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By: Raffy Cabristante

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. met with United States senators as part of his five-day official visit to Washington, Malacañang said.

BUSINESS MIRROR

[DENR chief pitches shift to ‘regenerative’ tourism](#)

By: Jonathat Mayuga

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has called for a shift to “regenerative” tourism to boost the country’s ecotourism.

CNN

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President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. had a “productive” meeting with US senators as they discussed issues on defense, agriculture, climate change mitigation, economy and cyber security, Malacañang said Thursday.

MANILA BULLETIN

[Global semiconductor firm to expand in PH with US\\$200-M investment pledge](#)

By: Betheena Unite

A global semiconductor company intends to expand in the Philippines by investing USD 200 million in a new research and development (R&D) facility in Cavite.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[\[Opinion\] Simple things we can do as citizens to help mitigate the adverse effects of climate change](#)

By: Maria Cequeña

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PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[PBBM hails US willingness to work with PH as equal partner](#)

By: Filane Mikee Cervantes

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Wednesday hailed the United States' willingness to work with the Philippine government “as an equal, sovereign partner”, noting that defense and security engagement remains the key pillar of Philippines-US bilateral relations.

RAPPLER

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THE MANILA TIMES

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By: Jenica Faye Garcia

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By: Cristina Chi

Consistent with warnings from international groups that a warming planet places people in climate-vulnerable countries at risk, the Department of Education's move to allow blended learning can help protect students from the dangerous dry season heat, the Commission on Human Rights said.

[Marcos, US senators discuss defense, climate change](#)

By: Alexis Romero

President Marcos met with some US senators yesterday to tackle various issues, including defense, agriculture and climate change mitigation and to express his intention to further strengthen the Philippines' ties with its treaty ally, Malacañang said yesterday.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

BUSINESS WORLD

[Keeping Intramuros clean with tourists, volunteers in weekly drive](#)

By: Brontë H. Lacsamana

THE ADMINISTRATION of Intramuros, a Spanish-era walled city in Manila, is tapping tourists and other volunteers for a weekly clean-up activity that it hopes will serve as an example for other tourist-heavy sites.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

Marcos meets with American senators in final stages of US visit

By: Raffy Cabristante

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. met with United States senators as part of his five-day official visit to Washington, Malacañang said.

During his meeting Wednesday, Marcos and members of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee tackled a wide range of issues including security, defense, agriculture, and climate change mitigation, economic cooperation and cybersecurity.

Marcos told the US Senate panel that defense and security engagement remained the key pillar of bilateral relations between Manila and Washington, and lauded the United States for its willingness to work with the Philippines.

He also said the Philippines was keen to deepen cooperation with the US in the fields of supply chain, health and health security, environment, energy security, and interconnectivity.

The President thanked US Senate Foreign Relations Committee chair Sen. Robert Menendez for welcoming his delegation to Capitol Hill.

"Having been a member of the Philippine House of Representatives and the Senate, Marcos said engagements between Manila and Washington should not only take place at the executive but also with members of the legislature," Malacañang said.

Marcos' meeting with US Senators followed his separate meetings with US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris.

Marcos is set to talk with reporters to highlight gains during the Washington visit before flying to London in the United Kingdom later this week to attend the coronation of King Charles III.

BUSINESS MIRROR

DENR chief pitches shift to ‘regenerative’ tourism

By: Jonathat Mayuga

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has called for a shift to “regenerative” tourism to boost the country’s ecotourism.

In a statement, DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga defined regenerative tourism as simply “leaving a place better than it was before.”

Pitching the call for regenerative tourism in a speech delivered by DENR Undersecretary for Legal and Administration Ernesto D. Adobo Jr. during the International Ecotourism Forum held in Manila from March 29 to April 2, Loyzaga said regenerative tourism goes beyond the environment and looks at the social and economic development of communities, preservation of local cultures, and protection of biodiversity.

“It is the understanding that everything is connected and the interactions between every stakeholder throughout the tourism value chain have impacts on each other and our ecosystems,” she explained.

