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28 FEBRUARY 2023 [08:00 am]

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[Gov't urged to rethink RCEP due to threats to PH industries](#)

By: Joyce Balancio

MANILA - Several groups on Monday urged the government to rethink the ratification of the country's participation in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) due to threats to local industries and potential income losses.

BUSINESS MIRROR

[Group calls for full-blast transition to renewables](#)

By: Manuel Cayon

DAVAO CITY—A lobby group is urging the government to go full blast in transitioning to renewable energy (RE), stressing “it is time to break our relationship with fossil fuel industries.”

BUSINESS WORLD

[EU carbon emissions-based tariffs seen encouraging greener practices](#)

By: Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson

AN upcoming European Union (EU) tariff scheme that rewards low-carbon practices could encourage exporters to shift to greener technology, Sustainable Fitch said.

[\[Opinion\] Crisis narratives as hindrance to growth and freedom](#)

By: Bienvenido S. Oplas, Jr.

Feb. 24 last week marked the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Ukraine crisis has morphed from a border war between the two countries to a potential nuclear conflict in Europe. Here are five major crisis narratives which have had a big impact on economic growth and individual freedom.

FAR EASTERN AGRICULTURE

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

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

GMA NEWS ONLINE

[3 weather systems to bring rains across Philippines —PAGASA](#)

Three weather systems will trigger rains in Metro Manila and the rest of the country, state weather bureau PAGASA reported on Monday.

[8 out of 10 Filipinos prefer environment-friendly products — Pulse Asia survey](#)

By: Lou Albano

A Pulse Asia survey shows 83% of Filipinos prefer environment-friendly products and services from brands with environment-friendly operations.

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Northeastern monsoon or amihan, shear line, localized thunderstorms to bring cloudy skies, rain over various parts of the country, PAGASA reported.

MANILA BULLETIN

[Brazil storm death toll rises to 64](#)

By: Agence-France-Presse

SAO PAULO, Brazil – The death toll from floods and landslides in southeast Brazil a week ago was officially increased to 64 Sunday, as the search continued for one missing person.

[Imee Marcos: PH to hold industrialized nations accountable for global warming](#)

By: Mario Casayuran

Senator Imee Marcos on Monday, February 27 said the climate change problem does not recognize national boundaries.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Green lanes to help realize investment pledges from PBBM's trips](#)

By: Kris Crismundo

MANILA – The country's major investment promotion agencies (IPAs), the Board of Investments (BOI) and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) have welcomed the issuance of the Executive Order (EO) No. 18 or the creation of green lanes for strategic investments.

[Zambo City to install alarm system to warn residents of floods](#)

By: Teofilo Garcia, Jr.

ZAMBOANGA CITY – The city government is set to install a flood alarm system to help determine impending occurrences of flooding in this southern port city.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[\[Opinion\] Organic farmers are the hope for food security](#)

By: Daniel Jason M. Maches

Food security is one of the biggest challenges facing mankind, especially with the looming impacts of climate change. Compounding the issue is the lack of support from both the authorities and the private sector to strengthen agricultural foundations, particularly in developing countries like the Philippines.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Imee: Hold industrialized nations accountable on global warming](#)

By: Wilnard Bacelonia

MANILA – Senator Imee Marcos on Monday urged the national government to take a more aggressive stance in the next Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention to Climate Change.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

Gov't urged to rethink RCEP due to threats to PH industries

By: Joyce Balancio

MANILA - Several groups on Monday urged the government to rethink the ratification of the country's participation in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) due to threats to local industries and potential income losses.

RCEP is a free trade deal among 14 other nations including ASEAN member states and its partners China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

Sonny Africa, the Executive Director of the independent think tank IBON Foundation, said the country has not benefitted on any of the past trade agreements that promised more investments and better jobs for the Filipinos.

He said the government was downplaying the lower tariff revenues and failed to see that the country is poised to lose roughly \$58.2 million in revenues due to RCEP concessions, he added.

"Mahaba na ang karanasan natin sa free trade agreements. Maraming marami ang naipangako, pero marami rin ang napako," he said during a people's forum organized in UP Diliman.

Some free trade agreements, he said could lead to trade deficit and "worsening" food import dependency.

"Oo lumalaki ang kalakaran ng exports, pero mas malaki ang iniimport natin," he said.

Former Agrarian Reform Secretary and Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMU) Chairman Emeritus Rafael Mariano said Filipino farmers would suffer income losses due to the expected increase in the imports of agricultural products.

He also said local products are not competitive in the bigger export market.

"Hindi na maiiwan ang agrikultura kasi matagal nang naiwan iyan. Wala ring kasiguraduhan na mas maraming papasok na investments," he added.

What the government should do, he said, is to increase the productivity and quality of our local produce, and implement measures to attain food self-sufficiency instead of opening the local market to more imports.

"Ang export markets hindi mawawala iyan, kung competitive ang mga produkto natin...competitive ang cost of production, competitive ang farmgate price, competitive ang quality at presyo sa domestic market," he said.

