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26 JAN 2016

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Tuesday

# **DENR**

## **IN THE NEWS**

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICES

# ₱60-M allotted for environmental infra in Dinagat Islands

By MIKE U. CRISMUNDO

SAN JOSE, Province of Dinagat Islands – In an effort to provide vital environmental services to the people of the Province of Dinagat Islands' (PDI) seven towns, the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) launched yesterday a ₱60-million Infrastructure Masterplan of PENRO-Dinagat Complex (IMPDC) at Purok 2, Barangay Sta. Cruz, in San Jose town.

Top officials of the DENR and PDI jumpstarted the project by launching ₱2-million fencing project as part of the site development of IMPDC.

Part of the budget of the IMPDC will be set aside for the construction of road network, sea wall, boulevard, port, guard post and other PENRO-PDI development projects.

During the the inauguration and blessing of the DENR PENRO-PDI Training Center, it was also learned that the PENRO-PDI will be able to start constructing a third building for a hostel.

Also highlighting of the PDI's big event was the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the close



**DINAGAT ISLAND TRAINING CENTER** – Top officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and local officials, led by Province of Dinagat Islands Rep. Arlene J. Bag-ao (second from left), lead the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the opening of the two-story Dinagat Islands DENR provincial training center at Purok 2, Barangay Sta. Cruz in San Jose town, Province of Dinagat Islands yesterday. (Mike U. Crismundo)

to 1,000—hectares tree planting project, in full support of the National Greening Program (NGP) in the municipalities of Loreto, Dinagat, Libjo, Basilisa, San Jose, Cagdianao and Tubajon, where the signatories included PENRO-PDI officials, led by PENR Officer Agapito

T. Patubo, barangay captains and other local leaders.

Under the NGP program, PENRO-PDI will have an allocation of ₱20 million for massive tree planting activities this year.

Witnessing the signing of MOA were

PDI lone district solon Rep. Arlene "Kaka" J. Bag-ao, mayors and provincial officials.

Bag-ao said she was also allotting ₱6 million from her congressional fund for the infrastructure development of IMPDC. The Constituency Office of the solon is now closely coordinating with PENR Officer Patubo for various environmental programs in the province.

DENR Director for Human Resource Development Service Central Office Rolando R. Castro and DENR 13 Regional Executive Director (RED) Nonito M. Tamayo, also witnessed the event.

"These infrastructure and development programs here will pose a great inspiration to further our commitment of sustaining excellence in governance and service delivery for Dinagatnons," Tamayo said.

Environment Secretary Ramon JP Paje has also ordered that another ₱20 million be allocated as funding support for the Dinagat Conservation Program (DCP) for the island's seven towns which have a total population of 150,000.

To date, over 550,000 mangrove propagules have already been planted in the island province.



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# The Manila Times

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## 1,500 waterbirds counted in

TEXT AND PHOTOS  
BY ALBERT BALBUTIN  
HARIBON FOUNDATION

## Manila Bay's sole mangrove haven

**I**N January, the Philippines participated at the International Waterbird Census (IWC), the largest coordinated biodiversity monitoring program in the world, which marked its 50th year.

In a span of two weeks, the Haribon Foundation and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) along with other environment organizations and bird enthusiasts counted thousands of waterbirds in various locations in the country.

On its count on January 20, Haribon and DENR recorded waterbirds roaming at Manila Bay's only mangrove haven, the Freedom Island, which is part of the Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Eco-tourism Area (LPPCHEA). The count contributes to the IWC via the Asian Waterbird Census, devoted to consolidating records in Asia.

Among 26 species, 1,554 birds

were counted, compared to 5,000 birds from a 2004 census. This showed that numbers of birds declined over the years and although Wednesday's low tide might have contributed to low counts, trends of decrease are still evident in Asian Waterbird Census.

In a comment by Rey Aguinaldo, project manager of LPPCHEA to the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAF), the "number of birds in the area is declining and this might be due to the reclamation activities and prolific development in the area."

This plus the vast abundance of plastic, garbage and other debris that can be found on the shores of LPPCHEA threaten the habitat, its birds and the residents living in the area.

### **The bird sanctuary's importance**

Mangroves, soft bottom, and other marine ecosystems make up "blue carbon:" habitats that absorb and

store up to 70 percent carbon and green house gases. Although covering 0.5 percent only of the seafloor, blue carbon plays a large role in mitigating the effects of climate change. Mangrove forests in the Philippines alone may contain up to 1306.9 t C ha<sup>-1</sup> (Gevaña and Pampolina 2009, Camacho et al. 2011; Abino et al. 2014).

