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IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



## Phl seeks support for climate change summit

By JANVIC MATEO

The Philippines is seeking support from developing countries in the global fight against climate change.

Climate Change Commission secretary Emmanuel de Guzman said the ongoing conference of parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Katowice, Poland is an opportunity for countries to demonstrate their commitment to set stronger climate action.

He earlier stressed the leadership role that the Philippines would take during the discussions for the implementation guidelines of the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement that underscored the priorities in addressing issues and challenges pertaining to climate change.

"We need to incorporate climate change in our long-term policy. In the climate talks, ours is a leadership voice on behalf of the climate vulnerable. The Philippines championed climate justice," said De Guzman, head of the Philippine delegation to the conference.

"We continue to enjoin developed countries to improve their mitigation targets, mobilize climate finance and accelerate its flow, as well as the development and transfer of technology," he added.

De Guzman said the Philippines will continue to champion the various concerns of developing countries, including

financial support for technology development, transfer and diffusion and capacity-building; clear programs for delivery among developed countries; and clarity and acceptability of the timeframe of the programs to enable developing countries to build their national capacities.

He said the Philippines will also push for the establishment of a global accounting system that deals with both the causes and impacts of climate change, as well as monitor environmental integrity.

"This system will allow countries to monitor collective progress against the global temperature goal of the Paris Agreement," said De Guzman.

He said the Philippines will also deliver on its commitment to submit its first Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) to minimize the impact of climate change.

"The NDC of the Philippines conveys our country's readiness to raise our ambition and pursue the low carbon transition of our sectors towards a climate-resilient and green economy," he said.

"However, we would like to emphasize that defining the ambition and contributions of developing country-parties entails clarity on the delivery of the means of implementation. It is therefore critical that (conference) delivers on the guidance on how to ensure scale, predictability and sustainability in the delivery of climate finance," he added.



## Neda signs climate-change declaration, affirms vow for green transport drive

By CAI U. ORDINARIO  
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**T**HE National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) will explore alternative transport options and other green initiatives following the signing of the agency's climate-change declaration.

In a news statement issued on Tuesday, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto M. Pernia said the declaration provides that the Neda commits to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions requiring the oversight agency to use ride sharing or point-to-point shuttles for employees, among others.

The Neda Declaration on Climate Change, likewise, reaffirmed the agency's commitment to conserve the environment and natural resources.

"This declaration is a call to action for the present generation to live sustainably and help reduce the detrimental effects of climate change, so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations," Pernia said.

"It will also provide the much-needed framework that will guide and enable Neda to implement concrete actions that ensure the protection and conservation of our environment and natural resources," he added.

The Neda Climate Change Strategy is a multicomponent initiative aimed at implementing measures that reduce the agency's ecological footprint and energy and water consumption, as well as reduce per-

capita greenhouse-gas emissions, while maximizing productivity.

The first component is the dissemination of a promotional video on climate change, and the signing and adoption of the Neda Declaration on Climate Change.

The second component involves mainstreaming sustainable consumption practices in the workplace like water and energy conservation, efficient use of resources, reducing the use of plastic, waste reduction and recycling, and workplace greening through rooftop or vertical gardening.

The last component is the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework that assesses the overall effectiveness of the Neda's green initiatives, which could include a reward system that incentivizes good practices.

"With this initiative, we hope to set an example among our stakeholders and encourage other government agencies to follow suit. Together, we can all make a big impact in reducing the effects of climate change," Pernia said.

The creation of the strategy stemmed from the Philippines's signing of the Paris Agreement on March 23, 2017, as well as Republic Act 9729 or the Climate Change Act of 2009.

The Neda also took into consideration the country's scientific studies which find that the Philippines is one of the countries in the world most vulnerable to climate change.



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# The Manila Times



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## Climate change is real, but woe to its torchbearers

THE United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released in October the findings of the world's top climate scientists — 133 scientists propped up by 166 peer-reviewed studies and articles on the topic that is deemed most important to our planet's survival. Unless global warming is reined in 12 years, the IPCC report said, natural calamities of biblical proportions would upend many areas across the globe.

