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BUSINESS MIRROR

SM Offices: Forging a sustainable business environment in PHL

By: BMPLUS

SM Prime Holdings, Inc. (SM Prime), one of the largest integrated property developers in Southeast Asia, has the biggest footprint of mall space in the Philippines, along with a vast portfolio of residences, offices, leisure resorts, hotels, and convention centers.

US government to plant 1 billion trees as climate change kills forests

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BUSINESS WORLD

As food security issues weigh on the Philippines: Here is where fisheries management might be headed

By Edwina D. Garchitorea and Caterina Maria Po

Fisheries are a vital source of nutrition, jobs, and community well-being for millions of Filipinos — and yet they are increasingly at risk from climate change, overfishing and data-poor management structures. To enhance community well-being and improve the lives of fishers and those involved in the industry, we must take steps to build greater resilience into the way we manage this vital national resource.

As gov't scrambles to achieve food security, it mustn't forget about climate change

By Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson

Climate change is expected to reduce agricultural productivity and disrupt food availability if the government does not integrate mitigation measures in future policy, analysts said.

Huawei offers green solutions to banking sector

Huawei expects Philippine regulators to step up green finance efforts by setting industry guidelines on power consumption and encouraging green investments.

Sustainable cities to require private sector investment, DENR says

By Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson

Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Y. Loyzaga said private sector investment will be required to make cities more sustainable and climate-resilient.

MANILA BULLETIN

Heed call of science in response to pandemic, climate crisis - Legarda

By: Mario Casayuran

Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda on Tuesday, July 26 called for unity toward resilience as the country's priority strategy in its response to the pandemic and the climate crisis.

DND, AFP back PBBM's priority bills concerning nat'l security

NationalNews

By: Martin Sadongdong July 26, 2022

The Department of National Defense (DND) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) expressed support to the proposed legislations of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. which would affect the security sector.

Zubiri favors nuclear energy program

By Mario Casayuran

Senate President Juan Miguel “Migz” Zubiri said on Tuesday, July 26 that his mind has opened up to the possibility of agreeing to a nuclear energy program for the Philippines.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Energy projects must respect IP rights, gov’t told

Tabuk City, Kalinga, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s plan to push for renewable energy projects to fill the gap in the country’s energy demand should not be at the peril of the environment and indigenous peoples (IPs), according to an Apayao province-based organization, Kabugao Youth.

Groups see ‘mixed signals’ in Bongbong Marcos’ renewable energy push

By Cristina Eloisa Baclig

An environmental group on Monday (July 25) called out President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. for giving “mixed signals” in highlighting the administration’s plans to use nuclear and fossil power alongside renewable energy in the country during his first State of the Nation Address (Sona).

PHILIPPINE STAR

Bulacan tightens environment checkpoints

By:

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Volunteer groups vow to sustain mangrove planting in NegOr

By Mary Judaline Partlow

Dumaguete City – An alliance of volunteer groups in Negros Oriental has committed to planting thousands of mangrove trees yearly and relentlessly to protect the province’s shorelines and support global efforts against climate change.

PHILVOLCS

JUST IN: Magnitude 7.3 hits Abra

Earthquake Information No.1

Date and Time: 27 July 2022 - 08:43 AM

Magnitude = 7.3

Depth = 025 km

Location = 17.63°N, 120.74°E - 002 km N 20° E of Lagangilang (Abra)

Reported Intensities:

Intensity IV - Quezon City

THE MANILA TIMES

DoE lays down plan for PH energy supply

By Eireene Jairee Gomez

The Department of Energy (DoE) on Tuesday revealed some of its major plans that the Marcos administration will need to realize to ensure sufficient, reliable and affordable energy supply in the Philippines.

Firefighters battle wildfire as heat advisories up

By Agence France-Presse

Midpines, California: Firefighters were battling California's largest wildfire of the summer on Monday (Tuesday in Manila), a blaze near the famed Yosemite National Park that has forced thousands of people to evacuate, officials said.

Marcos hopes to pass Land Use Act

By Kristina Maralit

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. is hoping he can do what his predecessor fell short of doing — convince Congress to pass the long-stalled Land Use Act.

The future is now

By Ambassador Carlos Salinas

How are we doing in the way of dealing with the climate crisis? If we think that picking up where we left off before the Covid-19 pandemic turned our world upside down, think again. British economist James Meadway recently wrote an article in The Guardian that warned against the mistake of planning on the assumption that things would return to normal.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS MIRROR

SM Offices: Forging a sustainable business environment in PHL

By: BMPLUS

SM Prime Holdings, Inc. (SM Prime), one of the largest integrated property developers in Southeast Asia, has the biggest footprint of mall space in the Philippines, along with a vast portfolio of residences, offices, leisure resorts, hotels, and convention centers.

Following the success of its trailblazing and resilient mall developments, SM Prime expands its environment-friendly and socially-conscious office portfolio. Through SM Offices, the conglomerate develops business spaces that situate its tenant-partners in key strategic hubs, while promoting employee well-being and enhancing customer satisfaction.

The Future of SM Offices

For decades, SM Offices has redefined how office spaces should be designed and constructed. Highlighting its position at the forefront of building innovative and sustainable office buildings and business districts throughout the Philippines, SM Offices' E-com Centers were built in the dynamic and vibrant SM Mall of Asia Complex in the Bay Area, Pasay City, with the goal of accommodating Fortune 500 and business processing companies.

ThreeE-com Center, Mall of Asia Complex's first LEED Gold-certified office building, solidified the Developer's position and commitment to green offices and commercial developments in 2019. Later this year, SM Prime will follow this achievement with the launch of FourE-com Center, the latest pre-certified LEED Gold office building in Pasay City.

LEED certification is achieved by adhering to a number of strict criteria that are essential in keeping businesses running, while minimizing the impact on our environment. The integration of these holistic strategies begins with the building's construction, by using low volatile organic compound (VOC) adhesives and paint, along with material recyclable concrete, among others. Equipment and facilities include the availability of N+1 redundancy generators to ensure business operation continuity in the event of power outages, while the allocation of parking spaces reserved for low-emission vehicles and installation of shower rooms and bike racks in SM Offices buildings encourage a lower carbon footprint lifestyle from its employees.

Energy consumption of SM Offices buildings are minimized by utilizing structurally-incorporated approaches, such as double-glazed windows to reduce heat conduction; carefully thought-of office space designs to allow ample natural light to permeate; and water recycling facilities that reuse tons of cubic meters of water for restrooms, irrigation, and grounds maintenance, thereby mitigating the effects on our environment. The use of energy-efficient LED lighting and water-saving fixtures and aerators also contribute to the over-all efficient resource management practices of its building operations.

At the heart of SM Prime's commitments to its various stakeholders is to help build a sustainable future for generations to come. As such, SM Offices' E-com buildings promote healthier living by providing unique outdoor environments via an expansive green podium courtyard in its office developments. These "sky gardens" serve multiple purposes, be it an opportunity for one's mind to refresh and recuperate, or as collaborative spaces where ideas become implementable successes.

SM Offices set a high bar for a flourishing office market that is becoming more discerning of the type of ESG-sensitive spaces that are being brought to market. Conforming to strict standards, such as a superior LEED certification, validates SM Prime's commitment of introducing office buildings that are efficient, cost-effective, and enhanced to deliver healthier working spaces for its occupants and the environment.

US government to plant 1 billion trees as climate change kills forests

Billings, Mont.—The Biden administration on Monday said the government will plant more than 1 billion trees across millions of acres of burned and dead woodlands in the US West, as officials struggle to counter the increasing toll on the nation's forests from wildfires, insects and other manifestations of climate change.

