

23 November 2022, Wednesday



DENR

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BBM orders DENR to assist miners

By ALEXIS ROMERO

President Marcos ordered yesterday the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to strengthen its regulatory powers on small- and large-scale mining to ensure the safety of miners and to provide them with the assistance they need.

In a statement, the Office of the Press Secretary (OPS) said Marcos gave the directive during a meeting with DENR officials at Malacañang.

"We want to legalize small-scale mining firms because many of them are illegal so there is no protection for miners. We want to strengthen the regulatory framework for them to operate legally so we can give miners assistance and protection so they can be safe while working," Marcos said.

"The miners are pitiful... They have no safety. Many have died," he added, referring to mining sector workers who do not have proper training and who do not enjoy adequate safety measures inside mines.

The President cited the need to boost social protection and security for miners and to provide them access to financing.

The OPS said Marcos may also certify as urgent bills seeking to amend Republic Act 7076 or the law creating a people's small-scale mining program to provide miners social assistance and labor protection as well as access to state assistance programs.

"I think for now the need is for the regulatory capabilities, especially for the small-scale mining," the President said.

Under Republic Act 7076, small-scale mining refers to activities that rely heavily on manual labor using simple implements and methods. It also defines small-scale mining as an activity that "does not use explosives or heavy mining equipment."

The DENR has expressed readiness to look into existing mining laws to ensure that mining standards are updated and that the implementing rules take full advantage of remote sensing and artificial intelligence innovation.

The mining industry is pushing for stable policies to revitalize the sector and attract big investors to allow it to contribute to the country's sustained economic development.

The stability in mining policies is needed after the industry suffered from the nine-year moratorium on new permits and the ban on open pit mining, according to Chamber of Mines of the Philippines vice chairman Gerard Brimo.

He said if mining policies are stable, investments, particularly from experienced international companies, would flow naturally into the capital-intensive industry.

"We want to attract multinational mining companies with a lot of resources and knowhow, but to be able to do that, we need to have policies that are consistent," Brimo said.

Marcos also called for the upskilling and reskilling of seafarers to address the scheduled shift of ocean-going vessels to green hydrogen as fuel source from 2030 to 2040.

The President said seafarers would need additional training to be able to handle alternative fuels and meet global decarbonization objectives.

The seafaring industry has to create habits to contribute to the carbon emission reduction, he added.

His remark came on the heels of the 27th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change or COP27 held in Egypt from Nov. 8 to 18.

Earlier this month, leading organizations across the shipping value chain and the largest green hydrogen producers signed a joint statement at COP27, committing to the rapid production and use of low-carbon fuels based on green hydrogen to hasten the decarbonization of global shipping.

The shipping sector accounts for about three percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, but is expected to grow to 50 percent by 2050 without intervention, the OPS said.

- With Danessa Rivera



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Marcos: Enforce mining laws strictly

ZAMBOANGA CITY: President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ordered the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to bolster its regulatory powers on small and large-scale mining to ensure that standards are updated and that mining firms are strictly implementing their respective safety and health programs for workers.

Marcos made this instruction in a meeting with DENR officials in Malacañang last week.

"We want to legalize small-scale mining firms because many of them are still illegal and the miners have no protection. We want to strengthen the regulatory framework for them to operate legally and to give our miners assistance and protection for a safe working condition," Marcos said.

He also expressed the need to enhance social protection and security for workers in the mining industry.

"We might be able to access financing, they might be able to access social protection," Marcos told DENR officials.

"The miners... they have no safety. A lot of them have died," Marcos lamented, referring to miners who do not have the proper training or inadequate safety measures inside the mines.

On small-scale mining, there are bills that the President may certify as urgent, including the amendment to Republic Act (RA) 7076 to incentivize small-scale mining (SSM) to provide social assistance and labor protection as well as government assistance programs.

Under RA 7076, or the "act creating a people's small-scale mining program," SSM pertains to mining activities that rely heavily on manual labor using simple implementation and methods. The law also defines small-scale mining as an activity that does not use explosives or heavy mining equipment.

"I think for now the need is for the regulatory capabilities, especially for the small scale," Marcos said.

said it suspended all nickel mining operations in Tawi-Tawi to pave the way for a review of the region's mining policy. But details of the review were not made public.

The Philippines is the world's second-largest nickel ore producer in 2018 after Indonesia, with both Southeast Asian nations as the top two suppliers to China, the biggest buyer. Latest available industry data show that 2.34 million wet metric tons (wmt) of high-grade ore, or nearly 90 percent of 2.66-million wmt of the high-grade material the Philippines exported to China in the first half of 2018 came from Tawi-Tawi.

'Cease and desist'

Tawi-Tawi accounted for 27 percent of overall nickel ore exports, totalling 15.8-million wmt, to China during the six-month period.

In 2016, then-ARMM Assemblyman Hanibal Tulawie, then chairman of the Committee on Environment and Ecology, said that a resolution was passed asking the DENR to immediately issue a "cease and desist" order on all mining companies operating in Tawi-Tawi and also in Basilan, Sulu, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao provinces after he received numerous complaints from the public and environmentalists who are opposed to destructive mining methods.

Photos of nickel mining operations in Tumbagaan Island posted on Facebook also showed huge trucks and barges hauling off red soil, which was allegedly being shipped to China where it is processed. There were previous reports indicating that Tumbagaan Island was totally devastated because of mining explorations and the nickel mining activities there. The same thing allegedly happened to Panglima Sugala town.



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BBM: Protect mine workers

Legalization of small-scale firms sought

We want to legalize the small-scale mining firms because many of them are illegal, so the miners have no protection

BY MICHELLE GUILLANG
@tribunephil_mish

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. wants to legalize small-scale mining firms whose countless workers still lack protection while exposed to the hazards of the profession.

"We want to legalize the small-scale mining firms because many of them are illegal, so the miners have no protection," Marcos said in Filipino, during a Cabinet meeting in Malacañang Palace on Tuesday.

Marcos instructed officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to bolster its regulatory

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PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. presides over a meeting with officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to discuss initiatives to promote responsible mining.

BBM: Protect mine workers

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powers on small and large-scale mining to ensure that standards are updated and that mining firms are strictly implementing their respective safety and health programs for workers.

"We want to strengthen the regulatory framework so they can operate legally, to give our miners assistance and protection for their safe work," he said.

According to the Office of the Press Secretary, the Chief Executive saw the need to enhance social protection and security for workers in the mining industry.

"We might be able to access financing, they might be able to access social protection," the OPS quoted Marcos as telling DENR officials.

