



## NEWS ROUNDUP

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### ABS CBN

#### [SDGs ResiliArt exhibit opens at National Library](#)

By: Totel V. de Jesus

Pinoy pop girl group 4th Impact and Zimbabwean artist-musician Xander Pratt performed at the SDGs ResiliArt exhibit opening on Wednesday morning at the National Library.

### BUSINESS MIRROR

#### [ISAAA: Singaporean agri firm develops climate-resilient strawberry variety](#)

By: Manuel Cayon

Davao City—A Singapore-based agri-genomics firm that has developed a proprietary genomics technology platform has launched the world's first climate-resilient strawberry, according to a scientific journal.

## **BUSINESS WORLD**

### **[PHL climate-resilient agri project receives \\$26.2 million in funding](#)**

By: Sheldeen Joy Talavera

THE PHILIPPINES will receive \$26.2 million worth of international funding for a seven-year project to help climate-vulnerable rural smallholder farmers become more resilient against climate change.

## **GULF NEWS**

### **[Democracy alone cannot fight climate change](#)**

By: Ashok Swain

Are democracies better than other forms of governments in mitigating climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions? There is general unanimity that climate change poses greater challenges to democracies by bringing severe stress to societies.

## **MINDA NEWS**

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By: Chris V. Panganiban

The 300-year-old Philippine Rosewood tree (*Petersianthus quarilatus*) near the national highway in Barangay Alegria here, considered the tallest and the oldest of its kind in the country, is facing another threat to be cut down as residents living nearby were worried it might fall during a strong earthquake last week.

## **PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY**

### **[Save lives, know more about disaster tools, apps](#)**

By: Susan De Leon

Knowing how to use some of the digital innovations, applications and tools that facilitate the interactive use of hazard and risk information for decision-making and action before, during and after disaster can save lives.

## **PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY**

### **[School-on-air trains W. Visayas farmers on climate-resilient agri](#)**

By: Perla Lena

The third season of the school-on-air (SOA) being implemented as one of the components of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) and to air next week will benefit 2,560 rice farmers in Western Visayas.

## **POLITIKO**

### **[100 Bataan youth attend disaster resilience camp](#)**

Some 100 youth in Bataan province gathered for a two-day camp on disaster resiliency, officials said.

## **RAPPLER**

### **[Philippine fishermen balk at land reclamation projects](#)**

For decades, Philippine fishermen have laid out their catch each dawn at a seafood market on the shores of Manila Bay, their traditional system of hushed bartering giving the Bulungan (Whispering) market its name.

## **RELIEF WEB**

### **[Green Climate Fund approves USD 39.2 million project with FAO and Philippine government to boost climate resilience and improve livelihoods](#)**

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) has approved a Philippine funding proposal on “Adapting Philippine Agriculture to Climate Change” at its 35th Board Meeting held in Songdo, Incheon in the Republic of Korea.

## **REUTERS**

### **[Germany introduces national water strategy as climate change forces action](#)**

By: Riham Alkousaa and Markus Wacket

Germany's cabinet on Wednesday agreed on a national water strategy aimed at coping with long dry seasons and heatwaves caused by climate change to ensure water security in Europe's biggest economy in future.

## **THE PHILIPPINE STAR**

### **['Above-normal rainfall now less likely': PAGASA declares end of La Niña](#)**

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

State weather bureau PAGASA declared the end of La Niña—or the condition that increases the likelihood of having above-normal rainfall.

### **[Floods, landslides hit parts of Davao due to LPA](#)**

By: Diana Lhyd Suelto

Landslides and floods have been reported in parts of Davao region due to a low-pressure area (LPA).

## **US EMBASSY IN THE PHILIPPINES**

### **[U.S. provides Php 38 million in grants to promote women's role in clean energy](#)**

On International Women's Day March 8, the United States government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), announced two new grant projects valued at Php 37.9 million (\$690,000) to boost women's participation in energy resilience, innovation, and security in the Philippines.

## **VATICAN NEWS**

### **[Cyclone hit countries paying the high price of climate change](#)**

By: Linda Bordoni

After barreling through Mozambique and Malawi since late last week, Cyclone Freddy is set to move away from land bringing some relief to regions that have been ravaged by torrential rain and powerful winds.

**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

**ABS CBN**

**[SDGs ResiliArt exhibit opens at National Library](#)**

By: Totel V. de Jesus

Pinoy pop girl group 4th Impact and Zimbabwean artist-musician Xander Pratt performed at the SDGs ResiliArt exhibit opening on Wednesday morning at the National Library.

Pratt is a visiting Earthsavers UNESCO Artist for Peace, while 4th Impact has been a long-time member of the Philippine-based Earthsavers Dreams Ensemble, which has been consistently awarded with the prestigious UNESCO title.

Best known for competing in the 12th season of “The X Factor UK,” 4th Impact is composed of sisters Almira, Irene, Mylene and Celina Cercado from Roxas, Isabela. They landed in fifth place.

They also won twice, 2006 and 2013, in the annual World Championships of Performing Arts and placed eight place in the South Korean talent search “Superstar K6” in 2014.

In March 2022, their comeback song “Here We Go,” which they also composed, was a hit.

