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By Anna Felicia Bajo and Hana Bordey

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MANILA BULLETIN

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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By: Villamor Visaya Jr.

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POLITIKO

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By Roy C. Mabasa

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By Pia Ranada

The Philippines now has a law requiring large companies to recover the plastic packaging waste they produce, a bid by lawmakers and firms to address the country's reputation as a top plastic polluter.

THE MANILA TIMES

Bong Go seeks resilient houses for homeless

Sen. Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go pushed his priority bills which aim to provide more resilient, affordable and decent houses to disadvantaged Filipinos across the country.

Producer Responsibility Act lapses into law

By Javier Joe Ismael

The Extended Producers' Responsibility (EPR) Act has lapsed into law, Sen. Cynthia Villar said on Tuesday.

CCC IN THE NEWS

BUSINESS WORLD

[OPINION] Moving for a collective impact

By Ron F. Jabal

More and more companies are seeing a clear connection between social progress and business success. Not a day passes without hearing companies trumpet their triple-bottom approach to conducting business. These stories are being chronicled in sustainability reports that the Securities and Exchange Commission will reportedly mandate for all listed companies by 2023. Recent data shows that while this requirement is still on a comply or explain basis, the compliance rate among listed firms in the local bourse has been over 90% for the past two or three years. Indeed, local firms have gone a long way in implementing and chronicling their efforts to manage business impacts on people, profit, and the planet. Even without an expressed admission, companies are now fast becoming agents of social change.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS-CBN

Demand for climate information growing, says PAGASA

By Jasmin Romeo

Manila —The demand for climate information is expected to increase as the country finds ways to deal with the effects of climate change, state weather bureau PAGASA said Wednesday.

PAGASA Climatology and Agrometeorology Division officer-in-charge Rosalina De Guzman said in a forum that the public needs "reliable and actionable information" on the climate for decision making.

"There is also a growing recognition in the public and private sector for climate products of PAGASA, and it will grow in to the future," De Guzman said.

The climate information service is something that PAGASA has been giving in the past: weather forecast and tropical cyclone warning, flood forecasting and warning, climatological and farm weather services, research and development, and astronomical services, among others.

De Guzman said the state weather bureau is also offering new products.

"We provide observation and forecast of the heat index. (Another is) MARITES (Managing Risk and Uncertainties). This is a game tool for understanding forecast uncertainties and demonstrates how to create decisions based on different seasonal forecast uncertainties, what actions to take," she said.

PAGASA has also "co-produced client-tailored climate services" such as local climate advisories and consolidating capacities for disaster risk reduction in agriculture.

"Farmers use information to select cultivars, purchase appropriate seeds, use alternative livelihoods, determine the right harvest time, deciding time of pesticide application," said De Guzman.

But more needs to be done, she said.

"More effort is still needed to understand climate information users' needs and in the decision making processes," she said.

GMA NEWS

Marcos backs creation of Department of Disaster Resilience

By Anna Felicia Bajo and Hana Bordey

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. said Wednesday that he is supportive of a proposed measure that would create the Department on Disaster Resilience, following the strong earthquake that hit northern Luzon this morning.

Asked if he would push for the passage of the measure, Marcos replied, "Yes."

"Mukhang...I don't like to say it, mukhang mapapadalas ito eh... not the earthquake pero 'yung weather, lalo na 'yung extreme weather... kahit hindi bagyo, nakikita mo sa Europe, sa Amerika, baka naman abutan tayo ng ganyan, 'yung napakainit masyado," Marcos added.

(Yes, I don't like to say it but it has been happening more frequently... not the earthquake but the weather... the extreme weather... it's not necessarily the storms, but in Europe and America, you will notice that it is very hot.)

"So these are the things that we have to be careful, we need more capability that we have now. Magaling na tayo sa bagyo, marunong na tayo sa lindol pero ang mga dangers, the effects of climate change present are different, that's why we need a specialist agency," he added.

(We are good in our typhoon measures, we know how to handle the earthquake but the dangers, the effects of climate change present are different, that's why we need a specialist agency.)

The Philippines is among the countries hardest-hit by natural disasters in the last 20 years, with weather effects exacerbated by climate change.

In January of this year, former senate president Vicente Sotto III said the bill creating the Department of Disaster Resilience was unlikely to be approved in the 18th Congress because of intense interpellation.

The House of Representatives passed its version of the bill in 2020.

According to Phivolcs, the quake—earlier reported as magnitude 7.3—occurred at 8:43 a.m. and was located at 17.64°N, 120.63°E - 003 km N 45° W of Tayum in Abra. It had a depth of 17 kilometers.

The quake was felt strongly in many areas in Luzon, including in Metro Manila.

