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By: Matt McGrath

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MANILA BULLETIN

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By: Anna Mae Lamentillo

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MINDA NEWS

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By: Antonio Colina IV

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PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

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SUNSTAR

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By: Rox Peña

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) of the United Nations said Europe is off to a warm start as many national and local temperature records for December and January were broken in several countries, from southern Spain to eastern and northern parts of Europe.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Diokno urges action vs global polycrisis](#)

By: Eireene Jairee Gomez

INTERNATIONAL cooperation is needed to address the polycrisis affecting many developing countries such as the Philippines, Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno said.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Natural disasters, debt crises top risks for Philippines, says survey](#)

By: Louella Desiderio

MANILA, Philippines — Natural disasters, debt crises, and high inflation are the top risks for the Philippines in the next two years, according to a survey conducted by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

CCC IN THE NEWS:

THE MANILA TIMES

[Drawing a roadmap for climate resilience](#)

LAST Wednesday, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. visited a group of villagers in Misamis Oriental who were forced out of their homes by flooding induced by days of relentless monsoon rains.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BBC NEWS

[Climate change: UAE names oil chief to lead COP28 talks](#)

By: Matt McGrath

The head of one of the world's biggest oil companies has been named to lead the COP28 global climate talks in Dubai, later this year.

Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber is currently the chief executive officer of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company.

He is also the minister for industry and advanced technology for the COP28 hosts, the United Arab Emirates.

Campaigners say he must stand down from his oil business role while president as it is a clear conflict of interest.

They believe someone steeped in the oil industry may not push countries to rapidly reduce their production and use of fossil fuel, which scientists say is critical to avoiding dangerous climate change.

Running the global climate talks process is not an easy job - for months before, and especially during the conference, every word and action of the president is heavily scrutinised.

COP28 is already mired in some controversy as the hosts, the United Arab Emirates, are one of the world's biggest producers of oil and gas.

The appointment of a key figure in the energy industry as the president-designate of COP28 will likely increase the concerns that the global climate talks process is facing significant influence from fossil fuel interests.

The recent COP27 gathering in Egypt was described by some attendees as a "glorified fossil fuel trade show".

Analysis of those who registered for the event showed a significant increase in those who were connected to the oil and gas industry compared to previous meetings.

Among the large delegation from the UAE at the conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, there were 70 people closely connected to fossil fuels.

Mr Al Jaber is the chief executive of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, said to be the world's 12th biggest oil company.

Over the past decade he has become the face of the UAE's energy industry but he will be the first serving oil executive to assume the role of COP president.

As well as being a minister and his country's climate envoy, he is also chairman of Masdar, the government-owned renewable energy company that he helped set up.

He has certainly long warned of the dangers of climate change but campaigners are concerned about his appointment, and are calling for him to step aside from his industry roles.

"It is imperative for the world to be reassured that he will step down from his role as the CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company," said Tasneem Essop, from Climate Action International.

"He cannot preside over a process that is tasked to address the climate crisis with such a conflict of interest, heading an industry that is responsible for the crisis itself."

What will concern campaigners is that major oil and gas producers are among those opposed to a more rapid phase out of all fossil fuels.

At COP27, there was a strong push from more than 80 countries for the conference to declare support for a phase down of oil and gas as well as coal.

This attempt came to nothing in the face of strong opposition from countries the rely of fossil fuel exports.

While Mr Al Jaber's appointment has been met with criticism from activists, others involved in climate diplomacy have welcomed the move.

"The UAE has adopted a sound green growth strategy and is a major investor in renewable energy both at home and abroad," said Yvo de Boer, who was UN climate chief between 2006 and 2010.

"The COP president-designate has been instrumental on many of these issues. This equips him with the understanding, experience and responsibility to make COP28 ambitious, innovative and future focussed."

Certainly those skills will be tested at the gathering in Dubai in early December this year.

COP28 will hold the first formal assessment of progress on cutting carbon since the Paris agreement was signed.

The "global stocktake" as it is called will be a key moment in clarifying just how much further countries will need to go in restricting their emissions.

BUSINESS MIRROR

BSP adopts sustainable CB strategy

THE Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas announced last Thursday it has launched its “Sustainable Central Banking (SCB) Strategy, which embodies the BSP’s commitment to championing the sustainability agenda in the Philippine financial system.”

A statement from the central bank quoted BSP Governor Felipe M. Medalla as saying that “climate change and other environmental hazards impact the prices of goods and change the risk profile of financial institutions.”

“We are doing what we have to do in line with our mandates of promoting price and financial stability,” Medalla said.

