



NEWS ROUNDUP

14 MARCH 2023 [08:00 am]

- 'Planet in the crosshairs': UN chief demands rapid emission cuts
- Envi-business org demands review of tax breaks for EVs
- Senate resolution sets investigation into destructive Oriental Mindoro oil spill
- DOT meets with German stakeholders, execs to further boost tourism
- Group calls for urgent response after experts warned Mindoro oil spill may reach Verde Island Passage
- Water disasters on both ends of the spectrum – dry and wet – are getting more intense as planet warms, study finds
- Big finance firms seek more environmental data
- Worry about severe weather events among highest in PH
- QC to host 2023 Earth Hour
- PAGASA eyes new weather radar system in Western Visayas
- Ternate residents hail PNP for leading mangrove planting
- Filipino women pedal for rights, climate justice
- Governments to vet crucial UN climate science report
- [Opinion] The problem with plastics
- Government urged to review tax breaks for electric vehicles
- Small island nations that are water-secure will be more resilient to climate change

AL JAZEERA

['Planet in the crosshairs': UN chief demands rapid emission cuts](#)

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BUSINESS MIRROR

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Senate resolution sets investigation into destructive Oriental Mindoro oil spill

By: Butch Fernandez

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CEBU DAILY NEWS

DOT meets with German stakeholders, execs to further boost tourism

By: Zacarian Sarao

To increase tourist visitors from the heart of Europe, Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Frasco met with stakeholders in Germany to discuss marketing and connectivity.

CNN PHILIPPINES

Group calls for urgent response after experts warned Mindoro oil spill may reach Verde Island Passage

By: Paige Javier

The latest simulation on the Oriental Mindoro oil spill possibly reaching the Verde Island Passage this week serves as a wake-up call for more urgent containment, according to an environmental advocacy group.

Water disasters on both ends of the spectrum – dry and wet – are getting more intense as planet warms, study finds

By: Rachel Ramirez

From lengthy droughts to severe flooding, the intensity of water-related disasters around the world has increased over the last two decades as global temperatures climbed to record levels, according to new research

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

[Big finance firms seek more environmental data](#)

By: Reuters

Financial institutions managing \$137 trillion in assets will this week call on companies to share more data on their environmental impact, the chair of disclosure platform CDP told Reuters.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

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By: Susan De Leon

In partnership with the World Wide Fund for Nature – Philippines (WWF-Philippines), Quezon City will host this year's Earth Hour celebration in the Philippines on March 25 at the Quezon Memorial Circle.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[PAGASA eyes new weather radar system in Western Visayas](#)

By: Perla Lena

The Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical Astronomical Service Administration (PAGASA) is eyeing a new radar system for the Iloilo Synoptic Doppler Radio Station which has been non-operational since August 2021 due to defective power supply, according to a weather specialist on Monday.

[Ternate residents hail PNP for leading mangrove planting](#)

By: Prof. Julio O. Castillo Jr.

Local folks in Ternate cannot help but commend the recent effort by Police Brig. Gen. Romaldo G. Bayting and the Philippine National Police (PNP) Maritime Group to come up with an activity that is timely and relevant to today's environmental challenge and that coincided with their 32nd founding anniversary celebration.

SUNSTAR

[Filipino women pedal for rights, climate justice](#)

By: Ronaldo O. Reyes

SOME 1,000 bikers participated in the all-women “Pedal for People and Planet” in Quezon City on Sunday, March 12, 2023, to raise awareness on issues on women's rights, food, energy, and climate justice.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Governments to vet crucial UN climate science report](#)

By: Agence France Presse

Diplomats from nearly 200 nations and top climate scientists begin a weeklong huddle in Switzerland Monday to distill nearly a decade of published science into a 20-odd-page warning about the existential danger of global warming, and what to do about it.

[\[Opinion\] The problem with plastics](#)

By: Orlando Mercado

I WAS in college in the 1960s when I saw the critically acclaimed movie "The Graduate." Benjamin Braddock (Dustin Hoffman) was constantly asked what he wanted to do with his life. A businessman, Mr. McGuire (Walter Brooke), told him to remember one word: "plastics."

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Government urged to review tax breaks for electric vehicles](#)

The current tax incentive scheme for electric vehicles (EVs) should be amended because it "lacks inclusivity," an official of an environmental business group said.

UNESCO

[Small island nations that are water-secure will be more resilient to climate change](#)

Numerous small island nations will attend this side event, along with the Alliance of Small Island States and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, among others.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

AL JAZEERA

[‘Planet in the crosshairs’: UN chief demands rapid emission cuts](#)

The head of the United Nations called for scientists to serve up “cold hard facts” to push governments into making policies that curb climate change before a key global warming threshold is passed.

His comments came as experts and officials from around the world gathered for a weeklong meeting in the Swiss Alpine town of Interlaken to finalise the last of seven reports issued by the global body’s panel of top scientists since the Paris climate accord was forged in 2015.

In a video address to delegates, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Monday the latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) “could not come at a more pivotal time”.

“Our world is at a crossroads – and our planet is in the crosshairs,” he said. “We are nearing the point of no return, of overshooting the internationally agreed limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius [2.7 degrees Fahrenheit] of global warming.”

That threshold, agreed upon in Paris almost eight years ago and measured against average temperatures during pre-industrial times, has become the yardstick for climate scientists who warn of the dangers of an ever-hotter planet.

‘The right decisions’

Guterres cited recent IPCC reports showing while some effects of global warming are already unavoidable, “it is possible to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees with rapid and deep emissions reductions across all sectors of the global economy”.

Some scientists disagree, noting the rate at which greenhouse gas is being pumped into the atmosphere makes this limit almost impossible to keep to.

The UN chief said the final instalment in the IPCC’s sixth reporting cycle – known as the synthesis report because it brings together insights from six previous papers – should provide governments with “solid, frank, detailed scientific guidance to make the right decisions for people and planet” when they gather for the annual world climate conference in Dubai at the end of the year.

Guterres stressed speeding up the phase-out of fossil fuels is “tough but essential”.

“Show the urgent need to end global heating with cold, hard facts,” he told delegates.

BUSINESS MIRROR

[Envi-business org demands review of tax breaks for EVs](#)

Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship Secretary General Felix Jose Vitangcol urged the government to amend the tax incentives for electric vehicles as it 'lacks inclusivity.'

This was after the Palace released Executive Order No. 12 series of 2023 which modifies the tariff rates for EVs to help mainstream its use among Filipinos.

EO12 lowered the tariff rate for certain types of EVs ranging from five to 30 percent to zero percent import duty.

