



NEWS ROUNDUP

17 APRIL 2023 [08:00 am]

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ABS CBN

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BLOOMBERG

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By: Flavia Rotondi, Alessandro Speciale and Megan Durisin

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MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

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By: Rintaro Tobita

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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RAPPLER

[\[Opinion\] The Nationally Determined Contribution: Looking back at the Philippines's climate promise](#)

By: John Leo C. Algo

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THE BOHOL CHRONICLE

[Ordinance protecting heritage trees in Tagbilaran proposed](#)

In a press briefing last Wednesday at the City Hall attended by officials of the City Government and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, City Mayor Jane Yap assured the protection of the heritage trees in Tagbilaran City through a proposed Ordinance which will be submitted to the Sangguniang Panlungsod through Vice Mayor Adam Relson Jala.

THE MANILA TIMES

[China should 'walk the talk' in sea row – analyst](#)

By: Kristina Maralit

China may have misinterpreted the Philippines' decision to grant the United States access to four more sites under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA).

[\[Opinion\] Do we have a DENR secretary?](#)

By: Rigoberto Tiglao

Honestly, I've become confused as nine months into the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. four crucial departments actually do not have secretaries, but mere OICs.

[The road to a modern transportation system](#)

By: Walter Abela Jr.

The ongoing dispute regarding the modernization of the country's public transport of choice — the iconic jeepney — is a clear sign of the rapidly changing face of transportation in a digital, climate-challenged world. While there is a debate among stakeholders on how to go about this modernization, it is safe to say there is widespread agreement over the need to bring jeepneys up to par with relevant environmental and safety standards.

['Water supply in Metro Manila enough'](#)

By: Claire Bernadette Mondares

Metro Manila's water supply is enough, but pipe repairs still cause water interruptions, an expert said on Friday.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Only 67% of households have access to running water – SWS](#)

By: Janvic Mateo

Amid a looming water crisis in the country, results of a recent survey released on Thursday found that only seven in every 10 households in the Philippines have access to running water.

[Philippines, UK pledge cooperation to help protect communities from climate crisis](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

The Philippines and the United Kingdom agreed to deepen their cooperation in enhancing resilience to current and future climate impacts, and protecting and restoring the environment.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

Sunny, hot conditions expected this week in most of PH: PAGASA

Sunny and hot weather may be expected this week in most parts of the Philippines, state weather bureau PAGASA said Sunday.

In its weather outlook for April 17 to 23, PAGASA said there is no weather disturbance expected to enter the Philippine area of responsibility this week.

Warm and humid easterlies will also prevail this week, it added.

Metro Manila will experience sunny and hot weather from late morning to early afternoon, while thunderstorms are possible from mid-afternoon to early evening on weekdays. Hot and dry weather is also expected next weekend, PAGASA said.

A frontal system, or the meeting of air masses with different temperatures, may bring rain showers over extreme northern Luzon from Tuesday to Friday, while localized afternoon and/or evening thunderstorms may affect northern and central Luzon and Mindanao on Monday, and northern Luzon on Friday.

Just last week, parts of the country, including Bicol region, experienced flooding due to tropical depression Amang.

It later weakened into a low pressure area but it continued to bring rains over parts of the country.

BLOOMBERG

Drought Is Parching Crops Across Southern Europe for Second Year

By: Flavia Rotondi, Alessandro Speciale and Megan Durisin

A dry spell is wilting crops and delaying plantings in some of Europe's top produce growers, risking a further run-up in food inflation.

About 60% of the Spanish countryside is gripped by drought, and conditions are worsening for farmers in Italy and Portugal. It follows an exceptionally dry, warm winter in southern and western Europe, curbing the availability of water for agriculture use later in the year.

Soaking March and April rains have bolstered the rest of the European Union, with the bloc forecasting grain output to rise 8% from last year. Still, southern Europe is a heavyweight in fruit and vegetables, and the bad weather follows a drought that withered rice paddies and olive groves last year.

"Sowing in the Po River area traditionally starts in late February or early March, but right now the soil is too dry," Massimiliano Giansanti, head of Italian farm group Confagricoltura, said in an interview in Rome. "The more we wait, though, the less we will get in terms of crops."

Upward pressure on food prices in Europe remains firmly in place, even as headline inflation slows. Heat and dryness withered corn crops on much of the continent last summer and drained water levels on the Po River — Italy's largest — to a 70-year low.

This year's drought could hit spring harvests of lucrative produce such as tomatoes and fruit — an industry with €20 billion (\$22 billion) in annual sales and almost €8 billion in exports, Giansanti said. Soy and corn output also will be at risk, boosting expenses for meat and poultry producers.

In Spain, there already are irreversible losses on more than 3.5 million hectares (8.6 million acres) of rain-fed grain crops, according to a local farmers organization. Some nut orchards and vineyards are struggling to sprout, and a lack of flowers is preventing bees from making honey.

Italy is trying to act before the summer heat sets in. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's government said it will appoint a water emergency czar to speed up infrastructure works and fix leaking pipes across the country. But the post remains unfilled amid political infighting.

Rapidly changing temperatures and scarce water have altered product availability, and prices for tomatoes — a staple in local diets — are up 30% versus 2022, said Fabio Massimo Pallottini, president of wholesale market operators Italmercati.

Prospects are better in other major crop growers: Nearly all wheat and barley fields in France are in good shape early in the season, although groundwater levels remain low. Much of Germany and Poland had double their normal rainfall in the past 30 days.

