



NEWS ROUNDUP

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BUSINESS MIRROR

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JOURNAL ONLINE

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MANILA BULLETIN

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By: Argyll Cyrus Geducos

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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By: Armin P. Adina

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PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

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By: Azer Parrocha

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PTV

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SUNSTAR

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By: Charlene A. Cayabyab

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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

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[Experts: PH economy recovering but additional maintenance needed](#)

MANILA, Philippines — Significant economic improvements in the Philippines that have been felt in 2022 state that among the major economies in the region that released their real GDP growth, the Philippine economy posted the second fastest growth after India but faster than Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and China.

[Former UN chief calls for climate action over 'visions' at COP28](#)

By: Agence France Presse

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Climate talks in the United Arab Emirates this year should focus on action rather than visions, former United Nations chief Ban Ki-moon said during a visit to the oil-rich Gulf country.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS MIRROR

[Reduce, reuse and recycle your way to a zero waste life](#)

For many, the beginning of another year is the perfect opportunity to learn and develop new habits, which is why setting new year's resolutions continue to be a popular tradition. Some of the most common ones include eating healthier, exercising more, discovering new hobbies, and managing finances better. This year, why not make space for one more resolution on your list and try going zero waste for the planet?

Adopting a zero-waste lifestyle means minimizing the amount of trash an individual generates daily to reduce waste in landfills and the environment, which further contributes to global warming and climate change. It is also a way to help mitigate the solid waste crisis in the country as local waste generation is projected to reach 23.6 million tons in 2025 from 21.4 million tons in 2020.

Starting your zero-waste journey doesn't have to be complicated. In fact, it can be as simple as practicing the 3Rs: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.

Reduce

Believe it or not, this is one of the easiest ways to become zero waste—you just have to limit yourself from buying things that you don't need. When people purchase more items, more waste is produced and the demand to manufacture also increases, resulting in more impact to the environment. So the next time you're out shopping, evaluate first whether the items in your cart are truly worth the space in your home.

Another tip is to reduce unnecessary single-use items, especially plastics, to lessen one's waste footprint. They may be convenient to use, but that does not change the fact that they also largely contribute to the solid waste crisis at hand. Invest in reusable items instead. Fortunately, a wide range of reusable alternatives for almost anything nowadays, from water bottles to sanitary products, makes the switch so much easier.

Reuse

Instead of buying new things, use your resourcefulness and creativity to reuse and/or repurpose items that you have rather than just throwing them away. The possibilities are endless! For example, NESCAFE Gold glass jars make great containers for pens and other trinkets while KOKO KRUNCH cereal boxes can be crafted into gift boxes, bookmarks, and even drawer dividers. You can also give used goods a second chance

by purchasing from thrift stores and choosing to repair furniture, household items, and electronics.

Recycle

The waste we generate that cannot be reduced or reused will ultimately need to be recycled. Remember that the recycling process starts at home—it's our responsibility to properly segregate our trash and make sure our recyclables are clean and dry before collection. Make sure to follow your barangay or LGU's collection schedule for recyclables or if that's not applicable, you can also send them to recycling centers or look for the nearest plastic drop-off location nearest to you by visiting #PlasticDropPH.

Kitchen and garden wastes, on the other hand, can be composted to prevent them from ending up in landfills. You can either try backyard composting if you have the space or indoor composting, particularly the Bokashi method, and vermicomposting if you reside in a condominium or apartment.

Choosing to live a zero-waste life is not an easy task, but there are many communities both online and offline that can support you with this transition. More and more brands are also doing their part in enabling the public to become more conscious of the waste they produce and how to manage these properly.

Nestle Philippines, for example, is embracing its leadership role in tackling plastic waste in the country and shaping a waste-free future through its various initiatives that are inclusive and wide-ranging. Aside from constantly working to make its packaging more sustainable, it also empowers its consumers and communities to practice proper solid waste management (SWM) by developing educational modules, conducting capacity-building activities and supporting the construction of collection, segregation, and recycling infrastructure, particularly materials recovery facilities in barangays.