RCEP would also destroy the fishing industry since there would be more conversion and reclamation projects in the coastal areas, fisherfolk group PAMALAKAYA said.

"Matagal nang pinaglalawayan ng foreign investors ang ating coastal area para pagtayan ng mga malls, recreational areas at industrial parks. Mas lalala pa iyan, mas dadami ang reclamation sa ng mga palaisdaan," PAMALAKAYA National Chairperson Fernando Hicap says.

While businessmen engaged in private aquaculture may thrive, small fishermen will suffer heavy losses, the group said.

RCEP is unlikely to result in more jobs for the Filipinos, labor group Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) said, but instead would cause more layoffs and increased unemployment following the possible closure of many industries.

"Dapat i-withdraw ito ng gobyerno ng Pilipinas, bawiin ito, dahil hindi ito makatutulong, hindi ito sagot sa kahirapan, kagutuman at ang pagunlad ng ating ekonomiya," KMU Chairperson Jerome Adonis said.

Center for Environment Concerns Philippines Inc (CEC) Executive Director Lia Torres, meanwhile lamented the lack of environmental provisions in the RCEP that would guarantee the protection of the country's resources.

With increased trade activities, there would be more extraction of natural resources that could lead to environmental degradation and destruction, the group said.

The effects of climate change might also worsen, it added.

"May pagaaral na ang pagtanggap ng trade barriers ay magpapataas ng walang habas na pagpuputol ng mga troso para paramihin sa export. Isa pa ang mga plantasyon din dahil sa ngayon ilan klase na ng plantasyon mayroon sa Pilipinas...mas lalawak pa ito

na magresulta sa land grabbing at higit lahat ang conversion ng mga forest at pagpapalayas sa mga magsasaka at katutubo," Torres explained.

RCEP can also potentially result in a monopoly on pharmaceutical products, Filipino Nurses United said.

Filipinos would have less access to affordable medicines, the group said.

"RCEP will further entrench the power of the pharmaceutical companies to extract profits and deprive millions of people from affordable treatment," FNU leader Jocelyn Andamo also said.

Unhealthy food products and commodities may also flood the local market and cause health problems among Filipinos, she said.

"It will embolden alcohol, tobacco, sugar, and processed industries that are drivers of non-communicable diseases," she added.

Together, the groups called on the government to rethink its participation in the RCEP and withdraw its membership before we feel the negative impacts.

"Hindi naman tayo sarado sa import ng raw materials na hindi pa natin kayang likhain. Hindi naman tayo sarado sa export ng mga produkto nating agrikultura, pero sana tugunan muna ang mga pangangailangan ng mga mamayan," Mariano stressed.

Economic managers have said the RCEP could give the country access to more markets, create jobs and boost economic recovery. The trade deal also has provisions to protect "sensitive" products such as rice and corn.

BUSINESS MIRROR

Group calls for full-blast transition to renewables

By: Manuel Cayon

DAVAO CITY—A lobby group is urging the government to go full blast in transitioning to renewable energy (RE), stressing “it is time to break our relationship with fossil fuel industries.”

“More sustainable resources are already within our reach, yet we fail to explore and diversify our energy sources. There are existing initiatives and proposals such as solar, wind, and geothermal power that can actually help decrease the electricity rates of end-users and hasten our transition to renewable-energy,” the Philippine Legislators’ Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD) said.

The group said it was joining with other advocates of RE “to call on our legislators to pass bills that expand opportunities to implement RE projects, such as improving the net metering program, establishing solar rooftop programs, and institutionalizing the Green Energy Auction Program.”

“It is time to modernize our grids to effectively install and distribute RE. But scaling up clean energy financing is crucial to make this possible,” it added.

The PLCPD said, “As an immediate response to the impact of electricity price hikes, government subsidies should be also provided to aid poor households who are gravely affected by rising electricity rates.”

It cited the instance last month when Meralco “implemented another electricity price hike amid worsening inflation. The increase applied was P0.6232 per kilowatt hour (kWh), an additional P125 in the monthly bill for an ordinary household consuming 200 kWh.”

This is consistent with the previous price hikes in 2022, like the one in November with the increase of P0.844 per kWh, equivalent to P17 for a household that consume 200 kWh, and in December, with P0.3297 per kWh or P66 (for 200 kWh). The increase was triggered by the increased charges of more expensive fuel used by Independent Power Producers (IPP) and the rise of Wholesale Electricity Spot Market prices due to tight supply conditions that caused preceding yellow alerts, particularly in the Luzon grid.

Similar to the red onion price hike also caused by excessive importation plus the persistence of illegal smuggling, electricity is definitely one of the top concerns of all Filipinos, the PLCPD said.

The group said for Filipino families that belong to poor households and only earn a minimum wage of P570 a day in Metro Manila, “This is an additional struggle to survive the daily expenses.” Even when prices of basic commodities, products, and services continue to increase, wages remain low. Worse, the minimum wage all over the country is still disproportionate and does not even reach 50 percent to 60 percent of the living wage.

