



NEWS ROUNDUP

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DAILY TRIBUNE

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ECO BUSINESS

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By: Ruelle Castro

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

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China aims to effectively eliminate severe air pollution by the end of 2025, a senior environment official said, as authorities ramp up efforts in pollution control and emissions reduction in the “battle for blue skies.”

China will improve its air quality forecasting and early warning systems and enhance coordinated management of harmful airborne particles known as PM2.5, as well as ozone pollution, said Li Tianwei, Director of the Department of Atmospheric Environment.

“The battle for blue skies remains unchanged,” Li said according to a transcript on the Ministry of Ecology and Environment’s website on Monday.

Though some progress has been made, air pollution remains a major problem in China and affects economies and people’s quality of life, said the World Health Organization (WHO).

Air pollution is responsible for about 2 million deaths in China annually, the WHO said. Of those deaths, ambient air pollution caused more than 1 million deaths, while household air pollution from cooking with polluting fuels and technologies caused another million deaths, it said on its website.

The WHO considers PM2.5 concentrations above 50 micrograms per cubic metre “severe” air pollution.

China’s air quality improved significantly in 2024, Li said. The average concentration of PM2.5 in cities was 29.3 micrograms per cubic metre, a year-on-year decrease of 2.7%.

The proportion of days with good air quality reached 87.2%, up by 1.7 percentage points year-on-year.

China must introduce new emission standards that align with global best practises, Li said, adding that the country will boost the share of new energy vehicles and machinery in airports, ports and logistics parks.

Authorities also plan to promote the long-distance transportation of bulk goods by rail and water, rather than by roads.

President Xi Jinping has said China prioritises environmental protection, promoting green lifestyles and that conservation of nature is an essential part of building a modern socialist country.

DAILY TRIBUNE

[MCT boosts renewable energy use with solar power integration](#)

Mindanao Container Terminal (MCT), a key gateway operated by International Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI) at the Port of Cagayan de Oro, has ramped up its renewable energy use by integrating solar power into its daily operations.

Since 14 February, MCT has been sourcing solar energy during daylight hours through a retail supply contract with PrimeRES Energy Corporation, under the Philippine Department of Energy's Retail Competition and Open Access (RCOA) framework. At night, the terminal continues to operate using PrimeRES' diversified energy portfolio, including supply from the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM), ensuring round-the-clock power availability.

"The Mindanao Container Terminal is a key gateway for the region, and reducing carbon emissions from our operations aligns with ICTSI's broader environmental objectives," said MCT president and general manager Aurelio Garcia.

"This shift to solar power reflects our commitment to sustainability and demonstrates the steps we are taking to lower emissions."

PrimeRES Energy Corporation, a licensed retail electricity supplier, provides renewable energy solutions to industrial customers. It focuses on partnerships with private distribution utilities and electric cooperatives to deliver sustainable power.

"This partnership with MCT exemplifies our commitment to delivering affordable and reliable power solutions tailored to meet diverse needs," said PrimeRES Energy Corporation chief operating officer Daniel Arago. "We appreciate MCT's trust and shared vision of providing consumers with environmentally friendly energy solutions at competitive costs."

Aside from supporting sustainability efforts, the switch to PrimeRES is expected to provide MCT with competitive electricity rates and potential cost savings.

ICTSI, through its subsidiary Mindanao International Container Terminal Services Inc. (MICTSI), recently secured a 25-year extension to operate and manage MCT. As part of its long-term strategy, MCT is set to invest over \$100 million in infrastructure upgrades, including a 300-meter berth extension and new equipment to accommodate increasing cargo volumes. These enhancements will expand the terminal's current 350,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) capacity and improve connectivity for Mindanao's importers and exporters.

The expansion aligns with government efforts to drive investment and business growth in the region while reinforcing MCT's commitment to operational efficiency and sustainability.

ECO BUSINESS

[Exiled by climate, Bangladeshi migrants risk abuse in Gulf](#)

Climate change is forcing ever more Bangladeshis to emigrate to the Gulf in search of a better life but the dream often turns into a reality of abuse and exploitation endured in slave-like conditions, according to a new study.

“Vulnerable people pushed to the brink due to climate shocks take a huge gamble to pay for migration, but often end up in a situation where they face abuse,” said Ritu Bharadwaj, one of the report’s authors.

