thanks to Covid. And if the environment issue is played on our reclamation projects, we can point to the fact that in the United States, there are 220 operating coal plants while we have only 22 plants that are now being asked to be stopped due to environmental considerations.

The economic impact of a reclamation project should provide the platform for the DENR to allow the continuation of the projects to ramp up economic activity. Much analysis, it is said, leads to paralysis and this should not be the case. The sooner that the impasse is resolved, the

**The economic impact of a reclamation project should provide the platform for the DENR to allow the continuation of the projects to ramp up economic activity. Much analysis, it is said, leads to paralysis and this should not be the case. The sooner that the impasse is resolved, the sooner can the country benefit from the tremendous economic boom that the projects will trigger.**

sooner can the country benefit from the tremendous economic boom that the projects will trigger.

Imagine LGUs like Paranaque being able to raise enough to fund the building of more schools, or hiring more STEM (science, technical, engineering and math) tutors to address the students' learning disabilities brought by their concentration on gadgets, or even build condomini-

ums for rent-to-own schemes for their constituents. The list of the economic impact of reclaimed land far outweighs the projected risks attached to them, such as the possible loss of the famed Manila Bay sunset.

Actually, with the reclaimed land along Manila Bay, the LGUs can band together to create a tourist destination that will rival other tourism sites. For instance, a boardwalk could be built with different kinds of restaurants offering native delicacies. Also, a bike lane can be designated in the area, and a place for walking enthusiasts and even a museum and a bird sanctuary. Aside from these, several lanes can be established that will allow local and foreign tourists to enjoy being in the said sites.

And as for the risks linked to reclamation projects, the Philippine Reclamation Authority had already settled the issue. PRA Assistant General Manager Joseph Literal said that the developers are enhancing coastal protection, a fact that is part of the

reclamation projects in other parts of the world.

Cities with reclamation projects are now spending money to balance economy and ecology, and these include constructing breakwaters and seawalls that will reinforce coastal defenses. Ripraps are also put in place to ensure non-erosion. All these developments go with the ongoing reclamation projects and these are what the developers are doing.

For Dr. Edgardo Alabastro, Ph. D., Chief Executive of Technotrix Integrated Services Corp, one of the reclamation project developers, the impasse created by the continued suspension "could prejudice the attainment of benefits that would accrue with the full development of the reclamation project. On full development, socio-economic benefits will filter down to the public and communities, especially in the territorial jurisdiction of the reclamation project. Jobs and livelihood would be made available."





TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

## Habitat preservation propagates more medicinal trees, plants



ERDB director Maria Lourdes Ferrer

**HABITAT** protection will preserve medicinal plants and allow them to multiply and enable experts to maximize the economic and health values of the vegetation.

Experts stressed the need to implement conservation efforts to protect and propagate medicinal plants amid climate change and other threats.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources—Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (DENR-ERDB), the principal research arm and think tank of the DENR, hosted

the ASEAN Conference on Medicinal Forest Trees in Pampanga and cited their huge potential for the health of Filipinos.

Around 117 participants from the Philippines, Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan took part in the three-day conference.

ERDB director Maria Lourdes Ferrer said forest species studies had shown the links between nature and human health as exploited by indigenous people worldwide in treating diseases.

Ferrer stressed the need to gather and preserve indigenous knowledge on medicinal plants and 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 trees species conservation,” said Ferrer.

ERDB assistant director Conrado Marquez said habitat protection through active management of forests, governance with the appropriate funding allocation are vital for medicinal forest trees to adopt and become resil-

ient to climate change.

“We are working now on a technology called tree fortification. We are trying to fortify trees in a manner that will make them more resilient to pests and to add to the viability and manageability of particular tree species,” said Marquez.

Tree fortification seeks to protect threatened tree species and increase their population. The ERDB is also doing other vegetative propagation measures such as cloning to address scarcity of species.

Dr. Pastor Malabrigo Jr., professor at the University of the Philippines Los Baños, said based on the database of medicinal species in the country, 456 tree species have known medicinal value.

“We have 3,500 tree species. It’s safe to assume that we are underutilizing our plant resources. There are rare, threatened species, the public is not familiar with, which are not being used. We have to give attention to these,” said Malabrigo.

