

04 May 2023 Thursday



DENR

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DENR program gets P2.39B in funds

BY NIÑA MYKA PAULINE ARCEO

THE Department of Budget and Management has allocated funds for a massive forest rehabilitation program nationwide.

The National Greening Program of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources received a

budget amounting to P2.39 billion under the 2023 General Appropriations Act.

"As mandated by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., we will remain committed to attaining inclusive and sustainable transformation toward a greener economy. But we cannot achieve this goal if we neglect our environment," Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman said in a statement on Wednesday.

"That's why, in crafting our

national budget, we also put a premium on environmental expenditures. We also increased the budget for climate change programs and activities," Pangandaman added.

The program is a large-scale forest restoration seeking to meet sustainable development goals such as poverty reduction, food se-

curity, biodiversity protection, environmental stability, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

It eyes the planting of 7,249,642 seedlings and 158,843 hectares of land to be maintained.

The administration had allocated P464.5 billion for climate change mitigation. This budget is 60.1 percent larger than the P289.7

billion allotted in 2022.

"We are already feeling the effects of climate change, especially El Niño," Pangandaman exclaimed.

"That's why we urge all the sectors to include provisions on mitigating climate change in their respective budget proposals," the Budget secretary remarked.



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PBBM admin allots P2.39b for green programs in PH

THE need to address the impact of climate change made the current administration allot about P2.39 billion to the National Greening Program of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) this year.

In a statement on Wednesday, Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Amenah Pangandaman said the fund will help the government "achieve a sustainable, green and climate-resilient economy."

Pangandaman said the fund will help the banner project of the DENR that will ensure "a massive forest rehabilitation initiative in pursuit of sustainable development for poverty alleviation, food security, biodiversity conservation, environmental stability and climate change adaptation and mitigation."



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NEWS IN BRIEF

■ DBM commits ₱2.4 B to greening program

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said the government is committed to attain a sustainable, green, and climate-resilient economy by putting a premium on environmental spending. In a statement on Wednesday, May 3, Budget Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman said the Marcos administration has allocated ₱2.39 billion for the national greening program under the 2023 general appropriations act. "As mandated by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., we will remain committed to attaining inclusive and sustainable transformation toward a greener economy. But we cannot achieve this goal if we will neglect our environment," Pangandaman said. "That's why, in crafting our national budget, we also put a premium on environmental expenditures. That's why for this year, we have increased our budget for climate change programs and activities," she added. A banner project of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the National Greening Program is a massive forest rehabilitation initiative. Pangandaman said the program aims to pursue sustainable development for poverty alleviation, food security, biodiversity conservation, environmental stability, and climate change adaptation and mitigation. The program covers a land area of 13,565 hectares; 7.24 million seedlings to be planted; and 158,843 hectares to be maintained. "We're already feeling the effects of climate change, particularly with the onset of El Niño. We in the DBM has been calling on each and every agency to include in their budget proposals provisions for climate change response," Pangandaman said. To recall, the PBBM administration has allotted ₱464.5 billion for 2023 to address climate change. This budget is significantly higher by 60.1 percent compared to its ₱289.7 billion allocation in 2022. On Tuesday, Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) issued an El Niño alert as the country faces the threat of the dry spell. According to PAGASA, recent conditions and model forecasts indicated that El Niño may emerge between June and August at 80 percent probability and may persist until the first quarter of next year. (Chino S. Leyco)



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Negros town seeks 'bamboo capital' status

THE municipality of Cauayan is positioning itself to become the "Bamboo Capital of Southern Negros Occidental" to also provide more livelihood opportunities to its residents and boost the local economy.

After initiating the first-ever Bamboo Summit over the weekend, the municipal government headed by Mayor John Rey Tabujara identified areas for bamboo planting, including Barangay Talacdan, which will serve as the pilot site.

"We already took the first step toward making Cauayan the 'Bamboo Capital of Southern Negros Occidental,'" Tabujara said in a statement on Tuesday.

He added that Gov. Eugenio Jose Lacson and Sixth District Rep. Mercedes Alvarez have committed support to the program.

As part of the efforts, the municipal government formed the Bamboo Program Committee supervised by municipal agriculturist Daniel Dayono and bamboo project focal person Ruel Eleccion.

The identified areas for bamboo planting have been assessed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Community Environment and Natural Resources Office in Kabankalan City.

