



NEWS ROUNDUP

29 July 2022 (Friday) [as of 10:34am]

- Filatex India to acquire stake in renewable energy company
- LIVE interview of Senator Loren Legarda with CNN Senior Anchor Pinky Webb.
- Affected areas assured of prompt assistance
- UN General Assembly Approves Resolution Recognizing Right to Healthy Environment
- OCD official pushes massive flood control projects on Panay Island
- Tackling solid waste: Nestlé PH turns over materials recovery facility in Lipa City
- Dying in an earthquake: Experts say it's not just the tremor
- [OPINION] Going nuclear: A sensible and practical option for the Philippines
- Creation of disaster resilience dep't pushed after Abra quake
- Flash floods displace 100 families in Koronadal
- U.S. Senate climate deal 'transformative', backers say
- P150M road raising project to mitigate SCTEX flooding
- Bong Go renews call for passage of ddr bill
- Communicating sustainability
- The next page for property: Recovery, growth and sustainability
- UN General Assembly declares access to clean and healthy environment a universal human right

BUSINESS STANDARD

Filatex India to acquire stake in renewable energy company

For sourcing captive power and reduce carbon footprint Filatex India announced that under Gujarat's Hybrid Wind-Solar Power Policy 2018, the company has signed PPA and SHA on 27 July 2022 with FP Crysta Energy and FPEL Sunrise respectively, 100% subsidiaries of Fourth Partner Energy, to procure renewable energy from their hybrid wind-solar open access power project as a captive consumer.

CNN Philippines - The Source - July 29, 2022 (Friday) | Facebook

LIVE interview of Senator Loren Legarda with CNN Senior Anchor Pinky Webb. SLL emphasized the importance of "build right at first sight" than build back better.

HEALTH POLICY WATCH

UN General Assembly Approves Resolution Recognizing Right to Healthy Environment

By: Elaine Ruth Fletcher

UNGA decision comes on the heels of an about-face by coal-promoting US Senator Joe Manchin, to support the inclusion of a climate mitigation package as part of President Joe Biden's flagship domestic spending package, potentially enabling its passage after months of deadlock.

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

Affected areas assured of prompt assistance

By: Jocelyn Montemayor

President Marcos Jr. yesterday assured Luzon residents affected by the magnitude 7 earthquake of immediate assistance, as he said he will soon visit Abra, the quake's epicenter, and other areas to personally check the situation on the ground.

MANILA BULLETIN

OCD official pushes massive flood control projects on Panay Island

By: Tara Yap

Iloilo City – An official of the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) has said that massive flood control projects are needed in three major river systems on Panay Island to curb perennial flooding.

MANILA STANDARD

Tackling solid waste: Nestlé PH turns over materials recovery facility in Lipa City

The growing solid waste management (SWM) problem in the Philippines can be attributed to factors such as improper waste disposal, inefficient waste collection, and the lack of disposal and recycling facilities in many cities and municipalities.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Dying in an earthquake: Experts say it's not just the tremor

By: Cristina Eloisa Baclig

Manila, Philippines—Earthquakes—which can result in ground shaking, soil liquefaction, landslides, fissures, avalanches, fires, tsunamis, and other destruction—have caused 750,000 deaths globally from 1998 to 2017, according to World Health Organization (WHO).

[OPINION] Going nuclear: A sensible and practical option for the Philippines

By Moira G. Gallaga

Energy is a vital resource of any country. Just as the human body needs the energy to function and get things done, it is essential in the functioning and growth of the country's economy. Its reliability, accessibility, and sufficiency can have direct effects on one's quality of life.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Creation of disaster resilience dep't pushed after Abra quake

By Filane Mikee Cervantes

Several lawmakers in the House of Representatives on Thursday emphasized the need for the immediate passage of a measure seeking to establish a Department of Disaster Resilience (DDR) to manage the country's disaster preparedness, response, and rehabilitation efforts.

Flash floods displace 100 families in Koronadal

By: Roel Osano

Koronadal City – At least 100 families were evacuated to safer grounds when a flash floods caused by a heavy downpour submerged five exterior barangays in this city on Wednesday evening.

REUTERS

US. Senate climate deal 'transformative', backers say

By: Timothy Gardner

Washington, July 27 (Reuters) - The nearly \$370 billion in climate and energy security measures in the budget reconciliation deal U.S. Senate Democrats struck on Wednesday were whittled down from previous versions of the bill, but highly praised by backers of clean energy.

SUNSTAR

P150M road raising project to mitigate SCTEX flooding

By: Charlene Cayabyab

HE ongoing P150-million road raising project at a 640-meter stretch at the SCTEX Dinalupihan is now halfway through and expected to be completed within the third quarter of the year.

THE MANILA TIMES

Bong Go renews call for passage of DDR bill

By Javier Joe Ismael

Sen. Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go on Thursday, July 28, renewed his call for the creation of the Department of Disaster Resilience (DDR) to ensure quicker response and a more proactive and holistic approach to preparing for calamities and other natural disasters.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Communicating sustainability

By Ron F. Jabal

With stakeholders demanding more transparency and accountability from brands and businesses, it has become imperative for organizations to develop and implement strategic sustainability communication plans.

The next page for property: Recovery, growth and sustainability

By Danessa Rivera

The Philippine property sector is expected to recover significantly in the next two to three years.

UN NEWS

UN General Assembly declares access to clean and healthy environment a universal human right

With 161 votes in favour, and eight abstentions*, the UN General Assembly adopted a historic resolution on Thursday, declaring access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, a universal human right.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS STANDARD

Filatex India to acquire stake in renewable energy company

For sourcing captive power and reduce carbon footprint, Filatex India announced that under Gujarat's Hybrid Wind-Solar Power Policy 2018, the company has signed PPA and SHA on 27 July 2022 with FP Crysta Energy and FPEL Sunrise respectively, 100% subsidiaries of Fourth Partner Energy, to procure renewable energy from their hybrid wind-solar open access power project as a captive consumer.

The Company will be required to invest Rs 10.35 crore for a 26% stake in the project to attain captive status. The PPA will be valid for a period of 25 years.

The Company will source 10.8MW of Wind and 10.8MWp of Solar, totaling to estimated 50 million units of energy annually. This will result in savings of Rs 10+ crores annually and reduce the carbon footprints of the company.

HEALTH POLICY WATCH (Independent Global Health Reporting)

UN General Assembly Approves Resolution Recognizing Right to Healthy Environment

By: Elaine Ruth Fletcher

UNGA decision comes on the heels of an about-face by coal-promoting US Senator Joe Manchin, to support the inclusion of a climate mitigation package as part of President Joe Biden's flagship domestic spending package, potentially enabling its passage after months of deadlock.

As regions as diverse as Southeast Asia, Europe and the Americas scorched under record July temperatures, the UN General Assembly on Thursday **adopted a landmark resolution** recognizing the human right to a "clean, healthy, and sustainable environment" as an indelible part of broader human rights guaranteed by the global governance body.

