

28 September 2023 Thursday



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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



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PH, Australia restoring coral reefs in WPS

By JOSEPH PEDRAJAS

The Philippines and Australia have joined hands in restoring coral reefs in several parts of the West Philippine Sea (WPS) amid various activities that have threatened marine environment in the area.

During a forum organized by Stratbase ADR Institute on Wednesday, Sept. 27, acting Australian Ambassador to the Philippines Moya Collett bared ongoing efforts between

the two sides to restore life at sea as she showed videos of joint coral reef projects in the waters off Zambales and Palawan provinces.

Collett said such videos make her "proud and excited about the amazing work we continue to pursue together with the Philippines to protect our most precious marine environment."

Australia is helping the Philippines in its efforts to preserve marine **▶ 8**

PH, Australia restoring coral reefs in WPS 1◀

environment off Zambales waters by providing assistance to the Mead Foundation, the Southern Cross University, and the University of the Philippines Marine Environmental and Resource Foundation. They combine various coral restoration methods to maximize the health of the marine ecosystems.

Meanwhile, in Palawan, the Australian Institute of Marine Science is helping the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development with its reef monitoring by integrating in its routine an easy-to-use reef monitoring device the Australian team developed.

"Both of our countries are committed to promoting an open, secure and prosperous region where international law and sovereignty are respected. We are also committed to protecting the marine environment which is critical to supporting the lives and livelihoods of our two peoples," Collett said.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Wescom commander Vice Admiral Alberto Carlos welcomed Australia's aid. AFP is on the front-line of protecting the country's territorial waters and their marine environment.

He said this is the "perfect opportunity" to work with Canberra

as he noted the High Seas Treaty recently signed by the Philippines and Australia, among other countries, and the reported changes in the quality of marine life in the West Philippine Sea.

"After the AFP reports changes in the quality of marine life in our areas of responsibility, we would very much like to help our experts do their tasks of studying, researching, and finding ways to preserve and protect marine biodiversity. We need experts from the Bureau of Fisheries and perhaps the DENR, the UP Marine Science Institute and other similar institutions," Carlos said.

Stratbase ADR Institute president Dindo Manhit welcomed Australia's aid, saying maritime cooperation with like-minded states is "reassuring" for the Philippines amid the continued threats in its maritime domain.

"Fortunately, amid the traditional, non-traditional and evolving risks that are present in the region, like-minded states are finding the opportunity to work more closely together, driven by their shared values and commitment to the rule of law. The Philippines is right in the middle of these alliances and partnerships—a reassuring place to be, given the difficulties now besetting the region," Manhit said.



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Australia helping restore WPS coral reefs

By Rey E. Requejo

AUSTRALIA is helping the Philippines restore the coral reefs in some parts of the West Philippine Sea.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines Western Command (AFP WESCOM) and the Australian Embassy in the Philippines discussed the joint coral reef restoration projects to protect the marine environment during a forum on Wednesday.

The forum was entitled "Implementing a Comprehensive Philippine Maritime Framework to Advance the Rule of Law" and organized by the Stratbase

ADR Institute.

The partnership comes amid various activities that have threatened the marine environment in the waters, Acting Australian Ambassador to the Philippines Moya Collett revealed, as she showed videos of joint coral reef projects in the waters off Zambales and Palawan provinces.

Collett said such videos make her "proud and excited about the amazing

work we continue to pursue together with the Philippines to protect our most precious marine environment."

Australia is helping the Philippines preserve the marine environment off Zambales waters by assisting the Mead Foundation, the Southern Cross University, and the University of the Philippines Marine Environmental and Resource Foundation.

They combine various coral restoration methods to maximize the health of the marine ecosystems.

In Palawan, the Australian Institute of Marine Science is helping the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development with its reef monitoring by integrating an easy-to-use reef monitoring

device the Australian team developed into its routine, the diplomat said.

"Both of our countries are committed to promoting an open, secure, and prosperous region where international law and sovereignty are respected. We are also committed to protecting the marine environment which is critical to supporting the lives and livelihoods of our two peoples," Collett said.

AFP WESCOM Commander Vice Admiral Alberto Carlos welcomed Australia's aid, as the Armed Forces are on the frontline of protecting the country's territorial waters and marine environment.

