



NEWS ROUNDUP

21 February 2023 [07:30 am]

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- Mangrove Reserve forest in Surigao del Norte 'headed for bigger things'
- LGUs urged to adopt edible landscaping
- Siargao ramps up mangrove protection

BUSINESS WORLD

[Abandoning monocropping expected to boost farming households' food security](#)

By: Patricia Marisol

IT'S DIFFICULT to imagine farmers being at risk of growing hungry, being so close to where the food is grown. But agricultural households that specialize too much in any one crop to maximize their land may find themselves in exactly that situation; avoiding such a predicament will require them to cultivate a variety of crops and farm animals.

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By: Alyssa Nicole O. Tan

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By: Ronnel W. Domingo

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PHILIPPINE STAR

[What we know so far: BuCor's plan to relocate its headquarters to Masungi](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Corrections is planning to transfer its headquarters from the national penitentiary in Muntinlupa City to a parcel of land within the Masungi Georeserve, an award-winning ecotourism site and conservation initiative in Rizal province.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Asean project aims to revitalize region's rivers](#)

A five-year project aimed at reducing pollution and revitalizing rivers in the region was launched last week in Manila by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).

THE VISAYAN DAILY STAR

[WASH and disasters](#)

According to the United Nations Children's Fund, when Super Typhoon Odette (Rai) struck southern and central parts of the Philippines in December 2021, it damaged 141 water structures and over 410 sanitation facilities, leading to increased risk of water-borne diseases as affected Filipinos had no access to drinking water were forced to rely on water from open springs and hand pumps contaminated by mud, flood and sea water.

CCC IN THE NEWS

MANILA BULLETIN

[Climate Change Commission bats for agro-industrial initiatives to ensure food security](#)

By: Betheena Unite

The government is pushing for agro-industrial initiatives as a way to ensure food and human security in the country.

[Mangrove Reserve forest in Surigao del Norte 'headed for bigger things'](#)

By: Betheena Unite

The Del Carmen Mangrove Reserve in Surigao del Norte is "headed for bigger things" as it vies for a global recognition, the Climate Change Commission (CCC) said.

PHILIPPINE STAR

[LGUs urged to adopt edible landscaping](#)

By: Helen Flores

MANILA, Philippines — Local government units (LGUs) and the private sector should adopt edible landscaping to ensure sustainable food sufficiency across the country, an official of the Climate Change Commission (CCC) said.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Siargao ramps up mangrove protection](#)

By: Kristina Maralit

The ecotown initiative spearheaded by the Climate Change Commission (CCC) inspired a town in Surigao to preserve and prepare its mangrove forest for global recognition.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS WORLD

[Abandoning monocropping expected to boost farming households' food security](#)

By: Patricia Marisol

IT'S DIFFICULT to imagine farmers being at risk of growing hungry, being so close to where the food is grown. But agricultural households that specialize too much in any one crop to maximize their land may find themselves in exactly that situation; avoiding such a predicament will require them to cultivate a variety of crops and farm animals.

"You can't consume the same crop or food every day," according to Ma. Elena P. van Tooren, executive director of the East-West Seed Foundation, Inc., adding that growing mixed crops also helps food security within a community because it makes food accessible, available, and affordable.

The East-West Seed Foundation is the corporate social responsibility arm of East-West Seed Philippines, which breeds and produces vegetable seed for tropical conditions.

"Grow local, consume local, shorten the food supply chain," she said in an e-mail.

The Food and Agriculture Organization has said that one of the most advantageous features of home gardens is their "location adjacent to homes, close association with family activities, and a wide diversity of crop and livestock species to meet family needs."

Per the World Food Programme (WFP), about a quarter of Philippine agricultural households are food insecure, compared to only 9% for non-agricultural households.

Regenerative agriculture — an approach that highlights intercropping, where multiple crops are planted together; agroforestry, the cultivation and use of trees and shrubs with crops and livestock in agricultural systems; and livestock integration — may likewise help contribute to food security.

The approach helps both farmers and the environment by "ensuring that the agri-ecosystem remains productive, with less damage to the environment," said academician Eufemio T. Rasco, Jr., chair of the Agricultural Sciences Division of the National Academy of Science and Technology.

"Switching from the present practice to regenerative agriculture practices may temporarily compromise food production, however, as it takes time to heal a damaged agro-ecosystem," he said.

"This damage resulted from years of monoculture, harmful tillage practices, and chemical farming," he told BusinessWorld.

Mr. Rasco added that the Philippines could be uniquely resistant to regenerative farming because of the “limited” diversity of its food — dominated by rice — and high meat consumption.

“The existing practices in rice production is arguably the most environmentally destructive form of agriculture,” he said. “Meat has a higher environmental footprint than plants and fish. We need to shift to a more diverse diet, mostly plant-based.”

Ms. Van Tooren describes regenerative agriculture as “one level higher” than organic or natural farming, as it requires more planning.

“At this time, even natural or organic farming has limited adoption, with farmers claiming that commercial crop production is not possible with natural or organic methods and procedures,” she said.

Both organic or natural farming and regenerative agriculture require a paradigm shift, she added.

“We all know how difficult a paradigm shift can be. Pushing for organic or natural farming is paving the way towards regenerative agriculture,” Ms. Van Tooren said.

The global food and beverage manufacturer Nestlé, whose NESCAFÉ Plan helps smallholder Robusta coffee farmers increase yields and earnings, sees regenerative agriculture as feasible in the Philippines.