UNGA decision comes on the heels of an about-face by coal-promoting US Senator Joe Manchin, to support the inclusion of a climate mitigation package as part of President Joe Biden's flagship domestic spending package, potentially enabling its passage after months of deadlock.

As regions as diverse as Southeast Asia, Europe and the Americas scorched under record July temperatures, the UN General Assembly on Thursday **adopted a landmark resolution** recognizing the human right to a "clean, healthy, and sustainable environment" as an indelible part of broader human rights guaranteed by the global governance body.

The historic resolution was five decades in the making said the UN Environment Programme, that described it as a "victory for people and the planet." UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called it "an important tool for accountability and climate justice."

Until now, legal recognition of the right to a healthy environment in binding UN treaties and Conventions is patchy and vague. The General Assembly resolution sets the stage for more explicit recognition of this right in existing and future UN legal instruments – including new climate measures negotiated at the **COP 27** UN Climate Conference in November.

Climate mitigation advocates face an uphill battle to win approval at the Conference of Parties, due to be held in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt for more ambitious climate commitments that would keep average temperature rise under 1.5 C during this century. Under existing national commitments made **last year at COP26 in Glasgow**, the world remains on a trajectory to well exceed that target.

UN Vote comes hours after key US Senator withdraws opposite to US climate bill Sun obscured by heavy smoke during last summer's forest fire season in the United States.

Hours before the UN General Assembly vote, news of a dramatic turnabout in Washington DC by coal-promoting West Virginia Senator Joel Manchin, to support a raft of new US tax credits and incentives promoting green tech and renewable energy. His sudden turnabout, raised hopes among climate advocates that the United States could indeed assume a stronger leadership role in the global drive to sharpen climate commitments – which fail woefully short of what is needed to keep average temperature rise below 1.5 C in this century.

After weeks in which record US temperatures, wildfires and in other places, violent floods have vividly underscored that the climate crisis is real, Manchin said that he would support a massive **US domestic tax and spending bill** that includes \$369 billion in credits and financial incentives for clean energy and climate mitigation – as long as the package “invests in the technologies needed for all fuel types – from hydrogen, nuclear, renewables, fossil fuels and energy storage” and “does not arbitrarily shut off our abundant fossil fuels”.

The domestic spending package includes tax incentives and finance for renewable energy projects, climate friendly agriculture and other green-tech, and pollution reduction, as well as a \$7,500 tax break on new electric vehicles. That includes \$30 billion in production tax credits for solar panels, wind turbines, batteries and processing of minerals input; \$10 billion for clean industrial tech, , according to the **New York Times and other media reports**.

And the bill would include \$60 billion to clean up pollution hotspots in low-income communities; \$27 billion for a “green bank” aimed at delivering financial support to clean energy projects; \$20 billion to cut agriculture emissions. sector; and a methane fee on leaks from oil and gas facilities.

UN General Assembly delivered a “victory for people and planet”
Meanwhile, the UN Environment Programme's Inger Andersen celebrated the passage of the UN General Assembly Resolution as a “victory for the planet and people.”

In a press statement, she noted that billions of people are suffering “under the weight of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste,” and the UN move ” will help people stand up for their right to a safe climate, their right to breathe clean air and their rights to access clean and safe water, adequate food, healthy ecosystems and nontoxic environments.”

But now we must build on this victory and implement the right, because the triple planetary crisis is a huge threat to present and future generations. If nations implement this right fully, it will change so much – by empowering action on the triple

planetary crisis, providing a more predictable and consistent global regulatory environment for businesses, and protecting those who defend nature.

“The resolution has the potential to be a turning point for humanity, improving the life and enjoyment of human rights of billions of individuals as well as the health of our extraordinary planet,” said the **UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, David R. Boyd** in another statement.

“The health and quality of life of everyone directly depend on clean air to breathe, safe water to drink, sustainably produced food to eat, non-toxic environments, a safe climate, and healthy biodiversity and ecosystems,” the UN expert said. “The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as recognised universally today, includes all of those substantial elements.”

Draft US legislation also moves to lower prescription drug costs

The new US tax and spending bill also includes a **landmark initiative** to lower the cost of healthcare and particularly of prescription drugs in the US – where costs of the same medications are often far higher than those in Canada or other developed countries, including the European Union.

To lower costs, the draft US legislation would empower Medicare for the first time ever to directly negotiate with pharma providers over the price of prescription drugs that it procures, **beginning in 2023**. It would also cap out-of-pocket costs for older people drawing Medicare at \$2000 a year, provide free vaccines to seniors – and expand subsidies and provisions of the Affordable Care Act, which aims to provide access to health insurance to all Americans.

The plan would raise an estimated \$313 billion by closing tax loopholes used by some of the largest US corporations to reduce their tax rates below the US 21 percent corporate income tax rate. And the plan would raise another \$14 billion by reducing preferential tax treatment of venture capitalists and private equity firms.

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

Affected areas assured of prompt assistance

By: Jocelyn Montemayor

PRESIDENT Marcos Jr. yesterday assured Luzon residents affected by the magnitude 7 earthquake of immediate assistance, as he said he will soon visit Abra, the quake's epicenter, and other areas to personally check the situation on the ground.

The President, on social media immediately after the morning tremor, told the affected individuals that the government has taken actions to ensure their safety and welfare. "Sa kabila ng nakalulungkot na mga ulat tungkol sa pinsalang dulot ng lindol, ating sinisigurado ang maagap na pagtugon sa mga pangangailangan ng ating mga kababayang apektado ng sakunang ito (Amid the sad report on the damage brought by the earthquake, we assure the immediate and early response to the needs of our countrymen who were affected by this incident)," said Marcos who was in Malacañang when the earthquake hit.

Speaking in Ilocano, he also said, "To my countrymen in Abra, remain vigilant and approach members of government if you need help. We will recover from challenge together. Let us all be careful."

In a press conference in the afternoon, Marcos said would "stay away" from the affected areas to allow local officials to do their work without distraction. He said he might visit today or "as soon as possible."

Marcos said Social Welfare Secretary Erwin Tulfo, however, has flown to Bangued in Abra to check the situation and ensure food packs and other relief goods are readily distributed to affected communities.

Executive Secretary Victor Rodriguez also convened the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC) and established communications with local government units (LGUs) concerned to determine what they need from the national government.

"I am staying away from going to the affected areas for a very simple reason: It has been my experience as governor, it has been my experience in (typhoon) 'Yolanda' that when the national officers come to the affected areas immediately, ginugulo lang namin 'yung trabaho ng mga local (we just disrupt the work of the local officials)," Marcos said.

The President said if he visits this time, he would also need the police to secure him and he would meet with local officials to brief him when they should be on the ground attending to the people.

"So, I said, let them do their work. Let us wait for them to tell us what is going to be — what the true situation is and maybe I can schedule a trip perhaps tomorrow (Thursday) as soon as possible," he added.

Press Secretary Trixie Cruz-Angeles said Marcos has been coordinating with the NDRRMC and the Department of Social Welfare since the quake struck.

Tulfo, who also flew to Vigan in Ilocos Sur late yesterday, said the President ordered him to go to Abra within 30 minutes after the earthquake.