Carlos said this is the "perfect opportunity" for Manila to work with Can-

berra, as he noted the High Seas Treaty recently signed by the Philippines and Australia, among other countries, and the reported changes in the quality of marine life in the West Philippine Sea.

"After the AFP reports changes in the quality of marine life in our areas of responsibility, we would very much like to help our experts do their tasks of studying, researching, and finding ways to preserve and protect marine biodiversity," he said.

"We need experts from the Bureau of Fisheries and perhaps the DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources), the UP Marine Science Institute, and other similar institutions," Carlos said.



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FORGING SOLUTIONS

AUSSIE, PH REEF PROJECTS CAN INCLUDE ROZUL, ESCODA

By Jacob Lazaro
@INQjacobreports

After the positive results of Australia's coral reef projects in Zambales, Pangasinan and Palawan, the acting head of Australia's mission in the Philippines said it may be possible to expand the two country's marine program to include Rozul Reef in the West Philippine Sea.

"There's no specific plan for that at the moment," said Moya Collett, Canberra's acting head of mission in the Philippines. "But I think there's potential for us to do that through our existing marine cooperation program."

"I think there's potential for it because we're doing a lot of things, but two things in particular for reef restoration and also monitoring of marine environment as a whole," Collett said at a forum on Wednesday.

Canberra has led coral reef restoration projects in Pangasinan, Zambales and Palawan employing technologies used in preserving the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, and they have yielded great results, Collett added.

Collett said large areas of coral reefs have been restored and the newly grown corals have the potential to be "more climate resilient" and bolster the return of

fish to reef systems that were earlier found to have died.

When asked if the embassy is considering expanding the program to Rozul, Collett said "so we recently handed equipment to the Philippines. Some of them for monitoring. So I think there's potential to do that more broadly."

Continuing destruction

The possibility of doing a similar project in Rozul Reef was raised after the Philippine Coast Guard reported early this month that a fleet of Chinese vessels was spotted at Rozul Reef and Escoda Shoal in the eastern part of the Spratly Islands and videos later showed that the coral in the two reefs were totally destroyed.

Jay Batongbacal, director of the University of the Philippines Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea, pointed out that since 2012, satellite imagery has shown continuing destruction in the West Philippine Sea believed to be linked to China's artificial island-building within the Philippines's 370-kilometer exclusive economic zone.

He estimated that over 5 square km (500 hectares) in Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal had been destroyed between 2012 and 2015 alone. But he said, there is a need "to quantify and evaluate" the full extent of the damage. INQ



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Australia helps PH restore coral reefs

AUSTRALIA is helping the Philippines restore damaged coral reefs in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) to protect the marine environment in the area, acting Australian Ambassador to the Philippines Dr. Moya Collett said.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines Western Command (AFP Wescom) and the Australian Embassy in Manila have discussed the joint coral reef restoration projects.

AFP Wescom chief Vice Admiral Alberto Carlos said this is the "perfect opportunity" to work with Australia, noting the recently signed treaty and the reported changes in the quality of marine life in the WPS.

Collett welcomed the Philippines and Australia's recent signing of the United Nations High Seas Biodiversity Treaty, which aims to protect the oceans. "This will help create marine protected areas to preserve our precious marine resources," she said.

"As the marine ecosystem in the West Philippine Sea affects not just the food chain and food source of the Philippines but also that of many countries, then it would be wise to put all of our expertise together to find solutions to this very grave

problem of marine life destruction and degradation," Carlos said.

During a forum organized by the Stratbase ADR Institute on Wednesday, Collett showed videos of the Philippines and Australia's joint coral reef projects in Zambales and Palawan.

"Watching these videos makes me proud and excited about the amazing work we continue to pursue together with the Philippines to protect our most precious marine environment, as well as our broader work in promoting a region that is open, secure and prosperous for ourselves and future generations," Collett said.

Stratbase ADR Institute President Dindo Manhit said maritime cooperation with like-minded states such as Australia is "reassuring" to the Philippines amid continued threats in its maritime domain.

"Fortunately, amid the traditional, non-traditional and evolving risks that are present in the region, like-minded states are finding the opportunity to work more closely together, driven by their shared values and commitment to the rule of law," he said.