Destructive fires in recent years that burned too hot for forests to regrow naturally have far outpaced the government's capacity to plant new trees. That has created a backlog of 4.1 million acres (1.7 million hectares) in need of replanting, officials said.

The US Agriculture Department said it will have to quadruple the number of tree seedlings produced by nurseries to get through the backlog and meet future needs. That comes after Congress last year passed bipartisan legislation directing the Forest Service to plant 1.2 billion trees over the next decade and after President Joe Biden in April ordered the agency to make the nation's forests more resilient as the globe gets hotter.

Much of the administration's broader agenda to tackle climate change remains stalled amid disagreement in Congress, where Democrats hold a razor-thin majority. That has left officials to pursue a more piecemeal approach with incremental measures such as Monday's announcement, while the administration considers whether to declare a climate emergency that could open the door to more aggressive executive branch actions.

To erase the backlog of decimated forest acreage, the Forest Service plans over the next couple years to scale up work from about 60,000 acres (24,000 hectares) replanted last year to about 400,000 acres (162,000 hectares) annually, officials said. Most of the work will be in western states where wildfires now occur year round and the need is most pressing, said David Lytle, the agency's director of forest management.

Blazes have charred 5.6 million acres so far in the US this year, putting 2022 on track to match or exceed the record-setting 2015 fire season, when 10.1 million acres (4.1 million hectares) burned.

Many forests regenerate naturally after fires, but if the blazes get too intense they can leave behind barren landscapes that linger for decades before trees come back.

"Our forests, rural communities, agriculture and economy are connected across a shared landscape and their existence is at stake," Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said in a statement announcing the reforestation plan. "Only through bold, climate-smart actions...can we ensure their future."

The Forest Service this year is spending more than \$100 million on reforestation work. Spending is expected to further increase in coming years, to as much as \$260 million annually, under the sweeping federal infrastructure bill approved last year, agency officials said.

Some timber industry supporters were critical of last year's reforestation legislation as insufficient to turn the tide on the scale of the wildfire problem. They want more aggressive logging to thin stands that have become overgrown from years of suppressing fires.

To prevent replanted areas from becoming similarly overgrown, practices are changing so reforested stands are less dense with trees and therefore less fire prone, said Joe Fargione, science director for North America at the Nature Conservancy.

But challenges to the Forest Service's goal remain, from finding enough seeds to hiring enough workers to plant them, Fargione said.

Many seedlings will die before reaching maturity due to drought and insects, both of which can be exacerbated by climate change.

"You've got to be smart about where you plant," Fargione said. "There are some places that the climate has already changed enough that it makes the probability of successfully reestablishing trees pretty low."

Living trees are a major "sink" for carbon dioxide that's driving climate change when it enters the atmosphere, Fargione said. That means replacing those that die is important to keep climate change from getting even worse.

Congress in 1980 created a reforestation trust that had previously capped funding—which came from tariffs on timber products—at \$30 million annually. That was enough money when the most significant need for reforestation came from logging, but became insufficient as the number of large, high intensity fires increased, officials said.

Insects, disease and timber harvests also contribute to the amount of land that needs reforestation work, but the vast majority comes from fires. In the past five years alone more than 5 million acres were severely burned.

BUSINESS WORLD

As food security issues weigh on the Philippines: Here is where fisheries management might be headed

By Edwina D. Garchitorena and Caterina Maria Po

Fisheries are a vital source of nutrition, jobs, and community well-being for millions of Filipinos — and yet they are increasingly at risk from climate change, overfishing and data-poor management structures. To enhance community well-being and improve the lives of fishers and those involved in the industry, we must take steps to build greater resilience into the way we manage this vital national resource.

But there are challenges to creating greater sustainability in tropical fisheries. For one thing, they're complex, with many species and types of fishing gear involved, where different species can be caught at the same rate. In addition, catches are brought into multiple small landing areas, which makes effective monitoring and sustainable management extremely challenging. The situation is made even more complex by climate change, which will have oversized impacts on catch, availability of fish, and species. That said, overfishing is an equally critical driver of declines in production. We have been systematically depleting our fishery resources since the 1950s, from nearshore reef and soft-bottom species (such as shellfish, and rabbitfish) to offshore ground fish and pelagic fish (such as tuna, skipjack, sardines, mackerel, and scad) in a kind of slash and burn pattern.

Although data show a steady increase in production from 1950 to 2010, a closer look indicates that fleets started plying the nearshore areas, and as the more valuable reef and soft-bottom finfish and shellfish species ran out, they mechanized and moved further and further out in search of catch. Today the Philippine fisheries are composed primarily of sardines, galunggong (scad) and other small pelagics and forage fish like anchovies, which are important sources of food for larger fish such as tuna, as well as for humans.

The impacts of the way we have fished, and continue to fish, include shifts in ecosystem balances, biodiversity loss, changes in species composition, and reductions in volume and quality of fish. And we have not started documenting the adverse effects of climate change on our fish stocks.

COVID-19 has also affected the sector. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has noted, "The impacts of COVID-19 have affected fisheries management processes. Some fish assessment surveys have been reduced or postponed; obligatory fisheries observer programs have been suspended; and this postponement of science and management meetings will delay implementation, monitoring, and enforcement of these measures.

A lack of monitoring and enforcement may encourage a less responsible level of management, monitoring, and control of fishing operations and there is a risk that levels of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing will increase."

Now, more than ever, the need for the scientific management of fishing operations, driven by evidence and supported by its stakeholders, is key.

Within the context of the pandemic, NEDA released its “We Recover As One” paper, stating that “the new normal for the agriculture and fishery (A&F) sector calls for a heightened policy focus on food security. As one of the key production sectors, NEDA emphasized the need for the government to “continue the strict enforcement of the government’s policy measures to ensure agriculture/food production and supply chain.”

Fisheries Management Area (FMA) 8, on the country’s eastern seaboard, covers the Leyte Gulf from eastern Samar to the Dinagat Islands, as well as the Surigao Strait and the waters around Siargao. It is among the most vulnerable areas to climate change, typhoons, and extreme weather events, as evidenced by Typhoon Yolanda and the more recent Typhoon Odette.

FMA 8 fisheries are typical of the tropics – they are complex multispecies and multi-gear fisheries, primarily small-scale or municipal, with limited data and information for sound decision making.

The planning process, guided by the EAFM principle, integrates both science (including climate) and stakeholder involvement, towards a fisheries management plan that is based on biological as well as social and economic goals expressed by stakeholders. Management measures will be chosen in consultation with fishers and communities, to ensure a higher level of compliance. While the final plan will be specific to the area and the particular fish stocks within the FMA, the process will set a solid foundation so that it can be replicated in other FMAs across the Philippines.

As gov't scrambles to achieve food security, it mustn't forget about climate change

By Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson

Climate change is expected to reduce agricultural productivity and disrupt food availability if the government does not integrate mitigation measures in future policy, analysts said.

"We have been experiencing extreme weather events due to climate change. Torrential rains and strong typhoons lead to floods which cause heavy damage to crops. These calamities are occurring more frequently and it is expected that they will get worse," Vincer V. Quibrál, Food Security Cluster Coordinator of The Climate Reality Project Philippines, said in an e-mail.

According to the World Bank, storm surges are projected to affect about 14% of the Philippine population and 42% of coastal populations.

