



NEWS ROUNDUP

07 FEBRUARY 2024 [08:00 am]

- EU facing backlash over some green policies
- PAGASA: Water levels in all Luzon dams below normal
- Death toll in Davao floods climbs to 18—NDRRMC
- How climate change contributes to wildfires like Chile's
- Floods displace 2.9K families from 21 villages in Butuan
- Negros Occidental to use solar energy for provincial gov't buildings
- Facing climate challenges and rising costs, Palawan's rice farmers turn to labor
- Reimagine Recycling showcase circular economy solutions
- Better data, resource valuation needed for Southeast Asian wetlands — ACB

BUSINESS WORLD

[EU facing backlash over some green policies](#)

What a difference five years make. During the last European Union (EU) elections in 2019, hundreds of thousands across the 27-nation bloc staged protests to fight climate change. Ahead of this year's EU vote, farmers are in the streets demanding fewer green rules, and politicians cannot afford to ignore them.

GMA NEWS

[PAGASA: Water levels in all Luzon dams below normal](#)

By: Jiselle Anne Casucian

The water levels of all nine dams in Luzon have dropped to below normal as provinces continue to reel from the brunt of the El Niño phenomenon, data from state weather bureau PAGASA showed.

MANILA STANDARD

[Death toll in Davao floods climbs to 18—NDRRMC](#)

By: Maricel Cruz

The death toll from the effects of bad weather due to a trough of a low-pressure area and the northeast monsoon (amihan) in parts of Mindanao has climbed to 18.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[How climate change contributes to wildfires like Chile's](#)

At least 122 people have been killed by wildfires in central Chile, leading its president to declare two days of national mourning. The devastation comes soon after Colombia declared a disaster over wildfires. Scientists say climate change makes the heat waves and drought now hitting South America more likely — and both contribute to wildfires by drying out the plants that feed the blazes.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Floods displace 2.9K families from 21 villages in Butuan](#)

By: Alexander Lopez

At least 21 barangays here are currently affected by flooding as the water level in the Agusan River continued to rise due to the persisting inclement weather, the City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (CDRRMO) said Tuesday.

[Negros Occidental to use solar energy for provincial gov't buildings](#)

By: Nanette Guadalquiver

The Negros Occidental provincial government will soon utilize solar power to energize its main office buildings as part of the initiatives to go renewable to ensure power security for Negrenses.

RAPPLER

[Facing climate challenges and rising costs, Palawan's rice farmers turn to labor](#)

By:Gerardo C. Reyes Jr.

Facing rising costs of farm inputs and climate change threats like dwindling irrigation water, some rice farmers in Roxas town, Palawan, are opting to work as farm laborers for better pay.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Reimagine Recycling showcase circular economy solutions](#)

The Reimagine Recycling program, an initiative of Save Philippine Seas and Coca-Cola Philippines, proudly announces five community-based programs that have received up to P500,000 of grant funding.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Better data, resource valuation needed for Southeast Asian wetlands — ACB](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

Investing in data collection and natural resource valuation initiatives is crucial to achieving more effective wetland restoration in Southeast Asia, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) said.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS WORLD

EU facing backlash over some green policies

What a difference five years make. During the last European Union (EU) elections in 2019, hundreds of thousands across the 27-nation bloc staged protests to fight climate change. Ahead of this year's EU vote, farmers are in the streets demanding fewer green rules, and politicians cannot afford to ignore them.

A shift in political tone around how to protect the planet is looming over EU Parliament elections in June, even as climate change unleashes more severe and costly extreme weather.

"There is a clear backlash on the agriculture part of the Green Deal," said French EU lawmaker Pascal Canfin.

"But there is no backlash for the rest," he said.

To appease farmers protesting low food prices and high EU environmental standards, the EU last week loosened environmental regulations on fallow land while France paused a national pesticide reduction policy.

But the overall EU 'Green Deal' vision for tackling climate change remains intact, supported by more than two dozen laws passed over the last five years to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change.

The policies already in place are unlikely to be withdrawn. But the EU's recent attempts to fold broader environmental policies into this package have faltered. In the last few months, EU countries and lawmakers have shot down or weakened new laws on industrial pollution, cutting pesticide use and restoring damaged nature.

"We shouldn't mix environment and climate," said Peter Liese, an EU lawmaker from the center-right European People's Party, the biggest political family in the EU parliament.

"If we want to be carbon neutral and still want to be industrialized... we cannot do everything at the same time," he said.