He encouraged the event poster presenters to publish their researches on medicinal plants for people to recognize these and increase public awareness.

**DENR News**





STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE

# BusinessMirror

A broader look at today's business



09 - 25 - 23

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

## Summit cites role of forests to achieve sustainable goals

NEW YORK—"Green should be the color of the future," said QU Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

The FAO chief articulated the message during a high-level event at the margins of the SDG Summit dedicated to build momentum on the role of forests in contributing to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Qu stressed that initiatives for ecosystem restoration, combating desertification and expanding green areas and forest cover are huge opportunities for the world and that FAO stands ready to support its members in this context and promote further solidarity and cooperation.

The event was organized by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), chaired by FAO, a partnership of 16 major global organizations within and outside the United Nations system with substantial mandates on forests.

The CPF at the meeting launched the joint call to action for forests to-



AFP

Food and Agricultural Organization director-general Qu Dongyu

wards 2030 highlighting the need for increased action and political commitment to strengthen the implementation of forest solutions in pursuit of the SDGs and other global objectives.

The 2023 SDG Summit marks the halfway point in efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs along with other internationally agreed-upon goals related to forests, such as the Global Forest Goals outlined in the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030.

Covering 31 percent of the world's land surface, forests sustain livelihoods and produce wood and non-

wood forest products, contribute to food security, combat climate change and desertification and conserve biodiversity and water. They also generate employment and contribute to human well-being.

According to FAO's Global Forest Resources Assessment, the world has lost 420 million hectares of forest through deforestation since 1990. Deforestation continues although the rate slowed from 12 million hectares per year in the period 2010-2015 to 10 million hectares per year in the period 2015-2020.

Progress towards reaching global goals on protecting forests is not advancing fast enough, as forests are still disappearing, climate-change impacts and biodiversity loss are increasing, and malnutrition and hunger are rising, all undermined by social and economic instability.

The Collaborative Partnership on Forests' aims to enhance the contributions of forests to the Sustainable Development Goals, the Global Forest Goals and other international commitments. **FAO News**





TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

PAGE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

# 'Brad Pitt' attacks owner in Cebu

By CALVIN CORDOVA

CEBU CITY – "Brad Pitt" has been turned over to authorities after he attacked a 62-year-old man in Minglanilla town, southern Cebu recently.

Brad Pitt, a male Philippine long-tailed macaque and namesake of the popular American actor, attacked Roberto Caday, who had been keeping the monkey as a pet in his home in Minglanilla.

Because of the incident, Brad Pitt was turned over to the Wildlife Rescue Center of the Department of Natural Resources-Central Visayas (DENR-7) for safekeeping.

The monkey escaped from his cage and attacked Caday, who was bitten in different parts of his body.



**BAD MONKEY** – 'Brad Pitt,' a namesake of the American actor, is locked up after attacking its owner. (MyTV Cebu)

Carlo Babiera, DENR-7 Wildlife and Rescue Center in-charge, said it is prohibited to keep Philippine long-tailed macaque as it is considered a wildlife species.

"There is a tendency that it will attack a person especially if it gets provoked. If the enclosure is not secured, it can really hurt someone," said Babiera.

Babiera said it is not only dangerous to keep wildlife animals as pets but it is also against the law.

Those who will be caught keeping wildlife animals could be charged for violation of Republic Act 9147 or an Act Providing for the Conservation and Protection of Wildlife Resources and their habitats.

"You have to have necessary permits if you are keeping wildlife animals. A person can be fined or imprisoned if caught violating such law," said Babiera.





TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

# China installs barrier in Bajo de Masinloc

**WHAT NOW?** Filipino fishermen look at the floating barrier placed by China to stop them from fishing in rich waters. PHOTO COURTESY OF PFG

BY FRANCO JOSE C. BAROÑA AND BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO

**T**HE China Coast Guard (CCG) has installed a floating barrier near the Bajo de Masinloc (Scarborough Shoal) in the West Philippine Sea to keep out Filipino fishing vessels, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) reported on Sunday.

Bajo de Masinloc lies within the country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

The PCG said a 300-meter-long barrier was deployed in the southeast portion of the shoal.

The barrier was discovered by the PCG and the Bureau of Fisheries and

Aquatic Resources (BFAR) personnel aboard the BRP Datu Bankaw during a routine patrol on Saturday.

