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By: Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson

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By: Bienvenido S. Oplas, Jr.

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CNN

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By: Laura Paddison and Jessie Gretener

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By: Samantha Ho

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GMA NEWS

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MANILA BULLETIN

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By: Joseph Pedrajas

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MANILA STANDARD

[Warmest 5 years coming up—UN](#)

It is near-certain that 2023-2027 will be the warmest five-year period ever recorded, the United Nations warned Wednesday, as greenhouse gases and El Niño combine to send temperatures soaring.

RAPPLER

[Manila in the middle: Marcos navigates 'upside' in PH-US relations](#)

By: Bea Cupin

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[UN lays out blueprint to reduce plastic waste 80% by 2040](#)

Countries can reduce plastic pollution by 80% by 2040 using existing technologies and making major policy changes, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) said in a report on Monday, May 15.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Four projects worth P65B to support PH agriculture](#)

By: Janine Alexis Miguel

The Department of Agriculture (DA) unveiled on Tuesday four new projects worth P65.36 billion to support the agricultural development in the country.

[Philippine trade needs a shot in the arm](#)

By: Ernie Cecilia, DPM

Experts predict that the world economy will grow by 3 percent in 2023. But if the financial sector stress continues, global growth could decelerate to 2.5 percent.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Australian foreign minister hopes to advance Philippine relations to strategic partnership](#)

By: Kaycee Valmonte

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong said her main goal in her Philippine visit is to “uplift” the bilateral relationship of Canberra with Manila beyond having a robust defense partnership.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[CCC to integrate volunteerism in combating climate change](#)

By: Filane Mikee Cervantes

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) and the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA) have signed a memorandum of agreement to maximize volunteerism and community participation in combatting climate change in the country.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS MIRROR

Climate change disproportionately affects women — World Bank

By: Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson

GOVERNMENTS need to adjust policy to account for the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and girls, the World Bank said.

“There is growing evidence that climate change has a gendered impact, with women and girls disproportionately affected by extreme weather events and other climate-related phenomena. Understanding these impacts is essential if we are to design policies that are effective, equitable, and sustainable,” the World Bank said in a study.

“In many parts of the world, girls and women are more likely to be discriminated against from an early age, leading to reduced opportunities for education and employment. Women are more likely to withdraw from agricultural work and struggle to find alternative sources of income after weather shocks,” it said.

“Boys may also be taken out of school to work, while men may be forced to migrate in search of new employment opportunities. These social responses to weather shocks could ultimately result in widening the gender gaps,” it added.

In the Philippines, heat, typhoons, and rainfall were deemed likely to increase male outmigration relative to women.

The World Bank said that girls and women are “particularly vulnerable” to the social responses triggered by weather shocks.

“For example, droughts can result in reduced resources that can lead to sex-selective abortions, malnutrition, and neglect of girls due to son preference. Thus, weather shocks have been associated with girls’ higher mortality,” it added.

The study found that in the Philippines, child mortality due to typhoons a year after the disaster tends to be concentrated among girls and families with numerous children.

“Mortality rates are highest in households where infant daughters face competition for resources, particularly if siblings are boys,” it added.

The report also evaluated the impact of extreme weather events on education.

It cited Typhoon Mike in the Philippines, which had “a greater impact on girls’ highest-grade completion 2 and 4 years after the disaster, but the impact was similar to boys’ 12 and 15 years after.”

The World Bank said there is a need to design policies that have a “better understanding of the social mechanisms through which men and women are affected.”

“This requires investment in research that looks at the intersection of climate change, gender, and social inequality. It also requires policies that are designed with a gender perspective, taking into account the unique challenges faced by men and women in different contexts,” it said.

“For this, there is a critical need for improved collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data. As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, pervasive gaps in sex-disaggregated data caused knowledge of the gender impacts of the pandemic to be incomplete,” it added.

[Opinion] Climate cycle, climate loans, and the PPP Act

By: Bienvenido S. Oplas, Jr.

With endless “climate crisis” or “climate catastrophe” narratives that we hear and read, we have been led to embrace more wasteful, bottomless climate loans and climate bureaucracies.

See how the multilaterals like the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank (WB) lobby in stories published in BusinessWorld this month alone: “ODA, loans not enough for climate goals — ADB” (May 4), “PHL to host Asia-Pacific conference on disaster risk reduction” (May 8), “Gov’t seeks \$500-million climate risk loan from WB” (May 11), “ETM seen helping PHL accelerate transition to clean energy” (May 16).

The Energy Transition Mechanism (ETM) is an economically dangerous and blackout-friendly climate loan scheme concocted by the ADB to fast-track the transition from fossil fuels to renewables, especially wind-solar. Buy out then kill via early retirement of coal plants and invest more in wind-solar. As of the first quarter of 2023, coal contributed 61% of total electricity generation in the Philippines, while wind and solar combined contributed only 4%. See how blackout-prone the Philippines will be if such a dangerous and economically suicidal policy is enforced.

THE CLINTEL REPORT

Last week, on May 9, the Climate Intelligence Foundation (Clintel), an Amsterdam-based independent think tank founded in 2019 by emeritus professor of geophysics Guus Berkhout and science journalist Marcel Crok, released its new report: “The Frozen Climate Views of the IPCC: An analysis of AR6.”

It is a 180-page date-heavy report that tears into the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) recently published 6th Assessment Report (AR6). Simply put, the Clintel Report showed in many charts and graphs that the IPCC AR6 is focused on “dangerous anthropogenic climate change,” ignores natural climate change, leans on extreme emissions scenarios, and cherry picks the time periods and the literature to make climate change appear “dangerous.”

Among the important data of the report is this chart showing that weather-related losses as share of global GDP is actually falling, not rising.

The report can be downloaded free at <https://clintel.org/download-ipcc-book-report-2023/>.

THE PPP ACT

The Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Act was passed in the House of Representatives last December: House Bill 6527, “An Act Providing for the Enabling Environment to Foster the Growth of Public-Private Partnerships for Infrastructure and Other Development Projects.”

There are six versions of the PPP bill in the Senate, and on April 18, the Senate Committee on Public Works conducted a public hearing on the subject.

The PPP Act is a quick win for the government and the public because it will expand infrastructure projects around the country at little or no cost to taxpayers because the private sector proponents will shoulder the bulk of financial, technical, and engineering costs.

