



NEWS ROUNDUP

22 MARCH 2024 [11:00 am]

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PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

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By: Kris Crismundo

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PHILSTAR

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By: Agence France-Presse

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CCC IN THE NEWS:

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By: Alice Sicat

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) works tirelessly to develop strategies that enhance the country's ability to withstand the effects of climate change, from rising sea levels to extreme weather events.

MANILA TIMES

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

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The underlying mission of such act, no matter how small it is, and the call for cooperation will bring a difference, Lotilla said in a statement Thursday.

“Every year during the same period, we are reminded of an hour of collective action to make a difference for our Mother Earth,” he said.

The DOE chief also encouraged Filipinos to be mindful of energy usage, not only during Earth Hour, but to make energy efficiency and conservation a way of life.

“With energy efficiency and conservation practices, we can do more with less by using technology and adopting behaviors that reduce the energy required to accomplish a task or provide service,” he said.

Whether upgrading to energy-efficient appliances, improving insulation at home, or optimizing industrial processes, Lotilla said every small step towards energy efficiency contributes to significant savings and environmental benefits.

The annual symbolic lights-out event started in Sydney, Australia in 2007.

The Philippines registered the highest energy savings during Earth Hour in 2019, saving 195.34 megawatts. DOE targets to exceed it this year.

Last year, energy savings on Earth Hour was at 62.69 MW.

This year’s Earth Hour theme is “Switch Off Plastic Pollution, Give an Hour for Earth

MANILA BULLETIN

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By: Lizst Torres Abello

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) on Thursday, March 21 said hot and humid weather will be experienced for the next three days.

PAGASA weather specialist Daniel James Villamil said the northeast monsoon, or “amihan” will have no effect on the country in the coming days.

“Inaasahan natin ang tuluyang paghina ng hanging amihan, so hindi na natin inaasahang makakaapekto ang northeast monsoon sa buong Luzon for the next three days, kaakibat ng paghina ng amihan ang pagtaas ng maximum temperatures sa hapon or sa tanghali kaya mainit at maalansingang panahon muli ang posibleng mararanasan (We expect the continuous weakening of amihan, so we don’t expect northeast monsoon to have its effects in Luzon for the next three days, alongside its weakening is the increase in maximum temperatures at noon time or afternoon, that is why, hot and humid weather will be experienced),” Villamil said.

Based on the PAGASA’s extended weather outlook from March 22 to 24, the actual air temperature in some key areas are: 23–34°C in Metro Manila, 24–31° in Legazpi City, 14–24°C in Baguio City, 25–32°C in Metro Cebu, 26–33°C in Iloilo City, 24–31°C in Tacloban City, 24–33°C in Metro Davao, 23–34°C in Zamboanga City, and 23–32°C in Cagayan de Oro City.

Meanwhile, over the next 24 hours, PAGASA said Caraga, Davao Oriental, and Davao de Oro will have cloudy skies with scattered rain showers and thunderstorms caused by the easterlies or the warm winds from the Pacific Ocean.

PAGASA said flash floods or landslides may occur in times of moderate to heavy rains.

In Cagayan Valley, Apayao, Kalinga, Mountain Province, Ifugao, Aurora, Quezon, and Camarines Norte, cloudy skies with light rains will be felt, while Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated light rains due to a weak amihan.

PHILSTAR

[Global sea level jumped due to El Nino and climate change — NASA](#)

By: Agence France-Presse

In an aerial view, the Pacific Ocean and coastline are seen on April 19, 2022 in Ventura, California. Sea levels along coastlines in the U.S. will rise up to one foot by the year 2050, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Mario Tama/Getty Images/AFP

WASHINGTON, United States — Global average sea level rose by about 0.3 inches (0.76 centimeters) from 2022 to 2023 -- nearly four times the increase of the previous year -- NASA said Thursday, attributing the "significant jump" to a strong El Nino and a warming climate.

The NASA-led analysis is based on more than 30 years of satellite observations, with the initial satellite launching in 1992 and the latest in 2020.

Overall, sea levels have risen by around four inches since 1993. The rate of increase has also accelerated, more than doubling from 0.07 inches per year in 1993, to the current rate of 0.17 inches per year.

"Current rates of acceleration mean that we are on track to add another 20 centimeters of global mean sea level by 2050," said Nadya Vinogradova Shiffer, director for the NASA sea level change team and the ocean physics program in Washington.

That would be double the amount of change in the next three decades compared to the previous century, she said, creating a future where flooding is far more frequent and catastrophic than today.