The DENR chief emphasized the importance of transitioning towards tourism that regenerates the environment and provides economic, social and environmental benefits, and taking into account climate change.

She noted the country’s tourism sector faces challenges brought about by climate change, extreme weather events as well as slow and rapid onset of hazard that impede potential to be a driver of environmental and cultural protection, economic progress, and social development.

The DENR has been at the forefront of ecotourism development through sustainable management of protected areas (PAs) under the National Integrated Protected Areas System or NIPAS program, Yulo-Loyzaga said.

CNN

Palace: Marcos' meeting with US lawmakers 'productive'

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. had a “productive” meeting with US senators as they discussed issues on defense, agriculture, climate change mitigation, economy and cyber security, Malacañang said Thursday.

According to the Palace, Marcos acknowledged that the dialogues should not only engage the executive but also members of the legislature.

The president also stressed that talks on defense and security “remain the key pillar of Philippines-US bilateral relations.”

Malacañang added that Marcos also raised the country’s intention to further strengthen ties with the US government in the supply chain, health, environment, energy security, and interconnectivity.

Other Philippine government officials who participated in the meeting include Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo, Philippine Ambassador to the US Jose Manuel Romualdez, Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno, Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla, and Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual.

Meanwhile, the US government was represented by Sen. Robert Menendez, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Sen. James Risch; and other officials of the panel.

Marcos flew to the US on Sunday for an official five-day working visit. He met with US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, and the top leaders expressed their commitment to boosting economic and military ties with the Philippines.

Marcos also secured investment pledges from US investors during his trip.

MANILA BULLETIN

[Global semiconductor firm to expand in PH with US\\$200-M investment pledge](#)

By: Betheena Unite

A global semiconductor company intends to expand in the Philippines by investing USD 200 million in a new research and development (R&D) facility in Cavite.

This was among the investments bagged by President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. while in Washington for a five-day working visit.

In a meeting with Marcos, the Analog Devices, Inc. (ADI) announced its investment in a new R&D facility to add to its LEED certified production facility at the Gateway Business Park in Cavite.

According to ADI, it would continue to decide on the manufacturing aspects and change the manufacturing operation to focus more on current technology.

They said rather than the more basic stuff that may have been done 15 to 20 years ago, they have continued to increase the level of technology that's been introduced since the planning.

"So today you hear about 300 mm wafers, 12-inch wafers, in there. Well, those wafers now come down and we are setting up a 300-mm Center of Excellence in Cavite, which is doing all of the wafer programs and associated with our products," an ADI official told the President.

These are some of the most advanced technology products that come in, get tested and processed at ADI's Cavite plant, ADI said, adding the company has moved at all stages to the technology part, both from development and manufacturing perspectives.

Marcos welcomed the company's expansion plans and affirmed the support of his administration to its endeavors.

Established in 1965, ADI is a global semiconductor leader using Intelligent Edge. It combines analog, digital, and software technologies into solutions that help drive advancements in digitized factories, mobility and digital healthcare, combat climate change, and reliably connect humans and the world.

ADI's Philippine counterpart, Analog Devices General Trias, Inc. (ADGTI), engages in the manufacture, assembly, semi-conductor devices testing and dice inspection.

As of 2022, ADGTI has 5,252 employees, with a total of USD 394.39 million worth of exports for the same year.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[\[Opinion\] Simple things we can do as citizens to help mitigate the adverse effects of climate change](#)

By: Maria Cequeña

Yearly, the Philippines experiences about 20 typhoons because the country is located near the equator where the ocean water is warm, which typically forms storms. For the past 10 years, due to global warming, we've experienced supertyphoons which destroy lives, properties, and infrastructure. This is an alarming environmental issue that we should address before its effects become irreversible.

According to the United Nations, the earth's temperature is about 1.1 degrees Celsius warmer than in the late 1800s. Based on records, the last decade from 2011 to 2020 was the warmest so far. The increasing temperature is the result of climate change. Climate change is attributed mostly to human activities such as the creation of landfills, deforestation, and the burning of fossil fuels.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[PBBM hails US willingness to work with PH as equal partner](#)

By: Filane Mikee Cervantes

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Wednesday hailed the United States' willingness to work with the Philippine government "as an equal, sovereign partner", noting that defense and security engagement remains the key pillar of Philippines-US bilateral relations.

