



NEWS ROUNDUP

09 FEBRUARY 2023 [08:00 am]

- Climate change is slowly having an impact on human health—expert
- DOE to hold 2nd ‘green energy’ auction
- With cash infusion, developing nations boost sun-dimming research
- Villar pushes for new, expanded protected areas
- DOST-CAR Promotes Eco-Friendly Pinoy Inventions
- Marcos in Japan seeking closer ties in agri, security
- United for Climate: Sustainability Forum PH 2022
- Pollution and climate change set stage for rise in antimicrobial resistance
- Legarda cites gains on free trade agreement with EU states
- BARMM turns to reforestation, waste management to prevent repeat of killer floods
- Co-firing with ammonia at Quezon plant will raise emissions, power costs — green groups

CCC IN THE NEWS:

- LGUs given until March 31 to submit climate adaptation proposals

BUSINESS MIRROR

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By: Rory Visco

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By: Lenie Lectura

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BUSINESS WORLD

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By: Alyssa Nicole O. Tan

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JOURNAL ONLINE PH

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MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

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By: Jocelyn Montemayor

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MONGABAY

[Pollution and climate change set stage for rise in antimicrobial resistance](#)

By: John Cannon

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PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Legarda cites gains on free trade agreement with EU states](#)

By: Leonel Abasola

MANILA – Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda on Wednesday cited the significant gains of the country's economy since the free trade agreement (FTA) with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in the last five years.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Co-firing with ammonia at Quezon plant will raise emissions, power costs — green groups](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

MANILA, Philippines — Using ammonia to help lower carbon dioxide emissions at a coal plant in Quezon province might end up causing more pollution and drive up electricity prices as well, residents and green energy advocates.

[BARMM turns to reforestation, waste management to prevent repeat of killer floods](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

CAGAYAN DE ORO, Philippines — The Bangsamoro government is counting on restoring denuded forests and conducting geohazard assessments after landslides and floods devastated parts of Mindanao.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[LGUs given until March 31 to submit climate adaptation proposals](#)

By: Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos

MANILA – Local government units (LGUs) have until March 31 to submit their proposed climate change adaptation projects and programs to the People’s Survival Fund (PSF) Board, the Climate Change Commission (CCC) announced Wednesday.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS MIRROR

[Climate change is slowly having an impact on human health—expert](#)

By: Rory Visco

EVER wondered why the world’s polar caps are melting? Did your heart melt when you saw a polar bear standing precariously atop a small chunk of ice that came from melted polar caps?

According to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), global warming is created with the burning of “fossil” fuels such as coal, crude oil and gas. Although these fuels answer the energy needs to produce light in our homes, run our cars and operate factories to produce our daily needs, it also fuels global warming by creating immense amounts of carbon dioxide emissions that are then trapped in the planet’s atmosphere, thus creating climate change. This means the more carbon dioxide in the air, the hotter the climate gets.

In her presentation during the “Stop COVID Deaths” webinar titled “Climate Change and post-Covid-19 Health Security” that was organized by the University of the Philippines and the UP Manila NIH National Telehealth Center together with the UP Philippine General Hospital (UP-PGH), Dr. Susan Pineda Mercado, co-Chair of the National Panel of Technical Experts of the Philippine Climate Change Commission, said that fossil fuels create greenhouse gases that account for 80 percent of carbon dioxide leading to global warming and ocean acidification.

“The Philippines still has coal-fired plants though they should have been phased out completely. Currently, the greatest emitter of fossil fuels in the world is China and unless the bigger countries bring down their emissions, we all suffer. The bigger countries are the ones that have to cut down on their use of fossil fuels though that’s really very contentious,” she said.

Right now, Dr. Mercado said scientists are aiming for only a 1.5-degree Centigrade increase in temperature by 2030 but they themselves believe it’s not realistic with what’s happening today. They believe an increase of more than 1.5 degrees (some estimates peg it at four degrees) poses a scenario where only reptiles will be able to survive.

Climate Change: the impact on human health

SHE said that rising temperatures, extreme weather, rising sea levels and increasing carbon dioxide levels can result in air pollution, which increases the risk for asthma and

cardiovascular disease, changes in vector ecology such as malaria, dengue, encephalitis, Hantavirus, Rift Valley fever, Lyme disease, Chikungunya, and West Nile Virus. Increasing allergens contribute to respiratory allergies and asthma, water quality impacts could result in cholera and other kinds of water-borne disease. Water and food supply impacts can lead to malnutrition and diarrhea, while environmental degradation can result in forced migration, civil conflict and mental health impact. Extreme heat causes heat-related illness and death, cardiovascular failure, and severe weather can lead to injuries, fatalities, and mental health impacts.

Slow-onset events—what to do next?

CLIMATE change, according to Dr. Mercado, will bring about what is called “Slow Onset Events” or SOEs, events that happen so slowly that are hardly noticeable. These include increasing temperature, “desertification” where fertile land becomes a desert due to climate change and other human activities, loss of biodiversity, land and forest degradation, glacial retreat, sea level rise, ocean acidification and salination, where salt water intrudes into ground water.

Climate change is said to be the greatest threat to public health, a threat seen as an existential one due to concerns where humanity’s survival hangs in the balance. Thus, Dr. Pineda pointed out that there should be substantial investments in public health, particularly in the areas of surveillance, laboratories, vaccine production, workforce development and emergency management.