Pratt, who is also CNN Africa’s top 10 Avante Garde awardee, has been in the Philippines since January for his Asian Art tour holding exhibits and collaborating with local musicians and performers. A well-respected composer, writer, fashion designer and disc jockey, Pratt has performed, lectured and exhibited in Makati, Tagaytay, Siargao and even up to Isabela City in Basilan province.

Highlighting Afro-Asian concern for peace and climate justice, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ResiliArt exhibit also features Angono-based acclaimed veteran visual artist Nemi Miranda and visiting Fil-Am author Rey de la Cruz.

De La Cruz will have the Philippine launch of his climate change-themed children’s book, “Ballesteros On My Mind.” There will be a Philippine premiere of the short film version adapted from the book.

De La Cruz also wrote the screenplay of “Ballesteros on My Mind” produced by Gakka Films in 2022.

Nemiranda is considered the “Father of Imaginative Figurism. He is founder of the Angono Ateliers Association in 1975 and owner-curator of the Nemiranda Art House Family Museum.

Developed through the support of the Senate initiated during the term of former Senate President Vicente Sotto under UNESCO patronage, the exhibit is curated by Susan Claudio of Caffeinated Palette.

“This is a conjoined celebration of all United Nations dedicated days in March namely women, anti-racial discrimination, nuclear disarmament, water, forests, UNESCO Poetry and ITI-World Theatre Week through a proclamation of then President Gloria Arroyo,” said National Library director Cesar Gilbert Q. Adriano.

One of the organizers is Cecile Guidote-Alvarez, director of Earthsavers DREAMS Ensemble-UNESCO Artist for Peace and International Theatre Institute-Social Change Network president.

She said, “The exhibit will feature artistic creations for promoting peace and climate emergency action as well as a heritage-based book launch that will be helpful for early childhood education aligned with UNESCO concerns.”

The SDG ResiliArt exhibit will run until April 4.

“With this, we can set an example that the National Library could be an alternative center for cultural and art exhibits. They have facilities too for film showings,” said Guidote-Alvarez.

## **BUSINESS MIRROR**

### **[ISAAA: Singaporean agri firm develops climate-resilient strawberry variety](#)**

By: Manuel Cayon

Davao City—A Singapore-based agri-genomics firm that has developed a proprietary genomics technology platform has launched the world's first climate-resilient strawberry, according to a scientific journal.

Singrow said its purpose was to make strawberries more affordable while reducing the environmental impact of its production. The novel strawberry variety was featured in the February issue of the online weekly publication of the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA).

It was also Singrow's plant experts who applied genomics-based science to develop the new strawberry variety.

ISAAA said genomics-based science "is gaining popularity in the food industry, especially in developing nutrient-dense plant varieties resilient to drought and diseases."

"Advanced genomics is expected to aid strawberries' large-scale production in tropical countries by breaking seasonal and temperature barriers. This provides opportunities for growers and potentially reduce costs for consumers," ISAAA added.

It said strawberries are traditionally grown in temperate climates and then exported to tropical areas like Southeast Asia.

"Exporting them adds costs, and makes the fruit more expensive to consumers and also leaves a huge carbon footprint behind."

Through genomics, Singrow developed a sustainable commercial strawberry variety that can withstand temperature changes and exhibit high-yield qualities, ISAAA said.

According to Singrow developers, "genome-based technology is more productive than conventional breeding. The same technology can be used for other staple crops like rice, corn, and selected vegetables facing challenges brought on by climate change."

ISAAA said Singrow will expand its list of crop products.

On its web site, Singrow said "using techniques such as marker-assisted cross breeding and advanced technology including CRISPR-Cas9, we are able to create our own

proprietary crop varieties that are more energy efficient, faster growing and tastefully delicious.”

“Our flagship products: Rouge strawberry, Blanc strawberries and Japanese Spinach [Komatsuna].”

Singrow said it also discovered a faster cultivation method. “Using customized cultivation methods, we are able to control every aspect of the crop development, and no pesticide. Our strawberry plants normally take 3.5 months from planting to harvesting compared to over six months.”

“Some of our methods include precision hydroponics, greenhouse hybrid lighting and tissue cultures. Our indoor farm can produce 20 times more compared with what a conventional strawberry farm of the same size can achieve. The controlled environment of the indoor farm has helped reduce the time needed to cultivate the strawberries by around 30 percent.”

The company plans to expand overseas such as in China, Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Middle East.

Meanwhile, ISAAA reported that the two-year collaborative work by Japanese and Chinese researchers has succeeded in sequencing the whole genome of the cultivated strawberry and four closely-related wild strawberries.

“The research found genes that can be used for future breeding, including genes unique to the cultivated strawberry, and genes related to disease resistance.”

Sachiko Isobe, head of the Kazusa DNA Research Institute’s Laboratory of Applied Plant Genomics in Kisarazu, Japan, led the research team. Researchers from Japan’s Chiba Prefecture Agriculture and Forestry Research Center, Kyushu University, Kagawa University and the Nanshan Botanical Garden in Chongqing, China, collaborated in the work.

“We expect the research’s findings will help in discovering genes related to serious diseases affecting strawberries worldwide such as powdery mildew, anthracnose, and Fusarium wilt,” Isobe said.

The researchers also expect their findings to make it easier to discover and study the functions of genes related to traits such as color, shape, taste and health benefits of strawberry.