To mark this year's National Zero Waste Month celebration, Nestle Philippines and GMA Network are launching an online video series aimed to raise awareness about the 3Rs: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. This is part of the Kapuso at Kasambuhay ng Kalikasan partnership that aims to educate the public about our individual responsibility to the planet and engage them to be more actively involved in the advocacy for the environment. Don't miss it!

JOURNAL ONLINE

[IBP providing free legal aid to indigenous peoples to make ancestral lands as food production areas](#)

Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) – National President Burt M. Estrada talks to members of the press during the PCAFI-HAN press conference together with former Department of Agriculture (DA) Undersecretary Roberto “Bobby” Ansaldo representing Philippine Chamber for Agriculture & Food, Inc. (PCAFI) as its Regional Director for Mindanao.

President Burt shared that the IBP supports PCAFI’s vision and advocacy focusing on the IP Communities to achieve water security, climate change, credit access, and more. the Philippines, like many other countries, is facing skyrocketing food inflation due to supply issues and the high cost of fuel. There is a need to urgently develop our food resilience. While working on our food security, we should also ramp up our productivity so we become less reliant on imports. We have to push for agriculture and manufacturing supply chain-enhancing infrastructure projects. Given the importance of farming and fishery to our economy, IBP will provide free legal aid to IPS to transform portions of their idle ancestral lands into food production areas to ensure stable food supply amid global food crisis.

Mr. Ansaldo was the Project Director of the USAID program, “Inclusive Growth through Inclusive Business” (IGIB), that helped the Bukidnon Tagoloanon Tribe, as beneficiary of the project, create Bukidnon Tagoloanon MulaHay Ha Kabukalagan Agriculture Cooperative (BUKTAMACO) as their economic arm. 5 years after, President Burt M. Estrada is replicating the program in the IBP for more lawyers to help more IP communities be included in national growth and development.

Inclusive Growth through Inclusive Business (IGIB) is the flagship project under the National Legal Aid program with the objectives of providing IP Communities with an organization with a recognized juridical personality to deal with the government, the private sector, and financial institutions that is in accordance with their customary laws and traditions and maintaining and improving IBP’s socio-cultural relevance through the proper optimization of the “Rule of Law”.

IGIB provides the economic platforms for marginalized communities to capacitate them and give them better access government and non-government programs. The main beneficiaries of this project for this initial phase are Indigenous People communities in 3 project sites, covering 4 cooperatives in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao:

1. Luzon- Bataan
2. Visayas- Negros Occidental
3. Mindanao- South Cotabato-General Santos City

The project has already made significant gains, with the project site in Dinalupihan, Bataan, already receiving its Articles of Cooperation from the Cooperatives Development Authority (CDA) after only a few months of implementation and the project site in Don Salvador Benedicto, Negros Occidental having its application approved. The other project sites are expected to follow suit.

MANILA BULLETIN

[5 BURNING QUESTIONS: Miss Earth 2022 Mina Sue Choi on issue of carbon footprints](#)

By: Robert Requintina

Miss Earth 2022 Mina Sue Choi of South Korea is taking an active role in the protection and preservation of Mother Earth.

As the reigning Miss Earth, Mina says there's a big responsibility ahead when it comes to the promotion of environmental awareness.

As South Korea's first Miss Earth, Mina also says she's thrilled to serve as the ambassador to environmental protection campaigns worldwide.

"So far, the crowning moment seems as if it was only yesterday, so the experience is still very surreal. The crown is quite heavy and I know for a fact that the responsibilities will be heavy as well. I am excited for the challenges I will be facing this year, but I am very happy and grateful for the supporting community and the people I have around me," says Mina, a communication arts student, during an exclusive online interview recently.

Mina vows to set a legacy of beauty and responsibility during her reign.

"The moment I was crowned as Miss Earth marks only the beginning of my journey. I will do my best during my reign and I will continue to stay true to my advocacy and my values throughout this journey," the Korean beauty queen adds.

Mina advocates in promoting reduction of carbon footprints in cities with sustainable mobility and encouraging lifestyles that will help reduce carbon emission in our daily lives.

With the rapid rise of industrialization and urbanization, humans that live in urban areas will increase at an unprecedented rate. With cities already being 60 percent responsible for our greenhouse gas emission, the numbers will skyrocket as more people live in cities.

