



## NEWS ROUNDUP

01 JUNE 2023 [ 08:00 am]

---

- Signal No. 1 still up in Batanes as 'Betty' continues to move north
- As Asian heatwaves require burning more fossil fuels, fears of a slower transition grow
- Iceland is our Green European country of the month - here's why
- Gov't teams up with private sector, PDRF to fight El Niño
- [Opinion] A blessing in disguise: Russia-Ukraine war spurs consciousness for renewable energy
- DA empowers farmers and fisherfolks through various projects
- Marcos approves Masagana agri roadmap, targets self-sufficiency by 2028
- Climate change fight could be a boon for Southeast Asia if it gets the right support
- 'Philippines must prepare for worsening effects of climate change'

### CCC IN THE NEWS:

- Laguna Lake contaminated with harmful microplastics — MSU scientist
- CCC, MARINA seek greener, more sustainable maritime industry
- Cayetano to senior labor officials: Serving God means serving others

## ABS CBN

### [Signal No. 1 still up in Batanes as 'Betty' continues to move north](#)

Tropical Cyclone Wind Signal No. 1 remains hoisted over Batanes as typhoon Betty continues to move north, the state weather bureau said late Wednesday.

## ECO BUSINESS

### [As Asian heatwaves require burning more fossil fuels, fears of a slower transition grow](#)

By: Liang Lei

Gian Bermudo, a university educator from Iloilo, central Philippines, spent most of her days at home with the air conditioner turned on in early April, as a humid heatwave settled over the city.

## **EURO NEWS**

### **[Iceland is our Green European country of the month - here's why](#)**

This country has become a world leader in geothermal technology and produces one of the highest amounts of green energy per person in the world.

## **MANILA BULLETIN**

### **[Gov't teams up with private sector, PDRF to fight El Niño](#)**

By: Martin Sadongdong

The national government is working together with the private sector and non-government agencies to prepare for and mitigate the impacts of El Niño, particularly in ensuring that there will be adequate water supply in the country.

## **PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER**

### **[\[Opinion\] A blessing in disguise: Russia-Ukraine war spurs consciousness for renewable energy](#)**

The unforeseen Russia-Ukraine war, which raised fuel prices to unprecedented highs, has come to be a blessing in disguise for the Philippines. It has led Filipinos—especially those from the private sector—to be conscious of the country's geographic endowments and utilize them in augmenting our power supply and lessening our carbon footprint.

## **PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY**

### **DA empowers farmers and fisherfolks through various projects**

By: Maria Viktoria M. Viado

The Department of Agriculture (DA) concludes the celebration of National Farmers' and Fisherfolks' Month (NFFM) this May. This year's theme is "Masaganang Agrikultura, Maunlad na Ekonomiya," a reflection of the current administration's plan to utilize the agricultural sector as a key contributor to the betterment of the Philippines' post-pandemic economy.

## **RAPPLER**

### **Marcos approves Masagana agri roadmap, targets self-sufficiency by 2028**

By: Iya Gozum

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. approved the Masagana Rice Industry Development Program (MRIPD) on Wednesday, May 31, during the Rice Industry Convergence Meeting at the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) in Quezon City.

## **SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST**

### **Climate change fight could be a boon for Southeast Asia if it gets the right support**

By: Harald Eltvedt

This month, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) announced that for the first time in human history, we are more likely than not to breach 1.5 degrees Celsius in global warming within the next five years.

## **THE PHILIPPINE STAR**

### **'Philippines must prepare for worsening effects of climate change'**

By: Romina Cabrera

The Philippines must prepare for the worsening effects of climate change, such as sea level rise and hotter weather already affecting the country, according to Secretary Renato Solidum Jr. of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST).

## **CCC IN THE NEWS:**

### **MAHARLIKA TV**

#### **[Laguna Lake contaminated with harmful microplastics — MSU scientist](#)**

Citing reports of the high concentration of microplastics found in Laguna de Bay, Climate Change Commissioner Albert Dela Cruz Sr. is calling on industries operating around the country's largest lake to be mindful in the disposal of their industrial waste that often end up polluting the lake's waters and ecosystem.

### **PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY**

#### **[CCC, MARINA seek greener, more sustainable maritime industry](#)**

By: Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) and the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) have forged partnership in pursuit of a greener and more sustainable maritime industry.

### **SENATE OF THE PHILIPPINES**

#### **[Cayetano to senior labor officials: Serving God means serving others](#)**

Saying that serving God means serving others, Senator Alan Peter Cayetano on Tuesday pledged to promote safe, orderly, and regular migration by actively facilitating collaboration and "synergy" among key agencies responsible for safeguarding the welfare of overseas workers.

**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

## **ABS CBN**

### **Signal No. 1 still up in Batanes as 'Betty' continues to move north**

Tropical Cyclone Wind Signal No. 1 remains hoisted over Batanes as typhoon Betty continues to move north, the state weather bureau said late Wednesday.

In its 11 p.m. weather bulletin, PAGASA said Betty was last located 450 kilometers east northeast of Itbayat, Batanes as of 10 p.m., packing maximum sustained winds of 120 kilometers per hour near the center, with gusts of up to 150 kph.

It is currently moving northward at 10 kph, and is expected to exit the Philippine area of responsibility between Thursday night and early Friday morning.

Signal no. 1 is still raised over Batanes, where winds could damage structures made of light materials and break some trees, the weather forecaster said.

PAGASA also said Betty is expected to enhance the southwest monsoon or habagat in the next three days.

