



NEWS ROUNDUP

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By: Jing Villamente

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By: Hana Bordey

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MALAYA

[Agencies scramble to contain possible oil spill off Mindoro](#)

By: Jed Macapagal and Victor Reyes

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Energy (DOE) yesterday scrambled to contain a possible oil spill after a tanker carrying 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil sank off Oriental Mindoro last Tuesday.

[Philippines to host the APEC Business Advisory Council in Cebu](#)

THE Philippines will host the third leg of this year's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Business Advisory Council (ABAC) in Cebu from July 27 to 30, headlining the region's private sector priorities on economic integration, sustainable growth, financial services, inclusion, and digitalization and innovation under the theme of "Equity, Sustainability, and Opportunity."

MANILA BULLETIN

[\[Opinion\] The agricultural landscape of the Philippines](#)

By: Brian Trias

I had the pleasure of attending a lecture recently by the former Department of Agriculture (DA) Assistant Secretary Leandro Gazmin regarding the economics of agriculture. Somewhere in the beginning of his lecture, he asked us if we thought the Philippines was an agricultural country. Some said yes, some said no. After giving his lecture, which included statistics from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), he asked us that same question again, and some of us still came to that same conclusion that we are not. If you make it to the end of this article, perhaps, you can decide for yourself whether we are or are not. I will let you be the judge.

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By: Keith Bacongco

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THE MANILA TIMES

[\[Opinion\] Why we need to plan for climate migrants](#)

By Merliza Makinano

THE escalating signs and impact of climate change can no longer be ignored. In its analysis of extreme climate events, the Global Climate Risk Index ranks the Philippines as the second most affected country by extreme climate events in 2018. The Global Report on Internal Displacement also cites that over 4 million Filipinos were internally displaced in 2020, mostly due to typhoons.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[\[Opinion\] Caring for Earth](#)

By: Federico R. Lopez

By 2050 we will need five times the electricity we use today; and we will need 10-12 times the clean energy in use today. Even as we do this, we must continue to improve access to 24/7 electricity for billions of people (in the case of the Philippines, millions of households) who currently do not have it reliably in their lives if we are to even begin uplifting them from poverty.

[Oriental Mindoro oil spill could affect 21 marine protected areas — DENR](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

MANILA, Philippines — The oil spill caused by a sunken tanker in Oriental Mindoro could affect 21 marine protected areas, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources said as it formed a task force to address the situation.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

['Good work,' PBBM tells PH humanitarian contingent to Türkiye](#)

By Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Wednesday heaped praises on the Philippine inter-agency contingent sent to help victims of the devastating magnitude 7.8 earthquake that hit Türkiye on Feb. 6.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

DAILY TRIBUNE

[DENR to check oil spill damage of submerged tanker in Oriental Mindoro](#)

By: Jing Villamente

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources on Wednesday said it had already sent their regional personnel to determine the possible damage to sea waters by a submerged fuel tanker in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro.

In a statement, DENR said it required their regional personnel to be on the site to access and monitor for potential marine biodiversity impacts and the possible risk to lives and livelihoods in the area due to the direction of the current and distance from the shoreline which may be affected.

This, after the environment agency said initial reports they received indicated that access to the area was limited due to the bad weather and observation of the impact has been limited to aerial survey.

Meanwhile, the government agency said it is continuously coordinating with the local government of Naujan and the Philippine Coast Guard who had already mobilized certified oil spill response organizations to support their operations.

As of this writing, DENR reported that the fuel tanker is positioned on the eastern side of Mindoro Island at an estimated distance of 8 to 12 nautical miles.

On Tuesday, the Princess Empress, carrying 800,000 liters of industrial fuel oil from Bataan province encountered engine trouble and drifted towards the vicinity waters of Naujan due to rough seas causing it to become half-submerged according to reports by PCG.

GMA NEWS ONLINE

[Imee Marcos confronts Galvez on reported EDCA sites near Taiwan Strait](#)

By: Hana Bordey

Senate foreign relations committee chairperson Imee Marcos on Wednesday confronted officials on the reported establishment of four Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites in Northern Luzon near the Taiwan Strait.

"Are we talking about the escalating tensions in the Taiwan Strait as the number one issue?" Marcos asked at a Senate briefing on the new EDCA sites.

According to Marcos, two new EDCA sites will be established in Cagayan, one in Isabela, and in Zambales.

"It clearly indicates that this is the first line in the Taiwan attacks that are projected. Is that correct?" Marcos asked Defense officer-in-charge Carlito Galvez Jr.

"I just need to understand why are you choosing all these sites in Northern Luzon when in fact if it were West Philippine Sea deterrence that were uppermost in our minds, the protection of our territorial sovereignty, surely it should be in the western sector not purely in the northern," Marcos went on.

In response, Galvez said the four sites are still in negotiation.

"We might change the locations depending on the agreement that we are having in the security sector," he said.

When asked to confirm the four new EDCA sites in Northern Luzon, Galvez said "it is still unidentified location."

During the discussion on the new EDCA sites, Galvez said they just agreed on the numbers and not on the actual sites.

When they came up with the number of new EDCA sites, Galvez said they need to follow some criteria, such as sites that can cater to Balikatan exercises.

But Marcos is not satisfied with Galvez's explanation.