Simply put, it would usher in the beginning of death.

Droughts and floods, extreme heat and coastal areas sunk by elevated seawaters. By 2030, if nothing adequate is done, some 100 million people will be driven into extreme poverty. There would be massive forest fires and heat-related deaths. Crop-pollinating insects would lose their natural habitats. Coral reefs would vanish and marine life would enter the process of slow death.

By 2040, the world — or much of it — will be a dystopian nightmare. These were implied: The Arctic will mostly disappear and low-lying countries like the Maldives would have been submerged by rising sea levels.

The authors, firm on the science and rigor that backed up the study, were less clear on whether countries across the globe will be able to summon the political will to do the right thing — and avert the world's slide into a giant baking oven. "We said it was possible within the laws of physics and chemistry," said Jim Ikea, co-chair of the IPCC Working Group 111. The political



### MIDWEEK COMMENTS

MARLEN V. RONQUILLO

will required to fight a looming catastrophe on a global scale? The scientists were not so sure.

Why are the scientists doubtful about the political component of the urgent work to combat global warming? Many answers to the question. First, fossil-reliant economies have an oversized influence on global affairs. Because they produce and supply the crude that feeds most industrial economies, modes of transportation and power grids. Second, the giant fossil companies are themselves global economic powers with massive political influence. Third, powerful politicians (take the case of the Republican Party in the US) are aligned with fossil fuel interests and have dismissed climate science as a "hoax."

But this is the clincher. Climate science, though real and terrifying, has never been a winning theme in popular elections. More, it has dragged most of its apostles and torchbearers to political failure. Or, at the very least, the failure of the torchbearers to reach their full potential.

Take the Philippine political context. Do you know of one prominent environment and climate science advocate who rose to political prominence and eminence on the back of the all-too-important issue of climate change?

Not one. Instead, you will come

out with names of political figures, prominent in their own right, who have failed to reach full political greatness due to a common bond — they all got too serious with environmental and climate change issues.

We can start with the case of Heherson "Sonny" Alvarez.

In the early 1970s, Sonny Alvarez, just over 30 years old, had established a name as a prominent political dissenter. First, as a UP-based anti-Marcos activist, then as one of the youngest delegates to the 1971 Constitutional Convention. He was one of the dozen or so delegates who voted "No" to the new Constitution, thus earning the special ire of President Marcos. After the declaration of martial law in 1972, Alvarez became a fugitive with a "shoot-to-kill" order from Marcos. He slipped into a container van of a Hong Kong-bound cargo ship at the Port of Manila, then proceeded to New York to join his wife, theater pioneer Cecile Alvarez.

After the fall of Marcos, he was one of the 24 men and women elected to the 1987 Senate, the start of his long work for the environment and climate change. After two terms in the Senate and one at the House of Representatives (representing a district of Isabela), he briefly served as environment secretary and head of the Climate Change Commission.

The tag "Mr. Environment" — this was the sense of political pundits — dragged down, not enhanced, the once-brilliant and promising career of Sonny Alvarez.

Orly Mercado, another popular

young senator in the batch of Alvarez, also bannered environmental issues. Like Alvarez, he is now in political Hades, no thanks to his effort to push the environment plank

Sen. Loren Legarda was number one in her first senatorial run and was believed to be either a vp-in-waiting or president-in-waiting until she took the "misstep" of making environmental protection and climate science her main legislative agenda.

The common bond of the three, after their election to the Senate at a relatively young age, was the expectation of political greatness. Not one was able to scale the peak and the consensus was — climate change and environment platforms were hazardous to their political health.

In the bigger stage was the case of Al Gore, who won the popular vote for president in the 2000 elections but lost the Electoral College votes to George W. Bush. Gore, who served two terms as vice president under Bill Clinton, was generally disparaged for his climate science advocacy and work. Between his promise to save the planet via his strong environmental agenda, and the promise of George W. Bush to embrace "compassionate conservatism," voters gave the Electoral College vote to Bush the Younger.

