



## NEWS ROUNDUP

18 August 2022 [as of 08:44 am]

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- Spain, Portugal battle to control huge wildfires
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- Biden signs major climate change, health care law
- Carbon tax under study

## CCC IN THE NEWS

- Legarda commends US President Biden for climate change action

## ABS CBN

### [US enacts \\$437-B law, touting largest climate change investment](#)

Washington - President Joe Biden on Tuesday signed into law a \$437 billion investment bill that includes what he calls the largest U.S. spending ever aimed at combating climate change, while raising taxes on large companies.

## **BBC NEWS**

### **[Climate change: 'Staggering' rate of global tree losses from fires](#)**

By: Matt McGrath

Around 16 football pitches of trees per minute were lost to forest fires in 2021, a new report says.

## **BUSINESS MIRROR**

### **[ACTING ON CLIMATE CHANGE](#)**

Ambassador Laure Beaufigli of the United Kingdom (second from right) launched the “Climate Action Implementation Programme” with Mayor Josefina G. Belmonte of Quezon City (second from left).

## **PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY**

### **[House panel pushes for conservation, protection of PH wildlife](#)**

By Filane Mikee Cervantes

A House of Representatives panel on Wednesday approved measures for the conservation and protection of wildlife resources, as well as the promotion of sustainable forest management.

### **[Mindanao coffee farmers now earn more after Nescafé training](#)**

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## **SUNSTAR**

### **[\[Opinion\] Algo: Achieving climate justice thru loss and damage finance](#)**

By: John Leo Algo

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## THE MANILA TIMES

### [Attracting the youth to agriculture](#)

By William Dar

If more students are enrolled in agriculture and agribusiness courses this school year, particularly in state universities and colleges, that means they are answering the call of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. to take part in leveling up the country's farming and fishery sector, so we can eventually produce at least 100 percent of our major staples like rice, corn, poultry, livestock and fisheries.

### [BBM reviews water management proposal](#)

By Kristina Maralit

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. is reviewing a proposal to establish an Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Program that seeks to balance the country's economic, social and environmental sustainability.

### [Biden inks major climate, health care law](#)

By Associated Press

Washington, D.C.: United States President Joe Biden signed his fellow Democrats' landmark climate change and health care bill into law on Tuesday (Wednesday in Manila), delivering what he has called the "final piece" of his pared-down domestic agenda, as he aims to boost his party's standing with voters less than three months before America's midterm elections.

### [Expert: Businesses need resilience, sustainability](#)

By: Bella Carisao

An expert on Wednesday said that businesses should adopt eight initiatives to address the pandemic, climate change and other global challenges.

### [LandBank lends P5.8B for agri climate resiliency](#)

By Eireene Jairee Gomez

In support of building a climate-resilient agribusiness value chain in the country, the Land Bank of the Philippines (LandBank) has approved loans totaling P5.8 billion to 15 borrowers as of June 30, 2022.

### [Spain, Portugal battle to control huge wildfires](#)

By Agence France-Presse

Madrid: Spain and neighboring Portugal fought against large wildfires on Tuesday, while three people were badly injured after their train hurtled into a smaller Spanish blaze.

### **[SPNEC to establish biggest solar farm](#)**

By Eireene Jairee Gomez

SOLAR Philippines Nueva Ecija Corp. (SPNEC) allocated proceeds from its various capital raises to complete securing at least 2,500 hectares in the provinces of Nueva Ecija and Bulacan for a planned 3.5-gigawatt (GW) solar farm, as it aims to be the world's largest solar farm.

### **THE PHILIPPINE STAR**

#### **[Biden signs major climate change, health care law](#)**

By: Agence France Presse

Washington, United States — President Joe Biden on Tuesday signed into law a big climate change and health care spending bill, giving Democrats another boost ahead of midterm elections in which Republicans are suddenly less certain of their predicted crushing victory.

#### **[Carbon tax under study - Philstar.com](#)**

By Louise Maureen Simeon

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Finance (DOF) is studying the viability of imposing a carbon tax in a bid to generate much-needed revenues and address environmental concerns.

### **CCC in the news:**

### **MANILA BULLETIN**

#### **[Legarda commends US President Biden for climate change action](#)**

By: Mario Casayuran

Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda commended on Wednesday, Aug. 17 United States (US) President Joe Biden for signing into law a legislation addressing climate change.

**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

**ABS CBN**

**[US enacts \\$437-B law, touting largest climate change investment](#)**

Washington - President Joe Biden on Tuesday signed into law a \$437 billion investment bill that includes what he calls the largest U.S. spending ever aimed at combating climate change, while raising taxes on large companies.

The law is Biden's latest legislative win ahead of the November midterm elections, in which control of Congress will be at stake. The administration has touted the Inflation Reduction Act as including measures to address high prices, such as by lowering energy bills and health care costs on prescription drugs. But uncertainties remain as to whether the law will immediately bring down the decades-high inflation, with the Congressional Budget Office having estimated that the enactment of the bill would only have a "negligible effect" on inflation this year.

The legislation, which pledges around \$369 billion in investment for climate change and energy security, provides incentives such as tax credits to encourage purchases of electric vehicles and installation of rooftop solar panels.

The Democrats have explained that such "historic" climate investment will reduce the country's carbon dioxide emissions by roughly 40 percent by 2030.

"This bill is the biggest step forward on climate ever," said Biden, who has made tackling climate change a priority since taking office in January last year.

The legislation also imposes a 15 percent minimum tax on large corporations.

According to the Democrats, the law is expected to reduce the deficit by hundreds of billions of dollars over the next decade such as through tax hikes, which are likely to drive down demand in the economy and contribute to price declines.

## **BBC NEWS**

### **Climate change: 'Staggering' rate of global tree losses from fires**

By: Matt McGrath

Around 16 football pitches of trees per minute were lost to forest fires in 2021, a new report says.

