



NEWS ROUNDUP

25 August 2022 [as of 08:00 am]

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THE MANILA TIMES

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By: Ben Kritz

THE Extended Producer Responsibility Act of 2022 lapsed into law on July 22, and is intended to place responsibility for the management of plastic waste — specifically, waste from plastic packaging — on the businesses that create it. Under the law, businesses with total assets above P100 million are required to participate; micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are exempt, but are "highly encouraged" to follow the EPR program.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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By: Jing Castañeda

Did you know that 40% of our travel taxes are earmarked for the Higher Education Development Fund? Because of this, and because of the new government's mandate to reinvigorate the tourism industry, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is stepping up the delivery of their Study in the Philippines Program. Also known as StudyPH, this initiative is championed by no less than CHED's Chairman Dr. J. Prospero

"Popoy" E. De Vera III and Interim Deputy Executive Director and Director for International Affairs Services Atty. Lily Freida C. Macabangun-Milla.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS WORLD

China expected to face more climate havoc despite cool-off in some regions

SHANGHAI — Extreme heat in China played havoc with crops and power supplies on Wednesday despite lower temperatures in some regions, with authorities across the Yangtze river basin scrambling to limit the damage from climate change on crops and livestock.

The southwestern region of Chongqing has been hit especially hard by weeks of hot, dry weather. One resident, Zhang Ronghai, told Reuters that both his water and his power had been cut after a four-day mountain fire in the district of Jiangjin.

“People need to go to a power center over 10 kilometers (6 miles) away to charge their phones,” Mr. Zhang said.

Chongqing’s agriculture bureau drew up emergency measures to protect livestock at more than 5,000 large-scale pig farms, which have faced “severe challenges” as a result of the heat, state media said.

Damage to crops and water scarcity could “spread to other food-related sectors, resulting in a substantial price increase or a food crisis in the most severe case”, said Lin Zhong, a professor at City University of Hong Kong who has studied the impact of climate change on agriculture in China.

China’s National Meteorological Center downgraded its national heat warning to “orange” on Wednesday after 12 consecutive days of “red alerts”, but temperatures are still expected to exceed 40 Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) in Chongqing, Sichuan and other parts of the Yangtze basin.

China has warned it is especially vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters are expected to proliferate in coming years as a result of more volatile weather.

As the drought drags on, state media have been turning their attention to the impact of climate change in other countries.

“Climate change is once again a wake-up call for the world,” said the official newspaper of China’s corruption watchdog on Tuesday, adding that damaging heatwaves and droughts have hit Europe, Africa and North America in recent weeks.

China, the world’s largest source of climate-warming greenhouse gas emissions, is committed to bringing CO2 to a peak before 2030 and to become “carbon neutral” by 2060, and it is also racing ahead in renewable energy development.

But the drought has eroded hydropower generation and coal-fired power is again on the rise, with plants in Anhui province raising output by 12% compared with normal years.

Prospects for international cooperation to tackle the problem dimmed following the visit of US House of Representatives speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan this month.

In response, an angry China canceled climate talks with the United States, ending an important channel that has helped drive greener policies.

China has said the climate cannot be separated from wider diplomatic issues. The foreign ministry told the United States last week that it should end a boycott of solar power products from the Xinjiang region and provide funds to help developing countries adapt.

The United States has banned imports from Xinjiang in an effort to safeguard the US market from products potentially tainted by human rights abuses. China denies that abuses are taking place.

“If recent events don’t focus minds, it’s hard to know what will,” Mark Beeson, a professor at the University of Technology, Sydney, who studies global climate politics, said of prospects for international cooperation.

Demographic dividend to spur growth — NEDA

By: Diego Gabriel Robles

The country must capitalize on its demographic dividend through innovations in human capital and infrastructure development to sustain economic growth, its chief economist said.

