



## NEWS ROUNDUP

30 JANUARY 2023 [ 08:00 am]

---

- DENR official: Creation of new posts will not cause duplication of functions
- OECD urges more green investment in Southeast Asia
- [Opinion] How about a Maharlika Green Investment Fund?
- Ripples of the global green movement in the Philippines
- EGCO-QPL, Korean firm to pioneer ammonia co-fired plant
- EU sees robust FDI inflows, trade with PH
- DTI discloses P629-b investment leads in renewable energy projects
- Seabed quarrying 'crowding us out,' say Manila Bay fisherfolk
- Marcos' state visit to France slated before June: envoy
- DENR fetes Finnish 'envi warrior'
- Asia's first steam field continues to power homes
- DENR pursues green recovery programs
- Digital readiness strategy for PH
- DOE to issue new ESS policy
- Government boosts program for agricultural training centers

### CCC IN THE NEWS:

- CCC seeks single-use plastics ban

## BUSINESS MIRROR

### [DENR official: Creation of new posts will not cause duplication of functions](#)

By: Jonathan Mayuga

THERE is no duplication of functions among current offices and officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)—a senior official of the state environment agency clarified.

## **BUSINESS WORLD**

### **[OECD urges more green investment in Southeast Asia](#)**

By: Luis Maria Jacinta C. Jocson

SOUTHEAST ASIA needs to undertake more green investment to minimize environmental footprints and promote sustainable development, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) said in a report.

### **[\[Opinion\] How about a Maharlika Green Investment Fund?](#)**

By: Romeo L. Bernardo

Following concerns expressed by business organizations, academicians, civil society, and a sagacious member of his own official family, the President wisely called for our Senators to exercise utmost care in their deliberations on the proposed Maharlika Investment Fund. (“Ang message ko sa Senado, suriin ninyo nang mabuti para magandang maganda ang batas natin [My message to the Senate is to study it very well so that our law will be very, very good],” Marcos told television journalists at Malacañang on Monday, Jan. 23.)

### **[Ripples of the global green movement in the Philippines](#)**

By: Angela Kiara S. Brillantes

The past years saw climate change, defined by World Health Organization (WHO) as “the change in climate in time due to human activities,” becoming a more intensified global issue, as well as a major factor in health risks. Former WHO Director Dr. Margaret Chan said that the climate crisis affects daily livelihood, including the social and environmental food determinants, namely food, water, shelter, and air. On top of that, natural disasters and health risks can be influenced by to climate change.

## **MANILA BULLETIN**

### **[EGCO-QPL, Korean firm to pioneer ammonia co-fired plant](#)**

By: Myrna M. Velasco

Quezon Power (Philippines) Ltd. Co. (QPL) of Thailand’s EGCO Group and South Korean firm Doosan Enerbility Co. Ltd. have cemented a deal targeting to pioneer ammonia co-firing at QPL’s coal-fired power generation facility in Mauban, Quezon.

## [EU sees robust FDI inflows, trade with PH](#)

By: Bernie Cahiles-Magkilat

The European Union, which is composed of 27-member countries, is confident of higher foreign direct investments inflow in the Philippines and robust trade surpassing pre-pandemic levels, but stressed the need to do more to further boost the country's competitiveness.

## **MANILA STANDARD**

### [DTI discloses P629-b investment leads in renewable energy projects](#)

By: Othel V. Campos

The Department of Trade and Industry identified massive investments in the renewable energy sector in 2023 as more companies are transitioning to cleaner power sources.

## **PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER**

### [Seabed quarrying 'crowding us out,' say Manila Bay fisherfolk](#)

By: Krixia Subingsubing and Mariejo S. Ramos

(First of two parts)

MANILA, Philippines — Before daybreak, Edwin Rosales, 33, would set out for Manila Bay to find the best spots to cast his net for “alubaybay,” a variety of sardines and a major income-earner in his coastal village in Limay, Bataan province, a supplier of “tuyo” (dried fish) for markets in Metro Manila.

## **PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY**

### [Marcos' state visit to France slated before June: envoy](#)

By: Joyce Ann L. Rocamora

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. is expected to visit France before the end of June 2023, French Ambassador to the Philippines Michele Boccoz said Friday.

## **SUNSTAR**

### **[DENR fetes Finnish 'envi warrior'](#)**

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has recognized the untiring effort of a Finnish in helping maintain cleanliness at the boulevard of Dipolog City, Zamboanga del Norte.

## **THE MANILA TIMES**

### **[Asia's first steam field continues to power homes](#)**

By: Rhaydz B. Barcia

ALBAY: Asia's first commercial-scale geothermal steam field, which was discovered 50 years ago in a quiet and small town in Albay province, continues to provide clean and renewable energy to 2.7 million homes in the Philippines.

### **[DENR pursues green recovery programs](#)**

By: Bella Cariaso

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga vowed to push for green recovery programs as the Philippine government prepares its portfolio of environmental projects for consideration under the eighth funding replenishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF-8).

### **[Digital readiness strategy for PH](#)**

By: Tony Maghirang

PUBLISHED by the UN Development Program (UNDP), the Digital Readiness Strategy (DRS) for the Philippines advances the use of digital resources and technologies for disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA) in the Philippines.

## **THE PHILIPPINE STAR**

### **[DOE to issue new ESS policy](#)**

By: Richmond Mercurio

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Energy (DOE) plans to come out by February a new policy on energy storage systems (ESS), a move seen to support further the development of renewable energy in the country.

### **[Government boosts program for agricultural training centers](#)**

By: Danessa Rivera

MANILA, Philippines — The Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) has launched three major initiatives for its nationwide network of training centers.

## **CCC IN THE NEWS:**

### **THE MANILA TIMES**

#### **[CCC seeks single-use plastics ban](#)**

By: Bella Cariaso

THE Climate Change Commission (CCC) and various environmental groups called on Congress to pass a measure banning single-use plastics as the country commemorates the National Zero Waste Month and the 22nd anniversary of the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act this January.

**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

## **BUSINESS MIRROR**

### **DENR official: Creation of new posts will not cause duplication of functions**

By: Jonathan Mayuga

THERE is no duplication of functions among current offices and officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)—a senior official of the state environment agency clarified.

In a letter to the BusinessMirror, DENR Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and International Affairs Jonas R. Leones also said that, as the new chief steward of the environment and natural resources, Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga has the management prerogative to realign authorities, as well as review and modify the agency's management structure in order to align it with the current administration's priority thrusts.

Leones was reacting to the broadsheet's exclusive report last Friday with the headline: "Loyzaga shuffles key officials, creates new posts."

The story was culled from a series of special orders from January 11, 23 and 25 that designated key officials to certain positions—some of which are newly created, with specific tasks and functions.

In effect, the reshuffle placed five officials in "floating status." They were assigned to offices with no specific task or functions.

Sources who spoke on condition of anonymity, meanwhile, said the relief of some of the officials' reassignments were justified, as some have actually been linked to recent controversies, and may actually face graft and corruption charges.

According to the undersecretary, the "multiple functions" of some officials mentioned in the report were merely rationalized to other officials in the Executive Committee "so that these are not concentrated in one office, and to allow faster and more efficient action and delivery of service."

The official added that the newly appointed officials are highly qualified for their designation, and have the track record in the field of expertise assigned to them. He cited the case of Undersecretary Carlos Primo David who has been part of the scientific community for many years, and has initiated and developed numerous successful

projects and programs in the field: “Such expertise to infuse science is aligned with the policies of the department.”

