



NEWS ROUNDUP

23 FEBRUARY 2023 [08:00 am]

- Multi-sector group to be set up to boost financial protection from disaster risks
- PHL to take part in ASEAN river management project
- 17 Philippine regions among top at-risk areas for climate damage —report
- PH to host 3rd leg of APEC Business Advisory Council in July
- Wetter storms, deforestation: Manila faces worsening floods
- Saving Baguio City
- 4th Philippine Environment Summit opens multi-sectoral discussions for climate action
- LOOK: Ashley Montenegro heads to Egypt for Miss Eco International 2023
- Climate change: how asset managers use clients' voting power to press Asia's polluters to act
- The need for PH to attain food security
- Dredging, seabed quarrying in Manila Bay seen to threaten fisheries production

CCC IN THE NEWS:

- How hybrid work can lead to sustainable practices

BUSINESS WORLD

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By: Merlina Hernando-Malipot

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By: Agence-France-Presse

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PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

[4th Philippine Environment Summit opens multi-sectoral discussions for climate action](#)

By: Christopher Hedreyda

TAGAYTAY CITY (PIA) — Around 1,000 multi-stakeholders gathered in Tagaytay City on Tuesday as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Region 4-A and Green Convergence formally opened the 4th Philippine Environment Summit.

RAPPLER

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Asia's listed companies face increasing scrutiny on their climate-related disclosure and commitments, as fund managers and institutional investors use their voting power to pressure them to act to mitigate effects on a warming climate.

THE MANILA TIMES

[The need for PH to attain food security](#)

By: William Dar

THERE is a need to be very frank and honest whenever food security is discussed, as that is a very sensitive socioeconomic issue. For sure, no government wants to be told that the majority of its citizens are suffering from involuntary hunger.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Dredging, seabed quarrying in Manila Bay seen to threaten fisheries production](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

MANILA, Philippines — An organization of scientists on Wednesday warned that not only coastal ecosystems but also the country's fisheries production will be put at risk if dredging and seabed quarrying in Manila Bay continue.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

BUSINESS WORLD

[How hybrid work can lead to sustainable practices](#)

FILIPINOS now prefer to work in a hybrid setup and studies have shown that it not only opens many benefits for the employees, but new possibilities for the employers. This includes revisiting operations and embedding more sustainable business practices in ways that can dramatically change their consumption patterns such as reducing their environmental footprint by equipping employees with tools that are better for productivity and the planet, and appealing to worker preferences in an increasingly competitive labor market.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS WORLD

[Multi-sector group to be set up to boost financial protection from disaster risks](#)

By: Beatriz Marie D. Cruz

A HOUSE panel approved on Wednesday a resolution creating a multisectoral group that will enhance the country's financial protection against climate and disaster risks, especially for the most vulnerable sectors.

Bohol Rep. Edgar M. Chatto, author of House Resolution No. 213, told the climate change committee that the Philippines must boost its climate and disaster risk financing and insurance (CDRFI) mechanisms to provide social protection to communities that suffer the most from the impact of extreme weather patterns.

The group will include representatives from the private sector, insurance providers, national and local governments, cooperatives, and civil society organizations, among others.

Angelo Kairos Dela Cruz, deputy executive director of the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities, said that a multi-actor partnership (MAP) would prepare the Philippines for loss and damage funding negotiations as well as engagement with international financing mechanisms such as the Global Shield against Climate Risks financing facility.

"The government is in the best position to lead MAP and maximize collaboration among key stakeholders," Mr. Dela Cruz said.

The CDRFI "creates a space to minimize and respond to the impacts of disasters" by "ensuring that necessary resources are available to respond to and recover from potential losses," according to the resolution.

"MAP and CDRFI both are not silver bullets. It will not solve our climate problem, but they're small pieces of the puzzle," Mr. Dela Cruz said.

The Finance department said last year that the Philippines may incur P1.5 trillion in losses from the impact of natural events following the intensified impacts of climate change.

Human rights organization Germanwatch noted that the Philippines was the fourth most affected country in terms of losses from extreme climate events from 2000 to 2019.

The committee also approved a resolution adopting a People's Green New Deal, which is intended to guide the executive and legislative branches in forming long-term strategic goals for mitigating the impact of climate change and strengthening resilience towards economic recovery.

[PHL to take part in ASEAN river management project](#)

By: Patricia B. Mirasol

AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL organization recently launched a project in Manila aimed at reducing water pollution and restoring rivers in southeast Asia, especially those where major urban centers have been built alongside.

The Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) project was launched in Manila on Feb. 16 “to develop practical and innovative ways for communities, industries and governments to work together to revitalize Southeast Asia’s rivers,” the Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) said in a statement.

Inthavy Akkharath, chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) working group on water resources management, said the IRBM will integrate knowledge about the connections between rivers and seas.

“Best practices and pitfalls shall be shared for other rivers to emulate and avoid.”

Philippine Environment Undersecretary Carlos Primo C. David, for his part, 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.”

