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By: Job Manahan

MANILA - President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. on Tuesday urged farmers to change the schedule of planting their crops in response to climate change, Malacañang said on Tuesday.

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By: Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz

Cloudy and rainy weather may persist in some parts of Luzon and Western Visayas in the next 24 hours due to the northeast monsoon or “amihan,” the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said on Tuesday, Feb. 28.

MINDA NEWS

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By: Paul MArt Jeyand Matangcas

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[Marcos Jr. wants detailed cropping schedule to protect local agri sector](#)

By: Daphne Galvez

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. on Tuesday said he wants a detailed cropping schedule to ensure that agricultural imports will not harm local production.

[Southeast Asia lags in electric vehicles. Can it catch up?](#)

By: Reuters

KUALA LUMPUR (Thomson Reuters Foundation) – For self-confessed tech geek and adrenaline junkie Farhan Abdul Rahim, becoming one of the first Malaysians to own an electric car in 2020 was a no-brainer – but he didn’t simply stop there.

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

[Pres. Marcos gives go light to green lanes](#)

By: Kate Shiene Austria

QUEZON CITY (PIA) -- The administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. orders the establishment of ‘Green Lanes’ for strategic investments in government offices.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[More US, China financial cooperation seen by industry insiders](#)

NEW YORK – The United States and China have cooperation potential in the financial sector given China's further opening-up, bilateral collaboration between regulators and shared interests in fighting climate change, according to industry insiders and experts.

[PBBM wants detailed cropping time to protect local agri sector](#)

By: Azer Parrocha

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. said Tuesday the country’s agricultural sector must use a “detailed” cropping schedule to ensure that agricultural imports would not harm local production.

THE CLIMATE REALITY PROJECT

[Advocates laud EPR Act, push for more circular policies and business practices](#)

Quezon City—The enactment of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Act of 2022 is a good start but more transformational and progressive policies, programs, and business practices are needed to enable a circular economy for the Philippines.

THE MANILA TIMES

[ADB readying new PH country strategy](#)

THE Asian Development Bank is preparing to update its country strategy for the Philippines, and is looking to provide \$3.5 billion in loans annually to support the country's development.

[PH gets better growth outlook](#)

By: Niña Myka Pauline Arceo

GLOBAL and domestic headwinds will weigh on Philippine economic growth this year, but the country could still perform much better than initially expected given its fundamentals and better-than-expected results last year, experts said Tuesday.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Marcos orders NIA, DPWH: Speed up irrigation projects](#)

By: Alexis Romero

MANILA, Philippines — President Marcos yesterday ordered the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to work together and speed up the implementation of high-impact irrigation projects, an official said yesterday.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[CCC, Papal Nuncio eye climate cooperation](#)

By: Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos

MANILA – The Climate Change Commission (CCC) and the Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines have sought partnership to mitigate the impact of climate change in the country.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

[Adjust planting schedule amid climate change, Marcos tells farmers](#)

By: Job Manahan

MANILA - President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. on Tuesday urged farmers to change the schedule of planting their crops in response to climate change, Malacañang said on Tuesday.

Marcos also directed the Department of Agriculture to "go into more detail on the cyclical nature of crops" in the country so importation would not happen during harvest season.

The agriculture sector should also "adjust accordingly" due to climate change, which "complicates things," he said.

"Hindi tayo nag-i-import ng kahit anong produkto pagka maraming production para naman magamit natin lahat ng production na galing sa Pilipinas," Marcos said during his meeting with the agriculture department, which he leads.

"Kung mag-i-import lang tayo, kung talagang may kulang and that's what I mean about the cyclical nature of crops, that we have to be sensitive to that," he added.

Meanwhile, he also directed the DA to craft measures to aid the fisheries sector and set up infrastructure and facilities. This includes, he said, improving fishing grounds and aquaculture, and rehabilitation of fish ports.

He also tasked the DA to carry out its agricultural and fishery technologies and equipment, based on the release.

"Now, kulang pa rin ang production natin sa fisheries kaya't kailangan natin tingnan pati 'yung tinatawag na mariculture 'yung mga isda na nasa dagat. So that is basically what we were discussing and putting together also we were already starting to give the tasking to the different agencies like DTI, like DBP, LandBank, the CDA or the Cooperative Development Authority," Marcos said.

The Palace said that based on the Philippine Development Plan, the DA targets a growth rate of 1.8 percent to 3.3 percent in the agriculture sector from 2023 to 2028.

"Last year, the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries (AFF) sector performed modestly at 0.5 percent," the statement read.

BUSINESS WORLD

[\[Opinion\] A circular economic model for responsible stewardship of the environment](#)

By: Victor Andres C. Manhit

All our efforts to achieve economic growth and create wealth will amount to nothing if we leave behind depleted resources and a damaged environment for future generations.

In fact, we are already feeling the effects of this: climate change is taking its toll on the world's most vulnerable countries, and, within those countries, the most vulnerable communities. In terms of plastic pollution, the Philippines is the third-largest contributor to plastic waste worldwide.

Indeed, development is not genuine if it is not sustainable.

The Stratbase ADR Institute and Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship (PBEST) held a roundtable discussion on Feb. 23 entitled "The Philippine Circular Economy Agenda: Integrating Sustainable and Strategic Waste Management Systems." Experts from the government, business, and civil society joined us to help shed light on the issue of cooperation towards solutions to this end.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Undersecretary Carlos Primo David said that the common understanding of "sustainability" is that it is a precarious balance between economic development and environmental protection. But there is a third aspect, he said: social welfare. Waste to energy is not just an environmental issue but a social one, and solutions to this end must be part of an integrated strategy for the good of all.

The mitigation hierarchy that is common in climate change issues may also very well apply to solid waste, he said. "It starts with avoidance, then reduction of impact, then rehabilitation, then offsetting."

The implementing rules and regulations of the Extended Producer Responsibility Act of 2022 was signed last month by DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga. They are required to implement their own Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs to process plastic packaging waste for recycling and reuse instead of discarding them in landfills and to prevent its leakage into the environment, especially our waterways. The

law requires enterprises to offset their plastic packaging footprint by 20-80% beginning this year until 2028.