The President will deliver his second State of the Nation Address (SONA) in two months. In his first SONA last July, President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. mentioned that the PPP Act aims to address three things: ambiguities in the existing law, bottlenecks and challenges affecting the implementation of the PPP Program, and lack of a competitive and enabling environment for PPPs.

So, the PPP Act, when enacted as a law, will unify the fragmented legal framework and improve governance of PPPs to improve doing business and protect the consumers. Currently, there are different legal frameworks for PPPs, each with their own requirements and processes: the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) Law, the Joint Venture (JV) guidelines of the National Economic and Development Authority (better known as NEDA), local PPP and JV ordinances, and guidelines issued by other agencies with special charters.

The proposed PPP Act will address bottlenecks in the PPP process. The approval thresholds of the current BOT Law have not been amended since 1994, so the PPP Act will increase the approval threshold for national PPP projects, making the approval process streamlined and more efficient. The proposed approval thresholds for national PPP Projects are seen in the table in this story.

The autonomy of local government units (LGUs) in the approval of local PPP projects is recognized and preserved by the PPP Act. Some mechanisms should be ready to ensure coordination in investment programming between the National Government and LGUs. These include cases where: 1.) there are proposed National Government undertakings for approval by NEDA’s Investment Coordination Committee, or, 2.) the

local PPP project affects national development or master plans and projects, so an endorsement from the National Government through local development councils shall be required.

The tight fiscal condition of the National Government at a time when public demand for more modern, bigger infrastructure projects keeps rising should help the Senate in fast-tracking the enactment of this bill into a law.

CNN

[‘Sounding the alarm’: World on track to breach a critical warming threshold in the next five years](#)

By: Laura Paddison and Jessie Gretener

The world is now likely to breach a key climate threshold for the first time within the next five years, according to the World Meteorological Organization, due to a combination of heat-trapping pollution and a looming El Niño.

Global temperatures have soared in recent years as the world continues to burn planet-warming fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas. And that trend shows no sign of slowing. In its annual climate update, the WMO said that between 2023 and 2027, there is now a 66% chance that the planet’s temperature will climb above 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming above pre-industrial levels for at least one year.

As temperatures surge, there is also a 98% likelihood that at least one of the next five years – and the five-year period as a whole – will be the warmest on record for the planet, the WMO reported.

Breaching the 1.5-degree threshold may only be temporary, the WMO said, but it would be the clearest signal yet of how quickly climate change is accelerating – hastening sea level rise, more extreme weather and the demise of vital ecosystems.

Countries pledged in the Paris Climate Agreement to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees – and preferably to 1.5 degrees – compared to pre-industrial temperatures. Scientists consider 1.5 degrees of warming as a key tipping point, beyond which the chances of extreme flooding, drought, wildfires and food shortages could increase dramatically.

“This report does not mean that we will permanently exceed the 1.5 degrees Celsius level specified in the Paris Agreement which refers to long-term warming over many years. However, WMO is sounding the alarm that we will breach the 1.5 degrees Celsius level on a temporary basis with increasing frequency,” said WMO Secretary-General Professor Petteri Taalas, in a statement.

The temperature increases are fueled by the rise of planet-heating pollution from burning fossil fuels, as well as the predicted arrival of El Niño, a natural climate phenomenon with a global heating effect.

“A warming El Niño is expected to develop in the coming months and this will combine with human-induced climate change to push global temperatures into uncharted territory,” Taalas said. “This will have far-reaching repercussions for health, food security, water management and the environment. We need to be prepared.”

The current hottest year on record is 2016, which followed a very strong El Niño event. El Niño tends to ramp up the temperatures the year after it develops, which could put 2024 on track to be the hottest year on record.

The world has already seen around 1.2 degrees of warming, as humans continue to burn fossil fuels and produce planet-heating pollution. And despite three years of cooling La Niña, temperatures have soared to dangerous levels. The last eight years were the warmest on record.

The report stated that the chance of temporarily exceeding 1.5 degrees Celsius has risen steadily since 2015, when the WMO put the chance of breaching this threshold at close to zero.

The annual mean global near-surface temperature for each year between 2023 and 2027 is predicted to be between 1.1 degrees Celsius and 1.8 degree Celsius higher than the 1850-1900 average, said the WMO. That refers to the period before the sharp increase of planet-heating pollution from burning fossil fuels.

“Global mean temperatures are predicted to continue increasing, moving us away further and further away from the climate we are used to,” said Leon Hermanson, a Met Office expert scientist who led the report, in a statement.

Why does 1.5 degrees matter?

Scientists have long warned that the world needs to stay within 1.5 degrees of warming to avoid catastrophic and potentially irreversible changes.

Warming above this point increases the risk of triggering major tipping points, including the death of coral reefs and the melting of polar ice sheets, which will add to sea level rise, devastating coastal communities.

In the US alone, 13 million people could be forced to relocate because of sea level rise by the end of the century. For many low-lying Pacific Island nations, warming over 1.5 degrees is a threat to their survival.

Temperature rises also increase the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events including droughts, storms, wildfires and heatwaves.

Already this year a slew of temperature records have been broken – and in some cases smashed – across the world.

In March, parts of Argentina grappled with temperatures up to 10 degrees Celsius (18 degrees Fahrenheit) above normal. High temperature records were smashed across large parts of Asia in April, while record-breaking temperatures scorched locations in the Pacific Northwest in May.

Limiting warming to 1.5 degrees could reduce the number of people exposed to extreme heatwaves by around 420 million, according to NASA.

The window to act is closing

The 1.5 threshold may be important, but it's not a tipping point in itself.

With every fraction of a degree the world warms, the worse the effects will be. But, that also means every fraction of a degree by which warming can be reduced, will help.

Scientists say that, while the window to act is fact closing, there is still time to reduce global warming by moving away from burning oil, coal and gas and toward clean energy.

Many have also called for adaptation measures to prepare for the climate impacts that are already baked in, such as vast coastal walls to protect communities from sea level rise.

Countries will meet at the UN COP28 climate summit in Dubai at the end of the year, where they will undertake a “global stocktake” – an assessment of their progress toward targets agreed in the Paris Climate Agreement.

