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DAILY TRIBUNE

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By: Tiziana Celine Piatos and Vivienne Angeles

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MONGABAY

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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

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By: Tiziana Celine Piatos and Vivienne Angeles

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Vietnamese President H.E. Võ Văn Thường agreed to boost the strategic maritime cooperation between Manila and Hanoi amid tensions in the South China Sea.

Marcos expressed his desire to explore “fresh opportunities” that could benefit both Vietnam and the Philippines and contribute to regional development.

He also emphasized the need for continued high-level engagements to foster peace and prosperity in both countries with the “thriving nature” of relations between Manila and Hanoi.

“Vietnam remains the sole strategic partner of the Philippines in the ASEAN region, and I am hopeful that this meeting will provide fresh opportunities to reinforce our bilateral relations,” Marcos told his Vietnamese counterpart.

He said that as both nations face new challenges, there are numerous opportunities for cooperation for their mutual benefit.

“While maritime cooperation remains the cornerstone of our strategic partnership, our relations have expanded to encompass diverse areas like defense, trade, agriculture and culture,” Marcos said.

“As we navigate new challenges, we also see numerous opportunities for collaboration,” he added.

Signed agreements

Marcos’ meeting with Thường comes amid growing regional tensions and concerns about economic stability, as both the Philippines and Vietnam have territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea.

Marcos wished the Vietnamese people well on the upcoming Tet holiday, signifying his commitment to cultural understanding and mutual respect.

After the bilateral meeting, Marcos and Thường witnessed the signing of agreements on rice trade cooperation, incident prevention and management in the South China Sea, agriculture and cultural cooperation.

Among the deals signed were the Memorandum of Understanding on Rice Trade Cooperation; Understanding on Incident Prevention and Management in the South China Sea; Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Agriculture and Related Fields; Memorandum of Understanding between the Philippine Coast Guard and the Vietnam Coast Guard on Maritime Cooperation; and the Cultural Cooperation Program between the National Commission for Culture and the Arts of the Philippines and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Viet Nam for 2024-2029.

The MoU on Rice Trade Cooperation creates a framework for rice cooperation between the Philippines and Vietnam to establish and ensure a sustainable food supply amid the impacts of climate change, the pandemics, and other events external to both countries.

Under the MoU, Vietnam agrees to a five-year commitment to supply, through its private sector, white rice to the Philippine private sector totaling 1.5 million to 2 million metric tons per year at a competitive and affordable price.

Apart from rice, the Philippines and Vietnam are also expected to exchange information on policies, plans and regulations, and other rice-trade related activities.

On Incident Prevention and Management in the South China Sea, the two nations agreed to enhance coordination on maritime issues bilaterally, within the ASEAN and with other dialogue partners, with both sides intensifying efforts to promote trust, confidence, and understanding through dialogue and cooperative activities.

The MoU on agriculture cooperation will intensify the tie-up between the Philippines and Viet Nam in the fields of agriculture, rural development, and other related fields, as well as establish 19 areas of cooperation, including on high value crops, livestock, and aquaculture, farm management and sustainability, smart agriculture and aquaculture technology, research trainings, and exchange of experts.

Mutual trust

On the other hand, the MoU on Maritime Cooperation is aimed at strengthening the understanding, mutual trust, and confidence between the two parties through the development of a Joint Coast Guard Committee to discuss common issues and

interests between the PCG and VCG. A hotline communication mechanism will be established between the PCG and VCG.

Through the Cultural Cooperation Program, the Philippines and Vietnam will expand cultural exchanges and strengthen friendly relations in accordance with the Cultural Agreement signed between the two nations in 1998.

In a separate meeting with Vietnam's Prime Minister, Pham Minh Ching, Marcos called for a stronger defense cooperation between the two countries as he condemned China's "unilateral and illegal actions" that violate Philippine sovereignty.

The President cited recent incidents at Ayungin Shoal and Bajo de Masinloc, including China's use of a water cannon that damaged a Philippine vessel last 10 December.

"We are firm in defending our sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdiction against any provocations. But, at the same time, we are also seeking to address these issues with China through peaceful dialogue and consultation as two equal sovereign states," Marcos told Ching.

"We are committed to working in partnership with other like-minded states to ensure a rules-based international order in the

Asia-Pacific region governed by international law," Marcos stressed.