"I thought of this initiative six years ago because the name of our place is Cauayan. Even in our municipal seal, the bamboo plant is also there. Our festival has been named 'Lubay-Lubay' based on the characteristic of bamboo that swings," Tabujara said.

During the summit, which was also attended by participants from other local government units, the resource persons included former Agriculture secretary Emmanuel Piñol, giant bamboo program advocate Myrna Decipulo, leading bamboo furniture and products designer Robert Palomares, bamboo products entrepreneur Mark Gersava, and artist and eco-warrior Nicky Dumapit.

Lectures focused on various topics such as propagating, growing and harvesting of bamboo, the production of high-value items made of bamboo and the impact of climate change on tree farming.

Tabujara said he learned about the importance of bamboo during his discussions with Piñol.

"He is one of those who orients me. Then I decided to buy bamboo propagules to be planted in Cauayan. We also explored livelihood programs from bamboo that we can provide to our constituents," the mayor said.

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MWSS chief: No El Niño water shortage

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System does not foresee a water shortage despite the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) raising the El Niño alert amid the threat of the dry spell, MWSS administrator

Leonor Cleofas said yesterday.

In an interview with **The STAR**, Cleofas noted that Metro Manila customers, particularly those being serviced by Maynilad Water Services Inc., would not experience another rotating water

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interruption.

"If ever, the worst case scenario is there will be a decrease in water pressure," she said.

The MWSS official added that while the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) only approved the 52-cubic-meter-per-second (cms) allocation until May, the MWSS regularly conducts assessments on the water level of Angat Dam.

"We regularly meet every two weeks to assess the current situation, so ahead of time, we will be able to really assess the current situation at Angat Dam," Cleofas said.

Maynilad customers in Manila, Quezon City, Makati, Caloocan, Pasay, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas and Malabon; the cities of Cavite, Bacoor and Imus in Cavite and the towns of Kawit, Novleta and Rosario also in Cavite experienced at least eight to 14 hours of daily water cut off in the latter part of March and first two weeks of April.

"As of now, we don't see a possible water shortage, but we still need to be concerned about water conservation as based on the projection of PAGASA, the impact of El Niño will be in the latter part of this year and next year. We will have an opportunity to refill our dams," Cleofas said.

As of 6 a.m. yesterday, the water level of Angat Dam further dropped to 194.68 meters or 20 centimeters less than its previous level of 194.88 meters.

Angat Dam supplies more than 90 percent of Metro Manila's potable water needs and provides irrigation for 25,000 hectares of farmlands in Bulacan and Pampanga.

Based on the projection of the state weather bureau, the rainfall in May up to September will be near normal, according to Cleofas.

"Despite the expected El Niño, it will still rain. In fact, according to PAGASA, the cyclones will be more intense, that is why we are hoping that we can recharge our dams," she said.

The MWSS executive reiterated the need to conserve water, emphasizing that help from the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and local gov-

ernment units (LGUs) is necessary to help mitigate the possible impact of the dry spell.

PAGASA on Tuesday formally issued an El Niño alert amid the threat of the dry spell in the country.

PAGASA administrator Vicente Malano said recent conditions and model forecasts indicated that there is an 80 percent probability that El Niño will start in June, July or August and may persist until the first quarter of 2024.

El Niño is characterized by unusually warmer-than-average sea surface temperatures at the central and eastern equatorial Pacific.

Malano said all concerned government agencies and the general public are encouraged to keep monitoring and take precautionary measures against the impending impacts of the dry spell.

Irrigation supply suspended

NWRB executive director Seville David Jr. yesterday said his agency will suspend the water allocation for irrigation starting next week.

In a text message to **The STAR**, David clarified that the suspension was not related to the drop in water level of Angat Dam.

"(Farmers) are already harvesting and they have no water requirement starting May 11 until their next cropping, by the middle part of June," David said.

From 30 cms, raw water allocation from Angat Dam for irrigation is now at 10 cms until May 10, according to the NWRB official.

He said the suspension would remain until the resumption of the next cropping season by the middle of June.

The NWRB reduces and stops irrigation allocation for rice fields since many farms are either in their terminal drainage situation or there is less water requirement.

Last year, the agency stopped the irrigation supply in April.

"This is usually done annually during summer at the end of their cropping season," David said.

He earlier said the El Niño phenomenon's threat is real as he urged the public to conserve and practice water recycling.