Leones also explained that DENR’s legal matters remain with its Legal Service, which is different from the Legislative Affairs.

“[Our Legal Service handles DENR’s case resolutions], while the Legislative Affairs pertains to the legislative agenda, which is required of all national government agencies,” he explained, as he cited that under Cabinet Resolution 16, series of 1988, all department secretaries are directed to designate their respective department legislative liaison officer to Congress, who shall have at least the rank of assistant secretary.

In a telephone interview, Leones added that while indeed the DENR has the Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB)—the principal research and development unit of the agency—the designation of a scientist in the newly created position of undersecretary for Environmental Science will focus on, as stated in the special order, the supervision of the Geospatial Database Office, and lead discussions in policy formulation, which is different from actual research and development work of the bureau.

He furthered that, while the ERDB is indeed the principal research and development unit, it has never been assigned to a supervising “asec.” or “usec.” who is, strictly, “a scientist.”

“Before there were assistant secretaries or undersecretaries assigned as supervising officials to the ERDB, but none of them are really scientists,” Leones pointed out.

He confided that he himself was once assigned as a supervising undersecretary of the ERDB—even though he is actually not a scientist, or an expert in the field of science.

“Again, there’s no duplication of functions. The new assignments were a result of rationalization,” the undersecretary insisted. “We believe in the wisdom of appointments.”

## **BUSINESS WORLD**

### **[OECD urges more green investment in Southeast Asia](#)**

By: Luis Maria Jacinta C. Jocson

SOUTHEAST ASIA needs to undertake more green investment to minimize environmental footprints and promote sustainable development, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) said in a report.

“Investment for green growth is central to the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and needs to be scaled up significantly to advance sustainable development in the region, and achieve national economic, social and environmental policy goals,” according to the report.

“Green growth means fostering growth and development while preserving natural assets, and ensuring that they continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being relies,” it said, noting that investment is needed in new technology, services and infrastructure that make more sustainable claims on natural resources.

The OECD said that growth and development in Southeast Asia has come at the cost of pollution and environmental degradation.

In urban areas, home to 50% of the region’s population, annual mean levels of air pollution often exceed World Health Organization limits.

“Manila’s air pollution has been linked to between 11,000 and 27,000 deaths in 2018 alone, according to a recent Greenpeace study, and affects 98% of the capital region’s 12.8 million people,” it added.

It also noted that the region was especially vulnerable to climate change, with the Philippines ranking fourth among the most affected countries in the world to extreme weather events between 2000 and 2019.

The OECD said that foreign direct investment (FDI) can contribute to the needed financial and technological resources to deliver green growth.

“Thanks to their multinational parent companies, foreign investors often have access to superior technology, skills and capital than domestic peers, which can allow them to deliver greener technologies, services and infrastructure,” it said.

“In some cases, foreign investors are greener than their domestic counterparts as a result of the more stringent international environmental standards that they are measured against. But foreign investors can also deteriorate environmental outcomes by offshoring highly polluting activities to countries with less stringent regulations and induce a race to the bottom with respect to environmental standards,” it added.

Governments should prioritize making their business environment more investor-friendly, according to the report.

“Uncertainty and unpredictability are among the greatest barriers to green investment. Too often the reason governments fail to attract green investment is due to the lack of an enabling environment for investment. Green investors are no different than any other in requiring a stable, predictable, and transparent investment environment in which to identify bankable projects,” the OECD said.

“Thus, efforts to mobilize green investment will fail to meet their intended target unless governments ensure a regulatory climate that provides investors with fair treatment and confidence in the rule of law,” it added.

The OECD also noted that policymakers need to improve conditions for green investment by developing policies and regulations that “systematically internalize the cost of environmental externalities like carbon emissions.”

“At the same time, openness, stability, and fair treatment are not enough to channel private investment towards green growth and decarbonization objectives. In other words, policies conducive to FDI will not automatically result in a substantial increase in green or climate-aligned FDI,” it said.

It cited targeted financial, technical and information support and aligning investment incentives to climate goals to ramp up green investments.

“Technical support is a useful tool for reducing the environmental footprint of investments, building capabilities related to green technologies, and promoting green innovation and spillovers,” it added.

## [Opinion] How about a Maharlika Green Investment Fund?

By: Romeo L. Bernardo

Following concerns expressed by business organizations, academicians, civil society, and a sagacious member of his own official family, the President wisely called for our Senators to exercise utmost care in their deliberations on the proposed Maharlika Investment Fund. (“Ang message ko sa Senado, suriin ninyo nang mabuti para magandang maganda ang batas natin [My message to the Senate is to study it very well so that our law will be very, very good],” Marcos told television journalists at Malacañang on Monday, Jan. 23.)

These concerns centered around both sources and uses of funds, and possible unintended effects. On the sourcing side, there is absence of any additionality since the funding will be coming from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), and Land Bank. On the utilizations side, there are the risks of improper/poor utilization, not just by this administration but beyond, in light of the Malaysia 1MDB mis-governance. It may also detract from the BSP’s focus on inflation, debt, and exchange rate management responsibilities over the medium term, and more immediately, raise perceived Philippine sovereign fiscal and financial risks among credit watchers (See <https://bit.ly/Maharlika20221205>).

Consulting highly respected veteran economic policy makers and financial experts, this column addresses some of those concerns by re-imagining the program to one which can attract generous grant and soft loans from donor countries, multilaterals and private sector investors, under an umbrella we can call the Maharlika Green (or Climate) Investment Fund.

What are the differences?

1.) Certain “Additionality”: Funding will primarily come from donor countries, multilaterals, and private institutions that have already pledged or set aside “COP” funding and would like to support the climate adaptation components of the Philippine economic program. (One comment on the Maharlika fund as originally conceived since there is no assured external resources inflow: “a dog eating its tail and calling it nutrition.”)

2.) Builds on experience: This is akin to what we had been doing during President Ferdinand Marcos, Sr.’s administration under the umbrella of a “Consultative Group” (CG) chaired by the World Bank. A feature of these CGs is a “pledging session” where Philippine authorities invite commitments from both bilateral and multilateral partners to

support Philippine projects and programs built around a theme. Examples of past themes were on infrastructure, agriculture, structural adjustment, and social development.

3.) Flexibility in operationalizing: There is much flexibility in translating these pledges into actual programs and projects, soft loans and grants, utilizing the various agencies of government as implementors but with the Department of Finance (DoF), the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and BSP providing the governance framework under the Medium-Term Public Investment Program/ICC/etc. This will also address the concerns about provisions in the bill that exempt a centralized fund from usual fiduciary safeguards.

4.) Leveraging on a global concern: The unifying theme we can present this time around that can potentially attract generous support could be “Climate Change Adaption and Mitigation” since the Philippines will be greatly affected by strong typhoons or droughts. This is a matter of climate justice since we only contribute 0.3% of carbon emissions even as we bear a disproportionately heavy burden from historic and continuing environmental damage wrought by the bigger, richer, more industrialized countries.

The recent COP 27 (UN Climate Change Conference) meetings provides a model for this. Indonesia’s Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) will mobilize \$20 billion over the next three to five years, as announced by world leaders last November in Bali. Similar programs are being developed for Vietnam and South Africa ([https://bit.ly/ISSD\\_EnergyTransition](https://bit.ly/ISSD_EnergyTransition)). Much of the funding will go towards the early retirement of coal plants.

