



NEWS ROUNDUP

13 FEBRUARY 2024 [08:00 am]

- [Opinion] Stemming tide of plastic waste generation starts with every citizen in every community
- Pinay lang ang sakalam! More than half of Filipino active UN peacekeepers are women
- LGUs agree to address waste, water challenges
- NASA PACE mission will study climate change
- Flood-hit families in Butuan swell to over 6K
- Ilocos Norte to receive treatment facility for medical waste
- Kidapawan City marks 1M trees planted in 2 years
- 4 weather systems bring rain, cold nights in PH – Pagasa
- [Opinion] Climate justice of another sort
- Philippines 10-year nuclear plan ‘too late,’ says climate analyst

MANILA BULLETIN

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By: Ben Kritz

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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Philippines 10-year nuclear plan ‘too late,’ says climate analyst](#)

By: Patrick Miguel

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

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Interior and Local Government Secretary Benjamin Abalos, Jr. has sounded the alarm. Based on a World Bank report, 2.7 million tons of plastic waste materials produced in the Philippines end up in its own waters. He warned that this “could spell disaster to marine life, especially on coral reefs, as they will stay there for the long haul since they were non-biodegradable.

As this disturbing news story hit the headlines yesterday, a poster bearing a similar message has also been passed on among mobile phone users. The poster announces: “Nearly 36.38 percent of plastic ocean waste comes from one country.” That country is the Philippines.

Any diligent fact checker would then verify that this was sourced from Science Advances volume 7, issue 18 published in April 2021, and authored by L. J. J. Meier, which explained further: “These assessments demonstrated a significant correlation between (micro)plastic concentration data collected by surface trawls in rivers, national statistics on mismanaged plastic waste (MPW) generation, and population density.”

Being an archipelagic country, the Philippines has 18 major river basins and 421 principal rivers as reported by the National Water Resources Board (NWRB). The largest river basin is the Cagayan River; the other important rivers are Agno in Pangasinan; Pampanga, Pasig, and Bicol in Luzon; and Rio Grande de Mindanao and Agusan in Mindanao.

India, which is far larger than the Philippines in terms of land mass and population, accounts for only 12.9 percent. China, Indonesia and Brazil, other countries that are significantly more populous, account for single-digit-shares.

Metro Manilans could readily affirm this unpleasant reality as they have been accustomed to seeing the Pasig River in its polluted condition. Recently, President Ferdinand Marcos presided over a ceremony that launched the beautification of the Pasig River to underline the urgency and importance of transforming this major river into a showcase of the country’s commitment to environmental sustainability.

As pointed out by Secretary Abalos: “The Kalinisan sa Bagong Lipunan Program intends to uphold clean and green governance at barangay levels by promoting sustainable development and instilling the habit of cleanliness among residents to create livable communities.”

Elsewhere in the country, the Iloilo River stands as a model worthy of emulation. The Iloilo River Esplanade garnered recognition for the Iloilo City local government unit (LGU) in 2018, including the 2018 Galing Pook awardee for advocating ecological sustainability and providing the local communities a sense of security and livability. It also received the Haligi ng Dangal award from the National Commission for Culture and the Arts for Landscape Architecture.

There is no reason why other LGUs would not aspire for similar honors. It is unthinkable that any self-respecting community would shy away from the imperative need to maintain cleanliness in each backyard, street, plaza, school, government office, church or home.

[Pinay lang ang sakalam! More than half of Filipino active UN peacekeepers are women](#)

By: Aaron Recuenco

They proved their worth in law enforcement operations in the Philippines, and now, Filipino female police officers are rocking the world of peacekeeping missions outside of their turf.

More Filipino women are participating in the peacekeeping missions in conflict-torn areas around the world, with Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo saying that there are now more Filipino women serving as active peacekeepers of the United Nations.

The total number of active Filipino UN peacekeepers is not immediately available but Manalo said more than half of them are women.

“Having females comprising more than half of the current active Filipino UN peacekeepers is a concrete example of the Philippine commitment to the women, peace and security agenda,” said Manalo in his speech during a ceremony at Camp Crame where 20 PNP officers were honored for their peacekeeping duty in South Sudan.