But while the law is good, it is its implementation that would spell the success or failure of the program, Mr. David said. “For our part at the DENR, we hope to make the EPR procedures as straightforward as possible, with less paperwork, and focus first on the registration of all plastic producers.”

The Director of the Environmental Management Bureau, Gilbert Gonzales, said that the shift from linear (take-make-sell-use-waste) to the circular economy is indeed transformative. The circular model yields greater benefits including economic growth and sustainability, more equally shared benefits and a more sustainable relationship with nature.

Nazrin Castro, Branch Manager of The Climate Reality Project Philippines, said a circular economy aligns well with the global and national agenda on climate resilience and sustainable growth.

She said the Philippines is a top contributor to plastic waste, next only to Indonesia and China, but they are also looking at plastics from a carbon-emission and global-warming perspective.

“Shifting to a circular economy is a pathway that can help address our addiction and dependence on plastics which is aggravating the climate crisis as well,” she said.

Carlo Chen-Delantar, a pioneer of Circular Economy from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation Philippines, said that in implementing the EPR law, what are important are localizing the program, understanding the supply chain, understanding the industrial symbiosis, and appreciating how each step in the value chain works.

Alexander Cabrera, vice-president of the Management Association of the Philippines, said the government must provide incentives and impose taxes on business to address the country’s waste problem.

“There must be an incentive integrated in the EPR or supplement to it when collecting your plastic or repackaging in order for your products to be more environment friendly. Meanwhile, the compulsion of taxing end-of-life plastic use will force people to reinvent their packaging because they don’t want to pay tax. It’s not a question of whether it can be done or not, it’s a question of political will,” Mr. Cabrera said.

What I found most heartening during the forum was the release of a survey conducted by Pulse Asia, commissioned by Stratbase, saying that 83% of Filipinos prefer to patronize products and services of brands that have environment friendly operations and products. The survey was conducted between Nov. 27 and Dec. 1 last year. The findings were presented by Pulse Asia President Ronald Holmes.

“The message is clear,” Mr. Holmes said. “Filipinos know that there are certain things that are happening in the country that require us to be more socially conscious. The question now is whether industries or firms will be able to cater to this preference.”

In adopting a circular economy, the government plays a key role in creating and implementing policy, including providing incentives to occasion certain behavior. The private sector contributes through its investments and programs that enable circular business models. Some large-scale enterprises have taken the challenge, thus creating jobs, new revenue streams, and sustained livelihood for Filipinos especially in the waste management industry. After all, while companies need to be efficient in their processes to maximize profit, they must consider the impact of their operations on the environment. Meanwhile, civil society must keep watch and hold the government and the private sector accountable for their action — or inaction.

Environmental stewardship is one of the key advocacies of Stratbase and PBEST. Every one of us, not just the government, has the responsibility to ensure that the resources we enjoy are used productively and prudently not just for ourselves but for future generations. We do not own the resources, we are but its stewards, and so we must act responsibly and considerately not only for ourselves but, most importantly, for our children and our children’s children.

INTERAKSYON

'Ark of biodiversity': Rundown of animals living in Masungi Georeserve

By: Catalina Ricci S. Madarang

The Masungi Georeserve is one of the few remaining karst landscapes in the country that serves as home to hundreds of flora and fauna.

This information was published on the Masungi Georeserve Foundation's social media accounts last week amid the bid to preserve the heritage site from destruction.

Citing a technical report from the National Museum of the Philippines, the organization informed the public that the conservation area is called a "karst landscape." It is also estimated to be millions of years old.

National Geographic defines karst or a karst landscape as "an area of land made up of limestone."

This type of limestone-filled landscape also features different land and water formations. These include "caves, underground streams and sinkholes on the surface."

"Where erosion has worn away the land above ground, steep rocky cliffs are visible," the National Geographic said.

In the post, the foundation said that karsts are known as "arks of biodiversity" where flora and fauna thrive.

To offer a glimpse into how diverse the Masungi Georeserve is, it cited that it has 500 documented species of animals.

These include the following:

- 97 species of birds
- 47 species of snails
- 30 species of bats
-

The foundation attached photos of several animals that are endemic to the Philippines.

These are:

- Luzon Tarictic Hornbill
- Masungi Microsnail
- Mottle-winged Flying Fox
- Golden Birdwing Butterfly
-

This area of biodiversity in Baras, Rizal is seen as an alleged relocation site for the New Bilibid Prison (NBP) under the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) despite being critical to the country's ecological sustainability in the future.

In a statement on February 20, Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla expressed hopes that part of this land, home to endemic species of flora and fauna, would be used by the government.

“Ang mahalaga lang sa Masungi ay ma-preserve ‘yan ngunit ‘yong bang lupa na hindi nagagamit, ay magamit naman ng gobyerno,” Remulla was quoted in a report as saying.

Several environmental advocates, including Justin of SB19, have later voiced out their calls to preserve the area to be appreciated and enjoyed by future generations.

In a new petition, the foundation appealed to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Environment Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga for help in opposing the BuCor plan, to preserve the award-winning geotourism site.

“In pursuit of sustainable development and climate change adaptation, let us keep Masungi as it is and find more suitable locations for BuCor's needs. #HandsOffMasungi,” the petition reads.

MANILA BULLETIN

'Amihan' continues to bring rains over parts of Luzon, W. Visayas

By: Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz

Cloudy and rainy weather may persist in some parts of Luzon and Western Visayas in the next 24 hours due to the northeast monsoon or "amihan," the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said on Tuesday, Feb. 28.

Scattered light to heavy rains may prevail over the Cagayan Valley, Bicol Region, Western Visayas, Aurora, Quezon, Oriental Mindoro, Marinduque, and Romblon.

PAGASA warned those in these areas to remain alert because of the threat of flooding or landslides caused by moderate to occasional heavy rains.

Partly cloudy to cloudy skies with light amihan rains may also affect the rest of Luzon, it said.

Meanwhile, the shear line, the boundary between cold air from the northeast monsoon and warm air from the easterlies, may bring cloudy skies with scattered light to occasional heavy rain showers and thunderstorms over the rest of Visayas.

PAGASA said Mindanao may experience partly cloudy to cloudy weather with isolated rain showers or thunderstorms.