According to Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla who I consulted on this, these countries have state-owned and vertically integrated power sectors, not private and market driven like in the Philippines. Thus, a JETP for the Philippines has to make business sense to the private sector. This makes it a little more difficult to coordinate but may also yield a richer menu of projects that can be supported depending on the interests of the development partner, and utilizing financial vehicles and institutions they are most comfortable with.

Examples of projects that can be supported by a combination of grant/lending facilities are listed below.

a.) Transmission projects to enable full and efficient dispatch of renewable energy (RE) projects (e.g., in Negros island, Visayas-Mindanao interconnection). Connectivity is key. The country does not have a fully connected grid given its archipelagic nature.

- b.) A soft loan/grant facility to support/jump-start promising RE technology and RE projects in small and remote islands.
- c.) Support programs/projects like industrial forest plantations. There are at least 5 million hectares of denuded forest lands ripe for tree plantation that will help produce forest products, conserve water, generate energy, and mitigate climate change. This is also a viable employment program for the bottom of the pyramid and acts as a 4Ps supplement.
- d.) Financial support for retiring old inefficient fossil fuel plants but transition to LNG for a definite period.
- e.) Electric vehicle infrastructure financing.
- f.) Fresh water dams and storage; flood control.
- g.) Commercial tree plantations for coconut, cacao, fruit trees.

This is one approach.

However, if there is a preference for a single fund centrally managed and more commercially driven, the white paper authored by Congressman Joey Salceda, et al. has some merit: a Securities and Exchange Commission-registered corporation that can be publicly listed to attract private investors and multilateral institutions down the road. This was something I also had in mind when I wrote in this column space on Dec. 18, “A closer look at the Maharlika Fund” ( <https://bit.ly/Maharlika20221218>).

“... A straightforward way to address the governance concerns of critics is for government to own under 50% of the shareholdings, with the balance to be subscribed by multilateral organizations (the Asian Development Bank or ADB, the International Finance Corp. or IFC, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank or AIIB) and private investors. For example: 40% Republic of the Philippines, 20% ADB, 20% IFC, 20% private sector. By attracting other investors, they can multiply the size of what is now just a P100-billion fund.”

Where Congressman Joey and I would differ perhaps is timing: at what point to invite these parties. I would much rather that they are asked to participate from ground zero so that the Philippines can benefit from their rich intellectual and governance inputs early, before the fund falls into witting or unwitting bad form and habits.

An easy way to do this is to request either the World Bank's private sector window, the IFC, or the ADB's Private Sector Operations Department (PSOD), to provide a small technical assistance grant (no more than \$100,000), for a feasibility study. The starting point of that study needs to be a crystal-clear articulation of the objectives of the proposed fund and why these cannot be met using existing institutions and instruments, something that seems to be amazingly missing.

Romeo L. Bernardo started his professional life as staff to then Finance Secretary Cesar Virata in 1976, rising to become finance undersecretary, 1990-1996. He is a co-founder and trustee/director of the Foundation for Economic Freedom. He also serves as a board director in leading publicly listed companies in banking and financial services, telecommunication, energy, food and beverage, education, real estate, etc.

## Ripples of the global green movement in the Philippines

By: Angela Kiara S. Brillantes

The past years saw climate change, defined by World Health Organization (WHO) as “the change in climate in time due to human activities,” becoming a more intensified global issue, as well as a major factor in health risks. Former WHO Director Dr. Margaret Chan said that the climate crisis affects daily livelihood, including the social and environmental food determinants, namely food, water, shelter, and air. On top of that, natural disasters and health risks can be influenced by to climate change.

Climate change has grown further into a global alarm as it started impacting humanity, from social, environmental, and health aspects; and, in response, both the government and private sectors across the globe have been working to address this worsening crisis by developing green infrastructures and initiatives, such as climate and ecological activism, the use of eco-friendly products, and developing sustainable buildings, to name a few. These initiatives and more has been likewise evident in the country.

In a foreword in the Green Infrastructure Investment Opportunities (GIIO) Philippines Report published by Climate Bonds initiative in 2020, Former Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Commissioner Ephyro Luis B. Amatong shared that the Philippines has been subjected to many environmental challenges since before, becoming the most vulnerable when it comes to climate change. Additionally, the country has also been dealing with severe natural disasters, including massive droughts and floods.

As a result, Mr. Amatong continued, the Philippine government has strived to build a supportive and enabling environment to establish a sustainable market. With the economic effect of climate change at hand, the SEC encourages the increase of green financing in the market to achieve a more sustainable environment.

“While green finance is relatively new in the Philippines, the first movers in our market have been instrumental in introducing the concept to our domestic investor base and making other local firms aware of the potential for green finance,” Mr. Amatong wrote.

“The continued development of the green sustainability bond market is also supported by the Philippines whole government approach to sustainable/green finance,” he added.

Alongside these financial initiatives, the Climate Change Act, passed by the Philippine government in 2009, promotes climate resilience, creates a low-carbon economy, and strengthens the nation’s climate change position. Thereafter, many laws and policies were implemented to support and raise awareness of ecological issues and initiatives

Climate Bond Initiative's GIIO report further highlighted that as the country was struck down due to the pandemic, the main priority of authorities is to build back better and develop a more sustainable and greener tomorrow for all Filipinos.

Developing green infrastructure now becomes an opportunity for economic and ecological growth for the Philippines. As the significant demand for green investments and green infrastructure continues to increase, this becomes an opportunity for the country to build resiliency and achieve development to recover from the economic crises that the pandemic has brought.

The GIIO report noted that infrastructure investment and developments were executed by the Philippine government and public-private partnerships (PPPs), providing initiatives and climate change mitigation and building a greener future.

"As a top priority for the current Philippine administration, infrastructure development is being heavily supported and promoted in the Philippines. Currently, much of the Philippines' investment in infrastructure is being carried out through public funding and PPP ventures," the report read.

However, the country is still seen struggling in some aspects. For instance, among investors, there is a lack of awareness and understanding of green investments, making it difficult to develop future infrastructure and investment opportunities in supporting the country's goal to shift to a low-carbon economy.

According to the report, the lack of awareness and understanding of green investments can be solved by educating and promoting knowledge on green investments and green financing, which in turn will increase resiliency and help establish a more sustainable country.

The report also shared that the Philippine government has also been developing an action plan that prioritizes green infrastructure development, including timely environmental monitoring, improving waste management, increasing sustainable urban mobility solutions, and promoting resource-efficient and climate-smart practices and lifestyles.

The global green movement has been growing, providing more growth and opportunities for everyone. For instance, more green investments are happening lately because of the global trend of consuming green-labeled products. In addition, green financing is increasing in the Philippines. The government has been establishing national and regional policies that support the growth of green financing in the country.

“The Philippines has been increasingly exploring the use of green debt as well as equity instruments and has been expanding credit enhancement mechanisms and risk sharing options,” the report added.

