



## NEWS ROUNDUP

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### BUSINESS MIRROR

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By: Jonathan Mayuga

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## **DW AKADEMIE**

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## **MANILA BULLETIN**

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### **[The Netherlands optimistic in investing in PH](#)**

By: Joseph Pedrajas

The Netherlands has expressed optimism about investing in the Philippines following the increased cooperation on agrifood, digitalization and water management between the two countries.

## **PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY**

### **[DENR chief calls for increased investments in science, technology](#)**

By: Perfecto Raymundo Jr.

MANILA – Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Antonia Loyzaga has called for increased investments in science and technology to gain new insights and tools in the protection and restoration of Philippine biodiversity.

## **POLITIKO**

### **[The end is nigh? Climate, nuclear crises spark fears of worst](#)**

By: Shaun Tandon

For thousands of years, predictions of apocalypse have come and gone. But with dangers rising from nuclear war and climate change, does the planet need to at least begin contemplating the worst?

## **THE MANILA TIMES**

### **[Climate change, ASF biggest challenges to food production](#)**

By: Bella Cariaso

An official of the Department of Agriculture (DA) on Tuesday said typhoons caused by climate change, the African swine fever (ASF) and avian influenza or bird flu, and rampant agricultural smuggling affected the country's food production in 2022.

### **[\[Opinion\] Climate change is real, but it's not all doom and gloom](#)**

By: Daphne Oseña-Paez

"SO, are we doomed by climate change in the Philippines? Are you panicking?" My friend asked me at a recent reunion. She had heard that I was studying environmental management again. I said, "No," and proceeded to eat some Christmas ham. She asked why. "Because I got some perspective from my course. I also taught my daughters how to germinate seeds and plant native trees. And it isn't all doom." In reality of course, it isn't as simple as that. And I have been worried and slightly panicking in the past. This is what I plan to fight in 2023, the hopeless feelings peddled to our youth who are battling climate anxiety. We are not helpless.

### **[EU-PH trade conference highlights going green for MSMEs](#)**

As part of the EU-DTI Arise Plus Philippines project, the first European Union (EU)-Philippines Conference on green transition and trade was held in Manila during the ongoing National Exporters' Week.

### **[Updating maritime legislation](#)**

By: Atty. Brenda Pimentel

AS 2022 comes to a close, Congress busied itself accelerating the debates and enactment of priority bills endorsed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., none of which pertains to maritime legislation. Of the several maritime-related bills filed in Congress at the start of the 19th Congress, one needs to be given precedence — House Bill (HB) 4336 or the "Philippine Ship Registry" bill filed by Ilocos Norte Second District Rep. Angelo Barba Marcos.

## THE PHILIPPINE STAR

### [Arthaland raises P3 billion from ASEAN green bonds](#)

By: Iris Gonzales

MANILA, Philippines — Listed real estate developer Arthaland successfully raised P3 billion from the issuance of ASEAN green bonds.

### [Despite rising inflation, government sees growth spurt](#)

By: Louella Desiderio

MANILA, Philippines — While 2022 is the year when restrictions that limited mobility and business activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic were eased, the Philippines, like many other countries, also had to battle with rising inflation.

**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

## **ABS CBN**

### **[Agri dept eyeing climate-resilient programs for 2023](#)**

MANILA — The Department of Agriculture (DA) on Tuesday said it is looking into developing more climate-resilient programs for the agriculture sector starting next year.

Rex Estoperez, the agency's deputy spokesperson, said their budget next year would cover climate change programs in preparation for strong typhoons in the country.

The DA received a budget of P178 billion for 2023.

"Kahit anong gawin mo kung year-in and year-out po mayroon tayong bagyo; at naiiba po, dati po na-plot natin kung kailan pumapasok iyong bagyo sa atin, so ngayon hindi na, anytime pumapasok iyong bagyo sa atin at napakalakas ng bagyo, so iyon ang ating ia-address," said Estoperez during a public briefing.

"Ngayon ito 'yung mga priority areas na pinagtutuunan natin ng pansin," he added.

The official noted that they aim to adjust farmers' planting and harvest season to address production woes.

"Hindi lang naman doon sa areas, we have to change iyong atin pong season 'no, 'yung atin pong planting season/harvest season para nang sa ganoon kung ma-address natin ito, iyong ating production ay hindi masyadong maapektuhan," he said.

"Iyong mga bagay na pong iyan, tayo po ay nagbabago ng ating strategy and then transform natin na, base doon sa instruction ng ating Pangulo – food security, but we have to consider iyong climate change."

The Philippines is ranked among the most vulnerable nations to the impact of climate change.

Scientists have warned that storms are becoming more powerful as the world gets warmer.

## **BUSINESS MIRROR**

### **[DENR's Gawad Taga-Ilog boosts tie up with LGUs, communities to save rivers, esteros](#)**

By: Jonathan Mayuga

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is strengthening its partnership with local government units (LGUs) and communities to help save rivers and esteros.

The DENR, the agency mandated to manage the country's natural wealth, is implementing the annual Gawad Taga-Ilog: Search for the Most Improved Estero in the National Capital Region (NCR).

The award seeks to recognize the most improved esteros or waterways in Metro Manila, and to honor their barangays for the effort in maintaining them clean and trash-free.

On a broader scope, the Gawad Taga-Ilog or GTI initiative, which is now on its third year, taps LGUs and communities into the greater goal of rehabilitating Manila Bay.

During its launch last month, DENR OIC Assistant Secretary for Field Operations – Luzon and Visayas Gilbert C. Gonzales said although significant accomplishments were achieved ever since the 2019 launch for the Battle for Manila Bay, challenges in domestic sewage remain.