Project Coffee+, the Plan’s banner project, was implemented from 2018 to 2022 in the provinces of Bukidnon and Sultan Kudarat. A joint undertaking with the German development agency Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the project sought to equip 1,500 farmer participants to approach farming as a “business beyond subsistence levels,” said Jose Uy III, senior vice-president and head of corporate affairs, Nestlé Philippines, Inc.

Some 83% of all coffee in the country is grown in Mindanao, Mr. Uy told BusinessWorld.

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and Region XII (which covers the provinces of Cotabato, Sarangani, South Cotabato, and Sultan Kudarat in Mindanao) are two of the most food insecure regions in the country, WFP noted in October 2022. BARMM, in particular, is the only area that recorded food insecurity levels above 30%.

“These farmers have undergone extensive training to become agripreneurs who now practice farming as a business,” Mr. Uy said in an e-mail. As a result, he added, the participants’ average production grew to about 900 kg/hectare in 2021 from 235 kg/hectare in 2018.

The regenerative agriculture practices of composting, intercropping, agroforestry, and cultivating cover crops were among the techniques taught to the first batch of farmer participants. These, said Mr. Uy, strengthen resilience against climate change, increase harvests, help improve farm incomes, and promote coffee agriculture sustainability.

“As more farmers adopt these practices in and beyond coffee growing, the country’s agriculture sector as a whole can only become stronger, increasing our food security,” he added.

[DoF expects more businesses to go green this year](#)

By: Alyssa Nicole O. Tan

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance (DoF) is confident that it can persuade more businesses to go green this year, citing the possible passage of a bill easing tax payments as well as increased promotion of available incentives.

Finance Undersecretary Maria Cielo D. Magno said that despite the incentive packages, the Philippines still has a low count of environment-friendly companies.

“Companies are still applying; we still have very few,” she said in an interview on the sidelines of the Nordic-Philippine Climate Executive Dialogue on Thursday.

However, she expects to see progress this year since “we’re just at the beginning of implementing it,” referring to incentive packages provided by the fiscal incentives review board.

The DoF is giving incentives to companies that employ eco-friendliness and renewable energy, as well as those that introduce new technology.

“We are also working with Congress right now on the ease of paying taxes to simplify all the tax administration [and] tax payments,” Ms. Magno said, citing the inclusion of a provision that further simplifies invoicing requirements of companies.

She said the bill if passed would make it easier for export companies that are entitled to a value-added tax (VAT) refund to get their claim, benefits, and incentives given by the government.

Should the proposed bill be passed, it will remove the P500 annual taxpayer registration fee, introduce a medium-sized taxpayer classification, and remove the distinction between sales invoices and official receipts for purposes of recognizing VAT transactions.

“The [DoF] remains steadfast in mobilizing financing for climate change mitigation and adaptation,” Ms. Magno said.

The Finance department is currently establishing a sustainable finance ecosystem to synergize investments from the public and private sectors to yield green projects that “will have a lasting and permanent effect on the environment and our people,” she added.

Meanwhile, Ms. Magno said that in the extractive sector, which includes mining, and oil and gas exploration, “there is an active discussion within the MSG (multi-stakeholder group), the board of the EITI (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative), to discuss

stronger environmental and social monitoring,” noting awareness for the increasing need for critical minerals.

On its website, the EITI describes itself as a platform to show the direct and indirect contributions of the extractive sector to the economy, among others.

Critical minerals such as copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt and rare earth elements are essential components in rapidly growing clean energy technologies — from wind turbines and electricity networks to electric vehicles, according to the International Energy Agency.

Demand for these minerals will grow as clean energy transitions gather pace, it added.

“Right now, the group is working on a grievance mechanism, so that the MSG will be more accessible,” Ms. Magno said, adding the creation of more policies that target responsible mining.

“If we’re able to really implement policies that would make responsible mining feasible, then I think it’s good news for everyone, especially now that there’s increasing demand for critical minerals,” she said.

[Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino get P80-M facilities to mitigate climate change risks](#)

TWO provinces in the Cagayan Valley region in northeastern Philippines have received P80 million worth of support facilities to mitigate risks from climate change and natural disaster.

The provinces of Nueva Vizcaya and Quirino received the agroforestry support facilities through a joint project of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

“I hope that you are now more capable and empowered, ready to sustain our efforts in conserving our forest, protecting our environment, and mitigating climate change and disaster risks,” JICA Senior Representative Ide Soichiro said during the turnover ceremony, based on a press release from the agency.

The facilities are part of the Forestland Management Project, an 11-year program that seeks to conserve forests in the river basins of Upper Magat and Cagayan, Pampanga, and Jalaur, according to JICA.

JICA and DENR are using community-based forestland management strategies for the project, which includes partnering with and assisting people’s organizations (POs) for their enterprises.

“The project also assisted their 45 partner people’s organizations in said provinces in developing their enterprises. They have been working also on agroforestry value chain for coffee and high value fruits, which is expected to generate further incomes for farmers,” JICA said.

The Forestland Management Project has so far developed 71,300 hectares of tree and agroforestry plantations, which are being maintained and protected by partner POs.

PANAY NEWS

DOST calls for science-based solutions to real problems

By Glenda Tayona

ILOILO City – The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) started preparing for its Call for Proposals for DOST and Council Grant-in-Aid (GIA) Program.

DOST secretary Renato Solidum Jr. said they are looking for a research that can provide science-based solutions to real problems in the real world.

