



NEWS ROUNDUP

30 MARCH 2023 [08:00 am]

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['A win of epic proportions': World's highest court can set out countries' climate obligations after Vanuatu secures historic UN vote](#)

By: Rachel Ramirez

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PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

[Newly created WRMO aims to address El Niño](#)

By: Maria Viktoria M. Viado

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. is confident that the newly-created Water Resource Management Office (WRMO) will include El Niño – a warm climate pattern that usually results in concerns on water supply due to drought and dry spells, in its top priorities in the coming years.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[DPWH plants 315K 'replacement' trees in E. Samar](#)

By: Sarwell Meniano

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) on Wednesday began planting 315,100 trees to replace those trees cut to pave the way for the slope protection rockfall netting project in Eastern Samar.

[Fair weather, isolated rain showers continue to prevail across PH](#)

By: Ma. Cristina Arayata

Fair weather with isolated rain showers will continue to prevail across the country on Wednesday, the weather bureau said.

THE MANILA TIMES

[High Seas Treaty offers opportunities for PH](#)

EARLIER this month, member states of the United Nations, including the Philippines, approved a landmark High Seas Treaty, ending a decade of contentious negotiations capped off by a marathon, 38-hour session just before the final draft was approved by the UN General Assembly.

['Tanker owner should pay for oil spill damage'](#)

By: Janine Alexis Miguel

FISHERFOLK communities and environmental organizations led by the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PM CJ) sought the government's intervention to hold the fishing vessel owner of the sunken MT Princess Empress vessel accountable for the oil spill.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[PAGASA issues extreme heat danger alert](#)

By: Romina Cabrera

The heat index in Laoag City in Ilocos Sur may reach 48 degrees Celsius on the first day of April, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

[UN considers 'historic' Vanuatu-led climate resolution](#)

By: Amélie Bottolier-Depois

The UN General Assembly on Wednesday is expected to adopt a resolution calling for a top court to outline legal obligations related to climate change, an "unprecedented challenge of civilizational proportions."

CCC IN THE NEWS:

GMA NEWS

[Filipinos join Earth Hour 2023](#)

Filipinos switched off non-essential lights on Saturday as part of the Earth Hour initiative.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[CCC sponsors food security forum in Caloocan City](#)

The Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) has conducted a forum for food security and urban agriculture in Camarin, Caloocan City to educate residents in urban gardening as a means of livelihood and self-sufficiency.

RADYO PILIPINAS

[Selebrasyon ng Earth Hour 2023, ginunita sa Quezon City](#)

Ginunita ang selebrasyon ng Earth Hour 2023 sa Quezon Memorial Circle sa Quezon City na inorganisa ng Worldwide Fund for Nature - Philippines.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

CNN PHILIPPINES

['A win of epic proportions': World's highest court can set out countries' climate obligations after Vanuatu secures historic UN vote](#)

By: Rachel Ramirez

Pacific Island nation of Vanuatu on Wednesday won a historic vote at the United Nations that calls on the world's highest court to establish for the first time the obligations countries have to address the climate crisis — and the consequences if they don't.

Vanuatu has long faced the disproportionate impacts of rising seas and intensifying storms. And in 2021, it launched its call for the UN International Court of Justice to provide an "advisory opinion" on the legal responsibility of governments to fight the climate crisis, arguing that climate change has become a human rights issue for Pacific Islanders.

Although the advisory opinion will be non-binding, it will carry significant weight and authority and could inform climate negotiations as well as future climate lawsuits around the world. It could also strengthen the position of climate-vulnerable countries in international negotiations.

This year has already been rough for Vanuatu: It is currently under a six-month state of emergency after a rare pair of Category 4 cyclones pummeled the country within 48 hours during the first week of March. The islands' residents are still picking their way through the storms' rubble.

Wednesday's resolution for an advisory opinion passed by majority, backed by more than 130 countries. Two of the world's largest climate polluters, the US and China, did not express support, but did not object meaning the measure passed by consensus.

This is the first time the highest international court is called on to address the climate crisis. The landmark decision is "essential," UN Secretary General António Guterres said in his remarks to the assembly. "Climate justice is both a moral imperative and a prerequisite for effective global climate action."

Advisory opinions have "tremendous importance and can have a long-standing impact on the international legal order," Guterres said.

"Today we have witnessed a win for climate justice of epic proportions," said Ishmael Kalsakau, prime minister of Vanuatu, soon after the resolution was adopted. "The very fact that a small Pacific island nation like Vanuatu was able to successfully spearhead

such a transformative outcome speaks to the incredible support from all corners of the globe.”

Ralph Regenvanu, Vanuatu’s minister of climate change adaptation, told CNN that he hopes the opinion would be “greatly persuasive in terms of increasing domestic action and identifying what gaps in international law and domestic law need to be filled.”

“It is quite historic,” he added.

From classroom to the highest court

The push to seek an advisory opinion from the world’s highest court began in an environmental law class in Fiji in 2019.

Cynthia Houniuhi, president of Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change, said she and her peers had been looking for ways to address the climate crisis head-on through various international legal pathways, until they decided on the International Court of Justice.

“To be honest, at first, I was very hesitant when this idea was discussed,” Houniuhi said. “My mind keeps telling me to back off. I mean, let’s be real here, it was too ambitious to say the least. Like, how can a small group of students from the Pacific Region convince the majority of the UN members to support this unique initiative?”

But as Pacific Island nations continue to suffer from hotter temperatures and more droughts, rising sea levels, and increasingly intense cyclones, Houniuhi realized they needed to do this.

“What is the use of learning all this knowledge if it’s not for people to fight the single greatest threat to their security?” she said. “For me, the memories of my childhood growing up in my village with my people are slowly fading, as the environment that sustained us disintegrates before our eyes.”

Tropical cyclones are not rare in Oceania, but Vanuatu, which has the highest disaster risk in the world, suffers disproportionately highly.

Scientists say these storms are intensifying as the planet warms and will continue to carry a tremendous economic toll. According to Regenvanu, the financial damage caused by the recent twin cyclones will likely amount to more than half of Vanuatu’s GDP.

