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ASIA NEWS NETWORK

[Indonesian, Philippine water experts push for more sustainable dams amid climate change](#)

By: A. Muh. Ibnu Aqil

JAKARTA – Experts warn that dams in both Indonesia and the Philippines, crucial for irrigation, drinking water and electricity generation, may face increased strain as climate change brings unpredictable and high-precipitation weather patterns.

BUSINESS MIRROR

[Loyzaga shuffles key DENR officials, creates new posts](#)

By: Jonathan Mayuga

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By: Angela Kiara S. Brillantes

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CNN PHILIPPINES

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By: Jelo Ritzhie Mantaring and Syrah Vivien

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GMA NEWS

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By: Lou Albano

Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts became the first museum in the United Kingdom to designate a curator for art and climate change, and it appointed none other than Filipino curator John Kenneth Paranada to the role.

MANILA BULLETIN

[DOST-SEI's Indie-Siyensya Film Festival returns, S&T films streaming on JuanFLix](#)

By: Dhel Nazario

Films communicating science as a catalyst for positive change can be streamed on JuanFlix, according to the Department of Science and Technology-Science Education Institute (DOST-SEI) as part of its 6th Indie-Siyensya Film Festival, almost three years after the Covid-19 pandemic hit the country.

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By: Raymund Antonio

House Speaker Martin Romualdez sees warmer relations between the Philippines and the United States (US) under the Marcos administration that will bring economic gains to the two nations.

MANILA STANDARD

[BOI expects P1 trillion worth of renewable energy projects](#)

By: Othel V. Campos

The Board of Investments said investments in the renewable energy sector are expected to reach P1.031 trillion in 2023 and in the coming years.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Cleanup boosts Pasig River's flood-carrying capacity](#)

MANILA – San Miguel Corporation (SMC) said it expects its PHP2-billion Pasig River cleanup project to cross the 1 million metric tons threshold in silt and solid wastes removed by next month, as its dredging teams focus their efforts on both ends of the river -- the Manila Bay and Laguna Lake, where significant water flow restriction is known to occur.

[Davao City bats for linkages in waste-to-energy project](#)

By: Che Palicte

DAVAO CITY – This city is linking up with national government agencies to push its waste-to-energy (WTE) project and comply with requirements for national government funding needed to build the facility.

THE MANILA TIMES

[\[Opinion\] Misdirected protest on energy planning](#)

A COALITION of environmental and community groups has petitioned the Supreme Court to strike down Executive Order (EO) 30, issued by President Rodrigo Duterte in 2017, arguing that it is unconstitutional and will lead to the expansion of coal and other fossil fuel energy projects in the country. The environmental and social concerns are quite valid, and it is to the country's benefit that there are groups actively working to ensure that they are addressed. Assailing EO 30, however, is not the right way to accomplish that.

[WB approves \\$600-M funding package for PH](#)

THE World Bank has approved nearly P33 billion in fresh funding for the Philippines to rebuild the country's economy and strengthen the financial sector.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[World Bank to lend Philippines \\$600M for pandemic recovery, climate financing](#)

MANILA, Philippines — The World Bank awarded a fresh loan program to the Philippines to support the domestic economy's recovery from the pandemic and improve the resilience of the financial sector.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

ASIA NEWS NETWORK

[Indonesian, Philippine water experts push for more sustainable dams amid climate change](#)

By: A. Muh. Ibnu Aqil

JAKARTA – Experts warn that dams in both Indonesia and the Philippines, crucial for irrigation, drinking water and electricity generation, may face increased strain as climate change brings unpredictable and high-precipitation weather patterns.

Budi Santoso Wignyosukarto, a hydraulic engineering expert at Yogyakarta-based Gadjah Mada University, said that Indonesia had been accustomed to heavy rain, however, climate change would cause the weather to become less predictable, which would also affect dams.

Budi emphasized the need for Indonesia to be prepared for these uncertainties, as the country is already facing challenges such as rapid population growth that lead to land use changes, as more people need more food, shelter and industry, which all affect the climate.

He said that Indonesia needed to be more flexible and adaptable to climate change by improving its resilience.

“Building this resilience can be done through building infrastructure that can absorb [extreme] rainfall well, such as reservoirs coupled with dams whose capacities have been optimized,” Budi said.

Evi Anggraheni, a lecturer in water resource management at the University of Indonesia’s Civil Engineering Department, agreed that climate change would lead to unstable weather that affected dams, particularly through erosion in upstream areas caused by extreme rainfall. This erosion leads to sedimentation in the reservoirs of dams.

“Conservation [of the environment] at the upstream of dams is needed to improve their performance,” Evi said.

Airlangga Mardjono, the director of dams and lakes at the Public Works and Housing Ministry, said that all dams in Indonesia would be able to withstand the effects of climate change, as they have been designed with their probable maximum flood (PMF) capacity in mind to ensure they can contain large amounts of water.

“Dams are built that way because of the high risk [from holding large amounts of water], so we use the most conservative calculations,” Mardjono said.

There were 228 dams operating in Indonesia as of 2022, an increase from the previous year’s 205 dams.

Mardjono also said the ministry had adjusted operation patterns of dams to withstand high rainfall by making sure to release excess water from dams’ reservoirs ahead of the rainy season, as well as installing early release floodgates and automating weather monitoring at dams.

One of the best options

The Philippines is also home to dams mainly used for irrigation and energy generation.

The Philippines Biodiversity Management Bureau recorded 39 water storage areas or dams in the country. Nine of these are major dams that are closely monitored by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), the country’s meteorological agency, particularly during typhoons.