One of the greatest factors that contribute to carbon emission is transportation. Our consciousness plays a big role in this task. Finding alternative ways to reduce carbon

emission and making eco-friendly choices. Mina tackles further her advocacy in our online interview:

1) Your advocacy is promoting reduction of carbon footprints in cities with sustainable mobility. Why does it matter?

First, It is crucial to mitigate carbon footprint in cities because cities and urbanized areas account for the majority of the carbon emission. Thus, catalyzing and instigating the speed of global warming and irregular natural disasters/climate change. Unfortunately, the largest group that is most immediately affected by this occurrence is not the cities, but the developing cities and countries that have the least in-put in carbon emission. There is an unfair distribution of the consequences when it comes to the question, 'who is most affected by climate change?' Communities that do not have the technology in combating irregular natural disasters are faced with the most disastrous consequences. Secondly, there is no doubt or denial in the fact that more urbanization will be taking place in the next few years. Thus, As more urbanization takes place we are in urgent need of adoption of green technologies. Cities with the technology should share knowledge with developing cities and countries and set as an example for a sustainable economy. Climate crisis knows no borders, and as an international community, I believe it is us who Miss Earth's role to be in the forefronts, collect and knowledge-share across borders.

2) You also encourage lifestyles that will help reduce carbon emission in our daily lives. Share us tips on how to reduce carbon emission?

The good news is that we live in a transitional period. We currently live in a period where climate discussions have become the 'must have' talks. From international conventions, such as the COP, international communities are gathering to combat the current existential climate crisis. We are consciously talking, but I believe what really has to be tackled is the subconscious minds of the world. We need to embed the idea of being eco-friendly in our daily lives to truly make everyday changes. For now, small activities such as using your own tumbler, using less plastic straws, having occasional meatless meals, walking or biking close distance will make a difference. These may appear as such simple activities, but when these eco-activities become the norms of our lives, not long, we will live in sustainable ecological era, and the only matter in our hands is time and the heart to empathize with our mother earth.

3) What programs in your country – South Korea – that are related to the promotion of the reduction of carbon footprints which you think our government can also adopt?

There are many aspects we can learn from one another, but if I were to mention one thing I am proud of Korea is the country's recycling practices. Korea has one of the most organized recycling systems. In fact if a household does not correctly distribute their waste and trash, the government will fine them. The trash bags in your district would have a specific labelling and they can be bought in any local grocery shops. Distributing and recycling your trash has been such an embedded norm for Koreans that sometimes I actually get a little surprised to see trash all being thrown out in the same bin.

4) Do you think the issue of carbon footprints has reached a negative level elsewhere? What will happen if we take for granted the issue of carbon footprints?

Most definitely. Carbon emission released into our atmosphere raises the average surface temperature of our earth causing global warming and extreme weather events. As we deplete our natural resources and burn fossil fuels, the risk of threats are further increasing. Not only do they affect the poorest areas in the world, but also affect the harmony of the biodiversity. As mentioned before, while climate change affects every single person, it significantly and immediately impacts developing countries with the least amount of technology to protect themselves from irregular events; in fact, a lot of these countries rely heavily on natural resources. Today, we're seeing the tragic results of our reliance on heavy industrialization and urbanization. Cities such as Joshimath in India are sinking and we are seeing more cities disappearing at an unprecedented rate. If it affects the developing countries and cities, it will creep on the bigger, unexpected cities as well.

5) As ordinary citizens, how can we be part of the change?

Community involvement is crucial to combating the environmental crisis because not only does climate change affect every single person, but without a unified participation of people, we cannot change the entire system. It is not only about being ecological on a daily basis on your own, but it is also about influencing one another to be ecological as well. Today, we live in a social media based community. What we know and what we acquire comes a lot from what we are exposed to. I truly believe that we can utilize the medium we have and expose more of what we learn and believe in through media. Every person can be an 'influencer' and I believe this term has a bit more power and it can be used to do good in the world. My suggestion to many is to constantly use your platform to showcase the beauty of Mother Earth, the ecological activities you are doing, and even the heartbreaks you feel from seeing our lands falling apart.