Senators

Following the quake, some legislators emphasized the need for the Department of Disaster Resilience as they believe that this will consolidate government resources towards "a more unified disaster preparedness, response, and management strategy."

For one, Senator Christopher "Bong" Go said the quake "makes our long-running clamor for the establishment of the Department of Disaster Resilience relevant."

"Once established, we will have a Cabinet secretary-level department whose primary tasks are not limited to extending immediate assistance but also making sure the rapid recovery and rehabilitation of affected communities," Go said in a separate press release.

Meanwhile, Senator JV Ejercito said the country's vulnerability to natural disasters "calls for a fully fledged department dedicated to disaster preparedness, response, and management."

Senator Grace Poe likewise said this recent earthquake "brought to fore" the previous calls to create the Department of Disaster Resilience and Emergency Assistance and Management which, she said, would be the first responder during calamities.

"The proposed body will also efficiently plan and collaborate with concerned agencies and local government units on disaster mitigation and management," she said.

"Our people especially in vulnerable communities should not suffer more in the face of calamities," she added.

In a virtual interview with Senator Imee Marcos, the president's sister agreed that there should be a government body that will respond to these natural calamities like the United States' Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The lawmaker noted that the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council usually lacks budget as it is just a coordinating body and some of its funding were realigned for the rehabilitation of Marawi City.

"Halos ang konti lang ng budget niya. Nailagay pa halos lahat sa Marawi rehab kaya hindi makakilos ang NDRRMC. Kung tutuusin namamalimos lang siya sa iba't ibang department, sa quick response fund ng [Department of Agriculture], [Department of Social Welfare and Development]. So we wanted them to have more teeth," Imee said.

(It has a small budget, and most of it has been allocated to Marawi rehabilitation so NDRRMC can hardly take action. They have to ask other departments for their quick response funds.)

Although she raised this suggestion, Imee said she is not in favor of creating a new department, considering the recent stand of the administration on rightsizing the bureaucracy.

"Ayaw ko naman agad-agad gawing department kasi mauubos lang sa sahod ng [undersecretary] at [assistant secretary]. Subukan muna natin na isang authority o di kaya admin o kaya council, basta something na mas maliit na hindi kailangan ng full-blown department," she said.

(I don't want to immediately make another department because we will use up the funds towards salaries for the undersecretaries and assistant secretaries. Let's try an

authority or council first, something that is smaller and doesn't need to be a full-blown department.)

"Isang authority directly under the president with its own powers and functions. Some budget and more teeth," she added.

During the Senate's Wednesday plenary session, Senator Alan Peter Cayetano cited the 2021 World Risk Report which showed that an average of 20 typhoons hit the Philippines and the country ranked eighth out of 181 countries in terms of disaster risk.

In another study by German Watch, Cayetano said, the Philippines ranked fourth among the countries that are most affected by climate change and weather catastrophes from 2000 to 2019.

"No less than our Senate president pro tempore [Loren Legarda] yesterday fittingly was the first one to speak on the environment. So, I would just like to manifest and ask the leadership to consider asking the president to consider these bills urgent," he added.

The lawmaker noted that several bills introduced by several senators like Senator Pia Cayetano, Go, and himself have already been filed in the chamber.

Although he acknowledged the commitment and the dedication of the people in the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), Cayetano said the body is composed of 44 agencies which are only tasked to coordinate with each other during the times of catastrophes.

"I've seen them work but Mr. President ano ito, 44 agencies, ad hoc coordination. Coordinating lang sila. We need one department that will be accountable, one department that will be the one to do the job and we can pinpoint if any coordination is needed," Cayetano stressed.

The lawmaker said he will draft a personal letter to Marcos to ask the Palace that these bills will be certified as urgent.

"But if the majority leader can consider in the Rules Committee meeting if the Senate as a whole wants to ask for this bill to be certified urgent, I'd greatly appreciate that," Cayetano added.

In response, Senate Majority Leader Joel Villanueva said he wants to be part of this measure creating the DDR and the Committee on Rules will consider Cayetano's suggestion as soon as they finish its organization.

Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri, who manifested that he also filed a bill creating the DDR, also expressed his full support on Cayetano's manifestation.

"I fully support it and You have the support from this chair," Zubiri said.

MANILA BULLETIN

Climate change, health challenges to shape next 20 years: Australian report

By: Xinhua

Canberra, Australia — Australia’s national science agency has identified a list of global megatrends that will shape the next 20 years.

The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) on Wednesday published the latest edition of Our Future World, a once-in-a-decade report on global megatrends.

It identified seven trends researchers said would shape the next 20 years, including adapting to climate change, escalating health challenges and increasing reliance on artificial intelligence (AI).

