



NEWS ROUNDUP

05 JANUARY 2023 [08:00 am]

- Philippines, China expected to sign up to 14 deals during Marcos visit
- Green lending tops fossil fuel as 'Big Oil' gets cash elsewhere
- France asserts pact to climate resilience a year after 'Odette'
- Study: Pollination loss removes health foods from global diets
- PHL space agency joins global climate observatory initiative
- New Year: What if or what will be?
- Indigenous group develops underground greenhouses to combat climate crisis
- Marcos, Xi intend to resume oil, gas exploration talks
- 'Feels like summer': Warm winter breaks temperature records in Europe
- Marcos: China vows solution to plight of Filipino fishermen in West Philippine Sea
- Sultan Kudarat farmers get organic fertilizers
- 2023 transition year for recovery: bizman
- 10 HEIs make it to '22 World 'Green Rankings'
- Starting 2023 with hope
- Coral bleaching causing 'unnecessary' fish fights
- [Opinion] Eyes on Indo-Pacific

ABS CBN

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By: Katrina Domingo and Warren de Guzman

MANILA (UPDATE) - The Philippines and China are expected to sign 10 to 14 bilateral agreements during President Ferdinand Marcos Jr's visit to Beijing, Malacanang said on Wednesday.

BUSINESS MIRROR

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BUSINESS WORLD

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By: Patricia B. Mirasol

THE Philippine Space Agency (PhilSA) signed the Space for Climate Observatory (SCO) Charter on Nov. 28, 2022, making it the climate resilience initiative’s National Focal Point of the Philippines.

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

[New Year: What if or what will be?](#)

By: Bernard Karganilla

NEW Year. Anything is possible. Including Nostradamus? “XVII. Par quarante ans l’Iris n’apparoistra, Par quarante ans tous les iours sera veu: La terre aride en siccité croistra, Et grands deloges quand sera apperceu.”

MANILA BULLETIN

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To combat the intensifying effects of climate change, an indigenous tribe in the central United States developed greenhouse structures below the ground.

[Marcos, Xi intend to resume oil, gas exploration talks](#)

By: Bethene Unite

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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[Marcos: China vows solution to plight of Filipino fishermen in West Philippine Sea](#)

By: Beatrice Pinlac

MANILA, Philippines – President Ferdinand R. Marcos. Jr on Wednesday said that his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping has committed to “find a compromise and find a solution” for Filipino fishermen to resume fishing in the West Philippine Sea.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Sultan Kudarat farmers get organic fertilizers](#)

By: Noel Punzalan

COTABATO CITY – At least six agrarian reform beneficiaries’ organizations (ARBOs) in Sultan Kudarat province have been given 300 bags of vermicompost and 130 gallons of organic foliar fertilizer by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).

SUNSTAR

[2023 transition year for recovery: bizman](#)

By: Ian Ocampo Flora

CLARK FREEPORT Businessman Rene Romero sees 2023 as the “final transition” year for the country’s recovery from the previous economic impacts of the corona virus pandemic.

THE MANILA TIMES

[10 HEIs make it to '22 World 'Green Rankings'](#)

By: Leander Domingo

TEN Philippine higher education institutions (HEIs) made it to the 2022 UI GreenMetric World University Rankings (UIGWUR).

[Starting 2023 with hope](#)

By: Ernie Cecilia, DPM

IN my column last week, I wrote about "Unfinished Tasks in 2022." The optimist in me wishes that world leaders would start the year 2023 with hope, and with solutions that should fully address lingering issues.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Coral bleaching causing 'unnecessary' fish fights](#)

By: Daniel Lawler, Agence France Presse

PARIS, France — Fish that have lost food due to mass coral bleaching are getting into more unnecessary fights, causing them to expend precious energy and potentially threatening their survival, new research said Wednesday.

[\[Opinion\] Eyes on Indo-Pacific](#)

By: Iris Gonzales

The Indo-Pacific region, stretching from the Pacific coastline to the Indian Ocean, is home to three of the world's largest economies – China, India and Japan.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

Philippines, China expected to sign up to 14 deals during Marcos visit

By: Katrina Domingo and Warren de Guzman

MANILA (UPDATE) - The Philippines and China are expected to sign 10 to 14 bilateral agreements during President Ferdinand Marcos Jr's visit to Beijing, Malacanang said on Wednesday.

Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno said the agreements will boost the Philippines' infrastructure push.

"We will be signing more than a dozen of agreements and loans so that we expect our 'Build Better More' to be accelerated," Diokno said in an interview with the Office of the Press Secretary.

Other areas of cooperation include trade and investment, agriculture, renewable energy, infrastructure, development cooperation, maritime security, and tourism.

Among the projects expected to receive funding from China include farm-to-market roads as well as other "sustainable projects," he said.

"This very short trip will promise to be a very successful one," Diokno said.

Malacañang has yet to disclose how much in investment pledges the Philippines expected to yield from Marcos' 3-day state visit to Beijing.

Marcos' state visit to China comes about 2 months after his first face-to-face meeting with Xi on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit in Bangkok last year.

A large contingent of Filipino businessmen has travelled with Marcos to Beijing for the visit, including the leadership of the Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc., and members of the Private Sector Advisory Council or PSAC led by businessman Sabin Aboitiz.

Political Analyst Austin Ong said upgrading cooperation between the Philippines and China should be the priority of the trip.

He noted the Philippines benefited from cooperation with China during the administration of former President Rodrigo Duterte, with the country receiving vaccine donations, and transport infrastructure including two donated bridges in Metro Manila.

Ong said he hopes some of these discussions and agreements will help address key issues and problems in the Philippines right now such as high food prices, job security, health and education.

“So that would be the guide poles for our leaders in the next 5 years,” Ong said.

Meanwhile some small business owners are looking forward to more trade with China.

For 56 year old Nelda Serrano, who sells China-made portable gensets, water pressure pumps and screw drivers, the Philippines and China should cooperate more.

“Sa kanila din nanggagaling ang produkto natin. Halos lahat. Kagaya ng negosyo natin, sa kanila nanggagaling yan.”

Salesman Alberto Negrite asaid that while there is a stigma attached to China-made products, customers still keep buying them.

“Yung mga produkto ng China, although sabihin natin medyo low quality, pero talagang mura.”

Negrite is also aware the health of the Chinese economy is essential for good business not just here, but around the world.

“Naniniwala naman ako na ang pagpunta ng presidente natin doon, magpapasok siya ng mas maraming negosyo dito sa atin.”