“Between 2000 and 2020, the working-age population has grown faster than the total population, leading to increases in its overall share. Thus, a more substantial size of our workforce is supporting economic activity and contributing to growth,” Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan said during the 43rd National Conference of Employers by the Employers Confederation of the Philippines on Wednesday.

Recent data from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed the working-age population, covering those 15 to 64 years old, accounts for 63.9% of Filipinos, up from the 63.3% in 2015 and 59.1% in 2000.

To sustain the economy’s high-growth targets, “the government shall equip and provide our workforce with sufficient tools and infrastructure to raise productivity and enhance innovation capacity,” Mr. Balisacan said, citing the Marcos administration’s eight-point socioeconomic agenda which aims to reinvigorate job creation and reduce poverty.

The government intends to grow the economy by 6.5-7.5% this year and 6.5-8% next year until 2028. At the same time, it also plans to reduce poverty incidence to a single digit by the end of the Marcos administration. “We must regain losses from the last two years and strengthen human capital even further in light of anticipated future disruptions such as automation and the effects of climate change,” Mr. Balisacan said in reference to the disruptions in learning amid the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

“The President has directed relevant agencies in the Executive to prioritize efforts that would expand training and skills development and facilitate employment. We are mindful that we must provide opportunities for training of our labor force such that the competencies required by the private sector match what our schools and training institutions teach,” he added.

Under the proposed national budget for 2023, the education sector will get P852.8 billion, an 8.2% increase from this year’s P788.5-billion allocation.

The proposed Department of Education budget of P710.66 billion is the second-highest budget among departments, following the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) at P718.36 billion.

“Binding constraints to investments and job creation — in particular, our need for supporting infrastructure in energy, transportation, logistics, telecommunications, and water — will be addressed over the next six years,” Mr. Balisacan said.

ENERGY

In the same event, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) chief mentioned energy as an important component in ensuring the economy's growth in the medium and long term, particularly with how it relates to the costs of power and its effects on employment. "If there are alternative sources of energy that are cheaper, accessible, reliable — it boils down to that. We don't want a scenario where we adopt a particular source of energy but it comes at the expense of jobs," Mr. Balisacan said when asked if the Marcos administration is prioritizing alternative sources of energy such as nuclear and renewables.

"The private sector, for example, will lose their competitiveness if their energy source is more expensive than what other countries have for their energy," he added.

In his first State of the Nation Address, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. signaled the administration's intent to build new power plants and pursue technologies in the area of renewable energy to reduce energy costs.

"We are not closed to any sources... The competitiveness of renewables as a source of energy has substantially improved in recent years, so we need to seize the opportunities there," Mr. Balisacan said.

"Nuclear is one energy source that can be reliable, low cost, and we explore that part of the mix — what I refer to as efficient, affordable, sustainable, and reliable energy sources."

CNBC

[Inflation Reduction Act could curb climate damages by up to \\$1.9 trillion, White House says](#)

By: Emma Newburger

The Inflation Reduction Act, the most aggressive climate investment ever taken by Congress, could cut the social costs of climate change by up to \$1.9 trillion by 2050, the White House said in an assessment on Tuesday.

The act, which the president signed into law earlier this month, will reduce costs related to rising temperatures, minimize property damage from sea level rise and other disasters and reduce health impacts such as premature death, the White House said.

The analysis by the Office of Management and Budget, which administers the federal budget, is the first published estimate of avoided climate-related social costs resulting from legislation. The social cost of carbon is an estimate of the economic costs that would occur from a future level of carbon pollution.

The bill's climate provisions are projected to reduce the country's carbon emissions by roughly 40% by 2030. Early in his presidency, President Joe Biden pledged to reduce U.S. emissions from 2005 levels at least in half by 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

In the shorter term, the analysis projects the bill will save between roughly \$34 billion and \$84 billion each year by the end of the decade. The White House assessment is based on models developed by the climate policy think tank Energy Innovation, Princeton University and the research firm Rhodium Group.