"The miners will be in a miserable situation. They're really not... they have no safety. There are so many mining accidents leading to deaths," he lamented, referring to miners who do not have the

proper training or inadequate safety measures inside the mines.

The DENR earlier said the agency would review mining laws, including small-scale mining, to ensure that standards are updated.

They also consider the provision of the implementing rules and regulations takes full advantage of remote sensing and innovation in artificial intelligence.

"I think for now the need is for the regulatory capabilities, especially the small scale," Marcos told DENR.

OPS said Marcos is considering the certification of urgent bills that are related to small-scale mining, which is defined as an activity that "does not use explosives or heavy mining equipment."

This includes the amendment to Republic Act 7076, or An Act Creating People's Small-Scale Mining Programs, to incentivize small-scale mining and provide social assistance and labor protection as well as government assistance programs.

Small-scale mining pertains to activities that rely heavily on manual labor using simple implementations and methods.



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Destructive mining unabated

In Southern Philippines, destructive mining practices both by small-scale and large-scale miners continue unabated. In Zamboanga Peninsula, open-pit mining has become a practice by commercial miners.

In Tawi-Tawi province, Languyan town shows the devastation of nickel mining activities there. Environmentalists said nickel mining activities have also destroyed the environment on Tumbagaan Island and other sites in Tawi-Tawi. Mining money was also being used in the past to bankroll political campaigns in the Muslim autonomous region comprising the provinces of Tawi-Tawi, Basilan, Sulu, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao.

As early as 2016, the Regional Legislative Assembly of the previous and the now-defunct Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) had asked the DENR to issue an order stopping all destructive mining activities in the Muslim autonomous region.

In September 2019, the BARM

Rehabilitation underway

The en-president Rodrigo Duterte, who was made aware of the mining devastation on the island, has ordered a stop to all mining operations in Tawi-Tawi. Then-cabinet secretary Karlo Nograles said Duterte was very much concerned about reports that Tumbagaan Island has been completely devastated by mining activities.

"The island has, at this point, been mined out. And while rehabilitation efforts are underway, the president is issuing a directive to stop any and all mining," he said.

Duterte ordered authorities to step up rehabilitation by planting trees in areas devastated by nickel mining. But surprisingly, Duterte did not order an investigation into the mining in Tawi-Tawi or who were the groups behind the environmental destruction. This is allegedly the reason why it was not acted upon by DENR, particularly the Mines and Geosciences Bureau.

The DENR earlier expressed commitment to review mining laws, including small-scale mining, to ensure that standards are updated and that the provision of the implementing rules and regulations takes full advantage of remote sensing and innovation in artificial intelligence.

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Palace orders DENR to ensure small-miner safety net coverage

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. ordered the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to more closely regulate smaller miners to ensure their safety practices are compliant with regulations, and that their workers are adequately covered in terms of social protections.

Mr. Marcos issued the instructions in a meeting with DENR officials in Malacañang, the Office of the Press Secretary (OPS) said in a statement.

"We want to legalize small-scale mining firms because many of them are illegal, therefore the miners do not have protections," he said. "We

want to strengthen the regulatory framework so that they can legally operate and we can give our miners assistance and protection."

"They might be able to access financing (and) social protections" if brought within the regulator's purview, he added.

The OPS said the President may certify some bills on small-scale mining, including amendments to Republic Act (RA) No. 7076, to offer incentives to the industry and "to provide social assistance and labor protection as well as government assistance programs."

Under RA 7076, the small-scale mining category refers

to mines that rely heavily on manual labor, without the use of explosives or heavy equipment.

"I think for now the need is for the regulatory capabilities, especially over small scale (miners)," the President told the DENR officials.

Finance Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno earlier said the mining industry can support the Philippines' long-term expansion.

Separately, Mr. Marcos cited the need to upskill and reskill seafarers in preparation for the expected shift of ocean-going vessels to green hydrogen between 2030 and 2040.

The President said Filipino seafarers would need additional training in handling alternative fuels.

At the 27th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27), leading shipping organizations and major producers of green hydrogen signed a joint statement committing to the rapid production and use of low-carbon fuels based on green hydrogen to accelerate the decarbonization of global shipping.

The shipping sector accounts for 3% of global greenhouse gas emissions but is expected to grow rapidly without intervention. —
Kyle Aristophere A. Atienza



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MINING DIRECTIVES. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Tuesday directs officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to bolster the DENR's regulatory powers on small and large-scale mining.



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DENR ordered to require mining safety programs firms to update

By Vince Lopez

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Tuesday directed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to require small- and large-scale mining firms to comply with policies that ensure safe working conditions for mining workers.

In a meeting with DENR officials at Malacañan Palace on Tuesday, Mr. Marcos lamented the failure of mining firms, particularly those involved in illegal activities, to provide adequate safety measures inside the mines.

"The miners are victims here. They have no safety. A lot of them die," he said.

The President said there is a need to enhance social protection and security for workers in the mining industry. "We might be able to access financing, they might be able to access social protection."

He also asked the agency to ensure that standards are updated and that mining firms are strictly implementing health programs for workers.

The Chief Executive further urged the DENR to address bottlenecks to regulate the small-scale mining industry.

"We want to legalize the small-scale mining firms because many of them are illegal, so the miners have no protection," Mr. Marcos said, adding that "we want to strengthen the regulatory framework so they can operate legally, to give our miners assistance and protection for their safe work."

Mr. Marcos earlier called for the amendment of the Republic Act (RA) 7076 or the People's Small-Scale Mining Act of 1991 to incentivize small-scale mining and provide social assistance and labor protection for all small-scale miners.

"I think for now the need is for the regulatory capabilities, especially the small scale," the President said.

Under the law, small-scale mining refers to a mining activity that relies heavily on manual labor using simple implementations and methods.



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PBBM tells DENR to watch small-scale mining closely

By SAMUEL P. MEDENILLA
@sam_medenilla

CONCERNED over the mounting fatalities in small-scale mining, President Ferdinand "Bongbong" R. Marcos Jr. is now pushing for measures to regulate the said activity.

During his meeting with officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Tuesday, Marcos said he wants to prevent further deaths in small-scale mining through government regulation and support.

"We want to legalize small-scale mining firms since many of them

are illegal so their miners have no protection. We want to strengthen the regulatory framework so they can operate legally and their miners are given assistance and protection in their work," said Marcos in Filipino while addressing DENR officials.

A strong regulatory framework, he said, can provide small-scale mining firms access to financing at the same time give their workers social protection coverage.

