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07 MARCH 2025 [08:00 am]

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By: Dr. Fernando T. Aldaba

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MANILA BULLETIN

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By: Derco Rosal

Worsening climate change could drive up the cost of insuring personal assets, creating a domino effect from rising reinsurance costs, according to the Philippine Insurance and Reinsurers Association (PIRA).

UNITED NATIONS

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CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

[Cooling La Nina expected to be 'short-lived': UN](#)

The cooling weather phenomenon La Nina that emerged late last year is weak and likely to be brief, the UN said Thursday, dashing hopes it could help rein in soaring global temperatures.

"The weak La Nina event that emerged in December 2024 is likely to be short-lived," the United Nations' World Meteorological Organization said in its latest update.

There is currently a 60-percent probability that conditions will shift back to neutral between this month and May, it said, adding that chances increased to 70 percent between April and June.

The WMO had last year voiced hope the return of La Nina would help lower temperatures slightly after months of global heat records fuelled in part by La Nina's opposite number, the warming El Nino weather pattern, which gripped the planet for a year from June 2023.

But the phenomenon appeared unlikely to significantly impact temperatures after 2024 ticked in as the hottest year ever recorded.

Despite the presence of weak La Nina conditions, WMO pointed out Thursday that "January 2025 was the warmest January on record".

And it said its latest global seasonal climate update, which looks beyond just the impact of the El Nino and La Nina phenomena, noted that "above-normal sea surface temperatures (were) expected to persist across all major oceans -- except for the near-equatorial eastern Pacific".

It also forecast "above-average temperatures over nearly all land areas worldwide".

La Nina refers to a naturally occurring climate phenomenon that cools the ocean surface temperatures in large swathes of the tropical Pacific Ocean, coupled with winds, rains and changes in atmospheric pressure.

In many locations, especially in the tropics, La Nina produces the opposite climate impacts to El Nino, which heats up the surface of the oceans, leading to drought in some parts of the world and triggering heavy downpours elsewhere.

The agency said the probability El Nino developing again between now and June was "negligible".

While both are natural climate events, WMO stressed they were "taking place in the broader context of human-induced climate change, which is increasing global temperatures, exacerbating extreme weather and climate, and impacting seasonal rainfall and temperature patterns".

WMO chief Celeste Saulo stressed in the update that seasonal forecasts for El Nino and La Nina and the associated impacts on weather and climate patterns globally were "an important tool to inform early warnings and early action", and help support decision-making.

"These forecasts translate into millions of dollars worth in economic savings for key sectors like agriculture, energy and transport, and saved thousands of lives over the years by enabling disaster risk preparedness," she said.

[Global sea ice cover hits record low as heat streak continues](#)

Global sea ice cover reached a historic low in February, Europe's climate monitor said Thursday, with temperatures spiking up to 11C above average near the North Pole as the world continued its persistent heat streak.

Copernicus Climate Change Service said last month was the third hottest February, with planet-heating greenhouse gas emissions stoking global temperatures.

That helped push combined Antarctic and Arctic sea ice cover -- ocean water that freezes and floats on the surface -- to a record minimum extent of 16.04 million square kilometres on February 7, Copernicus said.

"February 2025 continues the streak of record or near-record temperatures observed throughout the last two years," said Samantha Burgess of the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts, which runs the Copernicus climate monitor.

"One of the consequences of a warmer world is melting sea ice, and the record or near-record low sea ice cover at both poles has pushed global sea ice cover to an all-time minimum."

Decreased ice cover has serious impacts over time on weather, people and ecosystems -- not just within the region, but globally.

When highly reflective snow and ice give way to dark blue ocean, the same amount of the sun's energy that was bounced back into space is absorbed by water instead, accelerating the pace of global warming.

Antarctic sea ice, which largely drives the global figure at this time of year, was 26 percent below average across February, Copernicus said.

It said the region may have hit its annual summer minimum towards the end of the month, adding that if confirmed in March this would be the second-lowest minimum in the satellite record.