“Sometimes researchers think of something that they perceive is beneficial to the community but it will be helpful if they hear it from the industry, the local government... That is why we need to have an ecosystem for the scientific community that will not only address the perceived need of researchers but the real needs of industry players,” Solidum said.

He was in Iloilo on Feb. 16 for the third leg of the 2023 Visayas Cluster Call Conference. It aims to discuss research and development priority areas as well as the requirements and evaluation process, among others.

Solidum said the call for proposals is very significant so that the department can lay down its priorities.

“Starting this year, we convince state universities and colleges, private colleges and research organizations that what we need in the scientific community is to translate what we produce as innovations or applications or services towards four major themes aligned with the President’s socio-economic agenda and the long-term vision for the country,” said Solidum.

The four major themes are human well-being, wealth creation, wealth protection, and sustainability.

Solidum said under the human well-being theme, the aim is to develop science and technology innovation to address health and food security concerns.

“We need to ramp up our human resource development in terms of providing scholarship, providing new ways of learning or doing things, especially the school system. Most importantly even with graduate degrees already, we still need to ramp up efforts in making sure that technology and entrepreneurship should be combined,” he added.

For wealth creation, the focus is to make sure that what is in research and development is translated into something that is adopted by the national and local governments and most importantly by the enterprises.

“There are various business models... We have been helping micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) but what we need to also engage larger businesses, the larger organizations, so we can create more impact,” he added.

In wealth protection, Solidum emphasized the need to protect lives and livelihood: “We are prone to many natural hazards because of the climate change, global warming. So we need to protect our lives and our livelihood, that is why the third is wealth protection.”

He emphasized that to integrate these and to ensure the future generation will be able to use the country’s natural wealth, there is a need to preserve and conserve the environment.

He said sustainability also means ensuring the products and innovations of the researchers are acknowledged and supported.

Also, Solidum said there is a need to develop smart technology and guides, and applications and other innovations to ensure an effective governance system through digital transformation.

This research will be funded through the DOST grant aid; Philippine Council for Health Research and Development; Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development; Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and Emerging Technologies; and National Research Council of the Philippines./PN

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[Millennial leaders driving positive change—in schools, at sea](#)

By: Russel P. Loreto

In a country where education and environmental challenges loom large, two millennial leaders are making a mark: Jatón Zulueta, who started his education advocacy teaching street kids at Manila South Cemetery, and Anna Oposa, a “mermaid” at heart who aims to turn every Filipino into a “sea-tizen.”

Both have dedicated their lives to creating sustainable solutions to the ills of society. Zulueta, 38, founder of AHA! Learning Center, addresses education inequity while 35-year-old Oposa, co-founder of Save Philippine Seas (SPS), fights for marine conservation.

The two have been selected to join Ashoka’s dynamic global community of social entrepreneurs dedicated to creating positive change across various fields. Ashoka describes its fellows, numbering more than 3,500 across 93 countries to date, as those who “champion new ideas that transform society’s systems—providing benefits for everyone and improving the lives of millions of people.” They are deemed as the “ultimate role models in today’s world.” There are only 16 Filipino Ashoka fellows at present.

A nonprofit based in Virginia, United States, Ashoka equips its fellows with financial support, expert guidance, connections and a powerful platform to magnify the impact of their work.

Empowering the underserved through education

Erika Tatad, venture manager at Ashoka Philippines, explains that candidates go through multiple rounds of interviews to ensure their credibility, ethics and sustainability of their organization. “We need to be thorough in the process because an Ashoka fellowship is a lifetime commitment,” she says.

Zulueta’s mother encouraged him to volunteer by teaching at a graveyard where street kids lived. As he himself struggled with math, he developed a deep sense of empathy for out-of-school children who had fallen behind their peers. When he began teaching, he realized he wasn’t bad at math but that he just wasn’t being taught in a way he could excel. He dedicated his free time and weekends to teaching at the graveyard from age 19, when he was a college student.

Zulueta founded AHA! Learning Center, an after-school tutorial program in Makati in 2009. Going beyond the common models of tutoring, he is committed to stay long enough with students to make a difference in their learning journey.

According to Ashoka, AHA! “become more than a weekend tutoring program and became a true center for children, parents, families and teachers to create deep transformations in themselves, and give themselves permission to dream and be the change.”

“There seems to be a gap [in the quality of education]. It looks like there’s no hope [in underserved communities],” he says in an interview with Inquirer. “Our goal is to eradicate illiteracy.”

In 2018, Zulueta decided to commit his full attention to AHA! and expand it, gaining recognition and awards such as The Outstanding Young Men (TOYM) and Obama Foundation Fellow.

“No one wants to be on it [the idea] unless there’s a proof of concept,” says Zulueta.

To date, AHA! has reached more than 168,000 children with its network of 25 school partners in the poorest areas in the Philippines.

When the pandemic hit, it threatened to upend all of Zulueta’s hard work. However, he didn’t back down; he mobilized his team for emergency solutions to ensure that access to education would not be disrupted. He quickly crowdsourced across his networks. Hundreds of Filipinos volunteered their resources, time and skills to create modules and train teachers.

Aside from the reaching out to communities amid the pandemic restrictions, Zulueta and AHA! came up with Eskwelang Pamilya, an educational program that uses Facebook Messenger to connect with parents and children. The program uses text-based methods to educate and provide resources to those in need. AHA! also broadcasts lessons through a daily radio program that serves as an alternative classroom for students.