"I think for now the need is for the regulatory capabilities, especially the small scale," Marcos said.

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To facilitate such reforms, the Office of the Press Secretary (OPS) said the President may consider certifying as urgent the proposed legislation, which will amend Republic Act 7076 or the Act Creating A People's Small-Scale Mining Program.

It noted the amendment may cover the inclusion of a provision which will provide small-scale miners "social assistance and labor protection as well as government assistance programs."

The DENR has already committed to review existing mining laws to help in modernizing the mining industry through new technology and better standards.

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) has been lobbying for the regulation of small-scale mining following the deaths of miners engaged in the said activity in Benguet in 2018 and Agusan Del Sur in 2019.

ATM reaction

MEANWHILE, the Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM) welcomed Marcos's directive to the DENR to strengthen its regulatory powers over mining projects. Both mining laws that regulate small-scale and large-scale mining are outdated and not designed to ensure safety of small-scale miners nor respond to the challenges of climate change or impacts, it said.

"We hope that Sec. Yulo-Loyza will consider publicly supporting the proposed Alternative Minerals Management Bill [AMMB] in Congress, as a starting point to crafting new policies in mining at the DENR.

"Our alliance is also recommending that DENR consult local governments and indigenous communities to help identify policy reforms in effectively managing the country's mineral resources. It is important that DENR ensure that Filipinos benefit from minerals and that mining does not displace affected communities or bring additional environmental and social problems with their operations," ATM said.



WITH TIGHTENED REGULATION

Gov't to legalize more small-scale miners

BY JOCELYN MONTEMAYOR

PRESIDENT Marcos Jr. yesterday directed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to look into legalizing more small-scale miners to give enhanced social protection and security for workers in the mining industry.

In his meeting with DENR officials in Malacañang yesterday, Marcos ordered the agency to boost its regulatory powers on small and large-scale mining to ensure standards are updated and implemented.

Marcos also ordered DENR to ensure mining firms are strictly abiding by regulations and are implementing safety and health programs for workers.

"We want to legalize the small-scale mining firms because many of them are illegal, that's why the miners have no protection. We want to strengthen the regulatory

framework so they can operate legally, we can give the miners assistance and protection to ensure their safety at work," Marcos said as quoted by the Office of the Press Secretary (OPS).

He said the miners in these companies do not have the proper training and inadequate safety measures inside the mines.

He also wants to provide miners with access to financing and other forms of benefits.

The OPS said the President may certify as urgent laws such as the amendment to Republic Act 7076, or the Act Creating A People's Small-Scale Mining Program, to incentivize small-scale mining (SSM) and to provide social assistance, labor protection and government assistance programs to miners.

"I think for now the need is for the regulatory capabilities, especially the small scale," Marcos said.

The DENR, for its part, committed to review mining laws,

including small-scale mining, to ensure standards are updated and that the provision of the implementing rules and regulations takes full advantage of remote sensing and innovation in artificial intelligence.

Based on data from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB), there are 49 declared Minahang Bayan in the country as of the first half of the year.

A Minahang Bayan is a common area where small-scale miners are allowed to legally operate.

Such areas are being pushed by the government in a bid to integrate and formalize the small-scale mining sector as these areas enable the government with better monitoring and regulation apart from ensuring government revenues and safety of both workers and the environment.

Of the 49 Minahang Bayan, 15 are in Luzon, three in Visayas and 29 in Mindanao.

Meanwhile, out of the 49 areas, 40 are for gold, seven for chromite, one for magnesite and another one for silica quartz.

At the Pilipinas Conference organized by the Stratbase ADR Institute yesterday,

an official of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) said the mining industry will continue to "underperform" due to unstable policies.

"We want to attract the large, responsible multinational mining companies with a lot of resources and knowhow but to be able to do that, we need to have policies that are consistent and don't change," said Gerard Brimo, COMP vice chairman.

Brimo said since the lifting of the moratorium on new mining permits as well as the ban on open pit method, foreign investors are beginning to come back to the Philippines "little by little."

But this was halted when t Con-

gress approved a consolidated bill, seeking to raise the effective tax rate on mining to 51 percent from the current 38 percent.

"We want to have stable policies to be able to attract good investments. This is a capital intensive industry and we do need capital and if our policies keep on changing, we'll just continue to underperform," Brimo said.

The proposed law increasing mining taxes was approved by the Congress last August and consolidated House Bill (HB) 373 introduced by Joey Salceda, committee chairman and Albay, second district representative; together with HB 2246 of Rep. Stella Quimbo, Marikina City's second district; HB 3888 of Rep. Lex Colada of AAMBIS-OWWA Partylist; and HB 2014 jointly authored by representatives L-Ray Villafuerte of Camarines Sur second district, Miguel Villafuerte, Camarines Sur fifth district and

Tsuyoshi Horibatai, Camarines Sur first district and Rep. Nicolas Enciso of Bicol Saro Partylist.

The bill also calls for the implementation of a 5 percent royalty tax on the market value of gross output of large-scale mining operators; a minimum government share of 60 percent of net mining revenues, including all taxes and charges; and a 10 percent export tax on the market value of mineral ore exports to encourage domestic processing of mineral products.

The Department of Finance (DOF) earlier said "there is room to improve the fiscal regime in the mining industry" as part of its reforms for the sector.

The DOF said it aims to make taxation uniform in all mining operations aside from instituting transparency in mining operations including the results and data that are transmitted to the government. - With Jea Macapagal



IN BRIEF

Gov't asked to ensure stable mining policies

THE Chamber of Mines of the Philippines asked the government to ensure stable policies to continue attracting investors in the mining industry.

"We want to attract the large, responsible multinational mining companies with a lot of resources and know-how, but to be able to do that, we need to have policies that are consistent and don't change," CoMP vice chairman Gerard Brimo said during the Pilipinas Conference 2022.

Brimo said the mining industry was underperforming because of the 12-year moratorium on new mining permits. He said while this was lifted, the industry was essentially "in limbo in terms of growth."

"So, what we need here is to see stability in policies," said Brimo, who also mentioned the issues involving mining taxes.

Brimo said a multinational company came to the Philippines looking for opportunities after the lifting of the moratorium on new mining permits and the open pit ban. "But here comes in the news that our mining taxes will go up... They looked at that and said what the heck is this. The Philippines again is going to change the policies again," he said.