On top of the global green movement’s impact on finances, the country is implementing eco-conscious initiatives. Diverting from reliance on imported coal, the government and private sector are investing in more renewable energy as an alternative source to help meet the country’s energy needs and goals. Low-carbon transportation modes are also starting to be used such as national and urban passenger rails, electric vehicles, and bicycle transport systems, which are seen to produce low or zero direct carbon emissions to restrain air pollution. Green buildings that are also beginning to help achieve energy efficiency and establish a safer environment, and the country has also been modifying older buildings to become more energy-efficient by adopting green building codes. Finally, as tourism starts bouncing back after the pandemic and the number of tourists is gradually increasing again, sustainability in tourism is becoming more crucial, the Sustainable Tourism Development Project has been implemented, where the Department of Tourism collaborates with local government unities, communities, and private sectors in promoting sustainable practices in the sector.

## MANILA BULLETIN

### [EGCO-QPL, Korean firm to pioneer ammonia co-fired plant](#)

By: Myrna M. Velasco

Quezon Power (Philippines) Ltd. Co. (QPL) of Thailand's EGCO Group and South Korean firm Doosan Enerbility Co. Ltd. have cemented a deal targeting to pioneer ammonia co-firing at QPL's coal-fired power generation facility in Mauban, Quezon.

According to Quezon Power, it inked a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the South Korean multinational firm "to study the feasibility of ammonia co-fired generation at EGCO Group's Quezon power plant in the Philippines to help reduce carbon dioxide emissions."

The company said the MOU "will support EGCO group's strategic plan to reduce its carbon dioxide emission intensity by 10-percent within 2030."

As explained, lowering carbon footprint in fossil fuel-fed facilities, primarily coal plants, emerges as the main advantage of ammonia co-firing in these types of electricity generating assets.

With most, if not all, energy markets globally now focusing on decarbonization to abate climate change risks, it has been specified that cutting back emissions through innovative solutions like ammonia co-firing may eventually thrive as viable strategy to turn thermal plants into cleaner power generating fleets.

That technology could complement other solutions being enforced in energy markets – including mammoth renewable energy installations, energy storage systems; as well as carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) which is also being advanced to commercial scale rollout.

Doosan, in particular, started last year its development of green ammonia dual-fuel boilers to be deployed for co-firing generation at coal plants, its partnership with KEPCO Engineering & Construction and Samsung C&T's Engineering and Construction Group.

Apart from the Philippine energy market, Doosan is also pursuing the same experiment on ammonia-mixed fuel combustion technology for thermal plants in Vietnam.

For EGCO Group, its Philippine subsidiary Quezon Power emphasized that the Thai firm is aiming for a business direction anchored on "cleaner, smarter and stronger" solutions to drive sustainable growth."

It added that such long-term strategy for its businesses in the region includes Quezon Power, and that has been cast with “the ultimate goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.”

EGCO’s carbon emissions reduction target is aligned with the Thai government’s aspiration to become carbon neutral by 2050 for it to clinch its net zero emissions target by 2065.

## EU sees robust FDI inflows, trade with PH

By: Bernie Cahiles-Magkilat

The European Union, which is composed of 27-member countries, is confident of higher foreign direct investments inflow in the Philippines and robust trade surpassing pre-pandemic levels, but stressed the need to do more to further boost the country's competitiveness.

EU Ambassador to the Philippines Luc Veron projected that robust bilateral trade will continue this year, surpassing the pre-pandemic level. "Indeed, open trade and investment are crucial to generate the growth and jobs," Veron added.

In terms of FDI, Veron said that the developments in the Southeast Asia region, particularly the Philippines, are seen with increasing interest in Brussels, the seat of the EU government and European businesses.

Veron noted that EU is "doing very well" in terms of FDI in the Philippines. He noted that investors would look at the positive factors in the Philippines such as being part of a fast-growing region and even growing than its peers, and a very young and growing workforce with a good level of education.

"So, if I'm an investor, I'm going to look at these," he said adding that most of the EU enterprises and even those in the European Free Trade Associations (EFTA) are composed of small and medium but which constitute very good potential for investments in the Philippines.

But Veron also emphasized saying, "I will not hide the fact that in our view, even more can be done for the competitiveness of the Philippines."

There are critical issues that are not addressed in the doing business, like the reliability of power supply, and the reliability of connectivity.

In addition, he cited the issue of justice or redress for investors when disputes occur citing the modernization of the delivery of Justice in the country as contained under Chapter 12 of the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028. He said that delivery of justice has direct link between the economy and the government.

This is important as the Philippines is engaging the world with the President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s visit to Davos for the World Economic Forum stressing its "It is very important to put the Philippines on the map."

Thus, the need to address other factors such as environment, climate change, energy and production.

Furthermore, the impact of the pandemic on global supply chain and the economic consequences of the crisis of the Russian war against Ukraine. He further noted that EU has recognized the need to better balance the risks of its supply chains and reduce dependencies on specific providers and markets to create more quality jobs.

He also cited the critical role of an open rule-based trade and investment environment and the role that these rules play in upholding the common economic model and ensuring well being

“And this is why the EU, its trade policy puts a strong emphasis on sustainable development,” he pointed out adding that this is a central pillar in EU’s bilateral relationships.

ECCP President Lars Wittig also said they are expecting “billions worth” of FDIs to come to the Philippines’s way, driving global competitiveness and economic development further.

Alongside the economic reforms, Wittig further stressed that “step-up efforts” such as creating green and resilient infrastructure as well as further prioritizing the wellness and education of the Filipino workforce, be also prioritized.

ECCP Executive Director Florian Gottein said “We are very bullish on the Philippines” as he cited the landmark legislations that opened up the economy further.

Gottein further cited the implementation of the Ease of Doing Business law, which is implemented by the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA). He urged to further strengthen the implementation of the law and enforcement, pointing out that “efforts not always trickle down to the frontliners in different government agencies.”

“So, we still up until now experience or getting feedback from some of our members that you know, some permits take longer than they actually should,” he said. Instead of coming up with other pieces of legislation, he urged the government to focus on the EODB law implementation to basically “roll out the red carpet instead of red taping.”

For his part, Norway Ambassador Christian Halaas Lyster also cited the important legal and policy reforms that have been brought in the Philippines.

“These reforms opened key economic sectors to foreign investment, modernize customs, and could have the potential to improve the ease of doing business,” he said. In particular, Norway welcomed the revision of the IRR on RE that if fully implemented and without restrictions can be beneficial to businesses and investors also from Europe.

He reported positive results of the recently concluded Joint Committee meeting between the Philippines and EFTA (European Free Trade Association) composed of the four small but rich states – Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland. The Joint Committee discussed economic issues relating to the bilateral free trade agreement implementation.

In particular, he noted issues on reimbursements of customs duties, recent developments in the Philippines regarding fertilizers, implementation of licensing requirements related to fish and maritime marine products, particularly exports of Norwegian salmon.

He raised that the new rules and regulations should be in accordance with the EFTA agreement.

Also discussed are issues under the trade and sustainability chapter, and the implementation or ratification of international labor convention as well as the Philippines domestic policies on freedom of association, child labor and climate change.

And from the Philippine side, reference was made to find this finalization of the tripartite approach roadmap under the ILO organization. Both parties also discussed sustainable development, which is a top priority of EFTA countries.

“Such an agreement with the joint committee will also help pave the way forward in ensuring that the Philippines as such will become also an even more competitive country in the future,” he said.

## MANILA STANDARD

### [DTI discloses P629-b investment leads in renewable energy projects](#)

By: Othel V. Campos

The Department of Trade and Industry identified massive investments in the renewable energy sector in 2023 as more companies are transitioning to cleaner power sources.