The project is supported by the Global Environment Facility and the United Nations Development Programme or UNDP.

Plastic is estimated to account for 80% of all marine debris in the ocean, according to the ASEAN Regional Action Plan on Combatting Marine Debris.

Less than a fourth of the total recycled waste in the ASEAN, moreover, is recycled. The way plastics are produced, used, and managed “often does not reflect the economic benefits of an approach to a circular economy and results in harm to the environment.”

A number of the region’s largest cities were built beside rivers: Viet Nam’s Saigon in Ho Chi Minh, Malaysia’s the Klang in Kuala Lumpur, and the Philippines’ Pasig in Metro Manila.

These rivers provide habitats for various flora and fauna, as well as food production and water sources for millions of people. As many rivers pass through densely populated towns and cities, waste and sediment eventually flow out to sea.

PEMSEA, the implementing agency of the project, said it will work with the six member states' governments and stakeholders to improve source-to-sea governance, and build the capacity to plan and strengthen river basin management mechanisms.

Aimee T. Gonzales, PEMSEA executive director, said that state-of-the-river-basin reports are among the expected outputs of the IRBM. It is also expected to institutionalize the use of the integrated river basin management approach.

"We view this project as a natural extension of PEMSEA's work on integrated coastal management," she said.

GMA NEWS

[17 Philippine regions among top at-risk areas for climate damage —report](#)

By: Richa Noriega

Seventeen regions in the Philippines were among the top 100 areas in the world most vulnerable to the growing destructive power of climate change–driven weather extremes, according to a report.

The Gross Domestic Climate Risk of assessor Cross Dependency Initiative (XDI) calculates the physical climate risk—due to extreme weather and climate change—to the built environment in over 2,600 territories around the world.

The study measures damage ratio, which it defines as "an expression of the Annual Average Loss from extreme weather damage to a property as a fraction of the replacement cost of that property."

There are two kinds of damage ratio: Aggregated Damage Ratio, which "looks at the total amount of damage to the built environment in a particular province"; and Average Damage Ratio, which "provides insight into states and provinces that may have fewer properties but which may be subjected to greater or more widespread damage, so the proportion of damage is higher."

At least 17 regions in the Philippines were among the top 100 regions highest in terms of average damage ratio.

These were Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Pangasinan, Ilocos Sur, Eastern Samar, Zambales, Aurora, Northern Samar, Cagayan, Surigao del Sur, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, Sulu, Leyte, Pampanga, Samar, and Southern Leyte.

In 2022, the Philippines had the highest disaster risk among 193 countries, according to another index, scoring high in its exposure, vulnerability, susceptibility, lack of coping capacities, and lack of adaptive capacities in the face of disasters.

A 2020 UN study also found the Philippines among the hardest hit by natural disasters in recent years.

More Gross Domestic Climate Risk results

Meanwhile, nine of the top 10 most at-risk regions are in China, including two of the its largest sub-national economies, Jiangsu and Shandong.

China was followed by the US as the most high-risk states. Florida, number 10 in global rankings, is the US state most in jeopardy, followed by California and Texas.

China, India, and the US make up over half the states and provinces in the top 100.

The report found that both inland and coastal flooding pose the greatest risks to physical infrastructure.

It also examined the dangers of extreme heat, forest fires, soil movement, extreme wind, and freeze thaw.

MANILA BULLETIN

[PH to host 3rd leg of APEC Business Advisory Council in July](#)

By: Merlina Hernando-Malipot

Headlining the region's private sector priorities on various concerns, the Philippines will host the third leg of this year's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Business Advisory Council (ABAC) in July.

With the theme "Equity, Sustainability, and Opportunity," the 2023 ABAC will be held in Cebu from July 27 to 30.

Economic integration, sustainable growth, financial services, inclusion, and digitalization and innovation are among the issues to be highlighted in this year's ABAC.

The ABAC will be the first international event within its borders since reopening after the pandemic.

The Philippines will welcome top business leaders from the 21 APEC economies, who will be discussing ABAC's approved 2023 Work Program.

Simultaneously, this is also a window for the country to present potential business opportunities whilst showcasing the beauty and heritage of Cebu.

"We are thrilled and honored to be hosting ABAC 3 in Cebu this year, and we look forward to not just tackling various areas of economic concern and urgency, but, more importantly, working together in a highly synergized way to produce meaningful insights and solutions," Aboitiz Group President and CEO Sabin M. Aboitiz said.

boitiz also serves as the Vice-Chair of ABAC's Sustainable Growth Working Group (SGWG).

The working group will lead discussions on effective responses to climate change, realistic decarbonization transition strategies, and efficient and sustainable processes across the regional food value chain.

Other initial areas of focus will be discussed by other working groups and task forces.

The Economic Integration Working Group will talk about accelerating the realization of the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP), supporting the World Trade

Organization (WTO) and its advocacy for the rules-based multilateral trading system, improving trade resilience, and promoting trade and sustainability.