They are expected to be a long way off track on meeting goals to keep within 1.5 degrees of warming by cutting planet-heating pollution by more than 40% by 2030.

ECO-BUSINESS

[Asia's heatwave made 30 times more likely by climate change: study](#)

By: Samantha Ho

The intense heatwave experienced by most of South and Southeast Asia this year was made 30 times more likely due to human-caused climate change, according to the World Weather Attribution group, an international coalition of leading climate scientists.

In April, countries including Bangladesh, India, Laos and Thailand experienced record-breaking heatwaves, with temperatures soaring as high as 45°C in Thailand and 42°C in Laos.

The World Weather Attribution's latest report revealed that in both the South Asian and Southeast Asian regions, temperatures were at least two degrees Celsius hotter than they would have been without climate change.

"Global temperatures will continue to increase and events like this will become more frequent and severe...until overall greenhouse gases emissions are halted," the scientists said in a statement.

The researchers analysed weather data and computer model simulations, following peer-reviewed methods, to compare today's climate, after about 1.2°C of global warming since the late 1800s, with the climate of the past. The analysis looked at the average maximum temperature and maximum heat index for four consecutive days in April across two regions, one covering south and east India and Bangladesh, and a second one including all of Thailand and Laos.

The heat index is a measure that combines temperature and humidity and reflects more accurately the impacts of heatwaves on the human body.

"In Bangladesh and India, events like the recent humid heatwave used to occur less than once a century on average [but] they can now be expected around once in five years now," the scientists said. If global temperatures rise by two degrees, such events could occur annually, they said.

Meanwhile, the recent humid heatwave in Laos and Thailand "would have been nearly impossible without the influence of climate change", said the coalition of scientists.

"It is still a very unusual event that can only be expected around once in 200 years, even with the influence of human-caused climate change. But if temperature rise

reaches 2 degrees, it will become much more common, occurring about once in 20 years.”

The heat has already caused widespread hospitalisations, damaged roads, sparked fires and led to school closures but the full human cost of the extreme weather event is still unknown.

“The full impact of a heatwave is often not known until weeks or months later, when death certificates are collected, or when scientists can analyse excess deaths. Many places lack good record keeping of heat-related deaths, therefore currently available global mortality figures are likely an underestimate,” said Anshu Ogra, assistant professor at the Indian Institute of Technology’s school of public policy, ahead of the report’s launch.

The study also concluded that the high vulnerability in Asia, which is one of the world’s heatwave hotspots, amplified the impacts.

Heat action plans lacking

Heat action plans are crucial in addressing the human and economic impacts of heatwaves, especially when it comes to vulnerable populations, said Ogra.

The report said that solutions to heat-related harms can also include self-protective action, early warning systems, and passive and active cooling. “They are currently implemented as patchwork, to various degrees, across the countries studied, with India having the most advanced heatwave planning,” the report said.

Vulnerable communities often lack access to complete protection from deadly heat, and policymakers need to consider the different impacts of the extreme heat on these groups of people, such as workers exposed to the sun and those in the informal sector, said Emmanuel Raju, associate professor in the Global Health Section of the University of Copenhagen and member of the Copenhagen Centre for Disaster Research.

“It is important to talk about who can adapt and who has the resources to do that,” he said, adding that vulnerability assessments would produce varying results across different countries, regions and communities. For example, crop productivity failures need to be considered among other invisible factors affecting farmers and agricultural communities.

“Heat is something that we still do not have access to relief or compensation (from). Our action plans need to do more to incorporate that, because it is important to talk about social protection and immediate relief within the context of heat as a disaster,” said Raju.

While India and Bangladesh have formulated heat action plans coupled with advisories from their respective meteorological departments, the study found that Thailand and Laos lacked similar preparedness for extreme heat.

“In Thailand, the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation did give some advisories around heatwaves, but in Laos, we were not able to trace any such advisories,” Orga said. “The case needs to be made to separate heat action plans from disaster management plans.” She said Laos had not issued any heatwave advisories, and recommended that authorities devise proper heat action plans instead of falling back only on disaster management plans, which are more common.

Chaya Vaddhanaphuti, lecturer at the Chiang Mai University department of geography, faculty of social sciences believes that the institutionalisation of a heatwave action plan is necessary in countries such as Laos and Thailand.

“In coming years, we need year-round preparations for a heatwave, and not declare an emergency only when it strikes,” he said.

GMA NEWS

PH-US ties stands on its own, not about China — Amb. Carlson

United States Ambassador to the Philippines MaryKay Carlson on Wednesday said the US commitment to support the Philippines is not about any other country as the ties between them "stands on its own."

In a television interview, Carlson was asked for her thoughts about China's previous statement that the increased presence of the US in the Philippines through the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites affect regional stability.

"The Mutual Defense Treaty dates back to 1951. Our commitment to the Philippines stands on its own. Our relationship stands on its own, it's not about in a third country, it's not about a single challenge. But we certainly have global challenges when it comes to climate change, when it comes to cybersecurity, when it comes to environmental degradation of our surrounding seas and climate," Carlson told ANC.

"There's so much that we're working together. It's not about China. It certainly is not about China alone, it's about what we do together... It dates back decades. I understand that that argument is out there but that's not why we're committed to the Philippines," she added.

Further, Carlson said the "EDCA sites can be used for whatever the Philippine government invites the United States to do."

"These are not our sites. We do not have any rights to these sites. It's not as if somehow somebody snaps a finger and all of a sudden everything is open to the United States," Carlson said.

She also admitted that the Indo-Pacific region is a critical regional trade around the world as 90% of trade goes across the high seas.

"A large percentage of that passes through the West Philippine Sea, the South China Sea, to these key straits in this region. So economic security is national security. So making sure that we guarantee prosperity for our people, means we have to have open sea lines of communication," Carlson said.

Earlier, President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. already said the additional sites under the country's EDCA with the US would not be used for offensive actions.

The new EDCA sites will be the Naval Base Camilo Osias in Sta Ana, Cagayan; Lal-lo Airport in Lal-lo, Cagayan; Camp Melchor Dela Cruz in Gamu, Isabela; and Balabac Island in Palawan.

While on his way to Washington early this month for an official visit, the President also said the Philippines would not be used as a staging post for any kind of military action.