"Nag-shift na po ba tayo at hindi na yung territorial integrity kundi yung escalation ng tension sa Taiwan Straits ang ating tinutumbok nito?" Marcos asked.

Galvez said he cannot categorically answer the question.

At the latter part of the hearing, Marcos also noted that the Balikatan exercises "suddenly shifted" to Northern Luzon.

"Gentlemen, what is our fight with Taiwan? What is our fight with Taiwan? I don't understand. So why are we doing all the military exercises in Northern Luzon-- a stone's throw or at least a boat ride away from Taiwan," Marcos said.

"Then clearly, the new expanded EDCA is addressing the escalation of tensions in the Taiwan Straits, not Philippine interest in the West Philippine Sea. We are therefore going to fight for another country, the United States? Is that correct, sir?" she went on.

Galvez said they look at the totality of the country's complete preparedness to collective defense and disasters considering that the Philippines is the most vulnerable in climate change.

He further explained that the Balikatan exercises are being done annually and rotationally in different regions.

"The reason why we choose the northern part for Balikatan exercises because...our preparation for disaster is very significant considering that we have seen a lot of typhoons, a lot of flooding, a lot of earthquakes happening in the country," he said.

In the same hearing, Cagayan Governor Manuel Mamba reiterated his opposition to the possible creation of EDCA sites in the province.

Mamba said the Armed Forces of the Philippines provides an efficient disaster responses to areas in need.

"Please do not ram into our throats what is not acceptable to us because binobola-bola lang po tayo e. Hindi na po totoo ito," Mamba said.

"China never invaded us, never conquered us. Wala kaming problema sa kanila. Sa totoo lang they are very helpful. I never sought their help during disasters but China came in yung federation of Chinese Chamber nagpapadala ng rice.. During our disaster, they are our neighbors. Please, do not let us tell them that they are our enemies because of the United States of America. Let them have their own war but we can never be an enemy to our neighbor," Mamba said.

JOURNAL ONLINE

[LNG does not lead to energy security, policymakers told](#)

The Power for People Coalition (P4P) on Wednesday said that the expansion of Philippine dependence on liquefied natural gas (LNG) is not needed to avert a power crisis and would have negative effects on energy security and consumer welfare.

P4P issued the explanation in response to a statement by Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, who said that the country must invest more in LNG terminals with the Malampaya supplies drying up.

“Any energy source that must be imported does not address energy security, especially if it’s an expensive and unreliable fossil fuel which fossil gas is. The cost of LNG also means consumers would pay through the nose to keep the lights on. Instead of being trapped in the false dilemma of having expensive electricity or none at all, we should go for expanding domestic renewable energy sources,” said Gerry Arances, P4P Convenor.

The consumer energy advocate explained that any further expansion in the use of fossil fuels would cause the country to miss the 1.5°C target for global warming which the Philippines committed to in the Paris Agreement.

“We call on Senator Gatchalian to not fall victim to the false promises of proponents of LNG, who use the terms short-term and medium-term to justify the expansion of fossil fuel use. If we fall into this ruse, there will be no long-term, as it will surely cause us to miss the target of the Paris Agreement. This target was set to prevent disastrous climate change, and missing it would mean we, as a country in the typhoon belt, would suffer a lot,” said Arances.

Recent estimates from the Department of Energy show the Philippines has potential to tap up to megawatts of renewable energy across 25 Competitive Renewable Energy Zones, more than enough to supply the needs of the country’s energy grid.

“Insisting on LNG means squeezing Filipinos’ limited financial capacity as high prices persist. If we maximize renewable energy, we will create a domestic and cheaper supply that protects us from the unstable global price market. Renewables are the key to green, affordable, and secure energy,” said Arances.

Arances also pressed on the fulfillment of the Renewable Energy Act of 2008 which states that it is the policy of the State “to accelerate the exploration and development of 9 renewable energy resources to achieve energy self-reliance, through the adoption of 10 sustainable energy development strategies to reduce the country’s dependence on fossil fuels and thereby minimize the country’s exposure to price fluctuations in the international markets, the effects of which spiral down to almost all sectors of the economy.”

“We do hope that our policymakers and the Department of Energy realize that pushing for LNG goes against the Renewable Energy Act of 2008 which must be fully and urgently implemented. Renewable energy plants can come online faster than these LNG facilities which have faced several delays due to supply restrictions and economic unviability. We urge Senator Gatchalian to reconsider his stance and help us push the Department of Energy to further accelerate the use of renewable energy to power our grid,” said Arances.

MALAYA

Philippines to host the APEC Business Advisory Council in Cebu

THE Philippines will host the third leg of this year's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Business Advisory Council (ABAC) in Cebu from July 27 to 30, headlining the region's private sector priorities on economic integration, sustainable growth, financial services, inclusion, and digitalization and innovation under the theme of "Equity, Sustainability, and Opportunity."

As 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.

Mr. Aboitiz 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.

Meanwhile, 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.

Finally, 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 Mr. Aboitiz as part of the Philippine delegation is Tomas Alcantara, Chair of ABAC Philippines, and 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 with regards to education and the future of work.

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 first 2023 ABAC meeting was held in Auckland, New Zealand last February 12 to 14. This is to be followed by the second meeting 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."