COMMUNICATIONS

Angeles said the President also called on the telecommunication companies to provide immediate assistance and free communication to all locations where towers have gone down.

Marcos, in the briefing, said Globe Telecoms is providing emergency cellsites while Smart Communications has yet to respond.

He said his main concern is ensuring the supply of electricity and water. He said the restoration of communication lines may be dependent on the availability of electricity.

Marcos also said that he learned from local officials that many establishments suffered structural damage. He said further inspection would be done to ensure the soundness of buildings, and even homes, before people are allowed to return. He expressed said aftershocks may affect the stability of structures. He recalled that during a strong earthquake in the 1990s, many people died in Baguio City after structures collapse during aftershocks.

The National Telecommunications Commission issued a memorandum directing all public telecommunication entities to provide free calls and free charging services from July 27 to August 5 in areas affected by the quake.

Globe said it has deployed a “Libreng Tawag, Libreng Charging and Libreng WiFi” station to the Bangued Plaza in Abra, adjacent to Lagangilang town, epicenter of the temblor.

Globe said its service has been stable as the quake had no impact on its network infrastructure.

PLDT and Smart said they have deployed personnel and mission-critical equipment to set up #LibrengTawag (free calls) stations in Abra and Ilocos Sur.

PLDT deployed power generators in areas with no power connections. “Emergency power generators are active in our towers where available and we are working with power companies and local government units to help restore services as soon as possible,” it said.

CALAMITY DECLARATION

Marcos said there is yet no need to declare a state of calamity or emergency in any area.

He said at least three regions should be heavily affected to warrant a declaration of a state of calamity. In this case, he said, only two regions — Ilocos (Region I) and the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) – have been heavily affected.

Interior Secretary Benjamin Abalos earlier said the Cagayan Valley (Region II) was also affected.

The President also emphasized the importance of having a Department of Disaster Resilience, saying extreme weather conditions being experienced by other countries due to climate change may eventually hit the “disaster-prone” Philippines.

“These are the things that we have to be careful of. We need more capability than we have now. We are already experienced in terms of typhoons. We already know what to do during earthquakes. But in times of danger, the dangers that the effects of climate change present, are different, that’s why we need a specialist agency,” he said in mixed Filipino and English.

Marcos said he and the others in Malacañang knew there was an earthquake because a chandelier in his office was swinging.

Angeles said the President and his family were all “unharmed” during the quake.

Employees in the Malacañang complex evacuated the buildings during the earthquake and stayed either at parking lots or streets outside the gated buildings. They returned to the offices after an inspection of the offices was done.

CLASSES

The Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) asked the Department of Education to suspend all in-school activities in affected areas.

ACT chairperson Vladimir Quetua said the DepEd should not wait for local authorities to do so.

“DepEd should suspend physical enrollment and face-to-face remedial and enrichment classes, and inspect all school buildings to check their safety before resuming in-school activities,” Quetua said.

“Schools now need the quick response of DepEd, the DPWH, and local government units for the needed repairs and alternative plans as to how to prepare for school opening and face-to-face classes,” he added.

Quetua said his group has received reports that Marikina and Makati have ordered the dismissal of all those in school for enrollment and enrichment classes.

“Parañaque also already sent city hall employees home, they also postponed the giving of allowances to students,” he added.

DepEd spokesperson Michael Tan Poa said they are still checking with their regional and division offices in affected areas if there are damaged schools.

Asked if Vice President and concurrent Education Secretary Sara Duterte Carpio will visit the affected area, Poa said he would check first with the former, who he added, is attending a meeting.

Meanwhile, Supreme Court spokesperson Brian Keith Hosaka said the regional trial courts of Malabon City, the Hall of Justice in Urdaneta City, Pangasinan, the regional trial courts and metropolitan trial courts of Lingayen and Branch 1 and 2 of the municipal trial courts in cities in San Fernando, La Union have also temporarily suspended their operations due to the earthquake.

ASSISTANCE

Tulfo said an initial P6 million in assistance has been released and 1,000 food boxes delivered to Abra. He said 5,000 to 6,000 additional food boxes from the DSWD's regional warehouse were expected to be delivered within the day.

He said 70 houses, 20 government buildings and three bridges in the province were damaged by the quake.

Tulfo said there were landslides in seven towns — Bucloc, Daguisman, Malibcong, Manabo, Pidigan, Wew, and Tineg. The towns of Tubo, Daguisman, Bucluc, and Lacub were isolated.

The DSWD-Disaster Response Operations Monitoring and Information Center (DROMIC) said it monitored landslides in Mt. Province and Abra as well as in Benguet that affected Marcos Highway and the Ambulao Road Beckel.

It also monitored that internet and electricity services in parts of Baguio had been affected.

DSWD said the department has P1.364 billion worth of funds and food and non-food items on stand by and ready for distribution.

Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman said the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Program (NDRRMP) Fund is available to tap for relief operations. There is also a quick response fund (QRF) that may be mobilized.

The Department of Public Works and Highways deployed quick response team to assess the national roads, bridges and public infrastructure.

Fourteen national roads were impassable to traffic due to rock fall, soil collapse, and safety reasons as a result of the earthquake.

The Department of Transportation (DOTr) and its attached agencies said airports, railways and seaports have resumed normal operations.

Baguio Airport is being monitored as some minor cracks in some facilities have been discovered.

The Light Rail Transit line 1 (LRT-1), LRT-2, Philippine National Railways and the Metro Rail Transit line 3 (MRT-3) resumed operations before noon yesterday, according to DOTr.

Several ports under the control of the Philippine Ports Authority reported normal operations.

MANILA BULLETIN

OCD official pushes massive flood control projects on Panay Island

By:Tara Yap

ILOILO CITY – An official of the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) has said that massive flood control projects are needed in three major river systems on Panay Island to curb perennial flooding.

“The river systems in the provinces of Capiz, Aklan, and Antique must be addressed,” said Jose Roberto Nuñez, OCD-Western Visayas (Region 6) director.

“Since I was assigned here (Western Visayas), the damage from flooding is very big,” said Nuñez, chairman of the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (RDRRMC)-Region 6.

“Sometimes, it even floods when there is no typhoon in the area,” added Nuñez as the National Disaster Resilience Month comes to a close.

Much of Capiz was engulfed by floodwaters last April from the intermittent rains spawned by tropical depression “Agaton.” The flooding killed 21 persons and displaced more than 480,000 people.

Nuñez said that RDRRMC-6 had earlier urged to expedite the implementation of the proposed Panay River Basin Development Project in Capiz.

The P19.7-billion project proposed by the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) has yet to start. While the project is mainly for the agriculture sector, it also has a flood control component.

Nuñez also called for a convergence approach by national government agencies such as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Agriculture (DA), as well local government units.

“We also need to work with our representatives in Congress,” added Nuñez.

Tackling solid waste: Nestlé PH turns over materials recovery facility in Lipa City

The growing solid waste management (SWM) problem in the Philippines can be attributed to factors such as improper waste disposal, inefficient waste collection, and the lack of disposal and recycling facilities in many cities and municipalities.