Home-based workers suffer as they heavily rely on electricity as their capital to perform their jobs. Businesses, especially micro, small and medium enterprises too, are affected as they consume more electricity compared to an ordinary household.

“We call on the electric co-operatives, independent power producers, and big energy corporations to divert their resources to renewable energy, and more importantly, empower end-users to avert the power crisis through increased participation in the energy transition,” the group said.

BUSINESS WORLD

[EU carbon emissions-based tariffs seen encouraging greener practices](#)

By: Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson

AN upcoming European Union (EU) tariff scheme that rewards low-carbon practices could encourage exporters to shift to greener technology, Sustainable Fitch said.

“We believe APAC (Asia-Pacific) exporters will be incentivized to develop clean production technologies that meet the more stringent EU emission standard. Regulators could also be more inclined to set up domestic carbon-pricing mechanisms to encourage a reduction in carbon intensity and minimize downside risk amid a growing trend of carbon tariffs, elsewhere around the world,” according to Sustainable Fitch, a specialist environmental, social and governance (ESG) unit of the Fitch Solutions group.

The EU is aiming to launch the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) by October, which will require importers to purchase carbon certificates mirroring European carbon prices. It is expected to be fully operational by 2026.

“Ultimately, the scheme aims to incentivize the adoption of cleaner technologies in industrial production to reduce carbon leakage, particularly by major exporters of raw materials and manufactured goods,” Sustainable Fitch said.

“We expect the scheme to encourage Asia-Pacific (APAC) exporters to develop and implement clean technologies that reduce carbon intensity in anticipation of CBAM compliance as well as a possible expansion of sectors covered by the mechanism,” it added.

Sustainable Fitch said it expects that decarbonization will not be as straightforward in Southeast Asia, particularly as “governments balance social and economic considerations with environmental ones.”

However, it noted that CBAM may hasten the progress in aligning national carbon frameworks and strategies with net-zero carbon emission goals.

The EU is southeast Asia’s third-largest trading partner after China and the US, accounting for around 11% of total trade, according to the European Commission.

On the other hand, Sustainable Fitch said that the CBAM will increase the supply-chain costs of covered commodities, which will be passed on downstream.

“This scenario has spurred discussions over trade protectionism and discrimination against EU’s trading partners, as the carbon tariffs may encourage APAC industrial producers to divert trade flow towards markets that do not impose such schemes to remain cost competitive. The effectiveness of carbon tariffs to curb carbon leakage should improve as the scale of carbon markets and covered sectors expands,” it said.

“Still, despite the large trading volume, the region’s response to the CBAM has been muted, because close to 90% of southeast Asian exports of manufactured goods to the bloc fall outside the stipulated product categories,” it added, citing Eurostat.

The initial phase of CBAM will only apply to six sectors, none of which are key to EU-southeast Asian trade, the report noted.

“As such, Sustainable Fitch sees a limited impact to major southeast Asian economies for now. However, the situation is likely to evolve over time. For instance, if the CBAM is expanded to include a larger range of sectors and imported products, regional southeast Asian economies may be compelled to implement appropriate domestic environmental regulations and technologies to avoid losing an important overseas market. Such a transition would not be without challenges,” it added.

British Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Executive Director Chris Nelson said that, while the UK is now on the outside looking in on EU policy, schemes like CBAM could set the trend in trade policy.

“I think the move on carbon emissions is an inevitable consequence not only in Europe or the United Kingdom (UK) but in Asia. The Philippines is looking at ESG principles and I think the positive side is the move of companies and businesses to look at greener sources of energy. Inevitable, but it has positive developments,” he said by phone on Monday.

“This is a likely development which will need to be adjusted to. Carbon emissions apply to many sectors and businesses. I think this will give a further push to renewable energy, which has been mentioned by the (Philippine) administration,” Mr. Nelson said, also noting that the UK is also considering its own carbon pricing system.

Meanwhile, Confederation of Wearable Exporters of the Philippines Executive Director Maritess Jocson-Agoncillo said that the CBAM represents “another major tariff barrier.”

“(It) will definitely impact the Philippine apparel and textile sector. The supply chain, specifically from textile production, will be adversely affected as carbon emissions are

mostly a by-product of textile production. This will add up to the cost of the base raw material,” she said in a Viber message.

“The supply chain at source will definitely carry additional costs and this will be passed on within the supply chain, apparel manufacturers and ultimately the consumer,” she added.

In 2022, exports to the EU accounted for 7.3% of total apparel exports. A decade ago, it was at around 15%, Ms. Jocson-Agoncillo added.

The Philippines was the EU’s 39th largest trading partner in 2021.

[Opinion] Crisis narratives as hindrance to growth and freedom

By: Bienvenido S. Oplas, Jr.

Feb. 24 last week marked the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Ukraine crisis has morphed from a border war between the two countries to a potential nuclear conflict in Europe. Here are five major crisis narratives which have had a big impact on economic growth and individual freedom.

1. The virus/pandemic crisis. It led to widespread government-imposed business and mobility restrictions or lockdowns and human isolation, while expanding government spending and borrowing.