“Our country is worth working for,” says Zulueta. “The difficult thing oftentimes [with this line of work] is that it takes a lot of courage; 90 percent of it is showing up and connecting with the communities.”

Zulueta has a lot of plans for the future of AHA!. But for now, he is focused on reaching more provinces and communities to make sure that change is felt nationwide. Being an Ashoka fellow, he says, “doesn’t just validate what we do but emboldens us to do even better,” he says.

Saving the seas

For Oposa, every Filipino must become a “sea-tizen,” a portmanteau of the words sea and citizen, one who is actively engaged in protecting the seas. Her official title at SPS—“chief mermaid”—speaks volumes about her mission.

“My work has definitely been cut out for me,” Oposa shares with the Inquirer. From a young age, she fell in love with the ocean. Her father, Antonio “Tony” Oposa, a

well-known environmental lawyer and 2009 Ramon Magsaysay honoree, has instilled in her the responsibility of protecting the environment.

In 2008, during a summer break from college at the University of the Philippines (UP), Oposa assisted her father in organizing an event called the Global Legal Action of Climate Change. It was there that she realized the true potential of individual and collective action. No matter how small the initiative, one can make an impact.

Once back in school, Oposa cofounded Isko Cleans UP, an organization that aims to reduce waste and promote recycling through monthly fairs and workshops. Thanks to her initiative, UP banned the use of styrofoam and institutionalized the recyclables fair. Realizing that much of climate change literature is Western-centric, Oposa co-authored the book “An Introduction to Climate Change for Filipino Youth” to make the topic more relatable to young people.

A few months prior to graduation, Oposa was chosen to join the Philippine delegation to the UN Climate Change Conference, gaining her first experience in multilateral negotiations.

In 2011, Oposa was deeply disturbed by illegal wildlife trade. She began writing to peers, local leaders and even strangers, starting an online campaign. She quickly became the face of the advocacy and by 2012, became the youngest winner of the Future for Nature Award. Through this program, she was able to create the Shark Shelter Project in Cebu and establish SPS as a thriving organization.

Shark Shelter Project, a community-based initiative on the island of Malapascua, implemented a “full value chain approach” that included education, livelihoods, resource mobilization and policy work, empowering locals to protect marine life.

Oposa recalls her first ever experience in reaching out to communities, “I was really young and naive and I thought marine conservation was easy. But it was really hard to do as most of them didn’t care. They [the locals] were just there for the food and beer.” In order for her advocacy to come through, she spent countless weeks and months immersing into the communities.

Oposa served as lead campaigner for a shark conservation bill. Her efforts led to additional national protection for shark and ray species. She also conducts research, analysis, information management and communications work to support the development of ocean health-related agenda of the Asian Development Bank. She has previously worked on the multilateral bank’s projects related to the youth, curbing illegal wildlife trade and environmental education.

She also established SPS’s youth program, the Sea and Earth Advocates Camp, the first environmental education and leadership program of its kind in the Philippines. Just like her father, Oposa also became a TOYM honoree in 2022.

[New Philippine blueprint meant to be pandemic-proof](#)

By: Ronnel W. Domingo

The Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 is not the first economic blueprint for the country that was drawn up in the wake of economic, historical, global upheavals.

We had a “technical memorandum” on Philippine Economic Development adopted by President Roxas for the years 1947-1952 at a time of rebuilding immediately after World War II.

The Roxas administration built on up such a memo and drew up a more proper plan, but it was the succeeding Quirino administration that carried it out. This was the five-year (1949-1953) “program for rehabilitation and industrial development,” also known as the Cuaderno Plan after Mr. Roxas’ Finance Secretary Miguel Cuaderno Sr.

Through the intervening decades, economic road maps sought to increase national output and income which—when later plans were improved with a broader perspective that integrated the “social” aspect in planning—were to be measured in terms of job creation, human development, equitable distribution, poverty alleviation (and later on, reduction), and even good governance and the rule of law.

The latest iteration of a Philippine economic blueprint, PDP 2023-2028, was drawn up amid the lingering disruptions of a global pandemic.

“By taking stock of the many lessons we have learned from the past three years, the PDP clearly and coherently maps out our vision, timeline and strategies for deep and genuine socioeconomic transformation,” says Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno.

Considering this, Secretary Arsenio Balisacan of the National Economic and Development Authority says that the plan not only entails support for human and social development, it also includes protection from risks and preparation for future economic disruptions.

Competition and pricesBalisacan says the PDP strategies will also include transforming the production sectors so that they can provide a range of goods and services at competitive prices, especially at a time when high inflation is a pressing problem.

“This entails creating an enabling environment for growth and investment through policies that foster competition and innovation, harness digitalization as an efficient means of delivering public and private services, and uphold peace and security,” he says.

For the economic or production sector, the plan is geared toward modernizing agriculture and agribusiness, revitalizing the industry sector and reinvigorating the services sector.

For the social and development part, the plan is intended to promote and improve lifelong learning and education, boost the population's health, establish livable communities, ensure food security and proper nutrition, strengthen the social protection system, and increase the income-earning ability of the workforce.

To catalyze the economic and social strategies, the plan is banking on digitalization, public-private partnerships (PPPs), "servicification" or building ecosystems around manufacturing clusters identified as potential sources of high growth, a dynamic innovation ecosystem with new products and more efficient processes, enhanced digital and physical connectivity through infrastructure and greater collaboration between the national and local governments.

To entice investors' support in the implementation of the plan, this was promoted recently through several economic and business fora held in Germany, the United Kingdom and Japan.