The BSP said that under the SCB Strategy, it will foster a policy environment conducive to the adoption and growth of sustainable finance. It also commits to adhere to the same standards set for supervised financial institutions in managing risks and in making environmentally and socially responsible investment decisions.

“The BSP is an enabler, a mobilizer, and a doer in championing sustainable finance. But we also recognize that climate action is a whole-of-society undertaking. We are in this together,” Medalla said. “We will be working together and we must take a long-term view that the things that are consistent with a better planet are also good for everyday life.”

The BSP said that the SCB Strategy provides 11 action points integrating sustainability principles in its key operations and functions.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) provided technical assistance in developing the strategy. The BSP also worked closely with sustainable finance expert Professor Ulrich Volz, Director, Centre for Sustainable Finance, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, in crafting the strategy.

The event was attended by different stakeholders who supported the BSP in implementing various initiatives to promote the sustainability agenda.

The SCB webpage, a dedicated section on the BSP web site to communicate the various partnerships and accomplishments as well as ongoing and forthcoming initiatives of the BSP in line with its sustainability agenda, can be accessed through <https://www.bsp.gov.ph/SitePages/StrategicPrograms/SustainableCentral-Banking.aspx>.

[\[Opinion\] It isn't perfect, but...](#)

By: Luis Teodoro

The inflation rate remains sky-high. Low productivity is putting the country's food security at risk. Filipino fisherfolk are unable to fish in much of the Philippines' own waters. Poverty and hunger are devastating millions. Entire regions are flooded and reeling from the onslaught of climate change. The pandemic is still a problem, and the economy yet to recover.

But to some of the allies of President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., none of these seems as urgent as amending the 1987 Constitution so they can correct its supposed "imperfections."

The House of Representatives Committee on Constitutional Amendments will begin hearings by Jan. 26 on proposed resolutions calling for constitutional amendments through a constituent assembly of both houses of Congress.

Senator Robin Padilla, the only non-lawyer to chair the Senate counterpart of the House Committee, has repeatedly stressed the "urgency" of amendments that would enable the Constitution to "keep up with the times," although he has not been clear on the specifics of doing that.

Even Presidential Legal Counsel Juan Ponce Enrile has echoed the call for a constituent assembly, although apparently not to amend, but to totally do away with the 1987 Constitution and to draft a new one.

Many Filipinos are unfamiliar with the particulars of their country's Constitution, but every opinion poll has found that they oppose amending it because they fear that its proponents will use the opportunity to keep themselves in power.

The behavior of past regimes suggests that it can indeed happen.

Ferdinand Marcos, Sr., for example, initiated the drafting of a new Constitution during his last years in office so he could run for a third term, which, under the provisions of the 1936 Constitution, was not possible. He proclaimed it in force in January 1973, and based his staying in office beyond that year on its provisions.

Amendments to the 1987 Constitution could indeed include extending the terms of office of incumbent officials. But equally possible and as dangerous is that among the possible changes could be the weakening of the Bill of Rights, and the repeal of the limits on the President's power to declare martial law.

The first proposal to amend the 1987 Constitution was made 10 years after it went into effect. In 1997, the outgoing Ramos administration argued that a parliamentary system and extending the terms of incumbent officials would be more responsive to the demands of development and ensure the continuity of an administration's policies, beginning with those of Ramos' own. Because many thought it a shortcut to its advocates' staying in power beyond 1998, the citizenry rejected the idea.

During the Joseph Estrada administration, its adherents limited their proposed changes to the economic provisions of the Charter that they said discouraged foreign investments. It was again rejected, but the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo regime, which favored a shift to the parliamentary system, echoed its focus on economic "liberalization." It was again opposed by various sectors, including much of the business community.

Elected President in 2010, Benigno Aquino III opposed any attempt at amending that document, which, after all, was among his late mother's legacies. Upon ascending the Presidency in 1986, Corazon Aquino convened the commission that drafted the most liberal Constitution in Philippine history.

Then candidate Rodrigo Duterte proposed during the 2016 presidential campaign the adoption of a federal form of government, and upon his election created a consultative committee to study the 1987 Constitution. That body produced a draft mandating a shift to federalism. But the regime seemed to lose interest in it in the face of its problems with the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the economy, and with its failing "war on drugs," the human costs of which had called the attention of the International Criminal Court.

No constitution is so perfect as to remain unchanged, but once begun by the illiberal wing of the oligarchy currently in power, amending the present one could further endanger whatever remains of Philippine democracy.

Most of its advocates say that they want "only" the economic provisions of the Constitution amended, such as those limiting to Filipinos ownership of land and the mass media and the practice of the professions, as well as those requiring State partnerships in economic enterprises only with corporations that are 60% owned by Filipino citizens.