Some of the constraints at the early onset of Covid-19, she noted, was slow testing. “We had only one bio-safety level laboratory 3. Testing was slow since we were not prepared for an outbreak. There was also no local Personal Protective Equipment [PPE] production so health workers got infected resulting to death, and that serious mistake where hospitals not geared up for infection control accepted Covid-19 patients.”

She reiterated the need to create a good laboratory and surveillance network, which is what many countries have done already, to test and determine if there is a new virus or if there are mutations happening that could impact the country’s control measures. “Creating a good laboratory and surveillance network should be made a part of an overall plan for pandemic preparedness by putting in the necessary investments,” Dr. Mercado emphasized.

She also pointed to having a body of technical experts who are highly skilled in surveillance, a body that is somewhat similar to the US Centers for Disease Control and Protection, our own Philippine CDC. “We have to purposely be better at surveillance

and start looking at how we're going to manage all infections in the country and not just Covid-19."

Dr. Mercado also suggested the "repurposing" of the Quezon Institute, which used to be the center for tuberculosis, into a National Center for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, and to stockpile PPEs that can be given to health workers when they need it. Given the conditions of climate change, she said, another pandemic may hit the world again.

Many people, Dr. Mercado pointed out, don't notice SOEs but they are slowly affecting people's lives and they don't seem to be acting as much as they should. "It's happening so slowly that unless you step back, you don't realize that the Earth is actually on fire or underwater in many places and you think it's just something that happened to you today not realizing how widespread it is."

[DOE to hold 2nd 'green energy' auction](#)

By: Lenie Lectura

THE Department of Energy (DOE) announced the conduct of a second green energy auction in the next few months to further boost the country's renewable energy (RE) sector.

"To provide a robust and additional market for RE through a transparent and competitive bidding, the DOE is conducting the second round of the "Green Energy Auction (GEA) program' by the second quarter of 2023," said DOE Secretary Raphael P.M. Lotilla during a forum held last February 8. The first round of the auction was conducted in June last year. It generated almost 2,000 megawatts (MW) of capacities that were committed to deliver energy from 2023 to 2025 at a competitive price lower than or equal to the Green Energy Auction Reserve (GEAR) prices set by the Energy Regulatory Commission.

Lotilla said the DOE plans to conduct the GEA annually "to encourage more RE investments in the country." He said that during the first GEA Round, the DOE issued 18 Certificate of Awards of RE capacity, which are "committed to go onstream beginning this year."

The DOE said the GEA program "empowers consumers" with the option to source RE from a licensed supplier as opposed to consuming what is supplied by the distribution utility in their area. The program also promotes the use of RE to increase the share of clean energy in the country's generation mix.

Other ways to transition to clean energy, Lotilla added, includes energy efficiency and conservation (EEC) measures and storage solutions.

"By taking these actions, we will reduce our overall energy consumption, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and get one step closer to meeting our long-term energy goals," he said.

The DOE is also currently scaling up the rollout of concrete plans and programs—demand side management, minimum energy performance for products, promotion of energy service companies and the government energy management program. The last program encourages the adoption of EEC and performance enhancements in public buildings and facilities, among others.

On energy storage system (ESS) in the power sector, the DOE is nearing completion of the enhanced ESS policy that provides a refined framework for its use. The ESS

technologies will serve multiple functions, including energy generation, peak shaving, ancillary services and mitigating the intermittent generation output of variable renewable generating plants thereby ensuring power quality and system reliability. Lotilla said this will also be a key element in the smart grid policy, which the DOE promulgated to guide the electric power industry stakeholders in modernizing their respective electrical facilities.

BUSINESS WORLD

With cash infusion, developing nations boost sun-dimming research

OSLO — Stepping into a “minefield” about how to slow global warming, scientists in developing nations have won new funds to study whether dimming sunshine by mimicking volcanic eruptions can be a sufficiently safe way to temporarily cool a hotter planet.

Research into “solar geoengineering”, perhaps using planes or balloons to spray sun-reflecting sulphur into the stratosphere, has made scant progress despite alarm over rising temperatures and a sluggish global shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

Trying to build momentum, the Degrees Initiative, a UK-based non-government group, announced on Wednesday \$900,000 in new solar geoengineering funding for researchers in 15 countries including Nigeria, Chile and India.

The money will pay for things like computer modeling to study how solar geoengineering – also called solar radiation modification, or SRM – might affect everything from monsoons and storms to heatwaves and biodiversity.

The new grants follow an initial 2018 round, also worth \$900,000, backing projects in 10 developing nations to understand risks such as worsening droughts in South Africa or possible impacts on rice and maize production in the Philippines.

So far, research into a possible planetary sunshade has been dominated by universities in rich nations, such as Harvard and Oxford.

“The whole point is a redistribution of power on SRM. It is empowering the countries who would be most affected by decisions to use it or reject it,” said Andy Parker, CEO and founder of the Degrees Initiative.

The new funding is a joint project between the Degrees Initiative – funded by Open Philanthropy, backed in part by Facebook co-founder Dustin Moskovitz – and the World Academy of Sciences.

“Given the high stakes, there is a shockingly low level of research around the world,” Parker said, estimating SRM research attracted somewhere in the “low tens of millions of dollars” globally a year.