“As much as we want to improve the water quality in Manila Bay, it has to start from the source. Collaboration, especially with the LGUs, is necessary so we can work together and improve the water quality of Manila Bay,” said Gonzales.

For the GTI contest, LGUs will nominate their chosen estero or waterway within their jurisdiction. Nominees will be judged according to the LGUs' management of their solid and liquid waste, informal settler families and illegal structures, habitat and resources, and sustainability and partnership.

The search will run from November 2022 to February 2023 and awarding will be in March 2023, to coincide with World Water Day.

Recognizing the exemplary accomplishments of some LGUs in the past years, Gonzales said GTI is DENR's “simple way of thanking them for helping the agency improve the conditions of our environment and making communities more livable and safer.”

GTI also aims to encourage Metro Manila residents to adopt a sense of ownership and a positive mindset towards their responsibility to maintain clean waterways.

Apart from GTI, sustainable efforts of the DENR in supporting LGUs and communities include Communication, Education, and Public Awareness (CEPA) activities for the communities and the Dalaw Turo program for the youth.

Meanwhile, DENR-NCR Regional Executive Director Jacqueline A. Caanacan announced that the GTI would include a new category this year called Hall of Fame—or “winner among the winners”—where the DENR-NCR will choose among the past winners and see if cleanliness were sustained and maintained by the respective barangays.

Caanacan said that all barangays in Metro Manila are automatically qualified to join the GTI.

She emphasized that the cleanup and rehabilitation of Manila Bay and its tributaries lie on the empowerment and autonomy of local governments.

For this purpose, Caanacan said the DENR-NCR would continue to provide policy and technical support to LGUs and institutionalize activities that formally recognize their efforts.

## DW AKADEMIE

### What's the link between global heating and extreme weather?

By: an D. Walter

Attribution scientists are modeling floods, droughts and wildfires in real time to determine how big a part global heating plays in each event. DW takes a closer look.

New York authorities have called it the "blizzard of the century." A ferocious snow storm has gripped parts of the United States from north to south, killing at least 34 people.

Millions were left without power, trapped in their cars and stranded at airports as the country was plunged into a bone-chilling freeze. A polar vortex had brought cold air from the Arctic down to the US.

But Americans aren't the only ones battling extreme weather this holiday season. Torrential rain in the Philippines caused flash floods that killed 13 people and displaced thousands. And the Horn of Africa continues to battle the most severe drought in decades.

These catastrophes have many pointing their fingers at the climate crisis.

That heating the planet by burning fossil fuels is broadly making extreme weather more frequent and intense is well-established. Scientists have been sounding the alarm bells on that for years.

But can we determine how big a factor climate change plays in specific natural disasters? Establishing a direct causal link between rising global average temperature and a single storm, for instance, is difficult and an evolving science.

"Extreme weather has always existed and will always exist," said Sjoukje Philip, a climate researcher at the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute. "But climate change might, however, have an impact on the probability or extremity of the extreme weather events."

Determining climate change's contribution is exactly what Philip, who works with an international research team at the World Weather Attribution initiative, is trying to do by conducting real-time attribution analysis of global weather events as they occur.

Does global warming cause flooding and heat waves?

Weather catastrophes are never down to just one cause. They result from natural factors, as well as human-made ones. For instance, large-scale deforestation and paving over green areas that would usually absorb heavy rainfall with concrete and tarmac can worsen flooding.

Climate change is a human factor too, of course, but is never the sole trigger of a weather catastrophe. Its influence depends on the weather phenomenon in question and is weighted differently for each event, said German climatologist Friederike Otto from Imperial College in London and a founder of the World Weather Attribution research team.

Climate change plays a big role for some events, said Otto, "but for most others like heavy rainfall or droughts, it is quite often a relatively small factor compared to others."

So while global heating alone cannot cause heavy rain, it can facilitate prime conditions and increase the amount of precipitation. This includes snow storms like the one that recently pummeled the US and Canada.

"As Earth's climate warms, our atmosphere can hold more moisture — roughly 7% more for every 1-degree [Celsius] of warming. That additional moisture contributes to heavier precipitation, including snowfall," Peter Girard, an official spokesperson for the US nonprofit Climate Central, said in a statement.

"As a result, places like the Great Lakes region which remain cold enough for snow, can expect our warming climate to bring more severe snowstorms."

But while snowfall may have grown more intense in parts of North and East Asia, North America and Greenland, scientists are still not sure how exactly climate change is affecting winter storms in most places.

The link between temperature extremes and global heating is much more direct, said Sjoukje Philip. Swings in temperature are not necessarily more extreme but as global average temperatures rise, heat waves have grown hotter and cold spells milder.

Without global heating, recent record temperatures of 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) in the United Kingdom last summer would have been virtually impossible, as would the North American heat wave of 2021, according to analyses by the World Weather Attribution. And climate change made deadly early heat waves in India and Pakistan earlier this year 30 times more likely.

"With heat waves climate change is really a game changer," said Friederike Otto.

Does climate change have the same impact everywhere?

Climate change impacts also differ from region to region, said Philip. "So even for similar types of extreme weather, it can still be different for different regions."

Take the Ahr Valley flood in Germany and Belgium in July 2021, compared to flooding in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal in April 2022 as an example. At least 435 people died in the latter flood and thousands were made homeless. In the Ahr Valley, heavy rainfalls triggered flooding that killed more than 220 people.