In these fora, the Marcos administration touted a large consumer base of over 110 million people in an economy that expected to reach upper-middle income status in the next three years.

The Philippines is pictured as a competitive launching pad for the Southeast Asian market which is, in turn, a market with more than 600 million people.

Also, the administration rekindled attention to the Philippines' "demographic dividend"—a growing and young working population that presents fuel for additional sources of economic growth in the next two to three decades.

More importantly, the country is presented as now being more open to business than ever before, thanks to new laws that liberalize domestic industries.

The Marcos administration vows to build on such "game-changing reforms" in the investment environment, such as the amendments to the Foreign Investment Act, Retail Trade Liberalization Act, and Public Service Act, as well as the passage of the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises Law.

Thus, there are significant opportunities for PPPs in energy, water, logistics, transportation, agribusiness, tourism, health, education, and digital connectivity.

In this regard, the Marcos administration promises to strengthen and facilitate PPPs, trade and investments, research and development, and technology transfer, while enabling open and competitive markets will complement these reforms.

The goal is to make it easier for companies to compete and innovate while upholding consumer protection. Businesses will be assured of lower transactions costs, a healthy regulatory environment, and protection from anti-competitive practices.

And as the Philippines seeks to “regain its position among the most dynamic economies in Asia and the world” through the plan, Balisacan says PDP has provisions to strengthen the resilience of communities, institutions, and ecosystems to the impacts of natural hazards and climate change.

“To achieve transformation, we must introduce systematic changes to our consumption and production patterns, as well as manage our natural capital resources, if we are to sustain a well-functioning and resilient economy,” the NEDA chief says.

“Indeed, given today’s technological advances, sustained levels of high growth need not be at the expense of the environment,” he adds.

At the same time, Balisacan says the administration is reaffirming the commitment to significantly reduce poverty and inequality in the Philippines through the PDP, which he described as designed to address the persisting multi-generational inequality and poverty among Filipino families.

“In particular, initiatives to boost health, improve education and lifelong learning, increase income-earning ability, ensure food security and proper nutrition, and rationalize social protection will be among the main policy thrusts of the PDP,” he says.

“We aim to sustain the socioeconomic gains in the past decade for at least two more decades, in the hope of attaining the AmBisyon Natin 2040, which states that all Filipinos will enjoy a firmly rooted, comfortable and secure life by 2040,” he adds.

This was brought up as the World Bank reported that the top 1 percent of Filipino earners contribute to 17 percent of national income while only 14 percent comes from the bottom 50 percent.

“We must urgently address these challenges so that we do not backslide and instead sustain our efforts towards sustainable and inclusive economic development,” the Secretary says.

But research group IBON is not impressed, dismissing PDP 2023-2028 as a rehash of a worldview that was becoming obsolete and one that needed to be reversed.

The group said that through the years, PDPs have had the same framework and have made the country more and more export-oriented and attractive to foreign investors by opening up the economy.

Despite this, IBON said the share of manufacturing has fallen to its smallest share of gross domestic product since the 1950s while that of agriculture shrank to its smallest share in Philippine history.

For the think tank, the latest PDP will not deliver more, better and green jobs, nor will it drive progress.

“The PDP is underpinned by an out-of-date free market globalization framework which is the very same approach that kept the Philippine economy persistently underdeveloped for the past decades,” IBON said.

“Changing global conditions of dampening exports and investments only point to the urgency of much more domestic-led and democratic development,” it added.

PHILIPPINE STAR

[What we know so far: BuCor's plan to relocate its headquarters to Masungi](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

MANILA, Philippines — The Bureau of Corrections is planning to transfer its headquarters from the national penitentiary in Muntinlupa City to a parcel of land within the Masungi Georeserve, an award-winning ecotourism site and conservation initiative in Rizal province.

BuCor's plans to relocate its headquarters and training institute within Masungi drew criticisms and raised concerns that it will damage the fragile Upper Marikina watershed, parts of which are being protected by the Masungi Georeserve Foundation for decades.

What are BuCor claims?

On February 16, Masungi Georeserve Foundation questioned the area inspection conducted by BuCor personnel in a parcel of land called Lot 10, which comprises the ecotourism site.

A day later, the BuCor said it is the registered owner of a 270-hectare land within the area, essentially claiming the majority of the 300-hectare Masungi Georeserve.

According to BuCor officer-in-charge Gregorio Catapang Jr., a transfer certificate of title for the 270-hectare land in Barangays Kuyumbay, Layban, San Andres and Tinucan in Tanay town was issued in favor of BuCor on September 28, 2022 by the Registry of Deeds in Morong, Rizal.

The BuCor official said the parcel of land was originally registered under the Republic of the Philippines covered by the Original Certificate of Title No. 3556.

Catapang insisted that the corrections bureau remains the owner of the property unless a court nullifies its title.

What are BuCor's plans?

The agency said it plans to transfer its headquarters, Corrections National Training Institute, and aqua- and agri-farm to Lot 10.

BuCor also plans to build a residential area for its personnel and employees there.

Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla said BuCor's plans are not yet final and are still being explored.

What is 'Lot 10'?

According to Masungi Georeserve Foundation, Lot 10 is part of protected areas and is home to fragile limestone formations conserved by the organization.

The property in question was equitized in a joint venture project in 2002 between the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Blue Star Construction and Development Corp., which leads Masungi's forest restoration and conservation initiatives.