Additional dams are expected to become operational soon as a result of the administration of then-president Rodrigo Duterte’s massive infrastructure program, also known as the “Build, Build, Build” project.

According to the Ibon Foundation, a non-profit development organization, the program introduced eight dam projects from Abra in Northern Luzon to Iloilo in the Visayas. Many of these projects are funded by official development assistance from China.

While supporters of dam construction argue that the facilities will address water and energy issues in the Philippines, critics assert that dams have negative impacts on the environment and indigenous communities near the sites, and are vulnerable to typhoons made worse by climate change.

Franz Kevin Geronimo, a Philippine consultant for the World Water Council, said that the intensifying rainfall in the Philippines due to climate change would mean that dam operators needed to release water more frequently or they would break.

“If the dam breaks, there will definitely be a bigger amount of water that will be released,” Geronimo said, adding that the changing rainfall patterns would produce heavy rain in a short span of time.

While dams could provide water and clean energy for the Philippines, Geronimo said that there were other options aside from dams to address these issues.

Geronimo said solar panels or hydrogen fuel were alternatives for providing energy. However, the latter, while feasible, is not yet available in the country due to high cost and safety fears.

To address water issues, Geronimo suggested that the country consider harvesting rainwater. The Philippines already has a Rainwater Collector and Springs Development Act, which requires the public works department to construct rainwater collectors to prevent flooding.

Geronimo also mentioned the options of recycling waste water and utilizing groundwater, however they might not be able to provide the amount of water dams do.

“We are talking about big supplies of both water and energy. I think [dams are] still one of the best options at the moment.”

BUSINESS MIRROR

Loyzaga shuffles key DENR officials, creates new posts

By: Jonathan Mayuga

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga has issued a series of special orders on January 23, 24 and 25, creating new positions and designating key officials with specific tasks and functions.

Some of officials were named to newly created positions or office, somehow, duplicating existing the functions of other offices or officials who already have multiple functions under their present designation.

On January 23, invoking “in the interest of the service,” Loyzaga assigned Undersecretary Ignatius Loyola A. Rodriguez as undersecretary for Special Concerns and Legislative Affairs.

The function of the newly created position is to maintain an awareness of development that might affect the DENR, its property, personnel and prepare reports for the DENR chief. It was noted that this is may have the same function of the existing Office of the Undersecretary for Legal Affairs and Administration.

With his new designation, Rodriguez will also assist in the review of documents for the signature of the Secretary, including correspondences, certifications, memos, circulars, orders, permits, contracts, and agreements, to ensure that they comply with relevant statutes and regulations.

As the undersecretary for the said office, Rodriguez will also handle priority areas, which necessitates special and immediate attention.

Meanwhile, Carlos Primo C. David has been assigned as undersecretary for Integrated Environmental Science, another newly created position, to supervise the Geospatial Database Office; lead discussions in policy formulation, and required changes in the regulatory functions of DENR bureaus and attached agencies.

As undersecretary for Integrated Environmental Science, he will also be tasked to promote the use of science in the performance of all DENR bureaus and attached agencies; in policy formulation in the regulatory functions of the DENR, and liaise with the different National Government Agencies on scientific and technical matters.

Assistant Secretary Joan A. Lagunda, meanwhile, is reassigned to the Office of David.

The DENR currently has the Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB), the agency's principal research and development unit.

In another order, Loyzaga has designated Undersecretary Marilou G. Erni as undersecretary for Strategic Communications who will supervise the Strategic Communication and Initiative Service (SCIS) on top of her present assignment as chief of staff of DENR.

Subsequently, Loyzaga has named Karmela Beatriz L. Galura as Director for Strategic Communications. The DENR chief has also directed the Financial Management Service to allocate funds for the SCIS.

On January 11, Loyzaga has given Undersecretary Augusto D. dela Peña the assignment as Supervising Undersecretary of the Human Resource Development Service, formerly assigned to Undersecretary Ernesto D. Adobo Jr.

As such, dela Peña is now the DENR's undersecretary for Organizational Transformation and Human Resources.

Meanwhile, in view of the retirement of Director Tirzo P. Parian, Loyzaga has named Arleigh J. Adorable as Officer-in-Charge (OIC) Assistant Secretary for Field Operations-Western Mindanao.

Assistant Secretary Marcial C. Amaro Jr. has been named as Director of the Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) replacing former OIC Director Natividad Bernardino. Armida P. Andres was named as OIC Assistant Director of the BMB.

For the EMB, Loyzaga has named Gilbert Gonzales as director. He will be performing the function as EMB Director in concurrent capacity as OIC Assistant Secretary for Luzon and Visayas. Esperanza A. Sajul was named as Assistant Director of the EMB.

Meanwhile, Director Wilfredo Moncano was assigned to the Office of Undersecretary Ernesto Adobo Jr., leaving the position of Director, Mines and Geosciences Bureau vacant.

BUSINESS WORLD

President Marcos, Jr. on food and nutrition security

By: Angela Kiara S. Brillantes

Food is a basic human necessity, and everyone needs food to live. However, providing enough food security and, moreover, nutrition security poses a global challenge to mitigate the risks of hunger, malnutrition, and even climate change, among other conflicts.

To address the global challenge of food security, the United Nations' second sustainable development goal (SDG) is set to prioritize sustainable agriculture by the year 2030, as the World Economic Forum (WEF) noted. According to the WEF, agricultural sustainability can be achieved by implementing public-private partnerships, and effective business strategies, and by engaging in greenhouse emissions, water, and waste usage can boost productivity in agricultural sectors.

It is important to note that food insecurity is a significant driver of non-communicable diseases and, in worst-case scenarios, can impact the health of the planet.