The heavy rainfall in the Ahr Valley would have been a once in 500-year event around the start of the 20th century. That means we could have reckoned with such an extreme event every 500 years in an area of a similar size between the Alps and the North Sea under global average temperatures seen in the year 1900, according to a World Weather Attribution analysis.

Global heating made the event 1.2 to 9 times more likely, so in today's climate, we can expect such a flood every 56 to 400 years. At the same time, the rainfall was likely 3 to 19% stronger than it would've been 120 years ago, said the research group.

In KwaZulu-Natal, the researchers found climate change had made torrential rains that washed away entire settlements between 4 and 8% stronger. The probability, meanwhile, had doubled since 1900.

So, the uncertainties in weather attribution vary greatly depending on location. Climate scientists can determine the influence of warming more precisely in bigger regions. The area flooded in South Africa was many times larger than the affected valleys in Belgium and Germany. But it's clear that the influence of global warming on heavy rainfall in South Africa is in all probability smaller than in Central Europe.

#### Predicting future weather disasters

Potential disasters in the distant future cannot be predicted with existing models — the weather is too chaotic for that. Serious weather forecasts are still only possible a few days in advance.

But what weather attribution models can "calculate very well is the frequency of certain weather patterns," said Otto. And according to World Weather Attribution findings, as we continue to burn fossil fuels causing global average temperatures to rise, weather patterns that can trigger floods, droughts and other extremes become more likely.

## JOURNAL ONLINE

### [EcoWaste Coalition Backs Barangay Action to Protect People and the Environment from Firecrackers and Fireworks](#)

27 December 2022, Quezon City. The toxics watchdog group EcoWaste Coalition exhorted the country's over 42,000 barangays to mount proactive action that will protect their constituents and the ecosystems from harms caused by the lighting of firecrackers and fireworks, especially on New Year's Eve.

With few days remaining before the New Year's Eve revelry, the group, which has been staging its "Iwas Paputoxic" campaign since 2006, urged barangay authorities to take the lead in promoting an injury-free, fire-free, garbage-free and toxics-free way of heralding 2023.

In the latest edition of its "Iwas Paputoxic" drive held at Barangay Bagong Silang, Caloocan City, the EcoWaste Coalition linked arms with barangay, health, fire and police officers to encourage the public to opt for a safer way of welcoming the New Year sans injuries, fires, waste and chemical pollutants linked to firecrackers and fireworks.

"We commend the country's most populous barangay for its efforts to dissuade residents against the use of firecrackers and fireworks, which can endanger human health and the environment," said Aileen Lucero, National Coordinator, EcoWaste Coalition. "As frontliners in the promotion of public welfare, the proactive action by our barangay officials will be crucial in influencing families and neighborhoods to switch to a pro-health and pro-environment way of ushering in the New Year."

The non-use of firecrackers and fireworks during the New Year revelry will protect the people's constitutionally-guaranteed rights to health and to healthful environment, as well as help in upholding important environmental, health and animal protection laws such as the Clean Air Act, Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, Clean Water Act, Climate Change Act, and the Animal Welfare Act, the EcoWaste Coalition emphasized.

In seeking barangay-level action against firecrackers and fireworks, the group cited key reasons why communities are better off without the "toxic beauty" of firecrackers and fireworks:

1. Firecrackers and fireworks can cause physical injuries requiring emergency medical treatment.
2. Firecrackers and fireworks generate toxic smoke filled with particulates, heavy metals and other chemicals of concern resulting in poor air quality and visibility and causing public health and safety hazards.
3. Firecrackers and fireworks leave toxic-laced residual garbage in streets that ends up in waterways, dumps and landfills.
4. Firecrackers and fireworks produce deafening noise that is torture for animals with acute sense of hearing like cats and dogs.

5. Firecrackers and fireworks can start accidental fires, which can destroy homes and take lives.

The money saved for not buying and bursting firecrackers and fireworks can be used instead to pay for food, medicines, bills, clothes, school needs, and other essentials, the EcoWaste Coalition concluded.

## MANILA BULLETIN

### [Gov't on track to hit revenue goal](#)

By: Chino Leyco

Revenue collection is on track to hit the government's full-year target this year driven by the Bureau of Customs' better than expected performance, data from the Bureau of the Treasury showed.

Based on the Treasury report on Tuesday, Dec. 27, total revenues reached P3.277 billion from January to November, shy by only 0.7 percent to meet the full-year goal of P3.3 trillion.

The end-November revenue haul was also 18 percent higher compared with P2.774 trillion in the same period last year.

Taxes contributed 90 percent to the total, while the remaining 10 percent were from non-tax sources.

According to the Treasury, the improved revenue was due to the Customs' collections, which surpassed its P721.5 billion target by 9.4 percent to P789.2 billion

Customs' resulting first 11-month uptake similarly rose 35 year-on-year from P583.3 billion.

Meanwhile, the Bureau of Internal Revenue raised P2.156 trillion in January to November, up 12 percent compared with P1.915 trillion in the same period last year.

Earlier, Finance Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno said the budget deficit this year may fall below ceiling due to higher than expected revenue collections of its two main tax agencies.

Diokno said the fiscal deficit as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) had settled at only 6.5 percent in the first nine months of the year, way below the 7.6 percent full-year program

"The government has ramped up efforts to maintain fiscal discipline through its revenue agencies, which have surpassed their programmed collections for 2022," Diokno said.

Diokno also expressed confidence that revenue collections will surpass pre-pandemic levels this year, in light of higher economic activity that is supported by effective tax administration.