The public is also warned against possible flooding or landslides during severe thunderstorms.

MINDA NEWS

[Finding the Indigenous Voice in Environmental Journalism: Lessons from Kenya](#)

By: Paul MArt Jeyand Matangcas

MATI CITY, Davao Oriental (MindaNews / 28 February)—Indigenous peoples (IPs) have existed and taken care of the environment long before I even had the mental agency to articulate my thoughts into words. Unfortunately, they are often left out of discourses regarding their communities.

In the Philippines, a country dubbed as one of the most dangerous places for environmental defenders, many narratives perpetuated by media surrounding IPs are often anchored on their struggles. While this may not entirely be a wrong practice, it becomes myopic when they are reduced to mere portraits of poverty who need saving.

Moreover, there is abundant coverage of climate change impacts or displacement from ancestral domains, but rarely do we consume media that are solutions-based and dig deep into the social, historical, and cultural underpinnings of these issues.

We've heard news about indigenous activists being jailed, Lumad teachers being red-tagged, or fishing communities being ravaged by mining operations. In many instances, this type of reporting explicates the cause of a problem and ends with the presentation of its evident effects.

But what about what happens after?

This question was among the many discussions that were central to my three-day training last February 21-23, 2023, in Nairobi, Kenya. The event gathered 10 journalists from around the world to learn more about effective and ethical indigenous environmental reporting.

Indigenizing environmental journalism

In her talk on indigenous journalism, Zeynab Wandati, an award-winning science journalist, underscored the power of media in presenting underreported environmental stories surrounding IPs. When disasters happen, we are quick to label them as a natural occurrence without trying to understand the human intervention that could have exacerbated the phenomenon.

For Wandati, we should broaden our analysis on these matters, and ask ourselves questions like: “Is it exclusively a natural disaster or is it man-made?” She highlighted that as journalists, we must always be critical in our reportage.

This example made me think about COVID-19 which disproportionately impacted marginalized communities at an unprecedented rate. Many claimed that the pandemic caused hospital infrastructures around the globe to fail. But was this solely because of the coronavirus or did it merely expose the fragile healthcare systems that were already on the brink of collapse from the very beginning?

A trip to the “lungs” of Nairobi

While I was lining up at the airport, an immigration officer, upon seeing my documents, raised an eyebrow and asked, “Why here, of all places?” At that point, I found it difficult to respond to his question. What can I say about Kenya? Why did the event have to be in this country?

I got my answers in a forest.

On the second day of our training, we had a field trip to the Karura Forest, an upland urban forest dubbed as the “lungs” of Nairobi and is home to an abundant collection of flora and fauna. But what made the experience more interesting for me was learning about its tumultuous past.

Karura Forest once experienced crime, land grabbing, and violence. On January 8, 1999, Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, and her cohorts were beaten by armed guards for demanding government accountability and protesting harmful state-sanctioned activities in the protected land. The attack was met with international outrage and soon after, widespread protests ensued.

Today, the forest remains to be one the largest of only three main gazetted forests in Nairobi and serves as a lifeline of the city’s biodiversity. It employs hundreds of people, houses thousands of tourists, and continues to promote inclusive indigenous practices on conservation and environmental protection. It is unfortunate, however, that the majestic forest is not immune to the jarring impact of climate change as manifested in the drought experienced by the once-alive Lily Lake.

When I asked Ruth Aura, a Mombasa-based journalist, what the world can learn from Kenya and its treatment of Karura Forest, she answered, “We’re not perfect, but we’re trying. As journalists, we must make sure that indigenous peoples are always included

in these discussions since they are the ones who are heavily affected by environmental matters. I think that's what the world can learn from us."

(Un)muted voices

In one of the sessions, we had an activity where two photos were flashed on the screen. The task was for us to identify which photo "looked" indigenous.

At first, I felt a little bit uncomfortable because, whether I admitted it or not, my mind instinctively selected the photo that conformed with how the media often portrays what an indigenous person is supposed to look like. But deep inside, I was deliberately trying to shed that internal bias because IPs aren't limited to arbitrary notions of what is indigenous-passing or not. They come in all shapes and sizes.

So, I answered "neither." I was wrong.

The task was a lesson on perception, and according to Stella Paul, an international multimedia journalist, "perception does not always have to be the truth."

This is where journalists come into the picture—to go further and beyond.

In every journalism workshop that I have attended, there is one famous quote that has always been cited repeatedly by speakers, albeit in different variations: "If someone says it's raining, and another person says it's dry, it's not your job to quote them both. Your job is to look out the window and find out which is true."

As journalists, our work is anchored on facts, especially at a time of massive disinformation in public and digital spaces. However, in those moments of finding out whether it is indeed raining or not, let us be reminded that our role as journalists is to amplify the voices of those we claim to serve. We are not the voice of the voiceless nor are we the representatives of disenfranchised communities because they've always had a voice, the problem lies within institutions that continue to shut them out of conversations in the first place.

It's about time we listened.

Onward, upward

While it can be argued that many of the things we learned could have been done online, with the increasing presence of webinars and Zoom-based workshops, I strongly

believe that the screen pales in comparison to the actual feeling of being immersed with people whose stories and experiences transcend language and distance. From learning Fijian phrases to tasting Nepali snacks, to bargaining for cheap prices at the Maasai Market, the three-day workshop proved to be more than just a classroom-based learning experience.

But one of the greatest takeaways from my short stay in Nairobi is that the future of indigenous environmental journalism is bright. As I go back to the Philippines, it brings me comfort to know that while a handful of challenges make reporting fact-based information a difficult task, there are young, smart, and ambitious journalists from around the world who continue to hold the line.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[Marcos Jr. wants detailed cropping schedule to protect local agri sector](#)

By: Daphne Galvez

MANILA, Philippines — President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. on Tuesday said he wants a detailed cropping schedule to ensure that agricultural imports will not harm local production.

According to the Presidential Communications Office (PCO), Marcos made the statement after a briefing with the Department of Agriculture and other concerned agencies where he asked agriculture officials to go into more detail on the cyclical nature of crops in the Philippines to avoid importing products during the harvest season.