“Some of the trends we identified have been widely discussed, while others are newer and directly related to our experiences during the pandemic,” the report co-lead author Stefan Hajkovicz said in a media release.

“We are, for example, just beginning to understand the potential long-term impacts of the pandemic on mental health and chronic illness.”

It warned the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing health challenges, with one in five Australians now reporting high or very high levels of psychological distress.

Additionally, the pandemic-fuelled boom in digitisation, an increased focus on potential solutions to resource constraints including food security were identified as significant megatrends.

According to the report, while Australia saw a record level increase in public trust in institutions during the pandemic, this “trust bubble” has since burst, with societal trust in business dropping by 7.9 percent and trust in government declining by 14.8 percent from 2020-21.

“But these challenges also tell us where the most powerful innovation can be found, when we see a different future and leverage science to create it,” Larry Marshall, chief executive of the CSIRO, said.

“We have the opportunity now to use science to invent the kind of world we want to live in, but we have to act, and we have to do it together.”

PHILIPPINE INQUIRER

Worker dies, 6 others hurt as earthquake shakes roadside hill in Kalinga

By: Villamor Visaya Jr.

Tabuk City, Kalinga—A man died and six others were injured when the magnitude 7 earthquake struck while they were placing wire mesh over a hillside area along a road in Balbalan town, Kalinga province, on Wednesday (July 27) morning.

Major Garry Gayamos, Kalinga police spokesperson, identified the fatality as construction worker Jefferson Basar, 24, a native of Quezon City.

Basar was declared dead on arrival at the Kalinga Provincial Hospital.

“They were atop the hill when the earthquake took place. Basar and his fellow workers fell to the ground. Basar’s head probably hit the pavement,” Gayamos told the Inquirer.

Those injured were identified as Kelwayne Pultz, 22; Joseph Gullipis, 37; Arris Ammogawen, 27; Christian Tongdo, 32; Shan Adrian Tebon, 24; and Renato Manlapaz Jr., 32.

They were taken to the Kalinga Western District Hospital for treatment

7.0 Luzon earthquake: 5 dead, 1,200 structures damaged

Vigan City, Ilocos Sur, Philippines — Norman Aba, his two cousins and a 10-year-old niece were at the topmost floor of the Bantay Watchtower built from stone outside of this city when the 431-year-old structure swayed slowly and then wobbled violently on Wednesday morning.

The severe shaking, caused by a 7-magnitude earthquake, gave Aba, 41, his “first brush with death.”

Aba, his companions, and their tour guide were the only people inside the watchtower just minutes before portions of it collapsed.

They were lucky to escape with their lives.

The powerful quake jolted a large part of Luzon Island at 8:43 a.m., leaving at least five people dead, disaster management officials reported.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said the epicenter was centered 17 kilometers underground, about 3 km west of Abra province’s Tayum town.

Phivolcs recorded 280 aftershocks as of 4 p.m. on Wednesday, with magnitudes ranging from 1.5 to 5.4.

Falling stones

“We were checking the sights from atop the tower. Then the ground shook. It did not sink in to me immediately. But when the old stones started falling on us, that was when I realized that an earthquake was happening,” Aba told the Inquirer.

“We used our hands to cover our heads. When the shaking was getting stronger and more stones were falling, I asked everyone to duck under the bell. That was how we survived this incident,” he said.

“The stairs were steep and narrow. There was no way we could go down immediately,” Aba said.

Their tour guide, a man in his 60s who was bleeding in the head, shielded his crying niece from the falling debris. Aba and his two cousins got bruises on their arms.

After reaching the bottom of the five-story watchtower, Aba said they rushed to the parking lot and returned to their hotel, praying in gratitude for escaping death.

A 23-year-old woman, Jonaly Sigamay, at Barangay Zone 5 in Abra’s capital town of Bangued, was among the four that were initially reported to have died in the quake.

The strong tremor toppled the wall of a dormitory on her, authorities said.

Aron Cul-iteng, 25, a construction worker in La Trinidad, capital of Benguet province, was struck and killed by debris that fell from a building under construction.

Benguet landslide

A landslide near a mountain village in Tuba, also in Benguet, buried 32-year-old Resty Emperador Tavas. He died on the way to the hospital.

In Kalinga province, construction worker Jefferson Basar, 24, was killed while he was placing wire mesh over a roadside hill in Balbalan town.

A report from the provincial disaster risk reduction and management council in Abra said a 86 people were injured as of 4:26 p.m. from the municipalities of Bangued, Boliney, Bucay, Lagangilang, Luba, Peñarrubia, Pidigan, Pilar, Sallapadan, San Juan, San Quintin and Tubo.

Some of the injured were patients at Abra Provincial Hospital, which was damaged by the quake.