JICA not involved in Davao City WTE project

By: Antonio Colina IV

DAVAO CITY – The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is not involved in the proposed construction of the waste-to-energy (WTE) project of the Davao City government contrary to claims made by various groups here, the agency's executive said.

In a statement dated Jan. 26, Ide Soichiro, senior representative of JICA Philippines, clarified that they are neither funding nor implementing the construction of the proposed WTE facility.

The official reaffirmed the continuous support of JICA for environment management, natural environment preservation, and other sectors towards sustainable, resilient, and inclusive growth.

The agency is determined to continue working with stakeholders to help the country address development challenges, he added.

He emphasized JICA's development cooperation is centered on integrated society efforts in addressing climate change issues. "We care for climate change issues."

State-run Chinese firm commits more investments in PH

By: Argyll Cyrus Geducos

A major State-run Chinese construction firm has committed more investments in the Philippines, mainly through public-private partnership (PPP), following the state visit of President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. to China early this month.

Communications Secretary Cheloy Garafil said this after Marcos met officials of the China Communications Construction Co. Ltd (CCCC) in a courtesy call in Malacañang on Monday, Jan. 30.

In a statement, Garafil said the CCCC proposed the construction of the 270-km Laoag City-Rosario City Highway Project and the introduction of China’s Juncao technology to the Philippines.

It also pitched to build a Juncao Technology Demonstration Center and a Juncao Industrial Park for Juncao grass cultivation and processing.

Juncao is a hybrid of the Giant Napier Grass developed by the Fujian Agriculture and Forest University from eight different types of grass through tissue culture.

Once approved, the proposed Juncao technology project will be funded through Chinese foreign aid.

Aside from this proposal, the CCCC officials provided the President with an update on its ongoing infrastructure projects in the Philippines, including the Samal Island-Davao City Connector (SIDC) Project and North & South Harbor Bridge, among others.

Marcos said the central part of his government’s economic policy is establishing, endorsing, and promoting PPPs, in which the CCCC could participate.

He added that the government had changed the regulations and rules for establishing PPPs to make it more attractive for private corporations to come into the Philippines and work with the government.

The President also said that the administration would not limit these partnerships to PPPs.

“It can be of any nature – commercial venture or joint venture with a local partner,” Marcos said.

“Of course, the PPP, where you have a partnership with government, even G2G — government-to-government arrangements — is also something that we have been doing for a long time and again that we wish to further,” he added.

Marcos said that the Philippines has also relaxed the rules to allow foreign contractors to bring in their professionals to encourage technology transfer.

According to Garafil, the President expressed hope that the CCCC could assist the Philippines in carrying out projects that ensure environmental sustainability amid the threats posed by climate change.

The CCCC is a Chinese state-owned enterprise mainly engaged in transportation infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges, and railways.

Currently, it has more than 60 wholly owned subsidiaries and has operated in more than 150 countries and regions.

Aside from government projects, the CCCC is also involved in ongoing private-led reclamation projects in Metro Manila, such as the Pasay Harbor City Reclamation Project and Manila Waterfront City Development Project.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[PH's Maria Luisa Varela is Miss Planet](#)

By: Armin P. Adina

The Philippines may have missed the first cut at the Miss Universe pageant earlier this year, ending a 12-year placement streak in the prestigious global tilt, but it was able to score its first victory in a young international competition—the Miss Planet International contest.

Maria Luisa Varela from Navotas City bested 13 other aspirants in ceremonies staged at Koh Pich Theater in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on Jan. 29 to inherit the title from Monique Best of South Africa.

This is the second edition of the international pageant conceived in 2019. No pageant was held in 2020 and 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, while the 2022 competition was canceled because of an Ebola outbreak in Uganda.

During the speech round with the Top 7, Varela said experiencing flood, poverty and lack of educational opportunity in her city made her join the pageant. “I firmly believe in the mission and vision of this organization, which is the preservation of nature and environment, climate action and promoting education, which are very close to my heart,” she said.

“It is high time for us to act now and talk less. For it is now or never. Let us all be a beacon of hope, and let me start it by being your compassionate ambassador of Miss Planet International 2023,” she said.

