



NEWS ROUNDUP

06 JANUARY 2023 [08:00 am]

- PH gets \$13.7 billion 'investment pledges' from China firms for renewable energy: Palace
- Sierra Madre: The deadly battle to save a rainforest in the Philippines
- Germany to draw up legislation to enable carbon storage
- India approves \$2.3 billion to develop green hydrogen
- Post-INC-1 negotiations for a plastics treaty continue
- UK saw hottest-ever year in 2022 as Europe's climate warms
- Up to half of the world's glaciers could disappear even if ambitious climate targets are hit, new study finds
- Japan's PM to meet Biden in Washington, visit other G7 allies
- Sultan Kudarat Farmers Get Organic Fertilizers
- Marcos reports 'fruitful' talks with China's Xi
- Consumers' pain worsens as inflation climbs to 8.1% in December 2022
- [Opinion] Air pollution is back!

ABS CBN

[PH gets \\$13.7 billion 'investment pledges' from China firms for renewable energy: Palace](#)

By: Job Manahan

MANILA — Chinese firms have pledged around \$13.7 billion for the country's renewable energy sector, Malacañang said on Thursday.

BBC NEWS

[Sierra Madre: The deadly battle to save a rainforest in the Philippines](#)

By: Laura Bicker

Francisco Elle is haunted by the faces of children he could not save. It's what drives him deep into the dense rainforests of the vast Sierra Madre mountain range day after day, carrying a heavy wicker bag full of fresh saplings on his shoulders.

BUSINESS MIRROR

[Germany to draw up legislation to enable carbon storage](#)

BERLIN — Germany is working on legislation enabling the use of underground carbon storage, a much-discussed technology that's preferable to releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, a top government official said Thursday.

[India approves \\$2.3 billion to develop green hydrogen](#)

By: The Associated Press

BENGALURU, India — The government has approved \$2.3 billion to support production, use and exports of green hydrogen, aiming to make India a global hub for the nascent industry.

[Post-INC-1 negotiations for a plastics treaty continue](#)

Punta del Este, Uruguay—The first intergovernmental committee meeting (INC-1) for an internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution convened by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) concluded on December 2 has the stage for a two-year-long process that could result in one of the most significant multilateral environmental agreements in history.

[UK saw hottest-ever year in 2022 as Europe's climate warms](#)

By: The Associated Press

Britain had its warmest year on record in 2022, official figures showed Thursday, the latest evidence that climate change is transforming Europe's weather.

CNN PHILIPPINES

[Up to half of the world's glaciers could disappear even if ambitious climate targets are hit, new study finds](#)

By: Laura Paddison

Glaciers are set to lose substantially more ice and contribute more to sea level rise than current scientific estimates project, according to a new report. Using new satellite data to model different climate change scenarios, researchers found that up to half of glaciers could be lost by the end of the century, even if the world's ambitious global climate targets are met.

MANILA BULLETIN

[Japan's PM to meet Biden in Washington, visit other G7 allies](#)

By: Agence France Presse

TOKYO, Japan – Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Wednesday he would hold talks with US President Joe Biden at the White House on January 13, and would also visit other G7 allies this month.

PAGE ONE

[Sultan Kudarat Farmers Get Organic Fertilizers](#)

At least six agrarian reform beneficiaries' organizations (ARBOs) in Sultan Kudarat province have been given 300 bags of vermicompost and 130 gallons of organic foliar fertilizer by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Marcos reports 'fruitful' talks with China's Xi](#)

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Wednesday reported a productive bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing that focused on soft infrastructure, climate change, renewable energy, people-to-people ties and agricultural cooperation that include the so-called "durian protocol."

RAPPLER

[Consumers' pain worsens as inflation climbs to 8.1% in December 2022](#)

By: Ralf Rivas

MANILA, Philippines – The Philippines' inflation rate soared to 8.1% in December, the highest since November 2008, as Filipinos celebrated the holidays with even tighter budgets.

SUNSTAR

[\[Opinion\] Air pollution is back!](#)

By: Rox Pena

Dirty air greets the New Year once more! Now that all COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, firecrackers and fireworks are back – and so with polluted air. As of 12 a.m. of January 1, 2023, the monitoring station at the De La Salle University in Manila recorded a PM2.5 level of 448 micrograms per normal cubic meter (ug/Ncm), while pollution levels in the cities of Paranaque, Taguig, Valenzuela and Muntinlupa were 433, 324, 285 and 175 ug/Ncm, respectively. As of 2 a.m. of the same day, the air quality monitoring stations in Pasig City and the Ateneo de Manila University in Quezon City recorded PM2.5 levels of 397 and 369 ug/Ncm, respectively.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

[PH gets \\$13.7 billion 'investment pledges' from China firms for renewable energy: Palace](#)

By: Job Manahan

MANILA — Chinese firms have pledged around \$13.7 billion for the country's renewable energy sector, Malacañang said on Thursday.

President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr hoped that Chinese investors will also discover the country's potential in manufacturing in the sector for project parts and equipment and help it develop.

He also welcomed potential investors in photovoltaic, onshore and offshore wind turbine generation, waste-to-energy, and other renewable energy projects, Press Undersecretary Cheloy Garafil said.