NEXT STEPS

An EU proposal on Tuesday will test the political mood. The European Commission is set to recommend an ambitious goal to cut net greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by

2040. The target would aim to foster green jobs and low-carbon industries, drafts of the proposal showed.

But the goal will need approval from the next EU parliament after the elections, which some EU officials fear could lose the broad support that climate policies have enjoyed since 2019.

Polls show more seats could go to far-right and right-leaning parties opposed to climate policies. EU officials say backing for ambitious green laws has also been eroded among EU states by recent elections in Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

“All this green policy is not accepted anymore. It makes people’s lives very difficult. It makes people’s lives very expensive,” said Rob Roos, an EU lawmaker in the eurosceptic European Conservatives and Reformists Group.

“We should abolish the Green Deal because it’s not what the people want,” Mr. Roos told Reuters. Polls suggest his group could win 27% more seats in the upcoming election than it has now.

COST WORRIES

Surveys show that while a large majority of Europeans support ambitious action to fight climate change, a majority is also worried about the cost of doing this.

“This is a big misunderstanding. People think that if our ambition is lower, we will be more competitive. That’s simply not true,” Bulgaria’s climate minister Julian Popov said.

Mr. Popov and other green policy supporters warn halting climate policy will ultimately cost more, as worsening climate change would hit economies harder with devastating floods and fires. They say green policies are needed to establish a technological advantage that will help EU industries compete with China.

With CO2 emissions policies until 2030 already agreed, the new EU parliament and Commission formed after elections will focus on plans for curbing CO2 beyond 2030. That will require faster emissions reductions in industry and farming, politically sensitive sectors struggling with high energy prices and competition from abroad.

“The competitiveness risk to Europe... that won’t be reversed by us going weak on climate,” said Irish climate minister Eamon Ryan, who described the competitiveness of industry, and how climate policies can ensure this, as central to the election.

“It is a real issue, and every vote counts,” Mr. Ryan said.

GMA NEWS

[PAGASA: Water levels in all Luzon dams below normal](#)

By: Jiselle Anne Casucian

The water levels of all nine dams in Luzon have dropped to below normal as provinces continue to reel from the brunt of the El Niño phenomenon, data from state weather bureau PAGASA showed.

Based on a report Tuesday by the PAGASA Hydrometeorology Division, the water levels have been on a general downward trend since Jan. 1 or the start of 2024.

All dams were at below-normal levels for the first time this year starting Jan. 27, after the water in Angat Dam dipped to 211 meters.

Angat Dam, which supplies water to over 98% of Metro Manila, has dropped further to 210.08 meters, which is 1.92 meters lower than the regular 212-meter level.

The water supply in Angat at the start of the year stood at a more robust 214 meters, or 2 meters higher than the normal.

Aside from Angat Dam, all other dams entered the new year with below-normal water levels.

La Mesa Dam, another key water source for Metro Manila and nearby provinces, fell short of the normal 80.15-meter level with only 78.05 meters of water.

Of all the nine dams, only Ipo Dam registered a notable rise this year. After slipping to 97 meters on Jan. 29, its water level has increased to 99 meters although this was still 2 meters shy of its normal 101-meter level. Ipo Dam has remained at the 99-meter level since Feb. 1.

As for the six other dams, their current and normal water levels, respectively, are:

- Ambuklao Dam — 750.94 meters (normal: 752 meters)
- Binga Dam — 572.75 meters (normal: 575 meters)
- San Roque Dam — 249.65 meters (normal: 280 meters)
- Pantabangan Dam — 192.05 meters (normal: 221 meters)
- Magat Dam — 183.14 meters (normal: 193 meters)

- Caliraya — 287.51 meters (normal level not indicated; 288 meters, as per 2020 Napocor report)

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) last month assured that the country's water supply would be sufficient this summer despite the effects of the El Niño.

MWSS added that although water interruptions may occur, these would not be caused by insufficient water supply.

PAGASA had forecast the extreme climate phenomenon to peak in February, with its effects possibly felt until June.

By April, as many as 56 provinces may be grappling with the El Niño, according to the state weather bureau.

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. signed last month Executive Order 53 reactivating Task Force El Niño, which would implement "both short and long-term solutions to ensure food, water and energy security, safeguard livelihoods, and improve the country's disaster and climate resilience."

MANILA STANDARD

Death toll in Davao floods climbs to 18—NDRRMC

By: Maricel Cruz

The death toll from the effects of bad weather due to a trough of a low-pressure area and the northeast monsoon (amihan) in parts of Mindanao has climbed to 18.

