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MANILA STANDARD

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

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Switzerland-based air quality monitoring database IQAir unveiled its findings on Tuesday, which draw on data from 40,000 air quality monitoring stations in 138 countries, finding that Chad, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have the most polluted air in the world.

Data gap

The scale of the problem might be far greater than reported, given that many parts of the world lack the monitoring needed for more accurate data. Across Africa, for example, there is only one monitoring station for every 3.7 million people.

The data gap could grow wider following an announcement by the US Department of State last week that it will no longer make public the data it gathers from its embassies and consulates around the world.

Many developing countries have relied on air quality sensors mounted on US embassy and consulate buildings to track their smog levels, but the US State Department is now ending the monitoring scheme, citing budget constraints.

"Most countries have a few other data sources, but it's going to impact Africa significantly, because oftentimes these are the only sources of publicly available real-time air quality monitoring data," said Christi Chester-Schroeder, IQAir's air quality science manager.

Christa Hasenkopf, director of the Clean Air Program at the University of Chicago's Energy Policy Institute (EPIC), said at least 34 countries will lose access to reliable pollution data after the US programme closes.

The State Department scheme improved air quality in the cities where the monitors were placed, boosting life expectancy and even reducing hazard allowances for US diplomats, meaning that it paid for itself, Hasenkopf said.

As a result of the State Department's move, more than 17 years of data were removed last week from the US government's official air quality monitoring site, airnow.gov, including readings collected in Chad.

According to the report, Chad and Bangladesh had average smog levels more than 15 times higher than WHO guidelines last year.

Chad was ranked the most polluted country in 2022 due to Sahara dust as well as uncontrolled crop burning.

Climate change is playing an increasing role in driving up pollution, Chester-Schroeder warned, with higher temperatures causing fiercer and lengthier forest fires that have swept through parts of Southeast Asia and South America.

CNN

[The Arctic is in trouble. The consequences will be felt around the world](#)

By: Laura Paddison

The Arctic has long filled humans with awe, but there are now profoundly worrying signals coming from the frozen landscape at the top of our planet, and scientists are deeply concerned about its future as the Trump administration pulls the US out of global climate strategy and guts its science agencies.

Last month was extreme: Temperatures in parts of the Arctic spiked 36 degrees Fahrenheit, or 20 Celsius, above normal. By the end of the month, sea ice was at its lowest level ever recorded for February, marking the third straight month of record lows.

This follows a year of concerning signs from the region, including intense wildfires and thawing permafrost pumping out planet-heating pollution.

It paints a grim picture of a region that's been in rapid decline for the last two decades as humans continue to burn fossil fuels. The Arctic now exists within a "new regime," where signals such as sea ice loss and ocean temperatures may not always break records, but are consistently more extreme compared to the past, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said in its annual health check of the region published in December.

It's a problem with global consequences. The Arctic plays a vital role in global temperatures and weather systems. It's "sort of like our planetary air conditioning system," said Twila Moon, deputy lead scientist at the National Snow and Ice Data Center. Its decline accelerates global warming, increases sea level rise and helps to drive more extreme weather.

The Arctic is the early warning system for climate change and the loss of sea ice is a clear sign it's in trouble, scientists say. It should be reaching its annual maximum levels of ice at this time of year, but instead it's experiencing record lows.

"I hope that these three months do not act as a precursor to a potential new all-time minimum this summer, because the starting point to the melting season is not good," said Mika Rantanen, a researcher at the Finnish Meteorological Institute.

Arctic sea ice bottoms out at the end of summer in September. The last 18 years have seen the lowest sea ice levels on record, a downward spiral that will continue, scientists say.

The Arctic will be ice-free in the summer at some point by 2050, even if humans stop pumping out climate pollution, according to a report co-authored by Dirk Notz, head of sea ice at the University of Hamburg. "It's basically too late to prevent that," he told CNN.

The first ice-free day could even happen before the end of this decade, according to a separate study published in December.