The government, Marcos said, must consider the sensitivities of local cropping, particularly their cyclical nature when sourcing products abroad.

“Hindi tayo nag-i-import ng kahit anong produkto pagka maraming production para naman magamit natin lahat ng production na galing sa Pilipinas,” he said, as quoted by the PCO.

(We don’t import products if we have ample supply here so that our supply can be used.)

“Kung mag-i-import lang tayo, kung talagang may kulang, and that’s what I mean about the cyclical nature of crops, that we have to be sensitive to that,” Marcos added.

(We will only import products if there is a lack in supply, and that’s what I mean by cyclical nature of crops, that we have to be sensitive to that.)

In response to climate change, Filipino farmers have to change their planting schedule in some areas of the Philippines to take advantage of the moving rainy season, Marcos said, adding it may bring some benefits since farmers can have three croppings a year.

The cyclical nature of agriculture already exists, he said, adding, however, that with the advent of climate change, which complicates things, the sector should adjust accordingly.

According to the PCO, the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries (AFF) sector performed modestly at 0.5 percent last year.

The modest growth was attributed to the positive Gross Value Added (GVA) growth of 2.3 percent in livestock and 6.7 percent in poultry despite the decline in the performance of the crops and fisheries subsectors by -1.1 percent and -3.5 percent, respectively.

Under the Marcos administration's Philippine Development Plan, the DA is targeting a growth rate of 1.8 percent to 3.3 percent in the agriculture sector from 2023 to 2028.

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

[Pres. Marcos gives go light to green lanes](#)

By: Kate Shiene Austria

QUEZON CITY (PIA) -- The administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. orders the establishment of 'Green Lanes' for strategic investments in government offices.

Executive Order No. 18 signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin on February 23, 2023 mandates all national government agencies (NGAs) and their regional and provincial offices, government-owned or -controlled corporations (GOCCs), local government units (LGUs), and other government instrumentalities to create green lanes that will fast-track the process of securing necessary licenses and permits for investments.

Strategic investments are those which are aligned with the Philippine Development Plan or any similar national development plan and are expected to contribute significantly to the Philippine economy by bringing significant capital or investments, contributing to the country's balance of payments, and improving the country's infrastructure capabilities. It will also be classified into three: (1) Highly desirable projects, (2) Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs), and (3) Projects or activities under the Strategic Investment Priority Plan (SIPP).

Then, a One-Stop-Action-Center for Strategic Investments (OSAC-SI) shall be established by the Department of Trade and Industry-Board of Investments (DTI-BOI) within six months from the issuance of the EO to serve as the single point of entry for all projects qualified as strategic investments.

Whilst the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) will provide to LGUs with the software for the computerization of the business permit and licensing system, with the help of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

Moreover, Secretary Amenah Pangandaman also expresses the Department of Budget and Management's full support and commitment to digitalizing government processes, records, and databases through e-governance as part of the administration's agenda to promote bureaucratic efficiency. The FY 2023 National Budget will facilitate this transformation and digitalization of the government to streamline the bureaucracy.

The creation of 'Green Lanes' is consistent with the current administration's Eight-Point Socioeconomic Agenda and serves as a crucial part of its efforts to implement policy reforms that will facilitate ease of doing business in the Philippines.

[Southeast Asia lags in electric vehicles. Can it catch up?](#)

By: Reuters

KUALA LUMPUR (Thomson Reuters Foundation) – For self-confessed tech geek and adrenaline junkie Farhan Abdul Rahim, becoming one of the first Malaysians to own an electric car in 2020 was a no-brainer – but he didn't simply stop there.

Last June, Farhan embarked on a three-day journey around the Malay peninsula in his Tesla – covering about 1,700km (1,050 miles) – seeking to prove that electric vehicles (EVs) can operate beyond cities and in rural parts of the Southeast Asian nation.

However, as a manager at state oil company Petronas and someone who helped the firm start considering establishing EV charging stations during coronavirus lockdowns in 2021, Farhan was acutely aware of the challenges facing such a journey.

“It's the first time I'd done this (trip) with an EV,” said the 46-year-old who spent weeks planning what EV charging options he would have before setting off on the trip.

Farhan said he first became interested in EVs in 2017 after attending a conference for work that had a stand promoting the vehicles and featured a Tesla on display.

“(The trip) was about busting the myth and helping the EV community, who say you cannot go to the eastern part of Malaysia with an EV,” he said in an interview, referring to an often-cited lack of charging infrastructure that is seen as an obstacle to the sector's growth in Malaysia.

Electric vehicle production and sales are surging globally, with the sector seen as key in the drive to curb climate change by cutting emissions from petrol and diesel fuel, reduce oil imports and fuel subsidies, and support investment in renewable energy sources.

More climate-conscious drivers around the world are going green, with EV and hybrid vehicles accounting for 18% of global sales of four-wheeled vehicles last year, according to Rahul Gupta, an associate partner at McKinsey & Company in Singapore.

But that uptake was mostly in the United States, Europe and China, with the latter two markets at about 20 percent and 25 percent of sales respectively, he said.

In South Asia, EVs accounted for less than 2 percent of sales in 2022, he explained.

A dearth of charging infrastructure outside urban centres, a lack of tax incentives and subsidies for both automakers and buyers, and slow progress on developing affordable EVs among Southeast Asia's main manufacturers have held back the region, analysts said.

But governments appear keen to pick up the pace, offering growing incentives to auto and battery makers, tax breaks for buyers, and setting ambitious targets as they seek to position themselves as EV manufacturing hubs for the region.

For Farhan, a trip that was initially about demonstrating the capabilities of EVs in Malaysia had unexpected benefits.

"I could actually appreciate the landscape and scenery on the journey," said Farhan, who travelled with his wife and two children, recalling how the family enjoyed views of vast mountain ranges, lush rainforests and pristine beaches.

Luxury item?

Two and three-wheelers – from motorbikes to tuk-tuks – account for about 80 percent of vehicles running in Southeast Asia, according to Benedict Eijbergen, transport practice manager for East Asia and the Pacific at the World Bank.

This means the EV transition in the region will differ greatly from that in China, Europe and the United States, where EV growth is fueled by the electrification of cars, he said.