The pageant said it aims to support the Sustainable Developments Goals of the United Nations.

First runner-up Jemima Mandemwa from Zimbabwe, meanwhile, said, “between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause 250,000 deaths per year, which lead to malnutrition, malaria and heat waves. And all I can say is it’s time to act now.”

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Marcos meets with Chinese, US business leaders

By: Azer Parrocha

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Monday met with business leaders from China and the United States to discuss investments and other partnerships

In a news release, the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) said officials of China Communications Construction Co. Ltd (CCCC), a Chinese state-owned enterprise, paid courtesy call on Marcos at Malacañan Palace and committed to more investments following the President’s state visit earlier this month.

“...Officials of the China Communications Construction Co. Ltd proposed the construction of the 270-km Laoag City-Rosario City Highway Project and the introduction of China’s Juncao technology to the Philippines,” the PCO said.

The CCCC proposed to build a Juncao Technology Demonstration Center and a Juncao Industrial Park for Juncao grass cultivation and processing.

Juncao is a hybrid of the Giant Napier Grass developed by the Fujian Agriculture and Forest University from eight different types of grass through tissue culture.

The proposed Juncao technology project, once approved, will be funded through Chinese foreign aid.

CCCC officials also updated Marcos on their ongoing infrastructure projects in the Philippines, including the Samal Island-Davao City Connector Project and North & South Harbor Bridge, among others.

Marcos, meanwhile, reiterated the importance of public-private partnerships (PPPs) as a “central part” of his government’s economic policy.

“It can be of any nature – commercial venture or joint venture with a local partner. Of course, the PPP, where you have partnership with government, even G2G -- government-to-government arrangements -- are also something that we have been doing for a long time and again that we wish to further,” he said.

He said the government has changed the regulations and rules for the establishment of PPPs to make it more attractive for private, but added that his administration will not limit these partnerships to just PPPs.

He also hoped the CCCC could help the Philippines in carrying out projects that ensure environmental sustainability amid threats posed by climate change.

The CCCC is a Chinese state-owned enterprise mainly engaged in transportation infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges and railways.

To date, the CCCC has more than 60 wholly owned subsidiaries and has operated in more than 150 countries and regions.

Aside from government projects, the CCCC is also involved in ongoing private-led reclamation projects in Metro Manila, such as the Pasay Harbor City Reclamation Project and Manila Waterfront City Development Project.

Stronger PH-US ties

Meanwhile, Marcos also welcomed at the Palace members of the US-Philippines Society, a non-profit organization that aims build on historical ties between the two nations.

During their meeting, the President underscored the importance of forging strong ties with the country's friends and partners in the US, Southeast Asia and the entire Asia Pacific amid present geopolitical challenges.

"And that is when we once again look to our friends and partners in the United States to be our treaty partner, and of course, our neighbors in ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and the entire Asia Pacific extending up to the Indo-Pacific," Marcos said.

"These partnerships have become as important as they have ever been in our entire joint history. And that is why I am very happy to see that the US-Philippines Society is so active, " he added.

He also welcomed the growing US-Philippines relationship and thanked the organization for strengthening the ties that he described as an "evolving relationship" amid the current changes.

The US-Philippines Society is a private sector initiative organized to broaden and expand interaction and understanding through basic research and/or applied research in the areas of security, trade, investments, tourism, the environment, history, education and culture between the US and the Philippines which would benefit the American public and the people of the Philippines.

New appointments

Meanwhile, Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin led the oath-taking of eight new members of the Marawi Compensation Board – Dalomabi Lao Bula, Mustapha Dimaampao, Moslemen Macarambon Sr., Nasser Macapado Tabao, Mabandes Sumndad Diron Jr., Jamaica Lamping Dimaporo, Sittie Aliyyah Lomondot Adiong and Romaisa Lomantong Mamutuk.

Bersamin also swore in Romulo Victoria Arugay as chair of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas.

PTV

[Filipino scientist inducted into UK's Royal Society of Arts](#)

By: Gabriela Baron

Filipino scientist Glenn Banaguas has been inducted into the prestigious Royal Society of Art (RSA), becoming the first science diplomat from the country to become a fellow of the organization.