Marcos made the remark during his meeting with members of the US Senate led by Senator Robert Menendez, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and other members of the panel on Capitol Hill.

Marcos said engagements between Manila and Washington should not only take place at the executive level, but also with members of the legislature.

During the meeting, Marcos and the US Senate members discussed a wide range of issues that include security, defense, agriculture, climate change mitigation, economic cooperation and cyber security.

Other areas of cooperation between the two countries that need to be strengthened, Marcos said, include the supply chain, health and health security, environment, energy security and interconnectivity.

The meeting was part of the President's ongoing five-day official visit to Washington, which included a series of high-level dialogues with US President Joseph Biden and US Vice President Kamala Harris.

Joining the President in Wednesday's Capitol Hill meeting were Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez, Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique A. Manalo, Philippine Ambassador to the US Jose Manuel G. Romualdez, Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno, Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin C. Remulla and Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual.

Among those who joined Menendez were Senator James Risch as well as other officials of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

RAPPLER

[Jollibee Group launches global sustainability agenda entitled Joy for Tomorrow](#)

The Jollibee Group launched last March 16 its Global Sustainability Agenda dubbed Joy for Tomorrow, which aims to further strengthen the company's commitment to sustainable business practices.

While Jollibee Group has made significant strides over its 45-year history in various social and environmental projects, it is now purposely integrating all its sustainability efforts into a more cohesive framework that unites the Jollibee Group community, including employees, business partners, suppliers, vendors, and other stakeholders, toward a set of shared sustainability goals.

With Joy for Tomorrow, Jollibee Group stays true to its mission of bringing the joy of eating to everyone, acknowledging that this mission extends not only to its customers and stakeholders today, but also to future generations. The company recognizes that it must use its global scale, resources, and expertise to help usher in a more sustainable future for society and the planet.

"Our challenge in Jollibee Group is how to sustain our success while creating a positive impact on our society and planet. As one of the fastest growing restaurant companies in the world, and with our vision to become one of the top companies in our industry, we recognize that we have a significant role and responsibility in impacting positive change," said Jollibee Group president and CEO Ernesto Tanmantiong.

The Joy for Tomorrow Sustainability Agenda centers on three pillars, namely food, people, and planet. These pillars consist of ten focus areas: food safety, food quality, nutrition and transparency, employee welfare, farmers' livelihood, community support, good governance, packaging and recycling, waste reduction, and energy and water efficiency. Each focus area sets goals and initiatives that contribute and align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

According to Jollibee Group chief sustainability and public affairs officer Pepot Miñana, Joy for Tomorrow serves as the company's roadmap for achieving the triple bottom line of people, planet, and profit.

"It's a call to action for everyone in Jollibee Group, amid the pursuit of our sustainability pillars of Food, People, and Planet. It is our commitment to future generations to preserve and improve natural resources from which they can benefit," Miñana said.

Serving food that people trust

Jollibee Group prioritizes food safety and quality to maintain the trust of its customers worldwide.

In 2022, the company conducted over 15,000 Food, Service, and Cleanliness (FSC) Audits across its stores worldwide, while over 125,600 online training hours were devoted to food, service, cleanliness, and condition. Moreover, 100% of its stores, commissaries, and logistics facilities have undergone rigorous quality management audits. The group also achieved a global net promoter score of 82, exceeding the industry benchmark of 50, showcasing customer satisfaction and loyalty for the various brands.

Helping make people's lives better

Jollibee Group recognizes its invaluable role in fostering an inclusive work environment for its employees, partners, farmers, and communities.

In 2022, women made up 59% of management positions and 51% of the total workforce. Through training courses on unconscious bias, inclusive leadership, and anti-discrimination, the company educates its employees on the value and benefits of a diverse and inclusive workplace. As a measure of high employee engagement, the group achieved the 70th percentile of Gallup's Q12 percentile ranking.

