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27 MARCH 2025 [08:00 am]

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CLIMATE HOME NEWS

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FINANCIAL TIMES

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS WORLD

US Supreme Court will not hear novel youth-led climate change case

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday rejected a bid by 21 young people to revive a novel lawsuit claiming the U.S. government's energy policies violate their rights to be protected from climate change.

The justices denied a request by the youth activists to hear their appeal of a decision by the San Francisco-based 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals directing a federal judge in Oregon to dismiss the case after holding they lacked legal standing to sue.

The decision marks the end of Juliana v. United States, one of the longest-running climate change cases that youth activists have filed nationwide and one that the plaintiffs' lawyers say helped sparked a broader youth-led movement for climate rights.

"The Supreme Court's decision today is not the end of the road and the impact of Juliana cannot be measured by the finality of this case alone," Julia Olson, a lawyer for the plaintiffs at Our Children's Trust, said in a statement.

The U.S. Department of Justice, which had fought the case across three presidential administrations, welcomed the court's decision, which Acting Assistant Attorney General Adam Gustafson in a statement said "brings this long saga to a conclusion."

Our Children's Trust and its youth clients have filed a series of lawsuits accusing state and federal governments of exacerbating climate change by adopting policies that encourage or allow the extraction and burning of fossil fuels in violation of their rights.

While some cases have faltered, the Montana Supreme Court in December held that the state's constitution guarantees a right to a stable climate system. Hawaii in June agreed to a first-in-the-nation settlement with young people to take action to decarbonize its transportation system by 2045.

In Monday's case, which was filed in 2015, the youth plaintiffs had alleged the U.S. government has permitted, authorized and subsidized fossil fuel extraction and consumption despite knowing those actions cause catastrophic global warming.

By contributing to climate change, the plaintiffs said U.S. energy policies violate their rights to due process and equal protection under the U.S. Constitution.

But in a 2020 ruling, the 9th Circuit held it was beyond the power of the courts to order and supervise remedies designed to address climate change and that such complex policy decisions were better left to Congress and the executive branch.

The court sent the case back to the Oregon judge with instructions to dismiss the lawsuit. But U.S. District Judge Ann Aiken instead allowed the plaintiffs to try to amend their complaint to keep it going, citing a change in the law.

A three-judge 9th Circuit panel in May 2024 said the 2020 ruling left no room to amend the complaint and directed Aiken to dismiss the case.

CLIMATE HOME NEWS

[Carbon credit auditors suspended for failures in sham rice-farming offsets]
By: Matteo Civillini

Carbon credit registry Verra has suspended activities by four auditors related to carbon credit projects they vetted in China which claimed bogus emission reductions.

In an unprecedented move, TÜV Nord, China Classification Society Certification Company, China Quality Certification Center and CTI Certification will be prevented from auditing agriculture and forestry offsetting schemes on Verra's registry. For German certification giant TÜV Nord, the measures will only apply to its operations in China. It is the first time Verra has taken such measures.

The auditors certified the activities of 37 programmes that aimed to slash planet-heating methane gas releases from rice fields across China, resulting in the generation of millions of carbon offsets. But Verra revoked the projects in August 2024 after a 17-month review found a string of integrity failures that the auditors had failed to identify.

Before this week's suspension, Climate Home previously reported on ten of these projects closely linked to energy company Shell and revealed evidence raising serious doubts over whether any emission-cutting activities had been carried out on the ground at all.

Nearly 2 million worthless carbon credits produced by the projects – and partly used to offset emissions from Shell's gas business – still need to be compensated.

Auditors fail to course-correct
As it axed the projects last year, Verra told the four auditors to produce a "strong" action plan that would prevent similar failures from happening again. But Verra said on Tuesday the responses had proved to be inadequate, prompting it to slap suspension measures on the certifiers.

The suspension will be lifted only if the auditors address the issues and meet Verra's reinstatement requirements.

"This decision was not made lightly, but Verra's commitment to integrity means upholding the highest standards of quality and trust, and maintaining market confidence must come first," Justin Wheler, Verra's chief program management officer, said in a written statement.

Blowback for other projects
Voluntary carbon market standards like Verra rely heavily on external auditors to assess projects and their compliance with the rules, while the registry only gives the final stamp of approval. But auditors are picked and paid directly by project developers, something that, experts say, raises the risk of conflicts of interest.