“It’s an enormous impact,” he said. “We just have to try to recover, rebuild, all the while knowing that we are coming up to the next climate impact.”

To get support for their idea, the Pacific Island students passed around a petition that garnered signatures from teachers and students. And while campaigning for the initiative, they drafted a letter and proposal that they sent to Pacific Island governments.

After receiving positive feedback from Vanuatu, the student members met with Regenvanu, who was the foreign affairs minister at the time.

“I could empathize with them, and I share their convictions and passions,” Regenvanu said. “I was very happy to receive that proposal and to commit to advancing it.”

The Vanuatu government kept its word, endorsing the proposal and taking it to the international stage.

“It was history in the making,” Houniuhi said. “I don’t want to show a picture to my child one day of my island. I want my child to be able to experience the same environment in the same culture that I grew up in.”

Final stretch

During last year’s UN Climate Week in New York City, a group of Pacific Islander climate activists amped up the pressure on UN leaders, who were gathering for the annual UN General Assembly to discuss climate change-related matters.

Along the East River in front of the UN headquarters, students and climate activists sailed in a flotilla of boats, flying the flags of more than a dozen Pacific Island nations while calling on leaders to vote “yes” to their request for an advisory opinion.

The momentum continued two months later at the UN’s COP27 climate summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, where world leaders and negotiators agreed to create a loss and damage fund, which Vanuatu first proposed back in 1991.

The idea is that rich countries — which have contributed the most to climate change with their planet-warming pollution — should pay poorer nations to recover from the resulting disasters.

“It’s a great injustice when you see oil companies make billions in profits when countries like ours in the Pacific are looking for and seeking support for climate adaptation and mitigation,” said Lavetanalagi Seru, Fijian climate activist and regional policy coordinator

with the Pacific Islands Climate Action Network. “And now, we are living through an era of loss and damage.”

While the advisory opinion is separate from loss and damage, Regenvanu said they are both rooted in climate justice. Having an advisory opinion from the highest court would provide legal clarity of how a loss and damage fund would work.

“The ICJ advisory opinion will come at a the right time to help us define what loss and damage means [and] how it will work,” he said.

Regenvanu said Vanuatu’s request brings attention to the legal avenues small countries can take to fend off the worsening effects of the climate crisis.

“While the Paris Agreement is an essential part of the international legal framework for climate action, it is certainly not the only instrument ... nor is it the most legally enforceable,” Regenvanu said.

It could still take around 18 months for an opinion to be issued, with countries able to provide input into the process.

The climate change minister will now head home to Vanuatu, where he said he will rejoin the ongoing relief efforts after the recent storms.

“We’re basically constantly in a state of recovery in response to climate disasters,” Regenvanu said. “This is why we are so passionate on the climate change front, because this is our reality, and we need to deal with it, and we need other countries to assist us to deal with it.”

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

[Forest Foundation Ph scales up grant program](#)

In celebration of the International Day of the Forest, Forest Foundation Philippines announced that it will scale up its grant program through its 2023 – 2026 Results Framework.

The new framework aims to enable a holistic and trans-disciplinary approach to forest protection, restoration, and conservation in the Philippines.

The 2023-2026 Framework is a four-year program that will empower organizations and individuals to protect and sustainably manage forests for land productivity, water, and biodiversity, while improving forest-related climate action. In addition, the framework will continue and expand Forest Foundation Philippines' grant program to conserve and protect four focal landscapes in the country: the Sierra Madre, Palawan, Samar and Leyte, and Mindanao.

The Philippines is currently suffering from diminished forest cover that is primarily due to anthropogenic causes, including large scale logging and land conversion. This is done to cope with the increasing demands of a growing population of over 115 million Filipinos. Of the nation's total forestlands, only 6.8 million ha remains forested as of 2010; a significant drop that is lower than the 1934 forest cover of 17 million ha, according to the DENR Forest Management Bureau.

These challenges towards deforestation are compounded by the ongoing effects of climate change, such as storm surges, floods, and landslides, destroying the country's first defense against natural disasters. According to the 2017 Philippine Climate Change Assessment, these issues have led to damage upwards of \$8.45 billion.

Forest Foundation Philippines' 2023 – 2026 Results Framework is grounded by a strong commitment to reinforce the relationship between people and forests by building partnerships among stakeholders to ensure a livable future for the next generation.

“Our 2023 – 2026 Results Framework is a commitment to the continued protection, restoration, and conservation of our nation's most important resource,” said Jose Andres Canivel, Forest Foundation Philippines executive director.

“We urge interested organizations and individuals to reach out to us and learn more about the ways they can apply for a grant and collaborate with us. Join us in setting solid roots and foundations for a better tomorrow,” he added.

The Framework continues to build on its current efforts in the four focal landscapes and will also expand its efforts in Mindanao, specifically in the Eastern Mindanao Biodiversity Corridor, with additional site-based projects around the country. Support projects include the initiatives that can:

Grow Forests

Projects that restore, protect, and conserve forests and their adjacent ecosystem to ensure these areas can sustainably meet the needs of present and future generations.

Grow opportunities

Projects that empower local communities by improving their livelihoods and developing economic incentives.

Grow partners

Projects that strengthen cross-sectoral partnerships between the government, private sector, and communities towards the protection and conservation of the forests.

Grow advocates

Projects that empower individuals, communities, and organizations to become advocates for the forests through knowledge sharing and collective action.

MONGABAY

[Hydropower projects vulnerable to warming climate and increased precipitation](#)

By: Manish Kumar

Climate change can significantly alter hydropower generation capacity, notes a study published by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Gandhinagar.

The study that appeared on February 17, 2023, claimed that with the anticipated increase in precipitation and warming, the power generation capacity of the majority of the Indian hydro projects would rise. But it would also expose the hydropower projects to increased risks, such as flooding and dam breaks.