Mangrove patches like those found in LPPCHEA also protect communities from strong wave surges and provide them with healthy natural ecosystems, abundant in food and livelihood sources.

The waterbirds themselves are beacons to ecosystems like LPPCHEA. Their study and numbers communicate the health of any given location, and enable local policy makers and stakeholders to make informed decisions about a given area depending on this data.

Declared by Presidential Proclamation 1412, LPPCHEA is the only Critical Habitat in Manila

Bay. Its declaration in 2007 also makes it the first Critical Habitat ever established in the country.

Although the law states that existing mangrove, mudflats and ecosystems be "preserved and/or not built-over," reclamation projects continue around the area.

And with 30 percent of the country's population living in Manila Bay according to the Environmental Management Bureau, the amount of plastic and garbage continue to line Freedom Island's shores.

Just north of LPPCHEA, a \$2-billion construction project is underway. According to Casino News Daily Manila Bay Resorts will be the third of four integrated resorts to be launched in "a multimillion gambling and entertainment complex intended to turn into Asia's next gambling Mecca..."

Will Manila Bay's only protected mangrove safe haven be improved for the health of its feathered tourists, as well as its human visitors? Or will it be paved over for



# The Manila Times

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

1,500 water birds  
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its moneyed ones? The answers to these questions lie not only within continued counts and studies of crucial wetland birds, but within conservation actions and awareness campaigns that count.

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In addition to the annual Asian Waterbird Census, the Haribon Foundation holds the Welcome

to the Birds (WTTB) festivities, bringing awareness of the importance of wetland areas to migratory birds. WTTB birdwatching events continue throughout the migratory season (February extending into March).

To learn more or to join a birdwatching event, e-mail [volunteer@haribon.org.ph](mailto:volunteer@haribon.org.ph).



■ Mangrove patches in LPPCHEA also protect communities from strong wave surges and provide them with healthy natural ecosystems



■ A black-crowned night heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)



# The Manila Times

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

1,500 water birds counted in Ala. Bay's  
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# Business World

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## PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS

### El Niño casts gloom on outlook for harvests

By Victor V. Saulon

PALAY AND CORN production in the first quarter of 2016 is expected to fall — contrary to earlier bets for growth in harvest — as the past typhoon, insufficient water supply and intense heat take their toll on the country's major crops, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said in a report released yesterday.

Edilberto M. De Luna, Agriculture assistant secretary for field

operations, blamed the gloomier forecast on Typhoon Nona, which hit the country's farming areas in December last year just as farmers replanted after Typhoon Lando.

"The rehabilitation took place in January, so palay harvest will take place in April," he said in a phone interview, adding that the damage was significant and hit Central Luzon and Cagayan Valley.

The agency said that based on standing palay crop, "probable production in January-March 2016 will be 4.15 million MT [met-

ric tons], nearly 5% below the 4.368 million MT output in 2015."

It forecasts a 6.5% slump in corn output to 2.214 million MT in the first quarter from 2.369 million MT a year earlier. (See related infographics on S1/3)

The new estimates were in stark contrast to what the Agriculture department announced in December last year. The Agriculture department had earlier thought that rice and corn production could still increase by 0.31% to 4.38 million MT and 0.48% to 2.38 million MT, respec-

tively, despite reports that the El Niño phenomenon will be at its worst starting in February.

#### DRY SPELL

In its report, the PSA said reductions in palay production were expected in all regions except Eastern Visayas, Central Visayas, Calabarzon, Caraga and Davao.

In Central Luzon, unrealized plantings due to insufficient water supply and damaged areas caused by Typhoon Nona resulted in lower harvest area.

*El Niño, S1/3*

The typhoon, lower harvest area, insufficient rainfall and the late release of irrigation water supply were blamed for the probable low output in Cagayan Valley.

Insufficient water and the shift to vegetables were also blamed for the likely drop in output in the Ilocos region.

Reduced plantings were observed in Iloilo due to early closure of irrigation systems, and insufficient rainfall may contribute to lower production in Western Visayas, the PSA said.

Corn growers are also pointing to the dry spell as likely cause of the possible drop in output during the first quarter.

Mr. De Luna said corn growers hesitated whether to plant and many have opted to forego planting ahead of El Niño.