“We look forward to more Chinese investments in renewable energy pursuits such as in solar and wind, as well as in related sectors including battery energy storage systems and off-grid power supply systems,” Marcos said during a roundtable meeting with Chinese firms on the matter.

During the meeting, Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said the Marcos government aims to provide 35 percent of renewable energy in the country's energy mix by 2030 and 40 percent by 2040.

A total of 52,000 megawatts will be needed though to attain the 40 percent renewable energy target by 2040, of which 27,000 MW will come from solar and 16,000 from wind, said Lotilla.

“But this does not take into account right now the total offshore wind potential of 178 gigawatts or 178,000 megawatts for the Philippines as a whole,” he said.

In a separate statement, the Department of Finance said the following agreements and completion documents were signed:

- 4 individual loan agreements worth \$201.8 million co-signed by Export-Import Bank of China (China Eximbank)
- Framework Agreement for the implementation of the Priority Bridges Crossing Pasig-Marikina River and Manggahan Floodway under Chinese Government Financing co-signed by the China International Development Cooperation Agency.
- Agreement on economic and technical cooperation between the two countries
- Handover certificate for the Binondo-Intramuros and Estrella-Pantaleon Bridge

The loan agreements raised the country's cumulative loan commitments to China to \$1.06 billion, according to the DOF.

Meanwhile, the framework agreement for the Pasig-Marikina River bridge and the Manggahan floodway "is a precursor agreement which gives the Philippines access to the renminbi (RMB)-denominated government concessional loan (GCL) facility portion of the loan."

The agreement on economic and technical cooperation, on the other hand, provides RMB1.5 billion or equivalent to about \$217.7 million or P12.2 billion.

This is "for projects to be agreed between China and the Philippines based on the development plan and specific needs of the Philippine government," the agency said.

Malacañang has yet to disclose how much in investment pledges the Philippines expected to yield from Marcos' 3-day state visit to Beijing.

Marcos' state visit to China comes about 2 months after his first face-to-face meeting with Xi on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit in Bangkok last year.

Marcos' predecessor, former President Rodrigo Duterte, also boasted about bringing home \$24 billion in investment pledges during his first state visit to China in 2016.

But years later only a small fraction of the pledged investments and loans had been delivered.

In 2020, Duterte's own Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ernesto Pernia said China was "slow" in providing funding for the country's infrastructure projects.

The National Economic and Development Authority said that as of August 2020, or 4 years after Duterte's China visit, the country had received only P5.9 billion for the Binondo-Intramuros and Estrella-Pantaleon bridges, P1 billion for the rehabilitation of conflict-stricken Marawi City, P4.4 billion for the Chico River Pump Irrigation Project, and P12 billion for the New Centennial Water Source Kaliwa Dam.

In July this year, the Department of Transportation said the construction of several China-backed railway projects under the "Build, Build, Build" program could not move forward because they have yet to be funded.

BBC NEWS

Sierra Madre: The deadly battle to save a rainforest in the Philippines

By: Laura Bicker

Francisco Elle is haunted by the faces of children he could not save. It's what drives him deep into the dense rainforests of the vast Sierra Madre mountain range day after day, carrying a heavy wicker bag full of fresh saplings on his shoulders.

His lean figure ducks under a thick ceiling of leaves. Even with his glasses falling to the end of his nose, he manages to avoid being tripped by exposed tree roots as he hurries along a faint trail to his latest tree planting site.

Following him is tough going, especially as clouds roll down the hillside brushing the tips of the branches with a fresh mist of rain.

He once made a living chopping down these trees which had taken centuries to grow. Now in his 50s, he has turned from illegal logger to forest ranger after witnessing what he describes as "nature's revenge".

More than 1,000 people were killed when Francisco's village, along with several others, was washed away by a landslide in December 2004.

"I saw lifeless children all lined up on the street while the houses were all destroyed. There weren't any houses left, even ours was gone. When I remember the things we did, I feel helpless," he said during one of the few breaks he was willing to take that day.

Does he feel guilty about his past?

He turns away in tears. After several minutes, he answers: "I blame myself. Maybe if I didn't cut trees, maybe it wouldn't have happened."

Saving the Sierra Madre

The Sierra Madre, Filipinos will tell you, is the backbone of Luzon, the main island of the country. Some even describe the mountain as their mother and protector. Stretching for more than 500km (310 miles) from north to south, her uneven, rugged peaks are thought to shield the 64 million people who live there, including those in the capital Manila, from the worst of the strong typhoons which barrel in from the Pacific Ocean.

But 90% of the original rainforest is now gone. Illegal logging, mining and quarrying have taken a toll. And without the tree roots for stability and the vast canopies of the forest to absorb the heavy rains, landslides and flash floods are becoming more common, especially as the frequency and the severity of the storms increase.

"People say illegal logging is destroying nature, but God gave all this to us so we can use it," says Marc. He is in his mid-50s and makes a living illegally cutting down wood for housing and other construction projects.

He shows off a chainsaw that he bought after selling his cow seven years ago. It's a prized possession because chainsaws are registered here - just like guns.