Under the EO, EVs such as kick scooters, pocket motorcycles, and self-balancing cycles are included in the tax breaks. Two-wheeled electric motorcycles, on the other hand, are still subject to 30 percent import duty.

In a statement posted on their Facebook page, Vitangcol stated that there seems to be a problem in the EO since only a limited portion of the population can afford to buy four-wheeled vehicles.

"Only more affluent Filipinos – indeed a limited segment of the population – can afford to buy four-wheel vehicles, and hence enjoy these incentives," Vitangcol said in their statement last February 16.

The organization reiterates that the majority of the motorists in the country are using two or three-wheeled vehicles including public utility jeepneys.

The Land Transportation Office documented that almost 8 million units of motorcycles are registered in their office in 2021.

"It is also they who are already perennially burdened by the soaring prices of basic goods and hampered by their limited income to provide for their families," he added.

PBEST asserts that more Filipinos should be encouraged to shift to alternative energy regardless of their socio-economic status and the types of their vehicles.

"This is why the government must make these tax incentives more inclusive," the Secretary General addressed.

Vitangcol also said that it is the government's role to spearhead the country's shift to electric vehicles as it will lessen the nation's dependence on fossil fuels.

According to the Statista Research Department, the power production in the Philippines is still dominated by coal at 47.6 percent, followed by other fossils at 18 percent, and gas at 10.7 percent, which totals 76.3 percent.

Various types of renewable energy generation like wind, solar, bioenergy, hydro, and other renewables share at 23.7 percent of the country's total power source.

The EO12 aims to help Filipinos to adapt to the usage of e-vehicles while decarbonizing and reducing the carbon emissions caused by the fueled-run vehicles.

Due to the fact that the Philippines is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, shifting to EVs is one of the country's solutions to help weaken its effects and go full electric by 2040.

To help mainstream the use of EVs and the development of infrastructures that can cater the industry, Republic Act No. 11697 commonly known as the Electric Vehicle Industry Development Act was passed along with other landmark policies.

Senate resolution sets investigation into destructive Oriental Mindoro oil spill

By: Butch Fernandez

Senate probers, acting on Senator Cynthia Villar's motion, are poised to mount an inquiry into the oil spill leaking from the tanker MT Princess Empress that sunk off the coast of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, damaging the marine ecosystem and biodiversity in the area and beyond.

In filing Senate Resolution 537, Villar asked the Senate Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change to spearhead the probe on the escalating adverse effects of the oil spill from the tank ship that sank off the coast of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro last February 28.

The Villar resolution also cited initial reports that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Philippine Coast Guard and Office of Civil Defense (OCD) have assessed the oil spill incident, but the lawmaker lamented, "No concrete action to contain it has been initiated."

Moreover, the senator also received reports that urgent calls were made by the local government units (LGU) concerned, as well as the people directly affected and environmentalists asking the government to "act swiftly to contain the oil spill and avoid further damage to the environment, livelihood and health of the people, and the tourism industry."

Villar also cited reports by University of the Philippines-Marine Science Institute experts that also warned that the oil spill can possibly "affect over 36,000 hectares of coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass across Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Palawan and Antique."

According to the chairperson of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, the oil spill is also likely to threaten the marine biodiversity of the Verde Island Passage, considered by scientists as the center of the world's marine biodiversity, noting reports that "there were already findings of dead fishes, marine life and sea birds."

"The oil spill has likewise affected the tourist destinations in Oriental Mindoro, such as the Bihiya Beach, 3 Cottage, Long Beach K. I, Aguada Beach Resort, Oloroso Beach Resort, Munting Buhangin Tagumpay Beach Resort, and Buhay na Tubig White Beach Resort in Oriental Mindoro, and even threatens to affect Boracay, the country's premiere tourist destination," she said.

“Apart from the environmental damage to the marine ecosystem, biodiversity, fisheries and tourism, the livelihood and health of the people in the area are already adversely affected by the said oil spill,” Villar added.

Based on the monitoring report of the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO), nine out of the 13 towns in Oriental Mindoro have been affected by the oil spill while 10,362 families or 48,885 people were likewise affected.

The ill-fated tanker vessel was traversing the route from Limay, Bataan to Iloilo, carrying a around 800,000 liters of industrial fuel when it encountered rough sea conditions and engine trouble that resulted to the ship’s sinking.

CEBU DAILY NEWS

[DOT meets with German stakeholders, execs to further boost tourism](#)

By: Zacarian Sarao

To increase tourist visitors from the heart of Europe, Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Frasco met with stakeholders in Germany to discuss marketing and connectivity.

According to Frasco, they met with some 20 tourism movers and players from Central Europe to discuss connectivity, training, and marketing on the sidelines of ITB (Internationale Tourismus Börse) Berlin 2023 in Germany.

“We are aiming to invite more German nationals to our shores. After almost three years of setbacks and the global pandemic among the hosts of other calamities, we can finally say the worst is almost over, we flourished, and we have survived, and now the Philippines is thriving and ready for your partnership. Ready to receive all of you and the tourists that you would like to bring into our country,” she said in a statement.

Frasco noted that Germany was the Philippines’ 11th biggest market for tourism in 2022, registering 39,013 German visitors last year.

She also said the DOT recorded 23,949 French, 19,306 Dutch, 11, 092 Swiss, and 8,964 Belgian tourists visiting the Philippines in 2022.

‘Overwintering’

The DOT program “Overwintering,” which is meant to cater to the German market, was also unveiled during the meetings.

“As many of you know, while you are experiencing winter here, we are about to declare the official start of summer in the Philippines. This is the best time to explore sun and beach destinations which we will make available for you through our ‘Overwintering’ program,” Frasco told German stakeholders and officials.

DOT data shows that a German visitor stays an average of 14.50 nights in the Philippines, mainly for leisure and business purposes, and that they usually go to Cebu, Palawan, and Bohol.

Aside from tourism partners, Frasco said she also met with Dieter Janecek, the Maritime Industry and Tourism Coordinator under the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Change, on March 9.

This meeting discussed the necessity of enhancing connectivity between Germany and the Philippines. Possible areas of collaboration on joint promotions to strengthen the Philippines' presence in the German market and the best sustainable tourism practices that both countries may venture into were likewise tackled during the talk.

Moreover, Frasco said the DOT conveyed during the conference its interest in initiating German language training for tourism frontliners, particularly tour guides, to further develop the tourism product portfolio offered to German tourists.

CNN PHILIPPINES

[Group calls for urgent response after experts warned Mindoro oil spill may reach Verde Island Passage](#)

By: Paige Javier

The latest simulation on the Oriental Mindoro oil spill possibly reaching the Verde Island Passage this week serves as a wake-up call for more urgent containment, according to an environmental advocacy group.