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

Collaboration with Vietnam

President Marcos Jr. took the opportunity of his state visit to Vietnam and his meetings with Vietnamese President Vo Van Thuong and Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh in Hanoi to perorate on his desire for the Philippines to take on an important role in the globe's common fight against climate change.

Marcos began the narrative by announcing that the Philippines is keen on pursuing land-based and marine pollution abatement projects with the ASEAN neighbor, after pointing out that the Philippines and Vietnam share the same vulnerability to climate change. What the President has in mind are joint research initiatives on low carbon growth.

After all the "pasakalye" (introductory hints), Marcos goes direct to the point: he wanted Vietnam to support the Philippines' having a seat on the board and hosting the world's Loss and Damage Fund, which was adopted recently in the Conference of Parties (COP) to help developing nations cope with the extreme impacts of climate change. The COP is a group of 197 nations and territories that have signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

"The offer to host the Board of the Fund is in line with the Philippines' long-standing engagement on discussions of this Fund for the past decades, and it is our belief that all States must contribute to the success of its institutional architecture," he said.

MONGABAY

[Forest diversity is key to Southeast Asia's climate adaptability, study shows](#)

By: Carolyn Cowan

Throughout history, philosophers have told us that in order to best prepare for the future, we should look to the past. Wisdom, knowledge and new perspectives can often emerge out of a greater understanding of what went before. And it's no different when it comes to predicting how nature will respond to projected climate change.

A new paleoecological study based on environmental records going as far back as 119,000 years ago suggests that Southeast Asia's forests could be more resilient to climate shifts than previously thought, provided a diversity of ecosystems is maintained.

In contrast to a widely held theory that tracts of Southeast Asia's lowland forests morphed abruptly into a vast savanna corridor in response to the cool and seasonal climate during the peak of the last ice age roughly 20,000 years ago, the international research team found evidence that forests largely persisted across the landscape at that time.

Rather than an abrupt shift from forest to grassland, the researchers documented smooth transitions between lowland rainforest, open-canopy seasonally dry forest with a grassy understory, and tropical montane forest. This mosaic of forest types indicates the region's ecosystems had the capacity to "resist and recover from" climate stress, the study says.

The new insights back up calls from conservationists to preserve a diverse mix of forest types in well-connected networks across Southeast Asia to afford the region the best chances of adapting to climate change impacts.

"Preservation of forest types that facilitate resilience should be a priority," Rebecca Hamilton, a paleoecologist at the University of Sydney and lead author of the new study, told Mongabay. "Seasonally dry forest, for instance, often gets overlooked. It's not seen as locally biodiverse in comparison with tropical rainforest, but it has beta diversity on a landscape level."

Southeast Asia's forests have seen unprecedented pressure from human activity in recent decades. Clearance of much of the region's lowland rainforest to make way for urban expansion, agriculture, and oil palm and rubber plantations is now being followed up with alarming rates of encroachment of upland forest.

To investigate Southeast Asia's ancient landscapes, Hamilton and her colleagues looked at biochemical data from 59 paleoecological sites across the region. They scrutinized fossil pollen grains preserved in lakebeds to tell which species of trees were growing at a particular point in time; conducted isotopic analyses of carbon in sediment cores to reveal the relative ratios of grassy plants to woody plants extant through time; and even looked at evidence from animal remains and bat guano.

Although their analyses revealed a high abundance of grasses similar to that found in prior studies, the additional presence of woody species in the fossil record led the team to conclude that forests on higher ground likely expanded and flourished during the cool and seasonal climate of the last glacial maximum, while expanses once presumed to have been savanna grassland were more likely seasonally dry forest, which "actually have a lot of grasses in the understory," Hamilton said.

The last glacial period investigated in the study is by no means an exact analog of projected climate change, the authors note. It was, however, a period of extreme seasonality, which is a "really important factor" in determining whether natural landscapes are dominated by forests or grasslands, they say. With scientists expecting climate change to amplify the seasonality of Southeast Asia's wet seasons and dry seasons, triggering extreme precipitation and drought events, an enhanced understanding of how ecosystems respond to such conditions is vital, Hamilton said.

The results also suggest that Southeast Asia's forests might respond to large-scale disturbance in different ways than what's observed in other parts of the world, according to Hamilton. Forest biologists in South America, for instance, have documented concerning "tipping points" triggered by huge disturbances, such as El Niño-driven forest fires and massive land clearance for agriculture, which lead to irreversible shifts from forest to grassland-dominated savanna systems.