Outside of the organization, Jollibee Group Foundation's Farmer Entrepreneurship Program (FEP) has enabled over 700 smallholder farmers across the Philippines to deliver their produce directly to Jollibee Group. Today, the white onions, green bell peppers, tomatoes, calamansi, ginger, and other vegetables that the company uses in Jollibee, Chowking, Greenwich, and Mang Inasal products come from FEP farmers.

Treating the planet responsibly

In terms of environmental sustainability, Jollibee Group focuses on the key areas of packaging and recycling, energy, water, and waste.

By the end of 2022, Jollibee Group manufacturing sites in the Philippines achieved a 21% reduction in energy use ratio, a 23% reduction in water use ratio, and a 38% reduction in waste, with almost 50% of waste now being recycled versus the company's 2020 benchmarks. On the store level, each solar panel installed reduces about 3-7% of consumption from the grid.

Progress over perfection

"We understand that assessing our impact is a continuous process of ambition and refinement. We will track the success of our strategies over the coming years, and

periodically review our material topics and stakeholder engagement process. We will set agile goals and targets to help us significantly impact society and the environment in more meaningful ways,” Tanmantiong said.

Apart from establishing a unit dedicated to sustainability and the appointment of a chief sustainability officer as part of its executive team, Jollibee Group also instituted an Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Council to ensure that its business operations are aligned with the sustainability goals.

“Our Global Sustainability Agenda represents our belief system in conducting business more ethically. As a global food company, we are responsible and deliberate with our actions and their impact, and we are making our sustainability measures the way of the future,” added Miñana.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Survey shows Pinoys lagging in EV interest](#)

By: Jenica Faye Garcia

FILIPINOS are the least interested in buying a hybrid or electric vehicle (EV) for their next purchase compared to other Southeast Asians, professional services firm Deloitte said on Thursday.

The lack of charging infrastructure is driving the hesitation, Deloitte said, also noting that across the region, an expected reduction in operating costs and not a desire to combat climate change is the main factor behind interest in EVs.

While fewer Filipinos expressed a preference for internal combustion engines (ICE), Deloitte's 2023 Global Automotive Consumer Survey still found an overwhelming 72 percent wanting their next cars to be propelled by traditional fuels such as gasoline or diesel.

The figure is down 10 percent from a year earlier, Deloitte said.

Just 25 percent of the Filipino respondents said they were looking at buying an EV, broken down into 13 percent preferring hybrids (which use both ICE and electric motors), 10 percent picking plug-in hybrids and 2 percent for cars that run purely on battery power.

The remaining 3 percent chose "others."

Majority of Indonesians and Malaysians also preferred ICEs at 59 percent and 58 percent, while Vietnam came in at just under half at 49 percent. Interest in gasoline- and diesel-powered cars was lowest in Thailand (36 percent) and Singapore (34 percent).

Interest in EVs, either hybrids or full battery-powered ones, was highest among Singaporeans (62 percent) and Thais (60 percent).

Asked what was giving them pause from purchasing a full battery-powered EV, the most common response in the region was the "lack of public EV charging infrastructure." Singapore, where the foremost concern was "time required to charge," was the exception.

"These results underscore the importance of ensuring that a robust infrastructure is in place to support EVs before we can expect consumers to make the switch en masse,"

Eric Landicho, Deloitte Philippines managing partner and chief executive officer, said in a statement.

"And we're not just talking about convenient charging sites. We have to consider if we have the right workforce to service these vehicles wherever the owners may need that assistance," he added.

"It also helps situate the government's efforts at messaging and designing incentives to encourage the use of EVs so they can better align these initiatives with what consumers actually want."

Despite the message that EVs will help address climate change, Southeast Asian consumer interest is still primarily based on the perception that buying an EV will lead to significantly lower vehicle operating costs.

"Across all six SEA countries, 'lower fuel costs' was identified as the number one reason respondents would choose an EV," Deloitte said.

"For Filipinos, this reason was followed by 'better driving experience' and 'less maintenance.'"