ALIBI FOR INACTION?

Critics say pursuing SRM as a potential way to deal with climate change could give fossil fuel companies an alibi for inaction, and could disrupt weather patterns, perhaps exacerbating poverty in the most vulnerable nations.

“It is too controversial,” said Chukwumerije Okereke, director of the Center for Climate Change and Development at Alex Ekwueme Federal University in Nigeria.

“I can list 100 things the world can do (to slow climate change) and geoengineering will not figure among them.”

Okereke, who is also a visiting professor at the London School of Economics, noted a key UN panel of climate scientists did not even mention SRM in a 48-page summary last year to guide policymakers on how to address global warming.

Backers of SRM say the technique draws inspiration from volcanoes. The eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines in 1991, for instance, cut global temperatures for more than a year as an ashen veil swirled high above the planet.

With the last eight years the warmest on record and global temperatures already have risen about 1.2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times – approaching the 1.5C lower limit set in the 2015 Paris Agreement – finding ways to limit heating is crucial, scientists say.

Frank Biermann, a professor of global sustainability governance at Utrecht University, decried SRM as a distraction from the need for the rich to cut emissions.

He said that the average American emits 14.7 tonnes of climate-changing carbon dioxide a year, compared to just 1.8 tonnes per person in India.

If everyone in the world had per-capita emissions equal to those of India – or Africa or most of Latin America – climate change would not be a significant problem, he said.

Swifter emissions cuts by the rich – rather than techno-fixes aimed to buy time for cuts – should be the real focus of efforts to address climate risks, Biermann said.

“The question is ‘Who are we buying time for?’” he asked. “Is it the time for the global population, the poor and the vulnerable? Or is it time bought for the oil industry, the gas industry, the coal industry?”

MEXICO BANS EXPERIMENTS

Biermann said 390 scientists had signed to a letter urging a ban on the use of SRM – and he welcomed a decision by Mexico last month to ban experiments after a US start-up, Make Sunsets, launched sulphur-carrying balloons in Mexico without seeking local permits.

Make Sunsets has since shelved plans for new launches.

But researchers involved in the new SRM funding round said gaining more knowledge about options to deal with climate change is vital.

Andreas Meyer, a researcher at the University of Cape Town who will study how SRM might affect biodiversity, said deep cuts in emissions were the best solution for climate change.

But “further research is needed (for SRM) to fully understand its potential benefits and drawbacks,” he added.

His team will study how a sun-dimming haze might affect the survival and reproduction of animals, using a database of 30,000 mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, fish and marine invertebrates.

The team will also take a look at how use of SRM might affect mosquito-borne diseases.

Pornampai Narenpitak, of Thailand’s National Science and Technology Development Agency and the leader of one of the research teams, said she welcomed “opportunities for SRM scientists in the Global South to catch up with the research that’s been done in the Global North.”

Her team will study how the use of SRM might affect river flows in the Chao Phraya River basin in Thailand, among other issues.

Pascal Lamy, the former head of the World Trade Organization who chairs a commission looking at what to do if temperatures overshoot the 1.5C limit, predicted hard choices ahead as the planet heats up, bringing harsher weather extremes.

“Even if there are obvious risks (in SRM), there are also enormous risks in global warming too,” he said. “It is risk against risk”.

Lamy's Climate Overshoot Commission, whose members include former presidents of Mexico and Kiribati, will issue a report late this year.

When it comes to considering the use of SRM, "I have the impression of walking on a field of landmines," he said.

Villar pushes for new, expanded protected areas

By: Alyssa Nicole O. Tan

SENATOR Cynthia A. Villar is pushing for the passage of several bills that will create new protected areas and expand declared sites to remove the Philippines' tag as a biodiversity "hotspot" where ecosystems are under serious threat by human activities.

"Hotspots are also considered to be significantly threatened due to man-made exploitation and by climate change," she said in a statement on Wednesday.

Ms. Villar, chair of the Senate environment and natural resources committee, said many places in the country are seeing high rates of habitat degradation and biodiversity loss.

"Hence, there are still many areas in the country, such as wetlands, marine sanctuaries, tropical forests, watersheds, wildlife sanctuaries, among others, that remain under-protected and one certain way of affording protection to these areas is by designating them as protected areas through legislation," she said.

Legislating more protected areas, she added, has also become more urgent due to the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, which aims to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems on every continent and in every ocean from 2021 to 2030.

There are seven pending bills relating to the declaration of new or expanded protected areas.

These include the Paoay Lake Protected Landscape in Ilocos Norte; Las Piñas-Parañaque Wetland Park; San Francisco Protected Landscape and Alibijaban Protected Landscape and Seascape in Quezon province; Taklong and Tandog Group of Islands Natural Park in Guimaras; and Bantayan Group of Islands Protected Landscape and Seascape in Cebu.

According to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Philippines is one of 18 mega-biodiverse countries of the world, containing two-thirds of the earth's biodiversity and between 70% and 80% of the world's plant and animal species.

JOURNAL ONLINE PH

DOST-CAR Promotes Eco-Friendly Pinoy Inventions

THE Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) promotes products using eco-friendly technologies by top Filipino inventors in a forum held in Baguio City on Tuesday, Feb, 7.