The immediate cause of the spike is the El Nino weather effect, which replaced the La Nina from 2021 to 2022, when the sea level rose around 0.08 inches.

El Nino involves warmer-than-average ocean temperatures in the equatorial Pacific.

"In El Nino years, a lot of the rain that normally falls on land ends up in the ocean, which raises sea levels temporarily," said Josh Willis, a sea level researcher at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL).

But there is also a clear human footprint evident in the underlying trend of acceleration.

"Long-term datasets like this 30-year satellite record allow us to differentiate between short-term effects on sea level, like El Nino, and trends that let us know where sea level is heading," said Ben Hamlington, lead for NASA's sea level change team at JPL.

Technological innovations have brought greater accuracy of measurements over the years. For example, radar altimeters bounce microwaves off the sea surface, then record the time the signal takes to travel back to the satellite, as well as the strength of the return signal.

They also cross-check their data with other sources like tide gauges and satellite measurements of atmospheric water vapor and Earth's gravity field.

UNDP

[UN Development Programme Disrupts Global Television Airwaves with Shocking Weather Forecasts from the Future to Mobilize Climate Action Today](#)

The Weather Kids campaign, created in partnership with the World Meteorological Organization and The Weather Channel, calls for urgent climate action for the next generations.

Global television audiences who tune in for their local weather reports today are in for a surprise – a special forecast from the year 2050. While the format is familiar, the forecasts – anchored by children – are not. These young TV meteorologists joined the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for its newly Weather Kids campaign, created in partnership with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and The Weather Channel. Supported by global celebrities and UNDP Goodwill Ambassadors, including Oscar-winning Malaysian actor Michelle Yeoh, American actor Connie Britton and Danish actor Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, the campaign is part of UNDP's efforts to boost awareness on the impacts of climate change and to mobilize people around the world to take meaningful climate action for future generations.

The segment warns viewers that rising temperatures will continue to bring more of the catastrophic climate change impacts that we are currently experiencing to people and the global economy. These include a projected impact on 94% of the world's children, threats to food security and a potential rise in taxpayers' bills globally of trillions of US Dollars. "Everything is crazy. Schools are closed because it's too hot. Wildfires are burning whole towns. And floods are making everything wet and gross," announces one young presenter.

The forecast ends with a powerful plea from the children: "It's not just a weather report to us. It is our future." Viewers are encouraged to sign a pledge to act by making financial decisions that align with sustainability and educating themselves on climate solutions and global climate action. UNDP's new video series Climate Action Explained, narrated by Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, which complements the campaign, highlights some of the concrete solutions that are already happening.

"The Weather Kids add a powerful voice to alert us to a future that will certainly materialize if we do not take meaningful climate action today," said Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator. "Continued inertia on climate change will lead to an increasingly uninhabitable planet for the 'kids of today' and future generations. We can only course-correct if we move at speed and scale now. That includes decarbonizing our economies and advancing access to affordable, clean energy for all; protecting and restoring our natural world; and empowering communities to have their say in their countries' climate pledges."

The Weather Kids campaign is part of UNDP's efforts to inspire public conversation and mobilize action on climate change on the road to the COP30 climate negotiations to be held in Brazil 2025. COP30 will mark the ten-year anniversary of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement and is a critical opportunity to get the world on a path aligned with limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, as countries submit a new round of climate actions and goals they plan to undertake. These plans – known as 'Nationally

Determined Contributions' (NDCs) - are at the very heart of the global fight against climate change.

“The Arab region is the world's most water-scarce and food import-dependent. Climate change is seriously affecting lives and livelihoods in all of our countries,” said Abdallah Al Dardari, UN Assistant Secretary General and Director for the Regional Bureau for Arab States. “We hope that the Weather Kids campaign will engage everyone in our region and across the world, and motivate them to act urgently to stave off the current climate emergency and transform our future. For the children in your lives and all future generations, I encourage you all to sign the Climate Pledge today.”

Weather Kids is underpinned by UNDP's extensive work on climate change and climate action. The newly established UNDP Climate Hub delivers the UN System's largest portfolio of support on climate action in nearly 150 countries. UNDP's flagship Climate Promise initiative has supported action to tackle global warming by working with 85% of the world's developing countries on their NDC submissions.

Designed to emulate weather reports television viewers see every day, the projected forecasts were developed using data from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and UNDP's Climate Horizons data platform.

The Weather Kids will air on news channels in more than 80 countries around the world.