At end-November, the government's fiscal deficit amounted to P1.236 trillion, seven percent lower than last year's P1.332 trillion tally.

Likewise, the budget gap t was only 75 percent of the Marcos administration's full-year ceiling of 1.7 trillion.

To sustain these hard-earned gains, the government is implementing the country's first-ever Medium-Term Fiscal Framework (MTFF). This serves as the country's blueprint for fiscal sustainability for the next six years.

The Framework proposes measures that will improve tax administration, enhance the fairness and efficiency of the tax system, and promote sustainability to address climate change.

The fiscal strategy will help bring down the country's debt-to-GDP ratio to less than 60 percent by 2025, and further down to 51 percent by 2028. Furthermore, it will cut the deficit-to-GDP ratio to 3 percent by 2028.

## The Netherlands optimistic in investing in PH

By: Joseph Pedrajas

The Netherlands has expressed optimism about investing in the Philippines following the increased cooperation on agrifood, digitalization and water management between the two countries.

At a business forum in the Netherlands last week, Dutch Foreign Affairs Deputy Director General for International Economic Relations Peter Potman said both countries can look forward to exciting opportunities that will result from strengthened cooperation in such fields.

"It is clear that there has never been a better time for the Philippines and the Netherlands to strengthen ties," Potman said.

Organized by various Philippine agencies, the forum served as the reintroduction to the Netherlands of the Philippines and its robust economy under the administration of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr., Philippine Ambassador to the Netherlands J. Eduardo Malaya said in his opening remark.

The event was held at a more opportune time following the bilateral meeting between Marcos and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte in Brussels at the sidelines of the ASEAN-EU Summit.

"We are ready to make it happen for you in the Philippines," Malaya reiterated Marcos' pronouncement.

Department of Trade and Industry Undersecretary Ceferino Rodolfo, the event's keynote speaker, cited economic sustainability and connectivity as the two pillars that will drive the future of the two countries' bilateral economic relations.

"Even if our countries are far from one another in terms of proximity, the Philippines and the Netherlands share the same aspirations—a sustainable, resilient and inclusive economic growth through food security and development of green ecosystems," he said.

According to the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands was ranked as among the Philippines' five top investor countries, and the number one among the 28 EU Member Countries.

Around 150 Dutch companies are based in the Philippines, including ING Bank, Friesland Campina (joint venture partner of Alaska Milk Corp.) and Unilever.

## PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

### [DENR chief calls for increased investments in science, technology](#)

By: Perfecto Raymundo Jr.

MANILA – Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Antonia Loyzaga has called for increased investments in science and technology to gain new insights and tools in the protection and restoration of Philippine biodiversity.

Loyzaga made the call during the 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, which is the largest conference in the world focused on biodiversity, on Dec. 14 in Montreal, Canada.

A DENR website post on Tuesday said Loyzaga served as one of the panelists in Conservation International's flagship event with the theme: "Innovations for a Nature Positive and Net Zero Future."

She was designated by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. as his representative in the COP15.

The DENR chief said protection and restoration comprise more than 80 percent of the biodiversity financing gap, making it extremely important to fill the void through the accumulation of investments for biodiversity conservation.

She cited the significance of investing heavily in science and technology, specifically in improving the technical capacity of the different offices concerned with the restoration of damaged or destroyed ecosystems across the country.

"Climate change adds another layer of complexity to these tasks. We know that ecosystems and community interactions are dynamic, thus there is a continuous need to address the socioecological roots and drivers for vulnerability and development," she said.

Loyzaga said improving the technical capacity of concerned government agencies will enable the successful review and assessment of national resources, including terrestrial, coastal, and marine ecosystems.

She said this process would engage the private sector to use "spatial finance" that would aid them to accelerate the integration of nature-based solutions into their core value cycle that defines how they could offer their services with ease.

She added that improvement in technology would also grant constructive monitoring and analysis of data that would help in the decision-making of regulations and legislations toward adaptive management.

“We must raise the flag for regeneration beyond restoration targets for this high ambition for nature-positive investments. Not just nature and communities bouncing back, but we need to invest in bouncing forward to anticipate future needs and risks,” she said.

Likewise, she reiterated President Marcos’ message in his first State of the Nation Address last July 25, that the preservation of the environment is the preservation of life.

She said this would mean economies depend on air, water, food and energy sustained by a healthy environment, and not the other way around.

She urged both government and private sector to work across “silos” by investing in the restoration of the country’s ecosystems and biodiversity.

## POLITIKO

### [The end is nigh? Climate, nuclear crises spark fears of worst](#)

By: Shaun Tandon

For thousands of years, predictions of apocalypse have come and gone. But with dangers rising from nuclear war and climate change, does the planet need to at least begin contemplating the worst?

When the world rang in 2022, few would have expected the year to feature the US president speaking of the risk of doomsday, following Russia's threats to go nuclear in its invasion of Ukraine.

"We have not faced the prospect of Armageddon since Kennedy and the Cuban missile crisis" in 1962, Joe Biden said in October.

And on the year that humanity welcomed its eighth billion member, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned that the planet was on a "highway to climate hell."

In extremes widely attributed to climate change, floods submerged one-third of Pakistan, China sweat under an unprecedented 70-day heatwave, and crops failed in the Horn of Africa — all while the world lagged behind on the UN-blessed goal of checking warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels.

#### **– Biggest risk yet of nuclear war? –**

The Global Challenges Foundation, a Swedish group that assesses catastrophic risks, warned in an annual report that the threat of nuclear weapons use was the greatest since 1945 when the United States destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in history's only atomic attacks.

