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By: Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson

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CNN PHILIPPINES

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SUNSTAR

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THE MANILA TIMES

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[\[Opinion\] Davos warned of a 'polycrisis'; PH focused on... onions](#)

By: Marlen Ronquillo

THE recent World Economic Forum in Davos was not exclusively about schmoozing and networking and deal-making among the world's political and economic elite. Or techno and corporate babble. It warned of the great and destabilizing dangers that the world at large faces: a bloody and long-dragging war, inflation wreaking havoc on nations, the rise of autocracy and the many other threats to economic stability and global peace. The ravages from climate change were cited as the clear and present danger, the existential threat to humanity itself.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Green groups to ILO: Upholding workers' rights vital in fighting climate crisis](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

MANILA, Philippines — Upholding the rights of workers is crucial in crafting a comprehensive response to address the climate crisis, a coalition of grassroots environmentalist groups said as the International Labour Organization began to look into the situation of Filipino workers.

[Philippines needs comprehensive long-term corn development program](#)

By: Danessa Rivera

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines urgently needs a comprehensive long-term corn development program to help meet the growing demand and reduce importation of the grain, according to feedmillers.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DWIZ

[Climate Change Commission, First Gen nagsagawa ng tree planting](#)

By: Gilbert Perdez

Naging matagumpay ang isinagawang tree planting at growing activity ng Climate Change Commission PH at First Gen Corporation (First Gen) sa BINHI Arboretum, Eugenio Lopez Center, Antipolo, Rizal.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[PH econ team to foreign investors: 'Think growth, think PH'](#)

By: Azer Parrocha

MANILA – Whenever foreign business leaders and investment companies think of growth, they can think of the Philippines.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS WORLD

[Kidapawan City's solar-powered feed mill under EU program ready for operation](#)

A 50-KILOWATT solar-powered feed mill in Kidapawan City has been completed and expected to be operational within the first quarter this year, the local government announced.

The P6.46-million facility was built under the Integration of Productive Uses of Renewable Energy for Sustainable and Inclusive Energization (I-PURE) in Mindanao funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA).

Kidapawan Mayor Jose Paolo M. Evangelista said in a statement that the city government, which will manage the storage and miller, will save on energy cost for processing corn and rice used as feeds for farm animals.

The on-grid green energy facility is located at the City Agriculture Office's Demo Farm.

The feed mill is one of the 10 pilot projects under the I-PURE Mindanao program, which combine agricultural and renewable energy development by supporting areas that are already productive but unable to expand due to lack of power supply.

EU has provided about P264.91 million for the program, which covers communities within the provinces of Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and Cotabato in the Soccsksargen region, and Tawi-Tawi and Lanao del Sur in the Bangsamoro region.

At least three of these solar-agri project sites also include provisions for delivering power supply to households.

"It will provide electricity to widely dispersed households. It will also increase the quality of life in those areas and bring clear benefits including to women and children. We hope that this will serve as a platform to scale up access to renewable energy solutions in far-flung areas," Ileana Miritescu, program manager for energy of the EU delegation to the Philippines, said in a forum in 2021 when the program was launched.

[PHL urged to ramp up infrastructure investment](#)

By: Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson

THE PHILIPPINES and ASEAN+3 member economies should boost infrastructure investments, which will help drive economic recovery while maintaining debt sustainability amid a looming global recession, the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO) said.

AMRO Senior Economist Byunghoon Nam said the Philippines' infrastructure stock and competitiveness is "low" compared with its neighbors.

"Despite the 'Build, Build, Build' program launched in 2017, the Philippines still faces sizeable investment needs for both traditional infrastructures, such as transportation and utility, and new infrastructures for digitalization and climate change mitigation/adaption," he said in an e-mail.

The Philippine government plans to spend at least 5-6% of gross domestic product (GDP) on infrastructure.

Based on the latest Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) report, the government plans to allocate P1.248 trillion for infrastructure this year, up by 4.1% from the P1.199-trillion program for 2022. The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has yet to finalize this year's infrastructure program.

"Infrastructure investments can contribute to boosting economic recovery and enhancing growth potential, while, at the same time, maintaining debt sustainability," Mr. Nam said.

In an analytical note "Public Infrastructure Investment and Macroeconomic Impact in ASEAN+3 economies," AMRO said the fiscal multipliers and long-term effects of public investment "may be higher during the recession and under high uncertainties."

Higher public infrastructure investments may increase the debt-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratio in the first year, but will eventually reduce it in the medium term as the economy grows and raises fiscal revenues, it added.

"In Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and Cambodia, the debt-to-GDP ratio declines substantially in the medium term, compared to the baseline, mainly due to high revenue buoyancy," AMRO said.

Mr. Nam noted that the extent of the debt-to-GDP ratio's decline would depend on the "efficiency of investments in promoting growth and the responsiveness of revenue to growth."

As of end-November, the National Government's outstanding debt hit a record P13.644 trillion.

The debt-to-GDP ratio was 63.7% at the end of September, the highest debt-to-GDP ratio in 17 years. It also remains above the 60% threshold considered manageable by sovereign debt lenders.