MANILA BULLETIN

[PH seeks cooperation with Maldives vs climate change](#)

By: Joseph Pedrajas

The Philippines is seeking to enhance its cooperation with Maldives in facilitating climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as in protecting the marine environment and promoting sustainable tourism.

This was expressed by Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Secretary Enrique Manalo in his meeting with Maldivian counterpart, Abdulla Shahid, at the sidelines of Munich Leaders Meeting in Tokyo on Tuesday.

In pushing for such partnership, Manalo said the Philippines and Maldives are both archipelagos sharing similar concerns pertaining to the environment and the challenges of climate change.

"We enjoy warm people-to-people ties and valuable partnerships in (the) United Nations, including in pushing for global climate action," Manalo said in a later Twitter post as they discussed the enhancement of bilateral cooperation between the two countries celebrating their 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties.

"Let's aim to establish a mechanism for political consultations between our foreign ministries and to explore ways to further enhance our people-to-people ties," Manalo told Shahid, his "good friend," during their meeting.

For his part, Shahid expressed his appreciation for the 2,000 Filipinos living and working in Maldives. He noted their significant contributions to the Maldivian economy.

The two foreign ministers also agreed to conduct an exchange of visits in 2024 to mark the golden anniversary of Philippines-Maldives bilateral ties.

MANILA STANDARD

Warmest 5 years coming up—UN

It is near-certain that 2023-2027 will be the warmest five-year period ever recorded, the United Nations warned Wednesday, as greenhouse gases and El Niño combine to send temperatures soaring.

There is a two-thirds chance that at least one of the next five years will see global temperatures exceed the more ambitious target set out in the Paris accords on limiting climate change, the UN's World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said.

Locally, several areas in Bicol Region and Western Visayas experienced a heat index of 46°C on Wednesday, according to the state weather bureau.

PAGASA classifies heat indices reaching 42°C to 51°C as under “dangerous” level, which may cause heat stroke and heat exhaustion.

The highest computed heat index was recorded in Masbate City; Daet, Camarines Sur, and Catarman, Northern Samar, a GMA TV report said last night.

A similar heat index is likewise projected in Roxas City, Capiz on Thursday.

According to PAGASA, residents living on islands are more susceptible to the possible effects of the high heat index.

The hottest eight years ever recorded were all between 2015 and 2022, with 2016 the warmest—but temperatures are forecast to increase further as climate change accelerates.

“There is a 98-percent likelihood that at least one of the next five years, and the five-year period as a whole, will be the warmest on record,” the WMO said.

The 2015 Paris Agreement saw countries agree to cap global warming at “well below” two degrees Celsius above average levels measured between 1850 and 1900—and 1.5°C if possible.

The global mean temperature in 2022 was 1.15°C above the 1850-1900 average.

The WMO said there was a 66 percent chance that annual global surface temperatures will exceed 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels for at least one of the years 2023-2027, with a range of 1.1°C to 1.8°C forecasted for each of those five years.

'Uncharted territory'

"WMO is sounding the alarm that we will breach the 1.5°C level on a temporary basis with increasing frequency," said the agency's chief Petteri Taalas.

"A warming El Niño is expected to develop in the coming months and this will combine with human-induced climate change to push global temperatures into uncharted territory.

"This will have far-reaching repercussions for health, food security, water management and the environment. We need to be prepared."

El Niño is the large-scale warming of surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean. The weather phenomenon normally occurs every two to seven years.

Typically, El Niño increases global temperatures in the year after it develops—which in this cycle would be 2024.

Wednesday's predictions show "we haven't been able to limit the warming so far and we are still moving in the wrong direction," Taalas told a press conference.

He said it could take until the 2060s to phase out the negative trend and stop things getting worse.

Heat gets trapped in the atmosphere by so-called greenhouse gases, which are at a record high.

The major greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide, plus methane and nitrous oxide.

"The return to normal level might take even thousands of years because we already have such a high concentration of carbon dioxide, and we have lost the melting of glaciers and sea level game," said Taalas.

"There's no return to the climate which persisted during the last century. That's a fact."

'Nobody untouched' by changes

Mean global land and sea near-surface temperatures have increased since the 1960s.

The chances of temperatures temporarily exceeding 1.5°C above the 1850-1990 average have risen steadily since 2015, a year in which they were considered close to zero.

“It will be sad the day we pass 1.5 degrees but it’s not a reason to give up,” said Leon Hermanson of Britain’s Met Office national weather service, the WMO’s lead center on yearly to 10-yearly climate predictions.

“We need to emit as few as possible of the greenhouse gases and any emissions that we manage to cut will reduce the warming and this will reduce the big extreme impacts.

“Nobody is going to be untouched by these changes and it’s already leading to floods across the world, droughts and big movements of people.”

Taalas added that while predictions for climate averages are fairly strong, climate extremes predictions are “still a bit unknown, and the biggest impacts of climate change are felt through these extremes.”

RAPPLER

Manila in the middle: Marcos navigates 'upside' in PH-US relations

By: Bea Cupin

It was a cold and very windy Wednesday morning at the Pentagon in Washington DC as the military band played a snappy rendition of the Philippines' "Lupang Hinirang," followed by the US' "Star Spangled Banner."

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., dressed in his usual piña barong, stood at attention beside the towering Lloyd Austin, the US defense secretary.

Malacañang, citing the US Department of Defense, said he was the first head of state to get full military honors under the Biden administration.

Inside the Pentagon, away from the prying eyes of the media, Austin made a promise to Marcos and the Philippines, similar to what his boss, US President Joe Biden, had made a few days prior.

"Our commitment to the defense of the Philippines is ironclad. And let me tell you once again that our Mutual Defense Treaty applies to armed attacks on our armed forces, Coast Guard vessels, public vessels, or aircraft in the Pacific, including anywhere in the South China Sea. So, make no mistake Mr. President, we will always have your back, in the South China Sea or elsewhere in the region," said Austin.

Marcos said he looked forward to a "very bright future" between the Philippines and the United States.

The Pentagon visit was one of several stops for the jet-setting Philippine president who had a five-day official working visit to Washington DC, accompanied by Cabinet members, allies, and friends and family who are also political figures.

The visit, the first of its magnitude from a Philippine president in over a decade, was the "welcoming back" not just of the once-disgraced Marcos name into international politics, but also of the Philippines into the "mainstream" of foreign policy: that is, back on the side of its long-time defense ally, the US.