That, essentially, is the paradox of a climate science and environment-centered political career. The torchbearers carry the truth and an agenda bigger than all of us sapiens. And fighting for the bigger truths — and this is the tragedy — has dragged down their careers.



## PROTESTERS DISRUPT U.S. FOSSIL FUEL EVENT AT U.N. CLIMATE TALKS

**K**ATOWICE, Poland—Protesters disrupted a US government event at United Nations climate talks on Monday, criticizing the Trump administration's policy of backing the extraction of fossil fuels that contribute to global warming.

About 100 people from groups representing indigenous peoples and youth stood up and chanted "Keep it in the ground" near the beginning of the American presentation. As cameras swarmed around them, some of the protesters explained the extraction of coal, oil and natural gas affects their communities.

The US event, titled "US Innovative Technologies Spur Economic Dynamism," took place on the sidelines of the ongoing UN meeting in Katowice, Poland. After several minutes, the activists left the room chanting "Shame on you." Their actions mirrored a similar protest during a US-hosted panel at last year's UN climate talks in Bonn, Germany.

Wells Griffith, a Trump administration adviser at the Department of Energy, said after the interruption that the United States would continue extracting fossil fuels, including through hydraulic fracking. Speaking at the event, Griffith warned against "alarmism" over climate change, adding that "all energy sources are important, and they will be utilized unapologetically."

The panel's premise—that fossil fuels can be made "clean" through innovation—stands at odds with recommendations from scientists who say countries should transition to renewable energy sources as soon as possible or risk catastrophic levels of global warming by the end of the century.

Investors, too, have backed a shift away from fossil fuels. On Monday, 415 pension funds and insurance companies, with over \$32 trillion in assets, called on governments to phase out coal-fired power plants and put a meaningful price on carbon to help tackle climate change.

Jan Erik Saugestad, the chief executive of Storebrand, a Norwegian fund that manages \$85

billion in assets, said even highly efficient coal plants are highly damaging to the environment and carbon capture technology—touted by some as a way to pull emissions out of the air again—isn't economical.

"Investors are not going to be sold fake news on coal, which seeks to mask the rapid decline of the US coal industry and disregards the solar and wind growth markets," said Saugestad.

Even as the Trump administration promoted coal abroad, new figures show coal consumption by the US power grid this year will be the lowest since 1979 as a wave of coal-fired power plants shut down.

Andrew Light, a former US State Department official, said the US event was unlikely to affect the landmark Paris agreement to limit global warming.

Most of the world's countries are signatories to the 2015 agreement, while President Donald J. Trump has said he will withdraw the United States from it.

"This event has the audience of one person and that is President Trump," said Light, who is now a senior adviser with the environmental group World Resources Institute. He said the US government's arguments were more likely to upset than win over other governments represented at the talks in Katowice.

Over the weekend, the United States, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait prevented endorsement of a scientific report on keeping global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit)—the most ambitious target in the 2015 Paris climate accord. The State Department said US officials didn't discuss their position in advance with the other countries.

Washington sent a small delegation to the summit in Poland because the US is technically still part of the accord.

Ministers and senior officials arrived on Monday in Katowice for the second half of the meeting, which still has numerous hurdles to take before the scheduled end on December 14.

**Bloomberg News**



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## 3 HULI SA ILLEGAL LOGGING

SWAK sa kulungan ang tatlong lalaki matapos mahulihan ng iligal na pinutol na punongkahoy sa Brgy. San Juan, Ilagan City, Isabela.

Kinilala ang tatlong suspek na sina Michael Simangan, 30; driver, Wilfred Pacorsa, 37, binata at Bernard Baysa, 30, pawang ng Brgy. Capellan, Ilagan City.

Ayon kay Supt. Rafael Pagaliluan, hepe ng Ilagan City Police, nakasamsam sila ng 350 board feet na mga pinutol na kahoy, sakay sa Hyundai Grace van.

Sinabi ni PENRO Marlon Agnar ng Isabela, wala silang palalampasing illegal loggers lato't umiiral ang total log ban sa bansa.

