



NEWS ROUNDUP

20 December 2022 [08:00 am]

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ABC NEWS

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MANILA BULLETIN

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By: Alden M. Monzon

The British Chamber of Commerce Philippines (BCCP) said the Philippine government should consider delving into nuclear energy to help the country meet rising energy demand.

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MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Monday urged the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to remain committed to their mandate of sustaining peace and security in the country.

[PH envisions biodiversity restored, maintained: DENR](#)

By: Perfecto Raymunod Jr.

MANILA – The Philippines envisions a future where biodiversity is restored and maintained to help build healthy, resilient Filipino communities while delivering benefits to all, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said on Monday.

SUNSTAR

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THE MANILA TIMES

[Metro air most polluted during New Year revelry](#)

By: Bella Cariaso

THE environmental watchdog EcoWaste Coalition on Monday said air pollution in Metro Manila is usually at its worst during New Year revelries because of exploded firecrackers and fireworks.

[Multimedia summit 2023 set in Aklan for January](#)

THE nationwide Multimedia Press Summit 2023 is set in Aklan from January 10 to 12. Considered to be the biggest convergence of the press and social media groups, the community Multimedia Press Summit 2023 is conceived to tackle issues such as food security, climate change, tourism, social media education and other concerns, affecting the national interest.

[\[Opinion\] 2022 was a kick-start for the energy transition](#)

By: Ben Kritz

In some respects, the news from the Philippines and the global energy sectors throughout most of 2022 was legitimately alarming, and many unresolved issues are being carried into the new year as potential crises. However, there seems to be as much reason for optimism as worry.

[Sardines catch up again, PSA report shows](#)

By: Rhaydz Barcia

(Second of a series)

The species composition in the waters of Fisheries Management Area 7 (FMA-7) has significantly changed in the past two decades based on the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data 2002-2020.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Philippines pushes creation of biodiversity fund at Montreal summit](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

LONDON, United Kingdom — The Philippines called for the creation of a fund for Earth's biodiversity at the COP15 summit in Montreal as it highlighted the need to invest in the protection of land and sea.

Zero tariff on EVs to help develop infrastructure – DTI

By: Catherine Talavera

MANILA, Philippines — The coverage of only pure electric vehicles in a proposed executive order granting zero tariffs on the importation of electric vehicles (EVs) is in line with the goal of developing the EV infrastructure in the country, according to the head of the Board of Investments (BOI).

Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABC NEWS

[Scientists: Atmospheric carbon might turn lakes more acidic](#)

By: John Flesher

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. -- The Great Lakes have endured a lot the past century, from supersized algae blobs to invasive mussels and bloodsucking sea lamprey that nearly wiped out fish populations.

Now, another danger: They — and other big lakes around the world — might be getting more acidic, which could make them less hospitable for some fish and plants.

Scientists are building a sensor network to spot Lake Huron water chemistry trends. It's a first step toward a hoped-for system that would track carbon dioxide and pH in all five Great Lakes over multiple years, said project co-leader Reagan Errera of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"If you change things chemically, you're going to change how things behave and work and that includes the food web," said Errera, a research ecologist with NOAA's Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

"Does that mean your favorite fish might not be around any more? We don't know that, but we know things will change. Maybe where and when they spawn, where they're located, what they eat."

Oceans are becoming more acidic as they absorb carbon dioxide that human activity pumps into the atmosphere — the primary cause of climate change. Acidification endangers coral reefs and other marine life.

Studies based on computer models suggest the same thing may be happening in big freshwater systems. But few programs are conducting long-term monitoring to find out — or to investigate the ecological ripple effects.

"This doesn't mean the waters are going to be unsafe to swim in. It's not like we're making super acid battery liquid," said Galen McKinley, a Columbia University environmental sciences professor. "We're talking about long-term change in the environment that to humans would be imperceptible."

A 2018 study of four German reservoirs found their pH levels had declined — moving closer to acidity — three times faster in 35 years than in oceans since the Industrial Revolution.

Researchers say Great Lakes also could approach acidity around the same rate as in oceans by 2100. Data from the Lake Huron project will help determine if they're right.

Two sensors have been attached to a floating weather buoy at Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary near Alpena, Michigan. One measures carbon dioxide pressure in the water column and the other pH. Additionally, crews are collecting water samples at varying depths within the 4,300-square-mile (11,137-square-kilometer) area for chemical analysis.

Besides disrupting aquatic life and habitat, acidification could deteriorate hundreds of wooden shipwrecks believed resting on the bottom, said Stephanie Gandulla, the sanctuary's resource protection coordinator and a study co-leader.

Other monitoring stations and sampling sites are planned, Errera said. The goal is to take baseline measurements, then see how they change over time.

Data also is needed from lakes Erie, Michigan, Ontario and Superior, she said. All are part of the world's largest surface freshwater system but have distinct characteristics, including water chemistry, nutrients and other conditions needed for healthy biological communities.

Acidification from carbon dioxide overload in the atmosphere is different than acid rain caused by sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides from fossil fuel burning for electric power generation or manufacturing.

While more potent, acid rain covers relatively small areas and can be reduced with scrubbing equipment, as the U.S. Clean Air Act requires. But the effect of carbon-related acidification is worldwide and potentially more damaging because there's no easy or quick fix.

"The only solution is a global solution," McKinley said. "Everyone cuts their emissions."

Regardless of how well nations accomplish that, big lakes probably will continue acidifying as they absorb carbon dioxide already in the atmosphere, plus carbon-laden water runoff from land, she said.

Less certain are effects on ecosystems, although initial studies have raised concerns.

Based on laboratory tests, scientists who documented soaring acidity in the German reservoirs found it can imperil a type of water flea by hampering defense from predators. The tiny crustaceans are an important food for amphibians and fish.

Scientists in Taiwan experimented with Chinese mitten crabs, an Asian delicacy but an invasive species elsewhere. Increasing water acidity in lab tanks to projected 2100 levels more than tripled their mortality rates, according to a report last year.