“As of Jan. 23, 2023, these leads are expected to generate investments worth P629 billion and generate 2,025 MW [megawatts] of power. To give you an idea, there are investment leads for floating solar sheets on inland water, offshore wind turbines and waste-to-energy projects,” Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual said over the weekend.

The agency said of the total investment pledges in 2022, RE comprised 50 percent of the investment proposals. Approved investment pledges at the Board of Investments grew by 11.6 percent to P729 billion last year from P655 billion in 2021.

It said that as of 2020, the domestic energy mix relied heavily on coal with 42 percent in installed capacity, followed by renewable energy with 29 percent, oil-based with 16 percent and natural gas with 13 percent.

Energy demand is expected to rise again as the economy recovers from the pandemic and the need for alternative energy sources is expected to further spike with the rise of the hyperscaler industry in the Philippines.

The BOI said building up of capacity and employment of energy-efficient technologies are necessary to ensure a stable and cleaner supply of electricity.

Based on the recalibrated Philippine Energy Plan 2020 to 2040 of the DOE, the sector’s goal is to chart a transformative direction towards attaining a clean energy future. PEP 2020 to 2040 is the second comprehensive energy blueprint supporting the government’s long-term vision known as Ambisyon Natin 2040.

The BOI said the country would shift to greener and sustainable initiatives to reduce greenhouse emissions and in compliance with the Glasgow Climate Pact to reduce coal use and cut carbon emissions.

“We are continuously pursuing studies on the different energy, fuel and technology options. The feasibility of nuclear energy is also being explored that we now talk about digital infrastructure,” Pascual said.

The big drivers for 2022 investments included power, particularly renewable energy accounting for 50 percent of approved investments; information and communication projects such as data centers and telco towers at 28 percent; and mass housing and transportation and storage including logistics and cold chain facilities.

## PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

### [Seabed quarrying ‘crowding us out,’ say Manila Bay fisherfolk](#)

By: Krixia Subingsubing and Mariejo S. Ramos

(First of two parts)

MANILA, Philippines — Before daybreak, Edwin Rosales, 33, would set out for Manila Bay to find the best spots to cast his net for “alubaybay,” a variety of sardines and a major income-earner in his coastal village in Limay, Bataan province, a supplier of “tuyo” (dried fish) for markets in Metro Manila.

Having learned the ways of the sea from his father and grandfather, Rosales remembered a time when he didn’t have to go far in his motorboat for a good catch within Limay’s local waters. But in recent years he had been forced to venture farther out to Bulacan or Cavite provinces, with the haul getting smaller and paying little for the extra effort.

He and other longtime fishermen in the village agreed that the dwindling yield may be due to overfishing. But recently another, more disturbing factor emerged.

In Cavite, a number of large vessels had entered the old fishing grounds, dredging the seafloor and filling their bellies with wet sand, before sailing off and leaving a wrecked marine ecosystem in their wake.

On at least two occasions, Rosales said, the dredgers “ran over my net because I couldn’t get out of their way fast enough.”

#### **‘Evil twins’**

“Before they arrived, we were free to fish there. The sadder part was that they chose the spots that were known to be hatching grounds,” he added. “Now that they have mined those areas, we think the fish have left.”

Fisherfolk and environmental advocates blamed Rosales’ plight on what they considered the “evil twins” now doing damage on Manila Bay away from public gaze: quarrying and reclamations.

They noted an increase in seabed mining activities — or the extraction of mud, silt, and sand from the seafloor — since April 2021 after then President Rodrigo Duterte lifted

the nine-year moratorium on mineral agreements, undoing Executive Order No. 79 that was issued during the Benigno Aquino III presidency.

According to the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB), dredging operations in various areas of the bay currently cover about 13,530 hectares.

The EMB confirmed two ongoing operations in the bay, both in the coastal waters of Cavite: the San Nicolas Shoal Seabed Quarry Project of VIL Mines Inc. (active since 2022 and covering some 8,530 ha), and the Seabed Quarry Project of the Philippine Reclamation Authority (beginning in 2021 and covering 5,000 ha).

### **Crowded out**

In Limay, Bataan, Cargon Mining Corp. applied for a permit in 2020 to extract some 77 million tons of sand, according to the bureau.

The following year, however, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) denied Cargon's application for area clearance, as well as that of 12 other companies. In rejecting them, the bureau said it "cannot simply dismiss the potential adverse impacts of seabed quarrying on fisheries."

"Further degradation [of] fisheries habitats in Manila Bay and the rest of our fishing grounds will surely result in depletion in fisheries biodiversity," the BFAR explained.

Aware of the BFAR rejections, Rosales and his colleagues were thus puzzled by the continued presence of dredgers in the bay.

They were not being "territorial," he said. "We share our area and we don't bar others from coming here; as long as you are a fisherman you can partake of what the sea can offer."

"But because of the quarrying, the reclamations, it's getting crowded here... So many businesses are crowding us out of the bay," said Rosales, who heads the local chapter of the fisherfolk group Pangisda.

### **Minimizing impact**

In an email interview last week, then EMB Director William Cunado said the agency allowed the quarrying operations of VIL Mines and the PRA since they had complied with the requirement to introduce "mitigating measures," like the installation of silt

curtains and oil spill arresters to control pollution, and the establishment of buffer zones along the coastline and nearshore seabeds.

According to the environmental impact statements (EIS) submitted by the VIL and PRA to the EMB, the filling materials extracted by both operations were intended for government reclamation projects, including the 265-ha Pasay Reclamation Project near the SM Mall of Asia complex and the new international airport planned in Taliptip, Bulacan.

In its EIS, a copy of which was obtained by the Inquirer, VIL Mines also promised to keep off valuable fishing grounds and implement “social development and management plans” to provide alternative sources of livelihood for any displaced fishermen.

The company also said it would set aside P115 million to fund livelihood, educational and health programs for the affected coastal communities.

### **No replacement**

But for the fisherfolk of Limay, those promised programs offered little assurance and could not supplant their way of life.

Angelo Dula, 39, said he could no longer go to some of his usual fishing areas near Malabon City, Cavite and Bulacan since the quarrying started. Many of those areas, he said, were known hatching grounds for sardines and threadfin bream (“bisugo”).

Like Rosales, Dula said he had encountered the dredging vessels up close when they dislodged his nets and laid his day’s work to waste. (Most Limay fishermen use gillnets, locally known as “panyo,” which cost around P6,000 per set.)

“They would just run over our nets like they own the sea; they don’t care at all,” he said. “They don’t even try to avoid them.”

Elpidio dela Cruz, another local fisherman, said the disturbed sediment could cling to their nets “like snot and it’s not easy to remove.”

### **Risk of red tide**

Quarrying basically leaves the seafloor too muddy for fish to stay, said Fernando Siringan, a marine scientist from the University of the Philippines-Marine Science Institute (UPMSI).

Scooping out the sand could also release “dormant cysts of red tide species” that were already embedded harmlessly in the seabed, he said. In the right conditions, the cysts could reproduce and repopulate the water surface, causing algal blooms that are toxic to marine life.

“These are the kinds of considerations that should have been measured and weighed against the benefits of scraping the seabed,” Siringan said. “Because the consequences would not just affect the communities in offshore Bataan but everybody using Manila Bay.”

Gloria Estenzo-Ramos, vice president of the marine conservationist group Oceana Philippines, added: “We know that if you do seabed quarrying, you’re destroying what’s there. There should be transparency but we’re not seeing any of that.”