The provision on professionals, land ownership, and State partnerships are meant to protect and encourage Filipino businesses and such practitioners as doctors and

lawyers. The mass media, meanwhile, are not only commercial undertakings; they are also vehicles of information and shapers of opinion. Those responsibilities cannot be left to foreign-owned media enterprises, which, once operating as Philippine-based businesses, would first and last protect the interests of the corporations behind them.

The consequences of amending the economic provisions of the Constitution may not be as purely beneficial as they seem to be — and the process could also open the gates to the amendment or even the abolition of those provisions the ruling oligarchy despises, among them the Charter's Article II Section 26 mandating a ban on political dynasties, and Article III, the Bill of Rights.

Congress has repeatedly refused to pass the enabling law that will implement the anti-dynasty provision of the Constitution. Its members have instead either denied the existence of those very real dynasties, or, themselves being part of such families, defended their continuing dominance in politics and governance.

They also reject the thesis that dynastic dominance in politics and governance prevents those who may not be as privileged but who are better qualified to run for public office. Access to political power is so limited to a handful of families that it denies the Philippines the services in government of the more competent who can introduce the political, economic, and social changes that are needed for the country to move forward.

Among the atrocities that have been proposed in the past are changes to the Bill of Rights by limiting its application, eliminating parts of it, or adding to Article III Section 4 the phrase “the responsible exercise of,” which would transform its declaration that “No law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the Government for redress of grievances” into “No law shall be passed abridging the responsible exercise of the freedom of speech....”

Those were obvious attempts to enable any regime to diminish the freedoms protected by Article III. Nothing can stop their or their variations' being reintroduced should Congress convene as the constituent assembly the majority — and Juan Ponce Enrile — prefer as the means of amending the Constitution.

Any or all of the above, and even worse, could happen. One need only recall how, even with the provisions the dynasts are likely to target still as intact as when they were drafted, they have succeeded in violating such rights as those of free expression, press freedom, and due process.

The proposals for a constituent assembly to amend the Constitution suggest that the power elite still needs one that would legitimize what they have been doing and whatever else will redound to their personal, familial, and class interests. Not necessarily would they amend “only” the 1987 Charter’s economic provisions. They could also transform its Bill of Rights into a mockery of its own name, forego the next elections, and complete the country’s ongoing descent into another tyranny.

The 1987 Constitution may not be perfect, but as things stand today, it is all we have.

MANILA BULLETIN

[ELEVENTH HOUR: Youth leaders sound the alarm at COP27](#)

By: Climate Reality Project

Last November, the Egyptian resort town of Sharm El Sheikh hosted hundreds of young climate advocates from more than 140 countries during the 17th United Nations Climate Change Conference of Youth (COY17), which happened ahead of the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference or the 27th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27).

Designed to serve as a space for capacity building and policy training to prepare young people for their participation at COP27, the youth-led conference has been an annual event under YOUNGO, which is UNFCCC's official children and youth constituency.

Its 17th edition was organized and led by Sustainable, El Emam Foundation, Enviro-X, youththinkgreen Egypt, and Youth Loves Egypt, with the support of the Egyptian Ministry of Youth and Sports and with endorsement from the COP27 President Designate.

The key outcome of COY17 is the Global Youth Statement, which is a policy document containing inputs from young leaders across the world on the different issues, challenges, and action points they believe should be included to advance climate action.

The policy document outlined detailed recommendations on different topics ranging from adaptation and mitigation to just renewable energy transition and climate finance.

The statement included a call to fulfill the commitment of Global North countries to a dedicated finance facility for Loss and Damage to enable most affected people and areas (MAPA) and climate-vulnerable countries to cope with the effects of the climate crisis.

Demands of COY17 from COP27

"From heat waves across Europe to droughts across Africa and massive flooding in Asia, the past year of extreme weather events have served as another visible wake-up call for humanity," the Global Youth Statement highlighted adding that our political leaders should take concrete actions.

"We have no more time to lose. Our future literally depends on it," the text reads.

Here are some of the issues and demands that were included in the Global Youth Statement:

Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE): There is a need to acknowledge the significance of ACE as a key pillar of climate action through adopting a robust ACE Action Plan with universal metrics and attributions to each element.

Adaptation and Resilience: The global goal of Adaptation must be clearly defined, understood, and implemented in an inclusive, systemic, and transformational manner.

Arts, Culture, and Heritage: A comprehensive solid legal framework must be in place to ensure the protection of rights and intellectual properties so we can collectively enhance climate education and broaden reach.

