

MANILA BULLETIN:

# Marcos orders comprehensive listing of government lands

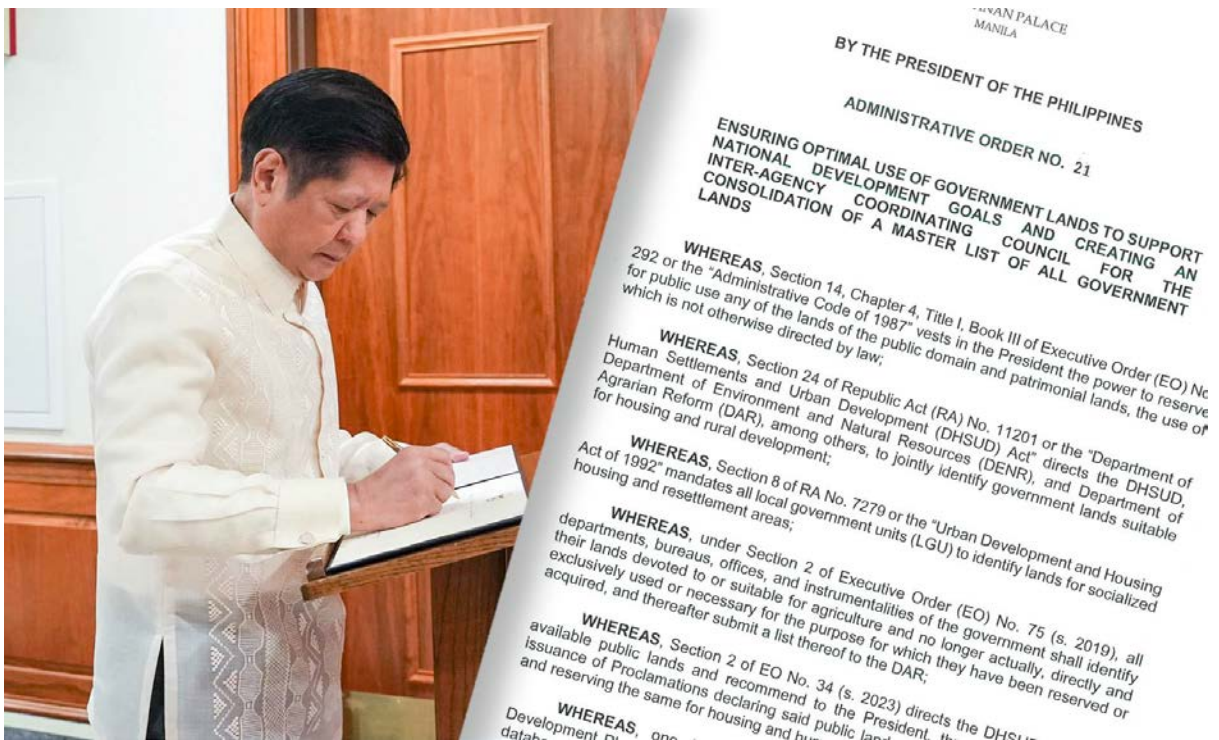
BY ARGYLL CYRUS GEDUCOS

May 5, 2024 01:40 PM

## AT A GLANCE

- In his AO, the President said the consolidation of a master list of all government lands would boost the administration's Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028. One of the key strategies identified in the PDP 2023-2028 to establish liveable communities "is the creation of a database containing a complete inventory of idle government lands."

President Marcos has formed an inter-agency coordinating council to create a comprehensive master list of state-owned lands to ensure their effective use and allocation and establish livable communities.



*File photos*

Marcos said this in the four-page Administrative Order (AO) No. 21 signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin on April 30.

In his AO, the President said the consolidation of a master list of all government lands would boost the administration's Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028.

One of the key strategies identified in the PDP 2023-2028 to establish liveable communities "is the creation of a database containing a complete inventory of idle government lands."

"To ensure the efficient and effective allocation and utilization of land resources for the country's national development goals, it is necessary to consolidate a comprehensive list of all government lands," Marcos said.

With this, President Marcos created an Inter-Agency Coordinating Council to create a "Master List" of all government lands and transmit a digital copy to him within 180 days after they created the AO's implementing guidelines.

Meanwhile, all national government agencies, instrumentalities, and bodies whose function is related to land identification and inventory are required to submit an inventory to the Inter-Agency Coordinating Council.

The body will be headed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) as co-chairs. The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) will act as the vice-chair.

The other members of the Coordinating Council are:

- Office of the Executive Secretary
- Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG)
- Department of Agriculture (DA)
- Office of the Solicitor General (OSG)
- Department of Justice (DOJ)
- Land Registration Authority (LRA)
- Commission on Higher Education (CHED)
- Department of Information and Communications (DICT)

The DENR-Land Management Bureau (LMB) will be the body's secretariat.

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/5/marcos-orders-creation-of-comprehensive-list-of-government-lands>

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

# 'Nakakalito': Solon slams DA, NDRRMC over conflicting data on El Niño damage

**BY DEXTER BARRO II**

May 5, 2024 02:26 PM

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## AT A GLANCE

- AGRI Party-list Rep. Wilbert Lee criticized on Sunday, May 5, the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) for their inconsistent figures on the agricultural damage caused by El Niño.
- According to the DA, El Niño's agricultural damage was P5.9 billion. Meanwhile, the NDRRMC said the damage was at P1.6 billion.



