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By: Job Manahan

MANILA - President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. has appointed geologist Carlos Primo David as undersecretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Malacañang said Tuesday.

BUSINESS MIRROR

[\[Opinion\] Let us heal the world, it's the only one we have \(When will we ever learn?\)](#)

By: Dr. Jesus Lim Arranza

Living life can come in two different ways. It can be a life filled with goodness in our heart, or it can be a life of an evil soul. For many nations and men, choosing to be good or evil is a daily struggle. A predicament that I luckily never encountered in my advocacy against all forms of illicit trade, as I get inspiration from the Bible's Romans 12:21 that says "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

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By: Michelle Anne P. Soliman

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PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

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By: Mary Judaline Partlow

DUMAGUETE CITY – Efforts are now underway to restore the boardwalk of a mangrove forest in Siaton town, Negros Oriental province that has deteriorated during the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[More investments in power sector sought](#)

By: Richmond Mercurio

MANILA, Philippines — Power producers are seeking an improvement in policies to encourage more investments in the power generation sector.

[\[Opinion\] Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy benefits the Philippines](#)

By: Andrew J. Masigan

The Indo-Pacific region is now of supreme geopolitical importance to the world not only because it is the reigning driver of economic growth, but more so because it is the flashpoint for armed conflict among superpowers. The Philippines sits in the middle of it all.

[Philippines-EFTA member states reaffirm economic cooperation](#)

By: Catherine Talavera

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) member states – Switzerland, Norway, Liechtenstein, and Iceland – have reaffirmed their economic cooperation as they reviewed the implementation of the Philippines-EFTA free trade agreement (FTA).

CCC IN THE NEWS:

BUSINESS WORLD

[Water, climate change expert appointed to DENR](#)

By: John Victor D. Ordoñez

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. has appointed a geologist with expertise on water and climate change as undersecretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

JOURNAL ONLINE

[CCC Meets Batac Farmers To Discuss Climate Risks For Agri Sector](#)

BATAC, ILOCOS NORTE, 13 February 2023 — The Climate Change Commission (CCC) met the farming community in Brgy. Rayuray, Batac, Ilocos Norte and discussed their observations on environment- and climate-related concerns in the area.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Climate action in PH must address extreme, slow-onset events: CCC](#)

MANILA – The Climate Change Commission (CCC) on Tuesday underscored the need for an immediate climate change action in the country to move towards the prevention of disasters, especially those that emerge gradually over time.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

Marcos Jr. names Carlos Primo David as DENR undersecretary

By: Job Manahan

MANILA - President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. has appointed geologist Carlos Primo David as undersecretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Malacañang said Tuesday.

David's transmittal paper showed he was appointed on Dec. 28 last year.

The DENR website indicated that David, a licensed geologist, will lead its Integrated Environmental Science office.

He was a project leader of the science department's Project NOAH, his curriculum vitae showed.

"Dr. David [pioneered a] short term rainfall forecasting in the country and climate change-related research on water resources," it read.

BUSINESS MIRROR

[\[Opinion\] Let us heal the world, it's the only one we have \(When will we ever learn?\)](#)

By: Dr. Jesus Lim Arranza

Living life can come in two different ways. It can be a life filled with goodness in our heart, or it can be a life of an evil soul. For many nations and men, choosing to be good or evil is a daily struggle. A predicament that I luckily never encountered in my advocacy against all forms of illicit trade, as I get inspiration from the Bible's Romans 12:21 that says "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

I have been fighting smuggling for over 40 years now in my desire to protect consumers from the evil deeds of smugglers. Although I have had milestones in my anti-smuggling advocacy, I find it even more challenging today as some of those involved in this evil activity are officials who are supposed to stop smuggling.

However, I was jolted out of my struggles fighting against the country's unabated smuggling problem when I came across the following facebook post of my wife, Evelyn, which read:

"If the Chinese balloon material had not been detected by the advanced US radar system, then there is a possibility of their enemies' making use of new or unknown materials as a carrier of destructive elements. Before it is too late, why not try again diplomatic means to have amicable settlement of issues. Why continue man-made problems like war when there are other serious issues that should be confronted, like climate change, Covid-19 and other diseases, changing values, depletion of natural resources, fast population growth, pollution, racial differences, aid concerns for poor countries, etc. throughout the world. The US is a respected superpower and it must not jeopardize its image. LET US HEAL THE WORLD. IT IS THE ONLY ONE WE HAVE."

Knowing that all things that happen in our lifetime have a reason, the last line of my wife's facebook post particularly caught my attention. It reminded me of the tragic earthquake in Turkey and Syria that has already claimed more than 33,000 lives—with the United Nations expecting casualties to reach 50,000.

It also reminded me of the recent cyclone that hit the northern part of New Zealand, which left tens of thousands of people homeless; and the severe floods in Pakistan where 15 million people in flood-affected areas are still in need of emergency food assistance.

I know that it takes a lot of arguments, facts and logical conclusions to convince modern people that there is a Divine Design, which gives direction to human life through natural events. Here are the questions in my mind: Are these events Divine manifestations of God for all of humanity to work as one? Are these natural calamities and disasters God's wake up call for us to set aside our differences—be it racial, political, and social among others—so we can work together and help each other?

