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CNN PHILIPPINES

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BERLIN – Climate change could cause economic damage of up to 900 billion euro (USD956 billion) in Germany by 2050, according to a study commissioned by the German Economy Ministry.

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By: Joyce Ann L. Rocamora

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By: Perla Lena

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MANILA - The Senate on Monday approved on third and final reading the Malacanang-sponsored New Agrarian Emancipation bill that will condone all loans including interests, penalties and surcharges, arising from the award of agriculture lands under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program as of Dec. 31, 2022.

RAPPLER

[Why jeepney phaseout is anti-poor, will do little for environment](#)

By: Ralf Rivas

MANILA, Philippines – The Philippine government's move to force jeepney drivers to shift to the more environment-friendly, modern jeepney has faced backlash over its anti-poor terms.

REUTERS

[Climate change could cost Latin America 16% of GDP this century, says Moody's](#)

MEXICO CITY, March 6 (Reuters) - Climate change could cost Latin America nearly a fifth of its gross domestic product (GDP) by the end of the century without new policies to curb its impact, according to a Moody's Analytics report published Monday.

THE MANILA TIMES

[US hosts marine protection summit in Palawan](#)

By: Leander C. Domingo

THE United States government convened the first-ever civil society organization (CSO) summit in Puerto Princesa City to coordinate action for marine biodiversity conservation and protection in the coastal areas of Northern Luzon, Mindoro, and Palawan that face the South China Sea.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Group urges Marcos to end 'plunder of resources' by large-scale mining firms](#)

By: Cristina Chi

MANILA, Philippines — After two communities formed barricades against mining firms in February, Alyansa Tigil Mina has called on President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr. to put a stop to illegal mining operations that wreak havoc on the environment and surrounding areas.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

CNA

[Sultan al-Jaber, COP28 president, calls for climate action](#)

Sultan al-Jaber, CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Co, who will lead international climate talks later this year told energy industry power players on Monday that the world must cut emissions 7 per cent every year and eliminate all emissions of methane, strong comments for an oil executive.

But speaking at Ceraweek in Houston, al-Jaber did not directly address emissions from transportation. the destination of most crude oil. Emissions from transport are the largest contributor to climate change in many countries, including the United States.

Al-Jaber singled out electricity, cement, steel and aluminium as targets for clean up, but not trucks, cars, trains and aircraft. He called for far greater investment to speed the transition to cleaner industries.

“According to the IEA, in 2022, the world invested US\$1.4 trillion in the energy transition,” he said. “We need over three times that amount.”

Each year, nations gather at COP to discuss how Paris Agreement goals to limit global warming to just 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2050, can be achieved through international collaboration.

The 28th international Conference of the Parties or COP28 will be held in Dubai, Nov 30 to Dec 12. As president, al-Jaber will have influence over how much pressure is brought to bear on those most responsible for climate change, coal, oil and gas companies and countries that produce the fuels.

Al-Jaber is the United Arab Emirates minister of industry and advanced technology, also serves as the chairman of Masdar, a renewable energy company.

Ceraweek attracts high level oil and gas officials each year and is hosted by S&P Global.

This year COP28 will be held in UAE, which has drawn criticism given the nation’s high level of crude production. The Abu Dhabi National Oil Co pumps approximately 4 million barrels of crude a day and plans on expanding to 5 million barrels daily.

Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. See more about AP's climate initiative [here](#). The AP is solely responsible for all content.

CNBC

[Risky feedback loops are accelerating climate change, scientists warn](#)

By: Emma Newburger

Risky feedback loops that are accelerating global climate change may not be fully accounted for in current climate models, according to a recent study published in the scientific journal *One Earth*.

A group of international scientists from institutions like Oregon State University, Exeter University and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany, identified 41 climate feedback loops in what they called “the most extensive list available of climate feedback loops.” Of these, they discovered 27 amplifying feedback loops that are accelerating global warming and only seven that are slowing it.

A feedback loop is a cyclical chain reaction that either speeds up or slows down warming. An amplifying, or positive, feedback loop is the process in which an initial change that prompts temperature rise triggers another change that causes even more temperature rise.

These positive feedback loops, which can be large and difficult to quantify, threaten to cause a permanent shift away from Earth’s current global climate, researchers warned. For instance, warming in the Arctic has led to melting sea ice, which has prompted even more warming because water has a darker surface than ice and therefore absorbs more heat.

Another example involves the impact of wildfires, which are becoming more frequent as the Earth warms and drought conditions intensify. Combustion of the vegetation during wildfires releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which then contributes to the greenhouse effect and triggers even higher temperatures.

“There are many such amplifying feedbacks, including some that are not fully accounted for in climate models,” said Christopher Wolf, a postdoctoral scholar at Oregon State University and a lead author of the study.