But such tipping points aren't so clear in Southeast Asia, Hamilton said. Instead, the region's forests tend toward the "stepping stone" composition of seasonally dry forest, which lies somewhere between forest and grassland. "In Southeast Asia, we don't really see these abrupt shifts to savanna. We only really see gradual shifts toward more open forest types."

This doesn't mean, however, that Asia's forests are immune to devastating regime shifts. Human activity is persistently undermining the resilience of the region's forests. "[This] could potentially be quite catastrophic to persistence of rainforest across the tropical zone," Hamilton said. "We're seeing [forest] fragmentation often with fire, which is used

to clear large swaths of landscapes, which is pretty damaging and can cause abrupt human-caused transitions to savanna [similar] to a lot of the Americas.”

However, we can't ignore the fact that humans have been shaping the world's forests for thousands of years, Hamilton said. Previous studies show, for example, that swidden forms of slash-and-burn agriculture have maintained structural forest diversity in parts of mainland Southeast Asia. And the new insights into the extent of forest cover across the region could help elucidate theories of how humans and animals moved through Southeast Asia during the last glacial period.

“Some schools of thought suggest that savanna environments facilitated human migration, [viewing] tropical forests as absolutely inhospitable to humans,” Hamilton said. “Now we know that people use and manage tropical forests and have migrated through at least some forest systems to reach Australia, for example ... We don't have enough evidence to suggest [forest persistence] was a driver of this migration, but it shows that we as a species have historically used resources from a range of ecosystems.”

The findings of the new study “substantiate what at least some of us suspected,” Alice Hughes, an associate professor at the University of Hong Kong, who was not involved in the study, told Mongabay by email. “The savannah corridor hypothesis has long been questioned in Southeast Asia, and [has] longstanding implications for our understanding of regional biogeography.”

Sea levels were much lower during the last glacial period, exposing what's known as the Sunda Shelf — a low-lying landmass connecting what's now mainland Southeast Asia to the islands of Borneo, Sumatra, Bali, and many others. Hughes said the new evidence that the Sunda Shelf was home to forests underscores the importance of modern-day forests as important reservoirs of genetic diversity.

“With the rising of sea-levels, remaining forests do represent true refugia, and the last strongholds of genetic diversity of species that in some instances would have had much more expansive ranges across the Sunda shelf,” Hughes wrote. “Undoubtedly, [these forests are] key areas to protect to maintain diversity (and genetic diversity) across the region.”

In the face of global warming, conservation practitioners and policymakers must be mindful of the fact that many of the region's species have narrow geographic ranges, which renders them particularly vulnerable to impacts from climate change, Hughes added.

“Increasing connectivity across this region will be vital to reconnect forest patches and enable species within them to attempt to track future climate ranges.”

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[La Union swaps 2K kgs. of fruit seedlings for rice](#)

By: Hilda Austria

Nearly 2,000 kilos of seeds of fruit-bearing trees were exchanged for rice and seedlings from 2022-2023 under the La Union provincial government's "Sukat Bukel" (seeds exchange) program.

According to the La Union Provincial Information Office (PIO) on Wednesday, residents may exchange a kilo of fresh or air-dried fruit seeds for two kilos of rice or seedlings through the program, which is aimed to provide economic aid to residents as well as help mitigate climate change through backyard gardening, and encourage zero waste lifestyle in the province.

Residents may swap the seeds of fruit-bearing or native trees to the provincial nurseries in the municipality of Santo Tomas and Barangay Pias in San Fernando City, or at the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO), also in San Fernando City.

"Sukat Bukel" started in 2019 and it received an allocation of over PHP1 million in 2023.

From 2022 to 2023, nearly 2,000 kilos of various seeds like avocado, cacao, and coffee were collected and these were cultivated in the provincial government's nurseries.

Last year alone, over 500 residents availed of the program and received more than 5,000 kilos of rice, the La Union PIO said.

Aside from rice, the project also allows residents to exchange the seeds to seedlings of grafted rambutan or budded calamansi.

In 2023, some 163 rambutan seedlings and 287 calamansi seedlings were distributed under the program.

Governor Raphaelle Veronica Ortega-David, in a statement Wednesday, said the program does not only provide economic assistance but also encourages environmental consciousness.

"This is our contribution to the whole-of-nation and community approach on ecological and environmental stability," she said.

David said the program also aims to preserve indigenous and endemic tree species in the province like bittaog, mabolo, botong, and pakak, which are slowly becoming endangered.