The event at Elizabeth Hotel was attended by DOST Undersecretary for Regional Operations, Engr. Sancho A. Maborang; Dr. Nancy A. Bantog, regional director of DOST-CAR; Engr. Angel L. Maguen, assistant regional director of DOST-CAR; Engr. Victoriano Ocon, CEO of Vic Metal Fabrication and Environmental Services, Inc.; Engr. Jimson Uranza, president of Lead Core Technology System, Inc. (LCTSI) and Inventrepreneur, Francisco 'Popoy' Pagayon, chairman of the Filipino Inventors Producers Cooperative (FIPC).

Resource persons Uranza discussed about energy storage system while Ocon talked about solid waste management along with Pagayon who showcased his multi-purpose speed grains solar dryer Portasol.

Maborang acknowledged that DOST-CAR has potential to offer a lot in science technology and innovations but was somehow "overlooked" and he promised to focus on the region this time.

The technology offered by Ocon's Advance Waste Solutions (AWS) is the latest and currently provides the best way of waste management. Easy installation, low operation cost, minimal land requirement and a healthy solution to waste problem are just few of the advantages of this technology.

Waste, garbage thrash are some of the social environmental problems affecting and increasing with time and population and need to be addressed, according to Ocon. These wastes are clogging canals, waterways, streets, open dumpsites and sometimes being burned in open spaces despite efforts of local government units and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to address the issue.

On the other hand, Pagayon said his Portasol doesn't need maintenance, repair. This is a grain drying equipment especially needed during rainy season and to avoid contamination from insects and rodents.

“Our target are small-time farmers who are forced to sell their rice cheap because it’s wet or damp,” Pagayon explained. But with Portasol, they can sell at a higher price. He said that with the help of DOST, they were able to use hybrid plastic as technology for doing his invention.

He said that based on studies, the farming industry loses P12-billion a year from the ineffective ways of rice drying.

The hybrid generator system is another technology used by Lead Core Technology System, Inc. or LCTSI headed by its president Engr. Uranza. The company is a 100% Filipino corporation. It achieved the status of a “Total Stored Energy Solutions Provider,” on its 10 years of existence in the industry.

The company offers wide range of products from industrial batteries, fuel cells, renewable energy and to services such as installation, monitoring and testing, commissioning and preventive maintenance.

The company has created its own niche in the industry and established strong International and local allies and affiliates.

LCTSI’s manpower has a unique combination of skills, professionalism and dedication able to meet the ever-evolving challenges of the industry.

Uranza presented his hybrid generators using only running water that can supply a small house with 5 kw power.

Forum guests from Manila included Publishers Association of the Philippines, Inc. (PAPI) president Nelson Santos, FISPC president Bimbo Doran, directors Davis Pagayon, Dennis Pagayon, Rey Sanchez, among others.

Meanwhile, event guests from provincial science and technology offices included Aileen Myrna Malangen from Abra; Jovelyn Sienna – Apayao; Melecio Balangen Jr. – Benguet; Don Ognayon – Ifugao; Karl Ian Martinez – Kalinga; Alfonso Berto- Mt. Province.

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

[Marcos in Japan seeking closer ties in agri, security](#)

By: Jocelyn Montemayor

PRESIDENT Marcos Jr. arrived in Japan yesterday for an official visit aimed at strengthening partnerships in agriculture, renewable energy, digital transformation, defense, and infrastructure.

In Manila before flying to Tokyo, Marcos said his visit is part of his foreign policy agenda which seeks to forge closer political ties, stronger defense, and security cooperation, and lasting economic partnerships with major countries in the region amid a challenging global environment.

He said that during his February 8 to 12 official visit, he is set to hold a meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to “take stock of our bilateral relations and regional cooperation in a broad range of engagements,” from security and economic relations to Manila and Tokyo’s continued commitment to mutual peace and prosperity.

Marcos and Kishida are also expected to witness the signing of key agreements between the Philippines and Japan in the areas of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, infrastructure, agriculture and digital cooperation.

Marcos will also have an audience with Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako, meet with business leaders and officers of Japanese shipping companies and associations, and address the Philippine Business Opportunity seminar to promote trade and investment opportunities in the Philippines

Marcos will also meet with the Filipino community. There are at least 248,400 Filipinos living and working in Japan.

“In these meetings, I will be joined by my economic team and key private sector representatives who have been and will be continuously our partners in growing the Philippine economy,” Marcos said in his departure speech.

“I look forward to bringing home... more of these agreements that will be of benefit to the transformation of our economy and to be able to mitigate some of the challenges that we are facing in the new global economy,” he added.

Ambassador to Japan Mylene Garcia-Albano earlier said Marcos' trip is seen to generate P150 billion in investment pledges which can result in the employment of some 8,000 Filipinos.

Japan has been a major trade and official development partner, consistent in its commitment to uphold the same values aligned with Manila's economic and development priorities.

SECURITY TIES

Marcos' visit is expected to pave the way for closer security ties with between the two countries, as Manila increasingly sides with the United States in its regional tussle with China.

"As the United States deepens its relationship with the Philippines, it's important for regional security that Japan join in," a Japanese defense ministry source with knowledge of internal discussions on national security told Reuters. He asked not to be identified because he is not authorized to talk to the media.