Out of the 20 PNP officers, 13 of them are women while the rest are males. They were all awarded with Medalya ng Kasanayan by PNP chief Gen. Benjamin Acorda, Jr.

The 20 PNP officers served as members of the UN peacekeeping mission in Juba, South Sudan from Nov. 17, 2022 to Dec. 22, 2023.

Acorda said the participation of female police officers in peacekeeping missions is part of the PNP’s commitment for gender equality.

“Being a peacekeeper is an arduous task. However, as ambassadors of our country, I must say that the PNP has excelled. Our efforts, professionalism, and excellence are being recognized in peacekeeping missions,” said Acorda.

“In collaboration with fellow peace and security officers, the PNP urges all personnel to uphold the credibility and integrity of our nation in ongoing endeavors to foster peace and order across mission countries. This unity transcends differences in color, language, and religion, as we strive to be a leading contributor of peacekeepers in Southeast Asia. The Philippines reaffirms its commitment to the youth, gender equality, and support for sustainable development for people of diverse nationalities,” he added.

Manalo said a total of 14,000 Filipino peacekeepers were already deployed to 21 UN Peacekeeping Missions around the world, including special political mission in Africa, the Middle East and Asia Pacific.

“Filipino peacekeepers have played critical roles not just in peacekeeping but also in rebuilding communities, healthcare and promoting human rights especially in regions affected by climate change and complex geopolitical conflicts,” said Manalo.

“The deployment of individual police officers to the UN mission in South Sudan significantly increased our ranking from 98 out of 121 countries in 2021 to 80th last year,” he added.

The participation of more Filipino women in peacekeeping missions is part of the country's commitment to honor the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 which recognizes the role of women in armed conflict and peacekeeping processes.

MANILA STANDARD

LGUs agree to address waste, water challenges

Local government units (LGUs) are answering the call to provide safe water and sanitation infrastructure and address solid and plastic waste problems to promote sustainability.

Over 350 local government officials and stakeholders from across the country made the pledge during the Waste and Water (W2) Summit held on January 26, and agreed to explore the latest in water technology.

Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga stressed the pressing problem of solid waste. She cited a report saying that the Philippines generates 61,000 metric tons of solid waste daily, 12 to 24 percent of which come from plastics.

The World Bank reported that Filipinos use more than 163 million plastic sachet packets, 48 million shopping bags and 45 million thin-film bags daily. About 33 percent of the plastic products are disposed in landfills and dumpsites, while around 35 percent is leaked into the open environment and oceans.

LGUs in partnership with national government agencies like the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the academe, private institutions agreed to draw up incentives to encourage waste segregation in households and ensure e-waste and disaster waste are part of the Solid Waste Management Plan.

The W2 Summit is in support of the call of President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. for a clean environment and sustainable management of the country's resources.

Stakeholders were urged to be proactive in finding which areas have water and those without, and explore the latest in water technology.

"The collaboration here is important. Let's discuss the problem. This is why this summit is very important. Tell us about your problems and we will come up with a plan with the DENR," said DILG Secretary Benjamin Abalos Jr. in Filipino.

Loyzaga underscored the critical role of LGUs in the country's push for sustainability and resilience, particularly in achieving the targets of the Philippine Development Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"A study estimates that 65 of the 169 sub-targets of our 17 SDGs will not be achieved without the engagement of our local and regional governments," said Loyzaga.

She also stressed the need to develop and protect water sources, conduct water treatment effectively, distribute water efficiently and collect sufficient fees to sustain its management and operation.

“Water conservation is not implemented, more so if water is cheap relative to other household expenses such as electricity and mobile connectivity,” she said.

Loyzaga, meanwhile, said it was imperative to encourage the consumer sector to be more conscious of the plastic waste that it generates, and reiterated her call to the private sector, academe and the industry for the need to put research into the substitution of single-use plastic.