## **BUSINESS WORLD**

### **[PHL climate-resilient agri project receives \\$26.2 million in funding](#)**

By: Sheldeen Joy Talavera

THE PHILIPPINES will receive \$26.2 million worth of international funding for a seven-year project to help climate-vulnerable rural smallholder farmers become more resilient against climate change.

The Philippine proposal was one of two approved for funding in Southeast Asia by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) at its board meeting.

In a statement on Wednesday, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific said the grant will be supplemented by \$12.9 million in co-financing by the Department of Agriculture and the government weather service, known as PAGASA.

The project is expected to benefit 1.25 million farmers who will be instructed in climate-resilient farming practices, risk reduction measures and enterprise development, as well as granted access to finance and technology.

“We are truly grateful to GCF for supporting this important and timely initiative that will help Filipino smallholder farmers adapt to mitigate the impacts of the climate crisis on their livelihood,” the FAO Representative in the Philippines, Lionel Dabbadie said.

The GCF also approved \$43 million for a six-year project in Cambodia benefiting 450,000 smallholder farmers in the Northern Tonle Sap Basin — Cambodia’s top agricultural region.

“These two most recently approved projects by the GCF in Southeast Asia are emblematic of the trust placed in FAO’s work to deliver with, and on behalf of, our member nations in this region,” FAO Assistant Director-General Jong-Jin Kim said.

## **GULF NEWS**

### **Democracy alone cannot fight climate change**

By: Ashok Swain

Are democracies better than other forms of governments in mitigating climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions? There is general unanimity that climate change poses greater challenges to democracies by bringing severe stress to societies.

Climate change brings political instability by increasing the number of devastating natural disasters, bringing food insecurity, catalysing economic decline, and multiplying forces that cause conflicts and push people to migrate.

Democracies have much to lose from climate change, but do they do enough to mitigate it? The track record of democracies in protecting their environment is mixed. And their efforts have been no better when it comes to reducing carbon emissions.

Three democratic powers of the world, the US, EU, and Japan, are responsible for at least two-thirds of total historic greenhouse gas emissions.

Even after the signing of the first inter-governmental climate treaty in 1992, except for the EU, most other democracies have continued to increase pumping more carbon into the atmosphere than before.

The world's most powerful democracy, the US, had not signed the Kyoto Protocol and had withdrawn itself from the Paris Agreement for some years.

### **'Willow Project' in Alaska**

Biden Administration has just approved the massive oil drilling 'Willow Project' in Alaska — reported first in this column last week — is a fine example of how democracies suffer from structural weaknesses in taking strong measures to cut carbon emissions.

In many industrialised democracies like the US, Canada, Korea, and Australia, electorates lack consensus about the climate crisis's seriousness.

In Western Europe, though there is a general acceptance that something must be done to mitigate climate change, a huge pushback comes from people if that something needs to compromise their present way of living. It doesn't, however, mean that the democratic form of governance is bad and authoritarian rule is good for climate action.

Many authoritarian countries are also neither willing to commit nor have fulfilled their commitment to cut carbon emissions. But, at the same time, those who see democracy as a panacea for climate challenges must be careful with their hopes about it.

There are no clear relations that a democratic country will be more climate responsible than other governing mechanisms, at least not until now. Democratic countries, compared to others, have been historically and continue to be high emitters.

The threats of climate change to national and human security are not as straightforward as a perceived security threat from another country or a terror group.

So, for a democracy, taking decisive policy measures against a not-so-well-defined threat is a challenge. Policymaking in a democracy is not only a time-consuming exercise but also goes through a process of bargaining and compromises.

No straightforward solutions

At the same time, climate change is a very complex problem with no straightforward solution. So, the slow and participatory approach of democracy toward meeting climate challenges may likely be more sustainable in the long run. Still, it fails to act fast in reducing its carbon emission as the planet's health now demands.

In a democracy, leaders are elected by the electorates of their country. Thus, they tend to aim at keeping their electorates happy, and they strive to do so by developing their country's economy and providing its people with a better living standard.

Sacrificing their country's economy to improve global commons doesn't seem to them as a smart political choice to make.

Climate change is not a one-time and sudden occurrence. It is gradually incapacitating the planet, but leaders of a democratic country need to prioritise the short-term needs and demands of the country as they must face their regular election cycles.

For future generations

Protecting the interests of the future generation continues to be an abstract concept for the new age voters.

Moreover, the youth who constitute the leading voice for climate action in the democracies are either yet to get the right to vote, or even if they are eligible to vote, they rarely vote. That makes it easier for political leaders to ignore climate activists and prioritise other issues.

In democracies, political leadership is also likely to listen to business interests and lobby groups to get the resources to contest elections.

Though authoritarian states don't necessarily make better climate policies, they can pursue long-term plans and objectives as they don't have to worry about regular elections and populist opposition.

To act decisively against climate change, there is overwhelming evidence that it is not a country's political system that matters the most.

The key for a country to perform better or worse in climate policy performances basically depends upon the type of leadership and the quality of institutions it has.

The world urgently needs more visionary leaders and strong environmental institutions at this critical juncture.