Marc says the authorities will only "catch him when he is dead". He and his wife Grace live deep in the forest in a small woven bamboo hut with a corrugated iron roof which seems to defy gravity. It is built on a sloping hillside surrounded by coconut trees.

Their last big order was in March. It took around a month to complete with the help of others and earned them around \$300 (£250), which amounts to 16,500 pesos. The orders come from a middle man. But getting the wood to them is a difficult process.

"We wait until midnight because we are hiding from the soldiers and forest rangers. We will get paid a week after that.

Despite the risk, logging is the only source of income for some of the poorest Filipinos.

"My message to people is to not get angry at us because we don't actually want to do this," Marc says. "We can only get our money for basic necessities from farming our land. Others can afford to get mad because they have other sources of livelihood but for us, we have none."

But Francisco says that doesn't change the fact that they still have to face the devastating impact of logging.

"We did not know what we were doing, we just cared about getting money for our food every day because there were no other sources of livelihood. We would dig even the roots of the trees we cut. We would cut down all the trees in an area of the forest until there were no large trees left."

Now, he believes, chopping down "just one piece of wood... is one of the greatest sins against nature".

Near a flowing stream, he lays down his heavy bag of saplings and directs an army of volunteers working for the Haribon Foundation - a dozen men and women carrying bags of saplings that weigh up to 15kg. Some are wearing flip flops, but they are still sure-footed as they clamber up the steep bank through cloying mud.

Under the rainforest canopy, Francisco vows to keep working to ensure "history will not repeat itself".

"Our enemy now is flash flooding," he says. "Even my children, I teach them to plant trees, I tell them not to follow those who do logging."

The clouds dip a little lower and the first drops of rain splash down onto the leaves. The volunteers continue to plant, unfazed. The saplings are narra trees - the fast-growing national tree of the Philippines. In 10 years, they hope this part of the forest will be green again.

A deadly job in a deadly conflict

Replanting trees in the Sierra Madre is a long, difficult and even dangerous job. Like rainforests everywhere, this one too is home to a conflict between those desperate to make a living and those desperate to preserve life. And the risk of that conflict becoming deadly is high.

A Global Witness report identified the Philippines as one of the most dangerous places in the world to be an environmental or land rights activist.

"Once, we called out to someone to tell them to stop cutting trees. They told us that they might kill us," Francisco says.

"I told them that we weren't there to pick a fight and we were just explaining what will happen to all of us if they continue what they do. I said 'you won't be the only one affected, it's all of us'." He says they had a frank discussion and peacefully went their separate ways.

But that's not always the outcome.

At least 270 people have been killed in the last 10 years defending these rainforests. Two forest rangers who work for the Masungi Georeserve in the south of the Sierra Madre mountain range were shot and wounded in 2021, which prompted the reserve to call for urgent protection for their staff.

The Department of Environment and National Resources has also made calls over the last few years for their forest rangers to be armed.

But rangers are not the only ones vulnerable to attacks by armed illegal loggers - 114 of the environmental activists killed in the Philippines were from indigenous communities.

The Philippines is losing around 47,000 hectares of rainforest each year, according to the Forest Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. That's an area around the size of 87,700 football fields. It is also thought to have the highest number of threatened species in the world.

The majority is lost to logging, but the battle isn't just over timber.

Climate change v growth

This vast mountain range is also rich in copper, gold, nickel, chromite and limestone. And that is big business in a developing country keen to rebuild its economy after being battered for nearly three years by the pandemic.

There was a moratorium on new open-pit mining projects until 2021, but several companies have long-standing permits to use nearby land.

"We need a comprehensive review of all the permits given for mining," says Tony La Vina, associate director for climate policy and international relations at the Manila Observatory.

"There are well-documented links between politicians and mining companies in the Philippines. Logging and mining have fuelled the political careers of many local and national politicians. That link has to be broken."

Getting a true picture of the scale of mining projects along the Sierra Madre mountain range which spans 10 provinces is difficult. The BBC contacted local officials in each province to find out how many permits they had issued in the last five years.

Only those in one province, Rizal, responded. They said that they had issued three permits for "mineral extraction", but that the land owners had "prior rights" which allowed them to also mine in the protected area.

The Department of Environment and National Resources, which issues mining or quarrying permits, is also yet to respond to the BBC's request for a comment.

To complicate matters further, the same department employs hundreds of forest rangers to protect the Sierra Madre.

It captures the contradiction developing countries face in their fight against climate change. Their growing populations need houses, roads and jobs. But the infrastructure and industries that provide those are often also responsible for the deforestation and flooding that threaten their future.

These countries are hoping richer nations will help. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia and Brazil, home to 52% of the world's rainforests, announced that they will work together to secure "payments to reduce deforestation".

The Philippines has turned to China to help fund a huge dam to meet the rising demand for water in Metro Manila, Rizal and Quezon. Officials argue the benefits of the project outweigh the disruption to the environment. But others fear it will further erode precious flora and fauna, and pave the way for other developments.

When severe storms threaten Luzon, the priorities change - quickly. In September, as super typhoon Noru made landfall in the Philippines, #SaveSierraMadre trended on Twitter. TV Networks were filled with pundits who praised the forest for protecting the island.