Marcos' first visit to Japan since taking office in July comes after he signed an agreement last week granting the United States greater access to its military bases. It also follows a trip to Beijing last month where he told his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, that the Philippines would pursue an independent foreign policy.

Tokyo has been deepening security ties with nations that view China with concern.

A year ago, Japan and Australia signed a visiting forces agreement, allowing them to deploy forces on each other's soil, with Tokyo concluding a similar accord with Britain last month. Those deals provide a framework for how Marcos and Kishida could also forge deeper military ties to counter a common adversary, say experts.

"The Philippines is a critical security partner for Japan," said Narushige Michishita, a professor at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) in Tokyo. "Any conflict in the Taiwan Strait would make the Philippine Sea strategically important," he added.

TAIWAN

Taiwan, which lies between Japan and the Philippines, has become a focal point of intensifying Chinese military activity that Tokyo and Washington worry could escalate into war as Beijing tries to capture what it views as a rogue province.

A Japanese military presence in the Philippines could also help Marcos counter Chinese influence in the South China Sea, much of which Beijing claims, including territory that Manila considers its own.

Beijing has said its intentions in the region are peaceful.

Marcos has vowed not to lose an inch of territory in the strategic waterway through which \$3 trillion in ship-borne trade passes annually.

By gaining access to bases in the Philippines, Japan would extend the range of its defense forces, including surveillance aircraft that could patrol the South China Sea, according to Ken Jinbo, a professor at Keio University in Japan, who also served as a government security advisor.

“One thing people are watching out for during President Marcos’ visit, is whether Japan will agree to provide infrastructure assistance now that the United States has access to the nine bases there,” he said.

Marcos is joined in the trip by First Lady Louise “Lisa” Marcos, former president and now Pampanga Rep. Gloria Arroyo, Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri, Speaker Martin Romualdez, Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo, Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno, Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual, Energy Secretary Rafael Lotilla, Tourism Secretary Cristina Frasco, Presidential Communications Secretary Cheloy Garafil, Special Assistant to the President Antonio Lagdameo Jr.

Vice President and concurrent Education Secretary Sara Duterte heads the caretaker committee while Marcos is abroad.

United for Climate: Sustainability Forum PH 2022

SM Investments Corp. and WWF Philippines joined forces through United for Climate: Sustainability Forum PH 2022 held recently at the Conrad Manila, to trigger a more ambitious and coordinated climate response among the business community.

The SM Group's climate position recognizes climate change as an urgent global priority and considers the unique challenges of the Philippines. Anchoring all subsidiaries' present and future climate action plans, the SM Group commits to do its part through decarbonization, which is a major aspect of climate mitigation, and through various efforts that would help people and ecosystems adapt to climate impacts and build resiliency.

In his keynote address, Hans Sy Jr., president of SM Engineering Design and Development Corp. emphasized the SM Group's commitment to climate action and issued a strong call for collective partnership among the business community to support the Philippine climate agenda.

Sy opened with a very important statement – that climate change is happening right at our doorsteps. That it is something that affects our daily lives makes the problem personal to all.

Sy also shared his insights following the discussions by the global community at the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27).

“Two key takeaways stood out for me– the urgency of a united accelerated effort to reduce carbon emissions and the need to help developing countries most vulnerable to climate change thrive above its devastating impact,” he said.

On the first issue, Sy said the initial step towards the goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5C is mitigation, where one of the key drivers is the systemic shift in energy use and sourcing. He added that as an organization, SM has taken big steps to align its resources along this path.

As prime examples of energy efficient properties, SM Aura Premier and Conrad Manila are LEED Gold Certified. Complementing this is the intentional shift to renewable energy sources.

In 2022, SM Prime Holdings Inc. achieved its goal to increase its renewable energy portfolio to more than 50 percent.” Its partnership with Aboitiz Power for Cleanergy supply will help power SM’s properties under the Retail Competition and Open Access program by yearend.

The rehabilitation of over 10 hectares of mangroves in Hamilo Cove and Pampanga is also a great example of a nature-based solution addressing climate resiliency, safety and prosperity for the community.

Sy also gave equal importance to climate resilience with SM’s constant support to the communities it operates in – from providing a platform for over 90,000 MSMEs partners within the SM ecosystem, to providing environment-friendly systems like rainwater catchments, and submersible pumps for people living around their malls.

Sy stands firm on SM’s commitment to the country. “This is the reason why for us at SM, climate adaptation and resilience are the keys to thriving above the damage and losses brought about by climate change,” he said.

“As an engineer, I am passionate about designing things that work, that help solve problems. I appreciate the complexity of systems, but I also need to think in very practical terms. My job requires understanding physical, structural and system limits. If something is not up to standard, then it is not – there is no ‘pwede na’. Otherwise, public safety is at risk,” Sy said.

When SM built SM Masinag, it incorporated a rainwater catchment facility with a 17,681 cubic meter water capacity, equivalent to 7 Olympic size swimming pools. The two communities connected their drainage systems to the mall which is equipped with three 30 HP (Horsepower) submersible pumps which are used to pump out accumulated rainwater. As a result, families in the area can adapt to the impact of increasing typhoons and rainfall without having to fear the loss of their homes and the safety of their loved ones.

SM Mall of Asia complex, meanwhile, was designed with a seawall to protect the surrounding communities from potential storm surges or rising sea levels. The property also uses specialized foundation systems to provide more robust protection against liquefaction and seismic events.