The arid spell could hold further south, with forecaster Maxar Technologies Inc. expecting dryness and stress to persist in Spain in the near-term. Northern Italy also may miss out on rains through April 22.

“We risk finding ourselves in a dramatic situation in a few weeks time,” said Giansanti, whose group is the oldest national organization representing the agriculture sector.

GULF NEWS

[COP28 head urges 'accessible' global climate finance](#)

Tokyo: Sultan Al Jaber, president of the COP28 climate talks, called on Saturday for “available, accessible and affordable” finance for the developing economies most vulnerable to the destructive impacts of a warming planet.

Al Jaber said he had urged G7 climate and environment ministers meeting in Japan this weekend to prioritise support for poorer countries.

“The time has come for us to provide a fair deal for the Global South, especially when it comes to climate finance,” he told AFP on the sidelines of the G7 talks in Sapporo.

“I’m fine with raising ambitions, even going for more ambitious plans and programmes” to fight global warming, he said.

However, to boost trust worldwide “this needs to be equipped and coupled and supported with real, pragmatic, actionable plans enabled by finance that is available, accessible and affordable”.

Al Jaber, 49, is also the UAE’s minister for industry and advanced technology and founded the government-owned renewable energy company Masdar.

Balance between passion and realism

COP27, held in Egypt in November, brought a landmark agreement to create a “loss and damage” fund to cover the costs of the destruction that developing countries face from climate-linked natural disasters.

Floods that covered large swaths of Pakistan last year and drought in East Africa both bear the fingerprint of climate change.

Multi-billion-dollar investment plans have also been announced in recent months for countries such as South Africa and Indonesia to transition to clean energy from fossil fuels.

Al Jaber said climate finance for developing countries needs to be “very high on the agenda”.

But he highlighted the need “to strike a balance between passion and realism, in order for us to deliver a true, pragmatic, progressive, practical deal at COP28”.

In a closed-door address to the G7 climate ministers on Saturday, Al Jaber also called for developed countries to follow through on an unfulfilled promise to provide developing nations with \$100 billion a year to fight climate change.

He also urged the world to triple the amount of money available for clean tech investment, adaptation finance and energy transition in developing countries by 2030, according to a transcript of his speech obtained by AFP.

The latest leaked draft of a G7 climate statement to be issued on Sunday reaffirms the bloc's commitment to the \$100-billion pledge, which dates back to COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009.

In the draft, the G7 vows to work with other developed nations "to fully meet the goal in 2023".

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

[1 TICKET, 1 TREE: Cathay Pacific leads the way to go Greener Together](#)

Cathay Pacific will be planting 20,000 mangrove trees in Southeast Asia this year, to honor its commitment to plant a tree for every flight ticket purchased in the region during the 1 Ticket, 1 Tree campaign held in 2022.

This was announced at a tree planting event in Manila on April 13.

To commemorate Earth Day, which falls on April 22, 2023, volunteers comprising Cathay Pacific employees, trade agents and other partners will be gathering at various mangrove forests across Southeast Asia in April and May to kickstart the planting of mangrove trees in their respective countries.

One of the first planting sites is in Hagonoy, Bulacan in the Philippines, where 8,000 mangrove trees will be planted. The remaining 12,000 trees will be planted in Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam.

Fostering stronger partnerships to go “Greener Together” and leading the way towards a more sustainable future is a central theme of Cathay Pacific’s sustainability efforts. Aligned with this, 1 Ticket, 1 Tree was launched in Thailand in 2021, with the aim of supporting local communities, restoring local habitats and driving climate resilience. The campaign was rolled out to the whole of Southeast Asia in 2022, with the airline committing to plant a tree for every ticket purchased from the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Singapore. The airline is working with local environment and community partners for the tree-planting effort.

“We are excited to continue contributing to projects that make a difference to the communities we serve,” said Dominic Perret, regional general manager of Cathay Pacific in Southeast Asia and Southwest Pacific. “Since our pilot in 2021, interest in the 1 Ticket, 1 Tree initiative has been very high amongst our employees, trade agents and business partners, many of whom have been helping to spread the word, enquiring about future campaigns, and volunteering their time to plant trees with us as well. We are happy to see conversations about sustainability being sparked and hope more in the community will be inspired to come together to make a sustainable impact.”

In the Philippines, Cathay Pacific is working with FEED, Inc (Fostering Education & Environment for Development) and One Child, One Tree.

Anne-Marie Mananquil Bakker, director of Partnerships at FEED, said “preserving our mangrove forests is vital as it has a lasting positive impact on our local community’s

livelihoods and food security, as well as the Philippine's carbon mitigation and biodiversity targets. Such an endeavor requires a whole-of-community effort, and we are very happy to work with like-minded corporate partners such as Cathay Pacific to further this cause.”

NIKKEI ASIA

[ADB readies \\$15bn in climate financing for emerging Asia: president](#)

By: Rintaro Tobita

The Asian Development Bank will provide an additional \$15 billion in funding for emerging markets to tackle climate change under a new, faster lending model, President Masatsugu Asakawa told Nikkei.

Advanced economies will provide \$3 billion in guarantees, enabling the ADB to extend loans worth five times that amount. These will be used for decarbonization projects to cut greenhouse gas emissions and promote growth.

The development bank will call on private-sector banks and others to join the effort to expand investment further. The new lending facility will be announced at the ADB's annual meeting in May.

"The ADB will become a climate bank," Asakawa said.

Demand for capital for climate projects in developing nations is vast, yet there are few lenders to meet it. The Group of 20 major economies have urged multilateral development banks to step up financing.