Other studies have found freshwater acidification harms development and growth of young pink salmon, also known as humpback salmon, an important commercial and sport fishing species in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest.

But it's unknown how big such problems will get, said Emily Stanley, a University of Wisconsin freshwater ecology professor.

"I honestly don't see this as a thing that we as lake scientists should be freaking out about," Stanley said. "There are so many other challenges facing lakes that are larger and more immediate," such as invasive species and harmful algae.

Many lakes emit more carbon dioxide than they take in, she said. But other scientists say even those could acidify because their outflow will slow as atmospheric concentrations surge.

Either way, tracking lakes' carbon dioxide levels is a good idea because the compound is fundamental to processes including photosynthesis that algae and other aquatic plants use to make food, Stanley said.

A crucial question is the effect of CO₂-related acidification on microscopic plants called phytoplankton, said Beth Stauffer, a University of Louisiana at Lafayette biologist studying the situation around river mouths where fresh and ocean waters meet.

Studies suggest some of the tiniest phytoplankton may thrive in acidic waters, while larger types — more nutritious for fish — fade.

"It's like walking into a buffet and instead of having the salad bar and roast turkey, you have just Skittles," Stauffer said.

Of particular interest for the Great Lakes are quagga mussels, said Harvey Bootsma, a University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee lake scientist. The prolific invaders have elbowed aside other plankton eaters and fueled nuisance algae. Acidification could weaken quaggas' calcium carbonate shells, as it has with ocean mussels and clams.

But that's hardly a silver lining, Errera said. The same fate could befall native mussels that conservationists are struggling to protect.

The potential upheaval in freshwater ecosystems is one example among many of global warming's long reach, she said.

"Those greenhouse gases we're putting into the atmosphere have to go somewhere," Errera said. "The oceans and large freshwater bodies are where they're going, and acidification happens as a result."

MANILA BULLETIN

[Global 'peace pact' signed to protect nature](#)

By: Agence France Presse

MONTREAL, Canada – Countries reached a historic deal on Monday to reverse decades of environmental destruction threatening the world's species and ecosystems, in what the UN chief hailed as “a peace pact with nature.”

After the marathon COP 15 biodiversity summit in Montreal ran into the small hours, chair Chinese Environment Minister Huang Runqiu, declared the deal adopted and banged his gavel, sparking loud applause.

“We are finally starting to forge a peace pact with nature,” UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, hailing the accord.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said the deal was a “foundation for global action on biodiversity, complementing the Paris Agreement for Climate.”

And the United States hailed the outcome as a “turning point,” voicing appreciation for the role of frequent adversary China. State Department spokesman Ned Price called the deal “sweeping and ambitious.”

American President Joe Biden supports the deal and has launched his own “30 by 30” plan domestically, but the United States is not formally a party to the biodiversity convention because of opposition by Republicans in Congress.

After four years of fraught negotiations, more than 190 other states rallied behind the Chinese-brokered accord aimed at saving Earth's lands, oceans and species from pollution, degradation and the climate crisis.

“We have in our hands a package which I think can guide us all to work together to hold and reverse biodiversity loss, to put biodiversity on the path of recovery for the benefit of all people in the world,” Huang told the assembly.

He overruled an objection from the Democratic Republic of Congo, which had refused to back the text, demanding greater funding for developing countries.

– Biggest conservation deal ever –

The deal pledges to secure 30 percent of the planet as a protected zone by 2030, stump up \$30 billion in yearly conservation aid for the developing world and halt human-caused extinctions of threatened species.

Environmentalists have compared it to the landmark plan to limit global warming to 1.5C under the Paris agreement, though some warned that it did not go far enough.

Brian O'Donnell of the Campaign for Nature called it “the largest land and ocean conservation commitment in history.”

“The international community has come together for a landmark global biodiversity agreement that provides some hope that the crisis facing nature is starting to get the attention it deserves,” he said.

“Moose, sea turtles, parrots, rhinos, rare ferns and ancient trees, butterflies, rays, and dolphins are among the million species that will see a significantly improved outlook for their survival and abundance if this agreement is implemented effectively.”

The CEO of campaign group Avaaz, Bert Wander, cautioned: “It’s a significant step forward in the fight to protect life on Earth, but on its own it won’t be enough. Governments should listen to what science is saying and rapidly scale up ambition to protect half the Earth by 2030.”

– Indigenous rights –

The text pledges to safeguard the rights of Indigenous people as stewards of their lands, a key demand of campaigners.

But observers noted it pulled punches in other areas — for example, only encouraging businesses to report their biodiversity impacts rather than mandating them to do so.

The 23 targets in the accord also include saving hundreds of billions of dollars by cutting environmentally destructive farming subsidies, reducing the risk from pesticides and tackling invasive species.

– Funding fight –

At times, the talks looked at risk of collapsing as countries squabbled over money.

How much the rich countries will send to the developing world, home to most of the planet’s biodiversity, was the biggest sticking point.

Developing countries had been seeking the creation of a new, bigger fund for aid from the Global North. But the draft text instead suggested a compromise: creating a fund under the existing Global Environment Facility (GEF).

That concern was echoed by the Democratic Republic of Congo, home to the Congo Basin, a rich haven of biodiversity.

Current financial flows for nature to the developing world are estimated at around \$10 billion per year. A DRC delegate spoke up in the plenary to demand annual funding rise to \$100 billion — but Huang declared the framework passed, angering DRC’s allies.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[Gov't sees sustained farm sector recovery](#)

By: Jordeene B. Lagare

The Department of Agriculture (DA) is counting on livestock growers to allow the farm sector to end on a positive note this year, reversing the slowdown seen last year.

Agriculture Undersecretary Mercedita Sombilla expects the farm sector, led by the livestock subsector, to increase output by 1.2 to 1.5 percent for the full year, versus the 1.7-percent contraction recorded in 2021.

For 2023, the essential agriculture sector was projected to grow at a faster pace of 2.3 to 2.5 percent.

Sombilla said the DA was hoping that the crop subsector, particularly rice, would sustain higher production amid challenges arising from skyrocketing prices of fuel and fertilizer.