All men have innate goodness in them, that's why we naturally help each other. We saw this when the world came to help the Philippines after Super typhoon Yolanda destroyed so many regions and claimed the lives of over 10,000 Filipinos.

With all these natural disasters happening here and there, perhaps God is now calling us to humble ourselves and repent. As 2 Chronicles 7:14 says, "If My people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

My wife could be right. Why continue with man-made problems like power and pride-triggered wars when there are other serious issues that the world should confront together, like climate change, Covid-19 and other diseases, changing values, depletion of natural resources, fast population growth, pollution, racial differences, aid concerns for poor countries, among others.

Now is the time for us to heed the call of God and save the world before it's too late. "Let us heal the world. It is the only one we have."

BUSINESS WORLD

The CCP in 2023

By: Michelle Anne P. Soliman

AS the main building of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) shuts down for the first of a multi-year renovation, the CCP's programs will be traveling to a variety of performances spaces.

The CCP's program lineup this year aims to be more accessible and diverse, with live performances, productions, exhibits, as well as training and education programs.

"We hope that through our increased geographical presence and more outreach activities, the public will know that we are relentless in offering arts and cultural experiences for people from all walks of life," CCP president Margarita "Margie" Moran-Floirendo said in a statement. "While we are temporarily closing our home, our commitment to fulfill our duties will even be intensified."

CHALLENGES

The program announced during the press conference was not complete as more performances and programs by resident companies will be announced as schedules are firmed up.

CCP Vice-President and Artistic Director Dennis Marasigan said that the chosen titles will depend on how the final venue will measure to their requirements.

"Because of the transfer of the CCP, we are really behind in terms of the fulfillment of the contracts. Because also of the changes of schedule with the transfer of venues we are finalizing those things," Mr. Marasigan said in a press conference on Feb. 2 at the CCP Black Box Theater.

"One of the problems we are encountering because of the changes in the CCP is that we also lack rehearsal venues. There are certain companies that are having second thoughts about their own seasons," he added.

THE PROGRAM

The Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra (PPO) will present the sixth and seventh concerts of its 38th season on Feb. 24 and March 17 at the Metropolitan Theater in Manila.

Tanghalang Pilipino's *Ang Pag-uusig*, the Filipino adaptation of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, will open on Feb. 17 and run until March 12. The play won six Philstage Gawad Buhay Awards (including Outstanding Translation and Outstanding Play) after its first run in April 2018. *The Crucible* used the setting of the Salem witch trials in the 1690s to comment on the United States government's persecution in the 1950s of people accused of being communist. *Ang Pag-uusig* in turn, uses *The Crucible* to comment on the Philippine situation.

There will also be a three-day festival called *Performatura* slated on March 31 to April 2 at the CCP's new black box theater, the Tanghalang Ignacio Gimenez. *Performatura* is the country's biggest performance literature festival celebrating the written word, performance, and the rich history of Philippine literature.

On March 28 to April 1, Ballet Philippines will hold a week-long dance celebration featuring characters of Carlo Calma's *Diyosa*. To be performed at the Samsung Performing Arts Theater at Circuit Makati, this story is set in a dreamy mythical world depicting Filipino culture and heritage, fusing fashion, art, music, and architecture.

The CCP will also conduct workshops and training programs for young musicians in different regions to upgrade their skills and prepare them for professional careers with the National Music Competitions for Young Artists (NAMCYA).

WEBSITE MAINTENANCE

Meanwhile, the CCP's official website is undergoing maintenance and will soon be active within the year.

"Our website, once its fully up, will really have a good connection to the archives," Mr. Marasigan said. "We have not digitized all the collections... we are making sure that the library is going to be up [and running] again as soon as possible.

The digitized collections are accessible at <https://collections.culturalcenter.gov.ph/> while the CCP time capsule, which includes text and photos of events and programs, is accessible at <https://timecapsule.culturalcenter.gov.ph/>.

THE RENOVATIONS HAVE BEGUN

After the National Artist Leondro Locsin-designed main building of the CCP was the named an important cultural property in 2019, it closed this January for the first year of a major three-year renovation.

The redevelopment of the building, which opened in 1969, will retain its architectural design and focus on structural improvements including upgrading its fire, drainage, electrical and environmental protection systems and other changes needed to conform to modern building codes. The project will include climate change adaptation measures to improve energy and water efficiency. The improved facilities will be gender-responsive and inclusive for persons with disabilities and senior citizens.

An initial budget of P900 million was allocated for the rehabilitation of the CCP Main Building, which came from an earlier proposed budget for an Artist Center.

The second phase will cover the repair of facilities such as the hydraulic lift, freight elevator, LED lights, rigging system, and acoustics. But given the scale and ambitions for the project, more funds may be needed.

The allotted P900 million will only cover the structural renovations such as plumbing, electrical, and drainage. Additional money will be needed for interior renovations and architectural design.