AGRI Party-list Rep. Wilbert Lee (Rep. Lee's office)

AGRI Party-list Rep. Wilbert T. Lee criticized on Sunday, May 5, the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) for their inconsistent figures on the agricultural damage caused by El Niño.

“Nakakalito ang mga lumalabas na datos mula sa DA at NDRRMC. Bukod sa hindi nagtutugma, napakalaki ng diperensya ng inilalabas nilang mga numero,” Lee said in a statement.

(The reported data from DA and NDRRMC are confusing. Aside from not matching, the difference in the numbers they put out is huge.)

According to the April 29 report of the NDRRMC, El Niño caused more than P1.6 billion in agricultural damage, affecting 44,437 hectares of crops. About 46,805 farmers and fisherfolk were affected by the extreme heat.

Meanwhile, in a report by the DA published a day later, the damage to the agricultural sector was pegged at P5.9 billion, devastating a total of 104,402 hectares of agricultural areas. It is said to have affected 113,585 farmers and fisherfolk in 12 regions of the country.

“Dapat linawin kung bakit magkaiba at alin ang dapat sundin dito (It should be clarified why there is a variance and which one should be followed),” said Lee.

The Bicol lawmaker stressed the importance of consistent and accurate figures since it becomes the basis for the government’s assistance to those affected by the blistering heat.

“How much will be given to how many is reliant on the reports being published kaya sana po ay magkaroon ng maayos na komunikasyon sa pagitan ng mga ahensiya ng gobyerno na nag-a-assess at naglalabas ng mga ganitong datos (so hopefully there will be proper communication between the government agencies that assess and release such data),” he said.

According to the DA, it has so far provided at least P2.18 billion worth of assistance to El Niño-affected farmers and fisherfolk.

“Napaka-crucial ng tamang datos para makapaghatid ng sapat at mabilis na tulong sa mga nangangailangan. Deserve ng ating mga kababayan ang mas maayos na serbisyo, mabawasan ang kanilang mga pasanin, at maibsan ang kanilang pangamba na lalong mabaon sa hirap at utang sa panahon ng kagipitan tulad na lang kung may magkasakit sa pamilya,” Lee said.

(Accurate data is crucial in delivering adequate and prompt assistance to those in need. Our countrymen deserve better services to ease their burdens, and to alleviate their fear of being further buried in poverty and debt during times of crisis, like when someone in the family gets an illness.)

“We deserve better, and we must demand better for efficient and swift services,” he added.

[https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/5/nakakalito-solon-slams-da-ndrrmc-over-conflicting-data-on-el-nino-damage#google\\_vignette](https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/5/nakakalito-solon-slams-da-ndrrmc-over-conflicting-data-on-el-nino-damage#google_vignette)

**MANILA BULLETIN:**

**OPINION-EDITORIAL OPINION**

# **Advancing women's rights: The 4th PH human rights plan**

**THERE'S HOPE!**

**BY GODDES HOPE O. LIBIRAN**

May 5, 2024 00:00 AM

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**GUEST COLUMNIST**



Toward the end of April, I had the immense pleasure of joining the initial drafting of the fourth Philippine Human Rights Plan (PHRP4) organized by the Presidential Human Rights Committee Secretariat (PHRCS) at Malacañang, Manila. As representative of Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Amenah “Mina” F. Pangandaman, I participated in the thematic cluster workshop focused on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The Budget Secretary is known as among the most vocal Filipina advocates of women's rights of our time. And from my observation, Sec. Mina's passion for any endeavor is communicable. She can inspire or make those around her care for the battles she fights for. With her, I became more involved and personally invested in women's empowerment.

Having said this, I believe it is beneficial for the Philippines to have more women in power advocating for gender equality and responsiveness, hopefully just as dedicated and zealous as Sec. Mina. This call to promote gender fairness extends beyond those in positions of authority – it encompasses everyone, especially fellow women who should support one another the most.



A brief background on CEDAW, the Philippines signed the International Bill of Rights of Women on July 15, 1980, and ratified it on Aug. 5, 1981, becoming the first Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) country to do so. Additionally, we ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW on Nov. 12, 2003, which provides mechanisms for addressing violations of CEDAW.

At one point in time, we could say we were ahead of our neighboring countries in the field of gender and development.

On that account, I commend the PHRCS led by Usec. Severo Catura, together with PHRP4 head consultant Dr. Rosette Gilda Libre and Ma. Rebecca Rafaela Baylosis for conducting the cluster meeting. These are some of the people who truly care and work hard to polish our human rights strategies and policies.

To elaborate further on the forum, delegates from pertinent government agencies such as the Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Agriculture, Commission on Higher Education, Department of Education, Department of Justice, Department of Foreign Affairs, and the like, were gathered to share their inputs in addressing the continuing human rights issues and concerns, as well as those arising from engagements with international and regional human rights mechanisms and other stakeholders. As Sec. Mina has mentioned in her recent engagement with the International Monetary Fund in Washington, DC, a lot of interventions are going on in gender and development not only in the Philippines but all over the world.