The report warned that an all-out exchange of nuclear weapons, besides causing an enormous loss of life, would trigger clouds of dust that would obscure the sun, reducing the capacity to grow food and ushering in "a period of chaos and violence, during which most of the surviving world population would die from hunger."

Kennette Benedict, a lecturer at the University of Chicago who led the report's nuclear section, said risks were even greater than during the Cuban Missile Crisis as Russian President Vladimir Putin appeared less restrained by advisors.

While any Russian nuclear strike would likely involve small "tactical" weapons, experts fear a quick escalation if the United States responds.

"Then we're in a completely different ballgame," said Benedict, a senior advisor to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, which in January will unveil its latest assessment of the "doomsday clock" set since 2021 at 100 seconds to midnight.

Amid the focus on Ukraine, US intelligence believes North Korea is ready for a seventh nuclear test, Biden has effectively declared dead a deal on Iran's contested nuclear work and tensions between India and Pakistan have remained at a low boil.

Benedict also faulted the Biden administration's nuclear posture review which reserved the right for the United States to use nuclear weapons in "extreme circumstances."

"I think there's been a kind of steady erosion of the ability to manage nuclear weapons," she said.

### **– Charting worst-case climate risks –**

UN experts estimated ahead of November talks in Egypt that the world was on track to warming of 2.1 to 2.9 C — but some outside analysts put the figure well higher, with greenhouse gas emissions in 2021 again hitting a record despite pushes to renewable energy.

Luke Kemp, a Cambridge University expert on existential risks, said the possibility of higher warming was drawing insufficient attention, which he blamed on the consensus culture of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and scientists' fears of being branded alarmist.

"There has been a strong incentive to err on the side of least drama," he said.

"What we really need are more complex assessments of how risks would cascade around the world."

Climate change could cause ripple effects on food, with multiple breadbasket regions failing, fueling hunger and eventually political unrest and conflict.

Kemp warned against extrapolating from a single year or event. But a research paper he co-authored noted that even a two-degree temperature rise would put the Earth in territory uncharted since the Ice Age.

Using a medium-high scenario on emissions and population growth, it found that two billion people by 2070 could live in areas with a mean temperature of 29 C (84.2 F), straining water resources — including between India and Pakistan.

### **– Cases for optimism –**

The year, however, was not all grim. While China ended the year with a surge of Covid-19 deaths, vaccinations helped much of the world turn the page on virus, which the World Health Organization estimated in May contributed to the deaths of 14.9 million people in 2020 and 2021.

Surprising jaded observers, a December conference in Montreal on biodiversity produced a major deal to protect 30 percent of the world's land and seas, with China leading the way.

The world has seen previous warnings of worst-case scenarios, from Thomas Malthus predicting in the 18th century that food production would not keep up with population growth to the 1968 US bestseller "The Population Bomb."

One of the most prominent current-day critics of pessimism is Harvard professor Steven Pinker, who has argued that violence has declined massively in the modern era.

Speaking after the Ukraine invasion, Pinker acknowledged Putin had brought back interstate war. But he said a failed invasion could also reinforce the positive trends.

Biden, in a Christmas address to Americans, acknowledged tough times but pointed to the decline in Covid and healthy employment rates.

"We're surely making progress. Things are getting better," Biden said.

## THE MANILA TIMES

### [Climate change, ASF biggest challenges to food production](#)

By: Bella Cariaso

An official of the Department of Agriculture (DA) on Tuesday said typhoons caused by climate change, the African swine fever (ASF) and avian influenza or bird flu, and rampant agricultural smuggling affected the country's food production in 2022.

During the Laging Handa briefing, DA deputy spokesman Rex Estoperez said that climate change will remain as the main obstacle to the efforts of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to achieve food security in 2023.

"For this year, among our challenges include our problem with typhoons, and then we also have pests, like for example the ASF and avian flu. We must address that although we also have other issues like smuggling," Estoperez said.

He added that as the Philippines is dependent on agriculture, Marcos has tasked the DA to implement programs that will lessen the impact of climate change on the farm sector.

"What we are doing right now is to make a resilient approach to address climate change so that we can address the problem of dwindling food production as well as the increasing population," Estoperez said.

He added that since 1990, the DA has provided P290 billion in assistance to farmers affected by typhoons.

Congress has increased the budget of the department to cope with challenges brought by climate change.

"Typhoons will affect us year end, year out. Now typhoons enter the country at no particular time, so that is what we are trying to address. We will identify the priority areas. Based on the instructions of the President on food security, we really need to consider climate change," he said.

Estoperez added that the Agriculture department should also address the value chain issues.

"From the farm gate to the market, we need to expedite the construction of farm-to-market roads to provide logistics to our producers," he said.

Post-harvest facilities such as cold storages will be provided to improve the value chain in the country and more Kadiwa centers will be available to provide a market to farmers and ensure the availability of affordable agricultural products to consumers.

Meanwhile, Estoperez said the spike in retail prices of farm commodities is temporary.

"We have an abnormal increase in the prices. First, it is off-season, but we don't want to tolerate smuggling. What we are doing right now is zoning of farm products, aside from being resilient. We are trying to identify the areas where a particular commodity is suitable," he added.

## [Opinion] Climate change is real, but it's not all doom and gloom

By: Daphne Oseña-Paez

"SO, are we doomed by climate change in the Philippines? Are you panicking?" My friend asked me at a recent reunion. She had heard that I was studying environmental management again. I said, "No," and proceeded to eat some Christmas ham. She asked why. "Because I got some perspective from my course. I also taught my daughters how to germinate seeds and plant native trees. And it isn't all doom." In reality of course, it isn't as simple as that. And I have been worried and slightly panicking in the past. This is what I plan to fight in 2023, the hopeless feelings peddled to our youth who are battling climate anxiety. We are not helpless.