Center for Energy, Ecology, and Development (CEED) Deputy Director and Protect Verde Island Passage (Protect VIP) co-convenor Avril de Torres says the simulation model by the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UP MSI) validates reports on the ground of widespread impact.

“This is horrible news that we have been dreading to hear, but we had also expected considering the location where the tanker sank. There’s massive ecological and economic value in this Verde Island Passage that is being threatened by this oil spill,” De Torres told CNN Philippines.

Most of the oil will stay around Naujan coast and Pola Bay, based on the UP MSI's bulletin, while some oil may flow northward to the coast of Calapan, Verde Island, and other areas of Batangas due to the weakening amihan or northeast monsoon.

“These projections show that there is extreme urgency to address where the oil spill is projected to reach. And to prevent them from impacting more communities than it already had,” she added.

Around two million people who depend on the Verde Island Passage (VIP), the richest marine habitat in the world, for food and livelihood will be affected should the oil reach the area. The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), meanwhile, offered assurance that contingency measures are in place.

De Torres urges the government to expedite oil spill cleanup efforts and address its effects on livelihood and tourism, as well as hold individuals involved in the oil catastrophe accountable.

“Responses should focus on holding accountable the actors, containing the oil spill, preventing more communities from suffering the impacts of this ecological nightmare, and pursuing long-term reforms to make sure instances like this don’t happen again,” she said.

The PCG said it aims to finish the oil spill clean-up in four months, following the deadline given by President Bongbong Marcos Jr., with experts from Japan assisting in the operations.

The coast guard has also transported spill response workwear, masks, oil-proof working gloves, oil-proof rubber boots, oil blotters, and oil snares for use in the containment.

The PCG has also requested additional response equipment and absorbent pads from its United States counterpart to further speed up the process.

[Water disasters on both ends of the spectrum – dry and wet – are getting more intense as planet warms, study finds](#)

By: Rachel Ramirez

From lengthy droughts to severe flooding, the intensity of water-related disasters around the world has increased over the last two decades as global temperatures climbed to record levels, according to new research.

The study from NASA scientists published Monday in the journal *Nature Water* found that increasingly frequent, widespread and intense droughts and floods were linked more strongly to higher global temperatures than to naturally changing weather patterns, like El Niño and La Niña. This suggests these intense events will increase as the climate crisis accelerates, the study says.

The study comes as California is slammed with its 11th atmospheric river so far this season – storms that have brought torrential rainfall and crushing snow to a region that for the past several years has been mired in extreme drought. These storms have caused significant flooding, mudslides, collapsed bridges and unusable roads.

While scientists have been predicting climate change will increase the frequency of droughts and floods, it has been tricky to measure.

Matthew Rodell, lead author of the study and hydrologist at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, looked at 20 years of NASA satellite data from 2002 to 2021, and analyzed the size, duration, and severity – how much wetter or drier it is than normal – of water-related extreme events around the world.

The study identified 505 extreme wet events and 551 extreme dry events during this period, with roughly 70% lasting six months or less and about 10% lasting for more than a year.

The scientists found that these extreme events grew in intensity and frequency since 2015, when the trend of record warm years began.

“We thought, well, maybe this is related to global warming, because we do know the past seven or so years have been the hottest on record,” Rodell told CNN. “Sure enough, there was a significant correlation between this total worldwide intensity of these events and the temperature record.”

Rodell wanted to be certain of this conclusion, so he ran analyses to rule out other climate indicators including El Niño-Southern Oscillation, which is a natural climate

pattern that involves sea temperature changes in the Pacific Ocean and affects weather globally.

And in the end, he said the climate change signal was stronger than the other natural indicators.

“What I feel more confident about is that as the world warms, we’re going to see the greater global intensity of all the wet and dry events increase, meaning they’re going to be more frequent, larger and more severe in total,” Rodell said. “What happens in a regional sense is a little bit more difficult to say with certainty.”

Monday’s report found that the most extreme wet event during the study period happened in 2020 in sub-Saharan Africa, where months of intense rain swelled Lake Victoria – Africa’s largest lake – to the highest levels ever recorded. Rising water flooded homes and affected critical infrastructure such as drinking water, healthcare facilities, and hydropower.

The most intense dry event the study recorded was in Brazil and Venezuela from 2015 to 2016, which Rodell said “was about twice as intense” as the current drought in the southwestern US as of the end of 2021. The drought severely threatened hydroelectric power, drained critical reservoirs, and cut crop yields.

Richard Seager, professor at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University, who was not involved with the study, told CNN that the scientists’ use of satellites to analyze water events was a new angle as most studies just measure levels of precipitation or soil moisture.

“This study uses novel data to confirm that human-driven warming is driving the climate system to more extremes of extended both wet and dry episodes,” he said.

UN scientists recently concluded that as the climate changes, droughts that may have occurred only once every 10 years or so now happen 70% more frequently; whereas heavy rainfall that used to happen once every 10 years now occurs 30% more often.

While 2022 was not included in the study period, vast swaths of the world saw extreme events last year, including the deadly flooding that submerged a third of Pakistan as well as the severe European drought that caused some rivers to dip to historic lows.

Kim Cobb, a climate scientist and director of the Institute for Environment and Society at Brown University who did not participate in the study, told CNN that the latest research brings “a new lens on our rapidly changing water cycle, linking many of the headlines about droughts, floods and wildfires to this global analysis.”

Dramatic swings between both extremes – periods of drought and high precipitation – also known as weather whiplash is another phenomenon that scientists warn will occur more often under a warming planet in the coming decades.

California, which has been experiencing a historic megadrought triggering severe water shortages, has been suddenly pummeled by heavy rain and snowstorms over the last few months.

“This finding really reinforces the trends that we see from analysis of rainfall data and climate model output, and in that sense adds significant evidence to inform emergency planning and response, infrastructure planning, agricultural practices, and water resource management under continued warming,” Cobb said.

Rodell added he hopes the study will help people realize that every little increase in global temperature matters, and that the world must curb the relentless rise of planet-warming pollution.

“The study is another way for people to recognize that climate change affects everyone,” he said. “It’s not just about the temperature rising on average around the world, it’s the actual weather events that have severe impacts on people that may be increasing in intensity and frequency.”

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

[Big finance firms seek more environmental data](#)

By: Reuters

Financial institutions managing \$137 trillion in assets will this week call on companies to share more data on their environmental impact, the chair of disclosure platform CDP told Reuters.

In a letter to the boards of over 15,000 companies, 748 financial institutions – including BlackRock, Fidelity International, Aviva and the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPPIB) – will ask companies to report on issues including climate change, deforestation, water security and biodiversity.