Through the program, the provincial government is able to maintain its nurseries and supply seedlings for free during tree planting activities within and outside of the province.

PH, Vietnam ink 5-yr rice trade, SCS management, agri pact

By: Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos

The Philippines and Vietnam on Tuesday signed agreements on rice trade cooperation, incident prevention and management in the South China Sea (SCS), agriculture, and cultural cooperation.

The deals were signed on the second day of the state visit of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to Vietnam, Communications Secretary Cheloy Garafil said in a statement.

She added that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was among those signed to create a framework for rice cooperation between the Philippines and Vietnam to ensure and establish a sustainable food supply amid the impact of climate change, pandemics, and other events external to both countries.

“Under the MOU, Vietnam agreed on a five-year trade commitment to supply, through its private sector, white rice to (the) Philippine private sector, amounting to 1.5 million to 2 million metric tons (MT) per year at a competitive and affordable price,” Garafil said.

“Apart from rice trade, the Philippines and Vietnam are also expected to exchange information on policies, plans and regulations, and other rice-trade related activities,” she added.

The two countries also inked an MOU on Cooperation in Agriculture and Related Fields to intensify their tie-up in the fields of agriculture, rural development, and other related fields.

She said the agriculture pact would also pave the way for the establishment of 19 areas of cooperation, including high-value crops, livestock, and aquaculture, farm management and sustainability, smart agriculture and aquaculture technology, research trainings, and exchanges of experts.

Also signed was an Understanding on Incident Prevention and Management in the SCS.

Garafil said the two nations agreed to enhance coordination regarding maritime issues bilaterally, within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and with other dialogue partners.

Amid territorial disputes in the SCS, both countries aim to step up efforts to promote trust, confidence, and understanding through dialogue and cooperative activities.

Garafil said the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and the Viet Nam Coast Guard (VCG) also signed an MOU on Maritime Cooperation to strengthen the understanding, mutual trust, and confidence between the two parties.

Under the agreement, the PCG and the VCG will form a Joint Coast Guard Committee to discuss common issues and interests between them. A hotline communication mechanism will also be established between the PCG and VCG.

She said the Philippines' National Commission for Culture and the Arts and Vietnam's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam also agreed to implement the Cultural Cooperation Program from 2024 to 2029.

"And through the Cultural Cooperation Program, the Philippines and Viet Nam will expand cultural exchanges and strengthen friendly relations, in accordance with the Cultural Agreement signed between the two nations in 1998," Garafil said.

Bilateral meeting

Marcos also met with Vietnamese President Vo Van Thuong on Tuesday at the Presidential Palace in Vietnam for a bilateral meeting.

In his speech, Marcos thanked Thuong for inviting him to visit Vietnam, saying the gesture is a testament to the "thriving nature" of the two countries' relations.

Marcos stressed that despite the new challenges faced by the Philippines and Vietnam, they continue to explore a vast number of opportunities or cooperation.

"Vietnam remains the sole Strategic Partner of the Philippines in the ASEAN region, and I am hopeful that this meeting will provide fresh opportunities to reinforce our bilateral relations with the aim of fostering peace and prosperity between our two countries and in the region," he said.

"While maritime cooperation is the foundation of our Strategic Partnership, our bilateral relations have spanned various areas of cooperation, such as in defense, trade, agriculture, and culture, amongst others," Marcos added.

Closer defense

Marcos, during his bilateral meeting with Thuong, stressed the need for the two countries' armed forces to conduct a regular and strengthened high-level exchange on information, education, and training to advance their defense and security capabilities.

In another meeting with Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chin, Marcos hoped for the conclusion of the negotiations for the proposed MOU concerning the provision of Mutual Logistic Support.

“Regarding defense cooperation, I strongly advocate for enhancing and conducting a high-level exchange, information sharing, educational initiatives, and training exchanges between our respective armed forces, amongst other measures,” Marcos said.

The President also expressed elation now that the Implementation Program of the Agreement on Cooperation on Tourism for 2024 to 2028 is “close to finalization.”

“I am very excited by the extension of air services between our key destinations, and I believe that it will greatly contribute to the growth of both economic activity and interpersonal relationships,” he said.

Marcos said he is, likewise, optimistic about the Philippines' closer parliamentary relations with Vietnam to address several pressing issues, including human trafficking.

This, as he hoped that the “deepening friendship” between the two countries would result in closer cooperation between their legislatures.