“We are approximating that it will cost an additional amount of about P200 million, but that is a very conservative amount,” CCP trustee Junie del Mundo said. “X-rays are being taken of the structure [for structural defects] because... we do not want to damage the integrity of the building,” he said.

“We are going to go back to congress for additional appropriation and [will] also tap sponsors to help us with the renovations,” he added.

CLIMATE HOME NEWS

[UAE's Cop28 boss calls for "course correction" on climate change](#)

By: Reuters and Joe Lo

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) climate envoy and designated president of the Cop28 climate summit said on Tuesday that the world needed a "course correction" to limit global warming.

But Jaber said on Tuesday his presidency would bring a much needed fresh approach to tackle climate change challenges.

"As Cop28 president, I will lay out a roadmap for Cop28 that is inclusive, results-oriented and far from business as usual," he said.

"It is in our common interest to have the energy industry working hand in hand and alongside everyone on the solutions the world needs. This is just logical and makes sense," Jaber said.

"We are in the UAE not shying away from the energy transition," he claimed, "we are running towards it."

He quoted UAE president Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan who said in 2015: "If we make the right investments today, there will come a time when the UAE would celebrate the last barrel of oil".

Jaber told the summit: "That was a bold call to action which resonated deeply around the world and it certainly resonated with me".

International agenda

On Loss and Damage, one of the critical issues of Cop27, Jaber said "capital is critical to make the loss and damage fund real and operational and it is the key to a fair deal on climate finance for the Global South", referring to developing nations.

The loss and damage fund, agreed to at the Cop27 conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt last year, was hailed as a breakthrough for developing countries, which could access new funding to rebuild after extreme climate change impacts.

Although it is a wealthy nation which has contributed more than most to climate change, the UAE will likely not be asked to pay into the fund as it is classified by the UN as a developing country.

Jaber also supported a push led by the primer minister of Barbados Mia Mottley to reform financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to dedicate more money to fighting climate change.

“We need real reform of international financial institutions and multilateral banks to unleash more concessional dollars, lower risk and attract more private finance to vulnerable communities,” Jaber said.

This initiative was included in the COP27 final text, which called on countries to “reform multilateral development bank practices and priorities” so they can start “adequately addressing the global climate emergency”.

Two of the World Bank’s biggest shareholders, the US and Germany, have supported some of her proposals and they will be discussed at the two institution’s annual spring meetings in April.

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

DENR cites relevance of multisector dialogs

By: Rio N. Araja

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Tuesday vowed to apply lessons learned from non-government organizations and the academe on environmental protection and biodiversity conservation.

The agency ensured that science-based and evidence-informed solutions for forest management and biodiversity conservation gathered during its Mindanao multi-stakeholder forum in Cagayan de Oro City would be used for the various needs of communities with over 300 stakeholders from local government units, academe, NGOs, people's organizations, representatives from indigenous peoples groups, and the private sector, to gain valuable insights on environmental protection and sustainable development.

DENR Secretary Ma. Antonia Loyzaga cited the importance of holding such multi-sectoral consultations, noting that the partnership is key to delivering the agency's commitment to serve the Filipino people.

"There isn't a perfect approach or solution to tackling the environmental challenges we face. However, with everyone's support and collaboration, together we will be able to craft adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable development pathways built on strategic partnerships and sound science," she added.

Philippine Eagle Foundation executive director Dennis Joseph Salvador presented the foundation's initiatives and the challenges concerning protected areas and biodiversity conservation.

Kitanglad Integrated NGO Inc. executive director Maria Easterluna Canoy underscored the equal importance of culture and development, and how consultations like the forum will recognize the IPs expertise, and experiences in the local context.

On the other hand, Society of Filipino Foresters Inc. national council president forester Tommy Valdez urged the DENR to optimize opportunities in forestry to ensure that the supply of ecosystems and socioeconomic services would be available to meet both present and future needs.

Dr. Hilly Ann Roa-Quiaoit from the Mindanao State University provided examples on how ecosystem services can help sustain and conserve natural resources by providing incentives to local communities.

Ateneo de Davao University president Fr. Joel E. Tabora SJ also highlighted people's involvement as a key ingredient to successful climate action.

The DENR aims to incorporate these insights and inputs into its Environment and Natural Resources Framework, which will be the foundation for science-based, data-driven, and socially, politically, and culturally sensitive environmental policies and programs for the country.

Water management body welcomed

By: Jed Macapagal

The creation of the Water Resources Management Office (WRMO) as a transitory body pending the creation of a Water Resource Department is seen to help improve the country's water supply management, according to the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ECCP).

Earlier this month, President Marcos Jr. approved the creation of the WRMO under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to respond to the current environmental challenges and manage water resources through a concerted government effort.

In a statement, the ECCP said the government should also approach the country's water resource planning using an Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) framework.

ECCP said the IWRM is an internationally recognized framework, based on the idea that water issues should not be approached in isolation but in a more holistic manner due to the interdependence of the uses of finite water resources to guide countries on their journey to water security.