"The Inflation Reduction Act will help ease the burden that climate change imposes on the American public, strengthen our economy and reduce future financial risks to the Federal Government and to taxpayers," Candace Vahlsing, the OMB's associate director for climate, wrote in a blog post on Tuesday.

Climate-related disasters could cost the U.S. federal budget roughly \$2 trillion per year — a 7.1% loss in annual revenue — by the end of the century, according to a separate White House assessment. That report warned the government could spend an additional \$25 billion to \$128 billion each year on financial risks related to climate change.

The bill provides \$369 billion in funding for initiatives such as cutting emissions, manufacturing clean energy products and advancing environmental justice initiatives.

FOREIGN POLICY

Extreme Weather Is Brutalizing Asia

By: Mary Yang

Floods, droughts, tropical storms, and heat waves are severely testing the resilience of a region with a lot of vulnerable people.

High temperatures, frequent droughts, torrential rains, and other extreme weather events this summer have throttled Asia, forced industries to shut down, slowed global business, disrupted food supplies, and upended the lives of ordinary people living in some of the world's most populous countries and densely packed cities.

For months, countries across the Asia-Pacific have been experiencing a mix of heavier rains and higher temperatures, creating unpredictable weather patterns. When the rains aren't falling a lot—as in Pakistan, where eight monsoon cycles have left thousands of people homeless—they aren't falling at all, causing energy shortages as droughts have seriously restricted access to hydroelectric power. Record-breaking temperatures in China, for example, have sparked intense wildfires in the country's center and dried up rivers that cities bank on to power industries and homes.

On Tuesday, a severe tropical storm in the Philippines forced schools to shutter the day after classes resumed in person for the first time following the nationwide shutdown and a shift to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Government buildings in some of the most industrialized metro areas also closed Tuesday and Wednesday, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. announced in a statement. Earlier this month, extremely heavy rains in South Korea flooded roads in Seoul, causing landslides and killing at least eight people, including one family living in a half-basement—a kind of low-income housing that makes up about 5 percent of the city's homes.

"The problem has always been that the most vulnerable communities tend to be the poorest communities, the marginalized communities, the communities that don't have resilience built in," said Peter Gleick, a climate and water scientist and the co-founder of the nonprofit Pacific Institute. The disruptions to the normal weather patterns mean that either places get flooded, or they get scorched. Cities in southern China—notably those in Sichuan, which gets 80 percent of its electricity from hydropower—are experiencing a major drought. A mix of high temperatures and slower rainfall has caused local officials to suspend the supply of hydropower to some companies and factories. Experts are also warning of lower electricity supply for the winter. This isn't China's first dance: Last fall, China was hit by widespread coal shortages, causing long-lasting power outages and residential blackouts, which are particularly dangerous.

"You're talking about heatstroke, you're talking about old folks who can't get the word out of their homes that they need help," said David Fishman, senior manager at the Lantau Group, a Shanghai-based economic consultancy focused on Asia's energy industry.

But this year, while the energy shortage hasn't become that extreme, a drier than normal rainy season has left water supply low, and higher temperatures are causing the little rainfall in reservoirs to dry up fast.

"Normally during this rainy season, if the rain is actually falling properly, power is really, really cheap," Fishman said.

Everybody downstream of Sichuan, along with China's eastern coast, a major importer of Sichuan hydroelectricity, has been affected, he said. Plus, with a water shortage comes a slowdown in production, affecting cars, fertilizers, and steel, and increases the demand for other energy sources, like coal, he said.

"When hydropower is affected, it's not momentary," Fishman said. "Performance has been down for all of July and August, and that means going into the autumn and winter, hydropower production should be depleted still."

That means turning back to the very things that are contributing to the weird weather in the first place. The return to coal and other non-hydropower sources "ironically contributes to the emissions of greenhouse gasses and worsens the risk of climate change," Gleick said.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[Ayala-backed fund invests in green data platform](#)

By: Tyrone Jasper Piad

An Ayala-led corporate venture capital firm injected new capital into a global environmental and data platform company that seeks to address air pollution and climate change.