The Arctic, where ice cover normally grows to an annual winter maximum in March, has seen record monthly lows since December, with February seeing ice cover eight percent below average for the month.

"The current record low global sea ice extent revealed by the Copernicus analysis is of serious concern as it reflects major changes in both the Arctic and Antarctic," said Simon Josey, Professor of Oceanography at the UK's National Oceanography Centre.

He added that warm ocean and atmospheric temperatures "may lead to an extensive failure of the ice to regrow" in the Antarctic during the southern hemisphere winter.

- Heat streak -

Globally, February was 1.59 degrees Celsius hotter than pre-industrial times, Copernicus said, adding that the December to February period was the second warmest on record.

While temperatures were below average last month over parts of North America, Eastern Europe and across large areas of eastern Asia, it was hotter than average over northern Chile and Argentina, western Australia and the southwestern United States and Mexico.

Temperatures were particularly elevated north of the Arctic Circle, Copernicus added, with average temperatures of 4C above the 1991–2020 average for the month, and one area near the North Pole hitting 11C above average.

Copernicus said a lack of historical data from polar regions makes it difficult to give precise warming estimates compared to the pre-industrial period.

Oceans, a vital climate regulator and carbon sink, store 90 percent of the excess heat trapped by humanity's release of greenhouse gases.

Sea surface temperatures have been exceptionally warm over 2023 and 2024, and Copernicus said readings in February were the second highest on record for the month.

Climate scientists had expected the exceptional heat spell across the world to subside after a warming El Nino event peaked in January 2024 and conditions gradually shifted to a cooling La Nina phase.

But the heat has lingered at record or near-record levels ever since, sparking debate among scientists.

A single year above the Paris Agreement limit of 1.5C warming from pre-industrial levels does not mark a breach of the climate deal, but with record-breaking temperatures last year scientists warn that target is rapidly slipping out of reach.

In the 20 months since mid-2023, only July of last year dipped below 1.5C, Copernicus said.

The EU monitor uses billions of measurements from satellites, ships, aircraft and weather stations to aid its climate calculations.

Its records go back to 1940, but other sources of climate data -- such as ice cores, tree rings and coral skeletons -- allow scientists to expand their conclusions using evidence from much further in the past.

Scientists say the current period is likely the warmest the Earth has been for the last 125,000 years.

BUSINESS MIRROR

The risks of a rapid energy transition in the Philippines

By: Dr. Fernando T. Aldaba

The global push for renewable energy is a critical response to climate change, but in the Philippines, the rapid transition to renewables is beset with significant challenges. While the shift to cleaner energy sources is necessary, the speed at which it is being pursued presents risks that could undermine its long-term success. Key issues include the intermittency of renewables, the financial burden of feed-in tariffs (FIT), the intense use of natural resources that disrupts communities and biodiversity, and institutional constraints that hamper a smooth transition. Additional concerns include the need for workforce reskilling and the geopolitical risks associated with renewable energy supply chains.

One of the most pressing challenges in the transition to renewables is the intermittency of energy sources like solar and wind. Unlike fossil fuels, which provide continuous power, renewables are dependent on environmental conditions—solar power relies on sunlight, and wind turbines need consistent wind speeds. The Philippines, an archipelagic nation with a growing electricity demand, faces a serious challenge in ensuring a stable and reliable power supply when relying too much on intermittent renewables. The Luzon grid has faced several instances of red and yellow alerts due to insufficient power reserves, particularly during peak demand. The lack of adequate energy storage infrastructure exacerbates the problem, as excess energy generated during peak production hours cannot always be stored for later use. Battery energy storage systems (BESS) are being developed, but they remain expensive and insufficient for nationwide deployment. Strengthening energy storage capacity and ensuring a balanced energy mix are crucial to mitigating these challenges.

To encourage investment in renewable energy, the Philippine government has implemented feed-in tariffs (FIT), a subsidy mechanism that guarantees fixed payments to renewable energy producers. While this policy has successfully increased investments in solar, wind, hydro, and biomass energy, it has also imposed financial pressures that need to be carefully managed. The FIT system is ultimately funded by consumers through the universal charge for renewable energy (UC-RE) in their electricity bills. This additional cost is passed down to households and businesses, increasing electricity prices in a country where power rates are already among the highest in Southeast Asia. While renewable energy must be supported, a more sustainable approach that ensures affordability for consumers needs to be explored.