China is the Philippines largest trading partner, accounting for \$2.22 billion or 20.2 percent of the total imports in October 2022, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority.

China, including Hong Kong, is also a top export market. Hong Kong accounted for \$1.28 billion or a share of 16.6 percent to the total exports in October while China accounted for \$959.59 million or 12.5 percent of total exports.

BUSINESS MIRROR

Green lending tops fossil fuel as 'Big Oil' gets cash elsewhere

FOR the first time, more money was raised in the debt markets for climate-friendly projects than for fossil-fuel companies.

Roughly \$580 billion was arranged in 2022 for renewable energy and other environmentally responsible ventures, while the oil, gas and coal industries turned to lenders and underwriters for closer to \$530 billion, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. But it's not that green financing is finally winning out over fossil fuel lending. Rather, Big Oil looks to be getting more money from elsewhere. High oil prices over the past year have likely freed energy companies from their dependence on capital markets, said April Merleaux, research manager at the environmental nonprofit Rainforest Action Network.

"We're also seeing fossil-fuel companies turn to less traditional sources of capital, such as private equity, which is much harder for us to track," Merleaux said. Given this backdrop, "it's difficult to say with confidence that there's a new trend in the lending markets that will extend into 2023."

The big question for oil, gas and coal companies is how they plan to use their balance sheets to make the transition to clean energy, Merleaux said. Currently, many are saying they plan to expand fossil-fuel production now and decarbonize later, she said.

"This is false logic, and it isn't what the International Energy Agency (IEA) recommends," she said. As for the banks, "they know what needs to be done, but we don't yet see evidence that they're really ready to follow through on their emissions-reduction objectives."

Climate ambitions

BANKERS are generating considerably more revenue these days from selling green bonds and loans. In 2022, they pocketed an estimated \$3.3 billion of fees from these deals, exceeding the \$2.5 billion earned from lining up bonds and loans for the highest-polluting energy sectors, Bloomberg data show.

Credit Agricole SA, BNP Paribas SA and Bank of America Corp. ranked as the top arrangers of green bonds and loans last year, according to Bloomberg data, while RBC

Capital Markets, Wells Fargo & Co. and JPMorgan Chase & Co. were the leading providers to the fossil-fuel industry.

However, if one looks at the bigger picture, Wall Street and its brethren clearly remain dedicated to funding the companies most responsible for global warming. Since the Paris climate agreement was announced in 2015, banks have raised almost \$4.6 trillion for oil, gas and coal companies—double the \$2.3 trillion gathered from green loans and bond sales.

But those Big Oil banks—including JPMorgan—say they have climate ambitions, and they're expanding.

Last month, the New York-based bank announced new emissions-reduction targets for airlines, cement manufacturers and iron ore and steel companies. That adds to JPMorgan's first set of goals, which focused on the oil and gas, electric power and auto manufacturing sectors.

Mixed reaction

JPMorgan said the six sectors now covered by its reduction goals account for the majority of global emissions. The new targets are intended to align with the IEA's net zero by 2050 scenario, according to the bank.

Climate activists have had a mixed reaction to JPMorgan's claims.

While the adoption of additional sectoral goals is "great to see," JPMorgan's oil and gas commitments have so far done "nothing to change its unwavering support" for the fossil-fuel industry, said Lucie Pinson, director of environmental nonprofit Reclaim Finance. "The jury is still out on the material impact of these new targets for cement and steel."

Merleaux and others also have questioned JPMorgan's decision to focus on reducing the carbon intensity of its financing portfolio rather than pledging to reduce absolute emissions. That jibes with a United Nations-appointed panel of experts that said companies and financial institutions should focus on cutting absolute emissions when setting net-zero goals.

JPMorgan has responded by saying that intensity-based metrics are the most "decision-useful way to evaluate clients progress against climate scenarios."

France asserts pact to climate resilience a year after ‘Odette’

ONE year after Typhoon Odette’s (international name Rai) rampage, the French government said it remains committed to provide assistance to the Philippines for emergency relief and long-term climate resilience.

The Embassy of France to the Philippines was among the first to provide funding to Filipinos affected when the howler struck the Philippines on December 16, 2021. It claimed nearly 400 victims and displaced thousands of families.

As a response to the calamity, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through its Crisis and Support Center, mobilized €1 million in emergency aid to support the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) and the French Red Cross, together with the Philippine Red Cross, and another €1 million to the World Food Programme and the United Nations Children’s Fund. Their projects were carried throughout 2022, and will continue beyond that.

In typhoon-struck Siargao Island, ACTED Phils. provided hygiene kits and shelter-repair tools in the municipalities of Sison, San Francisco, San Isidro and Santa Monica in the first weeks of the response.

ACTED’s flagship project in Surigao del Norte is focused on rehabilitation of water sources; rebuilding of damaged infrastructures; and construction of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities which helped 1,269 households, or 6,345 persons.

Meanwhile, the Airbus Foundation provided a helicopter that delivered medicines and supplies to French and Filipino communities in Siargao. The Philippine Air Force also extended its help to the French Embassy in bringing food, medicine and other supplies to Bohol and Siargao.

The French Chamber of Commerce and the France-Philippines United Action Foundation also had a donation drive for the benefit of communities in difficulty in Cebu, Bohol, and Siargao, in coordination with the Philippine Coast Guard.

Likewise, the Alliance française de Cebu and French nongovernment organization (NGO) Enfants d’Asie sent 3,000 liters of water to Cebu for the province’s French and Filipino communities.

Cooperation among the French Embassy and its partners in the Philippine government, French community, NGOs and the private sector underscore France’s assurance in

supporting the Philippines in its efforts to adapt to the consequences of climate change, manifested by the increasing frequency of typhoons.

[Study: Pollination loss removes health foods from global diets](#)

Inadequate pollination has led to a 3 percent to 5 percent loss of fruit, vegetable, and nut production and an estimated 427,000 excess deaths annually from lost healthy food consumption and associated diseases, according to a study.

The research, titled “Pollinator deficits, food consumption, and consequences for human health: a modeling study,” was led by researchers from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Published in *Environment Health Perspectives* last month, the study quantified the toll of insufficient wild animal pollinators on human health.

“A critical missing piece in the biodiversity discussion has been a lack of direct linkages to human health. This research establishes that loss of pollinators is already impacting health on a scale with other global health risk factors, such as prostate cancer or substance use disorders,” said Samuel Myers, principal research scientist, planetary health, Department of Environmental Health and senior author of the study.