For 2023, the government is aiming to bring down the debt-to-GDP ratio to 60-62%.

In its study, AMRO noted that narrowed fiscal space during the pandemic may prevent governments from hiking infrastructure spending.

"Due to the revenue shortfalls and massive healthcare/stimulus spending during the pandemic, the public debt-to-GDP ratios in all member economies have increased substantially, raising concerns about debt sustainability. As a result, the authorities are leaning toward restoring their fiscal buffers in the medium term, notwithstanding the need for continuing economic recovery support," it added.

In 2020, the Philippines, Singapore, and Brunei governments reduced public capital expenditures, as they reallocated funds to healthcare and support for pandemic-hit businesses, but restored capital spending in 2021.

In 2021, infrastructure spending rose by 31% to P895.1 billion from the P681 billion spent in 2020. As of end-November 2022, infrastructure spending was up 14.3% to P869.2 billion.

Mr. Nam said governments should implement policy measures to improve investment efficiency and strengthen revenue collection.

"For investment efficiency, the authorities should pay more attention to choosing projects based on rigorous cost-benefit analysis; monitoring and reviewing the implementation of projects to address the potential risks and issues preemptively; and improving the coordination and cooperation among public and private stakeholders," he said.

To boost revenues, Mr. Nam said authorities maximize collection capacity, strengthen tax compliance, introduce new taxes, and raise tax rates.

“In addition, encouraging the public-private partnership (PPP) with a well-designed legal or institutional framework would mitigate the government’s financing burden while inviting the efficiency of the private sector. Financing sources would also be available from China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that has been encouraging infrastructure investments in the region,” he added.

The government last year revised the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) for the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) Law, which it hopes will attract more private sector investment in infrastructure.

INCENTIVES URGED

Meanwhile, Terry L. Ridon, a public investment analyst and convenor of think tank InfraWatch PH, said that the government should focus on making more infrastructure investments in underdeveloped areas.

“For emerging and underdeveloped areas, it will be the government’s sole burden to fund infrastructure which can improve the economy in various localities. As such, government-funded infrastructure in emerging areas should be encouraged, as it can create new industries and jobs, and improve efficiencies,” Mr. Ridon said in an e-mail.

“This will consequently lead to higher incomes and broader economic activity in previously economically stagnant regions, and contribute to a better management of government debt,” he added.

Mr. Ridon urged the government to offer incentives to encourage private sector investment.

“Ultimately, the Marcos government will have to decide whether to take on more debt to fund its infrastructure program or grant significant incentives to the private sector to engage in PPPs despite threats of recession, rising interest rates and other uncertainties,” he added.

Antonio A. Ligon, a law and business professor at De La Salle University, said it is uncertain whether the government can maintain a sustainable debt level while raising investments in infrastructure “due to the unclear roadmap of economic programs of the government.”

CNN PHILIPPINES

[The Doomsday Clock reveals how close we are to total annihilation](#)

By: Megan Marples, Kristen Rogers and Rachel Ramirez

(CNN) — The Doomsday Clock has been ticking for exactly 75 years. But it's no ordinary clock. It attempts to gauge how close humanity is to destroying the world.

On Tuesday, the clock was set at 90 seconds until midnight — the closest to the hour it has ever been, according to the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, which created the clock in 1947. Midnight represents the moment at which we will have made Earth uninhabitable for humanity. From 2020 to 2022, the clock was set at 100 seconds to midnight.

The clock isn't designed to definitively measure existential threats, but rather to spark conversations about difficult scientific topics such as climate change, according to the Bulletin.

The decision to move the clock 10 seconds forward this year is largely due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the increased risk of nuclear escalation, the Bulletin said in a news release. The continuing threats posed by the climate crisis, as well as the breakdown of norms and institutions needed to reduce risks associated with biological threats like Covid-19, also played a role.

"We are living in a time of unprecedented danger, and the Doomsday Clock time reflects that reality," Rachel Bronson, president and CEO of the Bulletin, said in the release. "It's a decision our experts do not take lightly. The US government, its NATO allies and Ukraine have a multitude of channels for dialogue; we urge leaders to explore all of them to their fullest ability to turn back the Clock."

What is the Doomsday Clock?

The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists was a group of atomic scientists who worked on the Manhattan Project, the code name for the development of the atomic bomb during World War II.

Originally, it was conceived to measure nuclear threats, but in 2007 the Bulletin made the decision to include climate change in its calculations.

Over the last three-quarters of a century, the clock's time has changed according to how close the scientists believe the human race is to total destruction. Some years the time changes, and some years it doesn't.

The Doomsday Clock is set every year by the experts on the Bulletin's Science and Security Board in consultation with its Board of Sponsors, which includes 11 Nobel laureates.

Although the clock has been an effective wake-up call when it comes to reminding people about the cascading crises the planet is facing, some have questioned the 75-year-old clock's usefulness.