Data from Global Forest Watch suggests that across the globe, the amount of tree cover being burned has nearly doubled in the past 20 years.

Climate change is a key factor in the increase as it leads to higher temperatures and drier conditions.

Of the 9 million hectares of trees consumed by fire in 2021, over five million were in Russia. The new data allows researchers to distinguish between trees lost to fires, and those destroyed for agriculture, logging or during intentional burns. In 2021, the second worst year for fires on record, an area the size of Portugal was lost. "It is staggering," says James MacCarthy, an analyst with Global Forest Watch.

"It's roughly twice what it was just 20 years ago. It is kind of astonishing just how much fire activity has increased over such a short amount of time."

The impacts of fire-related losses are being felt primarily in forests in more northerly countries like Canada and Russia.

While fire is a natural part of how these forests have long functioned, the scale of destruction seen in Russia in 2021 was unprecedented.

Of the 9.3 million hectares (23 million acres) burnt globally, Russia accounted for more than half.

"What's most concerning is that fires are becoming more frequent, more severe and have the potential to unlock a lot of the carbon that's stored in soils there," said James MacCarthy.

Trees and soils store carbon dioxide - one of the key gases warming our atmosphere - and experts say they are crucial in tackling climate change. Climate change is seen as a key driver of these fires, with rising temperatures creating the drier conditions in which more trees burn.

Northern regions of the world are warming at a faster rate, leading to longer fire seasons.

In Russia, the 31% increase in fire losses in 2021 was due in part to the prolonged heatwaves that experts believe would have been practically impossible without human-induced warming.

"Climate change is increasing the risk of hotter, faster and larger fires," said Dr Doug Morton, who's chief of the Biospheric Sciences Laboratory at Nasa.

"And that's nowhere more visible than forests and woodlands where you have plenty of fuel to burn."

In other parts of the world, the impact of deforestation is also leading to more fires.

In the Brazilian Amazon, which recently saw the number of trees felled climb to a six year high, the losses due to agricultural clearing and logging are having a knock-on effect.

"Deforestation changes local and regional climates and removes a lot of the evapotranspiration that help keep temperatures low and more humid," said James MacCarthy. "So cutting down these forests is actually making them hotter and drier, and making them more prone to fires."

While many of the trees that burn down will grow back over a period of 100 years or so, there are significant associated impacts of these losses on biodiversity, on water quality and soil erosion.

The UN says that the outlook for forest fires in the decades ahead is grim. There is an expected increase of 50% in extreme fires by the end of this century.

To address this problem, scientists say that rapid and deep cuts in global carbon emissions are key.

Global leaders at the climate change conference COP26 in Glasgow last year pledged to end deforestation, but the promise must be honoured if it's to make a difference.

More focus on preventing forest fires, rather than fighting them, is still needed, according to Mr MacCarthy.

"About 50% of national fire budgets are for responding to fires and less than 1% is really for preparing and planning," he says.

## **BUSINESS MIRROR**

### **ACTING ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

Ambassador Laure Beaufigli of the United Kingdom (second from right) launched the “Climate Action Implementation Programme” with Mayor Josefina G. Belmonte of Quezon City (second from left).

The former cited the “key role cities play to turn the tide on climate change,” and that her country is proud to work with C40 Cities to support Quezon City in delivering its bold vision for renewable energy and energy efficiency.

## PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

### [House panel pushes for conservation, protection of PH wildlife](#)

By Filane Mikee Cervantes

A House of Representatives panel on Wednesday approved measures for the conservation and protection of wildlife resources, as well as the promotion of sustainable forest management.

The House Committee on Natural Resources chaired by Cavite Rep. Elpidio Barzaga Jr. approved the proposal to protect wildlife resources, as contained in House Bills 154, 2595, 306, 309, 485, 1534 and 2769.

Cagayan de Oro City Rep. Rufus Rodriguez said the bill aims to ensure that the country's flora and fauna, as well as the ecosystems where they live, are protected from threats including habitat destruction and fragmentation, overexploitation, poaching and hunting, pollution, climate change and culling.

"This will ensure that our environment will be protected not only for us but for future generations as well," Rodriguez said.

The bill provides for stronger measures to conserve and protect the country's wildlife resources to promote ecological balance and proposes stiffer penalties against individuals violating provisions in the proposed law.

The panel also approved the proposal to sustain forest management through House Bills 1878, 2018 and 2469.

Abra Rep. Menchie " Ching" Bernos said the institutionalization of sustainable forest management is an imperative task for the government to protect and preserve the Philippines' vast forest ecosystem.

Sustainable forest management, as defined by the United Nations, is the stewardship of forests in a way that maintains biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality, and their potential to meet relevant, ecological, economic, and social functions without damage to other ecosystems.

"Sustainable forest management requires our government to institutionalize mechanisms and processes that respond to forest management concerns in terms of development, regulation, protection, and the mitigation of the impacts of industrial demand," Bernos said.

The bill proposes the reconstitution and strengthening of the Forest Management Bureau as managers or administrators of forest resources, as well as "stewards and guardians" of the forest ecosystem.

"Deforestation is not a problem to be faced by future generations. This is a problem that we face right now. But through the swift and decisive action of the government, with the help of civil society groups and the public at large, we will still be able to save our forests and our entire nation's ecological balance," Bernos said.

## Mindanao coffee farmers now earn more after Nescafé training

By Christine Cudis

Davao City – Some 1,500 small coffee farmers in Mindanao have increased their yield and income by around 64 percent and 45 percent, respectively, in 2021.

The increase in harvests came after the completion of the three-year Project Coffee+ launched by Nestlé Philippines through the NESCAFÉ Plan.

The project had 980 Sultan Kudarat and 520 Bukidnon farmers participating in intensive training since 2019 to develop their “agripreneurial” mindset.

