



NEWS ROUNDUP

20 June 2024 [08:00am]

- Comelec approves use of biodegradable items for campaign materials
- Philippines has up to \$1-T mineral reserves essential to making gadgets, e-vehicle batteries
- Albay creates technical working group on renewable energy dev't
- Pagasa: Rain showers expected in most parts of PH on Thursday
- PH to rely on coal-fired plants amid green energy push
- Bago City starts trash-to-cash program to reduce plastic waste
- Companies setting climate transition plans up 44% in 2023, research shows

ABS CBN

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By: Simon Jessop

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

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By: Sherrie Ann Torres

The campaign materials of 2025 national and local candidates will now have to be made of biodegradable materials, the Commission on Elections said Wednesday.

Comelec Chairman George Erwin Garcia said the poll body's en banc approved his earlier proposal on this matter.

This means that candidates will be discouraged from using non-biodegradable campaign materials such as plastic and PVCs, producing noise pollution, and using up too much fuel during motorcades.

The new Committee on Sustainable Election to be chaired by Commissioner Ernesto Maceda Jr. was tasked to come up with rules and penalties for this.

"Siya ang magda-draft ng mga policy direction patungkol sa kung papano isasakatuparan ng Comelec hindi lamang sa 2025, kung hindi sa mga susunod na halalan," Garcia said.

"Our sense is, there has to be a sanction... We will see if it's going to be workable that it's part of the Certificate of Candidacy or if not, then it is a pledge that we will put up at the filing that you know, we'll ask them to sign or it's available for them to sign voluntarily," Maceda said.

"In that sense also, call it a soft law... It will be enforced by what? By publicity and people will publicly see, does this candidate support this initiative by signing or not. That will also affect his environmental bona fides for the public," the official added.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, COCs

Meanwhile, Garcia said the Comelec would soon approve policies on the use of artificial intelligence (AI), "deepfake" technology, and the posting of Certificate of Candidacy (COC) and Certificate of Nomination and Acceptance (CONA).

He said the Comelec en banc referred his AI ban proposal to the Committees on Digital Transformation and Kontra Fake News chaired by Commissioner Nelson Celis.

The said panels will coordinate with the Commission's Education and Information, Law and Information and Technology departments, he said.

"Upang magkaroon tayo, makapaglinang tayo ng isang polisiya na ating ipapatupad, kung ban, regulation ng AI, lalong-lalo na ng deepfakes," Garcia said.

(So that we can craft a policy on whether we would ban or regulate AI especially deepfakes)

"Take note, kinikilala po natin, hindi naman po masama ang buong AI... kaya lang may ilang aspeto nito ang pwedeng magamit para magtanim ng disinformation, ng misinformation, fake news... yan po ang pinipigilan, nilalabanan ng Commission on Elections," he added.

(Take note, we recognize that AI is not bad. But there are aspects of it that can be used for disinformation, misinformation, fake news, which we want to stop)

The mandatory COC and CONA posting of all national and local candidates in the Comelec website will be tackled by the Commission en Banc in its Wednesday session.

With only a little over three months before the October 1-8 filing of COC by the would-be 2025 candidates, and amid the citizenship issue hounding Bamban, Tarlac Mayor Alice Guo, Garcia reiterated his earnest advice to Filipino voters to question the qualifications of an aspirant if they have doubts, particularly, on the issue of citizenship, voter's registration, age and literacy.

"Hindi lang po si Mayor Guo, pupwede po ninyong makwestyon kung sa inyong palagay ay hindi naman po eligible at wala naman po yung requirements na pine-prescribe ng batas natin... ang sabi po ng batas, any registered voter. Basta po, rehistradong botante kayo. Pwede kayong mag-file ng petition sa Commission on Elections," Garcia pointed out.

(Not only Mayor Guo but you can question anyone who you feel is not eligible. Any voter can do that)

MORE ABOUT ACMs

On Wednesday, Garcia personally demonstrated how a voter can use the automated counting machine (ACM) manufactured by Miru Systems Co. Ltd based in South Korea.

The customized ACM has "sealed" corners and openings and sports a darker ballot box. It will use "locally sourced" paper weighing 90 grams per meter.

The ACM based on its monitor, has the ability to process or read an accomplished ballot between 10-15 seconds.

A voter's ballot, once it entered the ACM, will be immediately read by an installed camera.

A photo of the accomplished ballot showing the voter's votes will be flashed on the screen for 20 seconds for a voter to see and check.

There will no longer be an option to change the contents of an accomplished ballot.

Only the voter can look or check the ballots. Any poll watcher who will try to intervene or get a screenshot of the accomplished ballot will be charged, Garcia stressed.