While 69 percent of Filipinos said they would have to charge their EVs at home for day-to-day use, 71 percent will likely be unable to do so because they cannot install home chargers (26 percent) or that the cost is too high (45 percent).

Twenty-six percent, meanwhile, expect to charge their cars at an on-street public charging station while 5 percent expect to do so at work. When charging on the go, 40 percent preferred using a dedicated EV service station while 26 percent would opt for a traditional gas station with EV chargers.

Asked about the amenities they would like to have at public charging stations, 89 percent of Filipinos said Wi-Fi connectivity followed by coffee and beverages (77 percent), snacks and light meals (75 percent), and lounges or sitting areas (73 percent). Forty-four percent said they would like to have access to a full-service restaurant.

"The ecosystem that will likely rise around EVs as their popularity grows will open up many new opportunities for businesses, especially if you consider the amount of time EV owners expect to spend charging their vehicles," Landicho said.

The Deloitte study found that a quarter of Filipinos expected to spend 10 to 20 minutes for their EV to charge from empty to 80 percent at a public charging location while 29 percent were willing to wait even longer — 21 to 40 minutes.

"That's significantly more time spent at these stations compared to a traditional gas station, giving businesses access to a captive market," Landicho said.

"The consumer experience they provide at these venues will play a part in boosting EV adoption locally, and ultimately in helping decarbonize our transport sector."

The Deloitte study was conducted between September 2022 and October 2022 with over 26,000 consumers in 24 geographies surveyed. In Southeast Asia, 6,048 respondents were polled from six countries: Indonesia (1,003), Malaysia (1,006), the Philippines (1,008), Singapore (1,003), Thailand (1,009) and Vietnam (1,019).

[US, SKorea OK \\$2M climate grant](#)

By: Leander Domingo

THE US government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAid) and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (Koica) signed a P111.5-million (\$2 million) grant partnership to improve the climate resilience of Philippines cities.

The US Embassy in Manila said the partnership was aimed at boosting the capacities of the cities of Batangas, Borongan, Cotabato, Iloilo, Legazpi and Zamboanga to adapt to, mitigate and manage the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

Through this grant funding forged on March 22, 2023, Koica will support the implementation of the USAid's five-year P836.5 million (\$15 million) Climate Resilient Cities Project that benefits said partner cities.

The embassy also said that Koica's technical assistance will enhance the capacity of local government units (LGUs) to develop guidelines for and use climate adaptation technology.

More than 180 Philippine officials and stakeholders will be invited to participate in capacity-building programs organized in the Philippines and South Korea.

"USAid and Koica will also support the six LGUs and other stakeholders to more effectively disseminate climate-related information to local communities; increase access to climate financing for economic and social development; and promote natural climate solutions that strengthen cities' resilience to climate change," the embassy said.

Another partnership between the US government and South Korea will soon be launched to prevent and reduce marine pollution in Manila Bay.

The embassy said this partnership also seeks to enhance knowledge and influence social and behavioral changes for marine pollution reduction and prevention.

This latest agreement between USAid and Koica follows the signing of a memorandum of understanding in April 2021 where the two leading development agencies agreed to strategically collaborate on priority programs, including climate change-related initiatives, to advance development in the Philippines.

"As the United States and Korea are among the largest bilateral donors in the Philippines, this momentous partnership of USAid, Koica, and the Philippine government will bring together our accumulated experience and technical expertise to

build climate change and disaster resilience in the country," Koica Country Director Eunsub Kim said.

USAid Philippines Mission Director Ryan Washburn also noted that for 70 years, the US and Korea have worked together to pursue mutual goals based on their core values of democracy and human rights.

He said the US has pledged to strengthen this alliance and broaden the focus to address issues of critical importance to the Indo-Pacific region and the world.

"In particular, we will deepen our cooperation in addressing the climate crisis, reducing plastic waste, and promoting advanced technologies. We will also enhance our economic cooperation and people-to-people ties," Washburn added.