The Philippines is ranked as one of the countries most affected by extreme climate events. While the West is now experiencing extremely cold winter storms and occasional floods, charging it all to climate change, the Philippines has been exposed to very destructive typhoons annually at least for the past 10 years. As we head to the end of the year, we had another devastating flood leaving 13 dead in a weather disturbance that wasn't even a tropical storm with a name.

There is no denying climate change is real. According to the UN, it is the long-term shift in temperatures and weather patterns. These changes may have been naturally caused through variations in the solar cycle. But based on evidence, since the mid-1800s, or industrialization, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, due to the burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas. Nowadays, every international cooperation, workshop, meeting or forum is centered on climate policies to help adapt and mitigate the changes caused by extreme weather conditions as temperatures are projected to continue rising by 1 to 2 C.

For the Philippines, this means a heavier toll on Filipino lives, livelihoods and properties. According to the November 2022 Country Climate and Development Report by the World Bank, if climate change is left unaddressed, it could hamper the Philippines' ambition of becoming an upper-middle-income country by 2040. However there remains to be many tools, instruments and opportunities for the Philippines to address these impending changes.

There are many things individuals, organizations and local governments can do now, on top of climate action policies and investments. Here are some actions that can be taken by individuals or smaller governments:

- Land use plans. Let's make the plans work already. Every LGU has a land use plan that identifies flood-prone areas. There are existing no-build zones. But have a look outside your airplane's window in your next domestic flight and you'll see river banks so densely populated. We must avoid construction in flood-prone areas.
- Let's fix old existing problems instead of worrying about the end of the world. We have to admit that there are many urban problems that have existed for decades which

haven't reached a satisfying and comfortable solution yet. The need for public and mass transportation is finally starting to be addressed, with the groundbreaking of our first subway system in Metro Manila last May. But there are so many more things that can be done at community level — clearing of sidewalks, better garbage and sanitation, reduction of use of disposable plastics, choosing to walk or bike in short distances, keeping trees alive. It sounds simplistic, but if done collectively, these things help in anticipation of floods.

– Improve nutrition of infants. I go back to my 12-year-long humanitarian work with the UN. This is something highlighted by Bjorn Lomborg, the "skeptical environmentalist" author of *False Alarm*. Leaders attempt to address all major global problems like eradicating poverty, stopping war, protecting biodiversity and improving education. But one of the themes I found most powerful in my work was the importance of nutrition in the first 1,000 days of an infant's life, from the moment of conception. When infants and pregnant mothers are deprived of the needed nutrition they are robbed of essential nutrients and vitamins. They tend to have stunted growth and lower IQ. The cycle of poverty recreates itself. We have to have healthier and smarter children to face a changing world.

– Environmental science and environmental management must be in our basic education curriculum. While the theme of education remains a headline in all international forums, I will continue to stress that both the physical and social sciences in understanding and managing the environment must be worked into all levels of education in the Philippines. We cannot be left just as recipients of aid and potential climate victims forever. I believe humanity can work with the world's climate by scientific research, innovation and cooperation. The social science part is equally important.

– Plant native trees. Again, we need more trees. Not just to restore and protect biodiversity, habitats and watershed management, but to combat floods and landslides. If your young child or teen is feeling hopeless by the repeated images of impending climate-caused doom that they see in media and social media, please have them grow and plant a tree. It is a powerful tool for fighting climate anxiety.

These are my rather simplistic and very doable tips for facing the reality of climate change from here, one of the most vulnerable countries in the world. While global leaders are meeting targets and setting goals for renewable energy and electric cars, we Filipinos must keep working to protect our own communities. Besides, even in the fancy world of environmental management, Filipinos have pioneered community-based environmental protection.

## EU-PH trade conference highlights going green for MSMEs

As part of the EU-DTI Arise Plus Philippines project, the first European Union (EU)-Philippines Conference on green transition and trade was held in Manila during the ongoing National Exporters' Week.

Under the theme, "The Green Transition: Opportunities and Challenges for Philippine MSMEs," the discussions at the conference highlighted the importance and impact of 'going green' for Philippine micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) exporting to the EU.

International and national experts and practitioners raised awareness on the new agenda for sustainable growth of the EU, also called the "Green Deal" during various sessions.

The event provided an introduction to the circular economy, deforestation-free products and carbon adjustment. Discussions focused on the opportunities and challenges this Green agenda entails for Philippine exporters and MSMEs.

"Having this 'Green Deal' session is an opportunity for the Philippine MSMEs to be informed of the importance of sustainable production in enabling them to access more diverse and high-value markets, especially the EU," DTI-Trade Promotions Group (TPG) Assistant Secretary Glenn Peñaranda said.

Philipp Dupuis, Minister Counsellor, Head of the Economic and Trade Section, Delegation of the EU to the Philippines speaking on the occasion, said "Conferences like the one today are essential to inform exporters in our partner countries about what the Green Deal is and how it can affect the requirements of their EU business partners have towards them".

Rajesh Aggarwal, Director Division of Market Development, International Trade Centre, ARISE's main implementer said "This conference will pave the way for enabling Philippine SMEs to become export competitive and make their mark in international trade. We are grateful to be part of this initiative from the EU and DTI."

As part of the efforts to mainstream and support women entrepreneurs, the event also officialized the institutionalization of the ITC-DTI SheTrades Hub in the Philippines.