The ADB's new leveraged climate finance model will be the first time for the bank to use government guarantees in this way.

"If the ADB succeeds, [the model] could spread to other development banks," Asakawa said.

One aim is to encourage countries to shut down coal power plants and transition faster to renewable energy. Such financing will be tested in Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines, and Pakistan has expressed interest as well, according to Asakawa.

"Ninety percent of coal power plants that are less than 20 years old are concentrated in the Asia-Pacific," he said. "If we don't do something about them, they could keep running for another 20 years."

The ADB expects to extend \$8 billion in climate financing in 2023 and has said it seeks to reach a cumulative total of \$100 billion by 2030.

Asked about financial conditions in the region, Asakawa said he sees the risk of a serious crisis as "extremely low." While concerns have been raised about capital flight

amid interest rate hikes in the U.S. and Europe, he stressed that Asian countries are better prepared now than they were during the currency crisis of the 1990s.

He called Asia's economic growth "relatively resilient," pointing to steady growth rates and restrained inflation compared with other regions.

"Foreign currency reserves and regional financial cooperation have been strengthened, and countries hold more public debt in their own currencies," he said.

On Sri Lanka's debt crisis, the ADB chief said the lender will hold policy dialogues with the government later this year and "support them while urging them to make necessary structural reforms." The ADB cannot itself agree to debt reductions, he said.

Asakawa said inadequate tax collection is a factor in swelling debt in emerging Asian economies, noting that the average ratio of tax revenue to gross domestic product is half as high for the region as for the members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The ADB plans to do more to help countries strengthen their tax systems, he said.

On the lender's goal of playing a bigger role, Asakawa said: "We're supporting climate change countermeasures through our biggest organizational reform in 20 years."

The ADB is optimizing its balance sheet, through such moves as exchanging risk exposure with other development banks, to boost its lending capacity.

It will hire more local staffers in different regions and transfer some authority from its Manila headquarters to "bring us closer to our member countries," Asakawa said.

G-7 ministers to call for natural gas phaseout

Environment and energy ministers from the Group of Seven rich nations are poised to endorse faster progress toward ending reliance on fossil fuels, including natural gas, at a meeting here, sources close to the talks said.

The phaseout will target so-called unabated uses of fossil fuels -- those unaccompanied by measures to capture or reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

The ministers are scheduled to issue a joint statement on Sunday, and talks on the text are ongoing. The statement is not expected to set a target date for ending the use of CO₂-spewing coal-fired power plants.

Adding relatively cleaner-burning natural gas to the list would mark a change from last year's meeting, when ministers agreed to phase out unabated coal power generation. European and other nations have called for setting a time frame for this process.

This year's G-7 president Japan, which lags behind Europe in the transition to renewable energy and has made little progress on restarting nuclear power plants, still relies heavily on coal power.

G-7 nations face the challenge of fighting climate change with ensuring energy security, the importance of which has been underscored by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The 196-nation Paris Agreement sets a goal of limiting global warming from preindustrial times to within 1.5 C. The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) said in March that greenhouse gas emissions in 2035 would need to be 60% lower than in 2019 to achieve this goal.

Countries are to submit their 2035 goals to the U.N. by 2025.

The G-7 ministers' statement will also mention synthetic fuels, alternatives to gasoline or diesel that are made from hydrogen and CO₂ using renewable energy.

The European Union agreed in March to make an exception for synthetic fuels in its proposed 2035 ban on the sale of new combustion engine cars.

The G-7 will create an action plan for ensuring stable supplies of critical minerals needed for batteries and other electric vehicle components. The G-7 is expected to commit billions of dollars to promote joint development of mines and initiatives to recycle minerals recovered from electronic waste.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Pagasa: 11 provinces now under Signal No. 1 as TD Amang crosses Caramoan, CamSur

By: Faith Arsogino

Tropical Cyclone Wind Signal No. 1 is now raised over 11 provinces, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said on Wednesday afternoon, as Tropical Depression Amang traverses the coastal waters of Caramoan in Camarines Sur province.

In its 2 p.m. cyclone bulletin, Pagasa said Amang maintained its maximum sustained winds of 45 kilometers per hour (kph) near the center and gustiness of up to 55 kph as it moved north-northwestward at 10 kph.

“Amang is forecast to track generally northwestward in the next 12 hours and is expected to pass over the eastern localities in Camarines Sur, Lamon Bay, and Quezon (with the possibility of passing near or over Polillo Islands),” the state weather service disclosed.

“Considering the weak and disorganized nature of this depression, considerable changes in the track forecast of succeeding bulletins are not ruled out,” it added.

READ: Albay road impassable due to heavy rains from TD Amang

Pagasa likewise said Amang “is forecast to weaken into a low-pressure area by tomorrow (April 13), possibly earlier, due to the combined effects of land interaction, dry air intrusion, and increasing vertical wind shear.”

Below is the list of provinces and areas under Tropical Cyclone Wind Signal No. 1 as of 2 p.m., April 12:

- Catanduanes
- Sorsogon (City of Sorsogon, Pilar, Castilla, Donsol, Barcelona, Magallanes, Gubat, Casiguran, Juban, Prieto Diaz)
- Albay
- Camarines Sur
- Camarines Norte
- Laguna (Cavinti, Lumban, Kalayaan, Paete, Pakil, Pangil, Siniloan, Famy, Santa Maria, Mabitac)

- Aurora
- Quezon (Buenavista, Calauag, Infanta, Lopez, Guinayangan, Plaridel, Quezon, Alabat, Sampaloc, Mauban, General Nakar, Perez, Gumaca, Atimonan, Real, San Narciso, Tagkawayan) including Pollilo Islands
- Rizal (Tanay, Pililla, Rodriguez, Baras, City of Antipolo)
- Bulacan (Norzagaray, Doña Remedios Trinidad)
- Nueva Ecija (Gabaldon, Bongabon, Laur, General Tinio)

Pagasa further notified the public that moderate to rough sea conditions are expected over the eastern and southern seaboard of Southern Luzon and the eastern seaboard of Central Luzon amid Amang.