Climate Action Plans and Global Stocktake: Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Global Stocktake (GST) processes must give equal emphasis to both mitigation and adaptation and loss and damage, paying attention to the principles of just transition and to human rights, including intergenerational equity. The NDC and GST processes must develop avenues to foster youth skills and meaningfully include them in their design and implementation.

Climate Finance and Markets: It is necessary to create a transparent, grant-based, and concessional financial scheme for the delivery of all previous pledges, including the Paris Agreement and the Glasgow Climate Pact.

Climate Justice and Human Rights: Parties should respect, protect, and promote all human rights when designing climate policies and strategies.

Food and Agriculture: Parties must promote agroecology as a sustainable pathway towards a robust and resilient food system, support policies, which integrate sustainable consumption and promote green jobs at global, national, and sub-national levels.

Health: Policy development at the intersection of climate change and health must be accelerated via knowledge transfer and global research, leveraging the potential of digital technologies. This must encompass different healthcare sectors, including infectious diseases control, food system, mental health, and disaster management.

Loss and Damage: Loss and Damage must be annually and permanently included in the COP negotiation agenda. At the same time, COP must establish a Loss and Damage Financing Facility with effective, transparent, and grant-based resources, that

are decoupled from adaptation and mitigation funding. The Santiago Network mandate must be effectively operationalized and sufficiently financed.

Nature and Biodiversity: Any restoration measures must be designed carefully after assessing the pre-existing ecology of the target ecosystem, with outcomes being properly monitored against transparent criteria.

Oceans: Ocean-related impacts must be taken into account in loss and damage negotiations. Increased attention must be directed to funding and implementing nature-based infrastructure for coastal buffers to mitigate coastal damage.

Politics, Policymaking, and Governance: Parties must design effective and just NDCs, National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and climate policies aligned with scientific guidance, as well as mechanisms of implementation that are coordinated with local and regional governance, inclusive of all members of society and enforceable long-term.

Reimagining and Transforming Economies: A just transition of the workforce and the creation of quality green jobs must be prioritized to ensure the development of climate-resilient, just, and sustainable economies.

Technology and Innovation: Earmarking of finance to support young innovators and increase technology transfer targets must be established to foster more impactful and long-lasting change in receiving countries.

Water: Local, regional, and global participation of youth must be established and institutionalized in the water and climate sector for knowledge exchange, networking, innovation and technological interventions, and capacity building.

[\[Opinion\] PH gains in PBBM's China visit](#)

By: Anna Mae Lamentillo

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s state visit to China is one of his most productive official travels with US\$22.8 billion in investment pledges received and 14 bilateral agreements signed

The investment pledges were secured by the President during his roundtable discussions with Chinese businessmen. This includes US\$1.72 billion for agribusiness, US\$13.76 billion for renewable energy, and US\$7.32 billion for strategic monitoring (electric vehicle, mineral processing). These investments are expected to create many jobs for Filipinos.

During his bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, President Marcos received the Chinese chief executive's commitment to address the trade deficit gap. In fact, there's already an agreement between the Philippines and China as to the rules and regulations to make possible the importation of durian, mangosteen, and other specialty rice varieties and other fruits to China.

The two leaders were also able to talk about soft infrastructure, climate change, renewable energy, people-to-people ties and agricultural cooperation.

Moreover, President Marcos and President Xi witnessed the signing of 14 bilateral agreements, which include agreements on agriculture, infrastructure, development cooperation, maritime security, and tourism, among others.

One of the agreements signed was a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to enhance cooperation and exchange in the digital and information and communications technology (ICT) sectors.

The MOU on enhanced digital cooperation was signed by Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) Secretary Ivan John E. Uy for the Philippines and by Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) Minister Jin Zhuanglong for China.

Secretary Uy, who was part of President Marcos' official delegation to China, stressed that the signing of the MOU between DICT and China's MIIT is an affirmation of the two nations' desire to continue to deepen their existing bilateral relations and to promote useful exchanges in the areas of digital and ICT cooperation.

The MOU covers the exchange of knowledge, technical expertise and best practices in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), 5G, cloud computing, Internet of Things, industrial Internet, big data, analytics and robotics; enhanced support to the pragmatic cooperation between Philippine and Chinese enterprises in the telecommunication industry; exchange best practices about 6G vision requirements and 5G use cases, as well as 5G and 6G technology innovation, 6G system concepts and Architecture.

On the area of e-governance, the two nations agree to exchange knowledge and share best practices in digital government strategy, digital government services, and digital identity. They will also exchange best practices about data center design standard, and explore potential partnership to establish data center projects in accordance with international standards for facility design, operations, and data privacy and security.