It is also elevated by 4.5 meters high in MLLW (Mean Lower Low Water) in preparation for climate change issues and has a wave return and drainage channel to prevent flooding.

In closing, Sy made this commitment to walk-the-talk towards a climate alliance with a common roadmap and standards can be measured.

“The opportunity we see is for a private sector alliance that would accelerate action in both mitigation and adaptation and help drive the transition to a green economy. We owe it to our children, the millions of Filipinos yet to be born, to succeed in this fight for the climate,” Sy said.

MONGABAY

[Pollution and climate change set stage for rise in antimicrobial resistance](#)

By: John Cannon

Pollution from a variety of sources is driving up the incidence of resistance to the compounds used to treat infections, according to a report released by the United Nations Environment Programme.

The authors also note that climate change and biodiversity loss help foster the development of antimicrobial resistance, or AMR. They call for systemic societal changes to avoid rendering more of these disease-fighting tools ineffective.

Our reliance on antibiotics and other antimicrobial compounds has created something of a paradox. These chemicals treat bacterial, viral, fungal and parasitic infections, saving countless lives around the world and boosting the production of food crops and livestock. But the use — and overuse in many cases — of these antimicrobials has also come at a cost, nudging along the evolution of potentially dangerous microbes into forms that are more resistant to the medications we throw at them.

“We’re selecting for stronger and more powerful microorganisms,” David Graham, a professor of ecosystems engineering at the U.K.’s Newcastle University and one of the lead authors of the report, said at a press conference ahead of the report’s launch Feb. 7 at a meeting of the Global Leaders Group on Antimicrobial Resistance in Barbados.

Studies show bacterial infections resistant to antimicrobials played a role in the deaths of nearly 5 million people in 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO) considers antimicrobial resistance one of the top 10 threats to global health.

The report’s authors sought to tease apart the complex dynamics by which this resistance develops and to identify the pollution sources that increase the likelihood of more resistance. Effluent from the pharmaceutical industry, hospitals, human waste and agriculture exposes germs to the drugs, giving them more chances to evolve resistance to them.

The presence of other pollutants in the environment, such as heavy metals like zinc used in the production of steel, can also prime the development of resistance to important antimicrobials, and the loss of biodiversity, even at the microbial level, can as well. A warmer global climate may also lead to more widespread resistance, as higher temperatures can encourage the rate at which genes are transferred from microbe to

microbe. In addition, the extreme weather the world is already experiencing as a result of climate change can trigger the failure of the barriers, such as sewers, between us and virulent microorganisms.

“Unfortunately, when you get a flood, for example, those barriers break down,” Graham said. “Once those barriers break, then you’ve got uncontrolled spread in places where AMR doesn’t exist.

“By curbing temperature rises and reducing the extremity of events,” he added, “we can actually then fundamentally curb the probability of evolving new resistance.”

Beyond the need to address climate change, the authors suggest that halting the rise of AMR will require improved sanitation and wastewater treatment, the enhanced ability of industry to contain the release of antimicrobials, resistant microbes and other pollutants, and limiting the use of these chemicals in agriculture when they’re not necessary.

“If you’ve got a healthy animal, you don’t need an antibiotic,” Graham said.

Recent projections suggest that antibiotic use in the animals humans raise for food will increase by 8% by 2030.

“Failing to address the global burden of [antimicrobial resistance], including its environmental dimensions, could take humanity back to an era when even mild infections could become deadly,” the authors write.

Research suggests this resistance could lead to an additional 10 million deaths by mid-century, about as many as the people who died of cancer globally in 2020, according to the WHO. What’s more, the resistance could cost governments trillions of dollars in lost economic productivity and impoverish 24 million more people worldwide, the authors write.

Sunita Narain, the director-general of the Indian nonprofit Centre for Science and Environment, said countries like India are facing the “twin challenge” of needing access to antimicrobials but also dealing with their overuse. She said knowledge of the problems that widespread and excessive use of these compounds can cause gives less-industrialized countries the opportunity to find a different path.

“The cost of cleaning up once you’ve contaminated your environment, your soil, with antimicrobials is extremely expensive,” said Narain, who served as a consultant to the

authors of the report. “I think it’s very important that we bring out the environmental aspects of the silent pandemic, but we also move towards the action that we need.”

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Legarda cites gains on free trade agreement with EU states](#)

By: Leonel Abasola

MANILA – Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda on Wednesday cited the significant gains of the country's economy since the free trade agreement (FTA) with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in the last five years.

Legarda, chair of the Committee on Foreign Relations, said the Philippines has maintained its strong foothold in the European market since the enforcement of EFTA in 2018. EFTA states are Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein.

"Given the current developments with our cooperation with EFTA states, I am confident that the partnership would be beneficial to our economy. The preference utilization rate of the Philippines continues to improve, from 30 percent in 2019 to 31 percent in 2020 as per the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)," Legarda said in a statement.

From 2018 up to the third quarter of 2022, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said the Investment Promotion Agencies (IPA)-approved Swiss investment totaled PHP1.4 billion in the manufacturing, real estate and administrative sectors.

On the other hand, investments from Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein for the same period amounted to PHP229.4 million in the finance and insurance, manufacturing, administrative, transportation, and storage sectors.