The embassy said the Philippines consistently places high in global rankings on climate change risk and vulnerability and with an average of 20 typhoons per year and frequent floods, landslides, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions, the Philippines is one of the most disaster-prone nations.

Citing the 2022 World Risk Index, it said the Philippines ranked first out of 193 countries with the highest disaster risks and has incurred more than P670 billion worth of damage and losses due to tropical cyclones alone between 2011 and 2021.

The embassy also noted that the negative impacts of climate change and disasters severely impede national economic development and worsen poverty and thus, one of the top priorities for sustainable development is to strengthen national and local climate resilience systems.

The USAid-Koica partnership supports the Philippine government's 2023-2028 strategy framework goal to "enhance adaptive capacity and resilience of communities and ecosystems to natural hazards and climate change," it added.

The US-Republic of Korea alliance will be marking its 70th anniversary this year.

US President Joe Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol agreed to strengthen the global comprehensive strategic alliance beyond the Korean Peninsula in the US-South Korea's leader's joint statement in May 2022.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[CHR: DepEd blended learning option helps learners adapt to climate crisis](#)

By: Cristina Chi

Consistent with warnings from international groups that a warming planet places people in climate-vulnerable countries at risk, the Department of Education's move to allow blended learning can help protect students from the dangerous dry season heat, the Commission on Human Rights said.

In a statement on Tuesday, the human rights body said it welcomes DepEd's reminders to schools to conduct blended learning to protect students from extreme heat during face-to-face classes.

The CHR said that while DepEd required schools to return to face-to-face classes in 2022, the department displayed "commendable responsiveness and adaptiveness" when it "adjusted their perspective on blended learning arrangements" recently following reports of students falling ill due to heat exhaustion.

The CHR cited findings from the International Labor Organization in 2019 that "extreme temperatures due to climate change would become a safety hazard for people living in climate change-vulnerable countries."

"CHR supports DepEd's decision to pursue blended and (alternative delivery mode of) learning to promote a safe learning environment for children pursuant to the Convention on the Rights of a Child, and a safe working environment for faculty and staff in line with international labor standards," the human rights body said.

Several teachers and students have reported experiencing discomfort inside the classroom due to the hotter weather during the dry season. A survey among teachers in late March found that most felt "intolerable heat" (67% or 7,800 out of 11,700) inside the classroom, with the most reported impact being students' waning focus during lessons.

The human rights body expressed support for DepEd's decision to let school heads decide according to their respective circumstances, "acknowledging that each school may have different experiences and capacities in dealing with the dry season heat."

Long-term solutions needed for persistent gaps

CHR, however, called on DepEd to close the "persisting gaps" in distance learning which continues to place marginalized students at a disadvantage, according to the

human rights body's report on students' access to education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“(Students) faced difficulties in affording decent-performance gadgets, access to stable internet, and other resources for online learning. Their home environments were barely conducive for attending online classes and accomplishing school work,” the human rights body said.

For long-term solutions, the CHR said that DepEd should heed the “recommendations of several teachers' organizations” to construct more climate-resilient classrooms and address the inadequate number of classrooms and teachers.

The Alliance of Concerned Teachers in April said that the government needs to focus on addressing shortages in education, including the lack of classroom facilities, instead of defaulting to the blended learning modality, which leaves some disadvantaged students behind.

Vice President Sara Duterte, who heads DepEd, has said the department acknowledges the need to construct more classrooms to accommodate the growing student population in basic education.

According to the first Basic Education Report, which Duterte presented in January, DepEd's budget in 2023 will allow it to build around 6,000 classrooms. This is only about 6.5% of the 91,000 classroom shortage it projected in August.

Overall, the agency still faces a backlog of around 190,000 school buildings that need minor to major repairs for various reasons, according to DepEd data.

Marcos, US senators discuss defense, climate change

By: Alexis Romero

President Marcos met with some US senators yesterday to tackle various issues, including defense, agriculture and climate change mitigation and to express his intention to further strengthen the Philippines' ties with its treaty ally, Malacañang said yesterday.