Informal settlements, which account for 45% of the Philippines' urban population, are particularly vulnerable to floods due to less secure infrastructure, reduced access to clean water, and lack of health insurance.

"For the ordinary Filipino, climate change is increasing temperature and precipitation that leads to droughts and floods. When these are intensified by wind from typhoons, the physical destruction of agriculture and food production areas could be massive," Roy S. Kempis, retired Pampanga State Agricultural University professor, said in an e-mail.

In agriculture, the effects of climate change manifest in pest damage, crop failure, and crop diseases, among others.

"As temperature rises, insects digest food faster, thereby damaging more crops. Crops also become more susceptible to pests when the temperature rises, which in turn affects the health of the crops. If these issues are not properly addressed, food production will diminish and it will be hard to provide food to all," Mr. Quibrál added.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), pests like the golden apple snail threaten the top Asian rice-producing countries.

"Increasing temperatures, changing precipitation levels, and extreme climate events like heat waves, droughts and typhoons will persist to be important vulnerability drivers that will shape agricultural productivity particularly in South Asia and Southeast Asia," the report added.

Rowena A. Buena, a regional director with the Magsasaka at Siyentipiko para sa Pag-unlad ng Agrikultura (MASIPAG), said changing weather patterns and erratic rainfall brought about by climate change floods farms and destroys crops and agricultural infrastructure like roads, seed storage, and post-harvest facilities.

"Specifically, intense drought and rainfall are hurting our rice farmers (to the extent that) planting is now seen as an unsustainable livelihood (because farmers are) unable

to harvest and sell their crops. Their children and the youth in the rural communities who are supposed to continue farming and food production are now choosing to find work in urban areas to avoid agricultural work, becoming wage laborers instead, further weakening the future and continuity of the agricultural sector,” she said in an e-mail.

The IPCC said that recent studies have linked the frequency and extent of the El Niño phenomenon with global warming, which can substantially degrade crop and fisheries production.

According to the World Resources Institute, the Philippines will likely experience severe water shortages by 2040, with agriculture bearing the brunt.

“The looming impact is on food security because climate change can lead to hunger and malnutrition in some pockets of our population, in areas directly affected by droughts and floods brought about by high temperatures, high rainfall, or typhoons,” Mr. Kempis said.

“While only some pockets of the Philippine population will be affected by reduced physical supply of food, efforts to meet their needs from areas where there is sufficient supply could increase prices, not only in the physically affected areas but also in the areas where the supply comes from. So overall, there will be further impact,” he added.

Among the segments of agriculture, rice is considered one of the most at-risk crops when the climate changes.

“Rice farming is the most vulnerable agri-subsector in the Philippines against climate change. First, rice is the most important staple food in the Philippines. Despite that, the majority of rice farmers are living in poverty. Rice farmers can hardly protect themselves from extreme weather events,” Mr. Quibral said.

“Second, rice is mostly cultivated in lowland areas, which makes it vulnerable to floods. Most rice production depends on an abundant supply of water. With dwindling sources of water due to climate change, less rice is being produced,” he added.

Ms. Buena said it is getting harder to maintain a substantial crop yield as erratic weather conditions and intense typhoons either destroy farms or disrupt cultivation and planting schedules.

An analysis of temperature trends and irrigated field experiments at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) shows that grain yield declines by at least 10% for every 1°C increase in growing-season minimum temperatures during the dry season.

Apart from crops, the livestock industry is also at risk as farm animals become more susceptible to diseases due to fast-changing weather.

“Moreover, livestock shelters are now more easily destroyed by strong wind and rain leaving them exposed and vulnerable to extreme weather events,” Ms. Buena added.

A study on water buffalo production in Nueva Ecija cited feed availability and animal health as the factors most severely affected by extreme weather, according to the IPCC.

Moving forward, the government must ramp up its efforts to prepare farmers, fisherfolk, and agricultural workers to deal with the impending effects of the climate crisis.

“Government representatives from the agriculture sector must reach out to every farmer and show that their roles are very important in securing food for the country. It is important that farmers’ concerns are heard. Creating a healthy relationship will make it easier to educate farmers regarding climate issues,” Mr. Quibrál said.

“The government must ensure the provision of wider insurance coverage for crops and livestock, as well as assistance and incentives for practitioners of environment-friendly farming practices. Our forests must also be rehabilitated to increase water supply, protect farmers from unfavorable weather conditions, and provide natural and regenerative resources,” he added.

Ms. Buena said conventional farming practices render farmers uniquely vulnerable to climate change.

“Conventional farmers have already become dependent on the use of costly chemical-based inputs which they can access usually through debt. The use of chemical inputs through time has weakened soil structure and degraded soil integrity which makes it more challenging for farmers to harvest more than the value of their input; and, increases the possibility of soil erosion,” she said.

“Thus, conventional agriculture does not only make farmers vulnerable to the hazard of landslides and flooding during disasters but also challenges them financially, limiting their resilience and ability to prepare for the impact of natural disasters aggravated by climate change,” she added.

Organic agriculture should also be promoted, as it offers a sustainable approach to ensuring food security while maintaining agrobiodiversity.

“Maintaining diverse crops and livestock, and the effective integration of different components, promote resilience that can support the communities’ need for food and reduce the hazards (from) natural calamities,” Ms. Buena added.

Mr. Kempis said some short-term solutions are to ramp up the replenishment of seed and seedling stock, as well as other crop production inputs, starter livestock and poultry stock including native chicken, fingerlings for aquaculture, and equipment for the fish capture industry.

“In the long run, the government should further strengthen research and development and innovation, starting with increasing budgets to hire more scientists, technology professionals, and marketing and logistics persons,” he added.

In order to deal with the changing climate, climate-smart technology and mechanics should be among the priorities, including “organic agriculture, agroforestry, bio-intensive farming, and many more,” Mr. Quibrál said.

“This way, farmers will have increased production and income and will be adapted and resilient against climate change. On top of that, greenhouse gas emissions are either reduced or removed. Instead of harming the environment, agriculture can be a solution to climate change and other environmental issues,” he added.

Ms. Buena touted MASIPAG’s Collection, Identification, Maintenance, Multiplication, and Evaluation (CIMME) program, which identifies climate-resilient varieties of rice.

“Through CIMME, indigenous and local rice collected are organically grown and maintained in trial farms, while some are improved through breeding. Some of the varieties or selections are observed to have climate change resilient characteristics,” Ms. Buena added.

Mr. Kempis said that the Early Warning Intelligence and Information System (EWIIS) is still among the best available measures for droughts, floods and typhoons.

In terms of farming practices, he said protection starts with identifying the vulnerable agricultural and food production areas.

“A rotational schedule of enhancing production in less vulnerable areas and reducing production in vulnerable areas, according to data and information of projected occurrences using EWIIS, should be followed as a public policy and adhered to by communities. Crops will vary following this rotational schedule,” he said.

“Then there is the enhanced research and discovery of more resilient varieties of crops and breeds of animal. These resources must be made available by way of storing crucial stocks of certified seed and genetic material of animals in secure facilities,” he added.

The new government appears to recognize the threat from climate change and the need to finance mitigation projects, but Mr. Quibrál called for active participation by farmers in policy making.

“Project implementation should be encouraged and the government should bring the technologies and know-how to every Filipino farmer. Moreover, grants and projects for farmers must be climate-sensitive,” he said.

“Building the capacity of our farmers on climate-smart agriculture is also critical in the coming years. If properly educated, our farmers can eventually provide food for the country, instead of relying on importation,” he added.