"With the institutionalization of the SheTrades Philippines Hub, the DTI-Export Marketing Bureau will work with ITC to further strengthen our country's efforts in promoting women's economic empowerment and lower or eliminate the barriers faced by women entrepreneurs, at home and internationally, to foster a more inclusive and sustainable economic growth," DTI- TPG Assistant Secretary Peñaranda added.

## Updating maritime legislation

By: Atty. Brenda Pimentel

AS 2022 comes to a close, Congress busied itself accelerating the debates and enactment of priority bills endorsed by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., none of which pertains to maritime legislation. Of the several maritime-related bills filed in Congress at the start of the 19th Congress, one needs to be given precedence — House Bill (HB) 4336 or the "Philippine Ship Registry" bill filed by Ilocos Norte Second District Rep. Angelo Barba Marcos.

Several existing pieces of legislation refer to the registration of ships under Philippine laws such as the Tariff and Customs Code of the Philippines, Presidential Decree 474 and Executive Order 125/125-A, among others.

However, these are laws that only tangentially deal with the acquisition and registration of ships and the allocation of mandates to administrative agencies which are to oversee the country's merchant fleet; these laws lack the coherence expected of making a responsible flag state though.

It is observed that during the past two decades, a plethora of bills on seafaring issues was filed; not that this subject is less important, but rather, developing a national merchant fleet is indispensable to an archipelago and in building a nation that counts on its maritime industry.

A Philippine merchant fleet complements the national objective of providing Filipino access to economic, safe, reliable and secure transport. Together with moving people and cargoes by sea within and from the archipelago, the national merchant fleet will boost associated economic activities such as seafaring, ship management, shipbuilding and repairs, and port and terminal operations, among others.

Attempts to enact a coherent and focused ship registry law were unsuccessful probably due to the confidence that existing legislation meets the requirements.

However, with the rapid development in shipping technology coupled with corresponding changes in the international regulatory framework, upgrades must be made to Philippine maritime legislation. In coping with the challenges brought about by concerns for climate change and the environmental sustainability of the oceans, there is a corresponding increase in the demand and accountability imposed on flag states.

Thus, the responsibilities of the Philippines as a flag State have tremendously increased compared to what was expected of it a century back. This is a matter which needs to be addressed given the rollout of the IMO Member States Audit Scheme (Imsas). It helps to take cognizance that the Imsas leans heavily on the legislative framework — from compliance monitoring to enforcement — there is a need for laws, rules and regulations which define the mandatory and prohibited acts required of the regulated community.

Then there is that expectation that by growing the maritime industry, the economic, political and social opportunities offered by the archipelagic attributes of the Philippines could be translated into concrete achievements. Such anticipation though must be supported by robust maritime legislation which creates confidence to attract investment. HB 4336 aims to do just that by updating obsolescent Philippine maritime legislation, and the subject of the bill deserves to be given Congress' earnest attention.

## THE PHILIPPINE STAR

### [Arthaland raises P3 billion from ASEAN green bonds](#)

By: Iris Gonzales

MANILA, Philippines — Listed real estate developer Arthaland successfully raised P3 billion from the issuance of ASEAN green bonds.

A substantial portion of the proceeds from the offer will fund the necessary investment in new certified sustainable residential projects that will allow Arthaland the flexibility to develop and launch within the next 10 years or more, the company said.

The latest offer comprises the second tranche of the company's P6 billion ASEAN Green Bond Program, for which Arthaland established the first Green Framework by a real estate company in the Philippines.

Christopher Po, Arthaland director, said the green bond issuance is part of the group's commitment toward sustainable real estate.

"The ASEAN green bonds carry our commitment to use the proceeds only toward projects that meet minimum green building certifications and to be transparent in disclosing the environmental impact of these projects through energy savings and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. We believe that this offer gives institutions and the public a chance to participate in this noble cause," Po said at the listing ceremony for the bonds last Dec. 22.

The bonds were issued in two tenors – five years at eight percent per annum and seven years at 8.7557 per annum, respectively.

The ASEAN green bonds align with Arthaland's unparalleled commitment to sustainability.

Arthaland is the only developer in the country with a portfolio composed entirely of sustainable projects certified under multiple global and national standards for green buildings.

It is the first real estate developer in Asia and the first signatory from the Philippines to the Net Zero Carbon Building Commitment of the World Green Building Council, Arthaland said.

Arthaland has committed to decarbonize its portfolio by 2030, placing itself and the Philippines in the forefront of the global initiative for climate action.

The Arthaland Century Pacific Tower, the company's flagship office project, was recognized as the world's first Net Zero Carbon Project as certified under the EDGE Green Building Program of the International Finance Corp.

Two of Arthaland's largest multi-certified sustainable projects, Cebu Exchange and Savya Financial Center, became operational in 2022.

## [Despite rising inflation, government sees growth spurt](#)

By: Louella Desiderio

MANILA, Philippines — While 2022 is the year when restrictions that limited mobility and business activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic were eased, the Philippines, like many other countries, also had to battle with rising inflation.

Despite seeing high inflation numbers, the government believes the economic performance could exceed the growth target set for 2022 as consumption has continued to hold up and fuel growth.

But with growth widely expected to be slower in 2023 due to high inflation, rising interest rates, and looming recession in advanced economies, the government sees the need to continue measures to address high prices, while having strong focus on infrastructure, education, agriculture, and climate change mitigation to safeguard growth.