Once cast, an official receipt will be released by the machine, which the voter in turn, will personally drop to the attached container, which can only be opened once elections are over, and the Board of Election Inspectors will finally count the votes.

The ACM will also print eight copies of election returns which will bear the name of recipients like major political party, name of the election watchdog and others.

MANILA BULLETIN

[Philippines has up to \\$1-T mineral reserves essential to making gadgets, e-vehicle batteries](#)

By: Aaron Recuenco

The Philippines has rich mineral resources with a combined value of up to \$1 trillion, which could be a unique opportunity for the country to become a global leader in sustainable mining once properly managed, foreign mining experts said.

And these mineral reserves, based on the discussion in a forum in Makati City organized by the Embassy of Sweden and Business Sweden, are vital to the manufacture of chip-driven gadgets and electric vehicle batteries.

These include gold, copper and nickel.

But such an opportunity has prompted Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga to call on the mining industry to continue improving ways to protect the environment as she cited the adverse effects of climate change.

Loyzaga stressed that the mining industry must always find ways to rethink, invent, and innovate the ways it develops the country's natural resources, and must evolve to align with the principles of sustainability, stewardship and resilience.

"Our nation is at a pivotal juncture where the need to balance economic growth with environmental protection has never been more pressing. And while climate change has increased the complexity of risk across different scales and sectors, it also now represents opportunities for reform in this particular sector and industry," said Loyzaga.

"The Philippines must leverage its natural wealth responsibly and equitably while ensuring that the socio-economic benefits of mining extend to all Filipinos, especially to the communities that host mining operations and those beyond," she added.

In a forum with the theme "Pioneering the Green Transition: Advancing Sustainable Mining," one of the issues discussed was the needed collaboration that is crucial to advancing Philippine Development Goals and international commitments made to the Paris Agreement, Convention on Biodiversity, Sustainable Development Goals, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, among others.

Loyzaga said the collaboration includes investing in science and technology and in integrating social and ecological considerations into the mining operations, promoting biodiversity, as well, reducing carbon footprints, and implementing effective waste management practices.

"These must not just be part of our regulatory requirements but must now become essential elements of a progressive and responsible mining sector," said Loyzaga.

In the same forum, Loyzaga also highlighted that biodiversity protection, low carbon development, and the implementation of the Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System (PENCAS) are critical areas for the green transition of the mining industry.

To protect biodiversity, she said DENR Administrative Order No. 2022-04 mandates comprehensive guidelines to protect and conserve biodiversity in mining operations by emphasizing the integration of biodiversity management plans into mining practices to ensure conservation.

The order reflects the DENR's commitment to ensuring that this is not just a regulatory requirement but a fundamental component of mining operations.

To transition to a low carbon future, Loyzaga said the DENR is directing its policies towards the adoption of low-carbon technologies and practices and nature-based solutions in mining operations.

"Beyond enhancing energy efficiency and investing in renewable energy, this will include a more strategic mining forest program to address climate risks in the country," said Loyzaga.

As of May 2024, over 55 million seedlings have been planted by mining companies in over 50,000 mined-out areas with a survival rate of close to 90 percent. These trees can decrease the vulnerability of host and nearby communities.

Additionally, the PENCAS Law mandates measuring the true value of the country's natural resources and ecosystems, including minerals, to socio-economic development, and includes addressing the impacts on ecosystems by adopting the mitigation hierarchy in mining operations which follows the steps of avoidance, minimization, restoration, and offsetting compensation for affected communities.

"In this regard, we have a very keen interest in learning today from Sweden's long history and experience in promoting scientific advancement, transparency, accountability, and sustainability in the mining sector," said Loyzaga.

The Philippines' partnership with Sweden will pave the way towards achieving the greatest net positive impact today and in the future, so that we may, in fact, win this race to resilience, this race to a low carbon, and possibly net zero environment and the race to have our earth still be enjoyed by many generations to come," she added.

MANILA STANDARD

[Albay creates technical working group on renewable energy dev't](#)

By: Rosas Olarte

Albay is charting a path to become one of the Philippines' renewable energy hubs by 2030 with its creation of a technical working group (TWG) tasked to develop plans towards achieving this goal.

Albay Gov. Edcel Greco Lagman recently issued an executive order officially establishing the TWG headed by provincial planning and development coordinator Arnold Onrubia as chairman.

Onrubia will be working with the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Albay, department heads of the provincial government, as well as like-minded private organizations to develop a renewable energy roadmap for the province.

Frequent power outages have been plaguing Albay, disrupting daily life and economic activities despite efforts of the Albay Electric Cooperative Inc. (ALECO), the lone electricity provider in the province.