“Along with the efforts of our partners and other stakeholders, the NESCAFÉ Plan aims to increase the capacity of farmers for regeneration and build a future through green coffee beans sourced from farmers adopting regenerative agriculture practices,” Kais Marzouki, Nestlé Philippines head, said in a statement Wednesday.

The increase in production was reported by the Rainforest Alliance -- an international non-government organization addressing deforestation, climate change, systemic poverty, and social inequity -- that performed monitoring and evaluation to help assess the sustainability of the NESCAFÉ Plan.

The report showed that Project Coffee+ farmers’ adoption of regenerative farming practices such as agroforestry, the application of organic matter, and rejuvenation of coffee trees, have made a positive impact on the total harvest.

“As we move forward in our transition to regenerative food systems, we want to encourage consumers to be more mindful of how raw materials are grown and how products are made as they make purchase decisions,” Marzouki said.

The project, completed in cooperation with the German development agency Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), has provided smallholder coffee farmers with training, mainly in agronomic practices such as grafting, pruning, rejuvenation, and organic and inorganic fertilization.

The significant increases in their yield and income are attributed to their adoption of an agri-enterprise approach to farm operations, which includes applying learned skills in better farm planning, budgeting, seeking financial services, and farm diversification, among others.

The Nescafé Plan in the country is a long-term program to increase the supply of Robusta coffee which lags considerably behind demand by helping farmers increase the productivity of coffee farming towards a better quality of life.

Robusta accounts for 66 percent of local coffee production and is mostly grown in Mindanao.

In the Philippines, Nestlé is the biggest buyer of Robusta green coffee beans. It increased its volume purchase of locally-grown coffee by 41 percent in 2021 over 2020, sourced from participants in NESCAFÉ Plan projects as well as consolidators, smallholder farmers, and farmer cooperatives across Mindanao.

## SUNSTAR

### [\[Opinion\] Algo: Achieving climate justice thru loss and damage finance](#)

By: John Leo Algo

Climate justice is the anchor of any discussion or action to address loss and damage (L&D). With every typhoon, drought, or other hazard that hits our nation, it is always the poorest and most vulnerable peoples who experience its gravest impacts.

Implementing solutions to reduce, if not avoid casualties and destruction of properties is necessary for developing countries like the Philippines to continue on its road to sustainable development. Yet they mostly lack the finance and resources to enforce their L&D strategies, which would come from the high-income nations that emitted most of the greenhouse gases that caused the climate crisis to begin with.

With L&D finance poised to be one of the most hotly-debated topics at COP27 in Egypt, the question remains on how countries can break through this political wall that has impeded progress on this workstream for decades.

A new approach

In the context of L&D, many advocates demand for compensations from developed countries, based on the "polluter pays" principle. Most of them call for such payment in monetary form, although some have also suggested other modes of compensation through technologies and infrastructures to aid vulnerable communities address potential impacts. Despite the efforts of developed nations to permanently end conversations on L&D finance, grounds for it gained significant momentum during last year's climate negotiations in Glasgow. A bloc of developing countries pushed for a "loss and damage facility" that would finance actions to avert or minimize L&D, which gained enough momentum to be discussed at COP27. In addition, the governments of Scotland and Wallonia, Belgium, together with a few philanthropic organizations, collectively pledged nearly USD7 million to compensate victims of climate-related disasters.

These events are crucial for the global climate justice movement to keep pressuring governments, businesses, and funding agencies to formalize L&D finance. They provide hope for L&D victims and vulnerable communities affected by climate threats to adequately cope with the changing climate, especially if the projections of worsening impacts in the following decades happen.

That said, the focus for calls on compensation raises an interesting question. If vulnerable nations and communities receive enough payments from developed countries and carbon majors, what happens next?

Compensations for L&D would likely cover the economic, environmental, and social costs that nations and communities endured from extreme weather events they have already experienced. Yet after that, these people would still be highly vulnerable to climate change impacts that are projected to become even more intense in the future.

Without appropriate interventions, these people could experience even more L&D. And the cycle of debates, frustrations, losses, and damages start all over again.

It must be highlighted that addressing L&D cannot be isolated from adaptation or mitigation. Furthermore, addressing any of these three pillars of global climate action cannot focus on just one aspect of the solution. Multiple actions must be taken simultaneously, with all sectors working together to effectively address the impacts of the climate crisis.

Through this lens, achieving climate justice in the context of L&D should not only focus on providing compensations to the most vulnerable peoples by high-emissions countries and businesses. Policymakers must also account for how to distribute in an equitable manner the reparations and other forms of payment of the so-called "climate debt" among the L&D victims, also in aid of their pursuit of development.

When answers cannot be found, the right action might be to change the questions. For decades, the narrative involving L&D, and the climate crisis in general, has been on "who deserves the blame" to emphasize accountability of big polluters and pressure them to take action. And rightfully so.

Yet with the urgency of increasing the resiliency of poorer communities growing with each passing year, the attention should also be placed on them in the global policymaking arena. Dialogues and actions should also be centered on "who has been harmed the most" and "who needs support the most" as much as "who deserves the blame". This could not only help climate justice advocates mobilize more political support, but also help generate more L&D finance pledges before an official financing mechanism is even created.

Slightly changing the messaging by justice advocates from "because you caused this" to "because you benefited from this, which means you are the most capable to support" can also help gather more support and pledges for addressing L&D.

What must not be lost in the discussions is the importance of inclusive decision-making at the global, national, and local levels. Policymakers and potential funders need to

meaningfully engage with communities affected by L&D, not use them to advance their personal agendas. This would help them recover from local impacts, as well as deal with non-economic L&D, whose true value can only be assessed by the locals themselves.

As another round of high-stakes negotiations approaches this November, a new paradigm for avoiding L&D and seeking climate justice must be forged. The world needs to consider a hybrid approach that not only demands compensation from big polluters, but also provides knowledge, resources, and tools to the most vulnerable nations and communities.

The political deadlock at the negotiating table must end sooner than later, for the sake of current and future generations.