Verra's suspension will have immediate repercussions for projects that had contracted the services of any of the four auditors.

Verra said that it will not accept project registrations or requests to issue credits that rely on audits done by the certifiers affected by the measure. Those that have already undergone an audit carried out by suspended auditors will have to repeat the process with a new entity. A spokesperson for Verra told Climate Home at least 57 projects will be directly affected.

"While we recognize the impact of this suspension on affected projects, ensuring rigorous and credible validations and verifications is critical," said Verra's Wheler.

TÜV Nord is one of the world's largest certification companies and, according to its website, it has vetted thousands of carbon credit projects both in the voluntary market and the United Nation's Clean Development Mechanism. Climate Home has approached the company for comment.

China Classification Society Certification Company, China Quality Certification Center and CTI Certification are among China's biggest certifiers of products and services, including emission reduction programmes.

Phantom credits still not compensated

Meanwhile, Verra has still been unable to obtain compensation for the 1.8 million worthless credits generated by ten rice farming projects that Shell directly supported in China. As Climate Home previously reported, the energy giant abandoned the projects soon after being informed that the sham offsets would need to be paid back.

The carbon credit registry sanctioned the project developer Hefei Luyu after the Chinese company failed to reply to Verra's emails and compensate for the credits. But, in contrast, Verra has not taken any action against Shell – the world's largest buyer of carbon offsets.

Shell used at least half a million credits produced by the Chinese rice farming projects to claim that shipments of liquefied natural gas (LNG) sold to clients were "carbon neutral".

FINANCIAL TIMES

[UN climate boss urges Europe not to forget planet amid defence drive]

By: Attracta Mooney and Alice Hancock

The UN's climate boss has urged Europe to step up efforts to tackle global warming under its security spending drive, as concerns mount that the EU is sidelining green action while dashing to revitalise its armed forces.

As European nations cut aid budgets, increase borrowing and explore new spending structures in an effort to re-arm in the face of US President Donald Trump's threats to leave Nato, climate experts fear green spending will also be targeted.

"The climate crisis is an urgent national security crisis that should be at the top of every cabinet agenda," Simon Stiell, chief of the UN's climate change arm, said in a speech in Germany on Wednesday.

He warned that Europe's borders were vulnerable to an influx of climate refugees as other regions become "unlivable", forcing "millions more people" to migrate.

"The damage will not stop at Europe's borders, but it will increasingly impact them," he said at the Europe 2025 conference.

As Trump launches a sweeping attack on policies to mitigate climate change, including pulling the country from the landmark Paris agreement, Stiell said "this is Europe's moment" to show "climate leadership".

"As one government steps back from climate leadership, it opens up space for others to step forward and seize the vast benefits on offer," said Stiell, who did not explicitly mention the US in the speech.

He pointed to Germany's recently agreed defence spending plans — which set aside money for climate change measures — as a way to combine both climate and security efforts.

The speech came days after UN secretary-general António Guterres pleaded with EU leaders not to request rebates from the New York-based body this year to help offset a halt in US contributions.

Climate ministers and negotiators from more than 30 countries are separately meeting in Germany this week for the first large talks since the UN COP29 summit in Baku in November and Trump's inauguration two months later. The US was absent for the talks across Tuesday and Wednesday.

Stiell, who is also attending the discussions, said climate change could cut the EU's combined GDP by 1 per cent within the next few years and 2.3 per cent by mid-century, creating what he called a “recipe for a permanent recession”. Last year was the hottest on record.

The EU is due to submit a new climate plan to the UN this year, setting out how the bloc will cut emissions and by how much by 2035. Brussels has backed away from announcing its target ahead of Polish elections in May, fearing voter backlash against ambitious climate plans.

Stiell said well-crafted decarbonisation plans are “wealth magnets, pulling in huge inflows of capital investment”. The comments echoed a landmark report last year by former Italian premier Mario Draghi that said investment in clean power is critical to the bloc’s energy security and economic performance.

“When it comes to security guarantees of the economic kind, they don’t come stronger for Europe than a bold new national climate plan,” Stiell added.

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

Bohol partners with int'l NGO to advance climate action
By: Rey Anthony Chiu

The provincial government of Bohol has partnered with the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities (ICSC) to help ensure that the island-province remains in the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) list of global geoparks.

The provincial government recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the ICSC to collaborate in addressing the effects of climate change in the island by coming up with the Enhanced Local Climate Change Action Plan (ELCCAP) in the next three years.