“Until we find an affordable and equally functional material to single use plastic, we will not be able to eradicate its use. This also has a social impact on those that need this material to actually service their daily need,” said Loyzaga.

She added the DENR this year would assist in identifying suitable landfill sites from multiple LGUs to use. A nationwide campaign for recycling and other waste reduction methods will also be launched.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[NASA PACE mission will study climate change](#)

By: Dale Arasa

Global warming and climate change have been worsening for years despite our best efforts. The Earth's temperature recently increased by 2°C, threatening humans, animals, and plants. We need more information about this phenomenon to form more effective solutions, but that will require an overview of the situation. Fortunately, NASA has an answer.

On February 8, 2024, it launched the PACE satellite to get an overview of the Earth's climate change from outer space. It has specialized equipment that will analyze how global warming is affecting life so that we can understand climate change further. As a result, researchers hope they can gain more data for more potent climate solutions.

I will elaborate on the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's climate research. Later, I will discuss another astounding idea to fight global warming.

What is the NASA PACE mission?

Elon Musk's SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket launched NASA's Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, Ocean Ecosystem satellite last week. As mentioned, PACE's goal is to gauge the health of our planet amid climate change.

It would monitor the impact of invisible objects like microscopic life and particles in the air and water. The satellite's hyperspectral ocean color instrument will help experts measure oceans and other bodies of water across a wide light spectrum.

The latter includes ultraviolet, visible, and near-infrared light, which will let scientists track phytoplankton. Consequently, they and coastal resource managers can use the data to forecast the status of fisheries, spot harmful algal blooms, and identify marine environment changes.

The NASA PACE satellite also has two polarimeter instruments: the Hyper-Angular Rainbow Polarimeter #2 and the Spectro-polarimeter for Planetary Exploration.

They will detect how sunlight affects atmospheric particles and show more information on aerosols, cloud properties, and air quality. The space agency will use these tools to understand the interaction of the ocean and the atmosphere and how climate change affects them.

“Observations and scientific research from PACE will profoundly advance our knowledge of the ocean’s role in the climate cycle,” said Karen St. Germain, the director of NASA’s Earth Science Division.

“The value of PACE data skyrockets when we combine it with data and science from our Surface Water and Ocean Topography mission – ushering in a new era of ocean science.”

“As an open-source science mission with early adopters ready to use its research and data, PACE will accelerate our understanding of the Earth system and help NASA deliver actionable science, data, and practical applications to help our coastal communities and industries address rapidly evolving challenges.”

Learn more about this climate change mission on the NASA webpage.

Should we block sunlight to fight climate change?

We’ve had global accords to fight climate change, and we’ve been changing some parts of daily life, such as using paper straws. However, these measures seem to have been ineffective in reversing global warming.

That is why Technion-Israel Institute of Technology researchers thought we needed a bold plan to save our planet. Believe it or not, they proposed deploying a shade or “sail” nine million miles from Earth.

Then, it would move through space by opening and closing its shading layer. “We at the Technion are not going to save the planet,” project leader Yoram Rozen said. “But we’re going to show that it can be done.”

He and his team call their initiative Cool Earth. It would require a “giant umbrella” of roughly one million square miles, approximately the size of Argentina.

Of course, launching such a structure from the Earth to space is almost impossible. That is why Rozen and his colleagues propose sending smaller shades that will work together.

They have not disclosed the material for this space umbrella, but they will ensure a flexible design that will take them to the first Lagrange point (L1).

“[The demonstrator satellite] will perform a variable movement towards the sun and back to the Earth by controlling the shading sail,” the team said.

“In this way, the satellite will be able to maintain its position in space for a significant duration and without dependence on complex propulsion systems.”

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Flood-hit families in Butuan swell to over 6K

By: Alexander Lopez

The number of flood victims here has ballooned to 6,212 families or 22,818 persons in 23 barangays, the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) said Monday.

Of the affected families, CSWDO said 5,910 families or 21,910 persons have been served with food aid, especially those in the evacuation centers.

“Around PHP4.2 million worth of food aid were served to the affected families,” it said.