At least 16 patients undergoing dialysis at the Shepherd's Pillar Kidney Care and Dialysis Unit in Bangued, the only dialysis center in Abra, had to be taken to an open area during the temblor.

"People were running outside as it was shaking. After we unhooked the patients, some of the ambulatory patients and their companions quickly exited the building while the nurses had to roll out the patients who couldn't walk," a dialysis nurse there told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

Daisy dela Pena, a resident of Barangay Zone 7 in Bangued, said the tremor woke her up. She joined other villagers who gathered in open areas near their homes. She said the multiple aftershocks unnerved her.

Panic at vax site

In Abra's San Isidro town, the Rural Health Unit was preparing to vaccinate kids in the area when the quake struck.

"The children started crying, and their parents started panicking. Some stumbled while running away from where debris may fall," said Princess Dumaslan, an rural health unit nurse who was treating patients.

In Mountain Province, a landslide that hit Saint Mark the Evangelist Chapel in Bauko town injured four people, including three children attending Bible classes.

In Baguio City, a 19-year-old female student trying to escape from the fourth floor of A's Dormitory accidentally fell off the fire exit, hitting a taxi.

According to the taxi driver, the victim landed head first on the windshield. The woman was taken to the Saint Louis University Hospital of the Sacred Heart.

In Ilocos Sur, the provincial government ordered the evacuation of all residents living in the coastal barangays following the quake for fear of a tsunami.

Kennon shut

Kennon Road in Baguio was closed to traffic due to multiple landslides, according to the Department of Public Works and Highways.

Only one lane of the Marcos Highway, a major road to the summer capital, remained open to traffic.

The Bokod section of the Baguio-Nueva Vizcaya road and portions of Itogon town on the Baguio-Bua-Itogon road, both in Benguet province, have also been closed due to rockslides.

A section of the Halsema Highway, the main vegetable road of the Cordillera, was also closed following a landslide in Bauko, Mountain Province, said Cameron Odsey, Cordillera director of the Department of Agriculture.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) reported 12 roads and four bridges (three in Bangued and one in Lagangilang in Abra) were damaged.

The earthquake also triggered 12 landslides in Bucloc, Daguioman, Luba, Malibcong, Peñarrubia, San Quintin, Tineg, and Tubo, all in Abra.

Damaged structures

The DILG said the quake damaged 51 government buildings, 1,214 residential homes, and seven commercial buildings, but it did not specify the locations.

Fourteen road sections also closed in Abra, Banaue, Ifugao, Mountain Province, Kalinga and Benguet due to soil collapse, slope collapse, rock slides and cracks.

Ensuring that food lanes are open has become the priority for agencies in the Cordillera region because of multiple landslides that blocked major arteries, said Juliet Lucas, regional director of the Department of Trade and Industry.

Baguio and the provinces of Kalinga and Ifugao have suspended work and classes due to the quake.

Power interruptions were reported in Laoag City and several areas in Pangasinan.

Marcos not visiting

There were 7,532 isolated families and some 1,729 families evacuated to safer ground, the DILG said.

DILG Secretary Benjamin Abalos Jr. said that in all, 218 towns in 15 provinces in Regions 1, 2 and the Cordillera Administrative Region were affected by the quake.

President Marcos said in a press briefing that he would not be visiting the quake-hit areas any time soon so as not to interrupt local rescue and relief efforts.

Press Secretary Trixie Cruz Angeles said the President, however, got in touch with local officials in Abra to get information.

The quake hit the so-called Solid North comprised of northern Philippine provinces on which Mr. Marcos and his allies banked for support in the recent elections.

Around three hours after the quake struck, the President issued a brief statement on his social media accounts expressing sadness about the tremor and assuring those affected that the government would attend to their needs.

“To my fellow countrymen, especially in Abra, let’s be careful and do approach representatives of the government if you need help. We will rise as one from this challenge,” he said in Ilocano.

Mr. Marcos said it was not necessary to declare a national calamity at this time.

“However, depending on the information that comes back, I am sure we will hear a lot more, a lot more information hasn’t reached us yet, so that might happen,” he said.

Order to telcos

Angeles said Mr. Marcos ordered the immediate dispatch of rescue and relief teams to Abra and directed telecommunication companies to ensure free communication to areas where telco towers may have been damaged.

In his briefing, the President also called on local officials to inspect houses and buildings once the aftershocks subside to determine whether they are still safe to live and work in. He also called on local authorities to be wary and prepared for possible landslides should rains pour in the disaster-stricken areas.

The President said the DSWD’s Assistance to Individuals/Families in Crisis Situation (AICS) program would be activated to provide necessary aid to the affected residents. The President said he was in his office when the earthquake struck and heard a chandelier “clinking.”