Increasing human pressure on natural systems is causing alarming losses in biodiversity, the topic of the COP 15 UN Biodiversity Conference which took place in Montreal. This includes 1 percent to 2 percent annual declines of insect populations, leading some to warn of an impending “insect apocalypse” in the coming decades.

Key among insect species are pollinators, which increase yields of three-fourths of crop varieties and are critical to growing healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, and nuts. Changes in land-use, use of harmful pesticides, and advancing climate change threaten wild pollinators, imperiling human supply of healthy foods.

The researchers used a model framework, which included empirical evidence from a network of hundreds of experimental farms across Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America, that looked at “pollinator yield gaps” for the most important pollinator-dependent crops, to show how much crop loss was due to insufficient pollination.

They then used a global risk-disease model to estimate the health impacts the changes in pollination could have on dietary risks and mortality by country. Additionally, they calculated the loss of economic value from lost pollination in three case study countries.

The results showed that lost food production was concentrated in lower-income countries but that the health burden was greater in middle- and higher-income countries, where rates of non-communicable diseases are higher. The geographic distribution was somewhat unusual in that generally the health effects from global environmental change

are centered among the poorest populations in regions such as South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Here, middle-income countries with large populations—China, India, Indonesia, and Russia—suffered the greatest burden.

The analysis also showed that lower-income countries lost significant agricultural income due to insufficient pollination and lower yields, potentially 10 percent to 30 percent of total agricultural value.

“The results might seem surprising, but they reflect the complex dynamics of factors behind food systems and human populations around the world. Only with this type of interdisciplinary modeling can we get a better fix on the magnitude and impact of the problem,” said co-author Timothy Sulser, senior scientist at the International Food Policy Research Institute.

Strategies to protect wild pollinators are not just an environmental issue, but a health and economic one as well. “This study shows that doing too little to help pollinators does not just harm nature, but human health as well,” said lead author Matthew Smith, research scientist, Department of Environmental Health.

BUSINESS WORLD

[PHL space agency joins global climate observatory initiative](#)

By: Patricia B. Mirasol

THE Philippine Space Agency (PhilSA) signed the Space for Climate Observatory (SCO) Charter on Nov. 28, 2022, making it the climate resilience initiative's National Focal Point of the Philippines.

As the Focal Point, it is designated to take part in Steering Committee meetings to make decisions on SCO programs and functions.

"Our membership to the SCO is an opportunity for the Philippines to work with international space agencies, climate resilience organizations, and the private sector, in data and information sharing to make the best use of space data to bring operational tools for climate action," said PhilSA Director General Joel Joseph S. Marciano, Jr. in a Jan. 3 statement.

Mr. Marciano said the global cooperation improves the capacities of its members, as well as vulnerable communities, in monitoring and addressing climate change and its impacts.

PhilSA is working on establishing the SCO Philippines, a national implementation that would engage public and private entities operating in the field of climate action.

"We encourage national government agencies and non-profit organizations in the Philippines to participate in this worldwide initiative through PhilSA," Mr. Marciano added.

Being a SCO signatory supports the agency's key development area on Hazard Management and Climate Studies.

The SCO was set up as an international network to support the emergence of operational applications to promote climate resilience.

It was launched in June 2019 when 23 space agencies and international organizations signed a declaration of interest. The idea behind it, however, dates back to 2017 during the One Planet Summit, which vision was to offer a "new, pragmatic, and effective framework for action, one that will contribute to broadening and renewing international cooperation for the ecological transition."

PhilSA also has cooperation agreements with the United Arab Emirates Space Agency (UAESA) the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, and the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs.

Other countries that joined the French-led SCO in 2022 include the US through its lead agency the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the United Arab Emirates through UAESA.

The Philippines is the third most vulnerable country to climate change. The Asian Development Bank has said the country stands to lose 6% of its gross domestic product per year by 2100 if it disregards climate change risks.

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

New Year: What if or what will be?

By: Bernard Karganilla

NEW Year. Anything is possible. Including Nostradamus? “XVII. Par quarante ans l'Iris n'apparoistra, Par quarante ans tous les iours sera veu: La terre aride en siccité croistra, Et grands deloges quand sera apperceu.”

“For 40 years the rainbow will not be seen. For 40 years it will be seen every day. The dry earth will grow more parched, and there will be great floods when it is seen.” If this refers to the ongoing catastrophic climate change, then the United Nations better hurry: “I will keep pushing for a Climate Solidarity Pact, in which all big emitters make an extra effort to reduce emissions this decade in line with the 1.5°C goal and ensure support for those who need it. There is no doubt that without it, the 1.5°C goal will soon disappear. I have pulled no punches on the imperative for all of us to confront this existential threat. And I will not relent. So today I am announcing that I will convene a Climate Ambition Summit in September 2023. I call on every leader to step up — from Governments, business, cities and regions, civil society and finance. They must come with new, tangible and credible climate action to accelerate the pace of change...It will be a no-nonsense summit. No exceptions. No compromises. There will be no room for backsliders, greenwashers, blame-shifters or repackaging of announcements of previous years.”

“LXXV. La voix ouye de l'insolit oyseau, Sur le canon du respiral estage: Si haut viendra du froment le boisteau Que l'homme d'homme sera Antropophage.” Nostradamus translated: “The voice of the rare bird heard, On the pipe of the air-vent floor: So high will the bushel of wheat rise, That man will be eating his fellow man.”

If this is about inflation, then in the Philippines it is “projected to remain elevated in the near term. The latest forecast path indicates that inflation is likely to peak in Q4 2022 and remain above the National Government’s target range of 2-4 percent until Q2 2023. Inflation is then seen to decelerate back to within the target range by Q3 2023... The risks to the inflation outlook are still skewed to the upside, particularly for 2023, but remain broadly balanced for 2024. Major upside risks to the inflation outlook are the potential impact of higher fertilizer prices; trade restrictions and adverse global weather conditions on international food prices; increased prices of fruits and vegetables owing to domestic weather disturbances; petitions for tricycle fare hikes due to elevated oil prices; higher sugar prices; and the possible reinstatement of the full tariff rates on several imports such as pork and rice that were temporarily lowered under Executive

Order No. 171. Meanwhile, the impact of a weaker-than-expected global output recovery is the primary downside risk to the outlook. Inflation expectations have risen further and remain at risk of disanchoring.” [Monetary Board approved this Monetary Policy Report at its meeting on 17 November 2022]

Nostradamus #3 for 2023: “LXXVII. L’antechrist trois bien tost anniehilez, Vingt & sept ans sang durera sa guerre. Les heretiques mortz, captifs, exilez. Sang corps humain eau rougi gresler terre.”