More importantly, this MOU will also pave the way for further agreements between the Philippines and China for the execution of projects or activities on ICT. This will be of great support to the DICT's efforts to improve and accelerate digitalization in line with the priorities of President Marcos.

MINDA NEWS

Mindanao to tap more renewable energy sources

By: Antonio Colina IV

Mindanao will have yet another solar power plant, aside from this one in Cagayan de Oro City, this time a much bigger one. MindaNews file photo by FROILAN GALLARDO

DAVAO CITY (MindaNews / 12 January) – More renewable energy sources are expected to be added to the Mindanao grid in the next six years, a move that may equalize the island’s current power mix of 70-30 in favor of fossil fuels.

Mindanao Development Authority Assistant Secretary Romeo Montenegro said during “Wednesdays at Habi at Kape” that the island is hoping to see additional supply of about 2,000 megawatts from renewable energy between 2023 and 2028, of which 400 MW are committed applications and 1,600 MW are indicative or in the early stage of the application process.

He said renewable energy is being pushed in Mindanao as the government hopes to reverse the power mix of the island, which is dominated by coal-fed power plants, to comply with the country’s obligations under the Paris Agreement.

Montenegro added that no new applications for construction of coal-fired power plants will be approved in Mindanao after the Department of Energy declared in 2020 a moratorium on endorsements for greenfield coal power plants.

The multilateral agreement, which entered into force on November 4, 2016, targets to limit “global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels” as part of global efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects.

Under this agreement, countries “aim to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible to achieve a climate neutral world by mid-century.”

The Philippines signed the Paris Agreement on April 23, 2016, and it was ratified by the Senate on March 23, 2017.

Montenegro said the island has a total of 4,000 MW installed capacity, of which between 2,700 and 2,800 MW is available.

He added there are applications for solar, hydro, biomass, and other possible sources of renewable energy on the island.

“If these are implemented, and fully developing power to the grid, that will definitely turn the tide in favor of renewable energy by 2028. However, it’s not easy to go through the several challenges,” he said.

Montenegro said among the challenges that investors in renewable power encounter are the agreements between the proponents and financial institutions and the available market.

He said the power demand of Mindanao is continuously increasing at the rate of 4 to 7% annually.

“Definitely, we need at least 1,500 MW between now and 2030,” he said.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[DOST-C. Luzon developing system to predict accurate rice yield](#)

By: Zorayda Tecson

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO, Pampanga – The Department of Science and Technology in Central Luzon (DOST-3) is developing a system that can predict rice yields accurately.

Dr. Amy Lizbeth Rico, a professor of the Tarlac Agricultural University (TAU) in Camiling town, Tarlac province, said in a statement on Thursday that predicting rice yields accurately "allows the government to plan the production, distribution, and consumption of food more effectively, combat food insecurity, and prepare for shortages and supply shocks well in advance."

Rico is the project leader for a research study being funded by DOST under its Regional Grants-in-Aid program (DOST3 – RGIA) entitled Satellite Imagery Crop Monitoring and Forecasting Systems for Agricultural Technology (SICAT) project.

She cited the importance of accurate prediction of rice yield with a specific field to determine the harvest per region considering that climate change and rapid population growth in the country have brought huge pressure on food demand and production.

Through Project SICAT, a rice crop advisory system developed by TAU, she said that yield forecasting can be done and necessary advisories could be issued accordingly.

Rico said the project researchers are now validating rice growth satellite images and developing phenological characteristics and algorithms for rice growth and yield that will be validated with ground data for accurate and precise predictions.

Likewise, she said information dissemination among target users such as farmer groups and agricultural technicians in Tarlac is being conducted to ensure the eventual smooth deployment of the technology.

The project is expected to be completed by October this year.

Lawmaker wants youth acquainted with agriculture, conservation

By: Zaldy De Layola

MANILA – Kabayan Partylist Representative Ron Salo has introduced a measure aimed to empower the youth to learn the importance of agriculture, fisheries, forest and marine conservation and management, among others.

The proposed measure, House Bill No. 6769 or the “Agri-Scouting Act,” seeks to encourage the youths to take a proactive stance in environment conservation and climate change resiliency, discover the fundamental concepts of proper food nutrition, and be acquainted with modern farming, fisheries, and food production methods.

“It is hoped that this will contribute to our collective aspiration of achieving food self-sufficiency,” said Salo in filing the bill.