While the solid waste collection rate varies across the country—ranging from 40 percent to 85 percent, it's still evident how a sizeable portion of uncollected trash ends up in the environment. In fact, out of the 2.7 million tons of plastic waste that the Philippines generates annually, an estimated 20 percent of these seep into the ocean.

Helping to shape a waste-free future as a top priority, Nestlé Philippines, one of the country's largest food and beverage manufacturers, is tackling solid waste, especially plastics, with a holistic approach. The company is developing the packaging for the future, increasing collection and recycling efforts, and driving new behaviors and understanding through solid waste management (SWM) education.

In its latest initiative, Nestlé PH turned over a new materials recovery facility (MRF) in Barangay Bagong Pook in Lipa City, as part of its program to support the construction of MRFs in barangays. The turnover was attended by Lipa City Mayor Eric Africa, barangay officials and residents, officers from the City Environment and Natural Resources Office, and company representatives.

MRFs are essential for more efficient collection, segregation, and recycling of wastes. As mandated by R.A. 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, each barangay or cluster of barangays in the country is required to establish an MRF.

According to the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DENR), and the National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC), only 35 percent of barangays nationwide have MRFs. The lack of an MRF is one of the challenges that barangays face in implementing their SWM programs.

Mayor Africa congratulated Barangay Bagong Pook officials and residents during the turnover. "My wish is for everyone to work together to maintain this structure so you can maximize its purpose for your barangay. Not only will this help the environment, but it's also a way to encourage discipline among residents and to learn more about the importance of proper waste segregation and recycling," he said.

"Our old MRF was already too small to accommodate all the recyclable materials from our barangay. This new MRF is a great help because it can lessen the volume of waste we currently deliver to the city," said Lope Lina, barangay chairman of Bagong Pook. "Our aim is that alongside our existing collection and recycling programs, this MRF will enable us to become a model barangay for solid waste management."

"At Nestlé PH, it is important that we partner with local government units or LGUs in addressing solid waste management problems. We explore different opportunities for plastics to be recyclable in the country. Through the construction of this MRF, the

community will be able to generate value through recycling and reduce the volume of plastic waste that goes to the landfill and oceans,” said Christine Ponce-Garcia, Sustainability Lead of Nestlé PH.

Nestlé Lipa Factory Manager Eric Angulo underscored the long-term partnership between the company and the barangay: “During our presence of 30 years in this community, we have formed a strong bond with its residents. We have been there for each other through thick and thin, especially in times of calamities and crises. Today, we sincerely hope that this MRF will help Barangay Bagong Pook to better manage their solid waste.”

Among its SWM milestones, Nestlé PH is the first multinational fast-moving consumer goods company in the country to achieve plastic neutrality, recovering the equivalent amount of plastic it puts out in the market. From August 2020 to May 2022, it collected 48 million kilos of plastic waste.

Another of its initiatives is the development and rollout of SWM education modules that reaches grades 1-10 students in 20,000 public schools nationwide under the Nestlé Wellness Campus program. Recently, DENR, NSWMC, and Nestlé PH also launched the No Time To Waste: Climate Change and SWM Talks for officials of LGUs and government agencies, and community leaders.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Dying in an earthquake: Experts say it's not just the tremor

By: Cristina Eloisa Baclig.

Manila, Philippines—Earthquakes—which can result in ground shaking, soil liquefaction, landslides, fissures, avalanches, fires, tsunamis, and other destruction—have caused 750,000 deaths globally from 1998 to 2017, according to World Health Organization (WHO).

Earthquakes, which can strike suddenly and without warning, have been described by WHO as “a violent and abrupt shaking of the ground, caused by movement between tectonic plates along a fault line in the earth’s crust.”

WHO said deaths caused by earthquakes in the past decade accounted for nearly 60 percent of all disaster-related mortality worldwide.

While the extent of destruction and harm caused by an earthquake depends on factors such as magnitude, intensity and duration, and many more, data showed that aside from deaths, the natural disaster affected 125 million people across the globe between 1998 and 2017.

This means that the affected individuals were “injured, made homeless, displaced or evacuated during the emergency phase of the disaster.”

Ten of the strongest earthquakes that hit the Philippines in the past years—with magnitudes ranging from 6.1 to 7.8—have killed over 11,000 people—the deadliest of which was the 1976 Moro Gulf earthquake and tsunami that killed 8,000 individuals.

Studies have shown, however, that ground vibrations during earthquakes are rarely the direct cause of deaths or injuries. Most earthquake-related mortality and injuries result from collapsing walls, flying glass, and falling objects caused by the shaking of the ground.

Some studies have also found that certain medical conditions and the risk of disease outbreak after an earthquake can lead to an increase in death toll or injuries.

Distinguishing earthquake-related deaths

Reports of earthquake-related death and injury ratios vary. However, many studies have previously pointed out that the ratio is approximately 1:3, with many victims dying immediately.

Several studies—based on medical records following different earthquakes across the globe—found that most cases of death in earthquakes were due to building damage, including the structural collapse of buildings and infrastructure and debris falling from damaged buildings.

“Building damage is a major cause of death and injury in earthquakes, especially where solid building materials such as concrete are used, and buildings are not adapted to withstand ground motion,” researchers Sodia Bartholdson and Johan von

Schreeb wrote in a study titled “Natural Disasters and Injuries: What Does a Surgeon Need to Know?”

Injuries from infrastructure damage—caused by earthquakes—which ultimately result in death are mainly crush and other traumatic injuries.

Crush injury is defined by Encyclopedia Britannica as “any of the effects of compression of the body, as caused by collapsing buildings, mine disasters, earthquakes, and cave-ins.”

Following findings from various studies on earthquake-related deaths, Encyclopedia Britannica also stated that crush victims—especially those with severe injuries to the chest and abdomen—usually die before help arrives.

“Injuries to the extremities may not appear immediately serious, though latent symptoms frequently arise.”

Crush victims likewise have a high incidence of disseminated intravascular coagulation, sepsis, adult respiratory distress syndrome, and death.

Bartholdson and Schreeb also found that the time of onset influences the death toll.

“Earthquakes cause infrastructural damage, damage to health facilities, and disruption of transportation. This might cause traffic injuries and death, but also restrict rescue efforts and increase the vulnerability of the affected population,” the researchers said.

Meanwhile, among the most common causes of earthquake-related mortality—including instant deaths—are severe trauma with head injury, asphyxiation or lack of oxygen, and shock.

During the 1999 earthquake in Taiwan, 30 percent of people reportedly died due to head injuries.

Causes of earthquake injuries

According to Bourque and co-researchers, an “overwhelming majority” of earthquake-related health problems recorded globally are injuries—specifically, “soft tissue and orthopedic injuries caused by falls and being struck by nonstructural elements (e.g., furniture, ornaments, light fixtures).”

They noted that the majority of these injuries are considered minor and do not require hospital admission.

In the study “Earthquake-related injuries among survivors: A systematic review and quantitative synthesis of the literature,” researchers further provided data on how common these earthquake-related injuries are.