The Digital and Innovation Working Group will review the strengthening of cybersecurity, the promotion of coherent and interoperable digital identity systems, and the facilitation of cross-border data flows.

The Finance Task Force is set to examine the facilitation of cross-border digital financial services, support for a just and affordable transition, financing of sustainable innovation, promotion of interoperable central bank digital currencies, and facilitation of cross-border data flows in financial services.

The Inclusion Task Force will tackle empowering women and engaging indigenous peoples in the economy, integrating ESG practice for MSMEs, as well as formalizing the informal economy and bridging generations through economic engagement.

Joining Aboitiz as part of the Philippine delegation is Tomas Alcantara, Chair of ABAC Philippines along with other ABAC members, Joanne de Asis, Francis Chua, and Guillermo Luz.

Together, the representatives will be raising key issues relevant to the Philippines, particularly energy security, food security, climate change, and digitalization and innovation, especially about education and the future of work.

Spotlight on Cebu

Hosting the prestigious international event is expected to bring positive buzz, not just to Cebu's local economy, but to its cultural life as well.

Cebu boasts a long history of being a center of culture and the arts, being home to the likes of the centuries-old Sinulog festival. In 2019, Cebu city was also hailed as a "creative city of design" by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Foreign dignitaries will also appreciate Cebu's coastal and urban attractions, including the 8.9-kilometer Cebu-Cordova Link Expressway, which connects mainland Cebu to the historic island of Mactan, being the country's longest sea-crossing bridge.

The United States is the host economy for this year's APEC and serving as Chair of ABAC is US member Dominic Ng, Chairman and CEO of East West Bank.

The first 2023 ABAC meeting was held in Auckland, New Zealand last Feb. 12 to 14.

The second meeting was held in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam on April 27 to 30.

The fourth and final ABAC meeting for the year will be in San Francisco, California, USA in November.

ABAC's 2023 Work Program will be discussed by business leaders in each of the quarterly meetings. Detailed recommendations will then be developed and conveyed to APEC governments via APEC Senior Officials, Trade, small market enterprise (SME), and Finance Ministers, or directly to APEC Economic Leaders.

The ABAC was established by APEC economic leaders in November 1995 to provide perspectives and advice from the private sector towards achieving the APEC's goals of liberalizing trade and investment, facilitating business activities, and promoting economic and technical cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

The APEC is an inter-governmental economic forum created in 1989 meant "to leverage the growing interdependence of the Asia-Pacific."

In 2020, APEC Leaders unveiled their Putrajaya Vision 2040 which underscored their vision of "an open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful Asia-Pacific community by 2040, for the prosperity of all our people and future generations."

Wetter storms, deforestation: Manila faces worsening floods

By: Agence-France-Presse

BARAS, Philippines — From her house in a Manila suburb, Rowena Jimenez can't see the bare mountains around the built-up city. But she feels the impact of deforestation every time her living room floods.

Slash-and-burn farming, illegal logging, open-pit mining and development fueled by population growth have stripped the once-densely forested Philippines of much of its trees.

In Manila, where more than 13 million people live, low-lying areas are often inundated when storms lash the Sierra Madre mountain range, which lies east of the city and acts as a barrier to severe weather.

But without enough trees to help absorb the rain, huge volumes of water run off the slopes and into waterways that flow into the metropolis, turning neighbourhoods into disease-infested swamps.

Jimenez, 49, has lost count of the number of times the Marikina river has broken its banks and flooded the ground floor of her family's two-bedroom concrete house, a few blocks from the water's edge.

"There is always fear that it will happen again," said Jimenez, who lives with her husband, youngest daughter, sister, nephew and mother.

"Your heart sinks because you realise the things you worked so hard to buy will be destroyed again."

Jimenez blames environmental "abuses" upstream in the nearby Upper Marikina River Basin — a catchment spanning roughly 26,000 hectares (64,500 acres) in the southern foothills of the Sierra Madre.

Only 2.1 percent of the watershed was covered by dense "closed forest" in 2015, according to a World Bank report.

Runoff from the mountains drains into the basin, which is critical for regulating water flow into Manila.

It was declared a “protected landscape” in 2011 by then-president Benigno Aquino, under a law aimed at ensuring “biological diversity and sustainable development”.

That was two years after Typhoon Ketsana, known in the Philippines as Tropical Storm Ondoy, had submerged 80 percent of the city and killed hundreds of people.

But by then, many of the trees in the catchment had been cleared to make way for public roads, parking lots, private resorts, and residential subdivisions.

Jimenez still shudders at the memory of the water reaching 23 feet (seven metres) high and forcing her family to huddle together on the roof of their house.

“We didn’t salvage anything but ourselves,” she said.

Wetter storms

The combination of development in the catchment and wetter storms caused by climate change have exacerbated flooding in Manila, said Rex Cruz, a watershed management expert at the University of the Philippines.

“The surface of the Marikina watershed has been modified into something that is not able to absorb a lot of rainwater,” he said. This also leads to water shortages in the dry season.