- **Bella Cariaso, Danessa Rivera, Emmanuel Tupas, Pia Lee-Brago**



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LGUs told to brace for strong El Niño

BY ARLIE O. CALALO

AMID the warning issued by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) that there was a 40 percent probability of a strong El Niño, government said it would cut irrigation supply for two provinces beginning next week and local government units were told to prepare contingency measures.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) directed local government units (LGUs) to beef up their contingency measures and take steps to conserve water.

The National Water Resources Board (NWRB) on Wednesday said that it decided to slash the water for irrigation from Angat Dam to 10 cubic meters per second from 30 m3.

NWRB Executive Director Seville David Jr. said the supply reduction will be from May 1

►El NiñoA8

to 10. After that, the supply for irrigation will be cut off.

David said the irrigation requirement had gone down because crops were being harvested.

The Angat Dam provides water to farmlands in the provinces of Bulacan and Pampanga.

The weather bureau on Wednesday said that there was a 40 percent probability that the El Niño this year would be strong.

El Niño is characterized by unusually warmer than average sea surface temperatures at the central and eastern equatorial Pacific.

Pagasa's Climate Monitoring and Prediction Section chief Analisa Solis said based on their latest forecast, there was an 87 percent likelihood that the El Niño would be weak.

Solis said the forecast would be updated in the third week of May. She said the entire country would not suffer from the lack of rainfall as there would be some areas that would have above normal rainfall conditions.

"Historically, during habagat season, which will occur this year almost at the same time with El Niño, there would be more rains over Luzon especially in Western Luzon which falls under Pagasa's Type 1 Climate that is based on monthly average rainfall," she said.

She said that from June to August this year, Metro Manila, Cordillera Administrative Region, Region 2 (Cagayan Valley), Region 3 (Central Luzon), Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon), Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan) and the Bicol Region may have normal to above normal rainfall.

On the other hand, areas in Eastern Visayas, Central Visayas, Caraga Region, Dinagat Island and BARMM (Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) will have below normal rainfall particularly in September and October.

Also on Wednesday, Interior Secretary Benjamin Abalos Jr. urged LGUs to step up their preparations to cushion the impact of the long dry season.

"Conserving water is one of the key actions needed to be taken to mitigate effects of El Niño

and as public servants, we must set an example. These precautionary steps, albeit small, can make a big difference that can affect our communities," Abalos said in a statement.

The DILG chief issued a memorandum circular enjoining all local chief executives (LCEs) to sustain mitigating efforts in place.

Included in the mitigation efforts are the urgent enactment of ordinances curbing illegal connections and encouraging prudent water usage; allowing water concessionaires and water utilities to conduct emergency leak repairs; lifting of application of number coding schemes to water tankers used by water concessionaires to immediately address water supply needs of affected customers; implementing and updating of contingency plans related to El Niño; and stockpiling of food and non-food items for immediate relief assistance, among others.

The agency advised LGUs to launch massive information and education campaigns in communities on ways to conserve water, including fixing water leaks, maximizing rain-water harvesting and storage, and setting the temperature of air conditioning units between 22 degrees Celsius and 25 C.

The memorandum circular included water conservation tips.

Local chief executives were also urged to coordinate with the Department of Agriculture on cloud seeding operations, implementation of a rotational irrigation scheme and water-saving technology; strategizing of areas to be irrigated and reusing wastewater from drainage canals; utilizing solar pump irrigation; adapting drought-resistant and early-maturing seed varieties; and adjusting cropping calendar, among others.

The Bureau of Fire Protection was told to refrain from unnecessarily drawing water from fire hydrants and limit it only to putting out fires.

WITH PNA



Brace for new heat records: UN raises alert on El Niño by July



THE United Nations warned Wednesday of a growing likelihood the weather phenomenon El Niño will develop in coming months, fueling higher global temperatures and possibly new heat records.

The UN's World Meteorological Organization said it now estimated there was a 60-percent chance that El Niño would develop by the end of July, and an 80-percent chance it would do so by the end of September.

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BRACING FOR EL NIÑO. A farmer, Eduardo Rossel, 62, walks along a dried-up rice field in Brgy. Maname in Naic, Cavite on May 3, 2023. The state weather bureau said that based on recent conditions and model forecasts, the El Niño phenomenon might "emerge" in the rainy season between June and August. **Danny Pata**

Brace...

From A1

"This will change the weather and climate patterns worldwide," Wilfran Moufouma Okia, head of WMO's regional climate prediction services division, told reporters in Geneva.

El Niño, which is a naturally occurring climate pattern typically associated with increased heat worldwide, as well as drought in some parts of the world and heavy rains elsewhere, last occurred in 2018-19.