"It's an imperfect metaphor," Michael E. Mann, Presidential Distinguished Professor in the earth and environmental science department at the University of Pennsylvania, told CNN in 2022, highlighting that the clock's framing combines different types of risk that have different characteristics and occur in different timescales. Still, he adds it "remains an important rhetorical device that reminds us, year after year, of the tenuousness of our current existence on this planet."

Every model has constraints, Eryn MacDonald, analyst with the Union of Concerned Scientists' Global Security Program, told CNN in 2022, adding that the Bulletin has made thoughtful decisions each year on how to get the people's attention about existential threats and the required action.

"While I wish we could go back to talking about minutes to midnight instead of seconds, unfortunately that no longer reflects reality," she said.

What happens if the clock reaches midnight?

The clock has never reached midnight, and Bronson hopes it never will.

"When the clock is at midnight, that means there's been some sort of nuclear exchange or catastrophic climate change that's wiped out humanity," she said. "We never really want to get there and we won't know it when we do."

How accurate is the clock?

The clock's time isn't meant to measure threats, but rather to spark conversation and encourage public engagement in scientific topics like climate change and nuclear disarmament.

If the clock is able to do that, then Bronson views it as a success.

When a new time is set on the clock, people listen, she said. At the COP26 climate talks in Glasgow, UK, in 2021, Prime Minister Boris Johnson cited the Doomsday Clock when talking about the climate crisis the world is facing, Bronson noted.

Bronson said she hopes people will discuss whether they agree with the Bulletin's decision and have fruitful talks about what the driving forces of the change are.

Moving the clock back with bold, concrete actions is still possible. In fact, the hand moved the farthest away from midnight — a whopping 17 minutes before the hour — in 1991, when President George H.W. Bush's administration signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with the Soviet Union. In 2016, the clock was at three minutes before midnight as a result of the Iran nuclear agreement and the Paris climate accord.

What can an individual do to turn back time on the clock?

"We at the Bulletin believe that because humans created these threats, we can reduce them," Bronson said. "But doing so is not easy, nor has it ever been. And it requires serious work and global engagement at all levels of society."

Don't underestimate the power of talking about these important issues with your peers, Bronson said.

"You might not feel it because you're not doing anything, but we know that public engagement moves (a) leader to do things," she said.

To make a positive impact on climate change, look at your daily habits and see if there are small changes you can make in your life such as how often you walk versus drive and how your home is heated, Bronson explained.

Eating seasonally and locally, reducing food waste, and recycling properly are other ways to help mitigate, or deal with the effects of, the climate crisis.

This story was first published on CNN.com, "The Doomsday Clock reveals how close we are to total annihilation"

MANILA STANDARD

[UN notes climate change a factor in human trafficking](#)

Evidence is emerging that climate-related disasters are becoming a cause of human trafficking as criminal gangs exploit a growing number of uprooted people, the UN said Tuesday.

The continuing war in Ukraine is also another risk factor for increased human trafficking, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in a report.

The UN drugs agency noted that an increase in cases of human trafficking had been observed in Bangladesh and the Philippines after devastating cyclones and typhoons displaced millions.

Droughts and floods in Ghana, and the Caribbean region – subject to hurricanes and rising sea levels – were also forcing many to migrate.

“Climate change is increasing vulnerability to trafficking,” the UNODC report said.

“While a systematic global analysis of the impact of climate change in trafficking in persons is missing, community level studies in different parts of the world point at weather induced disasters as root causes for trafficking in persons,” it said.

The report is based on data from 141 countries collected from 2017 to 2020, and the analysis of 800 court cases.

The impact of climate change “disproportionately” affected poor farming, fishing and other communities mainly relying on the extraction of natural resources for their livelihoods, the report said.

Once “deprived of their means of subsistence and forced to flee their community,” people were becoming easy prey for traffickers, Fabrizio Sarrica, the report’s main author, told a press briefing.

In 2021 alone, climate-related disasters internally displaced more than 23.7 million people, while many others fled their countries altogether.

As entire regions of the world are at risk of becoming “increasingly uninhabitable,” millions will face “high risk of exploitation along migration routes,” the UN report said.

While most of the victims of trafficking resulting from conflicts originated from Africa and the Middle East, a potentially “dangerous” situation is simultaneously building up in Ukraine as millions flee the war-torn country.

“The challenge is how to deal with human trafficking arising from war and instability,” Ilias Chatzis, the head of the human trafficking and migrant smuggling section at UNODC, told AFP.

With regard to Ukraine, helping neighboring countries and increasing support to the Ukrainian authorities is equally important, Chatzis added.

The COVID-19 pandemic limited the ability to detect cases, especially in low-income countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa, the report added.

Faced with the closure of public venues such as bars and clubs due to health restrictions, certain forms of trafficking, in particular sexual exploitation, have been pushed into “less visible and less safe locations.”

For the first time since data collection began in 2003, the number of victims detected worldwide fell in 2020, dropping by eleven percent compared to 2019, the Vienna-based UNODC said.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Climate hazards cause irreversible damage on economy

MANILA – Damage brought about by natural disasters harm livelihood and economy, with billions in losses that could have been used to finance health and social welfare programs.

Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda said Tuesday that the Philippines is among the vulnerable nations that is entitled to financial support through the 2015 Paris Agreement on the effects of climate change.

The country is also a beneficiary under the global Green Climate Fund (GCF), created to serve the Paris Agreement and Kyoto Protocol that aims to provide funding for climate mitigation and adaptation of developing countries.

The Kyoto Protocol, adopted in 1997, operationalizes the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by committing industrialized countries and economies in transition to limit and reduce greenhouse gases emissions.

While these grants benefit the Philippines, Legarda emphasized that a whole of nation approach is vital in addressing the dire global climate crisis.

"The loss and damage fund cannot bring back what we have lost in terms of lives, livelihoods, assets and opportunities, but just like post war reparations, these will help get us on an appropriate development track," she said in a news release.

Legarda pointed out that climate finance is needed to build defenses, safeguard every Filipino from climate impacts, and shift the economy and society "towards low-carbon development and growth that would mitigate global warming and the intensity of climate change."

In November last year, the Philippines joined the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People which aims to protect at least 30 percent of the world's land and ocean through increased public and private financing.

"Hindi lang tayo dapat umasa sa isang grant gaya ng (We shouldn't just rely on the) GCF. There should be a whole of government, whole of nation approach in addressing the climate crisis," she said. "These few grants will not change the scenario."

She said local governments must master early warning systems, evacuation and geohazard mapping, among others.

Legarda also urged her colleagues to recognize their critical roles in dealing with the global climate emergency.

"Let's not waste this opportunity to do good, to do what is right and in all our endeavors, imagine a different future past the twin crisis of climate and biodiversity collapse," Legarda said.

[PH on track to meet UN's inclusive, quality education goal: VP](#)

By: Stephanie Sevillano

MANILA – Vice President and Education Secretary Sara Duterte said on Tuesday the Philippines is on the right track in its efforts to achieve one of the United Nations (UN) 2030 agenda, particularly the goal for an “inclusive and equitable quality education.”

In a speech, Duterte highlighted the administration’s efforts as the Department of Education (DepEd) joins the observation of the International Day of Education (IDE).

“This year’s theme ‘To Invest in People, Prioritize Education’ affirms that the new administration is on the right track,” she said.

“At the UN Transforming Education Summit in September last year, President (Ferdinand R.) Marcos Jr. announced our commitment to recover the learning losses from the pandemic and rebuild our education to be more inclusive, relevant, and resilient to future shocks and disruptions,” she added.

To address the learning loss and education mismatch for the future workforce, Duterte said budget allocation has been increased.

“Following the eight-point socioeconomic agenda of the Marcos administration, the Department of Education received the increased budget for the fiscal year 2023,” she said.

The education chief underscored the Philippines’ capacity to meet the recommended allocation for a country’s education sector, which is at around 15 to 20 percent of the total government appropriations.

“From PHP631 billion in 2022, we now have PHP719 billion in 2023, making the education sector’s percentage share of the total government appropriations within the recommended 15 to 20 percent,” she said.

Through proper investment and prioritization of the youth’s education and capacity-building, Duterte expressed confidence in progress in the years to come.

“I am confident that this is only the beginning of our renewed commitment to investing more in education and prioritizing the development of a future-ready workforce... With more than 13 million young people, the largest in our country’s history, we are poised to benefit from this demographic dividend,” she said.

Challenges, reforms

Duterte said the young people are facing various challenges, hence the need for authorities to work closely with all other stakeholders to ensure child protection.

Cited among the challenges posed against the welfare of learners were susceptibility to various forms of abuse, drug addiction, violent extremism, climate change, human trafficking, gender equality, inclusion and sustainable development, among others.

“Second batch of our child protection specialization course for focal persons in the central offices, regional offices, and schools division offices is ongoing, where child protection specialists will in turn empower child protection committees in schools and protect learners from abuse, and support their entire wellbeing,” Duterte said.

The DepEd earlier launched child protection hotlines to make contact offices more accessible to complainants.

As of the launch, 78 complaints have been sent to the DepEd via calls and emails.

Besides learners’ rights, improvement to systems and foundational learning strategies shall be also given focus.

“Critical areas of focus include the crisis in foundational learning among our early grade learners, particularly in reading, numeracy, and science... We also need our education systems to be more resilient to any crisis. We are now seeing global and local disruptions such as adverse weather conditions and other public health emergencies,” Duterte said.

“With increased investments also comes the responsibility to invest equitably, efficiently, and innovatively, as DepEd rolls out much-needed reforms in our basic education sector in the next six years,” she added.

The department, meanwhile, is set to disclose on Jan. 30 more of these target reforms, including the current status, challenges and its action plan, through its Basic Education Report (BER).

[PH-US trade in 2022 exceeds \\$33B: envoy](#)

By: Kris Crismundo

MANILA – United States Ambassador to the Philippines MaryKay Carlson said bilateral trade between the Philippines and the United States last year surpassed the USD33-billion level.