House Bill 6522 and Senate Bill 1869 will create a new bureaucracy — the Philippine Center for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC). I have two objections against this bill.

One, it contradicts the National Government Rightsizing Program (NGRP) of the Marcos Jr. administration which aims to reduce redundancy or duplication of functions, and reduce government spending. See this column's piece last week, "Bureaucratic rightsizing a big part of fiscal reform push" (Feb. 20). Instead of reducing the existing bureaucracies, the bill is creating a new agency with new plantilla positions and more personnel with national and regional offices.

Two, the same people and professionals who distrust natural immunity from natural infection from COVID-19 and pushed to trust only vaccine immunity and mandatory vaccination, who demonized cheap, off-patent, generic medicines like ivermectin and other supplements as prophylaxis and treatment to COVID, will likely be sitting in the key positions of the new bureaucracy CDC.

The Concerned Doctors and Citizens of the Philippines (CDC PH), Covid Call for Humanity (CCH), Constitutionally Compliant Businesses (CCB PH), Hilway Panay, and other NGOs held a simultaneous protest movement against the proposed CDC bill in key cities of the country on Feb. 25. Stay brave, guys. Protect civil liberties and human rights, and individual rights to one's body and health. Resist political science that masquerades as medical science to impose political and medical tyranny.

2. The economic/poverty crisis. Government-imposed lockdowns then overspending and borrowing for aid/ayuda and subsidies will lead to more taxes in the future to pay for the huge borrowing.

Below I make two computations: a.) required growth in 2021 to reach the level of 2019's gross domestic product (GDP), and, b.) required growth in 2023 to expand by 15% over 2019's GDP level. The results show that for many East Asian economies, their GDP growth in 2021 has enabled them to recover a similar GDP size of 2019.

For the Philippines, a.) GDP growth in 2021 should have been 10% and not just 5.7% to be at the same GDP size or level of 2019, and, b.) growth in 2023 should be at least 11.7% if targeting to have at least a 15% expansion in 2023 over 2019 level,

By 2021, many of our neighbors in East Asia had already recovered to their 2019 levels — the Philippines did not. Meaning that the effects of the government's lockdowns and business shutdowns was severe and deep. This administration and succeeding ones should never impose another lockdown and political-medical tyranny.

Related narratives are: the inequality crisis, population/congestion crisis, education crisis, housing crisis.

3. The climate/environment crisis. This is based on the persistent narrative that there is no natural or nature-made climate change, only man-made climate change; that there is no natural warming-cooling cycle, only "unprecedented, unequivocal" warming; that "extreme weather" is getting more frequent, more deadly, and that there is no natural cycle of strong and weak cycle energy. Thus, heavy intervention by governments and multilaterals to fight less rain and more rain, less snow and more snow, less cold and more cold, less cats and more cats.

No, the number of strong storms and hurricanes is not increasing. No, the accumulated cyclone energy (ACE) is not getting stronger (see Chart). In fact, the years 2021 and 2022 saw weak ACE, a less windy planet, which is why wind power plants were not producing enough electricity and led to wind power-heavy countries firing up their coal and gas plants to avoid blackouts.

The Philippines and other countries should cut their huge spending on climate bureaucracies, climate meetings and travel, cut taxes on fossil fuels, or impose uniform taxes like VAT for both fossil fuel and renewable plants, and uniform excise tax for both gasoline-powered cars and e-cars.

Now there is another lobby by some groups that the irrational zero excise tax for e-cars should be extended to e-motorcycles. This is equally irrational, for three reasons. One, there is little difference between gasoline vehicles that use 100% fossil fuel and e-vehicles that use 80% fossil fuel because about 80% of the Philippines' electricity

generation comes from coal, natural gas, and oil plants. Two, both gasoline and electric vehicles occupy road space and contribute to the depreciation of public infrastructure. And, three, government is in search of more revenues and lobby groups and sellers do not want to contribute to tax mobilization. The Finance department should stonewall such a lobby.

Related narratives are: the garbage/plastic crisis, carbon crisis, energy crisis.

4. NCDs crisis. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like cancer, heart disease, and stroke are now the main causes of deaths in the world — good. Perhaps the best ratio would be something like 98% of people dying of NCDs, and only 1% from infectious/communicable diseases, and another 1% from accidents or violence (war, murder, homicide).

In the Philippines, the share of NCDs to total deaths rose from 55% in 2000 to 70% in 2019. And life expectancy has increased from only 59 years in 1960 to 69 years in 2000, and 72 years in 2020. There is a correlation between a high share of NCDs/total deaths to longer lifespan.

People own their bodies. Not the government or doctors, NGOs or media. The decision to smoke, vape, drink alcohol, soda and other sugary drinks, climb steep rocks and mountains, do fast downhill bicycle racing, go skydiving, take two or six vaccine boosters, etc. should be left to the individuals, their families and friends.

Related narratives are the tobacco and alcohol crisis, the sugar addiction crisis.

5. The food/hunger crisis. Related to the climate crisis narrative, it argues that “extreme weather” plus other political, business, and technological factors adversely affect global food production. So, government must step in via more agricultural subsidies and freebies, more irrigation, machine and fertilizer subsidies, and so on.