Lot 10 is also included in Masungi's reforestation initiative with the government called Masungi Geopark Project. Under a 2017 agreement with the DENR, the initiative aims to restore 2,700 hectares of degraded forest land around the georeserve.

The foundation stressed that Lot 10 is "mountainous and geologically unbuildable" and that "development will be financially prohibitive."

What does Proclamation 1158 say?

Catapang and Remulla cited Proclamation 1158 issued by former president and now Senior Deputy Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (Pampanga), which reserved 270 hectares of the parcel of land as the new site of the New Bilibid Prison as recommended by the DENR.

In the same proclamation, 30 hectares of land in the same area was reserved as a site of the DENR Calabarzon's field office.

In a letter to former BuCor deputy director general and spokesperson Gabriel Chaclag in January, Masungi Georeserve Foundation president Ben Dumaliang said the presidential proclamation does not terminate the supplemental agreement executed by the DENR and the Blue Star Construction and Development Corporation on Nov. 15, 2002.

"The president (Arroyo) was deliberately misled. We respectfully submit that had the president known that Lot 10 was already the subject of a contract, especially one she herself caused, she would not have signed Presidential Proclamation No. 1158," Dumaliang said.

In 2009, former Environment chief Lito Atienza issued a memorandum, directing the agency's regional office to find a different site for the NBP in consideration of the appeals from homeowners in Tanay, Rizal.

What are BuCor's next steps?

In a briefing on Monday, Catapang said the agency will tap the University of the Philippines School of Urban and Regional Planning to study "how to best develop the area."

He added the development, if it pushes through, "should be environmentally-friendly and will not destroy the ecology in the area."

In a separate ambush interview, Remulla said the land not in use should be utilized by the government.

“The title of Masungi belongs to the government. It’s the heritage of the Filipino people. It does not belong to one foundation at all, but to all the Filipino people,” he said.

The justice chief added that he and DENR Secretary Toni Loyzaga “will speak in one voice on this matter.” Loyzaga has yet to respond to Philstar.com’s request for comment.

Why is Masungi Georeserve important?

Once an abused strip of land, Masungi Georeserve is now an award-winning conservation area known for its lush sceneries and sprawling karst landscape. It is also home to more than 400 species of flora and fauna, some of which are rare and threatened.

Masungi, located on the foothills of the Sierra Madre, is part of the 26,000-hectare Upper Marikina River Basin Protected Landscape.

The Upper Marikina watershed plays a critical role in the climate fight by serving as a buffer against storms and by regulating water flow toward Metro Manila.

Over the years, Masungi has locked horns with quarry operators, resort owners and other entities who illegally occupy forestlands within the Upper Marikina Watershed. The DENR recently canceled quarrying permits within the Masungi Geopark Project.

Masungi managing trustee Ann Dumaliang earlier appealed to Catapang to “deem the environment as central to all issues and reconsider BuCor’s plans.” She also called on Loyzaga and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to intervene.

“The Masungi Geopark Project is at the forefront of the Philippines’ climate change agenda to enable effective, nature-based solutions involving the private sector, civil society, and communities. Sabotaging Masungi goes against our nation’s sustainable development,” the foundation said.

THE VISAYAN DAILY STAR

WASH and disasters

According to the United Nations Children’s Fund, when Super Typhoon Odette (Rai) struck southern and central parts of the Philippines in December 2021, it damaged 141 water structures and over 410 sanitation facilities, leading to increased risk of water-borne diseases as affected Filipinos had no access to drinking water were forced to rely on water from open springs and hand pumps contaminated by mud, flood and sea water.

According to the International Federation of Red Cross, there were over 400 cases of diarrhea and gastroenteritis, likely resulting from contamination of water sources in Odette-hit areas. Eight people reportedly died due to diarrhea.

“During climate disasters, infrastructure gets damaged. Not just electricity, communication, but most importantly, water,” said Jenica Dizon, country director of Waves for Water Philippines, and organization that started in the country in 2013 as a response to Super Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan), one of the most powerful tropical cyclones ever recorded.

Additionally, in 2050, climate change could be responsible for approximately 32,954 additional diarrhea deaths worldwide among children aged 0 to 15, the World Health Organization estimated.

The WHO stressed that investing in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is a core element in both preparedness and response, and prevention and mitigation of the impacts of future emergencies. “It’s paramount to plan for and create more resilient water infrastructure because access to clean water is a human right and a basic need. Without water, there really is no life,” Dizon said.

For the WHO, the top three priorities in promoting WASH in vulnerable communities are ensuring sufficient amounts of safe water, arranging basic sanitation necessities and promoting good hygiene practices. It adds the first priority necessitates each person be provided with 15 liters of water, which can be limited to 7.5 after a disaster. Water sources must also be protected from contamination and toilet facilities immediately provided when sanitation structures are damaged by disasters. Securing toilet facilities prevents the further spread of contamination to the community or its water sources.

While the DOH and WHO have integrated WASH into disaster setting guidelines, simply providing recommendations isn’t enough as implementation and sustainability will be critical as damaged water systems have to be restored or upgraded.

As a nation that still needs to upgrade WASH facilities and programs, including preparation for disasters makes sense and that is a direction government should move towards as we strive to build a healthier and more resilient country.*

THE MANILA TIMES

[Asean project aims to revitalize region's rivers](#)

A five-year project aimed at reducing pollution and revitalizing rivers in the region was launched last week in Manila by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).

The Reducing Pollution and Preserving Environmental Flows in East Asian Seas Through the Implementation of Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) project aims to develop practical and innovative ways for communities, industries and governments to work together, Asean said in statement.