“Consequently, the effects of greenhouse gas emissions could be underestimated and strong climate mitigation policies are needed,” Wolf added.

Other dangerous feedback loops include the thawing of permafrost, or the frozen ground that underlies much of the Arctic and contains plant and animal remains. As

temperature rise accelerates the thaw of permafrost, the organic matter in the frozen layer breaks down and releases carbon dioxide and methane gas into the atmosphere.

Tim Lenton, an Earth systems scientist at the University of Exeter and one of the study co-authors, said the results suggest that the amplification of climate change could be greater than expected.

“That is yet another reason to accelerate action to limit global warming – because that also limits how much it is going to get amplified by the feedbacks in the climate system,” Lenton said.

Some feedback loops may also be associated with key climate tipping points that could significantly disrupt the global climate system, researchers said. For example, feedback loops that are driving ice melt in the Arctic could ultimately trigger the collapse of the Greenland ice sheet.

“In the worst case, if positive feedbacks are sufficiently strong, this could result in tragic climate change outside the control of humans,” researchers wrote.

“It is too late to fully prevent the pain of climate change as severe impacts are already being felt, but if we can have a much better understanding of feedback loops and make the needed transformative changes soon while prioritizing basic human needs, there might still be time to limit the harm,” they wrote.

CNN

[Countries agree historic oceans treaty to protect the high seas](#)

By: Laura Paddison

Nearly 200 countries have agreed to a legally-binding "high seas treaty" to protect marine life in international waters, which cover around half of the planet's surface, but have long been essentially lawless.

The agreement was signed on Saturday evening after two weeks of negotiations at the United Nations headquarters in New York ended in a mammoth final session of more than 36 hours — but it has been two decades in the making.

The treaty provides legal tools to establish and manage marine protected areas — sanctuaries to protect the ocean's biodiversity. It also covers environmental assessments to evaluate the potential damage of commercial activities, such as deep sea mining, before they start and a pledge by signatories to share ocean resources.

"This is a historic day for conservation and a sign that in a divided world, protecting nature and people can triumph over geopolitics," Laura Meller, Oceans Campaigner at Greenpeace Nordic, said in a statement.

The high seas are sometimes called the world's last true wilderness. This huge stretch of water — everything that lies 200 nautical miles beyond countries' territorial waters — makes up more than 60% of the world's oceans by surface area.

These waters provide the habitat for a wealth of unique species and ecosystems, support global fisheries on which billions of people rely and are a crucial buffer against the climate crisis — the ocean has absorbed more than 90% of the world's excess heat over the last decades.

Yet they are also highly vulnerable. Climate change is causing ocean temperatures to rise and increasingly acidic waters threaten marine life.

Human activity on the ocean is adding pressure, including industrial fishing, shipping, the nascent deep sea mining industry and the race to harness the ocean's "genetic resources" — material from marine plants and animals for use in industries such as pharmaceuticals.

"Currently, there are no comprehensive regulations for the protections of marine life in this area," Liz Karan, oceans project director at the Pew Charitable Trusts, told CNN.

Rules that do exist are piecemeal, fragmented and weakly enforced, meaning activities on the high seas are often unregulated and insufficiently monitored leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.

Only 1.2% of international waters are protected, and only 0.8% are identified as "highly protected."

"There are huge unmanaged gaps of habitat between the puzzle pieces. It is truly that bad out there," Douglas McCauley, professor of ocean science at the University of California Santa Barbara, told CNN.

The new oceans treaty aims to fill those gaps by providing the legal force to create and manage marine protected areas in international waters. Experts say this will be vital for meeting global biodiversity pledges nations made at COP15, the UN Biodiversity Conference in Montreal in December.

A successful treaty "will help us achieve the goal of conserving or protecting at least 30% of the global ocean by 2030," Monica Medina, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, told CNN by email.

The agreement of the oceans treaty marks a process that started around two decades ago(<https://www.highseasalliance.org/high-seas-alliance-timeline/>).

Back in 2004, the UN set up an ad hoc group to discuss ocean protection. It wasn't until 2015, that the organization adopted a resolution to develop a binding oceans treaty and, after years of preparatory talks, negotiations began in earnest in 2018.

"It has been a long arc from the first time the question was raised, to where we are now," Karan said.

Many had hoped that 2022 would be the breakthrough, but talks in August — the second round that year — ended in failure.

These latest negotiations were billed as a final chance for the world's oceans.

There were points during the negotiations where some worried that agreement would never happen, as conflicts threatened to derail talks. "It's been a bit of a roller coaster ride," said Karan.

Major sticking points included nailing down the processes for creating marine protected areas and ensuring costs and benefits were shared equitably -- especially as many developing countries may not have the technology or capacity to do their own scientific exploration of the high seas.