Going back to Feb. 23, 2022 — or day before the Russia invasion of Ukraine — and even a year before that, commodities like rice, corn, coffee, wheat, soybeans, palm oil, lean hogs, poultry, beef, fertilizers had prices this month that were similar or even lower than last year’s prices.

rices are indicators of a product’s abundance or scarcity relative to demand. When prices flatline or decline, this means the supply is stable or rising relative to demand and hence, there is no food crisis. Government should resist temptation and lobbies to

further raise agricultural and food subsidies. Farming should be a business venture, not a government or tax charity.

Related narratives are: the population crisis, the fertilizer crisis.

We should grow our businesses and economy fast, widely, and in a sustained manner.

We should streamline and cut spending and subsidies, and reduce borrowings and high interest payments.

We should apply uniform tax rates for each sector and avoid cronyism and favoritism.

We should avoid another round of political-medical tyranny.

We should be wary of new “crisis” narratives because the hidden goal is to have more command and control over our lives, our work, our body and family.

FAR EASTERN AGRICULTURE

Kidapawan City's solar-powered feed mill ready for operation

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

The US\$113,363 facility was built under the Integration of Productive Uses of Renewable Energy for Sustainable and Inclusive Energisation (I-PURE) in Mindanao funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA).

The city government, which will manage the storage and miller, is expected save on energy cost for processing corn and rice used as feeds for farm animals, according to Kidapawan Mayor, Jose Paolo M. Evangelista.

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

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

The EU has provided roughly US\$4.7mn for the programme, which covers communities within the provinces of Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and Cotabato in the Soccsksargen region, and Tawi-Tawi and Lanao del Sur in the Bangsamoro region.

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

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

GMA NEWS ONLINE

3 weather systems to bring rains across Philippines —PAGASA

Three weather systems will trigger rains in Metro Manila and the rest of the country, state weather bureau PAGASA reported on Monday.

In its 4 p.m. forecast, PAGASA said the northeast monsoon (Amihan) continues to affect Luzon and will bring cloudy skies with rains in Cagayan Valley, Cordillera Administrative Region, Bicol Region, Aurora, Quezon, Oriental Mindoro, Marinduque, and Romblon.

Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon will experience partly cloudy to cloudy skies with light rains.

Cloudy skies with scattered rain showers and thunderstorms will prevail in the Visayas region due to the shear line while partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers or thunderstorms will prevail in Mindanao due to the localized thunderstorms.

PAGASA warned the rainfall may cause flash floods and landslides in the affected areas.

Meanwhile, moderate to strong winds will blow over the country according to PAGASA. This will be accompanied by moderate to rough coastal waters.

The sun will set at 6:04 p.m. It will rise on Tuesday at 6:14 a.m.

[8 out of 10 Filipinos prefer environment-friendly products — Pulse Asia survey](#)

By: Lou Albano

A Pulse Asia survey shows 83% of Filipinos prefer environment-friendly products and services from brands with environment-friendly operations.

The results of the survey — conducted from November 27 to December 1 and commissioned by Stratbase ADR Institute — was presented by Pulse Asia President Ronald Holmes in Thursday's forum on sustainable and strategic waste management.

"The message is clear: a sizable majority of Filipinos will support enterprises that have environment-friendly operations and products," said Holmes at the forum organized by the Stratbase ADR Institute, the Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship (PBEST), and The Climate Reality Project Philippines.

"The question now is whether industries or firms will be able to cater to this preference," he added.

Participants of the survey were asked "As a consumer, do you prefer to patronize products and/or services of brands or enterprises that you believe have environment-friendly operations or products?"

While the term "environment-friendly" was not explained to them, the survey results showing Filipinos' sentiment toward sustainability couldn't have come at a better time.

Climate change is a growing concern worldwide, with scientists already sounding the alarm. The world must limit its warming to 1.5C to 2C in accordance with the 2015 Paris Agreement.

But according to the latest report by the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published in 2021, Earth is projected to hit 1.5 or 1.6C in seven short years, or around 2030.

At a recent IPCC briefing arranged by the Oxford Climate Journalism Network, Dr. Friederike Otto, a senior lecturer in Climate Science at the Grantham Institute for Climate Change at Imperial College London and member of Working Group 1 of the IPCC, said "it's still the time to act. Not a time to despair."

At Thursday's forum, Stratbase ADR Institute, the Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship (PBEST), and The Climate Reality Project Philippines all pushed for circular economy.

Under the Extended Producer Responsibility Law of 2022, (EPR) circular economy refers to an economic model of efficiently utilizing resources by its continual use and retaining the highest utility and value of products through sharing, leasing, reuse, repair, refurbishment, and recycling in an almost closed loop.

It is the exact opposite of the current linear economic "take-make-waste" model, where raw materials extracted from natural resources end up as waste on land, water, and air.