The study examined the hydropower generation of 46 major hydropower dams in the country. It found that in a warmer projected climate (up to 5 degrees Celsius) and increased projected precipitation (between 5%-33%), the inflow of water to reservoirs of major dams is likely to increase by 7% to 70%, depending upon the region. This increased inflow, could, in turn increase (9%-36%) hydropower generation in most dams in the future.

The impact of these changes in reservoir storage and streamflow, on hydropower generation, indicates that hydropower is susceptible to climate change, noted the study. It found that hydropower projects in central India are likely to see higher inflow.

“A simultaneous rise in extreme inflow and high reservoir storage conditions is projected under future climate for most dams. However, future climate changes project a favorable hydroclimate for hydropower production, with the associated risks related to extremes,” the study said. It also added that considerable adaptation measures would be needed to tackle the extremes in the future.

“Our findings can provide crucial insights related to projected changes in hydroclimate and hydropower for the major dams in India to planners and policymakers. In addition, we highlight the challenges and opportunities associated with climate change mitigation and adaptation in the context of hydropower in India under the warming climate. Our findings emphasise the need for reliable early warning systems that can assist reservoir operations in the future,” the authors said in their study.

Execution is key

Hydropower project damages due to extreme weather events are not new to India. According to documents from the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), between 1974 and 2008, at least 24 hydropower projects were affected due to flooding, which disrupted

their normal functioning and performance. While 19 of these projects were affected during their operation and maintenance phase, seven were affected during their construction period, the report said.

Hydropower projects in India are the third largest source of electricity, with a share of 11% of India's total installed capacity, after coal (50%) and renewable sources (30%) of energy. India has 211 large hydro projects (above 25 Megawatt) in operation with a cumulative installed capacity of 46.8 GW. Another 41 hydroelectric projects (HEP) are under construction totalling 17 additional GW of planned production. They include 30 large HEPs in the fragile Himalayan region which are under the construction phase.

After the uproar over the Joshimath incident, the Ministry of Power recently told the Indian Parliament that all large hydropower projects get the green signal only after environmental clearances of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) that too after a comprehensive assessment by an Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC).

Several agencies also assess the hydro projects' Detailed Project Reports (DPR). It includes scrutiny from the Geological Survey of India (GSI), Central Electricity Authority (CEA), Central Water Commission (CWC), and Central Soil and Materials Research Station (CSMRS).

Guidelines for formulation of DPR for large hydro projects categorically say that the project developers need to analyse the general climatic conditions of the project site and its seismic potential, investigate the meteorological conditions there, make disaster management plans, and estimate its cost besides working on other aspects. The cost of the disaster management plan and protecting the environment must be part of the project's cost estimates.

However, experts from the sector claimed that adequate robust climate risk assessments before starting such projects are hardly done, leading to their exposure to several climate-related hazards.

"I have written several letters to the Ministry of Environment and Forests and its Expert Appraisal Committee on River Valley Projects in the last 15 years. We had been demanding robust climate risk assessment studies before sanctioning hydro projects and dams, especially in the fragile Himalayan regions. There is a need for a course correction in policies governing hydro projects. There should be studies to determine the area's existing disaster potential before these projects. Also, on what additional disaster elements the new projects can add in such areas post construction and operations," Himanshu Thakkar, Coordinator at the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP), told Mongabay-India.

The hydropower developers also validated the lack of climate risk assessment studies, hinting towards a lack of reflection on the risks of these projects from the climate point of view. The National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC), one of the significant public sector HEP developers in India, in an email response to Mongabay-India, said that it had yet to undertake any study on the risk of climate change on its hydropower projects. As released by the Ministry of Power, the 2022 document on disaster preparedness of the energy sector also bats for such studies.

Towards climate resilience

The International Energy Agency (IEA), which studied the future impacts of climate change on hydro projects in Latin America and Africa, claimed that the resilience of HEPs is paramount for the sector. “Climate resilience is essential for hydropower to continue delivering its function in the path of clean energy transitions. Without enhancing climate resilience, adding new capacity and flexibility services can quickly be disrupted by increasingly frequent extreme precipitation events and their associated hazards,” it said in its report.

The IEA claimed that countries need to take ‘soft measures,’ including policy changes like incentivising HEP developers for roping in climate resilient structures, regulating its mandatory compliance, and others. It also advocated for ‘hard measures’ which looked at making the structures and designs more robust to counter the impact of climate change.

The IIT Gandhinagar study also advocated advanced early warning systems (EWS) to prepare the HEPs better to counter adverse conditions. However, Thakkar from SANDRP pointed out that these are not new recommendations. The delay happens at the execution level.

“EWS was long recommended by the Ravi Chopra Committee in 2014 and even earlier. But even after that, in most HEPs, it remains non-existent, which could have saved many lives. Be it the February 2021 Chamoli floods or many other floods at HEPs in Himalayan states, the lack of EWS led to more losses. Even today, hardly any HEPs in India have advanced EWS systems with credible, transparent and accountable governance. Moreover, all information related to the EWS must be mandatorily and promptly in the public domain for everyone to know and to fix accountability,” Thakkar added.

Only after the 2021 Tapovan flash floods at a hydro project managed by the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) did the union minister RK Singh announce the installation of EWS at the NTPC HEPs in the hilly regions.

Jayanta Bandhopadhyay, Professor (retired) at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Calcutta, told Mongabay-India that India needs to re-look at its existing policies and revise them to make them more contemporary on account of the rising new threats from global warming and climate change.

“A lot of regulations, standards, and specifications governing the hydroelectric powers in India are quite old and need revision and upgradation to cater to the changing demands of global changes. However, the impact of climate change on hydropower is not confined to India alone and is a global phenomenon. But we still need to figure out the precise quantum of greenhouse emissions and global warming in the future and thus cannot predict the precise impact of climate change. The climate problems are thus poorly understood and tough to forecast,” Bandyopadhyay told Mongabay-India.

He also said that HEP developers follow the set standards and guidelines for design and construction. “First, there is a lack of information on the challenges. Secondly, we lack well-tested technologies to help design climate change resilient structures.”