“Mariners of small seacrafts are advised to take precautionary measures when venturing out to sea and, if possible, avoid navigating in these conditions,” it said.

Meanwhile, the Office of Civil Defense-National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) activated its Emergency Preparedness and Response protocols in areas under Signal No. 1.

The NDRRMC considered Calabarzon and Regions 5 (Bicol) and 8 (Eastern Visayas) as “high risk”; National Capital Region or Metro Manila, Cordillera Administrative Region, Regions 1, 2, and 3, and Mimaropa as “moderate risk”; Caraga as “low risk”; and other regions as “standby” or “no to very low risk.”

[PH Red Cross at 75: Set for more challenges amid climate change](#)

The Philippine Red Cross (PRC) marked its 75th founding anniversary on Saturday, dedicating the milestone to donors and volunteers while renewing its commitment to emergency response and humanitarian work amid the rising frequency of disasters due to climate change.

From only 13 chapters in 1947, the PRC has grown to 102 chapters nationwide. Under the current chairmanship of former Sen. Richard Gordon, it has expanded its volunteer base — with over 1.5 million registered members — and strengthened its logistics capabilities, making it the largest humanitarian organization in the Philippines.

Its network of volunteers has been crucial in responding to emergencies, as they are often the first to arrive on the scene to provide initial assistance, the organization said in a statement on Saturday.

“Over the years, the PRC has evolved from its primary role as a blood collection agency to a full-service humanitarian organization. It has expanded its services to provide aid in all kinds of disasters, including typhoons, earthquakes, armed conflicts and disease outbreaks. The organization has built thousands of homes for those affected by disasters and has developed an extensive network of trained emergency medical services personnel,” it added.

Rolling assets

Investing heavily in rolling assets, it now operates a fleet of 178 ambulances, food trucks, rescue trucks, firetrucks, Humvees, amphibians, rescue boats, wing vans, water tankers with water bladders, and payloaders for clearing debris.

One major asset, the humanitarian ship MV Amazing Grace, enables the volunteers to easily reach various islands for rescue efforts and relief operations.

The establishment of a 24/7 state-of-the-art PRC Operations Center—first set up at Manila’s Port Area in 2008 and relocated to Mandaluyong City in 2015 — allowed for faster, more targeted coordination with and among the different chapters.

PRC’s timely programs for the most vulnerable remain the most effective incentive for local and international donors to continue building partnerships with the organization. In March, for example, business conglomerates and both houses of Congress chose PRC to assist in their donation drives for the victims of the magnitude 7.8 earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

Anniversary activities

All these have made the PRC one of the best Red Cross societies in the world, according to its secretary general, Dr. Gwendolyn Pang.

“April 15 is a day of celebration, the day we express our appreciation to our donors and volunteers who embodied the values and mission of the PRC in the last 75 years,” said Gordon, who has been in PRC’s helm since 2004. “As we venture into the next 75 years of humanitarian work, the Philippine Red Cross is prepared for stronger and more frequent disasters as climate change rears its ugly head.”

Aside from the main anniversary program held at Shangri-La The Fort Manila, the various PRC chapters conducted simultaneous activities on Saturday.

These included medical missions, first-aid demonstrations and lectures, blood donation drives, free circumcisions, cleanup and tree-planting activities, a fundraising concert and fun run, and solidarity walks, among others.

RAPPLER

[\[Opinion\] The Nationally Determined Contribution: Looking back at the Philippines's climate promise](#)

By: John Leo C. Algo

April 15th marks two years since the submission of the Philippines's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). This policy document is important in setting the nation's course for addressing the climate crisis.

The NDC is a self-determined commitment of all countries that signed the Paris Agreement to reduce their pollution and implement other solutions to slow down global warming and resulting climate changes. The pollution in question is in the form of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, which largely come from fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas.

The NDC is produced through an assessment of each country of their own needs, resources, and capacities. All NDCs should be aligned with the need for limiting global warming to 1.5°C, a level experts say is a critical point when climate change impacts could start becoming irreversible.

What we promised

Under its first NDC, the Philippines pledged to reduce its GHG emissions by 75% from 2020 to 2030 relative to a business-as-usual scenario, or without any solutions being implemented. A large portion of this (72.29%) is "conditional," meaning the country needs means of implementation (i.e., finance, technologies, capacity-building) from developed nations to successfully lower its pollution.

The "conditional" clause is based on the principle that as highly-vulnerable countries like the Philippines did not contribute much to the climate crisis, they should be assisted in their solution implementation by high-income countries, who are the biggest polluters. It is also aligned with the nation's championing of climate justice at the global policymaking arena.

It must be highlighted that the NDC commitments are based on the Philippines's development objectives and priorities, which include sustainable industrial development, poverty eradication and inclusive growth, energy security, and social and climate justice.

Are we keeping up?

Based on observations, some of the mitigation policies and measures that would contribute to the NDC's fulfillment are already being implemented. Among these are ongoing programs and activities being enforced across the sectors of agriculture, waste, industry, transport, and energy.