“The Philippines is not lacking in ideas, talent, resources, and existing models of modern food and agriculture production,” Mr. Kempis added.

Huawei offers green solutions to banking sector

By Patricia B. Mirasol

Huawei expects Philippine regulators to step up green finance efforts by setting industry guidelines on power consumption and encouraging green investments.

“Huawei sees tremendous opportunities in the Philippines — not only [in the] building of green infrastructures, but also in green bonds and the green economy system,” said Luan Mingming, country head of Huawei Philippines’ Enterprise Business Group, in a July 26 e-mail.

While green finance is not a new topic, the actual implementations and best practices vary, Mr. Mingming added.

At Huawei’s Intelligent Finance Summit 2022, Jason Cao, chief executive officer of Huawei Global Digital Finance, pointed out that digital banking consumes “a lot of resources, a lot of data.”

“Banks are large consumers of computing power,” he said at the July 20 roundtable discussion.

Technology providers, he added, can help banks resolve carbon emissions by focusing on alternatives to issues affecting power supply, power consumption, and power management. Photovoltaic energy (or solar panels), for instance, can be offered as a clean source of power supply. Banks can also invest in equipment with recycling systems for the efficient heat dispersal.

Huawei offers smart management modules that detect peak periods of usage. This feature allows banks to shut down some modules during off-peak hours to save power.

Accessing services on the Internet entails the use of servers in data centers, all of which need electricity to run. Phys.org, a web-based science news service, estimates that the electricity consumption for these centers may grow to between 15%–30% of the total electricity consumption of some countries by 2030. Most electricity is generated by fossil fuels, which contributes to climate change.

Huawei is targeting two types of customers, according to Mr. Cao: traditional banks that are going digital because customer behaviors are changing; and banks in areas without prevalent services such as Africa and the Asia Pacific.

“We are pushing for inclusive finance,” he said.

Huawei counts BDO Unibank, Inc., and Union Bank of the Philippines (UnionBank) among its local clients.

Sustainable cities to require private sector investment, DENR says

By Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson

Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Y. Loyzaga said private sector investment will be required to make cities more sustainable and climate-resilient.

The private sector can have “an influence on how cities are shaped and the way investments are made in infrastructure,” she said at the post-State of the Nation Address economic briefing on Tuesday.

“The private sector through their programs and core business values, and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) programs need to keep in mind the risks we face,” she added.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), she said, recognizes the need for “resilience to keep our cities and communities safe, as well as the ecosystems that support them. Keep in mind that many major cities are coastal, or in fact, influenced or aided in development by river systems.”

She also cited the need for integrated water resource management.

“The way we need to approach this is to look at different sectors and look at the demand for the kind of sustainability we want to achieve. We need to reverse engineer, because many of our cities are water stressed,” she said.

“We know from hazards from the past but there is uncertainty in climate change. We must invest in the plausible, not just the possible, in building our cities. The preservation of the environment is the preservation of life. That is the mother statement of the DENR’s vision,” she added.

In his address to Congress on Monday, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. said that he instructed the DENR and the Department of Public Works and Highways to explore possible partnerships with the private sector to work on climate change and disaster preparedness.

“The Philippines has excellent laws on the environment, but we have to guarantee that these laws are properly enforced. And this will require a great deal of coordination and cooperation between concerned government agencies and private stakeholders,” he said.

“Companies who exploit our natural resources must follow the law. We all have the responsibility to preserve this Earth, for we are but custodians, and we will pass on this great treasure to future generations. If we cannot mitigate climate change, all our plans for the economy, all our plans for our future, will be for naught,” he added.

He also said that investing in technology that will boost capacity-building for natural disaster resiliency will be a priority.

“Geographically, we are a disaster-prone country... investment in science and technology is imperative to enable us to have accurate weather forecasts and on-time disaster alerts,” he said.

“Studies show that already many areas in the Philippines are at high risk from the rise in sea levels brought about by the increase in global temperature. We must adapt to this phenomenon with disaster-proof planning of our communities,” he added.

MANILA BULLETIN

Heed call of science in response to pandemic, climate crisis - Legarda

By: Mario Casayuran

Senate President Pro Tempore Loren Legarda on Tuesday, July 26 called for unity toward resilience as the country's priority strategy in its response to the pandemic and the climate crisis.

In her first privilege speech delivered in the 19th Congress, Legarda, an environmentalist, said 'We need to heed the call of science and our experts to pursue and realize economy-wide and community-based measures that aim at reaching our goals sooner rather than later.'

Legarda said President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. himself said in his State of the Nation Address (SONA) on Monday that government's response to the climate crisis should be just as urgent.

"Let's invest in where it truly matters so our development gains won't be wasted come another typhoon or disaster. Let's strive for a better normal by enabling genuine and lasting resilience for all," she explained.

"Together, let us lead the way towards a resilient and sustainable pandemic recovery for all Filipinos, for all species in the world, and for our future generations," she added.

Legarda impressed upon her colleagues that "We are obviously living in challenging times of climatic changes that are unparalleled over thousands to millions of years."

"The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) has warned us that today's temperatures are at the highest in 125,000 years. We are now at the point of no return in our battle against climate change," she warned.

DND, AFP back PBBM's priority bills concerning nat'l security

NationalNews

By: Martin Sadongdong July 26, 2022

The Department of National Defense (DND) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) expressed support to the proposed legislations of President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. which would affect the security sector.

President Ferdinand ‘Bongbong’ Marcos Jr. (Photo courtesy of Bongbong Marcos FB)

During his first State of the Nation Address (SONA) on Monday, July 25, Marcos enumerated 19 priority bills that he would like the Senate and House of Representatives to pass to support the policies of his administration.

Among these are the Mandatory Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) and National Service Training Program (NSTP); Unified System of Separation, Retirement, and Pension; National Defense Act; and the creation of a separate Medical Reserve Corps.

“The President has articulated his direction and policies in his SONA. Since many of these require legislations, the AFP will be ready to provide inputs on matters related to national security,” said Col. Medel Aguilar, acting AFP spokesperson.

Out of these priority bills, the mandatory ROTC program has drawn the most buzz due to the sensitivity of the topic.

According to Marcos, it seeks to “reinstitute the ROTC program as a mandatory component of Senior High School programs Grades 11 and 12 in all public and private tertiary level educational institutions.”

“The proposed revival of the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps in senior high school will greatly enhance our efforts to orient and prepare our youth for national defense preparedness and disaster response,” said DND spokesperson Arsenio Andolong.

However, opposition lawmaker Senator Risa Hontiveros objected to the proposed revival of the mandatory ROTC, saying there are different ways for the youth to show their nationalism and love for the country.

“Ito’y isang programa mula sa nakaraan na napatunayang hindi iyon ang optimal. Kasi ‘yong mga kabataan natin, may iba’t ibang paraan para mahalín at magsilbi kay Inang Bayan (This is a program from the past which is proven to be not an optimal [solution]. Our youth has different ways to love and serve the country),” she stated in an interview after the SONA.

The mandatory ROTC was abolished in 2001 after the death of University of Santo Tomas (UST) cadet Mark Chua, who exposed the alleged corruption in the university’s military reserve training program. Chua alleged that some students would pay big sum to the training officers to avoid training but still get a good passing grade. After this, he went missing and his body was found floating in the Pasig River

on March 18, 2001 – sparking a series of protest and the eventual abolition of the mandatory ROTC.

NDA

Meanwhile, Marcos said that he wanted the Congress to amend the “antiquated” National Defense Act of 1935 to provide a change in the military structure of the AFP and make it “more responsive to current and future non-conventional security threats to the country’s territorial integrity and national sovereignty.”