REY VELASCO



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## PH stresses biodiversity efforts in UN confab

**THE Philippines highlighted its efforts conserving its rich biodiversity.**

In the high level segment of the UN Biodiversity Conference held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, Ambassador to Egypt Sulpicio M. Confiado welcomed the adoption of the "Sharm el-Sheikh Declaration: Investing in Biodiversity for People and Planet."

He explained the Philippines' efforts in improving management regimes, conserving biodiversity and ensuring the integrity of the country's ecosystems, culture and indigenous practices, in support of the global strategic plan for biodiversity.

Confiado reiterated the Philippine's commitment to its roadmap and action plan for biodiversity conservation and to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The UN Biodiversity Conference comprises a series of meetings of governing bodies of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its protocols.

Meetings and events for intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations were also held in parallel with the conference.

The Philippine delegation include officials and representatives from various government and non-government institutions, such as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Science and Technology (DoST), Department of Health (DoH), National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (PCHRD), and the ASEAN Center for Biodiversity (ACB).

**Cristina Lee-Pisco**



Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
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**DEATH ON MT. APO**

# UPLB'S 'BATMAN' REMEMBERED FOR HARD WORK, PASSION

**By Maricar Cinco**  
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SAN PEDRO CITY—Colleagues and friends remember James Alvarez, a researcher at the University of the Philippines Los Baños-Museum of Natural History (UPLB-MNH), for his diligence and attention to details, the “sterling qualities” of a taxonomist-ecologist, his mentor said.

“I am deeply saddened. I consider him a son and one of our mentees to carry on with our science and advocacies when we retire,” said former MNH director, Ireneo Lit Jr.

Alvarez, 27, died Saturday as he and three other friends and UPLB graduate students were trekking Mt. Apo, the Philippines’ highest peak.

The MNH, in a statement on Tuesday, said Alvarez and his

companions were on vacation after conducting training sessions for a university in Kabacan town, Cotabato province.

**Heavy rain**

The group left Kidapawan City on Dec. 5 and reached Apo’s peak on Dec. 7.

During their descent, Alvarez, at a camp about 2,000 meters above sea level, fell “gravely ill” and began vomiting until the next day, the statement said.

Rescuers organized to fetch the group failed to reach them in time due to heavy rain. The group reached a road early morning on Dec. 9 but Alvarez never regained consciousness after suffering from a seizure.

Alvarez’s remains would be flown back to his family in Lemery town, Batangas province, on Tuesday night.

UPLB would also provide counseling to his three companions.

“James is one of few to choose the off-the-beaten track of wildlife field biology. Given his talents and grit, he could have very well have chosen a more profitable, more glamorous career and yet he chose to pursue taxonomy and conservation,” said entomologist and UPLB professor, Aimee Lynn Dupo.

**Bat study**

Alvarez, who just obtained his master’s degree on wildlife studies at the UPLB, came to be known as “batman” among his friends in the science community for his study of bats.

In 2014, he, with Lit and another scientist, worked on identifying species of “bat vampires,” or Philippine nycteribiids, published on the Brazil-



**BAT LOVER** Colleagues and mentors cite the late wildlife taxonomist and researcher, James Alvarez, for his contribution in the study of Philippine bats. —PHOTO FROM JAMES ALVAREZ’S FACEBOOK ACCOUNT

based Checklist (The Journal of Biodiversity Data).

“Bat vampires,” or “little vampires,” as Alvarez called them, are bat ectoparasites or

wingless insects that suck and feed on bat blood.

“Because of James, we know more about this group and about bats in the Philippines,”

Dupo said.

**Outstanding researcher**

Alvarez was named one of the Outstanding Researchers during UPLB’s Foundation Day in 2017.

In an article posted on the UPLB website, Alvarez was described as someone who would spend months in forests and mountains doing fieldwork.

He also once talked about his time spent on Mt. Guiting-Guiting, another difficult mountain to climb on Sibuyan Island, Romblon province, for research.

“I can start with bats and pursue their conservation in the long run,” Alvarez was quoted as saying. “After all, they are very important when it comes to balancing biodiversity.”