Former RSA fellows included anti-apartheid and former South African President Nelson Mandela, chemist Marie Curie, and astrophysicist Stephen Hawking.

“My heart is filled with gratefulness for this gift. I am deeply humbled to walk in the shadow of such great minds,” Banguas said.

“I hope to be able to contribute even just a fraction of what they have given to the world,” he added.

He said he hopes the recognition will be able to bring an “atmosphere of positivity” and “create the power of compassion among nations.”

The RSA, also known as the Royal Society for the Encouragements of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, was founded by English social reformist and inventor William Shipley in 1847.

Banaguas is a distinguished scientist and science diplomat. He is also one of Asia’s leading experts in environment, climate change, and disaster risk.

He chairs the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) Fellows for Science and Technology and the Climate Diplomat of the European Union (EU)-Asia Expert Panel for Climate Diplomacy and Environment Security.

Banaguas is also the first Filipino recipient of the United Nations (UN) Sasakawa Laureate for Disaster Risk Reduction.

SUNSTAR

[DOLE to reinforce DENR's greening program](#)

By: Charlene A. Cayabyab

CLARK FREEPORT The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has committed anew to help the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR) continuous implementation of the National Greening Program.

Through its Cagayan Valley Regional Office, DOLE will provision 14 Government Internship Program (GIP) beneficiaries and 35 Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) program beneficiaries for the program.

DOLE-2 Regional Director Joel M. Gonzales said the GIP beneficiaries shall render service for the DENR for three months while the TUPAD beneficiaries shall render service for 60 days, with a daily wage of P420.

The beneficiaries shall provide additional manpower to accelerate the survival and growth of bamboo and other trees planted in a 38-hectare plantation situated in the provinces of Cagayan, Nueva Vizcaya, and Quirino.

The commitment comes after a memorandum of agreement was signed among the DOLE, DENR, and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) for the engagement of TUPAD and GIP beneficiaries to further sustain bamboo reforestation and promote the bamboo business industry, initially employing about 11 GIP beneficiaries for the said effort.

"Through the GIP, the beneficiaries are allowed to earn a living [while] also augmenting government efforts to address climate change through massive planting activities," DENR RO2 Regional Executive Director Gwendolyn Bambalan said.

Regional Director Joel M. Gonzales meanwhile underscored the DOLE's efforts to continually augment the program needs of partner agencies through the provision of GIP and TUPAD assistance.

"The regional office shall endeavor to partner with government agencies to further our mandate on labor and employment and our partnership with the DENR and DTI ensures the continuity of this goal," Gonzales said.

DTI Regional Director Leonila T. Baluyut said that the significant increase of new BN registration indicates good business confidence in the region.

“The surge means that more residents are venturing into entrepreneurship which could bring investments and generate more jobs in the region. This is a positive sign as we continue to adapt in the new economic atmosphere,” she added.

Business name registrations can be processed at the DTI Regional Office, Provincial Offices, and the 140 Negosyo Centers across the region. For more convenience, BN registrations can also be conducted online through the website – www.bnrs.dti.gov.ph. Applicants can simply register using their computers or mobile phones with internet connections. Similarly, payments may be made online through GCash, PayMaya, Landbank, Credit/Debit Cards or over-the-counter 7-11 and Bayad Centers. (PR)

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[DENR chief urged to meet with Masungi to settle questions on caretaker deal](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

MANILA, Philippines — A network of environmental organizations called on the leadership of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to meet with the Masungi Georeserve Foundation to address concerns about their agreement to restore and protect parts of the fragile Upper Marikina Watershed.

In a statement on Monday, the Upper Marikina Watershed Coalition urged Environment Secretary Toni Yulo-Loyzaga to hold a direct dialogue with Masungi "to settle mutual concerns on its joint reforestation program." Masungi is a member of the coalition.

Under a 2017 agreement between the foundation and then-environment chief Gina Lopez, Masungi will plant and nurture trees to help heal a 2,700 hectare area in the Upper Marikina River Basin and Protected Landscape.