"We can't just have one use for the Sierra Madre, but we have to prioritise," Mr La Vina says. "We should not develop infrastructure that will kill or defeat all the other uses of the Sierra Madre. The stakes are much higher now."

The competition for resources in the Sierra Madre comes at a time when the country might need their mother mountain's protection more than ever. The Philippines is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world - and now, it is also one of those most vulnerable to climate change.

Mr La Vina is hopeful: "I know there are many out there working hard to protect our forests. And awareness is growing. If we keep moving forward, we have a greater chance now of success than ever before."

But that's not a feeling shared by those who are on the frontlines.

Mother Mila Llagas lives next door to a quarry in Rizal that is under investigation after her neighbourhood of scattered bamboo huts along a river was submerged by a flood.

She now keeps her prized possessions in a bag, along with essentials for her and her children.

"I was born here - those mountains there above, they were okay, we didn't experience flooding back then," she says, pointing to the steep mountainside above the river. Some of her neighbourhood has been sliced away and is no longer green with trees. Instead it is a grey stone quarry.

Now, she adds, there are not trees to absorb the rains and "nothing" to stop the river when it swells.

"Everyone is wary of the future. We can't do anything, we don't have any power to stop those things."

BUSINESS MIRROR

[Germany to draw up legislation to enable carbon storage](#)

BERLIN — Germany is working on legislation enabling the use of underground carbon storage, a much-discussed technology that's preferable to releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, a top government official said Thursday.

Speaking to an industry group in Norway, Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck, who is also Germany's economy and climate minister, pointed to the prospects of a "new market" for carbon capture and storage, particularly in the lime and cement industry.

The technology has yet to be deployed at scale. Opponents maintain that it is unproven and has been less effective than alternatives such as solar and wind at decarbonizing the energy sector.

Habeck, a member of the environmentalist Green party, said that "we are no longer in a situation [where] we can pick and choose."

"Putting CO₂ under the ground is quite simply better than releasing it into the atmosphere," he said. "For this reason, Germany is now working on a carbon management strategy in order to create the legislation for the use of such technologies in this year, by mid-2023."

Data published on Wednesday by a respected environmental think tank indicated that Germany likely missed its target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions again last year, despite a big effort by the new government to expand the renewable energy use.

The government has acknowledged that achieving the next big climate milestone — a reduction of emissions by 65% in 2030 compared with 1990 levels — will be a major challenge. Germany, which is home to many energy-intensive industries, aims to cut its emissions to "net zero" by 2045.

[India approves \\$2.3 billion to develop green hydrogen](#)

By: The Associated Press

BENGALURU, India — The government has approved \$2.3 billion to support production, use and exports of green hydrogen, aiming to make India a global hub for the nascent industry.

The funding, announced late Wednesday, is a first step toward establishing the capacity to make at least 5 million metric tons of green hydrogen by the end of this decade.

Green hydrogen is hydrogen that is produced through the electrolysis of water, powered by electricity generated from renewable sources of energy. Most of the world's hydrogen is produced using fossil fuels, especially natural gas.

The aim of the funding initiative is “to make green hydrogen affordable and bring down its cost over the next five years. It will also help India reduce its emissions and become a major exporter in the field,” said Anurag Thakur, India's minister for information and broadcasting.

He said the financing would also help add about 125 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2030. As of October, India had about 166 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity.

Other aims are to create more than a half million new jobs, attract more private investment into the sector, reduce fossil fuel imports and cut greenhouse gas emissions by 50 million metric tons.

Many of India's leading renewable energy companies, including companies owned by the Adani Group, Reliance Industries and JSW Energy; public sector companies like Indian Oil and NTPC Limited; and renewable-only companies such as Renew power are investing in production of green hydrogen.

Green hydrogen now amounts to a small fraction of global hydrogen use, estimated to be about 70 million tons per year. Most commercially produced hydrogen is grey hydrogen, produced using fossil fuels, and blue hydrogen that is also made using fossil fuels but with the use of carbon capture systems to reduce emissions. The production of green hydrogen results in the emission of little to no greenhouse gases.

In providing policy incentives for green hydrogen production, India is following the lead of many other countries such as China, the European Union and the United States. Energy analysts expect manufacturing costs for green hydrogen to fall significantly in the next few years and estimate the green hydrogen market will grow 20-fold to \$80 billion by the year 2030.

“A robust policy framework, requisite financial support and an enabling ecosystem for technology development are essential to displace the country’s conventional fuel mix with green hydrogen and enhance its industrial competitiveness in an increasingly decarbonizing world,” said Shreyans Jain, an India-based sustainable business strategy consultant who closely tracks developments in the green hydrogen industry.

Post-INC-1 negotiations for a plastics treaty continue

Punta del Este, Uruguay—The first intergovernmental committee meeting (INC-1) for an internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution convened by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) concluded on December 2 has the stage for a two-year-long process that could result in one of the most significant multilateral environmental agreements in history.

It may be recalled that in early 2022 the United Nations approved a landmark agreement to create the world's first-ever global plastics pollution treaty. It was adopted upon the conclusion of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 5.2) in Nairobi, Kenya.