In a forum of the Makati Business Club (MBC) Tuesday, Carlson said 2022 was a banner year for the bilateral trade between the two countries.

She said a big chunk of the trade value last year was exports to the US at around USD21 billion, making the US the top destination for Philippine exports.

US Embassy data also showed that two-way trade between the Philippines and US in 2021 reached USD30.2 billion.

The Philippines is one of the 119 developing countries that are benefiting from the US Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).

In a report of the US Congressional Research Service last year, it said the Philippines is one of the top five beneficiary developing countries in terms of value of goods entering the US market in 2021 under the GSP along with Thailand, Indonesia, Brazil and Cambodia.

The trade preference program covers nearly half of tariff lines in the US.

Carlson is also optimistic about the trade ties between the two countries, with the Philippines joining the US-led Indo-Pacific Economic Partnership (IPEF).

The Biden administration aims to use IPEF to strengthen its engagement with Indo-Pacific countries such as the Philippines, Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Fiji.

Its four pillars include trade; supply chain; clean energy, decarbonization and infrastructure; and tax and anti-corruption.

“The way we look trade and investment now coming out of the pandemic is very different than the straight-up trade agreements that we used to have,” Carlson said, adding that the IPEF addresses those non-tariff barriers and other trade issues apart from tariffs that would improve the flow of trade.

Trade missions

To further boost economic ties between the two countries, Carlson announced that the US government agreed to support multiple trade missions this year.

“These will bring US exporters involved in agriculture, energy, technology and other industries to the Philippines to explore business opportunities,” she said.

The envoy also invited Philippine companies interested in investing in US to participate in the SelectUSA Summit in May.

SUNSTAR

[EMB 7 cites San Fernando companies for eco purok tact, Clean Air programs](#)

THE Environmental Management Bureau in Central Visayas (EMB 7) has recognized two allied firms operating in San Fernando for their separate initiatives to protect and enhance the environment.

It recognized Taiheiyo Cement Philippines Inc. (TCPI) for mobilizing community involvement through the purok system in the implementation of comprehensive environmental management programs.

It also cited Solid Earth Development Corp. (SEDC) for its “initiative in Clean Air Management by integrating sustainable environmental practices in quarry and port operations.”

The EMB 7 gave the plaques of recognition during the recent Environmental Awareness Month with the theme, “Rise Up: Moving Beyond Climate Talk to Climate Action.”

It awarded TCPI for its “commitment and untiring support to sustainable environmental programs” and for “showcasing its air quality management and climate change mitigation system.”

EMB Central Office Director William P. Cuñado, who previously served as EMB 7 regional director, and his successor, Maribel B. Munsayac, handed the recognitions during the Clean Air and Climate Change Exhibit that TCPI participated in on Nov. 29-30, 2022.

TCPI vice president operations and plant manager Tsutomu Hirobe received the award with Emylita B. Ortega, vice president and corporate planning division manager at Cebu Trade Hall of SM City Cebu, the exhibit venue.

SEDC vice president Noel P. Lorica received the other awards with Angelo O. Teopiz, head of safety and health.

Matters that concern the environment have always been close to the hearts of TCPI and SEDC that their management and employees would be involved in programs that either promote or protect it. They run and maintain Social Development Management Programs and Environment Protection and Enhancement Programs that involve their host communities in their respective initiatives.

“TCPI is not an island. It needs the community to be actively on board, even deeply involved, in programs that have an impact on the environment in San Fernando,” said the company’s environment advocate Dwight P. Avila.

“It matters to the people after all,” added Avila, manager of TCPI’s Environment and Safety Division.

Last November, the EMB 7 also marked the National Clean Air Month and Climate Change Consciousness Week. TCPI participated in those activities.

TCPI manufactures the Grand Portland, Grand Pozzolan, Grand Premium and Grand Masonry brands of cement from its plant in San Fernando, using earth materials SEDC supplies and facilitates in shipping out from its port facilities in the same town.

THE MANILA TIMES

[IRR for Extended Producer Responsibility Act signed](#)

By: Bella Cariaso

ENVIRONMENT Secretary Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga has signed the implementing rules and regulation (IRR) of Republic Act 11890, or the "Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Act of 2022."

The law mandates large-scale companies to establish a mechanism for the recovery of their plastic packaging.

Yulo-Loyzaga added that under the EPR, companies have the responsibility for the proper and effective recovery, treatment, recycling or disposal of their products after they have been sold and used by consumers. RA 11890 aims to reduce the volume of plastic waste generation and extend the life of plastics by adding value or purpose through upcycling or recycling.

"The EPR Law will also help in advancing a circular economy that mitigates climate change and protects our life-supporting ecosystems by avoiding or minimizing pollution while maximizing the use of materials," Yulo-Loyzaga added.

Environment Undersecretary for Policy, Planning and International Affairs Jonas Leones said the Department of Environment and Natural Resources led a series of public consultations for the IRR in different regions across the country.

"The consultation solicited insights and contributions from the different sectors including nongovernment organizations, academic institutions, local government units and the private sector. Among the private sector representatives were sanitary landfill operators, manufacturing corporations and recycling/upcycling companies," Leones said.