From Wednesday night to Thursday night, heavy rainfall may be experienced in Ilocos Sur, La Union, Abra, Benguet, Oriental Mindoro, Romblon, Aklan, Antique, northern portion of mainland Palawan, Cuyo Islands and Calamian Islands.

Occidental Mindoro may also experience accumulated rainfall between 100 to 200 millimeter.

“Under these conditions, flooding and rain-induced landslides are possible, especially in areas that are highly or very highly susceptible to these hazard as identified in hazard maps and in localities that experienced considerable amounts of rainfall for the past several days,” PAGASA said.

Betty is expected to steadily weaken as it moves farther away from the Philippines. It may be downgraded into a severe tropical storm by Thursday, PAGASA said.

## ECO BUSINESS

### [As Asian heatwaves require burning more fossil fuels, fears of a slower transition grow](#)

By: Liang Lei

Gian Bermudo, a university educator from Iloilo, central Philippines, spent most of her days at home with the air conditioner turned on in early April, as a humid heatwave settled over the city.

Coal and oil plants make up 52 per cent of installed power capacity in the Philippines' central Visayas islands, where Bermudo lives. The 31-year-old isn't aware of the size of her personal carbon footprint, but says she feels guilty thinking about how her electricity usage for air conditioning could add to climate change.

That is despite keeping cool being a health necessity for Bermudo. A three-day power outage while temperatures soared triggered her asthma and landed her in hospital for a week.

As temperatures exceeding 45°C swept over South and Southeast Asia in the past weeks, governments have been struggling to meet record-breaking power demand as people turn to air conditioning en masse. Over a dozen people have died from the heat in India, Malaysia and Thailand.

Faced with a steep public health challenge, policymakers are relying on fossil fuels to do the heavy lifting. Commodity analyst S&P Global reported a surge in natural gas demand from Thailand, Bangladesh and India in April. Asia is also importing significantly more Russian coal and fuel oil last month, Bloomberg reported, citing data analyst Kpler.

It is a familiar pattern whenever heatwaves strike, but one that could be increasingly risky as climate change worsens.

Experts fear that regular hot weather episodes will keep policymakers returning to tried-and-tested fossil fuels for power generation, instead of ramping up clean energy infrastructure. While more solar and wind generators have been installed in recent years, some analysts believe they are not yet able to handle large heatwave episodes.

"My worry is that because of the heatwave, and because of the current [energy] infrastructure development, countries in the region may turn to coal more aggressively than ever," said Dr Victor Nian, chief executive of Singapore think tank Centre for Strategic Energy and Resources (CSER).

Cheap but pollutive coal, along with natural gas, contributes close to 60 per cent of Southeast Asia's power capacity. Sticking to fossil fuels would worsen both climate change and future hot weather spells. Already, the latest Asian heatwave was made 30 times more likely, and 2°C hotter by global warming.

Southeast Asia does not have the "climate burden" that long-industrialised nations have and countries could opt to be lax on their decarbonisation commitments, Nian said. Thailand and Vietnam, both of which have net-zero emissions commitments, have been betting big on imported natural gas for the next decades, while countries like Indonesia and the Philippines still rely heavily on coal.

Some of the challenges could also stem from inherent characteristics of renewable power sources, and Southeast Asia's geography. Wind and solar power are dependent on weather conditions, and it is possible to be hot while cloudy in tropical Southeast Asia – making solar panels less effective, Nian noted.

Meanwhile, hydropower dams, which form the bulk of Southeast Asia's renewable capacity, could also face water shortages if heatwaves come with low rainfall. In Vietnam, 10 dams reached "dead level" in early May and could not generate electricity, according to its state-owned power company.

These challenges mean that policymakers should look to diversify their clean power sources and build excess generation capacity, said Marc Allen, an energy consultant and co-founder of climate-tech platform Unravel Carbon.

Renewables could help to meet peak demand during hot days, but the key lies in building enough power storage capacity, Allen said. Technologies like large batteries and pumped-storage hydropower, where water reservoirs are filled using excess electricity, could give regulators more flexibility in dispatching power from intermittent sources.

These tools could be too expensive for Asia's developing markets. For instance, each kilowatt-hour of energy stored in a battery could cost US\$300, according to energy research firm BloombergNEF, compared to mere cents for the same amount of power generated from renewable sources.

In Vietnam's latest 10-year power development plan, batteries are only expected to contribute 0.3 gigawatts (GW) of capacity in 2030, compared to 41GW of solar and wind power. Pumped hydropower is to contribute another 2.4GW of storage.

At the household level, buying solar panels to bolster electricity supply could be out of reach for many Southeast Asians too. Bermudo said she has been quoted between 100,000 to 300,000 Philippine peso (US\$1,775-5,324) to install photovoltaics.

“It is not accessible even to middle class people,” Bermudo said.

“Right now, [solar panels] seem to be a nice-to-have thing. I’m sure if they are more affordable, more people would opt for solar panels,” she added.

Cost issues mean that governments need to shift subsidies from fossil fuels to renewable energy, said Lidy Nacpil, coordinator of umbrella advocacy group Asian Peoples’ Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD).

Continued reliance on fossil fuels is bad given its price volatility and monopolistic market structure globally, Nacpil said, adding that most people in Asia cannot afford air conditioners because of their high electricity cost.

As it stands, Asian natural gas prices are low and stable, in part due to lower demand from bigger nations like China, Japan and South Korea. Coal prices are also heading back to 2019 levels after the post-pandemic spike.