More regional wars: “If the war in Ukraine has reverberated across crises worldwide, its impact has been especially acute in the South Caucasus. Two years after their latest war over Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia and Azerbaijan appear headed toward another confrontation... M23, a previously dormant rebel group, which UN reports suggest is backed by Rwanda, is wreaking havoc in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Fighting has driven tens of thousands of people from their homes and could spiral into a wider regional proxy war.” [10 Conflicts to Watch in 2023 by the Crisis Group]

In Northeast Asia: “By late 2018, PRC concerns began to emerge that the United States would use low-yield weapons against its Taiwan invasion fleet, with related commentary in official media calling for proportionate response capabilities. The DF-26 is the PRC’s first nuclear-capable missile system that can conduct precision strikes, and therefore, is the most likely weapon system to field a lower-yield warhead in the near-term.” In Southeast Asia: “All of the PLA’s 24 Su-35s purchased from Russia are assigned to the Southern Theater Command Air Force and have flown patrols in the South China Sea and the Western Pacific. The Southern Theater Command was also the first command to receive the PLAN’s H-6J maritime strike bombers. In December 2019, the PRC commissioned its first-domestically produced aircraft carrier, Shandong into service at Yulin Naval Base.” [United States Department of Defense. Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2022: A Report to Congress. pp. 98, 110]

Theater confrontations coagulating into the Big One: “More than half of people in all 33 countries polled on Ipsos’ Global Advisor online platform between September 23 and October 7, 2022 expect there could be a world conflict on par with WW1 and WWII by 2047.” [<https://www.ipsos.com/en/halifax-report-2022-war>] As it is, the United States has already engaged in armed conflict in a score of countries through ground forces, proxy forces, or air strikes.

Eagle v. Dragon = WW3? “China wants the ability to invade and hold Taiwan within the next six years but might not intend to do so in the near term, Chairman of the Joint

Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley told Congress... “Their assessment is based off a speech by President Xi that challenged the People’s Liberation Army to accelerate their modernization programs to develop capabilities to seize Taiwan and move it from 2035 to 2027...What I’m talking about is capability...not an intent to attack or seize. My assessment is an operational assessment...Intent is something that could change quickly’.”

“The antichrist very soon annihilates the three, 27 years his war will last. The unbelievers are dead, captive, exiled; with blood, human bodies, water and red hail covering the earth.”

MANILA BULLETIN

[Indigenous group develops underground greenhouses to combat climate crisis](#)

To combat the intensifying effects of climate change, an indigenous tribe in the central United States developed greenhouse structures below the ground.

The 850,000-hectare Pine Ridge Reservation in the state of South Dakota, United States, is classified as a “food desert,” with only a handful of food stores in the area and many of its residents living below the poverty line. The hard economic situation has been aggravated by the worsening climate-related extremes. From droughts to intense storms, extreme weather events continuously hinder the Oglala Sioux Tribe from having sustainable food production.

Some indigenous farmers have started building underground greenhouses, locally called “walipini,” to ensure food security despite the weather extremes. A typical walipini is a long and sleek greenhouse structure housing plants eight feet below the ground and is covered on top by a polycarbonate roof angled south to let the sunlight in. According to local farmer Natalie Hand, the greenhouse is cooled by exhaust fans during summer and uses sunlight to warm the environment during winter.

Even if it is underground, a walipini costs around the same price as an above-ground greenhouse. It is much cheaper to operate because the ambient earth temperature maintains the greenhouse climate, and the wind is much less of a concern, according to underground greenhouse business owner Russel Finch.

Theresa Ong, an assistant professor of environmental studies at Dartmouth College, shared that aside from helping ensure food security year-round, underground greenhouses can also reduce agriculture’s reliance on fossil fuels.

At the moment, there are still only eight operating underground greenhouses in the reservation, but the tribal leaders are planning to build more to achieve self-sufficiency in food in the middle of a desert and survive through the worsening climate crisis.

Marcos, Xi intend to resume oil, gas exploration talks

By: Betheene Unite

BEIJING, China— President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. and Chinese President Xi Jinping have both signified willingness to resume the discussion on the oil and gas exploration in the West Philippines Sea.

Marcos announced this after his bilateral meeting with Xi on Wednesday, Jan. 4, during his three-day state visit here.

“I really hope—I would very much like, as you have suggested, Mr. President, to be able to announce that we are continuing negotiations and that we hope that these negotiations will bear fruit because the pressure upon not only China, not only the Philippines but the rest of the world to move away from the traditional fronts of power,” Marcos said.

The President stressed that the continuing negotiation for the joint exploration between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea is very important to the Philippines as he earlier stated that the country needs the resources it could get from the sea.

Marcos also revealed that Xi vowed to assist the Philippines in developing the administration’s priority areas, such as agriculture, fisheries, energy, and infrastructure.

The Chinese leader has welcomed the President, the first state leader to visit China this year and since it closed borders due to Covid surge, through a welcoming ceremony, followed by their bilateral meeting and a banquet at the Great Hall of People.

“Mr. President, your current trip is a trip to honor history, but more importantly, it is to open up the future. I look forward to having discussions with you to carry forward the friendship and further promote [our] bilateral relationship,” President Xi said in his welcome remarks during their bilateral talks.

“Together, let’s deepen cooperation and draw out a blueprint with China-Philippines cooperation in the new era. This way, we will bring more benefits to our people and contribute to peace and stability in the region,” he added.

In his response, Marcos said the Philippines and China should strengthen their partnership to make the two countries stable and strong and keep the region a driving force behind the new global economy.

The chief executive said they “covered so many subjects much more than is usual for this very formal meeting,” including the plight of Filipino fishermen to be allowed to fish in their natural fishing ground.

“I am quite gratified that we made a good start but it is but a start,” Marcos said.

The two leaders also talked about the trade imbalance between the two countries, the Durian protocol, renewable energy, people to people relationships, tourism, cultural exchanges, education exchanges, infrastructure development, and climate change.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

'Feels like summer': Warm winter breaks temperature records in Europe

LONDON/BRUSSELS – Record-high winter temperatures swept across parts of Europe over the new year, bringing calls from activists for faster action against climate change while offering short-term respite to governments struggling with high gas prices.