In its latest situation report on Tuesday, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said the reported deaths in the Davao Region, along with 11 injured and three missing persons, are still being validated.

Some 324,040 families or over 1.2 million persons in 723 villages in Northern Mindanao, Davao Region, Caraga and Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao have so far been affected.

Of this number, 25,477 families or 97,603 persons are being aided in 380 evacuation centers while another 175,370 families or 697,454 persons are being aided outside.

Davao del Norte Rep. Alan Dujali has appealed for immediate relief and humanitarian aid in the region.

Dujali issued this call on Tuesday even as he assured the flood-affected people in the region that aid has started to pour in the provinces affected by the deadly flooding triggered by heavy rains since last week.

The Department of Health (DOH) reported that flood victims have expressed worry after cases of leptospirosis have gone up. The DOH-11 said leptospirosis cases in the region went up in January 2024 compared to the same period last year.

From January 1 to 27, the DOH-11 has recorded 34 cases of leptospirosis with two deaths, which is 48% higher compared to the 23 cases logged in 2023.

Davao de Oro has the most number of cases followed by Davao del Norte.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) meanwhile said it has extended over P26.9 million worth of humanitarian aid to families affected by torrential rains and flooding. More than 41,100 family food packs (FFPs) were distributed to the families affected in the provinces of Davao de Oro, Davao del Norte, Davao Oriental, Davao Occidental, Agusan del Sur and Davao City.

Sleeping kits and modular tents were also provided for the affected families in Compostela town, Davao de Oro, he added.

The state weather bureau PAGASA is predicting more rains in Davao Region, Caraga, and SOCCSKSARGEN this Tuesday due to the easterlies.

In its latest weather bulletin, the weather bureau said the three regions are expected to experience cloudy skies with scattered rain showers and thunderstorms. PAGASA also warned of possible flash floods or landslides due to moderate to at times heavy rains.

Rain has pounded parts of Mindanao, the country's second-largest island, on and off for weeks, and forced tens of thousands of people into emergency shelters.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[How climate change contributes to wildfires like Chile's](#)

At least 122 people have been killed by wildfires in central Chile, leading its president to declare two days of national mourning. The devastation comes soon after Colombia declared a disaster over wildfires. Scientists say climate change makes the heat waves and drought now hitting South America more likely — and both contribute to wildfires by drying out the plants that feed the blazes.

What's happening in Chile?

The fires in Chile came amid a heat wave that pushed temperatures in the capital city of Santiago to about 37 degrees Celsius (nearly 100 degrees Fahrenheit). Extreme heat bakes moisture from wood, turning it into ideal fuel. Fires take hold more rapidly, and also burn with more intensity. Just a few extra degrees can be a tipping point that makes the difference between a mild fire season and a severe one.

Edward Mitchard, a forests expert at the University of Edinburgh School of Geosciences in Scotland, said climate change “makes the world hotter, which means that plants evaporate more water through them and soils get drier.”

It only takes a few days of very dry, hot weather for leaves to feel crisp and dry, he said. “That’s fuel that burns very well,” he said, adding: “Drier soil means fires are hotter and last longer.”

A Nature study showed that fire seasons are an average of 18.7% longer in length due to climate change. That means an increased window for disastrous fires to start.

What role do global weather cycles play?

The increased number of droughts as global rain cycles are interrupted means whole regions can be left unusually parched and more vulnerable to ignition.

“Climate change has made droughts more common,” said Mitchard. “And that’s especially happened in South America this year.

“We’ve had the most extreme drought ever recorded in the Amazon basin, and if you have droughts in the Amazon basin, you also get less rainfall in the south of South America.”

In Chile’s case, some unusually heavy rains last year are thought to have increased the growth of brush that makes perfect kindling for fires.

On top of this has come the El Niño weather pattern, the natural and periodic warming of surface waters in the Pacific that affects weather around the globe. In South America, it's meant increased temperatures and drought this year.

Climate change makes stronger El Niños more likely, said Mitchard, and droughts caused by it are likelier to be more intense. Last month, Colombia's government declared a disaster over dozens of wildfires associated with the weather phenomenon.

And the huge amount of carbon released by forest fires itself increases global warming.

Are forest fires getting worse?

The World Resources Institute used satellite data to calculate that wildfires now destroy about 11,500 square miles of forest annually (30,000 square kilometers), an area about the size of Belgium and about twice as much as 20 years ago.