Since 2020 though, the world has been hit with an exceptionally long La Niña -- El Niño's cooling opposite -- which ended earlier this year, ceding way to the current neutral conditions.

And yet, the UN has said the last eight years were the warmest ever recorded, despite La Niña's cooling effect stretching over nearly half that period.

Without that weather phenomenon, the warming situation could have been even worse.

Global heating spikes likely

La Niña "acted as a temporary brake on global temperature increase," WMO chief Petteri Taalas said in a statement.

Now, he said, "the world should prepare for the development of El Niño."

The expected arrival of the warming climate pattern, he said, "will most likely lead to a new spike in global heating and increase the chance of breaking temperature records."

At this stage, there is no indication of the strength or duration of the looming El Niño.

The last one was considered very weak, but the one before that, between 2014 and 2016, was considered among the strongest ever, with dire consequences.

WMO pointed out that 2016 was "the warmest year on record because of the 'double whammy' of a very powerful El Niño event and human-induced warming from greenhouse gases".

Since the El Niño effect on global temperatures usually plays out the year after it emerges, the impact will likely be most apparent in 2024, it said.

"We are expecting in the coming two years to have a serious increase in the global temperatures," Okia said.

More extreme weather

Taalas highlighted that the expected arrival of El Niño could have some positive effects, pointing out that it "might bring respite from the drought in the Horn of Africa and other La Niña-related impacts".

But it "could also trigger more extreme weather and climate events" he said, stressing the need for effective early warning systems "to keep people safe."

No two El Niño events are the same and their effects depend, in part, on the time of year, WMO said, adding that it and national meteorological services would be closely monitoring developments.

The climate pattern occurs on average every two to seven years, and usually lasts nine to 12 months.

It is typically associated with warming ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.

Increased rainfall is usually seen in parts of southern South America, the southern United States, the Horn of Africa and central Asia, while severe droughts can occur over Australia, Indonesia and parts of southern Asia.

During summer in the northern hemisphere, El Niño's warm water can also fuel hurricanes in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean, while hindering hurricane formations in the Atlantic Basin, WMO said. **AFP, Rio N. Araja**



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World should prepare for new heat records – UN

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■ PREPARE FROM A1

World should prepare

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"The world should prepare for the development of El Niño," Taalas said.

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DRY CONDITIONS
— Farmer Eduardo Rossel carries buckets of water as he sizes up the challenge of irrigating this dried up rice field in Barangay Maname in Naic, Cavite, on Wednesday, May 3, 2023. The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) has said that based on recent conditions and model forecasts, the El Niño phenomenon might develop in the rainy season between June and August this year.
(Ali Vicoy)





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SUNSET. Manila residents gather to watch the sunset over at the Manila Bay Dolomite beach, which has become popular with tourists. **Joan Bondoc**





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Mindoro oil spill cleanup continues

Two months after the tanker *Princess Empress* sank, oil spill cleanup in the waters off Oriental Mindoro continues, according to the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG).

Marine science technicians tested absorbent pads made from coconut oil and fiber, which were installed in Barangay Navotas in Calapan City on May 1, the PCG reported yesterday.

On Tuesday, two tug boats – *Titan 1* and *Cabilao* of Malayan Towage and Salvage Corp. – deployed oil spill booms and a skimmer as well as conducted “manual scooping” in the area where the vessel sank to contain and recover sighted oil sheens off Balingawan Point.

The PCG said the tug boats recovered 400 liters of oily water mixtures.

The agency said 48.45 kilometers of the 57.77

kilometers of shoreline affected by the oil spill have been cleaned.

Up to 5,963 sacks of oil-contaminated debris have been collected in Naujan, Calapan and Pola towns as of Tuesday.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources said damage to coral reefs, seagrasses, mangroves and fisheries was estimated at P7 billion.

– Ghio Ong



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MORE INVESTMENT PLEDGES DURING MARCOS VISIT

ANOTHER US NUCLEAR PLANT BUILDER KEEN ON PH

By Marlon Ramos
@MRamosINQ

WASHINGTON—President Marcos' initiative to tap nuclear energy as the Philippines' new major source of electricity has received the backing of another American company, which proposed the use of micro modular reactors (MMR) to put an end to supply shortages and outages such as the hours-long brownouts now happening in Occidental Mindoro.