## **MINDA NEWS**

### **300-year-old Toog tree faces danger anew of being cut down**

By: Chris V. Panganiban

The 300-year-old Philippine Rosewood tree (*Petersianthus quarilatus*) near the national highway in Barangay Alegria here, considered the tallest and the oldest of its kind in the country, is facing another threat to be cut down as residents living nearby were worried it might fall during a strong earthquake last week.

Most of the local officials attending a committee hearing initiated by the municipal council's environment committee have given more weight to the protection of people's lives than the historic value of the towering tree locally called Toog.

The committee hearing chaired by Sangguniang Bayan (SB) member Jay-Ar de Asis was held at Barangay Alegria's covered court on Tuesday to hear the residents' sentiments of fear that a tree might fall whenever a natural disaster like a storm or earthquake might occur in the future.

It was held in response to a barangay resolution asking Mayor Grace Carmel Paredes-Bravo to conduct another assessment by a joint team of government experts on the health status of the 54-meter-tall tree.

"The protection and safety of the greater number of people is my utmost concern," Paredes-Bravo said.

Vice Mayor Arth Ryan Palabrica and other SB members aired the same stand as the mayor as they took turns in voicing out their respective concerns.

Barangay Captain Blandina Ruffa earlier told the town officials that many residents living near the tree were sleepless for many nights, fearing the Toog might tumble down after the magnitude 5.9 earthquake jolted many towns of neighboring Davao de Oro province last week.

Elsie Teola, a retired public school teacher whose house is near the tree across the national highway, told officials she saw the tree jolting towards them during the earthquake, prompting them to seek refuge at the covered court for many nights.

The committee agreed that a letter of invitation will be sent on Monday to concerned government experts for updates on the health status of the tree.

This was the third time local officials were poised to decide in cutting down the centuries-old Toog after the regional office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) had given the cutting permit.

In 2019, local officials, a local conservationist group, and DENR foresters agreed they will spare the cutting of the tree to pave the way for a thorough assessment by experts to determine if it is still healthy.

The following year, local officials moved anew to cut down the tree to half its height, so that 30 meters will remain standing to maintain a landmark memory.

The tree was set to be cut down on August 8 and 9 in 2020 on orders of local officials based on the recommendations of the DENR, which said the cavity on its buttress has worsened that “it might fall anytime soon.”

In a last-minute effort, a local conservationist group, Save the Toog Tree Please (STOP) movement, led by Engr. Mauro Bravo Jr., a retired district engineer of the Department of Public Works and Highways whose family is a town pioneer, had succeeded in suspending the scheduled cutting of the tree.

The STOP movement sought support from the Society of Filipino Foresters, Inc. (SFFI) and the Philippine Native Tree Enthusiasts (PNTE), a social media-based national conservationist group, that resulted in another suspension of the tree cutting as they pleaded to Mayor Solomon Rufila, Agusan del Sur Gov. Santiago Cane Jr., and Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu to conduct a reevaluation and reassessment on the health status of the Toog tree.

Tree surgeons Armando Palijon, a former forestry professor at the University of the Philippines–Los Baños, and Marcelina Pacho, the former pathologist of DENR’s Ecosystem Research and Development Bureau, agreed to conduct the reevaluation and assessment via a Zoom live meeting with SFFI vice president Jose Kanapi Jr. and local SFFI member Raul Bunao, who followed the guidelines set by the experts while doing live discussions at the location of the Toog tree.

At that time, Palijon and Pacho could not personally visit the tree due to the difficulties of travel as the country was grappling with the COVID-19 crisis, thus the Zoom meeting as an alternative procedure.

In September 2020, Palijon, along with another expert arborist, June Micoso, found the iconic tree to be alive and well after two days of technical assessment.

He told members of the Agusan del Sur Environment and Sustainable Development Council (ASESDC) in a meeting that the Toog tree is very much alive and still structurally stable that can even resist the effects of natural calamities.

Palijon issued these findings as the concluding part of their series of third-party scientific assessments (TPSA) of the iconic Toog tree as requested by STOP movement with the support of the SFFI and PNTE.

## PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

### [Save lives, know more about disaster tools, apps](#)

By: Susan De Leon

Knowing how to use some of the digital innovations, applications and tools that facilitate the interactive use of hazard and risk information for decision-making and action before, during and after disaster can save lives.

During the recent conduct of this year's first quarter National Simultaneous Earthquake Drill, Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Secretary Renato U. Solidum Jr. said destruction and death due to earthquakes are preventable.

"Let us allow the tools of science to assist us in making earthquake-resilient communities to prevent destruction and death," Solidum said.

The has developed tools, applications and digital innovations including How Safe is My House – a self-assessment tool that every homeowner should take; the FaultFinder – which tells us how far away our home or workplace or school is from a source of the earthquake; the HazardHunter – which tells us what are the natural hazards that can affect our neighborhood; the GeoanalyticsPH – a tool that shows us in maps and figures the hazards assessment of our neighborhood.

Also included in the innovations from DOST-PHIVOLCS is PlanSmart, which gives national and local planners the necessary information needed for their development planning needs; and REDAS – which teaches our local planners to build the exposure database and the scenarios of earthquake, tsunami, and landslide hazards that they will use in their CLUPs or Comprehensive Land Use Plans.

"DOST continues to develop various applications to make science more accessible in decision-making for prevention and mitigation and encourage everyone to use them as our good practice," Solidum said.

