



## NEWS ROUNDUP

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- Oriental Mindoro oil spill could affect 21 marine protected areas — DENR
- Small island states fight back against nature loss, climate change

## ARAB NEWS

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DUBAI: Dubai International Financial Centre hosted the first summit dedicated to advancing the COP28 climate action agenda in the global finance industry, Emirates News Agency reported on Thursday.

## BUSINESS MIRROR

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By: Sheikh Saaliq & Krutika Pathi

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By: Rhea Mogul and Vedika Sud

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### **GMA NEWS**

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## **MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT**

### **[North Korea's Kim demands more farmland to boost food production](#)**

SEOUL — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ordered improvements to infrastructure and expansion of farmland to ramp up food production, state media said on Thursday, amid warnings of an impending food crisis.

## **PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER**

### **[Law modernizing polluting steel plants in Pampanga town gets 1st nod of prov'l board](#)**

By: Tonette T. Orejas

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO, Pampanga — The first Philippine municipal ordinance legislating the modernization of smelting metal scraps, including a ban on induction furnaces (IF) for the manufacture of steel bars, passed the Pampanga Provincial Board's committee on environment and disaster resilience on Thursday, March 2.

## **THE PHILIPPINE STAR**

### **[77 groups urge Philippines to stop OceanaGold's mining ops in Nueva Vizcaya](#)**

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

MANILA, Philippines — Human rights and environmental groups from six countries called on the government to shut down the mine of Australian-Canadian firm OceanaGold in Nueva Vizcaya, which scarred the lands of indigenous Tawali people and polluted water systems in the area.

### **[Makati hosts national day with embassies](#)**

By: Marc Jayson Cayabyab

MANILA, Philippines — Makati Mayor Abby Binay yesterday met with ambassadors holding offices in the city to promote partnership between the local government and foreign dignitaries.

## **Oriental Mindoro oil spill could affect 21 marine protected areas — DENR**

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

MANILA, Philippines (Updated, 5:50 p.m.) — 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.

## **UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME**

### **Small island states fight back against nature loss, climate change**

Day was dawning over the Comoros when two self-described eco-guardians found the great bulk of a sea turtle motionless on the beach. The animal had laid its eggs in the sand and was gathering the strength to bury them before hauling itself back to the sea.

**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

## ARAB NEWS

### [DIFC hosts first finance summit to advance COP28 climate agenda](#)

DUBAI: Dubai International Financial Centre hosted the first summit dedicated to advancing the COP28 climate action agenda in the global finance industry, Emirates News Agency reported on Thursday.

More than 500 people attended the first of a series of finance summits to spur proactive action in the industry to lead the charge on climate change and accelerate the green transition.

The event featured a panel of speakers from leading investment firms, banks and financial service providers, who discussed the sector's COP28 priorities and how to implement best practice decision-making across their organizations.

The summit was presided over by Dame Heather McGregor, who wrote columns in the Financial Times under the name Mrs Money Penny from 1999-2016.

Simon Thompson, author of "Green and Sustainable Finance" and CEO of the Chartered Banker Institute, discussed how finance can power the green transition by ensuring capital flows to firms, investments, projects and technologies working to create a sustainable, low-carbon world.

Senior executives from ING, Zurich Insurance, and NatWest Group also discussed their commitment to achieving net zero.

At the event, the findings of the first Global Islamic Finance Retail Banking Survey and their implications for the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were released.

According to the survey, 90 percent of Islamic banking customers from a variety of markets believe it is critical that their bank offers products that are aligned with the SDGs.

About 86 percent said it is critical that the financial products they buy align with their personal values and ethics.

And 87 percent are willing to pay more for financial products that support the SDGs.

“DIFC and our clients are leading the approach on how the finance industry can play a significant role in tackling the climate crisis,” Christian Kunz, head of group strategy and innovation at DIFC, said.

Kunz added: “In alignment with the UAE’s priorities for hosting COP28, the first in a series of summits held at DIFC provided the ideal platform for influential contributors from the sector to come together and drive ideas forward to accelerate climate action.

“As a significant contributor to the sustainable economic growth of the Emirates, the DIFC is deeply committed to actively contributing to the UAE’s role as host of the next UN climate talks — the second largest in the history of climate summits.”

Omar Shaikh, managing director of the Global Ethical Finance Initiative, said: “Financial institutions need a greater sustainability focus if we are to overcome the very real threat of climate change, particularly for developing nations.

“The pressure on the industry will only continue to increase ahead of COP28 and financial institutions will be challenged to play a key role in climate action.

“The maturity and foresight of the UAE government and the DIFC’s leadership as a world-class financial center shows the nation’s unwavering commitment to tangible outcomes.

“This summit helped UAE-based financial institutions to understand what COP28 means to them and provided practical direction on how to successfully shift to a low-carbon world.

“Together with the DIFC, we look forward to encouraging and supporting the regional industry to both set the tone of ambition and practically accelerate the transition toward delivering net zero.”