This global reach was made possible by a broad coalition of partners, many of whom donated their time and services for this common cause. In addition to our core partners the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and The Weather Channel, the flagship consumer brand of The Weather Company, UNDP would like to thank: Activista; Earth X; Pvblic Foundation, The Artery, ICCO – the International Communications Consultancy Organization – and SAWA, the Global Cinema Advertising Association and its network of members.

CAJNEWS

[Climate change triggers cholera outbreak in Somalia](#)

MOGADISHU, (CAJ News) – AN outbreak of cholera, indirectly linked to climate change, has left at least 54 people dead in Somalia in recent months.

The waterborne disease outbreak is peaking, with nine people dying in the past week alone, representing the highest weekly death toll this year.

More than 59 percent of the 4 388 confirmed cases for 2024 or 2 605 people are children under five, according to the latest report from Somalia's Ministry of Health and Human Services.

The current outbreak, which started in January, is understood to be the results of the large-scale flooding that took place in October and November 2023.

El Nino-induced flooding in November and December 2023 destroyed toilets and latrines, forcing communities, especially recently displaced families, into open defecation.

Flooding is linked to the climate crisis.

Mohamed Abdiladif, Save the Children's Acting Country Director for Somalia, expressed concern that the cholera outbreak would spiral out of control when the rainy season starts, in a month, if urgent action was not taken by government and donors to provide enough clean drinking water and sanitation facilities to communities.

"These vulnerable communities have faced back to back tragedies having been forced out of their homes by flooding and conflict," he said.

Save the Children has committed to providing humanitarian aid, including medical supplies, drugs and cholera kits.

"However, more funds are to provide hygiene and sanitation items to prevent further spread of the cholera," Abdiladif appealed.

Apart from climate change, Somalia is devastated by the insurgency perpetrated by the Al-Shabaab terror group.

Over 4 million people or 21 per cent of the population are facing food insecurity.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

[A nation unites in darkness: Philippines to join Earth Hour](#)

By: Alice Sicat

As the clock strikes 8:30 PM on March 23, the Philippines will join the global movement in observing Earth Hour, a symbolic event that encourages individuals, communities, and businesses to turn off non-essential lights for one hour.

This year, the Philippines is not just dimming its lights; it's highlighting the importance of environmental conservation and sustainable living. With the Department of Energy (DOE) taking significant strides to promote this advocacy, the activity marks a very crucial moment for the country's commitment to a greener, more sustainable future.

Since its inception in Sydney in 2007, Earth Hour has grown into a global phenomenon, with millions of people in over 190 countries participating each year. In the Philippines, the event has also gained support, becoming a symbol of unity in the fight against climate change.

From busy metropolises to remote villages, Filipinos across the archipelago will switch off their lights for an hour, creating a breathtaking display of darkness that underscores the urgent need for environmental action.

Homes, businesses, and iconic landmarks such as the Rizal monument in Manila, the Cebu Taoist Temple, and the Davao City Hall will power down, sending a message of solidarity and responsibility.

This year, the Philippine government has once again stepped up its efforts to support Earth Hour and promote sustainable practices throughout the nation.

Led by the Department of Energy (DOE) and various government agencies and local government units (LGUs), initiatives are being rolled out to raise awareness, educate the public, and implement concrete measures for environmental conservation.

Recognizing the crucial role of energy consumption in climate change, the DOE has been at the forefront of promoting renewable energy sources.

Through campaigns, workshops, and partnerships with the private sector, the DOE aims to shift the country towards cleaner, more sustainable energy options such as solar, wind, and hydroelectric power.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) continues to spearhead reforestation efforts and biodiversity conservation programs.

These initiatives not only mitigate the effects of deforestation but also protect the country's rich flora and fauna. Earth Hour serves as a reminder of the importance of preserving our natural heritage for future generations.

Plastic pollution remains a pressing issue in the Philippines, but the government is taking action.

Local government units (LGUs) are implementing strict waste management (SWM) policies, promoting recycling, and conducting clean-up drives in coastal areas and urban centers. Through these efforts, the Philippines aims to reduce its plastic footprint and promote a culture of sustainability.

Just recently, the DENR Environmental Monitoring and Enforcement Division (EMED) led the first regional ecological center (REC) meeting to tackle the status of solid waste management implementation in the National Capital Region and updates on LGUs with expiring 10-year SWM Plan.

With the Philippines being one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change impacts, adaptation and resilience-building are crucial. The Climate Change Commission (CCC) works tirelessly to develop strategies that enhance the country's ability to withstand the effects of climate change, from rising sea levels to extreme weather events.