The DOST Chief said Filipinos must have a deeper understanding and appreciation of what earthquake disaster means considering that several devastating incidents of earthquake that have happened in the Philippines and in other countries as well.

"It is likely that we know someone, if not ourselves, who experienced the impacts of devastating earthquakes in the Philippines in the last two decades," Solidum said.

The government conducts quarterly nationwide earthquake drills each year to promote disaster preparedness and resilience among Filipinos.



Solidum said that most of us are aware that ground shaking does not kill, it is the collapsed houses, buildings, and infrastructures that kill.

“Many Filipinos know that collapsed houses, buildings, and infrastructures oftentimes is a result of flawed construction practices – meaning two things: old buildings that no longer meet current standards and the other where new buildings are unfortunately constructed that do not conform to current building standards,” he added.

According to Solidum, if we believe and accept that bad construction practices cause collapsed structures during earthquakes, then destruction and death due to the earthquake are preventable, if bad practices are replaced by good practices.

To know more of the tools that will help in keeping everyone informed of the hazards and preparatory measures to take, all are encouraged to download the special book on The DOST Innovations: Web and Mobile Applications for Disaster Risk Reduction Management.

It is a user guide for accessing, utilizing, and applying DOST web and mobile applications for DRRM. You can navigate these innovations and access our risk information to support the country’s resilience initiatives.

## PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

### School-on-air trains W. Visayas farmers on climate-resilient agri

By: Perla Lena

The third season of the school-on-air (SOA) being implemented as one of the components of the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) and to air next week will benefit 2,560 rice farmers in Western Visayas.

“That is part of the component of the RCEF under the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI). Through this program, we try to raise their awareness on climate change resilient technologies that we discuss on air,” said James Earl Ogatis, head of the Regional Agri-Fishery Information Section (RAFIS) of the Department of Agriculture in Western Visayas on Wednesday.

The rice farmer-beneficiaries of SOA will come from Guimaras with 150, Aklan with 300, Iloilo and Capiz have 700 each, and 710 from Negros Occidental.

Ogatis said all farmers who are enrolled with the SOA are the recipients of palay seeds under the RCEF program.

“We have been successfully implementing the School-on-Air for the last two years. For this season we target those who were not able to join the first and second season. We wanted to cover all those who received palay seeds,” he added. The first two seasons served 3,900 farmers.

SOA is implemented in collaboration with ATI, Philippine Rice Research Institute, International Rice Research Institute, and the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization.

The program was officially launched on Tuesday and will start with the simultaneous airing of its first module on six radio stations in the region next week.

It will cover over 30 modules that will be discussed every Wednesday and Thursday for four months.

Ogatis said that they have been scheduling attached agencies of the department to discuss their programs.

Likewise, they like to encourage young farmers to get involved as a way of addressing the aging population of the agriculture sector.

## **POLITIKO**

### **100 Bataan youth attend disaster resilience camp**

Some 100 youth in Bataan province gathered for a two-day camp on disaster resiliency, officials said.

The event was organized by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) in Bataan province, along with the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO), Bataan Youth Development Office and Sangguniang Kabataan Provincial Federation of Bataan.

With the theme “Wemboree: Changing the Mindset from Me to We,” the youth camp sought to cascade information on disaster risk reduction at the grassroots level.

According to a Sun Star Pampanga report, it was implemented to underscore the role of the youth in the planning and decision-making processes in their respective organizations and localities.

The Bataan PDRRMO provided a session on hands-only cardiopulmonary resuscitation, appropriate actions during an earthquake, and stress debriefing procedures through simulation drills, plus discussions on social media etiquette, cyber security, and the Philippine Youth Development Plan, the report said.

“Disasters happen when you don’t expect it to happen. That is why we don’t just respond to disasters, we should also prepare for them,” DILG Provincial Director Belina Herma was quoted as saying in the report.

She urged participants to impart lessons from the activity to their peers in order to help raise more leaders and champions in nation-building.

## RAPPLER

### [Philippine fishermen balk at land reclamation projects](#)

For decades, Philippine fishermen have laid out their catch each dawn at a seafood market on the shores of Manila Bay, their traditional system of hushed bartering giving the Bulungan (Whispering) market its name.

But fishermen and traders at the market in Parañaque City have been worried of late – concerned about the local government’s plans for a 300-hectare (740-acre) land reclamation project that they say threatens their way of life, and earnings.

It is one of about 20 reclamation projects slated to be completed in Manila Bay over the next decade.

“The continuous dump-and-fill projects brought changes to the bay and its environment, and our catch has declined significantly,” fisherman Gilbert Reyes told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

“This is a huge loss for our families. Before, we could catch enough to survive for months,” he said, adding his income had plummeted since the 1990s, before the construction of a huge shopping mall and factories on land reclaimed from the sea.

Land reclamation threatens stocks of sardines, mackerel, squid, and other fish in the Manila Bay area by destroying breeding grounds, according to a report by Oceana Philippines, an environmental group.

Critics of the projects say they also increase the risk posed to coastal communities from flooding and storms linked to climate change by depleting coastal wetlands and mangrove forests that slow storm surges and soil erosion.

At the same time, research has linked increased groundwater extraction due to the developments to subsidence in the urban sprawl around Manila Bay that is home to the country’s capital and some 23 million people.