Alena Mae S. Flores



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Mas mahigpit na panuntunan sa pagmimina, ipinag-utos ni PBBM sa DENR

INATASAN ni Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" R. Marcos Jr. nitong Martes ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na palakasin ang kanilang kapangyarihan sa regulasyon sa maliit at malakihang pagmimina upang matiyak na ang mga pamantayan ay naa-update at ang mga kumpanya ng pagmimina ay mahigpit na nagpapatupad ng kani-kanilang kaligtasan at kalusugan mga programa para sa mga manggagawa.

Ginawa ng Pangulo ang tagubiling ito sa pakikipag-pulong sa mga opisyal ng DENR sa Malacañang noong Martes.

"Gusto natin ma-legalize ang mga small-scale

mining firms kasi madami sa kanila illegal, kaya walang protection ang mga minero. Gusto nating palakasin ang regulatory framework para maka-operate sila ng legal, para mabigyan ang ating mga minero ng tulong at proteksyon para sa ligtas nilang pagtatrabaho," ayon kay Marcos.

Sa pulong, ipinahayag ni Pangulong Marcos ang pangailangang pahusayin ang panlipunang proteksyon at seguridad para sa mga manggagawa sa industriya ng pagmimina.

Sa small-scale mining, may mga panukalang batas na maaaring sertipikahan ng Pangulo bilang urgent, kabilang ang pag-amyenda sa Republic Act 7076 para bigyan ng insentibo ang small-scale mining (SSM), para magbigay ng social assistance at labor protection gayundin ang government assistance programs.

Sa ilalim ng RA 7076, o ang Act Creating A People's Small-Scale Mining Program, ang SSM ay tumutukoy sa mga aktibidad sa pagmimina na lubos na umaasa sa manual na paggawa gamit ang mga simpleng pagpapatupad at pamamaraan.

Tinutukoy din ng batas ang small-scale mining bilang isang aktibidad na "hindi gumagamit ng mga pamapasabog o mabibigat na kagamitan sa pagmimina."

"Sa tingin ko sa ngayon kailangan ang regulatory capabilities, especially the small scale," ipinunto ng Pangulo.

Nauna nang nagpahayag ng pangako ang DENR na repasuhin ang mga batas sa pagmimina, kabilang ang small-scale mining, upang matiyak na ang mga pamantayan ay naa-update at ang probisyon ng mga implementing rules and regulations ay lubos na sinasamantala ang remote sensing at innovation sa artificial intelligence.

(Vanz Fernandez)



BBM sa DENR: Legalisasyon ng mga minahan paspasan

Inatasan ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na paigtingin ang kanilang regulatory powers sa 'small and large-scale mining'.

Ayon sa Office of the Press Secretary (OPS), dapat tiyaking updated ang standard at sumusunod ang mining firms sa worker safety at health programs.

"Gusto natin ma-legalize ang mga small-scale mining firms kasi madami sa kanila illegal, kaya walang protection ang mga minero. Gusto nating palakas in ang regulatory framework para maka-operate sila ng legal, upang mabigyan ang ating minero ng assistance at protection para sa ligtas nilang pagtatrabaho," ani Marcos sa ginawang pakikipagpulong sa DENR officials sa Malakanyang.

Sinabi rin ni Marcos na dapat itaas ang pangangailangan para sa social protection at seguridad ng mga manggagawa sa mining industry.

"Ang kawawa diyan 'yung mga miners. They're really not... they have no safety. Ang daming namamatay," giit ni Marcos.

May mga bill sa small-scale mining na sesertipikahan bilang urgent ni Marcos kasama na ang pag-amyenda sa Republic Act No. 7076 para bigyan insentibo ang mga SSM at mabigyan ng social assistance, labor protection, at government assistance.

Una nang nagpahayag ang DENR ng commitment para i-review ang mining laws, kasama ang small-scale mining at tiyakin na 'up to date' ang standards. (Juliet de Loza-Cudia)



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PAHALAGAHAN KALIGTASAN NG MGA MINERO

MAHALAGA para kay Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr., ang kaligtasan ng mga mamamayang kanyang pinaglilingkuran.

Kaya nga inatasan niya ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources na isaayos ang kalagayan ng mga minero sa pamamagitan ng pagpapatupad sa maliit at malalaking kompanya ng mga polisiya na magbibigay kasiguruhan sa kaligtasan sa trabaho ng mga minero.

Pinagtuunan ng pansin ng Pangulo ang kakulangan ng mga kompanya ng minahan, lalo na yung mga ilegal, ng sapat na kaligtasan at proteksyon para sa kanilang mga manggagawang minero.

Iginiit ni Presidente Bongbong na lubhang kailangan ang mga patakaran para sa kaligtasan sa loob ng mga minahan sapagkat marami sa mga minero ang nadidisgrasya at ang iba ay nauwi sa kamatayan.

Ayon pa sa pinakamataas na pinuno ng bansa, malaki ang pangangailangan ng mga minahan na palakasin ang kanilang social protection at security para sa mga manggagawa.

Ipinag-utos din niya ang pagsasaayos ng napakarami at nagsisiksikang maliit na kumpanya ng minahan na karamihan ay walang permiso o ilegal.

Idinagdag pa ni Pangulong Marcos na nais niyang maging ligal ang mga minahan upang magbigyan ng sapat na proteksyon at tulong sa kanilang trabaho.



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Inconsistent policies on mining sector hit

Potential growth stymied by rules changing midway, says COMP official

By **Jordeene B. Lagare**
@jordeenelagare

The country's mining companies have urged the government to address the inconsistencies in the rules governing the industry, as its growth has been stymied by policies that constantly change halfway through.

"To give an example, a few months ago, there was a multinational company that came to the Philippines because we were able to lift the moratorium and the open pit ban so they are now coming back little by little, looking at opportunities," said Gerard Brimo, vice chair of Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP), who declined to disclose the name of the interested company.

"But here comes the news that our mining taxes will go up. They looked at that and said what the heck is this, the Philippines is going to change the pol-

icies again," said Brimo during the Pilipinas Conference 2022.

Effective taxes

Brimo, who is also chair of listed Nickel Asia Corp., is referring to the proposal approved by the House ways and means committee to raise the country's effective tax rate on mining to 51 percent from 38 percent, impose a royalty tax of five percent on the market value of gross output of large-scale mining operations; a minimum government share of 60 percent of net mining revenues; and a 10-percent export tax on the market value of mineral ore exports.

The COMP said earlier that the proposed measure would again put into question the stability of policies governing the mining industry and delay the revitalization of the industry, which the Marcos administration had said would play a major role in

the country's economic recovery.