MANILA BULLETIN

[\[Opinion\] The agricultural landscape of the Philippines](#)

By: Brian Trias

I had the pleasure of attending a lecture recently by the former Department of Agriculture (DA) Assistant Secretary Leandro Gazmin regarding the economics of agriculture. Somewhere in the beginning of his lecture, he asked us if we thought the Philippines was an agricultural country. Some said yes, some said no. After giving his lecture, which included statistics from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), he asked us that same question again, and some of us still came to that same conclusion that we are not. If you make it to the end of this article, perhaps, you can decide for yourself whether we are or are not. I will let you be the judge.

Just to give an overview, the Philippines' agriculture industry is diverse and includes crops such as coconut, banana, rice, corn, sugarcane, pineapple, and mangoes, among others. It also includes poultry, swine, and cattle. The agriculture industry provided employment to around a quarter of the country's workforce and accounted for 9.5% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022. While 9.5% of GDP is significant, looking at the rest of our GDP, a much more significant 61% comes from services. Looking at our agricultural trade balance, in 2021, agricultural imports were a little more than double the value of exports. Agricultural imports and exports were recorded at US\$15.71 billion and US\$6.79 billion, respectively.

Just like any business or industry, the agriculture industry has its challenges. It is mainly comprised of small-scale farmers who rely on traditional methods of farming, which can be time-consuming and inefficient. If we compare ourselves to other countries like Vietnam or Thailand for instance, we yield less per hectare than they do.

Philippine farmers also struggle to access markets and often sell their produce at low prices due to a lack of bargaining power. They also typically lack modern equipment and infrastructure. Another challenge faced by farmers is the limited access to financing. It is often difficult for them to obtain loans to invest in their farms and improve their productivity. Climate change is another factor that affects their productivity.

While there are government initiatives in place to improve our agriculture and the income of farmers, these challenges, the trade deficit in agriculture, and our GDP suggest to me that we are not an agricultural country. At least not yet. The good news is that the government's eight-point socioeconomic agenda includes a budget allocation of P174.0 billion to ensure food security. The Department of Agriculture (DA) will receive the highest share of that allocation in the amount of P156.6 billion to support banner programs that cover rice, corn, livestock, and fisheries.

New home for PH eagle in Davao City perfect for natural breeding

By: Keith Baconco

DAVAO CITY – Nestled within a natural Philippine eagle habitat, the new sanctuary of the national bird in a hinterland barangay here is a perfect environment for natural breeding.

As the new home of the Philippine eagle also sits between the boundary of two nesting territories of the national bird, Philippine Eagle Foundation Director for Research and Conservation Dr. Jayson Ibañez believes that the Philippine Eagle could be more productive in their new home. “The temperature, altitude, and vegetation are perfect for natural breeding,” Ibañez added.

Unlike its current home at the Philippine Eagle Center (PEC) in Barangay Malagos here, the Philippine Eagle Conservation Breeding Sanctuary (PECBS) in Barangay Eden is far from human noise and disturbances.

“In Malagos, the breeding facility is very near the tour place and the isolation area surrounded by farms and roads,” Ibañez explained.

Three breeding pairs of Philippine eagle are set to be moved to their new sanctuary next month as a measure to protect the national bird against the threat of avian flu as well as the changing landscapes around the PEC.

The 13-hectare PECBS is within the 105-hectare Eden Tourism Reservation Area of the city government.

In a briefer, the PEF said that a single case of avian flu in the current facility could wipe out the only captive breeding stock of the species in the world.

It added that the outbreak of avian flu in March 2022 in Magsaysay town in Davao del Sur province 90 kilometers southwest of the PEC posed a threat right at the doorstep of the national bird in this city.

PEF added that the outbreak put at risk 32 Philippine eagles being exterminated.

There are around 400 pairs of Philippine eagles left in the wild and had been placed under the category of critically endangered species.

The PEF noted that the changing landscape around the PEC, such as the mushrooming of game and poultry farms, increases the risk of exposure to highly pathogenic diseases such as avian flu.

Once the breeding pair of eagles will be moved to the new facility, Ibañez disclosed that for the first time, they will attempt natural incubation and natural chick-rearing techniques.

“Eagles mismo ang mag-incubate at magpakain and magpalaki ng chicks (The eagles themselves will incubate and feed their chicks). At the PEC, artificially

incubated and puppet reared ang birds (the birds). By doing this, the chicks will grow knowing their kind and behaving like a proper eagle, and not become human malimprinted birds,” he said.

Apart from the imprinted birds, Ibañez added that they will use natural eagle pairs for breeding. “Actual male and female eagles together and jointly incubating, and taking care of their young enhances their success at reproduction.”

The hatched chicks, the PEF official added, will be naturally reared by its parents until they become independent. These independent birds will then be released back to the wild.

In the new facility, Ibañez said they will minimize human interaction and presence especially in the rearing of captive-bred chicks. “Dapat minimal to zero ang human exposure (Human exposure should be minimal to zero), and that’s what we want to attempt at the new facility.”

Ibañez said the facility will also be equipped with a hospital for the raptors. However, the hospital will be exclusive for the eagles of the foundation only, he added.

Aside from breeding pairs, the hospital will also be for rescued eagles, hospital for treatment of injured and rescued birds, and quarantine and rehabilitation facility for rescued eagles, Ibañez said.

Construction of three duplex cages is ongoing and set to be completed by last week of March.

Ibañez said three breeding pairs of Philippine eagles are set to be moved in the PECBS on April 22, in time for Earth Day.