It noted that many of the region's largest cities were built beside rivers: Ho Chi Minh City has the Saigon, Kuala Lumpur the Klang, Jakarta the Ciliwung, and Metro Manila the Pasig, which provide habitats for plants and animals, food production and water sources for millions of people.

Supported by Global Environment Facility and the United Nations Development Program, the project will establish functional IRBM mechanisms in Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

"It will integrate knowledge about the vital connections between rivers and seas. Best practices and pitfalls shall be shared for other rivers to emulate and avoid," said Inthavy Akkharath, chairman of the Asean Working Group on Water Resources Management.

The launch was inaugurated by Carlos Primo David, undersecretary at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, who was quoted as having said that "effective governance will allow us to continue to utilize the water and other ecosystem services that river basins provide despite the threats of extreme events and climate change."

Selva Ramachandran, UNDP Resident Representative to the Philippines, added that "water use among Asean countries is growing rapidly, while water quality and quantity challenges threaten to derail much-needed economic growth."

"We're glad to help address the critical issue of freshwater governance in river basins beyond national jurisdictions, addressing transboundary issues such as pollution, watershed management, climate change impacts and disaster risks."

Ekkaphab Phanthavong, Asean deputy secretary-general, said "the project is a testament of Asean's collective and forward-looking action to improving water resources management in our region".

Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia, the implementing agency of the project, will work closely with the governments and stakeholders in Asean member-states to improve source-to-sea governance, as well as build the capacity to plan and strengthen river basin management mechanisms.

The launch was organized in conjunction with a project inception workshop and a project steering committee meeting to discuss implementation arrangements, among others.

CCC IN THE NEWS

MANILA BULLETIN

[Climate Change Commission bats for agro-industrial initiatives to ensure food security](#)

By: Betheena Unite

The government is pushing for agro-industrial initiatives as a way to ensure food and human security in the country.

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) has met with local officials of Camarines Sur to discuss linking the municipality with the CCC to help Ocampo town gear up and become the country's food basket, particularly in the Bicol Region.

Climate Change Commissioner Albert Dela Cruz conferred with Ocampo Mayor Ronald Allan Go on the possibilities of ensuring safe and compliant slaughterhouse facilities in the municipality through the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS).

The commissioner also discussed with the local government chief executive how the CCC could assist in the formulation of a comprehensive land use plan that would benefit his constituents and the whole country.

Dela Cruz stressed the importance of partnerships with local government units (LGUs) in speedily implementing climate action across the archipelago in order to begin sustainable development through the creation of more green jobs and other pro-environment efforts that would mitigate the impact of climate change and help the country adapt and gain benefits from the phenomenon.

"Climate action has no political color like what our beloved President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Romualdez Marcos Jr. has repeatedly said. It is an issue we should all face in unity and with each others' help," Dela Cruz said.

[Mangrove Reserve forest in Surigao del Norte 'headed for bigger things'](#)

By: Betheena Unite

The Del Carmen Mangrove Reserve in Surigao del Norte is “headed for bigger things” as it vies for a global recognition, the Climate Change Commission (CCC) said.

Del Carmen Mangrove Reserve (Photo courtesy of CCC)

The mangrove reserve site was officially nominated for inclusion to the Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance list, the CCC has disclosed.

Aside from the nomination, the government through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)-Biodiversity Management Bureau declared the Del Carmen Mangrove Reserve as “Wetland of International Importance” on Feb. 2 during the celebration of World Wetlands Day.

CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert E.A. Borje believes that the Del Carmen Mangrove Reserve and the entire Siargao Island Protected Landscapes and Seascapes (SIPLAS) “are headed for bigger things.”

“We rely on these mangroves for a lot of things: shoreline stabilization, surge protection, food security, flood control, water purification, groundwater replenishment and climate change mitigation,” Borje said.

“The recognition of the Del Carmen Mangrove Reserve as a Wetland of International Importance is a step toward securing a commitment from both the local and national government for their protection and preservation. It is also a precursor to being listed as a Ramsar Site,” Borje added.

The local government of Del Carmen took inspiration from the CCC’s ecotown initiative to prepare the SIPLAS – through its Del Carmen Mangrove Reserve – to be recognized as a Wetland of International Importance.

“The process of getting ready to get the Del Carmen Mangrove Forest be recognized as a Wetland of International Importance can be traced back as early as 2011. We started with the CCC program Ecotown that allowed us to understand and appreciate the value of the mangrove forest,” said Del Carmen Mayor Alfredo Coro II.

The CCC formulated the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) to address urgent and immediate needs and concerns of the country regarding the adverse effects of climate change.

Under the NCCAP, an ecologically sound, stable and economically resilient town was built in Del Carmen.

According to Borje, the CCC has conducted extensive targeted research with the Department of Science and Technology (DOST)-National Research Council of the

Philippines, DENR-Biodiversity Management Bureau, and Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR), and are currently updating the Ramsar Information System to be forwarded to UN Ramsar for evaluation.

“The Local Government of Del Carmen is also leading the campaign to transition from Ramsar Listing to UNESCO Global Geoparks which will now cover the entire island of Siargao,” he added.

Del Carmen is working closely with various partners to gather additional data to support the Ramsar and UNESCO Global Geoparks application.

UNESCO Global Geoparks are geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological importance are managed with a holistic approach of protection, sustainable development and education. There are currently 177 UNESCO Global Geoparks in 46 countries.