Hundreds of sites have seen temperature records smashed in the past days, from Switzerland to Poland to Hungary, which registered its warmest Christmas Eve in Budapest and saw temperatures climb to 18.9 degrees Celsius (66.02°F) on Jan. 1.

In France, where the night of Dec. 30-31 was the warmest since records began, temperatures climbed to nearly 25C in the southwest on New Year's Day while normally bustling European ski resorts were deserted due to a lack of snow.

The Weather Service in Germany, where temperatures of over 20C were recorded, said such a mild turn of the year had not been observed in the country since records began in 1881.

Czech Television reported some trees were starting to flower in private gardens while Switzerland's office of Meteorology and Climatology issued a pollen warning to allergy sufferers from early blooming hazel plants.

The temperature hit 25.1C at Bilbao airport in Spain's Basque country. People basked in the sun as they sat outside Bilbao's Guggenheim Museum or walked along the River Nervion.

"It always rains a lot here, it's very cold, and it's January, (but now) it feels like summer," said Bilbao resident Eusebio Folgeira, 81.

French tourist Joana Host said: "It's like nice weather for biking but we know it's like the planet is burning. So we're enjoying it but at the same time we're scared."

Scientists have not yet analysed the specific ways in which climate change affected the recent high temperatures, but January's warm weather spell fits into the longer-term trend of rising temperatures due to human-caused climate change.

“Winters are becoming warmer in Europe as a result of global temperatures increasing,” said Freja Vamborg, climate scientist at the European Union’s Copernicus Climate Change Service.

It follows another year of extreme weather events that scientists concluded were directly linked to global warming, including deadly heatwaves in Europe and India, and flooding in Pakistan.

“The record-breaking heat across Europe over the new year was made more likely to happen by human-caused climate change, just as climate change is now making every heatwave more likely and hotter,” said Dr Friederike Otto, climate scientist at Imperial College London.

Temperature spikes can also cause plants to start growing earlier in the year or coax animals out of hibernation early, making them vulnerable to being killed off by later cold snaps.

Robert Vautard, director of France’s Pierre-Simon Laplace Institute, said that while temperatures peaked from Dec. 30 to Jan. 2, the mild spell has lasted for two weeks and is still not over. “This is actually a relatively long-lived event,” he said.

EMPTY SLOPES

French national weather agency Meteo France attributed the anomalous temperatures to a mass of warm air moving to Europe from subtropical zones.

It struck during the busy skiing season, leading to cancelled trips and empty slopes. Resorts in the northern Spanish regions of Asturias, Leon and Cantabria have been closed since the Christmas holidays for lack of snow.

On Jahorina mountain above the Bosnian capital Sarajevo, which hosted the 1984 Winter Olympics, it should have been one of the busiest weeks of the season. Instead, the chair-lifts hung lifeless above the grassy slopes. In one guesthouse a couple ate dinner alone in the restaurant, the only guests.

A ski jumping event in Zakopane, southern Poland, planned for the weekend of Jan. 7-8 was cancelled.

Karsten Smid, a climate expert at Greenpeace Germany, said while some climate change impacts were already unavoidable, urgent action should be taken to prevent even more drastic global warming.

“What’s happening right now is exactly what climate scientists warned us about 10, 20 years ago, and that can no longer be prevented now,” Smid said.

WEATHER EASES GAS STRAIN

The unusually mild temperatures have offered some short-term relief to European governments who have struggled to secure scarce gas supplies and keep a lid on soaring prices after Russia slashed deliveries of the fuel to Europe.

European governments have said this energy crisis should hasten their shift from fossil fuels to clean energy – but in the short term, plummeting Russian fuel supplies have left them racing to secure extra gas from elsewhere.

Gas demand has fallen for heating in many countries due to the mild spell, helping to reduce prices.

The benchmark front-month gas price was trading at 70.25 euros per megawatt hour on Wednesday morning, its lowest level since February 2022 – just before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

The head of Italy’s energy authority predicted that regulated energy bills in the country would fall this month, if the milder temperatures help keep gas prices lower.

However, a note by Eurointelligence cautioned that this should not lull governments into complacency about Europe’s energy crisis.

“While it will give governments more fiscal breathing room in the first part of this year, resolving Europe’s energy problems will taken concerted action over the course of several years,” it said. “Nobody should believe this is over yet.”

Marcos: China vows solution to plight of Filipino fishermen in West Philippine Sea

By: Beatrice Pinlac

MANILA, Philippines – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr on Wednesday said that his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping has committed to “find a compromise and find a solution” for Filipino fishermen to resume fishing in the West Philippine Sea.

Marcos and Xi earlier met during the former’s three-day state visit to China – his first to a non-Asean country since assuming office last year.

“We also discussed what we can do to move forward to avoid any possible mistakes, misunderstandings that could trigger a bigger problem that we already have,” he said in a video shared to reporters.

“And I was very clear in trying to talk about the plight of our fishermen. The President promised that we would find a compromise and find a solution that will be beneficial, so that our fishermen might be able to fish again in their natural fishing grounds.”

Ikinalugod ni Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. ang resulta ng kanyang mga pulong kasama sina Chinese President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang, at National People's Congress Standing Committee Chairman Li Zhanshu, sa ikalawang araw ng kanyang opisyal na pagbisita sa China. Umaasa si PBBM na magsisilbing matibay na pundasyon ang mga talakayang naganap para sa layunin ng kanyang administrasyon na paigtingin ang ugnayang Pilipinas-China sa mahahalaga at napapanahong usapin.

Posted by Office of the Press Secretary on Wednesday, January 4, 2023

Fishermen’s appeal

Prior to his state visit to China, Marcos had been urged by Filipino fishermen to prioritize pushing back on the Asian superpower’s encroachment in Philippine waters during his meeting with Chinese leaders.

China claims nearly the whole South China Sea, including the West Philippine Sea—waters within the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone.

The country’s maritime dispute with China has long strained their relations, especially after a 2016 arbitral ruling invalidating the latter’s sweeping claims in practically the entire South China Sea.

Communication mechanism

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), in a press briefing in Malacañang last week, said it will be formalizing a communication mechanism with its Chinese counterpart during Marcos' state visit "to avoid miscalculation and miscommunication in the West Philippine Sea."

Marcos, said the DFA, is likewise expected to discuss "the full range of our bilateral relations—both the positive aspects of it and the sensitive aspects of our relations, which includes the issue of the West Philippine Sea and China's activities in the area."