The study analyzed 74 research articles about earthquake-related injuries from China as well as from other countries that were published over the past 50 years

“In this analysis, fractures, soft tissue, and crush injuries were the three most common and most reported injury types. Extremities and the head/neck were the most common and mentioned injury locations,” the researchers stated.

Out of the total earthquake-related injuries they tallied from the 74 research articles, fractures were the most common, accounting for 48.47 percent.

Other earthquake-induced injuries that were also noted: “range from mild cuts and bruises to more serious conditions such as severe fractures, internal organ damage, crush syndrome, and burns.”

Burn injuries during earthquakes, Bartholdson and Schreeb noted, are relatively rare. However, it is common when earthquakes occur in rural areas of low- and middle-income countries, “where basic cooking methods and heating is used.”

“Earthquakes occurring during common cooking times might also increase the burn incidence,” they added.

[OPINION] Going nuclear: A sensible and practical option for the Philippines

By Moira G. Gallaga

Energy is a vital resource of any country. Just as the human body needs the energy to function and get things done, it is essential in the functioning and growth of the country's economy. Its reliability, accessibility, and sufficiency can have direct effects on one's quality of life.

The pressing need to address climate change and meet commitments made to reduce our carbon footprint, the war in Ukraine, and the pandemic, among other factors affecting the global economy, have all combined to create a multitude of issues, such as inflation and high gas prices, that have made life quite difficult for ordinary folk. It also bears mentioning that even before the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, energy prices in the Philippines were already among the highest in the region.

In view of the multifaceted challenges faced by the Philippine energy sector, adding nuclear power to the country's energy mix is a sensible and practical option. Nuclear energy provides a solution to meet commitments to reduce carbon emissions, as well as adequate and reliable power for development needs. It also lowers electricity prices for consumers and enhances the country's energy security by reducing its reliance on third parties and external factors.

In his first State of the Nation Address this week, President Marcos Jr. cited the need to reexamine the country's strategy for utilizing nuclear power and adding it to the mix of energy sources needed to spur economic development while adhering to climate change commitments. He also assured the International Atomic Energy Agency that the Philippines will observe pertinent regulations for the safe and secure use of nuclear energy. With the President's pronouncement, going nuclear is now definitely part of our country's energy policy.

As for implementation, Executive Order No. 164 signed by former president Duterte can be viewed as a starting point, as it provides a national policy position from which the strategy of building nuclear power plants can be reexamined by relevant agencies. There will be other key steps necessary to move forward with this policy, such as establishing an independent regulatory body, ratifying key global nuclear safety and security conventions and treaties, and passing legislation to update nuclear regulatory laws.

This means that the participation and support of both houses of Congress will be crucial. The involvement of the legislative branch of government in this process will provide ample opportunity to put into place a robust legal and regulatory framework to ensure safety and security in the use of nuclear energy. Given there will be resistance to the use of nuclear power from some sectors of society, the legislative arena provides ample opportunity for robust debate on the issue.

Mr. Marcos has yet to appoint an energy secretary, but whoever gets entrusted with that role will be crucial in putting everything together to enable the country to reap the benefits of nuclear energy. This person should be able to work closely with other key agencies such as the Departments of Environment and Natural Resources, Trade and

Industry, and Science and Technology. Hopefully, the right person would soon be chosen for the job.

This is an opportunity to get things done right for the benefit of all. The success of advanced economies may be traced in part to their use of nuclear energy. The Philippines is no longer a Third World country and is now a fast-rising, dynamic economy on the verge of achieving upper-middle income status. Let's not fail to seize the moment.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Creation of disaster resilience dep't pushed after Abra quake

By Filane Mikee Cervantes

Several lawmakers in the House of Representatives on Thursday emphasized the need for the immediate passage of a measure seeking to establish a Department of Disaster Resilience (DDR) to manage the country's disaster preparedness, response, and rehabilitation efforts.

Ang Probinsyano Party-list Representative Alfred Delos Santos said the magnitude 7 quake that hit Abra and nearby areas should be the "last reminder" to Congress on the urgent necessity of creating the DDR.

Delos Santos said the chamber could expedite the approval of the bill since it was already approved in the 18th Congress, citing House Rule 10, Section 48, which authorizes the committees to dispose of priority measures already filed and approved on the third reading in the previous Congress.

"I was a co-author of the Department of Disaster Resilience (DDR) bill during the 18th Congress. It was approved on third and final reading; so, I add my voice in agreement to the fast-track approach to bills that the House previously approved on third and final reading," Delos Santos said.

A more science-based approach to disaster resilience

Davao City Representative Paolo Duterte, Benguet Rep. Eric Yap, Quezon City Rep. Ralph Tulfo, ACT-CIS Partylist Reps. Edvic Yap, Jocelyn Tulfo and Jeffrey Soriano, meanwhile, pushed for House Bill No. 452 that aims to create the DDR.

The bill seeks to create an "empowered, highly specialized, science and information and communications technology (ICT)-based and fast and responsive Department of Disaster Resilience, with the clear unity of command which shall be primarily responsible for ensuring safe, adaptive and disaster-resilient communities."

"We should emphasize the science-based aspect of this proposal. With the Philippines among the countries most vulnerable to the destructive effects of climate change, science and technology should play a key role in helping us prepare for possible disasters," the lawmakers said.

Under the measure, the DDR shall manage and direct the implementation of national, local and community-based disaster resilience and disaster management programs, projects and activities in collaboration with relevant government agencies, local government units (LGUs), civil society organizations, academic groups and other stakeholders.

Duterte said their proposed measure includes the establishment of a National Disaster Operations Center (NDOC), Alternative Command and Control Centers (ACCCs) in the regions and the Disaster Resilience Research and Training Institute (DRRTI).

He said the DRRTI will help develop a highly professionalized corps of officers that will be in charge of, among others, multi-hazard mapping; risk analysis; and the setting up of a database that includes relevant information from other government agencies and third parties for the DDR to better prepare and respond to natural hazards.

The DRRTI also includes the establishment of reliable and up-to-date disaster-related information and communications systems and technologies through close coordination with the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and academic institutions.

“If we are to create a Department of Disaster Resilience, we should make it a strong, dependable agency by employing the latest technologies available. This will ensure that the DDR will be efficient and effective in performing its task of being the country’s main disaster management agency,” Duterte said.

Evacuation centers in every city, municipality

Speaker Martin Romualdez, Committee on Accounts Chairperson Rep. Yedda Maria Romualdez, and Tingog Party-list Rep. Jude Acidre filed a measure that would make temporary shelters always available for Filipinos under House Bill 16.

The bill proposes to establish evacuation centers in every city and municipality that would offer accommodation for people who have been displaced from their homes due to natural or man-made disasters.

“Seeking temporary solutions to the displacement of families by using schools as evacuation centers must be stopped. There should be no tradeoff between protecting lives and the education of students. The provision of adequate evacuation centers is of invaluable importance during cataclysmic times,” the lawmakers said.

To save government expenses, the measure provides that existing structures that could be upgraded to effectively serve as evacuation centers would be designated as such in compliance with the local government unit concerned.