Cruz said the situation will worsen if “business as usual prevails” in the country, which is ranked among the most vulnerable nations to the impacts of climate change.

Official data show “closed forest” cover in the archipelago — which has a total land area of 30 million hectares — declined from 2.56 million hectares in 2003 to 1.93 million in 2010.

It rose to 2.22 million hectares in 2020.

Protecting existing forests and replanting others are made difficult by corruption and sometimes violent conflict over land ownership and usage.

Watchdog Global Witness ranks the Philippines as one of the most dangerous countries in the world for environmentalists, with 19 killed in 2021 and 270 slain in the decade preceding it.

The Masungi Georeserve Foundation has spent years trying to reforest about 3,000 hectares in the upper Marikina basin, which is less than 30 kilometres (19 miles) from Manila.

But there are disputes over whether the land should be conserved or developed.

Some people want to use it for quarrying, burning wood for charcoal, building resorts, or growing crops.

The Bureau of Corrections wants to put its headquarters there.

Masungi forest ranger Kuhkan Maas, 32, has been abused and even shot for trying to protect the land, where he has planted thousands of trees in the past decade.

He refuses to be intimidated.

“My dream is to see all the trees we planted flourish and to see the land that used to be barren become a lush forest,” said Maas, still bearing the scar from where a bullet punctured his neck in 2021.

‘Wicked problem’

Without a land use policy and integrated environment laws to govern the competing uses of resources, it has been difficult to develop sustainably, said lawyer Tony La Vina, describing it as a “wicked problem”.

Manila resident Jimenez said her family’s house never flooded in the 1980s when she recalls the Marikina river being “pristine” and surrounded by farms, trees and a handful of families.

But as more and more land was developed for the growing population, their house began to flood in the following decade.

Since then, Jimenez said the family home is inundated once or twice a year, sometimes more.

The slightest drizzle sends her mother, who has Alzheimer’s disease, into a panic.

“She’ll pack things, put them in a plastic bag and nag us to start packing,” said Jimenez.

“It’s sad to know that the only memory she has left is the rain and flooding.”

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[Saving Baguio City](#)

Postcard-perfect images that showcase Baguio City's status as the Summer Capital of the Philippines hide the bitter reality that it is a most vulnerable city when it comes to the harsh effects of climate change, particularly excessive rainfall, with its resulting widespread flooding, and deadly landslides. And unless concrete, time-bound, and science-based steps are immediately taken, these manifestations of environmental crisis on this tourist, trade, and education center in the Cordillera Administrative Region, are bound to get worse.

Baguio City already holds the distinction of getting the most rainfall in the Philippines, with the average annual volume steadily rising over the past 20 years. And projections are that the volume will increase even more, by an alarming 23 percent over the next 10 years, according to Baguio City Mayor Benjamin Magalong, no thanks to harmful greenhouse gas emissions such as carbon dioxide. These emissions warm up the atmosphere and lead to extreme weather patterns, including stronger and more frequent typhoons.

During the Feb. 9 Baguio Climate Change Summit, Magalong stressed that the city has to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent in 2030, and work down to zero emissions by 2050, to protect the city against the severe impact of climate change seen in more intense rains. The mayor cited the 2020 annual report of the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Urban Financing Partnership Facility Group, which warned that climate change "is only expected to exacerbate rain-induced landslides and flooding events due to the frequency and intensity of rainfall in the city."

This is a terrifying prospect, considering that as much as 80 percent of the city is prone to landslides, according to a separate 2021 report of the ADB. These landslides can be triggered as well by earthquakes, since Baguio City is crisscrossed by seismic faults and lies on a tectonically active area. That the city is teetering on the edge of a climate precipice has been known as early as 2011, when it was tagged as the most exposed and vulnerable to extreme weather events compared to other major cities in the Philippines. And excessive rainfall is enemy number one.

"Rain is going to be Baguio's bane," said the Business Risk Assessment and the Management of Climate Change Impacts study conducted by the World Wide Fund Philippines (WWF) and the Bank of the Philippine Islands Foundation, Inc. "Extreme rainfall and intensified tropical cyclones will continue to define the city's future. It is likely

that Baguio will go from wet, to wetter,” the study stressed. Baguio City has enough proof of the devastation that flooding and landslides can cause. In 2018, for example, Typhoon “Ompong” lashed Northern Luzon and caused raging floods and landslides in Baguio City, killing 11 people and causing access road closures as well as significant damage to properties.

But Mother Nature is not solely to blame for the city’s woes. Unregulated and unrestricted human activity poses a far bigger threat. The city’s drains, for instance, have been blocked by accumulated garbage when human settlements encroached on the easement areas and narrowed waterways, thus constricting the city’s ability to absorb excess water. This, in turn, can be blamed squarely on Baguio City’s burgeoning population that, as of 2020, stood at 366,358, and is projected to hit close to 500,000 by the end of the year, far outstripping the infrastructure and land limits of a city spanning 5,700 hectares and established for only 30,000 people.