Climate change, renewable energy

Marcos said he and Xi covered a wide range of subjects from addressing the trade imbalance between both countries to sharing experiences on the shift to renewable energy.

Climate change and the shift to renewable energy were also among the other points Marcos said he had discussed with Xi.

"It has been a very wide ranging discussion, and we talked at great length, towards the end, about climate change. We are all very much in agreement, all the leaders that I have spoken to thus far, are very much in agreement that this is a subject that we cannot leave alone or it will come back to haunt us in the future if we do not prepare," he said.

Marcos also noted that he and Xi had agreed to engage in an exchange of experiences on various matters like "the transfer of technologies and the different strategies for the move to renewable energy."

"It really, in the end, became a fairly detailed discussion which made the meeting [run] very long and that's why I'm actually very optimistic, because President Xi seemed to be genuinely interested in all of these issues and finding a way to move forward to again strengthen the relationship between China and the Philippines," he added.

Marcos said that he has since directed Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo and Philippine ambassador to China Jaime FlorCruz "to pursue the subjects that we had discussed and to make sure that they do not remain in the wind but will actually come to fruition so that the effects will be felt by both our people."

The Philippines and China has so far signed 14 bilateral agreements, ranging from agriculture, infrastructure, development cooperation, maritime security and tourism, over the course of the state visit.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Sultan Kudarat farmers get organic fertilizers

By: Noel Punzalan

COTABATO CITY – At least six agrarian reform beneficiaries' organizations (ARBOs) in Sultan Kudarat province have been given 300 bags of vermicompost and 130 gallons of organic foliar fertilizer by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).

Rushdi Mindalano, provincial agrarian reform program officer, said the assistance aims to boost the ARBOs' agricultural production and promote a healthy way of producing food without harming the environment.

"It has always been our aim to ease the problems of the farmers by helping them achieve higher farming productivity and profitability through the provision of support services," Mindalano said in a statement Wednesday.

Amounting to PHP247,350, he said the farm inputs were provided to the ARBOs in line with the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to DAR Secretary Conrado Estrella III to help improve the lives of the farmers.

The ARBOs which each received 22 gallons of foliar fertilizer and 50 sacks of vermicompost were the Agrarian Reform Farmers Association in Tacurong City; the Silang Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Association in Bagumbayan; the Palimbang Entrepreneurs Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries' Organization in Palimbang town; and the Sitio Lagon Farmers' Multi-Purpose Cooperative in President Quirino town.

Likewise, the Kangkong Farmers Association and Tagumpay Vegetable Growers Association, both located in Esperanza town, each received 21 gallons of foliar and 50 sacks of organic fertilizers.

Hernane Fermo, president of the Agrarian Reform Farmers Association, said the assistance "will surely help us to produce better products that we can sell competitively in the market."

The agricultural inputs were delivered under DAR's Sustainable and Resilient Agrarian Reform Communities (ARCs) program, which aims to promote vegetable production to combat the effect of climate change.

SUNSTAR

[2023 transition year for recovery: bizman](#)

By: Ian Ocampo Flora

CLARK FREEPORT Businessman Rene Romero sees 2023 as the "final transition" year for the country's recovery from the previous economic impacts of the corona virus pandemic.

Romero however cited the lingering problems of food security and a growing inflation as the major challenges for the first quarter of the year.

Romero, a businessman for 50 years, said that businesses need to adjust and become resilient in the coming year like in the first two years of the pandemic.

He added that private and government spending would greatly help ease economic woes.

The businessman said that enabling more workers to have better salaries would strengthen the spending power of the consumers.

Romero added that he is all in for any proposal to increase worker salaries especially in the regions.

He said government should institute programs to enable a more stable good gross domestic product.

Climate change, according to Romero, also possesses a great challenge to the government's food security programs.

"Our farmers are most affected by climate change. Any natural disaster impacts on local productivity and products," Romero said. "Yearly damage from typhoons alone contributes a great deal to the losses of the agriculture sector."

"Each natural disaster offsets gains that we our farmers achieve every cropping season," Romero added.

With preparations in place, Romero said the last quarter of 2023 would greatly spell how well the country recovers from the offsets of the prior years.

THE MANILA TIMES

[10 HEIs make it to '22 World 'Green Rankings'](#)

By: Leander Domingo

TEN Philippine higher education institutions (HEIs) made it to the 2022 UI GreenMetric World University Rankings (UIGWUR).

De La Salle University-Dasmariñas is the highest ranked Philippine university at the 274th place, followed by DLSU-Manila (302nd), Tarlac Agricultural University (317th), Batangas State University (351st), Mariano Marcos State University (356th), Bataan Peninsula University (567th), Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology (650th), Xavier University Ateneo de Cagayan (664th), Ateneo de Davao University (758th), and Manila Central University (804th).

Initiated by the Universitas Indonesia (UI) in 2010, the ranking aims to provide the result of an online survey regarding the current condition and policies related to Green Campus and Sustainability in Universities all over the world.

UI said it is expected that by drawing the attention of university leaders and stakeholders, more attention will be given to combating global climate change, energy and water conservation, waste recycling, and green transportation.

This ranking on green campus and environmental sustainability of world universities is determined by six criteria: setting and infrastructure; energy and climate change; waste; water; transportation; and education and research.

With Mariano Marcos State University ranking fifth in the Philippines, university president Shirley Agrupis said the Ilocos Norte-based HEI earned a total score of 6740 for 2022 distributed as follows: 1005 in setting and infrastructure, 1560 in energy and climate change, 1050 in waste, 350 in water, 1175 in transportation, and 1600 in education and research.

Agrupis said MMSU ranked highest in the energy and climate change criterion. She thanked the whole university community for the new achievement, attributing the effort, especially to the committee which took charge of the application to the said world rankings.

"May this recognition inspire us even more to raise the global prominence of our beloved university, and to continue generating novel ideas and innovations toward environmental sustainability," she said.

Dr. Mee Jay Domingo, the university's director for internationalization, linkages and partnerships, said the UI GreenMetric collected numeric data from universities that applied to the world rankings.

Domingo said these data were processed into single scores which reflect the efforts being made by the institutions to implement environment-friendly and sustainable programs.

A total of 1,050 universities across the globe were ranked according to the set criteria with the full results of the rankings posted on the UIGWUR website at <https://greenmetric.ui.ac.id/rankings/overall-rankings-2022>.