The first half of the President's five-day working visit in the United States proved fruitful as the Philippines secured a slew of investment proposals, including a \$3-billion financing package through the US Trade and Development Agency to build ports, railways and other

public transport systems.

A day after meeting with Oregon-based NuScale Power Corp., Mr. Marcos on Tuesday (Wednesday in Manila) spoke with top executives of Ultra Safe Nuclear Corp. (USNC), a Seattle-based company involved in the vertical integration of nuclear technologies and services.

According to the Presidential Communications Office (PCO), USNC was looking at the Philippines as the first site of its nuclear energy facility in Southeast Asia.

It said the company's proposed project would help provide the needed electricity in provinces such as Occidental Mindoro that are experiencing long brownouts.

The PCO said Mr. Marcos

was interested in using "cutting-edge" micro nuclear fuel technology as an additional source in the country's energy mix.

"Ensuring an unhampered supply of energy, alongside the promotion and utilization of renewable energy sources, are top priorities of the Marcos administration in an aggressive bid to realize a sufficient and clean energy supply in the future," the PCO said in a statement.

Francesco Venneri, chief executive officer of USNC, told the President that they were interested in providing "clean and reliable nuclear energy" with the use of MMRs, a nuclear plant system based on its patented "fully ceramic micro-encapsulated fuel technology."

"We also note that there's a great deal of discussion about (Occidental) Mindoro having blackouts and that might be an excellent... a good (scientific solution)," Venneri said.

Clean energy

Before meeting US President Joe Biden at the White House on Monday, Mr. Marcos discussed with senior officials of NuScale Power the possible construction of a \$7.5-billion small modular reactor (SMR) in the Philippines.

In his meeting with US Vice President Kamala Harris on Tuesday, the American official commended the President for sharing her interest in pushing for clean energy.

"During my visit to the Philippines, we discussed many is-

ues, including the importance of clean energy to the economy. You and I share a passion for that," Harris told the President.

The Marcos administration's push for clean energy was boosted further with the plan of Maxeon Solar Technologies to scale up its operations in the Philippines by infusing a fresh capital of \$900 million.

Officials of Maxeon, which owns solar panel manufacturer SunPower Philippines Manufacturing Ltd., were among the American traders who attended the series of business meetings at the Blair House during the visiting state leader's second day at the US capital.

Maxeon CEO Bill Mulligan said the expansion of their operations would generate more than 3,000 job opportunities for

Filipinos over the next few years.

"The Philippines... is actually a strategic part of our company. And I want to thank you and I want to thank all of the government agencies for all of the help and the support for the 40 plus years that we've been in the country," Mulligan told the President.

Investment pledges

Carnival Corp., a British-American cruise operator, informed the President of its plan to employ up to 75,000 Filipino seafarers over the next few years for several cruise ships.

Company CEO John Padgett said Filipino seafarers were known for their skills and hospitality in the cruise line industry.

ANOTHER US NUCLEAR PLANT BUILDER KEEN ON PH

FROM A2

"It doesn't matter whether it's the marine, deck, hospitality, restaurant... Everything is based on the happiness, the smile and the greatness of the Filipino employees," Padgett said.

Mr. Marcos also thanked Cambridge-based Moderna Inc. for its decision to establish a "shared service facility for pharmacovigilance" in the

Philippines that would provide the needs of its clients in the Asia-Pacific region.

"With your experience in other countries, there are many lessons that we could learn that can be applied in the Philippines," Marcos told Moderna executives led by its chief commercial officer Arpa Garay.

Two other American companies, Atento and Optum Inc., also pledged to bring in investments in the business process outsourcing industry in the Philippines.

Optum, an American health-care provider, said at least 1,500 Filipinos would be hired for its planned P800-million business expansion in the country.

On the other hand, Atento would be setting up its first call center in the Philippines inside the Iloilo Business Park in Mandurriao town, Iloilo province.

"I know it will be successful because... it has been a go-to industry for the Philippine government for quite a long time now," Marcos said. **INQ**

A5



US, SoKor ink P111.5-M climate resiliency grant for Phl cities

By PIA LEE-BRAGO

The United States government, through the US Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) signed a P111.5-million (\$2 million) grant partnership agreement to improve climate resilience of Philippine cities.

The agreement, signed last March 22, will boost the capacities of Philippine cities to adapt to, mitigate and manage the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

Through the grant, KOICA will support the implementation of the USAID's five-year P836.5-million (\$15-million) Climate Resilient Cities Project that benefits partner cities of Batangas, Borongan, Cotabato, Iloilo, Legazpi and Zamboanga.