“Hopefully, no more typhoons will hit the country,” she told reporters. “The main problem is that fertilizer and fuel prices remain high.”

Super Typhoon “Paeng,” the latest weather disturbance to hit the Philippines this year, wiped out P3.41 billion worth of agricultural output. Rice farmers suffered the most damage from Paeng, estimated at P2.5 billion covering 185,736 metric tons.

Sombilla said the DA was optimistic about the recovery of the palay subsector amid the slew of typhoons that have ravaged farm lands throughout this year.

In the third quarter, farm production expanded by 1.8 percent against a decline of 2.6 percent in the same period a year prior, the Philippine Statistics Authority reported. This marked a turnaround from the 0.6-percent drop in the second quarter and a slight contraction of 0.3 percent in the first quarter.

Poultry, equivalent to 15.2 percent of the total value, logged the largest output increase at 6.4 percent. All poultry commodities, except for duck, saw their production expand.

Livestock, with a share of 15.6 percent, gained 4 percent as improvements were recorded in most commodities.

Crops, which accounted for more than half of total agricultural output at 53.9 percent, inched up by 1.8 percent, driven by higher production of palay and corn.

Fisheries, however, decreased output by 4.2 percent. It has been on a downtrend in the last nine months.

Balancing act

Meanwhile, agriculture officials rallied behind President Marcos' decision to extend the implementation of lower tariffs on imported food such as rice until end-2023.

Sombilla said the DA was attempting to strike a balance between importation and local production while considering the confluence of factors beyond its control such as typhoons, climate change and rising cost of inputs.

"We have to balance all of these with imports. Otherwise, as you have noticed, the inflation rate on food has always been on the rise and this affected the entire economy," said Sombilla.

"All of these balancing acts are needed at least in the coming months," said Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa.

Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban said the DA would not issue any "special permit" for imports, especially in the first quarter, since the domestic harvest season would take place from January to March.

[PH should consider nuclear energy, says British business group](#)

By: Alden M. Monzon

The British Chamber of Commerce Philippines (BCCP) said the Philippine government should consider delving into nuclear energy to help the country meet rising energy demand.

BCCP executive director Chris Nelson said the prospects for nuclear energy in the country should be looked at considering that there had been recent developments in the technology.

“If you look at the grid in the Philippines, it goes through various warnings, right? Yellow, red,” the BCCP official said, referring to the recent thin power supply margins in some parts of the country.

“Nuclear [energy] is going to be a challenge but you can’t ignore it,” he said, but added that the Philippines should also continue pursuing renewable sources of energy.

Among other issues, electricity costs in the Philippines have been cited by business groups as one of the main considerations of foreign investors when setting up operations in the southeast Asian country.

The country’s largest business organization, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI), and the Foreign Buyers Association of the Philippines (FOBAP) have urged the government to address the issue to lower costs of production in the country.

PCCI president George Barcelon said in previous months that lowering electricity costs would temper price increases in manufactured goods since it factors in the final price of manufactured costs.

Costly electricity

Meanwhile, FOBAP president and chair Robert Young said back in September that electric costs in the Philippines were significantly higher compared with other Asian countries including Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia.

Young said this was making other countries more attractive for foreign investors who were looking to set up or expand in Asia.

Most of the Philippines’ power plants are coal-fired and diesel-fed, meaning that the cost of electricity in the Southeast Asian country is closely linked to the global market prices of coal and gas.

The country’s largest power distributor, Manila Electric Co., announced earlier this month an increase of P0.3297 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) in electricity rates, bringing the

cost of electricity for a typical household to P10.2769 per kWh this December from last month's P9.9472 per kWh.

This meant an increase of about P66 for residential customers consuming 200 kWh per month.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Dabawenyos urged to minimize waste during holidays

By: Che Palicte

DAVAO CITY – The city government is urging residents to minimize their wastes, particularly during the Yuletide season.

Engr. Lakandiwa Orcullo, acting head of the City Environment and Natural Resources Office-Environmental Waste Management Division, said they are anticipating volumes of wastes usually during the holiday season.

In a radio interview Monday, Orcullo underscored the importance of reducing the volume of garbage that would ultimately end up in the city's landfill.

"Dabawenyos are urged to minimize their waste output by segregating waste to be recycled and reused. Around 700 to 750 tons of garbage are dumped in the city landfill each day. This number will likely rise significantly this holiday season," he said.

He noted that the volume of garbage is higher than average in December and January.

As of November this year, he said around 20,237 tons of garbage have already dumped in the landfill.

Despite efforts to extend the sanitary landfill's life-span, Orcullo said the facility is still approaching its full capacity, making reduction of waste generated in the city a serious concern.

Among the waste reduction measures, Orcullo said, is requiring households to segregate their garbage and dispose only the residual waste while making use of biodegradables and recyclables.

Barangay officials, he said, have an important role in reducing waste generation through consistent enforcement of the rules governing the composting and materials recovery.

Orcullo also reminded residents on the importance of reducing the chance of solid waste ending up as marine litter, which not only cause harm to the environment but can also worsen the flooding in the city

Marcos to AFP: Stay committed to sustaining peace

By: Azer Parocha

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Monday urged the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to remain committed to their mandate of sustaining peace and security in the country.

“My marching guidance has always remained constant: we commit to the cause of peace. The security and stability of the country remains the priority,” Marcos said in his speech during the 87th anniversary celebration of the AFP at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City.

“I call on you to continue performing your duties as you have had for many many years, and competently so that our country can achieve peace and security and sustain economic prosperity,” he added.

Marcos assured the AFP and other uniformed personnel of his administration’s commitment to its modernization programs aimed at acquiring more equipment for external defense and their other needs.

“We will be partners towards your vision of a strong, credible, world-class armed force that is a source of national pride and a source of national security,” he said.

“Hindi lingid sa aking kaalaman ang sakripisyo ng ating hukbo at ang panganib na kanilang hinaharap sa tawag ng tungkulin kaya naman bukod sa kagamitin, patuloy nating susuportahan ang kanilang pangangailangan (I am not oblivious of the sacrifice of our army and the danger they face in the call of duty, that is why apart from equipment, we will continue to support their needs),” he added.

