



NEWS ROUNDUP

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THE MANILA TIMES

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By: Ed Paolo Salting

The country's power grid needs to be upgraded to accommodate electricity produced from renewable energy (RE) sources, industry officials said Wednesday at The Manila Times forum on environmental and economical energy generation.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

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Global temperatures "smashed" heat records last year, as heatwaves stalked oceans and glaciers suffered record ice loss, the United Nations said Tuesday— warning 2024 was likely to be even hotter.

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By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

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By: Stephanie Sevillano

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS WORLD

[SEC takes sustainability roadshow nationwide](#)

By: Revin Mikhael D. Ochave

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) announced on Wednesday a nationwide roadshow that aims to promote sustainability among small, medium, and large enterprises.

In a statement, the commission said the roadshow aims to introduce sustainability reporting, foster awareness, build capacity, develop measuring tools, and establish monitoring schemes to embed sustainability in business practices.

The roadshow was launched in collaboration with Accelerating Green and Climate Finance project funded by the Canadian government and implemented by the United Nations Development Program.

“Our world is facing complex challenges, from climate change to social inequality, and businesses play a crucial role in addressing these issues,” SEC Commissioner Javey Paul D. Francisco said.

“Sustainability reporting is not just about compliance; it is about creating long-term value for businesses, society, and the environment,” he added.

Small, medium, and large enterprises generate more than 5.7 million jobs and account for 105,000 business establishments in the country.

Only publicly listed companies are required to submit sustainability reports to the SEC.

The commission said it is currently updating guidelines to reflect the latest developments in global sustainability frameworks.

“Moving forward, we envision a future where sustainability is not just a matter of awareness but a standard practice for all small, medium, and large enterprises. By embracing sustainability practices and introducing sustainability reporting, businesses can enhance their competitiveness, attract investors, and contribute to sustainable development,” Mr. Francisco said.

After Cebu, the SEC will bring the roadshow to Davao in June, and Baguio in September. These will be followed by the annual Corporate Governance Forum in November, which is organized by the SEC and the Philippine Stock Exchange.

DW

[UN weather agency sounds 'red alert' on climate](#)

The WMO, the United Nations' weather observer, says a string of global temperature records have been broken — and in some cases even smashed. The agency warned that sea ice loss was of particular concern.

A World Meteorological Organization (WMO) report confirmed on Tuesday that 2023 was the warmest year on record, with global average surface temperatures at 1.45 degrees Celsius (2.61 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels.

The UN agency warned that the changes were interwoven with growing food insecurity and population displacement.

What the report showed

The WMO study showed broken records across numerous parameters, including greenhouse gas levels and temperature.

The agency noted particularly alarming changes at sea, with a worrying rise in surface levels and acidification.

Its report said Antarctic sea ice loss, rising ocean heat, and glacier loss were of particular concern.

Antarctic sea ice extent was "by far the lowest on record," with the maximum extent at the end of winter at 1 million kilometers squared below the previous record year — the size of France and Germany combined.

Glaciers suffered the largest loss of ice on record, driven by "extreme melt" in both western North America and Europe.

The authors also pointed out increasingly frequent heatwaves, floods, droughts, wildfires, and intensifying tropical cyclones.

They caused "misery and mayhem, upending everyday life for millions and inflicting many billions of dollars in economic losses."

What is the UN agency's warning?

The organization's Secretary-General Celeste Saulo said the world had never been so close to, at least temporarily, exceeding the 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) lower limit of the Paris Agreement on climate change.

"The WMO community is sounding the red alert to the world," said Saulo.

A report by the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) last showed average global surface temperatures for 2023 had actually nudged above the threshold.

"Climate change is about much more than temperatures," said Saulo. "What we witnessed in 2023, especially with the unprecedented ocean warmth, glacier retreat, and Antarctic sea ice loss, is cause for particular concern."

The report drew attention to the number of people who are acutely food insecure worldwide, noting this had grown from 149 million people before the COVID-19 pandemic to 333 million in 2023.

"The climate crisis is the defining challenge that humanity faces and is closely intertwined with the inequality crisis — as witnessed by growing food insecurity, and population displacement, and biodiversity loss," Saulo said.