However, through their analysis, the latest CEA document on disaster management of the energy sector claimed that most of the flooding and damages to HEP were reported during the operations period. It also pointed out that most of the HEPs that were affected due to flooding were found using ‘Francis Turbines,’ which seemed more vulnerable to damaging the powerhouses in the case of floods. The report claimed that the HEP developers may have prevented many of these threats with timely actions.

“It is observed that the extent of the damage and rehabilitation period could have been minimised if adequate measures had been taken at design, construction, and during operational stages of the hydropower houses. In some cases, even flooding of powerhouses could have possibly been prevented,” the report said. It also advocated for some mitigation measures like not constructing HEPs along the floodplains of rivers, locating such projects at higher altitudes, using salt water resistant structures, and simulation studies, among others.

At the global level, the International Hydropower Association (IHA) 2019 also prepared a guide to do climate-resilient hydroelectric power projects. It advocated four steps for these HEPs to make them robust to counter climate change effects. These included-climate risk screening, initial analysis, climate stress test, climate risk management and monitoring, reporting, and evaluation.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Dwindling Filipino farmers

Former agriculture secretary William Dar sounded the alarm in 2021: If nothing is done to make it worthwhile for more Filipinos to take up farming, the Philippines will face a “critical” shortage of farmers in just 12 years, thus threatening the country’s ability to feed its own growing population.

Dar cited the results of a 2020 study by retired University of the Philippines anthropology professor Florencia Palis, who determined that the average age of Filipino farmers is 53—up from 46 in 1966—and that they’ve been working on the farm for 25 years. Assuming a retirement age of 65, they have only 12 productive years left, with not enough young Filipinos to take their place, not even their own offspring. In fact, the farmers themselves actively discourage their children from following in their footsteps.

According to Palis’ paper titled “Aging Filipino Rice Farmers and Their Aspirations for Their Children,” as many as 65 percent of 923 farmers surveyed for the study believed that their children “would not have any future” tilling the land. For a better life, farming is “considered the last resort.” Farmers would rather that their children finish college and find a more stable job in urban areas or overseas. Doing so could free them from the physical and financial burdens that their parents have endured, and allow them to break the vicious cycle of poverty. “If they are getting older, who will replace them? Who will produce rice to feed the Filipinos?” Palis asked. But then who can blame farmers for dissuading their children from going into agriculture when, as the folk song goes, farming is no joke?

Palis’ paper shows how Filipino rice farmers are trapped in a seemingly endless cycle of indebtedness as most of them do not have the capital needed to see them through the planting season. Informal lenders who charge a hefty 20-percent monthly interest thus corner the bulk of their earnings. Adverse market forces and climate change with its more frequent and stronger typhoons, as well as more severe and protracted droughts that ravage their crops, have sunk them further into debt and poverty.

The latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority bear this out, with the 2021 poverty statistics showing that farmers and fisherfolk remain the poorest in the Philippines. Fisherfolk had the highest poverty incidence of 30.6 percent, followed by farmers with 30 percent. No surprise then that Filipinos are leaving the agriculture sector in droves. A report from the National Economic and Development Authority similarly shows that the number of Filipinos involved in agriculture plummeted by 25 percent to 9.07 million in 2017, from 12.25 million in 2010, with 15 of the country’s 17 regions enduring losses in agricultural employment between 2010 and 2017.

“[There is] out-migration in agriculture especially among young and educated workers across study areas ... Most agricultural workers permanently migrated to jobs in construction, information technology, business processing management, transportation (as ‘habal-habal’ drivers, for one), retail and food establishments (in sales and as food attendants), manufacturing (like food processing), tourism-related services, and domestic work (as ‘kasambahay’),” according to the study titled, “Out-Migration in Agriculture: An Analysis of the Loss of the Labor in the Agriculture Sector in the Philippines.”

There remains the urgent need to encourage more Filipinos to take up farming by dismantling the structural obstacles that have held down farmers for far too long, and have prevented the country from achieving food self-sufficiency. President Marcos must lead the herculean effort to increase the ranks of farmers and make farming a more profitable endeavor, thus raising agricultural productivity and lowering food prices. As Agriculture secretary, he can deploy the resources needed and direct the bureaucracy to do right by the farmers. He will not lack for master plans and road maps to improve the lot of farmers and fisherfolk, as their plight has been studied, dissected, and reviewed by local and international think tanks, academic institutions, and the private sector whose fortunes are tied to agri business.

The challenge therefore is not in coming up with a new game plan, but in the implementation of already existing laws, and in genuine commitment to follow through the steps already laid out: from improving access to affordable credit, to infrastructure and technology support, and subsidies for cheaper farm inputs such as seeds and fertilizer. The Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food Inc. has even called on the President to declare a state of agriculture emergency and to act on measures presented back in July for the country to attain food security.

But whatever plan or program this administration decides to pursue, it must put farmers front and center where they can be heard. They deserve no less for putting food on our table and ensuring our very survival.

Extreme heat in PH: Health risks, economic impact

By: Cristina Eloisa Baclig

As the country transitions from cold and rainy weather to the warm and dry season, the temperature increases again, and so do risks tied to hot and sunny days—such as its impact on people’s health and the economy.

Last week, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) officially declared the start of the warm and dry season, which is expected to last until May.

Pagasa has also upgraded its monitoring of oceanic temperatures to an El Niño Watch, which means there is a high likelihood that the El Niño phenomenon, characterized by extreme heat and prolonged dry spells, will develop in the next six months.

While the end of the northeast monsoon, or amihan, season signals the start of warmer temperatures across the country, more Filipinos—as well as foreign tourists—start to flock to popular beaches and other leisure destinations to beat the heat, by either dipping in the waters or soaking up cool wind.

While these activities are natural or usual among local and foreign tourists, especially amid hot weather, there are still dangers and hazards to watch out for.

Heat-related illnesses

Among the dangers of blistering temperatures are heat-related illnesses like heat cramps, heat exhaustion, sunburn, rash, and potentially fatal heatstroke.