And the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has found that globally, extreme heat waves happen five times more often because of human-caused global warming. Fire seasons are thus drier with higher temperatures. These are ideal conditions for forest fires to take hold.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Floods displace 2.9K families from 21 villages in Butuan

By: Alexander Lopez

At least 21 barangays here are currently affected by flooding as the water level in the Agusan River continued to rise due to the persisting inclement weather, the City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (CDRRMO) said Tuesday.

The CDRRMO issued Water Level Flood Alert No. 3 for the continuing forced evacuation of residents residing along the Agusan River as the water level reached a critical 3.1-meter level.

“Residents are also advised to contact (our office) for any flood and disaster-related concerns,” it said in an advisory.

The increase in the water level of the Agusan River is caused by the flooding in parts of neighboring Agusan del Sur and Davao de Oro provinces due to the continuous rains caused by the trough of a low-pressure area since last week.

Meanwhile, the City Social Welfare and Development Office reported that the flooding has impacted 2,947 families or 9,308 individuals in the 21 affected barangays.

Displaced families were brought to 32 designated evacuation centers across the city.

As of Tuesday, 2,344 affected families were served food and other needs amounting to PHP1.2 million.

Negros Occidental to use solar energy for provincial gov't buildings

By: Nanette Guadalquiver

The Negros Occidental provincial government will soon utilize solar power to energize its main office buildings as part of the initiatives to go renewable to ensure power security for Negrenses.

Governor Eugenio Jose Lacson said in a statement on Tuesday the province will bid out the works for the utilization of solar panels, based on the result of the energy audit.

“As a result of this energy audit, the provincial government will soon bid out the solarization of seven provincial buildings, the biggest of which is the Negros First Cyber Centre,” he said.

Lacson said that since 2023, he initiated the energy audit for the Provincial Capitol and other key provincial buildings to “set an example in action, not just words.”

“I enjoin everyone, particularly our local government units, to do the same, starting with grid tied rooftop solar systems,” he added.

On Monday afternoon, Lacson and former governor Rafael Coscolluela, the provincial consultant on energy and environment concerns, led the launch of the SecuRE Negros campaign as a commitment to energy security through the support for distributed energy systems or distributed energy resource models, and the use of renewable energy sources.

Negros Occidental has a total installed renewable energy capacity of 510 megawatts produced by 16 power plants, among these are eight biomass and six solar plants and one battery energy storage system.

However, the province does not directly consume the power it produces, the study showed.

The governor acknowledged that ensuring energy security for the province is “not an easy, short-term endeavor,” adding that “it requires careful study, strategic planning and implementation, and continuous consultation.”

“In this, we have been proactive, strategic, and consultative,” he said.

Lacson said the province has been proactive by anticipating future energy challenges given the periodic power outages the Negrenses have been experiencing for so long

through a research-based assessment of the real power situation as a basis for policy-making.

The Provincial Power Sector Study Group was created in 2021 to assess the province's current power situation and propose policy measures and other recommendations, and Negros Occidental Power Sector Assessment Study research team was subsequently formed in 2022.

"We have been strategic by utilizing the information collected from the study and examining it against the backdrop of bigger challenges such as impending energy and climate crises," he said.

"We have been and continue to be consultative because what affects us all must involve us all. We are for a just transition that is fair and inclusive, too, not just any transition," he added.

Lacson said that this year, the province will conduct power summits to consult all stakeholders to develop the Negros Occidental Energy Development Road Map, hold a Renewable Energy Week, and ask the Provincial Board to pass a Renewable Energy Ordinance.

"These are only for 2024. We will have more to work on together after we have jointly developed the Negros Occidental Energy Development Road Map," he said.

RAPPLER

[Facing climate challenges and rising costs, Palawan's rice farmers turn to labor](#)

By:Gerardo C. Reyes Jr.

Facing rising costs of farm inputs and climate change threats like dwindling irrigation water, some rice farmers in Roxas town, Palawan, are opting to work as farm laborers for better pay.

Rudy Dangan and his wife Diana, small rice farmers in Barangay Minara, Roxas, used to cultivate less than two hectares of leased rice fields.

But the current demand for farm laborers in ricefields in Roxas town convinced Rudy and Diane to prioritize working in their neighbors' rice fields, allowing them to earn a steady income. The couple, with two children, made this decision to ensure financial stability.

They said the soaring prices of fertilizer, pesticides, and labor expenses pushed them to stop their rice production. Instead, they now spend their days as farm laborers in nearby rice farms, where they receive more income.

From 7 am to 4 pm, Rudy and Diana harvest palay (unmilled rice), and from 4 pm to 6 pm, they use threshers to process the harvested rice.