Nacpil says she does expect the heatwave to be used as an excuse to backpedal on renewable energy commitments, given the health risks that governments also have to contend with.

“[But] I don’t see why people have to feel uncertain [about the transition]. The idea is that you do it at the same time – the pace of fossil fuel phase-out should be matched by renewables development,” Nacpil said. Renewable energy power plants take less time to build, with costs mainly front-loaded, to meet the higher future power demand, she said.

#### Cutting demand judiciously

Several Asian countries have been grappling with blackouts in past weeks as power usage overwhelms generation. Vietnam has shortened the operation hours for streetlights to save electricity; power regulators across the region have also been appealing to residents to use their appliances sparingly.

Such efforts could pile more risks on people, particularly the most vulnerable. Recent research in Japan suggests that the country’s energy-saving policies after its 2011 nuclear disaster caused 7,710 premature deaths a year. Many of them are suspected to be heat-related casualties in hot summers as people used less air conditioning.



Still, policymakers need to have a clear plan for where and how to cut electricity should their resources be overwhelmed, Allen from Unravel Carbon said. He pointed to how Australia funds power-intensive industries to shut down some systems when electricity demand is high. Singapore launched a similar incentive programme last year amid high fuel prices.

There should also be a greater focus on energy efficiency and proper disposal of coolants, experts told Eco-Business.

Allen noted that common refrigerants used in air conditioners today are powerful greenhouse gases – hydrofluorocarbons are 14,800 times more powerful than carbon dioxide at exacerbating global heating. Discarding cooling units without draining these gases can result in massive leaks.

Government subsidies would be needed to help people switch to power-saving models, APMDD's Nacpil said, noting that more efficient air conditioners in the Philippines can be up to US\$200 more expensive – again out of the price range of many households.

Bermudo said money should also go to providing public schools in the Philippines with electric fans. Weathermen across Asia expect recurring heatwaves in the coming months, driven by “El Niño” weather conditions that keep rain away from the region.

The reality, in such conditions, could be a clash of “politics against policy”, CSER's Nian said. There will be an “intuition” that the clean energy transition needs to be accelerated, but also a flight towards more conservative moves when the challenges stack up, he added.

## EURO NEWS

### [Iceland is our Green European country of the month - here's why](#)

This country has become a world leader in geothermal technology and produces one of the highest amounts of green energy per person in the world.

The climate and nature crises have thrown European countries into a new kind of healthy rivalry with each other.

In the race to reach net zero emissions and restore depleted ecosystems, any nation's win is a victory for us all. But looking to the most positive examples on the continent can help inspire and pressure our own politicians to follow suit.

Of course it's not an even playing field. From the windy coastlines of Sweden to Albania's wild rivers, each country has its unique natural resources. As well as its particular political and economic context that could be helping or hindering climate action.

Last month we looked at how Denmark's green leadership is inspiring other European nations.

This month, we're celebrating Iceland's unique approach to keeping carbon emissions down as it heats more than 130,000 households.

Here's why Iceland is our Green country of the month for May.

Iceland gets the highest share of energy from renewables in all of Europe  
Iceland generates more than 86 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources according to Eurostat and around 66 per cent of this comes from its geothermal resources.

The country lies on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge between the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates. This is a very active geothermal zone providing a great source of heat for Iceland's homes.

The capital city, Reykjavik, has one of the largest district heating systems in the world, pumping millions of cubic metres of water heated by geothermal sources to its some 200,000 inhabitants.

Not only does this hot water power homes, but it also supplies some of Iceland's most popular tourist attractions including the famous Blue Lagoon. Created by the

neighbouring Svartsengi geothermal power plant, the site allows tourists to learn about the country's energy landscape.

Heat and light from geothermal sources also help Iceland feed its citizens. Greenhouses, kept warm and bright by this renewable source, grow crops like tomatoes and cucumbers year-round.

Much of the rest of its renewable energy comes from hydropower from rivers fed by glaciers that cover 11 per cent of Iceland's land mass. Investment in wind power is also growing, contributing to the country's ever-increasing share of clean energy in its generation landscape.

How did Iceland become a world leader in geothermal energy?

But Iceland hasn't always been a beacon of green energy, leading to the air over Reykjavik once being thick with smog. The country first started to harness its natural resources in the 1940s but was still getting around 75 per cent of its energy from fossil fuels by the 1970s.

Following the 1973 oil crisis, Iceland struggled to keep up with fluctuating prices. The government switched its focus to hydropower and geothermal heat instead. Money was put into building new infrastructure for green energy.

Since then, it has steadily weaned itself off of fossil fuels becoming one of the world's biggest producers of green energy per capita. These cheap, renewable resources have drawn businesses like data centres and metal producers to the country too.

Unfortunately, just like everywhere else in Europe, climate change and overconsumption are still a problem. A lack of rainfall and increased demand have left Iceland's hot water supply nearing its limit, local news outlet Visir reported in 2022.

As increased use outpaces population growth, utility companies have warned that they may need to start rationing hot water during long periods of cold weather and high demand.

What other positive environmental projects does Iceland have in the pipeline?

Carbon capture technology has been controversial because some campaigners and scientists believe that it isn't yet effective and could prolong the life of the fossil fuel industry. But the IPCC says it is now unavoidable in the fight against climate change.

Mammoth, the world's biggest direct carbon capture facility is currently being built in Iceland. It is being constructed by Swiss startup Climeworks AG and the captured carbon is taken by another business, Carbfix, mixed with water and injected deep underground where a chemical reaction will turn it into rock.