Meanwhile, in the Times Higher Education or THE World Impact Rankings, MMSU also emerged second in the country and 401st-600th worldwide while in the World Universities with Real Impact (WURI), the university prevailed as top 101-200 in the overall rankings.

Also in WURI, MMSU entered the top 50 universities for three impact categories such as fourth in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, 36th in industrial application, and 49th in crisis management.

MMSU also qualified as a finalist in the Global Citizenship Award and the Outstanding Contribution to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Award in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Philippine Higher Education Internationalization Awards 2022 by the Commission on Higher Education.

It also reaped the Internationalization or IZN Leadership Award for Agrupis.

Starting 2023 with hope

By: Ernie Cecilia, DPM

IN my column last week, I wrote about "Unfinished Tasks in 2022." The optimist in me wishes that world leaders would start the year 2023 with hope, and with solutions that should fully address lingering issues.

The world has not fully resolved the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change issues. The efforts to arrest the problems fell short. To mankind's credit, however, we survived Covid-19 for three years. We've become more resilient after the onslaught of the natural calamities brought by climate change. Perhaps, these are reasons to be thankful and hopeful as we start another year.

But the world is far from being perfect. We need to hurdle more challenges for the sake of our children and their children's children. Failure is not an option in the world's overall effort to avert global disaster as a consequence of a few more crucial issues — conflict, child abuse and hunger.

Conflict

According to UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, "there are 82 million people living in refugee and displacement camps or away from home, creating tensions among host communities, forcing families to make dangerous journeys and opening up the vulnerable, especially women and children, to trafficking gangs and exploitation."

Observers believe that there are now more active conflicts than at any time since 1945 when World War 2 ended. There are different kinds of conflicts today — civil wars, invasions, insurgencies, creed or racial atrocities, and political chaos. These conflicts are driving massive displacements of people and are inflicting serious damage among children in such places as Ukraine, Yemen, South Sudan, Ethiopia, DR Congo, Afghanistan, Venezuela and Myanmar.

On Feb. 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, as an escalation of the 2014 war between the two countries. More than 8 million Ukrainians were immediately displaced within the country while 7.8 million Ukrainians were fleeing Ukraine as of November 2022.

Widespread global condemnation, including by the UN General Assembly, the International Court of Justice and the Council of Europe, did not stop the invasion or settle the issues between Russia and Ukraine. The invasion has affected the rest of the world's economies.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict exacerbated the already rising energy prices that started in 2021. The other major concern relates to the security of energy supply, especially after Russia decided to suspend gas deliveries to several members of the European Union. The EU retaliated and agreed in March 2022 to phase out the EU's dependence on Russian fossil fuels. In May 2022, the European Council decided to ban almost 90 percent of all oil imports from Russia by the end of 2022.

Since both Russia and Ukraine export significant volumes of fuel, steel and food, the world continues to suffer shortages of these important commodities. This further led to the ongoing supply chain disruptions that the world and the Philippines are currently experiencing.

Countries have been forced to cope with the impact of conflicts by strengthening their own production and agriculture capabilities as they downplayed their reliance on imports. The Philippines should do the same.

Child abuse

All around the world, experts have observed that "conflicts, massive hunger, displacements and poverty are forcing children and their families to take terrible decisions in order to survive. The pandemic has seen child marriage rates increase by the largest amount in 25 years."

World Vision, an international aid, development and advocacy organization, reported that a child going to bed hungry "is 60 percent more likely to be married than peers who are not. In places like Latin America, children are especially vulnerable to trafficking and drug gangs and sexual exploitation, while around the world 160 million children are now working, the first rise in two decades."

Aside from child labor, violence against children continues to rise around the world, whether perpetrated by parents, caregivers, peers, romantic partners or strangers. According to data, roughly 1 million children ages 2-17 years have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence or neglect in the past year. These incidents leave a permanent scarring on children's health and well-being.

World Vision said, "In the face of multiple types of disasters, girls and boys face huge challenges that are deeply damaging to their dreams and hopes for a better life."

The good news is that child abuse and violence are preventable but would need "whole-of-society" solutions.

Hunger

Every year, there is enough food produced to feed everyone on the planet. The greatest irony is that one third of the world population throw away food they cannot eat at once, while two-thirds have practically nothing to eat. In one hemisphere of the globe, people are complaining of obesity while on the other side people are dying of hunger.

At the start of 2022, data show that 193 million people experienced acute hunger. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that "there are 2.3 billion (or 29 percent) people all over the world facing less extreme, but still dangerous levels of food insecurity."

The hunger hotspots are in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East, where people do not know where their next meal is coming from. World Vision thinks that "[m]illions are living on the cusp of famine and need food urgently if they are to survive. Dreams of defeating hunger by 2030 are seriously off track due to the conditions driving hunger, which include conflict, Covid-19, and climate change."

Aside from starvation, a pressing issue is severe malnutrition among 45 million children around the world, and the hunger crisis is growing rapidly. The long-term physical and mental development of these children is damaged when they do not get the needed nutrition, and this results in physical and mental stunting, which affects many children, including Filipinos. The FAO estimates that 149 million children under 5 years old are stunted due to inadequate food and nutrients.

Hundreds of millions of people, primarily children, are caught in the epicenter of intersecting crises that are damaging not only the health but the dreams, hopes and aspirations of a global generation of children. Decades of progress is now at a standstill and might go into a reverse due to other issues I have discussed — Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, conflict, child abuse and hunger.

Conclusion

The world economy is forecast to decline in 2022. The World Bank, however, predicts that the Philippines' 2022 gross domestic product (GDP) will likely grow by 7.2 percent on account of pent-up consumer demand (and the election spending). The Philippine

Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that the year-on-year inflation rate rose to 8 percent in November 2022, up from 7.7 percent in October 2022.

We all should work together to find in 2023 "whole of society" solutions to the issues affecting our people, especially the children.

Austrian idiosyncratic poet Rainer Maria Rilke once wrote, "And now we welcome the new year. Full of things that have never been."

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Coral bleaching causing 'unnecessary' fish fights

By: Daniel Lawler, Agence France Presse

PARIS, France — Fish that have lost food due to mass coral bleaching are getting into more unnecessary fights, causing them to expend precious energy and potentially threatening their survival, new research said Wednesday.

With the future of the world's coral reefs threatened by climate change, a team of researchers studied how a mass bleaching event affected 38 species of butterflyfish.

The colourfully patterned reef fish are the first to feel the effect of bleaching because they eat coral, so their "food source is hugely diminished really quickly", said Sally Keith, a marine ecologist at Britain's Lancaster University.