But after a grueling final session, the talks ended late Saturday night with an agreement.

"We praise countries for seeking compromises, putting aside differences and delivering a treaty that will let us protect the oceans, build our resilience to climate change and safeguard the lives and livelihoods of billions of people," Greenpeace's Meller said.

Countries now have to formally adopt and ratify the treaty. Then the work will start to implement the marine sanctuaries and to attempt to meet the target of protecting 30% of global oceans by 2030. "We have half a decade left, and we can't be complacent," Meller said.

"If we want the high seas to be healthy for the next century we have to modernize this system -- now. And this is our one, and potentially only, chance to do that. And time is urgent. Climate change is about to rain down hellfire on our ocean," McCauley said.

CNN PHILIPPINES

[Canada to work with PH on nutrition, food security, climate change](#)

By: Tristan Nodalo

Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, March 7) — The Canadian government is studying the possibility of partnering with the Philippines in addressing the nutrition of Filipino school children, capacity building on food security, and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

These will be the short-term priorities of Canadian Minister for International Development Harjit Sajjan in the Philippines-Canada cooperation.

“I would be looking at how we can support greater nutrition for kids in the Philippines. This is because we already have a strong relationship in development. We can then look at how we can improve it further,” Sajjan told reporters during his visit to the Philippines.

Sajjan visited a school in Surigao Del Norte to check on the progress of recovery and rehabilitation after Typhoon Odette. Canada has been providing aid to the country’s typhoon-hit communities.

“I’d like to move very quickly on the nutrition program in schools and how schools are doing gardening. On the nutrition side, we already have a program in place in other parts of the world, we also provide different vitamins that are in Canada. Research has shown that proper vitamins can bring the kids to work better and learn more,” he said.

Sajjan also noted that Canada can share expertise in terms of food technology, which can help in the Philippines’ bid towards food security.

“Create jobs, within the entire supply chain from the food to agri-tech – there’s technology in [agriculture], cold storage, transportation, and how you sell it,” he said.

The minister also acknowledged that the Philippines is among the most disaster-prone countries in the world, and therefore there is a need to work together to mitigate the impact of climate change. But he said the partnership should not only be about funds but should be about capacity building.

“We will provide support but it will come with capacity building. We won’t be just giving equipment. Using equipment is useless without efficient training or skills,” Sajjan added.

MANILA BULLETIN

Bill establishing evac centers all over PH hurdles House

By: Ellson Quismorio

With 307 congressmen voting in the affirmative and just one in the negative, the House of Representatives has approved on third and final reading a bill that seeks to establish evacuation centers in every city and municipality in the country.

Under House Bill (HB) No.7354, these evacuation centers will serve as immediate and temporary accommodation for people who have been displaced by disasters, calamities, or other emergency events such as typhoons, floods, and storm surges.

The bill gained the House's final nod during plenary session Monday night, March 6. The official result of nominal voting on HB No.7354 was 307-1-0 (yes-no-abstain).

Deputy Speaker and Ilocos Sur 2nd district Rep. Kristine Singson-Meehan, who presided over plenary session Monday, announced the bill's third-reading passage.

House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, and Tingog Party-list Reps. Yedda Marie Romualdez and Jude Acidre were among the principal authors of the measure.

The proposed evacuation centers may also be used by victims of fire, and the outbreak of illnesses and diseases that present imminent danger to life and property, as per Section 2 of the bill.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRMC) and local executives of provinces, cities, and municipalities are tasked to identify areas to be given the highest priority in the establishment of new evacuation centers.

"It shall be the policy of the State to uphold the constitutional right of the people for the protection of their life and property and the promotion of the general welfare. Towards this end, the State shall establish and maintain a safe, fully-equipped, and fully-operational evacuation center, responsive to environmental or climatic events, in recognition of the vulnerability of the Philippines to climate change, and hazards such as the occurrence of severe floods, typhoons, and other natural or human-induced disasters, illnesses, diseases and other factors that affect the environment," HB No.7354 read.

The bill also provides that existing structures that can meet the minimum requirements or can be upgraded to effectively serve as evacuation centers may be designated as such according to the needs of the local government unit (LGU) concerned.

An LGU included in the priority list is also allowed to improve schools or existing structures used as evacuation centers by making these compliant with the minimum requirements such as location and structural capacity.

Under HB No.7354, the LGU is also in charge of the operation, supervision, and management of evacuation centers.

It provides that the initial amount necessary for the construction and maintenance of multi-purpose gyms will be charged against the budget provided for this purpose under the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

On the other hand, the construction and maintenance of additional facilities for schools already used as evacuation centers shall be charged against the appropriations for the Department of Education (DepEd)

Thereafter, such amounts necessary for the continued implementation will be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[Gatchalian: Tax breaks on e-vehicles to help promote 'green' transportation in PH](#)

MANILA, Philippines – Senator Sherwin Gatchalian said the newly imposed tax breaks for certain types of electric vehicles (EVs) will help Filipinos adapt to the regular use of EVs that may reduce carbon emissions in the country.