However, unlike the PEC, the new facility in Barangay Eden will be off limits to tourists, said Ibañez. The site will exclusively operate as a breeding facility for the Philippine eagles as it will be implementing strict biosecurity measures.

The PEC, he added, will be maximized for educational purposes and will remain a home to other injured, rescued, and endemic animals.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[Environment groups say e-vehicles need more than market incentives](#)

MANILA, Philippines — “The shift to electric vehicles is vital in addressing the prevailing climate crisis,” thus said several environmental groups following the introduction of electric vehicles in the country, which necessary to address climate-related issues.

However, the Climate Reality Project – Philippines (TCRP) said that this initiative needs more support from the government in terms of policy-making and power generation.

TCRP said in a joint statement with the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities (ICSC), that the country must also ensure the transition to renewable energy and enable public infrastructure for people’s mobility.

This came after the release of Executive Order No. 12 series of 2023 where tariff rates for electric vehicles (EVs) and other components were modified to help promote the shift from gas-fueled to electrically-propelled vehicles.

Under EO12, different types of EVs have received tax breaks with the exclusion of electric motorcycles which are still subject to 30 percent import duty.

“The shift to electric vehicles is vital in addressing the prevailing climate crisis. However, electrification is only ideal when the source of electrification is renewable energy; and when we can provide affordable, stable, and flexible electricity rates for every Filipino household,” Nazrin Camille Castro, TCRP executive, said.

According to Statista Research Department, the power production in the Philippines is still dominated by coal at 47.6 percent, followed by other fossils at 18 percent, and gas at 10.7 percent, which totals 76.3 percent.

Various types of renewable energy generation like wind, solar, bioenergy, hydro, and other renewables share at 23.7 percent of the country’s total power source.

“We can accelerate the renewable energy transition by ending policies that allow fossil fuel companies to pass the higher costs of imported coal on to the consumers and create an enabling environment for more renewable energy producers,” Castro said.

“We need to approach electrification of vehicles not just through market incentives, but address vital points where electric vehicles’ potential can really address hardworking commuters’ needs which include secure, flexible, reliable, and affordable energy via renewables; and systematically address congestion by enabling public infrastructure for people’s mobility, not cars,” Castro added.

Castro also said that the country should also fix its car-centric infrastructure which makes up 80 percent of road spaces by making it sustainable and climate-friendly by creating more bike lanes, walkways, and green spaces.

BuCor HQ at Masungi Georeserve: What's really at stake?

By: Kurt Dela Peña

MANILA, Philippines—"Twenty years in the making," the Masungi Georeserve has "successfully made progress in watershed rehabilitation and protection" within the threatened landscape of Rizal province.

Since the 2000s, the Masungi Georeserve Foundation (MGF) has conserved and rehabilitated the landscape, which is a 300-hectare land in the Sierra Madre Mountain Range.

"Trees are now growing taller, the wildlife is slowly but certainly getting richer," the MGF said of the georeserve, which in 1996 was dedicated to conservation and restoration.

But not even a year has passed since the attack of seven park rangers by a mob of 20 to 30 people and the "attempted invasion" of over 30 armed men, the landscape is feared to be put at risk once again.

This, as the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) said it has a plan to build a new headquarters within the Masungi Georeserve, stressing that the bureau is the registered owner of 270 hectares, essentially most of the landscape.

BuCor officer-in-charge Gregorio Catapang Jr. said a transfer certificate of title for the land in Barangays Cuyambay, Laiban, San Andres and Tinucan in Tanay town was awarded to the BuCor last year.

Looking back, the 270 hectares and a separate 30 hectares for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) were under the name of the national government in Certificate of Title No. 3556.

However, when Proclamation No. 1158 was signed in 2006 by then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the BuCor and the DENR were given rights to the land.

This was the reason that BuCor is now planning to build a new headquarters, a residential area for its staff, and an agro-production area within the landscape's Lot 10.

But there's a problem.

As stressed by the MGF on Feb. 16, when 20 men from the BuCor arrived at the georeserve to conduct an "ocular inspection," Lot 10 was found to be part of several protected and conserved areas:

National Park, Wildlife Sanctuary and Game Preserve (Proclamation No. 1636, which was signed in 1977 by then President Ferdinand Marcos Sr.)

Proposed Masungi Strict Nature Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary (DENR Administrative Order No. 33, which was issued in 1993 by then environment secretary Angel Alcala)

Kaliwa River Forest Reserve (Proclamation No. 573, which was signed in 1969 by Marcos Sr.)

The MGF said Lot 10 is part of hundreds of hectares of land, which were equitized in a conservation and rehabilitation project in 2002 by the DENR and Blue Star Construction and Development Corp.

It also includes the latest MGF initiative with the government—the Masungi Geopark Project (MGP)—which it said is “at the forefront of the Philippines’ climate change agenda.”

Looking back, it was in 2017 when the DENR asked MGF to help preserve 2,700 hectares of protected landscape, especially the Upper Marikina River Basin protected Landscape (UMRBPL).

Serious implications

While Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla said the BuCor’s plan is not yet final, with Catapang stressing that they will first seek the approval of experts, the BuCor’s move is already raising concerns.

Last Feb. 21, Sen. Nancy Binay filed Senate Resolution No. 495 to seek intervention, stressing that the Senate should look into the plan of the BuCor.