On January 10, 2023, delegations from the Philippines and EFTA member states met in Geneva, Switzerland for its first Joint Committee meeting focused on trade in goods, sustainable development, trade facilitation, and technical cooperation.

DTI Undersecretary Ceferino Rodolfo headed the Philippine delegation, while Ms. Karin Büchel, Minister at the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, acted as the EFTA spokesperson.

The Philippines was able to secure duty-free market access for all industrial and fisheries tariff lines and significant concessions on agricultural products through the FTA.

"We will maximize the benefits from this FTA as we recognize our bilateral trade as a promising tool toward economic recovery and building back better post-Covid

(coronavirus disease) pandemic, the global economic recession following the Russia-Ukraine war, and the twin crisis of climate and biodiversity" Legarda said.

In 2020, the country exported tuna, desiccated coconuts, fruits and nuts, processed foods and other food preparations, pasta, malt products, vacuum cleaners, new pneumatic tires, and hairdressing apparatus with reduced or zero tariff rates amounting to EUR24.84 million.

DTI also said the opening of 100 percent foreign capital in renewable energy projects will pave the way for more investments from EFTA to the Philippines, particularly in the energy sector.

The PH-EFTA FTA is the Philippines' second bilateral FTA next to the Philippines-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (PJEPA), which officially entered into force in December 2008.

"Opening markets through agreements such as the EFTA enables a business environment conducive for investments, and thus, provides opportunities for producers, consumers, and service suppliers alike. We want to promote international trade to help Filipino businesses and MSMEs through the benefits that we get from FTAs," she said.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Co-firing with ammonia at Quezon plant will raise emissions, power costs — green groups](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

MANILA, Philippines — Using ammonia to help lower carbon dioxide emissions at a coal plant in Quezon province might end up causing more pollution and drive up electricity prices as well, residents and green energy advocates.

Quezon Power Philippines (QPL), a subsidiary of Thailand-based EGCO Group, signed a memorandum of understanding with South Korean firm Doosan Enerbility Co. to study the feasibility of ammonia co-fired power generation at QPL's 460-megawatt plant in Mauban, Quezon province.

EGCO Group said in a release that this is part of their strategy to cut carbon dioxide emissions.

"This plan would only prolong the life of an already polluting facility while bringing a whole new set of risks to the health and environment of our people," said Fr. Warren Puno of advocacy group Quezon for Environment (QUEEN) and director of the Ministry of Ecology of the Diocese of Lucena.

Co-firing with ammonia is being promoted as a way of reducing carbon dioxide emissions in coal power generation facilities.

However, there are concerns in the intensive use of fossil fuels for the production and processing of ammonia. Co-firing will also add to power generation costs.

"Retrofitting the plant to accommodate co-firing, ammonia fuel production, transport, and other required processes will only add more costs and promote the continued use of coal to sell power that consumers simply can no longer afford," said Gerry Arances, convenor of Power for People Coalition (P4P).

According to P4P, Quezon Power supplies 10% of the total power requirements of Meralco, with an average cost of P12.11 per kilowatt per hour in the last year — higher than the spot market's P10.27 kWh.

"The only study that coal companies should be doing amid high fuel costs and catastrophic climate change today is how a well-managed and immediate

decommissioning of their facilities can be done," said Aryanne De Ocampo, advocacy officer of think tank Center for Energy, Ecology, and Development.

"We are better off accelerating the deployment of genuinely sustainable and affordable renewables than dipping our toes in even more harmful and costly pursuits like ammonia co-firing," he added.

[BARMM turns to reforestation, waste management to prevent repeat of killer floods](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

CAGAYAN DE ORO, Philippines — The Bangsamoro government is counting on restoring denuded forests and conducting geohazard assessments after landslides and floods devastated parts of Mindanao.

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which is rarely on the path of tropical cyclones that batter the country, was hit hard by landslides and floods brought by Severe Tropical Storm Paeng (international name: Nalgae) in October 2022.

The village of Kusiong, a Teduray relocation site in Datu Odin Sinsuat town in Maguindanao, was buried by an avalanche of huge rocks and mud from Mount Minandar.

Sixty-three people were killed across the region, while 11 remain missing. Officials estimate around one million were affected by the intense flooding.

"These are not just numbers. These are communities and individuals with their lives now changed because of the disaster," Bangsamoro's environment minister Akmad Brahim said during a forum in Cagayan de Oro City on February 3.

Flooding in Mindanao 'increasing markedly'

According to a 2022 World Bank report, Luzon and Visayas are projected to become wetter, while Mindanao is forecast to become drier.

The report, however, noted that the number of flooding events has "increased markedly" in the southern Philippines over the last two decades, and may rise further due to climate change and more tropical cyclones passing through the southern part of the archipelago.

The Washington-based lender also said that while the annual rainfall in 2050 is forecast to decrease in central Mindanao, it will increase in western Mindanao.

"More devastating impacts of less frequent but high-intensity floods are expected in Mindanao," the report read.

Reforestation to fight flood, climate change

Reforestation is one of the Bangsamoro government's interventions to prevent severe flooding and reduce planet-warming greenhouse gas emission.