Sea ice loss is not only damaging to wildlife, plants and the roughly 4 million people who live in the Arctic — it has global consequences. Sea ice acts like a giant mirror, reflecting the sunlight away from the Earth and back into space. As it shrinks, more of the sun's energy is absorbed by the dark ocean, which accelerates global heating.

Part of the reason for the recent run of record-low sea ice is the unusual heat in the Arctic, which has been warming around four times faster than the global average.

Early February's extreme warmth "was one of the strongest ever recorded," said Rantanen, who estimates it was probably in the top three of the most intense warming events in the satellite era since the 1970s.

The Arctic landscape is changing too, said the NSIDC's Twila Moon.

The thawing of permafrost — a jumble of soil, rocks and sediment held together by ice — is pervasive, she said, releasing planet-heating carbon dioxide and methane.

Wildfires have become more frequent and intense and wildfire seasons run longer. Last year marked the third time in five years significant, widespread blazes ripped across the Arctic.

These changes are fundamentally altering the ecosystem. For thousands of years, the shrubby landscape of the Arctic tundra stored carbon, but wildfires and thawing permafrost mean that this region is now releasing more carbon than it stores, according to NOAA.

"There's just an overwhelming amount of change happening in the Arctic right now," said Moon.

What happens in the Arctic has repercussions across the planet.

A warmer Arctic means land ice — glaciers and ice sheets — melts faster, adding to sea level rise. The Greenland ice sheet already sheds around 280 billion tons of ice a year, enough to cover the whole of Manhattan in a layer of ice roughly 2 miles thick.

Rapid warming in the region also weakens the jet stream, altering weather systems that affect billions of people, said Jennifer Francis, a senior scientist at Woodwell Climate Research Center. A more meandering jet stream "makes weather conditions linger longer, leading to more persistent heat waves, cold spells, drought, and stormy periods," she told CNN.

Scientists say some of these changes can be reversed if humans stop pumping out planet-heating gases, but on timescales ranging from hundreds of years to many thousands. Many of these changes are considered “relatively irreversible,” Moon said.

There’s another threat, too. Scientists’ ability to keep tabs on the swift-changing Arctic is being jeopardized by geopolitical upheaval.

Russia’s war on Ukraine has meant scientists from the country, the largest Arctic nation, have been excluded from international collaboration. This has already undermined scientists’ ability to track what’s happening in the Arctic, according to a recent study.

In the US, the Trump administration’s sweeping cuts to government climate science jobs is creating serious concern, especially as many measurement systems are maintained by the US. With less US expertise and fewer US scientists, “it would become much, much harder to understand what’s happening” at a vital time for the Arctic, said the University of Hamburg’s Notz.

What’s happening in the Arctic is one of the starkest indications of “how powerful we humans have become in changing the face of our planet,” Notz said. “We are able to wipe out entire landscapes.”

RAPPLER

[‘Work on track’ after US pullout from climate damage fund – DENR](#)

By: Iya Gozum

Environment Secretary Toni Yulo-Loyzaga said Tuesday, March 11, that work “remains on track” following the United States’ pullout from the board of the Loss and Damage Fund, which the Philippines hosts.

“We will continue to work towards climate and disaster resilience with like-minded international partners,” Loyzaga said in a message to Rappler.

Loyzaga did not offer more details if the board is expecting delays in fund disbursement to vulnerable countries experiencing the irreversible impacts of climate change. The environment chief led the Philippine delegation at the recent climate summit in Azerbaijan where Philippines’ host duties were formalized.

In a letter dated March 4, US representative to the board Rebecca Lawlor said “both the United States Board Member and United States Alternate Board Member will be stepping down, not to be replaced by a US representative.”

This follows the US’ exit from the 2015 Paris Agreement, a historic climate deal where countries commit to reduce carbon emissions.

In December 2024, the board of the fund gathered in Manila for a weeklong meeting on the disbursement of fund. Under then-US president Joe Biden, the US signed a contribution of \$17.6 million to the fund.

International climate group 350.org called the withdrawal a “gut punch to Asia’s frontline communities.”