The survey of Bangladeshi migrants who moved from climate-vulnerable areas to work in the Gulf showed that nearly all had faced at least one form of exploitation in their new life, be it employer abuse, sexual attack or wage denial, the study found.

Migrants - most of whom move to states such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Oman - get locked into a form of “modern slavery” after taking out loans or selling land to pay the US\$4,021 it typically costs to secure work overseas, said the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

The London-based think tank spoke to 648 households to learn how climate change had impacted those living on the frontline.

On the move

Migration has accelerated in the past two decades as the planet grows ever warmer, robbing people of a safe life, stable future or reliable income.

The study found that families in disaster-prone regions were now 1.6 times more likely to move within Bangladesh, and twice as likely to move abroad compared to households living in safer places. Up to 88 per cent of households sent someone abroad this past decade, compared to just 9 per cent from 2001-2010 and 4 per cent in the 1990s.

Bangladesh is the world’s seventh most vulnerable country to the impacts of climate change, and frequent disasters - from floods to cyclones - are taking a rising toll.

The economic costs of climate-related disasters have jumped four-fold - from about US\$146 million annually during 1960–1990 to US\$558 million in the last 30 years.

That cost each family in the disaster-prone coastal area more than US\$870 a year, the study said, leaving families with less for the staples of life such as food, education or health.

Among those affected were farmers, fishing communities and small business owners whose livelihoods were often the hardest hit, forcing them to seek out better prospects elsewhere.

Take the district of Pirojpur on the southern coast of Bangladesh, which has faced a slew of destructive floods and cyclones in recent years.

Teacher Abu Musa said he had sent his younger brother to Dhaka to work as a security guard after last year's monsoon destroyed crops and fisheries owned by his family.

"Repeated disaster losses make it harder to get through in recent years - and you can at least earn a steady income when you land a job in a place like Dhaka," he told Context.

But many left only to face new risks and problems in their adopted cities - especially those who had moved abroad.

The study said that migrants in the construction and garment industries in big cities were denied compensation when they had workplace accidents, while domestic workers faced beatings or inadequate food and bedding.

Migrants who move overseas face higher risks as they have no choice but to recoup their high startup costs, said Bharadwaj.

Employers often seize workers' passports and bar them from leaving the workplace, denying them a chance to contact their families or the embassy, the study said.

Women suffer most: more than 80 per cent of domestic workers faced abuses such as beating or sexual harassment in their host households, the survey found.

Where to run?

As the number of Bangladeshi migrants in Gulf countries runs to the millions, embassies often struggle to monitor conditions or mount rescues, said the International Labour Organization.

"The sad part is when a worker faces abuse, they often do not know where to turn to," said Mohammad Rashed Alam Bhuiyan, an assistant professor of political science at the Dhaka University who studies Bangladeshi climate migrants.

The government could outsource essential services - such as health care or shelter for those at risk - to private organisations, he said.

Helping communities minimise climate-related losses at home could also cut the risk of overseas abuse, said Md Shamsuddoha, chief executive of Dhaka-based research organisation Center for Participatory Research and Development (CPRD).

If families could get early alerts of disasters as well as cash support, they would be better informed and may be more likely to stay, he said.

Experts also pointed to the complex web of brokers helping migrants get work, from the Middle East to Malaysia.

These middlemen are often accused of fraud or deceit, underlining the need to better track the migrants, said Bharadwaj from IIED.

“We should not paint the agents and brokers supporting climate migration as villains - rather the government should register all the middlemen and work with them to ensure minimum standards for workers,” she said.

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

MCT increases renewable energy utilization

By: Ruelle Castro

International Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI) said its Cagayan de Oro operation, Mindanao Container Terminal (MCT), is now running on pure solar energy during daytime operation.

The Razon-controlled port terminal operator said it has signed a retail supply contract with sister company PrimeRES Energy Corp. for the power supply under the Department of Energy's retail competition and open access framework last February 14.

"MCT will use solar power generated by PrimeRES' solar power supply during daylight hours. At night, the terminal will draw power from PrimeRES supply portfolio including the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM), ensuring 24/7 energy supply," the company said.

This hybrid solution maximizes the use of renewable energy while maintaining operational stability, ICTSI added, noting it will also provide MCT with competitive electricity rates and potential cost savings.