## **BUSINESS MIRROR**

### **[At G-20 talks, high expectations for India as rising global power](#)**

By: Sheikh Saaliq & Krutika Pathi

NEW DELHI—With the foreign ministers of the Group of 20 leading economies meeting Thursday in New Delhi, host India is promoting itself as a rising superpower while leveraging its position on the global stage to bridge the gap between the West and Russia.

Experts expect India to be at the center of bitter global divisions, particularly over Russia's war in Ukraine. But it's also an opportunity for the South Asian nation to position itself as the voice of the Global South and as a potential mediator between the West and Moscow.

India is expected to adopt a neutral stance on Ukraine, as it has in the past. The event is likely to be overshadowed by the war in Europe and its impact on global energy and food security. However, senior foreign ministry officials said Wednesday that India was determined to focus on "equally important" issues of rising inflation, debt stress, health, climate change and food and energy security in developing nations.

"I really do believe that India stands the best chance of all countries to try to hold peace negotiations between Russia and not just the US, but the West, actually," said Derek Grossman, an analyst focused on the Indo-Pacific at the RAND Corporation.

He credited India's non-alignment and its rise as a global power for why it could be a potential peacemaker.

But the South Asian country has its own challenges, particularly with regional rival China. Tensions between New Delhi and Beijing remain high after a deadly border clash in 2020.

On Wednesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said the country's foreign minister would be attending the G-20 meeting, and that "China attaches great importance with India." She added maintaining good ties between the two countries is fundamental to their interests.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar "have done a good job of steering this middle path in very turbulent times," Grossman said.

“You now have American, Russian and even Chinese diplomats supporting India. The country really is at the geopolitical crossroads of everything now that involves the Global South,” he added.

So far, India has refrained from directly criticizing Russia. The two have been allies since the cold war era and New Delhi depends on Moscow for nearly 60 percent of its defense equipment. India has increasingly scooped up Russian oil since the invasion a year ago, initially facing scrutiny from the US and other allies over its growing purchases. That pressure has since waned and India has continued to abstain from voting in UN resolutions that condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

“It may appear unfathomable to many in the West that the reaction of the world’s largest democracy to such a cold-blooded, egregious aggression would be so subdued. But for anyone who understands India’s foreign policy, it’s not surprising at all,” said Michael Kugelman, director of the Wilson Center’s South Asia Institute.

“New Delhi has a special relationship with Moscow, and it’s not about to jeopardize it by turning on a longstanding partner,” he said.

Thursday’s meeting will nonetheless be challenging for India, especially after it was forced to issue a compromised chair’s summary at the conclusion of the G-20 finance ministers meeting last week. Russia and China objected to a joint communiqué that retained language on the war in Ukraine drawn directly from last year’s G-20 leaders summit declaration in Indonesia.

India has said that it stands by the Bali declaration in which major world powers strongly condemned the war in Ukraine, warning that the conflict was intensifying fragilities in the world’s economy.

Grossman said it was concerning that the final statement issued in Bengaluru last week was watered down from the Bali declaration at the insistence of China and Russia. He said New Delhi allowing that to happen was worrisome, but India’s “awkward predicament” to ensure a successful G-20 with everyone there, including Russia and China, meant the country has to make “compromises.”

“I think that’s what India is trying to do now,” he said.

The summits are particularly important for Modi and his ruling party ahead of the 2024 general elections. A strong show during India’s year as G-20 president will allow Modi’s party to signal its diplomatic reach and project power both at home and abroad.

Kugelman said the summit, due later this year, will advance important domestic political goals for New Delhi, and Modi's ultimate goal would be to "successfully manage the myriad geopolitical rivalries within the G-20, signal that India can rise above intense great power competition and seemingly intractable issues like the Ukraine war, and guide the prestigious club toward tangible achievements."

"In effect, Modi wants its G-20 presidency to yield meaningful achievements. That's a tall order, for sure, but it's important for New Delhi's foreign policy and domestic political goals alike," he said.

## Salceda: Solar alone won't cut it; include nuke in energy mix

By: Jovee Marie Dela Cruz

THE House Committee on Ways and Means chairman on Thursday told Department of Energy officials that nuclear energy must be part of the country's energy transition plans, adding that, "in a country without a national land use plan, and which is both densely populated and with a shrinking rural sector, overreliance on solar power for clean energy is dangerous."

Albay Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda made the statement following the Shell Resellers Conference on Thursday.

"I am telling you, nuclear is inevitable," said Salceda, the principal author of the proposed Comprehensive Nuclear Energy Regulation Act.

"Solar currently requires 1 hectare per megawatt. That's one hectare gone for agriculture, since agri lands are also the ones most ideal for solar power. You use it on water, same goes. That's one hectare gone that could have gone to fisheries," Salceda added.

Under a clean energy scenario, the Philippines needs 93,482 MW in additional installed capacity, around 45,000 of which is expected to come from solar power.

"One, it's not baseloadable yet. So, it's not a perfect substitute to coal or fossil fuel. Two, it requires a lot of land, and for a country without a national land use plan; for a country with LGUs that require heavy licensing processes for land reclassification, that makes renewable energy supply inelastic—it simply can't respond fast enough to increases in demand. As a result, you have high power costs," he said.