Climeworks AG says the plant will be able to suck 36,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from the air every year and the entire process will be powered by geothermal energy.

Iceland is already home to the world's first large scale carbon dioxide removal plant. Called Orca, it is around 50km outside of Reykjavík and began pulling carbon from the air in 2021. Climeworks AG claims it can suck 4,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year from the atmosphere - roughly the emissions from 870 cars.

While these plants only capture a small slice of the world's annual 36.8 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, the technology is rapidly advancing and Iceland is at the forefront of its development.

Honourable mentions go to...

There have been plenty of other positive environmental stories from Europe this month too.

In Portugal, solar and wind produced half of the country's energy for the first time ever in April. Renewables reached 51 per cent of electricity production - beating the previous monthly record of 49 per cent in December 2021.

France announced in May that it plans to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent by 2030 when compared to 1990 levels. This new figure is double current emissions cuts and will require efforts in all sectors from agriculture to electric vehicles.

France also officially introduced its ban on short-haul domestic flights this month. Any journeys that are possible in less than two-and-a-half hours by train now can't be taken by air.

What is Euronews Green's country of the month?

Euronews Green is highlighting European countries that are advocating for climate, nature and the environment. Each month, we select a country that stands out for anything from eco-innovations to policy change.

## MANILA BULLETIN

### Gov't teams up with private sector, PDRF to fight El Niño

By: Martin Sadongdong

The national government is working together with the private sector and non-government agencies to prepare for and mitigate the impacts of El Niño, particularly in ensuring that there will be adequate water supply in the country.

A total of 240 representatives from various national government agencies and key sectors attended a virtual briefing organized by the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF), a non-government organization advocating for disaster risk reduction and management.

In a statement Wednesday, May 31, the PDRF said they sought to discuss how the private sector can help the government in effectively addressing the effects of El Niño.

El Niño is seen to develop by May to July this year and last until the first quarter of 2024, Remedios Cervio, senior weather specialist at the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), said during the briefing.

As such, PDRF President Butch Meily encouraged businesses to prepare by managing their water supply effectively, coordinating with government and business partners, and planning and educating families, employees, and suppliers about El Niño and its impacts.

Meily stressed that Metro Manila, for example, has “grown tremendously” over the past years but its sources of water “have not changed a great deal.”

“So, any significant variation in the weather or any failure of equipment can lead to widespread interruptions. I hope that someday, our children will finally enjoy an adequate supply of clean running water,” he noted.

#### El Niño Task Force

Relatedly, the national government created the El Niño Task Force recently on the orders of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. The task force is being headed by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and it seeks to address El Niño’s impact to critical lifeline utilities and livelihood.

According to DILG Director Edgar Allan Tabell, the new task force will use “protocol-based and long-term scientific processes and a whole-of-nation approach” involving the

private sector, non-government and civil society organizations, academe, and other stakeholders.

The government also created the Water Resources Management Office (WRMO) under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) “to solve conflicts among government water agencies.”

“For Metro Manila, we wanted to jumpstart a water conservation program. The issue with water supply can also be solved by water demand. If we are able to decrease water demand, then it softens the blow of not having enough supply later on,” DENR Undersecretary Dr. Carlos Primo David said.

In preparation for El Niño, David shared that the private sector could support the government in fixing pipe leaks that often result in water wastage and bill increases.

#### Contribution by private sector

On the part of the private sector, water service providers Manila Water and Maynilad shared that they have started building additional water treatment facilities and upgrading the capabilities of existing plants to prevent water shortage and the occurrence of poor water quality to its customers.

“The Philippines is blessed with a lot of water sources. There’s enough water. But the key [here] is to develop small water resources,” Manila Water Chief Operating Officer Melvin John Tan said, adding that the private sector needs the support from the government to implement infrastructure programs.

“What we need to do is to finish all the infra projects. And this is also where we need help from the government and the public to have patience,” Tan said.

## PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

### [\[Opinion\] A blessing in disguise: Russia-Ukraine war spurs consciousness for renewable energy](#)

The unforeseen Russia-Ukraine war, which raised fuel prices to unprecedented highs, has come to be a blessing in disguise for the Philippines. It has led Filipinos—especially those from the private sector—to be conscious of the country’s geographic endowments and utilize them in augmenting our power supply and lessening our carbon footprint.

Meanwhile, as a reminder of our recurrent energy conundrum, yellow and possible red power alerts are again expected in June, August, September, October, and November. A realistic mix of current energy production data show an undesirable picture of power source breakdown: coal, 47 percent; natural gas, 22 percent; oil-based, 6.2 percent, and renewable energy (hydro, geothermal, wind, solar, biomass), 24 percent. The first three are the cause of our high power rates as they are mostly imported, not to mention that their by-products cause pollution.

We really need to increase the renewable energy (RE) component of our power mix and, fortunately for us, we are blessed with a geographical location whose features provide just this. But it appears that, more than the government, it is the private sector that has become conscious of our natural blessings, and we see this in its earnest ongoing and planned investments in renewable energy production.

There is Vicente Perez’s Alternergy Holdings Corp. which is currently operating solar and wind projects with a total capacity of 67.24 megawatts, with plans of developing 62 MW more from hydro and solar projects. The Ayala group’s ACEN Corp. is currently developing a 160-MW wind farm project in the northern town of Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte. Aboitiz Power Corp. has its Cleanergy program that produces power from hydro, solar, geothermal, and wind projects with a current total capacity of 1,000 MW of RE power, which is planned to be increased to 4,600 MW by 2030.