## THE MANILA TIMES

### Attracting the youth to agriculture

By William Dar

If more students are enrolled in agriculture and agribusiness courses this school year, particularly in state universities and colleges, that means they are answering the call of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. to take part in leveling up the country's farming and fishery sector, so we can eventually produce at least 100 percent of our major staples like rice, corn, poultry, livestock and fisheries.

But my fear is the number of students who have enrolled in agriculture and agribusiness courses will show a decline this school year, which may mean that the youth generally have no interest in becoming farmers, fishers, or agripreneurs. I also find it disturbing that a recent study by the University of the Philippines in Los Baños showed that the average age of the Filipino farmer is around 58 years old, and that 65 percent of the farmers interviewed want their children to go into other vocations or professions.

These can have huge consequences for a country where the average age of farmers and fishers is fast approaching 60 years old.

When I was Agriculture secretary, the Department of Agriculture (DA) and its attached agencies launched the following programs to enlist the youth into the farming and fishery sector: Mentoring and Attracting Youth to Agribusiness (MAYA); Kapatid Access for Youth Agripreneurs (KAYA); Educational Assistance for the Youth: Degree Courses in Agriculture and Agricultural Biosystems Engineering; and the Digital Farmers Program (DFP).

MAYA attracted thousands of applicants and in June 2021, 10 youngsters were chosen by a panel of business experts for coming up with the "best agribusiness plan." They received P40,000 each as start-up capital for their proposed agribusiness ventures. Also, 26 were declared as "best MAYA interns" and another 30 won the "best photo journey," with each receiving P7,500 and P4,000 cash incentives, respectively.

The 791 interns who were qualified for the program received a monthly allowance of P20,000 for their immersion in various DA agencies and its regional field offices.

KAYA is a program by the Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) and aims to provide zero-interest, uncollateralized loans of up to P500,000, payable in five years to young proponents of agribusiness projects.

The EasYAgri by the Agricultural Training Institute aims to encourage children of smallholder farmers and fishers to pursue a degree related to agriculture, while the DFP aims to address the "digital divide" in the agriculture sector by engaging capitalizing on the youth's technological savvy to teach older farmers new technologies via digital agriculture.

I also learned that the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization has launched the Youth for Mechanization program to drum up the interest of the youth toward agriculture through farm mechanization.

Initiatives outside of the government like the National 4-H Club of the Philippines and the establishment of youth chapters in SUCs by the Philippine Society of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineers are also laudable efforts to get more young interested in taking a vocation in agriculture.

But much still needs to be done because if the trend of farmers getting older is not reversed and the majority of their children choose not to farm, I see a "critical shortage" of farmers in 12 years or less.

While 12 years may still look quite far away, we should take into account the growing Philippine population which, according to [worldpopulationreview.com](http://worldpopulationreview.com), is projected to reach 125 million by 2030 from the current 112 million. This means that eight years from now, the local production of major staples like rice, corn, poultry, livestock and fishery should increase by at least 10 percent to feed the growing population. But the problem is we are not even 100-percent self-sufficient across major farm commodities.

Also, achieving sufficiency across major farm products is a more daunting challenge today because of geopolitical disruptions, globalization trend and climate change.

Exciting opportunities for young farmers

But amid those challenges are exciting, or very exciting, opportunities for the youth to level up agriculture primarily through technology and the spirit of enterprise or agripreneurship.

Let us first discuss technology — my column titled "Is PH agriculture ready for Industry 4.0?" published in The Manila Times on Aug. 4, 2022 discussed how the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4ID) can have an impact on the country's agriculture, particularly through digitalization.

From what I discussed in that column, it is very clear that 4ID can revolutionize agriculture or disrupt well-established systems in the food industry. A good example of 4ID technologies are robots to remove weeds without using herbicides; drones to apply chemical inputs instead of a farmworker; the Internet of Things to access markets for agricultural produce; and sensors to monitor soil and plant health.

There are also technologies prior to 4ID that can significantly boost agriculture like mechanization, geomapping or geographic information systems, greenhouses, hydroponics and aquaponics, among others.

This means that there are hundreds of technology options to level up agriculture, which I am very sure is appealing and exciting to the youth. With that, we should also encourage students taking up IT courses to go into farming or offer their services to farmers and agribusiness companies.

Now, let us discuss agripreneurship — the thousands of young people who applied for the DA's MAYA program in 2021 amid the pandemic shows that the youth are interested in establishing farming- and fishery-based enterprises.

This is also a good indication that the youth sees agriculture as a viable business or economic activity, and not just an undertaking to produce the country's food needs. The youth are also interested in value-adding, and activities within a commodity value chain and not just on-field crop production or raising of livestock, poultry or marine products. I can say that because 9 of the top 10 finishers in the 2021 MAYA competition proposed value-adding activities.

However, very few young people were born with a silver spoon in their mouths, so it is essential that the youth aspiring to venture into agriculture be given funding support like collateral- and interest-free loans like under the MAYA program of ACPC.

I must also emphasize that state universities and colleges (SUCs) must do a bigger part in creating agripreneurs through the technology agribusiness incubation initiatives that the Department of Science and Technology is strongly supporting. Furthermore, SUCs can establish units or offices to make students become more aware and adapt to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, also with focus on how this can level up agri-based enterprises.

And since many SUCs are in the rural areas, they can help mobilize their graduates in business courses like management, marketing and accounting to venture into agriculture or support agri-based enterprises and cooperatives.

SUCs should also keep track of the number of students enrolling in agriculture or agribusiness degrees or if this is or declining, because if it is declining, that means they need to do something drastic or disruptive to make the youth more interested in agriculture. That would be an interesting topic to discuss in a future column.

## **BBM reviews water management proposal**

By Kristina Maralit

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. is reviewing a proposal to establish an Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Program that seeks to balance the country's economic, social and environmental sustainability.