Government agencies are also ramping up public awareness campaigns to educate Filipinos about the importance of environmental conservation. From school programs to social media campaigns, these initiatives aim to inspire individuals to make sustainable choices in their daily lives.

Quezon City joins earth hour with eco-bazaar

Stepping into a world of eco-friendly innovation, the POP QC Eco-Bazaar 2024, opens its doors to all residents. This exciting event showcases the unique and environmentally-conscious products brought to you by 12 QC-based micro entrepreneurs.

Located at Farmers' Plaza, Araneta City, from March 20th to 23rd, 2024, 10:00 AM to 9:00 PM, this bazaar promises a diverse array of sustainable goods. From handmade crafts to organic foods, there's something for everyone looking to support local businesses with a green touch.

This is a collaborative effort between the QC Small Business and Cooperatives Development and Promotion Office (SBCDPO) and the J. Amado Araneta Foundation (JAAF). It's a testament to the city's commitment to fostering sustainability and empowering its entrepreneurs.

For those eager to delve deeper into environmental stewardship, mark your calendars for an engaging and informative discussion on March 23, 2024.

Join hands with the Mother Earth Foundation, QC Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Department, and Artitas Events for a thought-provoking dialogue.

Whether you're on the hunt for eco-conscious products or seeking to expand your knowledge on green initiatives, the POP QC Eco-Bazaar 2024 is the place to be.

A call to action: Every hour counts

While Earth Hour serves as a moving reminder of the need for environmental action, its message extends far beyond the sixty minutes of darkness. It is a call to action for every Filipino to embrace a more sustainable lifestyle, to reduce waste, conserve energy, and protect the environment for future generations.

In the words of Senator Loren Legarda, a staunch advocate for environmental protection, "Earth Hour is not just about turning off our lights; it is about turning on our collective resolve to protect our planet. Together, we can make a difference, one hour at a time."

So, as the clock ticks towards 8:30 PM on March 23, let us join hands, switch off our lights, and illuminate a future where sustainability is not just a goal but a way of life.

MANILA TIMES

[Meralco strengthens sustainability commitment with P100-B capital investment](#)

The serious threat of climate change has sparked demand for a stronger global response that could mitigate its impact, prompting governments, companies, and organizations worldwide to embed sustainability practices in their operations.

In its February 2024 report titled "People and Planet: Addressing the Interlinked Challenges of Climate Change, Poverty, and Hunger in Asia and the Pacific", the Asian Development Bank, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and United Nations Development Program sounded the alarm on the impacts of climate change — warning that more frequent and severe climate-related hazards will hinder social and economic progress.

Meralco's significant capital investment to accelerate the implementation of its sustainability agenda is in line with the government's efforts to achieve a sustainable energy future.

This risk made it imperative for highly vulnerable countries such as the Philippines to immediately lay down measures to address the threat. In response, the government and energy industry movers such as Meralco are working together to fast-track efforts towards a sustainable energy future.

Just recently, Meralco, the country's largest distribution utility, announced a landmark investment of over P100 billion through 2030 to accelerate the implementation of its sustainability agenda.

Under its long-term sustainability strategy, Meralco is pouring in significant capital investments to catalyze critical projects intended to fortify the company's distribution network, making it not only sustainable but also smarter and more resilient in the face of the increasing challenges posed by climate change.

Key initiatives include enhancing grid reliability, reducing system loss, transitioning to natural ester oil for distribution transformers, implementing energy efficiency solutions, and expanding electric vehicle (EV) fleets and infrastructure.

"With sustainability deeply embedded in Meralco's operations and long-term plans, we are proud to commit over P100 billion in capital expenditures to initiatives that not only enhance our infrastructure but also align with the government's vision for a sustainable future," Meralco Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Ronnie Aperocho said.

Aligned with its just, orderly, and affordable transition to clean energy, Meralco is ramping up its RE buildout through MGen Renewable Energy Inc. (MGreen), a wholly owned subsidiary of Meralco PowerGen Corporation, to accelerate the development of RE projects primarily from solar and wind sources.

"Core to our long-term sustainability strategy are twin commitments to secure 1,500 MW of renewable energy supply contracts and to develop 1,500 MW of attributable green energy generation capacity. This underscores our dedication to our low-carbon

transition and to serving the country's growing energy demand with clean power," emphasized Meralco First Vice President and Chief Sustainability Officer Raymond Ravelo.