At Thursday's event, Environment Assistant Secretary and DENR-Environmental Management Bureau Director Gilbert Gonzales said a circular economy "offers a strategy and a pathway that could potentially reduce GHG emissions across the economic sectors and value chains, by transforming the way products are designed and used, and derive more value from products through better product design, increased value-retention of materials, and diversion of waste from landfills."

Climate Reality Project Philippine Branch Manager Nazrin Castro echoed Gonzales and said "A circular economy can help avoid excessive consumption, waste and use of fossil fuels by leasing, reusing, repairing, and recycling existing materials and products."

At the event, Climate Reality Leader Carlo Delantar and Circular Economy Pioneer at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, underscored three principles of circular economy: (1) designing out waste and pollution, (2) keeping products and materials in use, and (3) regenerating natural systems.

So businesses can transition to circularity by shifting to renewable energy, for instance, or adapting to a refilling distribution method to limit waste and curb plastic pollution.

Management Association of the Philippines Vice President Alexander Cabrera shared various circular business models already changing the private sector landscape in the country, including circular inputs (using renewable, recycled, or highly recyclable inputs in the production process), sharing economy (maximizing idle assets by renting or leading it), product as service (selling the same product to the maximum amount of people over and over again); product use extension (designs products for repairability, upgradability reusability, reconditioning, and recyclability of all components), and resource recovery (recovering embedded materials, energy, and resources from products at the end of use).

At the event, Cabrera said a circular economy model will not only benefit the environment and society but can also add value to businesses.

And with a majority of Filipinos preferring environment-friendly products and businesses with environment-friendly operations, perhaps it's time for businesses to consider going circular.

Cloudy skies, rain over parts of the country due to three weather systems

Northeastern monsoon or amihan, shear line, localized thunderstorms to bring cloudy skies, rain over various parts of the country, PAGASA reported.

Cagayan Valley, Bicol Region, Western Visayas, Aurora, Quezon, Oriental Mindoro, Marinduque, and Romblon will have cloudy skies with rains brought about by the northeast monsoon with possible flash floods or landslides due to moderate with at times heavy rains.

The rest of Visayas will have cloudy skies with scattered rain showers and thunderstorms due to the shear line with possible flash floods or landslides due to moderate to at times heavy rains.

Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon with partly cloudy to cloudy skies with light rains also due to the northeast monsoon but with no significant impact.

Mindanao will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers or thunderstorms due to localized thunderstorms with possible flash floods or landslides during severe thunderstorms.

The wind speed forecast for Luzon and Visayas is moderate to strong moving northeastward with moderate to rough coastal waters.

Mindanao will experience moderate to strong wind speed moving northeastward while coastal waters will be moderate to rough.

Sunrise will be at 6:14 a.m., sunset at 6:04 p.m

MANILA BULLETIN

[Brazil storm death toll rises to 64](#)

By: Agence-France-Presse

SAO PAULO, Brazil – The death toll from floods and landslides in southeast Brazil a week ago was officially increased to 64 Sunday, as the search continued for one missing person.

Among the confirmed toll, 18 were children, the Sao Paulo state government said in a statement.

More than an entire February's worth of rain fell in 24 hours on the picturesque beach resort town of Sao Sebastiao and surrounding areas last weekend.

Authorities said the largest daily rainfall ever registered in Brazil triggered violent floods and landslides that tore through precariously built hillside communities.

According to the G1 news site, quoting civil defense authorities, one person remained missing Sunday, down from dozens initially.

More than 2,400 people were displaced by the downpour which washed away homes, roads, clinics and other infrastructure.

An estimated 9.5 million of Brazil's 215 million people live in areas at high risk of flooding or landslides — mainly poor favela neighborhoods.

The South American country has been hit by a series of deadly weather disasters in recent years, which experts say are likely being made worse by climate change.

[Imee Marcos: PH to hold industrialized nations accountable for global warming](#)

By: Mario Casayuran

Senator Imee Marcos on Monday, February 27 said the climate change problem does not recognize national boundaries.

Thus, the government has to take a more aggressive stance in the next Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention to Climate Change to hold the industrialized nations accountable for their previous contribution to global warming, given that the contribution of the Philippines is very minuscule, she said.

Marcos noted that there have been too many pledges and too little action.

“But there are at least two new grounds for optimism: the COP27 discussion, at last, of their debt to the vulnerable developing world’s “loss and damage” as well as US President Joe Biden’s climate catch-up law, the Inflation Reduction Act,” she said.

Marcos emphasized that It has long been established that island nations like the Philippines suffer the most from associated damages from climate change such as rising sea levels, prolonged droughts, and stronger typhoons.

“On our part, the national government can continue to promote efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of the Philippines through a shift to renewables and other low-carbon technologies, promoting energy conservation, and promoting mass transportation through railways,” she said.

“For the locals government units (LGUs), investment for resiliency programs would be critical,” she added.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Green lanes to help realize investment pledges from PBBM's trips](#)

By: Kris Crismundo

MANILA – The country's major investment promotion agencies (IPAs), the Board of Investments (BOI) and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) have welcomed the issuance of the Executive Order (EO) No. 18 or the creation of green lanes for strategic investments.