During the workshop, I echoed the sentiments of Sec. Mina, and emphasized the integration of gender tagging into the national budget so that our government could track and identify areas in which we could improve gender equality.

We are pushing for gender-responsive budgeting in the Philippines, and central to this is the Gender and Development (GAD) budget. This policy directs all government departments and agencies to allocate a minimum of five percent of their total annual budgets for gender programs and activities. It has been a vital feature of the annual General Appropriations Act, which has been enhanced by the Magna Carta of Women (RA 9710).

In enhancing gender tagging, the DBM has been conducting training with the Local Government Units on how they can manage and utilize efficiently their GAD funds.

It was also very satisfying to hear about all the efforts of the current administration to elevate the rights of women in the country.

For instance, in 2023, the Department of Science and Technology DOST's Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program generated employment opportunities for 3,348 Filipino women. In addition, 68 percent of recipients of loans from the Small Business Corporation were women, indicating their increased participation in financial activities such as account ownership, savings, and credit access compared to men.

GAD principles have been embedded into social protection initiatives like the DSWD's Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), which benefits 4.4 million households, and

provides conditional cash transfers aimed at improving education, healthcare, and financial inclusion. Direct cash grants are conferred to mothers, leading to enhanced survival rates, better health outcomes, and improved educational opportunities for their children.

To empower women with essential skills for success, the Philippines offers scholarships ranging from secondary school to postgraduate levels, with a focus on promoting science-based education and nurturing female graduates in STEM fields. The list goes on.

The goal of the cluster meeting is to create a new Philippine Human Rights Plan that would develop and implement proactive policies and programs to close gender gaps and ensure equal opportunities between men and women.

With persistent, brilliant, and impassioned leaders like Sec. Mina in the Philippine government, there is hope!

<https://mb.com.ph/2024/5/5/advancing-women-s-rights-the-4th-ph-human-rights-plan>

# Transition to clean energy is crucial



[BABE'S EYE VIEW FROM WASHINGTON D.C. - Ambassador B. Romualdez -](#)

The Philippine Star

May 5, 2024 | 12:00am

The actual start of summer in the United States is still a month away but people are already beginning to feel the heat. Many countries across the globe, particularly in Asia, are also experiencing scorching temperatures at above 40 degrees Centigrade (104 degrees Fahrenheit), prompting climatologist and weather historian Maximilliano Herrera to declare that “thousands of records are being brutalized all over Asia, which is by far the most extreme event in world climatic history.”

In Thailand, government authorities said at least 30 people have died of heatstroke, with incidents of death also reported in India, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Health authorities are on the alert for reports of hospitalizations due to heatstroke and other heat-related illnesses. Vietnam has issued warnings on the risks of forest fires.

In the Philippines, millions of students are shifting to online learning as face-to-face classes in all school levels across the country are being suspended due to extreme heat, with high blood pressure, dizziness and fainting reported among students and teachers. The Department of Agriculture said the sweltering heat exacerbated by the El Niño phenomenon has caused P4.39 billion in damages to the agriculture sector due to the resulting dry spell, devastating the livelihood of farmers and fisherfolk in 11 regions, with many local government units declaring a state of calamity.

In the United States, weather experts have warned that triple-digit temperatures experienced last summer could happen again. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, majority of the US could see above normal temperatures this summer with several states, including Washington, DC, getting hotter than usual.



The World Meteorological Organization said, “Asia is warming faster than the global average,” with many countries experiencing extreme heat events in 2023. Aside from droughts and heatwaves, countries also suffered the impact of floods and storms that have been increasing in severity over the years.

WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo clearly stated, “Climate change exacerbated the frequency and severity of such events, profoundly impacting societies, economies and, most importantly, human lives and the environment that we live in.”

More than ever, there is no doubt that extreme weather changes are caused by climate change, with fossil fuels, namely coal, oil and gas, being the biggest contributors to global climate change and accounting for over 75 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions and nearly 90 percent of all carbon dioxide emissions, according to the United Nations.

A report published at the NASA Earth Observatory website said total emissions in 2023 is estimated at 40.9 billion metric tons, with both 2022 and 2023 seeing record increases in carbon dioxide from fossil fuels. “The rise in heat-trapping carbon dioxide – and other greenhouse gases – is the primary reason for the planet’s soaring temperatures,” the report said.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has been urging leaders of developed countries to fulfill their commitments and do more to address the threats of climate change. Although the Philippines is not a top carbon dioxide emitter, it is at the top of the most climate-vulnerable countries list, according to the 2023 World Risk Index.

“This glaring disproportion between our share of responsibility and our vulnerability reflects an injustice that must be corrected. Developed countries must do more. And they must do it now,” the President said during his address to the Australian Parliament last February.

Clearly, the transition to clean and renewable energy sources has become even more crucial than ever to mitigate the impact of climate change and cope with the increasing energy requirements of the country.

During the historic trilateral summit between the Philippines, Japan and the US, a key commitment was to increase their cooperation towards the transition to clean energy.

“Our three nations seek to expand trilateral cooperation in the Philippines on the deployment of clean energy technologies, including renewable energy projects such as solar and wind, to support energy requirements in the Philippines and help ensure a just energy transition,” the Joint Statement read.