Albay's current energy infrastructure struggles to keep up with demand, even with the presence of two geothermal power plants, according to Onrubia. To address this, the local government aims to tap potential renewable energy sources.

"We have the wind and two geothermal power plants here in Albay alone and that includes wind energy sources," Onrubia said.

Onrubia noted that they have already identified promising sites to generate wind energy in the towns of Rapu-Rapu, Camalig, Pio Duran, parts of Polangui, Guinobatan and San Miguel Island in Tabaco City. He said these areas could potentially harness up to 10 gigawatts of electricity.

Solar energy is also a key component of Albay's renewable energy strategy. Onrubia highlighted the importance of this transition, which aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"To make that happen, [we need] comprehensive policies, investment in clean technologies, and international and local cooperation," Onrubia underscored, noting that challenges remain in the areas of infrastructure investment, technology development, among other key issues.

The TWG's responsibilities included scoping and mapping Albay's renewable energy sources. It is reportedly on track to finalize the Renewable Energy Road Map and the Albay Green Energy Road Map by July 2024.

These plans will be unveiled at the upcoming Renewable Energy Summit in August 2024, expected to attract potential foreign investors. President Marcos, officials from the Department of Energy, as well as European and Chinese ambassadors were expected to attend this gathering.

Camarines Sur has also recently launched the San Miguel Bay Offshore Wind Power Project, targeting significant energy generation from wind blowing across the sea.

This project, spearheaded by Danish firm Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners (CIP), aims to generate 1,000 megawatts and has already received approval from the Department of Trade and Industry's Board of Investments and necessary compliances from government regulatory agencies like the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Pagasa: Rain showers expected in most parts of PH on Thursday

By: Zacarian Sarao

The southwest monsoon or “habagat,” will continue to bring rain to most parts of the country on Thursday, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa).

“Itong Central Visayas, Western Visayas at kasama na rin po ang buong Mindanao ay makakaranas ng maulap na kalangitan na may mga kalat kalat na pag-ulan at thunderstorms,” said Pagasa weather specialist Aldczar Aurelio.

(Central Visayas, Western Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered showers and thunderstorms.)

The same weather will likewise prevail over parts of Luzon, specifically, Palawan, Occidental Mindoro and Romblon.

Partly cloudy skies are forecast over the rest of Luzon, including Metro Manila, especially in the morning — with scattered rain showers and thunderstorms more likely in the afternoon and evening.

“Samantala ang Eastern Visayas makakaranas ng fair weather pero may tiyansa pa rin ng mga isolated na pag-ulan,” said Aurelio.

(Meanwhile, Eastern Visayas will experience fair weather but there is still a chance of isolated rain showers.)

Meanwhile, no cyclones or low pressure areas are expected to form in and around the Philippine area of responsibility until Saturday.

Forecast temperature range in key cities / areas on Thursday

- Metro Manila: 25 to 34°C
- Baguio City: 18 to 26 °C
- Laoag City: 25 to 33°C
- Tuguegarao: 25 to 35°C
- Legazpi City: 25 to 33 °C
- Puerto Princesa City: 25 to 32 °C
- Tagaytay: 24 to 32 °C
- Kalayaan Islands: 26 to 32 °C
- Iloilo City: 26 to 31 °C
- Cebu: 25 to 31 °C
- Tacloban City: 25 to 32 °C
- Cagayan De Oro City: 24 to 31 °C
- Zamboanga City: 24 to 31 °C
- Davao City: 25 to 31 °C

[PH to rely on coal-fired plants amid green energy push](#)

By: Lisbet K. Esmael

The Philippines will exhaust currently operating coal-fired plants as the plan to increase renewable energy's share in the power generation mix remains at a standstill.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla bared on Wednesday the government's move to continue relying on coal plants to ensure the country has until 2030 enough baseload capacity, or power that can readily be injected into the transmission system to meet demand.

During an energy forum in Makati City, the official said that while he sees a "massive room" for growth for renewable energy, particularly solar and wind, its current contribution to the power mix remained sluggish at 22 percent. The figure is far from the goal of hitting 35 percent in six years.

Coal, on the other hand, is still a dominant power contributor, supplying 62 percent of the country's needs.

Lotilla said that while his department continued to maintain a moratorium on the development of new coal plants, exemptions were in place "for committed, indicative, and expansion plans."

The moratorium was issued in late 2020 as part of efforts to cut dependence on coal and reduce the country's greenhouse emissions.

"[W]e do not set aside our responsibility to ensure adequate baseload capacities in conjunction with our push to increase [renewable energy] share in the power mix," he said.

Lotilla noted that the country still has more than 6,300 megawatts (MW) of dependable coal capacity aged 10 years or younger.