Filipino fishermen who frequent the area said three CCG rigid hull inflatable boats (RHIBs) and a Chinese maritime militia service boat put up the barrier just as the BFAR

vessel was approaching.

The CCG vessels usually install floating barriers whenever they monitor a large number of Filipino fishermen in the area, the PCG said.

In a joint statement, the PCG and BFAR condemned the deployment of

the barrier, saying it prevents Filipino fishing boats from entering the shoal.

The BFAR personnel distributed grocery items to Filipino fishermen on 50 boats near the shoal.

They also provided fuel subsidies to the fishermen.

At least four CCG vessels with bow numbers 3065, 3066, 3105 and 3301 attempted to drive away the BFAR vessel.

In their radio challenges, the CCG crew issued radio warnings to the BFAR vessel and Filipino fishermen were encroaching into Chinese territory.

The BFAR vessel responded to the

►BarrierAB

radio calls and emphasized that they were on a routine patrol within Philippine territory.

"Upon realizing the presence of media personnel onboard the BFAR vessel, the CCG vessels

maintained a safe distance and moved away," the PCG said.

PCG Commandant Admiral Artemio Abu expressed his commitment to support BFAR and

other national government agencies in ensuring the safety and security of Filipino fishermen.

Bajo de Masinloc lies about 198 kilometers west of Subic Bay, well within the Philippines' EEZ.

The shoal is also being claimed by China and Taiwan.

It had been administered by the Philippines as part of the province of Zambales, until 2012, when China sent warships to drive away Filipino fishing boats.

Chinese maritime forces eventually occupied the shoal.

The incident prompted the Philippine government to file a case against China before the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague, Netherlands in 2013.

Manila contested the legality of Beijing's nine-dash line on which its claim over a vast portion of the South China Sea is based.

In 2016, the court declared China's claim as invalid, at the same time upholding the sovereign rights of the Philippines in the area.

The ruling did not stop China from building structures on Kagitingan (Fiery Cross), Panganiban (Mischief), Zamora (Subi), Burgos (Gaven), Kennan (Hughes), Mabini (Johnson South) and Calderon (Cuarteron) Reefs, which are all part of Philippine territory.

Several nations support the arbitral ruling.

In a statement Sunday, Senate President Juan Miguel "Migz" Zubiri asked the PCG "to immediately cut and remove all these illegal structures located at our West Philippine Sea not just to assert our sovereign rights to the area but to protect our fishermen from any possible accidents that may arise from these illegal structures."

"We, in the Senate, stand by our brave men and women who risk their lives for the freedoms that we enjoy today," Zubiri said.

Sen. Ana Theresia "Risa" Hontiveros said in a text message China's "cruelty knows no bounds" as she urged the government to review its foreign policy toward China.

"Filipino fisherfolk are among the poorest in our country. They only rely on our seas for their food and their livelihood," Hontiveros said.

She said China had destroyed many coral reef systems in the West Philippine Sea. "These natural resources would no longer be enjoyed by the next [Filipino] generation," she said in Filipino.

"I trust that the Philippine Coast Guard can escort our fisherfolk and ensure that they pass through the floating barriers," Hontiveros said. "We should no longer accept acts like this going unpunished. If we allow China's bullying to continue, it will cost the lives of our own people."





TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

PAGE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## Miners' wish: One-stop shop for permits

The mining sector wishes that the government will set up a one-stop shop for the securing of permits needed to develop mineral resources in the country—similar to the one put up by the Department of Energy (DOE).

"Of course, we'd love to have streamlined permits. I think DOE is setting the bar with one-stop shop and I think if we can replicate that with the same ideals, I think it will be good (for the industry)," DMCI Mining Corporation President Tulsi Das Reyes C. Reyes said in an interview over the weekend.

He noted that, "right now, we go to EMB (Environmental Management Bureau), FMB (Forest Management

Bureau), central, regional directors, you have to have a lot of dealings. Sometimes there is miscommunication between the national and local levels."

"So if you have a one-stop shop, I think it will help clarify some matters. Who do you follow, LGUs or the national government? So if we could speak the same language, which I think we are doing right now, I think we are going to see more clarity," Reyes said.