“That’s our guide here in the Palace. When you hear the chandelier clinking, that means there’s an earthquake,” he said, adding that the quake was “stronger than the usual.”

Abra River Fault

Phivolcs Director Renato Solidum Jr. said the quake was “most likely” caused by the movement of the Abra River Fault.

The last “historical earthquake” to take place along the Abra River Fault was in 1868 and it was a magnitude of around 4.0 to 5.0.

He noted that Wednesday’s tremor was the strongest “in-land” earthquake since the 6.6 magnitude that struck Masbate and the Bicol region on Aug. 18, 2020.

The Abra quake was felt at various intensities across Luzon, with the strongest at intensity 7 in Bucloc and Manabo in the province.

It was felt at intensity 2 as far away from the epicenter as in General Trias City in Cavite and Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

The Philippines sits in the Pacific Ring of Fire, a region where frequent earthquakes and volcanic activities occur.

In July 1990, a 7.8-magnitude earthquake centered in Nueva Ecija created a ground rupture stretching over a hundred kilometers.

Fatalities were estimated to reach over 1,200 and caused major damage to buildings in Baguio, Pangasinan and Manila.

POLITIKO

France, Philippines in talks for renewable energy cooperation

By Roy C. Mabasa

Discussions are underway between France and the new administration in the Philippines for possible cooperation in the area of renewable and nuclear energy, the top French diplomat in Manila said Tuesday.

French Ambassador Michele Boccoz made this disclosure as she outlined their priorities and aspirations in time for the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of bilateral relations between the two countries.

“There are a lot of discussions now with the new cabinet, (and) the new government around energy issues. And obviously nuclear energy issue is one of the areas that is very much talked about,” Boccoz told journalists during a gathering at her residence in Makati City.

Boccoz takes pride of France’ “innovative competence” on energy generation, an advantage they can bring to their discussion with the administration of President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.

France stands out among many highly developed countries as it derives most of its electricity supply from nuclear and renewable energy.

“As you know, our energy mix for electricity production in France is 70 percent nuclear, 27 percent from hydroelectricity, while three percent are dependent on gas,” the lady diplomat explained.

During his State of the Nation Address (SONA) last Monday, Marcos Jr. pledged to increase the country’s renewable energy resources to compliment its climate agenda.

“We will increase our use of renewable energy sources such as hydropower, geothermal power, solar and wind,” the President said.

Although the nuclear option as a potential source of energy for the Philippines was not mentioned in the SONA, a well-placed foreign diplomat who had met with Marcos shortly after the May 9 presidential election told Politiko that the latter brought up the idea of reviving the mothballed project.

On climate change, Boccoz said the issue is always part of their priorities as it resonates to the public good, especially for the Philippines which is prone to natural disasters and calamities.

“(The Philippines) is not a big producer of greenhouse gases but has been disproportionately affected by climate conditions,” the French envoy noted.

France, she said, is working with the French agency for development to fund certain projects for disaster risk reduction and climate change in the Philippines.

RAPPLER

Everything you need to know about the Philippines' Extended Producer Responsibility law

By Pia Ranada

The Philippines now has a law requiring large companies to recover the plastic packaging waste they produce, a bid by lawmakers and firms to address the country's reputation as a top plastic polluter.

The Extended Producer Responsibility Act of 2022, or Republic Act No. 11898, lapsed into law on July 23, 2022. This means it became a law because neither former president Rodrigo Duterte nor President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. signed it 30 days after receipt from Congress.

By allowing it to become a law, Marcos did not give in to the appeal of some green groups for him to veto the measure because of its limitations and concessions to plastic-using firms.

The EPR law is the first amendment to the two-decade-old Ecological Solid Waste Management Act.

Rappler got a copy of the new law on Wednesday, July 27, from the office of Senator Cynthia Villar, who sponsored the measure as Senate chairperson of the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Climate Change in the 18th Congress.

Here's what you need to know about the EPR law (scroll to the end of the article for a copy of the measure).

The gist

The law requires large enterprises, defined as enterprises with total assets over P1 billion, to recover a certain portion of their plastic packaging waste, or else pay a fine.

Recovery is part of a larger concept of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), which means the responsibility of entities to ensure the materials and waste they produce do not end up in landfills or the environment, but can be reused, recycled, or allowed to biodegrade in an ecologically-sound manner.

Many countries, like Japan, Australia and some states in Europe and Latin America implement EPR schemes on a wide scale.

What kind of waste do enterprises have to recover?

The recovery requirement only applies to plastic packaging which includes sachets, labels, laminates, single or multi-layered plastics, beverage and food containers, containers for personal care and cosmetic products, lids and caps, plastic forks and spoons, plates, straws, sticks, tarps, signages, and the like.