“The Masungi Georeserve is a symbol of sustainable development and at the forefront of efforts to conserve, restore and improve the environment in the face of climate change, which must be protected [...] at all cost.”

Binay, chair of the Senate Committee on Tourism, said while BuCor’s reason for developing the area was “reasonable, it is important to weigh the possible consequences.”

She said the plan “may affect the environment and tourism in the country,” stressing the implications of building a structure in an ecotourism area like the Masungi Georeserve.

Even Rep. Raoul Manuel (Kabataan), who visited Lot 10 on Friday (Feb. 24) with the group Kalikasan PNE, said he will file a resolution that will “express the sense of the House of Representatives.”

‘Ark of biodiversity’

As stressed by the MGF, the Masungi Georeserve is possibly the only remaining large exposure of rock from the Paleocene age in the Philippines.

Based on a report by the National Museum of the Philippines (NMP) last year, the Philippines is gifted with abundant landforms scattered all over the country.

One of these is karst, it said, a limestone formation created by water sinking and circulating below the ground, resulting in the chemical erosion of bedrock.

The MGF said one of the few karst landscapes in the Philippines that could be estimated to be millions of years old, the Masungi Georeserve has a unique biodiversity, which is home to endemic species.

Ann Dumaliang, managing trustee of the Masungi Georeserve, told INQUIRER.net that “we have been able to document more than 500 species of flora and fauna.”

These include 97 species of birds, 47 species of snails, which is the highest in the Philippines, and 30 species of bats, like the Mottle-Winged Flying Fox.

As Dumaliang said, these species include rare ones, like the JC’s Vine, which has been documented only in five places in the Philippines, the Masungi Microsnail, and Scale-Feathered Malkoha.

The NMP said the formation of the landscape takes hundreds of years. “It is home to significant geological, biological, and even cultural resources.”

No construction, please?

But Dumaliang said “as a karst ecosystem comprising a network of caves, sinkholes, and even underground systems, it can be massively impacted by whatever occurs in its surroundings.”

Catapang earlier said the BuCor will use only 20 to 30 hectares out of the 270 hectares, and that it will only be on “vacant spaces” at the bottom of the landscape.

As the NMP and the World Commission on Protected Areas explained, any karst environment depends on the relationship of water, land, vegetation, and soil.

It said while activities such as developmental ones in the vicinity of the Masungi Geopark may not cause direct destruction on the geopark itself, the activities may disrupt karst systems.

This was the reason that construction of any permanent structures is prohibited.

The NMP said developments such as, but not limited to, establishment of facilities, construction of concrete roads or hiking trails, or the permission of any vigorous anthropological activities may become a triggering event for sinkhole collapse.

This, as the Masungi Georeserve is made of soluble rocks known as limestone. Such lithology is very critically susceptible to the formation of cavities, which eventually become large cave systems.

“These cavities are not usually known unless their roof collapses to form sinkholes.”

As stressed by the MGF, the area is “mountainous and geologically unbuildable,” saying that the development will be financially prohibitive, and in the words of scientists from the NMP, will have “expensive consequences” for the environment.

Masungi's carbon sink

The Global Water Partnership said conserving the Masungi Georeserve and MGP will help strengthen resilience to climate changes, especially by protecting and rehabilitating the forests in the watershed and its biodiversity.

It said when landscapes are saved from threats, they act as carbon sinks, stressing that so far, the Masungi Georeserve and MGP presently store an estimated 160,000 tons of carbon, equivalent to 66 million gallons of gasoline consumed.

“Once fully restored, the area will be able to store almost one million tons of carbon and sequester even more every year,” the Global Water Partnership said.

The problem, however, is that from 2003 to 2010, the UMRBPL lost a significant area of 2,247 hectares, or an average of 321 hectares yearly, the Upper Marikina Watershed Coalition said.

“In 2015, there was only 21.1 percent estimated forest cover left in the Upper Marikina Watershed. Parts of the watershed are still under threat as mining, quarrying, professional squatting, and large-scale illegal logging continues,” it said.

A conserved UMRBPL translates to the preservation of the Masungi Georeserve—the home of 60-year-old limestone formations and over 500 species of flora and fauna.

Catch basin

Looking back, when Tropical Storm Ondoy hit in 2009, the failure of the watershed to hold water led to one of the deadliest disasters to hit the National Capital Region (NCR).

Then when Typhoon Ulysses hit in 2020, the Advocates of Science and Technology for the People said the degraded condition of watersheds upstream the Marikina-Pasig was also a critical factor in the floods that hit communities.

“If a watershed is no longer healthy, when there are no trees and no vegetation, runoff water can easily travel down from the mountains and toward the rivers and other channels,” it said.

As stressed by the MGF, a higher forest cover can lower possible flood water volume by 27 percent to 47 percent versus a ‘No Forest’ cover simulation by the World Bank in the Upper Marikina Watershed.

Dumaliang told INQUIRER.net that Lot 10 contains the main rock spine of the karst formation: “This area is also tactically important in preventing encroachment further up the watershed.”

“It is especially sensitive in the system being the watershed divide (highest points of the watershed).”

Dumaliang previously said UMRBPL is very critical not only for the communities within and on its edges because it's also significant for NCR.