“The department has been pushing for an amendment of the NDA for years. A new NDA will determine the size, shape, and capabilities of the DND and AFP based on today’s realities and requirements,” Andolong said.

“It must be recrafted to optimize jointness among our major services and operating units, and address non-conventional threats such as cyber and cognitive warfare, terrorism, and climate change, among others which were non-existent in 1935,” the Defense spokesperson added.

Pension liabilities

The DND also “recognized” the need for a unified system of separation, retirement, and pension for military and uniformed personnel. In his SONA, Marcos urged the Congress to pass the Unified System of Separation, Retirement, and Pension which seeks to grant a monthly disability pension in lieu of disability benefits provided under existing laws for military and uniformed personnel retired by reasons of disability.

Andolong said that there are already several versions of the bill that are in the works at the Senate and House concerning this matter. He explained that the proposed reform seeks to control the looming unfunded pension liabilities for retired personnel which will continue to grow if the current scheme prevails.

“As various aspects of economic and fiscal management are involved, there is a need to study the proposals in order to craft a sustainable pension system that will be responsive to the needs of our military and uniformed personnel,” Andolong said.

MRC

The AFP and DND also supported Marcos’ plan to create a Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) that will be separate from the AFP’s own Medical Corps.

Under Marcos’ plan, the MRC will be supervised by the Emergency Management Bureau of the Department of Health (DOH-EMB), and shall be composed of licensed physicians, medical students who have completed their four years of medical course, graduates of medicine, registered nurses, and licensed allied health professionals.

Aguilar said the military will be ready to assist the DOH “should the task of organizing and training them is given to the AFP.”

Andolong, on the other hand, said: “The DND believes that it is worth pursuing.”

The Department of National Defense (DND) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) expressed support to the proposed legislations of President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. which would affect the security sector.

President Ferdinand ‘Bongbong’ Marcos Jr. (Photo courtesy of Bongbong Marcos FB)

During his first State of the Nation Address (SONA) on Monday, July 25, Marcos enumerated 19 priority bills that he would like the Senate and House of Representatives to pass to support the policies of his administration.

Among these are the Mandatory Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) and National Service Training Program (NSTP); Unified System of Separation, Retirement, and Pension; National Defense Act; and the creation of a separate Medical Reserve Corps.

“The President has articulated his direction and policies in his SONA. Since many of these require legislations, the AFP will be ready to provide inputs on matters related to national security,” said Col. Medel Aguilar, acting AFP spokesperson.

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Zubiri favors nuclear energy program

By Mario Casayuran

Senate President Juan Miguel “Migz” Zubiri said on Tuesday, July 26 that his mind has opened up to the possibility of agreeing to a nuclear energy program for the Philippines.

Zubiri issued the statement during an interpellation at the Senate session hall by Senator Francis Tolentino of Senator Loren Legarda after she delivered a privilege speech on climate change.

Legarda impressed upon her colleagues that “We are obviously living in challenging times of climatic changes that are unparalleled over thousands to millions of years.”

“The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) has warned us that today’s temperatures are at the highest in 125,000 years. We are now at the point of no return in our battle against climate change,” she said.

Zubiri said he once was like Legarda, when he initially was not in favor of nuclear energy “but the more I travelled, the more I met people from nuclear energy industry, my mind has opened to the possibility of agreeing to it myself”.

“Because apparently in the Southeast Asian nation countries like Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and I believe Malaysia are going nuclear energy baka mahuli tayo (we might be left behind) and if we want to achieve eight percent growth rate, we need robust energy,” he stressed.

in his State of the Nation Address (SONA), President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. reckoned that it is time to re-examine the country’s strategy toward building nuclear power plants in the Philippines.

“We will comply of course with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regulations for nuclear power plants as they have been strengthened after Fukushima. In the area of nuclear power, there have been new technologies developed that allow smaller scale modular nuclear plants and other derivations thereof,” Marcos said.

Tolentino said the President showed his great interest to revive nuclear energy.

He said he was not referring to the Westinghouse plant built by Marcos’s father, the late President Ferdinand Marcos Sr., “but his notion now is that nuclear energy will provide greater means of support in uplifting the lives of countrymen. Will you agree nuclear energy is clean energy?” Tolentino asked Legarda.

Legarda answered that while she may not be an expert in nuclear energy, she remains open to hearing discussions and consultations with stakeholders and experts.

Tolentino said he is 100 percent in favor of nuclear energy “and from my readings, I glanced accounts that nuclear energy is zero emission, meaning it won’t contribute an iota of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere”.

"Ako non scientist, from my readings nuclear generated electricity saves atmosphere more than 470 million metric tons of carbon dioxide, that is equivalent to removing 100million cars from our streets. Ano pa ililinis nito, wala nang usok mula diesel and gasolina, naka save pa ng gasolina (What more will you clean, there are no emissions from diesel and gasoline and we save from gasoline)," he added.

Tolentino said nuclear energy produces the least green house emissions, is four times less toxic than solar energy, and accounts for 10 percent of the world's electricity.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Energy projects must respect IP rights, gov't told

Tabuk City, Kalinga, Philippines — President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s plan to push for renewable energy projects to fill the gap in the country's energy demand should not be at the peril of the environment and indigenous peoples (IPs), according to an Apayao province-based organization, Kabugao Youth.

In his first State of the Nation Address (Sona) on Monday, the president said the government would increase the use of renewable energy sources, such as hydropower, geothermal, and solar and wind, to cushion the impact of climate change.

"For the welfare of our people, it is incumbent upon us to lessen our vulnerability. Studies show that many areas in the Philippines are already at high risk from the rise in sea levels brought about by the increase in global temperature. We must adapt to this phenomenon with disaster-proof urban planning," Marcos said in his speech.

But Kabugao Youth said energy projects, such as hydropower, have been proven "more destructive" to IPs and their resources.

"Previous and current renewable energy projects in the country also created a cycle of abuse against IP rights," it said in a statement on Monday.

Community clearance

Kabugao Youth, composed of students and young professionals in Kabugao town, has been opposing the ongoing plan to build two large hydropower plants in Apayao, the 150-megawatt Gened 1 and the 335-MW Gened 2.

The P19.8-billion dam projects involved the construction of hydropower plants along the 175-kilometer Apayao-Abulog River.

A certification precondition has already been issued by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples for the project.

But Kabugao Youth and other groups opposing the hydropower plants alleged that there were "anomalies and flaws" in securing clearance from IPs living in affected areas. A certification precondition states that "free, prior and informed consent," or FPIC, has been obtained from the concerned IPs.

"We reiterate our stand against large renewable energy projects, such as the Gened dams in Apayao," Kabugao Youth said.

Instead, the group said the government should focus on alternative solutions, such as mini hydro power plants and solar and wind power options.

Noting that Marcos won in Apayao in the May polls, Kabugao Youth is hoping that the president would help them, fearing the dam project would displace IP communities and cause irreversible damage to the environment in the area.

Bataan nuke plant

In Bataan province, the group that opposed the construction and operation of the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant during the term of Mr. Marcos' father and namesake said the incumbent President was "inconsistent" in his administration's energy program.

David Honra, secretary general of the Nuclear-Free Bataan Movement, said Marcos was "not being consistent when he said he would be prioritizing renewable [sources of energy] while at the same time urging the use of nuclear energy."

"If we really want a sustainable source, it's best to concentrate on renewable energy sources instead of other dirty and dangerous sources like [nuclear power plants]," Honra told the Inquirer in a chat message.