“The US decision to walk away from the Loss and Damage Fund is more than just another broken promise — it’s a gut punch to the world’s most climate-vulnerable nations in Asia, where the climate crisis isn’t a distant threat but a daily reality,” Chuck Baclagon, 350.org Asia regional campaigner said in a statement on Tuesday.

Other parties with signed contributions to the fund are Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, and the Walloon Region of Belgium.

REUTERS

[Judge questions Trump administration claw back of \\$20 billion climate fund](#)

By Valerie Volcovici and Andrew Goudsward

A U.S. judge on Wednesday pressed President Donald Trump's administration for evidence of fraud, waste and abuse in a \$20 billion climate funding program that the administration has moved to terminate.

U. S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan said she would order the administration to file a sworn statement by Monday detailing the evidence used to justify ending the grant, which aimed to fund greenhouse gas reduction projects.

"You can't even tell me what the evidence of malfeasance is," Chutkan told a lawyer for the Trump administration during a hearing in U.S. District Court in Washington.

Climate advocates and Democrats say the move illegally seizes money allocated for clean energy and transportation for disadvantaged communities.

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin had publicized his campaign to claw back money from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, which Congress appropriated under the Biden administration to kick-start projects aimed at curbing pollution.

In a statement late on Tuesday, the EPA said it had clawed back the funds, saying the program did not align with the agency's priorities, citing concerns with potential fraud, waste and abuse, although it gave no details or evidence for the allegations.

Chutkan's demand for evidence came as part of a lawsuit brought by the Climate United Fund advocacy group, which sued the EPA and Citigroup's (C.N), opens new tab Citibank for withholding the funds

The group is seeking an emergency order temporarily requiring Citibank to disburse funds at its request, warning that it will run out of money as soon as Friday.

A lawyer for the Trump administration argued the court no longer had jurisdiction over the dispute because the grant had already been terminated.

The move is the latest development in the EPA's effort to take back funding that the Biden administration distributed last year to eight organizations that were chosen to

administer grants from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund from an account held by Citibank, which holds a financial agency agreement with the Treasury.

Zeldin has said that the FBI and Justice Department are also investigating.

The use of the FBI to investigate the fund has raised concerns with Democratic lawmakers who said the agencies have no grounds to probe Citibank or the grant recipients.

"The funding process followed a centuries-old framework that is set out transparently in a contract between Citibank and the Department of the Treasury and was announced publicly in April 2024," Democratic Senator Sheldon Whitehouse said in a letter to Attorney General Pam Bondi and FBI Director Kash Patel.

Whitehouse, who is the top Democrat on the Senate Environment Committee and on a Senate Judiciary Subcommittee, said the officials did not have a "true basis to interfere with these properly appropriated and obligated funds."

The EPA said it would work to use the funds "with enhanced controls" within the law but did not say specifically what it would do with the money.

"EPA will be an exceptional steward of taxpayer dollars dedicated to our core mission of protecting human health and the environment, not a frivolous spender in the name of 'climate equity,'" Zeldin said.

Congress appropriated the \$20 billion through the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act under Democratic President Joe Biden. Under Trump, the EPA has sought to freeze funding related to climate change and environmental justice amid legal challenges.

Separately, the EPA announced in an internal memo on Tuesday that it will shutter the agency's Office of Environmental Justice and Civil Rights, which focuses on minority and low-income communities that have been hard hit by air and water pollution, along with its 10 regional offices, as part of a broader reorganization of the agency.

The EPA had put staffers in that office on administrative leave last month.

"It needlessly endangers the health of our children, particularly in areas overburdened by pollution," said Stephanie Reese, a director at the Moms Clean Air Force environmental group.

THE GUARDIAN

[‘Global weirding’: climate whiplash hitting world’s biggest cities, study reveals](#)

Climate whiplash is already hitting major cities around the world, bringing deadly swings between extreme wet and dry weather as the climate crisis intensifies, a report has revealed.