No wonder, then, that the city is ironically suffering from a grave water supply problem that is bound to become more acute. As the WWF study revealed, the city’s groundwater supply is now “grossly inadequate” since the pine forest that used to recharge the city’s aquifers has been felled. Add to this the fact that of the city’s six watersheds, two are no longer operable because of the unregulated influx of informal settlers. This is but one portent of the bleak future that awaits Baguio City, unless a multiyear program is put in place to reverse the “urban decay” that has blighted it.

Development plans have to be immediately revisited and redrawn, and desired reforms, such as the rapid reduction in the city’s greenhouse gas emissions, doggedly implemented given the present hazards caused by rapid and poorly planned urbanization. The right balance should be struck between the desired economic growth and the realities of climate change, urbanization trends, and the overarching need to manage the city’s watersheds, green spaces, and drainage system. Failure is not an option, for the very survival of Baguio City is at stake.

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

[4th Philippine Environment Summit opens multi-sectoral discussions for climate action](#)

By: Christopher Hedreyda

TAGAYTAY CITY (PIA) — Around 1,000 multi-stakeholders gathered in Tagaytay City on Tuesday as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Region 4-A and Green Convergence formally opened the 4th Philippine Environment Summit.

With the theme “Caring for Earth: Scaling Up Solutions to the Climate Emergency,” the summit aims to celebrate the Philippine environmental movement and serves as a call for each Filipino to take personal responsibility for the country’s response to the climate emergency.

Promoting the target of Climate Neutrality by 2050 and laying out recommendations on food safety and having a sustainable economy are among the agenda of the environmental summit.

In a video message, Vice President Sara Z. Duterte lauded the DENR and Green Convergence, along with a coalition of environmental networks and organizations for their support of the government’s whole-of-nation approach to reduce climate change vulnerability.

Duterte then urged different sectors in the country to become voices of change in the country to mitigate the risks brought about by the rising sea levels, changes in air temperature, and frequency of climate disasters.

“By showcasing projects and programs that directly or indirectly address climate change, we provide resources and tools for others to find inspiration and encourage every sector of society to make climate action a priority,” the Vice President said.

DENR 4-A Regional Executive Director Nilo Tamoria underscored the importance of spearheading the summit to strengthen the collaboration and involvement of different sectors in addressing the climate emergency.

Tamoria then highlighted the accomplishments of DENR 4-A in preserving nature and wildlife throughout the region by actively monitoring protected lands and implementing environmental laws and regulations.

The regional executive director appealed for everyone's participation in environmental causes to ensure that the government's efforts won't go to waste.

"While the department moves to sustain, develop, and improve programs for the environment, we also rely on the continued support and commitment of our stakeholders. I know that some of our participants today belong to the youth. After this three-day activity, I challenge you to make use of what you have learned, apply it in your daily lives, and be our environmental champions. We hope that when you go back to your own communities, you will serve as our multipliers," Tamoria added.

Systems-lens response vs climate emergency

DENR Undersecretary for Field Operations - Luzon and Visayas Atty. Juan Miguel Cuna delivered the summit's keynote speech on behalf of DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga.

Cuna said that confronting the climate emergency should be under a 'systems-lens' approach to ensure a comprehensive response to hazards being felt throughout the world.

Usec. Cuna then quoted President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. saying "...[T]he preservation of the environment is preservation of life," and added that the investment towards prevention and preparedness for environmental hazards must continue.

He also laid out several approaches to be implemented by the DENR during the Marcos Jr. administration such as the establishment of National Risk Registry, crafting nature-based solutions for climate action, facilitating disaster resiliency efforts for businesses, unity with the CSO community, and investment in education and capacity building for the labor force to involve them in the preservation of the environment.

The DENR also commits to involve the youth and the private sector in policy decisions in combating climate change, as the department believes that all the plans for the economy will be forgone if the environment continues to be at risk.

Members of environmental groups, non-government organizations, academe, and the media then had the chance to participate in a more in-depth discussion with sessions and exhibits focusing on programs and topics about sustainable development like renewable energy, organic agriculture, safe food manufacturing, native trees reforestation, climate change adaptation, ecological solid waste management, and ecotourism among others.

RAPPLER

[LOOK: Ashley Montenegro heads to Egypt for Miss Eco International 2023](#)

MANILA, Philippines – Ashley Subijano Montenegro left Manila for Egypt on Wednesday, February 22, to represent the Philippines in the Miss Eco International pageant.

“I’m really looking forward to meeting all the other candidates of Miss Eco international,” she said in an Instagram post, alongside photos of her wearing green coords while holding a Philippine flag.

Fellow beauty queens such as Maureen Montagne, Gwendolyne Fourniol, Nicole Borromeo, and Karen Laurrie Mendoza expressed their well-wishes for Ashley’s pageant journey.

Prior to her departure, Ashley also shared her eco-tourism video for the pageant, where she talked about how climate change affected the beauty of the Philippines.