"This program is an approach to promote the coordinated development and management of water, land, and related resources to maximize economic and social welfare without compromising our ecosystem," a statement released by the Office of the President said.

The Chief Executive mentioned in his State of the Nation Address (SONA) last month that it is high time for the Department of Water Resources to be institutionalized and adopt the IWRM. This, in turn, can be used to craft and implement the "strategic framework for national water management, policymaking and planning."

Passing a bill that would establish the said agency was listed among his Priority Legislative Measures, and he has called on both houses of Congress for its approval.

Marcos had also repeatedly called for a review of the country's supply of fresh, clean and potable water, especially in urban areas, pointing out that many decades-old systems need to be either rehabilitated or replaced.

The President also underscored the importance of having accessible drinking water in emergencies and natural disasters, such as the big earthquake that hit Northern Luzon late last month. He called for more water purifying systems to be put in place.

Access to safe drinking water in times of calamities, he stressed, is needed as "cholera, diphtheria will come into play" and put affected residents at risk of contracting the said diseases.

Marcos tasked the government agencies, including the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Public Works and Highways and even the Department of Agriculture, which he concurrently heads, to collaborate with the private sector and other stakeholders.

## [Biden inks major climate, health care law](#)

By Associated Press

Washington, D.C.: United States President Joe Biden signed his fellow Democrats' landmark climate change and health care bill into law on Tuesday (Wednesday in Manila), delivering what he has called the "final piece" of his pared-down domestic agenda, as he aims to boost his party's standing with voters less than three months before America's midterm elections.

The legislation includes the most substantial federal investment in history to fight climate change — some \$375 billion over the decade — and would cap prescription drug costs at \$2,000 out-of-pocket annually for Medicare recipients. It also would help an estimated 13 million Americans pay for health care insurance by extending subsidies provided during the coronavirus pandemic.

The measure is paid for by new taxes on large companies and stepped-up Internal Revenue Service enforcement of wealthy individuals and entities, with additional funds going to reduce the federal deficit.

In a triumphant signing event at the White House, Biden pointed to the law as proof that democracy — no matter how long or messy the process — can still deliver for voters in America as he road-tested a line he is likely to repeat later this fall ahead of the midterms: "The American people won, and the special interests lost."

"In this historic moment, Democrats sided with the American people, and every single Republican in the Congress sided with the special interests in this vote," Biden said, repeatedly seizing on the contrast between his party and the Grand Old Party, or GOP. "Every single one."

The House of Representatives last Friday approved the measure on a party-line 220-207 vote. It passed the Senate days earlier, with Vice President Kamala Harris breaking a 50-50 tie in that chamber.

"In normal times, getting these bills done would be a huge achievement," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York said during the White House ceremony. "But to do it now, with only 50 Democratic votes in the Senate, over an intransigent Republican minority, is nothing short of amazing."

Biden signed the bill into law during a small ceremony in the White House's State Dining Room, sandwiched between his return from a six-day beachside vacation in South Carolina and his departure for his home in Wilmington, Delaware. He plans to hold a larger "celebration" for the legislation on September 6 once lawmakers return to Washington.

The signing caps a spurt of legislative productivity for Biden and Congress, who in three months have approved legislation on veterans' benefits, the semiconductor industry and

gun checks for young buyers. The president and lawmakers have also responded to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and overwhelmingly supported North Atlantic Treaty Organization membership for Sweden and Finland.

With Biden's approval rating lagging, Democrats are hoping that the string of successes will jump-start their chances of maintaining control in Washington in the midterms. The 79-year-old president aims to restore his own standing with voters as he contemplates a reelection bid.

The White House announced on Monday it was going to deploy Biden and members of his Cabinet on a "Building a Better America Tour" to promote the recent victories. One of Biden's trips will be to Ohio, where he'll view the groundbreaking of a semiconductor plant that will benefit from the recent law to bolster the production of such computer chips.

He will also stop in Pennsylvania to promote his administration's plan for safer communities, a visit that had been planned the same day he tested positive for Covid-19 last month.

Biden also plans to hold a Cabinet meeting to discuss how to implement the new climate and health care law.

Republicans say the legislation's new business taxes would increase prices, worsening the nation's bout with its highest inflation since 1981. Though Democrats have labeled the measure the Inflation Reduction Act, nonpartisan analysts say it would have a barely perceptible impact on prices.

## **Expert: Businesses need resilience, sustainability**

By: Bella Carisao

An expert on Wednesday said that businesses should adopt eight initiatives to address the pandemic, climate change and other global challenges.

During The Manila Times forum entitled 'Environmental Practices for Sustainable Businesses,' Young Environmental Forum Executive Director Ludwig Federigan said businesses should embrace resilience and sustainability as top priorities to ensure humankind will continue to survive and thrive.

'We need to build a system that is more resilient in facing pandemic, climate change and other emerging global challenges. There are at least eight environment-friendly initiatives that businesses can adopt to ensure climate-change considerations are being implemented,' Federigan said.

The eight initiatives include the harvesting of rainwater; greening workspaces; reducing energy consumption and harnessing solar and other renewable energy sources; implementing solid waste management practices such as reusing, and refusing single-use plastics and reducing food wastes; choosing greener equipment and sustainable suppliers; optimizing employees' transportation and promoting environmentally friendly ways of working; building capacities to prepare and respond to climate change and risks; and raising awareness through information dissemination and capacity building.

'Harvesting of rainwater can provide water when there is a drought and can help mitigate flooding. The water can then be used for cleaning office areas, flushing toilets and gardening,' Federigan added.

Republic Act 6716, or the 'Rainwater Collection and Springs Development Law,' mandates the construction of water wells and rainwater collectors, developing springs and rehabilitating water wells in villages nationwide.

Federigan said that on-site renewable power generation in the form of solar panels will cut emissions related to electricity consumption.