At the beginning of 2022, the Philippines saw a surge in COVID cases due to the highly contagious Omicron variant, prompting the government to place areas including Metro Manila under the stricter Alert Level 3, which allowed certain economic activities to operate at 30 percent indoor venue capacity for fully vaccinated individuals and 50 percent outdoor venue capacity, and prohibited those considered high risk for transmission.

As COVID cases declined, restrictions were eased. In February, the government removed quarantine requirements for vaccinated foreign travelers.

Later in August, the country also saw the resumption of face-to-face classes.

“The past year saw our economy steadily recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. After two years of restricting movement and commercial activity, the country successfully reopened our economy while effectively rolling out the public vaccination program to mitigate risks of infection and death,” National Economic and Development Authority Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said.

After five successive quarters of gross domestic product (GDP) contraction since the first quarter of 2020 amid pandemic-induced restrictions, he said the country has seen six consecutive quarters of robust economic growth, or growth of at least seven percent since the second quarter of 2021 until the third quarter of 2022.

In the third quarter of this year, in particular, the economy grew by a faster-than-expected 7.6 percent, bringing the average growth to 7.7 percent from January to September.

Balisacan said the country would have seen a much faster economic performance if not for high inflation.

The Philippine Statistics Authority earlier reported that the country's headline inflation rate accelerated to eight percent in November, the highest in 14 years.

From January to November, inflation averaged 5.6 percent, which is below the government's assumption of 5.8 percent, but higher than the central bank's two to four percent target for the year.

With strong growth expected in the fourth quarter, Balisacan believes the country's economic growth would beat the government's 6.5 to 7.5 percent target for 2022.

As for 2023, he said the government sees global headwinds, particularly the likely recession of advanced economies, and prolonged supply chain problems as the conflict between Russia and Ukraine continues.

High inflation and interest rates are also seen as downside risks to growth for 2023 as these could weaken consumption and investments.

With these headwinds expected to slow down the country's economic growth for 2023, the government has downscaled its GDP growth target to six to seven percent from the previous goal of 6.5 to eight percent.

Even multilateral agencies expect Philippine economic growth to moderate in 2023, with the World Bank projecting a 5.4 percent GDP growth for the country from an expected 7.2 percent expansion in 2022.

As for the Asian Development Bank (ADB), it is forecasting a six percent GDP growth for the Philippines for 2023, slower than the expected 7.4 percent growth for 2022.

"The immediate challenge is to address high rising domestic inflation which will dampen household consumption and borrowing and investment," World Bank senior economist Ralph van Doorn said.

He said addressing high inflation would involve using both monetary and non-monetary measures including importation at lower tariffs to augment domestic supply of staples, providing support for agriculture production through extension of services, seeds and fertilizers, and using policy rate hikes.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has so far delivered a 350-basis-point increase in the key policy rate to curb inflation and stabilize the peso.

Balisacan said the recently approved Philippine Development Plan, which will serve as the overall blueprint for socioeconomic development from 2023 to 2028, would address issues faced in the short term. These include protecting the people's purchasing power given high inflation, mitigating the scarring in human capital due to the pandemic, and providing targeted assistance to the most vulnerable sectors.

Asian Institute of Management economist John Paolo Rivera said the government would have to exercise fiscal prudence and prioritize spending on projects that have multiplier effects.

For his part, ADB Philippines country director Kelly Bird said the multilateral lender is recommending that the country continues its infrastructure development program to support growth.

“It’s highly recommended. It’s continuing, which is great. It creates jobs, it improves connectivity and it helps to create safe and efficient public transport systems for Filipinos. So it has huge benefits,” he said.

Bird said the country’s infrastructure spending at five percent of GDP should at least be continued for the next 10 years.

“Everyone recognizes there has been under-investment for infrastructure and it is going to be another 10 or 20 years of investments that are required to bring the Philippines up to global standards,” he said.

Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. chief economist Michael Ricafort said increased infrastructure spending would continue to be a major pillar of economic growth for the coming years as the new administration has signaled the continuity of the various infrastructure projects around the country.

For Van Doorn, it is also very important for the Philippines to sustain investments in health and education to address the pandemic’s scarring effects.

“The shocks of the pandemic have manifested themselves in child malnutrition and stunting and reduced student learning especially among the poor. If these effects are unmitigated, these shocks may have persistent impacts on people’s well-being and damage future productivity,” he said.

Ateneo de Manila University economics professor Leonardo Lanzona Jr. said the government needs to identify and reassess the weaknesses in the economic structure that were exposed by the pandemic.

He said the poor, in particular, were severely affected by the pandemic.

“We need to know how we can help support and restore whatever capabilities that we had before the pandemic,” he said.

While the country’s unemployment rate is back at the pre-pandemic level, having eased to 4.5 percent in October, the underemployment rate remains high at 14.2 percent.

Lanzona said the high underemployment indicates a decline in the quality of jobs in the country.

“Part of the problem is technology. A lot of the workers are being replaced by cheaper digital technologies. Programs on productive employment and skill development will need to be designed,” he said.

Given the challenge of food security, Van Doorn cited the importance of improving the agriculture sector’s productivity.

For the World Bank, effective public spending would address the low productivity of the country’s agriculture sector, which had minimal contribution to growth in the last five years, but employs over 22 percent of the workforce.

As the Philippines is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change, the ADB believes investments should be made to mitigate its impact and promote resilience.

“When you do have floods, damages and so on, that means insurance companies, the government have to spend more on damages of climate. It is important now to both mitigate climate change, but also build infrastructure that makes the economy, the community more resilient to climate change. Those investments are needed to mitigate against lower economic growth in the future,” Bird said.

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