Professor Tina van de Flierdt of Imperial College London said the latest WMO report "reinforces that climate change is not a distant threat — it is here now."

WMO climate monitoring director Omar Baddour said: "There is a high probability that 2024 will again break the record of 2023."

Finally, some good news

While its warning was dire, the WMO highlighted "a glimmer of hope" in the form of the increased use of renewable energy.

Renewable energy capacity saw its greatest rate of increase over the past two decades in 2023, growing by 510 gigawatts (GW), 50% more than was added the previous year.

"Renewable energy generation, primarily driven by the dynamic forces of solar radiation, wind and the water cycle, has surged to the forefront of climate change action for its potential to achieve decarbonization targets," the report said.

"We're seeing year on year increases in the amount of energy being produced in that way, so that's that's one kind of positive thing that's happening," WMO scientist John Kennedy told DW.

"We're moving in the right direction in terms of energy generation."

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[More renewable energy projects to be developed in Negros](#)

By: Nanette Guadalquiver

Several renewable energy (RE) projects, totaling more than 1,000 megawatts, are being proposed across Negros Occidental in the next 15 years, data from the Department of Energy (DOE) showed.

Those were among the developments discussed during the Negros Island Power Forum organized by the Metro Bacolod Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MBCCI) at the L' Fisher Hotel here on Wednesday.

In his presentation, Engr. Jose Rey Maleza, chief of DOE-Visayas Energy Industry Management Division, said that Negros Island has a total of 155.6 megawatts (MW) committed power projects and 1,231.7 MW indicative power projects.

“Committed projects ready for implementation or already being implemented while indicative projects are those in the planning stage,” he added.

Committed projects include biomass in Victorias City, geothermal in Bago City, solar in Silay City, and battery energy storage in Murcia and San Carlos City.

Indicative projects are solar in the cities of Victorias, Bacolod, Cadiz, Silay, and Calatrava town, wind in Pulupandan, hydro in Sagay City, and battery energy storage in Cadiz.

“(These are) the incoming projects here in Negros. Please take note that all are RE,” Maleza said.

“The indicative projects of 1,000 MW additional RE in Negros is still until 2040. I think it’s the time for the new lines from Mindoro going to Panay will come in to support another door (for supply access),” he added.

Based on the sub-grid power demand and supply snapshot, Negros has a total installed capacity of 910 MW but has only 692 MW of dependable capacity.

“Under the generation mix, 99.1 percent of power plants in Negros generate RE. Basically, all REs are in Negros,” Maleza said.

MBCCI vice president for government affairs Frank Carbon said the forum discussed the electric power situation and how to ensure a reliable and sustainable power supply in Negros Island.

He added that the plan is to create the Negros Island Power Development Coordinating Council.

[PH wants 'gender-responsive' climate action](#)

By: Ruth Abbey Gita-Carlos

Women's rights should be taken into consideration when crafting a "gender-responsive" climate action plan, the Philippine Commission on Women said in an event in the United States on Wednesday (Manila time).

During the side event at the 68th annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68), PCW officer-in-charge Khay Ann Magundayao-Borlado said climate change disproportionately impacts women because of intersecting vulnerabilities from pre-existing structural gender inequalities.

Magundayao-Borlado called on the CSW member-states to strengthen inclusive decision-making to make sure "the voices of women and girls are heard and gender equality environment action is achieved."

"The rights of women and girls must be at the center of climate action, advancing the rule of law and policy frameworks and delivering a gender responsive just transition and often overlooked pathway is critical," she said.

"Because women are most at risk of being left out of the process and benefits of a just transition, there is an urgent need to understand the linkages between women's rights in the world of work and the transition to a more sustainable and low carbon economy, particularly on the structural barriers and the interventions that promote women's equal opportunities and treatment at work," she added.

To deliver a just transition, Magundayao-Borlado said women's health, well-being, and livelihoods must be protected, adding that they should also be provided with more opportunities through the creation of green jobs and the promotion of entrepreneurship.

Magundayao-Borlado said nations must invest in education, skills, capacity-building, and health and social protection services that engage and support women as "active agents of change."