'Choose more environmentally friendly suppliers and equipment, and choose suppliers who demonstrate good environmental practices,' he said. 'We do not have the luxury of time if we aim to halt the trend of the devastating impacts of climate change on our businesses. Let us learn from one another, support each other's climate actions, advise on strategies, and go for convergence.'

Environmental and Climate Change Research Institute President Glenn Banaguas said he developed the Climate Smart Philippines Science for Service 10 years ago to address climate change.

'We started the program in 81 provinces, 146 cities, 1,488 municipalities and 42,046 barangays so whenever we talk about Climate Smart, we refer to particular solutions, climate-change mitigation and climate-change adaptation,' Banaguas said.

He identified the program as a track risk impact policy (TRIP) framework.

'This is always what we consider every time a disaster happens such as tropical cyclones, flooding, drought, and sea level rise. It's not just one particular solution. Under the track assessment, we consider the human resources and demographics, the people who are living in the province. We also want to include the historical analysis. What happened before. What is happening right now. It is just a matter of comparing what happened in a certain province before,' he added.

Banaguas added that the climate scenarios and projections are very important to understand what a particular province is going to experience, including the amount of rainfall and an increase in temperature.

'Under the climate scenarios and projections, we use global climate models that are usually accredited,' Banaguas explained.

'During the Covid-19, we made an analysis, what is going to happen to the areas affected by Covid-19, if sea level rise is going to happen, what is going to happen in the areas affected by Covid-19. If flooding is going to happen. The same analysis we also applied in the tropical cyclone or typhoons: which areas are to be considered, low risk, moderate, risk, high risk,' he added.

Banaguas said he wants to make sure that the programs in the business sector are aligned with the international action plans and frameworks, with priorities for food security, sustainable energy, water sufficiency, human security, ecological and environmental stability, climate-smart industries and infrastructure, knowledge management and capacity development.

On the other hand, SM Investments Vice President for Corporate Communications Miguel Mercado said SM has implemented sustainability programs.

He said that the SM Green initiative of the SM Supermalls includes water, waste and energy management.

'We have already implemented our own rainwater catchment in 20 malls. At least in one mall, we capture enough water to fill up about 17 Olympic-sized pools and that has helped reduce flooding. It has also helped us in recycling the water, so that is about 35 percent of the water in the malls are recycled,' Mercado noted.

According to Mercado, disaster resilience efforts are also being implemented in SM Supermalls.

'In our mall in SM Marikina, what we did is build the mall on stilts. In fact, the first level of the parking lot is higher than the highest flooding levels. We did that so that business can continue during floods, and we can protect our tenants and our community as well. When a flood happens, people can go to our malls to seek refuge. So, water catchment and disaster resilience are among the things that we are glad to be working on,' he said.

The Sustainability forum was hosted by Times editors Dafort Villaseran and Peter Conrad Cariño and was livestreamed on The Manila Times Facebook, YouTube and Dailymotions accounts.

## **LandBank lends P5.8B for agri climate resiliency**

By Eireene Jairee Gomez

In support of building a climate-resilient agribusiness value chain in the country, the Land Bank of the Philippines (LandBank) has approved loans totaling P5.8 billion to 15 borrowers as of June 30, 2022.

Through the LandBank Climate Resilient Agriculture Financing Program, the bank aims to finance farming technologies, systems, facilities and equipment that will help local farms and fisheries become more adaptive and resilient to the effects of climate change, such as severe storms and prolonged drought.

"LandBank supports investments in innovative technologies that will help address climate change risks in the agriculture sector. This modernization is aimed toward improving the production and income of our local farmers while ensuring national food security amid the changing global climate," said LandBank President and Chief Executive Officer Cecilia Borromeo.

The program can finance crop, livestock and fishery projects that utilize climate-resilient technologies, such as the adoption of planting materials and seedling techniques for climate-resistant food crops, and pipe irrigation that helps prevent water loss during dry season and climate-adaptive farming systems such as terracing.

Modern facilities and equipment that minimize harvest and post-harvest losses during typhoons can also be financed under the program including rice harvesters, dryers and outdoor grain storage facilities.

The program can also provide credit funds for working capital and the construction of facilities, such as greenhouses, reservoirs, rainwater collecting systems and farm-to-market roads with drainage, and other new and emerging technologies approved and endorsed by the Department of Agriculture and the concerned Municipal Agricultural Office.

Under the LandBank Climate Resilient Agriculture Financing Program, cooperatives, associations and private borrowers categorized as single proprietorships, partnerships or corporations may borrow up to 80 percent of the total project cost. Meanwhile, local government units may borrow not more than their net borrowing capacity as certified by the Bureau of Local Government Finance.

Term loans for working capital and permanent working capital are payable up to one year and three years, respectively, while loans for fixed assets and construction of facilities are payable based on cash flow but not more than its economic useful life. The interest rate shall be based on the prevailing market rate.

The LandBank Climate Resilient Agriculture Financing Program underscores the bank's commitment toward advancing a more resilient agriculture sector while promoting environmental sustainability.

In his recent State of the Nation Address, President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. identified climate change and its impact on agriculture as one of the top priorities of his administration.

## Spain, Portugal battle to control huge wildfires

By Agence France-Presse

Madrid: Spain and neighboring Portugal fought against large wildfires on Tuesday, while three people were badly injured after their train hurtled into a smaller Spanish blaze.

Some 300 firefighters spent a difficult night battling a huge wildfire in southeastern Spain that has burnt through nearly 10,000 hectares in an area notoriously difficult to access, officials said.

The fire began when lightning hit the Vall de Ebo area in the city of Valencia last Saturday and has since spread rapidly, fueled by strong winds, forcing the evacuation of more than 1,500 people, regional authorities said.

"At the moment, we are talking about more than 9,500 ha (235,000 acres) burnt with a perimeter of 65 km (40 miles)," regional leader Ximo Puig said on Monday night, describing the blaze as "absolutely huge."

"It's a very complicated situation.... The fire is creating enormous difficulties that are absolutely impossible to tackle with the speed we would like," he added.