"The Mindanao Container Terminal is a key gateway for the region, and reducing carbon emissions from our operations aligns with ICTSI's broader environmental objectives. This shift to solar power reflects our commitment to sustainability and demonstrates the steps we are taking to lower emissions," said Aurelio Garcia, MCT president.

ICTSI, through its subsidiary Mindanao International Container Terminal Services Inc., recently secured a 25-year extension to operate and manage MCT.

As part of its long-term plan to enhance capacity and efficiency, MCT will invest more than \$100 million in infrastructure upgrades.

The investment includes a 300-meter berth extension and the acquisition of new equipment to support projected cargo volume growth, which will increase the terminal's annual capacity beyond its current 350,000 twenty-foot equivalent units.

The berth extension will accommodate larger vessels and support new service routes, improving connectivity for Mindanao's importers and exporters.

MSN

[UN warns that 'time is not on our side' as key climate science meeting begins](#)

By: Rosie Frost

Representatives from nearly 200 countries gathered on Monday to work out the details of the next major UN climate science report.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is meeting for a week-long session in Hangzhou, China to negotiate the content and timing of the next landmark assessment. It comes not long after several climate agencies confirmed that 2024 was the hottest year on record.

Systemic Change Worldwide

On Monday, UN Environment Programme chief Inger Andersen opened the meeting by warning that “time is not on our side”, urging “ambitious” outcomes from these talks.

IPCC Chair Jim Skea said it was a “pivotal session” for the delivery of the next report on global climate science.

What is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change assessment report?

These landmark reports from the IPCC were set up in 1988 to inform policymakers of the latest climate science. The first was published in 1990 and they are now considered to be the most authoritative source of global climate science information.

In the words of World Meteorological Organisation deputy secretary general Ko Barrett at the opening of the meeting on Monday, they are “a guiding compass for governments as they navigate the complexities of climate change”.

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The report brings together and summarises the latest evidence on climate change from leading scientists around the world and takes hundreds of experts years to produce.

This will be the seventh round of assessments that will compile global climate science into three reports: one on the physical science of climate change, one on the climate impacts, and one on solutions for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The three-part report is currently set to be released in 2029 – but that could change as some countries call for an earlier delivery date.

Why do countries disagree about the timing of the report?

Discussions in Hangzhou are expected to be tense as it could be the last chance for countries to agree on a timeline. Some are pushing for the next report to be released earlier than planned.

A group of 20 ministers from the High Ambition Coalition has called for the protection of climate science that countries rely on to make vital climate policy decisions. Environment ministers behind the statement include those from EU countries, island nations, and some of the countries most vulnerable to climate change.

“We owe it to everyone suffering the impacts of the climate crisis now, and to future generations, to make decisions about our planet’s future on the basis of the best evidence and knowledge available to us,” they said in a joint statement.

The ministers added that it is vital the IPCC’s latest report is ready in time to inform the next UN Global Stocktake in 2028, a process that assesses the world’s progress towards meeting Paris Agreement goals.

A group of countries made up of Russia, Saudi Arabia, China, South Africa and India - backed by Kenya - has pushed back on an accelerated timeline, arguing that it would be too rushed. They have also said it could put the report’s inclusivity at risk, making it harder to include scientists from the Global South.

Has Trump prevented the US delegation from attending?

US officials from the State Department and scientists from federal agencies have reportedly been pulled out of IPCC talks by the Trump administration.

It comes after President Donald Trump signed an executive order to withdraw the US from the Paris Agreement for a second time on his first day in office.

Sources familiar with the situation told news agencies Reuters and Axios that a stop work order was impacting staff at the US Global Change Research Program and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – key organisations that usually take part in IPCC talks.

NASA’s chief scientist Kate Calvin – who holds a leadership role in the new report cycle - will no longer attend as a result, according to CNN, which cited a spokesperson from the space agency.

They said that this was part of Trump’s broader withdrawal from multilateral cooperation and efforts to mitigate climate change.

The White House has not yet commented on whether the US will be withdrawing from the IPCC.

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

[DOST program eyes transforming Kalinga into inclusive, smart, sustainable community](#)

By: Rod Asurin

Kalinga has officially launched its Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) plan for the 2024–2028 period, aimed at making the province an inclusive, smart, and sustainable community.