"You have investors interested in putting up big wind projects, but they're asking for FIT—which of course will increase, rather than decrease, power costs, at least in the short term," he added.

In that kind of situation, Salceda said the country must include nuclear energy is a policy priority.

Explore Taiwan as source

Salceda also urged the government to explore talks with Taiwan on the use of nuclear plants it is set to retire.

“The Maanshan NPP is 375km away from Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte. It’s at the very tip of Taiwan. It is owned by Taipower—the NAPOCOR of Taiwan,” he said.

“It will be decommissioned between 2024 and 2025. And the useful life is 60 years. In other words, if we can negotiate its use, we don’t need to put up new plants. Only submarine transmission between North Luzon and Taiwan,” he added.

Salceda said that also solves the NIMBY or Not in My BackYard attitude of many politicians towards nuclear power.

Maanshan, Salceda adds, is a 1900 MW plant which, if used for Philippine needs, can lower power cost by as much as 66 centavos per kwh.

“The cost is just 5 pesos per kwh,” Salceda said. “That is very crucial. We have millions of excess labor—as much as 12 million people—in agriculture and related sectors. They share around 9 percent of GDP, and that’s a recipe for certain poverty. If we don’t lower power costs, we won’t be able to create the light industries needed” to move them out of poverty, Salceda said.

**CBS**

**[As climate changes, climate anxiety rises in youth](#)**

By: David Schechter, Haley Rush, Chance Horner

Kids often worry about much different things than their parents do. One of the big ones is climate change. Research shows most youth are "extremely worried" about it, leading to a phenomenon called climate anxiety. Kids and young adults who struggle with this can perceive they have no future or that humanity is doomed.

"We see that a lot of young people are saying, I think my life will be worse than my parents' lives," said Dr. Sarah Schwartz, a professor of psychology at Suffolk University in Boston.

A study published last year collected attitudes about climate change from 10,000 people across the world, aged 16-25.

In the survey, 59% of youth and young adults said they were very or extremely worried about climate change and more than 45% said their feelings about climate change negatively affected their daily life and functioning.

"So, they know that the world is going to get to be a harder, darker, scarier place," said Schwartz. "And imagining themselves in that world feels really scary for them."

The study also revealed how climate change makes young people feel. In all countries surveyed, nearly 62% said they were anxious about climate change. About 67% said they were sad and afraid.

Schwartz is researching climate anxiety. She said it's not a diagnosis, but a valid response to the current situation in the world, and her research shows that three-quarters of young people report worrying about climate change.

"I don't think it makes sense as a disorder because, again, that one assumes that this is a psychopathology of a few rather than the majority," said Schwartz. "And then the goal is that it is this individual disorder, where we treat at the individual level rather than address the societal issues and the environmental issues."

"People should be talking about it more since it's their planet," said high school student Johanna Flores. "They should be worried about their health."

Flores lives in Chelsea, Massachusetts, just outside Boston, where she said there is so much jet fuel, road salt and heating oil stored on the river it's hard for some residents to even get close to the water.

"And you wouldn't see that in a white neighborhood, like you would see a beautiful view of the water," said 15-year-old Darien Rodriguez, who also lives in Chelsea. "You wouldn't see any industries, any like smoke and pollution."

The students are environmental activists at a non-profit called GreenRoots. They work alongside adults, advocating for environmental justice in their hometown by educating and empowering others to get involved.

"We're supposed to just partake in anything we can, like if there is some sort of thing going on of planting trees, like participate in that," said Flores. "Or if there's some sort of event, just even a trash pickup, people should participate in that because it helps the community so much."

With a group so focused on the environmental problems in their neighborhood, it's no surprise that they also worry about climate change.

"It's scary to think about what awaits the future generations and, like, the world itself," said 16-year-old Greandoll Oliva.

"I'm very concerned because I want to be able to have kids and watch their kids grow up and have a family," said Rodriguez. "I feel like I won't be able to experience that just because people are careless about what they do and how they treat the environment."

Getting involved helps

Schwartz said activism may be an effective way for kids to deal with the feelings associated with climate anxiety.

"Higher climate change anxiety is correlated with higher clinical symptoms of depression and anxiety," said Schwartz. "But what we saw was that for young people who have high levels of climate anxiety, if they also have high levels of activism, then we didn't see any higher levels of depression symptoms."

Schwartz said the social aspect and peer support of activism is most likely the biggest piece to help protect against depression.

"That may mean signing petitions," said Schwartz. "That may mean supporting other people who are the ones who are going to be the face of, you know, who are going to be going marching up to Beacon Hill over there," said Schwartz. "So, I think the idea of working with a group."

It could also mean building a "pop-up park" together in Chelsea, like the kids at GreenRoots have done.

"If there are more people working like this for a better future, there can be a change," said 16-year-old Greandoll Oliva.

"It helps me deal with it, like I'm not the only one," said 16-year-old Troy Arnold.