To stand any chance of reaching its full income potential, Brimo said it was imperative for an industry as capital-intensive as mining to attract large and responsible multinational mining companies with deep pockets and technical expertise.

Untapped sector

He said the sector would continue to underperform, however, if there are inconsistencies in policies.

"That's what we want to avoid, we want to have stable policies to be able to attract good investments," Brimo said.

The COMP earlier stressed that without a stable policy regime, foreign investors "will simply look elsewhere."

"We are not the only country blessed with mineral resources. If further tax increases are unavoidable, the tax structure

should not be onerous as to stop investments from coming in. This will sustain existing mines and encourage quality investments in the hugely untapped Philippine minerals sector, ultimately expanding considerably the tax base and providing far larger tax revenues to government," the COMP said.

Brimo noted that the expansion of the mining industry had been "essentially in limbo" even with the lifting of the moratorium on new mining permits that had been place for nine years.

"We were also able to overturn the ban on open pit mining, which is used all over the world, but that was a big problem for so many years," he added.

Mining companies have long said that with stable policies, the country would be able to generate significant revenues that can be plowed back into public projects, especially now that metal prices are elevated. [INQ](#)



Sen. Tulfo seeks budget cut from DENR to fund procurement of NCH equipment

BY BUTCH FERNANDEZ [@butchBM](#)

SEN. Raffy Tulfo on Tuesday threatened to cut the annual budgetary allotment of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and channel part of it to the cash-starved National Children's Hospital (NCH), a vital facility for sick children.

The senator moved to trim DENR's budget, citing its alleged "failure to carry out some key mandates" under questioning during the period of amendments in the ongoing plenary deliberation on the proposed 2023 national budget bill.

Tulfo, in moving to raise the budget for NCH reminded that the hospital facility serves children from the poorest families dealing with the most serious pediatric cases that is not receiving enough support from the government.

In his privilege speech on Monday, Tulfo divulged what he found to be an "appalling and heartbreaking situation" in the children's hospital that, he said, "adversely affects its patients, such as its lack of manpower, below industry standard facilities, and outdated or lacking equipment."

At the same time, the senator prodded the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and "my esteemed colleagues to personally visit the hospital to witness its struggles firsthand."

"Mr. President, the National Children's Hospital, a health facility for the poorest and weakest, is in dire need of our help," Tulfo pleaded, adding: "*Kung paano naghisingalo ang mga pasyente doon, gayun din ang paghisingalo ng pasilidad at sitwasyon ng National Children's Hospital.*"

He added: "I invite you to visit this hospital *para makita niyo kung gaano kalunos-lunos ang kalagayan ng mga pasyente doon. Nang makausapko sila, wala daw pong bumibisita sa kanila na mga opisyal ng gobyerno.* There is something wrong in the way they are treated and how the government handles them. They are not getting the help they must receive," the senator lamented.

Moving to promptly remedy the dire situation, the Senator sought to augment the NCH budget by sourc-

ing it from underperforming government agencies.

A veteran broadcaster doing public service prior to his election as senator, Tulfo shared how the situation in NCH has not improved through the years, lamenting, "in fact has even gotten worse."

In his recent visit to said hospital, Tulfo shared that the suffering of children and sorrow of parents accompanying them are "visibly apparent on their faces as they were lined up in the hospital's cramped, hot and humid hallway which only compounded to their sufferings."

For instance, the senator cited one case in particular that broke his heart as Tulfo recalled seeing a six-year-old boy with stage 4 liver cancer having a hard time breathing even if he already had an oxygen tank assisting him.

Tulfo shared that he was told that the patient was just waiting for his time to go.

Further discussing the problems hounding the hospital due to lack of budget, Tulfo said that NCH could not handle the number of patients that comes to them. He said that there is a three-year waiting time for some of the therapies being offered to the patients including PT, OT, and Speech therapy.

Tulfo said the hospital's building, meanwhile, is dilapidated and its sorry state cannot properly accommodate children. He described: "*May basag na bintana at plywood ang ipinangtatakip dito.* There are not enough electric fans and no proper ventilation, and the windows have to be opened for fresh air. *Sinabitan ng manipis na kurtina ang bintana marahil upang di makapasok ang mga lamok at alikabok!*"

Moreover, the senator from Isabela and Davao shared that he noticed water stains from the hospital's ceiling, which is a sign of water leak from the roof from the last rainfall.

Tulfo likewise recalled that the hospital's therapy rooms are very small, which could not adequately accommodate children, thereby prompting doctors to instruct parents to just continue the therapy at home instead of having it two to three times a week at the hospital.



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REIMATE OPINION



ANG INYONG LINGKOD

NI DR. HILDA C. ONG

KONTAMINASYON NG UNDERGROUND WATER PINANGANGAMBAHAN

NITONG nagdaang Sabado, November 19, nakilisa ang Pilipinas sa obserbasyon ng "World Toilet Day" campaign na may temang "Sanitation and Groundwater".

Pangunahing pinagkukunan pa rin natin ng potable water ang ground water na ayon sa datos ng National Water Resources Board (NWRB) ay 49% ang nagagamit sa mga domestikong pangangailangan, 32% sa agrikultura, 15% sa industriya, at 4% na iba pang pinagagamitan.

Binigyang-pansin ang kahalagahan ng pagkakaroon ng palikuran ang mga pamilyang Pilipino para mapangalagaan

ang imbak na tubig sa ilalim ng lupa sa kontaminasyon o pagdumi.

Ayon sa datos ng PSA o ng Philippine Statistics Authority, may 5.64 milyong pamilya ang walang maayos na banyo sa bansa, at dumurumi kahit saan.

Maliban sa health authorities, malaki rin ang pangamba ng NWRB, partikular si executive director Dr. Seville David, Jr., sa magiging epekto ng pagkalat ng dumi ng tao sa underground water ng bansa.

Ayon kay Dr. David, lubhang mahalaga na matuto ng tamang sanitasyon ang mara-

ming pamilya para manatiling malinis at mapakinabangan ang mga imbak na tubig sa kailaliman ng lupa lalo na sa panahon na tuyot ang mga ilog, sapa at lawa dala ng manit na panahon.

Mataas din ang kaso ng cholera, dysentery, typhoid, at diarrhea lalo na sa mga kata sa mga lugar na walang maayos na banyo o kontaminado ang tubig ng E. coli na tumatagal ng hanggang siyam na araw sa dumi ng tao, habang ang dumi ay aabot ng isang taon bago matunaw nang tuluyan.