In hot weather, the body cools itself by perspiring. “The evaporation of your sweat regulates your body temperature,” the US-based nonprofit organization Mayo Clinic explained.

However, vigorous activity during extreme heat and humid weather affects the body’s ability to cool itself efficiently. When this happens, internal heat can build up to “dangerous” levels, said Johns Hopkins Medicine.

Aside from high heat index, hot weather, and strenuous activity, Mayo Clinic likewise identified dehydration, alcohol intake, and overdressing as some causes of heat exhaustion, heat cramps, and heatstroke.

It also said that infants, children, and adults over 65 years old are at higher risk of experiencing heat-related illnesses.

“The body’s ability to regulate its temperature isn’t fully developed in the young and may be reduced by illness, medications, or other factors in older adults,” the organization said on its website.

Certain medications and obesity can also affect the body’s ability to remain hydrated and respond appropriately to heat.

What to do

According to the Department of Health (DOH), out of the common heat-related illnesses, heat stroke is the most severe form. It occurs when the body overheats and fails to cool down due to dehydration and a humid environment.

Among the emergency measures that should be taken when someone is suffering from heat stroke are:

- moving the person to a shady spot or indoors
- have them lie down with their legs elevated
- have the victim drink cool water
- remove clothing and apply cool water to the skin
- fan the person
- apply ice packs to the armpits, wrists, ankles, and groin.

The health department stressed that heat stroke is a medical emergency and that the patient should be rushed to the hospital after instituting emergency measures.

To prevent heat stroke—as well as other heat illnesses—the DOH provided the following tips:

- Limit the amount of time you spend outdoors.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Avoid tea, coffee, soda, and alcohol.
- Schedule heavy-duty activities for the beginning or end of the day when it’s cooler.

The CDC also recommended the following:

- Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- Cut down on exercise or strenuous activities during the heat.
- Wear sunscreen.
- Avoid hot and heavy meals.

In addition, Johns Hopkins Medicine advised the public to opt for water and sports drink and limit the intake of caffeinated tea, coffee, soda, and alcohol, as these can lead to dehydration.

It also recommended people with chronic conditions to talk with their healthcare provider about extra precautions to protect themselves against heat stroke.

Dry spells wilt PH economy

Every year, extreme dry spells during the El Niño season do not only hurt individuals but also the economy.

In 2010, El Niño unleashed droughts that damaged rice crops in the Philippines worth around \$240 million (P13 billion).

With temperatures forecast to be 2 degrees higher in the succeeding years, the Asia Development Bank in 2015 estimated that damage caused by severe dry spells could reach \$700-\$800 million (P38-43 billion).

A report published by the World Bank last year also found that in 2016, dry El Niño conditions—which lasted for 18 months—affected about a third of the Philippines. Over 400,000 farmers and 550,000 hectares were directly affected by El Niño-induced drought.

The report stressed that the El Niño event in 2015-2016 in the Philippines caused \$327 million (P17.78 billion) in agricultural production losses.

Simulations conducted by the World Bank showed that the country's national GDP losses during an intense El Niño event amounted to \$3.3 billion (P179 billion).

“Percentage losses are larger in agriculture, where GDP falls by nearly 7 percent. Subnationally, GDP losses vary across regions within the Philippines: agricultural GDP falls by 1.9 percent in Luzon during a strong El Niño, but by 1.4 percent in Mindanao,” said World Bank.

In the past years, poultry farms in the country have been hit by very high temperatures during the dry season.

In 2018, 1,000 chickens died of heat stroke in a poultry farm in Pangasinan two days after a 9-hour power outage.

On May 28, Pagasa recorded 42°C—the hottest temperature that day.

According to the state weather bureau's Heat Index, a temperature of 33°C to 41°C is classified as "extreme caution." These temperatures may cause heat cramps and heat exhaustion. Continuing activity could lead to heat stroke.

A temperature lower than 25°C is classified as not hazardous. When the temperature hits 27°C to 32°C, Pagasa warned that fatigue is possible with prolonged exposure and activity. Continuing activity could lead to heat cramps.

However, a temperature of 42°C to 51°C is considered dangerous, while a temperature equal to or higher than 52°C is already extremely dangerous. Heat cramps and heat exhaustion are likely, and heat stroke is imminent with these temperatures, according to Pagasa.

The hottest temperature recorded this month so far was 47°C in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, and Butuan City, Agusan del Norte last March 25.

Pagasa's five-day forecast released last March 27 showed that the heat index could rise to:

- a maximum of 44°C in Laoag on March 30
- a maximum of 43°C in Laoag on March 31
- a maximum of 45°C in General Santos on April 01
- a maximum of 45°C in Tacloban on April 01

Children bear brunt

A report by Unicef recently found that with the rapidly accelerating climate crisis, by the year 2050, virtually all children are expected to have been exposed to frequent heatwaves.

Heatwaves, or prolonged periods of extremely high temperatures, are becoming longer, stronger, more widespread, and more frequent due to the climate crisis—and this causes a devastating impact on children worldwide.

Across the globe, 559 million children are suffering from high heatwave frequency impacts. By 2050, over 2 billion children are forecast to face more frequent heatwaves or one of three other high heat measures—high heatwave duration, high heatwave severity, or extremely high temperatures.

In the Philippines, an estimated 1.1 million children had already been exposed to high heat frequency—or 4.5 or more heatwaves per year—in 2020.

At least 1.9 million children in the country were affected by high heatwave duration or prolonged heatwave, which usually lasts 4.7 days or longer, during the same year.

In 2050, the number of Filipino children suffering from having five or more heatwaves will rise to 33.5 million, or 99 percent of all children living in the country that year.

At least 26.3 million Filipino children—77 percent of the estimated total children in the country in 2050—will experience high heatwave duration.

According to Unicef, the figures could rise to 33 million children in the Philippines (99 percent) who will experience high heatwave frequency and 30.6 million (92 percent) who will bear the brunt of the impacts of days-long heatwaves.