Also included are plastic bags and polystyrene, often used to make rigid food containers, foamed cups, plates, and bowls.

What does recovery mean?

Waste recovery means actions that prevent waste from leaking into the environment. According to the law, they include:

- Buying back the material or waste from consumers
- Putting up collection points where the material or waste can be dropped off after consumption then collected for reuse or recycling
- Clean-up of waste from coastal areas, public roads, other places
- Establishment of recycling, composting, thermal treatment, and other waste diversion or disposal facilities

What are the target recovery rates?

The large enterprises must comply with this schedule for target recovery of their plastic footprint:

- December 31, 2023 – Must recover 20% of their plastic footprint the year before
- December 31, 2024 – Must recover 40% of their plastic footprint the year before
- December 31, 2025 – Must recover 50% of their plastic footprint the year before
- December 31, 2026 – Must recover 60% of their plastic footprint the year before
- December 31, 2027 – Must recover 70% of their plastic footprint the year before
- December 31, 2028 and every year after – Must recover 80% of their plastic footprint the year before

What's the penalty for failure to meet the waste recovery targets?

The large enterprise will have to pay twice the cost of recovery and diversion of their plastic footprint or its shortfall, or the appropriate fine below, whichever is higher:

- P5 million to P10 million – 1st offense
- P10 million to P15 million – 2nd offense
- P15 million to P20 million – 3rd offense

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR's) Pollution Adjudication Board will hear and judge cases of alleged violations and impose the fines.

The same fines listed above will be the penalties for an enterprise's failure to register their EPR program on time.

How will this be implemented?

First, large enterprises must come up with their EPR program and register it with the government, specifically the National Solid Waste Commission (NSWC) under the DENR. They must do this within six months of the law's effectivity.

When they register their EPR program, they must include information like the person responsible for EPR in the company, the type of plastic packaging they use, "verifiable volume or weight" of the plastic packaging brought into the market within a specified period, the target volume or weight of plastic packaging for recovery, how they label packaging materials to facilitate recovery or proper disposal, and more.

The enterprises are to get an “independent third-party” auditor to certify the veracity of their reported plastic product footprint and their compliance with EPR targets using “uniform standards” established by the DENR. The audit report must be submitted to the DENR and should be posted by the DENR on a website accessible to the public.

Producer Responsibility Organization

Many companies might not have lots of experience in implementing EPR schemes so the law allows large enterprises to tap what’s called a Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO).

A PRO is an entity that will help the enterprises implement EPR and would likely be firms or groups that have experience in recycling, waste recovery, reuse, or other EPR-type of initiatives.

Multiple companies can come together to form a PRO using shared resources.

Information on an enterprise’s PRO must also be included in their registration of their EPR program with the government.

The guard dog and information manager: National Ecology Center

The law creates a sub-grouping within the NSWC, called the National Ecology Center or NEC.

The NEC, to be headed by the Environmental Management Bureau assistant director, is supposed to keep close tabs on the implementation of enterprises’ EPR schemes and the overall impact of the law.

Its responsibilities include:

- Maintain the registry of EPR programs submitted by enterprises
- Monitor and evaluate compliance to the EPR program registration requirement
- Take action on complaints from any citizen against a large enterprise, PRO, waste generator, or any waste management entity
- Within one year of the law’s effectivity, provide an assessment of the volume or footprint of other generated wastes, for priority inclusion in the country’s EPR scheme
- Create a database showing the rate of recovery of all types of plastic waste; list of processors and recycling entities, the materials they buy or recycle, and at what prices they buy them
- Conduct training on ecological solid waste management
- Promote the development of a “recycling market” built on a national network of groups and entities that will make recycling easier to do for everyone

Financial incentives for enterprises

Apart from penalties, the law also hopes to encourage EPR schemes through a reward system.

Large enterprises can apply for tax incentives for their EPR activities, under the section on tax incentives of the National Internal Revenue Code. The EPR expenses of large enterprises and other private enterprises that volunteer to do EPR schemes will be

considered “necessary expenses deductible from gross income,” subject to substantiation requirements under the tax code.

National Framework for EPR

The law encourages a shift to an EPR mindset by introducing a framework for this way of dealing with waste.

The framework calls on all sectors to lessen the use of products or materials that are bad for the environment and redesign products in a way that makes them reusable, recyclable, or retrievable.

It encourages things like product refilling systems for retailers, in place of “tingi-tingi” system where products are individually sold in new disposable wrappers. It wants products to have labels that show consumers how they can properly dispose of the product or ensure it is retrieved by the company that made it.

Why do some green groups oppose this law?

Some of the most active groups against plastic pollution, Greenpeace, Ecowaste Coalition, and Break Free From Plastic Movement, wanted Marcos to veto this bill.