The Manila Bay projects “manufacture new disaster risks where there were none before” by putting people and buildings in climate vulnerable coastal areas, said Kelvin Rodolfo, a marine geologist and professor emeritus of earth and environmental sciences at the University of Illinois in Chicago.

“When urban landscapes are built, people will be drawn because of the economic promises these places make. But in the case of the reclaimed lands in Manila Bay,

people are going to be put directly in harm's way," he said, adding that reclamation works also threatened the area's marine ecosystem.

### **Mall expansion plan**

Last year, fishermen and civic groups called for a moratorium on reclamation projects, saying permits have been granted without proper consideration of the social and environmental impact, including to their jobs.

Some of the nearly two dozen projects are already underway while others have yet to get the go ahead from planning and environmental officials.

One involves expanding the SM Mall of Asia – the world's fifth-biggest shopping center – in Pasay City, which lies about five miles (8 km) from Parañaque City on a stretch of previously reclaimed land.

It will be extended as part of a 360-hectare (890-acre) reclamation partnership between the local government and mall developer SM Prime Holdings. The project also includes plans for a new business district, five-star hotel and convention centre, creating thousands of jobs and boosting city revenues.

But many fishermen like Reyes think the project is unlikely to benefit them, bringing only jobs for which they are poorly qualified.

"Where would they place the fishing sector, with ageing fisherfolk who didn't even finish school?" said the 43-year-old.

Representatives of Pasay City government and SM Prime did not immediately respond to a request for comment, but the mall developer has said previously that it "complied with all the requirements" for the project.

In Parañaque City, the government's public relations head Catalino Alano said fishermen's voices "are being heard" with regards to the city's reclamation proposal.

He added that the government has been providing them with fuel subsidies, fishing supplies and financial aid during disasters.

### **Floods and subsidence**

About 40 miles (64 km) from Parañaque, on the northern side of Manila Bay in Bulacan province, some residents of fishing-reliant communities fear they will bear the brunt of the new \$15-billion Manila International Airport, which is under construction.

In 2021, the country's environment department granted the project an environmental compliance certificate – a requirement for any land development proposal – despite strong opposition from fishing community representatives and environmentalists.

Several groups asked the Supreme Court in 2020 to issue a writ against the construction of the airport on environmental grounds, but the Court rejected it.

Once completed, the 2,500-hectare (6,180-acre) airport is expected to see 35 million passengers pass through annually. Supporters of the development say it is vital to solve Manila's acute flight congestion problems.

But opponents of the project say it will force fishermen in the villages of Taliptip and Bambang, both in Bulakan City, Bulacan, who live on the development site to leave their homes, and move to areas far from their usual fishing grounds.

In Taliptip, a coastal village of 5,000 people, resident Rosalina Atenciana said some of her neighbors, who were mostly fishermen, have left the village after being paid compensation to relocate by the project's developer, San Miguel Corporation.

Hundreds of families have moved to make way for the airport works, but Atenciana said she was worried about leaving.

"We will not leave the [village] without a proper relocation area," she said.

"It should be a place where concrete livelihood opportunities exist because we need to raise our children and feed our families," she said.

San Miguel Corporation did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Scientists have said subsidence in Taliptip – partly linked to the over-extraction of groundwater – is raising flood risks as global sea levels rise as a result of climate change.

Reclaiming even more land – with resulting construction on the land – could exacerbate the problem, they say.

Rodolfo, the marine geologist, also warned of the impact of coastal development projects on Manila Bay's marine life, including fish stocks.

For fishermen like Reyes, the impact is already being felt.

“If they continue with the reclamation projects, they’re removing the fishing sector – a major provider of food – from the map,” he said.

## RELIEF WEB

### [Green Climate Fund approves USD 39.2 million project with FAO and Philippine government to boost climate resilience and improve livelihoods](#)

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) has approved a Philippine funding proposal on “Adapting Philippine Agriculture to Climate Change” at its 35th Board Meeting held in Songdo, Incheon in the Republic of Korea.

Under USD 39.2 million, seven-year initiative, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), GCF and the Government of the Philippines will work together to boost the resilience of climate-vulnerable rural smallholder farmers. The project will play a key role in advancing the country’s transition towards more sustainable, resilient and inclusive agrifood systems. It will be supported by a USD 26.2 million GCF grant and USD 12.9 million in co-financing from the Department of Agriculture (DA), and the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

The initiative will directly benefit 1.25 million rural men and women Filipino farmers by raising their awareness of climate risks and risk-reduction measures, building their capacity to develop enterprises and to access finance and related technologies, and adopting climate-resilient agriculture (CRA) practices.

DA Senior Undersecretary Domingo F. Panganiban expressed his appreciation for the support from GCF to this landmark joint venture. “Through this, we are giving flesh to the President’s pronouncement in his first State of the Nation Address emphasizing that the production of farm inputs or the needs of farmers to increase their productivity should conform to the challenges brought by climate change and global warming,” he said.

“We are truly grateful to GCF for supporting this important and timely initiative that will help Filipino smallholder farmers adapt to and mitigate the impacts of the climate crisis on their livelihoods. FAO is and will continue to remain committed to supporting the country in pursuing climate action through this initiative, leveraging our technical expertise and experience in climate-resilient agriculture that we will extend to the Philippine government, particularly our long-standing partners’ DA and PAGASA,” says Lionel Dabbadie, FAO Representative in the Philippines.