The Philippines, Manhit said, "is right in the middle of these alliances and partnerships - a reassuring place to

be, given the difficulties now besetting the region."

Collett said that the Mead Foundation, the Southern Cross University, and the University of the Philippines Marine Environmental and Resource Foundation are working together to restore coral reefs in Zambales with the help of the Australian government.

They combine various coral restoration methods to maximize the health of marine ecosystems.

In Palawan, the Australian Institute of Marine Science is helping the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development with its reef monitoring by integrating into its routine an easy-to-use reef monitoring device the Australian team developed.

When used with its accompanying cloud service, users of the reef monitoring device can get real-time reports that help reef management.

"Both of our countries are committed to promoting an open, secure and prosperous region where international law and sovereignty are respected. We are also committed to protecting the marine environment, which is critical to supporting the lives and livelihoods of our two peoples," Collett said.

BERNADETTE E. TAMAYO



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Sustainable progress through responsible mining

As the fifth most mineralized country in the world, the Philippines' vast wealth of resources offers an extraordinary opportunity for mining to emerge as a catalyst for economic growth. However, this industry's complete potential remains largely untapped. Persistent challenges, such as regulatory and policy issues, environmental concerns, and safety issues, have hindered the growth of the domestic mining sector, limiting its contribution to the economy.

Historically, mining has been overlooked in terms of its contribution and economic importance. Nonetheless, it

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has consistently played a crucial role in upholding the nation's economic stability, particularly during the global pandemic. Mining emerged as one of the most robust and least affected industries even amidst the slowdown that affected the rest of the world.

Statistics from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) reveal that employment in the mining sector grew from an estimated 180,000 in 2020 to 208,000 by the end of 2022 despite widespread restrictions that paralyzed business activities across various industries.

Latest data from MGB also showed that metal production in the first six months of this year increased by 8.06 percent to P123.07 billion, spurred by robust gold and nickel output.

Today, as the world increasingly pivots towards clean and green technologies, the mining industry is presented with exciting opportunities, driven by the growing demand for nickel and lithium.

Recent reports indicate that the growing demand for electric vehicle (EV) batteries has instilled confidence among Philippine nickel producers who are now anticipating a significant upswing in raw nickel mining.

Demand for minerals is expected to be sustained, with new technologies driving digitalization, economic growth, and social development across the world. This global shift highlights an urgent opportunity to further develop our local mining industry.

During the 2023 Mining Conference, Philex Mining chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan (MVP) put forward a compelling case for the advancement of the mining industry as he emphasized the sector's importance in promoting sustainability through the promotion of green technologies.

According to MVP, "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 '50s and '60s, and the export boom in the '70s and '80s. This time we cannot miss this bus yet again, with our available mineral resource base."

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

Trade and Industry Secretary Alfredo Pascual also underscored mining sector's significance in fostering economic growth, acknowledging the government's efforts to bolster the green metals sector.

"There is a tremendous opportunity to use the extractive industry's potential to propel long-term economic growth. Philippine companies have several opportunities in mining and mineral processing," he said.

Mining holds the potential to stimulate economic expansion, foster job creation within local communities, and emerge as a substantial revenue stream for the government through taxation of mining companies.

Given the abundance of opportunities in the industry, it would be a disservice to our nation to shun mining due to its challenges and risks. Instead, we should seek ways and means to responsibly and sustainably utilize our mineral resources.

As MVP emphasized: "Mining is not the enemy, but poverty is. The most damaging myth in which our industry must contend with is the idea that we must choose between sustainability and mining. We should forge ahead together as one industry, in unity, in strength, and do the right things for our people and for our planet."

Realizing the full potential of our mining industry in a sustainable and responsible manner requires the collaboration of all stakeholders, including the government, private sector, and local communities.

Beyond infrastructure development to maximize economic benefits, the mining industry should also evolve to address criticisms, such as safety, labor practices, as well as environmental impact. A holistic approach to the development of the mining industry is necessary to achieve the collective benefit sustainably and to ensure that the next generation can gain from it as well.

All opportunities come with responsibilities. In any industry, realizing the full potential of an opportunity always comes with risks – that, if approached sustainably, can lead to shared benefits for all.

At the end of the day, it is value creation that both government and the private sector should always prioritize. As a result, economic growth, job generation, and improvement in lives cannot be far behind.