Groups see 'mixed signals' in Bongbong Marcos' renewable energy push

By Cristina Eloisa Baclig

An environmental group on Monday (July 25) called out President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. for giving “mixed signals” in highlighting the administration’s plans to use nuclear and fossil power alongside renewable energy in the country during his first State of the Nation Address (Sona).

Throughout the campaign period, Marcos has been pushing to increase and further develop the country’s renewable energy sources—including wind and solar power, hydropower, geothermal, and biomass or biofuels—in response to climate change.

Philippine power plants are currently heavily reliant on coal, using what is considered to be the world’s dirtiest fuel for almost half of energy production.

The president also cited the country’s precarious power supply as a reason to push for the use of more sustainable and renewable energy sources, along with the adoption of nuclear power as an alternative energy source.

Marcos and Vice President Sara Duterte previously said incorporating nuclear power in the country’s energy mix—traditional and renewable energy—would lower electricity rates and help secure a steady power source.

So, it was not surprising that Marcos again mentioned his administration’s plans to advance the use of renewable energy and re-examine the country’s policy on nuclear power.

However, environmental group Greenpeace said it believed that Marcos’ first Sona sent mixed signals in addressing climate change, which Marcos said is at the top of his agenda as the 17th president of the Philippines.

Prioritize renewable energy, nuclear and fossil power

According to Marcos, the current demand for energy in the country exceeds the available and reliable supply. To increase the level of energy production, the country should lean towards renewable energy, he said.

“We must take advantage of all the best technology that is now available, especially in the areas of renewable energy,” said Marcos.

“Our search for new power sources should always be with an eye to improving the mix of the energy supply between traditional and renewable sources. The technology on renewable energy is progressing rapidly. And many of these technologies are appropriate for the Philippines,” he added.

The president said that the country, which has already been utilizing windmill power, has also started rapidly expanding its solar power production—which he said is “power that is practical almost everywhere in the Philippines all year round.”

Last April, Marcos—still a presidential candidate then—said the country has the potential to be a “major wind power producer” in the world and that he would push for

regulatory and policy reforms to enable the country to realize its potential as a major offshore wind power producer globally.

Aside from renewable energy, the president also said it is already time to re-examine the country's strategy toward building nuclear power plants in the country.

"We will comply, of course, with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regulations for nuclear power plants as they have been strengthened after Fukushima," said Marcos.

"In the area of nuclear power, there have been new technologies developed that allow smaller scale modular nuclear plants and other derivations thereof," he continued.

During the campaign period, Marcos also mentioned the possibility of tapping experts to look into the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP) and determine if it can still be reopened or if a new one should be constructed.

This prompted talks and concerns on the revival of the nuclear plant, which experts said could be risky due to safety issues.

The \$2.2-billion BNPP was built during the reign of the current president's father, the late Ferdinand Marcos Sr.. The project became a white elephant after laying dormant for many years until the elder Marcos' ouster in a people power revolt in 1986.

The project was also mothballed because of corruption allegations and safety concerns about the use of nuclear energy after the deadly Chernobyl disaster in April 1986.

Since its construction, several safety issues and concerns about the nuclear plant's design and location have hounded BNPP.

'Mixed signals'

In a statement, Greenpeace Campaigner Khevin Yu said while Marcos mentioned the use of renewable energy in addressing the climate crisis, the president has placed nuclear and fossil gas plans ahead of renewable energy sources.

"The mixed signals coming out of the Marcos administration's first Sona are worrying. Nuclear and fossil gas should be out of the picture today. It's hypocritical to talk about addressing the climate crisis while prioritizing dangerous energy sources," said Yu.

"If the president is sincere about acting on the environment and climate, he should head straight for genuine renewable energy – and stop promoting nuclear and fossil gas," he added.

Yu said that the "necessary push for renewable energy and climate action is being maneuvered to suit the administration's misguided nuclear and fossil gas agenda."

The environmental group also noted that the country's existing energy issues would worsen as the president further pushed for public-private partnerships (PPPs)—which involve surrendering the fate of the energy sector to corporations.

It added that the administration's primary concern should be providing safe, affordable, and reliable power to Filipinos.

"We have a vast amount of renewable energy resources waiting to be tapped, and RE (renewable energy) has been proven to be more cost-efficient and dependable in the face of climate," Yu explained.

"With the world and our country facing the impacts of a rapidly worsening climate crisis, we have no 'lead time' and no room for nuclear and fossil gas. The President should walk the talk on his statements about preserving the environment and human life, and stop creating barriers to RE," he added.

"Distracting ourselves with more costly and risky sources only sacrifices valuable time and resources—and threatens the very lives he wants to preserve."

Experts warn against nuclear energy in PH

According to Yu, nuclear "in any context" is a "dangerous proposition, even more so for the Philippines."

"Housing a nuclear plant in a country constantly battered by typhoons and earthquakes is like building a ticking time bomb, not to mention the amount of radioactive waste we wouldn't know how to dispose of," he added.

Yu added that the cost of constructing and maintaining facilities for nuclear energy sources will also be an issue "for a country already swimming in debt." He said he feared that the cost will be passed on to consumers, who are already suffering from food and energy supply issues and the climate crisis.

In his Sona, Marcos likewise acknowledged the cost needed for adopting nuclear energy in the country.

"Once again, PPPs will play a part in support as funding in this period is limited," Marcos said.

Greenpeace added that developing fossil gas—which the president also mentioned in his Sona—"is no better" as it produces methane, a greenhouse gas, which is up to 105 times more potent than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period.

"Any new facility built now will lock the country into 40 more years of fossil fuel dependence and will considerably delay the country's much-needed transition to RE," Yu said.

RE recommended for carbon emissions

A 2020 study by the University of Sussex—published in the journal *Nature Energy*—found that rather than pushing for nuclear power, countries that aim to lower emissions "as substantially, rapidly and cost-effectively as possible" should focus more on renewables.

The study showed that an analysis of 123 countries over 25 years by the University of Sussex Business School and the ISM International School of Management showed

that nuclear energy programs across the globe tend not to deliver sufficient carbon emission reductions, unlike renewables.

“The evidence clearly points to nuclear being the least effective of the two broad carbon emissions abatement strategies, and coupled with its tendency not to co-exist well with its renewable alternative, this raises serious doubts about the wisdom of prioritizing investment in nuclear over renewable energy,” said Benjamin K Sovacool, professor of Energy Policy in the Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU) at the University of Sussex Business School.

“Countries planning large-scale investments in new nuclear power are risking suppression of greater climate benefits from alternative renewable energy investments.”

The Philippines contributed only 0.3 percent to global gas emissions, according to the Department of Finance (DOF)—whose chief, now former Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, headed the Philippine delegation in the 26th Conference of Parties (COP26) in Glasgow last year.

However, the country’s vulnerability to climate change would inflict losses amounting to P506.1 billion, or about \$10 billion, in the next 10 years, according to Dominguez.

Last year, the country committed to the United Nations (UN) a target to reduce GHG emissions by 75 percent between 2020 and 2030.

BNPP not the solution

Aside from Greenpeace, several anti-nuclear power experts have already opposed the possible revival of BNPP and warned Marcos about the dangers of the nuclear plant’s rehabilitation.

Filipino-American geologist Kelvin Rodolfo, professor emeritus of environmental science at the University of Illinois at Chicago, said last month that the worst danger facing the BNPP is the possible explosion of Mount Natib—a dormant stratovolcano and caldera complex in Bataan with no historical or analytical record of eruption.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs), however, classified it as “potentially active.”