Earlier this January, the WEF Annual Meeting once again tackled this issue in a panel session themed "Moving Towards Nutrition Security." President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., one of the speakers, shared that steps that should be taken so that nations can attain nutrition security, which include boosting agricultural and fishery productivity, improving logistics systems and changing people's lifestyles.

"We must invest in facilities, logistics and systems that bring nutritious food to our people, much like a grander scale of farm-to-table and increase the capacity of our institutions to enforce regulations that enhance food quality," Mr. Marcos was quoted as saying.

He also raised the need to "cooperate to develop technologies that increase the nutritional value of our food and content and prolong their shelf life."

The President also shared how he sees food security is being addressed in the country.

"Food security remains at the forefront of our national agenda. Anchored in our vision for a prosperous, resilient, and secure Philippines by the year 2040," Mr. Marcos said.

“The overreaching goals of this administration are to build an inclusive society where no one is hungry, where Filipinos live long and healthy lives and where they are provided by an environment built upon trust and security and where they can be innovative, remains smart, and responsive to the problems of the day,” he added.

Prior to this session at Davos, Switzerland, Mr. Marcos told world leaders that food security is a serious global problem that it serves as a lens in which other global threats such as climate change and conflicts are seen through.

“Food security must be a top priority for all governments and developing economies must have the policy flexibility needed to ensure an increased domestic food production and diversification and to improve the local agricultural supply and value chain,” Mr. Marcos was quoted as saying in his speech at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) CEO Summit in Bangkok, Thailand last November.

The President mentioned as well at Davos that with the goal of providing sufficient and quality nutrition for all Filipinos, the Philippines has already developed nutritional programs, including the Nutritional National Council (NNC), that focus on addressing the hunger and nutritional needs of the country. Specifically, the NNC was established to formulate, coordinate, and evaluate national food and nutritional policies.

In addition, for Mr. Marcos, not only is the administration working on providing quality food security for all, but also on improving and strengthening the country’s agricultural sector, which plays an integral role in the impact of climate change and economic growth; and becoming one step closer in making the Philippines a “leading agricultural resource hub in the region and the world.”

“The work to improve our agricultural sector and improve the plight of our farmers and fisherfolk has only just begun, we need to continue to open more opportunities to improve their well-being,” he was quoted as saying last October in a BusinessWorld report.

As cited by the 2021 Food Security Index, the Philippines was ranked 64 out of 113 countries in the food security matrix. Though not quite there yet, Mr. Marcos said, the Philippines was able to develop growth in food security, but it needs more.

“If we are to attain SDG on zero hunger, it bears emphasizing that the challenge of nutrition is different for you and for me, from your economy to mine, from us here to the people back at home. Among our priority interventions are those geared toward making

food available, affordable, accessible, amid the looming global food and energy shortage,” Mr. Marcos explained in his opening remarks at the said WEF session.

According to Mr. Marcos, the administration is set to focus on productivity-enhancing interventions, research and development, and government spending on the agriculture and distribution sectors, by boosting productivity in the sector, using climate-resilient technologies, promoting agricultural production in non-agricultural areas, investing in facilities, logistics, and systems, and developing technologies that will help provide nutritious foods and increase the quality of food.

During the APEC CEO Summit, Mr. Marcos shared that alongside local nutritional programs, the Philippine government has expanded irrigation projects, worked on developing agri-trading and food logistics hubs, and collaborated with cooperatives and organizations to obtain refrigerated vans, freezers, chillers, and other related equipment.

Nonetheless, the administration is looking forward to their partnership with WEF towards sufficient and actionable plans for attaining food and nutrition security.

“The work of the WEF’s New Frontiers of Nutrition, a vital component of the equally vital Future of Consumption Platform, is commendable in this regard in providing us all in a first big leap towards nutrition security through a common paradigm on the purpose of nutrition and the future of food and developing principle and indicators to sustain our efforts while aiming to create economic value,” Mr. Marcos explained during the WEF panel session.

Additionally, he said the local government will also prioritize feeding programs in local schools, where the government will provide food for children in schools and assistance to Filipinos who are severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Marcos also mentioned the key to achieving food security is through system-based and data-driven cooperation.

With the Philippine leader’s commitment to the second SDG, he continues to aim for agricultural excellence and to grow and sustain development in food security and agricultural development.

“Let us incentivize a nutritious lifestyle, promote active and healthy-seeking behaviors across different ages and income levels and create an ecosystem based on the concept of a green and circular economy,” Mr. Marcos added.

CNN PHILIPPINES

[Groups urge DENR chief to finalize cancellation of quarry permits in Upper Marikina watershed](#)

By: Jelo Ritzhie Mantaring and Syrah Vivien

Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, January 31) — Environmental groups urged the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to finalize the cancellation of quarry permits in the Upper Marikina Watershed after learning that the orders have yet to be signed.

In a statement Monday, the Upper Marikina Watershed Coalition said it requested copies of the orders revoking the mineral production sharing agreements (MPSAs) that were granted to quarry operators.

According to the coalition, the DENR's Mines and Geosciences Bureau said the cancellations, although already recommended, have yet to be signed by Environment Secretary Toni Yulo-Loyzaga.

An MPSA is an agreement in which the government offers the contractor the right to mine over a specific area in exchange for a portion of its profits.

"We, therefore, hold the Secretary to her word and encourage her to make good on her promise: fulfill the cancellation orders of these four MPSAs in the Upper Marikina Watershed and nearby protected areas, including portions of the Masungi Geopark Project," the coalition said.

In November last year, Loyzaga told the Senate during the DENR's budget hearing that the cancellation of two MPSAs were finalized while two more were awaiting a 90-day effectivity.