—WITH A REPORT FROM EDWIN O. FERNANDEZ INQ



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# BIOLOGIST NAMATAY HABANG NAGRE-RESEARCH

**ISANG wildlife biologist ang nasawi habang nagsasagawa ng research sa Mount Apo.**

Kinilala ni Supt. Ramel Hojilla, Kida-

pawan City Police Chief ang biktima na si James De Villa Alvarez, 27, at residente ng Itaas, Lemery.

Ayon kay Hojilla,

nagsasagawa ng research ang grupo ni Alvarez sa Mount Apo nang ito ay mahilo, mag-suka at tuluyang nang nanghina. Reptiles at

amphibians na naninirahan sa Mount Apo ang target ng research group ni Alvarez na nagtapos ng Bachelor of Science in Biology.

Ipinabatid ng Red Cross na wala nang buhay si Alvarez nang dumating ang kanilang team sa 'Ko Ong' base camp. **DWIZ882**



## Longest-serving UK courier company launches eco-friendly vehicles

**L**ONDON—Absolutely—one of the UK's longest-established courier companies, has added to their fleet with the launch of new electric-cargo vehicles.

In order to ensure compliance with the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), as well as the petrol and diesel car ban in specific parts of east London, the new fleet of vehicles will enable Absolutely to continue delivering an excellent standard of service, whilst adhering to the latest legislation.

At present, one of the most significant issues facing the courier industry is the introduction of the ULEZ in April 2019. In order to reduce the levels of carbon emissions and toxic gases around, the ULEZ will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week and set a daily charge for vehicles failing to meet

the emissions standards. This will be in addition to the weekday congestion charge and the Low Emission Zone charge.

The launch of the electric vehicles—a first for Absolutely—is an innovative and industry leading move as it is environmentally friendly.

With their zero carbon emissions, the vehicles will be eligible to travel within the upcoming zone. This will enable Absolutely to continuously provide an excellent standard of service for which they are known for.

Along with the electric vans, Absolutely will introduce a new set of electric cargo bicycles which will facilitate deliveries within the congested City and West End areas and offer improved efficiency for their customers. **AP**



UNDERGROUND FORESTS

## ZOMBIE-LIKE MICROBIAL LIFE LURKS BENEATH SEABED

TAMPA—Scientists have drilled 2.5 kilometers beneath the seabed and found vast underground forests of “deep life,” including microbes that persist for thousands, maybe millions of years, researchers said Monday.

Feeding on nothing but the energy from rocks, and existing in a slow-motion, even zombie-like state, previously unknown forms of life are abundant beneath the Earth despite extreme temperatures and pressure.

About 70 percent of Earth's bacteria and archaea—single-cell organisms with no nucleus—live underground, according to the latest findings of an international collaboration involving hundreds of experts, known as the Deep Carbon Observatory (DCO), released at the American Geophysical Union

meeting in Washington.

This “deep life” amounts to between 15 and 23 billion tons of carbon, said the DCO, launched in 2009, as it nears the end of its 10-year mission to reveal Earth's inner secrets.

“The deep biosphere of Earth is massive,” said Rick Colwell, who teaches astrobiology and oceanography at Oregon State University.

He described the team's findings so far as a “very exciting, extreme ecosystem.”

Among them may be Earth's hottest living creature, *Geogemma barossii*, a single-cell organism found in hydrothermal vents on the seafloor.

Its microscopic cells grow and replicate at 121°C.

“There is genetic diversity of life below the surface that is at

least equal to but perhaps exceeds that which is at the surface and we don't know much about it,” Colwell said.

### ‘Distinct’ from surface life

Similar types of strange, deep life microbes might be found on the subsurface of other planets, like Mars.

“Most of deep life is very distinct from life on the surface,” said Fumio Inagaki of the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology.

Using the Japanese scientific vessel *Chikyu*, researchers drilled far beneath the seabed and removed cores that gave scientists a detailed look at deep life.

“The microbes are just sitting there and live for very, very long periods of time,” he said.

—AFP