He also thanked the AFP’s “unwavering loyalty and service” to the country and people.

The Commander-in-Chief cited how the AFP played a crucial role in assisting the government in the fight against terrorism as well as the Covid-19 pandemic.

“Through your efforts, along with other law enforcement authorities and government agencies, we now see a significant decline in their numbers, and that you have helped to pave the way for development to foster and for communities to live in peace,” he said.

Marcos recognized the armed forces’ support to humanitarian assistance and disaster response efforts through mobilizing assets and the immediate deployment of personnel to save lives.

“The world we live [in] has changed. Apart from climate change related disasters, we are now confronted with the different and complex security environment. It brings with it new challenges that require us to adapt,” he said.

He also lauded the AFP for sustaining your existing defense and security engagements while exploring new areas for cooperation with your counterparts overseas.

“New security challenges do not recognize borders and we must continue to work with our neighbors, our allies, partners and friends to address mutual security concerns,” he added.

During the event, Marcos witnessed the static display as well as parade and review of the AFP’s air and ground assets and awarded military officers and civilian employees for their exemplary contributions to the armed forces.

Bearing the theme, “AFP @87: Kaisa ng Buong Sambayanan Tungo sa Mapayapa, Matatag at Maunlad na Pilipinas”, this year’s anniversary celebration aims to showcase and highlight the AFP’s “transformation and advancement as a military organization through the display of assets”.

Different activities will be organized nationwide to honor the decades-long service of the AFP to the country including bloodletting programs, tree-planting events and free museum visits in military camps, among others.

PH envisions biodiversity restored, maintained: DENR

By: Perfecto Raymunod Jr.

MANILA – The Philippines envisions a future where biodiversity is restored and maintained to help build healthy, resilient Filipino communities while delivering benefits to all, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said on Monday.

In a country statement to the 15th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD COP), DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga said the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Fund (GBF) must ensure clear linkages to national policy mechanisms and implementation that recognize the intersections between climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development.

“On conservation, we have planted and maintained over a million hectares of degraded forestlands, while more potential protected areas have been identified to bring us closer to our development goals and 30-by-30 targets,” Loyzaga added.

She noted that these areas include scientifically determined ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) and “we regard these efforts as a source of nature-based solutions to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.”

On sustainable use, ecotourism jobs have more than doubled in the last five years, promoting practices, products and services that enhance biodiversity.

Regulations for mainstreaming biodiversity-friendly agricultural practices and nationally important agricultural heritage systems have also been implemented.

“Our high endemism and rate of species discovery, drive our will to strengthen the Nagoya Protocol’s implementation to complement practical bilateral and multilateral benefit-sharing mechanisms for the utilization of genetic resources, associated traditional knowledge and Digital Sequence Information (DSI),” she said.

Despite these efforts, Loyzaga said much remains to be done to ensure the balance between advancing human development and protecting biodiversity.

“On means and tools of implementation, recent estimates show a more three-fold increase in public expenditure for biodiversity, with agrobiodiversity expenditures increasing nine-fold,” she added.

However, these estimates also indicated that at least a PHP14-billion annual biodiversity funding gap exists, particularly for protection and restoration.

“We expect this gap to remain deeply significant, if not larger than previously determined. We intend to achieve our highest goals while respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, women and youth, and the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment,” Loyzaga said.

She noted that development is not sustainable if the vulnerable are left behind.

Loyzaga cited that President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. said “the preservation of the environment is the preservation of life.”

“Mindful of our common but differentiated responsibilities, we join the call for the fulfillment of commitments, specifically for the establishment of a global biodiversity fund that will mobilize resources for biodiversity,” she said.

She acknowledged the support from the Philippines' ASEAN neighbors, including the ASEAN Center for Biodiversity, and other bilateral, regional and global partners, for capacity building, scientific cooperation and technology transfer.

She said the assistance that the country gets enables the following: 1) ecosystem risk assessment, 2) the creation of a geospatial database of biodiversity resources and, 3) the establishing of the natural capital accounting system, 4) quantifying loss and damage from climate change and 5) measures and safeguards to ensure equitable benefit-sharing from traditional knowledge and genetic resources.

“We hold sacred our stewardship of one of the world’s most megadiverse countries and one that hosts the center of the center of global marine biodiversity. We are, however, compelled to address the intersecting crises of biodiversity loss, climate change and inclusive to achieve resilient and sustainable development,” she said.

She added that the country will invest in urgent and transformative change, with the goal of eventually hosting a COP CBD in Manila.

“Our vision of living in harmony with nature and building a shared future for all life on earth can only be realized through common values, concerted efforts, and the sustained commitment of all,” she said.

“We must now look beyond restoration, and together work towards investing in the regeneration of life on land and below water to achieve a nature-positive world,” she added.

SUNSTAR

[\[Opinion\] Blessed Mother on approaching times: “Each of you will get what you deserve”](#)

By: Ding Cervantes

It's not a conspiracy theory even as it sounds preposterous. It's in the Great Reset map of the world's elite, including the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Klaus Schwab whom Pres. Bongbong Marcos seems exhilarated to brush elbows with in Davos.

Some call it “climate lockdown” and it's now formally laid out in Canterbury, England's council which has drawn up a radical plan to tackle climate change by splitting the city into five zones and banning residents from driving outside their zones.

Canterbury's ‘Local Plan to 2045’ says that “Community infrastructure provided as part of upcoming developments should be accessible to new and existing residents – preferably within 15 minutes walking time and always within 15 minutes” with a ban on fossil fuel-run vehicles.

It's all within the WEF framework allegedly in pursuit of protecting the environment from degradation, among other seemingly lofty objectives.

Go deeper into the internet and dig up not only from Schwab, but also from fellow global elites George Soros and Bill Gates. They all want world control purportedly for the good of humanity.

Has not the Blessed Mother warned us of the return of communism?