"There are moments where you're just like, well, nothing's ever going to change," said Rodriguez. "But then there's also that small feeling that there's still hope that people will change, and people will come together to help save humanity."

## How you can get involved

Schwartz said when people think of activism, they often think of a protest or rally. She said there are other ways people can get involved and work with others, too. She recommends some of the following tools, guides, and resources:

### Getting started

Are you interested in climate activism, but not sure where to begin? You can find climate toolkits and resources here, through Our Climate.

### Programs and resources

Get involved in programs to make a difference in your community, through The Climate Initiative.

Here, you can find more resources to help you act on climate change.

### Join a group

Join a Sunrise Hub here. A hub is a group of young people working together in their community to stop the climate crisis, through the organization Sunrise Movement.

**CNN**

**[Grand test for Indian diplomacy as American, Chinese and Russian ministers meet in Delhi](#)**

By: Rhea Mogul and Vedika Sud

(CNN) — Foreign ministers from the world's biggest economies have convened in New Delhi, setting the stage for a grand test in Indian diplomacy as it attempts to navigate tensions over Russia's brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

In the second high-level ministerial meeting under India's Group of 20 (G20) presidency this year, the country's foreign minister, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, will meet his American, Chinese and Russian counterparts Thursday, hoping to find enough common ground to deliver a joint statement at the end of the summit.

The world's largest democracy, with a population of more than 1.3 billion, has been keen to position itself as a leader of emerging and developing nations — often referred to as the global South — at a time when soaring food and energy prices as a result of the war are hammering consumers already grappling with rising costs and inflation.

Those sentiments were front and center during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's opening remarks Thursday, when he spoke of multiples crises the world faces, with less wealthy nations hit especially hard.

"The experience of the last few years, the financial crisis, climate change, the pandemic, terrorism and wars clearly shows that global governance has failed," Modi said.

"We must also admit that the tragic consequences of this failure are being faced most over by the developing countries," who he says are most affected by global warming "caused by richer countries".

Eluding to the war in Ukraine, Modi acknowledged the conflict was causing "deep global divisions." But he encouraged the foreign ministers to put differences aside during their meeting Thursday.

"We should not allow issues that we cannot resolve together to come in the way of those we can," he said.

But analysts say India's attempt to push its agenda has been complicated by the enduring divisions over the war.

Those differences played out in the southern Indian city of Bengaluru last month, when G20 finance chiefs failed to agree on a statement after their meeting. Both Russia and China declined to sign the joint statement, which criticized Moscow's invasion. That left India to issue a "chair's summary and outcome document" in which it summed up the two days of talks and acknowledged disagreements.

Analysts say that throughout the war New Delhi has deftly balanced its ties to Russia and the West, with Modi emerging as a leader who has been courted by all sides.

But as the war enters its second year, and tensions continue to rise, pressure could mount on countries, including India, to take a firmer stand against Russia — putting Modi's statecraft to the test.

### India's balancing act

Arguably India's most celebrated event of the year, the G20 summit has been heavily promoted domestically, with sprawling billboards featuring Modi's face plastered across the country. Roads have been cleaned and buildings freshly painted ahead of the dignitaries' visit.

Taking place in the "mother of democracies" under Modi's leadership, his political allies have been keen to push his international credentials, portraying him as a key player in the global order.

Last year's G20 leaders' summit in Bali, Indonesia, issued a joint declaration that echoed what Modi had told Russian President Vladimir Putin weeks earlier on the sidelines of a regional summit in Uzbekistan.

"Today's era must not be of war," it said, prompting media and officials in India to claim India had played a vital role in bridging differences between an isolated Russia and the United States and its allies.

India, analysts say, prides itself on its ability to balance relations. The country, like China, has refused to condemn Moscow's brutal assault on Ukraine in various United Nations resolutions. Rather than cutting economic ties with the Kremlin, India has undermined Western sanctions by increasing its purchases of Russian oil, coal and fertilizer.

But unlike China, India has grown closer to the West — particularly the US — despite ties with Russia.

New Delhi's ties with Moscow date back to the Cold War, and the country remains heavily reliant on the Kremlin for military equipment — a vital link given India's ongoing tensions with China at its shared Himalayan border.

The US and India have taken steps in recent months to strengthen their defense partnership, as the two sides attempt to counter the rise of an increasingly assertive China.

Daniel Markey, senior adviser, South Asia, for the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), said while India's leaders "would like to facilitate an end to this conflict that preserves New Delhi's relations with both Washington and Moscow and ends the disruption of the global economy," India did not have "any particular leverage" with Russia or Ukraine that would make a settlement likely.

"I believe that other world leaders are equally interested in playing a peace-making diplomatic role. So when and if Putin wishes to come to the table to negotiate, he will have no shortage of diplomats hoping to help," he said.

Still, as Putin's aggression continues to throw the global economy into chaos, India has signaled an intention to raise the many concerns faced by the global South, including climate challenges and food and energy security, according to Modi's opening speech.