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House okays budget bill, some CIFs realigned

By JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ
X @joveemarie

THE House of Representatives went on a congressional break on Wednesday with the final approval of the proposed P5.768-trillion General Appropriations Act and all 20 priority bills of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (Ledac).

Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez said the approval of the 2024 national budget reflects the House's commitment to the welfare of Filipinos and their enduring pursuit of a more prosperous and equitable nation.

"When we passed the 2024 [national budget], our goal was to give comfort to the lives of our people. I am confident that the budget we passed will not only help to improve the condition of Filipinos. This is also the key to our continuous rise towards a better future," the Speaker said in his speech before adjourning the session.

Romualdez said the budgeting process was marked by rigorous discussions, particularly on confidential and intelligence funds, which the House scrutinized well to ensure accountability and responsible use. "We underscored the need for agencies to abide by the strict accounting and auditing rules governing the handling and release of such funds and emphasized the need to safeguard their efficient and responsible utilization," Romualdez said.

"As a result, the House was able to assess and evaluate the nature and use of these funds, correct any mix-ups, and allay public concerns regarding this issue," he added.

CIF realignment

APPROPRIATIONS committee chairman Elizaldy Co confirmed that the chamber will realign the confidential and intelligence funds (CIF) of certain civilian agencies, including the Office of the Vice President and Department of Education, to augment the budgets of intelligence and security forces addressing escalating threats in the West Philippine Sea.

"The country's safety and security are of paramount importance. To protect our territorial integrity from external threats, Congress is giving top priority to agencies directly in charge of protecting the country's safety and securing its borders," he said.

Following the unanimous decision of all party heads in the House of Representatives, Co said they will augment funding for the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (Nica), the National Security Council (NSC), the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

"As discussed, we will realign the confidential funds of various civilian agencies. Now is the time to give our intelligence community

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HOUSE OKAYS BUDGET BILL, SOME CIFS REALIGNED

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the means to perform their duties, especially in these pressing times when we're facing serious concerns in the West Philippine Sea," Co explained.

"The CIFS from other departments and agencies will be realigned with the NSA, Nica, PCG, and BFAR to boost the country's monitoring and operational capabilities in protecting our territorial waters and securing the rights and access of Filipino fishermen to their traditional fishing grounds," he added.

In response to media queries, Co said among those to be affected by the budget cuts are the OVP and DepEd, which were allocated a combined P650 million in confidential and intelligence funds under the 2024 National Expenditure Program.

"So far, that's what we have identified, but we're still looking at other sources," he said.

The House party leaders decided on this after the Chinese Coast Guard installed a floating barrier in Bajo de Masinloc or Scarborough Shoal off the coast of Zambales.

The proposed 2024 national budget is 9.5 percent higher than this year's budget of P5.267 trillion and is equivalent to 21.7 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

The education sector receives the largest allocation at P924.7 billion, including funds for the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education program, textbooks, and feeding programs. The Department of Education sees a 5.37-percent increase to P758.6 billion.

Infrastructure priorities include the North-South Commuter Railway System and Metro Manila Subway Project Phase 1. The Department of Public Works and Highways gets P822.2 billion with allocations for road improvement. The Department of Transportation's budget doubles to P214.3 billion, focusing on mass transport and rail systems.

Agriculture receives P181.4 billion, supporting rice, corn, and high-value crop production. The Department of Health gets P306.1 billion, while the Department of Social Welfare and

Development sees a 5.2-percent increase to P209.9 billion. The Department of National Defense's budget rose by 14.16 percent to P232.2 billion.

Earlier, Rep. Co also assured the public that the country's post-pandemic recovery will continue to be the national budget's main focus next year as it was crafted to support post-pandemic recovery and shield the economy from external headwinds and inflationary pressures.

"The key priorities of the 2023 GAA are still education, healthcare, infrastructure, social services, social welfare, and many others," said Co.

Co also said the P5.786-trillion national expenditure program for next year will include a budget of P1.748 trillion for debt payments and other expenditures that are automatically appropriated by law.

He said the general appropriations of P4.020 trillion are 9.5 percent higher than in 2023, while the P281.9 billion earmarked as unprogrammed funds are 65 percent lower than this year's amount.