Ayala Corp. Technology Innovation Venture (Active) Fund is among the investors that led the \$9.6-million series A+ fund-raising activity by Clarity Movement Co.

Amasia, a venture capital firm that focuses on sustainability, also had major capital contribution.

Series A round refers to the fund-raising activity after a startup's seed funding stage. Here, investors fund companies with a strong strategy for turning a great idea into a successful business.

"Our investment in Clarity builds on our commitment to environmental sustainability while at the same time backing a rapidly growing business addressing a huge market," said Minette Navarrete, president of Kickstart Ventures, the company behind Active Fund.

"We are keen to see Clarity's technology empowering superior air quality monitoring: better data for better decisions from both the public and private sectors," Navarrete added.

Clarity employs an air quality monitoring solution that is deemed to be affordable and scalable. The funding is seen to support its growth and product development.

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“Clarity nodes extend the resolution of traditional measurement stations with small, inexpensive, easy-to-install nodes that provide reliable and accurate results within minutes using solar power and cellular communication,” it explained.

It has installed nodes in over 60 countries, including the Philippines, London, Los Angeles and Singapore. These were placed in school districts, mining companies, ports and sporting leagues, among others.

Clarity also has a partnership with the Quezon City government for air quality monitoring initiatives.

“Our motivation is simple – if you can’t measure it, you can’t fix it. Air pollution is one of the greatest risks to global health and a major factor contributing to climate change,” Clarity CEO David Lu said.

Active Fund is backed by Ayala Corp. and its units, AC Energy, AC Ventures, Bank of the Philippine Islands and Globe Telecom. The Ayala conglomerate seeks to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emission by 2050.

Dolomite project just one of many ecological threats seen in Manila Bay

By: Cristina Eloisa Baclig

Manila, Philippines—Following the flooding in areas in Manila earlier this month, an environmental group emphasized the dangers of dump-and-fill projects, such as what was done to put in place Dolomite Beach, which was first thought to be the reason behind the flooding.

A previous news report cited the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) as saying that the gutter-deep flooding in several parts of Manila—including areas along Taft Avenue, Kalaw, Quirino, United Nations Avenue, and Pedro Gil—was caused by the controversial Manila Baywalk Dolomite Beach project.

But MMDA later clarified that the flooding—and the slow subsidence of floodwater— amid the heavy downpour was due to unfinished construction of pumping stations and pipelines near Dolomite Beach.

The group Oceana—the largest international advocacy organization dedicated solely to ocean conservation—emphasized that Dolomite Beach would still cause flooding and other natural hazards in the long run.

Risking lives on sea and land

According to Oceana, previous studies have pointed out that dump-and-fill activities would exacerbate Manila Bay's vulnerability to environmental hazards and extreme weather events, which are further aggravated by climate change.

Climate change, paired with the environmental threats of illegal reclamation projects, would cause:

increased rainfall year-round by 2050, which would lead to worsened flooding.

more frequent super typhoons resulting in storm surges in coastal areas.

rising sea levels worsening land subsidence causing rapid sinking of the land (land subsidence).

“According to experts, Manila Bay is also not safe for reclamation and similar coastal development activities due to the existence of many natural hazards, such as land subsidence (sinking), flooding, and storm surges brought about by stronger typhoons,” said lawyer Rose-Liza Eisma-Osorio, legal and policy director of Oceana.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Making plastic producers pay](#)

By: Ben Kritz

THE Extended Producer Responsibility Act of 2022 lapsed into law on July 22, and is intended to place responsibility for the management of plastic waste — specifically, waste from plastic packaging — on the businesses that create it. Under the law, businesses with total assets above P100 million are required to participate; micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are exempt, but are "highly encouraged" to follow the EPR program.