Recently, Santa Clara International Corp. and Investco BHPI Inc. have sealed a deal for the development of the 8.4 MW Maladugao Hydroelectric Power Project in Bukidnon in Mindanao, where many good areas for harnessing hydropower are located. In addition, Chevron Corp. plans to develop further the geothermal power potential of the Central Luzon and Bicol-Mindanao-Central Cordillera volcanic belts. Marubeni Corp. meanwhile promises to help the country increase its RE production through investments in mini-hydro, solar, and wind projects. For its part, San Miguel Corp. has recently completed its 500 megawatt-hours of battery energy storage system, which will be distributed all over the country.

The above RE projects are large-scale and are planned to be connected to the national power grid which, however, still needs more interconnections. Actually, the Department of Energy's (DOE) Grid Planning and Competitive Renewable Energy Zones program has yet to be fully implemented. With regard to the national overall power transmission system, the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines has yet to complete its power transmission lines linking the whole country to allow quick adjustments in power distribution.

Observers point out that even as the government focuses its attention on expensive big ticket projects such as liquefied natural gas facilities, it should have actively promoted building local microgrids that would link 2 or 3 MW solar, hydro, and biomass capacities that abound in the country. Particularly, it could have promoted the installation of affordable solar or photo-voltaic panels on the rooftop of houses and public buildings, these panels being the most "mature" renewable energy technology available in the market today.

There are still so many watersheds whose waters have yet to be tapped for power and water supply production. A lot of biomass energy potential from piggery and poultry farms just go to waste in sanitary landfills. And we have not even tried using former military officer Victor Corpus' tidal turbine invention in our vast marine waters. It appears that the DOE has yet to live up to the "energy" mandate attached to its name.



## **PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY**

### **DA empowers farmers and fisherfolks through various projects**

By: Maria Viktoria M. Viado

The Department of Agriculture (DA) concludes the celebration of National Farmers' and Fisherfolks' Month (NFFM) this May. This year's theme is "Masaganang Agrikultura, Maunlad na Ekonomiya," a reflection of the current administration's plan to utilize the agricultural sector as a key contributor to the betterment of the Philippines' post-pandemic economy.

Under the leadership of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., DA has prepared a wide variety of programs and projects for farmers and fisherfolks across the country.

Considered modern-day heroes, farmers and fisherfolks were honored during the month-long celebration. In one of his speeches, Senior Undersecretary Domingo F. Panganiban reiterated the relevance and importance of agricultural workers' role in achieving food security and resiliency. In addition, he also recognized the continuous significant contribution of the sector to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) despite the effects of the spread of COVID-19.

He added that these workers were at the frontline in facing the drastic effects of the pandemic.

"[N]arapat lamang na maihatid sa kanila ang mas malaking oportunidad upang mapaunlad ang kanilang kabuhayan," he said.

Hence, the Agriculture Department has provided more than 1.178 million rice farmers support under the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance amounting to P5.8 billion as of March 2023.

Apart from financial assistance, the DA also extended fertilizer assistance and fuel discount vouchers to cushion the rising production costs.

Another popular project is DA's Kadiwa market which provided farmers and fisherfolks an avenue to sell their local products, resulting in enhanced food mobilization and constant connections to farmers nationwide.

During one of the NFFM celebrations, DA's Assistant Secretary for Operations Arnel De Mesa presented some agri-fisheries projects the department has launched in

partnership with international funding institutions such as the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization.

Adapting Philippine Agriculture to Climate Change (APA) aims to increase agricultural stakeholders' resilience in areas vulnerable to climate change.

Philippine Fisheries and Coastal Resiliency Project (FishCoRe) looks after the improvement in managing the fishery resources and enhances the value of fisheries production in select Fisheries Management Areas (FMAs)

Scaled-up Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) was established to focus on the augmentation of the farmer's and fisherfolks' access to markets and increase their incomes.

Mindanao Inclusive Agriculture Development Project (MIADP) is a project responsible for the 26 ancestral domains in Regions 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and BARMM to sustainably increase their agricultural productivity, resiliency, and access to markets and services.

Apart from these existing and new projects and programs, DA's regional offices also provided weekly exhibits, free public webinars and seminars on modern farming, and free training – expanding their knowledge in agriculture and introducing them to new trends in the industry, cooking demonstrations, and distribution of seeds and seedlings, among others.

For her part 2023 NFFM Chairperson Agnes Catherine T. Miranda notes the administration's commitment to assist the country's food heroes.

"As we conclude the National Farmers' and Fisherfolk's Month, we do not cease to pay tribute to our farmers and fisherfolk," she said.

## **RAPPLER**

### **Marcos approves Masagana agri roadmap, targets self-sufficiency by 2028**

By: Iya Gozum

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. approved the Masagana Rice Industry Development Program (MRIPD) on Wednesday, May 31, during the Rice Industry Convergence Meeting at the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) in Quezon City.

“It is essentially a roadmap to the eventual goal of reaching 97.4% self-sufficiency for rice,” explained Marcos in an ambush interview at another event on the same day.

According to the President, the 97.4% target is enough to reach rice self-sufficiency by 2028.

“[A]t 97% masasabi na natin mapapakain na natin lahat ng ating mga kababayan ng may sapat na bigas and supply,” Marcos said. (At 97%, we can already say Filipinos will have enough supply of rice to eat.)

The roadmap is supposed to boost local rice production and prioritize “the welfare of Filipino farmers” as well as provide higher income for them.