During the meeting, Marcos, a former lawmaker, said engagements between Manila and Washington should not just take place at the executive branch but also with members of Congress.

He praised the US for its willingness to work with the Philippines "as an equal, sovereign partner" and noted that defense and security engagement remains the "key pillar" of their bilateral relations.

"The President also expressed the Philippines' intention to deepen cooperation with the US in the areas of supply chain, health and health security, environment, energy security, and interconnectivity," the Presidential Communications Office (PCO) said in a statement.

According to the PCO, Marcos and the senators discussed a wide range of issues that include security, defense, agriculture and climate change mitigation, economic cooperation and cyber security. It did not elaborate on the points raised during the meeting, which was held after Marcos' engagement with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin III at the Pentagon.

The President thanked Sen. Robert Menendez, chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee, and other members of the panel for welcoming his delegation to Capitol Hill and for the "frank" and "productive" discussions on the state of bilateral relations between Manila and Washington.

Aside from Menendez, present during the meeting was Sen. James Risch, a ranking member of the Senate foreign relations committee. Also present were Speaker Martin Romualdez, Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo, Ambassador to the US Jose Manuel Romualdez, Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno, Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla and Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual.

Earlier this week, Marcos had separate meetings with US President Joe Biden and US Vice President Kamala Harris to reaffirm the longstanding alliance between the Philippines and the US.

In his previous speeches, Marcos cited the need to strengthen and update partnerships and alliances to enable the Philippines to cope with new challenges.

In a related development, Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink said the US and the Philippines will co-host in Manila the 6th annual Indo-Pacific Business Forum next year with the US Trade and Development Agency (USTDA).

Romualdez, meanwhile, stressed the role of the legislature in efforts of the Philippines and the US to strengthen relations.

“We, at the House, welcome the suggestion of President Marcos Jr. that efforts to boost the longstanding bond of friendship between the Philippines and the US should also involve the respective legislative branches of the two countries,” the House leader said.

“We are ready to take up that challenge and we look forward to more engagements with our counterparts in the US in the future,” Romualdez said.

“While the conduct of foreign relations is largely the domain of the executive, engagements between the lawmakers of both countries would be of immense value in, for instance, harmonizing the legal framework governing their bilateral relations,” he pointed out.

“We have actually taken the initiative to move toward the direction suggested by President Marcos,” the Speaker added.

In April, Romualdez, along with several members of the House, flew to the US and met with key congressional leaders to lay the groundwork for the official visit of President Marcos.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

BUSINESS WORLD

[Keeping Intramuros clean with tourists, volunteers in weekly drive](#)

By: Brontë H. Lacsamana

THE ADMINISTRATION of Intramuros, a Spanish-era walled city in Manila, is tapping tourists and other volunteers for a weekly clean-up activity that it hopes will serve as an example for other tourist-heavy sites.

“We’re targeting partnerships with schools and companies so we can reach 100 participants every week. That would mean 400 volunteers a month, or about 5,000 volunteers a year,” said Jeffrey Yap, officer-in-charge for urban planning and community development in Intramuros.

Launched in March, the “Cleantramuros” project has seen dozens up to a hundred participants each week.

Though the famed “Walled City” has its own janitors and cleaners, the clean-up drive was started for the larger purpose of “creating a culture of respect for the heritage district,” according to Mr. Yap.

He told BusinessWorld in a Zoom interview that despite Intramuros being named Asia’s Leading Tourist Attraction in the 2022 World Travel Awards, the historic site can still be greatly improved.

“Of course, we’re championing it as the premier heritage district, but unfortunately, most visitors throw trash everywhere. People will be more aware if they see a clean-up drive,” he said.

Volunteers get to avail free entrance to Fort Santiago, which usually costs P75.

According to the Department of Tourism, the capital city of Manila attracts over a million visitors each year, with Intramuros being one of the main attractions.

Mr. Yap explained that this heavy foot traffic means more care needs to be put into preserving the built heritage, including the cobblestones and the walls.

“We’re partnering with the Climate Change Commission so that we can be mindful about the physical impact and further study how to protect the concerned sites,” he said.

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