Leones added that the last series of regional public consultations was held on Nov. 3, 2022 that was attended by over 650 participants. The dialogues were supported by the United Nations Development Program and the Government of Japan.

"The success of the implementation of the EPR Law heavily depends on the cooperation and compliance of the private sector. It is always important to recognize the voices of different sectors and the public consultations provided everyone the venue to share and exchange their ideas that contributed to the crafting of the IRR," Leones said.

Under the IRR, large-scale enterprises are expected to initiate efforts on plastic recovery and diversion schemes as mandated by the EPR. The IRR also includes an online registry where producers and manufacturers need to register their information.

Yulo-Loyzaga said the implementation of EPR Law is a crucial step to the Philippines' transition to the circular economy.

"Corporations with total assets of over P100 million will be required to recover a certain percentage of their plastic packaging waste, or else pay a fine. Companies shall be responsible for allocating resources to support the collection, recovery, transportation, processing, recycling and disposal of plastic packaging wastes in environmentally sound ways," she added.

Yulo-Loyzaga said that with the passage of the law, the Philippines was included in a select group of states that promulgate EPR, including the United States, Canada, Japan, Singapore, India, South Korea, Chile, Mexico, Columbia, Peru and Brazil.

The EPR sets incremental targets that should be fulfilled yearly until 2030. For 2023, obliged companies must recover 20 percent of their plastic footprint. Producers, distributors and retailers implementing initiatives under the EPR law will be eligible for tax incentives.

Fines ranging from P5 million to P20 million will be imposed for failure to comply with the provisions and meet the target recovery rates of the EPR.

[\[Opinion\] Davos warned of a 'polycrisis': PH focused on... onions](#)

By: Marlen Ronquillo

THE recent World Economic Forum in Davos was not exclusively about schmoozing and networking and deal-making among the world's political and economic elite. Or techno and corporate babble. It warned of the great and destabilizing dangers that the world at large faces: a bloody and long-dragging war, inflation wreaking havoc on nations, the rise of autocracy and the many other threats to economic stability and global peace. The ravages from climate change were cited as the clear and present danger, the existential threat to humanity itself.

These two events were unspoken of, but were on everyone's mind. The grievous and unimagined toll of Brexit on Britain. The post-Brexit environment led to the choice of a clueless prime minister who governed for a total of 44 tumultuous days, double-digit inflation, strikes of health sector workers. Britain, the great imperial power and the mother nation of the so-called Commonwealth of Nations, on the wane. The historic ascendancy to the leadership of Rishi Sunak, the son of immigrants from India, a former colony, has been overshadowed by Sunak's often flailing efforts to contain various crises. The other unexpected event, that has exacted a heavier toll on the world than Brexit, was Vladimir Putin's Feb. 24, 2021 invasion of Ukraine, done without provocation and launched in pursuit of Putin's revanchist dreams.

Davos resurrected a hardly invoked term — "polycrisis" — which means many intractable problems rocking the world on multiple fronts at the same time. News reports said the term gained prominence after Jean-Claude Juncker, then president of the European Commission, used the word in 2016. So alarmed were the nabobs at Davos of the multiple challenges faced by the world at the moment that the term "polycrisis" was adopted in the annual report of the World Economic Forum to dramatize the need to respond with urgency.

But once we tune out of the "polycrisis" taken seriously by the world's political and economic elite to focus on the domestic front, we see a sea change, a dramatic break from the topics discussed with utmost seriousness at Davos, which are also the urgent themes upending, roiling the broader world. We see the two chambers of Congress, with utmost seriousness and intensity, hold legislative inquiries on ... onions. Disappearing onions. Overpriced onions. Cheap onions that vanished at the Kadiwa outlets. Smuggled onions. Onions that disappeared from our favorite sisig. Onions that had been reduced to barely visible and soggy slivers on local hamburgers.

Onions that are at the moment (through this is mainly fleeting) the bane of our national existence.

Not to be outdone, the announcement of the executive branch to clear 24,000 metric tons of onion importation was the screaming headline of newspapers for days, the topic of coffee shop chatter. The weight of critical decision-making rested on onions. Primetime TV spiced up the onion-centric stories, the lead in the nightly news. Onion reporting has been basically lazy, but attention-catching, television journalism.

While global leaders were preoccupied with existential threats such as climate change, we have seen that in the Visayas and Mindanao with the recent killer floods, the Philippine conversation could not get enough of ... onions.

I am not saying that onions should be missed out in the national conversation because the shortage of onions is unimportant. That is not the point. The point is this. There is a short supply of onions, which leads to the inevitable overpricing. Same with pork, same with eggs, same with sugar. Same with most vegetables. Prices of yellow corn, which is 60 percent of animal feeds and aqua feeds. Corn prices have been surging since the middle of last year due to the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war. Fertilizer prices are up three times from the 2020 prices. There are no two commodities that are more critical to food production than yellow corn and fertilizer.