Of the total worth of aid, PHP3,8 million was from the Department of Social Welfare and Development in the Caraga Region; PHP300,625 from the city government; and PHP21,500 from other groups.

Floods caused by the rising waters of the Agusan River prompted the city government to evacuate the residents last week.

The heavy rains caused by the shear line and the trough of the low pressure area caused flooding and the swelling of the river systems in Agusan del Sur.

The Agusan River serves as the catch basin of the flooded river systems in the province.

As of Sunday afternoon, the City Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office in Butuan City reported that the water level at the Agusan River had dropped to 2.5 meters categorized as an Orange Warning or preemptive evacuation level from 3 meters last week.

“The office is also working with concerned authorities in the assessment of the affected barangays to determine the safety of residents who intend to return to their homes,” the CSWDO said.

Ilocos Norte to receive treatment facility for medical waste

By: Leilanie Adriano

The Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) will donate an infectious waste treatment machine worth PHP20 million to Ilocos Norte, boosting the province's efforts for a clean, green, and safer environment.

Dr. Arlene Ragasa, officer-in-charge of the Governor Roque B. Ablan Sr. Memorial Hospital, said in a media interview Monday that it's about time for Ilocos Norte to have its own medical infectious solid waste management and treatment facility.

"The treatment of biomedical waste is one of the big expenditures of the provincial government amounting to a million a year," she said.

Ragasa explained that people handling the infectious waste at the hospital will benefit from the equipment since they no longer need to worry about contamination.

Biomedical waste generated at the provincial hospital is dumped in a storage room and hauled at least twice a year by a private company for treatment in Capas, Tarlac, she said.

Ragasa said around 50 kilos of infectious waste are generated per day in the hospital.

The machine grinds the solid waste into small particles through rotating blades and microwave heat technology machine.

It then sterilizes the infectious wastes, like syringes or needles, used test strips, textiles waste, microtubes, paper waste, diapers, catheters, separating funnel, sampling needles, and test specimens, to become general or non-hazardous waste.

Kidapawan City marks 1M trees planted in 2 years

By: John Andrew Tabugoc

Mayor Jose Paolo Evangelista, together with other local officials here on Monday, planted the one millionth tree seedling as the highlight of the city's 26th charter anniversary from Feb. 7-12.

The city government's million tree campaign, dubbed Canopy '25 under the Luntian Kidapawan Program, aims to plant 2.5 million tree seedlings from 2022 to 2025.

"What we are doing today is for the benefit of our people," Evangelista said in his message during the culmination ceremony, adding that the program intends to mitigate the impact of the effects of climate change and environmental degradation.

The seedlings were planted in Mt. Apo protected forests, watersheds, riparian zones, government properties, and idle private lands.

Evangelista said the seedlings included endemic species, perennial crops (fruit trees, coffee, cacao), and bamboo.

"Twenty-six years from now, the people of Kidapawan will look back and ask what these leaders have done for their people," the mayor said.

The Kidapawan cityhood was made possible under Republic Act 8500 or the "Act converting the Municipality of Kidapawan in the Province of Cotabato into a component city to be known as the City of Kidapawan."

THE MANILA TIMES

4 weather systems bring rain, cold nights in PH – Pagasa

By: Arlie O. Calalo

At least four weather systems – shear line, northeast monsoon, easterlies and localized thunderstorms – will be affecting most parts of the country over the next 24 hours, the state-run weather agency said on Monday.

Weather specialist Robert Badrina of the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said the combined effects of shear line and easterlies are bringing overcast skies with scattered rain showers and thunderstorms over Eastern Visayas, Capiz, Aklan, Iloilo, Bicol Region and Romblon.

The Pagasa forecaster said the northeast monsoon or "amihan" is affecting Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon where cloudy skies with isolated light rains may prevail.

"It would still be colder nights and mornings, especially over Luzon in the coming days due to amihan," he said.

Citing Pagasa's data and analysis, he said they have not monitored any tropical cyclone or low pressure area inside and outside the country's area of responsibility until over the weekend.