In its report, the PSA said the January-March 2016 forecast on standing crop indicates cutbacks in production, harvest area and yield by 6.5%, 4.2% and 2.4% from their respective lev-

els in 2015.

In the the first half, the PSA expects palay production to drop by 1.48% to 8.2 million MT. It sees corn output to also soften by 0.17% to 3.37 million MT.

Roger V. Navarro, president of the Philippine Maize Federation, Inc., cited the past typhoon, lack of rainfall and "hot climate in the corn champion regions" for the outlook.

"What is worse is we will see a decline in corn planting," he said in a text message, pointing to a Supreme Court decision that stopped the testing of genetically modified eggplant.

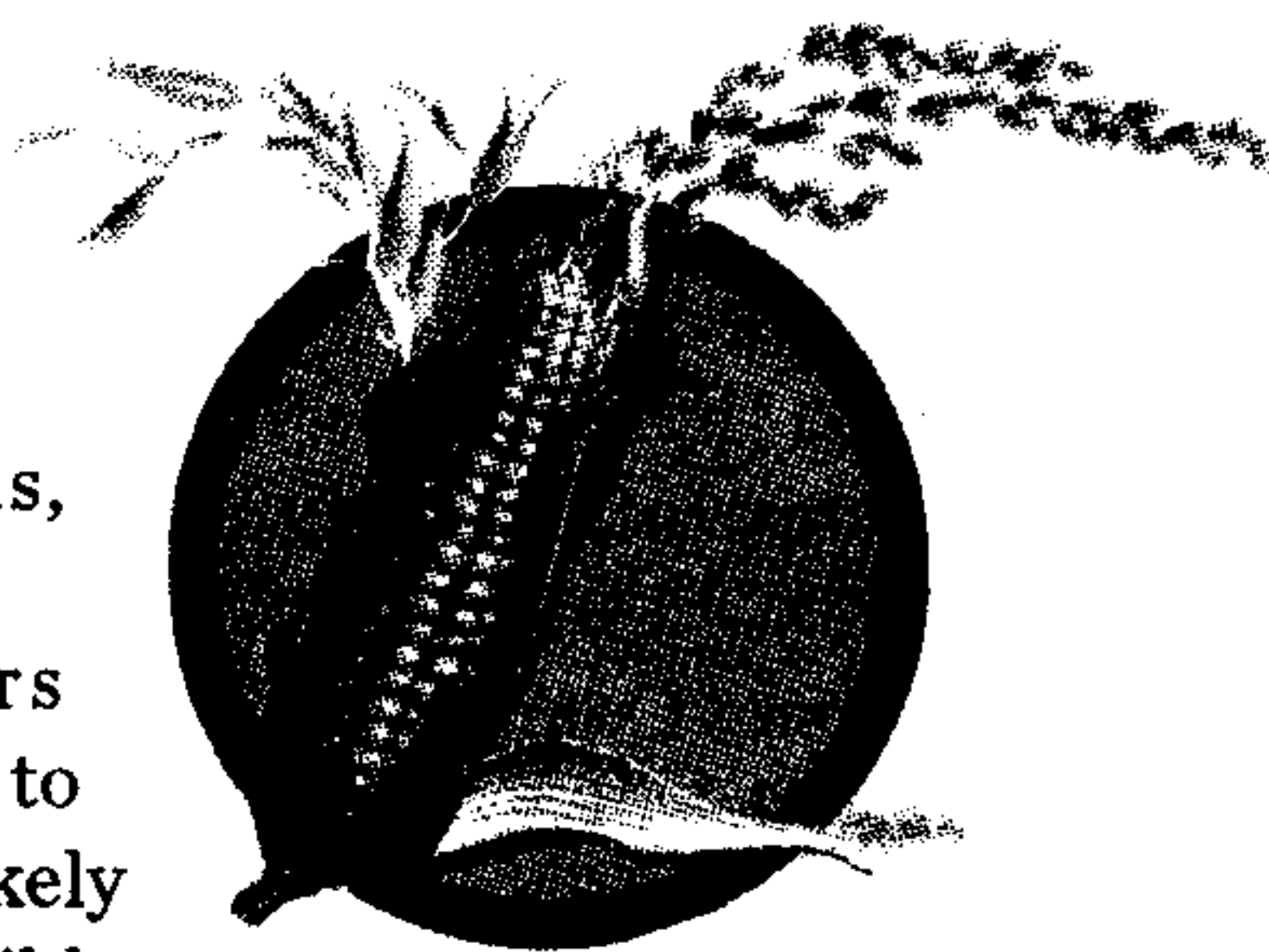
The ruling also nullified a 2002 or-

der from the Department of Agriculture that allowed a similar technology for the propagation of corn.