The veteran lawmaker noted that the Philippines, primarily an agricultural country, should put a premium on the development of the agricultural sector as it directly affects the economy and the quality of life of the people. However, he also noted that the Philippines has low food productivity despite its abundant natural resources.

“It is quite concerning that low food productivity has now become a national issue. To illustrate, in the 2020 report on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN), the Philippines recorded the highest number of food insecure people in Southeast Asia in 2017 to 2019, with 59 million Filipinos suffering from moderate to severe lack of consistent access to food. These findings were even recorded before the pandemic,” Salo said.

For the purpose of carrying out the objectives of the proposed measure, the Department of Education (DepEd) is mandated to integrate agri-scouting as a program in the elementary and junior high school under the K-12 curriculum in all public and private schools in the Philippines. The DepEd shall also directly supervise and control the program implementation of the said Act.

“The inspiration behind this bill is the success of the boy and girl scouts movement in the Philippines since 1938 whose training program prepares the youth for responsible leadership and nation-building. We aim to inspire and move young people to take leadership roles with a strong emphasis on agriculture, fisheries, forest and marine conservation and management, and ecology-related training programs,” Salo said.

"Our youth have so much potential to address long-standing challenges, especially in food security. This is one of our ways to maximize that potential so they can truly contribute to society in the immediate future and for the generations to come," he added.

2 dead, over 200K displaced in Eastern Visayas flooding

By: Sarwell Meniano

TACLOBAN CITY - Widespread flooding due to heavy rains this week have already killed two persons in Eastern Visayas and displaced at least 213,737 residents in the region, the Office of the Civil Defense (OCD) reported on Thursday.

Confirmed dead are Cpl. Jerry Palacio, whose body was found in San Isidro town, Northern Samar province and Winefreda Asis whose cadaver was recovered in Maydolong town, Eastern Samar.

Palacio was one of the soldiers tasked to help rescue flood victims when raging waters swept him away on Jan. 9. Rescuers found his body floating in a nearby river in San Isidro on Wednesday.

Asis, a resident of Pinanag-an village in Borongan City was first declared missing on Jan. 9 when their wooden banca capsized while attempting to reach a nearby village. Her companion, Carlito Dagumay, remained missing.

Fishermen found Asis' body floating near the shore of Maybocog village in Maydolong town on Wednesday.

OCD Eastern Visayas regional director Lord Byron Torrecarion told the Philippine News Agency that 120 flooding incidents have been reported as of Thursday in Leyte, Northern Samar, Samar, and Eastern Samar provinces.

"We have 84 evacuation centers in operation in the region with 21,062 families taking shelter. The Department of Social Welfare and Development have started the distribution of food packs and some non-food items," Torrecarion said.

As of Thursday morning, the DSWD regional office has already distributed 14,944 food packs to families badly affected by flooding.

The official asked local governments to step up monitoring activities on since there are 1,445 villages in the region highly susceptible to flooding and landslides.

"The flooding is widespread due to heavy rains caused by the shearline since December. We recognize that the local government cannot sustain the needs of affected families. We also asked for replenishment of relief items from our central office

considering that our stocks have been depleted due to bad weather last December,” Torrecarion added.

The official also reported that of the 13 areas in the country that experienced above normal rainfall from Jan. 6 to 10, six of these areas are in Eastern Visayas with cumulative volume rainfall ranging from 182 mm (millimeter) to 417 mm.

The areas that experience heavy rains are Catarman town, Northern Samar; Borongan City, Eastern Samar; Tacloban City, Leyte; Catbalogan City, Samar; Maasin City, Southern Leyte; and the town of Guiuan in Eastern Samar.

SUNSTAR

A warm winter

By: Rox Peña

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) of the United Nations said Europe is off to a warm start as many national and local temperature records for December and January were broken in several countries, from southern Spain to eastern and northern parts of Europe.

Records broken on December 31, 2022, were those in Dresden-Hosterwitz, Germany with a temperature of 19.4 °C, surpassing the 17.7 °C measured on December 5, 1961, and Prague Klementinum, Czechia which has a temperature 17.7 °C, slightly higher than the 17.4 °C also registered on December 5, 1961.

On New Year's Day 2023, shattered records were those in Bilbao Aeropuerto, Spain at 25.1°C from the previous high of 24.4 °C on January 1, 2022, Besançon, France at 18.6 °C overtaking the 16.8 °C in Jan 1918, Warszawa – Okęcie, Warsaw, Poland at 18.9 °C way above the 13.8 °C made in January, 1993 and Abed in Lolland, Denmark at 12.6 °C , which is slightly higher than the 12.4°C measured on January 10, 2005.