CNN Philippines is waiting for Loyzaga's comment on this matter.

The coalition likewise urged Loyzaga to hold a direct dialogue with the Masungi Georeserve Foundation, Inc. (MGFI), a member of the coalition, to settle "mutual concerns" on its joint reforestation project.

In 2017, the foundation and former DENR chief Gina Lopez reached an agreement to restore nearly 2,700 hectares of degraded forest land around the Masungi Georeserve and solve gaps in ending deforestation.

However, in November last year, the DENR said before the Senate that there were "legal complications" in the agreement and that MGF's "lack of diligence" caused losses to the government.

The MGF denounced the agency's statement, calling it "libelous, irresponsible, and baseless."

"The urgency of safeguarding Masungi Georeserve and the Masungi Geopark Project cannot be understated," the coalition said. "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 twenty years."

The House of Representatives will hold an inquiry into the alleged unauthorized and unlawful activities at the Masungi Georeserve on Wednesday, Feb. 1.

The groups also called on lawmakers to "look into the real illegal and destructive interests in the area, instead of finding justification to shut down a valuable and ecologically important conservation project for the benefit of a select few."

GMA NEWS

[A Filipino is appointed curator of art and climate change by the 1st UK museum to elect such a role](#)

By: Lou Albano

Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts became the first museum in the United Kingdom to designate a curator for art and climate change, and it appointed none other than Filipino curator John Kenneth Paranada to the role.

Paranada assumed the position in October 2022, with his first curatorial exhibit, Sediment Spirit, opening in October 2023.

Speaking to GMA News Online, Paranada said the creation of the role is "part of the museum's 50th anniversary program. The director [Jago Cooper] was telling me it's part of the museum's ethos to go back into this closer understanding of art and nature and ecologies and environment."

The Sainsbury Center for the Visual Arts, located inside the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England, opened in the '70s and quickly earned the reputation for being "genre-defying."

And its "emphasis on climate and sustainability enticed me," Paranada said. "I believe the climate crisis is one of our generation's most pressing, challenging, and complex

Growing up in Ilocos Sur, Paranada's introduction to climate and the environment started at a very young age thanks to his environmentalist parents who worked at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

"Growing up, this was my education. 'Look at the trees, tell me what you're seeing. Observe.' This was my foundation, the core. They introduced me to climate change at a very young age — obviously, I couldn't understand it then, only clicking when all these catastrophes started appearing," he says on a Zoom call in January.

He got his bachelor's degree at De La Salle University Manila, took up his masters at the University of the Philippines and in 2013, got a post-graduate scholarship to study the Philosophy of Nature in Paris with Bruno Latour, "one the trailblazing philosophers of the 21st century."

Paranada says it was when Latour quoted from British scientist James Lovelock's book, "The Vanishing Face of Gaia" that his deeper engagement with the climate crisis really started.

"Lovelock posited that all forms of life, combined with the physical systems around them, are vital to regulating the Earth's delicate chemistry and temperature, which in turn keeps conditions stable enough for life to continue. He termed this process of life as Gaia, after the Greek goddess of the Earth," Paranada narrated.

"The likening of our planet to a goddess has such a mythological and magical undertone to it, inviting us to see the Earth itself as a living, breathing entity. I found these ideas deeply poignant," Paranada said.

He found himself plunged even deeper into the issue of climate change when he flew back home to the Philippines in November 2013 for a holiday. Typhoon Yolanda had just struck Eastern Samar, killing and displacing some 7,350 people and destroying and damaging more than a million houses. It is famously the Philippines' worst typhoon on record.

Paranada became witness to the aftermath of Typhoon Yolanda. "The news, the catastrophe and the devastation. What is happening? That really impacted my desire: How do we change society through art?"

In holding the historic position at the Sainsbury Centre, Paranada is working closely with the Tyndall Center for Climate Research of the University of East Anglia, which he says is "the first university in Europe to dedicate the study of changing environment." He adds he is constantly validating "if the science is correct in my writing."

"We're also going to be working with the scientists from MIT, from Cambridge in Oxford, across Europe to translate hard data into something visual and experiential for people to relate and understand no matter their status."

"There are numerous ways to engage with the overlap between art and climate change," Paranada says.

He intends to break away from the usually bleak, often depressing narratives of climate crisis by prioritizing hope and promoting "the possibility of change, without reducing the very serious threats the climate crisis poses on humanity."

Paranada continues: "I want to have a frank, honest and urgent conversation. The climate crisis is the most significant and most pervasive threat to humanity, and to sugarcoat this truth would be a disservice to the audience."

In his curatorial exhibit, *Sediment Spirit*, Paranada intends to "highlight art and ideas that demonstrate a shared understanding that nature – understood as a living ecosystem – is something of which humans are actively a part."

"I will showcase artworks that demonstrate the fact that there is no escape from our shared responsibility towards Earth's survival. They elucidate the impending consequences of our impact on the planet. The artists working on explaining the complexities of the climate crisis represent our contemporary canaries in the coal mine – warning us of the future and allowing us to imagine a more sustainable way of living."

"As a curator in a public museum, my role is to harness the power of storytelling through art to captivate, enchant, warn and inspire audiences from all walks of life about the vast impending consequences of the climate crisis."

Sediment Spirit will open in October 2023 and will run for six months. It is comprised for three different shows — one on plastic, another on indigenous art, and then finally the titular show, after which "there will be loads of programs to activate all the works together — artist talks, a performance, a discussion, a workshop."