Meanwhile, we need to pray for priests, even here in Catholic Philippines where, even just by the priest's Sunday homilies, we can know for whom to pray for more deeply.

Indeed, such call for prayer was emphasized by our Blessed Mother in her message to mystic Valeria Copponi on Dec. 14, 2022, as follows:

“My dearly beloved little children, pray for my sons, the priests, that they would be an example to you with their lives. I follow them in every time and place, but most of them do not let themselves be guided by my Son.

“They have become men of weak faith: they often think about the things of the world and do not trust with their whole selves in Jesus Christ, who allowed himself to be crucified for the sake and example of His sons the priests.

“Pray for them, so that by their personal example, they might become true Christians. The sacrifice of the Cross was one of unspeakable suffering for all people, but for those sons who are priests it must be the primary example.

“My sons [priests], if you are able to give your lives for your children, give yourselves to Jesus: you will truly be priests of Christ and authentic children of God. Invoke your Mother day and night so that it would be easier for you to imitate her most beloved Son.

In the confessional, be truly worthy to absolve all my children who want to receive Jesus in their hearts.

“The times are approaching at a rapid pace and then each of you will get what you deserve.

“I am with you: welcome me in your hearts and you will have the peace and love of my Jesus. Forgive and you will be forgiven; devote your time to forgiveness and true and sincere love for my Son Jesus.” (End of quote.)

The call for spiritual preparation amid pending tribulations was also clear in the message of St. Joseph to mystic Eduardo Ferreira on Nov. 30, 2022. St. Joseph said:

“Beloved, I Joseph, invite you to place all your trust in the Lord once again. Beloved, seek for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where nothing will destroy them, where they will not perish, rot nor die. Do not despair concerning material things. Be content with what is destined for you; enjoy what you have with love and happiness, with joy and peace in your heart. Be obedient to God.

“I, Joseph, will pray to Jesus for each one of you. I, Joseph, will ask Jesus to give you detachment from earthly goods. I am Joseph the carpenter.” (End of quote.)

In spiritual preparation, much help can be obtained from what Our Lord Jesus told mystic Maria Valtorta (1897-1961) whose writings were endorsed by St. Padre Pio and St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

Here are some quotes from Our Lord as recorded by Valtorta, as He addresses St. Matthew, a former tax collector:

“Be chaste in doing good. Also in giving alms. An exciseman knew how to be so before his conversion. And are you not capable? Yes, I am praising you, Matthew, for your chaste weekly offer, which only the Father and I knew was yours and I am quoting you as an example. Also that is a form of chastity, My friends. Do not disclose your goodness as you would not undress a young daughter before a crowd of people. Be virgins in doing good. A good act is virgin when it is free from any connection with thoughts of pride and praise, or from incentives of pride.” (End of quote.)

At another time, Our Lord affirmed Purgatory and life after earthly death:

Jesus said: “Before ending this cycle, something needs to be said about the two resurrections.

“The first begins when the soul is separated from the body and appears before Me in the particular judgement. But it is only a partial resurrection. Rather than a resurrection one could say a release of the spirit from the envelope of the flesh, and the spirit’s unit until it is reunited to the flesh to rebuild the living temple created by the Father, the temple of the human being created in God’s image and likeness.

“A work with a piece missing is incomplete and therefore imperfect. The human being, a perfect work in its creation, is incomplete and imperfect if it is not reunited in its various parts. Destined to the luminous Kingdom or to the murky abode, human beings must be forever in these [heaven or hell] with their perfection of flesh and spirit.

“Therefore, one can speak of a first and of a second resurrection. But consider.

“The one who has killed his spirit with an earthly life of sin comes to Me, in the particular judgement, with a spirit already dead. The final resurrection will bring about that his flesh takes up again the weight of the dead spirit to die with it utterly. Whereas the one who has overcome the flesh in his earthly life comes to me, in the particular judgment, with a living spirit which, as it enters Heaven, increases its life.

“Those in purgatory too are alive; ill, but alive. Having recovered through expiation, they will enter the place which is Life. At the final resurrection their spirits, alive with My Life to which they will be indissolubly united, take up the flesh again to make it glorious and to live with it completely, just as I live with it.

“That is why one can speak of a first and of a second death and, consequently, of a first and a second resurrection. The latter is eternal possession of Light — because in Heaven you possess God, and God is Light. Individuals must reach it of their own free wills, just as of their own free wills they wanted to lose light and Paradise. I give you the help you need, but the will must be yours.

“I am faithful. I have created you free and leave you free. And if you think how worthy of admiration God’s respect for human free will is, you can understand how duty-bound you are not to misuse it by doing evil with it, and how duty-bound you are to have respect, gratefulness and love for the Lord your God.

“To those who have not deviated from their duty I say: Your dwelling in Heaven is ready, and I burn with desire that you be in My Bliss.”

THE MANILA TIMES

[Metro air most polluted during New Year revelry](#)

By: Bella Cariaso

THE environmental watchdog EcoWaste Coalition on Monday said air pollution in Metro Manila is usually at its worst during New Year revelries because of exploded firecrackers and fireworks.

EcoWaste cited a study by the Manila Observatory in 2019 where the recorded hourly average fine particulate matter (PM2.5) was at 143.4 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$).

Manila Observatory Research Associate Genevieve Rose Lorenzo said that based on the Cloud, Aerosol and Monsoon Processes Philippines Experiment (CAMP2Ex), the PM2.5 between 6 p.m. on Dec. 31, 2018 and 8 p.m. of Jan. 1, 2019 exceeded the 24-hour National Ambient Air Quality Guideline Value (NAAQGV) of 50.0 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

"The worst air quality during the year in Metro Manila has been previously recorded during the New Year revelry as firework activities caused unhealthy increases in fine particulate matter," Lorenzo said.

These were the only measurements by the Manila Observatory "that have reached the very unhealthy and hazardous ranges of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Air Quality Index," she said.

When air quality reaches the very unhealthy level, people with heart or lung disease, older adults and children are advised to stay indoors, and everyone else should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion, Lorenzo said.