The uptake of two-wheeled EVs has been higher in the region than electric cars, accounting for about 8 percent of all vehicle sales in market leader Vietnam in 2020, Eijbergen added.

However, McKinsey & Company's Gupta said the higher cost of buying an EV compared to an internal-combustion engine (ICE) vehicle prevented many drivers from making the switch.

To address this, governments must introduce subsidies at the point of purchase to help buyers and provide incentives or tax breaks for carmakers to reduce production costs, Gupta said.

Last year, Thailand approved a package of incentives including tax cuts and subsidies to promote EVs, while earlier this month Indonesia said it was looking at slashing value-added tax on electric car sales to 1 percent from 11 percent.

More charging infrastructure and greater availability and choice of EVs would also help increase the appetite for these vehicles in the region, as would governments setting timelines for banning petrol and diesel vehicles, Gupta added.

While many Southeast Asian nations have ambitious net-zero plans – which include support for EVs purchases, rebates and charging infrastructure – implementation is widely uneven, said Gregory Poling, director of the Southeast Asia Program at the U.S.-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

As in many parts of the world, the lack of charging stations outside cities is a problem, with expansion in countries such as Indonesia – an archipelago of thousands of islands – likely to be a challenge, he added.

“EVs are still a luxury item for the most part in Southeast Asia, as they are globally,” Poling said.

Climate not a concern

Greater take-up of EVs in Southeast Asian nations would help meet international climate goals and assist them in attracting companies looking to invest in nations joining the global decarbonisation push, Poling said.

In coming years, Poling predicted, Southeast Asian countries will try to position themselves as regional EV manufacturing hubs. Ample nickel reserves in Indonesia and the Philippines could play a role in making the needed batteries.

However, curbing climate change is unlikely to be the driving factor for EV growth in most of the region.

“Most of these countries, understandably, still believe rightly that they didn’t make this problem,” said Poling.

“The West made this problem, so why should they have to crimp economic growth – if that’s what it takes – in the name of switching over to green electricity generation and EVs?”

Abhilash Gupta, an automotive analyst at research firm Counterpoint, noted that production of EV batteries is unlikely to be carbon neutral, and ramped up mining and manufacturing could carry environmental and human risks.

“(Southeast Asian) nations are rushing to attract more multinational corporations and, therefore, are not adequately focusing on sustainable practices in the mining and production cycle,” he said.

Indonesia has in the last three years signed at least a dozen deals, worth more than \$15 billion, for battery and EV production in the country, while President Joko Widodo has sought to convince Tesla CEO Elon Musk to invest.

‘Chicken and egg situation’

For Malaysia’s Farhan, working at Kuala Lumpur’s iconic Petronas Twin Towers gives him access to underground parking and about 50 charging points – the largest single concentration of EV charging stations in the region, he says.

But switching to EVs is more difficult for the general public, especially when many condominiums refuse to install charging points or even allow home owners to do so at their own cost, he said.

Many auto dealers are also not trained well enough to promote EVs or offer basic advice for potential EV owners, he added.

However, Farhan believes greater tax incentives from the government are helping. Malaysia has import duty and excise tax exemptions for EVs and the new government is expected to announce more financial incentives in its 2023 budget this week.

Farhan, a member of the Malaysian Electric Vehicle Owners Club, said there now are about 2,400 registered EVs in the country, up from around 240 in early 2021.

He urged the government to set aggressive EV targets and establish a single body to lead the country’s EV charge – but acknowledged that the overall picture was complex.

“It’s a sensitive thing because Malaysia is a net producer of oil,” he said. “It’s a chicken and egg situation.”

“(But) I’m not going to buy petrol. It’s going to be electric vehicles from now on,” he added.

[More US, China financial cooperation seen by industry insiders](#)

NEW YORK – The United States and China have cooperation potential in the financial sector given China's further opening-up, bilateral collaboration between regulators and shared interests in fighting climate change, according to industry insiders and experts.

Cooperation potential

China and the United States could further promote cooperation between their financial institutions, such as in the opening up of financial markets to each other and in currency affairs, said Mingzhi Liu, professor of economics and finance at Tsinghua University PBC School of Finance.

The financial cooperation between the United States and China benefits the two economies and the world at large, said Liu at a panel discussion organized by the American Chinese Finance Association (ACFA) on Thursday.

"Together, China and the United States can do many things," said Liu, citing cooperation in the transition to green energy, financial digitalization and safeguarding stability in the financial markets.

Liu added the two countries could cooperate in helping emerging markets and developing countries transition toward a greener future through financial means, a view echoed by Jeffrey Ball, scholar-in-residence at Stanford University's Steyer-Taylor Center for Energy Policy and Finance.

To the extent that China decarbonizes its outbound investment, there will be an increased opportunity in markets abroad, not just for Chinese firms but also for American firms, said Ball at the panel.

"There are things that the United States can do given its role in international institutions to support rather than thwart the greening of China's outbound investment," said Ball.

Ball said the desire for people on both sides of the Pacific to cooperate is strong.

"I believe the door of Chinese financial industry opening will be wider and wider," said Liu, "and I hope cooperation between China and the United States in the financial sector will become broader."

Opening-up adds attractiveness

The further opening-up of China's financial sector will bring more opportunities for US players, said Liu.

Liu said the US financial players have performed well in China, with some expanding businesses in China.

China's switch to a registration-based initial public offering (IPO) system means that China's regulator is allowing the market to play a much bigger role in IPO price discovery and price setting, said Bryan Lin, chief executive officer of Huatai Securities (USA), Inc.

Since the introduction of the qualified foreign institutional investors program in the early 2000s, the Chinese government has made the program more flexible, more user-friendly and therefore more attractive as a tool for foreign investors, Lin said at the panel discussion.

He said northbound trading under Shanghai-Hong Kong Stock Connect program now accounts for 10 percent to 12 percent of total turnovers in the Shanghai Stock Exchange, up from 2 percent to 3 percent in early 2018.

"Offshore investors' ability to invest was significantly expanded, and we see a lot of activities by international investors," Lin said.

Lin also highlighted the attractiveness of Chinese onshore equities as investors allocate assets globally and seek relative value.