"We remain committed to working with the government and other stakeholders in resolving the current water-related issues in the country. The ECCP, together with its Environment and Water Committee, strongly advocates for regular multi-stakeholder engagements to be institutionalized to allow exchange of insights, facilitate coordination and come up with effective solutions on water-related issues," the group said.

ECCP urged the government to establish a multi-stakeholder advisory panel under the WRMO with representation from the private sector, academe and civil society "to serve as an additional soundboard for the said office in the crafting and implementation of policies, programs and projects for the water sector in line with IWRM's principle of participatory governance."

The group said this will help in promoting more synergy with public-private partnerships as it leads and encourages the establishment of investments, technology, benchmarking and sharing of best practices resulting in the improvement of the water sector.

Despite the support for the WRMO, ECCP said there is a need for the government to come up with the "long overdue" creation of an overseeing body for water resources.

“We believe that having an executive water department tasked to harmonize and monitor all water-related efforts will provide strategic direction which would not only help in solving water scarcity in the country but would also aid in the establishment and operation of businesses as well as attract new investors. We hope that the current interest from the government will be sustained and bring the much-needed changes in the water sector into fruition,” ECCP said.

Last October, DENR Secretary Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said they are leading the crafting of a roadmap for water security that is expected to be the basis in the creation of an umbrella body that will manage all water-related issues of the country.

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LEDAC Execom To Endorse 10 Priority Bills To PBBM

The executive committee of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) will recommend 10 bills to President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to be tagged as priority legislations for the current session of the Congress.

“The LEDAC met to agree on the criteria for prioritization of common legislative bills and in the process, we come up with a list that we will endorse to our President for confirmation,” said National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arsenio Balisacan on the sidelines of an event in Quezon City on Monday.

Balisacan said the 10 priority bills listed by LEDAC are critical legislations to the success of the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028 and the administration’s eight-point socioeconomic agenda.

The NEDA chief declined to divulge further information, but said one of the priority bills is the Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System (PENCAS).

Balisacan said the passage of PENCAS will support the targets of PDP 2023-2028, particularly Chapter 15, the “Accelerate Climate Action and Strengthening Disaster Resilience” of the blueprint.

“Chapter 15 of the PDP, in particular, aims to strengthen the resilience of communities, institutions, and ecosystems to the impacts of natural hazards and climate change,” he said.

Institutionalizing a PENCAS will allow the government to measure environmental inputs and outputs, which information is vital for economic management and policymaking.

Balisacan said the country needs to pursue sustainable consumption and production to support long-term economic expansion.

He said policies have to be introduced to make systematic changes in Filipinos’ consumption and production patterns, as well as managing the country’s natural resources to sustain a well-functioning and resilient economy.

“For example, our current (economic) growth is 7.6 (percent)... But if we do not take care of our environment, our growth might not be sustainable,” he said in mixed English and Filipino.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Negros Oriental to restore mangrove forest boardwalk](#)

By: Mary Judaline Partlow

DUMAGUETE CITY – Efforts are now underway to restore the boardwalk of a mangrove forest in Siaton town, Negros Oriental province that has deteriorated during the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic.

Provincial Tourism Unit (PTU) chief Myla Mae Bromo Abellana told the Philippine News Agency in an interview on Tuesday that the Mangrove Conservation Walk in Barangay Siit, Siaton, has lots of potential to be an eco-tourism site provided strict regulations are in place.

“We visited the site recently, which is part of Tambobo Bay, and found out that the mangrove forest has the most number of mangrove species on Negros Island, with 28 of the 32 species found in the Philippines,” she said.

The visit is the first of a series of discussions with a local cooperative that manages the mangrove boardwalk’s affairs, she said.

Abellana noted the need to revisit the project as it was not able to fully take off about four years ago due to the pandemic.

“It is important that we are able to come up with a good plan of action to promote this site not just as a tourist destination but an opportunity for visitors to learn about mangrove ecosystems and their role in addressing environmental issues and climate change,” she said in mixed English and Cebuano.

Evelyn Bucad, the acting team leader of the Palinpinon Palayuhan Siit Multi-Purpose Cooperative (PAPSIMCO), in a separate interview, said that in 2019, the site was originally known as the Siit Mangrove Eco-Park but now, they are working to have it changed to the Tambobo Mangrove Conservation Walk.

“The new name would reflect our mangrove conservation efforts as the old title seemed to present only the boardwalk as something simply for rest and recreation,” she said in the Cebuano dialect.

Bucad said the Marine Conservation Philippines helped to build the 500-meter boardwalk made of bamboo.

The entire mangrove forest is about six hectares although the boardwalk is limited only to a small portion of the area, she said.

The Siit Mangrove Conservation Walk charges a PHP30 entrance fee and offers guided tours, and kayak and binocular rentals.

Among its attractions is the presence of wildlife aside from the 28 species of mangrove that can be found in the area, one of which is endemic to the Philippines – the endangered *Camptostemon philippinensis*, Bucad added.