The letter to companies, and its questionnaire, is an annual event, but the number of financial institutions joining the initiative is the biggest ever this year, CDP said.

For the first time, the questionnaire will also ask companies about plastics-related business risks, for example around packaging, and how they are addressing them.

“Consistent, decision-useful information is critical for investors to evaluate and assess the potential impacts of climate-related risks and opportunities on a company’s performance,” Richard Manley, chief sustainability officer at the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, said in a statement.

The initiative is coordinated by environmental non-profit CDP and the data collected, as well as being used by the customers of companies and their investors, also helps underpin financial products such as indexes.

“Last year, we had 18,700 major corporations reporting to us, this year we expect considerably more,” Paul Dickinson, founder chair of CDP, said.

The increase in demand for more information from companies comes as regulators across the world begin to mandate some form of disclosure in law, including the European Union and Britain. The United States is expected to announce similar measures in April.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Worry about severe weather events among highest in PH

The Philippines still lagged in the latest Safety Perceptions Index (SPI) despite improving 16 places to 112th out of 121 countries compared to last year's 128th.

Based on the SPI, which is produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) to provide a "comprehensive assessment" of worries about and experiences of risks across 121 countries, the Philippines had an overall score of 0.397.

The 0.397 even exceeded the global average of 0.2376, making the Philippines one of the countries with the highest scores. As explained by the Lloyd's Register Foundation (LRF) and IEP, a score closer to 1 indicates a higher level of risk impact.

With the Philippines at the bottom 10, or the countries with the highest scores, were Mali (0.587), Sierra Leone (0.502), Guinea (0.467), Republic of Congo (0.451), Mozambique (0.436), Gabon (0.426), Brazil (0.416), Cameroon (0.403), Afghanistan (0.397), Burkina Faso (0.396), and Zambia (0.396).

As the LRF said, Mali, which is suffering from a "violent internal conflict" and saw its government overthrown in successful coups in 2020 and 2021, is the most risk-impacted country, while Uzbekistan, which had a rate of 0.072, is the least.

With Uzbekistan in the top 10, or the countries with the lowest scores, were the United Arab Emirates (0.073), Saudi Arabia (0.093), Norway (0.098), Estonia (0.100), Singapore (0.101), Iceland (0.109), Sweden (0.111), China (0.113), and Denmark (0.116).

"The past several years have been characterized by rising feelings of uncertainty worldwide. Central to this shift has been the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted the functioning of social institutions as well as patterns of individual and collective behavior in countless ways," the LRF said.

PH most concerned about severe weather

The SPI did not indicate the overall score that the Philippines got in each of the five domains being analyzed to measure people's worries and experiences of serious risks, but it stressed that the country is one of the most risk-impacted when it comes to severe weather-related events.

As the LRF said, there are five domains in the SPI—food and water, violent crime, severe weather, mental health, and workplace safety—which broadly cover threats related to health, security, and the social and physical environment.

“While these domains are not an exhaustive collection of all risks, they do cover those that people are likely to face in their daily lives and that could result in serious harm,” it said.

Based on the SPI, which was released last month, it is severe weather that the Philippines is most worried about, especially since its experience rate of that risk is the highest among the 121 countries included in the Index.

The Philippines, the LRF said, has an experience rate of 62.4 percent and a worry rate of 67.1 percent, making it second only to Mali as the most risk-impacted by severe weather-related events.

It was explained that severe weather-related events, and violent crimes, too, “are likely to be associated with high levels of unpredictability and uncontrollability [so] it is therefore unsurprising that worry for these two domains tends to show the highest absolute levels of worry and the highest relative levels of worry in comparison to first-hand experiences.”

Setbacks from extreme weather events

But why is the Philippines most worried about severe weather-related events that it even landed in the top 5 countries, which includes Mali, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Burkina Faso, that are most risk-impacted?

Though the LFR did not indicate the reason, recent assessments have presented how extreme weather events could inflict a heavy toll on the Philippines, which has been considered the “most disaster-prone country” in the world.

Even in the latest Global Risks Report that was released by the World Economic Forum last Jan. 11, it was stressed that in the next two years, natural disasters and extreme weather events will be the top risks for the Philippines.

Based on data from the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), close to 20 typhoons are entering the Philippine Area of Responsibility (PAR) every year.

Last year, Souleymane Coulibaly, lead economist of the World Bank, said climate change, which manifests itself through rising temperatures, increasing sea levels, more intense droughts and stronger typhoons, will significantly threaten the global economy.

He said without interventions from the government and private institutions, extreme weather events will likely slash gross domestic product by 13.6 percent by 2040 and inflict a heavy burden, especially on the poorest of the poor.

Coulibaly said the consequences of climate change are expected to negatively impact economic growth as it is seen to erode natural and physical capital, lessen work productivity, weaken financial stability, and alter domestic and external competitiveness.

This, as “temperatures in the Philippines will continue to rise by the end of the 21st century,” while “rainfall patterns will change and intensify, and extreme weather will become more frequent.”

Intensifying climate change

As Pagasa said, while typhoons hitting the country are becoming fewer, those that do make landfall are becoming stronger. Out of the average 20 typhoons that enter PAR every year, eight or nine make landfall.

“Based on our data, we have seen that the frequency of typhoons is decreasing a bit and we have seen that for those greater than 170 kilometers per hour, there is a slight change, there is a slight increase,” it said.

Likewise, Pagasa said it was expecting the country’s temperature to rise by four degrees by the end of the 21st century, while the intensity of typhoons that make landfall will continue to increase.

As scientists had stressed, warmer temperatures, which melt ice caps and cause oceans to expand, was the reason that sea levels are rising.

Take the case of the sea level rise in the Philippine Sea, which Pagasa climate scientist Dr. Marcelino Villafuerte said had risen by about 12 centimeters, or about 5 inches, over the past two decades.

Pagasa said the sea level in the Philippines is rising 3 times faster than the world average. With 70 percent of its municipalities facing large bodies of water, including the Pacific Ocean, the rise could spell a “big impact” on millions.

Based on a study by the International Food Policy Research Institute, climate change is expected to put 2 million more people at risk of hunger by 2050 and cost about P145 billion every year.

Rise in 'ambiguous risk'

As the LRF said, there were two central findings in the 2023 SPI, and one of those points to a notable rise in generalized and non-specific feelings of fear and lack of safety throughout the world, with people becoming more fearful overall but less certain about the sources of potential threats.

It stressed that the Index found a rise in "ambiguous risk," which refers to people's sense that risk exists in the world around them but that it cannot always be defined.