In addition to fortifying its distribution network and bolstering its RE portfolio, Meralco has allocated funds to promote the adoption of solar energy solutions for businesses and homes through its subsidiary MSpectrum, and to champion social development and amelioration programs through One Meralco Foundation's (OMF) solar electrification initiatives targeting underserved households, rural health centers, water access projects, and livelihood programs.

These strategic investments are pivotal in driving Meralco's sustainability strategy, which aims to reduce total emissions by 20 percent by 2030, encompassing both direct emissions from onsite activities and indirect emissions from purchased electricity, supply chain operations, and services provided.

Beyond power generation, Meralco recognizes the need to engage and support the government in driving sustainable solutions in the country.

The distribution utility recently held a dialogue with the Climate Change Commission (CCC) Philippines delegation led by Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Secretary Robert Borje, to discuss Meralco's ongoing commitment to bolster the country's transition towards a greener future.

During the engagement, Meralco executives led by Aperocho, showcased the distribution utility's electric vehicles and charging stations, along with its digital laboratory — the Powertech Innovation and eXperience Lab (PIXL) to the CCC delegation. These initiatives underscore Meralco's dedication to leveraging innovative technologies for improved customer service and more sustainable business operations.

"As one of the largest players in the power industry here in the country, we are conscious of the impact of our business to the environment and we are one with the government in mitigating the risk of global warming attributed to carbon emissions and other chemicals produced during power generation and distribution," Aperocho said.

Meralco's sustainability agenda extends beyond pursuing cleaner energy sources and includes programs for the environment too. Through the One for Trees environmental program of OMF, Meralco contributes to the preservation and protection of Philippine forests via reforestation and agroforestry.

By the end of 2023, OMF has already nurtured 2.3 million trees across 35 reforestation sites in the country. This has directly benefited 2,359 tree farmers and their families, leading to improvements in their economic welfare and social well-being as they maintain these trees.

"Reversing the losses in our environment takes more than just tree-planting activities; it takes conscientious efforts—from volunteers, to the local government partners, to the community—to grow, nurture and protect these trees so that the community can also reap economic and social benefits from them and over the long term, help mitigate the extreme effects of global warming and climate change. Ultimately, it is an investment for

a more sustainable world for the future generation as well," OMF President and Meralco Chief Corporate Social Responsibility Officer Jeffrey Tarayao said.

Meralco is also a leading supporter of the country's important shift towards sustainable transportation. Through its Green Mobility Program, Meralco aims to electrify at least a quarter of its entire fleet by 2030. Last year, the company also incorporated Movem Electric Inc., in line with its plans to be a major player in the growing EV industry and help drive solutions to achieve cleaner and greener transportation.

With its comprehensive sustainability agenda, Meralco has consistently earned international accolades in recognition of its transformative initiatives.

In 2023, Meralco was feted with a total of eight Stevies — four Gold and four Bronze awards — recognizing the company's outstanding achievements in the realms of sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and communications.

Meralco executives Ravelo and Tarayao were among those recognized as "Sustainability Hero of the Year in Asia, Australia, and New Zealand" and "Thought Leader of the Year" respectively. Both executives were lone recipients of the said awards in their respective categories.

Meralco has also sustained its strong environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance as it maintained its all-time best ratings in global indices. The power distributor secured a 3.2 ESG score for the third consecutive year from Financial Times Stock Exchange Russell ESG Ratings — performing better than Philippine and energy sector averages. It also received a rating of BBB for two consecutive years from MSCI, driven by strong performance in RE opportunities and water management.

Looking ahead, Meralco Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Manuel Pangilinan affirmed the power distributor's commitment to accelerate its transition to green energy by leveraging next-generation technologies such as nuclear energy and battery energy systems, charting a course towards deep decarbonization with the goal to become coal-free by 2050.

"This year, we expect to move forward with our long-term goal of achieving sustainable energy security through our investments in utility scale power generation projects, including exploring the possible adoption of nuclear energy in the country," Pangilinan said in a recent statement.

"Our mission in Meralco goes beyond delivering innovative products and quality services to Filipino consumers. Our strategic expansion and social development initiatives have always been anchored on our firm commitment to create additional and transformative value to our stakeholders, power the country's economic progress, and contribute further to the advancement of the Government's socio-economic agenda" he added.

Established in 2019, Meralco's sustainability agenda, "Powering the Good Life," is deeply rooted in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and is supported by four pillars: Power, Planet, People, and Prosperity.

"As we pursue our decarbonization strategies, we envision a thriving society with access to education, clean water, quality healthcare, dignified livelihoods, and disaster preparedness — all in alignment with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals," Pangilinan concluded.

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