"What I want the audience to get from *Sediment Spirit* is an understanding of how intrinsically we're part of nature and that we cannot control it anymore in ways that our former knowledge dictates. That's the first thing," Paranada said.

"On a personal level, I want people to have that deep reflection of trying to unlock our ecological unconscious. That notion that we need to address this problem collectively. It doesn't happen automatically or in 24 hours, even in a year but the moment we start considering all these things, the moment we allow it to enter our inner consciousness, it starts to brew," he adds.

Before taking on the job, Paranada was a curator of performance and engagement at contemporary art gallery, Zabłudowicz Art Collection in London (2021–2022).

"I was mainly doing art performances and access programs, which are more focused on broadening the audience base of the gallery — so it's like programming how visually impaired people can go to the museum and access art. It was making sure art is accessible, removing barriers, and creating a social and nurturing space. This is the

museum of the 21st century. It's no longer just for the elite. It's for everyone who wants to understand what art is." he said.

MANILA BULLETIN

[DOST-SEI's Indie-Siyensya Film Festival returns, S&T films streaming on JuanFLix](#)

By: Dhel Nazario

Films communicating science as a catalyst for positive change can be streamed on JuanFlix, according to the Department of Science and Technology-Science Education Institute (DOST-SEI) as part of its 6th Indie-Siyensya Film Festival, almost three years after the Covid-19 pandemic hit the country.

According to DOST-SEI, this was made possible through a partnership with the Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP). Films were also screened in Cinematheque Centres across the country.

Indie-Siyensya's on-site film festival returned with a two-day film screening of science-based creative films at the Cinematheque Centres in Manila, Nabunturan, Davao, and Negros from last Jan. 21 to 22. Cinematheque Centre Iloilo also joined the celebration as it followed with the screening on Jan. 26 to 27. The film festival kicked off at the Cinematheque Centre Manila with a brief opening ceremony conducted to formally welcome everyone to the film screening. Present during the program were officials of DOST-SEI and FDCP, namely, Engr. Albert Mariño, DOST-SEI's Deputy Director; Mr. Randolph Sasota, DOST-SEI's S&T Manpower Education Research and Promotions Division's Officer-in-Charge; Daniel David Morales, FDCP's Executive Director; and Ms. Rica Arevalo, FDCP's Education and Development Support Division Head and one of the 6th Indie-Siyensya jurors.

Directors, scriptwriters, and members of the featured films' production team also graced the event. They all showed gratitude for being a part of the Indie-Siyensya movement to use films to communicate science and contribute to building ripples of change for communities.

DOST-SEI stated that they also expressed delight to learn how passionate Filipinos are in creating films that mirror the realities of society and how the Indie-Siyensya has inspired and nurtured this passion among them as filmmakers.

"Being with these people, looking at the films, nakakaiyak kasi I know na hindi lang ako, hindi lang ako yung passionate about this. Everyone is. And [I am] super grateful. This competition is just doing many things for many," said Kyle Carlo Lasala, director of one

of the featured films, when asked about his experiences in joining the 6th Indie-Siyensya Filmmaking Competition during the festival's talkback.

The filmmakers all expressed hope to tell more stories, create more documentary films, and join more science film festivals with the aim to inform, educate, and enrich the knowledge of the public about a certain issue, and eventually move them to action. Such is the issue of the climate change crisis. Through the Indie-Siyensya Film Festival, DOST-SEI pledged to continue to harness the potential of films in communicating science, building awareness of critical issues, and driving action for the betterment of the country and the world.

Mariño thanked FDCP for sharing in the advocacy of bringing science closer to the Filipino people through competitions like Indie Siyensya and helping spark the interest of the youth to join the science community. Meanwhile, Morales commended the DOST-SEI for successfully cultivating creativity and innovation, as well as creating a means to highlight meaningful content through the Indie-Siyensya Film Festival. He pointed out how films are not only a visual treat but also an excellent vehicle for science communication, social change, and advocacy. He also added that the FDCP will continue to support the DOST-SEI by making Indie-Siyensya an Inter-Agency Partnership Program under the leadership of its new chairman, Mr. Tirso Cruz III. Just like the previous Indie-Siyensya Film Festivals, this year's event featured the 10 finalists of the Indie-Siyensya Filmmaking Competition. With the theme "Communicating Climate Change," the festival screened short documentary films and explainers that confront environmental challenges and advocate solutions to climate change.

The film entries are available on JuanFlix until Feb. 5, 2023. Viewers must register first at juanflix.com.ph to watch the entries for free.

Formerly known as the FDCP Channel, JuanFlix is a streaming platform that features classic Filipino films and special selections from recently conducted local film festivals. It aims to offer educational entertainment for all learners and film enthusiasts through homegrown films that inspire, enrich, and challenge perspectives.

For this year, the 6th Indie-Siyensya's Viewers' Choice Award will be given to the film entries with the highest number of votes per category from the combined on-site and online voting results. The winners of the Viewers' Choice Award will take home the P20,000.00 cash grant. Online voters are highly encouraged to watch all the Indie-Siyensya film entries on JuanFlix. The Awarding Ceremony will be held on Feb. 25, 2023 at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) in Pasay City.

[PH, US must work together to bolster economic ties—Romualdez](#)

By: Raymund Antonio

House Speaker Martin Romualdez sees warmer relations between the Philippines and the United States (US) under the Marcos administration that will bring economic gains to the two nations.

Speaking before a luncheon caucus of the US-Philippines Society on Tuesday, Jan. 31, Romualdez said he hoped the dialogue will help them identify more areas of cooperation.

“The United States and the Philippines have a long history of collaboration and cooperation when it comes to global issues. From trade and investment to security and defense, our countries have shown that much can be achieved if we continue working together,” he said.