The WMO attributed the warm spell in Europe to a high-pressure zone over the Mediterranean region which encountered an Atlantic low-pressure system. Their interaction “induced a strong south-west flux that brought warm air from north-western Africa to middle latitudes”, the UN agency explained, adding that this hotter-than-normal air “was further warmed when passing the North Atlantic, due to a higher-than-normal sea surface temperature”. Rising sea surface temperatures is one of the effects of global warming.

With the warm winter, many ski resorts were closed for lack of snow. There's one good thing though about this weather. The warm winter provided short-term relief to European governments' tight gas supply and soaring prices. Gas is used for heating during the winter. There was a decline in demand due to milder temperatures.

Warm winter may be good for humans, but not for other creatures. Plants follow a rhythm in consonance with the seasons. When the weather turns haywire, their routine is disrupted as well. They grow and flower prematurely. In the recent warm winter in Europe, Czech Television reported some trees were starting to flower in private gardens.

When plants grow and flower early due to the weather anomaly, there will be no insects to pollinate them. Insects also follow seasonal changes. This disruption in the mutual relationship of plants and insects will affect their reproduction and survival. Animals in hibernation may also come out early.

Is climate change to blame? "Winters are becoming warmer in Europe as a result of global temperatures increasing," said Freja Vamborg, climate scientist at the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service.

Two months ago, WMO released the 2021 Europe State of the Climate Report stating that temperatures over Europe have warmed significantly over the 1991-2021 period, at an average rate of about +0.5 °C per decade, the highest of any continent in the world and more than twice the global average.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Diokno urges action vs global polycrisis](#)

By: Eireene Jairee Gomez

INTERNATIONAL cooperation is needed to address the polycrisis affecting many developing countries such as the Philippines, Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno said.

Speaking at the 16th Asian Financial Forum (ASF) in Hong Kong this week, Diokno called for a comprehensive approach that takes into account the interests of developing countries to achieve faster recoveries and enhanced resilience.

As defined by the Canada-based Cascade Institute, a global polycrisis occurs "when crises in multiple global systems become causally entangled in ways that significantly degrade humanity's prospects."

Human activities have pushed the planet's ecological systems so far out of balance that all other global systems are in danger, from food production to global trade to international security.

Diokno noted "the global call for concerted, immediate and on-ground climate action as well as climate justice, where 'emitters' are taxed appropriately and 'sufferers' are compensated for loss and damage."

"While the challenges we face today are grand and complex, these are not insurmountable. There is much we can accomplish with the right policy tools, decisive action and commitment to global cooperation," he added.

The impacts of climate change in the Philippines are immense, including annual gross domestic product (GDP) losses, rising temperatures, extreme rainfall, droughts, threats to biodiversity and food security, sea level rise, public health risks and endangerment of vulnerable groups such as women and Indigenous People.

The country has experienced highly destructive typhoons almost annually for the past 10 years. According to the World Bank Group's "Country Climate and Development Report" released in November, annual losses from typhoons have hit 1.2 percent of GDP.

This year's ASF, themed Accelerating Transformation: Impact-Inclusion-Innovation, kicked off on Wednesday with over 1,000 participants, including more than 100 global leaders and officials.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Natural disasters, debt crises top risks for Philippines, says survey](#)

By: Louella Desiderio

MANILA, Philippines — Natural disasters, debt crises, and high inflation are the top risks for the Philippines in the next two years, according to a survey conducted by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

Results of the Executive Opinion Survey (EOS) released as part of the WEF's Global Risks Report 2023 showed Philippine business leaders consider natural disasters and extreme weather events as the top risk for the country in the next two years.

The Philippines is among the countries most prone to natural disasters and extreme weather events globally.

Conducted between April and September last year, the EOS covered over 12,000 respondents across 121 economies to determine the possible-short term risks at the country level.

For the survey, respondents were asked to select the top five risks they consider as posing the biggest threat to their country in the next two years from a list of 35 risks.

The WEF report showed Philippine respondents consider debt crises as the second biggest risk in the next two years, followed by rapid and/or sustained inflation.

Last December, the country's headline inflation rate hit a 14-year high of 8.1 percent from eight percent in November amid faster food price increases.

Other top risks cited by Philippine respondents are misinformation, and geopolitical contestation of resources including technology, energy and minerals.

Globally, the WEF said the cost-of-living crisis or inability of broad sections of the population to maintain their current lifestyle due to higher costs of essential goods is the top risk identified in the short-term or over a two-year period.

The WEF said prices of basic necessities like food items, which were already increasing even before the COVID-19 pandemic, rose further last year due to disruptions brought about by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

While the cost-of-living crisis is perceived by respondents to be a short-term risk, the WEF said its persistence could lead to a greater proportion of people unable to access basic needs.