Currently, the Philippines is the world’s second-biggest rice buyer just behind China.

Before setting the 2028 target, Marcos said back in February that two years is enough to reach self-sufficiency if the Department of Agriculture reorganizes and cooperates with other agencies. Former agriculture chief Leonardo Montemayor, however, commented that this deadline is “over ambitious.”

According to the Presidential Communications Office, the convergence meeting aimed to foster cooperation among concerned government agencies. Eventually, they would engage with the private sector, farmers’ cooperatives, said Marcos.

To reach self-sufficiency, the sector must also update farming technologies. Introducing new technology to farmers is also a way to make the sector more inviting for younger people. Marcos admitted, “[T]here are new technologies na talagang dapat nating tingnan but we are not there yet.”

During the meeting, various strategies to implement MRIPD were identified, namely: climate change adaptation, farm clustering, consolidation of intervention, value chain approach, and digital transformation.

Last year, the President reiterated this promise to bring down rice prices to as low as P20 per kilo. “The 20 pesos was really the goal,” Marcos said then.

Since he took over as agriculture chief, Marcos was set on reimplementing the agricultural program from his father’s days, the Masagana 99, now refurbished as the Masagana 150 and Masagana 200, to shore up rice production.

## **SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST**

### **Climate change fight could be a boon for Southeast Asia if it gets the right support**

By: Harald Eltvedt

This month, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) announced that for the first time in human history, we are more likely than not to breach 1.5 degrees Celsius in global warming within the next five years.

As weather patterns combine with the effects of human-induced climate change, global temperatures will enter “uncharted territory”, WMO secretary general Petteri Taalas said. Such effects will be especially pronounced in Southeast Asia, where the ever-growing threat of climate change is more intense than ever.

The region is one of the most vulnerable to climate change, but it also arguably occupies a unique position in the global fight against it – one that is primed to effect actual tangible progress, if it paves the right way ahead. For one, it has the potential to provide up to US\$1 trillion in annual economic opportunities from the green economy by 2030.

The region has made significant progress in recent years. Since 2020, the Asia-Pacific region has recorded US\$15 billion in cumulative investments, with most of it going towards renewables and the built environment. Eight out of the 10 Southeast Asian countries have committed to net-zero targets.

Simultaneously, gaps remain in the region’s emission reduction plans and pathways to decarbonisation are unclear. In Southeast Asia, most of the total energy supply continues to be derived from non-renewable sources, and its energy demand is forecast to rise by nearly 80 per cent by 2050 from 2020 levels according to the International Energy Agency.

There is an urgent need for green financing to close a major carbon emission gap of up to 3.2 gigatonnes by 2030. It’s clear that the financial sector plays a critical role in supporting countries on their journey towards greater resilience and sustainability.

While Southeast Asian economies face immense pressure to increase growth, the region has the potential to integrate green growth into its business goals. It has the opportunity to scale new, emerging and innovative technologies within its start-up ecosystem to confront the risks of climate change and climate inaction.

So much of the growth and economic opportunity in Southeast Asia is being driven by start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which make up almost 60 per cent of the region’s gross domestic product. Investors are also taking note of the

opportunities, with private funding for climate tech projects hitting a new high in 2022 at US\$1.11 billion, compared to US\$607 million for the previous year.

An area that we should be looking at is decarbonisation, where there are likely to be promising new projects and services that will enable business and governments to better meet their sustainability goals. Specifically, projects that can address scope 3 emissions – a category developed by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol – bear considering. Scope 3 emissions are those that firms are indirectly responsible for throughout their value chain. These are often the most difficult to quantify and measure at a high standard.

Fundamentally, scope 3 emissions require organisations to shift how they view and take accountability for their carbon footprint beyond what is directly created by their operations. National bourses have already begun to mandate environmental, social and governance (ESG) reporting that includes scope 3 disclosures. Hong Kong is the latest to propose new rules for companies listed on its stock exchange.

This is a critical step that encourages climate accountability across major corporations while also encouraging the growth of an entire new industry of infrastructure providers and platforms that will enable businesses to better measure and manage their emissions. At a later stage, companies can also benefit from being able to manage their emission offsets by purchasing carbon credits that would verifiably align with the amount of carbon they have actually emitted.

Another area to watch is agritech and agriculture more broadly, which account for a large part of regional GDP and is a major employer in Southeast Asia. The industry in the region has been heavily battered by extreme weather which is exacerbated by global warming.

To ensure the region's agricultural sector remains viable, farmers need access to consistent financing and tools that allow for price transparency, supply chain efficiency and crop quality across the entire food and agriculture value chain.

With 2030 approaching and a growing need for green projects in Asia, sustainable finance will play an essential role in supporting the transition to a green economy. Investments in new growth sectors that allow for greater climate resilience and adaptation will strengthen the region's competitiveness by creating new technologies, industries and ventures.

However, channelling material investments and capital will not be enough to meet sustainability commitments. Organisations must also be equipped with the right know-

how and technologies to adapt and transition towards a green economy. SMEs in particular need the extra resources to streamline their transition into the green economy amid the ongoing climate crisis.

Southeast Asia has made significant inroads into meeting its sustainability commitments, but a great deal more work still needs to be done. In this constantly evolving space, tackling emissions requires expert knowledge and the right measurement tools to drive alignment and standardise existing data disclosure frameworks, even if regulation or industry-wide mandates have yet to catch up.

Greater collaboration across the public and private sectors is needed to create an enabling ecosystem. We need to nurture the next generation of start-ups dedicated to building innovative sustainable technologies that can truly make an impact.