While there are major challenges that we will face in the future, emerging technology will play a big part in developing solutions, among them nuclear. The 123 civil-nuclear cooperation agreement between the US and the Philippines will pave the way for climate and energy transition goals while securing the Philippines' energy future. We are also optimistic that in the next five to 10 years, we will be seeing small nuclear modular power plants being deployed in the Philippines for much safer and cleaner energy.

AI or artificial intelligence will also play a major role in revolutionizing the energy sector. The US government is poised to invest trillions of dollars in energy infrastructure, with AI enabling better design structures, efficient monitoring, optimized generation and demand that can bring about billions of dollars in savings annually.

An interesting piece of news came out recently about a Filipino engineer who developed a thermal insulating powder that when applied as coating or paint, can reportedly reduce room temperatures by 30 to 60 percent. Apparently, the engineer was inspired by NASA's technology in developing the coating for space shuttles. If this is something viable, then we should look into it and perhaps use this to paint the walls of classrooms to help insulate our children from suffering in the heat.

It truly takes a Filipino to be innovative in finding ways to survive this sometimes-cruel world. We are a good people – and we certainly don't deserve to be pushed around by bully nations. We are naturally kind and hospitable; we are much appreciated by many nations worldwide, and surely our resilience will help us survive the many challenges that we face, both internally and externally.

<https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2024/05/05/2352624/transition-clean-energy-crucial>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# COA: Remulla highest paid in Cabinet last year

[Elizabeth Marcelo](#) - The Philippine Star

May 5, 2024 | 12:00am



Jesus Crispin Remulla on July 6, 2023.

STAR / Edd Gumban

**MANILA, Philippines** — Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla took home the biggest paycheck among the Cabinet members of President Marcos in 2023, latest report of the Commission on Audit (COA) showed.

Based on the COA's "2023 Report on Salaries and Allowances" or ROSA uploaded on its website on May 2, Remulla received a net pay of P7.08 million last year, his first full-year term in the Department of Justice (DOJ). This was an increase of P6.6 million or 1,283 percent from the P511,308.00 he received in 2022.

Though Remulla started his term as justice secretary in July 2022, the COA, in its 2022 ROSA, noted that he only received salaries and allowances for three months that year.

As for 2023, the COA's breakdown showed that Remulla's net pay was for 12 months as DOJ chief. This included P3.34 million in basic salary; P738,720 in

allowances; P598,868 in bonuses, incentives and benefits; P354,000 in discretionary and extraordinary and miscellaneous expenses (EME); P24,000 in additional compensation and honorarium; plus P2.02 million from “prior year’s adjustment.”

Remulla took the top spot from Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno who was relegated to sixth place with a net pay of P4.94 million in 2023.

Meanwhile, Science and Technology Secretary Renato Solidum Jr. got the second biggest pay in 2023, amounting to P6.06 million from P4.91 million in 2022.

Solidum took the second spot from Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan, whose net pay was down to P4.59 million from P6.95 million in 2022, relegating him to 17th spot.

Appearing as the third highest paid member of Marcos’ Cabinet was Higher Education Secretary Prospero De Vera III with a net pay of P5.19 million from P5.10 million in 2022.

Coming in fourth spot was Labor Secretary Bienvenido Laguesma with a net pay of P5.13 million from P2.28 million in 2022, followed by Public Works Secretary Manuel Bonoan with P5.09 million from P2.37 million in 2022.

Meanwhile, the seventh highest paid member of the Cabinet in 2023 was Agrarian Reform Secretary Conrado Estrella III with P4.93 million, followed by Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla (P4.76 million), Information and Communications Technology Secretary Ivan John Uy (P4.75 million) and Foreign Affairs secretary Enrique Manalo (P4.71 million).

Meanwhile, the 2023 ROSA showed that Vice President Sara Duterte took home P558,000 as Education Secretary for 12 months, a jump from the overall P300,000 she received from June 30 to Dec. 31, 2022 in the same Cabinet post.

On the other hand, though included in the 2023 ROSA as secretary of agriculture for ten months (January to October 2023), the audit breakdown showed that President Marcos did not receive any salary, allowances or other pay for the post.

Marcos concurrently served as agriculture secretary since he officially assumed his presidency on June 30, 2022.

In November last year, Marcos officially appointed Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. as his agriculture chief.

The ROSA showed that Tiu Laurel received a total of P418,181.75 as agriculture secretary from November to December 2023.

Majority of the Cabinet members' net pay significantly grew in 2023 as they were compensated for the whole 12 months as compared to 2022 when the majority of them took office in the second half of the year.

However, none of the Cabinet secretaries made it to the top 100 highest paid government officials in the COA's 2023 ROSA.

The COA's overall list was instead dominated by executives of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, with its governor Eli Remolona Jr. emerging as the highest paid government official with a net pay of P35.48 million

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/05/05/2352694/coa-remulla-highest-paid-cabinet-last-year>



**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# State of calamity sought in Isabela due to drought

[Jun Elias](#) - The Philippine Star

May 5, 2024 | 12:00am



Locals walk over the dry part of Intang Lake in Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija on April 22, 2024.