The Speaker made a call for closer economic ties with the US to capitalize on the country’s record-breaking economic growth last year.

“I am confident that the long and extensive relationship between the United States and the Philippines will continue to bring economic gains that are beneficial for peoples of both countries,” he said.

Top US business leaders and former government officials gathered during the US-Philippines Society caucus held at the Manila Peninsula Hotel in Makati City.

Romualdez told the US-Philippines Society that the two countries should further strengthen ties and commitment to working together as “friends and allies.”

“Our bilateral relations are an important part of our diplomatic efforts. We have been able to make progress in areas such as climate change, economic development, and counterterrorism. This is the result of the strong bonds of friendship between our two countries,” the lawmaker from Leyte said.

“The US-Philippine relationship is also one of mutual respect and understanding. As friends and allies, we strive to be partners in promoting peace and stability in the region. We value the trust and confidence that come with our relationship as neighbors and partners,” he added.

Prior to his call for increased economic ties with the US, Romualdez spoke of the Legislative Agenda of the Philippines' 19th Congress.

He also mentioned how President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.’s “Agenda for Prosperity” was responsible for the country’s full-year 2022 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 7.6 percent.

“This agenda has as its core mission the country’s economic transformation towards inclusivity and sustainability,” Romualdez said, citing that “we in Congress join the President in this mission.”

Romualdez, a cousin of the President, noted that the House of Representatives has adopted the Marcos administration’s Medium-Term Fiscal Framework (MTFF) and 8-Point Socio-Economic Agenda, which comprise the roadmap for the Agenda for Prosperity.

“We have committed to prioritizing legislative measures that support the MTFF and the 8-Point Socioeconomic Agenda because we in Congress join in the mission to steer the economy back to its high-growth path in the near term and sustain inclusive and resilient growth through to 2028,” he said.

The common goals in government led to the “sound economic plan” that came with the Agenda for Prosperity, Romualdez added.

This “solid economic plan” is also the reason why the country is “not only surviving but thriving in spite of the external or global economic challenges.”

Despite the “gloomy” economic outlook globally brought about by the pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, high inflation, and “an abrupt slowdown in global growth,” the lawmaker noted how the Philippines last week announced a GDP growth of 7.2 percent in the fourth quarter of last year, resulting in a 7.6 percent full-year growth in 2022.

“This is the fastest growth recorded since 1976, and above the government’s target of 6.5 to 7.5 percent,” he added.

These figures further strengthen the resolve of Congress “to remain fully committed to supporting the Agenda for Prosperity with the necessary legislative measures.”

“We are now deliberating on current bills— and will propose more measures— aimed at opening the Philippine markets for foreign direct investments. The approval in the

House of Representatives of the Maharlika Investment Fund bill is just the beginning,” he said.

MANILA STANDARD

[BOI expects P1 trillion worth of renewable energy projects](#)

By: Othel V. Campos

The Board of Investments said investments in the renewable energy sector are expected to reach P1.031 trillion in 2023 and in the coming years.

Trade Secretary and BOI chairman Alfredo Pascual said renewable energy projects would continue to be a key driver for investments this year, following the removal of the foreign equity restriction on local projects.

Danish renewable energy developer Copenhagen Energy A/S is investing P360 billion in the BuhaWind offshore wind project in Ilocos Norte. The project is on its advanced stage of entry, according to the BOI.

“I am looking forward to the implementation of this project, especially since CE has already secured a service contract. They also already submitted a system impact study last week, which already included the electrical design and proposals on how to bring power to the grid,” Pascual said.

The BOI is in close coordination with other government agencies involved to expedite the evaluation of the study. The project is expected to be in commercial operation by 2028, according to Pascual.

The project involves the development of offshore wind power using wind turbine generators that can produce 15 to 20-megawatt capacity each in the waters off Burgos, Bangui and Pagudpud towns in Ilocos Norte.

CE chief executive officer Jasmin Bejdic said the company was on track and progressing with its community engagement, financial impact assessment and national strategy.

“With proper government support, we will be able to implement the project according to plan, noting Ilocos region as definitely one of the best resource for wind power,” he said.

Bejdic said the Philippines remains a very promising business destination for floating wind towers.

The BOI is also evaluating P446 billion worth of investments for eight RE projects and P225 billion for pump-storage and solar energy projects.

“We highly regard renewable energy projects, especially off-shore wind types, as game changers especially as more and more investors particularly in global value chains are looking for locations that provide solutions on net-zero carbon commitments of companies,” Pascual said.

He said the BOI was also engaged with the World Bank on the implementation of its recommendations on the Offshore Wind Study conducted in 2022. The WB ranked the Philippines as the 8th best location globally for offshore wind.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Cleanup boosts Pasig River's flood-carrying capacity

MANILA – San Miguel Corporation (SMC) said it expects its PHP2-billion Pasig River cleanup project to cross the 1 million metric tons threshold in silt and solid wastes removed by next month, as its dredging teams focus their efforts on both ends of the river -- the Manila Bay and Laguna Lake, where significant water flow restriction is known to occur.

SMC president and CEO Ramon S. Ang reported that with the company's ongoing cleanup, the Pasig River's flood-carrying capacity has significantly improved. From just two to three meters deep at the start of the project, completed sections now have depths of up to five to six meters.

Ang added that the target of 1 million tons by February will be achieved just 20 months after the initiative was launched in July 2021, with the support of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and local government units.

Ang said the pace of its cleanup activities at the Pasig River is considerably faster compared to its earlier project to clean up the Tullahan River, owing to its deployment of more heavy equipment and personnel.