Renewable energy is often seen as environmentally friendly, but large-scale projects can have significant ecological and social consequences. Hydropower plants, for

instance, require vast amounts of land and can lead to deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and displacement of local communities. The Pulangi hydroelectric project in Mindanao has drawn attention for its potential impact on indigenous communities and ecosystems. Similarly, wind and solar farms require extensive land areas, which can lead to conflicts over land use. In Ilocos Norte, the expansion of wind farms has raised concerns over land acquisition and the impact on local agricultural activities. Additionally, large-scale solar farms in areas like Nueva Ecija have led to concerns about agricultural land being repurposed for energy production, potentially affecting local food supply and farmers' livelihoods. Moreover, the extraction of materials for solar panels, wind turbines, and battery storage—such as lithium and rare earth metals—requires intensive mining, which has its own environmental consequences.

The rapid energy transition is further complicated by institutional and regulatory barriers. Various government agencies oversee different aspects of energy policy, and ensuring smooth coordination remains a challenge. The permitting process for new energy projects can be slow, with renewable energy developers navigating complex regulatory requirements and right-of-way issues. While efforts have been made to streamline approvals and enhance grid infrastructure, further improvements are needed to support the growing share of renewables in the energy mix. Grid modernization is crucial to integrating intermittent energy sources, and sustained efforts in this area will help strengthen the overall reliability of the power sector.

Another challenge in the transition is the need for workforce reskilling. As the energy landscape evolves, workers in traditional fossil fuel industries may find themselves displaced. Investing in workforce training programs and social protection programs will be essential to ensure a smooth transition for affected workers and to build a skilled labor force that can support the growth of renewable energy industries.

The global nature of renewable energy supply chains also presents a potential risk for energy security. Many of the critical materials used in solar panels, wind turbines, and battery storage systems are sourced from a few key countries. This concentration of supply can lead to vulnerabilities in the event of geopolitical tensions or trade disruptions. Diversifying supply sources and supporting domestic capabilities in renewable energy manufacturing can help mitigate these risks.

The Philippines' energy transition should not be rushed at the expense of stability, affordability, and sustainability. While the government's goal of increasing renewable energy's share in the power mix is commendable, a more pragmatic approach is necessary. This includes investing in energy storage and grid modernization, diversifying the energy mix to ensure stability, and ensuring that financial mechanisms

supporting renewables are sustainable. Strengthening coordination among agencies, addressing environmental and social concerns, and preparing the workforce for new opportunities in the renewable energy sector are also critical. The transition to renewable energy must continue, but it is essential to remain conscious of the challenges and implications of a rapid shift. A carefully managed transition will ensure that the benefits of clean energy are maximized while minimizing unintended consequences.

DAILY TRIBUNE

[80% of persons displaced by climate change are women — group](#)

By: Gabriela Baron

About 80 percent of persons displaced by climate change are women, according to Child Rights Coalition (CRC) Asia.

"Women and children are also among the most vulnerable to climate-induced disasters," CRC Asia said, noting that in Asia Pacific, women in coastal and rural communities face heightened risks due to rising sea levels, extreme weather, and food insecurity.

"Climate justice must prioritize protection, mitigation, and adaptation efforts that leave no one behind — especially children," CRC Asia regional executive director Amihan Abueva said.

UNICEF also pointed out that gender-based violence exacerbates in the wake of climate crises, as girls are increasingly being traded off into child marriages in return for food amid climate-induced starvation across the world.

Further, the United Nations (UN) stressed that when extreme weather disasters strike, women and children "are 14 times more likely to die than men," mostly due to limited access to information, limited mobility, decision-making, and resources.

"Climate change, then, is not just an environmental phenomenon, it is a social injustice crisis that aggravates already existing injustices in communities," UNICEF noted.