Dozens more cities, including Lucknow, Madrid and Riyadh have suffered a climate “flip” in the last 20 years, switching from dry to wet extremes, or vice versa. The report analysed the 100 most populous cities, plus 12 selected ones, and found that 95% of them showed a distinct trend towards wetter or drier weather.

The changing climate of cities can hit citizens with worsened floods and droughts, destroy access to clean water, sanitation and food, displace communities and spread disease. Cities where the water infrastructure is already poor, such as Karachi and Khartoum, suffer the most.

Cities across the world are affected but the data shows some regional trends, with drying hitting Europe, the already-parched Arabian peninsula and much of the US, while cities in south and south-east Asia are experiencing bigger downpours.

The analysis illustrates the climate chaos being brought to urban areas by human-caused global heating. Too little or too much water is the cause of 90% of climate disasters. More than 4.4 billion people live in cities and the climate crisis was already known to be supercharging individual extreme weather disasters across the planet.

Rising temperatures, driven by fossil fuel pollution, can exacerbate both floods and droughts because warmer air can take up more water vapour. This means the air can suck more water from the ground during hot, dry periods but also release more intense downpours when the rains come.

“Our study shows that climate change is dramatically different around the world,” said Prof Katerina Michaelides, at the University of Bristol, UK. Her co-author, Prof Michael Singer at Cardiff University, described the pattern as “global weirding”.

“Most places we looked at are changing in some way, but in ways that are not always predictable,” Singer said. “And given that we’re looking at the world’s largest cities, there are really significant numbers of people involved.”

Coping with climate whiplash and flips in cities is extremely hard, said Michaelides. Many cities already face water supply, sewage and flood protection problems as their populations rapidly swell. But global heating supercharges this, with the often ageing infrastructure in rich nations designed for a climate that no longer exists, and more climate extremes making the establishment of much-needed infrastructure even harder in low income nations.

The researchers have worked in Nairobi, Kenya, one of the cities suffering climate whiplash. “People were struggling with no water, failed crops, dead livestock, with drought really impacting their livelihoods and lives for multiple years,” Michaelides said. “Then the next thing that happens is too much rain, and everything’s flooded, they lose more livestock, the city infrastructure gets overwhelmed, water gets contaminated, and then people get sick.”

Sol Oyuela, executive director at NGO WaterAid, which commissioned the analysis, said: “The threat of a global ‘day zero’ looms large – what happens when the 4 billion people already facing water scarcity reach that breaking point, and the food, health, energy, nature, economies, and security that depend on water are pushed to the brink?”

“Now is the time for urgent collective action, so communities can recover from disasters and be ready for whatever the future holds. This will make the world a safer place for all,” Oyuela said.

The savage wildfires in Los Angeles in January were an example of a single whiplash event, with a wet period spurring vegetation growth, which then fuelled the fires when hot and dry weather followed. Such events are increasing due to human-caused global heating.

The new analysis by Michaelides and Singer was much broader and examined the changes in wet and dry extremes over the past four decades in 112 major cities.

It found that 17 cities across the globe have been hit by climate whiplash, suffering more frequent extremes of both wet and dry conditions. The biggest whiplashes were seen in Hangzhou in China, the Indonesian megacity of Jakarta, and Dallas in Texas. Other whiplash cities include Baghdad, Bangkok, Melbourne and Nairobi. The rapid shift between wet and dry extremes makes it difficult for cities to prepare and recover, damaging lives and livelihoods.

The analysis also found that 24 cities have seen dramatic climate flips this century. The sharpest switches from wet to dry conditions have been in Cairo, Madrid and Riyadh,

with Hong Kong and San Jose in California also in the top 10. Prolonged droughts can lead to water shortages, disrupted food supplies and electricity blackouts where hydropower is relied upon.

The sharpest switches from dry to wet conditions were in Lucknow and Surat in India and in Nigeria's second city, Kano. Other cities with wet flips were Bogotá, Hong Kong and Tehran. Intense rains can cause flash floods, destroying homes and roads and spreading deadly waterborne diseases like cholera and dysentery when sanitation systems are overwhelmed.