SMC's Tullahan River cleanup, which removed some 1.12 million metric tons of silt and waste from sections of the river traversing Navotas, Caloocan, Malabon and Valenzuela, took a total of 27 months.

To date, SMC's cleanup teams have extracted a total of 927,198 metric tons of silt and waste from the Pasig River, with monthly targets now at more than 70,000 tons.

Apart from removing wastes and improving the flow and carrying capacity of the river to help mitigate flooding, navigability and safety for ferries and other vessels have also improved.

"We are happy to note that the easing of restrictions, along with the additional personnel and equipment we were able to put on the ground, are now allowing us to achieve our cleanup targets much faster," Ang said in a statement on Tuesday.

“Hopefully, by the time the rainy season sets in later this year, our cities will feel the benefits of the Pasig River’s larger carrying capacity, along with government’s other flood mitigation and control programs,” he added.

SMC’s historic Pasig River cleanup, said to be the largest such initiative to date by a single private enterprise, caught the attention of Japanese shipping giant NYK Line last year.

The firm, whose seafarers are mostly Filipino, supported the project via a USD1.5-million grant for the purchase of additional equipment. SMC has pegged the cost of its entire Pasig River cleanup at PHP2 billion, or close to USD37 million.

Ang said the increase in output from the Pasig River effort is also partly due to the addition of the San Juan River -- a major tributary to the Pasig River -- to the coverage area.

With a length of around 10 kilometers, the San Juan River emanates from Quezon City and passes through Manila, San Juan, and Mandaluyong, leading to the Pasig River.

“Compared to our earlier Tullahan River cleanup, the positive impacts of our Pasig River effort will be felt in even more areas. It will benefit not just people from Metro Manila, but also many who are living in Rizal, all the way to Laguna de Bay,” Ang said.

He added that apart from increasing the river’s capacity to receive floodwaters, the cleanup will also reduce peak water flows that normally go to the Laguna Lake, via the Manggahan Floodway.

In many instances, areas near the Laguna Lake experience flooding during heavy rainfall or typhoons, because of heavy siltation, which causes the lake to overflow.

Siltation of major tributaries, apart from pollution, is among the major challenges that need to be addressed to better manage flooding, Ang said.

Meanwhile, at the request of the local government units in Bulacan, he said that San Miguel has also started cleanup efforts at the Meycauayan River, one of the tributaries that make up the Marilao-Meycauayan-Obando-River System (MMORS).

This is also to help address flooding in the province. To date, a total of 147,661 metric tons of silt and waste have been removed from this area.

Davao City bats for linkages in waste-to-energy project

By: Che Palicte

DAVAO CITY – This city is linking up with national government agencies to push its waste-to-energy (WTE) project and comply with requirements for national government funding needed to build the facility.

Assistant City Administrator Tristan Dwight Domingo said the local government initially partnered with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to conform with the prerequisites and get approval from the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Board for the proposal.

“Just recently, the city wrote DENR to follow up on the plans to form a technical working group (TWG) for the project,” Domingo said in a statement Tuesday.

He said the TWG will be composed of the city government project team, the DENR - Environmental Management Bureau and other concerned offices.

With an in-depth feasibility study, he said the public can be assured that the Davao City WTE project will ensure compliance with the safety, health and environmental standards.

He made the assurance amid the supposed disinformation spread by groups or individuals opposing the project.

"The city recognizes everyone's right to voice their opinions and comments on the project. However, we would like to appeal to them to be mindful of the statements that they release, and ensure that these are accurate," Domingo said.

He noted that the partnership with DENR is vital as the funding from the national government will be coursed through the department, the venture being one of the pilot WTE projects in the country.

Domingo further emphasized that countries like Japan and those in Southeast Asia were successful with their respective solid waste management programs, as these are usually done with support from their national governments through subsidy or funding.

"That is the same financing scheme that we would like to pilot here in Davao City," Domingo explained.

He said that the city would need an estimated PHP3.5 billion from the national government to fully fund the construction of the facility.

Domingo said the amount is on top of the PHP2.5 billion initially donated by the Japanese government for the project.

THE MANILA TIMES

[\[Opinion\] Misdirected protest on energy planning](#)

A COALITION of environmental and community groups has petitioned the Supreme Court to strike down Executive Order (EO) 30, issued by President Rodrigo Duterte in 2017, arguing that it is unconstitutional and will lead to the expansion of coal and other fossil fuel energy projects in the country. The environmental and social concerns are quite valid, and it is to the country's benefit that there are groups actively working to ensure that they are addressed. Assailing EO 30, however, is not the right way to accomplish that.

EO 30 was written at a time when fears for the Philippines' near-term and future energy supply were particularly acute. In an effort to accelerate development, and in line with the Duterte administration's focus on infrastructure expansion, EO 30 created the Energy Investment Coordinating Council (EICC), which was given the primary task to review energy projects and declare those it deemed suitable as Energy Projects of National Significance (EPNS).

An EPNS designation is intended to fast-track the approval process for an energy project that will contribute substantially to meeting the country's overall energy demand. It provides for a number of exemptions and modified rules to accomplish this, with the initial vetting of proposed projects by the EICC intended to be the safeguard against abuses or inappropriate planning.

The activity of the EICC has slowed considerably since the end of President Duterte's term, but as of December 2021 there were a total of 149 EPNS projects, of which 74 are fossil fuel generation projects, primarily coal and gas, with most of the remainder being renewable energy projects.