“The more frequent, longer lasting and more severe heatwaves children are exposed to, the greater the impacts on health, safety, nutrition, education, access to water and future livelihoods,” climate activist and Unicef Goodwill Ambassador Vanessa Nakate said.

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

Newly created WRMO aims to address El Niño

By: Maria Viktoria M. Viado

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. is confident that the newly-created Water Resource Management Office (WRMO) will include El Niño – a warm climate pattern that usually results in concerns on water supply due to drought and dry spells, in its top priorities in the coming years.

According to Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) El Niño may still persist until 2024. This weather phenomenon is not new for the Philippines, the last El Niño event in the country was recorded in 2018 until 2019.

During a Pag-IBIG Fund event, Marcos reiterates the goal behind the creation of the WRMO and the ongoing establishment of the Department of Water Management as soon as House Bills materialize. He says that these government offices are there to “precisely address this problem.”

Aside from the effects of El Niño, the President and head of the Department of Agriculture (DA) is well-aware that the country has problems with water, particularly in the agricultural sector. Thus, part of the responsibilities of the new office on water is the development and building of infrastructure that could maximize the water sources in the country.

“We are going to shift from the majority of water sources now which is kumukuha tayo [sa balon] ... What we really should be doing is taking advantage of surface water,” Marcos said.

The Chief Executive also underscores the immediate actions in order to address this water crisis.

“We kept postponing (solving) this problem over the many, many years at every level. So, it’s time to put it together, to put in a cohesive plan,” he adds.

The President looks forward to executing these plans guided by water management practices across the world.

He previously expressed his intentions of providing every Filipino with clean and fresh water, as well as better irrigation systems to improve their livelihood. This is also one of the priority legislative measures of his administration.

The Water Resource Management Office will be attached to the Office of the President and with the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to address environmental challenges and water management in the country, among others.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[DPWH plants 315K 'replacement' trees in E. Samar](#)

By: Sarwell Meniano

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) on Wednesday began planting 315,100 trees to replace those trees cut to pave the way for the slope protection rockfall netting project in Eastern Samar.

DPWH - Eastern Samar district engineering office chief Ma. Margarita Junia said the target number was a replacement of the 3,151 trees affected by the project meant to prevent erosion along the road that connects Eastern Samar and the Samar provinces.

“We will be busy this year implementing this tree replacement program. In fact, we already had a total of 14,000 saplings of native trees in our nursery, which are ready for the tree planting program,” Junia said in a phone interview.

The tree planting complies with the tree-cutting permit issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), which directs the implementing office to replace each cut tree with 100 seedlings.

“With the voluminous requirements of trees to be planted, we are also coordinating (with) the local barangay officials in Taft who will help us in the supply of more seedlings. They will be of great help in this tree replacement program and at the same time, this will provide them an additional source of income,” she added.

Junia said the tree planting activity would cover the roadside from Taft to Arteche towns and in forest lands to be identified by the DENR.

The department put down 3,151 trees for its netting project designed to protect 1.7 km. of road in Eastern Samar from frequent rockfalls.

The 1.7-km. road section is within the road network that links the provincial capitals of Catbalogan City in Samar and Borongan City in Eastern Samar.

Rock netting on unstable rock faces and slopes is a way to contain and control rockslides, protect against the effects of erosion, and improve stability.

Fair weather, isolated rain showers continue to prevail across PH

By: Ma. Cristina Arayata

Fair weather with isolated rain showers will continue to prevail across the country on Wednesday, the weather bureau said.

The easterlies continue to prevail over the eastern section of the Visayas and Mindanao, Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) weather forecaster Obet Badrina said.

Localized thunderstorms will be experienced over parts of these islands, he said, adding that generally fair weather will prevail over most of Luzon, although localized thunderstorms are still likely in the afternoon or evening.

PAGASA said flash floods or landslides are possible during severe thunderstorms.

Badrina said no low-pressure area was monitored inside the Philippine Area of Responsibility, and that the country has a slim chance of having a tropical cyclone until Friday.

Moderate to strong winds and moderate to rough seas continue to prevail over extreme Northern Luzon.

Elsewhere, winds will be light to moderate with slight to moderate seas, PAGASA said.

THE MANILA TIMES

[High Seas Treaty offers opportunities for PH](#)

EARLIER this month, member states of the United Nations, including the Philippines, approved a landmark High Seas Treaty, ending a decade of contentious negotiations capped off by a marathon, 38-hour session just before the final draft was approved by the UN General Assembly.

Almost two-thirds of Earth's surface is covered by seas, and the ocean makes up 95 percent of Earth's total habitat by volume, but only about 39 percent of the planet's seas fall within national borders or jurisdictions. Of the rest, only about 1 percent is protected. The High Seas Treaty aims to provide some protection and rules for exploitation and management of the vast ocean ecosystem, in line with the target of putting at least 30 percent of ocean, land and coastal areas under protection by 2030, the so-called 30-by-30 agreement reached in December at the UN Biodiversity Conference held in Montreal.

The main points of the new High Seas Treaty are a stipulation that environmental impact assessments must be completed before any new exploitation of marine resources — such as commercial fishing, undersea mining, or oil or gas exploration — are undertaken in areas beyond national jurisdictions. It also features provisions to allow for the equitable sharing of knowledge, technologies and benefits from marine genetic resources

In a statement, a representative of the UN explained, "[The treaty] is not about putting nature in a bell jar to remain untouched — but rather, applying a precautionary approach to using marine resources responsibly in this 'Wild West' of the high seas, to ensure that we are not depleting ocean ecosystems and leaving nothing for tomorrow."

In that sense, many of the countries which supported the treaty are looking at it as an opportunity for sustainable economic growth, and the Philippines should as well. There are three areas that are immediately apparent as potential advantages for the Philippines.

First, the new ocean treaty will offer access to a new range of financial and technical resources for conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. Shortly after the treaty was passed by the UN General Assembly, both the European Union and the US announced that they would contribute to starting a proposed new fund for ocean protection, with initial amounts of €40 million and \$800 million, respectively. Even more new funding is expected to be announced by the World Bank when it holds its spring meeting next month.

