



SONA 2024

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Delivered his third State of the Nation Address (Sona) at 4 p.m. Monday, July 22, 2024,

The President arrived at the Batasang Pambansa in Quezon City onboard a chopper. He was greeted by top government officials, particularly Senate President Chiz Escudero and House Speaker Martin Romualdez.

Martin Romualdez acknowledged the presence of President Marcos, who then took the rostrum to start his third Sona. Marcos greeted officials and guests, particularly former Presidents Joseph Estrada and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Below are the issues tackled by Marcos in his Sona:

FOOD SECURITY, AGRICULTURE

Marcos explained that the government needed to import rice as the supply generated by local farmers was not enough for all the Filipinos. He noted that in the past year, the country was able to harvest over 200 million tons of rice, the highest since 1987, but it was not enough. He assured, though, that the government will still prioritize local production, the reason it is supporting the agriculture sector.

“Kaya patuloy nating sinusuportahan ang sektor ng agrikultura upang mapabilis, mapadali, at mapalakas ang produksyon — mula pagpunla, pag-ani at paghuli, hanggang sa pagbiyahe at pagbenta — at upang maiwasan din ang pagkasira ng mga produkto,” he said.

He also said that the government had distributed over 100 million kilos of seeds and fertilizers to farmers in the country, while fishermen were given fingerlings and fishing boats. These were done along with the improvement of fish ports to support the fishing industry.

Marcos also announced that the government is now ready to make the African Swine Fever (ASF) vaccine available to help boost livestock and prevent losses for farmers.

He also vowed that the government is taking steps to lower the prices of food and increase the food supply.

“Because of compelling emergency reasons, such as illegal price manipulations by hoarders, we were constrained to temporarily implement mandated price ceilings on rice. We also extended the reduced tariff rates to facilitate the importation of rice, corn, and pork until the end of this year,” he said.

He said these steps are just temporary measures to support the agriculture sector.

LAND REFORM

Marcos said programs for land reform in the country will continue along with the distribution of land titles to farmers.

He said that in the past two years, more than 130,000 titles were given to beneficiaries, adding that the distribution of collective Certificates of Land Ownership Award (CLOA) for the individual beneficiaries has also been expedited.

Aside from this, Marcos reported that over 700,000 cases related to agrarian reform have been resolved, including those that have been pending even before he took office.

SMUGGLING

The President also said during his Sona that modernized customs procedures and heightened enforcement efforts have led to the seizure of more than P2.7 billion worth of smuggled agri-fisheries products, “preventing them from entering the market and negatively influencing prices.”

He said the seized sacks of rice, in particular, were given to poor families, while the others were destroyed. He said the suspects involved were arrested.

“Soon, we will be implementing the pre-border technical verification and cross-border electronic invoicing of import commodities. This will send a strong signal that we mean serious business,” Marcos said.

ROAD FEES, KADIWA CENTERS

In his third Sona, Marcos also reported that local government units no longer collect fees and charges from motorists transporting goods and merchandise while passing through national roads to reduce unnecessary business costs, and that he urged all LGUs to refrain from collecting similar fees for the use of local roads.

He also stressed the importance of Kadiwa Centers especially when the prices of food were high. He said these centers have been effective, thus the government has continued to build Kadiwa in several areas in the country.

“Higit sa lahat, layunin nating gawing permanente rin, at mas madalas pa ang pagdaraos ng mga Kadiwa,” he said.

FARM-TO-MARKET ROADS

Marcos announced that this year, around 1,200 kilometers of farm-to-market roads will be finished in the country, adding that 9,300 machineries will be distributed and more facilities will be built.

IRRIGATION

He also said the government will continue to open and repair irrigation systems to provide water to hectares of land.

“Bubuhayin din nating muli ang irigasyon sa halos tatlumpu’ t walong libong ektarya ng lupain sa buong bansa,” he said.

Marcos cited the completion of Stage 2 of Malitubog-Maridagao Irrigation Project, which is expected to serve over 10,000 hectares of land in North Cotabato at Maguindanao del Sur.

He said some of the irrigation systems being built now are solar-powered. One of these is the Cabaruan Solar-Powered Pump Irrigation Project in Quirino, Isabela.

He also mentioned the Jalaur River Multipurpose Project in Iloilo, which is set to irrigate 302,000 hectares of land.

“Moving forward, irrigation dams will supplement all our other bulk water projects to ensure water security for our people, especially in the underserved areas,” he said.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Marcos also acknowledged in his Sona the impacts of climate change in the country, prompting the government to be “proactive advocates for heightened climate responsibility and justice on the global stage.”