"The rise in ambiguous risk can be seen in the responses to a World Risk Poll question on the greatest perceived threat in people's daily lives," the LRF said.

"Between 2019 and 2021, the largest changes in response rates were for those saying that no risk existed in their lives, which fell by half, and those saying they did not know what their greatest risk was, which nearly doubled."

It said this year's SPI highlights the changing dynamics of risk that accompanied the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic as the world became less certain about its future than at any time since the Cold War.

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

[QC to host 2023 Earth Hour](#)

By: Susan De Leon

In partnership with the World Wide Fund for Nature – Philippines (WWF-Philippines), Quezon City will host this year's Earth Hour celebration in the Philippines on March 25 at the Quezon Memorial Circle.

QC, recognized as the largest city leading climate action in the country, will join over 7,000 cities from 193 countries to commemorate Earth Hour, which is considered one of the world's largest grassroots environmental movements.

"Local Government Units like Quezon City play a big part in raising awareness about the threats of climate change among our constituents. That's why every environmental program and initiative we have established and are currently planning are inclusive and responsive to the circumstances of our people," Mayor Joy Belmonte said.

On March 25 at exactly 8:30 PM, the city government will switch off the lights of the pylon in Quezon Memorial Circle and other city government-run buildings for an hour. QC citizens and business owners are also encouraged to switch off their non-essential lights.

"The city's participation in Earth Hour signifies our strong commitment to push for climate justice as we head towards advancing inclusive, ambitious, and evidence-based climate action to provide a livable and quality community for all," Belmonte added.

Before the switch off activity on the 25th, the city government through the QC Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Department (CCESD) and the Gender and Development Council Office (GAD) will host the Padyak ng Kababaihan para sa Kalikasan cycling event and a scavenger hunt for the youth.

Various non-government organizations and social enterprises with climate and environment advocacies will also set up booths around the premises of Liwasang Aurora.

A pre-switch off program will also take place, where performances and messages of support from different NGOs and government agencies will be delivered.

During the lights-off proper, a symbolic run spearheaded by fitness and environmental conservation enthusiasts will take place inside the Quezon Memorial Circle, signifying

the power of collective action in achieving a future where Filipinos live in harmony with nature.

“We are celebrating Earth Hour again in-person to show our stronger commitment and solidarity as a people who want a better future for our country. We want to make this the Biggest Hour for Earth because we are fighting the biggest concerns of the planet: climate change and biodiversity loss. These grave issues might seem impossible to solve, but that is why we in WWF always advocate our ‘Together, Possible’ approach. We bring people together and solve problems together and this is what Earth Hour is all about,” WWF-Philippines Executive Director Katherine Custodio said.

Quezon City has been working with WWF-Philippines and Earth Hour for several years. QC was also the host city of Earth Hour in 2015, which took place at the QMC.

QC was also among the finalists of the One Planet Cities Challenge (OPCC) last year, which recognized cities for their climate actions and ambitions, and evaluates whether they align with the goal set forth in the Paris Agreement to limit climate change to 1.5 °C.

The observance of Earth Hour is organized by the WWF-Philippines, co-presented by the QC Government, ComCo Mundo League of Enterprises, and supported by the Department of Energy, League of Cities of the Philippines, League of Provinces of the Philippines, National Economic Development Authority, Department of Agriculture, Court of Appeals, Department of Health, Armed Forces of the Philippines, Laguna Lake Development Authority, DICT, and National Historical Commission of the Philippines, and National Parks Development Committee.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[PAGASA eyes new weather radar system in Western Visayas](#)

By: Perla Lena

The Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical Astronomical Service Administration (PAGASA) is eyeing a new radar system for the Iloilo Synoptic Doppler Radio Station which has been non-operational since August 2021 due to defective power supply, according to a weather specialist on Monday.

The radar station, located at the compound of the Western Visayas Agricultural Research Center (WESVIARC) of the Department of Agriculture in Barangay Hamungaya, Jaro district here, covers around 300 to 400 kilometers or the entire Western Visayas, said PAGASA weather specialist I Ferdinand Rubin, in his presentation during the meeting of the Infrastructure Development Committee (IDC) of the Regional Development Committee (RDC).

The radar system serves as surveillance for rainfall, storms, clouds, and thunderstorm, among others, he added.

“We reminded them that Iloilo City is one of the most vulnerable cities when it comes to climate change consequences,” said IDC co-chairperson Ma. Luisa Segovia in an interview.

Since it is not operational, the station relied on radar stations in Guian town, Eastern Samar province; Mactan, Cebu province; and Palawan province; as well as satellite data and automatic weather stations.

Rubin, in a follow-up interview, said the power supply is a high-powered voltage supply and its other parts are difficult to find since some are no longer being manufactured.

“We proposed for a new radar system,” he said, adding that they have sought PHP200 million funding from their office for the new system.

Segovia said the IDC will be focusing on the development of the radar station as per advice of his co-chair, Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas, while awaiting feedback on the fund request.

Meanwhile, the Iloilo Science and Technology University (ISAT U) is eyeing to offer a Bachelor of Science in Meteorology program starting this year.

Dr. Raul Muyong, ISAT U president, in an interview on Monday, said they will be taking advantage of the presence of the Satellite Ground Receiving Station and the Knowledge Center for Weather, Atmospheric, Astronomical, and Geophysical Observations (KWAAGO) at their Dumangas campus that will serve as their laboratory.

KWAAGO serves as a resource center for scientific materials in the field of space technology, astronomy, meteorology, and remote sensing technology.

The proposal will be presented to the University Curriculum Committee as well as their Academic Council for approval.

Ternate residents hail PNP for leading mangrove planting

By: Prof. Julio O. Castillo Jr.

Local folks in Ternate cannot help but commend the recent effort by Police Brig. Gen. Romaldo G. Bayting and the Philippine National Police (PNP) Maritime Group to come up with an activity that is timely and relevant to today's environmental challenge and that coincided with their 32nd founding anniversary celebration.

It is not easy to command participation from different cause-oriented non-government organizations (NGOs) and other environmental groups to participate in this kind of activity to protect the environment. Part of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s priority agenda is to give assurance that our environment and our country's resiliency and adaptation to the new normal of climate change must be given utmost importance.

The good weather on a Tuesday morning (March 7) provided the impetus for the active participation of the local community in barangay Población 1A in Ternate, Cavite. After a brief orientation by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) representative, the PNP Maritime Group initiated the mangrove planting on the nearby riverbank. One cannot help but noticed the excitement shown by volunteers to be part of this event.