Second, the new treaty is already inspiring development and investment demand in areas such as aquaculture and fisheries, waste management, and environmental remediation and conservation. Even though the High Seas Treaty pertains to areas outside national waters, it is recognized that the seas are all connected, and therefore efforts in a country's own territory can either help or hurt the success of efforts in the open seas.

Finally, the High Seas Treaty may provide some framework for the Philippines to resolve its dispute with China over the West Philippine Sea. As most of the sea is recognized as international waters, China will be obliged to curb some of its aggressive behavior, such as illegal construction and unregulated fishing, or face sanctions. Likewise, the High Seas Treaty encourages collective action, such as the already in place Coral Triangle Initiative between the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste, or the long-proposed code of conduct for the West Philippine Sea.

Of course, all of this is prospective at this point; to be put into force, the treaty must be ratified by individual countries. In order to take advantage of its protections and the opportunities it offers, the Philippines must also ratify the treaty, which is the responsibility of the Senate. This measure should not be made to wait; it is after all the product of many years of discussion that the Philippines was a part of, and should already be familiar. Both for the sake of the country and for the sake of demonstrating world leadership, the Senate should take up the matter of ratification as soon as the official documents are received.

'Tanker owner should pay for oil spill damage'

By: Janine Alexis Miguel

FISHERFOLK communities and environmental organizations led by the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ) sought the government's intervention to hold the fishing vessel owner of the sunken MT Princess Empress vessel accountable for the oil spill.

The oil spill has impacted not just the ecological balance of Mindoro Oriental but its neighboring provinces as far as the Verde Island Passage at the tip of Batangas province.

"The Department of Environment and Natural Resources needs to take a stand to make the owner of the sunken MT Princess Empress vessel pay for all the damages," said Dr. Rene Ofreneo, president of the Freedom from Debt Coalition.

Ofreneo, who was also a former dean of the University of the Philippines School of Labor and Industrial Relations, also pointed out that the livelihood of fisherfolk in the area was severely affected.

Liezal Amol, a resident and volunteer of the Batangas City Bantay Dagat, said fishermen lost an estimated P700 per day after the fishing ban was declared on Verde Island more than two weeks ago.

Amol and the other representatives said the relief goods given by the government are not enough to keep them afloat further.

While some communities added that they haven't received goods from their LGUs.

She cited that the locals who lost their livelihood became volunteers under the cash-for-work program implemented by the Department of Social Welfare and Development to give aid to the affected communities.

Meanwhile, Labor leader Leody de Guzman of Partido Lakas ng Masa called out vessel owners who violate the law by continuing to pass through the marine protected areas.

"Declared as the heart of marine biodiversity, [but] big vessels still continue to pass through [the area]," Ka Leody said in Filipino, pertaining to the Verde Island passage.

While the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources visited the area for a water contamination exam, a continuation of fishing activities is not feasible soon.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

[PAGASA issues extreme heat danger alert](#)

By: Romina Cabrera

The heat index in Laoag City in Ilocos Sur may reach 48 degrees Celsius on the first day of April, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

PAGASA said this corresponds to an "extreme danger level" on its heat index chart. It said the heat index may reach up to 44 degrees Celsius tomorrow.

The highest heat index recorded so far was 47 degrees Celsius in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro on March 25 and in Butuan City in Agusan del Norte on March 24.

PAGASA said extreme caution should be taken during these temperature surges.

The agency warned the public that high temperatures may have adverse effects on the body, such as fatigue, cramps, exhaustion and stroke.

The actual heat index – human discomfort or the temperature felt by the body relative to high humidity – may be about two degrees higher than recorded temperatures.

PAGASA had raised the alert level to El Niño watch as the probability of its occurrence had reached 55 percent or higher.

It said the El Niño phenomenon would likely develop from July to September following a transition from the current neutral conditions in the El Niño southern oscillation.

The phenomenon, which increases the likelihood of below normal rainfall conditions, may last until the first quarter of 2024.

It may result in dry spells and droughts in some areas of the country, with forecasters expecting early impact on the Visayas and Mindanao.

[UN considers 'historic' Vanuatu-led climate resolution](#)

By: Amélie Bottolier-Depois

The UN General Assembly on Wednesday is expected to adopt a resolution calling for a top court to outline legal obligations related to climate change, an "unprecedented challenge of civilizational proportions."

Pushed for years by Vanuatu and Pacific islander youth, the measure asks the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to lay out nations' obligations for protecting Earth's climate, and the legal consequences they face if they don't.

If the resolution passes—as is widely expected since more than half of UN member states have co-sponsored it—Vanuatu's Prime Minister Ishmael Kalsakau told AFP he will be "elated."

"Global warming is en route to Armageddon," warned the leader, whose Pacific nation faces rising sea-levels and experienced back-to-back cyclones earlier this month.

He added that leaders must "react very quickly, urgently" to address the climate crisis.

The government of Vanuatu started lobbying for the climate resolution in 2021, after a campaign initiated by a group of students from a university in Fiji in 2019.

Co-sponsored by some 120 nations, the resolution asks the ICJ to clarify the "obligations of States under international law to ensure the protection of the climate system."

A week ago, the UN's panel of climate experts (IPCC) warned that global average temperatures could reach 1.5C above the pre-industrial era by as early as 2030-2035, underlining the need for drastic action this decade.

While nations have no legal obligation under the Paris Agreement to meet emission reduction targets, backers of the new climate resolution hope other instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, could offer some pathways for enforcement.

ICJ opinions are not binding, but they carry significant legal and moral weight, and are often taken into account by national courts.

The future ruling "will serve as an important accountability tool," Harjeet Singh of Climate Action Network, an international NGO, told AFP

He hailed the resolution's apparent success as "potentially one of the biggest climate diplomacy and multilateral successes in the recent past."

His enthusiasm however is not shared by all.

"I don't see anything useful that the Court could say. On the other hand, I see scenarios where this request would be counterproductive," Benoit Mayer, a specialist in international law at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, told AFP.