“It’s really something that affects some 20 million Filipinos who rely on this watershed,” she said, stressing that illegal activities have deep impact on the quality and amount of water, siltation of waterways, and even soil quality.

A watershed is an area of land that drains or “sheds” water into another body of water. In this case, water from the Sierra Madre flows through these areas all the way down the Pasig River, Marikina River and Laguna de Bay:

- Antipolo
- Baras
- General Nakar
- Rodriguez
- San Mateo
- Tanay

The MGF stressed in 2020 that “there should be no other recourse but to conserve what’s left of the watershed, restore the forest, and remove all incompatible activities within it.”

Gov’t is pro-environment

“There are many viable alternative sites elsewhere. Masungi is a priceless legacy of the nation that should be preserved at all costs instead of destroyed,” the MGF said.

But Remulla clarified that the development plans for the bureau’s 270-hectare property within the protected area in Tanay, would be “pro-environment.”

He said: “Secretary Loyzaga and I talked yesterday and will speak with one voice on this matter. There should be no problem. We’re pro-environment, the environment is not our enemy.” He was referring to current Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga.

“We are exploring everything. Actually, there’s no final decision on that yet... but definitely, we will be needing some of the land that’s not part of the reserve. But most likely we’re thinking of [a prison] for young offenders or women offenders for the [NCR],” Remulla said.

However, he said they would utilize only the “unused” portion of the geopark: “What’s important to Masungi is to preserve it. But the other land areas that are not being used will be used by the government.”

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

BuCor’s plan to move out of Muntinlupa City was part of the “BuCor Development and Modernization Plan 2023-2028.”

THE MANILA TIMES

[Why we need to plan for climate migrants](#)

By Merliza Makinano

THE escalating signs and impact of climate change can no longer be ignored. In its analysis of extreme climate events, the Global Climate Risk Index ranks the Philippines as the second most affected country by extreme climate events in 2018. The Global Report on Internal Displacement also cites that over 4 million Filipinos were internally displaced in 2020, mostly due to typhoons.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that about 21.5 million people have been forcibly displaced due to weather-related events, such as floods, storms, wildfires and extreme temperatures since 2008. By 2050, according to the Institute for Economics and fPeace (IEP), there could be 1.2 billion climate refugees — those who live in countries they identified as not resilient enough to withstand ecological threats.

The United Nations Women states that in the climate crisis, women and girls have been impacted the most, worsening the "existing gender inequities, and unique threats to their livelihoods, health and safety."

It is projected that extreme weather events will worsen and become more frequent. Even high-income countries have been impacted with heat waves and flooding. But the poorest countries are particularly vulnerable given its lesser capacity to cope, rebuild and recover.

The Philippines is among the countries most affected by extreme climate events. For the past 10 years, annual losses from typhoons was 1.2 percent of GDP, according to the World Bank's Country Climate and Development Report 2022.

Rising sea level threat

The reported sea-level rise in the country is 60 centimeters, about three times more than the global average of 21 to 24 centimeters. In 30 years, this is projected to affect about 6.8 million Filipinos living below the high tide line, rising to 13 million by 2100.

According to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources figures, more than 50 percent of municipalities are coastal, where most major cities are coastal, and 62 percent of the population lives in the coastal zone (832 coastal municipalities and 25 coastal cities).

With a 1-meter sea-level rise, it is projected that about 60 million Filipinos living in coastal areas will be forced to move by century's end.

Already, residents in small islands have felt the impact of the climate crisis. For instance, the sinking islands in Bohol is a grim reminder of the impact of climate change and natural disasters. In the island of Batasan, Tubigon, residents have

adapted to the high tide submerging their entire island for about four hours a day every few months of the year.

Most of the climate migrants are likely from rural areas, with their livelihoods dependent on agriculture and fishing. Whether to stay, or leave is a dilemma for the vulnerable, as most would neither have the resources, nor the capacity to leave their homes and start anew. Not to mention the loss of community ties, which is part of their identity should they leave.

Threat to national security

The Philippines has an overall ETR score of 5 out of 5, or extremely high risk in the Institute for Economics and Peace's Ecological Threat Report 2022, assessing ecological threats to food and water risk, rapid population growth and natural disasters.

As an archipelagic state, the rising sea level poses an impending threat to peace and security, not just on the stability of the maritime boundaries, but on the nation's sovereignty, territorial integrity and way of life.

A lack of resilience will also worsen food security and competition over resources, particularly those in coastal areas, who are particularly vulnerable given that poverty is widespread in these areas, and the fisherfolk among the poorest of the poor.

Further, we can expect population changes, as climate migration would also impact densely populated coastal areas as the sea level rises. The mass displacement will have social and political impact fueling insecurity.

As UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has pointed out, in coming decades, "The danger is especially acute for nearly 900 million people who live in coastal zones at low elevations — that is, one out of 10 people on Earth," ... and thus "ever-fiercer competition for fresh water, land and other resources."

Challenge of our time

According to the World Bank, the fundamental challenge of our time is "tackling the climate crisis while meeting urgent development needs."

This is not an easy task. Without urgent concerted action, environmental degradation will worsen, and further drive global insecurity.

Many measures have been suggested by experts to adapt to the impact of climate change. In building resilience, it is important to keep it people-centered and holistic. And as studies have suggested, it should empower local communities to help shape their development and security.