KOICA's technical assistance will enhance the capacity of local government units (LGUs) to develop guidelines and use climate adaptation technology.

More than 180 Philippine officials and stakeholders will also be invited to participate in capacity building programs organized in the Philippines and Korea.

USAID and KOICA will also support the six LGUs and other stakeholders to effectively disseminate climate-related information to local communities, increase access to climate financing for economic and social development and promote natural climate solutions that strengthen cities' resilience to climate change.

The US and Korea will soon launch a partnership to prevent and reduce marine pollution in Manila Bay.

This partnership also seeks to enhance knowledge and influence social and behavioral changes for marine pollution reduction and pre-

vention.

This latest agreement between USAID and KOICA follows the signing of a memorandum of understanding in April 2021 where the two leading development agencies agreed to strategically collaborate on priority programs, including climate change-related initiatives, to advance development in the Philippines.

"As the United States and Korea are among the largest bilateral donors in the Philippines, this momentous partnership of USAID, KOICA and the Philippine government will bring together our accumulated experience and technical expertise to build climate change and disaster resilience in the country," KOICA country director Eunsub Kim said.

USAID Philippines mission director Ryan Washburn said the US has pledged to strengthen this alliance and broaden the focus to address issues of critical importance to the Indo-Pacific region and the world.

"In particular, we will deepen our cooperation in addressing the climate crisis, reducing plastic waste and promoting advanced technologies. We will also enhance our economic cooperation and people-to-people ties," Washburn said.

The Philippines consistently places high in global rankings on climate change risk and vulnerability. With an average of 20 typhoons per year and frequent floods, landslides, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, the Philippines is one of the most disaster-prone nations.

According to the 2022 World Risk Index, the Philippines ranked first out of 193 countries with the highest disaster risks. Between 2011 and 2021, the country incurred more than P670 billion worth of damage and losses due to tropical cyclones alone.



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USAID, Korean agency boost fight vs climate change

By JOSEPH PEDRAJAS

The United States and South Korea have joined hands in helping the Philippines fight the threats of climate change.

The US Agency for International

Development (USAID) and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) recently signed a ₱111-million (approximately \$2 million) grant partnership agreement to boost the Philippines' capacities in adapting, mitigating, and managing the im-

pacts of climate change and natural disasters.

Under the agreement, KOICA will support the USAID's implementation of the five-year Climate Resilient Cities Project that will benefit the cities of Batangas, ► 4

USAID, Korean agency boost fight vs climate change 1◀

Borongan, Cotabato, Iloilo, Legazpi, and Zamboanga.

KOICA's technical assistance will enhance the capacity of local govern-

ment units (LGUs) to develop guidelines for climate adaptation technology, according to the US Embassy in Manila.

Both agencies will also support the six cities and other stakeholders "to effectively disseminate climate-related information to local communities; increase access to climate financing for economic and social development; and promote natural climate solutions that strengthen cities' resilience to climate change," the embassy said on Wednesday.

Soon, the governments of both countries will also launch a deal to prevent and reduce marine pollution in Manila Bay.

"This partnership also seeks to enhance knowledge and influence social and behavioral changes for marine pollution reduction and prevention," the embassy said.

The latest agreement between the two agencies followed the April 2021 signing of a memorandum of understanding, where they agreed to collaborate on priority programs, including climate change-related initiatives, in the Philippines.

The Philippines is among the countries at risk of facing climate change. It is also considered vulnerable.

With about 20 typhoons yearly and frequent floods, landslides, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, the Philippines is one of the most disaster-prone nations.



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Mitigating global warming and climate change

WE HAVE been talking about climate change and global warming for years and the need for the country to prepare to mitigate their harmful effects.

With the heat index hitting the mid 40s in the last few weeks, we are actually experiencing it in real time.

A number of people have died of heat stroke last week and there will be more.

If what we are seeing and experiencing is just the beginning of things to come, the government will need to do more.

As one of the countries that will be most impacted, one would think that enough attention is being given by the government to the problem.

If we look around us, however, it does not seem there is any sense of urgency on the part of government to do anything about the ravages of climate change.

Instead of planting trees which is the cheapest and easiest way to mitigate global warming, open pit mining has now been allowed back after many years of hiatus. Being the most destructive form of mining, this will undoubtedly destroy our remaining forest cover, not to mention the destruction of our mountains which can never be restored.