Regional Interior Minister Gabriela Bravo told Antena 3 television that some 300 firefighters were battling the flames, backed by 24 planes and helicopters.

Firefighters elsewhere in the region were also battling two other wildfires north of Valencia, with hundreds of firefighters and at least 10 firefighting planes involved in the operation, officials said.

Three people were badly wounded after the train they were riding on ran into flames.

"Three people suffered bad burn injuries," the regional health authorities said, adding that one had to be evacuated by helicopter to the hospital. More than eight others were lightly injured.

Further north, firefighters in the Aragon region were battling another major blaze that broke out last Saturday and has burnt more than 6,000 ha, forcing at least 1,500 people from their homes.

In Portugal, a huge wildfire in the country's center that raged for a week in a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization-designated natural park and was brought under control last Friday night flared up again on Tuesday, the civil protection authority said.

More than 1,200 firefighters had been brought in to tackle the blaze, which has already consumed some 15,000 ha and was "burning fiercely" with the flames whipped up by strong winds, it added.

So far this year, Spain has suffered 391 wildfires, fueled by scorching temperatures and drought conditions, which have destroyed 271,020 ha, according to the latest figures from the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS).

This year's fires in Spain have been particularly devastating, destroying more than three times the area consumed by wildfires in the entire 2021, which amounted to 84,827 ha.

Portugal has had 195 wildfires so far this year, which have ravaged 84,717 ha.

Scientists say human-induced climate change is making extreme weather events, including heat waves and droughts, more frequent and intense. They in turn increase the risk of fires, which emit climate-heating greenhouse gases.

Fires have blazed across Europe, particularly in France, Greece and Portugal, making 2022 a record year for wildfires on the continent.

## **SPNEC to establish biggest solar farm**

By Eireene Jairee Gomez

SOLAR Philippines Nueva Ecija Corp. (SPNEC) allocated proceeds from its various capital raises to complete securing at least 2,500 hectares in the provinces of Nueva Ecija and Bulacan for a planned 3.5-gigawatt (GW) solar farm, as it aims to be the world's largest solar farm.

This would mark SPNEC's expansion of operations in the same area of the land secured for its 500-megawatt (MW) solar project, for which the first 50 MW and the transmission for the full 500 MW are under construction.

At 4 GW, SPNEC's combined developments in this area would surpass the capacity of India's Bhadla Solar Farm, currently the world's largest solar farm at over 2.2 GW; as well as surpass the capacity of the total grid-connected solar operating in the Philippines as of the end of 2021 at over 1.3 GW.

This scale is enabled by Solar Philippines having been consolidating land and permits for this project since 2016, when it applied for its first Department of Energy (DoE) solar energy service contract in this area. This clustering of projects in the same area also supports the development of transmission, which would extend over 60 kilometers to connect to National Grid Corp. of the Philippines' substations that supply the Greater Manila Area.

"Over the years, others did not believe these ranchlands far from the grid could be the site for a solar farm. By the end of this year, our planned share issuances should result in the consolidation of ingredients that would enable SPNEC to expand its flagship project to be the world's largest solar farm," Solar Philippines founder Leandro Leviste said in a statement on Wednesday.

These share issuances include the company's asset-for-share swap, through which SPNEC would acquire shares of Solar Philippines in a portfolio of projects, which are primarily under joint ventures, including the 3.5 GW solar, 4.5 GWh battery Terra Solar project, which plans to supply Meralco mid-merit for around 12 hours per day; 1.8 GW of projects contracted under the DoE's Green Energy Auction; another 1.8 GW solar, 1.8 GWh battery project, which plans to supply Meralco baseload for up to 24 hours per day; and over 400 MW operating or under construction.

These share issuances also include the company's stock rights offering, with its scheduled pricing date on August 18, ex-date on August 22 and start of offer period on August 30. The company has also recently disclosed that it is in discussions with investors for private placements to complete its share issuances planned in light of its asset-for-share swap.

## THE PHILIPPINE STAR

By: Agence France Presse

### [Biden signs major climate change, health care law](#)

Washington, United States — President Joe Biden on Tuesday signed into law a big climate change and health care spending bill, giving Democrats another boost ahead of midterm elections in which Republicans are suddenly less certain of their predicted crushing victory.

The law, dubbed the Inflation Reduction Act, was touted by the White House as the biggest commitment to mitigating climate change in US history, as well as targeting long sought changes in the way medicines are priced, while adding fairness to the tax system, with a minimum 15 percent tax for corporations.

"A nation can be transformed. That's what's happening now," Biden said in a White House speech likely to form the basis of his campaign ahead of the November polls, where Republicans have hoped to end Democrats' narrow control of Congress. "It's about tomorrow," Biden said. "It's about delivering progress and prosperity to American families. It's about showing America and the American people that democracy still works in America."

While the sprawling bill is a fraction of the gargantuan package Biden originally tried and failed to get through Congress, the fact he was able to sign even the scaled-back version marked a political resurrection -- a success Democrats now hope might fuel a comeback at the ballot box later this year. Under the plan, the government will spend about \$370 billion on green energy initiatives while also allowing the state-run Medicare system to negotiate prices for prescription drugs, a popular measure designed to cut the often ruinous prices Americans are forced to pay.

Although the Republican National Committee called a provision to subsidize electric vehicle purchases a "scam," the Sierra Club, an environmental lobbying group, praised what it called a bold step in the struggle against an overheating planet.

"This day will be remembered by future generations as the turning of the tide against the fossil fuel industry and toward a healthier, cleaner, and more just future for all people across this country," Sierra Club president Ramon Cruz said. The law's massive cost will be covered in large part by closing numerous tax loopholes and enforcing a new 15 percent minimum tax on corporations -- a measure Biden has long promised to his base as a way to get the wealthy to "pay part of their fair share."

Democratic resurgence, Republican disarray?