He noted that, with government support for the mining industry, there are now many nickel miners who are planning to put up processing plants that require **►B-6**

## Miners' wish:....

**B-1 ◀**

billions of dollars in investments.

"Who would have ever thought that we would be talking about a \$1.5-billion investment for a processing plant? I have never seen that, I have never heard that happen. Nickel Asia was the first one, how many years ago, in the 1970s. Just them. Now you are getting PGMC, CNC, all these second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth miners in the country, who now have options to process ore," Reyes added.

He said the Philippines can be com-

petitive and meet demand for resources in the global market and a \$1.5-billion processing plant can also provide many jobs for Filipinos.

"You can do world-class environmental procedures following all these international companies because the need is there, EV vehicles, in a big, big way," Reyes added.

He pointed out that the past "two-and-a-half administrations" have been very progressive in its support for the mining sector. (James A. Loyola)





TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

**MVP WANTS BETTER DEFINED ROLES FOR GOV'T AGENCIES**

# MINING FIRMS BAT FOR REGULATORY REFORMS

**By Jordeene B. Lagare**  
@jordeenelagare

Mining executives are battling for additional reforms to unlock additional investments in the Philippine mining sector.

In particular, tycoon Manuel Pangilinan, who serves as chair of listed mining company Philex Mining Corp., called for separating the functions of regulating and promoting the industry.

Pangilinan said the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) and the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB), both under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), have "conflicting goals" as it places 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. We don't need to create a new department with a separate budget," Pangilinan said in his speech during the Mining Philippines 2023 International Conference and Exhibition held earlier.

Pangilinan said the MGB is responsible for promoting, developing and supervising mining while the EMB is tasked with enforcing environmental laws on mining.

The businessman also raised health-related and safety concerns and the exploitation

of women and child workers.

The sector, he added, lacks "clarity of plans and actionable postmining rehabilitation, which can restore mine sites to their original natural state."

Meanwhile, Tulsi Das Reyes, president of DMCI Mining Corp., the mining business of Consunji-owned DMCI Holdings Inc., said while the current administration is "very much supportive" of the mining sector, the permitting process is something the government can improve.

"The Department of Energy is setting the bar with one-stop shop and if we can replicate that, I think that's great," Reyes said in a press briefing. **INQ**





TITLE :

PAGE

DATE

# Miners urge govt to streamline permits

By VG CABUAG

@villygc

**T**HE mining sector is asking the government to set up a one-stop shop for permits to hasten the development of mineral resources in the country.

"Of course, we'd love to have streamlined permits. I think DOE [Department of Energy] is setting the bar with one-stop shop and I think if we can replicate that with the same ideals, I think it will be good [for the industry]," DMCI Mining President Tulsi Das C. Reyes said over the weekend.

"Right now, we go to EMB [Environmental Management Bureau], FMB [Forest Management Bureau] central, regional directors, you have to have a lot of dealings. Sometimes there is miscommunication between the national and local levels."

Reyes said a one-stop shop will help clarify laws for miners.

"Who do you follow, LGUs [local government units] or the national government? So if we could speak the

same language, which I think we are doing right now, I think we are going to see more clarity."

He said with government support for the mining industry, a number of nickel miners are now planning to put up processing plants that require billions of dollars in investments.

"Who would have ever thought that we would be talking about a \$1.5-billion investment for a processing plant? I have never seen that, I have never heard that happen," Reyes said.

"Nickel Asia [Corp.] was the first one, how many years ago, in the 1970s. Just them. Now you are getting PGM [Platinum Group Metals Corp.], CNC [Carrascal Nickel Corp.], all these second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth miners in the country, who now have options to process ore."

He said the Philippines can be competitive and meet demand for resources in the global market.

"You can do world-class environmental procedures following all these international companies because the need is there."





STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION  
AND  
INITIATIVES  
SERVICE

Trusted Since 1939

The Manila Times

B3  
PAGE

UPPER  
 LOWER

PAGE 1  
STORY

BANNER  
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

09-25-23

TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

# Reduce red tape, DMCI Mining urges

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

**THE mining subsidiary of listed DMCI Holdings Inc. is supporting a mining industry proposal to streamline the approval process for mineral development projects.**

DMCI Mining Corp. President Tuli Das Reyes told reporters over the weekend that a one-stop shop for permits would be a big boost.