Immediate past president of the Philippine College of Physicians and pulmonologist Dr. Maricar Limpin added that aside from the risk of physical injuries, lighting firecrackers and fireworks can increase ambient PM levels, which can aggravate respiratory diseases such as asthma, bronchitis, laryngitis, pneumonia, rhinitis and sinusitis.

"Infants, children, the elderly and persons with pre-existing health conditions are most vulnerable to the adverse effects of exposure to PM2.5, which can penetrate deep into the respiratory tract and lungs. The extreme noise can affect hearing health, as well as cause restlessness, sleep disturbance and high blood pressure," Limpin said.

EcoWaste's former trustee and co-chairman of National Capital Region Airshed Governing Board Rene Pineda said traces of chemicals associated with firework components such as copper, strontium, barium, potassium, aluminum and lead increased by 6.1 to 65.2 times compared to levels before and during New Year celebrations.

"The citizens' right to clean, nontoxic air has long been settled. That right cannot and should not be superseded by a long-held cultural practice of firecracker and firework revelries, which has become a social status symbol for many representing the exorbitant display of literally burning of money," Pineda said.

EcoWaste Coalition National Coordinator Aileen Lucero said the "human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment must take precedence over toxic festivities."

Multimedia summit 2023 set in Aklan for January

THE nationwide Multimedia Press Summit 2023 is set in Aklan from January 10 to 12. Considered to be the biggest convergence of the press and social media groups, the community Multimedia Press Summit 2023 is conceived to tackle issues such as food security, climate change, tourism, social media education and other concerns, affecting the national interest.

Acting as convener of the three-day media gathering is the Provincial Multimedia Press Corps Philippines Inc. (PMPCPI) in cooperation with the Publishers Association of the Philippines Inc. (PAPI), the Philippine Online Broadcasters Association and the Aklan Press Club Inc., which will serve as host.

Officers of the PMPCPI directorate are veteran journalist Juan "Johnny" Dayang, who serves as chairman.

Dayang — a lifetime member of the National Press Club; chairman emeritus, PAPI; former president, Manila Overseas Press Club; former publisher, Philippine Graphic; columnist, Tempo; and trustee, Catholic Mass Media Award Foundation — has been active in promoting the role of the community press in the spread of critical issues.

Joseph Lazarr Punay, a veteran publisher of a community newspaper, is president.

Other officers include Erik Espina, a leading columnist and television host from Cebu, executive vice president; Reynante Langit Jr., vice president for Luzon; Odon Bandiola, vice president for the Visayas; Emmanuel Lumanao, vice president for Mindanao; Rod Frederick Bato, secretary; Manny Mogato, auditor; Jaime Vistar, treasurer; Lilia Chua Sy and Nena Mallari, directors for Luzon; Nestor Abrematea and Tara Katherine Yap, directors for the Visayas; and Antonio Figueroa and Angelina Lim, directors for Mindanao.

[\[Opinion\] 2022 was a kick-start for the energy transition](#)

By: Ben Kritz

In some respects, the news from the Philippines and the global energy sectors throughout most of 2022 was legitimately alarming, and many unresolved issues are being carried into the new year as potential crises. However, there seems to be as much reason for optimism as worry.

As a recent report by Oxford Business Group put it, 2022 was an "inflection point" for the energy transition away from fossil fuel dependence. The global leadership on climate action has been yapping about the need for that transition for years without doing much actual work in that direction, but circumstances in 2022 seemed to have finally forced the world to begin pursuing it in earnest.

Russia's vicious invasion of Ukraine is of course the source of a great deal of the world's current energy crisis — manifested as persistent high prices and constrained supplies of oil gas and coal — but that isn't the only source. Lingering supply chain and macroeconomic issues that developed during the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-2021 have also played a role, aggravated by the usual malicious market manipulation by the OPEC nations; as well as widespread political disturbance ranging from the normal uncertainty of a change of administration here or the reset direction of China after its Communist Party congress to the unexpected and embarrassing dumpster fire of the UK's Tory leadership.

Sustained high energy prices and the vulnerability of continuing to be dependent on imported fuels, in Oxford Business Group's view, appear to be a major driver for shifting the global energy system away from a dependence on hydrocarbons and toward lower-cost clean energy sources.

The uneven distribution of oil, gas and coal resources around the world put supply chains at risk and cause economic pressures due to "the cyclical and often volatile pricing of commodities," but there is also a social aspect to this.

Hydrocarbon-producing countries earned record revenues because of the high prices in 2022, even though energy demand growth actually slowed down (to 2.4 percent from 6.0 percent in 2021). The inequality is keenly felt not only because of the direct economic effects of persistent high inflation, but also because the patience of climate-vulnerable countries toward the slow delivery of long-promised financial aid for climate adaptation and mitigation from the advanced economies finally began to run out in 2022. Even though energy security and climate resilience are not necessarily inseparably intertwined from the point of view of at-risk countries like the Philippines, pushing their own energy transitions is a way to reduce their disadvantages in both.

For all of the late president Noyonoy Aquino's term and most of former president Duterte's, RE development was treated rather dismissively by energy policy. There was the obligatory lip service in the form of aspirations vaguely expressed and arbitrary

targets set in national development plans, but it was not until the Duterte administration's Department of Energy had gotten hopelessly mired in controversy over the sale of the dying Malampaya gas field that the government woke up to the fact that it had better take real steps to encourage development of secure alternatives, and announced it would allow 100-percent foreign ownership in larger geothermal energy projects.

The replacement of Duterte by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. didn't completely eliminate the established pattern of questionable leadership choices — there are still a few Clown School alumni among the current Cabinet — but at least in the energy area, Marcos picked the most skilled professionals available, sending former Energy secretary and former CEO of Power Sector Assets and Liability Management (Psalm) Raphael Lotilla back to the DoE, and former head of the National Renewable Energy Board (NREB) Monalisa Dimalanta to the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC). As soon as these two clocked in, the energy transition in the Philippines grew some legs and started to run.