Less cost burden on the economy, consumers

"These plants can be relied on to operate for at least another 30 years. Moreover, over 3,400 MW of dependable coal capacities are between 10 and 30 years old, allowing for at least a further 10 years of operation," the Energy secretary said, adding:

"Maximizing the use of existing energy infrastructure avoids placing an added cost burden on both the economy and consumers."

By 2028, the Department of Energy expects power generators to produce about 2,255 MW of additional coal supply—part of the government's target to add a total capacity of 11,000 MW. Lotilla said this would help the country address the projected peak demand growth of 5.3 percent from 2023 to 2028.

Gerry Arances, convenor of Power for People Coalition, said the DOE's continued utilization of "young" coal plants was "a classic example of the sunk cost fallacy."

“Continuing to use coal is an irrational decision considering the magnitude of its impact [on] the climate emergency and the exorbitant charges inflicted on consumers,” he said in a statement.

In a related development, Aboitiz Power Corp (AboitizPower) Thermal Business Group said Wednesday that power supply challenges remained, especially in Cebu, with about 60 percent of its electricity needs still being imported.

The company said it was planning to boost its Therma Visayas (TVI) coal-fired power plant in Toledo, Cebu with a new unit, which would add 150 MW into the Visayas grid.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Bago City starts trash-to-cash program to reduce plastic waste

By: Nanette Guadalquiver

The City of Bago in Negros Occidental launched a community-based waste-to-cash program to reduce plastic waste as part of its activities for the observance of Environment Month this June.

Vice Mayor Ramon Torres said Wednesday that the launch of the “Aling Tindera Plastic Waste to Cash” in Barangays Ma-ao and Poblacion, in partnership with Friends of Hope Inc. and Germany-based development agency Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, on Tuesday would help address plastic pollution.

“It is important to work hand-in-hand in the protection and conservation of the environment through a program such as this,” Torres said in a statement.

The two “Aling Tindera” waste collection stations are near the expanded sanitary landfill site in Sitio Pandan in Barangay Ma-ao and beside the fish port at the Bantayan Park in Barangay Poblacion.

City Environment Management Office head Vicente Mesias said the four-hectare expansion area could still accommodate more waste generated in the city.

However, through the program, they are looking at reducing waste generation and the volume of garbage disposal at the sanitary landfill.

“We are eyeing to open more ‘Aling Tindera’ stations. The project will surely have positive social and environmental impacts on the community,” he added.

Aling Tindera program coordinator Mia Rosabel Grace Azurin said the collection program aims to help the community manage their plastic waste at home.

It will also provide additional income to the designated “Aling Tinderas” who will manage the waste collection stations, and community members who will sell their plastic waste to the collection station.

Plastic sachets, packaging materials, and containers, among other plastic waste, can be sold at an “Aling Tindera” station at PHP2 per kg., and partner organizations will then buy them at PHP2.50 per kg.

Rinalyn Alforque, one of the “Aling Tinderas” in Bago City, said through the waste-to-cash program, they will have additional income while helping reduce plastic waste in their surroundings.

REUTERS

[Companies setting climate transition plans up 44% in 2023, research shows](#)

By: Simon Jessop

The number of companies saying they have a climate transition plan in line with the world's most ambitious goal has jumped by nearly half, but many do not give investors enough information to check the claims, according to non-profit data tracker CDP.

One in four companies to provide data to the world's only independent environmental disclosure platform, or 5,906 in total, said they had a plan aligned with capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial average.

Doing so is crucial to avoiding the worst impacts of climate change, yet the United Nations said in December that the world was currently on track to record a temperature increase of 2.9 degrees Celsius.

Regulators in the U.S., European Union and elsewhere are increasingly making reporting by companies mandatory, but in many countries it remains voluntary, and the actions of some boards are outpacing change by policymakers.

To help investors track the quality of the plans, CDP has picked 21 indicators it said a company should aim to provide, such as emissions data from across its supply chain, clarity on any assurance provided, and the degree of board oversight.

Of the companies to lay claim to a 1.5 degrees Celsius-aligned transition plan, 39% disclosed information on at least two-thirds of the CDP target metrics, but just 1% of the companies, some 140, gave information on all the metrics.

"With nearly 50% more companies reporting climate transition plans through CDP in 2023, it's evident that data on forward-looking commitments are becoming crucial tools for companies to build and maintain confidence with market stakeholders," said CDP Chief Executive Sherry Madera in a statement.

"This momentum is unmistakable, with a further 8,000 businesses looking to have their transition plans in place by 2025. This is encouraging and a smart business move, as climate transition plans are an essential tool needed for credible businesses as they shift to net-zero."

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