"It's been incredible how quickly it has turned," said Brian Harding, senior expert for Southeast Asia and Pacific Islands at the United States Institute for Peace.

Harding said the question now is, "Can it be sustained?"

Pivot one, pivot two

Following the Pentagon meeting, the US announced several agreements: to “swiftly operationalize” new military sites under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), help upgrade Philippine maritime assets, and institute new defense guidelines.

Marcos first spoke of his desire for Philippine-US relations to “evolve” in late September 2022, the same month he first stepped foot on US soil as Philippine chief executive. In the weeks before the Washington trip, he had gone into specifics – he wanted the Philippines-US MDT, signed in 1951 and ratified by the Philippine Senate in 1952, to “evolve” because the world had evolved, too.

Alma Salvador, assistant professor at the Ateneo de Manila University’s political science department, observed: “What Marcos is doing is to build on the existing security and strategic security partnerships that were earlier constructed under the Aquino administration. It’s the Aquino administration, because of its hard balancing foreign policy approach vis-a-vis China.”

It was during the administration of Benigno Aquino III that the first pivot – away from bilateral talks with China – happened.

On top of taking China to court, Aquino leaned heavily on the existing alliance with the US while also forging partnerships with “middle powers” then in the region.

“At the first level...it is to maintain and to bandwagon with the United States, and to activate and cultivate the alliance.... But the second layer is forging strategic partnerships, the so-called middle powers. During the time of Aquino, we built [ties with] Japan, South Korea, Australia,” said Salvador.

Then another pivot happened when Rodrigo Duterte won the presidency in 2016.

With the potty-mouthed Duterte in Malacañang, there was a shift – away from the US and closer to China, while still keeping close ties, both economically and militarily, with Japan, Australia, and South Korea.

Under Marcos, all those ties are moving forward: long-standing commitments with the US are being fulfilled, a visiting forces agreement with Japan – which occupied the Philippines in World War II – is a possibility, military ties with South Korea are progressing, while Manila is eyeing joint patrols with Australia in the South China Sea.

At the same time, Marcos is keeping China close by.

“My sense is that the US has been waiting for this moment. And President Marcos’ visit to Washington sealed the deal, so to speak. There’s still a lot more left to discuss, but Washington is very welcoming of this revitalization of the alliance relationship,” said Elina Noor, senior fellow at the Carnegie Institute for Peace’s Asia Program.

All in the family

The last time Ferdinand Marcos Jr. was a White House guest, he was part of his dictator-father’s delegation for a state visit in 1982. Then a disinterested Ilocos Norte vice governor, Marcos Jr. joined a state dinner, which the Washington Post described as a scene that “fell somewhere between a Christmas image and a South Seas fantasy.”

Forty years ago, US access to Philippine bases was also top on the agenda.

Then-US president Ronald Reagan said in his toast that “a strong defense alliance is a major factor in contributing to the security of the Philippines and to the maintenance of peace and security in Asia.” He was referring to the review of an agreement to allow the US use of Clark Air Base and Subic Bay Naval Base, then the largest US installations overseas. The five-year, \$900 million deal would be signed in 1983.

Reagan’s closeness to the Philippine dictator was criticized by certain personalities in US politics, including then-senator Joe Biden. The Washington Post, reporting this time on Marcos Jr.’s 2023 visit, said Biden “suggested that President Ronald Reagan’s willingness to support the Philippine dictator was in part based on his desire to maintain US leases on military bases.”

Forty years later, himself now president and with a commitment from Marcos Jr. for US boots to have access to Philippine bases in Cagayan, Isabela, and Palawan, there was no mention of that sordid past.

Talk of bases wasn’t the only similarity between the late dictator Marcos’ last visit to the White House and his son’s first visit as commander-in-chief.

During that 1982 state dinner, “there was dancing in the grand foyer of the White House...and chanting on the sidewalk outside, each out of step with the other,” reported the Washington Post, referring to protests against the elder Marcos and then-first lady Imelda Marcos.

Marcos Jr.’s visit and military agreements in the US revive both horrid memories of Martial Law and the abuses associated with American military bases.

Just outside the White House at Lafayette Square, a modest group of demonstrators protested both EDCA and Marcos Jr.'s visit.

Chants of "Marcos is not welcome here!" hounded him around Washington DC – from private dinners at Georgetown to a semi-public gathering of supporters at the posh Ritz Carlton.

The 1982 visit would be Marcos Sr.'s last while in power.

The next time he would find himself on US soil would be in February 1986, via a US Air Force plane following the 1986 People Power Revolution that finally removed the dictator and his family – Marcos Jr. included – from Malacañang. The same movement thrust Cory Aquino, widow of prominent Marcos critic Ninoy Aquino, into power.

Then-president Cory Aquino, in her first official working visit to Washington in September 1986, called on the US to join the Philippines as it "[builds] a new home for democracy, another haven for the oppressed, so [the Philippines] may stand as a shining testament of our two nations' commitment to freedom."

From Marcos to Aquino, with Manila in the middle

So there is, perhaps, a tinge of irony that Marcos Jr. now follows the path carved and fortified by the late president Benigno Aquino III, the only son of Cory.

It was Aquino who was "the only Philippine president since Martial Law who has given unprecedented attention to the military's capability upgrade," wrote Carmela Fonbuena in a 2016 Rappler report. All in all, the Philippine government released over P60 billion (\$2.8 billion then) to complete 68 military modernization projects under the second Aquino president, driven mostly by China's aggressive moves in the South China Sea.

Until Obama's visit to Manila in 2015 for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit, when he pledged his country's "ironclad" commitment to defending the Philippines, the US was painfully vague if it would come to the Philippines' defense in the event of an attack from China.

That's surely no longer the case. Geopolitics and a realignment of priorities have changed much in the region.

Marcos now benefits from the AFP upgrades and a change in the geopolitical landscape.

“The Philippines has a different role now. It has a different positioning,” observed Salvador.

“Now we bring with us the fact that we cultivated our strategic security partnership with the middle powers – from Aquino, pursued by Duterte, and pursued vigorously by Marcos. And it also works both ways,” she added.

What does Washington get from Manila? Access, said Harding.