## THE PHILIPPINE STAR

### 'Philippines must prepare for worsening effects of climate change'

By: Romina Cabrera

The Philippines must prepare for the worsening effects of climate change, such as sea level rise and hotter weather already affecting the country, according to Secretary Renato Solidum Jr. of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST).

In an interview with "The Chiefs" aired on Cignal TV's One News last Tuesday night, Solidum stressed that global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius has dire effects on one of the most at-risk countries from the climate crisis.

"Here in the Philippines, climate change is something that we need to prepare for. Roads and bridges below one meter and other airports should be planned out to be inland. There are communities that might be flooded. That level of temperature has a significant effect on our sea level and, of course, the hot weather, which is really hot," he said in mixed Filipino and English.

The DOST chief noted that there is a looming El Niño phenomenon, characterized by below-average rainfall that may last for months and could spell trouble for agriculture, drinking water and hydroelectric power plants that generate electricity for parts of the country.

"During El Niño, when there is not much water, our agri crops could be affected, the water supply could diminish and the reservoirs are not filled. And energy, hydropower will be affected," he said.

Solidum urged the public to conserve water even before the onset of El Niño to be prepared for its adverse effects.

"Overall, there will be decrease in rainfall in various parts of the Philippines. We should conserve water, hopefully, conserve electricity because scarcity in water affects our beverage and power," he added.

Solidum said that before El Niño arrives, the country may still expect stronger rains on its western side due to the southwest monsoon.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) earlier noted that stronger monsoon rains and tropical cyclones tend to develop before an El Niño episode.



“Sometimes, the southwest monsoon is so strong during an El Niño event. Warm air and moist air from Indian Ocean meet, and where they meet, that’s where heavy rain occurs,” Solidum explained.

In terms of Typhoon Betty, the DOST chief defended PAGASA’s forecasts and said its predictions were accurate even if rains were not felt in Metro Manila.

He urged local government units (LGUs) to keep updated on weather forecasts, especially in areas where farmers supposedly conducted early harvest to prepare for the effects of the cyclone.

“Perhaps, LGUs should study the forecast rainfall that will change; what a tropical cyclone will bring could change,” he said.

## CCC IN THE NEWS:

### MAHARLIKA TV

#### [Laguna Lake contaminated with harmful microplastics — MSU scientist](#)

Citing reports of the high concentration of microplastics found in Laguna de Bay, Climate Change Commissioner Albert Dela Cruz Sr. is calling on industries operating around the country's largest lake to be mindful in the disposal of their industrial waste that often end up polluting the lake's waters and ecosystem.

According to Mindanao State University (MSU) scientists Prof. Cris Gel Loui Arcadio and Dr. Hernando Bacosa, thorough analysis of Laguna de Bay's 900-square-kilometer waters has shown the presence of harmful microplastics that could lead to adverse effects on humans and marine life.

"We were able to extract 100 microplastics and in examining its morphological characteristics, we found that majority of the microplastics that were found in Laguna Lake were fibers and were all blue colors," Arcadio and Bacosa disclosed.

Both experts noted that the lake is one of Metro Manila's main water sources as it stretches over the provinces of Rizal and Laguna and is a catchment area of about 3,820 sq km that feeds some 21 rivers.

Arcadio explained that the danger posed by microplastics is when they enter the human body and cause oxidative stress in the cells.

"When the cells are stressed, they cannot function normally and they cannot actually detoxify. This could lead to inflammation in the long run and abnormal functions of our organs," he pointed out.

Bacosa added that there are also smaller plastics called nano plastics that can penetrate the human body's organs and can be found in the blood.

He warned that microplastics also has indirect effects on human health because they could be carriers or a vector of a host of other pollutants.

"They could be a vector of harmful bacteria in water, viruses, heavy metals including lead, mercury, arsenic, chromium, organic pollutants, and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls)," the scientist revealed.

In view of the analysis and views of both experts, Commissioner Dela Cruz enthused that with scientific evidence pointing towards the scaling impacts of climate change, particularly in the aspects of food and human security, our collective climate action assumes a higher sense of urgency.

“We must intensify our convergence to address the negative impacts of plastics and microplastic pollution in Laguna de Bay. If we will not do the necessary action, it will severely affect public health, food production, and the livelihood of our fisher folks. Buhayin natin ang Lawa ng Laguna, bubuhayin din tayo ng lawa,” he meaningfully concluded.

## **PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY**

### **CCC, MARINA seek greener, more sustainable maritime industry**

By: Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) and the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) have forged partnership in pursuit of a greener and more sustainable maritime industry.

The collaboration was a result of the two agencies' recent meeting to discuss objectives and strategies for decarbonization aligned with MARINA's Maritime Industry Development Program (MIDP) 2019-2028, the CCC said in a news release on Wednesday.

One of the MIDP's core objectives is the promotion of an environmentally sustainable maritime industry.

The CCC and MARINA committed to strengthening their partnership further through the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

"The cooperation between the CCC and MARINA is significant, given that the shipping industry contributes to climate change and accounts for over 3 percent of the global annual carbon dioxide emissions," the CCC said.

"The CCC will provide technical expertise, including guidance on mitigation and adaptation measures, to support MARINA's policies and programs on decarbonization, and sharing of scientific studies and data sources on GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions," it added.

From 2007 to 2012, the shipping industry caused about 1.015 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions globally, according to the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) report.

The CCC said forging a partnership with MARINA is in line with the country's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP).