Kaya pakiusap ng NWRB, pagtulungan ng mga local government unit ang pagseseruro sa pagkakaroon ng banyo sa mga komunidad para nabawasan ang pagdumi ng pagligid at ng ating natitirang groundwater.

NWRB ang ahensiya ng pamahalaan na namamahala sa lahat ng katubigan sa buong bansa at nagmo-monitor sa paggamit ng tubig, pati na rin sa pagkontrol ng paggamit ng lahat ng uri ng katubigan tulad ng alokasyon, konserbasyon at pag-iingat na kaakibat ang pagsustena sa pagpapaunlad nito sa pamamagitan ng sistema ng water rights.



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DPWH allots P100M to stop Arayat slides

Debris barriers to be set up along four creeks choked with debris on the Pampanga mountain

By **Tonette Orejas**
@ttorejasINQ

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) will install debris flow barriers on Mt. Arayat before the onset of rains in 2023 to avert rockslides and landslides toward Arayat and Magalang towns in Pampanga province and reduce harm to communities at the foothills.

Public Works Secretary Manuel Bonoan announced the quick-fix solution on Monday after he approved the request of Pampanga Gov. Dennis Pineda and Pampanga Rep. Aurelio Gonzales to fund and implement engineering interventions on the inactive volcano that stands at 1,034 meters.

Bonoan pledged an initial P100 million from the agency's emergency funds to set up and maintain a series of debris flow barriers along Sapang Maeyagas, Sapang Oliva, Sapang Madalumdum and Sapang Takwi. Landslides starting in 2009 had killed 13 people in the area.

The erodible materials, largely rocks, on those creeks after Supertyphoon "Karding" (international name: Noru) and Severe Tropical Storm "Paeng" (Nalgae) totaled 324,043 cubic meters, according to the data presented by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau in Central Luzon during a meeting with



SAVING LIVES The Department of Public Works and Highways is working to minimize the hazards of rockslides and landslides on Mt. Arayat, where boulders and other debris are lodged in creeks.

—MINES AND GEOSCIENCES BUREAU
CENTRAL LUZON PHOTO

Bonoan at the DPWH central office in Manila.

A volume of this size could fit in at least 18,002 trucks, each carrying 18 cu. m.

Harm's way

During the aerial and ground surveys on Nov. 10, two gashes from the summit were confirmed to have taken place in the area.

Arayat Vice Mayor Emmanuel Bonifacio Alejandrino and San Juan Baño village chief Froilan Soriano expressed their sup-

port for the governor's appeal.

Close to 2,100 households live in Purok 4, 5, 6 and 7 of San Juan Baño, which is in direct harm's way, Soriano said.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has also allotted P42 million in 2023 for programs making Mt. Arayat a protected landscape through a law sponsored by Gonzales, DENR regional executive director Paquito Moreno Jr. said at the same meeting.

To further avoid risks, the Pampanga provincial government has installed sensors for rainfall, earthquakes and ground movements through its Mt. Arayat Early Warning System.

Arayat residents have been informed of the hazard, while their houses were tagged for priority assistance.

The provincial government has distributed "emergency go bags" and food packs, established alerts and warning for preemptive evacuations, and prepared two evacuation sites in anticipation of the looming rockslides.

Also part of the preventive measures were massive bamboo planting and strict monitoring of slope farming.

"The severity of the problem not only needs engineering measures but also social and environmental solutions," Bonoan said. **INQ**



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VP Kamala Harris' productive visit strengthens PH-US bilateral relations

Vice President Kamala Harris delivered a clear message to President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. when she visited Malacañang Palace: "We stand with you in defense of international rules and norms. As it relates to the South China Sea, an armed attack on the Philippines' armed forces, public vessels, or aircraft in the South China Sea would invoke US mutual defense commitments, and that is an unwavering commitment that we have to the Philippines."

She also went to Palawan, the Philippine province closest to the South China Sea. While aboard a Philippine Navy vessel, BRP Teresa Magbanua, she reaffirmed the United States' advocacy on the importance of sovereignty, territorial integrity and freedom of navigation. These vital precepts in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea were cited in the 2016 ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (also known as the Arbitral Tribunal) that upheld the Philippines' position with regard to its territorial claims in the area.

It will be recalled that after the meeting between President Marcos and US President Joe Biden in New York last September, the White House said in a statement: "The leaders reflected on the importance of the US-Philippines alliance. President Biden reaffirmed the United States' ironclad commitment to the defense of the Philippines."

"Ironclad commitment" was also the term used in 2014 by former President Barack Obama with reference to setting into motion the US' mutual defense agreement with the Philippines in case of an attack on the Philippines or on its naval assets, arising from tensions in the South China Sea.

During his watch, President Donald Trump and his defense secretary Mike Pompeo forcefully

declared: "The People's Republic of China (PRC) cannot lawfully assert a maritime claim — including any Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) claims derived from Scarborough Reef and the Spratly Islands — vis-a-vis the Philippines in areas that the Tribunal found to be in the Philippines' EEZ or on its continental shelf."

Included in Vice President Harris' Manila agenda was strengthening the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) in terms of identifying additional sites for basing US troops engaged in joint military exercises as well as major disaster relief and humanitarian assistance activities.

Vice President Harris also conveyed the US' readiness to cooperate with the Philippines' initiatives to promote energy security by tapping into nuclear power options. She observed that the two countries' "multi-faceted" bilateral relations have expanded in scope within the context of Indo-Pacific economic prosperity. While the Philippines is keen on tapping into opportunities for expanded trade and investments in the post-pandemic era, it continues to be hobbled by the destructive impact of global warming and climate change.

Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff, who served as President Biden's official emissary during the Marcos inaugural last June, joined Vice President Harris in her Manila visit. In a Healthy and Safe Back to School event hosted by USAID at the Gregoria De Jesus Elementary School in Caloocan City, he announced that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) will be providing \$5 million to accelerate the country's vaccine rollout.

Philippine-American diplomatic relations have been strengthened considerably by Vice President Harris' highly productive working visit.



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Harris: Uphold int'l rules to protect lives

By MARTIN A. SADONGDONG

United States Vice President Kamala Harris underscored the importance of upholding international rules and norms in the South China Sea and around the world to create economic opportunities, protect lives and livelihoods, protect coastal ecosystems, and maintain peace and stability.

She stressed this during her visit to Palawan on Tuesday, Nov. 22, where she said "the United States is proud of our long-standing ties with the people of the Philippines."

Harris visited Barangay Tagburos in Palawan and interacted with the fisherfolk community.

