Commercial vessels could deplete fish stocks in municipal waters — NGO

OCEANA Philippines warned of the potential depletion of fish stocks after a Supreme Court (SC) resolution allowing commercial fishing operations in municipal waters.

"We are worried that this court decision will result in the depletion of our fish stocks with the unabated fishing operations of commercial fishers, displacement of our small, municipal fisherfolk, and destruction of marine habitats and spawning grounds of juvenile fish needed to restore our fisheries," Oceana Vice-President Gloria E. Ramos said in a statement.

The SC's First Division upheld a Malabon Regional Trial Court ruling declaring the Fisheries Code's preferential access provisions unconstitutional.

Under the Republic Act No. 10654, or the Amended Fisheries Code of the Philippines, commercial fishing vessels are only allowed to operate outside a 15-kilometer zone designated as municipal waters.

Oceana said 533 out of 884 coastal towns in the Philippines will now have to open up 90% of their municipal waters to commercial fishing vessels.

"All these will push back the reforms for science-based fishery management areas system now in place, rendering irrelevant the vessel monitoring requirement for commercial fishing vessels," Ms. Ramos added.

She said that the move could also lead to "deeper hunger and poverty" among small-scale fisherfolk due to more intense competition.

In a statement over the weekend, the Department of Agriculture said that it was urging the High Court to reconsider its decision.

"At a depth of seven fathoms, or 12 meters, corals are at risk, and our scarce marine resources could face further depletion," Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said during a meeting with fishing industry representatives.

The volume of fish catch delivered to regional ports declined by 11.5% to 42,445.26 metric tons in December, according to the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority. — **Adrian H. Halili**

Supply chain disruptions, skills gap expected to delay PHL AI adoption

By Beatriz Marie D. Cruz
Reporter

THE Philippines' adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) this year are expected to be hampered by supply chain vulnerabilities and the digital skills gap, according to software firm Hitachi Vantara.

"Supply chain issues are a significant challenge in adopting AI technologies, and the Philippines is no exception," Matthew Hardman, chief technology officer for Asia-Pacific at Hitachi Vantara, said in an e-mail.

"These challenges manifest in several ways, including difficulties in accessing hardware, software, talent, and regulatory frameworks needed to build and sustain AI systems effectively."

Around 54% of organizations globally identified supply chain challenges as the biggest barrier in achieving cyber resilience, according to the World Economic Forum's Global Cybersecurity Outlook for 2025.

"Supply chain disruptions, like the global semiconductor shortage, have made this hardware more expensive and less predictable. For the Philippines, which is still developing its digital infrastructure, this poses a significant barrier to scaling AI solutions," Mr. Hardman added.

While the Philippines is making steady progress in adopting AI, its adoption rates and maturity levels lag those of its regional counterparts like Malaysia and Singapore, he also said.

Compared to its ASEAN (Association of Southeast Nations) peers, the Philippines' AI adoption remains hampered by limited talent, a fragmented digital infrastructure, and lower public and private sector investment in research and development, Mr. Hardman said.

Offshore wind to add 16 GW in new capacity — Energy dep't

THE Department of Energy (DoE) said it is projecting more than 16 gigawatts (GW) of new capacity from offshore wind power projects.

The DoE said it is currently assisting 16 offshore wind proponents who committed to start construction by 2027 and to deliver the first kilowatt-hour by 2028.

The largest project is Domhain Earth Corp.'s Bulalacao Offshore Wind Farm in Oriental Mindoro and Antique with capacity of 3,100 megawatts (MW).

Other large-scale projects are the 1,830-MW Calatagan Offshore Wind Farm in Batangas and Mindoro; the 1,600-MW Claveria Offshore Wind Farm in Ilocos Norte and Cagayan; and the 1,500-MW Mariveles Offshore Wind Farm in Bataan, Cavite and Batangas.

The DoE has also recognized BuhaWind Energy Northern Luzon Corp.'s 2,000-MW Northern Luzon Offshore Wind Power Project in Ilocos Norte as a so-called "frontrunner project."

Other offshore wind project include CI NMF (PH) Corp.'s 1,000-MW San Miguel Bay Offshore Wind Power Project in Camarines Norte and Camarines Sur; the 650-MW Samar Norte Offshore Wind Power Project in Northern Samar; and the 350-MW Dagupan Offshore Wind Power Project in Pangasinan and La Union.

The other frontrunners include Vind Energy Corp.'s 994-MW Cavite Offshore Wind Project and the 728-MW GS2 Offshore Wind Power Project in Guimaras; Triconti SouthWind Corp.'s 600-MW Guimaras Strait Wind Power Project; and Jet Stream Windkraft Corp.'s 600-MW Guimaras Strait II Wind Power Project.

Also designated frontrunner projects are Ivisan Windkraft Corp.'s 450-MW Frontera Bay Wind Power Project in Bataan and Cavite and ACX3 Capital Holdings, Inc.'s 500-MW San Miguel Bay Wind Power Project in Camarines Sur, 475-MW Lucena Wind Power Project in Quezon, and 275-MW Tayabas Bay Wind Power Project in Quezon.

The DoE is hoping to stage the fifth round of the green energy auction (GEA-5) focused on offshore wind power this year, Undersecretary Rowena Cristina L. Guevara said.

"We announced this in December because some of the frontrunner offshore wind projects needed to assure their investors that the Green Energy Auction 5 is going to happen," Ms. Guevara told reporters last week.

GEA-5 is expected to secure market access for offshore wind developers, ensuring long-term demand for their generation capacities and keep them on track to generate the first kilowatts by 2028.

The government had awarded 92 offshore wind contracts with 68-GW potential capacity as of October. Of the total, 21 contracts were awarded to foreign-owned companies with an aggregate capacity of 19.2 GW.

However, for these projects to be realized, ports need to be developed to serve as logistics hubs throughout the lifecycle of the projects.

Ms. Guevara said that transmission and ports are the crucial components of offshore wind development. The DoE is currently working with the National Grid Corp. of the Philippines for the transmission and local government units for right of way.

The department is also in talks with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA).

The PPA has committed and allocated a budget for repurposing and expansion of three priority ports. Due to their proximity to high-potential wind energy service contracts, Currimao port in Ilocos Norte, the Port of Batangas, and the Jose Panganiban port in Camarines Norte have been identified as critical to offshore wind development.

In October, the DoE and the DENR signed a memorandum of agreement allowing access to both offshore and auxiliary areas during the pre-development/exploration, development and commercial development phases, subject to the necessary DENR requirements. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**