"The world looks upon the G20 to ease the challenges of growth, development, economic resilience, disaster resilience, financial stability, transnational crime, corruption, terrorism, and food and energy security," Modi said.

### Navigating tensions

While Modi's government appears keen to prioritize domestic challenges, experts say these issues could be sidelined by the tensions between the US, Russia and China, which have increased recently over concerns from Washington that Beijing is considering sending lethal aid to the Kremlin's struggling war effort.

Speaking to reporters last week, Ramin Toloui, the US assistant secretary of state for economic and business affairs, said while Secretary of State Antony Blinken would highlight its efforts to address food and energy security issues, he would also "underscore the damage that Russia's war of aggression has caused."

Blinken will "encourage all G20 partners to redouble their calls for a just, peaceful, and lasting end to the Kremlin's war consistent with UN Charter principles," Toloui said.

At the same time, Russia in a statement Wednesday accused the US and the European Union of "terrorism," stating it was "set to clearly state Russia's assessments" of the current food and energy crisis.

"We will draw attention to the destructive barriers that the West is multiplying exponentially to block the export of goods that are of critical importance to the global economy, including energy sources and agricultural products," Russia said, hinting at the difficulties New Delhi might face during the meeting.

India has "worked very hard not to be boxed into one side or the other," Markey said. The country could not "afford to alienate Russia or the US and Modi doesn't want discussion of the war to force any difficult decisions or to distract from other issues, like green, sustainable economic development," he added.

But with plummeting ties between Washington and Beijing after the US military shot down what it says was a Chinese spy balloon that flew over American territory, New Delhi will have to carefully drive difficult negotiations between conflicting viewpoints.

China maintains the balloon, which US forces downed in February, was a civilian research aircraft accidentally blown off course, and the fallout led Blinken to postpone a planned visit to Beijing.

As differences are likely to play out during the ministerial meeting Thursday, analysts said India might see even limited progress as a win.

"Any joint declaration would probably be portrayed in the Indian media as a diplomatic accomplishment," Markey said. "But its wider significance would be limited."

## **GMA NEWS**

### **Shear line, amihan to bring rain over some parts of Philippines**

The shear line and northeast monsoon or amihan will bring rain to various parts of the Philippines on Friday, PAGASA reported.

Caraga and Davao Oriental will have cloudy skies with scattered rain showers and thunderstorms brought about by the shear line with possible flash floods or landslides due to moderate to at times heavy rains.

Cagayan Valley, Bicol Region, Apayao, Aurora, Quezon, Marinduque, Romblon, and Oriental Mindoro will have cloudy skies with rains due to the northeast monsoon with possible flash floods or landslides due to moderate with at times heavy rains.

Palawan, Visayas, and the rest of Mindanao will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers or thunderstorms due to localized thunderstorms and shear line with possible flash floods or landslides during severe thunderstorms.

Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with light rains also due to the northeast monsoon but with no significant impact.

Luzon and the eastern sections of Visayas and Mindanao will experience moderate to strong wind speed moving northeastward while coastal waters will remain moderate to rough.

The rest of the country will experience moderate to strong wind speed moving northeastward with moderate to rough coastal waters.

Sunrise will be at 6:12 a.m., sunset at 6:04 p.m.

## MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

### [North Korea's Kim demands more farmland to boost food production](#)

SEOUL — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ordered improvements to infrastructure and expansion of farmland to ramp up food production, state media said on Thursday, amid warnings of an impending food crisis.

Kim gave instructions to revamp irrigation systems, build modern farming machines and create more arable land as he wrapped up the seventh enlarged plenary meeting of the ruling Workers' Party's powerful Central Committee on Wednesday.

The meeting began on Sunday to discuss the "urgent" task of improving the agricultural sector.

South Korea has warned of an mounting food crisis in the isolated North, including a recent surge in deaths from hunger in some regions, due in part to what it said was a failure of a new grain policy limiting private crop transactions.

North Korea's economy has been battered by floods and typhoons, sanctions over its nuclear and missile programs, and a sharp decline in trade with China amid border closures and COVID-19 lockdowns.

South Korea's rural development agency estimated the North's crop production fell nearly 4% last year from the year before, citing heavy summer rains and other economic conditions.

Kim laid out plans and specific tasks to build "rich and highly-civilized socialist rural communities with advanced technology and modern civilization," the official KCNA news agency said.

He ordered revamp of the irrigation system to cope with climate change, production of efficient farming machines to modernize production, and reclamation of tidelands to expand farming areas, KCNA said.

A lack of adequate agricultural infrastructure, machinery and supplies including fertilizers and fuel have made North Korea more vulnerable to natural disasters, experts say.

The mountainous country has also sought to expand arable land through tideland reclamation along its west coast since the 1980s, but earlier efforts failed due partly to poor engineering and maintenance.

Under Kim, reclamation projects have been relatively more successful, but with slow progress in converting coastal mudflats into fertile farmland, they did little to ease food shortages, the US-based 38 North project said in late 2021.