“The MOU establishes the framework for collaboration between ICSC and Bohol to advance clean, affordable, reliable and secure energy systems while promoting community welfare through inclusivity and sustainability,” said ICSC executive director Angelo Kairos Dela Cruz.

The ELCCAP will also help address the impact of human habitation on the geoparks as communities are established right in the midst of these areas.

In May 2023, Bohol was enlisted as a global geopark by UNESCO, the first in the country.

“This is a credit Bohol keeps as long as it can keep its environment as pristine and its geography practically ‘untouched’, which is a huge responsibility knowing that it is the entire island that we need to sustain and conserve,” explained Mary Lou Regis, Bohol’s geoparks information, education, and communications team member.

Under the MOU, the ICSC will provide technical assistance on the ELCCAP development and greenhouse gas emissions inventory.

ICSC will also expand sustainable transport options outside of Tagbilaran City and help spread public awareness on renewable energy mechanisms.

On the other hand, the provincial government will implement training for greenhouse gas inventories and manage urban development and eco-friendly transport systems.

Bohol will also convene the local government units and renewable energy stakeholders to coordinate and harmonize efforts in supporting the local energy plan development, including the installation of solar panels on public infrastructure.

The Bohol Island UNESCO Global Geopark covers 8,808 square kilometers of land and surrounding lush marine protected areas.

The island features unique geological treasures and karstic geosites such as caves, sinkholes, and cone karst, including the famous Chocolate Hills in Carmen town that show distinct and mostly uniformly shaped conical limestone hills.

The northern coast of Bohol is also home to the Danajon Double Barrier Reef, a rare geological formation that is considered as the only one of its kind in the Philippines and Southeast Asia.

The UNESCO Global Geopark list was first created in 2015 to recognize geological heritage of international significance.

[DOST, Cagayan State U promote e-trike innovation]

By: Mary By Joy F. Javier

The Cagayan State University (CSU), in partnership with the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), is promoting electric tricycle (e-trike) technology across the Philippines in support of the government's climate change mitigation efforts and environmental sustainability goals.

Exhibits showcasing e-trikes have already been held in Batanes, Nueva Vizcaya, Isabela, Apayao, Quirino, Kalinga, and Iloilo, with plans to extend the project to Mindanao this year, including General Santos City, Bukidnon, Zamboanga, and Basilan.

In Region 2, CSU has established the country's first DOST-funded Electromobility Research and Development (R&D) Center for e-trike technology. This initiative includes the development of the 6+1 passenger e-trike, advanced electronics in collaboration with the University of the Philippines Diliman, and the converted electric tricycle (c-trike).

According to Michael Orpilla, CSU's research coordinator, the project aligns with the government's goal of reducing carbon emissions by at least 75 percent by 2030.

He emphasized the need for the transportation sector to shift towards sustainable alternatives, promoting environmental sustainability, energy security, and cost efficiency for drivers.

"We need to transition to sustainable solutions to mitigate climate change. The cost of adapting to climate change will eventually become too high, which is why we must act now to reduce its impact," Orpilla said.

In addition to the well-known 6+1 passenger e-trike, CSU is also promoting the c-trike, which offers significant economic benefits to tricycle drivers due to its lower operating costs.

He said research shows that the c-trike costs only P0.88 per kilometer to operate, compared to P3.20 for 2-stroke and P2.30 for 4-stroke tricycles. The conversion process replaces the engine with an electric kit, reducing both emissions and operational costs.

Arnold Kein T. Tolbe of CSU's Electromobility R&D Center shared that the public reception of the e-trikes has been overwhelmingly positive, particularly in areas where the technology has been showcased.

He said CSU has already secured four technology adopters—two from Isabela, one from Cebu, and one from Pasay City.

Currently, e-trikes use large batteries that allow them to travel up to 100 kilometers per day. However, CSU is focusing on improving charging efficiency through ongoing research into battery swapping.

By establishing charging and battery-swapping stations, CSU aims to reduce battery size and lower the overall cost of e-trikes, as batteries currently account for 40-60 percent of the total unit price.

“We have developed a fast-charging battery in collaboration with UP Diliman that can fully charge an e-trike in just 35 minutes. However, our team is also working on a battery-swapping system that would allow drivers to replace batteries as quickly as refueling a gasoline-powered vehicle,” Orpilla added.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

LPA, easterlies to bring showers across Philippines
By: Ian Laqui

Two weather systems may bring cloudy skies and scattered rains across the country on Thursday, March 27, state weather bureau PAGASA said.