US keen to work with PH on mineral processing, renewables

By: Kris Crismundo

The United States (US) government has offered its support to the Philippines in developing the country's mineral processing and renewable energy (RE) sectors.

US Under Secretary for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment Jose Fernandez said in an interview here Tuesday that the US government can help the Marcos administration to engage with countries under the Mineral Security Partnership (MSP), a collaboration of 13 countries and the European Union to catalyze investments in responsible critical supply chains across the world.

Fernandez said the US government can organize video conferences with companies in MSP countries where the Philippine government can present to potential investors the kind of investments it needs for the industry.

"It's a way for us to facilitate engagement by the Philippine government and the mining companies, mining investors out there," the visiting US official said.

He shared that the MSP currently has "over half a dozen projects," not only in mining but on the processing side, as well.

Fernandez said with the interest of US companies that are already here, the US government will continue working with the concerned agencies in the country to facilitate their investments here.

"We are working with the Philippines and helping them to create an enabling environment for these types of investments. A regulatory environment that is modern, and that includes the best practices out there," he added.

Aside from processing critical minerals, Fernandez said the US government is keen to support the Philippines in increasing its RE capacity.

Fernandez had a meeting with the Department of Energy during his visit here. He conveyed that the Development Financing Corp. can be a source of funding for RE projects and infrastructure in the Philippines.

PH role in clean energy goals

The US official highlighted that the Philippines has a critical role to play in achieving clean energy goals globally, being a country with rich natural resources.

“For us to reach our clean energy goals by 2050, we’re going to need exponentially more critical minerals that we use today,” Fernandez said.

Citing data from the International Energy Agency, Fernandez said to shift to clean energy by 2050, the global market needs 42 times the amount of lithium, 20 times the amount of manganese, and 20 times the amount of cobalt.

“Those kinds of numbers mean that unless we’re able to find them, our clean energy transition will be at risk,” Fernandez added.

The Philippines is host to 5 percent of global nickel reserves and 4 percent of global cobalt reserves, the mineral resources used for producing batteries. Batteries are needed to store power from RE sources such as solar, wind, and hydro among others.

“Right now, most of these critical minerals are produced by or mined or processed by one or two countries, one of them is China... And it’s not a question of China. Something that Covid taught us is that we cannot depend on one supplier for anything,” Fernandez said.

Fernandez also discussed these sectors with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

Mineral processing is one of the five priority sectors of the DTI under its Make It Happen in the Philippines campaign.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[\[Opinion\] Very urgent: Global warming alert](#)

By: Cherry Ballescas

As January, the International Zero Waste Month exits, it may be best and timely for everyone to be reminded about the urgent call for all to help keep global warming preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius level by 2030.

This is considered by scientists “as a key tipping point, beyond which the chances of hastening sea level rise/extreme flooding/drought/more extreme weather/wildfires/demise of vital ecosystems/and food shortages could increase dramatically.”

A CNN May 2023 article reported that, according to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), “the world has already seen around 1.2 degrees of warming, as humans continue to burn fossil fuels and produce planet-heating pollution.”

WMO Secretary-General Professor Petteri Taalas sounded “the alarm that we will breach the 1.5 degrees Celsius level on a temporary basis with increasing frequency and that we need to be prepared as El Niño combined with human-induced climate change push global temperatures into uncharted territory, with far-reaching repercussions for health/food security/water management/the environment.”

As the trend of increasing global temperature “shows no sign of slowing, the WMO said that between 2023 and 2027, there is now a 66% chance that the planet’s temperature will climb above 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming above pre-industrial levels for at least one year.”

“As temperatures surge, there is a 98% likelihood that at least one of the next five years – and the five-year period as a whole – will be the warmest on record for the planet. “

Another CNN May 2023 article discussed a study published in the journal Nature Sustainability which noted that “if the current pace of global warming goes unchecked, it will push billions of people outside the “climate niche,” the temperatures where humans can flourish, and expose them to dangerously hot conditions.

This climate niche “consists of places where the annual average temperature spans from 13 degrees Celsius (55 degrees Fahrenheit) to around 27 degrees Celsius (81

degrees Celsius). Outside this window, conditions tend to be too hot, too cold or too dry.”

According to this study, “factoring in both the expected global warming and population growth, by 2030, around two billion people will be outside the climate niche, facing average temperatures of 29 degrees Celsius (84 degrees Fahrenheit) or higher.”