“Partnering with DOST- PAGASA since 2011, FAO has assisted the country in pursuit of its development objectives through promoting agricultural adaptation and mitigation to climate change, such as CRA and reducing disaster risks through the use of weather and climate information services. It is indeed a great opportunity that these valuable and



innovative undertakings will be elevated to the next level with the support from GCF through this project,” adds Dr. Vicente Malano, PAGASA Administrator.

The collaborative initiative is poised to support the most vulnerable farmers, including women, youth, and indigenous communities by providing them with access to targeted climate information and technical services for CRA. By assisting smallholder farmers in overcoming obstacles related to inputs and market access, and building their capacity to develop and implement CRA investment plans, the project will enable a sustainable shift to these crucial agricultural practices, thereby improving food security, household incomes and resilience.

At the national level, the project will work towards incorporating CRA into the development agendas of the national government and local government units. It will work with the private sector and financial institutions to develop robust CRA value chains, and provide financial and risk-transfer products to boost investments in climate actions. By doing so, the project will empower these institutions and facilitate partnerships to create a more sustainable future for all.

To ensure the project’s long-term sustainability, the Land Bank of the Philippines – a GCF Direct Access Entity – will play a critical role in leveraging finance to increase farmers’ access to the bank’s lending programmes.

The project is also expected to deliver indirect benefits to over five million Filipinos, thanks to enhanced information systems and strengthened institutional capacity, which will advance the widespread adoption of CRA in the country. Special attention will be paid to Indigenous People, women and girls, ensuring their fruitful participation and benefits.

The initiative will create mitigation gains by reducing emissions by some 4.38 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent over a 20-year period as a result of the application of CRA practices and better land use.

On average, about 20 typhoons enter the Philippines Area of Responsibility yearly. Ranked 4th on the global Long-Term Climate Risk Index (2000 to 2019), the country is expected to experience increasingly more frequent and catastrophic extreme weather events, not only typhoons but also droughts, floods, and irregular precipitation, due to the climate crisis. Most areas of the country and over 70 percent of the population are at risk from these disasters, and the country could lose as much as 6 percent of its GDP by 2100 if appropriate climate change-mitigation actions are not immediately taken.

Additionally, with global warming, large parts of the country will face further increased average temperatures. It is expected that the grain yield of rice – the country’s main

staple – could decrease by as much as 10 percent for every 1°C increase in the dry growing-season minimum temperature.

Innovative CRA practices offer options to help the country respond to the challenges of a changing climate. Crop- and system-specific practices, incorporating indigenous food production systems, present viable solutions that increase climate-resilience of and improve food security. Investments in more integrated farm systems can also reduce farmers' vulnerability to the climate crisis and incentivize the uptake of CRA.

## REUTERS

### [Germany introduces national water strategy as climate change forces action](#)

By: Riham Alkousaa and Markus Wacket

Germany's cabinet on Wednesday agreed on a national water strategy aimed at coping with long dry seasons and heatwaves caused by climate change to ensure water security in Europe's biggest economy in future.

Germany is a water-rich country, but weeks of high temperatures and scant rainfall in recent years have drained the water levels of the Rhine river, the country's commercial artery, and hit farmers' crops in many parts of the country.

In a first-ever national water strategy, Berlin aims to set up and protect water reservoirs in forests, floodplains, towns and villages.

The strategy, with goals to be concluded up to 2050, includes restoring forests and green spaces, and developing guidelines to regulate water distribution in case of regional shortages, through categorizing water consumers in rankings.

Local and federal governments should be able to keep an overview on where and how much water is available in the country through a new registry system, the 120-page strategy showed.

Although Germans have lower daily water consumption levels compared with other industrialised countries, the strategy examines introducing incentives for saving water.

"The consequences of the climate crisis for people and nature are forcing us to act," Environment Minister Steffi Lemke said in a statement.

## THE PHILIPPINE STAR

### 'Above-normal rainfall now less likely': PAGASA declares end of La Niña

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

State weather bureau PAGASA declared the end of La Niña—or the condition that increases the likelihood of having above-normal rainfall.

In its final La Niña advisory, PAGASA said that most of the climate models predict a neutral phase of El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO)—or the recurring climate pattern across the tropical Pacific—from March to June 2023.

There will be an "increased likelihood of a transition to El Niño" or the warm phase of ENSO after.

El Niño increases the likelihood of below-normal rainfall conditions, which could lead to dry spells and droughts in some areas of the Philippines.

Although the cold phase condition has already ended, La Niña's "lag effect may still influence the probability of above normal rainfall conditions in the coming months," PAGASA stressed.

Above-normal rainfall could result in heavy rainfall, floods, flash floods, and rain-induced landslides in some highly-vulnerable areas.

In its outlook for March, PAGASA said the northeast monsoon or amihan is expected to wane, while the easterlies—or warm winds blowing from the east—will become predominant.

At least one tropical cyclone may develop next month, it added.

## Floods, landslides hit parts of Davao due to LPA

By: Diana Lhyd Suelto

Landslides and floods have been reported in parts of Davao region due to a low-pressure area (LPA).