During that same month, Agham (Advocates of Science and Technology for the People)—a nongovernment organization consisting of scientists, engineers and science and technology advocates—said that the mothballed BNPP will not solve the country’s energy crisis.

The group said Marcos “denies the fact that the BNPP is already antiquated, faulty, dangerous and has served as a milking cow for corrupt practices.”

It also noted that power shortage is being used as another justification to recommission BNPP. Based on the organization’s analysis, there was still enough power supply in the country.

“In 2020, the country has an installed capacity of 26,250 megawatts with a dependable capacity of 23,410 MW, while the peak demand is just 15,282 MW in the same period,” the group said emphasizing that there is enough supply for the coming years.

“If we want energy sufficiency in the coming decades, we need to harness our own indigenous energy resources and move away from imported, dirty, and dangerous fuels such as coal and nuclear,” it added.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Volunteer groups vow to sustain mangrove planting in NegOr

By Mary Judaline Partlow

Dumaguete City – An alliance of volunteer groups in Negros Oriental has committed to planting thousands of mangrove trees yearly and relentlessly to protect the province’s shorelines and support global efforts against climate change.

Sidney Lee, the planting coordinator of the Allied Mangrove Planting Organizations (AMPO), said in an interview on Tuesday that they target to plant 600,000 mangrove trees by October.

“We have already planted 520,000 mangrove trees since October 2015, and last July 23, we were able to plant an additional 20,000 mangrove seedlings at the boardwalk area in Tanjay City,” Lee said.

“The remaining 60,000 mangrove trees for our target this year can be easily accomplished by then, as there are plenty of volunteers willing to undertake the activity each month.”

He explained the need to raise awareness of the importance of mangroves, saying that not all people understand the role of these coastal trees or shrubs that provide not only shoreline protection but also food and shelter to animals.

"Mangroves are also a natural habitat for certain marine creatures and help in carbon sequestration that can result in reduced carbon footprint, no matter how small," Lee said. "They play a very important role in carbon sequestration, which do twice as much than terrestrial trees."

He said while mangroves are common in the Philippines, with 33 species growing throughout the archipelago, they are under threat because humans use these coastal trees for firewood.

The sea forest restoration effort in the province began in 2015 with the Negros Oriental ROTC (Reserve Officers’ Training Corps) Association of Corps Commanders (NORACC), of which Lee is a member, taking the lead to plant one million mangrove trees in 10 years.

The local government unit of Tanjay City in Negros Oriental back then agreed to allow the NORACC to rehabilitate and restore 52 hectares of mudflats around its boardwalk to be planted with mangrove trees.

“This is our primary site for the massive mangrove forest restoration, with the 540,000 trees and seedlings already planted,” Lee said.

The NORACC later spearheaded the informal coalition of AMPO, comprising 12 non-government organizations that have volunteered to join the advocacy to revive the declining mangrove forests in the Tanjay boardwalk, now a famous tourist destination.

He said in their early years, they planted 100,000 mangrove trees a year but the pandemic slowed down their efforts for about two years.

The boardwalk was locked down so the group had to find an alternative area in Banilad in this capital city, where they planted mangroves when the quarantine restrictions had already eased, Lee said.

“But our goal is to actually be able to plant one million mangrove trees at the boardwalk in 10 years, and we are optimistic that we can achieve that, many thanks to the volunteers from the government and non-government sectors, including the youth,” he added.

In the coming years, the alliance will go beyond the boardwalk mudflats to continue its advocacy for rejuvenating and planting more mangroves across the province.

Lee said as the world celebrates International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem on July 26, the alliance is hopeful that more organizations and individual volunteers would be educated on the importance of the mangrove ecosystem and become actively involved in their protection and conservation.

THE MANILA TIMES

DoE lays down plan for PH energy supply

By Eireene Jairee Gomez

The Department of Energy (DoE) on Tuesday revealed some of its major plans that the Marcos administration will need to realize to ensure sufficient, reliable and affordable energy supply in the Philippines.

During the post-State of the Nation Address (SONA) economic briefing, which the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas hosted on Tuesday at the Philippine International Convention Center, Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla highlighted the need to prioritize the development of the country's indigenous energy sources.

"We need to be more energy secure and that means that we have to develop our indigenous resources and the first one that we have lost... the President said we have less power than we need... and that's because we lost 1,200 megawatts of Ilijan, which is powered by natural gas, so this is a top priority for us," Lotilla said.

For many years, power plants in the Philippines have been heavily reliant on coal, which is considered to be the world's dirtiest fuel. This makes up almost half of the country's energy production.

In his first SONA, President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. committed to increase and further develop the country's renewable energy sources in response to increasing energy demand and climate change.

"The use of renewable energy is at the top of our climate agenda... We will increase our use of renewable energy sources such as hydropower, geothermal power, solar and wind," the President said.

This is what the DoE will work on "at the soonest time possible," according to Lotilla.

"The President has directed that we address the uncertainties over investments in the upstream so that we can mobilize the natural gas around Malampaya and other fields for our needs at the soonest time possible," he said, noting a possible executive action clarifying the policy.

Lotilla said the government will be addressing energy security while protecting the most vulnerable sectors of the society. "We will continue to work on the target electrification of households all over the country. There are still more than 1 million households which are unserved and more than 800,000 of those are in Mindanao," he added.

While the government capitalizes on the exploitation of the country's indigenous resources, DoE Director Mario Marasigan stressed the need to push for more energy efficiency concepts to reduce the country's dependence on imported fuel.

Furthermore, he said, "We're are pushing for more distributed energy where the consumers themselves can put up their own generating facilities that is also in

pursuance of our net metering program, so it's a form of livelihood under part but at the same time we conserve energy."

Capitalizing on investments

During the forum, Marasigan stressed several major issues that the Energy department will have to address in the coming months to attract more investments in the Philippine energy sector, particularly on renewable energy.

"First, [we need to address] the foreign ownership issues in terms of exploration and development of our renewable energy. At the same time, we have to ensure that the renewable energy market provides a conducive environment that is to strengthen our distribution sector and ensure their timely and appropriate conduct of competitive selection process and that will also provide security in terms of investment," he explained.

Marasigan also cited the need to ensure compliance of the system operators in providing ancillary services "because ancillary services are equally important power generation components as an additional element from the conventional that we have to renewable energy."

He also pointed out the need to allow the private sector to come in not only in providing the supply of energy in the covered franchise area. "We need to allow the entry of the private sector in providing access to our remote communities," said Marasigan.

Firefighters battle wildfire as heat advisories up

By Agence France-Presse

Midpines, California: Firefighters were battling California's largest wildfire of the summer on Monday (Tuesday in Manila), a blaze near the famed Yosemite National Park that has forced thousands of people to evacuate, officials said.

The Oak Fire in central California broke out last Friday and is raging while parts of the United States swelter through a heat wave, including the usually cool Pacific Northwest.

The fire in Mariposa County has engulfed 17,241 acres (6,977 hectares) of land and is 16 percent contained, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) said.

"Fire crews are working aggressively using bulldozers, hand crews and aircraft," with only "minimal growth on the fire" seen on Monday, it added.

It is the most destructive blaze so far this fire season, according to Cal Fire, destroying more than three times the acreage of the nearby Washburn Fire, which has been nearly 90 percent contained.

But it remains much smaller than last year's Dixie Fire, which burned nearly 1 million acres.

Jon Heggie, a Cal Fire battalion chief, told CNN the latest wildfire was "very indicative" of other blazes seen in the region over the last two years.