Palay and corn accounted for 22% and 6.5% of the value of the country's agricultural production last year.

"We forecast a continuation this year, closer to the 4.31% and 3.24% drop of palay and corn, respectively," Luis A. Limlingan, business development head at Regina Capital Development Corp., said in a text message.

He shares the same view that rice and corn output will be lower because of the decline in the forecast harvest area and yield as drought results in insufficient water supply for farming.





# The Manila Times

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

## Red tide alert up in 14 areas

BY JAMES KONSTANTIN GALVEZ REPORTER

**T**HE Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources has warned the public against catching and consuming shellfish from coastal waters in the provinces of Davao Oriental, Bohol, Western Samar, Leyte, Capiz, Aklan, Iloilo and Biliran Island which remain affected by the red tide toxin.

The alert warning now covers a wider portion of Eastern and Western Visayas as the red tide toxin continues to thrive in the region.

BFAR Shellfish Bulletin No.2-2016 identified the coastal waters

of Balite Bay in Mati, Davao Oriental; Dauis in Bohol; Daram in Daram Island, Irong-irong Bay and Cambatutay Bay in Western Samar; Leyte Bay and Carigara Bay in Leyte; Pilar and Sapián

Bay in Capiz; Atlavas, Batan and New Washington in Batan Bay, Aklan; Gigantes Islands in Carles, Iloilo; and Naval in Biliran Island as containing species of algae that produce toxins.

The agency said all types of shellfish and acetes (alamang) gathered and collected from the said areas are not safe for human consumption.

BFAR, however, said that several species – including of fish, shrimp and crab – are safe to eat provided that they are fresh and washed thoroughly, and internal organs such as gills and intestines are removed before cooking.

Other major fishing grounds in the country remain unaffected

by the toxin.

Last December, BFAR also warned that a prolonged dry season this year has put the Eastern Visayas Region in danger of suffering the worst algal bloom not seen in more than three decades.

The same alert was raised last October over the province of Leyte and the Biliran Strait.

Red tide has affected the livelihood of thousands of fishermen in the region and the strict enforcement of the shellfish ban was necessary to safeguard public health.

The discoloration of seawater is triggered by a massive population growth of a few species of algae that produce the toxins.



**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE**

**From The Stands**

By DOMINI M. TORREVILLAS

**Alvarez on climate change/  
Zubiri on wind energy**



I had a long chat with former Sen. Heherson Alvarez during a "core group" dinner at a Chinese restaurant with former House Speaker Joe de Venecia and his wife Rep. Gina de Venecia. Our conversation led to the unloading on my desk at home the next morning of numerous published articles on the topic closest to Alvarez's heart – climate change. One of them was published in my paper. It's worthwhile taking up the points he raised for the benefit of those who had missed reading it.

At the dinner, Alvarez, who is the Climate Change commissioner, was still agog, like much of the concerned world, over the signing by 195 nations of the Paris Agreement in Paris last month that seeks to address global warming.

Under the accord, as the Paris Agreement is also called, individual countries have committed to slash emissions and pledged to assist poorer nations to adapt to the damaging effects of a warming planet. It also sets a long-term goal of capping the rise in global temperatures to below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels, while calling on nations to try to limit that increase to 1.5 degrees C.

Alvarez said the accord is the culmination of more than two decades of international attempts to come to a collective agreement on how to tackle the global problem. The accord marked a major foreign policy success for US President Barack Obama, who has been quoted as saying the agreement is a "turning point for the world... We came together around the strong agreement the world needed. Together we've shown what's possible when the world stands as one."

Alvarez, one of the Philippine negotiators to the COP21, said the Philippines can now start formulating policies to prepare the country for a low carbon and, eventually, a zero fossil fuel economy. "This could be the beginning

of the end of the fossil fuel era. The transition to a low carbon economy is almost inevitable," said Alvarez.

He said it took 22 years of continued conferences and debates and transparency to "achieve this convergence of understanding and begin to lick the scourge of climate change."

In his article in the **Philippine STAR** (Jan. 12, 2016), Alvarez wrote that to rise to the challenges of the Paris agreement, the country's political and economic leaders must begin to undertake effective capacity building. He touched on capacity gaps and needs that must be resolved in order to integrate climate strategies in our development plans and investments.