"We must ensure effective financial flows to the regions and populations that need it the most," she said. "Finally and in order to achieve this, we need better quality gender disaggregated data to support decision making in (the) transition plan. I look forward to discussions to be had today to deliver a gender responsive and inclusive just transition for all."

Citing the 2023 Gender Assessment of Climate Related Legal and Regulatory Frameworks in the Philippines by the International Development Law Organization

(IDLO), Magundayao-Borlado stressed the need to enhance existing climate and environmental laws by incorporating gender considerations.

She said gender responsive approaches and policies and laws must be integrated, in the context of disasters and climate change and advanced social justice, economic equality and environmental sustainability.

“This intersectionality of vulnerability results in climate change affecting women and girls in different ways than boys and men. Women are expected to be most severely affected due to their high representation in sectors, particularly susceptible to climate change impacts,” Magundayao-Borlado said.

“Exposure to these hazards amplifies existing gender inequalities and poses a serious threat to women's livelihoods, health and well-being. Considering gender equality and climate action is, therefore, essential to building inclusive and just transition to resilience,” she added.

Magundayao-Borlado said a just transition presents an important opportunity for a transformative agenda for the diversity and inclusion of gender equality in the workplace.

She noted that in the Philippines, the government is making sure that the recently-adopted National Adaptation Plan and Nationally Determined Contribution Implementation Plan are gender responsive and guarantee inclusive and equal representation in the decision-making process.

“Legal and policy frameworks ensure that the transition to a more climate resilient sustainable and equitable economy benefits everyone, including women and marginalized groups,” she said.

Magundayao-Borlado participated in the CSW68 side event organized by the IDLO, with the theme, “Gender Equality in Climate Action: The Role of Legal and Policy Frameworks in Delivering a Gender-Responsive Just Transition”.

PTV

[PH-EU to resume FTA negotiations](#)

By: Brian Jules Campued

The Philippines and the European Union (EU) are set to resume the negotiations for the Philippines-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary Alfredo Pascual said Monday.

Pascual made the announcement with European Commission Executive Vice Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis in a joint press briefing in Brussels, Belgium—providing for deeper economic ties and mutual benefits between the Philippines and the EU.

Although formal talks on PH-EU FTA have stopped in 2017, a comprehensive stocktaking exercise conducted by DTI and the European Commission from September to December 2023 made the resumption of negotiations possible.

“The conditions are right to take our trade relations to the next level. Trade between the EU and the Philippines is already strong and has been growing at an impressive pace over the past decade,” said Dombrovskis.

Pascual noted that strengthening engagements with the EU remains a priority for the Philippines as it is one of the country’s largest trading partners and sources of investments.

According to DTI, total PH-EU bilateral trade reached US\$16.16 billion, contributing an 8.1% share to the country’s overall trade.

“Similarly, the EU has been a major foreign investment partner, with total foreign direct investments reaching US\$29.16 million in 2022 and US\$63.99 billion in 2023,” the DTI statement read.

Meanwhile, Pascual said the PH-EU free trade deal aims to provide enhanced market access for goods, services, and investments from the current EU Generalised System of Preferences Plus (GSP+).

DTI said the GSP+ offered zero tariffs on more than six thousand tariff lines or 66% of all EU tariff lines, benefiting communities including General Santos, Davao, and Cebu.

“A modern, comprehensive and values-based free trade agreement with this fast-growing economy would open new opportunities for both sides, strengthen our supply

chains, and promote sustainable trade. It would also deepen ties with a key partner in the burgeoning Indo-Pacific region,” said Dombrovskis.

The FTA will also ensure mutual market access and diversify supply chains, as well as attract more investments, particularly in infrastructure, digital technology, research, renewable energy, and green transition.

“As we look ahead, the Philippines is committed to deepening economic ties and fostering cooperation with the EU across emerging trade areas like critical raw materials, climate change, environmental sustainability, labor, and good governance,” Pascual added.

THE MANILA TIMES

Power grid needs upgrading for renewable energy – NGCP

By: Ed Paolo Salting

The country's power grid needs to be upgraded to accommodate electricity produced from renewable energy (RE) sources, industry officials said Wednesday at The Manila Times forum on environmental and economical energy generation.

The National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP) said several improvements are needed to enable the grid to transition smoothly to incorporating RE production.