But in a Senate hearing last November, DENR officials said the contract with the foundation is disadvantageous to the government. The foundation called the pronouncement "libelous, irresponsible and baseless."

The Upper Marikina Watershed Coalition said the urgency of safeguarding Masungi Georeserve and its reforestation project "cannot be understated."

"Their internationally recognized work has stopped further severe, irreversible damage and threats to the people, land, and biodiversity of the protected area—all of which have been painstakingly recovered and protected through many sacrifices of its people in the past 20 years," the coalition said.

Cancel quarry permits

The Upper Marikina Watershed Coalition also called for the release of orders canceling the mineral production sharing agreements (MPSAs) that were granted to quarry companies. An MPSA gives contractors the right to mine within a contract area.

According to the groups, the Mines and Geosciences Bureau said the cancellation orders, although already recommended, have not yet been signed by the environment secretary. Philstar.com sought the comment of Yulo-Loyzaga, but she has yet to respond as of posting.

The coalition that includes Alyansa Tigil Mina, Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment and Non-Timber Forest Products-Exchange Programme stressed the political threats and undue pressures against environmental defenders are "deeply concerning and unacceptable."

"The use of political power to undermine the preservation of this important ecosystem is indicative of the dangerous uphill battle that environment defenders all over the Philippines experience," the groups said.

"Our fight in the Upper Marikina Watershed alongside the Masungi Geopark Project is a critical piece in the climate action agenda of our government, and the support, or lack thereof, from public sector actors can determine where their real priorities and interests lie," they added.

Over the years, Masungi has locked horns with quarry operators, resort owners, and other entities who illegally occupy forestlands inside the 26,000-hectare protected area.

The House of Representatives' chamber's committee on natural resources will conduct an inquiry into the alleged unauthorized and unlawful activities at the Masungi Georeserve on Wednesday.

Experts: PH economy recovering but additional maintenance needed

MANILA, Philippines — Significant economic improvements in the Philippines that have been felt in 2022 state that among the major economies in the region that released their real GDP growth, the Philippine economy posted the second fastest growth after India but faster than Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and China.

To sustain recovery, specific measures to mitigate the lingering challenges include the pursuit of more sustainable energy solutions, such as the transition to green energy, the use of Electric Vehicles (EVs) to support decarbonization and the push for green-certified spaces have been linked to the country's continued acceleration towards growth.

These were the points raised during the Power Up Live Webinar hosted by Meralco. Headlined as the Philippine Energy and Economy Update, the webinar provided richer insights to the Filipino public about ASEAN and local perspectives on energy and the economy and their impact on the commercial and industrial sectors.

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), one of the webinar's key presenters, reported that the country's gross domestic product (GDP) expanded by 7.8% in the first semester of 2022 despite the uptick of COVID-19 cases due to the Omicron variant.

The growth was driven mainly by domestic demand on the expenditure side, the tourism industry and services on the supply side.

This movement was further buoyed by Filipino consumers' increased willingness to spend and travel due to the high vaccination rates and the easing of mobility restrictions; hopeful that these will drastically improve given the influx of travel over the holidays.

However, some sectors remained below pre-pandemic levels, particularly the transport, hospitality, mining and manufacturing industries.

These statistics underscore the need for particular policy inventions geared towards generating productive employment that provides adequate income for Filipinos and their families.

Still, with these indicators, it was mentioned in the webinar that recovery is underway with robust domestic demand, which is expected to sustain the country's growth

momentum as the economy fully reopens. The country's GDP is expected to grow by 6.5 to 8% by 2028.

It was established that the government has an 8-point economic plan to follow through with its economic targets. This plan includes creating programs and legislation to, among others, protect the purchasing power of families and create more jobs.

Also highlighted is the need to transition to clean and renewable energy, to improve energy security and lower energy costs in the country.

The transition to green energy is an important step to move forward, said Dr. Prinyantha Wijayatunga, chief of the Energy Sector Group, Asian Development Bank (ADB).

In his presentation entitled "ADB's New Energy Policy: Implications in Developing Asia," Wijayatunga said the energy sector is a cross-sectoral industry that affects many aspects of a country, particularly the economy.