The law covers plastic packaging that is used to "carry, protect or pack goods for transportation, distribution or sale," including sachets, labels, laminates and other flexible plastic; rigid plastic packaging such as drink bottles; rigid plastic "promotional items" such as disposable plates, utensils, straws or signage; plastic bags; and rigid and foam polystyrene used for takeout containers, cups or packaging material.

80-percent reduction goal

Companies covered by the law must establish EPR programs for their plastic packaging within six months, or by the end of January 2023, and register these with the National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC). The EPR program must measure the company's annual plastic packaging footprint for 2022, and then use this as a benchmark for plastic waste recovery and diversion activities. By the end of 2023, companies must recover or divert 20 percent of their 2022 plastic footprint; the target will then double to 40 percent in 2024, with 10-percent annual increases to reach 80 percent by 2028. Covered companies are also required to file annual, third-party audited annual compliance reports. Penalties for non-compliance with the EPR Act are substantial, including fines up to P20 million or twice the cost of recovering or diverting the amount of plastic needed to comply, whichever is higher, and possible suspension of business permit.

However, the law does allow covered businesses to deduct EPR program costs from their gross income, and offers a wide range of compliance options in terms of handling plastic waste. These include plastic buy-back, exchange, or similar recovery schemes; recycling and other unspecified "sustainable methods"; transporting plastic waste to suitable processing or disposal facilities; cleanup of plastic waste pollution in coastal or other areas; establishment of a commercial-scale recycling, thermal treatment; or other waste processing facility; and partnerships with local government units (LGUs), community groups, or the informal waste sector to recover plastic waste.

Following the bill's passage in the Senate, Sen. Cynthia Villar, chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change, said, "It [the EPR law] is not a solution in itself, but it is a move in the right direction, I believe. We need to rescue our country from being a marine litter culprit and demonstrate that a developing country can and will make this work."

Nestlé Philippines, which may be the biggest company affected by the law, welcomed the new measure. In a statement, Nestlé PH Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Kais Marzouki said, "Our vision is that none of our packaging, including plastics, ends up in landfills, oceans, lakes, or rivers, or as litter. We congratulate the authors and sponsors of this EPR legislation, which we have consistently advocated. Its enactment into law will be a major step in building a waste-free future and a circular economy." 'Not enough'

Environmental groups, however, are not so enthusiastic about the EPR Act. In a statement urging former president Rodrigo Duterte to veto the measure prior to its lapsing into law, a coalition of environmental groups including Greenpeace Philippines, the EcoWaste Coalition, the Mother Earth Foundation, Gaia, Break Free From Plastic and Healthcare Without Harm said that although "[w]e laud the 18th Congress for finally addressing and acknowledging the producers' role [in] addressing waste management issues," the EPR bill "is not enough to address the waste crisis."

Among the flaws in the measure, according to the statement, are the EPR Act's focus solely on plastic packaging; the incompatibility of some of the permitted EPR activities with provisions of RA 9003 and the Clean Air Act (RA 8749), which prohibit "non-environmentally acceptable products and packaging" and incineration of waste, respectively; and the lack of requirements for producers of plastic waste to actually reduce the volume of waste generated.

"With regard to the EPR Act of 2022, I disagree that this is a step toward the right direction," Miko Aliño, Break Free from Plastic's project coordinator for Corporate Accountability told The Manila Times. "While EPR as a regulatory tool can address plastic waste generation, policy makers and implementers should review the provisions whether it truly addresses plastic pollution. If not crafted well, EPR measures can be used to justify business-as-usual practices such as co-incineration and continued plastic production." "Ideally, EPR measures should involve internalizing negative costs of a product's life cycle; outline time-bound targets for reuse, reduction and recycling, and not just merely collecting plastic waste; prioritize waste prevention and reduction over recovery and recycling; and integrate the informal sector," Aliño added.

"Such measures, moreover, should be supplemented by other policies on single-use plastic bans, plastic tax, stricter waste trade regulations and keeping incineration bans."