It should be noted that adaptation is the nation's primary mode of climate action, given its high climate vulnerability and low contribution to global GHG emissions. As a result, some of the proposed NDC policies and measures are focused on adaptation, with co-benefits on enhancing mitigation.

Perhaps the most vital to attaining the 75% target is successfully transforming the Philippines's energy sector from fossil fuel-reliant to renewable energy (RE)-dependent. Energy remains the highest-emitting sector, partly due to the dominance of coal in the country's power generation. This necessitates the significant acceleration of RE development to increase its share in the country's energy mix.

However, achieving the self-imposed target would be difficult, given current policy directions. The current regime has strongly advocated for natural gas, another fossil fuel with similar circumstances to coal, as a stopgap before fully committing to RE-centric development. Discussions for building nuclear power plants, which is not among the proposed NDC measures, would also pose not only a potential roadblock for RE growth, but also safety and security risks in an already-vulnerable nation.

Questions also remain regarding how to implement mitigation policies in a just manner. An infamous example of this is the ongoing Public Utility Vehicle (PUV) Modernization Program, which has earned a lot of criticism for the past few years. While emphasizing the environmental benefits of modernizing jeepneys and buses, the two most recent administrations have failed to adequately respond to concerns on how PUV drivers and operators can afford the expensive costs.

Ensuring a "just transition" is also a challenge in the energy sector, given the necessary scale of transformation of both the supply and demand side. With the inherently-conflicting vision of a RE-dominated sector that is needed to attain the NDC target and the current preference for seemingly any other fuel source than RE itself, the burden would ultimately be shouldered by Filipino consumers, who are already enduring one of the highest electricity rates in the Asia-Pacific.

With the Philippines's NDC being largely conditional, only three "unconditional" measures have been declared (as of 2022). These endeavors cover the National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Program, rail programs under "Build, Build, Build," and the Manila Bay Coastal Management plan. Without securing more support from

developed nations, the country's ambitious goal of reducing its climate pollution will never be realized.

Keeping our word

The following call has been made for years, and it must be repeated: the Philippine government must present to the public a comprehensive decarbonization plan to reduce the country's GHG emissions by 75%. This, at the bare minimum, should include mitigation pathways covering different scenarios and how each of the main economic sectors would respond to potential challenges and opportunities for climate action.

The principle of "just transition" must not be forgotten in the NDC implementation process, and in all aspects of climate action. Trade-offs between benefits and consequences always exist in any proposed solution, and must be studied carefully and integrated into the planning process to ensure that no one will be left behind on the road to a more climate-responsible economy and society. To do otherwise results in false solutions and even more injustices.

When securing the means of implementation from developed countries, the Philippine government needs to ensure that these agreements would come without strings attached. Based on the principles of "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities" and "polluters pay," our nation should be getting these modes of support such that the terms do not slow down our pursuit of sustainable development and trigger even more loss and damage.

As it stands, the Philippines's implementation of its NDC leaves a lot to be desired. There are still many pieces that need to be acquired and placed yet the window of opportunity to turn our country into one capable of addressing the climate crisis is not getting any bigger.

For a nation so used to hearing one broken promise after another, the NDC must not follow in those footsteps.

THE BOHOL CHRONICLE

Ordinance protecting heritage trees in Tagbilaran proposed

In a press briefing last Wednesday at the City Hall attended by officials of the City Government and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, City Mayor Jane Yap assured the protection of the heritage trees in Tagbilaran City through a proposed Ordinance which will be submitted to the Sangguniang Panlungsod through Vice Mayor Adam Relson Jala.

This was disclosed in the said briefing to lay out all the facts and clarify certain issues arising from the cutting of acacia trees located in barangay Taloto which caused public uproar.

The proposed heritage trees ordinance will protect not only centuries old trees but all trees in the city that have historical, cultural and contextual value.

“The creation of an ordinance protecting identified heritage trees in Tagbilaran City will be the City’s long-term measure in protecting the environment. There will be more developments in Tagbilaran City but environmental factors will not be disregarded. We are committed to continue protecting and preserving our environment,” Yap said.

Other resource persons during the meeting were Elena Suarez of the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) Tagbilaran; Forester Ariel Rica of the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO) Bohol; Cory Lyn Estavillo of the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) Bohol; Chief of Staff John Geesnell Yap II and City Legal Officer Atty. Kathy Blanche Jamila.

City Councilors Nerio Zamora II and Charles Cabalit were also present together with the department heads.

Due to the confusion about the identity of CENRO Tagbilaran which has the legal mandate on matters relating to the tree cutting permit and Private Tree Plantation Registration, Mayor Yap also took the time to explain that the City Environment and Natural Resources Office (City-ENRO), an office under the City Government of Tagbilaran, is different from CENRO Tagbilaran that is under the realm of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources Office.

It was also declared in the said gathering that the City Government has lodged a complaint at the EMB against the project proponent for the cutting of trees contrary to the Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) issued to the same.

A joint ground inspection will also be conducted by a composite team from the City Government, DENR, CENRO Tagbilaran and EMB to ensure compliance to the conditions set forth in the ECC.

It was also proposed that for every single tree that will be cut in Tagbilaran, it will be replaced with 1,000 trees to be planted in the City. The Mayor said that the Building Permit of the proposed developer remains suspended pending results from the investigation.

THE MANILA TIMES

[China should 'walk the talk' in sea row – analyst](#)

By: Kristina Maralit

China may have misinterpreted the Philippines' decision to grant the United States access to four more sites under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA).