The researchers also assessed the level of social vulnerability and quality of infrastructure in the cities. The cities with the biggest increases in climate hazards combined with the highest vulnerability – and therefore the places facing the greatest dangers – were Khartoum in Sudan, Faisalabad in Pakistan, and Amman in Jordan.

Karachi, also in Pakistan, ranked highly for vulnerability as well and is experiencing more wet extremes. Torrential rains in 2022 destroyed the family home of fisher Mohammad Yunis in Ibrahim Hyderi, a waterfront district in the city.

“We have spent many days and nights completely drenched in rain because we had no shelter,” he said. “The weather affects everything. When it rains heavily, our children fall sick. But we don't have sufficient [clean] water. Our localities are breaking down. Houses near the drainage systems collapse due to floods. When floods come, walls fall apart. If we had enough money, we would not be living here.”

Even in the cities where the changes in climate were less stark, clear trends were seen in almost all of them. The places getting drier over the last 40 years included Paris, Los Angeles, Cape Town, and Rio de Janeiro. Many of those getting wetter are in south Asia, such as Mumbai, Lahore and Kabul.

The researchers also found 11 cities where the number of extreme wet or dry months had fallen in the last 20 years, including Nagoya in Japan, Lusaka in Zambia, and Guangzhou in China.

The overall results of the new study are consistent with the most recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which found there were both regions with increases in heavy rains and others with increases in drought, as well as some regions with increases in both, said Prof Sonia Seneviratne, at ETH Zurich in Switzerland, coordinating lead author of the IPCC chapter on weather and climate extreme events.

“A few tenths of a degree warmer and the life we know becomes increasingly at risk due to climate extremes such as heatwaves, droughts, and heavy rainfall,” she said.

Singer said: “We hope our report can galvanise global attention on the challenges of climate change with respect to water. Perhaps it will lead to a more realistic conversation about supporting adaptation to climate change, with a sense of compassion and understanding of the challenges people are facing, rather than just saying, well, we can’t afford it.”

Methodology

The researchers analysed the changing climate of cities using a standard index (SPEI) that combined precipitation with evaporation each month from 1983 to 2023. Index values above a widely-used threshold were categorised as extreme.

To assess changes over the four decades, the data was split into two 21-year periods. The cities that experienced at least 12 months more of one type of extreme climate (wet or dry) and at least 12 months less of the other type of extreme climate in the second 21-year period were classed as having a climate flip. The cities that had at least five months more of both extreme wet and extreme dry in the second period were classed as having developed climate whiplash. The overall wetting or drying trends were determined from all 42 years of data.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DAILY TRIBUNE

[PRA 'champions' feted on Women's Month](#)

A top Philippine fire officer, recognized for her leadership in disaster resilience, highlighted the critical role of women in building safer communities during the National Women's Month Celebration kickoff.

Senior Fire Officer 3 Daisy Leal-Cabauatan, the 2024 Philippine Resilience Awards Champion for Women, shared her experiences as Provincial Chief and Operations Program Director of the Nueva Vizcaya Bureau of Fire Protection at the event organized by the Climate Change Commission (CCC).

Cabauatan stressed that women are often at the forefront of disaster response, leveraging local knowledge and community networks to ensure safety during emergencies. She stressed the importance of equal participation and leadership for effective climate change adaptation.

"When Juana is always prepared, the whole community is safer," Cabauatan said, calling for increased mentorship, networking, and leadership opportunities for women in disaster management.

The event, led by the Philippine Commission on Women and SM Cares at the SM Mall of Asia, featured service booths, livelihood support, and lectures aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

Philippine Commission on Women chairperson Ermelita Valdeavilla, in her "State of the Filipino Women" report, underscored the necessity of gender equality in resilience efforts.

"Climate change disasters do not sit down and negotiate; they do not choose who you are. They can strike whenever they want," Valdeavilla said. "We cannot win against them, so our fight is about resilience. Let us teach our women and our communities how to strengthen resilience."