The groups which submitted the petition against EO 30 to the Supreme Court on January 23 include Quezon for Environment (Queen); Atimonan Power to the People, Center for Energy, Ecology and Development (CEED); Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ); and Sanlakas. In a press release announcing the filing, Gerry Arances, executive director of CEED and convenor of Power for People Coalition (P4P), said: "We were right to raise concern regarding the constitutionality of EO 30 when it was first announced. In addition to the constitutional issues, there are very real economic issues which will confront consumers if this policy is continued. EO 30 has only reinforced the country's reliance on fossil fuels like coal. It is high time that the Supreme Court sees EO 30 for what it is: a blessing for the fossil fuel industry."

Some of the EPNS projects that are singled out by the coalition of green groups include the first one given EPNS status, the 1,200-megawatt (MW) coal-fired Atimonan One Energy power plant located in Quezon province; the 15 MW Palawan CFB coal-fired power plant project; and the Batangas LNG terminal. The Atimonan One project is currently on hold after the Supreme Court invalidated its power supply agreement (PSA) in 2019.

The reason the petition against EO 30 should and probably will fail is that it takes an all-too-common, emotion-based approach to addressing what very well may be real, unresolved environmental and economic concerns with some energy projects. The protestors provide no explanation for their determination that EO 30 is "unconstitutional," and the actual outcomes of the EPNS initiative belie the argument that the program is "a blessing for the fossil fuel industry." It is true that about half of the EPNS projects are fossil fuel projects, but about half are not; the 50-50 ratio actually closely follows the Department of Energy's long-established objective of having renewable energy make up 50 percent of the country's energy mix by 2040.

As has happened in many other cases where a particular law or policy has been assailed, the protesters, in this case, are mistaking possible flaws in implementation for a flaw in the concept. The EPNS program is a good idea, one of the very few to come out of the Duterte-era DoE. It at least partially addresses the chronic obstacles to developing energy resources and catching up with the country's energy supply requirements. The government of course has the responsibility to apply it prudently, and that application should be carefully monitored. But there is otherwise no compelling reason for the Supreme Court to end the program. As the old saying goes, dumping the entire policy codified in EO 30 would be throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

[WB approves \\$600-M funding package for PH](#)

THE World Bank has approved nearly P33 billion in fresh funding for the Philippines to rebuild the country's economy and strengthen the financial sector.

The \$600-million Philippines Second Financial Sector Reform Development Policy Financing program will be used to boost financial sector stability, integrity and resilience; expand financial inclusion for individuals and firms, particularly small ones; and catalyze climate and disaster risk finance to help protect Filipinos from climate change and natural disasters.

"Policy actions that strengthen the stability of the financial sector — including banks and insurance companies — will help Filipino families, businesses and investors withstand financial shocks and enhance their resilience by ensuring that problems... are detected at an early stage without severe disruptions to the economy," World Bank country director Ndiame Diop said in a statement.

The World Bank noted that only 51 percent of Filipinos ages 15 and above have accounts with financial institutions, below the East Asia and Pacific average of 80 percent. In the bottom 40 percent of the population, only 34 percent of adults have accounts, it added.

"Financial inclusion can be a key enabler to speed up poverty reduction and strengthen recovery from the pandemic," Diop said.

The quick-disbursing development policy loan program also aims to grow the local catastrophe insurance market to prevent people from falling into poverty following natural disasters. The increased use of catastrophe insurance, Diop said, will allow the government to focus fiscal resources on supporting people who need these most.

Reforms that promote innovative financial services by harnessing digital technologies, build consumer trust and improving the credit information infrastructure will also be supported by the financing program.

The World Bank also wants financial institutions to integrate climate and environmental risks in their risk management frameworks and mobilize private sector financing for green investments.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[World Bank to lend Philippines \\$600M for pandemic recovery, climate financing](#)

MANILA, Philippines — The World Bank awarded a fresh loan program to the Philippines to support the domestic economy's recovery from the pandemic and improve the resilience of the financial sector.

In a statement on Tuesday, the Washington-based lender granted the country a \$600-million loan. Aside from supporting the Philippine economy's recovery from the pandemic, this new loan financing is aimed at supporting three policy reform areas: the stability of the financial sector, improving financial inclusion for Filipinos and businesses, and climate and disaster risk finance.

"Policy actions that strengthen the stability of the financial sector – including banks and insurance companies – will help Filipino families, businesses, and investors withstand financial shocks and enhance their resilience by ensuring that problems in these financial institutions are detected at an early stage without severe disruptions to the economy," said Ndiamé Diop, World Bank country director for Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand.

The Philippine economy took a hit at the onset of the pandemic. The economy sank to lows unseen since World War II as the Duterte administration imposed mobility restrictions to prevent the spread of the virus.

Catastrophe insurance

As it is, the World Bank noted that the new loan program will aid the development of the country's catastrophe insurance market.

This relatively-new financial instrument could prevent the public from sliding into poverty if natural disasters strike. As it is, catastrophe insurance products are designed to protect households, assets, and businesses against natural disasters.

The Southeast Asian archipelago sits within the Pacific Ring of Fire, which leaves the Philippines vulnerable to a host of natural disasters annually. Likewise, the developing nation is at the receiving end of the climate crisis, as its wildly vulnerable to the effects of a warming planet.

Diop noted that catastrophe insurance will enable the national government to use its limited resources to support communities and Filipinos who need it most.

On the other hand, the development policy loan will also expand financing access for the public and businesses through digital technologies.

The World Bank indicated that development policy loans are sources of quick-disbursing assistance to countries pursuing reforms. As it is, this type of loan supports policy and institutional changes to foster an environment for equitable growth within a country's development priorities.

That said, the World Bank stood as the country's third-largest source of official development assistance in 2021 according to data from the National Economic and Development Authority.

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