They think the law would just give plastic-dependent companies an excuse to use more plastic since, anyway, they are just required to recover those materials after their products are bought and consumed.

Environmental advocates who oppose the measure prefer a nationwide ban on single-use plastic, which, they point out, has been successfully implemented by cities on their own.

They resent that EPR schemes are only required for large companies, and not enterprises of all sizes. They also point to how the law’s mention of “thermal treatment” and “processing” of plastic wastes might lead to more widespread use of pollutive technologies like incineration, pyrolysis, or waste-to-fuel.

THE MANILA TIMES

Bong Go seeks resilient houses for homeless

Sen. Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go pushed his priority bills which aim to provide more resilient, affordable and decent houses to disadvantaged Filipinos across the country.

To ensure that the homeless have access to decent yet affordable shelters, Go refiled Senate Bills (SBs) 192 and 426, providing for the Rental Housing Subsidy Program and the National Housing Development, Production and Financing (NHDPF) Program, respectively.

Because of its geographical location, the Philippines is prone to natural disasters, such as typhoons, floods and volcanic eruptions. Thus, Go reiterated the need for the government to step up measures in dealing with crisis situations.

SB 192 aims to provide adequate, sustainable and habitable shelter for Filipinos affected by disasters and other crisis situations.

Under the measure, a housing and social protection program will also be developed to provide disaster victims better and more affordable access to the formal housing market through the provision of rental subsidies provided by the government.

The bill seeks to address the plight of displaced families caused by various disasters and calamities, whether natural or man-made, as well as those families who cannot afford or build their own homes.

Meanwhile, the lawmaker also pushed for SB 426 which seeks to increase housing production by forging partnerships among relevant stakeholders to address the social housing demands of Filipino families.

The bill aims to generate and mobilize funds to guarantee the development of a sustainable, accessible and affordable housing financing system for the country's informal settlers.

Meanwhile, the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development and its attached key shelter agencies shall intensify the implementation of the vital components of the NHDPF program.

The National Housing Authority shall be the sole national government agency tasked to implement and develop the housing programs intended for the bottom 30 percent of the income population.

Furthermore, the Social Housing Finance Corp. will develop social housing programs that will cater to the formal and informal sectors in the low-income bracket and take charge of developing and administering social housing programs, particularly the Community Mortgage Program and its different modalities.

Javier Joe Ismael

Go also refiled his bills establishing the Department of Disaster Resilience and mandatory evacuation centers in every city, municipality and province to further intensify and strengthen the country's resilience to disasters.

The senator was also the main proponent of the Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program (BP2) which is a long-term plan of the government to decongest urban areas, boost countryside development, and improve the quality of life in all regions.

Producer Responsibility Act lapses into law

By Javier Joe Ismael

The Extended Producers' Responsibility (EPR) Act has lapsed into law, Sen. Cynthia Villar said on Tuesday.

The chairman of the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change said that the EPR Law mandates large corporations to process their plastic waste.

With the implementation of the EPR Law, Villar expressed confidence that the Philippines will no longer be tagged as one of the largest plastic litterers in the world.

"According to the University of Georgia study, we are the third largest producer of plastic into the ocean in the world, next to China and Indonesia. I guess we'll now be able to remove that image," Villar said.

The law covers plastic packaging that is used to "carry, protect, or pack goods for transportation, distribution, or sale."

These include sachets, labels, laminates and other flexible plastic, whether single layer or multilayered with other materials, examples of which include packaging used for shampoo and noodles; rigid plastic packaging, whether layered with any other materials, and their coverings or lids such as bottles used for drinks and cosmetics; rigid plastic promotional items such as cutlery, plates, drinking straws or signage; plastic bags, including single-use plastic bags used to transport products that are provided or used upon purchase and polystyrene, including both rigid (e.g., takeout containers) and foam polystyrene (e.g., cups, packing foam).

Products made of plastic are not covered by the law.

The law is meant to address the country's contribution to the global plastic pollution problem, where 40 percent of global plastic waste ends up in the ocean. In 2016 alone, 11 million metric tons (MT) of plastic entered the ocean. If nothing is done, this may reach 29 million MT by 2040.

Previously, manufacturers were only responsible for the impact of the actual production of their products. But under the EPR Act, product manufacturers will be held responsible for the entire life cycle of their product — from manufacture to use and to end of life.

Companies must establish or phase in EPR programs for their plastic packaging within six months of the law's effectivity and register these with the National Solid Waste Management Commission.

They also need to measure their annual plastic packaging footprint and meet diversion targets.

Companies that don't register their EPR programs or fail to meet the diversion targets will be fined as follows: for the first offense, between P5 million and P10 million; second

offense, between P10 million and P15 million; and third offense, P15 million to not more than P20 million and suspension of business permit until they comply.