The China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) has recently clarified what Chinese companies must do to list overseas, with the variable interest entity structure allowed to continue, he said.

Chinese firms issue bonds and stocks in the US, bringing investment opportunities to US investors and financial institutions, said Liu.

Last year, North American investors were the largest and most active investors trading in Chinese equities and paying commissions, including the Chinese American depositary receipts listed in the United States, echoed Lin, citing third-party data.

As the US subsidiary of a leading Chinese securities house, Huatai Securities (USA) is expanding its operations, including in hiring more professionals, said Lin.

The US Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB) confirmed in December 2022 that it was able to completely inspect and investigate the accounting firms headquartered in the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong, and thus vacating its relevant determinations made in 2021.

The PCAOB decision, which came a few months after China and the US entered into an audit oversight cooperation agreement, marked a "watershed event" as it removed the threat of forced delisting and reopened the door to further Chinese IPOs in the form of depository receipts, said Lin.

In the past two years, the two sides have conducted multiple rounds of discussions and negotiations regarding financial regulatory cooperation, which is a good thing, Lin said.

PBBM wants detailed cropping time to protect local agri sector

By: Azer Parrocha

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. said Tuesday the country’s agricultural sector must use a “detailed” cropping schedule to ensure that agricultural imports would not harm local production.

In a news release, the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) said Marcos pitched this idea during a meeting with officials of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and other concerned agencies at Malacañan Palace.

A cropping schedule or cropping calendar is a schedule of the rice growing season from the fallow period and land preparation, to crop establishment and maintenance, to harvest and storage, according to the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI).

Marcos, who heads the DA, asked agriculture officials to go into more detail on the cyclical nature of crops in the Philippines to avoid importing products during the harvest season.

He said the agency must consider the “sensitivities” of local cropping, particularly their cyclical nature when sourcing products abroad.

“Hindi tayo nag-i-import ng kahit anong produkto pagka maraming production para naman magamit natin lahat ng production na galing sa Pilipinas (We do not import any product when there is high production so that we can use all of the country’s production),” he said.

“Kung mag-i-import lang tayo, kung talagang may kulang (We only import if a product is really lacking) and that’s what I mean about the cyclical nature of crops, that we have to be sensitive to that.”

Marcos said changing the planting schedule in some areas of the Philippines to take advantage of the moving rainy season may bring some benefits as farmers can have three cropping cycles a year.

He, however, said the agricultural sector must also learn to “adjust accordingly” as climate change “complicates things.”

Aside from cropping schedules, Marcos and DA officials also discussed the country’s rice demand outlook for this year.

The DA also presented to Marcos interventions to ensure enough supply of corn, pork, chicken, fish, sugar, and rice.

It also recommended the continuous implementation of integrated national swine production initiatives for recovery and expansion programs to speed up the recovery of the hogs sector from African swine fever.

She said the meeting also tackled wealth production in agriculture by strategically implementing convergence initiatives.

Last year, the agriculture, forestry and fisheries (AFF) sector performed modestly at 0.5 percent.

The modest growth was attributed to the positive Gross Value Added (GVA) growth of 2.3 percent in livestock and 6.7 percent in poultry despite the decline in the performance of the crops and fisheries subsectors by -1.1 percent and -3.5 percent, respectively.

Under the Marcos administration's Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028, the DA is targeting a growth rate of 1.8 percent to 3.3 percent in the agricultural sector from 2023 to 2028.

THE CLIMATE REALITY PROJECT

[Advocates laud EPR Act, push for more circular policies and business practices](#)

Quezon City—The enactment of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Act of 2022 is a good start but more transformational and progressive policies, programs, and business practices are needed to enable a circular economy for the Philippines.

This was emphasized by sustainability advocates yesterday during a town hall discussion at the Quezon City Sports Club, entitled “The Philippine Circular Economy Agenda: Integrating Sustainable and Strategic Waste Management Systems,” which was organized by international research organization Stratbase ADR Institute with the Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship (PBEST) and The Climate Reality Project Philippines.

Participated by key stakeholders from diverse sectors, the event tackled the national government’s circular economy agenda, the private sector’s circular business model initiatives that can be adopted at scale, and consumer responsibilities in effective waste management.

“The [EPR] Act, while not the only solution, is an important enabler to accelerate our transition to a circular economy,” Assistant Secretary Gilbert Gonzales of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said during the event where he presented the salient provisions of the said law.

The EPR Act, which was passed in 2022, requires large enterprises or business entities with over PhP100 million in total assets to be environmentally responsible throughout the life cycle of their products, by reducing and preventing waste and pollution. It imposes tighter mandates for plastic-producing companies that must recover or offset their plastic packaging footprint by 20%-80% starting in 2023 up to 2028 and beyond.

“We’ve made a significant step with the EPR Law, but our next big step should already turn off our plastic faucet. Shifting to a circular economy is a pathway that can help address our addiction and dependence on plastics, which is aggravating the climate crisis,” Nazrin Castro, Manager of The Climate Reality Project Philippines, said during the forum.

Circular economy, as defined under the EPR Act, 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. This is the exact opposite of the current linear economic model, where raw materials extracted from natural resources end up as waste on land, water, and air.

The future is circular: environmental and economic benefits of circular economy

During the event, Climate Reality Leader Carlo Delantar, 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.

“If we do that right, then a lot of post-consumer issues that we’re talking about now will be completely eliminated,” Delantar added.

Castro, on her part, added that a circular economy will rectify the traditional and backward notions and approaches and the current hyper-consumeristic behavior and attitude towards development—especially on the aspects of consumption and production where greenhouse gas emissions are mainly concerned.

Mr. Alexander Cabrera, Vice President of the Management Association of the Philippines (MAP), noted that a circular economy model does not only benefit the environment and society but also adds value to businesses.

Cabrera also shared various circular business models that are already changing the private sector landscape in the country and that participants could consider in their respective operations. This includes 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).

Adopting these circular models makes good business sense.

According to a Pulse Asia survey conducted from November to December 2022, an overwhelming majority of Filipinos (83%) prefer to patronize products and/or services by entities that they believe have environment-friendly operations and products.