"I think [the] DoE (Department of Energy) is setting the bar with one-stop shop, and I think if we can replicate that [with regard to mining and] with the same ideals,

I think it's good," he added.

Reyes said the process currently has to go through agencies such as the Environmental Management Bureau, Forest Management Bureau, and the central and regional offices of the Department of Environment and National Resources.

"Sometimes there is miscom-

munication ... so if you have a one-stop shop, I think that will help clarify some matters," he added.

Expeditious permit issuances, Reyes claimed, would open up competition and help mining firms meet global demand.

"You need competition, you need the resource for global demand and supply, and there's no joke [that the] Philippines can provide supply for global demand," he added.

During a business conference last month, Philippine Nickel Industry Association President Dante Bravo said they were dis-

cussing the idea of a one-stop shop with the government.

He called the current process "tedious," sometimes taking five to 10 years. This could be shortened to a year or even six months with a one-stop shop, Bravo claimed.

"[I]f we can sort of streamline and identify, really, that this is a priority program, it's a lot easier to convince investors," he continued.

Bravo also noted that industry development efforts should include exploration and extraction aside from the government's focus on attracting investors in value-added processing.





## Australia works with Phl in coral reef restoration

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

Australia continues to work with the Philippines on protecting the marine environment through coral reef restoration, Australian Ambassador HK Yu said yesterday.

Yu welcomed the signing of the UN High Seas Biodiversity Treaty, the historic global treaty on the world's oceans, by the Philippines and Australia.

As of last Saturday, 75 nations and the European Union had signed the treaty while gathered at the 78th United Nations General Assembly in New York.

"Both have signed this important global treaty for protecting our oceans. We continue to work with the Philippines on protecting our marine environment through coral reef restoration, monitoring and governance, reducing marine plastics and geospatial marine mapping," Yu said in a post on social media platform X (formerly Twitter).

Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo told the UN General Assembly last Saturday that the Philippines is "proud to be among the first states to have signed this week, the Treaty on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, which opens new windows to cooperate in the responsible stewardship of the high seas."

The landmark UN treaty seeks to deliver stronger protections for the ocean under the framework of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

It is the first ever treaty to protect the world's high seas that also seeks to strengthen the legal regime in the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in over two-thirds of the world's ocean.

The Philippines expressed serious concern over the destruction of corals in Rozul Reef and called for an end to all ecologically harmful activities in the country's exclusive economic zone.

US Ambassador MaryKay Carlson expressed alarm over the reports on destruction of corals in the West Philippine Sea, which the military and coast guard suspect as Chinese activities, describing it as "troubling."

Japanese Ambassador Kazuhiko Koshikawa also branded the reported harvesting of corals as "alarming."

### Strategic partnership

Meanwhile, International think tank Stratbase-Albert del Rosario (ADR) Institute has trumpeted the recent signing of the strategic partnership between the Philippines and Australia as an assurance of peace in the Indo-Pacific amid continuing security challenges, particularly in the West Philippine Sea.

"The Stratbase-Albert Del Rosario Institute fully supports the deepening of Philippine-Australia relations. Australia has consistently been among the countries most trusted by Filipinos," Stratbase ADR Institute president Dindo Manhit said in a statement.

"We are grateful for Australia's unwavering support for the Philippines, particularly its recognition of the 2016 arbitral ruling and its commitment to preserving the rule of law. Its presence in the Indo-Pacific and defense of the rules-based international order provides assurance that peace, stability and prosperity will be maintained in the region," Manhit added.

He also noted that the signing of the pact was a natural progression for the Philippines and Australia's flourishing relations.

"Over the last 77 years, our defense and economic ties have grown stronger, fortified by shared values and principles. The visit of (Australian) Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to Manila is a landmark initiative that highlights the central geopolitical value of the Philippines in the Indo-Pacific region," he said.

- With Rainier Allan Ronda





TITLE:

PAGE

DATE

# Climate inaction slows down fight against poverty, global hunger

**I**NSUFFICIENT progress towards climate goals is slowing down the global fight against poverty, hunger and deadly diseases, according to a report released by the UN World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

UN Secretary-General António Guterres echoed that message, warning that record temperatures and extreme weather were "causing havoc" around the world.