“The state media report said they set new goals and action plans, but I don’t see anything new as all of the elements including irrigation and reclamation have already been raised before,” said Lim Eul-chul, a professor of North Korean studies at Kyungnam University in South Korea.

Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean studies in Seoul, also noted the report did not suggest new ideas or a possible change in the grain policy which South Korea blamed for food shortages.

KCNA said Kim stressed the need to tighten discipline in implementing the economic plan, warning against “practices of weakening the organizational and executive power of the cabinet,” and ordered all party units to “get their working efficiency verified.”

The Central Committee also discussed ways to improve the country’s financial management, KCNA reported, without elaborating.

## PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

### [Law modernizing polluting steel plants in Pampanga town gets 1st nod of prov'l board](#)

By: Tonette T. Orejas

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO, Pampanga — The first Philippine municipal ordinance legislating the modernization of smelting metal scraps, including a ban on induction furnaces (IF) for the manufacture of steel bars, passed the Pampanga Provincial Board's committee on environment and disaster resilience on Thursday, March 2.

The committee approved Ordinance No. 003-2023 of the municipal government of San Simon at the motion of Board Member Benjamin Jocson and seconded by Board Member Nelson Calara during the first hearing.

Local laws undergo mandatory review by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan (provincial legislative board).

Lawyer Ananias Canlas Jr., the committee's chair, found no legal issues since the Department of Environment and Natural Resources representatives confirmed there was "no existing policy against IF and that nothing prohibits local governments from banning IF."

The Board of Investments in 2019 rejected the application of Philippine Sanjia Steel Corp. to put up an P800-million steel plant due to "DENR's policy against IF with defective or substandard air pollution control technology," George Cariño, San Simon's council secretary, told the committee.

At the hearing, San Simon Mayor Romanoel Santos said the ordinance, approved on Feb. 13 and signed by Mayor Abundio Punsalan Jr. on Feb.16, sought to minimize pollution to protect the health and environment of the people.

"These smelting plants have not stopped emitting smoke," Santos told the committee, adding that a health census in Barangays San Pablo Propio, Libutad, Dela Paz, San Isidro, and Sta. Monica showed an "unusually high number" of adult residents with asthma and children with primary complex, a form of tuberculosis.

San Simon recorded 72 of the total 102 asthma cases assisted by the provincial government's Alagang Nanay Preventive Health program as of March 1, a tally showed.

Residents have also complained that tiny particles settling on their roofs erode them quickly.

Canlas said several farmers in adjacent villages reported a decline in rice production per hectare from 150 cavans to less than 100 cavans and called for water quality tests on irrigation sources.

The ordinance's sponsor, Liga ng mga Barangay chair and Councilor Randie Flores said the local law took cues from the fact that China had banned IF since 2017 because of its harmful effects on the environment.

Melters Steel Corp., Real Steel Corp., and Wan Chiong Steel Corp. reported using IF in smelting scrap metals. The two others — Altima Empire Steel Corp. and SKK Steel Corp. — use electric arc furnaces, according to the minutes of a Jan. 18 municipal hearing.

As of March 2, these companies had not notified them of closure, partial operations, or filing of a legal case stopping enactment of the "Strengthening the Modernization of Smelting Metal Scrap Ordinance" before the local or provincial board, Santos said.

These were due to be invited in the second hearing.

He earlier said these firms had not updated their environmental clearance certificates or operated with continuous emission monitoring systems.

Flores told board members that some companies had operated beyond the capacity of their pollution control devices.

The five companies produce an average of 3,000 tons of steel bars daily, an INQUIRER source in the industry estimated.

Canlas required the DENR and its Environmental Management Bureau to furnish the provincial board with copies of the results of soil, water, air, and chemical tests done around the smelting plants.

## THE PHILIPPINE STAR

### [77 groups urge Philippines to stop OceanaGold's mining ops in Nueva Vizcaya](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

MANILA, Philippines — Human rights and environmental groups from six countries called on the government to shut down the mine of Australian-Canadian firm OceanaGold in Nueva Vizcaya, which scarred the lands of indigenous Tawali people and polluted water systems in the area.

Seventy-seven organizations from the Philippines, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States and El Salvador also called on the government to ensure that the communities affected by the gold miner's operations will get reparations.

"We make this urgent appeal in the name of present and future generations and the well-being of our earth and its precious waters," the groups said in a statement on Thursday.

The operations of OceanaGold in Barangay Didipio in Kasibu have faced resistance from locals who say the extraction of gold and copper has affected their agricultural lands and polluted their water systems.

According to the groups, toxic-filled waste water from the mine of OceanaGold Philippines Inc. (OGPI) is contained in tailings ponds that risk overflow from typhoons.

In 2021, the government of then-President Rodrigo Duterte approved the new permit of OceanaGold Philippines Inc. despite strong opposition from local stakeholders and environmental groups.

Eduardo Ananayo of Didipio Earth Savers Multi-purpose Association Inc. (DESAMA) said the renewal of OGPI's permit "can only be considered illegal, especially because it poses a danger to our farmlands, our livelihoods, and our very survival."