### **Since the 1970s**

But the worst effects of seabed mining may be too subtle or incremental to be immediately seen and felt.

Siringan said the coastal erosion currently taking place in Cavite may be traceable to seabed mining in San Nicolas dating back to the 1970s. A UPMSI study touching on this correlation is in progress.

Materials obtained from quarrying activities during the period were used for reclamation projects covering wide swathes of Manila Bay, including areas that now host the Manila Film Center, the Folk Arts Theater and the Rizal Park, among others, he said.

Communities near reclaimed or quarried areas should be aware that as the water becomes deeper because of the extractions, waves can penetrate coastlines with their “full energy,” making the local population more vulnerable to the impact of typhoons, which are then amplified by climate change, he added.

## PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

### Marcos' state visit to France slated before June: envoy

By: Joyce Ann L. Rocamora

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. is expected to visit France before the end of June 2023, French Ambassador to the Philippines Michele Boccoz said Friday.

The envoy said Malacañang has accepted French President Emmanuel Macron's invitation and agreed to conduct the state visit within the first half of the year.

Paris and Manila are currently working on the trip's deliverables, which could include agreements on creative industries, film co-production, and information and communications technology (ICT), among others.

A high-level political consultation is scheduled on March 8 to further discuss the areas of cooperation that would be discussed between the two leaders.

Boccoz said the priority areas are food security, energy, maritime security, climate change, and biodiversity, including people-to-people ties.

She said France is also "very interested" in facilitating contacts between Filipino and French investors.

"There's a lot of interest so we hope that we might have more concrete plans before the time of the visit," she said.

"(The invite has been accepted) it's just a matter of schedule.)"

## SUNSTAR

### DENR fetes Finnish 'envi warrior'

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has recognized the untiring effort of a Finnish in helping maintain cleanliness at the boulevard of Dipolog City, Zamboanga del Norte.

Cidur Jalsadjiri, Zamboanga del Norte Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office chief, awarded a Plaque of Recognition to Somo Aaltonen, a Finnish, who is now residing near Dipolog City boulevard.

The awarding of plaque was held after the clean-up activity in identified rivers and creeks in Dipolog City in celebration of Zero Waste Month on Wednesday, January 25.

Julsadjiri said he noticed Aaltonen consistently picking up trash along the boulevard during his daily morning jogs.

It was revealed that Aaltonen has been doing voluntary work by collecting trash since 2014 after he accidentally stepped on a shard of glass in the boulevard.

Then and there, he began collecting glass pieces weighing from two kilograms in a plastic bag every day to cement sacks of plastic, diapers, and other non-biodegradable solid wastes.

On worst days, he would sometimes collect 30 sacks of solid waste.

Julsadjiri commended the foreign "envi warrior" for doing such selfless service in keeping the coastlines of Dipolog Boulevard debris-free for all the Dipolognon and a safe space even for children to play in.

Aaltonen, in his response, said the recognition is well-meaning for him as his service will be remembered somehow.

He hopes that this will encourage others to do the same to help maintain clean environment.

## **THE MANILA TIMES**

### **Asia's first steam field continues to power homes**

By: Rhaydz B. Barcia

ALBAY: Asia's first commercial-scale geothermal steam field, which was discovered 50 years ago in a quiet and small town in Albay province, continues to provide clean and renewable energy to 2.7 million homes in the Philippines.

The geothermal field has also been instrumental in the development of Albay, specifically in the remote municipality of Tiwi which was once considered as the poorest town in the province.

Mayor Jaime Villanueva said Tiwi transformed from being a sixth class town into a first class municipality in 1996. Tiwi currently has an income of over P200 million annually, including the internal revenue allotment (IRA).

Geothermal is the biggest industry in Tiwi and a major source of local employment.

The Philippine Geothermal Production Corp. (PGPC), which operates the plant, and its partners have been complying with the Tiwi First Policy which requires businesses to prioritize the employment of the town's residents.

More than half of PGPC's personnel, 58 percent, originated from Tiwi and 62 percent are currently residing within the town, according to the latest data.

Villanueva said the partnership between the local government and the PGPC resulted in the industrialization of their town, thus, helping develop the skills of the residents in construction, mechanical and drilling works.

The mayor said the operations at the Tiwi steam fields provide subsidies to 16 villages through the national wealth fund. This fund can be used to lower electricity rates by at least 80 percent.

PGPC also provides scholarships to students.

### **Birth of geothermal**

In 1962, a team from the Commission on Volcanology, now the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, spearheaded an expedition in Mount Malinao with the goal of harnessing the area's abundant geothermal energy.

The Geothermal Energy, Natural Gas and Methane Gas Law which, among others, promotes and regulates the exploration, development and utilization of geothermal energy in the country, was enacted in 1967. It was also in the same year that Dr. Arturo P. Alcaraz and his team first illuminated an electric bulb using steam-powered electricity coming from Mount Malinao.

Tiwi's commercial geothermal operations officially began in 1979.

At present, the Tiwi power plant, located at the slope of Mount Malinao, has an installed capacity of 234 MW, making it the third-largest geothermal facility in the Philippines.

Aside from the Tiwi steam fields, Bicol Region is also home to the Bacon-Manito Geothermal Power Plant situated in the Pocdol volcanic range, some 100 kilometers away from Tiwi.

Geothermal energy is abundant in the region which has several dormant volcanoes.

The geothermal fluid underneath the ground is tapped via wells and is sent through insulated pipelines to primary pressure vessels that separates steam from brine. The steam then travels through insulated lines to the secondary pressure vessels where it is purified.

The steam delivered to the power plants passes through and rotates the turbines coupled to generators that produce electricity. And through transformers and power transmission lines, electricity is then distributed to homes, offices and industries.

Guarding the geothermal field

PGPC public affairs supervisor Erwin Vargas said the intact forest cover and abundant source of water continuously fuel the 50-year-old geothermal field.

The Agta-Tabangnon Indigenous peoples have been tapped to protect the area that houses the geothermal field.

Arsenio Condono, the Agta-Tabangnon chieftain of Joroan, said the presence of the geothermal power plant in Tiwi is advantageous to their community, as their rainforests

and secondary forests are being preserved. Their livelihood and culture are intertwined with the forest, he said.

"We acquired scientific knowledge through the training of the PGPC and the government. So, we integrate our indigenous practices with these new learnings to improve our survival techniques in times of natural calamities," Cordenó said.

The geothermal forest reserve covers at least 17,661 hectares of land in the towns of Tiwi and Malinao. Vargas said the forest reserve is also home to many animals like wild boars, monkeys, eagles, snakes and several bird species.

"This is a good sign that our biodiversity is still good and protected. In Tiwi, Albay, the biodiversity is still protected due to the presence of geothermal," Vargas said.

He added the Indigenous community will be tasked to nurture newly planted trees within the reserve and will be given corresponding payment as guardians of the forest.

PGPC also replanted abaca within the geothermal field to help communities generate income, provided that they do not vandalize the facilities.

"We invested in comprehensive and integrated high-value programs and partnerships to promote human progress, sustainable development and positive change in our host communities," Vargas said.

### **Future of geothermal**

Geothermal energy represents 13 percent of the Philippines' energy mix.

Aside from the Tiwi plant, PGPC also runs the Mak-Ban steam field in Laguna.