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

StudyPH and EduTourism: Using education to drive tourism

By: Jing Castañeda

Did you know that 40% of our travel taxes are earmarked for the Higher Education Development Fund? Because of this, and because of the new government's mandate to reinvigorate the tourism industry, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is stepping up the delivery of their Study in the Philippines Program. Also known as StudyPH, this initiative is championed by no less than CHED's Chairman Dr. J. Prospero "Popoy" E. De Vera III and Interim Deputy Executive Director and Director for International Affairs Services Atty. Lily Freida C. Macabangun-Milla.

According to Atty. Lily, this program is vastly different from the conventional practice of developing Tourism or Hotel and Restaurant Management graduates for the travel, hospitality, and tourism industries. Rather, it entails using higher education (HE) to drive tourism by attracting foreign students to enroll in our highly competitive state universities and colleges (SUCs). The vision for StudyPH
The Philippines as a center of education

Chair Popoy and Atty. Lily harken back to the days when the Philippines was once considered a center of education in Asia. In fact, up until the 1970s, a great number of the ASEAN professionals who went on to become experts in their respective fields studied in our SUCs. Thus, the primary goal of StudyPH is to make the Philippines the center of quality higher education once again, especially in the ASEAN, and particularly in identified areas of excellence. These areas are currently categorized according to the following priority themes:

Culture, Heritage and Museums (CHM) for the preservation and appreciation of participants and products of Philippine civilization;

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery (AFF) for promotion and development of the tourism potential of economic activities; and,

Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) for the conservation and restoration of ecological systems.

Other niche areas being considered are those related to Health and Medicine, IT, Creative Arts, and Teacher Education.

But are we ready to compete with the rest of the world? Atty. Lily says the question is moot. "The fourth industrial revolution is already upon us. So we must be ready or risk being left behind. This includes accelerating our digital transformation." The emphasis should therefore be on glocalization: being competitive with world standards while still being responsive to local needs and peculiarities.

But internationalization is just as crucial. Beyond just the influx of foreign students and building partnerships and linkages, it's important to build intercultural competence. She

defines this as the capacity to respect different faiths, navigate through diverse or multicultural environments, and be truly global citizens.

Adds Atty. Lily, glocalization and internationalization are not goals but processes of change that will facilitate the improvement in leadership styles and the shifting of outdated paradigms.

Philippine SUCs as study destinations

As our SUCs continue to strengthen their respective niches, the Philippines is poised to become a sought-after study destination for foreign students. More so because of our proficiency in using English as a medium of instruction and our openness to diversity. In turn, foreign enrollment will foster greater connectivity between students, faculty, and staff in both local and international universities, communities, industries, and local and national government agencies.

Philippine SUCs as changemakers

Chair Popoy's direction for StudyPH is clear: "Aside from transforming SUCs edutourism destinations, they must be allowed to use their trifold function of research, instruction, and extension to support the tourism industry as well as other industries within their respective communities." This will result in improvements in innovations, policy development, constantly upskilling the workforce, especially adult learners, and greater cooperation with the local government to push their local tourism agenda.

It's therefore important for SUCs to recognize the important role they have to play in local tourism precisely because they can mobilize their expertise in research, extension, and education in partnership with the local government and other stakeholders.

Philippine SUCs as drivers of sustainable development goals

By committing to sustainable development goals (SDGs), United Nations member countries also commit to improving the lives of people and the betterment of our planet. Chair Popoy says that SDGs are therefore a universal language among higher education institutions (HEIs).

Through StudyPH, SUCs can integrate their response to SDGs in their curriculum. Adds the chairman, "The good thing about SDGs is that you can measure success over time. With SDGs as part of the program, SUCs are able to measure their progress against these global commitments as well as gauge how they compare with their foreign counterparts, thus making internationalization all that much easier."

But it all depends on the SDG being targeted, he continues. Chair Popoy cites a recent conference among peace advocates in General Santos, saying that the 31 HEIs in attendance discussed how to improve the peace curriculum and make it a three-unit course in the general education curriculum.