“The survey results show that 8 out of 10 Filipinos, regardless of area and socioeconomic class, expressed preference for products and services produced by firms that they believe to be environment-friendly,” Dr. Ronald Holmes, President of Pulse Asia, presented during the forum.

“Given this message, there is one challenge. And this is for firms to satisfy these preferences by providing products and services within the reach of consumers,” he added.

The need for a national ban on single-use plastics

While there are certain provisions in the EPR Act that are contentious to her organization—such as the inclusion of “thermal treatment” facilities and the absence of consumer safeguards from additional costs to implement EPR schemes, Castro said that putting greater responsibility on businesses that put out massive amounts of plastics in the market is still a cause for celebration.

“While we support the implementation of the EPR Act, we are also keen to support once again legislation to regulate and phaseout single-use plastics, Castro noted.

Local and community-driven zero-waste solutions

At the end of the event, Climate Reality Philippines signed a Memorandum of Understanding with PBEST to develop the online platform of #BawalPlastikan.

The platform, which will be launched later this year, will serve as a compendium of local policies and initiatives of LGUs, the private sector, civil society organizations, and other groups that reduce and manage plastic waste and pollution, especially on single-use plastics, as well as promote zero-waste and sustainability practices, through research and crowdsourcing.

THE MANILA TIMES

[ADB readying new PH country strategy](#)

THE Asian Development Bank is preparing to update its country strategy for the Philippines, and is looking to provide \$3.5 billion in loans annually to support the country's development.

"We are now looking for a new strategy... for 2024 to 2029," ADB Country Director Kelly Bird told an economic forum organized by The Manila Times on Tuesday.

The strategic priorities under the plan include intensifying climate action, investing in climate-smart transportation and communications, and investing in Filipinos.

These are aligned with the government's Philippine Development Plan that aims to reduce poverty and income inequality, sustain high economic growth, and add more, better and "green" jobs.

The \$3.5 billion in annual lending will be used for climate adaptation, biodiversity protection and continued investments in mass public transportation, education skills and employment, social protection and health care.

Bird noted the ADB's ongoing involvement in mass transport systems in and around Metro Manila, including the \$2.74-billion Malolos-Clark railway project, \$123-million EDSA Greenways project and the \$175-million Metro Manila bridges project.

In Mindanao, these are the ongoing \$100-million rehabilitation of war-torn Marawi and a growth corridor road sector project worth \$380 million.

The ADB, Bird said, could approve the \$1.5-billion Bataan-Cavite bridge project, which would be the second-longest bridge in the world, and the \$924-million Davao bus project later this year.

Lined up for next year, meanwhile, is the \$1.2-billion Laguna Lakeshore Rail and the Metro Rail Transit-4 projects.

The 2018-2023 country strategy approved in 2018 focused on three priority areas: accelerating infrastructure and long-term investments, promoting local economic development in Mindanao and Visayas, and investing in people.

The ADB then said it expected to lend an estimated \$7.8 billion, or nearly \$2 billion annually, from 2018 to 2021.

Projects covered by the strategy included the Malolos-Clark railway, North-South Commuter Rail, Metro Manila bridges, the Bataan-Cavite long-span bridge and the EDSA Greenways.

The ADB also said it would support capital market development, private sector participation and innovations such as green finance solutions to create more options for long-term infrastructure finance.

[PH gets better growth outlook](#)

By: Niña Myka Pauline Arceo

GLOBAL and domestic headwinds will weigh on Philippine economic growth this year, but the country could still perform much better than initially expected given its fundamentals and better-than-expected results last year, experts said Tuesday.

Speaking at an economic forum organized by The Manila Times, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Resident Representative Ragnar Gudmundsson said the Washington-based multilateral was now looking to raise its 2023 Philippine growth forecast to 5.5 percent from 5.0 percent.

"[W]ith the strong Q4 (fourth quarter) numbers for 2022, we're going to revise our projections," he said.

The country's medium-term potential growth remained close to 6.5 percent, Gudmundsson said, reflecting dividends from recent structural reforms. An improvement in foreign investments, continued reforms and productivity gains could raise this closer to government targets.

Gross domestic product (GDP) growth averaged 7.6 percent last year, exceeding the government's 6.5- to 7.5-percent target, due to strong consumer spending, employment gains, and a continued economic reopening.

This year's official target is a lower 6.0 to 7.0 percent with economic managers noting risks from high inflation and global developments.

The 2024-2028 goal is 6.5-8.0 percent.

Asian Development Bank Country Director Kelly Bird, meanwhile, told the forum that Philippine growth would remain "solid" this year at "around 6.0 percent ... coming off a very good year in 2022."

The expansion, he added, will be underpinned by an acceleration in public infrastructure spending, a continued employment recovery, and also remittances and tourism gains.

For World Bank Country Director Ndiame Diop, GDP growth this year will be a "relatively decent" 5.6 percent as the average outlook for emerging market economies was lower by 3.7 percent.

He warned, however, that with the world "one shock away" from a recession, achieving 5.6 percent was not guaranteed.

Locally, continued monetary policy tightening could end up limiting growth, Diop added.

"That's a very big headwind that may offset all the good things that are being done to boost growth from high investment in infrastructure but also some of the reforms that the government is implementing," he continued.

The ADB's Bird, who said the Philippine economy had completed a recovery and was now in an expansion phase to its potential growth rate of "slightly above 6.0 percent," also warned of risks from continued tightening.

"What's going to be key ... for growth this year is sustaining infrastructure spending above 5.0 percent," he noted, but added that "high-interest rates can start to slow private investments later in the year."

Gudmundsson also said that monetary policy could dampen credit growth.

The full impact of 400 basis points of interest rate hikes since last year has yet to be felt, he added, given a likely lag time of up to six quarters.

Speaking earlier in the day, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Senior Assistant Governor Illuminada Sicat said that monetary authorities believed the economy was in "a strong position to absorb the impact of our policy rate hikes."

"Did our monetary tightening kill growth? It's important to think of it from a long-term perspective. Once inflation becomes embedded, the risk of output loss becomes larger," she said.

"This is similar to doctors addressing illness. Allowing it to worsen today will require a greater dosage later to cure it."