“One third of the global population could find themselves living in climate conditions that don’t support human flourishing,” according to Timothy Lenton, one of the study’s two lead authors and director of Global Systems Institute, University of Exeter.

Even as “less than 1% of the global population is currently exposed to dangerous heat, with average temperatures of 29 degrees Celsius or higher, climate change has already put more than 600 million people outside the niche.”

According to the study’s co-author. Professor Chi Xu of Nanjing University, “most of these people lived near the cooler 13 degree Celsius peak of the niche and are now in the ‘middle ground’ between the two peaks. While not dangerously hot, these conditions tend to be much drier and have not historically supported dense human populations.”

This seriously alarming finding of the study: “If the Earth warms 2.7 degrees Celsius, the Philippines, together with India, Nigeria, Indonesia and Pakistan would be the top five countries with the most population exposed to dangerous heat levels!”

The study shared that as areas within the climate niche shrink as global temperatures rise, expect increased mortality rates as “exposure to temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius could be lethal. Expect more people frequently exposed to extreme weather events including droughts/storms/wildfires/heatwaves.

However, there is hope!

“if the world moves away from burning oil, coal and gas and toward clean energy, experts say there is still time to slow the pace of global warming!”

This means “speeding up by five times the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions or the decarbonization of the global economy,” according to Lenton.

Powering progress toward sustainable energy

By: Joe Zaldarriaga

As Filipinos anticipate the onset of the dry season, which is intensified by the ongoing El Niño, President Marcos has issued a crucial directive to all government entities, both at the national and local levels, emphasizing the imperative need for energy efficiency and conservation.

Through Administrative Order 15, the President has called upon all government agencies, including government-owned or -controlled corporations (GOCCs), to expedite the execution of the Government Energy Management Program (GEMP). This move is prompted by the urgent necessity to reduce the bureaucracy's monthly electricity consumption, with the anticipation of heightened power demand during the impending dry season.

This directive marks a significant stride, complementing the ongoing implementation of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act. It also demonstrates that the government is at the forefront, establishing a strong example for the country in adopting a sustainable energy lifestyle, showcasing effective and efficient electricity utilization.

From a holistic perspective, it is noteworthy that the Philippines has laid the foundation with necessary infrastructure and policies needed to advance the nation toward a sustainable energy future. President Marcos' administration not only champions the energy efficiency campaign but also actively advocates for renewable energy sources to address the looming threat of climate change. With the implementation of these policies, the nation is positioned to emerge as a shining example of sustainable energy practices.

However, achieving greater energy efficiency mandates active participation and collaboration from both the public and private sectors. This collaboration is essential for the implementation of programs and for raising awareness about the importance of adopting a sustainable energy lifestyle among Filipinos.

Despite electricity rates being a lower priority among Filipinos, as indicated in a recent survey by the OCTA Research Group, it is essential to recognize that reasonable pricing doesn't diminish the need for a more proactive information campaign on energy efficiency.

To be able to foster public participation toward embracing energy efficiency and sustainable practices, the private sector needs to align and complement the ongoing efforts of the government.

As an example, emphasizing the benefits of energy efficiency, such as cost savings, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and meeting the surging energy demand, can significantly enhance the government's campaign to encourage Filipinos to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle.

GEMP serves as a model for offices to embrace energy efficiency, having already yielded tangible results. In 2023 alone, GEMP generated over P300 million in energy savings, equivalent to over 300 million kilowatt-hours of electricity consumption, as reported by the Department of Energy (DOE). Accelerating the program's implementation could potentially yield up to P2 billion in savings, according to the DOE.

The private sector, especially energy industry players, must take the lead in advocating for energy efficiency among their stakeholders and rigorously implement government programs.

Take Meralco, for instance, which actively executes the government's Interruptible Load Program (ILP) to alleviate households from power interruptions during red alert situations or insufficient supply. The ILP, a demand-side management initiative, involves large-load customers utilizing their generator sets during instances of red alert. Likewise, in a bid to empower Filipino households with more control over their monthly energy consumption, Meralco has incorporated an appliance calculator in its mobile app and shares energy efficiency tips via multi-platform communication channels, in collaboration with the DOE.

Through sustained cooperation between the public and private sectors, a sustainable energy lifestyle could soon be ingrained in every Filipino home and office.

These vital initiatives, including the steadfast execution of government programs, impactful information campaigns, and unwavering support from the private sector, are integral in shaping a truly sustainable energy future, serving as a model for other nations to emulate.

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