Gatchalian, the principal author of the Republic Act 11697 or the Electric Vehicle Industry Development Act (EVIDA), said that the modified tariff rates will help make EVs more affordable for the local consumers.

The senator made the statement following the issuance of Executive Order No. 12 series of 2023, which halted the import duty of electric vehicles for the next five years to help mainstream EV usage and create a new industry that will support it in the country.

Under EO12, several types of EVs have received tariff reductions and removal from the previous rates ranging from five to 30 percent.

“We expect that tariff exemption of EVs will lead the country to usher in an EV ecosystem that is vibrant, responsive, and dynamic,” the senator said in a statement.

‘Inclusivity needed in the EO’

While EO12 reduces the tariff for certain types of EVs, International think-tank and research organization Stratbase ADR Institute said that this can be done better by including e-motorcycles in the measure.

Under the directive, e-motorcycles are still subject to 30 percent tariff while the taxes for kick scooters, pocket motorcycles, and self-balancing cycles were reduced to zero.

Stratbase President Prof. Dindo Manhit said that the EO should be modified as workers and students use motorcycles to commute to work while four-wheeled vehicles are often only afforded by higher-income individuals.

In 2021, the Land Transportation Office recorded that almost 8 million units of motorcycles are registered in the agency.

Environmental effects

Meanwhile, environmentalists have been proposing the shift to EVs in the country to help mitigate the effects of climate change. Along with this is the call to shift to renewable energy production as the country is still sourcing its electricity mainly from fossil fuels and coal.

According to the Statista Research Department, the power production in the Philippines is still dominated by coal at 47.6 percent, followed by other fossils at 18 percent, and gas at 10.7 percent, which totals 76.3 percent.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Climate change could cost Germany \\$956B by 2050, study finds](#)

BERLIN – Climate change could cause economic damage of up to 900 billion euro (USD956 billion) in Germany by 2050, according to a study commissioned by the German Economy Ministry.

The Institute for Ecological Economy Research (IOW), the Institute of Economic Structures Research (GWS), and Prognos AG had worked on the study, which was presented on Monday.

While the calculation of consequential damage caused by climate change usually takes into account destruction caused by flooding, for example, the paper also looked at damage beyond pure reconstruction costs.

The authors also took into account additional burdens caused by restricted production options or interrupted supply chains.

"Climate change is already having severe economic consequences that could grow massively," State Secretary for Economic Affairs Stefan Wenzel of the Green Party commented to the business newspaper Handelsblatt on Monday.

According to Wenzel, the German government is working on a "climate adaptation law" to reduce the financial impact of the climate crisis.

Increased dev't cooperation seen with Canada's Indo-Pacific push

By: Joyce Ann L. Rocamora

MANILA – The Philippines can expect increased development cooperation with Ottawa as the Canadian government implements its 2.3 billion Canadian dollar Indo-Pacific strategy that seeks to position Canada as a reliable partner in the region.

Canadian Minister of International Development Harjit Sajjan, who met with Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo on March 3, said Ottawa will strengthen collaboration with the country in building capacity, especially in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), combatting illegal fishing, food security, agriculture and health.

“As part of our strategy, (we visited the Philippines) to listen and learn to allow us to figure out what would be the next steps toward implementing our strategy,” he told reporters over the weekend as he capped off his official visit to the country.

Sajjan said Canada's Indo-Pacific push has a strong disaster response component which spans from climate change mitigation, preventing destruction from typhoons down to improving capacity for recovery efforts.

On combating illegal fishing, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, Ottawa has a CAD7 million program that uses state-of-the-art technology to detect vessels whose location transmitting devices have been switched off, often in an attempt to evade surveillance.

To note, IUU had been a perennial problem in the Philippines, especially in the West Philippine Sea. In a 2021 report, the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) said illegal fishing pre-pandemic amounted to PHP62 billion.

“Illegal fishing is a very significant issue here and it's something that I've been tracking very closely but let's not forget it's also a significant issue around the world,” Sajjan said.

“The discussion that we had is that the international community, including Canada needs to be very supportive of the Philippines when it comes to their fishing rights,” he added.

Sajjan said officials would still need to flesh out details on specific activities but there are “many different facets” of cooperation that the two states could look at especially as Canada has “significant expertise when it comes to maritime domain awareness”.

The official said he discussed this with Manila and he looks forward to “taking things to the next step”.

“[M]ore importantly, what we also talked about was ultimately, when a country succeeds and its citizens thrive through economic opportunity, that is one best way to send a strong message to any nation that would look at trying to undermine its own sovereignty,” he said.