STAR / Walter Bollozos

**CAUAYAN CITY, Philippines** — The Isabela provincial disaster risk reduction and management council (PDRRMC) has recommended to the Sangguniang Panlalawigan to place the entire province under a state of calamity due to the effects of El Niño.

PDRRMC officer Constante Foronda said damage to agriculture due to drought in the province has ballooned to P1.5 billion.

Foronda cited data from the provincial agriculture office which showed that damage to rice production was placed at P635 million; corn, P629 million; high-value crops, P215 million, and fisheries, P7 million. At least 9,773 farmers were affected.

PDRRMC officials sought the declaration of a state of calamity to allow the provincial government to use its calamity funds to provide assistance to affected farmers.



Eight provinces had earlier been placed under a state of calamity due to El Niño.

These are Negros Oriental, Occidental Mindoro, Antique, Sultan Kudarat, Basilan, Maguindanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Norte and South Cotabato.

<https://www.philstar.com/nation/2024/05/05/2352766/state-calamity-sought-isabela-due-drought>

**THE PHILIPPINE STAR:**

# Agriculture loans hit P213 billion in 2022

[Keisha Ta-Asan](#) - The Philippine Star

May 5, 2024 | 12:00am



Farmers harvest rice using sickles in Bocaue, Bulacan on January 2, 2024. STAR / Jesse Bustos

MANILA, Philippines — The share of agriculture loans and services granted by the banking sector picked up to 18.1 percent in 2022 from 17.6 percent in 2021 as the agriculture industry slowly recovered from the COVID pandemic.

Based on the 2022 Countryside Bank Survey (CBS) report released by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), the total value of agriculture loans surged by 36.7 percent to P213.1 billion in 2022 from P155.9 billion in 2021.

“This improvement was mainly due to the growing demand for agricultural loans as the sector slowly recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic,” the central bank said.

The increase was also due to Republic Act 11901, or the Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development Financing Enhancement Act of 2022.

“It induced flexibility on banks’ compliance on agri-agra requirements and thus allowed for alternative forms of investment that count toward their compliance,” the BSP said.

However, loans for basic crops in these agricultural loans plunged by 76 percent to P12.73 billion in 2022 from P53.33 billion in 2021.

The banks attributed the decline to lower demand for basic crop loans, uncontrolled risks such as extreme weather conditions, rising costs and lower profits in basic crop farming and the lingering effects of the pandemic on some borrowers.

Meanwhile, the value of non-agricultural loans jumped by 34.2 percent to P2.8 trillion in 2022 from P2.1 trillion in 2021.

“For banks that increased the value of granted non-agricultural loans, the growth was due to higher demand for personal and business loans by new borrowers, better marketing to small business owners and a less restrictive borrowing environment,” the BSP said.

According to the BSP, at least 50 percent of the respondent banking units offered loan products pertaining to the acquisition of seeds, fertilizer, poultry, livestock, feeds and other similar items.

The survey revealed an increase in loan products pertaining to sustainable projects, digitalization or automation of farming, fishery, agri-business activities and processes as well as for agri-tourism.

Survey results also showed that interest rates on agri loans ranged from 12 to 18 percent in 2022, higher than the interest rates on non-agri loans that ranged from 7.5 to 16 percent.

The BSP said banks saw an average repayment loan rate of 67 percent in 2022. Government-owned banks declared a higher overall repayment rate of 70 percent.

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2024/05/05/2352595/agriculture-loans-hit-p213-billion-2022>

**PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER:**

## China seen behind new WPS island-building

Filipino marine scientists find unnatural piles of dead corals on Sandy Cay near Pag-asa Island which are likely man-made and an indication of new islandbuilding in the West Philippine Sea. A coast guard official suspects China. A retired Supreme Courtjustice says ex-President Rodrigo Duterte violated the Constitution in an alleged deal with China in 2016 on Panatag Shoal.

By: [Jane Bautista](#), [Julie M. Aurelio](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:35 AM May 05, 2024



**MARKED TERRITORY** A team from the Philippine Navy plants the Philippine flag on Sandy Cay, a sandbar some 7.4 kilometers (4 nautical miles) from Pag-asa Island in the West Philippine Sea, in this photo taken on June 25, 2022. —MARIANNE BERMUDEZ

The piles of corals were a dead giveaway.

Filipino scientists on Saturday said there might be an [ongoing artificial island-building](#) in the waters close to Pag-asa in the West Philippine Sea (WPS) and a Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) official said they suspect the Chinese were behind it. Also on Saturday, a Philippine maritime expert said the findings of the marine research team that surveyed the area could be used in another case to add to the [arbitral tribunal ruling invalidating Beijing's sweeping claims to the South China Sea](#).

Retired Supreme Court Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio said former President Rodrigo Duterte waived the country's sovereignty over Bajo de Masinloc [Panatag,

or Scarborough, Shoal] in a “temporary special arrangement” with China in 2016, which was disclosed by the Chinese Embassy in Manila in a statement on May 2.

### ‘Degraded state’

Duterte also waived the right of poor Filipino fishermen to fish within the shoal’s lagoon, a traditional fishing ground recognized by the July 2016 arbitral award in the case brought by the Philippines to challenge China’s sweeping claims to nearly all of the South China Sea, he said in a statement on Saturday.