The LGUs would be responsible for the operation, supervision, and management of these evacuation centers.

The bill has already been referred to the Committee on Disaster Resilience to be deliberated upon by the legislators.

Bills promoting disaster preparedness, animal calamity rescue

Delos Santos said the Laging Handa bill under House Bill 1923 provides for the integration of basic medical training and disaster awareness or response in all institutions of learning, including but not limited to, schools, colleges, universities, and vocational learning institutions.

“The schools would be mandated to integrate into their respective curricula and make available to all its students relevant and updated subjects, units, and electives, or

courses, regarding basic medical training, national emergency or disaster awareness, preparedness, and response,” he said.

Implementing agencies in HB 1923 are the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Department of Education (DepEd), in coordination with the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRMMC).

He also pushed for the Animal Calamity Rescue bill (HB 1915) to address the lack of guidelines about the rescue of livestock and working animals during times of calamity.

"Many of our fellow Filipinos depend on their animals for their livelihood or business, and their rescue during disasters would reduce calamity impacts on households and enterprises,” he said.

Flash floods displace 100 families in Koronadal

By: Roel Osano

Koronadal City – At least 100 families were evacuated to safer grounds when a flash floods caused by a heavy downpour submerged five exterior barangays in this city on Wednesday evening.

Cyrus Urbano, chief of the City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office, said Thursday many of the evacuees came from the hardest hit barangay Cacub that experienced a life-threatening flood.

“In Cacub, 55 flash flood affected families are now temporarily staying in their barangay gymnasium. Crops and infrastructures were also destroyed,” Urbano said.

In Barangay Topland, several families voluntarily evacuated and stayed with their relatives and neighbors living on safer grounds when the main irrigation canal traversing the provincial road overflowed.

“Several families affected by continuous erosion of the riverbank in Topland River evacuated to the local gymnasium a few days earlier,” Urbano said.

He added that families living near a riverbank in Barangay Esperanza were also evacuated. The city government sent two dump trucks to extricate the affected residents to their barangay gymnasium.

“I have yet to establish the exact number of affected families but what is definite is we have evacuees in Barangay Esperanza,” Urbano said.

In Barangay San Jose, at least nine families that were also affected by flash floods are now staying at the regional evacuation center in the area.

Urbano said the flood waters came from the mountainous areas of Barangays Topland and Cacub and parts of nearby Tampakan town.

The city government has distributed family food packs, sleeping mats, jerry cans and other essential needs to the flood victims.

REUTERS

US. Senate climate deal 'transformative', backers say

By: Timothy Gardner

Washington - The nearly \$370 billion in climate and energy security measures in the budget reconciliation deal U.S. Senate Democrats struck on Wednesday were whittled down from previous versions of the bill, but highly praised by backers of clean energy.

Early versions of the bill had \$555 billion in tax breaks for clean energy such as wind and solar power as well as batteries and nuclear reactors.

Still, Wednesday's package would cut U.S. emissions 40% by 2030, a summary released by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer's office said.

The baseline for the cut was 2005, Leah Stokes, a professor of climate and energy policy at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who advised Democrats on the bill.

Clean energy backers said it would go a long way toward President Joe Biden's goal of decarbonizing the U.S. economy by 2050.

"It's an absolutely transformative package," said Stokes. She said the bill would boost American manufacturing in everything from batteries to solar energy to electric vehicles and contains the largest environmental justice investment ever.

Advertisement · Scroll to continue

Biden, who has faced soaring oil prices and record gasoline prices that have helped drive inflation to 40-year highs, said in statement the bill would "improve our energy security and tackle the climate crisis."

Heather Zichal, the head of American Clean Power, a group of renewable energy companies, said Congress is now close to passing "the biggest climate and clean energy investment in American history."

Biden, who has faced soaring oil prices and record gasoline prices that have helped drive inflation to 40-year highs, said in statement the bill would "improve our energy security and tackle the climate crisis."

Heather Zichal, the head of American Clean Power, a group of renewable energy companies, said Congress is now close to passing "the biggest climate and clean energy investment in American history."

Democrats hope to pass the bill by a simple majority in the Senate. The bill must also pass the House, where Democrats also have a razor-thin majority, and be signed by Biden.

It contains a "methane emissions reduction program" to cut leaks of the potent greenhouse gas methane from drilling of natural gas, according to the summary.

It was not immediately clear if a methane fee many Democrats had wanted on the emissions that would penalize energy companies for the leaks had been modified.

Senator Joe Manchin, a conservative Democrat and the swing vote who has received more donations from oil and gas companies than any other lawmaker in recent years, had pushed for companies to not face the fee if they were unable to build a pipeline to carry the gas to market.

Manchin said the bill will invest in hydrogen, nuclear power, renewables, fossil fuels and energy storage.

"This bill does not arbitrarily shut off our abundant fossil fuels," said Manchin, who has sought for months to preserve federal oil and gas leasing projects and natural gas pipelines in talks on the bill.

Democrats, he added, "have committed to advancing a suite of commonsense permitting reforms this fall that will ensure all energy infrastructure, from transmission to pipelines and export facilities, can be efficiently and responsibly built to deliver energy safely around the country and to our allies."

The measure has more than \$60 billion in environmental justice programs to fight pollution and address public health harms in disadvantaged communities. It also has \$20 billion for "climate-smart" agriculture practices, the summary said without providing details.

The bill contains a \$10 billion investment tax credit to build clean technology manufacturing plants for EVS, wind turbines and solar panels, the summary said.

It also has an estimated \$30 billion investment in production tax credits to accelerate U.S. manufacturing of batteries and wind and solar power components and critical minerals processing.

SUNSTAR

P150M road raising project to mitigate SCTEX flooding

By: Charlene Cayabyab

HE ongoing P150-million road raising project at a 640-meter stretch at the SCTEX Dinalupihan is now halfway through and expected to be completed within the third quarter of the year.

“We are always on the lookout for solutions that can help improve the reliability and safety of our roads and other structures. By elevating this portion of SCTEX, motorists can expect to traverse a safer and more accessible route, especially during inclement weather conditions,” NLEX Corporation President J. Luigi L. Bautista said.

The project, which aims to mitigate the risk of flooding, includes the construction of new pavement on top of the existing one and the addition of new culverts or drainage structures. Parts of the road are being raised as high as two meters and are filled with layers of earth materials to mitigate flooding in the area, thus, ensuring the safe passage of motorists.

Once completed, the project will enable the infrastructure to be more resilient and further sustain severe weather events.

With the implementation of lane closures, traffic management and safety measures are in place to guide motorists and reduce travel delays. Advisories on the closures are regularly posted on NLEX Corporation’s social media channels to update motorists on traffic conditions and construction activities.

Previously, NLEX raised the elevation of the Maritan Highway-Rizal Highway-Tipo Road junction as part of the capacity expansion of the Subic Freeport Expressway (SFEX). It also undertook drainage improvement projects last 2015 and 2021 in Valenzuela City to ease flooding. These projects involved the construction of a pumping facility and a sump on the southbound, and the replacement of concrete-made drainage covers with more durable steel gratings on the northbound side.