"Integrating high levels of variable renewable energy will cause grid operation challenges because of its intermittent nature of operations [which might cause instability to the grid] and voltage fluctuations," said Redi Allan Remoroza, NGCP assistant vice president and head of transmission planning.

"So what are the requirements? [One], we need transmission expansions that go to areas with RE resource potential.... Two, we need continuing enhancements in RE forecasting to handle the intermittency better. Three, we need flexible generators... that can adjust to variations in solar and green plant output. And lastly, we need energy storage facilities. We are not only talking about batteries but also large-scale pump storage for hydroelectric power plants," he said.

Energy Regulatory Commission Chairman Monalisa Dimalanta said the transmission sector has grown a little over the last few years and definitely needs improvement.

For instance, she said, from 2009 to 2023, the grid's transmission line length has grown by only 8 percent, which is a challenge to energy generators.

In an interview on the sideline of the forum, Remoroza said one way to speed up transmission projects for RE and increase the grid's capacity and reach is to allow putting up transmission facilities before the power plants go up in certain areas of the country.

"(One suggestion) is the implementation of the transmission projects inside Competitive Renewable Energy Zones.... This will help solve the chicken-and-egg problem that we usually have, where power plants are constructed first before the transmission lines that traverse several towns and provinces. If this gets approved, it will help with the timing of the projects tremendously," Remoroza said.

He said the government should continue helping them with right-of-way issues, approving transmission projects needed by RE plants, and quickly releasing the necessary permits.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[Planet 'on the brink', with new heat records likely in 2024 — UN](#)

By: Nina Larson

Global temperatures "smashed" heat records last year, as heatwaves stalked oceans and glaciers suffered record ice loss, the United Nations said Tuesday— warning 2024 was likely to be even hotter.

The annual State of the Climate report by the UN weather and climate agency confirmed preliminary data showing 2023 was by far the hottest year ever recorded.

And last year capped off "the warmest 10-year period on record," the World Meteorological Organization said, with even hotter temperatures expected.

"There is a high probability that 2024 will again break the record of 2023," WMO climate monitoring chief Omar Baddour told reporters.

Reacting to the report, UN chief Antonio Guterres said it showed "a planet on the brink."

"Earth's issuing a distress call," he said in a video message, pointing out that "fossil fuel pollution is sending climate chaos off the charts" and warning that "changes are speeding up."

The WMO said that last year the average near-surface temperature was 1.45 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels—dangerously close to the critical 1.5-degree threshold that countries agreed to avoid passing in the 2015 Paris climate accords.

'Red alert'

"I am now sounding the red alert about the state of the climate," Saulo told reporters, lamenting that "2023 set new records for every single climate indicator."

The organization said many of the records were "smashed" and that the numbers "gave ominous new significance to the phrase 'off the charts.'"

"What we witnessed in 2023, especially with the unprecedented ocean warmth, glacier retreat and Antarctic sea ice loss, is cause for particular concern," Saulo said.

One especially worrying finding was that marine heatwaves gripped nearly a third of the global ocean on an average day last year.

And by the end of 2023, more than 90 percent of the ocean had experienced heatwave conditions at some point during the year, the WMO said.

More frequent and intense marine heatwaves will have "profound negative repercussions for marine ecosystems and coral reefs," it warned.

Meanwhile key glaciers worldwide suffered the largest loss of ice since records began in 1950, "driven by extreme melt in both western North America and Europe."

In Switzerland, where the WMO is based, Alpine glaciers lost 10 percent of their remaining volume in the past two years alone, it said.

The Antarctic sea ice extent was also "by far the lowest on record", WMO said.

Rising sea levels

The maximum area at the end of the southern winter was around one million square kilometers below the previous record year—equivalent to the size of France and Germany combined, according to the report.

Ocean warming and the rapidly melting glaciers and ice sheets drove the sea level last year to its highest point since satellite records began in 1993, WMO said.

The agency highlighted that the global mean sea level rise over the past decade (2014-2023) was more than double the rate in the first decade of satellite records.

The dramatic climate shifts, it said, are taking a heavy toll worldwide, fuelling extreme weather events, flooding and drought, which trigger displacement and drive up biodiversity loss and food insecurity.