“The US is not interested in new bases. It’s about presence and access,” he explained. The presence of US boots and assets – though neither side has specified what equipment would be prepositioned in Philippine bases – means Americans get to familiarize themselves with terrain fronting the South China Sea and close to Taiwan.

Americans on Philippine military grounds are also a means to deter China, a threat to US dominance. It’s also the “basis for closer ties” in the future, said Harding.

In exchange, Manila also gets to deter China, whose harassment has become a “daily situation” in the South China Sea. Manila’s strength as a middle power in the region, after all, is driven mostly by its defense networks – in particular, its treaty-ally, the US.

A strategy of peace

Marcos has called his foreign policy “simplistic” and one “based on the pursuit of peace.”

Yet the situation Manila finds itself in is anything but simple, particularly in the South China Sea and amid tensions in Taiwan.

Even as China’s harassment in the West Philippine Sea happens daily, the economic giant remains the Philippines’ top trading partner – as of March 2023, 22.4% of imports are from China, while 21.8% of exports go to China.

It doesn’t help that there seems to be a “disjuncture in rhetoric and reality” when it comes to China’s relationship with the Philippines – a laser-pointing incident in the West Philippine Sea on the heels of Marcos’ state visit to Beijing, for instance.

“Beijing is probably surprised at how quickly the US and Philippines relationship has deepened,” noted Harding.

Biden has pledged to send a “first [trade and investment] of its kind” to the Philippines, featuring “the highest caliber for US business leaders.” Manila is also set to co-host the 6th annual Indo-Pacific Business Forum (IPBF), “the United States’ marquee annual commercial event in the region.”

The US has also promised partnerships, funding, and agreements that cover infrastructure upgrades, education, clean energy, digital infrastructure, water and food security, and disaster resilience, among others.

These are pledges on top of the defense commitments from the Pentagon – covering defense modernization, “real-time information sharing,” and “cyber defense and cyber security cooperation,” among others.

The Philippine Coast Guard under Marcos has also developed a “new” role: “exposing the unlawful activities of both the China Coast Guard (CCG) and alleged Chinese Maritime Militia (CMM),” according to Jay Tristan Tarriela, a commissioned officer of the Philippine Coast Guard.

Harding sees this as a “lesson from the Duterte years.” He said, “Toning down differences does not lead to good results.”

That Manila and Washington agree in their desire to grow closer, both militarily and economically in the face of China’s aggressive moves in the South China Sea, means Beijing must rethink its own strategy.

“Beijing is going to have to come to terms with this recalibration in Malacanang’s policy.... Beijing is going to have to figure things out and get a little more comfortable with how things pan out. And obviously it’s not, which is why it’s acting the way it is,” said Noor.

The ASEAN question

There’s another character in the regional play: the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a bloc of 10 (11, once Timor-Leste becomes a full-time member). Six countries in the bloc, including the Philippines, are “middle powers,” based on the Lowly Institute’s latest Asia Power Index.

For over two decades, the bloc has been trying to finalize a Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea with China. It is unlikely to be completed any time soon.

“Part of the reason is because of the asymmetrical relations and the power dynamic involving ASEAN as a whole and the fragmented situation that ASEAN is at, and of course China,” explained Salvador.

When yours is a state that’s behind your neighbors both economically and politically, it’s harder to put national interests behind that of the region’s, said Salvador. It’s not just on the South China Sea – ASEAN has not made a clear stand on junta-ruled Myanmar, and its “Five-Point Consensus” appears to have no teeth.

That ASEAN members’ stake in the South China Sea also differ – between maritime countries and those with only land borders, for instance – make it difficult to find consensus, said both Noor and Salvador.

“What else could [ASEAN] do? It could come together in a more cohesive way when it comes to pronouncing on some of these political security issues. Is it going to do that? Probably not because of the differing interests,” said Noor.

In the latest ASEAN Summit in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia, regional leaders expressed concern over “land reclamations, and serious incidents in the area, including damage to the marine environment, which has eroded trust and confidence, increased tensions, and may undermine peace, security, and stability in the region.” There was no mention of who the aggressor was.

But in dealing with China, the US, and complexities in the region, Marcos again looks to those partnerships – in ASEAN and the rest of the Asia Pacific, including South Korea, Australia, and Japan.

Discussions on the COC may be long and seemingly far from any conclusion but, as Noor pointed out, “what other alternatives are out there?”

Marcos and his administration, similar to neighbors in Southeast Asia, project their foreign policy as one that doesn’t have to pick sides. But those choices have already been made via the treaty alliance, pointed out Noor.

There is pressure, too, on Washington, as it seemingly attempts to shore up economic ties with Manila. According to Noor, it must avoid the failed hype of China under Duterte, or face “a possible recalibration.”

With Manila as a crucial middle power comes a more crucial task: figuring out a middle ground that works best for both the superpower and its former colony.

“Both Manila and Washington are trying to figure out where the comfort zone for the both of them is going to lie, especially with the geopolitical overlay of Taiwan coming into play,” Noor said.

[UN lays out blueprint to reduce plastic waste 80% by 2040](#)

Countries can reduce plastic pollution by 80% by 2040 using existing technologies and making major policy changes, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) said in a report on Monday, May 15.

The Kenya-based UN body released its analysis of policy options to tackle the plastic waste crisis two weeks before countries convene in Paris for a second round of negotiations to craft a global treaty aimed at eliminating plastic waste.

The report focuses on three main market shifts needed to create a “circular” economy that keeps produced items in circulation as long as possible: reuse, recycling, and reorientation of packaging from plastic to alternative materials.

“If we follow this roadmap, including in negotiations on the plastic pollution deal, we can deliver major economic, social and environmental wins,” said Inger Andersen, UNEP executive director.

The treaty negotiations, known as INC2, will take place from May 29 to June 2 and are expected to result in key inputs for the first treaty draft, which needs to be done before the third round of negotiations in Kenya in November.

UNEP estimates that government promotion of reuse options like refillable bottle systems or deposit return schemes could reduce 30% of plastic waste by 2040.

It also says recycling could achieve an additional 20% by that year if “it becomes a more stable and profitable venture” and fossil fuel subsidies are removed, and that the replacement of products like plastics wraps and sachets with compostable materials could yield an additional 17% reduction.