Some of Del Carmen’s development partners are the US Agency for International Development Philippine Sustainable Interventions for Biodiversity, Oceans and Landscapes (SIBOL), Metro Pacific Investments Foundation’s Shore It Up, Rare, SIKAT, Caraga State University and the University of the Philippines Los Baños.

The Philippines currently has eight Ramsar Sites, including the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park and Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park. The country is yet to be included on the UNESCO Global Geoparks list.

PHILIPPINE STAR

[LGUs urged to adopt edible landscaping](#)

By: Helen Flores

MANILA, Philippines — Local government units (LGUs) and the private sector should adopt edible landscaping to ensure sustainable food sufficiency across the country, an official of the Climate Change Commission (CCC) said.

CCC commissioner Albert dela Cruz Sr. made the proposal, noting that the rising population and the decreasing availability of land for food production aggravate the growing concern over food security.

Dela Cruz said depressed communities in urban areas are the most vulnerable to problems of food availability due to lack of tillable land and food commonly comes from external sources.

“If most of our households were to utilize the open space within their properties, they could benefit by having their own sources of food even on the smallest scale possible,” he said in a recent statement.

Edible landscaping is the growing of organic vegetables, fruits, herbs and medicinal plants in landscaping.

The late Leonido Naranja from the then Crop Science Cluster of the University of the Philippines-Los Baños College of Agriculture started and executed the concept in 1999.

According to Dela Cruz, edible landscaping should not be considered merely as crop production as it entails a complex activity of planning, design, implementation and maintenance, as is similarly done in conventional landscaping.

“Edible landscaping can be combined with bio-intensive gardening (BIG), which is commonly used in small spaces to increase productivity.

BIG is a crop production method designed to maximize the use of space and utilize the resources present in the surrounding environment,” he said.

“The aim is to produce safe and readily available nutritious food for the family and the community while creating an attractive and functional edible landscape and maximizing the use of all resources present in the site,” he added.

Dela Cruz is currently in the process of authoring and sponsoring a climate change policy for all public sectors to utilize a portion of their public funds to use of edible landscaping and gardening instead of ornamental plants.

He said the private sector could also utilize mechanisms provided under the Department of Agriculture (DA)'s Adaptation and Mitigation Initiative in Agriculture (AMIA), where institutional risks could be minimized in the appropriation of funds even as government investments would be protected as well.

“Through AMIA, development programs, projects and approaches could be adjusted to address climate change risks and this would not only benefit those who will invest in this new concept of edible landscaping and gardening but the whole country as well,” he said.

President Marcos, who concurrently heads the DA, previously said he has three “dreams” for the country’s agriculture sector – sustainable livelihood for farmers, affordable food for all and food security.

The President said he wants the Philippines to attain food self-sufficiency by prioritizing local production over food importation.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Siargao ramps up mangrove protection](#)

The ecotown initiative spearheaded by the Climate Change Commission (CCC) inspired a town in Surigao to preserve and prepare its mangrove forest for global recognition.

Taking a page from the CCC's National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP), the local government of Del Carmen ramped up efforts to protect the Del Carmen Mangrove Reserve and established the Siargao Island Protected Landscapes and Seascapes (Siplas).

The NCCAP was aimed to address the immediate needs and concerns of the country regarding the adverse effects of climate change.

This paved the way for the Del Carmen mangrove forest to become an ecologically sound, stable, and economically resilient town and be declared as a "Wetland of International Importance" by the Biodiversity Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources earlier this month.

It was also nominated officially for inclusion to the Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance list.

CCC Vice Chairman and Executive Director Robert E.A. Borje lauded the town's efforts and expressed belief that the Del Carmen Mangrove Reserve and the entire Siplas "are headed for bigger things."

"We rely on these mangroves for a lot of things: shoreline stabilization, surge protection, food security, flood control, water purification, groundwater replenishment and climate change mitigation. The recognition of the Del Carmen Mangrove Reserve as a Wetland of International Importance is a step toward securing a commitment from both the local and national government for their protection and preservation. It is also a precursor to being listed as a Ramsar Site," Borje said.

"Del Carmen is also leading the campaign to transition from Ramsar Listing to Unesco Global Geoparks which will now cover the entire island of Siargao," he added.

Unesco Global Geoparks are geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological importance are managed with a holistic approach of protection, sustainable development and education. There are currently 177 Unesco Global Geoparks in 46 countries.

The local government is now working closely with various partners to gather additional data to support the Ramsar and Unesco Global Geoparks application. USAid's Philippine Sustainable Interventions for Biodiversity, Oceans and Landscapes, Metro

Pacific Investments Foundation's Shore It Up, Rare, Sikat, Caraga State University and the University of the Philippines Los Baños are some of their development partners.

On climate change adaptation and mitigation, the Del Carmen local government is looking to connect with global island networks such as Global Island Partnership, Local2030 Islands Network and Small Island Developing States.

The CCC, for its part, endeavors to continuously provide capacity building programs and technical assistance for local planners and disaster risk reduction management officers to increase the capacities of LGUs, on local climate change action plan formulation, and climate change mainstreaming process, regardless of where they are.

"The Climate Change Commission has been working with various local stakeholders and the international community, engaging all important members of the society in a one country team approach. The convergence of resources — the convergence of hardware, the software, and the humanware — will be critical to achieve success," stated Borje.

The Philippines currently has eight Ramsar Sites, including the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park and Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park. The country is yet to be included on the Unesco Global Geoparks list.

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