Some of the other mangrove species found at the Siit site include the *Sonneratia alba* (or pagatpat in the Philippines); *Avicennia* (bungalod) with four types -- *alba*, *rompiana*, *marina*, and *officinalis*; *Aegiceras corniculatum*; *Aegiceras floridum* (both known as saging-saging); and three types of *Rhizophora* (bakhaw), namely, *stylosa*, *apiculata*, and *mucronata*, among others.

Fish, shrimp, crabs, and seashells also flourish in the mangrove area, Bucad said.

Abellana said there is a need to strengthen efforts and draw up a proper plan for the Siit boardwalk so that it can become the next tourism destination in the province, while the mangrove forest and its inhabitants, as well as those dependent on it, are reassured of protection and conservation.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[More investments in power sector sought](#)

By: Richmond Mercurio

MANILA, Philippines — Power producers are seeking an improvement in policies to encourage more investments in the power generation sector.

Philippine Independent Power Producers Association Inc. (PIPPA) president Anne Estorco Montelibano said power generators want to see proper regulation and policies that would reflect the true business of the industry.

She said the country's power generation sector has absorbed "a lot of variables" and "been shouldering most of the costs already."

"Right now our regulators are very specific on cost and they focus on the price of electricity and what is being passed on to customers... instead of the impact to investors and power generators," she said.

"So in its effort to cushion the effect, they put it on our side, which is an unhealthy way of thinking about it because we are not really delving into the actual problem, which is that there are no generators that are willing to continuously invest," Montelibano said.

Should this continue, Montelibano said there would be no players in the market that would make a healthier mix of technology, which could result in lower power prices.

"Passing on costs to investors is a band-aid solution, when in fact you have to examine policies that would encourage investment, and we have been – I'm speaking for power generators – shouldering most of the cost already," she said.

She said PIPPA is pushing for the review of the current secondary price cap and reliability standards as these are outdated and do not reflect the current situation, especially on fuel prices.

The group has also been pushing for the removal of significant barriers to entry for power generators to make electricity rates more competitive in the country.

These include transmission connection issues as well as permitting and financing challenges.

PIPPA is a group of 28 generator members with 18,132-megawatt grid installed capacity.

Meanwhile, Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla is pushing for investments in research and development for renewable energy, citing innovation in the sector as a key to the country's energy transition.

"By embracing technology and innovation, we can develop a cleaner and greener energy system that will help us mitigate the effects of climate change and contribute to preserving our planet for future generations," Lotilla said.

He said that while the shift away from fossil fuels to cleaner and more sustainable forms of energy is a great challenge, innovation in renewable energy such as wind, solar, geothermal, biomass and hydropower would be crucial to the country's energy shift.

He said the present pace of technological innovation is paving a new era for next-generation renewable technologies to swiftly emerge.

"The achievements we have made in promoting renewable energy in recent years have been remarkable, and we must continue to support this program by broadening their use, accelerating their deployment, and investing in research and development activities in these areas," he said.

The Department of Energy (DOE) has identified offshore wind energy as one of its top priorities in the country's renewable energy sector.

The agency is, likewise, ramping up research and development activities on next-generation fuels such as hydrogen and ammonia.

Nuclear energy is also among the technologies being explored by the country, but it is still considered as a long-term option for the Philippines for power generation.

Nuclear energy is eyed to be included in the country's energy planning until 2050.

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

He said the ESS technologies would 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.

“Our approach for transitioning to clean energy also includes energy efficiency and conservation measures and storage solutions, which will help us to use energy more efficiently and effectively,” Lotilla said.

[\[Opinion\] Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy benefits the Philippines](#)

By: Andrew J. Masigan

The Indo-Pacific region is now of supreme geopolitical importance to the world not only because it is the reigning driver of economic growth, but more so because it is the flashpoint for armed conflict among superpowers. The Philippines sits in the middle of it all.

That said, strengthening ties and deepening alliances with Indo-Pacific nations are top priorities for Canada. Last November, the government of Canada released its 10-year Indo-Pacific Strategy. It is a comprehensive road map on how the Canadian government is to engage with the Indo-Pacific nations as we move forward.

The Canadian government has committed \$2.2 billion to realize its engagement initiatives with Indo-Pacific nations, the largest commitment it has made so far. Its Indo-Pacific Strategy was ratified by no less than 21 departments and agencies, the Canadian Parliament and the Prime Minister himself. Mind you, neither South America, Africa nor the European Union has an over-arching strategy, let alone a financial commitment of this magnitude. This exemplifies the importance of the Indo-Pacific to Canada.

The Indo-Pacific consists of ASEAN, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, North Korea, South Korea, India, Japan, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, China, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and the 14 Pacific Island Countries. Collectively, the region comprises 50 percent (and rising) of global GDP and 65 percent of the world's population. It also accounts for 50 percent of greenhouse emissions. Certainly, the opportunities for positive engagement are vast and wide.

Among all Indo-Pacific countries, the Philippines is among the top three nations with the deepest engagements with Canada. There are more than a million Canadians of Filipino ancestry, making them the third largest ethnic group in Canada. Trade between both countries stands at about \$3.5 billion annually, for which the Philippines enjoys a surplus. Canadian firms like Sunlife, Manulife, Telus, VOXDATA and CanadaDirect are well entrenched in the Philippines. So entwined are both countries that the Canadian embassy in Manila is the 4th largest in the world, following Washington DC, Beijing and Delhi. With ongoing expansion, the embassy is likely to be the third largest soon.

Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy covers five crucial spheres. These include promoting peace and security; expanding trade, investments and supply chain resilience;

deepening people-to-people engagement; ensuring environmental sustainability and establishing Canada as a strategic and reliable partner. Let me dive into it one by one.

Promoting peace, resilience and security: The stability of the Indo-Pacific region is essential to the wider rules-based order of the world.

To strengthen its contribution to peace and stability, Canada has committed \$720 million to increase its military engagement via deployment of military assets; to strengthen the defense architecture of the region and expand military capacities; to mitigate behaviors that threaten regional security; to ensure respect of international laws, especially UNCLOS; to build relationships with law enforcement agencies; to combat disinformation and threats to democracy; to ensure stronger border and cyber security; to protect against theft of data, intellectual property and technologies and to enhance resilience and preparedness.

Expanding trade, investment and supply chain resilience: Canada is investing \$244 million to promote and expand trade and partnerships; to increase innovation research; to promote inclusive economic growth; to promote supply chain resilience; to support women entrepreneurs; to establish an agri-food office for the region (preferably and hopefully, in the Philippines); to diversify and expand economic partnerships through the ASEAN-Canada Trade Gateway; the expansion of CPTPP and the Canada-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement.

Connecting people: Canada will build on its deep, long-standing people-to-people ties in the Indo-Pacific region. It will do this by investing \$261.7 million to bolster visa-processing capacities; to increase international assistance; to enhance educational and research exchanges; through cultural diplomacy; through the protection of human rights and to support indigenous peoples.

Build a green, sustainable future: Canada recognizes the importance of the Indo-Pacific in the global fight against climate change and environmental degradation. As a reliable energy security partner, Canada will invest \$903 million to support the region's transition to a sustainable and low-carbon future that is resilient to climate-related natural disasters, while contributing to high-quality and sustainable regional infrastructure.

Canada will make itself an active, engaged and reliable partner to Indo-Pacific countries: It will strengthen its regional diplomatic engagement and work with partners to advance shared values and objectives. It will increase its diplomatic capacity in the region and appoint a Special Envoy to advance Canadian objectives more effectively.

Canada has appropriated \$137 million to increase its diplomatic presence in the region. Diplomatic presence will be established in Hawaii and a new embassy will be built in Fiji. It will increase cooperation towards shared priorities and make ASEAN a strategic partner.

In summary, Canada seeks to be a friend, ally and reliable partner to Indo-Pacific countries as it pushes for peace, inclusive prosperity, rules-based engagements among nations and a sustainable green future.

However, this multibillion-dollar initiative is by no means “free aid.” Countries which stand to benefit from these initiatives are those that attain critical thresholds in its record on human rights, money laundering, cybercrime, terrorism, respect for intellectual property and use of disinformation towards political objectives.

As mentioned earlier, the Philippines is in pole position to benefit the most out of Canada’s Indo-Pacific Strategy. After all, strong people-to-people ties already exist. Investment and corporate partnerships continue to expand. Trade is on an upswing. Diplomatic relations are long-standing (75 years in 2024). Above all, we share common values such as democracy, a rules-based international order, free trade, respect for human rights, respect for the environment and a rules-based management of oceans.

We must all appreciate the depth and breadth of Canada’s initiative since the Philippines can benefit enormously from it. Engagement with the Canadian government is key and our leaders will do well to pursue as many avenues of cooperation as possible.

Philippines-EFTA member states reaffirm economic cooperation

By: Catherine Talavera

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) member states – Switzerland, Norway, Liechtenstein, and Iceland – have reaffirmed their economic cooperation as they reviewed the implementation of the Philippines-EFTA free trade agreement (FTA).

In a statement, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said the Philippines and the EFTA states officially assessed the implementation of the FTA, which was enforced in 2018, during the recent inaugural joint committee meeting hosted by EFTA member states.

The joint committee meeting was co-chaired, on behalf of the EFTA member states, by Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs Minister Karin Buechel and Trade Undersecretary Ceferino Rodolfo.

“Over the five years of implementation, both sides have confirmed that the FTA is working well and has no critical implementation issues to date. The preferential utilization rates for the Philippines and EFTA member states were reported at 31 percent and 30 percent for 2020, respectively,” the DTI said.

It said both sides are determined to further improve their respective utilization rates.

The DTI said a key highlight of the meeting was the official preview of the PH-EFTA FTA online interactive web tool that will help the Philippines and EFTA exporters maximize their preferences under the FTA.

“We are privileged to be the EFTA’s first recipient partner of this online web tool to promote the PH-EFTA FTA. This will really benefit the Philippines and EFTA business community,” Rodolfo said.

At the same meeting, both parties had a constructive dialogue on trade and sustainable development, during which we had the opportunity to highlight the Philippine government’s initiatives on the implementation of international labor and environmental conventions, including the Philippines’ domestic policies on freedom of association, gender equality, sustainable management of forests and climate change.