“As a Miss Eco International from the Philippines, I hope to promote the practices of sustainable tourism. With our impact, we can inspire people as they travel throughout the world,” she said in the clip.

Ashley is aiming for a back-to-back victory for the Philippines with reigning Miss Eco International Kathleen Paton. If she wins, she’ll be the third Filipina to win the country’s Miss Eco International crown after Cynthia Thomalla (2018) and Paton (2022).

The Miss Eco International 2023 coronation night is set for March 4.

SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST

[Climate change: how asset managers use clients' voting power to press Asia's polluters to act](#)

By: Martin Choi and Eric Ng

Asia's listed companies face increasing scrutiny on their climate-related disclosure and commitments, as fund managers and institutional investors use their voting power to pressure them to act to mitigate effects on a warming climate.

Fidelity International, which manages US\$663 billion of assets for 2.88 million clients, prioritises investees in energy and greenhouse gas emission-intensive sectors, from which the fund manager has sought disclosure of direct and indirect emissions and reduction targets.

For the 166 companies identified by investor-led initiative Climate Action 100+ to account for over 80 per cent of global industrial emissions, Fidelity has also demanded detailed mitigation plans aligned to pathways for reaching net zero emissions by 2050, key for the world to avoid the worst climate change impacts.

"Where companies have not shown alignment, we have voted against the chair or another suitable director," said Fidelity's director of sustainable investing Paul Milon. "In the few cases where no director was on the ballot, we elected to vote against other items such as board [duties] discharge or financial statements."

In 2022, Fidelity's first year of implementing its climate voting policy, it voted against responsible directors at 52 companies due to climate concerns, Milon said. Alternative actions were taken against seven companies where voting at director elections was not feasible.

Opposing votes were casted on 24 firms based in North America, followed by 19 companies in Asia – with most votes found in India, followed by Indonesia and the Philippines. It voted at a total of 4,090 company meetings in 2022.

The asset manager will engage with the investees for up to three years before considering divesting if it sees no prospect of increasing their transition potential, according to its climate investing policy.

State Street Global Advisors, which manages US\$3.48 trillion in assets, said more climate-related shareholder proposals were submitted to its portfolio companies in 2021 with over 100 proposals going to vote, up from 58 in 2020 and 47 in 2019.

The asset manager has launched an engagement campaign targeting the climate transition disclosure plans of major emitters in carbon-intensive sectors, according to Jia Xinting, the company's ESG investment strategist for Asia-Pacific.

"As is typical across environment, social and governance issues, we will first approach ... the companies through engagements," she said. "If we encounter laggards that are not making sufficient progress as a result of our engagements, we will consider taking action using our votes."

UK-based Abrdn, which manages £508 billion (US\$615 billion) of client assets, sets time-bound milestones and expected outcomes for high-emitting companies in its portfolios, said David Smith, senior investment director of Asian equities.

The asset manager deploys its own analytical model to assess the companies where the investees sit along the pathway to net zero emissions.

"If we find that our engagement efforts are not as effective as we would hope, we will vote our clients' shares accordingly," Smith said. "Where we find that there is limited progress despite intensive engagements, we will of course consider the ultimate option of selling our holdings."

Asia lags behind Europe on climate proposals, according to Chris Liu, the Hong Kong-based stewardship analyst at Allianz Global Investors, which oversees €521 billion (US\$555 billion) of client assets.

"Unlike in Europe, [climate] proposals have not gained traction in Asia," he said in a statement on Wednesday. "Yet, Japan continues to stand out ... with [a] steady increase in climate-related shareholder resolutions urging Japanese companies [to commit] to developing robust decarbonisation strategies."

In 2022, Allianz voted on 52 climate-related proposals from management and supported 70 of 87 shareholder climate proposals globally. It took part in 10,205 shareholder meetings.

In the US, some 273 resolutions on environmental and social themes were put forward for voting by shareholders of listed firms in 2022, up from 171 in 2021, funds researcher Morningstar said in a report in January.

This was after the Securities and Exchange Commission broadened in late 2021 the definition of permissible shareholder resolutions addressing "significant social policy issues".

THE MANILA TIMES

[The need for PH to attain food security](#)

By: William Dar

THERE is a need to be very frank and honest whenever food security is discussed, as that is a very sensitive socioeconomic issue. For sure, no government wants to be told that the majority of its citizens are suffering from involuntary hunger.

So, the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) covering 2023-2028 was not short on being very honest on the assessment of the country's food security situation, even sounding like pushing the panic button.

"The country's progress in attaining food security has been slow, posting a score within the moderate food security category since 2012, based on the Global Food Security Index," stated the first paragraph of Subchapter 3.1 of the PDP titled "Ensure Food Security and Proper Nutrition."

"In 2020, when the Philippines recorded its highest score of 61 (100 being the most favorable), it only ranked 64th out of 113 countries. In 2022, the country's score slipped to 59.3 amid global economic headwinds, including the Russia-Ukraine conflict that led to food price spikes," it added.