#### Threats vs IPs

The lives of women and Tawali leaders who oppose the mine are also threatened, with members being tagged as fighters or supporters of the communist armed struggle, the groups also said.

In 2020, the barricade set up by indigenous Tuwali people was violently dispersed by the police.

“Indigenous women, like myself, who were at the forefront of the barricades suffered physical injuries, and psychological and emotional trauma,” said Myrna Duyan of Bileg Dagiti Babbae.

Nueva Vizcaya Gov. Carlos Padilla, Alyansa Tigil Mina, Center for Environmental Concerns, Kalikasan People’s Network for the Environment, Purple Action for Indigenous Women (LILAK), and Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center were among the signatories from the Philippines.

In the same statement, the human rights and environmental organizations called for a halt to OceanaGold’s expansion in New Zealand and the United States.

They also urged the government of El Salvador to uphold the country’s 2017 ban on mining, and the governments of Canada and Australia to enact mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence legislation.

## Makati hosts national day with embassies

By: Marc Jayson Cayabyab

MANILA, Philippines — Makati Mayor Abby Binay yesterday met with ambassadors holding offices in the city to promote partnership between the local government and foreign dignitaries.

In her speech during the city's "National Day Celebration," Binay pitched an idea to the ambassadors for a bazaar of their country's products to commemorate their national days.

She said the bazaars may be held in Salcedo and Legazpi markets in Makati.

"We can organize a bazaar where it will showcase your country's produce. That is a step to us being closer as a community, not just us as officials but us as part of Makati," Binay said.

She underscored the importance of cooperation to address global challenges such as climate change and inequality.

Binay said foreign embassies have a "critical role in building bridges and international cooperation in creating solutions that benefit everyone."

The city holds national day celebrations with countries commemorating their nationhood days.

Makati hosts 42 foreign embassies in the country.

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

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

MANILA, Philippines (Updated, 5:50 p.m.) — 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.

The Philippine Coast Guard on Thursday said that industrial fuel oil from the vessel's cargo has leaked into the sea after initially reporting that the spillage was diesel 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.

Clean up

In a video message sent to reporters, Environment Secretary Toni Yulo-Loyzaga said the oil spill has reached the municipal shores of Pola, Pinamalayan, Gloria, and Bongabong in Oriental Mindoro.

"The spill appears to be flowing southwards toward the southern part of Oriental Mindoro," Yulo-Loyzaga said.

She added that the agency's personnel are now focusing on coastal clean-up as possible contamination could affect the viability of coastal and marine ecosystems in the area.

"At this point, what is important is that we determine the extent and contain the spread of the oil, and hasten the clean up to prevent further impacts on coastal and marine biodiversity as well as the livelihoods of coastal communities," she also said.

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.

## UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

### [Small island states fight back against nature loss, climate change](#)

Day was dawning over the Comoros when two self-described eco-guards found the great bulk of a sea turtle motionless on the beach. The animal had laid its eggs in the sand and was gathering the strength to bury them before hauling itself back to the sea.

Had the men discovered it earlier in their patrol, they would have stayed to keep the turtle and its shallow nest safe until dawn, whether from natural enemies such as snakes – or nocturnal hunters lured by the turtle’s meat.

“This one has laid its eggs and is just trying to protect them,” said Chamse Said Mansoib, the leader of the patrol and chairman of a local development association. “But it is nearly half past five now, and people are up and starting to go about their work. So we can safely move on and let it return to the water on its own.” With daily life beginning on the island, chances are lower that people or animals would take the precious eggs.

Safeguarding endangered turtles in the Comoros is just one part of a gathering effort in small island developing states (SIDS) across the globe to protect and restore their unique and precious ecosystems for the benefit of both people and nature.

Many island nations are struggling to escape poverty just as climate change accelerates the degradation of the natural resources that underpin their economies. Coral reefs and fish stocks are in decline. Sea level rise is leading to the salinization of rivers and lakes, thus making freshwater scarce on the islands. Rising sea levels are also eroding coastlines battered by intensifying storms.

Being at the frontline of climate impacts, island nations are leading by example in tackling global environmental crises. For example, SIDS leaders pressed the international community to set the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C, the most ambitious target under the Paris Agreement. They have also turned chunks of their territorial waters into marine protected areas, making them vital players in global conservation, delivering on the new Montreal-Kunming Global Biodiversity Framework.

"To some, these islands are mere dots on the map," said Sai Navoti, chief of the SIDS unit at the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). "But together they show that they are not only small and vulnerable, but indeed are large ocean states."

In recognition of the frontline role played by SIDS, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration has chosen an initiative covering three island states – Vanuatu in the Pacific, Saint Lucia in the Caribbean and the Comoros in the Indian Ocean – among its first 10 World Restoration Flagships. These ambitious initiatives, announced during a star-studded ceremony in December 2022, are designed to showcase the far-reaching benefits that come when communities revive degraded natural spaces.