The plan, formulated through the Department of Science and Technology (DOST)'s Innovation, Science, and Technology for Accelerating Regional Transformation (iSTART) program, outlines strategies to address key issues in social, economic, environmental, institutional, and infrastructure development in the province. It aims to drive socio-economic development through science, technology, and innovation.

DOST Secretary Renato U. Solidum Jr., Undersecretary for Regional Operations Sancho A. Maborang, and DOST-Cordillera Regional Director Nancy A. Bantog led the unveiling on February 19, 2024, at the Tabuk City Hall. It was attended by local officials and stakeholders.

Solidum lauded the province for taking a significant step towards becoming a smart and sustainable community.

“Everything starts with planning, but planning that is good and based on updated data and information. That is why it is important for us to work with all of you at the provincial, municipal, and city levels so that our interventions at your level will be according to the plan, which we agree will truly cause development and transformation in your area,” Solidum said.

He said the plan will serve as a roadmap to leverage both national and local expertise to strengthen and sustain inclusive growth.

“The Science, Technology, and Innovation plan we have just unveiled will serve as a roadmap to harness not only national expertise but, more importantly, local expertise within your neighboring regions, and we hope that this will strengthen and sustain our drive for inclusive growth,” the Secretary said.

Governor James S. Edduba thanked the DOST, partner agencies, and planners for spearheading the province’s first-ever STI Plan and affirmed his full support for its realization.

To help address issues in the province regarding agriculture, Maborang said they will deploy the Smarter Approaches to Reinvigorate Agriculture as an Industry in the Philippines (SARAI) Project to address climate change challenges and enhance farm productivity.

On supporting MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises), Maborang cited the Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (SETUP 4.0), an initiative aimed at capacitating small-scale entrepreneurs by providing innovation system support, including equipment, technology, and business solutions.

He also highlighted the ongoing collaboration with Balik Scientists aimed at conducting studies to address urban challenges.

“We said that we will deploy experts to the city of Tabuk and the province of Kalinga so that we will be able to also come up with studies that will eventually, in anticipation of later traffic problems in your province and the city, come up with modern solutions that will also include the use of modern technology,” he said.

The DOST and local officials also signed a pledge of commitment to harness science, technology, and innovation for the province to become smart and sustainable.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[WFP vows unhampered aid to PH; says US cutback impact 'minimal'](#)

By: Joyce Ann L. Rocamora

The Philippines' flagship school meals and food voucher programs will continue to receive unhampered funding from the World Food Program (WFP), its Asia-Pacific chief said against the backdrop of a changing global funding landscape.

WFP Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific Samir Wanmali conveyed this during a meeting with Philippine Ambassador to Italy and Permanent Representative to the WFP Neal Imperial on the sidelines of the 1st Regular Session of the WFP Executive Board in Rome on Feb. 18, according to a news release issued by the embassy on Tuesday.

Wanmali told the envoy that the impact of the United States' funding cutbacks on its program in the Philippines would be "minimal."

He assured that the Philippines remains a top priority of the WFP in the Asia-Pacific region and that its support would extend to the country's emergency preparedness and response initiatives.

Imperial, meanwhile, reaffirmed the strong partnership between the Philippines and the WFP towards addressing child malnutrition and rural poverty.

The Trump administration in January imposed a 90-day freeze on all its foreign development assistance, except for some programs in Egypt and Israel.

On Monday, the Philippine government confirmed that the US has also recently exempted some of its aid to the Philippines but only on "a portion" of its foreign military financing.

The WFP operates in the Philippines under the Country Strategic Plan (CSP) 2024-2028 approved in 2024.

The CSP has a total cost of USD131,193,069 to support the Philippine government in achieving food and nutrition security, focusing on improving emergency preparedness and response, strengthening resilience against climate change and other shocks, and enhancing the delivery of social protection in line with UN Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger).

Its donors include Japan, the US, the UN Central Emergency Response Fund, the Asian Development Bank, Australia, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Korea, Canada, France, the Emerging Donor Matching Fund, the OPEC Fund for International Development, and private donors.

The Philippines, one of the member states of the WFP, sits as Observer at the Executive Board, the WFP's supreme governing body that provides intergovernmental support and policy direction.

The Philippines served on the Board in 2007-2009, 2010-2012, and 2013-2015.

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