At day's end, the farm owner compensates them with two sacks of palay, which, when sold to local buyers at P600 per sack, earns them P1,200.

Their harvested rice field, less than two hectares, is irrigated. They also receive rice bran, locally known as darak, from the owner, selling it to buyers at P10 to P15 per kilo.

Rudy said their combined daily incomes of P1,200 to P1,500 surpasses the P400 daily wage he earned as a carpenter, while Diana tended their rice farm.

Managing even a small rice field, according to Diana, is financially taxing due to fertilizer and pesticide expenses. Unable to afford these inputs and maintenance costs, they decided to halt rice production temporarily and turn to labor work.

Previously, Rudy said he toiled in construction projects to buy farm inputs. However, their expenses exceeded their income from selling harvested palay, leaving them with minimal profit.

Now, as farm laborers, they find their earnings surpassing their previous income, providing them with much-needed financial relief.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Reimagine Recycling showcase circular economy solutions](#)

The Reimagine Recycling program, an initiative of Save Philippine Seas and Coca-Cola Philippines, proudly announces five community-based programs that have received up to P500,000 of grant funding.

Now in its fifth year, Reimagine Recycling continues to support groups that champion circular economy solutions, address solid waste management and enhance the well-being of the informal waste sector.

This year, the initiative also focuses on projects preventing waste leakage in riverine and marine ecosystems and grassroots initiatives.

Following a competitive application process that opened in October 2023, projects were selected for grant funding from the Coca-Cola Foundation Philippines.

These projects are RezBin, Threads by Pammé, Love for Green Universe, Coast and Upstyle.

The Foundation reports that past winners of Reimagine Recycling continue to scale up, expand, and benefit underprivileged communities, such as Alon and Araw, Barrio Studios, and Smart Recycle PH.

In 2018, the Coca-Cola Co. has announced its global ambition to support a circular economy to help eliminate waste through the continual use of packaging as a valuable resource.

In addition to the Reimagine Recycling program, Coca-Cola Philippines is accelerating more waste management solutions through the implementation of "May ikabobote pa," its consumer engagement initiative that aims to inform and engage consumers about the actions they can take to recycle their empty plastic bottles.

For more information about Reimagine Recycling, visit savephilippineseas.org. You may also read more about Coca-Cola Philippines' initiatives at coca-cola.com/ph/en/sustainability.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Better data, resource valuation needed for Southeast Asian wetlands — ACB](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

Investing in data collection and natural resource valuation initiatives is crucial to achieving more effective wetland restoration in Southeast Asia, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) said.

Wetlands, such as rivers, lakes, peatlands, marshes, mangrove forests, seagrass meadows, mudflats and shallow coral reefs, are considered the "kidneys of the Earth" because of their capacity to purify the soil and provide drinking water to communities.

These ecosystems play a crucial role in the fight against climate change, storing vast amounts of carbon dioxide while also serving as buffers against storm surges, floods and sea level rise.

Despite providing essential services and roles, wetlands are considered the most threatened ecosystem on the planet, according to ACB. Human activities are largely responsible for the rapid loss of the world's wetlands, with an estimated 35% decline since the 1970s.

ACB stressed that gaps in the implementation of initiatives and activities must be addressed to ensure that Southeast Asia's nearly two million square kilometers of wetlands are protected and restored.

"First, ASEAN Member States must be able to resolve data deficiencies to support better management of their wetlands," the inter-governmental organization.

"Furthermore, valuation of natural resources throughout ASEAN must be encouraged to come up with better policy frameworks and evidence-based conservation measures," it added.

ACB noted that there are 59 Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar convention in eight ASEAN member states. The region is also home to 60% of the world's tropical peatlands and 42% of its mangrove forests.

In the Philippines, there are eight Ramsar sites, including the Las Piñas-Parañaque Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area and Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary.

'Not wastelands'

"People often view wetlands as wastelands or areas that need to be drained or converted for development and other land uses. However, they are nature's secret wonders because of their ability to provide vital services to sustain life and maintain balance of ecosystems," ACB said.

Wetlands also serve as vital stopover sites for migratory waterbirds, homes for countless fauna and flora species, and breeding grounds for fish populations.

In a separate statement, Wetlands International Philippines said it is working in the Cagayan de Oro River Basin to reduce the risk of flooding and in the northern coast of Manila Bay and in Macajalar Bay to replant mangroves with local communities using science- and community-based techniques.

"Let us act together to conserve, use sustainably, and restore these ecosystems for our well-being and our children's future," said Annadel Cabanban, Wetlands International Philippines country manager.

=END=