The Philippines's outstanding debt at the end of 2024 is projected to reach P15.841 trillion as the Marcos Jr. administration is set to borrow more money to bankroll the national government's record-high P5.768-trillion budget for next year.

The 2024 budget, as submitted by the Department of Budget and Management, showed the expected national government's debt stock by the end of 2024 is P1.218 trillion higher than the projected P14.623 trillion of outstanding debt by the end of this year.

The 2024 national budget will be funded through a combination of 53 percent revenue and 43 percent debt paper issuances. Of the total P2.46 trillion in borrowings planned for next year, 75 percent will be sourced from the domestic capital market to better manage the debt.

For her part, House Committee on Appropriations Senior Vice Chairperson Stella Luz Quimbo gave assurances that macroeconomic assumptions adopted in the 2024 General Appropriations Bill have sound basis.

According to Quimbo, the 2024 national budget sets aside resources for programs critical to accelerating the nation's growth, such as investments in education, transportation, and infrastructure.

100% for Ledac list

ALSO, Romualdez reported the 100-percent approval of Ledac priority bills three months ahead of time.

Romualdez recalled that at the July 5 second full meeting of Ledac, 20 priority bills were targeted for approval by both houses of Congress by yearend.

He listed the 20 Ledac-agreed priority bills the House has approved, including two the President may sign into law soon: House Bill (HB) 7006, or Automatic Income Classification Act for Local Government Units, and HB 8278, or the Philippine Salt Industry Development Act.

The 14 others passed on third and final reading are: HB 6522, or Philippine Centers for Disease Prevention and Control Act; HB 6518, or Health Auxiliary Reinforcement Team Act; HB 6452, or Virology and Vaccine Institute of the Philippines Act; HB 6687, or Instituting a National Citizens Service Program; HB 6558, or Real Property Valuation and Assessment Reform Act; HB 7327, or E-Governance/E-Government Act; HB 6444, or Waste Treatment Technology Act; HB 6510, or New Philippine Passport Act; HB 7325, or Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers; HB 7240, or National Government; Rightsizing Act; and HB 7393, or Anti-Financial Account Scamming Act.

Also on Ledac's: HB 7446, or bill amending the Bank Secrecy Law; HB 8969, or Military and Other Uniformed Personnel Pension Act; and HB 9284, or Anti-Agri-fishery Commodities and Tobacco Economic Sabotage Act of 2023.

The House also adopted Senate Bill 1846 as an amendment to HB 0004, or the Internet Transactions or E-Commerce Law.

On Wednesday, the House ratified conference committee reports on HB 6527, or the Public-Private Partnership Act, and HB 4125, or the Ease of Paying Taxes Act.



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Editorial

Flooding crisis demands rapid action

WHILE it may be an anecdotal observation, it seems a virtually universal one: flooding problems around Metro Manila are rapidly worsening. Areas of the city that have always been prone to flooding now seem to be rendered impassable more quickly and with less rainfall, and other areas where flooding has typically been a rare occurrence are similarly swamped by what we might consider a "normal" rainfall. The government is not unaware of the situation, of course, but awareness and action are not the same thing. Something must be done to address the problem before it becomes truly calamitous.

The perceptible increase in the severity of flooding seems to have correlated with the rapid expansion of reclamation projects in Manila Bay, but government and other experts have dismissed the connection. The reclamation projects do cause numerous issues that need to be resolved, but the increase in flooding across Metro Manila does not seem to be one of them. Instead, the sources of flooding problems seem to be issues that have been long understood but have been largely neglected.

First, there is the unavoidable geography of Metro Manila, much of which is low-lying and criss-crossed by several larger rivers and numerous smaller creeks and drainage channels. Lying next to the bay, Metro Manila is the end of the journey for rainwater traveling down from higher elevations farther inland, so even under the best of circumstances, flood prevention and control is a constant challenge.

The circumstances are far from being their best, however, because of the degraded capacity of upland areas to absorb rainfall due to land-clearing and forest loss. Another large-scale contributing factor is the fact that most of Metro Manila, particularly the coastal cities, is actually sinking due to a combination of groundwater extraction and the sheer mass of manmade structures.