Battered by outrage over the chaotic final exit of US troops from Afghanistan, stubborn Covid waves, and the highest inflation in 40 years, the Biden administration has had a rough last 12 months.

Adding to the left's gloom, opposition from just two center-right Democratic senators has repeatedly doomed party attempts to make use of a razor thin advantage in the Senate.

Opinion polls show Republicans likely to get a healthy majority in the House of Representatives and possibly also win the Senate.

This could effectively turn Biden into a lame duck for the rest of his first term, with Republicans shutting down his legislative agenda and subjecting government officials to aggressive probes by congressional committees.

The last few weeks, however, have seen a momentum shift.

Republicans are embroiled in the scandal over former president Donald Trump's alleged illegal hoarding of top secret documents at his Florida golf club.

Meanwhile, Biden has scored a series of victories, allowing the White House to project a message that Democrats are focused on helping ordinary people.

In addition to the Inflation Reduction Act, Congress has passed the first meaningful gun safety legislation in three decades, a government-financed plan to rebuild the anemic US microchip industry, and a bill expanding health care for military veterans exposed to toxic smoke.

Coming on top of wins early in his presidency to pour billions of dollars into supporting the pandemic-hit economy and transforming national infrastructure spending, this amounts to a serious legacy, Biden argued.

"I know there are those here today who hold a dark and despairing view of this country. I'm not one of them," he said.

The new climate and health care law -- opposed by every single Republican member of Congress -- meant "the American people won and the special interests lost," Biden said.

"That's the choice we face: we can protect the already powerful or show the courage to build a future where everybody has an even shot. That's the America I believe in."

## [Carbon tax under study - Philstar.com](http://Philstar.com)

By Louise Maureen Simeon

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Finance (DOF) is studying the viability of imposing a carbon tax in a bid to generate much-needed revenues and address environmental concerns.

On the sidelines of the Economic Journalists Association of the Philippines-San Miguel Corp. economic forum yesterday, Finance Undersecretary Zeno Ronald Abenoja said the DOF has partnered with an international organization to look at carbon taxation. Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno has said carbon tax is one of the measures that the administration may consider “if feasible.”

“We have an agreement already with our partner to look at this proposal. It is something that we are looking at very closely,” Abenoja told The STAR.

“We will seriously consider, that’s why we are devoting resources and studies on this issue,” he said.

Abenoja did not name the partner, but another DOF official said the Philippines is partnering with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) for the study.

UNOPS supports the government and other partners in sustainable procurement, infrastructure, governance, grant management and logistical support services.

The UN-attached agency’s work focuses on building national capacity, strengthening community resilience and supporting efforts toward the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals.

Abenoja said the study aims to assess the current situation in the Philippines right now, as well as the structure of the economy.

“It will look at the options that could be applicable to circumstances and the gains from the experiences of other countries. That is the scope of our engagement... to provide us options as to the possible instruments that we can adopt in terms of carbon pricing and carbon taxation,” Abenoja said.

As to the timeline, the DOF official said the study would take a “few months” and that next year would be more reasonable to complete it.

Former finance chief Carlos Dominguez had proposed a tax on carbon emissions as part of the government's fiscal consolidation and resource mobilization plan.

Under the plan, the proposal on carbon tax may be implemented by 2025.

Global efforts to slap taxes on carbon remain small. Many countries, including the Philippines, have yet to ride on the carbon tax.

The Asia-Pacific region is both highly exposed to climate risk and a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, considering that the region is home to the majority of the world's population and has been the main driver of global growth for the past decades.

But imposing a carbon tax may not always be the best and most preferred choice considering every country's circumstances just like in the Philippines, where power rates are among the costliest in the region.

No less than the Department of Energy earlier said the Philippines was not ready for carbon tax as this would make the country uncompetitive in terms of power rates.

## CCC in the news:

### MANILA BULLETIN

#### [Legarda commends US President Biden for climate change action](#)

By: Mario Casayuran

Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda commended on Wednesday, Aug. 17 United States (US) President Joe Biden for signing into law a legislation addressing climate change.

The law, according to Legarda, seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by about one billion tons in 2030.

The Inflation Reduction Act will raise over \$700 billion in government revenue over 10 years and spend over \$430 billion to reduce carbon emissions.

Legarda, an environmentalist, said the Philippines has laws for climate change mitigation and adaptation such as Republic Act (RA) No. 9729 or the Climate Change Act and its amendatory law, the RA 10174 or People's Survival Fund (PSF), among others. The PSF is the country's local adaptation fund meant to provide grants to local government units (LGUs) and organizations for their projects and programs that can help communities and ecosystems cope with the impacts of climate change.

The fund is annually allocated with P1 billion and may be augmented by other sources. It is managed by the PSF Board, which is chaired by the Department of Finance (DOF) and includes representatives from other government agencies such as the National Economic and Development Authority, Department of Budget and Management, and Climate Change Commission (CCC), the academe, business sector organizations, and civil society. The Board considers the presence of multiple climate hazards, poverty incidence, and key biodiversity areas in the approval of proposals from LGUs. "We still have a long way to go in climate mitigation, and adaptation. Much still has to be done," she emphasized.

Legarda said that in pursuit of climate change mitigation and adaptation, various laws on environmental and climate action have been passed, such as the Philippine Environmental Impact Statement System, Marine Pollution Control law, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, Renewable Energy Act, Environmental Awareness and Education Act, Climate Change Act and its amendatory law creating the People's Survival Fund, Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Act, Toxic Substances and Hazardous and Nuclear Wastes Control Act, Green Jobs Act, Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act, Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act, and Extended Producer Responsibility Act.

“We also have Republic Act No. 11639, or the 2022 General Appropriations Act, which mandates all agencies of the government to “implement projects incorporating risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and where feasible, climate change mitigation in light of intensifying hazards,” she pointed out. “The effective implementation of these are vital to the country’s sustainable growth and development,” she added.

**=END=**