“And in Canada, we are very strong proponents of Philippine sovereignty because we have such strong people-to-people ties,” he added.

He said Canada would also use its development portfolio to further increase the capacity of Filipinos to create greater economic opportunity for themselves.

“When you look at our Indo Pacific strategy, it is not separate in defense, development, trade. It’s integrated all together. So fortunately when it comes to our development portfolio, because we’ve already have done some really good work together over the over decades, it allows us to build on something where we already have a strong foundation,” he said.

During the meeting with Manalo, the officials also discussed how Canada’s Indo-Pacific strategy can complement the two states’ deepening bilateral ties.

Manalo said they explored ways to promote a rules-based order in the South China Sea.

Canada and the Philippines are set to mark 75 years since the establishment of their diplomatic relations in 2024.

At present, Canada’s official development assistance to the country has already reached 1 billion Canadian dollars (approximately PHP40 billion) since 1986.

Meeting with OCD execs

On March 3, Sajjan also paid a courtesy call on officials of the Office of Civil Defense (OCD).

The meeting took place at the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council Operations Center (NDRRMC) in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, the OCD said in a statement Monday.

Sajjan met with OCD deputy administrator for operations, Assistant Secretary Bernardo Rafaelito Alejandro IV and other officials of the agency.

OCD officials discussed with the Canadian delegation the mandates of the NDRRMC, disaster response strategies as well as areas of cooperation between Canada and the Philippines on disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM).

During the meeting, Sajjan conveyed the Canadian government's willingness to support the Philippines' DRRM system including the strengthening of search and rescue operation capabilities.

Accompanying the minister are the Canadian Ambassador to the Philippines David Hartman and members of the Canadian diplomatic staff.

Alejandro emphasized the need to continuously improve DRRM systems through international engagements.

"Our country's experiences have highlighted the need for us to further strengthen our DRRM system. Indeed, we continue to learn from the models and experiences of our foreign counterparts on the implementation of their DRR programs and we intend to fully harness the advantages of those best practices," Alejandro added.

He also said this activity is an expression of our desire to continue nurturing a strong working partnership with Canada) as the Philippines strives to strengthen the response, preparedness and resilience of both the state and people against all hazards.

Oil spill threatens P79-M seaweed industry in Antique island town

By: Perla Lena

ILOILO CITY – The oil spill suspected from a sunken vessel off the coast of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro is a threat to the seaweed industry in Caluya Island in Antique valued at PHP79 million and providing livelihood to 99 percent of the more or less 11,000 fisherfolk in the area.

“Looking into the oil spill trajectory model by the UP-MSI (University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute), it will pass by Caluya going to Palawan. We don’t know the dispersal of the oil, so when it passes by it will affect the seaweeds in Caluya Island,” said Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) Regional Director Remia Aparri in an interview on Monday.

The seaweed farm in Caluya Island is around 1,532 hectares, the majority of which are in the islands of Panagatan and Sibay.

Based on the report of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), the areas currently affected by the oil spill are the 4-kilometer coastline of Sitio Sabang, Barangay Tinogboc and 2 kilometers in Barangay Semirara, all in Semirara Island and another 2 kilometers in Sitio Liwagao, Barangay Sibolo in Liwagao Island, within the municipality of Caluya.

In a press conference on Monday, Coast Guard District Western Visayas (CGDWV) Public Information Officer Jansen Y. Benjamin said that they don’t “negate the possibility” that the two islands will be “contaminated” through a drift scenario although for now there was no sighting of the oil spill.

“If ever, these areas will be a priority for protection. Maybe our experts will have these prioritized for shoreline booming or protection,” he said, adding that they will try to deflect the oil spill to a less sensitive area.

However, the spill boom is yet to be transported from the Lipata Port in the municipality of Culasi.

They had been prepositioned since March 4 and waiting for the good weather that will allow the tugboat carrying the equipment and PCG personnel to depart going to Caluya.

Aparri said that the impact of the oil spill will be minimized if the Philippine Coast Guard can put in place spill booms and other measures to be done in coordination with the local government unit.

The regional director said that currently, they are still validating the stages of the seaweed since these grow the whole year round.

Based on the oil spill experience in Guimaras in 2006, the seaweed will just melt once it is hit by the oil slick.

Aside from the seaweed farm, Aparri said the fishing activity in the area will also be halted.

Aparri advised fisherfolk to harvest their seaweed if already in the harvestable stage and should also secure their fishing boats and not expose themselves to the oil spill because it is detrimental to their health.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development said that as of 2 p.m. on Monday, there are already 7,198 families or 25, 733 individuals affected by the oil spill coming from four barangays of Caluya.

DSWD Disaster Response Management Division head Judith T. Barredo added that affected families will be provided with an emergency cash transfer good for 15 days at PHP5,070 per family aside from the food packs.