Groups under the Break Free From Plastic movement have noted the high points of the five-day First INC negotiations, which included demands calling for reductions in plastic production and use, eliminating toxic substances associated with the plastic life cycle, protecting human health, and need for a just transition, backed by many member States and even two of the worst plastic polluters, Nestle and Unilever. The participation from member States from global South-located developing countries from Latin American, the Caribbean, African, Asia and Pacific nations—especially small island developing states—was particularly notable, bringing a strong voice for urgency and high ambition in these treaty negotiations.

Few weeks before INC-1, various stakeholders have already coalesced around formations like the industry-led Business Coalition for a Global Plastics Treaty. There is also the Scientists' Network for an Effective Plastics Treaty (#SNEPT) composed of multidisciplinary scientists and researchers. There is a need, however, for more participation from global South-based scholars and social scientists to this group.

Additionally, a diverse coalition of civil society members and rights-holders provided vital expertise and typically underrepresented perspectives across the full plastics lifecycle. In particular, the leadership of waste pickers resulted in the launch of the Just Transition Initiative (building upon its earlier iteration as the Group of Friends of Wastepickers), which will ensure their representation at future INCs and bring visibility to more than 20 million people who work as waste pickers worldwide.

Among the lows, according to the BFFP movement, are the following: “The adoption of the Rules of Procedure, a document that will determine how States and organizations can engage in future negotiations, has yet to be finalized and was moved to INC-2 in May, 2023 to be held in Paris, France. The outstanding issues include whether

European Union (EU) Member States will each have a vote or whether they will be treated as a single bloc during voting, and whether decisions should only be arrived at via consensus. To many observers, the latter seems to be a ploy to weaken strong measures that could be adopted to reduce plastic production.”

In her book, “Plastics Unlimited,” University of Warwick’s Alice Mah has written “the capitalist pursuit of unlimited growth is the key problem underlying the plastics crisis.” The book has clearly provided the argument for the clear link of plastic production to climate change as plastics are produced from natural gas, feedstocks derived from natural gas processing, and feedstocks derived from crude oil refining. Thus, stakeholders who are part of the INC process must ensure that the world’s plastic polluters’ virgin plastic production is cap. Further, problematic plastics must also be eliminated and the polluter pay principle must be included in the envisioned legally binding instrument.

Companies like Unilever and Nestle that have both called for a cap on plastic production during INC-1 will be able to walk the talk by changing their own business models to match their statements. It is high time for fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs) responsible for using single-use plastic in their packaging to invest in reuse systems instead of single-use, eliminate problematic packaging types like sachets, and drastically reduce their plastic use.

Further, the plastics treaty must ensure support in achieving its objectives for countries of the global South and those economies in transition, including through: a dedicated financial mechanism and technical support and technology transfer similar to the Paris climate agreement.

The INC-1 process and the next five INCs to be conducted in France (May 2023), Kenya (December 2023), Canada (early 2024) and South Korea (late 2024) must be transparent, inclusive, and ambitious enough to ensure that a legally binding agreement with clear obligations and provisions for all Parties will be ratified during the Diplomatic Conference Plenipotentiaries on Plastic Pollution Treaty in 2025. As of the moment, member states namely Ecuador, Rwanda, Peru, and Senegal are bidding to host the said landmark event.

As INC chair Gustavo Meza-Cuadra of Peru said during his closing speech, quoting United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, “Plastics are fossil fuels in another form and pose a serious threat to human rights, the climate, and biodiversity...Look beyond waste and turn off the tap on plastic.” The next INC meetings and processes

leading to the potential enactment of a legally binding treaty in the first half of 2025 is crucial to solve this environmental crisis.

[UK saw hottest-ever year in 2022 as Europe's climate warms](#)

By: The Associated Press

Britain had its warmest year on record in 2022, official figures showed Thursday, the latest evidence that climate change is transforming Europe's weather.

The Met Office weather agency said the provisional annual average temperature in the U.K. was 10.03 degrees Celsius (50 Fahrenheit), the highest since comparable records began in 1884. The previous record was 9.88 Celsius (49.8 Fahrenheit) set in 2014.

Met Office scientists said human activity — primarily fossil fuel emissions — has made such warm conditions vastly more likely. Britain's 10 hottest years on record have all been since 2003.

"The results showed that recording 10C in a natural climate would occur around once every 500 years, whereas in our current climate it could be as frequently as once every three to four years," said Met Office climate attribution scientist Nikos Christidis.

Britain is not alone. France's average temperature was above 14 Celsius (57.2 Fahrenheit) in 2022, making it the hottest year since weather readings began in 1900. Switzerland's meteorological service said the alpine nation's annual average temperature of 7.4 Celsius (45.3 Fahrenheit) was "by far the highest value since measurements began in 1864."

Spain also had its hottest year since records started in 1961, according to the national weather agency Aemet, with an average daily temperature of 15.4 Celsius (59.7 Fahrenheit). It said the four hottest years on record for the southern European country have all come since 2015.

Last year saw summer drought and heat waves across much of Europe, with the temperature in Britain rising above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) for the first time on record. Norway's Svalbard islands in the Arctic had their warmest summer in more than a century of record-keeping. The archipelago's average temperature for June, July and August was 7.4 Celsius (45.3 Fahrenheit), the Norwegian Meteorological Institute said.