The global response has fallen "far short," Guterres recently said, just as latest UN data indicates that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are only 15 percent on track at the midway point of the 2030 Agenda.

According to WMO, current policies will lead to global warming of at least 2.8 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels over the course of this century—well above the Paris Agreement target of 1.5°C.

This year's northern hemisphere summer has been the hottest on record, prompting the UN chief last week to reiterate his call for a "surge in action."

Guterres underscored in his foreword to the report that weather, climate and water-related sciences can "supercharge progress on the SDGs across the board."



Climate change protesters take to the streets of London, United Kingdom. [news.un.org](https://news.un.org)

The United in Science report, which combines expertise from 18 UN organizations and partners, shows how climate science and early warnings can save lives and livelihoods, advance food and water security, clean energy and better health.

After recent flooding in Libya that has claimed thousands of lives, WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas stressed that a lack of adequate forecasting capacity can have deadly consequences for a country when faced with extreme weather events.

He highlighted the risky situation developing in Sudan, where conflict has

crippled the agency's capacity to forecast hazards.

The head of the country's meteorological service told him that most of her staff members escaped Khartoum and were unable to "run their business in a normal way," he said.

"They are not able to forecast this kind of high-impact weather events anymore," he warned.

Extreme weather events are also a key factor in the spread of global hunger and the new report seeks to inform urgent action on this front as the UN estimates that nearly 670 million people may be food insecure in 2030.

The report's authors explore the link between life-saving food production and nutrition, and investments in weather sciences and services which enable farmers to make decisions on crops and planting.

Early warnings are also crucial to "helping identify potential areas of crop failure that may lead to emergencies."

"United in Science" includes analysis from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which warned that climate change and extreme events such as heatwaves are set to "significantly increase ill health and premature deaths."

The report's findings show that integrating epidemiology and climate information makes it possible to forecast and prepare for outbreaks of climate-sensitive diseases, such as malaria and dengue.

Early-warning systems can also help to reduce poverty by giving people the chance to anticipate and "limit the economic impact" of disasters.

The WMO-led report shows that between 1970 and 2021, there were nearly 12,000 reported disasters from weather, climate and water extremes, causing \$4.3 trillion in economic losses—the majority of them in developing countries.

WMO deplored the fact that so far, there has been "very limited progress" in reducing the gap between promises that countries made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the level of emissions cuts really needed to achieve the temperature goal of the Paris Agreement.

To limit global warming to 1.5°C, global greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced by 45 percent by 2030, with carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions falling close to net zero by 2050.

The report's authors wrote that while some future changes in climate are unavoidable, "every fraction of a degree and ton of CO2 matters to limit global warming and achieve the SDGs."

WMO has also underscored the importance of the UN's "Early Warnings for All" initiative aiming to ensure that "everyone on Earth is protected from hazardous weather, water, or climate events through life-saving early warning systems by the end of 2027."

Currently, only half of the countries worldwide report having adequate multi-hazard early warning systems.

UN News





TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

PAGE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## 3 quakes rock Masbate

Three consecutive earthquakes rocked the province of Masbate yesterday morning, according to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs).

The first quake, with magnitude-4.7, occurred at 6:21 a.m. and its epicenter was located 13 kilometers north of Masbate City, state seismologists said.

The quake was felt at Intensity 4 in Masbate City and San Fernando town.

Intensity 3 was felt in Batuan, Milagros, Mobo and Monreal, while Intensity 2 was felt in Aroroy, Baleno and San Pascual in Masbate; Allen, San Isidro and Victoria in Northern Samar, and Calbayog City in Samar.

The second quake of magnitude-3.9 occurred at 6:40 a.m. and its epicenter was located 12 km north of Masbate City.

The quake was felt at Intensity 3 in Masbate City and San Fernando, and Intensity 2 in Mobo and Monreal towns.

The third quake, a magnitude-3.2, occurred at 7:07 a.m. Its epicenter was located 14 km north of Masbate City.

The quake was felt at Intensity 3 in Masbate City and Intensity 2 in San Fernando town.

Phivolcs said the temblors were not expected to cause damage, but these may generate aftershocks.

- Bella Cariaso