"The fisheries of Palawan not only provide food for residents but serves as the economic lifeblood of this is-

land," she emphasized.

Days before Harris' visit, the China Coast Guard and Philippine Navy were involved in a maritime incident over a metal debris.

Harris believes that the vitality of fisherfolk communities like Barangay Tagburos "is at risk" for reasons like this.

"Communities like these have seen the consequences and people here know the impacts when foreign vessels enter Philippine waters and illegally deplete the fishing stock, when they harass and intimidate local fishers, when they pollute the ocean, and destroy the marine ecosystem," she said.

"This is how I see it: to protect the economic vitality of these communities, to protect the ecosystems they rely on, and to protect



ABOARD BRP TERESA MAGBANUA – Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) Lieutenant Junior Grade Adriane Belleza gives US Vice President Kamala Harris a tour of the bridge of BRP Teresa Magbanua, which was docked at the Puerto Princesa Port in Puerto Princesa, Palawan on Tuesday, Nov. 22, 2022. (Photo from the PCG)



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lives and livelihoods, we must uphold international rules and norms, and that is why our work here is so very important," Harris said. "We must stand up for principles such as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, unimpeded lawful commerce, the peaceful resolution of disputes, and the freedom of navigation, and overflying in the South China Sea and throughout the Indo-Pacific."

"The tribunal's decision is legally binding and must be respected. We will continue to rally our allies and partners against unlawful and irresponsible behavior. When the international rules-based order is threatened somewhere, it is threatened everywhere," Harris added, referring to the 2016 ruling of the United Nations' Permanent Court of Arbitration unanimous and final decision that rejected China's sweeping maritime claims in the South China Sea and favoring the Philippines' protest.

Harris arrived at the Puerto Princesa Port around 2 p.m. and she was welcomed by top ranking officials of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), led by Vice Admiral Rolando Punzalan Jr., deputy commandant for operations; Capt. Christopher Meniado, commander of Coast Guard District Palawan; and Commander Erwin Tolentino, skipper of BRP Teresa Magbanua (MRRV-9701).

After the arrival ceremony, Harris was escorted to BRP Teresa Magbanua, one of the two

newest and largest multi-role response vessels in the PCG's fleet. She was toured in the bridge of BRP Teresa Magbanua and shown the vessel's monitoring system used to keep watch of Filipino fishermen and sailors within the vast waters of the Philippines.

She was briefed on the current maritime operations of the PCG in Palawan.

"The United States is proud of our long-standing ties with the people of the Philippines. I am here in Palawan to underscore the importance of our partnership in order to create economic opportunities, protect coastal ecosystems, maintain peace and stability, and uphold international rules and norms here in the South China Sea and around the world," Harris said in a speech onboard BRP Teresa Magbanua.

Coast Guard partnership

On her trip, the Vice President Harris made several announcements to strengthen the US partnership with the PCG for maritime security. It included the following:

- A \$7.5 million additional assistance for the Philippine maritime law enforcement agencies to increase their capacity and capabilities to counter illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing, improve maritime domain awareness, and provide search and rescue support;



US VICE PRESIDENT KAMALA HARRIS
(Photo from the PCG)

- A new initiative to upgrade and expand PCG's vessel traffic management system, which will lead to better maritime safety;
- The Philippines' capacity to receive near-real-time data under the Quad's Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness initiative, an effort that uses commercial space-based platforms to deliver a common operating picture of waterways to promote transparency and to detect and counter illicit activities. (With a report from Joseph Pedrajas)



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PH to pursue talks with US on climate loss and damage

By Vince Lopez

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. explored possible cooperation with the United States on climate loss and damage during his meeting with Vice President Kamala Harris on Monday.

In a statement issued Tuesday, the Department of Foreign Affairs said Marcos is interested in partnering with Washington D.C. beyond climate mitigation and relief.

“(President Marcos) expressed in-

terest in pursuing further discussions and possible cooperation with the US on the damage and loss concept, beyond mitigation and relief, to build on the discussions at the COP27,” the agency said.

Loss and damage refers to climate change’s negative impact that cannot be avoided by mitigation and adaptation, such as extreme weather events, sea level rise, and glacial retreat among others.

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On Sunday, the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Egypt closed with a breakthrough agreement to establish a new fund to help vulnerable countries respond to loss and damage.

One of the main focus of Harris' trip to the Philippines is to spur cooperation on a range of issues, including advancing clean energy and addressing the climate crisis.

Among the United States' latest initiatives are the establishment of an energy policy dialogue as well as the launch of negotiations for civil nuclear energy cooperation or the so-called "123 agreement."

The 123 agreement, once in force, would allow the US exports of nuclear equipment and material to support the country's energy security and climate goals.

Aside from climate change, Marcos and Harris also discussed peace and security against the backdrop of global and regional developments.

The two underscored the importance of upholding an international rules-based regime and maintaining open communication lines between and among partners to prevent any miscalculations and misunderstandings.

"President Marcos reiterated the independent foreign policy adopted by the Philippines, which is based on national interest and the country's commitment to peace," the DFA said.

On Tuesday, the President called on disaster officials to study the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency (US-FEMA) to get its best practices for disaster management.

The President made this suggestion in a meeting in Malacañang, the primary agenda of which is to make the government more responsive to people's needs in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.

FEMA, an agency under the Department of Homeland Security, primarily coordinates the response to a disaster that has occurred in the US.



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Cooperation with US on climate 'loss, damage' sought

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has sought for a possible cooperation with the United States on climate loss and damage during his bilateral meeting with Vice President Kamala Harris on Monday.

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Climate change and the new Marcos brand of diplomacy

WE saw the President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. brand of diplomacy at the 29th APEC Summit in Bangkok, Thailand, and I like it. It is refreshing and exciting. This was his first appearance on the world stage and he did well, as former president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said. The Asia-Pacific region covers more than half of the world's economies. The president seemed very at ease among the leaders of major economies like France, Canada, China and Saudi Arabia, like he was in the comfort of old colleagues, or friends even. There was that light moment with Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau when they both compared their printed socks.

With the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, President Marcos threw in a little nostalgia about how his father, the late President Ferdinand E. Marcos, would send him as an emissary to Saudi Arabia during the oil crisis. In this bilateral meeting they discussed the important issue of energy, Saudi Arabia being the world's largest oil producer. There were reciprocal invitations for state visits in the fu-



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ture. More importantly, the Crown Prince committed to pay for the unpaid salaries of more than 10,000 overseas Filipino workers who lost their jobs in construction when they declared bankruptcy in 2015-2016. The Saudi government will also establish an insurance system to secure the salaries of future OFWs. According to Migrant Workers Secretary Susan Ople, it was refreshing to see both leaders sitting and talking like old friends, both visionaries and both proud of the Filipino workers.