We just read about the Chinese ship that run aground in the Visayas containing about 55,000 tons of nickel ore.

China seems to be in a hurry to mine all our nickel.

Indonesia, however, requires that mineral ores are processed in the country and do not allow the export of the raw mineral ore.

That way, environmental degradation is kept to the minimum.

We, however, do not care about the long term costs of what we are doing and it's sad.

Our rivers also continue to be polluted due to lack of laws, poor enforcement or simply people's ignorance or lack of civic mindedness.

Except for a few rivers in Mindanao and perhaps in Northern Luzon, most of our rivers are already heavily polluted.

This is true for all the rivers in heavily populated areas like the National Capital Region, Region 4-A and Region 3.

That news item about the cleanup of Malabon River wherein dozens of plastic bags full of garbage were retrieved sums up what is regularly happening to our rivers.

There is no sustained effort both nationally and locally to prohibit people from building houses along river banks until it is too late to relocate the informal settlers.

Since their garbage are not being collected and there are no septic tanks, the rivers are their natural garbage dumps and sewer.

How many times has the government tried to clean the Pasig River to no avail? This is because the people living near it and the river's tributaries continue to dump garbage and use it as sewer.

“ In the end, doing the right thing is what is needed not like what one official who funded a flood control project worth hundreds of millions in a place that is apparently not prone to flooding ”

We applauded the DENR when it undertook the cleanup of Manila Bay.

But unless the national government will lead the cleanup of all the rivers that flows to Manila Bay and support it with sufficient funds, the pollution of the Bay will continue.

The DENR should have gone to the root cause of the pollution which is to clean the rivers flowing towards Manila Bay.

We cannot continue to be cleaning up the beach front along Roxas Boulevard every day due to the polluted water from the Pasig River unless we clean the river.

It is a good thing that San Miguel Corporation is dredging the Pasig and Tullahan Rivers which is somehow helping in the cleanup.

Without the effort, the pollution of these two rivers and the bay area would be a lot worse.

Part of the reason why SMC is doing this,



however, is because of its planned freeway project along the Pasig River and the new international airport it is building in Bulacan.

Nonetheless, the government needs to come in and do more because there are certain things only the government can do.

One is preventing the discharge of any waste water in the Pasig River and all the other rivers flowing to Manila Bay.

The local government units where the rivers flow can be tasked for this while the national government can help finance the setting up of water treatment facilities so that only treated water can flow freely to the Bay.

Yes, it will cost a lot of money but there is probably no cheaper way to do it at this time unless all the houses along all waterways can be relocated which perhaps is no longer possible.

At one stage, the government did pause our reliance on coal but unfortunately we went back constructing coal power plants.

One good news which we hope will happen is the planned construction of a huge solar power plant in the country.

It remains to be seen whether the administration will push thru with its plan for nuclear energy by rehabilitating the mothballed Bataan Nuclear Power Plant.

What is apparent is that a lot more needs to be done and we have to start like yesterday.

But there seems to be no strategic thinking on the part of many senior officials. The now mentality is the one prevailing when they should be thinking long term like what will we be leaving to the future generations of Filipinos.

We cannot leave them a country whose environment has been completely degraded.

In the end, doing the right thing is what is needed not like what one official who funded a flood control project worth hundreds of millions in a place that is apparently not prone to flooding.



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HOW TO MOVE TO NET ZERO? EXPERT HAS LIST

By CAI U. ORDINARIO
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INCHEON, South Korea— Getting rid of fossil fuel subsidies, land use, and making agriculture greener are among the “low-hanging fruits” for countries in their effort to transition to net zero, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

In a briefing here on Wednesday, ADB Chief Economist Albert Park said removing fuel subsidies can discourage its consumption; land use can lead to efforts that cut greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and cropping activities; a “greener” agriculture mean using better fertilizers.

These efforts, Park said, can be addressed through regulations and legislation, and not necessarily investments that may be costly given that countries are still recovering from the pandemic.

“Things like green building codes, (setting) carbon emission standards, and other ways that again, it’s all about making people, if there isn’t a carbon price out there, make people internalize actions that are going to be harmful for the environ-

ment,” Park said.

For the development sector, ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa said the need to address climate change and tread the path to net zero is also a call for ADB and other multilateral development banks to evolve.

This MDB evolution must recognize that development is no longer possible without effective climate action; investing in global public goods; and be key players in the effort to mobilize the levels of financing now required for development, from billions to trillions.