Autumn brought more heavy rain in parts of Europe, including the mountainous Italian island of Ischia, where downpours in November triggered a massive landslide that pushed cars and buildings into the sea and killed at least a dozen people.

Unlike the U.S. and Canada, which have been hit by bitter cold and snowstorms, much of Europe is experiencing unseasonably warm winter weather.

In Germany, the year ended with the warmest New Year's Eve on record, with temperatures reaching 20 Celsius (68 Fahrenheit) in the south of the country. Belarus, Belgium, Czechia, Latvia, Poland and the Netherlands all set national record daily highs for Dec. 31 or Jan. 1.

As 2023 begins, many low and medium-altitude ski resorts in the Alps, the Pyrenees and other European ranges are suffering from a lack of snow.

In Bosnia, spring-like weather has foiled even artificial snow — either it's too warm to make it, or it melts soon after being spat out onto the slopes. Along the slopes in Bjelasnica near Sarajevo on Wednesday, snow accumulation amounted to little more than several white patches on an otherwise grassy landscape of brown and green.

CNN PHILIPPINES

[Up to half of the world's glaciers could disappear even if ambitious climate targets are hit, new study finds](#)

By: Laura Paddison

Glaciers are set to lose substantially more ice and contribute more to sea level rise than current scientific estimates project, according to a new report. Using new satellite data to model different climate change scenarios, researchers found that up to half of glaciers could be lost by the end of the century, even if the world's ambitious global climate targets are met.

More than 215,000 glaciers creep and slide over the world's mountains, growing when the snow falls and shrinking when the temperature rises. They provide fresh water for nearly 2 billion people and are a key contributor to sea level rise, a threat to the billions of people living along the world's coastlines.

While it has long been known that these giant ice "rivers," some of which are hundreds of thousands of years old, are hugely vulnerable to the climate crisis, understanding how glaciers will react to different climate scenarios has been a challenge. Data are often regional or otherwise limited in scope, said David Rounce, a glaciologist at Carnegie Mellon University and lead author of the report, which was published on Thursday in the journal Science.

The past few years, however, have seen "a revolution in using satellite images to monitor glacier changes," Rounce said, allowing scientists to come up with estimations for each individual glacier.

"That's really a huge advance compared to previous studies," he said.

Using these new data sets, the researchers made predictions for the fate by the end of the century of the world's more than 215,000-plus mountain glaciers (excluding the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets) under a range of temperature increases: 1.5 degrees Celsius, 2 degrees Celsius, 3 degrees Celsius and 4 degrees Celsius.

Their modeling projects that glaciers will lose 41% of their mass by the end of the century, compared to 2015, if temperature rises hit 4 degrees Celsius.

Even if temperature rises are kept within 1.5 degrees Celsius – a target the world is not currently on track to meet – glaciers are still projected to lose 26% of their mass by the

end of the century. Under a best case climate scenario, up to half the world's glaciers could disappear by 2100, according to the report.

Current climate pledges are projected to result in global temperature rise between 2.1 and 2.9 degrees Celsius by 2100, according to the United Nations. If that happens, glaciers could almost completely disappear in several regions including central Europe, western Canada and United States, and New Zealand, the report says.

"The loss of these glaciers, especially over time horizons that are within our lifetime or our children's lifetime, is really disturbing," Rounce said.

Shrinking glaciers will also have a clear impact on sea level rise. The researchers project that a 1.5-degree Celsius increase in warming would see 90 millimeters (3.5 inches) of sea level rise, compared to 154 millimeters (6 inches) under a 4-degree Celsius rise.

But while significant glacier loss is locked in, every effort to tackle climate change will help reduce further losses, Rounce said. "Even a small reduction in temperature change can have a really big impact."

MANILA BULLETIN

[Japan's PM to meet Biden in Washington, visit other G7 allies](#)

By: Agence France Presse

TOKYO, Japan – Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Wednesday he would hold talks with US President Joe Biden at the White House on January 13, and would also visit other G7 allies this month.

The visit will be Kishida's first trip to the US capital since taking office in October 2021, though he has held talks with Biden several times, including in Japan.

Japan is assuming the presidency of the G7 grouping and Kishida said he also planned to visit members France, Italy, Canada and Britain this month.

He said the meeting with Biden would be "extremely important" and demonstrate "the strengthening Japan-US alliance". The White House said in an earlier statement the trip would "further deepen ties between our governments, economies, and our people".

The two leaders are expected to discuss regional security challenges, including North Korea and China, as well as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and ways to address climate change.

Kishida said he would also raise Japan's bolstered defence policy.

Japan's government approved a major defence policy overhaul last month, including a significant spending hike, as it warned China posed the "greatest strategic challenge ever" to its security.

In its largest defence shake-up in decades, Japan vowed to increase security spending to two percent of GDP by 2027, reshape its military command, and acquire new missiles that can strike far-flung enemy launch sites.

Before arriving in Washington, Kishida will start his diplomatic journey in Paris on January 9, followed by stops in Rome, London and Ottawa.