The government's effort in propagating the advocacy of mangrove planting, especially in the province of Cavite, helps build awareness on climate resiliency among the coastal communities. These actions encourage other cause-oriented groups in cascading the advocacy in the entire coast of the Philippines. This kind of advocacy activity is a learning curve for the newbies who are interested in propagating the mangrove.

The help of the government on this kind of program will encourage further the interest of the cause-oriented groups and will easily arouse the interest of volunteers. This will eventually give participants a wider knowledge about the value of the mangroves in reducing vulnerability to climate change impacts.

Talking to one of the volunteers, Alfredo Guarino shared that: "We, as Akbay Kalikasan/Project Luntian Cavite warriors want to positively influence the members of the community to improve the status of our province. By sustaining the planting of mangroves, we are not only protecting the environment, but also sustaining the community's livelihood and providing opportunities for future generations."

A glimpse of his thoughts provided a notion of strength in character of the person and a strong dedication to help promote their cause in protecting the environment.

The Kabalikat Civicom of Cavite, the 42nd Infantry Brigade and the Philippine Army Reserve Command, local barangay, and the other cause-oriented groups were very encouraging. One can feel the atmosphere of belongingness and pride in helping promote the preservation of the environment.

Considering that the huge landmass of the entire province of Cavite -- a total land area of 1,407 square kilometers -- with 316 barangays are situated along the coast. These coastal areas of Cavite are approximately 93,679.38 hectares with a shoreline length of 122.57 kilometers with around 350,000 people are living along the coast. The folks living in the area's main sources of income are fishery, carpentry and vending. These folks experience the impact every typhoon season.

Mangroves as revenue generation, eco-protection

Noticeably, mangrove areas are sources of sea products. It is a haven for fish, prawns, crabs, and shellfish and are the best source of income for the coastal residents of the province. In maintaining mangroves, it helps provide ecological services such as preventing erosion, shoreline protection, climate regulation, among others.

The DENR and LGU's must actively support the cause-oriented group in helping and maintaining this kind of activity. The decline of mangrove forests in Cavite is due to the rapid conversion into fishponds, salt beds and building up of settlement areas. Some settlers use mangroves as wood for charcoal-making.

The initiative of the stakeholders in helping create awareness to help survive the decline of mangroves, is being addressed through the strong voices of the different advocacy groups, emphasizing the efforts mostly in coastal town of Cavite.

SUNSTAR

[Filipino women pedal for rights, climate justice](#)

By: Ronaldo O. Reyes

SOME 1,000 bikers participated in the all-women “Pedal for People and Planet” in Quezon City on Sunday, March 12, 2023, to raise awareness on issues on women’s rights, food, energy, and climate justice.

Lidy Nacpil, coordinator of Asian Peoples’ Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD) and lead organizer of the event, said that “social and economic marginalization of women not only exacerbates women’s vulnerability to impacts of the climate crisis, it also undermines climate actions.”

She urged the governments to “make a rapid, equitable and just energy transition that meets the needs and upholds the rights of women.”

“Climate change is harming food systems in many parts of the world because frequent and more intense climate change-induced droughts, heat waves or flooding are destroying crops and livelihoods,” she said.

“Women bear the brunt of these climate shocks because women provide food for the family and many women depend on natural resources for livelihood. We need urgent actions to strengthen food systems that address social and economic needs of women and communities,” Nacpil added.

The bike actions were also held across India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Nepal, and Vietnam to celebrate Women’s Month.

Citing some studies, the organizer maintained that women worldwide “are disproportionately affected by climate change.”

“Climate change exacerbates women’s burdens because of gender norms that tie them to domestic care work, such as gathering food, water, and firewood. Women also frequently lose part of their already lower earnings because women’s livelihoods are linked to natural resources that are adversely impacted by climate change,” Nacpil said in a statement.

“Despite having vital roles in local food systems as food producers, women remain unable to earn enough to meet their basic needs from health and water to adequate and

nutritious food. In many cultures, women ensure the well-being of kin first and often eat last and consume the least,” she added.

It is also estimated that 60 percent of those chronically hungry are women and girls.

Meanwhile, the organizer said that over 50 cycling groups in the country have joined with climate campaigners to hold all-women bike actions in Cebu, Cagayan de Oro, Bulacan, Atimonan, Camarines Norte and Batangas City, with Quezon City having the biggest event.

The bike actions in the country were in partnership with the Quezon City Gender and Development Council, Philippine Movement for Climate Justice, The Firefly Brigade, Siklista Pilipino, Pinay Bike Commuter Community, Tropang Women Bikers, Women Bikers for Safe Spaces, 350 Pilipinas, Oxfam, Sanlakas, Oriang, and Aniban ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura.

THE MANILA TIMES

Governments to vet crucial UN climate science report

By: Agence France Presse

Diplomats from nearly 200 nations and top climate scientists begin a weeklong huddle in Switzerland Monday to distill nearly a decade of published science into a 20-odd-page warning about the existential danger of global warming, and what to do about it.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) synthesis report — to be released on March 20 — will detail observed and projected changes in Earth's climate system; past and future impacts such as devastating heat waves, flooding and rising seas; and ways to halt the carbon pollution pushing Earth toward an unlivable state.

"It's a massive moment, seven years since the Paris Agreement and nine years since the last IPCC assessment report," Greenpeace Nordic senior policy advisor Kaisa Kosonen, an official observer at IPCC meetings, told Agence France-Presse (AFP).

Since its creation in 1988, the IPCC — an intergovernmental body staffed by hundreds of volunteer scientists — has released six, three-part assessments, the most recent in 2021-2022.

"It is scientists telling governments how they are doing during these crucial defining years," Kosonen said.

The report card is not good: global greenhouse gas emissions have continued to grow, even as science has cautioned that deadly consequences are coming sooner and at lower levels of warming than previously thought.

Since the late 19th century, Earth's average surface temperature has risen more than 1.1 degrees Celsius, enough to amplify a crescendo of weather catastrophes on every continent.

Carbon budgets

Under the 2015 Paris treaty, nations promised to collectively cap the rise at "well below" 2 C, and at 1.5 C if possible.

An IPCC special report in 2018 made it alarmingly clear that the more ambitious aspirational goal — since adopted by governments and business as a hard target — was a better bet for a climate-safe world.

But an already narrow pathway has become a tightrope: humanity's "carbon budget" for staying under the 1.5 C barrier is less than 300 billion tons of CO₂, barely seven times current yearly emissions, according to the IPCC.

Two other special reports — one on oceans and Earth's frozen zones, the other on forests and land use — will also be covered in the summary for policymakers under review in Interlaken.