The department requested an estimated PHP47 million during their meeting with their central office on Monday morning.

The oil spill possibly came from the motor tanker, MT Princess Empress, which sunk on Feb. 28. However, the PCG has yet to confirm this waiting for a laboratory test.

As of Monday, the PCG reported that the collected oil and debris is around 8,200 liters.

The volume of oil that reached Sabang and Liwagao was estimated at 40 drums each and two drums in Barangay Semirara.

Senate OKs New Agrarian Emancipation bill on final reading

By: Wilnard Bacelonia

MANILA - The Senate on Monday approved on third and final reading the Malacanang-sponsored New Agrarian Emancipation bill that will condone all loans including interests, penalties and surcharges, arising from the award of agriculture lands under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program as of Dec. 31, 2022.

Senate Bill 1850, which was included in Malacanang's list of priority bills, gathered 23 votes without abstention.

Senator Cynthia Villar, who chairs the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Food, and Agrarian Reform, said the measure shall cover two types of loans given to Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries (ARBs)>

These include loans of ARBs who have Agrarian Reform Receivables (ARR) Account with the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) and those who have not paid or have incomplete payments of their amortization on the principal, interests, penalties and surcharges of their lands under Presidential Decree 27, and subsequent amendments to Republic Act No. 6657.

"This bill seeks to help alleviate the plight of our ARBs who are farmers for them to recover and overcome the fallout of the Covid-19 crisis, the devastating African swine fever, the ongoing Avian influenza, the increasing cost of fertilizer, fuel and other farm inputs and climate change," Villar said in her sponsorship speech.

"Condoning their amortization will provide them the much-needed financial resources that shall help them develop their farms, increase their productivity and advance an agriculture-driven economy, improve the lives and that of their families, reduce poverty, accelerate rural development and promote food security," she added.

She said that the measure involves 1,173,101.574 hectares of agricultural land with PHP57.557 billion in principal debt and will cover 610,054 ARBs.

The Senate, at the same time, passed also on third and final reading the Senate Bill 1604 or the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program Act being pushed by Senator Sherwin Gatchalian.

The bill proposed to allow learners to catch up with the rest of the world despite learning losses through well-systematized tutorial sessions and well-designed remediation plans

targeting learners who did not enroll in School Year 2020-2021 when the pandemic began.

Gatchalian, who chairs the Committee on Basic Education, was referring to students who were lagging academically, and are at or marginally above the minimum level of mastery required in Language, Mathematics, and Science.

He cited estimates from the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) that such learning loss may cause about PHP10.1 trillion in economic losses over the next 40 years if not addressed immediately.

The ARAL Program, the senator said, is a free and effective program aimed at closing the learning gap.

"The ARAL Program Act is an essential piece of education reform legislation designed to help our learners get back on track. Under the ARAL Program Act, learner recovery and economic recovery will be achieved together, leading us towards a brighter and more prosperous future," Gatchalian said.

The World Bank has estimated that learning poverty as of June 2022 in the Philippines was 90.9 percent.

Learning poverty is the percentage of children aged 10 who cannot read or comprehend a simple story.

RAPPLER

[Why jeepney phaseout is anti-poor, will do little for environment](#)

By: Ralf Rivas

MANILA, Philippines – The Philippine government’s move to force jeepney drivers to shift to the more environment-friendly, modern jeepney has faced backlash over its anti-poor terms.

The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) is forcing drivers and operators to use an electric vehicle or a combustion engine that complies with a Euro IV emission standard, as prescribed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, toxic fumes, and other forms of air pollution.

But here are some numbers that show that the government’s modernization plan is clunky at best:

According to data from the Department of Energy and LTFRB, there are over 9 million registered vehicles in the Philippines. Of the total, jeepneys comprise only over 250,000. Of the total jeepneys, around a quarter operate in Metro Manila.

While jeepneys play an important role in providing services in the country, a study by the Blacksmith Institute and Clean Air Asia found that diesel-powered jeepneys contribute 15% of the total particulate matter emissions in Metro Manila.

The Center for Energy, Ecology and Development (CEED) argued that air pollution reduction efforts “would be negligible if modernization efforts focused on jeepneys compared to private vehicles.”

“Not to mention, private car owners would also be more likely financially capable of modernizing their vehicles,” CEED said.

Jeepneys are mostly fitted with imported, second-hand engines which have higher emissions than modern diesel technologies.

The study also found that the majority of jeepney owners own only one unit, making it difficult for them to save on costs and properly maintain vehicles.

A traditional jeepney costs around P150,000 to P250,000. A modern e-jeepney would force drivers and operators to cough up as much as P2.8 million, a 1,766.7% increase in cost.