What is very clear from those statements is that the Philippines food system is not immune to external shocks, and much needs to be done to ensure the food security of all Filipinos.

Among the recent problems that made the country less food secure is higher food inflation rates in the recent months. Anybody can check out those figures from the portal of the Philippine Statistics Authority.

The issue of malnutrition

The PDP also emphasized the need to address malnutrition, citing that the Philippines had "varying degrees of success in addressing malnutrition." It cited that from 2015 to 2021, the prevalence of children stunting under 5 years old decreased to 26.7 percent from 33.4 percent, while wasting among the same age group went down to 5.5 percent from 7.1 percent.

"Despite the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic, both the targets for the reduction of stunting and wasting were attained," the PDP stated.

However, the PDP said the pandemic that limited mobility and livelihood of households aggravated food insecurity, or 33.4 percent of households experiencing "moderate to severe food insecurity, of which 2 percent suffered from severe food insecurity."

With those realities, the PDP has set three strategies for the Philippines to attain food security, and I quote them: attaining sufficient and stable supply of food commodities; expanding access of consumers to affordable, safe and nutritious food; and improving nutrition across all ages.

Attaining sufficient food supply

The outcome of the first strategy is "sufficient and stable supply of food commodities attained" by leveling up agricultural productivity with solutions that yours truly and other experts have been saying for many years. And let me quote them from the PDP: diversification of production to maximize the use of resources; consolidation and clustering of farms to take advantage of economies of scale; and adoption of improved technologies to modernize the sector.

In pursuing the second outcome of "access of consumers to affordable, safe and nutritious food expanded," the following solutions will be pushed: level up digital platforms for food and farm transactions; get more private investments for the storage and marketing of food to consumers; improve and assure unhampered transportation of food products; strengthen monitoring of the price and supply of food commodities; address price manipulation and anticompetitive practices like smuggling; and intensify food labeling and food safety measures.

All aforementioned are self-explanatory and, I must emphasize anew, do not need rocket scientists or an army of scholars with IQs of 190 and above to understand and undertake.

Healthy lifestyle must be pursued

For the third outcome of "nutrition across all ages improved," the first solution is to "adopt a whole-of-society approach in promoting healthy lifestyle and a culture of active health-seeking behavior among Filipinos across age groups and income classes." That is almost unheard of when discussing the issue of food security, and should be

advocated to prevent the increase in the number of unhealthy or sickly Filipinos that can result in the overloading of the public health system.

The second solution, or to "intensify the development and adoption of technologies that increase the nutritional content and prolong the shelf-life of food products" will help address food wastage in the Philippines.

Meanwhile, the ongoing development of affordable food products that have a better nutrient content should be scaled up. Among these notable efforts as mentioned by the PDP are enhanced Nutribun, sesame seeds-based and rice-mongo-based complementary foods developed by the Department of Science and Technology.

The remaining three measures to attain improved nutrition across all ages are: initiatives to prevent wasting, stunting and obesity; pushing for and strengthening nutrition-specific, nutrition-sensitive and enabling interventions with focus at the local level; and improving nutrition governance also with focus at the local level.

Concluding, the country's attainment of food security also needs collective action nationwide with the government providing the overall direction, and various players and stakeholders converging their efforts. I stated the same thing for the country to modernize its agriculture sector.

Anything short of true collective action should not be accepted, as food security is a more critical issue today given the challenges presented by the "Three Cs," or Covid-19's lingering effects, climate change and geopolitical conflicts.

So, expect me also to discuss food security in future columns as the three Cs are still very much upon us.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Dredging, seabed quarrying in Manila Bay seen to threaten fisheries production](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

MANILA, Philippines — An organization of scientists on Wednesday warned that not only coastal ecosystems but also the country's fisheries production will be put at risk if dredging and seabed quarrying in Manila Bay continue.

In a statement, the Advocates of Science and Technology for the People (AGHAM) expressed grave concern over ongoing dredging, seabed quarrying, and reclamation activities in Cavite, particularly in the towns of Ternate, Naic and Rosario.

"Dredging activities in Cavite are closely related to ongoing reclamation projects in Manila Bay as filling materials dumped into our coasts are obtained from San Nicholas Shoal in Cavite, which had already affected the coastal ecosystems and the livelihood of the fisherfolk," said Jerwin Baure, resident marine scientist of AGHAM.

Citing accounts of fishers from Cavite, the group said that quarrying operations are driving away fish in the area due to associated pollution and noise.

"Manila Bay is one of the most productive fishing grounds in the country," Baure added.

A study by the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute previously found that the northern and eastern parts of Manila Bay, which includes Bulacan, Metro Manila and Cavite, are known to have high biomass of fish eggs and larvae. These areas have mangrove ecosystems that serve as nursery grounds for fish.

"If dredging and reclamation activities in Manila Bay continue, coastal ecosystems that serve as fish nurseries will be affected, which can eventually affect our fisheries production," Baure said.