“To this end, we have secured a seat on the Board of the Loss and Damage Fund. Further, the Philippines has also been selected as host country to that fund,” he said.

He added that this will require an enabling law from Congress to confer the legal personality and capacity to the Board.

He said this will also complement the country’s climate adaptation and mitigation measures, and “give us a strong voice to access the needed financial assistance for climate-related initiatives and impacts.”

He also said that Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) workers have been readied to ensure that the country is prepared for disasters and emergencies.

Part of this preparation is the building of infrastructure, such as evacuation centers, to help protect the people.

“Within the past two years, almost a hundred evacuation centers have already been built. While in January of this year, we started the operations of our Disaster Response Command Center, which shall serve as the central hub for the government’s disaster response efforts,” Marcos said.

He said flood control projects had also been completed, and more will be built. He cited the Flood Risk Management Project in Cagayan de Oro River and the Pampanga Bay projects, which protect the local community.

KALINISAN SA BAGONG PILIPINAS

Marcos also announced that last January, the government launched the “Kalinisan sa Bagong Pilipinas,” wherein all barangays were mobilized to conduct cleanup drives.

He said this project has collected tons of garbage in several areas in the country.

He said that in Manila, efforts to rehabilitate the Ilog Pasig have already started.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Marcos said the country’s infrastructure development has remained “sustained, strategic, and on schedule.”

“Aside from agriculture and disaster risk, our other vital sectors and pillars — such as education, health, energy, low-cost housing, transport, information technology — also stand to benefit from our aggressive infrastructure development, as befitting our upper middle-income economic target,” he said.

He said the power and internet services are continuously being upgraded in both capacity and connectivity.

In terms of the Free Wi-Fi Program, almost 10 million unique user devices have access to free internet, even those who are in far-flung areas in the country. He assured that the Free Wi-Fi program will continue.

“As part of our nationwide internet infrastructure development, phase 1 of the National Fiber Backbone has been completed and operationalized. Phases 2 and 3 have already begun early this year, and shall be completed by 2026. This fiber backbone will give us sufficient capacity in terms of bandwidth,” he said.

He added that with the help of private sector partners, “we will efficiently harness the concept of common towers to provide connectivity to Filipinos who are at the far end of the last mile.”

“Expect full government support to ensure the successful completion of this critical project, including policy reforms and streamlined processes,” he said.

POWER SUPPLY

Marcos also assured that the government will continue to address power shortages, as well as the systemic causes of blackouts in unserved and underserved areas.

“Nireremedyuhan natin ang pangangailangan ng mga lugar na wala pang kuryente at madalas ma-brownout, sa pamamagitan ng microgrid at off-grid systems, at mga missionary small power utilities na sinusuportahan ng solar,” he said.

He cited the newly inaugurated Mariveles-Hermosa-San Jose transmission line, which runs through Bataan, Pampanga, and Bulacan. He said this will further strengthen the reliability of the Luzon power grid.

In the Visayas, Marcos mentioned the Cebu-Negros-Panay backbone project, which was recently completed. “This project shall serve to stabilize the power situation in Western and Central Visayas, and avert recurrences of power outages experienced in the past,” he said.

He said the CNP prevented blackouts in Panay Island in April to June this year despite the yellow and red alerts raised during these months.

“Just last week, the Dumanjug-Corella Line of the Cebu-Bohol Interconnection Project was energized, enabling the transfer of power between Cebu and Bohol,” Marcos said.

“With these systems currently operating at capacity, these major power lines shall contribute to the efficient power exchanges not only between Luzon and the Visayas, but also involving Mindanao. Energy sharing and transfers between, among, and within the three island groups have now been made possible with the energization last January of the Mindanao-Visayas Interconnection,” he added.

He said the energization of the Mindanao-Visayas Interconnection is a defining moment not only for the power sector but for the entire country.

“Finally, we have connected the power grids of all three major island groups,” said Marcos.

He also mentioned during his Sona that the government is reviewing the Epira law to determine whether it needs amendment or not. He asked for the Congress' help in addressing this matter.

“Sa taas ng presyo ng kuryente sa bansa, nahihirapan hindi lamang ang mga negosyante — kundi lalo na ang taumbayan,” he said.

ROADS, BRIDGES

Marcos also reported that 12,000 kilometers of roads and more than 1,200 bridges have been built and upgraded across the country.

He mentioned the C-LEX, NLEX-SLEX Connector, and the Plaridel Bypass, which he said will be fully completed by the end of this year. “CALAX and the C5 South Link will be fully operational by next year.”