With France's President Emmanuel Macron, the President discussed potential cooperation in agriculture, energy and defense. The two had met in person on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York last September. During this bilateral meeting, they discussed a potential partnership in nuclear energy.

Though both Saudi Arabia and France are not members of APEC, their leaders were invited as guests at the informal dialogue with the Asia-Pacific leaders.

France is one of the European Union's best performing countries in decarbonizing their energy mix and is well on its way to achieving a 40 percent reduction in GHG emissions by 2030. France has minimized its reliance on petroleum, coal and gas by increasing its use of nuclear energy. It will be remembered that Marcos Jr. had mentioned the possibility of reviving the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant, a project under his father which was mothballed in 1986 due to safety concerns. A lot has happened in the nuclear industry since, including small and portable nuclear reactors.

In the conversations with climate change activists, nuclear energy is still a bit of a bad word despite it having zero carbon emissions. The world is, however, facing pressures from all angles beyond environmental catastrophes brought by climate change, including post-Covid economic



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recovery, food security, regional tensions and the war in Ukraine. Europe is facing a very cold winter as much of their gas is supplied by Russia. These challenges are forcing nations to re-evaluate their commitments to the proposed single solution to reducing carbon emissions by switching to renewable sources of energy. Germany has gone back to the use of liquefied natural gas to reduce its dependence on Russian energy. It is a bitter pill to swallow, the return to fossil fuels with the use of gas. The world cannot rely on renewables like solar and wind alone as an alternative to phasing out fossil fuels. It will have to go through a gradual hit or miss cocktail.

In the meantime, while Europe and other bigger economies try to navigate through this winter's energy crisis, the Philippines is in a unique resilient position of having been so used to an energy and environmental crisis through the decades while looking at a better mix for our energy sources. The President knows that to reach our long-term economic goals, we

need a stable supply of energy that is not reliant on one source, hence, the talks with Saudi Arabia for oil and France for nuclear, and other possibilities discussed bilaterally with Australia, New Zealand and China. All that in four days.

It is a very interesting time for Marcos Jr to be stepping into the world stage as our president. These person-to-person meetings after the pandemic-induced lockdowns, do a lot more than just achieve points in bilateral discussions. They provide a platform that has long been missing in diplomacy and business forums — the human touch, the light moments, the laughter. And it seems, Marcos Jr. has it — the Marcos brand of diplomacy we saw from his father and mother, a mix of wit and charm that can even knock the socks off some of the most politically correct leaders of this time, like Trudeau and New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern. He continues to represent the Philippines as a sovereign nation in a peaceful Asia-Pacific region, who is a friend to all, and enemy to none.



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Editorial

COP27's disappointing results

ALTHOUGH the participants in the grandiosely named 27th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, more commonly known as COP27, tried to spin the outcomes of the annual global climate summit as a breakthrough, the general consensus, particularly among climate-vulnerable countries, is that they fell far short of expectations. The lesson that the Philippines should take from this is that our own efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change should not rely on global action, because that is not likely to be forthcoming.

COP27 faced a great deal of skepticism before it even began. Apart from the choice of Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, an upscale coastal resort as the choice of venue, there were criticisms raised about host country Egypt's human rights record and the contradiction that represented for efforts to develop climate assistance for emerging economies and disadvantaged populations.

An even bigger issue was the unimpressive record of progress toward meeting commitments of past COP meetings. Since the landmark Paris Climate Agreement of 2015, pledges of emissions reductions and funding for climate action have consistently fallen short. It is not that no progress has been made — there have been some accomplishments — but that progress is far too slow, and as a consequence, it has become inevitable that the ideal target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels will be missed, probably within the next 10 to 15 years, perhaps sooner.

Given these problems in perception, it was hoped that the conference of 199 country and territory representatives would agree to some definitive actions to restore confidence in the global consensus process. There were two main outcomes that were anticipated. The first was a framework to begin the phase-out of the use of fossil fuels for energy production, as this is considered necessary for achieving overall emissions reduction goals. The second, and more important to the Philippines, was an agreement to compensate climate-vulnerable countries for loss and damage caused by climate change effects.

On the first item, COP27 completely failed, producing only a statement reaffirming an earlier global commitment agreed at last year's COP26 in Scotland to gradually phase out the use of coal. However, after marathon negotiations that extended the conference beyond its scheduled closing date last Friday, an agreement was reached on the matter of compensation, which was promptly hailed by COP27 participants as "historic," and "a breakthrough."

The agreement turned out to be anything but that, amounting to no more than a statement of good intentions. The important details of how the proposed "loss and damage fund" would be set up, how much would be paid into, and by whom were all kicked down the road at least a year. According to the agreement, a "transitional committee" will be set up to develop recommendations to be presented at COP28 in November 2023; those recommendations will include "identifying and expanding sources of funding," among other things.

Given the grindingly slow pace of anything organized under the umbrella of the vast UN bureaucracy, it is doubtful whether such a committee could even be properly organized, funded and complete its work within a year.

The disappointing outcome of COP27 invites a comparison with the positive atmosphere created by the recent Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summits held in Cambodia and Thailand, respectively. In both regional meetings, climate concerns were near the top of the agenda, and the region expressed a single mind with respect to addressing the crisis proactively in areas of common interest. While specific programs or goals did not emerge from the meetings, they clearly set a positive foundation for further action.

We believe that this bodes well for the Philippines' own efforts to adapt to a changing climate and mitigate its effects, and that the government should make every effort to cultivate its regional relationships to that end. It might, in fact, be the only real path for progress against climate change; while it is a global problem that requires a global solution, it does not seem we are moving closer to achieving that, despite seven years of summits since the Paris Agreement. The climate certainly will not wait for the world to get its act together; neither should we.



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Kaalinsabay ng National Children's Month ay muling nangalampag ang EcoWaste Coalition na protektahan ang mga bata mula sa mapanganib na mga sangkap gaya ng nakalalasang kemikal na phthalates na na-detect sa ilang mga laruan at baby care products. (Jesse Bustos)

Product	Phthalates Detected
TOXIC DOLL	17.9% phthalates
TOXIC BABY CHAIR	23% phthalates
TOXIC BABY STROLLER	6.57% phthalates
TOXIC BABY PACIFIER	4.3% phthalates