Another factor is the critical lack of green spaces throughout Metro Manila. Parks and forested areas help to absorb rainfall, controlling the flow of excess water into natural and manmade drainage systems and helping to replenish the already rapidly diminishing water table. Unfortunately, green spaces are most often viewed by developers and government economic planners alike as an unproductive use of high-value land in the densely populated metro area.

The sources of flooding problems seem to be issues that have been long understood but have been largely neglected.

Poor solid waste management is another contributing factor to flooding. The drainage systems in most of Metro Manila are outdated and inadequate, having been planned and built at a time when the city was a fraction of its present size and population, but they would nevertheless function better than they do now if they were not constantly obstructed by litter. According to a report from the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) back in 2021, 32 dump-truck-loads of trash are collected and hauled away every day from the city's 57 pumping stations. And this is only the trash that makes it that far downstream; farther upstream, there are many times that amount of solid waste obstructing creeks and drainage channels.

Finally, there is the persistent presence of informal settlements along most of Metro Manila's waterways. In addition to the unchecked water and solid waste pollution problems that these cause due to a lack of infrastructure and services, building along the banks of rivers and other waterways severely reduces their capacity to hold excess rainwater, causing flooding in the immediate area and farther upstream. The problem is only aggravated further by the fact that informal settlers are affected first by flooding and are most often the least equipped to endure it.

In recent weeks, there have been proposals from the government to build a series of underground drainage tunnels to help manage stormwater runoff, and this seems to be a good idea. However, that is a long-term fix. Some priority must be given to immediate responses that can be carried out by the MMDA, Department of Public Works and Highways, and other relevant agencies to alleviate the problem of flooding before the next tropical storm arrives. What we have been experiencing so far is merely serious inconvenience compared to what might happen in that event.



Over 3,000 volunteers join Bellevue ICC 2023

THE Bellevue Resort's International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) 2023 set new standards with an impressive turnout of more than 3,000 volunteers.

This marked the sixth consecutive year of the event.

The 5-star sanctuary and Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Green Hotel awardee teamed up with Plastic Free Bohol, Cebu Pacific, Miss SCUBA Philippines, Selrahco, Island Living Channel, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Tourism, Provincial Government of Bohol, local government of Panglao and partners from various organizations to protect and preserve the coastal ecosystems by removing nonbiodegradable waste from the shores of Doljo Beach, Panglao.

With a total of 1,218 kilograms, consisting of plastic bottles, cellophane, sachets, styrofoam, cans and rubber, 217 sacks of nonbiodegradable trash were extracted.

Every piece was diligently sorted and categorized by the Plastic Free Bohol team.

Expressing gratitude to the partners and volunteers, The Bellevue Resort emphasized the crucial role each participant played in making the ICC 2023 an extraordinary success.

The event not only set a precedent, but also inspired hope for a cleaner, healthier marine environment for generations to come.

"We extend our heartfelt thanks to our partners and volunteers from various organizations for their indispensable contribution. Their enthusiasm and dedication have left an indelible mark on



■ More than 3,000 volunteers join in gathering nonbiodegradable waste on the shores of Doljo Beach, Panglao. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

the success of the International Coastal Cleanup 2023, making it an event one for the books," The Bellevue Resort Manager Andrew Fernandes said.

With initiatives such as these, the Bohol community affirmed its commitment to preserving the natural beauty of its coastal treasures.



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Cebu Pacific Joins 2023 International Coastal Cleanup

CEBU Pacific (PSE: CEB), the Philippines' leading airline, reaffirms its commitment to environmental conservation by joining the 37th International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) on September 16, 2023.

The ICC, organized by the nonprofit organization Ocean Conservancy, is the world's largest volunteer effort for ocean's health.

This year, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said 35,000 Filipinos came together to clean up coastal areas across the country.

CEB contributed significantly to this effort by mobilizing a team of volunteers who worked with government agencies, private sector entities, academe, and civil society groups to collect and document waste at the Manila Baywalk Dolomite Beach.

"At Cebu Pacific, we go the extra mile—not just in the services we provide, but also in the initiatives we support. Our participation in the International Coastal Cleanup shows our enduring commitment to foster a culture of volunteerism among our employees and support larger efforts towards a cleaner and healthier environment," said Felix Lopez, Cebu Pacific's Chief Human Resources Officer.