The tollway company is currently doing various infrastructure improvement works in all its expressways such as upkeep of interchange bridges and overpasses, upgrading of pavement, and major safety upgrade of Candaba Viaduct southbound and Pasig-Potrero bridge. Toll system enhancement projects are also underway in select NLEX-SCTEX toll plazas.

NLEX Corporation is a subsidiary of the Metro Pacific Tollways Corporation (MPTC), the toll road arm of the Metro Pacific Investments Corporation (MPIC).

THE MANILA TIMES

Bong Go renews call for passage of ddr bill

By Javier Joe Ismael

Sen. Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go on Thursday, July 28, renewed his call for the creation of the Department of Disaster Resilience (DDR) to ensure quicker response and a more proactive and holistic approach to preparing for calamities and other natural disasters.

"I am confident that our government is always ready to help our countrymen toward their early recovery. I am also prepared to help our affected countrymen in whatever capacity," he said.

The senator said that the powerful quake that hit Abra province made his long-running clamor for the establishment of the DDR even more 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," said Go.

"'Immediate return to normalcy' is one of the most important mandates of the proposed DDR," he added.

Go reintroduced in the 19th Congress Senate Bill 188 to establish the DDR. The measure seeks to create a highly specialized agency that will be tasked with ensuring adaptive, disaster-resilient and safe communities.

The DDR will bring together all essential functions and mandates currently scattered among various disaster-related agencies.

To support the DDR's functions and responsibilities, the measure provides for the creation of an Integrated Disaster Resilience Information System which will serve as a database of all relevant disaster risk reduction and climate change information.

Moreover, the bill provides for the establishment of a Humanitarian Assistance Action Center, a one-stop shop for the processing and release of goods, equipment and services, in order to guarantee the timely delivery of assistance to disaster-stricken areas.

It likewise provides for remedial measures for areas under a state of calamity, such as the imposition of a price ceiling on basic necessities and prime commodities, programming or reprogramming of funds for the repair of public infrastructures, and grant of no-interest loans by lending institutions to vulnerable groups or individuals.

Finally, the measure establishes the National Disaster Operations Center and Alternative Command and Control Centers to monitor, manage and respond to disasters. There will also be a Disaster Resilience Research and Training Institute which will offer training, and collect, manage and share information to improve the country's resilience.

Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano, during the Senate regular session on Wednesday, delivered a manifestation asking the Senate to urge President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. to certify as urgent the measures creating the DDR.

Senate President Juan Miguel "Migz" Zubiri and Majority Leader Emmanuel Joel Villanueva also expressed their support for the legislation.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Communicating sustainability

By Ron F. Jabal

With stakeholders demanding more transparency and accountability from brands and businesses, it has become imperative for organizations to develop and implement strategic sustainability communication plans.

Today, sustainability communication is no longer just a compliance exercise focusing on ticking boxes for regulators as companies rethink their communications approach. With sustainability becoming a mainstream business concern, more and more companies are communicating sustainability stories that feature initiatives that address several social issues. Organizations are engaging more people to make sustainability programs accessible and understandable for everyone using various communication channels.

Communicating sustainability to all stakeholders has inherent benefits for organizations. For one, sustainability communication strengthens brand equity and corporate reputation. Surveys of senior managers and investment professionals in global firms have found that brand equity and corporate reputation are perceived as the most critical areas where sustainability actions bring benefit and add value. Bringing to people's attention the various sustainability initiatives of businesses and brands help stakeholders and consumer care about them.

Given the emergence of highly attentive stakeholders and vigilant consumers, share value projects form part of people's decisions on whether to invest in, partner with, or work for a company. A well-crafted sustainability communications program can help manage the gap between sustainability perception and sustainability reality.

Unfortunately, for companies who stay quiet, stakeholders may assume silence reflects a lack of progress on the issues they care about. Today's stakeholders and consumers, in general, are also savvy and increasingly unsatisfied with sweeping statements. Thus, they seek proof of the benefits and impact of your sustainability programs.

Therefore, there is a need for well-crafted communications plan to serve as a powerful tool to engage employees and help drive change internally and to spark stakeholders' interest in the significant milestones you are meeting on your sustainability journey. In addition, a good narrative can help you increase competitive advantage as your position or stance on social and environmental issues will differentiate you from your peers and competitors. Moreover, communicating sustainability efforts will help address challenges, such as new reporting regulations, declining consumer trust in brands, and closer scrutiny from investors.

Here are some basic principles to effectively craft your sustainability story.

Keep it simple

Sustainability is a vast and complex business agenda. It is very nuanced and multi-layered, and it can be overwhelming when left with untrained consumers. Simplify

complex information or concepts into bite-size and easy-to-understand information chunks and avoid jargon.

Be authentic and genuine.

Do not dress up the stories you are sharing. Fluff can easily be checked. Show proof of impact. Do not just say it. More importantly, never impress with too much data. Your stakeholders and consumers can and will know.

Focus on positives

Concentrate on what your stakeholders and consumers can gain from the information you share. Do not hesitate to share the challenges you need to overcome and the steps you took to manage challenges.

Enhance your design

Never consider design as an afterthought. Make sure the design is in tune with your brand and business. Avoid the clichés of stock sustainability images. Explore ways to show your thinking, using your distinctive voice relevant to your brand and audience.

Continue communicating

Sustainability is not a one-off activity you forget when you tick off the box. Just keep the engagement going and flowing. To drop the ball after your initial action is a missed and failed opportunity. Just keep talking, listening, and collaborating.

The next page for property: Recovery, growth and sustainability

By Danessa Rivera

The Philippine property sector is expected to recover significantly in the next two to three years.

Homebuyers will be looking for future-ready and sustainable homes and employees will be returning to the office. Commercial spaces will bounce back as well, along with the property sector's recovery.

Indeed, demand for commercial spaces is back as pandemic restrictions ease and as offices implement the return-to-office (RTO) directive, according to real estate services company Santos Knight Frank.

Santos Knight Frank said demand for the office market, in particular, will be driven by Western companies continuing to cut costs, which could lead to more outsourcing companies to set up shops in the Philippines.

The real estate services firm also cited the need of PEZA-registered companies for more office space to comply with Fiscal Incentives Review Board requirements.

Those currently operating at under 70 percent work-from-office rules may need to prepare for 90 percent work-from-office by September, leading to higher leasing activities for office space.

BPOs to boost return-to-office work

Also in relation to the RTO directive, Santos Knight Frank said the Philippines is forecasted to see a greater rate of RTO for employees than the rate in developed Western economies. RTO in the Philippines is a result of both the office culture and the needs of its BPO occupiers.

Santos Knight Frank cited the easing of travel restrictions, pent-up demand for consumption, high vaccination rates, and the RTO as reasons for the recovery in brick-and-mortar retail.

It also cited the latest survey by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) which showed consumers had a higher level of confidence during the quarter and better outlook for the rest of the year despite inflation.