In a statement Monday, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary and BOI chairperson Alfredo Pascual said the green lanes for strategic investments will facilitate ease of doing business and will increase the country's attractiveness as an investment destination.

"This EO complements our efforts to facilitate a robust economic recovery and expansion. It promotes ease of doing business as national government agencies including its regional and provincial offices, as well as local government units are now mandated to create green lanes that will fast-track the process of securing necessary licenses and permits for strategic investments," he said.

It was Pascual and the DTI-BOI that recommended the creation of green lanes to President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. last October that will help the administration to realize the investment pledges from the Chief Executive's foreign trips.

"It was during the meeting that we communicated to the President that several investors are interested to expand operations in the Philippines. Most of them have emphasized the importance of advancing ease of doing business after we have identified barriers across multiple regulatory agencies that hamper the smooth entry of FDIs (foreign direct investments) in the country," he added.

The new EO will provide ease of doing business for highly desirable projects, FDIs and activities under the Strategic Investment Priority Plan (SIPP).

EO 18 covers all national government agencies, government-owned or -controlled corporations and local government units involved in the issuance of business permits, licenses, certifications and/or authorizations.

For his part, PEZA officer-in-charge Tereso Panga said in a Facebook post that the EO 18 signals a whole-of-government approach in improving and accelerating the issuance of permits and licenses needed in putting up businesses in the country.

“PEZA welcomes the issuance of Executive Order 18 for its ‘whole-of-government approach’ in easing the conversion of investment pledges to actualize on the ground presence of foreign investors’ companies and facilities,” Panga said.

He added PEZA commits to share its best practices and knowledge in providing smooth services to investors as the agency implements one-stop shop for securing permits and licenses.

PEZA has been recognized by International Finance Corporation (IFC)-World Bank, United States’ Department of State, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Investment Report for its one-stop-shop facility, investment promotion and facilitation measures for its economic zone locators.

“The best practices and ease of doing business climate it has set in place has been a model for other countries to follow. It is high time that we recognize that to stay competitive, taking the cue from PBBM’s national policy to address the pain points of investors by setting up green lanes for strategic investments,” Panga added.

According to Malacañang, the recent foreign trips of Marcos secured some PHP3.4 trillion in investment pledges.

Malacañang added over the weekend that some PHP239 billion worth of projects are already in the implementation stage, while around PHP1.5 trillion are currently in the planning stage.

Zambo City to install alarm system to warn residents of floods

By: Teofilo Garcia, Jr.

ZAMBOANGA CITY – The city government is set to install a flood alarm system to help determine impending occurrences of flooding in this southern port city.

Mayor John Dalipe said Monday they have allocated PHP5 million to acquire water sensors with alarm systems to be installed in strategic places in this city.

Dalipe said the alarm devices will be mounted along the riverbanks of the Pasonanca-Tumaga, Ayala-Tulungatung, Vitali, Putik and Curuan rivers here.

“With the climate change, we need to be ready,” Dalipe said in an interview, adding that the sensors will be installed by the second quarter of the year.

Currently, he said the city is only relying on the water level advisory of the Zamboanga City Water District (ZCWD) to determine if there is an incoming flood, especially during inclement weather.

Since December last year, the ZCWD had been issuing hourly water level and turbidity advisories to alarm residents of impending floods and stoppage of water service to its concessionaires.

For the past two heavy flood incidents here, the ZCWD has suspended water service to concessionaires for 24 to 36 hours as water production at the treatment plant decreases due to high turbidity.

Meanwhile, Dalipe said they will also upgrade the communication system to fast-track information dissemination, particularly to residents in far-flung areas.

Currently, the city government has established the Barangay Information Officers’ Network to enhance the relay of information on disasters among villages.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[\[Opinion\] Organic farmers are the hope for food security](#)

By: Daniel Jason M. Maches

Food security is one of the biggest challenges facing mankind, especially with the looming impacts of climate change. Compounding the issue is the lack of support from both the authorities and the private sector to strengthen agricultural foundations, particularly in developing countries like the Philippines.

With all the adverse news bombarding us about how the world could go hungry in the coming decades, one could not help but feel hopeless. Some of us might even feel angry and just anticipate a cataclysmic end to all. I used to feel that as well but when I traveled to different parts of the country and met with impassioned farmers doing the right thing, I realized that not all hope is gone.

Yes, on the ground, there are determined individuals and groups who have taken small steps forward to create models that address food security in a holistic manner. In my engagements, I'm particularly referring to organic farmers, not necessarily certified but whose convictions and practices totally do away with chemical inputs and practices.

There are many of them on the ground and though they may not be recognized as such, they are champions of agricultural methods that respect nature and the soil in which every crop grows and thrives. They can be referred to as natural farmers, eco-friendly farmers or biodynamic farmers.

There may be differences in specific practices but the commonality that binds them all is their non-usage of synthetic fertilizers. Rather, they take inspiration from the natural cycle and harmonize their farms to be part of the natural balance.