Countries have different approaches to tackling plastic waste. Some major plastic producing countries like the United States and Saudi Arabia prefer a system of national strategies.

Some that have formed a “High Ambition Coalition,” comprising Norway, Rwanda, New Zealand, the European Union and others, have called for top-down approach where global targets are set to reduce virgin plastic production and eliminate fossil fuel subsidies, among other measures.

Some environmental campaigners on Tuesday called out UNEP for promoting the practice of burning plastic waste in cement kilns or incinerators for addressing plastic

waste that cannot be recycled. A 2021 Reuters investigation found that some of the world's biggest consumer brands have funded projects to send their plastic waste to cement kilns.

UNEP said given the short timeline between now and 2040, "sub-optimal solutions" will need to be used to deal with that waste though further study was needed to weigh the impacts of increased greenhouse gas emissions or air toxics.

"Not only does this pose a grave climate and public health threat, it also undermines the primary goal of the global plastic treaty –putting a cap on plastic production." said Dr. Neil Tangri, Policy Director at Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA).

THE MANILA TIMES

Four projects worth P65B to support PH agriculture

By: Janine Alexis Miguel

The Department of Agriculture (DA) unveiled on Tuesday four new projects worth P65.36 billion to support the agricultural development in the country.

In line with the celebration of farmers and fisherfolk month, Agriculture Assistant Secretary for Operations Arnel de Mesa presented the DA's four new major projects that will demonstrate the agency's commitment in transforming the country's agriculture sector.

The recently approved projects include: Adapting Philippine Agriculture to Climate Change (APA); Philippine Fisheries and Coastal Resiliency Project (FishCoRe); Scaled-up Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP); and Mindanao Inclusive Agriculture Development Project (MIADP).

The programs are in partnership with international funding institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations-Food and Agriculture Organization.

With a project cost of P2.3 billion, APA aims to increase the resiliency of agricultural stakeholders in areas vulnerable to climate change like the Cordillera, Cagayan Valley, Bicol, Northern Mindanao and Soccsksargen regions.

FishCoRe targets to improve the management of fishery resources and enhance the value of fisheries production in select fisheries management areas (FMAs) covering 24 provinces. It has a project cost of P11.422 billion.

The Scale-up PRDP has a budget worth P45.012 billion and aims to improve farmers' and fisherfolk's access to markets, and increase their incomes from the agri-fishery value chains. It will be expanded to 82 provinces nationwide.

The MIADP, on the other hand, will focus on 26 ancestral domains in Zamboanga Peninsula, Northern Mindanao, Davao Region, Soccsksargen, Caraga and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. The program aims to sustainably increase the six region's agricultural productivity, resiliency, and access to markets and services. It has a project cost of P6.625 billion.

"We will press on with our collaboration with members of the House and Senate as we support new legislation for the expansion of opportunities in our rural areas," Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban said.

He added that the Agriculture department will continue to work to ease the burden of rising inflation and encourage growth in the countryside through its various programs for agriculture and fisheries.

Panganiban further said that the government will continue to support the agri-fisheries sector, adding that expanding investments in food production will create jobs and promote progress in the countryside.

Philippine trade needs a shot in the arm

By: Ernie Cecilia, DPM

Experts predict that the world economy will grow by 3 percent in 2023. But if the financial sector stress continues, global growth could decelerate to 2.5 percent.

Economists expect the Philippines to grow by 5.8 percent to 6.0 percent, or perhaps higher, in 2023. The growth will be driven by sustained "strong private consumption spending, an upturn in government infrastructure spending and improving remittance inflows."

ADB Outlook

On April 4, 2023, the Asian Development Bank Outlook reported, "Philippine economic growth is expected to moderate this year from 2022's forecast-beating outturn but will remain on a healthy expansion mode, underpinned by rising domestic demand and a recovery in services, particularly tourism."

ADB forecasts a 6.0 percent GDP (gross domestic product) growth in 2023, based on a recovery in employment and retail trade, sustained expansion in the manufacturing sector, and rising public infrastructure spending (expected to be above 5.0 percent of GDP). Possible deterrents to growth are a slowdown in advanced economies, heightened geopolitical tensions and inflation.

The ADB Outlook forecasts an inflation rate of 6.2 percent in 2023, before easing to 4.0 percent in 2024 as the monetary policy tightening takes effect and global commodity prices ease.

Philippines Country Director Kelly Bird of the ADB said that the Philippines is on track toward its goal of becoming an upper-middle-income country. Bird said, "Like most other economies, the Philippines will be increasingly challenged by the impact of climate change and the effects of emerging technologies on the labor market."

The good news is that the January 2023 unemployment rate is 4.8 percent, down from 6.4 percent in January 2022. It appears that 4.1 million new jobs were added over the year, mainly from the services and tourism sectors. This should translate to a higher purchasing power for the workers and small entrepreneurs, and overseas Filipino worker (OFW) families. This should also spur private consumption.

Revenues from business process outsourcing, tourism receipts and higher OFW remittances will narrow the current account deficit. But robust domestic demand could drive more imports of consumer and capital goods.

Where does trade come into the picture?

Exports

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) released on March 14, 2023, the highlights of Philippine Export and Import Statistics for January 2023, in comparison with those statistics in January 2022.

In January 2023, the Philippines' total external trade in goods declined by -2.4 percent to \$16.20 billion, compared to January 2022. Of the total external trade, 67.7 percent are imports, while 32.3 percent are exports. We imported twice the value of our exports.

As a result, the balance of trade in goods (BoT-G) amounted to -\$5.74 billion, "indicating a trade deficit with an annual increase of 27.2 percent," the PSA reported.

The country's total export sales in January 2023 amounted to \$5.23 billion, reflecting a -13.5 percent decrease. In contrast, total imported goods were at \$10.97 billion, an annual increase of 3.9 percent. This means that for every dollar that we earned from exportation on January 23, we spent \$2 on imported goods.

Electronic (and semiconductor) products continued as our top export, accounting for 54.2 percent of total export value, with earnings of \$2.83 billion. Mineral products and other manufactured goods represent 5.5 percent and 5.4 percent, respectively, of our top exports.

The Philippines' exports went to the following top five countries: 1) Japan, \$866.25 million; 2) USA, \$738.26 million; 3) China, \$666.99 million; Hong Kong, \$530.16 million; and 5) Singapore, \$318.47 million.