These roads and bridges will connect northern and central Luzon to Manila and southern Luzon, Marcos said.

He also said that under the Inter-Island Linkage Bridge Program, “we expect two major bridges to be opened to motorists within this year.”

“One is the Panguil Bay Bridge — touted as the longest water-spanning bridge in Northern Mindanao. This will connect Lanao del Norte to Misamis Occidental. The other is the Guicam Bridge in Zamboanga Sibugay, which shall connect Olutanga Island to the mainland of Mindanao,” he said.

He also said that travel to and from Clark Airport is now much faster and more convenient with the inauguration of the 20-kilometer Airport-New Clark City Access Road in Pampanga.

‘RAILWAY RENAISSANCE’

“We are in the midst as well of a ‘railway renaissance.’ The Metro Manila Subway Project has logged significant accomplishments in its tunneling works,” Marcos said.

He said other railway projects, such as the MRT-7 and the North-South Commuter Railway, are also progressing.

He assured that right-of-way issues will be resolved “in the most equitable, efficient, and expeditious manner, so that these will not get in the way of our infrastructure development.”

Marcos also said that improvement of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) will continue with the assistance from the private sector.

“Soon, it will be capable of accommodating 48 flights per hour, servicing our ever-increasing local and international flight routes, and catering to more than 62 million passengers per year,” he said.

He added that over 70 airport and seaport development projects across the country have been completed, and another 350 ongoing projects are set to be completed by 2028.

HEALTH

Marcos said more specialty centers and ambulatory services will be built in the country to respond to the health needs of poor Filipinos.

He said these centers are intended to decongest public hospitals and provide competent ambulatory care most especially to the poor and the disadvantaged.

He said LGUs are working to build “Super Health Centers” in several areas in the Philippines, while he assured that every province in the country will have a Mobile Clinic where laboratory examinations can be done.

He assured that the government has allocated a bigger amount for medical assistance program.

“As part of our recalibrated health approach towards prevention and healthy habits, we are prioritizing vaccinations, nutrition, mental well-being, and active and healthy lifestyles,” he said.

NUTRITION

Marcos also announced on Monday that the recently launched “Walang Gutom 2027” will be fully rolled out from the initial 2,300 households to 300,000 food-poor households by the end of 2024.

“The program will go on until we feed the one million most food-poor Filipinos by 2027,” he said.

PALARONG PAMBANSA

Marcos also mentioned in his Sona the successful holding of the Palarong Pambansa 2024, which was held in Cebu City in July.

He congratulated Marikina and Cebu, as well as the Department of Education for successfully hosting the Palaro.

He said the government will continue to support these “health-enhancing sports programs,” stressing that 28 of the country’s finest athletes are currently competing in Paris “for the glory of the Philippines.”

EDUCATION

Marcos assured that the national learning recovery program must proceed without the slightest disruption, especially in basic education.

“Our system of education must be strategically calibrated to make sure that our youth are not only taught to become literate. But, it must also consciously develop them into problem-solvers, and into critical thinkers — hungry for success and ready for the future,” he said.

He said the government will continue to work to equip students with computers, smart TVs, essential programs, digital books, and access to reliable power and Internet.

“Digitalization and solar-powered electricity must now be standard features in our schools and our classrooms. Simply put, this is educational reform through technology,” Marcos said.

TEXTBOOKS PROBLEM

Marcos said the perennial problem surrounding textbooks must be resolved by producing instructional materials that are up-to-date and error-free.

He said the whole process, from approval of manuscript to procurement, all the way to distribution, will be cut short from its present three years to just one year.

He posed this challenge to the new DepEd secretary, Sonny Angara.

“Ito ngayon ang magiging hamon sa ating bagong kalihim: na tiyakin ang pagbangon at pagtaas ng kalidad ng edukasyon sa bansa, sa lalong madaling panahon,” Marcos said.

SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

He also said that teachers must be supported, stressing that “they are the very foundation of our educational system.”

Marcos said upskilling of teachers is important to allow them to do their job properly.

He said the government has allocated funds to implement the expanded career progression system for public school teachers. This, he said, will promote professional development and career advancement within their ranks.

PROGRAMS FOR PWDs, SENIOR CITIZENS

Marcos also assured program and beneficial policies for persons with disabilities (PWDs).

He said that next year, the Philhealth will launch a program for PWDs, adding that discounts for this sector as well as senior citizens for basic necessities at prime commodities have been increased.