According to political analyst Dr. Froilan Calilung, Beijing's concerns that the Philippines and the US might aggravate tensions in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait because of the new EDCA locations, are unlikely as the military agreement was crafted well within the bounds of the law.

This is apart from the fact that the Philippines and United States are longstanding allies.

"It is very important for us to really understand EDCA. Basically, it is an exercise not just for internal and external security. It also aims to enhance what we call HADR or Human Assistance and Disaster Response, as well as addressing climate change especially in the face of natural calamities," Calilung said during the "Laging Handa" televised briefing.

"At the same time, it aims to enhance what we call the interoperability between our forces, skills transfer, and technological transfer between the US and the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines), especially now that we have talks regarding cybersecurity and counterterrorism," he added.

The analyst likewise reiterated that President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. wants to put special focus on the country ramping up the country's territorial integrity and that the PH-US collaboration is not meant to confront China regarding its "potential advances" but merely an implementation of long-sealed agreements between the two countries.

"EDCA has been here since 2014, and these annual exercises have been going on for a long time even before talks regarding the West Philippine Sea and Taiwan Strait have escalated," he stated.

China may have had the impression that the Philippines "had a sudden shift" when it comes to its foreign policy, according to Calilung, especially since the country had a supposed pro-Beijing stance throughout the past administration.

But instead of harking criticisms on the EDCA, China should "walk the talk" and fulfill its end of the bargain with the Philippines with regards to issues concerning the disputed waterway.

"I think we have already understood that despite us favoring China in the past, they did not really follow through. Fishermen in Scarborough Shoal are still being driven away, there was also that one incident of laser pointing. In short, China is not really walking the talk," Calilung asserted.

"It must be understood that it is not a war that we want to start. Definitely, we don't want that to happen, that is against our Constitution. It's basically a deterrent policy that we're having right now; not an offensive tactic whatsoever," he added.

[\[Opinion\] Do we have a DENR secretary?](#)

By: Rigoberto Tiglao

Honestly, I've become confused as nine months into the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. four crucial departments actually do not have secretaries, but mere OICs.

Prominent among these is the Defense department which only has an "OIC/senior undersecretary." Quite anomalously, I think, an "OIC/undersecretary" will sign the EDCA documents that puts on the line the lives of 110 million Filipinos — if nuclear war breaks out between the US and China.

The Health department still has no secretary, only another "OIC/undersecretary" Maria Vergeire, even as she performed quite well as Health Secretary Francisco Duque's deputy as well as being the face of the department in the government's victory over the Covid-19 epidemic. Marcos himself of course is also officially the Agriculture secretary.

We do have a secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) who I'd bet very few of my readers can name: Maria Antonio Yulo-Loyzaga (the wife of a son of the basketball legend Carlos), who has however been practically invisible these past nine months.

The biggest environmental threat since the 2006 oil spill off Guimaras Island has emerged with the sinking of the MT Princess Empress off Naujan, Oriental Mindoro on February 28, its cargo of industrial fuel spilling and spreading to reach even the Verde Islands Passage, which has been miracle of marine biodiversity which the oil could damage for decades. It is "threatening the biodiversity of 21 nearby marine protected areas and the livelihoods of Filipinos working in the fishing and tourism sectors," the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada warned in a March 22 article.

Disaster

Three days after the disaster, the DENR posted a three-minute video of Yulo-Loyzaga mouthing generalities over her department's response to it.

After that, nothing more was heard from her. It's as if she's vanished or taken a vacation during a serious environmental threat.

Even the DENR's website isn't alarmed over it, its last update on the disaster posted March 1 — one and a half months ago.

Yulo-Loyzaga should be embarrassed that she wasn't asked to join President Marcos' aerial inspection on a helicopter of the areas affected by the oil spill the other day. Only

Mindoro Gov. Humerlito Dolor was with Marcos during the flight although the prime official who should be briefing him on the crisis is the Environment secretary.

Can she not take the hint that she is useless to Marcos? She should spare him the emotional stress of kicking out an old friend from the Cabinet by resigning ASAP. The video of the briefing after Marcos' inspection showed top Cabinet officials: If Yulo-Loyzaga was there, she was in some corner of the table distant from Marcos.

Helpless

I wrote a column on this topic more than a month ago, entitled "Gov't helpless, leaderless in Mindoro oil spill." Yulo-Loyzaga obviously ignored that column, and continued to practically pay no attention to the oil spill — which has caused losses to Filipinos livelihood, now amounting to P1 billion, based on the estimates of a unit of the Agriculture department.

What has Yulo-Loyzaga been doing that she is absent in this crisis that she should be on top of? DENR sources allege that her overriding interest is "climate change," that she attends every single convention or mere meeting abroad. Her absence was such that this dubious official in the Defense department a week after the oil spill problem broke out, appointed himself as head of a task force in charge of the crisis and ordered the local government and the DENR to report to him.

A senator who had been close at least for a while to Malacañang said: "She's not just up in the clouds, she's in the moon and the stars," alluding to her interest in astronomy, having been the chairman of the international advisory board of the Manila Observatory. While she's away, DENR sources allege, everything has to be approved by her executive assistant, her son Jose Joaquin Loyzaga.