Some 82.6 percent or \$4.32 billion of our total exports go to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) countries; 47.6 percent or \$2.49 billion go to East Asia, and 18.1 percent or \$948.12 million go to the Asean.

Imports

In January 2023, the Philippines imported \$10.97 billion worth of goods, an increase of 3.9 percent over the January 2022 figure. The increase in import value was "due to the increases in the values of seven of the top 10 major commodity groups in terms of FOB value," reported the PSA. Metalliferous ores and metal scrap recorded the highest annual increase of 333.5 percent. Mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials allegedly increase by 70.6 percent annually, and telecommunication equipment and electrical machinery by 15.2 percent.

The country's biggest commodity exports in January 2023 were electronic products valued at \$2.44 billion or 22.2 percent of total exports. Note, however, that our biggest exports were electronic and semiconductor products valued at \$2.83 billion. We import equipment, tools, instruments, gadgets and appliances that utilize our electronic spare parts and semiconductors that we export to large manufacturers abroad. We buy their finished products made from our raw materials.

Our second biggest imports are mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials, valued at \$2.06 billion or 18.8 percent of our total imports. We are dependent for the longest time on gas, oil and coal imports to "fuel" our economy, but we continue to find alternative, green and renewable sources of energy. Unfortunately, fossil fuel burning causes global warming and climate change.

China continues to be the biggest supplier of imported goods to the Philippines, valued at \$2.32 billion or 21.1 percent of total imports in January 2023. Incidentally, China bought Philippine goods valued at only \$666.99 million, or roughly 3.5 times what China sells to us. Rounding off the top five suppliers are Indonesia, \$1.16 billion or 10.6 percent; Japan, \$958.7 million or 8.7 percent; South Korea, \$866.19 million or 7.9 percent; and the US, \$696.99 million or 6.4 percent.

"By economic block, APEC countries were the biggest suppliers of the country's imported goods in January 2023, with a share of \$9.26 billion (84.4 percent)," reported the PSA. East Asia supplies us with goods valued at \$4.84 billion (44.1 percent), while Asean sells us goods worth \$3.17 billion (28.9 percent).

Trade deficit

The PSA trade data can be summarized as: "We import twice more than our exports, and we have a trade deficit." The Philippine economy obviously needs a "shot in the arm" to improve trade and investment that benefit the country and its people.

The Philippines is not new in international trade. It had commercial ties with Mexico, China, America and Asia via the Galleon Trade since 1565. Some 458 years later, the fact remains that we buy more than we sell to other countries. We even import food that grows abundantly here. It seems that we have mastered the art of creating a shortage, making massive imports and watching rotting stocks in warehouses.

Other countries have developed and implemented import substitution strategies, such as improving domestic manufacturing capabilities, prioritizing agriculture, livestock and food production, and hyper-localization. Unless the PSA figures lie, it appears that our top priorities are: importation, importation and importation.

With a new US-Philippine bilateral trade cooperation, we look forward to an improvement in the Philippines' economic strategy, business model and trade practices.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Australian foreign minister hopes to advance Philippine relations to strategic partnership](#)

By: Kaycee Valmonte

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong said her main goal in her Philippine visit is to “uplift” the bilateral relationship of Canberra with Manila beyond having a robust defense partnership.

Wong will be in the Philippines until Friday, May 19. Her visit comes in the heels of Australian Minister of Trade Don Farrell last month and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defense Richard Marles in February.

“Australia wants to bring more to the table when it comes to the economic relationship but a key outcome of the visit would be to progress the uplifting of our relationship from a comprehensive partnership to a strategic partnership,” Wong said in an interview with CNN Philippines’ “The Source” on Wednesday.

A strategic partnership will open up the opportunity for further collaboration in the defense and maritime space, counterterrorism and law enforcement, as well as climate change, among others.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese gave the initiative a go-signal in November last year after meeting with President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. at the sidelines of the 29th APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting.

“Elevating our relationship to a Strategic Partnership will reinforce our focus on strengthening ties between our two countries, and working together to build a region that is resilient and prosperous for all,” Albanese said in a statement dated November 19.

Wong noted that Australia’s national interest mirrors “very closely” with the Philippines’ in keeping a “stable, peaceful, and prosperous” region. Canberra has supported Manila in asserting its territory over the West Philippine Sea.

Aside from improving its bilateral relationship with the Philippines, Wong said Australia is open to looking at partnerships “whether they are by formal agreements or by exercises or by informal cooperation or dialogue.”

The Philippines and the United States said they are exploring the possibility of creating trilateral modes of cooperation with both Japan and Australia, although there are no other details regarding the suggested mechanism.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[CCC to integrate volunteerism in combating climate change](#)

By: Filane Mikee Cervantes

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) and the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA) have signed a memorandum of agreement to maximize volunteerism and community participation in combatting climate change in the country.

In a news release on Wednesday, CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert Borje stressed the importance of volunteerism as a tool in building and advancing policies to avoid, minimize and address climate risks.

Borje further explained that volunteerism is crucial in activities that improve community resilience and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"We must appreciate that volunteerism should be present not only in times of crisis, but also in fostering holistic formation and development. With this, volunteerism serves as a catalyst for realizing progress and creating a sustainable impact," Borje said.

Under the MOA, the CCC and PNVSCA will jointly organize, support and participate in programs and activities to promote volunteerism in mainstreaming climate change resiliency, aligned with the national government's whole-of-society approach to sustainable development.

The partnership is expected to provide an effective mechanism to ensure that climate change initiatives are integrated across different sectors and communities.

PNVSCA Executive Director Donald James Gawe, for his part, said the partnership will help mobilize more volunteers and stakeholders to support the country's climate change agenda.

"This is also a good opportunity not only to raise awareness, but as we engage more partners from the private sector, civil society organizations, academe, national government agencies, and local government units, this partnership can encourage more stakeholders to create and establish their own volunteering mechanism to build and enhance the climate resilience of their respective communities," Gawe said.

The MOA was signed by Borje and Gawe during a ceremony held at the CCC office in Manila.

Through this collaboration, both agencies will create greater synergy and cooperation among government agencies and other stakeholders towards accelerating the transition to a climate-resilient and sustainable future for the Philippines.

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