Keith and her colleagues had no idea a mass bleaching event was coming when they first studied the fish at 17 reefs off Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia and Christmas Island.

But when one of history's worst global bleaching events struck in 2016, it offered "the perfect opportunity" to study how it affected the fish's behaviour, Keith told AFP.

The researchers returned within a year and were "shocked" to see the devastation of the once beautiful reefs, she said. Donning their snorkels or scuba gear, the team watched the fish "swimming around looking for food that just isn't there anymore," she added.

"There was a bit of crying in our masks."

Losing battle

The bleaching particularly affected Acropora coral, the main food source for the butterflyfish.

That "changed the playing field of who's eating what," Keith said, putting different species of butterflyfish in increased competition for other types of coral.

When a butterflyfish wants to signal to a competitor that a particular bit of coral is theirs, they point their noses down and raise their spiny dorsal fins.

"It's almost like raising your hackles," Keith said.

If that fails, one fish will chase the other, usually until the other gives up.

"I followed one for about 50 metres (165 feet) once, that was quite tiring, they're very fast," Keith said.

The team observed 3,700 encounters between butterflyfish. Before the coral bleaching event, different species of butterflyfish were able to resolve disputes using signalling around 28 percent of the time.

But that number fell to just 10 percent after the bleaching, indicating many "unnecessary attacks," according to the new study in the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*.

"Making poor decisions about who to fight, and where to invest their really valuable energy, could be that little bit that tips them over the edge towards actual starvation," said Keith, the study's lead author.

It is not clear if the fish will be able to adapt to the changes brought about by coral bleaching quickly enough, the researchers warned. It could also have knock-on effects between species and up the food chain, she added.

Human-driven climate change has spurred mass coral bleaching as the world's oceans get warmer.

Modelling research last year found that even if the Paris climate goal of holding global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is reached, 99 percent of the world's coral reefs will not be able to recover. At two degrees of warming, the number rose to 100 percent.

[Opinion] Eyes on Indo-Pacific

By: Iris Gonzales

The Indo-Pacific region, stretching from the Pacific coastline to the Indian Ocean, is home to three of the world's largest economies – China, India and Japan.

Imagine the region, some 17 years from now:

“By 2040 – less than two decades from now – the region will account for more than half of the global economy, or more than twice the share of United States. By 2030, it will be home to two-thirds of global middle class, having lifted millions out of poverty through economic growth.”

How do I know this? I've been studying Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), a 10-year roadmap that would strengthen its presence in the region. The embassy of Canada in the Philippines recently hosted a roundtable discussion with journalists on the so-called IPS, which was announced in Vancouver in November last year.

The briefing was held ahead of the presentation of credentials to President Marcos by David Hartman, the new Canadian ambassador to the Philippines, succeeding Peter MacArthur.

An official from the embassy who asked not to be identified for now, gave the briefing and said part of the strategy is also to enhance relations with the Philippines, which have been strained during the Duterte administration when Canada called out the former president's violent war on drugs.

Says Canada in its strategy:

“The rise of the Indo-Pacific and the profound impacts the region will have on the lives of all Canadians demand a comprehensive, whole-of-society strategy to guide Canada's actions. Canada must invest resources and build knowledge and capacity to engage. How Canada engages in the region will set the pace for the future and prosperity of our economy, security and stability.

“To seize opportunities in the national interest of Canadians, while defending the values they hold dear, Canada will invest in building capacity to engage with countries across the region, while paying particular attention to Australia, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, China, India, Japan, Pacific Island countries, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand.”

Five strategic objectives

The IPS has five strategic objectives – to promote peace, resilience and security; expand trade, investment and supply chain resilience; invest in and connect people; build a sustainable and green future and for Canada to be an active and engaged partner to the Indo-Pacific.

Human rights; trade and investment

For sure, the Philippines can greatly benefit from Ottawa's five strategic pillars, whether it's through improving security, enhancing trade, bringing in more investments to the country, etc.

I believe our economy will get a boost as Canada seeks to expand export partners and create partnerships abroad to grow its own economy, create jobs and keep its competitive advantage.

"The Indo-Pacific is the world's fastest-growing economic region and its importance will only continue to expand over time. In a world increasingly shaped by tensions, trade is not only an economic but also a geopolitical priority. It is also uniquely vulnerable to supply chain disruptions emerging from the region, as demonstrated during the pandemic," Canada said in its IPS.

Furthermore, Canada will launch a Canadian Trade Gateway in Southeast Asia to expand Canada's businesses.

But our authorities must note that there's no such thing as free lunch.

Canada will continue to keep a close watch on the human rights situation in the Philippines.

However, during the briefing, I got a sense that under the Marcos administration, the possibility of better relations between Canada and the Philippines is strong.

The official indicated that President Marcos had expressed more willingness to rebuild relations with Canada.

In fact, a new memorandum of understanding (MOU) on defense cooperation, which would translate to training and exercises, had been finalized between the two countries.

'Disruptive China'

Outside the Philippines, Canada's IPS will also largely focus on dealing with "disruptive China" and it will be interesting to see how this plays out.

Note that the Philippines, too, faces defense challenges posed by China.

How will the Philippines establish improved relations with both Canada and China amidst such dynamics? We will wait and see.

As I write this, President Marcos is in Beijing for a quick state visit, which makes for another story, too.

For sure, Canada has vowed to deal with China, calling it a "disruptive global power."

"China is looking to shape the international order into a more permissive environment for interests and values that increasingly depart from ours. And China's rise as a global actor is reshaping the strategic outlook of every state in the region, including Canada," according to the embassy briefing.

At the same time, Canada recognizes that China's sheer size and influence makes cooperation necessary to address some of the world's existential pressures such as climate change and biodiversity loss, global health and preventing future pandemics and nuclear non-proliferation.

"We will challenge China when we ought to. And we will cooperate with China when we must."

At the end of the day, it's also largely about people, Canada said.

"Canada will forge ahead with a strong, broad-based approach to China. We must always remember to differentiate between the actions of the current Chinese government, with whom we have differences, and the Chinese people.

"The bedrock of our relations remains the people of Canada and China. The long-standing connections we share and the extraordinary contributions of Canadians of Chinese origin to Canada will continue to bring diversity and depth to our relationship for decades to come," it said.

Overall, there are many good things in Canada's much touted Indo-Pacific Strategy. As a country that values democracy, inclusive and accountable governance and human rights, Canada can certainly help the region, including the Philippines.

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