In New Bataan, Davao de Oro, preemptive evacuation was conducted in Barangays Andap, Camanlangan and Bantacan.

Lynne Dollolasa, New Bataan municipal disaster risk reduction and management officer, said additional evacuation centers were opened to accommodate flood victims. She said many of those affected by recent earthquakes remain in existing evacuation centers.

Davao de Oro First District Rep. Maricar Zamora said a road in Purok 6, Barangay Magangit remains impassable due to a landslide.

Residents of Purok 8 in Barangay San Miguel in Compostela and Sitio Estabillo, Barangay Andili in Mawab, also in Davao de Oro, evacuated their homes due to flooding.

The municipal government of Nabunturan reported landslides and flooding in Barangays Bukal, Mainit, Katipunan and Tagnocon.

A landslide was also reported in Purok 1, Sitio Baay, Barangay Luban in Mati, Davao Oriental.

Classes in several schools in Davao City were suspended yesterday due to the LPA.

The state weather bureau said parts of Mindanao would continue to experience rain today due to the LPA.

The weather system was monitored 370 kilometers east of Davao City as of 3 p.m. yesterday.

## US EMBASSY IN THE PHILIPPINES

### [U.S. provides Php 38 million in grants to promote women's role in clean energy](#)

On International Women's Day March 8, the United States government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), announced two new grant projects valued at Php 37.9 million (\$690,000) to boost women's participation in energy resilience, innovation, and security in the Philippines.

USAID Philippines Deputy Mission Director Rebekah Eubanks formally awarded the Women in Energy Leadership, Innovation, and Resilience grant to the Diwata-Women in Resource Development, Inc. and the Women Engineers Network of the Philippine Technological Council, Inc. (PTC) during the Women Champions in Sustainable Climate Solutions Forum held on March 8 and 9. More than 100 women leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators attended the event to exchange ideas and propose solutions that address climate risks.

"Women empowerment and climate change are two pressing issues of our time. They are inextricably intertwined," USAID Philippines Deputy Mission Director Eubanks said. "Climate change exacerbates gender inequalities and developmental gaps. Women have a unique perspective on these issues as they often bear the brunt of climate shocks and stresses."

Diwata-Women in Resource Development, Inc. received Php 29 million (\$528,000) to expand "Tanging Tanglaw: Turning IP Women into Solar Engineers," a program that trains elderly women from indigenous communities to build and maintain solar-powered pump systems to electrify their neighborhoods.

PTC received Php 8.9 million (\$162,000) to implement the "Women Engineers as Instruments for Sustainable Engineering in Renewable Energies (WISER) Project" which will increase the enrollment of girls in renewable energy engineering programs through mentoring, technical seminars, competitions, and renewable energy campaigns in eight cities under the USAID Cities Development Initiative.

"When we talk about sustainable operations, it is not just about transitioning to cleaner energy. It also means opening management positions to women and giving them a voice in the energy transition," ENGIE Services Philippines General Manager Louella Caridad said during the Women Champions in Sustainable Climate Solutions panel discussion.

Through the Energy Secure Philippines Activity, USAID positions women at the forefront of climate action and sustainable energy development in line with its 2022-2030 Climate Strategy.

## VATICAN NEWS

### [Cyclone hit countries paying the high price of climate change](#)

By: Linda Bordoni

After barreling through Mozambique and Malawi since late last week, Cyclone Freddy is set to move away from land bringing some relief to regions that have been ravaged by torrential rain and powerful winds.

But the death toll from flood-devastated areas continues to rise, it is estimated that at least 20,000 people have been displaced, and millions more urgently need clean water, shelter and food.

Cyclone Freddy – the longest and strongest tropical storm on record in the Southern hemisphere – has damaged thousands of homes, roads, and telecommunication infrastructures.

Its devastating impact further compounds the crisis caused by the deadliest cholera epidemic Malawi and neighbouring Mozambique have ever recorded and that risks spreading further due to the flooding of polluted rivers and water basins.

It also comes in the wake of Cyclone Idai which killed more than 1,500 people and wreaked enormous destruction in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi in 2019.

#### Paying the price of climate change

Humanitarian agencies are currently assessing the scale of devastation in order to mount a humanitarian response to provide clean water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, as well as emergency cash and food, but collapsing infrastructure, particularly in the remotest areas is slowing relief efforts.

The climate crisis has made extreme weather, including cyclones, more severe and prolonged and human rights advocates note that those who are the least drivers of climate change – the poor - are paying the steepest price.

And while a comprehensive response is needed to ensure those in. need receive vital aid, climate campaigners have long pointed to the plight of Malawi as an example of a nation whose population has played little role in warming the planet, but is disproportionately reaping the consequences of humanity's surging emissions.

Their call for environmental justice resounds in harmony with Pope Francis' prophetic encyclical, *Laudato si*, in which he notes "We have to realize that a true ecological



approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."

#### UN warning

At last year's major U.N. climate summit, hosted in Egypt, some wealthy Western countries pledged tens of millions of dollars in funding to Mozambique to help with loss and damage due to extreme weather events, though activists say these contributions don't go nearly far enough.

At a U.N. Security Council session last month on the security risks posed by rising sea levels, Secretary-General António Guterres warned of "a mass exodus of entire populations on a biblical scale" as floods and coastal erosion uproot whole communities.

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