He warned of a possible "disaster scenario," if the ICJ opinion is "clear and precise, but contrary to what the supporters of the request wanted."

'Particularly vulnerable' islands

Another unknown factor is the position of the two largest emitters of greenhouse gasses, China and the United States.

During negotiations on the Paris Agreement, US diplomats secured the addition of a clause specifying that the text "does not involve or provide a basis for any liability or compensation."

This is a critical issue in the debate over paying for the so-called "loss and damage" costs borne by the poorest countries, which have contributed the least to global warming.

The UN resolution notably asks the ICJ to clarify the "legal consequences" for states which "have caused significant harm to the climate system and other parts of the environment."

It specifically asks the court to weigh obligations to "small island developing States," which are "particularly vulnerable" to climate change, as well as obligations to future generations.

When the UN considers the resolution on Wednesday, it will be a "test moment for states around the world to really show where they stand," said Nikki Reisch, of the Center for international environmental law (Ciel).

It will also be an emotional day for the Pacific youth, who spearheaded the initiative.

"This was an opportunity to do something bigger than ourselves, bigger than our fears, something important for our future," said Cynthia Houniuihi, president of the group Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

GMA NEWS

[Filipinos join Earth Hour 2023](#)

Filipinos switched off non-essential lights on Saturday as part of the Earth Hour initiative.

Several establishments in Makati City and Quezon Memorial Circle turned off their lights for 60 minutes, or from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., according to reports from Super Radyo dzBB's Sam Nielsen and Carlo Mateo.

An activity was also held at the Quezon Memorial Circle to raise awareness of the climate situation and promote measures to reduce energy consumption.

"By switching our lights off, we want to be a beacon for all and a signal to all. We want to tell the world that we need to act for our country and our world in the face of climate change," said Climate Change Commission Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert Borje, who attended the event, which carried the theme "The Biggest Hour for Earth."

The energy sector accounts for 55% of the domestic emissions in the Philippines, with household and commercial energy consumption ranking as the second and fourth highest demands based on the latest National Greenhouse Gas Inventory, respectively, the CCC said.

"To respond to the growing emissions, the National Climate Change Action Plan includes 'sustainable energy' as [one of] its thematic priorities with the aim of promoting and implementing energy efficiency and conservation measures," the CCC added.

Earlier, President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. asked the public to participate in the Earth Hour to "give Mother Nature 60 minutes to breathe."

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[CCC sponsors food security forum in Caloocan City](#)

The Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) has conducted a forum for food security and urban agriculture in Camarin, Caloocan City to educate residents in urban gardening as a means of livelihood and self-sufficiency.

The office of Climate Change Commissioner Albert Dela Cruz Sr. conducted the forum in line with the Marcos administration's advocacy of achieving food security and economic stability for all Filipinos.

Dela Cruz is now on a trip to Taiwan to meet with possible partners and investors through his initiative to support President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s efforts for climate action in the fulfillment of the country's commitment to the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

BPI agriculturist Ernie Boloso from the office of National Program for Urban Agriculture director Gerald Glenn Panganiban led the forum and taught some 50 residents of Barangay Camarin in the proper way of urban gardening through the utilization of spaces in their community to plant various kinds of edible crops and vegetables.

Moral Recovery Chaplaincy Organizational Movement founding chairman Bishop Edgardo Espiritu said he is very much thankful to the Climate Change Commission (CCC) and BPI in helping educate and empower the public to achieve self-sufficiency by teaching them methods of creating their own means of livelihood.

Dela Cruz cited the significance of giving knowledge and skills to the citizenry to make them self-sufficient and resilient to the impacts of climate change that is mostly triggered by the fast-paced growth of the economy brought by industrialization.

"Alongside the fast trend of modernization with the use of mechanized technology, we are also creating problems in our environment; hence, climate change and global warming. We need to address this and only through mitigation and adaptation can we survive and help future generations attain resiliency," Dela Cruz said in a news release on Wednesday.

In his debut speech at the 77th session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in New York in September last year, President Marcos underscored the need for nations to invest in food security.

“We need to take concrete steps towards modern and resilient agriculture. For food is not just a trade commodity nor is it just a livelihood. It is an existential imperative, and a moral one. It is the very basis of human security,” he said.

RADYO PILIPINAS

Selebrasyon ng Earth Hour 2023, ginunita sa Quezon City

Ginunita ang selebrasyon ng Earth Hour 2023 sa Quezon Memorial Circle sa Quezon City na inorganisa ng Worldwide Fund for Nature - Philippines.

Pasado alas-8:30 kagabi, sabay-sabay na pinatay ang mga ilaw at muling binuksan pagsapit ng alas-9:30 ng gabi.

Sinundan ito ng symbolic run kung saan sabay-sabay na nag-jogging ang ilang kalahok. Nagpahatid ng mensahe ng pagsuporta si Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte sa mga hakbangin para sa pagtugon sa climate crisis at nagkaroon din ng live performances mula sa iba't ibang Pinoy artists.

Dumalo rin sa switch-off ceremony si Sec. Robert E.A. Borje, ang Vice Chair at Executive Director ng Climate Change Commission. Sa kanyang pahayag, sinabi ni Borje na ang isang oras na pagpatay ng ilaw ay nagbigay-liwanag sa pangangailangan ng bansa para tugunan ang climate crisis.

"By switching our lights off, we want to be a beacon for all and a signal to all. We want to tell the world that we need to act for our country and our world in the face of climate change," ani ni Borje.

Ayon kay Atty. Angela Consuelo Ibay, National Director for Earth Hour Philippines, malaki ang kaniyang excitement dahil muling isinagawa ang face-to-face celebration mula noong kumalat ang COVID-19.

Aniya, mas dumami ang lumalahok sa Earth Hour sa mundo kung saan umabot sa 192 na mga bansa ang nakikiisa.

Inimbitahan sa Earth Hour 2023 ang iba't ibang non-government organizations at business enterprises na nagsusulong ng pangangalaga sa kalikasan. | ulat ni Bernard Jaudian Jr.

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