Thus, any action to address climate vulnerabilities taken at various levels, should consider the migrant, and the community. And for the residents of the disappearing islands, they are hoping that more can be done, and should be done soon.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[\[Opinion\] Caring for Earth](#)

By: Federico R. Lopez

By 2050 we will need five times the electricity we use today; and we will need 10-12 times the clean energy in use today. Even as we do this, we must continue to improve access to 24/7 electricity for billions of people (in the case of the Philippines, millions of households) who currently do not have it reliably in their lives if we are to even begin uplifting them from poverty.

Reducing the carbon intensity of electricity is a complex balancing act. Adding more 24/7 renewable energy (RE) sources like hydro and geothermal power to the grid is straightforward and should be encouraged where we can. What needs to be done thoughtfully is adding more intermittent RE sources like solar and wind. Their variable and intermittent nature necessitates that we match them with more storage to account for the fact that they're not there when night falls or on cloudy or windless days.

However, batteries are only capable of running 3-4 hours and thus fall short of fully providing power for the 10-12 hours before the sun rises or the stretches of cloudy or windless days or even weeks. This is why President BBM correctly points out the need for a low carbon emission fuel like natural gas to act as the bridge fuel that's technically more suited for complementing the variable nature of RE. Without this we cannot keep our lights on and affordable as we scale-up and deploy more intermittent renewable energy sources into our grids.

Of course, over time as more clean energy and storage is added into our grids, we must look toward decommissioning our fossil fuel powered plants: first the coal plants, and then ultimately the oil and natural gas plants. For the latter they can either be repowered with green fuels like hydrogen as they become feasible in the coming decade or outright decommissioned before 2050, similar to the process done for the coal plants earlier. We ought to keep an eye out for international funding for decommissioning these plants earlier than their useful lives. Such funds are increasingly becoming more available.

Decarbonizing and scaling up a green electricity grid over the next three decades is probably the greatest energy transition in the history of mankind. It's not just changing the electricity system but building a new global energy system with components we have never built before and on a massive scale. This will need nothing short of collaborative action among various players that today consider themselves competitors. And these also need well-coordinated and timely action on the part of regulators who must be decisive and well-versed on the elements that make for a successful and just energy transition. The path is made more complex today by the Russia-Ukraine war's effects on energy prices worldwide, and our need to secure energy supplies at a time when all countries in the world are scrambling and paying top dollar to secure theirs to avoid Russian supplies and energy blackmail.

You may ask why the Philippines should undertake this, given our limited resources and the fact that we account for only 0.4 percent of global emissions. I would answer that question in this way: It's apparent that the world is changing, not as fast as it needs to, but eventually it will, and it must. The impacts of the climate crisis as well as climate action that will be demanded of everyone are among the forces in history that will transpire "gradually and then suddenly." If we're not prepared and conveniently ignore it, we'll be overwhelmed and not recognize the world around us in the coming 30 years.

The science tells us we no longer have a choice. Unless we have more of these pandemics that choke growth, there will no longer be any time extensions. Since we have limited resources, we must choose to spend it wisely and in a future-proof manner.

We are the fourth most climate vulnerable nation on earth, some say even THE most vulnerable. The poster boys for what's to come are massively destructive typhoons like Yolanda (powerful 314 kph winds), Ondoy (massive precipitation in highly concentrated cities like Metro Manila), Urduja (lingered and stayed stationary dumping rain on us for three consecutive days). Let's expect more of these and prepare. Global warming's higher average temperatures also mean extreme wet seasons; but it also means more extreme dry ones when they come, with dire consequences for our fresh water supplies and even the possibilities of forest fires as is happening in many developed countries like Australia, the US and all over Europe as well.

With 60 percent of Filipinos living in coastal areas, sea-level rise is a major threat. Temperatures on the planet are rising fastest at the poles. This will have grave consequences for sea-level rise as tipping points are triggered in the world's cryosphere. Permafrost areas in the Arctic circle are also recently discovered to contain enormous amounts of methane (80 times more potent a GHG than carbon dioxide). If triggered, it's a tipping point that could release massive emissions equivalent to that of China today. Except no amount of climate negotiations can pull that back.

One thought I want to emphasize is something I remember Al Gore saying in 2016 at the Climate Reality Project leadership training at the Sofitel Manila. "All our infrastructure was built for a world that's now changed." At 1.1 degrees Celsius of warming, where we are today, the world has already changed. It will be even more so as we successfully navigate the journey to limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

In addition to creating a future-ready energy system, our being fourth on the world's climate vulnerability list necessitates that we prepare Philippine cities, communities and infrastructure for resilience in a climate-changed world. We need to do this in a systematic and collaborative way if we want to succeed and make serious headway in tackling other issues like hunger, poverty and the other pressing Sustainable Development Goals of our time. Trying to solve those will be futile if we don't build for the resilience we need and if we don't ultimately "solve climate change."

Having said all that, it is clear that the forces being triggered by the climate crisis and planetary degradation are very real. They're shaping local and global politics like no other time in history. Our social, economic, and political systems are all causing us to overshoot almost all of our planet's ecological ceilings. Biodiversity loss is happening at a rate that's hundreds of times faster than it's been over the last ten million years because of human activity. On the average, we use up 1.75 Earths each year to feed and fuel our current economies and lifestyles. Developed country lifestyles use up an average of four Earths.