The cumulative gross generation of Tiwi and Mak-Ban steam fields reached 142 billion kWh as of September 2021. This is equivalent to 264 million barrels of oil imports, and has helped reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by at least 56 billion kilograms.

The Aboitiz Power Corp. (Aboitiz Power), through its subsidiary AP Renewables Inc., is establishing the 17 MW Tiwi Binary Geothermal Power Plant Project within the 1.5 hectares of land where the Tiwi Geothermal Power Plant is located.

The town mayor said that during the early years of Tiwi geothermal operations, the plant generated at least 300 MW production but after 50 years, the generated electricity significantly declined to 115 MW.

When asked if the construction of a binary plant will boost the power generation in the country specifically in the countryside, Villanueva said the liquid waste or brine will be harnessed and used through the binary facility to produce another source of power before it will be reinjected into the wells.

Jeffrey Estrella, APRI president, said the Tiwi Binary Power Plant is a facility designed to extract the reconvertable heat from the geothermal brine that is processed in a closed-loop system. Through this process, no harmful gas or liquid is being emitted nor any waste products are discharged to the atmosphere.

The concept of recovering heat from the geothermal brine and converting it into electricity is a novel solution that improves its overall thermal efficiency.

Vargas also explained that the binary is dependent on the supply of brine from the steam generating system. He added the corporation is enhancing its existing wells and drilling new wells to produce more steam.

The 17-MW binary geothermal power plant is targeted to be operational by the end of 2023.

Mario Marasigan, assistant secretary of the Department of Energy, said the government is aspiring to develop and generate 100,000 MW of renewable energy by 2040.

The energy official said the binary geothermal plant will have a massive contribution to the power requirements in Luzon and in the Visayas.

"The capacity is not that big and will not solve the capacity and power requirement of the country, but it will greatly help out the supply of energy not only in Bicol but also in the Luzon grid including in the Visayas. So, this is a big contribution to our power requirement," Marasigan said.

Hopes are high when it comes to maintaining and improving power generation through geothermal energy, especially as the urgency to address climate change looms large.

This story is produced by Rhaydz Barcia as 2023 Journalism Fellow on Just and Sustainable Energy Transition of the Climate Tracker Asia in partnership with Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung.

## [DENR pursues green recovery programs](#)

By: Bella Cariaso

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga vowed to push for green recovery programs as the Philippine government prepares its portfolio of environmental projects for consideration under the eighth funding replenishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF-8).

The Philippines is allocated over \$52 million in funding support, the country's largest allocation so far.

Yulo-Loyzaga added that the country continues to face more complex challenges toward achieving ecosystem integrity, and enhancing climate and disaster resilience.

She underscored the importance of holding the GEF National Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue to develop projects that respond to the Philippines' environmental challenges and priorities.

"The 'healthy planet, healthy people' framework, as the heart of the overall global GEF-8 architecture, emphasizes the critical connection between humanity and the environment. Thus the importance of urgent environmental threats reduction and protection of our natural resources to improve human well-being cannot be overemphasized," Yulo-Loyzaga said.

She said the country values the importance of consultative process in designing integrated approaches necessary to address the intersectionality of development, climate change, biodiversity and disaster resilience. It also recognizes the value of a comprehensive risk management approach that integrates a system lens and optimizes the resources available to improve quality of life.

Yulo-Loyzaga gave her assurance that the Philippines will work with the GEF in strengthening national commitments and institutionalizing capacities to translate these commitments to meaningful actions to support sustainable development since the GEF-8 calls for a systematic and transformational strategy that responds to the urgency of raising global climate ambition.

Strategic programming and positioning directions

As a member of the GEF-8, countries are encouraged to move more of their programming through 11 integrated programs, including food systems; landscape

restoration; clean and healthy oceans; circular solutions to plastic pollution; elimination of hazardous chemicals from supply chains; net-zero, nature-positive accelerator; sustainable cities; greening infrastructure development; and wildlife conservation for development.

The multistakeholder dialogue was designed to stir discussions toward finalizing the Philippines GEF-8 portfolio in accordance with the GEF-8 strategic positioning and programming directions.

Implementing a whole-of-society approach, the projects under GEF-8 will be implemented by national government agencies, local government units, development partners, nongovernment and people's organizations, scientific institutions and the academe, and other stakeholders during the four-year cycle covering 2023 to 2026.

The GEF-funded projects are expected to realign private sector capital to achieve a wider scale and impact, empowering local communities to harness their resources and capacities to protect livelihoods, uplift socioeconomic conditions and enhance resilience.

Since 1992, the GEF has become one of the major driving forces supporting the country to achieve global environmental benefits embodied in various international environmental agreements.

At least 128 GEF-funded projects that are being implemented in the country have been approved since the pilot phase up until its Seventh Replenishment Cycle. These cover the five focal areas of biodiversity, climate change mitigation, land degradation, chemicals and waste, and international waters.

## Digital readiness strategy for PH

By: Tony Maghirang

PUBLISHED by the UN Development Program (UNDP), the Digital Readiness Strategy (DRS) for the Philippines advances the use of digital resources and technologies for disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA) in the Philippines.

The DRS draws from the findings of the Data Governance Study (DGS) organized into two components: first is to measure the institutional capacity of the Prevention and Mitigation (P&M) member agencies using the Digital Disaster Risk Reduction Maturity Model (DDRRMM), and second is to understand or "paint the picture" of the current digital DRRM-CCA landscape in the country by characterizing the flow of data and identifying potential gaps and needs in data-driven decision-making.

The DRS, composed of a three-pronged strategy for digital readiness, adopts the technology aspect of the DDRRMM and groups the business processes and enabling environment of the DDRRMM under governance, including a component highlighting people in the system. The latter comes from the findings that there is a significant opportunity to build and strengthen the competencies, capacities, and resources for agency staff and users within the DRRM-CCA ecosystem.

The technology component aims to bolster resources and improve the ICT infrastructure in the DRRM-CCA ecosystem, and integrate and adapt the DDRRMM framework and dashboard as a tool to monitor and guide the digital maturity of stakeholders. While the scope of the study emphasizes the digital ecosystem of DRRM-CCA in the Philippines, its overall framework seeks to provide a more comprehensive view and approach to the gaps and challenges, with technology as one of the three overall components.

One significant finding is that insufficient funds limit the procurement of software and hardware as well as the enhancement of skills and competencies. In addition, the study revealed that most respondents of the DDRRMM framework were not familiar with the relevant ISO standards.

As such, one of the central recommendations in the technology component is the establishment of a DRRM system with a centralized and interoperable data warehouse, which will require the allocation of sufficient financial resources to bolster the agencies current information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure. To achieve this, the DDRRMM Dashboard can be leveraged to support and guide agencies in improving their maturity levels across the use of digital resources and tools. This way,

government agencies cannot only direct their improvements toward compliance with international standards but also strengthen their coordination, collaboration, and alignment with one another toward this goal.

For instance, a cross-cutting issue for DoST-Pagasa, DoST-Phivolcs, OCD, and UPRI is that there is an insufficient implementation for computing and network infrastructure. This can be enhanced with additional resources for full implementation, performance assessment, and compliance with national standards.

All components (i.e., technology, people and governance) are geared toward working together to ensure that the proposed DRS can be sustained indefinitely despite being dynamic with multiple stakeholders with different mandates or objectives. Under each strategy, the DRS has specific workstreams. The key differentiator of the DRS is its holistic approach to addressing problems.