The LTFRB said that a subsidy of P160,000 will be provided. This is only 5.7% of the total cost of the modern jeepney.

Rappler was able to talk to some jeepney drivers who said that they earn around P2,000 per day. Should they upgrade to modern jeepneys, they would need to earn at least P3,500 to pay off their debt.

The LTFRB insists only operators who have consolidated into either a cooperative or corporation will be allowed to operate. Jeepney drivers fear that the program would eventually phase out their units and require them to buy new modernized jeeps that they can't afford.

Past efforts

Before the PUV modernization push, several programs had been explored in the past but failed.

In 2007, the DENR explored the replacement of old engines used in jeepneys with new engines. Mitsubishi UFJ Securities and the University of the Philippines-National Center for Transportation Studies were asked to come up with a proposal. They found that new engines cost P300,000.

But the plan failed as the program needed additional public and private funding.

In 2011, liquefied petroleum gas or LPG jeepneys were launched. By using LPG engines, jeepneys became Euro III-compliant.

However, this also failed since the engine and transmission components cost P350,000 and LPG stations were limited.

In 2008, the first electric jeepneys were introduced in Makati City through the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities and the Philippine Utility Vehicle. Limitations in battery capacity limited these e-jeepneys to shorter routes.

Just transition

During the 19th Congress, former Manila 1st District representative Manuel Luis Lopez filed a just transition bill that aimed to shift drivers to e-vehicles with sufficient financial support from government.

His proposal included the following:

- Vehicle subsidy – The Department of Transportation (DOTr) will provide financial assistance to drivers and operators not lower than 50% of the cost per unit of modern jeepneys.
- Fuel subsidy – The DOTr will pay a portion of the fuel consumed by affected drivers on a bi-weekly basis.
- Concessional loan – A tripartite mechanism including the government, financial institutions, and transport workers will establish a loan program. The interest rate will not exceed 1% annual interest. The loan amortization will be at least 15 years, subject to recomputation if the transport worker decides to shorten the said period.
- Financial assistance – Drivers who cannot be part of the transportation industry due to their incapacity to take out a loan will be given no less than P300,000 to shift to other forms of livelihood.

REUTERS

[Climate change could cost Latin America 16% of GDP this century, says Moody's](#)

MEXICO CITY, March 6 (Reuters) - Climate change could cost Latin America nearly a fifth of its gross domestic product (GDP) by the end of the century without new policies to curb its impact, according to a Moody's Analytics report published Monday.

The analysis examined three possible scenarios for the region, accounting for costs of climate change's physical toll - infrastructure damage, poorer health - as well the costs of policy interventions aimed at reducing climate change's impact.

If no new policy action is taken, Moody's foresees a steady deterioration in GDP, losing 10% by 2075 and ending the century down 16% as the region loses production capacity starting this year and losses mount at increasing rates.

The report called this a "nightmare scenario."

"Latin American countries that would be more affected by climate change are the main fossil fuel producers and consumers: Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil and Mexico," the report said.

Latin America's economic output sustained losses under all three scenarios analyzed: immediate policy actions targeting zero emissions by 2050, policies delayed until 2030 but then picking up pace, and no new policies to curb climate change.

"Early policy is the best-performing scenario as it reports the lowest losses," said Moody's, predicting higher inflation for the first 50 years with output losses falling below 4.5% and leveling down just 3.5% by 2100.

Under a late policy scenario, Moody's sees output sinking more than 6% lower before recovering to a loss of 5% by 2080.

Output losses would accelerate and worsen between 2030 and 2060 as decarbonization advances, it said, with much higher inflation from more intensive prices and tariffs.

THE MANILA TIMES

[US hosts marine protection summit in Palawan](#)

By: Leander C. Domingo

THE United States government convened the first-ever civil society organization (CSO) summit in Puerto Princesa City to coordinate action for marine biodiversity conservation and protection in the coastal areas of Northern Luzon, Mindoro, and Palawan that face the South China Sea.

The summit, in partnership with more than 60 CSOs, was led by United States Agency for International Development (USAid) Mission Director Ryan Washburn during his visit to Palawan from March 1-3, 2023.

It was attended by Palawan Third District Rep. Edward Hagedorn, USAid Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Senior Adviser Kathryn Booker-Veloz, and representatives from academia, women's groups, and Indigenous Peoples living along the seaboard also attended the summit.

The US Embassy in Manila said the visit highlighted the US government's continued commitment to supporting local stakeholders in conserving biodiversity and protecting marine resources from illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing activities of domestic and foreign fleets.

Washburn said the US, as an enduring friend, partner, and ally, will continue to collaborate with local stakeholders in the western Philippines to support sustainable fishing practices, strengthen food security, and advance the conservation of marine ecosystems.

"[We] work toward achieving our shared goal of inclusive growth and a free, prosperous, and secure Indo-Pacific region," he added.