Supporting the economic outlook is a view that foreign exchange pressures have dissipated but still require vigilance, that robust external accounts — particularly remittances — provide a cushion against global spillovers, and a strong domestic banking system.

The BSP's policy actions, Sicat claimed, were all supporting of growth. Future decisions "will be guided by our assessment of the latest information," she said in her presentation.

Gudmundsson agreed, saying that "continued near-term tightening is appropriate."

Globally, "central banks should be careful not to pull their foot from the brake too early."

Challenges for the Philippines, Bird said, include the need for structural adjustments "over the next decade or so" given the "scarring effects" of the pandemic on firms and employment, underinvestments in infrastructure and people, and climate change.

For Gudmundsson, these involve calibrating the policy mix to put the recovery on a firmer footing, building fiscal buffers against downside risks, and raising long-term growth and living standards.

Diop called attention to the fact that a large part of the population has yet to benefit from the economic recovery and said that the government had to work on improving food security and social protection measures, among others.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Marcos orders NIA, DPWH: Speed up irrigation projects](#)

By: Alexis Romero

MANILA, Philippines — President Marcos yesterday ordered the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) to work together and speed up the implementation of high-impact irrigation projects, an official said yesterday.

NIA Administrator Eddie Guillen said the “convergence effort” by agencies would allow the government to save money and implement projects with high economic returns.

“We have given our list of projects and he told Secretary Manny Bonoan of public works that we should help each other. If the public works department identifies a project, the NIA will provide assistance,” Guillen said at a press briefing in Malacañang.

He said that ideally, the government has to carry out P200 billion worth of dam projects a year that can serve different purposes.

“For me, the government should implement around P200 billion worth of dam projects to change the agricultural landscape,” Guillen said.

“Dams are flood control projects. The advantage of dams is they are not for irrigation. They can also serve as power sources... they can be used for aquaculture and tourism. You can place solar panels on the dams too,” he added.

Guillen said the NIA could identify projects that are expected to yield benefits or present project plans to the DPWH.

He said Marcos wants to bridge the gap caused by “parochial thinking” of some government agencies that prefer to undertake projects by themselves.

The government’s convergence efforts in food security were discussed during the sectoral meeting of the agriculture department yesterday in Malacañang.

The meeting tackled the rice supply-and-demand outlook in the country for this year, interventions to ensure enough supply of corn, pork, chicken, fish, sugar and rice, as well as initiatives aimed at speeding up the recovery of the hog sector from African swine fever.

Cropping schedule

At the same meeting, Marcos said he wants a detailed cropping schedule to ensure that agricultural imports won't harm local production.

According to the Presidential Communications Office, Marcos asked agriculture officials to be more detailed on the cyclical nature of crops to avoid importing products during the harvest season.

Marcos cited the need for the government to "consider the sensitivities of local cropping," particularly its cyclical nature when sourcing products from other countries.

"We don't just import products if we have a lot of production so we can consume all the local produce," the President said in Filipino.

"We'll only import if we really lack supply and that's what I mean about the cyclical nature of crops, that we have to be sensitive to that," he added.

Marcos said Filipino farmers have to alter their planting schedule in some areas due to climate change.

The changes in the schedule, which were meant to take advantage of the moving rainy season, may yield some benefits as farmers can have three cropping seasons per year, he added.

Climate change, Marcos said, complicates the process and the farming sector should adjust accordingly.

The agriculture, forestry and fishery sectors grew by a modest 0.5 percent last year.

Under the Philippine Development Plan, the agriculture department is seeking a growth rate from 1.8 percent to 3.3 percent in the agriculture sector from 2023 to 2028.

Fishery

Marcos gave assurance that the government has started crafting a plan to improve the Philippines' fishery sector.

Agencies have been tasked to develop the necessary infrastructure and facilities to increase production, he said.

“So we have started to formulate a plan to improve the fishing grounds for our aquaculture that is in land, in our rivers and freshwater, although we have a good supply of tilapia and bangus. Although we are looking at galunggong, but the truth is we still have other areas of production,” he said.

“Now, we still lack production in the fisheries so we need to look at the mariculture, the fish in the sea. That is basically what we were discussing and putting together. Also, we were already starting to give the (task) to different agencies like DTI (Department of Trade and Industry), DBP (Development Bank of the Philippines), LandBank and the CDA or the Cooperative Development Authority.”

Measures designed to improve production of basic agricultural commodities include rehabilitation and modernization of fish port complexes as well as implementation of agricultural and fishery machinery and equipment service center.

Base on the 2023 demand and supply outlook for basic commodities, the Philippines' 3.55million-metric ton demand for fish outpaces supply at 2.97 MT.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[CCC, Papal Nuncio eye climate cooperation](#)

By: Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos

MANILA – The Climate Change Commission (CCC) and the Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines have sought partnership to mitigate the impact of climate change in the country.

This developed after CCC vice chairperson and executive director Robert Borje met with Papal Nuncio to the Philippines Archbishop Charles Brown, the commission said in a statement on Tuesday.

“The CCC and the Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines look forward to forging enhanced partnership on climate change action,” it said.

The CCC noted that during the meeting, Brown and Borje emphasized the importance of climate action as an “integral component of stewardship role.”

Both Borje and Brown acknowledged that urgent climate action is part of stewardship roles that “uphold human dignity,” adding that such move would benefit those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Borje said his meeting with the Apostolic Nuncio signifies the CCC’s recognition of the crucial role of faith and faith-based organizations in transformative climate actions, as well as in sustainable development, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian assistance.

“The Commission welcomes every opportunity to strengthen partnerships, including with the Apostolic Nuncio,” he said.

“We recognize the efforts of the Apostolic Nuncio to move and respond to key issues on climate change and disaster reduction and response with emphasis on key stewardship roles for the faithful,” Borje added.

Brown, on the other hand, lauded the CCC for its “huge contribution” to the government’s efforts in combatting climate change, saying the commission’s role is “extremely important.”

“We [all] have a fundamental responsibility to care for one another and the environment,” he said. “The world is interconnected, and it includes not only the consequences of our actions, but also cooperative solutions.”

The CCC has been holding meetings with different agencies, local government offices and other concerned stakeholders to strengthen the Marcos administration’s commitment to delivering on key climate actions.

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