Under the alleged 2016 arrangement, Duterte also agreed to keep the Philippine Navy and the PCG from entering the waters within 22 kilometers (12 nautical miles) around the shoal and the airspace above, which is a virtual recognition that Panatag was Chinese territory.

In a forum in Quezon City on Saturday, Jonathan Anticamara of the University of the Philippines (UP) Institute of Biology, said his group had examined the marine life on Sandy Cays 1, 2, 3 and 4 from March 20 to March 23 and found them in a “degraded” state with dead corals piled “higher than a person” on top of live corals.

The research team found coral rubble or dead coral fragments “piled on Pag-asa Cays 1, 2 and 3 that are now exposed during high tide,” Anticamara said in a presentation to the forum.

“The coral rubble are piled on large live coral colonies, suggesting that those rubble are dumped on those live coral colonies,” part of his presentation said.

It added that the pile of sand and rubble on the cays “have many characteristics that are atypical of naturally formed coral or sandy barrier islands, indicating that these are possibly products of island-building activities that are observed in the West Philippine Sea, but with some degree of uncertainty.”

## Key indicator

One significant observation was that the slope of the cays was “too vertical,” compared to naturally formed islands whose slopes are gentle due to erosion by the sea.

This is an indication that the dead coral pile was dumped.

“Many of these characteristics suggest that most likely, these piles of rubble were made by humans. It’s not typical of islands in the Philippines,” Anticamara said. “You cannot find an island in the Philippines that it is natural to have the slope as vertical. You can find this in a reclamation area.”

He added that Pag-asa Island itself had “coral reefs that are now experiencing either a decline or degradation, overfishing and the habitat itself is not in good condition.”

“Throughout the Philippines, there’s degradation occurring. But I was surprised that Pag-asa Island itself, which is very far from a lot of fishers and from the mainland, is also suffering from degradation,” he said.

The scientific survey team that visited the cays also included staff from the Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and the PCG.

## ‘Be vigilant’

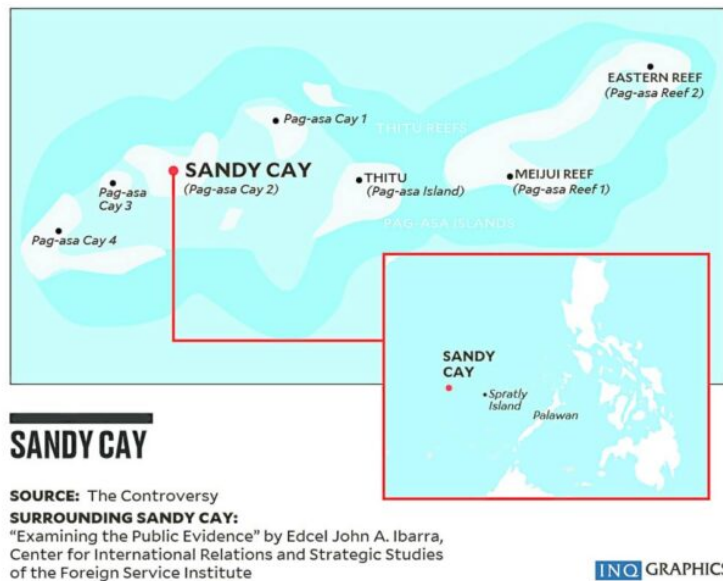
“The most important thing that we know is that it doesn’t look natural,” Anticamara said.

He said Filipinos must be “vigilant” because China had already built artificial islands close to Pag-asa that had been turned into military bases.

“There is a history of island-building and ongoing island-building in the area, so Filipinos must be very vigilant. We should pay attention and really make sure that we monitor these areas. That’s my main recommendation,” Anticamara said.



Speaking in the same forum, PCG spokesperson for the West Philippine Sea Commodore Jay Tarriela said no other country but China was responsible for the degradation of Pag-asa's marine life and the dumping of dead corals on the cays.



Harassed, too

“The scientific research conducted by UP and the BFAR was not a walk in the park. They were harassed by the China Coast Guard. They were also harassed by the Chinese maritime militia,” he said.

On the last day of the team's research, a People's Liberation Army-Navy helicopter flew about 20 meters above the group, its rotors creating a downwash that scattered dried corals and sand, which caused cuts to some members of the group.

“If there is one country that we need to hold accountable for the damage to our coral reefs in these cays, that will only be the People's Republic of China, if you were to ask me who is our suspect in doing illegal small island reclamation in the Cays 1, 2, 3, 4,” Tarriela said.

## Basis for case

Jay Batongbacal, head of the UP College of Law's Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea, said the government could use the research team's findings as the basis for a follow-up case to the 2016 arbitral ruling that junked China's nine-dash-line claim in the South China Sea.

Batongbacal said the act of deliberately destroying coral reefs for reclamation activities is a violation of international law because it contravenes the obligation of nations to preserve and protect marine resources.

"At the very least, this destruction of corals and deliberate alteration of the marine environment can be a basis for another case to follow up the 2016 arbitration ruling," he said.

The Philippines can also opt for "nonadversarial or nonconfrontational" options by calling on an international organization to conduct a fact-finding mission, Batongbacal added.