## THE PHILIPPINE STAR

### [DOE to issue new ESS policy](#)

By: Richmond Mercurio

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Energy (DOE) plans to come out by February a new policy on energy storage systems (ESS), a move seen to support further the development of renewable energy in the country.

“Based on the target timeline provided by our Electric Power Industry Management Bureau colleagues, the target issuance is on Feb. 14. Hopefully it can be signed before Feb. 14,” DOE Assistant Secretary Mylene Capongcol said.

Deadline for submission of comments and recommendations on the draft circular issued by the DOE prescribing the policy for ESS in the electric power industry is set on Feb. 3.

In 2019, the DOE issued a department circular that aims to introduce ESS technologies to serve a variety of functions in the generation, transmission and distribution of electric energy.

With the increasing influx of renewable energy plants, the DOE has found it necessary to enhance the existing policy and regulation to accommodate the development of ESS and support the renewable energy integration and grid stability.

The DOE said it also recognizes the applications and the benefits of ESS as an emerging technology in the improvement of the electric power system in accordance with the objective of ensuring the quality, reliability, security and affordability of the supply of electric power.

“With respect to renewable energy, in the course of processing all the applications for renewable energy, it has become more tedious if we do not have this kind of policy,” Capongcol said.

“So what we’re doing is come up with a single policy or clarify certain policies with regards to renewable energy because we now have renewable energy facilities that actually are powered or supported by ESS and there are certain questions, like what incentives do we avail or how do we treat the energy that is stored and dispatch from the energy storage system. So with that, I think with this, we will be able to have more clarity in the policy and even regulation,” she said.

The DOE defines ESS as a facility capable of absorbing energy generated from a renewable energy plant or from a generation facility connected to the grid or distribution system, and injecting stored energy when prompted, needed to ensure reliability and balanced power system.

ESS technologies include, but are not limited to, battery energy storage system (BESS), compressed air energy storage (CAES), flywheel energy storage (FES), and pumped-storage hydropower (PSH).

BESS is capable of storing electric energy electrochemically from which it is able to charge or discharge electric energy, while CAES uses electric energy to inject high-pressure air containers.

An FES, meanwhile, uses electric energy to accelerate a rotating mass called a rotor to store kinetic energy, while PSH uses electric energy to pump water from a lower elevation reservoir to a higher elevation reservoir.

“Again the purpose of energy storage system is to clarify and to make our renewable energy increase its generation and deployment in the grid,” Capongcol said.

“As we all know, the geopolitical happenings nationwide or worldwide has really manifested that we need to go more into renewable and to slowly meet those targets, energy storage system plays an important part in our power system,” she added.

The Philippines targets to increase the contribution of renewable energy by at least 35 percent in the total generation mix by 2030 and looking further at achieving at least 50 percent share by 2040.

## Government boosts program for agricultural training centers

By: Danessa Rivera

MANILA, Philippines — The Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) has launched three major initiatives for its nationwide network of training centers.

The attached bureau of the Department of Agriculture (DA) banks on the opportunities and possibilities of the ongoing technological advancements as it celebrated its 36th anniversary celebration in the past week with the theme “ATI LEADS: Innovate, Transform, Empower – Embracing Extension Modernization for a Progressive and Sustainable Agriculture and Fisheries.”

The ATI introduced the Unified Extension System Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Information System (UnExSys) which will be used for information management and harmonization of the agri-fishery extension services.

The system is seen to ensure effective and efficient resource mapping, planning, monitoring, and evaluation of ATI programs, projects, and activities.

Meanwhile, the institute bared its Agriculture and Fisheries Extension (AFE) Strategic Plan 2023-2028, which will serve as a blueprint for reframing the sector and transforming the country’s food systems to become more productive, efficient, sustainable, and resilient.

Created together with the National Extension System for Agriculture and Fisheries, the strategic plan comprises of four strategic objectives, namely, enhancing capacities of extension workers and farmer-leaders; improving competitiveness through agripreneurship; ensuring nourishment of farmers and their families; and strengthening partner institutions and primary producers.

To further empower its stakeholders, ATI also launched the new brand of the Digital Farmers Program (DFP) as it expands its services to increase mobile and internet literacy and introduce various digital applications and platforms for farm productivity and livelihood.

This is implemented in partnership with PLDT and Smart Communications.

The new DFP components will include Farm Learn or capacity-building; Farm Tech or package of technology; Farm Connect or linkage between farmers and digital

agriculture services; and Farm Seal or certification of Smart Learning Sites for Agriculture.

ATI also signed a memorandum of understanding for credit assistance for youth agripreneurs and commitment signing for the work and financial plan for fiscal year 2023.

Last year, more than 135,000 clients were served through over 3,000 training and other extension-related activities conducted by the ATI. These include training courses on agricultural production, specifically for rice, corn, high-value crops, coconut, livestock, and poultry.

The institute also focused on providing capacity-enhancement services to help address the effects of African swine fever, fall armyworm, and climate change. Its network also promoted the practice of food production in household levels through the Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture Program and training on food safety.

Farm Business School programs and other entrepreneurship training, as well as farm mechanization, postharvest, processing, logistics, and marketing support training, were held to level up farmers' skills and attitude towards agribusiness and the agricultural value chain.

## CCC IN THE NEWS:

### THE MANILA TIMES

#### [CCC seeks single-use plastics ban](#)

By: Bella Cariaso

THE Climate Change Commission (CCC) and various environmental groups called on Congress to pass a measure banning single-use plastics as the country commemorates the National Zero Waste Month and the 22nd anniversary of the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act this January.

A photo exhibit dubbed #PlasticFreePilipinasSaSenate was launched to drum up efforts to phase out single-use plastics.

Under the proposed bill entitled Single-Use Plastics Regulation and Management Act of 2022, the manufacture and importation of single-use products will be regulated by providing penalties, levies and incentives for industries and consumers.

"This measure will provide an ambitious yet comprehensive approach to solving the problem of single-use plastics, and support the development and use of more eco-friendly products and packaging. We will continue to lobby against single-use plastics and foster discussions on initiatives that advance real, demonstrable and lasting solutions to the plastic pollution crisis in the country," said Sen. Lorna Regina "Loren" Legarda, the main proponent of the bill who joined the launching of the photo exhibit.

The photo exhibit held at the Senate features a documentary screening of "The Story of Plastic" and "Ang Huling Plastic," detailing the problems brought by single-use plastics. It will run until February 2023, while the documentaries will be screened on February 2 and 9, 2023.

#### **Activities for awareness**

A Zero Waste Bazaar will also run from February 13 to 22, 2023, showcasing viable alternatives to single-use plastics from eco-friendly micro, small and medium enterprises such as Candles by Ilka, The Bamboo Company, Armari Organics and Sabon Express.

To cap off the monthlong celebration, a Waste-to-Energy (WTE) Legislative Forum will be held to dig deeper into the WTE issue.

The #PlasticFreePilipinasSaSenate photo exhibit was organized by the Plastic Free Pilipinas Project collaborators including EcoWaste Coalition, Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, Mother Earth Foundation, Greenpeace Philippines and Ocean Conservancy, together with the CCC and Oceana Philippines.

Earlier, Environment Secretary Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga signed the implementing rules and regulation of Republic Act 11890, or the "Extended Producer Responsibility Act of 2022." The law mandates large-scale companies to establish a mechanism for the recovery of their plastic packaging.

**=END=**