As of 3 a.m., a low pressure area (LPA) was estimated 220 kilometers east of Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur.

In a weather forecast, PAGASA weather specialist Chenel Dominguez said the LPA has a low chance of developing into a typhoon but may still bring rains to parts of Visayas and Mindanao.

Visayas, Northern Mindanao, Caraga and Davao Region may experience cloudy skies with scattered rains and thunderstorms due to the LPA. PAGASA warned of possible flash floods or landslides in these areas due to moderate to heavy rainfall.

Meanwhile, Metro Manila and the rest of the country may expect partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers or thunderstorms due to the easterlies.

PAGASA said that severe thunderstorms caused by the easterlies may lead to flash floods or landslides in some areas.

Japan lends P65 billion to Philippines for infrastructure, climate change

By: Louise Maureen Simeon

The Philippines and Japan have signed P65 billion worth of loan financing for five projects aimed at boosting infrastructure and climate change initiatives in the country.

During a high-level meeting of the two governments yesterday in Manila, Finance Secretary Ralph Recto and Japan International Cooperation Agency country chief representative Baba Takashi led the signing of loan agreements amounting to JPY 171.58 billion or roughly P65.43 billion.

This was conducted on the sidelines of the 15th Philippines-Japan High-Level Joint Committee Meeting on Infrastructure Development and Economic Cooperation as part of efforts to expedite the rollout of Japan-supported projects in the Philippines.

Recto and Takashi signed the financing for the third phase of the Davao City Bypass Construction project worth JPY 46.34 billion (P17.67 billion).

The country's first-ever long-distance mountain tunnel in the Philippines is aimed at enhancing connectivity and accessibility in Davao City.

The construction of a four-lane bypass road with a total length of 45.5 kilometers is expected to improve mobility in Davao, facilitate trade and accelerate economic growth in Mindanao.

The two governments likewise inked the JPY 45.76 billion (P17.45 billion) loan for the fourth and final phase of the Pasig-Marikina River Channel Improvement project.

The project aims to strengthen the flood management infrastructure in Metro Manila through the establishment of dikes and revetments, installation of flood gates and channel dredging, among others.

The fourth phase covers structural and non-structural measures that will mitigate flood damage in the capital caused by channel overflow of the Pasig-Marikina River, thereby facilitating urban development and enhancing the sustainable environment along the river.

Japan also extended JPY 35 billion (P13.35 billion) in loans for the Climate Change Action Program-Subprogram 2 to equip the government with the financial capability to implement more climate adaptation, mitigation and disaster preparedness initiatives.

Similarly, JPY 30 billion (P11.44 billion) was lent for Build Universal Health Care Subprogram 2 to improve equitable access to quality health services that are also responsive to gender-specific health concerns and the health impacts of climate change.

Further, the Cavite Industrial Area Flood Risk Management project received financing worth JPY 14.48 billion (P5.52 billion) to help mitigate flood damage in the lower reaches of the San Juan River Basin and its adjacent Maalimango Creek Drainage Area.

During the meeting, the Japanese government reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the administration's Build Better More program and other key priority areas.

Both countries discussed the status, implementation issues and ways forward to fast-track the rollout of the big-ticket projects funded by Japan.

These include the first phase of the Metro Manila Subway Project, North-South Commuter Railway, the Metro Rail Transit Line 3 Rehabilitation, the Dalton Pass East Alignment Road and the Metro Manila Priority Bridges Seismic Improvement.

Japan is also in talks with the Philippines to support the construction of the Central Mindanao High Standard Highway, the second San Juanico Bridge, the flood control and drainage system in Davao City and the Parañaque Spillway as well as the development of the National Public Broadcasting Digital Terrestrial Broadcasting Network and reconstruction of the Magat Dam, among others.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DAILY GUARDIAN

[Opinion] Let’s Talk About Money and Climate Change
By: John Leo Algo

2025 for the Philippines is not just defined by the elections. It is also defined by change against climate change.

This year would see the country update or introduce new plans and policies that would set the direction of how it would address the climate crisis. These would cover different aspects, including the long-term plan for reducing emissions, enabling a just transition towards national sustainable development, and localizing adaptation to extreme impacts.