"It is for this reason that any discussion on climate action is tokenistic in nature and futile in structure, unless it addresses the plight of women in climate crisis," the UN agency added.

With that, Abueva called on governments, civil society, the private sector, and communities "to work together in tackling these urgent challenges."

"Women and girls must not only be seen as beneficiaries but as active participants and leaders in shaping solutions," Abueva stressed.

"It is time to accelerate action for gender equality and the full realization of women's and girls' rights. Our collective future depends on it."

CAAP urges travelers to brace for hotter weather

By: Anthony Ching

All travelers were cautioned by the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) on Thursday to stay hydrated and cool as temperatures continue to rise with the beginning of the dry season in the country.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) calculated a five-day heat index from February 28 to March 3, and according to that index, temperatures at several airport locations have increased to between 42 and 45 degrees Celsius. Isabela, Virac, Masbate, Cagayan, and Tuguegarao City are among the impacted areas.

Along with an anticipated surge of tourists, individuals are being warned to brace themselves for even hotter temperatures this summer.

To further improve passenger comfort and well-being throughout the hot season, the CAAP is implementing measures in coordination with its operated airports. Air travelers can also still get assistance from the Malasakit Help Desk.

"As instructed by Secretary Vince Dizon, we are working closely with our Area Managers to conduct routine airport surveillance. They are required to help travelers, particularly at airports with the highest temperatures," stated retired Lt. Gen. Raul del Rosario, director general of CAAP.

"We have adequate ventilation in our facilities to reduce discomfort and health issues both before and after travel," he continued.

In order to protect the well-being of all passengers and staff, the CAAP remains dedicated to maintaining safety regulations. The Department of Transportation, the agency's main department, continues to work closely with CAAP. In addition to the expected increase in tourists, people are being cautioned to prepare for much harsher summer temperatures.

FINANCIAL TIMES

[US pulls out of flagship \\$45bn global climate finance coalition](#)

By: A. Anantha Lakshmi, Attracta Mooney and Rob Rose

The US has withdrawn from a flagship global climate financing programme by rich nations to help developing countries quit coal, putting the \$45bn effort in jeopardy as a result of the latest green retreat by Donald Trump.

The US president, who has called climate change a hoax, has made sweeping cuts to climate programmes since coming to power, axing funding and jobs even at critical US domestic weather and science agencies, such as the National Weather Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The US was a core member of the so-called Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP), an initiative launched in 2021 to assist South Africa, Indonesia and Vietnam to abandon fossil fuels and move to renewable energy through a combination of loans, grants and private finance. It was designed to incentivise those countries to cut emissions in return for funding.

In letters sent to participating countries in the past week, the US said it was withdrawing from the JETPs covering Indonesia, Vietnam and South Africa, after Trump's executive order called for putting America first in international deals, according to three people familiar with discussions.

A terse one-page letter sent to South Africa's energy minister from the US embassy, seen by the Financial Times, said the order revoked the US's international climate finance plan.

Dana Brown, the US chargé d'affaires, said it meant "all associated financial pledges are also withdrawn [and] grant projects that were previously funded and in planning or implementation phases have been cancelled".

At the time of their launch by former US climate envoy John Kerry, the JETPs were seen as crucial to building trust between rich countries, responsible for the bulk of the world's historical greenhouse gas emissions, and developing nations.

Poorer countries are facing the consequences of global warming while struggling with the need for energy to develop their economies.

The US exit from the programme meant "the credibility [of the JETPs] is lost", said one person familiar with Indonesia's participation.

Rachel Kyte, the UK's climate envoy, said on Thursday that the US's exit marked a "withdrawal of commercial finance and so while regrettable, we believe there is a clear path forward".

Other members of the international coalition — the advanced economies, including the EU, the UK and Japan — remained committed, she said.

German development state secretary Jochen Flasbarth also called the US move "regrettable", but added: "We are convinced that the work of the Just Energy Transition Partnerships can be continued successfully."

Germany has stepped up to co-lead the Indonesian programme alongside Japan, in lieu of the US. "The decision to share responsibility between so many partners is now turning out to be very helpful," Flasbarth said.