## No power to waive

Carpio expressed concern over the Duterte-era "special arrangement" on Bajo de Masinloc, even if only temporary.

The Chinese Embassy did not respond to the Inquirer's request for details on the deal.

"Under the Constitution, then President Duterte had no power to waive, even temporarily, Philippine sovereignty or traditional fishing rights of Filipinos unless the waiver is embodied in a treaty ratified by the Senate," Carpio said.

He added that the waivers were also considered void as they were accomplished without fully informing Congress and the Filipino people.

"These acts of Duterte caused undue injury to poor Filipino fishermen and to the government through Duterte's gross inexcusable negligence or bad faith," Carpio said.

Philippine officials have said that the Chinese were increasingly being aggressive in asserting its claims over the South China Sea, including the WPS, waters within the country's exclusive economic zone.

A PCG ship and a BFAR vessel were pummeled by potentially “fatal” water cannon blasts from China Coast Guard ships that damaged both on April 30 near Panatag, Tarriela said.

China justified its coast guard's actions, saying that the Philippine government vessels entered the waters of Panatag without permission in violation of Chinese sovereignty and the 2016 arrangement under the Duterte administration. —*with a report from inquirer research*

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/234545/china-seen-behind-new-wps-island-building>

# Govt to support urban agriculture, horticulture

By Philippine News Agency

May 5, 2024

THE Philippines has a huge potential to be a bigger player in the global horticulture market, Department of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said on Friday, noting that the government will ramp up efforts to increase production.

Tiu Laurel said he sees a promising future for Philippine exports, especially among those with "green thumbs" or have the natural abilities to grow plants.

He said the Philippines can also supply plant landscaping.



SUMMIT First lady Liza Araneta-Marcos (right) visits a booth at the Philippine Horticulture and Urban Agriculture Summit at One Ayala Mall, Makati City, on Friday, May 3, 2024. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE PHOTO

"Ang sabi sakin kanina for landscaping, kulang 'yung supply versus demand so there's still a good opportunity for that (I was told earlier that for landscaping, there is a lack of supply versus demand so there's still a good opportunity for that)," Tiu Laurel added in an interview on the sidelines of the Philippine Horticulture and Urban Agriculture Summit in Makati City.

In his speech during the summit, the agriculture chief cited the role of horticulture and urban agriculture in food security, economic growth and sustainability.

"Horticulture, with its focus on cultivation of high-value crops and ornamentals, offers a pathway to diversity. Our agricultural landscape is limited as of the moment, and that with this, we will definitely diversify and meet the evolving demands of domestic and international markets," he said.

Tiu Laurel said urban agriculture, on the other hand, represents a modern adaptation of traditional practices.

"It presents a unique opportunity to reimagine the role of urban spaces in our agricultural system and harness the capacity of idle lands into centers of food and land production," he said.

Bureau of Plant and Industry Director Gerald Glenn Panganiban, for his part, said they are looking at ways on how to scale up production of high-value crops, especially ornamental plants.

"Globally, it's a billion-dollar industry. Based on experience, there's a huge potential because Filipinos love horticulture, loves taking care of plants. We have a lot of high-value crops and ornamentals and with the support of the government, private sector collaboration, we can scale it up because we have the talent to do it and technologies are here," said Panganiban.

He said the government intends to invest in greenhouses and irrigation technologies.

The summit was attended by first lady Liza Araneta-Marcos, farmers, the private sector and participants from the local and international community.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2024/05/05/business/top-business/govt-to-support-urban-agriculture-horticulture/1944681>

**REMATE:**

## **Pagsibol ng horticulture, urban agri sa food security at sustainability, kinilala ng DA**

May 5, 2024 12:33



MANILA, Philippines – SINABI ni Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tui Laurel Jr. na kinikilala nito ang makabuluhang papel ng hortikultura at agrikultura sa lungsod, at kung ano ang ginagawa nito sa seguridad ng pagkain, paglago ng ekonomiya at pagpapanatili ng ating bansa sa Pagsibol: Philippine Horticulture at Urban Agriculture Summit 2024.

Sa pagbubukas ng kaganapan noong Mayo 3, ipinahayag ni Sec. Tiu Laurel ang pangako ng Department of Agriculture (DA) sa pangunguna sa mga hakbangin para sa pagpapaunlad ng agrikultura ng Pilipinas alinsunod sa agenda ni Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. para sa modernisasyon at mekanisasyon para sa sapat na pagkain.



Sinabi niya na ang hortikultura ay nag-aalok ng landas tungo sa pagkakaiba-iba na may pagtuon sa pagtanim ng mataas na halaga ng mga pananim at ornamental at dahil limitado ang tanawin ng agrikultura ng bansa, sinabi niya na makakatulong ito na matugunan ang mga umuusbong na pangangailangan ng mga domestic at internasyonal na merkado.

Kaugnay nito kinilala rin ng agri chief ang urban agriculture bilang isang modernong adaptasyon ng mga tradisyonal na gawi sa pamamagitan ng pagdadala ng agrikultura sa mga sentro ng lungsod at komunidad. *Santi Celario*

<https://remate.ph/pagsibol-ng-horticulture-urban-agri-sa-food-security-at-sustainability-kinilala-ng-da/>

**REMATE:**

## **Bohol nagluwag na ng border controls sa ASF**

May 5, 2024 11:28



MANILA, Philippines – Niluwagan na ng pamahalaang panlalawigan ng Bohol ang border control nito laban sa African Swine Fever (ASF).