Yet the inequality of benefits has caused massive shortfalls in the provision of basic foundations for billions of people. Poverty, hunger, loss of livelihoods have triggered wars, conflicts and mass migration all over the world. We're heading into a more unequal and politically unstable world yet one that's still driven primarily by metrics such as profit maximization, maximization of shareholder value and gross domestic product (GDP) growth. Remember too that healthy forests and trees are never given any value in GDP until they're cut down and used as wood. Rich schools of fish, corals and turtles are also not reflected in GDP until they appear on your dinner plate or hung as ornaments on your wall or as table décor.

Technology or even geo-engineering by themselves will not save the day for us. The times call for new paradigms and social constructs. We will need to measure progress using new metrics and reshape our way of life to thrive in a changed and rapidly changing world. It's all about reimagining our relationship to the planet and to one another. The flipside of the word Anthropocene is that if humans have such immense power to degenerate the Earth, if we so choose, humanity can also wield the same power to change course and regenerate it, not just for the sake of currently living humans but for the millions of other species that co-inhabit our world, today and tomorrow.

[Oriental Mindoro oil spill could affect 21 marine protected areas — DENR](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

MANILA, Philippines — The oil spill caused by a sunken tanker in Oriental Mindoro could affect 21 marine protected areas, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources said as it formed a task force to address the situation.

Authorities are rushing to contain an oil spill from MT Princess Empress, which sank off the coast of Oriental Mindoro. The vessel was carrying 800,000 liters of industrial fuel.

Environmental advocates and locals fear the oil spill could threaten the already fragile Verde Island Passage (VIP)—considered by scientists as the center of the center of marine biodiversity in the world—and the livelihoods of people who depend on the marine corridor. Oriental Mindoro is one of the five provinces surrounding VIP.

According to a report of the DENR's Biodiversity Management Bureau, the oil spill that stretches several kilometers could impact 21 locally-managed protected areas (LMMPAs). Potential risk areas including seagrass beds, mangroves, and dispersion pathways for spawned fish larvae have been mapped.

The Philippine Coast Guard—the lead agency tasked with response operations in the affected area—will install spill booms to protect LMMPAs.

The agency also formed a task force to address the situation and carried out water sampling in the towns of Naujan, Pola, and Pinamalayan.

The task force, in cooperation with the PCG and the Philippine Air Force, will conduct an aerial surveillance in the coming days to further assess the situation.

“[The DENR] has coordinated with experts in the private sector to immediately address the emergency situation and create a mid to long-term risk management strategy for the affected areas,” the department said.

CCC IN THE NEWS

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

['Good work,' PBBM tells PH humanitarian contingent to Türkiye](#)

By Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Wednesday heaped praises on the Philippine inter-agency contingent sent to help victims of the devastating magnitude 7.8 earthquake that hit Türkiye on Feb. 6.

In a Facebook post, Marcos expressed elation to know that the 82-man team returned home safely after their humanitarian mission in Istanbul.

“Welcome back from Türkiye to our relief workers. Your rescue and relief efforts were a job well done. Good work and welcome home,” he said.

Marcos issued the statement the same day the Philippine humanitarian team arrived in Manila.

He also thanked the Philippines’ response team for serving about 1,022 patients, helping recover the bodies of six quake victims and assessing 36 buildings in Türkiye.

He also lauded them for providing the victims with 11,205 pieces of blankets, 5,000 pieces of bonnets, and 420 pairs of gloves.

The Philippine contingent consisted of 30 emergency medical technicians from the Department of Health; 21 members of the Philippine Army’s 525th Engineer Combat Battalion, 51st Engineer Brigade; 12 from the Philippine Air Force’s 505th Search and Rescue Group; 9 from the Metro Manila Development Authority; 8 from the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority; and 2 from the Office of Civil Defense.

The team arrived in Istanbul on Feb. 9 and stayed there for two weeks.

Türkiye’s government will no longer accept a second contingent from the Philippines, as the so-called element of “life-saving time” has already lapsed, OCD spokesperson Assistant Secretary Rafelito Alejandro IV said on Feb. 13.

It, however, said the Philippines could still send or donate non-food items.

‘Resilient’ Philippines

Meanwhile, the Climate Change Commission (CCC) said the Marcos administration is determined to realize its bid to make the Philippines a “resilient” country.

This was after CCC Commissioner Albert dela Cruz Sr. lauded the resiliency and “bayanihan” (teamwork) of the people of the Dinagat Islands, as well as the smart

leadership of its local government officials, which helped the island province survive the severe typhoons that beset its communities in recent times.

“We should emulate what has been done here in Dinagat and with proper coordination, we can share our best practices with each other to achieve our goal of a resilient Philippines, as espoused by our beloved President Marcos,” dela Cruz said in a separate statement on Wednesday.

Dinagat is bearing the brunt of extreme weather disturbances, the CCC noted, citing the case wherein about 14,500 houses were destroyed and 15,700 were damaged when super typhoon Odette (international name Rai) hit the islands in 2022.

Dela Cruz said the impacts of severe typhoons on lives and property are getting worse because of climate change and global warming.

He said climate-related actions should be intensified in all communities in a “bottom-up strategy” to ignite the Filipino spirit of volunteerism.

“Mitigation and adaptation is a must. A whole-of-nation and -community approach is important in addressing the challenges brought about (by) the climate crisis,” dela Cruz said. (PNA)

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