Hagedorn said the protection and preservation of the West Philippine Sea is a herculean task that requires collective, whole-of-nation action.

"We thank the USAid Fish Right Program for leading this summit and bringing together representatives from universities, NGOs (nongovernment organizations), municipal fisherfolk peoples' organizations, commercial fishers' associations, the private sector, co-ops, and alliances to prepare a common agenda and action plan protecting West Philippine Sea resources and addressing food security and livelihood issues," he said.

The embassy said the CSO summit was organized as a follow-up to the visit of US Vice President Kamala Harris to Palawan in November 2022, where she underscored the importance of the US-Philippines partnership in creating economic opportunities and protecting coastal ecosystems throughout the region.

While in Puerto Princesa City, Washburn and Booker-Veloz handed over freezers and other fish drying materials valued at P300,000 (\$5,460) to women's associations in the fishing village of Tagburos.

The embassy said this donation will help the local fishing community reduce post-harvest losses, adding that the USAid officials also joined partners from the Gerry Roxas Foundation to award environment grants valued at P64 million (\$1.2 million) to four local organizations.

These were the Nagkakaisang Tribu ng Palawan, Palawan Biodiversity Conservation Advocates, World Wide Fund for Nature, and Community-Centered Conservation.

It said through these grants, the CSOs will implement Palawan-based projects on biodiversity conservation, wildlife protection, natural resource management, and local climate actions.

The embassy also noted that the USAid is currently implementing three biodiversity conservation projects covering the Philippine waters in the South China Sea.

These projects are Fish Right; the Sustainable Interventions for Biodiversity, Oceans and Landscapes; and Investing in Sustainability and Partnerships for Inclusive Growth and Regenerative Ecosystems.

These three projects have a combined value of P4.3 billion (\$78.2 million) in development assistance from the US government, the embassy said.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Group urges Marcos to end 'plunder of resources' by large-scale mining firms

By: Cristina Chi

MANILA, Philippines — After two communities formed barricades against mining firms in February, Alyansa Tigil Mina has called on President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr. to put a stop to illegal mining operations that wreak havoc on the environment and surrounding areas.

The nationwide alliance of anti-mining advocates began its weeklong commemoration of the 28th anniversary of the passage of the Mining Act of 1995 with a demand for Marcos to halt the activities of companies involved in large-scale mining, especially those that dispensed with government permits in conducting its operations.

“We call on the PBBM administration to listen to the demand of the people, especially those holding barricades in Sibuyan, Romblon; Brooke’s Point, Palawan and Brgy. Didipio, Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya,” said Jaybee Garganera, a national coordinator of ATM.

“Our natural resources should be protected and preserved and not subjected to exploitation and corruption,” Garganera added.

Mining-affected communities in Sibuyan Island and Brooke’s Point, Palawan set up barricades in February to block the entry of mining firms which they say profit off of natural resources while exposing nearby residents, including indigenous persons, to health hazards.

Elizabeth Ibanez, coordinator of Sibuyanons Against Mining, called for the cancellation of the Mineral Product Sharing Agreement (MPSA) of Altai Philippine Mining Corporation in Sibuyan Island, Romblon.

“To allow mining in Sibuyan, which is known to be the Galapagos of Asia, is unacceptable. Large-scale mining will drastically and negatively impact the rich biodiversity of our region as well as affect the livelihood of our people,” Ibanez said.

Meanwhile, Brooke's Point, Palawan Vice Mayor Jean Feliciano echoed the demand to DENR to cancel the MPSA of Ipilan Nickel Corporation for reportedly worsening the flash floods in the area due to its deforestation and nickel ore extraction.

“We are already experiencing the harsh effects of mining as our communities were damaged by flash floods, which we suspect are due to mining. We do not want mining in the region, and the government must respect our decision to determine for ourselves our development programs.”

Repeal Mining Act to prevent disasters

The group has also called to repeal the Mining Act of the Philippines and replace it with another measure that prohibits mining in critical areas, imposes tighter regulations on mining firms and allocates portions of mining companies' revenue to local governments.

The Alternative Minerals Management Bill (AMMB) is “anchored in the climate discourse (and) situates mining within the country’s aspiration for a low-carbon development pathway,” said Maya Quirino of SOS Yamang Bayan Network, a group calling to reform the country’s mining regulations.

Supporters of the Alternative Minerals Management Bill previously cited the need for its urgent passage to prevent possible mine spills that would damage the lives of residents living near mining sites.

One case is the Marcopper Mining Corporation's disastrous collapse in 1993, which poisoned the community's drinking water and exposed residents to toxic vapors, causing skin rashes and other ailments.

A Marinduque court in 2022 ruled in favor of the survivors of the incident, citing the damages caused by the mining project on the community.

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