“Continued supply-chain disruptions could lead to sticky core inflation, particularly in food and energy. This could fuel further interest rate hikes, raising the risk of debt distress, a prolonged economic downturn and a vicious cycle for fiscal planning,” the WEF said.

In the long term or over a 10-year period, failure to mitigate and adapt to climate change were cited as the most severe global risks, the WEF said.

As the demand to address other crises grows, the WEF said this would reduce the speed and scale of climate change mitigation efforts.

“Without significant policy change or investment, the interplay between climate change impacts, biodiversity loss, food security and natural resource consumption will accelerate ecosystem collapse, threaten food supplies and livelihoods in climate-vulnerable economies, amplify the impacts of natural disasters, and limit further progress on climate mitigation,” the WEF said.

As countries face ongoing shocks, the WEF said it is important for countries not to lose sight of the long term view.

“Climate and human development therefore must be at the core of concerns of global leaders to boost resilience against future shocks,” WEF managing director Saadia Zahidi said.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

THE MANILA TIMES

[Drawing a roadmap for climate resilience](#)

LAST Wednesday, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. visited a group of villagers in Misamis Oriental who were forced out of their homes by flooding induced by days of relentless monsoon rains.

The President noted that the floods had caught everyone by surprise. They came at the tail end of the rainy season, when the monsoon tapers off into smatterings of scattered showers and thunderstorms.

Last year was different. An extended La Niña caused a shift in weather patterns, resulting in torrential rainfall that lasted for as long as seven days in some parts of the country. All this happened despite the absence of a severe storm or typhoon.

Weather forecasters familiarized us with a previously obscure term: shear line. It describes a narrow atmospheric zone where wind velocity increases dramatically as cold and warm air converge. The result is almost nonstop rains and heavy flooding.

Floodwaters prompted the evacuation of more than 56,000 people, and close to 60 were reported killed. At least 22 cities and towns declared a state of calamity as local governments were overwhelmed by the number of evacuees to be fed and sheltered.

Damage to crops and infrastructure is expected to match the losses from a strong typhoon.

But bigger challenges lie ahead, President Marcos realized during Wednesday's briefing in Misamis Oriental. New communities have to be built for the evacuees who need to be relocated. Roads, bridges and other public works structures have to be repaired or replaced. Seeds and financial aid must be distributed to flood-stricken farmers to get them back on their feet.

But perhaps the biggest challenge is seeing to it that the government stays on the path toward climate resilience.

The world is in a climate crisis. Spells of extreme heat, flooding and drought have not only intensified but are becoming more frequent.

Climate resilience has been aptly described by the Union of Concerned Scientists as "successfully coping with and managing the impacts of climate change while preventing those impacts from growing worse."

The only way to achieve climate resilience, according to the group, is to "cut the heat-trapping emissions that drive climate change while adapting to the changes that are unavoidable — and do so in ways that make the world more equitable and just, not less."

Mitigation and adaptation

Climate resilience involves a two-pronged approach: Mitigation and adaptation.

Mitigation calls for "shutting down coal and gas plants, shifting to renewable energy sources, using energy more efficiently, using less oil for transportation, ramping up use of public transportation and electric vehicles, and using land in ways that removes carbon from the atmosphere."

Adaptation is protecting "against the threats already here and preparing for more change to come" by, among other things, upgrading the electric grid to make it stand up to extreme weather and building better housing and infrastructure in areas vulnerable to flooding or sea level rise.

"Only by pursuing mitigation and adaptation in tandem can we achieve and sustain climate resilience," the Union of Concerned Scientists believes.

For the group, building climate resilience "should be a core ambition of climate activists and policymakers."

It is an ambition that the Philippines, to its credit, has taken to heart. In 2012, Republic Act 10174 was passed, creating the People's Survival Fund to help local governments and community organizations implement climate change adaptation projects.

In 2021, the government submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat the country's first nationally determined contribution, a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

At the 26th Conference of the Parties, the Philippines affirmed its call for climate justice, pushing the world's biggest economies to channel financial and technical support to the climate initiatives of developing nations.

The government also reconstituted the National Panel of Technical Experts of Climate Change Commission (CCC) and focused its thrust on making recommendations for implementing local climate adaptation and mitigation measures.

Carlos Dominguez 3rd, the finance secretary and CCC chairman designate at that time, highlighted the urgency for action, noting that climate change "is a battle we cannot afford to lose."

It is incumbent on the Marcos administration to carry on that battle.

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