“Second quarter was the first quarter for many employees to return to the office. With that, we also saw an increase in leasing activity for the first time in a while. However, with 228,500 square meters of new office space also added to the market in the second quarter, the Metro Manila vacancy rate still rose to 23 percent,” Occupier Strategy & Solutions senior director Morgan McGilvray said.

The weighted average lease rate grew by 0.7 percent to P1,089 in the second quarter from P1,082 in the first quarter.

LEED-certified buildings, ESG values

Santos Knight Frank expects an increase in demand for spaces in LEED-certified buildings amid companies' growing commitment to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) values.

This as it projects the proportion of LEED-certified buildings in Metro Manila to increase to 32 percent by end-2025 from 22.3 percent in the second quarter of this year.

"ESG is becoming integral to corporate real estate decision making. From 'nice-to-have,' sustainability and wellness are increasingly becoming 'must-haves' for companies," Santos Knight Frank chairman and CEO Rick Santos said.

He said occupiers will choose the best space for their employees and businesses at the best value.

"Landlords have been acknowledging this, and we estimate that 72.3 percent of upcoming office space between the third quarter of 2022 and 2025 will be in LEED-certified buildings. This will increase the proportion of green buildings in Metro Manila to 32 percent by the end of 2025," Santos said.

The real estate services company also sees a significant growth in demand for industrial space, specifically renewable energy.

It noted that in 2012, the Philippines only had two megawatts (MW) of solar energy capacity and this jumped to 1,370 MW in 2021.

"The growth of renewable energy is key to supporting the expansion of the industrial sector. Lower cost of electricity significantly benefits industries that massively rely on power, such as manufacturing and data centers," Santos Knight Frank head of investment and capital markets Kash Salvador said.

There is also a growing interest in the country's data center sector.

Santos Knight Frank said it is tracking a total of 220 MW worth of expressed interest, with 90 MW recorded in the second quarter of this year alone.

It projects that the existing 94 MW total IT capacity of data centers will likely double in the next two to three years.

"A number of factors are driving interests in the Philippines, including the new Singapore rule on data center construction and the potential incentives for data center investment in the Philippines under the Strategic Investment Priority Plan. Some of the best places for data centers are industrial parks, and we look forward to seeing more industrial park developments to host data center facilities. With about 8,700 MW capacity across Asia Pacific, the Philippines data center market still has a wide room for growth," Santos Knight Frank's data centers lead and Occupier Strategy & Solutions director Monica Gonzalez said.

UN NEWS

UN General Assembly declares access to clean and healthy environment a universal human right

With 161 votes in favour, and eight abstentions*, the UN General Assembly adopted a historic resolution on Thursday, declaring access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, a universal human right.

The resolution, based on a similar text adopted last year by the Human Rights Council, calls upon States, international organisations, and business enterprises to scale up efforts to ensure a healthy environment for all.

The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, welcomed the 'historic' decision and said the landmark development demonstrates that Member States can come together in the collective fight against the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

“The resolution will help reduce environmental injustices, close protection gaps and empower people, especially those that are in vulnerable situations, including environmental human rights defenders, children, youth, women and indigenous peoples”, he said in a statement released by his Spokesperson’s Office.

He added that the decision will also help States accelerate the implementation of their environmental and human rights obligations and commitments.

“The international community has given universal recognition to this right and brought us closer to making it a reality for all”, he said.

Guterres underscored that however, the adoption of the resolution 'is only the beginning' and urged nations to make this newly recognised right 'a reality for everyone, everywhere'.

Urgent action needed

In a statement, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet also hailed the Assembly’s decision and echoed the Secretary-General's call for urgent action to implement it.

“Today is a historic moment, but simply affirming our right to a healthy environment is not enough. The General Assembly resolution is very clear: States must implement their international commitments and scale up their efforts to realize it. We will all suffer much worse effects from environmental crises, if we do not work together to collectively avert them now,” she said.

Ms. Bachelet explained that environmental action based on human rights obligations provides vital guardrails for economic policies and business models.

“It emphasizes the underpinning of legal obligations to act, rather than simply of discretionary policy. It is also more effective, legitimate and sustainable,” she added.

A resolution for the whole planet

The text, originally presented by Costa Rica, the Maldives, Morocco, Slovenia and Switzerland last June, and now co-sponsored by over 100 countries, notes that the right to a healthy environment is related to existing international law and affirms that its promotion requires the full implementation of multilateral environmental agreements.

It also recognises that the impact of climate change, the unsustainable management and use of natural resources, the pollution of air, land and water, the unsound management of chemicals and waste, and the resulting loss in biodiversity interfere with the enjoyment of this right - and that environmental damage has negative implications, both direct and indirect, for the effective enjoyment of all human rights.

According to the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, Mr. David Boyd, the Assembly's decision will change the very nature of international human rights law.

"Governments have made promises to clean up the environment and address the climate emergency for decades but having a right to a healthy environment changes people's perspective from 'begging' to demanding governments to act", he recently told UN News.

A victory five decades in the making

In 1972, the United Nations Conference on the Environment in Stockholm, which ended with its own historic declaration, was the first one to place environmental issues at the forefront of international concerns and marked the start of a dialogue between industrialized and developing countries on the link between economic growth, the pollution of the air, water and the ocean, and the well-being of people around the world.

UN Member States back then, declared that people have a fundamental right to "an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being," calling for concrete action and the recognition of this right.

Last October, after decades of work by nations at the front lines of climate change, such as the Maldives archipelago, as well as more than 1,000 civil society organisations, the Human Rights Council finally recognised this right and called for the UN General Assembly to do the same.

"From a foothold in the 1972 Stockholm Declaration, the right has been integrated into constitutions, national laws and regional agreements. Today's decision elevates the right to where it belongs: universal recognition", UN Environment chief, Inger Andersen, explained in a statement published this Thursday.

The recognition of the right to a healthy environment by these UN bodies, although not legally binding— meaning countries don't have a legal obligation to comply— is expected to be a catalyst for action and to empower ordinary people to hold their governments accountable.

"So, the recognition of this right is a victory we should celebrate. My thanks to Member States and to the thousands of civil society organizations and indigenous peoples' groups, and tens of thousands of young people who advocated relentlessly

for this right. But now we must build on this victory and implement the right”, Ms. Andersen added.

Triple crisis response

As mentioned by the UN Secretary-General, the newly recognised right will be crucial to tackling the triple planetary crisis.

This refers to the three main interlinked environmental threats that humanity currently faces: climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss - all mentioned in the text of the resolution.

Each of these issues has its own causes and effects and they need to be resolved if we are to have a viable future on Earth.

The consequences of climate change are becoming increasingly apparent, through increased intensity and severity of droughts, water scarcity, wildfires, rising sea levels, flooding, melting polar ice, catastrophic storms and declining biodiversity.

Meanwhile, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), air pollution is the largest cause of disease and premature death in the world, with more than seven million people dying prematurely each year due to pollution.

Finally, the decline or disappearance of biological diversity - which includes animals, plants and ecosystems - impacts food supplies, access to clean water and life as we know it.

* States who abstained: China, Russian Federation, Belarus, Cambodia, Iran, Syria, Kyrgyzstan and Ethiopia.

-END-