The easterlies, along with the localized thunderstorms, are bringing either isolated heavy rains or thunderstorms over the rest of the country, the state weather bureau said.

[\[Opinion\] Climate justice of another sort](#)

By: Ben Kritz

In a rather satisfying development at the end of last week, a jury in the Washington, D.C. Superior Court unanimously found conservative commentators Mark Steyn and Rand Simberg liable for defamation against noted climate scientist Michael Mann, awarding Mann \$1 million in damages. Although Steyn said he would appeal the verdict, it likely brings to an end a case that has dragged on for 12 years and sought unsuccessfully to put climate science itself on trial.

Mann, a climatologist at Pennsylvania State University, led a landmark research study published in 1999 that provided the famous "hockey stick" graph, a chart showing global temperature variations over 1,000 years. The chart indicates relatively consistent temperatures — if anything, a slight, gradual cooling — until about 1900 when they sharply jump upward. The "hockey stick" was one of the first widely publicized pieces of evidence of human-caused global warming, and while it was challenged by numerous other researchers, as any research results ought to be because that's how science works, it has been confirmed as valid at every turn.

One watershed moment came in 2005 when the Republican-led science committee of the US House of Representatives requested a review of Mann's research. The National Academy of Science convened a 12-member panel to carry out that review and, about a year later, delivered a 155-page report that concluded "an array of evidence" supports the original paper's conclusions.

The lawsuit by Mann was triggered by a commentary published by Mark Steyn in the National Review Online in early July 2012 entitled "Football and Hockey." In the piece, much of which was copy-pasted from an earlier blog post by Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) Rand Simberg, Steyn claimed Mann had "molested and tortured data," comparing Mann to disgraced Penn State assistant football coach and convicted sex offender Jerry Sandusky, and said that the famous "hockey stick" graph was the product of "academic fraud." In response to the offensive article, Mann sued Steyn, Simberg, CEI and the National Review Online for defamation about two weeks later.

Describing Mark Steyn as "a conservative commentator" is generous. A 2004 profile of the college dropout in the Boston Phoenix sums him up pretty well. Steyn, the Phoenix wrote, is "the most toxic right-wing pundit you've never heard of" and "a pungent columnist, essayist, and critic who's not well-known in the United States, but whose political screeds are published in English-speaking countries around the world. A native of Canada who divides his time among New Hampshire, Quebec and London, Steyn is a self-described right-wing warmonger." The Phoenix compared Steyn to famous right-wing monsters Rush Limbaugh and Ann Coulter, writing that "he possesses a shrill,

mocking tone of moral certainty that consigns those who disagree with him to the status of appeasers or even terrorists; and a willingness to distort, misrepresent, and omit facts in order to advance his argument."

Besides his virulent climate denial, other causes championed by Steyn in recent years include advancing conspiracy theories that the 2020 US election was "stolen," supporting the Jan. 6, 2021 attempted coup ordered by the former president, sharing various conspiracy theories related to the Covid-19 pandemic and efforts to control it, and complaining that avowed white supremacists are treated "unfairly" by the media, especially when compared with all those terrorist, drug-dealing Latinos flooding across the US southern border.

The case took as long as it did due to intense legal maneuvering by the defendants. At one point, they even petitioned the Supreme Court to throw out the case based on First Amendment protections, but the court declined to hear it. Somewhere along the way, the two publishers involved, CEI and the National Review Online, managed to extricate themselves for reasons that are not entirely clear but probably have less to do with questions of law and fact than they do with those two organizations' capacity to retain good lawyers.

In the four-week trial that ended on February 8, Simberg and Steyn attempted to turn the issue into a trial of climate science itself, calling several "expert" witnesses. None of these offered any identifiable scientific rebuttal of Mann's work but rather attacked his character, calling him "thin-skinned" and a "self-promoter." Simberg's attorney largely focused on the supposed controversy of climate science, saying that his client was "right to question [Mann's] credibility." Steyn, on the other hand, who was representing himself — despite being warned by the judge at the outset and at several points during the trial that this was a really bad idea — instead attacked the US justice system, arguing that "in my country (Canada), this case would have been thrown out," and labeling Mann "a vanity plaintiff," and "a humbug with no case."