The MENRE has so far planted around 11.5 million seedlings in 10,401 hectares of land across the region. Its massive reforestation initiative called Integrated Bangsamoro Greening Program aims to grow 171.2 million trees or propagules covering 159,000 hectares of land.

Former Moro Islamic Liberation Front members and Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces combatants—now called “Palaw Rangers” have been tapped—to aid the government in monitoring and maintaining seedlings, and preventing illegal logging.

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. earlier blamed deforestation for the deadly landslides and flooding in BARMM as he urged authorities to make tree planting a major component of flood control projects.

Bangsamoro's environment ministry earlier told Philstar.com that deforestation in the area was “primarily caused [by] timber licensing agreements awarded and other timber industries operating in Mindanao decades ago.”

Deforestation worsened during the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos Sr. as the Philippines became a major exporter of logs. Timber licensing agreements were also given to the relatives and cronies of Marcos Sr.

Kaingin or slash-and-burn and the conversion of forests into farmlands also drove forest loss in the area, the MENRE added.

The MENRE recently launched a greening program that targeted urban areas.

"Before, our reforestation program focused on the hinterlands. We're now introducing it to our urban areas to increase the resiliency of urban areas against disasters aside from aesthetic value," MENRE Director General Badr Salendab said in an interview.

Geohazard assessment, solid waste management

To increase the resilience of Bangsamoro residents against climate disasters, BARMM Environment Minister Brahim said the agency is conducting geohazard assessment and assisting local government units in including geohazard information in their disaster risk reduction plan.

According to the government's geohazard assessment, the seaside village of Kusiong is a hazard-prone area that is susceptible to floods and landslides.

The local government is looking for potential settlements where Kusiong residents can be permanently relocated, Salendab said.

Salendab added that the Bangsamoro government is focused on implementing a "holistic and sustainable" solid waste management program.

These programs are expected to be strengthened following the recent signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Bangsamoro government and the national government through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The agreement aims to enhance the region's climate and disaster resilience as well as help achieve its sustainable development goals.

"One way to diminish the effects of natural disasters on this nation and its community is to invest more effort on enhancing our climate resilience and capacity to formulate and plan more," Brahim said.

Community involvement

The World Bank said regions such as the BARMM are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change than others due to their socio-economic conditions. The region has the highest level of poverty and the lowest coverage of water supply and sanitation services in the country.

Most of the region's poor rely on subsistence-level farming for their livelihood and food—and agriculture is one of the sectors most affected by the climate crisis.

"Problems are exacerbated by low institutional capacity, a lack of data, uncertainty over access to nationally-funded programs, and fragmented emergency responses between BARMM ministries, provinces, and LGUs," the World Bank report read.

Greenpeace Philippines stressed that addressing climate disaster risks needs to go beyond implementing needed projects such as reforestation and proper waste management.

"It needs to be embedded in governance approaches that are geared towards building and strengthening community resilience. This involves ensuring people participation in plans and programs, and looking at existing and developing new community initiatives

and solutions,” Greenpeace country director Lea Guerrero said in an email response to Philstar.com.

“But beyond disaster and risk mitigation, communities in the Philippines should be actively involved in discussions about payment for loss and damage being experienced by communities, and should be calling actively for payment from governments and corporations most responsible for the climate crisis,” she added

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[LGUs given until March 31 to submit climate adaptation proposals](#)

By: Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos

MANILA – Local government units (LGUs) have until March 31 to submit their proposed climate change adaptation projects and programs to the People’s Survival Fund (PSF) Board, the Climate Change Commission (CCC) announced Wednesday.

“Local government units can now submit project proposals to access the People's Survival Fund — a grant facility for LGUs to implement local climate change adaptation initiatives,” the CCC, one of the PSF Board members, said in a statement.

The CCC said LGUs may submit their climate change adaptation proposals to the PSF Board Secretariat.

LGUs must submit letter of intent; accomplished project proposal template; adaptation references such as climate risk and vulnerability assessments, CCA-DRR-Enhanced Comprehensive Land Use or Development Plans, and Local Climate Change Action Plan; and annual investment plan.

“Aligned with the objective of advancing local resilience, the Department of Finance (DOF), chairing the PSF Board, issued the Call for Proposals enabling access by LGUs to PSF,” the CCC said. “Submissions shall be made through the PSF Board Secretariat in the DOF.”

Proposals will be reviewed by the PSF Board and its Secretariat.

The PSF Board will rate potential recipients based on the following criteria: presence of multiple hazards (30 percent), presence of key biodiversity areas (30 percent) and poverty incidence (40 percent).

“Priority is given to those LGUs with a high presence of multiple, climate-related hazards, high poverty incidence and with present key biodiversity areas),” the advisory read.

Other documentary requirements may be required after passing the initial screening process.

The PSF, created by virtue of Republic Act (RA) 10174, serves as a special fund intended to finance the climate action programs and projects of LGUs to increase resilience of communities and ecosystems to climate change.

According to the official website of the CCC, the PSF has an allocation of at least PHP1 billion and can be augmented through donations, endowments, grants and contributions.

Under RA 10174, the PSF is managed by a board chaired by the DOF, assisted by member-agencies which include the CCC, the Department of Budget and Management, the National Economic and Development Authority, the Department of the Interior and Local Government and the Philippine Commission on Women.

Other members include representative from the academe and scientific community, business sector and non-government organizations.

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