When SUCs understand the SDGs, says the chairman, they will be able to embrace them as an anchor of their educational system. This, in turn, will be instrumental in the country's fulfillment of our commitments with the UN.

The Philippines as a laboratory for experiential learning

As StudyPH's vision for Philippine HE grows into fruition, learning will happen on different levels and on different fronts, not just in the classroom. This means offering up the entire country, especially the local communities where the SUCs are, as a hands-on laboratory for experiential learning. In so doing, our foreign students—including university-level enrollees, adult learners, and even mobile students who will cross enroll for just a semester or a year— will be immersed in the richness of our biodiversity and culture (We have over 110 indigenous peoples, notes Atty. Lily). But it also means allowing them to experience firsthand the challenges faced by a developing nation, such as poverty, infrastructure, and even disasters.

Best of all, because they will learn alongside our homegrown students, they will all become glocal and internationalized students who are solution seekers and change makers.

In light of this, StudyPH intends to support HEIs through capacity building and funding that will allow them to stay in stride with the international institutions. And for their part, SUCs must look beyond local communities and focus on ASEAN and the rest of the globe. This will allow them to see where they stand versus international benchmarks. This means graduating from the local mindset of licensure results, for example, and towards performance-based international metrics like research, employability, social engagement, reputation, and even overall institutional performance.

StudyPH: Making the grade
Philippine HEIs: Moving up the ranks

Atty. Lily says we're nearly where we want to be, as shown by how our ASEAN rankings have dramatically increased in the last decade.

Ten years ago, only four HEIs from the Philippines were included in the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranking of world universities. But in 2021, 14 Philippine universities made the cut.

Meanwhile, in the 2022 Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings, which measures what universities have done to reach Sustainable Development Goals, 15 Philippine universities ranked among the best HEIs in the world. Our showing in the 2022 THE Impact Rankings showed a 300% increase from the five HEIs included in the previous year.

How can SUCs take part in StudyPH?

CHED's International Affairs Services (IAS), also headed by Atty. Lily, is tasked with running the StudyPH program. Applications and project proposals from the SUCs pass through rigorous examination by an expert panel before being deliberated by the commission en banc. Region III became StudyPH's priority because it is considered one of the primary tourism growth areas in the country. The first project approved by CHED is the eFarm Academy of the Central Luzon State University (CLSU). This CHED-funded agro-tourism project has been running for almost five years now.

Other projects include Bulacan State University for heritage tourism, Tarlac Agricultural University for eco-tourism, and President Ramon Magsaysay State Universities for coastal tourism.

StudyPH: Why stories matter

Chair Popoy relates that his support for StudyPH is rooted in personal experience. "My wife and I love to travel, and I've noticed that tourist sites overseas have many stories behind them. Written stories. Stories recounted by locals, Stories available online and on social media. They help travelers understand the significance of those places."

He laments that the Philippines has many attractions but very little information. "If you Google Marinduque, for example, the results will be mostly blogs about the beaches and the cuisine, but very little about the history, the importance of the place. So there is a dire need to produce good tourist information to attract visitors to our heritage and historical sites. We are more than just beautiful beaches and cheap food."

"Each university, each province has their own tales that need to be told. Like Bulacan which is very historic. Or the site in Mindanao that is the first foothold of Islam in the country. But when you get to the mosque, there's virtually no written reminder of that fact." But through StudyPH, educational institutions can uncover and promote their community's own stories. Chair Popoy says, HEIs should be at the core of finding these stories and producing these materials.

Listening to Chair Popoy and Atty. Lily talk about StudyPH, it's easy to get swept up in the passion for the program's edutourism mandate. It makes sense. It is achievable. And above all, it's sure to make a positive impact on so many levels.

They say education opens learners to the wonders of our big, wide world, or so the adage goes. But with StudyPH, CHED will be able to bring the wider world to the Philippines and its many wonders.

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