"The climate crisis is THE defining challenge that humanity faces and is closely intertwined with the inequality crisis," Saulo said.

'Glimmer of hope'

The WMO did highlight one "glimmer of hope": surging renewable energy generation.

Last year, renewable energy generation capacity—mainly from solar, wind and hydropower—increased by nearly 50 percent from 2022, it said.

The report sparked a flood of reactions and calls for urgent action.

"Our only response must be to stop burning fossil fuels so that the damage can be limited," said Martin Siegert, a geosciences professor at the University of Exeter.

Jeffrey Kargel, a senior scientist at the Planetary Science Institute, stressed that the dramatic climate shifts "do not connote the inevitable doom of civilisation".

The outcome, he said, "depends on how people and governments change or don't change behaviours".

Saulo acknowledged that the cost of climate action might seem high.

"But the cost of climate inaction is much higher," she said. "The worst thing would be to do nothing."

Guterres also emphasised that there was still time to "avoid the worst of climate chaos."

"But leaders must step up and act—now."

Regulations needed to ensure sustainable salt industry expansion — group

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

The newly-signed Philippine Salt Industry Development Act needs thorough regulation to ensure a balance between salt production, aquaculture, and environmental sustainability, a group said on Wednesday.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. signed into law the measure that seeks to revive a sector considered "dying" by equipping salt farmers with appropriate technology as well as financial, production, and marketing support.

However, environmental organization Wetlands International Philippines warned that the measure might exacerbate the degradation of mangroves in the country.

"The signing of the national salt industry [law] raises valid concerns about its potential environmental impact, particularly regarding the increased salinity levels in abandoned, underdeveloped, and underproductive (AUU) fishponds," said Annadel Cabanban, country manager of Wetlands International.

Cabanban noted that increased salinity in soils would make it difficult to revert AUU fishponds to mangrove forests.

The group earlier said that excessive water salinity can stunt mangrove growth, reduce biomass, and impair photosynthesis. It also makes it difficult for mangroves to absorb water and nutrients, hindering their survival.

Assess, identify

Wetlands International suggested that a thorough assessment must be conducted to identify fishponds suitable for reversion to mangroves, implementation of mangrove-friendly aquaculture, or use for salt farming.

"Salt can be produced elsewhere. We suggest around islands with clean water, specifically areas behind the beach towards land," said Cabanban.

Wetlands International is working with the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) to strike a balance between preserving mangrove ecosystems and promoting sustainable aquaculture, fisheries, and climate adaptation while exploring avenues for growth in salt production.

During a meeting with the organization, Oceana Philippines and Rare Philippines early this month, BFAR said the sites for the salt-pan industry would still be identified by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Wetlands International also recommended including salt production in the country's integrated coastal management plans.

"Salt production can be part of the multiple-uses strategy in the coastal zone and it is timely that we get a better understanding of this law as the country embarks on integrated coastal management," Cabanban said.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

BUSINESS MIRROR

[CCC, DOH to boost collab vs. climate change impact on public health](#)

By: Stephanie Sevillano

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) will strengthen its collaboration with the Department of Health (DOH) to address the impact of climate change on public health.

CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert Borje made this commitment in a meeting with Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa at the DOH main office in Manila last March 19, 2024.

These issues include heat-related illnesses, vector-borne and waterborne diseases, malnutrition and mental health issues, among others.

In a news release, Borje said it is imperative to have an adaptive and resilient healthcare system in the country, recalling the effects of the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic.

“Our experiences have shown us that our well-being is intricately linked to the health of our planet. Recognizing this connection is key to building a resilient and sustainable future for all,” he said.

Meanwhile, Herbosa vowed to continue pushing for reforms aimed at establishing a more resilient healthcare system.

“Our plans include constructing environmentally friendly hospitals, incorporating climate change adaptation into our disaster risk reduction initiatives. As the DOH is actively reforming to prioritize Universal Health Care and primary care, we believe this presents a prime opportunity to foster partnerships for a healthier and greener future,” he said.

Possible areas of collaboration, meanwhile, include formulation of climate-health policies and campaigns, as well as increase of public awareness activities.

To date, the CCC is working on its National Adaptation Plan (NAP), with health included among the focus sectors for climate resilience.

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