On Lotilla's part, besides revamping the national energy plan to make the aspirations and targets for expanding RE something more than just words on paper, he prodded the Department of Justice (DoJ) into assessing the legality of extending the investment liberalization previously applied to geothermal to all forms of RE. After consideration, the DoJ came back with the sensible decision that this is permissible, as sunshine and wind and the potential energy of ocean water are not really exhaustible resources for which the Philippines can claim sovereign ownership. The one exception, understandably, is hydroelectric power, which relies on finite water resources that the country does in fact own.

As for ERC chairman Dimalanta, she has helped encourage the energy transition in two ways, one specific and one more general. The specific action was the recent publication by the ERC of rules for the implementation of distributed energy resources (DER), which rely mostly on rooftop solar installations. This will rapidly increase electrification of still isolated areas, and provides electric consumers of all sizes a clean and low-cost choice for their energy needs.

More generally, Dimalanta is leading the ERC in an aggressive campaign to put an end to regulatory capture and enforce some discipline in the energy sector. This was most recently and spectacularly demonstrated by the ERC's slapping down of San Miguel's attempt to gain regulatory approval to penalize consumers for its own bad business decisions. There have been other less noticeable but still important actions as well; the page on the ERC website where notices and decisions are posted is full of recent filings against various generation firms, the grid operators, distribution utilities and cooperatives for infractions — most of them relatively minor rule violations, some more concerning, but all of them together an indication that ERC means to maintain a reliable environment in the energy sector. After all, it is axiomatic among investors — in any sector, and whether foreign or domestic — that it is not as important what rules and processes are, so long as they are consistently and uniformly applied.

So, 2022 is ending on a promising note for the Philippines' energy transition, but whether we will start to see some tangible, positive outcomes in the coming year is still a bit uncertain. There are some big, problematic issues that need to be addressed, and soon. The impending shutdown of the Malampaya gas field will, out of necessity, work against energy security goals because it will require replacement by imported gas, provisions for which are already well under way. Even under the best of circumstances, a direct domestic replacement for Malampaya in the form of new wells in the Malampaya-Camago prospect, near Reed Bank, or on the Benham Rise would not be available for several years.

Another big issue, and one of the biggest obstacles to increased energy investment identified by the DoE, is the inadequacy of the national grid. The National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP) has been under fire for some time, for a number of reasons, and it should be. That is a subject for another time, but the bottom line is that, without assurance of rapid and cost-effective connection to the national grid, no investor is going to see the point of building a new power plant of any kind. That assurance does not currently exist, and it is not just a problem here; Vietnam this year imposed a moratorium on connecting new solar and wind projects to its grid, as the 20 gigawatts that have been built in the past three years have led to serious grid overload and wastage of renewable generation capacity.

Sardines catch up again, PSA report shows

By: Rhaydz Barcia

(Second of a series)

THE species composition in the waters of Fisheries Management Area 7 (FMA-7) has significantly changed in the past two decades based on the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data 2002-2020.

In 2002, the dominant marine product was seaweed with 16 percent of the total landings followed by round scad at 12 percent, Indian mackerel at 10 percent and anchovies at 6 percent. Small pelagics dominate the landings with about 50 percent of the total landings. Sardines only represent 8 percent of the total landings.

Pelagic fish range from small fish, such as herrings and sardines, to large fish like bluefin tuna. In 2010, the dominant marine harvest was still seaweed at 24 percent followed by round scad at 10 percent, fimbriated sardines at 10 percent, anchovies at 6 percent and Bali sardines at 6 percent. About 50 percent of landings were still dominated by pelagics. Sardines, meanwhile, continued to increase in 2010 with 17 percent of the total landings.

Ten years later, the species composition in FMA-7 changed significantly with Bali sardines dominating at 25 percent of the total landings, followed by seaweed now at only 16 percent, fimbriated sardines at 5 percent, and round scad at 5 percent. The pelagics still dominate the entire landings at about 53 percent.

Sardines contribute about 31 percent of the total landings. The significant change in the species composition is a serious jolt on the biodiversity of marine life in FMA-7 with a clear impact of overfishing coupled with the possible effect of climate change causing the decrease of the species that were abundant two decades ago.

A study conducted by Oceana revealed sardine production has changed over the last decade. Due to this "Sagip Sardinas," a nationwide campaign to promote the sustainable production of sardines was launched by Oceana Philippines and the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in the Bicol Region and Visayas late last month to put in place a National Sardine Management Framework Plan (NSMFP).

The target is to come up with a science-based NSMFP by October for implementation next year. The NSMFP will serve as the country's first sardine fisheries roadmap.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) Fisheries Situation Report noted a 13.5 percent reduction in the volume of production of tunsoy (dried fish), one of the major species with reported declines for the first quarter of 2022.

The PSA also reported a decline in all captured fisheries for the first quarter of 2022 from 973,622.41 metric tons (MT) a year ago, fisheries production volume in both commercial and municipal fisheries dipped to 971,500.80 MT from January to March this year.

The government attributed this to rising fuel costs and has also contributed to its push for fish importation.

In Bicol, the provinces of Masbate, Sorsogon, and Camarines Sur are still among the top 10 producers of sardines.

The Bicol Region provides the second-highest production of tamban and tunsoy, next to the Zamboanga Peninsula based on the 2019 PSA Report on the annual production of sardines.

There are 20 sardine species that were found in FMA-7, which were lawlaw, alubaybay, tamban and tunsoy. Currently, there is only one cannery in Bicol and some LGUs do not allow sardine fishers to trade with larger canneries.

Based on Oceana's assessment, the dwindling sardine stock was particularly noted in Balatan, Camarines Sur; Pio Duran, Albay; Monreal, Ticao Island; and the main station for fishing vessel operations in Bulan, Sorsogon.

In a study done by Oceana on the conditions of sardine stocks in FMA-7 fishing grounds off Bicol and Samar from February 2020 to March 2021, it was revealed that "sardine stocks are overfished."

The fishing grounds in the Philippines were Quezon, Bicol, Northern Samar, the Visayan Sea, Northern Sulu Sea, South Sulu Sea and Palawan.