CEB's participation in this year's ICC aligns with its broader corporate social responsibility (CSR) pillars, which emphasizes environmental stewardship. By taking an active role in events like the ICC, CEB upholds its commitment to promote sustainable tourism and support nation-building efforts for every Juan.

To learn more about CEB's CSR work, visit: www.cebupacificair.com.



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West Zone concessionaire Maynilad to increase its 'Plant for Life' tree-planting target by 133% this year

WEST Zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services, Inc. (Maynilad) aims to plant around 210,000 native trees in vital watersheds for its "Plant for Life" program implementation in 2023, a 133 percent increase from last year's target of 90,000 trees.

For this year's run of the Maynilad annual reforestation initiative, the company committed to plant 210,000 tree saplings and mangrove propagules over a land area of approximately 525 hectares at the Ipo watershed in Bulacan, Kaliwa watershed in Quezon Province, La Mesa watershed in Quezon City, and the Manila Bay coastline in Cavite Province.

"One climate change mitigation measure that will have a long-term and major impact on protecting our water sources is the planting of trees. It not only enhances carbon sequestration; it also increases the soil's water-retention capacity, thus preventing erosion in watersheds that could lead to high turbidity in the raw water supply," said Maynilad's Quality, Sustainability and Resiliency (QSR) Head, Atty. Roel S. Espiritu.

Espiritu said that intensified reforestation activities this year will focus on improving forest cover at Mt. Balagbag in Bulacan, which is now highly denuded and has to be restored.

Maynilad plants trees with the help of volunteers from private and public organizations—including its sister companies under the MVP Group such as PLDT/Smart—that share in the water company's concern for environment conservation. Maynilad also works with the Mt. Balagbag Farmers, local communities, indigenous people, and Bantay Gubat to sustain high survival rate of the trees



MAYNILAD Chief Operating Officer Randolph T. Estrellado leads other volunteers in planting a tree at the La Mesa Nature Reserve, Quezon City, during the recent kick-off ceremony of this year's "Plant for Life" program, the company's annual reforestation initiative in vital watersheds. For 2023, Maynilad aims to plant around 210,000 native trees over 525 hectares, a 133 percent increase from last year's target of 90,000 trees planted.

More than one million trees have already been planted through "Plant for Life" since the program's inception in 2007.

Maynilad is the largest private water concessionaire in the Philippines in terms of customer base. Its service area includes the cities of Manila (all but portions of San Andres and Sta. Ana), Quezon City (west of San Juan River, West Avenue, EDSA, Congressional, Mindanao Avenue, the northern part starting from the Districts of Holy Spirit and Batasan Hills), Makati (west of South Super Highway), Caloocan, Pasay, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas, and Malabon, all in Metro Manila; and the cities of Cavite, Bacoor, and Imus, and the towns of Kawit, Noveleta, and Rosario, all in the province of Cavite.



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Trusted Since 1948

The Manila Times



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Journalists from China visit Kaliwa Dam Project

A DELEGATION of journalists from the Guangxi Radio and Television in China visited the construction site of the Kaliwa Dam Project, a high-quality project undertaken by China in the Philippines.

The Kaliwa Dam Project was a crucial part of the Philippines' New Centennial Water Source Project.

It was a concrete gravity dam with a designed height of 73 meters and a 247-meter crest. A 21.9-kilometer water diversion tunnel was currently underway, which would play a significant role in controlling the project.

Ryan James Eisen, the representative of the Philippine owner unit of the Kaliwa Dam Project, said the China Energy Engineering Group Co. Ltd. (CEEC) had brought advanced

engineering technology and mature construction experience to the Philippines.

Reports said the Kaliwa Dam Project was located in a geologically complex area.

To ensure the smooth progress of the project, CEEC has custom-designed the Sampaguita dual-shield hard rock tunnel boring project. This machine was capable of traversing fault zones and fractured zones, and could excavate at a speed of 20 to 30 meters per day.

Once completed, it would supply 600 million liters of clean drinking water to the Manila area on a daily basis, which would meet the demands of nearly 6 million people.



Moreover, the project would greatly strengthen local transportation, would generate a substantial number of employment opportunities and would contribute to the overall improvement

of residents' living standard.

The project exemplified the immense potential for cooperation between China and the Philippines in the field of infrastructure.