Speaking of domestic food problems, the onion shortage is far below the food sector's weighty problems. What is most worrisome is the failure of reckless rice importation to provide relief to rice consumers, with the profits cornered by traders and importers. There is no figure yet on total imports for 2022, but the total is expected to top 3 million metric tons, like the greed-driven rice imports in 2019. We are killing a proud rice-growing culture and killing the small rice farmers with little pass-on benefits to rice consumers.

In the overall equation of food shortages and overpricing, onions, something we could do without on a daily basis, should be in the lower tier of our priorities. It is in that context that the national preoccupation with onions — those discussions tragically taken in isolation — truly fall into the "Only in the Philippines" category. And very dispiriting. The shortage of onions has its roots and this is in the overall state of Philippine agriculture, which is sinking deeper and deeper into the rabbit hole. And what the two chambers of Congress should focus on is the big picture of agriculture overall, from rice to yellow corn to sugar to pork, to eggs and down to the lesser subsectors. The onion is part of agriculture's lesser subsectors.

In most major economies, discussions on food shortages, surging food prices, the available surplus foodstuffs traded in the open market, countries on the verge of famine and many other food-related issues are big, leading with this question. Do we adopt efficiency — that still assumes there are enough critical food commodities in the open market and food importation remains a sound policy for food security? Or do we adopt resilience, which says that focus should be on domestic food production because of the uncertainty of relying on efficiency?

We are not doing that kind of serious policy discussion. We remain fixated on ... onions. But then again, what do you expect of a polity often preoccupied with trivial policy pursuits?

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Green groups to ILO: Upholding workers' rights vital in fighting climate crisis](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

MANILA, Philippines — Upholding the rights of workers is crucial in crafting a comprehensive response to address the climate crisis, a coalition of grassroots environmentalist groups said as the International Labour Organization began to look into the situation of Filipino workers.

In a statement on Monday, the Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment said it is hopeful the ILO-High Level Tripartite Mission to the Philippines will come up with findings that will protect the rights of Filipino workers.

“Now that we are facing a climate crisis that threatens the very survival of humanity, we urge the ILO-HLTM to investigate the various issues plaguing Filipino workers today, and expose the reality of the situation,” said Jon Bonifacio, national coordinator of Kalikasan PNE.

He stressed that upholding workers' rights “is vital to finding just, equitable and sustainable solutions to the climate crisis.”

According to Bonifacio, workers have an important role to play in ensuring the just transition necessary to tackle climate change.

Just transition, according to the ILO, entails “greening the economy in a way that is fair and as inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind.”

The concept means that a shift to cleaner forms of energy and transport should address the impacts of the moves to kick fossil fuel dependence on the rights of workers, and the human rights issues in the wind and solar value chain.

Land defenders

Kalikasan PNE also noted that agricultural workers play the role of “land defenders.”

“When agricultural workers organize themselves against huge agribusiness corporations, they are also fighting against the environmentally-destructive practices of these agribusinesses,” Bonifacio added.

“This includes widespread deforestation needed to create vast tracts of plantations, and monocropping and overuse of chemical fertilizers that destroy soils and pollute rivers,” he continued.

Kalikasan PNE and other groups have documented several cases of harassment, threats, physical assault and killings of agricultural workers.

The Philippines remained the deadliest country in Asia for land and environmental defenders in 2021, according to a report by international organization Global Witness. With 19 reported killings in 2021, the country ranked fourth globally.

Green employment

Forty-five trade unions, workers’ organizations and civil society organizations also crafted a 15-point labor agenda where they called on the government to create more climate jobs.

“Together with environmental and climate justice groups, trade unions and worker organizations are advocating for the promotion and integration of green employment in the government rebuilding programs,” they said.

The groups also recommended the involvement of trade unions and workers’ organizations in climate policy making and development of plans of action.

[Philippines needs comprehensive long-term corn development program](#)

By: Danessa Rivera

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines urgently needs a comprehensive long-term corn development program to help meet the growing demand and reduce importation of the grain, according to feedmillers.

In a statement, the Philippine Association of Feed Millers Inc. (PAFMI) said having a national corn development program, which encompasses the whole value chain starting from the farm until the produce reaches the market and industrial users, will allow the country to reduce its dependence on imports.

Based on the latest 2022-2023 Corn Supply Outlook published by the National Corn Program, local feed corn sufficiency last year was only at about 57 percent.

This situation leaves feedmillers “with little option but to resort to importations.”

PAFMI, representing more than 30 feed milling companies in the country, said imported corn volumes have continued to rise over the last decade as local corn harvests are unable to keep up with demand.

Corn is an integral ingredient in the manufacture of feeds for the livestock and poultry industry.

PAFMI said the gap between imported and local corn needs to be “substantially trimmed to a single digit to insulate the country from the adverse effects of any tight global supply of grains, which ultimately impinges on the nation’s food security and leaves the country vulnerable to global supply imbalances.”

This year, the DA expects local corn produce for feeds to reach 7.56 million metric tons (MT), of which 6.35 million MT will go to animal feed mix.

PAFMI noted that even without any typhoons that could affect harvest, the farm production volumes are still not enough.