None of this impressed the judge, whose final instructions to the jury were an admonition that "climate science is not on trial." Even so, the jury appeared to have been affected to some degree by Simberg's defense; while still unanimously finding him guilty of defamation, they only recommended damages of \$1,000. Steyn, on the other hand, took the full brunt of the decision, being handed a \$1 million penalty. The judge could still modify the damage amounts one way or another, but most observers have correctly noted that the actual amount is not really the point.

Personally, I would have liked to have seen heavier damages levied, and both CEI and the National Review Online, both notorious purveyors of unsupported right-wing ideology, called to account as well, but the result of the case is nevertheless a good and

proper outcome for the message it sends that it is worthwhile to stand up to climate denialism. Before Michael Mann, no climatologist did that, even though just about every one of them has at some point been subjected to the same sort of attacks.

I think that is probably a consequence of the way any honest scientist looks at things. One expects to have to defend one's work against challenges but assumes those challenges to his conclusions will be coming from the same context of science; therefore, he tends to ignore the irrational and ideological. Letting that slide has been a disservice to the world, maybe even a fatal one, because we should not now be having a debate, contrived entirely by feelings, about whether or not climate change is a thing. The incontrovertible evidence is that it is happening, and it is caused by human activity; if there is anything to debate, then it is what steps humans should take to correct it or adapt to it. To argue anything else is slanderous, and to give a platform to that slander out of some perverse notion of fair play to "both sides" is malpractice.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Philippines 10-year nuclear plan 'too late,' says climate analyst](#)

By: Patrick Miguel

The long-term nuclear plan outlined by the Department of Energy (DOE) is “too long, too late” due to the climate emergency, a climate analyst said, suggesting instead the prioritization of building renewable energy facilities.

“Prioritize renewable energy, primarily solar and wind as the alternative to fossil fuels because solar and wind are ready now and there is no need to wait 10 years,” Asian Peoples’ Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD) senior lead Paolo Pagaduan told The STAR.

While other energy experts welcomed the plan, including DOE Undersecretary Sharon Garin, Pagaduan said he is “not as keen into pursuing nuclear energy programs.”

The Nuclear Energy Program Inter-Agency Committee (NEPIAC) is now on the second phase of planning, which is expected to last at least 10 years.

“I was hoping that the plan would be a bit faster,” Pagaduan said. “Ten years down the line is too long because that’s 10 years too late because of our climate emergency now.”

Moreover, Pagaduan said there is no need to wait for new laws and policies, and that resources should be allotted into installing more solar and wind sources of energy.

Think tank Climate Analytics reported in November 2023 that the Philippines must phase out coal-fired power plants by 2035, and entirely get rid of gas-fired generation by 2040.

Fossil fuels still dominate the country’s energy mix, accounting for 78 percent of aggregate power generation in 2022. Meanwhile, the Philippine Energy Plan 2023-2050 shows growth in renewable energy.

“The Philippines has enough cost-effective renewable resources to both replace fossil fuels in the power sector and meet future energy demands,” Climate Analytics stated.

For her part, Garin said the 10-year plan is rather “too fast,” and that there is no need to rush the construction of nuclear energy in the country if there is a question on safety.

“We have to make sure it’s safe, that there’s no risk of us getting into a disaster. We need to follow each and every rule because if you are rushing because you want it fast, then you might bypass some other requirements,” Garin told The STAR.

NEPIAC, according to Garin, has been in three provinces so far for site inspections and eyeing on building the plant in the western part of the Philippines.

In addition, the committee is also reviewing the requirements and necessary standards imposed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the nuclear power plant.

She added that additional training will also be provided to the police and local communities living near the designated site.

The design and construction also needed to be factored in, particularly the standard materials in building the power plant. Since the Philippines is a member of the IAEA, the construction of nuclear energy facilities must be pursuant to the international guidelines.

“I don’t want to sacrifice safety,” she said.

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