“This FTA certainly promotes international trade while contributing to the objective of sustainable development, all the while ensuring that labor rights and environmental protection will not be sacrificed in the name of trade and investments,” Rodolfo said.

Prior to the convening of the Joint Committee, the sub-committee on Trade in Goods (TIG) met to discuss the technical operationalization of the TIG Chapter of the FTA, including market access, customs, rules of origin, and trade facilitation.

The Philippine side was led by Bureau of International Trade Relations director Angelo Benedictos and the EFTA side was represented by Swiss Federal Office for Customs and Border Security deputy head Meinrad Muller on behalf of the EFTA member states.

The DTI highlighted that since the FTA entered into force on June 1, 2018, the Philippines was able to turn around its trade deficit with EFTA, emphasizing that the Philippines posted a trade surplus of \$47.1 million in 2019.

It said this surplus further grew to \$101.49 million in 2020 and \$129.89 million in 2021 despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Similarly, total trade between the Philippines and EFTA increased by 2.4 percent from \$802.150 million in 2018 to \$821.407 million in 2019. This further improved by 16 percent to \$953.58 million in 2021.

“The Philippine market does not compete and is complementary in nature to the EFTA market. As such, the Philippines was able to secure duty-free market access for all industrial and fisheries exports to EFTA and significant concessions on major agricultural products through the FTA, particularly those: Philippine products to the EFTA member states, such as desiccated coconut, prepared or preserved pineapples, and raw cane sugar; and with high potential export interest,” Rodolfo said.

With the FTA in place, around 24.84 million euro worth of Philippine agricultural and industrial products were able to enter the EFTA market with

reduced or zero tariff rates in 2020. These Philippine products include tunas, desiccated coconuts, fruits and nuts, processed foods and other food preparations, pasta, malt products, vacuum cleaners, new pneumatic tires, and hairdressing apparatus.

On the investment front, Switzerland has been the country’s major partner in EFTA and a regular source of foreign investments in the European Region, the DTI said.

It said that from 2018 to the third quarter of 2022, Swiss investments approved by investment promotion agencies (IPAs) totaled P1.4 billion in the manufacturing, real estate activities, administrative and support activities sectors.

From 2018 to the second quarter of 2022, investments from Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein amounted to P229.4 million in the country's financial and insurance, manufacturing, administrative, transportation, and storage sectors.

DTI said that along with the PH-EFTA FTA, recent economic reforms, such as 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.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

BUSINESS WORLD

[Water, climate change expert appointed to DENR](#)

By: John Victor D. Ordoñez

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. has appointed a geologist with expertise on water and climate change as undersecretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

In an appointment letter dated Dec. 28 and made public on Feb. 14, the president appointed Carlos Primo C. David as DENR undersecretary for scientific and technical services.

Mr. David earlier served as a convenor and trustee of the Albert del Rosario Institute, which provides strategic solutions to domestic governance, socio-economic, and other policy concerns.

He was also a convenor of the Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship and is a member of the panel of experts of the Climate Change Commission.

He also previously worked as executive director of the Department of Science and Technology Philippine Council for Industry, Energy, and Emerging Technology Research and Development (DoST-PCIEERD).

He was also one of the project leaders of DoST's Nationwide Operational Assessment of Hazards (NOAH) Program, which is now under the University of the Philippines.

The geologist is the son of Randall "Randy" S. David, a journalist and sociologist who is a vocal critic of the Marcos administration.

The newly appointed undersecretary completed his doctorate in environmental science and geology from Stanford University in 2003. He is also a geology professor at the University of the Philippines.

JOURNAL ONLINE

[CCC Meets Batac Farmers To Discuss Climate Risks For Agri Sector](#)

BATAC, ILOCOS NORTE, 13 February 2023 — The Climate Change Commission (CCC) met the farming community in Brgy. Rayuray, Batac, Ilocos Norte and discussed their observations on environment- and climate-related concerns in the area.

CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director (VCED) Robert E.A. Borje and Commissioner Rachel Anne S. Herrera visited the showcase area of the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) in Barangay Rayuray, Batac, Ilocos Norte.

According to PhilRice OIC Director Mary Ann Baradi, drought-resistant crops are tested in Barangay Rayuray in response to the water supply problem affecting agriculture in Ilocos Norte.

In a short walkthrough at the site, the farmers explained how water shortage affected their agricultural productivity. Throughout the years, the community has become heavily reliant on groundwater extraction, which may eventually result in land subsidence.

According to PhilRice, there were 330,749 metric tons of palay produced on the 63,909 hectares of land in the province of Ilocos Norte in 2022.

“Nakadepende sa ulan ang supply ng tubig dito sa’min. Dahil sa pagbabago ng klima, paiba-iba rin ang panahon kung kailan malakas o mahina ang tubig, at dahil dito ay naapektuhan ang aming mga pananim,” Barangay Captain Norberto Puyot said.

PAGASA’s projection is that Ilocos Norte will have an increase in temperature and rainfall by 2036-2065, which will result in drier dry days and wetter wet days.