Threatened species

Climate change and overfishing are fast catching up with these highly resilient species. "Even the fishes in canned sardines are getting smaller and smaller, a sign there is a problem," Gloria Estenzo Ramos, vice president of Oceana Philippines, said.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Philippines pushes creation of biodiversity fund at Montreal summit](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

LONDON, United Kingdom — The Philippines called for the creation of a fund for Earth's biodiversity at the COP15 summit in Montreal as it highlighted the need to invest in the protection of land and sea.

A draft COP15 deal calls on wealthy nations to increase financial aid to developing countries to \$20 billion annually by 2025, increasing to \$30 billion per year by 2030. Developing nations were pushing for \$100 billion per year.

Current financial flows to the developing world—home to most of the planet's biodiversity—are estimated at around \$10 billion per year.

“The Philippines envisions a future where biodiversity is restored and maintained to sustain healthy, resilient Filipino communities while delivering benefits to all,” said environment chief Maria Antonio Yulo-Loyzaga in a speech Saturday. A copy of the statement was sent to media on Monday.

Yulo-Loyzaga is the country's head of delegation to COP15.

The Philippines is one of the world's most megadiverse countries and hosts the center of the center of global marine biodiversity.

“We are, however, compelled to address the intersecting crises of biodiversity loss, climate change and inclusive to achieve resilient, and sustainable development,” Yulo-Loyzaga said.

She added the Philippines will invest in “urgent and transformative change and one day hope to host a [biodiversity] COP in Manila.”

30x30 goal

The draft also calls for the protection of 30% of the world's land and sea by the end of this decade. Called the 30x30 target, it is seen to help address biodiversity loss but also combat climate change.

The Philippines is a member of the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, which champions the ambitious 30x30 target.

Jamie Dichaves, campaign lead of 30x30 Southeast Asia, stressed that critical targets “that will put us on the path to recovery, ultimately affecting our own species' very survival” are being tackled in Montreal.

Dichaves added that biodiversity loss is a big and urgent threat.

“More than half of global gross domestic product relies on healthy functioning ecosystems, providing multiple contributions to people beyond the usual ecosystem services we are able to place dollar signs on,” she said.

The draft also includes a language safeguarding the rights of indigenous peoples as stewards of their lands, which is a key demand from campaigners.

The text still needs to be agreed upon by the 196 signatories to the Convention of Biological Diversity before it is finalized.

Zero tariff on EVs to help develop infrastructure – DTI

By: Catherine Talavera

MANILA, Philippines — The coverage of only pure electric vehicles in a proposed executive order granting zero tariffs on the importation of electric vehicles (EVs) is in line with the goal of developing the EV infrastructure in the country, according to the head of the Board of Investments (BOI).

In a virtual press briefing, Trade Undersecretary and BOI managing head Ceferino Rodolfo said only pure EVs would be included in the proposed EO.

“We want to develop the infrastructure, such as the charging stations. The problem with hybrid is most of them will not need any charging station,” Rodolfo said.

He explained that if hybrid is included in the EO, this may not lead to the development of charging stations. “While with pure EVs, this will also spur investments in charging stations,” Rodolfo said.

Several foreign chambers have earlier expressed support for calls to include hybrid vehicles in the proposed executive order granting zero tariffs on the importation of EVs.

In a recent press conference for the Arangkada Philippines forum, Korean Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines president Hyun-chong Um expressed support for the imposition of zero tariffs on EV imports.

He also supports calls of including hybrid vehicles under the planned zero tariffs.

“I think hybrid or a combination will be a good start, with changing the combustion engine to electric cars,” he said as he emphasized the need for setting up the EV infrastructure, particularly charging stations.

Rodolfo emphasized that the goal is for the manufacturing and assembly of EVs in the country.

“Leveraging our abundance of green metals, which we want to further add value to. Then our strength in software development and electronics manufacturing,” Rodolfo said, stressing the goal of the country to cater to the manufacturing and assembly of EVs.

“Consistent with that, the decision is really for just to include pure electric vehicles and not hybrid,” Rodolfo said.

However, he pointed out that the board of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) decided to provide a review clause, adding that after one year of the policy’s implementation, a review will be conducted by the board on the coverage of products in the EO.

In late November, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Board endorsed an executive order that will temporarily reduce the tariff rates on certain EVs to zero percent to help develop the industry and address the impact of climate change.

“We want to encourage the adoption, the use of e-vehicles because that will address pollution issues and, of course, adaptations to climate change; and we believe that’s the future,” Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said in an earlier press briefing in Malacañang.

“But more importantly, we want to be part of the value chain globally in this drive to get to these new industries, new growth drivers. And hopefully, we can develop our own industries, and this reduction in tariff is part of that building up of ecosystem,” he said.

The EO also aims to expand market sources and encourage consumers to consider acquiring e-vehicles, improve energy security by reducing dependence on imported fuel, the NEDA said in a statement.

The order will modify tariff rates on certain e-vehicles like passenger cars, buses, mini-buses, vans, trucks, motorcycles, tricycles, scooters and bicycles, including their parts and components. It will reduce the most favored nation tariff rates to zero percent for five years on completely built up units of certain e-vehicles, except for hybrid-type vehicles.

It will also modify tariff on certain parts and components of e-vehicles from five percent to one percent for five years.

According to earlier news reports, the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines submitted a position paper to the Department of Energy arguing that the planned zero tariffs on EVs should also cover hybrids.

Australian-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines vice president Bradley Norman highlighted the environmental element of the planned zero tariff on EVs, as it works to bring in EVs into the Philippines as cheaply as possible, in line with efforts to replace fossil-fueled vehicles.

“It will certainly be great if it can be applied to the hybrids as well because there seems to be the bridge between the fossil-fueled motor vehicles to electric vehicle,” Norman said.

Meanwhile, Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Philippines Inc. vice president Nubuo Fujii and American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines executive director Ebb Hinchcliffe also expressed support for the planned zero tariffs on EVs.

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