Inilabas ni Gov. Aris Aumentado ang Executive Order (EO) na nag-aalis ng mga checkpoint sa Dauis Bridge na nagkokonekta sa Panglao Island patungo sa mainland.

Noong Abril 18 ay inisyu ni Aumentado ang EO na nagpapatupad ng mahigpit na border control matapos na maitala ang mga kaso ng ASF sa tatlong barangay sa Dauis.

Sa nasabing panahon, ipinagbabawal ang pagbyahe ng mga buhay na baboy, mga luto at uncooked pork, pork products at by-products mula Panglao Island patungo sa mainland Bohol.

Sa pinakabagong inisyu na EO noong Mayo 2, sinabi ni Augmentado na wala nang naitalang aktibong kaso ng ASF, 15 araw matapos ang huling positibong kaso ng ASF sa Dauis.

Tinukoy ang Purok 5 ng Barangay Mayacabac at Purok 2 ng Barangay Mariveles bilang “infected premises.”

Tinukoy naman ang Barangay Biking at nalalabing mga purok ng Mayacabac at Mariveles bilang ASF Quarantine Area-Level 2.

Ang mga nasa ASF Quarantine Area-Level 2 ay magkakaroon ng disease surveillance at random blood sample collection para sa ASF testing kasama ang information at education campaigns.

Bagama’t pinaluwag ang border controls, kailangan pa din ng ASF negative test, livestock inspection certificate at barangay certification ang mga baboy na palabas ng Dauis, na nagpapakita kung saan talaga nanggaling ang mga ito.

Kailangan din sumailalim sa ASF rapid testing ang mga kinatay na baboy para sertipikahang ang mga ito ay infection-free. **RNT/JGC**

<https://remate.ph/bohol-nagluwag-na-ng-border-controls-sa-asf/>

**REMATE:**

## **4 na lugar positibo sa red tide**

May 5, 2024 14:18



MANILA-NAGPAALALA sa publiko ang pamunuan ng Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) na mahigpit na ipinagbabawal ang pagkain at pagtitinda ng mga seafood sa apat na lugar sa probinsya matapos itong magpositibo sa toxic red tide, iniulat kahapon, Mayo 4.

Batay sa inilabas na bulletin ng BFAR noong Mayo 3, 2024 ang mga nasabing lugar ay ang mga sumusunod: Matarinao Bay sa Eastern Samar; Dumanquillas Bay sa Zamboanga del Sur; at coastal waters ng San Benito sa Surigao del Norte.

Sinabi ng BFAR na ang mga makukuhang shellfish sa mga nasabing lugar ay positibo sa Paralytic Shellfish Poison (PSP) o toxic red tide.

Ayon sa BFAR, ligtas pa rin kumain ng isda, pusit, hipon, at alimango lalo na kapag sariwa pa ang mga ito at kailangan linisin mabuti at lutuin ng maayos. *Mary Anne Sapico*

<https://remate.ph/4-na-lugar-positibo-sa-red-tide/>

**REMATE:**

## Rice freeze sa el nino, iginiit ni Tolentino

May 5, 2024 14:31



MANILA, Philippines – Sa gitna ng mga lokal na deklarasyon ng state of calamity, idiniin ni Sen. Tolentino ang pangangailangan ding ideklara ang isang probisyon ng Price Act para sa kaluwagan ng mga konsumer.

Binabanggit ang Seksyon 6 ng R.A. 7581, binigyang-diin ni Senator Tolentino na ang pambansang deklarasyon ng state of calamity ay isang paunang hakbang para ma-trigger ang pagpapatupad ng price freeze sa buong bansa.

Habang nagdeklara ng state of calamity ang ilang local government units, gaya ng Iloilo City, ang iba naman ay nag-aalangan dahil sa limitasyon sa badyet o pagrereserba ng pondo lalo na para sa mga emergency na may kinalaman sa bagyo.



“Nasa hurisdiksyon ng DTI na magpatupad ng price freeze, lalo na sa panahon ng krisis tulad ng kasalukuyang sitwasyon ng El Nino,” pahayag ni Senator Tolentino.

“Kailangan ang agarang aksyon para mabawasan ang epekto ng pagtaas ng presyo sa mamamayang Pilipino.”

Sa pagtaya na magtatagal ang El Nino hanggang sa katapusan ng Mayo, hinimok ni Sen. Tolentino ang DTI na mabilis na magpatupad ng price freeze upang maprotektahan ang mga mamimili mula sa tumataas na gastos.

Samantala, kinumpirma ni Sen. Tolentino na 3 empleyado ng municipal government ng Pili, Camarines Sur ang namatay dahil sa heatstroke, ayon sa pagberipika ng municipal health officer.

Ang insidenteng ito ay nagsisilbing matibay na ebidensya ng malawakang epekto ng El Nino phenomenon. **RNT**

<https://remate.ph/price-freeze-sa-el-nino-iginiit-ni-tolentino/>