First is a low-carbon program that is an essential strategy for stimulating the economy, creating more jobs, and moving us rapidly to a clean energy future.

Second, a low-carbon path must be attractive to investors. Congress can begin to legislate appropriate tax structure on carbon emissions. To make coal and fossil fuels reflect their true cost to society, pollution must be made an expense rather an externality, Alvarez said.

Governments across the globe have been subsidizing fossil fuels by \$400 to \$500 billion per year, thereby encouraging extraction of coal and fossil fuels that we are seeking to diminish. Despite remarkable strides in renewable-energy technologies, Alvarez said, the transition from fossil fuels to clean energy sources is being "blocked by cheaper market prices of coal and oil – prices that do not include the costs of carbon pollution."

Alvarez wrote that President Aquino has responded to the accord by mandating that the Philippine intended nationally determined contribution (INDC) goal should be 70 percent cut by 2030.

The president's INDC "crystallizes the Filipino's vision of economic and social transformation toward a low-carbon and more resilient society." This is necessary, said Alvarez, as the Philippines is one of the three top nations battered regularly by disastrous climate change. On the average, we sustain some 20 increasingly powerful typhoons annually, including floods, storm surges, and intermittent drought.

Ironically, the President recently announced the operation of several coal-powered plants in the country, saying that these are necessary to keep the nation out of the dark. This development runs counter to the global challenge to reduce dependency on coal as a source of energy.

Alvarez wrote before the Paris agreement, that France argued for an ambitious target of a 4 percent reduction in greenhouse gasses by 2030 and of 60 percent by 2040 (from 1990 levels). He also said China and the United States, the two largest polluters, announced mutual plans to reduce their emissions. The US promised a reduction of 28 percent by 2025, while China agreed to slow its CO2 emissions around 2030 and then increase the share of nonfossil fuels in its energy portfolio to "around" 20 percent by 2030.

Alvarez expressed hope that the new leadership will be courageous, clear-headed, and climate-smart.

\* \* \*

On a climate-change related development, former Sen. Migz Zubiri announced that the Philippines is now the largest and fastest-growing producer of electricity from wind power among the 10 countries belonging to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).

"Our wind farms now have an aggregate installed capacity of almost 400 megawatts (MW) – far more than our neighbors – and we expect this number to quadruple to 1,600 MWs in two to three years," said Zubiri, author of the Renewable Energy Law of 2008.



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The only paper you read from cover to cover!

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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

Alvarez on climate change  
Zubiri on wind energy

The former legislator from Bukidnon who is seeking a seat in the Senate in the May 9 election, cited a study by the US National Energy Laboratory which said the Philippines has "some 10,000 square kilometers of land areas with good-to-excellent wind resources." The best of these resources are in Batanes province, the north and northwest coast of Luzon; the northeast and east-facing coasts of Luzon and Samar; the southern coast of Mindanao, and the straits between Mindoro and Panay, and Panay and Negros.

"Wind energy is highly beneficial because it is abundant, naturally replenished, widely distributed, and produces zero harmful carbon dioxide emissions during operation."

Zubiri said the Renewable Energy Management Bureau has identified at least 44 potential wind energy projects that when combined, could produce another 1,168 MW of electricity. The 150-wind farm of the Energy Development Corp. (EDC) in Burgos, Ilocos Norte, is the largest in Southeast Asia.

More wind energy projects are on the way. The Philippine Hybrid energy Systems Inc. is putting up a 48-MW wind farm in Puerto Galera, Mindoro Oriental. Last week, the government awarded another four wind energy service contracts to private developers – two to EDC and two to Firstmax International Corp.

Zubiri is to be thanked for authorizing the Renewable Energy Law which accelerates the exploration and development of the country's "green" energy resources. The law Republic Act 9513, aims to lessen national dependence on electricity generated from imported and highly pollutive coal and fuel oil.

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Email: [dominitorrevillas@gmail.com](mailto:dominitorrevillas@gmail.com)





# World Bank, BPI hike energy funds

By Gabrielle H. Binaday

*INTERNATIONAL Finance Corp., the private sector lending arm of the World Bank group, on Monday signed a P3.5-billion risk-sharing facility with the Bank of the Philippine Islands to expand the sustainable energy finance program.*

Under the agreement, IFC and BPI will share the risk for up to P3.5 billion of the bank's portfolio in distributed energy projects, service companies projects and green building construction.