"The proposed collaboration forms part of the CCC's goal of building and strengthening strategic partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders to influence greater climate action," it said.

MARINA wanted to align the decarbonization strategies in the technical, operational and economic measures with the country's mitigation targets.

It invited the CCC to become a member of the technical working group under the National Task Force: Inter-agency Coordinating Committee to Facilitate the Ratification and Accession to and Implementation of Maritime Conventions (ICCFRAIMC).

MARINA also asked the CCC to attend the meeting of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 80) from July 3 to 7 and the meeting of the Intersessional Working Group on Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships (ISWG-GHG 15) from July 26 to 30.

The CCC joined the MARINA in the recently-held IMO Regional Conference on Seizing Opportunities for Green Shipping in Asia and the Pacific in Manila.

The conference was attended by key maritime stakeholders from Pacific Islands and Southeast Asian States to discuss energy efficiency, short sea segment, education of seafarers and global regulations.

CCC vice chairperson and executive director Robert Borje stressed the importance of collaboration and cooperation among international organizations, governments, non-government organizations, shipping firms, and other maritime stakeholders to enhance the region's capacity to face the challenges of climate change toward a more sustainable and green sector.

"Shipping is a vital part of our economy, but it also has a significant impact on our climate. Through collaborating with MARINA on green shipping initiatives, we can develop a sustainable maritime industry that benefits both our economy and climate," Borje said.

"We need a whole-of-world approach in order to effectively address climate change and to modernize the shipping industry —through an investment-led, accelerated, just, and equitable transition. This is the one thing that the CCC asks from all of our stakeholders. There is an existential threat and challenge of climate change and this is the right time for us to integrate all of these concerns, particularly in the shipping industry," he added.

MARINA Deputy Administrator for Planning Sonia Malaluan said the collaboration with the CCC is an important step towards the goal of achieving carbon-neutral shipping in the Philippines.

"We hope that the CCC can support us in developing and implementing policies that will help reduce the carbon footprint of our shipping industry," she said.

MARINA is an attached agency under the Department of Transportation that is mandated to integrate the development, promotion, and regulation of the maritime industry in the country.

## Industrial waste

Meanwhile, CCC Commissioner Albert dela Cruz Sr. called on industries operating around the country's largest lake to be mindful of the disposal of their industrial waste which pollutes the waters and ecosystem.

Dela Cruz made the call after a study conducted by Mindanao State University (MSU) scientists Cris Gel Loui Arcadio and Hernando Bacosa found that a high concentration of microplastics was found in Laguna de Bay's 900-square-kilometer waters.

Citing the study, Dela Cruz said the presence of harmful microplastics could lead to adverse effects on humans and marine life.

"We must intensify our convergence to address the negative impacts of plastics and microplastic pollution in Laguna de Bay. If we will not do the necessary action, it will severely affect public health, food production and the livelihood of our fisher folks. Buhayin natin ang Lawa ng Laguna, bubuhayin din tayo ng lawa," he said. (

## SENATE OF THE PHILIPPINES

### Cayetano to senior labor officials: Serving God means serving others

Saying that serving God means serving others, Senator Alan Peter Cayetano on Tuesday pledged to promote safe, orderly, and regular migration by actively facilitating collaboration and "synergy" among key agencies responsible for safeguarding the welfare of overseas workers.

Cayetano made the pledge at the welcome dinner for the Senior Officials of the Asia-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) on May 30, 2023 held in the City of Taguig.

It was attended by senior labor officials from Bangladesh, Indonesia, India, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Also in attendance were officials from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) led by Asia and the Pacific Regional Director Atty. Sarah Lou Arriola, International Labor Organization (ILO), ASEAN Trade Union Council (ATUC), Office of the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC), International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and from the Philippines' Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) led by Secretary Susan Ople, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), and Climate Change Commission of the Philippines.

Cayetano, who was Foreign Affairs Secretary in 2017 and 2018 and who as former House speaker was principal author of the law creating the DMW, commended those in attendance for their hard work in keeping migrants safe while working in or even just visiting other countries.

"You take care of people in the most desperate of situations," he said.

Delivering his pledge, Cayetano said he will use his individual and collective power of oversight as senator "to ensure that the DMW's policies and programs are consistent with the 23 Objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in the Philippines."

He was referring to the 23 GCM objectives that are intended for better managing migration at local, national, regional and global level. These objectives include minimizing the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin; ensuring that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation; facilitating fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that

ensure decent work; and saving lives and establishing coordinated international efforts on missing migrants.

Cayetano said he will also closely monitor the performance of the DFA, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), and other agencies tasked with the protection of Filipinos abroad "in ensuring that they all work in synergy to promote safe, orderly, and regular migration."

Father of DMW law

After giving the pledge, Cayetano said he is also making a commitment to open his office to monitoring and scrutiny by the DMW and the DFA "so that the monitoring and the calling into accountability will be two-way."

Migrant Workers Secretary Susan Ople thanked Cayetano for delivering his pledge, acknowledging him as "the father of the law creating the Department of Migrant Workers" and a former Foreign Affairs Secretary like her late father, Blas Ople.

She also thanked the City of Taguig for hosting the event, saying she appreciated not just the gesture of welcoming the delegates but "the manner of how we were welcomed."

International Organization for Migration (IOM) Asia and the Pacific Regional Director Sarah Lou Arriola, for her part, congratulated Cayetano for being "the first individual stakeholder in the world who made a pledge."

She also congratulated the City of Taguig for being the first city in Asia that made the pledge.

**=END=**