Yulo-Loyzaga's incompetence — or focus on things other than pressing DENR concerns — was demonstrated last year when a Filipino company asked the department to stop the operations of a Chinese firm it had given its mining rights to, since the latter totally failed to pay the over P1 billion it should have paid the Filipino firm for the rights. The DENR secretary had not acted on it to the point that one DENR unit, its Regional Office 3, told the Chinese firm to proceed with its operations, with the DENR's Mines and Geosciences Bureau countermanding that order. Because Yulo-Loyzaga was practically an absent secretary, one unit of the DENR was fighting with another unit.

Most vulnerable

The DENR is actually one of the biggest bureaucracies of government, and one of the most vulnerable to corruption, especially with the proliferation of mining firms secretly owned by unscrupulous Chinese companies which are quick to pay bribes to the department and to local officials so they could mine quickly and move out of the country minerals with a huge global demand. For instance, because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, prices of the minerals, nickel and copper, have risen steeply.

As Marcos nears the completion of his first year in office, he should clean up his Cabinet. He — and we — cannot afford to have the nonperforming Cabinet secretaries in this period fraught with risk, both economically and geopolitically.

The road to a modern transportation system

By: Walter Abela Jr.

The ongoing dispute regarding the modernization of the country's public transport of choice — the iconic jeepney — is a clear sign of the rapidly changing face of transportation in a digital, climate-challenged world. While there is a debate among stakeholders on how to go about this modernization, it is safe to say there is widespread agreement over the need to bring jeepneys up to par with relevant environmental and safety standards.

The urgency to act on climate change and the technological advances that have reshaped the way people move are prompting nations around the world to rethink their transportation systems. In the Philippines, transitioning jeepneys to electric variants is just a preliminary step to significantly improving transport efficiencies and effectiveness. The Deloitte Centre for Government Insights recently looked at similar trends that are geared towards making transportation resilient and future ready.

Creating sustainable funding mechanisms

Many existing funding models for transportation are based on taxes levied per gallon or liter on fossil fuels. What will happen to these revenue streams when more fuel-efficient vehicles and electric vehicles (EVs) begin to outnumber vintage gas-guzzlers? Some countries are already finding out. Australia has lost about \$1.5 billion in federal revenue due to the 30-percent decline in fuel excise tax collections on petrol in the 12 years since 2009.

An alternative to this approach is to tax commuters based on actual road usage. Road user charging (RUC) systems calculate tax owed for each driver, which will likely mean higher administrative and equipment costs compared to the traditional gas tax. One phased-in approach for administrators to consider is New Zealand's system, where the RUC applies only to heavy vehicles and those that run on untaxed fuel such as diesel. Concerned taxpayers pay in advance in 1,000-kilometer units for an RUC license. Once they have travelled the distance covered by their license, which is measured by a government-approved hubodometer, they will have to pay again to renew the license and continue using roadways.

A generational shift in mobility

Under the Philippines' Electric Vehicle Industry Development Act, the Department of Energy is looking to roll out 2.45 million EVs in the next five years. Convincing

consumers to abandon their internal combustion engine-based vehicles in favor of these rechargeable ones, however, will take more than a fancy showroom.

Based on Deloitte's 2023 Global Automotive Consumer Study, there is an increasing number of consumers worldwide who plan to buy an EV in the next three years. In Southeast Asia, for example, 16 percent in the Philippines, 19 percent in Indonesia, and 48 percent in Thailand intend to purchase an EV. But across these three countries, the number one reason stopping consumers from making the switch is the lack of public EV charging infrastructure.

Building a charging network that resembles today's ubiquitous gas stations may be the biggest short-term hurdle to the global shift to EVs. Concerned stakeholders need to ask themselves questions such as: How many public charging stations should be installed? How should charging be priced? What effect will charging have on the grid during peak consumption hours?

Another challenge that comes with the rise of EVs is the availability of workforce trained to maintain and repair these vehicles and the charging infrastructure. Plans need to be put in place to retrain and reskill workers who can reliably address consumers' issues wherever they may be located.

Inclusive, equitable modernization

The initial lockdowns of March 2020 threw into stark relief the inequality hounding our society. Essential workers who are often low-income earners such as grocery clerks, warehouse workers, and cleaners still had to commute to show up for work every day even as most Filipinos sheltered in their homes. That period of uncertainty served to highlight the important role that public transport agencies play in addressing some of these inequalities.

To put in place an inclusive, equitable modernization plan, it is critical that government agencies consult with as many stakeholders as possible. People with disabilities and citizens living in remote, rural areas, for example, bring a unique voice to the table. Listening to them will help ensure that the new transportation system is responsive to the actual needs of the commuting public as a whole. In California, for example, the State Transportation Agency established an equity index to help measure the impact of its transportation infrastructure plans on various demographic groups.

Early last month, local transport groups held what was supposed to be a week-long transport strike to protest the jeepney modernization plan that they said would lead to a loss of livelihood for thousands of drivers and operators. Thankfully, the government immediately began a dialogue to cut the strike short.

One of the commitments that came out of that meeting is that concerned transportation agencies will hold more consultations with jeepney drivers, operators, and the commuting public to hear their concerns about the modernization plan. This is a welcome move in making sure that, on the road to a more sustainable, efficient Philippine transport system, no one is left behind.

'Water supply in Metro Manila enough'

By: Claire Bernadette Mondares

Metro Manila's water supply is enough, but pipe repairs still cause water interruptions, an expert said on Friday.

Pipe repairs are one of the commitments of Maynilad Water Services Inc. and Manila Water Co. Inc. to improve service and promote efficiency to consumers.

Maynilad says leakage control is an activity in line with its non-revenue water management program.