The theme for this year's National Women's Month, "Babae sa Lahat ng Sektor, Aangat ang Bukas sa Bagong Pilipinas," translates to "Women in All Sectors, the Future Rises in the New Philippines," reflecting the vision of progress through women's leadership.

Climate Change Commission vice chairperson and executive director Robert E.A. Borje praised women's active leadership in building climate resilience.

"Women have always played a key role in shaping the resilience of our communities. Their insights and actions in disaster response and climate adaptation are indispensable in building a better, more prepared nation," Borje said.

Meantime, CCC commissioner Rachel Anne Herrera added that women are not only first responders in crises but also lead climate resilience initiatives.

Pangasinan vows fight vs climate change

By: Aldwin Quitasol

The governor of Pangasinan vowed that the officials, together with the Pangasinenses, will continue and further strengthen their collective efforts in nurturing the environment of the province as part of the global bid to combat the negative impacts of climate change.

Pangasinan Governor Ramon Guico III express their gratefulness to the Climate Change Commission (CCC) for recognizing their consistent environmental campaign of the province.

He said the recognition will serve as a stronger motivation for them to continue the collaborative work of all the local government units and residents of Pangasinan towards climate change adaptation, environmental protection and socio-economic sustainability.

Guico noted that Pangasinan's climate adaptation and mitigation efforts will not only benefit the province but will also have positive impact for the rest of Luzon given the interconnectedness of the ecosystem.

In February 2023, the governor, through his administration, launched the "Green Canopy Program" as manifestation of the province's contribution to the global fight against the negative impacts of climate change.

It is also the flagship environmental rehabilitation project of his administration.

During the visit of CCC at the province of Pangasinan, it lauded the initiatives of the provincial government on its climate action plans and applications, its efforts on disaster preparedness and environmental sustainability.

The agency praised the province's commitment to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

MANILA STANDARD

Climate actions assure sustainability—CCC

The Philippines must build up resilience measures to minimize climate risks and ensure sustainability of the country's economic and social systems.

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) made the call during the recent 5th Philippine Environment Summit (PES) here, citing the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) as a key strategy for building the country's climate resilience.

Secretary Robert E.A. Borje, vice chairperson and executive director of the CCC, noted the Philippines' susceptibility to climate change. "The Philippines faces intensifying climate threats—rising temperatures, increasing sea levels, shifting rainfall patterns, and stronger tropical cyclones," he said.

Discussions in the summit centered on transformative actions to reduce carbon footprints, with the CCC citing the NAP as a framework for strategic, informed, and targeted measures to minimize climate risks.

"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," Borje said.

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.

Borje batted for climate change mitigation, with the Nationally Determined Contribution Implementation Plan (NDCIP) serving as the country's commitment to reducing emissions and supporting global climate efforts. The NDCIP provides strategies for transitioning to cleaner energy, promoting renewable sources, and increasing energy efficiency.

While frameworks and roadmaps like the NAP are in place, Borje said their success relies on collective action. “The success of the NAP and NDCIP depends on the active participation of all stakeholders,” he said.

He encouraged simple yet impactful actions to reduce carbon emissions, such as participating in tree-growing activities, abstaining from using disposable plastics, conserving energy and supporting solar, wind and other renewable sources.

Undersecretary Asis G. Perez of the Department of Agriculture also called for concrete action, noting that climate change poses severe threats to the agricultural sector. “The Philippines is not only a contributor but also experiences major impacts, such as strong typhoons that disrupt harvest seasons,” Perez said.

The three-day summit, held in collaboration with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Green Convergence, brought together representatives from government, business sector, civil society, indigenous groups, non-government organizations, and students. \

The CCC also visited the Leganes Integrated Katunggan Ecopark, a 9.1-hectare mangrove forest rehabilitated after the devastation caused by Typhoon Frank in 2009. The ecopark serves as a vital carbon sink, contributing to climate change mitigation efforts.

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