### A grand vision

The UN Decade seeks to scale up and accelerate ecosystem restoration in order to address the interlinked environmental crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste. Flagship initiatives are chosen to showcase best practices and demonstrate long-term results.

Rather than launching new on-the-ground projects, the SIDS flagship seeks to significantly strengthen and expand existing restoration programmes. Coordinated by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNDESA, it aims to restore whole landscapes, accelerate the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and show how island nations can build sustainable “blue” economies around healthy marine ecosystems.

The bricks and mortar of this integrated approach – plugging knowledge gaps, bringing together governments, communities and businesses, crafting policies and laws, and securing sustained financial support – can take years to assemble and implement fully. But experts say it can deliver benefits on a scale that matches the size of the challenge.

“We need transformative initiatives like this to make sure the compounded impacts of biodiversity loss and climate change do not lead to irreversible loss and damage, which the world is not yet ready to cope with,” said Mirey Atallah, head of UNEP's Nature for Climate Branch. “For island communities, that means securing sustainable benefits from their rich natural heritage, while shielding themselves from the climate impacts that their ancestors did so little to bring about.”

Her comments come just ahead of World Wildlife Day, which falls on 3 March. This celebration of the natural world casts a spotlight on the planet's wild animals and plants, including the contributions they make to humanity and the health of the Earth.

### Making amends

The SIDS restoration initiative is expected to benefit embattled communities and ecosystems in all three target countries.

Across the archipelago of Vanuatu, coastal communities are finding ways to reduce the pressure on their coral reefs, which are suffering from storm damage and bleaching events, so that fish stocks can recover. Efforts are under way to restore species such as the giant clam and endangered palm trees.

On Saint Lucia, the restoration of mangroves and seagrass beds is protecting coastal areas used for sea moss cultivation. Communities are being empowered to produce charcoal sustainably and earn alternative income from eco-tourism and beekeeping, while the government has designated marine protected areas the size of Germany.

In the Comoros, where low incomes and a growing population are adding to the pressure on natural resources, building up sustainable fishing and tourism sectors are at the core of this initiative.

Mansoib and colleagues patrol several beaches on Mohéli (also known as Mwali), one of the Comoros' three main islands. Community-led conservation efforts like the turtle programme in Itsamia village, are supported by the expanded Mohéli National Park, whose 64,000 ha cover most of the island's land and coastal waters. Comoros recently added several more protected areas.

Green and hawksbill turtles are a big draw for overseas visitors staying in the islands' villages and hiring guides, boats and gear to explore the park's reefs and forests. Other attractions include dugongs and humpback whales. But securing this income stream while restoring ecosystems also means enforcing restrictions on fishing and preventing pollution.

Adifaon Mchinda, a ranger in Mohéli National Park, motors back and forth between the small fishing boats, recording the catches and chatting with the fisherfolk. He said catches were increasing and becoming more diverse because fish stocks were rebounding thanks to the protection measures.

"We try to convince them by saying 'Think about future generations. If we don't take care of things, will our grandsons find anything to eat?'" said Mchinda. "Some of them understand."

Turtles, tourists and residents alike are also benefiting from a cleaner, greener environment.

Local communities have halted the mining of sand from the beaches where tourists enjoy watching dozens of baby turtles emerge from a nest and take their daunting first swim in the ocean. Community groups are gathering trash on which turtles can choke and replanting mangroves to counter coastal erosion.

“We are doing this to restore our environment because we believe that is something good and important,” said Mdra-Aty Mihidjay, a leader of a youth group that carries out beach clean-ups as well as mangrove restoration near the village of Itsamia. “The next generation will see that we did what we could.”

Across the Comoros, Saint Lucia and Vanuatu, some 110,000 ha are already under restoration. By strengthening ecosystems and livelihoods – and developing a “toolbox” of effective approaches – the initiative hopes to catalyze restoration in more island nations.

“Restoration will become unstoppable when people can see and feel how a healthy environment gives them a better life and future. We hope this initiative can spread that conviction and create a hunger for restoration in every ocean and along every coastline,” said Benjamin de Ridder, Forestry Officer in the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism of FAO.

#### About the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

The UN General Assembly has declared the years 2021 through 2030 the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Led by UNEP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN together with the support of partners, it is designed to prevent, halt, and reverse the loss and degradation of ecosystems worldwide. It aims at reviving billions of hectares, covering terrestrial as well as aquatic ecosystems. A global call to action, the UN Decade draws together political support, scientific research and financial muscle to massively scale up restoration.

#### What is a World Restoration Flagship?

Countries have already promised to restore 1 billion hectares – an area larger than China – as part of their commitments to the Paris climate agreement, the Aichi targets for biodiversity, the Land Degradation Neutrality targets and the Bonn Challenge. However, little is known about the progress or quality of this restoration.

With the World Restoration Flagships, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration is honouring the best examples of large-scale and long-term ecosystem restoration in any

country or region, embodying the 10 Restoration Principles of the UN Decade. Progress of all 10 World Restoration Flagships will be transparently monitored through the Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring, the UN Decade's platform for keeping track of global restoration efforts.

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