Future Water Asia Chief Executive Officer Dondi Alikpala said Manila Water's non-revenue water dropped from 68 percent to about 9 to 12 percent before its privatization in 1997, while Maynilad's non-revenue water is still almost 40 percent since its reprivatization in 2007.

"Non-revenue water is the water pumped that is unaccounted for, due to old pipe leaks," Alikpala said in a recent media forum at National Press Club.

In February, Maynilad discovered a pipe leak at the corner of Osmeña Highway and Zobel Roxas in Manila, with around 20 to 30 million liters of water lost per day.

In April, almost 1.7 cubic meter per second (cms) of water were lost due to leaks found by Manila Water between the Ipo Dam in Bulacan and La Mesa Dam in Quezon City.

"That is why we are experiencing water interruptions. Since its tariff increased this year, Maynilad is investing on replacing old pipes, to reduce leakages," Alikpala said.

Maynilad implemented a rate increase of P3.29 per cubic meter last January following approval by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) board.

Maynilad is the concessionaire of the MWSS for the West Zone of the Greater Metro Manila area.

Rapid urbanization and climate change were also challenges faced in water management, Alikpala said.

He said a study predicts a 40-percent increase in rainfall for the next 25 years, but the Philippines needs more catchment areas to collect rainwater.

Climate change is something that we cannot control and we feel helpless about, Alikpala said.

"But there are ways at the household level that we can do. Collect water as much as we can and whenever we can," he said.

Alikpala is pushing for the bill that will create the Department of Water Resources (DWR).

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Only 67% of households have access to running water – SWS

By: Janvic Mateo

Amid a looming water crisis in the country, results of a recent survey released on Thursday found that only seven in every 10 households in the Philippines have access to running water.

A Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey conducted last Dec. 10 to 14 found that only 67 percent of Filipino households have access to running or piped water, translating to an estimated 17 million out of over 25 million households in the country.

The 67 percent is composed of 58 percent who said their running water is billed and nine percent who said it was not billed.

For those whose running water is billed, their average expense is at P320 per month. It was highest among those in Metro Manila at P500 per month, followed by those in the Visayas at P340, the rest of Luzon at P312 and Mindanao at P300.

Those whose running water was not billed said they spend an average of P300 per month. It was highest among respondents in Metro Manila at P400 per month, followed by those in the rest of Luzon and the Visayas at P300 and those in Mindanao at P225.

The survey had 1,200 respondents and an error margin of +/- 2.8 percent.

The United Nations recognizes access to water and sanitation as a human right.

No water crisis

A ranking official of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System gave assurance there will be no water crisis in 2023 but admitted that the MWSS cannot confirm nor deny the warning of former MWSS chairman Ramon Alikpala that a crisis was likely next year.

In a radio interview, MWSS Deputy Administrator Jose Dorado Jr. said that based on the projection, the level of Angat Dam will reach 197 meters or 2011 meters by the end of December.

“We are doing this (simulation) on a monthly basis that is why this April, we will conduct another simulation to determine if there will be a water crisis next year,” he said. He

added that as of 6 a.m. on Thursday, the water level of Angat Dam was at 198.49 meters.

On the other hand, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) is set to decide today whether to grant the 52 cubic meters per second allocation being requested by the Maynilad Water Service Inc. and Manila Water.

The NWRB has earlier approved 50 cubic meters per second allocation for the two water concessionaires until April 15, 2023.

El Niño

A ranking official of the Department of Agriculture (DA) yesterday identified at least 16 provinces to be severely hit by the El Niño phenomenon as the DA revived the inter-agency task force to address the possible impact of the drought on the agriculture sector.

In an interview, Agriculture Assistant Secretary and deputy spokesman Rex Estoperez said the 16 provinces include areas in Central Visayas (Region 7), Eastern Visayas (Region 8), Zamboanga peninsula (Region 9), Caraga (Region 13) and Calabarzon (Region 4-A) — some of which are known big producers of palay.

“These are top producing provinces but there are also vulnerable areas because of climate change. We need to identify these vulnerable areas. Just like Mindanao, it is now affected by the flooding and typhoons,” Estoperez said.

President Marcos has ordered the revival of the inter-agency El Niño Task Force to minimize the damage of the dry spell to the farm sector.

“The task force will be represented by representatives from bureaus and attached agencies,” Estoperez said.

Philippines, UK pledge cooperation to help protect communities from climate crisis

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

The Philippines and the United Kingdom agreed to deepen their cooperation in enhancing Environment Secretary Antonia Loyzaga and British Ambassador to the Philippines Laure Beaufile signed a renewed partnership agreement on climate change and environment during a dialogue on Thursday. The agreement focuses on building resilience to current and future climate impacts, and protecting and restoring the environment.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources said in a release on Friday that both countries committed to enhance the resilience of their economies, ecosystems and communities, accelerate clean energy transition, mobilize climate finance, and drive inclusive, cross-sectoral collaboration.

“We have a shared understanding that the last mile—our communities and ecosystems that support them—need to be the first mile in terms of investment, impact-based early warning, and environmental protection,” Loyzaga said.

The Philippines is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, with poor and rural communities bearing the brunt of strong storms and sea level rise. A survey released last month showed that nine in 10 Filipinos experienced the impacts of climate change in the past three years.

The country is also one of the world’s biodiversity hotspots with at least 700 threatened species.

“Addressing these challenges is not just a public good—it will drive investment, innovation, and empower communities across the Philippines,” Beaufile said.

The Philippines and the United Kingdom also held dialogues on climate change and environment in 2020 and 2022.

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