"The synthesis report matters because it will be the last IPCC product for some years, and one of the major sources of knowledge to be considered in the first Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement," Oliver Geden, one of the report's lead authors and a senior fellow at the German Institute for International Security Affairs, told AFP.

Unveiled ahead of COP28 UN climate talks in Dubai in December, the global stocktake will confront nations with the deep inadequacy of their Paris pledges to cut emissions, which would allow global temperatures to rise 2.8 C above the preindustrial benchmark.

Among the IPCC findings that could be highlighted in the synthesis report is the looming threat of deadly heat.

'More politicized'

Even in a 1.8 C world — an optimistic scenario, according to some scientists — half of humanity could, by 2100, be exposed to periods of life-threatening climate conditions arising from the coupled impacts of extreme heat and humidity.

There are similarly dire projections for health, the global food system and economic productivity.

"What is at stake matters to everyone on the planet — our ability to have healthy, nutritious and affordable food, both now and in the future," said Rachel Bezner Kerr, a professor at Cornell University and an IPCC lead author for the most recent report on climate impacts.

Floods last year that covered a third of Pakistan, and ongoing drought in East Africa, both bear the fingerprint of climate change.

The synthesis report will also reflect the debate over the best way to decarbonize the global economy, with some emphasizing the need to rapidly phase out fossil fuel use and reduce consumer demand, and others the potential of technological solutions.

Diplomats in Interlaken vetting the text line-by-line cannot change the science in the underlying reports' 10,750 pages, but they can decide what to leave in or out, and can highlight — or obscure — things through wording.

"Over time, IPCC meetings became more politicized as government representatives — mainly, but not exclusively, from oil-producing states — interfered in the scientists' discussions," the journal Nature said in a recent editorial.

Despite that, "the main IPCC studies have an extraordinary reach, informing everything from global climate agreements... to the school climate strikes movement Fridays of Future," the journal said.

[Opinion] The problem with plastics

By: Orlando Mercado

I WAS in college in the 1960s when I saw the critically acclaimed movie "The Graduate." Benjamin Braddock (Dustin Hoffman) was constantly asked what he wanted to do with his life. A businessman, Mr. McGuire (Walter Brooke), told him to remember one word: "plastics."

Since then, plastic use in a dizzying array of products has become a fact of life. I cannot remember the last time I bought something without it being wrapped in the material, often with the brash colors of its brand proudly printed in neat fonts. Shampoo. Toothpaste. Detergent. Chips. Biscuits. Chocolates. Mineral water. Soft drinks. Everything is in neat lightweight containers. Sari-sari stores and groceries seem like they were built with a kaleidoscope of plastic walls.

Even the food I buy in carinderias, or from little carts here and there, would be handed to me inside a plastic container — whether or not I asked for one. The same goes for take-outs from fast food outlets and restaurants.

Easy to handle, these plastics are. Easy to dispose of, too.

Ideally, these cheap plastics are as effortless to recycle as they are advertised by large companies who often tout their "corporate social responsibility" to the world by including "recycle me" in their packaging. This effectively tells the public that they are using recyclable materials, environment-friendly, they say, reassuring those conscious of their consumption that they are buying the right choice and doing Mother Earth some good.

But alas, we do not live in a perfect world. Not all plastics can be recycled or repurposed.

And now, plastics have become one of the most serious environmental threats. Unfortunately, as much as we want to take pride in everything Pinoy under the global spotlight, it is a shame to be notorious for being the third-largest contributor to plastic waste worldwide, which amounts to an estimated 2.7 million metric tons of plastic annually. Twenty percent of it, or 521,000 tons, end up in the oceans. Tell me you also almost instantly thought of poor pawikans tangled in takeout cupholders and choking on plastic straws.

Because of these plastic products, as well as their improper disposal, our environment is being made to suffer. It is especially felt by our country folks in the coastal areas making a living by fishing. These big corporations are raking in millions in profits while

leaving behind a toxic trail of pollutants that disrupt our biodiversity. If our environment suffers, we do, too. And most of the time, the low-income population feels the brunt of it.

Like what we say in Filipino, "Ang basurang itinapon mo, babalik sa'yo." Remember the floods of filth regularly thrown back at us after heavy downpours? Now think of marine animals living among the floating debris of your regular conditioner and instant noodle packets. Fisherfolk are taking less and less catch because of this, too. And we have yet to dive deep into the issue of microplastics seeping into our food.

I wanted to do something about this problem. A nongovernment organization I belong to, the Community Legal Help and Public Interest Centre Inc. has taken legal steps that would hopefully make a difference.

Similar to the story of David and Goliath, 32 Filipino consumers are currently waging war against seven gigantic corporations — Coca-Cola, Pepsi Cola, Nestlé, Unilever, Procter and Gamble, Colgate Palmolive, and Universal Robina Corp. (URC) under the watchful eye of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). The complaint was filed last Nov. 15, 2022.

We are holding these companies accountable for violating our consumer rights to safety, a healthy environment, and information upon finding out that these products have dangerous packaging and are unrecyclable — even as they have the printed words "recycle me," "recycle," "recycle ready" "recyclable" and other recycling marks or symbols on their plastic packages.

With the exception of URC, these corporations are unfortunately known to be global plastic polluters, as their product brands have been found in collected and audited wastes in the Philippines and the world since 2018.

Instead of making products more affordable to the poor, they exploit the "tingi" culture and package their goods in single-use sachets, costing the consumer a few pesos for their daily needs. With the insufficient solid waste management infrastructure trying to keep up with the unsustainable production and consumption of plastics, the manufacturers should instead step up and take responsibility and not pass the buck to consumers.

If the problem with plastic continues to go unchecked, it will end up in dumpsites, landfills, streets, and various bodies of water, or burned up, causing health, safety, livelihood, and environmental problems to people. This is why every citizen should be concerned and do something as the next generation's future is at stake.

Dr. Jorge Emmanuel of Silliman University, a scientist specializing in environment, renewable energy, public health, and climate change, said that "recycling of plastics should be viewed in the context of the life cycle of plastics, a transition towards a circular economy model, the global climate crisis, and protection of public health and safety." Just because the material is cheap, durable, and accessible does not mean its negative impact should be disregarded.

Plastics take forever to decompose completely, so while multimillion corporate empires are being built on it, the 9 billion tons of plastic that have been produced globally since the 1950s are still somewhere on this planet — in our land, in our waters, and in the air we breathe.

They may already be in our very bodies — we are just not aware of it.

Yet.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Government urged to review tax breaks for electric vehicles

The current tax incentive scheme for electric vehicles (EVs) should be amended because it "lacks inclusivity," an official of an environmental business group said.

Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship (PBEST) Secretary General Felix Jose Vitangcol issued the call after the Palace released Executive Order No. 12 series of 2023 that modifies the tariff rates for EVs to help mainstream its use among Filipinos.

EO12 lowered the tariff rate for certain types of EVs ranging to 0% import duty from 5% to 30%.

Under the EO, EVs such as kick scooters, pocket motorcycles and self-balancing cycles are included in the tax breaks. Two-wheeled electric motorcycles, on the other hand, are still subject to 30% import duty.

In a statement posted on their Facebook page, Vitangcol stated that there seems to be a problem in the EO since only a limited portion of the population can afford to buy four-wheeled vehicles.

"Only more affluent Filipinos — indeed a limited segment of the population — can afford to buy four-wheel vehicles, and hence enjoy these incentives," Vitangcol said in a recent statement.

The organization reiterated that the majority of the motorists in the country are using two or three-wheeled vehicles including public utility jeepneys.

The Land Transportation Office documented that almost 8 million units of motorcycles are registered in their office in 2021.

"It is also they who are already perennially burdened by the soaring prices of basic goods and hampered by their limited income to provide for their families," he added.

Shift to alternative energy

PBEST asserted that more Filipinos should be encouraged to shift to alternative energy regardless of their socio-economic status and the types of their vehicles.

"This is why the government must make these tax incentives more inclusive," Vitangcol said.

Vitangcol also said that it is the government's role to spearhead the country's shift to electric vehicles as it will lessen the nation's dependence on fossil fuels.

According to the Statista Research Department, the power production in the Philippines is still dominated by coal at 47.6%, followed by other fossils at 18%, and gas at 10.7%, which totals 76.3%.

Various types of renewable energy generation like wind, solar, bioenergy, hydro and other renewables share at 23.7% of the country's total power source.

The EO12 aims to help Filipinos to adapt to the usage of e-vehicles while decarbonizing and reducing the carbon emissions caused by the fueled-run vehicles.

As the Philippines is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, shifting to EVs is one of the country's solutions to help weaken its effects and go full electric by 2040.

To help mainstream the use of EVs and the development of infrastructures that can cater the industry, Republic Act No. 11697, commonly known as the Electric Vehicle Industry Development Act, was passed along with other landmark policies.

UNESCO

Small island nations that are water-secure will be more resilient to climate change

Numerous small island nations will attend this side event, along with the Alliance of Small Island States and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, among others.

Some of the most water-scarce countries in the world

Social progress, economic growth and environmental sustainability are the three pillars of sustainable development. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face unique challenges in all three areas. They are among the most water-scarce countries in the world, with 7 out of 10 (71%) facing the prospect of water shortages in the years to come and 9 out of 10 (91%) lying just a few metres above sea level.

Groundwater and rainwater harvesting are the main source of freshwater in SIDS. As these countries tend to be low-lying, their groundwater is prone to saltwater intrusion, which is a problem for 73% of SIDS.

Saltwater intrusion into soils also threatens agriculture. SIDS import more than 60% of their food and half of these countries even import over 80%. Greater water security would support endogenous agriculture and fisheries and, thereby, protect food security.

In 2016, UNESCO's Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme conducted groundwater assessments on 42 islands to improve groundwater governance in SIDS at the local and national levels.

Much of freshwater is being lost in the Caribbean, as 85% of wastewater is untreated. As a consequence, wastewater discharge has destroyed 80% of the living coral reefs in the Caribbean over the past 20 years. This could have dire economic repercussions, since tourism accounts for about 70% of GDP and coral reefs are a key attraction for the many tourists who holiday in the Caribbean each year.

In 2018, UNESCO's Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme studied wastewater management and emerging pollutants in a rural community of St Lucia.

SIDS disproportionately affected by climate-related disasters

SIDS are particularly ill-equipped for natural hazards, owing to a lack of adaptation and capacity. Each disaster costs them 17% of GDP, on average, the highest ratio of national income in the world. Whereas about 90% of natural disasters are water-related,

all climate-related disasters involve water: too much or too little of it. This type of disaster includes cyclones, droughts and floods.

Small islands are increasingly being affected by climate change, which is leading to rising temperatures, more frequent and more intense tropical cyclones and storm surges, changes in rainfall patterns, droughts, sea-level rise, coral bleaching and invasive species.

In the years to come, sea-level rise is expected to double the frequency of flooding in much of the Indian Ocean and Tropical Pacific, whereas tropical cyclones will remain the main driver of flooding in the Caribbean Sea and Southern Tropical Pacific, according to the Sixth Assessment Report released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2021.

Greater water security can reduce vulnerability

One way to protect freshwater and coastal ecosystems is to restore mangrove forests. These serve as a natural buffer from cyclones and inland flooding from storm surges. Healthy mangrove forests not only protect coastal populations but also economic sectors such as agriculture and fisheries, industry and tourism. In Cuba, UNESCO is working with local scientists and community leaders to restore mangrove forests in the Guanahacabibes Peninsula Biosphere Reserve.

Farther inland, the restoration of forest ecosystems can serve as a buffer against flooding and landslides. In 1960, about 60% of Haitian territory was covered by forest. By 2011, this proportion had shrunk to 3.5%. Since about half of the country is hilly, this deforestation has led to severe erosion. Without trees and shrubs to retain moisture, rainwater carries off precious topsoil and can easily destabilize the soils, leading to landslides. The growing frequency and strength of hurricanes and tropical storms is making both flooding and landslides more common in Haiti. Since 2018, UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme has worked with local communities and school children in La Selle Biosphere Reserve and beyond to reforest the bare hills. Over 290,000 seedlings have been planted, including avocado, coffee and tamarind.

UNESCO is working with the local management committee and scientific community in Maio Biosphere Reserve in Cabo Verde to establish an ecohydrology demonstration site. A biosphere reserve since 2020, Maio encompasses an entire island and marine zone. Tourists flock to the biosphere reserve for its gorgeous beaches and rich cultural and historical heritage. However, the growing tourist industry is straining limited freshwater resources, as Maio is one of the most arid islands in Cabo Verde. The

ecohydrology demonstration site will foster an integrated approach to coordinating and managing the island's freshwater, land and rich biodiversity to achieve long-term sustainability. The site will also provide opportunities for researchers, trainees and other stakeholders to acquire scientific knowledge of ecohydrological principles and strategies.

UNESCO is also providing SIDS with policy advice on how to ensure that the population has access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation. These were recognized by the United Nations in 2015 as being basic human rights. In 2018, UNESCO organized a Consultation Meeting on Water Quality in Nadi, Fiji, which brought together 12 SIDS from the Pacific, as well as a number of international and regional organizations.

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