Kishida will host the G7 leaders summit in Hiroshima in May and wants to put achieving a world free of nuclear weapons on the international agenda.

He said he expected the G7 to reaffirm support for Ukraine but also to display “solidarity with the rest of the world” and engage the “global south” on issues such as climate change and food and energy crises.

PAGE ONE

Sultan Kudarat Farmers Get Organic Fertilizers

At least six agrarian reform beneficiaries' organizations (ARBOs) in Sultan Kudarat province have been given 300 bags of vermicompost and 130 gallons of organic foliar fertilizer by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).

Rushdi Mindalano, provincial agrarian reform program officer, said the assistance aims to boost the ARBOs' agricultural production and promote a healthy way of producing food without harming the environment.

"It has always been our aim to ease the problems of the farmers by helping them achieve higher farming productivity and profitability through the provision of support services," Mindalano said in a statement Wednesday.

Amounting to PHP247,350, he said the farm inputs were provided to the ARBOs in line with the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to DAR Secretary Conrado Estrella III to help improve the lives of the farmers.

The ARBOs which each received 22 gallons of foliar fertilizer and 50 sacks of vermicompost were the Agrarian Reform Farmers Association in Tacurong City; the Silang Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Association in Bagumbayan; the Palimbang Entrepreneurs Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries' Organization in Palimbang town; and the Sitio Lagon Farmers' Multi-Purpose Cooperative in President Quirino town.

Likewise, the Kankong Farmers Association and Tagumpay Vegetable Growers Association, both located in Esperanza town, each received 21 gallons of foliar and 50 sacks of organic fertilizers.

Hernane Fermo, president of the Agrarian Reform Farmers Association, said the assistance "will surely help us to produce better products that we can sell competitively in the market."

The agricultural inputs were delivered under DAR's Sustainable and Resilient Agrarian Reform Communities (ARCs) program, which aims to promote vegetable production to combat the effect of climate change.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Marcos reports 'fruitful' talks with China's Xi

MANILA – President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on Wednesday reported a productive bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing that focused on soft infrastructure, climate change, renewable energy, people-to-people ties and agricultural cooperation that include the so-called "durian protocol."

"It has been a very wide-ranging discussion... the meeting ran very long, and that's why I'm actually very optimistic because President Xi seemed to be genuinely interested in all of these issues and finding a way to move forward to again strengthen the relationship between China and the Philippines. I'm quite gratified that we had made a good start," Marcos said in an interview.

The Asian leaders talked "at great length" about climate change, which Marcos described as "a subject that we cannot leave alone or it will come back to haunt us in the future."

The President said there was also an offer of so-called "soft infrastructure" in terms of digitalization of government bureaucracy as well as improving connectivity across the country.

"We had a very fruitful exchange of ideas and beginnings of a plan for moving forward... And we covered so many subjects, much more than as usual for these very formal meetings. We talked about the trade imbalance between our country and China and what we can do to remedy this," he said.

Marcos said the meeting yielded a "durian protocol," pointing to an agreement for exporting durian to China.

Manila and Beijing agreed on a protocol of phytosanitary requirements for the export of fresh durians from the Philippines to China between the Department of Agriculture (DA) and China's General Administration of Customs.

"Because they are opening their trade to imports of durian and other agricultural products from the Philippines so that we can redress the imbalance in our imports and exports from China," Marcos said.

The two leaders also discussed what they could do "to move forward, to avoid any possible mistakes, misunderstandings that could trigger a bigger problem than what we already have."

"And I was very clear in trying to talk about the plight of our fishermen. And the President (Xi) promised that we would find a compromise and find a solution that will be beneficial, so that our fishermen might be able to fish again in their natural fishing grounds," President Marcos pointed out.

The President also spoke about his meeting with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and National Congress of the People's Republic of China chairman Li Zhanshu.

"I met with the Premier, Premier Li, who I had met before in Cambodia. And we continued the discussions that we began there, which were essentially about the strengthening again of relationships between China and the Philippines," Marcos said.

The Philippines and China earlier inked 14 bilateral agreements on Wednesday during President Marcos' state visit to China, including deals on agriculture, infrastructure, development cooperation, maritime security, and tourism, among others.

RAPPLER

Consumers' pain worsens as inflation climbs to 8.1% in December 2022

By: Ralf Rivas

MANILA, Philippines – The Philippines' inflation rate soared to 8.1% in December, the highest since November 2008, as Filipinos celebrated the holidays with even tighter budgets.

The latest figure reported by the Philippine Statistics Authority on Thursday, January 5, is slightly higher than the 8% recorded in November 2022 and more than double December 2021's 3.6%.

For the entire 2022, inflation averaged at 5.8%, well above the target range of 2% to 4%. This is the second straight year that the Philippines missed its inflation target. In 2021, inflation averaged at 4.5%.

December inflation was primarily brought about by the faster year-on-year growth rate of the following items:

- Food and non-alcoholic beverages – 10.2%
- Restaurants and accommodation services – 7%
- Housing, water, electricity, gas, and other fuels – 7%

Food inflation at the national level rose further to 10.6% in December, from 10.3% in November. In December 2021, food inflation was far lower at 1.6%.