In recent weeks, the UK and Germany have been among the countries trying to shore up the JETPs.

Indonesia, one of the top carbon emitters in the world, is set to receive \$20bn, making it the biggest recipient. But the programme has been criticised since its launch for being too reliant on loans and the slow disbursement of funds. Hashim Djojohadikusumo, Indonesia's climate and energy envoy, in January said it was a "failed programme".

South Africa's JETP unit, sitting under the presidency, said the US withdrawal reduced the overall pledges to South Africa from \$13.8bn to \$12.8bn. This showed it was not existential for its programme.

The US had pledged \$56mn in grant funding, and \$1bn in potential commercial investments, which will now not take place.

"All other [international] partners remain firmly committed to supporting South Africa's [programme]," said Joanne Yawitch, head of the unit. It would speak to other participants to "source alternative funding", she said.

The issues with the JETPs come as countries around the world continue to clash over climate finance. At COP29 in Baku in November, developing nations heavily criticised rich countries for their failure to provide effective financing to deal with climate change.

At last week's meeting of the G20 finance ministers held in Cape Town, no formal agreement could be reached between the countries on climate finance.

South Africa's finance minister Enoch Godongwana said certain countries had "a different view on how we manage climate finance", with other sources in those meetings identifying the US as the holdout.

MANILA BULLETIN

[Rising reinsurance costs, fueled by climate change, could hike Philippine insurance rates](#)

By: Derco Rosal

Worsening climate change could drive up the cost of insuring personal assets, creating a domino effect from rising reinsurance costs, according to the Philippine Insurance and Reinsurers Association (PIRA).

In a briefing on Wednesday, March 5, former PIRA chairperson Eden R. Tesoro said the most recent wildfires that ravaged California could increase non-life insurance premiums' costs.

Tesoro, also the chief operating officer of Malayan Insurance, said that the market should expect price adjustments if their reinsurers happen to be among those affected by wildfires.

Reinsurers—insurance firms providing financial protection to insurance companies—will adjust pricing to ensure their stability, Tesoro said.

“As a rule, when you have this significant rise in reinsurance costs, then generally, the product will have to increase in price,” Tesoro noted.

As a result, insurers will also pass on higher reinsurance costs to policyholders through increased premiums, as maintaining current pricing would be unsustainable.

According to Tesoro, non-life insurance premiums rose by about 10 to 15 percent in 2023 and 2024.

PIRA Executive Director Michael F. Rellosa said non-life insurers cannot just raise premiums without the Insurance Commission's (IC) approval.

Despite this, Tesoro noted that non-life insurers have various reinsurance sources. To date, the National Reinsurance Corporation (NatRe) remains the only professional reinsurer in the Philippines.

As per Jose Augurio N. De Vera Jr., NatRe's non-life reinsurance head, reinsurance costs surged in 2024 due to a “hard market.”

Concerning risks, PIRA said that besides intensified climate-related events, the industry might also feel the impact of global politics.

Rellosa warned of record temperatures before summer, which could lead to heavy rainfall.

“We’re going to be hitting record temperatures and we haven’t even started our summer. If there’s record-high heat, it usually translates to record-high rainfall,” Rellosa said.

Meanwhile, Tesoro said US politics may not directly affect Philippine non-life insurers but could influence their investments in the country.

Further, the looming trade war between the world’s largest traders could spill over locally, impacting the insurance industry.

“Anything that affects the economy, we feel that in the insurance industry, either we insure less goods or the cost for example of preparing stuff locally would be more expensive because we import. So an increase in tariffs should also increase in prices,” Rellosa said.

UNITED NATIONS

[Climate change: La Niña fades, as global heat keeps rising](#)

La Niña, a natural climate phenomenon, results in cooler Pacific Ocean temperatures and influences weather conditions worldwide. The latest forecasts from WMO indicate sea surface temperatures in the equatorial Pacific are expected to return to normal.