“Sa pagbabago ng klima o climate change, hinaharap natin ang problema sa pag init o kawalan ng tubig, kung saan tayo ay mga biktima ng problemang hindi naman natin kasalanan. To our vulnerable communities, the CCC is here and united with you in the fight for climate justice,” said CCC Commissioner Rachel Anne S. Herrera.

In his conversation with the farmers, VCED Borje stressed the importance of partnerships with various sectors to boost funding for agricultural programs toward climate-resilient food systems.

“The CCC has farmers like you in mind. Kaya patuloy nating pinalalawig ang pakikipag-ugnayan sa local at probinsyal na pamahalaan, sa PhilRice, MMSU, maging ang People’s Survival Fund, upang matugunan ang mga pangangailangan ng ating mga magsasaka na lubos na naapektuhan ng nagbabagong klima. Dahil hindi lang po kabuhayan natin ang apektado – ang ating buhay at kinabukasan din ay nakataya,” VCED Borje emphasized.

Some of the initiatives and programs that farmers themselves recognized as being necessary for implementation are:

- Solar-powered irrigation systems
- Rainwater catchment facilities
- Harvest calendar
- Drought-resistant crops
- Post-harvest marketing
- Information dissemination, and knowledge and capacity development
- Guided by President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos, Jr.’s pronouncements on climate justice, the CCC is prioritizing the strengthening of partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders for the benefit of the most vulnerable sectors.

In 2022, it has formally institutionalized the following coordination mechanisms for the LGUs, development partners, civil society organizations and private sector: ACT Local (Accelerating Climate Action and Transformation for Local Communities; ENACT (Empowering Nurtured Alliance for Climate Action and Transformation; WE CAN (Working to Empower Climate Action Network; and CONNECT (Communicating Opportunities to Network, Navigate and Explore Climate Transformation).

The CCC will continue to bolster its cooperation with the Mariano Marcos State University (MMSU), PhilRice, and the local government of Ilocos Norte to help formulate more appropriate plans of action toward climate-resilient agriculture in the region.

“Makakaasa po kayo na narito ang CCC upang matulungan ang ating mga pamayanan na maging mas matatag sa mga hamon ng nagbabagong klima, upang lumago ang kabuhayan at magkaroon ng magandang kinabukasan ang bawat Pilipino,” VCED Borje assured.

The CCC also joined the 34th Regional Symposium on R&D Highlights which took place on 1-3 February 2023 at MMSU Campus.

Part of the event was the Local Planners Forum where the CCC presented the development and enhancement of Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCCAPs) and access to the People's Survival Fund (PSF).

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Climate action in PH must address extreme, slow-onset events: CCC

MANILA – The Climate Change Commission (CCC) on Tuesday underscored the need for an immediate climate change action in the country to move towards the prevention of disasters, especially those that emerge gradually over time.

“Climate action in the Philippines must address both extreme and slow onset events. Adaptation and mitigation actions, some of which are already underway in the country, would reduce vulnerability and future losses if fully implemented,” Climate Change commissioner Albert dela Cruz Sr. said in a press statement.

Slow onset events, as initially introduced by the Cancun Agreement (COP16), refer to the risks and impacts associated with: increasing temperatures; desertification; loss of biodiversity; land and forest degradation; glacial retreat and related impacts; ocean acidification; sea level rise; and salinization.

According to dela Cruz, the Philippines has many of the tools and instruments that could reduce the damage of climate change and global warming substantially but this should be done immediately in order to mitigate the impact of the global problem.

However, with 50 percent of the country’s more than 111 million population living in urban areas, and many cities in coastal areas, he admitted that the task would be “a serious undertaking” since the Philippines is vulnerable to sea level rise.

“Changes due to the variability and intensity of rainfall and increased temperatures will affect food security and the safety of (our) population,” dela Cruz added.

Dela Cruz and fellow commissioner Rachel Ann Herrera noted how climate change is exacting a huge toll on the lives of Filipinos, including on their property and livelihood.

If left unaddressed, they said the situation could hamper the Marcos administration’s goal of becoming an upper-middle-income country by the year 2040.

CCC vice chairperson Robert Borje, likewise, cited the need to implement stronger climate action that would support sustainable recovery and accelerate poverty reduction in the country.

Based on the Country Climate Development Report of 2022 from the World Bank (WB), the Philippines has been ranked as one of the countries in the world extremely affected by climate events as shown by the highly destructive typhoons that have struck the country almost annually for the past 10 years.

Data showed that annual losses from typhoons have been estimated at 1.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).

WB vice president for East Asia and Pacific Manuela Ferro said climate impacts are threatening to significantly lower the country's GDP as well as the well-being of Filipinos by 2040.

Ferro, however, said that policy actions and investments—principally to protect valuable infrastructure from typhoons and to make agriculture more resilient through climate-smart measures—could reduce these negative climate impacts by two-thirds.

The private sector plays a crucial role to play in accelerating the adoption of green technologies and ramping up climate finance by working with local financial institutions and regulators, she added.

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