JOB ORDER, CONTRACTUALS

The government has also extended the services of job order and contract of service personnel working in government, said Marcos.

He added that this will afford them ample opportunity to work on their civil service eligibilities, while gaining additional relevant experience and training to upgrade their employment qualifications.

‘EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM’

Marcos also stressed in his Sona the so-called “experiential tourism.” This, he said, is the government’s focus to boost the tourism industry.

“Food, culture, heritage and the arts, education, halal and Islamic traditions, dive, cruise, farm and eco-tourism, even sports, now have become potent subjects and products of a nation’s tourism. Thus, it is imperative that we elevate and expand our understanding of the ‘one town, one product,’ or OTOP, concept,” he said.

He added that Filipino creativity and ingenuity will enliven and unlock the untapped potential of these new facets of Philippine tourism.

OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS (OFW)

Marcos also thanked the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) for their contribution to the economy, citing that data from the Bangko Sentral noted that they have brought to the country around 307 billion US dollars last year.

“Sadyang napakalaking tulong nito sa ating bumabangon na ekonomiya,” he said.

He also assured the government’s continued assistance for the OFWs.

PEACE AND ORDER

He also said that the police, military, and coast guard undergo continuous capacity-building and asset-upgrading, so that they are better able to preserve the peace and defend the country’s territory.

“We have noted an overall decrease in crime rate and an improvement in crime solution efficiency. But this is not enough. Our law enforcers need to earn the trust of our people,” he said.

He also mentioned in his Sona that at present, no guerilla fronts have remained active across the country.

“Only seven weakened groups remain to be dismantled, and they are the subject of focused operations. But along with the assertion of government might, we also offer peace, community development, and reintegration programs for those who have returned to the fold of the law,” he said.

He assured that government will honor and fully comply with its remaining deliverables and commitments under peace agreements, noting that in November last year, “we signed proclamations granting amnesty to former rebels.”

‘A month later, and then in June of this year, the House of Representatives and the Senate issued their respective resolutions concurring with these amnesty proclamations,” he said.

WAR ON DRUGS

Marcos said the government will continue its “bloodless war” on dangerous drugs.

“Extermination was never one of them,” he said, earning praises from the audience.

He said thousands of operations have resulted in the seizure of more than P44 billion worth of illegal drugs, and the arrest of more than 97,000 drug personalities.

He also reported that the number of drug-affected barangays in the country has been reduced by 32 percent.

WEST PHILIPPINE SEA

Marcos stressed that the Philippines will assert its rights and interests over the West Philippine Sea through proper diplomatic channels and mechanisms.

“Peace and community-building will always be our clarion call, especially when the country serves as chair and the host of the Asean Summit in 2026,” he said.

With this, he said the government will continuously try to find ways to de-escalate tensions in contested areas with its counterparts.

He said the Philippines cannot yield and cannot waver.

“We are now more conscious as a people, and strategic in heightening our aerial and maritime domain awareness. We are continuing to strengthen our defense posture, both through developing self-reliance and through partnerships with like-minded states,” he said.

“Ang West Philippine Sea ay hindi isang kathang-isip natin lamang. Ito ay atin. At ito ay mananatiling atin, hangga’ t nag-aalab ang diwa ng ating mahal na bansang Pilipinas. Pagtitibayin at palalaguin natin ang kamalayan at kaalaman ng buong bansa, at titiyaking maipapasa natin ito sa ating kabataan at ating susunod na mga salinlahi,” he added.

He also thanked the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine Coast Guard and Filipino fishermen for their sacrifices.

ECONOMIC STATUS

Marcos reported that the country exhibits healthy signs of post-pandemic resilience comparable to strong economies in the region.

“Our poverty rate has significantly dropped to 15.5 percent, down from 18 percent in 2021. This present figure is even lower than the pre-pandemic level of 16.7 percent in 2018,” he said.

He added that to sustain the country's economic gains, "we are promoting investment-led growth."

"We look to the cooperation of our colleagues in the Legislature, not only that our proposed National Budget be approved in your usual timely manner, but that it be adhered to as closely as possible," he added.

POGO BAN

Before Marcos ends his speech, he announced that effective Monday, July 22, 2024, all Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (Pogo) are banned.

"Kailanan nang itigil ang panggulo nito sa ating lipunan at paglalapastangan sa ating bansa. Effective today, all Pogos are banned," he said, earning praises from the audience.

He ordered the Philippine Amusement Gaming Corporation (Pagcor) to cease all operations by the end of this year, and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) to find new jobs for Filipino workers who will be displaced.