"BPI has always been at the forefront of sustainable energy finance in the country," said BPI president and chief executive Ce-

zar Consing.

"We prioritize creating sustainable shared value in our business, and our partnership with IFC will enable us to carry on this commitment for the environment, our clients, and stakeholders," he said.

The program will provide loans and technical advice to clients investing in energy projects to re-

duce energy costs and cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Greenhouse gas emissions are the main contributors to climate change, which has been blamed for severe weather events that cause massive loss of human lives and damage to property and livelihoods.

IFC will provide risk sharing facilities and technical advice to partner banks who wish to lend to sustainable energy projects.

BPI released P35.3 billion worth of loans with P24.7 billion for energy efficiency, renewable energy and climate resilience projects from 2009 to October 2015.

IFC said these projects helped reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 1.9 million tons a year, or equivalent to taking 362,000 cars off the road.



THE NATIONAL NEWSPAPER

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**PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE NEWS CLIPPINGS**

## Electric vehicle maker Tojo gets DBP Green Loan

SLOWLY but surely, the missing pieces of the electric vehicle industry puzzle are falling into place. One big piece just got plugged in recently: financing. This was revealed by Rommel T. Juan, president of the Electric Vehicle Association of the Philippines.

He said that for so long a time, no financing company would dare grant a loan to EV companies due to what they termed as the absence of a proof of concept. "Now that financing is available, we must have proven that EV technology really works. Thus, we are happy to note that the EV

industry has made a great stride forward as the road to financing was finally traversed by Tojo Motors Corp., a homegrown wholly Filipino-owned electric vehicle manufacturer".

Tojo Motors Corp. recently announced that it was finally able to secure a substantial loan from the Development Bank of the Philippines after it was able to submit the proper requirements needed by the bank.

DBP is a development bank mandated to provide banking services to small and medium scale businesses. It has initially allocated P10

Billion for the Green Financing Program as it noted that more and more private firms, local government units and other groups were undertaking environment-friendly projects.

The Green Financing Program specifically aims to reduce the environmental footprint from industrial operations and LGU projects, enable industries to achieve production efficiency and become globally competitive in fast-growing green markets, and help both the private and public sectors with their compliance to environmental laws and regulations.





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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE

# 99% of gov't offices pass anti-red tape test

Efforts to improve the delivery of frontline services in government are yielding results as 99 percent of agencies subjected to the 2015 Anti-Red Tape Act Report Card Survey (RCS) passed the test, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) announced yesterday.

Only 15 out of 1,114 government offices failed the test and were subsequently given service improvement orientation and workshops under the Service Delivery Excellence Program.

The CSC said offices that initially failed the test received passing marks when it conducted a second round of RCS.

It said 697 out of 1,114 government service offices obtained a "good" rating in terms of compli-

ance with the ARTA provisions and overall quality of frontline service delivery.

A total of 353 offices received an "excellent" rating, six were "outstanding" and 43 were "acceptable."

The 2015 RCS was conducted in nine government agencies with frontline service transactions based on the reports lodged by the public through the Contact Center ng Bayan, a call center facility managed by the CSC.

The agencies covered by the survey include the Bureau of Internal Revenue, Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), Home Development Mutual Fund or Pag-IBIG Fund, Land Registration Authority, Land Transportation

Office, Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth), Professional Regulation Commission, Philippine Statistics Authority-National Statistics Office and the Social Security System.

Forty-six first class cities nationwide and 51 branches of the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) were included in the survey.

The CSC released the survey results during the opening ceremony of the ARTA Caravan yesterday at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City.

CSC chairman Alicia de la Rosa-Bala said the agency sees the survey results as an achievement and a challenge.

Among the 10 government agencies surveyed, the GSIS, LBP,

PhilHealth and SSS received a full passing rate, with all offices obtaining scores not lower than 70.

The GSIS had the highest score at 80 percent or 46 out of 57 offices, followed by PhilHealth at 66 percent or 88 out of 133 offices.

Of the 46 first class cities, 11 percent obtained excellent rating, 78 percent were good, nine percent were acceptable and two percent got a failed mark.

The city government of Taguig received the highest excellent rating among the local government units, with a score of 92.31 percent. Other LGUs with excellent rating were the cities of Batangas and Santiago in Isabela, Sta. Rosa in Laguna and Olongapo City.

— Michael Punongbayan