"These fires are burning with just such a velocity and intensity, it makes it extremely challenging and extremely dangerous for both the public and the firefighters," Heggie said.

"It's moving so quickly it's not giving people a lot of time, and they sometimes are just going to have to evacuate with just the shirts on their back," he added.

One such couple, Jane and Wes Smith, lost their home and everything in it to the inferno, CNN reported.

"It's pretty sad to see the house that I grew up in and was raised in gone," their son Nick Smith told the broadcaster. "It hits hard."

Cal Fire said 55 residential, commercial and other structures had been destroyed.

Jonathan Pierce, a spokesman for the fire department, said low humidity and high temperatures were stoking the blaze, worsened by the high number of dead trees and steep slopes in the area.

The Oak Fire has forced the evacuation of about 3,000 people so far, officials said.

Nearly 3,000 firefighters backed by 24 helicopters have been deployed near the southwestern edge of Yosemite.

In recent years, California and other parts of the western United States have been ravaged by huge and fast-moving wildfires, driven by years of drought and a warming climate.

"What I can tell you is this is a direct result of what is climate change," Heggie told CNN.

"You can't have a 10-year drought in California and expect things to be the same," he said. "That drought is what drives what we are calling megafires."

Extreme temperatures could be seen elsewhere in the country, as 60 million Americans were under a heat advisory on Monday.

The National Weather Service (NWS) said heat advisories were in place in the Southern Plains and Lower Mississippi Valley, while stifling temperatures would ease on Tuesday in the Northeast and mid-Atlantic.

The usually cool Pacific Northwest will see temperatures surpassing 100 or more degrees Fahrenheit (37 degrees Celsius) in the Columbia River Gorge and Basin.

The NWS said daily record highs is likely to be broken from northern California to areas in Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington on Tuesday.

Cities have opened cooling stations and increased outreach to at-risk communities, such as the homeless and those without air conditioning.

The world has been hit by extreme heat waves in recent months, including Western Europe in July and India in March and April — incidents that scientists say are an unmistakable sign of a warming climate.

Marcos hopes to pass Land Use Act

By Kristina Maralit

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. is hoping he can do what his predecessor fell short of doing — convince Congress to pass the long-stalled Land Use Act.

The Chief Executive listed the proposed law among his 19 priority legislative measures when he appeared before the joint session of the Senate and House of Representatives for his first State of the Nation Address (SONA) on Monday.

"[It] provides for a rational and holistic management and development of [the] country's land and water resources; holds owners accountable for making these lands productive and sustainable; and strengthens the LGU to manage ecological balance within its jurisdiction," Marcos said.

"It also provides for Land Use and Physical Planning/Framework as a mechanism in determining policies and principles to implement this legislative measure," he added.

In 2017, former president Rodrigo Duterte called on lawmakers to pass the National Land Use Act (NLUA) that aims to address the land reform problems in the country.

The previous administration had repeatedly argued that "when it comes to food production, food availability, food price stability and helping small farmers, land is important."

This was echoed by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), reiterating that the NLUA would "ensure the rational and the sustainable use of the country's land and physical resources, as well as harmonize sector-specific land use policies and institutionalize land use planning."

The previous administration also warned that unregulated and unrestricted land conversion poses a risk to food security.

However, the bill was not passed.

The passage and enactment of the proposed Land Use Act is more likely to be achieved with President Marcos also the concurrent head of the Department of Agriculture.

The country's food security is one of the President's immediate priorities.

Having a law on land use could resolve a big part of the problem on food security. This is because the law will prevent the conversion of agricultural lands into industrial or commercial use, or residential real estate development.

The LUA could also be intertwined with Marcos' initiative of making the Philippines a champion of addressing climate change as it would prevent the country's remaining forest lands from being stripped bare for mining, leading to floods.

The future is now

By Ambassador Carlos Salinas

How are we doing in the way of dealing with the climate crisis? If we think that picking up where we left off before the Covid-19 pandemic turned our world upside down, think again. British economist James Meadway recently wrote an article in The Guardian that warned against the mistake of planning on the assumption that things would return to normal:

"The environmental crisis isn't going away. The best available projections from climate forecasters point to greater instability — more heat waves, more floods, worse shortages of food, even an increased risk of future pandemics," he says and laments that this instability, is "now becoming a part of our daily lives, scarcely seems to register with the institutions charged with managing the economy."

That's right, the future is now. Not in 2050, when we are supposed to have attained carbon neutrality. Not even in 2030, when we should have succeeded in limiting global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius. It is now, today, this minute.

Shipping is seen as the low-hanging fruit that will bring about change — such as achieving International Maritime Organization's (IMO) ambitious net zero emissions targets and addressing the spiraling cost of transporting goods worldwide as well as domestically.

We anticipate the massive change in digitalization and automation that characterizes the fourth and fifth Industrial Revolutions, ensuring that all global maritime professionals currently on board, and those still aspiring to become the next generation seafarers, are appropriately skilled, upskilled and reskilled to keep their places in an ever-changing and increasingly complex work environment, driven by consumer demands.

Are we ready? Is the Philippine maritime industry ready to take on these massive undertakings to ensure that the big ticket projects will be effectively addressed by the country as a real maritime nation with a huge contribution to the international maritime industry?

Are we ready to lay the groundwork for 2050, just a short sprint to 28 years from now, when our population is expected to breach 150 million?

What will it take to live up to the IMO's aspirations for shipping, to ensure a cleaner, more sustainable and resilient planet for all?

What must our country do to effectively support an industry that moves the world?

Four main areas need our immediate and aggressive attention:

– Safety considerations in attitude and mindset across all industry stakeholders, driven by the theme "Together in Safety," while harnessing the power of collaboration in getting things done.

– De-carbonization — working with partners in the industry to help achieve a net-zero emissions future for shipping. Just recently, over 11,000 scientists from around the world signed a manifesto seeking urgent and concerted global action on climate issues.

– Talent Acquisition — understanding and defining the workforce of the future — managing through diversity, flexibility and automation, among others, to attract the best and brightest.

– Eliminating waste — driving productivity by merging the physical and the digital, which in reality is at the heart of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

These topics are relevant for us today as we plan the Future which is Now.

Understanding the global shipping industry and its reach is a must.

Recognizing that continuing to do what got us to where we are today will not get us to where we need to be is another must. Unless we adapt and disrupt, address the evolving issues, and anticipate the future, we will be lost in terms of how the game will play out in the years ahead.

Throughout history, we have evolved the use of the seas and oceans to drive development, global trade and humanity.

The Byzantine Greek historian and philosopher George Pachymeres summarized the importance of shipping quite nicely, way back in the 13th century:

"Shipping is a noble thing, useful beyond all others to mankind. It exports what is superfluous, it provides what is lacking, it makes the impossible possible, it joins together men from different lands, and makes every inhospitable island a part of the mainland, it brings fresh knowledge to those who sail, it refines manners, it brings concord and civilization to men, it consolidates their nature by bringing together all that is most human in them."

What Pachymeres said about shipping remains true now as it was eight centuries ago. What has changed, Lincoln Paine says, is "a global consciousness of the sea," and what it means for us all.

The Future is Now is a call to action for all of us, to renovate, evolve and cultivate the mindset needed to face a future that is upon us.

The mindset that will define the future of seafaring for the Philippines and the Philippine maritime industry, while ensuring that a Filipino global maritime professional will continue to sail on every vessel, in every sea, moving the world, making us proud.

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