Yet all of these would require a lot of finance to be fully executed. After a year that saw Filipinos go from enduring heatwaves to bracing themselves for six storms in a span of one month, never before has it been more important to enable and empower local governments and communities to initiate solutions.

To achieve this, however, there are many issues that need to be addressed, starting with our laws.

FUND LOCALLY

As important as the passage of the Climate Change Act was in 2009, one of its glaring flaws is that it did not provide a dedicated funding for climate solutions, similar to the Local Disaster Risk Reduction Management Fund (LDRRMF). This resulted in the amendment to the law a few years later that created the People’s Survival Fund (PSF) to support local adaptation projects.

Yet it took more than a decade before its initial budget was even fully utilized due to bureaucratic inefficiencies that prevent access by local government units (LGUs). Even if efficiently disbursed, a P1-billion sum is nowhere near enough to reduce vulnerabilities and increase climate resilience of more than 1,500 cities and municipalities across the country.

In an effort to address this, an inter-agency policy was enacted in 2013 to enable the LDRRMF to be used for adaptation measures, such as conducting risk assessments to be integrated into several LGU plans and implementing community-based monitoring systems.

Despite these efforts, the LDRRMFs have not been fully or properly used across many LGUs. Many local officials still lack the capacity for conducting such risk assessments and mapping or maintain a database that could inform both disaster management and adaptation.

The national-level financing is also not as effective as it appears. The 2025 climate budget is actually double the amount from the previous year, with 87% allotted for adaptation.

However, much of this funding is allotted to flood control projects and the construction, repair, or retrofitting of roads (including farm-to-market roads), bridges, and other infrastructure. While important interventions, their respective allocations face several issues.

One of these is that many of these projects have been ineffective, as seen in 2024 alone where several communities reported some of the worst flooding they have ever experienced. Prolonged periods for their completion and perceived corruption have also plagued many of them.

Another issue is that the current lack of a comprehensive climate finance strategy. While currently being developed with government partners, its absence has contributed to the lack of alignment in climate-related budget allocations with intended adaptation priorities, incoherence of climate-related policies among government agencies, and an uneven allocation of public funds among said agencies.

Under the 2025 national climate budget, the Department of Public Works and Highways account for by far the highest share and increase in allotment from 2024. On the other hand, the Department of the Interior and Local Government received one of the biggest decreases.

What all of these evidences show is that for a country that urgently needs to further empower its local governments and communities for climate action, the national government so far has kept falling short of giving them enough resources and capacity-building to do so. The lack of multi-scenario and probabilistic analysis of numerous local projects is another indicator of this unfortunate reality.

THINK NATIONALLY

With all the proposed bills in Congress to fill in existing gaps related to climate action, a track that has not been as explored in recent years is amending existing laws.

An amendment to either the Climate Change Act or the National DRRM Act to directly include adaptation as part of the scope of activities under the LDRRMF would hold more legal weight than the current policy.

It would also give a stronger and clearer signal to LGUs that the 70% portion of the LDRRMF that is for disaster mitigation, prevention, and preparedness can also be used to fund adaptation solutions, as part of their respective Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCCAPs).

Another policy reform is clearly defining who handles the climate agenda at the LGU level. Under the Climate Change Act, the local chief executive assigns who leads the formulation and implementation of LCCAPs, which makes it prone to instability from potential short-term political turnover.

An amendment to the Climate Change Act to address this issue, such as creating new plantilla positions at the LGU level or designating an existing LGU department as the responsible entity, would go a long way in further empowering locally-led climate actions.

Further empowering the Climate Change Commission (CCC), the country's lead advisory policymaking body on the climate crisis, is also a necessity.

For example, several of the proposed bills have provisions that provide added responsibilities to the agency, whose growing mandate has not been matched by its received support in terms of sufficient personnel, resources, and capacities. This is a problem that has persisted almost since its inception more than a decade ago, which needs to be remedied.

All of these recommendations have to be complemented by policy and decision-making aligned with good governance. As the Philippines updates many of its climate policies and plans for 2025, the government has the responsibility to ensure coherence among all of them, especially with the annual national climate budget, to implement them properly, and to do so with a genuine "whole-of-society" approach.

Just as importantly, decision-makers need to fully embrace a proactive approach to climate governance over the reactionary one that has dominated for the past few decades. Sooner or later, Filipinos will learn. It might as well be sooner.

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