I met Arnold Timmangao, an agroforestry farmer who transformed a once denuded and bald mountain into a lush wonderland. At first glance, his farm looks more like a forest with towering trees and a rich diversity of flora. Birds and insects abound. But it is indeed a farm as integrated into the ecosystem are different species such as rambutan, lanzones, coffee, gabi and many more. This forest-farm also helps sustain water that irrigates rice paddies below and his ponds thrive with freshwater eels. It's a self-sustaining farm that benefits not only him but the communities below.

Then there's Ashley Lamaton who create a forest coffee farm as opposed to mono-cropping systems practiced worldwide. A Japanese once visited his farm and was

surprised to find out that it looks more like a jungle than a farm. But it is a farm, and it produces high-quality Arabica coffee and other crops. Lamaton shared that he does need to incorporate chemical inputs since the forest takes care of fertilization and irrigation. Even wildlife like birds help minimize pest infestation.

“Para kanyak, ti kinabaknang ket jay maitulong mu ti tau. Bonus lang ti kwarta. Ket nu aywanam ti forest tas agmula ka kape, dytuy ti mang-ited ti maiangus ti tattau karkaru jy mamagyan ijay siyudad (For me, wealth is the help you give to people. Money is just a bonus. And if you take care of the forest and plant coffee, you are helping sustain the oxygen that humans breathe, especially those living in the city),” said Lamaton.

In addition, there are the women coffee farmers of Tublay in Benguet who have been using coffee to improve their livelihoods while reforesting their once-denuded landscapes. They also follow the agroforestry model and don’t apply synthetic fertilizers. But their coffee plants are healthy and productive, allowing them to earn while preserving the pristine condition of the soil.

Definitely, there is more to add to these. And it is truly heartening that, although not as popular, their efforts offer hope for humanity and the planet.

For one, they prove that one can be self-sufficient and sustainable at the same time. Even with a small plot, one can grow crops to feed the household and community without having to use expensive and destructive chemical inputs. By taking care of the soil and the ecosystem, farms can be made productive in the long run.

That is the key to food security.

Sure, there is a need to scale up these efforts. And that is where the government should come in – to provide an enabling environment that prioritizes sustainable farming practices and the welfare of the farmers doing so. Of course, the Department of Agriculture (DA) is at the helm of this program but it should do more than just publicity and extravagant presentations in expensive hotels. It should, most of all, go to the grassroots – to meet with the farmers, listen to their stories and their aspirations and how they can be supported to sustain their organic practices. Then, from these, they can craft concrete programs and lobby our policymakers to increase funding for such efforts.

It is high time the government’s programs should accelerate the transition to organic agriculture. As a farmer myself, I have seen how conventional farming has devastated our ecosystems, polluted our rivers and impacted the health of our people. We can no

longer continue with this trail of uncertainty, and thus, the government should complement the efforts, especially of small players taking things into their own hands, to create models that prove organic agriculture works. And that it is key to food security.

Of course, that is easier said than done. But it can and should be done – as our smallholder farmers are doing.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Imee: Hold industrialized nations accountable on global warming](#)

By: Wilnard Bacelonia

MANILA – Senator Imee Marcos on Monday urged the national government to take a more aggressive stance in the next Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention to Climate Change.

Marcos, who chairs the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, said it is time to hold the industrialized nations accountable for previous contributions to global warming, given that the contribution of the Philippines is very minuscule.

"There have been too many pledges and too little action. But there are at least two new grounds for optimism: the COP27 discussion, at last, of their debt to the vulnerable developing world's 'loss and damage' as well as US President Joe Biden's climate catch-up law, the Inflation Reduction Act," she said in a statement.

The Cross Dependency Initiative (XDI) recently reported that 17 provinces in the Philippines were among the top 100 areas in the world that are most vulnerable to the growing destructive power of climate change.

These provinces include Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Pangasinan, Ilocos Sur, Eastern Samar, Zambales, Aurora, Northern Samar, Cagayan, Surigao del Sur, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, Sulu, Leyte, Pampanga, Samar, and Southern Leyte.

It has long been established, Marcos said, that island nations like the Philippines suffer the most from associated damage from climate change such as rising sea levels, prolonged droughts, and stronger typhoons.

"On our part, the national government can continue to promote efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of the Philippines through a shift to renewables and other low-carbon technologies, promoting energy conservation, and promoting mass transportation through railways. For the LGUs, investment for resiliency programs will be critical," she added.

Climate Change Commissioner Albert dela Cruz recently called for the private sector to participate in immediate climate action by supporting the Climate Change Commission's

(CCC) programs such as tree planting activities and adopting the just transition of landfills to waste-to-energy technologies.

“We, in the Climate Change Commission, have been given the mandate to formulate and issue national policies that would support the Marcos administration’s advocacy of protecting our planet and adopting a mitigation and adaptation strategy to achieve resiliency to climate change,” Dela Cruz said in a recent statement.

As one of the policy-making bodies of government, CCC is tasked to coordinate, monitor and evaluate government programs and ensure mainstreaming of climate change in national, local and sectoral development plans towards a climate-resilient and climate-smart Philippines

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