Asakawa stressed that traditional models of lending and grantmaking will not be enough to respond to the challenge of climate change. MDBs must undertake efforts to “help economies transition, swiftly and justly, to a net zero future.”

“We need to answer the call for MDBs to do more to maximize our financing capacity through game-changing new mechanisms; to leverage the enormous investment potential of the private sector and philanthropies; and to maintain our place as a stable, reliable financial institution,” Asakawa said.

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Net zero...

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Earlier, ADB said the vulnerability of the Philippines to climate change also makes it a country that has the most to gain in the shift to a more carbon-neutral world.

This is especially crucial since climate change under a high emissions scenario could impose GDP losses of 24 percent in the whole of developing Asia, 35 percent in India, 30 percent in Southeast Asia and 24 percent in the rest of South Asia by 2100.

The report’s coauthor and ADB Economic Research and Regional Cooperation Department (ERCD) economist David Anthony Raitzer said in a recent briefing that the Philippines saw an expansion in the share of coal in terms of the country’s electricity generation. This, he said, is not “economically preferable” in the study’s model.

The primary recommendation of the report is for countries to tap carbon pricing as a way to finance green technologies that are carbon-neutral to attain the below-1.5 degree celsius target set under the Paris accord.

The report noted that the region’s share of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions doubled to 44 percent in 2019 from 22 percent in 1990 and is expected to remain at this share until mid-century under current policies.

At current levels of GHG emissions, ADB said, the region would exhaust the remaining global carbon budget consistent with limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2040.



Dried seahorse seized in Zamboanga

ZAMBOANGA CITY: Authorities seized on Tuesday over 100 pounds of dried seahorse at the Zamboanga International Airport.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has confirmed the confiscation of the illegal shipment following a routine security inspection of the cargo. It said the seized dried seahorse, used widely in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), can fetch up to P600,000 in the black market as it is thought to cure asthma, skin infections, impotence and can even act as a natural Viagra.

The cargo, declared as assorted barter goods, was bound for Manila, according to BFAR.

It said a member of the Police Aviation Security Group, SSg. Albasir Kairan, discovered the contraband after inspecting three boxes of cargo. Kairan informed the findings to BFAR quarantine officer Remelyn Atilano who ordered the confiscation of the cargo.

Atilano said under the law, it is illegal to trade dried seahorse. She was referring to Section 102 of Republic Act (RA) 8550 as amended by RAs 10654 and 9147 or "The Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act," which prohibits the killing and trading of endangered species.

BFAR did not release the names of the shipper and consignee of the



■ Photos released by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources show the confiscated dried seahorse at Zamboanga International Airport on Tuesday, May 2, 2023. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO.

cargo, but said "the PNP Aviation Security Unit 9 headed by Maj. Sharwin Concha turned over the confiscated items to DA-BFAR 9, particularly at the regional office for safekeeping, issuance of Notice of Violation followed by filing of appropriate administrative and criminal cases to the owner of the confiscated items."

According to Project Seahorse, a marine conservation organization, seahorses are used variously in the Philippines, including for medical purposes and good luck charms. It said coastal people of Mindanao and the Central Visayas use seahorses to treat asthma, gas pains and hyperactivity.

In Palawan, claims that seahorses cure asthma probably derive from TCM practices.

In Bohol, and occasionally in Palawan, seahorses were found to be used to treat stomach upsets.

A local medicine man in Luzon prescribed a mixture of seahorses and herbs to patients with skin disorders, and one former seahorse trader had used seahorses to cure his arthritis.

Fisherfolk in some areas believe that ingesting a seahorse soaked in liquid (usually alcohol) will promote vigor and fertility, whereas fishers in Bohol explained that young seahorse — which they believed to be high in vitamins — served as a tonic food. Merchants in southern Philippines believe that a seahorse brings profits. Some villagers in Palawan hang a seahorse in the doorway to ward off evil spirits.

Seahorses are also an important part of shellcraft and the curio trade in the Philippines, with large volumes of dried seahorses finding their way into cheap seaside scenes and paperweights. Importers apparently request small spiny seahorses, which would be considered very poor quality for TCM. While mostly for export, souvenir shops in Palawan and Cebu, and resorts in Balicasag (Bohol) and Boracay, sell seahorses to local and foreign tourists.

The souvenir shops were supplied by traders from the same province and sold the seahorses dried and individually. The dried seahorses in the resorts were also sold individually and peddled by children or women along the beaches.

AL JACINTO