AGHAM called on the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources to grant the request of fishers, scientists and environmentalists for a dialogue.

The group also urged the DENR to issue a moratorium on dredging and reclamation projects until issues concerning these projects are addressed.

There are 187 reclamation projects across the archipelago, according to a master list of approved, pending, and ongoing dump-and-fill ventures of the Philippine Reclamation Authority. At least 30 projects are in Manila Bay.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

BUSINESS WORLD

[How hybrid work can lead to sustainable practices](#)

FILIPINOS now prefer to work in a hybrid setup and studies have shown that it not only opens many benefits for the employees, but new possibilities for the employers. This includes revisiting operations and embedding more sustainable business practices in ways that can dramatically change their consumption patterns such as reducing their environmental footprint by equipping employees with tools that are better for productivity and the planet, and appealing to worker preferences in an increasingly competitive labor market.

HP, for example, has outlined bold sustainable impact goals and commitments over the next decade. It aims to be the most sustainable and just technology company in the world by 2030, ushering a new era of progress where climate change is reversed, human rights are universally protected, and digital equity democratizes opportunity for all. Sustainable impact has been a part of the company's DNA from the very beginning. It is proven to be one of the strategic drivers that accelerate and scale growth for the business.

A WIN-WIN-WIN OPPORTUNITY

Improving sustainability through the transition to hybrid work provides benefits for employers, employees, and the environment, all at the same time. That's because many of the systems, measures, and technologies that create a better hybrid work experience also enable more-efficient management of physical office resources, from smarter use of space to the conservation of energy and water.

Realizing the potential benefits of adapting to not only hybrid work but also an overall sustainable business — where work is conducted in the space that best suits the task at hand — brings with it an opportunity to adopt an “only-what-we-need-when-we-need-it” approach to resources, ranging from power to square footage.

“We're now basing facilities decisions on utilization, not headcount,” says Rena Marin, country HR head of HP, Inc. in the Philippines. “We're creating more choice for employees, including multifunctional areas that can be adapted to meet their needs.”

In some cases, that could mean moving walls to turn individual cubicle space into open collaboration areas, or incorporating movable, adjustable office furniture that employees can reconfigure as necessary. Organizations may also choose to eliminate personal workspaces altogether and replace them with hot desks, or shared workstations that employees can reserve for use when they're in the office.

SMART FACILITIES THAT CONSERVE RESOURCES

A range of technologies can help companies pinpoint what resources they need, when and where they need them, increasing efficiency and conservation.

This includes a number of solutions that use Wi-Fi connectivity combined with sensors to determine how rooms and offices are being used, and how frequently. With that data, organizations can turn off power, heating, and cooling in empty spaces or implement a smart heating and lighting system.

Additionally, by tracking occupancy across the building, some software can also allow employees to check which rooms are available for an impromptu meeting; book a workstation in advance of their arrival; or see which colleagues are working from the office each day.

DOING MORE WITH LESS (WASTE)

Equipping hybrid employees with new tools and tech to do their jobs in a hybrid world not only helps them maintain productivity wherever they are, but also gives businesses a chance to choose more sustainable devices.

The most important piece of equipment for any hybrid employee is a powerful and portable laptop, such as the HP Elite Dragonfly, the HP Elite c1030 Chromebook, or the HP ZBook Studio mobile workstation, all of which include components made from recycled ocean-bound plastic and long-lasting batteries for seamless transition between home and office.

While many companies adapted quickly to remote work with more mobile devices and cloud solutions, one area that often posed a challenge for remote workers was printing — especially for those who didn't have printers at home, or needed to print frequently.

“The pandemic has reinforced the idea that work is not a separate place, and for many people that involves printing where they are,” says Christian Edmond Reyes, Philippines

managing director of HP, Inc. “Just like we’ve seen with computing, printing needs to adapt to hybrid work in terms of mobility.”

HP Roam for Business addresses that challenge, allowing mobile workers to safely and securely submit print jobs on the go, from any device and any location, and then print only when they are at an HP Roam-enabled printer. This gives hybrid employees flexibility and security, and also helps reduce wasted energy, paper, and supplies from unintentional prints. This added layer of efficiency can even reduce printing needs by 15% to 30%, according to HP studies.

CUTTING THE COMMUTE

According to the Climate Change Commission (CCC), transportation is the third-largest contributor to the country’s greenhouse gas emissions. Netherlands-based technology specialist TomTom’s 2020 Traffic Index reported that commuters lost an average of 188 hours in traffic that year, or the equivalent of seven days and 20 hours.

With Filipinos staying home due to the ongoing pandemic and work hybrid setups, many did not have to experience the difficulties of traffic and commuting.

“With the workplace changing so rapidly, there is a collective responsibility to maintain a strong focus on sustainability as we not only adapt, but innovate in the face of change,” shares Mr. Reyes. “The opportunity to evolve work in a more ethical and sustainable way is there for the taking. It’s up to all of us, as citizens of the planet, to do it in such a way that helps not only the company and the employees, but the world around us.”

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