"The energy sector should not be taken as a single sector to proceed with development. We must consider the energy sector part of an overall cross-sectoral intervention. If you take any project, it's cross-sectoral, not just a single energy project," he said.

Shift to sustainability

With roughly 350 million people across the globe, still without adequate energy supply, and 250 million with no electricity access, Wijayatunga said many countries see the power industry as a sector with profound opportunities.

This is particularly true in the ASEAN region, as the International Energy Agency believes electricity demand in the area will double by the year 2040. Hence, many countries are switching or transitioning to low-carbon energy sources not only to meet the demand but also to minimize the effects of climate change.

ADB sees the way forward as focusing on decarbonization: reducing carbon dioxide using low-carbon or clean and renewable energy sources, decreasing energy intensity, digitalization and decentralization.

A shift away from traditional areas of investment and towards these four aspects can, Wijayatunga explained, help increase the country's GDP by lowering energy costs, among others.

Other industries in the Philippines are ready to embrace sustainable energy. According to Maria Fe Perez-Agudo, president of the Association of Vehicle Importers and Distributors, the use of Electric Vehicles (EVs) to support decarbonization is viable in the country, especially with the enactment of the Electric Vehicle Industry Development Act (EVIDA). But this can only work if stakeholders work together to build the right ecosystem.

She noted that global EV sales reached a record high of 6.9 million in 2021. But sales are still emerging in countries such as the Philippines because the mass market has yet to afford the available models. "This is what the EVIDA will be developing," she said.

Meanwhile, the real estate industry was among the first to utilize sustainable energy, said Jose Carmelo Porciuncula, executive director for Investor Services of KMC Savills, thanks to the Philippine Green Building Code of 2016.

With the Green Building Code, local real estate companies and conglomerates have been pushing for green-certified spaces for their buildings to promote sustainability while minimizing the adverse effects of buildings on health and the environment.

With the perspectives of the experts and leaders in the Power Up Live webinar, Meralco, who serves 7.5M customers in Luzon and accountable for 60% of GDP, hopes to empower and support the Philippine economy further in its upwards journey toward growth.

"We know that for the economy to prosper, we need a reliable and sufficient supply of energy. We have been investing heavily in our electric distribution network, and we stand ready to provide the kind of electric service needed by our local companies, partners and customers to compete in the global market," said Joebet Isaac Del Rosario, Meralco's Lead Specialist for Forecasting, Utility Economics.

Former UN chief calls for climate action over 'visions' at COP28

By: Agence France Presse

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Climate talks in the United Arab Emirates this year should focus on action rather than visions, former United Nations chief Ban Ki-moon said during a visit to the oil-rich Gulf country.

"Many countries and many people have already presented the visions, so we may not need any more," he told AFP in Dubai on Saturday.

"We need a COP of solutions and a COP of action."

The South Korean diplomat, who co-chairs the Ban Ki-moon Centre for Global Citizens, was in the UAE this weekend to launch a partnership with Dubai Cares, a civil society organisation focused on training youth on "green skills".

The last UN climate talks held in Egypt in November concluded with a landmark deal to create a "loss and damage" fund to cover the costs that developing countries face from climate-linked natural disasters and slower impacts like sea level rise.

But observers were left disappointed that little progress had been made on reducing planet-heating emissions from fossil fuels.

Ban urged the COP28 presidency to consider "harmonisation" between adaptation and loss and damage.

"We have to help developing countries to adapt to changing situations... (but) what about the situations already damaged and lost?" he said.

"We have to help them so that they can recover from this loss and damage."

The UAE, a leading crude producer and exporter, named the head of its national oil company as president of this year's COP28 climate talks, prompting fierce criticism from environmental activists.

The wealthy nation argues that oil remains indispensable to the global economy, while pushing the merits of carbon capture -- removing carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, as fuel is burned or from the air.

During his visit, Ban signed a memorandum of understanding with Dubai Cares to launch an environmental training programme targeting youth.

Tariq Al Gurg, chief executive and vice chairman of Dubai Cares, told AFP during the signing ceremony that the partnership is focused on training 10,000 young people.

"Climate without education (equals) no solution. Education without climate (means) we will suffer. That's why those two have to marry," said Al Gurg.

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