The agency says that there is a 60 per cent chance conditions will shift back to what scientists call an ENSO-neutral temperature range during March-May 2025, increasing to 70 per cent for April-June 2025.

ENSO (El Niño-Southern Oscillation)-neutral simply means the ocean is neither unusually warm (El Niño) nor unusually cool (La Niña). Likewise, the probability of El Niño developing is very low during this period, the agency said.

According to WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo, El Niño and La Niña associated forecasts are critical for early warnings and taking preemptive action.

“These forecasts translate into millions of dollars’ worth in economic savings for key sectors like agriculture, energy and transport, and have saved thousands of lives over the years by enabling disaster risk preparedness”.

La Niña, with its large-scale cooling of ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific, changes wind, pressure, and rainfall. Typically, it brings climate impacts opposite to El Niño, especially in tropical regions.

For instance, during El Niño, Australia often experiences drought, whereas La Niña can bring increased rainfall and flooding. In contrast, parts of South America may experience drought during La Niña but wetter conditions during El Niño.

Bringing the heat

Notably, these natural climate events are currently occurring alongside human-caused climate change, which is warming the planet and causing more extreme weather. According to WMO, January 2025 was the warmest January on record, despite the cooler La Niña conditions.

The agency looks at ENSO but also issues regular Global Seasonal Climate Updates (GSCU) that provide a more comprehensive climate outlook based on other key patterns such as those in the Atlantic and Arctic. These updates also track sea temperatures, global and regional temperature and rainfall changes.

With most maritime regions set to be warmer than normal, except in the eastern Pacific, WMO forecasts above-average temperatures across nearly all land areas worldwide during the upcoming season.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[CCC urges LGUs to fully utilize NAP, PSF to boost climate resilience](#)

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) has urged local planning officers to fully utilize the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and the People's Survival Fund (PSF) to strengthen climate resilience.

During the 35th Annual National Convention of the League of Local Planning and Development Coordinators of the Philippines held Feb. 25 to 28 here, CCC Deputy Executive Director, Assistant Secretary Romell Antonio Cuenca, said the NAP and PSF are key tools to enhance local climate resilience.

The NAP aims, he said, to steadily reduce climate-related loss and damage and build the country's adaptive capacity towards transformative resilience and sustainable economic development by 2050.

On the other hand, the PSF is a dedicated finance mechanism that supports various community-based adaptation projects to strengthen the resilience of localities and ecosystems.

"The NAP provides a long-term strategy for climate adaptation, while the PSF provides financial support for local projects. As one of the most climate-at-risk countries, the Philippines must maximize these frameworks to enhance preparedness and adaptive capacity," Cuenca told the around 800 local planning and development coordinators and other LGU representatives.

With the theme "Beyond Building Back Better: Utilizing Lessons of Resilience in Development Planning," the event focused on disaster preparedness, particularly drawing insights from Tacloban's experience recovering from Super Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) in 2013.

He emphasized the vital role of local planning and development coordinators in ensuring these programs are effectively implemented.

"The success of NAP implementation and PSF access depends on the collective efforts of local governments. Proper compliance with PSF requirements is necessary to ensure the effective utilization of funds for climate adaptation initiatives," Cuenca said.

For his part, CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director, Secretary Robert E.A. Borje, underscored the importance of these programs for local planners.

"With proper integration, utilizing the PSF and NAP in local plans will strengthen resilience and support sustainable recovery," Borje said, noting that the NAP was developed under the leadership of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.

In the 5th Philippine Environment Summit (PES) held on Feb. 15 to 20 in Iloilo City, Borje also highlighted the importance of NAP as a key strategy for building the country's climate resilience.

"The Philippines faces intensifying climate threats—rising temperatures, increasing sea levels, shifting rainfall patterns, and stronger tropical cyclones," Boje said.

"This underscores the importance of NAP as it outlines actions to reduce risks, enhance adaptive capacities, and integrate climate adaptation into national and local development planning," he added.

Iloilo City is one of the 18 provinces identified in the NAP as highly exposed to climate change impacts, particularly strong winds, rising sea levels, and extreme sea levels.

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