“A comprehensive long-term corn development program that takes into consideration the country’s growing appetite for livestock and poultry produce should provide an impetus to modernize corn farming and put in place much-needed harvest and post-harvest infrastructure,” it said.

To come up with a national corn development program, stakeholders composed of representative farmer groups, business groups, and the Department of Agriculture (DA) have agreed on several recommendations.

These include an efficient and stable supply chain of industry inputs like seeds, fertilizer, and other inputs; production of quality corn in efficient production systems for food, feeds and industrial uses by empowered, enterprise-oriented farmers amidst climate change challenges; efficient post-harvest systems for quality corn to reduce cost and losses; the development, improvement and promotion of efficient use systems of corn in appropriate scales of operation; and efficient marketing infrastructure and systems.

On the policy side, some of the recommendations include clustering and consolidation of corn farms to achieve economies of scale in production-postharvest industry linkages; pursuing science-/data-based policy decision making and data collection/analytics; improving the vertical integration of yellow corn producers to the livestock and poultry industry; and enhancing short-term corn availability to support value chains.

Meanwhile, PAFMI said it fully supports DA Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban's plan to increase the yield per hectare of yellow corn by three percent a year as an immediate step towards increasing harvest volumes in the coming years.

Earlier, President Marcos signed Executive Order (EO) 10, which kept the corn tariff at five in- quota from 35 percent, and 15 percent out quota from 50 percent until year-end.

"The positive effect of lower tariffs on imported corn on pork and chicken prices has been a result of several commissioned studies by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA)," PAFMI said.

Corn-based feeds are the biggest cost component in poultry and livestock production, thus any radical deviations in the availability, affordability, and accessibility of corn in both the local and global markets have an unavoidable inflationary effect on the country's food basket, the group said.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

[Climate Change Commission, First Gen nagsagawa ng tree planting](#)

By: Gilbert Perdez

Naging matagumpay ang isinagawang tree planting at growing activity ng Climate Change Commission PH at First Gen Corporation (First Gen) sa BINHI Arboretum, Eugenio Lopez Center, Antipolo, Rizal.

Ayon kay CCC Vice Chairperson at Executive Director Robert Borje, kasama sa mga itinanim nila ay mga seedlings ng Narra, Ipil, Supa at Banuyo.

Maliban kay Borje, dumalo rin sa aktibidad sina Mr. Francis Giles Puno, First Gen President & Chief Operating Officer; Ms. Shirley Cruz, Vice President & Chief of Staff; Mr. Ricky Carandang, Vice President for Corporate Communications; at Mr. Ramon Araneta, Vice President for External Affairs & Security.

Kasabay nito, nilagdaan naman ang isang Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) sa pagitan ng CCC at First Gen upang malinang at mapayabong pa ang kaalaman at kapasidad ng mga lokal na komunidad ukol sa pagpaplano at pagpapatupad ng climate change action.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

PH econ team to foreign investors: 'Think growth, think PH'

By: Azer Parrocha

MANILA – Whenever foreign business leaders and investment companies think of growth, they can think of the Philippines.

This was the message underscored by members of the Philippine economic team during the Philippine Economic Briefing (PEB) held in Frankfurt, Germany on Monday (Philippine time) as they assured investors that diverse investment opportunities await them in the country.

The PEB serves as the platform for the Philippine government to provide international business and financial communities with updates on the country's robust economic performance and investment opportunities.

During the briefing, the economic team spelled out the reasons why the Philippines has a “comparative advantage” over other ASEAN countries in terms of its investment environment.

They cited the country's structural reforms, young workforce, strong private sector support, priority on infrastructure spending, strategic regional coordination and stable political environment.

"This administration has more than a hundred implementation-ready infrastructure projects so if the investors are ready to come in, these are projects that are easy to implement," said Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Amenah Pangandaman in the discussion on the Marcos administration's Build, Better, More program.

Department of Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno, in his keynote message, invited the German investing community to explore opportunities in the fields of telecommunications, airports, toll roads, agribusiness, renewable energy and shipping.

Also present in the briefing were Bangko Sentral Governor Felipe Medalla and Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. earlier welcomed the Philippines' inclusion in the "VIP Club" or a list of Southeast Asian countries with best-performing economies as tagged by economic leaders at the 2023 World Economic Forum (WEF).

Climate and disaster resilience

Meanwhile, Pangandaman also shared that a significant number of government agencies in the Philippines have already mainstreamed climate and disaster resilience in the preparation of budgets for their programs and projects in response to the increasing need for climate and sustainability investment.

The DBM, in partnership with the Climate Change Commission, launched the Climate Change Expenditure Tagging (CCET) which encourages agencies to intensify their efforts to implement climate change mitigation and adaptation programs.

These include building disaster-resilient infrastructure and low carbon transportation and promoting climate-smart agriculture and regulated renewable energy systems, among others.

The DBM has tagged a record-high PHP453.11 billion for climate change adaptation and mitigation in the 2023 national budget, which is 56.4 percent higher than last year's PHP289.73 billion.

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