CCC IN THE NEWS

BUSINESS WORLD

[OPINION] Moving for a collective impact

By Ron F. Jabal

More and more companies are seeing a clear connection between social progress and business success. Not a day passes without hearing companies trumpet their triple-bottom approach to conducting business. These stories are being chronicled in sustainability reports that the Securities and Exchange Commission will reportedly mandate for all listed companies by 2023. Recent data shows that while this requirement is still on a comply or explain basis, the compliance rate among listed firms in the local bourse has been over 90% for the past two or three years. Indeed, local firms have gone a long way in implementing and chronicling their efforts to manage business impacts on people, profit, and the planet. Even without an expressed admission, companies are now fast becoming agents of social change.

We have heard and seen for decades how the global community has called into question how businesses are being conducted — where even the legitimacy of enterprises is put into question primarily because of their adverse impact on society. Thankfully, all stakeholders realize that the seeming antagonistic relationship between companies and communities is not the solution to huge problems such as environmental degradation and climate change. We are seeing several steps toward a more concerted approach to better sustainable business practices. Businesses realize they cannot work in silos as they exist in an ecosystem that involves the broader society — impact communities, suppliers, distributors, consumers, non-government organizations (NGOs), people's organization (POs), and state entities, i.e., national and local governments.

Hence, in pursuing shared value initiatives, we are seeing a positive theme called “collective impact,” which is fast becoming a “movement.”

As some management literature posits, a collective impact presupposes that social malaise is brought about by a complex combination of actions and omissions by stakeholders in any given situation; hence can be solved and managed only through careful, strategic, and coordinated efforts of all the stakeholders — the businesses, government, NGOs and POs, and the impact communities.

Indeed, a collective impact is an imprimatur for systemic changes. By bringing together relevant stakeholders — armed with appropriate data — the collective impact can foster a common understanding of the problem, eventually leading to developing and implementing mutually agreed upon solutions to social problems.

And businesses can bring so much to the table. They bring expertise in problem-solving within an understanding of time and budget. They embrace change management, pragmatism, and accountability, and have the ability to weave through ideological disagreements that sometimes affect governments and NGOs. Ultimately, motives can drive businesses to participate in collective impact initiatives because

their growth and resilience can be affected if and when social problems distress their businesses.

A clear example of a successful collective impact initiative is the Net Zero program being implemented by a global firm in the Philippines. Characterized as bold and yet realistic, this firm commits to: 1.) reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 30% in their operations by 2025 and achieve net-zero by 2050 at the latest; 2.) collect and divert 26,000 metric tons of plastic waste annually away from landfills and the ocean; 3.) reduce the use of virgin plastics by a third by 2025 and 100% of packaging to be recyclable or reusable; and, 4.) switch to 100% clean and renewable electricity in all its factories.

Early on, the company already realized that it could not achieve these targets alone. Thus, it has forged several strategic partnerships and collaborations with several organizations. It partnered with EcoPlanet Bamboo and One Tree Planted to help plant 2.5 million bamboo clumps and 1 million trees in Mindanao over the next three years.

It is also collaborating with the Climate Change Commission (CCC) to engage the youth in developing workable solutions to address issues and challenges linked to climate change through its innovation hub — Klimathon: Our Race Towards a Net Zero Reality. It is also in strategic alliance with the University of the Philippines – Los Baños (UPLB) to develop a program for its Department of Agribusiness Management and Entrepreneurship (DAME) to harness the youth’s potential for climate action through the “Net Zero Nation” competition.

Another company at the forefront of collective impact initiatives is one of the leading energy companies in the Philippines, which, for over 40 years, has been generating power from geothermal sources. It has earned its reputation as the Philippines’ leading renewable energy producer and the world’s largest vertically integrated geothermal producer.

Given its responsibility to carefully manage its impact on where it operates, this company has adopted a revolutionary framework that calls for regenerative development. It is particularly welcoming to hear its senior executives profess and commit action towards arresting the negative impacts of climate change.

This renewable energy firm has realigned its business, resources, and capabilities to fulfill a new chosen purpose: to forge collaborative pathways for a decarbonized and regenerative future. Embarking on this path, the company seeks to elevate the environment, its employees, communities, customers, other co-creators, and shareholders to create a broader, more positive impact on the planet.

As we continue to reel from the impact of COVID-19 amidst our battle against a number of social ills and the harmful effect of climate change, a new social mandate should be adopted by all businesses: a collective impact should be the new normal. More than a clarion call, a battle cry, or a mission, the collective impact should be a movement — a shared value for all. Only when a concerted and unified effort addresses social problems can we mitigate the bad, and, most importantly, grow and expand the good.

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