Faster food inflation was driven by higher prices of vegetables (32.4%) and sugar (38.8%) amid higher input costs and lower production. Asked for his reaction to the inflation rate, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. zeroed in on agricultural production. Marcos is also agriculture secretary.

“Kailangan talagang ayusin ‘yung production natin kasi import tayo nang import (We really need to improve our production because we keep on importing goods),” Marcos told Philippine media in Beijing on Thursday, during his state visit to China.

Regions

Inflation in Metro Manila moved at a faster pace of 7.6% in December from 7.5% in November. In December 2021, the inflation rate in the area was at 2.1%. In areas

outside the capital, an uptrend of 8.2% was observed in December, higher than the 8% in November. In December 2021, it was recorded at 3.4%.

Peak reached?

ING senior economist Nicholas Mapa said the December print will “likely be the peak for this inflation episode.” But he noted that price pressures are now broad-based, as core inflation stood at 6.9%.

Core inflation is the change in prices of goods and services, except for those from the food and energy sectors. Stripping out the volatile items allows economists to see the broad underlying trend in consumer prices.

“Storm damage to crops may have helped fan price pressures for basic food items but elevated transport and utility costs for nearly a year may have also contributed to price pressures spreading across the CPI (consumer price index) basket,” Mapa said.

Despite inflation possibly peaking in late 2022, Mapa expects prices to remain elevated, which would push the central bank to remain hawkish.

“We could see [the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas or BSP] roll out additional rate hikes to match moves by the [Federal Reserve]. However, once the Fed carries out its much-anticipated ‘pivot,’ we believe Governor [Felipe] Medalla could consider a pause of his own as policy rates are currently already in restrictive territory,” Mapa said.

Anchoring inflation expectations

Economists project inflation to remain elevated and above target, as the global economy continues to face supply chain disruptions and braces for a recession. To anchor inflation in 2023, the Marcos administration has extended the temporary tariff cuts on pork, rice, corn, and coal, which would in effect augment supply.

“Executive Order No. 10 will continue to provide diversified sources of food and agricultural inputs in the short term. The operational intervention, however, is to ensure food security by boosting food production, improving farm-to-market connectivity, and investing in disaster resilience, climate adaptation measures, and coordination mechanisms,” said Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan in a statement on Thursday.

The Philippines' economic growth will likely take a hit, as central banks around the world hike interest rates to anchor inflation expectations. The BSP projected that inflation would average at 4.3% in 2023.

SUNSTAR

[\[Opinion\] Air pollution is back!](#)

By: Rox Pena

Dirty air greets the New Year once more! Now that all COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, firecrackers and fireworks are back – and so with polluted air. As of 12 a.m. of January 1, 2023, the monitoring station at the De La Salle University in Manila recorded a PM2.5 level of 448 micrograms per normal cubic meter (ug/Ncm), while pollution levels in the cities of Paranaque, Taguig, Valenzuela and Muntinlupa were 433, 324, 285 and 175 ug/Ncm, respectively. As of 2 a.m. of the same day, the air quality monitoring stations in Pasig City and the Ateneo de Manila University in Quezon City recorded PM2.5 levels of 397 and 369 ug/Ncm, respectively.

It will be recalled that on Jan 1, 2019, rains dampened the New Year's Eve celebration resulting in less pollution. The rains washed away the tiny particles emitted by pyrotechnics. There was a reduction in fireworks and outdoor activities too. According to the Environmental Pollution Studies Laboratory of the University of the Philippines, air pollution levels in Metro Manila during on that New Year's Eve was still poor but was at an all-time low.

In New Year 2020, air pollution was up again. But when COVID-19 restrictions were put up in March, air pollution drop significantly not just in the Philippines but all over the world due to reduced human activities. According to the measurements done in the monitoring stations of the Environmental Management Bureau, air pollution significantly decreased in Metro Manila during the implementation of the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ).

With COVID-19 restrictions still implemented towards the end of 2020, Department of Environment and Natural Resources recorded a substantial reduction in air pollution levels in the first day of 2021 in Metro Manila by as much as 59 percent. This was attributed to strict measures implemented by Metro Manila Mayors under Metro Manila Development Authority Resolution No. 20-17 "Prohibiting Individual and Household Use of Firecrackers and Other Pyrotechnic Devices During General Community Quarantine".

While the usual New Year activities are back again, I noticed that there are less fireworks compared to pre-pandemic years. My colleagues in the Mabalacat City Council have the same observation. Inflation has probably affected the sale of pyrotechnic devices. But even with the reduction in usage, air pollution still reached unhealthy levels as seen from the readings of air monitoring stations in Metro Manila.

Based on some news articles I've read, the major environmental concern for this year will still be Climate Change. According to a study by the NGO International Rescue Committee (IRC), Climate change will accelerate humanitarian crises around the world in 2023, adding to the issues created by armed conflict and economic downturns.

In the Philippines, we look forward to the implementation of the Extended Producer Responsibility Act of 2022, or Republic Act No. 11898, which requires large companies with total assets over P1 billion to recover the plastic packaging waste they produce. At the end of this year, they should have recovered at least 20% of their waste.

=END=